



2 FM: Kuwait offered \$1.7bn for Syrians in past decade



5 Biden says no rallies, EU bars US visitors



7 How India's largest slum beat back a pandemic



16 Messi scores 700th goal but draw hurts Barca title hopes



Gulf economies to shrink 7.6% over virus, oil slump

IMF predicts faster rebound in 2021 • Saudi triples VAT in austerity push



RIYADH: Saudis shop at a jewelry shop in the Taiba gold market on June 29, 2020 after authorities announced a 10% increase in the VAT rate from July 1. — AFP

DUBAI/RIYADH: The Gulf states' economies could contract by 7.6 percent this year in their deepest decline in decades, as the coronavirus and low oil prices take their toll, a top IMF official said. The new projection for the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is dramatically worse than the 2.7 percent contraction the IMF forecast just two months ago.

Oil revenues in the GCC, the Gulf Arab monarchies that supply nearly a fifth of the world's crude, are also expected to decline by \$200 billion in 2020, said Jihad Azour, director of the IMF's Middle East and Central Asia Department. "The oil sector will shrink sharply by around 7.0 percent and it will be accompanied by a drop in the non-oil sector also," he said in a webinar on the prospects for a post-coronavirus recovery in the region.

Azour however predicted a faster rebound in 2021 as Gulf economies grow by 2.5 percent — "a full 10 percent turnaround". The GCC comprises regional powerhouse Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates along with Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar. Azour said that oil prices in real terms (adjusted for inflation) dropped to their lowest level since 1973 earlier this year before recovering partially following a deal among major exporters to slash production.

The IMF last week kept its projections for Brent oil prices unchanged at around \$36 a barrel, almost half of last year's average. Azour said the sharp drop

in oil prices and the impact of the pandemic would lead to more debt in GCC economies, a problem he warned must be tackled. In its World Economic Outlook released last week, the IMF projected the Saudi economy, the largest in the region, would shrink by 6.8 percent — the lowest growth in more than three decades.

Ahmed Al-Kholifey, governor of the kingdom's central bank, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority, downplayed the projection as too gloomy. "We see the IMF forecast as more pessimistic than our projections or even the (experts') consensus," Kholifey told the virtual forum, although he declined to provide figures. Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Statistics published figures on Tuesday showing that the kingdom's economy shrank by 1.0 percent in the first quarter. But Kholifey acknowledged that the second-quarter performance would be weaker.

In the neighboring UAE, Dubai said Tuesday that its GDP had declined by 3.5 percent in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. The emirate's official media office said however that its troubled real estate activity had registered 3.7 percent growth.

Meanwhile, Saudis braced yesterday for a tripling in value added tax, another unpopular austerity measure after the twin shocks of coronavirus and an oil price slump triggered the kingdom's worst economic decline in decades.

Continued on Page 2

Adasani files new grilling against finance minister

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Riyadh Al-Adasani yesterday filed to grill Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan for the second time in less than a month, repeating almost the same charges that were debated in the first grilling two weeks ago. The lawmaker accused the minister, who has been in office for just two months, of proposing unpopular measures that would undermine the "pockets" of the people and for failing to file proper lawsuits over major corruption and money laundering scandals. He also accused the minister of providing false information during the first grilling with the aim to mislead the lawmakers and the public.

Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the grilling will be placed on the agenda of the next session, which will be determined by the Assembly office on Sunday. He also said that he referred to the legal and legislative committee two requests by the public prosecution asking to lift the parliamentary immunity of two MPs in one case and a third MP in a different case. The first case is related with suspected dealings with a Bangladeshi MP who under investigation in Kuwait. A number of senior officials are also suspected of being linked to his illegal activities.

In his new grilling, Adasani said that the minister submitted to the Cabinet in May what he called the "economic document", which proposes wide-scale measures to boost revenues by imposing taxes, raising charges and cutting employment benefits. The document proposes, among other measures, to impose value added tax (VAT) and other taxes on certain goods, raise electricity and water charges and freeze salary hikes and annual promotions in all government departments, besides reducing government contribution to social security.

The document calls to amend a 1994 law that prevents the government from raising charges on public services without the prior approval of the Assembly with the aim to free the

Continued on Page 2

19 killed in explosion at Tehran clinic

TEHRAN: A powerful explosion at a clinic in northern Tehran killed at least 19 people on Tuesday, Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency reported. The blast at Sina At'har health center caused damage to buildings in the vicinity and sent a plume of thick black smoke into the night sky, state television reported. "An explosion was reported at 20:56 (1626 GMT) followed by a fire at Sina At'har clinic. Medical units were dispatched immediately," Tehran's emergency medical services said in a statement.

"The death of 13 people has been

confirmed. Six have also been injured and transferred" to a hospital, it added. Tehran fire department spokesman Jalal Maleki also told the agency that firefighters recovered six more who died after the blaze was extinguished around two hours later, raising the toll to 19. Fifteen of the dead were women, state television said.

In a TV interview, Maleki said the explosion occurred as gas canisters caught fire in the clinic's basement. Some of the victims "were in upper floors in operation rooms, who were either patients being operated on or those with them," he said. "They unfortunately lost their lives due to the heat and thick smoke."

A gas leak caused the blast, Tehran Deputy Governor Hamid Reza Goudarzi told state television.

Continued on Page 2



TEHRAN: First responders gather at the scene of an explosion at the Sina At'har health center in the north of the capital on Tuesday. — AFP

Qatar animal shelter braces as expats leave

DOHA: Animals dumped or born on the streets in Qatar face particular hardship. Summer temperatures touch 50 degrees Celsius and images of abuse, including animals being shot with airguns, are common on social media. Now, rescuers are warning there could be a spike in dumped pets in the emirate as an economic downturn driven by the novel coronavirus pandemic forces expatriate workers and their families to leave at short notice. Expatriates make up 90 percent of Qatar's 2.75 million population.

"We're expecting a wave of emails and phone calls to say, 'Help'. We've had a few of those already," Paws animal shelter co-founder Alison Caldwell said. Founded seven years ago by two British expats, Paws said it saw an influx of animals in the early days of the pandemic from owners who feared their pets could spread the virus. People have also contacted the shelter for help after some animal owners fell ill and were hospitalized without warning. — AFP (See Page 13)



DOHA: An employee of the Paws animal welfare organization walks rescued stray dogs outside the premises in the Mesaieed industrial area on June 14, 2020. — AFP

Lebanon raises price of bread, army cuts meat

BEIRUT: The Lebanese government on Tuesday raised the price of a 900-gm loaf of partially subsidized bread to 2,000 pounds from its pre-October-crisis price of 1,500 pounds in the first such price change in eight years. The pound, which is officially pegged at 1,500 to the dollar, has lost over 80 percent of its value since October and is now trading at nearly 9,000 to the dollar on the black market after sharp falls in recent days.

Since October Lebanon has been in a financial crisis that has seen businesses close and prices and unemployment soar. Lebanon is in the throes of its worst economic downturn since the 1975-1990 civil war, with poverty surging to now afflict around half of the population. The heavily indebted country has maintained an official dollar peg of 1,507.5, but dollars at this level have been rationed exclusively for imports of fuel, medicine, and wheat.

As a result, food prices have shot up by at least 72 percent since the autumn, the non-governmental Consumer Protection Association says.

Continued on Page 2

Local

Kuwait offered \$1.7 billion for Syrian people in past decade

Brussels conference on Syria pledges \$7.7 billion for humanitarian aid

KUWAIT/BRUSSELS: Kuwait has donated a total of \$1.7 billion in aid for Syria's displaced people and refugees and countries hosting them in the past 10 years, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said. Speaking at the Fourth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, held virtually on Tuesday, Sheikh Dr Ahmad pointed out that Kuwait had played a major role in providing humanitarian aid to the war-torn Arab country during that period. Kuwait has also hosted three international conferences for Syria donors, co-chaired two others and partook in several related gatherings, including Tuesday's conference, the minister recalled, estimating his country's contributions during these events at \$1.7 billion.

The Kuwaiti top diplomat expressed appreciation of the contributions of the countries hosting Syrian refugees, namely Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey. He unveiled that Kuwait had inked memos with these countries to carry out projects to improve the living conditions of the Syrian refugees there. Finally, Sheikh Ahmad reiterated support to UN Secretary General Special Envoy to Syria Geir Pederson's efforts to persuade warring parties to implement UN Security Council resolutions No 2254 and 2401 which call for ending hostilities and finding a peaceful settlement to the conflict in the Arab country.

Total pledges

The fourth Brussels conference on Syria concluded with total pledges amounting to 6.9 billion Euros (\$7.7 billion), of which for 2020 the amount is 4.9 billion Euros (\$5.5 billion), Janez Lenarcic, EU Commissioner for humanitarian aid, announced. "The Covid pandemic is leading to huge humanitarian needs around the world and is having a big impact on donor economies," he told a press conference in Brussels. "For 2021 and beyond we have



United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres attends the videoconference.

two billion Euros (\$2.2 billion). In addition international financial institutions and donors announced loans on concessional terms in the amount of six billion Euros (\$6.7 billion)," he added.

Reacting to the outcome of the Brussels conference on Syria, Marta Lorenzo, the international aid organization Oxfam's Middle East and North Africa Regional Director, commented that "the pledges made by donor governments are simply not enough to address the Syrian crisis." "It's shocking that the international community has failed to recognize the urgency of the situation despite clear calls from Syrian civil society," she said in a statement.

Nationwide ceasefire

The conference also ended by expressing its full support for the call made by the UN Special Envoy for a nationwide ceasefire in Syria. Participants

reiterated the international community's strong concerns about the risks of a further escalation of violence in Syria, said the Declaration of the Fourth Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region," hosted by the European Union and co-chaired with the United Nations. Building upon the work of the conferences held in Kuwait (2013-15), London (2016) and Brussels (2017-19), Brussels IV renewed and strengthened the political, humanitarian and financial commitment of the international community to support the Syrian people, the neighboring countries and the communities most affected by the conflict, it noted.

The conference brought together 84 delegations including 57 States, 10 regional organizations and International Financial Institutions as well as 17 UN agencies. The Conference acknowledged Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey's

extraordinary solidarity and tremendous efforts towards Syrian refugees even as some of the countries face severe socio-economic challenges. Iraq's and Egypt's efforts were also highlighted and commended. The worsening economic context in Syria and the region and the protracted nature of the crisis warrants further support. In spite of the logistical challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Brussels IV saw an impressive effort to reach out to civil society representatives in Syria and the region. More than 1,400 civil society organizations were consulted on all key topics pertaining to the international response to the Syria conflict throughout the preparations for the Conference, including through extensive online consultations and many interactive side events over the week preceding the Ministerial meeting. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah attends the videoconference. — KUNA

Deputy FM, EU ambassador discuss bilateral ties



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with European Union Ambassador to Kuwait Cristian Tudor. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met Tuesday with European Union Ambassador to Kuwait Cristian Tudor. During the meeting, they tackled different aspects of bilateral relations and cooperation. Kuwait considers highly its relations with the EU, Jarallah said, hailing the EU positive role in handling the region's

causes. Meanwhile, Tudor stressed that the EU highly appreciates Kuwait and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He lauded Kuwait's balanced foreign policy and distinguished roles in several fields. Tudor also noted that the EU is looking forward to furthering cooperation with Kuwait in various domains. — KUNA

Kuwait stresses joint work for combatting COVID-19

GENEVA: Kuwait emphasized Tuesday the importance of joint action to win the battle against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Speaking at the United Nations Human Rights Council 44th session, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and international organizations in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim noted that since the outbreak of the virus, Kuwait announced offering \$60 million to support the World Health Organization efforts in responding to the pandemic. Later, Kuwait donated additional \$40 million to ensure the

continuity of the international efforts to curb the spread of the pandemic and reducing its negative effects, he added. Ghunaim pointed out that Kuwait had also supported development projects in many countries across the world. About 106 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean have benefited from the assistance provided by Kuwait which had been pumped into projects in vital human rights-related sectors, he said.

In the meantime, Ambassador Ghunaim also expressed Kuwait's strong condemna-

tion of the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories by the Israeli forces and their violations against the defenseless Palestinian people, without any regard for the coronavirus outbreak. He also voiced Kuwait's aspiration to continue cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and her team so that they can carry out their noble mission. The 44th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council started its activities Tuesday through a videoconferencing app and will continue until the July 17. — KUNA

KRCS doles out aid to 2,000 families in Lebanon

BEIRUT: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) on Tuesday provided humanitarian aid for about 2,000 Lebanese families in need of support due to difficult economic conditions following the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19). In a statement to the press, the relief coord-

inator at the Lebanese Red Cross, Yousef Boutros, said the KRCS aid included food and cleaning materials and were distributed to the families in cooperation with the Lebanese Red Cross and coordinated by Kuwait Embassy in Lebanon. Boutros pointed out that the KRCS was keen to

support families in need to face of difficult living and economic conditions following the virus spread. KRCS continues its relief efforts in Lebanon throughout the year through its humanitarian projects that benefit thousands of Lebanese families, Syrian and Palestinian refugees. — KUNA

Gulf economies to shrink...

Continued from Page 1

Retailers in the country reported a sharp uptick in sales this week of everything from gold and electronics to cars and building materials, as shoppers sought to stock up before VAT is raised to 15 percent.

The hike could stir public resentment as it weighs on household incomes, pushing up inflation and depressing consumer spending as the kingdom emerges from a three-month coronavirus lockdown. "Cuts, cuts, cuts everywhere," a Saudi teacher in Riyadh told AFP, bemoaning vanishing subsidies as salaries remain stagnant. "Air conditioner, television, electronic items," he said, rattling off a list of items he bought last week ahead of the VAT hike. "I can't afford these things from Wednesday."

With its vast oil wealth funding the Arab world's biggest economy, the kingdom had for decades been able to fund massive spending with no taxes at all. It only introduced VAT in 2018, as part of a push to reduce its dependence on crude revenues. Then, seeking to shore up state finances battered by sliding oil prices and the coronavirus crisis, it announced in May that it would triple VAT and halt a cost-of-living monthly allowance to citizens.

The austerity push underscores how Saudi Arabia's once-lavish spending is becoming a thing of the past, with the erosion of the welfare system leaving a mostly young popu-

lation to cope with reduced incomes and a lifestyle downgrade. Shopping malls in the kingdom have drawn large crowds in recent days as retailers offered "pre-VAT sales" and discounts before the hike kicks in. A gold shop in Riyadh told AFP it saw a 70 percent jump in sales in recent weeks, while a car dealership saw them tick up by 15 percent.

Once the new rate is in place, businesses are predicting depressed sales of everything from cars to cosmetics and home appliances. Capital Economics forecast inflation will jump up to six percent year-on-year in July, from 1.1 percent in May, as a result. The kingdom also risks losing its edge against other Gulf states, including its principal ally the UAE, which introduced VAT at the same time but has so far refrained from raising it beyond five percent. But the kingdom has few choices as oil revenue declines.

Its finances have taken another blow as authorities massively scaled back this year's hajj pilgrimage, from 2.5 million pilgrims last year to around a thousand already inside the country, and suspended the lesser umrah because of coronavirus. Together the rites rake in some \$12 billion annually. The austerity drive would boost state coffers by 100 billion riyals (\$26.6 billion), according to state media. But the measures are unlikely to plug the kingdom's huge budget deficit. The Saudi Jadwa Investment group forecasts the shortfall will rise to a record \$112 billion this year. — Agencies

Lebanon raises price of...

Continued from Page 1

Prices are expected to climb further as the currency continues to dive. Lebanon relies on imports for most of its food, but the scarcity of dollars and the plummeting local currency have made such imports both costly and difficult.

In recent days there have been long queues in bakeries as oven owners stopped selling their bread to shops, complaining that their production costs had spiraled due to the rapid depreciation in the value of the pound. Bakeries also threatened to stop bread distribution, saying they were losing money. Flatbread is a staple food for the majority of the population in the Middle East. Ali Ibrahim, the head of the Lebanese Ovens Association, told Lebanese LBC TV broadcaster the decision should "have been taken a while ago".

Meanwhile, the Lebanese army has scrapped meat from all meals it offers to soldiers on duty as food prices skyrocketed, state media said Tuesday. Lebanon's army has "completely scrapped meat from meals offered to soldiers while they are on duty", the National News Agency said, citing the economic crisis.

On Tuesday, a kilogram of lamb was selling for around 80,000 Lebanese pounds (\$53 at the official rate), up from 30,000 pounds (\$20 at the official rate) two months ago. The price of a kilo of beef has shot up from 18,000 pounds (\$12) to more than 50,000 (\$33).

The union of butchers and cattle farmers said Tuesday that more than 60 percent of butcher shops had closed in recent weeks. It blamed the collapse of the pound and a decision by commer-

cial banks to halt dollar withdrawals and transfers. After a meeting on Tuesday, the union addressed authorities, saying: "either you release our trapped dollar savings from banks or you support the livestock sector... otherwise we will have no choice but to completely close down."

Lebanon, which has a sovereign debt equivalent to 170 percent of its GDP, defaulted on its debt in March for the first time in its history. The economic crunch has sparked months of unprecedented protests against official corruption and the banking sector. The bread crisis sparked renewed anti-government protests on Saturday and Sunday as demonstrators blocked main highways across the country. Angry protesters again took to the streets on Tuesday in the heart of the capital Beirut, paralyzing traffic in sporadic demonstrations over deteriorating living conditions.

An evening dress for milk formula, children's clothes for cooking oil — as they watch prices soar in crisis-hit Lebanon, parents are taking to bartering online to survive. Tens of thousands of people across the social spectrum have lost their job or part of their income because of Lebanon's worst economic crisis in decades. As the Lebanese pound has plunged to historic lows in the market, many have reverted to non-cash transactions. On Facebook, a group called "Lebanon barterers" has attracted 12,000 users in just two weeks. Aid workers and volunteers say families that were once well-off are now struggling to put bread on the table, let alone pay for medication. Economists are speaking of the disappearance of the middle class. — Agencies

Adasani files new...

Continued from Page 1

government's hand in this issue. The lawmaker said such measures breach the constitution and aim to tackle the financial crisis by leaning on the people.

The grilling also accuses the minister of failing to control the country's foreign investments managed by Kuwait Investment Authority, saying that losses have been reported in several investments and the minister did not take action. Adasani also accused the minister of not filing adequate and complete lawsuits to the public prosecution regarding a number of high profile corruption cases like that of the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund, Kuwait's alleged involvement in the Airbus bribery case and the scandal revolving around the Bangladeshi MP currently detained in the country.

19 killed in explosion at...

Continued from Page 1

The clinic, which had 25 employees inside at the time of the blast, primarily carries out light surgeries and medical imaging, Harirchi said. A video posted on social media appeared to show multiple explosions at the north Tehran site and another showed firefighters using a ladder to reach the roof of the building.

The incident comes four days after an explosion near a military complex rocked the Iranian capital. It took place in the Parchin area in the southeast of Tehran due to "leaking gas tanks", Iran's defense ministry said on Friday, adding there were no casualties. Parchin is a site suspected of having hosted conventional explosion tests applicable to nuclear power, which the Islamic republic denies. It had come under scrutiny from the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency in 2015. — Agencies

Local

Expats lament 'chaotic' food distribution in areas under lockdown

'I wasn't afraid during Gulf Wars the way I fear for my life now'

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The stories of expatriates who are under lockdown in some areas of Kuwait are harrowing. Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula have been isolated since April 8, 2020, while Farwaniya, Khaitan and Hawally were later included. The lockdowns of Khaitan and Hawally were lifted on June 21, 2020, but Farwaniya, Jleeb and Mahboula remain cordoned off until further notice. To ease the suffering and hunger of people in the area, the government and charity organizations regularly distribute food, although the quantities are limited. Only a few people are benefiting from the handouts and only those living near distribution points are getting them. People have to jostle to get their share, and are often met with shoving and pushing in the queue without observing social distancing. Often they are met with batons from the police manning the distribution area.

Larry, a Filipino mechanic, regularly visits the food distribution center hoping to get something, but goes home empty-handed frequently. "How can you get your share if most of the time they distribute a few food packs with thousands of people queuing to get rations," he asked. Larry then goes to a nearby block for food distributed by May Siapno. Siapno's group distributes food to Filipinos with the support of the Philippine Embassy. "If not for her and the Philippine Embassy, we would surely go hungry and die, because we have no more money to buy anything. God bless those who are braving the



KUWAIT: This May 3, 2020 file photo shows a Civil Defense worker distributing food to people under lockdown in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

War broke out in 1990-1991 when Saddam Hussein's soldiers invaded Kuwait, while the second Gulf War took place in 2003 when a US-led coalition invaded Iraq and deposed Saddam.) A beautician in Kuwait since 1986, Eliza is now 67 years old and little did she know she would witness yet another historic event - the coronavirus pandemic.

"I was here during two Gulf Wars, but I wasn't afraid the way I fear for my life now," she said. "At that time, at least we knew our enemy was somewhere. We were scared but not like the fear nowadays. I wasn't afraid of a Scud missile, because we knew we would die immediately. COVID-19 is different - I am afraid to get out of my house even to go to the baqala or get any COVID symptoms," she said. "They said senior citizens are most vulnerable to the virus, so I had to take extra precautions. During the first and second months, I stayed at home, but when I ran out of food and medicine, I braved myself to go out and get help from May Siapno," Eliza said.

Comparing the distribution of food packs during the Gulf War, she recalled "they were more organized and everything was open". "We had no lockdown because the battle was a bit far away. We could hear sirens and bombs, but there was no lockdown like this," she said. "I never knew one day I would come out of my house to beg for food - not once but many times. I also begged for medicine for my blood pressure, plus during the lockdown, my fridge and AC broke down. I hope everything gets better now glob-

ally, as we have the same crisis in the Philippines. Four months is long enough - we want to work," said Eliza.

Her employer did not give them any support. "We placed several calls to our employers since the beginning of the crisis, but they have not answered our calls even once. We are receiving no salary since March," she lamented. Eliza shares her home with three other elderly women. One works as a food porter at a ministry hospital, while another is also a salon worker. She said if the employer decides to close the salon or cut staff, she would volunteer herself as she is ready to go home. "Thank God with my 35-year stay in Kuwait, I was able to build my own house. My only daughter is married and I did not remarry when my husband died many years back. I only want to retire and maybe do some gardening," she added.

Arturo, another senior Filipino citizen, shared his lockdown story with Kuwait Times. "We were 11 Filipinos terminated by our company on April 30. Our March salary was given to us, but not the April salary. We don't know if they are going to pay us, but they initially told us they are calculating our indemnities and will pay us after the lockdown," he said. Arturo would like to be repatriated and return to his family in the Philippines. "After getting all my indemnities from my company for which I worked 18 years, I certainly would like to go home and stay with my family," he said.



No social distancing in queues

virus to feed us," Larry said.

There were times he would only sleep with a bowl of rice porridge to fill his empty stomach because he would not get anything. "For three consecutive days, we only ate some rice porridge with salt. We ran out of everything and my flat-mates have nothing to offer as well, so we share whatever we have just to survive the day," he said. "This lockdown is really difficult for us," he said.

Larry is waiting for his company to call him and start working again, although he hasn't heard anything from the management. "I need to work because I have loans from a loan shark to pay," he said. Larry is a bachelor, and is the sole breadwinner for his parents, who are both senior citizens.

Constant fear

Eliza also shared her lockdown story with Kuwait Times and compared her Gulf War experiences against her COVID-19 ordeal. (The Gulf

In My View

Incompetent managers



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

There are some people who when they assume authority, especially if they become heads of departments, they become totally different and start dealing with those around including employees as if they are working for them personally and not the company or the government.

You find them sometimes very arrogant due to a lack of knowledge of how to manage, and they cover this deficiency by mistreating the staff and yelling at them to the point that they are not able to speak to them in any way.

The problem is that most of such people believe they are keen on the job and want it to be done the best way, but the truth is that such a person does not have the faintest idea about management, much less good management.

I am sure there are always rules and standards to be followed that should be implemented and enforced by the manager with a smile without hurting anyone. A manager must have an ear to listen to subordinates' problems and solve them, and take their advice when applicable, because when treated as prisoners or much worse as slaves, there will not be much production and for sure there will be a clash.

This does not mean that there aren't good managers who are adored by their employees and get all the respect they deserve. You find them liked by the public because their departments are run smoothly, and yes, efficiently.

There are places where employees see a large numbers of people every day, which causes them stress because they have to deal with many transactions from various people during long working hours. They may become lethargic at work and frustrate those who need their paperwork processed so they can go on with their businesses.

Such employees who deal directly with the public should be, besides training, given psychological courses to enable them to bear with their daily routine and leave their personal problems at the door, or at least not mix them with their official work. Because if this happens, all what we are going to see are mistakes and inaccuracies.

I once went to a department to get a document - the job normally takes about 15 minutes maximum. When my turn came, the woman took the application and told me to wait. I remained in my seat for 45 minutes as the lady spoke on the phone all that time, and when I finally gestured to her, she was really rude, to put it mildly. At that moment, the woman next to her grabbed my papers, reprimanded her and mentioned how much time she wasted.

I mentioned this incident that took place with me personally to stress the fact that employees should be trained in all aspects of their job, including how to deal with those in front of them.

Final Word: "Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use." —Emily Post

News in brief

Education ministry renews visas

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education will renew visa residency for its employees which have expired between February 24 and May 31. Those whose residencies expired during that period are requested to send an e-mail to pass@moe.edu.kw to set an appointment for an interview which will be announced later. Employees must provide their personal information (name, position, phone number and WhatsApp number), in addition to a copy of the following documents to be attached to the email: A copy of the passport, a copy of the page of the last visa sticker, and a copy of the civil ID.

Workers test positive

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs announced that an employee tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), noting that the woman last worked at the Qurain and Ashbilya head offices for family care homes. The two buildings were fumigated and all staff were instructed to follow home quarantine and other Health Ministry procedures, the ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Social Development Hana Al-Hajri said. Separately, Ardhiya Co-operative Society announced that 11 employees tested positive after 200 staff members were tested for COVID-19. The workers were asymptomatic. The co-op's central market 2, block 2 branch, car repair shop, technicians shop and head office will be closed for fumigation, it said.

Twenty seven flights

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced that 27 flights were set to depart from Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying a total of 4,815 passengers. They included 11 flights to India, eight flights to Egypt, two flights to Nepal, two flights to the UAE, one flight to Qatar, one flight to Lebanon, one to Philippines, and one flight to Turkey.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 46,195 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Tuesday, in addition to 354 deaths. With the exception of 139 cases in intensive care, all infected cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while thousands have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 37,030 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 8,811 people receiving treatment.

Curfew

Kuwait imposed a three-week partial curfew starting May 31 (from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am), as part of a five-phase plan for a gradual return to normal life, brought to a standstill by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The curfew hours were later reduced to start on 7:00 pm and end at 5:00 am, starting from June 21, 2020. The first phase includes a total lockdown on Farwaniya, Khaitan, and Hawally, joining Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh which were put under lockdown earlier. The lockdown ended in Hawally and Khaitan on June 21, 2020. Activities resumed in the first phase included home deliveries of restaurants, telecommunication companies, food retailers, companies' transportation of employees, gas stations, private clinics and car workshops.

Kuwait moved to the second phase starting from June 30, 2020. The second phase saw the curfew shortened to be between 8:00 pm and 5:00 am, while resuming work in the government and private sectors with the workforce being less than 30 percent, in addition to resumption of constructions, banking sector, pickups from restaurants, as well as reopening of commercial complexes, malls, parks, and other places of leisure between 10:00 am and 06:00 pm.

The third phase would see an end of curfew, and health authorities would be assessing situation of areas under lockdown. It would see increase of workforce to less than 50 percent. Visits for social care homes would be allowed, reopening of hotels, resorts and hotel apartments. Taxis will be allowed to operate with only one passenger, and mosques would be allowed to perform Friday prayers.

Phase four would see an increase in workforce, restaurants would be receiving customers but with restrictions, and public transportation resumed but with distancing. All activities would resume in phase five, government and private sector returned to normal, families could gather, weddings and graduation ceremonies, health clubs and gyms to reopen, as well as cinemas and theaters.

Mosques in the so-called 'model residential areas' reopened their doors for worshippers on June 10 amid strict health precautionary measures. Minister of Jus-

tic and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Afasi said that mosques in commercial, markets and heavily-populated areas will remain closed for the time being. Worshipers must wear face masks, keep social distancing between queues and between worshippers must be strictly observed. Worshippers must bring their own mats so they do not get in contact with mosque carpets. Mosques will reopen five minutes before prayer time and close 10 minutes after prayer.

Earlier, Kuwait imposed a total curfew from May 10 to May 30, allowing room for people to walk out for daily exercise between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and to shop at co-ops and supermarkets once every six days during the curfew hours by making an appointment through www.moci.shop. Before that, Kuwait enforced a country-wide partial curfew from 5:00 pm to 6:00 am, which was later extended to start from 4:00 pm until 8:00 am during Ramadan, while allowing restaurants and food stores to make home deliveries from 5:00 pm until 1:00 am. The government also locked down Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh in a bid to contain the spread of the virus and enable health workers to test inhabitants. Earlier, the government decided to close all shopping malls, beauty salons and barber shops as part of its measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The government also allowed supermarkets, restaurants and shops to host a maximum of five people at a time and in case there are lines, the distance must be at least one meter between people. The Ministry of Commerce launched a website (www.moci.shop) to enable people to book appointments to shop at co-operative societies in their areas. The Public Authority for Industry also announced that companies can apply to evacuate their workers from Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula. To do so, they must fill a 'workers evacuation form' available on www.pai.gov.kw, and send the form via email to: Jasiri@moh.gov.kw.

Precautions

Kuwait halted all commercial flights until further notice, and has sent special flights to repatriate Kuwaitis back home from countries affected with the virus' spread. Kuwait took all measures to test Kuwaitis repatriated from infected areas for potential infection. Kuwait had required all expatriates who arrived from travel on March 1 and beyond to visit Kuwait International Fairground where the Ministry of Health has set up a center to test people for possible infection. Meanwhile, the Cabinet announced on April 9 the operation of all airline flights for expats who are wishing to return back to their countries. Authorities also announced a public holiday in the country from March 12 to May 28, with work resuming on May 31, while entities providing vital services will remain open. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs);

first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages. State departments have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facial masks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain accessible to the public.

Kuwait suspended issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions. The Interior Ministry issued an amnesty allowing residency violators to leave the country between April 1 and April 30 without paying any fines or airfare with a chance to return to Kuwait later. The amnesty was issued in view of the circumstances the country is currently going through and as part of the precautionary measures taken to fight the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). During the amnesty period, individuals desiring to procure valid residencies in Kuwait and were willing to pay the fines without being subjected to investigations were allowed to pay the fines and legalize their status if they meet the required conditions.

Hotlines

The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619.

The Education Ministry set the following hotlines to receive inquiries on school closures related to the anti-coronavirus measures:

- 24970967 (24/7 hotline)
- 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone)
- 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone)
- 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone)
- 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)
- 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)
- 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone)
- 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)
- 51588599 (Private Education Department)
- 51592515 (Services Department)
- 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

Medicine delivery

Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MOH) launched a new medicine delivery service for people in Kuwait, which they can use to order medications to be delivered during curfew hours. The medications will be delivered within 72 hours after the order is submitted. To place an order, patients should send a WhatsApp to the numbers for the hospitals and medical centers as listed below. The patient should include their name, Civil ID number, hospital or clinic file number, mobile phone number and the medicine needed to the following numbers:

- Amiri Hospital: 50880699
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital: 50880755

- Farwaniya Hospital: 50880852
- Adan Hospital: 50880908
- Jahra Hospital: 50881066
- Sabah Hospital: 97632660
- Jaber Hospital: 96992079
- Ibn Sina Hospital: 99613948
- Chest Hospital: 99258749
- Razi Hospital: 97633487
- Kuwait Cancer Control Center: 96735242
- Psychiatric Hospital: 97350113
- Physiotherapy Hospital: 99824037
- Maternity Hospital: 98559531
- As'ad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center: 98514508
- Zain Hospital: 97552031
- NBK Hospital: 96931761
- Al-Rashed Allergy Hospital: 94162470
- Infectious Diseases Hospital: 96989164
- Palliative Care Hospital: 94024786
- Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center: 90952469
- KFH Addiction Treatment Center: 94169363

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

Mental health assistance

The Kuwait Psychological Association (KPA) is providing consultation through the phone for people suffering from the psychological impacts of coronavirus. Different doctors are working on the hotline in different timings as follows:

- Dr Rashed Al-Sahl: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.
 - Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.
 - Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.
 - Dr Mohammed Al-Khalidi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.
 - Dr Ahmad Al-Khalidi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.
 - Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.
 - Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.
 - Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.
 - Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.
- For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

Interior Minister pushes move towards digital transactions

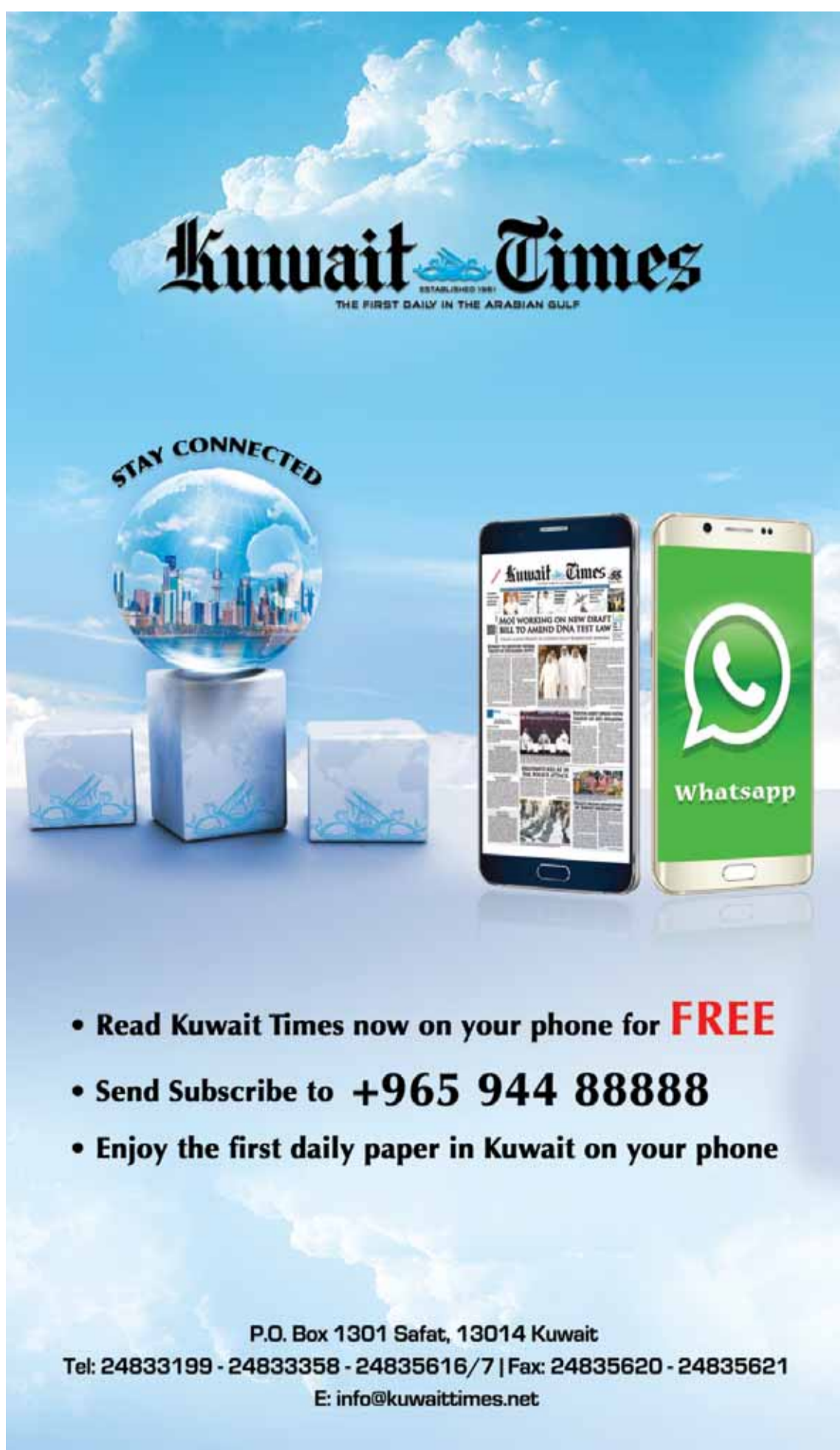
KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh affirmed on Tuesday the importance of continuing the digital transformation process in various ministry sectors in order to develop service offered to the public.

Saleh made those remarks during a meeting with Central Agency for Information Technology (CIAT) Director Haya Al-Wadaani and Deputy Director Ammar Al-Hussaini to discuss ways to develop the security database system and streamline the transition towards digital platforms. Saleh pointed out the necessity to consolidate efforts of state departments

in order to develop the security and services technological system in coordination with CIAT.

In this regard, the minister stressed the necessity of forming a 'working group of specialists' in order to develop IT systems and simplify procedures related to completing transactions, while coming up with a comprehensive vision in order to achieve the desired goals.

The Interior Ministry's Director General of the General Information Systems Department Brigadier General Tariq Al-Dossari, and a number of academics specializing in technology and communications attended the meeting. —KUNA



Kuwait Times
ESTABLISHED 1961
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

STAY CONNECTED

- Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**
- Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**
- Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait
Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621
E: info@kuwaittimes.net



KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society workers distributed face masks and hand sanitizers for employees working at Ministries Complex on Tuesday, following their return to work as Kuwait entered the second phase of easing restrictions imposed due to the spread of COVID-19.

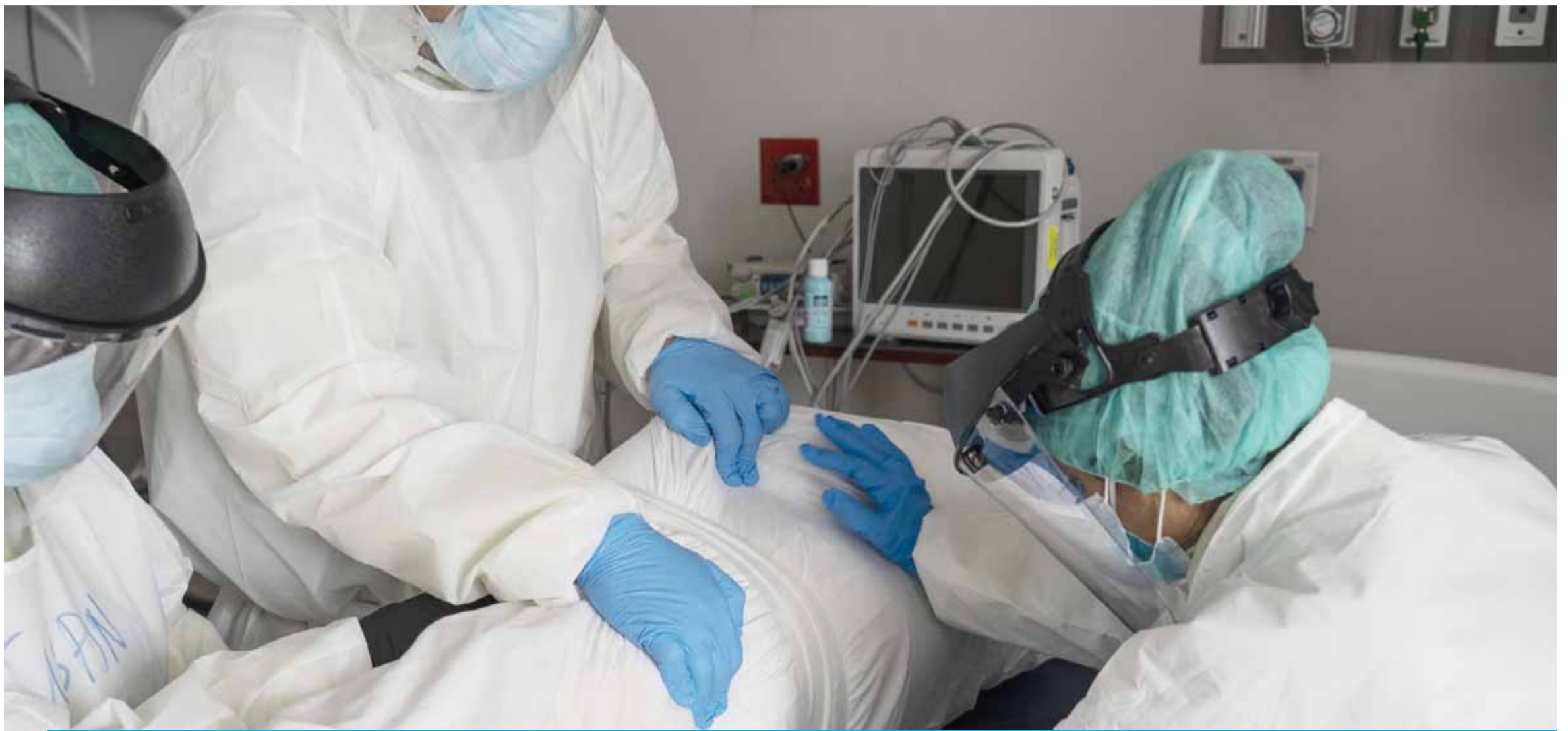


Hong Kong marks handover 'versary

'Chasing the virus': How India's slum beat back COVID

Page 7

Page 7



HOUSTON: Medical staff wearing full PPE wrap a deceased patient with bed sheets and a body bag in the Covid-19 intensive care unit. — AFP

COVID: EU bars visitors from US

Experts warn of potential virus surge

WASHINGTON: The European Union reopened its borders yesterday to visitors from 15 countries - but not the virus-stricken United States, where a top health official warned the country is headed in the "wrong direction" as cases spike in multiple states. US infectious diseases expert Anthony Fauci said that the United States could see 100,000 new COVID-19 cases a day, and several US states imposed 14-day quarantines on travelers from other states. Also in the US, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden announced he will not hold rallies during the outbreak, a move that is in stark contrast with President Donald Trump, who has already held large campaign gatherings.

The 77-year-old former vice president delivered a blistering critique of his November opponent's handling of the virus, saying the Republican president had "failed" the country. "This is the most unusual campaign I think in modern history," Biden said. "I'm going to follow the doc's orders - not just for me but for the country - and that means that I am not going to be holding rallies." In Brussels, the EU finalized the list of countries whose health situation was deemed safe enough to allow residents to enter the bloc. Notably excluded were Russia and Brazil, as well as the United States, whose daily death toll passed 1,000 Tuesday for the first time since June 10.

The countries that made it onto the EU's list are Algeria, Australia, Canada, Japan, Georgia, Montenegro,

Morocco, New Zealand, Rwanda, Serbia, South Korea, Thailand, Tunisia and Uruguay. Travelers from China, where the virus first emerged late last year, will be allowed on the condition that Beijing reciprocates and opens the door to EU residents. The border relaxation, to be reviewed in two weeks and left to member states to implement, is a bid to help rescue the continent's battered tourism sector, which has been choked by a



Biden shuns rallies amid coronavirus

ban on non-essential travel in place since mid-March. But with some 10.4 million known infections worldwide, the pandemic is "not even close to being over," the World Health Organization has warned.

'Very disturbing'

In Washington, Fauci, a member of Trump's coro-

navirus task force, warned Congress that "clearly we are not in total control right now." "I would not be surprised if it goes up to 100,000 a day if this does not turn around." Alarming spikes in Texas and Florida are driving the national total of new cases to over 40,000 per day, and they need to be tamped down quickly to avoid dangerous surges elsewhere in the country, Fauci stressed. Texas alone reported 6,975 new cases of COVID-19 on Tuesday, its highest tally yet.

"I'm very concerned and I'm not satisfied with what's going on, because we're going in the wrong direction," Fauci said. The pandemic has claimed some 127,000 American lives so far and more than 508,000 around the globe, Senator Lamar Alexander, a Republican who chairs the Senate panel, urged Trump to end the politicization of mask-wearing by putting on one himself. "The president has plenty of admirers, they would follow his lead," Alexander said. "It would help end this political debate."

New York, New Jersey and Connecticut on Tuesday doubled to 16 the number of US states whose residents must go into quarantine for 14 days if they visit any of the northeastern states. The Pan American Health Organization warned, meanwhile, that the coronavirus death toll in Latin America and the Caribbean could top 400,000 by October without stricter public health measures. That would represent

a quadrupling of the fatal cases of COVID-19 in the region. Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, meanwhile, scored a victory Tuesday when a judge overturned a ruling that had forced him to wear a mask in public. The judge deemed the rule redundant since face masks are already mandatory in Brasilia.

'Infrastructure revolution'

European aircraft maker Airbus said it is planning to cut around 15,000 jobs worldwide, 11 percent of its total workforce. Britain, home to Europe's deadliest outbreak, has already seen its sharpest quarterly contraction in 40 years, shrinking 2.2 percent from January-March. The worst is yet to come, with economists predicting a double-digit slump in output during the second quarter, tipping Britain into a technical recession. Prime Minister Boris Johnson vowed Tuesday to deliver an "infrastructure revolution" to help the country out of the economic downturn. Germany, which has been praised for its handling of COVID-19, saw its North Rhine-Westphalia state extend a lockdown on a district hit hard by a slaughterhouse outbreak. And in Australia, a spike in cases in parts of Melbourne spurred new stay-at-home measures affecting some 300,000 people. Around the world, sporting events continued to fall off the calendar, including the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations and the remainder of this year's World Rugby Sevens Series. — AFP

Coronavirus-fuelled baby boom worries Indonesians

JAKARTA: With her husband left jobless by the pandemic, the last thing Indonesian mother Juarsih needed was to get pregnant, but now she's expecting a third child - one of many in the country anxiously preparing for a COVID-fuelled baby boom. Indonesian authorities believe there could be 400,000 more births than usual next year as lockdowns keep couples at home and cut access to contraception, prompting fears of an increase in abortions and stunting of children in poorer families. Juarsih, 41, says her birth control ran out as clinics closed or slashed hours and overwhelmed hospitals struggled to keep up with mounting coronavirus infections in the world's fourth most populous country.

The mother of two teenagers is now too scared of the deadly respiratory disease to risk going out for a pregnancy checkup in her hometown Bandung, on Java island. "At first I was shocked when I found out that I was pregnant," she said. "I started feeling happy later although there's still some sadness... I should be grateful but this is happening at a difficult time." Contraception use has "dropped drastically" since the pandemic took hold across the sprawling archipelago in early March, Hasto Wardoyo, head of Indonesia's national population and family planning board, told AFP. Health authorities are worried increasing numbers of expectant parents will turn to abortions and push up maternal mortality rates. "We're also worried about stunting - not all families can afford proper nutrition," he said.

'Dads control yourself'

With access to hospitals and contraceptives

difficult, health authorities have been forced to get creative. One campaign saw health workers in government vehicles rolling through communities to announce that now wasn't the time to have a baby. "You can have sex," one message blared out as workers trundled through a village. "You can get married. But don't get pregnant." "Dads, please control yourself... You can have sex as long as you use contraception."

Birth control has been a key plank of a family planning push launched by Indonesia's late dictator Suharto half a century ago. The program was later applauded for population control measures that saw in a big drop in the then developing nation's fertility rates. This week authorities launched a one-day blitz that aimed to give away contraceptives to one million citizens. Condoms are not popular in Indonesia, where some 98 percent of contraceptive users are women, mainly of hormone injections and birth-control pills. The family planning agency also enlisted the help of celebrities with huge social media followings to get the word out to the country's nearly 270 million people.

'Corona baby'

At a health clinic in the capital Jakarta Monday, mother-of-two Rahma took advantage of the handouts, admitting that there was more romance in her household since the virus struck. "My husband has spent a lot more time at home," she laughed. "But since I'm using this programme I'm not worried about having more babies." Still, infection fears are keeping many at home like Ratna Dewi Nur Amalia, who has decided to rely on charting her menstrual cycle in the hopes of avoiding pregnancy.

"I wanted to go to the gynaecologist for my birth control, but then the pandemic happened," said the 39-year-old Amalia. "I'm too scared to go anywhere near a hospital." Nearly 3,000 people have died of COVID-19 in Indonesia, according to an official tally, but independent researchers say the real toll could be several



JAKARTA: Doctor Priyo Yudhosari speaks about the IUD contraceptive device works at a clinic in Jakarta. — AFP

times higher. Budget cuts and a decentralized political structure across the huge country already made it tough to educate the public about family planning.

"Now health workers are too busy focusing on handling corona patients so birth-control services have been pushed aside," said Kusmana, the head of West Java's family planning agency, who goes by one name. But the pandemic's work-from-home orders were an unexpected blessing for Arie Novarina and her husband after the busy couple's nearly two years of fruitless efforts to conceive. The 38-year-old is now pregnant with her first child. "Maybe it was because we were healthier and not exhausted anymore, and we had lots of quality time together at home," said Novarina, a state-owned firm employee. "My husband and I joke that this is a corona baby." — AFP

After 65,000 excess deaths, UK figures return to normal

LONDON: Britain recorded 65,000 more deaths than usual in the past three months as the coronavirus ravaged the country but numbers are now returning to normal, new data showed Tuesday. In the week to June 19, so-called excess deaths in England and Wales fell below the five-year average for the first time since mid-March, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said.

There were 0.7 percent fewer deaths overall than would be expected for that period. Excess deaths give a broader picture of the pandemic than the health ministry figures published every day, which only include confirmed cases of coronavirus and which currently put the toll at 43,730. The ONS data includes people who may have had coronavirus but where it was not picked up, or who died as a result of measures introduced to tackle the disease, such as the cancellation of routine hospital operations.

Separate ONS figures show the number of deaths where coronavirus was on the death certificate but not necessarily confirmed by a test - a figure of almost 54,000 by June 19. By any measure, Britain has suffered the deadliest coronavirus outbreak in Europe. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is currently easing a nationwide lockdown imposed at the end of March, as Britain faces a deep recession. But on Monday he had to close schools and shops in the city of Leicester because of a spike in cases there.

The apparent return of excess deaths to the normal level has been welcomed but experts warned that coronavirus had not gone away. David Spiegelhalter, chairman of the Winton Centre for Risk and Evidence Communication at the University of Cambridge, noted that 783 deaths involving COVID-19 were still registered in the week to June 19. "The lack of excess deaths is explained by non-COVID deaths being eight percent below the five-year average," he said. — AFP

International

Australia to lock down 300,000 in Melbourne after COVID spike

Victoria state ramps up testing blitz on hotspot areas

MELBOURNE: Authorities will lock down more than 300,000 people in suburbs north of Melbourne for a month from today to contain the risk of infection after two weeks of double-digit rises in new coronavirus cases in Australia's second most populous state. Australia has fared better than many countries in the pandemic, with around 7,920 cases, 104 deaths and fewer than 400 active cases, but the recent jump has stoked fears of a second wave of COVID-19, echoing concerns expressed in other countries. Globally, coronavirus cases exceeded 10 million on Sunday, a major milestone in the spread of a disease that has killed more than half a million people in seven months.

From midnight, more than 30 suburbs in Australia's second-biggest city will return to stage three restrictions, the third-strictest level in curbs to control the pandemic. That means residents will be confined to home except for grocery shopping, health appointments, work or caregiving, and exercise. The restrictions will be accompanied by a testing blitz that authorities hope will extend to half the population of the area affected, and for which borders will be patrolled, authorities said. The measures come as curbs ease across the rest of the state of Victoria, with restaurants, gyms and cinemas reopening in recent weeks.

Victoria recorded 73 fresh cases on Tuesday from 20,682 tests, following an increase of 75 cases on Monday. State premier Daniel Andrews warned yesterday that the return of broader restrictions across city remained a possibility. "If we all stick together these next four weeks, we can regain control of that

community transmission ... across metropolitan Melbourne," Andrews said at a briefing. "Ultimately if I didn't shut down those postcodes I'd be shutting down all postcodes. We want to avoid that." Victoria's spike in cases has been linked to staff members at hotels housing returned travellers for which quarantine protocols were not strictly followed. Victorian state authorities have announced an investigation into the matter.

"We've had an increase in cases but they're almost all in a very defined geographic area," said acting



Recent jump stokes fears of a second COVID wave

chief medical officer Paul Kelly. "Most of the cases are continuing to be based on family clusters ... (which) have this single link back to quarantine failure in a couple of hotels in central Melbourne. So that leads me to think this is not a widespread issue at the moment." Some other Australian states and territories are preparing to open borders, but applying limits and quarantine measures to citizens of Victoria as the school holiday season gets under way.



MELBOURNE: People wait in chairs and cars during testing for the COVID-19 coronavirus at a drive and walk through pop-up venue in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

South Australia, the country's fifth most populous state, has had just three new cases in the past month. But citing the spike in coronavirus infections, on Tuesday it cancelled its scheduled reopening to other parts of the nation. New South Wales (NSW), Australia's most populous state, has stopped short of closing its borders to all Victorians, but those holidaying from hotspot areas - not permitted under

NSW rules - can be handed a fine of A\$11,000 (\$7,596) or jailed if they are detected, state authorities said. State cases rose by 14 overnight, all returned travellers in quarantine. The delays reopening internal borders cast doubts over a federal plan to set up "travel bubble" with neighboring New Zealand that would allow movement between the two countries. — Reuters

4 dead as protests erupt over killing of Ethiopia singer

ADDIS ABABA: At least four people were killed as protests spread across several Ethiopian cities on Tuesday after a prominent singer from the country's largest ethnic group was shot dead, according to medical sources and a relative. The unrest, which prompted the government to switch off the internet in the capital, highlighted ethnic tensions that threaten to derail Ethiopia's fraught democratic transition, overseen by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, last year's Nobel Peace Prize laureate. The singer Hachalu Hundessa was shot on Monday night in Addis Ababa, the state-affiliated FANA Broadcasting Corporate reported.

With his political lyrics, he was seen as a voice of the Oromo people during years of anti-government protests that swept Abiy to power in 2018. On Tuesday morning, large crowds of protesters poured into the capital Addis Ababa from the surrounding Oromia region, snarling roads with stones and blocking traffic. Protests were reported in several towns in Oromia, such as central Adama where the injured said they had been shot by security forces, said Desalegn Fekadu, a surgeon at the Adama Hospital. "There are a lot of casualties, most of them are bullet injuries. Three patients died and there are still critical patients," he told AFP. "There are also more than 10 patients with burn injuries. They said their houses were set on fire."

A resident of Western Hararge, in Oromia told AFP on condition of anonymity that his cousin had been killed by young Oromo nationalists known as Querroo, because he was from the Amhara ethnic group. "They killed him because of the death of the artist. We grew



ST PAUL: Mawardi Moussa speaks to a crowd gathered to protest the death of musician and activist Hachalu Hundessa outside the Governor's Mansion in St Paul, Minnesota. — AFP

up together, but they killed him today with knives ... he doesn't know anything about politics," he said. Federal police commissioner Endeshaw Tassew said there had been "deaths in several areas of Oromia and Addis Ababa." "Those who were trying to take advantage of Hachalu's death to create havoc have thrown grenades in three different places in Addis Ababa. Several were injured while on the side of the perpetrators, several were injured and several others were killed."

Suspects detained

The motive for the singer's killing was not immediately clear but police have detained "some suspects," Addis Ababa police commissioner Getu Argaw told FANA. Hachalu's songs spoke to concerns among the Oromo that they had been economically and politically marginalized. "The Oromos did whatever we could, we

have done our best, we can do no more than this. We served the small and the big people just so we can live together but we can't tolerate it anymore," went the lyrics of one song.

Oromia regional deputy president Shimelis Abdisa said regional flags would be flown at half-mast for five days to honour the singer. The Oromo Media Network in the afternoon reported the arrest of prominent Oromo opposition politician Jawar Mohammed, who has criticized some of Abiy's policies. Rumors of a plan to arrest him in October last year led to anti-Abiy protests which devolved into clashes fuelled by ethnicity and religion, leaving 78 dead. The head of Mohammed's Oromo Federalist Congress, Merera Gudina, told AFP he and some other party members were being "detained. Whether it is temporary or not I am not sure. Things are not clear." — AFP

had a friend lend me a meadow," she said. "The situation has got a bit out of hand," she laughed. She now owns some 20 donkeys - 15 of which are pregnant - as well as about 10 cows, five calves and five heifers.

'Not an easy choice'

Jacopo Fontaneto, of Italy's main agricultural union Coldiretti, said after years of mountain life being out of favor among Italians, "we have seen a good return of young people in the last 10 to 20 years". There has been a 12 percent rise in the number of people under 35 at the helm of agricultural businesses in the past five years, Coldiretti said in a study of data from last year. It said women make up almost a third of the total of new entries to farming. The sector was seen as "ripe for innovation" and working the land "is no longer considered the last resort of the uneducated" but something parents would be proud of. Nonetheless, Fontaneto admits: "It's not an easy choice." Instead of computer screens or checkout tills, those on remote pastures stare at "the most beautiful countryside you can dream of", but it is also "a life of sacrifice", with little opportunity for wild nights on the town, he said. — AFP

Young Italians pick cows over clubbing in Italy

SCHIGNANO: While her friends sleep off hangovers, 23-year-old Vanessa Peduzzi is doing a dawn check on her livestock, one of a growing number of Italian youths ditching the fast lane for a farmer's life. "It's a tiring, demanding job, but I like it," she told AFP as she walked through the wood-lined pastures high above Lake Como in northern Italy to show off the building she is slowly restoring and transforming into a farmhouse. "I chose this life. This is where I want to be, surrounded by nature and animals," she said.

Peduzzi is a trained chef, but has downed her ladles to become a donkey and cow breeder instead in Alpe Bedolo, some 813 meters above sea level, near the border with Switzerland. "I started last year with two little donkeys. I didn't have any land or a stable, so I



Photo shows 23-year-old breeder Vanessa Peduzzi with her cows at her farm called 'Fioco di Neve' (Snowflake) in Schignano, Alpe Bedolo. — AFP

An Ivory Coast city on the front line, and afraid

FERKESSEDOUGOU: Residents of Ferkessedougou, a commercial hub in northern Ivory Coast, are shaken by this month's brazen jihadist attack just 100 kilometers away - the first assault by Islamist extremists in the country in more than four years. "The people are afraid," Kiali Ouattara, the local traditional chief, said of the city's 160,000 inhabitants. Dozens of gunmen had targeted a frontier post at Kafolo, on the border with Burkina Faso, in the June 11 pre-dawn attack which killed 13 soldiers. Ferkessedougou, commonly known as Ferke, sits at a major crossroad with direct routes to border crossings into Mali and Burkina Faso.

Its residents now worry that a jihadist revolt which began in Mali in 2012 will cross into Ivory Coast, which has only recently returned to stability after a decade-long period of turbulence. A major exporter of cocoa and coffee, the country has also returned to its position as the biggest economy in West Africa. The attack in Kafolo was the first by Islamist extremists since March 2016, when a raid on hotel terraces in the southeastern beach resort of Grand-Bassam left 19 people dead. "What happened (in Kafolo), is what has happened in Mali and Burkina Faso," Ouattara said of the country's troubled neighbors to the north where jihadist violence has claimed thousands of lives and forced more than a million people from their homes.

"I see gendarmerie patrols criss-crossing the town, but fear remains," he said. Military operations continue in the Kafolo region and it is out of bounds for journalists. Attributed to the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), an organization linked to Al-Qaeda, this attack was "much more worrying", according to a security source, because it was carried out by fighters who had based themselves in the area. Ferkessedougou's mayor Kaweli Ouattara said he was worried for his city. "What happened in Kafolo ... could happen here. Mali and Burkina Faso are not far away. We are on the front line," he said.

Long-term strategy

The latest attack took place in the same zone where Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso last month launched a ground-breaking joint operation to flush out jihadists. "Operation Comoe", named after a river that flows through the two countries, led to the death of eight suspected jihadists, the capture of 38 others and the destruction of a "terrorist base" at Alidougou in Burkina Faso, the Ivory Coast army said on May 24. The operation was launched after jihadists were spotted last year to the north of Ivory Coast's Comoe national park. The attack in Kafolo was carried out by fighters from Burkina Faso and even Mali, who had holed up in Ivory Coast before they were "disturbed", according to several sources.

About 60 people in total, including the "commando leader", who was from Burkina Faso, were arrested before and after the attack, including those arrested during Operation Comoe, according to authorities. "There is probably a long-term strategy for installing themselves. They blend in with the population," a security source said, drawing parallels with the emergence of jihadism in Burkina Faso six years ago. "We played that down in the beginning, but look what has happened," the source said. In Burkina Faso, jihadists offer young people up to 25,000 CFA francs a month (\$45, 40 euros) - a large sum in the region - to gather intelligence for them. — AFP

Facebook boots far-right network and boosts news

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook disrupted a "violent US-based anti-government network" and vowed to give original news priority as it remained under fire for what it takes down and lets stay. The moves come as Facebook faces an advertiser boycott that has morphed into a global digital activist campaign aimed at curbing hateful and toxic content on the social media platform. The disrupted network was loosely affiliated with the "Boogaloo" movement, whose followers have appeared at recent protests while heavily armed, the Silicon Valley-based company said Tuesday. The group is distinct from the broader "Boogaloo" movement in that it actively seeks to commit violence, Facebook said in a blog post. "This is the latest step in our commitment to ban people who proclaim a violent mission from using our platform," Facebook said.

The social network reported that it removed 220 Facebook accounts and another 95 Instagram accounts, along with 28 pages and 106 groups "that currently comprise the network." Facebook added that it also took down more than 400 other groups and more than 100 other pages where similar content was posted. "Officials have identified violent adherents to the movement as those responsible for several attacks over the past few months," Facebook said. The Boogaloo movement is not organized, and the ideology shares followers with some neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups, as well as with libertarians and anarchists. Facebook said it first spotted "initial elements" of the movement in 2012 but has only been closely following it since 2019. "We expect to see adversarial behavior from this network including people trying to return to using our platform and adopting new terminology," Facebook said. Few had heard of the Boogaloo movement before this year. But recently, the Justice Department charged one of its followers, California Air Force Sergeant Steven Carrillo, with the drive-by killing of an Oakland police officer during May 29 Black Lives Matter protests. — AFP

International

Hong Kong marks handover anniversary with first arrest under new security law

China to foreign critics: Hong Kong law 'none of your business'

HONG KONG: Hong Kong police made the first arrest under Beijing's new national security law as the city greeted the anniversary of its handover to China with protests banned and its cherished freedoms looking increasingly fragile. The commemorations came a day after China imposed a sweeping security law on the city, a historic move decried by many Western governments as an unprecedented assault on the finance hub's liberties and autonomy. Police said a man with a Hong Kong independence flag was the first to be arrested under the new law, confirming that certain political views and symbols had become illegal overnight. Opprobrium poured in from critics and western governments - led by the United States - over fears the law will usher in a new era of mainland-style political repression.



Canada updates travel advisory for citizens

Under a deal ahead of the 1997 handover from Britain, authoritarian China guaranteed Hong Kong civil liberties as well as judicial and legislative autonomy until 2047 in a deal known as "One Country, Two Systems". "(China) promised 50 years of freedom to the Hong Kong people, and gave them only 23," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said as he promised unspecified countermeasures. But Beijing said foreign countries should keep quiet about the law, while Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam hailed the legislation as the "most important development" since the city's return to Beijing's rule.

Activists called on people to defy a ban on protests and march on Hong Kong island yesterday afternoon. But it was unclear how many would be willing to face the risks posed by the new law and increasingly aggressive police tactics towards even peaceful rallies in recent months. Gatherings of more than 50 people are banned under anti-coronavirus laws even though local transmissions have ended. Riot police quickly used pepper spray and made arrests when a few hundred people

gathered in the district of Causeway Bay yesterday afternoon.

Floats and helicopters

During a morning anniversary ceremony, helicopters flew across Victoria Harbour carrying a large Chinese flag and a smaller Hong Kong pennant, while a barge appeared with a banner reading "Welcome the Enacting of the National Security Law" in giant Chinese characters. Small groups of Beijing supporters waved Chinese flags in several local neighborhoods, untroubled by police. The July 1 anniversary has long been a polarizing day in the city. Beijing loyalists celebrate Hong Kong's return to the Chinese motherland after a century and a half of what they consider humiliating colonial rule by Britain. Democracy advocates have used the occasion to hold large rallies as popular anger towards Beijing swells - although this year's event was banned for the first time in 17 years. During huge pro-democracy demonstrations last year, the city's legislature was besieged and trashed by protesters.

Jurisdiction, life sentences

The "One Country, Two Systems" formula initially helped cement the Hong Kong's status as a world-class business hub, bolstered by an independent judiciary and political freedoms unseen on the mainland. But critics have long accused Beijing of chipping away at that status and describe the new security law as the most brazen move yet.

It was passed in just six weeks, skipping Hong Kong's fractious legislature, and the precise wording was kept secret until it came into effect late Tuesday. It outlaws subversion, secession, terrorism and colluding with foreign forces to undermine national security, with sentences of up to life in prison. It also topples the legal firewall that has existed between the city's judiciary and the mainland's party-controlled courts. China will have jurisdiction over "serious" cases and its security agencies will also be able to operate publicly in the city for the first time. Another provision also claims universal jurisdiction for national security crimes committed beyond Hong Kong or China.

More than two dozen countries - including Britain, France, Germany and Japan - urged Beijing to reconsider the law, saying in a statement to the UN Human



HONG KONG: A woman reacts after she was hit with pepper spray deployed by police as they cleared a street with protesters rallying against a new national security law in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

Rights Council that it undermines the city's freedoms. Canada, meanwhile, updated a travel advisory yesterday for citizens in Hong Kong warning that they faced an increased risk of arbitrary detention or even extradition to China. In Taiwan, authorities there opened a new office to deal with Hong Kongers seeking refuge.

China to foreign critics

Meanwhile, China yesterday slammed international criticism over a controversial new national security law for Hong Kong, saying other countries should keep quiet. Western governments and critics have warned the new law will curb the city's freedoms and undermine the "One Country, Two Systems" policy meant to protect freedoms unseen on the mainland. But Beijing officials rebuffed the criticism of the law at a press conference. "What's this got to do with you?" said Zhang Xiaoming of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office of the State Council. "It's none of your business".

Officials insisted there had been wide consultation with members of Hong Kong society and hit back at criticism it was undermining Hong Kong's autonomy. "If

what we want is one country, one system, it would have been simple," Zhang said. "We are completely able to impose the criminal law, the criminal procedure and the national security law and other national laws on Hong Kong. "Why would we need to put so much effort into formulating a national security law tailor-made for Hong Kong?" Zhang also insisted that the law - which he said can not be applied retrospectively - was only to target "a handful of criminals" and "not the entire opposition camp".

"The purpose of enacting Hong Kong's National Security Law is definitely not to target Hong Kong's opposition camp, pro-democracy camp, as the enemy," he said. Instead, the One Country, Two Systems policy showed the government's "political tolerance", he said. His comments come a day after Hong Kong pro-democracy party Demosisto announced it was disbanding, following the passing of the national security law. Zhang also lashed out at suggestions of punishment from other nations. "As for... some countries now saying that they will impose severe sanctions on some Chinese officials, I think this is the logic of bandits." — AFP



KARACHI: A paramilitary soldier gestures while standing guard outside the Pakistan Stock Exchange building a day after a gunman attack in Karachi. — AFP

Pakistan blames India for stock exchange attack

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday blamed India for a deadly attack on the stock exchange in Karachi, saying there was "no doubt" who was responsible. "Our security forces fought and thwarted a huge tragedy which was planned by our neighboring country India," Khan told parliament, without offering any evidence. The home-grown Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for Monday's attack, in which three security guards and a policeman were killed - as well as the four assailants.

The BLA said it was targeting "Pakistan's economy", as well as "Chinese economic interests" in Balochistan. "This plan, we have no doubt, was perpetrated by India," Khan told parliament. Pakistan has long

blamed India for funding the Balochistan separatist movement and other groups. India, meanwhile, accuses Pakistan of supporting militants in the contested Kashmir region and elsewhere. India did not directly respond to Khan's comments, which came after the Pakistan foreign ministry Monday accused India of "complicity in acts of terrorism against Pakistan".

New Delhi said it rejected those "absurd comments". "Pakistan cannot shift the blame on India for its domestic problems," an Indian foreign ministry spokesman said. Khan has come under increasing pressure over his handling of the coronavirus pandemic and a weak economy. The former cricket star also drew criticism last week after he said former Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden had been "martyred". Opponents have long accused Khan of being overly sympathetic to the militants, with rivals once dubbing him "Taliban Khan". Pakistan and India have been at loggerheads since independence from Britain in 1947, primarily over the Muslim-majority Kashmir region that is claimed by both countries. — AFP

As Japan re-opens, a hospital grapples with virus aftermath

YOKOHAMA: Doctors in white coats and blue scrubs sat around a conference room table in June, looking up at a colorful slide projected on the wall. "How is anyone supposed to memorize this?" a doctor sitting in the back asked as Yoshihiro Masui, the director of Yokohama City Seibu Hospital's critical care center, checked the slides. The presentation, full of color-coded flow charts, showed dozens of new safety protocols for everything from routine surgeries to dialysis. Weeks earlier, Seibu had been the site of one of the worst hospital coronavirus outbreaks in Japan, with some 80 people testing positive for COVID-19, including 43 staff members. By the time the hospital contained the spread, 13 elderly patients had died. For most of May, the 500-bed hospital, in a port city 30km south of Tokyo, had sat empty. After the outbreak, it halted nearly all outpatient services. Doctors and nurses were required to spend two weeks at home, monitoring for symptoms before they could return to work. Now, as the country emerges from a state of emergency, hospitals like Seibu face the prospect of operating in the shadow of a virus with no treatment or cure. "We can never have an outbreak again like the one we experienced," said Masui, an emergency doctor who has been charged with the hospital's coronavirus response. "What we learned is that this can truly happen anywhere." — NEW NORMAL

Doctors and nurses at Seibu were among the first to mobilize for the pandemic in Japan, accepting sick passengers from the Diamond Princess cruise ship in February. After treating dozens of coronavirus patients, a man with no fever and no other obvious symptoms was carried into the emergency room in early April. The man was kept in a room with another patient before he was discharged to another facility. By the time the staff learned in late April the man had the virus, it had already spread to other wings of the hospital.

Masui says he felt responsible for the outbreak. "I pushed the hospital to take in suspected coronavirus patients, knowing other hospitals were turning them away," he said during a rare break between his rounds. "I was the one convincing the head of the hospital to take these patients in." More than 18,000 people have tested positive for the virus in Japan. The number of new coronavirus cases have fallen since mid-April and with 971 deaths, the country has so far managed to dodge the kind of catastrophic death toll seen elsewhere. — Reuters

'Dirty' depiction of Kim wife outraged North Korea

MOSCOW: North Korea's fury over anti-Pyongyang leaflets launched from the South is driven by "dirty, insulting" depictions of leader Kim Jong Un's spouse, Russia's top envoy in the reclusive country has said. In recent weeks Pyongyang has issued a series of vitriolic condemnations over anti-North leaflets which defectors based in the South send across the militarized border - usually attached to balloons or floated in bottles.

The campaigns have long been a point of contention between the two Koreas, but this time, Pyongyang upped the pressure, blowing up a liaison office and threatening military measures. One of the most recent launches - carried out on May 31 - had included provocative imagery of the North's First Lady Ri Sol Ju, sparking "serious outrage" in

Pyongyang, according to Russian ambassador to North Korea Alexander Matsegora. Russia is a key ally of the isolated North and Matsegora is one of the longest serving ambassadors in Pyongyang. "The leaflets bore a special kind of dirty, insulting propaganda, aimed at the leader's spouse," Matsegora told Russia's TASS news agency on Monday. They were photoshopped "in such a low-grade way", he added, and served as "the last straw" for the North.

Inter-Korean relations have been in deep freeze following the collapse of a summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump early last year over what the nuclear-armed North would be willing to give up in exchange for a loosening of sanctions. Pyongyang turned its anger against Seoul

rather than Washington, despite three summits between the North's leader and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who brokered the first Trump-Kim meeting in Singapore. The impoverished country is subject to multiple UN Security Council sanctions over its banned weapons programs. The Russian diplomat also dismissed speculation that Kim's younger sister was being trained as the next leader of North Korea.

Since early June, Kim Yo Jong - a key adviser to her brother - has been the face of Pyongyang's highly aggressive stance towards the South over the leaflets. North Korea blew up the liaison office days after she warned it would soon be seen "completely collapsed", and later she called Moon "disgusting" and apparently "insane". — AFP



MUMBAI: Medical staff wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) gear conduct a door-to-door medical screening inside Dharavi slums to fight against the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. — AFP

'Chasing the virus': How India's slum beat back COVID

MUMBAI: When coronavirus claimed its first victim in India's largest slum in April, many feared the disease would turn its narrow, congested streets into a graveyard, with social distancing or contact tracing all but impossible. But three months on, Mumbai's Dharavi offers a rare glimmer of hope with new infections shrinking, thanks to an aggressive strategy that focused on "chasing the virus, instead of waiting for disaster", according to city official Kiran Dighavkar.

The sprawling slum has long been a byword for the financial capital's bitter income disparities - with Dharavi's estimated one million people scraping a living as factory workers or maids and chauffeurs to Mumbai's well-heeled residents. With a dozen people typically sleeping in a single room, and hundreds using the same public toilet, authorities realised early that standard practices would be of little use. "Social distancing was never a possibility, home isolation was never an option, and contact tracing was a huge problem with so many people using the same toilet," Dighavkar told AFP.

An initial plan to conduct door-to-door screenings was abandoned after Mumbai's searing heat and humidity left medical workers feeling suffocated under layers of protective equipment as they combed the area's cramped alleys for cases. But, with infections rising fast and fewer than 50,000 people checked for symptoms, officials needed to move quickly and get creative. What they came up with was coined "Mission Dharavi". Each day, medical workers set up a "fever camp" in a different part of the slum, so residents could be screened for symptoms and tested for coronavirus if needed. Schools, wedding halls and sports complexes were repurposed as quarantine facilities that offered free meals, vitamins and "laughter yoga" sessions. Strict containment measures were deployed in virus hotspots that were home to 125,000 people, including the use of drones to monitor their movements and alert police, while a huge army of volunteers swung into action, distributing rations so they didn't go hungry. Bollywood stars and business tycoons

paid for medical equipment as construction workers built a 200-bed field hospital at breakneck speed in a park inside Dharavi. By late June, more than half the slum's population had been screened for symptoms and around 12,000 tested for coronavirus. So far Dharavi has reported just 82 deaths - a fraction of Mumbai's more than 4,500 fatalities.

'Brink of victory'

"We are on the brink of victory, I feel very proud," said Abhay Taware, a doctor who saw around 100 patients daily in his tiny clinic at the height of the crisis. The 44-year-old father-of-two also had to fight his own battle against coronavirus when he contracted the disease in April, but told AFP he had "no doubts" about returning to work. "I thought I could show my patients that a positive diagnosis does not mean the end," he said. Although doctors like Taware worked to reassure worried residents, the stigma persists. After an isolating 25-day spell in hospital and a fortnight in quarantine, Sushil - not his real name - said he now feared discrimination if people found out about his diagnosis. The 24-year-old also struck a note of caution, warning of a potential resurgence in infections. "People need to take as many precautions as possible. The numbers might have come down but they can swiftly rise again", he told AFP.

'No escape next time'

With Mumbai and Delhi struggling to accommodate coronavirus patients as India's cases surge past half a million officials are also wary of celebrating too soon. "It's a war. Everything is dynamic," said Dighavkar. "Right now, we feel like we are on top of the situation," he said. "The challenge will be when factories reopen," he added, referring to the billion-dollar leather and recycling industries run out of Dharavi's cramped tenements. And some in the slum fear their community might not be as lucky next time. On a blazing morning, as car salesman Vinod Kamble lined up to have his temperature taken, he recalled his terror when the virus landed in Mumbai. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 2020



BLAGNAC, France: An Airbus A320 plane at the Airbus company headquarters in Blagnac, southern France. European aircraft maker Airbus said on Tuesday that it is planning to cut around 15,000 jobs worldwide, 11 percent of its total workforce, in response to the coronavirus crisis. —AFP

Airbus to cut 15,000 jobs amid 'gravest crisis'

Major European airlines plan massive layoffs

PARIS: European aircraft maker Airbus said on Tuesday it is planning to cut around 15,000 jobs worldwide, 11 percent of its total workforce, in response to the "gravest crisis" the industry has ever seen caused by the coronavirus.

The cuts are to be implemented by the summer of 2021, Airbus said in a statement, and follow a drop of nearly 40 percent of the commercial aviation business in recent months. "With air traffic not expected to recover to pre-COVID levels before 2023 and potentially as late as 2025, Airbus now needs to take additional measures to reflect the post COVID-19 industry outlook," it said in a statement.

The company said 5,000 positions would be cut France, 5,100 in Germany, 900 in Spain, 1,700 positions in Britain and 1,300 positions at Airbus' other worldwide sites. Airbus warned that "compulsory actions cannot be ruled out at this stage", in an indication that some employees could be made redundant. It said the plan would now be discussed with unions and Airbus would seek to use different measures to bring about the reductions, including voluntary departures, early retirement, and long-term partial unemployment schemes.

'Brutal, lasting shock'

In a sign of the controversy that may be ahead, the French economy ministry said the number of job cuts was "excessive" and urged Airbus to do everything to

limit the number of forced departures. "The aviation sector is facing a massive, brutal and lasting shock. It is highly likely that the recovery will be gradual," said the ministry.

But it added: "However, the figure of job cuts announced by Airbus is excessive." The French government on earlier this month pledged 15 billion euros (\$17 billion) for the country's aviation industry in a



Aviation sector facing brutal, lasting shock

bid to preserve jobs. The sector has been hammered by the travel restrictions imposed to contain the outbreak, with firms worldwide still uncertain when they will be able to get grounded planes back into the air.

Its main rival Boeing said in April it plans to reduce its workforce by 10 percent through voluntary and involuntary layoffs to face the new situation.

"Airbus is facing the gravest crisis this industry has ever experienced," said Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury. The company had already in April said it was cutting production of its planes by around a third. "These measures allowed us to weather the early stages of the economic shock," Faury added in a video message. But "given the scale of the crisis and the share of our business that has disappeared for the foreseeable future, there is still a need for adaptation."

"It is our duty to face the reality," he said, while expressing confidence that Airbus would "recover".

Air France to cut jobs

Airbus' announcement came as union sources told AFP that French flag carrier Air France would cut 7,500 jobs by the end of 2022 as part of a cost-cutting drive that has gained new urgency in the wake of the pandemic. Most of the job cuts will come from non-replacement of retiring workers or voluntary departures, though layoffs have not been excluded, the union sources said ahead of a works council meeting with management on Friday.

The group joins a long list of airlines that have announced job cuts in recent weeks. Air France has been offered seven billion euros in emergency loans from the French state or backed by it. Lufthansa is to slash 22,000 jobs, British Airways 12,000, Delta Air Lines 10,000 and Qantas 6,000. —AFP

Japan business confidence worst since 2009 crisis

TOKYO: Confidence among major Japanese manufacturers has plunged to its worst level since the global financial crisis, a key survey showed yesterday, as the coronavirus dries up global demand.

The Bank of Japan's June Tankan business survey—a quarterly poll of about 10,000 companies—showed a reading of minus 34 among big manufacturers, the lowest since June 2009 when worldwide financial shocks hammered the planet's third-largest economy. It was the biggest quarterly drop since early that year, and even worse than analysts had feared after the index turned negative in March.

"These figures show that companies believe it will take a long time for the economy to recover," Yoshiaki Shimamine, chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute, said. The coronavirus has hit

Japan less hard than many advanced nations, with fewer than 1,000 deaths and about 19,000 cases.

Nevertheless, the contagion has taken a bitter economic toll, knocking the country into its first recession since 2015. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has passed two record stimulus packages worth nearly \$2 trillion to cushion the impact, including handing out 100,000 yen (\$925) to every man, woman and child in Japan. Unemployment is rising, albeit at a rate that would make most countries jealous. Data released on Tuesday showed the jobless level rose from 2.6 percent to 2.9 percent.

The low unemployment figure reflects a shrinking workforce given Japan's rapidly ageing population, 28 percent of which is 65 or over. Analysts said millions of people—especially women—had simply left the workforce during the pandemic to care for families.

Half the revenue

Millions are also on furlough, meaning that the unemployment data may be considerably less rosy than it looks, said Shimamine. "One estimate says the jobless rate is actually 11 percent if you incorporate those on furlough," he said.



TOKYO: A woman wearing a face mask rides her bike in front of an electric quotation board showing numbers of the Nikkei 225 index in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

Japan was struggling with the effects of natural disasters and a hike in consumption tax even before the pandemic crippled the global economy. Once it hit, there were no mandatory lockdowns in the country, the government instead asking people to stay at home—requests that were largely heeded. —AFP

Officials cheer signs of US rebound

WASHINGTON: The world's largest economy is showing signs it is rebounding faster than expected from the damage inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic, but US officials on Tuesday signaled more aid may be needed to solidify the comeback. On top of the unexpected job gains in May, credited to the massive support programs provided by the CARES Act, new data released Tuesday show consumer confidence jumped in June.

"We have entered an important new phase and have done so sooner than expected," Powell said in testimony before the House Financial Services Committee. But the April-June quarter is likely to see the largest decline in GDP on record after authorities shut down businesses nationwide, he said, adding a warning that unless COVID-19 is kept in check the economy cannot fully recover.

And with 20 million jobs lost, Powell said a full recovery is "unlikely until people are confident that it is safe to reengage in a broad range of activities." The comments come just days after several southern and western US states, including Texas and Florida, were forced to reimpose restrictions after seeing COVID-19 cases spike. —AFP



SAN FRANCISCO: A pedestrian walks by a retail store that has reopened in San Francisco, California. —AFP

N American trade pact takes effect in virus-ravaged world

WASHINGTON: The USMCA trade agreement has been hailed as the start of a new era in North American commerce. Unfortunately, it officially launches in the middle of a pandemic.

Starting Wednesday, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement will bind nearly half a billion

consumers in a single market, where trade between the three economies that add up to about 27 percent of the world's GDP hit \$1.2 trillion in 2019. But that was before COVID-19 broke out. Now, the borders between the countries are partially closed, and the IMF is forecasting severe drops in all three North American economies this year. The pact replaces the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and was negotiated after attacks by US President Donald Trump, who said it destroyed American jobs and was unfair.

The "entry into force of USMCA is a key part of a broader trade agenda, the goal of which is to pursue free, fair and reciprocal trade with all our trad-

ing partners," US Deputy Under Secretary for International Trade Joseph Semsar said Tuesday. "We believe USMCA will ensure North America remains the world's economic powerhouse, and that the agreement will create high-paying jobs for Americans, Canadians and Mexicans," he said in a videoconference organized by the Washington-based Wilson Center.

New rules

Trump pushed Canada and Mexico to come to the bargaining table, and following marathon talks, the three parties signed the initial version of the agreement in November 2018. Mexico ratified it in

December 2019, and Trump signed the pact into law in January after amendments demanded by Democratic lawmakers. Canada's parliament adopted it in March. The USMCA changes rules on auto manufacturing to boost US jobs, including requiring that close to half of North American auto production come from higher paid workers, as well as imposing tougher labor provisions that obliged Mexico to reform its laws. It remains to be seen if the measures will achieve Trump's goal of creating more employment at American plants: some Japanese firms have opted to raise wages in Mexico by as much as three times rather than move production to US factories, according to reports. —AFP

Business

MSCI webinar discusses virus-induced uncertainty in global financial markets

Webinar held in collaboration with Boursa Kuwait

KUWAIT: MSCI hosted a webinar entitled "Charting the COVID-19 Crisis" in collaboration with Boursa Kuwait on June 10 to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy and the investor community. The webinar, which catered to Kuwaiti listed companies and capital market stakeholders, was organized to ensure the sustainability of the local financial market, protect stakeholder rights and minimize the negative effects of the outbreak on investors and stock exchanges.

Shedding light on the economic ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic on financial markets around the world, the webinar addressed the need to adopt environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) reporting to assess risks and opportunities, to ensure business continuity and to mitigate the negative impact on capital markets worldwide. Financial markets and factors that led to their decline in performance were also topics of focus, in addition to the importance of the MSCI ESG Index and its contributions in guiding investment decisions for market participants during these challenging times.

Gulf Bank sponsors Injaz Kuwait's annual program

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced it is sponsoring Injaz Kuwait's annual "Company Program" competition as part of its long-standing partnership with the non-profit organization. Students will be participating in the competition, pitching their business ideas and presenting projects they had worked on to a panel of judges.

In light of the current circumstances, this year's competition will be held virtually through video communications app, Zoom, and will take place over the course of two days from July 3-4. On the first day of the competition, the students' various

NBK moves head office branch to new head office

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait always strives to be closer to its customers and provide them with top-notch banking services. In this context, the bank relocated its head office branch (Abdullah Al-Ahmad) to the new head office in Kuwait City, which will serve individual customers from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm.

NBK continues to reopen its branches as per the directions of Kuwait's Council of Ministers concerning the Normalization Plan, as well as the instructions of the Central Bank of Kuwait, as it recently added 7 branches, including its branch at Grand Avenue – The Avenues to the list of operating branches, which reached 34 branches serving customers. Noting that The Grand Avenue- The Avenues branch serves customers from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

And as part of its aim to keep both customers

Mask mandate could save US recovery: Goldman

NEW YORK: A national mask mandate could be a way for the United States to address the latest coronavirus surge while also protecting the country's economic recovery, Goldman Sachs said.

In a report titled "Face Masks and GDP" the financial giant said a national mask mandate could "partially substitute" for renewed lockdowns that would otherwise subtract nearly five percent from US growth.

The report, released late Monday, comes as Florida, Texas and numerous other southern and western states contend with huge jumps in coronavirus cases. While several states have rolled back some reopening policies, there has been public pushback against broad lockdowns that have prompted deep layoffs.

Whether the US should follow European and Asian countries in instituting the mandate is an "inherently political decision," Goldman said, while adding that analytic tools can assess the policy on economic grounds. Based on COVID-19 trends in 125 countries, the report estimated that coronavirus cases grew by 17.3 percent per week without a mask mandate, but only 7.3 percent with a mask mandate.

In the US, states without mask requirements account for two-thirds of new infections. A national mask mandate would make mask use more widespread and lower the daily growth in infections to around one percent from 2.9 percent, Goldman said.

"Will the US adopt a national mask mandate?" Goldman asked. "This is uncertain, partly because masks have become such a politically and cultural-

Commenting on the webinar, Boursa Kuwait's Markets Executive Director, Noura Al-Abdulkareem said: "As one of Kuwait's key financial institutions, Boursa Kuwait has been taking the necessary and feasible measures since the outbreak of the pandemic to ensure the continuity of our business considering that Boursa Kuwait is one of the most prominent pillars of the economy in the State of Kuwait. In cooperation with our partners in the Kuwaiti capital market apparatus, we have succeeded in adopting robust practices and systems that have contributed to reducing the risks and impacts related to the pandemic."

This webinar, organized by MSCI, focused on the importance of complying with environmental, social and corporate governance policies, which

help businesses enhance their performance and increase competitiveness in the short and long term."

Commenting on behalf of MSCI, Robert Ansari – Executive Director and Head of the Middle East, said: "As the global pandemic has evolved through the months, MSCI has been working extensively to publish information and research for the international investment community. MSCI has sought to bring closer its partners in Kuwait and we are pleased to be working with Boursa Kuwait to disseminate

this information with the purpose of sharing insight and thought leadership. In partnership with Boursa Kuwait, we will continue to provide as much information as we can to help investors navigate these challenging times while ensuring a number of the

projects will be scored by a panel of judges who will be meeting at the Chairmen Club in KIPCO. Tareq Al-Saleh, Deputy General Manager of the Economic Research Unit at Gulf Bank, will be representing the Bank on the judging panel this year. On the second day, Injaz Kuwait will announce this year's winners, all of whom will receive prizes sponsored by Gulf Bank.

Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, commented: "We are proud to renew our partnership with Injaz Kuwait, and are committed to supporting the next generation of young entrepreneurs by equipping them with the various skills needed for an ever-changing job market. Despite the evolving demands of the job market and the world, we are confident in our youth's ability to not only keep up, but continue to innovate and thrive."

INJAZ Kuwait, part of the global network of Junior Achievement worldwide, is a non-profit (NPO), non-governmental organization (NGO)

and employees safe amidst the current emergency health conditions and the resulting exceptional measures, NBK always adheres to the instructions of concerned authorities regarding safety guidelines and social distancing rules, as customers' temperature is checked upon arrival to the branches and wearing masks and gloves is mandatory.

On this occasion, Ali Al-Mulla, Head of Domestic Branches, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "Moving our Head Office branch to the new NBK Head Office comes as part of our efforts to be closer to our customers, and is considered a good step on the way to upgrade branches' performance in a way that supports offering top-notch banking services that reflect our historical leadership, and emphasize our endeavors to consolidate this leadership in the future."

"With the commencement of phase two of the Normalization Plan, we continue to reopen our branches, and in the meantime, we are ensuring the safety of our customers and employees, which is our top priority, by strict adherence to all safety measures and social distancing rules mandated by the concerned authorities," he added. Al-Mulla affirmed the integration between branches operation and NBK Digital Channels resulted in providing first-

driven by Kuwait's private sector. Through strategic partnerships with Kuwait's business and education sectors, and with the help of qualified and dedicated volunteers, INJAZ delivers both Arabic and English language educational programs on entrepreneurial and leadership skills to build successful careers.

Gulf Bank continues to sponsor Injaz Kuwait as part of its commitment to encourage and develop professional work skills among young adults. It is worth noting that Injaz Kuwait is a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to educating and training Kuwait's youth in workforce readiness, financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

class banking services that are accessible to customers in a quick, easy and safe way, with the aim of enriching their banking experience.

Concluding his statements, extended thanks to NBK front-line employees for their dedication in performing their jobs, stressing that their relentless efforts will remain a source of pride and appreciation. The National Bank of Kuwait provides its services 24/7 under all circumstances through its various digital channels, mainly NBK Online Banking and NBK Mobile Banking.

In addition, NBK provides its banking services through ATMs and CDMs available all over the country, comprising 327 ATMs, including 100 CDMs. Customers can also reach the bank through multiple channels including, NBK Contact Center on 1801801 and NBK WhatsApp on the same number, or through its social media platforms where all inquiries are answered.



NEW YORK: An exterior view of the Goldman Sachs New York City headquarters. A national mask mandate could be a way for the US to address the latest coronavirus surge while also protecting the country's economic recovery, Goldman Sachs said. —AFP

ly charged issue.

"However, even in the absence of a national mandate, state and local authorities might well broaden mandates in ways that ultimately mimic the impact of a national mandate. "Either way, our analysis suggests that the economy could benefit significantly from such moves, especially when compared with the alternative of a return to broader lockdowns."

The report's release comes as some additional conservatives have publicly endorsed masks as the virus bears down on states controlled by President

Donald Trump's Republican party. Trump himself refuses to wear a mask at public events.

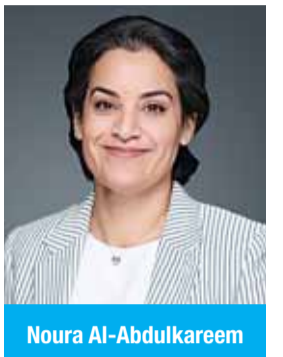
On Tuesday, "Fox & Friends" co-host Steve Doocy called on Trump to wear a mask, as did Tennessee Republican Senator Lamar Alexander, who opened a hearing on COVID-19 by extolling masks.

"I have suggested that he occasionally wear a mask even though in most cases it's not necessary for him to do so," Alexander said. "The president has plenty of admirers. They would follow his lead." —AFP

global investing trends, such as Environmental, Social and Governance, or ESG, remain important investment themes long after the global Covid-19 pandemic."

Earlier this year, Boursa Kuwait organized a conference in collaboration with MSCI, aimed at raising awareness of MSCI's ESG index. In November, MSCI will include Kuwait in its Emerging Market Index review.

The exchange continues to support and launch similar initiatives within the framework of its corporate sustainability strategy, which counts education, society and the environment as its main pillars, along with its continuous endeavor to educate various stakeholders on all aspects of operational excellence and supporting the reputation and advancement of the Kuwaiti capital market.



Noura Al-Abdulkareem

LuLu Hypermarket announces winners of 'Dream Drive' promo

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket, a leading retailer in the region, announced the winners of their exciting 'Dream Drive' promotion following a draw held with the support of LuLu Hypermarket management, and Kuwait officials on 15 June at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry premises. A variety of prizes will be handed over to a total of 104 winners.

During the 45-day promotional period, shoppers were entitled to one e-affle coupon for every KD 5 worth of purchases at any LuLu Hypermarket outlet in the country. The coupon entered shoppers into a raffle draw to win one of four Nissan X-Trail 2020 model Sports Utility Vehicles (SUV). In addition to the bumper prize, 100 winners would each receive KD100 worth of gift vouchers, for a total of KD 10,000 in promotional vouchers.

LuLu Hypermarket remains committed to offering customers the widest range and largest variety of quality products from around the world at highly competitive prices. The 'Dream Drive' promotion is part of this customer-oriented approach that aims to ensure customer satisfaction at every retail touch-point, and add value to the shopping experience at the hypermarket.

Ineos on track to build car despite crisis

LONDON: Ineos, the chemicals giant owned by British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe, is driving through plans to build a 4x4 vehicle despite a car sector stalled by the coronavirus pandemic. "The task of building a brand and making known to everybody what the proposition is, is quite ambitious," said Ineos Automotive CEO Dirk Heilmann, as more detailed plans regarding the project, including on its design, were revealed.

Ineos Grenadier, described by the company as "a stripped back, utilitarian, hard-working 4x4", will enter production in late 2021 at a new factory in Wales, creating an initial 200 jobs, a statement said yesterday. "Deliveries will start first in the UK and Europe and in other global markets" thereafter, it added amid a project investment totaling £1.0 billion (\$1.2 billion, 1.08 billion euros).

It comes at a time when the auto sector worldwide has seen sales and production crushed by COVID-19 lockdowns shutting factories and showrooms, although many have since reopened. "It is a very difficult time for the automotive industry, though it is worth bearing in mind that these (car launches) are relatively enduring investments," said Cardiff University Professor Peter Wells, an expert on the global automotive industry.

"In some respects starting production now is actually using the current situation to the advantage of the business," he said. "It will give the business time to smooth out any production problems or any quality concerns before increasing the (assembly) line speed to full output," Wells added.

Car enthusiast Ratcliffe identified a gap in the market for such a vehicle after the final Land Rover Defender was produced in 2016. Ineos has meanwhile teamed up with leading car groups, including BMW. "Combining rugged British spirit with German engineering rigour, the Grenadier will be a truly uncompromising 4x4, built from the ground up," Ineos said yesterday. It predicted that the vehicle would appeal to landowners, forestry workers, explorers and ski operators.

"In some regards the car is a rather dated concept, that is not attuned to the emergent world of low-carbon mobility," said Wells. "However, it is also a niche product, and in that sense builds on a noted aspect of the UK automotive industry." Heilmann said Ineos was not yet in a position to have a vehicle that did not run on petrol or diesel. —AFP

Amazon deforestation is linked to lower corn yields in Brazil

BRASILIA: Deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon and neighboring savannah may be hurting regional corn yields, according to a new study released on Monday.

Roughly one-fifth of Brazil's Amazon has been cleared in the last 50 years, as the country went from being a food importer to a global farming powerhouse. In terms of corn, Brazil is now the world's second largest exporter, after the United States. But that forest-clearing, which also included more than half of the natural vegetation in the vast Cerrado savanna southeast of the Amazon, has made the region warmer. That heat is associated with lower corn yields, researchers reported in the science journal Nature Sustainability.

"The landscape is getting a lot hotter than it should be," said study co-author Stephanie Spera, an environmental scientist with the University of Richmond. "We're messing with the system so much that we actually might not be able to continue to cultivate agriculture, specifically corn."

The researchers linked the deforestation to a 5-10 percent drop in corn yields across most of the west-central state of Mato Grosso, Brazil's largest grains producer. Soybean crops, which tend to be more heat-resilient, were not significantly affected, Spera said.

Spera and her colleagues used computer simulations to see how various deforestation scenarios impacted

local climate conditions and crop yields, and compared those cases with how crops might have fared had no trees been cut down.

The study found that conditions in 2016 included eight more "hot nights" a year, with nighttime temperatures above 24 degrees (75.2 degrees Fahrenheit), than if the forest had remained in tact. Those higher nighttime temperatures can hinder corn's development.

The researchers also looked into future possible scenarios, including having the entire savanna or southeast Amazon cleared and converted to cropland. In those cases, corn yields were predicted to fall up to 20 percent in some areas of Mato Grosso. The same deforestation that hurts crops could also harm the remaining forest as well. Tree loss can reduce the amount of moisture available to the rain cycle. Some scientists estimate that if just 20-25 percent of the original total rainforest that spans parts of nine countries is destroyed, the Amazon could go into a death spiral, without enough rainfall and moisture to keep it from drying out and becoming a savanna.

"Deforestation interferes with rains and agricultural productivity," said Raoni Rajao, a professor at the Federal University of Minas Gerais who studies agriculture and environmental policy.

Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon rainforest accelerated to an 11-year high in 2019 of more than 10,000



Smoke rises from the fires ravaging the Amazon basin in August. Brazilian authorities released data revealing the highest rate of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest in a decade — partly due to a recent surge in wildfires throughout the region. — AFP

square kilometers (2.5 million acres), an area more than six times that of London or nearly 13 times the size of New York City. The destruction rose a further 34 percent in the first five months of the year, compared with the same period a year ago, preliminary government data shows.

Researchers and advocates accuse right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro, who assumed office in 2019, of encouraging the forest clearing by rolling back environmental protections. Bolsonaro has called for more farming and mining in protected areas of the rainforest, arguing that the commercial activities

will help lift Brazil's Amazon region out of poverty and that most of the rainforest remains intact.

Global warming will only exacerbate the situation. "The future of climate change is already here," Rajao said, "and the situation is likely to get worse." — Reuters

CLINIC PAGE

248 33 199

DERMATOLOGY, VENEREOLOGY & LASER

These services include, but are not limited to, the below:

- Diagnosis of all diseases and infectious diseases related to the skin, nail, hair, mucous membrane, and STDs
- Laser hair reduction
- Fractional laser treatment for wrinkles, scars, enlarged pores, pregnancy marks, and mild skin discoloration
- Laser for pigmented skin lesions
- HiFu (High Intensity Focused Ultrasound) for lifting and tightening loose skin

1808088 taibahospital.com

fb tw ig @taibahospital

DERMATOLOGY VENEREOLOGY & LASER

Dr. Mohamed Al Qasimi
Dermatology Consultant

Dr. Dalia Mohamad
Dermatologist

Dr. Manal Ibrahim
Dermatologist

1808088 taibahospital.com

fb tw ig @taibahospital

Ophthalmology
Services

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid
Consultant

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally
Senior Registrar

Dr. Abeer Khattab
Specialist

Cataract Surgery

Glaucoma

Retina

General Ophthalmology

Follow-Up All Treatments

Tel: 1828282
Whatsapp Us
+965-6000 2184

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

WELCOME

Dr Tammam About Ali

Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon.

Following of the royal college of surgeons in UK and Ireland.
10 years work experience in Zah Hospital, MGH Kuwait.
Ex Head of ENT department in Forewatts Hospital, MGH Kuwait.
10 years work experience in UK and Ireland.

- Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
- Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF
- Snoring and OSAP Surgery
- Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques
- Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty
- Salivary gland and parotid surgery
- Thyroid and parathyroid surgery
- Micro laryngeal surgery

1 888 883

www.qmc-kuwait.com

fb tw ig @qmcKuwait

Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family

Book your appointments today!

Dr. Kiran Turaka
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Zareena Zahir
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Hasan Khan
Senior Otorhinologist

Dr. P. Seshendra Nath
Orthopedic Consultant (AUSTRALIA)
Specialised in Neck, Shoulder, Hip and Knee

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER

Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES

Tel : 24568857 / 24568859

info@exircenterkw.com www.exircenterkw.com

fb tw ig @exircenterkw



Czechs mark end of lockdown with bridge dinner

Crowds gathered on Prague's Charles Bridge on Tuesday to celebrate the end of the Czech Republic's coronavirus crisis with a group dinner along a gigantic table set up on the historic landmark. The EU member of 10.7 million people has by now eased most of the anti-virus measures it introduced early on—thanks to which it has fared relatively well, registering fewer than 12,000 coronavirus cases and under 350 deaths. On the 14th-century bridge, merrymakers munched on snacks and sipped drinks they brought from home, sharing their fare with others at the table spanning 500 metres (a third of a mile). "Everyone had to do something to be here, bring food or a flower. The idea was for everyone to get involved,"

Prague cafe owner and event organiser Ondrej Kobza told AFP.

"We want to celebrate the end of the coronavirus crisis with people meeting up and showing they're no longer afraid to meet others. That they aren't afraid to accept a bite of a sandwich from someone." "Society mustn't be afraid. Otherwise, we'll have an economic crisis, a depression and that will hit society harder than COVID-19," said Kobza. The 41-year-old is known for having placed pianos in the streets of Prague, set up chess tables in a local square and made the roof of a palace accessible to the public. Several improvised bands played and sang along the curvy table adorned with oxeye daisies and new friendships were

sealed over a snack or a glass. "I found the event on Facebook and thought it was interesting," said Galina Khomchenko-Krejcikova, a Russian Prague resident who came with a friend. "I just finished a night shift so I didn't have time to prepare anything. But we brought some wine and snacks we found at home," she told AFP.—AFP



People walk past and sit at a half-kilometre long table set up on the Charles Bridge in Prague to celebrate the end of the restrictions linked to the new coronavirus pandemic. — AFP photos

Tom Hanks: 'I have no idea when I will go back to work'

US actor Tom Hanks said Tuesday that Hollywood has "no idea" when it can return to production, as he described his own recovery after contracting the coronavirus, which has shut down the movie industry. The "Forrest Gump" and "Philadelphia" Oscar-winner in March became the first high-profile star to come down with COVID-19, shortly before he was due to begin shooting an Elvis Presley biopic in Australia. "As the canaries in the coal mine for the COVID-19 experience, we are fine—we had about 10 days of very uncomfortable symptoms, not life-threatening. I'm happy to say," he told a virtual press conference.

Hanks said that he and his wife Rita Wilson were fortunate to be "model recoverers from COVID-19," but noted that "any number of things" could have gone wrong. With the virus rampaging across the US—which has recorded more than 126,000 deaths and 2.6 million cases—many states have been criticized for reopening too early. California gave the all-clear for filming to resume earlier this month, but most major Hollywood productions remain frozen—a situation Hanks does not expect to change soon.



In this file photo actors Tom Hanks (left) and his wife actress/singer Rita Wilson attend "JONI 75: A Birthday Celebration" Live at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles.—AFP

"I have no idea when I will go back to work," he said. "Nobody has any idea of when they will go back to work. But the time will come. We just don't know when." He added: "Everything comes into play—there's financial concerns, there's legal concerns, liabilities." "There's physical concerns about 'how does everybody get to work and go into the same soundstage, and work in such close quarters?'"

Now living in isolation under social distancing rules, Hanks has watched as blockbuster titles postponed their launches, scrambling for dates later this year and into 2021, when studios hope audiences can return. On Monday, as Los Angeles County experienced a new daily record number of cases, Mayor Eric Garcetti announced a "hard pause" in the opening of businesses including movie theatres. Cinemas are also yet to reopen in New York and a number of other US cities.

Hanks' own World War II naval thriller "Greyhound" will skip the big screen entirely, after Sony agreed to sell the movie as an Apple TV+ exclusive. Hanks, who wrote the screenplay and stars in the movie, admitted he is "heartbroken" the film will not appear in theatres. But he described the deal to stream it online worldwide from July 10 as a "savior" that "offers us the opportunity to have the movie out." Movie productions have recently resumed in some countries including Iceland, South Korea and New Zealand, but Hanks said he has no timeline for returning to Baz Luhrmann's "Elvis." "The answer is nobody knows. And me included," said Hanks. He added: "There is nothing but questions as far as starting up physical production again. That's the terrible news."—AFP



In this file photo Kanye West attends the 2020 Vanity Fair Oscar Party following the 92nd annual Oscars.—AFP

Kanye West drops new song, video from upcoming album

Entertainment mogul Kanye West on Tuesday released a new song, "Wash Us In the Blood," along with an accompanying video including imagery from recent anti-racism protests. The new track, the first released from the born-again rapper's planned 10th album "God's Country," features lyrics with heavily biblical overtones, in line with his musical turn to Christianity in recent years. The song appears to refer to recent civil unrest over persistent police killings of black Americans, also mentioning mass incarceration and alluding to endemic poverty. The video includes footage of Breonna Taylor—a black woman who

police shot dead after forcibly entering her home on a no-knock warrant—as well as scenes from recent protests over police brutality and the death of George Floyd and West's Sunday Service rehearsals.

Rapper Travis Scott features on "Wash Us In the Blood," and legendary producer Dr. Dre mixed the track. The visual was directed by Arthur Jafa, who has previously collaborated with West and shot videos for stars including Jay-Z and Solange. The song is the mercurial West's follow-up to last year's gospel album "Jesus Is King" and his Sunday Service Choir's companion LP, "Jesus Is Born." West—who just announced a

deal with Gap to design a new line inspired by his "Yeezy" brand—mentioned his forthcoming album in an April 2020 interview with GQ, saying he "was thinking of not rapping again, because I rapped for the devil so long that I didn't even know how to rap for God." "Then one of my pastors told me, 'My son just said that he would want a rap album about Jesus from Kanye West.' He didn't say, 'Kanye West, you should do this,' or 'you need to do this.' He just told me something that a child said. And that one thing made the difference."—AFP

Hollywood French film festival postponed to 2021

Hollywood's French film festival will not take place this year due to the coronavirus pandemic, organizers said Tuesday, as cases continue to surge in the United States. COLCOA, which features premieres and glitzy galas for Gallic cinema in Los Angeles, will next take place in September 2021—a 25th anniversary edition. The decision was taken due to "the continuing health situation in the United States, which is different from Europe at the moment," COLCOA said in a statement to AFP.

COVID-19 is still rampaging across the US, which has recorded more than 125,000 deaths and 2.5 million cases, and theatres in Los Angeles remain shuttered. Uncertainties remain over how the situation, including travel restrictions, will

progress by September—when this year's COLCOA was due to take place—the statement added. Organizers said they had ruled out a "virtual" edition of the festival.

Screenings in theatres are "fundamentally and symbolically important for all official premieres of a film in Hollywood," said festival director Francois Truffart, adding that "this form of public event will remain necessary and popular even after the crisis." Last year's COLCOA—which stands for "City of Lights, City of Angels"—opened with Ladji Ly's gritty Oscar-nominated drama "Les Misérables." It also featured Netflix's "I Lost My Body," a French animation about a severed hand which also earned an Oscar nomination.—AFP



In this file photo COLCOA Executive Producer and Programmer Francois Truffart and COLCOA Deputy Director Aouchka Van Riel attend the announcement of the 23rd Edition Program of COLCOA French Film Festival, in Beverly Hills, California.—AFP

Awkwafina to Zendaya: Oscars Academy boosts female minority membership

Young actresses Awkwafina, Zendaya and Constance Wu were among those invited to join Hollywood's Academy on Tuesday, as the Oscars-awarding club opened its prestigious doors to a diverse crop of new members. Slammed again at the Oscars this year for nominating just one non-white actor, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has boosted its efforts to increase female and ethnic minority membership in recent times.

The majority of actors invited to join this year were women, and more than half were from "underrepresented ethnic/racial communities," said an Academy statement. Cynthia Erivo—the sole non-white acting nominee at February's Oscars, for "Harriet"—was on Tuesday's list of invitees, along with Eva Longoria, "Joker" star Zazie Beetz and upcoming Bond girl Ana de Armas. "We have always embraced extraordinary talent that reflects the rich variety of our global film community, and never more

so than now," said Academy President David Rubin.

Comedian and rapper Awkwafina has become one of Hollywood's most sought-after actresses, winning a Golden Globe for Chinese-American family drama "The Farewell" but snubbed at the Oscars. She was invited to join Tuesday along with former Disney child star Zendaya ("Spider-Man: Far from Home") and Constance Wu, who earned praise for her performances in "Hustlers" and "Crazy Rich Asians." Seen as the apex body of the Hollywood film industry, the Academy issues a single round of invitations annually.

The organization has grown vastly more international in recent years, tripling its non-US membership since 2015. Only Academy members can vote for Oscar winners, so this trend was seen as a factor in "Parasite" becoming the first-ever non-English language best picture winner this year. A dozen cast and crew members from the South Korean black comedy were also invited to join Tuesday. Its director Bong Joon-ho was already an Academy member. The board of governors vowed four years ago to double the number of women and non-white members by 2020, following calls to boycott the glitzy Oscars and an angry social media backlash under the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite.—AFP



US actress Awkwafina — AFP photos



US actress Zendaya



US actress Constance Wu



Edward Riley, a British resident of Qatar, plays with his rescue dogs at his home in the Qatari capital Doha.—AFP photos



Edward Riley and Paige Tiesdell, British residents of Qatar, walk their rescue dogs.



A mask-clad animal trainer of the Paws animal welfare organisation handles a rescued stray dog inside a kennel at the premises in the Mesaieed industrial area.



Paige Tiesdell, a British resident of Qatar, plays with her rescue dogs at her home.

RUFF DEAL: ANIMAL SHELTER BRACES FOR SURGE AS EXPATS ABANDON QATAR

When stray puppy Izzy was rescued from a stretch of wasteland in Qatar, she was so dehydrated she could barely stand and was close to death. One of many abandoned and stray animals struggling to survive on the scorched streets of the wealthy Gulf state, she is set to be adopted by a German family, but most others are not so lucky. Now, Izzy's rescuers are warning there could be a spike in dumped pets in the emirate as an economic downturn driven by the novel coronavirus pandemic forces expatriate workers and their families to leave at short notice.



A mask-clad employee of the Paws animal welfare organisation walks rescued stray dogs outside the premises in the Mesaieed industrial area.

Expatriates make up 90 percent of Qatar's 2.75 million population. "We're expecting a wave of emails and phone calls to say, 'Help'. We've had a few of those already," Paws animal shelter co-founder Alison Caldwell said. Major employers including Qatar Petroleum and Qatar Airways have warned of sweeping cuts to staff numbers as the global economy slows. Animals dumped or born on the streets in Qatar face particular hardship.

Summer temperatures touch 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) and images of abuse, including animals being shot with airguns, are common on social media. Caldwell said the Paws shelter had already seen an uptick in the number of animals needing help. "There's nothing we can do, really," Caldwell said—the shelter has capacity for just 60 cats and 30 dogs. There are no statistics on stray animals in Qatar, but Paws estimates they number in the tens of thousands.

'Sitting there waiting'
The pandemic has also complicated Paws' efforts to re-home animals. Izzy, a cream-coloured "Doha mix" cross-breed common in Qatar, was rescued in February. By April, a family in Germany had spotted her story on Paws' Facebook site and decided to adopt her. But commercial aviation had ground to a halt as authorities imposed restrictions to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. From her home near Bremen in northern Germany, Christina Fuehrer said she had been "just sitting there waiting" for flights to resume so she could complete Izzy's adoption. "We still have to find a flight," she told AFP, but said mid-July was the soonest.

Until then, Izzy is with a foster family who, like many others in Doha, found themselves eager for canine company to break the lockdown's monotony. "We decided it would be a good thing to do this summer, because we're obviously not going anywhere," said Julie Melville, who has taken the puppy in temporarily. Paws uses "flight buddies"—volunteer passengers who carry animals to their future homes as excess luggage. It costs just over \$300, compared to \$1,600 to send the pets via air freight—but for the system to work, passengers need to be able to travel freely and frequently.



A mask-clad employee of the Paws animal welfare organisation walks a rescued stray dog outside the premises in the Mesaieed industrial area.



Paige Tiesdell, a British resident of Qatar, plays with one of her rescue dogs at a park in the Qatari capital Doha.

'Strange times'
Founded seven years ago by two British expats, Paws said it saw an influx of animals in the early days of the pandemic from owners who feared their pets could spread the virus. People have also contacted the shelter for help after some animal owners fell ill and were hospitalised without warning. Since March, more than 100 people have died and over three percent of Qatar's population has been infected with the novel coronavirus, according to official figures. Animal cruelty is also a major issue, said Paws co-manager Hester Drewry, due to Qatar's transient population and a lack of education on the issue. To raise awareness and deter those unable to care for an animal from acquiring pets, Paws partners with local schools and encourages children to volunteer with the rescue animals.

But Qatar's lockdown has seen schools suspended and Paws unable to visit. The not-for-profit depends on donations and a mostly volunteer workforce, as well as revenue from its kennelling service. The shelter team says their pens are "always full" as they battle to cope with an ever-increasing population of abandoned pets and strays, and volunteers often take home animals to help out. "We have a huge backlog of animals waiting to fly out to their 'forever homes'," Drewry said. Since opening, Paws has helped re-home 1,000 animals, many of them overseas, where Qatar's ubiquitous Saluki hunting breed—with their distinctive narrow heads, prominent eyes and dangling ears—is highly coveted. Drewry expressed

hope that some animals would begin to leave in July and August as travel starts to pick up again. "It's strange times," Drewry said.—AFP



Edward Riley and Paige Tiesdell, British residents of Qatar, pose with their rescue dogs at a park in the Qatari capital Doha.

Panda gifted by China gives birth to second cub in Taiwan

A giant panda gifted by China to Taiwan has given birth to a second female cub after being artificially inseminated, Taipei Zoo announced Monday. Yuan Yuan and her partner Tuan Tuan have been top attractions since arriving from China in 2008 as a symbol of what were then warm relations between the two sides. The unnamed cub, weighing 186 grammes, was born on Sunday after a five-hour labour, the zoo said. "We were hoping the mother could look after the cub. But Yuan Yuan was probably very tired from the birth... so after evaluation we decided to remove the cub" to be fed by caretakers, the zoo said in a statement.

It added that the newborn cub was in stable condition after being treated for a minor injury to its back. Yuan Yuan gave birth to a daughter Yuan Zai in 2013 — the first giant panda born in Taiwan. Beijing usually only loans its pandas, and any progeny must be sent to China. But in a rare departure from that protocol, Taiwan was allowed to keep Yuan Zai as her parents were a gift, according to Taipei officials.

China's decision to give Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan to Taiwan was a symbolic gesture when the self-ruled island was run by a Beijing-friendly Kuomintang administration. "Tuan Yuan"—a combination of the Chinese

characters of the pandas' names—means "reunion" or "unity". The pair's arrival sparked a panda mania on the island, especially after Yuan Zai's birth.

Taiwan and China have been ruled separately since the end of a civil war in 1949 and Beijing has vowed to one day bring the island back into the fold, by force if necessary. Since the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen—

who views Taiwan as a de facto sovereign state and not part of "One China"—Beijing has ramped up military, economic and diplomatic pressure. Fewer than 1,600 pandas remain in the wild, mainly in Sichuan province, with about 300 in captivity around the world.—AFP



This handout photo taken on June 28, 2020 and received on June 29, 2020 shows a newborn baby panda at the Taipei Zoo in the Taiwan capital after the yet-unnamed-cub, weighing 186 grams, was born after a five-hour labour.—AFP

Catalans told not to dance with strangers

Barcelona disco owners on Tuesday condemned a regional decision to maintain a ban on dancing, unless you are at a hotel or restaurant and know your partner well. "We want to dance" the discotheques said in a statement in response to a U-turn by the Catalan regional government on the issue. It had lifted the dance ban in discos and nightclubs last week as Spain eased one of Europe's most strict set of coronavirus virus lockdown measures. But on Monday, officials backpeddled on the decision, saying night clubs would have to keep people off the dance floor, if necessary by putting tables and chairs there.

Dance floors in hotels and restaurants were allowed to stay open, but only if they were used by "groups of people often together and in close contact." Social media had a field day with the decision, but disco owners who have been hoping to open again were not amused. "They stop us from dancing even though that is what we all like the most," Ramon Mas, head of the

Barcelona discotheque federation told a regional parliament hearing. "A night club without dancing is like an opera without music or a restaurant without food," Mas explained, before concluding that "we will not reopen if we cannot let people dance."

The head of another organisation, Spain Night Life, told AFP the rule would just favour illegal clubs. "Knowing the level of relations between one person and another impacts their privacy and an entrepreneur cannot be a part of that," Joaquim Boadas added. He argued for having people dance with masks. Spaniards were set to celebrate after a confinement decreed in mid March was finally lifted last weekend. Spain has suffered more than 28,300 deaths from COVID-19, one of the highest tolls in Europe. People are still supposed to maintain a distance of 1.5 metres (yards) from each other, or wear a mask when that is not possible.—AFP

Sports

Photo of the Day



Participant performs during Red Bull Soapbox Race in Amman, Jordan. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Fraud probe rocks Team NZ reeling from spy claims

WELLINGTON: Team New Zealand yesterday denied misusing public money meant for next year's America's Cup yacht race, after allegations that fraudsters siphoned funds from the organisation into an offshore bank account.

Already rocked by claims of spying and internal leaks, Team New Zealand said it had cooperated with inquiries into the missing funds.

Managing director Grant Dalton, a key figure in preparations to hold the prestigious regatta in Auckland in 2021, said money earmarked to pay a European supplier had somehow been sent to a bank account in Hungary. "We got straight onto the fraud police, who have been working carefully out of New Zealand and into Belgium and across Interpol and we've recovered some of that money," he told radio station NewstalkZB.

Dalton said the fraud did not involve taxpayers' money and it was still unclear who was behind it. "We were defrauded by scammers, so we don't really know and the police don't really know," he said.

Team New Zealand hold hosting rights for the America's Cup after winning the "Auld Mug" in Bermuda in 2017.

They are organising the regatta with oversight from the New Zealand government and Auckland Council, who have poured a combined total of more than NZ\$250 million (\$160 million) into the event. New Zealand's Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment has already revealed it is investigating "structural and financial matters" surrounding Team New Zealand's organisation of the race. — AFP

Silver says NBA no-risk free way to play but bubble safest

22 teams playing games without spectators in Orlando

NEW YORK: NBA commissioner Adam Silver says there are no risk-free options to finishing the season in a coronavirus pandemic but the league's bubble plan is the safest, most responsible way.

In a Time 100 online talk Tuesday, Silver addressed the NBA's restart plan, with 22 teams playing games without spectators in Orlando under quarantine starting July 30, and said NBA relations with China have improved since last year. The league shut down the 2019-20 season on March 11 after Utah's Rudy Gobert tested positive for COVID-19 with five weeks remaining in the regular season.

Plentiful testing and contact tracing within the bubble should help the NBA contain positive tests within an isolated Disney World campus even as COVID-19 positives spike in Florida, Silver said.

"If cases are isolated, that's one thing," Silver said. "But if we had a lot of cases, we're going to stop. We are left with no choice but to learn to live with this virus. No options are risk-free right now."

NBA team owners and players hope to limit the financial damage of playing without spectators in seclusion by televising eight seeding games per team in the bubble plus a normal two-month playoff run.

"We're looking to find the right balance between health and safety on one hand and economic necessity on the other," Silver said. "And what we think is we've found what makes sense for the NBA and that is a safe and responsible way to play."

"Our best understanding of this virus is that it's not going away anytime soon so we



No options are risk-free

feel we have to find a way to move forward and this is our way."

Last October, Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey tweeted his support for protesters in Hong Kong, drawing criticism for the league in China and creating a rift between the nation and the NBA. Silver says he feels relations have improved, but notes different systems of government

produce different ways of doing things.

"Hopefully we can find mutual respect for each other," Silver said. "Our games are (back) on Tencent. We have continued a dialogue with the Chinese, with our business partners there, with certain government officials, and we're going to keep at it."

Silver said it was a "complete coincidence" that the New Orleans Pelicans, powered by rookie Zion Williamson, have the easiest schedule among the bubble teams in a bid to get the last West playoff spot — and what would be a TV-friendly likely playoff series against the LeBron James-led Los Angeles Lakers. Teams were scheduled against other bubble teams remaining on their schedule at the time the season was shut down. "Zion is an incredible player because of his skill level, not because of the marketing behind him, and I think LeBron is hoping to win another championship," Silver said. "That's what makes the game so exciting."

'THE LONGEST SEASON'

The NBA Finals would finish in mid-October, just under a year from when the regular season tipped off.

"It will be the longest season in history,



NBA commissioner Adam Silver

maybe for any league," said Silver.

The NBA plans to have new camera angles and microphones on players and some sort of crowd noise to add atmosphere.

"I'm curious to see how the presentation is going to be," Silver said. "We want crowd noise but we don't want just somebody to turn a knob. We want to find new

ways to engage the fans." He did have some concerns about players trash talking each other with no crowd noise to keep television viewers from hearing profanity. "There have got to be some limits on the language. (Players) may have to adapt," Silver said. "In all seriousness, we may have to put some sort of delay on." — AFP

The billionaire, Bollywood and the future of Indian soccer

MUMBAI: A storm could be brewing in India's top-flight soccer, a glamorous and acrimonious world that encompasses Asia's richest man, the cream of Bollywood and a self-styled former gangster.

Mukesh Ambani, the billionaire tycoon who commands the Reliance Industries corporate empire that owns the Indian Super League, is facing pushback to his family's dominance from some executives in the country's soccer association and clubs.

At stake is the financial future of soccer in a country devoted to cricket. The outcome of the power struggle could also help shape whether India can ever become a world force in the game, realising ex-FIFA president Sepp Blatter's description of being a "sleeping giant" — and, of course, the big dream: whether it can one day play in or even host a World Cup.

Ambani's holding group launched the Indian Super League, an elite competition of newly created teams, in 2014 with the aim of attracting investment and big global names, much like the Indian Premier League has in cricket. However tensions have been building over who ultimately calls the shots: the Indian soccer association, which technically governs soccer at all levels, or Ambani's group which owns the top league of 10 teams.

It's a rare power split in global soccer, and a recent dispute between Ambani's

camp and the association illustrated differing visions over the direction of the Indian game, whose national team is ranked 108th globally.

This year, before the COVID-19 pandemic, a top executive at India's soccer association, Kushal Das, wrote to Martin Bain, the Ambani lieutenant who heads Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), a Reliance holding company that owns the league.

The national coach, employed by the association, has complained that the enlisting of so many foreign recruits in Indian soccer could hold back the development of home-grown players. Das, in a March email exchange seen by Reuters, said the governing body had the right to limit the number of foreign players allowed to compete in the Super League.

The dismissal was swift. "Contrary to the position in your email, all competition regulations rather need approval from FSDL," Bain responded, according to a copy of the email exchange seen by Reuters. The football association backed down for this season. Representatives for Reliance and FSDL did not respond to repeated requests for comment for this article. The soccer association's media director, Nilanjan Datta, declined to comment, but said questions about tensions with FSDL were "baseless".

Requests for comment from Bain and Das, via FSDL and the association, were not responded to.

INDIAN GAME OF TWO HALVES

The player issue is disputed globally; some argue imported veterans stand in the way of domestic talent, while others say they haul up standards and share skills and experience. But the exchange also reflects a conflict within the Indian game.

FSDL and the Ambani family's support-

ers says the Super League has raised awareness and money for a disorderly and underinvested sector, and brought in marquee players such as Italy's Alessandro Del Piero and France's Robert Pires.

Ambani's wife Nita, FSDL's chair and the public face of the league, has expressed hope India will qualify for the 2026 World Cup, and one day host the event. And some Super League club owners are committed to what they consider a soccer revolution.

"Indian players are benefiting from the arrival of quality foreigners and coaches," said Mandar Tamhane, CEO of JSW Bengaluru FC. "Football has become a lot more tactical and technical," he added. "The exposure has helped Indian football develop."

But the Ambanis' influence is resented by some club owners in India's traditional football league, the I-League, who say the Super League is sucking attention and investment from the rest of the game and stunting its long-term development.

"This is a hostile takeover if there ever was one. They basically own football," said Ranjit Bajaj, a self-described former gangster who found redemption in soccer, and a prominent figure in the game who took Punjab's I-League side to a national championship in 2018 as its owner. "It's really sad." The Ambanis did not respond to requests for comment made via Reliance. The family is accustomed to domestic business dominance.

The Reliance empire, with a market value of about \$153 billion, includes India's leading telecom firm, a major retailer, its largest refining complex, a news outlet and a Bollywood studio. The group's revenue last fiscal year accounted for around 3% of India's \$2.9 trillion economy.

'SUCH A DIFFICULT SITUATION'

Reliance and partner IMG Worldwide

bailed out the cash-strapped soccer association a decade ago, pledging around \$140 million over 15 years in return for sponsorship, licensing rights and running the Super League.

The association remains dependent on the deal money. It sent six emails to Reliance executives between May and October last year, reviewed by Reuters, saying payments of \$6 million had not been received. One warned of a "severe cash flow crunch" and said the association had to put payments to suppliers on hold.

A Reliance executive answered twice, once saying it would take more time to re-lease the payment and then saying the payment was in process.

Reliance did not respond to requests for comment on this email exchange.

The soccer association has considered whether it would be possible to renegotiate parts of the contract, according to an audio recording reviewed by Reuters of its president speaking to I-League executives at a meeting last year, although it is not clear which parts. "When you're dealing with a giant like FSDL, whose parent is Reliance, legally you will land up in such a difficult situation," association President Praful Patel said in the July meeting.

He said FSDL had saved the association from falling into debt, adding "They have invested so much money."

Patel did not respond to requests for comment made via the soccer association.

BUSINESS MEETS BOLLYWOOD

Thus far, however, the Super League itself is proving neither hugely popular nor lucrative — a rarity for an Ambani venture. Stadium attendances have halved over the past six years, and the pandemic is likely to worsen the situation.

Of course, creating a profitable league

Sports

Juventus keep title chasers Lazio at bay with Genoa stroll

Team have recovered well after losing the Italian Cup final

ROME: Juventus maintained their four-point lead at the top of Serie A on Tuesday after strolling to a 3-1 win at Genoa that keeps chasers Lazio at bay despite their comeback triumph at Torino.

Three stunning individual goals from Paulo Dybala, Cristiano Ronaldo and Douglas Costa downed relegation-threatened Genoa and kept Maurizio Sarri on course to deliver Juve's ninth straight league title in his first season as coach.

Andrea Pinamonti pulled one back with 14 minutes left for the struggling hosts, who stay just one point above the drop zone and third-from-bottom Lecce, who host Genoa's local rivals Sampdoria on Wednesday. Pinamonti's strike was the first goal Juve have conceded since losing at Lyon in late February, but it wasn't enough to stop the champions from cruising to their sixth straight league win.

"It was a good team effort and we scored three brilliant goals," said Sarri. "The team have recovered well after the disappointment of losing the Italian Cup final, it was only a matter of time."

The victory at the Stadio Luigi Ferraris showcased the firepower Sarri has at his disposal, with Genoa goalkeeper Mattia Perin making five saves in the goalless first half as Juve pushed early to win the match.

Dybala put his side in the lead in the 50th minute with a beautiful finish following a snaking dribble, a strike that set the tone for the rest of the match. Ronaldo, who had looked off the pace following the league's restart from the coronavirus shutdown, showed that he was back to his best seven minutes later when he charged towards goal before letting

off a rocket of a shot that Perin could only grasp at as it fired into the net.

That settled the result, but substitute Costa then made his own case for goal of the match when he collected the ball towards the right side of the area and unleashed a curling, dipping shot that again left Perin bewildered.

"They (Dybala and Ronaldo) have learned to look for each other more often," Sarri said of a blossoming partnership.

They have realised that by benefitting from each other, both reap the rewards. It's something I have noticed in training too."

IMMOBILE LAUNCHES LAZIO COMEBACK

Lazio had done their part earlier on Tuesday when they came from behind again to win 2-1 against struggling Torino. **Ciro Immobile's** 29th league goal of another remarkable season for the Italy forward and **Marco Parolo's** deflected strike in the 73rd minute completed a deserved second-half comeback for Lazio, who had clawed their way to a 2-1 win over Fiorentina in

similar fashion just two days earlier.

Andrea Belotti gave the hosts an early lead from the penalty spot after Immobile handled but spent the rest of the match on the back foot and are 14th on 31 points.

Moreno Longo's side have lost seven of their last nine league matches and although they are six points above the drop zone could find themselves dragged into a dogfight by the end of this round of fixtures.

Stunning individual goals

time. "We'll tackle everything, those are our goals," said Bayern head coach Hansi Flick, who only took over mid-season.

"At Bayern, you always think a bit bigger. First the Cup is in focus and then it's important the team has some time off and the staff can clear their heads. "After that, we'll prepare intensively for the Champions League."

Flick plans to send his players on a two-week holiday after the Cup final before a training camp ahead of their last-16 second leg against Chelsea on August 7 or 8. They hammered Frank Lampard's Blues 3-0 in February's first leg in London, making Bayern among the favourites to be European champions.

Bayern could face a disadvantage against potential opponents in the Final 8 tournament in Lisbon, due to start on August 12, from leagues which are not scheduled to finish until late July.

La Liga runs until July 19, while the Premier League is set to end a week later, with Serie A not slated to come to a conclusion until August 2.

Only PSG and Lyon will have had less game time than Bayern and RB Leipzig, as Ligue 1 was ended early due to the coronavirus pandemic. "We just have to make sure that we make the best of the situation," Flick said.

"It could be an advantage because

"We played against a team who defended with all their players in the goal and we had 12 or 15 chances.

"We cannot ignore that the lack of efficiency was the weak point for our team." With six games left, Leeds are four points clear of second-placed West Brom, who have a game in hand, and six ahead of third-placed Brentford.

Brentford moved to within two points of the automatic promotion places with a 3-0 victory at Reading. Bryan Mbeumo gave Brentford the lead midway through the first half, stooping to nod home his 15th goal of the season.

Josh Dasilva increased their advantage just past the hour mark and Joel Valencia added a third goal in the 90th minute to secure a fourth successive league victory. West Brom, without a win or a goal in four games, face Sheffield Wednesday.

Scott Parker has challenged fourth-placed Fulham to cope without a recognised striker after

designed to combat the spread of coronavirus.

That means vice-captain Stokes, who has not led a cricket team since he was a teenager, is set to be their skipper for the first Test. "I think he'll do a great job. He is a talisman, he leads from the front anyway," Silverwood told a conference call on Tuesday. "He's conscious of the people around him as well so I think he'll do a great job in Rooty's absence."

Former England pacesman Silverwood added: "It will be interesting to see what he does because obviously it is his first time captaining England. "We know he has got an aggressive nature but equally there is a good cricket brain in there as well."

England hope to have Root back in time for the second Test at Old Trafford starting on July 16. But he will miss England's lone warm-up match ahead of the series, a three-day intra-squad clash at the Ageas Bowl starting Wednesday, between a side led by Stokes and a team skippered by Jos Buttler, who will deputise as vice-captain. That suggests Buttler will



GENOA: Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo shoots to score during the Italian Serie A football match Genoa vs Juventus played on June 30, 2020 behind closed doors at the Luigi Ferraris stadium in Genoa. —AFP

Lazio meanwhile are still in the hunt for their first league title in 20 years and are also practically guaranteed Champions League football next season for the first time since 2007-08, as they are 20 points ahead of fifth-placed local rivals Roma.

Immobile's goal, a fine left-footed finish three minutes after the break, was another example of Luis Alberto's importance to Lazio, as it was a league-leading 13th assist of the season for the for-

mer Liverpool man.

His strike also meant the Italy forward equalled his own record for the highest number of goals scored by a Lazio player in a Serie A season. However Lazio will have to do without the 30-year-old against AC Milan on Saturday, as he will be suspended after being booked for the handball that gave his team another uphill struggle to overcome. —AFP

Bayern eye Champions League glory

BERLIN: Bayern Munich are expected by the club's own hierarchy to take the next step towards the treble in Saturday's German Cup final before they attempt more Champions League glory in August.

The German press dubbed Bayern 'FC Nimmersatt' (never satisfied) after celebrating an eighth straight league title last Saturday, the 30th in the club's history.

"The team is in such good shape that they are able to win every title this season," said Bayern president Herbert Hainer. Before tackling Europe and a possible repeat of their 2013 treble, Bayern face Bayer Leverkusen in Berlin in Saturday's Cup final having already lost to the Werkself this season.

Leverkusen sporting director Rudi Voeller has promised a "big fight" as they look to repeat November's shock league win when Jamaica winger Leon Bailey scored twice at the Allianz Arena.

Bayern are expected to secure the league and Cup double for the 13th



WOLFSBURG: Bayern Munich's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski celebrates with the trophy for leading goal scorer after the German first division Bundesliga football match VfL Wolfsburg v Bayern Munich on June 27, 2020 in Wolfsburg, northern Germany. —AFP

one or two players would be available again." Bayern's forwards are in stellar form. Thomas Mueller produced a Bundesliga record 21 assists this season, while striker Robert Lewandowski has netted 49 times in 42 games, including 11 in the Champions League.

Bayern have been European champions five times and two of their 2001 title-winning team are being groomed to take charge.

Former midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic is sporting director, while ex-goalkeeper Oliver Kahn will replace Karl-Heinz Rummenigge as chairman in 2022.

"In 2001, we won the Champions League together playing in jerseys, now we want to repeat that success with him in suits," said Salihamidzic. "Oliver feels the same way — we'll give everything to see it happen. "It's our turn again." —AFP

his side's 2-1 win at west London rivals QPR. Fulham boss Parker admits he had to reshape his entire attack with 23-goal forward Aleksandar Mitrovic suspended.

Serbia star Mitrovic will miss two more matches after his retrospective ban for elbowing Ben White in the 3-0 loss at Leeds. Cyrus Christie sealed Fulham's win after Harry Arter had cancelled out Jordan Hugill's first-minute header for QPR.

"There's no hiding from the fact we've not now got a recognised forward in our squad, in the building," Parker said. "So the way the players look to the structure and the way we wanted to play tonight was spot on really."

Sixth-placed Cardiff and in-form Charlton shared a 0-0 draw in south Wales as both sides extended their unbeaten runs since the restart. Elsewhere, Barnsley beat Blackburn 2-0, Wigan won 3-0 against Stoke and Millwall drew 1-1 with Swansea. —AFP

be England's wicketkeeper next week, rather than Jonny Bairstow or Ben Foakes. The warm-up game will involve 27 members of England's 30-man training squad, with uncapped bowlers Jamie Overton and Amar Virdi missing out along with Root. National selector Ed Smith is set to announce a slimmed down England squad on Saturday for the behind-closed-doors series. Among some of the selection issues still to be clarified are the top four, the first-choice spinner and the composition of the fast-bowling attack.

The top-order rivals are divided between the two sides, Dom Sibley and Zak Crawley in one team and Rory Burns and Joe Denly in the other.

Moeen Ali and Jack Leach will be in Team Stokes, with fellow spinners Dom Bess and Matt Parkinson representing Team Buttler. "You know the people who are the mainstay of our side, the engine room, but this is a great opportunity for some of the other players to show us what they can do in this game," said Silverwood. —AFP

Real Madrid to make history by ending wait for women's team

MADRID: After 118 years, Real Madrid will launch a professional women's team by absorbing CD Tacon and launching a fresh Galactico project at the club. Madrid, the best team of the 20th century according to FIFA, has so far been one of the only elite clubs to resist the creation of a female team.

By taking over Tacon, the women's club based in Madrid and created in 2014, 'Real Madrid Femenino' will become a reality. Approved at a meeting of shareholders in September last year, the buyout of Tacon for 300,000 euros (\$337,000) will become official from July 1, when another recruitment drive will begin.

According to the Spanish press, Madrid have set their sights on the game's finest talents and some of the first signings could arrive this week. Tacon have already been expanding in preparation.

They signed Swedish internationals Kosovare Asllani and Sofia Jakobsson, who was nominated for the 2019 Women's Ballon d'Or and who joined last year after finishing third in the Women's World Cup.

But there will be more changes, after the announced departures of Ana Valles, Esther, Marina Martin Massanet, Patri Carballo, Ainoa Campo and Osinachi Ohale, in May.

The goal will be to turn Madrid into contenders both in Spain and Europe, where they will hope to challenge the supremacy of Barcelona's women's team, finalists in the 2018-2019 Women's Champions League and who thrashed Tacon twice this season, 6-0 and 9-1.

"The time has come to build a team that you will all be very proud of," said Real Madrid president Florentino Perez. The change has been done gradually over several months. Since the start of the current season, Tacon, coached by David Aznar, have trained and played their home games at Valdebebas, a few metres from the men's team. This will continue to be the case this season and the club have not ruled out using the Santiago Bernabeu for showcase matches.

The launch will be an historical moment for the club but for women's football too. "It's a huge positive," Ada Hegerberg, the first winner of the Women's Ballon d'Or in 2018, told AFP. "I'm hoping they will stabilise the investment over a long period and that they have a long-term perspective because it can't happen overnight."

"You have to invest for a long time to succeed. It's a huge positive that you have the biggest men's club in the world now investing in the women's side. That's how modern women's football should be driven."

"It's the present and the future. And it sends out a message to other clubs, it keeps everyone on their toes when a club like Real Madrid creates a team. I hope they go all in." —AFP

Silverwood backs 'talisman' Stokes as England captain

LONDON: England coach Chris Silverwood is confident "talisman" Ben Stokes will lead from the front in Joe Root's absence during next week's first Test against the West Indies.

Stokes is set to captain England for the first time after it was confirmed on Tuesday that regular skipper Root would miss the series opener at the Ageas Bowl to be with his wife Carrie, who is expecting the couple's second child later this week.

Under health protocols for the series, Root will begin a seven-day self-isolation period at home once he leaves hospital with his family, in a measure

14 Silver says NBA no-risk free way to play but bubble safest



15 Juventus keep title chasers Lazio at bay with Genoa stroll



15 Bayern eye Champions League glory



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Argentine forward Lionel Messi (C) challenges Atletico Madrid's Ghanaian midfielder Thomas Partey and Atletico Madrid's Argentine forward Angel Correa (L) during the Spanish League football match between FC Barcelona and Club Atletico de Madrid at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

Atletico draw hurts Barca's title hopes

Messi scores 700th career goal with penalty

MADRID: Lionel Messi scored his 700th career goal but Barcelona suffered another blow to their La Liga title hopes after a 2-2 draw with Atletico Madrid on Tuesday.

Messi chipped in a penalty to reach another astonishing milestone at Camp Nou but twice Atletico hit back with spot-kicks of their own, Saul Niguez converting both after Barca took an early lead through Diego Costa's own goal.

The result gives Real Madrid the chance to move four points clear at the top of the table if they can overcome Getafe at home on Wednesday, a formidable lead with five games left.

Atletico stay third, two points ahead of Sevilla, who won 3-0 at Leganes. With a superior head-to-head, it would take a dramatic capitulation for Real Madrid not to lift the trophy from here but there is no guarantee Barcelona can finish strongly enough even to create pressure.

This was their third draw in four matches and with suggestions of disharmony between the players and coaching staff, the future of coach Quique Setien looks bleak too.

"From the dressing room I feel supported, yes," he said. "And regarding the meeting with the board, I will not say what was said in that."

Setien was also asked about his job on Monday and had to play down the significance of a frank exchange of views in the dressing room following Saturday's draw at Celta Vigo.

Messi had also caused a stir by appearing to ignore Setien's assistant Eder Sarabia during a water break at Vigo and on Tuesday it was impossible to ignore the contrast with Atletico's players, who huddled around Diego Simeone while 50 metres away Setien stood alone.

At full-time, Setien stared into space with the look of a coach that is running out of time but he had taken bold decisions, leaving 120-million-euro signing Antoine Griezmann on the bench and handing another start to 20-year-old Riqui Puig. "It's true that taking him out of the team like that

is hard for a player of his level but the circumstances forced me to do it," said Setien of Griezmann. "Tomorrow I will speak to him, not to apologise, but it is a decision he has to understand."

COSTA NIGHTMARE

Yet it started well for them as Costa endured a nightmare first quarter of an hour, first diverting Messi's corner into his own net after misjudging the flight of the ball at the near post.

Then he missed a penalty, won after the excellent Yannick Carrasco left Gerard Pique for dead and then cut back inside Arturo Vidal, who stuck out a leg.

Costa's shot was saved but VAR showed Marc-Andre ter Stegen had sprung off his line too early and Atletico were given a second chance. This time Saul took the ball and he scored the equaliser.

Messi dinked over the sliding Renan Lodi and then

whistled a curling effort past the far post. His deflected free-kick forced Jan Oblak to adjust his feet and palm over.

Finally, it was laid on a plate for him shortly after half-time, Felipe clipped Nelson Semedo and Messi, with the 700th in sight, chipped the ball delicately down the middle.

But every time Barca pulled away, Atletico pegged them back. Another penalty was awarded, again instigated by the speedy Carrasco, who made the most of the slightest touch from Semedo.

Saul took responsibility again and while Ter Stegen got a hand to it, the ball squirmed into the corner. Vidal twice went close, the second time heading wide Jordi Alba's cross, and Thomas Lemar might even have won it for Atletico in injury-time. For Barca, the draw was damaging enough.

Earlier, Sevilla's Oliver Torres scored twice and Munir El Haddadi added a third to see off Leganes and boost their hopes of holding onto fourth place.

Sevilla sit five points ahead of Getafe, having played a game more. Leganes stay 19th, nine points adrift of safety. — AFP

Fernandes fires Man Utd masterclass

BRIGHTON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said Bruno Fernandes has brought a winning mentality to Manchester United after his brace inspired an impressive 3-0 win at Brighton on Tuesday.

Cajoled by the dazzling Fernandes, United produced one of their best performances of the season at the Amex Stadium. Mason Greenwood opened the scoring early in the first half and Fernandes doubled the lead before the interval.

Fernandes netted again after half-time with a fine volley as United climbed above Wolves on goal difference to take fifth place in the Premier League.

"Bruno has come and been fantastic. He has

brought that winning mentality with him, that 99 percent is not good enough. It has to be 100 percent," Solskjaer said. "I've got more than one game-changer. The third goal was a great team goal. To see so many players sprinting forward to get on the end of it was fantastic. A great finish by Bruno."

Solskjaer's side are two points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, who play their game in hand at West Ham on Wednesday. With fifth place securing qualification for the Champions League if second-placed Manchester City's European ban is upheld, United are in a strong position to return to the continent's elite club competition.

If they make it, United will owe a huge debt of gratitude to Fernandes, who has scored six goals since arriving from Sporting Lisbon in January.

The Portugal midfielder's role in revitalising United cannot be understated. They were mired in a major slump before Fernandes' signing, but are now on a 15-game unbeaten run in all competitions, including three successive wins. "It's a joy to watch them when you see them express themselves like that," Solskjaer

said. "The confidence comes from performances. They worked hard during the lockdown and we know we have loads to play for."

"I don't care about making a statement, I know we are a good team." United are also looking more solid at the back with eight clean sheets in their last 13 league matches.

With a run-in that includes games against Bournemouth, Aston Villa and West Ham, Solskjaer's men could enjoy a memorable conclusion to the campaign as they also chase success in the FA Cup and Europa League.

Brighton had taken four points from two games since the restart, easing their relegation fears, but this defeat means they aren't completely safe yet.

Harry Maguire led United's charge with a long pass to Paul Pogba, who rolled it into the path of Fernandes for a fierce drive that cannoned back off the post. Solskjaer this week warned United's strikers they must improve if they want to stay in the team.

It was a message that Greenwood had clearly taken to heart as the 18-year-old produced a fine



Costa endured a nightmare