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Panel close to approving private sector salary cuts

Some mosques to reopen • Speaker meets PM • MP urges more virus tests

Kuwait arrests B'deshi MP over human trafficking

KUWAIT: A Bangladeshi lawmaker has been arrested in Kuwait for his alleged involvement in human trafficking and money laundering, officials confirmed on Sunday. Mohammad Shahid Islam, widely known as Kazi Papul, is a member of parliament from Laxmipur district. "Yes, our ambassador in Kuwait reported that he has been arrested on charges of money laundering and trafficking," Bangladesh's Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told Anadolu Agency.

Quoting Bangladesh ambassador in Kuwait SM Abul Kalam, the foreign minister added: "He has a big company in Kuwait and he is its Chief Executive Officer [CEO]." Islam, also a businessman, is in Kuwait since late March. He was arrested from his home in Mishref residential area by Kuwait's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), according to local media reports.

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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee yesterday reviewed government-sponsored amendments to the labor law to allow companies impacted by the crisis to cut salaries of their employees. Head of the committee MP Safa Al-Hashem said the amendments provide sufficient guarantees to protect Kuwaitis employed in the private sector, and even if they are laid off, the government labor support will be immediately doubled.

The amendments allow private sector companies impacted by the coronavirus crisis to cut the salaries of their employees or ask them to take their annual leaves during a period to be determined by the government. Although the labor law clearly forbids companies from cutting the salaries of their employees under any circumstances, many private firms, including large ones, have already either laid off hundreds of staff, cut their pay or forced them to take unpaid leave.

The amendments have been under study in the Assembly for several

weeks and the main stumbling block was to find a way to protect Kuwaitis, who form around two percent of the private sector workforce. Hashem said the amendments provide such protection, but the committee wants to make them permanent and not only during the coronavirus crisis.

She claimed that the labor law in the private sector provides expatriates with more benefits than their Kuwaiti counterparts and needs to be amended, adding that it was written by "expat legal advisors". She said a special meeting will be held tomorrow over the amendments and that a final meeting to approve them will be convened next Sunday, adding that they are likely to be approved by the Assembly on June 16.

The ministry of awqaf and Islamic affairs has given the green light to mosques in some areas to reopen tomorrow after almost three months due to the novel coronavirus outbreak. In a press statement, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahd Al-Afasi said mosques in model residential areas and sparsely-populated areas will receive worshippers for the



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. — KUNA

five daily prayers starting with the noon prayer on June 10.

He however noted that the weekly Friday noon sermon and prayer will be performed only at the Grand Mosque in Kuwait City and will be broadcast on Kuwait TV. Only the mosque's preachers and staff will be allowed to attend this prayer, the minister said.

Afasi noted that the ministry has completed all preparations for reopening mosques and will abide by all preventive and precautionary measures outlined by the state's health authorities to prevent the spread of the virus.

Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem held talks with HH the Prime Minister. — KUNA

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Mall operators curb expansion as retailers reel

DUBAI: Mall operators in the Gulf region are delaying new mega-projects as the coronavirus pandemic and low oil prices upend a retail industry built around huge centers catering to tourists and wealthy locals. Majid Al Futtaim (MAF), the Middle East's biggest mall-operator, told Reuters it had delayed the launch of its fifth and largest center in Oman, the 145,000 sq m Mall of Oman, because retailers did not have the cash at hand to fit out stores.

In Dubai, Emaar Malls halted construction on two projects, according to two sources familiar with the plans. They are a mall near the site of the Expo 2020 world fair, which has been delayed by a year to next October, and a 185,000 sq m mall in the Dubai Hills residential area, the people said. Emaar Malls, owner and operator of the world's largest shopping centre, Dubai Mall, did not respond to a request for comment.

"In malls under construction, timelines are being revisited. This is a fluid situation," MAF's Chief Executive Alain Bejjani told Reuters. "We will see how it goes and adapt," he added. "It will be the case for the coming 12 months." Luxury malls, featuring international brands and entertainments such as dancing fountains and indoor ski slopes, have been the cornerstone of the oil-producing region's retail industry, especially during the blistering summer months.

A growing population and steady stream of tourists has seen more projects planned in recent years even as competition has intensified and footfall has levelled off. Last year, Alpen Capital forecast the Gulf retail sector to grow from \$253 billion in 2018 to \$308 billion in 2023.

The pandemic has changed the game in a matter of months, though. Brick-and-mortar retailers have been among the worst hit by coronavirus closures. At Dubai's Mall of the Emirates last week, several shop fronts were boarded up and rental dispute notices hung in some shop windows, a visitor said. EFG Hermes forecast a 20 percent drop in Dubai store-based sales in 2020 if foreign visitors were allowed entry in the third quarter, and a 40 percent drop if travel bans remain until year-end.

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Global coronavirus cases hit 7 million, deaths top 400,000

SANTIAGO: The number of coronavirus infections globally topped seven million yesterday as deaths mounted in Latin America, but New Zealand's declaration of victory against the pandemic offered some hope for the rest of the world. Rising numbers of deaths were recorded from Brazil to Mexico to Peru, driving the confirmed global death toll above 400,000 and the number of declared infections over seven million, according to an AFP tally.

Brazil's crisis is escalating and it has the world's third-highest death

toll at more than 36,000, but President Jair Bolsonaro continues to play down the impact of the virus. In Chile the confirmed death toll reached 2,290 after miscalculations from March and April were corrected, adding 1,541 to the figure, health minister Jaime Manalich said Sunday.

Europe also continued to emerge from its lockdown, with Pope Francis proclaiming that the worst was over in Italy although he expressed sympathy for Latin America. "Your presence in the square is a sign that in Italy the

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NEW DELHI: Muslim devotees leave after offering prayers at the Jama Masjid in the old quarter of the capital as places of worship, hotels, restaurants and shopping malls were allowed to operate again yesterday. — AFP

Minneapolis vows to dismantle cops; Powell flays Trump

WASHINGTON: Councilors in the US city of Minneapolis pledged late Sunday to dismantle and rebuild the police department, after the death in custody of George Floyd sparked nationwide protests about racism in law enforcement, pushing the issue onto the national political agenda. Floyd was killed on May 25 when white Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin pressed his knee on the unarmed black man's neck for nearly nine minutes. Chauvin has been charged with second-degree murder and was to appear in court yesterday.

"We committed to dismantling policing as we know it in the city of Minneapolis and to rebuild with our community a new model of public safety that actually keeps our community safe," Council President Lisa Bender told CNN, after a majority of councilors committed to the effort.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, however, is against getting rid of the department, and the head of the city's powerful police union, Bob Kroll, appeared on stage last year with President Donald Trump. The vow by the majority of councilors came a day after Frey was booed at and asked to leave a



MINNEAPOLIS: A man kneels in front of a US flag at a memorial for George Floyd following a day of demonstrations on Sunday. — AFP

"Defund the Police" rally. He later told AFP he supported "massive structural reform to revise this structurally racist system" but not "abolishing the entire police department."

Bystander video of the incident - which captured Floyd calling for his mother and saying he could not breathe - has sparked two weeks of mostly peaceful demonstrations across the country. On Sunday, protesters in cities including Washington, New York and Winter Park, Florida, began focusing their outrage over the death of Floyd onto demands for police reform and social justice. But in Seattle a person was shot and wounded after a man armed

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No students in school without vaccine: Manila

MANILA: Tens of millions of children in the Philippines will not be allowed back to school until a coronavirus vaccine is available, officials announced yesterday, saying they may have to broadcast lessons on TV. Nations like France and South Korea began resuming face-to-face classes as they got their outbreaks under control, but Philippine authorities see the risk as too great.

President Rodrigo Duterte said last month that even if students could not graduate, they needed to stay out of school to fight the spread of the disease. "We will comply with the president's directive to postpone face-to-face classes until a vaccine is available," education secretary Leonor Briones said in a statement yesterday.

Classes are to resume at the end of August and teachers will use distance learning methods via the internet or TV broadcasts where needed, Briones added. Millions live in deep poverty in the Philippines and do not have access to

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Local

Kuwait's PM urges synergy among different authorities

Speaker Al-Ghanem lauds efforts during COVID-19 crisis

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah stressed the necessity of enhancing cooperation between the parliament, government and judiciary to implement the noble directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In a press statement after his meeting with the National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem on Sunday, His Highness the Prime Minister asserted that synergy in this coronavirus crisis is an urgent necessity to achieve the interests of both the country and the people. His Highness the Prime Minister hailed the great role

played by the parliament by proposing ideas and suggestions, offering visions, and passing laws to support the government's efforts.

Ghanem, meanwhile, praised His Highness the Prime Minister's sincere efforts to tackle the novel coronavirus crisis and combat corruption. In a press statement after the meeting, Ghanem said that these meetings represent an embodiment of cooperation between the authorities. These meetings and mutual visits also come in implementation of the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, he added. —KUNA



As per Amir's directives



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets President of the Supreme Judicial Council Yousef Al-Mutawa. — KUNA

Three-phase plan to resume commercial flights

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Services Affairs and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Mubarak Al-Haris announced Sunday a three progressive phases plan developed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to re-operate commercial flights. In a press statement after his meeting with DGCA officials, the minister said that the Kuwait International

Airport will operate in the first stage at 30 percent of its capacity, then will rise to 60 percent in the second stage, and back to normal level in the third and final stage. The minister affirmed that DGCA was keen, when developing the plan, to abide by the Cabinet decisions, taking into account adherence to the preventive and precautionary measures issued by the health authorities. — KUNA



Mubarak Al-Haris



KUWAIT: Public Works Minister and State Minister for Housing Dr Rana Al-Faris carried out an inspection tour Sunday night to check works on the Khaitan southern residential project.



Living healthy

In my view



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

My great-grandfather died at over 100 years of age. He was very alert and remembered many things and events that he went through and with whom. My grandfather lived into his late nineties, was very healthy and was active in his fields very late in his age, and if it was not for an accident, he would have kept working.

I put myself in trouble one day when my curiosity at that young age made me decide to be by the side of my grandfather Abu Essa from the time he woke up at dawn until all family members retired to bed. I told him what I wanted and he happily agreed and told me "you must be tough and patient, city boy" to endure the work you are going to experience, and the excited boy in me just smiled.

The next morning we were up at dawn and he told me to get ready. Then I mounted one tough strong mule while he was atop a horse. Oh, sorry - I forgot to mention that the very first thing he did when he woke up was drink a small cup of virgin olive oil on an empty stomach. Naturally, I asked what was that - he said that this scrubs your veins, keeps you alert and maintains your strength.

We then headed to the field while it was still dark to pick ripe figs. Then when sunlight broke on the horizon we headed to the wheat fields to harvest. There I learned the hardest lesson of my life and understood what tough meant! The sun was up and the heat unbearable, yet everybody worked with the same vigor without slowing down, except for this city boy who could barely move a yard or two while the person who was next to me was already 50 yards ahead!

The moral of my story is to tell you how healthy our forefathers were because of the pure and clean environment they lived in. Everything they had was fresh and from the home garden, and they raised their own animals and birds without worrying whether things were organic or chemically treated. That is why they lived healthy and passed away healthy!

The talk is really about the environment which is full of allergens, pollution and all types of dirt. All these elements make us exposed to various illnesses that affect most of our systems. A clean and healthy environment ensures that our food is safe, our water clean and our air free of insects, and no cockroaches crawling around.

I am sure that everybody knows that a clean environment helps in protecting us against diseases, which in turn gives our children the opportunity to develop and grow normally. Please keep our environment clean.

Final word: "If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it." — David Sobel

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 31,848 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Sunday, in addition to 264 deaths. With the exception of 196 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, 21,242 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 10,342 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 govern-

ment 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
- NKB 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-ehalth.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

Students speak of 'successful' e-learning experience in Kuwait

Students prepared should online system be applied next year too

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: As all schools and colleges have been closed in Kuwait due to the pandemic for months and learning is suspended till August, most colleges have shifted to online learning to avoid losing this semester. For some practical majors, this way of learning is not possible, but for many it has been successful. Kuwait Times spoke to some college students to gauge their opinion.

Ali, a student of business at Gulf University for Sciences and Technology (GUST), said online courses were something new for everyone at the university, including instructors and students. "It was a bit hard for everyone to keep up with everything, especially on such short notice. But thanks to our departments and our president, they made everything very clear and as easy as they could while maintaining the high quality of teaching," he told Kuwait Times.

On the other hand, he thinks it is also stressful. "I think it is hard to manage. I prefer the traditional way of teaching due to the way information is conveyed. Online courses are not as effective as traditional teaching. I see the real problem in the way the student absorbs information. Also, the environment plays a big role as well. To sum up, online courses are easy and hard at the same time. Traditional learning is the most effective," declared Ali.

Omar Al-Mansour, a student of aircraft maintenance engineering-avionics at the College of Aviation Technology (CAT), who enrolled in 2019, took the e-learning course as he is in the foundation year. Online learning is not available for other grades due to the practical aspect of the course, which can't be done online.

No complications
Omar finds e-learning easy. "The ac-

ademic year started smooth and easily, until we faced the pandemic that resulted in closing the college, which shifted to the e-learning system for the foundation year. I appreciate the efforts of the college's administration to take this step and provide online learning. In general, I haven't faced any complications in this online course, except that it needs intensive concentration," he said.

"Communication with teachers and asking questions is easy. Also, the system of homework is easy, and I improved my skills in researching during this semester. This improved students' knowledge, as they are depending on themselves more in searching for information. The teachers are very helpful after each lecture, and they arrange appointments for more questions and explanations using the same technology of e-learning. I hope e-learning is also applied in the next semesters to preserve the academic schedule and graduate on



time without delay," Omar added.

Afrah Al-Ajmi, also a student of aircraft maintenance engineering at CAT, agrees the online course is easy and a success. "It is a comfortable way of learning, especially since it saves time

and we avoid the traffic on the streets. I'm not worried of the coming semester, and I'm ready to take the course whether it is online or traditional. The teacher taught me how to use this system, which is really easy," she pointed out.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Army personnel man a checkpoint at an exit in Farwaniya to inspect drivers' permits before leaving the area which remains under total lockdown along with Hawally, Khaitan, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

News in brief

Rapid testing center

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti citizens suspected to be infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) are asked to visit the rapid testing center at the Jazeera Airways Park and Fly facility in Kuwait International Airport, or Jaber Stadium (Gate 10). This service is available exclusively for people who did not get a swap before and have not shown any symptoms. Those who wish to give a swap must obtain a permit to leave during curfew hours at <https://curfew.paci.gov.kw>, download the 'Shlonik' app, and arrive at the facility between 6:30 pm and 9:30 pm. A car can carry a maximum of four persons, who must comply with health procedures and wear masks. Furthermore, they must confirm arrival through the 'Curfew Permits' app; otherwise, the person will be denied future permits.

No new housing projects

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare denied social media reports claiming that it has allocated new residential areas around the country. It said in an official statement that no areas were allocated other than the projects announced through its official website and other official social media accounts. Furthermore, it confirmed that any new locations allocated will be included in its housing projects' plan.

22 flights

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced that 22 flights departed Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying 4,475 passengers in total. They included 15 flights to Egypt, one flight to Bangladesh, two flights to Iran, one flight to Malawi, one flight to Qatar, and two flights to India.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A photo taken on June 7, 2020, shows the moon over Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Three fire stations battle Amghara blaze

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firemen from three different fire stations worked together to put out a blaze in Amghara Sunday afternoon. The fire started in a refrigerated trailer truck, and the flames spread to foam and lumber, covering an area of 200 square meters. No injuries were reported. Meanwhile, an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.

Separately, police arrested an Arab man who attempted to leave Hawally, which remains under total lockdown, without a permit. The man was reportedly spotted attempting to jump over a barrier. He was sent to concerned authorities for further legal action.



A photo released by the Interior Ministry showing an Arab man arrested for attempting to leave Hawally without a permit.

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A fireman battles the blaze.



A fireman battles the blaze.



A fireman puts out the flames.

Local

Defying COVID-19, LAPA prepares package of youth programs, workshops

To be launched soon, featuring participation of media and creative figures



KUWAIT: Despite the curfew, LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) is preparing to launch a package of youth programs and workshops including 'Al-Jawhar' programs which comprises of a number of media workshops. The first episode will be presented by Lebanese media figure Jezail Khouri.

The program will be launched today with a presentation of a workshop on media arts and interviews with participants from Kuwait, Lebanon and Jordan. It will be on for two hours, five days a week through

the 'Zoom' app.

In addition, LAPA is preparing to launch its annual summer camp for juniors, teenagers and families under the title of 'All For the Universe'. The five-week camp will be on in the period of June 23 till July 28 providing participants with outstanding opportunities to practice a mixture of arts and sports mainly focusing on the universe and man's role in protecting it. The workshops will be presented for three hours Sundays-Wednesdays via Zoom.

The third program is the second edition of the 'Theatre Sanctuary' and will be on for three months starting July 20 under the same motto presenting a number of theatrical workshops including writing (by the Syrian scriptwriter, Dr Mamdouh Hamadah), followed by a workshop on documentary theatre by Sahar Afeef, a Cinograhpy workshop by Dr Khalifa Al-Hajeri, a comedy workshop by the Italian artist, Fabrizio, a Vocal workshop by Many Fox, a monologue workshop by Sara Attallah and a theatre pro-

duction workshop presented by LOYAC's chairperson, Farea Al-Saqqaf.

Notably, LAPA is always keen on offering some scholarships and free workshops for some LOYAC members in Kuwait, Lebanon and Jordan. It has also launched the 'Mob Art Kuwait' program by the beginning of Ramadan and is still on as a humane and charity program addressing children of needy families in Kuwait. All LAPA programs can be reached at: <https://lapa.loyac.org/> and Instagram account at: [lapaloyac](https://www.instagram.com/lapaloyac).



KUWAIT: Iraqi Chargé d'affaires Mohammad Al-Hussaini held a ceremony to honor 35 Iraqi volunteers who provided assistance to Kuwaiti authorities in their efforts to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Kuwait. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Silence is 'complicity,' say white protesters

Brazilians hold rival rallies for and against president

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CALIFORNIA: Protesters march holding placards and a giant portrait of George Floyd during a demonstration against racism and police brutality, in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Europeans join 'global wave' of protests

George Floyd's death spark racism protests

MADRID: Calling for racial justice, protesters rallied across Europe Sunday, joining a wave of demonstrations sparked by the death of African American George Floyd at the hands of US police. A video of the incident with Floyd pleading for his life in Minneapolis as a white police officer knelt on his neck has sparked protests worldwide, even as countries continue to discourage large gatherings to curb the coronavirus pandemic.

Several thousand people massed outside the US embassy in Madrid, shouting "I can't breathe", Floyd's last words, and demanding justice. "Racism knows no borders," said Leinisa Seemdo, a 26-year-old Spanish translator from Cape Verde. "In all the countries where I have lived, I have experienced discrimination because of the colour of my skin." Rome's Piazza del Popolo ("People's Plaza") fell silent for eight minutes - roughly the time the policeman pressed his knee on Floyd's neck - as thousands of people took a knee in memory of Floyd, their fists in the air.

"We can't breathe," shouted the crowd, after the collective silence. "It's really hard to live here," said Senegalese migrant Morikeba Samate, 32, one of the thousands to have arrived in Italy after risking the perilous crossing across the Mediterranean. Opposition to that wave of migration buoyed the

far-right in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. Floyd's death last month has unleashed the most serious and widespread civil unrest in the United States since Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968. The police officer, Derek Chauvin, has been charged with second-degree murder while three fellow officers face lesser charges.

'No Justice, No Peace'

More than 1,000 people on Sunday also gathered at a Black Lives Matter protest near the US embassy in Budapest. Hungarian reggae singer G Ras told cheering protesters: "If we want to live in a better world, we need to radically change the way we live." Almost 4,000 attended two similar events in the Netherlands, while thousands marched in cities across Britain. Hip-hop artist Stormzy joined protesters marching for a second day running in London despite a ban against large gatherings during the coronavirus.

For the second day running, some demonstrators

scuffled with police near Downing Street. There were also clashes outside the US embassy. Prime Minister Boris Johnson tweeted: "These demonstrations have been subverted by thuggery - and they are a betrayal of the cause they purport to serve. Those responsible will be held to account." In Bristol, a city linked to the slave trade, the statue of trader Edward Colston was torn down Sunday and thrown into the harbor. In Lausanne, Switzerland, a black-clad demonstrator's placard read: "my color is not a threat". Some protesters there carried placards with the name of 40-year-old Nigerian Mike Ben Peter, who died while being arrested by the city's police two years ago.

Brussels clashes

Almost 10,000 people marched in Brussels, police said. "The murder of George Floyd has clearly woken up a lot of people," said Ange Kaze of the Belgian Network for Black Lives. After the demon-

stration, police arrested around 150 people for vandalism, which the city's mayor, Philippe Close, blamed on "troublemakers and delinquents". Close had authorized the march against the advice of Prime Minister Sophie Wilmes.

A demonstration by 15,000 in Copenhagen ended peacefully. But there was fighting reported at the end of a protest in Goteborg, Sweden, where almost 2,000 people turned out for a march authorized for just 50 owing to coronavirus restrictions. Governments are struggling to balance people's need to express their anger, against the risk of protests spreading a disease that has killed more than 400,000 worldwide.

In France, more than 23,000 people demonstrated on Saturday, and football players from a half dozen German teams knelt over the weekend in Floyd's memory. His death occurred during a pandemic that has disproportionately affected black people and ethnic minorities in mega cities such as London, New York and Rio de Janeiro. The historic economic recession triggered by virus lockdowns has hammered the poor and marginalized even more. A combination of economic woes, social tensions and anger at US President Donald Trump's response has refocused attention on racial divides like few other events since the 1960s. — AFP



Racism knows no borders



India re-opens more public spaces despite record virus infections

NEW DELHI: Malls and temples re-opened in several cities across India yesterday despite the country recording a record daily number of new coronavirus infections, with the pandemic expected to ravage the country for weeks to come. After a 10-week lockdown the government has risked lifting some restrictions in a bid to ease the devastating blow to the economy dealt by the coronavirus.

But the number of new cases rose by 9,983 to 256,611, according to government figures announced Monday, putting the country of 1.3 billion on course to overtake Britain and Spain among nations with the highest number of infections. The reported death toll of 7,135 is much lower than reported in other badly-hit countries, but the epidemic is only expected to peak locally in July, according to health experts. Still, in the capital Delhi, shopping malls, restaurants, temples and mosques were allowed to re-open for the first time since March 25. The response was tentative, however, and only a trickle of people returned to some places of worship.

Businessman Mohit Budhiraja, wearing a mask and carrying sanitiser, went to his local temple in eastern Delhi for the first time since the lockdown. "It felt like something was missing when I couldn't

come to the temple for all these weeks," he said. "I hope things improve, but now I will come every day." Many temples set up sanitization tunnels at their entrances and barred worshippers from bringing offerings. "People are having their temperature tested twice before they get in," said Ravindra Goel, a trustee of the Jhandewalan temple, one of the oldest in Delhi. The 400-year-old Jama Masjid mosque - one of the biggest in India - planned to allow the faithful in just three times a day instead of the usual five.

Delhi is one of India's worst coronavirus hotspots, accounting for more than 27,600 cases and 761 deaths — although media reports say the real figures are much higher. Mumbai, which accounts for around a fifth of India's cases and hospitals have been overrun, was more cautious. Roadside shops were allowed to re-open, but malls, restaurants and hair salons remained shuttered. The Indian government says the tough lockdown it ordered on March 25 has limited the spread of the coronavirus. But it is now braced for a major hit to the economy, with millions of labourers now jobless. Rating agencies have said the economy could contract by more than five percent this year, after average growth of about seven percent over the past decade.



MUMBAI: Commuters are seen in a traffic jam during rush hour as places of religious worship, hotels, restaurants and shopping malls are allowed to operate again after more than two months of lockdown imposed as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus. — AFP

Despite restrictions being eased last month, India's manufacturing sector is struggling to restart because of an exodus of migrant workers prompted by the virus lockdown. Big cities - once an attractive destination for workers from poor, rural regions - have been hit by reverse migration as millions of labourers fled to their village homes.

"A lot of the manufacturing industry is actually located in the very states where the pandemic's impact has been great," Professor Santosh Mehrotra at Jawaharlal Nehru University told AFP last week. "Now these are the areas where naturally workers have left in large numbers... They will not return in a hurry." — AFP

International

Russia's 'hiring of Syrians' to fight in Libya accelerate

Syrians also recruited by Turkey to fight on other side

LIBYA: A Russian drive to recruit Syrians to fight in Libya for militia leader Khalifa Haftar accelerated in May when hundreds of mercenaries were signed up, five Syrian opposition sources and a regional source familiar with the matter said. Private military contractor Wagner Group is conducting the hiring with Russian army supervision, according to two senior Syrian opposition sources and the regional source. A former Wagner Group member said it first sent Syrians to Libya in 2019. The Russian Defense Ministry and the Wagner group did not respond to questions from Reuters. Turkey, meanwhile, says it is providing military support to the other side of the conflict, the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said in February that fighters from the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army were in Libya, as well as Turkey's own military. Russia has been a staunch ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, helping him crush the rebellion at home. Moscow's involvement in Libya is an extension of its ambition to project influence in the Eastern Mediterranean, some experts say. Egypt and the United Arab Emirates have also lent support to Haftar because they suspect the GNA of having ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist group they strongly oppose. Turkey, on the other hand, has made deals with the GNA over maritime borders and wants to protect its own interests in the region.



Many of the recruits are former rebels

of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

"Russia has tried to match Turkey's effort to send Syrian mercenaries, but with mixed results," Wagner has up to 1,200 people deployed in Libya, according to a confidential UN report seen by Reuters in May. The Russian state has denied having forces in Libya. When asked in January if the Wagner Group is fighting in Libya, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that if there are Russians in Libya, they are not representing the Russian state, nor are they paid by the state.

A spokesman for Haftar's Libyan National Army denied it had recruited Syrian fighters. It has repeatedly highlighted the presence of Syrians fighting alongside its enemy. US officials said on May 7 they believed Russia was working with Assad to transfer militia fighters and equipment to Libya. The Syrian government's information ministry did not respond to questions sent via email. Haftar's adversary, the GNA, has been supplied with drones, air defenses and advisers from Turkey. GNA deputy defense minister Saleh Namroush said its request for military support was in response to what he called "international meddling in Libya." "Turkey is the only country that was willing to help us end the widespread civilian killing and destruction by the UAE, Russia and others," he said.

Pace of hiring increases

New recruits to the Russian effort in support of Haftar included 300 from the Homs area, among them former Free Syrian Army fighters, according to one of the two senior opposition sources, and some 320 from the southwest, a third source said. The pace of hiring increased as Libya's fighting intensified and the war in Syria died down, the regional source said. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which reports on the Syrian conflict using a network of sources on the ground, more than 900 Syrians were recruited by Russia to fight in Libya in May. The fight-

respond to requests for comment. Titan said it was happy with its Egyptian investment and it saw a 5% increase in volume in the first quarter despite the coronavirus lockdown measures. Lorenz Naeger, the chief financial officer of HeidelbergCement told the company's annual meeting last week that sales in Egypt had been well below expectations.

"Several players are in deep distress today as most producers are generating losses at the gross and EBITDA level and balance sheets are in bad shape in some cases," said Yousef Hussein, analyst at EFG Hermes. "There is an expectation that some plants will have to close in the coming years as the economics just don't make sense." Overall demand for cement rose 8% in January and 9% in February 2020 from a year earlier but then fell 3% in March and 8% in April as the coronavirus crisis kicked in, said a second company official, citing government figures.

Official data for March and April have yet to be released. The state press centre and the military did not respond to a request for comment about the impact of the virus and the military-owned plant on the cement industry. Of the seven cement companies listed on the local stock market, only two eked out a profit in 2019, in both cases much reduced from 2018. A government official didn't rule out support for faltering companies. "This matter is being carefully studied by officials at the ministry in full coordination with the private sector," an official at the Trade and Industry Ministry, who asked not to be named, told Reuters.

While military-owned companies have been around for decades in Egypt they have flourished since former armed forces chief Abdel Fattah El-Sisi led the military in ousting

es have opened up for services under strict government regulations including the wearing of masks and social distancing. "God gave us also wisdom and intelligence. We can't just say because we are praying we are not going to observe those preventative measures," Malindhva said. But many religious locals are opting to stay away.

Strange space

"I am praying at home. God hears me just fine when I pray at home with my family," 57-year-old vegetable seller Gloria Msibi said. "I love church but it is so dangerous to be in a closed space with so many people." Since recording its first virus case on March 5, Africa's most modern nation has reported nearly 46,000 infections and 952 deaths, registering at least 1,000 new infections daily in recent days.

On Friday many South African mosques hosted their first prayers in more than two months. "We usually stand shoulder to shoulder. Right now we have to give space which is kind of strange," IT technician Tunde Oladeji told AFP after prayers at a Turkish mosque in Midrand, north of Johannesburg. "It is still better to be here than to be at home because praying in a mosque is really special." A

pro-Haftar forces. The Turkish-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli has in recent weeks retaken all remaining outposts of western Libya from pro-Haftar loyalists, who had sought to capture the capital in a 14-month offensive. In Tripoli on Sunday, crowds celebrated the retreat of Haftar forces, with residents flashing the victory sign and waving the national flag from honking cars moving in convoy. "Despite everything, we persisted and achieved victory, and we will keep on doing so," one of the joyous citizens, Abdel Salam Mohamed, told AFP.

But there were also warnings of acts of bloody retribution following the GNA military gains around Tripoli and the recaptured city of Tarhuna, including reports of looting and the displacement of thousands of residents. The UN Support Mission in Libya



TARHUNA: Fighters loyal to Libya's UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) pose for a picture in the back of a pickup truck in the town of Tarhuna, about 65 kilometers southeast of the capital Tripoli, after the area was taken over by pro-GNA forces. —AFP

ers are trained at a base in Homs before going to Libya, according to the sources who cited salaries ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,000 a month.

The movement of fighters into Libya violates a UN arms embargo and the UN's acting Libya envoy on May 19 urged the Security Council to stop "a massive influx of weaponry, equipment and mercenaries". Many former Syrian rebels stayed behind in areas recovered by Damascus and its Russian allies, signing agreements that required them to pledge loyalty to the state. But their lives remain tightly restricted and monitored by the authorities. Since 2014, Libya has been split between areas controlled by the Tripoli government and territory held by Haftar's eastern-based forces in Benghazi. Haftar is supported by Russia, the United

Arab Emirates and Egypt, according to U.N. experts and some security sources. The countries deny direct involvement in the conflict.

Despite this backing, forces loyal to the GNA captured Haftar's last major stronghold near Tripoli on Friday, capping the sudden collapse of his 14-month offensive on the capital. On Thursday, Erdogan vowed to ramp up Turkey's support for its ally in Libya to lock in the gains. On Saturday, Haftar was in Egypt, where President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced a new peace plan. The retreat, reversing many of Haftar's gains from last year, extends the GNA's control of most of north-west Libya. Haftar and allied groups still control the east and much of the south, as well as most of Libya's oilfields, however. —Reuters

COVID-19 widens the cracks in Egypt cement industry

CAIRO: The coronavirus is putting Egypt's private cement industry under even more pressure. Already scrambling to respond to competition from a vast new factory owned by the military, the pandemic has stymied a nascent rebound in sales, raising the possibility of plant closures, industry executives and analysts say. Demand for cement in Egypt was on the decline when the military opened a \$1 billion factory in 2018 that added 13 million tons of annual capacity, on top of the country's existing 79 million tons.

The plant in Beni Suef, 200 km south of Cairo, has compounded a difficult market for foreign firms that spent hundreds of millions of dollars buying cement factories during a wave of privatizations in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The pandemic, however, has made the economics even worse and could lead to four or five closures among the country's roughly two dozen plants in the coming months, according to one senior company official, who declined to be named because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

Foreign cement firms in Egypt include Germany's HeidelbergCement, France's Vicat, Switzerland's LafargeHolcim, Greece's Titan Cement and Mexico's CEMEX. LafargeHolcim, Vicat and CEMEX did not

S Africans reluctant to return to their places of worship

JOHANNESBURG: White plastic chairs are sprayed down with sanitizer and a smartly dressed cleaner says a prayer while dusting before a first service in her church in more than nine weeks. President Cyril Ramaphosa gave places of worship across South Africa the greenlight to reopen from June 1 provided they could satisfy appropriate COVID-19 self-regulation measures. But few have done so to date, with many worshippers hesitant to return for fear of catching the coronavirus.

"Our first service was today... we didn't have as many of our congregation members as usual," Pastor Sylvain Malindhva of Peniel ministries said. "The fear is there... a lot of people are still hesitating to come to the churches." In Johannesburg's crowded business district, some small evangelical church-

Unity forces battle to retake strategic Sirte

TRIPOLI: Fighters loyal to Libya's UN-recognized government Sunday kept up their counter-offensive against forces of strongman Khalifa Haftar, but fighting stalled on the outskirts of the strategic city of Sirte. The Mediterranean coastal city - the home of former dictator Muammar Gaddafi who was ousted and killed in a 2011 NATO-backed uprising - is also a key gateway to the country's major oil fields in the east, still held by



CAIRO: A woman cycles while wearing a face mask around her neck along the Nile riverfront in the Egyptian capital Cairo's southern district of Maadi during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. —AFP

Islamist President Mohamed Morsi in 2014 and took over a year later. The military's plant, billed as the biggest cement factory to have been built anywhere in the world at a single time, opened a year after the market began shrinking. The plant appears to have been inspired by a government study in the early 2000s that predicted demand would rise to 100 million tons a year, the company officials said. But cement sales in Egypt fell to 43.8 million tons in 2019 from 49.5 million in 2017, according to central bank data, a period that coincided with austerity measures under a three-year IMF reform plan. —Reuters



JOHANNESBURG: Muslims wearing masks await in line to enter the Nizamiye Mosque ahead of prayer in Midrand, Johannesburg. —AFP

fellow congregant described the prayer session as both "emotionally and spiritually challenging." "It is something different and so we have to adapt, and adapting is a challenge for some people. So it will take time, but hopefully ... we will get through this together." —AFP

(UNSMIL) said it "remains alarmed by the harm inflicted on the civilian population by the continuing cycle of violence in Libya". Rights group Amnesty International warned last week that "war crimes and other violations" may have been committed by warring parties near Tripoli, often in retaliation against civilians for their perceived affiliation to one side or another.

Haftar, following his string of military setbacks, was in Cairo Saturday to support a ceasefire proposal made by his key backer, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi which took effect at 0400 yesterday. The so-called "Cairo declaration" called for the withdrawal of "foreign mercenaries from all Libyan territory, dismantling militias and handing over their weaponry," Sisi said. —AFP

As Pakistan glacier melt surges, efforts to cut flood risk drag

ISLAMABAD: Late last month, residents of the tiny village of Hassanabad, in Pakistan's mountainous Hunza District, noticed floodwaters quickly rising in the stream that runs near their homes, carrying water from the towering Shisper glacier. "The flows became so high that they eroded the land and reached 10 feet from my family's home. We evacuated," said Ghulam Qadir, a resident of the village. The ensuing flood, carrying huge boulders from the melting glacier, demolished the cherry, apricot and walnut orchards many families depend on, and left homes cracked, 16 families in tents and local irrigation and hydropower systems damaged.

"The flood water broke all the retaining walls that were built last year in order to protect the village," Qadir told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by telephone. "Now there is a ravine right next to our houses and we live in dread of another flood." The area is one of 24 valleys in northern Pakistan scheduled to receive warning systems, between 2018 and 2022, for glacial lake outburst floods using \$37 million in funding from the Green Climate Fund. But work has been delayed as a result of differences between the partners - the U.N. Development Program-Pakistan and the federal Ministry of Climate Change - as well as by a change of government and now the coronavirus, said Ayaz Joudat, national program director for the project.

"The delay is partly due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and partly because UNDP-Pakistan would not finalise the letter of agreement signed with the Ministry of Climate Change, which would give us oversight over hiring of staff and other matters," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. That delay, however, was recently resolved, he said, and hiring now will begin at the end of June, with an aim of installing the first early warning systems on glaciers by September. Amanullah Khan, UNDP-Pakistan's assistant country director, agreed the delayed project was now "up and running".

Melting glaciers

With more than 7,000, Pakistan has more glaciers than anywhere except the polar regions. But climate change is "eating away Himalayan glaciers at a dramatic rate", a study published last year in the journal Science Advances noted. As glacier ice melts, it can collect in large glacial lakes, which are at risk of bursting their through banks and creating deadly flash floods downstream, in places like Hassanabad.

More than 3,000 of those lakes had formed as of 2018, with 33 of them considered hazardous and more than 7 million people at risk downstream, according to UNDP. In an effort to reduce the risks, pilot funding from the U.N. Adaptation Fund from 2011-2016 paid for two lake outburst warning systems, flood protection walls and community preparedness efforts in Chitral District and in the Gilgit Baltistan region. The new project aims to install similar systems in 15 districts in northern Pakistan, and to build other infrastructure to reduce risks, including flood walls in villages like Hassanabad. —Reuters

International

Brazil reports a total of 37,312 COVID-19 deaths

Brazilians hold rival rallies for and against president

SAO PAULO: Brazil registered 37,312 total coronavirus deaths while overall cases in the country reached 685,427, according to data from the health ministry on Sunday, amid criticism of the government's handling of the pandemic. Unlike in the previous day, the government released cumulative figures on Sunday and not a tally of deaths and new infections in the last 24 hours. Based on Sunday's data, Brazil registered 1,382 new deaths and 12,581 new cases in the last 24 hours. The government changed its format for reporting COVID-19 statistics for the second straight day. Over the weekend it removed from public view months of national data on the epidemic as President Jair Bolsonaro defended delays and changes to official record-keeping of the world's second-largest coronavirus outbreak. On Saturday Brazil registered 35,930 total coronavirus deaths and 672,846 confirmed cases.



Chile coronavirus death toll jumps sharply

Rival rallies

Meanwhile, Brazilians took to the streets in Sao Paulo and Brasilia for rival demonstrations on Sunday for and against President Jair Bolsonaro, who has been widely criticized over his response to the coronavirus pandemic. Hundreds of people banging drums and setting off flares marched through the capital to denounce the far-right president. Demonstrators, many dressed in black and wearing face masks, held banners saying: "Everyone for democracy", "Against racism and fascism" and "Terrorism is the government's policy of extermination." It was the first demonstration against

Bolsonaro in Brasilia since the pandemic began. "Get back fascist, get back, popular power is in the streets," chanted protesters.

Bolsonaro has caused controversy during a long political career, after leaving the army with comments many deemed racist, homophobic or sexist. At the same time, a smaller protest took place in support of Bolsonaro, who has repeatedly tried to downplay the threat of the novel coronavirus. His supporters regularly demonstrate at the weekend in the heart of Brasilia's government district and have demanded an end to lockdown measures, railing against the Supreme Court and Congress. Bolsonaro often attends the rallies. Police provided a cordon to keep the rival demonstrations apart. Separate protests were also planned in Sao Paulo, including one by football supporters and social organizations to demand "democracy."

Regional authorities have pleaded with organizers to keep the two apart to avoid clashes. Last weekend, Sao Paulo witnessed its first demonstration against the national government. Supporters of two of the city's most prestigious football teams - Corinthians and Palmeiras, whose rivalry is one of the fiercest in world football - joined forces "against fascism." They clashed with Bolsonaro supporters demanding an end to lockdown measures and had to be dispersed by police, who fired tear gas and stun grenades. Tensions are running high in Brazil, which has recorded more than 600,000 coronavirus cases and over 37,000 deaths from COVID-19. Bolsonaro has regularly attacked state authorities over regional lockdown measures and this weekend came under fire for ceasing to report Brazil's total number of cases and deaths, while also pushing back the daily report of the latest figures by five hours.

Chile coronavirus death

In another development, Chile revised its death toll linked to the novel coronavirus outbreak sharply higher on Sunday, adding fatalities from databases that previ-

France 24hr falloff

ously had not been included. Health Minister Jaime M said 653 additional deaths linked to COVID-19 had to be counted, bringing the total number to 2,290. That included 96 new deaths announced in the Sunday daily report. Chile has one of the highest numbers of cases in Latin America, which has become an epicenter of the pandemic even as countries worldwide have begun to reopen. Brazil, Peru and Mexico have also been hard hit by the virus.



SAO PAULO: An effigy of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro hangs from a tree during demonstrations against him and against racism, in Sao Paulo, Brazil amid the COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

ously had not been included. Health Minister Jaime M said 653 additional deaths linked to COVID-19 had to be counted, bringing the total number to 2,290. That included 96 new deaths announced in the Sunday daily report. Chile has one of the highest numbers of cases in Latin America, which has become an epicenter of the pandemic even as countries worldwide have begun to reopen. Brazil, Peru and Mexico have also been hard hit by the virus.

He said that databases on deceased persons certified by the civil registry had been reviewed and along

are being made in Sderot, a southern town near the Gaza Strip, using machines imported from China by the defence ministry.

Pope offers cautious hope

Pope Francis says the worst of the crisis is over in Italy, addressing the faithful for the first time in Saint Peter's Square since the health emergency began. "Your presence in the square is a sign that in Italy the acute phase of the epidemic is over," Francis tells those assembled for his weekly Angelus prayer. "But be careful... do not celebrate victory too soon".

Peru battles oxygen shortage

Peru, with 5,000 deaths to date, says it has a shortage of oxygen in its hospitals which are struggling to treat 9,500 cases.

Algeria begins deconfinement

Algerian shops began reopening as confinement measures begin to be relaxed - the country will review where it stands on June 13.

Cuba under control

Cuba's president said the country appears to have the pandemic "under control" after an eighth straight day with zero coronavirus deaths as the country mulls a partial deconfinement from the coming week. — AFP

Trump drifts from constitution, former military chief warns

WASHINGTON: Colin Powell, who served as America's top military officer and top diplomat under Republican presidents, said Sunday he will vote for Democrat Joe Biden, accusing Donald Trump of drifting from the US constitution and Republicans of failing to hold him accountable. In a scathing indictment of Trump on CNN, Powell denounced the US president as a danger to democracy whose lies and insults have diminished America in the eyes of the world. "We have a constitution. We have to follow that constitution. And the president's drifted away from it," Powell said. A retired four-star army general, Powell was the latest in a series of retired top military officers to publicly criticize Trump's handling of the mass anti-racism protests that have swept the United States since the police killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, in Minneapolis May 25.

A tipping point appeared to have been reached last week among the normally reticent retired officers when Trump threatened to use the active duty military to quell protests in US cities, setting off a confrontation with the Pentagon leadership. Among those who broke their silence was Trump's former defense secretary, Jim Mattis, a retired Marine general who accused the president of deliberately setting Americans against each other and making "a mockery of our Constitution." Powell's comments carried particular force as the nation's first and so far only African American chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the country's first black secretary of state, serving under Republican presidents George H.W. Bush and George Bush respectively.

Powell blasted Republican senators for not standing up to Trump. "We are in a turning point," he said. "He lies about things. And he gets away with it because people will not hold him accountable," he said, referring to Trump. Powell also rebuked Trump for offending "just about everyone in the world." "We're down on NATO. We're cutting more troops out of Germany. We have done away with our contributions to the World Health Organization. We're not happy with the United Nations." "And just about everywhere you go, you'll find some kind of disdain for American foreign policy that is not in our interests," he said. — AFP

with information from laboratories doing PCR tests for the virus had been consolidated into a single list. "This is an adjustment we have to make and report, a commitment to legitimacy, especially when we've made a huge effort to search additional databases for information not present in the databases that we were using before," he said. In recent weeks, some think tanks, media and scientists have criticized how the government was counting deaths from COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus, arguing the real number may be higher. — Agencies



In this file photo, Iyad Ag Ghaly, leader of the Islamic group of Ansar Dine, looks on at Kidal airport before a meeting with Burkina Faso's foreign Minister Djibrille Bassole. — AFP

Three top jihadists dominate Sahel after Qaeda leader death

BAMAKO: Three leaders have been left dominating the jihadist insurgency in the Sahel, following the death of a top al-Qaeda commander in the West African state of Mali this week. French forces killed Algerian national Abdelmalek Droukdel, the head of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), in a raid in northern Mali on Wednesday. The move will strike a blow to the organization, but other powerful al-Qaeda-linked leaders already operate in the semi-desert Sahel. Droukdel's death also comes at a time of increasing jihadist infighting, between al-Qaeda affiliates and Islamic-State-aligned militants. Three jihadist leaders now loom large over the central Sahel: Iyad Ag Ghaly and Amadou Koufa - who are both linked to Al-Qaeda - and Adnan Abou Walid Sahraoui, who leads the region's Islamic State group franchise.

Iyad Ag Ghaly

Iyad Ag Ghaly, who heads the powerful GSIM jihadist alliance, is a veteran of Mali's interneccine conflicts. An ethnic Tuareg from northern Mali, he first leapt onto the stage during a Tuareg rebellion during the 1990s. After it subsided he went into business, before publically returning to militancy again in 2012, with a newly created group called Ansar Dine. That year, Tuareg separatists launched a rebellion in northern Mali, which was quickly commanded by jihadists. The event triggered a bloody conflict, which has now spread to the centre of the country, and neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger. At first allied to the separatists, Ag Ghaly's Ansar Dine split from them and, alongside other jihadist groups, took control of several towns in northern Mali, until French forces drove Islamist fighters out in 2013. Ansar Dine is a member of the jihadist alliance the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), which also includes Amadou Koufa's Katiba Macina and AQIM. Iyad Ag Ghaly leads this alliance. Jean-Pierre Filiu, a historian at Paris' Science Po university, said the jihadist leader is now "the sole Sahel representative of the al-Qaeda's supreme chief, Ayman Zawahiri".

Amadou Koufa

Amadou Koufa, another leader within GSIM, is subordinate to Ag Ghaly, according Filiu. A firebrand Islamic preacher, Koufa's influence has nonetheless continued to grow since founding the Katiba Macina militia in 2015. He has been accused of exploiting tensions between herders and sedentary farmers, and of inflaming ethnic tensions in central Mali - where Katiba Macina has staged its attacks. Central Mali has now become one of the main theatres for jihadist attacks in the Sahel. Massacres with an apparent ethnic motive are also common. On Friday, some 30 people were killed in an ethnic Fulani village. A Fulani association has blamed the army for the killing, and on Saturday, Mali's defence minister promised an investigation. The pastoralist Fulani people are often accused of being close to jihadists, a perception which has led to tit-for-tit massacres between them and other ethnic groups. — AFP

Coronavirus: Latest global developments

PARIS: Here are the latest developments in the coronavirus crisis.

More than 400,000 deaths

The pandemic has killed 400,581 people worldwide since it surfaced in China late last year, according to an AFP tally at 1900 GMT on Sunday, based on official sources. At least 6,949,890 cases have been registered in 196 countries and territories. The United States is the worst-hit country with 110,037 deaths, followed by Britain with 40,542, Brazil with 35,930, Italy with 33,899 and France with 29,155 fatalities.

China foreign trade plunge

China's exports and imports fell in May, official data shows. Imports saw their sharpest on-year fall in over four years at 16.7 percent, while exports fell by 3.3 percent. Analysts say a deeper downturn in exports is looming for the world's manufacturing powerhouse.

Iran surge: More testing?

Iran's health ministry says a surge in new reported infections is due to increased testing rather than a worsening outbreak.

Silence is 'complicity,' say white protesters

NEW YORK: As massive crowds take over streets across the United States in support of black lives, "white silence is violence" has become a recurring theme, a push to spread awareness that discrimination in a country built on racism extends far beyond police brutality. The recent police killing of a black man, George Floyd, in Minneapolis and the protests it triggered have revived long-simmering criticisms over the historic complacency of white Americans towards the systemic racism undergirding their lifestyles. Krista Knight, a playwright who protested this weekend in Manhattan, was among the many demonstrators wielding signs with slogans like "complicity" to indicate their solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. It's the first time the white 36-year-old has marched for the cause, but staying home "is like sending the message that I don't care." "Silence is indicating complicity," she said. The Black Lives Matter movement was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of the white man who shot dead Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old black youth, in Florida. Since then, it has grown rapidly worldwide, founding dozens of chapters and organizing disruptions to draw attention to systemic ills - often ignored by white Americans, who are statistically affected the least by such issues - including police brutality, as well as housing, education and healthcare disparities.

The movement fueled a growing consciousness and organizing framework for years, building some of the forces necessary to foster the current explosion of protests. And according to Candace McCoy - a criminologist at the City University of New York who has written on protest tactics - "one of the major differences in these protests, compared to others in the past 30 years, is the significant percentage of white people protesting on behalf of equal rights for black people."

She compares this mobilization to the demonstrations for civil rights of the 1960s, in particular the August 28, 1963 "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom" spearheaded by Martin Luther King Jr. Even Barack Obama has noticed a difference: It's "a far more representative cross-section of America out on the streets peacefully protesting, who felt moved to do something because of the injustices that they had seen," the former president said during a recent digital town hall. "There is a change in mindset that's taking place."

'Tipped the balance'

For many young people, protesting was the obvious move. Ross, a 25-year-old musician who has lived in cities including New Orleans, Houston and New York, found it unnerving to see his black friends flinch at the sight of police. It's vital, he said, to march in the name of equality for "our friends, our neighbors." "It's not right to let that separation continue." The marches that have for more than a week blossomed from New York to Los Angeles, including in many small towns and rural areas nationwide, are attracting older generations as well.

"I've done a lot of marches for other things, but this is the first time I've come out" for Black Lives Matter, said Marianne Macrae, 58. "I don't know why this was the one that tipped the balance," said the employee of a non-profit that fights poverty, but "I think it's really important to show my support." "We have to have some reforms... I think this needs to go on and continue, all summer, into the fall, into the election." Some 49 percent of white Americans now say police are more likely to use excessive force against a black culprit - nearly double the 25 percent who said so in 2016. And 78 percent of all Americans consider the anger triggered by George Floyd's murder "fully" or "partially" justified.

It's a sensitivity also growing on social media. Meredith Parets, a teacher from Phoenix, Arizona, last week joined a protest and has subscribed to two groups related to the movement on Facebook. One, "White People for Black Lives," is aimed at helping white people detect and combat insidious forms of racism. "For all my life, when I thought of white supremacy, I thought of neo-Nazis and the KKK," the 47-year-old said. — AFP



FLORIDA: A demonstrator lays on the ground during a rally in response to the recent death of George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis in Winter Park, Florida. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2020

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In this file handout photo, Airbus commercial aircraft idle on the tarmac in Toulouse as the company is celebrating its 50th anniversary. — AFP

Pandemic bursts Toulouse aerospace bubble

Toulouse parts suppliers wrestle with collapse of jet demand

TOULOUSE: Barely three months ago, Serge Dumas had one problem: how to keep up with record demand for the metal fasteners and bolts his small aerospace supply firm manufactures just north of Toulouse.

Now, the head of Gillis Aerospace is wondering how to keep his 45 employees busy as Europe's aerospace capital reels from plummeting jetliner demand caused by the coronavirus crisis. "In February, we were in the midst of euphoria and operating a just-in-time schedule," Dumas said, referring to the drum beat of a fully-stretched aerospace supply chain.

"In a few days, we went from accelerating flat-out to slamming on the brakes. We were flabbergasted." Now his company, which recently partnered with Germany's Boellhoff Group, has suspended an 800,000-euro (\$906,700) investment in a new building and machinery.

Gillis Aerospace, with annual revenues of 5 million euros, is one of thousands of small to medium-sized firms hurt by the crisis as the French government and private lenders finalize a 1-billion-euro fund to help the sector.

Across the surrounding Occitanie region, a total of 40,000 aerospace jobs are seen at risk, up to half of which could involve Airbus, based in regional capital Toulouse. Once basking in wealth from air transport, France's fourth largest city is alarmed by whispers that it could suffer a fate

similar to Detroit, ravaged by recession in the auto industry.

Although Europe's social safety net is stronger, Detroit's experience highlights a pressing issue: how a city built around a single industry can spiral into decline when that sector is hit by economic disruption. Four think-tanks and associations sounded the alarm in May, warning the area could succumb to "Detroit Syndrome". They noted, though, that Airbus - flush with orders with rival Boeing weakened by the grounding of its 737 MAX - had avoided the kinds

of strategic mistakes that worsened the plight of US automakers. Just as Toulouse is now in France, Detroit was once one of the wealthiest American cities. But after decades of job cuts and auto factory closures, the Midwest city's population of below 700,000 is less than half its 1950 peak, and

many residents live in poverty. "Right now, aerospace subcontracting represents 86,000 jobs in Occitanie and Airbus buys 5-billion-euros of parts locally," said Alain Di Crescenzo, president of Occitanie's Industrial Chamber of Commerce (CCI). Planemakers employ another 30,000.

"When Airbus coughs, everyone gets sick," he said.

CCI estimates Airbus will halve parts procurement this year. For suppliers paying off loans, such cuts could be devastating. "Halving activity equates to 40,000 direct jobs locally and the same again for indirect jobs," Di Crescenzo said.

Airbus declined comment.

"Collective blindness" Furthermore, it's crunch time for employers.

As France returns to some measure of normality after lockdowns, government-supported furlough schemes will begin expiring and charges on employers that have been waived could start rising from July. "That's when the Detroit effect could kick in. If we don't do anything we could kill the largest aerospace cluster in Europe," Di Crescenzo said.

Toulouse's aviation roots date back to World War I when local industrialist Pierre-Georges Latécoere won a contract to build Salmson reconnaissance biplanes for the French army.

The city pioneered international flights with Latécoere's

they will be. "Consumers are placing a greater focus on essential spending categories," Fitch Solutions said in a June 4 report, predicting a fall in Chinese household spending this year and slashing its 2020 growth forecast to just 1.1 percent from 5.6 percent before the pandemic.

Dollar store clientele grows

In the United States, commonplace brands such as chocolate giant Hershey or toothpaste-maker Colgate say consumers have traded down. Dollar stores, meanwhile, expect to open their doors to a new set of customers as they did after the 2008-09 Great Recession.

"In 2008, folks lost jobs ... and they found us. And I think that's some of what we're planning for as we take a look into our crystal ball at back half of the year and 2021," Dollar Tree Chief Executive Gary Philbin said on May 28. Much hangs now on what happens to the mountain of savings built up by those US households which weathered the worst of the lockdown fall-out and have pushed the overall US savings rate to a record 33 percent of income.

While that rate will fall, those who expect cash to flood back into the economy may be disappointed. A 2012 paper by IMF researchers found that lingering uncertainty after the onset of the 2008-09 recession boosted saving rates durably, leading to lower consumption and growth in the wider economy.

Moreover many US households are about to suffer "income cliffs" with one-off tax rebates expiring in

legendary Aeropostale airline and spawned the Caravelle, Concorde and the Airbus jets that now drive its economy. But the recent think-tank report by Fondation Copernic, Attac, Amis du Monde diplomatique and Université Populaire de Toulouse attacked "collective blindness" that left it dependent on a single sector - one now facing its worst-ever crisis

According to France's INSEE statistics office, French output shrank 33 percent in the first weeks of the crisis, but the Toulouse area plunged by 38 percent due to its reliance on aerospace.

The shock was all the more painful because the industry had record activity in 2019, said regional director Caroline Jamet.

The dominant role of a handful of manufacturers like Airbus means three out of 10 local suppliers rely on one main client. The city's mayor, conservative Jean-Luc Moudenc, is worried about such disarray in the short term. But, pitching himself as an aerospace champion in upcoming elections, he dismisses fears that the city of half a million faces Detroit-style decay.

Its factories hope to develop green aircraft of the future, he told Reuters, adding: "Our firms have such know-how that they can diversify into other areas: defense, medicine or energy." —Reuters

May and pandemic unemployment compensation ending in July, Oxford Economics said, forecasting lower household income through the rest of the year.

"This will likely act as a constraint on the consumer spending recovery well into 2021," it said in a June 3 note. Such a scenario could force policy makers across the world to encourage savers to spend by speeding up moves to ease lockdowns, offering more economic support or pushing interest rates further towards, and even into, negative territory.

The same dilemma exists in Europe. The European Central Bank expects household savings to rise six points to 19 percent of income this year and remain high next year due to what economists call "scarring", when an event leaves a durable impact on behavior.

Citing the risk of cash-hoarding, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has called for direct incentives to boost demand. The budget he will present next week will forecast a drop in consumer spending of 10 percent this year as households amass savings. Germany has announced a cut in value-added tax for the second half of the year to drive consumption, coupling that with cash handouts to parents.

Presenting hefty downgrades of the bank's eurozone growth protections on Thursday, ECB President Christine Lagarde said the depth of scarring of domestic demand was one big factor that will determine the size of the contraction and recovery to come. She warned: "Overall, the (ECB) Governing Council sees the balance of risks ... to the downside." — Reuters

Scarred, scared: Consumers not their old selves

LONDON: Michael Clark of Amy's Housewares has one big fear as its London stores prepare to reopen on June 15 along with other retailers around Britain: "Customers not spending, having no trust in the economy."

His concern, captured in a survey by the British Independent Retailers Association (BIRA) before a nationwide easing of social distancing measures, may be well founded. Across the world, consumers are emerging from lockdowns warier and more thrift-conscious than before. That will drag on any recovery and could encourage governments and central bankers to follow up on coronavirus handouts with more costly stimulus.

The new thrift is showing up in various ways: some households are hoarding the cash they saved during lockdowns; some are flocking to cheaper brands or sticking with essentials.

Other risks to consumer demand include the outright collapse of purchasing power among those whose livelihoods were ruined by the pandemic and even imperishables such as what happens to spending



France readies 1-bn-euro crisis fund

of strategic mistakes that worsened the plight of US automakers.

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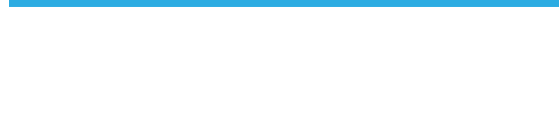
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ROME: People gather to buy fishes directly off fishermen's boats at the port of Fiumicino, west of Rome. Across the world, consumers are emerging from lockdowns warier and more thrift-conscious than before. — AFP

Business

Japan economy better than feared but still mired deep in recession

Household spending sees sharp drop in April

TOKYO: Japanese growth figures were better than initially feared in the first quarter, according to official data published yesterday, but the world's third-largest economy was still mired deep in recession.

Gross domestic product contracted by 0.6 percent in the January-March period compared to the previous quarter. Authorities had initially reported a 0.9-percent contraction.

Economists had expected the revision, with the market forecasting a 0.5-percent contraction. The figures confirmed that Japan was suffering its first recession—defined as two consecutive quarters of contraction—since 2015.

A tax hike and typhoons hit Japan hard in the fourth quarter of 2019, sparking a 1.9-percent contraction compared to the previous period—even before the coronavirus pandemic battered the economy both in Japan and worldwide. Japan has been hit less hard than most advanced economies by the coronavirus, with just over 17,000 cases in the whole country and around 900 deaths.

However, authorities urged people to stay indoors for several weeks at the height of the outbreak in Japan, which affected the capital and economic powerhouse Tokyo the most. Most analysts believe that Japan's economy will suffer further in the coming months as the effects of the restrictions on economic activity feed into the spending.

Meanwhile, Japan's household spending recorded its worst drop in nearly two decades in April, government data showed Friday, as the world's third-largest economy reels from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Spending fell 11.1 percent from a year earlier, with a sales tax hike last year adding to woes, according to data released by the internal affairs ministry.

The figure was largely in line with market expect-

tations of a 12.75 percent drop, and marked the seventh straight month of declines since the government hiked the sales tax in October. "The new coronavirus is having a serious impact on the economy including spending by individuals," chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters at a regular briefing.

"We think it is necessary for us to return to regular economic activities step by step while taking counter-infection measures, as businesses are trying to survive the current situation," added Suga, the top government spokesman. The April drop was partly attributed to declines in spending on transport and telecommunications, as well as on leisure activities.

It is the worst decline since comparable data became available in 2001. The latest figures come after official data last month confirmed Japan dived into its first recession since 2015, shrinking by 0.9 percent in January-March as it wrestles with the fallout from the coronavirus.

The drop in gross domestic product followed a 1.9 percent decline in the fourth quarter of 2019 as the tax hike and typhoons hit Japan hard—even before the pandemic shut down much of the economy.

Fears about the economic impact of the virus have shaken global and Japanese financial markets, and the Bank of Japan last month expanded its emergency monetary easing and cut growth forecasts for the country. Compared with hard-hit areas in Europe, the United States, Russia and Brazil, Japan has been spared the worst of the pandemic, with 17,064 infections and 907 deaths.

But on April 7, with cases beginning to spike and fears for the country's health system, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared a state of emergency for Tokyo and six other regions—later expanding it to cover



TOKYO: A man holding a shopping bag waits to cross a railway in Tokyo yesterday.—AFP

the entire nation. Businesses and schools were urged to shut and people were asked to remain home, but Japan's lockdown was far softer than in other parts of the world and there was no punishment for those flouting the rules.

People largely heeded the orders, however, with most of Tokyo's famously packed streets falling quiet.

On May 25, Japan lifted a nationwide state of emergency, gradually reopening the economy as government officials warned caution was still necessary to prevent another wave. The number of new infections has fallen from a peak of around 700 per day to just a few dozen nationally but officials warn there is a possibility of a second wave of infections in parts of the country, including Tokyo.—AFP

Euro stocks slide, Asia markets gain

LONDON: European stock markets slid at the start of trading yesterday following big gains ahead of the weekend. London's benchmark FTSE 100 index dropped 0.9 percent to 6,429.07 points, having jumped more than two percent Friday. At the open yesterday in the eurozone, Frankfurt's DAX 30 shed 1.3 percent to 12,684.61 points and the Paris CAC 40 lost 1.0 percent to 5,145.93. Both indices had closed with gains of around 3.5 percent on Friday following a surprisingly strong US jobs report.

Meanwhile, a blockbuster US jobs report that fanned optimism about the economic recovery from the coronavirus crisis helped push Asian stock markets even higher yesterday, while a decision to extend production cuts provided fresh support to oil prices.

As countries continue to ease lockdown measures and with trillions of dollars in stimulus and central bank support pledged, equities across the planet have surged since hitting a trough in March. And the release of data Friday showing a staggering 2.5 million US jobs were created in May—compared with an expected loss of more than eight million—added to the optimism, pushing the Nasdaq and the S&P 500 on Wall Street to within spitting distance of record highs. Canada also reported a surprise increase in employment, confounding forecasts of a big drop.

"While there are still significant uncertainties over the COVID-19 impact on corporate earnings, investors are encouraged by the reopening of economies that is likely to lead to a rebound in profitability later this year," said Iyad Abu Hweij of Allied Investment Partners PJSC. Tokyo rose more than one percent, while Wellington surged more than three percent after New Zealand officials reported no active cases of coronavirus for the first time since the pandemic began, and said the country was free of the disease—adding that restrictions would be lifted. Hong Kong inched up for a sixth straight gain, Seoul added 0.1 percent, Shanghai closed up 0.2 percent, while Mumbai, Taipei and Singapore jumped more than one percent, with Jakarta three percent higher.

Bangkok and Manila were also higher.

In early trade, London, Paris and Frankfurt dropped on profit-taking after surging Friday. Sydney was closed for a holiday. "In the space of four weeks we've seen history made as the US economy posted a record number of job losses in one month, only to be followed by a record number of jobs gains in the following month," said Michael Hewson at CMC Markets. But he added: "Despite all of the enthusiasm over last month's jobs report it doesn't change the fact that US unemployment is still well above post financial crisis levels, and is likely to remain so for quite some time."

'Increased confidence'

Jason Wong at BNZ markets added: "The data are consistent with activity indicators that show a recovery in activity as US lockdowns eased, following the big hole in the economy in April, and give increased confidence that activity is on a clear path upward from here as restrictions have eased further."

As Latin America experiences a spike in infections and deaths, Europe continues to reopen to some semblance of normality, providing a much-needed boost to the shattered tourism industry. Adding to the positive sentiment was news that major oil producers had agreed to extend output cuts of almost 10 million barrels a day for another month through to the end of July.—AFP

Fed says beating pandemic is key

WASHINGTON: With a full three months of responding to a global pandemic under their belt, US Federal Reserve officials have united around one point: lasting progress on the economic front will be dictated by success in containing the spread of the coronavirus.

But agreement beyond that may be elusive as Fed policymakers meet this week to balance fresh signs the United States may be over the worst of the economic fallout from the pandemic against evidence the virus is not yet under control.

A surprise gain of more than 2.5 million US jobs last month will factor into their debate, as will any hint the surge in employment and other activity more broadly is accompanied by more transmission of the novel coronavirus.

Where they end up could shape decisions about whether to expand or create new emergency programs in anticipation of a more extended economic crisis, or about how to best support companies and households if in fact the pandemic is easing.

The US central bank has ongoing

debates on each front, both about the long-run commitments it might make to anchor interest rates at a low level for the recovery, and the continued hunt, as Fed Chair Jerome Powell put it last week, for companies with substantial numbers of employees that have not been covered in any of the crisis programs launched so far.

The stunning May payrolls data released by the Labor Department on Friday could temper some of the urgency that has accompanied Fed meetings since March.

After having cut interest rates to near zero and launched a bevy of credit programs in a frenzy of emergency meetings in March, no major policy decisions are expected today when the Federal Open Market Committee ends its latest two-day meeting. It is scheduled to release its policy statement at 2 pm EDT (1800 GMT) today and Powell is due to hold a news conference shortly after.

Policymakers, however, will issue economic projections for the first time since December, before a decade-long economic expansion was snuffed out by a massive wave of unemployment that followed widespread lockdowns to stop the spread of COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus.

Jobs come first in S Korea's ambitious 'Green New Deal'

SEOUL: The first stages of a South Korean government "Green New Deal" aiming to retool one of the world's most fossil fuel-reliant economies is focused instead on protecting jobs as the country seeks to stimulate a virus-ravaged economy, activists say.

First proposed by President Moon Jae-in's ruling party ahead of the April parliamentary election, the Green New Deal set ambitious goals of net-zero emissions by 2050, an end to financing of overseas coal plants, and the introduction of a carbon tax. But activists say that government plans announced since then do not directly address Moon's pledge to reach net-zero emissions, or to end to coal financing.

An initial parliamentary proposal calls for an investment of 12.9 trillion won (\$10.5 billion) over the next two

years, with the focus on the creation of 133,000 jobs. The plan includes remodeling public buildings, creating urban forests, recycling, establishing a foundation for new and renewable energy, and creating low-carbon energy industrial complexes to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Those proposals look "like a repackaging of already existing plans and policies," Kim Joo-jin, managing director of Solutions For Our Climate (SFOC), a Seoul-based non-profit organization, said in a statement.

"There is quite a large gap between international praise of Korea's Green New Deal and the reality on the ground," he said. Lee So-young, who was elected to parliament this year on a platform of environmental reform, acknowledged the concerns but said lawmakers are seeking to draft more detailed laws that will not only not boost the economy after the coronavirus crisis, but also transform the economy and society in more sustainable ways. The jobs-heavy proposals are a first, short-term phase

years of freedom.

Prosecutors last week asked the court to issue an arrest warrant against Lee, culminating a probe into a controversial 2015 merger of two Samsung affiliates that they said helped facilitate Lee's plan to assume greater control of the group.

The risk of more jail time for Lee who has led the group since his father's heart attack in 2014, has cast a pall over the conglomerate and its crown jewel, Samsung Electronics Co, whose annual revenue alone is equivalent to 12 percent of South Korea's gross domestic product.



In this file photo, US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell gives a press briefing in Washington, DC.—AFP

Projections due in March were shelved because there was so much fog around the collapsing economy that policymakers felt it pointless to guess where unemployment, inflation and economic growth were headed.

Three months of data since have verified the scope of the crisis — unemployment may have fallen in May but remains at a Great Depression-like 13.3 percent. And while it does appear the worst in

terms of joblessness may have been reached, Oxford Economics economist Bob Schwartz cautioned on Friday that "the remarkable turnaround last month reflected the easy-lifting part of the healing process."

Furthermore, what remains unknown is perhaps what matters most — the extent to which durable progress has been made in containing a health crisis in which more than 110,000 Americans have died.—Reuters



SEOUL: Samsung Group heir Jay Y Lee arrives for a court hearing to review a detention warrant request against him at the Seoul Central District Court in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday.—Reuters

designed to help shore up the economy after the coronavirus crisis, she told Reuters.

"Green New Deal legislation is not simply a matter of injecting funding in

certain projects, but rather addressing what kind of procedure, governance and regulations we will use to remodel the entire society by 2050 to prevent climate change," Lee said.—Reuters

Samsung leader appears in court, awaits verdict

SEOUL: Samsung Group's leader, Jay Y Lee, appeared before a South Korean court yesterday, awaiting a ruling on whether new allegations including accounting fraud and stock manipulation will send him back to jail after more than two

Lee, 51, wearing a face mask and a dark suit, appeared at the Seoul court for a hearing that began at 10:30 am (0230 GMT). The Samsung Electronics vice chairman did not answer questions from reporters.

After the hearing, he is expected to head to a detention center to await the decision on whether he will be arrested, expected early today.

The court can then order Lee be detained for 20 days while prosecutors proceed with investigations. After that charges must be filed and he be put on trial. During a trial, Lee can then be detained for up to six months.—Reuters

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

Risk-on: Investors ditch the dollar amid hope for a V-shaped transition

US manufacturing sector ends a four-month decline

KUWAIT: The greenback fell sharply this past week as appetite for risk improved while US equities persistently rallied. Investors have so far shrugged off the civil unrest across the US which they feel will be limited. Meanwhile, a surprise figure for the US labor market suggests a faster than expected economic rebound from the coronavirus slump is in store. The euro and sterling both rose to fresh highs against the plummeting dollar, while the

million jobs combined in March and April when many businesses shut down to combat the spread of the virus.

Analysts had expected payrolls to shrink by 8 million, and the surprising developments boosted stocks and Treasury yields. Both the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average rose almost every day last week, though the most drastic rallies were seen following the labor report on Friday. Last week alone, they rose 5.45 percent and 7.23 percent respectively – recovering over 45 percent of their values from their March lows. Looking at Treasury yields, the 10-year rate rose to a high of 0.9590 percent while the 2-year rate rose to 0.2380.

The reopening of the economy following lockdowns has been a driving force for optimism, in addition to a bulk of stimulus measures from the US government and central bank. President Donald Trump, who has a lot weighing on the recovery from the pandemic ahead of his re-election campaign, tweeted “Really Big Jobs Report. Great going President Trump (kidding but true!)”

“demand remains uncertain.”

“Dual-key” role

The European Central Bank has announced an extra purchase of €600 billion worth of bonds, increasing the “Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program”, or PEPP, to €1.35 trillion total. The bank extended the scheme until at least June 2021, a decision which will lead to a record asset portfolio worth more than €4 trillion – a third of eurozone GDP. While Lagarde mentioned May had been the “bottoming out” of economic activity, she admits the recovery has so far

percent this year, 0.8 percent in 2021 and 1.3 percent in 2022. The predictions all fall well below the near-2 percent target.

Eurozone bonds rallied following the announcement, sending Italian and Greek yields to three-month lows. The euro rose to its highest level since March against the dollar at 1.1360, rising 2.59 percent last week alone. Meanwhile, stocks which had previously performed a strong rally ended lower.

China ahead in global recoveries

Manufacturing activity in China rebounded in May alongside the US driven by a

Looking at China’s trade deal with the US, it appears Trump will stick with his Phase 1 agreement for now, drawing a sigh of relief from investors. China is likely to fall short of purchase commitments for US agricultural goods, manufactured products, energy and services – goals that appeared unrealistic even prior to the coronavirus pandemic.

OPEC extends cuts: Brent rises above \$40

OPEC and allies have agreed on a proposal to extend current production cuts for an additional month in the latest effort to battle the market’s oversupply. Instead of easing the cuts to 7.7 million bpd as previously planned, the production cut will be maintained at 9.7 million bpd. Saudi Arabia and Russia, moving past their price war, will assess the balance between supply and demand moving forward. Any member that doesn’t implement 100 percent of its production cuts in May and June will make extra reductions from July to September to compensate, according to the latest deal. Brent crude has recovered significantly from its \$15.98 April low, rising to a 3-month high of \$42.48 last week in anticipation of Saturday’s meeting.

Investors abandon havens

The safe-haven metal dropped to a low of 1,670 last week after peaking to 1,764 in May. The demand for safer assets has declined drastically as countries around the world begin reopening while fundamental data recovers. The sharpest decline for gold came following the better-than-expected US labor data as money flooded into risk assets.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30805.



Surprise recovery in labor market

USD/JPY pair broke the 109 level for the first time since April – in line with the risk-on theme. As the global count for coronavirus infections lie above 6.9 million, it appears many are learning to adapt with the new normal.

‘V-shaped’ recovery hopes

Data regarding the US labor market supported the theory that the worst of the economic fallout has passed. Employers unexpectedly added 2.5 million jobs in May, sending the jobless rate down to 13.3 percent from the previous 14.7 percent – the largest figure on record. If the figures had matched expectations, the unemployment rate would have been close to 20 percent. Even as the rate sits well above its peak seen after the financial crisis, the unprecedented times lead markets to react extremely positive to news of economic recovery. The economy had lost 22.1

Further data suggests the worst is over

Meanwhile, manufacturing ended a four-month decline that placed the industry at its lowest levels since the financial crisis. The purchasing managers’ index was still deep in contraction territory at 43.1 last month, though stabilized off of its 11-year low of 41.5. Following months of severe hits to activity and demand, the easing of restrictions in many areas has helped find some relief as illustrated by the notch higher. According to the ISM, six manufacturing sectors grew while 11 shrank. “May appears to be a transition month,” said Timothy Fiore, chair of the ISM Business Survey Committee, adding

been “tepid” when compared to the speed of contraction as the pandemic hit. Lagarde added that the PEPP was had a “dual-key” role: to both support the economy in its recovery from the pandemic and act as a backstop to manage short-term market stress. The move follows similar actions by central banks in the US, Japan, and the UK.

Forecasts now predict an 8.7 percent contraction in the eurozone economy this year before a rebound of 5.2 percent growth in 2021 and 3.3 percent in 2022. If a new round of coronavirus infections takes hold, the economy could shrink by 12.6 percent this year. Inflation forecasts were also cut to 0.3

resumption in production following lockdown measures. The Caixin China General Manufacturing PMI rose to 50.7 from 49.4 in April, the highest reading since the beginning of 2020 before the outbreak-related lockdowns. The breakdown reveals the improvement is driven mainly by production while overall demand remained subdued. The first quarter is expected to be the worst for the Chinese economy which has already weathered the storm of the pandemic, unlike many areas which predict Q2 will hold the bulk of the damage. GDP fell by 6.8 percent y/y in the first quarter of 2020 – the first q/q drop since records began in 1992.



CARACAS: Bikers wait in a queue to refuel their tanks at a gas station, in Caracas. –AFP

Venezuela’s new gasoline system fails to end lines

CARACAS: Hundreds of Venezuelans queued up in miles-long lines to try to fill their cars with subsidized gasoline over the weekend, a week after President Nicolas Maduro launched a new dual-price system aimed at easing an acute fuel shortage. Maduro on May 30 announced the new system in which motorists could purchase up to 120 liters (31.7 gallons) of gasoline at a heavily subsidized price of 5,000 bolivares (2.5 US cents) per liter, and 50 US cents per liter thereafter. Some 200 gas stations were designated to charge solely at the higher price.

That change effectively ended decades of heavy subsidies in Venezuela, an OPEC nation with the world’s largest crude reserves and where cheap fuel has long been considered a birthright of sorts. The new plan caused chaos and confusion at service stations across the country when it began on June 1. While Venezuelans with resources can now wait in shorter lines at the stations tapped to charge higher prices, those seeking subsidized fuel, such as 42-year-old car mechanic Pedro Mujica, had no choice but to wait in seemingly endless lines. “With what little I earn, I can’t afford to pay the higher price in dollars,” Mujica said early in the morning, some 13 hours after he arrived at a Caracas gas station in his 1991 two-door BMW car.

“It is unnecessary that we Venezuelans are living through such problems,” he said, with his four-year-old daughter Aranza on his lap. Fuel shortages have plagued Venezuela for years as its economy deteriorated due to a plunge in the price of crude, its main export, as well as socialist policies that many economists criticize as misguided. But the shortages grew more acute this year due to a near-complete collapse in the South American country’s 1.3 million barrel-per-day refining network, as well as US sanctions designed to force Maduro, a socialist, from power.

Maduro launched the new gasoline system after receiving five shipments of fuel from Iran, another US adversary whose oil sector is under sanctions by Washington. But the government has not provided details of how much arrived through the shipments.

‘Not normal’

Opposition leader Juan Guaido, who has been recognized by more than 50 countries as the legitimate president of Venezuela, visited people waiting at a gas station in Caracas on Saturday, and pledged to “remain mobilized” against Maduro, who he labels a dictator.

A wave of protests aimed at ousting Maduro early last year has largely fizzled out, particularly in recent months due to a coronavirus-related quarantine. “This line is not normal,” Guaido said in a video posted on Twitter. “I understand the frustration that we feel in these lines for unfortunately having to search for fuel when we shouldn’t have to, but we cannot grow accustomed to it.”

Neither Venezuela’s state-run oil company Petroleos de Venezuela nor the government’s oil or information ministries responded to requests for comment for this story. “It bothers me, but not enough to drive me crazy,” said 22-year-old Pedro Perez, who entertained himself by playing the ukulele inside his dark-red Toyota in the line for non-subsidized gasoline – a shorter but still lengthy wait.

He said he needed gasoline to get to appointments to process his migration documents, as he plans to leave the country to live with family in Europe or the United States. Millions of people have left Venezuela during a crisis marked by chronic shortages of food and medicine and failing power, water and healthcare systems. Raising gasoline prices has long been considered the third rail of politics in Venezuela. A previous attempt to cut subsidies and implement other market-friendly reforms in 1989 led to a violent uprising known as the Caracazo.

But this time, there were no signs yet of major unrest in response to the latest move. “I don’t understand it, the last time they tried to raise gasoline by 30 cents it caused a whole mess,” Antonio Cardenas, a 68-year-old pensioner, said while waiting in the queue a few spots ahead of Mujica. “Now we’re all happily waiting in line. I really don’t get what’s happening, this country is all turned around.” – Reuters

Dollar on back foot amid more signs of recovery

TOKYO: The US dollar fell against the Antipodean currencies and the British pound after surprising improvement in US labor market data bolstered expectations for economic recovery, which reduced safe-harbor demand for the greenback.

The Australian and New Zealand dollars both rose to their strongest since January after data showed a smaller-than-expected fall in Chinese exports, which supports commodity currencies. In contrast, the US dollar traded near its highest in more than two months against the yen, supported by recent gains in long-term Treasury yields as investors await the outcome of a two-day US Federal Reserve meeting ending today.

Sentiment has improved dramatically in the currency market as traders look for signs of a rebound from the coronavirus outbreak as economies reopen from lockdowns, which has hurt the dollar and driven money into so-called risk-on trades. “Commodities and emerging market currencies are clearly finding it easier to rise against the dollar on hopes of economic recovery, but it is a different story when it comes to the yen,” said Junichi Ishikawa, senior foreign exchange strategist at IG Securities in Tokyo.

“For dollar/yen the focus is more on yields, which is pushing the currency pair higher.”

Japan’s economy shrank less than initially estimated in the first quarter, revised data showed earlier on Monday, but the yen took the data in its stride. The Australian dollar traded at \$0.6965, close to its firmest since Jan. 2. The New Zealand dollar rose to \$0.6537, the highest since Jan. 29, before settling at \$0.6512.

New Zealand’s Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said yesterday that all coronavirus measures in the country will be lifted, barring border closure restrictions, as the virus had been eliminated from the country.

Against the pound, the dollar fell 0.25 percent to \$1.2702 yesterday, close to its lowest since March 12.

The dollar traded at 109.48 yen, close to a two-month high set on Friday. Underpinning sentiment was a surprising recovery in US employment in May after the economy suffered record job losses in April, data showed on Friday. Some investors may avoid making big trades before the Federal Reserve meeting ending on Wednesday to see how Chairman Jerome Powell views a recent rise in 10-year Treasury yields and a steepening in the yield curve.

The onshore yuan was little changed at 7.0862 per dollar after exports from China, the world’s second-largest economy, fell less in May than the market expected, data showed on Sunday.

The pandemic first emerged in China late last year and has caused a sharp contraction in global economic activity, but many traders are now focused on the pace of recovery in the second half of this year. Some analysts said there are still many risks to the outlook, including any second wave of infections, diplomatic tensions between the United States and China, and the US presidential election later this year. The euro traded at \$1.1290 yesterday. —Reuters



A recently re-opened Vauxhall car dealership in north London

UK car dealership motors out of virus lockdown

CHINGFORD, UK: At the Vauxhall car showroom in Chingford, just northeast of London, business is motoring ahead after Britain lifted lockdown restrictions this week on the coronavirus-ravaged sector.

Car dealerships in England finally reopened as the UK government relaxed COVID-19 measures that had slammed the brakes on the industry and helped send the economy into reverse. “When we reopened it was quite refreshing and pleasing,” Nick Locke, manager of the Chingford dealership, told AFP on Thursday, against a backdrop of sparkling brand new vehicles.

Sector sales had screeched to a near halt in April and May after a nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 23 to stop the virus’s spread. Post-lockdown demand now is booming in Chingford for affordable mid-range cars from Vauxhall, which is owned by French automaker PSA Peugeot-Citroen.

‘Very busy’

“It’s come back,” Locke told AFP when questioned about the strength of demand since reopening on Monday.

“We have been very busy in sales and also in service—busier than we probably anticipated.” “On a daily basis we are selling three or four cars,” he added, noting the dealership has nevertheless temporarily reduced sales staff. Although normality is returning slowly, there are signs of strict health measures introduced to halt the deadly disease, which has so far killed almost 40,000 people in Britain.

Face masks and sanitizer hand gel are available at the entrance and the sales office has screens to prevent virus transmission, while social distancing measures have been introduced throughout. In Britain, sales of new cars plunged by about 90 percent in both April and May, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

Sales are also down 51 percent in the first five months of this year. Yet Locke remains bullish, predicting that the market will return to where it was before the lockdown in “four to six months”.

He said low-price cars are especially appealing to customers who want to avoid public transport because of the new disease. “They are going to be looking to buy cars probably up to about £7,000 or £8,000 (about \$9,000 to \$10,000) for the lower price range,” said the car dealer.

“That is going to save them putting themselves and their families at risk.”

“Every manufacturer suffers”

Vauxhall Group managing director Stephen Norman, speaking to AFP, mirrored Locke’s optimism but sounded a note of caution for the sector as a whole.

“When you lose 90 percent of the market, Vauxhall, like every manufacturer, inevitably suffers,” Norman said via a video link-up.

“Had it not been for the government’s furlough scheme, I am not even sure we would be having this conversation today,” he added in reference to the COVID-19 job retention scheme under which the state pays 80 percent of monthly wages. He said online searches for vehicles of all types continued at their old pace during the two-month lockdown.

“So I do believe the industry will bounce back—but of course it will take time. It won’t happen in a day or a week or even a month. “It will take months, perhaps some quarters, before we get to what I would term a natural running rate for the motoring industry in the United Kingdom.”

Fresh coronavirus damage

However on Thursday, fresh evidence of coronavirus damage emerged as car dealership group Lookers said it would axe about 1,500 jobs and shut 12 showrooms.

James Bond’s favorite carmaker Aston Martin also cut 500 jobs in response to tumbling demand and ballooning losses at the luxury group. And Japan’s Nissan warned separately Wednesday that a no-deal Brexit would make its Sunderland car factory in northeast England unsustainable due to the prospect of higher tariffs. —AFP

There is still time to save the Oceans: Oceanographer

LOS ANGELES: It's not too late to save the oceans from destruction, says the grandson of famed French oceanographer Jacques Cousteau.

AFP sat down with Philippe Cousteau, an environmentalist and oceanographer in his own right, on the eve of World Oceans Day, held on June 8. The means to saving the oceans are known, he said, and keeping them from destruction is a simple question of political will.

QUESTION: What is the state of the oceans today compared to what your grandfather Jacques Cousteau experienced?

ANSWER: "One can go back and look at footage from the film "Silent World" that he did in the 1950s, diving off the coast of southern France, and you see reefs and abundant fish.

"I've been diving in those same places. And to see the decline in the health in the Mediterranean, I mean much of the Mediterranean today is essentially dead.

"It's shocking in a lifetime. What you saw after WWII was an enormous industrial explosion and population growth around the world that began to really impact these ecosystems." The Caribbean has more or less declined, the Florida Keys is a dead zone, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia... I was there just two years ago and I had tears in my eyes.

"The decline is perhaps summed up best in this one statistic: In my lifetime—I've just turned 40 — the biodiversity on this planet has declined 50 percent."

QUESTION: Why is it so important to protect the oceans?

ANSWER: "Some people might not care about some animal or fish or something somewhere but what people fail, I think, to recognize enough is that we live in an interconnected system.

"The oceans are under appreciated because they are less visible than on the surface. You know the old

saying: Out of sight, out of mind.

"People talk about the rainforests of the Amazon. And they are magnificent and should be protected with every effort that we can create. But the majority of oxygen on Earth doesn't come from rain forests. It comes from the ocean—from plankton in the ocean.

"We think of rainforests, these diverse, incredibly biodiverse ecosystems and they are, but more diverse than a rain forest is a coral reef. And more than 50 percent of the world's coral reefs disappeared.

"We may lose virtually all the coral reefs on Earth by the end of the century and those coral reefs that are only one percent of the ocean surface support a vast majority of the kinds of food and seafood, that not only feeds over a billion people on Earth, but also employs tens if not hundreds of millions of people."

QUESTION: Is it not too late to change things and what can we do?

ANSWER: "The good news is that we have tools at our disposal, and we know that they work. One of the growing initiatives that is building consensus around the world, is the importance of establishing areas on Earth that are protected.

"There's only about five percent of the oceans that are actually protected. There's a movement growing to protect 30 percent of the oceans by 2030.

"We know that it would cost roughly around \$225 billion to protect 30 percent of the ocean... Some people say 'Oh we can't afford that nonsense,' but it's real. "We know that it would cost roughly around \$225 billion to protect 30 percent of the ocean. \$225 billion. That's a fraction of what the global economy has invested to fight the coronavirus. So the money exists... Now we just need the political will... to make it happen..."

"The benefit of that investment is estimated to be between \$500 and \$900 billion... protecting 30 per-



Philippe Cousteau says the means to saving the oceans are known. It's simply a matter of will. — AFP

cent of the oceans would result in a 600 percent increase in biomass of seafood.

"That's more jobs, more opportunity for people to feed their families, cheaper and more economic income. So again, protecting the oceans is good for everybody.

"The good news is that what tends to be better for

the oceans is better for us, whether we're on the coast or not... the things that we buy and the things that we eat, driving electric cars, when we use public transportation, how we use energy—that can be better for our health and the oceans as well.

"And that's really powerful—and I think that's important to remember." — AFP

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Lifestyle | Gossip



WATSON PLEDGES TO WORK HARDER TO FIGHT RACISM

Emma Watson has vowed to "work harder" to tackle institutional racism. The 'Little Women' actress admitted she has "benefited" from attitudes biased towards white people but has pledged to do more to "actively tackle" the issue within society. She wrote on Instagram: "There is so much racism, both in our past and present, that is not acknowledged nor accounted for. 'White supremacy is one of the systems of hierarchy and dominance, of exploitation and oppression, that is tightly stitched into society. 'As a white person, I have benefited from this. While we might feel that, as individuals, we're working hard internally to be anti-racist,

we need to work harder externally to actively tackle the structural and institutional racism around us. 'I'm still learning about the many ways I unconsciously support and uphold a system that is structurally racist.' The 30-year-old actress promised to share useful links with her followers to improve their own knowledge of the subject. She wrote: "Over the coming days I'll be using my bio link and Twitter to share links to resources I have found useful for my own researching, learning and listening. 'I see your anger, sadness and pain. I cannot know what this feels like for you but it doesn't mean I won't try to.' Emma had initially been criticised after taking part in the Blackout

Tuesday protest, posting a black square to her Instagram account. Some critics slammed her for not sharing helpful links and urged her to donate money, while others hit out at the 'Harry Potter' star for putting a white border around the black square, as she does with all her posts on the platform. One user wrote: "black lives matter is not an aesthetic for your instagram.(sic)" Four hours after her black post, Emma shared a poem and artwork from Dr. Fahamu Pecou and explained she had "held off posting until #blackoutuesday ended in the UK".

David and Victoria are building granny flat

David and Victoria Beckham want to build a "granny flat" in the grounds of their home. The couple - who have Brooklyn, 21, Romeo, 17, Cruz, 15, and Harper, eight, together - have submitted an application for a "detached outbuilding" in the gardens of their Oxfordshire abode, and insiders explained the lavish outhouse will be used by guests. A source told The Sun newspaper's Bizarre column: "David and Victoria want their version of a granny flat. "But far from this building being on the side of your house with a small kitchen, bedroom and bathroom, they're going all out. "The fancy building is being built in the same materials as their main house and will have a swanky kitchen, bathroom and bedroom for guests." It was revealed a few days ago that David and his 46-year-old wife are also hoping to have an underground tunnel from their house to their garage constructed, as well as having a wine cellar installed in the £6 million property. Planning agents for the property said in submitted documents: "The proposed development includes a new basement cellar constructed beneath the extension to the existing garage outbuilding with a linked walkway. "The basement cellar beneath is for storage of wine and the proposed use of the outbuilding is solely in association with the main dwelling house. "It will improve security for the occupants of the proper-



ty. "The proposed [garage] extension adds three new bays to the existing garage outbuilding, increasing the building from four bays to seven." The planned work comes as the latest project for 45-year-old former football ace David, after it was recently revealed he has registered a trademark to protect his name in order to use it for a chain of hotels and restaurants. A source said: "David is a shrewd businessman and just as he was clever in building brand Beckham with Victoria, he is making sure he protects any future projects. "He's got his hands full with his team in Miami but his own hotel - that could happen. "But David won't rush into anything, he'll be making sure any plans to go into the industry are totally watertight before he takes the plunge."



'Batwoman' is casting a completely new lead character

The CW series are currently looking for an actress to replace Ruby Rose after she stepped down from playing Kate Kane, the cousin of Batman/Bruce Wayne, after just one series, but they don't want someone to take on the same role. The Hollywood Reporter has confirmed. According to Decider, a casting notice appeared on a Reddit forum outlining the part of Ryan Wilder, a woman in her mid-20s who "is about to become Batwoman". The notice read: "She's likable, messy, a little goofy and untamed. She's also nothing like Kate Kane, the woman who wore the batsuit before her. "With no one in her life to keep her on track, Ryan spent years as a drug-runner, dodging the GCPD and masking her pain with bad habits. A girl who would steal milk for an alley cat could also kill you with her bare hands, Ryan is the most dangerous type of fighter: highly skilled and wildly undisciplined. "An out lesbian. Athletic. Raw. Passionate. Fallible. And very much not your stereotypical All-American hero." Ruby made a surprise announcement last month that she was stepping down from the role. She said: "This was not a decision I made lightly as I have the utmost respect for the cast, crew and everyone involved with the show in both Vancouver and in Los Angeles. I am beyond appreciative to [executive producers] Greg Berlanti, Sarah Schechter and Caroline Dries for not only giving me this incredible opportunity, but for welcoming me into the DC universe they have so beautifully created." It was later claimed the 34-year-old actress was unhappy with the long hours required as series lead, which led to friction on set, and ultimately the mutual decision between her and Warner Bros. Television that they would part ways. However, neither Ruby nor Warner Bros. have confirmed or denied the report.

Jimmy Fallon was urged to 'just stay quiet' amid blackface controversy

Jimmy Fallon was advised to "just stay quiet" amid his blackface controversy. The 45-year-old comedian has apologised once again for wearing blackface in the past, and discussed potential routes forward for the US amid ongoing race riots in various cities across the country. Jimmy - who appeared in blackface during an episode of 'Saturday Night Live' in 2000 - revealed he was urged "to just stay quiet and to not say anything" after the controversy resurfaced last month but knew he couldn't do that. He continued: "So I thought about it and realised that I can't not say 'I'm horrified and I'm sorry and I'm embarrassed.'" Jimmy subsequently revealed he'd spoken to some experts about the controversy, some of whom he invited on 'The Tonight Show'. He reflected: "The silence is the biggest crime that white guys like me and the rest of us are doing, staying silent. "We need to say something, we need to keep saying something, and we need to say 'That's not OK' more than one day on Twitter." Jimmy also explained he was eager to "figure out how to be a better ally". Derrick Johnson, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was one of the experts invited on the show. And in response to Jimmy's comments, he said: "We are all born flawed, but flawed is part of the journey we are on to get to perfection. "If anyone can stand up and say, 'I haven't made a mistake, run, because that person is clearly a liar.'" Later in the show, CNN anchor Don Lemon praised Jimmy for his honesty, and called for a period of self-reflection. Responding to Jimmy's opening monologue, he said: "That's exactly what we all need to do, examine ourselves. "That was very honest and brave of you. I wish more people would do that because we can't go back to the way we were."



Big Sean 'doesn't feel equal'

The 32-year-old rapper has spoken candidly about his experiences as a black man in America, insisting he has never felt "free", as he called for change in society. He said in a video shared to Twitter and Instagram: "So you want to talk about land of equality and freedom? "I don't feel equal and I don't feel free. Of course let's speak up and be heard, but things have to change." The 'Single Again' hitmaker called for "justice to be served" in the wake of the death of George Floyd after a police officer - who has subsequently been charged with third-degree murder - knelt on his neck and insisted real change wouldn't happen without it. He said: "Clearly we got the whole world's attention, obviously. "And justice has to be served. Period. And if it's not, I don't think things are going to change or get better." Sean also opened up about his experiences joining in with protests over the last few days and suggested there were people infiltrating the demonstrations with "ulterior motives". He said: I know I been protesting, I know a lot of us been out on the streets protesting. "And it's been a lot of unity, but I also see a lot of people with ulterior motives that look like undercover cops. I don't know if they are undercover cops, but like, you know, starting a lot of the conflict, a lot of the issues. "And we've all seen places where they've got them bricks conveniently located to wreak havoc, and I don't know what the ulterior motive is. "I don't know if it's to make us look like we wild beasts or don't have control, but we clearly are not wild beasts. We're extraordinary, talented magical people that if you took us out of the equation, the world would be very, very bland." The 'Mercy' hitmaker reflected on the history of discrimination throughout the US, insisting the country has a "racist foundation". He said: "Our ancestors built this country for free, OK? So I'm just talking from the heart right now but one of my biggest issues is that...this current government, and country, is built on a racist foundation. A lot of us know this. You want to talk about systemic oppression, you want to talk about the justice system being targeted to people that look like me. "And it's impossible to get out of once you in there, you know?...Some of the first polices forces ever was made during slavery, down South, in them Southern states. And their main focus was to capture, apprehend, beat, discipline slaves, rip them apart from their families, keep them apart and God knows whatever else. "So that's what I'm saying, that's how deep it goes back. "So no wonder that a cop feels like they could kill a Black man or woman and feel like it's a way of life."



Alicia Keys has "always cared" about skin care

The 'If I Ain't Got You' hitmaker admits that everyone is "different" when it comes to their beauty routine and she credits water as being a big part of her skin care regime. She said: "I've always cared about skin care but ... I didn't always have good skin ... Everybody's different. You have to keep trying to find what's good for you. Sometimes it takes a minute. I didn't even think about water as a part of my skin care regimen." And the 39-year-old singer admits her hair takes a "beating". Speaking about her haircare and style routine, she added to Vogue magazine: "My hair definitely takes a beating for sure ... There's so many gorgeous ways to wrap your head ... The thing I love the most is by the time I wrap it on my head, you have no idea what the colour is gonna be ... It's a beautiful expression. Even if I'm just gonna be able to walk around the block because I can't go anywhere, I'm still gonna be shining." Meanwhile, Alicia previously confessed she finds going without make-up "really empowering". She said: "[It's] really freeing. The thing is... it kinda came from because we put so many limitations on ourselves, we put limitations on each other, society

puts limitations on us, and in a lot of ways, I'm sick of it, I'm over it. And that's in a lot of ways, what the music is about, it's about being our own unique selves, because we each have something that no one else has and it would be so amazing to embrace each other, how we are."—BangShowbiz



James Corden weeps on Late Late Show

James Corden broke down in tears as he discussed racism on 'The Late, Late Show'. The 41-year-old presenter grew emotional and admitted he wished he could "put [his] arm around" his bandleader Reggie Watts after the musician reflected on his own experiences. Reggie said: "I was fortunate to grow up in a place where I was pretty protected by my parents when it came to forms of racism that happened in my neighbourhood. "My mom was a fierce fighter and would get out of the house and get in people's faces about, you know, people calling me the N-word or whatever growing up and being different and stuff. So I feel really grateful that my parents and my father fought so hard to make my life feel normal and to have me grow up feeling like I'm a human being rather than I'm a demographic." "And just going back in my history, my father growing up in the Midwest and being in Vietnam and not being able to get a job when he got out of the Army because he was black. "And the economy wasn't doing that well and he had to reenlist, got sent back to Vietnam. And then when my parents got married their marriage wasn't recognised in the US because of laws prohibiting interracial marriage." Growing tearful, Reggie said: "I have this history in the black community in the Midwest that I don't access a lot because there's a lot of pain and emotion there. "So it's hard and so much is happening. And I want to use my platform for good. I go in and out, you know Wiping away tears. James replied: "I'm so sorry that you're feeling this. I would give anything to be in a room with you and put my arm around. I would so much, I would give anything to be able to put my arm around you." The British presenter admitted he had been "struggling" to know what to say about the civil unrest in the US in the wake of the death of George Floyd - who passed away after a police officer knelt on his neck to restrain him - but offered support and called for change. He said: "Who needs my opinion? Surely, this is a time for me to listen, not talk. "And then I realise that that's part of the problem. People like me have to speak up. "To be clear, I'm not talking about late-night hosts, or people who are fortunate like I am to have to have a platform. I'm talking about white people. "White people cannot just say anymore, 'Yeah, I'm not racist.' And think that that's enough, because it's not. "It's not enough, because make no mistake, this is our problem to solve. How can the black community dismantle a problem that they didn't create?"



In this file photo US singer/songwriter Beyonce arrives for the world premiere of Disney's "The Lion King" at the Dolby theatre in Hollywood. —AFP

Beyonce decries bigotry in message to graduates

Beyonce on Sunday delivered a message to the graduating Class of 2020, marking their achievement with a speech amplifying messages of the Black Lives Matter movement and praising change-makers. The superstar artist was among a roster of A-listers to participate in YouTube's global virtual commencement ceremony "Dear Class of 2020." "You have arrived here in the middle of a global crisis, a racial pandemic and worldwide expression of outrage at the senseless killing of yet another unarmed black human being," the 38-year-old mother of three said. "And you

still made it. We're so proud of you." Beyonce was referring to the anti-racism protests roiling the nation as thousands take to the streets decrying systemic white supremacy and police brutality. "Thank you for using your collective voice in letting the world know that Black Lives Matter," she said. "Real change has started with you, this new generation of high school and college graduates we celebrate today." The wildly popular artist also took the moment to lambast persistent sexism in the music industry and beyond. "As a woman, I did not see enough female role models given

the opportunity to do what I knew I had to do," she related. "To run my label and management company, to direct my tours, that meant ownership—owning my masters, owning my heart, owning my future and owning my own story." Beyonce wrapped her message that ignited social media with a message for those who feel left on the margins: "Your queerness is beautiful, your blackness is beautiful, your compassion, your understanding." —AFP

A World Redrawn: Iranian photographer sees chance for solidarity

Iranian photographer Gohar Dashti has created a body of work that explores the relationship between nature, human migration and the ripple effects of conflict and social upheaval. The coronavirus pandemic presents, she believes, an opportunity to remind us of our mutual responsibility toward each other. With the pandemic creating a collective sense of unmooring from the familiar, what is important is that "it will make us understand that we're all in the same boat," she said. "This is a shared pain," she told AFP from Cambridge, Massachusetts in the United States, where she has been based for several years. "I hope that from this situation, we will come to an understanding that the world is one. If a tree is cut in Africa, it impacts the life of someone in France," the 40-year-old photographer and video artist said.



A handout image made available by Gohar Dashti and taken by spouse Hamed Noori, shows Gohar looking through the window of a car in the Iranian city of Mashhad.

"It's good that we understand the relationship between the world, economy and nature and maybe this epidemic has allowed us to think about all these issues again." Nature and its relationship to mankind trace a thread through Dashti's 15-year oeuvre — exhibited worldwide and featured in prestigious permanent collections—with nature often acting as a foil for examining social issues and identity in her large-scale, staged photographs. Dashti's own life was marked by conflict and its legacy. She was born in Iran's Khuzestan province at the start of the Iran-Iraq war that ravaged the oil-rich eastern region that borders Iraq and killed hundreds of thousands from 1980-1988.

'Not separate'

One of her series, "Today's Life and War", placed a couple going about day-to-day domestic life—cooking, watching TV, hanging up washing—amid the trappings of a battlefield, with tanks and soldiers looming in

the background. Another series, "Stateless", produced in 2014/2015, features scenes similar to those familiar in news coverage of refugees and migrants but rendered stark and semi-theatrical against vast and towering landscapes. Touching on ongoing conflicts, she said she hopes people, particularly those in wealthy countries, will come to recognise amid the pandemic that they are not unaffected by the suffering of others around the world.

"What is much more important to me is the view of countries with high economic power. For them to understand that they are not separate ... we all live in the same world," she said. "Sometimes we see something like war in the media and think that it has nothing to do with us—that's Afghanistan's problem or that's Yemen's problem. "But what's happening now shows that it has to do with all of us. If a war breaks out in

Yemen or in Afghanistan, it also has an effect on our lives, so we can't stay silent." She said her compatriots in Iran, which is facing the deadliest coronavirus outbreak in the Middle East, had rallied in solidarity in the face of the pandemic, drawing on resilience from previous crises. "Iran, like all countries, was taken unawares by the virus and experienced very difficult conditions and continues to see very difficult conditions. But, really, with the cooperation between people and the commendable efforts of medical staff, they have been able to manage the crisis," she said. "In my opinion, the people in Iran have shown a lot of solidarity—one reason is that they are a people that have known crisis."

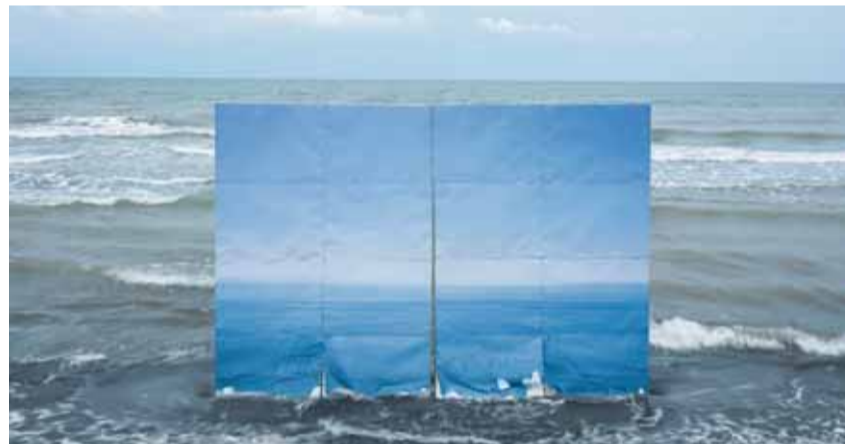
Resilience

Resilience to the anxiety triggered by uncertainty is something Dashti thinks we can learn from the pandemic. "The conditions created by the coronavirus all over the world teach us how to live with instability," she said. "In my opinion, artists and migrants can deal with these situations better. They know how to live and work with an uncharted future."

Thrown into her own state of uncertainty with exhibitions of her work "Land/s"—a meditation on finding the familiar in foreign landscapes—cancelled or postponed, Dashti is still working on a film about the project, but like many others around the world, experiencing a change of pace. "I am spending a lot of time with my four-year-old son, giving him lessons. Really, I feel like I have never spent so much with him," she said. "Another activity that I love is to take walks in nature. "More and more I think I should pay more attention to and work on nature and its relationship with humanity." —AFP



A handout image made available by the artist Gohar Dashti shows a photograph, taken in the US, placed within a natural setting in Iran as part of the Land/s photo project.



A handout image made available by the artist Gohar Dashti shows a photograph, taken in the US, placed within a natural setting in Iran as part of the Land/s photo project.



Cate Blanchett

Cate Blanchett in chainsaw accident at UK home

Double Oscar winner Cate Blanchett has revealed she had a lucky escape after suffering a cut to the head following a chainsaw accident at her home in southern England. The Hollywood actor shared details about the near-miss while talking last week to former Australian prime minister Julia Gillard on the ex-leader's podcast as they discussed coronavirus lockdowns. "I'm fine. I had a bit of a chainsaw accident yesterday, which sounds very, very exciting, but it wasn't," said Blanchett. "Apart from the little nick to the head, I'm fine." Gillard, who was the Australian PM from 2010 until 2013, responded: "Be very careful with that chainsaw. You've got a very famous head, I don't think people would like to see any nicks taken out of it."

Australian Blanchett lives with her family close to the Kent town of Tunbridge Wells, south of London, and said she had taken time off to educate her eldest son at home. His exams have been postponed because of the health crisis, she revealed. Blanchett, who won Oscars in 2005 and 2014 for her performances in "The Aviator" and Woody Allen's "Blue Jasmine", told the podcast she had "huge respect" for the teaching profession after attempting home-schooling. Teachers should be paid more for their efforts, she added. It was not clear what Blanchett was doing with the chainsaw when she was injured. —AFP

India sends 'man-eater' tiger to lifetime in captivity

A tiger blamed for killing three people will spend the rest of its life in captivity, Indian officials said Sunday, saying the big cat was "too dangerous" to be allowed to roam free. The five-year-old male predator, also blamed for attacking cattle, had embarked on a trek more than 500 kilometres (310 miles) long from western Maharashtra state to central India's Betul district in Madhya Pradesh state in 2018. "We gave it several chances to re-wild but it habitually went into human habitations," Madhya Pradesh's chief wildlife warden, S.K. Mandal, told AFP. "The only option left was to put it in captivity to ensure both the tiger and humans are safe." The tiger—dubbed the "vagabond" or "nomad" by some local media—was first trapped in December 2018 after its long journey and held in captivity for two months.

The big cat was eventually fitted with a tracking collar and shuttled between a tiger reserve and a national park. Officials however said it repeatedly strayed and hunted near human settlements, attacking cattle and endangering humans. Finally the tiger was tranquilised and sent to a zoo in

Madhya Pradesh capital's Bhopal on Saturday. Officials said the decision to capture the adult tiger was taken a few months ago, but was delayed due to the novel coronavirus lockdown. "It will take sometime for him to adjust to the new environment. We will be monitoring his behaviour," Bhopal's Van Vihar National Park director, Kamlika Mohanta, told AFP. "As of now it will remain in solitary confinement. A decision to put it on display at the zoo or send it to a (fenced) safari will be taken later."

Human encroachment on tiger habitats have increased in recent decades in the nation of 1.3 billion people, leading to deadly conflicts with the animals. Nearly 225 people were killed in tiger attacks between 2014 and 2019, according to government figures. More than 200 tigers were killed by poachers or electrocution between 2012 and 2018, the data showed. India is home to around 70 percent of the world's tigers. Last year, the government said the tiger population had risen to 2,967 in 2018 from a record low of 1,411 in 2006. —AFP



Bengal tigers are seen at the Joya Grande zoo, seized from Los Cachiros drug cartel in Santa Cruz de Yojoa municipality, Cortes department, Honduras. —AFP

A world redrawn: Isabel Allende hopes pandemic will doom 'patriarchy'

Chilean writer Isabel Allende says the coronavirus pandemic has exposed stark inequalities that will continue to fuel protests in the United States and around the globe. The 77-year-old author believes it will be up to the younger generations to build a new normal, founded on gender and racial equality. Allende, perhaps best known for her novel "The House of the Spirits," has a nonfiction book on feminism coming out in November, entitled "What Women Want."

She is a disciplined writer with a well-known tradition: every January 8th, she sits down to start a new work. This year was no exception, but she admits that working efficiently during a global health emergency has been a challenge. In an interview with AFP via video call from her home near San Francisco, Allende talks about her writing process, her vision for a post-pandemic world and what she thinks about recent US protests.



Chilean writer Isabel Allende

the same with what's going on now."

Q: How has the pandemic disrupted your routine?

A: "The pandemic, lockdown, fear of the virus and all the protests that have taken place have left people stuck. It's not easy. It happens to me too, but I am very disciplined.

Half the battle is showing up at the computer at the same time every day. Look, it's possible that what gets done on any given day will be useless. But it doesn't matter. That's how books get written—little by little, and with patience.

Q: Has the pandemic influenced your work?

A: "The pandemic is going to result in a wave, an avalanche, of new interpretations of our reality—not only in the arts, but in philosophy, history, everything. (...) But in my case, I need time and a bit of distance to see things.

"I could have written "The House of the Spirits" right after the military coup in Chile in 1973. It took me more than eight years to write it, because I needed that time to process what happened... And I think I'm going to do

Q: Have you learned anything during the lockdown?

A: "The pandemic has taught me to let go of material things, to help me realize how little I really need. (...) I look around me and I ask myself why there is all this stuff, why I need more than two plates.

"Then, I want to figure out who my real friends are, and who I really want to spend time with."

Q: What do you think the pandemic is teaching us all?

A: "It's teaching us to look at our priorities and it's showing us our reality. Inequality is the reality—how some people spend lockdown on a yacht in the Caribbean, and others go hungry.

"It's also teaching us that we are all one big family. What happens to a human being in Wuhan happens to the entire planet, happens to all of us. (...) There are no walls, there are no walls that can separate people.

"Creative people, artists, scientists, all the young people, many women—all are thinking about what the new normal looks like. They don't want to go back to what was normal before. This is the most important question of our time: this dream of a different world. We have to get to it."

Q: How would that new world be different?

A: "It would be the end of the patriarchy. These brutish men who rule the world would be run out. It would mean a world in which men and women share equally in running the planet. (...) "Let it not be violence and greed that rules the world, but solidarity, compassion and hope. This is the world that we want, a world in which there is respect for nature and for other species. "Young people are going to inherit a world that we've torn apart. They are the ones who must save the planet, if it can be saved. I hope they have a positive solution."

Q: What do you think of the recent protests in the United States?

A: "The protests are about racial justice and that is directly linked to the issue of poverty. "Who are the poorest people in this country? Who are the ones with worse health care, fewer jobs, who suffer more police brutality, who are jailed more often? African-Americans.

"I think these outbursts of protest are going to start happening everything. There is a tremendous global economic crisis. And that is going to lead to more unemployment, more poverty and, therefore, more violence. "There will be more protests—huge protests. "These problems cannot be resolved with bullets or tear gas. They'll only be resolved by tackling the root causes. These are deep-seated problems, that date back to the era of slavery." —AFP



JERUSALEM: Palestinian auto body technician Khaled Shaheen (right) works at his shop in the neighborhood of Wadi al-Joz in occupied east Jerusalem on June 4, 2020. — AFP

Palestinians fear expulsion for Jerusalem hi-tech hub

JERUSALEM: Palestinian business owners in occupied east Jerusalem are worried they will be forced to shut up shop by Israeli authorities over plans to build a vast high tech hub in their neighborhood. The main thoroughfare through the Wadi al-Joz area, close to Jerusalem's Old City, is lined by mechanic workshops and usually hums with the sound of car horns.

But business owners are facing an uncertain future, with fears that more than 200 premises could be forced to close including garages and popular restaurants. Fathi Al-Kurd, whose workshop opened in 1966, is worried that he and his two sons will not be offered another location. "My son has four children, if he doesn't work for a week his children will starve," the 77-year-old told AFP. "We can't confront this (municipal) government, but we ask that they at least provide us with an alternative," he added.

His son Muhammad Al-Kurd, a car electrician, said a municipal official visited them last summer and warned "eviction is coming". East Jerusalem was occupied by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed in a move never recognized by the international community. The Jerusalem municipality aims to create a "new high tech centre" that would "reduce social gaps and economic inequality in east Jerusalem," according to city hall.

The 2.1-billion shekel (\$600 million) project has allocated 250,000 sq m of land for the technology park. A further 50,000 sq m has been earmarked for other businesses, and the same amount for hotels. In a video, the Jerusalem municipality extols the central location and the "potential" of Wadi al-Joz, which lies near major roads. The project comes with a slogan: "Dreams become reality: Silicon Wadi."

'Start from scratch'

Several Palestinian families own land in the industrial zone of east Jerusalem, including Naif al-Kiswani who says they will inevitably be drawn into

the Israeli project. "I want to be compensated financially and given licenses to build shops, businesses and flats," he said, sitting inside his hardware store. Kiswani confirmed that talks about the redevelopment were underway with Israeli officials, with a meeting planned soon between Palestinian landowners and Jerusalem's deputy mayor.

"The project exists and our refusal won't change anything, but we must not lose everything," he said. Concerns over the redevelopment come as businesses are gradually reopening, after measures to tackle the novel coronavirus brought the city to a standstill. Muhammad Al-Kurd said his income fell by 70 percent in recent months and the new project could bring further financial losses. "This eviction will make us start from scratch," he said.

'Devastating' losses

Wearing a face mask at the garage where he works, Khalil al-Hawash said the project aims to "empty the city of Palestinians". Standing in front of a sign for the garage in both Arabic and Hebrew, he wanted to know whether there would be compensation or help to relocate elsewhere. Economist Mohammed Qirsh says if the business owners are expelled without financial redress the impact would be "devastating".

City hall says the project will create 10,000 jobs in east Jerusalem and increase the employment rate among women. It stands to "build confidence between residents of that part of the city, the city hall and the government," the municipality said. Some of those affected by the redevelopment plans aim to form a committee to challenge the decision.

Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion said the project constitutes a "real revolution and will create hope". The president of the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce in Jerusalem, Kamal Obidat, described it as a plan to "liquidate" parts of the city and "Judaise" them. His work in Jerusalem and that of the Palestinian government is banned by Israel. — AFP

This allowed New Zealand Rugby to announce a restart to a top-flight domestic competition this week, with fans allowed to pack into the stadiums. "We're incredibly proud, and grateful, to be the first professional sports competition in the world to be in a position to have our teams play in front of their fans again," NZR chief Mark Robinson said.

Thailand also hit a positive milestone after two weeks with no local infections. The only recorded cases came from overseas arrivals who were quarantined. The kingdom was the first country outside China to officially report a COVID-19 case in January but it has largely escaped the high tolls seen elsewhere in the region, with just 58 deaths.

Fears that large parts of Asia could still have the worst in front of them persist, however, with the death toll and infection rate climbing sharply in India. Still, after a 10-week lockdown, the government is risking lifting some curbs to ease the devastating impacts on the economy, and malls and temples re-opened in several Indian cities on Monday.

In Europe, countries are slowly working towards a post-pandemic normal and trying to revive tourism sectors in time for the summer peak season. Britain said it would reopen places of worship for individual prayer on June 15, but also yesterday began imposing a two-week quarantine period for most arrivals into the country — a move that prompted legal action by airlines.

British Airways and the low-cost carriers EasyJet and Ryanair said in a joint statement the measure would devastate tourism and destroy even more jobs. The European Union has said it could re-open borders to travellers from outside the bloc in early July. — AFP

worth close to KD 900 million were for issues unrelated to the coronavirus and held the minister responsible for any wrongdoing. He also accused the minister of referring to the public prosecution an incomplete file with regards to the suspected money laundering and corruption in the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund case.

MP Saadoun Hammad yesterday criticized the health minister over what he claims a new policy over testing for the coronavirus disease, saying the ministry has stopped testing for the virus except for people in a bad condition. He claimed that the main purpose of the ministry for reducing the number of tests is to show that the number of cases is on the decline, "which is untrue".

Hammad said Kuwait's health ministry does an average of 2,000 tests daily against between 35,000 and 40,000 daily tests in the United Arab Emirates. The lawmaker said the ministry must carry out the tests on suspected patients and those who came in contact with confirmed cases.

Minneapolis vows to dismantle cops...

Continued from Page 1

with a gun drove into a crowd of protesters. The suspect was arrested, police said.

Mitt Romney, a Republican senator from Utah, joined a group of Christian protesters marching toward the White House. He tweeted photos of himself in the procession, along with the simple caption, "Black Lives Matter". Although Romney has been a rare Republican voice of opposition to Trump, he was joined last week by Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski, who said criticism of Trump was overdue.

Trump's tough approach to putting down protests continued to draw exceptional rebukes from top retired military officers, a group normally loath to criticize a civilian leader. Colin Powell, who served as America's top military officer and top diplomat under Republican presidents, said Sunday he will vote for Democrat Joe Biden, accusing Trump of drifting from the US constitution and Republicans of failing to hold him accountable. In a scathing indictment of Trump on CNN, Powell denounced the US president as a danger to democracy whose lies and insults have diminished America in the eyes of the world.

"We have a constitution. We have to follow that constitution. And the president's drifted away from it," Powell said. Powell's comments carried particular force as the nation's first and so far only African American chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the country's first black secretary of state, serving under Republican presidents George H W Bush and George Bush respectively. Powell blasted Republican senators for not standing up to Trump. "We are in a turning point," he said. "He lies about things. And he gets away with it because people will not hold him accountable," he said, referring to Trump.

Powell also rebuked Trump for offending "just about everyone in the world" "We're down on NATO. We're cutting more troops out of Germany. We have done away with our contributions to the World Health Organization. We're not happy with the United Nations. "And just about everywhere you go, you'll find some kind of disdain for American foreign policy that is not in our interests," he said.

In contrast, Condoleezza Rice, Powell's successor as secretary of state and who also is African American, counseled setting aside "the language of recrimination" to help the country heal and move forward. "I would ask the president to first and foremost speak in the language of unity, the language of empathy," she said on CBS's "Face the Nation".

"Not everyone is going to agree with any president, with this president, but you have to speak to every American, not just to those who might agree

with you," she said. Rice also warned against sending in the military to contain peaceful protest, adding, "This isn't a battlefield." Rice would not say who she intends to vote for in November.

Powell, a moderate who has distanced himself from the Republican party in recent years and did not vote for Trump in 2016, said he would cast his ballot for Biden. "I'm very close to Joe Biden in a social matter and political matter. I worked with him for 35, 40 years. And he is now the candidate, and I will be voting for him," he said. "Every American citizen has to sit down, think it through, and make a decision on their own," he said. "Use your common sense, say is this good for my country before you say this is good for me."

Biden thanked Powell for his endorsement, tweeting, "This isn't about politics. This is about the future of our country. Grateful for your support, Secretary Powell." Trump also responded, dismissing Powell in a tweet as "a real stiff who was very responsible for getting us into the disastrous Middle East Wars."

The president has ordered National Guard troops to begin withdrawing from the nation's capital, whose Mayor Muriel Bowser, a Democrat who jostled with Trump over the use of force in her city, told Fox News there had been no arrests on Saturday despite the protests which saw thousands moving through the capital's streets.

A week earlier, however, there were fires and vandalism. Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf told ABC that Washington had been "a city out of control" and denied a problem of systemic racism among police. The Trump administration has proposed no specific policy changes in response to the widespread outrage over Floyd's death.

Members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) said they would introduce legislation in the House of Representatives on Monday to make policing more accountable. The legislation is expected to make it easier to sue police officers over deadly incidents, to ban the sort of choke holds that led to Floyd's death, and to establish a national database to record police misconduct.

One member of the caucus, Representative Val Demings of Florida, a former police chief in the city of Orlando, told ABC that "systemic racism is always the ghost in the room". "What we have to do as a nation is hold police accountable," said Demings, who has been mentioned as a possible running mate for presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden.

It is unclear what support the proposed reforms might find in the Republican-controlled Senate - or whether Trump might sign such legislation into law. Some jurisdictions have moved already to embrace reforms - starting with bans on the use of tear gas and rubber bullets against protesters. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio told reporters Sunday that he would cut the city's police budget and shift some funds to youth and social services, local media reported. — Agencies

No students in school without...

Continued from Page 1

computers at home, which is key to the viability of online classes. "The teacher and the school will have to adjust... depending on the availability of communication," Briones said in a press briefing.

There has been little public opposition to the postponement of face-to-face classes in the Philippines, where hundreds of new infections are

being detected daily despite early and strict lockdown measures. Children are generally not allowed outside their homes unless they are out getting essentials or headed to work. Online enrolment for over 25 million primary and secondary students started earlier this month for a delayed start to the school year, which normally runs from June to April in the Philippines.

Scientists around the world are racing to develop a coronavirus vaccine, but it is not clear when a viable candidate will be proven and distributed on a large scale. One of the contenders is from British pharma giant AstraZeneca, which said last week that it is "on track" to begin rolling out a vaccine in September if ongoing trials prove successful. — AFP

Global coronavirus cases hit 7 million...

Continued from Page 1

acute phase of the epidemic is over," Francis said on Sunday while addressing Catholics in Saint Peter's Square at the Vatican for the first time since the COVID-19 crisis began. "Unfortunately in other countries - I am thinking of some of them - the virus continues to claim many victims."

The virus, which emerged in China late last year, has forced more than half of humanity into some form of lockdown over the past six months and driven the global economy towards its worst downturn since the Great Depression. China, which has been accused of covering up the crucial early stages of the virus, on Sunday hit back at critics, saying it "will respond in the face of rumors, defamation, attacks and smearing". National Health Commission director Ma Xiaowei said reports the government delayed sharing the virus genome sequence "seriously go against the facts".

Elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region there was progress, with New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern telling reporters she danced around her living room on hearing her country had reached the milestone of zero active infections. The South Pacific nation lifted all domestic restrictions yesterday after it went 17 days with no new infections.

Panel close to approving...

Continued from Page 1

Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah about cooperation between the Assembly and the government. Ghanem said the prime minister said the government will attend the Assembly session next week during which two grillings against the ministers of finance and education are scheduled to be debated.

MP Riyadh Al-Adasani reiterated yesterday his charges against Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan, saying he will explain the five issues over which he decided to grill the minister. The lawmaker said more than 55 percent of contracts signed by the government during the coronavirus crisis and

Mall operators curb expansion...

Continued from Page 1

MAF, which operates 27 malls across the Middle East, said retailers in the Gulf region were not expecting a meaningful recovery for the sector in the next 18-24 months. Foot traffic at its malls in the United Arab Emirates in May was less than half of what it was a year ago, it added. "They are all in a tough spot. They're focusing on liquidity issues," Bejjani said. He said the impact was being felt, from retailers to companies in their supply chain. Some of the firms will "throw in the towel" this year, he added.

Kuwait's Alshaya Group, the Gulf's largest franchise operator with brands including Starbucks, Pottery Barn and The Cheesecake Factory, provided a grim outlook in April in an internal staff video seen by Reuters. "Today, less than 5 percent of our stores are open ... Our revenues have shrunk by 95 percent, whilst our cost base has stayed the same," said acting Chief Executive John Hadden. "This is not sustainable for any business anywhere in the world." Alshaya declined to comment.

The slow move to online sales in the region has compounded retailers' problems. Though malls reopened last month in the region's two largest markets, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, some cus-

tomers still worry about COVID-19. "I just looked at things from a distance and didn't buy anything," said Sahimaa in Riyadh. "I couldn't get myself to touch anything."

A senior executive at a large fashion conglomerate, who declined to be named, said 96 percent of sales last year in the Gulf came from malls, versus 4 percent from e-commerce. "To get 80 percent from online, vs 20 percent brick and mortar - that's not gonna happen in the next 20 years," the executive said.

Online sales in Saudi Arabia accounted for about 0.8 percent of retail sales in 2018, and 1.5 percent in the UAE, according to a Boston Consulting Group report. By contrast, online grabbed more than 14 percent of retail sales in the United States in 2018, research firm Digital Commerce 360 found. Many mall operators have offered a digital platform for shops to place products online to help cope with the pain.

MAF has placed some of the shops that sell household items on its Carrefour shopping marketplace, for example. Emaar Malls helped its tenants at Dubai malls place products on Namshi, an e-commerce website it owns, and Noon.com. "People still stood on the fence, thinking e-commerce is in the future. Because of corona, they were forced to use the available technologies," said Rabih Khoury, partner at Dubai-based venture capital firm Middle East Venture Partners. "You have to have the digital part. If you don't have it, it is as if you don't have a key location at a mall." — Reuters

Kuwait arrests B'deshi MP over...

Continued from Page 1

According to a report in Al-Rai daily, the public prosecution heard testimonies of five Bangladeshi nationals who said they paid KD 3,000 each to the suspect to come to Kuwait, in addition to paying money annually to renew their iqamas.

Kuwaiti intelligence agencies, a report by Dhaka Tribune said, have held more than 100 foreign nationals for their alleged involvement in human trafficking and money laundering, and Islam is one of them. After failing to secure the nomination from both the ruling Awami League, and the opposition Jatiya Party, he contested the 2018 election inde-

pendently and won the Lakshimpur-2 seat.

Meanwhile, corruption proceedings against him, initiated by the Anti-Corruption Commission in Bangladesh, are already ongoing. He is accused of making illegal wealth through human trafficking. Selina Islam, wife of the arrested lawmaker, in a statement to reporters said the media reports about the arrest are incorrect. She said that her husband is not accused in any case in the Gulf country. "The Kuwaiti government has summoned him through CID to discuss his business there as per Kuwait government rules," she added.

The issue of human trafficking came to light after Libyan human traffickers killed 30 migrants, including 26 Bangladeshi nationals, on May 28. As a consequence, law enforcement agencies arrested dozens in connection with the smuggling of Bangladeshis to different countries and filed cases against 38 individuals and agencies suspected to be involved. — Anadolu

Stars

Daily SuDoku

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

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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

medium

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)

That little child you once were and that you're trying so desperately to forget is still causing you problems, Aries. Why do you try so hard to deny that sweet and tender part of you that comes out even in your adult life? You'll forget about your faults, imperfections, and complexes more easily if you just remember your childhood fondly, and maybe even smile about it.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

You need to cut down on stress and stop getting upset over nothing, Libra. Even if up until now you haven't been able to figure out what is really bothering you, today you'll understand some of the mysteries of your personality, and understand what it is exactly that causes those chronic mood swings of yours. You'll see that you have nothing to worry about.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You'll have all the inspiration you need to get to work on some of the problems that have been plaguing your group lately, Taurus. You'll use your pragmatism and tact to efficiently tackle those things that have been making life difficult for the people you love. Help people to stay calm in the anxious atmosphere that could surround all of you today.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Those arrogant types really need to watch out around you, Scorpio. Even if they don't mean you any harm, you head straight to the attack in order to make them understand that they don't intimidate you. This constant state of war should calm down a little with the current celestial energy. You may even discover that people can respect and appreciate you even if you aren't constantly on the defensive.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your family is encouraging you to reconsider some of your long-term plans, Gemini. In fact, some of your loved ones' needs are changing. But the solutions you come up with may not be enough. Just don't panic. You may need to rethink some of your strategies, especially concerning your relationships with the people closest to you.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This is an important day for you, Sagittarius, especially if you're an artist. The work you have already begun is beginning to escape your grasp. It's time to give it a name and its own identity in the world. Of course, it's painful, but you knew it wouldn't belong to you forever. This is your lot in life. You need to accept both the joy and the pain of creation.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Without a doubt, your day will have important consequences for the future of your love life. The doubts you may have today, especially concerning your feelings, are likely to push you to think about things before you make any decisions. Should you go back on what you've done or march on with conviction? This is what is at stake right now. Don't be too hasty about things.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Are you an intellectual or a poet, a novelist or a playwright, Capricorn? The celestial energy leaves you alone with your anxieties and questions. You are sure of only one thing - words are the friends you've decided to spend the rest of your life with. This is a kind of dream and challenge that corresponds with your Capricorn identity. Get to work. You'll find your vocation and passion in your writing.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

You're naturally involved in things and bursting with energy. You're also trying to work on how you relate to other people. However, you tend to want to get too involved in their lives at home and work. You even tend to do their work for them sometimes. Try to avoid overworking yourself. Think about how you fit into the group around you.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Have you been working yourself too hard and denying yourself many of the pleasures that you see others enjoying that you'd like to have? Is there a new pair of shoes calling to you from your favorite online store that you just can't let yourself buy? Indulge yourself today. You won't regret it. It's important that you not confuse an object's price with its value. Think about it.

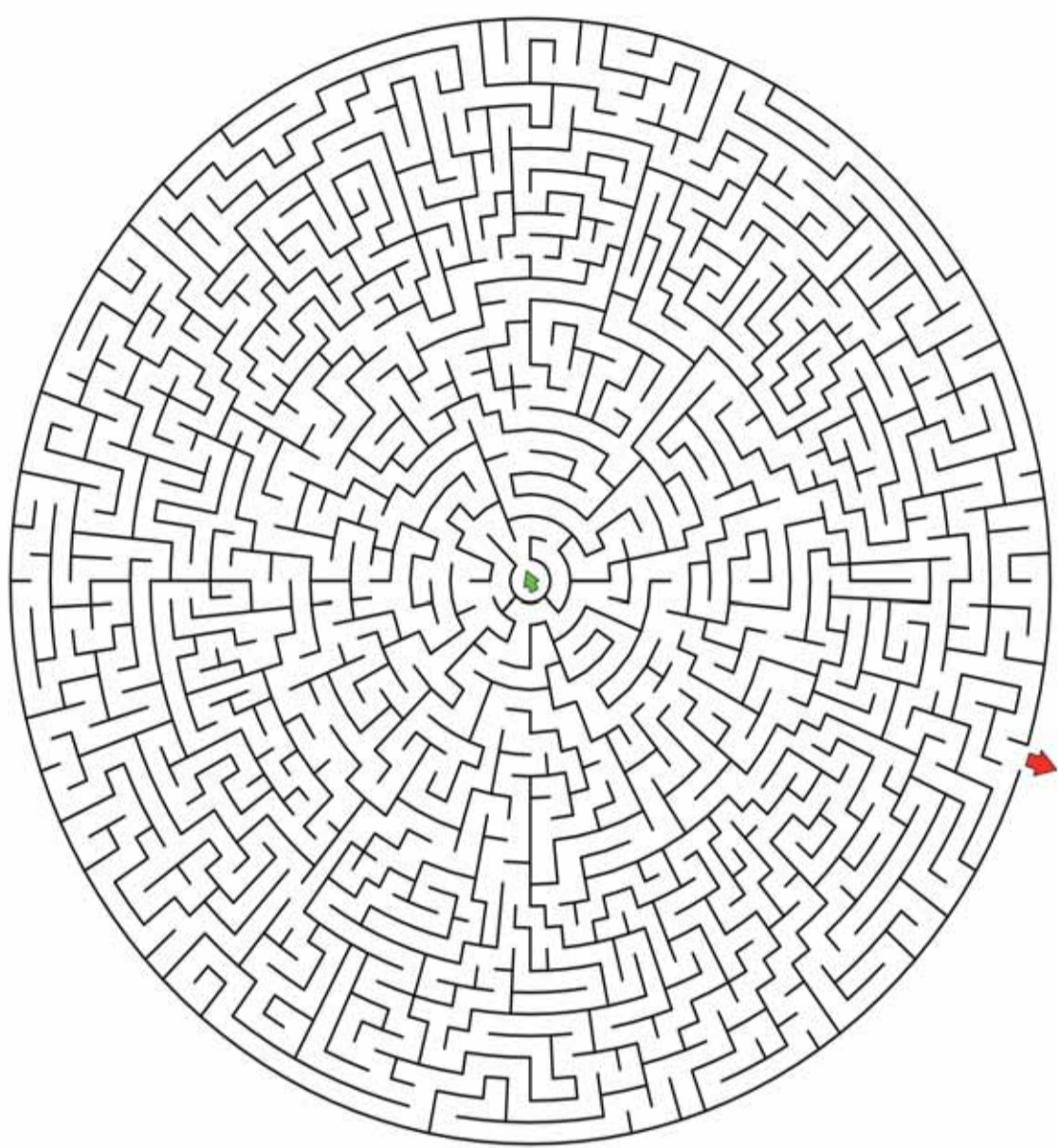
Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today you may be wondering just how much you should get involved in a certain conflict between family members or in your career. There's a lot of pressure on you to find an answer to this problem. But all you have to do is not take sides and everything should work out fine. You may finally realize that it's probably best to just let things happen for once.

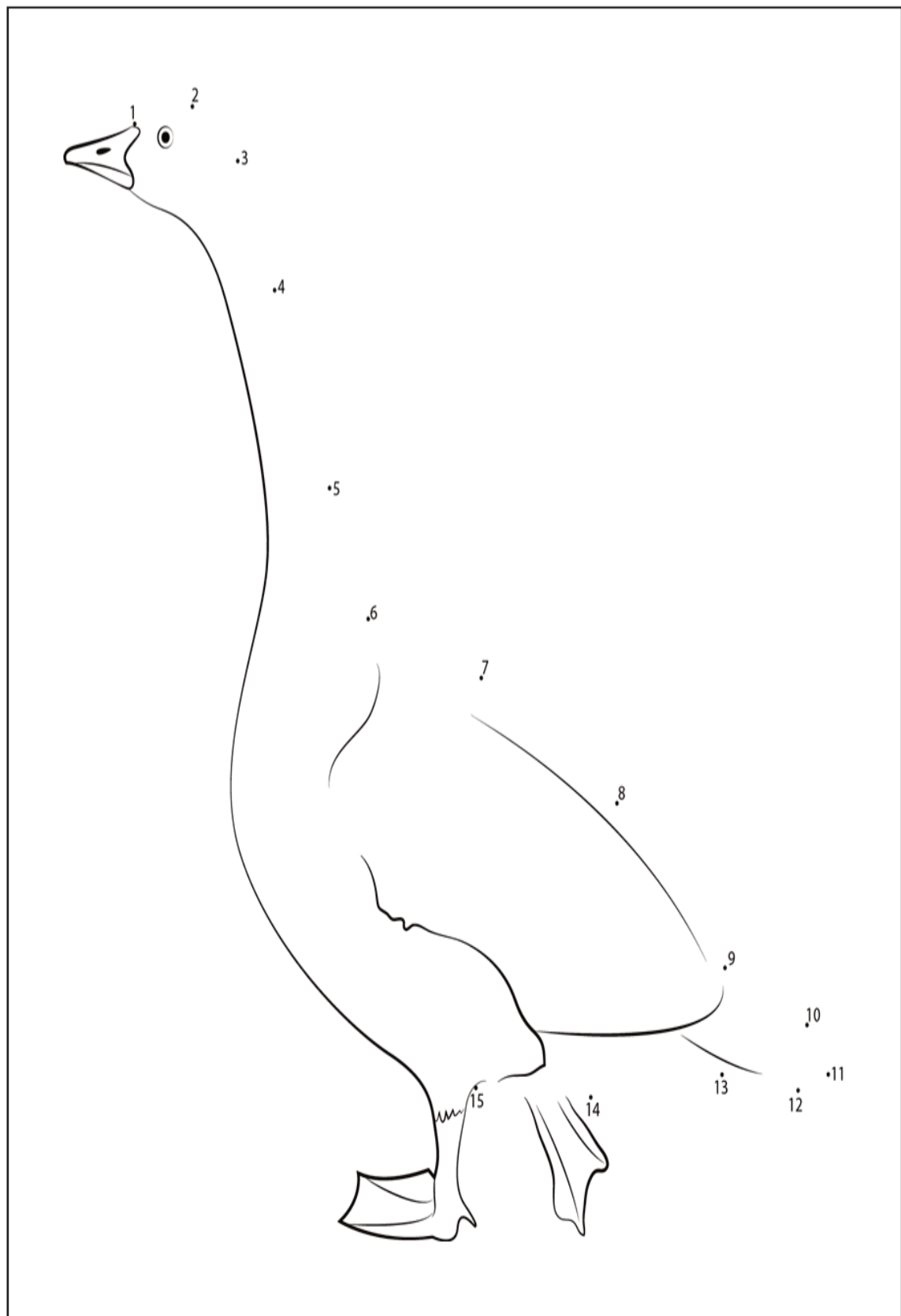
Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Perhaps your family is far away and you miss them a lot, Pisces. You need to realize that you can count on your friends. They'll be able to prove their love for you and show you that you're as important as the air they breathe. They'll also keep people from taking advantage of you on your journey toward the impossible.

Find the way



Join the dots



Word Search

St. Patrick's Day

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 34 letters spell a secret message.

S	A	S	S	E	N	N	I	U	G	E	V	E	N	T	S	P
I	Y	A	D	I	L	O	H	N	T	Y	Y	P	A	E	P	O
C	T	H	I	S	T	O	R	Y	R	A	R	P	K	G	O	T
I	L	S	O	D	A	B	R	E	A	D	A	A	I	R	H	A
S	C	O	K	L	H	T	N	E	E	T	N	E	V	E	S	T
U	C	I	V	N	V	H	D	E	R	S	O	I	D	E	I	O
M	E	I	C	E	U	A	C	O	N	A	I	T	L	N	B	E
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S	H	A	M	R	O	C	K	U	D	C	N	R	N	Y	Y	

BEER	DANCING	HOLY DAY	POTATOES
BELFAST	DUBLIN	IRELAND	SEVENTEENTH
BISHOP	EVENTS	IRISH	SHAMROCK
CABBAGE	FEAST DAY	LEPRECHAUN	SNAKES
CELEBRATION	FESTIVAL	LIMERICK	SODA BREAD
CELTIC CROSS	GREEN	MARCH	TRADITION
CHRISTIAN	GUINNESS	MISSIONARY	YEARLY
CLOVER	HERITAGE	MUSIC	
CORK	HISTORY	PARADE	
CORNED BEEF	HOLIDAY	PATRON SAINT	

Sports

Photo of the day



Parkour athlete, Alexander Titarenko performs in Turkey in 2019. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

China bans players for six months after virus rules broken

SHANGHAI: Six Chinese under-19 internationals have been banned from playing for six months and forced to write self-criticism essays after flouting coronavirus prevention rules to go drinking late at night.

The Chinese Football Association (CFA) suspended the six until the end of November and the players were hit with additional penalties by their clubs after they were discovered leaving the team's Shanghai training base on May 30 without permission.

"It was a severe violation of the team's epidemic control regulations and negatively affected the whole team," Xinhua news agency quoted the CFA as saying.

The players are banned from all matches organised by the CFA until November 30 and will also not be allowed to feature for the national team at any level during that time.

Three of the players, Ren Lihao, Liu Zhurun and Peng Hao, have had their wages suspended by their club Shanghai SIPG, the former Chinese Super League champions said.

Under-19 head coach Cheng Yaodong told Monday's Soccer News: "We used the harshest language at the time, gave them a dressing-down and said a lot of harsh words."

While the rest of the squad trained, the six players were made to write self-criticism essays, said Cheng. Some had to do it twice.

"After writing, we helped them sort out and recognise the mistakes they made," he added.

The U19 national team will play in China's third tier in the new season — which has been postponed indefinitely by the coronavirus pandemic — to help their preparations for the 2024 Paris Olympics, Xinhua said. —AFP

Windies quick Thomas keen to make Test debut in England

Archer urges victims to speak out against social inequality

LONDON: West Indies quick Oshane Thomas has said he hopes to make his test debut in England next month and establish himself in all three cricket formats.

Thomas has been named among 11 reserves to accompany the 14-member squad for their three-test series in England, which is scheduled to take place in bio-secure venues in Southampton and Manchester, subject to government approval.

"I definitely want to play test cricket; I want to do well in all three formats," the 23-year-old right-arm fast bowler told the Jamaican Observer. "Test cricket is really the ultimate that everyone wants to play to be great. You don't want to just be an average cricketer; you want to be among the greats."

"I was called up for the England test tour in the Caribbean (last year) and I didn't get to make my debut, but hopefully this time around." Thomas, who has played 20 one-dayers and 12 Twenty20 Internationals, says he has the backing of coach Phil Simmons.

"He says I can't be bowling that fast — probably bowling the fastest in the Caribbean — and not play in his test team," added Thomas.

With international cricket set to come out of

the coronavirus shutdown, Thomas is training at Sabina Park in Jamaica ahead of the tour.

"Last week is my first week back bowling on a pitch. I had been doing some little bowling here and there," he said.

"I'm very happy to be back bowling and I'm looking forward to playing test cricket."

"It's just up to me as a person; I just need to be

“

I just need to be fit, ready

”

fit and ready, and I should be in the test team."

Meanwhile, England fast bowler Jofra Archer has urged victims of racial abuse to speak out following the death of an unarmed black man in police custody in the United States.

Video footage showed a white police officer kneeling on the neck of George Floyd, 46, for nearly nine minutes before he died on May 25, triggering outrage and protests across the world.

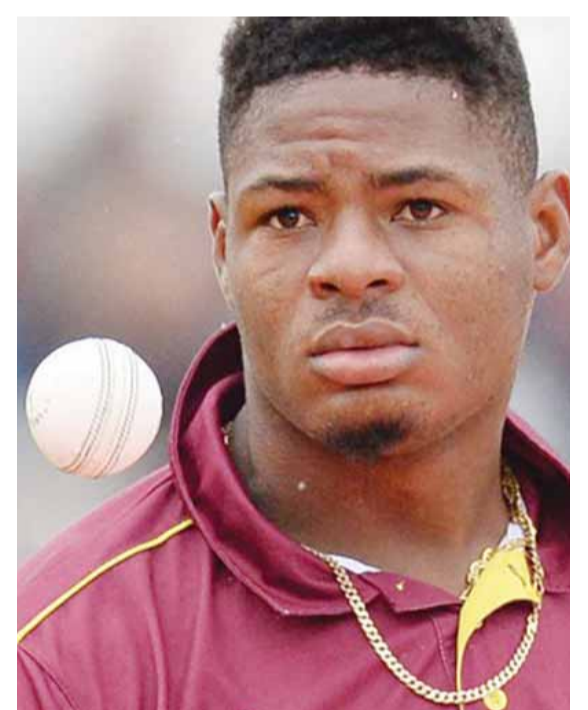
"I'm very glad the Black Lives Matter campaign has got as vocal as this," Archer, who was racially abused by a fan during a test against New Zealand in November last year, wrote in his column for the Daily Mail <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-8397107/JOFRA-ARCHER-Black-Lives-Matter-movement-shown-people-equality.html>.

"As an individual, I've always been one for speaking out, especially if something bothers you. My personal view is that you should never keep things bottled up, because racism is not okay."

Archer has played seven tests and 14 one-day internationals for England and has lauded the team for its diversity.

"We all live in the country and if you are English, you have as much right to play as anyone else," the 25-year-old added.

"There was a picture ... of me, Jos Buttler and Adil Rashid hugging in celebration during the 2019 World Cup. It told you everything you need to know about our team." —Reuters



West Indies quick Oshane Thomas.

Townsend says fans confuse her with other black tennis players

LOS ANGELES: Taylor Townsend says at one time or another she has been mistaken for every other American female black tennis player, including Venus Williams. "Everybody sees a black person and they assume that it's Venus or Serena (Williams) or Sloane (Stephens)," the 24-year-old Townsend said in a Tennis United video while talking about the death of George Floyd, who died in police custody on May 25 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"I've been literally all of them down the list except for myself," Townsend, who is ranked 73 in the world, recently had a fan insist she had to be the rising US star 16-year-old Coco Gauff.

"I've had people argue with me to tell me that I'm Coco Gauff. I'm not Coco Gauff, but all of us look the same, all of us are built the same," Townsend said.

Townsend said she gets treated differently by security personnel at tournaments, which usually means extra screening at checkpoints to "make sure that I belong." "Even from the aspect of, you walk through and nobody stops you, and I'm walking through and somebody has to check my bag, check my credential, check my coach's bag, check my coach's credential."

"This is our reality. It happens all the time — week in, week out, every tourna-

ment that I play in the States, overseas, it doesn't matter," she said.

"This is not the first time this has happened," Townsend said, referring to the protests sparked by Floyd's death. "But this is one of the bigger events that has caused such a mass eruption of people's emotions."

"It's not going to change. I don't expect it to change. Hopefully, this (Black Lives Matter protests) just creates a safe space and an awareness for people to want to talk about it. To be able to put yourself in someone else's shoes."

'ALL HUMAN BEINGS'

The actual Coco Gauff recently attended a Black Lives Matter protest where she delivered a heart-felt speech, adding her voice to those demanding racial equality in America.

Several US and international athletes joined — and even led — protest marches in cities across the US on the weekend.

A number of Milwaukee Bucks players marched and spoke on Saturday at a rally in the city, including NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo, who sported a shirt that read: "I can't breathe."

"We want change," Antetokounmpo, of Greece, said in address to other protesters. "We want justice. That's why we're out here. That's what we're going to do today. That's why I'm going to march with you guys. I want my kid to grow up and not to be scared to walk down the street. I don't want my kid to have hate in his heart."

"It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter the color. We're not black, white, yellow. It doesn't matter. We're all human beings."

Giannis's brother, Thanasis, and sever-

al other Bucks players including Brook Lopez, Sterling Brown, Donte DiVincenzo, Frank Mason and Cam Reynolds also marched.

"They all wore shirts reading, 'I can't breathe,' a reference to Floyd's last words. Floyd was killed when officer Derek Chauvin, who is white, knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes."

Chauvin has been charged with second-degree murder and manslaughter, while three other officers have been charged with abetting murder and manslaughter.

On Wednesday, NBA star Stephen Curry chanted the name "George Floyd" as he and some of his Golden State Warrior teammates joined a throng of protesters at a peaceful march in California.

As some protesters called for others to "say his name," Curry was among those shouting: "George Floyd!"

The march, which also included Warriors Klay Thompson, Kevon Looney and Damion Lee, took place in the same location as the NBA club's championship rallies and parades.

On Saturday, NFL quarterback Dwayne Haskins, of the Washington Redskins, attended protests in Washington, DC.

Haskins met with Mayor Muriel Bowser before marching with demonstrators across the city.

NHL star Zdeno Chara marched through the streets of Boston to show his support for the black community.

"For the last 13 days I have been sick about George Floyd's murder," said Boston Bruins captain Chara, who is from Slovakia. —AFP

Kevin Mayer beats rival decathletes

PARIS: World record holder Kevin Mayer came out on top as three of the world's top decathletes resumed international competition on Sunday without leaving their training facilities.

Mayer, German Niklas Kaul and Estonian Maicel Uibo followed the lead of pole vaulters in May by adding another innovative live-streamed event to the depleted track and field under the "Ultimate Garden Clash" banner.

After winning, Mayer told AFP that it was good to return to competition.

"I was stressed all day like I was before a big championship. Especially since we'd never done this before, it was a total unknown," Mayer said by telephone.

"I'm the world record holder, so you have to take responsibility for your title. I had everything to lose and nothing to gain so I put a lot of pressure on myself, I didn't know if I'd be good at it."

Mayer was at a track in Montpellier in France, world champion Kaul indoors in his home town Mainz, Germany, and Uibo in Clermont, Florida.

The constraints ruled out sever-

al disciplines, including Kaul's speciality the javelin. Instead, the men opened by attempting to clear a pole-vault bar set at 4.00 metres as often as possible in 10 minutes.

They then put the shot for 10 minutes, scoring for each throw beyond the 12 metres, and finished with a gruelling shuttle run, with a point for every lap round two cones placed 20 metres apart, in five minutes. Each man had one helper to keep score and operate the camera and Mayer missed the start because he was getting a drink.

World Athletics denied his request for an extra 25 seconds vaulting but he still took the lead with 17 clearances, while Uibo managed 15 and Kaul 14.

Mayer increased his edge in the throwing event, where the competitors had to run and retrieve their shot after each effort. He reached at least 12 metres 28 times, while Kaul scored 22 and Uibo 20.

Kaul won the shuttle run, with 27 40-metre laps, for a total of 1,080 metres instead of the 1,500 decathletes usually run in their last event.

Mayer, despite slowing up in his final lap, ran just one fewer to win comfortably.

"I had fun," said Mayer. "Under the circumstances, it was cool to have a competition." "But I'm a decathlete first and foremost, that's not what I'm training for at all. All I want to do is get back to being a real decathlete." —AFP

Sports

Saints quarterback Brees 'received death threats' over flag comments

Former NFL player Caldwell shot and killed in Florida

LOS ANGELES: The wife of New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees said on Sunday they received death threats over his comments about athletes protesting during the American national anthem.

"Until we experienced the death threats, we experienced the hate, did I realize that these words were speaking directly to us. How could anyone who knows us or has had interactions with us think that Drew or I have a racist bone in our body?" Brittany Brees wrote in a social media post.

Brees received plenty of backlash over his comments earlier in the week that he doesn't agree with players kneeling during the national anthem to protest the mistreatment of blacks in the US.

"I will never agree with anybody disrespecting the flag of the United States of America or our country," Brees said.

Criticism came from all over, including fellow American sports celebrities such as LeBron James. Brees quickly issued a public apology that he stood by in a separate statement after comments from US President Donald Trump, who said the quarterback should not have changed his stance.

"I realize this is not an issue about the American flag. It has never been," Brees wrote on social media after Trump's tweet.

"We can no longer use the flag to turn people away or distract them from the real issues that face our black communities."

Brittany Brees pledged that the family will now work to be an ally for the black community and help fight police brutality and racial prejudice against minorities.

"That's the problem — we are not listening, white America is not hearing. We're not actively LOOKING for racial prejudice," she said.

"We have heard stories from men and women we have known and loved for years about the racism that occurred in their lives... stories that were never shared

or talked about because somehow they were considered normal.

"To all of our friends and anyone we hurt, we will do better. We want to do better, we want to HEAR you, and we will fight for you because thinking we are not part of the problem is checking the box it means we are not doing enough. It's our job to educate ourselves. We are sorry."

A wave of protests against police brutality and racism has swept across the US in the past week, with many athletes voicing support for NFL player Colin Kaepernick, who ignited controversy in 2016 by kneeling during the US national anthem.

Former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Kaepernick, who said he was refusing to stand in order to draw attention to racial injustice, was later frozen out of the league and has been unemployed for the past four years.

PETERSON PLANS TO TAKE A KNEE

On Sunday, Washington Redskins running back Adrian Peterson said he would be taking a knee during the national anthem to protest racial injustice.

Peterson said he expects others on his team to join him. "Just four years ago, you're seeing Kaepernick taking a knee, and now we're all getting ready to take a knee together going into this season, without a doubt," Peterson told the Houston Chronicle newspaper. NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said Friday the NFL condemns "racism and the systematic oppression of black people" and indicated that players who kneel during the anthem might not face any punishment.

"We encourage all players to speak out and peacefully protest. We, the National Football League, believe that black lives matter," Goodell said.

Brees has been active in community projects since joining the Saints in 2006. Earlier this year, he pledged \$5 million to the state of Louisiana to help

to re-opened yesterday, more than 10 weeks after a nationwide shutdown was imposed in late March.

But gyms will remain closed, to the frustration of owners and trainers in several cities, including Amritsar in northern Punjab state.

"We are running in losses for last three months and there is no clarity when the government plans to open the gyms," Amritsar Gym Owners Association's president, Dhaminder Verma, told AFP on Sunday.

Gym owners were still paying rent and staff salaries despite being shut, Verma said.

Similar protests were held in neighbouring Ludhiana district on Saturday, where topless bodybuilders did push-ups and flexed their pumped-up muscles.

The easing restrictions come as India records a



MINNESOTA: File photo shows Drew Brees #9 of the New Orleans Saints looks on after losing in the NFC Wild Card Playoff game against the Minnesota Vikings. President Trump criticised Drew Brees on June 5, saying the NFL star was wrong to apologise for his comments about kneeling protests which ignited controversy. — AFP

fight the coronavirus pandemic.

Meanwhile, former NFL wide receiver Reche Caldwell was shot and killed aged 41 in an apparent attempted robbery on Saturday in Tampa, Florida. "He was a good person who smiled all of the time," his mother, Deborah Caldwell, told American tabloid news site TMZ. "He tried to help everyone he could. He was the type of guy who would take his shirt off his back and give it to you."

TMZ reported Caldwell was shot by a person or

rising number of new daily virus cases. The South Asian country has reported almost 250,000 cases so far including nearly 7,000 deaths.

India's economy — Asia's third-biggest and already stuttering before the pandemic — has been badly hit by the lockdown.

The government has sought to revive growth by gradually reopening most sectors of the economy over the past few weeks.

About one-third of domestic flights, limited interstate trains and buses have resumed. Offices and factories have also been allowed to reopen.

Tens of millions of Indians lost their jobs during the lockdown, including millions of migrant workers, many of whom fled cities back to their hometowns or villages, some on foot. — AFP

India bodybuilders flex muscles, call for gyms to open

AMRITSAR: Gym owners and trainers in several Indian cities held protests over the weekend against a ban on opening fitness centres over fears of spreading the coronavirus, even as many lockdown restrictions are set to ease.

The nation of 1.3 billion people will allow shopping malls, restaurants, hotels and places of worship

Olympiakos close in on 45th Greek title

ATHENS: Olympiakos closed in on a 45th Greek league title on Sunday with a 1-0 win at closest rivals PAOK Salonika, even if fans had to climb onto nearby rooftops to watch the game.

As the Greek Super League emerged from a three-month coronavirus shutdown, Olympiakos opened up a 17-point lead with nine games left.

With spectators banned from the usually intimidating Toumba Stadium due to health protocols, fans did their perilous best to still see the game.

One group clambered high onto the roof of an apartment block overlooking the stadium although a giant scoreboard may have obscured their view.

Moroccan striker Youssef El Arabi scored the only goal of the game in the 23rd minute after being set up by French teammate Mathieu Valbuena.

El Arabi had an earlier effort ruled out for offside after a VAR intervention.

Both teams will meet twice again before the end of the season - in the Greek Cup semi-finals and the return league clash which forms part of the championship play-offs.

After Sunday's game, dozens of PAOK fans gathered outside the stadium to jeer their team.

In other action on Sunday, Panathinaikos and AEK drew 1-1 after Italian forward Federico Macheda's 65th minute strike was cancelled out by Croatian striker Marko Livaja 10 minutes later.

Asteras Tripolis edged Larissa 2-1 despite having fallen a goal behind.

On Saturday, the play-offs began with Aris Thessaloniki beating OFI 3-1 and Panionios defeating Volos 1-0. —AFP



THESSALONIKI: Olympiakos's Mady Camara (L) vies with Paok's Andre Veiirinha (C) and Mauricio (R) during the first play-off match of the Greek football superleague between Paok and Olympiakos in the Toumba stadium in Thessaloniki on June 7, 2020. —AFP

Racism only disease right now: Sterling

LONDON: Manchester City and England footballer Raheem Sterling on Sunday insisted that racism is "the only disease right now". The 25-year-old, who has often and powerfully spoken out on discrimination, admitted his remarks may appear ill-chosen as the globe fights the coronavirus pandemic.

"I know this might sound a little bit cheesy but the only disease right now is the racism that we are fighting," said Sterling in a BBC TV interview to be broadcast yesterday. Sterling is the latest sports star to

voice support for protests against racism in the United States and across the world following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis last month.

"This is the most important thing at this moment in time because this is something that is happening for years and years. Just like the pandemic, we want to find a solution to stop it," he added.

"At the same time, this is what all these protesters are doing. They are trying to find a solution and a way to stop the injustice they are seeing, and they are fighting for their cause. "As long as they are doing it peacefully and safely and not hurting anybody and not breaking into any stores, they continue to protest in this peaceful way."

Sterling has previously been prominent in calling out racism in both the domestic and international

game. Last year he advised fellow players against walking off the pitch in the event of racial abuse. But Sterling believes it is now time for the talking to develop into real change - in society and in the notoriously tribal world of professional football.

"There's only so much communities and other backgrounds can take - especially black people. "It's been going on for hundreds of years and people are tired and people are ready for change. "This is something that needs more than just talking. We need to actually implement change and highlight the places that do need changes. "But this is something that I myself will continue to do, and spark these debates and get people in my industry looking at themselves and thinking what they can do to give people an equal chance in this country." — AFP

persons who jumped out of bushes and tried to rob him. Caldwell was chosen in the second round of the 2002 NFL draft by the San Diego Chargers. He played 47 games in four seasons there, followed by a season with the New England Patriots and parts of another season with the Washington Redskins.

In 71 career games, he had 152 career receptions for 1,851 yards and 11 touchdowns. Caldwell's older brother, Andre, also played in the NFL as a kick returner. — AFP

Unfamiliar homes offer Barca, Madrid fresh challenge in title race

MADRID: "I've missed this place," Lionel Messi said after stepping onto the Camp Nou grass for the first time in three months but when Barcelona return to action he knows it will not be the same.

Instead, La Liga's frenzied title race will take another step into the unknown as Barca run out into the biggest and now emptiest stadium in Europe after Real Madrid switch to a different home altogether.

Two points separate Spain's greatest rivals ahead of the return to top-flight games on Thursday, when the derby between Sevilla and Real Betis will end a 93-day hiatus and launch a five-week sprint to the finish. When games were suspended on March 12, Madrid had handed first place back to Barcelona, just after beating them at the Santiago Bernabeu, a seemingly significant shift in momentum that lasted exactly a week.

Given the many frailties of the two teams, few could predict who will emerge the stronger from the final 11 games of the season but a fresh factor will be who adapts better to strange surroundings.

Instead of their 81,000-capacity stadium in the city-centre, under renovation this summer, Real Madrid will play at the 6,000-seater Alfredo di Stefano Stadium, usually the home of the club's reserve and under-18 teams, at their training ground in the northern suburbs.

Barcelona, meanwhile, will trade the advantage of Europe's largest home crowd for the challenge of its most empty arena, where the absence of fans will, in numerical terms at least, feel starker than anywhere else. "It's the first time we have to play games without the fans," said Madrid's Toni Kroos earlier this month. "The team that adjusts best to this situation is the one that will win." For Barca, it will not be the first time.

Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez, Sergio Busquets, Gerard Pique, Sergi Roberto, Jordi Alba and Marc-Andre ter Stegen all played against Las Palmas in October 2017, when the club closed its doors at Camp Nou in protest against the game going ahead amid political unrest. They won 3-0 but while that was a one-off, this time there are five home games to navigate, including Atletico Madrid, who would be more easily overcome with the help of a crowd.

Leganes and Espanyol, sitting 19th and 20th respectively, may feel emboldened too.

"I love that connection with the fans, it's what allows us to feel those moments of happiness, to live them," said Barca's Arturo Vidal. "But we will have to adapt." On Saturday, the team held their first full training session at Camp Nou in almost seven years and Real Madrid have been trying to acclimatise too, with Zinedine Zidane overseeing regular meetings at their new ground. The pitch replicates exactly the 105 x 60-metre measurements of the Bernabeu while the club's groundsman, Paul Burgess, has been moved over to work on the surface.

But innovations are needed, with the club having to improve the lighting for broadcasting, add advertising boards and install the technology for VAR.

For Zidane, the setting is familiar because he led Madrid's reserve side, Castilla, for 28 games there before taking charge of the first team. He even made his last appearance there in a Real Madrid shirt, to open the stadium in 2006. —AFP

18 Windies quick Thomas keen to make Test debut in England



19 Saints quarterback Brees 'received death threats' over flag comments



19 Olympiakos close in on 45th Greek title



Wolfsburg win, Werder slip towards drop

Union eye safety as teams take knee for Floyd



BREMEN: Bremen's Czech defender Theodor Gebre Selassie, Wolfsburg's Croatian defender Marin Pongracic and Wolfsburg's Swiss defender Kevin Mbabu vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match SV Werder Bremen v VfL Wolfsburg in Bremen, northern Germany. — AFP

BERLIN: Werder Bremen were staring at relegation from the Bundesliga on Sunday after a 1-0 home defeat to Wolfsburg, while Union Berlin edged towards safety on a day that featured a renewed show of solidarity with the global protests sparked by the death of George Floyd.

Wout Weghorst headed home the decisive goal for Wolfsburg eight minutes before the end to push his team back up to sixth and into the Europa League spots.

The Dutch international's 12th league goal of the season came just seconds after Xaver Schlager crashed a shot off the bar and leaves Werder, the team with the most seasons in the Bundesliga, facing the drop for the first time since 1980.

"It is very disappointing, but everything is still possible. We will give everything until the end," said Werder captain Niklas Moisander to DAZN.

With four matches left, Florian Kohfeldt's side are second-from-bottom, six points from safety and three from the relegation playoff place following back-to-back home defeats.

Werder are the league's lowest scorers with 30 goals and have won just once at home all season, losing 11 times.

They travel to bottom side Paderborn next weekend in a match that could be decisive for their survival, with league leaders Bayern Munich the following weekend and relegation rivals Mainz, who are just outside the drop zone and won 2-0 at Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday, three days later.

The match began after both starting elevens gathered round the centre circle at the Weser Stadium before dropping to one knee, echoing a gesture made by Borussia Dortmund and Hertha Berlin players and Mainz midfielder Pierre Kunde Malong on Saturday.

Union Berlin and Schalke players then did the same before their 1-1 draw in the German capital.

Favourites to go down in their first ever Bundesliga

season, Union are 14th on 32 points, seven ahead of Werder who occupy the final automatic relegation place, and four away from the playoff spot.

However their Nigerian striker Anthony Ujah failed in his attempt to score and take the knee himself, as he had promised he would do on Saturday. Ujah did set up Robert Andrich's neat 11th-minute opener.

Union are level on points with Augsburg, who snatched a late draw at home to Cologne thanks to Philipp Max's 88th-minute equaliser, which came just three minutes after Anthony Modeste had fired the

away side into the lead.

Cologne are 12th on 35 points after a draw which also saw Florian Niederlechner miss a first-half penalty for Augsburg.

Schalke, who grabbed a point at Union thanks to a fierce Jonjo Kenny strike in the 28th minute, have

failed to win in 12 league games but are 10th and are seven points from the European places.

"It's a tough situation we're in but it's a good step to come away and get a point at a difficult place to come," said English goalscorer Kenny.

With protests against police brutality and for racial equality taking place around the world on Sunday, the Bundesliga has become a stage for tributes to Floyd, a black American man who died last month at the hands of police in Minneapolis.

On Saturday, Dortmund players also wore messages on their T-shirts during their warm-up in honour of Floyd.

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", "yellow" and "red" crossed out, with the word "human" below. Prior to their 4-2 win at Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday, Bayern Munich 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. — AFP

But everything is still possible

Sydney makes bid for Fury, Wilder rematch

SYDNEY: Australian city Sydney has made an audacious bid to host a blockbuster heavy-weight rematch between Tyson Fury and Deontay Wilder, with promoters eyeing Boxing Day for the trilogy superfight.

Promoter Dean Loneragan has tentatively booked Bankwest Stadium in the city's west for the bout, The Australian reported Monday. Semi-autonomous Chinese city Macau is also in the running.

"I put a proposal to (Top Rank promoter) Bob Arum about six weeks ago by way of

email to bring down here the world heavy-weight title fight between Deontay Wilder and Tyson Fury," Loneragan told the newspaper. "The day I suggested was December 26 here so we would (broadcast) to the USA on Christmas night." Loneragan wasn't immediately available to confirm the comments.

Following a controversial draw in December 2018, Britain's Fury, unbeaten as a professional, overpowered American Wilder in Las Vegas in February, beating him in seven rounds.

Wilder has activated the rematch clause in his contract, with a time yet to be fixed after the original date of July 18 was scrapped because of the coronavirus pandemic. Arum confirmed in a Sky Sports interview at the weekend that Sydney was in the mix, along with Macau. Both cities have got on top of COVID-19, and appear more likely to allow fans than the US or Britain.

Las Vegas could still host the fight if spectators are allowed back into venues.

"Our friends in Australia are talking about doing this fight, probably in Sydney. That's a possibility," said Arum, who previously promoted ring great Manny's Pacquiao's bout against Australian Jeff Horn in Brisbane.

"There are six big casino properties in Macau," he added. "We've talked to them. They're ready to put up money for the Fury fight against Wilder in November or December." Loneragan said Boxing Day would be symbolic, marking 108 years to the day since African-American Jack Johnson was crowned the first black heavyweight champion by beating Tommy Burns in a world title bout in Sydney. "Jack Johnson was the first Afro-American to crack the big time in the US. I think it would be incredibly significant if you did it down here to celebrate what he did all those years ago to chase Tommy Burns down," he said. — AFP



File photo shows Tyson Fury beat Deontay Wilder in their second fight in February.