



6 French forces kill leader of Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb



8 With bike chains and car parts, Afghan girls build ventilators



14 Ethiopia mobile camel libraries keep children from forced labor



19 Ole! La Liga to fire up again after old foes unite



Trump: 'Great day' for Floyd; anger at new police abuses

Mayor names 'Black Lives Matter Plaza' near White House



WASHINGTON: A new street sign that reads "Black Lives Matter Plaza NW" can be seen at the intersection of H and 16th Street near the White House on Friday.— AFP

NEW YORK: The United States braced for massive weekend protests against racism and police brutality, as outrage soared over the latest law enforcement abuses against demonstrators that were caught on camera. With protests over last week's police killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, surging into a second weekend, President Donald Trump sparked fresh controversy by saying it was a "great day" for Floyd.

Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee for November's election, called Trump's comments "frankly despicable", as thousands took to streets across America for a 10th straight day of anti-racism demonstrations. Massive street demonstrations were set for yesterday, including in Washington where tens of thousands of people are expected. The mayor painted "Black Lives Matter" in giant letters on the road leading to the White House ahead of the crowd's arrival.

Also yesterday, a remembrance for Floyd was to be held in Raeford, North Carolina, the state where he was born, following an initial ceremony in Minneapolis that was held Thursday. The protests, sparked by a police officer kneeling on Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes as he pleaded for his life, took place amid a roiling controversy over officers'

use of force against largely peaceful demonstrators.

In Buffalo, New York, two policemen were suspended without pay after a video showed them shoving over a 75-year-old protester who fell and suffered a head injury. Reporting the suspension on Twitter, Mayor Byron Brown said he and the police commissioner were "deeply disturbed" by the video. An earlier police statement said the man, who appeared unconscious and bleeding heavily from the head, "tripped and fell". Governor Andrew Cuomo called the incident "wholly unjustified and utterly disgraceful," in a tweet.

In Indianapolis, police launched an investigation after a video emerged showing at least four officers hitting a woman with batons and firing pepper balls at her on Sunday night. And in New York City Thursday, officers baton-charged dozens of peaceful protesters defying a curfew in the Bronx after pinning them in, leaving them with nowhere to run, several reports said.

New York Police Commissioner Dermot Shea announced Friday that two officers had been suspended following "several troubling incidents", one for pushing a woman to the ground and another for pulling down a man's face mask and spraying

Continued on Page 16

'No response' to efforts to resolve Gulf crisis: Qatar

DOHA: Qatar accused a Saudi-led alliance enforcing an embargo on Doha of refusing to engage with efforts it said were US-backed to resolve a crisis which entered its fourth year Friday. Riyadh, along with the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain cut diplomatic, economic and travel ties with Doha on June 5, 2017, insisting Qatar was too close to Iran and funding radical Islamists.

Gas-rich Qatar fiercely rejected the allegations and refused to budge on 13 demands made by its allies-turned-adversaries, including the closure of the Doha-based Al-Jazeera news network and shutting a Turkish military base in the emirate. "There is an initiative and a positive atmosphere in cooperation with the United States - and so far there is no response from the other side," Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani told Al-Jazeera.

Qatar has not previously confirmed US involvement in efforts to bring about reconciliation between the former allies. The latest effort, one of several since the start of the crisis which has complicated regional travel and trade as well as separating families, was being led by Kuwait, he added. "We hope this time there will be seriousness towards the Kuwaiti initiative with the support of the United States."

"We hope the initiative will produce results, we are open to dialogue and ready to meet each step forward with 10 steps from our side," Sheikh Mohammed said. "We hope this initiative is different than previous ones and it is taken seriously," the minister said, adding that there were some talks with Saudi Arabia at the end of 2019, but the process had stopped.

Ahead of Abdulrahman's comments, the UAE said the Gulf had changed and could not return to how it was before the rupture with Doha. "I do not think that the Qatar crisis, on its third anniversary, deserves comment", UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash wrote on Twitter. "Paths have diverged and the Gulf has changed and cannot go back to what it was," he said.

Despite a flurry of positive signs at the end of last year, including a round of shuttle diplomacy that saw the Qatari foreign minister visit Saudi Arabia for talks, the freeze shows no sign of thawing. "The causes of the crises are known, and the solution is also known and will come in time," Gargash said, without elaborating. — Agencies

Saudi reimposes virus lockdown on Jeddah

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia on Friday announced a renewed lockdown in the city of Jeddah, gateway to the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah, to counter a new spike in coronavirus cases. "After reviewing the epidemiological situation and the high occupancy

rates of intensive care departments, it was decided to take strict health precautions in the city of Jeddah for two weeks," starting from yesterday, the health ministry said.

The measures include a curfew running from 3 pm to 6 am, a suspension of prayers in mosques and a stay-at-home order for public and private sector workers in the Red Sea city whose airport serves Makkah pilgrims. After an easing of precautions in the kingdom in late May, the ministry said that strict measures could also soon return to Riyadh, which was "witnessing a continuous increase during the last days" of critical cases of the pandemic.

Trudeau takes a knee at protest for racial justice

OTTAWA: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joined thousands on Friday in taking a knee in front of Canada's parliament in solidarity with US protesters marching against racism and police brutality. It marked a rare public outing for the Canadian leader since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as protests spread outside the United States after police in Minnesota killed an unarmed black man.

"Far too many Canadians feel fear and anxiety at the sight of law enforcement officers," Trudeau told his daily briefing

earlier in the day. "Over the past weeks, we've seen a large number of Canadians suddenly awakened to the fact that the discrimination that is a lived reality for far too many of our fellow citizens is something that needs to end."

Trudeau, holding a "Black Lives Matter" T-shirt, chanted from behind a mask along with the crowd that extended several blocks to the US embassy, and later stood in silence for eight minutes and 46 seconds. This was the length of time that a white police officer in Minneapolis knelt on the neck of George Floyd, an unarmed African-American, who died after pleading "I can't breathe".

Video of Floyd's May 25 death has gone viral and sparked sometimes violent protests across the United States and mass demonstrations in European

Continued on Page 16



OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (second left) takes a knee during a Black Lives Matter protest on Parliament Hill on Friday.— AFP

Govt retakes Haftar's last redoubt in west

TARHOUNA, Libya: Forces loyal to Libya's UN-recognized government celebrated another victory against rival strongman Khalifa Haftar Friday after overrunning his last western stronghold, launchpad of an abortive 14-month assault on Tripoli. The recapture of Tarhouna southeast of the capital capped a week that already saw the Government of National Accord (GNA) reestablish control over the whole of Greater Tripoli with Turkish military support.

"Our heroic forces have extended their control over the whole of Tarhouna," said GNA spokesman Mohamad Gnounou. Fighters loyal to the GNA flashed the victory sign in the town's streets, some with ammunition belts slung around their necks as they rode on top of pick up trucks, others clambering over a tank, AFP pictures showed.

Tarhouna was the main rear base for the devastating offensive against the capital that eastern-based Haftar's forces finally gave up this week, abandoning their remaining positions in the southern suburbs to advancing government troops. "Our heroic forces have full control of Greater Tripoli right up to the city limits," Gnounou had announced on Thursday.

Continued on Page 16



TARHOUNA, Libya: Fighters loyal to Libya's UN-recognized Government of National Accord pose for a group picture as they celebrate in this town on Friday after the area was taken over by pro-GNA forces.— AFP

How to renew your driving license online

A step-by-step guide for renewal during the pandemic

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Driving without a license is a major traffic violation in Kuwait that can result in fines and even deportation. Be sure to check the date of your driving license's validity and make sure you renew it before it expires. The interior ministry's traffic department recently launched an online renewal process for driving licenses to help those whose licenses expired during the current period of extraordinary circumstances created by the global pandemic and the government shutdown.

Here's the step-by-step process for renewing your driving license.

1. The applicant must visit the interior ministry website. Applicant should already have a driving license and valid residency visa in Kuwait. Website: www.moi.gov.kw

2. Click on the icon indicating traffic department. Then click the online renewal tab for driving license.

3. If you had visited and signed-in previously,



License pickup subject to announcements

you will be automatically directed to the online driving license renewal page. Enter your username and password. Then you may start the re-

newal process.

For first-time visitors, you are asked to sign-in and fill out an application with personal information.

You will need:

- civil identification number
- reference number (the reference number is on the back of the civil ID card. You can also find it on old iqama stamps, and any previous traffic violation notices.)

4. You will then be directed to your personal record at the traffic department. It will show your traffic violations, if any. You must pay these before you can renew your license.

In case of any traffic violation, click the payment icon and pay through local banks using your local bank card. Follow the easy instructions for payment - it will only take a few seconds to complete

the transaction. Be sure to take a screenshot or printout of your payment receipt.

If there are no violations, you may proceed for the driving license renewal.

5. The fee for the renewal of the driving license is KD 3 for three years' validity. You will be directed to a payment screen. Be sure to take a screenshot of the payment. After payment, the screen will show the successful transaction and your license will be ready for pickup in a few days.

NOTE: The validity of driving licenses for Kuwaitis is now 15 years, while foreigners are given three years' validity. Pickup of renewed licenses during the current circumstances is subject to announcements. You can check the interior ministry's official accounts (Instagram @MoL_Kuw) to see when offices are open for license pickup.

In my view

Be sure about yourself

By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

I came across a story about a man who married from the same family, where some of its members have a hereditary disease causing difficulty hearing as age progresses. The man one day became suspicious that his wife's hearing had starting to deteriorate, so he consulted their family doctor.

The doctor told him there is an easy way to make sure about his wife's hearing. He said speak to her in moderate tone from 50 feet away, and if there is no response, go 10 feet closer and repeat the same talk. Again if there is no response, stand 20 feet away from her and say the same, then from 10 feet, and if she still does not respond, he should go behind her back and speak. He said this is the way to make sure about the strength of his wife's hearing.

The man went home and found his wife preparing lunch in the kitchen, so he stood 50 feet away from her and asked what she was preparing for lunch. She did not answer, so he stood 40 feet away and asked the same question - again no answer. The he spoke from 20 feet and the result was the same. He finally stood behind her back and said: What are you preparing for lunch my dear? And her answer was: This is the fifth time I'm telling you - the chicken is in the oven!

Do not assume you are always right, because the problem may be on your side. Is it not that we are not aware of our mistakes - we are highly focused on the mistakes of others. We must always start with ourselves make sure that we are on the right track before trying to correct or advise others, because we may be on the wrong track and must mend it.

On another note, I learned all of a sudden that a close friend had died on Thursday night. The hardest part is that I learned it not over the phone or from a visit by someone; rather I saw it in a Facebook post. What timing, and how hard it is because one cannot attend the funeral amid the COVID-19 circumstances, and you cannot visit the family for the same reason. The phone is your only way of communication in order to comfort the family members, or for them to comfort you indeed. It is a two-way road. May Allah bless your soul Adnan.

Final word: "Everyone wants to be the sun to lighten up someone's life, but why not be the moon, to brighten in the darkest hour?" - Anon

LuLu Hypermarket denies giveaway messages

KUWAIT: LuLu Hypermarket released the following statement, denying rumors that they were giving away coupons at present. "Dear valued customers, a message claiming that LuLu Hypermarket will be giving away coupons worth KWD 150 during the pandemic is being circulated on WhatsApp. We emphasize that this message is fake and not associated with LuLu Hypermarket by any means. News and giveaways are announced only on our official channels. Therefore, we encourage you to ignore the message's content and avoid sharing the news. Thank you for understanding and stay safe."



Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 30,644 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Friday, in addition to 244 deaths. With the exception of 197 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, 19,282 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 11,118 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 and Maidan Hawally, 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
- 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.

Local Spotlight

Death of an elephant

By Muna Al-Fuzai

Muna@kuwaittimes.net



What kind of a human loses the sense of humanity and places a pineapple stuffed with firecrackers that caused the death of an innocent pregnant female elephant? I am so angry because of this horrific and evil crime. I am not the only one, but many people in and out of India are horrified as well.

The female elephant entered a village near a park in Kerala looking for food, but ate a pineapple containing firecrackers that led to her death. She was seriously hurt, and dunked her trunk and mouth in a river in an attempt to drive away flies and insects that gathered on her wounds. The fire crackers had exploded in her mouth, causing her serious injuries, which led to her death. But she did not die alone - her fetus also died with her.

The Kerala state forest official said the 15-year-old elephant was unable to eat after the injury, and it died in the river on May 27. It was really a very painful incident for many people around the world that occurred at a very bad time, as most people are living in a messy psychological state for various reasons, whether economic or social.

The state forest department announced the arrest of the suspect, and said it is investigating whether he was a hunter or farmer who wanted to kill the elephant to prevent her from damaging crops. I hope the criminal will receive fair punishment and the maximum penalty.

News of the elephant's death sparked outrage among animal protection activists and on social media in India and around the world. Some news report said some of the villagers who live in the area placed firecrackers in fruits to protect their crops from wild animals, or erected electric fences with the aim of diverting elephants away from their fields located near the forests. Although this may sound justified for the villagers, it did not seem humane to the world, and the death of the elephant resulted in anger.

The world has not yet recovered from successive global events since January - from COVID-19 to the recent incidents of racism and unjustified killings in the US. The killing of elephants is a horrific act. But the forest department in India stated that it will leave no stone unturned to ensure maximum punishment for the offenders.

The elephant had been in pain for hours and started walking among the villagers without hurting anyone and ended up standing in the river, and remained there until she died. Police and specialists tried to get her out of the water to save her, but she remained standing until she died with her fetus.

Despite the severity of the situation, sadly animal abuse is repeated many times in many countries, whether with elephants or other pets such as cats and dogs. These ill behaviors even sometimes occur in labs when using poor animals in experiments, such as monkeys, cats and dogs. The same thing happens when animals are brutally beaten before slaughter to accelerate the end of the process.

I believe it is shameful to kill the animal brutally, but unfortunately, this is justified by many people and companies too. I believe nothing justifies brutality against peaceful animals, so I do not eat meat.

I hope the Indian government will set a law that makes such an act punishable against those who place any type of explosives in a fruit against innocent animals. There are certainly many ways to protect crops and villages of farmers other than this painful method that caused the death of a pregnant animal and raised the ire of many people. We are in a difficult time and tolerance of crime cannot be accepted.

Local

Over 70 Zain branches now ready to serve customers across Kuwait

Implementing all health precautionary measures to protect customers and staff



KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the reopening of over 70 branches across Kuwait to serve customers once again, while taking into consideration the strict implementation of all health and safety precautionary measures as directed by the authorities to protect customers and staff. Zain's valued customers may learn about the opened branches and their working hours via kw.zain.com or the Zain smartphone app.

Zain's reopening of its branches came after the Council of Ministers' official announcement of the inauguration of the plan for gradual return to normal life, which specified telecom companies as part of the institutions operating within the first phase. Zain affirmed its utmost commitment in all the official health guidelines at all reopened branches to protect both its customers and staff. This includes health measures such as sanitization and body temperature check-ups, as well as social distancing protocols and others.

Zain's plan for reopening its branches included many strict precautionary measures that started with full sanitization of all branches, furniture, and devices/equipment before opening them. Thermal cameras were installed at main branches to detect body temperatures from a safe distance of one meter without the need for physical contact, which achieves social distancing goals and commitment in official instructions. See-through dividers were also installed to separate customers and staff in a safe manner during transactions, while enabling sound to pass efficiently in order to achieve the best customer experience possible.

Zain has also supplied all branches and self-service machines with awareness stickers and banners to remind customers of health guidelines and social distancing goals while waiting. Some seats were made unavailable inside the branch to guarantee a safe space between customers while seated. In addition,

all demo smart devices were removed to ensure the safety of customers, who will be directed to the company's digital channels for full details about the newest devices and their features.

Zain has trained branch staff on all new health guidelines and precautions, including wearing face masks and gloves at all times, not allowing anyone to enter the branch in case they do not follow the needed precautionary measures or show an unaverage body temperature reading. Branches will also be periodically sanitized as per the highest health standards before opening, and K-NET pay machines, pens used for signatures, and other equipment will be sanitized after each transaction. Any important/official papers will be stored in a safe place and not kept exposed.

As part of its national commitment during this crisis, Zain recently changed its network's name to 'Shlonik' in line with the Ministry of Health and the country's efforts to launch the 'Shlonik' app, which coincided with the inauguration of the government's plan to evacuate citizens stranded abroad. The app was developed by Zain's team in joint collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT). Zain's development of the app came as an initiative on the company's part to support the country's efforts in fighting the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). 'Shlonik' translates to 'how are you' in the Kuwaiti dialect.

In March, Zain changed its network's name to STAY HOME in line with the directives of the Council of Ministers to remind its customers to commit to staying at home as much as possible and contribute to ending this pandemic.

Zain also offered over 40,000 meals in collaboration with the Kuwait Food Bank, where a large number of the meals was distributed during the week dedicated by the Ministry of Health at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref to conduct tests for residents who recently entered the country. The

meals were a contribution by the company to ease the long waiting times while waiting in line. Many meals were also being continuously distributed at Kuwait International Airport's gates dedicated for residents who are returning to their home countries because of this crisis.

Zain also offered many smartphone charging stations at Kuwait International Airport to serve Kuwaiti citizens who were returning home as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' evacuation plan to bring Kuwaitis back from all over the world during this crisis. This contribution aimed at facilitating communication between returning Kuwaitis and their families as soon as they arrived to Kuwait. Zain also continuously distributed a large number of meals to them in collaboration with the Kuwait Food Bank and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

Since the beginning of the crisis, Zain launched a social media campaign entitled 'This is Your Time' to send positive messages to the public about the importance of being a responsible citizen in this time

of crisis, not listen to rumors nor spread them, take part in volunteer efforts, commit to staying at home, as well as abide by the authorities' directives.

In March, Zain also collaborated with the Ministry of Health to offer its customers free calls to any health or medical information related to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) directly from the ministry's specialized team while ensuring taking the correct information from the official and certified sources.

As part of its continuous collaboration with the various ministries, Zain also provided the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior with FREE bulk SMS messages to send medical and awareness content to the community during this period. In addition, the company sent a number of awareness messages in collaboration with MOH's team through its official social media channels. Zain also broadcasted official MOH awareness videos on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in seven languages: Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Farsi, Filipino, Bengali, and Santhali.



All staff trained on new guidelines

Guterres thanks Amir for promoting cooperation with UN

KUWAIT: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres expressed gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the State of Kuwait's keenness to promote cooperation with UN and support to global efforts in fight against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Guterres made the remarks in a phone call with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Friday. He also thanked the State of Kuwait for always seeking to cooperate with UN agencies and programs in different fields. The UN chief



Antonio Guterres and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

and His Highness the Prime Minister also discussed regional and international issues, as well as cooperation to achieve international peace and security. —KUNA

UN official hails Kuwait's commitment to environment

KUWAIT: The United Nations special representative Tarek El-Sheikh praised the commitment of individuals, institutions, public and private bodies and civil societies in Kuwait for protecting the environment and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. Speaking in a statement on the occasion of World Environment Day, he said this year's event focuses on supporting biodiversity, which is the foundation that supports all living things.

A campaign was launched last week to draw attention to the need to restore nature and reverse the loss of biological diversity, the main objective of which was to build an understanding about how all living things

are linked in the web of life. It included interactive visual discussions and other platforms to show the interconnectedness of all life on Earth. Biodiversity, the diversity of life forms on Earth, from large animals, plants and fungi to the smallest living organisms, is being threatened like never before, he warned.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has stressed that we are on the verge of facing mass extinction. Over the next 10 years, about one million species of organisms may be erased from the face of the Earth, and wildlife has decreased on an average of more than 60 percent in the past 50 years. He cautioned that the loss of biodiversity would have severe impacts on humanity, from the collapse of food and health systems to disruption of entire supply chains, and that our unsustainable use of nature is the cause of this largely tragic situation. The UN official went on to urge governments, companies and civil society organisations to join hands in building a global understanding of biological diversity and nature's importance to our survival. —KUNA

CONDOLENCES

On behalf of the
**Mobile Telecommunications
Company - Zain,**
management and employees, we

would like to extend our heartfelt
condolences on the passing of

Mohammad Alqallaf

a member of the Zain family
and a beloved colleague.

We hold members of his family in
our closest thoughts and prayers
in this difficult time of loss and grief
and stand with them.

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him.

Local



KUWAIT: Kuwait Army patrolmen man a checkpoint at an exit in Farwaniya, which remains under total lockdown along with Khaitan, Hawally, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Kuwait to receive Avigan COVID-19 drug this week

KUWAIT: The first shipment of Japanese medicine (Avigan) will arrive in the country this week, after its positive results in clinical trials conducted by many countries to treat coronavirus, said Kuwait's Health Ministry Friday. The Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Medicines and Medical Equipment Affairs, Dr Abdullah Al-Bader, affirmed that the first shipment of the drug comes within the emergency response and humanitarian purposes and does not carry a commercial value from the Japanese government. The medicine's use will be in accordance with the guidelines prepared by Japan and according to the recommendations of the World Health Organization and the regulations followed in Kuwait, Bader added.

Bader lauded the coordination that lasted for nearly three months between the Ministries of Health and Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Kuwait in Tokyo, as an agreement was reached between the governments of Kuwait and Japan on April 19, 2020, and between Kuwait and the UN Office for Project Services on April 30, 2020, and May 19, 2020, to provide the medicine. Furthermore, Bader expected to also receive the 'Remdesivir' medicine during the current month, which is among the treatments that will be evaluated for its safety and effectiveness within the global initiative launched by the World Health Organization and its partners, entitled 'Solidarity'. —KUNA

Kuwait affirms PCR tests haven't stopped

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ministry of Health said Thursday swabs taken through the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests have not stopped and were conducted as planned by MoH. The MoH was reacting to media and social media reports it was halting PCR tests except for coronavirus patients, and affirmed the tests were conducted on suspected cases and on people who might have come into close contact with infected persons. The ministry, in a statement, warned against statements made by persons who were "not scientifically qualified to talk about pandemics and how to deal with them."

It said it was monitoring cases and testing peo-

ple in line with regulations of the World Health Organization (WHO) and international medical institutions. The PCR tests are conducted in two paths, the first is testing people showing symptoms to make sure whether symptoms were caused by COVID-19 or not. "These cases are tested in emergency wards in hospitals," said the ministry. The second path, it added, was testing people who might have come into close contact with infected persons.

"This test is for persons without symptoms but they were in touch with infected persons so it is possible they become infected," it said. The ministry said transmission of disease is likely in hospitals, so they could not have large amounts of people with no symptoms coming to hospitals for PCR test. "This will likely subject them to contracting the disease because they are in the hospital," it said, so those people would take another path managed by the Public Health Department and away from hospitals. —KUNA

Coast guard thwarts drugs' smuggling attempt

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Coast Guard managed to thwart an attempt to smuggle 131 kgs of hashish into the country via sea. Coast Guard patrols monitored a suspect boat with four people onboard through thermal cameras, clamped down and managed to detain them. When questioned, the group admitted dumping the narcotics in the water, yet, the shipment was traced down and retrieved, said a ministry statement late Thursday. Furthermore, the detained confessed that the shipment was meant to be delivered to a citizen inside the country, who is collaborating with another citizen outside. The detainees and confiscated belongings were referred to relevant authorities, pending legal action, while the suspected citizen was arrested after a legal warrant was issued, noted the statement. —KUNA

Kuwaiti oil price up to \$35.34 pb, American nears \$40 pb

KUWAIT: Price of the Kuwaiti crude oil rose \$1.69 to \$35.34 pb in Friday's trades against \$33.65 pb on Thursday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. In international markets, forward deals of the North Sea Brent Crude Oil climbed \$2.31, 5.8 percent, to \$42.30 pb. Meanwhile, the identical contracts for West Texas Intermediate crude oil climbed \$2.14, 5.7 percent, settling at \$39.55 pb. By contrast, price of the Kuwaiti crude oil dropped 94 cents to settle at \$33.65 per barrel in Thursday's trades against \$34.59 pb on Wednesday. On June 2nd, the Kuwaiti crude price began a bullish tendency crossing the \$30 pb level by more than three points: as compared to the drastic slump in April when it dropped as low as approximately \$12 pb, amid climax of the pandemic. Coronavirus had paralyzed various sectors, worldwide, namely transports and industries that depend heavily on fossil fuel. The prices started turning up as nations began easing constraints. —KUNA

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Local

Central Bank tables proposal to boost Kuwait's coronavirus-hit economy

In line with nature of local economy and state's legal requirements

KUWAIT: A proposal to boost the coronavirus-impacted local economy has been tabled during the most recent cabinet meeting, Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel said late Thursday. The twofold proposal comprises eased financing for SMEs and introduces the state as a guarantor for the aforementioned funding, noted Hashel. The CBK chair's remarks came during a press conference following an online extraordinary cabinet meeting to discuss measures to address the economic ramifications of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) earlier in the day.

The higher steering committee to stimulate the economy has examined 35 related experiments around the world; 40 percent of which concluded that government intervention should come in the shape of an easy-loaner/guarantor, he pointed out. Hashel is heading the committee. The proposal is designed to align with nature of the local economy and the state's legal requirements; conditioned with banks'



Eased financing for SMEs

liquidity abundance, attractive interest rates for both the lender and lent, and stimulating banks to provide credit, he explained. Beneficiaries of the proposed stimulus package would be companies and SMEs impacted by consequences of COVID-19, with the committee reducing discount rate and value of loans; offering up to KD 250,000 (\$825,000) in soft loans for every owner of a small or medium size enterprise (SME), who should pay back the loan in four years, he noted.

Opportunities for the state's economy and local banks, as well as the nonexistence of direct impact

on public funds are some of the proposal's advantages, Hashel said, noting that based on reserved scenarios, the program's cost would not exceed 10 percent of the sum amount presented by the banks to the private sector, as it represents one percent of the GDP, compared to 15 percent offered within similar programs in other countries. Other features of the CBK proposal include "risk-sharing" between the state and banks, which, according to Hashel, enables the state to focus on its role, which would result in mitigating inflationary pressures.

Such adjusted regulatory instructions and other macro prudential policy tools would empower the banks' ability to perform their vital role, provide financing to productive economic sectors, and offer liquidity to help businesses continue operations, he added. The CBK instructions issued include a reduction in liquidity requirements such as the liquidity coverage ratio, the net stable funding ratio, and the regulatory liquidity ratio. In addition, they increase the maximum limits for the negative cumulative mismatch and the maximum lending limits to providing financing. Locally, the CBK governor predicted that impacts of measures taken in the past three months would "hit the local economy hard," which requires abiding by health authorities' guidelines "in order to steer clear of a setback."

Based on CBK surveys, retail stores' clientele plummeted 75 percent; 45 percent of retail shops were forced to suspend activity, while 64 percent of Kuwait's population are in a state of uncertainty and 44 percent of real estate owners lowered their



The Central Bank of Kuwait.

monthly rent incomes. Al-Hashel pointed out. That, in addition to SMEs and major companies' 42-percent revenue crunch, would force curtail redundancies in terms of employees, leading to shrinkage in Kuwait's non-oil GDP. On the regional level, Hashel underlined that countries are fighting on two fronts, with the human race struggling to choose between saving lives or saving livelihoods.

On the global scale, Hashel said that the world is witnessing an unprecedented pandemic amid

expectations of a looming global recession: the largest since the Great Depression, pointing out that countries responded potently to the crisis by spending about 15 percent of the global GDP, with estimated stimulus packages' value of \$11 trillion. Earlier in the day, the cabinet hoped the stimulus measures would contribute to addressing economic impacts caused by COVID-19, stressing that the private sector should continue its pivotal role in achieving New Kuwait's 2035 Vision. —KUNA

Amir's representative takes part in Global Vaccine Summit 2020

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir's Representative, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, headed the Kuwaiti delegation in the Global Vaccine Summit (GAVI) which was held Thursday online at the invitation of the UK Prime Minister. This summit comes to support the concerted international efforts to find urgent solutions to accelerate the process of developing an effective vaccine for the new coronavirus and to finance research and innovative programs in this field. The summit also aims to support the manufacturing and supply capabilities so that treatment reaches all countries and work to strengthen the immunization measures and enabling health systems around the world to upgrade their capabilities to face the repercussions and risks of this pandemic.

In his speech, Sheikh Ahmad delivered His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's gratitude and appreciation for holding this urgent and important summit. Sheikh Ahmad stressed Kuwait's commitment to helping combat this epidemic and support this important alliance, affirming Kuwait's full support for GAVI strategy which includes plans to vaccinate more than one billion children by the end of 2025. Kuwait believes that this summit provides an opportunity to send a message to the world that a fair distribution of vaccines will be guaranteed, especially in developing countries, Sheikh Ahmad added. Gavi was established in 2000 as an international organization that brings together the public and private sectors with a common goal which is to provide equal opportunities for children in poor countries around the world to obtain vaccines and vaccination properties and work to protect the world from the threat of epidemics.



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah takes part in the Global Vaccine Summit 2020. —KUNA

Combating ISIS

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad headed the delegation of the State of Kuwait in the ministerial group of the international coalition against the so-called (ISIS) organization, which was held Thursday, through video communication conference, and after a joint invitation by both the United States and Italy. The meeting comes within the framework of completing joint international efforts to combat the so-called (ISIS) organization and prevent its expansion and support efforts taken to restore security and stability to the liberated areas from the grip of this terrorist organization in particular and in the Middle East region in general, in addition to discussing the latest international developments and accelerating changes due to the outbreak of coronavirus, especially in conflict areas.

Sheikh Ahmad delivered a speech during the meeting, which highlighted appreciation for the invitation and expressed concerns over the continued spread of the Corona pandemic, which greatly affected the world. The Foreign Minister also welcomed the formation of the new Iraqi government led by Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kazemi. Sheikh Ahmad also highlighted Kuwait's role in supporting international efforts to counter the spread of the coronavirus. —KUNA



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah participates in the international coalition in combating ISIS meeting.

Finance Minister to deal with grilling constitutionally

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Finance Minister Barak Al-Shitan said that he was informed, Thursday, that MP Riyadh Al-Adsani filed a grilling motion against him. Minister Shitan stressed in a press statement that the motion will be dealt with according to the constitutional frameworks. Earlier Thursday, Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said he had received a grilling motion from MP Riyadh Al-Adsani against Finance Minister Barak Al-Shitan.

Ghanem affirmed that all the procedures were followed by informing His Highness the Prime Minister

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and the minister concerned. According to the motion paper, it included five issues, one of which deals with public debt and public finances. Ghanem noted that he also received a request from MP Faisal Al-Kandari to add three issues to the motion submitted by him to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education Dr Saud Al-Harbi, and the minister was informed accordingly.

Last week, MP Faisal Al-Kandari submitted a grilling motion to the Speaker Ghanem, against the Minister of Education over one issue, which is "mismanagement of the educational process during the coronavirus crisis, which caused harm to the students." Article 100 of the Kuwaiti constitution states that "Every member of the National Assembly may address to the Prime Minister and to Ministers interpellations with regard to matters falling within their competence." —KUNA

Current economic conditions require spending cuts: PM

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah called on all authorities to understand "critical circumstances," which required spending cuts to overcome the current economic conditions. His Highness the Prime Minister said authorities should abide by all measures and show "serious cooperation in order to overcome this phase with the least damage possible."

He made the remarks while chairing an online cabinet meeting Thursday to discuss measures to address the economic ramifications of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Deputy Premier, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said in a statement after the meeting. Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel, in a briefing about the stimulus package, said no projection could determine how deep the crisis would be nor the time needed for recovery. He warned that delaying the rapid response to help companies and SMEs would have "big negative economic impacts," which mean they would go bankrupt. Hashel, who chairs the higher steering committee to stimulate the economy, said the committee adopted rapid stimulus measures to support banks in order to improve their lending abilities. The committee reduced discount rate, value of loans and offered up to KD 250,000 (\$811,000) soft loans for every owner of a small or medium size enterprise, who should pay back the loan in four years. The cabinet hoped the stimulus measures contribute to addressing economic impacts caused by COVID-19, and said the private sector should continue its major role to achieve Kuwait's 2035 vision.



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's meeting. — KUNA

The cabinet also said the private sector should remain attractive to Kuwaiti cadres. Furthermore, the cabinet approved the Finance Ministry's proposals not to increase budgets of independent government authorities, institutions and funds for five years, as well as reducing their budgets by 20 percent for fiscal year 2020-21. The ministry should also coordinate with all government departments to reconsider services and subsidies, and projected revenues out of this action. On the other hand, Minister Saleh briefed the cabinet about a meeting between His Highness the Prime Minister with editors in chief of local newspapers, during which he talked about the government measures to confront the spread of coronavirus. His Highness the Prime Minister also reaffirmed determined to carry out comprehensive reforms and crackdown on corruption and the corrupt with the ultimate objective of preserving the public funds. The cabinet, said Saleh, voiced relief as the number of recoveries from the coronavirus exceeded 50 percent than the number of active cases. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi recently toured the fish and vegetables market in Sharq to inspect adherence to government instructions to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Kuwait. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



UK virus death toll tops 40,000

UK halts trial of hydroxychloroquine as 'useless'

Page 8

Page 8



NEW YORK: Protesters take a knee and raise their fists during a 'Black Lives Matter' demonstration in front of the Brooklyn Library and Grand Army Plaza on June 5, 2020 in Brooklyn, New York, amid ongoing protests over the death in police custody of George Floyd. — AFP

UN condemns modern-day 'lynchings'

UN rights experts call for systemic reform in US

GENEVA: Independent UN rights experts called Friday for systemic reform in the United States following the killings of George Floyd and other African Americans they said resembled "modern-day racial terror lynchings". The experts, who do not speak for the UN but report their findings to the world body, decried the spate of killings by police and others, largely with impunity. They said in a statement that a number of the killings displayed a "particular disregard or depravity toward human life, and the use of public spaces to assert racial control, each characteristic of lynching".

The comments came as demonstrators continue to throng US cities to protest the killing of George Floyd, a black man who died when a white police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes. His May 25 death followed the police killing in Kentucky of emergency health worker Breonna Taylor in her

home and the fatal shooting of unarmed black jogger Ahmaud Arbery. The 12 special rapporteurs, three working groups on rights issues and the chair of the



Modern-day racial terror lynchings

UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination said they "strongly condemn" the killing of all

three and called for "systemic reform and justice".

'Track record of impunity'

"The latest videos to surface showing white men chase, corner, and execute a young man who was out jogging, or showing an officer kneeling with his weight on a man's neck for eight minutes shock the conscience and evoke the very terror that the lynching regime in the United States was intended to inspire," they said. "Given the track record of impunity for racial violence of this nature in the United States, black people have good reason to fear for their lives."

The experts said that "the origin story of policing in the United States of America starts with slave patrols and social control, where human property of enslavers was 'protected' with violence and impunity against people of African descent." "In the US, this legacy of racial terror remains evident in modern-day

policing," they said. Arbery, 25, was shot on February 23 by Travis McMichael, one of three white men who chased him down in pickup trucks in Brunswick town.

A witness told a court this week that McMichael used a racial slur after shooting him, calling him a "fucking n*****". "The last few moments of Ahmaud's life involved pursuit by a lynching party identical to the lynching parties of the Jim Crow era," the experts charged. They also raised concerns about the police reaction to demonstrations in several cities, noting a "militarization" of the response and the detention of thousands of protesters, as well as the targeting and detention of reporters of color. "Statements from the US government inciting and threatening violence against protesters stand in stark contrast to calls for leniency and understanding which the government had issued in the wake of largely white protests against COVID-19 restrictions," they said. — AFP

Eight-year-old maid's death spurs calls for child labor reform

KARACHI: The brutal death of an eight-year-old maid has caused outrage in Pakistan, prompting the government to propose changes to legislation governing child labor. Zohra Shah was taken to a hospital in Rawalpindi, in Punjab province, on May 31 with serious injuries, and she died soon afterwards. Police have arrested the girl's employers, a couple, over her killing. Following an outpouring of anger on social media about Shah's death, the country's human rights ministry said it would work to ensure her killers were brought to justice. "We will have a better picture once the (police) investigation is complete," Fauzia Chaudhry, a lawyer at the ministry, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone. "Once we know for sure, we will take action," she said. The minister for human rights, Shireen Mazari, tweeted on June 3 that the ministry had proposed amending a child labor law to classify domestic work as a "hazardous occupation." That would mean children could not legally be employed as maids or other household staff.

It is illegal for children to work in factories and other industries in Pakistan, but there are still about 12 million child workers in the country, said Sajjad

Cheema, executive director of Pakistani NGO Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC). Many work as domestic staff in private homes, making it more difficult for authorities to detect. Extreme poverty pushes many families to send their children to work, Chaudhry said. "In Shah's case, the parents were so poor they were reluctant to take their child's body back to the village as they did not have enough money for the ambulance or funeral rites," she said, adding that the government had arranged to cover the costs. Rabiya Javeri Agha, federal secretary at the rights ministry, said contradictions within the country's constitution about the legal age must be addressed in order to protect children from violence at the hand of employers.

"There needs to be legal and constitutional clarity on the age of the child," she said, highlighting several sections of the country's constitution and penal code that needed revisiting. She highlighted the ministry's role in amending a law to make "cruelty to a child" a penal offence, but said more remained to be done: "Beyond legislation, however, there is an urgent need to change our culture of discipline through corporal punishments - both at home and in schools." The government lawyer, Chaudhry, drew a parallel between Shah's death and a 2016 case involving a 10-year-old maid who was tortured by her employers, a judge and his wife. After the human rights ministry took up the case, the judge was barred from legal practice. The three-year jail term imposed on him and his wife was later reduced to one year, however. — Reuters

French forces kill leader of Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb

PARIS: French forces have killed the leader of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Algerian Abdelmalek Droukdel, in northern Mali, France's defense minister said. Droukdel was killed on Thursday near the Algerian border, where the group has bases from which it has carried out attacks and abductions of Westerners in the sub-Saharan Sahel zone, Defense Minister Florence Parly said Friday. "Many close associates" of Droukdel - who commanded several affiliate jihadist groups across the lawless region - were also "neutralized", she added.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) emerged from a group started in the late 1990s by radical Algerian Islamists, who in 2007 pledged allegiance to Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda network. The group has claimed responsibility for a string of attacks on troops and civilians across the Sahel, including a 2016 attack on an upmarket hotel and restaurant in Burkina Faso, which killed 30 people, mainly West-

erners. France has deployed more than 5,000 troops to combat jihadist groups in the region - a largely lawless expanse stretching over Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, where drugs and arms flow through porous borders. Northern Mali is the site of frequent clashes between rival armed groups, as well as a haven for jihadist activity.

In 2012, key cities fell under the control of jihadist groups linked to Al-Qaeda, who exploited an ethnic Tuareg-led rebel uprising, leading to a French-led military intervention. According to the UN, Droukdel was an explosives expert and manufactured devices that killed hundreds of civilians in attacks on public places. He was sentenced to death in Algeria in 2013 for his involvement in the bombings of a government building and offices of the UN's refugee committee in Algiers that killed 26 people and wounded 177. The US said it had provided intelligence to help track down Droukdel. "US Africa Command was able to assist with intelligence and... support to fix the target," spokesman Colonel Chris Karns told CNN on Friday.

France also claimed on Friday to have captured a leader of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (EIGS) group, which carries out frequent attacks over Niger's western borders. "On May 19, French forces captured Mohamed el Mrabat, veteran jihadist in the Sahel region and an important cadre in EIGS", Parly said on Twitter. — AFP

Iraqis: 'We want to breathe, too'

BAGHDAD: Seventeen years after US troops invaded their country and eight months since protests engulfed their cities, Iraqis are sending solidarity, warnings and advice to demonstrators across America. Whether in Baghdad's Tahrir Square or on Twitter, Iraqis are closely watching the unprecedented street protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died in Minneapolis as a police officer knelt on his neck. "I think what the Americans are doing is brave and they should be angry, but rioting is not the solution," said Yassin Alaa, a scrawny 20-year-old camped out in Tahrir.

Only a few dozen Iraqis remain in tents in the capital's main protest square, which just months ago saw security forces fire tear gas and live bullets at demonstrators, who shot back with rocks or occasionally Molotov cocktails. Violence left more than 550 people dead, but virtually no one has been held accountable - mirroring a lack of accountability over deaths

at the hands of security forces in the US, Iraqis say. Now, they want to share their lessons learned. "Don't set anything on fire. Stay away from that, because the police will treat you with force right from the beginning and might react unpredictably," Alaa said. And most importantly, he insisted, stick together. "If blacks and whites were united and they threw racism away, the system can never stop them," he said.

Common 'injustice'

Across their country, Iraqis spotted parallels between the roots of America's protests and their own society. "In the US it's a race war, while here it's a war of politics and religion," said Haider Kareem, 31, who protested often in Tahrir and whose family lives in the US. "But the one thing we have in common is the injustice we both suffer from," he told AFP. Iraq has its own history of racism, particularly against a minority of Afro-Iraqis in the south who trace their roots back to East Africa. In 2013, leading Afro-Iraqi figure Jalal Tiyab was gunned down in the oil-rich city of Basra - but discrimination against the community is otherwise mostly non-violent. "Our racism is different than America's racism," said Ali Essam, a 34-year-old Afro-Iraqi who directed a wildly popular play about Iraq's protests last year. — AFP



KARACHI: A girl holds her mother's hand as they walk along a road, as the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues in Karachi. — Reuters

International

Democratic US politicians urge police reform; protesters march for 11th day

Minneapolis, California bar police from using neck restraints

WASHINGTON: Prominent Democratic politicians on Friday embraced the cause of US protesters angered by the death of a black man in Minneapolis police custody, adopting their slogans and announcing reforms as tensions remained high in major cities. Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser, who has sparred with US President Donald Trump over his sometimes heavy-handed response to the rallies and marches in the nation's capital, had the slogan "Black Lives Matter" painted in massive yellow letters on a street leading to the White House.

In Minneapolis, where 46-year-old George Floyd died on May 25 after a police officer pinned him to the ground with a knee to the neck for nearly nine minutes, Democratic city leaders voted to end the use of knee restraints and choke holds, although the ordinance must be approved by a judge. Separate autopsies conducted by the Hennepin County Medical examiner and a team hired by Floyd's family each found that he died from asphyxiation.

California Governor Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, said he would bar a state police training agency from teaching a restraint technique, sometimes called a "sleeper hold," that involves restricting the carotid artery in the neck. And in New York, Governor Andrew Cuomo said his state should lead the way in passing "Say Their Name" reforms, including making police disciplinary records publicly available and banning chokeholds. "Mr Floyd's murder was the breaking point," Cuomo, also a Democrat, said in a statement.



NFL apologizes for failing to support protests

Players over kneeling protests during the national anthem before games, a practice made popular by quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who is black, in 2016 to protest against racial injustice and police brutality. Trump, who derided the kneeling players as "sons of bitches" in 2017, criticized their actions again on Twitter earlier on Friday.

Officers suspended

Black Lives Matter activists have also called for cities to defund police departments. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, a Democrat who in April proposed increasing law enforcement funding, this week reversed course and said he would seek some \$150 million in

"People are saying enough is enough, we must change."

Amid accusations across the country of police use of excessive force during the 11 days of protests, a federal judge in Denver ordered city police to stop deploying tear gas, plastic bullets and other "less-than-lethal" devices such as flash grenades. The temporary injunction was in response to a lawsuit filed by protesters. A spokesman for the Denver Police Department said the force would comply with the order. National Football League Commissioner Roger Goodell, in a video-taped message, said the NFL had made mistakes in not listening to players and it would now "encourage all to speak out and peacefully protest."

The NFL, ranked as America's most popular professional league in polls and television ratings, has been locked in a debate with



CALIFORNIA: Supporters of 'Black Lives Matter' sit and listen as activists speak during a protest to commemorate Breonna Taylor on what would have been her 27th birthday in Hollywood, California on June 5, 2020. Breonna Taylor, a black woman, medical worker, was shot dead by Louisville, Kentucky police when they stormed her home March 13, 2020 as part of a drug investigation. — AFP

cuts to the Los Angeles Police Department.

After video footage from upstate New York raised further questions about the handling of demonstrators by law enforcement, two Buffalo police officers seen on Thursday shoving a 75-year-old protester to the ground were suspended and placed under investigation. All 57 members of a police tactical unit quit the unit to protest their treatment, media said. Protests over the death of Floyd have rocked cities including Atlanta, Denver, Detroit as well as many smaller communities.

The demonstrations have erupted as the public and businesses struggle to recover from sweeping lockdowns imposed to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus. Disease experts have said the protests could spark new outbreaks. On Friday, marches and gatherings took place in Atlanta, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Miami, New York and Denver, among other places. Protesters also massed again in the rain in front of the White House. The nighttime protests were largely peaceful. — Reuters

China targets land grabs, evictions in new law

BEIJING: Farmers in China have faced forced evictions and illicit land grabs for decades - sources of social unrest that the government is finally trying to address in a major shake-up of its property law. Millions of hectares of rural land were taken away from farmers in the past three decades and given to developers as China raced to urbanize, often with little or no compensation in return. Rural migrants living in run-down inner-city areas have also been forcefully evicted in recent years as cities fight congestion.

"Land disputes trigger half of an estimated 100,000 social protests in China every year, making them the second leading cause for public unrest after labor disputes," Ni Yulan, a lawyer who advocates for property rights of low-income families in Beijing, told AFP. Ni has been jailed twice for her advocacy and is paralyzed from the waist down, a result she says of beatings received during her detention. Her house in Beijing was demolished by officials in 2008, but she hasn't yet been able to file a complaint about it because local courts were operating hand in glove with the local government, her husband Dong Jiqin said.

China's first-ever civil code approved by parliament last week focuses on giving judges greater independence and curbing the influence of local officials, but the judi-



SHANGHAI: File photo shows a worker shoveling building material around a soon-to-be torn down and empty residential building in Shanghai. — AFP

ciary is still ultimately answerable to the Communist Party. The new guidelines have narrowed the interpretation of "public interest" to prevent abusive land grabs. It also makes it mandatory for local governments to make public announcements on "all acts taken by the state in relation to private property", thus making land transactions more transparent. But it does not stipulate any punishments for those illegally expropriating land or the rights of individual farmers to collective land, making it harder for families to seek compensation. The wide-ranging legislative package will come into effect on January 1.

"For the first time, the civil code offers one whole (legal) system," Liu Qiao, who

specializes in Chinese and English civil law at the City University of Hong Kong, said. "It forces courts and judges to be consistent with their interpretations, thus reducing room for political meddling." But Dong, who is also an activist, was concerned that the new provisions will be ignored during enforcement. "The problem in China is that there is no supervision, and the judiciary doesn't act in accordance with the law," he said. Local governments have taken away land from 100,000 to 500,000 farmers every year between 2005 to 2015 in violation of national land-use laws, according to a study by Qiao Shitong, a property and urban law professor at the University of Hong Kong. — AFP

India-China generals over frontier dispute

NEW DELHI: Top Chinese and Indian generals met in a Himalayan outpost yesterday in a bid to end the latest frontier showdown between the world's two most populous nations that has seen thousands of troops sent to both sides. Ahead of the talks, here are the key points that have led to the dispute and the pitfalls of the two nations, who fought a 1962 border war and have clashed many times since, over the solution:

Fist-fights, handshakes

On May 9 several Indian and Chinese troops were injured in fights with fists, stones and wooden batons in Sikkim state. Indian officials say that within days, Chinese troops had encroached on the Indian side of their demarcation line in the Ladakh region further to the west. India has moved extra troops to positions opposite. The generals are to meet at a point near the face-off known as Chushul-Moldo for the highest-level talks since the fistcuffs, according to military sources.

A line out of control

Experts say that new roads on the Indian side of the line may have riddled China. But the dividing line between India and China is more like a scar - that includes a ceasefire Line of Actual Control

- than a border. They cannot even agree how long it is. India gives a figure of 3,500 kilometers. China does not give a number, but state media says the border should be just 2,000km when China's claims in Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and other regions are taken into account. Each side uses different frontier proposals made by Britain to China in the 19th century to back their claims. Increasingly tense border talks and a series of skirmishes led to the 1962 war, mainly fought above 4,000 meters (14,000 feet), in which China took territory from India in Arunachal Pradesh. Regular clashes have followed and the rival sides staged a 73-day showdown in the Doklam Plateau in 2017.

India-China powerplay

High altitude face-offs have become more frequent in recent years. There have been four since President Xi Jinping took power in 2012. The US administration has said this is a new sign of China's growing military assertiveness. India has also taken a tougher line on security since nationalist prime minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014. "India does not want to hurt any country's pride neither can it tolerate if a country wants to hurt ours," said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh last week. Tamanna Salikuddin, a South Asia expert at the US Institute of Peace think tank, linked the tensions to India's fierce rivalry with Pakistan, an ally of China. "From the Indian perspective, China's aggression is seen as supportive of Pakistan's efforts to contest the borders with India in this highly inflammable region." —AFP

Brazil threatens to quit WHO, US beating pandemic

RIO DE JANEIRO: President Jair Bolsonaro threatened Friday to pull Brazil from the WHO over "ideological bias," as his counterpart Donald Trump said the US economy was recovering from the coronavirus pandemic and Europe sought to re-open its borders. Adding fuel to the political fire raging around the pandemic, its origins and the best way to respond, Bolsonaro criticized the World Health Organization for suspending clinical trials of the drug hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19 - a decision it reversed this week - and threatened to follow in Trump's footsteps by quitting.

"I'm telling you right now, the United States left the WHO, and we're studying that, in the future. Either the WHO works without ideological bias, or we leave, too," the far-right leader told journalists. Sometimes called a "Tropical Trump," Bolsonaro has followed a similar script to the US president in his handling of the pandemic, downplaying its severity, attacking state authorities' stay-at-home measures and touting the purported effects of hydroxychloroquine and a related anti-malarial drug, chloroquine, against COVID-19.

The WHO had suspended trials of hydroxychloroquine after major studies raised concerns about its safety and effectiveness against the new coronavirus - irking Trump, a fan who even took the drug himself as a preventive measure. On Thursday, most of



RIO DE JANEIRO: Eliane Lima, 56, prays as she is being treated at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ward where patients infected with the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, are being treated at the Doctor Ernesto Che Guevara Public Hospital in Marica city, state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

the authors of the studies that appeared in The Lancet and the New England Journal of Medicine retracted their work, saying they could no longer vouch for their data because the firm that supplied it refused to be audited. However, adding to the swirling scientific and political debate, a new study from Oxford University said Friday that hydroxychloroquine showed "no beneficial effect" in treating COVID-19. In another potentially confusing reversal, the WHO changed its advice on face masks, saying that "in light of evolving evidence" they should be worn in places where the virus is widespread and physical distancing is difficult.

US 'largely through'

The new coronavirus has now killed more than 394,000 people and infected 6.7 million since it emerged in China late last

year, the world's worst health crisis in more than a century. In the US - the hardest-hit country, with 109,000 dead and nearly 1.9 million infections - Trump said the economy was bouncing back after being pummeled by lockdown measures. "We had the greatest economy in the history of the world. And that strength let us get through this horrible pandemic, largely through, I think we're doing really well," he told reporters. Trump, who is facing a tough campaign for re-election in November, reiterated his calls to further ease stay-at-home measures, after surprisingly upbeat employment numbers showed the country gained 2.5 million jobs in May. In a sign of the slow return to normal in the US, Universal Orlando became the first of the giant theme parks in sunny Florida to reopen - albeit with temperature controls at the entrance and mandatory face masks. — AFP

COVID-19 research scandal

WASHINGTON: The first research scandal of the coronavirus pandemic has created unnecessary distraction around the politically divisive drug hydroxychloroquine, scientists say, as questions swirl around the tiny health care company at the center of the affair. On Thursday, most of the authors of major studies that appeared in The Lancet and the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) retracted their work and issued apologies, saying they could no longer vouch for their data after the firm that supplied it - Chicago-based Surgisphere - refused to be audited.

At any other time the matter might have led to hang-wringing within academia, but it has taken on a new dimension as the world grapples with a virus that has claimed some 400,000 lives. Of particular interest was the paper in The Lancet that claimed to have analyzed the records of 96,032 patients admitted to 671 hospitals across six continents, finding that hydroxychloroquine showed no benefit and even increased the risk of death.

Its withdrawal is seen as a boost to backers of the decades-old anti-malarial drug, who include US President Donald Trump and his Brazilian counterpart Jair Bolsonaro. "It's very politicized - there is a group, probably not

particularly small, who have learned to mistrust science and scientists, and this just feeds into that narrative," Gabe Kelen, a professor of emergency medicine at Johns Hopkins University said. This is despite the fact that even without The Lancet paper, evidence has been building against hydroxychloroquine's use against COVID-19. On Friday, results from a fourth randomized controlled trial - carefully designed human experiments considered the most robust form of clinical investigation - showed it had no impact against the virus.

Mystery company

The Lancet, which first published in 1823, is one of the world's most trusted medical journals. As a result, the hydroxychloroquine paper had an outsized impact: the World Health Organization, Britain and France all suspended ongoing clinical trials. But things soon began unraveling after researchers noticed numerous red flags, from the huge number of patients involved to the unusual level of detail about the doses they had received. Both The Lancet and the equally prestigious NEJM, which had published a paper on whether blood thinners elevated the risk of COVID-19 that relied on the same company, issued expressions of concern - before the authors themselves pulled both papers. Surgisphere, founded in 2007 by vascular surgeon Sapan Desai, had refused to share data with third-party reviewers, saying it would violate privacy agreements with hospitals. — AFP

International

UK halts trial of hydroxychloroquine as 'useless' for COVID-19 patients

US randomized test also found drug to be ineffective

LONDON: British scientists halted a major drug trial on Friday after it found that the anti-malarial hydroxychloroquine, touted by US President Donald Trump as a potential "game changer" in the pandemic, was "useless" at treating COVID-19 patients. "This is not a treatment for COVID-19. It doesn't work," Martin Landray, an Oxford University professor who is co-leading the RECOVERY trial, told reporters. "This result should change medical practice worldwide. We can now stop using a drug that is useless." Vocal support from Trump raised expectations for the decades-old drug that experts said could have been a cheap and widely available tool, if proven to work, in fighting the pandemic, which has infected more than 6.4 million people and killed nearly 400,000 worldwide.

Controversy surrounding the drug grew after a study published in medical journal The Lancet last month raised safety concerns and led several COVID-19 studies of it to be halted. The Lancet study was then retracted on Thursday after its authors said they were unsure about its data. Landray, a professor of medicine and epidemiology at Oxford University, noted the "huge speculation" about the drug as a treatment for



Trump touted drug as potential 'game changer'

COVID-19 but said there had been until now "an absence of reliable information from large randomized trials". He said the preliminary results from RECOVERY, which was a randomized trial, were now quite clear: hydroxychloroquine does not reduce the risk of death among hospitalized patients with COVID-19. "If you're admitted to hospital, don't take hydroxychloroquine," he said.

Randomised trials

The RECOVERY trial of hydroxychloroquine had randomly assigned 1,542 COVID-19 patients to hydroxychloroquine and compared them with 3,132 COVID-19 patients randomly assigned to standard

care without the drug. Results showed no significant difference in death rates after 28 days, in length of stay in hospital or in other outcomes, the researchers said. Earlier this week, a University of Minnesota randomized trial found that the drug was ineffective in preventing infection in people exposed to the coronavirus.

Dozens of trials trying various permutations of use of the drug continue. The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday the RECOVERY results would not change its plan to resume tests of hydroxychloroquine as part of its 'Solidarity' trials. It had briefly stopped giving it to new patients in light of the Lancet paper. Parastou Donyai, director of Pharmacy Practice at the University of Reading in England, said the drug was "propelled onto the world stage by President Trump", adding he had praised it without solid evidence. "This news, although not positive, is a welcome relief to thousands of scientists, doctors and academics who have been crying out for proper proof of whether hydroxychloroquine works in COVID-19 or not," she added, calling the conclusion that it does not "definitive". — Reuters



UTAH: A bottle and pills of Hydroxychloroquine sit on a counter at Rock Canyon Pharmacy in Provo, Utah. — AFP

Biden clinches nomination for 2020 race

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden said Friday he had secured the delegates needed to clinch the Democratic nomination and face Donald Trump in November's US presidential election. "Folks, tonight we secured the 1,991 delegates needed to win the Democratic nomination," the former vice president said on Twitter. "I'm going to spend every day fighting to earn your vote so that, together, we can win the battle for the soul of this nation." Biden passed the 1,991 threshold to secure his party's nomination as counting continued from Tuesday's round of Democratic primaries.

He had been the presumptive Democratic challenger since Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders dropped out of the race in April and endorsed his onetime rival's run at the White House. Biden reached the threshold with the country wracked by protests over the death of African-American George Floyd at the hands of police. Floyd's death has reignited long-felt anger over police killings of African-Americans and unleashed a nationwide wave of civil unrest unlike any seen in the US since Martin Luther King Jr's 1968 assassination. "This is a difficult time in America's history. And Donald Trump's angry, divisive politics is no answer," Biden wrote in a post on Medium. "The country is crying out for leadership. Leadership that can unite us. Leadership that can bring us together."

'Equal justice'

Biden's response to the protests has been in marked contrast to Trump, who threatened to deploy the military against American citizens. In his first major public speech since going into isolation in mid-March because of the virus outbreak, Biden called Floyd's death a "wake-up call for our nation" and accused Trump of turning the US into a "battlefield riven by old



DOVER: Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee and former Vice President Joe Biden speaks at Delaware State University's student center in Dover, Delaware. — AFP

resentments and fresh fears." The 77-year-old Biden, who served as deputy for eight years to America's first black president, Barack Obama, has pledged to tackle "systemic racism" if elected to the White House. "We need equal justice — and equal opportunities — for every American now. We need a president who cares about helping us heal — now," he wrote.

Biden's run for the Democratic nomination had looked destined for disaster following early losses to the fiery Sanders in Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada. But he came roaring back in South Carolina's primary in late February on the strength of overwhelming backing from African-American voters, a crucial base of Democratic support. Biden will now be expected to name his running mate, after promising to pick a woman. Senator Kamala Harris, a 55-year-old former attorney general of California, is considered one of the front-runners to be Biden's vice presidential pick. Harris, who is of Jamaican and Indian ancestry, was considered a leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination but dropped out in December after failing to break out of the crowded field. In an average of opinion polls, RealClearPolitics gives Biden a 7.1 point lead over Trump in the election. — AFP

Gargling with bleach? Americans misusing disinfectants

WASHINGTON: More than a third of Americans misused cleaners and disinfectants to try to prevent infection by the coronavirus, according to a survey taken shortly after President Donald Trump publicly asked whether injecting such products could treat COVID-19. Washing food with bleach, using household cleaning or disinfectant products on bare skin, and intentionally inhaling or ingesting these products were some of the most commonly reported "high-risk" practices in a May 4 online survey of 502 US adults, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported. The survey's lead author said it was undertaken following a "sharp increase" in calls to poison control centers for exposure to cleaners and disinfectants during the pandemic.

In late April, Trump asked scientists during one of his coronavirus task force briefings whether inserting disinfectant into the bodies of people infected with the virus might help clear the disease, horrifying health experts. Makers of household cleaners were compelled to urge people not to drink or inject their products. Some 39% of people surveyed reported intentionally engaging in at least one high-risk practice not recommended by the CDC to prevent coronavirus infection, including using bleach to clean food or misting the body with a disinfectant spray. Four percent drank or gargled with diluted bleach solutions, soapy water or disinfectants.

A quarter of those surveyed reported having at least one adverse health effect during the previous month that they believed resulted from using these products. The CDC suggested that official COVID-19 prevention messages that currently focus on hand hygiene and frequent cleaning should also include instructions on proper usage of cleaners and disinfectants, and storing chemicals out of reach of children. — Reuters

With bike chains and car parts, Afghan girls build ventilators

KABUL: With pliers in hand, a group of Afghan girls fashion make-do ventilators from car parts, bike chains and machine sensors, an imperfect solution to the country's looming coronavirus crisis. The five teens, who live in Herat near the border with Iran, are part of the Afghan Girls Robotics Team: an initiative that teaches schoolgirls programming and computer science. "We had to be creative when it came to sourcing material," said Somaya Faruqi, the team's 17-year-old captain.

"Our machines are built out of a combination of a Toyota Corolla motor, chains from motorcycles as well as separate pressure, heat and humidity sensors," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation via WhatsApp. While the devices cannot replace medical ventilators, they should bring temporary relief to coronavirus patients. "It's not a perfect device, but it can do two things: control the volume of oxygen entering the body, and count and control the number of breaths per minute," said Faruqi.

Infections are rising in a country of 35 million, with more than 16,500 infections, according to Johns Hopkins University. Experts say the real figure is likely to be far higher. Kabul's mayor Daoud Sultanzyov fears half the capital's 6 million residents are infected as people defy lockdown. Similar estimates hold for Herat, home to about a million. "Every day, the number of sick people is increasing and in the near future, we will have neither enough ventilators nor hospital equipment," said Faruqi. For two months, her team - wearing masks and gloves - has worked five long days a week to complete their prototype.

"We were quite scared by the prospects of the pandemic, so we decided to try to do our part," said Faruqi. Before the coronavirus outbreak, the girls built robots, studied programming and prepared for their final year of school under an initiative set up in 2015 to teach girls tech skills and instill confidence through science. Computer scientist Roya Mahboob - founder of the Digital Citizen Fund - says she wanted to "give them a digital voice" in what is a conservative country, where many girls stay home. The team - who wear long black dresses and headscarves along with their anti-virus masks and gloves - has been celebrated across Afghanistan and won prizes in the West.

Tough fight

More than 3,000 girls in Herat have studied at the Digital Citizen Fund, and the city's university now has its largest body of women pursuing computer science, topping 500. Afghanistan's literacy rate for women remains low at about 30 percent, according to the United Nations, with many girls in rural, conservative communities unable to attend school. "It's slowly changing," said Faruqi, but only for some. Families like hers are more liberal, she said, otherwise it would have been impossible to leave the house and work on the breathing machines. The girls hope to finish their device by mid-month and sell them for about \$600 - 50 times cheaper than medical ventilators - as a stop-gap for Herat's main COVID-19 hospital, a government facility.

"In a country where medical supply is largely lacking, we are prepared to look into such alternative options," Qadir Qadir, general director of the Ministry of Public Health said. He said Afghanistan had about 480 ventilators available, but about 40 belonged to the military and dozens to non-profits. "Whether the girls' product can be used is yet to be determined. It would need to be tested and can't immediately be used in patient care," said Qadir. Faruqi is undaunted, her team working all out to finish their low-cost, low-tech prototype. "We've seen a lot of encouragement from people, but our biggest drive is the current situation: Afghanistan is in crisis and we want to do what we can to help," she said. — Reuters

Final farewells at Mexico cemetery lose luster

CIUDAD NEZAHUALCOYOTL: The peculiar nature of the job means they have more work than ever right now. But Mexico's gravediggers and crematorium workers say they are paying a heavy price for constant exposure to other people's grief during the coronavirus pandemic. The silver protective suit worn by Jose Ramirez makes him look like an astronaut. So far it's been an effective shield against infection, but it offers no barrier to other people's suffering, he says. "You don't get used to other people's pain, and when you are handing over the urn, it affects you and it's very difficult for us to stand it," said Ramirez. The 49-year-old is in charge of receiving corpses at the municipal cemetery in Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl just outside Mexico City, then delivering the ashes back to the family after cremation three hours later.

"Maybe you have to harden your appearance, but you don't lose your sentimental side," he said. The gas oven in front of him flared as he introduced a black body bag containing a suspected COVID-19 victim. It was the eighth bagged corpse he and his work partner Juan Carlos Cruz cremated that day. Both men say they are emotionally affected by the confusion of families who are bewildered by the speed with which the disease kills. "They tell you: I arrive at the hospital with my relative, I chat to him. After three or four days he's no longer with me. And then they give him back to me in ashes," said Cruz, 37.

Cruz admits the whole business gives him the creeps: "I'm scared of becoming infected. We run a lot of risks, we have family, we have people waiting for us at home." Humberto Montes' work by contrast has pretty much dried up. A funeral musician, his serenades for the dead - long a part of final farewells in Mexico - are no longer wanted by grieving families who are shocked at the swiftness of death and burial during the pandemic. These men are the last links in a chain of tragedy leading from sick bed to hospital to a tomb in this Mexico City suburb. The pandemic sweeping through Mexico has so far left more than 105,000 people infected and caused almost 13,000 deaths. — AFP



BIRMINGHAM: A paramedic takes a blood sample from a front line ambulance worker during an antibody testing programme at the Hollymore Ambulance Hub of the West Midlands Ambulance Service in Birmingham. — AFP

UK virus death toll tops 40,000

LONDON: Britain's official coronavirus death toll has topped 40,000, after the government on Friday reported a further 357 fatalities in the last 24 hours. Health Secretary Matt Hancock said reaching the grim milestone was "a time of sorrow for us all". "We've got to remember that each one of these is an impact on a family that will never be the same again and my heart goes out to them all," he said. "And it makes me redouble my determination to deal with this virus." His ministry said 40,261 people who tested positive for COVID-19 had died as of 0800 GMT on Friday. Britain was already second only to the United States in terms of numbers of deaths, and broader statistics indicate the toll is much higher when suspected cases are taken into account. The Office for National Statistics, which tallies all deaths in which COVID-19 was suspected or mentioned on death certificates, put the toll at 48,106 up to May 22.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson is going ahead with plans to ease lockdown restrictions imposed on March 23, after indications the virus was past its peak. Some schools reopened this week to the youngest children in England, while non-essential shops will be allowed to reopen their doors from Monday. A separate study published on Friday said about 53,000 people in England had coronavirus in the last two weeks of May. But only 29 percent of those who tested positive had symptoms, the ONS said. It surveyed almost 20,000

people in private homes and found that 21 people had the disease, which equates to some 0.1 percent of England's 56 million people.

Infection rate

As Britain gradually reopens, attention has focused on the so-called R rate - the average number of secondary infections produced by one infected person. Scientists and ministers say the easing of lockdown measures depends on keeping the rate below one. Modeling data published on Friday by one group that helps inform government policy suggested it was above one in two English regions. "We believe it is probable that R is below 1 in all regions of England with the exception of the North West and the South West," said the study by Public Health England and Cambridge University. However, the government said that information from a range of sources put the rate at between 0.7 and 0.9 across Britain.

Hancock noted that the government's recently launched "track and test" scheme would focus on identifying and isolating localized outbreaks of coronavirus. Securing public support for easing lockdown measures and confidence about risks are seen as key to returning to a semblance of normality. But the ONS found only four in 10 adults felt safe or very safe when outside of their home. Almost two in three parents in England said they were not confident about sending their children back to school. The study showed a decrease of positive tests in recent weeks but higher rates of infection for frontline health staff and those unable to work from home. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2020

10 stc launches 5GLIVEBUS, a safe bus equipped with 5G network



11 US shows surprising employment recovery in May despite virus



11 Luxury carmaker Bentley to axe 1,000 UK jobs



HARARE: A woman arrives to collect groceries from a Malaicha warehouse during a nationwide lockdown to help curb the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Harare, Zimbabwe.—Reuters

Africa goes online for groceries

Lockdown fuels severe shortages for food and groceries

JOHANNESBURG/BULAWAYO, Zimbabwe: I n between her shifts, Zimbabwean nurse Sinothando Mpofu used to go to Bulawayo's open-air markets to buy tomatoes and cabbages for her family of nine - until the country's coronavirus lockdown closed all stalls. Mpofu worried about where she would get fresh food, until she saw a message in her local church WhatsApp group about Fresh in a Box - one of rising numbers of African tech companies getting fresh food to people under lockdown.

Now she puts in an order online and gets a box of produce delivered to her home every week. The fruits and vegetables are better quality than the food she used to buy at the supermarket, she said, at about a third of the cost. "Buying vegetables at a local supermarket is very expensive, but now I get a variety of vegetables and I eat balanced meals all the time," Mpofu, 37, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, saying she will keep using the site even after lockdown ends. In many African countries, measures put in place to slow the spread of COVID-19 have made it harder for people to access affordable, nutritious foods, sparking warnings from aid groups that the pandemic will worsen malnutrition rates.

An estimated 73 million people in Africa are already acutely food insecure, noted Matshidiso Moeti, the World Health Organization's Regional Director for Africa in a press release last month. "COVID-19 is exacerbating food shortages, as food imports, transportation and agricultural production have all been hampered by a combination of lockdowns, travel restrictions and physical distancing measures," she said. A possible global GDP loss of 5 percent this year could push another 147 million people into extreme poverty - more than half of them in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the DC-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

Trump warns EU, China over lobster duties

BANGOR, US: President Donald Trump threatened Friday to impose tariffs against the European Union and China in retaliation for duties imposed on imports of US lobster.

At a meeting with fisheries representatives in Bangor, Maine, Trump instructed his hawkish trade advisor Peter Navarro to look into punitive tariffs on EU cars and on unspecified Chinese products. The Republican leader told lobster industry representatives that the EU has to drop its tariffs "immediately."

"If they don't change, we're going to put a tariff on their cars and they'll change right away," he said, call-

ing Brussels "almost as bad over the years as China in terms of trade." He said the tariff would be "equivalent-plus." Trump also told Navarro to look at China and find "something they sell that's very precious to them" which could then be counter-tariffed. "Pick a product, a corresponding-plus if they don't drop the tariff for Maine lobster going into China."

"It's very simple," he said. "All you do is say, that's OK, keep charging us: we're going to charge you a corresponding."

"Peter Navarro is going to be the lobster king now," he joked. At the same meeting, Trump signed an order instantly removing fishing restrictions imposed under president Barack Obama on 5,000 square miles (12,949 square km) of ocean off the coast of Maine.

The northeastern state is a small but important part of the mosaic of electoral college votes that Trump hopes to construct to secure a second term against Democratic challenger Joe Biden. He narrowly lost the state in 2016.—AFP

Launched in October 2018 and selling surplus fruits and vegetables from local farms, Fresh in a Box found itself scrambling to add more farmers to its roster to supply the sudden rush of new customers, said co-founder Kudakwashe Musasiwa. He added that it now distributes about 2.6 tonnes of vegetables daily from nearly 2,000 small-scale farmers to customers' doorsteps.

"With COVID-19, something incredible happened. We had to find a way of scaling up really quickly because all of a sudden our demand shot up," Musasiwa said. Like Zimbabwe's Fresh in a Box and the Market Garden app in Uganda, which is connecting women produce vendors to a new wave of online customers, Namibia has also seen a rise in the popularity of online markets under lockdown.

A website called Tambula - meaning "take" in the local



Tech firms get food for people

Oshiwambo language - is described as "an online mall" by its founder Jerobeam Mwedihanga, who launched the site about a week into Namibia's lockdown, which started in March.

"Rental fees in malls are high in Namibia," said Mwedihanga, 36, an IT engineer, whose site delivers electronics, beverages, furniture and more. "And there are many home-run businesses with no place to showcase their products." Last month, Tambula partnered with the UN Development Programme on a pilot project to sell informal market goods online, including local foods like dried spinach, mopane worms and ground nuts.

"For many consumers, this is their first time buying traditional foods online," said Mwedihanga, adding that products from informal vendors have grown to make up 35 percent of online sales. One positive to come out of the new coronavirus pandemic, he said, is that people are becoming more aware of e-commerce and realising that food from informal traders is often more affordable than that from retail shops.

In Nigeria, entrepreneur Luther Lawoyin realised that bulk purchases could save consumers from overspending on food. He launched PricePally - described as a digital food cooperative - in November 2019, as a way of letting people buy food online in bulk from farmers and wholesalers and split the cost with other site users.

"When the coronavirus (outbreak) was really picking up in Nigeria, we noticed a spike in our traffic and sales, so we figured that people need help to get their food items and, especially, to avoid the market," said Lawoyin.

The site's customers save at least 15 percent on the food they buy, he added. PricePally had about 320 paying users before the virus hit - that number shot up to more than 1,000 after the country's lockdown kicked in on March 30, Lawoyin said.

OPEC, Russia meet to extend record oil cuts

MOSCOW/DUBAI/LONDON: OPEC and its allies led by Russia meet to approve extending record oil production cuts and to push countries such as Iraq and Nigeria to comply better with existing curbs.

The producers known as OPEC+ previously agreed to cut supply by a record 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) during May-June to prop up prices that collapsed due to the coronavirus crisis. Cuts have been due to taper to 7.7 million bpd from July to December. OPEC+ sources have said Saudi Arabia and Russia had agreed to extend record cuts throughout July

Food remittances

Just as lockdowns around the world have disrupted food trade across borders, they have also made it difficult for people working abroad to send food to their loved ones back home. Zimbabweans living in South Africa who would normally pay bus and taxi drivers to carry food packages to their families have turned to an app called Malaicha. The app, which started in South Africa nearly one year ago, acts like a version of food remittances, allowing people in South Africa to order groceries for delivery in Zimbabwe. While 70 percent of products are sourced locally in Zimbabwe at cheaper rates, about 30 percent come from South Africa where Malaicha has permission to import goods.

Nokusa Nyathi, 24, stood in a snaking queue of up to 200 people at the Malaicha pick-up point in Bulawayo, waiting to get the parcel of goods that her father in South Africa had ordered online - essentials like cooking oil, sugar, spaghetti and soap.

Through Malaicha, her father can get groceries to his family in a few days, compared with the weeks or months it can take to send the food from South Africa to Zimbabwe, Nyathi said.

Using the service is also cheaper than if her father simply sent money for his family to buy the food themselves, she explained.

"Coronavirus pushed us in the right direction," said De Beer, who believes the app's steep surge in users will last long after the pandemic. The company is so confident about the future of online food shopping in Africa that it is launching Malaicha Global next week, said De Beer, so that people can send goods to Zimbabwe from anywhere in the world. "The need is simply too big to die down," she said.—Reuters

although Riyadh would prefer to see cut extended throughout August.

Global benchmark Brent crude, which slumped below \$20 a barrel in April, rose nearly 6 percent on Friday to trade at a three-month high above \$42.

The video conferences will start with talks between members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries at 1200 GMT, followed by a gathering of the OPEC+ group at 1400 GMT, OPEC said on Friday. OPEC sources said an extension of cuts was contingent on compliance as countries that produced above their quota in May and June must compensate by cutting more in future months.

Iraq, which had one of the worst compliance rates in May, according to a Reuters survey, agreed to additional cuts, OPEC sources said.

It was not clear how exactly Iraq would cut output and agree with oil majors working in the country to curtail production. Nigeria said it would also aim to reach full compliance.—Reuters

Business

stc launches 5GLIVEBUS, a safe bus equipped with 5G network

A first of its kind smart bus in Mideast equipped with innovative solutions

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of the 5G LIVEBUS, a safe and smart bus supported by 5G connectivity, creating a safe and convenient transportation method for the passengers. The first of its kind transportation innovative in the Middle East provides advance and integrated safety solutions for the business owner's and their employees, targeting all sectors and institutions of the state, especially the transportation sector, which is the most vital in the development of infrastructure.

In a statement released by stc, the company highlighted that the initiative is designed to meet the needs of its strong network of relationships with businesses in Kuwait, and is led by General Manager of Sales & Account Management at stc, Meshari Al-Hamad. The innovative concept falls in line with stc's sustainable strategy to enable digital transformation by investing in developing the communications and technology sectors. The unique service will allow customers to enjoy the benefits of digital services and improve their business, while maintaining stc's position as a leading telecom and digital solutions provider in the region.

The company added that the stc 5G LIVEBUS initiative is a critical step towards supporting business owners at the present time and falls in line with government's guidelines in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses can ensure the safety of their employees during the transition process with ease while monitoring their status instantaneously and

abiding to health and safety standards by monitoring social distancing through the command center. The initiative also contributes to the education sector by providing a safe and comfortable means of transportation that is monitored while transporting students from their homes to schools.

stc added that its R&D team has focused on developing and introducing the 5G LIVEBUS technology to begin with the transportation sector. Equipped with a continuous monitoring system, cameras are covering



A step towards supporting businesses

every angle of the exterior and interior of the bus, with the capability of tracking and recording movements. Motion sensors and an automated stop arm ensure the safety of riders when exiting the smart bus. The GPS feature helps locate the bus and reduces waiting time for its arrival, in addition to temperature, humidity and smoke sensors to ensure the comfort of users during the summer season.

The vehicle is also equipped with sensors to mon-

ing, as people return to cars, but other areas such as aviation will see much longer U-shaped recoveries."



Andy Critchlow

The feared exhaustion of global storage capacity, which briefly contributed to some niche headline US oil prices turning negative in April, has abated. VLCC freight rates have fallen back to around \$50,000 per day, from a peak of \$200,000 per day this year at the height of the crisis as storage demand eased.

Motorists are helping to restart demand. According to Apple Maps data based on routing requests, road traffic in Britain has doubled since the peak of the travel restrictions enforced in early April. In the US - the world's largest oil-consuming nation - the same data shows road journeys beginning to approach pre-pandemic levels as more states open up ahead of the summer driving season. Road congestion in Beijing is back to normal.

According to Platts Analytics, the steady reopening of the US and Europe has helped add 3.6 million b/d to demand in May compared with April's collapse. However, the overall consumption outlook remains bleak, with demand down 17 million b/d year-on-year in the second quarter.

Heading into OPEC's next discussions, both heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Russia are putting on a unified front. The Kremlin has said they want to continue coordination after President Vladimir Putin and Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman discussed the oil market in a recent telephone call. The kingdom - which needs

NBK CAPITAL

ISM Manufacturing employment index improved to 32.1 from 27.5 for the same period. The initial jobless claims 4-week average dropped to 2.6 million for the week ending May 22 from 3.04 million a week earlier, while continuing jobless claims recorded 21.05 million in mid-May down from 25 million a week earlier. Preliminary figures for the US GDP now show the US economy contracted by an annualized 5.0 percent during the first quarter. The rate of unemployment reached 14.7 percent in April while consensus estimates point to a further deterioration close which could take the rate closer to 20 percent in May.

While the European Gross Domestic Product declined by 3.8 percent during the first quarter compared to the fourth quarter of last year, it is expected to contract between 5 percent and 12 percent for 2020 according to the European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde. Meanwhile, the three largest European economies saw their GDPs contract for the first quarter. Germany's GDP declined by 2.2 percent during Q1 compared to Q4 of last year, while those of France and Italy declined by 5.3 percent each over the same period. The Markit Manufacturing PMI for the Euro Area started to show signs of stabilization, however, despite remaining in the contraction area at 39.4 for May up from 33.4 for April. In terms of market activity, the Stoxx Europe 600 index was able to build on the previous month's rally advancing by 3.04 percent. It was supported by robust gains for the German DAX which added 6.68 percent and, to a lesser extent, by the French CAC40 which advanced by 2.70 percent in May. In the UK, the markets broadly underperformed compared to developed markets as the FTSE 100 managed to add 2.97 percent during May on the back of the previous month gain of 4.04 percent. The Markit Manufacturing PMI showed a significant improvement jumping to 40.6 in



itor driver behavior to help the driver stay undistracted and focused on the road. These technology is connected and reporting activity to linked command control centers to monitor bus data and ensure immediate response when necessary. Also provided by an easy to use application, keeping passengers safe and monitored at any given time.

Conforming to the highest safety standards and to support the guidelines imposed by the government in the battle against COVID-19, the vehicle can also be equipped with fever screening thermal cameras with the option of adding artificial intelligence and facial

prices to trade above \$80/b normally to fund its budget - doubled down this month on its commitment to do whatever it takes to rebalance the oil market by announcing its intention to cut another 1 million barrels from its daily supplies starting in June.

However, doubts still remain over Russia's willingness to continue pledging meaningful long-term commitments to limiting its supplies, especially if a damaging second-wave of lockdowns is avoided. Russia's energy ministry is forecasting a balanced market by June, or July, indicating it is looking forward to the OPEC+ cuts possibly easing over the summer. The country also saw its shipments to China increase by almost 18 percent year-on-year to 7.2 million b/d in April, compared with an 18 percent decline for Saudi Arabia, according to official data.

Any easing back on cuts by Russia, Saudi Arabia and its major Gulf allies including the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait could boost US shale, which has temporarily been put on hold by the global pandemic.

Platts Analytics estimates more than 14 million b/d of shut-ins, or production cuts across non-OPEC and OPEC+ announced since the group's last meeting in March. Meanwhile, the number of rigs operating in America has dropped by 65 percent and more workers on fracking sites have joined the swelling numbers of America's almost 39 million unemployed. Crude output in the country has fallen by 1.6 million b/d from March to a total of 11.5 million b/d, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

The unprecedented collapse in demand caused by the pandemic made OPEC's choice to suspend its price war with Russia and agree historic cuts in March the only choice. But the ending of lockdowns and glimmers of returning demand make its decision in June more complicated. Note: Andy Critchlow is head of EMEA News, S&P Global Platts

May up from 32.6 for the previous month as the economy started its gradual reopening.

Emerging markets

Emerging markets generally underperformed with the MSCI EM recording a marginal gain of 0.58 percent in May as it was weighed down by the performance of Asian markets. The MSCI Asia ex-Japan index declined by 1.41 percent after failing to build on the 8.9 percent advance during April. The Shanghai Composite declined by 0.27 percent, while India's Nifty 50 retreated by 2.84 percent and the Taiwan Stock Exchange index lost 0.45 percent. Notable performers in the emerging market space included Brazil's Ibovespa Index which advanced by 8.57 percent for the month, in addition to Turkey's Borsa Istanbul 100 Index and Russia Stock Exchange Index which added 4.36 percent and 3.18 percent respectively.

The solid rally which propelled Brent oil by 40 percent during the month of May wasn't enough to provide support to the stock markets in the GCC as oil prices, at around \$35/bbl, are still far from their levels before the beginning of the current turmoil. The GCC markets witnessed a generally mixed performance during the month with the S&P GCC Composite Index recording an advance of 1.73 percent. It was mainly supported by the Saudi market as the Tadawul All Share index topped the list of GCC gainers with an advance of 1.41 percent. It was followed by the Qatar Exchange Index with a gain of 0.92 percent and Boursa Kuwait All Share index with a gain of 0.41 percent.

Kuwait resilient

In Kuwait, however, blue chip companies outperformed as Kuwait's Premier Market index added 1.27 percent during the month. The largest decline was sustained by Dubai's DFM General index which closed 4.02 percent in the red. It was followed by Bahrain Bourse All Share index and Abu Dhabi's ADX General Index which declined by 3.14 percent and 2.10 percent respectively. In other markets within the MENA region, the Egyptian EGX 30 declined 3.16 percent, the Moroccan MADEX gained 4.92 percent, and the Jordanian ASE Index shed 0.45 percent since trading resumed on May 10th, 2020 after activity was suspended for almost two months back in mid-March 2020

recognition to analyze and identify riders with high body temperatures.

stc concluded by saying that the 5G LIVEBUS project is an additional initiative added to the numerous activities launched by the Company related to the commercial use of 5G technology. This service provides 5G connectivity and unlimited connectivity Dedicated Access (DA) for the first time in the Middle East and Kuwait for the corporate sector, which relies on the largest 5G network covering all areas in Kuwait, and an advanced infrastructure to keep pace with this technological revolution.

Black Americans suffer from economic bias

WASHINGTON: Downtown Washington gleams with wealth, but as he stood in a crowd protesting at the White House, Justin Monroe doubted he would ever share in that prosperity.

"It just ain't for certain people. A lot of certain people," Monroe, an African American, told AFP. "We can't make that money. They don't want us to make that money." A restaurant cook who lost his job to the coronavirus pandemic shutdowns, Monroe, 25, lives in a part of the nation's capital separated by a river from the upscale offices and government buildings downtown.

He views the police violence that sparked nationwide protests as the norm for black Americans, not an exception. "I don't like them," he said of the police. "I don't like seeing a lot of my fellow race getting shot by cops."

The police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis led to diverse protests calling for an end to violence towards African Americans, whom studies have found face an elevated risk of dying at the hands of law enforcement. Yet the inequalities facing African Americans go deeper than just interactions with police: from lower wages to longer commute times, the structure of the world's largest economy deeply marginalizes black people.

"African Americans have always been full participants in the US economy, they're just not full recipients," said Nicole Smith, chief economist at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

A vast gap

Before Floyd died under the knee of a white police officer on a city street, the coronavirus pandemic already had taken a grievous toll on the United States, killing more than 106,000 people and costing 42 million lost jobs. Even the illness discriminates: Black Americans make up 13.4 percent of the population but comprise 22.9 percent of COVID-19 deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

They also are over-represented in the unemployment rate, which declined overall to 13.4 percent in May but increased slightly to 16.8 percent for African Americans, according to the Labor Department. And the economy disadvantaged black Americans long before the pandemic.

They make 73 cents for every dollar made by white Americans, with a poverty rate two-and-a-half times higher, according to the Economic Policy Institute think tank. The gap is so wide that the Cleveland Federal Reserve Bank estimated last year that the wealth of the average white household is about 6.5 times more than the average black household—roughly the same as it was in 1962.

In an optimistic scenario, black Americans will mostly catch up to whites in about 200 years. But, because of the pandemic, Cleveland Fed senior research economist Dionissi Aliprantis warned in an interview that "most of the gaps will grow."

Even after slavery was abolished in the mid-nineteenth century, generations of racist laws and practices segregating black Americans to certain neighborhoods and depriving them of access to financial services fueled the inequities and continue to haunt American cities. Home ownership is key to building intergenerational wealth, but a 2018 Brookings Institution study found that homes in neighborhoods where at least half the residents are black are valued at 50 percent less than neighborhoods where no residents are black. — AFP

NBKC Global Markets Report

Signs of stability are emerging on global economies

KUWAIT: Global markets ended the month of May in positive territory after plans to reopen the economies started to materialize and lockdown measures in several countries are eased further. Markets in developed countries were able to build on the strong rally of the previous month, while developing markets underperformed with a mostly mixed performance. The MSCI AC World Index advanced by 4.15 percent during May, while the MSCI EAFE recorded a gain of 4.07 percent, bringing total gains for the two indices for the second quarter so far to 15.17 percent and 10.61 percent respectively. The MSCI EM, on the other hand, was practically unchanged with a marginal gain of 0.58 percent for the month.

Major indices in the US recorded solid gains with the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average adding 4.53 percent and 4.26 percent during the month. The tech-heavy Nasdaq and the small-cap Russell 2000 index outperformed with gains of 6.75 percent and 6.36 percent respectively. Volatility eased further as the CBOE Volatility Index (VIX) continued its downtrend closing the month at 27.5, a level last seen at the onset of the market rout during the last week of February. Treasuries, on the other hand, remained stable and traded mostly sideways during the month with the 10-year yield closing at 0.65 percent and the two-year at 0.16 percent.

In the US, economic indicators started to show signs of stabilization after the record declines they sustained as a result of the Covid19-induced economic shutdown. The May ISM manufacturing PMI, although still deep in contraction territory, climbed to 43.1 up from 41.5 for the previous month, while the

Business

US shows surprising employment recovery in May despite virus

Economy regains 2.5 million jobs in May

WASHINGTON: The US economy regained 2.5 million jobs in May and the unemployment rate dropped as coronavirus pandemic shutdowns began to ease, which President Donald Trump said Friday was a sign the recovery from the crisis is underway.

The all-important Labor Department data showed the largest increase in jobs on record, which pushed the unemployment rate down to 13.3 percent from 14.7 percent in April. The report defied even the most optimistic expectations among economists, who had been expecting



Factory orders, retail trade pick up slowly

a payroll decline of more than eight million and a jobless rate of 20 percent or higher.

Trump, who is counting on a solid economy to convince voters he deserves a second term, immediately cheered the data and said the gains proved the combination of rapid government support and a push to reopen businesses was working.

"Today is probably the greatest comeback in American history, but it's not going to stop here," Trump told reporters at the White House, saying the recovery will continue unless "the wrong people get in here," an apparent reference to the November presidential election.

Trump, who likened the pandemic to a hurricane, has never wavered from his confidence in a sharp, "V-shaped" rebound. "This is better than a 'V'; it's a rocket ship!"



ARLINGTON: In this file photo, a man wearing a face mask walks past a sign "Now Hiring" in front of a store amid the coronavirus pandemic in Arlington, Virginia. The US economy regained 2.5 million jobs in May as coronavirus pandemic shutdowns began to ease, sending the unemployment rate falling to 13.3 percent.—AFP

Three points higher

The jobs report attributed the gains to "a limited resumption of economic activity," but the Labor Department said the jobless rate was likely three points higher due to errors in how workers described their employment status.

A separate report with state data on weekly initial claims for unemployment benefits shows that, as of last week, more than 42 million people have lost their jobs, at least temporarily, since mid-March when the shutdowns to contain the spread of COVID-19 began. But with a

massive \$3 trillion infusion of government aid and trillions more in lending to businesses, some firms were able to bring workers back.

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said the rebound is a testament to "decisive action by Congress," but emphasized millions of US workers remain jobless. Trump promised to push for a payroll tax cut as well as additional stimulus to ensure the recovery continues, while also signing into law a measure that extends the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to 24 weeks from eight.

The reform of the popular small business program low-

ers the loan amount that must be used for payroll, and extends the loan terms to five years from the original two—changes businesses had been calling for. With states allowing businesses to reopen, employment last month rose sharply in leisure and hospitality, construction, retail trade and education and health services, according to the data.

And the number of workers on temporary layoff declined by 2.7 million to a still-shocking 15.3 million. The gains came despite downward revisions to March and April that subtracted another 690,000 jobs and another sharp decline in government employment, which dropped by 585,000 positions. Pelosi urged lawmakers to pass the proposed Heroes Act, which would funnel resources to state and local governments vulnerable to layoffs, "or else this fragile progress will collapse."

"With more than 100,000 Americans tragically dead, 21 million still out of work and state and local budgets collapsing, now is the worst possible moment to take our foot off the gas," she said.

Temporary or permanent?

Some analysts warned it may be too soon to get confident about the recovery since employers may not be able to keep those employees.

Harvard's Jason Furman notes the reduction in temporary layoffs was "the easy part of the recovery," and further job gains may come more slowly.

And Diane Swonk of Grant Thornton said it remains to be seen whether the firms rehiring now can keep workers on payroll, citing research by the University of Chicago suggesting "more than 40 percent of those temporary layoffs in April will become permanent." The data also reflect the time before the killing of George Floyd at the hands of police sparked nationwide protests over racial injustice, along with looting in some cities.—AFP



In this file photo, EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier (left) talks with an advisor as he arrives prior to a meeting on the steering of European Parliament on Brexit at the European Parliament in Brussels.—AFP

EU, Britain to step up Brexit talks

BRUSSELS: Brussels and London pledged Friday to step up the pace of Brexit trade talks to try to strike a deal by the end of October, after the latest round of negotiations ended with no major breakthrough.

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier accused Britain of backtracking on divorce terms agreed last year as he reported "no significant progress" in four days of talks held by videolink because of coronavirus. The former French minister set an October 31 deadline to reach an agreement on future EU-UK ties, to give time for it to be ratified before the end of the year.

Britain left the EU on January 31 and is now in a transition period until December 31, when it will leave the bloc's single market and customs union—with or without a trade deal. Barnier's UK counterpart David Frost noted "limited" advances and asked that both sides "intensify and accelerate our work" in order to clinch the deal.

Barnier said the next round of talks would take place in late June or early July as officials talked of a busy summer ahead for negotiations. "I have no doubt that we will find common ground over the course of the summer and by early autumn at the latest," Barnier told a news conference in Brussels.

Planned summit

Barnier complained British negotiators were seeking to renege on commitments Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson made in a political declaration with EU members last year. Barnier said this declaration—legally a non-binding annex to the Brexit withdrawal agreement—could be the "only reference" for the talks.

Expectations among Brexit-watchers had been very low for this round of talks, and most in Brussels believe a breakthrough is not likely before the autumn.

But despite the lack of headline progress, there appear to be signs of movement in the negotiations. Barnier hinted at compromise on the vexed issue of fishing rights—dear to several EU states including key player France—

saying he was ready to "discuss what needs to be discussed". And from the other side, a senior British negotiating official suggested willingness to accept tariffs on certain goods in return for flexibility on the EU's so-called "level playing field" rules. These are commitments to maintain EU standards on health, safety, state aid and the environment. Britain says it wants to keep high standards but not be bound by Brussels regulations.

The focus now turns to talks between Johnson and EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel later this month. The meeting will not involve the EU's key national leaders, such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel or French President Emmanuel Macron, who will be decisive to any breakthrough.

This "high-level" meeting will also be the last chance for Johnson to ask for an extension to the negotiations beyond the end of the year when a transition period that keeps Britain aligned to EU rules comes to an end. Johnson has categorically ruled out prolonging the transition period and the Europeans are working under the assumption that London will not change its mind.

London had earlier said it was prepared to ditch the process and walk away with no deal if not enough progress was made by June. But the senior British negotiating official indicated this deadline no longer held, suggesting that progress by July would be enough keep going.

Virus impact

Some on the EU side fear that Johnson, who became prime minister on a promise to deliver a hardline Brexit, may not be serious about striking a trade deal, despite the consequences for the economy. The negotiation flashpoints have remained the same since talks began in March.

London and Brussels starkly disagree on ways to assure fair competition under the terms of the trade deal, as well as how much access European fishing vessels will have to British waters. France and other coastal states are looking to maintain as much access to British waters as possible, although Barnier has conceded the EU would have to budge. The sense of urgency has also been sapped by the coronavirus outbreak that has made Brexit talks a lower priority in EU capitals.—AFP

Luxury carmaker Bentley to axe 1,000 UK jobs

LONDON: German-owned luxury car brand Bentley on Friday said it would axe around 1,000 jobs in the UK as the market weathers the coronavirus-induced downturn. The carmaker, a Volkswagen division that employs 4,200 workers in Britain, said fallout from the COVID-19 outbreak "hastened" its move to cut almost one-quarter of the UK workforce.

"Losing colleagues is not something we are treating lightly but this is a necessary step that we have to take to safeguard the jobs of the vast majority who will remain, and deliver a sustainable business model for the future," said Bentley Motors chairman and chief executive Adrian Hallmark.

"COVID-19 has not been the cause of this measure but a hastener," he added.

Friday's news caps a grim week for Britain's automotive sector, which has been slammed by tanking demand as a result of the coronavirus lockdown.

Car dealership group Lookers said Thursday that it would axe about 1,500 jobs and shut 12 showrooms. James Bond's favorite carmaker Aston Martin meanwhile cut 500 jobs in response to tumbling demand and ballooning losses at the luxury group that began long before the virus appeared.

It comes as car dealerships in England reopened this week as the UK government relaxed COVID-19 measures that slammed the brakes on vehicle sales. Car sales had screeched to a near halt in April and May after Britain's lockdown imposed on March 23.—AFP



A Bentley car is pictured outside the Bentley Motors factory near Crewe, in northwest England. German-owned luxury car brand Bentley said it will axe around 1,000 jobs in the UK as the market weathers the coronavirus-induced downturn.—AFP

Eye of the storm: AfDB chief Adesina

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast: In just months, African super-banker Akinwumi Adesina has gone from glory to fighting for his career, battling US demands for a probe into accusations of ethical violations and favoritism.

In 2015, the son of a farming family wrote another chapter in a remarkable tale, becoming the first Nigerian to helm the African Development Bank (AfDB), one of the world's five largest multilateral development lenders. His flamboyant style gained him continent-wide renown, when the AfDB last October secured \$115 billion (105 billion euros) in funding pledges—doubling its capital at a stroke and cementing its glittering triple-A credit rating.

But with elections for the AfDB presidency looming in August, Adesina's bid for a second term in office is at threat. At issue is a 15-page whistleblowers' report which says that under Adesina's watch, the AfDB has been tarred by poor governance, impunity, personal enrichment and favoritism.

The bank's ethics committee has already exonerated Adesina, saying the allegations rest "on no objective, solid facts."

US pressure

But any hopes Adesina may have had that this would provide a clear path to election

victory have been dashed. On May 22, US Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin personally signed a letter questioning the outcome of the probe and called on the AfDB's board to appoint an independent investigator to uphold accountability.

Adesina, 60, fought an intense and vocal rearguard action backed by Nigeria, the biggest of the AfDB's 80 shareholders. He lashed at "allegations that unjustly seek to impugn my honour and integrity" and invoked "my heroes, Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan, whose lives have shown that through pain we grow."

But on Thursday, his campaign received a hefty blow when the board agreed to an independent review, with a four-week deadline.

"There has always been behind-the-scenes manoeuvring when there are elections for president of the AfDB, but to have a public controversy on this scale is unheard-of," said a diplomatic observer. An Ivorian economist suggested that Adesina's "outsized personality" may also have played a part.

"He's exuberant, probably too high-profile for the closed world of the bank—he even projects an impression of arrogance and of doing what he likes."



Investors shed bonds as ECB boosts eurozone

LONDON: Safe-haven German government bonds sold off for a second day on Friday, with yields reaching their highest levels in months, after the European Central Bank's support for the eurozone helped boost sentiment towards the wider region. Southern European borrowing costs fell further and the gap between long-dated Italian and German bond yields shrunk to its narrowest since the first coronavirus-related market rout in late March. The ECB approved a bigger-than-expected expansion of its stimulus package on Thursday to prop up an economy plunged by the coronavirus pandemic into its worst recession since World War Two.

"If you think about what the ECB has done, it is dramatically supporting the euro through reducing tail risk. Peripheral spreads will keep tightening, especially at the long end," said Peter Chatwell, Mizuho's head of rates. The gap between Italian and German 30-year bond yields was at its narrowest since March 27, at 167 basis points. German 10-year Bund yields rose 6 bps to -0.257 percent, the highest since March 25, buoyed also by a drop in the U.S. jobless rate to 13.3 percent last month from 14.7 percent in April, in spite of economists predicting it would rise.

Employment data from the United States also showed over 2.5 million jobs being added, an improvement from a dire figure the month before and adding to the positive sentiment. Data "suggests the American economy can bounce back very vigorously and we all need to massively revise up our economic projections," said James Knightley, chief international economist at ING.—Reuters

Adesina's managerial style came under scrutiny when the bank was shaken by a string of departures after he took over in 2015. "He made himself a lot of enemies in trying to reform the bank," the Ivorian economist said, adding that Adesina had a reputation for giving preference to "English-speakers" at the bank at the expense of francophones.

Managers at the bank, speaking on condition of anonymity, say Adesina was better at communicating than at managing and exaggerated his own performance.

The AfDB plays an important if largely behind-the-scenes role in African economies, financing projects in agriculture, health, energy, education, transport and other development sectors. Adesina, a charismatic speaker at home in English or French, and a snappy dresser who favors elegant suits and a bow tie, gave the bank an international visibility that it has rarely gained throughout its 56 years.

Born to a farming family in Oyo state in southeastern Nigeria, Adesina attended a village school before study agricultural economics at university. After gaining a doctorate at Purdue University in Indiana, he became prominent in the development sector, notably working with the Rockefeller Foundation, before being named agriculture minister in 2010.

He carried out an ambitious range of farming reforms—an achievement that earned him the honor of Forbes' "African Man of the Year" of 2013. In 2015, after a fierce lobbying campaign, he was elected president of the AfDB, succeeding Donald Kaberuka, a Rwandan.—AFP

Melting permafrost behind Arctic fuel spill: Russia

MOSCOW: An unprecedented fuel spill that has polluted huge stretches of Arctic rivers was caused by melting permafrost, Russian officials said Friday, ordering a review of infrastructure in vulnerable zones.

The spill—which has colored remote tundra waterways with bright red patches visible from space—has highlighted the danger of climate change for Russia as areas locked by permafrost for centuries thaw amid warmer temperatures. News of the cause of the accident came amid a huge cleanup effort outside the Arctic city of Norilsk which President Vladimir Putin said should be bankrolled by metals giant Norilsk Nickel.

A national-level state of emergency was announced after 21,000 tons of diesel fuel spilled from a reservoir that collapsed last Friday. Norilsk Nickel owns the reservoir through a subsidiary.

Three criminal probes have been launched, and Russia's prosecutor general's office said in a statement that preliminary findings indicate sagging ground as the reason for the disaster. "To prevent a similar situation on especially hazardous structures on territories prone to melting of permafrost," the prosecutor general has "ordered a comprehensive review of such objects," it said. Norilsk, one of the country's biggest industrial centers, lies above the Arctic circle and Norilsk Nickel had already said it suspects permafrost thawing. Other factors may be at play too: the country's technical safety watchdog told TASS news agency that since 2016, it has been unable to check the condition of the 35-year-old reservoir, because the company said it was under repairs.

The metals giant tried to contain the damage on its own for two days before specialists were called in from companies and agencies across Russia and managed to stop the spill from spreading further.

Speaking with officials at the site by video call, Putin told Norilsk Nickel chief Vladimir Potanin he

expected the company to pay for a comprehensive cleanup. "It's necessary to carry out all the compensatory measures to restore biodiversity and the environment," he said. Potanin estimated that the operations would cost about 10 billion rubles (\$146 million), on top of any fines.

"We will spend whatever is needed," said Potanin. "We will return the ecosystem back to normal." Russia's environmental watchdog Svetlana Radionova said the damage was being calculated, and called the accident "unprecedented in scope".

Worst spill in Arctic history

A vast Arctic state, Russia is warming 2.5 times faster than the world average. Sixty-five percent of the country is covered by permafrost and the environment ministry warned in 2018 that the melt threatens pipes and structures, as well as buried toxic waste, which can seep into waterways.

Northern regions have also rung the alarm, with the eastern Arctic Yakutia area for years lobbying Moscow to pass legislation protecting permafrost. Environmentalists said the spill was the worst such accident ever in the Arctic region and the second worst in modern Russian history.

The Ambarnaya River, which is affected by the spill, feeds into Lake Pyasino, a major body of water and the source of the Pyasina River that is vitally important to the entire Taimyr peninsula. Satellite images released by the European Space Agency and Russia's Roscosmos show a large spot of reddish fuel had travelled over 20 kilometers (12 miles) toward the lake from the spill site.

Russia's fisheries agency and some environmentalists have said that the floating barriers erected on the river by responders are unable to stop the majority of the pollution, which can quickly dissolve or sink. The spill also polluted 180,000 square meters of land



A photo made available by the European Space Agency shows a satellite image captured by the Copernicus Sentinel-2 mission of the extent of an oil spill after some 20,000 tons of diesel oil leaked into the Ambarnaya river within the Arctic Circle. — AFP

before reaching the river, regional prosecutors said.

The area has been pummeled by decades of pollution from metals production and other industrial activity in Norilsk, Russia's most polluted city. World Wildlife Fund expert Alexei Knizhnikov said local res-

idents have long since stopped fishing in the river.

He added that despite damage to permafrost, the disaster could have been avoided if the company followed the rules, such as erecting a barrier around its fuel reservoir to contain spillage. — AFP

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Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo – Rectal Surgeon

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368

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Workers carry a coffin made of Mapresa (pressed wood) to be stored at a factory at Juan de Lurigancho district in Lima. — AFP photos



A worker paints coffins made of Mapresa (pressed wood) before painting them at a factory at Juan de Lurigancho district in Lima.



Workers weld a coffin at a factory at Juan de Lurigancho district in Lima.

COFFIN-MAKERS BOOMING AS PERU VIRUS DEATHS SOAR

As the coronavirus-hit economy of Peru stagnated over the past three months, Lima coffin-maker Genaro Cabrera has seen his sales quadruple. "I never imagined working to such an extreme," Cabrera told AFP at his factory in the rundown district of San Juan de Lurigancho. Together with his wife and a staff of 20, he makes a variety of coffins using wood, pressed cardboard and steel, demand for which has soared amid a rising COVID-19 death toll.

Peru is the second worst-hit Latin American country after Brazil. With a population of 33 million, it has almost 180,000 infections and nearly 5,000 deaths. "We are full of orders. People even want to make deposits in advance," Cabrera's wife Cesarela said. "Before the pandemic, we made 100 coffins a month, now we make that many in just a week." Coffins are selling fast, costing from \$118 to nearly \$600. Some of Cabrera's customers have been his own neighbors who succumbed to the disease. "I have six neighbors who have died from the pandemic," said Cabrera, 52. Fears of contagion meant "some of my workers stopped coming." But like other operators in the booming death industry, Cabrera can count on a ready pool of labor from among Peru's estimated 800,000

Venezuelan migrants. He employs four Venezuelans to do the finishing work on his coffins.

'Tempting death'

The pandemic has left the dreams of many Peruvian small businesses in tatters, but coffin making and funeral services are flourishing, using Venezuelan labor for work Peruvians refuse to do. "Every day we tempt death," said Jhoan Faneite, whose job is to collect the bodies of coronavirus victims and take them to the crematorium. "At the beginning we were scared, but now I focus on my work. I blank out my mind so that I don't have feelings," said Faneite, 35. He is one of 21 Venezuelans who work collecting corpses to transport to Piedrangel crematorium in the south of Lima. Having fled the economic crisis in their own country, these Venezuelans dress in black suits and masks to remove corpses of suspected COVID-19 victims from hospitals and homes in Lima's poorer districts. It's a job no-one else will do. "They call us things like the 'Covid hunt' or 'the death squad' or 'Covid soldiers,'" said Faneite, who has lived with his wife and three children in the rundown district of Agustino since fleeing Venezuela two years ago.

A job no-one wants

Roberto Gonzalez, the owner of the private Piedrangel facility, is full of praise for his Venezuelan workers. "Ninety-percent of the work of collecting corpses for

they have not been infected. We have no cases, hopefully we can continue like this until the pandemic goes away," said Gonzalez.

At the Piedrangel crematorium in the

victim in March, in the wealthy Miraflores district. Business has been growing ever since. To date, more than 2,000 bodies have been cremated in Piedrangel's ovens. "I never thought I would live



A worker makes a coffin at a factory at Juan de Lurigancho district in Lima.



crematoriums is done by Venezuelans," Gonzalez said. "Our Peruvian workers didn't want the work of carrying bodies, out of fear. The most seasoned workers are Venezuelans. They have not run away." In addition to the 21 removers, other Venezuelan workers operate the ovens at the crematorium. "Thank God

working class district of Chorrillos, there are seven liquefied-gas ovens operating round the clock. Gonzalez's business is contracted by Peru's health ministry. His employees collect, disinfect and bag the bodies of virus victims, before taking them in a vehicle to the crematorium. The company picked up its first coronavirus

through something like this. Every day we collect between 70 and 150 bodies to be cremated," says Gonzalez. Before the pandemic, the average number was just 15. — AFP



Spectators gather on 'taxi boats' as they prepare to watch surfers in action at Teahupoo off the coast of Tahiti in French Polynesia. — AFP

Black girls, supporters surf around the world to honor George Floyd

From California to Indonesia, Australia and Senegal, black girls and supporters floated on surfboards on Friday to pay tribute to George Floyd, the black man whose death in US police custody has sparked protests worldwide. The "Solidarity in Surfing" events in more than 100 locations were organized by Black Girls Surf, a group founded in 2014 to teach the sport to girls of color aged 5 to 17.

In Santa Monica, California, about 200 surfers of various ages and races gathered under cloudy skies on a stretch of beach once known as Inkwell Beach, a place where black Californians sought an oceanfront refuge in the 20th century. The event was meant to honor Floyd and others who were victims of police brutality, said Sayuri Blondt, 29, a local coordinator for Black Girls Surf. The surfers waded into the water for a paddle out, a traditional Hawaiian ceremony to celebrate the life of someone who has died. About 200 yards offshore, they held a moment of silence while

floating on their boards in a large circle, and placed yellow, pink and red flowers in the water.

Some had written "Black Lives Matter" on their surfboards. Panpan Wang, 37, displayed the names of black people killed by police on his chest. Rhonda Harper, who founded Black Girls Surf after seeing that black women were underrepresented among professional surfers, said the group aimed to show "there can be solidarity in all of this violence." "I wanted the young girls to see that people do really care," Harper said via phone from Senegal. One person on the Santa Monica beach asked how others could support Black Girls Surf. Blondt said the group would welcome donations of surfboards or wetsuits. "When you are out in the ocean surfing and you do see a woman of color, just be friendly with her and help her to feel welcome in the ocean," she said. "That's the biggest thing." — Reuters



A grade seven student poses for a photo in the Somali region, Ethiopia. — Reuters

In a remote part of Ethiopia, one charity has come up with a novel way of protecting children off school because of the coronavirus pandemic from forced labor - camels bearing books. Ethiopia closed its schools in mid-March and sent more than 26 million children home, where experts say they are at greater risk from forced labor and child marriage. But in the country's eastern Somali region, more than 20 camels have been deployed to carry wooden boxes filled with storybooks to help thousands of children in remote villages to continue their education. "The scale of this crisis is huge, but we are determined to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and ensure no child is worse off at the end of this pandemic," said Ekin Ogutogullari, country director for Save the Children, the charity behind the scheme. "We are ensuring that children still continue to read and learn, despite the fact that they are out of school," he said. Save the Children launched the mobile camel libraries a decade ago and has

Saudi first female director premiere the critically acclaimed 'The Perfect Candidate'

OSN, the region's leading entertainment business is bringing the ground-breaking movie, 'The Perfect Candidate' exclusively to OSN Store, where it will be available to buy or rent. Based on a female doctor running for office in Saudi Arabia, this film will leave viewers feeling both inspired and empowered.

Directed by Haifaa Al Mansour, one of the most significant cinematic figures in the Kingdom - 'The Perfect Candidate' certainly lives up to its hype. The film tells the story of a young doctor Maryam (Mila Al Zahrani's debut) who surprises everyone by standing as a candidate for the local municipality in Saudi Arabia. Maryam's only desire is for the dirt road outside the local hospital to be surfaced, but no one takes this ambitious professional woman's modest political mission seriously.

Al Mansour depicts Maryam's political mission as a multi-layered family drama. She lovingly outlines how the new candidate is supported by her sisters and how her father, a musician, worries about her progressive values. On tour with his band in conservative areas, he realises Maryam's mission is about creative openness and freedom of expression.

Al Mansour directed the film WADJDA in 2012, making her the first director to ever shoot a film in its entirety in the Kingdom. After that she quickly found her way to Hollywood, where she worked on several projects. For her latest project, 'The Perfect Candidate', she returned to Saudi Arabia to capture this touching story about a woman trying to break the glass ceiling.

Haifaa Al Mansour, Director of The Perfect



Candidate said: "The pace of modernisation in Saudi Arabia is incredibly rapid right now. We are seeing so many changes, happening so fast, that it is hard for people to fully grasp the full extent of what is happening. I wanted to capture this moment through my film, of a society in transition, and the ways these changes are perceived from people." With the film being nominated for Best Film at the Venice Film Festival, FEST International Film Festival and the London Film Festival - 'The Perfect Candidate' is a must-see.

Rolla Karam, Vice President of Acquisitions and Head of Arabic Programming at OSN said: "OSN is all about bringing exclusive entertainment to the region and we are proud to introduce The Perfect Candidate to our exciting lineup this Eid. As a leading industry player, we are committed to celebrating local talent and making their content accessible to our customers across the Middle East. The Perfect Candidate is a stunning, feel-good movie based on hope and determination which couldn't be timelier." The film was made available to Buy & Keep or Rent on OSN Store from Sunday 23rd May.

Ethiopia mobile camel libraries keep children from forced labor

helped more than 22,000 children in 33 villages to get access to education during the pandemic.

Community volunteers travel around villages with the camels, carrying boxes of books and a tent to set up a temporary library that stays in each village for two and a half days before moving on. The charity has adapted its mobile libraries to the new circumstances - before, children would gather around and read together, whereas now they take the books home and return them the following week. Last month, it surveyed 30 Ethiopian children about their concerns over the coronavirus, finding they were worried about the economic pressure on their families and about rises in early marriage and child labor. One child from the Somali region, where people are already grappling with droughts, floods, disease outbreaks and invasions of desert locusts, said many minors were having to work as herders or collect firewood while out of school.

Almost 16 million children aged between 5 and 17

are engaged in child labour in Ethiopia, according to a national survey published in 2018. Joan Nyanyuki, executive director of the Ethiopia-based African Child Policy Forum, a research institution, said the role of schools was to protect as well as educate children. "But now with schools closed, children are shut off completely from different benefits of the educational system," she said. "They are more prone to violence, abuse, and even at risk of missing meals, which could result in malnutrition and hunger." Ogutogullari said the charity was trying to find creative ways to help children continue learning. "We also know the longer they are away from school, the higher the number of children that might not be coming back to school," he said. — Reuters



Artem Chigvintsev's world 'turned upside down' by Nikki Bella

The 'Dancing with the Stars' professional proposed to the former professional wrestler in the new episode of 'Total Bellas' and in his speech, he admitted it was "completely out of his control" when he fell for the sportswoman. He admitted to her: "The thing is when I fell in love with you, it was completely out of my control. There is a saying that love is a singular soul inhabiting two bodies. You turned my world upside down in the most incredible way, and I love you so, so much. I don't think there's words can describe how you make me feel, and how much I love you. I want

to spend every sunset and every sunrise with you." Nikki was in disbelief as she said excitedly: "Artem, what are you doing? ... Artem, no." And Artem got down on one knee: "What I'm trying to say is, 'Will you marry me?'" Meanwhile, Nikki recently recalled a time she told Artem she would "one-hundred percent understand" if he wanted to walk away from their romance whilst she was still "healing" from her split from John Cena. She said: "There were certain things I was struggling with because I was still in the process of healing, but yet I was falling in love so fast with this man. I had that

conversation with Artem. I told him, 'Look, I have good days and I have bad days and I am trying to heal, but I don't want to lose you. But if you want to put up with what I'm going through and stay by my side, do it. But if you want to walk away and we come back to this relationship down the road, I one-hundred percent understand.'" And Nikki revealed that Artem was fully behind her, as he told her: "Look, I know you're going through stuff, you're healing; I want to be here to support you."

Johnny Depp urged people to fight racism



The 'Pirates of Caribbean' star has commented on the murder of George Floyd, and urged people to use this tragic event to call for the end of systemic racism. He wrote: "There is no way to make sense of what is senseless. There is no way to restore a life that has been taken. Just as there is no way to un-break a heart that is broken. What we can do is make a vow to ourselves that racism and the ignorance inherent in such judgmental ugliness that it gives birth to, is NO LONGER AN OPTION!!! THERE MUST BE A CHANGE!!! DEMAND IT!!!! My dear friend and brother, Killer Mike - (Run The Jewels), is a brilliant musician, artist, activist for social justice and the son of an Atlanta Policeman. He is also, one of the kindest, most caring and loving human beings that I've ever had the pleasure and honor to know!!! I beg everyone to listen to the remarks of this true statesman. True statesmen have never been so needed, and they've never been in such short supply. With All Love, JD. (sic)" And the 56-year-old actor slammed the "grotesque illustration of the abuse of power" after Floyd was murdered by a police officer. He added: "As the majority of American people, our global community and our extended family of humans helplessly watched a man die on television ... I, too, was exposed to the atrocity of blatant barbarism, ruthless cruelty and unmitigated lack of humanity. A handcuffed man, pleading for his life lay prone with the full weight of a man sworn to defend the peace on his neck. The victim of this heinous act of cowardice, George Floyd, told the officers that he could not breathe."

Sophie Ellis-Bextor has 'newly glued forehead'

The 'Murder on the Dancefloor' hit-maker has taken to Instagram to give an update on her injuries after receiving treatment in hospital. Taking to Instagram, she shared: "Hello all. Just to let you know I'm doing ok. I've been so well looked after at home and am currently laid up on a sofa surrounded by my 3 smallest boys. I've got some impressive bruises and a swollen and newly glued forehead which I'm completely fascinated by. If I hurt myself, I'm always satisfied by a spectacular healing process and my puffy face has not disappointed. I want to thank you for the lovely messages. Quite overwhelming really, and almost worth falling off my bike for. As it happens I've been feeling so incredibly lucky to have not broken anything and to be fortunate enough to have so much

support Xxxx hope you're doing ok on what would have usually been our date night for the last couple of months. Have a boogie for me. I'll be dancing with you again in no time X (sic)" Earlier in the week, Sophie revealed she was rushed to hospital with cuts and bruises on her arm and a black eye after she fell "down the side of the Thames". Sophie wrote on Instagram at the time: "I ended up in a&e last night after I took a tumble from the tow path down to the side of the Thames on my bike during an evening cycle. I've put the photo in black and white so it's not too gory. I am ok, just a bit bruised and sore. I want to thank the ambulance crew and the staff at west mid hospital (where I was born, as it happens) for gluing me back together. (sic)"



Alexis Ohanian stepping down from the Reddit board of directors

The Reddit co-founder - who is married to Serena Williams and has Alexis Olympia Ohanian Jr, two, with the tennis star - has vowed to step down from his role so he can tell his daughter he has done his part to support the Black Lives Matter movement. He wrote on Instagram: "I co-founded @reddit 15 years ago to help people find community and a sense of belonging. It is long overdue to do the right thing. I'm doing this for me, for my family, and for my country. I'm saying this as a father who needs to be able to answer his black daughter when she asks, 'What did you do?' I have resigned as a member of the reddit board. I have urged them to fill my seat with a black candidate." And Alexis has pledged \$1 million to support Colin Kaepernick's Know Your Rights Camp, which helps to liberate black communities through "education, self-empowerment, mass-mobilization". He added in the lengthy post: "I will use future gains on my Reddit stock to serve the black community, chiefly to curb racial hate, and I'm starting with a pledge of \$1m to @kaepernick7s @yourrightscamp? ... I believe resignation can actually be an act of leadership from people in power right now. To everyone fighting to fix our broken nation: do not stop. (sic)"

David Oyelowo opens up about racism

The 'Selma' star spoke out to share his own experiences with racism as he admitted he fears for his sons Asher and Caleb. He said: "In a bid to pull myself out of the hole I have been in I've tried to look to the future, the future that my children will step into, but in a bid to do that I have had to look at the past ... We are not safe, and even though I am an optimistic person I now look to my son having watched my father suffer what he suffered, some of what I have faced, there is so much more I could tell you of what I have faced ... Please let the future not be the same for my son as it has been for my dad, for me, and for so many black people over the centuries. So my friends reaching out to me saying how are you doing, I'm not doing great." And when the 44-year-old actor heard what his father had been through when he first arrived in the UK, he vowed to make a "different" future for his family and to end systemic racism. Speaking about what her father went through in the 60s, he added: "When he arrived in the UK people would check for his tail to see if he had one, he had coffee thrown in his face, hot coffee, he was spat at, he couldn't rent a place to live because it was, 'No Blacks, No Irish, No dogs.' He would tell me these stories and they felt like something relegated to the past, something that we had moved on from, I stepped into a future that I determined was going to be different."

Blac Chyna accuses the Kardashians of racism



The model has faced a long legal battle with the Kardashian / Jenner family and NBCUniversal over the premature ending of her reality show with her then-fiancé Rob Kardashian, but she has now slammed the company and the family, claiming that her race was the reason why they decided not to renew the show. The Kardashian-Jenner family attorney Marty Singer told TMZ of the claims: "This is a two year old lawsuit in which Chyna has changed her defence more times than we can count. Sadly, unsurprisingly to anyone, she has stooped to a new low, changing her defense to try to leverage the emotions and pain of the moment, insulting the pain and suffering of real victims of racial injustice and systemic racism. "We take these allegations very seriously and once again, there is no Rob & Chyna show if there is no Rob & Chyna." Rob and Chyna - who share daughter Dream - have also been embroiled in a court case after he accused her of "threatening to kill him", something which she strenuously denies. Court documents allege that she "pointed a gun at Rob's head and threatened to kill him. Chyna came up behind Rob wrapped an iPhone charger tightly around his neck and started to strangle him using her full strength". It was also alleged that Rob hid himself in the bedroom locking the door, and he then claims Chyna "proceeded to use her fists and a metal rod to repeatedly strike" the door. Rob's attorney added in the court documents: "Chyna's erratic conduct under the influence of alcohol and drugs culminated in her physically assaulting and battering Rob and causing significant property damage."



Regina King tells son about police brutality

Speaking in the wake of the current Black Lives Matter protests across the world, the Oscar-winning actress revealed that she has had many different discussions with her 24-year-old son Ian Alexander Jr, about the dangers he faces as a black man living in America. During an interview on 'Jimmy Kimmel Live', Regina said: "I think in most black homes it's not just a conversation, it's an ongoing conversation and it never stops." Regina added that incidents such as the death of George Floyd, who died last month after a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes while he was handcuffed on the ground, makes black men feel like they are not "worthy" or valuable to society. The 49-year-old actress said: "It's another moment that's telling them that they're not worthy... their lives are not valuable once they walk outside of the comfort of their homes. "You get to a place, especially when your children are at an age where they are looked at as adults, and the anger that they have is... it just compounds every time something like this happens." The conversation shifts every time because you have to find a way to support their feelings and make sure that you're letting them know that you hear them and that you do mirror the same sentiment. But you don't want them to do anything that's going to put themselves in a situation that they may not come back home, they may not talk to you again."



Olly Murs 'sure' he will marry Amelia Tank

The 'Dance With Me Tonight' hitmaker is convinced he will marry his bodybuilding partner one day as he was asked if his pals would be getting an invite to his nuptials. Speaking to hosts Sky's Harry's Home Fixtures' hosts Harry Redknapp, his son Jamie and comedian Tom Davis, he said: "Listen, if, when, I'm sure I'll marry Amelia, when I get married all you guys are invited. 100 per cent." Meanwhile, a source previously claimed Olly is "so happy" in his relationship with Amelia and believes he's found "the right girl" in the brunette beauty after spending "a good few years" waiting for the perfect person to come his way. The source said: "He hadn't had a serious relationship for a good few years before Amelia came along because he was wait-

ing for the right girl. "Now he feels he has found that woman. He is so happy and everything is going really well ... They spend all their time together so it was the natural progression for her to move in, and there is plenty of room. Usually they are both so busy and it can be tricky to spend a lot of time together. But now they are making the most of their quality time as a couple and absolutely loving it." The 35-year-old hunk gushed before the festive holiday about how excited he was to be with Amelia after spending the past four years single and feeling "lonely" at Christmas. He said: "I'm going to spend some time with her really, it's been amazing. I haven't had a girlfriend for four years at Christmas, it's been a bit lonely."



KUWAIT: Geese walk along Arabian Gulf Street on Friday during a partial curfew imposed by the authorities in a bid to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Ethiopia migrants forced home empty-handed by coronavirus

ADDIS ABABA: When Rita Alemu realized the plane she had boarded in Dubai had taken her back home to Ethiopia, she burst into tears as she knew she would never recover more than a year's unpaid wages. The 23-year-old domestic helper had only been paid for two out of the 18 months she had worked in the United Arab Emirates when the new coronavirus pandemic suddenly forced her and thousands of other Ethiopian migrants to go home.

"I went to Dubai hoping I could work and change my life, but I spent all this time there and came back empty-handed," said Rita, whose broker took her to the airport after her employers decided to leave Dubai

because of the coronavirus crisis. "As soon as I arrived at the airport, I lost my mind," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, adding that she could not remember what happened after she landed.

More than 14,000 Ethiopians have either been deported or chosen to return home since the beginning of April, mostly from Sudan, Djibouti and Saudi Arabia, according to the UN migration agency (IOM). Every year, it is estimated that tens of thousands of Ethiopians travel irregularly, mainly to the Gulf, in search of better-paid work. Many end up exploited as maids or on building sites, unable to leave without their employers' consent.

It is easy for brokers to tempt Ethiopians to migrate because they lack opportunities at home and feel compelled to provide for their families in a poor country where droughts regularly leave millions short of food, migration experts say. But the trauma they endure - often working for more than 20 hours a day, without enough food or sleep and enduring physical and sexual abuse - can leave psychological scars, according to groups working with returnees.

Such problems are so common that returnees from the Middle East and elsewhere in Africa are usually screened by IOM on arrival back in Ethiopia. Those in need of professional help are taken to rehabilitation and reintegration shelters. But the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the system. Migrants are now sent directly to one of more than 50 coronavirus quarantine centers around the Horn of Africa nation for 14 days. Those who test negative can then go home.

Although the centers provide some psychological and physical support to help the returnees accept and cope with the sudden changes in their lives, 14 days is not enough to deal with serious mental health and trauma-related needs. "Most of the returnees who need further psychiatric, psychological and physical care returned home before they got the services they required," said Abera Adeb, head of the Agar Ethiopia Charitable Society, which runs rehabilitation shelters.

For many years, the charity has been running several shelters across Ethiopia, which host trafficking survivors and returning migrants with mental health problems for up to six months, providing clothing, therapies and training. "The counselling service (in quarantine) is

not adequate," said Abera. "It is there ... for the case of emergency. It's not enough to fully rehabilitate and send them home."

Meselech Assefa, a director at the ministry of labor and social affairs, said returnees were not abandoned after the 14-day quarantine period. "Psychosocial support is given at quarantine centers and should continue at their respective regions. There will be a follow-up at the regional, zonal, woreda and kebele levels," she said, referring to different levels of administration.

Agar Ethiopia has set up a temporary shelter in Dukem, 37 km southeast of the capital Addis Ababa, for migrants in need of further support after two weeks in quarantine to recover from trauma experienced abroad. Rita is one of about 20 women living in the shelter, all of whom were domestic workers in the Middle East. Some were deported by host governments over fears they could spread the coronavirus.

Arriving home empty-handed was never part of the plan, and coming to terms with this has been difficult for many. Without support, returnees risk developing severe mental health problems, said Daniel Melese, country representative for the Freedom Fund, which has financed the temporary shelter. "Sending them directly to their communities is dangerous both for them and for the families receiving them because they are coming back unsuccessful," said Daniel, who heads the fund's work in Ethiopia to end modern-day slavery.

"They are going back with frustration, unmet expectations, and low self-esteem. The families also have that feeling. (That could cause) mental stress and depression which is very dangerous." — Reuters

Trudeau takes a knee at protest...

Continued from Page 1

capitals and elsewhere. "Look at the diversity of this crowd," said Families Minister Ahmed Hussen, who joined Trudeau at the Ottawa protest. "These are not just black Canadians. It's everyone who's saying black lives matter."

Similar protests took place in cities across Canada. In Toronto, Police Chief Mark Saunders and several uniformed officers met protesters marching through downtown, and also took a knee. "We see you and we are listening," he tweeted. "We have to all stay in this together to make change."

Saunders' actions drew praise from Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who called images of the city's first black police chief joining protesters "impactful". "That's what you call true leadership," he said.

Ottawa protestor Stephane Kribodo said there was too much racism - "in the world, in France, in the United States, in Canada". "It's important to stand up against it if we want change," he said.

Another protestor, Sophie Scott, echoed this view, noting several recent cases of alleged police misconduct in Canada. Two women with mental health problems, in Toronto and the town of Edmundston, New Brunswick, died after calling police for help. An Inuit man in the far north was struck by a police cruiser. "We want a just (pandemic) recovery for all and that requires taking action against racism," Scott said.

On Tuesday, Trudeau appeared at a loss for words, pausing for 20 seconds when pressed for his thoughts on US President Donald Trump's threat of military mobilization against violent protests. "We all watch in horror and consternation what's going on in the United States," he said finally. Now "is a time to listen, it is a time to pull people together and a time to learn what injustices continue despite progress over years and decades," he added. — AFP

Trump: 'Great day' for Floyd; anger at...

Continued from Page 1

pepper spray at him. Both incidents were caught on video.

Under-fire New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, who imposed the week-long night-time curfew after widespread looting earlier in the week, has repeatedly said the NYPD is showing "restraint". In an editorial published Friday, The New York Times called on him to "open your eyes". "The police are out of control," it said.

Floyd, 46, died in the Midwestern city of Minneapolis while handcuffed during a May 25 arrest for a non-violent offense. His death reignited longstanding resentment over police killings of African Americans and unleashed a nationwide wave of protest unlike anything seen in the US since Martin Luther King's 1968 assassination. Mass protests have also taken place in European capitals and on Friday Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joined a large demonstration in Ottawa.

The action has handed Trump one of the greatest challenges of his tumultuous presidency. While condemning Floyd's death, he has adopted a tough stance towards the protesters and has been accused of exacerbating tensions. US civil rights groups have filed a case suing Trump after security forces fired pepper balls and smoke bombs to clear peaceful demonstrators in Washington before the president walked to a church for a photo op earlier this week.

Mayor Muriel Bowser Friday renamed the area outside the White House "Black Lives Matter Plaza"—unveiling a giant street mural—after

tweeting a letter calling on Trump to "withdraw all extraordinary federal law enforcement and military presence from our city." A city worker put up a new street sign with the name. The corner of 16th and H is significant - in a controversial incident on Monday, peaceful protesters gathered there were dispersed with tear gas. Shortly afterwards, Trump walked from the White House to a nearby church for a photo op, during which he held the Bible in his hand.

Stars Like LeBron James praised her move on Twitter, but the local chapter of the Black Lives Movement balked, calling the mural a "performative distraction from real policy changes". "This is to appease white liberals while ignoring our demands," it said on Twitter, saying Bowser had "consistently been on the wrong side" of the movement. But Trump was back in buoyant mood following the release of strong job numbers Friday. He told reporters that such violence as Floyd's death in handcuffs cannot be allowed to happen.

Nevertheless, Trump added, "Hopefully George is looking down right now and saying this is a great thing for our country." "This is a great day for him. It's a great day for everybody," he said. Biden immediately slammed Trump for invoking Floyd's name. "George Floyd's last words, 'I can't breathe,' have echoed across our nation and around the world. "For the President to try to put any other words in his mouth is frankly despicable," he tweeted.

Some of the early protests were marred by rioting and looting but they have been mostly peaceful since then. Curfews have been lifted in Washington, Los Angeles and other cities but New York's is due to run for the next three nights. Several thousand marched in Brooklyn on Friday afternoon as activists sought to keep up the movement's momentum into the weekend. — Agencies

Govt retakes Haftar's last...

Continued from Page 1

GNA head Fayez Al-Sarraj vowed that his government would impose its control over the whole of Libya. "Our fight continues and we are determined to defeat the enemy (and) impose state control on the whole of the homeland," Sarraj said after talks with key backer Turkey.

Late Thursday, Haftar's spokesman Ahmad Al-Mesmari confirmed his forces' "redeployment" away from the capital after more than a year of sometimes intense fighting. He said the redeployment was a "humanitarian gesture intended to spare the Libyan people further bloodshed".

Hundreds have been killed and 200,000 more driven from their homes since Haftar launched his assault, vowing to "cleanse" the capital of the "terrorist militias" he said dominated the GNA. The pro-GNA high command warned its troops on Facebook against perpetrating "acts of reprisals, looting or destruction" in Tarhouna as their troops circulated in the town on Friday.

Mesmari said the redeployment by pro-Haftar forces was intended to boost the work of a UN-backed military commission tasked with shoring up a nationwide ceasefire. "We announce that we are redeploying our forces outside Tripoli on condition that the other side respects the ceasefire," he said in a statement released late Thursday. "If they do not respect it, we will resume military operations and suspend our participation in the negotiations of the military committee."

Located in the hills southeast of Tripoli, Tarhouna had functioned as a forward base for Haftar's assault on the capital. Its swift fall suggests his foreign supporters were less willing to sustain his offensive once Turkey intervened. It has raised questions over Haftar's predominant position in eastern Libya though few other figures there appear capable of holding together the coalition of forces he has assembled into the LNA.

Some Tarhouna residents fled east, and the Kani

family, which had controlled it since 2014 also withdrew, LNA military sources said. Footage inside Tarhouna showed GNA forces there cheering and firing into the air. The GNA later said it had discovered more than 100 bodies in a morgue in the town and was investigating.

Later on Friday, the GNA said it had entered Bani Walid, a small town south of Tarhouna and site of an airfield. Two residents confirmed the GNA had entered it without opposition. "There could be a solution at the table, but Haftar's forces are losing ground in every sense," said a Turkish official.

The United Nations' Libya mission said Tuesday that after a three-month suspension, the warring parties had agreed to resume ceasefire talks. A military commission made up of five GNA loyalists and five Haftar delegates held talks in February, but the dialogue was suspended. A January truce brokered by Turkey and key Haftar ally Russia has been repeatedly violated.

Haftar is supported by neighboring Egypt and the United Arab Emirates as well as Russia. His forces control the whole of eastern Libya, with its economically vital oilfields and export infrastructure. They also control most of the far-flung oasis cities of the vast desert south. But they have suffered a string of defeats in recent months at the hands of GNA forces, which have been bolstered by significant Turkish military support.

Earlier this year, Haftar's forces already lost a string of towns along the Mediterranean coast between the capital and the Tunisian border. In April, UN experts said hundreds of mercenaries from Russian paramilitary organization the Wagner Group were fighting for him. But last month, as Haftar's losses mounted, the GNA said Wagner Group fighters had withdrawn from combat zones south of the capital.

Libya has endured years of violence since the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi, with rival administrations and scores of militias battling for power. The United Nations has urged outside powers to respect a deal reached at a January conference in Berlin, ending foreign meddling and upholding a much-violated arms embargo. Amnesty on Friday urged Turkey, Russia and the UAE to "cease violating the UN arms embargo". — Agencies

Stars

Daily SuDoku

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easy

Friday's Solution

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

hard

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
Long-buried emotions from the past, some of them pleasant and some in need of release, could well up from your subconscious today, Aries. This is likely to have an uplifting effect on your mental and emotional state, so don't fight it. It's also likely to release whatever hang-ups you might have about relationships. Therefore, you can expect all your involvements to thrive - particularly the romantic ones. Enjoy.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
Libra, your working life and income are likely to be enhanced today through the influence of people who live in distant states or foreign countries. The desire for knowledge is probably strong, and you might seek to develop some new skills. Your romantic life is also likely to be thriving since you feel passionate and project that feeling to others. Expect some surprises from a current or potential romantic partner.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
Some exciting activities could take place in your neighborhood today, Taurus. You'll definitely want to find out more about what's going on. If possible, you may go with some close friends or a romantic partner. Communicating with others is likely to be intense and gratifying now, so expect your head to be spinning by day's end. It's definitely a great idea to spend some time alone with a romantic partner this evening if that's in the cards. You're feeling passionate.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
Romance is front and center today, Scorpio, as you're probably feeling especially passionate. This is a great day to plan an intimate evening with a lover, if possible. Make use of candles, muted lights, and soft music. You're apt to be feeling especially passionate about your other interests, whether they're intellectual, creative, or business oriented. You can expect to spend a lot of time pursuing your passions, no matter what they are.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
Your business and financial interests definitely get a big boost today, Gemini, perhaps through contacts with friends. Career matters are skyrocketing, and your financial future looks promising. Keep up the good work. Your health is especially strong and vigorous, but your primary interest is likely to be romance, as you should be feeling especially passionate. Schedule an intimate evening with a significant other, if possible, and make the most of it.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
You're likely to be feeling especially romantic today, Sagittarius. If you're currently involved, plan an intimate evening at home with your lover. If you aren't involved, anything goes. Don't be surprised if someone new and exciting comes into your life. Your imagination is high, so you might decide to put your energy into creative projects. Take whatever time you need. Don't let the day pass you by.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
Love and romance are apt to be your primary focus today, Cancer. If you're currently romantically involved, expect a wonderfully intense evening with your special someone if it's possible you spend time together. If you aren't involved, don't be surprised if someone new and exciting comes into your life, perhaps contacting you from another state or foreign country. Your creative abilities are also intensified. Take whatever time you need to memorize the ideas coming your way.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
Today you might find that your social life takes a definite turn for the better. You could receive more than one text or call that piques your interest, Capricorn, and you'll spend a lot of time discussing arrangements for future get-togethers. If you aren't romantically involved now, you may find out about someone promising. If you're involved, make sure you reserve time for an intimate encounter with your special someone, if possible.

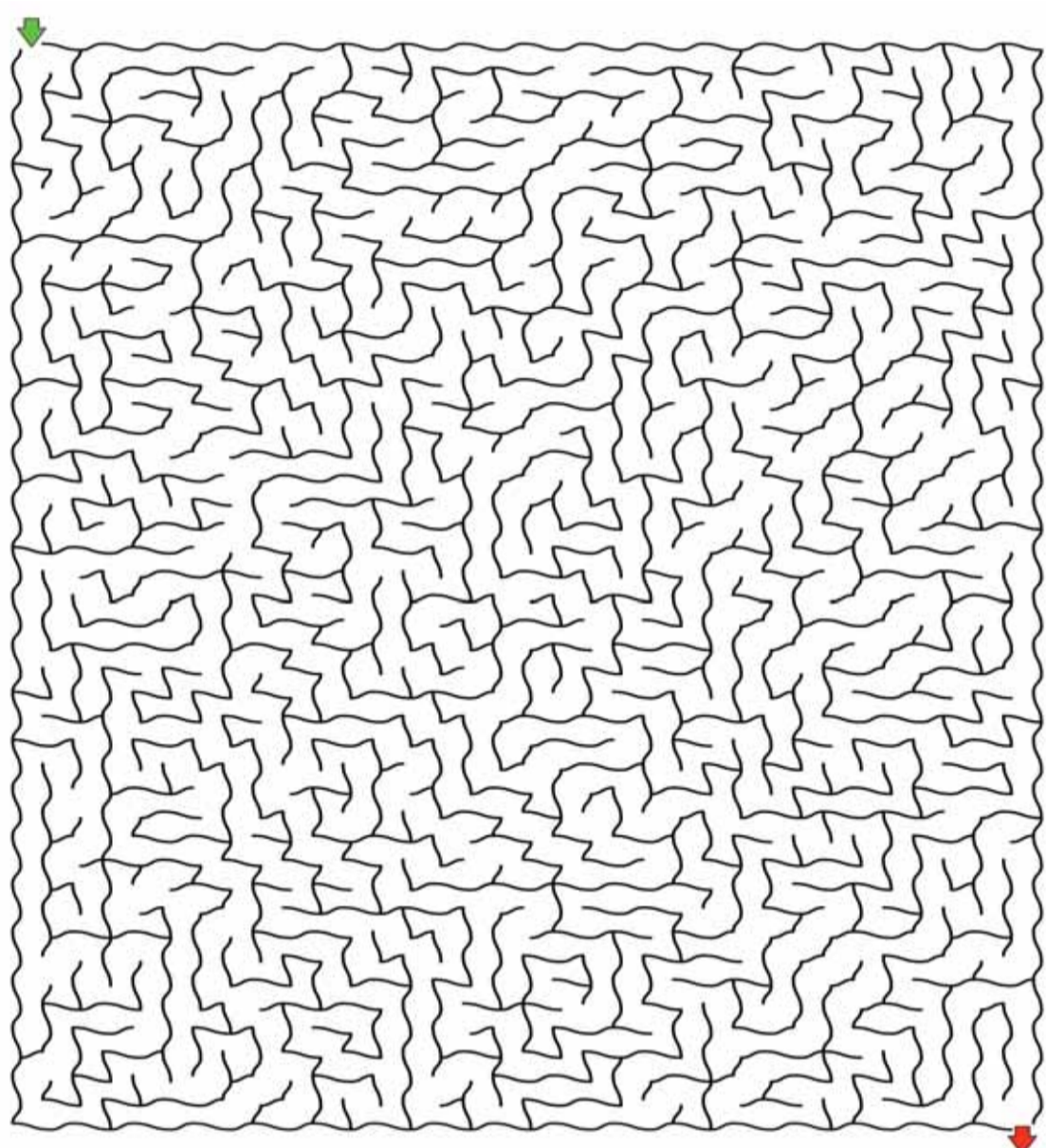
Leo (July 23-August 22)
Today dreams, visions, and intuitive insights enrich your innovative side and interactions with others. Don't hesitate to put your ideas into motion, Leo, even if they seem a bit too ambitious. You're well attuned to the collective unconscious and likely to be picking up on future trends, so be on the alert. You're feeling especially sexy in the evening, so plan an intimate get-together with your lover if possible.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
Business and money matters may seem too good to be true, Aquarius. Success and good fortune in these departments are definitely indicated for you today. If you've been trying to get a break in a creative or artistic field, it may finally manifest. The present looks profitable and the future bright. In the evening, celebrate by scheduling a romantic encounter with your lover, if possible. You should find it especially gratifying now.

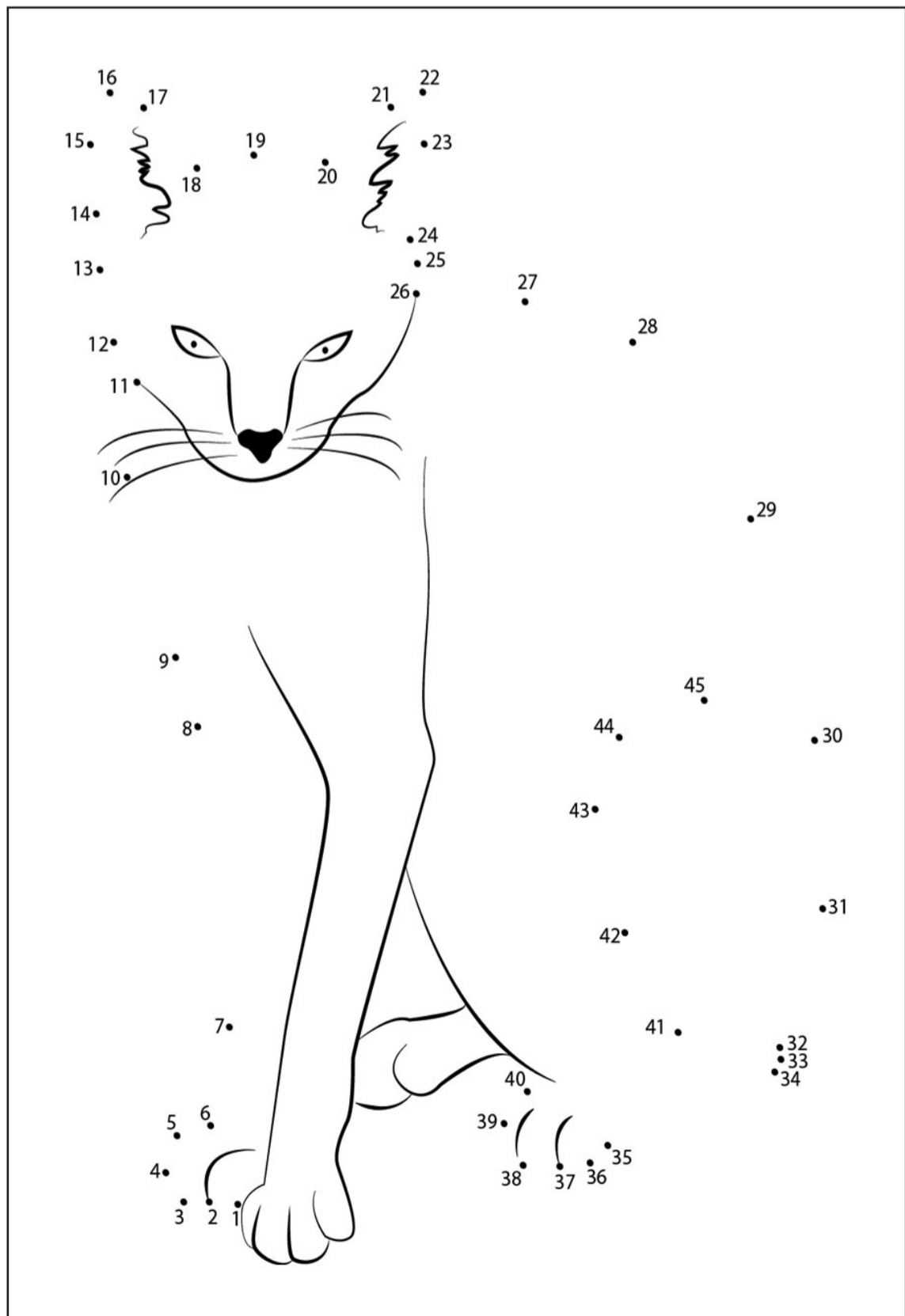
Virgo (August 23-September 22)
A neighbor or relative you haven't spoken to for a while might contact you out of the blue, Virgo. Make the time to talk, as it could open up doors for you that you wouldn't normally expect. Relationships of all kinds should be going especially well, and these include romantic ones. If you're involved, expect to grow closer. If you aren't currently involved, don't be surprised if someone new and exciting enters your life.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
You should be feeling especially passionate today, Pisces, so don't be surprised if you can't get sex and romance out of your mind. If you're currently involved, schedule an intimate evening with your lover, if possible. If you aren't involved, don't be surprised if you pull someone new and exciting under your spell. Your passions could also spill into other parts of your life, including creative and intellectual interests. Make the most of it.

Find the way



Join the dots



Word Search

Tokyo Word Search

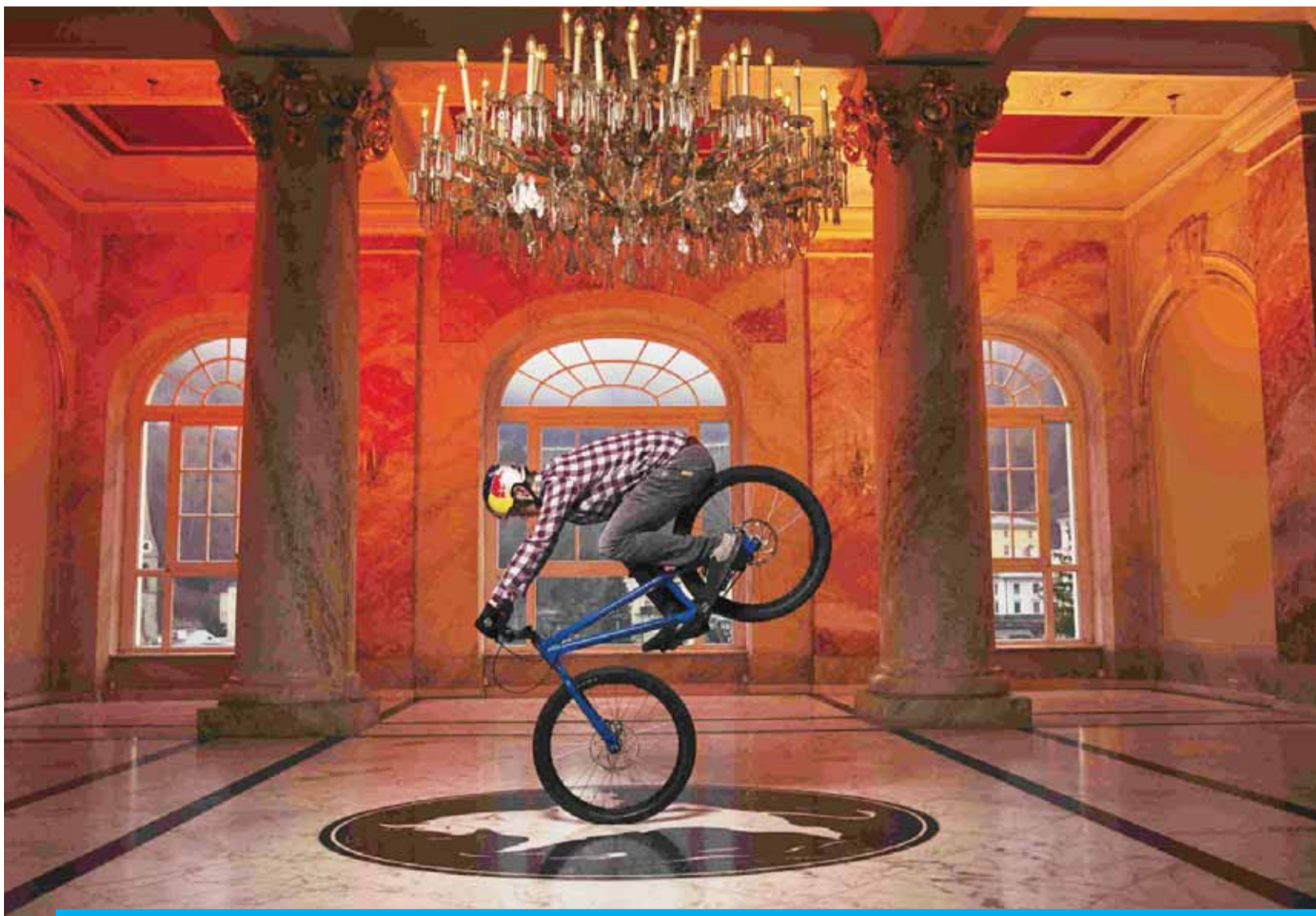
DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the words in the word search grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

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- Akihabara
- Disneyland
- DisneySea
- Fish Market
- Ginza
- Godzilla
- Harajuku
- Imperial Palace
- Museums
- Odaiba
- Park
- Ramen
- Roppongi
- Salaryman
- Shibuya Crossing
- Shrine
- Sky Tree
- Sumo
- Sushi
- Temple
- Tempura
- Tokyo Dome
- Tokyo Tower
- Train
- Udon
- Yakitori

Sports

Photo of the Day



BMX athlete, Tom Oehler performs at Grand Hotel de l' Europe in Austria in 2016. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Windies will miss Bravo, Hetmyer in England: Holding

LONDON: Pace great Michael Holding believes West Indies will particularly miss batsmen Darren Bravo and Shimron Hetmyer on their tour of England after they, along with all-rounder Keemo Paul, opted out of the series because of COVID-19 fears.

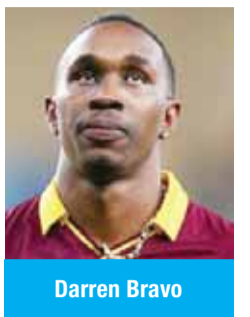
The three-test series is scheduled to be played in July behind closed doors at 'bio-secure' venues of Ageas Bowl and Old Trafford, subject to British government approval.

"I think it's unfortunate as far as West Indies cricket is concerned," Holding said on his YouTube channel.

"I'm not going to tell anyone that they should be going to England because COVID-19 is around, someone may get sick or even worse," he said. "But at the same time I think it's unfortunate for the West Indies team because these guys have quite a bit of talent, and they'll be missed." West Indies dropped Bravo for the one-off test against Afghanistan in November and Holding reckoned the England tour was a missed opportunity for the top-order batsman trying to revive his stop-start career.

"I'm sorry that Bravo in particular isn't going because Bravo, I think, needs to resuscitate his career," the 66-year-old Jamaican said. "I think the more cricket he can play now, especially for West Indies, the better chance he has of getting back on track and showing everyone the great player that he could be."

Fearless middle order batsman Hetmyer could have also benefited from the England tour, Holding said. "Hetmyer, again, I think he's a very, very talented player." "Again, I'm sorry that he's not going so that he can get more opportunity to express himself. But I ain't blaming them for not going." — Reuters



Darren Bravo

English Premiership Rugby sets August date for restart

Joe Marler signs new deal with English Premiership side Harlequins

LONDON: Premiership Rugby announced its plans on Friday to resume the English top-flight season on August 15 after the coronavirus shutdown.

Rugby chiefs earlier this week gave clearance for English Premiership clubs to start non-contact training. The competition was suspended in mid-March but the intention is still to finish the season.

Exeter are five points clear of Sale at the top of the table, with Bristol and Northampton occupying the other two play-off places. "Nothing will happen until it is safe to do so but we will do everything we can to resume the 2019/20 Premiership Rugby campaign on Saturday, 15 August," Darren Childs, chief executive of the southern hemisphere's premier club competition, said in a statement.

"We won't take risks with people's health, and rugby has unique challenges due to levels of proximity and impact, but with a number of clubs moving to stage one, it is important for us to give players, coaches and clubs clarity on when they can look to return.

"Bearing that in mind, we look forward to the restart of the season." The Premiership said the structure and format for the rest of the campaign would "follow in due course".

Each team has nine games still to play

"We won't take risks with people's health"

in the regular season but relegation is already decided, with Saracens set to play in the Championship next season as punishment for salary cap breaches.

Newcastle will replace Saracens after the second-tier Championship season was cancelled.

Bath Rugby chief executive Tarquin McDonald said "we are all desperate to

get back and play".

"We welcome this news and crucially can now set timeframes in order to maximise our athletes' readiness for a return to competition when that time comes in August."

Meanwhile, England prop Joe Marler has signed a new contract with Harlequins, the Premiership club announced on Friday.

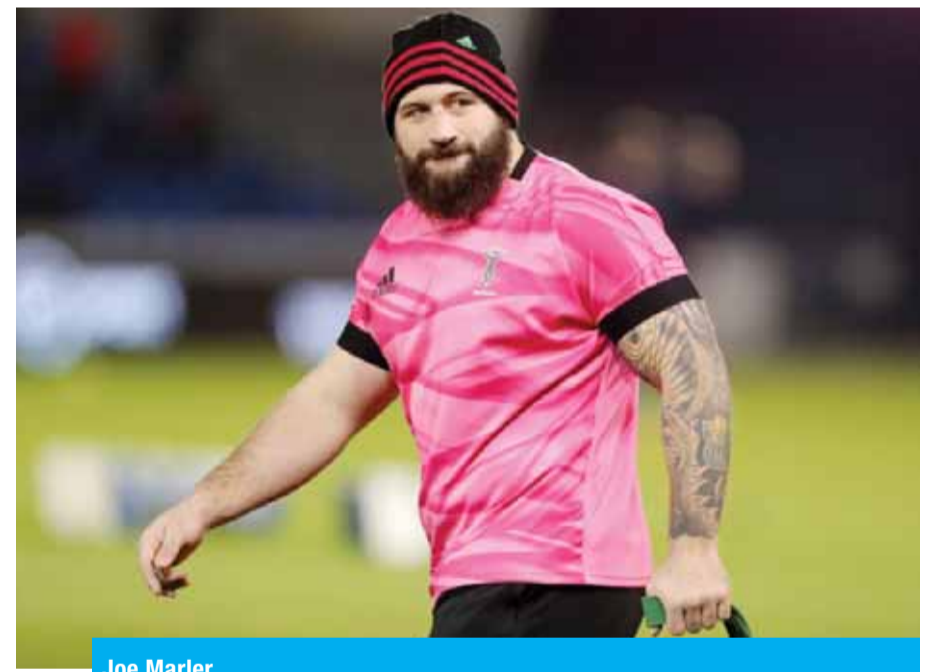
The 29-year-old front row, who has also represented the British and Irish Lions, has made more than 200 appearances for Quins since a debut in 2009.

Quins did not reveal the exact length of Marler's latest deal but said he had committed his "long-term future" to the London club. "I am a Harlequin, and I love the club," said Marler, capped 71 times by England.

"Growing up with Harlequins as my boyhood team, I remember getting thrown out of the Stoop as a fan when I was 12 because I had tried to run on the pitch.

"Now I get the chance to continue my journey with great friends, team-mates, coaches, and fans, without getting thrown out... yet."

Harlequins' head of rugby Paul Gustard



Joe Marler

said: "It is outstanding news that Joe has committed his long-term future to the club. "He is, without doubt, one of the best

props in world rugby and arguably the very best scrummaging loosehead prop in the modern era." —AFP

Future of Argentina's Jaguares in doubt due to coronavirus

BUENOS AIRES: Less than a year since reaching the Super Rugby final, Argentina's Jaguares face the risk of collapsing due to the coronavirus pandemic.

It was 11 months ago that the only Argentine side playing in the southern hemisphere's premier club competition fell at the final hurdle, beaten 19-3 by perennial winners Crusaders in New Zealand.

But with the 2020 season now abandoned due to travel restrictions imposed by the global virus outbreak, the Jaguares' very existence is in doubt.

While New Zealand and Australia are preparing to launch domestic Super Rugby tournaments after many of their coronavirus containment measures were lifted, Argentina is still under lockdown.

And Jaguares don't have the possibility of taking part in a domestic competition even when the lockdown is eventually lifted.

Their only hope of competition would be to join an eventual South African domestic competition but that would undoubtedly prove costly, particularly given the reduced income from being forced to play in empty stadiums.

"The New Zealand teams will play in New Zealand, the Australians in Australia and the South Africans in South Africa," said Jaguares captain Jeronimo de la Fuente

"The Jaguares are left a bit isolated and we're waiting to see if we get invited to another competition. It would be difficult but it's also a possibility."

Argentina's rugby union (UAR) has even paved the way for Jaguares players to join foreign sides to allow

them to maintain their match fitness.

Wing Emiliano Boffelli has received offers from Paris and English clubs, as have hooker Julian Montoya and center De la Fuente, while Stade Francais are also rumored to be interested in second row Guido Petti.

"I'm going to wait until the last minute to see what decision to take because I'm counting on" the Jaguares, said De la Fuente. "If an offer needs to come from Europe to help the UAR, I'll go. It pains me a lot to think that Jaguares won't exist any more, that they can't play in Super Rugby." Six players, including De la Fuente, will be out of contract at the end of the year anyway.

'A LOT OF UNCERTAINTY'

The suspended Super Rugby competition has sparked increased talk of South Africa's four participating sides potentially joining their countrymen, the Cheetahs and Southern Kings in the European Pro 14 competition that also features teams from Ireland, Italy, Scotland and Wales.

And that could leave the Jaguares on their own and with no-one to play against. One possible option would be to join the newly-created — and almost instantly suspended — Superliga Americana de Rugby that included fellow Argentines Ceibos as well as teams from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Jaguares, though, would be on a totally different level to any of those. Former Jaguares wing Juan Manuel Leguizamón, who now plays in the United States, told Milenium Sports "this generates sadness."

"I've spoken to quite a few players and they're waiting for a solution. There are 35 or 40 contracts that will disappear," he said.

Losing their Super Rugby representatives would be a huge blow for Argentine rugby, which fought for many years to be invited to the top table of rugby's yearly competitions. —AFP

Djokovic worried by 'extreme' US Open health restrictions

BELGRADE: World number one Novak Djokovic described the strict hygiene restrictions under which the US Open is likely to be played as "extreme" and a cap on support teams as "really impossible" on Friday.

As doubts grow over whether or not the Grand Slam event can go ahead as scheduled in New York, the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak in the United States, Djokovic admitted the demands of organisers could create severe strain.

"Just yesterday I had a telephone conversation with the leaders of world tennis, there were talks about the continuation of the season, mostly about the US Open due in late August, but it is not known whether it will be held," the 33-year-old Serb told Prva TV television and quoted by Blic online daily.

"The rules that they told us that we would have to respect to be there, to play at all, they are extreme." Djokovic, champion at the US Open in 2011, 2015 and 2018, described planned limits on player entourages as "really impossible".

"We would not have access to Manhattan, we would have to sleep in hotels at the airport, to be tested twice or three times per week.

"Also, we could bring one person to the club which is really impossible. "I mean, you need your coach, then a fitness trainer, then a physiotherapist.

"All their suggestions are really rigorous but I can understand that due to financial reasons, due to already existing contracts, organisers (want the event to be) held. We will see what will happen."

NADAL, BARTY FEARS

Djokovic was speaking a day after world number two Rafael Nadal had expressed similar reservations over the US Open, the main draw for which starts on August 31.

Nadal, who won a fourth US Open in 2019, said that if the New York showpiece was being staged this week, he would not play.

"We cannot resume until the situation is completely safe and fair in terms of health in that all players, wherever they come from, can travel and play tournaments in safe conditions," Nadal told reporters in a video conference call. "If you told me to play the US Open today, I would say 'no'."

"In a few months, I don't know. I hope so. We have to wait for people to return to normal life. And when it does, wait to see how the virus evolves."

The tennis tour has been in cold storage since mid-March and will not resume until late July at the earliest.

Wimbledon was cancelled for the first time since World War II, while the French Open has been shifted from May-June to September-October.

Earlier Friday, women's world number one Ashleigh Barty also voiced caution about resuming tennis too soon, saying she needed more information before committing to the US Open.

"It's exciting that tennis is being talked about again and things are moving in the right direction for us to start competing," she told the Sydney Morning Herald.

"But I'd need to understand all of the information and advice from the WTA and the USTA before making a decision on the US events."

It is expected that the ATP and WTA will issue an update on the US Open and the rest of the season on Wednesday.

Even if the US Open goes ahead, it will likely be behind closed doors. — AFP

Sports

Freiburg hand Gladbach Champions League setback

Growing calls for anti-racism protests as Bayern scent Bundesliga title

BERLIN: Borussia Mönchengladbach's push for a Champions League place was stalled by Freiburg who clinched a 1-0 win in the Bundesliga on Friday.

Gladbach, enjoying their best season since 1984, remain in fourth place - the final Champions League qualifying spot - on 56 points.

However, Bayer Leverkusen could replace them later should they defeat defending champions and league leaders Bayern Munich.

With just four games left, Freiburg boosted their Europa League hopes with victory secured by Nils Petersen's goal in the 58th minute.

Petersen had only been on the pitch for a minute after replacing Roland Sallai when he powerfully headed home from a free-kick.

To make matters worse for Gladbach, their French striker Alassane Plea was red-carded in the second half.

French striker Marcus Thuram, who made global headlines last weekend when he took a knee to protest the death of George Floyd, was unable to breakthrough despite his side having the best of the first hour.

When Plea was sent-off, Gladbach's sporting director Max Eberl protested too vigorously through his anti-coronavirus face mask and was also dismissed.

Plea will now miss next weekend's home clash with Bayern Munich.

Meanwhile, Bayern Munich face one of the final obstacles in their hunt for an eighth consecutive Bundesliga title this weekend as players in Germany contemplate staging collective protests following the death of George Floyd in the United States.

The German FA said on Wednesday footballers including Jadon Sancho who paid tributes to Floyd

during last week's games would not be punished, with calls since growing from several Bayern players for further action.

"Sport always was and is able to share the power, to try to show to the world we are a community and that we are strong together," said Bayern forward Thomas Müller, ahead of Saturday's game with Bayer Leverkusen.

"We have so many different people in the sport, it doesn't matter the colour. Sports have the power to bring people together to speak with one tongue."

Joshua Kimmich revealed Bayern players have talked about using their platform to reinforce their stance against racism, while World Cup winner Jerome Boateng urged more famous white sportspeople to add their voices to the chorus of outrage over Floyd's death.

Final obstacles

'WE CAN DO MUCH MORE'

"Our voices carry, we have a platform and we touch many people," Boateng, whose father is from Ghana, told Deutsche Welle radio.

"All white sportspeople who don't speak out are obviously not racists, but of course it is desirable that they also use their notoriety for this cause. Many do it, but I think we can do much more."

With five games remaining Bayern hold a seven-point lead over Borussia Dortmund, whose players took a knee during Thursday's training session in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Dortmund coach Lucien Favre said he "stood 100 percent behind" Sancho's call for justice although a number of players including the England winger courted controversy after they were pictured without masks alongside a hairdresser.

At the other end of the table, Werder Bremen have slipped back deep into relegation trouble



FREIBURG: Freiburg's German defender Robin Koch (2nd L) and Borussia Mönchengladbach's German defender Matthias Ginter (C) vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match SC Freiburg v Borussia Mönchengladbach on June 5, 2020 in Freiburg, south-western Germany. —AFP

after a 3-0 defeat to Eintracht Frankfurt on Wednesday greatly complicated the task of maintaining their top-flight status.

The loss was all the more disappointing for the four-time champions after a 1-0 win at Freiburg on May 23 had given them hope. Werder are now three points from safety and need a positive result at home against Wolfsburg today.

"That was a setback but definitely not a knockout," Werder coach Florian Kohfeldt said after the Eintracht defeat. "It has become harder but it's not impossible. We all knew that it would be hard, but we're going to give it a go."

The Borussia Mönchengladbach striker has

scored four times in as many games since the Bundesliga resumed last month to reach double digits in his debut season in Germany.

Thuram, the son of 1998 World Cup winner and anti-racism activist Lilian, made a statement of his own in last Sunday's 4-1 win over Union Berlin, kneeling and bowing his head after scoring the first of his two goals, in a gesture reminiscent of past protests by NFL players in the US against racism and police brutality.

Gladbach returned to action on Friday at Freiburg as they jostle with RB Leipzig and Leverkusen for Champions League qualification. —AFP

Bulgarian top tier resumes amid virus rules violations

SOFIA: The Bulgarian league resumed on Friday after an almost three-month break due to the novel coronavirus pandemic with fans allowed at stadiums but many of them violated the rule for occupying every third seat in the stands.

On Tuesday Sports Minister Krasen Kralev issued an order, allowing spectators at stadiums if they took up no more than 30% of a given venue's capacity and with supporters sitting on every third seat.

TV footage, however, showed that at least several dozen fans failed to observe the rule in front of Kralev in the southern city of Plovdiv where second-placed Lokomotiv Plovdiv beat resilient Etar Veliko Tarnovo 2-0 in a slow-tempo encounter.

Congolese striker Dominique Malonga scored his first goal for Bulgarian Cup winners Lokomotiv after coming on in the second half and the hosts needed an own goal by Etar's Anton Ognyanov to put the game beyond doubt.

The sports ministry said in a statement issued after the final whistle that the match went ahead with fans observing the seats rule, adding that the stadium announcer called on all spectators to maintain their distance.

There were also several seating violations during league leaders Ludogorets' 1-0 win at Levski Sofia, who slipped one place to fourth, as the Razgrad-based club took a big step towards winning their ninth consecutive title.

Brazilian midfielder Cauly Oliveira scored the



SOFIA: Supporters of Levski Sofia, surrounded by cardboard, wait for the start of the national championship's football match between Levski Sofia and Ludogorets Razgrad in Sofia. Bulgarian clubs were allowed to fill the stadiums with less than 30% of the seats. —AFP

only goal with thunderous long-range shot 20 seconds after the break.

The two games on Friday were held in unusual conditions as protective measures included pre-kickoff temperature checks for all players and spectators while teams were allowed to make up to five substitutions.

Before the league resumption, all 14 teams had to

test their players and staff for COVID-19. Ludogorets top the standings with 58 points, nine ahead of Lokomotiv Plovdiv. Sofia rivals CSKA, who have a game in hand, and Levski are both on 46.

In order to finish the season by mid-July, teams will play twice weekly with each round of matches spreading to four days due to TV coverage. —Reuters

Sancho, Akanji fined for home haircuts

BERLIN: English midfielder Jadon Sancho and his Borussia Dortmund teammate Manuel Akanji were fined by the German league on Friday for breaking stringent health guidelines to get haircuts at home.

Photos emerged of Sancho, 20, and 24-year-old Swiss defender Akanji having their hair styled in their respective homes, with neither the players nor the hairdresser wearing any personal protective equipment.

"Absolute joke DFL," tweeted Sancho. The German league (DFL) said in a statement: "The players from Borussia Dortmund had obviously violated general hygiene and infection protection standards at home hairdressing appointments and in particular the medical-organisational concept of the DFL task force. "There is no question that professional footballers also have to have their hair cut. However, this currently has to be done in accordance with the medical-organisational concept."

The German football federation (DFB) decided on Wednesday it would not fine Sancho for lifting his Dortmund shirt to reveal a t-shirt bearing the message "Justice For George Floyd" during the win against Paderborn last weekend. The death of Floyd, a black American, as a white policeman knelt on his neck in Minneapolis has sparked days of protests in cities across the United States and in other countries. —AFP

NFL boss admits 'We were wrong' over player protests

LOS ANGELES: NFL commissioner Roger Goodell admitted Friday the league had been wrong to silence player protests as it responded to calls from a group of players to issue an explicit condemnation of racism. In a video message posted on social media, Goodell said the league would now support peaceful protests from players in future. Goodell's message came as a wave of protests against police brutality and racism continued across the United States following the death of unarmed black man George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25. "It has been a difficult time for our country," Goodell said. "In particular, black people in our country." "We, the National Football League, condemn racism and the systematic oppression of black people. "We, the National Football League, admit we were wrong for not listening to NFL players earlier and encourage all to speak out and peacefully protest. "We, the NFL, believe Black Lives Matter." The NFL had been criticized for a statement released last Saturday which failed to directly reference racism or police brutality.

On Thursday, a group of several prominent NFL players including Super Bowl-winning quarterback Patrick Mahomes and Odell Beckham Jr released a video demanding that the NFL condemn racism and support protest. "How many times do we need to ask you to listen to your players?" Kansas City chiefs ace

Tyrann Mathieu asked in the video.

"What will it take?" Arizona's DeAndre Hopkins added. "For one of us to be murdered by police brutality?" Cleveland's Jarvis Landry asked.

Goodell, who has faced criticism in the past for his handling of NFL player protests launched by Colin Kaepernick in 2016, insisted he would now be a sympathetic ally for players.

"I personally protest with you and want to be part of the much needed change in this country," Goodell said. "Without black players, there would be no National Football League."

"We are listening, I am listening and I will be reaching out to players who have raised their voices and others on how we can improve and go forward for a better and more united NFL family." Green Bay Packers player Aaron Jones said he is pleased that Goodell has changed his outlook. "I am just glad he is listening. He has corrected himself and he has open ears," Jones said.

The NFL, which is the most popular professional league in the United States, has long struggled with allegations of racism. Many team owners are supporters of US President Donald Trump, who led stingering criticism of player protests in 2017, plunging the league into a protracted crisis. Trump had said players like former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Kaepernick who knelt during the national anthem were "sons of bitches" who should be fired. —AFP



Roger Goodell

Ole! La Liga roars back into action after old foes unite

BARCELONA: After an almighty push by all parties concerned, Spain's La Liga roars back into action next week after a three-month pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with matches taking place every day and with everything to play for.

The season resumes on Wednesday in bizarre circumstances with the second half of a Segunda Division match between Rayo Vallecano and Albacete that was abandoned in December due to offensive chanting.

The (re)starting gun will be properly fired with Thursday's derby between Sevilla and Real Betis, while champions Barcelona play their first game on Saturday away to Real Mallorca, with title rivals Real Madrid hosting Eibar on Sunday.

All matches will be played without spectators for safety reasons, although broadcasters plan to replicate crowd noise for television viewers, which will include a minute of applause for Spain's more-than 27,000 COVID-19 victims.

While clubs such as Eibar and Racing Santander expressed their disquiet about returning and a Cadiz player at first refused to turn up for training, Spain has been largely united by a desire for football to return to lift the mood in one

of the worst-affected countries in the world by the virus. La Liga president Javier Tebas has led the campaign to get the season back on track, warning early on that not completing the campaign could lead to a collective loss of one billion euros (\$1.13 billion) in forfeited broadcast revenues and prize money.

Old wounds between Tebas and federation president Luis Rubiales resurfaced in the early stages of negotiations. But after an eight-hour meeting organised by junior sports minister Irene Lozano in April, they finally pledged to work together to ensure the season was completed.

"How we act in this pandemic and the measures we take will determine how the world looks in the next few years and they were conscious of that and their need to co-operate," said Lozano of the unlikely meeting of minds.

As part of the commitment, La Liga increased its funding to the ministry and federation, while the latter lifted a ban on matches on Mondays and Fridays, paving the way for matches on every day of the week. Spain's footballers have welcomed the return of the season, although they concede it will not be the same without the supporters.

"It's going to be a very strange sensation. Football is all about the fans," said Atletico Madrid's Marcos Llorente. Spain coach Luis Enrique went further: "Playing matches without supporters is sadder than dancing with your sister," he said. "But we have to understand this is a global business and even though the spectacle will be very different, it can help us pass the time and get through this moment." —Reuters

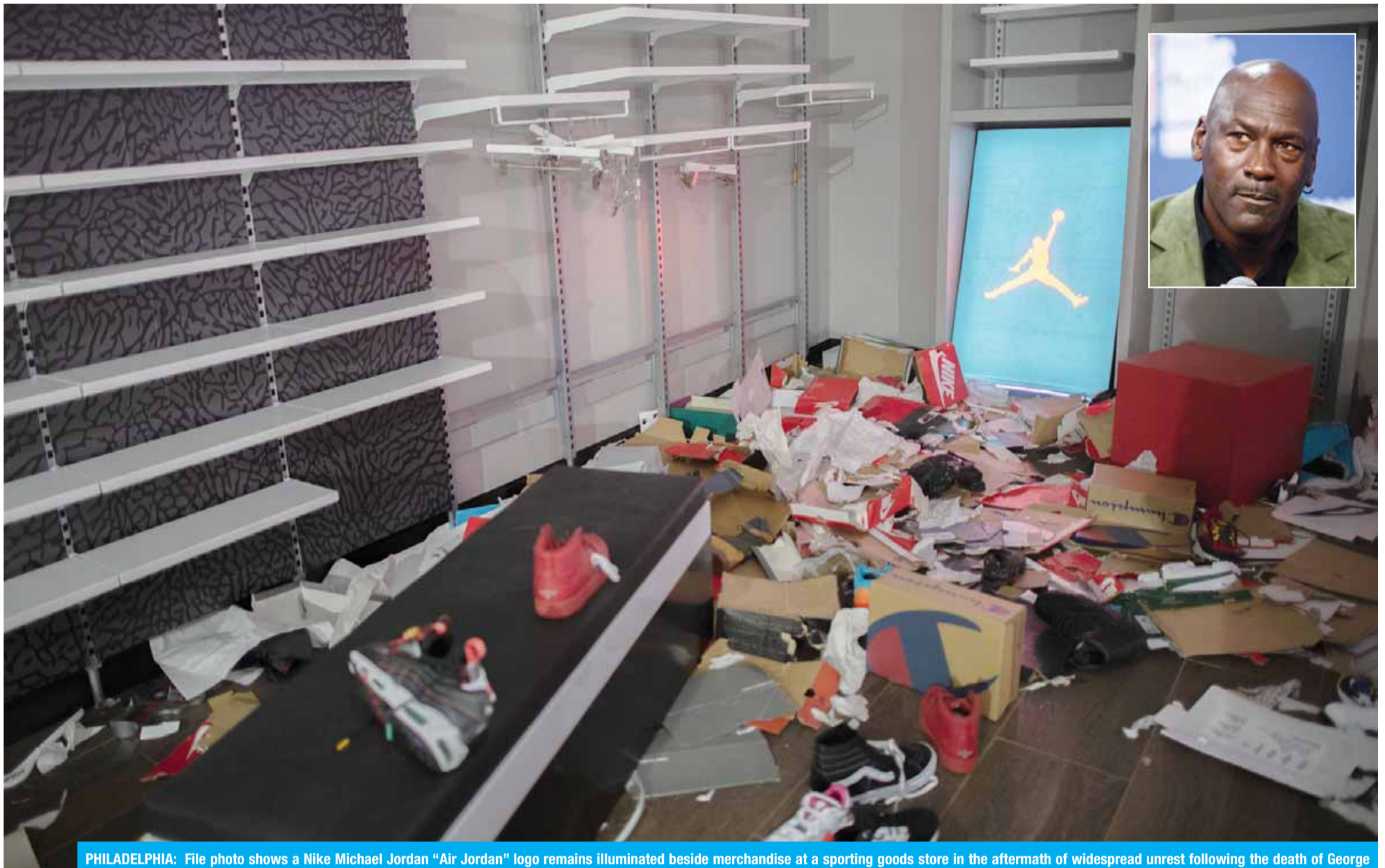
18 English Premiership Rugby sets August date for restart



19 Freiburg hand Gladbach Champions League setback



19 NFL boss admits 'We were wrong' over player protests



PHILADELPHIA: File photo shows a Nike Michael Jordan "Air Jordan" logo remains illuminated beside merchandise at a sporting goods store in the aftermath of widespread unrest following the death of George Floyd in Philadelphia. (Inset), Michael Jordan said, he is making a record \$100 million donation to groups fighting for racial equality and social justice amid a wave of protests across the United States. —AFP

Jordan to donate \$100m to social justice groups

NBA players union want more talks over restart plan

LOS ANGELES: Michael Jordan said Friday he is making a record \$100 million donation to groups fighting for racial equality and social justice amid a wave of protests across the United States.

The NBA legend said in a statement his Jordan Brand would distribute the money over 10 years to different organisations in a bid to stamp out "ingrained racism."

The pledge is believed to be the largest financial contribution to non-profit groups ever made by a figure from the sports world.

"It's 2020 and our family now includes anyone who aspires to our way of life," a joint statement from Jordan and his Jordan Brand said.

"Yet as much as things have changed the worst remains the same. 'Black lives matter.' This isn't a controversial statement. Until the ingrained racism that allows our country's institutions to fail is completely eradicated, we will remain committed to protecting and improving the lives of Black people," the statement added.

"Today we are announcing that Michael Jordan and Jordan Brand will be donating \$100 million over the next 10 years to organisations dedicated to ensuring racial equality, social justice and greater access to education."

Jordan's donation comes after a week of unprecedented nationwide protests across the United States following the death of an unarmed black man during an arrest in Minneapolis.

Large scale demonstrations have been held in all

50 states, with protesters demanding an end to police brutality and systemic racism after George Floyd's death on May 25.

'SADDENED, ANGRY'

Jordan, regarded by many as the greatest player in NBA history with an estimated net worth of \$2.1 billion, had already issued a passionate statement decrying Floyd's killing.

"I am deeply saddened, truly pained and plain angry," Jordan, 57, said last Sunday. "We have had enough."

Jordan's donation and impassioned recent statements followed criticism during his playing career over his reluctance to take a more prominent role in activist causes.

In the recent "The Last Dance" documentary, he addressed his infamous quip that he had steered clear of politics because "Republicans buy sneakers too."

Jordan said the remark had been a flippant comment made as a joke. Jordan added that he never saw himself as an activist athlete in the vein of former heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali.

"I do commend Muhammad Ali for standing up for what he believed in," Jordan said. "But I never

thought of myself as an activist. I thought of myself as a basketball player." Jordan acknowledged that his apolitical stance might be viewed as selfish in some quarters.

"I wasn't a politician when I was playing my sport. I was focused on my craft," Jordan said. "Was that selfish? Probably. But that was my energy. That's where my energy was."

Jordan said he had instead sought to set an example by his achievements as an athlete.

"The way I go about my life is I set examples. If it inspires you? Great, I will continue to do that. If it doesn't? Then maybe I'm not the person you should be following."

Meanwhile, NBA players have requested further negotiations with league chiefs before signing off on plans to resume the season in Florida next month, a statement said on Friday.

The National Basketball Players Association said its board of player representatives had approved a fresh round of talks with the NBA on its 22-team return to play scenario.

"Various details remain to be negotiated and the acceptance of the scenario would still require that all parties reach agreement on all issues relevant to

resuming play," the NBPA said in a statement following a conference call involving player representatives.

ESPN reported that players had agreed in principle to the 22-team restart plan but needed to iron out the fine details.

The NBA's board of governors on Thursday gave the green light to a plan to restart the coronavirus-interrupted season at Disney World in Orlando, Florida on July 31.

Under the NBA's proposals, all teams will be based at Disney's ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando to minimize the threat of COVID-19. Games will be played without spectators.

Playoffs would take place in August, with the NBA Finals set to be completed by October 12.

The league has also penciled in a provisional December 1 start date for the 2020-2021 season.

NBA commissioner Adam Silver cautioned on Thursday that the restart plan was still in its early stages. "We are in the equivalent of the first inning. We've got a long ways to go here," Silver said. "We have always been looking for a safe way to resume, knowing we are going to be living with this virus for a while."

The NBA suspended its season on March 11 as the COVID-19 pandemic erupted, leaving professional sport in North America at a standstill.

Under the restart proposal, 16 teams occupying the playoff berths in the Western and Eastern Conferences will be joined by six more teams to determine the final playoff line-up. —AFP



Black lives matter



Liverpool cleared to win Premier League at Anfield

LONDON: Premier League leaders Liverpool could claim a first title for 30 years at Anfield after the initial batch of fixtures of the restart was announced on Friday.

Jürgen Klopp's men, with a commanding 25-point lead at the top of the table, were just two wins away from clinching the title before coronavirus forced the

suspension of football in March.

Liverpool's first match back is against Everton on June 21. The Merseyside derby is due to take place at Goodison Park, less than a mile from Anfield, but a venue has not been confirmed by the Premier League.

Crystal Palace will then visit Anfield three days later. Wins in both of those matches would guarantee Liverpool's first English top-flight title since 1990.

But if Manchester City lose at home to Arsenal on June 17, the Reds would be champions if they beat Everton.

Liverpool City Council's safety advisory group will meet next week to make a decision on whether the game can go ahead at Goodison or should be moved to a neutral venue.

All remaining 92 Premier League games this season will be played behind closed doors, but there are fears that hosting the game in Liverpool could encourage supporters to congregate around stadiums.

Palace's trip to Anfield will kick off at 2015 local time (1915 GMT).

The only other match that could be moved to a neutral venue from the first three rounds of fixtures is Liverpool's visit to City on July 2.

The mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson, voiced fears that "there would be many thousands of people who would turn up outside Anfield" on the day Liverpool's long wait for a league title was ended.

That has been disputed by the club, who said they have engaged with supporters' groups to make sure

social-distancing guidelines are followed.

Aston Villa will host Sheffield United in the first match of "Project Restart", followed by Arsenal's trip to City on June 17.

Manchester United's visit to Tottenham will spearhead the first full round of matches spread over four days from June 19 to 22.

Premier League chief executive Richard Masters said: "We know it won't be the same without our loyal supporters in stadiums but, together with our broadcast partners, we are able to ensure fans can watch or listen to each match live from home."

"I am delighted we are able to take another positive step towards the season returning in just under two weeks' time," he added. —AFP