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Assembly panel seeks ban on new expat recruitment

Kuwaitization, quotas, residence curbs eyed • MP warns finance minister



KUWAIT: Cuban medical personnel arrive at Kuwait International Airport on Saturday to assist the country's effort in the fight against COVID-19. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Head of the Assembly's human resource development committee MP Khalil Al-Saleh said yesterday the panel will propose a ban on new recruitment of expat labor into the country during a meeting with the government this week. Saleh said on Twitter that resolving issues related to expatriate manpower and the imbalance in the demographic structure requires "draining" the sources of visa trading and a "ban on the recruitment of new expat labor".

It also requires Kuwaitization of jobs, imposing certain quotas on expat communities and limiting the duration of residence of expats, he said. The lawmaker said these issues will be raised during a meeting with the government later this week, adding that resolving the imbalance in the population structure requires strong decisions that are

implemented. He said the crisis has snowballed and now poses security, economic, social and health risks to the society of Kuwait.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah said last week that expats form 70 percent of the population against 30 percent of Kuwaitis and that the ideal composition is by reversing the percentage to be 70 percent for citizens against 30 percent for expats. Achieving the premier's vision requires getting rid of at least 2.5 million expats from their existing number of 3.35 million.

MPs have already submitted legislation calling to impose quotas of foreign communities and to replace all expat jobs in the government within one year. The two bills have not yet been debated by Assembly panels. Meanwhile, MP Riyadh Al-Adasani yesterday warned Finance Minister

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OPEC, Russia to extend cuts, Mexico refuses

VIENNA: OPEC members, led by Saudi Arabia, and other key oil producers agreed Saturday to extend historic output cuts through July, as oil prices tentatively recover and coronavirus lockdowns ease. The 13-member cartel and its allies, notably Russia, decided to extend by a month deep May and June cuts agreed in April to boost prices, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said in a statement.

But Mexico, which had already made clear ahead of the talks that it "could not adjust... production further", announced that it would not be complying. Oil prices have plummeted as a result of falling demand as countries around the world impose strict lockdowns to stop the spread of the new coronavirus.

"All participating countries... agreed the option of extending the first phase of the production adjustments pertaining in May and June by one further month," the OPEC statement said. Under the terms of the April agreement, OPEC and the so-called OPEC+ pledged to cut output by 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) from May 1 until the end of June. The cuts were then to be gradually eased from July, to 7.7 million bpd until December.

Algerian Oil Minister Mohamed Arkab, who currently holds OPEC's rotating presidency, told AFP that the agreed cut for July was 9.6 mbpd, just slightly below the 9.7 mbpd for May and June. Oil ministers from key producers will meet monthly to assess the agreement, he added. US Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette welcomed the

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World rallies against George Floyd's death

WASHINGTON: Taking a knee, banging drums and ignoring social distancing measures, outraged protesters from Sydney to London on Saturday kicked off a weekend of global rallies against racism and police brutality. Tens of thousands of peaceful protesters rallied for racial justice Saturday in cities across the United States following the death of African American George Floyd at the hands of police.

Protests took place from New York to Los Angeles but Washington was at

the epicenter, as thousands of people – black, white and brown – flooded downtown streets surrounding the White House, which was barricaded with black metal fencing. "This fight has been happening for many, many decades, hundreds of years, and at this point it's time for a change," said Washington native Christine Montgomery. "I'm here so my son is not the next hashtag that is circulating worldwide," she added, indicating her 10-year-old child standing next to her.

On a sunny but oppressively hot day, many people wore masks because of the coronavirus pandemic. Volunteers gave out water, hand sanitizer and other supplies as the area took on a block party vibe, with music, mural painting, food trucks, and vendors selling Black Lives Matter T-shirts.

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WASHINGTON: Demonstrators hold placards at the Lincoln Memorial on Saturday during a peaceful protest against police brutality and the death of George Floyd. — AFP

Dozens hurt as protesters flood Beirut

BEIRUT: Protesters poured into the streets of the Lebanese capital Saturday to decry the collapse of the economy, as clashes erupted between supporters and opponents of the Iran-backed Shiite group Hezbollah. Hundreds filled the streets in and around the protest hub of Martyrs Square in the center of Beirut, with skirmishes also between protesters and security forces, who fired tear gas.

Forty-eight were wounded in the violence, 11 of whom were hospital-

ized, while the rest were treated at the scene, the Lebanese Red Cross said. It was the first major anti-government rally attracting demonstrators from across the country since authorities relaxed a lockdown imposed in mid-March to fight the spread of the coronavirus. "We came on the streets to demand our rights, call for medical care, education, jobs and the basic rights that human beings need to stay alive," said 21-year-old student Christina.

Many protesters wore face-masks as part of hygiene measures imposed to fight the pandemic, which has severely exacerbated an economic crisis, the worst since the debt-burdened country's 1975-1990 civil war. But Saturday's protest turned violent

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BEIRUT: Lebanese riot police fire tear gas at protesters in central Beirut on Saturday. — AFP

Morocco artisans fear 'knockout punch' from virus

RABAT: Pottery, basketwork and wrought-iron furniture pile up in the deserted stalls of the Oulja arts and crafts complex in Sale near the Moroccan capital Rabat. Artisans have been starved of income for almost three months because of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Coronavirus is the knockout punch: without help, without support, our profession will disappear," said Youssef Rghalmi, a 49-year-old potter.

In the family workshop, where skills

have been handed down from generation to generation, the clay has dried up, the oven is turned off and the nine employees no longer turn up for work. The last order, for a customer from France who called off her visit because of border closures, is gathering dust in a corner.

"We were already struggling to survive because lifestyles have changed," said Mohamed Touel, a master carver of "gebs" decorative plaster. "Traditional trades are being lost because young people don't want to take over." The enterprising 62-year-old had added a small restaurant to his shop but it closed because of lockdown measures imposed since mid-March.

Foreign tourists have vanished, the lockdown has paralyzed economic life and local customers "have other priorities",

Ahmed Driouch said in his store cluttered with copper lamps, ceramics, daggers, jewelry, inlaid chests and carpets. Business has been "two hundred percent affected by the virus", he said, grimly forecasting it would take "at least two or three years" to return to normal.

Upstairs, employees dusted some 10,000 carpets in stock, one by one. "We must clean everything even if, for now, nobody's coming," one of them said ruefully, vacuum cleaner in hand. Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts Nadia Fettah has proposed ideas such as exhibition spaces in supermarkets to revive a sector that provides employment to two million people. That includes about 230,000 traditional artisans.

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SALE, Morocco: A Moroccan rug weaver creates a carpet at a workshop in this city north of the capital Rabat on June 3, 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Red Crescent Society distributes food boxes in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh

Priority in food distribution to areas under lockdown



KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) distributed Saturday 1,000 food boxes to workers and people living in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, which has been under lockdown to curb spread of coronavirus. KRCS gave priority for the distribution of food boxes to areas under lockdown: Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Mahboula, Farwaniya, Khaitan and Hawally. Society's Secretary General Maha Al-Barjas said in a statement to the press. She said KRCS continued to support all segments of the society and alleviate their suffering caused by the pandemic. The box, she added, included rice, oil, sugar, tea and canned ready-made food which was enough for a month. KRCS, said Barjas, was distributing food boxes in the isolated areas in order to prevent movement of people living there in line with health authorities' instructions to restrict movements in those areas. KRCS also delivers food boxes for needy families nationwide, she said, and urged the private sector to contribute to KRCS's program to curb the pandemic. She thanked the volunteers who were serving their country and participating in the society's programs. — KUNA



In my view

All men are created equal

By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

Racism - what a heinous act and an ugly word. It is a subject that is full of controversy - in the past and present. I cannot believe that there are still those who believe that they are better than or supreme to others or consider others as less than human because of skin color, language, customs, place of birth, religion or any factor that supposedly reveals the basic nature of that person. Islam fought racism head on and did not leave any doubt about condemning this behavior, and declared that in the religion of Islam there is no racism and all people are equal.

This was confirmed by the Messenger of Allah Muhammad (PBUH), who said there is no difference between an Arab and non-Arab and between white or black but except in piety (believing in God and doing good deeds and to move away from evil ones, obedience to Allah, etc). The quotation "all men are created equal" is part of the US Declaration of Independence, which is supposed to have given a solid foundation for the creation of a new nation and the country kept going and became the strongest country in the world despite a devastating civil war, but this is not the point.

History tells us that we are in the 21st century, when everything has moved further and man has made so many advancements and added to his knowledge and should act in accordance with that. In the US, George Floyd was already under control and could be handcuffed and placed in the police car, but the stubbornness of the police officer lead to his death, or so it was alleged. What happened to him can happen anywhere around the globe because of an individual's behavior. What is also alarming is that the other three officers at the scene were being trained by this officer, which makes it more alarming and scary.

We must learn from our behavior and remember our mistakes very well so that we do not make them again. The tragic events that took the life of Floyd in the United States, though unwarranted and uncalled for, can be a great lesson we all can learn from and hopefully it will be the last such act, although there were many like it in before. Let us restore our humanity and go back to basics and act as God wanted us to act, or at least as our human instinct of loving and good deeds wants us to be. Rest in peace George Floyd.

Final Word: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "No one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself".

PS: Please note that the word MAN for me means both genders, and there is no difference whatsoever between the two.

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 31,131 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Saturday, in addition to 254 deaths. With the exception of 180 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, 20,205 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 10,672 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, 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-health.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

Mental health assistance

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

Dr Rashed Al-Sahl: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.

Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.

Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.

Dr Mohammed Al-Khaldi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.

Dr Ahmad Al-Khaldi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.

Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.

Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.

Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.

Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

Local

Oil markets witnessed remarkable improvement due to OPEC+ deal: Kuwait

Kuwait urges Libyan parties to cease hostilities

KUWAIT: Oil markets have witnessed a remarkable improvement recently due to the historical OPEC+ agreement, said Kuwait's Oil Minister and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel. This came in a statement Fadhel made after his participation online, Saturday, in the Ministerial Meeting No. 179 of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The minister indicated that there are positive signs of a relative increase and a gradual improvement in global oil demand during the last period.

Fadhel affirmed that Kuwait played a prominent role in reaching this historic agreement, stressing Kuwait's commitment to reduce its production according to the terms of the agreement, which have a significant impact on the improvement witnessed in the oil markets during the past weeks. He also expected that the OPEC +

meeting will result in continued cooperation among all the signatory countries of this agreement because of the common interest of the countries concerned and the global oil industry in general in order to reflect these positive effects on the global economy. On April 13, the OPEC + group agreed to reduce oil production rates by 9.7 million barrels per day as of May 1 for an initial period of two months ending on June 30, 2020.

Libya hostilities

In other news, Kuwait, which supported UN Secretary General's global ceasefire initiative to focus efforts on combating coronavirus, called Saturday on Libyan warring parties to cease hostilities to end bloodshed of Libyans. The Foreign Ministry, in a statement, called for an end of fighting in Libya and welcomed Egyptian President Abdul-

fattah Al-Sisi's initiative to bring warring Libyan parties to table of negotiations.

The negotiations, it said, aimed at reaching a political solution on basis of relevant UN Security Council's resolutions and outcome of UN-sponsored Berlin Conference in order to preserve unity, independence and territorial safety of Libya, as well as meet aspirations of the Libyan people. Sisi announced the initiative during talks in Cairo with Libyan military commander Khalifa Haftar. The initiative calls for a ceasefire starting June 8, holding UN-supervised election of a Libyan presidential council and drafting a constitutional declaration to regulate elections for later stage, as well as ending foreign interference.

Iraqi FM

Separately, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad

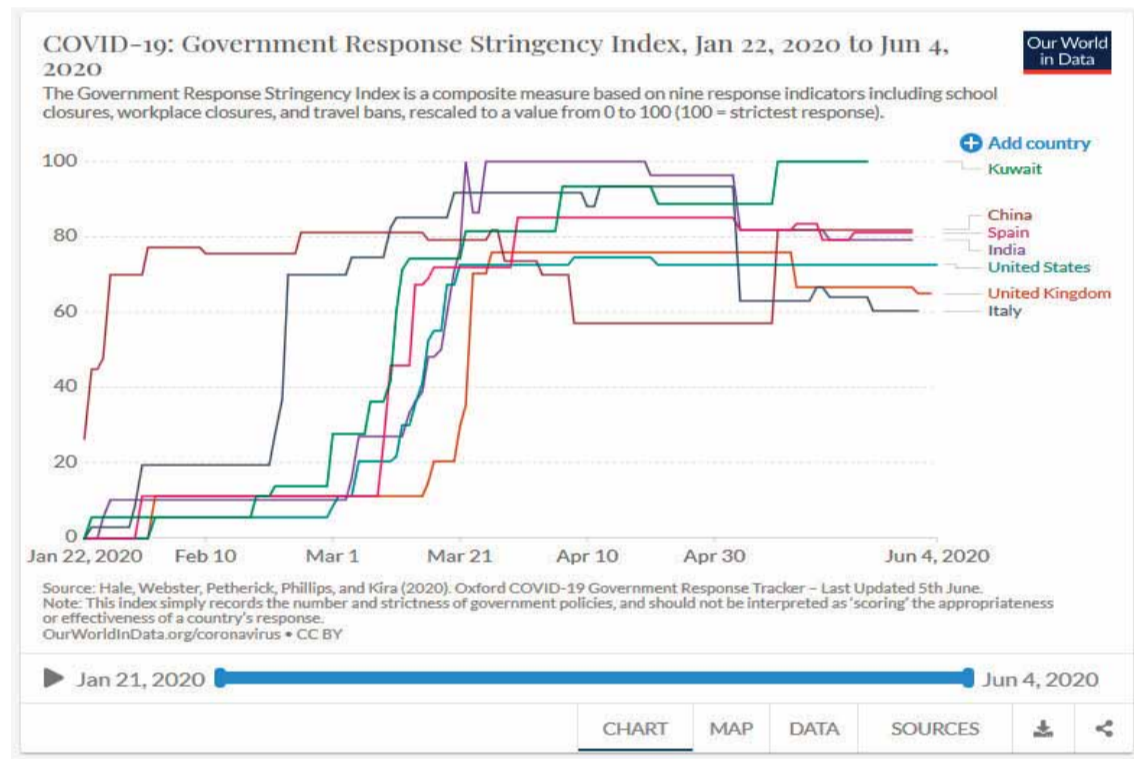
Al-Sabah phoned on Saturday Iraqi counterpart Fuad Baki to congratulate him on the new post. During the phone call, Sheikh Dr Ahmad conveyed the sentiments on behalf of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Prime Minister, and His Highness the Crown Prince after the completion of formation of the Iraqi cabinet. The foreign Minister also expressed best wishes to the minister and the Iraqi people and government.

Earlier, Iraq's parliament approved the remainder of Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi's cabinet and passing the candidates for seven government posts. A total of 247 MPs approved the seven ministry posts that had remained vacant since Kadhimi was sworn in last month. The new posts include oil, trade, foreign affairs, justice, migration and displacement and culture and agriculture ministries, completing the premier's 22-member cabinet. — KUNA



Kuwait's Oil Minister and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel.

Kuwait 100% on govt response stringency index



KUWAIT: Kuwait scored 100 percent on the Oxford University's Government Response Stringency Index for its fight against the coronavirus. Kuwait scored perfect on almost all indicators including school closures, restrictions on movement, economic policies, COVID-19 testing regimes and emergency invest-

ments in healthcare. Most of Kuwait is under a partial curfew from 6pm to 6am and several areas including Khaitan, Hawally, Mahboula, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Farwaniya are completely isolated. The infection rate has seen a decrease in recent days, although it remains unclear if this trend will continue.

US Ambassador congratulates Kuwaiti graduates of US universities

By Alina Romanowski, US Ambassador to Kuwait

On behalf of the US Embassy, I would like to congratulate the Kuwaiti students who graduated from US universities as part of the class of 2020! In addition, I welcome all Kuwaiti students who are back from universities in the United States, and extend my greetings to the Kuwaitis who are still studying in America. All of you have achieved a great milestone during a challenging time, and you and your families should be proud. You are joining generations of Kuwaitis who studied in the United States and used that education to become leaders in their fields.

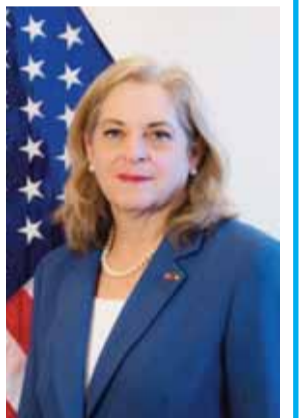
Thanks to the efforts of the Ministry of Higher Education, the Kuwaiti Cultural Office, and the National Union of Kuwaiti Students, Kuwaiti students in the US were able to receive food, financial support, and visa information during the COVID-19 crisis. My staff at the US Embassy have been in frequent contact with students and their parents to answer their questions. The US Department of Homeland Security helped students by allowing them to maintain their student status through online classes, and accepting electronic signatures on their I-20 forms. US universities are providing high quality online education options and enabling international students to complete their academic year prior to departure.

We take great pride in having Kuwaitis study at top schools in the United States. If you choose to study in the United States, you will not only receive

a world-class education, but also valuable life experiences and an opportunity to build even more connections between our great nations.

We are ready to support anyone interested in studying in the United States. We know that the college application process this year will be affected by the COVID-19 situation. Nonetheless, we can help make the process easier. Please contact our Education Adviser at KuwaitCity@EducationUSA.org for help with finding the right school for you.

I know that many students have questions about their visas and student status. We have a video on our Instagram account (@USEmbassyQ8) that answers frequently asked questions, and you can also contact KuwaitNIV@state.gov with any other questions. The Embassy's visa officers will prioritize returning student visa applications when we resume visa operations. Once again to those returning, welcome back. We wish you a safe and healthy summer!



US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski

News in brief

Six suicides in five days

KUWAIT: An Indian man was found dead in a Khaitan Park Saturday in an apparent suicide, police say. The victim's body was found hanging in the park, before police were called. The latest case is the sixth suicide reported within five days.

Scam calls

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior urged the public to avoid responding to scam text messages, international calls, or emails that they may receive and in which they are asked to update their bank accounts.

Medicine delivery

KUWAIT: Health Ministry Undersecretary for medicine and medical supplies Dr Abdallah Al-Bader said that total medicines that were delivered to the home by fire department reached 5,356 medical prescriptions last week, while a total of 46,572 prescriptions were delivered since the service was launched.

13 flights

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced that 13 flights departed Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying a total of 2,430 passengers. They include eight flights to Egypt, one flight to Qatar, one flight to India, one flight to Bhutan, one flight to Thailand, and one flight to the UAE.

Curfew breakers

KUWAIT: Nine people were arrested for violating the curfew on Saturday, including eight Kuwaitis and one expatriate. The arrests were made as follows: two in Hawally governorate, one in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, and one in Al-Ahmedi.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed

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KUWAIT: A delegation of Cuban medical personnel arrives at Kuwait International Airport early on June 6, 2020, to assist the country's effort in the fight against COVID-19. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

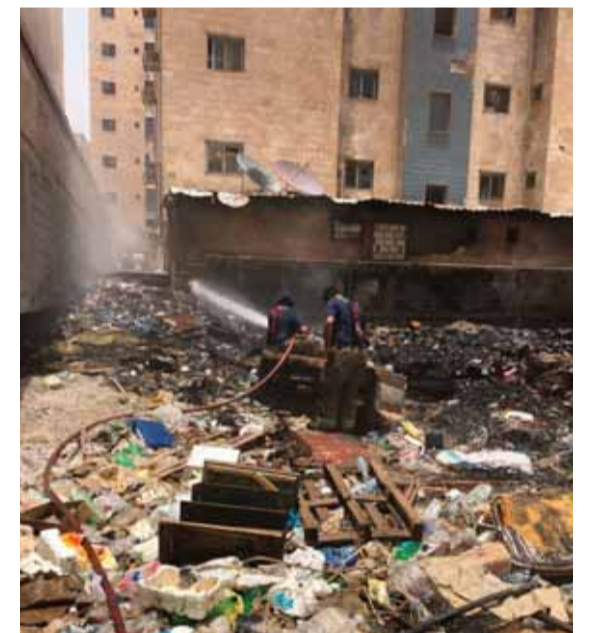
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Three fire stations battle Mangaf blaze



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Mangaf, Fahaaheel and Sabhan fire stations rushed to tackle a blaze that started in garbage left in an

open area in Mangaf. A nearby building had to be evacuated after the flame spread to nearby properties. The fire was put out swiftly and no injuries were reported. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality workers clean up the Mubarakiya Market in Kuwait City as part of periodic cleaning up measures taken at public places to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Local

Ooredoo branches reopened with extra safety precautions, social distancing

Following decision to resume operation at telecom, internet companies



KUWAIT: Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, reopened more than 30 branches to receive customers starting Sunday May 31st. This comes in response to the cabinet's latest decision concerning the "five-phases reopening plan": the first to include the resumption of telecom operators and internet providers operations

After being well disinfected and sanitized before reopening, more than 30 Ooredoo branches were all up and ready to receive customers from 9:00 am to 04:00 pm; while safety procedures were greatly considered and social distancing signs were demonstrated. Ooredoo employees were guarded with masks and face shields when interacting with customers. Customers' temperature were measured and they were asked to maintain social distancing and keep their masks on.

Ooredoo Kuwait Acting CEO and Chief of Operations Fadi Kawar and some management executives paid a visit to a number of branches across the country earlier this week to ensure operations are running smoothly and safety measures are implemented.

In an official statement, Ooredoo Kuwait ensured the fact that it is taking



a number of precautions to ensure customers and Ooredoo sales agents are safe. "We have provided masks and face shields for our employees while making hand sanitizers available and continuing increased cleaning and sanitization throughout all stores. We continuously advise our customers visiting the branches to interact at a safe distance

and we made sure signs and posters are up to indicate where customers should wait or stand before they are served by one of our sales agents".

Ooredoo Kuwait is committed in ensuring that all precautionary measures provided by the health authorities are implemented thoroughly to ensure the well-being of its customers as well as its



employees.

The company stated that customers can also use one of the company's 63 self-service kiosks which are available in several locations for customers. Customers are able to manage their lines, replace their SIM cards, view their accounts, subscription data, pay bills, recharge and many other services

through the self-service kiosks.

Customers can also view Ooredoo's services as well as exclusive offers and their subscription data online through the MyOoredoo application and the Company website Ooredoo.com.kw in addition contacting our call center through 121 around the clock for all enquiries and services.



Divers brave coronavirus crisis to check on corals

KUWAIT: Kuwait Dive Team of the Environmental Voluntary Foundation is regularly examining

condition of coral reefs in territorial waters despite extraordinary conditions prevailing in the country due to the coronavirus crisis. Mahmoud Ashkanani, in charge of environmental ventures at the foundation, said in a statement yesterday that the divers monitored the coral reefs skirting Umm Al-Maradem Island. Color of some reefs turned relatively pale and some covered with tunicates. The divers recorded growth of seagrasses and plants, zooxanthellae, algae, leafy and flowering plants, Ashkanani said. Moreover, fish circle in

small numbers around the monitored 13 settlements of reefs where temperature peak these days to no more than 30.5 degrees under the surface.

While scouring the chain of reefs, the divers lifted stuck nets close to Umm Al-Maradem Island and freed stranded alive creatures and fish. Ashkanani renewed the call on fishermen to abstain from fishing near the reefs. He further noted theme of this year's World Environment Day, that was marked Friday, was "Celebrate Biodiversity." The logo is intended to address threats against

one million species of living creatures facing extinction. The fishermen had in the past lifted various objects harmful to the reefs, such as abandoned heavy anchors and dumped nets. The reefs off the Kuwaiti coast had also suffered from bleaching in the peak of past summers. The foundation along with state authorities have repeatedly urged sea goers and seamen to refrain from littering the sea surface and bottom and dumping objects that hurt the reefs and other marine creatures. — KUNA

OMEGA goes classic for Father's Day

KUWAIT: For dads who love fast cars, the OMEGA Speedmaster has always been a perfect front seat passenger. Born for racing in 1957, the original models were not only used to time laps on the track, but also to create a distinct sense of style on the wrist.

In tribute to that motoring heritage, OMEGA is putting its famous chronograph in reverse, with a vintage spin on its Father's Day choices. Most notably, each Speedmaster model is set on its own leather strap, adding a classic and sophisticated edge to the look. Crafted from the finest material in differing tones of brown, each strap delivers a smooth retro spirit, while working in perfect harmony alongside the Speedmaster's iconic stainless steel case.

The Speedmaster has travelled a long

way since those early days behind the steering wheel. In fact, it's even been to the moon six times. So, if your dad wants to play it cool with some nostalgic astronaut style, you can pick up the Speedmaster "First OMEGA in Space" which first orbited the Earth in 1962. If you want to keep your choice focused on four wheels, then take a close look at the Racing models within the Speedmaster collection. These pieces have borrowed classic features from the past, such as the distinctive racing minute track, which first appeared in 1968, and even carried through OMEGA's Formula One years in the 1990s.

Finally, if you want to get as vintage as possible, why not journey back to the start of the story, with the Speedmaster '57 on a golden brown Novonappa leather strap. The design take inspiration from the very first pioneering design, but has been updated with a precise new engine and a modern silvery dial.

When it comes to Father's Day, there are not many timepieces more appropriate than the Speedmaster. A good-looking watch, with timeless appeal and unrivalled heritage? Any dad will love it.





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TOKYO: People wearing face masks amid concerns over the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) walk at Futako Tamagawa neighborhood in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Global virus deaths approach 400,000

US largely through crisis; EU to reopen borders

PARIS: The global death toll from the coronavirus neared 400,000 yesterday with fatalities accelerating in Latin America, as oil-producing countries agreed to extend output cuts to offset a collapse in prices caused by the pandemic.

Brazil now has the world's third-highest death toll from the virus, but President Jair Bolsonaro has threatened to leave the World Health Organization (WHO) over "ideological bias", following the example of the United States. He is among those arguing that the economic damage lockdowns are causing is worse than the virus itself—and the oil industry has been hit particularly hard.

OPEC agreed on Saturday to extend an April deal to cut production through July, aiming to foster a recovery in oil prices after they were pummeled by slumps in demand caused by virus restrictions. Governments are also increasingly focused on repairing the economic damage, and even hard-hit European countries are now opening their borders and allowing people to return to work.

But gloomy data from Asia's two largest economies highlighted the long road to recovery.

China reported a plunge in foreign trade on the

back of subdued consumer demand and weakness in key overseas markets. Analysts say a deeper downturn in exports is looming for the world's manufacturing powerhouse, where the virus first emerged late last year.

Factories in India are also struggling to restart because of labor shortages, as the country slowly emerges from a strict nationwide lockdown that sent millions of migrant laborers back to their far-flung home villages.

US 'largely through'

The worst health crisis in more than a century has infected nearly 6.9 million globally and forced tens of millions out of work just in the United States, the world's hardest-hit nation.

But President Donald Trump said his country was bouncing back. "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.

As the country reels from a second weekend of massive protests against racism and police brutality, Trump—facing re-election in November—reiterated his calls to further ease stay-at-home measures.

It followed surprisingly upbeat employment numbers that showed the country gained 2.5 million jobs in May.

EU to reopen borders

In Europe, badly-hit countries slowly continued on a path toward a post-pandemic normal, also seeking to revive key tourist sectors in time for the summer.

The European Union said it could re-open borders to travellers from outside the region in early July, after some countries within the bloc re-opened to European visitors. In France, the Palace of Versailles re-

opened without the US and Chinese tourists that usually make up a third of its visitors.

The country also marked the anniversary of the 1944 D-Day landings with a fraction of the big crowds seen in previous years, owing to strict social distancing restrictions. Elsewhere, the golf's Asian Tour became the latest international body to announce plans for a restart, after the pandemic threw the world sports calendar into disarray.

Play is expected to resume in September, although organizers said lingering flight restrictions may force competitors to travel without support staff. Signs that life was beginning a return to normal in Europe and Asia were tempered by the bleak numbers streaming in from Latin America. Brazil's death toll passed 35,000 as Bolsonaro echoed criticism of the WHO by Trump, who has said the US will defund the organization because it is too close to China. "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. Tolls are also rising sharply in Mexico, Peru and Ecuador, while in Chile, deaths have risen by more than 50 percent in the past week. — AFP



Fatalities accelerating in LatAm

'It's suffocating to be a black man in the US'

WASHINGTON: "I couldn't stay home": Moah Pollas, an African American recent college graduate, explained why he was compelled to spend days demonstrating in the streets of the US capital against systemic racism, despite the fear of being arrested, or worse.

As a victim of racism himself, Pollas simply could not stay home. It started early. When he was just seven or eight years old, walking down a sidewalk one day after a school field trip, he heard someone yell at him from the window of a passing school bus. "Take your black ass back to Africa!" a boy yelled, as others on the bus laughed raucously. "It didn't hurt as much as the reaction I got from my white teacher when I told her," he told AFP. "She basically told me to get over it."

"I'm not sure if she really believed me, to be honest." "That experience," added Pollas, a 21-year-old political science graduate, "has colored every experience with white people or other people of color for the rest of my life." Born in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince, Pollas was two years old when his family immigrated to the United States. His parents, who were fleeing political persecution, settled in the predominantly white California city of Burbank.

"I grew up knowing that based on my skin color, people were going to perceive me in a more threatening way, perceive me in a more dangerous way and perceive me to be more violent. "It causes you as a black person to police your actions on a daily basis, 24/7," he told AFP, sitting in the backyard of a home he shares with other students in northeastern Washington.

Being black in the United States, he said, is "suffocating." It means that if he is walking down the street "and if there are white people walking in the same direction as me, I should probably step out of the way... I



Moah Pollas, a political science graduate, has joined in the continued protests in the US capital over the death of George Floyd in police custody. —AFP

should probably do my best to look at the ground. I probably do my best to stay quiet."

'The fear in him'

One day when he was 13 years old he was in a car with his father, who works in the pharmaceutical business, when police pulled them over. "Police officers pull people over just because they're black all the time," he said.

"When my dad was stopped, I could sense the fear in him. A fear that I've never seen in the man who was protecting me and my family my whole life. That fear transferred onto me in that moment. And honestly, has never left me." African Americans are three times as likely to be killed by police as whites or Hispanics, according to data from the specialized website mappingpoliceviolence.org.

In one egregious example, a 32-year-old black man named Philando Castile was shot and killed by police in the state of Minnesota in July 2016 after the officer stopped him because of a faulty brake light on his car.

'I saw my own face'

Then on May 25 came the death of a 46-year-old black man named George Floyd, who was suffocated when an arresting offi-

cer in Minneapolis knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes. The death of the father of five, in a horrifying video now seen by millions, sparked protests of historic dimension across the United States as well as in many cities abroad.

"When I saw that video... I didn't just see George Floyd. I saw my father's face. I saw my uncle's face, my brother's, my cousin's, my friends'. "I saw my own face," Pollas said, not hiding his emotions. "I saw how easily I could have been in that situation and the people I cared about could have been in that situation."

A recent graduate of Howard University in Washington, a prestigious predominantly black school, Pollas had long dreamed of a career in politics. But lately he is thinking instead of a job in education. His change of heart likely came when worked in the city as a substitute teacher.

"I've seen first-hand the effects of underfunding that really affects predominantly black schools in DC," said Pollas. Having studied Russian, he is planning to travel to Ukraine to teach English. But when he returns to the United States he hopes to work to help change the system. —AFP

Emirates, Etihad extend salary cuts to Sept

DUBAI: Gulf carriers Emirates and Etihad Airways are extending the period of reduced pay for their staff until September as they try to preserve cash during the global coronavirus pandemic.

The aviation industry has been among the worst hit by the outbreak, which has dented travel demand and forced major airlines to lay off staff and seek government bailouts. State airlines Emirates and Etihad have operated limited, mostly outbound services from the United Arab Emirates since grounding passenger flights in March.

They are due to restart some connecting flights this month after the UAE last week lifted a suspension on services where passengers stop off in the country to change planes, or for refuelling.

Dubai's Emirates told employees yesterday it would extend a three month wage cut due to end this month until September 30, according to an internal email seen by Reuters. In some

cases, pay cuts will also be deepened, with some basic salaries reduced by 50%, the email to Emirates Group employees said. The decision was made after reviewing all possible options to preserve its cash position, it said.

State-owned Emirates Group, which employed 105,000 as of March and includes the airline among its assets, did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. Emirates had previously reduced basic wages reduced by 25 percent to 50 percent for three months from April, with junior employees exempted.

Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways has extended its salary cuts of between 25 percent to 50 percent to September, a spokeswoman said, as it considers all options to protect jobs and preserve cash. The airline originally reduced salaries for the month of April.

Etihad last week laid off some cabin crew and its not planning any further crew redundancies, according to emails seen by Reuters. The spokeswoman said there have been redundancies across several areas of the airline, and last month sources told Reuters Etihad was planning to lay off 1,200 employees. Like other airlines, Emirates and Etihad have laid off staff due to the impact of its business. Fellow Gulf carrier Qatar Airways has said it could lay off up to 20 percent of its employees. — Reuters



DUBAI: An Emirates Airlines flight takes off from Dubai International Airport in this file photo. Gulf carriers Emirates and Etihad Airways are extending the period of reduced pay for their staff until September, it is reported.

International

Virus, dire economy, unrest upend US presidential race

Crises prompt reflection over racial inequality in America

WASHINGTON: Three concurrent crises scarring the United States—a deadly health pandemic, economic despair and widespread social unrest—have reframed this year's presidential contest and prompted national reflection over racial inequality in America.

Is the country on the cusp of a transformation, or will systemic inequalities exacerbated by the coronavirus crisis persist, allowing alienation and marginalization to fester?

In weeks, the unprecedented strain has become the focal point of the ferocious White House campaign between President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden, two politicians approaching the disasters with very different strategies.

It has been several generations since the country has experienced such a sharp and rapid confluence of major emergencies, a national low point that philosopher Cornell West has branded "America's moment of reckoning."

Nearly 110,000 Americans have died of COVID-19, and tens of millions are jobless due to pandemic-prompted lockdowns. At the same time, unrest has gripped dozens of US cities where protesters demand justice over the killing by Minneapolis police of unarmed black man George Floyd.

Repeated episodes of police brutality caught on camera, even as most demonstrations have been peaceful, have further laid bare the nation's deep social wounds.

"It's a pretty bad moment," said Daniel Gillion, a political science professor at the University of Pennsylvania and author of "The Loud Minority."

The crises, he told AFP, have been "horrific" for African Americans, who traditionally have poorer health care outcomes, have just a fraction of the

household wealth of whites, and are more likely to face police brutality. "I can't think of a (modern-day) period where blacks have experienced such strife, such pain, such hardship," Gillion said. Among COVID-19 victims, a disproportionate number are people of color. While Trump on Friday touted a surprise drop in the overall jobless rate from 14.7 percent in April to 13.3 percent in May, black unemployment actually rose, to 16.8 percent. The injustice that erupted into ugly view when a white police officer pressed his knee onto Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes is the latest manifestation of a systemic racism that has persisted for generations.

"There's been a knee on the neck of black America since slavery was abolished," 30-year-old Minneapolis protester Kayla Peterson said from behind a pandemic face mask. "We've never really been free."

Law and order

Trump could have delivered an Oval Office address to the nation this week to soothe tensions. Instead he has exploited discord and launched a "law and order" crusade. Trump has walled off the White House from protesters and launched fiery accusations that do little to calm the storm.

"The problem," he tweeted Thursday about recent controversial tactics deployed in Washington, "is the arsonists, looters, criminals, and anarchists, wanting to destroy it (and our Country)!"

severity of the current crunch has sparked calls for government bailouts—with private papers in Cameroon even holding a "dead press" day to denounce a lack of action.

Authorities in some countries have heeded the pleas for help. Kenya's national regulator on Friday unveiled what it called a "historic" fund worth just under \$1 million to help some 150 broadcasters weather the storm.

"This challenge of COVID-19 has squeezed life from television and radio stations," said David Omwoyo, the head of the Media Council of Kenya.

Officials from Nigeria's journalist union said it had appealed to President Muhammadu Buhari to provide emergency aid to distressed media. But there are fears that state aid would only increase political interference in sectors around Africa that are already often dominated by powerful vested interests. "The government has been harassing the media. Several journalists are facing trials for frivolous offences," University of Lagos lecturer Olubunmi Ajibade said of the situation in Nigeria. "Collecting bailout funds from government at this time will compromise their independence and freedom."

'Disseminate propaganda'

Just as the spread of the virus has caused revenues to dwindle, it has also posed unprecedented logistical challenges to media outlets. While the official figures—more than 170,000 infections and 4,700 deaths across the continent—have risen slower than elsewhere on the planet, governments have still imposed tough restrictions. Lockdowns have hampered reporting, social distancing has forced journalists to work remotely with poor internet or electricity supplies, and protective

If their children have nothing to eat "the mother desponds, and I have three girls who've given birth during the quarantine," added Portales, of the Miluska Life and Dignity network. In a large house in the historic center of Lima, a group of prostitutes prepare huge pots of cooked food for their colleagues and families.

People in their profession have faced a worrying and uncertain period since Peru enforced a lockdown on March 16. Wearing red face masks, and some in high heels, the women arrive carrying their children in their arms.

"Miluska Life and Dignity is my organization, our organization and everyone's organization," Leida Portal told AFP. The 53-year-old is president of the network fighting the criminalization of and violence against prostitutes, and their right to access health care.

"We have extreme cases of women who were

foothold in the war-torn country or delivering advanced weaponry to Lebanese armed group Hezbollah.

Iranian and Iraqi armed groups backing the regime of Bashar Al-Assad have deployed across swathes of Deir Ezzor, a large desert province bordering on Iraq.

The Observatory said the latest strikes came after Afghan forces brought in reinforcements from near the Iraqi border to a large Iranian base near the town of Al-Mayadin on the Euphrates river. Two waves of similar strikes in May killed 12 pro-Iranian fighters, according to the Observatory.

Syria's complex, almost decade-long war has killed over 380,000 people, devastated the country's infrastructure and forced millions of people to flee their homes.

Meanwhile, a Turkish soldier was killed in Syria's Idlib region after an attack on an armored ambulance, the defence ministry said. Two other soldiers were injured, it said in a statement, adding the army retaliated by hitting specified targets. The ministry did not give further information.

A Russian-backed Damascus offensive on the last rebel bastion in the country has killed hundreds of civil-

Trump's provocative walk from the White House to a nearby church for a photo opportunity minutes after the area was forcibly cleared of protesters contained clear signals to conservative and evangelical voters in his base: security and faith remain paramount.

While Trump has trafficked in division, his November election rival has blasted him as "dangerously unfit" to lead. Biden, 77, was largely absent for two months, hunkered down in his Delaware home as the pandemic played out and Trump used his bully pulpit to push to re-open the country.

But the veteran Democrat is eyeing an opening by embracing a message of conciliation and reform—something that could unite the moderate and liberal factions of the Democratic Party and draw independents appalled by Trump's strongman style. "It is long past time we made the promise of this nation real for all of our people," Biden tweeted Friday.

'Teflon man'?

Experts say that despite the recent chaos, Trump does have a path to victory. "If the president is able to talk about race in a meaningful way, and if he's able to ride the recovery in health and in the economic crisis, he's going to look like the Teflon man," Gillion said. "Nothing will stick to him." Trump however has seen his poll numbers erode, particularly among two groups vital to his



This combination of file photos shows US President Donald Trump (left) and Democratic presidential hopeful and former Vice President Joe Biden.—AFP

re-election: elderly voters and evangelical Christians. And his failure to tackle the pandemic early and his threat to unleash the military on protesters is repelling female voters.

White women "are upset with Trump's handling of the pandemic" and his lack of leadership, said Nadia Brown, associate professor of political science and African-American studies at Purdue University. "Women are also watching the protests and they are having empathy" with demonstrators. The persistent inequalities, snapshots of a shattered economy and how leaders respond "will definitely be on the mind of voters in five months," Brown added. It doesn't mean Biden romps to victory, either. "A cat has nine lives," Brown said, "but Trump has 12." —AFP

Virus crisis piles pressure on Africa media

LAGOS: Collapsing revenues, rising layoffs: the coronavirus crisis is battering media outlets across Africa that were already struggling for cash and often facing pressure from hostile authorities.

The news of cutbacks was sudden and painful for journalists at two of Nigeria's most popular independent newspapers when bosses from The Punch and Vanguard made their announcements last month. "It was a rude shock for me because I didn't do anything wrong to warrant such treatment," one Punch veteran told AFP, asking not to be named as he was still owed a "token" payoff.

The redundancies were just the latest to hit Nigeria's press—one of the most vibrant on the continent—as the economic fallout from the pandemic has sent sales and advertising income plunging. "What is happening in Nigeria is not peculiar to us. The whole world is feeling the impact," said Qasim Akinreti, the chairman of the Lagos Union of Journalists. "For us in the Nigerian media, the story is the same—we have lost hundreds of jobs in the past four months."

Calls for state aid

In Kenya some media houses slashed wages by up to half, in Uganda a leading weekly halted printing, and in Namibia hours have been reduced and redundancy schemes fast-tracked. The speed and

Sex workers in Peru sharing food to survive

LIMA: Prevented by the lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic from earning a living, Peru's sex workers have had to organize soup kitchens supplied by food handouts to feed themselves and their children.

"We have 70 meals we're going to make on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, because most of the girls work on the streets and there's no work," 61-year-old Lidia Portales, who helps run a foundation that represents sex workers in Lima, told AFP.

East Syria air raids kill 12 pro-Iran fighters

BEIRUT: At least 12 pro-Iranian fighters died in strikes by unidentified aircraft on eastern Syria late Saturday evening, a war monitor said. "Eight air strikes before midnight on Saturday night targeted a base of pro-Iranian forces in rural eastern Deir Ezzor (province), killing 12 Iraqi and Afghan fighters and destroying equipment and ammunition," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Observatory did not identify the aircraft responsible, but its head Rami Abdul Rahman told AFP that Israel was likely responsible. The Jewish state has carried out hundreds of strikes targeting regime and Iranian-backed forces, notably in Deir Ezzor.

The Israeli military rarely claims responsibility for such attacks but has vowed to prevent Iran gaining a



LAGOS: The coronavirus crisis is battering media outlets across Africa that were already struggling for cash and often facing pressure from hostile authorities.

equipment has added new costs.

On the streets there have been reports of security forces harassing journalists trying to do their work.

In Ghana—one of West Africa's most open democracies—soldiers enforcing virus restrictions "assaulted" two reporters in April, the Committee to Protect Journalists said.

A raft of countries including South Africa have introduced legislation criminalizing the spreading of disinformation about the pandemic. Authorities insist the measures are needed to tackle a flood of dangerous falsehoods surrounding the virus.

But media professionals say journalists are already trying to do the job of combatting "fake news"—and such laws could be used to muzzle them. —AFP

working in brothels that are now closed. What can they do? How can they support their families?" said Portal.

"There are colleagues that have their little rooms and live there with their children. They sell themselves to get food for their children and themselves.

"Then there are other colleagues in other places who come to work the streets who will also come here for their food." Peru, a country of 33 million, has recorded the second-most coronavirus cases in Latin America with more than 187,000 and over 5,000 deaths, the third most in the region.

As well as running the soup kitchens, the group has been distributing food in various districts of the capital thanks to donations and from the sale of masks and syrups they made themselves. The group, founded in 2004, helps around 1,000 sex workers. —AFP



A Syrian boy looks at Russian and US military vehicles in the northeastern Syrian town of Al-Malikiyah (Derik) at the border with Turkey.—AFP

ians since December and displaced close to a million people. A ceasefire between rebel-backer Turkey and regime-ally Russia was agreed for Idlib and came into force on March 6.—AFP

Generation Z: creative and committed

PARIS: With their art, technology know-how, creative social networking skills or political commitment, post-millennials, known as Generation Z, have found their own ways to help others through the coronavirus lockdown.

From Colombia to Senegal, Malaysia to North Macedonia, AFP talked to a group of 15- to 24-year-olds, who put their energy and skills to use within their communities, contributing perhaps to shaping the post-virus world. Only history will tell if they'll become the "Coronavirus Generation", forever marked at a formative time in their lives by the pandemic, which brought more than half the planet to a standstill.

Solidarity beyond the smartphone

"If I don't volunteer and those like me don't volunteer, then who will?", asks Malak Sabah, 24. In her high visibility vest, she has been the linchpin of an initiative to sanitize the streets of Lebanon's overcrowded Wavel Palestinian refugee camp, where she grew up. Worried that some were not taking the risk seriously enough after the first COVID-19 case in the camp, an awareness campaign was launched, Sabah said.

"It's a hidden virus, you can't deal with it with physical strength, it requires awareness, knowledge and protection," she said. Having always known a world connected by the likes of Google, Facebook and Amazon, this generation understands the power of social networks in getting a message across, Walid Badi, a French professional handball player, said.

Not only that, but these young people also realize they're best placed "to help the most vulnerable", the 24-year-old, who lives in Ivry-sur-Seine near Paris, said. The health crisis demonstrated that "we're not just good for staying at home, hooked to our smartphones, but are deeply rooted in reality," he added. While competitions were off the cards during confinement, he used the time to step up action through his Solidaritess association in aid of the homeless, distributing clothes to the "forgotten" in the capital's suburbs.

Drones and 3-D printing

Jose Otero, a 22-year-old Venezuelan living in Colombia, has come up with what he describes as a low-cost drone to beat the travel restrictions by carrying medicine and test results around the northern city of Barranquilla. "They used to tell us that we had to separate ourselves from technological devices or telephones because that separated us," he said.

"On the contrary, right now it is what unites us." In Senegal, engineering student Ibrahim Cisse, 23, and his friends at Dakar's ESP Polytechnic Higher School built a special bicycle equipped with a rear-end loud speaker for sharing preventative information and a hand sanitizer dispenser. He said that they were learning how to be useful through initiatives that take into account the environment, people's needs and reducing costs.

"We're in a poor country and you shouldn't think of extravagant projects," he said. At 15, Romeo Estezet, a Paris high school student, has made his bedroom into a 3-D printing workshop and is turning out 80 protective visors a day. "My dream is to show other young people the usefulness and, above all, the ease of this technology, which puts the production of objects within everyone's reach" especially in a crisis, he said. —AFP

International

Fears for UK homeless as virus hotel scheme draws to a close

Charities fear they could soon be back on the streets

LONDON: Thousands of homeless people in Britain were given hotel rooms to protect them from coronavirus but as the outbreak slows, charities fear they could soon be back on the streets.

Lisa was among 15,000 people in England given emergency accommodation as part of an unprecedented government scheme in March to get "Everyone In" as COVID-19 spread. She has a chronic health condition and had been living on the streets, relying on temporary shelters run by the charity Glass Door, which helped her onto the hotel scheme.

"I was elated," the 30-something told AFP by telephone. "To be able to sleep in a bed, it was like sleeping on cloud nine!" But her room in a London hotel is only confirmed until the end of June—and as the government eases a nationwide lockdown, she is getting increasingly anxious.

The scheme "does give me some glimmer of hope that things can go forward. When you are on the street it feels never-ending", she said.

"I have faith that the charities are not going to put us back on the street. But if it's a case of going back into the kind of temporary accommodation I was in, I know the cycle will be repeated." Campaigners are demanding the government urgently clarify what happens to people like Lisa when the hotel contracts run out.

"Returning people back onto the streets should not be an option, but time is running out to find alternative solutions," said Glass Door chief operating officer Lucy Abraham. There are also calls for wider action amid warnings that homelessness will increase as the economic impact of the outbreak bites.

"The government's actions and support so far are welcome, but there is still a long way to go," said a joint letter to ministers from leading homelessness charities. "With the risk of a second wave

of infection and looming economic crisis, more needs to be done. Getting this right is critical for the health and economic security of tens of thousands of people and families."

Seize this opportunity

Charities had warned that people living on the streets or in crowded hostels were particularly vulnerable to coronavirus, which has killed around 40,000 people in Britain so far.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government responded with an extraordinary effort, housing 14,610 people sleeping rough or at risk of doing so in England — 4,450 in London alone. Many were given rooms in shuttered hotels, providing a safe and comfortable environment that some people had not experienced for years.

"We've heard some incredible stories of people really seizing this opportunity and showing they can hold down a tenancy," said Balbir Chatrik, of the youth homelessness charity Centrepoint. "But many more require the sort of intensive support that can only be provided in tandem with stable accommodation."

Moral mission

There is a major shortage of public housing in Britain and local authorities, which have responsibility for homelessness, have suffered years of cuts in central government funding.

Research by charities suggests rough sleeping has risen by 141 percent in the last decade. In December's election, Johnson's government pledged to end rough sleeping within five years, backed up by a £650 million package. Last month, Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick said he would accelerate delivery of 6,000 new "housing units" with support staff on hand, with 3,300 made



LONDON: Charities has warned that people living on the streets were particularly vulnerable to coronavirus. —AFP

available in the coming year.

"This government wants to end rough sleeping for good, and we now have a real opportunity to deliver on this moral mission," he said. On Friday, Jenrick also extended a three-month ban on evictions proceedings until August, to help people struggling to pay the rent.

Still dangerous

David Renard, housing spokesman for the Local Government Association (LGA), welcomed the extra funds for councils. But he asked for "clarity from government on what additional practical support will be available to councils to

help them move people out of hotels".

Campaigners say people are already falling through the gaps. Some who became homeless since March, such as newly released prisoners, have not been able to access the hotel scheme, one case worker told AFP.

There are also concerns that rules restricting government help on the basis of immigration status, which were suspended, are also being reimposed in some areas. "There are people being turned away from that support despite the fact that the pandemic continues," said Jasmine Basran, from housing charity Crisis. "And that is putting people in a very dangerous situation." —AFP

Nigerian girl, lover held for faking own kidnap

LAGOS: A 17-year-old girl in southwestern Nigeria who allegedly faked her own kidnap to demand a ransom from her mother has been arrested, police said yesterday. Seun Adekunle is accused of conspiring with her boyfriend to stage her abduction in Abeokuta, the capital of Ogun state and asking for 500,000 naira (1,388 dollars).

"The two lovers were arrested on Thursday following a report by the girl's mother that she had not been seen since June 1," state police spokesman Abimbola Oyeemi told AFP. He said the girl's mother got a call from someone two days later claiming to have kidnapped her and demanding 500,000 naira for her release.

"The caller also warned her against reporting the abduction to the police if she still needed her daughter," Oyeemi said. He said police detectives were able to trace the girl and her lover to their hideout.

"They were caught hibernating, yet passing themselves off as victims of abduction. They were promptly arrested," Oyeemi said the suspects would be taken to court after investigation.

Kidnapping for ransom is common in southern Nigeria where oil workers, prominent Nigerians, including relations of sports stars, have been abducted in recent years. The victims are usually released unhurt after ransom payments. —AFP

India, China seek to resolve border face-off

NEW DELHI: India and China have agreed to "peacefully resolve" a latest border flare-up that has heightened tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors, New Delhi said yesterday after a high-level meeting between army commanders.

Tensions have flared in recent weeks between the two regional powers over their 3,500-kilometre (2,200-mile) frontier, which has never been properly demarcated. Thousands of troops from both countries are involved in the face-off concentrated in India's Ladakh region, just opposite Tibet.

"Both sides agreed to peacefully resolve the situation in the border areas in accordance with various bilateral agreements," the foreign ministry said in a statement. The ministry added that the commanders agreed an "early resolution" was "essential" for bilateral relations between the world's two most-populous nations.

"Accordingly, the two sides will continue the military and diplomatic engagements to resolve the situation and to ensure peace and tranquility in the border areas," the statement said. There have been numerous face-offs and brawls between Chinese and Indian soldiers at the frontier, but they have become more frequent in recent years.

Crematorium in Delhi struggles with virus dead

NEW DELHI: Traditional funeral pyres have been drafted in to burn the bodies of coronavirus victims in the Indian capital as crematorium furnaces struggle to keep up with the mounting death toll.

Smoke from the open-air blazes stings the eyes of waiting mourners and workers at Nigambodh Ghat, New Delhi's biggest and oldest crematorium. The rising number of bodies arriving from hospitals has forced the facility, situated next to the city's historic Red Fort, to extend its opening hours. Funerals start at 8.00am and go on late into the night.

India is one of the hardest-hit countries from the coronavirus with about 240,000 cases and more than 6,700 dead. According to official figures, about 650 have died in Delhi, but media and cemetery officials say there have been hundreds more victims in the city.

The committee that runs Nigambodh Ghat says the crematorium has handled more than 500 coronavirus funerals in two months. Three other crematoria and at least two cemeteries also handle

Delhi's virus dead.

Authorities have ordered victims be incinerated in modern furnaces as a precaution against infection as anxiety grows over the spread of the disease.

But only three of six furnaces at Nigambodh Ghat are working, so for the past week, wood pyres, the traditional structures used in Hindu funeral rituals for thousands of years, have been allowed to help clear the backlog. Furnace or tradition -

Suman Kumar Gupta of the crematorium management committee said families arriving for a funeral had to queue to pass through a "sanitation tunnel" at the entrance and then wait hours for the ceremony, prompting anxiety about the risk of infection.

"They want it to be faster, but we have only the three furnaces working," said the official. Pressure is being felt all around. Some ambulances are bringing four or five bodies at a time from hospitals where mortuaries are reportedly overloaded with virus victims.

An ambulance driver told AFP there had been times when he was forced to leave his vehicle with bodies inside parked overnight at Nigambodh Ghat, after the facility failed to cremate them and they could not be returned to the hospital. It takes about two hours to incinerate a body in a furnace and even

the second week of May, and left them near the plantation boundary.

Officials said it was unclear when exactly the 15-year-old elephant consumed the rigged fruit but it was found injured on May 25, two days before it died.

Forest officials said the explosion caused severe damage to its mouth, leaving the creature unable to eat or drink for days. Villagers across India often use explosive or firecracker-filled fruits—which act like pressure-activated landmines—as bait to target wild animals that threaten crops and homes. A similar incident was reported last month in a nearby Kerala district, when a female pachyderm was found with serious mouth injuries. If convicted, the men could face up to seven years in jail for killing an elephant, a protected animal under Indian wildlife laws.

Lord Ganesh

The latest incident caused widespread outrage on social media, including from several sports and Bollywood celebrities, who condemned the "inhuman act" and called for harsh action against the perpetrators.

But it stirred another controversy after several Hindu right-wing figures on social media turned the death into a hate campaign against Muslims, falsely claiming that the community were behind the incident.



NEW DELHI: In this photograph, relatives prepare the cremation pyre for a person who died from the COVID-19 coronavirus, at the Nigambodh Ghat cremation ground in New Delhi. —AFP

longer on the pyres, which are fed by a constant stream of cartloads of wood pushed by dozens of crematorium workers. In front of the furnaces, the mourners stand behind a screen, their masked faces revealing only eyes brimming with tears.

Narendra Vashisht, 68, waited two hours before he could peer through the glass at his brother's body being prepared for its final moments.

"It has not been easy," he said. "We had to keep asking them to hurry it up."

Before the virus crisis, tradition-loving Indian families were wary of modern furnaces. Now they are scared of the illness and want a quick and efficient end.

"We used to get only four or five bodies a day for the furnace. We had to convince people to use it. Now things are different," Gupta said. —AFP



CHENNAI: A woman takes a picture with her mobile phone of a painted poster of an elephant and its calf in the belly lit up with candles by school staff to pay homage after the recent killing of a pregnant wild elephant in the southern Indian state of Kerala, in Chennai. —AFP

Many right-wing Hindu figures alleged online the creature was specifically targeted because the animal is an embodiment of Lord Ganesh, the elephant-headed Hindu deity. Members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party, including environment minister Prakash Javadekar and parliamentarian Maneka Gandhi, also claimed the event happened in Malappuram, a Muslim-majority district.

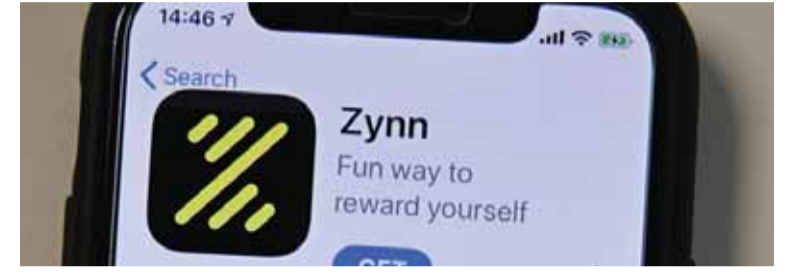
The incident took place in Palakkad district, some 80 kilometers

(50 miles) away. India is home to nearly 30,000 elephants, equivalent to 60 percent of the world's wild Asian pachyderms.

But urban expansion has put the animals in conflict with humans. About 2,360 people were killed in elephant attacks between 2014 and 2019, according to Indian government data. In the same period about 510 elephants died, including 333 from electrocution and roughly 100 from poaching and poisoning, the figures stated. —AFP

Business

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10 Malaysia plans to borrow its way out of economic downturn**11** Air travel may take 2 to 3 years to return to 2019 levels: Boeing exec**11** Zynn brings Chinese video app rivalry to US

MUMBAI: Migrant workers queue outside the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus railway station to return to their hometowns after the government eased a nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus, in Mumbai.—AFP

India's factories plunge into crisis

Manufacturers struggle as migrant workers flee amid virus

BAHADURGARH, India: An acute shortage of workers has turned the roar of machines to a soft hum at a footwear factory near New Delhi, just one of thousands in India struggling to restart after an exodus of migrant workers during the virus lockdown.

India is slowly emerging from strict containment measures imposed in late March as leaders look to revive the battered economy, but manufacturers don't have enough workers to man the machinery.

The big cities—once an attractive destination for workers from poor, rural regions—have been hit by reverse migration as millions of laborers flee back to their far-flung home villages, some uncertain if they will ever return. "Sixty percent of our laborers have gone back. How can we run a production unit with just one-third of our workforce?" asked Sanjeev Kharbanda, a senior executive with Aqualite Industries, which owns the footwear factory in the northern state of Haryana.

Kharbanda said the company's sports shoe unit had been sitting idle as there were no skilled workers to operate the high-tech machines. "We are running just one shift now. The cost of production has gone up and our profits are going down," he said, a conveyor belt carrying semi-finished flip-flops running slowly in the

background. In Gujarat state's Surat city—where 90 percent of the world's diamonds are cut and polished—many factories have been unable to open after more than two-thirds of workers fled, Surat diamond association president Babu Kathiriya told AFP.

Jobless and hungry

Meanwhile, the state's salt refineries have started doubling salaries to lure staff back. But experts say the workers may not return anytime soon. "A lot of the manufacturing industry is actually located in the very states where the pandemic's impact has been great (such as) Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Delhi," Professor Santosh Mehrotra at Jawaharlal Nehru University told AFP.

"Now these are the areas where naturally workers have left in large numbers... They will not return in a hurry." There are an estimated 100 million migrant workers—nearly a fifth of the labor force and con-

tributing to an estimated 10 percent of GDP—across the nation of 1.3 billion people.

Many are employed as cheap labor across a vast range of sectors including textiles, construction, mines and small businesses. But when the lockdown was suddenly imposed by the government, many found themselves almost immediately out of a job and unable to pay rent.

Without public transport after interstate trains and buses were halted, some embarked on long journeys home on foot in the scorching heat, with around 200 dying from exhaustion or accidents according to the non-profit Save Life Foundation.

The government eventually organized special train services to take millions stranded in cities back to their home states. Experts say India's economy—Asia's third-biggest and already stuttering before the pandemic—will be badly hit in the short-term at a minimum by the lack of workers.



India GDP grows at its slowest pace in 11 years

China imports plunge and exports fall

BEIJING: China's exports and imports fell in May as the economic slowdown abroad started to take its toll, and after a surprise jump driven by increased demand for anti-epidemic supplies, official data showed yesterday.

With consumer demand muted and key overseas markets suffering downturns, imports saw their sharpest on-year fall in over four years, even as the country worked to restart its economy after bringing activity to a standstill to curb the coronavirus. Exports from the manufacturing powerhouse fell 3.3 percent on-year last month, better than the 6.5 percent slide expected by a Bloomberg poll of analysts.

But the return to negative territory came after a surprise 3.5 percent jump in April, which was partly due to medical exports. Analysts have warned of signs that a larger downturn awaits.

Customs data released yesterday also showed a larger than expected drop in imports on-year, which were down by 16.7 percent and at a four-year low. Part of the plunge in the value of imports could be explained by falling commodity prices worldwide, said Rajiv Biswas of IHS Markit.

Iris Pang, ING chief economist for Greater China, told AFP another reason was likely a drop in parts bought for re-exports—imported goods that are shipped out after further processing—due to the uncertainty of global demand.

Deeper downturn ahead

Medical exports supported Chinese shipments in April and May, with shipments of textile yarns, fabrics and products rising 21.3 percent for the first five months on-year. Analysts expect this boost to fade however, as the virus situation improves worldwide.

"Export growth rebounded in March and April, even as lockdowns came into effect abroad, because of a backlog of orders that had piled up while Chinese factories were shut in February," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a recent report.

But he noted the Purchasing Managers' Index, a key gauge of factory activity, still pointed to "a deep downturn in exports that has yet to materialize" as activity in China's major export markets remains subdued.

Exports would likely take a further hit in June and July, said IHS Markit's Biswas, before recovering towards the end of the year supported by lockdowns ending across Europe and the US and the Christmas season. Cities in China have been rolling out measures to boost local demand, with Beijing announcing last week it would offer coupons worth 12.2 billion yuan (\$1.7 billion) to spur consumption, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Meanwhile, China's trade surplus with the US was up by 3.7 percent to \$27.9 billion in May, from last year.

This was also higher than the \$22.8 billion surplus in April. US-China tensions have risen again in recent months as both sides trade barbs over the pandemic and other areas.

With both economies hit by the virus, analysts have called into question their ability to meet earlier commitments from a partial trade deal signed in January.—AFP

Invisible workers

The economy is forecast to grow at its slowest pace in 11 years, and analysts are bracing for a severe contraction in the current quarter. The government has announced a 20 trillion rupee (\$266 billion) stimulus package but observers do not expect much of a boost, at least not in the short term, while there are fears the exodus of migrant workers may have set the economy back by 15 years.

"Their departure itself has been traumatic. They have gone through many indignities," said Mehrotra. "Some of them may come back, but many of them will look for work not in metro cities but in small towns close by which are less impacted by the virus."

It is unclear if they will find jobs back home, with the rural economy already in distress owing to low crop prices and yields.

But Mohammed Naseem Aktar, who lost his job as a worker at an export house in New Delhi, told AFP he was willing to take the risk. "I had no work for two months here and I faced a lot of problems," the 21-year-old said as he queued up to register for a train seat.

"The disease is showing no signs of a let-up. Now I just want to be with my family in the village."—AFP



BEIJING: A vendor wearing a face mask sells vegetables at a market in Beijing yesterday.—AFP

Business

Malaysia plans to borrow its way out of economic downturn

Fiscal deficit approaching 6% after stimulus measures

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia aims to borrow its way out of an economic slump brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, and the finance minister told Reuters it will nearly double its fiscal deficit this year while keeping open the option of raising the public debt ceiling.

Southeast Asia's third-biggest economy has announced incentives worth 295 billion ringgit (\$69 billion) to soften the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, with the government vowing to directly inject 45 billion ringgit of that into the economy, mostly raised through domestic borrowings.

Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul Aziz told Reuters the fiscal deficit would rise to around 6 percent of annual economic output this year because of the stimulus, and that a direct fiscal injection of 10 billion ringgit announced on Friday would be raised through domestic borrowing. "There is only so much monetary policy can do," Tengku Zafrul said in an interview in his office. "So you need fiscal policy to come into play, as long as you have the discipline and the commitment in the longer term to go back to where you should be in terms of the deficit."

Tengku Zafrul, who was chief executive of lender CIMB Group Holdings Bhd before joining the three-month-old government, said the goal was to narrow the fiscal deficit back down to less than 4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) over the next three years or so. It was 3.2 percent last year.

"How bad was it during the (global financial crisis)?" It was 6.7 percent. So we have room if we want to borrow," he said, referring to the country's peak annual deficit in 2009. The region's largest economy, Indonesia, said last month that it expected its budget deficit to swell to 6.27 percent due to virus-related stimulus.

Tengku Zafrul said Malaysia's outstanding public debt now stands at 52 percent of GDP but that "if we need to, then we should increase the ceiling" beyond the current 55 percent "to help the people and the economy".

He declined to say how high the government might seek to raise the ceiling, a move that would require approval from parliament. Neighboring Thailand said in April its latest borrowing plans would increase its public debt to 51.84 percent of GDP in the current fiscal year and 57.96 percent in the next one.



KUALA LUMPUR: People walk inside a shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur as sectors of the economy are being reopened following restrictions to halt the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. — AFP



Central bank unlikely to cut interest rates

Tengku Zafrul, 46, said there was no immediate need for the central bank to cut its benchmark interest rate further from its decade low of 2 percent, "given the liquidity in the country and given where

the currency is going and where we are we are an economy".

Bank Negara Malaysia's monetary policy committee next meets on July 7, and some analysts have predicted another cut. — Reuters

Sweden didn't lock down, but economy plunges

STOCKHOLM: Unlike most countries, Sweden never locked down during the coronavirus pandemic, largely keeping businesses operating, but the economy appears to be taking a hard hit nonetheless.

Under the Scandinavian country's controversial approach to the virus, cafes, bars, restaurants and most businesses remained open, as did schools for under-16s, with people urged to follow social distancing and hygiene guidelines. Whatever hope there may have been that this policy would soften the economic blow now seems dashed.

"As in most of the world, there will be a record decline for the Swedish economy in Q2," SEB bank economist Olle Holmgren said.

'A long time'

A rebound was likely in the latter part of the year, but "we expect it to take a long time before the situation normalizes," he told AFP.

To be fair, Swedish officials insist their strategy was always aimed at public health, and never specifically at saving the economy. The idea was to make sure hospitals could keep pace with the outbreak and protect the elderly and at-risk groups.

Sweden has succeeded at the former, but admitted failure at the latter, with more than three-quarters of virus deaths occurring



In this file photo, Danish police controls drivers from Sweden near the highway coming out of the tunnel to Sweden, in Copenhagen, Denmark. More than two months after the closure of its border, Denmark has loosened restrictions to allow lovers from the Nordics and Germany to reunite, but the application and legality of the practice has not really helped economy to recover. — AFP

among nursing home residents and those receiving care at home.

"When we have decided what measures to take to stop the virus from spreading, we have not had any economic considerations. We have followed the advice of our (public health) experts on this issue," Finance Minister Magdalena Andersson told reporters in late May. Still, authorities acknowledge that keeping businesses open was also part of a broader public health consideration, as high unemployment and a weak economy typically lead to poorer public health.

Sweden, a country of 10.3 million, had reported 4,639 COVID-19 deaths as of Friday. That gives it one of the world's highest virus mortality rates, with 459.3 deaths per million inhabitants—four times more than neighboring Denmark and 10 times more than Norway, which both imposed stricter confinement measures.

At first Sweden's export-heavy economy seemed to be doing okay, with GDP actually growing by 0.1 percent in the first quarter. But now the country is expected to follow the same path as most of Europe, with its economy shrinking for the full-year 2020 and unemployment soaring. — AFP

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WASHINGTON, DC: A Wells Fargo Bank near the White House is boarded up, after the unrest in downtown Washington, DC, in this file photo

cans have long proven a lifeline for America's black businesses.

The financial groups are based in the heart of urban centers and view banking as part of a larger activist mission that supports the black community by ensuring minorities can access needed capital. "If you go to another bank, you might see someone talking about a boat loan," said Teri Williams, president of OneUnited Bank, who said her company's programs are more tailored to the black community.

This includes "early pay" that allows consumers to get paid two days early. "We support Black Lives Matter, we support take a knee, so for us it's a mission to support our community and that's the service that we provide," she said.

Carver Federal Savings Bank, which has branches in working class areas in Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn, reinvests 80 percent of its deposits back in the community,

said Chief Executive Michael Pugh.

"It's an opportunity to help ensure that in neighborhood by neighborhood in our great state," people have access to finance, he said. "If we didn't do this work who would do it?"

The process of opening a savings account is similar to that at traditional banks, but the African American lending companies also offer some other services aimed at their clients, such as business coaching and financial training workshops.

Industrial Bank requires a business plan of small businesses and scrutinizes financial statements and doesn't always provide financing, said Chief Executive Doyle Mitchell. "If we can't make a loan we will tell you what we believe you need to work on to better prepare for," Mitchell said, adding that the bank aims to be competitive on interest rates for mortgages, not the lowest but "not the highest" either. — AFP

Fed to weigh unemployment, reopening

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve will meet next week for the first time since US states began easing shutdowns imposed to stop the coronavirus pandemic, unexpectedly boosting employment numbers after two months of massive layoffs.

The world's largest economy added 2.5 million jobs and the unemployment rate fell in May, according to the Labor Department, even as COVID-19 remains a threat to daily life. The Fed moved swiftly and aggressively as soon as the pandemic struck, even before businesses were shut down nationwide, as the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) slashed its key lending rate to zero in March.

The central bank also rolled out trillions of dollars in liquidity to support battered markets, and provide lending to large and medium businesses as well as state and local governments.

And Fed chair Jerome Powell has vowed to do more, if necessary. President Donald Trump who is counting on a solid economic recovery to boost his chances of winning a second term in November, cheered the better-than-expected job numbers.

But despite the unexpected good news the economy remains in trouble and BBVA's chief US economist Nathaniel Karp does not expect the FOMC to waver from its stance any time soon. "While there are some early signs that the worst part of the crisis has passed, we expect that the Fed will reaffirm its commitment to doing whatever it takes while also reflecting on how the committee is viewing the current crisis," he said.

The road ahead

The virus itself remains a real threat,

Pound pushes through \$1.27

LONDON: The pound rose above \$1.27 and was set for its biggest weekly gain against the dollar since the end of March on Friday, even though European Union and British negotiators said there had been little progress in Brexit trade talks.

Britain left the EU in January and there are just weeks left to extend a year-end deadline to reach a trade deal. A transition arrangement that keeps previous rules in place during talks expires at the end of 2020 unless both sides agree to extend it this month, which Britain has said it will not do.

"The market thinks there's still a better than 50 percent chance that we'll muddle through again," said Kit Juckes, FX analyst at Societe Generale, adding that the risk of not reaching a deal was a background worry for sterling. The pound, which has gained more than 3 cents in a week, rose as high as \$1.2705, its strongest since March 12.

Against the euro, which gained further after the European Central Bank's latest stimulus plan, the pound reached 89.04 pence, having retreated from the

90 level it briefly broke above late on Thursday.

The pound has gained 5 percent against the dollar since reaching a low of \$1.2075 in mid-May, but has been held back by Britain's high coronavirus death toll, Brexit-related risks, the prospect of negative interest rates and a growing debt pile.

It gained when the Bank of England's executive director for markets said that a negative interest rate would not be introduced in the near term.

"If the UK goes down the road of negative rates, it would be the first country with a negative current account deficit to do so, putting downward pressure on sterling," Deutsche Bank economist Sanjay Raja and macro strategist Oliver Harvey said in a note to clients. "This could see inflation jump at a time when the Bank is looking to shore up confidence and support the economy through the recovery," they added. The weakening dollar played a role in sterling's rise.

"The Federal Reserve is employing massive monetary expansion, and political tensions in the US cement that stance even further. Both have already contributed to a rebound in GBPUSD and will continue to do so," Thomas Flury, head of FX strategies, and Dean Turner, economist at UBS Global Wealth Management, said. — Reuters

African American banks vital for minorities in US

NEW YORK: When she needed capital to expand her business, Emisha Randolph was just one of countless African Americans to encounter roadblocks despite having no history of financial trouble.

About seven years ago, her catering company, Juanita's Kitchen, had secured a big government contract that guaranteed revenues for three years. To finance the expansion, she turned to banking giant Wells Fargo.

"I asked them for \$50,000 and when they denied it, I went down to \$25,000," she recalled in an interview. "I did not get that, either." Randolph turned to OneUnited, one of the leading African-American owned banks in the US that have supported minority-owned businesses over the decades.

With credit from OneUnited, Randolph transformed her Miami company into today's mini-food empire.

The Sweet Butter Hospitality Group includes the restaurant Shuckin & Jivin that now appears better positioned than many other restaurants and small businesses to survive the blow from the coronavirus.

"I am very very grateful for black-owned banks," Randolph said. "For so long we have been denied loans." As the political debate in the US shifts following mass protests in the wake of the killing of George Floyd at the hands of police, the focus is turning to systemic barriers to opportunity for African Americans, including in the banking system.

Larger mission

Banks led or owned by African Ameri-

Business

Air travel may take 2 to 3 years to return to 2019 levels: Boeing exec

Narrow-body airplanes will lead the way to recovery

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The air travel industry will come out of the present turbulence ignited by the coronavirus pandemic, but it might take two to three years for travel to return to 2019 levels and a few more years beyond that for the industry to return to long-term growth trends, said a top Boeing executive.

In remarks to Kuwait Times in an exclusive interview, Omar Arekat, Vice President of Boeing's Commercial Sales and Marketing for Middle East, Africa and Turkey, said the air travel industry has never seen anything like this. "Not just the Middle East - airlines around the world are assessing their businesses, making difficult decisions including those that result in grounding fleets, deferring airplane orders and postponing acceptance of completed orders," he said.

However, the fundamentals that have driven air travel through the past many decades and doubled air traffic over the past 20 years remain intact, he said. "The picture is dynamic and subject to many unknowns," Arekat said when asked if Boeing expects opportunities under the current circumstances for additional sales in the region and globally, at least in the short term.

Most of the Gulf countries are currently slashing their investments and spending in view of the budget constraints resulting from a sharp drop in oil prices coupled with the unpredictable economic fallout from COVID-19. The pandemic has taken a grievous toll



Omar Arekat

on the regional aviation industry, with many airlines grounding aircraft and slashing their workforces. Kuwait's flag carrier Kuwait Airways recently announced plans to lay off around 1,500 expat employees.

Way to recovery

"But as we see it today, narrow-body airplanes will lead the way to recovery, trailed by wide-body fleets as airlines progressively bring their networks back online. Therefore, wide-body passenger fleets will likely be more significantly impacted than narrow-body airplanes in the near term," he pointed out.

When asked about Boeing's short-term outlook, he said: "Our outlook is informed by decades of analyses and insights on customer behavior including how the industry reacted to prior market shocks." Boeing's position is helped by the value proposition of its family of airplanes and the diversity of its backlog, he explained. "This includes our market-leading 787 Dreamliner family, our unmatched cargo lineup, the world's largest and most efficient twin-engine jet, 777X, and the versatile 737 family," he said.



In this file photo, a Kuwait Airways Boeing B777 aircraft prepares to land at Kuwait International Airport in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Boeing recently announced its Confident Travel Initiative (CTI) where its team of experts will work to develop new solutions to help minimize air travel health risks amid the coronavirus pandemic and drive awareness of health safeguards already in place. "The CTI team will work with airlines, global regulators, industry stakeholders, flying passengers, infectious disease experts and behavioral specialists to establish

industry-recognized safety recommendations", said Arekat.

"Air travel is coming back and Boeing's goal is to provide a safe experience from curbside to the airplane and beyond for which common system-wide standards are key to a safe experience," he said quoting Mike Delaney, one of Boeing Commercial Airplanes' top ranking executives.



COVID-19 forces airlines to take hard decisions

Zynn brings China video app rivalry to US

BEIJING: Chinese short video app makers have taken their rivalry overseas, with TikTok facing stiff competition from a newcomer that has surged in popularity abroad—by paying users to keep scrolling.

Zynn, a product of China's number-two video app maker Kuaishou, launched in May and became the most popular free app in the US Apple App Store just a month later. With Zynn, Kuaishou is trying to dethrone TikTok, the app by its Beijing-based competitor ByteDance that has become a worldwide sensation.

Zynn's interface is a near-clone of TikTok, allowing users to view a continuous feed of short videos featuring other users dancing or performing stunts to upbeat music. But unlike TikTok, Zynn promises more than just entertainment.

Zynn, which is not available in China, rewards users in the US and Canada with cash when they invite friends to download the app—up to \$20 per invite, depending on how active the friend is on the app. Users also earn points for simply watching videos, which can then be converted into cash.

Zynn's model is familiar to users in China, where startups have thrown millions of yuan in gifts and cash at users in order to grab a larger share of the market than competitors offering nearly identical services. Nasdaq-listed news aggregator Qutoutiao was among the first apps to offer users cash rewards in what it calls "loyalty programmes" that "cost-effectively acquire new users".

"It requires people who are sensitive to small financial incentives of which there are plenty in China's vast inland rural areas," Shanghai-based mobile technology expert Matthew Brennan told AFP.

Kuaishou is taking a gamble in exporting its model to North America, where few apps have managed to build long-term audiences by paying people to use them.

Success will depend on whether the main attraction of the app is the money up for grabs, or whether payment is "merely a sec-



The Apple App Store download page for the app Zynn, a new Chinese owned video platform, in Washington, DC. — AFP

ondary 'side benefit' to using Zynn", Rui Ma, a tech advisor and host of the Tech Buzz China podcast, told AFP.

Most online reviews of Zynn are focused on the cash reward system, with reviewers either complaining about being unable to withdraw their winnings or grateful for the amounts they've made off the app.

'Money-making app'

Kuaishou has chosen a "smart" time for Zynn's debut, with many young people stuck at home because of COVID-19, and with the summer holidays approaching, said Man-Chung Cheung, an analyst at Insider Intelligence.

But in the long run, retaining users will depend on Zynn's "ability to attract top content creators, talent and brands to share videos", Cheung told AFP. Kuaishou will also have to contend with rising China-US tensions, which have already put rival TikTok and other Chinese tech companies under increased scrutiny from the US government.

US officials have warned that TikTok, which has denied any ties with the Chinese government, could become another tool exploited by Chinese intelligence services.

Zynn has sought to downplay its Chinese origins, with its website offering little information about its background and giving an

address in Palo Alto, California.

Zynn spokesman Rocky Zhang confirmed that Kuaishou is behind the upstart app. "Zynn is a product only for the US, and we launched Zynn for the US," he told AFP.

Zhang said Zynn plans to continue paying users in the long term, but will shift towards rewarding "content creators" in the future, while generating revenue through advertising.

Old rivals

A years-long rivalry between massive Chinese tech companies lies behind Kuaishou's new foray across the Pacific and into North America.

Kuaishou is backed by Tencent, the Chinese tech giant behind payment and social media app WeChat, which has long sought to expand its share of the short-video market. The Chinese short-video industry is expected to generate nearly 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion) in advertising revenue by 2021, according to Daxue Consulting.

Tencent has launched a number of short-video apps of its own, but none have reached the level of popularity enjoyed by Kuaishou and TikTok's Chinese version, Douyin. Kuaishou in February said it had reached 300 million daily active users, just behind Douyin, which said it hit 400 million users in January. — AFP

Bond investors look for Fed to back yield curve

NEW YORK: Expectations that the global economy has dodged the worst-case coronavirus pandemic scenarios have led to a dramatic sell-off in US government bonds from their record highs, pushing the yield curve to its steepest level since March.

Investors will get a chance next week to see whether the US Federal Reserve agrees with their optimism. The US central bank's two-day meeting, ending on Wednesday, will be the first since April when Fed Chair Jerome Powell said the US economy could feel the weight of the economic shutdown for more than a year.

The meeting will follow a surprise gain in the Labor Department's closely watched jobs report on Friday that pushed benchmark 10-year Treasury yields to the highest since early March.

"The sell-off in the bond market in the last few weeks seems to be justified," said Subadra Rajappa, head of US rates strategy at Societe Generale.

While the Fed could introduce additional bond-buying programs known as quantitative easing or yield-curve control measures to target short-term rates, fund managers say they expect yields will need to rise significantly to justify any intervention in the bulk of

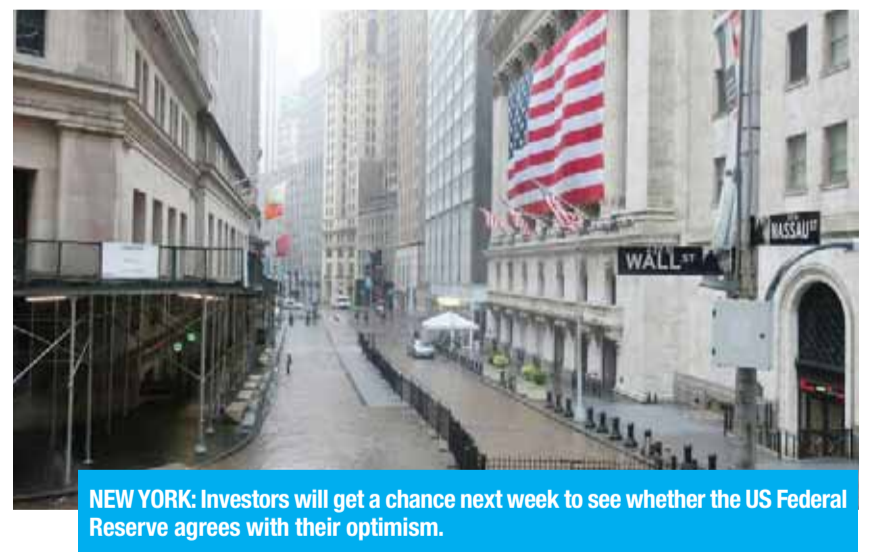
the curve. Instead, they are watching for hints that the central bank believes the worst part of the coronavirus crisis has passed. "They are really in this transition phase," said Eric Stein, co-director of global income and portfolio manager at Eaton Vance. "Markets are functioning, if not all the way back to pre-shock levels, with very strong debt issuance and market improvement, even though the real economy is incredibly weak."

As a result, Stein is looking for signs that the Fed believes the economic rebound can support the rise in yields. "The Fed will be OK with a slow creep higher, particularly with a backdrop of a recovery, but if it moves too much and destabilizes the recovery, there's a reason for concern," he said.

Ed Al-Hussainy, senior interest rate analyst at Columbia Threadneedle, expects the Fed to focus on its newly announced Main Street Lending Program to support small- and medium-sized businesses facing financial strain from the pandemic, rather than introducing significant new stimulus measures.

"The Fed is likely to communicate that there is more scope for fiscal measures but that is a very uncomfortable spot to be in," he said. "We won't have a clear sense of direction of the economy until well into the fourth quarter because all the sequential data now is massively positive."

The manufacturing ISM index rose to 43.1 in May from 41.5 in April, while weekly jobless claims fell to 1.877 million from 2.126 million the week before. — Reuters



NEW YORK: Investors will get a chance next week to see whether the US Federal Reserve agrees with their optimism.

Syrian pound plummets as sanctions loom

BEIRUT: Syria's pound hit record lows on the black market Saturday trading at over 2,300 to the dollar, less than a third of its official value, traders said, ahead of new US sanctions.

Three traders in Damascus told AFP by phone that the dollar bought more than 2,300 Syrian pounds for the first time, though the official exchange rate remained fixed at around 700 pounds to the greenback.

After nine years of war, Syria is in the thick of an economic crisis compounded by a coronavirus lockdown and a dollar liquidity crunch in neighbouring Lebanon.

Last month, the central bank warned it

would clamp down on currency "manipulators". Analysts said concerns over the June 17 implementation of the US Caesar Act, which aims to sanction foreign persons who assist the Syrian government or help in post-war reconstruction, also contributed to the de fact devaluation. Zaki Mehchy, a senior consulting fellow at Chatham House, said foreign companies—including from regime ally Russia—were already opting not to take any risks.

With money transactions requiring two to three weeks to implement, "today's transactions will be paid after June 17", he said. Heiko Wimmen, Syria project director at the conflict tracker Crisis Group, said that with the act coming into force, "doing business with Syria will become even more difficult and risky". Both analysts said the fall from grace of top business tycoon Rami Makhlouf despite being a cousin of the president was also affecting confidence.

"The Makhlouf saga is spooking the rich," Wimmen said.

After the Damascus government froze assets of the head of the country's largest mobile phone operator and slapped a travel ban on him, the wealthy feel "nobody is safe", he said. They are thinking "you better get your assets and perhaps yourself out preparing for further shakedowns", he said.

Mehchy said the impact of the pound's decline and ensuing price hikes on Syrians would be "catastrophic". Most of Syria's population lives in poverty, according to the United Nations, and food prices have doubled over the past year.

The UN food agency's Jessica Lawson said any further depreciation risked increasing the cost of imported basic food items such as rice, pasta and lentils.

"These price increases risk pushing even more people into hunger, poverty and food insecurity as Syrians' purchasing power continues to erode," the World Food Program spokeswoman said. "Families may be forced to cut the quality and quantity of food they buy." — AFP

Zimbabwe grain deficit to grow to 1.17m tons

HARARE: Zimbabwe's grain deficit is expected to widen to 1.17 million tons this year despite a small increase in production, the latest official crop report showed on Saturday, leaving the majority of the population facing food shortages.

The ministry of lands and agriculture said grain output would increase to 1,060,143 tons from 944,000 tons harvested last year. That is still below the

national requirement of 2.23 million tons, the report said. Last year, Zimbabwe had a grain shortfall of 700,000 tons, with stocks carried over from the 2018 season helping narrow the gap.

The World Food Programme is leading humanitarian efforts to feed millions of Zimbabweans and has warned of deepening climate- and recession-induced food shortages. The crop report said grain stocks in more than half of Zimbabwe's 60 rural districts would not last six months.

The coronavirus outbreak is seen inflicting more damage on Zimbabwe's economy, which is already grappling with the effects of a devastating drought in 2019 and erratic rains this year as well as a fiscal crisis. — Reuters

Researchers eye tech wearables as virus early warning system

WASHINGTON: Can your Fitbit or Apple Watch detect a coronavirus infection before the onset of symptoms? Researchers are increasingly looking at these devices and other such wearables as a possible early warning system for the deadly virus. Last month, scientists at the West Virginia University Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute said they had created a digital platform that can detect COVID-19 symptoms up to three days before they show up using the Oura ring, a wearable fitness and activity tracker.

An app developed by the researchers uses artificial intelligence to forecast the onset of COVID-19 related symptoms such as fever, coughing, breathing difficulties and fatigue, with over 90 percent accuracy, according to the university. The researchers said the system could offer clues of infection in people not yet showing symptoms – helping address one of the problems in detection and containment of the deadly outbreak.

Separately, Scripps Research Institute has enrolled more than 30,000 people – and aims for much more – in a similar study aiming to use wearables to find “presymptomatic” and asymptomatic people with COVID-19. Scripps researchers had already previously demonstrated the value of wearables in predicting influenza in a study published in January in the British journal The Lancet. Early indications suggest the devices “have the potential to identify people who are presymptomatic but still infectious,” said Jennifer Radin, a Scripps epidemiologist leading the research.

Volunteers being sought

Radin told an online conference discussing the research that wearables are detecting “subtle changes that indicate you are coming down with a viral illness” before the onset of symptoms. Scripps researchers say they hope to show that wearables data may be more reliable than temperature checks.

“Forty percent of people who come down with COVID don’t have a fever,” Radin said. “This is something that can be used to screen people that’s better than a temperature check.”

Resting heart rate, for example, is a good indicator because it is normally consistent before an infection, and can be accurately measured by most wearables. “We see these changes (in heart rate) four days before someone starts to develop a fever,” Radin said.

Eric Topol, director of the Scripps institute, said the idea of using wearables is promising because “over 100 million Americans have a smart watch or fitness band” which can provide key data for researchers, but that getting good results “is contingent on getting large numbers” to opt into the studies.

California health tech startup Evidation meanwhile has begun a project to produce an early warning algorithm from wearables worn by 300 people at high risk of contracting coronavirus, with funding from the US government and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Luca Foschini, Evidation’s co-founder and chief data scientist, said the research aims “to more effectively identify when and where people may contract COVID-19, and can potentially enable real-time interventions to limit spread and monitor outcomes.” A similar research effort is underway in Germany.

From recreation to medicine

The latest research highlights how some wearable devices – developed initially for fitness and recreation uses – may be adapted for important medical research. Apple has begun studies on how its smart-watch can detect heart problems. And Fitbit has been working with some 500 different projects for research on cancer, diabetes, respiratory and other health issues.

Scientists say wearables can provide data on body



MARICA, Brazil: A nurse works at the intensive care unit ward where patients infected with the novel coronavirus are being treated at the Doctor Ernesto Che Guevara Public Hospital on June 5, 2020. — AFP

temperature, heart and respiratory rates, sleep and activity patterns and other indicators which can be used as diagnostic tools. Researchers from Stanford University announced plans in April to participate in research on wearables, in collaboration with Scripps, for COVID-19 and other diseases.

“Smartwatches and other wearables make many, many measurements per day – at least 250,000, which is what makes them such powerful monitoring

devices,” said Michael Snyder, chair of genetics at Stanford School of Medicine. Snyder said these devices may alert users when their heart rate, skin temperature or some other part of their physiology signals of infection or another ailment.

“You might wonder, ‘Are these sniffles allergies, or am I getting sick?’ These algorithms could help people determine if they should stay home in case their body is fighting off an infection,” Snyder said. — AFP

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Lifestyle | Gossip

Aston Merrygold has become a father for a second time



The JLS singer and his wife Sarah Louise Richards welcomed a son, Macaulay Shay, into the world on Friday. He wrote on Instagram: "Welcome to the world baby boy ... Macaulay Shay Merrygold ... 12:52pm 5/6/2020 (sic)" Whilst Sarah shared the same image and a matching caption, announcing the couple's happy news. His bandmates - Oritsé Williams, Marvin Humes and JB Gill - were quick to offer their congratulations. Commenting on Aston's post, Oritsé wrote: "Little boy born to an incredible father, an incredible mother @sarahlourichards and an incredible big

brother in @graysonjxmerrygold ... so so happy for you all bro xxxx (sic)" Whilst JB shared: "The most beautiful news ... so proud of you @sarahlourichards and so happy for all three of you @astommerrygold @graysonjxmerrygold ... enjoy these incredibly special moments!! Lots of love from #TheGills (sic)" Marvin wrote online: "The family is getting bigger ... congrats @astommerrygold and @sarahlourichards .. love you guys (sic)" Meanwhile, Aston - who also has Grayson Jax, two, with dancer Sarah - previously revealed he only wants two children. Sarah said: "As soon as Aston found out

[I was pregnant], he was like, 'Let's do this, but that's it!'" Whilst Aston added: "Honestly, I had always said that I was never really interested in marriage and kids." Before meeting Sarah, I just wasn't bothered and I was younger. But our relationship built and I thought, 'Yeah this is the forever one.' I was always happy with one kid, but at the same time, I can still carry two, so it's perfect." Aston and Sarah got engaged in 2017.

Field will have to 'discuss' Williams' past with their kids

Ayda Field will have to "discuss" Robbie Williams' past with their four children. The 'Loose Women' presenter knows she will have to talk to her kids - Theodora, seven, Charlton, five, Colette, 20 months, and Beau, four months - about the 'Let Me Entertain You' singer's past, including his drug addiction and past dating habits. She said: "We'll just point and shout, call him a bad man and move on. Teddy on a few occasions has seen Robbie in an old video and says, 'Mum, did he date anyone before you?' I have to say, 'Yes, Teddy he did.'" She's so clued up. She has no idea how promiscuous their daddy was before me. But we are going to have to discuss Daddy's past, Daddy's drugs, Daddy's dating. I'm obviously going to be the angel in comparison, that's fine by me." And the 41-year-old actress says her four kids are all "four different images" of Robbie. She added: "All of my children are the spitting image of Robbie. Charlie has the same face, it's bizarre. I don't understand why I have such weak genes. I

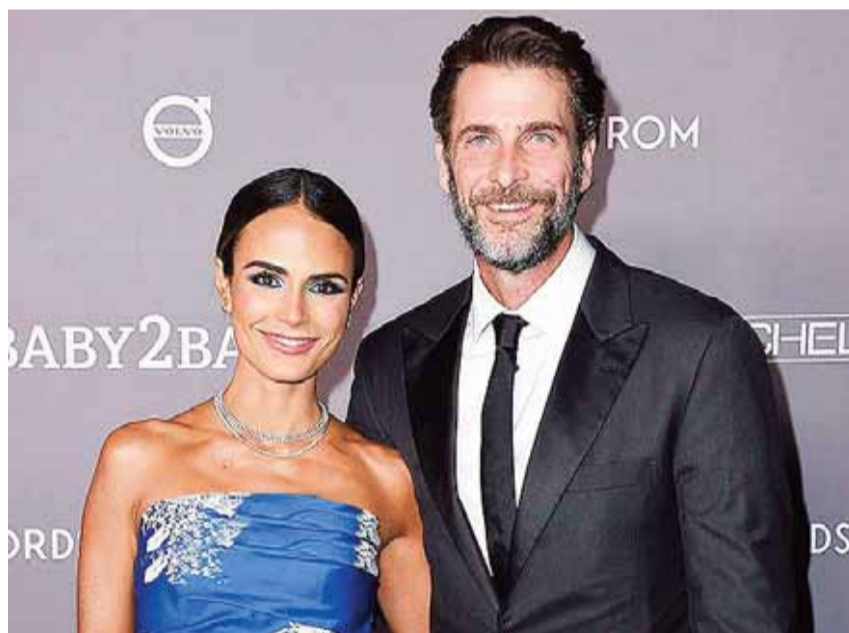
was convinced they would look like me because I'm Turkish. But they're four different images of Robbie. There's solo-career Robbie, Take That Robbie, early-years Robbie and late-years Robbie. The only one characteristic from my side is our little baby Beau, who has a dimple on his chin like my dad did. They're really funny, cheeky kids. Expression-filled, talkative and enchanting. They explode with personality." Ayda and Robbie don't want to do a reality show as they want their children to make their own decisions about being in the spotlight. She told The Sun newspaper: "I would never say never to it and it's been brought up to us before. But right now our privacy and protecting the kids is important to us. So it's not on the deck yet. The kids are not even old enough to know what the ramifications of that might be. It would be unfair to make that choice for them and there's a lot of adult things that come with exposure. You have to take all that on, the good and the bad. I don't want to put them in that position."



Reese Witherspoon feels 'a responsibility' to make 'impactful' work

The 'Little Fires Everywhere' star knows it is important for her to use her voice to speak out for women and share their stories. She said: "I'm definitely at that place in my life. I remember being a young actress and not knowing the kind of stories I wanted to tell. I was a little bit lost, but now I feel very, very clear about the deficit of storytelling for women - all women - and how we're making up for lost time. There's hundreds of years of lost stories, because we weren't the storytellers. I do feel a responsibility to make impactful work." And Reese felt lucky to work as a producer on the television series as she felt such a "tremendous responsibility" towards everyone. She added: "It was a big production with a big cast, so there was an enormous amount of responsibility. And that's why I felt very lucky to share it with Kerry Washington - there's a tremendous responsibility to the studio and to the network that you are spending your money responsibly, that you're on time and on budget. Those are things that we take very seriously and we spend a lot of time making decisions on pivoting on those decisions quickly when we have to." 'Little Fires Everywhere' focuses on all aspects of motherhood, something which Reese was pleased to bring to the forefront of people's minds. She told inews.co.uk: "I think we just haven't had an opportunity. All our storytellers haven't been able to authentically speak about motherhood in the way female creators like myself and Kerry can." It opens up the opportunity to explore the nuance of motherhood in a way that makes it an exploration, rather than an assassination."

Jordana Brewster and Andrew Form have quietly split



The 'Fast and Furious' hitmaker split from her husband earlier this year after nearly 13 years of marriage, but the end of their romance was very "amicable" and they will continue to co-parent their children - Rowan, three, and Julian, six. A source told People magazine: "They quietly separated. It was amicable. They have the utmost respect for each other. They remain committed to lovingly co-parent their two children as a team." Meanwhile, the 40-year-old actress previously opened up about being a mother as she admits she is "pretty neurotic". She said: "But being a mom, in general, is not easy, obviously. I thought I would be a chill supermom, but I'm not - I'm pretty neurotic. Having kids really kicked up my anxiety and made things like meditation that much more important for me. And kids really are mirrors back to you! My son Julian is a lot like

me. He'll see the negative in something or he will always question things. "He's really smart, so he keeps me on my toes. There are certain things I have to do now, like going on set, that I wouldn't have thought twice about back in the day. I'll make my boys calendars and say, 'This is when mommy is coming back. This is what your schedule is. This is what we'll do then.' That helps with all of our anxiety. I strive really hard to be a good mom and not take it too far where I'm being crazy-neurotic. What helps me the most is talking to my friends who have similar issues and are going through similar things. The only bummer is that I don't have that many actor friends who are moms, and I need some more of that in my life because it's just such a unique position to be in."



Eve 'trashed' by activists over 'difficult conversations' with her husband

Eve was "trashed" by activists who questioned her comments about having "difficult conversations" with her husband amidst the Black Lives Matter movement. The 41-year-old rapper admitted she had tough chats with her husband Maximillion Cooper as he tries to "understand" how she feels and asks questions to educate himself, following the murder of an unarmed black man, George Floyd. Speaking in a preview clip from The Talk@Home, she said: "I got some backlash just recently when I spoke out about myself. Me being in an interracial relationship and saying that 'I'm having some of the most difficult conversations that we've ever had.'" And some people lit up the comments and trashed me and were questioning whether this was the first time I had had these conversations. And I want to be very clear. We have had many conversations because I've been in this relationship for many years. When you enter an interracial relationship, there

are conversations you must have - that's just natural. So this is not the first one. I've been having some of the most difficult conversations because we are in one of the most difficult places in our nation, in our world, in this time, so that's why I said that it was difficult." Eve had previously admitted she was having "the most difficult and uncomfortable conversations" with her husband. She said: "I am having some of the most difficult and uncomfortable conversations I think I've ever had, and vice versa with my husband. But, at the same time, it's a beautiful thing, because ... I don't know his life through his eyes. He doesn't know my life through my eyes. All he can do is try to understand and try to ask the questions, and he wants to understand, and that's what the nation - that's what the world - has to do. It's gonna be uncomfortable. Yeah, it's going to be uncomfortable! But we have to be OK with being uncomfortable so that we can get to a solution."



John Legend still wants to share that joy

John Legend thinks it is important to "share that joy" despite the Black Lives Matter movement. The 'All of Me' hitmaker feels people should still look forward with positivity despite the current uproar across the United States over the death of an unarmed black man, George Floyd. Speaking on ATX TV ... from the Couch, he said: "We still have our sense of humour. We still think there's a lot in the world to talk about and make fun of and there's a lot of joy we can share with other people and I think it's important to continue to share that joy, that laughter with intelligence and with an eye to what's going on in the world, but people still need to laugh and enjoy themselves. I think it's important that we show the fullness of what it is to be black and human. Through our art, we are able to that." Meanwhile, John previously revealed he wants to help "spread some love" amid the coronavirus pandemic. He said: "Well, it's an interesting time for musicians. So much of what we do requires other people being around, and as much as we want to connect to people it's not as easy to do it this way as it would be otherwise, but we're trying to make the most of it and we've been trying to help people get through this time by giving them some music, some inspiration, spreading some love." We're just hoping everybody stays safe and stays healthy, and we all get through this, and then we can go back to getting together for concerts and doing all the things that we love doing with our audiences." —Bang Showbiz



Queen Elizabeth's corgis had their own food menu

Darren McGrady, who worked as a chef for Buckingham Palace for 15 years, has revealed the British monarch's pooches were treated like royalty themselves and he would regularly make meals for them, too. Speaking in a YouTube video, Darren said: "I didn't expect to be cooking for the Queen's dogs, when I started working at Buckingham Palace. I thought I was going to be cooking for kings, queens and presidents. I did eventually, but one of the first jobs I had was cooking for the corgis - the Royal Corgis - making fresh food every day. The corgis had their own menu. They sleep in like little wicker baskets in the corgi room and looked after by two footmen called Doggie 1 and Doggie 2, that's what they called them. The most important part of the meat was everything had to be cut into a fine dice ... to be sure there were no bones at all in the meat. Imagine if any of the dogs were to

choke on the - I'd be in real trouble." In October 2018, it was revealed Queen Elizabeth's last corgi passed away, leaving her with her two dorgis - dachshund and corgi crosses - called Candy and Vulcan. A source said at the time: "Whisper was a friendly chap and followed her everywhere. The Queen was quickly become very attached to the dog. The Fenwicks looked after their corgis like the Queen did so she knew there would be no problem if Whisper came to the Palace. When the dog was born it was named Wispa after the chocolate bar. The Queen thought it was a bit obscure and preferred the proper spelling." Whisper was gifted to the Queen two years ago, following the passing of Bill Fenwick, a former Sandringham gamekeeper, and the monarch took the pooch on as her own. Fenwick's late wife Nancy used to look after the Queen's corgis when she was away on royal duties.



Grand Theft Auto: finger flexes keep 90-year-old gamer console-ready

Every day, 90-year-old Japanese grandma Hamako Mori flexes her fingers to keep them nimble. Not for knitting or needlepoint, but to keep them in shape for playing video games. The pensioner known as "Gamer Grandma" spends three or more hours a day battling monsters and going on missions in the virtual worlds of her favourite games, and even has a popular YouTube channel for her fans. "I'm passionate about playing games every day," the white-haired widow told AFP in an interview conducted by videochat. "Every day is an enjoyable day," she said, describing eviscerating on-screen foes as a fantastic stress reliever. Mori cuts an elegant, mild-mannered figure, with her hair pulled back into a ponytail and a pair of large glasses perched on her nose.

She begins the videos she posts on her YouTube channel with a friendly "Konichiwa" and a bow. But her grandmotherly demeanour disappears when she plays, transformed into a gun-toting character in Call of Duty or a sword-wielding android in NieR: Automata. Mori, who lives in Chiba, southeast of Tokyo with her family, holds a Guinness World Record certifying her as the world's oldest gaming YouTuber. "She always gets into the games," her only grandchild, 43-year-old Keisuke Nagao,

told AFP. "I think she is slightly different. Ordinary old people are not so enthusiastic about video games as she is."

300,000 YouTube fans

Mori isn't new to the gaming world, and has played some 200 titles since she took up the hobby some four decades ago. Her first console was a Cassette Vision, which she bought in 1981 after being intrigued by her children's obsession with gaming. "I discovered that there was this fascinating thing that existed in the world," she said. She has played most of the gaming world's smash hits including "Super Mario Brothers", "Dragon Quest", "Final Fantasy" and "Call of Duty", and admits to sometimes staying up until 2am when she is sucked into a session. Her favourite games include action-adventure series "Grand Theft Auto" and popular fantasy role-playing game "Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim". "You can do whatever you want to" in a game, she said, describing them as a "motivation in life."

Mori usually plays alone at home, but launched a YouTube channel in 2014 to connect with other gamers. She posts new videos filmed by her grandson three or four times a month and has attracted 300,000 subscribers and millions of views with content featuring her gaming



This handout photo shows 90-Year-old Hamako Mori, dubbed Japan's "Gamer Grandma", holding a video game controller in Matsudo, Chiba prefecture.—AFP

but also showing her daily life. "It's fun being watched by a lot of people, rather than playing alone," she said of her "Gamer Grandma" channel. Among her videos is one showing her blowing out candles on a cake to celebrate her 90th

birthday with her family. Another features her "unboxing" a brand-new PlayStation console. At 90, Mori is fighting fit, but she says some state-of-the-art games require agile hand motions that can prove challenging. "It's getting hard. It really is,"

she said, describing exercises she does with her fingers and hands every day to keep herself game-ready.

'Better than doing nothing!'

But she has no intention of giving up gaming. "I won't put it down just because it's difficult... It's better than doing nothing!" And she hopes with practice she can improve further. "I want to play well no matter how old I am," she said. "I want to continue as long as possible." Mori is something of an evangelist for video games, and encourages other older people to get into gaming, or find other hobbies that keep them going. "It doesn't have to be video games necessarily. But it's good to do something," said Mori, who swam regularly until the age of 80 and still knits.

And while Mori said she understands concerns about video game addiction, particularly among young people, she pointed out that gaming may have helped many survive lockdowns over the coronavirus. "It's safer to play at home, rather than going out," she said. For now, Mori is eagerly awaiting the release of the PlayStation 5, due to hit shops later this year. "It's seriously preoccupying me," she said. "I want one. I really do."—AFP

CPS: It was 'right' to prosecute Caroline Flack

Caroline Flack was "right" to be prosecuted, after it was claimed she was facing a "show trial" before her death. The 'Love Island' television presenter tragically took her own life earlier this year, after finding out the Crown Prosecution Service was going to pursue a trial, which saw her charged with assault by beating following an alleged fight at her home in December with Lewis Burton, which she plead not guilty to. And now Ed Beltrami, Chief Prosecutor of London North, has defended his decision to continue to prosecute Caroline. He said: "You've got to do what you think is right. You cannot do what you think is popular ... You don't just fold at the first sign of trouble. The fact the victim doesn't want to know ... you've got to look at whether you can prosecute without the support of the victim. Domestic abuse is a separate category by itself - [with a] high risk of the offending escalating. The guy phoned the police, he was terrified he

was going to be killed. He's been hit over the head with a lamp, he's got a cut to his head, and she's made an admission to the police at the scene. In the principles of domestic abuse you say, 'I'm going to proceed without the victim because I've got the admission, I've got the complaint from the victim which I'll try to get in, I've got the evidence of the cut to the head and the mess in the flat which has been filmed by the police.'" And Beltrami insists he had no idea Caroline would decide to tragically take her own life. He added to Wales on Sunday: "But obviously when you make that decision to proceed with the case you have absolutely no idea the defendant is going to take her own life. You can't possibly anticipate that sort of thing."



Aniston donates \$1m to fight racism

Jennifer Aniston has donated \$1 million to fight racism amidst the Black Lives Matter movement. The 'Friends' star has donated to Color Of Change to help support the movement after the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A source told the Sunday Mirror newspaper: "Like most people, Jen has been deeply affected by what is going on in America and the terrible injustice that people of colour experience every day. She wanted to show her support, and has donated a big sum to the charity she felt resonated with her the most. The link is on her Instagram page so her fans can also donate." Jennifer previously admitted the week had been "heartbreaking" as she spoke out about racism and justice. Calling for people to donate to charities to support communities experiencing racism, she wrote on her Instagram page: "This week has been heartbreaking for so many reasons. We need to acknowledge that the racism and brutality in this country has been going on for a long time - and it's NEVER been okay. As allies, who want equality and peace, it's our responsibility to make noise, to demand justice, to educate ourselves on these issues, and more than anything, to spread love. How much more time are we willing to let pass without change? HOW MUCH MORE TIME? (sic)" Jennifer also shared a black square on her Instagram account earlier this week to coincide with Blackout Tuesday. She captioned it: "Black lives matter. #blackouttuesday (sic)"



David Beckham to launch his own cooking show

David Beckham is reportedly in talks to launch his own cooking show. The 45-year-old star has held discussions with the BBC and Netflix about the prospect of creating a cooking show - which would be developed by his company Studio 99 - having furthered his culinary skills during lockdown with the help of his daughter Harper, eight. A source told The Sun on Sunday newspaper: "One of the unintended benefits of lockdown for David has been the opportunity to do what he loves most - baking. 'He's been recreating some of his mum's old recipes, and got a load of pots and pans for his birthday recently.'" The retired soccer star - who is married to designer Victoria Beckham - has already taken advice from his showbiz pal Gordon Ramsay about the proposed project. On the other hand, broadcasters are said to be keen to work with more sportspeople following the success of the

basketball documentary 'The Last Dance', which has been a huge hit on Netflix. The insider explained: "David's also used this time to really focus on Studio 99, and initially chatted to Gordon about the pair doing an Instagram Live. 'He's seen how well Gordon has done with his own cookery shows and his Studio Ramsay production company, and Gordon's given him some great advice. 'Series like 'The Last Dance' on Netflix - about basketball player Michael Jordan - have made networks including the BBC keen to talk to sportspeople. 'The appetite is there for someone like David. Plus he comes with a huge social media presence which, in this day and age, is basically free advertising.'" Studio 99 was originally created to produce documentaries, shows and other formats, and David is already committed to star in some of the projects that are currently in development.



Rose McGowan has finally found peace in her life

The 'Charmed' star was one of the first women to accuse Harvey Weinstein of sexual assault when she alleged in 2017 that he had raped her in 1997, and after the disgraced movie mogul was found guilty of third-degree rape and a first-degree criminal sexual act earlier this year, she's hugely relieved to know he can't "hurt" her anymore. She told OK! magazine: "The feeling of peace has come. This person can't hurt me anymore. He was a one-man wrecking crew. He destroyed so many lives. 'Thank God the jury saw through that old fashioned slut-shaming. 'After he was found guilty, he said, 'I can't believe this happened in America.' It was the first time I ever agreed with him." Rose was in "utter shock" when the guilty verdict came through because she expected the producer to walk away. Asked how she felt about the verdict, she said: "I was in utter shock. The cases they tried in Manhattan were the weakest cases they had I think Harvey thought he was going to get off because of that. That's why he was sleeping through testimony. 'One of his core victims was having a full breakdown and he slept through it.'" The 46-year-old actress has previously spoken of her belief that people were being paid to "terrorise" her and she's admitted the pressure got so bad, she fled to a

retirement complex, where she had a "nervous breakdown. She said: "A year and a half ago, people were being paid to drive me insane and terrorise me and plant drugs. 'It was like I had spies following me, recording my life secretly. I had all this crazy pressure. I cracked at one point, after someone was hired to terrorise me at a book signing. 'I hid at a retirement community in Florida, among a bunch of senior citizens, and I had a nervous breakdown there. 'I learned that you can survive your brain breaking and you can put it back together. What I have now is a peace that can't be bought - and I didn't have that before. Ever."



Lisa Kudrow's son is 'not a fan' of her work

The former 'Friends' star - who has 22-year-old Julian with husband Michel Stern - doesn't often talk about her work with Julian and is happy to keep it that way, as she wants their relationship to be purely familial. Asked what Julian makes of the 'Friends' phenomenon, she said: "We don't talk about it a lot. He's been thrilled about certain things I've done but he's not a fan of mine and I don't want him to be. I want him to be my son. He should hold me accountable for parental things." Lisa thinks she and Michael "lucked out" in parenthood because Julian is "so great". She told OK! magazine: "He's unbelievably great. We lucked out. I try to advise him about girls and then I realise I probably don't know what I'm talking about. 'The 'Space Force' actress has found one "sad thing" about parenthood is she stopped finding certain TV shows and films funny. She said: "Motherhood changed everything. I remember thinking, 'Nothing else is ever going to be as important as this. I get it.'" The sad thing is, a lot of things stopped being funny. There are a lot of movies and TV shows I can't watch any more. 'I can't watch children getting hurt or doctor shows. 'Motherhood changed my sensitivity. But I loved 'The Crown'. I went through that

real fast." Meanwhile, Lisa is having a great time isolating at home amid the coronavirus pandemic. She said: "I talk to my dad about it a lot. He's like, 'I'm loving this isolation. How can anyone be bored?' I'm with my dad on this one. There's so much to do, so much to read, so much to watch. I potter around and keep moving and exercising then I do the cleaning and the day goes so quickly."—Bang Showbiz



Libya govt moves on Sirte; Haftar offensive collapses

CAIRO: Libya's internationally recognized government attempted new advances on Saturday against the forces of retreating eastern commander Khalifa Haftar, who stood by in Cairo as his ally, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, proposed a ceasefire. Forces of the Turkish-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) advanced into the central coastal city of Sirte, they and residents said, though eastern forces said they had driven them back.

In a series of rapid victories, the GNA has, with Turkish support, suddenly brought most of northwest Libya back under its control, dashing Haftar's bid to unite the country by force with help from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Russia. Two oil engineers in south Libya told Reuters that production at the Sharara field was also gradually restarting after having been shut down in January by eastern-based forces. It could help revive GNA finances after months of almost no revenues.

"The air force has carried out five strikes in the outskirts of Sirte," slain dictator Muammar Gaddafi's hometown and the last major settlement before the traditional boundary between Libya's west and east, GNA spokesman Mohamad Gnonou said. "Orders have been given to our forces to begin their advance and to systematically attack all rebel positions," he added.

Sirte was taken by Haftar's forces virtually without a fight in January after one of Libya's myriad local militias switched sides. Beyond Sirte lies the prize of Libya's main oil export ports, Haftar's most important strategic asset. Some 450 km east of Tripoli, the town was where Gaddafi put up his last stand against NATO-backed rebel forces in 2011.

Appearing at a news conference in Cairo alongside Sisi, Haftar agreed to a new political initiative that analysts say could dilute his power in his eastern home territory and may demonstrate the impatience of his foreign backers. The GNA seemed poised to reject Egypt's proposals, which included a ceasefire from today and a longer-term peace plan, but its war with Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) in the east still seems far from over.

Both sides' foreign backers may be unwilling to curtail efforts to expand their regional ambitions. The LNA still controls the east as well as most of Libya's oil fields in the south. Libya has had no stable central authority since dictator Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown by NATO-backed rebels in 2011 and has been split since 2014 between rival administrations in east and west.

Speaking alongside Haftar and Aguila Saleh, the head of the eastern Libyan parliament, Sisi proposed a plan that includes



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (center), Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar (right) and Libyan Parliament Speaker Aguila Saleh arrive for a joint press conference on Saturday. — AFP

talks in Geneva, the election of a leadership council, the disbanding of militias and the exit of all foreign fighters from Libya. In brief comments, Haftar said he hoped Sisi could make "urgent and effective efforts to compel Turkey to completely stop the transfer of weapons and mercenaries to Libya". The UAE was quick to state its support for Saturday's declaration.

But Khaled Al-Meshri, head of the GNA-aligned legislative assembly, said Libyans had no need for new initiatives and rejected Haftar's attempt to return to nego-

tiations after military defeat, according to Al Jazeera. GNA forces' spokesman also appeared to pour cold water on the Egyptian proposals, which included a demand that militias disband and hand over their weaponry to Haftar's men.

"We didn't start this war, but we will choose the time and place when it ends," Gnonou said. He issued a "final call" for Sirte's local leaders to abandon Haftar and spare the Mediterranean coastal city "the horrors of war". "Our forces continue to advance with force and resolve, chasing

the fleeing (Haftar) militias," he said.

Wolfram Lacher of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs said the Egyptian plan was aimed at "cutting Haftar down to size" by expanding Saleh's role. Haftar is a deeply divisive figure whose latest offensive has upended a UN-led peace process. It is unclear how much traction any initiative proposed by him or his allies can gain.

Numerous attempts to establish truces and a return to negotiations have foundered, though the United Nations has started holding separate ceasefire talks with both sides. Egyptian-led efforts to unify Libya's military have also stalled in the past over Haftar's demand to be supreme commander, diplomats say.

Since Thursday, the LNA has lost its last footholds in Tripoli and its most important northwestern stronghold, the town of Tarhouna. On Saturday morning, GNA forces continued their advance as the LNA retreated from Al-Washka, west of Sirte. GNA forces are likely to keep going until they meet resistance, said Tarek Megerisi, a Libya analyst at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "Right now, military voices are ascendant and supported by a fear that Haftar and the UAE will exploit any truce to consolidate and launch counter-attacks," he said. — Agencies

OPEC, Russia to extend cuts...

Continued from Page 1

extension of cuts. "I applaud OPEC-plus for reaching an important agreement today which comes at a pivotal time as oil demand continues to recover and economies reopen around the world," he said in a tweet.

Analysts had expected the May-June cuts to be extended by at least another month, if not longer. Although more countries around the world are

gradually moving out of lockdown, crude consumption has not returned to pre-confinement levels, which were already comparatively low.

"Today's deal is a positive development and, unless a second COVID-19 wave hits the world, it will be the backbone of a quick recovery for the energy industry," Bjornar Tonhaugen of Rystad Energy said, referring to a feared fresh wave of new coronavirus infections. "The 9.7 million bpd production cuts were already working, extending them an extra month will tighten (the) market more quickly," Ann-Louise Hittle of Wood Mackenzie said. A bone of contention ahead of the meeting had been the willingness of each country to abide by the agreed production quotas. According to data intelligence company Kpler, OPEC+ reduced output by

around 8.6 mbpd in May, less than planned, with Iraq and Nigeria seen as the most resistant. OPEC said all meeting participants agreed Saturday that countries that failed to comply fully so far were willing to make up for it in July, August and September.

Nevertheless, it was precisely that earlier failure that led Mexico on Saturday to refuse to extend its cuts. "There are other countries that extended the cuts to July. We told them no, that we are maintaining the agreement signed in April. There is no problem," Mexico's Energy Minister Rocio Nahle told reporters during a visit to a petrochemical plant in Veracruz state. She said Mexico "fully respected" the original agreement, under which it agreed to cut production by 100,000 barrels a day in May and

June, but other countries "did not respect it," without specifying which ones.

Despite the difficulties, the output cuts have helped support oil prices, which rose to around \$40 per barrel at the start of June for both the US benchmark, West Texas Intermediate (WTI), and Europe's Brent North Sea contracts. Both had slumped to historic lows in April, with Brent falling as low as \$15 and WTI briefly entering negative territory.

The April deal was signed after days of wrangling between major players, whose revenues have been ravaged by the collapsing oil market this year. The next meeting of OPEC and its allies has been scheduled for December 1 in Vienna, where the organization is based. — AFP

World rallies against George...

Continued from Page 1

Helicopters circled overhead as some protesters danced — but the pain which drove many in to the streets was never far below the surface, as others yelled "This ain't no party!" Military personnel as well as police watched over the gathering. But there appeared to be fewer than on previous days, and some gave the protesters small smiles and waves as they marched by.

On the National Mall, fencing and uniformed guards blocked protesters from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr famously delivered his "I have a dream" speech in 1963. The protests were ignited by videos of a police officer kneeling on Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes as he pleaded for his life — the latest unarmed black person to be killed by white law enforcement officers. The officer, Derek Chauvin, has been charged with second-degree murder.

The rage since Floyd's death in Minneapolis on May 25 has exploded into the most serious civil unrest in America since King was assassinated in 1968. Peaceful protests swelled Saturday in other US cities. Tens of thousands rallied across New York City and Philadelphia, Chicago shut down the city's Lake Shore Drive to facilitate protests, and demonstrators marched in Los Angeles. In San Francisco, thousands marched across the Golden Gate Bridge, briefly stopping traffic as they spilled into the driving lanes.

But the demonstrations in Washington were the biggest since protests began in Minneapolis before spreading across the country and then abroad. "Today, the pain is so raw it can be hard to keep faith," tweeted Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden. A remembrance for Floyd was held Saturday in North Carolina, the state where he was born, following a memorial service in Minneapolis on Thursday.

Hundreds waited to view his coffin, some holding umbrellas against the hot sun. Some sobbed and many held cell phones high as a hearse arrived with the casket. Floyd's sisters LaTonya and Zsa-Zsa told reporters they would not go inside. "I can't go in, see him laying in a coffin, it would drive me crazy forever," said LaTonya through tears.

She expressed her pain at watching the footage of her brother's agonizing death. "Every time I look up I see him on the ground, face up, neck down, hollering please help me," she said, adding she wished the video could be taken down. "I'll never hear his voice, I'll never hear his laughter, I'll never tell him again that I love him and likewise he'd tell me the same," said Zsa-Zsa.

Around the world, protesters echoed the rage of American demonstrators. "It is time to burn down institutional racism," one speaker shouted through a megaphone at a hooting crowd of thousands outside the parliament building in London. "Silence is violence," the throng shouted back in the rain, before mounted police moved in to disperse a small missile-pelting crowd trying to push its way closer to Downing Street. Thousands more marched in the northern English city of Manchester.

Officials around the world have been trying to balance understanding at people's pent-up anger with warnings about the dangers of a disease that has officially claimed nearly 400,000 lives globally. Yet tens of thousands of Australians defied Prime

Minister Scott Morrison's call to "find a better way", tens of thousands marched in France, and thousands more in Britain ignored the health minister's warning. And in Tunis, hundreds chanted: "We want justice! We want to breathe!"

In Sydney, aborigines performed a traditional smoking ceremony at the start of a "Black Lives Matter" protest, which was allowed at the last minute after initially being banned on health grounds. Many held up signs and wore face masks marked with the words "I can't breathe" — the words Floyd kept saying while handcuffed as a policeman knelt on his neck. One placard simply read "8:46" — the amount of time the 46-year-old was pinned to the ground by the white officer before his death.

In Paris, riot police held back a crowd of several thousand who gathered outside the US embassy for an unsanctioned protest. "I've had racist abuse all my life," said one demonstrator, 46-year-old Nadine. "That is our life. To be a black French woman in France, it's not easy." A protest in the French city of Metz ended with a few dozen people breaking into a courthouse and scuffling with security guards and one of the city's prosecutors. "Protesters held up placards reading "Being black is not a crime" and "Our police are assassins".

Smaller, youth-driven protests were staged outside US embassies in Warsaw and Sofia. In Germany, Bundesliga footballers warmed up in "Red card to racism #BlackLivesMatter" shirts and took a knee prior to kickoff. "How many more?" asked a poster held up in a crowd of thousands in Frankfurt, while hundreds rallied across town squares of Belgium and the Netherlands.

The protests have even resonated in war-scarred countries such as Iraq, where the "America Revolts" and the Arabic phrase for "We want to breathe, too" hashtags are spreading on social media. "I think what the Americans are doing is brave and they should be angry, but rioting is not the solution," said Yassin Alaa, a 20-year-old camped out in Baghdad's Tahrir Square, the site of months of anti-government protests. Back in Washington, many black protesters hailed the multiracial, multiethnic nature of the demonstrations, calling the change "invigorating". Jackie Maddox, 59, who remembered her own parents marching in Washington for their rights decades ago, said she felt "relieved" that black people were no longer alone. "It's about time that they are tired too," she said of other protesters — though, she added, she hoped it would last.

The days of demonstrations in the US — which have included outbreaks of looting and violence — have seen new police abuses, some captured on camera. Two policemen in Buffalo, New York were charged with felony assault Saturday after they were filmed shoving a 75-year-old protester who fell, hit his head and began bleeding, in one of the most widely shared videos fuelling outrage.

But there were some changes to policing as well. In Seattle, authorities announced a temporary ban on tear gas. A federal judge in Denver forbade the use of chemical agents and projectiles like rubber bullets against peaceful protesters. And in Dallas, police marched in solidarity with protesters.

The unrest has handed US President Donald Trump — the target of many a biting protest sign and chant — one of the greatest challenges of his tumultuous presidency. While condemning Floyd's death, he has adopted a tough stance toward protesters, calling them "thugs" or "terrorists" and threatening a military crackdown. "LAW & ORDER!" the president tweeted as evening fell Saturday, adding later that the crowd in DC was "much smaller" than anticipated. — Agencies

Morocco artisans fear 'knockout...

Continued from Page 1

The crafts industry represents around seven percent of GDP, with an export turnover last year of nearly one billion dirhams (\$100 million). Despite their role in the economy, artisans work without social security cover and with a limited distribution network, much of it through word of mouth, like elsewhere in North Africa.

The 30 women who weave rugs for a small cooperative called "Creative Woman" in Sale have all lost their meager incomes. Weavers work eight hours a day for barely \$100 a month "when the carpets are sold" and they "have nothing left because there has not been a single sale in three months", explained Rachida Nabati.

Dozens hurt as protesters...

Continued from Page 1

as supporters of Hezbollah clashed with some demonstrators calling on the group to disarm. Hezbollah is the only group to have kept its weapons since the end of the Lebanese civil war, deeply dividing Lebanon along political lines.

"Weapons should be only in the hands of the army," said Sana, a 57-year-old female protester from Nabatiyah, a city in southern Lebanon, a Hezbollah stronghold. Soldiers formed a human chain separating the two sides after supporters and opponents of Hezbollah threw stones at each other, an AFP photographer said. Supporters of Hezbollah, which is also represented in the government and parliament, chanted: "Shiite, Shiite."

On Saturday evening, there was an exchange of gunfire between residents of a Sunni district, a stronghold of the former prime minister Saad Hariri, and a nearby Shiite neighborhood, a stronghold of the Amal party, a security source said. Soldiers moved in to restore order, said the state-run news agency ANI. There were clashes too in the northern city of Tripoli, an AFP correspondent there reported.

Security forces fired tear gas near a street leading into the parliament building behind Martyrs Square, after some demonstrators pelted them with

Assembly panel seeks ban...

Continued from Page 1

Mohammad Al-Sheetan against reducing government subsidies or raising public charges as he prepares to grill him next week. Adasani on Thursday filed to grill the minister, appointed just a few months ago, on a number of counts including pushing to approve a government bill to borrow KD 20 billion and failure to follow up alleged kickbacks in Kuwait Airways deals, in addition to alleged losses in foreign investments.

The energetic woman in her 40s, who has been a weaver since the age of seven, has been forced to borrow from friends to supplement her modest earnings from a vegetable garden next to her shack. In the cooperative, some have been bailed out by a state coronavirus emergency fund, while many others "can no longer pay their rent". "We have to sell on the internet but we don't know how to do that," said the mother who taught herself to read and write. "A digital platform was launched for artisans a few years ago, but it doesn't work," master plasterer Mohamed Touel said.

In Tunisia, the National Office of Handicrafts has been working on an electronic platform for sales in Europe and has organized small exhibitions in hotels. It also encourages artisans to launch Facebook pages or electronic sites. But Sabiha, a potter in the Tunisian rural town of Sejnane whose works are on UNESCO's list of "intangible cultural heritage", said she cannot "even afford to recharge" her mobile phone. — AFP

stones and ransacked shops. Some protesters set fire to garbage bins as riot police advanced towards them.

Lebanon has been rocked by a series of political crises in recent years, before an economic crunch helped trigger unprecedented cross-sectarian mass protests in October. The demonstrations forced the government to resign and a new one headed by Prime Minister Hassan Diab was approved by parliament in February, tasked with launching reforms and combatting corruption.

But many Lebanese say the new administration has failed to find solutions to the country's manifold problems, including a grinding recession and spiralling inflation. The local currency has lost more than half of its value on the black market in recent months, falling from the official rate of 1,507 to more than 4,000 pounds to the dollar. Banks have gradually stopped all dollar withdrawals.

A sign held aloft by protesters on Saturday called for "a government that eliminates corruption, not one that protects corruption". More than 35 percent of Lebanese are unemployed, while poverty has soared to engulf more than 45 percent of the population, according to official estimates.

Lebanon is also one of the world's most indebted countries, with a debt equivalent to more than 170 percent of its GDP. The country defaulted on its external borrowing for the first time in March. Diab's government adopted an economic recovery plan in April and has begun negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, to try to unlock billions of dollars in aid. — AFP

The grilling also charges that the minister failed to take sufficient action against alleged involvement in the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund scandal and suspicion of money laundering. Adasani called on the finance minister not to resign and to face the grilling, due to be debated next week, adding he will explain that the government action to send the Malaysian fund issue to the public prosecution was insufficient.

The lawmaker also urged the prime minister to freeze the authorities of the finance minister until the grilling has been debated. Adasani said attempts by the minister to increase the cost of public services or privatize them are totally rejected, adding that the minister submitted the KD 20 billion debt law before looking into alternatives.

Stars

Daily SuDoku

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Yesterday's Solution

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6	1	9	4	3	7	5	8	2
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easy


STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)




Every once in a while, everyone must analyze his or her life. But you tend to be too pessimistic when you ponder yours. You get easily carried away, and you often exaggerate. Today, as you think about your life, try not to listen to that little voice in your head. Your life is far from being the way that you think it is.

Libra (September 23-October 22)




You'll be the savior of the day. Your wisdom and patience will be your best assets today, Libra. You'll be of great help to those around you. You'll counsel them and be able to guide them toward better days. All those who are lost in their personal problems just need someone like you. You're their friend and they appreciate your generosity.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)



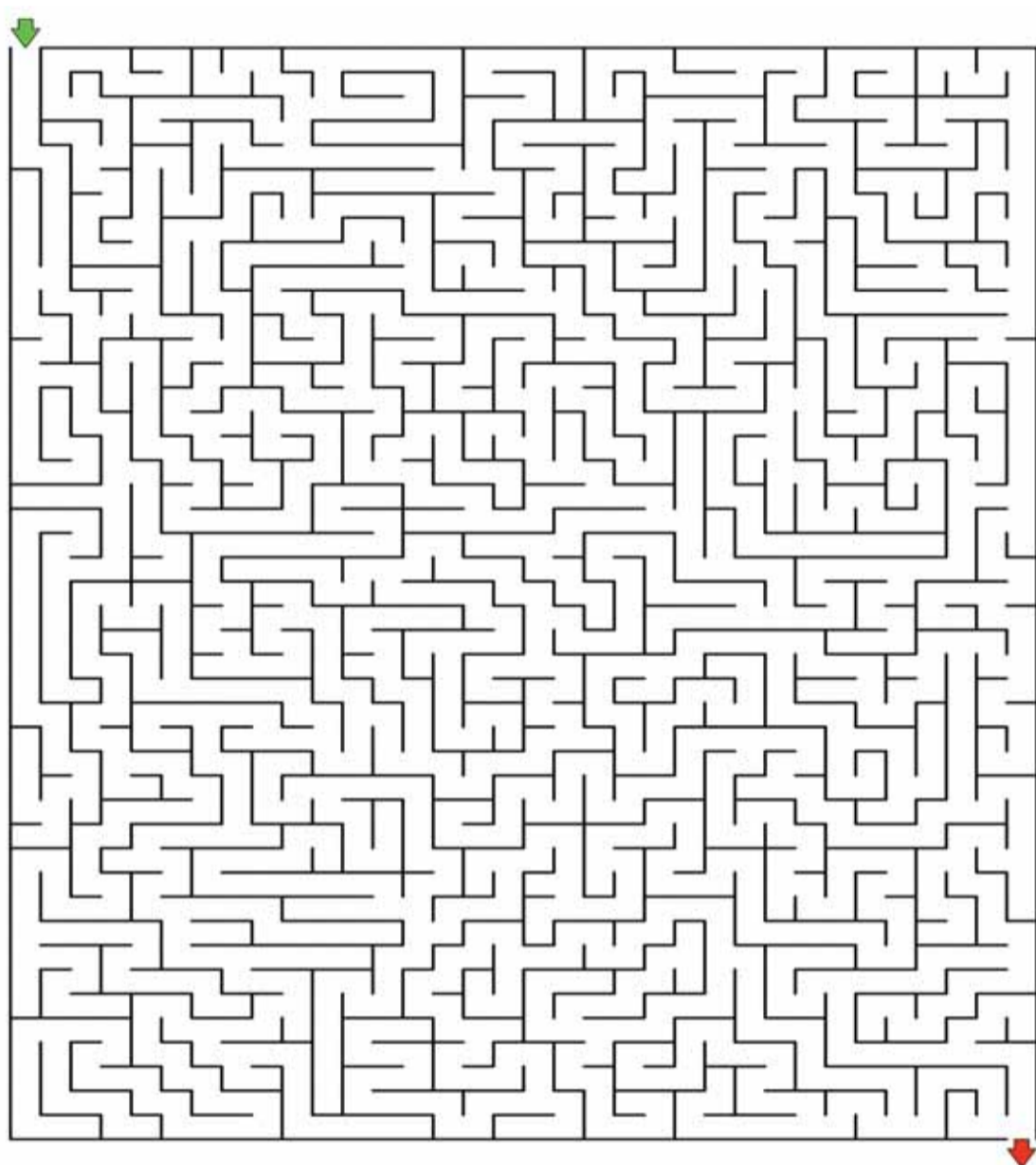
You'll have to use a cunning strategy today. The day will be tense and delicate. Some of your friends may try to put some pressure on you to obtain certain things. You'll have to find a clever way to get out of this tight spot. You might consider using some of their own medicine on them. This way, Taurus, you could keep your freedom. Try it and see.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)




You shouldn't work as hard as you do. You might have a lot of energy, but your body needs to rest from time to time. There is more to life than work. Try to take some time off to relax and recharge your batteries. You'll need to be in the best of shape pretty soon. The action is just around the corner, and you'll need all your capacities.

Find the way



Gemini (May 21-June 20)




Today, Gemini, you'll become quite introspective and reflect on your life. You probably heard some discouraging news concerning someone close to you, and it could leave you feeling blue. You'll find that you put a great deal of emotion into this relationship. Don't let this get you down. You need to react. Try to recharge your batteries so you can get your energy back.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)




You'll be lost in your thoughts today, Sagittarius. The celestial atmosphere is right for enabling you to ponder a frustrating aspect of your life. Often your partner is far away from you, yet you need your sweetie beside you. This may well be the cause of a lot of tension in your life now. The time is right to talk to your partner about this situation and try to rectify it.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)




Have your friends ever told you that you could be a great teacher? At home, you're the one who's talking all the time. You're almost compelled to make others listen to you. Children are fascinated by your knowledge. Today, Cancer, someone might not agree with you and upset you. You'll learn that your lessons can lead to a conversation. Knowledge isn't a one-way street.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)




People around you might have been expecting a bit more cooperation on your part. You could be nicer and more concerned about their needs. It seems that you've been ill-tempered recently. You like acting this way occasionally. Sometimes you act like a child who wants to play more. If you indulge this urge to play more often, you'll be able to be more loving toward your entourage.

Leo (July 23-August 22)



You've been working hard lately and giving a lot of your energy to others, Leo. Today you're feeling tired. There will be tension in the air throughout the day. You may feel that certain people that you considered friends now disappoint you. Don't get tangled up in their superficiality. It's probably wise to put some distance between you and these people.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)




If it were up to you, you'd rather stay in bed reading than confront the world. Deep inside, however, you know you need to reach out to others. You feel that you can't be left out of society. But have you ever thought about finding someone who shares your tastes? You could read in bed with someone else and still have a lot of contact.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)



Today, Virgo, you'll undoubtedly ask yourself a lot of questions. You tend to be rather introverted, and you typically need a great deal of freedom. You're usually an energetic person, but with the current astral energy at play, you may feel lonely and doubtful of your abilities. Take time today to analyze your commitments to others.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)



Generosity is one of your best qualities, Pisces. You have the uncanny ability to give without expecting anything in return, and you gain a great deal of power and light from this generosity. With little effort, you could become one of those people who never expects things in return. You could become a "saint" in a very real way.

Join the dots



Word Search

GONE with the WIND



- Ashley
- Atlanta
- Belle
- Bonnie Blue
- Butler
- Civil War
- Clark Gable
- Cotton
- Georgia
- Leslie Howard
- Mammy
- Margaret
- Marriage
- Mitchel
- O'Hara
- Olivia de Havilland
- Plantation
- Prissy
- Reconstruction
- Rhett
- Romance
- Scalawag
- Scarlett
- Slaves
- South
- Tara
- Union
- Vivien Leigh
- Wilkes



Sports

Photo of the Day



CASTLEROCK: Senad Grosic performs at Downhill Castle in Castlerock, Ireland. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Heavyweight champ Joshua hits out at 'virus' of racism

LONDON: World heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua told a Black Lives Matter march on Saturday that protesters were the "vaccine" to the "virus" of racism.

"The virus I am referring to is called racism," he said, comparing its effects to the damage done by COVID-19. Meanwhile the British boxer asked: "How long are we going to allow racism to spread through our communities?"

Worldwide protests under the banner of Black Lives Matter took place Saturday in response to the death of George Floyd, a black American man who died in Minneapolis last month while being arrested by police officers.

"You are the vaccine, I am the vaccine," the 30-year-old Joshua told a rally in his home town of Watford. "Killing a person outright is unforgivable, but stripping them of their human rights, oppressing them, mocking them, insulting them, placing glass ceilings above them... is just a slower way of killing them and taking the life out of their soul."

Joshua was on crutches at times on Saturday and was also seen wearing a knee brace, but a spokesperson insisted that was just a "precautionary measure".

Joshua, the reigning WBA, IBF and WBO titleholder, felt a "slight twinge" in his left knee in a training session earlier this week. But his camp insisted there was no cause for alarm.

"Anthony felt a slight twinge in his knee whilst training," the spokesperson said. "The brace is a precautionary measure on the advice of physios. It will be further checked by his doctors but there is no immediate concern." Joshua was due to defend his belts against Kubrat Pulev at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on June 20 only for the bout to be postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

Russian tennis player Anna Kournikova's relatively short career is still unparalleled

Listed among People Magazine's 50 most beautiful people in 1998

LONDON: For a tennis player who failed to win even one singles title on the WTA Tour, the frenzy surrounding Anna Kournikova's relatively short career is still unparalleled.

The blonde Russian was listed among People Magazine's 50 most beautiful people in 1998, voted the hottest female athlete on ESPN and her pictures adorned the covers of publications from Forbes to Sports Illustrated.

Kournikova's popularity could be gauged by the fact that a fast-spreading virus, disguised as a digital photo of the tennis star, infected millions of computers in 2001 and slowed electronic mail systems and caused some servers to be shut down.

She earned millions from endorsements and modelling and her celebrity status grew due to her romance with pop star Enrique Iglesias, with whom she has three children.

Having also played a minor role in the 2000 film 'Me, Myself & Irene', Kournikova joined the US television weight loss contest 'The Biggest Loser' as a trainer in 2011.

While her detractors would never consider the Russian as a serious singles player due to lack of titles, Kournikova was widely

acclaimed as a child prodigy.

She picked up a racket and started playing at the age of five in Moscow at a children's sports programme before leaving Russia to train at Nick Bollettieri's tennis academy in Florida.

She made her debut on the WTA Tour in 1995 as a 14-year-old and the following

Slam showing in singles.

Despite a barren trophy cabinet, Kournikova reached a career-high singles ranking of eight in 2000. Recurring injuries, however, forced her to retire early and she did not play on the WTA Tour after 2003.

While she failed to make her mark in singles, Kournikova won 16 doubles titles, including two Australian Open crowns with Martina Hingis, and reached the top ranking in doubles in 1999.

The Swiss, who reigned as world No.1 in both singles and doubles, is among many who consider Kournikova as a trailblazer in Russian tennis.

"She was a great player, a team player, and we had great times for those two years," said Hingis. "She kind of was the one who started this Russian Armada - or Russian generation - along with Elena Likhovtseva.

"She was definitely the one who you could aim for and be like, go around the world and live the 'Russian-American dream.' I loved playing with her." Former French Open and US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova said Kournikova would top her list if she penned a book on the history of Russian women's tennis.

"For me, she brought really big popu-



Hottest female athlete

year she went through the qualifiers to reach the fourth round of the US Open in her Grand Slam debut.

She fell to top-ranked Steffi Graf but did enough at the hardcourt major which earned her the WTA Newcomer of the Year award in 1996. The following year, the Russian made the semi-finals at Wimbledon, which ended up being her best Grand

F1 driver spent lockdown in Dubai

DUBAI: Following the postponement of the season, Scuderia AlphaTauri's Pierre Gasly found himself in lockdown in the United Arab Emirates with an important decision to make.

With travel restrictions swiftly implemented across the world these past couple of months, hundreds, if not thousands, of people have been left wondering when they would be able to return to where they call home.

For Scuderia AlphaTauri Formula One driver, Pierre Gasly, that time has finally come: the athlete is set to return to his home country following a two-month stay in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Gasly, 24, had been in the emirate ahead of his team's scheduled flight to Manama for the 2020 Bahrain Grand Prix, which was slated to take place, sans spectators, between 20-22 March. But following the announcement that the tournament was to be postponed until further notice, the Red Bull athlete found himself in a tricky situation - between trying to fly home with not many flight options, or remain in lockdown at his hotel on the Palm Jumeirah. Gasly opted to stay put in the UAE. So, just what has it been like for the Formula One rising star? Well, when you're an international athlete, the hard work simply doesn't stop.

"I [decided to] stay in Dubai for the last two months, because I have better facilities

here in Dubai than back in France: I've [just] been training hard the last two months," he says. "So that was the good thing; we've been really focused on our training since the first day we arrived. At that time of the year, we're usually travelling every three days... Going to the airports, playing in different countries, in different time zones, and we usually feel quite tired and try [our best] to recover. Now, we've really had a lot of time to work, and try to improve physical conditions - even though I felt like I was ready for this season, I have gotten stronger."

Staying at the FIVE Palm Jumeirah, Gasly recalls how staff did their best to accommodate him and his teammates' needs during their stay. With public facilities, such as hotel gyms being closed, the hotel's team created a special gymnasium in an empty apartment adjacent so he could continue training safely during isolation.

"We'd train six days a week - three days focusing on the cardio, and three days focusing on more gym-like exercises and strength work," he explains. "The hotel gave us the apartment next door with treadmills, weights... everything we needed to train."

As lockdown restrictions relaxed, Gasly was able to get some time on the track, receiving special permission to do some laps around the Dubai Autodrome.

"I managed to go to the karting track, so I had a couple of days doing karting, which is always good for practice, and also for fun!" With flights to selected destinations now being offered this month, Gasly is ready to return to France, before making his way to Italy where he is based.



Pierre Gasly

"Next for me is to go back to France and see the family: after two months I'm missing them! And after that I'll go back home to Italy, and yes, just keep on training!" he says. "We still have quite a bit of time before the first race, so we'll just focus on more preparation, and hopefully we can start the season very soon, because I'm missing racing!"

"I think it's the first time in my life I've been waiting that long between two races. The last one was in Abu Dhabi in December, so I need competition, and I'm looking forward to getting back in the car." While 2020 will be a year in remembrance of these sad unparalleled circumstances, Gasly acknowledges that he has been in a fortunate position during these times, and is grateful that his lockdown experience has been a positive one.

"Honestly, I really enjoyed my time here over the last two months, I'm probably going to miss it when I leave, but I know I'll come back to Dubai [soon], because I really like this place," he concludes.



Enrique Iglesias and his wife Anna Kournikova.

larity to Russian tennis, women's tennis. Everyone after her was just after her. For me, she was a big huge push," Kuznetsova told the WTA Insider in 2017. "I always de-

pend her when they say 'Oh, she never won a tournament'. So what? She was a Top 10 player. It's not just about winning tournaments. I think she was great." — Reuters

N Zealand's Dixon wins IndyCar opener in Texas

LOS ANGELES: New Zealand's Scott Dixon climbed out of his car and donned a white protective face mask after seizing the checkered flag in the delayed IndyCar season-opening race in Texas on Saturday.

Dixon crossed the finish line first ahead of runner-up Simon Pagenaud in the Genesys 300, the first IndyCar race in eight months because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Such strange times right now," said Dixon immediately after the race. "It was awesome. The power out there. We could just go for it."

After the COVID-19 pandemic led to a postponement of the 2020 IndyCar campaign, the series finally got underway with no spectators in the grandstands at the 1.5 mile (2.4 kilometer) Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth. "I am bummed that the fans aren't here," Dixon said. "I wish everybody was here to celebrate."

Former Indianapolis 500 winner Pagenaud finished 4.4 seconds back in second and reigning series champion Josef Newgarden placed third. Organizers decided to run the practice, qualifying and 200-lap race all on the same day to minimize the amount of time the participants would be at the venue.

"Today was compact," he said. "We flew in this morning and we had a hour and 20 minute practice, then straight to qualifying and straight to the race, and then fly back out tonight. That is very different. Normally we

have a couple of days of prep, so that was difficult."

Dixon earned his 47th career win to move within just five victories of Italian-born American Mario Andretti, who is second all-time with 52. He also matched AJ Foyt's record of 18 seasons with a victory.

Dixon led 157 of the 200 laps, and had an earlier six-second lead over Newgarden wiped out by a caution for debris. "We had to make some big bold moves," Dixon said.

"I can't tell you how good it feels to be back in the car. It has been such crazy times for so many people. "I feel very lucky to do what I do. A huge thanks to the IndyCar series and everybody involved to get us back on the track. We had a lot of changes in the offseason with the delay."

Drivers and team members went through temperature screenings when they got to Texas Motor Speedway. Crew members were required to wear face masks, and space was provided for social distancing in the garage areas. Dixon received elbow bumps instead of high fives in the victory lane.

Last year's pole sitter Takuma Sato crashed on his warm-up lap entering turn one. The former Indianapolis 500 winner was checked out at the on site medical facility and released, but then missed the race because he couldn't get his car repaired in time. Felix Rosenqvist was in contention when he crashed with nine laps to go. Rosenqvist was weaving through the field when he got high on the backstretch and lost control. He finished in 20th place.

There will be nearly a month's break before the next race July 4 on a road course at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The road course race will be the first of five IndyCar races in a 15-day period in July, including a doubleheader weekend at Wisconsin's Road America. — AFP

Sports

Will saliva ban threaten cricket's kings of swing? ICC to decide on Wednesday

Spinners have chance to shine during saliva ban: Kumble

LONDON: An International Cricket Council board meeting on Wednesday could see the global governing body uphold a recommendation to prohibit the use of saliva in order to stop the transmission of the coronavirus. Bowlers traditionally get the ball to move or swing in the air, thereby making it harder for batsmen to hit, by applying shine to one side via sweat — which can still be used — or saliva.

However, as a temporary measure to combat COVID-19, the ICC's cricket committee has suggested banning the use of saliva.

AFP Sport shines a light on the issue:

MASSIE'S MATCH

One of the most extraordinary individual performances in cricket history saw Australia swing bowler Bob Massie take 16 for 137 on his Test debut against England at Lord's in 1972.

Yet Massie won just five more caps and took only 15 more wickets, with the bowler himself saying he had struggled on a subsequent tour of the West Indies where he adjusted his action and was never the same cricketer again.

Massie's remarkable maiden Test and the lavish swing he generated at Lord's led to suggestions he'd applied lip salve to the ball in order to maintain the shine — an accusation he has always denied. "Some days things go just right," Massie said by way of explaining his remarkable introduction to Test cricket.

REVERSE SWING

It used to be thought that as a cricket ball got older it would swing less. But a technique pioneered by Pakistani paceman Sarfraz Nawaz, partly in response to the

slow and batsmen-friendly pitches of his homeland, led to the development of reverse swing.

"Just using sweat won't be of much help because that will only make the ball wet and that shine will be missing," said Sarfraz. Sarfraz confused a succession of batsmen by bowling in-swingers with an old ball.

He helped compatriot Imran Khan add reverse swing to his armoury and in the 1990s there were probably no better exponents than the Pakistan fast-bowling duo of Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis.

In 1992, the pair took 43 wickets between them as Pakistan won a five-match Test series in England 2-1.

MINT CONDITION

Over time, teams all round the world came to realise that in order to generate reverse swing it was vital the ball was 'looked after' properly, with one side polished and the other kept bone dry. Swing bowlers such as Andrew Flintoff, Matthew Hoggard and Simon Jones were pivotal to England regaining the Ashes from Australia in 2005. But it was England opening batsman Marcus Trescothick who later revealed he had put Murray Mints sweets to good use in the field because sucking them stimulated most saliva, which could then be applied to the ball.

PLAY ON WITH POLLOCK?

— It seems unlikely cricket chiefs will row back from the saliva ban but former South Africa paceman Shaun Pollock, even though he is a member of the ICC cricket committee, gave current swing bowlers a glimmer of hope by suggesting health checks in place for next month's behind closed doors three-Test series between

England and the West Indies might make it redundant.

"I think the environment that'll end up being created is almost going to be like a bubble," Pollock told the Following On Cricket Podcast.

"People will get tested, they'll go into a two-week camp where they're just going to sit and monitor how the conditions of their bodies change.

"And if there are no symptoms, it doesn't really matter about shining the ball then, because you're in the bubble and no one you come into contact with will have coronavirus." "So you can just get on with normal proceedings."

Meanwhile, Cricket chief Anil Kumble hopes a ban



King of swing Wasim Akram.

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Meanwhile, Cricket chief Anil Kumble hopes a ban

on using saliva to shine the ball after the coronavirus shutdown could see a resurgence of spin bowling in Test cricket. The International Cricket Council is expected to order a temporary ban next week on using spit as a shining agent, as part of measures to get the sport restarted.

Fast bowlers could struggle to swing the ball under the new rules with Australian quick bowler Mitchell Starc saying the game could be come "boring" if batters dominate. But Kumble, the former Indian Test captain and now chairman of the ICC cricket committee that recommended the ban, is hoping spinners could play a bigger part as a result. —AFP

Solskjaer backs extra subs change

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer believes the introduction of extra substitutions will be "welcome" when Manchester United resume their Premier League campaign later this month.

The coronavirus pandemic forced the English top flight to be suspended in March. But even though Britain's official virus death toll has now topped 40,000, 'Project Restart' is set to see the Premier League get going again, with United returning to action away to Tottenham Hotspur on June 19.

United face fellow European qualification hopefuls Sheffield United on June 24, with the FA Cup quar-

ter-final at Norwich and league match at Brighton following soon afterwards.

With games coming thick and fast, Premier League clubs have agreed managers will be able to make up to five substitutions per match from an expanded nine-strong bench as a way of helping sides cope with a three-month backlog of fixtures.

"I think that's helpful because footballers, after being out for so long, going into competitive games will be a challenge for them and we have to look after their injury-wise and fitness-wise," United manager Solskjaer told the club's website.

"We can't just flog one player and say to them, 'you play every game and every minute' because it might be a period when we have to rotate quite often." United are currently three points adrift of a place in next season's Champions League, and Solskjaer said: "It does feel like a new season but then again, the first

two games against Tottenham and Sheffield United are vital for the league standings, the table.

"And it's a short season, it's only nine (league) games so we can get many points and good performances as possible. "If we do get a good spell now, we could end up with some trophies and something to cheer about." "It's a young team with some great talent, some great work-rate, personalities... the human qualities in the group are fantastic." The enforced suspension has allowed the likes of Paul Pogba and Marcus Rashford to regain fitness following ankle and back injuries respectively.

But former United striker Solskjaer was cautious about their prospects of playing against Spurs. "Well, we hope everybody's going to be ready for the first game. "We've had time out so I don't think we can expect that those lads who've missed lots of the football can last the full game." — AFP

Dortmund, Hertha take a knee at Black Lives Matter protests

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund and Hertha Berlin took a knee in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter protests on Saturday as players across the Bundesliga showed support for demonstrations sparked by the death of George Floyd.

With thousands assembling in Berlin and Munich to demonstrate against police brutality and for racial equality, Dortmund and Hertha's starting line-ups gathered around the centre circle at Signal Iduna Park before dropping to one knee.

Dortmund players also wore messages on their T-shirts during their pre-match warm-up in honour of Floyd, a black American man who died in Minneapolis last month while being arrested by police officers.

Jadon Sancho and Achraf Hakimi wore the messages "no justice, no peace", while midfielders Axel Witsel and Emre Can's T-shirts displayed the words "black", "white" and "yellow" crossed out, with the word "human" below.

Earlier Pierre Kunde Malong also took a knee after scoring the second goal in Mainz's 2-0 win at Eintracht Frankfurt.

The Cameroonian will face no sanction from the German Football Federation (DFB) for the gesture after it gave the green light on Wednesday to players who wanted to honour Floyd or support the protests which have raged across the USA.

Sancho and Hakimi had also avoided punishment by the DFB following their on-pitch calls for justice last week.

Union Berlin's Nigerian striker Anthony Ujah said he was "proud" of the Bundesliga players who staged on-pitch protests, and pledged to do the same if he scores against Schalke on Sunday.

"I am proud of the players who are taking a stand. I am proud of Jadon Sancho. I am proud of Weston



DORTMUND: Dortmund's Portuguese defender Raphael Guerreiro and Hertha Berlin's Dutch forward Daishawn Redan vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match BVB Borussia Dortmund v Hertha Berlin on June 6, 2020 in Dortmund, western Germany. — AFP

McKennie. I am proud of Marcus Thuram. I am proud of Achraf Hakimi. The whole world saw their message," wrote Ujah in an article for German daily FAZ.

German champions Bayern Munich became the highest-profile club in the country to show their support for the protests.

Prior to their 4-2 win at Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday, players warmed up in T-shirts bearing both the Black Lives Matter hashtag and the slogan of the club's official "Reds Against Racism" campaign.

"As players, we always have the same message: we are tolerant, we are open, we are open to the world,"

Bayern captain Manuel Neuer told Sky after the game. Bayern's players also wore black armbands bearing the words "Black Lives Matter" during the match. "FC Bayern stands for a world in which racism, discrimination, hate, injustice and violence have no place. The death of George Floyd and the images from the USA have shocked us all," said club president Herbert Hainer in a statement.

"It's a matter of actively and loudly showing our colours. Black Lives Matter and Reds Against Racism. We stand for togetherness that goes far beyond sports." — AFP

logistics and safety protocols, with Brady saying stadiums would be divided into red, amber and green zones. "Red zone will be the most severely restricted area, including the pitch, the tunnel, technical areas, changing rooms will be limited to 105 people maximum, to include players, coaching staff, match officials and all the essential staff only," Brady wrote in her Sun newspaper column.

"And only those who have tested negative for COVID-19 in the past five days can enter this area... "The amber zone will be restricted to the minimum number of staff required to meet contractual requirements for broadcasting, media and club staff... And anyone entering this area will be subject to a temperature check and a health questionnaire.

"And the green zone is the stadium exterior, eg car parking." Players have been told they must not shake hands, spit or share drinks, while social distancing will be observed even in the dressing room and showers, with a 15-minute limit for pre-match talks by managers. "A new strict accreditation process will be developed, including an isolation room should someone unfortunately develop symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the stadium," Brady added.

Television viewers will have access to 360 degree replays and pre-match tunnel shots, while players' shirts will feature the logo of Britain's state-run National Health Service. "So we are in good shape," Brady said. "We are ready. We are ready to go." — AFP

FIFA open to salary cap and transfer fee limit proposals

PARIS: FIFA president Gianni Infantino called on Saturday for discussions over proposals to introduce salary and transfer fee caps to football in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

World football's governing body intends to finalise plans in the coming weeks for a financial relief package following the economic damage caused to the sport by the global health crisis.

FIFA announced in April it would release \$150 million (133 million euros) to its 211 member associations "as the first step of a relief plan". UEFA shortly afterwards said it had allocated 236.5 million euros to its 55 member federations.

Last month, the German FA and Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge urged industry talks about a salary cap and reforming the transfer system to keep football "credible".

"On the financial and governance aspects, I also heard some interesting proposals on a wide range of topics," Infantino wrote in an open letter to FIFA's members.

"From salary caps to transfer fee caps or other taxation mechanisms, to the possible obligation for governing bodies, competition organisers and clubs to build reserves or to contribute to a reserve fund which can be of assistance in hours of need such as now.

"I personally advocate for clearer and stricter financial regulations, imposing full transparency and good governance principles, and not only limiting this to the transfer system, but to the entire football ecosystem.

"FIFA is doing already a lot of work on this area, even if we face some strong vested interests who fight against our plea for a better global governance in our sport."

A recent study by accounting firm KPMG said the transfer value of players in 10 of Europe's top leagues could plummet by up to 10 billion euros due to the economic crash caused by coronavirus.

The French league, declared over in late April, said it would have to take out a government-guaranteed loan of some 225 million euros to tide over clubs impacted by the loss in income from broadcasters.

Last season's Champions League finalists Tottenham have received a £175 million loan from the Bank of England to help them through the crisis as the club predicted losses of £200 million over the next year.

Infantino is hoping to push through the rescue package by the time of the next FIFA council meeting later this month.

"The need for top club football to resume has understandably taken priority, but we must also consider national teams, women's football, lower-tier domestic leagues, youth and the grassroots game," Infantino said.

"We have to show unity across all aspects of football and make sure football can resume in its globality. This is our priority and our financial relief plan will also follow this principle."

While domestic leagues are gradually restarting, the international calendar has been decimated with Euro 2020 and the Copa America both postponed until next year.

However, Infantino said a reworked international schedule could be published shortly.

"On another very important topic, namely the international match calendar, I am happy to report that we also made some good progress," he said.

"In consultation with different stakeholders, we are closer to present a balanced solution that takes into account everyone's challenges and needs." — AFP

Stadiums to be split into 'zones' as EPL returns

LONDON: Premier League stadiums will be divided into three zones when the season resumes behind closed doors, West Ham vice-chairman Karren Brady said Saturday. The Premier League will resume on June 17 after a three-month absence due to the coronavirus pandemic. Clubs met on Thursday to discuss

18 Russian tennis player Anna Kournikova's relatively short career is still unparalleled



19 Will saliva ban threaten cricket's kings of swing? ICC to decide on Wednesday



19 Dortmund, Hertha take a knee at Black Lives Matter protests



Bayern close on Bundesliga title

Wirtz becomes Bundesliga's youngest scorer at 17 years and 34 days



LEVERKUSEN: Bayern Munich's Polish forward Robert Lewandowski (C) heads to score his team's fourth goal during the German first division Bundesliga football match Bayer 04 Leverkusen v FC Bayern Munich in Leverkusen, western Germany. — AFP

BERLIN: Bundesliga players wore black armbands and took the knee in displays of support for the Black Lives Matter protests on Saturday, as Bayern Munich kept title rivals Borussia Dortmund at bay with a ninth successive win.

Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski scored his 30th league goal of the season as Bayern came from behind to claim a 4-2 victory over Bayer Leverkusen, a win which kept them seven points ahead of second-placed Dortmund, who beat Hertha Berlin 1-0.

After Lucas Alario secured an early lead for the home side, Bayern struck twice in quick succession just before half-time to turn the game in their favour after Kingsley Coman's equaliser.

A mistake from Moussa Diaby allowed Coman to curl in the equaliser, before a fizzing shot from Leon Goretzka and an elegant lob from Serge Gnabry saw Bayern take a two-goal lead into the break. "We didn't start well, but I think it's something which really distinguishes us at the moment, that we are able to fight our way back into games," Goretzka told Sky.

Lewandowski sealed the win in the second half, equalling his most prolific Bundesliga season, although Leverkusen teenager Florian Wirtz struck late on to become the Bundesliga's youngest-ever scorer at just 17 years and 34 days.

"We already knew he was a huge talent," said Leverkusen coach Peter Bosz of the teenager, who beat the record set by Nuri Sahin for Borussia Dortmund in November 2005 by 48 days.

As thousands of protesters assembled in city centres across Germany, both of the country's top two clubs also used Saturday's games to make statements against police brutality and racism.

Dortmund players warmed up in T-shirts bearing messages of solidarity such as "no justice, no peace", before taking the knee in the centre circle with their Hertha colleagues for a moment's silence before kick-off.

Bayern players, meanwhile, wore black "Black Lives Matter" armbands during their rampant win over Lev-

erksusen. "As players, we always have the same message — we are tolerant, we are open, we are open to the world," Bayern captain Manuel Neuer told Sky.

Dortmund battled to a 1-0 home win over Hertha thanks to a second-half strike from Emre Can. England winger Jadon Sancho, who was among the first Bundesliga players to lend his voice to the protests last weekend, missed from close range just after the break before settling up Can with a deft chip over the back line on 57 minutes.

A late equaliser from Christian Strohdiek saw bottom-of-the-table Paderborn snatch a 1-1 draw away to RB Leipzig. Timo Werner set up Patrik Schick on 27 minutes to give Leipzig the lead, but they were forced to defend it with 10 men after Dayot Upamecano was booked twice in the first half.

Strohdiek's last-minute strike gave Paderborn their fourth draw in five games, though Stefan Baumgart's side remain eight points off Fortuna Duesseldorf, who occupy the relegation play-

off place.

Duesseldorf themselves missed the chance to move towards safety, as they battled to a dramatic 2-2 draw against 10-man Hoffenheim. A headed opener from Rouven Hennings and a red card for Hoffenheim's Benjamin Huebner put the home side in pole position.

However, the visitors struck back with goals from Munas Dabbur and Steven Zuber before Hennings saved a point with a late penalty.

Uwe Roesler's side remain three points adrift of safety in the relegation play-off place, after goals from Moussa Niakhate and Pierre Kunde Malong gave fellow strugglers Mainz a rare win over local rivals Eintracht Frankfurt.

Having sealed a crucial win with his 77th-minute strike, Cameroon international Kunde also joined the protests, taking a knee in place of a celebration. "I think it's good. It isn't a political statement, it's just a position, and these are values that we have. For me, there is no other possible position to take," said Mainz sporting director Rouven Schroeder. —AFP

McGregor announces retirement

NEW YORK: Mixed martial arts superstar Conor McGregor announced his retirement from the sport yesterday. The two-division Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) World Champion said his fighting days were over in a Twitter message posted on his verified account, alongside a picture of the Irishman with his mother, Margaret.

"Hey guys I've decided to retire from fighting. Thank you all for the amazing memories! What a ride it's been!" he wrote. "Here is a picture of myself and my mother in Las Vegas post one of my World title wins! Pick the home of your dreams Mags I love you! Whatever you desire it's yours."

The controversial fighter, nicknamed "The Notorious", first announced his retirement from the sport in March last year after being battered into submission by arch-rival Khabib Nurmagomedov in October 2018.

He made a return to the octagon in January after 15 months of inaction to knock out American Donald "Cowboy" Cerrone in just 40 seconds in Las Vegas.

The 31-year-old, an icon of the UFC, is no stranger to controversy and hit the headlines last year for an attack on an older man in a Dublin bar that was captured in a viral video.

McGregor, one of the most popular fighters in MMA history, has a record of 22-4 and was the first UFC fighter to hold two championship belts at the same time.

He achieved that feat in 2016, when he stopped Eddie Alvarez in a lightweight title fight, adding it to his featherweight title.

That triumph was followed by a loss to boxing great Floyd Mayweather in a cross-combat superfight in 2017, his loss to Nurmagomedov, announcements of retirements and returns to fighting.

Earlier, UFC featherweight champion Amanda Nunes dominated Felicia Spencer and scored a comprehensive decision victory on Saturday in retaining her crown, becoming the first two-weight UFC champ to successfully defend both belts.

The Canadian challenger went the distance at the UFC 250 event at the UFC Apex in Las Vegas on Sat-

urday, but she was completely outclassed, as Nunes won every one of the five rounds on the judges' scorecards.

"I studied her very well, I know she's tough and I have to be sharp if I have to go five rounds, I have to be dominating," a beaming Nunes told commentator Joe Rogan after the fight.

"That was my goal, defending my two belts at the same time. I defended both belts, you know, I'm the greatest! I'm so happy right now!" she added.

Spencer fought bravely but her limitations were exposed early on as Nunes caught her with a stiff jab and then took her to the mat, where she controlled her with ease.

A flurry of punches by Nunes the end of the second round almost put a stop to the contest, and Spencer somehow survived a late choke attempt at the end of the fourth, although her forehead swelled up heading into the final round.

With Nunes barely breaking a sweat, the doctor was called into the octagon late in the fifth to examine a cut on Spencer, but the 29-year-old was able to battle on to the end of a one-sided contest that cemented Nunes' status as one of the sport's most dominant champions.

After beating Miesha Tate to win the bantamweight belt in July 2016, the 32-year-old Brazilian has been on a tear for almost four years, defending that title with violent knockouts of former champions Ronda Rousey and Holly Holm.

She then stepped up to featherweight and added that title by demolishing the much-feared Cris Cyborg in just 51 seconds, knocking her unconscious with a superb display of boxing in December 2018.

The problem for Nunes and the UFC now is that there is no challenger on the horizon that looks capable of threatening Nunes, who hasn't lost since she was knocked out by Cat Zingano in September 2014. "I don't know what is next, but I've proved (myself) already. Tonight I closed a cycle, and I'm proud of myself and my team," Nunes said. — Agencies



Steps up racism protests