



3 Cabinet approves lab testing facilities at airport, land ports



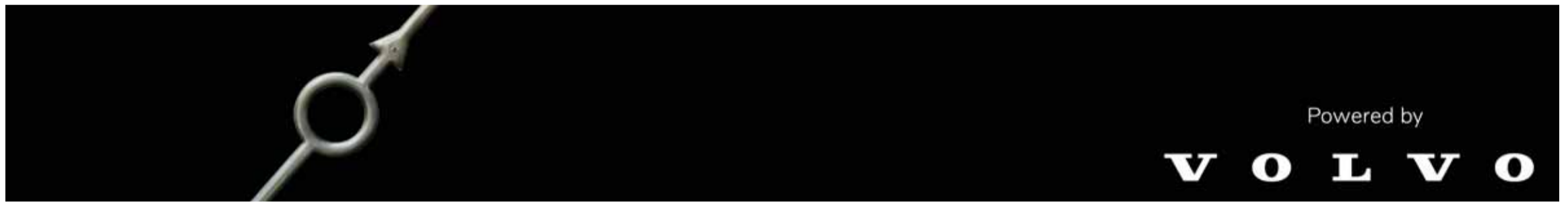
8 Assad's 20-year rule, from Damascus Spring to pariah



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MPs file two bills to exempt businesses from paying rent

Court hands visa traders long jail terms

Zain publishes annual sustainability report titled 'The Road to the Future'

Bader Al-Kharafi: Need for fundamental systemic change central to region's transformation, growth

KUWAIT: Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces the publication of its ninth annual sustainability report, entitled "The Road to the Future". Embedding sustainability in every aspect of its business, Zain is dedicated to its digital strategy of consistently working towards developing the mobile telecommunications ecosystem centered on a vision of inclusive development that leads to socio-economic growth.

"The Road to the Future" report includes Zain's key ESG indicators which is primarily based on the company's sustainability strategy and initiatives, established on six main pillars with its activities driven by the following imperatives: Creating shared value; Promoting social innovation; Inclusivity and leaving no one behind; Addressing Sustainable Development Goals; Tackling climate change; and Youth empowerment.

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi commented: "Now more than ever, the need for a fundamental systemic change is central to the region's transformation and growth. In our world, digital and technological advancements offer endless opportunities to



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

not only address negative impacts but create positive ones. Through digitization, our wide range of services, and reach, Zain aims to unlock the possibilities that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer and the publication of this report is testament to our ongoing efforts and resolve." (See Page 9)

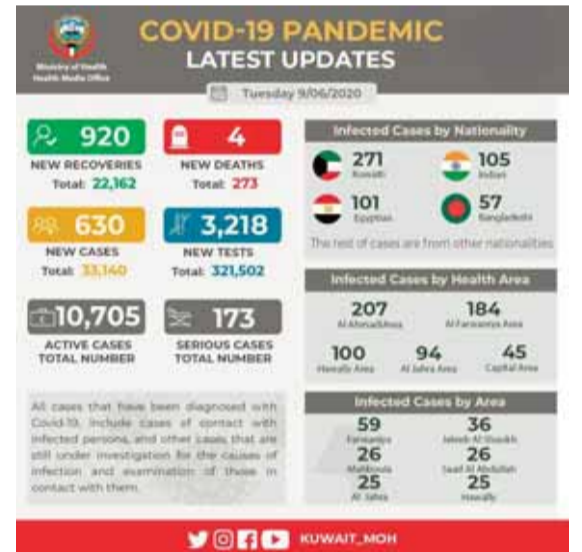
By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers yesterday submitted two separate draft laws calling to exempt businesses affected by the coronavirus from paying rent throughout the crisis. The two bills could eventually be merged into one as they await the approval of the legal and legislative committee and the Assembly, probably next week.

The legal committee last week approved amendments to the rent law stipulating that landlords will not be able to evict their tenants if they fail to pay the rent during shutdowns. The amendment states that the court will decide the way such tenants will pay the unpaid rent, mostly in installments.

MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei said on Twitter that the ministry of justice has accepted his draft law, proposing to add a provision to the civil law that would allow courts to exempt business tenants from paying the rent since March 12, when the country began the shutdowns. The new provision states that if the government orders a shutdown of economic activities as a result of epidemics, earthquakes, natural catastrophes or wars, business tenants will be exempted from paying the rent throughout the shutdown if their businesses were partially or completely affected.

Five MPs - Safa Al-Hashem, Ahmad Al-Fadhl, Nasser Al-Dossari, Khalaf Dumaitheer and Khaled Al-Shatti - submitted a similar law that calls to exempt business tenants from paying the rent for six months in case of disasters, catastrophes or epidemics. The affected businesses will also be exempted from 60 percent of the rent for another six-month period depending on the duration of the shutdowns. In all cases, the landlord will not be able to



force the tenant out during the emergency period. The criminal court yesterday sentenced a businessman to three years for promising expat workers to provide them with residency visas for money, according to local media. The court acquitted four other suspects. The same court had earlier sentenced a Kuwaiti businessman in absentia and his Egyptian office messenger to life in prison for recruiting 150 workers from Egypt against KD 1,500 each. The court also sentenced two expats for three years and two others for two years for taking part in the visa trading operation.

As part of its crackdown on visa traders during the coronavirus, the government has referred several Kuwaitis and expats to the public prosecution on allegations they are involved in visa trading.

Calls for Arab states to end kafala system

AMMAN: Global anti-racism protests sparked calls on Monday for Arab countries to abolish an "exploitative" system of sponsorship for migrant workers that has been likened to modern slavery. About 23 million migrants, mostly from poor African and Asian countries, work in the Arab world under a system known as kafala that generally binds them to one employer, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

Labor rights campaigners in the region said those expressing support for protesters calling for an end to racism in the United States and elsewhere should look closer to home, where foreign workers faced exploitation and abuse under kafala. "We're talking about an exploitative system used to monitor migrant workers' entry and participation in the labor market," said Salma Huerbi, a researcher at the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre advocacy group.

"These issues are very much systemic and engrained in racist rhetoric and perceptions toward other nationalities in our own countries," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. In Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states where the kafala system exists, migrant workers can be subjected to confinement, restricted movement and physical and sexual abuse, rights groups and activists have warned.

Joey Ayoub, an independent Lebanese activist campaigning to abolish kafala, said the system amounted to legitimized racism. "If we want to speak of black lives matter, we have to talk about the actual black lives that do not matter in Lebanon," he said, referring to the protests that have roiled the United States for the past two weeks. "Even if the kafala system is abolished tomorrow, racism would still exist, but it at least would allow people who are themselves

Continued on Page 16

Thousands mourn Floyd; Dems take knee in Congress

HOUSTON: George Floyd's funeral was to be held in his native Houston yesterday after mourners paid their respects to the African American whose death in custody ignited global protests against police brutality and racism. Thousands of well-wishers filed past Floyd's coffin in a public viewing Monday as a court set bail at \$1 million for the white officer charged with his murder last month in Minneapolis.

Many made the sign of the cross as they approached the open casket to say a last goodbye, while others took a knee or bowed their heads in silent prayer for a man who has become

emblematic of America's latest reckoning with racial injustice. The six-hour viewing at The Fountain of Praise church - which drew more than 6,000 people, organizers said - was the final stage in a series of ceremonies paying tribute to Floyd before he is laid to rest next to his mother in his hometown.

In Washington, Democratic lawmakers knelt in silent tribute to Floyd before unveiling a package of police reforms in response to the killing of unarmed black Americans by law enforcement. The congressional move came a day after the Minneapolis

Continued on Page 16

Luxe industry new normal seen in Dubai

DUBAI: The waiter at a chic Dubai restaurant wears a face mask and gloves, pours the wine into plastic cups and serves the steaks on paper plates with disposable cutlery. As the pandemic lockdown eases in Dubai, its world-class tourism industry is charting a gradual comeback - but the new normal has taken a toll on the city's "wow" factor.

Tables at the usually buzzing French bistro and bar, set among gleaming skyscrapers and long popular for its food and daily happy hours, are now set two meters apart. "For next time, you can choose to bring your own knife and fork if you wish,"

the waiter tells the customers - a far cry from the typical fine dining experience in a city known for its over-the-top services.

Hospitality experts now warn that extravagant luxuries, from sweeping breakfast buffets to frolics in swimming pools may have to be reconsidered. Dubai, one of the seven sheikhdoms that make up the United Arab Emirates, has been charting its tourism sector's "gradual return to normalcy". Pre-pandemic luxuries such as normal cutlery and glassware are making a return in some restaurants.

But with many restrictions and precautionary measures still in place, it just doesn't feel quite like it used to, said one 31-year-old Swedish expatriate. "Luxury experiences are not particularly luxurious anymore," she said. "I don't think things will return to normal for a long time."

Continued on Page 16



WASHINGTON, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer join fellow Democrats from the House and Senate to kneel in silence for eight minutes and 46 seconds to honor George Floyd in the US Capitol's Emancipation Hall on Monday. — AFP

Yemen medic treats poor from his car

DUBAI: In a war-ravaged country now battling coronavirus, one Yemeni doctor is dispensing medical advice from his car, gathering a large social media following along the way. "Stop me if you need a medical consultation," reads a large sticker on the rear window of Sami Yahya Al-Hajj's four-wheel drive, alongside a cartoon figure of the bearded doctor wearing his square spectacles.

As he offers diagnoses and prescriptions to the poor, the doctor's phone chirps with messages and calls from patients who cough and splutter as they explain their ailments. Hajj said he started giving free consultations via

social media but then wanted to reach to those without access to such technology. "I thought about the poor and those in need on the streets who cannot get medical advice or don't have the money for it," he told AFP.

Yemen is facing what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. A war between the government and Houthi rebels has killed tens of thousands and displaced four million people. Many Yemenis are afflicted by malnutrition and disease but the country's healthcare system has all but collapsed, leaving it extremely vulnerable to the spread of the COVID-19 respiratory disease.

In the rebel-held capital of Sanaa, Hajj is flagged down by a man driving alongside his car. "My wife for the past week or two..." calls out the man, before Hajj asks him to pull over. After a roadside consultation, Hajj prescribes a course of vitamins.

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Local

Grocery shopping by appointment in Kuwait? Confusion reigns

Some co-op branches allow shopping without appointment

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: After Kuwait shifted from full to partial curfew, confusion over the grocery shopping appointment system has surfaced. It is unclear still if all stores require appointments booked online prior to shopping.

The Co-Op Union announced that it is still required to have an appointment for shopping in co-ops and supermarkets to avoid crowds and long queues. According to the union, shopping in the main branch is only for residents of the area and can be done once every six days, while shopping at the branches of the area can be done twice a week.

However not all co-ops or markets are following this plan exactly. When this reporter tried to book an appointment for a co-op branch in Salwa, the website www.moci.shop wouldn't allow the booking because six days hadn't passed since the last appointment. When contacting the Co-op Union complaint number on WhatsApp +965 9693-0957, the response said shopping at co-op branches is without appointment.

The confusion further exacerbated the situation in the areas that remain under lockdown. Do residents in these areas need to book a shopping appointment? The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced that in isolated areas, shopping in co-ops will be available 24 hours.

Tony, a resident of Khaitan, noted that in the past week, he visited the co-op and the other supermar-

kets in his area around five or six times without being asked for the barcode of his appointment. "But yesterday when I visited a hypermarket, for the first time they asked me for the appointment and didn't let me in. But I saw they were letting women in without showing any barcode," he told Kuwait Times.

When visiting and contacting different co-ops, they all agreed that shopping at branches of co-ops can be done without appointment. Salwa Co-op,



Supermarkets still require appointments

Daiya Co-op and Ali Sabah Al-Salem Co-op noted that the various branches of each co-op (not the main branches) are open for shopping from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. The branch of Shamiya Co-op operates till 5:00 pm.

However, many places are still requiring the appointment barcode, especially for the main branch. In Hawally, which is one of the isolated areas, consumers



KUWAIT: This May 31, 2020 file photo shows people waiting in line to enter the Farwaniya Co-operative Society for shopping via appointments they made on www.moci.shop. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

noted that they were only allowed into the supermarket with a barcode of their appointment, although it is open 24/7. Another branch of a commercial supermarket in Salmiya also asked people for their ap-

pointment booked in advance. At the beginning of June, some commercial supermarkets were letting in shoppers without appointments and some reportedly still are, though it's unclear if this is standard policy.

In my view

It is us first

By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

Two days ago I wanted to go out for a walk, but as soon as I opened the door, I almost fainted because a very strong and obnoxious odor struck my nose. I slammed the door shut and was denied my walk. I found the smell was from a trash bag left on the stairs by someone, without consideration what such an act may do to the 20 families living in the five-storey building.

Many people blame the government or the municipality for leaving the streets full of rubbish without even thinking about how this rubbish reached the street. It is in our nature to like seeing our cities and streets squeaky clean, but the sad reality is that we do not pay attention to the fact that it is we who keep it clean if we choose, and render it ugly by our own doing. How many of you have seen people throwing rubbish out of their car, which may hit the car behind them? How many of you found fast food trash next to their car by someone who just enjoyed an unhealthy junk meal?

Many times, I have seen garbage bags full of all types of household waste left open and things flying out of it in all directions, with stray cats and dogs foraging for food, keeping in mind that the wind does a good job of spreading things around.

When we blame the authorities, we must first consider our responsibilities. Did we act as we are supposed to act? One major problem we suffer from is that we follow others, consciously or not. We often hear many people say "let him do it first and I will follow suit"! While the fact is that one should take the initiative and encourage others to join us instead of waiting for someone to start, then we go along.

We understand that when flies swarm over something, they will not be selective and will be an annoyance to everybody regardless of who they may be, and this goes for other insects and pests.

I remember some time back when rats invaded some of Kuwait's neighborhoods in scary proportions, and became so widespread to a point that made the director of Kuwait Television ask people to bring bags of rats to him. He then brought the bags in front of the camera to show how grave the problem was, and it was only with the joint efforts of the government and the public that ended what was really a crisis.

Let us care for each other in all aspects of public life so that we can lead a clean and healthy life.

Final word: "Teamwork - coming together is beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success." — Henry Ford

Kuwait Amir receives letter from Oman Sultan

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah on Monday received a letter addressed to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tareq. The letter is related to close and deep relations between both sisterly nations, bilateral cooperation in various domains and issues of mutual concern. The Kuwaiti foreign minister received the letter while welcoming Charge d'Affaires of the Omani Embassy in Kuwait Hilal bin Ali Al-Shanfari. Assistant Foreign Minister for GCC Affairs Ambassador Nasser Haji Al-Muzein, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Ambassador Saleh Salem Al-Lughani and several other senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the meeting. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Charge d'Affaires of the Omani Embassy in Kuwait Hilal bin Ali Al-Shanfari. — KUNA

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 32,510 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Monday, in addition to 269 deaths. With the exception of 166 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, 22,162 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 10,079 people receiving treatment and 23 quarantined.

Curfew

Kuwait imposed a three-week partial curfew starting May 31, as part of a five-phase plan for a gradual return to normal life, brought to a standstill by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The first phase also includes a total lockdown on Farwaniya, Khaitan, Hawally, joining Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh which were put under lockdown earlier.

Activities to resume in first phase included home deliveries of restaurants, telecommunication companies, food retailers, companies' transportation of employees, gas stations, private clinics and car workshops. The second phase will see the curfew shortened to be between 9:00 pm and 6:00 am, while resuming work in the government and private sectors with the workforce being less than 30 percent, in addition to resumption of constructions, banking sector, malls opening for eight hours and according to special instructions, parks and pickups from restaurants.

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

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

Earlier, Kuwait imposed a total curfew from May 10 to May 30, allowing room for people to walk out for daily exercise between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and to shop at co-ops and supermarkets once every six days during the curfew hours by making an appointment through www.moci.shop. Before that, Kuwait enforced a country-

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

Precautions

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

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

Hotlines

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

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

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

Medicine delivery

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

- Amiri Hospital: 50880699
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital: 50880755
- Farwaniya Hospital: 50880852
- Adan Hospital: 50880908
- Jahra Hospital: 50881066
- Sabah Hospital: 97632660
- Jaber Hospital: 96992079
- Ibn Sina Hospital: 99613948
- Chest Hospital: 99258749
- Razi Hospital: 97633487
- Kuwait Cancer Control Center: 96735242
- Psychiatric Hospital: 97350113
- Physiotherapy Hospital: 99824037
- Maternity Hospital: 98559531
- As'ad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center: 98514508
- Zain Hospital: 97552031
- NBK Hospital: 96931761
- Al-Rashed Allergy Hospital: 94162470
- Infectious Diseases Hospital: 96989164
- Palliative Care Hospital: 94024786
- Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center: 90952469
- KFH Addiction Treatment Center: 94169363

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

Local

Kuwait Cabinet approves laboratory testing facilities at airport, land ports

Total lockdown yielded 'positive indicators,' says health ministry



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's weekly meeting via teleconference.



Health Minister Dr Basel Al-Sabah attends the meeting.



Minister of Finance Barrak Al-Sheetan attends the meeting.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Cabinet approved setting up health ministry laboratory testing facilities at air and land ports. The endeavor, which includes Kuwait International Airport and the new airport, will be administered in joint coordination among the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Works and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. The government also decided to equip and prepare both Seashell Julaia Hotel and Resort and Al-Joan Resort as quarantine facilities for people who have begun to recover from the virus.

This came during the Cabinet's weekly meeting on Monday chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah via teleconference. His Highness the Prime Minister briefed the Cabinet on talks, describing them as "positive," which he had attended with the National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and the Supreme Judicial Council Chairman Yusuf Al-Muttawa regarding the government's coronavirus measures.

Health situation

Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah then outlined the health situation in the country, including data and statistics related to COVID-19 cases, recoveries and fatalities. He also highlighted precautionary measures taken by the Ministry of Health to reduce the spread of the virus, including the full lockdown described as having produced "positive indicators." The Cabinet expressed gratitude and appreciation for the commitment of nationals and residents alike to these measures.

Ministers also reviewed the most recent steps on the matter, namely the first stage of the plan to regain normality post-coronavirus, the partial curfew and the full lockdown still imposed on several areas. The public were urged to adhere to social distancing rules and to cover both the nose and mouth, working together as a



Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel attends the meeting.



Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of Economic Affairs Mariyam Al-Aqeel (left) and Minister of Public Works Rana Al-Fares attend the meeting.

team to prevent the spread of the virus in preparation for the transition to the next stage of the plan to return to normal life.

OPEC+ meeting

Separately, Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel briefed the ministers on his attendance of teleconferenced talks with OPEC+ nations, during which the oil producers agreed to maintain current output levels through July.

The Cabinet also reviewed lawmaker Riyadh Al-Ad-sani's application for a five-axis grilling of the Minister of Finance Barrak Al-Sheetan, which will be on the agenda of the upcoming National Assembly session.



Resorts prepared as quarantine facilities

The Cabinet underlined its acknowledgement that interpellations are a right guaranteed by the Constitution to every member of the National Assembly.

On regional and global affairs, the Cabinet expressed Kuwait's welcoming of the Libyan ceasefire initiative, launched by Egypt's President Abdelattah Al-Sisi, in line with its support for the United Nations initiative on the matter, last March, calling for a ceasefire in all conflict areas amid efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19. The Kuwaiti ministers expressed hope the recent initiative would contribute to initiating a political solution in a manner that preserves the unity and independence of Libya. — KUNA



Interior Minister and Cabinet Affairs Minister Anas Al-Saleh attends the meeting.

News in brief

Avigan shipment arrives this week

KUWAIT: The Health Ministry announced that the first shipment of the Avigan drug is set to arrive in Kuwait this week, following the positive results it made during the clinical trials many countries have carried out on light to moderate cases of COVID-19. Health ministry Undersecretary for Medicines and Medical Supplies Dr Abdallah Al-Bader said the ministry is waiting for another quantity of the medicine to arrive in order to carry out clinical research and studies in Kuwait and share its results with international agencies. He said the first shipment is designated for emergency response and humanitarian purposes, and does not have any commercial value by the Japanese government. Bader added that it will be used according to instructions and guidelines prepared by Japan and according with WHO recommendations. The drug supply is a donation from the Japanese government.

27 flights

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced that 27 flights departed Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying a total of 5,416 passengers. They included 17 flights to Egypt, one flight to Saudi Arabia, four flights to India, one flight to Bangladesh, one flight to Jordan, two flights to Ethiopia, and one flight to Tunisia.

Food distribution

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs allowed charities to distribute food in areas under lockdown, saying that about 7,700 food packages were distributed in the isolated areas on Saturday to help those in need.

No malaria

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of the Disabled denied social media claims about the spread of malaria inside its building, stressing that a resident there passed away recently as a result of complications from chronic pneumonia.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed



Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Mask-clad costumers buy fish at the main fish market in Sharq on June 3, 2020. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait oil price up by \$2.18 to \$37.52 per barrel: KPC

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by \$2.18 to \$37.52 per barrel (pb) on Monday, compared with \$35.34 on Friday, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Globally, the price of Brent crude on Monday closed up by \$1.50 or 3.6 percent to \$40.80 pb, while the West Texas Intermediate nosedived by \$1.36 or 3.4 percent to \$38.19 pb.

The OPEC daily basket price went up by \$1.9 to reach \$36.83 a barrel on Friday, compared with \$34.84 on Thursday, said the organization on Monday. The annual average of the OPEC basket hit \$52.43 per barrel in 2019, it added in a statement. The OPEC Reference Basket of Crudes (ORB) is made up of Saharan Blend (Algeria), Girassol (Angola), Djeno (Congo), Oriente (Ecuador), Zafiro (Equatorial Guinea), Rabi Light (Gabon), Iran Heavy (Islamic Republic of Iran), Basra Light (Iraq), Kuwait Export (Kuwait), Es Sider (Libya), Bonny Light (Nigeria), Arab Light (Saudi Arabia), Murban (UAE) and Mercy (Venezuela).

OPEC+ nations had on Sunday expressed their commitment to the ongoing agreement to cut production in the pursuit of market stability, serving the common interests of the oil producing countries. This came amid teleconference talks attended by OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers, co-chaired by the en-



ergy ministers of Saudi Arabia, Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, and Russia, Alexander Novak, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

The deal to reduce output, reached last May and includes June, will be extended until the end of July, they agreed, mentioning it is important to remain fully committed to efforts to achieve a balance in oil markets. Production will continue to be monitored at a meeting held on a monthly basis until December 2020, with the upcoming scheduled for June 18 and a ministerial OPEC+ slated for December 1 in Vienna. — KUNA

LAPA to launch Al-Jawhar training program next week

KUWAIT: Within a busy cultural season despite the curfew and health precautions, LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) is currently preparing to launch its Al-Jawhar program. The program includes a number of media workshops professionally addressing youth with participation of iconic Arab media figures.

The first episode will be launched next week and presented by Lebanese media figure Jezail Khouri; one of the most prominent in the field over the past two decades who had interviewed top leaders, kings, presidents and creative Arab figures.

"LOYAC is a wonderful humanitarian organization that is unrivalled in the Arab world because it helps youth from various Arab countries and extends helping hands to gift Arabs who have been suffering or had to become refugees due to war," stated Khouri, noting that on her visit to LOYAC Kuwait, she was highly impressed with what it presents to the youth in Kuwait, namely culture-wise. Khouri also expressed her joy to contact gifted youth and pass on her experience to them. "Al-Jawhar is a unique experience beyond media and professional training," she concluded.

Meanwhile, LOYAC's chairperson Farea Al-Saqqaf said that Al-Jawhar is cultural media program through which youth will be trained by iconic media figures. "The program aims at building cultural bridges



Farea Al-Saqqaf



Jezail Khouri

amongst Arab youth and peoples by effective Arab media figures to acquaint the youth with predecessor icons who had contributed to forming the essence of Arab culture," Saqqaf added, explaining that the program will be open only for talented serious youth to take part in 12-14 workshops throughout the year offering those who undergo more than one workshop, the 'Al-Jawhar Generation Certificate', in addition to future media training scholarships inside and outside Kuwait.

Saqqaf added that the program's episodes will be open for youth from Kuwait and the Arab world and that each workshop would include 10-14 trainees undergoing two-hour five-day training through Zoom app. Further, Saqqaf noted that LOYAC is keen on offering scholarships and support to youth, namely those from Kuwait, Lebanon and Jordan adding that there would be six scholarships: two for each country, for LOYAC youth or Arab youth residing in those countries.

Kuwait Times

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Local

Temperature guns effective, but sun exposure could render reading inaccurate

Automatic entry ban if tested 38°C degrees or higher

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times spoke to several people who were prevented from entering stores because the temperature gun showed their temperature was over 38°C degrees. Such a temperature could mean the person may be having some health issues.

The normal body temperature varies depending on many factors, including a person's age, sex and activity levels. A Kuwait Times source from the medical field suggested that normal body temperature of an adult is around 37°C, but explained it can be a bit higher or lower. "A temperature of 38°C is a fever, above 39.5°C is high fever and above 41°C is very high fever," said Dr Emerlita Grantos, a physician at Jarallah Medical Center.

Many businesses were closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, but some were allowed to operate by the ministry after ordering them to observe health protocols so as not to endanger customers. Many businesses that are serving customers despite the lockdowns and curfew include restaurants, grocery

stores, pharmacies and telcos. Observance of health protocols is strictly implemented like social distancing, wearing gloves and facemask and using an infrared forehead thermometer gun to test customers if they have fever. If a person has fever, they will be denied entry.

Drink cold water before entering



The social distancing requirement means customers must wait for their turn to be served and enter the shop. Some establishments are providing customers in the queue with chairs and air-conditioned waiting areas, while some have to wait under the heat of the sun. Many customers have complained of not being allowed entry just because their temperature spiked to above 38 degrees.

People who know they have no health issues try to argue with the guard. "You saw me in the queue for almost an hour and you won't allow me entry? I have no fever - this heat came from the sun. You let us wait outside for long period with a temperature of about 40 - of course I will absorb the heat," an Arab woman told a guard at the telecom company branch, who was not allowed entry.

She was given cold water by another woman in the queue, who told her to drink it and spray on her body, then wait for a minute and her temperature will be okay. "I've been in the queue for an hour - the heat of the sun is for real," she said. After a while, she was allowed to enter the branch.

Another woman told Kuwait Times that around 10 people and herself in the queue were denied entry at 10 am at a bank in Dajeej, because they showed a temperature above 38 degrees. "The guard told us to leave - most were Indians and I was the only Filipina in the queue. I said let me in because I was in the queue since 8 am, but when he checked my temperature, it was 38 point something degrees. So we were all denied entry," said Bing Mawalic, a personal assistant of her female employer.

Dr Grantos said these temperature guns are the most effective way to immediately gauge a fever, but they can malfunction. "Yes they are effective, but some are not very accurate. But they help to check your approximate body temperature. You will feel it yourself if there's something wrong with your body. The problem is if you are exposed to direct sunlight, your external body temperature will rise and the device will measure it as well. So I suggest relaxing in a corner and drinking some cold water. If the problem is not internal, the temperature will stabilize soon," she said.



Three hurt in Jabriya building blaze

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firemen put out a blaze that engulfed a fourth-floor apartment in Jabriya on Monday. Firemen from the Hawally, Salmiya and Shuhada fire stations responded to an emer-

gency call reporting a fire in a 10-storey building in Jabriya. They evacuated the building before extinguishing the flames. Three persons suffered from smoke inhalation and were treated on site. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.



KUWAIT: The 'Weyak Ya Watan' (with you, my nation) voluntary team distributed over 75,000 face shields to frontliners at hospitals, quarantines and other locations around the country to help protect them from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). — By Hanan Al-Saadoun



Pakistan's hospitals running out of beds as virus cases surge

North Korea cuts communication lines to South

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BRISTOL: This combination of pictures created on June 7, 2020 shows protesters pulling down a statue of slave trader Edward Colston during a demonstration organized to show solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died after a police officer knelt on his neck in Minneapolis. — AFP

Anger, but few want UK statue back

Toppling fuels debate on monuments to slave traders

LONDON: The British government on Monday denounced the toppling of a slave trader's statue during anti-racism protests, urging campaigners to use democratic means for change rather than breaking the law. But the action won some support, including from the city's mayor, against a backdrop of public pressure to re-examine representations of the country's colonial past.

Demonstrators pulled down the 5.5-m bronze monument to Edward Colston in the southwest English city of Bristol and threw it into the harbor on Sunday. The protest was one of many across Britain in recent days in response to the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, at the hands of police in the United States. Most marches were peaceful but there were flashes of violence, including in London, where the statue of World War II leader Winston Churchill in Parliament Square was defaced.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson condemned the clashes as "a betrayal of the cause they (protesters) purport to serve". Johnson's spokesman told reporters on Monday the violence was "unacceptable", while the removal of the statue in Bristol was a criminal act that should be prosecuted. "We fully understand the strength of opinion but in this country we settle our differences democratically," he added. In parliament, Home Secretary Priti Patel said there had been 135 arrests in protests across Britain and 35 police officers injured in London alone. She described those behind the clashes as "thugs and criminals".

Colston, who came from a wealthy merchant family, was a former top official in the Royal African Company in the late 17th century. The company sent into slavery hundreds of thousands of men, women and children from West Africa to the Caribbean and the Americas.

Many were branded with the company's initials. Colston was also a Tory member of parliament and philanthropist, donating huge funds to support schools, hospitals, almshouses and churches in Bristol.

'Symbol of injustice'

Historic England, a government heritage body, said the local community must now decide what to do with the fallen statue but "we do not believe it must be reinstated". "We recognize that the statue was a symbol of injustice and a source of great pain for many people," it added. Authorities had agreed to rename his statue, which was erected in 1895, to highlight his role in slavery but the process became deadlocked because of conflicting views.

Marvin Rees, Bristol's elected Labour mayor, said he believed the statue would end up in a museum, alongside banners from Sunday's Black Lives Matter protest. Rees, who is of Jamaican heritage, said he "cannot condone the damage" but described the destruction of the statue as an "iconic moment". "I cannot pretend it was anything other than a personal affront to me to have it in the middle of Bristol, the city in which I grew up," he told BBC radio.

Leading Bristol music venue Colston Hall, which has hosted concerts from Louis Armstrong to The Beatles, said Sunday's protests had spurred it to speed up a plan to change its name. Bristol trip-hop outfit Massive

Attack have consistently refused to play at the venue because of its name and associations.

'Who we are'

British institutions and local authorities have in recent years been re-examining their public monuments in the face of demands to better represent the country's colonial past. Churchill's legacy has come under scrutiny for his wartime policies that are blamed for the death of millions during famine in the Indian state of Bengal in 1943. "No debate about the way we run our public spaces should ever be finished," mayor Rees said. "We should be constantly wrestling with who we are and where we've come from."

British Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton called Colston a "monster" and urged all similar statues to be torn down. The wider protests won the backing of Manchester City and England footballer Raheem Sterling, while world heavyweight boxing champion Anthony Joshua joined protesters in London.

"It was an absolutely incredible feat that really shows the importance of us knowing our history," said Aliyah Hasinah, a curator and spokeswoman for protest group Black Lives Matter UK. "Public art absolutely has an impact on our imagination and what we believe is at the core of our society because it's what we hail as important," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "That's why so many people

politely petitioned to get the Colston statue removed ... They weren't listened to, so the city of Bristol made their voices heard in another way."

Debates rage

But the debate over building and monuments named after people involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade has been brewing for some years fuelled by the world's recently adopted drive to end modern slavery. Campaigners had previously called for the statue - still bearing a plaque describing Colston as "virtuous and wise" - to be removed, but had failed to persuade the authorities.

Debates over how to handle monuments and artifacts commemorating historic figures whose actions and beliefs are widely condemned today are also raging in other nations. In the United States, Virginia Governor Ralph Northam announced plans last week to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee in the state's capital city of Richmond. In Belgium, an online petition calling for the removal of statues of colonial-era King Leopold II has garnered more than 30,000 signatures. His troops decimated Congo in the late 1800s.

Others hailed the removal as affirmative action against racial inequality and Britain's imperial legacies - although some added they would have preferred to see it done legally. "It is important people see the reality of the growth of the British Empire and imperialism," said Richard Benjamin, head of the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, northern England. "The representation of Edward Colston was highly contentious and offensive to many, and in bringing him down, it is important to note we are not erasing history, but instead making history." — AFP



Hamilton calls Colston a 'monster'

Egypt still backing Libyan strongman Haftar - for now

CAIRO: Rattled by a string of military defeats for ally Khalifa Haftar in neighboring Libya, Egypt has pressed for a ceasefire - and, despite doubts, is sticking with the strongman for now, analysts say. The ultimate concern for Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, they say, is to secure the long western border with Libya, a chaotic battleground of rival administrations, militias and jihadists ever since the 2011 downfall and killing of dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

Haftar - a Gaddafi loyalist turned defector who spent years living in the United States - was already in control of oil-rich eastern Libya when in April last year he launched an offensive on Tripoli, seat of the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). The 76-year-old military leader's move was viewed as rash by Cairo, according to Tarek Megerisi, a fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "Egypt has direct security interests in Libya and having a security partner to work with in eastern Libya is of paramount importance to them, which is why they were so concerned at Haftar's reckless adventurism," he said.

The strongman's 14-month onslaught - despite also being supported by Russia and other outside actors - has unraveled spectacularly in recent weeks, as GNA forces, heavily backed by Turkey, have forced his men to fall back from the outskirts of the capital. Having lost their last outposts in western Libya, pro-Haftar forces have retreated and were Monday defending their positions in the coastal city of Sirte, a gateway to the oil-fields and the east. Egypt is still "invested in propagat-

ing the Haftar project diplomatically, providing him political support, and militarily supporting his war effort," said Megerisi.

That much could be seen when Haftar appeared alongside Sisi in Cairo at the weekend, where they pushed a time-buying ceasefire - a proposal that found little favor with the GNA, which is keen to maintain the momentum of its counteroffensive. But at the same time Egypt is "looking for other options and ways to secure their interests as they become less and less certain that he (Haftar) will win," Megerisi added. A key facet of this incipient Plan B is Egypt and Russia "working together on political alternatives to Haftar that may be able to save their spheres of influence in eastern Libya," said Megerisi. One such alternative figure is Aguila Saleh, the speaker of Libya's eastern based parliament, who likewise was in Cairo at the weekend, and who has lately been at loggerheads with Haftar.

Moscow, like Cairo and also Abu Dhabi, has invested in Haftar as a bulwark against the expansion of Ankara's influence in Libya. "Egypt has become the main gateway for much of the Emirati and Russian help going into eastern Libya," explained Jalel Harchaoui of the Hague-based Clingendael Institute. Harchaoui also pointed to Cairo's reservations about Haftar's move on Tripoli - an "initial instinct" that has been "vindicated" by the recent defeats. But "if, for whatever reason, the conflict worsens a lot from here... Egypt will not remain in a passive posture. It will likely intervene militarily," he told AFP.

This may take the form of air strikes directly by Egypt, a tactic it used against the Islamic State group in the eastern Libyan city of Derna in 2015. An Egyptian military expert using the pseudonym Egyptian Defense Review said Cairo remains "a major supplier of arms, training, and logistical support" to Haftar. It has provided "everything from Cold War-era tanks, fighter jets, helicopters, and assorted ammunition... from their own



TRIPOLI: A fighter loyal to the UN-recognized Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) prostrates in prayer as an expression of gratitude as his comrades celebrate in the Qasr bin Ghashir district south of the Libyan capital Tripoli, after the area was taken over by pro-GNA forces following clashes with rival forces loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar. — AFP

reserves and in contravention of a UN arms embargo on the country," the expert said. This expert pointed to the border town of Sidi Barrani as "one of the main staging areas for arms shipments, Russian mercenary shuttles, and Emirati air power into Libya".

The wider conflict between regional powers playing out in Libya was again made clear in a recent tweet by a key advisor to Abu Dhabi's powerful crown prince

Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. After Haftar's men were pushed out of Tripoli's southern outskirts, the adviser, Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, wrote that "Tripoli has become (the) first Arab capital to fall under Turkish occupation." "Count on Egypt and its military playing a decisive role... it will deter (Turkish President Recep Tayyip) Erdogan and stop his mercenaries' advances east, west and south." — AFP

International

Police in hot seat after years of near impunity

Calls for police reform spread across US

WASHINGTON: Calls for police reform have spread across the United States, but after years of acting with relative impunity - supported by powerful unions and protective laws - changing the worst habits of the US men in blue will be a steep challenge. After the May 25 death of George Floyd, the African-American who died while handcuffed and pinned to the ground at the neck by a white Minneapolis police officer, communities, states and even Congress have piled up initiatives to stem police violence, especially against blacks.

In Minneapolis, the city council has called for a wholesale dismantling and rebuilding of the Midwestern city's police department. In other communities, critics are demanding to "defund the police" - to force budget reductions and reappropriations that would bring about change. And in Congress, Democrats proposed nationwide reforms that would lower the legal threshold for police to face prosecution, including charges for use of excessive force. "This movement of national anguish is being transformed into a movement of national action," said House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi.

Pattern of abuse

Floyd's death was just the latest incident in a larger pattern of police use of lethal force. US police killed 1,098 people in 2019, one-quarter of them black Americans, who represent only 13 percent of the

population, according to the group Mapping Police Violence. By comparison, French police kill only around 20 people ever year. One explanation for the huge US number is the widespread availability of guns, which increase the danger faced by officers on the job. Last year, 135 officers were killed in the line of duty, according to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund.

US police are empowered to use their firearms at any "reasonable" expectation of immediate danger to themselves or others - a subjective standard. Given the somewhat wide parameters at issue, the cases of police being charged with excessive or flagrant abuse are extremely rare. Police are also protected by the contracts their unions negotiate, which make it much more difficult to pursue

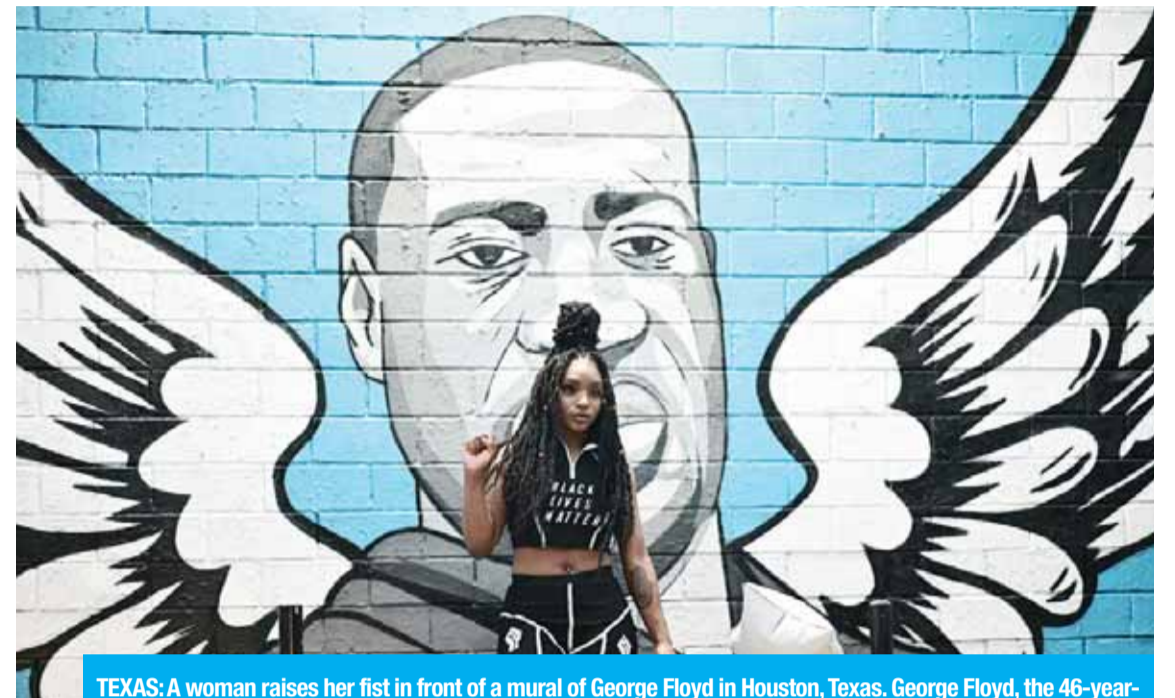
them in court, according to the activist group Check-the-police.org, which has compiled details on such contracts in more than 80 cities. The Minneapolis contract allowed Derek Chauvin, who held his knee to Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes, to keep his job for almost two decades despite 18 reports of abuse.

Reluctant prosecutors, juries

Over the past 15 years, just 110 police have been charged with felony homicide after killing someone while on duty, and only five have been convicted of murder, according to Philip Stinson, a former police

officer who is now a professor of criminal justice at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. "Prosecutors are reluctant to bring charges because they have to work with police officers for their day-to-day work," Stinson said. And it is hard to win a case against a cop because juries are "very reluctant" to second-guess

a policeman's split-second decision to shoot in a dangerous situation, he added. On top of that, said Minnesota law professor David Schultz, jurors do not trust many of those who accuse the police of abuse. The accusers "are oftentimes not... the most sympathetic people," he said. — AFP



TEXAS: A woman raises her fist in front of a mural of George Floyd in Houston, Texas. George Floyd, the 46-year-old African American whose killing by a white police officer transformed him into a global icon of the struggle against racism and police brutality, was laid to rest yesterday in Houston, the city where he grew up. — AFP



US police killed 1,098 people in 2019

Virus: Fears for UK homeless

LONDON: Thousands of homeless people in Britain were given hotel rooms to protect them from coronavirus but as the outbreak slows, charities fear they could soon be back on the streets. Lisa was among 15,000 people in England given emergency accommodation as part of an unprecedented government scheme in March to get "Everyone In" as COVID-19 spread. She has a chronic health condition and had been living on the streets, relying on temporary shelters run by the charity Glass Door, which helped her onto the hotel scheme. "I was elated," she said, "the 30-something told AFP by telephone. "To be able to sleep in a bed, it was like sleeping on cloud nine!"

But her room in a London hotel is only confirmed until the end of June - and as the government eases a nationwide lockdown, she is getting increasingly anxious. The scheme "does give me some glimmer of hope that things can go forward. When you are on the street it feels never-ending", she said. "I have faith that the charities are not going to put us back on the street. "But if it's a case of going back into the kind of temporary accommodation I was in, I know the cycle will be repeated." Campaigners are demanding the government urgently clarify what happens to people like Lisa when the hotel contracts run out.

"Returning people back onto the streets should not be an option, but time is running out to find alternative solutions," said Glass



LONDON: A homeless man, who has been rough sleeping for 8 weeks, sleeps in central London. Thousands of homeless people in Britain were given hotel rooms to protect them from coronavirus but as the outbreak slows, charities fear they could soon be back on the streets. — AFP

Door chief operating officer Lucy Abraham. There are also calls for wider action amid warnings that homelessness will increase as the economic impact of the outbreak bites. "The government's actions and support so far are welcome, but there is still a long way to go," said a joint letter to ministers from leading homelessness charities. "With the risk of a second wave of infection and looming economic crisis, more needs to be done. Getting this right is critical for the health and economic security of tens of thousands of people and families."

Seize this opportunity

Charities had warned that people living on the streets or in crowded hostels were particularly vulnerable to coron-

avirus, which has killed around 40,000 people in Britain so far. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government responded with an extraordinary effort, housing 14,610 people sleeping rough or at risk of doing so in England - 4,450 in London alone. Many were given rooms in shuttered hotels, providing a safe and comfortable environment that some people had not experienced for years. "We've heard some incredible stories of people really seizing this opportunity and showing they can hold down a tenancy," said Balbir Chatrik, of the youth homelessness charity Centrepoint. "But many more require the sort of intensive support that can only be provided in tandem with stable accommodation." —AFP

COVID 'worsening' Worldwide: WHO

NEW YORK: New York City - the epicenter of America's coronavirus outbreak - began partially reopening its shattered economy Monday after almost three months of lockdown, as the World Health Organization warned the health crisis was "worsening" worldwide. Some 400,000 New Yorkers were allowed to return to work as retailers began offering limited in-store and curbside pickup, with construction and manufacturing also permitted to resume operations.

"It's good to be back," said Michael Ostrergren, manager of the Shakespeare and Co bookshop on Manhattan's Upper West Side, where a trickle of customers arrived shortly after the doors reopened. "Everybody wants to be out of the house. We're just picking up where we left off in March," he added. As New York entered phase one of its reopening and some of Europe's hardest-hit nations lurched back to a new kind of normal, the WHO reported a record number of new cases globally.

Director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said 136,000 cases had been reported in the past 24 hours, "the most in a single day so far," with the majority of them in the Americas and South Asia. "Although the situation in Europe is improving, globally it is worsening," he told reporters. COVID-19 caused more than 21,000 confirmed and probable deaths in New York after America's most populous city quickly became ground zero of the US epidemic in late March. Mayor Bill de Blasio hailed the first easing of



NEW YORK: Commuters arrive at Grand Central Station with Metro-North during morning rush hour in New York City. — AFP

restrictions but warned residents that they must continue to social distance and wash their hands regularly.

"This is a triumphant moment for New Yorkers who fought back against this disease," he told CNN. "Come back to work, but remember to stick to those smart rules that got us this far." But the reopening effort was stymied by large numbers of high-end stores remaining boarded up following widespread looting during anti-racism protests a week ago. The start of the economic reboot came a day after de Blasio lifted a controversial week-long curfew he had imposed over the looting. Governor Andrew Cuomo has urged the thousands of protesters who demonstrated the police killing in Minneapolis of an unarmed black man, George Floyd, to get tested for COVID-19, fearing they may trigger a surge in infections.

US recession

One shop that did open in Midtown Manhattan was The Container Store, a home storage outlet. Sixty-one-year-old K.B. Barton left with three bags of items that he had first ordered online. "It's livelier today in Manhattan. I see a lot more people in the streets. I am happier but not everyone wears a mask," he told AFP. In the borough of Queens, rush hour subway trains into Manhattan were slightly busier than in recent weeks, but still nowhere near pre-coronavirus numbers. Seventy-year-old Brandy Bligen said he was looking forward to dining outside, which will be included in phase two of the reopening alongside barbershops, and expected in a fortnight if cases don't surge. "Being confined is enough to drive you crazy," he told AFP at the Roosevelt Avenue-Jackson Heights station. — AFP

Why the US is experiencing a COVID plateau

WASHINGTON: When epidemiologists talked about "flattening the curve," they probably didn't mean it this way: the US hit its peak coronavirus caseload in April, but since that time the graph has been on a seemingly unending plateau. That's unlike several other hard-hit countries which have successfully pushed down their numbers of new cases, including Spain and Italy, which now have bell-shaped curves. Experts say the prolonged nature of the US epidemic is the result of the cumulative impact of regional outbreaks, as the virus that started out primarily on the coasts and in major cities moves inward.

Layered on top of that are the effects of lifting lockdowns in parts of the country that are experiencing rising cases, as well as a lapse in compliance with social distancing guidelines because of economic hardship, and in some cases a belief that the threat is overstated. "The US is a large country both in geography and population, and the virus is at very different stages in different parts of the country," Tom Frieden, a former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

told AFP. The US saw more than 35,000 new cases for several days in April. While that figure has declined, it has still been exceeding 20,000 regularly in recent days.

By contrast, Italy was regularly hitting more than 5,000 cases per day in March but is currently experiencing figures in the low hundreds. "We did not act quickly and robustly enough to stop the virus spreading initially, and data indicate that it travelled from initial hotspots along major transport routes into other urban and rural areas," added Frieden, now CEO of the non-profit Resolve to Save Lives. To wit: the East Coast states of New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts accounted for about 50 percent of all cases until about a month or so ago - but now the geographic footprint of the US epidemic has shifted to the Midwest and southeast, including Florida.

Another key problem, said Jennifer Nuzzo, an epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins, is that the United States is still not doing enough testing, contact tracing and isolation. After coming late to the testing party - for reasons ranging from technical issues to regulatory hurdles - the US has now conducted more COVID-19 tests than any other country. It even has one of the highest per capita rates per country of 62 per 1,000 people, according to the website ourworldindata.org - better than Germany (52 per 1,000) and South Korea (20 per 1,000). — AFP

HK protesters torn between hope and fear

HONG KONG: Medical sector worker Tana has attended peaceful lunchtime rallies in Hong Kong regularly for months along with thousands of others protesting Beijing's influence and calling for greater democracy in the global financial hub. Now, a year on from a mass rally that kicked off a large scale and often violent anti-government movement, 37-year-old Tana and her husband fear not enough has changed. The protests succeeded in forcing a backdown by the Hong Kong government on proposed legislation that would have allowed extradition to mainland China. But a year later, authorities in Beijing are drafting national security laws that activists fear would further curb freedoms.

For Tana and her family, including a son born just before the protests began, pragmatism is beginning to trump idealism. "I am most worried about my child," Tana told Reuters, requesting her surname be withheld for security reasons. The family has already shifted their savings abroad, she said, and "emigration might be an option." Among supporters of the protest movement, feelings range from slim hope to acute fear of oppression. After a relative respite during the coronavirus outbreak, protesters are again taking to the streets against the proposed security laws. Officials have said

the laws would target a small number of "troublemakers" with provisions against secession, subversion, terrorism and foreign interference.

Ng, a retired 63-year-old woman is among those looking back at the past year with pride and pledges to keep demonstrating. "A single spark can start a huge blaze," she said, also requesting she be identified by one name only. "The more the government suppresses us, the more resisting we become." David, 22, who works in insurance and declined to give his surname, said a mix of violent and peaceful tactics was needed for international attention. David said he "sometimes felt overwhelmed with fear" when he helped at rallies by mixing petrol bombs and disabling tear gas canisters, but he felt compelled to continue.

Demonstrations have often turned violent, with protesters blocking roads, vandalizing shops perceived to have pro-Beijing links and throwing bricks and molotovs at the police, who have responded with tear gas and rubber bullets. Isaiah Choy, who studies in Britain but came back last year to take part in peaceful protests, said violent tactics should be abandoned. The 21-year-old said he is frustrated with Hong Kong being treated as a "pawn" in U.S.-China conflicts. Washington, which has traded barbs with Beijing over trade, the coronavirus pandemic and other issues, says China has quashed the high degree of autonomy that Hong Kong was promised for at least 50 years when it returned from British to Chinese rule in 1997. Beijing has dismissed the claim and urged Washington not to meddle. — Reuters

International

For Italy's Muslims, lack of burial space deepens grief

Imams call for more Islamic cemeteries

BRUZZANO: Italy's Muslim community, like others, suffered many deaths as the coronavirus pandemic hit the Mediterranean country hard. Compounding the pain for the religious minority has been the grim reality of a lack of space to bury their dead. Imams and Muslim community leaders are now calling for more Islamic cemeteries, or additional space in the country's existing graveyards, as the faithful increasingly want to be buried in Italy, their home. "We have experienced the pain (of the pandemic), but it has sometimes been deepened when some families could not find a place to bury their dead because there were no Muslim sections in the town cemeteries," Abdullah Tchina, imam of the Milan Sesto mosque, told AFP.

More than 34,000 people have died from the virus in Italy, mostly in the industrial north, and for months global air travel has been at a near-standstill. As a result, Muslims who died of COVID-19 or other causes could not be repatriated to their countries of origin, as was the practice previously. That led to a spike in requests for burials - and the realisation that Italy lacks the space. Italy's Muslims number around 2.6 million, or 4.3 percent of the population. Living mainly in the country's north, 56 percent hold foreign citizenship, many from countries in North Africa or South Asia. No official statistics are available on the number of Muslims, whether Italians or foreign nationals, who lost their lives during the outbreak.

A rectangle of pebbles

In the cemetery of Bruzzano, on the outskirts of Milan, 50-something Mustapha Moulay gazes at a greyish earthen tomb in the Muslim section of an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic cemetery. "It was God's will," he said of the death on April 7 of his 55-year-old wife from COVID-19. She contracted the virus in a Milan hospital where she had been admitted a month earlier for a minor leg operation, said Moulay, who was born in Morocco and has lived in Italy for 32 years. The grave has no tombstone, and is simply marked out with a rectangle of

pebbles. The freshest graves are strikingly destitute. The graves of those who died pre-coronavirus look more permanent - with cement borders and sometimes a marble slab engraved with the crescent moon. Many other Italian Muslims however were forced to travel long distances to bury their dead, or leave bodies for days in morgues, or even keep them at home while seeking a space.



Italy hit hard by pandemic

'A dignified burial'

Under Islamic tradition, the dead must be buried as quickly as possible, preferably within 24 hours. One of the most extreme cases was that of Hira Ibrahim, a Macedonian woman in Pisogne, near the northern city of Brescia, whose mother died from coronavirus. Ibrahim had to keep her mother's body at home for more than 10 days for lack of a Muslim cemetery in her community, according to the newspaper La Repubblica. Countless Muslim families faced similar tragic predicaments during the crisis, the paper said. Tchina, the imam, said the problem persists even after the biggest waves of deaths have subsided.

The body of a Muslim who died in Milan last week was transported some 50 kilometers away for burial, he said. Tchina thanked mayors "who opened their (Catholic) cemeteries during this crisis to ensure a dignified burial" for the Muslim dead. The president of Milan's Islamic Centre, Gueddouda Boubakeur, said that some families in Brescia and Bergamo - two of the areas hardest hit by the coronavirus - had to wait "a very long



BRUZZANO: A view shows the Muslim section of an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic cemetery of Bruzzano, on the outskirts of Milan. Like so many others, Italy's Muslim community was not spared the coronavirus that took thousands of lives in recent months. — AFP

time". Thanks to the combined efforts of municipalities and central government authorities, solutions were ultimately found most of the time, he said. "We didn't consider the distance. We went to the first town that accepted the bodies. Our concern was above all to find space," Boubakeur said.

Handful of cemeteries

The Union of Islamic Communities of Italy lists just 76 Islamic cemeteries in the country, which counts nearly 8,000 municipalities. The oldest was built in 1856, in the northeastern city of Trieste, while Rome's date back only to 1974. Under Italian law, cemeteries "may provide for special and separate sections" for non-Catholics, but they are not required. Boubakeur acknowledged the

government's cooperation, but urged more "political will" to create additional Muslim burial spaces.

"After this pandemic, 150 municipalities responded positively to our requests" to provide a Muslim section in their cemeteries, Boubakeur said - just a fraction of the nearly 8,000 municipalities. Going forward, the need for Muslim burial plots will only increase as immigrants and their offspring prefer to be interred in Italy. "We used to have a kitty to pay for sending back bodies to their country of origin, but no longer," Boubakeur said. "Some old people still want to be buried in their country of origin. But many have children, grandchildren in Italy and now prefer to be buried here." Younger Muslims "want to be buried in Italy because they're Italian", Boubakeur said. — AFP



DAMASCUS: In this file photo, Syrian presidential guards, waving pictures of President Hafez Al-Assad and his son, heir apparent Bashar, pay their last respects to their late president in the capital Damascus. — AFP

Assad's 20-year rule, from Spring to pariah

BEIRUT: Bashar Al-Assad's rise to power after three decades of his father's iron-fisted rule raised hope of democratic opening. But 20 years later, Syria is isolated and war-ravaged. Crumbling under a stinging economic downturn, Western sanctions and nine years of war, Syria today is a far cry from the vision Assad projected when he was propelled to the presidency a month after his father Hafez died on June 10, 2000.

"There was a good deal of anxiety in the early stages, as Syria hadn't experienced a peaceful transition of power in decades and Hafez al-Assad was all many people knew," said Faysal Itani of the Center for Global Policy. But "soon this all subsided as Bashar settled in and projected this aura of modernity, youth, and openness". Sworn in at the age of 34, the London-trained ophthalmologist exuded the aura of a reformer who could fundamentally alter Syrian politics through economic liberalization and a limited opening to the West. His ascension to the presidency, a year after Jordan and Morocco crowned new kings, added to the impression that a tide of change was sweeping the region.

For a brief period after he was voted in through a single-candidate poll, Syria saw a surge in political debate and activism, after almost 40 years of emergency law. This burst in political activity was inconceivable under the rule of Hafez, whose forces notoriously carried out a 1982 massacre in Hama following an Islamist uprising. "Bashar was a very different character from the other prominent figures in the regime," said Syria expert Daniel Neep. He was only second in line until his older brother Bassel died in a 1994 car accident. "In a country that had not seen any significant political or economic opening for over a decade, Bashar's ascension to the presidency appeared to signal the promise of long-overdue reform," said Neep, assistant professor at Georgetown University.

'Liberaliser idea died quickly'

In September 2000, around 100 intellectuals called for reforms including the

lifting of the state of emergency, public freedoms and political pluralism in what became known as the Damascus Spring. "The idea of Bashar as liberaliser died quite quickly," Itani said. By the summer of 2001, Assad was cracking down on dissent. The promise of economic liberalisation also faded as wealth fell exclusively in the hands of regime associates. "Bashar's 'social market economy' turned out to be a formula for rapacious corruption among Bashar's inner circle," Itani added. "Economic inequality deepened, and much of the middle class and rural populations fell into dire poverty." Bashar's attempts to draw Syria closer to the West also ended in failure.

The man who was received in Paris in 2008 by France's then-president Nicolas Sarkozy and whose British-born wife was dubbed a "Desert Rose" by the Western press is now a reviled figure. The brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2011, and the war that has since killed more than 380,000 people and displaced millions, have undermined his international legitimacy. A spate of sanctions imposed by the European Union and United States, the latest of which are due to go into force this month, have compounded a crippling economic crisis. Most of the population is living in poverty and the Syrian pound has hit an all-time low against the dollar, triggering a fresh wave of dissent in government-held areas while violence continues to stalk regions that evade Assad's control.

Syria has also lost its status as a regional heavyweight under Assad's watch and is now widely seen as heavily dependant on Russia, Iran and an assortment of Tehran-backed militias, including the Lebanese Hezbollah movement. "Hafez had always kept Syria independent from foreign interference. Bashar has become beholden to external influence to keep his regime intact," said Neep. "What we're seeing now is a strange, sub-contracted form of political authority that has no precedent in modern Syrian politics." — AFP

A year on, Hong Kong democracy protesters torn between hope and fear

HONG KONG: Medical sector worker Tana has attended peaceful lunchtime rallies in Hong Kong regularly for months along with thousands of others protesting Beijing's influence and calling for greater democracy in the global financial hub. Now, a year on from a mass rally that kicked off a large scale and often violent anti-government movement, 37-year-old Tana and her husband fear not enough has changed. The protests succeeded in forcing a backdown by the Hong Kong government on proposed legislation that would have allowed extradition to mainland China. But a year later, authorities in Beijing are drafting national security laws that activists fear would further curb freedoms.

For Tana and her family, including a son born just before the protests began, pragmatism is beginning to trump idealism. "I am most worried about my child," Tana told Reuters, requesting her surname be withheld for security reasons. The family has already shifted their savings abroad, she said, and "emigration might be an option." Among supporters of the protest movement, feelings range from slim hope to acute fear of oppression. After a relative respite during the coronavirus outbreak, protesters are again taking to the streets against the proposed security laws. Officials have said the laws would target a small number of "troublemakers" with provisions against secession, subversion, terrorism and foreign interference.

Ng, a retired 63-year-old woman is among those looking back at the past year with pride and pledges to keep demonstrating. "A single spark can start a huge blaze," she said, also requesting she be identified by one name only. "The more the government suppresses us, the more resisting we become." David, 22, who works in insurance and declined to give his surname, said a mix of violent and peaceful tactics was needed for international attention. David said he "sometimes felt overwhelmed with fear" when he helped at rallies by mixing petrol bombs and disabling tear gas canisters, but he felt compelled to continue. — Reuters

North Korea cuts communication lines to South

SEOUL: North Korea is severing all official communication links with the South, it announced yesterday in a move analysts said was aimed at manufacturing a crisis on the divided peninsula. Since last week the North has issued a series of vitriolic denunciations of the South over activists sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets over the border - something defectors do on a regular basis.

In recent days authorities in the North have organized large-scale rallies across the country of citizens pledging their support, with inter-Korean ties at a standstill despite three summits between the North's leader Kim Jong Un and the South's President Moon Jae-in in 2018. Yesterday's move cuts all official communication links between the two sides, but the immediate effect will be limited - Pyongyang has refused to engage with Seoul for months, with few if any conversations on the lines aside from test calls. The latest development comes just three days before the two-year anniversary of a landmark summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump in Singapore.

Negotiations over the North's nuclear program have been deadlocked since the collapse of a second meeting in Hanoi last year over

what the North would be willing to give up in exchange for sanctions relief. The impasse has left Pyongyang increasingly frustrated over the lack of concessions and analysts say it has taken no substantive steps towards giving up its weapons. It has increasingly turned its anger towards Seoul rather than Washington, carrying out a series of weapons tests and other provocations in recent months - including last month shooting at a Southern guardpost in the Demilitarized Zone that divides the peninsula.

Pyongyang "will completely cut off and shut down the liaison line" between North and South from noon on yesterday, the official Korean Central News Agency said, along with military hotlines and a communication link between the headquarters of the North's ruling Workers' Party and the South's presidential office. Hotline calls by the South to the North rang unanswered as the deadline expired, Seoul's unification ministry said. The decision was taken by Kim Yo Jong, the leader's sister and key adviser, and ruling party vice chairman Kim Yong Chol, KCNA said, in an explicit demonstration of the sibling's increasing authority in government. Last week she issued a statement threatening to scrap a military pact with the South and close a

liaison office - where activities have already been suspended for months due to the coronavirus outbreak. Yesterday's statement repeatedly denounced defectors who send leaflets to the North by balloon and bottle criticizing Kim over his weapons programs and human rights abuses. It called them "disgusting riff-raff" and accused Seoul of complicity in their actions. "This has driven the inter-Korean relations into a catastrophe," KCNA said, describing Seoul as an "enemy".

"We have reached a conclusion that there is no need to sit face to face with the south Korean authorities and there is no issue to discuss with them." Analysts say the move signals an acceleration in Pyongyang's strategy to ramp up pressure on the South. "This is North Korean policy," said Andrei Lankov, director of Korea Risk Group, adding that Pyongyang wanted to show the South that "their demand for financial giveaways cannot be ignored completely and safely". Since last month's DMZ shooting - which the South repeatedly insisted was accidental - the North has "tried to shake up the situation with a low-level provocation", said Shin Beom-chul, an analyst at the Korea Research Institute for National Strategy. — AFP



ISLAMABAD: Commuters make their way along a motorway as they enter Pakistan's capital city Islamabad. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan announced his government would end several months of coronavirus restrictions. — AFP

Pakistan's hospitals running out of beds as virus cases surge

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has recorded more than 100,000 cases of coronavirus, health authorities said Monday, as hospitals warned they are running out of beds to treat patients. Pakistan - and neighbors India and Afghanistan - have lagged behind Western nations in virus tolls, but experts warn a lack of testing or accurate reporting in rural areas could be hiding true figures. In recent weeks, however, the country of more than 210 million has reported a sharp rise in new infections, and on Monday the government said more than 100,000 cases and 2,000 deaths had now been recorded. Last week a leaked government report suggested there were nearly 700,000 infections in Lahore alone.

Doctors at several main hospitals in the historic eastern city told AFP they were running out of beds, ventilators and other vital equipment. "As the cases increase, more health care workers are also falling victim to the virus," said Farooq Sahil, a doctor at Services Hospital Lahore. Khizer Hayat, chairman of the Young Doctors Association of Punjab, said facilities across

the province needed help. "Hospitals are running out of beds; there aren't enough ventilators given to us," he told AFP. In the southern port city of Karachi, health centers are turning away the sick, with a large sign near the entrance of the Indus hospital stating there was no room for coronavirus patients.

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday said he expected the virus to peak "towards the end of July, followed by a gradual downside". Pakistan's lockdown policy has been patchy at best, with Khan reluctant to call a nationwide shutdown in order to protect the economy. Asad Umar, who heads the national coronavirus task force, announced that a package to relieve pressure on hospitals would include 1,000 new beds in major cities. "The crisis is unfolding now as we have ceased to observe isolation," said Sikander Ali Memon, who is leading Sindh province's anti-virus efforts. In southwestern Balochistan province, government spokesman Liaqat Shahwani told AFP the situation was serious, and authorities were struggling to cope. — AFP

Business

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Zain publishes annual sustainability report titled 'The Road to the Future'

KUWAIT: Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces the publication of its ninth annual sustainability report, entitled "The Road to the Future". Embedding sustainability in every aspect of its business, Zain is dedicated to its digital strategy of consistently working towards developing the mobile telecommunications ecosystem centered on a vision of inclusive development that leads to socio-economic growth.

In this consolidated Group-wide report, the company focuses on the concept of providing Meaningful Connectivity which triggers systemic change, ultimately creating room for development and growth, aiming to address the company's social, economic and environmental impacts. Noteworthy, is the FTSE Russell's inclusion of Zain Group in its FTSE4Good Index Series, the world's leading Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) index, a key indicator to help investors identify companies that meet globally recognized sustainability standards.

"The Road to the Future" report includes Zain's key ESG indicators which is primarily based on the company's sustainability strategy and initiatives, established on six main pillars with its activities driven by the following imperatives: Creating shared value; Promoting social innovation; Inclusivity and leaving no one behind; Addressing Sustainable Development Goals; Tackling climate change; and Youth empowerment.

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi commented: "Now more than ever, the need for a fundamental systemic change is central to the region's transformation and growth. In our world, digital and technological advancements offer endless opportunities to not only address negative impacts but create positive ones. Through digitization, our wide range of services, and reach, Zain aims to unlock the possibilities that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer and the publication of this report is testament to our ongoing efforts and resolve." Kharafi continued, "FTSE Russell's inclusion of Zain Group in its FTSE4Good Index Series reaffirms our commitment to embedding ESG principles in every operational aspect of the company."

On her part, Zain Group's Chief Sustainability Officer, Jennifer Suleiman said, "In an era of rapid change and disruption, having a forward-thinking vision is an essential aspect of our sustainability strategy. At Zain, we welcome the tides of disruption as they often provide us the chance to evolve in a positive manner." Suleiman added, "It is short-sighted for a company not to consider what the impact of its operations are on the environment and adjust its way of doing business accordingly. The reason we remain so committed to publishing our sustainability reports is to be extremely forthcoming of our own experiences in this area, and to inspire others to follow suit and have real conversations and implement real solutions in the pursuit of truly sustainable programs."

Action in motion

Internal and external stakeholders alike are at heart of Zain's sustainability activities. Throughout 2019, some of the significant developments undertaken by Zain and its operations include:

1. Regarding the universally important issue of climate change, Zain became a member of the GSMA Climate Action Task Force with the objective to play a more strategic role in addressing the company's environmental footprint. By becoming a member of the Carbon Disclosure Project, which provides a reporting framework and guidance to address climate change, Zain also installed 849 outdoor (base station/power) solutions and 91 small shelters across its operations to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, while deploying 25 solar and hybrid base solutions. These actions symbolize a firm step by Zain in the fight against climate change.

2. Zain continued to solidify its supply chain process through implementing initiatives such as the Supplier Assessment Questionnaire; joining up to the Supplier Code of Conduct; alignment to international best practices through Zain's ESMP Guidelines; and supporting two audit visits per year on selected suppliers on social and environmental criteria.

3. From an economic perspective, the company has expanded its life-enhancing digital financial services available in Jordan and Iraq under the Zain Cash brand, to now include Saudi Arabia, under the brand name Tamam, an end-to-end digital microlending platform offering micro-loans to vulnerable communities in the Kingdom. 52 percent of men, and 35 percent of women possess a bank

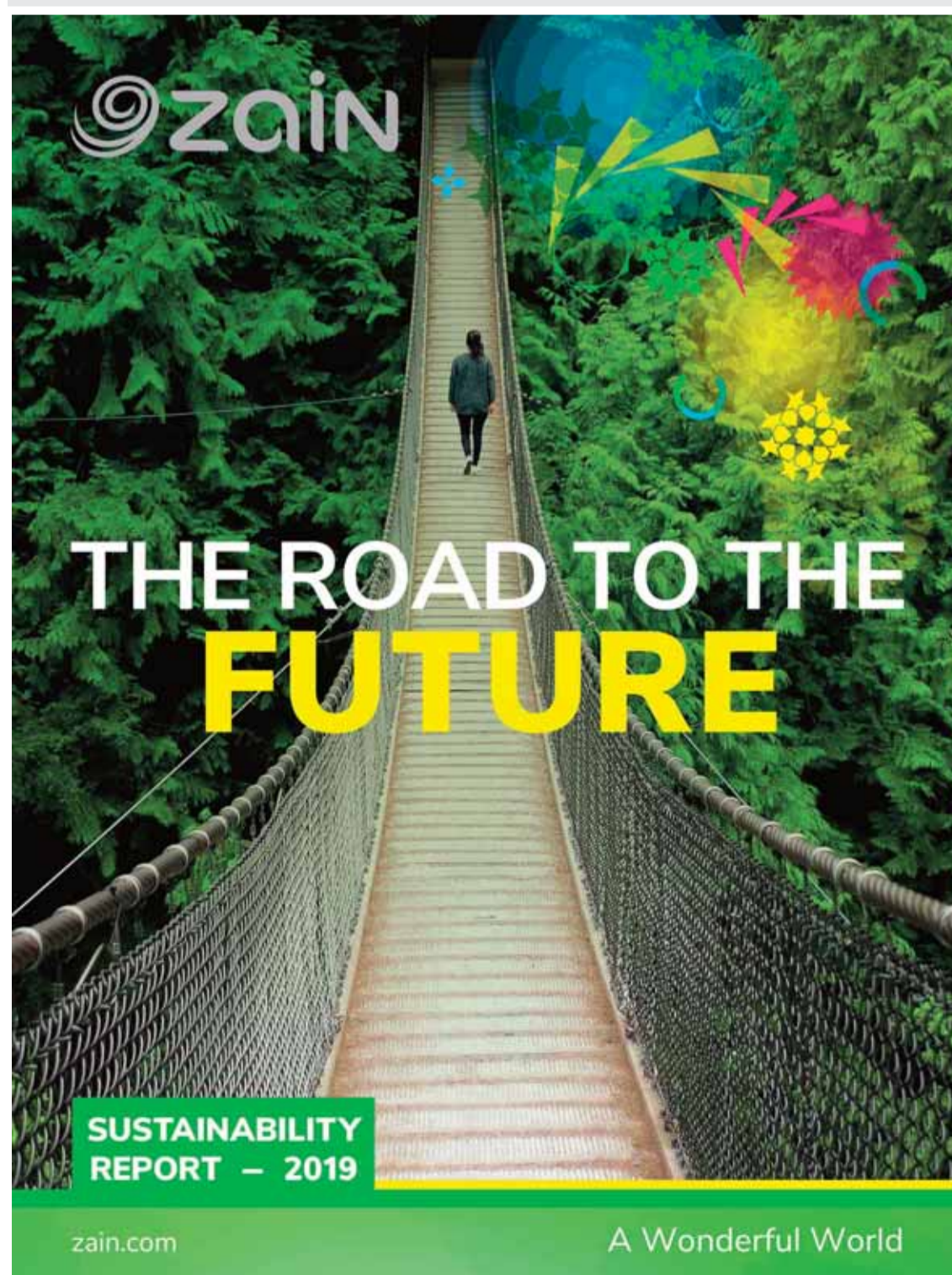


Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi

• Bader Al-Kharafi: "Now more than ever, the need for a fundamental systemic change is central to the region's transformation and growth"

• Zain Group included in FTSE4Good Index Series, recognizing company's ESG standards

• Report focuses on providing Meaningful Connectivity through digitalization, whereby Zain aims to unlock the opportunities of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



account in the Kingdom, though among the unbanked population, 86 percent men and 75 percent of women own a mobile phone. Moreover, Zain Kuwait and Boubyan Bank announced plans for the development of the first digital platform for Islamic banking services, marking the first digital partner-

ship of this nature in the region made between one of the biggest regional telecom entities. This encourages the development of digital banking services helping support startups and emerging enterprises and contribute to the incredible digital innovation taking place across the region.

4. With respect to the people at Zain, who are the heart of the organization, the company further enhanced its Gender Diversity and Inclusion program building its Women Empowerment initiative aiming to develop and increase female leadership. Furthermore, Zain launched its WE ABLE program to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace aiming to become Disability Inclusive by 2022 and became a signatory to the International Labor Organization (ILO) Global Business and Disability Network Charter. Zain firmly believes it is important that the contributions that people with disabilities can make in our workforce and in society in general are given ample opportunity to be recognized.

5. Moreover, Zain's Youth (ZY) Empowerment Program plays an instrumental role in empowering youth in the region. Initiatives launched under ZY include Generation Z; a year-long graduate program in Kuwait that enhances digital and behavioral skills preparing them for future employment and contributing to society at large; Zainiac, an internal e-platform that aims to encourage intrapreneurship within the organization and thereafter support in the incubation process and developing the business idea, noting the initiative has received over 700 unique ideas; and Reverse Mentoring, aiming to improve diversity and inclusion by reducing gaps between younger and senior employees, whereby youth act as a sounding board for new product launches and initiatives, better understanding one another's perspectives.

6. Engaging with its teams across the region, Zain organized several forums to align departmental strategies and objectives with the main aim of sharing best practices and scaling the opportunities of Meaningful Connectivity that empower the communities Zain serves. Functions included Regulatory, Digital, Risk Management, Commercial, Legal, Procurement and Technology.

7. From a products and customer perspective, Zain launched 5G networks in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, expanded much needed 4G networks across other key markets and continued to expand its B2B presence expanding its reach by including SoHo (small and home offices) and SMEs segments. Furthermore, the company is moving forward in its plans to set up a centralized ICT and Digital professional services hub that serves Zain's operations and other business entities across Zain's footprint and beyond. This hub will provide Cloud and Cybersecurity services, IoT, Big Data and Analytics as well as a wider spectrum of new technologies covering areas related to Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and Drone solutions to name a few. It is through these key steps that exemplify the efforts that the connectivity Zain provides takes a life of its own, and embodies the true meaning of Meaningful Connectivity, further accelerating much needed systemic change.

8. The company also scaled its Zain Group API, growing it exponentially in products offered and customer usage in Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia and expanding it during the year to Bahrain, Iraq and Oman. The social ambition is to open some of Zain's assets to emerging developers both regionally and internationally with the aim of creating new opportunities for young entrepreneurs to partner with Zain. This will allow the company to provide their services to our customers therefore expanding their reach ultimately creating shared value for both the company and the entrepreneurs. One relevant example that had multiple benefits, is Zain's launch of the Zain Kids application offering educational games and videos that can be managed by parents.

9. Safeguarding future generations and mitigating negative impacts of broadband connectivity is an especially important part of Zain's sustainability agenda, and the company reinforced its commitment to protecting children, publishing a report titled "Child Online Safety: Minimizing the Risk of Violence, Abuse and Exploitation" online under the Broadband Commission Working Group: Child Online Safety.

The above are just a few examples of the many initiatives outlined in the Report. With the MENA region undergoing drastic changes, Zain's sustainability agenda will continuously evolve so that the company remains of value to all our stakeholders. The "The Road to the Future" report is aligned with the United Nations Guiding Principles adhering to the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards reporting guidelines. In accordance with Zain's sustainability agenda, the 2019 sustainability report is available only in digital format and can be downloaded for free by visiting: <https://zain.com/en-sustainability/sustainability-reports/>

Business

Beijing's street vendors back on the run: No ware to sell

Tier-one cities warned against chasing short-term job solutions

BEIJING: Clad in black, Beijing's city inspectors descended on street vendors this week and ordered them to clear out, just days after the Chinese premier had sparked a rush to set up curbside stalls by praising them as a creator of jobs in the coronavirus-hit economy.

Wang Yihu, 50, a home decorator whose business has dried up after the COVID-19 pandemic, was in despair. "The premier has already given us support. The power of the Beijing city government couldn't be stronger than the State Council right?" Wang said as he packed away tens of toy cars in anticipation of being chased away. "The premier's words are always skewed by you local-level people," Wang said heatedly within earshot of some inspectors. "We've lost our basic right to feed our families!"

Deemed by city officials as filthy and unsightly, street stalls made an unexpected comeback last week after Premier Li Keqiang said on a visit to Shandong province that roadside vendors provided vitality to China. Days earlier, Li cited media reports about a certain city in western China that created 100,000 jobs overnight after setting up 36,000 street stalls. Up to 30 million people may lose their jobs this year due to the pandemic, some economists say.

But the State Council, or cabinet, has yet to announce any new policy in support of roadside vending. Beijing Daily, a newspaper run by the city government, said over the weekend that letting the street market economy proliferate will harm the image of the

Chinese capital. The Beijing city government declined to make any additional comments.

"Premier Li's words in Shandong were more of an improvisation, not an official report," said Liu Shengjun, an independent commentator on the economy. "What he didn't say but would naturally imply



30m people may lose jobs in China

was that the street stall economy must be well regulated too".

Job losses

The resistance towards street vendors widened on Monday as state television cautioned tier-one cities - traditionally Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen - against chasing short-term employment solutions. Among them only Guangzhou has unveiled new policies promoting street vending.

Guangzhou on Friday specified 60 locations in the



WUHAN: This photo taken on Monday shows street vendors selling clothes at an outdoor market set up in a street in Wuhan, in China's central Hubei province. —AFP

city where street stalls can be set up. It also imposed restrictions on merchandise type. The street stall economy is more suitable in central and western cities, some state media said.

Preventing mass unemployment remains a top concern for the Chinese leadership, with President Xi Jinping pledging to turn China into a moderately

prosperous society and eliminate abject poverty by the end of 2020. Beijing street vendors told Reuters they were desperate to boost their incomes.

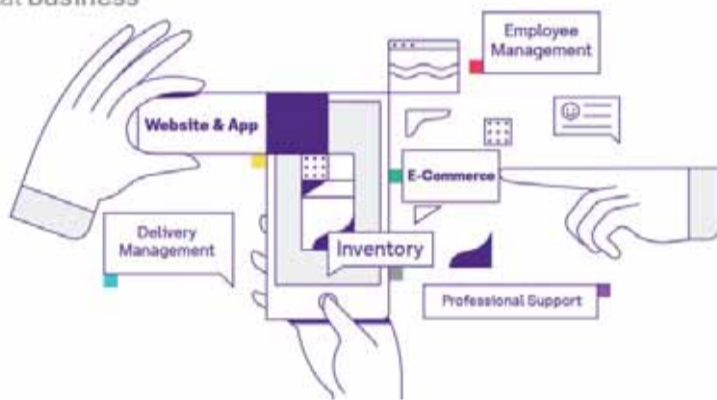
One was struggling with her rent and her son's mortgage, while a former jeweler with 100,000 yuan (\$14,126) of unsold inventories at home was peddling 150-yuan Thai elephant brooches. — Reuters

stc launches services to support SMEs

stc

All the tools you need to take your business further

with stc Digital Business



KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of several lucrative digital and cloud solutions to support SMEs and startups. The innovative and effective digital solutions, will offer customers the opportunity to develop and activate their own online store with a dedicated mobile application that will be operational within a few working days.

stc's advanced digital solutions aim to assist customers through their journey in utilizing the Company's integrated services to achieve their unique goals by growing and developing their business. The services offered are backed by an infrastructure based on stc's high-speed 5G network, and a professional team of specialists ready to provide technical support to customers through various communication channels.

Through its strong network of relationships with companies in Kuwait, and the sales team led by General Manager of Sales & Account Management at stc, Meshari Al-Hamad, stc aims to deliver a one stop shop for SMEs and startups to build their cloud based e-commerce platforms through stc's integrated digital solutions at affordable prices. The cloud-based services, suitable for various businesses such as restaurants, retail, shops and other sectors, will allow customers to launch an online store and application within a few days and manage their business from home, ensuring opera-

tional continuity during these unstable conditions.

stc added that the new services will contribute towards supporting local entrepreneurs in managing their businesses through various online platforms with greater accessibility to their loyal customers. The cloud-based solutions offered by stc take advantage of the latest online technology and available digital platforms to transform their offerings into sales with ease. With greater online exposure and faster transaction speeds, entrepreneurs can grow their operations to meet their targets and in return increase their profitability.

To enhance customer experience and usability, stc has dedicated a team of experts to assist customers in utilizing the services offered by the Company. The team of experts will be available to assist customers and provide technical support in all stages of setting up their individual platforms in collaboration with stc's strategic partner,

Future Communications Company.

The services are offered through dynamic, affordable packages that cater to stc's wide customer base of SMEs and startups with flexible monthly installment plans. stc will continue to utilize its resources to provide a helping hand in protecting the nation against the pandemic. The initiative falls in line with the Executive Management's strategic framework at stc, running parallel to the Company's sustainable approach to enabling digital transformation in Kuwait for new and existing customers, whether corporate or individuals.

Through ongoing collaborations and by aligning the Company's resources with its strategic goals, stc aims to provide the latest digital solutions, considering all precautionary measures, beyond traditional telecom services. stc will continue to upgrade its services and offer the latest solutions that will exceed its new and existing customers' expectations.

China's Baoshang Bank rescue exposes flaws

BEIJING: In May 2019, China's central bank announced a shock takeover of a lender, its first such move in 20 years, citing "serious credit risks". Creditors in small Baoshang Bank were to take a hit, assets would be sold and an example set for governance.

But a year on, regulatory and banking sources say, the rescue of a bank that had expanded rapidly, well beyond its own city base, has veered off its planned trajectory amid fighting between regulators, limited help from big state banks and a larger-than-expected role for financially stretched local government.

In future, such deals are likely to see a mix of support and mergers with bigger institutions, one senior regulator said, asking not to be named due to sensitivity of the matter. The Baoshang takeover has already been followed by bank rescues where authorities absorbed risk without creditors taking a hit. As the world's No 2 economy takes the strain of slowing growth and fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, small lenders like Baoshang will be central to market stability - more than 4,500 in number; they account for about a quarter of the nearly 300 trillion yuan (\$42 trillion) assets held by Chinese banks.

"In the next 1-2 years ... forced lending to support the economy will come back to haunt lenders in significantly increased non-performing loans," said Rory Green, a China economist at TS Lombard.

The China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission (CBIRC), the country's principal banking regulator,

didn't respond to requests for comment.

In a statement to Reuters, the People's Bank of China (PBOC), the central bank, said, "The consistent policy of regulatory authorities (is) ... to guide small and medium-sized banks to return to their original market and focus on their main businesses."

'Out of the blue'

Last month, PBOC extended its control of Baoshang for six months, citing delays caused by the impact of coronavirus. But officials had encountered difficulties well before that, people familiar with the matter said. Sources interviewed by Reuters for this article declined to be identified citing the sensitivity of the matter. Founded in 1998, Baoshang blossomed under the control of billionaire Xiao Jianhua's investment firm Tomorrow Holdings. But problems began after Xiao fell foul of a regulatory crackdown on financial conglomerates in 2017.

When the PBOC launched its move, it said Baoshang had been used by Tomorrow as an "ATM" with "serious credit risks", without disclosing details. The rescue sent borrowing costs rocketing overnight, forcing the PBOC to inject up to 200 billion yuan in liquidity, private estimates showed.

The PBOC plan was straightforward on paper: creditors would absorb losses - a rarity in China - and the bank would be reduced in size, supported by the biggest state-backed lenders. The move surprised not just financial markets, but also the CBIRC, two people with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters. One of them said it came "totally out of the blue" for the watchdog. CBIRC had in fact been quietly meeting with Baoshang since Xiao's 2017 downfall, offering monthly guidance on how to stabilize liquidity, the two sources said, with no intention of imposing inter-bank defaults. — Reuters

Cathay Pacific unveils \$5bn bailout plan

HONG KONG: Cathay Pacific announced a HK\$39 billion (\$5 billion) government-led bailout plan yesterday as it battles a crippling downturn caused by the coronavirus. Like many airlines hammered by the crisis, the Hong Kong carrier has seen passenger numbers all but evaporate in recent months leaving most of its fleet sitting on the tarmac and the company hemorrhaging cash.

The firm was already under pressure, after taking a hit from the impact of months of sometimes violent protests in Hong Kong last year that saw passenger numbers plunge. Yesterday, the airline announced a sweeping proposal to inject liquidity and keep it afloat with the help of Hong Kong's government.

"Cathay Pacific has explored available options and believes that a recapitalization is required to ensure it has sufficient liquidity to weather this current crisis," Cathay said in a statement to the city's stock exchange.

The bulk of the new capital will come from new shares issued to Avia-

tion 2020, a company owned by the Hong Kong government, as well as a HK\$7.8 billion bridge loan from the government. Under the proposal, it will raise about HK\$11.7 billion in a rights issue on the basis of seven rights shares for every 11 existing shares held, while preference shares for the government would raise HK\$19.5 billion and warrants would garner HK\$1.95 billion, subject to adjustment.

The South China Morning Post reported that it is the first time Hong Kong's government has directly injected money into a private company. Share trading in Cathay Pacific—and its two biggest shareholders Air China and Swire—was suspended in Hong Kong yesterday morning ahead of the announcement. They will resume trading today, Cathay said.

Swire, a Hong Kong and British conglomerate with colonial-era roots, has a 45 percent stake in Cathay while Air China owns 30 percent. Hong Kong's government will hold a news conference yesterday afternoon, followed by Cathay.

In its statement, Cathay said it also plans to implement a further round of executive pay cuts and a second voluntary unpaid leave initiative for employees. Before the pandemic struck Cathay was one of Asia's largest international airlines and the fifth largest air cargo carrier globally. — AFP

US recession started in Feb: Research

WASHINGTON, DC: The US economy ended its longest expansion in history in February and entered recession as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the private economics research group that acts as the arbiter for determining US business cycles said on Monday.

The Business Cycle Dating Committee of the National Bureau of Economic Research said in a statement its members "concluded that the unprecedented magnitude of the decline in employment and production, and its broad reach across the entire economy, warrants the designation of this episode as a recession, even if it turns out to be briefer than earlier contractions."

The designation was expected, but notable for its speed, coming a mere four months after the recession began. The committee has typically waited longer before making a recession call in order to be sure. When the economy started declining in late 2007, for example, the group did not pinpoint the start of the recession until a year later.

But the depth and speed of this collapse left little doubt. "In deciding whether to identify a recession, the committee weighs the depth of the contraction, its duration, and whether economic activity declined broadly across the economy. ... The committee recognizes that the pandemic and the



NEW YORK: Construction workers return to their jobs as part of phase one of reopening of the city from the coronavirus lockdown on Monday in the Bronx borough of New York City. — AFP

public health response have resulted in a downturn with different characteristics and dynamics than prior recessions," the committee said in a statement.

US gross domestic product fell at a 4.8 percent annualized rate in the first three months of the year. The outcome for the April to June period is expected to show an even worse annualized decline of perhaps 20 percent or more. The unemployment rate rose from a record low of 3.5 percent in February, hitting 14.7 percent in April and 13.3 percent last month.

But growth may well recover from there, possibly making the current downturn not only among the sharpest but also among the shortest on record. Since World War Two recessions have lasted from six to 18

months, nothing close to the 43-month downturn of the Great Depression that began in 1929.

Though the data that began to accumulate in March rival some of the statistics from the Depression era, economists expect growth to resume this summer and likely continue unless the virus resurges. "It could very well be that this is the beginning of the trough," Jack Kleinhenz, chief economist for the National Retail Federation, said in an economic outlook seminar organized by the National Association for Business Economics. But "there are so many moving parts," he said. "If we have a reoccurrence of the pandemic and it comes on stronger, there is the potential of another dip" in economic growth.

Business

Africa vs the West: Who will take the WTO helm?

Mexico's nominee says trade body has 'lost track'

GENEVA: The World Trade Organization on Monday kicked off the process for selecting a new director-general, after its current chief Roberto Azevedo decided to leave a year early. With Azevedo, a Brazilian career diplomat, now set to leave on August 31, the WTO opened a one-month window for would-be successors to put forward their candidacies.

Mainly African and European names are currently circulating in the media as likely candidates.

The first candidacy announced to the WTO Monday was meanwhile Mexico's nomination of Jesus Seade Kuri, a former WTO deputy director-general, who has also held high-level positions within the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

But while there is no geographic rotation principle at the WTO, it could be unlikely that the global trade body would choose another leader from Latin America. African countries have meanwhile long insisted that it should finally be the continent's turn to head the organization.

Several African names appear likely to be in the running, including former Egyptian diplomat Hamid Mandou, who worked with the WTO for years. Nigeria has backed Ngozi Okonkwo-Iweala for the post. She has served as Nigeria's minister of foreign affairs and of finance and currently serves as board chair of GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance.

Eloi Laourou, Benin's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, has also been mentioned as a likely candidate. The

African Union had voiced the ambition to settle on a single African candidate to put forward, but it remains unclear if it will manage to do so before the July 8 deadline.



New trade boss to face Sino-US trade tensions

The AU, like everyone else, believed it had more time on its hands, since the search for Azevedo's successor had been scheduled to start in December. However, the surprise announcement last month of his early departure has left everyone scrambling.

European runners?

Diplomats acknowledge that Africa may be in line for the post since the continent has never before provided a WTO director-general. But a growing number of voices are also being raised for putting a representative from a developed country in charge, to ensure an economy category alternative after seven years with a Brazilian at the helm.

And a number of Europeans are reportedly interested in the post. A source in Brussels confirmed to AFP that Irishman Phil Hogan, who has served as European

Commissioner for Trade since 2019, is thinking about throwing his hat into the ring.

Other European names circulating include Dutch Foreign Trade Minister Sigrid Kaag, although her spokesperson told AFP that she was "not available" to become head of WTO. Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez, who stood against Azevedo in 2013 and who until recently ran the International Trade Centre, an organization linked to the WTO, has also been mentioned.

But a spokesman told AFP she had enough on her plate currently with her foreign minister job. The Europeans are expected to discuss the situation on Tuesday, with the aim of coming up with a single candidate.

If they want to have a chance, they will also need to convince the other developed nations, including the United States, to back their choice.

Mexico nominee

Meanwhile, Mexico's candidate to lead the World Trade Organization says the group's rules no longer reflect the complexities of modern manufacturing and trade, proposing reforms that could include changing how members are classified as developing nations.

Jesus Seade, a veteran trade official, helped found the Geneva-based WTO in the early 1990s and more recently led his government's negotiating team to agree a new North American trade deal due to take effect in July. Seade was announced on



Nigeria has backed Ngozi Okonkwo-Iweala for the top WTO post. — AFP

Monday as the country's candidate to replace outgoing director general Roberto Azevedo.

"After 25 years of inaction in the development of rules, we have lost track," Seade told Reuters in an interview. However, he said there were "huge" opportunities to modernize the global trading system that the WTO governs.

Seade, 73, argued the current rules do not reflect the reality of global supply chains, technological change, Asia's rise as a trading powerhouse or the labor and environmental issues key to modern trade accords. "It cannot be denied that the WTO needs to change, needs to come back to negotiations," he said. "The world is moving on."

The WTO's last attempt at a comprehensive overhaul, the Doha Round, collapsed in 2015 after more than a decade of stalemate, underscoring the difficulty of getting countries with vastly different

agendas to agree on trade rules.

Seade said future talks could focus on specific issues and sectors, without ruling out another global round. The WTO job is vacant from the end of August after Azevedo, a Brazilian, said he would step down a year early. The WTO normally takes nine months to choose a new chief but now wants to do so in three.

The next WTO boss will face US-China trade tensions and rising protectionism exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. An expert on China and the current more protectionist US trade approach, Seade worked with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to seal the so-called USMCA deal that is replacing the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

He said Beijing wanted a strong WTO and that he did not believe the United States would pull out of the body that US President Donald Trump recently described as "horrible."

Sticking points between the two powers could be resolved with negotiation, Seade said, including urgent reform to the appellate system of dispute resolution and whether countries should be able to self-classify as developing nations.

"We need to be alert for win-wins, and not be frozen by zero sums," he said.

In the short term, he said, the WTO ought to help reactivate the global economy after the coronavirus pandemic. Over the medium term, it could work on ways to make a "good-practice book" to guide such responses in future, he added. — Agencies



VIENNA: An agreement has been reached on a rescue package for Austrian Airlines to the tune of 600 million euros (\$677 million) to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, local media reported on Monday. — AFP

Austrian Airlines to get \$677m rescue package

VIENNA: Austrian Airlines will receive a 600-million-euro (\$677 million) rescue package to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, the government said Monday, but also announced new rules to make aviation more climate-friendly.

In a press conferences announcing the rescue deal, ministers said a minimum price of 40 euros (\$45) will be introduced to combat "social and environmental dumping" in the aviation industry.

"It will no longer be possible to offer tickets which are cheaper than the actual costs," said Environment Minister Leonore Gewessler, referring to the social and environmental impact of the industry. Austria will provide 450 million euros of the rescue package, with the rest coming from German giant Lufthansa, of which Austrian Airlines is a subsidiary, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said.

The Austrian government will guarantee 300 million euros in loans on top of a 150-million-euro grant, he added, confirming earlier media reports of the deal.

Finance Minister Gernot Blumel said the airline would be taken into state ownership if it wasn't able to pay the loans back. Kurz said the airlines and the government had agreed to three goals: saving jobs, maintaining Vienna as a key hub and "necessary measures in terms of climate protection".

The current government is a coalition of Kurz's center-right People's Party (OeVP) and the Green party. Prominent Green politicians such as Gewessler had made clear in recent weeks that they wanted any deal to come with conditions to reduce the environmental impact of aviation.

Gewessler said that the minimum price would mean "the end of one euro tickets", adding that the measure would make Austria a European "pioneer". "I think this is what's necessary for sustainable and fair aviation," she said.

Austrian Airlines has also promised to increase fuel efficiency by 1.5 percent annually and to cut CO2 emissions per 100 passenger-kilometers from 9.55 kg to 8.5 kg by 2030. Gewessler also announced a special tax targeting flights shorter than 350 km (217 miles) and half a billion euros of investment to expand Austria's night train network, using domestically-manufactured modern carriages.

She said the government had also confirmed funding to bring in an annual ticket for all public transport in Austria for the equivalent of three euros a day from 2021.

Later this month, Lufthansa is to ask shareholders to back a nine-billion-euro bailout deal negotiated with the German government, which will take a 20-percent stake in the group under the agreement. — AFP

and will be kicked off by British trade minister Liz Truss and Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Toshimitsu Motegi.

"This deal will provide more opportunities for businesses and individuals across every region and nation of the UK and help boost our economies following the unprecedented economic challenges posed by coronavirus," Truss said in a statement. Britain said it aimed to reach a deal which builds on Japan's existing agreement with the EU, going further by including areas such as digital trade. Japan was Britain's fourth-biggest non-EU trading partner in 2019, with total trade between the two countries of 31.4 billion pounds, according to government statistics. Britain hopes ultimately to join the 11-member Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), and sees trade talks with Japan as a step towards that end. — Reuters

UK, Japan aim for free trade deal this year

LONDON: Britain will begin negotiating a post-Brexit trade agreement with Japan today which the government said both sides hoped would enter into force by the end of this year.

After decades outsourcing its trade policy to the European Union, Britain is embarking on negotiating free trade deals with countries around the world, and last month launched formal negotiations with the United States. Trade deals typically take years to complete. Britain is also hoping to reach a trade agreement with the EU by the end of the year.

Talks will be held via video conference

Ex-Audi boss faces German trial in Sept

FRANKFURT: Former Audi chief executive Rupert Stadler will go on trial for fraud on September 30, a German court said Monday, making him the first auto boss to appear in the dock over the "dieselgate" emissions cheating scandal. Stadler and three co-defendants will have to answer charges of "fraud, falsifying certifications and illegal advertising" before judges at the district court in Munich.

The trial is expected to last until December 2022, the court said in a statement. Not a single executive has been convicted in Germany so far over the massive scandal that erupted in 2015 when Audi's parent company Volkswagen admitted to installing cheating software in 11 million diesels worldwide.

The so-called defeat devices made the cars seem less polluting in lab tests than they were on the road. Stadler, 57, had been chief executive at Audi for 11 years when he was arrested in June 2018.

He spent four months in pretrial detention over concerns he could try to influence witnesses. A career Audi man, he joined the firm in 1990 and became CEO in 2007, before being replaced at the top by Dutchman Bram Schot following his arrest.

Prosecutors say Stadler knowingly continued selling cheating vehicles from

Samsung heir avoids arrest over merger

SEOUL: A South Korean court on Tuesday declined to issue an arrest warrant for the heir to the country's Samsung empire over a controversial merger of two business units seen as a key step to his succession.

Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, is already being re-tried on charges of bribery, embezzlement and other offences in connection with a corruption scandal that brought down former South Korean president Park Geun-hye.

The merger case is separate from his ongoing retrial, but adds to the difficulties for the Samsung group, by far the biggest of the family-controlled conglomerates, or chaebols, that dominate business in the world's 12th-largest economy. Prosecutors had sought the arrest warrant for Lee on suspicion he was involved in price manipulation and illegal trading during the 2015 merger of Cheil Industries and Samsung C&T.

But the Seoul Central District Court turned down the prosecution's request, ruling there was not sufficient probable cause for his arrest or those of two former Samsung executives. "There was insufficient explanation on the need to arrest the defendants against the principle of trial without detention," Judge Won Jung-sook said in a court statement.

"Prosecutors seem to have already

Audi, especially in Europe and the United States, after September 2015 when the fraud became public.

Payouts

The cheating saga plunged VW into an unprecedented crisis and a tangle of legal woes. Former Volkswagen CEO Martin Winterkorn, who was in charge of the car group when the cheating was uncovered, still faces charges of market manipulation.

A major court case also continues by investors demanding compensation for their VW shares' plunge in value after "dieselgate" came to light. But the VW group has drawn a line under most other cases in its home country.

Present chief executive Herbert Diess and supervisory board boss Hans Dieter Poetsch are off the hook on charges of market manipulation, after VW last month paid a total of nine million euros to settle the charges. VW also agreed in April to pay out at least 750 million euros (\$847,000) to 235,000 drivers under an out-of-court settlement reached with consumer representatives, well below the amounts paid out in the United States. The auto giant is also expected to make separate payouts to some 60,000 other drivers, after a German court ruled in a precedent-setting case last month that VW had to buy back a duped driver's diesel car.

The court did however state that VW only owed a partial reimbursement of the purchase price, easing the financial pain for the group. The dieselgate fallout has so far cost VW more than 30 billion euros in fines, buybacks and compensation. — AFP

French economy rebound only in 2022: CB

PARIS: France's economy will take two years to recover from its worst post-war recession, triggered this year by the coronavirus outbreak, the central bank said yesterday.

The eurozone's second-biggest economy is on course to contract 10.3 percent this year, before it bounces back with growth of 6.9 percent in 2021 and 3.9 percent in 2022, the Bank of France forecast. Nearly a million jobs are likely to be shed this year and unemployment could climb to a new record of 11.8 percent in the first half of 2021.

The central bank said the outlook could be brighter if the virus is quickly brought under control, while a second wave of infections could plunge the economy into a 16 percent downturn this year followed by growth of only 6 percent in 2021 and 4 percent in 2022. The forecasts did not take into account the potential impact of a recovery plan that the government aims to announce in the coming months.

President Emmanuel Macron put France under one of the most stringent lockdowns in Europe in mid-March, effectively shutting down large swathes of the economy until restrictions began to be lifted on May 11. As of the end of May, economic activity was still running 17 percent below normal levels, though up from the 32 percent reduction seen during the first two weeks of lockdown in March, the central bank estimated. Business surveys suggested activity could get back to less than 12 percent of normal levels this month, it added.

Nonetheless, the time spent under lockdown meant that the economy probably contracted 15 percent in the second quarter from the previous three months, when it had already slumped 5.3 percent, the Bank of France estimated. — Reuters



SEOUL: Samsung heir Lee Jae-yong (center), vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, leaves a detention center after waiting for a court decision on his arrest warrant over a controversial merger of two Samsung units, in Uiwang, south of Seoul, yesterday. — AFP

secured a considerable amount of evidence through their investigation," she said. Whether Lee committed illegal acts should be established at trial, she added. Lee attended the hearing, which Yonhap news agency said lasted for about nine hours, and then awaited the court's decision at a detention center. He emerged at about 2:40 am Tuesday and briefly greeted reporters but did not answer when asked how he felt about the decision.

Lee then left in a black sedan. The merger transaction was seen as helping ensure a smooth third-generational power transfer to Lee, a scion of Samsung's founding family.

Chaebol families often have only a small ownership stake in their empires, but maintain control through complex webs of cross-shareholdings between units.

Apology

Lee was the largest shareholder in Cheil Industries, and critics say Samsung sought to artificially lower the price of C&T to give him a bigger stake in the merged entity—a key part of the Samsung structure—consolidating his grip on the conglomerate. Last week, the Samsung group rejected media reports of price manipulation as "groundless", saying in a statement Lee did not take part in "any illegal acts".

The prosecutors' request came weeks after Lee issued a wide-ranging apology for company misconduct and promised to end the line of family succession. Lee, 51, has effectively been at the helm of Samsung—South Korea's biggest business group—since his father and Samsung group boss Lee Kun-hee suffered a heart attack in 2014. — AFP

Pandemic offers scientists chance to 'hear' oceans as they once were

NEW YORK: Eleven years ago, environmental scientist Jesse Ausubel dreamed aloud in a commencement speech: What if scientists could record the sounds of the ocean in the days before propeller-driven ships and boats spanned the globe?

They would listen to chit-chat between blue whales hundreds of miles apart. They would record the familiar chirps and clicks among a pod of dolphins. And they would do so without the cacophony of humankind – and develop a better understanding of how that undersea racket has affected sea life.

It was a flight of fancy, more aspirational and inspirational than a plan. At first, Ausubel says, he (very fancifully) suggested a year of a "quiet ocean," during which shipping would come to a halt, or at least slow down. Then a month. And finally, just a few hours.

As far-fetched as even that was, a small fraternity of about 100 similarly curious scientists picked up on his vision. In 2015, they published a plan of how to conduct the International Quiet Ocean Experiment, should the opportunity ever present itself. When the COVID-19 pandemic sparked an extreme economic slowdown in March, sending cruise ships to port and oil tankers to anchor, they mobilized. Last month, they finished cobbling together an array of 130 underwater hydrophone listening stations around the world – including six stations that had been set up to monitor underwater nuclear tests.

"Well, we're not excited that COVID happened, but we're happy to be able to take advantage of the scientific opportunity," says Peter Tyack, a professor of marine mammal biology at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland and one of the early instigators. "It would have just been impossible any other way."

Tyack says the recordings should give scientists a never-before glimpse of the ocean with little human interference. It's a bit like looking at the night sky if most of the world's lights were turned off.

He says some research suggests large whales have

adapted to man-made noises by raising their voices and their pitch. He speculates that many species also have moved to quieter regions of the world so they can find food, and one another, more easily. Generally, the group will be looking to see if the whales and other sea mammals adapt to the quieter oceans by lowering their volume, communicating more efficiently or shifting their habitat.

Some of the project's listening posts are connected to land via cables, but many of them are not and the recordings have to be retrieved by ships. Now that economies around the world are reopening, the quiet oceans group has started gathering the soundscape data. It won't be until the end of the year, however, that the researchers will have cleaned up the recordings and can compare them to previous years for changes in human and animal noise alike.

The focus of the serendipitous project is on the so-called SOFAR (Sound Fixing and Ranging) channel, a naturally occurring ocean stratum in which sound can travel long distances. It's where large baleen and fin whales sing for a lover or join in a friendly chorus. But it's also where the human racket from fishing boats, tankers and motorboats, as well as oil rigs and wind turbines, gets trapped and then propagated around the world.

Sound waves travel farther and faster in water than in the air. That's especially true of the bass notes of a whale's song, the low grinding of a ship's shaft, even the rumble of a nuclear explosion. Those sounds can travel hundreds or even thousands of miles, bending around the planet by bouncing up and down in the SOFAR channel, a kilometer-deep band of water.

The 130 recording stations used by the researchers are a hodgepodge of locations and sensitivity in that channel. Part of the planning process includes identifying and recruiting partners who operate listening stations run by governments, universities, environmental groups and other agencies.

The humblest station is four kilometers off the Spanish



An empty shipping dock is seen in this file photo as the global outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues in the Port of Los Angeles, California.

coast and operated by the Polytechnic University of Barcelona. It records sound up to 10 kilometers away. At the other extreme are six stations, each with multiple hydrophones, operated by the Vienna-based Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization. Those stations can not only pinpoint underwater nuclear explosions anywhere on the planet, but also eavesdrop on whales an ocean away.

Ausubel, the director of the Program for the Human Environment at New York's Rockefeller University, says he and his fellow dreamers were ready, even if their plan seemed unrealistic.

"We spent a lot of time planning: How would you try to set up this kind of study, even though we realized that

it wasn't really practical?" But the plan, Ausubel says, anticipated moments of opportunity such as an extreme weather event, not a pandemic.

"Immediately after a hurricane or a typhoon, it's very quiet for a day or two because of the fear of large waves or storms," he says. "Fishermen don't go out to sea; shipping routes are changed; oil and gas platforms may be shut down."

Amid the pandemic and the lockdowns that ensued, major ports in the Northeast of the United States, such as Boston, Philadelphia, New York and Baltimore, saw a nearly 50 percent drop in ship and boating traffic in April compared to the same month in 2019, according to MarineTraffic, a ship-tracking firm. —Reuters

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Nick Cannon's children are 'scared of police officers'

The 39-year-old rapper - who has nine-year-old twins Moroccan and Monroe with ex-wife Mariah Carey and three-year-old Golden with former partner Brittany Bell - has revealed his kids view cops as the "bad guys" and thinks that has become a major issue for society. Speaking amid rioting in US cities following the murder of George Floyd, Nick said: "My kids are scared of police officers. In their minds, they're the bad guys. This is clearly the problem." Floyd died on the streets of Minneapolis, and Derek Chauvin, a former officer in the Minneapolis Police Department, has been charged with his murder. Nick thinks the incident has shone a light on things that have been happening in the US for decades. He reflected: "What happened to George Floyd has been going on for years and years. "Now

technology has given us another liberty - to see firsthand what is going on. Now that we can see it we have got to hold them accountable. "From excessive force to murder - everything we see, we have to hold them accountable - including the so-called good cops standing by allowing this to happen. "One bad cop isn't acting alone. There are several other bad cops allowing that one to do what he is doing." Nick recently travelled to Minneapolis to join racial justice protests and the former 'America's Got Talent' host felt it was important for him to "see the people in that community". In an essay published by Variety, he shared: "I had to go to Minneapolis. I needed to be right there on 38th Street and Chicago where George Floyd's life was tragically stolen from him. "I needed to see the people in that community - how much love they had

for their community and their people and how much pain this has caused. We feel the pain go across the world - the anger and the hurt. "Those visuals will never be removed from our minds." Nick hopes the incident in Minneapolis will prove to be a turning point in American history, adding that people are "searching for a new normal". He wrote: "If you don't step up and say this system has been wrong for years - from the war on drugs to criminalisation of black men in general to the school-to-prison pipeline to the prison industrial complex. It's a form of modern-day slavery. "There are more black men in jail today than there were enslaved [in the 19th century]. These are concepts that people overlook daily."

CLAUDIA WINKLEMAN IS 'OBSESSED' WITH BRUSHING HER TEETH

The 'Strictly Come Dancing' star thinks people will be "highly disappointed" by her lockdown beauty routine as she admits she loves to clean her teeth and has likened it to a "holiday" for her as she looks forward to it so much. Asked about her lockdown beauty routine, she said: "You're going to be highly disappointed with me ... I'm obsessed with brushing my teeth. I look forward to it like people do with holidays." And the 48-year-old television presenter has also opened up about her beauty routine, including with her hair and her nails. Speaking about her hair and nail routine, she told Stylist magazine: "I haven't changed the way I wash my hair for about 100 years. The key is to foam up your shampoo. I trimmed them with clippers and tried to put on nail polish but it requires patience. I normally do my nails when the kids are at school and house is quiet and I'm sitting there with the radio on. But now, every time I've done it, I have to take something out of the oven. In fact, I've spent two hours trying to make the perfect cauliflower cheese - if anyone can get me on a Zoom call and explain how to avoid it getting slightly burnt and watery, I'd appreciate it!" Meanwhile, Claudia previously confessed her biggest beauty secret is napping "every day". She said: "I sleep a lot. I have a nap every day. After the school run if I can, I will always get back into bed for a sleep, my family and I call it my morning meeting. About an hour, definitely 45 minutes - I had two yesterday!"



Tara Reid says her mother is her 'guardian angel'

The 44-year-old actress was filming the new crime movie '5th Borough' when her mother, Donna, became seriously ill, and Tara admits completing the film amid her personal heartbreak was "one of the hardest things" she's ever done. Asked about the challenge of shooting '5th Borough', Tara - who portrays a mother whose daughter is diagnosed with a brain tumour in the movie - shared: "It was one of the hardest things I ever had to do, knowing that in the back of my head my mom was dying. "The emotion you see on screen was real because what I was feeling was so real. Whenever I thought of her, the tears just overcame me." Donna passed away in October 2018, and Tara thinks the tragedy taught her some important lessons about herself. In an interview with Fox News,



she said: "I'm stronger than I ever thought I was. "The fact that I was able to overcome all the things happening in my personal life and stay focused on my work was important to me. I learned that it's okay to feel pain and grieve and fully go through the process. "It helped me greatly in my healing even though I don't think I will ever fully recover from it. The hardest thing is that my mom will never get to share in my future, but I know she's watching over me every day." Tara also hopes audiences will see her in a new light when they watch the film. The 'American Pie' star said: "When they watch '5th Borough', I hope they see another side to me and see that I can play many roles, and hopefully create deeper connections and emotions with the audience."



'Friends' star Mary Pat Gleason has died at the age of 70

The actress, who amassed over 100 acting credits, passed away on June 2 after a battle with uterine cancer and is survived by a "large, loving extended family". Her nephew, John Brostrom said that she had previously beaten the disease in 1990 although she spent a month in hospital after it returned. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Mary's family had been unable to visit her in her final weeks, although Mary was moved to a friend's home in April - where she remained until her death. John says that the tributes to the actress, who also starred in 'A Cinderella Story', '13 Going On 30' and 'Mom', mean a lot as they show "how loved and respected she was in the Hollywood community". Mary's fellow actors paid tribute to her, with her friend and 'Watchmen' star Ron Fassler writing on Facebook: "Mary Pat Gleason, one of the dearest and sweetest people I have ever had the pleasure to know, passed away last night at age seventy. "She has 174 credits on her IMDb page (with one unreleased film still to come), but she was so much more than a wonderful actress: she was one of a kind. So caring, so funny, and so delicious to be around, that I find it hard to imagine a world without her shining presence and smiling face. "My heart goes out to all who knew and loved her (all one million of you). Let's all raise a glass to her this evening as one and offer a final toast and a fond farewell in her memory." Her 'Mom' co-star Allison Janney added on social media: "We said goodbye to Mary Pat Gleason yesterday. She was part of our @mom_cbs family and we loved her so much. "She was one of our favourite guest stars. Her kind heart and warm smile will be missed. RIP dear Mary Pat." Actress Mimi Kennedy, who also appears in 'Mom', wrote on Twitter: "I'm saddened to learn that Mary Pat Gleason (Mary on @MomCBS) passed away. "I'm sure she was met with thunderous applause and a great party backstage. My love to you Mary and to your loved ones." Mary played irritable receptionist Nurse Sizemore in 'The One With George Stephanopoulos' in the first season of 'Friends', and her character was less than sympathetic when Ross Geller (David Schwimmer) comes in with a broken nose.

Victoria Beckham made almost £1m from Spice Girls tour

Victoria Beckham made almost £1 million from the Spice Girls reunion tour. Although the 46-year-old fashion designer didn't join her bandmates Emma Bunton, Geri Horner, Mel B and Mel C when they reunited for a summer tour in 2019, she still profited from the venture through endorsements and merchandising deals. New documents filed with Companies House, show that Spice Girls Limited made £4.5million last year and as one of the business' only five members and directors, Victoria is entitled to one fifth of the profits. An insider told The Sun newspaper: "This means the rest of the group will have to hand over a huge amount to Posh on the back of the old magic they conjured up. "The irony of the payout is that Victoria has become distanced from the Spice Girls as she's tried to carve out a niche as a fashion designer. "But they have become a major source of her income once again as the clothes line falters. The other girls have handed a lot over." Victoria's Spice Girl profits are more than the £700,000 she paid herself from her eponymous fashion label last year. And there may be more payouts in store for her as Emma recently hinted the 'Wannabe' hitmakers could be set to head out on tour again in the near future, following the success of their string of reunion shows in the UK last year. She said: "Hopefully there are still some quite exciting things coming from the Spice Girls. Fingers crossed we can do some more shows." Emma has been in touch with the other members and said there's even a possibility of the popular group headlining a world tour with "international shows". The singer added: "I have been speaking to Geri and the other girls - we have been chatting and talking about other projects. We would love to do more live stuff as well. To do more international shows would be a dream."



JJ Abrams pledges \$10m to anti-racist causes

J.J. Abrams, his wife and his production company have committed to donating \$10 million to anti-racism campaigns over the next five years. The 'Star Trek' director and his spouse Katie McGrath have pledged to give the sum through his Bad Robot company and their own Katie McGrath and JJ Abrams Family Foundation to help "organisations and efforts committed to anti-racist agendas that close the gaps, lift the poor and build a just America for all." The couple are making initial investments of \$200,000 each to Black Futures Lab, Black Lives Matter LA, Community Coalition, Equal Justice Initiative, and Know Your Rights. Bad Robot said in a statement: "We at Bad Robot are grateful to the many scholars, activists, organizers and leaders fighting on the frontlines of change in our systemically unjust country. "It is that constellation of thinkers and doers who have the blueprint to a more perfect, fair, equitable, and kind union. "In this fragile time, words matter, listening is critical and investment is required. "The centuries long neglect and abuse of our Black brothers and sisters can only be addressed by scalable investment. A massive and thoughtful overhaul of tax policy, one that effectively meets the needs of the many in this country, and not just the few, is long overdue. "We are committing an additional \$10m over the next five years to organisations and efforts committed to anti-agendas that close the gaps, lift the poor and build a just America for all." Meanwhile, The Weeknd has urged those with "big pockets" to follow his lead and others to do what they can to help after he gave \$200,000 to Black Lives Matter Global Network, \$200,000 to Colin Kaepernick's Know Your Rights campaign, and \$100,000 to National Bail Out. Sharing receipts of the donations, he wrote on Instagram: "keep supporting our brothers and sisters out there risking everything to push for actual change for our black lives. "Urging everyone with big pockets to give and give big and if you have less please give what you can even if it's a small amount.(sic)" Harry Styles has also urged fans to donate after he contributed to an organisation helping cover the cost of bail for those arrested while protesting the death of George Floyd, who passed away last week after a police officer knelt on his neck. He wrote on Instagram: "I do things every day without fear, because I am privileged, and I am privileged every day because I am white. "Being not racist is not enough, we must be anti racist. "Social change is enacted when a society mobilizes. "I stand in solidarity with all of those protesting. "I'm donating to help post bail for arrested organizers. "Look inwards, educate yourself and others. "LISTEN, READ, SHARE, DONATE and VOTE. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. BLACK LIVES MATTER.(sic)



Michele accused of making former Glee co-star Ware's life a 'living hell'

Lea Michele has been accused of making life a "living hell" for 'Glee' co-star Samantha Ware. Samantha joined the musical TV show - which Lea starred in - for its sixth and final season in 2015 and after Lea took to social media in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, following the death of George Floyd at the hands of the police, Samantha called her out for being hypocritical. Lea, 33, wrote: "George Floyd did not deserve this. This was not an isolated incident and it must end. #BlackLivesMatter." And Samantha, 28, replied: "LMAO REMEMBER WHEN YOU MADE MY FIRST TELEVISION GIG A LIVING HELL?!! CAUSE ILL NEVER FORGET. I BELIEVE YOU TOLD EVERYONE THAT IF YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY YOU WOULD "SHT IN MY WIG! AMONGST OTHER TRAUMATIC MICROAGRESSIONS THAT MADE ME QUESTION A CAREER IN HOLLYWOOD... (sic)." Alex Newell, Amber Riley and Dabier Snell - who all co-starred in 'Glee' - reacted to the tweet in support of Samantha. Alex and Amber shared

gifs, with Alex posting the "Get her, Jade" meme from RuPaul's 'Drag Race', while Dabier wrote: "GIRL YOU WOULDN'T LET ME SIT AT THE TABLE WITH THE OTHER CAST MEMBERS CAUSE I DIDN'T BELONG THERE" (sic)." 'Community' actress Yvette Nicole Brown showed her support for Samantha by writing: "I felt every one of those capital letters." And Alex replied: "Felt like claps!!" Meanwhile, back in 2011, Hailee Steinfeld, now 23, revealed how Lea made her cry on the Paramount lot. She told J-14 magazine: "When I was auditioning for 'True Grit', I was on the Paramount lot. I was wearing clothes from the 1800s that were big and uncomfortable. "Glee' also films on the lot and I love that show. "I saw Lea Michele just walking to her trailer, and I was like, "That's the girl from 'Glee'. I've got to go ask for her autograph!" "So I walked up to her and asked for her autograph, but she walked by and a guy came and said, "Sorry, now's not a good time!" "I was so sad! I was practically crying on the way home." —Bang Showbiz



Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo Anita Pointer (left) and Bonnie Pointer (right) of the Pointer Sisters attend The Hollywood Chamber Of Commerce 98th Annual Board Installation And Lifetime Achievement Awards Gala at Avalon Hollywood in Los Angeles.—AFP

'Pointer Sisters' founding member Bonnie dead at 69

Bonnie Pointer, one of the four original members of The Pointer Sisters sibling musical group, has died at the age of 69, a statement on the group's website said Monday. The sisters—Bonnie, Anita, Ruth and the late June—began singing in their father's church in Oakland, California, and rose to fame in the 1970s. Their songs included hits such as "I'm So Excited" and "Jump (For My Love)."

The quartet won the first of three Grammy Musical Awards for their 1975 hit song "Fairytale." The song, co-written by Bonnie and her sister Anita, won in the Best Country Duo or Group category and was later recorded by Elvis Presley. Bonnie Pointer left the group in the mid-1970s for a Motown solo career, and her biggest solo was the 1978 hit "Heaven Must Have Sent You."

"Because of Bonnie's talent, drive and determination the multi-Grammy winning Pointer Sisters exist and have had the great fortune of spending two decades at the top of the charts and close to 50 years performing to sold out audiences around the world," the group statement read. "Our family is devastated," Anita Pointer told CNN in a statement. "On behalf of my siblings and I and the entire Pointer family, we ask for your prayers at this time."—AFP

BTS fans match K-pop superstars' \$1 mn Black Lives Matter donation

Fans of K-pop megastars BTS raised and donated \$1 million to the Black Lives Matter movement, matching the septet's donation of the same amount within 24 hours, organisers said Monday. The band's managers Big Hit Entertainment said at the weekend that they and BTS—currently one of the biggest acts in the world—had jointly donated \$1 million to the ongoing anti-racism movement in the US and beyond, triggered by the death in police custody of an unarmed black man as an officer knelt on his neck. "We stand against racial discrimination. We condemn violence," BTS tweeted last week, which has since been retweeted around 1 million times.

The Big Hit announcement soon sparked a #MatchAMillion hashtag trending worldwide on Twitter, with a set of BTS fans—One in an Army—setting up an online donation project for the cause. On Monday morning, One in an Army announced they had raised just over \$1 million from nearly 35,000 donors. "Just like BTS, we were able to donate 1M dollars to help fund bailouts for those arrested for protesting

police brutality," and support black-led advocacy groups, among others, they said on Twitter.

None of the fan group's organisers are South Korean, according to their website, with most from Europe or North America. The announcement follows a recent online effort by K-pop fans to take over the controversial #WhiteLivesMatter hashtag, often used by those who criticise the anti-racism protesters, by posting the tag along with videos and images of their favourite singers. BTS—or Bangtan Sonyeondan, which translates as Bulletproof Boy Scouts—are the first K-pop group to top charts in the United States and Britain with a string of sold-out shows in Los Angeles, Paris and London's Wembley Stadium. "I am from London. My mom had to deal with racism all her life," wrote one black BTS fan. "I'm absolutely proud to tell her the group that... I adore supports us and stand with us."—AFP



In this file photo Models present creations by Chanel at the end of the Women's Spring-Summer 2020/2021 Haute Couture collection fashion show at the Grand Palais in Paris.

CHANEL calls time on extravagant Paris fashion shows

The collection was very much in Viard's own image with plenty of deft Parisian classic chic touches to go along with bare midriffs adorned with strings of jewellery and tummy belts, tiny bags, flip up sunglasses and gladiator-style armband bracelets. Cruise collections traditionally showcase holiday wear for glamorous foreign travel, a luxury some jetsetters may have to forego this year. The daughter of two doctors, Viard said she was not immune to the effects of the coronavirus which she said has "left us all feeling more fragile", and therefore steered clear of evening dresses.

Instead she wanted to create something "simple and luxurious and charming. I hope people will be

touched by it." Viard said the clothes will be in the shops in November along with her summer collection which has been eclipsed by the COVID-19 crisis. And she insisted that Chanel's haute couture collection will be ready to show in Paris in July, when the shows will be held digitally.

CHANEL



Shop assistants wearing protective masks welcome customers at a store of French luxury brand Chanel at the Galeries Lafayette on the first day of the department store's reopening, on May 30, 2020, in Paris.—AFP photos



Art Basel 2020 scrapped over virus uncertainties

Art Basel, the world's biggest contemporary art fair, cancelled its 2020 edition in Switzerland due to the coronavirus pandemic, denting its parent company on the stock exchange Monday. The fair had already been postponed from June to September but organisers pulled the plug, saying there were too many uncertainties to stage the international show, which will return in 2021. "Art Basel regrets to announce that the 2020 edition in Basel has been cancelled," it said in a statement. "While there are signs of hope as individual countries are coming out of lockdown, the global situation remains precarious and, unfortunately, too many uncertainties remain to go ahead with the fair."

It said those included limitations on intercontinental travel, the health risks posed by large gatherings, and doubts over whether Swiss COVID-19 regulations would allow large public events. "We believe that the best option concerning the Basel show is to focus on next year's edition and delivering a fair of the exceptional international quality that the art world expects," it said Saturday. The 2021 Basel fair will run from June 17 to 21. The share price of parent company MCH Group fell further on the Swiss stock exchange on Monday.

MCH, which had already lost 41 percent of its value since the start of January, fell 3.05 percent to 15.90 Swiss francs in afternoon trading. By comparison, the SPI index of the top 215 companies on the Swiss exchange was down 0.28 percent. The Swiss government stopped short of imposing full confinement to combat the coronavirus pandemic. But the restrictions it brought in led to the cancellation of major events, including the Geneva Motor Show and the main watch fairs. While events for up to 300 people can now go ahead with appropriate protection measures, events for more than 1,000 people remain banned until August 31. While Art Basel is based in its Swiss home city, its success led to additional annual events in Miami since 2002, and in Hong Kong since 2013.—AFP

Rare Rembrandt self-portrait to go on sale in London

One of the last self-portraits by Rembrandt remaining in private hands is to go on sale next month with a guide price of £12-16 million (\$15-20 million, 13-18 million euros), Sotheby's said on Monday. Only three of the Dutch master's painted self-portraits remain in private hands: Sotheby's in London sold one in 2003; another is on long-term loan to the National Gallery of Scotland. The third, "Self-portrait wearing a ruff and black hat", is the earliest in date of the three, and goes on sale at the London auction house on July 28.



An undated handout photo released by Sotheby's auction house in London, shows 'Self-portrait, wearing a ruff and black hat', one of the Last Self-Portraits by Rembrandt left in private hands.—AFP

The self-portrait is one of 80 he created during his career, and was painted towards the end of 1632, when the 26-year-old was establishing himself in Amsterdam and enjoying his first flush of commercial success. "Rembrandt's face is instantly recognisable to us at every stage of his adulthood—far more so than any other painter," said George Gordon, Sotheby's co-chairman of Old Master Paintings Worldwide. "We know that this painting was created in a remarkably short period of time, because he laid in the background first, but when he signed it upon completion, the background was still wet, so the signature is impressed into it by his brush."—AFP



In this file photo taken on October 02, 2018 German fashion designer of Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld (left), flanked by French fashion studio director of Chanel Virginie Viard (right), acknowledges the audience at the end of the Chanel Spring-Summer 2019 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris.

Sick of lockdown: Panda escapes confinement in Copenhagen zoo

Humans are not the only ones tiring of confinement during the coronavirus pandemic—a panda escaped from his enclosure at Copenhagen Zoo on Monday. Xing Er, a six-year-old male panda—soon to be seven—then took a tour of the zoo, which was closed at the time. He was spotted on a surveillance video "leaving his enclosure, slipping under an electric fence", zoo spokesman Jacob Munkholm Hoeck told AFP. The animal wandered around the zoo until an employee noticed it and called a security team. "The veterinarian of the zoo anaesthetised the panda and he was brought back to the enclosure," Hoeck said. "There he was given an antidote and woke up a couple of minutes later."

Xing Er was not harmed and there were no human injuries. Bengt Holst, the zoo's chief scientist, said in a statement that security around the enclosure will be "carefully examined" to "make sure (it) doesn't happen again". Xing Er and his female mate Mao Sun—who did not take part in his escape—arrived in Denmark in April 2019, on loan from the Chinese city of Chengdu. They are a part of the "panda diplomacy" programme set up by China which consists of lending pandas in order to foster relations with trading partners.—AFP



A picture taken on April 9, 2019 shows Panda Xing Er sitting in its enclosure in the Copenhagen zoo.



In this file photograph visitors arrive at Art Basel, the world's premier modern and contemporary art fair, in Basel.—AFP



A picture taken on May 23, 2020 shows a view of the Copenhagen zoo.—AFP photos

Tragic yarn: India-China border spat hits cashmere production



LADAKH: In this file photo taken on Aug 29, 2019, a Changpa nomad weaves pashmina wool with a loom in a nomadic camp about 1 km from Korzok village in Leh district. — AFP

SRINAGAR: The world is heading for a shortage of the highly prized and super-soft cashmere wool as pashmina goats that live on the “roof of the world” become caught up in the fractious border dispute between nuclear neighbors India and China. Wool from pashmina goats, reared by nomads in the inhospitable high-altitude cold desert region of Ladakh, is the most expensive and coveted cashmere in the world.

But the shaggy creatures that provide the yarn are being pushed out of their grazing lands in the tussle between the world’s two most-populous nations, causing the death of tens of thousands of kids this season, locals and officials said. “In about three years when the newborn goats would have started yielding pashmina we’ll see a significant drop in production,” Sonam Tsering of the All Changtang Pashmina Growers Cooperative Marketing Society told AFP.

There have been numerous face-offs and brawls between Chinese and Indian soldiers over their 3,500-km frontier, which has never been properly

demarcated. The latest is concentrated in the Ladakh region, just opposite Tibet, with Indian officials claiming Chinese troops encroached over the boundary in recent weeks. The alleged movements came after military fisticuffs at the eastern part of the border near Sikkim in May.

‘Newborns dead’

Some traditional grazing land is lost to China each year, Tsering said. But this year, even the main winter grazing areas near KakJung, Tum Tselay, Chumar, Damchok and Korzok are out of bounds amid the heightened tensions, he added. “It’s devastating. The PLA (China’s People’s Liberation Army) used to encroach into our side by the meters, but this time they have come inside several kilometers,” said Jurmet, a former elected official who has only one name.

“It was breeding season for the goats. Around 85 percent of their newborns died this year because large herds were pushed out into the cold from the grazing lands (in February),” he told AFP

over the phone from Leh, the region’s capital city. Tsering said Indian soldiers were blocking the animals from entering areas deemed as sensitive, while herders told him the Chinese army was pushing Tibetan nomads into their grazing areas.

Half a dozen residents involved with goat herding who AFP spoke to said that until a few years ago, they would cross over the frozen Indus river for grazing during the winter, but those areas were now being encroached by China. Meanwhile, communicating with the herders — whose satellite phones provided by Indian officials have been withdrawn in recent years — has become difficult, said Jurmet.

Vital industry

The huge number of deaths — in the tens of thousands according to a local Indian official who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity — could devastate the sector in the coming years. The goats yield some 50 tons of the finest and most expensive feather-light cashmere wool each year,

supporting the vital handicrafts industry in Kashmir that employs thousands of people.

Most of the wool is woven into yarn and exquisite shawls sold the world over from luxury store Harrods in London to the Dubai Mall in the United Arab Emirates, and can cost up to US\$800 for one scarf. More than 1,000 families of nomadic Changpa herders roam the vast Changtang plateau at over 5,000 m, grazing some 300,000 Pashmina goats, black yaks and horses through the summer months.

They move to the slightly lower altitude grazing lands straddling Tibet and along the mighty Indus river during harsh winter months of December to February when temperatures drop up to minus 50 degrees Celsius. The military tensions are the latest blow for the herders, who are already reeling from the impact of climate change which has made winters harsher and summers drier. Some have even abandoned their generations-long way of life to migrate to towns in Ladakh in search of other sources of income. — AFP

Yemen medic treats poor...

Continued from Page 1

“We doctors are on the frontlines of this current pandemic, and we must disseminate advice even outside medical facilities,” said Hajj, who has nearly 18,000 followers on Facebook. “We must safeguard

and maintain the health of the poor, because their health is part of the whole community,” he said.

Yemen’s government has officially recorded hundreds of coronavirus cases, including 112 deaths. But according to the United Nations, testing and reporting remain limited and it is likely that most areas in the country have been impacted. “Here is a Yemeni doctor treating the poor for free on the streets,” said one of Hajj’s supporters in a Facebook post hailing his “noble and beautiful” contribution. “I wish all Yemeni doctors would do the same in the current situation we are in.” — AFP

Thousands mourn Floyd; Dems take...

Continued from Page 1

authorities pledged to dismantle and rebuild the police department in the city where the 46-year-old Floyd died during a May 25 arrest for allegedly passing a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Derek Chauvin, the 44-year-old white officer who was filmed pressing his knee on the handcuffed Floyd’s neck for nearly nine minutes, made his first court appearance on Monday. The 19-year veteran, who appeared by videolink from prison, faces up to 40 years if convicted on charges of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and manslaughter. Chauvin did not enter a plea and the Hennepin County District Court judge set his bail at \$1 million with conditions, or \$1.25 million without.

The conditions would require him to surrender his firearms, not work in law enforcement or security in any capacity, and have no contact with Floyd’s family. Three other policemen involved in Floyd’s arrest appeared in court last week to face a charge of aiding and abetting his murder. All four officers have been fired.

In Houston, mourners waited patiently in stifling Texas heat, wearing face masks because of the coronavirus outbreak. “It’s bringing us together as a country,” said Kevin Sherrod, 41, who was accompanied by his wife and two sons, aged eight and nine.

“Being here with my boys means a lot,” Sherrod added. “It is a time in history and they will remember they were part of it.”

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden flew to Houston on Monday for a private meeting with Floyd’s family. “He listened, heard their pain, and shared in their woe,” said Benjamin Crump, the Floyd

family attorney. “That compassion meant the world to this grieving family.” Floyd’s death, the latest in a litany of similar deaths of black men at the hands of police, has unleashed protests for racial justice and against police brutality in the US and beyond.

Some US cities have already begun to embrace reforms — starting with bans on the use of tear gas and rubber bullets. In Washington, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer and two dozen other lawmakers knelt in silence at the US Capitol for the eight minutes and 46 seconds that Chauvin pinned Floyd to the ground.

Democrats then unveiled a wide-ranging police reform bill, one of the chief demands of demonstrators who have taken to the streets for the past two weeks in the most sweeping US protests for racial justice since the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. The Justice in Policing Act, introduced in both chambers of Congress, would make it easier to prosecute officers for abuse, and rethink how they are recruited and trained.

“The protests we’ve seen in recent days are an expression of rage and one of despair,” House Democrat Steny Hoyer said. “Today, Democrats in the House and Senate are saying: ‘We see you, we hear you, we are acting.’” It is unclear what support the proposed reforms might find in the Republican-controlled Senate — or whether President Donald Trump would sign such legislation into law.

Trump has adopted a tough approach to putting down the protests and he voiced his support for the police at a roundtable on law enforcement at the White House on Monday. “There’s a reason for less crime. It’s because we have great law enforcement,” he said. “There won’t be defunding, there won’t be dismantling of our police.” Trump has accused “Radical Left Democrats” of seeking to “defund the police,” but Democratic leaders did not include any such language in their bill and Biden has also flatly rejected the suggestion. — AFP

Luxe industry new normal...

Continued from Page 1

With scant oil resources compared to its neighbors, Dubai — which boasts the most diversified economy in the Gulf — has built a reputation as a financial, commercial and tourism hub despite an economic downturn in recent years. The gleaming city is known for its mega malls, high-end restaurants, and five-star hotels and resorts, all of which have taken a severe hit during the coronavirus outbreak.

Karen Young, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, said that global norms surrounding travel, luxury and entertainment will have to shift. People will want more privacy and individual experiences in retail and hospitality. “It’s a good time to explore new customer experiences. Crowded restaurants and clubs are out, exclusive at-home chefs and shopping concierge will be in,” she said. “But we cannot expect a return to normal anytime soon, and recovery will have to include some reinvention.”

Although Dubai is steadily easing restrictions, masks remain compulsory outside the home, and an 11pm city-wide curfew is in operation. Children under the age of 12 and adults over 60 are prohibited from entering malls, entertainment centers and gyms. Many residents hit the beaches, dined at restaurants, and visited shopping centers over the

weekend after Dubai announced malls were allowed to open at full capacity. And the dancing waters of the Dubai Fountain — one of the city’s most popular attractions — began to sway to music again, in the shadow of the world’s tallest tower, Burj Khalifa.

Tourism has long been the lifeline of the emirate, which welcomed more than 16 million tourists last year. Before the pandemic crippled global travel, the aim was to reach 20 million visitors this year. According to research firm STR Global, 30 percent of jobs in Dubai’s hotel industry will likely be lost in the coming months until demand recovers. “There’s going to be a lot less group travel,” Dubai Tourism director-general Helal Saeed Al-Marri told Bloomberg in late April. “This definitely affects the hotel industry and affects the tourism industry and the yield, so there are going to be challenges.”

In malls, the retail industry is moving towards a “no touch” model which means hands-off consultations at beauty counters, and no product testers for buyers to peruse. Dubai’s luxury hotels and resorts are open at reduced capacity, many offering residents “staycation” deals to offset the halt in global tourism. But their swim-up bars and chilled pools, which usually attract hordes of young professionals in the summer heat, remain closed until further notice.

As business works out how to create an environment that is safe and socially distanced, yet still worth the hassle for potential customers, many remain wary. “It has me thinking twice about which experiences are worth paying for,” said the Swedish expatriate, “especially when my health might be the ultimate price.” — AFP

forced labor.

Oman announced on Sunday that from next year, foreign workers will no longer need permission to change jobs after two year of employment, although domestic workers will still be excluded from labor law protections. In 2019, Qatar introduced laws allowing workers to change employers more freely after facing criticism over exploitation of laborers building World Cup stadiums.

However Ryszard Cholewinski, an Arab states migration specialist at the International Labour Organisation, cautioned that it would take time to fully reform the kafala system. Forced labor and unpaid wages remain a problem and it is still common for workers to have their passports taken from them, even where the law prohibits it, Cholewinski said. “Given the degree of control that (the kafala system) gives to the employers over the workers, you get the sense that the workers are like objects of the employer.” — Reuters

Calls for Arab states to end...

Continued from Page 1

victims of racism much more say and autonomy in what they can do about it.” Lebanon’s government did not respond to a request for comment.

The suicide last month of a maid from the Philippines highlighted the struggles of migrant women in the country, whose labor ministry is working with the International Labor Organization to reform contracts for domestic workers. Some countries have relaxed their kafala laws in recent years under international pressure, among them Bahrain, which has allowed workers to freelance without sponsors, and the UAE, which has adopted measures to prevent

Stars

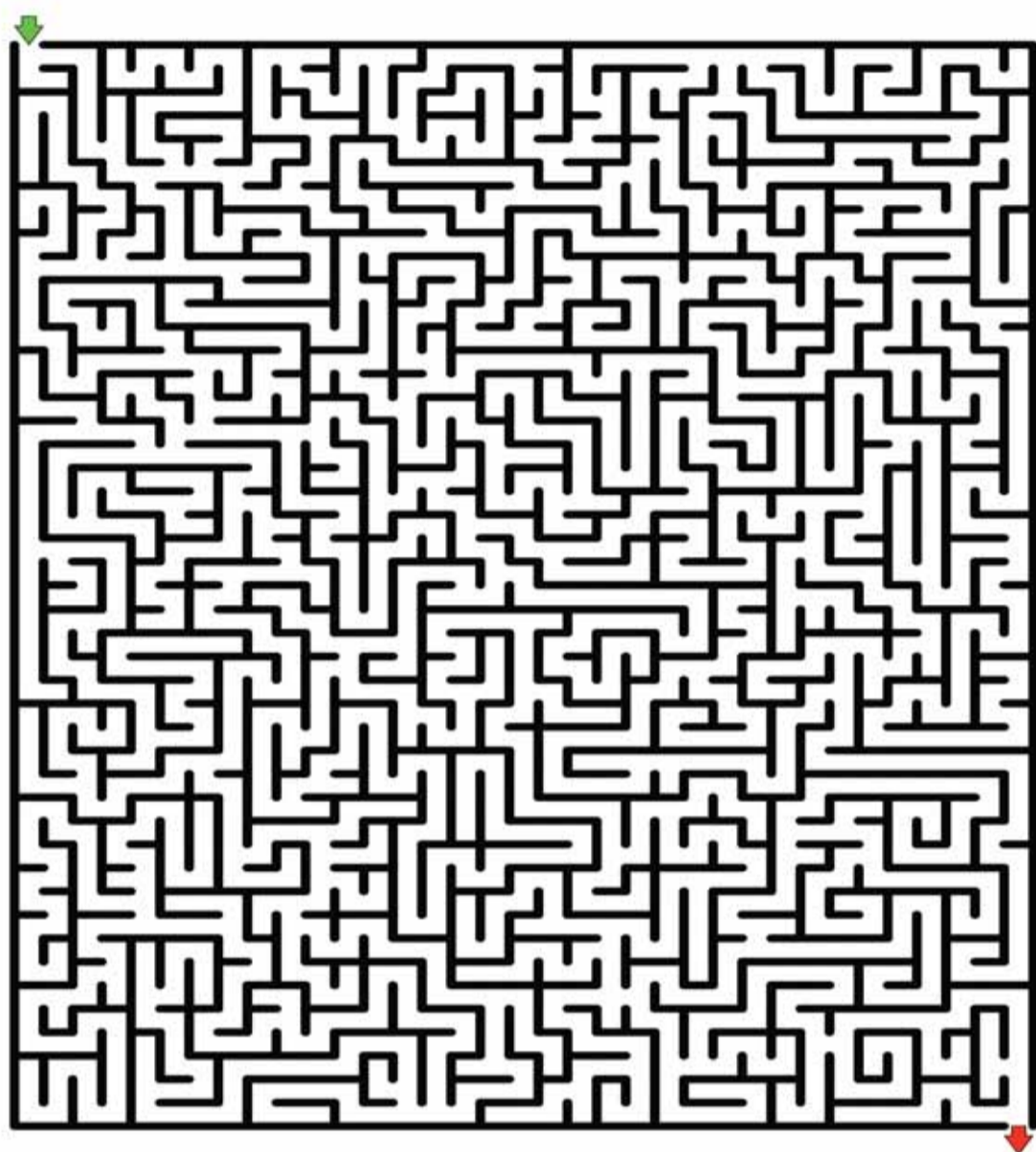
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	5	8	4	1				
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easy

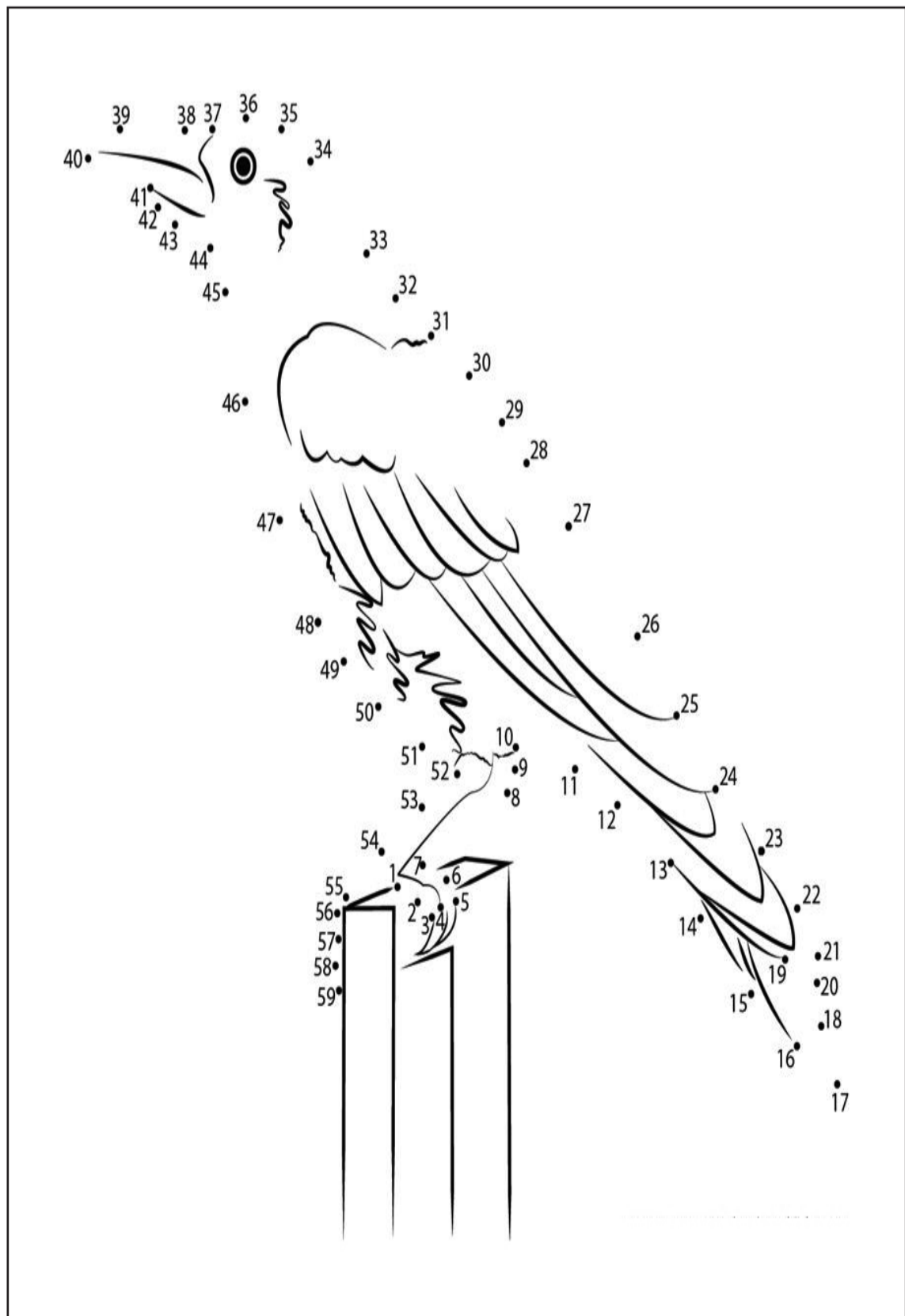
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very hard

Find the way



Join the dots



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 You shouldn't try to fight the feelings that run through you today. Don't even try to rationalize them. These feelings are probably related to emotions dating back to your childhood. You shouldn't avoid or analyze them. There will be a lot of turmoil welling up inside you, Aries. You should try to find some peace and quiet with special someone.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 You may feel annoyed about the attitude of some of your group of friends. Unlike these people, you're very open-minded and you can deal with situations as they arise. Indeed, you have a natural ability to adapt to every situation. Libra, today you'll probably have to arbitrate between two people with widely differing opinions.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 You'll be lost in your thoughts today, analyzing your life and relationships. You'll be asking yourself if your existence is meeting your standards. You will ponder what to expect from the future and from the people around you. You're in the right frame of mind to make a few life-changing decisions.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Today, Scorpio, you'll be submerged under a lot of emotions. In a way, you'll be revisiting your childhood. You may be very edgy. This is a good disposition in which to analyze your life. You'll be able to see if everything around you is where you think it belongs. Try to make the most out of this frame of mind.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 Today you will have all the energy you need to deal with long-term family problems. Indeed, you'll probably clash with some of your relatives. But this situation won't cause any serious issues, and you'll deal with these circumstances like a pro. You have the ability to get out of any delicate situation you find yourself in today.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 You really know how to seduce, Sagittarius. There is a spark inside of you that spreads naturally to those around you. You have a big reservoir of sensitivity and emotion that could grow today. You might charm new people. Don't forget to recharge your batteries in order to keep your feelings intact in the days to come.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 You enjoy caring for others and you intervene regularly in their lives to guide them. Ironically, today you're the one who needs advice. You'll probably need to get away from it all in order to get a clear view of your own life, Cancer. You could even decide to make the necessary arrangements for a trip abroad at some point in the future.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 You're a very active person, Capricorn, but today you'll probably be disappointed. If you ask those around you to help with your activities, they most likely won't understand your needs. They'll wonder why you need to move constantly and why you need to create. The day may seem exhausting and complicated to you.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 We all have to make compromises in order to live in contemporary society. You may have strong beliefs, but it's difficult to combine your ideals and a social life. Today you may wonder if you're prepared to be edged out of society and fight for your convictions. Shouldn't you try to find a compromise between life and your ideals?

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
 Nothing much is happening today, yet you seem worried and tense. You'll have to use this day to your advantage. Think about your life. You'll also think about the needs of your relatives in the years to come and how to attain those goals. You'll also be in the best disposition to think about your own family life.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 You've always felt the need to free yourself from society. You need to feel independent at any cost. You may need to face certain relationship problems at this time. Perhaps you're hesitant to commit either at work or in your personal life. You may ask yourself if your attitude isn't in fact revealing a desire to get away from it all. Perhaps you'll find the answer today.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 You often need to thrive on personal emotions. Today will be no exception to the rule. For instance, you could try to captivate the attention of people you admire. The only problem is that they might not be receptive at first. Try to take your time. You will have other opportunities in the near future.

Word Search

Free Printable Word Search Puzzles

Spring

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

T	L	E	M	W	O	N	S	S	S	A	R	G	L	A
G	C	Y	C	L	A	M	E	N	S	A	L	I	L	P
G	N	G	R	O	W	T	H	R	L	L	L	L	R	S
O	Y	I	I	D	L	S	A	R	A	I	E	S	N	N
L	A	L	N	K	A	I	E	B	E	R	R	O	H	E
F	M	L	O	A	N	F	E	S	G	M	I	P	W	W
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ALLERGIES	FROGS	RAIN
APRIL	GOLF	RENEWAL
BASEBALL	GRASS	ROBINS
BEES	GREEN	SEASON
CROCUSES	GROWTH	SNOWMELT
CYCLAMENS	IRISES	SOFTBALL
DAFFODILS	LILIES	SPRING BREAK
DANDELIONS	MARCH	SPRING CLEANING
EASTER	MAY	TULIPS
EQUINOX	NEW LEAVES	WARMER
FLOWERS	PLANTING	WET

Sports

Photo of the Day



Sequence shot as Alexey Kolesnikov performs at the Red Bull FMX JAM Kazakhstan. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Dhoni's calling card was under pressure: Laxman

NEW DELHI: Former India batsman VVS Laxman yesterday heaped praise on batsman MS Dhoni, saying the wicket-keeper's calling card has always been his composure under pressure-cooker situations. Laxman shared a photo of Dhoni as part of his initiative of paying tribute to his teammates who influenced him immensely. "Blessed with the rare equanimity of viewing cricket as a sport and not a matter of life and death, @msdhoni's calling card was composure, especially under pressure. The 2007 World T20 triumph catalysed the stirring captaincy saga of a leader who talked through his deeds," Laxman tweeted.

Blessed with the rare equanimity of viewing cricket as a sport and not a matter of life and death, @msdhoni's calling card was composure, especially under pressure. The 2007 World T20 triumph catalysed the stirring captaincy saga of a leader who talked through his deeds. pic.twitter.com/N2LukWwD3f Dhoni had made his ODI debut against Bangladesh in 2004, however, the then flamboyant wicket-keeper did not have a good outing as he scored just 19 runs in the three-match series.

But the wicket-keeper truly arrived in the series against Pakistan in 2005 as he scored 148 runs in the second ODI of the six-match series at Vishakhapatnam. Dhoni is the only captain to win all major ICC trophies (50-over World Cup, T20 World Cup, and Champions Trophy). Under his leadership, India also managed to attain the number one ranking in Test cricket.

He first led an inexperienced Indian side to the T20 World Cup triumph in 2007. He then took over the ODI captaincy, but he had to wait for leading the Test side as Anil Kumble was doing the duties in the longest format.

In December 2014, Dhoni announced his retirement from the longest format of the game and it gave a chance to the likes of Wriddhiman Saha to cement their place in the side for the longest format of the game.

US PGA Tour season resumes with star-studded field at Charles Challenge

Woods needs one victory to set the all-time wins record

HONG KONG: Top-level golf returns from its coronavirus shutdown Thursday as the US PGA Tour season resumes with a star-studded field at the Charles Schwab Challenge at Colonial in Fort Worth, Texas.

AFP Sport looks at three talking points as the players prepare to go into battle for the first time since The Players Championship was abandoned in March.

CAN'T SEE THE WOODS

Sixteen of the world's top 20 will tee off on Thursday at Colonial Country Club, but Tiger Woods will not be among them. The 15-time major winner last played on Tour in February at Riviera and missed the next four tournaments, including the Players, with a sore back.

The world number 11 looked to have his game in top shape on May 24 when he and Peyton Manning defeated Phil Mickelson and Tom Brady in a charity match. But he may be saving his fragile body for the frantic revamped schedule in August and September, and so could return as late as Jack Nicklaus's Memorial Tournament on July 16, which Woods has never missed when healthy.

The Memorial could be the first of eight events in 10 weeks for the 44-year-old. The WGC Invitational is on July 30-August 2, followed by the US PGA Championship, three FedEx Cup playoff events, and September's US Open and Ryder Cup.

Woods needs one victory to set the all-time wins record having tied Sam Snead's 82 PGA Tour victories at the Zozo Championship in Japan in October.

'DEBUTANT' RORY LEADS STELLAR CAST

World number one Rory McIlroy has been installed as favourite this week, despite never having played at Colonial before.

He will be joined in the hunt by the rest of the

world's top five — Jon Rahm, Brooks Koepka, Justin Thomas and Dustin Johnson — with Thomas another to play the event for the first time.

But picking a winner is not easy: 101 of the 148 players have PGA Tour wins under their belt, the strongest field in the event's history. The top three — McIlroy, Rahm and Koepka — will play together for the first two rounds in a stellar featured group that will have an odd feel in front of empty galleries.

Number four Thomas will play alongside his great pals Jordan Spieth and Rickie Fowler in what could be a fun grouping for an expected large TV audience.



Top-level golf returns

'BEEF' DOESN'T MINCE WORDS

While the return of the PGA Tour has been universally welcomed, the decision to restart the Official World Golf Rankings (OWGR) has not gone down so well. Players at the Charles Schwab Challenge and a second-string Korn Ferry Tour event in the US this week will be awarded ranking points.

But the European Tour is not scheduled to return until late July and it will be September before the Asian Tour sees any action.

Players on those circuits, with no points-scoring



AUGUSTA: File photo shows Tiger Woods of the United States celebrates after sinking his putt on the 18th green to win during the final round of the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on April 14, 2019 in Augusta, Georgia. — AFP

opportunities, took to social media to vent their anger.

"Completely dumb from @OWGRltd but anyway least golf is starting," fumed England's Andrew "Beef" Johnston on Twitter.

Compatriot Matt Fitzpatrick, the world number 25, chimed in: "Very unfair, can't understand this!"

South Africa's 165th-ranked Brandon Stone tweeted: "Find this very disrespectful to all other tours around the world." "Agreed! Either all Tours are play-

ing for points or none!" said Austria's number 26 Bernd Wiesberger.

Officials from the OWGR claimed in a statement that the averaging formula used to calculate rankings will help mitigate the problem.

But a row could be brewing, especially if a player on a suspended tour were to drop out of the all-important top 50 and miss out on a major or a lucrative WGC event as a result. — Reuters

Windies' arrival in England a boost for cricket

LONDON: International cricket will start to get back on its feet following the coronavirus shutdown when the West Indies arrive yesterday for a Test series in England. Fans who have had to make do with months of television repeats can now look forward to the real thing again, with England captain Joe Root saying of the West Indies' decision to tour: "It must be extremely scary and I think the whole cricketing world will be grateful to see some cricket again."

The three-match contest was originally meant to be played in June but will now start on July 8 instead because of the pandemic. But rather than games before crowds at the Oval, Edgbaston and Lord's, a now back-to-back series will take place behind closed doors at the more 'bio-secure' Ageas Bowl and Old Trafford.

Whereas players usually spend evenings during a Test away from the ground, they will now instead find themselves in a protective bubble at two venues which both have onsite hotels.

Hampshire's Ageas Bowl will stage the series opener from July 8, with the next two Tests at Old Trafford.

Health measures, including a ban on applying saliva to the ball to aid swing set to be rubber-stamped at an International Cricket Council meeting on Wednesday, and repeated virus testing will be in place.

"Our main objective is to deliver a safe environment for all stakeholders," said England and Wales Cricket Board events director Steve Elworthy.

'DONE US A FAVOUR'

Yet there is no escaping the financial impact of the virus. Going ahead with major matches is seen as vital, with the ECB estimating it could lose £252 million (\$316 million) if there are no fixtures at all this summer.

One of cricket's poorest major teams in the West Indies is now helping one of its wealthiest, with former England captain David Gower saying the Windies had "done us a favour" at a time when the COVID-19 death toll in Britain had topped 40,000.

The West Indies, who hold the Wisden Trophy after beating England in the Caribbean last year, have selected a 25-strong squad made up of 14 first-choice

players and 11 travelling reserves.

They will complete a 14-day quarantine period, combined with initial training, during several weeks at Old Trafford before heading south from Manchester for the first Test.

Despite the ECB's efforts, three West Indies players — Darren Bravo, Shimron Hetmyer and Keemo Paul — declined to tour, with Cricket West Indies insisting it will not hold this against them when it comes to future selection.

Bravo and Hetmyer's absence deprives the tourists of two top-order batsman, with Paul less of a loss given he is a back-up for fast-bowling all-rounder Jason Holder, the West Indies captain.

It was a point emphasised by CWI chief selector Roger Harper, who said at last week's squad announcement: "I expect that the bowling unit will once again provide a serious challenge for England and our batting will have to deliver." But it could be Root who is the most significant absentee from the first Test. Root's wife is expected to give birth to the couple's second child in the first week of July.

The Yorkshireman plans to attend the birth but that may mean Root has to then self-isolate for seven days, putting a question mark against his participation at Southampton.

Root has backed vice-captain Ben



COLOMBO: File photo of West Indies' Darren Bravo plays a shot during the first one day international (ODI) cricket match between Sri Lanka and West Indies at the Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) International Cricket Stadium in Colombo. Bravo was among three West Indies cricketers to turn down a chance to tour England to play three back-to-back Tests in July, Cricket West Indies (CWI) announced on June 3, 2020. — AFP

Stokes to do a good job in his absence but Kevin Pietersen, recalling his own brief stint as England skipper, was wary of adding to the star all-rounder's burdens and suggested wicketkeeper Jos Buttler for the role instead. "Do I want to see Ben Stokes change from who he is and the

current player he is?" Pietersen told talkSPORT. "Probably not."

"The entertainers and the guys that have to carry the mantle in the team sometimes aren't the best captains and sometimes struggle with the extra added pressure." — AFP

Sports

'Turbo Timo' Werner gives new-look Chelsea goal threat

Germany international has scored 31 goals for Leipzig in all competitions this season

LONDON: When Timo Werner seals his imminent move from RB Leipzig to Chelsea, the German's turbulent rise from national pariah to one of Europe's most feared forwards will be complete.

Chelsea are willing to meet the 60 million euro (£53 million, \$67 million) release clause in Werner's contract despite the economic crisis caused by coronavirus. But for the pandemic, Werner could have been lining up for Liverpool next season after the 24-year-old admitted to being flattered by Jurgen Klopp's interest.

However, Liverpool, concerned by the financial fallout from the virus, were not willing to pay Werner's release clause before it expired this month. So instead Chelsea are set to add some much-needed firepower to Frank Lampard's revamped attack next season.

The Germany international has scored 31 goals for Leipzig in all competitions this season, including four in five games since the Bundesliga returned last month. Werner has already proved he can trouble Premier League defences. He played an influential role as Leipzig thrashed Tottenham in the Champions League last 16, bagging the only goal of the first leg from the penalty spot.

Michael Ballack knows exactly what it takes to shine in the Premier League after leaving Germany and the former Chelsea and Bayern Munich midfielder believes Werner has the qualities required to adapt to English football.

"I think it's a good decision for both sides. For Timo, because he fits there, because the way (Chelsea) play football suits him," Ballack said. "He is a robust player, is very fast, but he is also physically good in a duel and he will quickly get used to it."

The fanfare around Werner comes just two years

after his reputation had taken a major hit amid World Cup misery and diving accusations. That storm was a far cry from Werner's humble upbringing in Stuttgart, where his father Guenther Schuh played at the amateur level.

Mario Gomez, an icon at Stuttgart, was Werner's hero as a child and fuelled his dreams of playing for his hometown club. He fulfilled that ambition in 2013, becoming Stuttgart's youngest ever debutant aged 17 and their youngest scorer when he netted three times in his first 10 appearances.

Earning the nickname 'Turbo Timo' because of his electric pace, which he attributes to running up mountains with his father as a child, Werner has been clocked at 11.1 seconds over 100 metres.

"When I was younger it quickly became clear to me that if you want to become a professional, you have to do more," he said. Werner became the youngest player to make 50 Bundesliga appearances, but despite his goals, Stuttgart were relegated in 2016.

That convinced Werner to accept an offer to join newly-promoted Leipzig — an unpopular decision not just to the spurned Stuttgart faithful but German football public at large given the anger at Leipzig's rise thanks to the backing of Red Bull.

Slammed for a lack of loyalty, Werner found himself public enemy number one when a blatant dive against Schalke enraged fans and pundits alike in 2016. The unassuming Werner rebuilt his confidence to head to the 2018 World Cup as Germany's leading striker, but failed to score in three games as the holders crashed out at the first hurdle for the first time since 1938.

Seeking help from a sports psychologist, Werner showed his maturity by using the backlash to fuel his

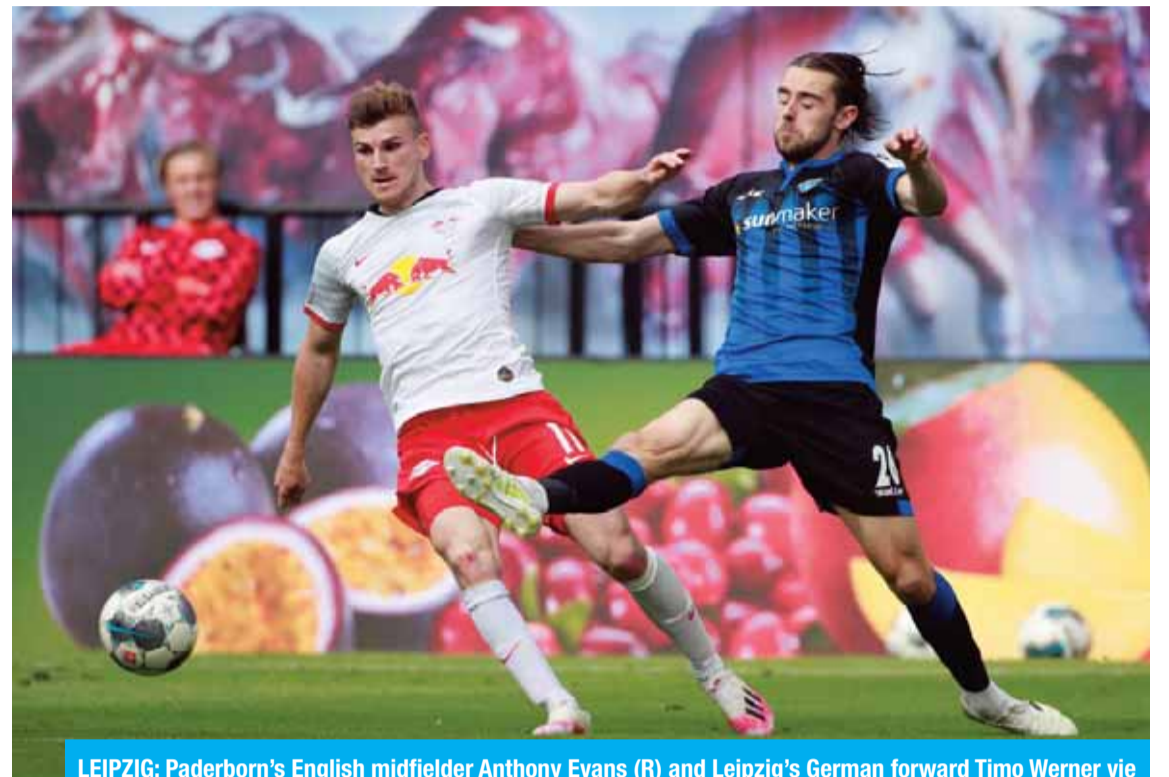
sions will be held with the likes of Boris Becker, Goran Ivanisevic and Ivan Lendl, and will be awarded to fans through auctions and prize draws.

"Funds raised will be allocated by the ATP Coaches Committee to support the members of the ATP Coach Programme, whose ability to work has been impacted by the ongoing pandemic," the statement said.

"In addition, a part of proceeds will be donated to a global COVID-19 relief fund."

Fans will participate in the sessions at 2021 ATP events and Grand Slams, the statement added, with spots being won between June 8-29.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the ability of many people to work and coaches are no



LEIPZIG: Paderborn's English midfielder Anthony Evans (R) and Leipzig's German forward Timo Werner vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match RB Leipzig v SC Paderborn 07 on June 6, 2020 in Leipzig, eastern Germany. — AFP

development. "He told me that I could silence everyone who doesn't like me by doing just one thing: scoring," Werner told Focus magazine at the time.

Werner's mission was quickly accomplished as his goals fired Leipzig into the Champions League, earning widespread admiration just months after he had been pilloried by the critics. With 92 goals in all competitions since joining Leipzig, Werner should add the

goal threat Chelsea have often lacked this season.

After a blistering start to the campaign, Tammy Abraham's form had stagnated before the virus lockdown, with an ankle injury hampering his progress. Werner's ability to cut in from the left or play through the middle offers options to complement Abraham and Olivier Giroud as Chelsea look to take the next step in their development under Lampard. — AFP

All-star tennis class auction for struggling coaches

PARIS: The ATP announced on Monday that it will give fans the chance to bid for coaching sessions with some of tennis' best coaches, in order to raise funds for trainers who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

In a statement, the ATP said that the private ses-

Berlusconi eyeing Serie A return after Monza promotion

ROME: Silvio Berlusconi is aiming for a return to Italian football's top table for the first time since selling AC Milan after his new club Monza were promoted to Serie B on Monday.

Monza were one of three clubs moved up to the second tier alongside Vicenza and Reggina following the Italian Football Federation's decision on Monday to end the regular Serie C season and promote the top team from each of the division's three groups.

"Monza will build a team ready to aim for the top of Serie B," local newspaper il Cittadino quoted Berlusconi as saying. "Promotion (to Serie A) will depend on a range of factors, some of which are unpredictable. However some we know very well and we will try to make the very most of that."

Berlusconi had previously owned AC Milan for over 30 trophy-laden years in which the team won five European Cups and eight Serie A titles.

He sold the club in 2017 to a consortium led by Chinese businessman Li Yonghong. American fund Elliott took over the following year after Li defaulted on a loan to buy the club.

The 83-year-old media tycoon and former Italian Prime Minister then bought Monza for the relative pittance of a reported three millions euros (\$3.4 million) and invested heavily in the team. He also brought in his historic right hand man Adriano Galliani to help guide the team to the top.

As a result they were 16 points clear in their group when the league was suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic. Berlusconi said he "never had a doubt" about Monza being promoted, and added that he didn't want his outfit to be considered "Milan's third team".

The Lombardy club is a stone's throw from both Milan and Berlusconi's historic residence in Arcore, the reported scene of wild parties which some guests have alleged descended into orgies.

Italy's football bosses approved on Monday the holding of play-offs should the restarting season be suspended again and an algorithm with which to decide the league table should the campaign come to a definitive halt. Serie A starts up again on June 20 after three months away, and with Italy one of the countries worst hit by the coronavirus its football authorities have backed contingency plans in case of a new spike in infections. "Football is the winner," said Italian Football Federation (FIGC) chief Gabriele Gravina after the approval via a vote in Rome. "We are restarting on June 20 with the aim of finishing the season. Until July 10-15, we will keep in mind the possibility of holding play-offs." — AFP

BCCI wants quick decision on fate of T20 World Cup

NEW DELHI: Uncertainty surrounding this year's Twenty20 World Cup in Australia due to the COVID-19 pandemic has created a scheduling headache and a decision should be made as quickly as possible, a top Indian cricket board official told Reuters.

Cricket Australia chief Kevin Roberts has said the tournament's October-November schedule was under "very high risk" and the International Cricket Council (ICC) is set to discuss contingency plans at its board meeting today. While the governing body is unlikely to announce a decision anytime soon, the treasurer of India's board (BCCI) says it would be unfair on world cricket to let the issue drag on.

"Because one would need clarity before one can plan," Arun Singh Dhumal said by telephone. "We'd see how it unfolds." India's board would shed few tears if the World Cup is postponed as it would open a window for its lucrative Indian Premier League, which was put on hold due to the pandemic.

There has been speculation in the media that this year's World Cup would be moved to 2021, which would make it necessary to shift next year's edition in India to 2022. "I'm not privy to any such discussion which may have happened in ICC," Dhumal said. "But first they would have to announce whether they are having this year's World Cup or not. Once they confirm, then only one can work on that."

Dhumal also ruled out any immediate return to training for the country's cricketers despite the opening of sports facilities. "We are reviewing the situation. When we think it's safe for them to return to training, we'll or-

US Soccer to review 'no kneeling' anthem policy

LOS ANGELES: The United States Soccer Federation is considering scrapping a rule which bans players from kneeling during the national anthem, officials confirmed on Monday.

USFF president Cindy Parlow Cone called for the policy to be discussed at a board meeting due to take place today, ESPN reported on its website. A USFF spokesperson later confirmed the federation was considering repealing the policy.

In a controversial move, US soccer introduced a rule in 2017 which formally states that players must "stand respectfully" during the national anthem.

It came after US women's team star Megan Rapinoe

exception," said ATP chairman Andrea Gaudenzi.

"The fact this initiative also helps fellow members of the tennis family during this uncertain time shows the unity and innovative spirit of tennis."

The ATP and WTA schedules have been on ice since March with action not set to resume until the end of July at the earliest.

Wimbledon was cancelled for the first time since World War II, while the French Open has been shifted from May-June to September-October and there are concerns about a potential August slot for the US Open. In May tennis' top governing bodies announced that they had raised \$6 million (5.3 million euros) for a relief fund for players hardest hit by the pandemic. — AFP



Cricket Australia chief Kevin Roberts

ganise the camp," he said.

India saw a record one-day jump of coronavirus cases (9,983) on Monday, bringing the total to 256,611.

Meanwhile, Australia batsman Matthew Wade may decide to keep his lip zipped during the test series against India over the home summer as he says Kohli's team thrive on verbal confrontations.

The 32-year-old Tasmanian has dished out his fair share of "sledging" on the field and was never far away when aggression levels spiked during last year's Ashes in England.

Yet Wade said chirping at India during the four-test series, which starts in December, might backfire. "They're a hard team, they use it to their advantage very well," Wade told reporters in a video call yesterday.

"Virat is very clever the way he uses his words or his body language. So they use it as an advantage now. To be honest, I don't really want to engage too much into that. I know that they thrive off that energy that comes between two players. They're probably as good at doing that as anyone in the world at the moment, so it's something I might stay away from this time." — Reuters

kneeling during the anthem at an international in 2016. Rapinoe took a knee in solidarity with former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick.

Kaepernick had begun kneeling during the anthem in August 2016 in order to draw attention to racial injustice following the deaths of several unarmed black men during confrontations with police.

Kaepernick's kneeling protest has become an emblematic expression of solidarity adopted during the recent demonstrations across the United States and around the world since the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25. Protesters and police officers have all taken a knee during the protests while sports stars in Germany's Bundesliga have all knelt before recent matches.

Players from English Premier League giants Liverpool also knelt in a photo distributed through the club's social media channels last week.

ESPN said if US Soccer's board votes to repeal the policy, it would take effect immediately but would still need to be voted on at the federation's annual meeting next year. — AFP

Sterling calls for more black managers in football

LONDON: Manchester City star Raheem Sterling has urged English football to use the global anti-racism protests to initiate debates and find solutions regarding the lack of black representation in top leadership positions in the sport.

Calling for racial justice, thousands of protesters have rallied across the UK, joining a wave of demonstrations sparked by the death of African American George Floyd at the hands of US police last month.

England forward Sterling, who has previously been prominent in calling out racism in both the domestic and international game, is the latest sports star to lend his support to the protests.

"The protest is a great starting point, to make your voice be heard. But just protesting alone is not going to make a change in this country," Sterling said Monday in a BBC TV interview.

"It's how we move on from here. It's about highlighting things, the society that needs changing, and then acting upon it. We've done a lot of talking, and it's time now to act."

"This is a time to speak on these subjects, speak on injustice, especially in my field," he added. Sterling pointed a finger at the long-running disparity between the number of high-profile Black, Asian and minority ethnic players and the dearth of those who go on to hold significant managerial, coaching or administrative jobs.

"There's something like 500 players in the Premier League and a third of them are black and we have no representation of us in the hierarchy, no representation of us in the coaching staffs. There's not a lot of faces that we can relate to and have conversations with," he said. "With these protests that are going on it's all well and good just talking, but it's time that we need to have conversations, to be able to spark debates.

"But at same time, it's coming together and finding a solution to be able to spark change because we can talk as much as we want about changing and putting people, black people, in these positions that I do feel they should be in."

Sterling contrasted the managerial paths of Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard, who have landed top roles at Rangers and Chelsea, to equally experienced black players who have been compelled to start much lower down the ladder.

"The coaching staff that you see around football clubs: there's Steven Gerrard, your Frank Lampard, your Sol Campbells and your Ashley Coles. All had great careers, all played for England," said Sterling.

"At the same time, they've all respectfully done their coaching badges to coach at the highest level and the two that haven't been given the right opportunities are the two black former players.

"The change is being able to speak to people in Parliament, people at the hierarchy at my football club, football clubs across the country, people at the national team of England, to implement change and give equal chances to not just black coaches but also different ethnicities.

"I feel like that's what's lacking here, it's not just taking the knee, it is about giving people the chance they deserve." — AFP

18 US PGA Tour season resumes with star-studded field at Charles Challenge



19 'Turbo Timo' Werner gives new-look Chelsea goal threat



19 BCCI wants quick decision on fate of T20 World Cup



La Liga gets its wish for season return

Sevilla host Real Betis tomorrow to begin a 39-day sprint finish



BARCELONA: This handout picture made available by FC Barcelona shows (from L) Barcelona's Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez and Barcelona's Argentine forward Lionel Messi attending a training session at the Ciutat Esportiva Joan Gamper in Sant Joan Despi on June 8, 2020. Lionel Messi trained again with his teammates to give Barcelona a massive boost ahead of their La Liga return against Mallorca next June 13, 2020. Messi has been suffering from tightness in his right thigh and had not trained fully since last week. — AFP

MADRID: La Liga president Javier Tebas said the games would have to go on and from tomorrow they will, with stadiums full of virtual fans, crowd noise from a computer game and fewer than 300 people allowed to attend.

As Ligue 1 in France was called off and the Premier League, still the benchmark for Spanish football, tied itself in knots, La Liga has been steadfast in its pursuit of completion. "I always believed we would play again," said Tebas on Sunday. The government in Spain had indicated it would be good for morale, perhaps even important for their standing in the world, while the country's infatuation with football meant the prime minister was often addressing the question of its return.

Yet driving La Liga's determination, as Tebas admitted, was the fear of financial meltdown. Cancellation would cost clubs a billion euros, he repeated, and no team would be spared.

Even with the season about to resume, Barcelona and Real Madrid have had to impose pay cuts. Atletico Madrid said they enforced a drop in wages

"to guarantee their future". Public opposition to the season continuing has therefore been fleeting. Eibar's players said last month they were "afraid" to go back to training while Valencia's Gabriel Paulista was one of the few to say it felt rushed.

Among the governing bodies, the players' union (AFE) was sidelined and even the conflict between La Liga and the Spanish football federation (RFEF) was largely put on hold.

Instead, La Liga has answered to the health authorities, who have always had the power to scrap even the most advanced plans at any given moment. So when Sevilla host Real Betis tomorrow to begin a 39-day sprint finish with matches every day, they will do so according to strict guidelines that even this week were still being updated. "We've planned everything to the last millimetre," Tebas said. Players will be tested for coronavirus within 24

hours of kick-off and visiting teams will use exclusive flights and hotels, before travelling to stadiums in two buses to ensure social distancing is maintained. Home team players will arrive in their own cars.

Both sets of players will have their temperatures taken before entering stadiums and will arrive wearing masks and gloves. All communal areas like changing rooms will be disinfected and aired before, during and after games. Only 270 people will be allowed inside stadiums, including club players and staff, doctors and security personnel, matchday and club officials, as well as press and technicians.

During the match, fans watching on television can choose to adopt a virtual experience that puts images of seated supporters, wearing the colours of the home team, in the stands.

There will be artificial sound too — taken from the computer game FIFA, using audio recorded from real

matches — that will then be adapted and implemented according to the flow of the action.

Tributes will be paid to the victims and heroes of the coronavirus pandemic, in the form of a minute's silence before kick-off and applause, contributed by real supporters and transmitted inside the stadium, in the 20th minute. Tebas has insisted the risk of infection once games are in play is "practically zero" given the amount of physical contact but the summer heat in Spain must be considered too.

Fixture lists now come with temperature predictions and, already, two kick-off times have been adjusted. Five substitutes will be allowed instead of three, as well as two drinks breaks.

Some regions in Spain have moved faster through the government's de-escalation programme than others and Tebas has said he would be in favour of clubs bringing supporters back when they can.

That could accelerate the league's initial timetable for 30 per cent of fans to return in September, 50 per cent in November and 100 per cent in January 2021. Until then, everyone will have to adapt. — AFP

Diack told top doping official to avoid 'a scandal'

PARIS: The former anti-doping chief of athletics' world governing body told a French court Monday that Lamine Diack urged him to bend the rules on Russian doping cases to avoid "a scandal" that would scare off sponsors. Gabriel Dolle is being tried in Paris alongside Diack, the Senegalese former president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), who is accused of accepting millions of dollars to cover up Russian doping tests.

Dolle, a 78-year-old Frenchman, is him-

self charged with "receiving bribes" amounting to 190,000 euros between 2013 and 2014.

He told the trial he had been trying to find a compromise between the "higher interest" of the IAAF, since renamed World Athletics, and doping suspicions surrounding Russian athletes. In late 2011 and early 2012, the IAAF drew up a list of 23 Russian athletes whose anti-doping tests gave cause for concern. Dolle said Diack "asked me to consider... the critical financial situation" of the IAAF.

"With the list... it was going to cause a scandal which could have influenced negotiations with sponsors and put them in jeopardy," Dolle told the court.

Dolle said he was "trying not to provoke a scandal" and the man who considered himself to be a "hardliner" insisted he had never avoided handing down punishments for

doping offenders.

When the judge in the trial, Marie-Rose Humault, pointed out that some of the names on the list who were allowed to continue competing not only went on to take part in the 2012 London Olympics, but won medals, Dolle said he had been "betrayed". "I was slightly a hostage to a commitment I had given my president," Dolle said, referring to Diack. Asked about the payments he is accused of receiving, Dolle said he believed 50,000 euros he was given in an envelope by Diack's son Papa Massata Diack, a marketing consultant for the IAAF, was a "bonus" for his handling of the Russian doping cases.

He said the 90,000 euros that Lamine Diack gave him in two payments in 2013 and 2014 was compensation for being "sacked in a brutal and ungrateful way". Diack, who was in charge of the IAAF between 1999 and

2015, will give evidence when the trial resumes today. The 87-year-old is charged with "giving and receiving bribes", "breach of trust" and "organised money laundering". The prosecution alleges that Diack obtained \$1.5 million of Russian funds to help back Macky Sall's campaign for the 2012 Senegal presidential election — which he won — in exchange for the IAAF's anti-doping arm covering up or delaying offences by 23 Russians. The aim, prosecutors say, was to allow the Russian athletes to compete in the 2012 Olympics and the World Athletics Championships in Moscow the following year.

The trial, following a four-year French investigation, was originally scheduled to start on January 13 but was delayed to examine new evidence.

The charges against Lamine Diack carry a maximum sentence of 10 years' prison. Also appearing in court is Habib Cisse,

Diack's former legal advisor, who is suspected of having acted as an intermediary between the IAAF and Russian athletics authorities and having received hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Missing from the trial, however, will be Papa Massata Diack, who handled lucrative contracts for the IAAF. Diack senior's son was implicated through a payment of 450,000 euros from Russian runner Liliya Shobukhova, allegedly to have her blood passport case delayed in order to compete in the 2012 Olympic marathon, as revealed by German broadcaster ARD in 2014.

Diack junior is accused of playing a "central role" in the network of corruption and is charged with "money laundering", "giving bribes" and "aiding the receiving of bribes".

Despite two international arrest warrants issued by France, the Senegalese authorities have refused to extradite him. — AFP

“ We would play again ”