



**7** Killing of Iraq expert stirs fear of new violent phase



**8** Export gloom sours Pak prized mango season



**12** Dubai reopens doors to tourists after shutdown



**16** Chelsea cling on to win five-goal thriller, Leicester held at Arsenal



# Bolsonaro tests positive for virus; US starts WHO pullout

762 new cases in Kuwait, 2 deaths • WHO acknowledges evidence of airborne spread



BRASILIA: A screen grab shows Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro putting a facemask on as he prepares to speak with journalists at Planalto Palace on Tuesday. — AFP

**RIO DE JANEIRO/KUWAIT:** Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who has consistently downplayed the risks of coronavirus, announced Tuesday he has tested positive, as the United States - the nation hardest hit by the pandemic - formally launched its withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO). The UN health agency meanwhile acknowledged that there was "emerging evidence" of airborne transmission of COVID-19, which has infected nearly 11.7 million people around the globe and caused more than 539,000 deaths.

Kuwait's health ministry yesterday announced 762 new COVID-19 infections, raising the total to 52,007 cases. Deaths reached 379 with the addition of two fatalities. Official spokesperson of the ministry Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a press statement that the 762 infections included 501 Kuwaitis and 261 non-Kuwaitis. Earlier, the health ministry announced the recovery of 593 people from the coron-

avirus, bringing the tally to 42,108 recoveries.

Bolsonaro, who said he had experienced only mild symptoms, has ignored containment measures such as social distancing, despite Brazil being the second-worst hit country, with more than 66,000 dead. The far-right leader, who at 65 is in the highest-risk age category, insisted he was feeling "perfectly well" and took off his face mask during a TV interview announcing his test results. He repeated his mantra that the "collateral effects" of the virus should not be worse than the illness itself.

In Washington, a senior US official said the United States had informed UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres of its intention to leave the WHO, effective July 6, 2021. President Donald Trump has been critical of the WHO's pandemic response, accusing it of bias toward China and ignoring early signs of human-to-human transmission of the deadly virus.

The US is the largest financial contributor to the WHO - which leads the fight on global maladies from polio and measles to mental health - providing \$400 million annually. Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, said Tuesday he would immediately reverse the decision and keep the US in the WHO if he defeats Trump in November.

Experts are still struggling to understand COVID-19, and the WHO said it was open to new research after scientists lobbied for it to stress that the virus can spread through the air farther and for longer than initially believed. WHO said it would put out a new scientific brief within days, after an international group of scientists concluded the virus could travel far beyond two meters.

On Monday, a group of 239 international scientists said exhaled droplets under five micrometers in size that contain the virus can become suspended in the air for

Continued on Page 2

## Friday Market reopens today

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** Vendors at the Friday Market in Rai were busy making preparations yesterday for its reopening today. On March 13, the Municipality closed the market as a precautionary measure to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Yesterday, Kuwait Times witnessed workers unloading goods and setting up displays. The Friday Market is popular with people looking for used items and cheap goods.

Like before, the Friday Market is open from Thursday morning until Saturday evening. However, it will now operate from 10 am to 6 pm because of the 8 pm curfew. Sellers are only allowed to bring their goods on Wednesday afternoon, and all products unsold by Saturday must be removed and the market cleaned.

"From tomorrow, everything here will be back to normal," said an official at the Friday Market who spoke to Kuwait Times on the condition of anonymity. "We will strictly observe the health ministry's directives on health protocols. Even now we have two personnel checking the temperature of anyone who enters the market. We do not want the virus to spread in the market," he added, urging customers to always wear masks and gloves.



KUWAIT: Workers unload furniture at the Friday Market before its reopening today. — Photo by Ben Garcia

## Saudi opens hajj registration for foreign residents

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia on Monday opened hajj registration for foreign residents in the kingdom, saying they will make up 70 percent of the pilgrims after it scaled-back the annual ritual due to coronavirus. Saudi Arabia has said it will allow only around 1,000 pilgrims already present in the kingdom to participate in this year's hajj, scheduled for the end of July, a far cry from the 2.5 million who attended the five-day pilgrimage last year.

Foreign residents, aged between 20 and 65 who have no previous health ailments such as diabetes and heart conditions, are allowed to register on <https://localhajj.haj.gov.sa>, the hajj ministry said. The registration process will be open until Friday, it added. Saudi citizens will make up the remaining 30 percent of the pilgrims, with the ritual restricted to medical professionals and security personnel who have recovered from the virus, the ministry said.

"They will be selected through the database of those who have recovered from the virus," the ministry said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency. The pilgrims will be tested for coronavirus before arriving in the holy city of Makkah and are required to quarantine at home after the ritual, according to health officials.

Last month, Saudi Arabia announced it would hold a "very limited" hajj, a decision fraught with political and economic peril as it battles a coronavirus surge. — AFP

## Dubai hospital bids farewell to last patient

**DUBAI:** Dubai on Tuesday closed its only field hospital set up at a convention center to treat coronavirus cases after the last patient, a Japanese national, walked out in good health. Doctors and nurses, still wearing protective gear, lined up clapping for Hiroaki Fujita as he left the Dubai World Trade Centre which was converted to a 3,000-bed field hospital in April to treat virus patients. "I ask everyone to take a more safer way," Fujita told AFP. "Feeling very good that I am about to go out."

The number of coronavirus cases in the United Arab Emirates has dropped sharply from a peak of 900 a day in

May, although there has been a new uptick recently to more than 500 cases daily. The Gulf state has so far reported 52,600 coronavirus cases including 326 deaths and 41,714 recoveries. A majority of the remaining patients are being treated at other hospitals across the UAE and some of them are recovering at home.

Director of the hospital Manal Taryam said medical equipment used will be "kept at stores and will be continuously sterilized, making them ready ... in case of a second wave".

"If we need, we can reactivate the field hospital within hours ... But we are confident while closing it," she said. "Today, thanks to efforts ... we have been able to put the pandemic under control," Taryam said. The closure coincides with Dubai reopening its doors for tourists after a four-month shutdown with the hope of reviving the key tourism sector. — AFP



DUBAI: Hiroaki Fujita from Japan, the last patient at a temporary COVID-19 hospital built in downtown Dubai, greets nurses and doctors as he leaves the facility on Tuesday. — AFP

## Illegals in Saudi look for way out

**RIYADH:** Jobless and broke, Sudanese electrician Hatem is stranded in limbo in Riyadh like countless other illegal workers, but he hopes the fast-spreading coronavirus will offer a chance for escape. While coronavirus drives a huge exodus of expatriates, campaigners say potentially hundreds of thousands of illegal workers remain

stranded in Saudi Arabia, complicating efforts to fight the disease.

The pandemic has laid bare what activists call systemic injustices roiling the lives of blue-collar foreign workers in Saudi Arabia - overcrowded housing, exploitative employers and a lack of effective recourse. Campaigners have called on Saudi Arabia to reform its labor policy and offer an amnesty to poor debt-ridden workers trapped in the country, a predicament that risks fuelling the pandemic.

The problem is rooted in the "kafala" sponsorship system, described by critics as a modern form



RIYADH: Sudanese electrician Hatem, a 45-year-old poor debt-ridden worker with an expired residence permit, lives in hiding to avoid arrest in the Saudi capital on June 6, 2020. — AFP

Continued on Page 2



## Local

## Residents of Jleeb, Mahboula overjoyed as lockdown ends

## Areas' residents eager to go back to work, meet friends after months of lockdown

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Residents of Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh are thrilled over the impending end of a lockdown imposed months ago due to coronavirus fears. After nearly 100 days, the areas open up today and residents are excited to return to work and normalcy.

"I'm holding myself back and not expecting too much because I do not want to be upset again," said Reyma Grande, a teacher and resident of Mahboula block 2. "In the past months and weeks, I was hoping that Kuwait will finally lift the lockdown, but it didn't happen. So I am waiting for the day they will finally open up the area. We have become used to this kind of environment for the last three months," she told Kuwait Times.

Grande was asked what she is planning to do when the lockdown is lifted. "I will go to the seaside.

It's nearby, but we were prevented during the lockdown from walking there because of a fence. They wouldn't allow residents of Mahboula go beyond the fence to the sea. Then I will visit my friend in Fahaheel and the Holy Family Cathedral in Kuwait City," she said.

## Assignments waiting

Gener Cantal, a mechanic and resident of Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, said he misses his work. "I was informed by my company in Rai to report to work on July 14. I am very excited to get back to work. I missed my job, my coworkers and my kind bosses. I have several assignments waiting for me according to them - after more than three months, I am ready to work again," he said.

Cantal said he was earlier told by his boss to report to work in May, but because he lives with his family, he preferred to stay in Jleeb. "They were

ready to provide me with accommodation outside the area, but I refused because in the time of pandemic, more than anything else I want to stay with

ment to my family and said it was okay," he said.

A Bangladeshi resident of Jleeb, who preferred to keep his identity anonymous, said he plans to visit his relative in Fahaheel and his close friend in Kuwait City once the lockdown is over. "I have friends in several areas of Kuwait, but particularly I want to visit my close friend in Kuwait City. Before the lockdown, we normally met in Maliya (in downtown Kuwait City) to chat. Sometimes I stayed over at his room in Maliya, and sometimes I invited him to my place in Jleeb. But during the lockdown, we were only talking through mobile apps. I am happy that I will also be able to visit my uncle in Fahaheel," he added.

With the opening up of Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, the only remaining area under lockdown is Farwaniya. According to the Ministry of Health, the lockdown there will be lifted once transmission of COVID-19 in the area is contained.



## Only Farwaniya remains under lockdown

my family. As the head of the family, I needed to make sure that every member of my family is safe before anything else. They understood my commit-

## Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 52,007 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of yesterday, in addition to 379 deaths. With the exception of 161 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, 42,108 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 9,520 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, and will be lifted on Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh starting today. 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 Justice and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Afasi said that mosques in commercial, markets and heavily-populated areas will remain closed for the time being. Worshippers 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 (Ahmad 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-ehelth.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

## Bolsonaro tests positive for...

Continued from Page 1

several hours and travel up to tens of meters. Benedetta Allegranzi, the WHO's technical lead on infection control, told a virtual press conference: "We acknowledge that there is emerging evidence in this field."

"We wanted them to acknowledge the evidence," said Jose Jimenez, a chemist at the University of Colorado who signed the open letter to WHO. He said historically, there has been a fierce opposition in the medical profession to the notion of aerosol transmission, and the bar for proof has been set very high. A key concern has been a fear of panic. "If people hear airborne, health-care workers will refuse to go to the

hospital," he said. Or people will buy up all the highly protective N95 respirator masks, "and there will be none left for developing countries."

There have been explosions of infections across the world, including Iran, which announced 200 new deaths on Tuesday. Australia on Tuesday ordered five million people locked down in Melbourne, its second-biggest city, to combat a surge in cases. Cases are also surging in India and four new coronavirus field hospitals were opened on Tuesday in the financial capital Mumbai as the nationwide death toll jumped past 20,000. Italy's health minister ordered a one-week suspension of flights to Rome from Bangladesh on Tuesday, after 21 passengers arriving from Dhaka tested positive, adding to the number of cases within the Bangladeshi community in the Lazio region surrounding Rome. — Agencies

## Illegals in Saudi look...

Continued from Page 1

of slavery that binds workers to their Saudi employers, whose permission is required to enter and exit the kingdom as well as to change jobs. Employers also hold enough sway to render their status illegal, according to activists and interviews with four undocumented workers, including Hatem, a 45-year-old electrician living in hiding in Riyadh to avoid arrest.

"My six kids, my old mother, my sister in Sudan... are living in a difficult situation, but I live in much worse conditions," Hatem told AFP in his squalid Riyadh apartment, which he shares with other workers. "The sponsorship system is very unjust," said Hatem, who arrived in 2016. Saudi Arabia, home to around 10 million expats, has expelled hun-

dreds of thousands of illegal workers in recent years. But many like Hatem who are stuck in a debt trap are not permitted to leave before settling their dues, even as kafala curbs prevent them from legally earning their way to freedom.

"The Saudi government should offer an amnesty for irregular migrants to regularize their status or return to their home countries," Annas Shaker, a research fellow at the advocacy group Migrant Rights, told AFP. Holding back such workers, many of whom are forced to go into hiding, risks fanning the pandemic, observers including Shaker warned. Saudi Arabia has reported over 200,000 infections and nearly 2,000 deaths. Hospital sources say doctors and nurses are among those dying and intensive care units are stretched beyond capacity.

Saudi nationalists online have openly demanded the expulsion of expat communities, widely blamed for spreading the disease. A Saudi newspaper columnist called for "cleansing" the oil-rich Gulf state of excess foreign workers. Hatem, who scrapes

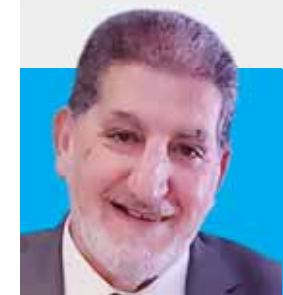
by thanks to the kindness of strangers, has implored Sudan's embassy in Riyadh to push authorities to grant him the exit visa he needs to leave. Neither responded to AFP's request for comment.

A South Asian official told AFP he had received similar pleas for exit visas from debt-saddled subcontract workers stuck in the same predicament, many for years. In an extraordinary announcement in March, Saudi Arabia offered free coronavirus treatment to illegal workers and promised no retribution if they come forward for treatment. But after years of what workers call heavy-handed treatment by authorities, the gesture has been met with suspicion.

Three other undocumented workers who spoke to AFP - two from Egypt and another from Bangladesh - said they would be unwilling to come forward if they contracted the virus. One of the Egyptians, a 36-year-old father-of-two, said he could not take the risk after he took on a huge loan to work in the kingdom as a private driver. — AFP

In My View

## Street wars



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

Many years ago, we woke up to advertisements that covered all the streets of Kuwait for a movie called "Street Wars". The ad was also broadcast on TV several times a day over several days. The promotion was highly successful and teased everyone into wanting to watch it. I remember vividly that on the night of its broadcast, streets had lighter traffic than usual.

Finally, the movie started, and people had many expectations about what it was all about. The film began with a shocking traffic accident. Soon enough, everyone knew the movie was about traffic problems and motorists' behaviors. It had interviews with police officers, experts, doctors and psychologists, who covered many aspects. The movie spoke about deaths and severe injuries many have suffered including paralysis due to accidents, besides wasting time and energy for a very long time.

A driver was caught zigzagging. When asked by police why he was doing so, the young man said he was doing it for fun and was not in a hurry for anything urgent. Others were caught racing, and many did not pay attention to traffic signs and instructions. When asked, why many were found not to know what the signs meant.

This real dilemma continues until today, as accidents - some fatal - are occurring every day despite development projects and improvement and widening of streets. Because of the rising population, the number of vehicles has multiplied and motorists' behavior remains just about the same, despite strict new laws and various means of controlling traffic, be it by man or machine.

There is no doubt that traffic is an integral part of the developmental process, as it is the way for individuals to move along with goods from one place to another. Yet the irony is that this highly important tool still has its drawbacks and harms, be it because of us motorists or the pollutants emitted by vehicles. Experts say that countries lose millions due to wasted time and energy as well as wasted resources.

It is true that the high rate of population increase is one of the factors for worsening traffic problems, as more drivers will be on the streets. I believe it is very important for authorities to have different approaches to deal with violations depending on the type of infraction, and to have certain measures such as sending them to school to learn the signs and even train them on behavior and street psychology so that they can tolerate mistakes of others and not have events that end with tragedies.

Motorists must wake up and start obeying the law - with or without the presence of police - to save their lives and that of others.



Local

# Zain joins 'The Valuable 500' to unlock opportunities for people with disabilities

Billion people with disabilities hold disposable income of \$8 trillion a year: Kharafi

**KUWAIT:** Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, proudly announces its inclusion in The Valuable 500, an international initiative striving to put disability on the leadership agenda within corporates. Zain already has a well-defined and proactive diversity and inclusion program, WE ABLE, aimed at integrating people with disabilities within the company as well as improving their business social and economic prospects. The company's participation in The Valuable 500 will further amplify its efforts.

Entrepreneur Caroline Casey launched The Valuable 500 at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos in January 2019, creating a global movement focused on disability leadership in business and celebrating those who commit to inclusion. The initiative's aim is to unite 500 business leaders representing global corporations to serve as role models and ignite social change by shining the light on people living with disabilities and showcasing how people in these communities remain a significant and contributing sector of society.

Zain is the first corporation from the GCC to join the initiative along with 285 other leading global corporates such as Coca Cola European Partners, Citi Group, Microsoft, Omnicom Group, Virgin, Shell and SKY, to name a few, with the list being added to all the time.

Embedding sustainability and meaningful connectivity in every aspect of its business, Zain is dedicated to its digital strategy of consistently working towards developing the mobile telecommunications ecosystem centered on a vision of inclusive development that leads to socio-economic growth, aligning to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals of leaving no one behind.

**Inclusive culture**

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO, commented: "It is our duty to ensure we are a diverse and inclusive workplace and by positioning diversity and inclusion on the board agenda, we are



clearly and proudly committing to our priorities. Our WE ABLE program pledges disability inclusion by 2022 and together with The Valuable 500, a global community with shared values and aspirations, we can foster an inclusive culture."

Kharafi continued, "At the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting, The Valuable 500 made history by putting disability on the main stage for the first time. The one billion people with disabilities worldwide also hold a disposable income of \$8 trillion a year, equating to an opportunity that businesses cannot afford to ignore, and that's why we have signed up to The Valuable 500. Now is the time."

Caroline Casey, Founder of The Valuable 500 said, "We have seen an impressive list of global telecoms companies join and put disability inclusion on their board agenda, and we are delighted that Zain, our first company from the Gulf has signed up. With 49.5 million customers, it is fantastic to ensure those with disabilities are included in having the ability to stay connected."

Casey continued: "The global telecoms industry has proven vital during the last few months in ensuring everyone is able to stay connected during the



lockdown caused by the pandemic. It is essential these services are accessible to everyone, throughout the whole supply chain."

On Zain's part, the company's dedication to the support of people with disabilities is extensive. Under its WE ABLE disability inclusion initiative that was launched in July 2019, Zain is working to become a disability inclusive organization by 2022 across all its operations. WE ABLE has four main targets:

1. Increase employment of people with disabilities.
2. Ensure all training programs are disability inclusive.
3. Ensure all operating locations are accessible.
4. Identify and implement assistive technologies that will enable employees with disabilities to independently complete their work.

As a member of The Valuable 500, Zain Group has pledged the following:

- **COMMIT:** Table disability on our Board agenda from 2020 and make ONE commitment to action.
- **COMMUNICATE:** Share our commitment to The Valuable 500 both internally and externally.
- **CONNECT:** Take part in the sharing of information and expertise across The Valuable 500 community.

Education and NUKS-USA to address students' questions and concerns. Students may also contact our Consular Section at [KuwaitNIV@state.gov](mailto:KuwaitNIV@state.gov) with questions regarding their specific situation. Our staff stands ready to assist.

For new students wishing to apply to US universities for the upcoming academic year, please also feel free to reach out to our Educational Advisor with any question you may have at [Kuwait-City@EducationUSA.org](mailto:Kuwait-City@EducationUSA.org). For more information, the full press release from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement is available here: <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/sevp-modifies-temporary-exemptions-nonimmigrant-students-taking-online-courses-during>.

## Kuwait media highly appreciated globally: Minister

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri stressed on Tuesday the valued role of Kuwaiti media on a global scale. Jabri made the statement while inaugurating Kuwait's first media forum, saying that developing media is not only the responsibility of the ministry, but also a common responsibility to which all should contribute. The forum translates this goal so as to make positive and realistic results contributing to the promotion of the steps made by Kuwait's media towards progress and development, he said. He noted that Kuwait's media has been playing its active role and fulfilling its national responsibilities in supporting the government and evaluating the performance of all state institutions.

**Key pillar**

The minister cited the words of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, praising the role of Kuwaiti media. The march of Kuwait's media has been backed by electronic media, he said, describing it as a 'key pillar' in bolstering progress in the country. He confirmed that the Ministry of Information is supporting all positive works carried out by various actors of civil society. The minister thanked Kuwait Society for Media and Communication and those responsible for organizing such forums to disseminate awareness and constructive media culture, whether on ground or in the virtual world.

Meanwhile, president of Kuwait Society for Media and Communication Madhi Al-Khamees said Kuwait's media is going through this stage while the world is experiencing a qualitative shift through electronic transformation and the use of modern technology, which proved its ability to adapt to different circumstances in a well-deserved manner. He stressed that Kuwait's media has been a pioneering in the region, noting that such specialized forums aim to develop media and reshape it to cope with this stage. The society organizes this forum through the electronic Microsoft Teams platform in cooperation with the Ministry of Information. A number of media professionals, academics, lawmakers and media students are also taking part in the three-day event.

**False information**

In other news, Director of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Office in Kuwait Dr Samer Haddadin stressed the importance of the measures taken by Kuwait to combat rumors, false information and what arouses hate speech, especially in light of the current circumstances against COVID-19. Haddadin said in a press statement Tuesday that the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information previously launched an electronic platform as a tool to investigate the credibility of news, photos and videos, reducing the spread of fake news. —KUNA

## US Embassy issues new ICE student visa guidance

**KUWAIT:** Student visas are an important priority for US Embassy Kuwait, and we are proud of the success Kuwaiti students have had at US academic institutions. We appreciate the patience of students and their families during this extraordinary time.

Guidance from the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement indicates that students enrolled under a fully online program at an academic institution should depart the United States.

Students attending schools with in-person classes or a "hybrid model"—that is, a mixture of online and in person classes—are allowed to stay in the United States while completing their studies. All students should contact their Designated School Official (DSO) at their academic institution to understand the rules for their program. Your DSO can tell you whether you should apply for a student (F-1) visa at this time.

As the guidance unfolds, Embassy staff will continue to coordinate with the Ministry of Higher

**News in brief**

**Condolences to Saudi**

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences on Tuesday to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz on the demise of Prince Khaled bin Saud bin Abdulaziz, praying for his soul and expressing solace to his family. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah addressed cables of identical content to the Saudi Monarch.

**Condolences to Egypt**

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent a cable on Tuesday to General Mohammad Zaki, Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Armed Forces and Minister of Defense and Military Production, expressing heartfelt condolences on death of Egypt's Minister of State for Military Production Mohammad Al-Assar. Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour prayed for soul of the deceased and wished patience to his bereaved family and the Egyptian people.

**Minister meets lawyers**

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh on Tuesday appreciated the constructive role of Kuwait Society of Lawyers in serving the issues in the country. He made the statement after receiving a delegation from the society led by president Sherian Al-Sherian at the ministry's building. The two sides discussed forming a joint committee to address issues of public concern, remove obstacles and protect public funds, as well as enforce the law on all to serve the country's interests, the ministry said in a statement.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.





## Local

# Kuwait's Foreign Minister receives several outgoing ambassadors

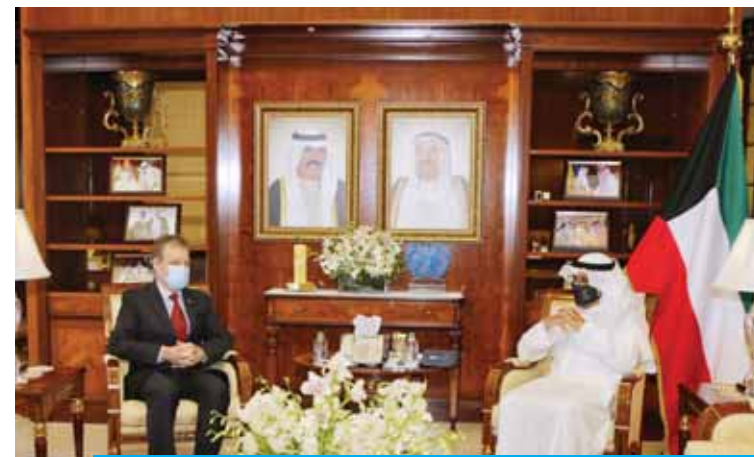
## Sheikh Dr Ahmad attends Arab meeting discussing Israel's annexation plan



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Tunisia Ahmed Sghaier. — KUNA photos



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Bangladesh SM Abul Kalam.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Belgium Piet Heirbaut.

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday several outgoing Arab and foreign ambassadors. Sheikh Dr Ahmad met separately with the Ambassadors of Tunisia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Nigeria, and India — Ahmed Sghaier, SM Abul Kalam, Piet Heirbaut, Garba Gajam Muhammad, and Jeeva Sagar respectively. Sheikh Dr Ahmad thanked the diplomats on their efforts to bolster ties, wishing them luck in their future endeavors.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah telephoned his German counterpart Heiko Maas discussing the solid bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and means of boosting these ties further in various sectors. The two ministers discussed cooperation for coping with repercussions of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), latest developments on the regional and international arenas and issues of joint concern.

### Annexation

In other news, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah headed Kuwait's delegation at an Arab-level meeting to discuss Israel's announcement of measures to annex parts

of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley. This was held via audio-visual technology on Tuesday at the invitation of Jordan, in the context of continuous coordination towards developing a common vision to confront Israeli intentions of annexing parts of the West Bank and imposing sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea regions.

Sheikh Dr Ahmad reiterated Kuwait's adherence to the Arab position that states that peace is the choice and that a fair solution is based on the two-state solution, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the principle of land for peace. This includes Palestinians obtaining all their political rights, establishing an independent state on their land as there is a flagrant violation of international law and the UN Charter. Kuwait's delegation included the Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Ambassador Fahad Al-Awadhi and a number of foreign ministry officials.

### Cybersecurity strategy

Separately, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah received at the ministry's general office Tuesday Chairman and CEO of

Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) Engineer Salem Al-Othaina, in the presence of Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Khaled Al-Jarallah. The ministry said in a press statement that during the meeting, Othaina provided a comprehensive review of the national cybersecurity strategy in Kuwait, the completed implementation programs and the global standards that are applied within this framework.

The meeting showed steps taken by Kuwait towards qualifying professionals that will be trained in this vital sector and the support services provided by the authority to all government agencies and institutions towards maintaining the security of its digital data, improving its performance in an optimal manner that coincides with the latest technology in this field. Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Waleed Al-Khubeizi, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ayham Al-Omar, Acting Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of the Deputy Minister Saleh Al-Loughani and a number of officials at the ministry attended the meeting. — KUNA



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Nigeria Garba Gajam Muhammad.



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of India Jeeva Sagar.

**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



## AUB charity initiative supports needy families

KUWAIT: The charity 'Fun Run' initiative, organized by Ahli United Bank (AUB) under the theme 'Plant Palm Trees with Your Steps' keeps on achieving success and making positive results. All proceeds from this activity were allocated for planting palm trees, and giving the produced dates to support needy families on permanent basis. AUB celebrated the delivery of the palm trees planted for this purpose to the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) that will handle the maintenance of these trees.

On this occasion, Sahar Dashti, General Manager of Customer Protection and the Head of AUB CSR Team said: "Achieving long-term positive results and Sustainability are our most important communi-

ty goals. Accordingly, we have ensured making the AUB 'Fun Run' under the slogan 'Plant Palm Trees with Your Steps' to have a deeper positive impact. The 'Fun Run' is not only a message of awareness about the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle and preserving the environment, as we also dedicated its proceeds to plant palm trees and provide the produced dates to support families in need. Today, we reaffirm our success through delivering these palm trees to PAAAFR to take care of their maintenance and then distribute the dates."

Dashti added: "Our CSR program is based on a number of pillars, with the environment being one of the most significant, which is in line with the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for 'New Kuwait 2035.'"

Dashti expressed congratulations to all participants and organizers on the success of this endeavor, affirming that this participation is a contribution to promoting health and environmental awareness, as well as charity activities, which made the 'Fun Run' an exceptional event, and became an example for distinctive community programs, especially after the growing success achieved year after year.

## 'Kuwait in Ottoman Documents' book gifted to Amir

ANKARA: The State of Kuwait's Ambassador to Turkey Ghassan Al-Zawawi on Tuesday received from the center of historic research of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation a copy of the book 'Kuwait in Ottoman Documents,' presented as a gift to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The official Turkish news agency, Anadolu, quoted the center director general Khaled Aran, as saying during the book handover ceremony, held in Turkey, that it includes documents from the Ottoman archive concerning Kuwait during the 1850-1900 period of time. The documents cover



ANKARA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Turkey Ghassan Al-Zawawi receives a copy of the book 'Kuwait in Ottoman Documents.' — KUNA

a significant period of the Kuwaiti history in the second half of the 19th century. — KUNA





Panic-buying returns as Melbourne braces for lengthy lockdown

## Hezbollah chief blasts US envoy as 'military ruler'

Page 6

Page 7



BISHKEK: A medical person assists an elderly man on the way to an ambulance in front of a medical facility for people suffering from coronavirus disease and pneumonia in Bishkek. — AFP

# 'Second wave' batters ex-Soviet Central Asia

## Coronavirus: Bishkek has become a new regional epicenter

**BISHKEK:** At a call centre functioning as a coronavirus hotline in Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek, the volunteers manning the telephones are under siege. Call centre coordinator Askhat Abdykerimov says he and his team of more than 60 medics and medical students are now fielding at least 3,000 calls per week. "When the call centre first opened, we had plenty of calls of a non-medical nature," Abdykerimov told AFP. "Now nearly all calls are people ringing in with symptoms of coronavirus infections." Bishkek has become a new regional epicenter of the disease that has re-emerged with a vengeance since Kyrgyzstan and fellow ex-Soviet neighbors Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan began relaxing stay-at-home restrictions in May.

Even Turkmenistan, which still insists it is virus-free, on Monday welcomed a 10-day WHO mission that will examine the secretive country's response to the pandemic. In Kyrgyzstan, registered daily infections have twice topped 500 this month—more than the total number of people recorded as ill with coronavirus at the time the lockdown was relaxed in late May. The country has reported more than 8,000 cases but many say the real number of infections is higher, pointing to overflowing hospitals and social media timelines thick

with condolences and cries for assistance.

A lack of tests, as well as their poor quality, are two reasons coronavirus is increasingly not being diagnosed or counted as a cause of death, experts say. Aigul Sarykbayeva, a 54-year-old queuing for a drip treatment at the capital's main indoor sports venue—recently repurposed as a hospital—has not yet been able

to get tested for the virus. But after battling to secure a lung scan, Sarykbayeva was diagnosed with pneumonia—a condition caused by the virus that she said is ripping through her neighborhood. "I sometimes think to myself, is there anyone I know who isn't ill? Absolutely everyone is ill," she told AFP.

### Firework fury

Kazakhstan, the richest of the five Central Asian states, has also seen its hospitals overwhelmed and drug supplies squeezed as registered cases have grown four-fold since the beginning of last month to top 48,000. Yevgeny Yerinin, a man who was in a long queue to buy medicines in the former capital Almaty, said he had considered coronavirus a "joke" and "something political" before his grandfather died from the virus and his elderly mother grew seriously ill.

Complaints poured onto social media on Monday after officials marked a public holiday honoring the capital Nur-Sultan—named in honor of ex-leader Nursultan Nazarbayev—with an ostentatious fireworks display in the city. Dimash Kudaibergen, a singer with a massive following in China as well as his homeland, was among those who criticized the move that came as the official virus death toll reached 264 people. "Fireworks in honor of what?" the star wrote on his Instagram page with 3.3 million followers. "In honor of taking the first place for coronavirus cases?"

### Bottlenecks

While Kazakhstan has this month reintroduced some of the restrictions that it first imposed in March, officials in Kyrgyzstan have said they are not considering a second lockdown. The government has admitted that pandemic-related aid received from international donors was used to pay state salaries and plug budget holes compounded by lockdown, rather than strengthen the health system. Across the corruption-prone region, the surge in cases has helped fuel accusations that officials are embezzling donor money.

One place where most agree aid has been put to good use is the Bishkek call centre, which was briefly closed for disinfection in June after two volunteers caught the virus. The importance of the centre, which began with just 12 volunteers in April and advises patients on further treatment, has led some to argue it should take on more staff. But Shamil Ibragimov, director of the national branch of the Soros Foundation that supported the project at the beginning, said that would only achieve so much. "We can expand the centre (again), but that will not add more mobile brigades or hospital beds," Ibragimov said. "Everywhere you look in the system, there are bottlenecks." — AFP

**Kazakhstan hospitals overwhelmed; drug supplies squeezed**



## Rain pounds central Japan, 55 feared dead in the south

**KURUME:** Torrential rain pounded the centre of Japan yesterday as authorities said 55 people were feared dead in days of heavy downpours that have triggered devastating landslides and terrifying floods. Rains that began early Saturday on the island of Kyushu have already caused widespread damage across a swathe of the southwestern portion of the country, causing rivers to burst their banks and hillsides to collapse.

The weather front was now moving north, and yesterday morning the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) issued warnings for Gifu and Nagano prefectures in central Japan, though it downgraded the advisories from its top level by midday. "In these areas, heavy rains are at an unprecedented level," a JMA official said at an early morning briefing. "Especially in areas designated as high risk for landslides and flooding, the possibility is extremely high that some kind of disaster is already happening," he warned.

At least 80,000 rescue workers have already been deployed in a desperate effort to reach survivors stranded by flooding and landslides. Late Tuesday, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledged to double the number of troops involved in the rescue effort to 20,000. The toll in the disaster has risen steadily as rescue workers discover new casualties. Government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said 52 deaths had been confirmed with three more people feared dead. The toll is expected to rise, with more than a dozen people reported missing, and authorities investigating whether six additional deaths are linked to the disaster.

### 'I was terrified'

In hardest-hit Kyushu, the rains had



KURUME, Japan: A car is submerged in floodwaters following a torrential rain in Kurume, Fukuoka prefecture. — AFP

mostly stopped yesterday morning, as residents tried to come to terms with extensive damage. Naomi Nishimura told Japan's NNN broadcaster that her parents had been killed in flooding in Hitooshi City in Kumamoto region. "Even though a neighbor came over and pleaded with my parents to evacuate, they didn't go... because I had told them that I'd come home (that day)," the tearful woman said as she attempted to clean her parents' flood-devastated home.

In Kashima city in northern Kyushu's Saga region, a woman was mopping the floor of a local souvenir shop inundated when a nearby river burst its banks. "It usually settles at the very edge of that stone bridge, but this time the water splashed up without stopping," she said. "The water rose so fast that I was terrified. I was too scared and shaky to do anything. I just kept going this way and that," she added, surrounded by knick-knacks now coated in mud.

Non-mandatory evacuation orders have now been issued for 1.4 million people, with millions more under lower-level warnings. But the coronavirus has complicated evacuation efforts, with the need to maintain so-

cial distancing reducing capacity at shelters. Japan has been relatively lightly affected by the pandemic, with just over 20,000 cases and fewer than 1,000 deaths. But local media reported that some people were preferring to sleep in cars rather than risk infection at shelters. At some facilities, cardboard walls were set up to separate families and try to reduce the risk of infection.

Authorities have warned that the rains will continue. "The rain front is expected to stay at least until Friday, and a wide swathe of the country... will likely have heavy rains," said Yoshihisa Nakamoto, the chief of the weather agency's forecast division, at a late morning press conference. "Please be extremely vigilant for potential landslides, flooding rivers and inundation on low-lying areas," he warned. Japan is in the middle of its annual rainy season, which frequently unleashes deadly floods and landslides. Experts say climate change has intensified the risks of heavy rains, because a warmer atmosphere holds more water. In 2018, more than 200 people died in devastating floods in western Japan. — AFP

## Ignoring outrage, Trump makes good on 'WHO pullout'

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump on Tuesday formally started the withdrawal of the United States from the World Health Organization, making good on threats to deprive the UN body of its top funding source over its response to the coronavirus. Public health advocates and Trump's political opponents voiced outrage at the departure from the Geneva-based body, which leads the global fight on maladies from polio to measles to mental health—as well as COVID-19, at a time when cases have again been rising around the world.

After threatening to suspend the \$400 million in annual US contributions and then announcing a withdrawal, the Trump administration has formally sent a notice to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, a State Department spokesperson said. The withdrawal of the key WHO founding member is effective in one year—July 6, 2021. Joe Biden, Trump's presumptive Democratic opponent in November elections, vowed he would immediately end the pullout if he won the White House.

"Americans are safer when America is engaged in strengthening global health. On my first day as President, I will rejoin the WHO and restore our leadership on the world stage," Biden wrote on Twitter. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus responded to the news with a one-word tweet—"Together!"—as he linked to a discussion by US health experts on how leaving the global body could impede efforts to prevent future pandemics. In line with conditions set when the WHO was set

up in 1948, the United States can leave within one year but must meet its remaining assessed financial obligations, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

### 'Total control'

In late May, Trump said that China exerted "total control" over the WHO and accused the UN body led by Tedros, an Ethiopian doctor and diplomat, of failing to implement reforms. Blaming China for the coronavirus, Trump, a frequent critic of the UN, said the United States would redirect funding "to other worldwide and deserving, urgent, global public health needs." Democratic lawmakers have accused Trump of seeking to deflect criticism from his handling of the pandemic in the United States, which has suffered by far the highest death toll of any nation despite the president's stated hope that the virus will disappear.

"To call Trump's response to COVID chaotic and incoherent doesn't do it justice," said Senator Robert Menendez, the top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee. "This won't protect American lives or interests—it leaves Americans sick and America alone," he said. Representative Ami Bera, himself a physician, said that the United States and World Health Organization had worked "hand in hand" to eradicate smallpox and nearly defeat polio. "Our cases are increasing," Bera said of COVID-19. "If the WHO is to blame: why has the US been left behind while many countries from South Korea to New Zealand to Vietnam to Germany return to normal?"

Even some of Trump's Republican allies had voiced hope that he was exerting pressure rather than making a final decision to abandon the World Health Organization. The investigative news outlet ProPublica reported last month that most of Trump's aides were blindsided by the WHO withdrawal announcement, which he made during an appearance about China. — AFP



## International

# Trump's niece describes US president as lying narcissist

## Trump shaped by bullying father, niece says

**NEW YORK:** Donald Trump's niece describes the US president as a lying narcissist who was shaped by his domineering father, according to excerpts of her memoir published Tuesday. The White House immediately hit back, describing Mary Trump's "Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man" as "a book of falsehoods." The memoir is due out on July 14 amid a legal battle to stop its publication and is already a best-seller on Amazon.

Mary, a clinical psychologist, writes that Trump saw "cheating as a way of life," according to The New York Times. She accuses Trump of "hubris and willful ignorance" stretching back to his younger days. She alleges that the future US leader paid someone else to take the SAT pre-collegiate exam, helping him get into the University of Pennsylvania's prestigious Wharton business school. The Times doesn't explain how she knew. "The absurd SAT allegation is completely false," said deputy White House press secretary Sarah Matthews.

The 240-page book says Trump is a product of his "sociopath" father Fred Trump who created an abusive and traumatic home life, The Washington Post reported. "(The president) said his father was loving and not at all hard on him as a child," Matthews said in response. The memoir is billed as the first unflattering portrayal of Trump by a family insider. The president's younger brother Robert Trump tried to block publication, arguing that Mary was violating a non-disclosure agreement signed in

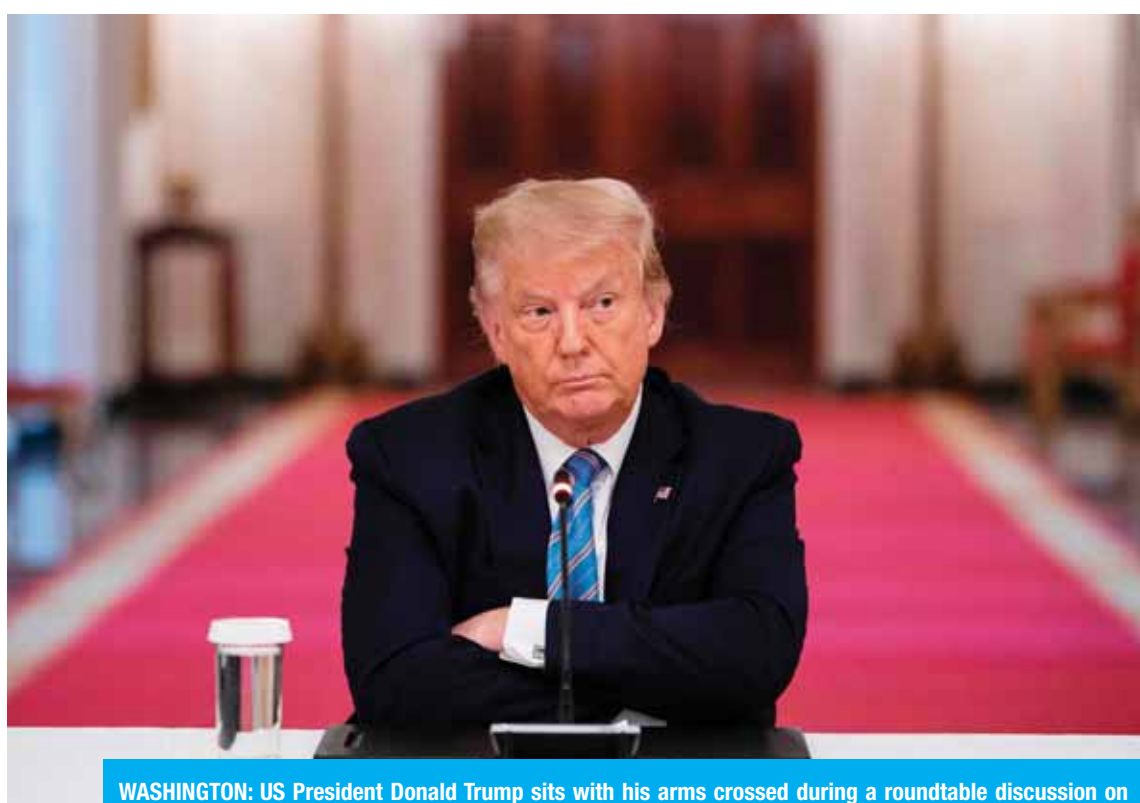
2001 after the settlement of her grandfather's estate. Last week, a New York appeals judge ruled that Simon & Schuster is allowed to release the memoir,



### White House cries foul, hits back

saying it was "not a party to the agreement."

Mary is the daughter of Fred Trump Jr, Trump's older brother, who died in 1981 from complications related to alcoholism. She writes that her uncle meets all the clinical criteria for being a narcissist, according to The New York Times. "Mary Trump and her book's publisher may claim to be acting in the public interest, but this book is clearly in the author's own financial self-interest," Matthews said. The book is set to be the latest bombshell book to dish dirt on Trump after former aide John Bolton's tome, which describes the Republican leader as corrupt and incompetent, hit shelves last month. Trump has described that book as "fiction." — AFP



**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump sits with his arms crossed during a roundtable discussion on the Safe Reopening of America's Schools during the coronavirus pandemic, in the East Room of the White House. — AFP

#### News in brief

#### 180 men extrajudicially killed

**OUAGADOUGOU:** The bodies of at least 180 men found in northern Burkina Faso suggest they were extrajudicially executed by the army, Human Rights Watch said in a report. The authorities have previously faced accusations of extrajudicial killings in the war against a jihadist insurgency that they have been waging since 2015. The dead, who were men mostly from the Fulani and Peul ethnic groups—communities targeted by the insurgents for recruitment—were buried by residents of the northern town of Djibo between April and May. "So many of the dead were blindfolded, had their hands tied up... and were shot in the head," one of the town's community leaders told Human Rights Watch (HRW) in the report released Wednesday. "Mass graves containing at least 180 bodies have been discovered in recent months, and available evidence suggests the involvement of government security forces in extrajudicial mass killings," the international watchdog said. — AFP

#### China's 'preferences in US'

**WASHINGTON:** The head of the FBI said Tuesday that China is pushing its preferences in the US election as part of broad intelligence operations, whose economic impact he called unprecedented. Christopher Wray, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, did not say whether China backed either President Donald Trump or his presumptive Democratic rival Joe Biden, both of whom have harshly criticized Beijing. "China's malign foreign influence campaign targets our policies, our positions, 24/7, 365 days a year," Wray said at the Hudson Institute. "So it's not an election-specific threat; it's really more of an all-year, all-the-time threat. But certainly that has implications for elections and they certainly have preferences that go along with that." — AFP

#### Trump lashes out at Harvard

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump lashed out at Harvard University on Tuesday, calling its decision to move all its courses online in the fall due to the coronavirus pandemic "ridiculous." "I think it's ridiculous. I think it's an easy way out. And I think they ought to be ashamed of themselves," Trump said at a White House roundtable discussion, during which he called for schools and universities to reopen for the next semester. Trump, who is campaigning for reelection in November, has taken a bullish approach to reopening the country even as virus infections continue to spike, particularly the south and west. "Everybody wants it. The moms want it. The dads want it. The kids want it. It's time to do it," he said. — AFP

#### US restricts visas to Chinese

**WASHINGTON:** The United States said Tuesday it was restricting visas to Chinese officials over Tibet, renewing a call for "meaningful autonomy" in the predominantly Buddhist region. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he was taking action against an unspecified number of officials under a new US law that presses China to let Americans visit Tibet. "Unfortunately, Beijing has continued systematically to obstruct travel to the Tibetan Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas by US diplomats and other officials, journalists and tourists, while PRC officials and other citizens enjoy far greater access to the United States," Pompeo said in a statement. Pompeo restricted visas to Chinese officials determined to be "substantially involved" in the exclusion of foreigners from Tibetan areas. — AFP

## Hezbollah chief blasts US envoy as 'military ruler'

**BEIRUT:** Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah Tuesday blasted the US ambassador to Lebanon as a "military ruler" who was inciting tensions after she accused the party of stealing billions from state coffers. Tensions have soared between the powerful Iran-backed Shiite party and the outspoken envoy, Dorothy Shea, since she accused the party last month of spiriting away billions of dollars of state money at a time of acute economic crisis. In an interview with Saudi-owned news channel Al-Hadath, Shea also said the US was reviewing Prime Minister Hassan Diab's government's links with



**BEIRUT:** An image grab from an Iran Press video shows the head of Lebanon's Shiite movement Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah, delivering a televised speech from an undisclosed location. — AFP

Hezbollah, considered by the US as a terrorist organization. "Since the new ambassador arrived in

Lebanon ...she has dealt with Lebanon as though she is a military ruler, or a high commissary, as though she has authority," Nasrallah said. "Every day she attacks (Hezbollah)... she insults and offends us," Nasrallah said in a televised speech, criticizing the government for keeping silent. "She is pushing the Lebanese towards infighting, sedition and civil strife," he said. Nasrallah said Hezbollah lawmakers in parliament will ask the foreign ministry to summon Shea and reprimand her.

The Lebanese Shiite movement and its allies command a majority in parliament and the cabinet. Shea was already summoned for a meeting with Foreign Minister Nassif Hitti late last month following her interview with Al-Hadath which prompted a south Lebanon judge to issue a non-binding and now-defunct order banning the Lebanese press from reporting her comments. Shea is "interfering in appointments and in government and in the economy," Nasrallah said. "She is attacking the Lebanese and inciting them towards sedition and strife." — AFP



**PORT-SAINTE-MARIE:** French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin (center) answers journalists' questions as he visits the Gendarmerie of Port-Sainte-Marie near Agen to pay tribute in Gendarme Melanie Lemece who was fatally hit by a car at a military checkpoint on the D813 road. — AFP

## France new interior minister: Rising star despite rape claim

**PARIS:** France's new Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, aged 37, is a rising star of the right-wing of French politics but his promotion has outraged feminists because of a years-old rape claim that remains under investigation. The son of a bar owner and a mother who worked as a cleaner at France's central bank, Darmanin takes on one of the most exposed portfolios in French politics—one that has ruined careers but also propelled his mentor Nicolas Sarkozy to the presidency.

Darmanin's relatively young age, ambition and loyalty to President Emmanuel Macron make him a shining example of the so-called Macronie elite serving the head of state since he came to power in 2017. But his rapid rise has come despite a complaint filed in 2017 from a woman, Sophie Patterson-Spatz, who alleged he raped her in 2009 after she sought his help to have a criminal record expunged.

Darmanin was at the time an official with the legal affairs unit of the right-wing Republicans party's predecessor, the UMP, to which he used to belong before joining Macron's Republic on the Move (LREM). He admits there was a sexual relationship with Patterson-Spatz but insists it was consensual. The charges were dismissed by prosecutors in 2018 due to a lack of evidence of coercion. But earlier this year, appeals judges in Paris ordered the reopening of the investigation into the allegations, saying the preliminary investigation was not sufficient grounds to drop the case.

#### 'Slap in the face'

As Darmanin was taking office Tuesday, some 20 feminists protested nearby, shouting "Darmanin resign!" and "Darmanin rapist." "It's a mighty slap in the face Emmanuel Macron has delivered to all those who mobilized against sexual violence," added Socialist senator Laurence Rossignol, a former women's rights minister. "You are accused of rape and you get to be the number one cop in France," seethed the Osez le Feminisme (Dare Feminism) collective, which has launched a petition for Darmanin's resignation.

Lawyers for Patterson-Spatz said in a statement that that were "amazed if not dismayed by his appointment". An Elysee source said the rape complaint made against Darmanin "did not pose an obstacle" to his nomination and the case appeared to be "going in the right direction" for him. And new government spokesman Gabriel Attal argued Darmanin had to benefit from the presumption of innocence. "There are investigations—and this is normal—but we cannot go further than that by assuming that just because there are investigations, there have been crimes," he said after the first meeting of the cabinet under new Prime Minister Jean Castex after Monday's reshuffle. Prosecutors have dismissed allegations by a second woman who had accused Darmanin of using his position to seek sexual favors while mayor of the northern city of Tourcoing between 2014 and 2017 — a claim he also denies.

He takes over at the ministry from Christophe Castaner, whose sometimes troubled two-year stint was marked by allegations of racism in the police force and complaints from officers he did not defend them. Politically, Darmanin is seen as standing to the right of Castaner, who came to Macron's government from the Socialist Party. Darmanin cut his political teeth in Sarkozy's 2007-2012 administration, joined parliament in 2012 and was elected mayor of Tourcoing in 2012. — AFP

## Dutch 'preachers, salesmen' lead EU frugality drive

**THE HAGUE:** The Netherlands will be at the centre of upcoming talks over European spending on the coronavirus crisis, driven by a mix of traditional Calvinist frugality and political reality, experts say. As part of the "frugal four" along with Austria, Denmark and Sweden, the Dutch have enraged many in the EU by putting the brakes on a 750-billion-euro (\$850 billion) rescue package for the worst-hit countries. Over the past decade the Netherlands has graduated from Germany's thrifty henchman to the loudest voice among northern European penny-pinchers fighting supposed southern profligacy.

The key role played by the Dutch is underscored by leaders lining up to meet Prime Minister Mark Rutte to break the impasse and reach a deal at a crucial EU summit next week. The Dutch position that has been harshly criticized has deep cultural and historical roots, analysts say. "It really has to do with our cultural background. We're a nation of preachers and salesmen, as they always say," said Jos Versteeg, an analyst at Amsterdam-based InsingerGilissen private bank. "In the north it has all to do with Calvinism and Protestantism—live a sober life, don't show your wealth. In the south (of Europe) there is a different culture," he told AFP.

#### 'Hard work, frugal living'

The Dutch were early followers of John Calvin, the reformist Protestant theologian who broke from the Catholic Church in the early 16th century, and his beliefs still influence this small country. Former Dutch premier Jan Peter Balkenende once called the Netherlands "the most Calvinist nation in the world", focused on "hard work, frugal living and tenacity of opinion".

The Netherlands also has a long history as a trading nation dating back to the Dutch East India Company—which has now come under scrutiny due to its links to colonialism and slavery. In the 21st century, the Dutch have become better known in Europe as the scourge of any bail-out destined for the south, most famously during the Greek debt crisis. This has often stirred up bad blood, for example when Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the hardline chief of the Eurogroup during the Greek crisis, quipped that bailed out countries spent their money on "drinks and women". Now the Dutch are taking a similar line with the COVID-19 package, insisting that the rescue package should not involve grants to affected countries, but loans with tough demands for reform. The Dutch are also in the hot seat, since normally frugal Germany surprised many by joining with France in proposing the coronavirus bailout. Rutte will meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Thursday, after meeting French President Emmanuel Macron and EU Council chief Charles Michel in the coming days. — AFP



## International

# China opens headquarters for its secret police in Hong Kong

## A public display of its tightening control over the finance hub

**HONG KONG:** China opened a new office yesterday for its intelligence agents to operate openly in Hong Kong for the first time under a tough new security law, in a public display of its tightening control over the finance hub. The new base is located in a rapidly converted hotel overlooking the city's Victoria Park, a location that has hosted democracy protests for years, including an annual vigil marking Beijing's deadly Tiananmen crackdown. A plaque bearing the security agency's name was unveiled yesterday in front of Hong Kong government and mainland officials—including Beijing's top envoy to the city and the commander of the Chinese army barracks in Hong Kong.

Police blocked roads around the former Metropark Hotel and surrounded it with water-filled barriers. A Chinese flag was unfurled on a pole erected outside the building while a plaque with the national emblem went up overnight. City leader Carrie Lam—a pro-Beijing appointee—hailed the opening as “a historic moment” and said China's intelligence apparatus would be an “important partner” in helping to safeguard national security. Luo Huining, Beijing's top envoy to Hong Kong, said the city had “bade farewell to the days when it was defenseless in national security”.

Beijing imposed the new law on Hong Kong last week targeting acts of subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign collusion, in response to huge and often violent democracy protests that erupted last year. The law is the most radical change in Hong Kong's freedoms and autonomy since Britain handed the city back to China in 1997. Similar national security laws are used to crush dissent on the mainland and police in Hong Kong have already arrested people voicing certain political views now deemed illegal, such as advocating independence or greater autonomy.

### Spear tip of security apparatus

The content of the security law was kept

secret until it was enacted last Tuesday, bypassing Hong Kong's legislature. China has said it will have jurisdiction over the most serious cases, toppling the legal firewall that has existed between its Communist Party-controlled courts and Hong Kong's independent judiciary since the handover.



### First time under a tough new security law

Among many precedent-setting provisions in the law is authorization for China's security agents to work openly inside Hong Kong, with powers to investigate and prosecute national security crimes. Until now Hong Kong's own police and judiciary had complete jurisdiction over the semi-autonomous finance hub.

But China argues national security is the responsibility of the central government and says the law is needed to restore stability. On the authoritarian mainland, China's secret police are the spear tip of a highly efficient and ruthless security apparatus that pursues critics and scrubs the public sphere of dissent. In his speech, Luo rejected criticism of the mainland legal system, saying “the Chinese mainland has a healthy legal system and a sound environment for the rule of law”. Observers have regularly raised concerns about due process in the country, where the courts have a conviction rate of about 99 percent.



**HONG KONG:** This handout photo from the Hong Kong government's Information Services Department (ISD) shows (left to right) director of the liaison office of the Central People's Government in Hong Kong and the national security adviser to the Committee for Safeguarding National Security, Luo Huining, Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam as they unveil a plaque during the opening of the new 'Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government' in Hong Kong. — AFP

### New boss

Last week Beijing appointed Zheng Yanxiong to head up the agency. A party hardliner, Zheng is best known for his involvement in a clampdown against protests across the border in neighboring Guangdong province. One of his deputies is Li Jiangzhou, a veteran public security officer who has worked in the Liaison Office, the body that represents Beijing in Hong Kong. Little is known about the other, Sun Qingye.

Last week the South China Morning Post described Sun as a senior official from China's intelligence agency, according to government sources. The opening of the new office comes little more than a day after Hong Kong announced expanded search and surveillance powers for police investigating national security crimes. These rules also empower Hong Kong police to order internet take-down notices if posts and comments are deemed to breach national security. — AFP

## Panic-buying returns as Melbourne braces for lengthy lockdown

**MELBOURNE:** Shoppers in Australia's second-biggest city stripped supermarket shelves yesterday as millions in Melbourne prepared for a return to virus lockdown, with warnings the new restrictions could prompt a mental health crisis. Five million residents were ordered back into a six-week lockdown beginning midnight yesterday as soaring community transmission of the coronavirus brings more than 100 new cases daily.

A further 134 infections were detected in the past 24 hours—small in comparison to the tens of thousands in hard-hit countries such as the US and Brazil, but considered a major spike in Australia, which had otherwise been successful in containing COVID-19. The country's largest supermarket chain, Woolworths, said it had reimposed buying limits on items including pasta, vegetables and sugar after shoppers rushed to stores across Victoria state.

Experts have warned that people everywhere will have to get used to the “new normal” of on-and-off restrictions as new clusters emerge and subside, while there are also concerns over the economic and mental health impacts the measures will

## Killing of Iraqi expert stirs fear of new violent phase

**BAGHDAD:** The killing of jihadism expert Hisham Al-Hashemi has stirred fears Iraq is entering a dark and violent phase, as boiling tensions between pro-Iran factions and the government reach new heights. Hashemi, 47, was gunned down outside his home in east Baghdad late Monday by masked assailants on motorcycles. While the perpetrators remain on the run, experts say the death signals a dramatic turn for political violence brewing since mass protests erupted in October.

“Armed forces of various affiliations have killed protesters and others willing to publicly criticize the government and armed forces with impunity,” said Belkis Wille of Human Rights Watch. “But killing someone of his stature smacks of a country where some groups have become so emboldened by the complete impunity for serious abuses, that they can kill anyone they want to without paying a price,” he said. Over the course of years, Hashemi had developed a vast network encompassing top decision makers, former jihadists and rival political parties, often mediating among them.

His exceptional access had granted him a level of protection, those close to him said, but the balance started to tip in October. His support for popular protests against a government seen as too close to Iran infuriated Tehran-backed factions in Iraq's Hashed al-Shaabi military network. Hashemi skirted threats to mediate between protesters and senior government officials, even as activists were fatally shot outside their homes and dozens more abducted. “The parameters changed starting in October. There was a new modus operandi, and a shift in the confrontation with pro-Iran factions,” said Adel Bakawan, an Iraqi expert who knew Hashemi.

### 'Won't be the last'

Other experts say the real turning point was in

## Face masks and fist bumps: Singapore's pandemic poll

**SINGAPORE:** Face masks at polling stations, rallies banned and candidates greeting voters with fist bumps: Singapore holds a general election tomorrow even as it recovers from a major coronavirus outbreak. Here is a look at campaigning during the pandemic, and safety measures the affluent city-state has rolled out to protect voters from the lingering risk of falling prey to the virus:

### How virus affected campaign

Rallies are banned to reduce the risk of infection, but mask-wearing candidates are allowed to meet constituents and campaign door-to-door in small groups. Fist bumps have replaced handshakes as, under official election guidelines, contact must be minimized. Campaigning began last week and has generally been muted, but there were raucous moments at the weekend when crowds of rival supporters tried to out-chant each other. This prompted a warning from the elections department that campaigners shouting party slogans risked spreading the virus. Candidates have been given extra airtime on national TV to address voters and have been livestreaming campaign pitches using internet platforms such as Zoom and Facebook.

### Will this help or hinder govt?

Observers say the ban on election rallies will likely hinder the small crop of opposition parties, who struggle to communicate directly with voters in a country where the mainstream media is largely pro-government. “The resource differences in terms of packaging and getting messages out on the mainstream media makes a big difference,” Ian Chong, an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore, told AFP.

The government however says all candidates have a chance to get their message across due to extra TV airtime. It has also provided venues for all candidates to livestream speeches. And some opposition groups think that a largely virtual campaign may have helped them. “In a way, this does level the playing field and can also save some parties from expending unnecessary financial resources, especially if their rallies were sparsely attended,” Jose Raymond, chairman of the Singapore People's Party, told the Today news site. But Singapore's weak and divided opposition holds just a handful of parliamentary seats and is no threat to the People's Action Party (PAP), which has ruled for decades and is assured of victory.

### What precautions are in place?

Voters will be required to wear masks and be given a recommended two-hour window to cast their ballots, while senior citizens will be encouraged to vote in the morning. Everyone must go through a temperature screening, sanitize their hands and put on disposable gloves before receiving their ballot paper. People have been asked to leave the polling station within five minutes of voting. Polling booths and pens will be cleaned at least once every half hour. — AFP



**ALBURY:** Commuters queue as police in the southern New South Wales (NSW) border city of Albury check cars crossing the state border from Victoria after authorities closed the border due to an outbreak of COVID-19 coronavirus in Victoria. — AFP

bring. “As frustrating as it is I support (the lockdown) — but ask me again in six weeks,” stoic Melbourne resident Michael Albert said. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said the Melbourne lockdown would cost the economy up to Aus\$1 billion (\$700 million) a week, telling public broadcaster ABC the burden would “fall heavily on businesses”.

“This is not the situation that anybody wanted to be in, but it is the reality that we must confront,” said state Premier Daniel Andrews. Restaurants and cafes will be limited to serving takeaway food, while gyms, beauty salons and cinemas will be forced to close again. Residents will be restricted to their homes except for work, exercise, medical care or to



**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi demonstrators stage a symbolic funeral for slain Iraqi jihadism expert Hisham Al-Hashemi on Tuesday in Tahrir Square. — AFP

January, when a US strike on Baghdad killed Iranian General Qasem Soleimani and Hashed deputy head Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis. Hardline factions within the Hashed, particularly those close to Iran like Kataeb Hezbollah, vowed revenge against both the US and its allies inside Iraq, whatever the cost. As someone with close ties to foreign governments, Hashemi was seen as a potential target, and he left Baghdad for a few days in late January, he told AFP at the time. “Hisham was aware that things had shifted,” said Renad Mansour, a researcher at London-based Chatham House who worked with Hashemi for years.

“The killing of Abu Mahdi unleashed all of these groups that he had been trying to control and centralise. We're still feeling the shock waves,” he said. Hashed al-Shaabi itself published a statement mourning Hashemi's murder. “We demand security forces follow up on this crime and catch the terrorist group that assassinated Hashemi,” it said. Within the network, Kataeb Hezbollah has accused then-spy chief Mustafa Al-Kadhemi of complicity in the deadly strike and deeply opposed his rise to Iraq's premiership in May. Hashemi had advised Kadhemi for years, a relationship that put the expert in “danger” when the former intelligence head became premier, those close to him said. — AFP

buy essentials—a return to social isolation that was only recently lifted. Professor Michael Kyrios, a clinical psychologist at Flinders University, warned that Victoria needed to brace for a “coming mental health crisis” as a result.

“This will likely place the mental health care system in a precarious situation with very limited ability to mobilize resources in response to the increased incidence of mental illness arising from the COVID crisis,” he said. Health authorities say they have linked many of the Melbourne coronavirus cases to hotels where residents returning from overseas were being quarantined.

Local media reported security guards had breached infection control regulations—including allegedly having sex with guests held in isolation—prompting the government to replace the private contractors with prison staff and launch an inquiry. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the country was now considering limiting the number of citizens returning from abroad, after Victoria began diverting international flights to other cities to ease the burden on its quarantine facilities. “There is a volume that can be accommodated by the (other) states and territories currently, but they certainly wouldn't want to see that increase,” he told reporters in Canberra. Thousands of health workers are knocking on doors in the worst-affected areas of Melbourne urging residents to get tested for coronavirus, with officials saying about 10,000 people have refused after being influenced by online disinformation. — AFP

## UN: Lives at risk as trafficking in faulty masks surges

**VIENNA:** Lives are at risk as the new coronavirus pandemic has led to a surge in the trafficking of substandard masks, sanitizers and other medical products, the UN warned yesterday. Organized criminal groups—exploiting fears and uncertainties surrounding the virus—are providing such products to cater to a sudden surge in demand and the supply gap, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a report.

UNODC said it expected criminals to shift their focus to vaccine-related trafficking once one was developed. Fraud and scams as well as cyberattacks targeting critical infrastructure have followed the spread of the virus, it added. “Health and lives are at risk with criminals exploiting the COVID-19 crisis to cash in on public anxiety and increased demand for personal protective equipment and medications,” UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly said in a statement. “Transnational organized crime groups take advantage of gaps in national regulation and oversight to peddle substandard and falsified medical products.”

An Interpol-coordinated operation to target illegal online sales of medicines and medical products with participation of 90 countries in March led to 121 arrests worldwide and the seizure of substandard and fake face masks, as well as more than \$14 million (12 million euros) worth of potentially dangerous pharmaceutical products, the report said. Compared to an earlier 2018 operation, Interpol reported an increase of about 18 percent in seizures of unauthorized antiviral medication and a more than 100 percent increase in seizures of unauthorized chloroquine, an anti-malaria drug used to treat coronavirus patients in some countries. UNODC called for increased international cooperation, strengthened legal frameworks and penalties and more training for those who work in the medical product sector, saying “only a common approach will enable effective responses”. — AFP



THURSDAY, JULY 9, 2020

# Business

## Zain offers unlimited opportunities on Kuwait's most powerful 5G network

### Free 5G device with unlimited 5G Internet for KD 15 monthly only

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the launch of its latest competitive offering for 5G Internet plans dedicated to postpaid customers. Through the new offer, Zain opens up a world of unlimited opportunities on its 5G network, considered the largest and most powerful in Kuwait with nationwide coverage.

The new offer comes in line with Zain's strategic vision towards meeting the needs and aspirations of customers in the era of digital transformation. The company is keen on launching the latest innovative products and services bundled with the most revolutionary technologies to open up a world of unlimited opportunities. Zain will always seek to meet the expectations of its customers, allowing them to enjoy a superior telecommunications experience on its most advanced network.

The limited time offer (available throughout

July) allows postpaid customers to enjoy 5G Internet technology with unlimited caps, in addition to getting a FREE 5G Router or 5G Hotspot



**Competitive offer for Kuwait's postpaid customers**

device, whichever best suits their personal or professional needs, all for KD 15 monthly only. Customers can easily get the offer through the Zain Online Store ([kw.zain.com/5G](http://kw.zain.com/5G)) and enjoy

FREE delivery to their doorstep, noting that Zain follows strict health protocols that adhere to official health guidelines to ensure the safety of customers and staff when delivering products.

Zain continuously works on improving all its services to continue its tireless efforts towards adopting the latest and most advanced solutions, with the aim of maintaining its leadership position in the Kuwaiti market. The company affirms its promise to always offer a variety of services and solutions to meet the personal and professional needs of Kuwait's largest family of subscribers.

Zain's current strategy is centered around digital transformation leadership and empowering the community to enjoy a smarter lifestyle, as well as using advanced technology to enable an easier and more flexible life. The company places itself as an active partner in creating the future of smart life in Kuwait.



## Export gloom sours Pakistan's prized mango season

**MULTAN, Pakistan:** Dwindling harvests, drooping demand and export supply chains hit by the coronavirus are biting into Pakistan's mango industry, with producers of the prized fruit battling to weather a disastrous season. Across Pakistan's "mango belt" in Punjab and Sindh provinces, farmers say a long winter and changing rain patterns have slashed production by up to half this year—just as virus shut-downs sparked border restrictions and spiraling export costs.

"There are multiple problems that mango farmers are facing," said Rana Muhammad Azim, whose family has been producing the fruit in Punjab for generations. "The situation is extremely worrisome for us. The mangoes are ready, but no exporter is willing to take the risk and place orders," he said, adding that he was already suffering from a 40 percent decline in the harvest.

Pakistan produced more than 1.5 million tons of mangoes in 2019 — and exported a record 115,000 tons worth \$80 million—making it the sixth-largest exporter of the fruit in the world.

But Waheed Ahmed, head of a produce association in Pakistan, said exports have dropped around 40 percent compared to the same period last year, with just a few months left of the season. Known in South Asia as the "king of fruits", the mango originated in the Indian subcontinent with two dozen varieties grown in Pakistan.

The country's most treasured variety is the greenish-yellow Chaunsa, known for its rich, unique flavor and juicy pulp. The fruit also helps sweeten diplomatic relations, with Pakistan sending crates of its best produce to India's prime minister every year, regardless of the political climate between the hostile neighbours.

It has also earned a place in recent literary history,



A laborer sorts mangoes before packing them into boxes at a farm in Multan, Pakistan. —AFP

with renowned Pakistan author Mohammed Hanif longlisted for the prestigious Man Booker Prize for "A Case of Exploding Mangoes", a comic novel based on an unexplained 1988 plane crash that killed former president Muhammad Zia ul-Haq.

### Rotting fruits

With much of the world's air traffic grounded by the coronavirus, exports of the best prime, ripe fruit by plane to the US and Europe have been particularly hard hit, but ground transport has also been badly affected. Dozens of trucks piled high with the yellow fruit were stranded at the border with Iran last month, their precious cargo rotting in the searing 40-degree heat.

Even where trading has continued via sea to the key Middle East market—which accounts for 70 per-

cent of exports—demand has plunged. Since the virus took hold shoppers are making fewer outings to supermarkets and are wary of spending on luxury items, while Pakistani migrant workers who relish the fruit have returned home.

The domestic market brings far less revenue. In one bright spot, harvests were at least spared the ravages of the worst locust plague in 25 years, which wiped out entire vegetable and cotton harvests.

As flights resume and border restrictions are eased, growers hope to increase exports in the second half of the season to avoid a complete lost season. "The situation has forced us to think of new solutions," said producer Muhammad Ali Gardezi, who for the first time has taken his business online, delivering door-to-door in the age of social distancing. —AFP

## Six candidates battle it out for WTO leadership

**GENEVA:** Six candidates are vying to become the next head of the World Trade Organization—an institution which faced mammoth challenges even before the pandemic-driven global economic crisis struck. The window to enter the race slams shut yesterday, in a speeded-up contest to replace the outgoing WTO director-general Roberto Azevedo—the Brazilian career diplomat who is stepping down one year early at the end of August.

The six candidates in the running are from Egypt, Kenya, Mexico, Moldova, Nigeria and South Korea. The new chief must revive stalled trade talks, lay the ground for the 2021 ministerial conference—one of the WTO's major events—and thaw relations with Washington. The United States, which has threatened to leave the WTO, has blocked the organization's dispute settlement appeal system since December, and wants China moved up from the developing economies category.

In a surprise move in mid-May, Azevedo, 62, announced that he would end his second four-year term early for personal reasons, forcing the Geneva-based WTO's 164 member states to come up with a successor in just three months instead of the usual nine. Rather than an election, the procedure for selecting the next WTO boss relies on finding consen-

sus, with candidates gradually being eliminated in turn. A vote is possible as a measure of last resort, but that scenario has never occurred. In 1999, when countries could not decide between two runners, both candidates each served a three-year term.

The next incumbent faces a tough task, with the WTO caught in the middle of rising tensions between the United States and China. "If the process of choosing the next director-general is heavily politicized, that could block things up," a diplomatic source said.

If a consensus cannot be reached in time, one of the four deputy directors-general will take the reins in September on a caretaker basis.

### First African WTO boss?

The six candidates are South Korean Trade Minister Yoo Myung-hee; Kenya's former foreign minister Amina Mohamed; Mexico's former WTO deputy director-general Jesus Seade Kuri; former Nigerian foreign and finance minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; Egyptian former diplomat Hamid Mamdouh; and former Moldovan foreign minister Tudor Ulianoschi.

Of the directors-general since the WTO was created in 1995, three were from Europe, while one each came from Oceania, Asia and South America. There has never been a WTO leader from Africa and the continent fancies its chances this time, even though there is no regional rotation principle at the global trade body.

However, African nations have so far



If elected, Amina Mohamed of Kenya (left) would become the first woman and the first African to lead the World Trade Organization. But she could face challenges from New Zealand's Tim Groser (center) and Phil Hogan of Ireland. —Reuters

failed to convene around a single candidate. Expecting the contest to come in 2021, the African Union had given early official backing to three figures, among them Mamdouh, a veteran former senior WTO official. Mamdouh, 67, who is also a Swiss national, was the only one to declare his candidacy. Nigeria's decision to stand Okonjo-Iweala against him has triggered a legal dispute with the African Union. Nonetheless, "Nigeria's candidate is gaining ground within Africa," said a diplomatic source.

Okonjo-Iweala, 66, who chairs the board of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, said she was receiving "tremendous support". "I'm sure the African Union will make a decision to choose and support

the candidate that merits it," she told reporters in Geneva at a virtual press conference in late June.

The former World Bank number two insisted that the WTO—which has never had a female leader—must choose its next chief based on ability. "I hope that the WTO director-general will be elected first and foremost on merit. And then, if it happens to be a woman or an African, that is also good," she said. Kenya's sports minister Mohamed, 58, has also previously served as chair of the WTO general council and first ran for the post in 2013. She threw her hat in the ring just before nominations closed, meaning there are three women and three Africans in the contest. —AFP

## AirAsia's future in doubt, share price tumbles

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The future of top regional budget carrier AirAsia is in "significant doubt" due to the collapse in demand for air travel caused by coronavirus, its auditor warned, sending its share price tumbling 18 percent yesterday. The aviation industry is facing its biggest-ever crisis due to the pandemic, with airlines worldwide laying off huge numbers of staff while some have already gone out of business.

AirAsia, led by colorful chief executive Tony Fernandes, pioneered low-cost air travel across Asia in the early 2000s at a time of growing demand from a fast-emerging middle class. But on Monday the debt-laden Malaysian airline reported a record quarterly loss of 803 million ringgit (\$187 million) for the first three months of the year, after being forced to ground its fleet due to the virus. Auditor Ernst & Young said Tuesday that "travel and border restrictions implemented by countries around the world has led to a significant fall in demand for air travel which impacted the group's financial performance and cash flows".

It noted the "existence of material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt on the group's and the company's ability to continue as a going concern", in an unqualified audit opinion statement to the Kuala Lumpur stock exchange. The airline was already facing stiff competition from other low-cost carriers before the outbreak, and had reported a net loss of 283 million ringgit in 2019.

### 'Toughest challenge'

But the auditor also said AirAsia had "seen positive developments on its business operations" with the gradual lifting of travel restrictions in some countries. Trading in AirAsia's shares was halted yesterday morning, and they crashed more than 18 percent when it resumed in the afternoon. They pared their losses later to trade down about 10 percent at 0.77 ringgit. Even before Monday's dire results, the airline was already reported to have plans to slash hundreds of staff in response to the pandemic.

Fernandes said the coronavirus was "by far the toughest challenge we have faced since we began in 2001". But he also sought to strike a positive note: "Every crisis is an obstacle to overcome, and we have restructured the group into a leaner and tighter ship." Since operations resumed in late April, there had been a strong rebound in demand, he said. AirAsia had applied for bank loans to shore up liquidity, and was in talks about joint-ventures and collaborations that could result in additional investments in the company, he said. —AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: AirAsia planes are seen parked at Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2, during the movement control order due to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, in Sepang. —Reuters



Business

# Algeria to cut dependence on oil in new economic plan

## President seeks to develop non-energy sector

**ALGIERS:** OPEC member Algeria, facing financial pressure after a fall in energy revenue, will launch a new economic plan to reduce reliance on oil and gas and give the private sector a greater role, the government said on Tuesday. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, who was elected in December, has repeatedly vowed to reform the oil-reliant economy by developing the non-energy sector and seeking new funding sources.

A further drop in oil and gas earnings during the coronavirus pandemic forced the government to cut public spending and delay planned investment projects in sectors including energy. The new "economic and social revival plan" was discussed at a meeting chaired by Tebboune and attended by the prime minister as well as energy, finance, mines, agriculture and trade ministers, the presidency said in a statement.

"Building a new real economy requires launching initiatives and liberating them from bureaucracy and reviewing existing legal texts," the statement quoted Tebboune as saying at the meeting. "No distinction must be made between the public

and private sectors in creating wealth and jobs," he added. The new plan will keep unchanged the country's subsidy policy. The government subsidizes almost everything from basic foodstuffs to housing, medicine and fuel.

"This plan must preserve the social nature of the state and protect the purchasing power of citizens, especially the fragile class," Tebboune said. The authorities will unveil more details of the plan after final government approval in the coming days before being submitted to businessmen for debate, the statement said. The plan comes amid preparations for a referendum later this year on amendments to the constitution to boost freedoms and give parliament more powers as part of political reforms.

That followed more than a year of mass protests demanding the withdrawal of the ruling elite and prosecution of people involved in corruption, forcing veteran president Abdelaziz Bouteflika to end his 20-year rule in April 2019. The government banned the protests in mid-March to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus. —Reuters



### Algeria eyes new funding sources



A general view of an oil installation on the outskirts of In Amenas, Algeria. —AFP

## European shares hit by rising virus cases

**LONDON:** European shares edged lower yesterday, as surging coronavirus infections threatened a recovery in the global economy, with gains in defensive sectors helping limit losses. The pan-European STOXX 600 fell 0.4 percent, with banks, travel & leisure and energy companies dragging the main index lower. London-listed HSBC tumbled 4 percent after Bloomberg reported that U.S. President Donald Trump's top advisers weighed proposals to undermine the Hong Kong currency's peg to the US dollar. The proposal could possibly limit the ability of Hong Kong banks to buy dollars.

Finland's Nokia slumped 7.5 percent to the bottom of the STOXX 600 on concerns that the company was losing the business of its key client Verizon in the United States. JPMorgan down-

graded it to "neutral".

Market sentiment soured overnight on Wall Street as the US coronavirus outbreak crossed a grim milestone of over 3 million confirmed cases on Tuesday, while the World Health Organization acknowledged "evidence emerging" of the airborne spread of the virus. "European markets have continued to look soft this morning on concern that rising cases in the U.S. across the southern states could stall the recovery there," said Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets.

The STOXX 600 climbed to a near one-month high earlier this week as improving economic data and bets of a swift rebound in China drove gains, but investors remained cautious about the progress of an European Union recovery fund and the upcoming earnings season. Analysts expect companies listed on the STOXX 600 to report a 53.9 percent decline in profit in the second quarter, according to Refinitiv data. "While these expectations look broadly consistent with our economists' forecast of minus 15 percent global GDP growth in Q2, activity rebounded more than expected in May and June," equity analysts at Barclays wrote in a note.

London's blue-chip FTSE 100 edged 0.3 percent



An investor looks at screens showing stock market movements at a securities company in Fuyang in China's eastern Anhui province. —AFP

lower ahead of British finance minister Rishi Sunak's next round of plans to prevent a wave of job cuts. Swedish home appliance maker Electrolux jumped 6.7 percent after saying its second-quarter operating loss would be smaller than feared, helped by a 3 percent rise in June sales and cost controls. —Reuters

## India arrests S Korean CEO for gas leak at LG Polymers

**CHENNAI:** Indian police have arrested 12 LG Polymers officials, including its South Korean Chief Executive Sunkey Jeong, an officer said yesterday, two months after a gas leak at the company's south Indian chemical plant killed 12.

The arrests were made under a case of culpable homicide filed against the company, a unit of South Korea's LG Chem Ltd., and its officials, stemming from the leak that occurred in the early hours on May 7 in the port city of Visakhapatnam, the city police commissioner Rajiv Kumar Meena said.

"A total of twelve members including the CEO and two directors were arrested on Tuesday evening," Meena said, adding that among those

arrested were two directors, one of whom was a South Korean. LG Polymers said it had nothing to share in an email responding to a Reuters request for a comment on the arrests. Toxic styrene gas leaked from the chemical plant choking many people who were sleeping.

This week, a government-appointed committee recommended that the plant should be shifted away from human habitation and called for action against the top employees. It said LG Polymers had been negligent and warning systems were not working. The company had ignored potentially hazardous chemical reactions at the plant in April before the leak, when it was working with reduced staff due to a coronavirus lockdown, the committee said. The temperature inside the oldest of the three storage tanks holding styrene monomer, a liquid used in making polystyrene products, rose to more than six times the permitted level, after which it evaporated, the committee found.

LG Chem Ltd said on Monday it had co-operated with the investigation and would respond to the probe result and take corresponding measures. The police case included counts of culpable homicide, negligent handling of poisonous substances and



Indian police have arrested 12 LG Polymers officials, including its South Korean Chief Executive Sunkey Jeong, an officer said yesterday. —Reuters

causing hurt and endangering public life. Meena said the charges could draw prison terms of up to eight years if proven in court. —Reuters

## Australia faces economic setback

**SYDNEY:** A hard lockdown in Australia's second-largest city will likely erase nearly A\$5 billion of economic output over six weeks, slowing a broader national recovery and forcing the government to expand its already massive debt-funded stimulus.

Australia has been among the most successful countries in curbing the spread of the coronavirus but the lockdown in the state of Victoria and its capital Melbourne has hurt hopes of a faster and sharper economic recovery. "Our initial sense is that the re-opening reversal stemming from the lockdown will see the economy surrender some - but not all - of the better than expected trajectory," Deutsche Bank economist Phil Odanagho wrote in a note.

Crucially, the shutdown will close cross-border trade and movement between Victoria and New South Wales, which collectively account for more than half of

Australia's economy and population. The two states, which are separated by the Murray River and its lucrative farming districts, had previously remained open to each other even as other states closed their domestic borders. In 2019, the air passenger route between the state capitals of Sydney and Melbourne was the second-busiest in the world, according to industry analytics group OAG.

Westpac downgraded its forecasts for growth in Australia's A\$2 trillion economy to 4.2 percent contraction in 2020 from 4 percent previously. Westpac chief economist Bill Evans said "the events in Melbourne highlight the risks to this scenario around the containment of the virus; other shutdowns; and the inevitable savage loss in confidence were that to occur."

To be sure, other states and territories are sticking to their planned re-openings, with Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory set to re-open their borders this month to each other and to New South Wales, the country's largest state economy. That would be positive for domestic tourism, retail spending and business supply chain management.

Still, the Melbourne lockdown means Prime Minister



Scott Morrison's conservative government could face a larger stimulus bill. Morrison has repeatedly said the temporary measures that is set to cost his government about A\$160 billion (\$111 billion), or 8 percent of GDP, will end in September.

However, he now faces increasing pressure to extend this support, which includes household income relief and provisions for workers to unlock some of their pension funds. —Reuters

front line of the crisis and suffering increasing cases of infection and death.

"Together we have a duty to protect those who protect us," he said.

The outlook for the global labor market in the second half of 2020 is "highly uncertain" and the forecast recovery will not be enough for employment to return to pre-pandemic levels this year, the ILO said last week.

The UN agency said the fall in global working hours was "significantly worse than previously estimated" in the first half of the year. —Reuters

## Pandemic plunges working world into crisis: ILO

**GENEVA:** Global leaders called for a comprehensive approach to counter the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, which International Labor Organization chief Guy Ryder said on Wednesday

## Recession could hasten refinery rationalization

**LONDON:** Coronavirus and the cyclical slump in petroleum consumption are accelerating a long-term rationalization of the global refining industry and a shift eastwards in its center of gravity to Asia. Refinery margins for making middle distillates such as gasoil and jet fuel have plunged to their lowest since 2009 as lockdowns and recession have cut fuel consumption by millions of barrels per day. Much of this is cyclical and will unwind if and when the major economies and their fuel consumption recover and stocks of gasoline and diesel return to more normal levels. But the crisis is compounding the long-term challenge for smaller, older and simpler refineries, especially in North America and Europe, faced with a growing competition from more modern mega-refineries in Asia.

### Cyclical slump

Refinery margins, the difference between the prices at which refineries purchase crude and sell refined products, have historically aligned with the business cycle. At the top of the cycle, capacity constraints become binding and refiners struggle to make enough fuel, fattening margins. When the cycle turns down, there is too much capacity, and margins shrink.

But the present recession is the worst for nearly a century and the impact has been concentrated in the petroleum-dominated transport sector because of lockdowns, so refiners have faced unprecedented cyclical pressure. In April, US refiners were forced to cut their crude processing by 20 percent compared with the previous five-year average as fuel consumption slumped, and refiners in other parts of the world have faced similar problems.

Pressure on margins has been particularly acute in this instance, however, because the expanded OPEC+ group of major crude exporters and US shale producers have also cut their output of crude oil. Consequently, the production-consumption balance for crude has tightened faster than the balance for fuels such as gasoline and distillate. Crude stocks are falling while fuel stocks remain bloated for the time being. Refiners are now being squeezed on both sides of their business: there are too many refineries chasing not enough crude (raising input prices) and too few fuel users (depressing output prices). The result is low crude processing rates, lots of idle capacity, poor margins and poor profitability across the global refining sector.

### East of Suez

The Great Lockdown has been a common shock felt by refiners around the world, though some sectoral end-users and major economies are emerging faster than others. But the slump in margins and profits is intensifying the competitive pressure on the oldest, smallest and least complex refineries, mostly in Europe and North America. Fuel and petrochemical markets around the North Atlantic area have become mature while growth has shifted to western, southern and eastern Asia.

China's oil consumption has been increasing at a compound rate of 6 percent per year for the last quarter of a century while India's has been rising at almost 5 percent and the Middle East has seen 3 percent growth. In contrast, North America's consumption has risen by just 0.4 percent per year since 1995 and Europe's consumption has actually fallen at an average rate of 0.2 percent. Total oil consumption in Asia and the Middle East surpassed consumption in Europe and the Americas for the first time in 2018 and the gap has widened in 2019 and 2020.

### Mega refineries

To satisfy growing consumption, new refineries have been built across Asia, while refineries in Europe and North America have seen little new investment (with the exception of export-oriented plants on the US Gulf Coast). The new generation of refineries in Asia are larger (able to achieve economies of scale) with more modern and sophisticated equipment (able to process poorer quality, cheaper crudes and produce more high-value products). —Reuters



## Business

# Ooredoo partners with Batelco to launch 'Global Zone' in Kuwait

## Extending the ecosystem platform to support the digital transformation in the region

**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, and Batelco, the leading digital solutions provider in Bahrain both announced yesterday the establishment of "Global Zone Kuwait", which will offer an ecosystem platform to further support the enablement of digital transformation in the region.



### Global Zone, a carrier-neutral data center

In line with Batelco's strategic agenda to cater to the ever-growing regional data demands, Batelco has selected Ooredoo as a strategic partner to enable the rollout of Global Zone's regional expansion and support the growing regional ICT and connectivity needs. As a result of further growing Global Zone

and expanding into new markets, a seamless data center interconnection is created and entirely powered by FASTtelco, the leading internet service provider (ISP) in Kuwait; acquired by Ooredoo in 2016. Featuring state-of-the-art high density designed systems, Global Zone Kuwait is being developed rapidly and supported by a superhighway network infrastructure. This entails Batelco's wholly owned terrestrial cable system, Batelco Gulf Network (BGN), ensuring both cost effective solutions to the end customers and superior performance.

Through Batelco and Ooredoo Kuwait's long-standing partnership, the two entities will be able to further strengthen their ties and help their customers and partners to reach new markets, while eliminating the complexity of getting connected to other players. Global Zone, a carrier-neutral data center, which was launched in the Kingdom of Bahrain in 2019, has a rich digital business solutions portfolio including Manama-IX, a carrier-neutral internet exchange, Cloud Connect solutions, and IPT solutions, which will also be available in Global Zone Kuwait, where Ooredoo Kuwait/FASTtelco and Batelco's partners can avail of these solutions for their business needs.



Abdulaziz Al-Babtain



Adel Al-Daylami

In a statement delivered while announcing this partnership, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, Chief Business Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait said, "The expanded partnership with Batelco will give FASTtelco - Ooredoo's owned ISP - access to a new set of products to further grow its portfolio by offering AWS DX, Global Zone, MPLS and MN-IX."

"The establishment of Global Zone Kuwait - this extensive regional footprint - will provide our clients with access to additional global fiber routes

for minimized latency and ultra-high performance and I am certain that it will significantly boost FASTtelco's capacity to support local and regional businesses and organizations to meet demanding cloud applications," Al-Babtain added. Commenting on the occasion, Adel Al-Daylami, Chief Global Business Officer at Batelco said, "Batelco has always sought to broaden its reach, with the aim of meeting the needs of customers and partners across the region. Batelco also has a continued focus on developing the ecosystem required to meet the needs of its global customers and partners. We are very pleased to have Ooredoo Kuwait as a strategic partner to support our regional rollout plans for Global Zone to deliver enhanced services to our customers and to support business innovation that will ultimately benefit the entire region from carriers through to end users."

Batelco's expansion of Global Zone into the Kuwaiti market is essentially a stepping-stone into the ultimate rollout plan for the region that will eventually extend globally through Batelco's strategic partnerships, robust global network, and digital ecosystem.

## NBK re-opens its KOC branch

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait strives to make all banking services available to its customers in an easy and quick way to ensure their safety as per the instructions of concerned authorities regarding safety guidelines and social distancing rules. In this context, NBK announces the re-opening of its branch at Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), thus increasing the total number of branches serving customers from 8:30 am to 1:00 pm to 35 branches, except for Grand Avenue branch, which serves customers from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

NBK always adheres to safety guidelines including checking customers' temperature before entering the branch, wearing masks and gloves, as well as following all social distancing rules, in order to keep both customers and employees safe. In an effort to meet the needs of all customers, NBK has assigned branches to serve individual customers; including: NBK Headquarters, Ministries Complex, Kuwait International Airport T4, Rawda, Daiya, Dahiyyat Abdullah Al-Salem, Shamiya, Kaifan, Surra, Bayan, South Surra, Salwa, Mishref, Jabriya, Sabah Al-Nasser, Ardiya, Al-Andalus, Hadiya, Ribab, Sabahiya, Riqqa, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Sabah Al-Salem, Jahra and Jahra Commercial.

Other branches serve both individual and corporate customers; including: Ahmed Al-Jaber, Sharq, Ghazali, Cinema Salmiya, Al-Salam Mall - Salmiya, Ahmadi, Fintas and Grand Avenue.

Meanwhile, Sabhan Branch serves individual, corporate and Al-Amil customers.

On this occasion, Ali Hussain, Executive manager, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We always strive to be closer to our customers, meet their needs and ensure their convenience. To this end, we are re-opening more branches, as part of our efforts to ensure serving all our customers all over Kuwait, in line with the decisions of the Council of Ministers and the instructions of concerned authorities in this regard."

"With the re-opening of more branches, NBK adheres to all the instructions of health authorities regarding safety guidelines and social distancing rules in order to keep both our customers and employees safe," he added. Hussain affirmed that NBK's services are available to all its customers 24/7 through its various digital channels, mainly NBK Mobile Banking and NBK Online Banking, which have become very popular in light of the current exceptional circumstances, the fact that proves NBK's excellence in providing digital services and its keenness to upgrade its digital channels that integrate with its branch network to enrich customers' banking experience.

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

## Ineos sparks fury in UK with 4x4 relocation to France

**LONDON:** The Ineos group of Brexit-supporting British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe said Tuesday it was in talks to build a new 4x4 vehicle at a Daimler plant in France, shelving a planned investment in Wales and provoking cries of betrayal. Ineos Automotive had said it was looking to build the Grenadier car-billed as a successor to the iconic Land Rover Defender-partly in Portugal and assemble it in Wales, but was now rethinking that plan because of the coronavirus outbreak.

The company, part of Ratcliffe's Ineos chemicals group, said the global pandemic had "led to some delays in our development plans, but has also presented some new opportunities in terms of existing manufacturing capacity that were not previously

available to us".

"Specifically, Ineos Automotive has entered detailed discussions with (Daimler's) Mercedes-Benz on the acquisition of its Hambach site in Moselle, France," a statement read. "We have therefore suspended the post-lockdown resumption of work at our sites in Wales and Portugal pending the outcome of this review. Further updates will follow in the coming weeks."

A Daimler spokesperson told AFP: "We can confirm that Ineos Automotive is a potential buyer (of the Hambach plant) and we are going to have discussions." Daimler caused consternation last week with the French government and auto unions when it said it was hunting for a buyer of the Hambach site near

Germany, which employs up to 1,500 workers making the Smart small car.

The Grenadier, described by the British company as "a stripped back, utilitarian, hard-working 4x4", was to enter production in late 2021 at a new factory in Wales, creating an initial 200 jobs, the group said in unveiling the car's design last week. Deliveries of the BMW-powered vehicle were to start first in Britain and Europe, and further afield afterwards, after a total investment totaling £1.0 billion (\$1.2 billion, 1.08 billion euros). The factory at Bridgend, near Cardiff in south Wales, was due to be built next to a huge Ford engine plant which is closing this year with the loss of 1,700 jobs.—AFP

## Singaporeans question foreign hires

**SINGAPORE:** For many Singaporeans, voting on Friday under the cloud of the coronavirus pandemic, a big election issue is job prospects and whether their rich little island needs so many foreigners taking better-paid roles. No-one expects a change of government on this Southeast Asian rock of stability. The People's Action Party has been in power since independence in 1965, and has always commanded an overwhelming parliamentary majority, even when its vote has slipped.

But this election will be a test of both people's confidence in the government's handling of the coronavirus crisis, and its next generation of leaders, as Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong - son of Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew - plans to step down within a few years.

Even small shifts in support for the pro-business PAP can prompt policy changes, and the coronavirus crisis has rekindled a national debate over outsiders' share of the city-state's prosperity. Opposition gripes about foreigners holding top-tier professional roles has resonated with voters, analysts say. And a spate of reports about foreigners breaking lockdown rules, and having their work passes revoked, has fueled resentment.

Analytics firm Meltwater found the issue catching voters' attention on social media, with only pensions and living costs being mentioned more often than "foreign talent".

### "Bogeyman"

Eugene Tan, a professor at Singapore Management University (SMU) and ex-member of parliament, said the image of the well-paid foreigner has become a "bogeyman" in the political debate. "It is

an issue with deep emotive appeal," he said. "The question is whether voters can balance that...with an objective, rational examination of whether we can do without foreign manpower."

Eight of ten opposition parties advocated reform of hiring policies to favour locals in their manifestos.

Yet, business groups fear curbs on recruitment could hurt growth in one of the world's most open economies. "Without foreigners, the large corporations may not necessarily be able to function and invest in Singapore like they always did," said Latha Olavath, senior director for Asia-Pacific at global migration services firm Newland Chase.

### Matter of perception

About 29 percent of Singapore's 5.7 million people are non-residents, having steadily increased from around 10 percent in 1990, according to population statistics. Most foreigners are low-paid domestic helpers or manual labourers, but it is the number in so-called professional, managerial, executive and technician (PMET) roles that irks Singaporeans with ambitions for their well-educated children.

"We have got to stop this foolishness of continuing to bring in foreign workers, especially foreign PMETs," Chee Soon Juan, a Singapore Democratic Party leader, said during a televised debate last week. It hit a nerve. The PAP's Vivian Balakrishnan shot back saying the local PMET workforce was nearly seven times larger than the foreign PMET workforce, that it was growing, and that recent job losses had fallen most heavily on foreigners.

"What more do you want us to do?," Balakrishnan, the foreign minister, asked. When similar issues flared during the 2011 election, the PAP polled a record-low 60 percent of the vote and tightened international hiring rules to address voters' sensitivities. "For me and my friends, one of our top concerns are employment opportunities," said Xuan Na a 21-year-old student about to enter her final year. "We are worried that we won't be able to land a proper job." — Reuters



Now that the trees have matured, they are having an even sweeter side-effect - helping to boost the local bee population and honey production in the area. — Reuters

## Pakistan's tree planting push has a sweetener: More honey

**CHANGA MANGA, Pakistan:** When authorities started planting millions of trees in eastern Pakistan's Changa Manga Forest five years ago, the idea was to bring back life to forest land that had been destroyed by illegal logging, water scarcity and fires. Now that the trees have matured, they are having an even sweeter side-effect - helping to boost the local bee population and honey production in the area. As part of Pakistan's efforts to offset the impacts of climate change by rehabilitating forests, conserving soil and improving water management, 3.5 million trees were planted on 6,000 acres (2,428 hectares) in Changa Manga, known as one of the world's largest man-made forests, near the city of Lahore.

Beekeepers in the plantation said they are now harvesting up to 70 percent more honey than before the greening project started in 2014, as the trees provide a habitat for bees and create conditions for a growing diversity of plants and flowers. "As more of the plantation has been created, our honey production has kept on increasing," said Bilal Hussain, a beekeeper in Changa Manga whose father runs the forest's honey operations.

"We will get even more income over the next four to five years," Hussain said excitedly, as he extracted honey from a piece of honeycomb to pack into bottles to sell at his shop.

The amount of honey harvested by beekeepers in the 12,500-acre forest almost doubled from 725 kg (1,600 pounds) in the fiscal year 2018-2019 to about 1,300 kg in 2019-2020, said forest officer Shahid Tabassum. And the amount of sticky stuff coming out of Changa Manga is estimated to keep rising to about 2,000 kg in the next fiscal year, Tabassum added. The old forest had three main species of trees, to which at least seven have been added, he noted.

"The forest cover plays an important role in the increase of honey production because honeybees get shelter, shade and water from the trees," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Globally, there has been a drastic decline in bee numbers, largely due to intensive agriculture, pesticide use and climate change, environmentalists say. A study published in the journal Science in April found that the world's population of land-dwelling insects is falling by almost 1 percent every year.

### Export success

The boost in honey production is sweet relief for Pakistan, a cash-strapped country that got a \$6-billion bailout package from the International Monetary Fund last year. Pakistan has seen a drop in its exports and foreign remittances since the

start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, according to independent economist Vaqar Ahmed.

He expects to see a further decline in the money coming into Pakistan as European and Gulf countries continue to wrestle with the economic effects of the outbreak.

Most of Pakistan's remittances come from Gulf states, while European Union nations are the main markets for its exports, he explained. Pakistan's exports dropped from \$20.1 billion in July-April 2019 to about \$19.6 billion in the same period this year, data from the State Bank of Pakistan shows.

But industry experts expect honey to buck that trend. In the financial year 2018-2019, Pakistan exported honey worth 966 million rupees (\$5.8 million), about 260 million rupees more than the year before, according to the government's Honeybee Research Institute (HBRI) in Islamabad. Figures for this year's honey exports are not available yet.

But industry insiders predicted they will keep going up, as the country's beekeepers benefit from the trees in Changa Manga along with Pakistan's ongoing push to reforest the country under its "10 Billion Tree Tsunami" project, launched last year. Pakistan has 7,000 commercial beekeepers looking after more than 1 million beehives but has enough space for double that number, according to data from the HBRI. And while planting trees expands the habitat for bees, the pollinators, in turn, help to naturally regenerate more forest areas with a variety of trees, plants and flowers, said Noor Islam, the bee institute's senior scientific officer.

"Honey production and forestry are interrelated because the honeybees get their food from trees, while trees, as a result, maintain their biodiversity," he said.

### Trees for bees

Malik Amin Aslam, climate change advisor to Prime Minister Imran Khan, said that nurturing the relationship between trees and bees is a priority for the 10 Billion Trees project. He told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that in several honey-producing areas the project is planting bee-friendly trees such as the indigenous bari tree - also known as ziziphus mauritiana or jujube. The tree's honey is sought after for its low glucose content, which makes it less likely to crystallize, he said. But Syed Mahmood Nasir, head of the Islamabad-based Nature Clicks Institution, a non-profit focused on the environment and anthropology, warned that growing Pakistan's honey industry is not as simple as planting more trees.—Reuters



SINGAPORE: Singapore's latest push to encourage companies to hire locally is unlikely to have a significant impact on foreigners looking to land a job in the Southeast Asian financial hub, say experts. — AFP



# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times  
248 33 199

## ANESTHESIA

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

- Accurate assessment of patient's condition prior to surgery to prevent any complications that may arise
- Helping the patient reduce or eliminate stress from undergoing surgery
- Minimize possible side effects & complications that may occur after the surgery
- Ease the patient into a smooth recovery phase



1808088 taibahospital.com  
@taibahospital

## ANESTHESIA



Dr. Osama Sheir  
Consultant of Anesthesia  
& Pain Management



Dr. Zakaria Alosasy  
Consultant Anesthesiologist



Dr. Maher Zaki  
Consultant Anesthesiologist



Dr. Jamaledin Ejalmi  
Specialist Anesthesiologist



Dr. Abba Saab  
Specialist Anesthesiologist



Dr. Rabie Soliman  
Specialist Anesthesiologist



1808088 taibahospital.com  
@taibahospital

## WELCOME

**Dr. Tammam About Ali**  
Consultant ENT, Head & Neck,  
Facial Plastic Surgeon.

- 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

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 Cardiologist



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

50721507  
24551555  
www.exircenterkw.com

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER  
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES

Tel : 24568857 / 24568859 info@exircenterkw.com www.exircenterkw.com

To advertise on this Page

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

**HADI CLINIC**  
Ophthalmology Services

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally  
Senior Registrar

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid  
Consultant

Dr. Abeer Khattab  
Specialist

Cataract Surgery, Glaucoma, Retina, General Ophthalmology, Follow-Up All Treatments

Follow us on Social Media @hadclinic

Tel: 1828282  
Whatsapp Ua  
+965-6000 2184

**DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY**  
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology  
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.  
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada  
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear  
implant & Ear diseases

- Diagnosis/Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- Diagnosis & treatment of Otology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122

**IC INTERNATIONAL CLINIC**  
American Board Certified in General Surgery  
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)  
Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation  
Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

- Day case surgeries
- Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Hernia repair
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Surgery for reflux disease
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

Dr. Hani Haider  
General Surgery Consultant  
http://www.international-clinic.com  
Tel: 1886677

**DR. FAHAD S. BUHAIMEED**  
Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist &  
Hair Transplant, NY

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

- Dermatology board certified.
- Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

SPECIALIZED IN:

- Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- Laser Treatments.
- Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- Body & Face Contouring.
- Injectable Fillers & Botox.

SHARQ, Ahmad Allaber st., Building 6B,  
Floor 13.  
Tel: (+965) 22060777.  
@Drbuhaimeed, @Renowabb, @dardonabb  
Email: drbuhaimeed@beautybeyond.com.kw  
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

**DR KHALED ALMERRI**  
Consultant Interventional Cardiology  
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

Specialized in:

- 1-Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4-Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

alsalam.int.hospital

**Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine**  
Head of Cardiology departmenta  
at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

مستشفى دار الشفاء  
Dar Al Shifa Hospital  
Tele:1802 555



## Lifestyle | Features

# Trump says Kanye West White House bid 'interesting'

U.S. President Donald Trump said Tuesday that rapper Kanye West's declaration that he is running for president was "very interesting." Responding to West's claim that he would run against Trump—for whom the musician has expressed support in the past, Trump told reporters at the White House, "He may." The declaration by West, 43, on Twitter that he was running for the highest office in the land was retweeted half a million times and "liked" a million.

"If he did it, he would have to view this as

a trial run for what's going to happen in four years," said Trump, noting that it may be too late for West to register in some states, and that he lacks the infrastructure for a presidential bid. West, who visited Trump in the Oval Office in 2018 and donned a trademark "Make America Great Again" red baseball cap, announced his proposed run on Saturday, as the country celebrated Independence Day.

"We must now realize the promise of America by trusting God, unifying our vision and building our future," the music and fashion

mogul said. "I am running for president of the United States," he said, with an icon of a US flag and the hashtag "2020Vision." He has not provided any details about his alleged campaign.—AFP

In this file photo US President Donald Trump meets with rapper Kanye West in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, October 11, 2018. —AFP



In this file photo Musicians Paul McCartney (left) and Ringo Starr of The Beatles perform onstage during the 56th GRAMMY Awards at Staples Center in Los Angeles, California.



Ringo Starr visits his 'Peace and Love' sculpture to celebrate his 80th birthday on Tuesday in Beverly Hills, California. —AFP photos

## RINGO MARKS 80TH AT ONLINE GIG WITH BEATLES HITS, CELEBRITY TRIBUTES

Ringo Starr held an online 80th birthday bash Tuesday with a little help from his celebrity friends—and a number of classic Beatles songs—in aid of causes including Black Lives Matter. But fans hoping for a virtual reunion between Starr and fellow surviving Beatle Paul McCartney were left disappointed, as the celebration concluded with an archive clip of the pair performing "Helter Skelter." Normally Starr marks each passing year with live performances that include fellow musicians and hundreds of fans, but the pandemic forced a rethink this time.

"As most of you know, I'm fond of a good birthday party... but this is a bad year to host a get-together of any kind," said the British musician, sitting behind a drum kit wearing a colorful face mask adorned with the peace sign. "So I'm celebrating with my friends in a new way this year—we're going to have to keep our distance due to the coronavirus." Famous pals from musicians Sheryl Crow and Kenny Loggins to filmmaker David Lynch recorded vocals and video tributes, as Starr introduced hits from the Beatles' back catalog as well as his own. "Come Together," "All You Need is Love" and "With a Little Help From My Friends" were among the tracks aired in an eclectic mix of archive concert footage and home recordings watched live by some 130,000 fans.

At the end of the festivities, Starr announced "We've got Paul... and I'm even playing with him!"—

before introducing footage of the pair shot in Starr's adopted hometown Los Angeles last year. But with McCartney seemingly billed in advance promotions as the show's top guest, some Beatles fans took to social media to vent their disappointment. "Where were you Paul? Very disappointing. #peaceandlove" wrote Chris Durso. "Very very disappointed. Now we know. Ringo is the God," tweeted Ann Olsson. McCartney did send a tweet earlier in the day wishing "Happy birthday SIR RICHARD alias RINGO. Have a great day my long time buddy!" The duo still play together on occasion, including at the Dodger Stadium gig last year as part of McCartney's "FRESHEN UP" tour.

### 'Peace and Love'

Ben Harper, Dave Grohl and Sheila E. were among the celebrities who recorded musical segments for Starr's online party. The event encouraged donations to the Black Lives Matter Global Network for the fight to "end all this racist violence," Starr explained, as well as The David Lynch Foundation, MusiCares and WaterAid. Documentary footage reflected on the Beatles' refusal to play before a segregated audience in Jacksonville, Florida during their famous 1964 US tour. "Black Lives Matter. Stand up and make your voice heard," said Starr, before noting the major influence of Black artists including Little Richard on the Beatles' sound. Ahead of the bash NASA's Curiosity

Rover tweeted Starr birthday wishes from space.

"Happy 80th, Ringo! Here's my view of Earth (and Venus) from the surface of Mars where I'm thinking about your message of Peace and Love, and how in good times and in tough ones, we all get by with a little help from our friends," it said. Known for his easy-going personality and humor, Starr rocketed to global fame in the early 1960s and helped change the face of pop music forever as part of the Beatles—still perhaps the world's most famous band. After the group's break-up, Starr emerged as a band leader in the late 1980s with his All Starr Band.

In an interview with Rolling Stone published Tuesday, the newly-minted octogenarian talked about his recent turn to health as he heads into his ninth decade. Starr said he works out anywhere from three to six times a week, goes for long walks and maintains a vegetarian diet—eating "broccoli with everything and blueberries every morning." He said he hasn't really left his Los Angeles home in some 11 weeks during the pandemic, inviting an engineer over just once for a jam session. "I do a bit of that and I have a paint room, a little art room. And I'm going in there, painting and doing stuff. And I love to sit in the sun. I love L.A. I love the brightness and hanging out. That's all we're doing."—AFP



A member of staff checks the temperature of a tourist at the AI Naseem hotel in the Gulf emirate of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.—AFP photos



Tourists sit at a restaurant at the AI Naseem hotel in the Gulf emirate of Dubai.

## Dubai reopens doors to tourists after long shutdown

With a "welcome" passport sticker and coronavirus tests on arrival, Dubai reopened its doors to international visitors Tuesday in the hope of reviving its tourism industry after a nearly four-month closure. But businesses are mainly betting on those already living in the gleaming desert city to energise its ailing economy and serve as a test run before wary foreign holidaymakers return. "A warm welcome to your second home," said the sticker applied to passports at Dubai airport, where employees wore hazmat suits and vending machines offered personal protective equipment. Italian tourist Francesca Conte said on arrival she was worried until the last minute that her flight would be cancelled. "When I saw passengers queuing at the gate, I thought today we are not leaving, since the trip to Dubai had already been skipped three times," Conte said.

She said she felt sad "seeing empty spaces" on the plane and stewards and hostesses "dressed like nurses and doctors", in their lab coats. The reopening Tuesday came as the number of COVID-19 cases in the United Arab Emirates climbed to 52,600 included 326 deaths, with millions of foreign workers living in cramped accommodation particularly hard hit. Incoming tourists are required to present a negative test result taken within four days of the flight. If not, they can take the test on arrival, but must self-isolate until they receive the all-clear. Tourism has long been the lifeline of the glitzy Gulf emirate, one of the seven sheikhdoms that make up the UAE. High season starts in October when the scorching heat of the Gulf summer starts to dissipate.



Tourists walk in a hallway of the AI Naseem hotel in the Gulf emirate of Dubai.

offering Dubai residents "staycation" and "daycation" deals to offset the slump.

### 'Plans have changed'

Restarting hospitality by "primarily targeting the domestic market is an important first step in our phased approach towards restoring normalcy in the tourism industry," said Issam Kazim, CEO of the Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing. And key to the effort are health and safety measures at hotels to "reassure guests and travellers that Dubai is one of the world's safest destinations", he said in a statement last month.

Boosting domestic tourism is also part of the strategy of the UAE's other main destination, the oil-rich capital Abu Dhabi, which welcomed a record 11.35 million international visitors in 2019. The UAE's capital is home to top attractions including an F1 circuit and the Louvre Abu Dhabi museum, which in late June opened its doors to masked, gloved visitors after a 100-day closure. But the emirate does not share Dubai's enthusiasm about opening doors to foreign tourists just yet, although those with negative test results are now allowed to enter.—AFP



Tourists sunbathe by the pool of the AI Naseem hotel in the Gulf emirate of Dubai.

## 'Do your part': WWII film 'Greyhound' teaches virus lesson, says Hanks

Tom Hanks is "heartbroken" that his World War II thriller must skip the big screen due to the pandemic—but hopes it can still reach audiences at home a thing or two about acting decently in a global crisis. "Greyhound," out on Apple TV+ Friday, was written by and stars Hanks as a rookie captain escorting a convoy of Allied ships as they cross the freezing North Atlantic, hounded by Nazi U-boats. The movie follows a destroyer's terrified young crew crossing the treacherous ocean beyond the range of air cover, bound together in life-and-death responsibility for protecting the fleet and each other. "Those guys on the ship... all they can do is what's expected of them, and hope for some combination of providence and serendipity to see them through," said Hanks. "COVID-19, no one knows how long it's going to go on, no one knows who's going to die because of it... you don't have to go very far to see the correlations and the similarities to the war years," he told a virtual news conference.



Hanks should know. The "Saving Private Ryan" star and "Band of Brothers" producer in March became the first Hollywood A-lister to contract the deadly virus, which has killed around 130,000 in the United States as a fresh surge brings 50,000 new cases a day. Contrasting today's simple instructions to socially distance, wash hands and wear a mask with World War II sailors pulling together as torpedoes tore through the icy waters and slammed into ships' hulls, Hanks sounds indignant. "If anybody cannot find it in themselves to practice those three very basic things, I just think, shame on you," he said. "Don't be a coward. Get on with it, do your part. It's very, very basic."

### 'A degree of hell'

Hanks, a self-described history buff, based his screenplay on C. S. Forester's 1955 novel "The Good Shepherd," in a seven-year process that began when he spotted a second-hand copy. "They had the original cover on it, and it was of (Commander) Ernie Krause gray-haired, undone, exhausted, uniform flapping in the wind, ships sinking and burning on the horizon," recalled Hanks. "And I thought—that man is exhausted. That man has been through a degree of hell."

Director Aaron Schneider constructed a set based on the USS Kidd, the only unmodified US World War II destroyer surviving today. For extra authenticity, some interior scenes were shot on the original ship—which survived a 1945 kamikaze attack—at a Louisiana museum. The film itself is stuffed with military jargon, as Hanks's captain bawls out orders. "It feels like we've just placed you on a destroyer and let you loose," said Schneider.

But with many US theaters closed due to coronavirus, Hanks admitted he was saddened that audiences will miss out on watching his passion project as a communal experience. Producers decided delaying was not worthwhile, with dozens of other blockbusters already vying for theater slots in winter and 2021, so Sony sold the movie as an Apple TV+ streaming exclusive.

"We are all heartbroken that this movie is not playing in cinemas," said Hanks. "But with that removed—I mean literally removed as a possibility—we were left with this as a reality. We have a movie that is ready to go, that is timely because of COVID-19," he added. "Just as Ernie Krause is in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, wondering when, how, if he is going to survive and do his job, we are all in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis, which ends up being like five times bigger than we anticipated it being."—AFP





These long exposures picture show fireflies at Tatsuno Hotarudoyo Park in Tatsuno in Nagano Prefecture. —AFP photos

As the sun sets in the Japanese town of Tatsuno, thousands of fireflies begin glowing, producing a spectacle that usually draws crowds of delighted visitors. But this year, the dance of the incandescent insects is being performed without spectators, after coronavirus prevention measures forced organisers of a popular firefly festival to cancel the event. The decision may have disappointed fans of the brilliant bugs, but it provides an unusually serene atmosphere as the insects blink on and off, appearing to dance through the black night air.

The natural spectacle lasts just 10 days in early summer, and is the final chapter of a firefly's life. "The glowing is the courtship behaviour of fireflies. They glow to communicate between the male and the female," Katsunori Funaki, from the city's tourism division, told AFP. "During the short, 10-day period, they find a partner and lay eggs for the next year." When conditions are right, with neither rain nor wind, as many as 30,000 fireflies perform their magic during the 10-day period in Tatsuno, a town set on a river in central Nagano prefecture. "Historical records say a massive number of fireflies were seen along the Tenryu river in the late 19th through early 20th century," Mayor Yasuo Takei said.

But the creature almost died out in the area as silk production and other industries flourished further upstream, creating pollution. After World War II, the town worked hard to restore the environment and protect fireflies, and the insects now attract tens of thousands of visitors during the annual summer firefly festival.

**'Precious to us'**

"When we have lots of fireflies, we get a spectacular landscape full of lights, with both stars and glowing fireflies reflected in the water," Takei said. Fireflies are often said to be evidence of a pristine natural environment, but the insects only thrive when other conditions are met. "To help fireflies, we need to have a snail called 'kawanina'," Funaki said. Fireflies spend about nine months of their year-long lifecycle growing in fresh water, and baby insects grow by eating the snail, Funaki said. The town has also created a park complete with ditches to bring in fresh water from the river and waterfalls to produce an oxygen-rich aquatic home for the insects. The silence of this year's mating season makes the ritual all the more poignant, said Takei. "The brief shining of the light is so impressive, making me feel that I also have to live my best," he said.

Firefly festivals are staged around late June in many parts of Japan, and the glowing courtship ritual has long been celebrated in the country. "This may be part of Japan's unique aesthetics, but they are so precious to us because we can only see them for a short period of time," said Takei. Festival organiser Tatsuki Komatsu said he felt the insects were "looking for a partner more freely with no humans around" but said he hoped the festival could be held again next year. "Fireflies are a creature that grows over a year and flies for only 10 days to leave behind the next generation before dying," he said. "We want to take care of them so that they will leave eggs for next year and we will once again see fireflies dance wonderfully." —AFP

## With festival cancelled by virus, Japan fireflies dance alone



## Holiday park sculpture by artist Calder on sale in Paris

A huge sculpture by American artist Alexander Calder will be auctioned this week in Paris after spending over 50 years at a holiday park in southern France, the auction house said on Monday. The influential sculptor is known primarily for his colourful and abstract mobiles, of which he made thousands over the course of his career. But he also made "stables"—the opposite of mobiles—one of which has remained concealed from the general public in La Colle-sur-Loup village, a few dozen kilometres from the ritzy city Cannes. Until now. The black steel 3.5 metre (11 foot) structure, which will go under the hammer at the auction house Artcurial on Wednesday, was made by Calder in 1963.



This picture shows an untitled sculpture by US artist Alexander Calder in the courtyard of the Artcurial auction house in Paris.

It was installed six years later in front of a holiday park which aims to attract low-income families by maintaining affordable prices. The free-standing stable is being sold by the current owner of the holiday park Belambra Clubs and is estimated to be worth between 2.5 and 3.5 million euros (\$2.8-4.0 million). "It's the first time that a major monumental stable by Calder will be on auction in France," said Hugues Sebilliau, the director of the modern art department at auction house Artcurial. "The stable is completely characteristic of Calder's style at the time. The structure is very assertive and well planted on its four bearing points," said sales expert Serge Lemoine.

"Rhythm and space are the vital compositions. The curves respond to the angles and the surfaces respond to the voids," Lemoine said. The stable is on show in the entry of the Artcurial building on the famous Champs Elysees avenue in Paris until its sale on Wednesday. Trained as an engineer, Calder used a wide variety of media to make more than 22,000 works before he died in 1976. —AFP



A member of staff wearing a protective face covering poses in front of "Saint Gregory the Great with Jesuit Saints" by Guercino inside the National Gallery.



Members of the media are welcomed by gallery staff wearing protective face shields as they arrive for a press preview at the National Gallery. —AFP photos



A member of staff wearing a protective face covering poses in front of "The Adoration of the Shepherds" by Guido Reni inside the National Gallery.



A member of staff wearing a protective face mask patrols a room inside the National Gallery.

## National Gallery becomes first major London museum to reopen

Britain's National Gallery reopened yesterday, with masks recommended and social distancing and advance booking mandatory, as the country continues to emerge from three months of coronavirus lockdown. The central London venue is the first major art museum in the British capital to open its doors after closing in late March along with the rest of the hospitality, tourism and cultural sectors. Visitors must now book in advance, are advised to wear face coverings and follow signposted routes around the space which, at 46,396 square metres (500,000 square feet) is roughly the size of six football pitches.

Gallery director Gabriele Finaldi told reporters he hoped initially for around a quarter of the usual number of visitors—or 3,000 to 4,000 people per day. The prestigious venue, located in the heart of London overlooking Trafalgar Square, has signposted three different one-way routes through its various wings to ensure social distancing. It is also providing hand sanitising gel and scrapped audio guides. "We had two primary objectives," said Chief Operating Officer Paul Gray. "One was to make sure that we made visitors feel safe and that we reassured them but equally we wanted to make it an enjoyable experience."

The National Gallery's daily hours have been reduced from eight to five, though on Friday they will be extended to 10 hours. However, Gray invited people to linger in front of paintings and "take their time to enjoy them", with the gallery able to stay open later if necessary. "We've got that extra capacity, by opening longer if we need to if it's busy, which would be a nice problem to have," he added.

**Tate Modern to follow**

The National Gallery was founded in 1824 and has a collection of more than 2,300 paintings dating from the mid-13th century to the 1900s. It closed its doors on March 18, five days before the country was ordered into full lockdown, and like many cultural institutions has seen its finances ravaged by the lockdown. The government on Monday announced a £1.57 billion (\$1.96 billion, 1.73-billion-euro) package to help the sector survive the crisis, following increasingly desperate calls for help. The National Gallery—which like its two great big rivals the Tate Modern and the British Museum is free to visit—relies on a mixture of state funding and the proceeds of exhibitions, memberships and patronage as well as endowments and trusts.

It is the wealthiest of the trio, according to a 2018 survey by the Times, which estimated its reserves then were £217 million. The Tate Modern, which houses a collection of contemporary art in a former power station on the banks of the River Thames, will reopen on July 27 along with its sister gallery Tate Britain, which exhibits older works. However, no date has been given for the reopening of the British Museum, seen as the country's flagship of cultural heritage with famous exhibits like the Elgin Marbles and the Rosetta stone. The Tate Modern is Britain's most visited museum, attracting 5.87 million people in 2018, compared to 5.83 million visitors to the British Museum, according to the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions. The National Gallery trails close behind in third, with some 5.7 million visitors that year. —AFP



A member of staff wearing a protective face shield walks past "Bathers at Asnieres" by Georges Seurat inside the National Gallery.



## Sports

## Photo of the Day



MOSCOW: Red Bull Racing ZeroG in Moscow, Russia in 2019. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## Kyrgios blasts Thiem in virus row

**SYDNEY:** Outspoken Australian Nick Kyrgios questioned Dominic Thiem's intellect yesterday after the world number three told him to stop criticising fellow tennis stars Alexander Zverev and Novak Djokovic for taking risks with the coronavirus.

Kyrgios said Thiem wasn't on the same "intellectual level" after the Austrian called his criticism "cheap" and claimed it was "bad luck" that Zverev was caught partying after promising to self-isolate.

Djokovic, Grigor Dimitrov, Borna Coric and Viktor Troicki all tested positive for COVID-19 after last month's Adria Tour, an exhibition series with minimal social distancing where Thiem and Zverev also played.

"Kyrgios has really done a lot of nonsense himself. That's why I understand even less when he interferes everywhere," Thiem told German media this week. "It would be better for him to come clean instead of always criticising others."

The Australian shot back on Twitter. "What are you talking about @ThiemDomi? Mistakes like smashing rackets? Swearing? Tanking a few matches here or there? Which everyone does?"

"None of you have the intellectual level to even understand where I'm coming from. I'm trying to hold them accountable," Kyrgios added. "This just shows what a joke @ThiemDomi @AlexZverev & @DjokerNole think this is, 2 of them partying like potato's during a global pandemic."

"People losing lives, loved ones and friends, and then Thiem standing up for the 'mistake'. These guys are the 'top' of our sport. SMH (shaking my head)." Last week Kyrgios also exchanged verbal blows with German legend Boris Becker, who called him a "rat" for singling out Zverev. "@TheBorisBecker is a bigger doughnut than I thought. Can hit a volley, obviously not the sharpest tool in the shed though," he fired back. Zverev vowed to self-isolate after the Adria Tour, only to be filmed days later in a busy bar in footage that went viral. — AFP

# England's Stokes ready for 'massive' return of international cricket

## Pressure of captaining England for the first time

**SOUTHAMPTON:** Ben Stokes is well aware he will have an extra "responsibility" when he leads England out in the first Test against the West Indies at Southampton, a match that marks the return of international cricket after months of coronavirus-enforced lockdown.

The pressure of captaining England for the first time, with regular skipper Joe Root missing the match to attend the birth of his second child, would have been enough to concentrate all-rounder Stokes' mind in normal circumstances.

But the first fixture in a three-Test series has been given added significance by the pandemic. "I know everybody has been craving this, certainly from a players' point of view but I also think from a spectators' and fans' view," said Stokes on Tuesday. "This is a massive occasion for a lot of people."

No spectators will be allowed into the Ageas Bowl in a behind-closed-doors series that sees the other two Tests taking place at Old Trafford. But Stokes said a lack of a crowd was no reason for England to let their standards slip.

"We know we have that responsibility on our shoulders, to go out and do justice for all those people," he said. "We can't use no crowd as an excuse to not feel up for this game because we know we have hundreds of thousands of people following us and wanting us to do well back home watching us on TV."

The Durham star added: "We're walking out on the field to represent our country. When you have the Three Lions on your chest, you can't feel any prouder in the sport that we play. "You don't lose that feeling just because there is nobody in the stands."

### 'BLUEPRINT'

Meanwhile, West Indies coach Phil Simmons praised English administrators for staging the series. Both teams are living and playing at bio-secure grounds, which have on-site hotels, while being subject to a twice-weekly testing regime and numerous social-distancing measures.

"It's a huge blueprint for how cricket can move forward," said Simmons, whose side quarantined and trained at Old Trafford from June 9 before travelling south. "We're about to show that other places can start putting things together. The England and Wales Cricket Board have to be commended for all the work they have done to get the series on the road and let's see what other countries take from it."

The former West Indies batsman added: "People want to see sports because it lifts people, so hopefully this is the start." Two pacemen from England's 13-man squad are set to be dropped with James Anderson, Stuart Broad, Jofra Archer, Mark Wood and Chris Woakes all vying for three places in the team.

Squad rotation — England are set to play six Tests in seven weeks including three against Pakistan — should see all of them involved at some stage. But Stokes had no desire to be the bringer of bad news ahead of Wednesday's match.

"I've been dreading it for the last two or three days, telling the unfortunate guys," he said. "I can't wait to give Joe the armband back for that reason, but that is leadership." And with this series taking place against the backdrop of the Black Lives Matter protests, it is possible that both Stokes and West Indies captain Jason Holder could lead their sides in taking a knee in



No spectators will be allowed



LONDON: File photo taken on August 16, 2019 England's captain Joe Root (L) and England's Ben Stokes talk between balls on the third day of the second Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia at Lord's Cricket Ground in 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. — AFP

support of the campaign, although that had still to be confirmed by officials late Tuesday.

Stokes' parents are usually avid followers of their son's progress, but now they are back in his native New Zealand they may not witness him becoming

England's 81st Test captain as the rest of the cricket world tunes in. "My Mam is spitting bullets because they're not showing the game back in New Zealand," said Stokes. "If you're out there and you see my Mam, I would stay out of her way." — AFP

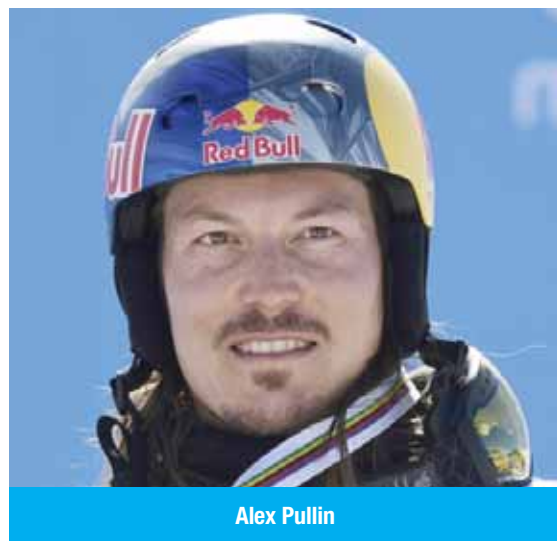
## Australian snowboarder Pullin drowns

**MELBOURNE:** Australia's double world champion snowboarder Alex Pullin drowned while spear fishing off a Gold Coast beach yesterday, plunging the country's winter sports community into mourning.

Pullin, Australia's flagbearer at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, was found by a snorkeller on an artificial reef just before 11 a.m. local time (0100 GMT) in waters off Palm Beach, state broadcaster ABC reported. Lifeguards and paramedics attempted to resuscitate the 32-year-old on the beach after pulling him from the water. Queensland Ambulance Service officer Justin Payne said he did not survive. Another diver had found Pullin on the sea floor in "very upsetting" circumstances, said Gold Coast Police District Duty Officer Chris Tritton.

"He didn't have an oxygen mask, we understand he was free diving and spearfishing out on the reef," Tritton told Australian broadcaster Channel Nine. "It appears he was diving alone. There were other divers out there but he was not with a friend."

Brisbane-based newspaper the Courier-Mail earlier reported that Pullin was thought to have "suffered a shallow water blackout". Pullin, nicknamed "Chumpy", won world championship titles in snowboard cross in 2011 and 2013, competed at the 2010 Winter Games in



Alex Pullin

Vancouver and placed sixth in his event at the Pyeongchang Games in South Korea two years ago.

"It is an incredibly sad day," Geoff Lipshut, the chief executive of the Olympic Winter Institute of Australia, told Reuters. Lipshut said Pullin had retired from his sport last month but had yet to announce it.

"Alex 'Chumpy' Pullin was one of our great winter sports pioneers... He attacked every day with intensity and purpose," he said. The New South Wales Institute of Sport wrote on Twitter: "Alex 'Chumpy' Pullin was an extraordinary individual who pursued his passions in sport and in life. This loss is tragic to everyone he inspired and loved." — Reuters

## India's cricket boss Ganguly opposes four-day Test plan

**NEW DELHI:** India's cricket chief Sourav Ganguly has come out against playing four-day Tests, proposed by the world governing body as a way to squeeze more cricket into a packed calendar. The International Cricket Council has floated the idea of reducing matches in the World Test Championship by one day from 2023, but Ganguly said officials should not "tinker" with what he calls the best form of cricket.

Four-day Tests have been tried in one-off games between South Africa and Zimbabwe and England against Ireland, but the Board of Control for Cricket in India is among a growing list of critics.

"I am not a big fan of four-day cricket because I feel lot of Test matches will not finish," Ganguly, who turned 48 yesterday, said in an online chat hosted by the BCCI. "When you have four days the approach is different," he said.

"I really feel that there is no need to tinker with those five-day Test matches. And for me Test matches are the toughest and the best form of cricket." Ganguly, who is rumoured to be in the running for the post of ICC chairman, backs other innovations, however, including day-night Tests.



India's cricket chief Sourav Ganguly

India, who refused to play a Test under floodlights in Australia in 2018, joined the pink ball party against Bangladesh in Kolkata last year. The final Test of a two-match series attracted packed crowds at Eden Gardens despite the Test lasting less than three whole days. India won the series 2-0.

"Day-night cricket, one Test a series is important, because cricket needs everyone back," said the former India captain. "We played that pink Test in Kolkata, I don't think if it was a normal India-Bangladesh Test match we would have one tenth of the people," he said, noting that 150,000 people attended over three days played. — AFP



## Sports

# Zlatan fires Milan comeback as Juve miss chance to stretch lead

## Lazio suffer title blow at Lecce as Patric sent off for biting

**MILAN:** Juventus wasted the chance to move 10 points clear at the top of Serie A as the defending champions blew a two-goal lead to lose 4-2 at a Zlatan Ibrahimovic-inspired AC Milan on Tuesday, after second-placed Lazio's shock defeat at Lecce.

Maurizio Sarri's men led through goals from Adrien Rabiot and Cristiano Ronaldo early in the second half, but were then blown away by a brilliant Milan display as Ibrahimovic scored and had an assist.

Milan coach Stefano Pioli, who could reportedly be sacked at the end of the season, saw his side boost their hopes of European qualification by moving above Roma and Napoli into fifth. "I am not remotely thinking about August 3 or the future. I am thinking of the next game," Pioli told DAZN. "There have been some tough moments, but I love what I do."

Juve remain on track for a ninth straight title, sitting seven points clear of Lazio with seven matches remaining, but could have rendered the race all but over with a victory. The loss snapped the Turin giants' seven-game winning run in the league.

Juventus dominated the first half without finding a breakthrough as the closest they came was when Leonardo Bonucci glanced Miralem Pjanic's free-kick wide when unmarked only three yards from goal.

Ibrahimovic had a couple of speculative efforts easily held by Wojciech Szczesny at the other end and also saw a goal ruled out for offside. The reigning champions burst into life after the interval though, as French international Adrien Rabiot drove forward and fired a fine left-footed shot from the

edge of the area into the top corner to score his first Serie A goal.

Ronaldo doubled the advantage less than eight minutes into the second half, netting for the fifth consecutive game and for the 26th time in Serie A this term with a cool finish. But Milan were handed a lifeline out of nowhere on the hour mark as Bonucci was penalised for handball, and Ibrahimovic stepped up to score his sixth goal since returning to the San Siro from LA Galaxy in January.

The 38-year-old made it back-to-back games with a goal and an assist in the 66th minute, teeing up Franck Kessie to score with a deflected strike. Incredibly, Milan completed the turnaround with

their third goal in five minutes as Rafael Leao beat Szczesny at his near post.

Ante Rebic had an excellent chance to make it 4-2 with 12 minutes remaining, but Szczesny did well to save with his boot. The Croatian international wrapped up the points two minutes later though with his 10th league goal of the season.

### Tough moments

#### LAZIO STUMBLE AGAIN

Earlier, Lazio, who lost 3-0 to Milan at the weekend, slumped to a second straight loss, beaten 2-1 at relegation-threatened Lecce. Defender Patric added to Lazio's problems in injury time as he was dismissed for biting Lecce's Giulio Donati and could face a lengthy ban, especially with the strict COVID-19 regulations in place.

"Our dream must continue, which is to qualify mathematically for the Champions League," Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi told Sky Sport Italia. "We



**MILAN:** AC Milan's Italian defender Davide Calabria (L) defends against Juventus' Brazilian forward Douglas Costa during the Italian Serie A football match AC Milan vs Juventus played behind closed doors at the San Siro stadium in Milan, as the country eases its lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of the COVID-19 infection, caused by the novel coronavirus. —AFP

hope to achieve it as soon as possible, but that is our only objective."

Lecce ended a six-match losing streak in dramatic fashion to climb out of the relegation zone. Lazio were without strikers Ciro Immobile and Felipe Caicedo through suspension against Milan, but both played a part as the latter gave the visitors a fifth minute lead, shortly after Lecce midfielder Marco Mancosu's strike was ruled out by VAR for a handball in the build-up.

But the hosts grabbed a deserved equaliser on

the half-hour mark when Senegalese forward Khouma Babacar nodded home Filippo Falco's cross. Lazio survived a massive scare on the stroke of half-time as Lecce were awarded a penalty for a controversial handball against Patric, but Mancosu spooned his spot-kick over the crossbar.

Lecce centre-back Fabio Lucioni headed in a corner to give the home team a shock lead early in the second half. Patric's moment of madness came in the third minute of added time when he bit Donati on the arm. —AFP

## Players' union slams 'unacceptable' A-League travel fiasco

**SYDNEY:** Australia's footballers' union lashed out yesterday at "unacceptable" chaos after three Melbourne-based A-League teams were prevented from leaving Victoria for a second time with borders shutting as coronavirus cases surge.

The top flight A-League is due to resume next week but Melbourne City, Melbourne Victory and Western United remain stranded in the city while Football Federation Australia seek government exemptions so they can cross into New

South Wales.

The first aborted attempt by the teams to leave was on Monday, when fog scuppered their planned flight to Canberra. A day later when they were on buses to the airport only to learn they would have to spend a fortnight in quarantine on arrival.

The border between Australia's two most populous states — Victoria and New South Wales — was closed from midnight Tuesday. "What the players and their families have had to endure over the past 48 hours is unacceptable," Professional Footballers Australia said.

"The lack of clarity, the ad-hoc planning and shifting commitments have left the players embarrassed, frustrated and entirely lacking confidence in the process." It added "a reliable and feasible plan" was needed "that does not shift the game's inability

to effectively manage these challenges solely on to players and their families".

A-League chief Greg O'Rourke insisted they had done "absolutely everything we could to get the players and staff out of Victoria". "We are in discussions the NSW government, and we will continue to seek the exemptions necessary for the teams to travel," he added.

The NSW government has indicated it would be sympathetic to the request with Deputy Premier John Barilaro saying if the opportunity was there "let's bring them across the border". The chaos throws into doubt the A-League plan to restart on July 16 in New South Wales with Melbourne Victory playing Western United in a blockbuster Melbourne derby. The league was suspended because of the pandemic March 24. —AFP

## Howard will play for Lakers when NBA resumes in Orlando

**LOS ANGELES:** Los Angeles Lakers center Dwight Howard says he will play when the NBA season resumes in Orlando on July 30 despite concerns the restart might distract from his social activism.

Howard announced his decision to join LeBron James and his other Laker teammates in a CNN appearance late Monday, citing his contract and his hunger to win an NBA crown at age 34.

"Yes, I will be joining my team in Orlando, but during that time we will be getting a lot of work done," Howard said of mixing his NBA goals with his activism.

Howard said he will donate his salary from the restart, about \$700,000, to his Breathe Again charity. This season, Howard has averaged 7.5 points, 7.4 rebounds and 1.2 blocked shots a game for the Lakers, who led the Western Conference at 49-14 when the NBA season was shut down March 11 after Utah's Rudy Gobert tested positive for COVID-19.

"I feel like we have a great opportunity, the Lakers do, for winning the title this year," Howard said. "I have an obligation. I have a contractual obligation to my teammates, to my fans, the Lakers, and everyone. But at the same time I also have an obligation to my family and my community."

Howard said last month that he might sit out, saying the NBA season restart in a bubble at Disney World in Orlando might distract from the growing movement against police brutality and racism in the



**LOS ANGELES:** File photo shows Dwight Howard #39 of the Los Angeles Lakers argues his foul call with referee David Guthrie #16 during the first quarter at Staples Center on February 21, 2020 in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

wake of unarmed black man George Floyd's killing while in police custody in May.

The Lakers, powered by James and Anthony Davis, are expected to remain title contenders despite the absence of guard Avery Bradley, whose concern over how coronavirus issues would impact at-risk family members will keep him from playing when the season resumes.

"The truth is, we need less - not more politics in sports," the conservative Republican said. "E-N-O-U-G-H! O-U-T!" the WNBA players' union tweeted in response to Loeffler's stance. WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert on Tuesday said that Loeffler, who co-owns the Dream with Mary Brock, does not, in fact, serve as governor of the team within the league. "The WNBA is based on the principle of equal and fair treatment of all people and we, along with the teams and players, will continue to use our platforms to vigorously advocate for social justice," Engelbert said in a statement.

"Senator Kelly Loeffler has not served as a Governor of the Atlanta Dream since October 2019 and is no longer involved in the day-to-day business of the team." Past and present WNBA players had already been angered by Loeffler's recent appearance on Fox News in which she called armed black protesters in Atlanta "mob rule" although she is a vocal supporter of Second Amendment rights to bear arms.

Howard, the top overall pick in the 2004 NBA Draft, is an eight-time NBA All-Star but has never won a league title as he nears the end of his 16th season. Howard, a member of the 2008 US Olympic gold medal squad, spent his first eight seasons with the Orlando Magic and has since played for Houston, Atlanta, Charlotte, Washington and the Lakers. —AFP

The "mob rule" comment prompted former WNBA star and Olympic gold medalist Sheryl Swoopes to tweet that the "WNBA MUST do better." Dream guard Renee Montgomery, who has opted out of the 2020 season to focus her time on social justice issues, tweeted of those comments: "The second amendment is a part of the Bill of Rights. The problem some may be having is who is bearing the arms." Alysha Clark and Sue Bird of the Seattle Storm and Skylar Diggins-Smith of the Phoenix Mercury were also among players calling for the league to separate itself from Loeffler.

Clark retweeted a Yahoo.com column headlined "Why is Kelly Loeffler still a WNBA co-owner despite 'Donald Sterling vibes'?" The column referenced former Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling, who was forced by the NBA to sell the team after racist comments he made in a personal conversation were made public. —AFP

## Chinese-owned Espanyol to drop out of La Liga

**MADRID:** Forever condemned to live in the shadow of Barcelona, Espanyol's worst nightmare will come true today if they are doomed to relegation from La Liga by their city neighbours. It is a likely scenario. With four games remaining, Chinese-owned Espanyol are rock bottom, 11 points from safety. Even a win at the Camp Nou would therefore only delay the inevitable.

Los Periquitos (The Budgerigars) have not beaten Barcelona in La Liga since 2009, when Mauricio Pochettino was coach. Today therefore looks set to be the day of reckoning for a club who are one of the proudest names in Spanish football.

It is too much to bear for fans, with the Federation of Espanyol Supporters' Clubs this week issuing a statement to express their dismay at what has happened under the current ownership. China's Rastar Group, which specialises in model cars, paid 60 million euros (\$67.7m) for 54 per cent of the club's shares in January 2016. They now own almost 100 per cent.

"We have been deeply angered by this shameful season, the worst in our history," said the federation, which has called on president Chen Yansheng to hand over the reins to someone based locally. "We want to express our indignation, our sadness, our disappointment, anger and feeling of helplessness at witnessing this pathetic relegation."

Espanyol have spent the season chopping and changing coaches, with David Gallego, Pablo Machin and Abelardo Fernandez all being sacked before sporting director Francisco Rufete was put in charge last month. He has been unable to halt the slide.

"The whole team are fed up with the situation, but they can't give up. We have to keep fighting until the end," Rufete said after a 1-0 defeat by Leganes at the weekend. "We have to go to the Camp Nou and play for pride."

#### SORRY SEASON

Espanyol's sorry season has been all the harder to take as it came off the back of a fine 2018-19 campaign under Rubi. He led them to seventh place and Europa League qualification, only to depart for Real Betis, taking top scorer Borja Iglesias with him. Spanish international defender Mario Hermoso left for Atletico Madrid and those departures were not adequately replaced.

"I can't understand how 80 million euros has been spent on transfers, and with the eighth-biggest budget in the league, the club has had the worst season in its history," fumed former president Joan Collet.

They did make it to the Europa League knockout rounds, but lost to Wolverhampton Wanderers. There has been little else to cheer. Signed amid much excitement last year, Chinese striker Wu Lei has contributed just four league goals this season, including a late equaliser in a 2-2 draw with Barcelona in January.

That would not be enough this time for a club who have won the Copa del Rey four times and twice reached the UEFA Cup final, most recently in 2007 when Ernesto Valverde's team lost on penalties to Sevilla in Glasgow. —AFP

## WNBA players hit back at Atlanta Dream co-owner

**LOS ANGELES:** Current and former WNBA players pushed back against Atlanta Dream co-owner Kelly Loeffler after the US senator from Georgia voiced opposition to league plans to honor the Black Lives Matter movement.

The Atlanta Journal Constitution reported that Loeffler had urged WNBA commissioner Cathy Engelbert in a letter to scrap plans for players in the US women's basketball league to wear warmup jerseys reading "Black Lives Matter" and "Say Her Name" suggesting the apparel should bear the US flag instead.



**14** England's Stokes ready for 'massive' return of international cricket



**14** Australian snowboarder Alex Pullin drowns



**15** Howard will play for Lakers when NBA resumes in Orlando



LONDON: Crystal Palace's Zaire-born Belgian striker Christian Benteke (C) scores their second goal during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Chelsea at Selhurst Park in south London. — AFP

## Chelsea win five-goal thriller

### Vardy's late strike earns Leicester point at Arsenal

**LONDON:** Chelsea moved up to third in the Premier League table after holding out to win a 3-2 thriller at Crystal Palace, while Leicester could only manage a draw at 10-man Arsenal on Tuesday.

Frank Lampard's men edged closer to sealing a place in next season's Champions League as a seventh win in eight games takes them one point ahead of Leicester and opened up a five-point lead on fifth-placed Manchester United.

The Blues were fortunate when opening the scoring at Selhurst Park as former Chelsea captain Gary Cahill fell to the ground clutching his hamstring to allow Willian to tee up Olivier Giroud for his fourth goal in six games.

Christian Pulisic's form since the Premier League's restart has led to comparisons with Eden Hazard, the man he replaced at Stamford Bridge, and the Belgian would have been proud of Chelsea's second as the 21-year-old American skipped past Joel Ward and hammered in off the inside of the near post.

"Christian is hugely important," added Lampard. "You look at the top attacking players in the world and they score goals and make assists regularly that win games and at the moment he is doing that, so I

am delighted with him."

As so often this season, Lampard's men failed to capitalise on their dominance and were suddenly on the back foot when Wilfried Zaha thundered a shot high past Kepa Arrizabalaga from long range for Palace's first goal in four games.

Chelsea looked to have sealed the three points again when substitutes Ruben Loftus-Cheek and Tammy Abraham combined for the latter to restore a two-goal cushion 19 minutes from time.

Just over a minute later, though, Palace were back in the game when a brilliant move culminated in Patrick van Aanholt squaring for Christian Benteke to tap in just his second goal of the season.

Questions remain over whether the Chelsea defence will be strong enough to maintain a title challenge next season and they were left clinging on in stoppage time as Kepa turned Scott Dann's header off the inside of the post and only a last-ditch chal-

lenge from Kurt Zouma denied Benteke a second.

Leicester have now won just one of their six games since the restart to see their lead over the chasing pack for a place in the top four whittled away, but were grateful for a 1-1 draw at the Emirates after a slow start against in-form Arsenal. Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang swept home the opener for the Gunners as Kasper Schmeichel kept Leicester in the game with a stunning save to deny Alexandre Lacazette.

"In the first half we should have gone 3 or 4-0 up and kill the game against this type of opposition," said Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta. Lacazette also saw a goal disallowed for offside after the break before the game turned when Eddie Nketiah was shown a straight red card after a VAR review for a high challenge on James Justin.

Leicester made the man advantage count as Vardy pounced to slot home Demarai Gray's cross and regain his two-goal advantage over Aubameyang in the

race for the Golden Boot. "I was really pleased with how we managed the game 11 v 10. We got a deserved goal and if we had made the final pass we could have gone on and won the game," said Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers.

Arsenal's hopes of reaching the top four now appear over as they remain nine points behind with just four games to go.

at the other end of the table, Danny Welbeck's first Premier League goal for Watford was as valuable as it was spectacular as the Hornets beat Norwich 2-1 to move four points clear of the relegation zone.

Defeat pushes Norwich ever closer to the drop and the Canaries could be relegated at the weekend if they fail to beat West Ham.

Like so much of his career, Welbeck's first season at Watford has been blighted by injury, but the former Manchester United and Arsenal forward showed his class by adjusting his body to hook home the winner after Craig Dawson cancelled out Emiliano Buendia's early opener for Norwich. "I am speechless after the goal," said Welbeck. "It means a lot to me and means a lot to the whole team. It is one that puts us on our way now. We will give it our all from now." —AFP

### Celta draw leaves Atleti waiting for CL 'objective'

**MADRID:** Atletico Madrid will have to wait to clinch a place in next season's Champions League after being held to a 1-1 draw at Celta Vigo on Tuesday. Alvaro Morata scored in the opening minute before Francisco Beltran equalised for the hosts the other side of the break.

The result leaves Atleti four points away from qualifying for the top tier of European football with three games remaining and Celta are seven points

clear of the relegation zone. "It's a difficult ground to visit. Celta play good football, where they are in the table isn't justified by their football," Morata told Movistar. "We're ready now to finish our objective of third place. What we have to do is achieve our objective as quick as we can." Victory could have seen Atletico seal a top-four spot this week if other results had gone their way.

Diego Simeone made three changes from the side which beat Real Mallorca on Friday with injured attackers Joao Felix and Yannick Carrasco having to sit out the trip to Galicia. Celta coach Oscar Garcia chose to name Nolito on the bench despite the winger's effort in Saturday's draw at Real Betis.

Morata opened the scoring after 55 seconds to claim his third goal in two games. The former Juventus forward slotted home from an Angel Correa cross in a perfect start for the visitors. Their best chance to

double their lead came just before the break but Correa was unable to connect cleanly to Marcos Llorente's low pass.

Celta equalised five minutes into the second half with a seemingly lucky effort as Beltran caught Jan Oblak off guard. Brais Mendez found Beltran in the box and the central midfielder lobbed the Atleti goalkeeper with a volleyed shot which spun off his shin.

Simeone threw on World Cup winner Thomas Lemar, who is yet to score this season, in the final 20 minutes as his side searched for a winner. Lemar had the best opportunity to clinch the three points but Ruben Blanco parried the France attacker's drive away to highlight Simeone's lack of attacking options with Felix and Carrasco injured and Diego Costa suspended.

Earlier, South Korean teenager Lee Kang-in scored with two minutes to play to move Valencia to

within a point of the Europa League places in a 2-1 win over Real Valladolid. Lee, 19, clinched his side's first victory since Albert Celades was sacked earlier this month and sent his outfit up to eighth, just behind Real Sociedad in the spot for the qualifying rounds for next season's continental competition.

Uruguay's Maxi Gomez opened the scoring on the half-hour mark, finishing tidily at the back post from a low Kevin Gameiro cross. Victor Garcia, making his maiden first-team appearance of the season having spent the campaign with the reserves, equalised for Valladolid just after the break.

Midfielder Garcia half-volleyed home a deflected shot after 100 seconds of the second half. Lee claimed his second goal of the campaign with less than two minutes of normal time remaining. His whipped shot from outside the box beat Antonito to end up in the bottom corner. —AFP