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Govt likely to cancel school year, except for grade 12

Adasani says finance minister's proposals harm citizens

Resilient Zain reports revenue of \$2.6bn, net income of \$273m

Bader Al-Kharafi: A mission-critical six-months in providing connectivity during the lockdown

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading mobile innovator with operations in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces its consolidated financial results for the six months to June 30, 2020. Zain served 47.6 million customers at the end of the period, reflecting a 3 percent decrease year-on-year (Y-o-Y).

For the first six months of 2020 (H1), Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 787 million (\$2.6 billion), a decrease of 3 percent Y-o-Y. EBITDA for the period reached KD 336 million (\$1.1 billion), down 5 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 43 percent. Net income amounted to KD 84 million (\$273 million), down 14 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting earnings per share of 19 fils (\$0.06). (See Page 9)



Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Cabinet is expected to approve recommendations by the education minister to cancel the current school year for all grades except grade 12 because of the higher secondary exams. Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi said last month that he would make a final decision on the school year by the middle of July.

Head of the Assembly's human resources development committee MP Khalil Al-Saleh said yesterday that the panel is awaiting a draft law on the population structure promised by Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem before writing its report on the issue. The committee was entrusted by the Assembly to prepare a comprehensive report on proposals to amend the population composition currently tilted in favor of expats, who form 70 percent of the population.

Ghanem told Kuwait Television two weeks ago that he and a number of MPs will submit a comprehensive draft law on expat manpower to achieve a gradual reduction in the number of expats without undermining the market.

MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday that new economic proposals by Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan directly harm the income of citizens as they call for wide-ranging taxes and charges. The so-called economic document is the main issue on

Adasani's grilling of the finance minister that was scheduled to take place on Tuesday but postponed because a number of MPs and workers tested positive for the coronavirus.

Adasani said in statements that the "document" stipulates "touching" the salaries of employees, calls for raising tariffs of electricity and water and other services, besides calling to impose taxes and privatization of some public services. The lawmaker charged that the minister is personally responsible for the document, which undermines ordinary people and their livelihoods.

Adasani grilled the finance minister last month on almost similar issues, but his grilling ended without submitting a no-confidence vote. This time, he says he wants to show that the minister was working against people's interests.

Meanwhile, MP Abdullah Al-Kandari said yesterday that Assembly meetings should not have been postponed because of the coronavirus scare and Assembly authorities should have taken sufficient health precautions. He said based on the constitution, only HH the Amir has the right to delay Assembly sessions for up to one month. MP Ahmad Al-Fadhl meanwhile denied that he and MPs Nayef Al-Merdas and Mohammad Al-Dallal had tested positive for the coronavirus as has been posted on social media.

News in brief

US rescinds visa order

NEW YORK: The US government rescinded its controversial decision to revoke foreign student visas whose courses move online due to coronavirus, a federal judge said Tuesday. The universities of Harvard and MIT, with the support of a number of other institutions, had taken legal action against the move that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced on July 6. "The government has agreed to rescind" the decision as well as any implementation of the directive, Judge Allison Burroughs said in a brief hearing. There were more than one million international students in the US for the 2018-19 academic year, according to the Institute of International Education.— AFP

Baby infected in womb

PARIS: Doctors in France have described what they said was the first confirmed case of a newborn infected in the womb with COVID-19 by the mother. The concentration of SARS-CoV-2 was highest in the placenta of the pregnant woman in her twenties - from there it passed through the umbilical cord to the baby. The baby began to develop severe symptoms 24 hours after birth, including severe rigidity of the body, damage to white matter in the brain, and extreme irritability. But symptoms began to recede, and within three weeks, the newborn had almost fully recovered on his own.— AFP

Population below projections

PARIS: Earth will be home to 8.8 billion souls in 2100, two billion fewer than current UN projections, according to a major study published yesterday that foresees new global power alignments shaped by declining fertility rates and greying populations. More than 20 countries will see their numbers diminish by at least half. China's will fall nearly that much, from 1.4 billion people today to 730 million in 80 years. Sub-Saharan Africa will triple in size to some three billion people, with Nigeria alone expanding to almost 800 million in 2100, second only to India's 1.1 billion.— AFP (See Page 5)

'Crimes of hunger' rise in Lebanon

BEIRUT: Zakaria Al-Omar was walking through Beirut when a stranger robbed him at knifepoint, a desperate crime of a kind that has become increasingly common in crisis-torn Lebanon. The small Mediterranean country is mired in an economic crisis marked by a steep currency fall and runaway inflation that have plunged nearly half of the population into poverty.

Omar, a 37-year-old graphic designer, recalled the terrifying and

tragic encounter that started when a man in his 40s crept up behind him as he walked alone at night through Beirut's Hamra commercial district. "He told me that he didn't want to hurt me. He asked me to give him money or take him to a grocery store to buy some food," Omar recounted. "He said his children back home were crying from hunger."

The robber grabbed the money and darted toward his motorcycle, then stopped dead in his tracks and returned, explaining that he had lost his job and could no longer pay the rent. "He started crying and apologized to me," Omar told AFP. "He told me that he was not a thief but that he was hungry and so were his children." Omar said he refused to take back the cash.

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TRIPOLI: In this photo taken on June 17, 2020, a Lebanese child stands next to an empty refrigerator in their apartment in this port city north of the capital Beirut.— AFP

ICJ backs Qatar; Saudi revokes license of beIN

THE HAGUE: The UN's top court on Tuesday backed Qatar in a bitter row with four Middle East nations that imposed an air blockade against Doha after accusing it of backing radical Islamists and

Iran. The decision by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) covers a key part of the acrimonious standoff that erupted three years ago pitting Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against Qatar.

Qatar said after the decision that its rivals would "face justice". "We welcome today's decision by the ICJ that will see the blockading states finally face justice for violating international aviation rules," Qatar Minister of Transport and Communications, Jassim Saif Ahmed Al-Sulaiti, said in a statement. The president of the ICJ, Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf

said The Hague-based court unanimously "rejects the appeal" by the rival states against a decision by the world civil aviation body in favor of Qatar over sovereign airspace.

The court also "holds that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has jurisdiction" in the case, by 15 judges to one, Yusuf said. The ICAO in 2018 ruled it had the jurisdiction to handle a dispute brought by Qatar, which accused its neighbors of violating a convention that regulates the free passage of its passenger planes through foreign airspace.

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Egypt street kids hit hard by pandemic

CAIRO: Wandering Cairo's bustling streets, Zeinab was struggling to survive by selling tissues when the coronavirus left her even more vulnerable, along with thousands of other homeless people and street children. The only good news was that, amid the pandemic fears, physical violence against the destitute has declined, Zeinab told AFP at a mobile shelter for the poor in Abbasiya, a working-

class district. "People attack us less because they are afraid," she said.

But with fewer people in the streets, "we have less work and less money," added the young woman, while keeping an eye on her one-year-old son, Abdallah. Almost one third of Egypt's population of 100 million live in poverty. Young people and children who roam the streets are among the poorest and are regularly exposed to verbal, physical and sexual violence and exploitation.

The novel coronavirus, which has killed nearly 4,000 people and infected around 83,000 more in Egypt, has compounded their vulnerability, as the country battles an economic

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CAIRO: Homeless children are cared for inside a mobile unit run by Egyptian authorities in the capital's Abbasiya district on June 22, 2020.— AFP

Local

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 56,877 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of yesterday, in addition to 399 deaths. With the exception of 146 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, 46,897 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 9,581 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 in Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh on July 9, 2020. Activities resumed in the first phase included home deliveries of restaurants, telecommunication companies, food retailers, companies' transportation of employees, gas stations, private clinics and car workshops.

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

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

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

Mosques in the so-called 'model residential areas' reopened their doors for worshippers on June 10 amid strict health precautionary measures. Minister of 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 starting from March 12, 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 facemasks, 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)

street children is compounded because many are from families long trapped in poverty and without stable housing who may not be listed in civil status registries.

In 2016, Egyptian authorities launched the national program "Atfal bala ma'wa" (Children Without a Home) with the aim of "integrating" street children and helping them "abandon street behavior," said Mohamed Shaker, head of the programme at the Ministry of Social Solidarity. The program deploys 17 mobile units throughout the country, providing a place to rest, food and games as well as medical, social and psychological support to street children.

"The aim is to build a relationship with the homeless children and help them build trust between each other," said Salma Ismail, communications officer at a non-governmental group Bannati. At the Abbassiya mobile unit, Karim tentatively approached and grabbed a snack on offer. He

to the greenback on the black market in early July. With Lebanon heavily reliant on imports, the price of medicine, baby milk and food has reached record highs.

The price of a relatively cheap brand of diapers has shot up from 15,000 Lebanese pounds (\$10 at the official rate) to 34,000 pounds (\$23) per pack. And the cost of a tin of baby milk has climbed from 23,000 (\$15) to 35,000 pounds (\$23) on average, with some brands selling for as much as 45,000 pounds (\$30).

In a video widely shared on social media this month, three men were filmed walking away from a Beirut restaurant carrying a large and heavy-looking safe. Walid Ataya, the restaurant owner, said: "They took money from the cash register, even the spare change. Then they scoured the place until they spotted the safe, which they couldn't open." He did not reveal exactly how much was lost but said the robbers stole the proceeds from "two years' worth of work". Ataya, who owns a chain of upscale restaurants in Beirut, said the safe contained cash he did not want to deposit in a bank, now a common concern.

Since the autumn, Lebanese banks have gradually forbidden depositors from withdrawing their dollar savings or transferring them abroad, prompting many to stash cash in their offices or at home. Apart from money, increasingly more cars are being stolen. The ISF has recorded 303 vehicle thefts so far this year - more than the 273 in the second half of last year. The increase, the security source said, was clearly linked to "deteriorating economic conditions and rising youth unemployment". — AFP

Egypt street kids hit hard...

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downturn and access to support is reduced due to lockdown measures. "They are isolated, the population at large avoids them... and their meager income has been hit hard," said Youssef Bastawrous, manager of the French civil society group Samusocial International, which works with street children in Egypt.

In 2014, authorities estimated Egypt had around 16,000 youngsters and children living rough on the streets. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) believes this a massive "underestimation" of actual numbers, said its communications head in Egypt Jonathan Crickx. The problem of compiling reliable figures on

'Crimes of hunger' rise...

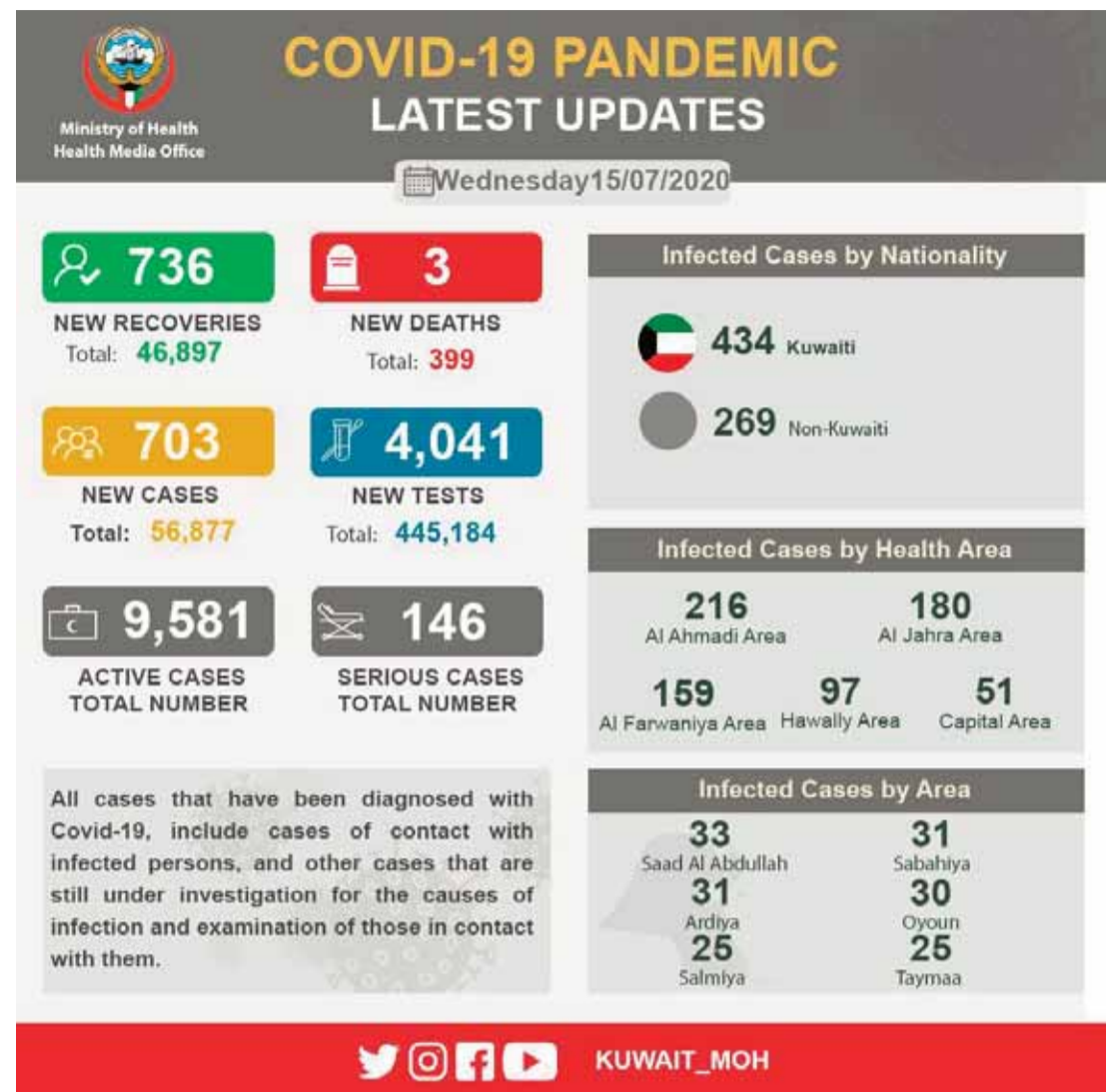
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"I told him that I forgave him, and then he went away," Omar said. "I was scared but I also felt sad for that man breaking down in front of me."

Lebanon's Internal Security Forces say crime rates have shot up this year amid Lebanon's worst economic turmoil since the 1975-1990 civil war. The ISF recorded 863 thefts and robberies in the first half of this year, up from 650 for all of 2019, according to a document seen by AFP.

A security official who asked not to be named told AFP that broader crime rates during the first half of 2020 reached a six-year peak, especially murders and robberies. The rise appeared to be driven by the deepening economic crisis, said the official, who was not authorized to speak on the issue. Police were noticing a "new kind of theft that involves mainly baby milk, food, and medicine", the source said. In another trend that evoked Omar's encounter, the source added, "more than one victim has said the perpetrators apologized while robbing them".

Tens of thousands of Lebanese have lost their jobs or part of their salaries, while a crippling dollar shortage has sparked rapid inflation. The Lebanese pound, though officially pegged to the dollar at 1,507, reached a peak of more than 9,000



- 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)
- 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)
- 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone)
- 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)
- 51588599 (Private Education Department)
- 51592515 (Services Department)
- 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

Medicine delivery

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

- Amiri Hospital: 50880699
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital: 50880755
- Farwaniya Hospital: 50880852
- Adan Hospital: 50880908
- Jahra Hospital: 50881066
- Sabah Hospital: 97632660
- Jaber Hospital: 96992079
- Ibn Sina Hospital: 99613948
- Chest Hospital: 99258749
- Razi Hospital: 97633487
- Kuwait Cancer Control Center: 96735242
- Psychiatric Hospital: 97350113
- Physiotherapy Hospital: 99824037
- Maternity Hospital: 98559531
- As'ad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center: 98545008
- 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-health.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

Mental health assistance

The Kuwait Center for Mental Health provides help through its suicide hotline: 24621770 (8 am - 5 pm). Meanwhile, the Kuwait Psychological Association (KPA) is providing consultation through the phone for people suffering from the psychological impacts of coronavirus. Different doctors are working on the hotline in different timings as follows:

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

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

said he was 12 years old but staff cautioned that most of the children who use the services do not know, or prefer not to disclose, their real ages.

Karim said he sleeps in a local park and earns his living by cleaning car windshields. He said he was attending a public school before authorities shut them down in late March as part of efforts to stem the spread of the virus. "I come here to play," Karim told AFP. "I miss school. Since it has been closed, I have forgotten everything. Before, I used to learn how to read and count."

The economic impact of Egypt's lockdown measures has stretched already overextended aid offered to street children. With the financial crunch, some charities have concentrated efforts on health and sanitation to help children protect themselves against the disease. "We make them aware of health issues, we distribute masks and explain to them how to wash their hands," said Samusocial International's

Bastawrous.

The lifting of a three-month curfew in late June brought some reprieve for street children, who could again sell trinkets and tissues or beg for money as people returned to cafes and restaurants. Restrictions have also been partially lifted on mosques and churches, which have long provided sanctuary for street children. At some mosques, the bathrooms usually used by worshippers to perform their ablutions act as a one-stop shop for the children's hygiene needs.

Maryam Hisham, a researcher on issues facing street children, said they are particularly vulnerable to disease and are often harassed by authorities patrolling Egypt's streets. She criticized an anti-begging law that deems the children's presence on the street illegal, saying it hurts rather than helps their situation. "The police are already treating them like trash," she said. — AFP

ICJ backs Qatar; Saudi revokes...

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But the four allies disagreed, saying the ICAO was not the right body to judge in the dispute and that its decision to do so was "manifestly flawed and in violation of fundamental principles of due process and the right to be heard". They had asked the ICJ to declare the aviation body's ruling "null and void and without effect." The UAE issued a statement vowing to fight on at the ICAO, saying it "will now put its legal case to ICAO supporting the right to close its airspace to Qatari aircraft".

Last year the ICJ - set up in 1946 to rule in disputes between UN member states - rejected a request by the UAE to take special measures against Qatar, after Doha won a case at the ICJ in 2018 over alleged discrimination against its citizens. Doha in June again accused the Saudi-led alliance of refusing to engage with efforts to resolve the crisis that it said were backed by the United States.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia said Tuesday it has permanently revoked the license of Qatari broadcaster beIN Sports and slapped it with a fine of \$2.7 million over alleged "monopolistic" practices. Subscribing to beIN, the Arab world's leading sports channel which has exclusive rights to several key tournaments, has been difficult for Saudi fans since the kingdom's 2017 boycott of Qatar.

Just days after Riyadh and its allies cut ties with Doha, Saudi Arabia banned the sale and distribution of beIN receivers and blocked Qatari websites as well as all transactions with its former ally. In 2018, Saudi Arabia's General Authority for Competition (GAC) said it was revoking the broadcaster's license and imposing the 10-million riyal (\$2.7 million) fine, according to local media. On Tuesday, the GAC said a Saudi administrative court had upheld the decision.

The GAC said beIN had "abused its dominant position through several monopolistic practices" that violated the kingdom's competition law. In a statement, beIN dismissed the decision as "nonsensical", which it said had come after "sham legal proceedings". "The very idea that permanently banning a leading competitor from a market could in any way promote competition is plainly absurd," beIN said in a statement.

beIN has alleged that since August 2017 a vast and sophisticated Saudi bootlegging network known as "beoutQ" illicitly transmitted its programs via Riyadh-based satellite provider Arabsat. The World Trade Organization ruled earlier in June that Riyadh had failed to protect the intellectual property rights of beIN by refusing to take action against beoutQ.

The ruling could have serious implications for a proposed £300-million (\$370-million) Saudi-backed takeover of English Premier League club Newcastle United. English Premier League football chief executive Richard Masters admitted last month that the proposed takeover involving Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) was "complicated". — Agencies

Local

Kuwait Crown Prince receives Premier, Defense Minister



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Tuesday at Seif Palace His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (left), as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Foreign Minister attends EU-Kuwait anniversary celebration

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah took part in a ceremony to highlight the first anniversary of the establishment of the European Union Delegation to the State of Kuwait. The event, held via videoconference, was hosted by Ambassador Cristian Tudor, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Kuwait, with the participation of chiefs of all EU delegations in Kuwait. The event reflects the firm and close friendship between Kuwait and the EU and reflects fruitful progress in various cooperative domains and vital issues shared by both sides.

Addressing the celebration, the Kuwaiti foreign minister said he was pleased to participate in the gathering, saying this momentous step is a strong indication of the deep and resilient relationship between both sides, a testament to the importance each side lays upon the other. Moreover, Kuwait, through its relentless efforts, has strived to develop its relationships with all the institutions of the European Union and with individual member states, he said.

Success story

He hailed the relationship between the State of Kuwait and the European Union as truly unique and having resulted in a great success

story and in a mutually beneficial relationship for both sides. "Kuwait is the first GCC country to sign a Cooperation Arrangement with the European Union, which is a cornerstone in our bilateral relations and also has resulted in the convening of the First Senior Officials' Meeting between both sides, also a first for GCC countries, in November 2018," said the Kuwaiti foreign minister. "In fact, we are proud that the next Senior Officials' Meeting is slated to take place on July 16. This Cooperation Arrangement has opened doors and paved the way for both sides to establish dialogue and to engage in detailed discussions in areas such as trade, investment, economy, human rights, security, humanitarian assistance cooperation, development, and many other issues," he said.

The European Union and the State of Kuwait have engaged in intensive political consultations and discussions for mutual benefit and to address important regional and international issues, he stressed. Specifically, Kuwait and the European Union have co-hosted a number of international donor and relief conferences for Syria, Iraq, and the Rohingya people, he added. Kuwait and the EU are constantly engaging in security and counter-terrorism dialogues for the betterment of all countries in the region, he boasted. "The State of Kuwait and the European Union took part in a wonderful and frank discussion in February of this year when we held our first informal Human Rights Dialogue," he added.

Regional mediation

Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser also thanked the European Union for continuing its support to



Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.



Ambassador Cristian Tudor, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Kuwait.

Kuwait's regional mediation efforts overseen by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to heal the Gulf fracture, in addition to the EU's support for Kuwait's endeavors to promote a dialogue based approach in the region. The EU-Arab relationship is an important and strategic partnership strengthened by close proximity and historic ties, he said, pointing out the groundbreaking first of its kind EU-Arab Summit that was held in Sharm El-Sheikh last year. This event truly contributed to boosting the EU-Arab relationship in many aspects and provided a platform for mutual understanding and appreciating each side's point of view, he noted. He also commended the EU for the honorable position it has taken in preserving the rights of the Palestinian people by continuing to advocate the two-state solution, in addition to the EU refusal of the Is-

raeli annexation attempts on Palestinian land. The minister further praised the EU for its genuine stand and the tireless efforts it has shown in supporting the Syrian people, appreciating its backing for the people of Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya. The foreign minister concluded by speaking highly of the great efforts of the EU Delegation in Kuwait as part of promoting joint cooperation and upgrading bilateral ties to wider prospects. Meanwhile, Ambassador Tudor lauded the great cooperation and support for the EU delegation since it was launched in Kuwait. He also spoke highly of the efforts and stands of the State of Kuwait on both regional and international levels, its humanitarian initiatives and efforts to maintain regional security and stability. Several senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the event. —KUNA

News in brief

Kuwait condemns Houthi attack

KUWAIT: Kuwait strongly condemns the continuous attacks of Houthi militants at civilian areas and civilians in Saudi Arabia through ballistic missiles and booby-trapped drones, an official source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on Tuesday. "Continuing such terrorist operations is a blatant violation of all international relations' norms and conventions, and an obstacle against spread of peace, and also poses threat to the security of Saudi Arabia and the stability of the region," a statement quoting an official source at the Foreign Ministry affirmed.

5,229 passengers

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced that 29 flights were set to depart Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying a total of 5,229 passengers. They included 12 flights to India, six flights to Egypt, two flight to Lebanon, two flight to Sudan, two flights to the UAE, one flight to Qatar, one flight to Jordan, one flight to Pakistan, one flight to Philippines, and one flight to the United States of America.

Public appeal

KUWAIT: Editor-in-Chief of Al-Baida newspaper Mohammad Al-Sawwagh made a public appeal to Health Minister Dr Basel Al-Sabah to reopen the West Sabahiya polyclinic, explaining that since its closure, workers have been using the spaces outside the building to wash cars in exchange for money. He urged the health minister in his appeal to honor his 'constitutional duty' of protecting public health and providing proper health care for citizens.

Oil price down

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 60 cents to \$43.02 per barrel on Tuesday as an oppose to \$43.62 pb the day before. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Globally, the price of the Brent crude futures went up by 18 cents to \$42.90 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which went up by 19 cents to \$40.29 pb.

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Local

Kuwaiti envoy to Germany discusses economic cooperation with institutions

Arab economies hit hard by COVID-19 due to oil prices decline, absence of stability

BERLIN: Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Germany Najeeb Al-Bader discussed in a virtual meeting on Tuesday, bilateral economic and trade cooperation between Kuwait and Germany. In the meeting, organized by the East and Near East Foundation for Economic Cooperation, the Ambassador affirmed that this conference reflects the traditional political, economic and cultural relationship between Europe and the Middle East on one hand, and the depth of Kuwaiti-German relations in all fields on the other hand. He explained that Germany's presidency of the European Union in the next six months comes within the framework of challenges related to the negative economic impacts left by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on Europe and the world. The other challenge relates to reaching an agreement on the Brexit, Ambassador Bader added, stressing that the timing of Germany's EU's presidency gives hope, due to a number of considerations, such as having the strongest economy in Europe led by a stable government.

During his presentation, Ambassador Bader focused on a number of axes related to the negative repercussions left by the COVID-19 pandemic on the world's economies, as well as trade and investment between Kuwait and Germany. He reviewed a number of major negative impacts left by the pandemic on the global economy, including the Kuwaiti and German economies, especially those related to the export of industrial products, as the coronavirus crisis hit global economies and was not limited to a particular country or region, it became more difficult to get out of this crisis. He expressed his belief that the consequences of the pandemic on the economies of the Arab countries were multiplied due to the decline in oil prices and the absence of sustainable stability in a number of Arab countries, thus affecting development of economy and development plans on the short and long terms. The crisis has caused some Arab countries, especially the Gulf states, to rethink their economic and development programs in light of the new reality imposed by the coronavirus crisis, he noted. He pointed to the decline in gross national product in Germany by 2.2 percent in the first quarter of this year, affected by the COVID-19, noting that this is the largest decline since the financial crisis in 2009.



Germany can contribute to Kuwait vision 2035

Acceptable solution
Bader stated that it is not possible to talk about the Arab economic situation without referring to the importance of providing an acceptable Arab solution to the Palestinian issue and to the political crises in Libya, Syria and Yemen in a manner that contributes to achieving real and sustainable economic development in the Arab world. He stressed that without achieving political and security stability, it is not possible to achieve economic construction, appreciating in this regard the position taken by the Federal Parliament (the Bundestag) recently by passing a resolution demanding Israel not to its plans to annex lands from the West Bank, considering that such a step is not compatible with international law. He praised the effective management by the German leadership headed by Chancellor Angela Merkel, which enabled Germany to overcome health and economic damages, explaining that the economic policies and support provided by the German government to its economic institutions enabled the control of the situation.

As for the economic and commercial relations between Kuwait and Germany, Ambassador Bader praised the level of bilateral relations in all political and economic fields, as it helps Kuwait in resolving regional and humanitarian crises. Ambassador Bader stated that Germany is the third global trade partner for Kuwait and the first among the EU countries, as the value of German exports to Kuwait in 2019 amounted

to about 1.4 billion euros. He noted that there are more than 700 officially registered German brands in Kuwait, primarily cars, machines, electrical, chemical, and metal materials, in addition to foodstuffs and devices, while crude oil and its derivatives are the basis of Kuwaiti exports to Germany. In order to develop trade cooperation, there is a need to develop economic relations with Germany in the field of German direct investments in Kuwait and in eliminating the major imbalance in favor of Germany in the trade balance between the two countries, he explained.

Greater role

For more than half a century Kuwait embodied its seriousness and credibility in its relationship with Germany, which qualifies it to aspire to a



Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany Najeeb Al-Bader

greater role in the German strategy to ensure and stabilize the energy supply. Increasing Kuwait's contribution to oil supplies to Germany is the fastest way to correct the severe deviation in the trade balance between the two countries, Ambassador Bader said. He described the German investments to Kuwait as "modest and hesitant," in light of the great transformation witnessed by the investment environment in Kuwait with all facilities provided, especially that Kuwait's vision 2035 is based on ambitious development plans to implement large investment projects in all economic sectors. He stressed that the State of Kuwait attaches special importance to the development of its commercial and economic relationship with the Republic of Germany and what Germany can contribute to the vision of Kuwait 2035.

Germany can contribute to the support and success of this vision, through its active and direct participation in the projects to be launched in the State of Kuwait, affirming at the same time the friendly relations between Kuwait and Germany. He directed his call to German companies to continue and activate the trade exchange between the two countries in light of the current challenges facing global trade and to show the benefits of economic cooperation, production diversity and international openness that accompanies the global development in providing an attractive environment for investment. It should be noted that the Middle East and Near East Foundation for Economic Cooperation is the oldest and largest German organization for economic development,

and former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder is honorary president. This institution contributes to strengthening relations between Germany and the countries of the Near and Middle East, as this region is distinguished by its vitality and diversity and provides companies with exceptional opportunities for economic success. —KUNA

No customs fees for personal shipments below KD 100

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The General Administration of Customs has waived customs fees for personal shipments below KD 100. This decision was taken after the launch of the 'Exempting Personal Shipments' social media campaign around 10 days ago by Mubarak Al-Ajmi, a Kuwaiti activist.

The decision will be effective after it's published in the Kuwait Al-Youm official gazette. "This decision is applied to all personal shipments, which means it can only be for individuals. The shipment is checked at the port, so if a box includes 50 items of the same product for instance, they won't be considered personal items," Hassan, a customs officer, told Kuwait Times.

The customs fee that was previously applied was 5 percent of the value of the shipment's value. "Also, the shipments were checked for the information provided in the documents. Some people mention a much lower price for a watch than its real price, so inspectors evaluate the actual price to set the customs fees," explained Hassan.

The campaign received a positive response from people, especially those affected by the excessive fees charged by shipping companies that claimed these are customs fees. Also, customers ordering inexpensive items were charged almost the same amount in fees as their orders. Some MPs discussed this issue in the parliament and announced their support and demand for waiving the customs fees for personal shipments.

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KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society volunteers fumigated the Farwaniya Educational Zone's building and distributed hand sanitizers, facemasks and gloves to employees there recently. This came as part of its efforts to assist state departments in fighting the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Kuwait.



Behind in the polls, Trump unloads on Biden at press event

Millions face new virus curbs, but hope rises for US vaccine



An image grab taken from a video uploaded on YouTube by the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry, allegedly shows smoke billowing from what they said was destroyed Armenia's military equipment on the Azerbaijani-Armenian border. — AFP

16 killed as Azerbaijan, Armenia battle

Fighting between the arch-foes - the heaviest in years

BAKU: At least 11 troops and a civilian were killed on Tuesday in a third day of fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia, despite international calls for restraint. The fighting between the arch-foes in the South Caucasus since Sunday is the heaviest in years, raising fears of a major flare-up in the volatile region. All-out war between the ex-Soviet republics could have wider implications and pit regional rivals Russia and Turkey against each other. Azerbaijan said seven of its troops—including a major general and a colonel—and a civilian had died on Tuesday, and Armenia said four of its troops had been killed, its first reported fatalities in the clashes.

Overall, 16 people have been killed from both sides since Sunday. The ex-Soviet republics have for decades been locked in a simmering conflict over Azerbaijan's southwestern separatist region of Nagorny Karabakh, which was seized by ethnic Armenian separatists in a 1990s war that claimed 30,000 lives. Fighting outside the region is rare, but since Sunday the two sides have reported clashes in northern areas along their shared border.

The fighting hundreds of kilometers from

Nagorny Karabakh has prompted calls for an immediate ceasefire from the United States, European Union and the regional power broker Russia. Azerbaijan's defense ministry said Armenian forces had attacked its positions in the northern Tovuz region with artillery fire, mortars and large-calibre machine-guns on Tuesday. It said several villages in the area had also come under fire. Azerbaijani forces opened fire again on the northeastern section of the border in its Tavush province, the defense ministry spokesman, Sushan Stepanyan, said.



7 Azerbaijan troops killed

'Baku will retaliate'
Azerbaijan's ally Turkey—which competes with Russia for the influence in the strategic region—expressed support for Baku. Turkish foreign min-

istry has accused Armenia of "aggressive nationalism" and vowed to "continue, with all its capacity, to stand by Azerbaijan in its struggle to protect its territorial integrity." Azerbaijani political analyst Elhan Shahinoglu said the probability of a full-scale war was now "very high".

"An Azerbaijani general has been killed and Baku will retaliate," he said. "There is a widespread popular demand in Azerbaijan to shift military actions to Karabakh."

But Armenian analyst Hakob Badalyan said an all-out war was very unlikely. "Baku and Yerevan, as well as the region's geopolitical powers (Russia and Turkey), don't want a big war which they know will lead to catastrophic consequences," he said, adding that neither side was in a clear position to win a protracted conflict. Four years ago, Azerbaijan had military superiority over its neighbor, but Armenia has

since "restored the balance" with purchases of sophisticated Russian weapons, he said.

Stalled talks

In April 2016, four days of fierce fighting in Karabakh—the worst violence in decades—claimed dozens of lives from both sides and nearly spiralled into full-scale war. Mediated by the "Minsk Group" of diplomats from France, Russia and the United States, talks on the Karabakh conflict have been largely stalled since a 1994 ceasefire deal.

Armenia, which controls the disputed region, is happy with the status quo in Karabakh that also suits Russia's interests as the Kremlin uses its power-broker's role in asserting its influence in the ex-Soviet republics. Moscow has a military alliance with Armenia, where it maintains a base, but supplies both Yerevan and Baku with weapons worth billions of dollars. Energy-rich Azerbaijan, whose military spending exceeds Armenia's entire state budget, has repeatedly threatened to restore control over the territory by force. Armenia has vowed to crush any military offensive. — AFP

Chile police train dogs to sniff out COVID-19

SANTIAGO: Police in Chile are training dogs to detect people that may be infected with the novel coronavirus by sniffing their sweat. The dogs - three golden retrievers and a labrador - are between the ages of four and five. Until now they have been used to sniff out illicit drugs, explosives and lost people, police say. The training program is a joint effort by Chile's national police, the Carabineros, and specialists at the Universidad Catolica de Chile. It follows in the footsteps of similar efforts taking place in France, said Julio Santelices, head of the police school of specialties. Dogs have 330 million olfactory receptors, and an ability to detect smells 50 times better than humans. They can also smell 250 people per hour.

"The virus has no smell, but rather the infection generates metabolic changes" which in turn leads to the release of a particular type of sweat "which is what the dog would detect," Fernando Mardones, a Universidad Catolica professor of veterinary epidemiology, told AFP. According to Santelices, tests in Europe and Dubai shown a 95 percent efficiency rate in canine detection of COVID-19 cases.



SANTIAGO: Members of the Chilean Police Canine Training team walk two Golden Retriever dogs before the beginning of their training session aimed to detect people infected with coronavirus COVID-19. — AFP

Medical Detection Dogs, a British charity set up in 2008 to harness dogs' sharp sense of smell to detect human diseases, also started training canines to detect COVID-19 in late March.

Four-legged biodetectors

"The importance of this scientific study is that it will allow dogs to become biodetectors, and detect this type of illness at an early stage," Santelices said. Mardones said that there is already evidence that dogs can detect diseases such as tuberculosis, parasite infections, and even early stages of cancer. Canines can detect subtle changes in skin temperature, potentially making them useful in determining if a person has a fever. According to the World Organization for Animal Health, the possibility of

contagion from a dog is remote. The canine trainees began their education one month ago, and will use sweat samples taken from COVID-19 patients being treated at the Universidad Catolica's clinic.

The experts hope to have the dogs trained and working in the field by August. The plan is to deploy them with an officer in pedestrian-heavy areas such as train stations and airports, and at health control stations. Chile on Tuesday reported 1,836 new cases of COVID-19 - the lowest figure in two months - bringing the total of cases since March 3 to 319,493. The viral infection has killed more than 11,000 people, according to the most recent Health Ministry official report, which includes "probable" COVID-19 victims. — AFP

World population in 2100 could be 2 billion below UN projections

PARIS: Earth will be home to 8.8 billion souls in 2100, two billion fewer than current UN projections, according to a major study published Wednesday that foresees new global power alignments shaped by declining fertility rates and greying populations. By century's end, 183 of 195 countries—barring an influx of immigrants—will have fallen below the replacement threshold needed to maintain population levels, an international team of researchers reported in *The Lancet*.

More than 20 countries—including Japan, Spain, Italy, Thailand, Portugal, South Korea and Poland—will see their numbers diminish by at least half. China's will fall nearly that much, from 1.4 billion people today to 730 million in 80 years. Sub-Saharan Africa, meanwhile, will triple in size to some three billion people, with Nigeria alone expanding to almost 800 million in 2100, second only to India's 1.1 billion.

"These forecasts suggest good news for the environment, with less stress on food production systems and lower carbon emissions, as well as significant economic opportunity for parts of sub-Saharan Africa," lead author Christopher Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington said. "However, most countries outside of Africa will see shrinking workforces and inverting population pyramids, which will

have profound negative consequences for the economy."

For high-income countries in this category, the best solutions for sustaining population levels and economic growth will be flexible immigration policies and social support for families who want children, the study concluded. "However, in the face of declining population there is a very real danger that some countries might consider policies that restrict access to reproductive health services, with potentially devastating consequences," Murray cautioned.

866 million people over 80

"It is imperative that women's freedom and rights are at the top of every government's development agenda." Social services and healthcare systems will need to be overhauled to accommodate much older populations. As fertility falls and life expectancy increases worldwide, the number of children under five is forecast to decline by more than 40 percent, from 681 million in 2017 to 401 million in 2100, the study found.

At the other end of the spectrum, 2.37 billion people—more than a quarter of the global population—will be over 65 years old by then. Those over 80 will balloon from about 140 million today to 866 million. Sharp declines in the number and proportion of the working-age population will also pose huge challenges in many

countries. "Societies will struggle to grow with fewer workers and taxpayers," noted Stein Emil Vollset, a professor at the IHME.

The number of people of working age in China, for example, will plummet from about 950 million today to just over 350 million by the end of the century—a 62 percent drop. The decline in India is projected to be less steep, from 762 to 578 million. In Nigeria, by contrast, the active labor force will expand from 86 million today to more than 450 million in 2100. These tectonic shifts will also reshuffle the pecking order in terms of economic clout, the researchers forecast.

A new multipolar world

By 2050, China's gross domestic product will overtake that of the United States, but fall back into second place by 2100, they predict. India's GDP will rise to take the number three spot, while Japan, Germany, France and the UK will stay among the world's 10 largest economies. Brazil is projected to fall in ranking from eighth today to 13th, and Russia from the number 10 spot to 14th. Historical powers Italy and Spain, meanwhile, decline from the top 15 to 25th and 28th, respectively. Indonesia could become the 12th largest economy globally, while Nigeria—currently 28th—is projected to crack the top 10. "By the end of the century, the world will be multipolar, with India, Nigeria, China and the United States the dominant powers," said Richard Horton, describing the study as outlining "radical shifts in geopolitical power." —AFP

International

Norwegian funeral homes turn to the state to avoid 'an early grave'

Due to declining mortality, undertakers struggle to make ends meet

OSLO: While the novel coronavirus pandemic is ravaging the world, some of Norway's funeral homes have found themselves without work and have turned to the state for aid. Due to declining mortality and cancelled funeral ceremonies, half a dozen Norwegian undertakers, according to a public registry, have turned to the state for help after the initial success of Norway's handling of COVID-19 left them struggling to make ends meet.

For the Lande family, who have made caring for the dead their livelihood for three generations, this has never happened before. "When the measures against the coronavirus were imposed, it turned out that it not only broke the back of the coronavirus but other viruses too," Erik Lande, now head of the family business in the south of the country, told AFP.

"So much so that some of the old and sick people who would have died in normal circumstances are still around," he added. Usually the firm handles around 30 funeral arrangements a month, but after the introduction of Norway's semi-lockdown in March, that fell to less than ten in following weeks, with not a single one from COVID-19, Lande explained. To cover fixed costs such as rent and insurance, Lande's Begravelssbyra (Lande's funeral home), has received almost 32,000 Norwegian kroner (about \$3,400 or 3,000 euros) of economic aid.

On March 12, Norway's Prime Minister Erna Solberg announced what she dubbed "the strongest

and most intrusive measures" the country had seen in peacetime. Those included the closure of schools, bars and many public spaces, a ban on sports and cultural events and a curb on foreign travel. Since then nearly all of the measures have been lifted and the virus has been mostly contained, in stark contrast to neighboring Sweden which is still seeing community spread.

Return to normal

Of the some 573,000 deaths linked to COVID-19 worldwide, only 253 have been recorded in Norway and this week the country said it had no COVID-19 patients on ventilators and only a handful in hospital. Presumably thanks to the isolation of the elderly and social distancing measures mortality even seems to have declined. Norway for instance had six percent fewer deaths in May than a year earlier, and 13 percent fewer in June. In the capital Oslo, Verd Begravelssbyra received almost 37,000 kroner in government support as its business model was disrupted.

The funeral home didn't actually struggle due to a lack of customers, but because the funerals it did arrange took on a new format. "With the outbreak of the coronavirus, many customers gave up the ceremony," director Henrik Tveter said, adding that the ceremony represents 60 to 70 percent of the price of a funeral. In part this has been by choice to limit the spread of the disease, but also because of the limits on the number of participants imposed by authorities and some chapels



OSLO: A custom made Tesla Motors car operated by a funeral services company in Norway is pictured in Oslo. While the novel coronavirus pandemic is ravaging the world, some of Norway's funerals homes ironically have found themselves without work and have turned to the state for aid. —AFP



Funeral homes found themselves without work

News in brief

4 Pakistani soldiers killed

ISLAMABAD: Four Pakistani soldiers were killed in a clash with militants in the northwestern tribal region near the Afghan border, the military said. The incident took place in the turbulent town of Miranshah, the capital of North Waziristan District, where several military operations have been launched in recent years against homegrown and foreign militants. The latest clash occurred when security forces were conducting an operation against the hideouts of suspected militants in the area. "As soon as the troops cordoned off the area" they came under fire, the military said in a statement. "All dug-out terrorists were shot down by security forces," but during the exchange of fire "four soldiers embraced shahadat", or martyrdom, it said. Four "terrorists" were also killed in the clash, the statement added. —AFP

Philippine police deployed

MANILA: Philippine police are being deployed to ensure people who test positive for the coronavirus and cannot self-isolate at home are taken to state-run quarantine centers, sparking warnings yesterday of potential rights violations. The move comes as authorities step up efforts to slow the rapid spread of the disease by increasing testing, reimposing lockdowns, and building dozens of quarantine centres to isolate patients with mild symptoms. To clamp down on local transmission, police are accompanying health workers to the homes of people who have tested positive and taking them to government facilities if their homes are considered inadequate for self-isolation or if they live with "vulnerable" people, officials said. "We prefer that the asymptomatics and the mild cases voluntarily surrender and confine themselves in isolation centers," said Harry Roque, spokesman for President Rodrigo Duterte, defending forced quarantine as legal. —AFP

Train crash near Prague

PRAGUE: A train driver died and dozens of passengers were injured when a passenger train collided with a stationary freight train near Prague, a Czech minister and rescuers said yesterday. "Unfortunately... I have learnt there is one dead," Transport Minister Karel Havlicek told the public broadcaster Czech Television. Rescuers said the deceased man was the driver of the passenger train, which was carrying more than 100 passengers. "He was found lifeless in his wrecked cabin," the regional rescue service wrote on its website. Havlicek told Czech Radio later that the driver had most probably ignored a red light. The accident occurred after 1930 GMT on Tuesday near the town of Cesky Brod, about 30 kilometers east of Prague, on a busy railway connecting the capital with the east of the country. —AFP

Customs seize rhino horns

JOHANNESBURG: South African customs officials said Tuesday they had seized dozens of rhino horn pieces disguised as art and valued at about \$7.0 million, at the airport in Johannesburg. Customs officials at OR Tambo International Airport "discovered 41 pieces of rhino horn valued at 115.66 million rand in a consignment declared as 'fine art'", the customs authority said in a statement. The cargo which was destined for Kuala Lumpur via Doha, was detected during a routine inspection of warehouses at the country's largest airport. Home to about 80 percent of the world's rhino population, South Africa has become the epicenter of poaching in recent years, but has seen a steady decline in numbers of rhino killed since 2014. In 2019, 594 rhino were slaughtered for their horns, down from 769 in 2018. —AFP

Behind in the polls, Trump unloads on Biden at press event

WASHINGTON: He started with announcements on China and Hong Kong, but quickly switched to the real reason for holding a press event—his election opponent Joe Biden. Donald Trump stood at the presidential podium in the White House Rose Garden yesterday and unleashed a torrent of criticism on his Democratic opponent, turning the press conference into a campaign event. In a long, disjointed monologue of almost an hour, the Republican billionaire—who is trailing Biden in the polls 110 days before the vote—poured out his frustration.

Trump read out a long list of allegations against his rival, accusing him of drifting to the "radical left" and painting an apocalyptic picture of the United States under a Biden presidency. He accused Biden of "fawning" over China and wanting to "kill" the US energy sector, said his policies would "demolish" the economy, and once again tried to implicate his son Hunter by alluding to his

Protests hit Belarus after opposition barred from ballot

MINSK: Hundreds of protesters rallied and scuffled with police in Belarus on Tuesday with more than 100 people detained after officials barred President Alexander Lukashenko's main rivals from running in an election in August. Hundreds of people took to the streets of the capital Minsk on Tuesday evening, walking peacefully and clapping as passing drivers honked their horns in support. But in scenes previously unseen during a recent wave of protests, some also scuffled with police and others cried out "Shame!" and whistled. Rallies also took place in a number of provincial cities including Brest and Gomel.

Human rights group Viasna said more than 100 people including over 70 in Minsk were detained. Those arrested included around 10 journalists. Lukashenko, a former collective farm chief, has been president for 26 years and will seek his sixth term in the August 9 election. He will stand against four candidates including a woman opposition activist. Earlier Tuesday the central electoral commission rejected two major opposition candidates, citing alleged violations including incorrect income declarations and a failure to gather required signatures.

Protestors pile pressure on Bulgaria veteran PM

SOFIA: A wave of street protests against corruption have swept Bulgaria in recent days, with demonstrators piling pressure on veteran premier Boyko Borisov to resign over his perceived links with oligarchs. Thousands of Bulgarians gathered for a sixth consecutive evening to chant "Resign!" outside the government headquarters in Sofia on Tuesday, the latest in some of the largest protests the country has seen in years.

The gatherings have attracted up to 10,000 people and have drawn support from across the political spectrum, as well as from those with no affiliation. Several high-profile recent incidents involving the country's powerful oligarchs have brought anger to boiling point in a country where politics and big business are inextricably

being too small for social distancing.

In Alesund in the west of the Norway, Alfa Begravelssbyra cut the working hours of its five employees and also had to ask for government aid after a 70 percent drop in revenue between March and May. But owner Odd Sverre Oie, like his col-

league, believed things were returning to a more grim normal as society reopens. "We know that, given the age pyramid, a certain number of people will die in Norway this year," he said. "So we'll probably catch up in the autumn when the flu and other such diseases reappear." —AFP

role on the board of a Ukrainian company accused of graft. "Where is Hunter?" he asked.

Polls 'really good'

Trump alternated his attacks with fulsome praise for what he sees as his own successes. That included the wall built on part of the border with Mexico, which he claimed had helped to stem the number of COVID-19 cases in the United States. He also praised his own reaction to the global pandemic, claiming his administration's actions have saved "millions" of lives, despite the United States remaining by far the most affected country in absolute terms. The Biden campaign countered later Tuesday by attacking Trump's decision to veer in to the campaign during an official event at the White House.

"The American taxpayer should be reimbursed for the abuse of funds this spectacle represented," Biden's director of communications Kate Bedingfield said. And, despite the soaring hyperbole, when the president finally paused for questions it was apparent that the media sitting in the Rose Garden with him were unconvinced. The first reporter to speak was blunt: "Do you see yourself as the underdog? Do you see yourself losing?" "No, I don't," Trump replied simply. Then, decry-

ing the results of multiple national polls as "fake," he said: "I think we have really good poll numbers." "I think that the enthusiasm now is greater and maybe far greater than it was in 2016," he continued—though he admitted that many voters "don't want to talk about it... and I fully understand that." Even so, he claimed, "I think you have a silent majority the likes of which this country has never seen before. This is a very important election. "I think we have a great chance." —AFP

'The authorities are afraid'

Belarus has seen a turbulent summer of protests and arrests of would-be opposition candidates, with Babaryko seen as the strongest potential opponent. "It's a clear sign that the authorities are afraid," said his spokeswoman Maria Kolesnikova. "The authorities removed the strongest candidates and left the weakest," Radio Free Europe political analyst Valery Karbalevich said. He said a genuine fight was possible only if the remaining opposition candidates chose a single one of them to stand, to avoid dividing the vote. Central electoral commission head Lidiya Yermoshina read out a letter from the state control committee, an audit body, alleging that Babaryko was part of an "organised criminal group" and failed to declare all his money and assets in 2019.

A lawyer representing Babaryko told the commission the accusations were part of a criminal case that has not yet been heard. The electoral chief also said Babaryko had used foreign financing for his campaign, referring to the use of staff and resources

by linked. Thirteen years on from accession to the European Union, Bulgaria remains the bloc's most corrupt member, according to Transparency International's corruption perception index. Adding to demonstrators' frustrations is the seemingly immovable Borisov, who has dominated politics since first being elected prime minister in 2009. He has resigned twice before in the face of street pressure, in 2013 and 2016, only to return to office in early elections. "I was part of the demonstrations that brought down Borisov's first government," electrician Plamen Stamo, 37, told AFP at a rally this week. "Seven years have passed since then, nothing has changed."

'A mafia junta'

"If you listen to Borisov and the media, all is done for the best, in the best of worlds," said 34-year-old mother of two Elena Radulova. "But there's no end to scandals and we are still the poorest country in the EU." Borisov's administration has been beset by various cor-



WASHINGTON: Members of the media, seated at a distance from one another, gesture toward the US President Donald Trump as he walks away from the podium after delivering a press conference in the Rose Garden of the White House. —AFP



MINSK: Plainclothed Belarus' security service agents and riot police officers detain a participant of a gathering of opposition supporters in Minsk. —AFP

from his former workplace, the Belarusian subsidiary of Russian state bank Gazprombank. Babaryko is incarcerated in the prison of the KGB security service.

His team told reporters they would contest the decision on his candidacy at the Supreme Court. The commission also rejected the other main opposition candidate, Tsepalko, who took part in the summer protests. It cited a lack of valid signatures and an allegedly incorrectly filled-out earnings declaration. Tsepalko also said he would appeal the decision. The commission registered five candidates including Lukashenko. He said he will not campaign as a candidate on state media, which already cover his activities in detail. —AFP

ruption allegations but two incidents last week lit the fuse of the protests. The first affair centered on Ahmed Dogan, the former leader of a party representing Bulgaria's Turkish minority and a powerful Borisov backer. Last Wednesday right-wing opposition leader Hristo Ivanov used a boat to attempt to access a nominally public section of coast near Dogan's Black Sea villa to point out that the beach had been sealed off.

Security agents paid for by the state, whose protection Dogan has enjoyed despite no longer being an MP, jostled with the boat's crew and pushed it back out to sea. The entire fracas was broadcast live on social media and sparked outrage against the authorities' perceived favoritism towards men like Dogan. Second came the raid last Thursday by heavily armed police and prosecutors on the offices of two of the closest aides of President Rumen Radev, who has been a trenchant critic of Borisov's government and is backed by the main opposition Socialists. —AFP

International

Third of Bangladesh flooded as monsoon drenches region

At least 50 killed as floodwaters surge

BISWAMBHARPUR: Almost four million people have been hit by monsoon floods in South Asia, officials said yesterday, with a third of Bangladesh already underwater from some of the heaviest rains in a decade. The monsoon—which usually falls from June to September—is crucial to the economy of the Indian sub-continent, but also causes widespread death and destruction across the region each year. “This is going to be the worst flood in a decade,” Bangladesh’s Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre chief Arifuzzaman Bhuiyan said.

The heavy rains have swollen two main Himalayan river systems—the Brahmaputra and the Ganges—that flow through India and Bangladesh. Bhuiyan said about a third of flood-prone Bangladesh—a delta-nation crisscrossed by hundreds of rivers—was underwater, and at least 1.5 million people were affected, with village homes and roads flooded.

In north-central Bangladesh, the Brahmaputra river was almost 40 centimeters higher than normal and threatening to burst its banks, district administrator Farook Ahmed said. Most villagers were trying to stay near their flood-damaged homes, but some 15,000 had fled severely affected areas, officials said. With a 10-day forecast pointing to rising waters, Bhuiyan said if more rivers burst their banks

some 40 percent of the nation could be flooded “in a worst-case scenario”.

In the northern town of Biswambharpur, villagers said most of the houses were partly underwater after the Surma, a major river in northeast Bangladesh, burst its banks. Farmer Abdur Rashid, 35, said he sent his wife and three children to a multi-storied village school that has been turned into a government shelter. “My whole house has gone underwater. I have sent the rest of the family to the school, but I stayed behind to guard my properties,” Rashid told AFP.

Heaviest rains in a decade

Twin challenges

In Assam, northeast India, more than 2.1 million people have been affected since mid-May. At least 50 people have died so far - 12 in the past week as floodwaters surged—with tens of thousands of mostly rural residents evacuated to relief camps, officials said. Emergency services personnel wore head-to-toe bright-orange suits to protect themselves from the floods and coronavirus—which has infected almost 17,000 people in Assam—as they used boats to reach stranded villagers.

“We have two challenges here, one is COVID-19 and another is (the) flood,” the head of a local rescue team, Abhijeet Kumar Verma, told AFP. In Nepal, at least 50 people have died in landslides



SUNAMGONG: A man works on a boat as a boy walks through flood waters in Sunamgong yesterday. Almost four million people have been hit by monsoon floods in South Asia, officials said, with a third of Bangladesh already underwater from some of the heaviest rains in a decade. —AFP

and floods triggered by the monsoon rains, with homes swept away and roads and bridges damaged. “We are distributing food and relief goods from

helicopters to about 300 displaced families after the roads were blocked by floods and landslides,” district official Gyan Nath Dahal said. —AFP

FETO terrorist organization and 15 July coup attempt

By Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak
Ambassador of the Republic
of Turkey in Kuwait

Fetullah Gulen is the ringleader of a clandestine, criminal and terrorist organization called FETO (Fetullah Terrorist Organization) that is unprecedented in terms of its global reach, ambitions and methods. Gulen is the mastermind behind what happened in Turkey on July 15th, 2016. Gulen and his followers planned and tried to capture the Turkish Republic on that date. Gulen is one of the serious threats to Turkey. To understand the security threat posed by his crime network, one needs to look into the enormity of his actions, primarily the 15th July coup attempt, and the resulting trauma that the Turkish nation has experienced.

His disciples within the armed forces did not shy away from using lethal military force against innocent civilians, killing 251 and wounding thousands. They tried to assassinate the President of the Republic of Turkey. They attacked the Prime Minister’s vehicle and air-bombarded the Grand National Assembly. The Presidential Complex, the buildings of the National Intelligence Organization and Turkish National Police departments were attacked.

The Police Special Operations Center, the crucial counter-terrorism operational body of Turkey in Ankara, was bombed by fighter jets, killing 55 police officers and injuring hundreds on the spot. Hundreds of civilians protesting the coup attempt in Ankara and Istanbul were shot to death. The FET? coup plotters targeted public and private communication outlets, including TRT (state broadcasting channel) and CNN Turk.

All the evidence collected so far throughout the investigations and trials demonstrates that the bloodiest terrorist attack in the history of Turkey was orchestrated by FETO under the instructions of Fetullah Gulen. We have an extensive collection of factual evidence including video footage, digital materials gathered at Akinci Air Base (the center of operations of the coup-plotters), satellite communications among plotters, the confessions of FETO members who actively participated in the coup attempt and the statements of those Turkish officers resisting the coup attempt.

What is FETO

To judge the deeds of Fetullah Gulen and FETO only with what transpired on July 15th would be a mistake. The crimes committed on the night of July 15th were just the tip of an iceberg. It all started

Anguish and anger in Serbia as virus returns with a vengeance

BELGRADE: When Petar Djuric arrived with fruit and water for his father at the hospital in April, he learned it was too late. For this loss, he blames the collapse of Serbia’s health system just as much as the coronavirus. “Pops, this is for you,” the bleary-eyed 31-year-old told a local TV channel as he joined protests that erupted last week over the Serbian government’s handling of the health crisis.

The words became a rallying cry for those outraged at leaders accused of toying with the health of citizens for political purposes. After flattening its first curve of infections by May, Serbia is now reporting its deadliest days yet. Hospitals are over-stretched with more than 300 new cases reported

under the guise of a charitable education effort back in the 1970s. Fetullah Gulen and his followers disguised themselves as a benign education movement, when they started the campaign of establishing schools in Turkey and later around the world. At the peak of their power, they controlled thousands of schools in Turkey and more than eight hundred educational institutes worldwide. In terms of their reach, they were unprecedented.

We now understand that this was the first step of an infiltration campaign where kids and their parents were recruited with the seemingly innocent promise of a better education and a good job. These kids were put through school with academic and financial help and mainly a heavy hand in indoctrination. They turned into unquestioning foot soldiers of Fetullah Gulen who claims to be the “Chosen One”. The goal was to subvert the democratic foundations of the Turkish state and establish a new anti-democratic one under the absolute rule of Gulen.

His students were also told that, to achieve their main goal of taking the control of the state, they should remain hidden and they could eschew all ethical, religious or personal beliefs. Attaching great importance to confidentiality in its structure, and calling the confidentiality as a “precaution”, the organization gives “code” names to its members apart from their real names to ensure secrecy. In this way, this is a unique and peculiar armed terrorist organization where its lower level members know each other by their code names and which has a “cell-type” structure.

There were mass-scale exam cheating as well: In order to infiltrate the critical government posts, FET? affiliated students were provided with the answers to entrance exams. There are currently many investigations into mass-scale exam cheating in Turkey, including the Police Academy entrance tests, the Centralized Public Service Admission Tests, Military Schools and other governmental jobs. The handlers of those FETO members staffed at critical governmental posts kept their indoctrination up-to-date and passed on the instructions of FETO. As civil servants or military personnel, FETO members’ loyalty was not to the nation or to the state they served. They did not care about upholding the constitution or the legal system of the country. Thus, the organization that disguised itself as an education movement gradually turned into a secretive operational structure aiming to transform the society by taking control of the Turkish state from within. As its strength grew, the organization began to claim a global messianic mission, depicting Fetullah Gulen as the “Imam of the Universe”.

The crime syndicate behind all this devised and ran an integrated system that took care of recruitment through schools and cram schools; financing was taken care of by holding companies and donations from business people. The organization also established media houses to shape the public opinion for and against any person, group or idea. Many people in Turkey who saw the organization

daily, putting a record number of around 170 patients on ventilators.

Djuric, a basketball coach, became a symbol of anger among protesters who accuse the government of lifting an initial lockdown prematurely in order to hold an election that tightened the ruling party’s grip on power. After his father came down with a high fever and cough in late March, “we called the COVID-19 call centre every day. They told us to wait, not to come to the hospital,” Djuric, who finally drove his father to the hospital himself said. On April 9, a doctor recommended the 71-year-old painter be transferred to a ward for respiratory assistance, according to his son.

But in the hospital in Zemun, a neighborhood of the capital Belgrade, “no ventilator was available at the time,” Djuric said. A few days later, his father was gone. “I think the doctors did their best. But apparently the system does not work. My father told me the situation was catastrophic,” he added. President Aleksandar Vucic—the target of protesters’ anger—

for what it really is got lynched through these media houses. These media houses became the focal point of actions taken against journalists, academicians, bureaucrats and military officers who opposed them, or tried to expose them. They were lynched and purged.

As the organization became more affluent, it started meddling in business transactions and government tender processes. Laundering enormous sums of money, arranging illegal transfers of cash and other financial crimes became business as usual. The FETO members infiltrating critical state posts abused their power to eliminate who opposed the organization, by illegal wiretapping, fabricating evidence, unlawful arrests, thereby intimidating and blackmailing a large segment of the society including politicians, businessmen, journalists, even athletes and artists among many.

Turkish judicial authorities rendered numerous conviction decisions against members of this crime syndicate due to its various criminal acts, some of which have been elaborated above. Thousands of investigations and prosecutions concerning the illegal activities of FETO members are still pending. The ongoing and finalized investigations, prosecutions and trials yielded that Fetullah Gulen is the administrator and ringleader of FETO armed terrorist organization and that he gave the order to stage the coup.

As the Turkish Government understood what was actually in place, the necessary legal actions were taken against FETO. In particular, the disclosure of their secret communication systems (ByLock, Eagle, etc.) and interceptions of FETO instructions made our efforts easier to identify their schemes and to incriminate them.

July 15th was plotted at the time when the government had discovered and listed most of the so-called military personnel who were actually recruits of FETO and thus was getting ready to dismiss them. In other words, July 15th was a desperate final move of Fetullah Gulen and his followers to keep their control in place in Turkey and capture the state.

15 July armed coup attempt demonstrated FETO’s resolute to unwaveringly use terror, alongside other crimes, as a means to achieve its ultimate aim. With this act, FETO has clearly shown itself to the world as one of the most dangerous terrorist groups. Hence, the 16th Criminal Chamber of the Court of Cassation decreed on 24 April 2017 by its judgment merit no. 2015/3 and decision no. 2017/3 that FETO is an armed terrorist organization and the Assembly of Criminal Chambers of the Court of Cassation upheld this judgment.

FETO is present in around 160 countries, with thousands of schools, businesses, NGOs and media houses. Their modus operandi is the same all around the world. As they aim to infiltrate and enlarge their global economic and political influence, they constitute a direct security threat for any country where they operate.



BELGRADE: Medical workers bring medications to patients suffering from coronavirus disease (COVID-19) inside the Institute for Orthopaedic Surgery ‘Banjica’, recently transformed to a COVID hospital. —AFP

responded to Djuric in a nationally televised address, calling the story a “lie”, while pro-government tabloids launched their own attacks. —AFP

Millions face new virus curbs, but hope rises for American vaccine



MEDAK: A boy wearing a facemask as a preventive measure against the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, looks on near a paddy field in Medak district of Telangana state yesterday. —AFP

HONG KONG: Millions of people faced new coronavirus restrictions yesterday as infections surge, but in one sign of hope, an American firm said it would soon start final-stage human trials for a possible vaccine. Countries around the world re-imposed lockdowns and curbs to contain new outbreaks, as global cases surged past 13.2 million with more than 576,000 deaths.

Parts of the Asia-Pacific region, which had been somewhat successful in fighting the pandemic, provided fresh evidence of the deadly threat still posed by the virus. Hong Kong’s bars, gyms, and beauty salons closed again yesterday and a ban on gatherings with more than four people came into force as the city battled a fresh outbreak after months of impressive success against the virus.

Most of the city’s residents voluntarily adopted facemasks as a barrier against the virus when it was first detected in mainland China late last year, but the Hong Kong government now requires passengers on public transport to wear them or risk a US\$650 fine. There was alarm in Japan too, where Tokyo’s governor warned that the capital was on its highest coronavirus alert level after a spike in infections. That came after the Indian state of Bihar, with a population of around 125 million, announced a 15-day virus lockdown starting Thursday. India’s IT hub Bangalore has already started a week-long lockdown.

Authorities in Australia, meanwhile, pleaded yesterday with the public to heed social distancing guidelines, with roughly five million people in Melbourne in lockdown since last week in a bid to contain a new outbreak. That request came just days after a group was fined Aus\$26,000 (US\$18,200) when their house party was exposed by an unusually large order of KFC. “A particular concern for us is the ongoing parties and gatherings—people playing poker, people holding parties,” said Rick Nugent, acting assistant commissioner of Victoria state.

“Please stop.”

“You are part of the problem” Such pleas from experts and authorities have been ignored and even mocked in many of the world’s most populous parts, including the United States—the worst-hit nation in the world. Tens of thousands of cases are now being reported every day in the US as authorities scramble to roll back reopenings. The national 24-hour infection count was more than 63,000 on Tuesday, according to a Johns Hopkins University tracker. Anthony Fauci, the top US infectious disease expert, again warned Americans against carelessness—especially young people who may feel they are not vulnerable and would rather be “sipping my margarita at a bar in a crowd”.

Given asymptomatic transmission, such young people “need to understand that given the nature of this outbreak... You are inadvertently propagating the pandemic, you are part of the problem and not the solution”, Fauci said at an online Georgetown University event on Tuesday. Hopes rose, however, when American biotech firm Moderna said it would start the final stage of human trials for its vaccine candidate on July 27, after promising results from earlier testing. Moderna is considered to be in a leading position in the global race to find a vaccine, and while its study should run until October 2022, preliminary results should be available long before then. —AFP

Business

Virus used as cover to smash Asia unions

Garment workers see orders worth billions of dollars cancelled

BANGKOK: From factory floors in India to the warehouses of Cambodia, garment workers for global brands say the collapse in demand triggered by the coronavirus is being used as a cover to break their unions. The crippling effect of the pandemic has seen orders worth billions of dollars cancelled across manufacturing hubs in China, Bangladesh, India, Cambodia and Myanmar.

That has left hundreds of thousands out of work in some of Asia's poorest countries.

But workers allege the financial turmoil has also provided an opportunity for bosses to target troublesome shop floors where unions have pressed for higher wages and better conditions. In southern India's Karnataka state—home to 20 percent of India's massive garment manufacturing sector—union leader Padma has sat every day cross-legged outside her factory Euro Clothing Company II to protest its closure since early June.

She was among the entire 1,200-strong workforce let go — 900 of whom were with a union. "I have sweated here for the past 10 years for 348 rupees (\$4.60) a day," said the 49-year-old, who was responsible for checking trousers, jackets and T-shirts bound for Swedish clothing giant H&M.

The workshop's parent company is Gokaldas, Karnataka's oldest manufacturer, a firm that runs more than 20 factories. But Padma's workplace was the only Gokaldas plant with a union, she said.

"They wanted to get rid of the union for a long time, and now they're using COVID-19 as an excuse," Padma told AFP, alleging the workers were "illegally laid off" without notice. Gautam Mody, general-secretary of the New Trade Union Initiative, which represents hundreds of workers' groups across India, said the firm was "union-busting under the pretext of COVID".

Mody told AFP the shuttered facility was "the sole factory where the majority of workers are union members". Gokaldas did not reply to requests for comment but H&M confirmed the closure of the plant. "We are

in close dialogue with both local and global trade unions as well as the supplier to help them resolve the conflict peacefully," H&M told AFP.

The high street clothing giant also buys garments from four other Gokaldas factories, according to the New Trade Union Initiative.

Fast fashion, cheap wages

Asia's textile factories have provided jobs for millions of people as well as vital foreign currency for many poorer nations, but the pandemic has gutted the sector. In Bangladesh alone, more than 100,000 workers have been left jobless.

About half are involved with unions, according to Rafiqul Islam Sujon, president of the Bangladesh Garments and Shilpo Sramik Federation, a rights group.



Crippling effect of pandemic

Many factories have long resented the work of unions and have discouraged workers from collectivizing while harassing or firing the most vocal leaders, campaigners say. But the economic crunch has offered "an opening for this tactic on a wide scale", said Jamie Davis of the Solidarity Center, a workers' advocacy organization affiliated with American unions federation AFL-CIO. Major brands are now being urged to use their financial muscle to protect the most vulnerable in their supply chains.

The big names "must make it clear that they will end



YANGON: In this file photo, workers work at a garment factory in Yangon. From factory floors in India to the warehouses of Cambodia, garment workers for global brands say the collapse in demand triggered by coronavirus is being used as a cover to break their unions. — AFP

the business relationship (with a factory) if the violations continue", said Scott Nova of labour watchdog the Worker Rights Consortium. "It is illegal to dismiss workers because of their union affiliation or to close a factory because it is unionized," he said. "Such anti-retaliation laws exist in most countries, including Cambodia, Myanmar and India—though they are, unfortunately, often not enforced."

Impassioned letter

In Myanmar, where the nascent garment sector was seen before the pandemic as a beacon of prosperity, 298 workers were fired in May at the Rui Ning factory, which produces clothes for the likes of Spanish fast-fashion brand Zara. Desperate to be reinstated, unionized workers wrote an impassioned letter to Amancio

Ortega, founder of the Inditex fashion group that owns Zara. "Surely a man of such riches would not need to profit from the global pandemic by smashing our unions," it said. Ortega is the sixth-richest man in the world with a \$62.8 billion fortune, according to Forbes. Inditex said it was aware of the labor disputes and cited its code of conduct, which "expressly forbids discrimination against workers' representatives".

It is a position shared in public by other multibillion-dollar clothing giants aware of the PR damage that allegations of worker exploitation can inflict. In the worst cases, workers voicing opposition to lay-offs are facing jail. Cambodian union representative Soy Sros took to Facebook in April to protest the dismissal of dozens of workers from a Superl factory on the outskirts of Phnom Penh. — AFP



Net Income

84

Million KD



Customers



Revenue



EBITDA



EPS

H1 2020 results

Business

Resilient Zain reports revenue of \$2.6bn, net income of \$273m

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading mobile innovator with operations in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces its consolidated financial results for the six months to June 30, 2020. Zain served 47.6 million customers at the end of the period, reflecting a 3 percent decrease year-on-year (Y-o-Y).

For the first six months of 2020 (H1), Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 787 million (USD 2.6 billion), a decrease of 3 percent Y-o-Y. EBITDA for the period reached KD 336 million (USD 1.1 billion), down 5 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 43 percent. Net income amounted to KD 84 million (USD 273 million), down 14 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting earnings per share of 19 fils (USD 0.06).

Zain Group's resilient results were achieved despite the widespread disruption in economic and social activity. To counter the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Zain Group financials, management proactively took decisive cost optimization measures in areas such as contracts renegotiation, management of cashflows and loan repayments, that succeeded in reducing operational expenses by USD 68 million.

Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD) for the second quarter (Q2) of 2020

In the second quarter of 2020 (Q2), Zain Group generated consolidated revenue of KD 378 million (USD 1.22 billion), down 7 percent when compared to the same period in 2019. EBITDA for the quarter reached KD 165 million (USD 533 million), down 7 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 44 percent. Net income for the quarter amounted to KD 36 million (USD 117 million), down 28 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting earnings per share of 8 fils (USD 0.03).

Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD) for the first quarter (Q1) of 2020

In the first quarter of 2020 (Q1), Zain Group generated consolidated revenues of KD 409 million (USD 1.34 billion), up 1 percent Y-o-Y. EBITDA for the quarter amounted to KD 171 million (USD 559 million), down 4 percent Y-o-Y, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 42 percent. Net income for the quarter reached KD 48 million (USD 155 million), up 1 percent Y-o-Y reflecting earnings per share of 11 fils (USD 0.04).

Key operational notes for H1 2020

1. Zain Group consolidated data revenue grew 10 percent Y-o-Y to reach USD 1.1 billion, representing 42 percent of the Group's revenue.

2. Relevant elements that had financial impact on the company include lower air time revenues (as key markets provided free airtime); the closure of retail shops, thus less recharge and handsets sales; halt of international business, leisure and religious travel affecting roaming revenues; increase of home Wi-Fi connectivity and lifting of data-usage caps; waiving of late fees; provision of more flexible payment terms and offering free content, to name a few.

3. Throughout the first six-months, Zain Group invested over USD 494 million in CAPEX reflecting 19 percent of revenues, predominantly in expansion of Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) infrastructure; spectrum fees; 4G upgrades and new network sites across its markets, as well as 5G rollouts in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and recently Bahrain.

4. On July 7, 2020 Zain Iraq's mobile license was extended for an additional eight years to expire on 30 August, 2030, with the operator planning to launch 4G services in early 2021.

5. Zain Saudi Arabia expanded its 5G network to cover all regions in the Kingdom (30 cities).

6. On February 12, 2020, Zain Kuwait completed the sale and leaseback of the passive physical infrastructure of its 1,620 mobile tower portfolio for USD 130 million (KD 40 million) to IHS Holding Limited. The transaction is the first sale and leaseback of telecom towers in the Middle East by a licensed mobile operator.

7. On June 14, 2020, Zain joined the Hedera Governing Council to create a safer, fairer, more secure internet, providing Zain with first-hand exposure to cutting-edge and secure technologies in the blockchain and wider distributed ledger technology (DLT) space, driving innovation, e-commerce and B2B across the region.

8. The Zain Group Application Program Interface (API) platform enabling faster deployment of digital partnerships, continues to grow exponentially, resulting in an eight-fold Y-o-Y increase in revenues with approximately 5 million transactions per month.

Commenting on the H1 2020 results, Chairman of the Board of Directors of



Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO



Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Group, Ahmed Al-Tahous

- For H1 2020, company records revenue of \$2.6 billion, net income of \$273 million
- Efficiency drive reduces operational costs by \$68 million
- Encouragingly, data revenue grew by 10%, representing 42% of group revenue
- Zain's 5G regional dominance grows with expansion to Bahrain

- Zain Iraq's mobile license extended to 2030 inclusive of 4G
- Chairman Ahmed Al Tahous: "The board has been working closely with management in minimizing the impact of COVID-19 on the business"
- Vice-Chairman & Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi: "A mission-critical six-months in providing connectivity during the lockdown; company's huge investments in digital transformation instrumental in countering the crisis"

Zain Group, Ahmed Al-Tahous said: "The Group's performance in the first half of the year reflected Zain's resilience to turbulence, given the numerous operational challenges in these unique times. The Board has been working closely with management in minimizing the impact of COVID-19 on the business as well as ensuring the mobile networks are at optimal performance. I would like to recognize all the government ministries and regulatory authorities across our markets for their proactivity and cooperation with the telecom sector at large, in supporting operators, mobile consumers and societies during these times."

Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO commented: "The first six-months was a mission-critical period as all our operations were focused on providing connectivity during the lockdown to minimize the impact of the pandemic on socio-economic life. At the same time, we refocused on digital transformation to better serve businesses, governments, and societies, granting increased digital access to essential medical, commercial and financial services."

Al-Kharafi continued: "I would like to recognize and thank all Zain personnel who have remained dedicated and motivated to their duties and provided exemplary services, helping deliver on the critical role we play in maintaining connectivity and supporting the communities we serve throughout these exceptional times. Furthermore, Zain was committed to ensuring its employees' wellbeing and safety and the company took decisive actions to support and provide them with the tools needed to adapt during this time of crisis."

The Group CEO added: "Our culture of innovation has been invaluable at this time of rapid change, and Zain has been proactive in its use of technology to maintain its operations at a high-level of availability, and our business continuity strategy has been executed impressively in the fight against COVID-19. We are proud to not reduce the salaries of any employee, as the company is optimistic of the telecom sector's resilience in such times."

Commenting specifically on the operational performance, Al-Kharafi noted: "We are reassured that the business fundamentals of Zain remain strong, although like most businesses, our financial results have been affected by factors outside of our control. Nevertheless, our decisive efficiency drive succeeded in reducing operational expenses by USD 68 million."

"We have also focused on our digital strategy of monetizing 4G and 5G networks, our FTTH services, and Group API platform through compelling initiatives and packages as well as focusing on gaming, entertainment, fintech and e-health services. This has proven instrumental in countering the negative impact of the crisis with data revenues growing 10 percent Y-o-Y and now representing 42 percent of total revenues."

"We have invested USD 1.5 billion in CAPEX including spectrum fees over the last 18 months, launching 5G networks in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and most recently Bahrain as well as upgrading and expanding our 4G networks and FTTH services across our footprint. Doing so allows us to offer more innovative services to our customers in government, business, IoT, and smart city sectors, bolstering the digital economy in these areas. 5G technology will create vast opportunities in the value chain proposition in numerous industries and will push

the telecom sector to a new and exciting phase of growth.

"Moreover, the recent granting of a 4G licence in Iraq coupled with our mobile license extension there to 2030, will be instrumental to Zain playing its key role in the country's socio-economic prosperity."

Al-Kharafi concluded: "The critical importance of high-quality connectivity has never been more evident in keeping businesses, governments, and societies connected and functioning. The wide-ranging effects of COVID-19 will bring multiple opportunities and challenges,

43 percent. Net income for the period reached SDG 803 million (USD 15 million). Data revenue represented 24 percent of total revenue.

Jordan: Zain Jordan served 3.4 million customers, maintaining its market leading position. For H1 2020, the operator generated revenue of USD 234 million with EBITDA amounting to USD 103 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 44 percent. Net income for the period reached USD 34 million. Data revenue represented 46 percent of total revenue.

Bahrain: For H1 2020, the operator generated revenue of USD 83 million

also equipped.

Supply Chain Management

To mitigate some of the challenges that suppliers may face, the company evaluated all managed services and suppliers securing assurance of 24x7 technical support. Also reviewed inventory levels of spares and relocated necessary parts from supplier warehouses to its temporary warehouse.

Network Capacity & Resilience to Support Needs

Addressing the significant growth in broadband traffic and to guarantee network resilience and continued connectivity at high service quality levels, Zain continued to actively engage with national regulatory authorities to meet increasing data demands and ensure ICT solutions are provided to support educational and health services online.

Community support and engagement

Zain has taken a hands-on approach to addressing concerns across all operations. Internal and external communications were undertaken through social media, e-mails, SMS, call back tones, radio channels, traditional media and billboards. Moreover, launched #StayZain social media campaign offering tips for parents, children and youth on how to maintain good mental and physical health.

Some of the COVID initiatives undertaken by Zain Kuwait:

- Effective April 18, Zain Kuwait in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) launched the 'Shlonik' app, to monitor the compliance of citizens who recently returned to Kuwait with regards self-quarantine directives. The app, developed internally by Zain, forms part of the Kuwait government's evacuation plan as related to home quarantine instructions. Zain Kuwait changed its network's name to 'Shlonik', which translates to 'how are you' in the Kuwaiti dialect of Arabic.

- Launched a food drive by offering 30,000 meals that are being distributed in collaboration with the Kuwait Food Bank to aid efforts during the crisis.

- Zain Kuwait provided free internet caps (5GB daily) and free local voice calls for a period of one month in collaboration with CITRA.

- Changed its network's name to STAY HOME in line with directives from the Council of Ministers

- Launched a social media campaign entitled "This is Your Time" to send positive messages to the public about the importance of being a responsible citizen

- Commenced an internal awareness campaign for the safety of its employees, distributing precautionary items and sanitizers to all staff while sending periodic awareness content.

- Supported the National Counselling Program for COVID-19, a volunteer program that offers a free online platform for mental health support to the Kuwaiti community.

- Ensuring inclusivity and accessibility during this crisis, Zain Kuwait broadcasted official Ministry of Health awareness videos on COVID-19 in seven languages: Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Farsi, Filipino, Bengali, and Santhali.

- Supported a nation-wide charity campaign launched under the patronage of H1 the Amir of Kuwait to collect donations for vulnerable workers and families.

Group Key Performance Indicators (KD and USD) for first six months (H1) of 2020

Total Managed Active Customers	47.6 million
Revenue	KD 787 million (USD 2.6 billion)
EBITDA	KD 336 million (USD 1.1 billion)
EBITDA Margin	43 percent
Net Income	KD 84 million (USD 273 million)
EPS	19 fils. (USD 0.06)

and Zain is mobilizing all its resources to ensure its networks are operating at optimal levels to provide a superb mobile experience to all while at the same time capitalizing on the many opportunities in the digital space to create shareholder value."

Financial KPIs of key markets for six-month period (H1) ended June 30, 2020

Kuwait: Maintaining its market leadership, the flagship operation of Zain Group saw its customer base serve 2.6 million. The Group's most profitable operation saw its H1 2020 revenue reach KD 153 million (USD 497 million), with EBITDA amounting to KD 54 million (USD 175 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 35 percent. The operator recorded net income of KD 38 million (USD 122 million). Data revenue represented 40 percent of total revenue.

Saudi Arabia: Zain KSA served 7.1 million customers. For H1 2020, the operator generated Revenue of SAR 3.9 billion (USD 1.05 billion), with EBITDA amounting to SAR 1.8 billion (USD 490 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 47 percent. Net income for the period reached SAR 164 million (USD 44 million). Data revenue represented 51 percent of total revenue.

Iraq: Zain Iraq served 14.9 million customers, maintaining its market leadership. For H1 2020, the operator generated revenue of USD 464 million and EBITDA reached USD 185 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 40 percent. Net income for the period reached USD 28 million.

Sudan: Zain Sudan served 15.7 million customers, maintaining its market leadership. For H1 2020, the operator generated revenue of SDG 9.4 billion (USD 178 million), with EBITDA amounting to SDG 4.1 billion (USD 77 million), reflecting an EBITDA margin of

with EBITDA amounting to USD 27 million, reflecting an EBITDA margin of 32 percent. Net income for the period reached USD 5.7 million. Data revenue represented 50 percent of total revenue.

Zain Group stands strong against COVID-19

Zain Group has taken proactive measures across its regional footprint to ensure the company takes into consideration the needs and challenges that our communities face during this global pandemic. The company created a Group Crisis Response Committee led by Executive Management to ensure that all country operations implement appropriate measures to rapidly respond to this evolving situation. Accordingly, each of the Zain operations has created a similar committee to help address the situation.

Staff Welfare

- Committed to ensuring its employees' wellbeing and safety, Zain took decisive actions to support all employees communicating and providing them with the tools needed to adapt during the crisis and implemented several measures to provide guidance on government rules with respect to travel, working remotely, and health and safety awareness as well as quarantine. The quarantine period was not deducted from any leave or payroll.

Availability of Products & Services

- Re-designed its direct and indirect sales channels to ensure availability of devices and lines to customers. Launched campaigns to provide relief to the community wanting to increase top-up, usage and revenues.

Customer Care Continuity

- Zain secured laptops and tools (softphones, VPN, Virtual Desktop Infrastructure and data dongles) for its customer-facing staff. In addition, social media and website support teams were

Business

Zain offers 'eeZee Flexi' with up to triple monthly benefits

Digital platform that gives customers ease of customizing their own plan

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the offering of a unique digital platform for prepaid customers entitled 'eeZee Flexi' under the theme 'eeZee got easier'. The new platform gives customers the ease and flexibility of customizing their very own plan as per their unique needs via the Zain App or MyZain online portal, while giving them a chance to get double and triple benefits every month for the same original price.

Zain specially designed this unique digital platform for prepaid (eeZee) customers with the aim of opening up entire new horizons towards their usage needs in line with today's ever-changing digital lifestyle. The company is keen on offering its customers an added value and meeting their unique needs and aspirations, while giving them double and triple monthly benefits as a sign of gratitude to the biggest family of subscribers in Kuwait.

Prepaid (eeZee) customers can now launch the Zain smartphone app or open the MyZain online portal and choose from a wide range of options to customize their very own plan from scratch as per their priorities, needs, and preferred budget. Customers can easily choose from six options for Internet caps, five options for number of Zain-to-Zain minutes, six options for number of local minutes, five options for number of international minutes, and three options

for unlimited benefits (which include social media, WhatsApp, and YouTube).

Once a customer specifies the options that best suit their needs, the final plan price will be shown, where they may add or edit options as they see fit. Once a customer activates the plan they customized, it will be valid for 30 days starting from the activation date, and it will automatically renew when the period is over. The minimum amount for a plan is KD 5, and the platform is available for all prepaid (eeZee) customers who have had a line for 30 days or more.

When a customer commits with auto-renewal on-time (meaning enough balance is available to renew after the 30-day period), they will receive double the benefits they have selected (such as minutes, Internet caps, etc.) in the next month for the same original price. If a customer continues to commit with auto-renewal on-time in the following month, they will receive triple the benefits they have selected the month after for the same original price.

Any unused minutes or Internet caps will be transferred to the upcoming month and added over the doubled/tripled benefits at no extra charge.

Once a customer activates the plan they have customized, they have the ability to prepare a different plan with different benefits for the next month anytime during the current plan's period by simply tapping on "Set Next Plan". Zain offered this feature for customers who may have changing usage habits that change from time to time, offering them the ease and comfort of not having to auto renew the same benefits they might not need in the future.

The unique platform was specifically designed to complement the needs and aspirations of Zain's prepaid customers. By launching this new innovative feature, the company aims at creating a new concept for the services it offers, as well as offering convenience with flexible plans that meet the different personal and professional needs of its prepaid customers. Zain is committed to offer the most flexible and



Opening up entire new horizons

Huawei remains focused on 5G advancements in Middle East

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: As the countries around the world grapple with the effect of the new coronavirus pandemic and nations are slowly reopening their economies, digital technology is playing a critical role these days, said Huawei officials during a video conference which was attended by ten media entities in the Middle East countries recently.

"Today, ICT companies in the region have a critical role to play in the evolution of digital economies working alongside governments, NGOs, and local communities to harness technologies like 5G to spur industrial innovation and investment," contends Charles Yang, VP, Huawei Middle East. "The outbreak has led to increased demand for ICT solutions, specifically in areas like 5G amidst a boost in network usage. There is simply a huge amount of data traffic now being generated for personal and business use, and 5G is the best option to ease such network pressure," he said.

Several countries in the Middle East have launched 5G commercially in its first wave itself. Many regulators took a collaborative approach to 5G spectrum allocations and licensing, with large-scale rollouts beginning as early as 2018. Yang said Huawei remains committed to innovation and the research and development which he thinks is the main reason why they are now being tagged as the leading global provider of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and smart devices.

Considering the US restrictions and pressures along with the threat of coronavirus, Yang said Huawei has achieved its global target revenue in the first quarter of 2020. "We increased up to

\$25.7 billion, or an increase of 12.4 percent on same period last year," Yang said. "Every year we spend 15 percent of our revenue for the R&D. I think this is the secret why we are now leading the technology. This year, Huawei continues to invest and innovate in connectivity, not to mention in 5G technology. We are fully aware of our responsibility as a leading ICT provider may it be in the security and trust of every valued individuals, we are open and transparent.

"ICT is the foundation of intelligent world. We are committed to bringing the digital world to every person or organizations in the world; we are independent and a private company founded in 1987," he added. "The use cases for 5G are practically unlimited, although certain sectors can stand to benefit more in current circumstances, such as healthcare, education, transportation, and energy to mention a few," notes Yang. "But transitioning towards a smarter society, in general, requires strong partnerships between the public and private sectors. The need to develop the 5G ecosystem, including the talent ecosystem, is clearer than ever."

One area that collaboration is being seen in is the concept of 5G+X; the combination of 5G connectivity with other advanced AI, IoT, and cloud technologies. In last year's GSMA report "The Mobile Economy Middle East & North Africa", the telecom industry body estimated that there would be around 45 million 5G connections across the region by 2025, with the contribution of mobile technology and services to the MENA region reaching more than \$220 billion in value by 2023.

Competitive edge

The 5G+X approach is also an area where

Huawei feels it brings a competitive edge to the market. "We are in a unique position to bring together Huawei's expertise in 5G with other areas like AI, the cloud, and smart devices. No other company offers the end-to-end solutions that embody this concept of 5G+X," says Yang.

Indeed, a focus on R&D has helped the company to become a clear leader in the global commercial deployment of 5G. It has worked with carriers and industry partners worldwide to explore the application of 5G in more than 300 projects, established 5G joint innovation centers in places like Europe, and is an active member of more than 400 standards organizations.

"It's with long-term R&D investment that we have been able to lead the pack in multiple technology domains, and continue to earn the respect and trust of our customers despite significant external pressure," maintains Yang, who cites close cooperation with external bodies as instrumental to its success in the Middle East. "We're continuing to work closely with governments, customers, and partners to provide services that help them to pursue digital transformation and realize national development visions."

Security and privacy protection do remain a top priority for Huawei, according to Yang. The executive believes that Huawei now has a "proven track record" in that field. He cites that over 700 cities and 228 Fortune Global 500 companies - including 58 in the top 100 - have chosen Huawei as their digital transformation partner.

"We work with governments, industries, and our customers in an open, transparent, and constructive way to maximize the benefits of ICT infrastructure while improving its security. We are fully aware of our responsibilities as a global

innovative offerings in the market for both prepaid and postpaid customers, reinforcing its leadership position and its pledge in offering the best services and offers to the largest family of subscribers in Kuwait.

ICT supplier," commented Yang. Over the past 30 years, Huawei has in fact worked with carriers to build more than 1,500 networks, providing network services to over 3 billion people in more than 170 countries and regions. Its customers include mainstream carriers, Fortune 500 companies, and hundreds of millions of consumers.

"We have put in place a comprehensive cyber security assurance system, and have a proven track record in that field. Our cyber security practices have won the trust of partners across the global value chain. Huawei's 5G products have passed multiple third-party security certifications, and Huawei has become the first company to gain the CC EAL4+ certificate."

The company's local growth is also encouraged by Huawei's support for local talent in the Middle East. Huawei has worked for years with local government authorities and academic institutions to develop home-grown talent that can lead the industry forward. That mission is becoming all the more important as economies are affected by COVID-19 and governments place an even greater emphasis on local job creation.

"The key to a mutually-beneficial ecosystem is to enable everyone to use their own strengths to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts," concludes Yang. "It is only through cooperation that we can bring digital to more homes, offices, and communities in the Middle East," he concluded.



Charles Yang

Biden unveils \$2tn climate plan in new contrast with Trump

WILMINGTON: White House hopeful Joe Biden on Tuesday unveiled an ambitious, \$2 trillion climate change plan that would revamp the US energy sector and seek to achieve carbon pollution-free power in just 15 years. The clean energy proposal was fleshed out in a speech in Wilmington as the veteran Democrat drew a sharp contrast with President Donald Trump ahead of November's election by arguing that fighting climate change would be a massive job creator under a Biden administration.

Insisting that "there's no more consequential challenge" today than climate change, Biden pledged to spend \$2 trillion over four years to promote his plan, a dramatic acceleration of the \$1.7 trillion he had proposed to spend over 10 years during the primary race. —AFP

CI Ratings affirms Gulf Bank's long-term foreign currency rating at 'A+'

KUWAIT: Capital Intelligence Ratings ("CI Ratings"), the international credit rating agency, has affirmed the Long-term Foreign Currency and the Short-term Foreign Currency of Gulf Bank ratings at "A+" and "A1", respectively. At the same time, CI Ratings has also assigned to

stc Kuwait announces soft launch of first regional Vo5G service

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it has deployed a revolutionary Voice and Video over 5G (Vo5G) service, sometimes referred to as VoNR, providing 5G Stand Alone (SA) users with enhanced voice, video, and other communication services.

Vo5G provides enhanced user experience. With Vo5G, a voice or video call can now be connected within a shorter period. While making calls, users can also enjoy stc's low-latency high-speed 5G internet with ultra-fast download and upload capabilities. This service will allow avid gamers to simultaneously play online games and receive calls without any interruptions or degradations in speed. Additionally, EVS and H.265 codec are mandated for Vo5G, permitting better user experience with voice bandwidths (ultra-broadband and full bandwidth) expanded, and the high error robustness of voice and video communication services improved.

the Bank a Standalone Rating of "a-", with a "Stable" outlook. On the other hand, CI Ratings has also affirmed the rating of Gulf Bank's KWD100 million Basel III-compliant Tier 2 Subordinated Bonds at "BBB+". The Outlook for the Bond is "Stable".

According to Capital Intelligence Rating, both affirmations, are mainly driven by the bank's well established business franchise especially in retail banking, sound loan asset quality, as well as the solid capital position and comfortable liquidity metrics. In addition, Gulf Bank has a good operating profitability, widening net interest margin and sound operating efficiency. The ratings also reflect Gulf Bank's size as the fourth largest bank in Kuwait with a wide distribution network and a good

Chief Technology Officer, engineer Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Ali, said, "stc's strive for differentiation through innovation is a cardinal element of its success. We have built a reputation for having the largest 5G network in Kuwait and the countries in which we operate. This achievement is a testament to the commitment and dedication we have placed towards delivering high-speed connectivity to our customers with exceptional quality of service. As digital leaders in the region, we believe that by continuously upgrading our 5G network and introducing new compatible services, such as Vo5G, will fully embrace digital transformation and enhance current business models".

He added, "We will continue to leverage our resources to offer our individual and enterprise customers with advanced digital solutions that meet their diverse needs. Through implementing our digital transformation strategy, we inch closer towards achieving our vision through multiple platforms while expanding our operations in Kuwait."

stc previously invested in strengthening its 5G infrastructure, allowing users to enjoy nation-wide coverage in C-band capacity and now with plans to explore the 5G Sub-3G spectrum for indoor areas. Providing wide coverage was the main prerequisite prior to considering Vo5G technology, thus qualifying stc to take a pole position in the global 5G race. More importantly, this critical step builds on stc's

market share of both loans and deposits in the banking sector, as mentioned by CI Ratings.

Commenting on the Capital Intelligence credit rating announcement, Dalal Al-Dousari, Gulf Bank's head of Investor Relations said: "We are very pleased to receive the affirmation of our Bank's Long-term Foreign Currency rating at "A+" and our Tier II subordinated Bond rating at "BBB+" by Capital Intelligence Ratings." "This is an important acknowledgement of the bank's sustained improvement in asset quality and profitability, solid capital and sound liquidity position," added Al-Dousari.

Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized in terms of its credit worthiness and financial strength internationally as it

5G vision of offering a solid connectivity platform capable of adopting new 5G services in the shortest time to market, while encouraging agile development of new markets and industries through NaaS-like model.

Project technical considerations

3GPP has specified that 5G provides voice and video communication services based on the IMS (IP Multimedia Subsystem), 4G voice architecture. From lean smartphones to the biggest hyperscaling systems and the world's fastest supercomputers, ARM-based computing is taking the lead when it comes to innovation in CPU space. stc considered the best-of-the-breed components available on the market and opted for a Huawei ARM system to power its next generation of IMS products, enabling tested VoNR service. Huawei's 5G leading technology and strong customer commitment, even during the harsh conditions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, led the VoNR project to success: a swift IMS equipment installation and configuration through clever NFVI/MANO systems.



Fahad Abdulrahman Al-Ali

is rated "A" by all four leading credit rating agencies. In addition to Capital Intelligence Ratings recent affirmation, Gulf Bank has a Long-term Issuer Default Rating of "A+" with a "Stable" Outlook by Fitch Ratings, an Issuer Credit Rating of "A-" with a "Stable" Outlook by S&P Global Ratings, and a Long Term Deposits rating of "A3" with a "Stable" Outlook by Moody's Investor Services.



Dalal Al-Dousari

Classifieds

Thursday, July 16, 2020

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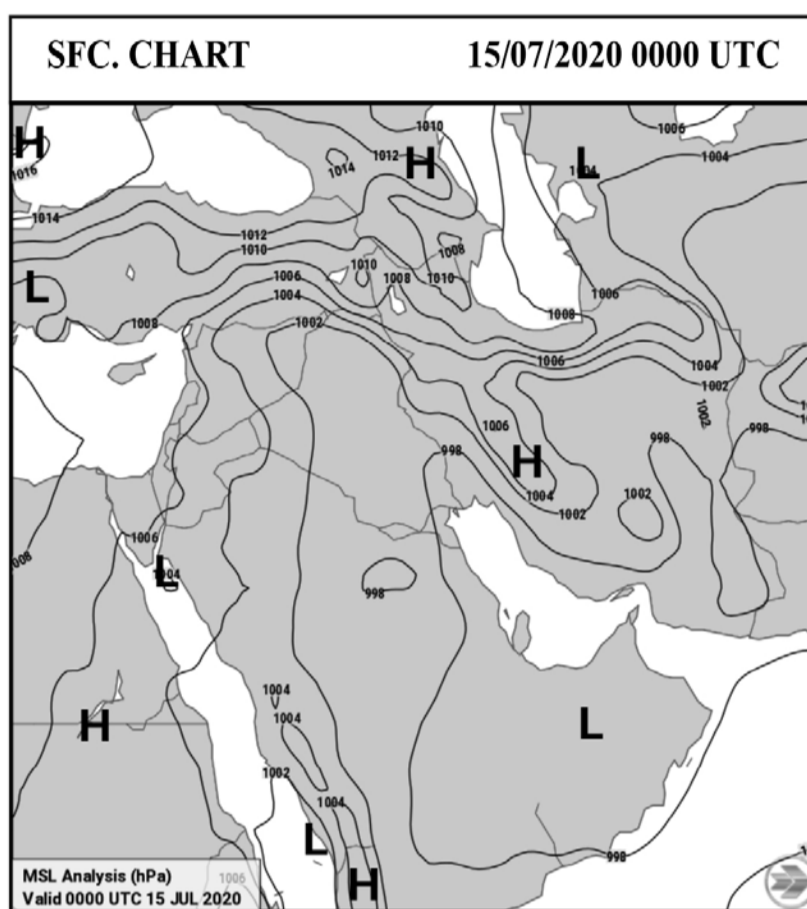
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 12 - 32 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
-----------------	---------------------

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	36 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	48 °C	34 °C
ABDALY	47 °C	31 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	48 °C	35 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	46 °C	33 °C
SALMIYAH	44 °C	35 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	46 °C	34 °C
WAFRA	47 °C	31 °C
SALMY	47 °C	33 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	07/16	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	48 °C	30 °C	NW	15 - 42 km/h
Friday	07/17	Very hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for light fog forming	47 °C	31 °C	NW-SE	12 - 32 km/h
Saturday	07/18	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	46 °C	33 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Sunday	07/19	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	48 °C	30 °C	NW	12 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:25
Sunrise	04:58
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:28
Sunset	18:49
Isha	20:19

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	48 °C
MIN. Temp.	32 °C
MAX. RH	22 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	E 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

Old name: Galib Ahamed Ansari, **New name:** Talib Husain Ansari, DOB: 23/03/1967, Passport No: J3969924. (C 5499) 16-7-2020

Old name: Ebrahim Gulam Hussain, **New name:** Ibrahim, Father's name: Gulam Hussain Shikari, Surname: Shikari, DOB: 05/02/1996, Passport No: J3219770, Address: Mohammadiya Colony PO. Galiakot. (C 5498) 15-7-2020

EMERGENCY 112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 Today might be a bit difficult, Aries, because you aren't likely to be as productive as usual. You won't have much to say, and you'll feel sleepy and somewhat grumpy. In other words, it's the perfect day to go back to bed with that novel. Take a nap - or several naps - and follow your desire to do as little as possible. There will be plenty of time to catch up on work.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 Because your tendency recently has been to brood over everything, Cancer, a day like this can't be anything but beneficial. It has been difficult for you to find material satisfaction of late, but today offers you a view into the world of the intangible and unreal. You may find it especially gratifying to participate in an artistic or religious activity.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 You'll probably be perfectly in tune with the day ahead, Libra. Of course, there are days when it's tempting to run away from the reality of the moment and its hardships. At times like today, you're so compassionate that you find it easy to listen to others, and life is truly rewarding. People find your company soothing and pleasant, and they are likely to thank you for it.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 Do countries abroad represent real opportunities for you, Capricorn? This is a question that you'll soon have to answer. The grass may be greener on the other side of the world, but have you considered the possibility that it isn't? Could it be that the dream of working abroad is a convenient explanation for the dissatisfaction you feel at work? It's important to solve this riddle, because you'll soon make some key decisions that depend on the answer.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 You certainly are in a strange mood today, Taurus. True, things have been going smoothly for the past few days, but be careful not to fool yourself. "Pride comes before a fall," as the expression goes. You should be wary of the way you treat your lover now. You're likely to be dismayed by your sweetie's attitude, yet you're the one who has strayed from reality.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 There are days when you feel wonderful without being able to attribute the feeling to any real event. Of course, your rational mind will search for a reason for the happiness. If you count the number of times when you do things against your will or better judgment, it becomes obvious that logic and reason don't always apply to this world. Don't even try to understand, Leo, just enjoy!

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 You're feeling especially healthy, energetic, and attractive today, Scorpio, and some friends may suddenly see you in a new light. This could bring a valuable boost in self-confidence. New careers that pay more and offer more of a challenge are especially appealing to you now. Consider them seriously. Write down your ideas and research them to see if they're workable. This may be the start of a whole new life.

Aquarius (January 20-February 18)
 Today won't be like most other days, Aquarius. Look around and you'll see that people either have their heads in the clouds, are depressed, or seem to be trying to keep up a good front. The planetary atmosphere is such that a lot of people - and you in particular - feel frustrated by an inability to realize their dreams. This is a difficult situation to be sure. Know that it will pass.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 It will be as though you're in a new, hopeful world today, Gemini. The people you meet will be cordial and caring, and the future will seem like a bright, attractive place to live. In other words, you feel as though you're living in a fabulous dream. Alas, the alarm clock is bound to wake you up soon. Enjoy the sweet reality of the day ahead while it lasts.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 The day ahead should be excellent. You've been searching for meaning behind recent events. No doubt there have been a lot of changes both at work and at home. You're bursting with new ambition. Today, Virgo, you're likely to put all these experiences into the hopper, stir them up, and be grateful for the thrilling life you lead right now! You may not get a specific answer. Sometimes feeling grateful is an answer all its own.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 This kind of strange day doesn't occur often, Sagittarius. You no longer seem to know what you want. Work or time off? Redecorate your house or live in a beach shack? It's hard to communicate because you feel it's pointless to try to explain your point of view, especially when you don't know what it is. The best thing to do may be to unplug from your usual activities and go for a walk.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 If you were offered the opportunity to take a trip around the world, where you would see wonderful palaces and experience a timeless love affair, would you take it? The freedom would tempt you, without a doubt, but would it make you happy, Pisces? Have you considered the possibility that you can create an environment here at home that gives you that same sense of freedom?

Lifestyle | Features

Tintin and the mystery of the duelling mummies

The mummified corpse of Rascar Capac thrilled and terrified generations of young fans of the Tintin comic book story "The Seven Crystal Balls". Now, Herge's fictional Inca has sparked a row between rival Belgian tourist attractions, each of which displays a mummy they say inspired Tintin's cre-



Serge Lemaitre, archaeologist and curator of the Americas collections at the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels poses during an interview about the Inca mummy that allegedly inspired Herge for his character Rascar Capac, hero of the Tintin album "The Seven Crystal Balls".—AFP photos

ator. The very serious Art and History Museum is in Brussels' Jubilee Park, near where Herge used to live, and he was known to frequent its collections. The museum's Andean mummy, squatting upright with knees bent, appears similar to the haunting effigy in the author's illustrated tale of the be-quilled reporter Tintin's adventure.

Curators thought they had established the link beyond doubt 10 years ago, but the Pairi Daiza safari park in southern Belgium is touting a rival mummy. Last week, the popular zoo began marketing an exhibit of the "authentic mummy nicknamed Rascar Capac". The royal museum is not taking this well, and has all but accused the zoo park of false advertising. "We don't attract visitors by promising them pandas," sniffed museum director general Alexandra de Poorter.

The zoo has expressed regret over an "argument started by the royal museums" but admits that "no one can say for sure which mummy inspired Herge." If there is confusion, it dates back until at least 1979, when the 2,000-year-old preserved corpse now on display at the zoo appeared in Brussels at an exhibit titled "Tintin's museum of the imagination". The collection was assembled to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1929 release of the boy reporter's first book-length adventure, "Tintin in the Land of the Soviets".

Author and illustrator Georges Remi—better known under his pen name Herge—attended the show, adding some credibility to the mummy's significance. But this, according to the Art and History Museum's curator of Latin American relics, Serge Lemaitre, was a mistake. The mummy in question had been bought by a Belgian collector in the 1960s, long after Herge published the "Seven Crystal Balls" book in 1948.



A photo shows an Inca mummy at the Pairi Daiza animal park in Brugelette, Belgium.



A photo shows an Inca mummy at the Pairi Daiza animal park in Brugelette, Belgium.

French connection?

"And in the first frames serialised in 1941 in the newspaper Le Soir, Rascar Capac was hairless and had very bent knees, just like our mummy," Lemaitre says. Herge lived near the Jubilee Park—still a popular spot in Brussels' European quarter—and knew the museum and its curator Jean Capart well. Capart even seems to have been fictionalised as Professeur Bergamotte—or Professor Hercules Tarragon in the English-language version of "The Seven Crystal Balls".

Not only that, but items drawn from other pieces in the museum's ethnographic collections have appeared in the Tintin tales, notably a Peruvian figurine that

inspired its eponymous twin in "The Broken Ear". The museum is thus confident in its claim, but—as is often the case in a Tintin mystery—the plot may have a further twist, according to independent expert Philippe Goddin. "We should stop arguing. Herge looked at lots of Inca mummies, but his first sketches of Rascar Capac are essentially based on a drawing in the Larousse dictionary," he said. This is an explanation that will not suit anyone in Belgium, where tourist attractions have seized upon any Tintin link to exploit as a key draw.—AFP

Former 'MythBusters' co-host Grant Imahara dies at 49

Grant Imahara, who co-hosted the popular science TV show "MythBusters" and worked behind the scenes on three "Star Wars" films, has died at age 49, the Discovery Channel said Monday. The New York Times quoted a Discovery spokeswoman as saying the cause of death was believed to be a brain aneurysm. No further details were available. An electrical engineering graduate from the University of South California, Imahara joined MythBusters in 2005 and was a part of the show's team for 10 years. "Grant was a truly brilliant engineer, artist and performer, but also just such a generous, easygoing, and gentle PERSON," Adam Savage, one of Imahara's MythBusters co-hosts, said on Twitter.

"Working with Grant was so much fun. I'll miss my friend." "We are heartbroken to hear this sad news about Grant. He was an important part of our

Discovery family and a really wonderful man," the Discovery Channel said in a statement. He also worked on the special effects teams on a number of blockbuster Hollywood franchises, including Star Wars Episodes I-III, two sequels to "The Matrix", and "Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines." The Discovery Channel said Imahara was one of the few officially trained operators of the R2-D2 droid in Star Wars.

He also co-hosted the 2016 Netflix series "White Rabbit Project". "Heartbroken and in shock tonight. We were just talking on the phone. This isn't real," Imahara's White Rabbit Project co-host Kari Byron tweeted. Grant said in 2018 that he was working with Disney to create autonomous robot stunt doubles.—AFP



In this file photo (from left to right) Grant Imahara, Kari Byron, Jamie Hyneman, Adam Savage and Tory Belleci attend the 2011 Primetime Creative Arts Emmy Awards at Nokia Theatre on September 10, 2011 in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Amazon smart cart lets grocery shoppers skip checkout

Amazon on Tuesday introduced a smart grocery cart that will let shoppers skip checkout queues. Amazon's latest cashierless shopping innovation comes as merchants and customers strive to do business while reducing risk of exposure to coronavirus. Dash Carts that use discretely embedded sensors and cameras to tally prices of items placed inside will debut in an Amazon grocery store to open in Southern California later this year. "It's a new smart shopping cart that makes a quick grocery trip even quicker by allowing you to skip the checkout line," the technology titan, which owns the Whole Foods market chain, said in a post. "When you're done shopping, you'll simply exit through the store's Amazon Dash Cart lane, and your receipt will be emailed to you."

Each cart uses computer vision software and sensor data to identify what is put inside, showing a running total along with item descriptions and prices on a display, according to Amazon. Using a Dash cart requires a smartphone loaded with the Amazon application, which syncs by scanning a QR code and then charges the purchase to the credit card on file, the US based company explained.—AFP



This undated and unlocated handout photo released by Amazon shows an Amazon Dash Cart. Amazon on Tuesday, introduced a smart grocery cart that will let shoppers skip checkout queues.—AFP

Telluride film festival scrapped as virus sweeps region

The prestigious Telluride film festival in the southwestern US state of Colorado was cancelled Tuesday as coronavirus cases soar across the region. The annual gathering which draws Hollywood A-listers to a small Rocky Mountains town for premieres and galas had hoped to stick to its September 3-7 schedule with heightened safety measures, but made the "heart-breaking" decision to cancel. With "a seemingly unending number of new cases of Covid-19 and the national chaos around it, even the best strategy is threatened by this out of control environment," organizers said in a statement to AFP.

Telluride traditionally takes place as part of a packed fall festival calendar—alongside Toronto, New York and Venice—at which studios hoping for Oscars glory launch high-profile titles. Last year's edition included world premieres for Oscar-winning movies "Judy" and "Ford v Ferrari." The other major fall festivals currently still plan to go ahead in some form, though with slimmer lineups and some virtual, online elements being explored. Telluride organizers will shortly release details of the lineup it had scheduled, in order to highlight "the best in film this year."

"No matter how much many of us wear our masks and observe social distancing protocols, the pandemic has worsened rather than improved and the health and safety of you—our passholders, filmmakers, the people of Telluride and its surrounding areas—cannot be compromised," the statement said.

Coronavirus cases are soaring in dozens of US states, particularly across the nation's south and west. Colorado has suffered over 37,000 confirmed cases, including 1,727 deaths, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally. Last week, the state experienced its highest number of new infections since early May.—AFP



A man walks past a mural of frontline workers after the government eased a nationwide lockdown imposed as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus in New Delhi on Tuesday. — AFP

Video game industry faces its #metoo moment

After years of simmering controversy over sexism in the video game industry, change may be on its way after outrage came to a boil with a C-suite massacre at Ubisoft. Following online allegations of sexual misconduct, the publisher of Assassin's Creed and Far Cry launched a probe, resulting in the departure over the weekend of the company's chief creative officer. The head of human resources also left, as did the chief of operations in Canada where the game maker has its biggest studios.

CEO and co-founder Yves Guillemot acknowledged that "Ubisoft has fallen short in its obligation to guarantee a safe and inclusive workplace environment for its employees". The executive ousters were a high-profile victory for the #metoo movement in the male-dominated video game publishing industry that has a reputation for hostility towards women. Accusations on social media of sexual harassment and abuse have targeted a number of video game publishers, as well as people in the gaming community around the Twitch platform. In 2014, two prominent women developers became the targets of an online harassment campaign known as gamergate and seen by many as a backlash to growing pressure about sexism.

'Toxic'

Women Ubisoft employees described as "toxic" the work culture at the company, particularly at its Canadian studios. One woman who asked for her name not be used told AFP that "working on Far Cry cost me two burnouts, psychological and sexual harassment and

humiliation, and human resources never bothered to listen to me". One employee said on social media that shortly after arriving at Ubisoft a team leader told her she was hired because she was "cute" but that "to everyone's surprise you do your job well". She discovered a mailing list where men describe what women are wearing "so guys can go take a look".

She then received comments about her looks, unwelcome invitations from superiors and was "regularly pinched on the butt and breast" while using a passageway between buildings. A former employee said "at Ubisoft people who do bad things are unfortunately protected. They are often highly-placed and if you go to human resources or to managers they usually do nothing." Another put the blame on the "work hard, play hard" culture inside the company. "That is where one creates a climate that is not safe, where inhibitions are lowered and people engage in predatory behaviour."

Lara's transformation

On Ubisoft's creative teams only one in five employees are women. Isabelle Collet, a French researcher who has long studied the issue in the IT industry overall, said "getting more women requires a willingness to better welcome them". Collet said "video game publishers today are real companies that should have real tools against harassment". But she added that the sector was "not necessarily worse" than medicine or journalism.

Fanny Lignon, a researcher at France's CNRS research institute said: "What is annoying is that sexism can be more common in other types of media without one necessarily realising it". There has been some change in the representation of women in the games themselves. In the successful Lara Croft game, the heroine morphed from excessively voluptuous and scantily-clad to a more normal body covered by clothes appropriate for her adventures. "Many games are now without stereotypes, but some still engage in them extensively, and that usually includes a hypersexualisation of bodies," said Lignon.—AFP



Gaming fans play Ubisoft games at the 2019 Electronic Entertainment Expo, also known as E3, opening in Los Angeles, California on June 11, 2019. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo Men unveil a piece of art attributed to Banksy.



French ambassador Christian Masset delivers a speech next to the artwork by street artist Banksy, that was stolen from the Bataclan concert hall in 2019.—AFP photos

ITALY RETURNS STOLEN BATACLAN BANKSY TO FRANCE

Some returned a stolen Banksy artwork to France on Tuesday after the famed street artist's homage to the victims of the 2015 Paris attacks was found in Italy. The image of a young girl in mourning was painted with stencil and white paint on an emergency door of the Bataclan concert hall in Paris where Islamic State gunmen killed 90 people nearly five years ago. It was found in the attic of an abandoned farmhouse in the central Italian region of Abruzzo last

The artwork was then displayed inside the French embassy in Rome's Farnese Palace. Masset said at the handover ceremony that it was through the emergency door "by which numerous people escaped and are alive today." "It has a dual significance because it reminds us of the 90 victims... and it was a witness to the massacre" at the Bataclan, he added. The date of the artwork's return to France has not yet been disclosed.

Italian news agency AGI reported that it could be exhibited at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, a claim not immediately confirmed by the UN cultural agency. Works by Banksy, known for their distinctive style, irreverent humour and thought-provoking themes, have been found on walls, buildings and bridges from the West Bank to post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans. At auction, works by the artist—who keeps his identity secret—have sold for more than \$1 million.

Theft captured on video

In January last year, hooded thieves managed to nab the Bataclan work by cutting through the metal door of the club, a scene captured on video by surveillance cameras. Last month, six people were arrested in France over the theft. Two were charged with robbery in an organised gang and the other four with receiving stolen goods. However Italy's AGI has reported that a total of eight people have been arrested, including two French-born Italian suspects, and that a suspected accomplice remains on the run.

Banksy, one of the world's most highly regarded contemporary artists, blitzed Paris during a whirlwind



French ambassador Christian Masset (center) answers journalists' questions, next to the artwork by street artist Banksy.

trip in 2018. The Bataclan door is not the only of his works to have been stolen in the French capital, some of which have since been recovered. Others include a mural of a businessman in a suit offering a dog a bone, having just sawn the animal's leg off, and an image of a masked rat wielding a box cutter, which disappeared from outside the Pompidou Centre.

Fans have covered some of his Paris street art with Plexiglass to protect them. The artist is known to shine a spotlight on social issues such as migration and racism. In recent weeks, he has posted on his

Instagram account a drawing showing a lit candle setting fire to the American flag above a picture of a black man, in homage to George Floyd, the US man whose death in police custody ignited protests across the country. Banksy has also posted a drawing of people pulling down a statue, a reference to attacks on monuments or statues of historical figures linked to slavery or colonisation.—AFP



Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte (right) meets French ambassador to Italy Christian Masset prior to a handover ceremony of the piece of art attributed to street artist Banksy.

month. The chief prosecutor of L'Aquila, the capital of Abruzzo, and the head of Italy's police in charge of cultural heritage handed over the work to France's ambassador Christian Masset at a Bastille Day ceremony.



In this file photo taken on April 16, 2016 actress Naya Rivera attends the 23rd Annual Race To Erase MS Gala in Beverly Hills California.



Ventura County Sheriff Bill Ayub speaks during a press conference held for missing actress Naya Rivera on July 13, 2020 in Piru, California.—AFP photos

'Glee' actress death ruled accidental drowning as tributes paid

The death of "Glee" actress Naya Rivera in a California lake last week was ruled an accidental drowning by medical examiners Tuesday. Rivera, 33, disappeared during a boating trip with her four-year-old son last Wednesday, and her body was found floating in Lake Piru on Monday. The Ventura County Medical Examiner's Office formally confirmed Rivera's identity using dental records, it said in a statement. No traumatic injuries or evidence of alcohol or other toxins were found. On Monday, Ventura County Sheriff Bill Ayub said there was no indication

of suicide, and suggested that the lake's strong currents could have caused a fatal accident. "The idea perhaps being that the boat started drifting—it was unanchored—and that she mustered enough energy to get her son back onto the boat, but not enough to save herself," he said.

Her son was found asleep and drifting in the boat some three hours after Rivera rented it at the popular recreational hotspot around an hour's drive northwest of Los Angeles. Hollywood stars paid tributes to Rivera, including her former castmates on

smash-hit musical television series "Glee," some of whom gathered at the shore of the lake on Monday. Chris Colfer said Rivera "spoke truth to power with poise and fearlessness," while Jane Lynch wrote on Instagram: "Rest sweet, Naya. What a force you were." Oscar-winning actress Viola Davis wrote: "Prayers for Naya Rivera's family. Man... can we have a 'Do Over' of 2020. The loss is too much."—AFP

US judge rejects civil settlement for Weinstein victims

A US federal judge in New York on Tuesday rejected a proposed civil settlement that would have created a nearly \$19 million fund for dozens of women who suffered sexual misconduct and harassment at the hands of Harvey Weinstein. The proposed deal had been announced last month by New York state's attorney general, putting an end to both a class action suit and a separate case brought against Weinstein, his brother Bob and their former film studio The Weinstein Company.

Despite the attorney general's approval of the settlement, District Judge Alvin Hellerstein on Tuesday rejected the deal, which had been contested by several of Weinstein's victims. Notably, the disgraced Hollywood mogul was



In this file photo taken on February 24, 2020 Harvey Weinstein arrives at the Manhattan Criminal Court in New York City.—AFP

not to be required to admit any responsibility for his actions, nor was he expected to contribute any of his own money to the fund.

Attorney Douglas Wigdor—whose clients include Tarale Wulff, a former cocktail waitress who alleged that Weinstein raped her in his New York apartment in 2005 — had described the deal as "a complete sellout." "We have been saying for over a year and a half that the settlement terms and conditions were unfair and should never be imposed on sexual assault survivors," Wigdor and two

other attorneys representing victims said in a statement.

The trio said they were "pleased that Judge Hellerstein swiftly rejected the one-sided proposal." John Clune, an attorney for another alleged victim, quoted Hellerstein as saying: "This is not a class action." Lawyers representing several women were angry that survivors who did not want to accept the settlement would have been prevented from pursuing other legal avenues. In February, Weinstein was found guilty of a criminal sexual act in the first degree and rape in the third degree in a landmark verdict for the #MeToo movement. He is currently serving 23 years in prison.

The lengthy sentence capped a remarkable downfall for the 68-year-old, who has been accused of years of vile predatory behaviour by almost 90 women, including Angelina Jolie and Salma Hayek. This fund was seen by some of the parties as possibly the best settlement his accusers would ever reach.—AFP

Johnny Depp staff defend actor in London libel trial

Employees of Hollywood star Johnny Depp during his rocky marriage to ex-wife Amber Heard defended the actor in a UK court Tuesday on day six of his libel lawsuit trial. The "Pirates of the Caribbean" hero is suing the publisher and executive editor of Britain's tabloid newspaper The Sun over a 2018 story that branded him a "wife beater". Depp, 57, denies abusing actress Amber Heard—now 34 and the global face of French cosmetics firm L'Oréal—during a two-year marriage that ended in a messy 2017 divorce and several lawsuits. She has claimed he was violent towards her on at least 14 occasions in various places around the world.

But Malcolm Connolly, who has worked for Depp and his family as a bodyguard for about 16 years, told London's High Court he had never seen the actor hit Heard. "I wouldn't tolerate any man striking a woman. No matter who he was, I just wouldn't tolerate that," Connolly, a former prison officer, said. "Not even if he's my boss. I don't care if he's the pope." Connolly said he had not been held responsible publicly at the time to protect her. "The usual victim pattern is to protect the abuser for some reason," Connolly commented.

Meanwhile Samantha McMillen, who has worked as Depp's stylist since 2002



A fan is embraced by US actor Johnny Depp (left) after she gave him a bunch of flowers as he leaves court after the sixth day of his libel trial against News Group Newspapers (NGN), at the High Court in London.

and also as Heard's during the couple's relationship, told the court she had "never noticed" injuries to the actress. "I noticed nothing but her beautiful skin," she said of a particular occasion in May 2016 when Heard claimed she had been left visibly bruised by Depp. The actor launched legal action after The Sun ran a story calling him a "wife-beater". It came after he had already publicly denied domestic violence, and Depp claims it has led to "significant reputational damage" to his career and personally. The High Court trial is due to last three weeks.—AFP



US actor Johnny Depp (center) carries a bunch of flowers given to him by a fan, as he takes leave of a member of his legal team outside court. —AFP photos

Sports

Photo of the Day



PETRA: Miles Daisher performs a BASE jump at The Treasury in Petra, Jordan. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Drogba suffers fresh blow in bid to become Ivorian football chief

ABIDJAN: Didier Drogba's bid for the presidency of the Ivorian Football Association (FIF) received a further set back on Tuesday when the nation's player association (AFI) announced it was backing a rival.

Drogba needs a nomination from one of five eligible bodies to stand. AFI was the fourth to make its choice, and, like the three that had already announced their endorsement, decided against the national team's all-time top scorer.

AFI said it was backing current FIF vice-president Idriss Diallo, who has the backing of former internationals Bonaventure Kalou, Cyril Domoraud and Ahmed Ouattara, in the September 5 election.

"In line with the majority of its members, the board decided to grant AFI's sponsorship to the list led by Idriss Diallo," AFI said in a statement signed by its general secretary Aruna Dindane, another former international.

"This choice is in line with the recommendation made by two thirds of the delegates at the end of last Friday's meeting," said the statement.

Yaya Toure, who like his brother Kolo Toure has backed Drogba, expressed his dismay.

"Ivorian players playing in Europe are worried about the current situation and do not understand why AFI does not seem to want to give its sponsorship to Didier Drogba," said Yaya Toure.

Of the five groups that can sponsor a candidate, four have already made their choice.

The association of coaches, like AFI, has supported Diallo. The association of former players and the association of referees are sponsoring league president Sory Diabate, who also has the backing of the country's most-capped player Didier Zokora and former internationals Youssouf Falikou Fofana and Abdoulaye 'Ben Badi' Traore. Only the society of football doctors has not yet endorsed a candidate. —AFP

Top 14's salary cap reduction underlines changing of the guard

Springboks winger Makazole Mapimpi head to Japan

PARIS: The French Top 14 has attracted some of the world's biggest names such as ex-All Blacks Dan Carter, Ma'a Nonu and Tana Umaga, former England fly-half Jonny Wilkinson or more recently South Africa's Rugby World Cup winners Handre Pollard and Eben Etzebeth, thanks to sumptuous wages.

Last week it was announced that from 2021 the salary cap, originally introduced in 2010 and currently set at 11.3 million euros (\$12.74 million) per year, will gradually drop to 9.94 million euros in the following years due to the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Top 14, the domestic competition with the highest wage limitation and the most lucrative television deal in world rugby, is adamant it will continue to entice the best, despite being forced to do so with less money.

"With the salary cap, the Top 14 remains a consistent and passionate competition right until the end," the LNR said. In recent years the tournament has been beaten to some big signings by Japan's Top League and even the English Premiership with a salary cap of 6.4 million pounds (\$8 million, 7 million euros) which will be reduced to 5.0 million pounds from 2021.

England's top-flight also has a marquee player rule in place allowing two squad members from each club to be exempt from the wage restrictions. The likes of former New Zealand captain Kieran Read, ex-Australia skipper David Pocock and livewire Springboks winger Makazole Mapimpi have chosen to head to Japan.

Earlier this month All Blacks fly-half Beauden Barrett signed a one-year deal with Suntory Sungoliath, an outfit supported by a multinational food and

drinks company based in Tokyo. In another sign of the Top 14's diminishing financial power, destructive Fiji centre Semi Radradra has left Bordeaux-Begles for Bristol Bears with the French club's president Laurent Marti claiming he failed to compete financially with the English side.

"The new El Dorado for players from the southern hemisphere is Japan. Geographically it's close to New Zealand and Australia... and they pay well too, the clubs are backed by big businesses like Panasonic, Toyota, Toshiba and Honda," an unnamed French agent said.

Former New Zealand back-rower Victor Vito joined La Rochelle after winning the World Cup in 2015 alongside Carter and Nonu. He has led the side to a European Challenge Cup final and the Top 14 play offs since being appointed club captain two years ago.

"In general if you're looking to look after your body, from what I've heard, (Japan's) probably better than coming here," Vito told AFP in September. "The Top 14 is pretty much an 11-month season in terms of pre-season and then the games, it takes its toll," he added.

'FARCE'

Pollard's Montpellier, owned by Syrian billionaire Mohamed Altrad, have been suspected of breaking salary cap rules but had a fine of 400,000 euros revoked for doing so last November. Comic book millionaire Mourad Boudjellal signed players such as Umaga, former New Zealand midfielder Sonny Bill Williams and ex-Australia skipper George Gregan during his time as Toulon president.

"There are people who get around because there

are groups who allow them to do it. The salary cap is a massive farce where the most virtuous cheat," Boudjellal said a year ago, before leaving the club.

For the new campaign the French league has still managed to bring in the likes of Springboks' world champion Cobus Reinach, Australia playmaker Kurtley Beale as well as Japan full-back Kotaro Matsushima.

With the increasing wealth in Japan, some rich benefactors in England as well as stricter matchday squad regulations on players who have not come through French academies the days of numerous pocket-filling contracts for global stars could be a thing of the past in France. — AFP

Tokyo Olympics at risk if coronavirus mutates

TOKYO: The Tokyo Olympics may have to be postponed again if the novel coronavirus mutates into a stronger pathogen, Kiyoshi Kurokawa, a prominent Japanese government adviser, said yesterday. However, a recent spike in cases in Tokyo is due to a failure to stick to guidelines to prevent contagion, he said.

A physician who served as a science adviser to the Japanese cabinet from 2006-2008, Kurokawa also headed an independent probe into the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. Currently, he is advising the government on the coronavirus pandemic.

"I think the virus is mutating all the time ... it may be a much stronger virus that triggers a second wave," Kurokawa told Reuters. "The Olympics may be postponed again, but I can't predict." "I think it's small incidents happening in Tokyo ... new cases are because people are not abiding by recommendations," Kurokawa said of the current spike in infections. "But if there are some mutations, that is a completely different story. That could happen anywhere in the world."

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike told Reuters on Monday the Olympics, originally scheduled to start this

month but put off to 2021 because of the pandemic, must go ahead next year as a symbol of world unity in overcoming coronavirus.

The spike in infections in Tokyo, which accounts for more than one-third of Japan's more than 23,000 cases, has prompted a backlash against a planned campaign to promote domestic tourism. Kurokawa said authorities were trying to balance priorities.

"I think one of the concerns of this pandemic is how to prevent the spreading out of this corona infection. The other side of this issue is ... how to promote the economy. Many people are losing their jobs," he said.

He added that he thought the government was "carefully balancing" the two priorities. Kurokawa was appointed last month to head a new panel to examine how to use artificial intelligence to fight the spread of the virus. His appointment to the four-person group including a Nobel Prize winning geneticist came after Economics Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura abruptly announced he would dissolve a panel of scientific experts and remake it with new members.

The move came amid reports of clashes between the health experts and politicians. Kurokawa said that whatever experts recommended based on science, political leaders had to make the final policy call.

"The scientific community's recommendations have to be fact-based, science-based recommendations, but politicians have to make the decisions," he said. "Scientists give advice, but decision-making is not by scientists." — Reuters



PAU: File photograph taken on February 24, 2018, Racing 92's New Zealander fly-half Dan Carter (L) passes the ball during the French Top 14 rugby union match between Pau and Racing 92 at The Hameau Stadium in Pau, southwestern France. In early July 2020 it was announced that from 2021 the salary cap, will gradually drop to 9,94 million euros in the following years due to the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic. —AFP

Woods cautious about return ahead of Memorial

WASHINGTON: Tiger Woods admitted Tuesday that concern over the coronavirus delayed his return to the PGA Tour as he prepares to play his first event since February at this week's Memorial Tournament in Ohio.

The former world number one has not played since appearing in the Genesis Invitational in Los Angeles in February but will tee off at Muirfield on Thursday chasing a sixth victory in the Jack Nicklaus-hosted event.

The 44-year-old 15-time major winner said Tuesday he had contemplated returning to the tour earlier but had wanted to see how the first few events of the post-coronavirus shutdown fared before coming back.

"I just felt it was better to stay at home and be safe," Woods said Tuesday. "I'm used to playing with lots of people around me or having lots of people have a direct line to me, and that puts not only myself in danger but my friends and family, and just been at home practicing and social distancing and being away

from a lot of people.

"Coming back and playing the tour, in my case over the 20-some-odd years I've been out here, that's really hard to say, that I'm used to having so many people around me or even touch me, going from green to tee.

"That's something that I looked at and said, well, I'm really not quite comfortable with that, that whole idea." Memorial organisers had initially planned to allow fans on the course at this week's tournament, but abandoned that idea as COVID-19 cases across the United States began to skyrocket.

On Monday, PGA Tour officials confirmed that the remainder of the 2019-2020 season would take place without fans. It means Woods will tee off on Thursday alongside world number one Rory McIlroy and Brooks Koepka without the customary horde of spectators that usually follows him around a course.

"It's going to be different, there's no doubt about it," Woods said. "For most of my career, pretty much almost every competitive playing round that I've been involved in, I've had people around me, spectators yelling, a lot of movement inside the gallery with camera crews and media."

Woods, who is making only his fourth tournament appearance of the season this week, said he has improved his health during the long layoff.

A stiff back hampered his performance at the Genesis in February, but Woods said he had not been troubled since. — AFP

Sports

Marquez v Marquez as MotoGP spins wheels of family fortune

Marquez brothers will become the first to race for the same team

PARIS: Motorcycling is often a family affair, and yet before Alex Marquez joined Marc at Honda for this season two brothers had never raced together for the same team in MotoGP. Honda had more obvious options than Alex Marquez as replacements for another Spaniard Jorge Lorenzo this season, including Japanese rider Takaaki Nakagami and Frenchman Johann Zarco.

But Marc Marquez, who is 27, dreamt of riding alongside his younger brother at the highest level and the team heeded its six-time world champion and signed 24-year-old Alex, although the team announced on Monday that it would only be for one year.

Next season Alex will drop to satellite team LCR while 29-year-old Pol Espargaro, also the younger of a pair of racing Catalan brothers, will join from KTM. Espargaro's brother Aleix rides for Aprilia. Other brothers to have ridden at the same time include the French Sarros, Dominique and 250cc world champion Christian, on rival teams in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The Marquez brothers will become the first to race for the same team when the coronavirus-delayed MotoGP season kicks off in Jerez this weekend. Marc Marquez began his phenomenal career by winning the 125cc, now Moto3, title, in 2010 at the age of 17.

He won the Moto2 title in 2012 and the MotoGP title in his first full season in 2013 and repeated the triumph

in 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Alex has taken a little longer. He won Moto3 in 2014 and finally took the Moto2 in 2019, a good progression when compared with anyone except his brother. The two kids from Cervera, discovered motorcycling young, pushed by their father Julia. They developed under the guidance of Emilio Alzamora, the 1999 125cc world champion.

"Marc and I have been racing together since we were very young, more or less every weekend," said Alex in 2014. "I spend most of my time with him. Besides being my brother, he's my best friend."

When Alex won the Moto2 title last year, after a crisis of confidence caused by crashes in 2016, his brother said he was "even more satisfied" than if he had won the crown. "It's difficult to be 'the brother of' and he's under a lot of pressure," said Marc. "Today he gave a championship ride. He's not 'the brother of', he's Alex Marquez." Mark, who is 1.69 metres (5ft 5ins), and Alex, who is 1.8 metres, were inseparable until they were confined during the coronavirus pandemic that delayed their season.

Phenomenal career



MADRID: File photo taken on February 27, 2020 Repsol Honda Team's Spanish MotoGP driver Marc Marquez and his brother teammate Alex (R) attend the presentation of the new Repsol Honda team in Madrid. Motorcycling is often a family affair, and yet before Alex Marquez joined Marc at Honda for this season two brothers had never raced together for the same team in MotoGP. — AFP

relationship between team-mates: partners in the garage and rivals on the track.

"Having Marc as a team-mate is the best way to find out as quickly as possible what this class is like, the secrets of Honda and to learn everything I can," said Alex, whose goal is to be MotoGP rookie of the year.

"I hope that soon I will be able to say that he is one of my rivals. This year it will be nothing like that: I'm

here to learn as much as I can from him." Marc agrees that this should be a season of brotherly cooperation. "I have my own goal and my teammate's goal is different," Marc said. "But it's certain that one day we could find ourselves fighting for a race, or even a title. I hope so. But I'm telling you: on the circuit, everyone sees their own interests and tries to give 100 percent of themselves." — AFP

Spinner Bess feels dangerous ahead of Test

LONDON: England off-spinner Dom Bess said he feels "dangerous" ahead of the second test against the West Indies which starts at Old Trafford today. Bess was frustrated on the final day of the first test at Southampton, going wicketless as the visitors reached a target of 200 to win by four wickets.

"I know I went wicketless but it could have turned and the thing that I'm focusing on is how well it's coming out at the moment, I do feel really dangerous and that's a great place to be," Bess told a news conference on Tuesday.

"As a spinner, some will go your way some days and some won't, that is cricket. I feel like I am attacking both edges of the bat. My consistency and accuracy within where I am landing it is dangerous."

The Old Trafford pitch is usually pace-friendly, which could again leave England with a decision to make about whether or not Stuart Broad is selected. He was left out of the first test — a decision that some felt cost England victory.

Bess said it shows how much strength in depth England have. "For the coaches, captains and senior players, you want that competition for places," the 22-year-old said. "You go through the whole squad and there are at least two or three who can do that



SOUTHAMPTON: England's Dom Bess bowls on the fifth day of the first Test cricket match between England and the West Indies at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton, southwest England. — AFP

role, that can only produce success in the long term. Look at Stuart Broad missing out in the first test. I know he was gutted and that shows you the depth we have. One of England's greatest missed out."

Bess was part of the England side which lost the

opening test in South Africa in December last year before they turned the series around. "I know there is that record of England not getting off to the best of starts," he said. "We turned it round in South Africa and there is no reason why we can't do it here." — Reuters

I just saw it as an awesome opportunity to mix what I knew with my passion about learning about science and tech." The 32-year-old said the project was focused on using technology to show athletes the difference between how they think their body is performing and the actual measurable data.

"If you can bridge the gap between what it feels like... and what you actually did from a skeleton's perspective, that is a huge leap forward for how people can not only train but start out and learn how to do these things," he added.

"That is what our project is working on: to extract how the skeleton is working and hopefully use that to not only give athletes insight and improve their performance, but also help fans who are watching sports deepen their understanding of what is going on."

The technology is already being used to help athletes who are having to adjust training schedules ahead of the rearranged Tokyo Olympics, which were supposed to start this month but have been pushed back a year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In addition to his two Olympic golds at London and Rio, Eaton also set the decathlon world record of 9,045 points in 2015, though this was later beaten by Frenchman Kevin Mayer. — Reuters

Eaton looks to push performance boundaries

TOKYO: Two-time Olympic decathlon gold medalist Ashton Eaton has turned to science and engineering for his post-athletic career but the American former world record holder told Reuters he has found a way to straddle both worlds.

Eaton, who retired from athletics in 2017, is studying for a second degree in mechanical engineering and is also part of a project at US tech firm Intel aimed at helping athletes squeeze every last bit of performance out of their bodies.

While the company lists his job as 'Product Development Engineer', Eaton's LinkedIn bio simply reads: "2x Olympic gold medalist, decathlon. Now pursuing engineering." "Ultimately (I) decided I wanted to learn the fundamentals of science and engineering," Eaton told Reuters in a recent interview. "(Intel) asked if I would like to join the project and

Australia's T20 Big Bash League announces schedule

SYDNEY: Cricket Australia announced yesterday plans for a full Twenty20 Big Bash League season starting in December, but acknowledged the schedule could be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 10th BBL will begin on December 3 when the Adelaide Strikers host the Melbourne Renegades, followed by 60 matches across the country and a final on February 6.

The ambitious fixture list, which will follow the Women's Big Bash League played from October 17 to November 29, means Cricket Australia will meet its commitments to broadcasters and will not face

penalties for reduced content.

However the schedule could still face problems as interstate travel in Australia is currently restricted after Melbourne and Sydney experienced new coronavirus outbreaks recently.

Cricket Australia's Big Bash chief Alistair Dobson said the league would follow public health advice and put in place health protocols to ensure the safety of the public, players and support staff. "Scheduling in the time of coronavirus is not without its challenges, as we have seen," said Dobson.

"There are factors outside the league itself which could impact (the schedule) at a later date." Australia A tours and Cricket Australia XI games are on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic but the domestic Sheffield Shield and home international series are planned to go ahead, including a money-spinning four-Test series against India. A decision is expected soon on whether the Twenty20 World Cup, due to be held in Australia in October and November, will be postponed. — AFP

Pineda's late winner as Fire scorch Seattle

MIAMI: Chicago Fire rookie Mauricio Pineda struck a late winner to leave Seattle Sounders' hopes of success at Major League Soccer's restart tournament hanging by a thread on Tuesday. Pineda's 84th-minute strike secured a 2-1 victory for Chicago, sending coach Raphael Wicky's side to the top of Group B in the World Cup-style tournament at Orlando, Florida.

But the defeat leaves Seattle, the reigning MLS Cup champions, in a dogfight to reach the knockout stages. Seattle have just one point from two games and are third in Group B, outside of the automatic qualification places.

"It's not good," Sounders coach Brian Schmetzer said when asked about his team's predicament. "We'll have to make sure we get a result in the last game and then see where we end up." Schmetzer was frustrated by his team's inability to create more than seven chances throughout the game.

"It's frustrating when you can't generate chances but that's always the hardest thing to get when you're in pre-season," he said. After a goalless first half, Chicago took the lead on 52 minutes after a defensive blunder by Seattle's Xavier Arreaga allowed the Fire's Slovenian striker Robert Beric in on goal.

Ecuador international Arreaga misjudged the flight of a long ball forward and Beric pounced on the chance to race clear. The Slovenian then cleverly twisted and turned his way past the covering Yeimar Andrade before blasting his finish past Seattle keeper Stefan Frei. Seattle got back on level terms in the 77th minute however when Jordan Morris got to the byline and squared a pass for Kenyan midfielder Handwalla Bwana, who finished from close range for 1-1.

But just when it looked as if Seattle had done enough to grind out a point, another defensive lapse cost them dear. An inswinging corner from Gaston Gimenez was somehow allowed to bounce across the face of goal through a crowded six yard box and unmarked rookie Pineda was on hand at the back post to tuck away the finish. — AFP

England captain Root returns as WI eye series win

LONDON: England will hope the return of captain Joe Root proves inspirational in the second Test against the West Indies at Old Trafford starting today. Star batsman Root missed England's four-wicket defeat at Southampton in international cricket's return from lockdown last week after attending the birth of his second child.

He has now rejoined the squad, with West Indies needing just one win from the two remaining Tests of the campaign at Old Trafford to clinch a first series win in England for 32 years.

Although all three fixtures are being played behind closed doors because of the coronavirus outbreak, Root will be in a familiar situation. England have now lost the opening match of a series for the eighth time in ten campaigns, a run dating back to the 2017/18 Ashes in Australia.

Most recently in South Africa they did recover from a heavy defeat in the first Test to win that series 3-1. But now at 1-0 down with just two to play, there is far less margin for error. Joe Denly appears to be the most likely candidate to make way for Root.

Denly was twice out cheaply at Southampton, with fellow batsman Zak Crawley making 76 in a second innings where England's loss of five wickets for 30 runs proved more pivotal to the result than their controversial decision to omit veteran paceman Stuart Broad. "We're all desperate to see Joe do really well," said England coach Chris Silverwood. "But obviously he's under pressure a little bit." "Zak is improving constantly. I think he certainly showed maturity and the innings he played was very good."

England wicketkeeper Jos Buttler dropped Jermaine Blackwood early in the West Indies' batsman's match-clinching innings of 95 on Sunday's final day at Southampton. And another pair of low scores left Buttler with a Test average of just 23.22 since the start of 2019 and now only one hundred in 75 innings.

But even though England have gifted gloveman Ben Foakes waiting in the wings, Silverwood said: "First and foremost we want to give Jos the best opportunity to succeed. "He just needs to go and make those big scores now doesn't he? He knows that as well."

TIGHT TURNAROUND

Meanwhile, with six Tests in seven weeks, including three against Pakistan, England could yet recall Broad in Manchester, having already said they plan to rotate their battery of quicks. It was West Indies fast bowler Shannon Gabriel, however, who was named man-of-the-match in the first Test for a nine-wicket haul.

Gabriel was only included in the main squad after being named as a travelling reserve following ankle surgery. Given the second Test starts just days after the end of the first, fitness is likely to be the West Indies' biggest issue as they return to Old Trafford, the venue for their quarantine period amid the pandemic and two subsequent intra-squad warm-up matches. The West Indies arrived in England with many doubting if their batsmen could give an impressive fast-bowling unit enough runs to play with. But they built a first-innings lead of over a hundred runs at Southampton after captain Jason Holder took a Test-best 6-42 in England's lowly 204. — AFP

14 Top 14's salary cap reduction underlines changing of the guard



15 Marquez v Marquez as MotoGP spins wheels of family fortune



15 Spinner Bess feels dangerous ahead of Test



LONDON: Norwich City's English midfielder Todd Cantwell (R) fouls Chelsea's English midfielder Ruben Loftus-Cheek during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Norwich City at Stamford Bridge in London. — AFP

Giroud guides Chelsea closer to CL

'I missed some I don't miss usually'

LONDON: Frank Lampard admitted Chelsea are struggling with nerves as they chase a place in the Champions League next season after Olivier Giroud scored the only goal in a 1-0 win over already relegated Norwich at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday.

Victory opens up a four-point lead for third-placed Chelsea over Leicester and Manchester United, who both have a game in hand later this week. But Lampard knows there is still plenty of work to do with a trip to champions Liverpool and sixth-placed Wolves visiting Stamford Bridge on the last day of the season to come in Chelsea's final two league games of the season.

"I want more but that can wait. Where we are at as a team and our position in the table, three points is everything," said Lampard. "If we want to really move on then it can be better. It's not easy, there is a nervy feeling there



There is a nervy feeling

for understandable reasons."

Lampard was furious with his side's lack of fight in surrendering to a 3-0 defeat at Sheffield United on Saturday that plunged Chelsea's chances of a top-four finish into doubt. The former England international made five changes from the battering at Bramall Lane with

Giroud among those restored to the starting line-up.

Chelsea have already significantly bolstered their frontline for next season with the signings of Timo Werner and Hakim Ziyech. But Giroud has more than justified the decision to also extend his contract by a year during football's shutdown as Chelsea's most potent striker since the restart.

"He's a big character for us and scoring important goals," added Lampard. Giroud saw a number of chances come and go in the first half as an attempted lob over Tim Krul fell gently into the Dutch 'keeper's arms before he sliced well over the bar when unmarked inside the area.

Christian Pulisic forced Krul into his best save of the first-half with a powerful drive that was just too close to the former Newcastle stopper. Just as Norwich looked set to hold out until the break Giroud shrugged off Tim

Klose to connect with Pulisic's cross for his fifth goal in eight games.

"I missed some I don't miss usually," said Giroud. "I lost a bit of confidence but my desire to score was bigger, so I just tried to stay focused and on the cross of Christian I anticipated this header." Norwich's long-awaited fate of a return to the Championship was confirmed in a 4-0 thrashing at the hands of West Ham on Saturday.

There was more defiance from the Canaries in defence, but they failed to score for the seventh time in their last eight games to slump to a ninth straight defeat. Daniel Farke's men failed to even test Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga or a defence that has been under the microscope for conceding 49 goals already in the league this season with a shot on target. — AFP



BERGAMO: Brescia's Italian forward Ernesto Torregrossa vies with Atalanta's French midfielder Adrian Tameze during the Italian Serie A football match Atalanta vs Brescia played behind closed doors at the Atleti Azzurri d'Italia stadium in Bergamo. — AFP

Pasalic hat-trick helps Atalanta go second in Serie A

MILAN: Mario Pasalic scored a hat-trick as Atalanta brushed aside struggling local rivals Brescia 6-2 to move second in Serie A on Tuesday. Gian Piero Gasperini's side extended their unbeaten league run to 13 games to move six points behind leaders Juventus who visit eighth-placed Sassuolo on Wednesday.

Inter Milan and Lazio are two points behind Atalanta before they play against SPAL and Udinese respectively later this week. Gasperini's side have scored 93 league goals so far this season — 26 more than eight-time reigning champions Juventus.

"We don't do it to humiliate the opponent, but we try to play our game," said Gasperini. "Already last year we were the best attack in the league, this year we have surpassed ourselves, scoring many goals with many different players.

"Playing in the Champions League has helped us and made us grow," added Gasperini, whose side will play Paris Saint-Germain in the last eight next month. "We are preparing for Paris Saint-Germain, but also want to fight to the end in Serie A.

"I think the best way to be ready for August 12 will be to play these last five league games to the maximum."

The game between high-scoring Atalanta and 19th-placed Brescia was one between two neighbouring teams from cities ravaged by the coronavirus pandemic.

A minute's silence took place before kick-off with players forming a circle with the backdrop of the music "Rinascero, Rinascerei" (I will be reborn, you will be reborn), by Bergamo musician Roby Facchinetti.

Atalanta's top scorer Luis Muriel, with 17 league goals this season, watched from the stands hours after the Colombian left hospital after suffering a head injury in a fall at his home. But his absence was not felt with Croatian Pasalic opening the scoring within two minutes at the Gewiss Stadium connecting with a Ruslan Malinovskyi cross. Brescia hit back minutes later with Ernesto Torregrossa pouncing on Atalanta defender Mattia Caldara's poor clearance.

But the hosts got back into their stride and were four-goals up after half an hour with Marten De Roon, Malinovskyi and a Duvan Zapata header within a five-minute spell. The punishment continued in the second half with Malinovskyi again setting up Pasalic to beat Lorenzo Andreacchi in the Brescia goal after 55 minutes.

The Croatian added a third three minutes later sending in Ebrima Colley's cross for his ninth goal this season, five of them against Brescia, having scored a brace in the away leg last November. "It's the best moment of my career," said Pasalic after his maiden hat-trick.

"There are still five games left and we can do even better. "We have scored more than 90 goals in Serie A, we have shown against Juventus (2-2 draw) that we can match even the strongest teams." — AFP