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PM assures chief editors no one is above the law

Graft, demographics discussed • Health, economy, education, security key priorities



By Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan
Editor-in-Chief

KUWAIT: It was a truly welcome change to attend an open discussion yesterday between HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and editors-in-chief of Kuwait's media. The meeting at Seif Palace personally gave me a feeling of normality despite the masks and social distancing. However, these are unprecedented times and we should be well aware that returning back to normal life in stages does not mean that the pandemic is over.

This is something that Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled emphasized in our discussions yesterday. "I informed HH the Amir that extreme measures had to be taken for Kuwait to face this pandemic," he said. "The truth is - without a confirmed cure or vaccine, any set plan of when we can get back to normal life is a prediction that could face setbacks," he reminded us all.

To break down his message: The fact of the matter is we all have to be responsible in this fight against the coronavirus by sticking to safety procedures and guidelines from the ministry of health. This is a serious matter that some people have taken for granted and still participate in social gatherings, and this further increases the chances of the virus spreading in Kuwait.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled reassured us all that Kuwait is in a good position, but "there are challenges that face us". The most important ones are health, economy, education and security. First and top of that list is public health and the ministry of health's recommendations and approval will be key in all planned stages of returning back to normal life.

Economically, Kuwait is financially stable and public sector salaries will be paid as usual. However, the PM pointed out that despite Kuwait's strong financial position, serious economic reforms are needed to sustain it. The premier noted that even though only a short amount of time remains for this government to

complete its mandate before the elections - it has taken actions and devised policies to help assist existing businesses and to encourage the manufacture of necessary products locally.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled emphasized that it's crucial for Kuwait to diversify its sources of income away from oil to be able to sustain its economy in the long term, regardless of global oil prices.

The subject of security also raised the issue of the highly-controversial demographic imbalance that Kuwait faces and the issue of corruption, as the seriousness of the government's will to tackle these issues was questioned. The premier responded to questions on these issues by saying that he had a conversation with HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who has advised that no one is above the law and all necessary legal actions should be taken. "Don't look at the names, look at their actions," the prime minister told us, quoting the Amir.

According to the prime minister, legal action is now being taken against 224 companies that are suspected of illegal visa trading. These have fueled the demographic imbalance, especially with unnecessary unskilled labor. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also noted that firm measures will be taken against any person who breaks the law or embezzles public funds.

As for the question of education and when schools might reopen, the prime minister responded that the government strongly believes in the importance of education and is deliberating over the issue. "Educating our children is of extreme importance but not at the cost of their health," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also affirmed Kuwait's continuous efforts in solving the Gulf dispute. The prime minister stressed HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah's keenness on the continuation of Gulf joint cooperation. He also reminded everyone that he was a foreign minister in the past, and was close to the efforts exerted by HH the Amir to end the dispute.

Continued on Page 16

Jazeera offers 50,000 tickets to frontliners

KUWAIT: Kuwait's private Jazeera Airways announced Tuesday it was offering 50,000 free round-trip tickets to "frontline heroes" who have been fighting the coronavirus pandemic in Kuwait. The tickets would be valid until the end of 2021. "We are honored to follow

the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah...to the government to reward our fellow frontline workers for their efforts to prioritize the safety of our people in the fight against the pandemic," Jazeera Chairman Marwan Boodai said in a statement.

He said the 50,000 free tickets would be redeemable to any destination served by Jazeera Airways' network. The tickets will be distributed to frontline individuals as directed by the government, said Boodai.— KUNA

MP slams 'new' health policy on virus testing

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Leading opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri yesterday accused the health ministry of limiting coronavirus tests to cases that require hospital admission only and denying them to scores of suspected cases. Addressing the prime minister from his Twitter account, Muwaizri said the ministry has declined requests by dozens of

Kuwaiti families and individuals to undergo the tests.

The lawmaker claimed that people suspected of contracting the disease "now search for wasta (influence)" to take the tests and make sure they are safe. He said hundreds of millions of dinars have been spent on coronavirus-related plans and studies and several quarantine sites have been built, wondering if the ministry was trying to shift the blame of its "failure" to the people.

The ministry of health has so far not responded to the accusations, but many such complaints have appeared on social media. Local media reported yesterday that a 300-strong medical team from Cuba is expected to arrive in the country today

to help in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. The National Assembly is holding regular sessions on June 16 and 17 to debate issues and legislation related to the coronavirus crisis.

The ministry of health announced yesterday 710 new coronavirus cases in past 24 hours, bringing total count of cases to 29,359. The ministry's official spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, in his daily briefing about the pandemic in the country, said four deaths were also reported in the same period, with the total number of fatalities amounting to 230 since the outbreak of the highly contagious disease in Kuwait.

All the contamination and death cases had mingled with other infected persons

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MUMBAI: Commuters drive in the rain along Marine Drive as Cyclone Nisarga barrels towards India's western coast yesterday. — AFP

Mumbai avoids brunt of cyclone

MUMBAI: Coronavirus-hit Mumbai appeared to escape the worst of Cyclone Nisarga yesterday as the first severe storm to threaten India's finan-

cial capital in more than 70 years left it largely unscathed after ripping roofs off homes in a nearby coastal town. Mumbai and its surrounds are usually sheltered from cyclones - the last deadly storm to hit the city was in 1948 - but authorities evacuated at least 100,000 people, including coronavirus patients, from flood-prone areas in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

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US protests defy curfews; Trump faces backlash

WASHINGTON: Protesters defied curfews across the United States as leaders scrambled to stem anger over police racism while President Donald Trump rejected criticism over his use of force to break up a peaceful rally. Standoffs between police and demonstrators stretched into the night in cities from New York to Los Angeles over the death of George Floyd, an unarmed African-American man whose killing has brought once-in-a-generation protests to the nation for the past week.

But there were fewer reports of the looting and violence that had soured street demonstrations in previous nights. Tens of thousands gathered earlier Tuesday in Houston to pay a hometown tribute to Floyd, who grew up in the Texas city and is to be buried there next week. "Today is... about George Floyd's family - we want them to know that George did not die in vain," Mayor Sylvester Turner told an estimated 60,000 people.



HOUSTON: Protesters demonstrate to mourn the death of George Floyd during a march across downtown Houston on Tuesday. — AFP

A tearful Roxie Washington, the mother of Floyd's six-year-old daughter, told a news conference she wanted "justice for him because he was good". "No matter what anybody thinks, he was good." In New York, which on Tuesday prolonged its first curfew since World War II for the full week, AFP reporters saw hundreds refusing to go home after the 8:00 pm cutoff, instead chanting slogans and peacefully

walking the streets in Manhattan and Brooklyn.

Hours after the curfew, mayor Bill de Blasio said it was a "very calm situation", a day after several Manhattan luxury stores were looted. "So far, the curfew is certainly helping, based on everything I've seen in Brooklyn and Manhattan over the last three hours," he tweeted.

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Local

Rapid intervention team reaches out to mental health sufferers in Kuwait

Consultations available for people at home or in hospital quarantines

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The lockdown of the country is going on much longer than anyone expected, and the almost three-month-long partial and total curfews have seriously affected the mental health of people. Therefore, the Kuwait Psychological Association (KPA) decided to provide consultation by phone for people suffering psychological problems during this tough period, and it has a rapid intervention team to face the impact of the pandemic.

"As part of our social responsibility, we formed a rapid intervention team that consists of psychological specialists and consultants. We set a plan of work that includes a free hotline for citizens and expats to provide psychological consultations related to the coronavirus by experienced psychologists who are members of KPA," Dr Asya Al-Jary, Educational Psychological Consultant and the President of KPA, told Kuwait Times yesterday.

Many people have benefited from these services. KPA provided Kuwait Times with statistics of people who have approached them through the hotline: The ages of people who availed consultation services ranged between 7 to 75 years. The total number until June 1, 2020 was 119 cases - 97 Kuwaitis and 22 expats. Based on gen-

der, they included 23 males and 96 females. In addition, 20 people from outside Kuwait also used the consultation service of KPA.

"The majority of the cases (98) were suffering from various disturbances including fear, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, depression and phobia. The rest suffered from other problems," stressed Jary.

KPA volunteer consultants provided psychological guidance and support to the hotline callers. "We also provided help seekers with a special program to follow, and we continued to follow up in applying it and their improvement. We provided consultation not only for people at home, but also in hospital quarantines," she added.

Members of KPA went on field tours to follow up the latest news and events. "We are also cooperating with different institutions to provide psychological awareness during this crisis. For instance, we have produced awareness videos on this subject. In addition, we posted informative and psychological advice on social media on the coronavirus," noted Jary.

"We are cooperating with other authorities and official institutions to provide volunteer psychological consultants for those who are in home or institutional quarantine. And we are still working on new ideas to face the

coronavirus," she concluded.

Doctors are available on the hotline as follows:

Dr Rashed Al-Sahl on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Tel no. 97976168

Dr Kadhem Abul on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Tel no. 90904807

Dr Fahd Al-Tasha daily from 8:00 pm to 12:00 am. Tel no. 99048258

Dr Othman Al-Asfour daily from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm - 99385350

Dr Mariam Al-Marzouqi on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm; Sundays and Tuesdays from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm - 99673233

Dr Mohammed Al-Khaldi daily from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. Tel no. 99036470 (head of the team)

Dr Ahmad Al-Khaldi daily from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm - 99107965

Dr Muneera Al-Qattan on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm - 99533108

Dr Zainab Al-Saffar on Sundays and Thursdays from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm - 99549908

Dr Sameera Al-Kandari on Tuesdays from 9:00 pm to 12:00 am - 67709434

Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout on Mondays and Wednesdays from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm - 55210088

For information and complaints: 94014283/99036470



Dr Asya Al-Jary



Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah headed Kuwait's delegation in the High-Level pledging online event to support the humanitarian situation in Yemen. Sheikh Ahmad, during a delivered speech, reaffirmed Kuwait's continued support to the Yemeni people and for all efforts aimed at reaching a solution conducive to a lasting peace for the crisis in Yemen.

Rabaa's reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's full support for the Yemeni people, and urged the UN and donor countries to commit to their pledges. Saudi Arabia is happy to host the first virtual pledging conference with this large number of participants, which included countries, UN agencies, international organizations and NGOs, said Rabaa, also an Advisor at the Saudi Royal Court. He said pledges this year fell short of last year's pledges because of humanitarian and economic ramifications of the coronavirus pandemic. He said participants agreed on importance of reaching a political solution for the conflict in Yemen, which was also battling

Speaker participates in int'l meeting

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem participated through a video conference on Tuesday in the fifth preparatory committee for the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, set to be held next August in Vienna. Ghanem's participation in the meeting comes as a representative of the Arab countries in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, where he previously participated in the past three meetings in Geneva and the last online meeting two weeks ago.

During the meeting, Ghanem discussed several points related to the position of the Arab region group of a variety of issues including climate change, refugee and demographic changes in the world countries, in addition to discussing the developments of the novel coronavirus. Parliamentarians from more than 14 countries representing the geopolitical



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

groups in the world participated in the meeting, in addition to the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Gabriela Cuevas Baron and the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Martin Chung Gong. — KUNA

Donors pledge \$1.35 billion for Yemen: UN

JEDDAH: Donors in a virtual International Yemen Pledging Conference on Tuesday committed \$1.35 billion for the conflict-ridden Arab country, an UN official said. Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, at a joint online news conference with Supervisor of King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center Dr Abdullah Al-Rabaa, said the UN continued to support the Yemeni people. Lowcock commended Saudi Arabia for hosting the conference and its \$500 pledge for the Yemeni people. Saudi Arabia will direct \$300 million for UN agencies in Yemen and \$200 million for humanitarian assistance.

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 28,649 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Tuesday, in addition to 226 deaths. With the exception of 187 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, 15,750 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 12,637 people receiving treatment and 23 quarantined.

Curfew

Kuwait imposed a three-week partial curfew starting May 31, 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 first phase also includes a total lockdown on Farwaniya, Khaitan, Hawally andp, joining Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh which were put under lockdown earlier.

Activities to resume in first phase included home deliveries of restaurants, telecommunication companies, food retailers, companies' transportation of employees, gas stations, private clinics and car workshops. The second phase will see the curfew shortened to be between 9:00 pm and 6:00 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, malls opening for eight hours and according to special instructions, parks and pickups from restaurants.

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.

Earlier, Kuwait imposed a total curfew from May 10 to May 30, allowing room for people to walk out for daily exercise between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and to shop at co-ops and supermarkets once every six days

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

Precautions

Kuwait halted all commercial flights until further notice, and has sent special flights to repatriate Kuwaitis back home from countries affected with the virus' spread. Kuwait took all measures to test Kuwaitis repatriated from infected areas for potential infection. Kuwait had required all expatriates who arrived from travel on March 1 and beyond to visit Kuwait International Fairground where the Ministry of Health has set up a center to test people for possible infection. Meanwhile, the Cabinet announced on April 9 the operation of all airline flights for expats who are wishing to return back to their countries. Authorities also announced a public holiday in the country from March 12 to May 28, with work resuming on May 31, while entities providing vital services will remain open. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes for March at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs): first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages. State departments have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facial masks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain accessible to

the public.

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

Hotlines

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

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

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

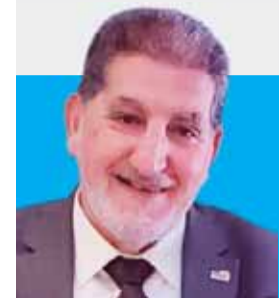
Medicine delivery

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

Amiri Hospital: 50880699
Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital: 50880755
Farwaniya Hospital: 50880852
Adan Hospital: 50880908
Jahra Hospital: 50881066

In My View

A cigarette's ingredients



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

Almost all smokers that I met through the course of my practical life indicated that they wanted to quit, yet many failed to do so. I personally worked with some doctors who worked in anti-smoking clinics in Kuwait, and I met some smokers who were addicted to nicotine and seemed to be willing to stop - but only seemed to.

Nicotine replacement products were being promoted in order to help smokers in their quest to free themselves from this obnoxious habit, but this was partially successful and highly dangerous, because they caused high blood pressure as nicotine levels in the body increased because smokers also kept lighting up.

If we study the ingredients of a cigarette, which I do not hesitate to call a "death stick", one would drop it in a blink. This paper contains no less than 400 significant substances and much worse, produces more than 7,000 chemicals - around 100 of these chemicals are known to cause cancer and other ailments that can be avoided. These chemicals are also found in consumer products, but at least the products have labels warning about the chemicals. But in cigarettes, they are not even mentioned.

Some other chemicals include acetone - I am sure that many people know it is found in nail polish removers. Acetic acid - found in hair dye. Ammonia - a popular household cleaner. Arsenic - a potent poison used to fight rats and mice. Benzene - found in gasoline. Butane - used in lighter fluid. Cadmium - found in batteries as an active ingredient in the acid. Carbon monoxide - produced by motor vehicles and released through the exhaust. Formaldehyde - found in laboratories to preserve animals for educational purposes and used as an embalming fluid.

Hexamine - this chemical is in barbecue lighter fluid. Lead - a metal that is highly dangerous for the blood and used in batteries. Naphthalene - found in mothballs. Methanol - the main component in rocket fuel. Our famous nicotine is used in insecticides. Tar is used in road paving mix. Toluene is used in paint.

I am sure no sane person is willing to ingest any of them in their natural form - yet when they are rolled in a small piece of paper, they become a favorite! I will leave it to you to take your first step towards a good life. Please be good to yourself and to your loved ones.

Final word: "Rather than you smoking a cigarette, the cigarette is really smoking you." — Anthony Liccione

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

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

Mental health assistance

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

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

The Big THANK YOU



The Big Thank You

We extend our deepest gratitude and recognition to everyone working on the front line in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic and who are standing strong to safeguard the health of citizens and residents in Kuwait.

Jazeera Airways is honoured to follow the directive of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah - may God protect him - to the government to reward our fellow front line workers for their efforts in prioritising the safety of our people in the fight against the pandemic. We are offering these front liners 50,000 free round trip flight tickets to any destination on the Jazeera network. The tickets will be distributed to front liners as seen fit by our esteemed Government.

May God protect Kuwait and its people under the leadership of His Highness the Amir and his loyal Crown Prince.

For more details, please visit our website : jazeeraairways.com

This ad was generously donated by the Kuwait Times.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Shoppers headed to the main fish market in Sharq after it was re-opened following the end of the total curfew in Kuwait. Shoppers are required to make appointment on www.moci.shop to visit the fish market. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Glucophage in Kuwait safe, not manufactured in US: Endocrinologist

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The news in US media about the withdrawal of Glucophage medicine manufactured by five US companies does not apply to Glucophage available in Kuwait, a Kuwaiti doctor said, noting that Kuwait does not import the medicine produced by said US companies.

"The Glucophage available in Kuwait is safe and manufactured by the medicine's main producer under the name Glucophage and Glucophage XR", said Endocrinologist Walid Al-Dhahi, President of the Kuwait Diabetes Society, Head of the Diabetes Unit at Mubarak Hospital and Director of the Endocrinology Program. "Its active ingredient is original and its sources are France and Spain. There is no proof that this ingredient contains any material that may endanger human life."

Dhahi added the news in the US media are related to N-nitrosodimethylamine, which is known to be a carcinogen in large quantities during laboratory trials on animals. He said this substance is found in very small quantities that do not constitute any danger in many things around us such water and food including meat,

dairy products, vegetables and manufactured products including medicines. He said the American Food and Drug Association (FDA) said the allowed daily quantity is 96 nano grams.

Dhahi said the US FDA and European Drugs Agency said it is important for the patient not to stop taking the medicine because it benefits overweight harms, adding that Glucophage is available since the 1950s and has many benefits for the body.

Meanwhile head of Endocrinology unit at Jahra Hospital Dr Sameer Al-Shimmari said patients of diabetes, blood pressure and other chronic diseases are more prone to COVID-19 disease than others. He said in a press release that COVID-19 is more dangerous to those suffering from other chronic diseases, pregnant women and the elderly who suffer from weak immunity.



Walid Al-Dhahi

Kuwaiti wins WHO anti-smoking award

KUWAIT: Secretary-General of Kuwait Society for Preventing Smoking and Cancer Anwar Borahma has won a World Health Organization (WHO) award in recognition of his anti-smoking efforts. Borahma was among the WHO's no-tobacco award winners of Eastern Mediterranean Region for 2020. Every year, WHO recognizes individuals or organizations in each of the six WHO Regions for their accomplishments in the area of tobacco control. This recognition takes the form of WHO Director-General Special Recognition Award

and World No Tobacco Day Awards.

Speaking on the WHO's prize, Dr Amal Al-Yehia, the rapporteur of the Health Ministry's National Anti-Smoking Program, commended Borahma's win of the WHO prize as a source of joyfulness and pride. "We are proud of Borahma's award. Yet, we stress all efforts to protect health and combat smoking in all forms and manifestations," she said. As a member of the antismoking committee, he has been spearheading great efforts since 1989 to raise public awareness of the hazards of smoking in Kuwait. Yehia pointed out. Kuwait Society for Preventing Smoking and Cancer promotes awareness of the dangers of smoking tobacco to protect all citizens, especially children and the elderly, from this scourge. —KUNA

Commerce Ministry penalizes 13 law breaking shops

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Commerce and Industry said yesterday that its inspection teams had filed reports against 13 shops and shut down four others for breaking law and guidelines put in place to

curb the fallout of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Personnel of the ministry's trade control and consumers' protection sector had monitored a total of 143 cooperative societies, shopping centers, shops and vegetable stands to ensure set prices remain steady, the ministry said in a statement. It added that its teams had also inspected 79 supply stores and reopened a single shop. Its emergency center had received 102 complaints through hotline (135) and 10 others via its control centers, while 40 supply cards were issued or renewed. —KUNA

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Local

Early re-opening brings relief for people in need to send money home

Remittance offices receive customers under strict health rules



KUWAIT: People queue outside money exchange offices and bank branches in Kuwait on Tuesday. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: After almost a month of closure due to the coronavirus, banks and remittance offices all over Kuwait have reopened with queues of customers. "We shall be strictly implementing the rules set by the ministry to maintain social distancing. [Customers] cannot transact with us without a face-mask," a remittance office manager said in Salmiya.

Customers were delighted by the Cabinet decision Monday to reopen financial service providers early including banks and money remittance offices, which were initially set to be operational by June 21.

"The decision to reopen was probably influenced by local banks because of the high demand from clients. Besides, they need to decide on the matter because some businesses are open, while the most important sector is closed. If some businesses are open, banks and financial institutions must be open too," a bank manager told Kuwait Times on the condition of anonymity.

Some Filipinos in the queues were happy that banks and remittance offices were allowed to open earlier than planned. "My family is waiting for my remittance since April, but they closed the offices

during the full lockdown, and during that time my salary wasn't in my bank, so I was not able to send money. If they had waited to open on June 21, it's already too late. I was very worried about that, so I thank Kuwait for reopening remittance offices early," said Jose, who was in a queue at a remittance center in Salmiya's old souq.

He said he could not send money through online apps because his remittance office, through which he sends money, doesn't offer online services. "If I move to another remittance center, they will need all my documents and I will need to be at the branch. First time transaction online is not allowed without necessary documents and registration, and they couldn't do this because remittance services were

closed," he said.

Another remittance customer in the queue yesterday said she urgently needed to send money home. "My family badly needs the cash. We are also under lockdown in the Philippines, but a member of a family can go to the market. They ran out of money and borrowed from our neighbor. At least this money will help them repay the amount and the remaining will help them until the end of the month," she said.



High demand likely pushed decision



ICRC briefed on Kuwait prisoners' conditions



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: An International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation visited the sector of correctional institutions and law enforcement at Kuwait's Interior Ministry on Tuesday. During the visit, the visitors were briefed on the conditions of prisoners in general, in addition to health services and rehabilitative programs provided to inmates, along with preventive and precautionary measures being taken to curb the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the Interior

Ministry's Relations and Security Media said in a statement. The delegation commended Kuwait's correctional, rehabilitative, health and psychological programs for inmates, the statement reads. Meanwhile, the ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Correctional Institutions Maj Gen Talal Marafie stressed that his ministry spares no effort in offering necessary human and health services to prisoners. He pointed out a strict plan to put the health situation in the Central Prison under control amid the current circumstances, according to the statement.



KUWAIT: Police man a checkpoint at a Hawally exit as volunteers distributed gifts to drivers passing by. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

News in brief

Shopping allowed outside areas

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced that people in Kuwait can now book appointments to shop at any central market or vegetable market located outside their areas of residence through their website www.moci.shop.

Staff test positive

KUWAIT: Abdullah Al-Mubarak Co-op Society announced that 22 of its employees tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). All co-op branches will be closed until further notice, it added.

Seven flights

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced that seven flights departed Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying a total of 1,294 passengers. They included three flights to India, one flight to Egypt, one flight to Qatar, one flight to Iran, and one to the Philippines.

Oil price up

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by 89 cents to \$33.89 per barrel (pb) on Tuesday, compared with \$33.01 a day earlier, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Globally, the price of Brent crude on Tuesday closed up by \$1.25 or 3.3 percent to \$39.57 pb, while the West Texas Intermediate jumped by \$1.37 or 3.9 percent to \$36.81 pb. —KUNA



Nearly 200 workers killed on India roads

Indian app highlights backlash against Chinese business

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NUEVA ESPERANZA: A worker digs the grave to bury the coffin of a suspected COVID-19 victim at the Nueva Esperanza cemetery, one of the largest in Latin America, in the southern outskirts of Lima. — AFP

Brazil death toll tops 30,000

Coronavirus kills 20 journalists in Peru

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil surpassed 30,000 deaths from the coronavirus outbreak as the disease continued to rip through Latin America, while Italy - at one point the hardest-hit country - prepared to reopen its borders in time for the European summer. After chalking up devastating human losses in Europe, the virus has now taken a firm grip in Latin America, where Brazil surpassed a chilling landmark late Tuesday.

The latest official COVID-19 death toll of 31,199 is the fourth-highest in the world, after the US, Britain and Italy. The figures come as some Brazilian states began to emerge from weeks of economically-stifling quarantine measures despite warnings from the WHO and epidemiologists it is too much, too soon. "In the current situation, relaxing the measures is adding gasoline to the fire," Rafael Galliez, an infectious diseases expert at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, told AFP.

Surf's up again in Rio

Yet surfers and swimmers streamed back to the beach in Rio de Janeiro as the city started easing lockdown measures, allowing the reopening of places of worship and water sports. "I think that here, in the water, there is no risk. It's not like in the stores," said Cesar Calmon as he delighted in the waves off Ipanema beach. In Europe, most countries have flattened their initial infection curves and are gradually

easing out of confinement as they try to curb the economic fallout of the shutdowns.

Italy reopens its borders to travellers from Europe Wednesday, three months after the country went into lockdown, with hopes for economic revival pinned on reigniting its tourism industry. But there were fears many foreign tourists will be put off visiting a country where 33,000 people died of the disease.



Italy reopens its borders

"Come to Calabria. There's only one risk: that you'll get fat," the southern region's governor Jole Santelli said as the race began to lure big-spenders - or any spenders - back to Italy's sandy shores.

Symbolic victory

In a symbolic victory in the French capital, Parisians reclaimed beloved cafe terraces that were

allowed to sprawl across pavements to accommodate social distancing measures. "Coffee on a terrace, that's Paris!" said Martine Depagniat, among those enjoying the new freedom after 10 weeks of closures.

Schools, swimming pools, pubs and tourist sites are steadily reopening across the continent to ease the economic pain, and stock markets rose on European optimism, despite fears of a second wave of infections. Greece suspended flights to and from Qatar on Tuesday after detecting multiple infections on a flight from Doha to Athens. The respiratory disease has claimed nearly 400,000 lives and infected more than 6.2 million in its rampage around the globe, upending life for billions since it first emerged in China late last year. The focus now falls on Latin America, which passed one million cases this week.

Brazil has more than half of that caseload - 555,383 - making it the second most affected country after the United States, where experts fear mass demonstrations over the police killing of African American George Floyd could reignite the spread of COVID-19. The World Health Organization has warned that healthcare systems could soon be overwhelmed with Peru, Chile and Mexico also seeing big daily increases in infections. Mexico has also started rebooting the economy after more than two months of shutdown, allowing activity in the car, mining and construction industries to resume.

Journalists die

In Venezuela the virus forced political rivals to come together, with the government of Nicolas Maduro striking a deal with opposition leader Juan Guaido, who claims the presidency, to seek resources to address the disease's spread, all parties confirmed Tuesday. Meanwhile at least 20 journalists have died from the coronavirus outbreak in Peru, most of them infected while reporting on the pandemic, often with little protection, the country's journalists' union said. Peru is Latin America's second worst-hit country after Brazil with more than 170,000 cases and 4,600 deaths. "As of June 1, the number of dead colleagues is 20 in all of the country," said Zuliana Lainez of the National Association of Journalists.

Many of them contracted the disease while reporting from streets, markets and hospitals on the effects of the virus, without proper protective equipment, Lainez said. "They have gone to hospitals, which are foci of infection, with homemade masks," she said. Back where it all began in Wuhan, the Chinese city where the virus first emerged in December, officials touted another success after finding only 300 positive cases after testing nearly 10 million people over the past two weeks. "These numbers show that Wuhan is now the safest city," said Feng Zijian, deputy director of China's national Center for Disease Control and Prevention. — AFP

Clashes at Paris protest against racism, police

PARIS: Clashes broke out between police and protesters in Paris on Tuesday after around 20,000 people defied a ban to rally over the 2016 death of a black man in police custody, galvanized by US demonstrations against racism and deadly police violence. The protesters used slogans from the American protest movement to call for justice for Adama Traore, whose death four years ago has been a rallying cause against police brutality in France. The demonstration, which came after the release of two differing medical reports into the cause of Traore's death, had been prohibited by police citing a coronavirus ban on gatherings of more than 10 people.

The protest started in the late afternoon outside the court in northern Paris, before projectiles were thrown and the police used tear gas to disperse the crowd, AFP journalists witnessed. Sporadic clashes broke out near the city's main ring road, with stones thrown at the police, who responded by firing rubber bullets. Some protesters burned bins, bicycles and scooters to set up flaming barricades on the streets. Interior Minister Christophe Castaner responded by saying that "violence has no place in a democracy". "Nothing justifies the behaviour that took place in Paris this evening, when protests on public streets are banned to protect everyone's health," he tweeted.

Many of the protesters drew inspiration from the protest movement raging across the United States over the police killing last week of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, holding up slogans in English such as "Black Lives Matter" and "I can't breathe". Earlier in the day Traore's elder sister Assa spoke to the large crowd. "Today we are not just talking about the fight of the Traore family. It is the fight for



PARIS: Protesters jump over the gates of the Martin Luther King park, northwest of Paris, to escape tear gas as they demonstrate near Paris courthouse against police violence. — AFP

everyone. When we fight for George Floyd, we fight for Adama Traore," she said. "What is happening in the United States is an echo of what is happening in France." Other protests were held across France, with 2,500 people attending a rally in the northern city of Lille, 1,800 in Marseille, and 1,200 in Lyon.

Medical reports

The Traore case has long been controversial in France. Following a dispute over an identity check, Traore, 24, was apprehended in a house where he hid after leading police on a 15-minute chase in 2016. One of the three arresting officers has told investigators that they pinned Traore down with their combined bodyweight.

Traore lost consciousness in their vehicle and died at a nearby police station. He was still handcuffed when paramedics arrived. On Friday, French medical experts exonerated the three police officers, saying that Traore did not die of "positional suffo-

cation", ruling out the officers pinning him to the ground as the cause of his death. Instead, the experts found Traore died of heart failure possibly brought on by underlying health conditions in a context of "intense stress" and physical exertion, as well as the presence of tetrahydrocannabinol - the active ingredient of cannabis - in his body.

The findings, the third official report to clear the officers, dismissed a previous medical report commissioned by the young man's family that said he had died of asphyxiation. But on Tuesday a new probe commissioned by the Traore family said that his death was caused by the arrest technique used by the officers. The contradictory medical reports also echoes the case of George Floyd, whose preliminary autopsy said he died from pre-existing heart problems, while an autopsy arranged by his family found he died of asphyxiation from sustained pressure. Floyd's official autopsy then confirmed he died in a homicide involving "neck compression". — AFP

S Korea approves remdesivir for virus patients

SEOUL: South Korea yesterday issued an emergency authorization for the anti-viral drug remdesivir to be used to treat coronavirus patients, paving the way for imports. The US authorized the emergency use of remdesivir in hospitals at the start of May, followed by Japan, while Europe has been considering following suit. A South Korean government review of remdesivir research said it had proven "clinically meaningful" in cutting patients' recovery times, the food and drug safety ministry said. It will work with manufacturer Gilead Sciences to expedite the first shipment of imports, it added, without offering further details of pricing or quantities.

South Korea endured one of the worst early outbreaks of COVID-19 outside China but brought it under control with a wide-spread "trace, test and treat" program, with citizens largely following government safety guidelines such as wearing face masks. It has so far reported 11,590 confirmed cases and 273 deaths from the outbreak. More than 800 patients are still under treatment or observation. A study on over 1,000 patients in 10 countries by the US' Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases found that remdesivir, injected intravenously daily for 10 days, accelerated the recovery of hospitalised patients compared to a placebo. — AFP

International

'Endemic racial discrimination' exposed in US: UN rights chief

Protesters risk COVID' for 'health of the nation'

GENEVA: The coronavirus pandemic's disproportionate impact on ethnic minorities, and protests triggered by George Floyd's death, have laid bare "endemic inequalities" in the United States, the UN rights chief said Tuesday, urging action. Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, warned that the COVID-19 crisis has had a worse impact on racial and ethnic minorities in the United States and a range of other countries.

"This virus is exposing endemic inequalities that have too long been ignored," she said in a statement. Similar inequalities were also fuelling the widespread protests over the police killing in Minneapolis last week of Floyd, an unarmed black man. "In the United States, protests triggered by the killing of George Floyd are highlighting not only police violence against people of color, but also inequalities in health, education, employment and endemic racial discrimination," Bachelet said.

Floyd was killed when a white police officer knelt on his neck, and video images of his killing have sparked demonstrations in hundreds of US cities against police brutality and racism. It has been the most widespread unrest in the United States since 1968, when cities went up in flames over the slaying of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Bachelet meanwhile stressed that entrenched racial discrimination is taking a heavy health toll during the pandemic, which has killed more than 375,000 people out of nearly 6.3 million infected worldwide.

In the United States, which is the worst-hit country with over 105,000 deaths, she noted that the virus

death rate for African Americans is reported to be more than double that of other racial groups. Her statement also highlighted the situation in Britain, where government data for England and Wales shows a death rate for blacks, ethnic Pakistanis and Bangladeshis that is nearly double that of whites. And she pointed to Brazil, where people of colour in Sao Paulo are 62 percent more likely to die from the virus than whites, and in France's heavily minority-inhabited Seine Saint-Denis suburb of Paris, which has reported higher excess mortality figures than other areas.

'Urgent steps needed'

"The appalling impact of COVID-19 on racial and ethnic minorities is much discussed, but what is less clear is how much is being done to address it,"

Bachelet said. "Urgent steps need to be taken by states, such as prioritising health monitoring and testing, increasing access to healthcare, and providing targeted information for these communities."

She said the disparities likely resulted from a range of factors linked to marginalization, discrimination and access to healthcare, along with economic inequalities, overcrowded housing and environmental risks. People from racial and ethnic minorities are also more likely to have jobs that require them to leave their home, like the transport, health and cleaning sectors, raising the risk of infection. "It is a tragedy that it took COVID-19 to expose what should have been obvious - that unequal access to healthcare, overcrowded housing and pervasive discrimination make our societies less stable, secure and prosperous," Bachelet said.

Inequalities fuel protests



CALIFORNIA: Protesters march through Hollywood during a demonstration over the death of George Floyd while in Minneapolis Police custody, in Los Angeles. — AFP

'Health of the nation'

Thousands of people protesting at close quarters, shouting demands and coughing violently when hit by tear gas: experts fear demonstrations roiling the US could reignite the spread of the coronavirus. But, stress clinicians and researchers, racialized police violence itself remains a grave and neglected public health crisis for African Americans, threatening not just their lives but raising the risk of stress-related diseases from heart failure to cancer.

It has been just over a week since George Floyd, an African American man, died after a white police officer knelt on his neck for several minutes, sparking a wave of protests across the country against institutional racism. For Ebony Hilton, a physician at the University of Virginia hospital who is herself black, the issue highlights what she calls the threat of the

two pandemics: COVID-19, and police brutality. "We are expecting to see a spike (in coronavirus cases) because there's no social distancing and unfortunately most people wear their masks incorrectly," she told AFP.

Law enforcement agencies have routinely fired tear-inducing pepper spray and tear gas, a nerve agent that causes intense burning, in order to disperse crowds. On Monday, for example, federal police hit peaceful activists in Lafayette Park outside the White House with rubber bullets and tear gas in order to let President Donald Trump get a photo-op at a historic church that had suffered damage the night before. "The pepper spraying and resulting coughing/gagging also heightens risk," said Hilton. "Additionally, COVID can be spread via droplets on eyes and many aren't wearing goggles." — Agencies

As protests rage, a tale of two leaders: Biden and Trump

WASHINGTON: The nationwide US protests for racial justice are giving Joe Biden, sidelined for over two months by the coronavirus pandemic, the opportunity to reclaim the spotlight and display a contrasting leadership style to that of his November election opponent President Donald Trump. "This is very much a tale of two types of leadership skills," said Capri Cafaro, an executive in residence at American University in Washington. "What strength looks like to these two men is very different."

"Trump tries to position himself as making leadership synonymous with strength and strength synonymous in this context with the use of military force," said Cafaro, the former Democratic minority leader of the Ohio Senate. For former vice president Biden, "leadership and strength are more synonymous with 'soft power,' if you will - collaboration, listening, engagement,"

Cafaro said.

Hakeem Jefferson, an assistant professor of political science at Stanford University, said issues of race and justice were always going to be prominent in the campaign even without the protests sparked by last week's death of George Floyd, the black man killed by a white police officer in Minnesota, and the crackdown ordered by Trump. "This is a function of having an incumbent president, Donald Trump, who came to power stoking racial fears, inciting and giving comfort to racial violence," Jefferson said.

Biden, in his first major public speech since going into isolation in mid-March because of the virus outbreak, called Floyd's death a "wake-up call for our nation" and accused Trump of turning the US into a "battlefield riven by old resentments and fresh fears." The 77-year-old Biden, who served as deputy for eight years to America's first black president, Barack Obama, pledged to tackle "systemic racism" if elected to the White House. "The country is crying out for leadership," he said. "Leadership that can unite us. Leadership that can bring us together."

'Law & Order'

Trump responded to Biden's re-



PHILADELPHIA: A man uses his phone to record former vice president and Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden as he speaks about the unrest across the country from Philadelphia City Hall. — AFP

marks with a bellicose tweet. "Weakness will never beat anarchists, looters or thugs, and Joe has been politically weak all of his life," the Republican president said. "LAW & ORDER." Cafaro said the protests may have a greater impact on the election than the pandemic in that they provide Biden with the chance to "starkly contrast himself, his experience, his leadership and, his empathy with that we've seen thus far from Donald Trump."

At the end of the day, however, she

said the recent events were unlikely to have much impact on hardcore supporters on either side. "The base on the left and the right - Trump's base and the Democratic base - I don't think there's a lot of moving," she said. "But there are a lot of independents on both the center left and the center right who are watching this as a flashpoint in our history, where you have the overlay of a pandemic, historically high unemployment and racial upheaval," she said. — AFP

Tents and razor wire: Cyprus struggles with migrant influx

KOKKINOTRIMITHIA: In the thick of the coronavirus lockdown in Cyprus, authorities gave a group of asylum seekers a stark choice: move to an overcrowded camp or go home. The Mediterranean island deemed it a necessary step to save money - the tiny country of just one million people now has Europe's highest per capita rate of asylum applications.

For the migrants, it was tough, said one Nigerian, who now lives in a cluster of UN tents and prefabricated huts surrounded by razor wire, a facility built for 200 people that now houses some 800. He was one of the dozens of asylum seekers who had initially been housed at hotel apartments in the coastal resort of Ayia Napa, which was otherwise deserted because of the pandemic. One day, he says, they were told: "Either you get on the bus or you sign a paper saying that you want to go back to your country." "It was so fast, nobody had time to decide," he said. "Everything was in a rush, we didn't have time to read the paper."

The Nigerian man, who asked not to be named, is now among the hundreds living in the Pournara camp in Kokkinotrimithia near the capital Nicosia, where a May heatwave saw temperatures soar to 43 degrees centigrade (109 Fahrenheit). The move angered rights groups such as the Cyprus Refugee Council, which said migrants face "very difficult conditions" in the "closed, overcrowded and tented camp... without clear information as to when they will be allowed to leave". But Cyprus says it can no longer afford the 19-million-euro (\$21-million) annual bill to house migrants in hotels and is asking for European Union help as the influx shows no sign of abating.

Divided island

Interior Minister Nikos Nouris told AFP that for



KOKKINOTRIMITHIA: In this file photo, Syrian refugee Ammar Hammasho, greets his children from which he was separated due to the conflict, as they are reunited at the Kokkinotrimithia refugee camp, some 20 kilometres outside the Cypriot capital Nicosia. — AFP

many migrants, the alternative to camps is unsafe city accommodation run by unscrupulous landlords. Nouris wants to accelerate asylum procedures and repatriations, insisting that "we have a huge volume of migrants, and 75 percent are not refugees". The EU says that in spring 2019, Cyprus was receiving three times as many asylum applications per month, adjusted for population, as Greece.

The influx is in part due to the troubled history of Cyprus, the easternmost member of the EU which lies just 80 kilometers (50 miles) from the Turkish coast, and has been divided since a military conflict in 1974. The Republic of Cyprus controls the south while a breakaway Turkish-backed entity controls the northern third and is recognized only by Ankara. In recent years, northern Cyprus has become a gateway for growing numbers of migrants who arrive by boat. Many, like the Nigerian man, then slip across the 184-kilometre UN-controlled buffer zone, even as it officially remains closed under coronavirus restrictions.

Tough message

Since the migrant "Balkans route" from Turkey to central Europe was blocked in 2015, asylum applications in Cyprus have soared - from 2,253 that year to 13,648 in 2019, the interior ministry says. While many hail from countries rocked by conflict and ethnic strife - particularly Syria and Cameroon - the ministry says that Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi applicants far outnumbered those fleeing war zones so far this year. Nouris insisted that "yes, we are very willing to host refugees. But we can no longer host in this country, in these numbers, all the economic migrants". Since the Nigerian man was transferred to the camp on orders from Nouris's office, he has been unable to leave. Despite eased coronavirus restrictions, migrants remain detained there under a health ministry order citing a scabies outbreak in the camp. Doros Polycarpou of migrants' rights group KISA said moving people to camps with no chance to appeal was "a serious violation" of existing rules. — AFP

White House race becomes a digital dogfight

WASHINGTON: The 2020 US presidential race is becoming a digital-first campaign as the coronavirus pandemic cuts candidates off from traditional organizing and in-person events. On the surface, President Donald Trump has the edge over Democrat Joe Biden because of the incumbent's extensive digital infrastructure and large social media following.

But Biden has been stepping up his digital presence and is getting a boost from a handful of outside organizations seeking to counter Trump's messaging on social platforms. Both sides agree that digital will play a critical role in the 2020 White House race as social media have taken the place of rallies and door-to-door campaigning. "The digital campaign has always been important. What has changed now is that it's the only show in town," said Republican digital strategist Eric Wilson, who has no direct role in the Trump campaign.

Wilson said the Trump campaign's experience since 2016 means it has a head start while Biden has been slow to embrace a digital strategy. "Voters are consuming politics as entertainment and Biden doesn't seem to grasp his role as a social media influencer and doesn't see any interest in changing that," Wilson said. Trump has some 81 million Twitter followers compared with 5.8 million for Biden, and similar advantages on Facebook and other platforms. But Biden and an array of progressive organizations have been working to flood the internet with messages to neutralize Trump and his supporters.

'Air cover' for Biden

Digital advertising for the 2020 election is expected to reach \$1.8 billion, according to research firm Advertising Analytics, which boosted its estimates by 13.5 percent due to the pandemic. The progressive policy group Acronym and its political action committee Pacronym have pledged a \$75 million digital campaign to bring out voters for Biden. "Since last August we started to counter what we knew would be a sophisticated digital operation by President Trump," said Acronym founder Tara McGowan. "We wanted to provide air cover for whoever the Democratic nominee would be since we knew the nominee would have a time and resources deficit." Research by the group found a 3.6 percentage point drop in Trump's approval rating among "persuadable voters" who have seen Pacronym's digital ads.

Acronym's analysis of online ad spending showed Trump has spent over \$62 million on Facebook and Google advertising since the 2018 midterm elections, compared with \$21.9 million for Biden. But the analysis showed Biden and progressive groups began outspending Trump and his backers in early May on Facebook, and narrowed the gap on Google. "I don't think the candidates themselves need to be as comfortable on social media as much as they need to hire experienced digital staffers," McGowan said. "We've seen the Biden campaign make leaps and bounds in their digital strategy." — AFP

International

Nearly 200 workers killed on India roads during lockdown

India's coronavirus cases cross 200,000

NEW DELHI: Nearly 200 migrant workers died in road accidents in India while returning to their village homes during the world's longest coronavirus lockdown, a charity said on Tuesday. Tens of thousands of people walked home from India's big cities after losing their jobs when one of the world's strictest lockdowns was introduced and all public transport was suspended to contain the spread of the new coronavirus in late March. More than 1,400 road accidents killed 750 people, including 198 migrant workers, between March 25 and May 31, according to the SaveLIFE Foundation, a charity that works towards improving road safety and emergency care in India.

The migrants lost their lives while walking, cycling and travelling in trucks and vans in intense heat, as well as in massive crashes involving state-organized buses, it said, blaming speeding and driver fatigue. India's cases of coronavirus crossed 190,000 on Monday, overtaking France to become seventh highest in the world, as the government eased back on a two-month lockdown on 1.3 billion people in all but high-risk zones. "With COVID-19 still very much around, we simply can't afford to burden our already over-burdened healthcare system with road crash related trauma," Piyush Tewari, head of the SaveLIFE Foundation, said in a statement. "It is critical that states enhance enforcement to prevent road crashes."

A speeding bus ran over and killed six migrant workers as they walked home last month, days after a train crushed 16 migrants who fell asleep on a railway line, sparking anger on social media. After weeks of criticism and stories of hardship - including that of a 15-year-old girl who carried her injured father

2,100 km across India by bike - the government is now running trains and buses to help people get home. Thousands of migrants packed into trains that resumed services across the country on Monday, raising fears about the pandemic spreading through villages as new infections are increasing. The SaveLIFE Foundation said almost half of road accident fatalities - involving 94 migrant workers - took place in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, which is home to millions of migrants, followed by central Madhya Pradesh and eastern Bihar.

Meanwhile, India's coronavirus infections crossed 200,000, official figures showed yesterday, and a peak could still be weeks away in the world's second-most populous country, where the economy has begun reopening after a lockdown imposed in March. Cases jumped by 8,909 over the previous day in one of the highest single-day spikes, taking the tally to 207,615, the health ministry said. "We are very far away from the peak," said Dr Nivedita Gupta, of the government-run Indian Council of Medical Research. Government officials have previously said it could be later this month, or even July, before cases start to fall off.

The death toll from the disease stood at 5,815. Six other nations, including the United States, Britain and Brazil, have higher case loads, and in India's favor, at least its mortality rate has been comparably low. But, India's infections are rising as it ends a severe lockdown of its 1.3 billion people imposed in March. The lockdown has crippled the economy and left tens of thousands without work. As train and bus services open, migrant workers are travelling home from the coronavirus hot spots of Mumbai and Delhi to the hinterland where infec-



MAHARASHTRA: Migrant labourers and their family members from Maharashtra hold kitchen utensils as they protest against the government for the lack of food in a slum area. — AFP

tions are starting to rise, health officials say.

These included states such as Bihar, Odisha and Uttarakhand which traditionally supply the bulk of migrant workers. Still, Gupta said relative to its large population, India had done well in tackling the disease. "Our preventive measures have been very effective. We are in a much better position vis-a-vis other countries," she said. Officials say the lock-

down helped limit the spread of the virus, giving space to hospitals to deal with those affected. India's fatality rate of 2.82% against the global average of 6.13% was among the lowest in the world. Lav Agarwal, joint secretary in the health ministry, said. "We have been able to achieve this due to timely identification of cases and proper clinical management," he said. — Agencies

India app highlights backlash against Chinese business

NEW DELHI: India's top trending free app on Google's mobile app store, with more than 5 million downloads since late May, is called "Remove China Apps" and does exactly what it says on the label. Its popularity comes amid calls for a boycott of Chinese mobile apps in India as a Himalayan border dispute fuels a backlash against products from China. Popular Indian yoga guru Baba Ramdev posted a video on Twitter on Sunday showing the step-by-step deletion of several Chinese apps, a move he described as a "national service".

Chinese companies have faced occasional opposition for years in India, where some supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party advocate self-reliance. Remove China Apps, whose logo contains a dragon's head with two brooms, scans a user's phone for apps such as ByteDance's TikTok and Alibaba's UC Browser. Once deleted, a message pops up saying, "You are awesome, no China app found." One-

Touch Ap Labs, which has developed the app to remove Chinese ones, did not respond to a request for comment. The company, based in the western Indian city of Jaipur, describes the app as its first initiative toward a "self-reliant India".

ByteDance and Alibaba did not respond to Reuters requests for comment on the app. The Chinese Embassy in New Delhi did not immediately respond. The protest against Chinese apps comes after India in April said stricter screening rules will apply to foreign direct investments from China, worrying investors there. China has said the policy is discriminatory. "Previous boycott calls have focused on Chinese goods, whereas this one especially targets Chinese apps, which could impact Chinese technology companies who have seen India as a crucial market," said Tanvi Madan, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who closely tracks Indo-China relations. The stakes are high for firms like ByteDance, which plans to invest \$1 billion in India and has recently ramped up hiring.

India, which has a population of 1.3 billion, is the biggest driver of installations of ByteDance's TikTok, which Bollywood actor Milind Soman said last week on Twitter that he was no longer using. Nupur Sharma, a spokeswoman for Modi's party, said it was "great to see concerned citizens setting an example". "We ought to hit them where it hurts most,"



BEIJING: Workers clean the windows on the exterior of a high-rise building in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

Sharma said on Twitter, using the hashtag, #BoycottChineseProducts. A senior executive working for a China-based company in India, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Chinese firms were contributing to the Indian economy, especially the manufacturing sector. He predicted the protests will be short-lived: "It hurts but (the boycott calls) are going to fade." — Reuters

Indian girl's suicide sparks protest over online classes

KOCHI: Students protested in southern India on Tuesday after the suicide of a teenage girl who was unable to attend online classes because she did not have a television or smartphone. Schools have been shut across India since the country locked down its 1.3 billion people on March 25 to curb the spread of the coronavirus, leaving millions of children whose families cannot afford expensive devices with no access to education.

Among them was Devika Balakrishnan, the 14-year-old daughter of a daily wage laborer in the southern state of Kerala who was found dead near the family home on Monday, the first day of the new school term, having apparently taken her own life. Student activists in Kerala took to the streets to protest her death, which has highlighted the inequalities of the lockdown, with pupils in poor, rural areas far less likely to be able to learn online. "The government action has put the poor students under stress and pressure," said Abhijith K.M., who heads the Kerala Students Union and was among the protesters.

"It should enable the poor students to obtain computers at interest-free loans to avoid similar cases in future," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone from Kozhikode district. He said the group had organized protests in all Kerala districts, but limited the number of protesters to 50 in each place so that they could follow social distancing rules. Police said they used batons to disperse protesters in northern Malappuram district, where the victim was from. One officer was injured when about 28 students tried to enter the district education office, Malappuram superintendent of police Abdul Kareem said. India has begun easing its coronavirus lockdown, which was among the strictest in the world and left millions without work.

But schools have not yet reopened and Kerala began its academic year on Monday with classes broadcast on television and online channel for more than four million students. The protesters accused the government of doing so without checking whether all students had the means to attend them. Kerala's education minister expressed grief over the teenager's death and ordered an investigation. He said online classes were being conducted on a trial basis and that students who missed them would be given opportunities to attend again. Kerala is one of India's wealthier states and more than half its inhabitants have access to the internet, according to a 2018 report by the Internet And Mobile Association of India. It also has among the highest rates of internet use by women, the same report said. — Reuters



RAJASTHAN: A resident tries to fend off swarms of locusts from a mango tree in a residential area of Jaipur in the Indian state of Rajasthan. — AFP

Drones to disjockeys: India battles locusts

NEW DELHI: From deploying drones and fire trucks to banging utensils and blaring loud music, India is experimenting with ways to battle a new wave of locust attacks that have alarmed farmers. Millions of locusts have engulfed India's seven heartland states, including the western desert of Rajasthan, and threaten vegetable and pulse crops such as lentils and beans. "We have never ever seen what we have in the last six months in India ... never in the history," said Bhagirath Choudhary, director of the New Delhi-based South Asia Biotechnology Centre, an agriculture think-tank. Farmers salvaged their wheat and oilseed crops from a previous locust scourge that started late last year.

But the fresh swarms have arrived at a time when the government is trying to contain the spread of the coronavirus and reeling from economic fallout associated with pandemic restrictions. India's lockdown - introduced in late March - has pushed millions into hunger and poverty as they lose their livelihoods and left farmers unable to harvest, bag and move their crops because of labor shortages and logistical challenges. The country is battling its worst desert locust outbreak in decades with swarms radiating through

much of the western states of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, the central states of Madhya Pradesh and Punjab, and Haryana and Uttar Pradesh in the north. States in India's east and south have been on alert too.

The last major locust surge was in 1993, when heavy rains created favorable breeding conditions for the insects along the India-Pakistan border. Most years the winged invaders destroy crops in parts of Rajasthan close to the border but farm experts say it is rare for them to move further into the state and other non-desert areas of India. Their wider distribution this year has bewildered residents and farmers, who have resorted to rudimentary efforts to scare the pests away. Some have mounted their tractors with insecticide sprayers or banged steel pots and plates, while others have lit fireworks or played loud music on speakers in the middle of their fields. A farmer in Uttar Pradesh rolled out a mobile disc jockey system, normally used at weddings.

'Farmers crying'

Locust swarms can fly up to 150 km a day, and the adult insects can consume roughly their own weight in fresh food each day. A small swarm can eat enough food to feed 35,000 people in one day, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "Farmers are crying, they don't know what to do ... it's like a natural disaster," Choudhary told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. India's state-run Locust Warning Organization, which is responsible for locust survey and control operations, did not respond to requests for comment. — Reuters

Death of reality TV show star spotlights cyber bullying

TOKYO: The recent death of Hana Kimura, a bubbly, pink-haired 22-year-old wrestler and reality TV show star, has spotlighted a rise in cyber bullying in Japan and prompted swift official pledges to do more to protect victims. Kimura, a cast member on the popular program "Terrace House", was found dead at her home on May 23 from an apparent suicide after being deluged with negative comments on her social media feeds. Acutely aware of the public debate spurred by her death, Japan's ruling party is holding hearings from this week to consider legal changes that will help cyber bullying victims seek justice. "People must understand where the line between constructive criticism and abuse lies," Junko Mihara, a member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party who is leading the party's team on online harassment, told Reuters. Kimura's death has been a lightning bolt as many Japanese spend more time online because of coronavirus lockdown measures. Celebrities, politicians and companies have all weighed into the debate.

In a 2018 Ipsos poll, Japan ranked the highest among 28 countries saying cyber bullying prevention measures were insufficient, but among the lowest for public awareness about online abuse. Government data showed the number of reported cyber bullying cases at schools more than doubled in the four years to 2018. Yet the legal recourse for victims - a lengthy court process to impel internet service providers to identify anonymous posters before those posters can be sued - has not changed since a law was established in 2001, before Twitter or Facebook were created. Experts and victims have welcomed the political momentum to update the law. "On the internet, the balance between freedom of speech and dignity is completely skewed, with no protection in place for personal dignity," said Daisuke Tsuda, an author of several books about online media.

But Tsuda cautioned against knee-jerk regulation that could allow authorities to regulate content on social media, preferring changes to legislation that would expedite the process of identifying anonymous posters. Indonesian-Japanese Kimura was a cast member on the latest season of "Terrace House", a show produced by Japan's Fuji Television Network and distributed globally by Netflix, which put six young people in a home together and let viewers watch their daily interactions. Unlike the globally franchised "Big Brother" there's no end goal or major prize and the series became known for its gentler story lines and general lack of high drama. But some critics claim it did have a darker side, particularly via a panel of celebrity watchers who provided sometimes biting commentary on the house members.

Kimura, who was introduced as a fun-loving jokester, attracted increased negative attention online after upbraiding a housemate for ruining one of her wrestling costumes. Kimura was also attacked for her appearance, with many posts calling her ugly and a few calling her a "gorilla", an apparently racist reference to her Indonesian heritage. On May 23, she posted images of bloodied, apparently slit wrists on Twitter and wrote that she was hurt by posts telling her to "die" and "disappear". "I wanted to be loved. I'm sorry for being weak," she wrote just hours before her death. Authorities have not formally announced the cause, but police investigators reportedly found a suicide letter at her house.

Fuji TV president Ryunosuke Endo said he was sorry for not giving Kimura the "delicate and consistent" support she needed. The network has deleted several tweets linked to the current season, including one promoting the costume incident, and cancelled the rest of the current season. — Reuters

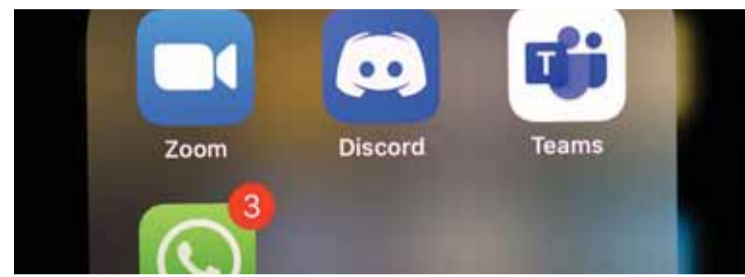
Business

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10 Gulf Bank welcomes clients back to its branches



10 Zoom earnings soar as video meets become norm



11 Post-Brexit trade talks kick off, but no breakthrough seen



MELBOURNE: A homeless man walks past a sale sign in a store window in Melbourne's central business district yesterday. Australia is heading for its first recession in nearly three decades after the economy shrunk in the January-March quarter.— AFP

Australian economy slips into recession

GDP dives as business sectors remain shut to halt coronavirus

SYDNEY: Australia's economy has fallen into recession, the country's treasurer said yesterday, after official data showed gross domestic product fell last quarter as entire business sectors were closed to fight the coronavirus.

The AS2 trillion (\$1.39 trillion) economy contracted 0.3 percent in the three months ended March, the Australian Bureau of Statistics said, the first decline in nine years. That took annual growth to 1.4 percent, the slowest since the 2009 global financial crisis, as the economy was hit by the worst bushfire season in living memory, a prolonged drought and a pandemic that shut down businesses and left many without jobs.

When asked if the country was already in recession, technically defined as two straight quarters of GDP contraction, Treasurer Josh Frydenberg answered in the affirmative. "Based on what we know from Treasury, we're going to see a contraction in the June quarter, which is going to be a lot more substantial than what we have seen in the March quarter," he told reporters in Canberra.

That would mark Australia's first recession since the



Annual growth drops to 1.4% slowest since 2009

early 1990s and end one of the world's longest growth streaks. Following the data release, the Australian dollar eased from a five-month high of \$0.6982 and was last at \$0.6940.

Household consumption was the biggest drag on growth last quarter with massive falls in spending on clothing, cars, transport, recreation, hotels, cafes and restaurants. Net exports and government spending supported the economy in the quarter.

Online lending had been one of the hottest sectors in recent years, as new players bet that a digital approach meant they could lend profitably to entities that banks found too costly or bothersome. Asian online lenders raised more than \$4 billion in 2017 and 2018, with Indian and Indonesian companies most prominent, according to data provider Tracxn.

In India there are nearly 500 online lending start-ups, and roughly 160 in Indonesia, many backed by Chinese money. Some are peer-to-peer platforms (P2P), which match borrowers with individual lenders who hope to earn a higher return on savings; others use their own funds or partner with other institutions. Many combine all three approaches.

But as economies across Asia went into lockdown to limit the spread of the new coronavirus, many borrowers defaulted. "I think it is only about 20 to 30 percent of (Indian online lenders) that are well capitalized, and the rest are going to struggle. 70 percent are staring at an existential crisis," one online lending chief executive said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. "Since the lockdown started, demand is down by 90 percent and lending now is down by 95 percent."

Dima Djani, CEO of sharia-compliant Indonesian business P2P lender ALAMI, described the situation as "natural selection". "This is a test. Those come out

Human toll

The economic fallout deepened in Australia as the number of local coronavirus cases surged from less than 100 in early March to more than 7,000 now, forcing the government to shut borders and restrict large gatherings. Those curbs hit retailers and upended Australia's labor market with 600,000 people losing work and the unemployment rate spiking to 6.2 percent in April. The central bank expects unemployment to hit 10 percent by June and stay elevated for much of 2021. Gurpreet Singh lost his job at a cafe in Sydney's west after it cut casual worker shifts. His home rental payments have now fallen five weeks into arrears.

To survive, he earns money delivering for UberEats on his pushbike and has turned to free food drives.

"This recession will be particularly bad for us young people," Singh, 29, said. "This money from UberEats is not bad but I am worried about my future. It's going to be hard to find (permanent) work."

unscathed will be the champions in a more saturated P2P landscape going forward," he said.

Especially vulnerable

The IMF expects Asia to record zero growth for the first time in 60 years, as lockdowns bring service sectors to a halt, exports plunge, and companies and individuals stop spending. Small and medium-sized enterprises and workers in the informal economy have been particularly hard hit. Asia-focused banks including HSBC and DBS have taken greater provisions against bad loans, but alternative online lenders are worse off than their traditional competitors.

Indonesian online lenders had an NPL ratio of 4.22 percent in March, according to data from financial regulator OJK, up from 3.65 percent in December, compared to 2.77 percent for traditional banks.

"Most fintech companies provide smaller-sized loans for middle-low borrowers to fill the gap that banks could not reach. This cohort is unfortunately one of the most impacted by the pandemic," said Markus Rahardja, of BRI Ventures, the corporate venture arm of state-owned Bank Rakyat Indonesia. It is also harder for some lenders to get repaid.

"Because everything from the paperwork to lending happens online, consumers find it easier to default," said Ashvin Parekh, a Mumbai-based independent financial consultant. Online lenders that fall

To help cushion the blow to the economy from the pandemic, the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) stepped in by cutting the cash rate to a record low 0.25 percent and launched an unlimited bond buying program.

The government, meanwhile, unleashed a large fiscal stimulus plan, including a \$60 billion wage subsidy scheme. Those stimulus measures are working as expected, RBA Governor Philip Lowe said this week, sounding less gloomy about the economy as health outcomes improved and businesses re-opened earlier-than-expected.

"That's it. The 'longest boom' is over," HSBC economist Paul Bloxham said, predicting a 6.9 percent quarterly decline in GDP in the second quarter. However, even with Australia's worst downturn since the Great Depression, Bloxham sees growth returning in the third quarter. "There are early signs of this improvement in the timely economic indicators," he said. "Consumer sentiment is rising. Weekly employment numbers showed a pick-up in some industries... in early May." — Reuters

Asia's online lenders in turmoil

HONG KONG/MUMBAI/SINGAPORE: The spring started out rosy for the Indian arm of ClearScore, a company that offers online credit scores and loans. Within weeks, the coronavirus pandemic had taken hold, drastically changing the picture for the online lending industry in Asia.

"In the second week of March, we were talking about what a great quarter it would be and a month later I had to let go of the team," said Hrushikesh Mehta, country manager for India at ClearScore.

The UK-based company shuttered its India business on April 13, as 10 out of 14 lending partners withdrew their products within three days of the launch of a nationwide lockdown.

Alternative lending companies and platforms across Asia are scrambling to raise funds and stave off bankruptcy as they face a wave of bad loans. Sixteen lenders and investors in markets across Asia Pacific said companies were laying off staff and cutting costs to survive.

outside the traditional bank regulations have fewer requirements in many markets about how much capital they must have on hand. That makes them more vulnerable to a wave of defaults, said Etelka Bogardi, a Hong Kong-based financial services regulatory partner at law firm Norton Rose Fullbright.

Survival of the fittest

Lenders must decide whether to lend more - there is demand from businesses and individuals desperate for cash - or hunker down. "If you have lots of money and you have reporting requirements, you might choose the approach of issuing more loans," said Jianggan Li of from Singapore-based venture outfit Momentum Works. "But that's dangerous, the minute the loans are issued, people can't pay back on time."

Abheek Anand, head of Southeast Asian investments at Sequoia Capital, told a DealStreet Asia event he had warned portfolio companies to be careful and avoid temptation. More cash is necessary for either strategy. But venture capital funds invested just \$388 million in online lenders in Asia in the year to May, a sharper decline than overall fintech investment.

"The last thing I want to be getting into at the moment is online lending," said one China-based VC investor. "It's just one turn of the glass and you go from being the good guy supporting microfinance, to backing loan sharks." — Reuters

Business

ABK-Egypt reports 22% increase in net profit for Q1 of 2020

Bank maintains its strong growth trajectory: Marafi

KUWAIT: Maintaining its positive growth trajectory through challenging times with the current COVID-19 pandemic, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (ABK-Egypt), one of Egypt's fastest growing banks, reported robust results for the first quarter of 2020. Net profit for the period ended March 31, 2020 reached EGP 140 million, a substantial increase of 22 per cent over the same period last year. Net operating profit for the period reached EGP 316 million a 50 per cent increase compared to EGP 212 million in the corresponding period of last year. The bank's gross customer deposits and loans grew by 2 per cent compared to the previous year to reach EGP 28.7 billion and EGP 19.9 billion respectively.

Ali Ibrahim Marafi, Chairman of ABK-Egypt said: "In the face of global health, economic and social upheaval caused by COVID-19, ABK-Egypt's team has shown steadfast purpose and tenacity in navigating the challenges faced. I would like to thank them for their dedication and hard work during this difficult time. Remaining true to our strengths, ABK-Egypt's commitment is threefold: firstly, to implement our contingency plans to ensure the health and safety of our colleagues and clients; secondly, to ensure busi-

ness continuity and clients' access to our full suite of banking services and products; and thirdly, to provide support to our clients and our communities during this difficult period.

We are tackling the crisis with care, governed by insight, and are confident in our business model; the swiftness of our operational model driven by techno-



Gross customer deposits, loans grew 2% in Q1

logical and digital advancements; and the strength of our capital and risk profile. We remain wholly committed and are thankful to the Government of Egypt and the Central Bank of Egypt's directives in intro-

ducing measures to protect the health of the residents and extend economic relief measures to those in need."

Khaled El Salawy, CEO & Managing Director of ABK-Egypt, said: "ABK-Egypt has achieved a robust start to 2020, and continues to grow on all key parameters. Despite the unprecedented global market disruption, we have remained true to our strengths, focusing on core operations, placing our customers first, nurturing a culture of transparency, concentrating on prudent and profitable lending, and providing world-class standards of corporate governance and risk management practices. The results are a validation of our growth strategy, and has put us in a position to withstand the current market stress. We have invested significantly in technology implementation over the past year, and have reinforced digitization as a strategic pillar for continued growth, in alignment with national initiatives. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our management and staff for their continuous hard work and dedication as we forge ahead with confidence."

The bank recently launched a unique range of innovative products and services including a personal



Ali Ibrahim Marafi



Khaled El Salawy

loan specially tailored for doctors. The benefits include a loan amount up to EGP 500,000 with competitive interest rates, flexible loan repayment period of 60 months and optional life insurance for the loan amount.

ABK-Egypt was recently named 'Fastest Growing Bank in Egypt', by International Finance Magazine, in recognition of its strong commercial performance and its multiple efforts to make banking more accessible and straightforward.

Gulf Bank welcomes its clients back to its branches

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced the re-opening of a group of its branches after the end of the total curfew period, in compliance with the phased transition plan recently announced by the Council of Ministers aimed at gradually restoring normalcy and easing restrictions put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. The announcement was made in coordination with the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwait Banking Association.

Starting Tuesday June 2, Gulf Bank's new working hours are 9 AM to 1 PM, every day except Friday and Saturday. The Bank is currently operating at 25 percent capacity in 16 branches across Kuwait: Sharq (Ahmed Al Jaber Street), Salmiya (Salmiya Co-Op), Sabah Al-Salem, Jahra (Jahra Co-Op), Jahra (next to the automated bakery), Al-Zahra, Al-Riqa, Al-Ghazali, Al-Adan, Sabahiya, Al-Qairawan, Al-Shaab, Bayan, Jabriya (individual customers), Adailiya (individual customers), and Gulf Bank's Head Office (corporate customers).

Customers are also welcome to use Gulf Bank's ITM (Interactive Teller Machine) service at the following branches: Al-Salam, Al-Shaab, Jabriya, Al-Adan, Main Branch, Fahaheel (Al-Ghanem Electronics Complex). Gulf Bank's ITM service is available from 8:30 AM until 3:30 pm.

Assistant General Manager and Head of Branch Banking at Gulf Bank, Basel Al-Assad, commented: "With the end of the total curfew period, we are pleased to wel-

come our clients back to our branches and provide them with all the banking services necessary to support the economy, and allow businesses to operate in an easier and smoother manner. To ensure the health and safety of both our clients and employees, we are currently operating at 25



Basel Al-Assad

percent capacity in accordance with the plan set by the Council of Ministers. During this phase, we will also be preparing to operate more branches and increase our capacity gradually in the coming stages."

Gulf Bank is keen on applying all precautionary measures necessary across its various branches, including regular branch sanitization, measuring incoming clients' temperatures, maintaining social distance, and wearing gloves and masks. The Bank also kindly requests its clients to also take their precautions when visiting any branches for the health and safety of everyone.



US suburbs poised for revival

NEW YORK: New Jersey realtor Peter Engelmann says he got his first COVID-19 "exodus call" in early March from a New Yorker who ended up buying a three-bedroom suburban house. With New York City's coronavirus lockdown confining many residents to tiny apartments for nearly three months, experts think post-pandemic life could see a wave of migration to roomier homes in the suburbs.

"They want open space, they want to be able to barbecue. They want to get out and stretch their legs and not be worried they're going to be contaminated," Engelmann told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

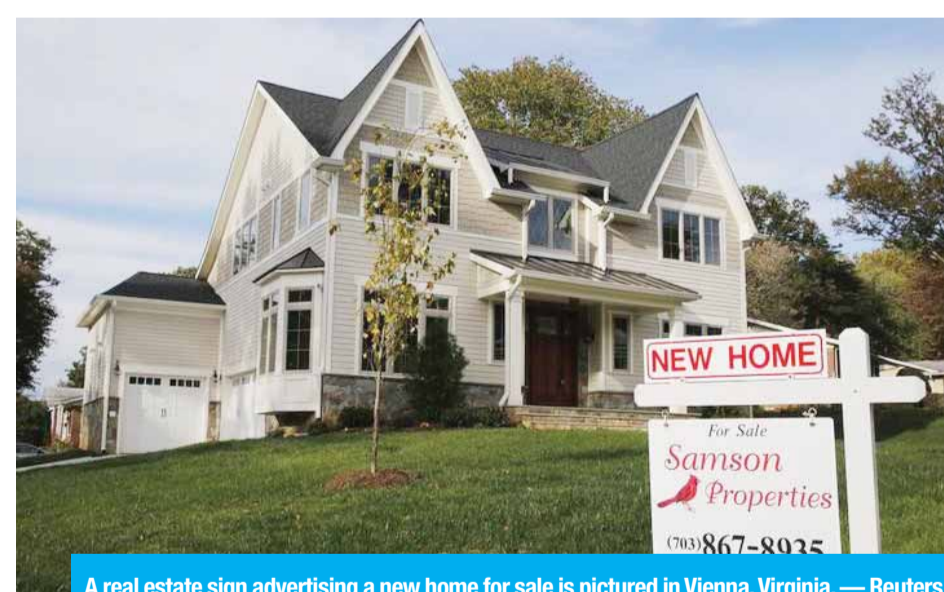
He has noticed a surge in interest in his sales patch, an area of rolling hills dotted with small towns about 40 miles (65 km) west of Manhattan. "I'm on fire. This could possibly be my best year," he said.

Ultimately, however, property analysts say a suburban renaissance depends on how many companies allow their staff to keep working remotely after the COVID-19 pandemic has passed. "If employers a year out say it was an interesting experiment but we benefit from people being eyeball to eyeball because we want the collaboration, then I think you're going to start to see this swing the other way," said Jeffrey Otteau, a real estate analyst in the New York City area.

"But if employers decide to retain this flexibility over the longer term ... we're going to see continued urban flight and renewed economic growth in suburban places."

'Get out of the city'

A recent nationwide Harris poll showed



A real estate sign advertising a new home for sale is pictured in Vienna, Virginia. — Reuters

almost 40% of urban dwellers would consider moving to less populated areas, and a slightly higher number said they had been browsing online for properties.

Two-thirds of respondents in a recent survey by Zillow, an online real estate site, said they would consider moving if they had the flexibility to work from home. "Everyone seems to be talking about wanting to get out of the city," said Debra Ross, another suburban New Jersey real estate agent.

"I don't believe we've all seen this crazy surge yet, but I think everyone's anticipating it will happen." Two-thirds of Americans have worked remotely since the coronavirus crisis peaked in March, according to a Gallup Panel poll, although other research has shown that only about a third of US jobs could be done entirely from home.

New York state is the US region hardest-hit by COVID-19, accounting for about 24,000 of the country's nearly 104,000 deaths, mostly in and near New York City. Most Americans now working from home have said they want to keep doing so, according to a survey conducted in April by

staffing specialists Robert Half International. Companies including Twitter have said already that some of their employees will be able to work from home indefinitely. Facebook has said that within a decade as many as half of its more than 48,000 staff members would work remotely.

Greener regions

Following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, many New York City residents and companies relocated to suburban areas. But the trend was reversed after the 2008 recession, when massive government funds were used to bolster Wall Street firms, bringing new jobs to the city.

For now, people who want to leave the city for greener regions are hampered by persistent lockdown restrictions, said Sylvia Ehrlich, head of The Intrepid New Yorker relocation consultancy.

US home sales logged their biggest drop in nearly 10 years in April as the novel coronavirus pandemic upended the labor market and broader economy, plunging almost 18 percent. — Reuters

UK households in April cut debts sharply

LONDON: British consumers cut their debts by the most on record and mortgage approvals slumped to a new low in April as the country spent the month in coronavirus lockdowns. Bank of England data published on Tuesday showed a net repayment of consumer credit of 7.4 billion pounds (\$9.28 billion) as people stuck at home slashed new borrowing to just half February's level, before the crisis escalated.

Loan repayments by consumers also fell - as banks allowed many households to pause payments - but the drop in repayments was less than the decline in new borrowing. Household bank deposits surged by three times the recent average. "Stronger household balance sheets should mean that consumers are in a good position to start spending again once the lockdowns are lifted," said Thomas Pugh, an economist with Capital Economics. "But we think that households' savings will remain elevated for a while yet."

Consumer lending fell by 0.4 percent in the 12 months to April, the biggest drop since August 2012. Mort-

gage approvals fell to their lowest since records began in 1997 - 15,848, 80 percent below their level in February. "This is consistent with the market almost completely disappearing during April," JP Morgan economist Allan Monks said. "However, the easing of restrictions last month and our tracking of high-frequency indicators points to a partial recovery in house purchase activity from May and into June."

Mortgage lender Nationwide said Britain's house prices fell by the most in more than 11 years in May. The BoE data showed net lending to businesses fell to 13.238 billion pounds in April, down by almost 20 billion pounds from March, when companies rushed to get loans to see them through the pandemic crisis, but still above average.

Britain's government has promised 330 billion pounds worth of state guarantees for bank loans to businesses as part of its attempts to stave off a wave of bankruptcies. Data published by the finance ministry on Tuesday showed small businesses had borrowed more than 21 billion pounds under a 100 percent government-guaranteed coronavirus program for small companies, well ahead of other lending support schemes.

The Treasury also said its wage subsidy scheme to soften a surge in unemployment now covered more than 8.7 million jobs and claims had passed 17.5 billion pounds. — Reuters

Zoom earnings soar; video meets become norm

SAN FRANCISCO: Zoom on Tuesday reported that its earnings soared as its video-meeting service became a popular way to work or socialize while hunkered down due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Zoom said it made a profit of \$27 million on revenue that leapt 169 percent to slightly more than \$328 million in the fiscal quarter that ended April 30.

In the same quarter a year earlier, Zoom reported zero dollars per share in net income for stockholders. "The COVID-19 crisis has driven higher demand for distributed, face-to-face interactions and collaboration using Zoom," founder and chief executive Eric Yuan said in a release.

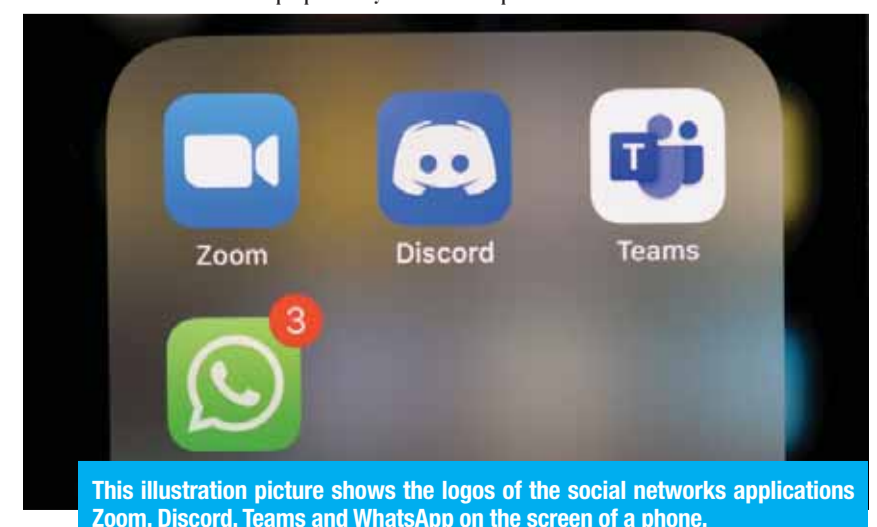
The quarter ended with Zoom having approximately 265,400 paying customers with at least 10 employees each—an increase of 354 percent from the first quarter in 2019, according to the company based in the Silicon Valley city of San Jose.

Zoom shares that ended the formal trading day up slightly gave back the gain in after-market trades, apparently due to concerns that its popularity will

decline when restrictions on movements ease and people can get back to seeing one another in person. Zoom told analysts that about half the growth in paid use was customers paying month-to-month, and those types of subscribers are more likely to leave than those who commit to annual memberships. "It's a reminder that Zoom is seeing an unusual spike during what we hope will be a relatively short term event," independent tech analyst Rob Enderle said.

"Once you don't have to socially distance as aggressively anymore, a lot of folks are going to want to go back to meeting in person." It is too soon to tell if monthly customers are abandoning Zoom in places where pandemic shelter-in-place rules are being eased because "even there people are taking their time to go back to work," according to chief financial officer Kelly Steckelberg. The earnings come with Zoom under pressure to deal with security and privacy as the platform faces scrutiny from rising usage. It has taken heat over uninvited cyber guests disrupting online meetings with a tactic called "zoombombing."

Zoom was originally built for businesses with dedicated IT teams to handle implementing security features, but first-time users flocked to the service to work or socialize from home due to the pandemic. — AFP



This illustration picture shows the logos of the social networks applications Zoom, Discord, Teams and WhatsApp on the screen of a phone.

Business

KAMCO GCC Markets Monthly Report

GCC markets see mixed returns as investors eye end to lockdowns

Kuwait indices eke out marginal gains in May

KUWAIT: A number of GCC economies have announced plans to gradually open the economy in the coming months post the ongoing lockdowns and support economic growth. The plans and the subsequent announcements boosted investor sentiment in the GCC, and drove the market to rally during the second half of May-2020 in most of the GCC benchmarks. On the other hand, confirmed COVID-19 cases accelerated in the region during the month to close slightly above the 200,000 mark.



COVID-19 cases spike in region

In terms of sector performance for the month, MSCI GCC index was up more than 1 percent led by gains in most large cap sectors like Basic Materials and Telecom with gains of 5.5 percent and 3.1 percent, whereas Real Estate and Consumer Cyclical declined by 6.4 percent and 4.7 percent, respectively. In terms of YTD-2020 returns, the Food & Beverage and Consumer Non-cyclicals sectors remained top performers with returns close to 30 percent, whereas the rest of the sectors were in the red. The Financial Services sector showed the biggest decline of 23 percent followed by Real Estate and Consumer Cyclical with declines of 22.9 percent and 18.1 percent, respectively.

Banks were also in the red with a decline of 17.7 percent.

Global benchmarks were also positive across the board with MSCI World index posting a monthly gain of 4.6 percent, although the tensions between Hong Kong and China proved a dampener. Investors were also waiting for the renewed US/China trade talks and were calmed after the US announced that it would not impose any new tariffs or sanctions against the country, despite rising tensions. On the other hand, the world also eyed the cautious opening up of the economies across the globe going against majority of the expert opinions that it could lead to reemergence of Covid-19 cases. On the contrary, gains in international benchmarks is pricing in that the worst of the Covid-19 crisis is behind while marking the second consecutive month of gains and one of the fastest 2-month gain since the financial crisis.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti benchmarks continued to be in the green during May-2020 but gains were marginal led by large-cap stocks. The Kuwait All Share Index gained 0.4 percent primarily on the back of the 1.4 percent gain in the

Kuwait Premier Market Index. These gains were partially offset by decline in the Main Market Index and the Main 50 Index by 1.8 percent and 3.6 percent, respectively. Premier market gains reflected double digit surge in shares of Boubyan Petrochemicals (+10.1 percent) followed by 4 percent gain in shares of NBK and GBK. On the other hand, Mabane, NIND and Warba Bank were key decliners with double digit fall in their shares that partially offset monthly performance. In terms of YTD-2020 performance, all the Kuwaiti benchmarks continue to remain in the red with the All Share Index falling by 20.5 percent.

In terms of sector performance, the Basic Materials index witnessed the biggest monthly gain of 5.5 percent primarily on the back of gain in shares of Boubyan Petrochemicals and Qurain Petrochemicals by 10.1 percent and 2.9 percent that was partially offset by decline in shares of Kuwait Foundry. The Insurance index was next with a gain of 1.1 percent followed by marginal gain of 0.7 percent in Banks and Real Estate indices. In terms

est in 18 months. Monthly volume of shares traded dropped by a third to reach 2.1 billion shares in May-2020 as compared to 3.2 billion shares in April-2020. The aggregate value of shares changing hands during the month also declined by a slightly higher 41.0 percent to reach KD 441 million vs. KD 747 million during April-2020. AUB Bahrain once again topped the monthly volume chart for the third consecutive month with 570.4 million shares traded followed by KFH and KIB with 152.5 million shares and 136.3 million shares, respectively. On the monthly value traded chart, AUB Bahrain topped with KD 101.4 million worth of shares changing hands during the month followed by KFH and NBK at KD 90.1 million and KD 60.2 million respectively.

Saudi Arabia (Tadawul)

After witnessing strong gains during April-2020, Saudi stock market once again witnessed gains during May-2020, albeit marginal, led by a late month rally. Gains came on the back of oil price surge that coincided

2020, after recovering by 16.7 percent m-o-m in April-2020. Aldar was down 4.4 percent for the month, as the company recorded AED 1.76 billion in revenues for Q1-20, unchanged from last year.

Qatar Exchange

After witnessing gains of 6.8 percent m-o-m in April-2020, the QE-20 index witnessed stabilizing trends and gained by 0.92 percent May-2020. The Qatar All Share index which maps the broader market moved up by 0.95 percent, but sectoral performance for the month was mixed. Industrials and Real Estate were the best performing indices and gained by 7.6 percent and 4.3 percent respectively m-o-m. Qatar National Cement (+11.8 percent) and Mesaieed Petrochemical (+11.7 percent) were the best performing industrials names while United Development (+10.9 percent) and Ezdan Real Estate (+4.2 percent) led the real estate sector.

Bahrain Bourse



of YTD-2020 performance, only the Consumer Goods sector was in the green with a gain of 14.0 percent whereas most of the sectors showed double digit declines led by the Covid-19 and oil rout led sell-off.

The monthly share performance chart was topped by Dar Al-Thuraya Real Estate Co with its shares more than doubling during the month, although trades in the stock were minimal. Real Estate Trade Centers was next with a gain of 48.6 percent followed by Bayan Investment and Al-Masaken International with gains of 44.9 percent and 36.3 percent. On the other hand, prominent decliners during the month included National Investments with a fall of 17.7 percent followed by AUB Kuwait and Tamdeen Real Estate with declines of 15.1 percent and 11.1 percent, respectively.

Trading activity on the exchange declined for the second consecutive month but was mainly led by Eid holidays and seasonal slowdown. As a result, both volume and value traded during the month reached the low-

with government's plan to reopen the economy in a gradual manner over the next few months. The benchmark TASI was up 1.4 percent during the month to close at 7,213.03 points following gains of 11 percent after the benchmark bottomed on 11-May-2020 at 6,603.96 points. The gains during May-2020 resulted in a slightly lower YTD-2020 decline of 14 percent.

Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange

The ADX index declined by 2.1 percent m-o-m in May-2020 after rebounding by 13.3 percent m-o-m in April-2020. The index closed at 4141.614 points at the end of the month, as most sectors barring Industrials and Telecoms closed lower m-o-m. Consumer Staples was the worst performing index, and declined by 9.7 percent m-o-m, as Agthia group plunged by 12 percent in May-2020. Energy names fell by 4.9 percent m-o-m in May-2020, as Dana Gas declined by 12.6 percent m-o-m. Real Estate also witnessed declines of 4.7 percent in May-

The Bahrain Bourse continued its declining trend into May-2020, and receded by 3.1 percent m-o-m. The index close at 1269.63 points as sectoral index was negative. Commercial Banks were down by 4.0 percent m-o-m, followed by declines from Investment names (-2.6 percent) and Industrials companies (-2.1 percent). In YTD terms, barring the Insurance sector, all other sectors remain in the red as of end May-2020.

Muscat Securities Market

The Omani stock market closed flat during May-2020 after gains during the last week of the month offset declines since the start of the month. The MSM30 index closed the month at 3,544.58 points resulting in a YTD-2020 decline of 11 percent by the end of May-2020. Sectoral trends were mixed during the month with 2.0 percent gain in the Industrial index, almost flat gains for the Financial index and a decline of 5 percent recorded in the Services index during the month.

Post-Brexit trade talks kick off

BRUSSELS: Trade negotiators from Britain and the EU embarked on a fourth round of post-Brexit negotiations Tuesday, but no-one in London or Brussels expects a breakthrough this week. Instead, once the latest cross-channel video conferences are over, Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen will meet to decide how to proceed.

A "high-level" June meeting to take stock of the talks was already foreseen in the political declaration signed by both parties alongside the divorce accord last year. But it may take on more urgency now, as talks between EU negotiator Michel Barnier and his UK counterpart David Frost have revealed stark differences in approach.

Britain is not expected to ask for any extension to the post-Brexit transition and so is on track to leave the single market and EU customs union on December 31. If no trade deal is in place by then, experts predict severe disruption to businesses already reeling from a coronavirus pandemic that no-one expected when Britain voted to leave the union in June 2016.

'Dead end'

Barnier, the Brussels veteran and former French minister tasked by the remaining 27 EU members with negotiating an orderly Brexit, has said the week would have to show Britain's intentions. "A crucial week ahead of us to make tangible progress across all areas, in line with the Political Declaration," Barnier tweeted on Tuesday. "A high-level meeting later this month will take stock of progress. I will brief the press on Friday."

A European official, talking condition of anonymity, warned: "It's not at all a decisive week, but a predictable one, which will just confirm we're at a dead end." Some have suggested that there may be some movement on fishing rights, with the EU giving ground on access to EU waters in exchange for Britain signing up to European level-playing field rules.

But Number 10 briefed reporters that this was "wishful thinking by the EU."

'Independent state'

Barnier has been given a mandate to seek an ambitious overarching agreement to oversee a so-called "level playing field" in manufacturing, labor and environmental standards. This would give British firms access to most—but not all—of the benefits of the single market, without exposing their European rivals to attempts to undercut standards.

Frost and Johnson, however, say they only want a simple trade deal that would preserve UK sovereignty while allowing the vast majority of trade to remain tariff-free. And, rather than placing this under the aegis of a unique EU-UK pact, they want to pursue a series of



In this file photo, European Union chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier (right) and the British Prime Minister's Europe adviser David Frost pose for a photograph at start of the first round of post-Brexit trade deal talks between the EU and the United Kingdom, in Brussels. — AFP

deals in separate sectors such as trade, fisheries, aviation and energy.

"We expect the round to be constructive and to keep the process on track ahead of the high-level meeting later this month," a British spokesman said.

"However... it's clear that the EU needs to evolve its position to reach an agreement," he warned. Barnier has complained that Frost's more aggressive "tone" in pushing the British case in an exchange of letters last month could disrupt progress.

Brussels officials are annoyed that Britain has, in their eyes, backtracked on a written agreement to accept level-playing-field guarantees as part of a future trade deal. But London insists the draft UK proposals meet these commitments, and complains the EU is refusing to offer the same kind of trade deal it signed with Canada or Singapore.

"A balanced solution is needed which reflects the political realities on both sides, and we will continue to make sure our position is understood," the spokesman said. "We won't agree to any EU demands for us to give up our rights as an independent state." With the sides camped out in conflicting visions of the way ahead, few experts expect this week's talks to bear fruit.

Late compromise

But, with so much at stake, nobody expects the talks to break down irretrievably either. "Barnier and Frost are saying the same thing, a deal is perfectly plausible. At the same time, both sides would prefer to have a deal," said Anand Menon, director of the think-tank UK in a Changing Europe.

He expected little from this week's talks, nor from Johnson and von der Leyen's meeting by the end of the month. "They will probably say that both sides are willing to continue talking," he told AFP. "If we get a compromise it will come very late in the talks, in the autumn." — AFP

Russia unveils \$72bn virus recovery plan

MOSCOW: Russia unveiled a \$72 billion recovery plan for its economy badly hammered by the coronavirus pandemic, vowing to boost employment and incomes in the country where cases continue to mount. The economy is set for a sharp contraction this year, and President Vladimir Putin is eager to get growth back on track in a bid to boost approval ratings.

Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin unveiled a raft of measures Tuesday worth \$72 billion aimed at reviving the sputtering economy after weeks of lockdowns that have kept much of the population home from work and shut key industries. Aimed at boosting employment, incomes and economic growth, the program "contains over 500 measures, its cost over two years will be about five trillion rubles," Mishustin told Putin in a televised meeting.

Putin described the plan as a "foundation" for repairing the economy and implementing "long-term structural change". "It is a matter of crucial importance for us to solve today's acute problems, as well as ensure confident movement forward in the long-term," he said. Putin said the epidemic had "seriously impacted all spheres of life" and added that he expected to launch the recovery plan next month.

The prime minister said the plan would be rolled out over three separate stages. Stage one would stabilize the economy and will be delivered in the current quarter. The next steps aimed to rebuild the economy and put it on a "trajectory for stable economic growth," the prime minister added.

Russia has introduced targeted tax cuts and provided some emergency aid for families and people newly unemployed since introducing the lockdown at the end of March. Yet observers have said that Russia's rescue package falls short of aid provided to populations by other countries with similar economies.—AFP



MOSCOW: Mobile phone accessories seller sits at her desk wearing a protective mouth and nose mask and a face shield at the Evropeyskiy shopping mall on Tuesday. — AFP

Lufthansa posts net loss of \$2.3bn in Q1

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German airline giant Lufthansa said Wednesday it will undergo "far-reaching" restructuring as it posted a first-quarter net loss of 2.1 billion euros (\$2.3 billion) yesterday, hammered by the coronavirus pandemic. "Global air traffic has come to a virtual standstill in recent months. This has impacted our quarterly results to an unprecedented extent. In view of the very slow recovery in demand, we must now take far-reaching restructuring measures to counteract this," chief executive Carsten Spohr said in a statement.

On top of the collapse in passenger numbers, depreciation of some company assets sapped the bottom line. Falling fuel prices meanwhile cost the airline 950 million euros because it had hedged its purchases with much higher priced contracts.

The first quarter was much worse than the loss of 342 million euros booked in 2019's first quarter—traditionally a quiet time for travel. The airline's supervisory board on Monday approved a nine-billion-euro bailout deal from the German government. The group is to ask its shareholders to back the accord at an online meeting on June 25. The bailout will see the German government take a 20-percent stake in the group, with an option to claim a further five percent plus one share to block hostile takeovers. That would make the federal government Lufthansa's biggest shareholder.

Long, slow ramp-up

Like its rivals, the Lufthansa group—which also includes Eurowings, Swiss, Brussels and Austrian Airlines—has been battered by the coronavirus pandemic. The airline said yesterday it plans to increase seat capacity in September to "up to 40 percent" of what was expected before the pandemic, and compared with around three percent in May. But of its 760 aircraft, 300 are expected to remain parked next year and 200 in 2022. Even with the hoped-for gradual ramp-up of passenger traffic, Lufthansa's push to repay the bailout cash "will only succeed if we implement restructuring programs in all areas... and agree on innovative solutions with the unions and working councils," finance director Thorsten Dirks said. Brussels is slashing its fleet by 30 percent and its workforce 25 percent, while Austrian will have 20 percent fewer planes and aims to cut personnel costs by the same amount.—AFP

As doctors go virtual, COVID turbocharges telemedicine

PARIS: Will visiting the doctor ever be the same again? In a matter of weeks, the coronavirus pandemic sparked a technological revolution in health-care systems across the world that might otherwise have taken years. Spurred on by fears of contagion in wards and waiting rooms, many health practitioners are replacing the face-to-face meetings that have always underpinned general practice, with patient consultations by telephone and online video apps.

Some of the most radical changes have been in primary healthcare, where doctors have often faced shortages of protective equipment, but specialists in everything from mental health to eye care have also turned to technology to treat patients at a distance. "General practice has undergone significant changes in the way GPs and our teams have delivered patient care during the pandemic—and the speed in which these changes were implemented has been remarkable," Professor Martin Marshall, Chair of Britain's Royal College of GPs told AFP.

As the virus spread, health authorities in the UK, Europe and elsewhere updated guidance on everything from data protection to how to build trust remotely. The United States rolled back restrictions on access to telemedicine, and eased privacy regulations to allow people to use platforms like Skype and FaceTime. "People are now seeing this model, which we thought would take years and years to develop. And it's probably been accelerated by a decade," Chris Jennings, US policy consultant and former White House health care adviser told STAT news recently.

Globally, 58 percent of surveyed countries are now using telemedicine, the World Health Organization said Monday, adding the figure was 42 percent among low income nations. Layla

McCay, a director at the NHS Confederation representing British healthcare services, told AFP that most of the UK's 1.2 million daily face-to-face primary care consultations were done remotely "in the space of weeks". But there were challenges. "My first video consultation was a mess. Builders were drilling, the microphone failed, a colleague walked in, and lockdown was imminent," Camille Gajria, a doctor and clinical teaching fellow at Imperial College London, told the British Medical Journal.

She said teleconsultations can be efficient but warned of "cognitive bias"—a doctor, for example, might assume that a child playing in the background is the one being discussed. There are also concerns that vulnerable patients might find it difficult to talk about mistreatment at home, while elderly people could struggle to navigate unfamiliar technology.

Remote medicine

Telemedicine may seem like a product of the internet age, but it has been around for decades, developing alongside communication technology. One big leap came during the space race of the 1960s, when scientists worried about the effect of zero gravity on the human body. Would it impede blood circulation or breathing? To find out, both the US and Soviet Union conducted test flights with animals hooked up to medical monitoring systems that transmitted biometric data back to scientists on Earth. Later, longer missions meant astronauts needed systems that could diagnose and help treat medical emergencies.

NASA went on to develop terrestrial telemedicine, including a project to provide healthcare to the isolated Tohono O'odham reservation in Arizona, as well as disaster response in the 1985

Mexico City and 1988 Armenia earthquakes. While the coronavirus pandemic has driven sweeping changes in the way many people see their local doctor, it has also highlighted the role telemedicine can play in connecting clinicians with remote communities.

In India, which has just 8.6 medical workers per 10,000 people according to 2018 WHO figures, the majority of doctors are concentrated in urban centres, while some 70 percent of people live in rural areas. Ayush Mishra, founder of the telehealth provider Tattvan, said this means people outside bigger towns are often forced to seek medical advice from overstretched or ill-qualified practitioners. His business, one of a growing number of telehealth providers in India, operates 18 clinics, mostly ATM-style booths that are manned by a medical assistant who can take vital measurements and linked with doctors in private hospitals in larger towns.

The firm languished in a legal grey zone for years until the coronavirus crisis spurred the government into broadening regulatory approval for virtual consultations. Now he hopes to open hundreds of clinics around the country. Mishra traces his enthusiasm for telemedicine to a horrific motor-bike accident when he was a biomedical engineering student in the northern city of Jaipur. Severely injured, he was driven ten hours to his hometown in Uttar Pradesh, before falling into a coma as a local doctor performed surgery.

His family was overwhelmed by "panic" until his father spoke by telephone to a surgeon at a hospital in Delhi, enabling them to arrange treatment in the city. Mishra lost his leg, but told AFP the experience inspired him to want to equalize medical access for people in smaller towns. "You need to be

able to offer this access—it's a human right," he said.

Not going back?

Internet-connected thermometers, pulse oximeters to measure oxygen levels, and smart devices that monitor vital signs are all widening the scope of what is possible in remote medicine. In an April article for JAMA Neurology, experts from the Netherlands and US said telemedicine could be a useful tool for in-home training, such as activities for survivors of stroke. Patients, they noted, could be monitored via sensors in watches or phones. "We hope that this current COVID-19 crisis will soon be resolved. However, it is as the old saying goes: 'never waste a good crisis,'" they said.

"Telemedicine for chronic neurological disorders should become part of the new normal rather than the exception," Marshall said there are still many routine procedures—vaccinations, blood tests and physical examinations—that cannot be done remotely. "Those living with multiple conditions and other complex health needs really benefit from seeing their doctor in person—and this is helpful for the GP, as well," he said. But he added that research supports the use of remote consultations for patients with simple conditions, or who have "transactional" needs like a repeat prescription.

Many say they want at least some of the changes to stay. "It has certainly turbocharged the digital transition nationally," said McCay of the NHS Confederation. "Lots of feedback from our members shows the culture has fundamentally changed, and clinicians who were perhaps previously resistant to digitization are now realising its benefits." "We can't go backwards," she added. — AFP

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Lifestyle | Features

'Blackout Tuesday' posts draw support, skepticism in music industry

Work stoppage campaign started by the music industry in solidarity with anti-racism protests has bloomed into a social media phenomenon featuring posts of black squares accompanied by somber messages and campaign hashtags. Music executives Jamila Thomas and Brianna Agymang hatched the idea to pause business as usual on Tuesday, June 2, "in observance of the long-standing racism and inequality that exists from the boardroom to the boulevard." Coming amid mass demonstrations over the police killing in Minneapolis of George Floyd, the campaign gained traction among major music labels and production companies as well as celebrities.

Rihanna, Drake and Kylie Jenner have posted the stark black images on their Instagram feeds. The Rolling Stones, Quincy Jones and Billie Eilish also said they would observe the day. But as the black squares proliferated on social media, many activists warned that the images were overwhelming BlackLivesMatter

posts that provide organizing information, resources and documentation of the protests over racist police brutality.

"When you check the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, it's no longer videos, helpful information, resources, documentation of the injustice, it's rows of black screens," said singer Kehlani on Instagram. Activists instead recommended tagging the posts #BlackOutTuesday. The movement began as a recognition of the music business' history of profiting off of black artists, traditions and communities without paying them credit. But some critics said that message risked being diluted by brands and individuals seeing an opportunity to promote themselves. "I know y'all mean well but... bro saying stop posting for a day is the worst idea ever," tweeted rapper Lil Nas X. "I just really think this is the time to push as hard as ever. I don't think the movement has ever been this powerful. We don't need to slow it down by posting nothing. We

need to spread info and be as loud as ever."

A number of widely shared posts encouraged social media users not to turn the moment into one of virtuous self-promotion—but instead use platforms to promote and uplift black community members instead. Bandcamp, a platform for musicians to share and earn money off their art, vowed to donate its share of sales made on Juneteenth—a June 19 holiday commemorating the emancipation of African Americans from slavery—to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, a racial justice organization. The company also said it would spend \$30,000 a year on partnering with civil rights organizations. "The current moment is part of a long-standing, widespread, and entrenched system of structural oppression of people of color, and real progress requires a sustained and sincere commitment to political, social, and economic racial justice and change," Bandcamp said.—AFP



Lil Nas X performs onstage during the 2019 BET awards at Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles, California on June 23, 2019. —AFP

France's cafes, restaurants reopen, but in Paris, only the terraces

French people head back to their beloved cafes and restaurants Tuesday after weeks cooped up in coronavirus confinement, marking a further step towards normality. As thousands thronged parks and gardens reopened over the weekend, eating and drinking establishments prepared to welcome back customers in the second phase of a step-by-step lifting of lockdown. "We have spent several hours cleaning," said Theo Stutzmann, head waiter of the renowned Maison Kammerzell restaurant in Strasbourg, eastern France. And a second, more thorough disinfection was due before they opened on Tuesday, he told AFP. "Optimism reigns today," said Herve Becam of the UMIH hospitality union, welcoming the return of reservations.

French people can again "live a life which is almost normal," said Prime Minister Edouard Philippe last week, as he announced the reopenings. But in Paris, where the coronavirus remains more active than in the rest of mainland France, cafes, bars and restaurants will be limited to outside terraces. To cater for the expected rush back to the city's eateries, the city council gave special permission for tables to be placed on sidewalks, parking spots and other public places. Several roads will also be closed to car traffic. The government credits France's strict

lockdown, which lasted from March 17 to May 11, with saving thousands of lives by relieving pressure on hospitals, but is eager to restart an economy devastated by the measures.

Hours cleaning

The country, which has suffered nearly 29,000 deaths, also faces an "historic recession", says Philippe, and a sharp rise in unemployment claims. The spread of the virus appears to be under control in most of France, designated "green zones". But the Paris Ile-de-France region and the overseas territories of Guiana and Mayotte, still in the higher-risk "orange" category, face a slower easing of the lockdown restrictions. Across the country, public gatherings of more than 10 people are still banned until June 21. And people still have to wear masks in public transport, stations and airports.

People can dine together in restaurants in groups of no more than 10, but with a minimum one-metre (3.3 foot) distance between tables. But all beaches can reopen from Tuesday, and weddings can once again be celebrated. Primary and middle schools will open countrywide, as well as high schools in green zones—but progressively and with a limited number of pupils per class. Epidemiologist Arnaud Fontanet, a member



People eat and have drinks on restaurant and cafe terraces in Paris.

of the scientific council advising the government, struck a note of caution. "Every day, there are five new (outbreak) clusters... we have had more than 100 clusters declared since May 11, so we can see that the virus is still present," he warned on BFMTV. France's StopCovid mobile app, that will alert users if they have been in close proximity of someone tested positive, will also come into use today.—AFP



This undated file photo courtesy of Netflix shows Joseph "Joe Exotic" Maldonado-Passage with one of his tigers.—AFP

Tiger King' star loses animal park to nemesis he tried to kill

The star of hit Netflix series "Tiger King" will have to hand over the ownership of his famous zoo to the nemesis he tried to have murdered, a court has ruled. Joe Exotic, whose real name is Joseph Maldonado-Passage, is in jail after he was sentenced to 22 years in prison in January for the attempted murder of Carole Baskin. His feud with Baskin, an animal sanctuary owner, captivated millions in the Netflix documentary that became a sensation when it was released in March as America went into coronavirus lockdown.

Baskin had for years accused Exotic of abusing the animals, including tigers, in his park. Exotic said Baskin was trying to destroy his business, and their dispute ended up in a years-long legal battle. On Monday, a judge in Oklahoma ruled that the ownership of Exotic's 16-acre land in the state must be transferred to Baskin, who runs Big Cat Rescue in Florida. The Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park will have to vacate the premises, "including removal of all zoo animals," Judge Scott Palk said in the decision.

In 2013, a Florida court ordered Exotic to pay Baskin \$1 million because his company had used logos and images similar to those of Big Cat Rescue. Exotic tried to get off from paying by shielding his assets, leading to this second lawsuit, with the judge ruling in Baskin's favor. "Tiger King", a seven-part documentary, was one of Netflix's most-watched shows. The platform announced in late April that in one month, 64 million subscribers had seen all or part of the series. Exotic, 57, has requested a pardon from President Donald Trump.—AFP



People eat and take drinks on the terraces of food stalls on the banks of the river Seine in Paris.—AFP photos



People eat and have drinks on restaurant and cafe terraces in Paris.

Kendall Jenner calls for 'real action' against injustice

Kendall Jenner has urged her fans to "take real action" against injustice. The 24-year-old model took to Instagram to speak out about the recent death of Minneapolis native George Floyd - who died after a police officer knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes - and the subsequent protests that have been taking place across America. And Kendall insisted "raging" on social media isn't enough to "repair the system" and bring justice, as she encouraged people to "vote" for real change, and to "have those uncomfortable conversations" with loved ones.

She wrote: "to everyone reading this and to myself: keep researching, reading, and educating yourself on how we can become better allies. 'I've been doing a lot of thinking these past few days and my heart has been so heavy. I'm angry and hurt just like so many. I will never personally understand the fear and pain that the black community go through on a daily basis, but I know that nobody should have to live in constant fear. I acknowledge my white privilege

and promise I will continue to educate myself on how I can help. raging on platforms can not be all that we do in order to repair the system, we need to take real action, off of social media. this is a time to have those uncomfortable conversations with people and mainly with ourselves. we must also make sure we are ready to vote when the time comes to elect the right people into office.

"the one truth that will always ring loudest is that BLACK LIVES MATTER. rest peacefully George Floyd and all victims of this horrible injustice (sic)"

Kendall's post comes after her half-sister Khloe Kardashian vowed to "use [her] privilege" to fight for black rights. She wrote in a statement shared on her social media channels: "Like so many of you I am angry, heartbroken and disgusted by the murder of George Floyd. 'We have seen this too many times. Black people have been discriminated against, victimized and murdered for too long, and have shown superhuman resiliency in the face of constant adversity. 'It is incomprehensible to me that it's 2020 and people continue to restrict, stereotype, damage and oppress people of color, and that racism is a constant reality.

"It breaks my heart to think about parents having to teach their children how to stay alive.(sic)"

The Good American founder - who has two-year-old daughter True with former boyfriend Tristan Thompson - promised to speak out about discrimination "louder than ever before" and called for people to come together to fight for justice. She continued: "I continue to pray for equality for all, understanding and love. 'I remain hopeful that together we can get help get justice for George and his family, and every black American who has been murdered, mistreated, abused and ignored.

"I know that I am privileged, in more ways than one. I will use that privilege to fight for you. I will not let George Floyd's name be forgotten. I will speak up and speak out against discrimination fearlessly and louder than ever before. 'I will stand for you as together we fight for what's right. 'I will vote for those who stand for equality and justice, and against racism, bigotry and corruption. I urge you to do the same."—Bang Showbiz



Kendall Jenner

Amy Schumer loves learning to cook



Amy Schumer and Chris Fischer

Amy Schumer says getting cooking tips from her husband Chris Fischer is the "biggest gift ever". The "Trainwreck" star and her professional chef spouse teamed up for her new show 'Amy Schumer Learns to Cook' - which was filmed from their own kitchen amid the coronavirus pandemic - and after the season finale aired on Monday, Amy has said she's thankful for her husband's skills in the kitchen. Speaking during the final episode, Amy told Chris: "I didn't really realise that I could make anything. It was a roller-coaster. It was really fun and really rewarding. 'I think I got, like, the biggest gift ever that I got to learn from you. It all just feels possible ... I'm really proud that I know how to make things now."

Amy's new culinary skills means she can explore new avenues, as she recently said the coronavirus pandemic means she's unlikely to return to stand-up comedy for at least a year. The 39-year-old actor and comedian - who has 12-month-old son Gene with Chris - admitted she is worried about catching the virus from members of her audience if she returns to stand-up too early. When asked what she would do if someone sneezed during her set, she said: "I'll probably stop talking onstage and just leave."—Bang Showbiz

Wayward whale takes city break in Montreal

A young humpback whale that swam up one of Canada's major rivers and has been exploring the waters off Montreal for a few days was likely led astray while on a hunting trip, authorities have said. Since Saturday, the giant creature has been swimming in the St Lawrence river against the backdrop of the Montreal skyline—hundreds of kilometres (miles) from the waters it usually calls home. The humpback is likely to be the same creature as that seen a few days ago further downstream near Quebec City, said Marie-Eve Muller of the Quebec marine mammal emergency network (RQUMM).

Humpback whales live near both the Arctic and Antarctic, with adults growing up to 17 metres (55 feet) and weighing up to 40 tonnes. Each pod spends the summer near the poles and travels to tropical areas in their respective hemispheres during the winter to breed. The Montreal visitor, thought to be two or three years old, was likely led astray while chasing prey, or made a navigation error, Muller said. It is possible that the whale could extend its stay in the city for several months, she added, although locks and rapids further upstream would likely prevent it from exploring any further west.—AFP



This handout picture courtesy of Réseau Québécois d'Urgences pour les Mammifères Marins (RQUMM) shows the tail of a humpback whale swimming in the water by Montreal.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Photo shows colourfully painted stones painted by artist Wu Rong-bi, also as known as "Uncle Stone", on display along a street in Taipei.



This photo shows artist Wu Rong-bi, also as known as "Uncle Stone", displaying colourfully painted stones along a street in Taipei.—AFP photos



Artist Wu Rong-bi displaying colourfully painted stones along a street in Taipei.

Taiwan's 'Uncle Stone' turns pebbles into colourful keepsakes

From Chinese characters to traditional Aboriginal totems, artist Wu Rong-bi has been selling intricately painted pebbles on the streets in Taiwan for the last 40 years. Dubbed "Uncle Stone" by his fans, the 64-year-old street artist began painting small rocks as Christmas gifts for his pupils when he was a young teacher. The idea was a hit and he went on to pass a test to become a licensed busker in Taipei. Wu sees his paintings as more than decorations—instead they are a way to convey good wishes to his customers. "I often tell them there is a positive concept behind each stone and I hope they can find it helpful in some ways," he told AFP at his stand outside a department store in Taipei.

One popular pattern he paints is the leaves of the ginkgo plant. In Mandarin the tree is known as "yin hsin", a phrase that also means wishing happiness on someone. Other pebbles have a fish on them, a positive symbol in Chinese culture because the word for a fish is also

a homophone for abundance. Some creations are inspired by Aboriginal totems, both from Taiwan's indigenous communities and those overseas. "Aboriginal cultures over the world have similar concepts and I base my drawings on the totems that stand for the vitality of life," he said. The vast majority of Taiwan's population are Han Chinese, with just two percent from its original indigenous tribes.

Most scholars consider Taiwan and parts of Southeast Asia as the original source of the Austronesians, who include people in the Pacific and Southeast Asia, as well as New Zealand's Maoris, and Polynesians in Hawaii. Like many Aboriginal communities, Taiwan's indigenous people suffered cultural and economic catastrophe once settlers landed on the island's shores from the 17th century.—AFP

Arc de Triomphe to get posthumous Christo wrap in 2021

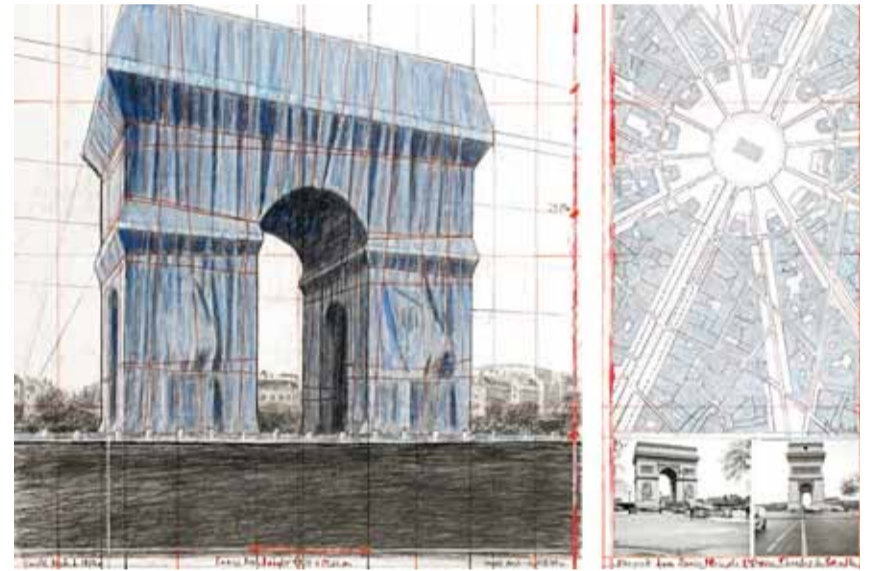
Even after his death, artist Christo's dream project of wrapping up Paris' Arc de Triomphe in silvery-blue recyclable fabric will go ahead next year in line with his wishes, organisers said on Tuesday. From Paris's oldest bridge to Berlin's Reichstag, the Bulgarian-born artist spent decades wrapping landmarks and creating improbable structures around the world. And his death in New York on Sunday at the age of 84 is not going to stop the realisation of a major project Christo first imagined back in 1961, when he used to gaze at the monument from his small bedroom in the French capital.

"Even before his wife Jeanne-Claude's death in 2009, Christo had said that he wanted the project to be carried out if they were to die," said Laure Martin, the head of the project "L'Arc de Triomphe: Wrapped". The world-famous war memorial was originally due to be wrapped in 25,000 square metres (270,000 square feet) of recyclable polypropylene fabric and 7,000 metres

(23,000 feet) of red rope between September 18 and October 3 this year.

But the coronavirus pandemic caused the project to be pushed back to the same dates in 2021. "The project is maintained. Its installation will begin on July 15, 2021 and it will have been fully taken down by October 31, 2021," Martin said. Wrapping up the Arc de Triomphe was going to coincide with a retrospective exhibition at the city's Pompidou Centre, due to begin on March 16, the day before France went into a two-month lockdown.

The exhibition focuses on Christo and Jeanne-Claude's life together in Paris between 1958 and 1964, as well as the wrapping of the Pont-Neuf bridge in 1985. Like all his installations, the Arc de Triomphe project will be fully financed through the sale of Christo's drawings, drafts and models, without any public or private funds.—AFP



In this file handout shows the preparatory drawings and collages by US artist Christo Vladimiroff Javacheff aka Christo, of the art installation "L' Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped", in Paris.—AFP

Italy reopens to tourists from Europe

Italy reopens to travellers from Europe on Wednesday, three months after the country went into coronavirus lockdown, with all hopes pinned on reviving the key tourism industry as the summer season begins. Gondolas are ready to punt along Venice's canals, lovers will be able to act out "Romeo and Juliet" on Verona's famed balcony, and gladiator fans can pose for selfies at Rome's Colosseum. But there were fears many foreign tourists would be put off coming to a country still shaking off a vicious pandemic. "Come to Calabria. There's only one risk: that you'll get fat," the southern region's governor Jole Santelli said on Sunday as the race began to lure big spenders—or any spenders—back to Italy's sandy shores.

Italy was the first European country to be hit hard by the coronavirus and has officially reported more than 33,000 deaths. It imposed an economically crippling lockdown in early March and has since seen its contagion numbers drop off dramatically. With the country facing its deepest recession since World War II, it needs foreigners to return, and quickly. But it is still reporting dozens of new cases a day, particularly in the northern Lombardy region, and experts warn the government may be being hasty in permitting travel between regions and abroad.

'Like a leper'

International flights were only expected to resume in three main cities: Milan, Rome and Naples. And there were concerns that those who usually come in by car, train or ferry from neighbouring countries would go elsewhere on their holidays. Switzerland has warned its citizens that if they go to Italy they will be subject to "health measures" on their return. The country will open its borders with Germany, France and Austria on June 15, but not with Italy. Austria is lifting restrictions in mid-June with Germany, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary—but again, not Italy, described last week by

Vienna's health minister as "still a hotspot".

Other countries, such as Belgium and Britain, are still advising against, or forbidding, all non-essential travel abroad. In response to perceived anti-Italian sentiment, Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio has warned countries not to treat Italy "like a leper". He said Saturday he would be travelling to Germany, Slovenia and Greece to persuade them Italy is safe for foreign tourists. Arrivals in Italy from Europe will not be required to self-isolate unless they have recently travelled from another continent.

Too expensive

Italy's lockdown has had a particularly devastating effect on the tourism sector, which amounts to some 13 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Historic sites were shut, restaurants closed, and hotels were used to care for coronavirus sick. Restaurants, cafes and beach establishments have slowly reopened over the past two weeks—although the government has said it reserves the right to impose localised lockdowns if it sees contagion numbers rise. But only 40 of Rome's 1,200 hotels have reopened, the Corriere della Sera newspaper said Monday, and just a dozen in Milan. It costs too much to open them if they will just stand empty.

"My hoteliers all want to reopen, but as long as the borders remain closed, it's not possible," Marco Michielli, deputy head of hoteliers' association Federalberghi, said Saturday. Italy's national tourism agency (ENT) said some 40 percent of Italians traditionally travel abroad for their holidays, but could be forced this year to vacation at home, helping local businesses. That may be little comfort to those running the country's costly historic sites, because most of the tens of thousands of visitors that usually flock daily to the Tower of Pisa, Pantheon or Pompeii come from abroad.—AFP

A WORLD REDRAWN: THE RICH MUST 'SHARE', SAYS AGNES B

French fashion designer Agnes b. has always been an optimist. It is what prompted her some 50 years ago to quit the world of fashion journalism and step onto the lowest rung of the design ladder. She started the Agnes b. brand and opened her first boutique in Paris in 1975, followed by others across France as well as in New York, London, Amsterdam, Taipei, Singapore, Tokyo and Hong Kong. Now 78 and still optimistic, she believes that a better world—driven by young people—will emerge from the coronavirus crisis.

Agnes b. spoke to AFP as part of our 'World Redrawn' series. She calls for the rich to "share" and insists we must not forget the urgency of looking out for the environment. Below are some extracts from the interview, edited for clarity.

Q: We talk about 'a world before' and 'a world after'. Will habits change or will the world just go back to how it was before?

A: I have a positive and optimistic nature and I hope that this kind of step back will have changed perspectives. The question of how we share our land relies on our young people. They have real awareness which is great. Everything links. When the farmers called for help, the city people answered. There are young people who are going to settle on farms... There is going to be a fresh start. We will come out different.



French fashion designer Agnes b.

Q: You place great faith in young people and their take on the environment. Why?

A: Young people are aware of the environment and know that it is more and more important. I have a lot of grandchildren and I see how concerned they are. We have to transform ourselves.

Q: France's economy is clearly taking a hit from the virus and quarantine measures. What does President Macron need to do to give some hope back to the French people?

A: I wouldn't like to be in the president's

shoes at the moment. In France, we are programmed to criticise. The most important thing is to bring money into France, and the rich must share the wealth.

There are many poor people and many wealthy people who have too much money. I know what it means to be poor. Wealth is so badly distributed. There are people who are badly housed or homeless. The differences have always existed. We had the French Revolution but that didn't change anything.

Q: What help can we give to developing countries as the world economy struggles to find its feet again?

A: We must manufacture where it is necessary, where we can help. My line manufactures as much as possible in France but we have a policy of giving added value to countries like Peru, which produces alpaca, or Mongolia with its cashmere. There are also embroiderers in Madagascar. This is always my principle.

Q: Have you been making masks during the lockdown?

A: We have already made lots of masks. I designed them in unbleached, patterned canvas, with lipstick smiles in different colours. We also made 2,000 medical gowns to donate to suburban hospitals. We are mucking in as best we can!—AFP



A man stands at the Swiss-Italian closed border at Grand Saint Bernard pass on June 2, 2020, on the eve of Italy's unilateral reopening of its borders, amid the COVID-19 outbreak, caused by the novel coronavirus.—AFP

Police stun Americans – by taking a knee with protesters

WASHINGTON: They are images that surprised and moved Americans: Police officers taking a knee alongside protesters in the most widespread civil unrest to rock the nation in decades – and in doing so embracing an anti-racism gesture denounced by President Donald Trump.

As Trump pushes for a crackdown on often violent protests over the death of George Floyd, police officers from New York to Los Angeles to Houston are making gestures of solidarity with demonstrators incensed at the latest case of an unarmed black man dying while in police custody.

"I took off the helmet and laid the batons down. Where do you want to walk? We'll walk all night," Chris Swanson, the white sheriff in Flint, Michigan, shouted to a group of protesters on Saturday. Then Swanson did just that, setting off walking with them, to cheers. He even posed for a selfie with a young black protester, and gave the thumbs up sign.

In Des Moines, Iowa, police chief Dana Wingert took a knee before a crowd of demonstrators along with other officers and explained it this way: "Us joining them in a symbolic way, that's the least we can do."

Anti-racism demonstrators across the country have embraced the gesture made famous by former quarterback Colin Kaepernick who began kneeling during pre-game renditions of the national anthem in 2016, to protest police brutality against blacks and other minorities. Kaepernick was ostracized by the NFL over his kneeling protest, which earned him and likeminded athletes condemnation and insults from conservatives including Trump.

Now, the police are emulating the protesters

emulating the quarterback turned civil rights activist. In an intense scene captured on camera Monday in New York, the city's white police chief Terence Monahan knelt and clenched hands with protest leaders, arms raised high, as a way to show support and shared outrage at Floyd's death. "Moments like that are how I know we will find a way through," tweeted the city's mayor, Bill de Blasio, in response.

Similar scenes have played out in Florida, Illinois, Missouri, Georgia – as well as in the capital Washington. Leading politicians have adopted the gesture, from Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden to the mayor of Los Angeles Eric Garcetti, who dropped to a knee along with a line of officers as they mingled with demonstrators near city hall on Tuesday.

'We are here with you'

The nationwide protests over Floyd's death on May 25 have seen police charge against and fire tear gas or rubber bullets at protesters – a minority of whom have engaged in looting and vandalism in the most widespread racial unrest to hit America in decades. In some cases, the police outreach appears wholly genuine – a case of individuals pledging their solidarity with the anti-racism cause, and seeking an absolution of sorts for police abuses past.

At other times, the kneeling has served to defuse soaring tensions – raising the question of whether it is more of a de-escalation tactic. Outside the Trump International Hotel in Washington on Monday evening, for instance, a line of police standing nose to nose with protesters took a knee as they were heckled by the screaming crowd.

In Los Angeles also, a line of officers were being



WASHINGTON: A man screams with emotion as he sees a policeman take a knee while hundreds protest the death of George Floyd next to the White House on May 31, 2020. — AFP

shouted at by protesters before finally taking a knee, one by one, some of them smiling as they got to the ground. "You want to take a knee? We'll take a knee with you because we are here with you," the leader of the unit says. As he rises he shakes hands with a protester and urges the group to refrain from violence to protect the city.

In Washington, a police spokesman told AFP the

decision to kneel outside the Trump hotel was "organic in the moment and was not a scripted technique". He also said police were "not facing disciplinary action" for embracing what is seen by many as a gesture of defiance to authority – even if video footage from a day earlier appeared to show one officer yanking a kneeling subordinate back to his feet. — AFP

Family mourns son killed by Israeli police

JERUSALEM: Iyad Hallak, a 32-year-old Palestinian man with autism, passed Israeli police every day to reach his special needs school in Jerusalem's Old City. Last week a police officer who believed Hallak was armed shot him dead, leaving his family searching for answers and igniting widespread grief and anger.

Thousands of mourners massed for Hallak's funeral while the social media hashtag #PalestinianLivesMatter echoed the fury being seen at mass protests against police violence and racism in the United States. Hallak, brown-haired, well-built and with broad shoulders, cut an imposing figure but

had the mental age of an eight-year-old, according to his bereaved family.

A polite man, according to his uncle Oussama, Hallak was an enthusiastic amateur gardener and adored his school. Early on Saturday morning in the Wadi el-Joz neighborhood of occupied East Jerusalem, he sipped tea made by his mother Rana before heading out. The family home is just a 10-minute walk from the Old City, and until recently Rana had usually accompanied her son to school. "I kept a close eye on where he was, we were in touch on WhatsApp," she said, now wearing a black mourning veil, her hands trembling as she spoke.

On Saturday morning, he walked with his teacher towards the Elwyn Al-Quds school, close to the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, which he has attended for the past six years. But when he stepped through the stone arches of the Old City's historic Lions' Gate, police became suspicious when he reached for his phone in his pocket.

Officers say they believed Hallak was car-

rying a weapon, given that attacks against Israeli forces are relatively common, and ordered him to stop. But Hallak seemed to panic. A police spokesman told AFP that "police units on patrol there spotted a suspect with a suspicious object that looked like a pistol. They called upon him to stop and began to chase after him on foot. During the chase officers also opened fire at the suspect, who was neutralized."

The man's father, Kheiri, told AFP that "his teacher told police that he was disabled and asked them to check his identity, but they kept their distance and ... fired at Iyad". Their son was killed by two gunshots, according to the family who recovered his body on Sunday after the autopsy. The parents, who also have two daughters, now want answers about the death of their son, who for years had crossed their path peacefully.

Police have launched an investigation while the main suspect, a recent recruit, has argued he "thought he was in real danger" according to his lawyer. —AFP



JERUSALEM: The mother of Iyad Hallak, a 32-year-old Palestinian man with autism who was shot dead by Israeli police, mourns her son at their home on June 1, 2020. — AFP

US protests defy curfews; Trump...

Continued from Page 1

Minnesota took one of the first concrete actions to address the grievances behind the uprising, which began after Floyd's death on May 25 in the state's largest city Minneapolis. The state launched a civil rights investigation of the Minneapolis Police Department, looking at possible "systemic discriminatory practices" going back 10 years, Governor Tim Walz tweeted.

Former president George W Bush called on the US to examine its "tragic failures" and to "listen to the voices of so many who are hurting and grieving". And in Los Angeles, one of dozens of cities hit by unrest, police officers and Mayor Eric Garcetti dropped to their knees in a symbolic act of solidarity as they met marchers led by African-American Christian groups.

"A black face should not be a sentenced to die, nor to be homeless, nor to be sick, nor to be under-employed, nor to be under-educated," Garcetti told them, inviting the leaders into City Hall for a discussion about the issues. But protesters gathered outside Garcetti's residence late into the evening. An AFP reporter witnessed a group of at least 200 refusing to disperse and subsequently arrested.

In Washington DC, thousands returned to the streets Tuesday for a peaceful "Black Lives Matter" march. Hours after the 7:00 pm curfew protesters could be heard chanting, as National Guard troops stood on the streets near the White House and helicopters hovered above. Broadcast footage showed police firing tear gas shortly after midnight, but the situation appeared to be calm overall.

"I'm just tired, essentially, of being scared of police, of not getting justice," said Jada Wallace, an 18-year-old protester outside the White House earlier who said she was ready to risk arrest. In the same place on Monday, federal police had abruptly opened tear gas and fired rubber bullets to break

PM assures chief editors no one is...

Continued from Page 1

"I am sure that all Gulf states see the path of the Gulf Cooperation Council as important to them and to the region and the world," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled added. "Unfortunately, we are now in the fourth year of the Gulf dispute, but attempts are still continuing and hopes are greater than they were," he said.

up a non-violent protest, clearing a path for Trump to stroll outside for a photo-op at a historic church damaged the previous night.

The move was loudly condemned by religious leaders, the president's political rivals, and onlookers around the country. But Trump, who has rejected the traditional presidential role of healer, voiced glee on Twitter over the response in Washington and accused the leadership of New York – led by the rival Democratic Party – of succumbing to "Lowlife & Scum". "Overwhelming force. Domination," he wrote, adding: "Washington, DC, was the safest place on earth last night!"

He pushed back against the criticism later on Twitter, writing: "You got it wrong! If the protesters were so peaceful, why did they light the Church on fire the night before? People liked my walk." Joe Biden, Trump's presumptive Democratic rival in November elections, denounced the crackdown as an abuse of power and promised, if elected, to tackle the "systemic racism" in the country. "Donald Trump has turned this country into a battlefield driven by old resentments and fresh fears," Biden said in a speech in Philadelphia, also hit by violence.

In his first comments on the unrest, Pope Francis said "we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism" but also condemned the violence. The United States also faced unusual, if polite, criticism from some international allies including Germany, Britain and Australia. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas called the anti-racism protests "understandable and more than legitimate". "I hope that these peaceful protests won't slide further into violence, but even more than that I hope that they will make a difference in the United States," Maas told reporters.

A Las Vegas officer was in "grave condition" Tuesday after being shot during protests overnight. An armed Hispanic man was shot and killed by police after raising his gun in a separate, nearby incident. Four officers were also shot overnight in St Louis. None of the injuries was life-threatening. But one retired St Louis police captain was shot dead early Tuesday outside a ransacked store. Trump tweeted that David Dorn, who was black, was "viciously shot and killed by despicable looters". —AFP

The prime minister closed the meeting by thanking all frontline personnel for their efforts and sacrifices. He also thanked the nation for their understanding and patience. "The solidarity that people have shown has made me proud to be part of this nation," he said.

Leaving Seif Palace, I felt reassured that the government has a clear plan of action to address all the issues of concern. I also am glad to see the regular press conferences and more open discussions with the press. For the first time, there is a clear flow of information from the government to the people of Kuwait. This is what we need if we are all going to work hand in hand for a better, stronger Kuwait.

Mumbai avoids brunt...

Continued from Page 1

The storm made landfall near the coastal town of Alibag, around 100 km south of Mumbai, yesterday afternoon, meteorologists said. It then crossed Maharashtra's coast, with its path veering to the east of Mumbai and its power expected to weaken by yesterday night, they added. The cyclone brought heavy rainfall – with winds of 100-110 km per hour and gusts of up to 120 kph. Mumbai experienced downpours throughout the afternoon, with strong winds toppling trees in some cases. The beach town of Alibag suffered worse damage, with the cyclone tearing roofs off homes and overturning mobile food stalls. A 45-year-old professor evacuated from his house near the sea told AFP he could see corrugated roofing flying through the air as Nisarga's powerful winds struck.

"The intensity is very strong and nothing like weather events we've seen before," said Milind Dhodre, who lives in Alibag with his wife and son. The coastal town is a favored haunt of Bollywood stars and industrialists, who own holiday homes there.

In Mumbai, police announced fresh restrictions on the city of 18 million people, which was just beginning to emerge from a months-long lockdown, and banned gath-

MP slams 'new' health policy...

Continued from Page 1

or individuals suspected of being ill with the virus. Sanad said none of the cases recorded in the past 24 hours had been linked to travel. The new cases include 256 Kuwaitis, 143 Indians, 93 Bangladeshis and 91 Egyptians, with the rest from other nationalities.

As to the cases recorded in hospitals and clinics in each health zone, Sanad said 282 in Farwaniya governorate, 140 were in Jahra, 130 in Ahmadi, 88 in Hawally, and 70 in Capital governorate. Up to 437 patients were discharged from quarantine in the past 24 hours. They will sequester themselves in their houses for not less than 14 days.

Sanad said up to 2,934 swab tests were conducted in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of such medical examinations for the virus to 303,285. He renewed the appeal to citizens and residents to take all necessary precautions to stem the spread of the contagion.

A number of MPs meanwhile said they will reject government-sponsored amendments to the labor law in the private sector that allows businesses affected by the coronavirus to reduce the salaries of

erings of four people or more until today afternoon. India's worst-hit city, Mumbai is home to a fifth of India's more than 200,000 coronavirus cases. The storm evacuees included nearly 150 coronavirus patients from a recently built hospital in Mumbai, underscoring the difficulties facing the city ahead of the monsoon season as it struggles to contain the pandemic.

"Refrain from venturing out to coast-beaches, promenade, parks and other similar places along the coastline," the police tweeted early yesterday. "Do not leave your house for your own safety and well-being," Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray tweeted late Tuesday, warning of possible disruptions to the power supply due to heavy rainfall.

Warnings of storm surges up to two meters high remained in effect yesterday afternoon, with slum-dwellers in low-lying areas of Mumbai instructed to move to higher ground. Even as the city's residents breathed a sigh of relief, forecasters warned the storm could still carry a sting in its tail until it eased. "Next 4 hours crucial for #Mumbai, the tail of the cyclone may lash and can cause severe damage," tweeted Jatin Singh, head weatherman at Skymet Weather, a private forecaster.

The storm triggered disruptions to travel as well, with planes grounded and inter-state railway services delayed or diverted to ensure that trains would not travel through the city until the cyclone had passed. Nisarga comes on the heels of Cyclone Amphan, which killed more than 100 people as it ravaged eastern India and Bangladesh last month, flattening villages, destroying farms and leaving millions without electricity. —AFP

their employees. The lawmakers said they will not accept the legislation unless the government provides protection to Kuwaitis employed in the private sector and excludes them from the proposed amendments.

MP Saadoun Hammad said the health and labor committee had already rejected the government amendments for failure to exclude some 70,000 citizens employed in the private sector. He said the panel had added a new provision to the amendments to exclude Kuwaitis from the law.

The amendments allow private sector establishments to ask their employees to take their annual leave with reduced pay not exceeding 50 percent or cut the salaries of employees by up to 50 percent based on mutual agreement. The government will decide which establishments are distressed.

The legal and legislative committee will study this week proposals to amend the rent law in order to reduce burden on tenants by allowing them to defer payment of rent until after the coronavirus crisis. One of the amendments calls for establishing a special bench in court to deal with rent disputes during the coronavirus and not include the period of shut-downs as part of the legal duration to file cases.

MP Adel Al-Damkhi asked the interior minister about the number of expats who violated the residency law in the past five years based on nationality. He also asked for the number of crimes committed by expats during the past five years based on nationality.

Stars

Daily SuDoku

			4	1		6		
7		6						1
	1		2		6			3
		3	1					
5				8				1
					9	7		
6			8		2		9	
	8					4		6
		2		4	3			

very hard


Yesterday's Solution

2	7	3	5	8	1	9	6	4
4	5	9	3	2	6	8	7	1
1	8	6	7	4	9	2	5	3
3	9	8	4	5	2	7	1	6
6	1	4	9	3	7	5	2	8
7	2	5	6	1	8	3	4	9
5	3	7	1	9	4	6	8	2
8	6	1	2	7	3	4	9	5
9	4	2	8	6	5	1	3	7

hard


STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)




Although you've been feeling especially strong physically over the past few days, Aries, today you might feel a little under the weather. You could even experience some giddiness. This is nothing to worry about, but you should try to take it easy. Don't exercise if you don't feel up to it. Get some rest. Even if you have to postpone some chores, you'll be better off in the long run.

Libra (September 23-October 22)



Stress could take a toll on you today, Libra. You might temporarily lose your ambition and be left wondering if it's all really worth it. This isn't a good day to start projects or engage in important discussions. Stay home and get some rest if you can. You might skip a few chores, but you'll be better off in the long run. Treat yourself to a good book and some ice cream.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)




Emotional matters could hit the fan today at a (virtual) group meeting of some kind. Those around you communicate with are apt to be feeling especially stressed and volatile, Taurus, so be prepared for anything. Try to stay out of passionate confrontations, and don't try to put oil on troubled waters. At times like this, such attempts only cause unwanted attention to focus on you. Stay centered.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)




Surprising new developments in close friendships or love relationships could come your way today, Scorpio. Someone might move away or perhaps move closer to you. This could prove a little unsettling at first, but you'll be happy once you get used to the idea. Communicating with new people could also bring unexpected events your way. Be prepared for some bombshells. On the downside, expect some trouble with machines.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)




Stress might be getting the better of a household member today, Gemini. This person feels emotionally volatile. The least irritation could set off a temper tantrum. Try to ease the pressure by staying out of the way. Don't offer advice, however well-intentioned it may be. This person needs to come to terms with whatever is bothering him or her. Distance yourself and do your own thing.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)



Unexpected developments might interfere with your home life or with plans to spend a quiet evening with your family, Sagittarius. This could have you feeling a little down at first, but don't let it get to you. Whatever you do today might open doors that will benefit both you and those close to you. Gird your loins and do whatever needs to be done. Later you'll be glad you did.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)




Friends, neighbors, and relatives could be feeling especially stressed out and explosive today, Cancer. This isn't a good day to initiate intense communications with them. Keep your talk light and inconsequential. This is a great day to stay home and read, especially since your mind is particularly receptive to unusual ideas. The Internet, videos, and TV documentaries could be most informative.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)




You may be looking forward to talking on the phone with someone dear who lives far away, Capricorn, but circumstances beyond your control could get in the way. Perhaps you keep missing each other, or problems with computers or phones throw a monkey wrench into the works. Don't let this dim your enthusiasm. Once you reach your friend, expect to have an exciting and emotionally gratifying conversation.

Leo (July 23-August 22)



The economy could well take another dip, Leo, and you might hear from people expressing concerns about financial matters. Don't take them to heart, and certainly don't worry about your own financial condition. The trend will probably reverse itself soon, and this time in the right direction. Take no drastic action just yet. Wait and see what happens. You'll probably breathe a sigh of relief.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)




Although business and money matters continue to go well, some rather unsettling news regarding either your finances or the economy in general could reach you today, Aquarius. However, don't accept as truth anything you hear until you check the facts. The planetary energies now lend themselves to the spread of rumor, gossip, and misinformation. This is definitely the day to hang on to your objectivity.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)



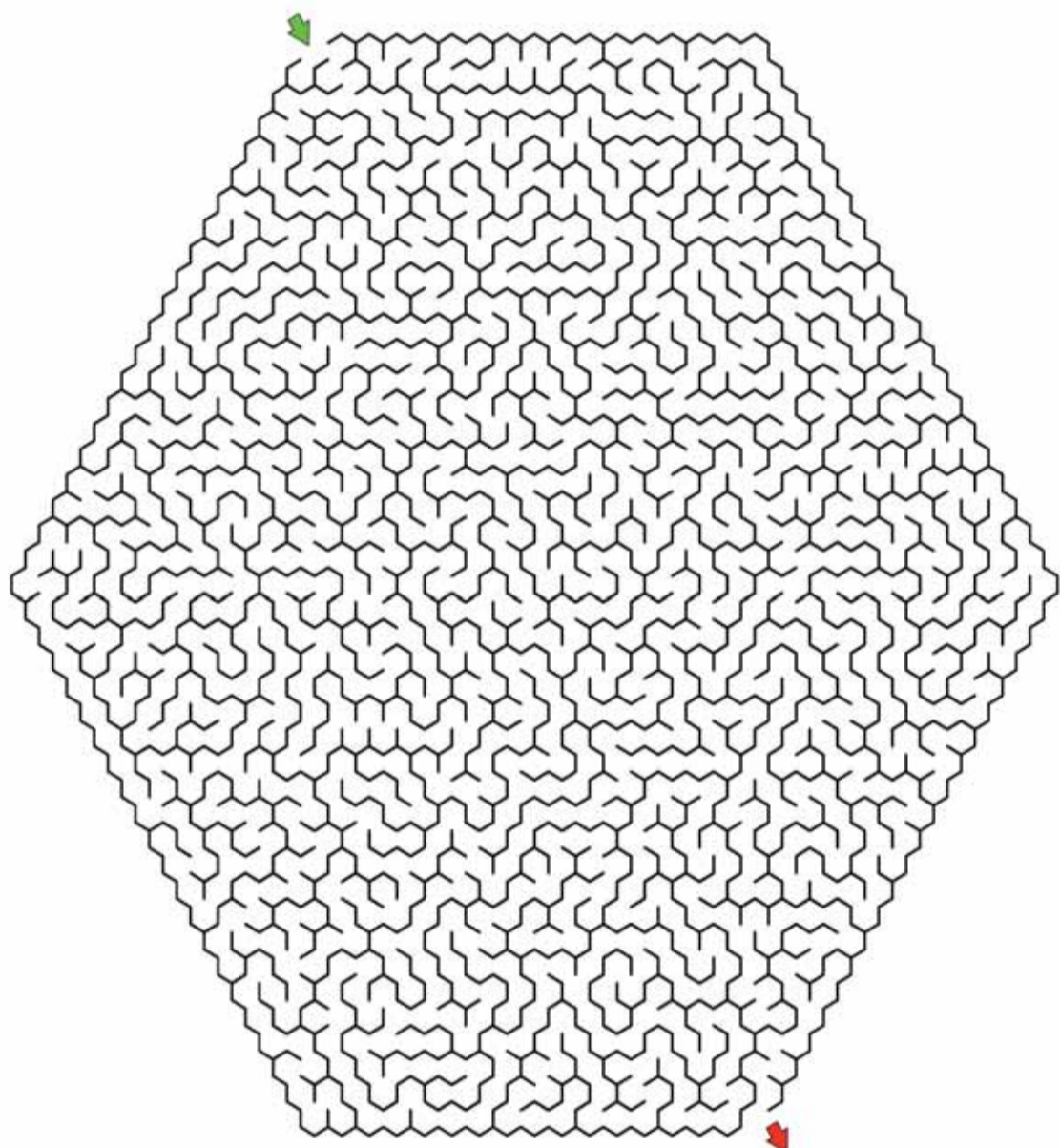
Oppressive stress on you or those close to you could cause disconcerting upsets within your relationships today, Virgo. Try to be objective and work things out rationally instead of going to pieces. Avoid being sucked into quarrels where you might say things you'll regret. Don't let this temporary situation get the best of you. Make the effort to stay focused and relaxed. Tomorrow all should be back to normal.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

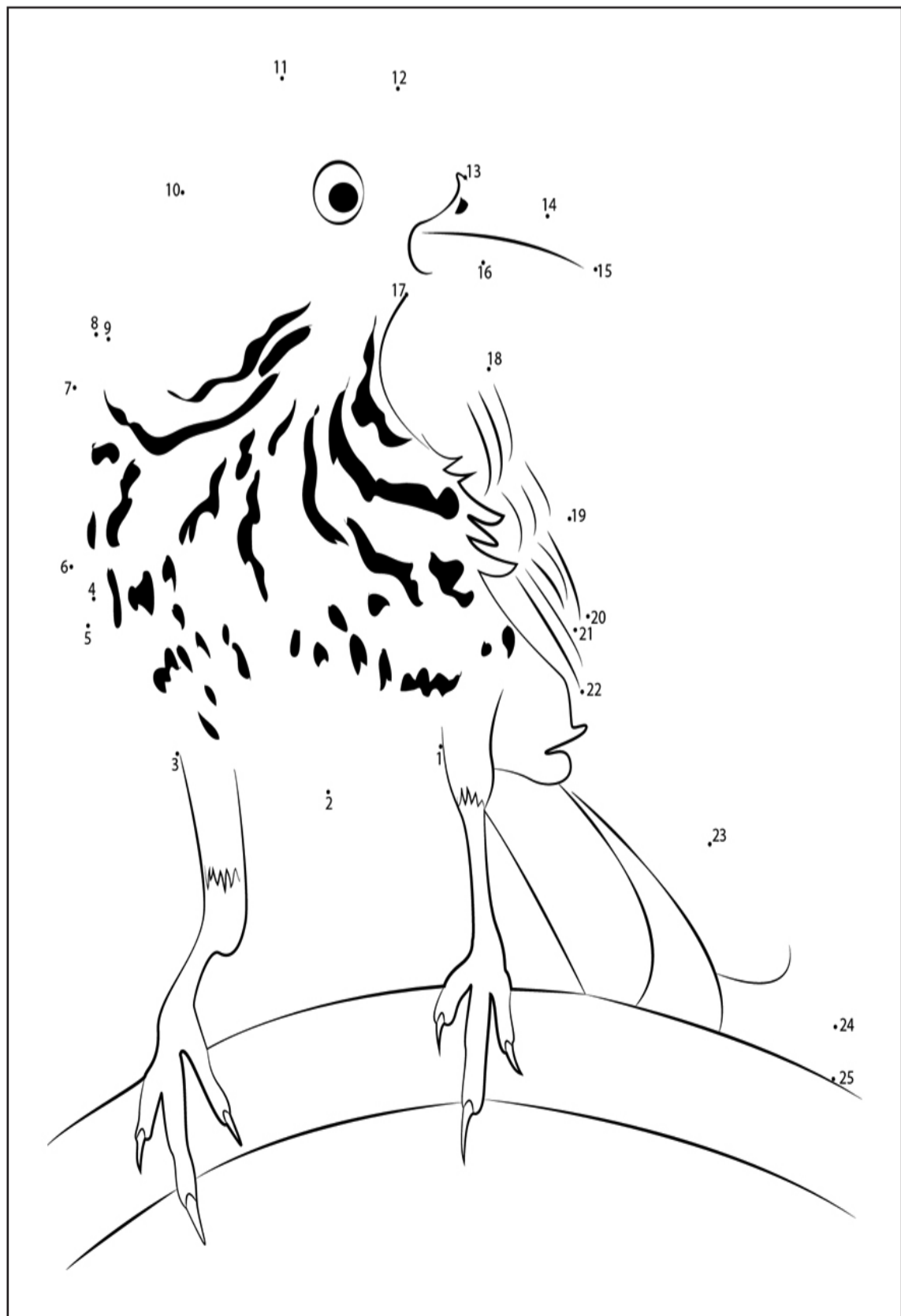


You may have been looking forward to communicating or spending time with the people you care about today if possible, but circumstances beyond your control throw some unexpected obstacles in your way. Don't panic, Pisces. If you're focused and objective, you can find a way to get around the obstacles and do what you want to do. If you're involved in creative projects, you might seem blocked today.

Find the way



Join the dots




Word Search

DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the city names in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

US Cities

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



Sports

Photo of the Day



Double olympic gold medalist Roman Hagara performs during the first sailing session after lockdown in Austria on May 6, 2020. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Australia swim coach Verhaeren quits

SYDNEY: Australia's head swimming coach Jacco Verhaeren quit yesterday, opting to return to his native Netherlands for family reasons after COVID-19 forced the postponement of this year's Tokyo Olympics.

Verhaeren had hoped to make a triumphant departure after leading Australia's campaign in Japan, but decided against staying Down Under for an extra year to attend the rescheduled Games.

"I tried to look for ways to extend, but you can't compromise in a high performance environment, nor did I want to compromise my family," the highly respected coach said in a statement released by Swimming Australia.

Verhaeren, 51, was appointed in 2013 after Australia's poor results at the London Olympics a year earlier, a campaign marred by ill-discipline, drug use and drunkenness. At the time, he was best known for guiding Dutch greats Pieter van den Hoogenband and Inge de Bruijn to Olympic success in Sydney and Athens.

He helped restore Australia as a swimming superpower, with the squad finishing second only to the United States at the 2015 and 2019 world titles. "(He) has overseen significant change and development in a complex system, laying a strong foundation for future success," Swimming Australia chief executive Leigh Russell said.

She said Verhaeren was leaving with Swimming Australia's best wishes and had decided "it is the right time to put family needs above anything else". He will be replaced by Australian Rohan Taylor, who is currently state coach for Victoria and Tasmania. The pair will work together during a transition period before Verhaeren departs in September. — AFP

Australia's Mick Doohan, greatest motorcycle racer of all time

'Doohan used to go racing like there were demons chasing him'

SYDNEY: Mick Doohan dominated the top class of motorcycle racing for half a decade at the end of the last century, wiping the floor with the competition to win five consecutive 500cc world championships.

Ice cool, brave, ultra-aggressive, dismissive of pain and competitive to the point of mania, the Australian controlled the snorting, bucking power of the two-stroke 500cc machine like no one else.

"Doohan was a driven man, to the scariest of degrees, he used to go racing like there were demons chasing him, and if he ever slowed down, they'd have him," respected motorcycling journalist Mat Oxley wrote of the Queensland rider. "There was a terrorised urgency to his riding, he forced the bike down into corners, hunched over the front like some kind of desperado..."

"Who knows what drove him, but the inside of a racer's head is a strange place: weird forces driving weird psyches to take weird risks."

Doohan, who started riding dirt bikes at the age of nine, was working as a swimming pool concreter and hanging out with Britain's twice world champion Barry Sheene on the Gold Coast when a breakout season in Superbikes caught the eye of Honda. He joined the powerhouse team in 1989 and quickly found his feet, looking set to win his maiden world title in 1992 before a nasty crash during practice for the Dutch TT at Assen shat-

tered his right leg.

A hospital infection would have cost him the limb had famed motorsports clinician Dr Claudio Costa not sewn it together with his left leg in a revolutionary procedure that had the Australian back on his bike four rounds later.

The right leg was permanently damaged, however, and Doohan struggled in the 1993 season until chief mechanic Jeremy Burgess rigged up rear brake control that could be triggered by his thumb rather than his foot.

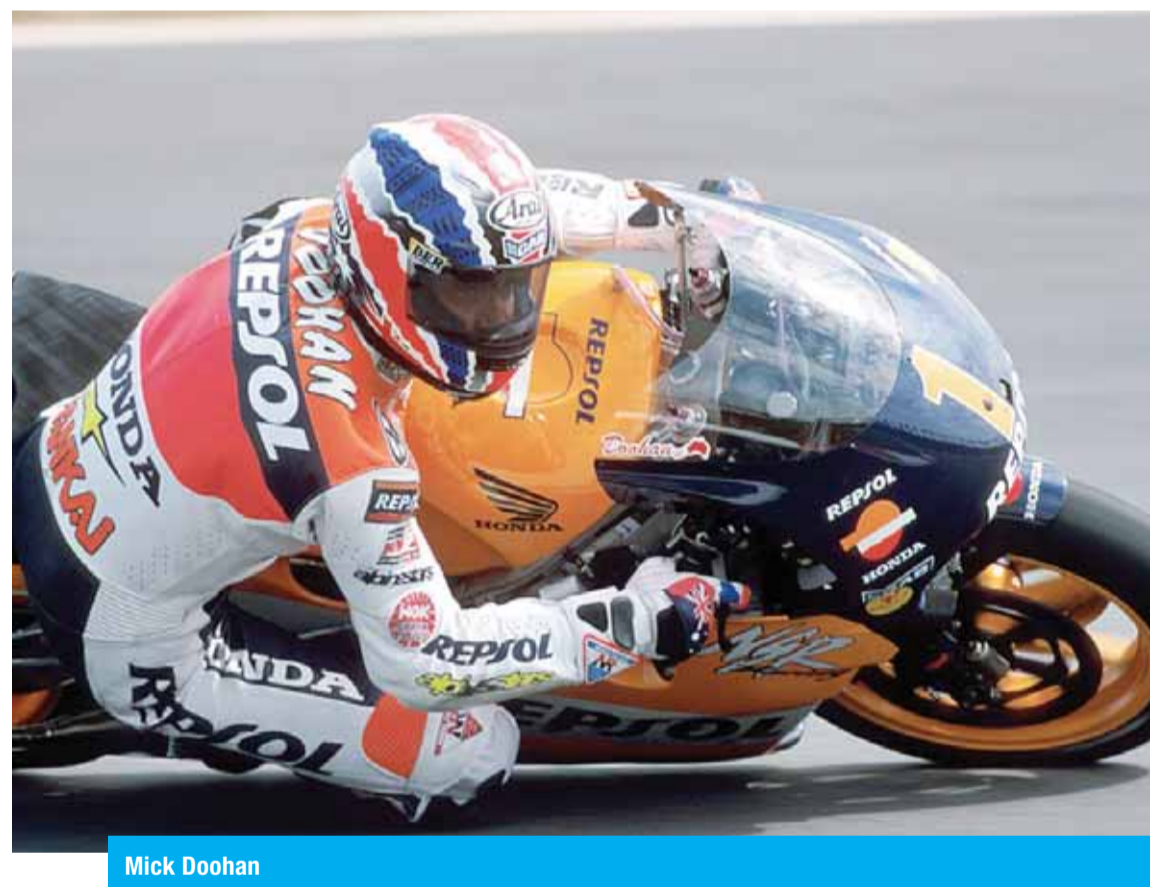
The first world title came in 1994 on the back of nine wins in 14 rounds and he defended it in dominant fashion over the following two years.

He raised the standard even higher in 1997 when he won 12 of 15 races and finished second in two.

The one blemish was at his home Australian Grand Prix when he and team mate Alex Criville came together but he made amends the following year when he clinched the fifth straight world title at Phillip Island.

He called it quits at the age of 34 after another serious crash in qualifying for the third round of the 1999 season at Jerez left him with a broken leg, wrist and collarbone as well as muscle damage to his back.

Doohan has since built a successful business career selling corporate jets and the motorsport world has perhaps not heard the last of the Doohan family with his 17-year-old son Jack a



Mick Doohan

promising driver in Formula 3.

His retirement would be followed by eras of dominance for Valentino Rossi and Marc Marquez

but, along with Giacomo Agostini, Doohan would still have to be part of any conversation about the greatest road racer of all time. — Reuters



Ice cool and brave

ITV racing frontman Chamberlin gears up for return to action

LONDON: Racing presenter Ed Chamberlin will switch his microphone on in his spare room on Friday to launch three days of racing coverage as the sport edges back towards normality.

Chamberlin is fronting ITV Racing's coverage of three days of the sport behind closed doors, including the first two Classics of the flat season at Newmarket — the 2,000 and 1,000 Guineas.

He admits he will feel a mix of nervousness and excitement as he tries to strike the right chord after the coronavirus-enforced suspension of action.

Racing in Britain was suspended in mid-March before returning at Newcastle, in northern England, on Monday.

"It is historic and a real challenge," Chamberlin told AFP. "There is a job to be done, a balance to be struck with an understanding and sensitivity at what has happened."

"There will be people watching who have suffered, people who have lost loved ones through these horrendous months."

"We are still in the midst of a global pandemic and have to be sensitive to get the tone right."

Chamberlin, 46, says his sleep has been disrupted as he comes to terms with the "huge responsibility" of returning to the screen. "People will understand if there are a few glitches — there will be some nervous moments," he said.

"My legs can be going at 100 miles an hour under the desk but I will be calm above it."

Chamberlin's love of racing kept him going through nine weeks of chemotherapy when, aged just 34, he was diagnosed with stomach cancer.

So the gratitude expressed towards Britain's healthcare workers has an extra resonance for him.

'THRILL OF RACING'

Chamberlin, who moved from presenting Sky Sports' Premier League coverage to fronting ITV Racing in 2017, believes the sport has a unique opportunity to attract new fans.

This is despite negative publicity around the Cheltenham Festival, which went ahead in March with 250,000 spectators, just before the shutdown.

"Cheltenham got unfair criticism, it garnered bad PR through no fault of its own," he said. "We were following government protocols."

"Cheltenham was made a scapegoat and it is sad as racing was a national treasure a while ago. It was picked out when there were concerts and other sports events being held."

Chamberlin believes the series of top racing events coming up could prove a turning point for the sport, especially with Premier League football on hold until June 17. "It is a gilt-edged opportunity for our sport," he said. "(Racehorse owner) Steve Parkin put it best — 'This is the best opportunity to sell the thrill of racing in a lifetime.'"

Chamberlin says there is an outside chance he and his team will be on site at Royal Ascot, which begins on June 16. But before then he has to adapt to his new studio. He has had to sacrifice his personally signed Southampton shirt for an ITV Racing backdrop and a photograph of his horse, Lord Rapsallion, winning in Ireland in 2018.

Chamberlin is crossing his fingers that his two children do not wander in unannounced while he is on air. "Don't rule it out," he said. "We had an unsuccessful discussion about getting a red light and having it outside the spare room."

"I am so spoilt on ITV. I have a make up artist, stylist and runners to get me tea." So I might hire my son and pay him below the minimum wage." — AFP

Hamilton 'overcome with rage' over racial injustice

LONDON: Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton said he is "completely overcome with rage" about racial injustice in the wake of the death of George Floyd.

It is the second time this week that Britain's six-time world champion has spoken angrily about the death of Floyd, an unarmed black man who died on May 25 during an arrest in Minneapolis.

"This past week has been so dark. I have failed to keep hold of my emotions," Hamilton said in a statement posted Tuesday on his social media accounts.

"I have felt so much anger, sadness and disbelief in what my eyes have seen," he continued, after days of protests that have gripped cities across the US prompting curfews and the use of force by law enforcement agencies.

"I am completely overcome with

rage at the sight of such blatant disregard for the lives of our people." Earlier this week Hamilton lashed out at leading figures in his "white-dominated" sport for not speaking out.

"I see those of you who are staying silent, some of you the biggest of stars yet you stay silent in the midst of injustice," he said.

It prompted several top drivers to express outrage and support. On Tuesday Formula One issued its first response. "We stand with you, and all people in the fight against racism," a Formula One statement said. "It is an evil that no sport or society is truly immune from."

"And it is only together we can oppose an eradicate it. Together we are stronger." Hamilton questioned why it needed protests for the police officer who knelt on Floyd's neck for more than eight minutes, Derek Chauvin, to be arrested.

"It is only when there are riots and screams for justice that the powers that be cave in and do something, but by then it is far too late and not enough has been done," said Hamilton.

"It took hundreds of thousands of people's complaints and buildings to burn before officials reacted and decided to arrest Derek Chauvin for murder, and that is sad. Please do not sit in silence, no matter the colour of your skin. Black Lives Matter." — AFP

Sports

Balanced Grizz rally past Celtics in NBA 2K League

NBA targeting October finish for virus-hit season

NEW YORK: Getting double-figure scoring totals from all five players, Grizz Gaming downed Celtics Crossover Gaming 87-68 in the decisive contest of a best-of-three match on Tuesday as Week 5 of the NBA 2K League season began.

The night's other two matches were two-game sweeps. NetsGC improved to 1-1 with a victory over Magic Gaming, and Jazz Gaming dumped winless Lakers Gaming.

The scheduled match between Hawks Talon GC and 76ers GC was pushed back to an unspecified date.

Originally due to begin its season March 24, the NBA 2K League postponed play because of the coronavirus pandemic. On April 27, the league announced an initial six-week, online-only schedule, with all 23 teams playing eight total matches from their home markets. Action finally began May 5.

Each match is a best-of-three, with the outcome of each three-game series counting as one win or one loss in the standings.

After the Celtics took the opener against the Grizz 69-59, the Grizz leveled the match with a 76-62 decision.

In the third game, the Grizz's Zach "Vandi" Vandivier produced 32 points and 11 assists, Meyhar "AuthenticAfrican" Ahmed-Hassan scored 23 points, and Dayvon "GOOFY757" Curry had 11 points and 13 rebounds. Justin "Jrod" Rodriguez added 11 points, and Daniel "DDouble" Davis contributed 10 points.

The Celtics got 50 points and seven assists from Albano "oFAB" Thomallari, but it wasn't enough.

In the opener, oFAB had 35 points and seven assists, and teammate Terry "NO xAUTOGRAPHS" Jackson scored 18 points. AuthenticAfrican led the Grizz with 25 points, and Vandi put up 20 points and 11 assists.

Vandi's 40 points were the difference in Game 2. AuthenticAfrican and GOOFY757 each added 14 points for the Grizz, and GOOFY757 pulled down 16

rebounds. oFAB scored 43 points in the defeat.

The Jazz opened with a 76-63 victory over the Lakers, as Lytel "Lotty" Martin amassed 25 points and nine assists, and Spencer "Ria" Wyman had 10 points and 16 rebounds. Sten "SAV" Valge-Saar paced the Lakers with 38 points and eight assists.

Ria's triple-double — 21 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists — powered the Jazz to a 73-60 win in the second game. Kimanni "Splashy" Ingram added 19 points for the Jazz while SAV led the Lakers with 25 points and 10 assists.

The Nets got 39 points from Josh "Choc" Humphries plus 21 rebounds from Aziz "Shuttles" Salem in a 66-61 victory over the Magic in Game 1. The Magic's Brendan "Reizey" Hill had 40 points, and Robert "May" May racked up 12 points and 22 rebounds.

The Nets sealed the sweep with a 62-49 triumph, getting 29 points and seven assists from Choc, 17 points from Kory "Chess" Taylor, and 20 boards from Shuttles. May finished with 14 points and 17 rebounds, hitting 6 of 7 shots from the field, and Reizey also scored 14 points.

Meanwhile, the NBA is aiming to complete the 2020 season by mid-October, reports said Tuesday, as the league edges towards a return from the coronavirus shutdown. ESPN reported that according to a timeframe due to be voted on by NBA's Board of Governors on Thursday, Game 7 of the NBA Finals would take place no later than October 12.

The NBA and NBA Players Association are still finalising the details of the resumption of the season, which was halted on March 11 as the coronavirus pandemic erupted. ESPN reported that the league is planning a 22-team format for its return to play on July 31.

All games are expected to be within the confines of Disney's ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando Florida, with all teams remaining on site to minimise risk of COVID-19 outbreaks.

The NBA's proposal to be put before the board

and organising body La Liga has said all matches should be played without supporters in order to prevent a second wave of the coronavirus outbreak.

But second-tier Las Palmas have started a discussion about fans returning after their president Miguel Angel Ramirez said he hoped fans could attend their first match back against Girona.

Simon said the issue was discussed on Tuesday in an online meeting between Health Minister Salvador Illa, Sports Minister Irene Lozano and four La Liga players including Barcelona's Gerard Pique and Atletico Madrid's Koke.

He added that the players and the department for sport do not want supporters at matches until every club is allowed to have them back.

"The department for sport have agreed with the players. That decision did not come from the health department as it's not some-

thing we considered when evaluating the risks," Simon said.

"We haven't given any firm answer as we are obviously not in a position to do so yet but it is true that the health minister has committed to evaluating the risks. And if a region is in phase three (fans attending matches) will be evaluated."

Spain, one of the countries in Europe worst-affected by the virus, imposed a strict lockdown in March but has been easing restrictions according to progress made in each region.

The majority of provinces are expected to move into phase three from June 8, with the exception of the region of Madrid, the province of Barcelona and some provinces in Castille Leon.

La Liga president Javier Tebas has said the organisation is planning for supporters to return to stadiums in stages next season, which is due to begin on Sept. 12, as long as they get the green light from health authorities. —Reuters

shooting in order to maintain the technical level of shooters which requires continued training and daily practice to be ready for international competition. The plan was made based on WHO reports which said shooting and archery sport is an individual sport and does not constitute any danger during practice because distances can be kept during the daily practice.

He said the Technical Committee put into consideration all precautionary measures called for by Kuwait health authorities. He said the plan consists of several stages as the first will start with shooters qualified for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, then the second stage will include shooters participating in the Gulf Sports Games to be held in Kuwait in December 2020.

Al-Osaimi said the club informed the Public Authority for Sport (PAS) about the committee's plan to ask for allowing the resumption of the shooting sport activities.

Under the proposal, the Cincinnati tournament would retain its August 17-23 slot in the calendar as a lead-in to the US Open, whose main draw gets under way on August 31.

Both tournaments would take place at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center at Flushing Meadows.

The reported proposal follows increasing uncertainty about the position of the US Open on the tennis calendar, with New York being the epicentre of the coronavirus crisis in the United States.

The USTA said last month it was "aggressively" drafting contingency plans for the US Open in light of the pandemic, with reports suggesting the tournament could even be moved to Florida or California.

The USTA has said it planned to take a final decision on the status of the US Open by the end of this month. COVID-19 has wreaked hav-



PHOENIX: File photo shows, Devin Booker #1 of the Phoenix Suns drives to the basket against the Houston Rockets on February 07, 2020 at Talking Stick Resort Arena in Phoenix, Arizona. —AFP

today requires support from three quarters of the league's 30 teams in order to be approved.

ESPN reported there was overwhelming support for the plan being recommended by NBA commissioner Adam Silver.

One of the key issues to be settled is the format of the competition which will determine the final line-up for the 16-team playoffs.

Six teams currently just outside the playoff places will be included in the 22-team field and given the opportunity to claim a playoff berth.

If approved, the format will bring an abrupt end to the season for eight teams languishing outside the top 22.

Atlanta Hawks coach Lloyd Pierce said Tuesday exclusion from the restarted season would hurt his young team.

"The biggest thing we can benefit from is playing

basketball," Pierce said. "If the season is going to resume and we are not a part of it, it hurts our growth, it hurts our product, it hurts our ability to continue the momentum that we need going to next season."

"I play young guys, I have young guys - we need to play basketball."

The restart is expected to include a two-week quarantine for players in their home cities, one to two weeks of workouts at team facilities followed by two-week training camps.

The regular season was halted abruptly after Utah Jazz player Rudy Gobert tested positive. Gobert, of France, was given the all-clear about two weeks later.

So far, less than a dozen NBA players have been confirmed as testing positive for the coronavirus although not all have been identified. —AFP

Spain considering allowing soccer fans to return

MADRID: Spain's health ministry is weighing up whether to let fans back into soccer stadiums when the season restarts later in June after a three-month pause due to the new coronavirus pandemic, Health Emergency Coordinator Fernando Simon said on Tuesday. Simon explained that regions which had moved into phase three of the de-escalation process could be authorised to hold matches with spectators but added that they might be prevented from doing so in the interest of sporting fairness.

The top-flight is starting up again on June 11 with the Segunda Division resuming a day later,

Integrated plan prepared for return of shooting sport

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Secretary General of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Obaid Munahi Al-Osaimi said an integrated plan was prepared for the return of Kuwait shooting sport following the reports of World Health Organization's announcement that individual sports including shooting are not risky during practice.

Al-Osaimi said the Higher Technical Committee at Kuwait Shooting Sport Club completed the preparation of a comprehensive and integrated plan to resume activities of Kuwait

US tennis chiefs mull US Open-Cincinnati double-header

NEW YORK: The United States Tennis Association has proposed moving August's ATP/WTA Cincinnati Masters to New York for a doubleheader with the US Open, the New York Times reported Tuesday.

The Times reported that the proposal, which is designed to ward off threats to both tournaments from the coronavirus pandemic, was being considered by both the ATP and WTA.

If approved, the move would allow foreign players to remain in one venue during competition in the United States, alleviating concerns about travelling during the pandemic.



Obaid Munahi Al-Osaimi

oc with the international tennis calendar, which has ground to a standstill since the crisis erupted.

The French Open at Roland Garros has already been postponed until the end of September while Wimbledon was cancelled for the first time since World War Two.

The Times reported on Tuesday that plans to save the US Open remained shrouded in uncertainty, with doubts about whether enough players will be willing to travel to New York for the event, which would almost certainly be held without fans in attendance.

US women's player Bethanie Mattek-Sands told the Times that he welcomed moves to "go outside the box".

"Putting two big tournaments in the same place is definitely on the right track because it definitely makes it a bit easier to control some things," she said. —AFP

England confirm West Indies Test series in July

LONDON: England will play three Tests at home against the West Indies in July, subject to government clearance, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced on Tuesday.

The first Test will take place at Southampton's Ageas Bowl from July 8-12, with the second and third Tests at Emirates Old Trafford in Manchester on July 16-20 and July 24-28.

The series had been due to take place in June but was delayed because of the coronavirus. The West Indies, who agreed in principle to play last week, are due to arrive in England on June 9 and will be based at Old Trafford for a three-week period of quarantine and training before travelling down to Southampton. England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) director of events Steve Elworthy said: "Our main objective is to deliver a safe environment for all stakeholders including players, match officials, operational staff, essential venue staff, broadcasters and media."

"We are in daily dialogue with government and our medical team, who have been incredibly supportive during this period. These are our proposed dates and they remain subject to UK government approval." The series should have started at the Oval in London on Thursday, with the second and third Tests originally scheduled for Edgbaston and Lord's.

The ECB decided to move the matches to the Ageas Bowl and Old Trafford for reasons of bio-security. Both grounds have on-site hotels where players and officials can be closely monitored for signs of COVID-19. Edgbaston, in Birmingham, will remain a "contingency venue" and will be used to stage additional training throughout July.

Last week the ECB announced it was pushing back the start of its domestic season until August at the earliest. But going ahead with international fixtures is seen as vital to avoiding a financial black hole, with the ECB accounts for the year 2019/20 published Tuesday estimating the deficit to the board from a loss of matchday revenues, broadcast and sponsorship income this season at £252 million (\$316 million).

That followed a previous warning by ECB chief executive Tom Harrison that a wiped out season could cost the English game £380 million.

Tuesday saw the ECB report a record turnover of £228 million — an increase of £56 million. In March, the ECB launched a £61 million aid package to help English cricket cope with the financial fallout from the pandemic. Pakistan are due to arrive in England for a three-Test series later in the season, with England also scheduled to play limited-overs matches against Australia and Ireland.

The ECB said a decision on those matches and the women's internationals against India and South Africa would be made at a later date. Ian Watmore's appointment as ECB chairman was ratified on Tuesday. —AFP

18 Australia's Mick Doohan, greatest motorcycle racer of all time



19 Balanced Grizz rally past Celtics in NBA 2K League



19 Integrated plan prepared for return of shooting sport



FIFA join protests over Floyd's death

Protesting players deserved praise not punishment: Infantino



MINNEAPOLIS: Former NBA player Stephen Jackson arrives at a protest in response to the police killing of George Floyd outside the Hennepin County Government Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Jackson, who was friends with George Floyd, spoke at a press conference before joining the protest. — AFP

BERN: World soccer's governing body FIFA has joined sports leagues, teams and players around the globe to express solidarity amid outrage over the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man killed in police custody in the United States.

The National Football League, National Hockey League and National Basketball Association have put out statements about the racial injustice that sparked protests across the U.S. but Major League Baseball has yet to make an official statement.

From those four leagues, 74 of 123 teams (60%) have issued statements on the protests according to research by Axios.

Only four of the NBA's 30 teams have not issued releases while fewer than half (15) of the NFL's 32 teams and just a third (10) of MLB's 30 clubs made statements.

Across those leagues the loudest support has come from the players, including Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James, New Jersey Devils defenseman PK Subban, Kansas City Chiefs Super Bowl-winning quarterback Patrick Mahomes and New York Yankees slugger Gincarlo Stanton.

Charlotte Hornets and owner and former NBA great Michael Jordan and golfer Tiger Woods, who

rarely speak out on social issues, have also called for change.

The voices of outrage, however, are being heard well beyond U.S. borders. Several soccer players protested during matches in Germany's top-flight Bundesliga at the weekend, with Borussia Dortmund's Jadon Sancho and Achraf Hakimi displaying undershirts with the message, "Justice for George Floyd" on Sunday.

The German Football Association (DFB) said it was reviewing the incidents. England international Sancho was shown a yellow card after removing his shirt but the DFB said it was not due to his message but because he broke the rules on removing shirts.

FIFA, an organisation that has had zero tolerance for players expressing personal views about politics, religion and social issues on the field, has asked competition organisers to use "common sense" with athletes who show messages of protest over Floyd's death.



Voices of outrage

In a statement on Tuesday, the global soccer body said it "fully understands the depth of sentiment and concerns expressed by many footballers in light of the tragic circumstances of the George Floyd case". It added that applying the laws of the game was the responsibility of competition organisers, such as domestic leagues, who FIFA said "should use common sense and have in consideration the context surrounding the events."

"FIFA had repeatedly expressed itself to be resolutely against racism and discrimination of any kind... FIFA itself has promoted many anti-racism campaigns which frequently carry the anti-racism message at matches organised under its own auspices," it added. FIFA President Gianni Infantino later added that the protesting players deserved praise not punishment. "For the avoidance of doubt, in a FIFA competition the recent demonstrations of players in Bundesliga matches would deserve an applause and not a punishment," he said.

"We all must say no to racism and any form of discrimination. We all must say no to violence. Any form of violence."

Former West Indies captain Daren Sammy has urged cricket's world governing body, the International Cricket Council, and its member nations to speak out against social injustice.

"@ICC and all the other boards are you guys not seeing what's happening to ppl like me? Are you not gonna speak against the social injustice against my kind..." he wrote in a series of tweets.

"Now is not the time to be silent. I wanna hear u," the St Lucia all-rounder, who led West Indies to Twenty20 World Cup titles in 2012 and 2016, said.

His former team mate Chris Gayle also posted a statement on social media saying "Black life matters just as any other life!"

Formula One drivers followed Lewis Hamilton's lead on Monday after he criticised those in what he called the "white dominated sport" for failing to speak out about Floyd's death.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc said on Twitter he had felt "out of place and uncomfortable" sharing his thoughts on social media about the situation but realised he had been "completely wrong". — Reuters

US hammer thrower demands apology from Olympic chiefs

LOS ANGELES: Hammer thrower Gwen Berry demanded an apology from the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee on Tuesday as the organisation addressed the protests against police brutality roiling the country.

In a letter to US athletes following the death of an unarmed black man in Minneapolis, USOPC chief executive Sarah Hirshland said she felt a "sense of despair" witnessing the tumultuous scenes of the last

week. "We absolutely condemn the systemic inequality that disproportionately impacts Black Americans in the United States," Hirshland wrote.

"It has no place in ours or any other community. It is clear there are no forces as ugly, damaging and demeaning as racism and marginalization practiced by some of those in positions of authority."

"It played out in Minneapolis in the most tragic and unconscionable way imaginable. It is being felt intensely across the United States day after day."

Hirshland said the USOPC planned to hold an "athlete town hall" on Friday to give US athletes the chance to "listen to each other, learn from each other, and support each other."

"We can see that apathy and indifference are not solutions," Hirshland wrote. "The USOPC stands with those who demand equality and we want to work in pursuit of that goal." But the USOPC chief's com-

ments rang hollow for hammer thrower Berry, who was given a dressing down by US officials last year for protesting during a medal ceremony at the Pan-American Games in Lima.

Berry, a member of the United States 2016 Olympic team, raised a clenched fist on the medal podium to protest racial injustice after winning gold in the hammer. Berry was later given a reprimand by the USOPC for her protest and placed on probation for 12 months, with a warning she would face more severe punishment if she repeated the protest. The International Olympic Committee also warned in January that any athlete protesting on the podium at the Tokyo Olympics would face stiff punishment.

Responding to Hirshland's comments on Tuesday, Berry called for an apology.

"I want an apology letter .. mailed .. just like you and the IOC MAILED ME WHEN YOU PUT ME ON

PROBATION," Berry said. "Stop playing with me."

Berry has said the sanction cost her around \$50,000 in lost sponsorship earnings.

In an interview with Sports Illustrated on Tuesday, Berry said she finally felt "understood."

"When I took my stance, it was at a time when things were happening, but nothing was being done," she said. "When I took my stance, I was completely misunderstood. Now I feel like everyone feels how I felt." Several social media users on Tuesday backed Berry's request for an apology. Matt Conly, a throwing coach at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, said Hirshland's remarks were "empty."

"Less than a year ago you placed (Berry) under probation for peacefully demonstrating to bring positive attention to racial injustice," Conly wrote. "I'll judge you by your actions not this PR statement. Apologize publically & do what is right!" — AFP