



**7** Bolton accuses Trump of more impeachable 'transgressions'



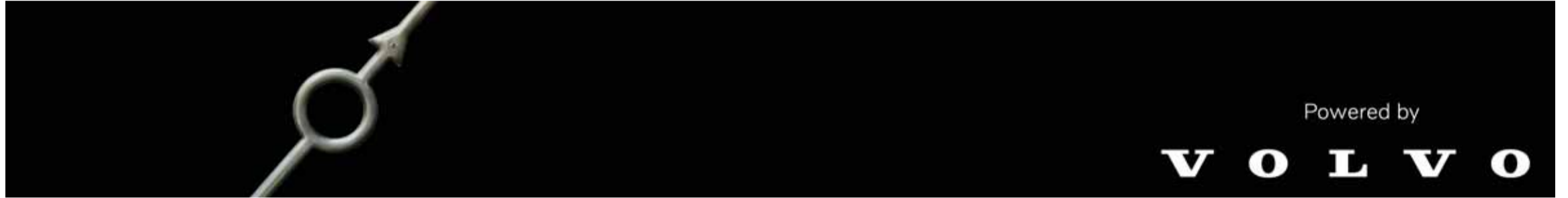
**9** Saudi wealth fund 'shopping spree' belies economic pain



**15** How Black Lives Matter is changing entertainment



**19** 50 years ago, Brazil taught the world to play, in color



# Fresh virus cluster in China raises pandemic control fears

Biggest single-day jump in India cases • Brazil second in deaths • US sees rising cases

BEIJING: Lockdowns were imposed in parts of Beijing yesterday to try and prevent the spread of a new coronavirus cluster, highlighting the challenges that lie ahead even for places where outbreaks are under control. It came as Brazil claimed the unenviable position of having the second-highest virus death toll worldwide behind the United States, with no sign the infection rate is slowing in Latin America.

After COVID-19 was first detected in central China last year, the vast Asian country largely eliminated transmission within its borders through hyper-strict lockdowns that were emulated across the globe. But as the government reported six new domestic cases, most linked to a meat market in southern Beijing, people were

forced indoors at several nearby residential estates – marking a painful step backwards in the city's return to normality.

Officials said the district has established a "wartime mechanism" and "field command center" to deal with the fresh outbreak, as paramilitary police were seen around the market hotspot and a mass testing campaign linked to the cluster was announced. Worldwide, the pandemic has killed more than 425,000 people and infected more than 7.6 million, while wreaking large-scale economic devastation.

India reported its biggest single-day jump in coronavirus cases yesterday, adding 11,458 confirmed infections and taking its total count to more than

300,000, according to data from the federal health ministry. India is the fourth-worst affected country in the world, having surpassed the United Kingdom on Friday, with cases steadily increasing despite a nationwide lockdown that began in late March and has since been loosened.

Confirmed cases in the worst-hit western state of Maharashtra moved past the 100,000 mark, data showed yesterday. The national capital New Delhi, where the health system has also been reeling, saw more than 2,000 new cases. Despite the rising case load, the recovery rate of patients was improving, with more than 147,000 people having been cured, the federal government said on Friday.

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BEIJING: People carry goods out of a side entrance of the Jingshen seafood market yesterday. The market was closed for disinfection and investigation on Friday after it was found that a newly-identified coronavirus patient had visited it. — AFP

## Veteran sports journalist Qenae passes away

KUWAIT: Kuwait has lost iconic sports media figure and former Kuwait Journalists Association secretary general Faisal Mubarak Ali Al-Qenae. Qenae, born in October 1950 in Sharq, was a pillar of Kuwaiti and Arab media, namely in sports journalism. Starting his career in 1969, Qenae witnessed many Kuwaiti teams' local and international achievements in various sports. He worked for many local dailies and was one of the founders of Al-Jamaheer daily in 1983. Throughout his career, Qenae received many accolades from regional and international organiza-

tions.

Qenae held many positions, including the secretary general of KJA and president of the Asian Sports Journalism Federation. He was a consultant to the Arab Journalists Federation, chief editor of Al-Shaheed magazine issued by the Olympic committee, Vice President of International Sports Press Association (AIPS), member of the communications committee at the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC), member of the Arab Sports Press Association's executive office and head of Kuwait Olympic Committee's media committee. (See Page 3)



Faisal Al-Qenae

## Shuttered salons deprive women of social outlet

KUWAIT: Warda is a 37-year-old teacher whose family only allow her to go to two places: Work, and the beauty salon that was her only social outlet before coronavirus restrictions shut it down. Since salons nationwide closed their doors three months ago to curb the spread of the pandemic, she has been depressed and frustrated. She said she misses chatting and relaxing at the plush venues.

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KUWAIT: This picture taken on Friday shows signs indicating women's beauty salons in buildings in Salmiya. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Lebanon to inject dollars amid protests

BEIRUT: Hundreds protested for a second night over the Lebanese authorities' handling of a deepening economic crisis, despite the government pledging on Friday to inject dollars into the market to bolster the sagging currency. In one incident in central Beirut, roughly 200 young men gathered on mopeds, some of them defacing shop fronts and setting fire to stores. Some chanted against sectarianism.

Security forces fired tear gas to disperse them and some of the young men threw stones and fire crackers back. Tension petered out after midnight. In the northern city of Tripoli, the army dispersed hundreds shouting "revolution, revolution". Demonstrators had thrown stones and Molotov cocktails toward the soldiers and damaged the facades of several banks and shops. Soldiers responded with tear gas.

After a crisis meeting on Friday, President Michel Aoun announced that the central bank would imple-



JAL EL DIB, Lebanon: A protester holding the Lebanese flag runs as protesters block the Jounieh Tripoli highway with flaming tyres during a demonstration against dire economic conditions northeast of Beirut late on June 11, 2020. — AFP

ment measures from tomorrow including "feeding dollars into the market", in a bid to support the Lebanese pound. But 17-year-old Wael, protesting in Tripoli, was not impressed: "I just want a job so I can live. We don't believe all the measures taken by the government to improve the dollar exchange rate." Lebanese media reported that the exchange rate had tumbled to 6,000 per dollar on the black market early on Friday, compared to the official peg.

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# CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief,  
management and staff convey their

deepest condolences to

## AL-QENA'AT Family

on the sad demise of

### FAISAL MUBARAK

### ALI AL-QENAE,

(Abu Ghazi)

The Former KJA Secretary

*May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him*

## Local

# KRCS delivers food parcels to residents of Farwaniya, Khaitan

For the benefit of laborers, low-income families in isolated areas



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Red Crescent (KRCS) handed out 1,000 food parcels and 1,000 milk cartons to residents of Farwaniya, which is currently under lockdown amid the COVID-19 precautionary measures. The campaign, undertaken in cooperation with the Interior Ministry, aims to provide food to the people there for one month, KRCS official Yousef Al-Miraj said. The campaign will continue targeting laborers and low-income families across other isolated areas in the country as the organisation supports government efforts to tackle the impacts of the virus on a local level.

Miraj urged businesses, nationals and residents to provide donations to the KRCS programme as they have done in earlier years, insisting that the organisation is committed to its role locally as well as globally. Meanwhile, food parcels were given to residents of Khaitan, another isolated area, by the Kuwait National Guard. The initiative, under the directions of the Kuwaiti Cabinet, is in line with KNG's social responsibility and humanitarian role, and is part of its efforts to assist the residents and alleviate their troubles, Brig Gen Riyadh Tawari said. — KUNA



## Our children

In my view



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

I was up all night waiting as I was told my daughter-in-law was admitted to hospital in labor. I stayed up with the phone in my hand, sending messages and making calls. Hours went by until finally a message came with the picture and sound of a baby angel, declaring that Lana just arrived. Excitement did not subside; rather I became restless. I wanted to see my granddaughter and inquire about her mother's health. But even here corona had its head right in my face telling me to stay put - you are not going anywhere.

There is no doubt that among the most valuable blessings God has bestowed on us is children, and with them came a major responsibility to raise them the right way or at least to our liking. Parents are always in search of methods on how to raise children the right way. This is a responsibility of a high magnitude, bearing in the continued fast changes in the world.

Parents, while attempting to bring up their children as they like, still make mistakes, as some tend to treat their children harshly to the point of beating, while others go to the other extreme of pampering, while a third type keep comparing their children with others, ignoring the various differences that actually should be considered. We should mention that there are those who prefer some of their children over others and this could have a devastating effect on them and may cause complicated behavioral problems.

Experts recommend that parents start at an early age and emphasize the importance of the first years of childhood, and that what was started should be followed in later stages. At this point, parents must stay away from extremely strict and threatening methods, and the same goes for being too lenient. Parents must justify their decisions towards certain issues in order to suppress the curiosity instinct children have, and this helps to keep the children from being disobedient, while at the same time, parents must keep in mind that they are always examples in front of their children. Parents are actually the source of correct behavior.

Fathers and mothers must keep in mind that one complements the other in decisions for their children and to get to know their requirements and problems, and this leads to taking the right decisions that achieve their wishes in a safe environment. We as parents must be aware that our children will learn not only from us at home, but they will absorb much of their knowledge from external influences such as friends, schools and worship places, which will constitute a major portion of their culture.

Final word: "Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one's] hope." - Holy Quran (18:46)

## Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has recorded 34,952 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Friday, in addition to 285 deaths. With the exception of 172 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, 25,048 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 9,619 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, and 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.

Mosques in the so-called 'model residential areas' reopened their doors for worshippers on June 10 amid strict health precautionary measures. Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Afasi said that mosques in commercial, markets and heavily-populated areas will remain closed for the time being. Worshippers must wear face masks, keep social distancing between queues and between worshippers must be strictly observed. Worshippers must bring their own mats so they do not get in contact with mosque carpets. Mosques will reopen five minutes before prayer time and close 10 minutes after prayer.

Earlier, Kuwait imposed a total curfew from May 10 to May 30, allowing room for people to walk out for daily exercise between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and to shop at co-ops and supermarkets once every six days during the curfew hours by making an appointment through www.moci.shop. Before that, Kuwait enforced a country-wide partial curfew from 5:00 pm to 6:00 am, which was later extended to start from 4:00 pm

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

### Precautions

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

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

### Hotlines

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

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

- 24970967 (24/7 hotline)
- 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone)
- 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone)
- 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone)
- 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)

- 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)
- 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone)
- 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)
- 51588599 (Private Education Department)
- 51592515 (Services Department)
- 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

### Medicine delivery

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

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

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

### Mental health assistance

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

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

Local

# Airport higher committee discusses commercial flights resumption plan

## Private jet makes emergency landing at Kuwait airport - DGCA

**KUWAIT:** The Higher Committee for Re-operating Flights at Kuwait International Airport discussed Thursday a plan to gradually resume commercial aviation through several steps. In a statement to the press on the sidelines of the meeting, Chief of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Sheikh Salman Al-Hmoud Al-Sabah said that the committee will take up the proposals of the relevant authorities for the gradual resumption.



**Plan according to int'l laws**

**Int'l laws**  
Sheikh Salman noted that one of the committee's tasks is to adopt the plan according to the international laws issued by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and other relevant international organizations. The committee will also take charge of overseeing the implementation plan in order to achieve the standard rules and recommended working methods and health

and security measures adopted internationally and locally, he added. No details about the flights' resumption plan, including potential dates, were made available in the press statement.

**Emergency landing**

In other news, a private jet made an emergency landing at Kuwait International Airport Thursday after experiencing a technical error, DGCA said. No one was hurt. The control tower received a call from the captain of the airplane, whose company was not disclosed, at 3:25 pm that he needed to return to the airport after he was airborne because of a technical malfunction, DGCA said in a statement. The plane, which was carrying seven passengers, made the emergency landing and "slightly skidded off the runway before coming into a complete stop," it said, and confirmed all passengers were safe. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** The Higher Committee for Re-operating Flights at Kuwait International Airport meeting in progress. — KUNA

## Faisal Al-Qenae: Half a century in sports media

**KUWAIT:** After more than 50 years in sports journalism, Kuwait has lost iconic media figure, former Kuwait Journalists Association secretary general and member of KJA's general assembly Faisal Mubarak Ali Al-Qenae.



**Faisal Al-Qenae**

Qenae, born in October 1950 in Sharq's Al-Jena'at neighborhood, was a pillar of Kuwaiti and Arab media, namely in sports journalism. Starting his career in 1969, Qenae witnessed many Kuwaiti teams' local and international achievements in various sports. He worked for many local dailies and was one of the founders of Al-Jamaheer local daily in 1983.

Qenae held many positions including the secretary general of KJA and president of the Asian Sports Journalism Federation. He was a consultant to the Arab Journalists Federation, chief editor of Al-Shaheed magazine issued by the Olympic committee, vice president of the International Sports Press Association (AIPS), member of the communications committee at the Association of National Olympic Committee (ANOC), member of the Arab Sports Press Association's executive office and head of Kuwait Olympic Committee's media committee.

Throughout his career, Qenae received many accolades from regional and international organizations including the International Sports Press Association, the Asian Sports Journalism Federation, the Arab Sports Press Association, the Gulf Sports Press Association and ANOC Award for outstanding services in 1989 and 1990.

In an interview, Qenae said: "I started developing my journalism skills in intermediate school when I had good command of classical Arabic. In 1971, when I was only 20, my friend Dr Mustafa Jouhar Hayat advised me to work in journalism to exploit my style of writing and helped me contact the late Al-Seyassah sports writer Ramzi Otaifa, who helped me start my career at the age of 21."

Qenae explained that taking into consideration his age, the mentality of his peers in those times and the fact that Kuwait was going through its golden age in sports, he chose to write about sports rather than politics or other topics.

Speaking on the sad occasion, Kuwait Hunting and Equestrian Club Chairman Sheikh Dhari Al-Fahd expressed his heartfelt condolences on Qenae's demise, describing him as "the dean of Arab sports journalism". In addition, the Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association expressed condolences, noting that throughout his life and long career, Qenae had spared no effort in serving Kuwaiti and Arab journalism.

Corporation, on the sidelines of the field visit by the Minister accompanied by the KPC CEO Hashem Hashem to Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery to check the progress of the clean fuel project. He noted that the refining capacity in the units that were operated at Mina Al-Ahmadi Refinery with its entire production units of 31 units amounted to 346,000 barrels per day, which constitutes approximately half of the total amount that the clean fuel project will produce after the completion of its work at the 800,000 BPD Mina Abdullah refinery. This vital project will develop the company's transformative capabilities and enhance operational, reliability, and safety levels in the Mina Al-Ahmadi and Mina Abdullah refineries, he added. — KUNA

## Minister hails oil sector staff efforts

**KUWAIT:** Efforts exerted by oil sector employees came in response to the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, said the Oil Minister and Acting Electricity and Water Minister Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel Thursday. This came in a statement issued by the Kuwait Petroleum



**KUWAIT:** Oil Minister Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel during the visit to Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery. — KUNA



## Amir offers condolence over Ateeqi's demise



**Abdulrahman Al-Ateeqi**

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Friday a condolence cable to the family of late Abdulrahman Salem Al-Ateeqi. In the cable, His Highness the Amir voiced sincere and heartfelt condolences over the demise of one of the nation's loyal men who contributed to development in the country, and paid tribute to his achievements and great contributions through the high-level posts and positions he had held. His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah the Almighty to have mercy upon the deceased and grant him Paradise as well as bestow patience on his family. His Highness

the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah expressed identical sentiments in two separate cables addressed to the family of the deceased. — KUNA



**Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA)**  
&  
**The Entire Journalism Community Announces the Sad Demise of The Late Colleague**

**FAISAL MUBARAK**

**ALI AL-QENAE**

(Abu Ghazi)

**The Former KJA Secretary**

&

**Member of KJA's General Assembly**

**Who Passed Away on the Morning of**

**June 12, 2020**

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him

## Local

# US report highlights status of religious freedoms in Kuwait in 2019

## US Department of State releases 2019 Report on International Religious Freedom

**KUWAIT:** The United States Department of State released its 2019 Report on International Religious Freedom, providing in-depth analysis for religious freedoms in countries around the world. The Department of State submits this annual report to the Congress in compliance with section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-292), as amended. The report covers the period between January 1 and December 31, 2019. US embassies prepare the initial drafts of country chapters based on information from government officials, religious groups, nongovernmental organizations, journalists, human rights monitors, academics, media, and others. The Office of International Religious Freedom, based in Washington, collaborates in collecting and analyzing additional information, drawing on its consultations with foreign government officials, domestic and foreign religious groups, domestic and foreign nongovernmental organizations, multilateral and other international and regional organizations, journalists, academic experts, community leaders, and other relevant US government institutions. The following are excerpts from the report on Kuwait:

### Executive Summary

The constitution declares Islam to be the religion of the state but declares freedom of belief is "absolute." It declares the state will protect the freedom to practice one's religion, provided such practice does not conflict with established customs, public policy, or morals. The constitution declares sharia to be a main source of legislation and all individuals to be equal before the law regardless of religion. Defamation of the three Abrahamic faiths (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity), publication or broadcast of material the government deems offensive to religious groups, and practices the government finds inconsistent with Islamic law are prohibited by law. In July the National Assembly passed legislation allowing the creation of separate courts for Shia Muslims for cases pertaining to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. In April the government registered The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Church of Jesus Christ). The government prosecuted numerous individuals for remarks deemed religiously offensive, mostly for comments made online, and sentenced some to prison terms. The government continued to appoint and pay the salaries of Sunni imams and provide the full basic text for weekly sermons preached at Sunni mosques. It did not exercise the same oversight of Shia imams. The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs (MAIA) fined, reprimanded, or suspended several Sunni imams for giving sermons perceived as politically motivated, insulting to other religious groups, and violating the national unity law. MAIA organized several courses for Sunni imams promoting tolerance and countering radicalization, and in October it announced the creation of a committee to monitor calls for extremism on social media. Minority religious groups said they could worship in private spaces without government interference provided they did not disturb their neighbors or violate laws regarding assembly and proselytizing. Members of most non-Abrahamic faiths and unregistered churches were not able to marry in the country. The government continued to provide added security at religious sites to all recognized non-Sunni religious groups. It required all religious communities to conduct religious events indoors. Most minority religious groups reported a continued lack of facilities for worship and difficulty obtaining permission to construct new facilities. The government did not accredit any religious schools or permit Shia religious training within the country, notwithstanding an increased need for qualified judges to staff the newly-approved Shia personal status courts. The Ministry of Education continued to ban or censor instructional materials referring to the Holocaust or Israel. Some Shia leaders continued to report discrimination in clerical and public sector employment.

Individuals continued to face societal pressure against conversion from Islam: some citizens who converted outside the country said their families harassed them because of their conversion. Hotels, stores, and businesses continued to mark non-Islamic holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, and Diwali. News media continued to publish information about the celebrations of religious holidays, including material on the religious significance of Christmas. Some Muslim clerics continued to express disapproval on social media of the celebration of non-Islamic holidays and called for more government action to restrict public expression of these holidays. The nongovernmental organization (NGO) Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) reported two instances during the year of individuals making public statements that perpetuated negative stereotypes of Jews.

In meetings with senior MAIA officials, senior US embassy officials discussed the importance of promoting tolerance, including for members of minority religious groups. They noted positively MAIA's registration of the Church of Jesus Christ and encouraged the government to take the same step with other unregistered religious groups. Embassy officials underscored the importance of places of worship for all faiths, regardless of their registration status, and relayed concerns from the Hindu community about their inability to cremate their dead. In December the Charge d'Affaires and other embassy officials hosted an annual event for representatives of officially recognized non-Muslim faiths to discuss how government policies were affecting their groups. A senior embassy official and other embassy staff also hosted a roundtable in May at which leaders of non-Abrahamic faiths discussed their communities' needs. Senior embassy

officials attended religious events throughout the year and discussed issues related to religious tolerance and emphasized the US government's commitment to religious freedom.

### Section I. Religious Demography

The US government estimates the total population at 3.0 million (midyear 2019 estimate). The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), a local government agency, reports there are 1.4 million citizens and 3.3 million noncitizens. The national census does not distinguish between Shia and Sunni Muslims. PACI estimates approximately 70 percent of citizens are Sunni Muslims, while the remaining 30 percent are Shia Muslims (including Ahmadi and Ismaili Muslims, whom the government counts as Shia). Community leaders have indicated there are 290 Christian citizens and a handful of Baha'i citizens. There are no known Jewish citizens.

According to information from PACI released in 2018, 64 percent of expatriates are Muslim, 26 percent Christian, and 10 percent from non-Abrahamic faiths. Sources in various noncitizen communities state that approximately 5 percent of the expatriate Muslims are Shia, while Buddhists and Hindus account for half of the non-Abrahamic faith population. Informal estimates by members of different faiths indicate there are approximately 250,000 Hindus, 25,000 Bohra Muslims, 10,000-12,000 Sikhs, 7,000 Druze, and 400 Baha'is.

While some geographic areas have higher concentrations of either Sunnis or Shia, the two groups are distributed quite uniformly throughout most of the country.

### Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom Legal Framework

The constitution declares Islam to be the religion of the state and the freedom of belief to be "absolute." It provides for state protection of the freedom to practice all religions, provided such practice is "in accordance with established customs, and does not conflict with public policy or morals."

The constitution declares sharia to be a main source of legislation and all individuals to be equal before the law regardless of religion. It declares the Amir shall be Muslim (the Amir and ruling family are Sunni) and the state shall safeguard the heritage of Islam. The Higher Advisory Committee on Completion of the Application of Islamic Sharia Provisions in the Amiri Diwan announced in November 2017 it had disbanded after achieving its goals.

The law states apostates lose certain legal rights, including to inherit property from Muslim relatives or spouses, but it does not specify any criminal penalty. If a Muslim man married to a Muslim woman converts from Islam, his existing marriage is annulled. If he is married to a non-Muslim woman and converts from Islam, the marriage continues to be valid. If a Muslim woman married to a Muslim man converts to another Abrahamic faith (Christianity or Judaism), the marriage is not automatically annulled, but the Muslim husband may request an annulment. If a Muslim woman married to a Muslim man converts to a non-Abrahamic faith, the marriage is automatically annulled.

The law prohibits the defamation of the three Abrahamic religions and denigration of Islamic and Judeo-Christian religious figures within accepted Islamic orthodoxy (e.g., prophets mentioned in the Quran or companions of Muhammad), and prescribes a punishment of up to 10 years in prison for each offense.

A national unity law prohibits "stirring sectarian strife," promoting the supremacy of one religious group, instigating acts of violence based on the supremacy of one group, or promoting hatred or contempt of any group. Violations of this law by individuals are punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment and/or a fine of 10,000 to 100,000 Kuwaiti dinars (KD) (\$33,000-\$330,000). Repeated crimes carry double penalties. If a group or an organization violates the law, it could have its license to operate revoked temporarily or permanently, and it could be fined up to KD 200,000 (\$660,000). Noncitizens convicted under this law are also subject to deportation.

The law allows citizens to file criminal charges against anyone they believe has defamed any of the three recognized Abrahamic religions or harmed public morals.

The law criminalizes publishing and broadcasting content, including on social media, which the government deems offensive to religious "sects" or groups, providing for fines ranging from KD 10,000 to 200,000 (\$33,000-\$660,000) and up to seven years' imprisonment.

There is no promulgated process outlining what steps religious groups must take to register with the government. Groups must navigate this process without guidance from government offices. Although all religious groups must apply in writing for a license from their municipality to establish an official place of worship and to gain full benefits from the central government, there are no fixed criteria for an application to be approved. To obtain a license, groups must first receive approval by the local municipality for their place of worship. The municipality then turns to MAIA for its "opinion" on the application for a worship space (MAIA indicates that it does not have the authority to give formal registration of the building). MAIA then issues a certificate that lists board members for the organization, making the religious group a legal entity. Once this certificate is granted, further approvals are required by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) and the Ministry of Interior (MOI).

Once these ministries give these approvals, the municipality must grant the final license, which requires the community leaders to obtain written permission from all the immediate neighbors occupying the properties around the proposed place of worship. The government often provides applicants no information about the status of their pending registration or if they have been rejected at any point. There is no recourse to appeal the decision: it is considered a "sovereign act" and cannot be challenged in court.

The officially registered and licensed Christian churches in the country are: National Evangelical Church of Kuwait (NECK) (Protestant); Roman Catholic; Greek Catholic (Melkite); Coptic Orthodox; Armenian Orthodox; Greek Orthodox; Anglican; and the Church of Jesus Christ. In April the government officially recognized the Church of Jesus Christ. There are no officially recognized synagogues, and according to MAIA, no application has ever been submitted for one. The government does not recognize any non-Abrahamic religions. Non-recognized religious groups include Hindus, Sikhs, Druze, Bohra Muslims, and Baha'is.

A religious group with a license to establish a place of worship may hire its own staff, sponsor visitors to the country, open bank accounts, and import texts needed for its congregation. Nonregistered religious groups do not have these rights, may not purchase property or sponsor workers, and must rely on volunteers from within their community for resources (although some registered religious groups have agreed to assist non-registered groups in these matters).

The law prohibits practices the government deems inconsistent with Islamic law, including anything the government deems to be sorcery or black magic, which under the penal code constitutes "fraud and deception" and carries a maximum penalty of three years' imprisonment, a fine, or both.

The law does not specifically prohibit proselytizing, but individuals proselytizing may be prosecuted under laws criminalizing contempt of religion. The law prohibits eating, drinking, and smoking in public between sunrise and sunset during Ramadan, including for non-Muslims, with a prescribed maximum penalty of up to KD 100 (\$330) and/or one month's imprisonment. It is illegal to possess or import pork products and alcohol. Importing alcohol carries a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment; consuming alcohol may result in a fine of up to KD 1,000 (\$3,300).

Islamic religious instruction is mandatory at all levels for all Muslim students in both public and private schools with one or more Muslim students enrolled, regardless of whether the student is a citizen. Non-Muslim students are not required to attend these classes. The law prohibits organized religious education in public high schools for faiths other than Islam. All Islamic education courses are based on Sunni Islam.

Religious courts administer personal status law dealing with issues of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. For non-Muslims, courts apply Sunni sharia in matters of personal status and family law. Noncitizens not belonging to the three recognized Abrahamic religions are also subject to sharia if family matters are taken to court. According to the law, sharia governs inheritance for all residents regardless of their religious affiliation if the case is brought to court.

Courts may follow Shia jurisprudence in matters of personal status and family law for Shia Muslims at the first instance and appellate levels. If the case proceeds beyond the appellate level to the court of cassation, the case may be adjudicated via Sunni personal status law. In July the National Assembly passed the Shia Personal Status Law, which allows for the creation of separate courts for Shia Muslims for cases pertaining to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. According to local sources, these courts have only three judges, none of whom has a background in Shia jurisprudence. The law also allows personal status cases to be adjudicated through the court of cassation under Shia doctrine. An independent Shia waqf (trust) administers Shia religious endowments. Cases are assigned to either Sunni or Shia judges based on the religious affiliation of the man. If a man is married to a non-Muslim woman, the husband's religious practice is followed. If a couple is from one of the registered churches, the settlement offered by the church may be taken into consideration; however, if the dispute is not settled, Sunni sharia is applied. Local sources suggest that the passage of the Shia Personal Status Law has increased the need for Shia religious training facilities to help staff the courts with qualified judges.

The law forbids, and the state does not recognize, marriage between Muslim women and non-Muslim men, but Muslim men may marry women of other recognized Abrahamic faiths. The law requires the raising of children of such marriages in their father's faith, and the father's religion governs the settlement of marital disputes. Muslim marriage cases are heard in Sunni or Shia religious courts, depending on whether the marriage certificate is Sunni or Shia. A Shia notary must authenticate a Shia marriage certificate. Non-Muslim divorce and child custody cases are heard in Sunni religious courts. Christian couples who are part of a registered church may marry and divorce following their religious customs, with local authorities and courts recognizing their documents. Except for Hindus and Sikhs of Indian nationality, who may marry at the Embassy of India, members of non-Abrahamic faiths and nonregistered churches may not marry legally in the country but may have their foreign wedding certificates recognized. Citizens who are members of the Baha'i Faith may marry abroad and

petition the court to recognize their marriage.

If a religious group wishes to purchase land, a citizen must be the primary buyer, and must submit a request for approval to the local municipal council, which allocates land at its discretion. Citizens may also rent or donate land to religious groups.

The law prohibits the naturalization of non-Muslims but allows male citizens of any religion to transmit citizenship to their descendants. Female citizens, regardless of religion, are unable to transmit nationality to their children.

An individual's religion is not included on passports or national identity documents, except for birth and marriage certificates, on which it is mandatory. On birth certificates issued to Muslims, there is no distinction between Sunni and Shia. Members of non-Abrahamic faiths are not able to list their religion on their birth certificate and a dash (-) is denoted in place of their religion. The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### Government practices

The government pursued several cases against individuals for violating the national unity law and fomenting sectarianism. In March journalist Abdallah Al-Hadlaq was sentenced to three years in prison for two tweets from 2018 that the court concluded offended Shia Muslims. In September the government filed slander charges against a female member of the Kuwaiti ruling family for insulting Shia Muslims in the country.

In May a criminal court sentenced a Lebanese television presenter to a year in jail with labor and fined her KD 5,000 (\$16,500) for insulting God in a program broadcast on a local satellite television channel. A court of appeals overturned the verdict in July. In July several individuals were arrested for making offensive remarks about God and the Prophet Muhammad in an online video. That same month, the director of juvenile prosecution announced that an underage noncitizen would be remanded for 10 days to a social welfare home over allegations of blasphemy. In August a court of appeals upheld the conviction of a blogger accused of contempt for Islam and fined him KD 5,000 (\$16,500) because of a tweet the court found derogatory and offensive.

In January Kuwait University law professor and anticensorship activist Fatima Al-Matar fled to the United States with her daughter after she was referred to the public prosecutor for a tweet she posted in October 2018 that was deemed blasphemous, derogatory, and offensive to religion. In March the Court of Cassation upheld verdicts by the Court of Appeals which fined Salafist cleric Othman Al-Khamees and Shia Cleric Hussain Al-Matouq KD 20,000 (\$66,000) each for "promoting sectarian strife" through YouTube videos.

Although the law does not prohibit apostasy, the government continued its policy of not issuing new official documents for recording a change in religion unless the conversion was from another religion to Islam. As in previous years, some religious leaders from non-Muslim religious groups said they had not heard of any case of a Muslim desiring to change religion, while others said they would not convert a Muslim in the country. All religious leaders, regardless of faith, continued to state that their sole mission was to take care of their existing community. Most religious leaders declined to speak about conversion.

In December the Constitutional Court rejected a challenge to the ban on public eating during Ramadan. In August press reports revealed the presence of an unregistered Sikh temple (known as "Sulabiya Gurdwara") in a Kuwait City warehouse, which authorities closed the same month. The temple had reportedly been operating for the previous nine years and served thousands of Indians from the Sikh community.

In accordance with MAIA policy, the government continued to vet and appoint all new Sunni imams. Media sources quoted senior MAIA officials as stating the government vetted every Sunni imam to ensure compliance with the government's view of moderate and tolerant religious preaching. The Shia community continued to select its own clerics without government oversight.

The government continued to provide the full basic text for weekly sermons preached at Sunni mosques and to monitor these sermons. Imams could add content to the sermons but needed to ensure the text adhered to the laws on political speech and avoided stoking sectarianism. Media sources reported MAIA continued to caution imams to ensure their sermons were consistent with MAIA guidelines to refrain from discussing political issues and insulting other religions in their sermons or at any other time while under MAIA jurisdiction. MAIA required Sunni imams to send a recorded audio of their sermons to MAIA for review after the fact. MAIA also relied on reports of worshippers and others who might be dissatisfied if the imam discussed politics or insulted other faiths. Shia sources and government authorities said the government did not officially monitor Shia clerics, who were free to write their own sermons if they did not violate existing laws or instigate sectarianism. If a questionable video appeared on social media or a worshipper reported a cleric, the government investigated. Some sources, however, stated they believed the government unofficially monitored Shia clerics. According to officials at MAIA and members of the Shia community, MAIA did not monitor sermons or other activities at the husseiniyas (Shia halls for religious commemorations) or at private gatherings. In June MAIA announced it had referred the case of a Sunni imam at the Munira Al-Khalid Mosque to MAIA's committee in charge of religious professional affairs

## Local

after he allegedly criticized Egypt in a sermon. In August MAIA suspended a muezzin and an expatriate Sunni imam for meddling with "political and sectarian issues."

During the year, MAIA organized several courses for Sunni imams to make their messages more effective in promoting tolerance and countering radicalization. In March Director of the Center for the Promotion of Moderation Abdullah Al-Shuraika said the center had not received any reports of cases of youth extremism from parents since 2018. In October Al-Shuraika announced the creation of a committee specializing in monitoring extremist calls on social media and fake accounts, which Al-Shuraika said were aimed at "promoting sedition and provoking sectarianism." In July Assistant Undersecretary of MAIA for Cultural Affairs Dawood Al-Asousi said 30 citizens who had previously adopted ISIS ideology had been "rehabilitated" after intensive programs to help them renounce extremism and to guide them back to the path of moderation and tolerance. In March MAIA announced it would organize Friday sermons and lectures with government-approved "moderate" messages in mosques of non-Arabic-speaking Muslim communities.

The government funded Sunni religious institutions, including mosques, and paid the salaries of all Sunni imams. The Shia community generally did not receive funding from the state for religious institutions and mosques. The government paid the salaries of some Shia imams: some Shia mosques requested government assistance and received funds to pay for salaries and maintenance of their facilities.

According to the government, during the year MAIA investigated three imams it considered to have made provocative statements that violated laws against harming national unity or insulting other religious groups. Disciplinary actions included temporary suspension, permanent suspension, and referrals to MAIA's counseling committee.

Representatives of registered churches continued to state the government was generally tolerant and respectful of their faiths. The Anglican Church was allowed to build a new chapel after its previous chapel was damaged by flooding in 2018. The new chapel includes more space for worship than the previous structure. Members of non-Abrahamic faiths and unregistered churches continued to state they remained free to practice their religion in private but faced harassment and potential prosecution if they disturbed their neighbors or violated laws regarding assembly and proselytizing. They also continued to say they avoided conflict with authorities by not proselytizing or disparaging the government or other faiths. The government continued to allow such groups to operate in rented villas, private homes, or the facilities of registered churches. Many of these groups said they did not publicly advertise religious events or gatherings to avoid bringing unwanted attention to their organizations, both from the public and from government authorities. In June the Public Authority for Manpower imposed a fine of KD 100 (\$330) per worker on the Roman Catholic Church for not committing to recruiting the required percentage of citizens as employees. Another church reported a total of KD 6,000 (\$20,000) in fines for failure to abide by this policy.

Members of non-Abrahamic faiths and unregistered churches continued to say they experienced hardships in commemorating major religious or life events. Almost uniformly across these communities, members said they lacked sufficient religious facilities and religious leaders or clerics to lead prayers, bless births and marriages, and conduct appropriate death rituals.

In many cases, members of these religious groups stated they resolved conflict internally within their communities rather than take legal action in the courts where they would be subject to sharia.

The government continued to require religious groups to obtain licenses from their respective municipalities for religious celebrations. Authorities retained the right to withdraw the license of any husseiniya not complying with the municipality's rules. Minority religious communities continued to state they tried to keep a low profile and did not request permission for public celebrations from authorities, which they presumed would be rejected if they applied for it.

The MOI continued to provide added security and protection at religious sites for all recognized non-Sunni religious groups. Religious leaders of Abrahamic faiths continued to report that the government, citing security concerns, kept in place the ban on outdoor religious observances instituted following an ISIS bombing of a Shia mosque in 2015 that killed 27 persons. In April MOSA rejected applications submitted by two Islamic charity organizations to hold religious awareness campaigns in public places, including public gardens, beaches, and malls.

The government continued to require the Shia community to conduct Ashura activities inside closed structures rather than at outdoor locations. The government did not permit public reenactments of the martyrdom of Hussein or public marches in commemoration of Ashura. The government continued to station security forces outside some Sunni mosques and all Shia and Christian religious venues during times of worship throughout the year as a deterrent to possible attacks. The government also continued to provide security to Shia neighborhoods during Muharram and Ashura.

Authorities continued the government's longstanding practice of prohibiting churches from displaying exterior signs, such as a cross or church bell. Only private shops owned by religious organizations could legally import, display, or sell non-Islamic religious literature. Church leaders continued to report the government permitted registered Christian churches to import religious materials for use by their congregations under the condition that none of the content insulted Islam. Registered churches reported they were able to import religious materials in any language. Members of non-Abrahamic faiths and nonregistered churches continued to state they could import religious materials for their congregations if they brought in the materials as personal items when entering the country and did not try to sell them in public stores. Minority religious communities said they continued to be selective in the religious materials

they imported and even more selective in giving access to the materials. They said they did not allow the circulation of these materials outside their congregations.

The municipality of Kuwait handled building permits and land issues for non-Abrahamic faiths and nonregistered churches. The government said it received no applications for construction of new churches from religious groups during the year. The Greek Catholic Church indicated that it had requested in April additional land near its location to accommodate more worshippers. The government said it did not receive additional requests for registrations of new groups during the year.

Shia community members reported a continued lack of facilities for worship and difficulties obtaining permission to construct new facilities, caused by the government's delay in approving repairs to existing mosques or constructing new ones. MAIA reported there were 1,656 mosques in the country, including 32 mosques opened during the year. According to 2018 government statistics, of the 1,601 mosques existing that year, 1,550 were Sunni and 51 Shia. Five new Shia mosques received permission to be built that year. A source from the Shia community said the government opened no new Shia mosques in 2019. There were 20-30 husseiniyas registered with the MOI and thousands of smaller Shia gatherings that took place in private homes.

Christian churches continue to report that government authorities did not respond to their petitions for expanding existing places of worship. Some churches said they stopped submitting such requests because the government did not respond.

Again citing security concerns, authorities stated they continued to act against unlicensed mosques. The government tasked MAIA, MOI, the municipality of Kuwait, and other agencies with finding solutions to end the use of illegal mosques. During the year, the government continued to raid makeshift mosques in remote areas and close them for operating without proper licenses. MAIA continued to operate under a mandate from the Council of Ministers to demolish unregistered mosques, stating that some of those mosques served as platforms of extremism. The demolition of these mosques continued during the year. Authorities said new unlicensed mosques continued to open. MAIA attempted to bring some underground mosques under its supervision by appointing and vetting imams, monitoring sermons, and getting them licenses through municipalities.

The Ministry of Education continued to ban or censor instructional materials, including fiction and nonfiction books and textbooks, referring to the Holocaust or Israel. The ministry permitted public schools to teach and celebrate only Islamic holidays. Members of non-Islamic faiths largely said the government did not interfere with religious instruction inside private homes and on church compounds.

According to church leaders, although most churches provided faith-based instruction for children, none of them had government-accredited church-based schools. Accreditation for church-based schools would enable students to receive religious education while fulfilling government requirements and allow school graduates to move on to higher education. The NECK repeatedly requested accreditation for its church-based school for many years, most recently in 2017, but authorities had not responded by year's end. The Armenian Church and the Bohra Muslim community continued to operate accredited community schools in lieu of seeking accreditation as religious schools. Other groups continued to report they conducted religious studies in their places of worship.

The government continued its practice of not responding to requests to establish Shia religious training institutions. Shia Muslims had to seek religious training and education abroad. The College of Islamic Law at Kuwait University, the only institution in the country that trains imams, provided

some Shia jurisprudence courses but did not permit Shia professors on its faculty.

Shia leaders continued to report that the lack of Shia imams limited their ability to staff Shia courts, causing a backlog of personal status and family cases. To address the backlog and shortage of staff, an ad hoc council the government created many years ago under the regular marital issues court to apply Shia jurisprudence continued to function. In July Member of Parliament Saleh Ashour said there was a shortage of Shia judges who could implement the new Shia Personal Status Law, and called for more to be trained. Ashour said the law was being applied through four circuit courts and at all litigation levels, including the court of cassation level.

Even though Shia make up an estimated 30 percent of the population, they remained underrepresented at all levels of government: six of 50 elected members in parliament, one of 16 cabinet members, one of six Amiri Diwan advisors, and disproportionately few senior officers in the military and police force. Shia community leaders continued to say there was a "glass ceiling" in promotions and difficulties in obtaining government jobs. Some Shia leaders said discrimination continued to prevent Shia from obtaining training for clerical positions and leadership positions in public sector organizations, including the police force and the military/security apparatus.

In February the government allowed the NGO Wathakker Center, which promotes the teachings of Sunni Islam and provides religion classes for children, to reopen after a one-year mandated closure following the 2018 sentencing of its owner, Fouad Al-Rifai. Al-Rifai was sentenced to eight years in prison with labor for posting a video inciting violence against Shia citizens and for contempt of Shia Islam through Twitter posts that contained abusive phrases against Shia Islam. In December Al-Rifai was sentenced to an additional four months in prison for similar Twitter posts insulting Shia Islam.

In January a member of parliament proposed two bills that would amend the citizenship law by removing religion as a requirement for granting Kuwaiti citizenship.

MOSA issued visas for clergy and other staff to work at licensed places of worship. The government continued to impose quotas on the number of clergy and staff of licensed religious groups entering the country but granted additional slots upon request. The government continued to require foreign leaders of unregistered religious groups to enter the country as nonreligious workers.

Media coverage included news on events and celebrations held by various Christian denominations in the country, such as Christmas services and church inauguration anniversaries attended by high-level government officials.

### Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There continued to be societal pressure against conversion from Islam, according to minority religious leaders and citizens. Leaders and members of religious communities said they did not convert Muslims in the country. Some citizens who converted outside the country said their families harassed them due to their conversion from Islam.

Hotels, stores, and other businesses continued to mark non-Islamic holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, and Diwali. During the Christmas season, Christmas trees and lights appeared in stores, malls, and homes, and Christmas music played in public places, including songs with Christian lyrics. News media continued to print information about religious holiday celebrations, including material on the religious significance of Christmas.

Some Muslim clerics continued to express disapproval via social media of the celebration of non-Islamic holidays and called for more government action to restrict public expression of these

holidays. In December the Wathakker Center tweeted an image that said, "No Christmas, do not celebrate the Holy Trinity, do not proselytize in Muslim lands."

MEMRI reported two instances during the year of individuals making public statements that perpetuated negative stereotypes of Jews. In January singer Monia Al-Hob said on judgment day Muslims would fight Jews and there would be a special gate to hell for them. In February researcher Muhanna Hama al-Muhanna posted a video on his YouTube channel, stating Jews used human blood, especially from Christian children, in making food, and he repeated other anti-Semitic stereotypes.

### Section IV. US Government Policy and Engagement

Senior embassy officials continued to meet with senior MAIA officials to discuss the importance of promoting tolerance and religious freedom in the country, including for members of recognized and unrecognized minority religious groups. Embassy officials noted positively MAIA's registration of the Church of Jesus Christ and suggested the ministry build on this action by registering other unregistered faiths. Embassy officials underscored the importance of places of worship for all faiths regardless of their registration status, and relayed concerns of the Hindu community about their inability to cremate their dead. Embassy officials raised the closure of the Sikh temple with officials of both MAIA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stating that denial of the right to a place to worship contravenes the fundamental right to religious freedom and rights enumerated in the Kuwaiti constitution.

The Ambassador and other embassy officials continued to meet with leaders and representatives of minority religious groups and with NGOs involved with religious issues to discuss the challenges religious minorities faced in their interaction with the government, such as difficulties obtaining places of worship, paying fines for not hiring citizen workers, lack of a transparent process for achieving recognition, and the inability to practice certain religious rituals, including marriage and burials. In December the Charge d'Affaires hosted an annual event for representatives of officially recognized non-Muslim faiths. The Charge spoke with each leader to learn how the government policies were affecting their groups and how the situation compared with previous years, including requests to expand existing spaces of worship and steep fines for not hiring the requisite number of citizen employees at their facilities. He underscored the embassy's commitment to continuing to raise issues of religious freedom with the government. Embassy officials also engaged with a professor at a sharia college, and with Sunni and Shia members of parliament (including the head of the Human Rights Committee) in order to discuss the rights of religious minorities and the status of religious freedom in the country.

During the year, embassy officials and religious leaders continued to discuss the needs of the various religious groups, which continued to include more space for worship, more transparency in the registration process for new churches, and permission to obtain religious school accreditation. In May a senior embassy official and other embassy staff hosted members of unrecognized religious groups (Hindus, Sikhs, Druze, Bohra Muslims, and Baha'is) at a roundtable to discuss their communities' needs. Senior embassy officials also continued to attend religious events throughout the year, including the observations of Ashura, Easter, Baha'u'llah's Birth, Christmas, Diwali, and the Sikh Vaisakhi Day celebration. At these events, they discussed issues related to religious tolerance with participants and emphasized the US government's commitment to religious freedom.

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China races to find coronavirus vaccine

## African countries call for racism debate at UN council

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KATHMANDU: Protesters maintaining social distancing hold placards during a demonstration against the government's handling of the fight against the COVID-19 coronavirus, in Kathmandu yesterday. — AFP

# Lives saved or deaths postponed?

## Calculating the cost of lockdowns

**PARIS:** While lockdowns undoubtedly avoided large numbers of deaths from the new coronavirus, the repercussions of the pandemic response are expected to blight economies and health systems long after restrictions are lifted. So how can we quantify the costs and benefits of one of the largest public health interventions ever? "This is a very difficult calculation to make," Sarah Burgard, a sociologist at the University of Michigan said.

According to official counts, the virus has infected at least 7.4 million people around the world and more than 415,000 have died. Burgard said in the end it may prove difficult to untangle how many deaths were caused by COVID-19 and how many by "the chaos and fallout" of the crisis. "I don't have a lot of faith that we are going to be able to come up with a very clear number," she said. Even if a figure is reached, decisions over its implications would be "heavily political and ethically complex". The response to the disease had led to an unprecedented reorganisation of societies, with businesses shuttered, stay-at-home orders, medical facilities refocused on treating COVID-19 patients. The economic impact of the measures has caused alarm and division.

### 'Unknown situation'

In a study published in 2000, the American economist Christopher Ruhm asked a provocative question: "Are recessions good for your health?" His research found that a rise in unemployment sharpened stresses

on mental health, causing increases in substance abuse and suicide. But there were unexpected benefits for physical health: road accidents and pollution reduced, while people had more time for exercise. Reflecting on his work two decades later, Ruhm said that in a normal economic slump "when unemployment was high, mortality was low and vice versa". But the coronavirus-induced recession is not a normal economic downturn. "We are in an unknown situation," Ruhm said in an April online talk for the University of Virginia, where he is a professor of public policy and economics. "I think it may be the first time in history that we are actually deliberately creating a recession, not because we want to create a recession, but because this health threat is so real."

### No silver linings

Now societies are bearing the strain of both a deadly pandemic and a huge economic shock. The virus undercuts the usual "silver linings" of an economic downturn, said Burgard. Populations have been confined inside, reducing access to beneficial physical exercise. People struggling with bereavement, mental health issues or unemployment find it harder to access

their normal support networks, with even visits to family members restricted. And the healthcare sector itself has been battered by the virus, with frontline staff at risk of infection while treatments for other illnesses have been postponed. Even in normal times, any positive effects seen in economic downturns are often in richer nations.

"The opposite seems true in many low- and middle-income countries, where mortality actually increases during recession," said Thomas Hone, a public health researcher at Imperial College London. He said this may suggest that what protects people from the harms of recessions are "strong health systems and social security nets". Many fear the scale of the pandemic and economic

downturn will disproportionately hurt the most vulnerable. UN agencies and the vaccine alliance Gavi have said virus restrictions caused immunizations to be disrupted in nearly 70 countries, affecting some 80 million children under the age of one and threatening a resurgence of preventable diseases like polio and measles. The World Food Program estimates the number of people facing acute hunger this year could nearly double - to 265 million.



**Virus had infected at least 7.4 million people**

### 'No choice'

Will the long-term ramifications of lockdowns counteract the effect they had on slowing contagion? In a study published on Monday, Imperial College researchers estimated that lockdowns had prevented around 3.1 million deaths in 11 European countries. On Wednesday, Imperial epidemiologist Neil Ferguson told a British parliamentary committee that because of the exponential spread of the virus, locking down just a week earlier would have reduced the final death toll by "at least a half". But any modeling is based on assumptions — in this case calculations of what would have happened if action had not been taken.

Restrictions were imposed after predictions of potentially enormous tolls, said Arthur Caplan, professor of bioethics at New York University. "I don't think politicians and leaders had a choice," he said. "If you saw those numbers in the millions of deaths, you had to take steps because you would have had a broken health system, a public that wouldn't have come out anyway because they would have been terrified." Caplan said there should be a "broad set of voices" in determining whether the lockdowns were the right solution, but added that the question would be "political". And will the people whose lives are affected in the future be counted in this reckoning? Some think not. "We will not have the director general of health reeling off the statistics of excess mortality by suicide or stroke every evening," French sociologist Didier Fassin said in the newspaper Le Monde. — AFP

## Joy, tears in Darfur over ICC arrests

**NYALA:** Sudanese civilians displaced during the devastating conflict in Darfur have welcomed news that a top militia leader accused of atrocities there has surrendered himself to the International Criminal Court. Ali Kushayb, also known as Ali Muhammad Abdelrahman, was wanted on more than 50 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the western region. He turned himself in earlier this week in the Central African Republic, ending 13 years on the run. "I couldn't believe it at first," said Badria Saleh, who lives in a refugee camp of mud houses with grass and plastic roofs in the South Darfur region.

"Kushayb killed my husband and my brother as they were burying a relative in 2013," she told AFP. "We fled our village," she added, bursting into tears. The Darfur conflict broke out in 2003 when ethnic African rebels, complaining of systematic discrimination, took up arms against the government of long-time dictator Omar Al-Bashir. The state hit back with violence by the mostly Arab Janjaweed militias, a campaign that saw the ICC accuse Bashir of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The United Nations says the conflict killed 300,000 people and displaced 2.5 million.

### 'Scared of his cruelty'

Kushayb, a senior Janjaweed com-



NYALA: Badria Saleh, a Darfuri refugee whose husband and brother were reportedly killed by militia leader Ali Kushayb, sits inside a shack at Al-Serif camp, west of Nyala. — AFP

mander in the early years of the conflict, was the target of a 2007 ICC arrest warrant on multiple counts including rape, murder and pillaging. Hassan Al-Senousi, another displaced Darfuri at the Al-Serif camp near South Darfur's regional capital Nyala, said Kushayb's arrest brought him "deep satisfaction." "Kushayb attacked our village with five cars and killed my brother and 35 other villagers," he said. "That was eight years ago - since then I've been living in the camp because I'm scared of his cruelty."

Fellow camp resident Hamed Ahmed Harir said he had tried to return to his village of Raheid Al-Bardi, 150 kilometers (90 miles) south of Nyala four months ago, but was blocked by Kushayb's forces. "Kushayb detained me for two days and threatened to kill me if I didn't leave," he said. "I've never been back." Displaced 70-year-old Abdelrahman, who lives in the sprawling Kalma camp east of Nyala, said Kushayb's forces had looted his family's

properties. "My family was forced to abandon 150 shops in Raheid Al-Bardi market," he said angrily. "Kushayb seized them and turned them into private investments."

### Hopes of return

Kushayb's arrest comes less than a year after a transitional government took power following Bashir's ouster by the military in April 2019 on the back of vast protests against his rule. The country's new rulers, including civilian and military figures, have promised accountability for those responsible for crimes under Bashir. In December Bashir himself was sentenced to two years in a community reform center over corruption. And in February, transitional authorities finally agreed to hand him over for trial at the ICC, although they have yet to do so. They have also started peace talks with rebel groups in Darfur and other conflict-torn parts of the country. — AFP

## The five controversial statues

**PARIS:** Protests in the wake of African American George Floyd's killing by a white police officer in the United States have led to the unceremonious toppling and vandalism of statues of controversial historical and political figures. Five symbolic examples:

### Bristol: Slave trader Edward Colston

On Sunday, in England's southwestern port of Bristol, protesters pulled down a bronze statue of 17th century slave trader Edward Colston and dumped it in the local harbour. Colston was a leading figure in a royal slave trading company that sold 100,000 west Africans in the Caribbean and the Americas after first branding its initials on their chests. But his name remains attached to streets and buildings in honor of his funding of local hospitals and schools for the poor, and officials fished the statue out.

### US: Christopher Columbus

Overnight Tuesday, in Boston, a statue of Christopher Columbus was beheaded, in the park named after him. A Columbus statue was also vandalised in downtown Miami with red paint, and another was dragged into a lake earlier in the week in Richmond, Virginia. The Italian explorer, long hailed as the so-called discoverer of "The New World," is considered by many to have spurred years of genocide against indigenous groups in the Americas. He is regularly denounced in a similar way to Civil War generals of the pro-slavery South.

### US: Jefferson Davis

On Wednesday, a statue of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States of America during the 1861-1865 Civil War, which opposed the pro-slavery South and the abolitionist North, was toppled in Richmond, Virginia. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the same day for removal of 11 Confederate statues from the US Capitol, part of a nationwide push to dismantle such memorials after the Floyd killing. According to a 2016 report from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), which is specialised in extremist movements and civil rights, more than 1,500 confederate symbols are still on show in public places in the United States, most in the South.

### Belgium: Leopold II

The Belgian port city of Antwerp took down a statue of late King of the Belgians Leopold II on Tuesday, days after it was daubed with red paint by anti-racism protesters. Statues of Leopold have long been a target of activists because of his record of brutal colonial rule in Belgium's former central African colonies, notably the then "Congo Free State", now the independent Democratic Republic of Congo. It has been removed by officials from its public pedestal next to an Antwerp church and taken for restoration to a museum where it will be examined before deciding what steps to take next.

### Churchill: Graffitied in Prague, London

In Prague a statue to Britain's World War II leader Winston Churchill was covered in graffiti early Thursday, daubed with the words "Black Lives Matter" in solidarity with the anti-racist movement in the United States. A central London statue of Churchill was also defaced, with the words "was a racist" with protesters blaming his policies for the death of millions during famine in the Indian state of Bengal in 1943. — AFP

## International

# Bolton accuses Trump of more impeachable 'transgressions'

## Former national security advisor to release his book

WASHINGTON: Defying the White House, former national security advisor John Bolton will release a book that suggests President Donald Trump committed impeachable offenses beyond Ukraine and alleges that his entire foreign policy is motivated by domestic politics, his publisher said Friday. Trump earlier this year warned Bolton not to publish his book while the president is still in the White House, whose lawyers have contended that large portions of the material in the memoir are classified.

But publisher Simon and Schuster said it would go ahead and release "The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir" on June 23, teasing in a press release: "This is the book Donald Trump doesn't want you to read." "I am hard-pressed to identify any significant Trump decision during my tenure that wasn't driven by re-election calculations," Bolton writes in the book, according to the release. The publisher said that Bolton will document wrongdoing by Trump that goes beyond his pressure on Ukraine to investigate

Democratic rival Joe Biden - which triggered Trump's impeachment by the Democratic-led House of Representatives.

Bolton "argues that the House committed impeachment malpractice by keeping their prosecution focused narrowly on Ukraine when Trump's Ukraine-like transgressions existed across the full range of

with Trump's diplomatic outreach to adversaries, notably North Korea and Afghanistan's Taliban.

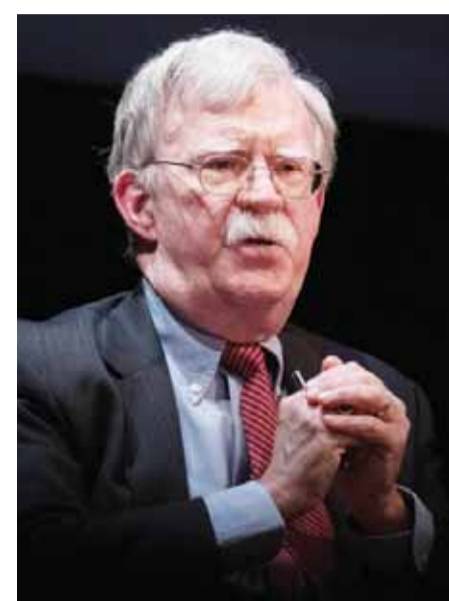
### Denunciations of Bolton

The memoir renewed questions on why Bolton, if he believed Trump had committed such serious offenses, did not testify as part of his impeachment and instead waited to sell his book. "John Bolton is an example of a purported public servant who not only put party over country, he put his own profits over country. Despicable," Representative Ted Lieu, a Democrat and vocal advocate for Trump's impeachment, wrote on Twitter. Walter Shaub, the former director of the Office of Government Ethics who clashed with the Trump administration, urged a boycott of Bolton's book, saying that buying it "amounts to supporting a shirker who betrayed his country by refusing to fulfill his duty to testify before Congress."

Bolton, who favors a tough line on Russia, is known to have opposed the White House's freeze on \$400 million in military

aid to Ukraine as it battled separatists backed by Moscow, privately accusing Trump's camp of a "drug deal." Trump in a phone call had pressed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to dig up dirt on Biden over the former vice president's son's business dealings in the country. Trump has called the impeachment a conspiracy against him, contending his effort on Ukraine was in the larger US interest.

Bolton, 71, has long been a controversial player in Washington, with former president George W. Bush bypassing the Senate to appoint him ambassador to the United Nations. An unapologetic campaigner for the Iraq war who has mused about bombing Iran and North Korea, the mustachioed, Yale-educated lawyer initially seemed an unlikely match for the domestic-focused Trump, but the television-loving president was drawn by Bolton's commentary on Fox News. Bolton has been unusually restrained in public comments since leaving the White House but a leak from his book roiled the impeachment trial. Chuck Schumer, the Democratic leader in the Senate, where



Former National Security Advisor John Bolton

Trump was acquitted, said at the time that Bolton's testimony could help persuade wavering Republicans. —AFP

Entire foreign policy motivated by domestic politics



his foreign policy," the publisher said. Bolton will describe Trump's "inconsistent, scattershot decision-making process," it said. Bolton, a veteran Republican policymaker known for his hawkish views, left in September after disagreeing

## Conflict, division blight coronavirus response in Libya

TRIPOLI: War and division are weakening Libya's fight against the novel coronavirus, with the government struggling to deal with an outbreak deep in the desert south. The oil-rich North African nation has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) controls the west, including the capital Tripoli, while military strongman Khalifa Haftar controls the east and some of the far-flung oases and oilfields that dot the south. With Libya already largely cut off from the rest of the world by conflict when it reported its first coronavirus case at the end of March, the situation appeared relatively contained.

Cases of infection were "very low" compared to neighboring countries, according to Badreddine al-Najjar, head of Libya's center for disease control. "We even had weeks without new infections," he said. The rival administrations imposed curfews and closed borders, schools, businesses and mosques, in a bid to prevent often obsolete and worn-down health facilities from becoming overwhelmed. But health measures "are difficult to apply due to the political and security context", Najjar said.

### Ill-equipped

The situation has changed rapidly in recent weeks, with dozens of cases appearing in the south's largest oasis city Sebha. The GNA has reported 393 coronavirus infections and five deaths nationwide, around half of them in and around Sebha. But that only ac-



TRIPOLI: A fighter loyal to Libya's UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) poses for a picture while seated in the turret of a technical (pickup truck mounted with turret) in the town of Tarhuna. — AFP

counts for cases that the Tripoli-based disease control center has been able to confirm. Najjar said local authorities in Sebha, which is under the control of pro-Haftar forces, were not equipped to deal with an outbreak, and initially refused the GNA's help. "It was difficult to open up isolation rooms... and the equipment didn't arrive until after a large number of infections among close contacts", Najjar said.

"The residents did not cooperate and did not respect the preventive measures", Najjar said. "They acted like nothing was wrong". Ibrahim al-Zouay, head of the committee to fight the pandemic in Sebha, acknowledged that local authorities had been overwhelmed by the task. "We were unable to isolate 'patient zero' because the number of cases grew", he told AFP. "The support and rapid intervention teams

stuck to testing and monitoring the family and friends" of confirmed cases, he added.

### 'Shameful'

Divisions and accusations of mismanagement have also marred a plan to repatriate more than 15,000 Libyans stuck abroad. Libya lacks adequate infrastructure for quarantining arrivals on its soil, and the security situation prompted fears that armed individuals could release people from isolation by force. So authorities decided to quarantine returnees before their repatriation instead, a decision critics say has led to new infections among those who came into contact with them. "Each flight carrying returnees was like bringing back booby traps", said Mahmoud Abdeldayem, who works in the civil registry in Tripoli. — AFP

## Long days for Mali hospital coping with violence and virus

MOPTI: After a busy day juggling paperwork and meetings, Brehima Traore, deputy director of a hospital in war-torn Mali, may have hoped for some rest. Then his phone rang: he was needed in the operating room. Traore is one of the doctors who keeps the hospital in Mopti - at the forefront of a jihadist insurgency in the West African state for years, and now in the fight against coronavirus - running smoothly. The hospital has received patients severely wounded by gunshots on a daily basis. It must also cope with a growing number of COVID-19 cases. Traore was called to the emergency room just as his day was ending. An all-terrain ambulance had just brought in an unconscious man with a gunshot wound to the lung. Armed men had attacked his village in the Bandiagara region, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) away. A 15-year-old boy was also shot and taken to hospital.

The surgeon, who had spread himself thin since the morning, worked for two hours to save the patient. A rare new medical facility in the Sahel, the Somine Dolo hospital was mainly dedicated to treating the wounded from the beleaguered country's volatile north when it was inaugurated in 2014. Mali, a poor nation of some 19 million people, has been in the grip of jihadist violence since 2012, when Islamist fighters linked to Al-Qaeda commandeered an initially separatist rebellion by ethnic Tuaregs in the north. Inter-communal

attacks have increased, and the state no longer has much control over large rural areas. The conflict - which has killed thousands of soldiers and civilians to date - has since spread to central Mali, as well as to neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger.

### 'Turned upside down'

The hospital, built with Belgian and French financing, is the only facility of its size within hundreds of kilometers and is on the front line of the conflict, admitting 682 wounded civilians and fighters in 2019 - four times as many as in 2018. Matthias Diassana, director of emergency services, details his days divided between visits to patients, trauma operations and orthopaedic consultations. "We are all straddling several tasks due to

the lack of staff," with just 200 people running the hospital, he said. "It can all be turned upside down by emergencies," Diassana said. But the team is well established, and "everyone knows what they have to do," he said.

Somine Dolo is struggling now, however, to cope with a pandemic on top of other crises. Before the first cases even arrived, a hospital within the hospital was set up, consisting of large white tents where COVID-19 patients have been treated. One recent day, there were 22 patients in isolation and only four caregivers allowed at a time beyond the orange barriers which separate the reception center from the rest of the hospital. Protected by coveralls, masks and boots, three hospital cleaners reassigned to disinfect against coronavirus returned from the morgue with a stretcher that they would have to clean. It was used to transport the remains of a patient who, it appeared post mortem, may have been a carrier of the virus. — AFP



MOPTI: Doctors of the Somine Dolo Hospital are seen during a surgical operation of a patient with a gunshot wound, in Mopti. — AFP

## Virus outbreak clouds Britons' trips to the sun

LONDON: Britons are looking likely to forgo their annual trip to the sun because of the coronavirus pandemic, and instead discover the joys of staying at home, whatever the weather. Travel firms say fear of infection, quarantine restrictions and cashflow problems caused by the outbreak have pushed up interest in "staycations". Top spots tipped in the British newspapers include Dorset's sandy beaches, the Lake District national park, the wilds of Scotland and the rugged Cornwall coast. "It's clear from conversations we're having with customers and booking patterns that many people will opt to stay closer to home within the UK this year," said Derek Jones, chief executive of Kuoni. Overseas travel appears to be considered "too risky", at least in the short term, he added. To tap into the increased demand, the high-end Swiss travel firm has for the first time included destinations in Britain and Ireland in its catalogue.

### Camping and caravanning

Britain has seen more than 40,000 people die in the outbreak but beyond fear of catching the virus, government advice and rules about travel have added confusion. Sean Tipton, from the Association of British Travel Agents, said some people were "desperate" to go overseas but many were not, which could provide a domestic boost. "It's a general feeling of uncertainty around travel in relation to coronavirus, which means some people would not be too keen on getting on a plane," he told AFP.

"The other thing is the question, where can you go? The Foreign Office is advising against travel, we have the quarantine requirement." Most people arriving from overseas, including British nationals, now have to spend 14 days in isolation, under new rules introduced on Monday to stop new COVID-19 infections. With airports deserted, campsites appeared to be on the verge of a surge in visitors, with bookings filling up as of last month, according to the Cool Camping website. The Auto Trader ad site also said it had seen a surge in enquiries about buying and renting caravans. — AFP

## How reintroduced predators benefit ecosystems

WASHINGTON: These little guys think there's something you otter know. Shellfish-munching sea otters have been the bane of fishermen's existence ever since they were reintroduced to Canada's west coast in the 1970s - but a new study indicates they bring more economic benefits than losses. The research was led by teams from the University of British Columbia and Vancouver Island University and published in the journal Science on Thursday.

The study offers an example of what might happen if other endangered species - from apex predators like wolves and sharks, to herbivorous bison which were once plentiful in the great plains - are brought back to their original habitats. Toward the end of the 19th century, otters in the northwest Pacific were hunted almost to the point of extinction due to a demand for their thick, luxurious fur - the densest coat in the animal kingdom, used by the aquatic mammals for insulation in freezing cold waters.

Otters prey mainly on invertebrates such as crabs, clams, and urchins. Don't challenge these chunky critters to an eating contest, as they consume about a quarter of their body weight every day. With the otters gone the shellfish fishing industry exploded. The Canadian government however decided to reintroduce otters in the 1970s - without consulting the local population, including the native First Nations. The otters began devouring the main source of fishermen's livelihoods, in what initially seemed to be a textbook example of ecological-economic conflict.

But it's not so straightforward, said the new paper's authors. The return of the otters also led to indirect effects on the ecosystem known as "trophic cascade." Otters eat sea urchins, which had devoured kelp on the ocean floor. The size of these algal forests have now multiplied by a factor of twenty, said the researchers. And kelp provide protective habitats for a number of fish species like herring, which, in turn, benefits the fishermen. Not only that, kelp also sequesters carbon dioxide, reducing ocean acidification and the amount of the greenhouse gas in the atmosphere.

### Wolves, foxes and ticks

The biggest direct financial benefit has come through tourism. "The sea otter is a very charismatic species," said Russell Markel, a co-author of the paper who runs Outer Shores Expeditions. "Tourists love being able to see them in the wild and, importantly, are willing to pay for this experience." The study authors estimate the dollar profit from having the sea otters is seven times greater than the losses to the shellfish industry. "When you restore a predator, it usually is controversial. And this arises largely because predators end up competing with people for resources," said Jane Watson, a professor at Vancouver Island University.

But the return of kelp forest "increases near-shore productivity" and "creates habitat for kelp dependent species," she said. "Countless ecosystems around the world are a shadow of their former glory, held back by missing key ecological players just as the sea otters were missing from this coast for decades," added Kai Chan, the paper's senior author, from the University of British Columbia. "Thus we are seeing elsewhere how reintroducing wolves can trigger ripples of benefits for a large number of species and also for humans across the US and even in Europe," he added. — AFP

## International

# China races to find coronavirus vaccine, put scandals in the past

## Parts of Beijing locked down due to fresh virus cluster

**BEIJING:** China has mobilized its army and fast-tracked tests in the global race to find a coronavirus vaccine, but its labs also have an image tarnished by past health scandals to overcome. Six months after the first cases emerged in the city of Wuhan, China has moved quickly to develop a vaccine and is involved in several of the dozen or so international clinical trials currently under way. Researchers have reported promising early results from tests on humans and monkeys, and authorities hope to have the first shots ready for the public this year. The Military Academy of Medical Sciences is among those working on a vaccine, in partnership with a pharmaceutical firm.

China has authorized fast-track procedures, allowing preclinical phases - such as animal tests and other studies—to be conducted at the same time instead of one after the other. But Ding Sheng, dean of the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Beijing's Tsinghua University, sounded a note of caution around using "non-conventional methods". "I understand that people are eagerly waiting for a vaccine," Ding said in the People's Daily, a Communist Party organ. "But on a scientific point of view, we can't lower our criteria, even in an emergency," he said.

Ding also questioned the decision to authorize phase one and two clinical trials at the same time, allowing labs to avoid having to seek authorization before proceeding from one to the other. Nick Jackson, of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), however, pointed out that China was not the only country to do this. "Many organizations globally are conducting adaptive trials that allow for rapid transition from phase one to two studies," said Jackson, whose organization funds research into vaccines. "This approach is necessary given the urgent need for vaccines."

### Tainted vaccines

One pharmaceutical company, Sinopharm, said its vaccine could be ready for the public at the end of the year or early 2021. The head of China's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention hopes a vaccine could be ready as early as September for priority cases, such as health workers. But China will also have to convince the public that any vaccine it produces are safe as the

country's pharmaceutical industry has been hit by scandals involving tainted medicine and corruption in recent years. Parents have held protests and some are scared enough to seek foreign-made vaccines for their children over those made in China. One of the biggest scandals involved Changchun Changsheng Biotechnology, which was fined a record \$1.3 billion in 2018 after it fabricated records for a rabies vaccine for humans.

The same company had also produced a vaccine for diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough (DPT) that was administered to more than 200,000 children and caused paralysis in a few cases. One of the companies involved in the search for a vaccine against the novel coronavirus was implicated in the scandal. The Wuhan Institute of Biological Products, from the city where the virus first emerged late last year, produced 400,000 doses of DPT that "did not meet the norms", according to drug regulators. The government responded by enacting legislation to tighten oversight and prevent defective shots from entering the market.

"The government is very careful in reviewing the vaccine applications," said Lung-Ji Chang, the American president of the Geno-Immune Medical Institute in Shenzhen, southern China, which is also working on a coronavirus vaccine. But several other cases have been reported by Chinese media in the past year, including fake vaccines in a southern hospital and children getting shots for the wrong illness in northern Hebei province. "This does not mean (China) does not have the capability to produce a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine," said Yanzhong Huang, a senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations think tank in the United States.

### Fresh virus cluster

Parts of Beijing were placed under lockdown yesterday as six new domestic coronavirus cases were reported, fuelling fears of a resurgence in local transmission. People were prevented from leaving their homes at 11 residential estates in south Beijing's Fengtai district after most of the cases were linked to a nearby meat market, city officials said in a press briefing. Beijing's first COVID-19 case in two months, announced on Thursday, had visited Xinfadi meat



**BEIJING:** Paramilitary police officers wear face masks as they prepare food supplies at the entrance to the closed Xinfadi market in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

market last week and had no recent travel history outside the city.

China's domestic outbreak had been brought largely under control through vast, strict lockdowns that were imposed after the disease was first detected in the central city of Wuhan last year. These measures had largely been lifted as the infection rate dropped, and the majority of cases reported in recent months were citizens living abroad who were tested as they returned home during the pandemic. Among the six new domestic cases announced yesterday were three Xinfadi market workers, one market visitor and two employees at the China Meat Research Centre, seven kilometers away. One of the employees had visited the market last week.

Authorities closed the market, along with another seafood market visited by one of the patients, for disinfection and sample collection on Friday. AFP reporters saw hundreds of police officers and dozens of paramilitary police deployed at the two markets. Workers were seen hauling several crates of seafood out of Jingshen seafood market, also in Fengtai district. Fengtai district officials announced yesterday that the district has established a "wartime mechanism" and "field command center" to deal with the fresh wave. Nine nearby schools and kindergartens have been closed. On Friday, Beijing officials delayed the return of students to primary schools across the city, and suspended all sporting events and group dining. Cross-provincial tour groups were suspended yesterday. —Agencies

## Delhi's coronavirus deaths twice as high

**NEW DELHI:** Deaths from coronavirus in New Delhi are almost twice as high as official figures show, a city leader said, as India overtook Britain with the fourth-highest number of cases worldwide. With India's lockdown being widely eased, the government has been reporting almost 10,000 new confirmed cases every day with infections totaling almost 300,000, including 8,500 deaths.

Densely populated megacities such as Delhi and Mumbai are the worst affected, stretching hospitals to breaking point. But data in Delhi is understating the true scale of the outbreak, said Jai Prakash, standing committee head of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, one of the three sub-districts that make up the capital. Citing data from the city's busy crematoriums and cemeteries, Prakash said Thursday that just over 2,000 people have died from the virus across the city - almost twice the official toll.

"These were corona positive cases. We have a separate record of funerals of some another 200 suspected cases," Prakash told reporters. But the party that governs Delhi as a whole, which has come under fire for its handling of the health crisis, rejected the claims. "This is a time to unite and save lives of people. This is not the time to make allegations," the Aam Aadmi Party said in a statement. Financial capital Mumbai is officially India's worst affected city with almost 2,000 fatalities.

Parts of the Dharavi area in Mumbai, one of Asia's largest slums, have been under strict months-long lockdown. The number of new cases has been easing, with 20 new infections confirmed on Friday. The death toll in the southern city of Chennai is at least 460, more than double the official figure, media reports said this week. Despite the surge in cases nationally, which is being mirrored elsewhere in South Asia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has declared the lockdown a success and has been steadily lifting restrictions.

### Mosque shut down

Meanwhile, the main mosque in the Indian capital New Delhi, which briefly reopened to worshippers, will again close over fears that the coronavirus could spread, its management said. The 17th century Jama Masjid had reopened Monday after the government relaxed its ban on religious gatherings - a measure that was part of a months-long nationwide lockdown. But authorities have warned that infections could surge in coming weeks, and mosque managers want to play it safe.

Head cleric Syed Ahmed Bukhari said public prayers will be halted from Friday through June 30, given the "deteriorating" coronavirus situation in New Delhi. The capital recorded more than 1,800 new cases on Thursday. Overall, Delhi - home to nearly 20 million people - has seen more than 34,000 infections and 1,000 deaths. "Coronavirus is spreading exponentially in Delhi," Bukhari said in a statement. "What is the point of visiting mosques at such a time when the spread of the coronavirus is peaking in Delhi?"

## Snapchat to deliver breaking news, adds wellness features

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Snapchat announced it would deliver breaking news as youth-focused social network unveiled a series of new features focused on information, entertainment and wellness. The California-based unit of parent Snap Inc. introduced a Happening Now service intended to quickly deliver news to its users. The list of partners for Happening Now includes The Washington Post, NBC News, ESPN, E! News, and BuzzFeed News. Snap says that many of its users already get news on Snapchat and that the new feature will offer "the biggest stories across politics, entertainment, sports and more into a new, easy-to-consume format customized for mobile."

The news service will also spotlight "Snaps" publicly shared by its users "since every day Snapchatters use phones to capture events around them," the company said. At the same time, Snap said it was working to curb the stress

and anxiety which plagues social networks which offer a platform for user content. One of the new initiatives will be to offer meditation tools from the health tech group Headspace, which produces apps for relaxing the mind.

"We found that an overwhelming majority of Snapchatters experience feelings of stress and anxiety and that their friends are the first people they turn to when they need help, more than professionals or even their parents," Snap said. The company will also accelerate the deployment of "Here For You," an initiative aimed at helping people suffering from stress and emotional issues. Snapchat touts that it reaches 90 percent of the 13-34 age group in the United States, and similar amounts in other markets, and sees an opportunity to connect them with well-being resources.

Opening its Snap Partner Summit, the social network which has more than 200 million members unveiled other efforts to boost usage and engagement including new gaming and entertainment features. Snap also announced expanded content deals with Disney, ESPN, NBCUniversal, ViacomCBS, and others to stream short-form video that has been a hit at on the Snapchat Discover platform. "The deals also include continued delivery of up-to-the-minute highlights for key news,

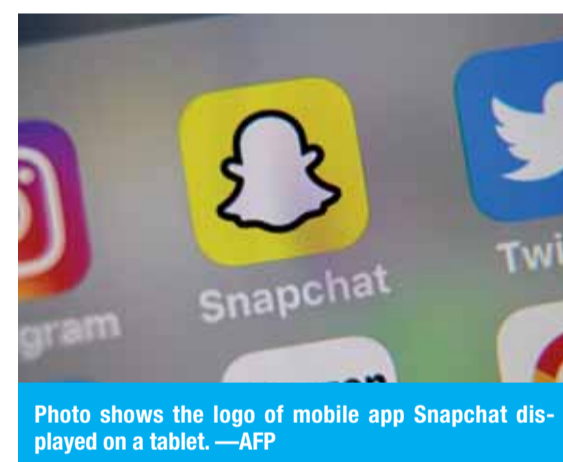


Photo shows the logo of mobile app Snapchat displayed on a tablet. —AFP

entertainment and sports moments," Snap said

### 'Visual search'

New features for the Snapchat Camera platform for smartphones will give users additional augmented reality options and more. The platform will offer expanded "visual search" features to help get information about something the user sees, such as plants or dogs. A scan of packaged foods will offer nutritional information about the products.

## Black Lives Matter protests: Where next?

**WASHINGTON:** The Black Lives Matter protests that erupted across the United States after the killing in custody of African-American George Floyd have begun to wane, having chalked up some accomplishments in the fight against racism and police brutality. The four officers involved in Floyd's death in Minneapolis on May 25 have been arrested and charged with murder or aid-

ing and abetting murder. Two other cases of wrongful black deaths, of Ahmud Arbery in Georgia and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, have garnered fresh scrutiny, with arrests made in Arbery's case. And senior lawmakers have embraced the idea that deep police reforms are needed.

Until now the seven-year-old Black Lives Matter movement has involved mostly African-Americans in localized protests against police killings, such as those in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. This time, shockingly brutal videos showing the deaths of Floyd and Arbery have demonstrated the extent of police mistreatment of blacks to a wider audience, says Theodore Johnson, who researches

race in politics at New York's Brennan Center for Justice. "Now the protests are in every single state and territory. The participants are of all ages, parties, races," he told AFP.

The firestorm was accelerated by a unique confluence of events, say activists, including provocative tweets from President Donald Trump casting the demonstrators as violent "anarchists" and the coronavirus lockdown that left people stuck home consuming more news and social media. "It just hit it the right moment," said Mark Winston Griffith, executive director of the Brooklyn Movement Center, a black-led activist group in New York. "If we were not on

lockdown, and this pandemic did not exist, I even wonder whether this moment would have been possible." Add to that, he said, "the full kind of breakdown in leadership that we've seen across the country, the utter failure of government, particularly on a national level."

Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors said Americans had moved beyond the "black lives matter" slogan to engage with the "defund the police" reform campaign that activists have been discussing for years. "Defund the police" has become such a huge and resounding call," she told Trevor Noah on "The Daily Social Distancing Show." —AFP

## African countries call for racism debate at UN rights council

**GENEVA:** African countries called Friday on the UN Human Rights Council to urgently debate racism and police brutality amid the unrest in the US and beyond over George Floyd's death. In a letter written on behalf of 54 African countries, Burkina Faso's ambassador to the UN in Geneva asked the UN's top rights body for an "urgent debate" on "racially inspired human rights violations, police brutality against people of African descent and the violence against the peaceful protests that call for these injustices to stop." The letter, addressed to rights council president Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger of Austria, requested that this debate be held next week, when the council's 43rd session resumes, after it was interrupted in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The call came after Floyd's family, along with the families of other victims of police violence and over 600 NGOs this week called on the council to urgently address systemic racism and police impunity in the

US. For the council to consider such a request, it needs to have the backing of at least one country. With the request now coming from a large group of states, "that increases the chances" it will take place, a council spokesman told AFP. Friday's letter pointed to the case of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man who died in police custody in Minneapolis on May 25 after a white officer, who has since been charged with murder, pressed his knee on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

### 'Unchecked police brutality'

His death, which was caught on video and has sparked massive protests across the United States and around the world, "is unfortunately not an isolated incident, with many previous cases of unarmed persons of African descent suffering the same fate due to unchecked police brutality," it said. "Sadly, the fates of many other victims attracted no attention, as they were not captured on social media for all to see," Ambassador Dieudonne Desire Sougouri wrote on behalf of the African Group at the council. While the letter called for a debate on racism around the globe, it in particular highlighted the situation in the United States.

"The protests the world is witnessing are a rejection of the fundamental racial inequality and discrim-



**RICHMOND:** Hundreds of people turned out for the BLACK PRIDE RVA March to protest police killing George Floyd and racial justice in Richmond, Virginia. —AFP

ination that characterize life in the United States for black people, and other people of colour," it said. Council President Tichy-Fisslberger will now announce Monday a proposed day for the urgent debate, and unless there are any objections, which is unlikely, it will go ahead. A number of countries are expected to address Floyd's killing and concerns about police violence and racism in the United States during the resumed 43rd council session even without a special debate.



## Business

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RIYADH: Laborers work at a construction site in the Saudi capital Riyadh as lockdown measures are eased amid the COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

# Saudi fund takes \$8bn worth of stakes

## 'Shopping spree' belies economic pain at home

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund has snapped up around \$8 billion worth of stakes in global giants—from Boeing to Facebook—in a spree that belies deep and unpopular austerity measures at home.

The twin shocks of the novel coronavirus pandemic and a plunge in oil prices have prompted the government to triple its value-added tax, suspend a monthly allowance to civil servants and slash spending as it seeks to tame a ballooning budget deficit. The harsh measures are straining a so-called "rentier" social contract, which for decades saw the kingdom use its oil wealth to provide citizens with generous subsidies, jobs and a tax-free lifestyle.

Amid its worst economic crisis in decades, the seemingly contradictory state policy to splurge billions on overseas assets is raising eyebrows. The kingdom's Public Investment Fund is emerging as one of the world's biggest bargain hunters, dishing out billions to buy minority stakes in American and European blue-chip firms.

"You don't want to waste a crisis," PIF governor Yasir Al-Rumayyan said in April, indicating the \$300 billion fund was taking advantage of a virus-induced recession to snap up stakes at knockdown prices. In the first quarter of this year, it bought \$7.7 billion holdings in a host of companies—from Boeing, Walt Disney and Starbucks to Marriott and Citigroup.

It also took stakes in energy giants including Royal

Dutch Shell and Total—a move at odds with Saudi policy to steer away from oil dependence—as well as Facebook, which has triggered privacy concerns from a US watchdog. The PIF is also backing a proposed £300 million (\$372 million) takeover of football club Newcastle United, though the deal looks to be in trouble over allegations that Saudi Arabia was behind a pirate sports broadcaster.



**'You don't want to waste a crisis'**

### Spending 'nest egg'

The painful austerity drive could heighten public scrutiny of such spending—especially after VAT, introduced just over two years ago, is tripled to 15 percent from July. "Companies are happy to see their stocks in demand and share prices buoyed," Karen Young, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, told AFP.

"However, it is more important to think about how

Saudi citizens view their savings and collective national nest egg being spent on international equity markets at a time of a national economic crisis."

Shopkeepers in Riyadh privately wonder why the crucial investments were not instead used to prop up struggling small and medium enterprises choked by the pandemic. The investments are also unlikely to soothe concern among young Saudis worried about finding jobs amid already high youth unemployment.

In an absolute monarchy where few publicly question official decrees, columnist Khalid al-Sulaiman wrote in a pro-government newspaper that the austerity measures will have a "significant effect on society's purchasing power".

"A football club, entertainment, mega projects. Throwing money at all this is absolutely unnecessary at a time of deep austerity," said one Saudi government worker, who also works part-time for a ride-hailing app to supplement his income. Such is the economic anxiety that some Saudis dubbed as "insensitive" a light-hearted video by entertainment chief Turki Al-Sheikh, in which he breaks a television screen out of frustration after losing a PlayStation game.

The central bank's foreign reserves saw a sharp fall in March and April, with the government saying \$40 billion had been transferred to the PIF to fund its stake-buying spree.

The reserves, which tumbled to about \$450 billion in April, a multi-year low, are expected to be further depleted to finance a growing budget deficit, analysts say.

### 'Big bet'

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has transformed the once-torpid PIF into a key investment vehicle to develop mega projects to diversify the oil-reliant economy, while also building an international portfolio of investments. In a statement, the PIF described itself as a "patient investor with a long-term horizon". "The PIF is making big bets on a few stocks," said Ali Shihabi, a Saudi analyst and author.

"Smart or not, we'll only know when we look in the rear-view mirror." Some of those "tactical" investments in undervalued assets, including the struggling cruise operator Carnival, chime with Saudi Arabia's goal of developing its tourism and entertainment sectors from scratch, Shihabi added.

The PIF reportedly struggled in the past to attract a cruise liner to the Red Sea, where the kingdom seeks to develop a mega tourism project as well as NEOM, a \$500 billion futuristic megacity.

But many of the other acquisitions are "unlikely to yield a substantial return over the short run," said Robert Mogielnicki, a resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. — AFP

## British economy shrinks a 5th on lockdown

LONDON: Britain's economy shrank by a fifth in size during April as the coronavirus lockdown shuttered factories, offices and shops, official data showed Friday, stoking concerns over a painful recession.

Gross domestic product nosedived by a record 20.4 percent after a 5.8-percent contraction in March, the Office for National Statistics said.

Taken together, the slump over March and April was three times worse than during the global financial crisis of more than a decade ago, the ONS added.

The dire data capped a week of bad news for British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who faces increasing criticism over his handling of the deadly COVID-19 outbreak as Britain's death toll surpassed 40,000 people to reach the second highest in the world. The UK government imposed a lockdown on March 23 — later than many other virus-hit nations—to halt the spread of COVID-19. It has also backed up employee wages in a costly furlough jobs retention scheme, while the Bank of England (BoE) has injected enormous amounts of liquidity and slashed interest rates to a record-low 0.1 percent.

"The economy has experienced a significant shock since the start of the coronavirus pandemic," the ONS said Friday.

"GDP has fallen dramatically, with record broad-

based falls in output for production, services and construction," it added in a statement. The UK economy shrank by 2.0 percent in the first quarter, and another contraction in the current second quarter, or April-June period, would put it in recession.

### 'Clearly in deep recession'

Analysts say a recession is likely already underway because of the staggering impact of the virus lockdown and despite Britain gradually easing stay-at-home restrictions.

"The UK is clearly in deep recession—GDP contracted 2.0 percent in the first quarter and it looks likely to contract at least 15 percent in the second," EY economist Howard Archer told AFP. "However, April highly likely marked the low point for the economy and activity appears to have edged up in May as there was some easing of restrictions in England."

The ONS said pubs, education, health and car sales were hardest hit areas.

The economy meanwhile shrank by 10.4 percent in the three months to the end of April. The OECD this week predicted the UK economy was on course to shrink by more than 11 percent in 2020 because of COVID-19.

The Bank of England has warned that the economic paralysis could lead to Britain's worst recession in centuries amid a broader global economic downturn.

"Unprecedented" Jonathan Athow, ONS deputy national statistician, described the 20-percent slump as "unprecedented". "April's fall in GDP is the biggest the UK has ever seen, more than three times larger than last month and almost ten times larger than the steepest pre-COVID-19 fall,"

said Athow. "In April, the economy was around 25 percent smaller than in February."

The pandemic, which has blighted economies worldwide, had a "significant and wide-ranging negative impact" on British businesses.

The data comes as Britain presses ahead with its lockdown easing plans. Non-essential shops and services, as well as zoos, wildlife parks and drive-in cinemas can open from Monday, and individual attendance will be allowed at places of worship. However, restrictions

have not yet been lifted on pubs, bars, restaurants and other leisure facilities. "April 2020 has experienced sharper falls than March as the negative impacts of social distancing and 'lockdown' have led to a significant fall in consumer demand and business and factory closures, as well as supply chain disruptions," the ONS said.

The UK economy could shrink by as much as 35 percent in the second quarter according to a recent forecast from UK fiscal watchdog the Office for Budget Responsibility. — AFP



LONDON: Workers install hand sanitizer stations and signs telling pedestrians and shoppers to adhere to the British government's current social distancing guidelines, and stay two meters (2M) apart, outside shops on Regent Street in central London on Friday as non-essential shops prepare to re-open on June 15. — AFP

# Markaz: Restoring mobility key to revitalizing economy

## Special report highlights 'impact of COVID-19 on mobility in Kuwait'

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing interest to constantly evaluate the performance of various economic sectors to help achieve sustainable growth, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" launched a special report highlighting the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on mobility in Kuwait. The report includes a set of recommendations that can be implemented by different sectors to address the challenges caused by disruptions to mobility as a result of the measures taken to curb the spread of the pandemic. It comes as a continuation of Markaz's efforts to monitor the latest market developments in line with the national initiatives aimed at gradually reviving the economy and returning life to normal.

### Revitalizing economy

The report focuses on the importance of restoring mobility to overcome the effects of the measures taken to contain the spread of the virus, on the national economy, and the increase in levels of demand for essential goods, services and supply chains. Traffic to supermarkets and pharmacies had heavily increased, prior to the announcement of the full lockdown, whereas a decline in activity was witnessed across all areas except for residential areas, and was also seen across the food supplies sector, pharmacies, parks, retail and entertainment, transportation stations and offices declined. Markaz's report indicates that mobility acts as an interlink between various stakeholders for goods and services, and creates a chain of linkages that touches every aspect of life. Therefore, it was necessary to reduce restrictions on mobility and allow various sectors to return to work under specific conditions and by following precautionary measures.

### The impact of mobility restrictions on different sectors

Several sectors were impacted by the restrictions on mobility and the full lockdown. Among those deeply impacted was the transportation sector, in which taxis and public transportation were negatively affected by the halt on business, in addition to the challenges faced by those without private cars to reach authorized convenient stores and supermarkets. All retail outlets, with the exception to cooperative-societies and supermarkets, have been closed, causing residents to panic-buy. There is also a heavy burden on the supply chain, as retailers face many challenges with stocks that will soon become perished, in addition to the lack of revenue in return for the occurring expenses. The medical sector was also impacted by the restrictions on mobility, where patients postponing treatments will increase pressure on the waiting list, and in return, hospitals may lose revenues due to this approach. In addition, hospital visits require the issuance of permits, and although pharmacies are open 24 hours, home delivery is also restricted by permits.

### Impact of mobility restrictions on financial sector

The financial sector witnessed a severe state of dis-



stress, being directly linked to other vital sectors. The nation's stock exchange continued its operations, however, relevant stakeholders, such as asset managers and brokers, are denied access to visit their offices, limiting their service capabilities. We also witnessed a halt on the operations of investment companies due to the total lockdown, as it restricts the critical employees from being present at their work place, creating pressure on the business activities and liquidity of these companies. The restrictions on mobility also impacted companies that rely on the collection of cheques as a settlement method, and have been unable to deposit cheques in banks over the past weeks. The inability to obtain account statements and remittance receipts from banks contributed to creating discrepancies between companies and bank statements. The full lockdown put pressure on treasury departments in investment companies in terms of working remotely with regard to transferring funds via SWIFT. In addition, investment companies may be exposed to some risks that affect their business in light of mobility restrictions, such as the inability to access the data center and servers in the event of any electrical failure or in the programs used, which will make it difficult for employees to access computers remotely.

As for banks, Banking services stopped due to the

total lockdown, with the exception to online services. Although many companies quickly shifted to electronic services, this also exposes them to the risk of cyberattacks, bearing in mind that many marginal labors cannot benefit from online services since they lack access. In terms of banks, and since they operate within strict protocols and restrictions related to confidentiality, majority of bank employees have not been able to carry out their duties from home, resulting in a halt of many banking activities related to credit, cheque deposits, and transfers that require client presence. However, with more restrictions eased, markets are expected to rebound and rebalance.

In accordance with the 5 phase comeback plan, investment companies will be allowed to operate in the second phase, which will limit the role of the financial sector in supporting national economic activities. The activation of the second phase is dependent on the success of the first phase, which means that the current halt can be extended to this sector, and it will represent a crisis for business continuity in the country. There is also a challenge facing the financial sector as a whole in relation to information technology, due to the fact that if for any reason, access to the database servers is lost, working remotely is no longer an option.



### Transportation sector badly affected

Measures taken to contain the spread of COVID-19 following the outbreak of the pandemic, restrictions on movement were announced in most countries around the world, including Kuwait. The wide-ranging preventive measures taken by various governments included strict lockdowns and curfews that curtailed travel and movement within and outside their countries. The State of Kuwait has taken several measures to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, including a total lockdown from 10 to 30 May. This was followed by the latest 'Five-stage' announcement for the gradual come back, starting with a partial lockdown from 31 May (from 6 pm until 6 am) and full lockdown for specific areas, namely Farwaniya, Khaitan, Hawalli and Maidan Hawalli. These measures have had significant ramifications on various vital sectors in these countries.

### NBK International Markets Report

## Global markets rebound, oil prices recover

KUWAIT: Financial markets enjoyed another strong month in May, buoyed by a gradual easing in coronavirus-driven lockdowns and travel restrictions, fresh policy stimulus announcements and slightly more positive – if still very weak – economic data. The US S&P for example surged nearly 5 percent in May and is now just 6 percent off its mid-February peak – a rally strong enough to feed perceptions that stocks have become disconnected from economic fundamentals that are still poor. Meanwhile key government bond yields remained very low amid central bank buying aimed at supporting the recovery. Oil prices have also continued their strong recovery from April lows, with Brent reaching above \$40/bbl helped by improved sentiment on demand but more importantly aggressive OPEC+ supply cuts in effect since May and which were extended in early June.

### US activity crawls back

Notwithstanding the riots and protests linked to racial tensions that have spread across the country since late May, a mild degree of optimism surrounding the economy has returned as lockdown rules are gradually lifted, businesses reopen, policy stimulus measures take effect and some economic data has surprised to the upside. ISM activity surveys have shown both the manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors starting to recover, though at 43 and 45 respectively in May, both remain at levels consistent with a steep economic downturn.

There were also surprisingly upbeat signs from the labor market, with non-farm payrolls rising 2.5 million in May, confounding expectations of a massive 8 million fall, and clawing back some of the 20.7 million collapse in jobs seen in April. The unemployment rate declined to 13.3 percent from 14.7 percent the previous month. Although some analysts have highlighted possible flaws in the survey, the figures at face value point to furloughed employees returning to work at a decent rate as businesses reopen, especially in the badly-hit recreation and leisure sector.

However, the strength and durability of the recovery remains uncertain. One fear is that unemployment could linger at very high levels due to the US policy of making transfer payments to individuals (and not just to employers), which may discourage people from returning to work and also weaken ties with their former firms.

The Federal Reserve has made no fresh policy announcements over the past month, preferring to allow some time for its previous stimulus measures – including cutting its policy rate to 0-0.25 percent, offering cheap loans to businesses and almost unlimited QE – to filter through and judge their effectiveness.

### Europe takes fresh policy action

Activity across Europe also shows signs of stirring as lockdowns are eased, with the Eurozone composite PMI rebounding from an astonishing low of 13.6 in April to an improved but still weak 31.9 in May. There has also been good news so far on the unemployment rate, which – despite GDP plunging 3.8 percent q/q in Q1 and a projected -10 percent or more in Q2 – ticked up only fractionally in April to 7.3 percent from a pre-crisis 7.2 percent in February. In Italy it even fell,

though this merely reflected a large number of people leaving the workforce. One explanation for the resilient labor market is the effectiveness of wage-subsidy programs across the region allowing firms to sustain their workforces despite plunging revenues. However the risk is that if demand for the same jobs does not return, the support money will have been misallocated.

Inflation will plunge to just 0.3 percent this year and 0.8 percent in 2021, well below the near-2 percent target. The policy loosening suggests the ECB is under-terred following a ruling by the German constitutional court in May that the bank may have overstepped its mandate with an earlier (but still active) QE program, which if not adequately rebutted could ultimately lead to a fracturing of support for the single currency.

### Japan falls into recession

The Japanese economy contracted by an annualized 3.4 percent in 1Q20 (-7.3 percent in 4Q19), as a global slowdown weighed on exports, firms cut back on investment and as consumers limited spending to essential goods amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Japanese exports saw their biggest drop since the 2009 global financial crisis in April, falling 22 percent y/y (-12 percent in March), affected mostly by weaker global demand for cars and industrial materials. Imports also remained in decline, falling 7.2 percent reflecting continued weakness in domestic demand as well.

### Chinese recovery

Latest survey and high-frequency data depict a tepid economic recovery in China. The official manufacturing PMI slipped slightly to 50.6 in May (50.8 in April). Gains in industrial activity remain weighed down by continued contraction in export orders, a reflection of weak external demand. This has in turn weighed on the labor market, with companies continuing to shed jobs.

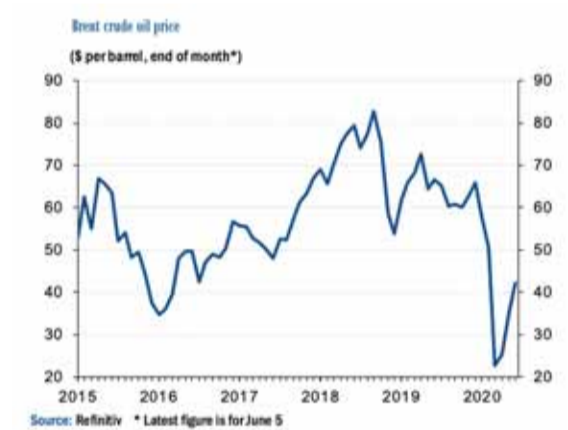
Separately however, the official non-manufacturing PMI ticked up to 53.6 in May (53.2 in April) on a rise in construction activity. Concern for the job situation was behind the authorities' decision in May to drop hard GDP growth targets for the year. Instead, the authorities' focus will shift towards job creation through more targeted fiscal and monetary stimulus. The aim will be to create at least 9 million urban jobs in 2020 (the lowest target since 2013 and down from 2019's target of 11 million).

### India's economic growth slows in Q1

India's GDP growth fell to 3.1 percent y/y in 1Q20 (4Q of FY19/20), the lowest pace of expansion since 2009, and bringing growth in the full financial year to a modest 4.2 percent from 6.1 percent in FY18/19. Economic activity has suffered due to the coronavirus and a national lockdown that commenced in late March. While weakness was visible across the board, investment and consumption have suffered the most, contracting by 6.5 percent and 2.7 percent y/y respectively in 1Q20. Weak demand and extended lockdowns have had a severe impact on business activity, with the services and manufacturing PMIs still deep in contraction territory in May at 12.6 and 30.8 respectively, although rising modestly from the previous month. On the other hand, the GDP figures showed government spending held fairly steady at 1.2 percent. Meanwhile, the fiscal deficit came in at 4.6 percent of GDP in 1Q20, missing the revised target of 3.8 percent mainly due to lower tax revenue following some tax breaks in 4Q19.

Looking forward, the biggest downside risk for India's economy is a prolonged lockdown, especially with the recent spike in confirmed cases that has seen India overtake Italy as the sixth worst hit country by

the pandemic. High unemployment and inflation coupled with low wages suggest that weak consumption may take time to recover. India's twin fiscal and external deficits pose a further challenge, and imply that further bids by the government to boost the economy, including extra spending or tax cuts will be financially difficult without incurring additional debt. GDP is forecasted to contract by 0.2 percent in FY20/21, revised down from 1.6 percent, and expected to rebound to 7.2 percent in FY21/22.



### Oil's rally continues on tighter oil supplies

Oil prices appear to be capitalizing on signs of tighter OPEC+ supplies and slowly recovering oil demand, notching up a sixth consecutive week of gains in early June. Brent reached \$42/bbl on June 5, 67 percent higher than at the end of April. The supply side of the equation has reacted far more quickly than the demand side, thanks to 9.7 mb/d of OPEC+ cuts, which went into effect in May and which were extended in early June for an additional month to August (after which they will be gradually tapered off). Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE have been instrumental in speeding up the rebalancing by agreeing to deepen production cuts over and above their quotas in June by 1 mb/d, 80 kb/d and 100 kb/d, respectively. So has the US, through market-led rather than orchestrated declines of at least 1.7 mb/d from peak output of 13.1 mb/d in early March.

Oil demand – despite a prospective boost from strong US jobs numbers for May – remains lackluster, however, with major economies only tentatively emerging from Covid-19 lockdowns, and it has been reliant on Chinese consumption to help it gain traction. Nevertheless, the outlook has significantly improved even in the span of six weeks, with the International Energy Agency revising up its estimate of oil demand growth in 2020 (+3.2 mb/d) and for 2021 as whole by 700kb/d to 91.2 mb/d. This is still a sizeable contraction from 2019, though.

## World shares fall as investors mull recovery outlook

NEW YORK: Global equity markets gave back earlier gains on Friday as concerns triggered by the US Federal Reserve's less-than-optimistic outlook for an economic recovery and a jump in US coronavirus cases gave investors pause. Trading was choppy, with the three



## Borgan Bank launches virtual assistant 'BANKI'

KUWAIT: Demonstrating its leadership as an innovative financial solutions provider, Borgan Bank recently launched its voice enabled artificial intelligence-powered banking chatbot named 'BANKI'. Adapting to the latest trends reshaping the banking sector, the electronic virtual assistant was built to serve customers in a safe, reliable and timely manner.

'BANKI' uses the latest in AI and Natural Language Processing (NLP), to better understand customer inquiries and enable relevant and contextual responses from innumerable sources accordingly. Borgan Bank's customers can now receive information related to products and services instantaneously by conversing with 'BANKI' in both voice and text available in Arabic and English languages instead of searching, browsing, clicking buttons or waiting on a call. Moreover, 'BANKI' is available round the clock to assist any customer with their banking needs.

"Borgan Bank adopts modern and pioneering services and technologies in line with current market trends which are leading to a shift in the way banks work and perform. With evolving customer expectations, we believe that AI is the key to creating personalized and better customer experiences across the digital channels. The Bank is investing in conversational AI as part of its strategy to empower customers and provide them with deeper insights into making better financial decisions as they make everyday purchases or prepare for life's biggest moments," said Masoud Hayat, Borgan Bank Vice-Chairman and Group CEO.

Borgan Bank's Group Chief Operations and Technology Officer, Venkat Menon, added "We are laying a very solid foundation for the transition to the next phase of artificial intelligence-based voice and chat enabled 'conversational banking'. Our goal is to ensure the entire service experience is seamless and more personalized with instant responses so that the chatbot can evolve and act as a banking assistant in the future," he said. Borgan Bank customers can begin engaging and interacting with 'BANKI' currently on the official website in their preferred language, with the service launching soon on the bank's social media platforms as well.

major US stock indexes moving above and below break-even, a day after the market's worst single-day drop in three months. MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe shed 0.35 percent.

Spot gold prices gained as investors bought the safe-haven metal, with bullion heading toward its biggest gain since the week of April 10. Meanwhile, oil prices fell for the first time in seven weeks.

Spot gold added 0.3 percent to \$1,731.81 an ounce. US gold futures settled down 0.1 percent at \$1,737.30. Joe Saluzzi of New Jersey-based trading firm Themis Trading LLC, said investors face broad uncertainties over what an economic recovery will look like and when we will get a vaccine for coronavirus. —Reuters

## Business

# US consumer confidence rises; but unemployment crisis looms

## Consumer sentiment index rises 9.1% to 78.9 in June

WASHINGTON: US consumer sentiment perked up in early June as households cheered the reopening of businesses and a surprise rebound in hiring, though they did not expect a significant improvement in the economy amid fears of a resurgence in COVID-19 infections.

The survey from the University of Michigan on Friday is broadly in line with economists' expectations that the recovery from the recession would be a long slog. The National Bureau of Economic Research, the arbiter of US recessions, declared on Monday that the economy slipped into recession in February.

"While uncertainty about the future is beginning to ease, it is still higher than it was at anytime during the Great Recession," said Joel Naroff, chief economist at Naroff Economics in Holland, Pennsylvania. "That raises questions about the willingness to purchase big-ticket items. If we don't see that happen, the recovery will be slower than hoped for."

The University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index increased to a reading of 78.9 from 72.3 in May. It said "few consumers anticipate the reestablishment of favorable economic conditions anytime soon." Two-thirds of consumers in the survey expected "bad times financially" during the year ahead, while half anticipated a "renewed downturn."

In addition to concerns about a second wave of COVID-19 infections, consumers also worried that persistently high unemployment could slow the economic recovery. Though the economy created 2.5 million jobs in May, an employment gap of nearly 20 million remains since March when nonessential businesses were shuttered to slow the spread of COVID-19. Layoffs are more than double their peak during the 2007-09 Great Recession.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the sentiment index would rise to 75 early this month.

While the University of Michigan survey showed

consumers' inflation expectations easing slightly in June, they remained above their pre-COVID-19 shutdown levels. Consumers' one-year inflation expectations slipped to 3.0 percent from 3.2 percent in May. Five-year inflation expectations dipped to 2.6 percent this month from 2.7 percent.

### Resurgence of COVID poses risk

Consumers' inflation perceptions in the past months have been driven by higher food prices, amid meat shortages caused by COVID-19 outbreaks at processing plants. "That provides some reassurance that the recent plunge in prices for travel-sensitive services like airline fares and motor vehicle insurance will not lead to a more widespread period of falling prices," said Andrew Hunter, a senior US economist at Capital Economics.

Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher, recouping about half of the previous session's sharp losses. The dollar rose against a basket of currencies. US Treasury prices fell.

### Import prices rise

Deflation fears were further assuaged by a separate report from the Labor Department on Friday showing import prices rose 1.0 percent in May, the largest gain since February 2019, after falling 2.6 percent in April. Import prices, which exclude tariffs, were driven by higher costs for petroleum products and food.

The government reported this week consumer prices falling moderately in May and a solid rebound in producer prices. Deflation is a decline in the general price level, which is harmful during a recession as consumers and businesses may delay purchases in anticipation of lower prices. "These gains should support June increases for CPI and PPI," said Mike Englund, chief economist at Action Economics in Boulder, Colorado. "Trade prices should rise further in June with oil prices, alongside a lift from a drop-back in the value of the dollar,



SALT LAKE CITY: In this file photo, Union Pacific train engines face each other as they sit idle at a train yard in Salt Lake City, Utah. Despite moves to reopen businesses, another 1.54 million US workers filed for unemployment benefits last week, the Labor Department said.—AFP

though we have an ongoing headwind from demand destruction with global shutdowns."

The Federal Reserve, which tracks the core personal consumption expenditures price index for its 2 percent inflation target, sharply lowered its inflation projections on Wednesday. The US central bank projected core inflation rising 1.0 percent this year and picking up to 1.5 percent in 2021. Back in December, it forecast inflation at 1.9 percent this year and 2 percent in 2021.

In May, prices for imported fuels and lubricants surged 20.5 percent after declining 31.0 percent in the prior month. Petroleum prices jumped 21.7 percent after plunging 32.6 percent in April. Imported food prices rebounded 2.2 percent last month after dropping 1.6 percent in April.

Excluding fuels, import prices gained 0.1 percent following a 0.5 percent drop in April. The cost of

goods imported from China was unchanged in May. Prices declined 1.0 percent year-on-year, the smallest drop since March 2019.

The government also reported that export prices rose 0.5 percent in May as higher prices for nonagricultural products offset lower prices for agricultural goods. That followed a 3.3 percent drop in April. Export prices fell 6.0 percent on a year-on-year.

Prices for agricultural exports declined 0.5 percent, pulled down by weaker prices for corn, dairy products and soybeans. That more than offset higher prices for meat, vegetables and cotton. Agricultural export prices fell 3.5 percent year-on-year. Nonagricultural export prices rose 0.6 percent, boosted by higher prices for industrial supplies and materials, which overcame decreases in prices for capital goods, consumer goods, automotive vehicles, and nonagricultural foods.—Reuters

## Quadruga CX was a Ponzi scheme: Probe

OTTAWA: Canadian cryptocurrency exchange Quadruga CX was operated as a Ponzi scheme, Canadian securities regulators have concluded, blaming the fraud for its demise.

Gerald Cotten, the founder of the Vancouver-based company, which collapsed last year following his sudden death, siphoned millions of dollars from unwitting clients to cover trading losses, as well as lavish spending on himself and his wife.

Seventy-six thousand investors from Canada and around the world collectively lost at least \$169 million. In a statement Thursday, the Ontario Securities Commission said it "determined that Quadruga collapsed due to a fraud committed by Cotten."

It alleges that he "opened accounts under aliases and credited himself with fictitious currency and crypto asset balances, which he traded with unsuspecting Quadruga clients." Cotten covered a shortfall in funds available for client withdrawals with other clients' deposits, "in effect, operating a Ponzi scheme," the OSC said in a statement.

A typical Ponzi scheme generates returns for early investors by acquiring new investors. Cotten's widow Jennifer Robertson said in a 2019 affidavit that the company had been unable to access encrypted computers that her late husband was believed to have used to store the cryptocurrencies, putting millions of dollars out of reach.

The files, for which Cotten alone had the passwords, were referred to as cold wallets.

Court-appointed monitor Ernst & Young noted that the couple had "acquired significant assets including real (estate) and personal property" and "frequently travelled to multiple vacation destinations often making use of private jet services."

The auditors also found that monies were transferred from the Canadian cryptocurrency platform to competitor exchanges and into personal accounts controlled by Cotten. But they were unable to confirm the identity of several wallet holders.

The OSC panel during a 10-month investigation reconstructed the affairs of Quadruga CX, which did not maintain proper financial records, by analyzing records from third-party payment processors and banks.

It went through more than six million transactions linked to more than 368,000 client accounts, and thousands of emails. The bulk of the missing funds, or about \$115 million, "arose from Cotten's fraudulent trading," the regulator concluded.

Millions of dollars, it said, were also misappropriated "to fund his lavish lifestyle."

Cotten died of complications from Crohn's disease in December 2018 during a trip to India. He was 30. —AFP

## Sony pulls back curtain on PlayStation 5

SAN FRANCISCO: Sony on Thursday gave the world the first look at its upcoming PlayStation 5, along with a glimpse at action-packed games being tailored for the next-generation consoles. The Japanese consumer electronics giant did not reveal pricing or a launch date for the PS5, which will take on a new Xbox Series X from Microsoft when the rival consoles hit the market later this year.

"With PlayStation 5, we are making a significant leap to deliver a truly new generation of transformative play experiences that will redefine expectations for what games can be," said Sony Interactive Entertainment chief Jim Ryan.

Ryan said the powerful hardware will offer "richer and more beautiful" content that will "captivate your senses in ways you didn't think possible." A streamed, hour-long presentation showing off titles being readied for PS5 ended with a first glimpse at the console—a dark tower with white sides that encased it like a partially open clamshell.

## Ailing Argentina extends debt talks to June 19

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina on Friday extended a deadline for debt restructuring talks to June 19 as the economy ministry announced it was preparing to present a new offer to creditors. The announcement, the third extension in months of negotiations to restructure \$66 billion in debt, had been expected amid reports that the government and bondholders were still some way apart.

"Argentina and its advisors intend to take advantage of this extension to continue discussions and allow investors to continue contributing to a successful debt restructuring," a statement from the economy ministry said. Buenos Aires is analyzing suggestions "on the different possible ways to improve collections... and maximize investor support, while preserving its debt sustainability objectives," it said.

Earlier, Mexico's President Manuel Andres Lopez Obrador said he had personally lobbied Larry Fink, chief executive of major Argentina creditor Blackrock, to accept the Argentine offer. He said he had contacted Fink at the request of Argentine President

Two versions of the PS5 were shown, one with a slot for game or video disks and another without for players who prefer to download titles via the internet. Ryan touted PS5 as Sony's most "striking" console design to date.

The PlayStation presentation, though, showcased games, which are main drivers of console sales.

Sony said the latest edition of the controversial blockbuster video game Grand Theft Auto, in which players engaged in rampant criminal activity, is being tuned for PS5 with expanded content and improved performance. Games shown during the PS5 event included Marvel's Spider-Man Miles Morales and first-person shooter Deathloop in which rival assassins are locked in a time loop on an island rife with enemies.

Car racing game Gran Turismo Sport was also shown off, along with a Resident Evil Village addition to the hit survival-themed franchise.

"PlayStation 5 will represent a paradigm shift in what players expect from gaming," said Hermen Hulst, head of PlayStation worldwide studios and a co-founder of Guerrilla Games.

Guerrilla is working on a "Horizon Forbidden West" action game sequel exclusively for PS5.

Microsoft last month unveiled games for its new Xbox console com-

Alberto Fernandez. "He knew I had a good relationship with Larry Fink," the Mexican president told his daily press conference.

"Sometimes these things affect the economic and financial stability of the world, of other countries," said the Mexican president, who did not disclose the date of his discussions.

Fernandez on Wednesday said that "obviously Argentina will improve its offer," after being knocked back several times by bondholders. In April, Argentina asked bondholders for a three-year grace period on debt repayment, a 62 percent reduction on interest amounting to \$37.9 billion, and 5.4 percent on capital — or \$3.6 billion.

That was rejected the following month, while Argentina then failed to pay \$500 million of interest on its bond debt, thus defaulting. Last week, the IMF gave its backing to a revised proposal by the Argentine government, but Fernandez insists any deal must be sustainable. The new offer could include a coupon tied to agricultural exports, the country's main source of income, according to sources close to negotiations, which involve three separate creditor groups.

The export warrants "would be less open to manipulation by governments (present and future) than the traditional GDP warrants, which have been issued in the past," Capital Economics said in a note. — AFP



In this file photo, the Sony Playstation logo is seen during the Tokyo Game Show

ing this year, wooing fans hungry for escape in a time of pandemic. Microsoft has not yet announced a release date for Xbox Series X.

PlayStation 4 consoles have trounced Xbox One in sales since the rival gaming systems launched in late 2013. While many titles may be played on different consoles, Sony has a strong library of exclusive content such as Horizon Zero Dawn, God of War and Marvel's Spider-Man, according to analysts who

point out that Microsoft has a difficult challenge.

"While, from what we have been told so far, we know the Xbox Series X will, on paper, have stronger specifications than the PS5, Sony has a tight grip on the gaming market," said market tracker Futuresource. Video games have been seeing exceptional growth during the COVID-19 pandemic which has shut down real-world activity and kept billions indoors.—AFP

## Pakistan sets ambitious growth target

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday announced its annual budget for financial year 2020-21, setting ambitious targets of 2.1 percent GDP growth, a 7 percent fiscal deficit and an increase in tax revenues, even as it reels from a surge in novel coronavirus cases.

The GDP target is much higher than a recent World Bank projection that Pakistan will have another year of negative growth at -0.2 percent, while the fiscal deficit is much lower than the 9.4 percent it is expected to hit in the current year.

Headline inflation that hit a decade-high of 14.56 percent in January is estimated at an average rate 6.5 percent in the next year. Economic analysts termed the targets unrealistic, forecasting that the government will need to introduce a mid-year supplementary budget given the economic disruptions caused by the pandemic.

"It looks unlikely that they will meet the fiscal deficit target," said Saad Hashemy, Executive Director at BMA Capital.

Total expenditure for the next fiscal

year will be 7.136 trillion Pakistani rupees (\$43.45 billion), said Minister for Industries and Production Hammad Azhar as he introduced the budget in a rowdy session of parliament.

Only 25 percent of members were in attendance in an attempt to ensure social distancing. "Corona is a flu!" shouted one opposition member, taking a jibe at Prime Minister Imran Khan, who in his initial response to COVID-19 had played down the respiratory disease.

Pakistan has struggled to contain the virus and the World Health Organization has warned that the acceleration of infections could overwhelm the under-funded healthcare system.

Official statistics showed a record 6,397 new cases and 107 deaths on Thursday, taking the tally to 125,933 cases and 2,463 fatalities. Azhar said in his speech that the outbreak has caused Pakistan's nearly \$300 billion economy a loss of 3.3 trillion Pakistani rupees (\$20.09 billion).

"The long lockdown, a countrywide shutdown of business, travel restrictions and social distancing have diminished economic activities, which have had a negative impact on growth rate and investment," Azhar added. On the expenditure side, debt servicing will take up 2.946 trillion Pakistani rupees (\$17.94 billion) - 41 percent of the country's spending.—Reuters

# Study shows how reintroduced predators benefit ecosystems

**WASHINGTON:** These little guys think there's something you otter know. Shellfish-munching sea otters have been the bane of fishermen's existence ever since they were reintroduced to Canada's west coast in the 1970s—but a new study indicates they bring more economic benefits than losses.

The research was led by teams from the University of British Columbia and Vancouver Island University and published in the journal *Science* on Thursday.

The study offers an example of what might happen if other endangered species—from apex predators like wolves and sharks, to herbivorous bison which were once plentiful in the great plains—are brought back to their original habitats.

Toward the end of the 19th century, otters in the northwest Pacific were hunted almost to the point of extinction due to a demand for their thick, luxurious fur—the densest coat in the animal kingdom, used by the aquatic mammals for insulation in freezing cold waters.

Otters prey mainly on invertebrates such as crabs, clams, and urchins. Don't challenge these chunky critters to an eating contest, as they consume about a quarter of their body weight every day.

With the otters gone the shellfish fishing industry exploded. The Canadian government however decided to reintroduce otters in the 1970s—without consulting the local population, including the native First Nations.

The otters began devouring the main source of fishermen's livelihoods, in what initially seemed to be a textbook example of ecological-economic conflict. But it's not so straightforward, said the new paper's authors. The return of the otters also led to indirect effects on the ecosystem known as "trophic cascade."

Otters eat sea urchins, which had devoured kelp on the ocean floor. The size of these algal forests have now multiplied by a factor of twenty, said the researchers.

And kelp provide protective habitats for a number of fish species like herring, which, in turn, benefits the fishermen. Not only that, kelp also sequesters carbon dioxide, reducing ocean acidification and the amount of the greenhouse gas in the atmosphere.

### Wolves, foxes and ticks

The biggest direct financial benefit has come through tourism. "The sea otter is a very charismatic species," said Russell Markel, a co-author of the paper who runs Outer Shores Expeditions. "Tourists love being able to see them in the wild and, importantly, are willing to pay for this experience."

The study authors estimate the dollar profit from having the sea otters is seven times greater than the losses to the shellfish industry. "When you restore a predator, it usually is controversial. And this arises largely because predators end up competing with people for resources," said Jane Watson, a professor at Vancouver Island University.

But the return of kelp forest "increases near-shore productivity" and "creates habitat for kelp dependent species," she said. "Countless ecosystems around the world are a shadow of their former glory, held back by missing key ecological players just as the sea otters were missing from this coast for decades," added Kai Chan, the paper's senior author, from the University of British Columbia. "Thus we are seeing elsewhere how reintroducing wolves can trigger ripples of benefits for a large number of species and also for humans across the US and even in Europe," he added.

How might bringing wolves back help humans?



Otters prey mainly on invertebrates such as crabs, clams, and urchins. Don't challenge these chunky critters to an eating contest, as they consume about a quarter of their body weight every day.

Their extermination from the mid-western and eastern United States benefited coyotes, which in turn led to a reduction in the population of foxes.

Foxes prey on small mammals, whose population has exploded as a result—leading to a surge in

ticks, and of Lyme disease. The new paper underscores the need to analyze ecosystems in their totality, rather than looking solely at what reintroducing predators will mean in terms of livestock losses.—AFP

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## Lifestyle | Features

## Star French chef comes up with 'COVID-safe' restaurant

French superchef Alain Ducasse is using a ventilation system similar to those in hospital operating theatres to reopen one of his Paris restaurants. Ducasse, whose restaurants have 17 Michelin stars—the most of any chef in the world—is installing the sophisticated system in his historic Allard bistro in the chic Saint Germain des Pres district of the French capital so it can open later this month. French restaurants have been allowed to serve on their terraces for 10 days but strict social distancing rules mean the interiors remain off limits.

Diners in Paris bistros and cafes traditionally sit almost elbow to elbow on small tables—a nightmare for restaurateurs who have been told by that tables must now be at least one metre apart. "No restaurant can survive with only half of its customers," Ducasse told AFP as he unveiled his air filtration system at the Allard, whose tables will also be screened off with sail cloth blinds.

Large white air "socks" decorated with drawings of the gods and goddesses of the wind hang over every table from the overhead ventilation pipes, gently pushing stale air away. And customers will also be offered round transparent "separators" to be placed on their table for additional safety when French restaurants are due to fully reopen on June 22.



French Chef Alain Ducasse poses in his restaurant Allard in Paris.—AFP

Ducasse said his prototype will "give extra safety to customers in confined spaces" and was a possible solution for tightly packed bistros which could lose half their tables if distancing rules are rigidly applied. Designer Patrick Jouin, whose work is displayed at MOMA in New York as well as the Paris Pompidou Centre, said he talked to scientists and virologists before coming up with the air system.

## 'Appropriate modernity'

He said its efficiency was comparable to those used in hospital operating theatres and intensive care units. Jouin said he contacted Ducasse in April to try and square the circle of social distancing, which he knew could be disastrous for restaurants in the long term. The designer said that his extraction and filtration system means the safe distance between people can be reduced from a metre to 32 centimetres (about a foot). Ducasse insisted the system does not spoil the atmosphere of the 1930s institution, with its red velvet banquettes and period wallpaper. "We have preserved the spirit of the place," he told AFP. "I love the idea of the just and appropriate modernity we have put into the DNA of this 1930s restaurant. "Even if COVID-19 disappears, I will keep this design," Ducasse vowed.

The chef said he wanted to "show that it was possible to do things differently and not just to passively accept (the constraints imposed by the virus), but to actively work with them." Jouin said normal restaurant air conditioning systems work very fast, which ironically can actually help concentrate the viral charge.

So he had to come up with a way of reducing the speed while "changing more of the air". "We take the air from the outside and pass it through a filter which makes it absolutely clean.



Into that we inject slightly cooled pure air above each table at a very low speed." Jouin refused to say how much the system cost but insisted it was not expensive. "Restaurants will be able to afford it," he said.—AFP

French Chef Alain Ducasse (center) French designer Patrick Jouin (left), and French architect Arnaud Delloye (right), pose on June 11, 2020, in the Allard restaurant, in Paris, equipped by their anti-Covid filtering device.—AFP



In this file photo Meghan Markle's friend, Canadian fashion stylist Jessica Mulrone arrives for the wedding ceremony of Britain's Prince Harry.



In this file photo taken on October 01, 2019, Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex arrives at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.—AFP photos

## Virus-hit London Fashion Week opens without catwalks

London Fashion Week opened on Friday but without catwalk shows due to the coronavirus pandemic, which is leading to a rethink of the seasonal event and reinventing the whole industry. In addition to the 100 percent digital format, this Fashion Week—usually leading to men's collections—will mix genres, an innovation that will continue post-pandemic. For the first time since it was conceived in 1983, there will be no models parading new collections before crowds at the biannual event. Instead, some designers, such as the duo JORDANLUCA, will present their spring/summer 2021 collections or smaller "capsule" collections by video. Others such as Hussein Chalayan, will take viewers on a behind-the-scenes tour of their collection.

All content posted online, which will include interviews with designers, showroom visits and discussions on the environment and racism, will be available free of charge. "I think that conversation has really developed over the last few weeks this idea of reset, not just in terms of the industry slowing down, but taking on board its impact on the environment," Caroline Rush, director of the British Fashion Council (BFC) which promotes British fashion, told AFP. With global outrage at the death of George Floyd, an unarmed African American in US police custody, the fashion industry also has an "opportunity to be much more open, diverse, to use this voice around issues such as racism," she added.

The global pandemic is dealing a heavy blow to British fashion, with 73 percent of companies in the industry already reporting order cancellations, according to the BFC. The fashion industry, which employs 890,000 people, directly contributed £35 billion (\$43.6 billion, 38 billion euros) to the UK's GDP in 2019 — an annual increase of 9.4 percent. Professionals were already concerned before the outbreak about the possible negative impact of Brexit on what is a highly international industry. "The majority of our industry did not want to leave the EU... we have very close trading relationships and industry and have benefited definitely from being part of the EU, so... it's very important that, where possible, those links are able to continue," said Rush.—AFP



A one-off capsule collection of Dublin-born fashion designer Robyn Lynch and supported by Rapha, is displayed on the London Fashion Week website, in London on Friday.—AFP



In this file photo taken on June 21, 2019 Racegoers attend day four of the Royal Ascot horse racing meet, in Ascot, west of London.—AFP

## Markle's Canadian BFF has TV show axed over race row

Canadian network has pulled the TV series of Meghan Markle's fashion stylist friend Jessica Mulrone, who was accused of "white privilege" in a spat with a black lifestyle blogger. Mulrone got into the row with Sasha Exeter over the blogger's support for the anti-racism protests that swept the United States. According to the single black mother, 40-year-old Mulrone, the daughter-in-law of former prime minister Brian Mulrone, threatened to bad-mouth Exeter to companies and brands that support her blog. CTV said Mulrone's reality show, "I Do, Redo," which organizes do-overs of weddings that went wrong, had been removed with immediate effect.

The network and its parent company Bell Media said in a statement Mulrone's actions conflicted with their "commitment to diversity and equality." They added that on-air talent was expected to "listen to and amplify black voices, and not to minimize them." The announcement came after Exeter described details of the row in a video posted to Instagram. Exeter said she became "paralyzed by fear" and "literally sick to my stomach," before finally deciding to air the dispute in public. "Listen, I am by no means calling Jess a racist but what I will say is this: She is very well aware of her wealth, her perceived power and privilege because of the color of her skin," she said.

"And that my friends gave her the momentary confidence to come for my livelihood in writing," she said, describing Mulrone's actions as "textbook white privilege." Mulrone also lost her job as a fashion and bridal consultant for Canadian department store Hudson's Bay, and will no longer appear as a guest expert on Canada's longest-running women's daytime television show "Cityline."

She apologized late Thursday, saying Exeter was right to call her out "for not doing enough when it came to engaging in the important and difficult conversation around race and injustice in our society." "I took it personally and that was wrong," she said. "I know I need to do better. Those of us with a platform must use it to speak out." Mulrone met Markle in Toronto, where the Duchess of Sussex lived while filming TV drama "Suits," before she married Britain's Prince Harry.—AFP

## Keep your hat on... designers face tough times without Ascot payday

From dress designers to hat makers to the hospitality sector, Royal Ascot is usually a lucrative source of income for a whole industry connected with one of Britain's most feted social and sporting events. However, Queen Elizabeth II will be absent this year, dresses will remain on their hangers and champagne corks will stay in their bottles—welcome to racing in the age of coronavirus. The five-day event, west of London, starts next Tuesday behind closed doors for the first time in its 250-plus year history.

Despite efforts by organisers to encourage racing fans to dress up, put on a hat and take part in "Royal Ascot At Home", things will feel very different. Last year's meeting attracted 300,000 spectators, with 6,500 temporary staff backing up the full-time roster of more than 200 personnel. With no race fans present, the economic fallout for designers could be devastating. Kate Reardon, former editor of high society and fashion magazine Tatler, told AFP the days were long gone "since the early years of Princess Diana," when what was worn at Ascot set fashion trends. "There's a difference between fashion and getting dressed up," she said. Reardon, now the editor of LUXE, the luxury glossy magazine of the Times, said the event remains an excuse for people to buy a new dress. "Let's say that women attending, at least half would buy a new outfit just for the occasion," she said.

"Aggregate sales of clothes probably won't make the world's biggest difference to brands like Chanel—they aren't going to be gnawing at their knuckles in terror." But Reardon said the changed circumstances would have a "monumental impact" on an army of small designers, dressmakers and hat makers. "It would be rather like cancelling Christmas for the jewellery trade," she said. "Lots of occasion-wear boutiques, brilliant British craftspeople, and small businesses will be crucified by this."

## 'Theatrical'

Tail coats, which men must wear in the royal enclosure, do not change year in year out. But that is small comfort for Kristian Robson Ferner, owner of men's outfitter Oliver Brown, who said his business had taken a hit, forcing him

to use the government's scheme to furlough staff at the beginning of the lockdown. "We are going to lose £2 million (\$2.5 million) turnover due to Ascot being behind closed doors," said Robson Ferner, who has spent lockdown biding round London delivering to clients. "We are OK as it looks as though Barclays (bank) are coming to the rescue. We have all the stock but hope for a double bounce next year. "Loads of people who wanted to go this year will have had a year off so should be good."

But Neil Phillips, known as the wine tipster due to his knowledge of wine and racing, says for those employed by Ascot in the hospitality sector it is a year's work gone



In this file photo taken on June 18, 2019 Racegoers attend on day one of the Royal Ascot horse racing meet, in Ascot, west of London.—AFP photos

to waste. Last year 350 chefs served up food, including 10,000 steaks and 3,500 fresh lobsters. "The Ascot heads of catering and the chefs have been planning for ages," he said. "After one finishes they start on another. It's a big loss to them, of course it is. All that planning and on that scale scrapped. Very sad." For Reardon, though, the Royal Family, primarily the Queen, remains the biggest drawcard for the meeting—the clothes and the food are secondary. Queen Elizabeth, a noted racing fan, will miss Royal Ascot for the first time in her 68-year reign.—AFP

## Bobby Lashley: WWE is united in Black Lives Matter Movement

Bobby Lashley thinks his WWE family are all "on the same team" with the Black Lives Matter movement. The 43-year-old superstar has been vocal on social media about the need for "solidarity" amid anti-racism protests following the death of George Floyd — who passed away when a police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes — and he feels he has the support of the company and his colleagues. Speaking to assembled media including BANG Showbiz, he said: "I think with the Superstars, at least the ones that I'm more close with, I think everybody across the board, we're on the same team right now, I think. "I don't think anybody is looking at our situation and saying anything negative towards it. "Everybody's on

the same team as far as wanting to see some kind of change, some kind of resolution and some hands shaken, you know?" Lashley insisted there is a "common goal" of finding happiness, with everyone pulling in the same direction. He explained "At the end of the day, we all want to get along, we all have a common goal of wanting to be happy. "And if somebody doesn't feel that they're getting that happiness, then we need to find a way to make sure that that happens. And I think everybody's on the same team and same thought process in that." Meanwhile, Lashley also commented on his upcoming match and promised a "fight" when he clashes with Drew McIntyre for the WWE Championship at 'Backlash' later this month. He added: "Drew

brings out something in me, and I bring out something in him that not everybody can bring out. It turns rough, it turns into a fight!" Both superstars had time away from WWE before their current stints, but Lashley feels McIntyre was handed early opportunities which he never had. He said: "That match is big because he talks about how the locker room has changed, how he wants to make a change, how he has to show people that they should appreciate being there. "I'm in the same boat — I'm in kind of a different boat than he is. I was here for a long time, but I wasn't the chosen one — I was never the chosen one."



Lifestyle | Features

# How Black Lives Matter is changing entertainment

In the few short weeks since the death of George Floyd at the hands of US police, the reinvigorated Black Lives Matter movement has rocked the entertainment landscape. We look at the some of the most dramatic changes it has sparked, from the temporary withdrawal of "Gone With the Wind" from HBO Max to a procession of performers apologising for their depictions of black characters.

## Apologies and removals

American television reality show, "Cops", in which the cameras went on patrol with police, has been permanently pulled by the Paramount Network. The show—a small-screen institution which had been broadcast continuously since 1989—had been long criticised for glorifying macho policing and stirring fear of crime. A swathe of cult comedy sketch shows have also been removed by some streamers and broadcasters. "Little Britain" was dropped by its makers the BBC as well as from Netflix, while two other British shows, "The Mighty Boosh" and "The League

of Gentlemen" have also disappeared from the US streaming giant.

Four mockumentaries by the Australian comic actor Chris Lilley, of "Summer Heights High" fame, are also no longer available on the service, with speculation that it may be over his depiction of black, Tongan and Chinese characters. "Little Britain" creators David Williams and Matt Lucas had earlier admitted that they had regrets over the show. "If I could go back and do 'Little Britain' again, I wouldn't make those jokes about transvestites... and I wouldn't play black characters," Lucas said. Another British comic, Leigh Francis apologised last week for caricaturing black stars in his "Bo'Selecta" show in 2002. "I guess we're all on a learning journey," he said before Britain's Channel 4 pulled it from its streaming service.

## Spotlight on black stars

As well as quietly dropping some shows, Netflix and streaming rival Amazon are also promoting black talent. Netflix created a special Black Lives Matter

section this week of films and documentaries so viewers can "learn more about racial injustice and the Black experience in America". "When we say 'Black Lives Matter,' we also mean 'Black storytelling matters,'" it tweeted. The section includes documentaries, films and series from the Oscar-winning "Moonlight" to the campus-set series "Dear White People".

Amazon Prime has its own section called "Black History, Hardship & Hope", with films including "Just Mercy" starring Michael B. Johnson and Jamie Foxx based on the true story of a black man appealing his murder conviction. HBO Max meanwhile said they pulled "Gone With the Wind"—one of US President Donald Trump's favourite films—because of its "racist depictions" that were "wrong then and are wrong today". But they plan to make it available again alongside a discussion putting it in its historical context.

## Books and music

Books by black authors, or dealing with racial

issues—like sociologist Robin DiAngelo's "White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism"—have also shot up the bestseller lists. The Booker Prize-winning "Girl, Woman, Other" by British-Nigerian novelist Bernardine Evaristo is currently topping the British list, while Reni Eddo-Lodge's "Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race" becoming the fastest selling non-fiction title at British bookshop chain Waterstones even though it was published three years ago. The catch-all musical term "urban", which has been applied to rap, hip hop, R&B and other "black" genres, is also being questioned. Republic Records, a Universal label that is home to the Canadian stars Drake and The Weeknd, was the first to stop using the word, with the Grammys following their lead by replaced its "urban music" awards section with "R&B progressive". —AFP

## Protests show 'progress' on diversity, says 'Star Trek' icon Takei

George Takei, the pioneering Asian American "Star Trek" actor and LGBTQ icon, said massive anti-racism protests this month show the US is "making progress" on diversity, but warned the pandemic is renewing deep-rooted prejudices. Speaking to AFP ahead of his address at the University of California Los Angeles' virtual commencement Friday, Takei said the tens of thousands marching over George Floyd's death in police custody inspired confidence in the next generation. But—drawing on his childhood in US wartime internment camps, and decades trapped in the closet due to Hollywood homophobia—he urged youth to stand firm on minority rights. "We are making progress, but that involves active participation," he said. "As a society, we are moving, inching forward."

The star best known for playing Sulu in the original "Star Trek" has spent decades campaigning for social justice. At 83, he is not marching this time, but the protests remind him of the 1960s, when he met Martin Luther King, Jr. after performing in civil rights musical "Fly Blackbird." "He said, thank you very much, and especially you, as an Asian man—I was the sole Asian in that cast, I usually was back then," said Takei. "There weren't other Asians involved in the civil rights movement."

Now, with young people of all backgrounds marching against racism, Takei praised the next crop of activists. "You, the infinitely diverse hi-tech class have the whole of human history, the glorious and the ugly, as your launching pad," he said later in his UCLA address. "Stretch as far as you can," he added. "Boldly go where no one has gone before."

## 'Categorized as aliens'

But, speaking to AFP, Takei warned the coronavirus pandemic is exposing racism beyond prejudice against the black community—such as against Asian Americans, fueled by President Donald Trump's references to the "Chinese virus." "In the New York subway, an Asian American woman was spat at... in Texas, an Asian American family was stabbed by this person, because they 'brought the virus to this country'" he said. It serves as a painful reminder of the years Takei's Japanese-origin family spent in World War II internment camps in the US.



A local resident cleans graffiti from a wall on Penny Lane in Liverpool, north west England on Friday.—AFP

## Signs at Beatles pilgrimage site defaced in racism row

Road signs on Liverpool's Penny Lane, immortalised by The Beatles in their classic 1967 hit, were graffitied over on Friday following claims it was named after a slave trader. Black spray paint covered writing on four signs on the road in the northwest English city, while the word "racist" was also daubed on a wall above one sign. Local residents later cleaned off the paint. Beatles songwriter Paul McCartney signed one of the signs when he visited the area in 2018.

Liverpool mayor Joe Anderson earlier this week denied that the road was named after slave trader James Penny, although the city's International Slavery Museum is researching its origins. "There is some debate about whether Penny Lane was named after James Penny, but the evidence is not conclusive," said a spokesperson from the museum. "This is an extremely important subject to the museum and the city of Liverpool, and we want to encourage the public to share evidence and research on this topic if they have any."

Separately, a statue of Jamaican poet, playwright and actor Alfred Fagon in Bristol was attacked with what appeared to be a corrosive substance, the BBC reported. Fagon was the first black person to have a statue in the southwest English city, which is at the epicentre of the broader row after a monument honouring slave trader Edward Colston was pulled down last week.—AFP



This handout photo courtesy of UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) shows actor-activist George Takei giving the Vulcan salute ahead of his address at the UCLA virtual commencement from his home in Los Angeles on June 12, 2020. — AFP

"My history is being repeated again, in this day and age, because of this pandemic," he said. "I was born right here in Los Angeles, California... we're Americans," he said. "And yet, we were categorized as aliens simply because we look like the people that bombed Pearl Harbor." Soldiers with bayonets on their rifles forced Takei's family from their home and into "barbed wire prison camps." "I don't mean to compare my background with the graduating generation, but they have uncertainty in their lives," he said.

## 'Torturous'

The coronavirus has also meant Pride parades set for this weekend commemorating the "Stonewall riots" have largely been scrapped. The June 1969 riots sparked by repeated police raids on the Stonewall Inn, a popular gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village, proved a turning point in the gay rights struggle. Takei expressed regret at remaining "silent" on LGBT rights until he was spurred to come out by then-California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's veto of same-sex marriage in 2005. He had feared losing acting jobs—"Star Trek" was cancelled in 1969, the same year as Stonewall, leaving him in need of work.

"I was closeted most of my adult life... that was torturous. I wanted to speak out," Takei added. Ironically, the cult actor said coming out has increased his job offers, including multiple cameos as himself in sitcoms such as "The Big Bang Theory." But issues of racism, police brutality, and a row involving Harry Potter author JK Rowling this week in which she was accused of transphobia, serve as poignant reminders of the progress still needed, said Takei. "The root of this kind of bias is all the same, whether it's race, or race combined with war in our case, or by gender identification, it's the same," he said. "It's hate—irrational hate."—AFP

## Country trio Lady Antebellum changes name to remove slavery link

The Grammy-winning country group formerly known as Lady Antebellum on Thursday announced their new name Lady A, with members saying they were "embarrassed" for not considering the band name's link to slavery. The term "antebellum" refers to a time period before a war, and is widely associated with the pro-slavery American South in the pre-Civil War years. "As a band, we have strived for our music to be a refuge... inclusive of all," the group that emerged some 14 years ago said on social media. "We've watched and listened more than ever these last few weeks, and our hearts have been stirred with conviction, our eyes opened wide to the injustices, inequality and biases Black women and men have always faced and continue to face every day," it added. "Now, blind spots we didn't even know existed have been revealed."

The announcement comes after two weeks of anti-racism protests ignited after the police killing of an unarmed black man, George Floyd, in Minneapolis. The band—known for hits like "I Run To You" and "Need You Now"—said they had settled on the original name after taking their first group photos at an antebellum-style home, saying it reminded them of "music born in the South" that had influenced them.—AFP



In this file photo (from left to right) Charles Kelley and Hillary Scott of Lady Antebellum and Halsey perform onstage during the 53rd annual CMA Awards at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tennessee.—AFP

## New Zealand to change border rules after 'Avatar' row

New Zealand will ease its coronavirus border controls, the government said Friday, after a decision to let Hollywood director James Cameron into the country to film an "Avatar" sequel prompted anger over double standards. Cameron and a crew of 55 arrived in Wellington from Los Angeles last month after receiving special permission to enter the country to film the sequel to his 2009 mega-hit. The exemption prompted complaints from those who remained shut out by New Zealand's border closure, including a father from Hong Kong who missed the birth of his first child.

New Zealand closed its border to non-citizens and non-residents in March, and this week announced it had no active COVID-19 cases and had eliminated transmission of the virus. Businesses last month after receiving special permission to enter the country to film the sequel to his 2009 mega-hit. The exemption prompted complaints from those who remained shut out by New Zealand's border closure, including a father from Hong Kong who missed the birth of his first child.



Immigration Minister Iain Lees-Galloway said Friday that the requirement that dependents travel together with a New Zealand citizen or resident in order to enter the country, would be relaxed from next week. Workers will also be allowed in if they have unique technical or specialist skills and are involved in a project of significant regional or national importance. The mandatory 14-day quarantine for all arrivals—a requirement that means Cameron and his colleagues are still locked down in a Wellington hotel—will remain, he added.

"The bar for being granted an exception to the border restrictions is set high, and remains high, to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of people already in New Zealand," Lees-Galloway said. Under the changes, crew support staff and family from two America's Cup syndicates have been allowed in, INEOS Team UK and American Magic. Another two syndicates—Luna Rossa of Italy and Stars & Stripes Team USA—are expected to compete in the Prada Cup challenger series early next year but their immigration status is unknown. The winner of the challenge earns the right to race holder Team New Zealand for the America's Cup in March.—AFP

## Spike Lee tackles racism from Vietnam to present-day in 'Da 5 Bloods'

With protests against racism sweeping the United States, two new films from Spike Lee place contemporary violence against African-Americans in its modern historical context, going as far back as the Vietnam War. "Da 5 Bloods," out Friday on Netflix, follows a fictional group of black soldiers who risked their lives in Vietnam even as civil rights protests and race riots broke out in their home cities during the late 1960s. The movie blends their story with archive footage of anti-war protesters being shot by the National Guard, deadly urban riots and speeches from iconic Black Power leaders such as Malcolm X and Angela Davis.

Its release follows more than two weeks of mass demonstrations over the death of George Floyd, a handcuffed black man killed in custody in Minneapolis on May 25, and criticism of heavy-handed policing of the protests. "History repeats itself," Lee said of the film's message, in notes sent to the press. "And we can learn from history—if we wake up." "Da 5 Bloods" jumps between the wartime experiences of four African-American soldiers who lost their leader in the far-flung conflict, and their present-day return to Vietnam to retrieve his remains.

During the war, "bloods" was adopted as a brotherly term between African-American soldiers. One flashback depicts the moment the soldiers learn of Martin Luther King's 1968 assassination by a white gunman—an event that sparked furious protests across the United States, and sowed racially charged division among troops in Vietnam.

In the war itself, a disproportionately high number of black US soldiers were sent to fight—and die. African-Americans represented approximately 11 percent of the



In this file Bob Dylan performs on stage during the 21st edition of the Vieilles Charrues music festival in Carhaix-Plouguer, western France.—AFP

## Bob Dylan: George Floyd's death 'sickened me'

Legendary US folk singer Bob Dylan said he was "sickened" to see unarmed black man George Floyd "tortured to death" by a white police officer in his home state, in a rare interview published Friday. Dylan spoke to The New York Times the day after Floyd's killing in Minneapolis, which has sparked mass anti-racism protests across the nation. It was the musician's only interview outside his own website since he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2016. "It sickened me no end to see George tortured to death like that," he said of Floyd, who died after a white policeman knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes during an arrest. "It was beyond ugly. Let's hope that justice comes swift for the Floyd family and for the nation," said Dylan, 79, who was born in Minnesota and attended university in Minneapolis.

Several of Dylan's most beloved songs from the 1960s and 70s addressed issues of police brutality and racism, including "Hurricane" and "George Jackson." He is set to release his first album of original songs in eight years next Friday, entitled "Rough and Rowdy Days." Speaking from his Malibu, California home where he has been sheltering from the pandemic, Dylan described the coronavirus as an "invasion" and a "forerunner of something else to come." "Maybe we are on the eve of destruction. There are numerous ways you can think about this virus. I think you just have to let it run its course," he said.

In late March, shortly after California imposed stay-at-home orders to contain the pandemic, Dylan surprised fans by releasing "Murder Most Foul," his first original song since 2012's "Tempest" album. Dylan said he himself had been surprised when the 17-minute ballad about the assassination of John F Kennedy and the evolution of 1960s counterculture rose to the top of the Billboard chart. It was also the first song Dylan penned and released since he reluctantly accepted the 2016 Nobel Prize for literature, the first songwriter awarded the honor. Dylan maintained a relentless touring schedule until the coronavirus struck, forcing him to cancel a string of dates in Japan and North America this spring and summer. — AFP



civilian population, but in 1965 they accounted for nearly a quarter of all combat deaths in Vietnam. Still, they have not traditionally been the focus of classic Vietnam War movies such as "Apocalypse Now," "Full Metal Jacket" and "Casualties of War." "No disrespect to any film that's been done before about the Vietnam War, but we wanted to do this through the perspective of the black soldiers," said Lee. He added: "We knew that we had not seen brothers like this in a Vietnam film."

## '3 Brothers'

Although the film's timing after the Floyd protests is coincidental, it is a theme Lee has regularly returned to—most recently in a separate short film called "3 Brothers" last month, which began with a title card reading: "Will history stop repeating itself?" That film compared footage of Floyd's death with Eric Garner's—killed in police custody on Staten Island in 2014—and the similar killing of fictional Radio Raheem in Lee's own prescient 1989 movie "Do the Right Thing."

"How can people not understand why people are reacting the way they are?" said Lee while introducing "3 Brothers" to CNN. "This is history again and again and again." He added: "We saw it with the riots in the '60s, with the assassination of Dr. King... People are fed up, and people are tired of the debasing, the killing of black bodies." "Now we have cameras. But the attack on black bodies has been here from the get-go," Lee concluded.—AFP

# Coverage of anti-racism protests sparks reckoning in newsrooms



SEATTLE: Police provide escort as people participate in a "March of Silence" from Judkins Park to Jefferson Park and a statewide general strike in support of all Black lives on Friday. — AFP

## Cleric: Combat anti-Semitism; UAE warns against annexation

**JERUSALEM:** Saudi cleric Mohammad Al-Issa sees combatting anti-Semitism as a religious duty, an approach which saw the head of the Muslim World League awarded this week by Jewish groups. Issa was given a prize by the Combat Anti-Semitism Movement and the American Sephardi Federation, in a virtual ceremony on Tuesday celebrating Muslim leaders tackling anti-Semitism and racism. "Fighting anti-Semitism is a religious obligation and a moral obligation," Issa told AFP from the Saudi capital Riyadh.

The former justice minister vowed that the Muslim World League would "keep on until there is no more anti-Semitism and racism". The organization is financed by Saudi petrodollars and is seen as a diplomatic arm of the kingdom, as well as an instrument of Wahhabism, the austere doctrine. Political conflicts have led to tensions between Islam and Judaism, Issa said, calling on people to put such differences aside. "Political outlooks change over time but our values, our morals should never change," he said.

The Saudi cleric was praised in January by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for travelling to Poland for events marking 75 years since the Nazi death camp Auschwitz was liberated. "This is another sign of change in the attitude of Islamic bodies and, of course, the Arab states toward the Holocaust and the Jewish people," Netanyahu said at the time.

Visiting the World War II extermination camp, where the majority of more than a million people killed were Jews, marked a turning point for Issa. "We went to Auschwitz to tell the world that we are against these crimes and they will not be repeated," he said. Riyadh has no formal diplomatic ties with Israel, but the two have a common enemy in Iran. Both countries accuse Tehran of wanting to broaden its influence in the Middle East and develop nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, the Emirati ambassador to Washington warned Friday that annexation by the Jewish state of parts of the West Bank would jeopardize any warming of Arab-Israeli ties. "Annexation will certainly and immediately upend Israeli aspirations for improved security, economic and cultural ties with the Arab world and with the UAE," Yousef Al-Otaiba wrote in a rare op-ed by an Emirati official in Israel's top-selling daily *Yediot Aharonot*, published in Hebrew.

"Recently, Israeli leaders have promoted excited talk about normalization of relations with the United Arab Emirates and other Arab states. But Israeli plans for annexation and talk of normalization are a contradiction," he added. Israel is expected on July 1 to unveil its strategy for implementing a US Middle East

peace plan announced by US President Donald Trump in January.

The plan — rejected wholesale by the Palestinians — gave the green light for Israel to annex West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley, Palestinian territory occupied by the Jewish state since 1967. Otaiba said his country "has been an unflinching supporter of Middle East peace" and that "annexation is the illegal seizure of Palestinian land". It could "ignite violence and rouse extremists", he warned.

The move has drawn international condemnation and the Palestinians are trying to mobilize support, particularly in Europe, to pressure Israel to abandon the annexation project. Arab states have long seen a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as their condition for normalization of relations with Israel. But Gulf Arab nations like the United Arab Emirates have been warming to the Jewish state amid shared concerns over Iran.

"The UAE has encouraged Israelis to think about the upside of more open and normal links," Otaiba wrote. He noted that he was one of three Arab ambassadors present in the White House at the announcement of Trump's plan. "And we have done the same among Emiratis and with Arabs more broadly," he said.

Responding to Otaiba's op-ed, Israeli Foreign ministry Spokesman Lior Haiat said on Twitter: "Peace is an opportunity for the whole Middle East, and provides potential for us all. The US Peace Initiative (Trump plan) is a starting point to realize this vision." The Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, which rules Gaza, condemned Otaiba for what it called an attempt to seek common ground with Israel. "All parties that seek normalization with the occupation (Israel) must cease this track," Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said.

On Tuesday, a flight of Etihad Airways — the UAE's flag carrier — carrying medical supplies for the Palestinians to help fight the novel coronavirus touched down in Tel Aviv. But the aid was refused by the Palestinians as the UAE had coordinated with Israel rather than with the Palestinian Authority. While a similar May 19 Etihad flight to Tel Aviv was unmarked, Tuesday's was the first time the airline landed in Israel with its logo, a source with knowledge of the flights told AFP.

Otaiba said the UAE and other Arab states "would like to believe Israel is an opportunity, not an enemy". "We face too many common dangers and see the great potential of warmer ties. Israel's decision on annexation will be an unmistakable signal of whether it sees it the same way," he wrote. — Agencies

Nevertheless, US President Donald Trump and many local officials remain determined to get the world's biggest economy back on track. The virus and resulting lockdowns have caused a spike in US unemployment — 44.2 million people have filed claims for jobless benefits since mid-March.

Europe is pushing ahead with its exit from lockdown, with a number of countries preparing to reopen borders on a limited basis on Monday after the EU Commission urged a relaxation of restrictions. France said it would gradually reopen its borders to non-Schengen countries from next month, and Germany said it would end land border checks tomorrow. Greece said it would welcome tourists again, though Britons remain barred — and visitors from Italy, Spain and the Netherlands must undergo tests on arrival.

In several European countries the focus has shifted to the courts and who might eventually be pinned with the blame for the global financial and health crisis. In Italy, one of the countries hardest hit by the virus, prosecutors questioned Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte over his government's initial response.

In the country's northern Lombardy region, an investigation has been launched into why a quarantined "red zone" was not enforced around two towns sooner. And in Bergamo province, 50 victims' family members filed complaints this week over how the crisis was handled. "All investigations are welcome. The citizens have the right to know and we have the right to reply," Conte said this week. Elsewhere, British Airways, easyJet and Ryanair launched legal action against the British government over a "flawed" 14-day coronavirus quarantine system introduced this week. — Agencies

**NEW YORK:** Anti-racism protests triggered worldwide after the police killing of George Floyd have many American newsrooms grappling with their own role in contributing to racial inequality. The past week has seen a widespread backlash and a slew of resignations, both over Black Lives Matter protest coverage and mushrooming accusations that reporters of color face chronic mistreatment at a number of top US media organizations.

The New York Times opinion page editor resigned in flames after publishing a hardline column by a US senator who urged military force against protestors, as the Philadelphia Inquirer's news head also stepped down following blowback for the headline "Buildings Matter, Too," in reference to the damage caused by violence at the demonstrations.

And the editor-in-chief of *Bon Appetit*, a culinary magazine owned by media powerhouse Conde Nast, left in disgrace over accusations he belittled and underpaid employees of color as a photo of him wearing brownface circulated online. Similar situations rippled across the industry, from lifestyle websites to newspapers, as outlets organized employee town halls and scrambled to issue statements of solidarity, apologies and vows to improve.

Many black journalists meanwhile began tweeting about their personal work experiences, decrying the challenges of navigating an industry that's long been dominated by white men. "Is anyone else the only black reporter in their newsroom?" tweeted Akela Lacy, who covers politics at *The Intercept*. The 27-year-old, who began reporting for the left-leaning investigative publication after working at Politico, told AFP that while most people within news organizations are well-intentioned, the industry "can foster a culture that is hostile to non-white people".

Martin Reynolds — co-head of the Maynard Institute, a body focused on promoting diversity in news media — argued that mainstream legacy journalism institutions were "largely complicit in perpetuating structures of institutional racism, because we haven't explicitly challenged them". The former editor-in-chief of *The Oakland Tribune* also pointed to the lack of newsroom diversity as inextricably linked to the question of well-rounded coverage.

Some 77 percent of American newsroom employees are non-Hispanic whites, according to 2018 data from the Pew Research Center — compared to 65 percent of all US workers, and 60 percent of the overall population. Non-Hispanic white

men make up almost half of newsroom employees. Inadequate diversity can prove particularly problematic on a day-to-day basis, said Ken Paulson, former editor-in-chief of USA Today, as outlets often fail to adequately cover communities of color until there's a scandal or violence.

"Big stories always get the attention," he said. "The challenge is to tell the smaller stories that paint a picture of what's actually happening. Journalists and diversity are key to that." Many black journalists, Reynolds said, have reached their breaking point. "There's a parallel uprising in communities and uprising in a lot of newsrooms that is beginning to amplify," he said.

### 'Systematically racist system'

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette came under fire this week for barring a black woman reporter from covering protests after she posted a personal tweet regarding property damage linked to demonstrations — which the outlet considered compromising to her ability to remain objective. Facing an uproar, the company's executive editor cited "a longstanding canon of journalism ethics" that prevents voicing opinion about topics of coverage.

But the journalist at the row's center, Alexis Johnson, held that she was singled out for tweeting about a "black issue". Reynolds questioned the paper's logic, calling the notion of objectivity a "fallacy" and saying the responsibility lies instead in fairness, which requires personal bias awareness. Lacy, at *The Intercept*, voiced a similar point, citing "a huge hesitancy to take non-white reporters and staff's word as unbiased" as endemic to many newsrooms.

That editorial framework, she said, has shaped coverage to conform to a narrative that's overwhelmingly white-centric. "It's unnerving for a lot of us to see the benefit of the doubt continuously given to the people who have written the rule," she said. "There's some things that you look at and you're like, either no black person looked at this, or y'all just didn't listen to what they have to say."

Both Lacy and Reynolds voiced hope that the difficult conversations launching in some newsrooms indicated hope for a more just, equitable future of news. "Imagine what kind of country and world we can have if we address these systemic issues that are imperiling people of color, and at the same time focus on our journalism institutions so that they can better reflect the diversity of the country and world — to stop being a sustainer of a systematically racist system," Reynolds said. — AFP

## Lebanon to inject dollars...

Continued from Page 1

of 1,507 in place since 1997. Protesters had initially taken to the streets after sundown on Thursday, railing against the spiralling cost of living and the government's apparent impotence in the face of the worst economic turmoil since the 1975-1990 civil war. They had also rallied against the governor of the central bank, Riad Salame.

Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, who attended Friday's meeting with the president alongside Prime Minister Hassan Diab, said the government's measures aimed to bring the exchange rate to stronger than 4,000 pounds to the dollar. The black market rate had appreciated to below 4,500 on Friday evening after the president's announcement, two dealers said.

Tensions have grown recently between the government, which is backed by Shiite movement Hezbollah, and the central bank's governor. Experts say the cabinet would like to see Salame removed from the position he has held since 1993. Protesters accuse him of having encouraged state borrowing over the decades that they say benefited only the banking and political elite.

Anger against banks has risen in recent months, after they banned all transfers abroad and gradually restricted dollar withdrawals, forcing those in need

to buy the greenback at unattractive rates on the black market. "Several currents taking part in the protests want to topple the central bank governor and hold him accountable for the financial crisis, among them Hezbollah, Lebanese American University professor Imad Salamey told AFP.

Hezbollah supporters joined the demonstrations late Thursday, despite usually being against the protest movement that began in October. The previous government stepped down under street pressure just weeks into the demonstrations that began in October, and Diab's cabinet began work earlier this year. "The economic situation has further deteriorated... The middle class has been obliterated," said Hilal Khashan, a professor at the American University of Beirut. "But I don't think the government will collapse."

The central bank late Thursday hit out at "baseless" information on social media of "exchange rates at levels far from reality, which mislead citizens". Lebanon — one of the most indebted countries in the world with a sovereign debt of more than 170 percent of its GDP — went into default in March. It started talks with the International Monetary Fund last month in a bid to unlock billions of dollars in financial aid. Dialogue is ongoing.

Unemployment has soared to 35 percent nationwide. The country enforced a lockdown in mid-March to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus, dealing a further blow to businesses. Lebanon has recorded some of the pandemic's best declared metrics in the Middle East, with just 1,422 cases of COVID-19, including 31 deaths. — AFP

## Fresh virus cluster in China raises...

Continued from Page 1

India has 145,779 active cases, and has recorded 8,884 deaths.

Latin America has emerged as the latest epicenter of the respiratory disease, believed to have jumped from an animal to humans at a Chinese market that sold wildlife. Brazil's health ministry recorded 909 deaths in the past 24 hours, putting the total at 41,828 — meaning the country of 212 million people has now surpassed Britain's death toll.

"Some areas are at a critical stage" in Brazil, with intensive care unit occupancy levels of more than 90 percent, World Health Organization emergencies director Mike Ryan told journalists in Geneva. Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who threatened last week to quit the WHO over "ideological bias", has dismissed the virus as a "little flu", and berated state officials for imposing lockdowns. World health officials have warned that the virus is far from contained. "The fight is not over," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said this week.

In the US, which has confirmed the most COVID-19 deaths — over 114,000 — more than a dozen states, including two of the most populous, Texas and Florida, reported their highest-ever daily case totals this week. "It's important that we remember that this situation is unprecedented. And that the pandemic has not ended," Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told a media briefing on Friday.

## Shuttered salons deprive women...

Continued from Page 1

"I'm from a conservative family and don't go out much, but I go to the salon to enjoy myself... you can't imagine how much fun I used to have there," Warda told AFP. "I'm waiting patiently for it to reopen. I can't imagine my life without it."

While Kuwaiti society is one of the most open-minded in the Gulf, with women in top government positions, some traditional families impose tight restrictions. This means that for some women, going alone to malls, coffee shops or even to exercise is out of the question. But going to beauty salons, usually run entirely by women, is an acceptable break from the routine of work and home.

Others from more liberal families are also big fans, seeing the salons as the equivalent of the traditional daily "diwaniya" when men traditionally gather to chat, drink coffee and smoke shisha. It's rare to find a building in Kuwait's shopping districts without a salon or two. Adiba Al-Wadi, who owns two such outlets in Fintas, says frequenting salons has become "a way of life". The state has a per-capita income of over \$70,000 a year, one of the highest in the world, ensuring a lavish lifestyle for many citizens.

Locals only make up about a third of the population of five million, the majority of them in high-

paying government positions, meaning many women can afford regular, top-end pampering services. "Some Kuwaiti women go to salons at least twice or three times a week for beauty services, to chat and have coffee," one woman who now lives in the United Arab Emirates told AFP.

The five-star salons usually offer services ranging from hair, skin and nail care to massages, Moroccan baths and jacuzzis. Some of the Gulf's top social media influencers are Kuwaitis, including beauty salon and brand owner Fouz Al-Fahd and fashion blogger Dalal Al-Doub, who has some 2.7 million followers on Instagram.

Kuwaiti women missing their salons will have to wait until September, when they are set to reopen under eased coronavirus restrictions. So far, the country has recorded more than 34,000 coronavirus cases, including 279 deaths. The pandemic has taken a toll on many businesses including salons, many of which had to furlough or lay off workers.

Some women, refusing to be deterred, have asked for treatments at home, Wadi said. "I've received many calls and messages from clients wanting us to provide services in their homes, but I had to apologize as it's currently not allowed," she said. And after such a long closure, Wadi said she does not expect salons to go back to being social hotspots due to new precautionary measures including a ban on walk-in clientele. "I think only really necessary services will push Kuwaiti women to go to the salons in the future," she said. "It will no longer be a treat." — AFP



Stars

**Daily SuDoku**

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

medium

**Friday's Solution**

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

hard

STAR TRACK

**Aries (March 21-April 19)**

Your generosity and altruism will be put to the test over the next few days, Aries. You'll probably help the underprivileged. After all, you've always felt concerned about humanitarian projects but have never gotten involved. Today this attitude will enable you to understand who you really are. You'll be able to learn a lot about your motivations and the keys to your success.

**Libra (September 23-October 22)**

You've felt the need to create over the past several days, Libra. This attitude is certainly due to the planetary positions, but it could also underlie your desire to change your professional and private lives. Therefore, you should let your creative mind come out. How about writing poetry or enrolling in a ceramics class? Don't refrain from showing this secret part of your personality to those closest to you.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**

Today's aspects will influence you to interact naturally with your circle of friends, Taurus. You're tired of hiding your feelings. You want to act in the way your instincts guide you. However, you're afraid of other people's reactions. Sometimes you don't express your emotions or opinions simply because you're afraid of what they might say or think. Try to gain more self-confidence.

**Scorpio (October 23-November 21)**

When you feel that your friends are trying to change your everyday life, you shouldn't try to resist it so stubbornly, Scorpio. Open up your heart and let yourself be led. You'll be surprised at the feeling of freedom this brings. You'll probably have some interesting interactions today. They might change your life completely. Get ready for an exciting day!

**Gemini (May 21-June 20)**

You're defining new strategies concerning your private life, Gemini. You could be feeling like a completely different person today. You're no longer afraid of society, and you enjoy meeting people. You'll probably sympathize with the goals of an individual or a group of people you have recently met. Try to fulfill your needs and forget any preconceived ideas.

**Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)**

Over the last few weeks you've been working hard so you don't have to worry about your finances, Sagittarius. Try to forget your problems, and especially avoid focusing on and talking about money today. Do what you feel like doing. You're probably already aware that you need to take care of yourself from time to time. Don't neglect your health.

**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**

Unfortunately, today's planetary energy will place you in a rather uncomfortable situation, Cancer. You'll be the one having to smooth things over with your group of friends. Try not to impose your point of view. On the contrary, you should try to become more diplomatic and gentler with the people around you. You could also learn a lot by observing how people behave.

**Capricorn (December 22-January 19)**

Today you're about to put your sense of humor to the test, Capricorn. You'll likely confront a few unexpected situations. Even if you're used to finding exciting things to do in an ordinary world, you'll be in for a big surprise or two. Today there will be a lot of excitement where you least expect it. Try to let the day's energy guide you.

**Leo (July 23-August 22)**

Even though the times are favorable for relaxation, you won't be able to fully enjoy this period, Leo. You'll instead try to adjust your agenda so you can lead a more balanced life. The planetary aspects in play will incite you to change your attitude toward work. You should try to lighten your responsibilities to avoid stress as much as possible.

**Aquarius (January 20- February 18)**

Today you'll question yourself about your private life, Aquarius. Indeed, you have to change your behavior. You're used to making decisions just for yourself. Now you'll realize that you need to think not only about yourself but also about your partner. This phase in your relationship is difficult and will lead to drastic measures. You now have to assume your responsibilities.

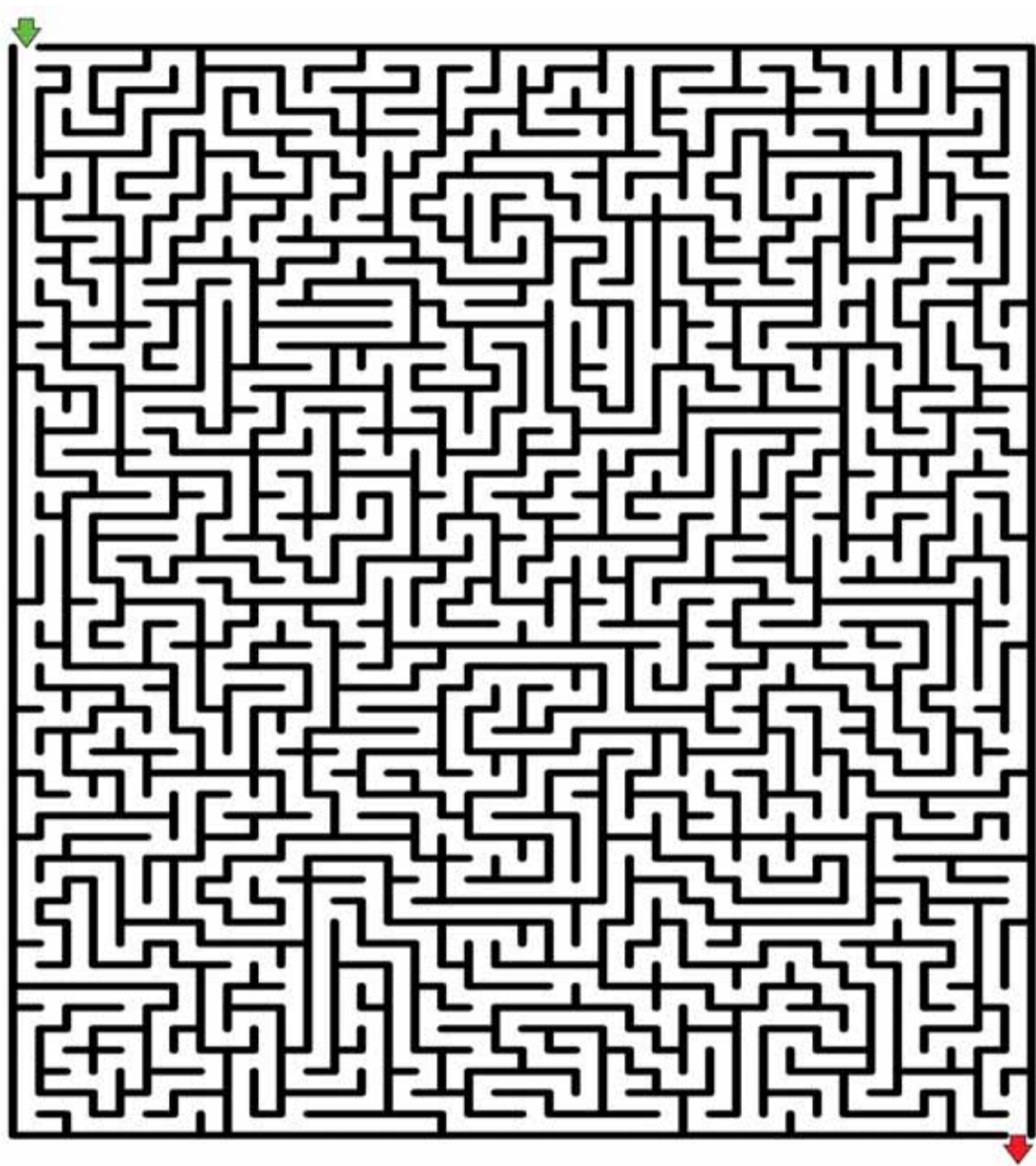
**Virgo (August 23-September 22)**

Today's celestial configuration will be favorable to changes in your relationships, Virgo. Your professional and private lives will be influenced by how well you deal with these relationships. You may have decided that in one way or another your behavior needs to change. Now it's time for you to act. Don't be discouraged if it takes a while to see lasting improvement.

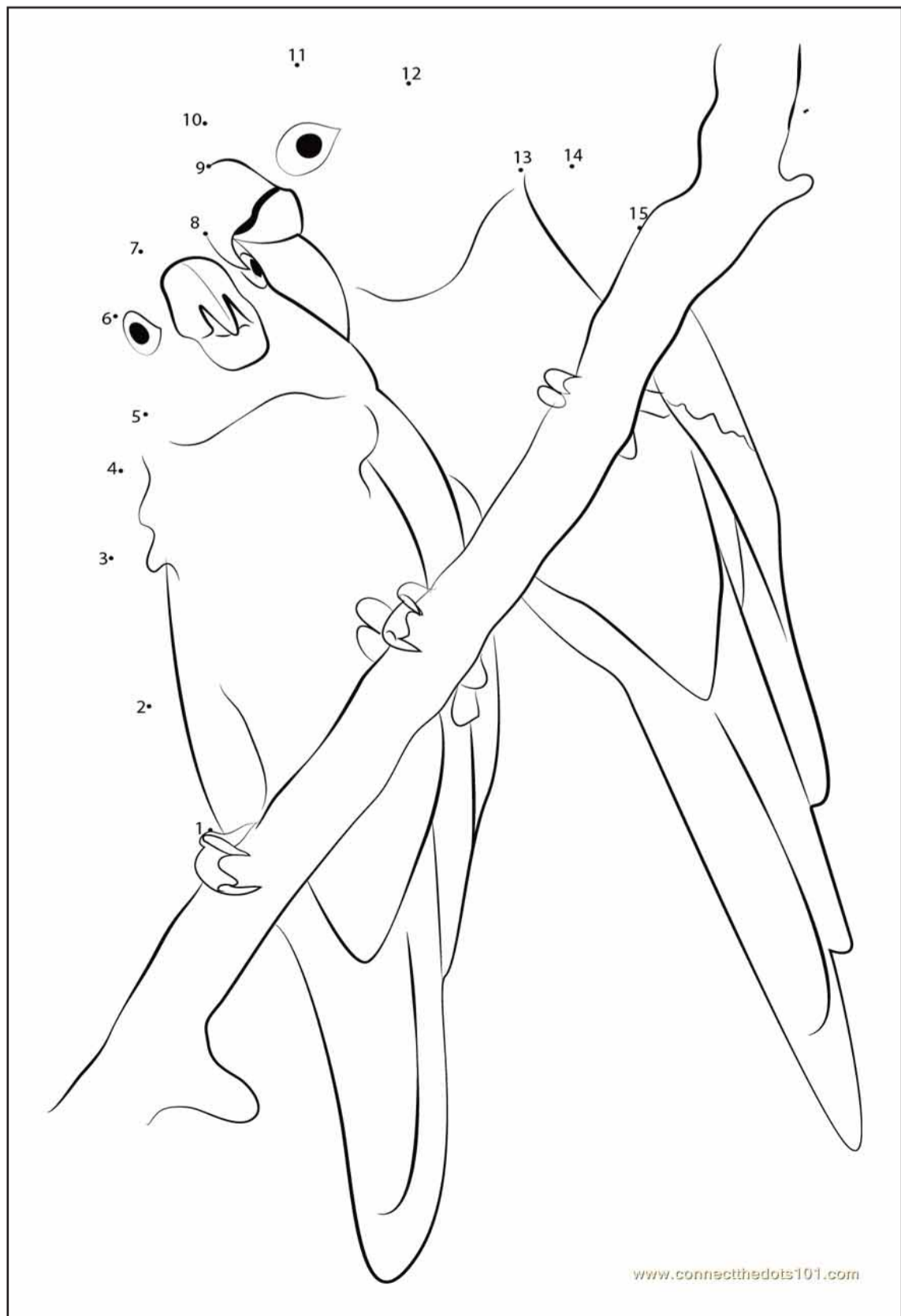
**Pisces (February 19-March 20)**

Today you should have a lot of vitality, Pisces. Recently, you may have decided to take more matters into your own hands. Your relationships will only benefit from this decision. The conflicts you've had to deal with were generally based on a lack of understanding. You sometimes have to make compromises. Try not to be too demanding.

Find the way



Join the dots



Word Scramble



Harry Potter  
Word Scramble

Somebody has cast a Gobbledygook Spell on Harry and his words are coming out all mixed up. Can you figure out what he is saying? Watch out! Some of the words are actually two.

- DIGHAR \_\_\_\_\_
- MUEGGL \_\_\_\_\_
- DANW \_\_\_\_\_
- DLTEOVROM \_\_\_\_\_
- RDFFGRYONI \_\_\_\_\_
- LRUESYDS \_\_\_\_\_
- OEBDLDMREU \_\_\_\_\_
- ANEYWREOLS \_\_\_\_\_
- RRSKAATD \_\_\_\_\_
- LILEBEONR \_\_\_\_\_
- IQCDIDUTH \_\_\_\_\_
- TRWFCICTHA \_\_\_\_\_

- NPOTSI \_\_\_\_\_
- ENOEHIRM \_\_\_\_\_
- LAEAYNIOLGD \_\_\_\_\_
- AAOCMYRDFLO \_\_\_\_\_
- NLIGWOR \_\_\_\_\_
- ILIVSNBEI \_\_\_\_\_
- DRNOGA \_\_\_\_\_
- OCSOHL \_\_\_\_\_
- ARHRY \_\_\_\_\_
- CASR \_\_\_\_\_
- IWZRDA \_\_\_\_\_
- RWSGAOTH \_\_\_\_\_

## Sports

## Photo of the Day



THE HAGUE: F1 racing driver Max Verstappen and motocross racer Jeffrey Herlings perform during The Dutch Road Trip at Scheveningen beach in The Hague, Netherlands. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## ECB vows changes to address racism in cricket

**LONDON:** The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has acknowledged that the sport is not immune to systemic racism and says it will address the issue and try to bring "meaningful and long-term change" to the game.

Athletes across a range of sports have spoken out about racism after the death of George Floyd, a black man who died on May 25 after a white policeman knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes in Minneapolis. "We have listened carefully to those who have spoken out in recent weeks about their experiences of being black in cricket, sport and society," the ECB said in a statement. "We admire them for being vocal on this crucial topic."

"We know that systemic racism spans institutions and sectors across the country and we know that our sport is not immune. We truly believe that cricket is a game for everyone but understand that sadly, barriers to its enjoyment exist for many communities."

Former England batsman Michael Carberry said cricket was "rife with racism" while fast bowler James Anderson said the team will consider a joint anti-racism protest with West Indies during their three-test series next month.

The ECB said they had made progress in bringing the game to more people and that they would "break down barriers and reform our structures".

"We will now work to engage community leaders and black influencers within cricket so that we can review and evolve our existing inclusion and diversity work and specifically address the issues raised by the black community," it added. "From there, it is our overall desire to create demonstrable action, in order to deliver meaningful and long-term change that permeates every layer of the game." — Reuters

# Harold Varner leads as Rory McIlroy charges in PGA return at Colonial

## Varner, one of three black players in the top 200 in world rankings

**LOS ANGELES:** Harold Varner overcame a triple-bogey start to maintain the lead at the halfway stage of the Charles Schwab Challenge on Friday as the hard-charging Rory McIlroy and Jordan Spieth appear poised to strike.

Varner, one of three black players in the top 200 in the world rankings, fired a four-under-par 66 at Colonial Country Club to reach 11-under 129 after 36 holes in the US PGA Tour's return event after a three-month shutdown due to the new coronavirus pandemic.

"I have learned a lot about myself through adversity. America is going through adversity right now so it is pretty eye-opening," said Varner, later referring to protests against the death of George Floyd, a black man killed recently as he was detained by white police officers.

Jordan Spieth and Bryson DeChambeau are tied for second, one stroke back after a second consecutive 65s, while world number one McIlroy fired a 63 to join Collin Morikawa and Xander Schauffele sharing third on 131.

England's Justin Rose and American Justin Thomas are tied for seventh. This week's Charles Schwab Challenge is full of firsts, the biggest change being the absence of spectators.

Players have to undergo temperature

screenings, regular COVID-19 testing and practice social distancing.

"When that first birdie putt went in and I didn't get a clap ... my hand was trying to go up to wave to someone in the gallery, but there's obviously no one there," McIlroy said.

The field includes 15 of the world's top



### Temperature screenings

20 players, but some bigger names from outside of North America skipped it because travelling to the US would mean two-weeks quarantine.

After an opening 63 to match Britain's late-starting Rose for the first-day lead, Varner took a seven at the par-four 10th hole to begin his second round, soaring off the tee and finding a bunker and rough before reaching the green.

Varner bounced back with birdies from four feet at 11 and 10 feet at the par-three

12th and par-three 16th holes.

"If you going to make a triple do it while you are playing well," said Varner, seeking his first PGA Tour win.

"I got it back in a hurry, so that was nice... The way I finished was pretty awesome."

After a bogey at 18, Varner closed with a flourish that started with a 31-foot birdie putt at the par-three fourth. He made three more in a row, the last a 20-footer at seven, and closed with a 10-foot birdie putt at the ninth.

The Tour is also holding a moment of silence every round at 8:46am, marking the time — 8 minutes 46 seconds — George Floyd spent pinned down by a white police officer kneeling on his neck.

### 'JUST TRYING TO MAKE BIRDIE'

Varner said the moment came at an awkward time. "After making the triple I was just fighting for my life. They told me not to putt, and I was like — I just wanted to make that putt just to get me back to even," he said.

"It's pretty cool that the Tour is doing that, but when you're out there you're just so in the moment."

Spieth, another back nine starter, had the lead after six birdies in his first 11 holes



FORT WORTH: Harold Varner III of the United States plays his shot from the 11th tee during the second round of the Charles Schwab Challenge on June 12, 2020 at Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth, Texas. — AFP

but four-putted for double bogey at the third and took a bogey at the par-three fourth after missing the green.

He bounced back with birdie putts from 16 feet at the fifth and 12 feet at the sixth to stay on Varner's heels.

"I played a really, really solid round of golf with a kind of 20-minute hiccup ... it's nothing to complain about," Spieth said.

McIlroy opened at the 10th hole and birdied three times on the back side before sinking a 23-foot eagle putt at the par-five first hole and following with a 10-foot birdie putt at the second.

Back-to-back birdies at the sixth and seventh put McIlroy one stroke off the course record but a losing bogey dropped him two off Varner's pace. — AFP

## Qatar announces completion of third FIFA WCup stadium

**DOHA:** The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy and Qatar Foundation have announced that the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 stadium located in Education City has been completed on schedule.

It is the third tournament-ready venue for Qatar 2022 to be completed, following the successful redevelopment of Khalifa International Stadium in 2017 and the inauguration of Al Janoub Stadium in 2019. The stadium's completion will be marked on 15 June with a live programme which celebrates the contribution of frontline workers during the coronavirus pandemic.

The show will also discuss the future of sport, mental health and fan experience in a post-COVID-19 world.



## MLB owners propose 72-game season

**NEW YORK:** Major League Baseball's latest offer to the players, presented Friday, calls for a 72-game season, ESPN's Jeff Passan reported.

Owners also are willing to up their financial offer to players, paying them 83 percent of their prorated salary when \$50 million in playoff bonuses are included, he said.

Ken Rosenthal of The Athletic reported a minimum three-week spring training could commence quickly after any agreement, and MLB plans to set a definitive timeline within 48 hours of any deal being reached. A deadline for an agreement is set for Sunday, per Rosenthal. The regular season would begin July 14 and end Sept. 27, the New York Post reported.

Passan said the roster would stand at 30 players the first two weeks of the season, drop to 28 for two weeks and remain at 26 during the rest of the season. Each team would have a taxi squad to draw from.

On Tuesday, the MLB Players Association reportedly submitted an outline for an 89-game season in which the players would get their full prorated salaries. A day earlier, the owners reportedly proposed a 76-game season in which players would be paid 75 percent of their prorated salaries, and only 50 percent if there wasn't a full postseason. Each offer drew a negative response from the opposing side. Commissioner Rob Manfred said Thursday that another offer from the owners was forthcoming and that he was "100 percent" certain the season will occur.

Baseball halted spring training on March 12 because of the coronavirus pandemic and eventually pushed back Opening Day indefinitely. In the subsequent months, the owners and players have disagreed over both the format and the finances of a back-to-action plan. Manfred said that ownership's newest proposal would be "another significant move in the players' direction in terms of the salary issue that has kept us apart." — Reuters

## Sports

# Cardboard cut-outs and Zoom parties: The new normal for Premier League fans

## Teams inspired by Bundesliga club Borussia Moenchengladbach

LONDON: From cardboard cut-outs in the stands to Zoom watch parties, the return of the Premier League will be a bizarre experience for locked-out supporters. The English top-flight resumes behind closed doors on Wednesday, with fans forced to adapt to an unsettling new normal due to the coronavirus.

Anyone watching the Bundesliga since German football's return will have noticed the eerie silence in the stands and echoing shouts of players are not conducive to a riveting viewing experience.

In the absence of fans, the games often seem soulless and resemble reserve team fixtures rather than high-stakes encounters.

Former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger is certain the Premier League product will suffer from the lack of colour and passion provided by supporters.

"What makes it special in England is the way people react to the game," Wenger told The Athletic. "It is the best country in the world for the way the fans respond to what's happening on the pitch."

He added: "You realise that football without fans is not real.... Only one part of the spectacle is the players. You realise how much you miss the other part." Keen to salvage some of the vibrant atmosphere that makes English football so popular, Premier League chiefs set up the Broadcast Enhancement Advisory Group. Clubs will reportedly be able to use video screens in stadiums to create "fan walls" made up of supporters on live video calls.

In Denmark, hundreds of fans were shown on a giant screen along one side of the Ceres Park stadium for the recent Superliga match between AGF Aarhus and Randers. It is understood that Premier League

clubs will also be allowed to play pre-recorded fan chants in stadiums to celebrate goals from the home team. Piped-in crowd noise could also be used for substitutions, VAR appeals and the final whistle.

Teams can use "stadium dressing" — comprising fan imagery, flags and banners — to cover the seats in the lower tiers of stands, minimising the visual impact of empty arenas. Several Premier League teams have been inspired by Bundesliga club Borussia Moenchengladbach, who used cardboard cut-outs of fans to fill around 13,000 seats in their stadium.

Brighton have offered supporters the chance to have personalised cut-outs, with some of the profits donated to charity. "Supporters are encouraged to wear colours to create a stand full of blue and white," the club said in a statement. However, the cut-outs cannot "sit" next to the replicas of family and friends in the Amex Stadium.

West Ham and Wolves have had a similar idea, with fans told their pictures can be part of crowd mosaics. Aston Villa have asked supporters to send in flags to fill the void at Villa Park. Fans are taking matters into their own hands as well. Leicester supporter Paul Rains has set up a website to give club members the chance to watch games together while enjoying a virtual version of the traditional matchday experience. He told the BBC: "I'll be using Zoom.... There's the pre-match pint, followed by the game itself and then the post-match meltdown."

"I'll be playing some well-known chants throughout the game, I'll open the online chat for match banter and post in-game polls to get views on controversial decisions."

Protests have erupted across the globe since the killing of African-American George Floyd in the United States on May 25 when a police officer, who has been charged with second-degree murder, knelt on his neck for several minutes.

A statement by players from all 20 Premier League clubs said: "We, the players, stand together with the singular objective of eradicating racial prejudice wherever it exists, to bring about a global society of inclusion, respect, and equal opportunities for all, regardless of their colour or creed."

"This symbol is a sign of unity from all Players, all staff, all clubs, all match officials and the Premier League #blacklivesmatter #playerstogether."

Several matches in Germany's Bundesliga have been preceded by both teams taking a knee prior to kick-off in recent weeks.

England international Jadon Sancho was among the first players to protest by showing a t-shirt branded "Justice for George Floyd" during Borussia Dortmund's



BRIGHTON: In this file photo taken on August 12, 2017 The Premier league trophy sits beside the pitch ahead of the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Manchester City at the American Express Community Stadium in Brighton. From cardboard cut-outs in the stands to Zoom-watch parties, the return of the Premier League will be a bizarre experience for locked-out supporters. — AFP

Every one of the remaining 92 Premier League matches will be shown live in Britain, with broadcaster Sky Sports doing their bit to hide the drab atmosphere. At various points in games, fans watching on Sky will be able to vote on their favourite chants and they will

be part of the audio mix on the broadcast. Realistic crowd sounds and chants are being taken from the FIFA 20 computer game. Other innovations include a Sky Fanzone, where up to six friends can have a video chat for the duration of the match.—AFP

## EPL approves kneeling protests, 'Black Lives Matter' on shirts

LONDON: The Premier League will support players taking a knee before or during matches in protest against racial discrimination, while "Black Lives Matter" will replace player names on the back of shirts for the first 12 games of the league's restart next week. "The League supports the players' wish to have their names replaced by Black Lives Matter on the back of their shirts for the first 12 matches of the restarted 2019/20 season," the Premier League said in a statement on Friday.

"In addition, the League will support players who 'take a knee' before or during matches."

## Irving asks NBA players to sit as protest of racism

LOS ANGELES: Brooklyn Nets star Kyrie Irving reportedly opposes the NBA restart plan, and he lobbied fellow players on Friday to sit out the scheduled resumption of play as a protest against racism, multiple media outlets reported.

According to The Athletic's Shams Charania, Irving told more than 80 NBA players on a conference call, "I don't support going into Orlando. I'm not with the systematic racism and the (expletive). Something smells a little fishy. ... I'm willing to give up everything I have (for social reform)."

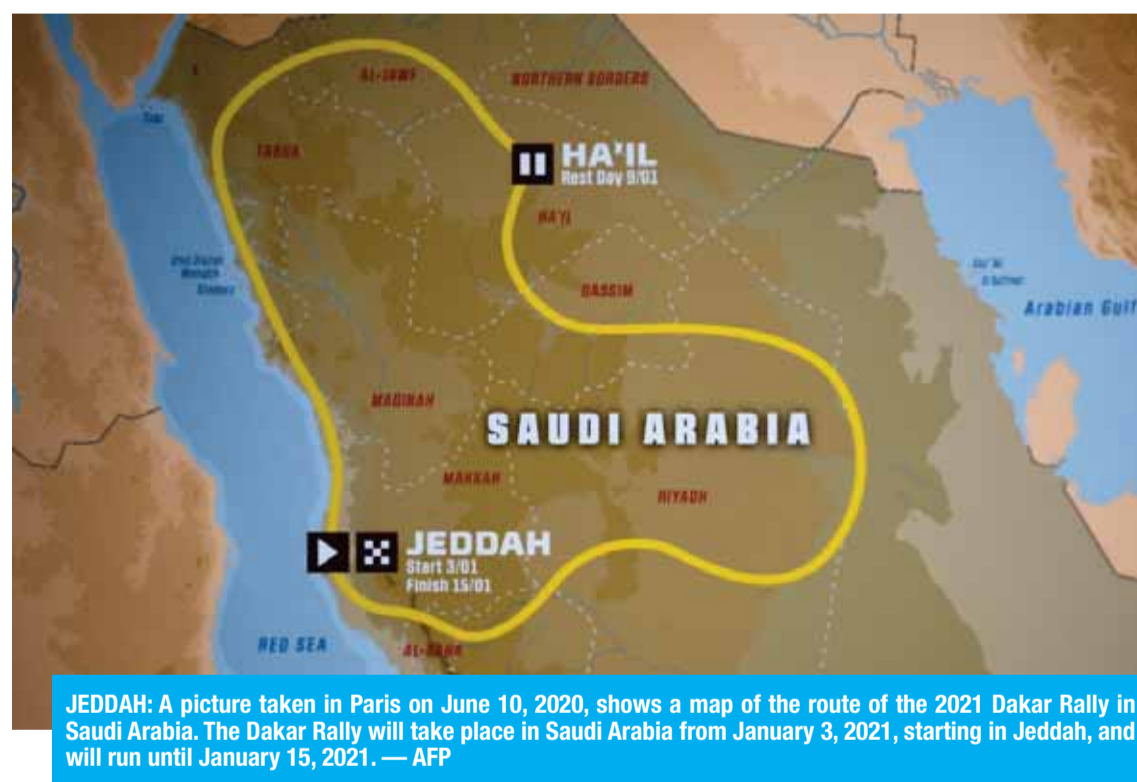
Turner Sports' Taylor Rooks tweeted, "Sources tell me majority of the NBA call was on social justice reform. It lasted for about 2 hours, but over an hour was dedicated to that. While they are absolutely all concerned about COVID and that was a vital part of conversation. Racial injustice is the #1 talking point."

An unnamed "widely respected" player told ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski, "Once we start playing basketball again, the news will turn from systemic racism to who did what in the game last night. It's a crucial time for us to be able to play and blend that and impact what's happening in our communities. We are asking ourselves, 'Where and how can we make the biggest impact?' Mental health is part of the discussion, too, and how we handle all of that in a bubble." Some star players on the call shared their view that sitting out the remainder of the season would adversely impact their economic outlook not just this season but moving forward, according to Yahoo Sports' Vincent Goodwill. The report added that the stars warned their peers that the players union's leverage is low in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic. Yahoo Sports' Chris Haynes reported that Irving said he would support the players if they decided to proceed with the scheduled restart near Orlando.

The league plan calls for 22 teams with a chance to advance in the playoffs to be sequestered at the Walt Disney World Resort. Players will be restricted in where they can go, and Bleacher Report's Howard Beck reported that many players could refuse to play because they "want more freedom of movement."

The National Basketball Players Association's executive committee and board members last week approved the NBA plan. Training camp is set to be held July 9-29 before the season restarts July 30. Game 7 of the NBA Finals could be played as late as Oct. 12.

However, some players reportedly are concerned about health hazards amid the coronavirus pandemic, which forced the league to halt the season on March 11. The racial unrest following the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis last month has added to players' discontent. — Reuters



JEDDAH: A picture taken in Paris on June 10, 2020, shows a map of the route of the 2021 Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia. The Dakar Rally will take place in Saudi Arabia from January 3, 2021, starting in Jeddah, and will run until January 15, 2021. — AFP

## Fresh route, new safety measures unveiled for 2021 Dakar Rally

PARIS: The second edition of the Dakar Rally in Saudi Arabia, scheduled to run from January 3-15 next year, will start and finish in Jeddah after venturing through the desert and along the Red Sea, organisers revealed Thursday.

The 2021 version of the gruelling 12-day marathon will take participants into uncharted territory, with all timed sections of the loop course brand new to the race. Competitors will set off from Jeddah towards the east and then head north, with a rest day in Ha'il on January 9, before tracing the Red Sea coastline back to the finish.

"We've made the most of all of Saudi Arabia," rally director David Castera told AFP. "The country is so big that we managed to only use 50-100km of this year's course."

"During each stage we find a bit of all the ingredients. We tried to keep a bit of the dunes, the technical sections and the quick parts each day."

Following the deaths of two motorcyclists, Portugal's Paulo Goncalves and Dutchman Edwin Straver,

on this year's rally, enhanced safety measures will be introduced in 2021.

Riders will be forced to wear airbag vests, while aural warnings will notify competitors in the approach to potential dangers with designated "slow zones" limiting the speed to 90km/h in especially tricky sectors.

Following a test run in 2020, road books will be distributed to participants just before the start of each stage, as opposed to the previous evening. Digital versions will be available in certain categories.

Castera said the coronavirus pandemic had forced organisers to revise their plans for next year's rally.

"We had mapped out a Dakar with other countries. Unfortunately, the week of confinement we should have left for a tour. We weren't able to do it, so we were obliged to abandon our project for this year," he said.

"We'll do it another time. We have three surrounding countries who want it and fit in with our DNA: Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan."

Castera also conceded the financial impact of the global health crisis would likely result in fewer participants over the next two years.

The event, launched in 1979 with its original route between Paris and the Senegalese capital Dakar, moved to Saudi Arabia this year after a decade in South America, a decision which sparked an angry reaction from human rights organisations. —AFP

## 50 years ago, Brazil taught the world to play, in colour

PARIS: Fifty years ago this month, modern football was born at the World Cup in Mexico, kicking and yelling, and live in vibrant colour for a global audience. This weekend marks the anniversary of the quarter-finals of that tournament as a star-studded cast played a thrilling series of knock-out games which built to a dazzling final, when the first World Cup broadcast in colour ended with an unparalleled display by a technicolour team.

Mexico in 1970 was not the first World Cup broadcast live. Four years earlier 400 million watched England beat West Germany in the final. But that tournament was shown in black and white. Battered Brazil, the reigning champions, limped out playing, as far as viewers could tell, in two shades of grey. In Mexico, their yellow and green glowed in the sunshine. Most viewers still watched in black and white. But the games were shot in colour and when the many iconic moments are replayed, that is how they are seen. And that is how the competition is remembered, even by its greatest star.

"I watch it because there are a lot of videos available and TV programmes," Pele told FIFA's website. "If I'm not careful, I always start crying." The tournament gave Pele his third winner's medal but the images also cemented his reputation as the world's greatest player, partly because of three spectacular near misses: a shot from his own half against Czechoslovakia, a header saved by England's Gordon Banks and the dummy that almost turned a Tostao pass into a goal against Uruguay.

"I was at my peak," Pele said. "We had a fantastic side and everyone expected us to win, which gave me the shakes." The quarter-finals all kicked off at noon on June 14.

Gigi Riva scored twice and Gianni Rivera once as Italy beat hosts Mexico 4-1. Rivellino, Tostao, Jairzinho and Pele, scored as Brazil beat Peru 4-2. Reigning champions England, with many of the stars of 1966 but not an ailing Banks and not, by the end, Bobby Charlton, substituted with his team two goals up to protect him from the heat, lost 3-2 in extra time to West Germany. Franz Beckenbauer and Gerd Mueller were among the German scorers.

In the semi-finals, in Guadalajara, Brazil gave Uruguay a one-goal start but won 3-1. Again Pele didn't score, but Clodoaldo, Jairzinho and Rivellino did. In Mexico City, the other semi-final was heading for a 1-0 Italian win until Karl-Heinz Schnellinger scored a 90th-minute equaliser for West Germany.

Extra time was 30 minutes of mayhem. Mueller gave West Germany the lead. Tarcisio Burgnich levelled and Riva put Italy ahead. Mueller replied, but a minute later Rivera gave Italy victory.

The abiding image is of Beckenbauer playing much of the game extravagantly strapped after dislocating a shoulder when West Germany had already used both substitutes.

The best was yet to come. Italy were a good team, with the extravagantly gifted Sandro Mazzola. The defence was built on the great Inter Milan side, pioneers of 'catenaccio', with Giacinto Facchetti at its heart. Brazil tore them apart.

At an altitude of 2,200 metres (7,200 feet) in dazzling sunshine in the Azteca, Brazil produced a display of attacking football that touched Olympian heights.

Mario Zagallo, Brazil's coach, later said he thought the 1-0 victory over England "was the best game of the tournament...a high-class game of chess." —AFP

**18** Harold Varner leads as Rory McIlroy charges in PGA return at Colonial



**19** Cardboard cut-outs and Zoom parties: The new normal for Premier League fans



**19** Fresh route, new safety measures unveiled for 2021 Dakar Rally



## Juve squeeze past Milan to reach final

Serie A champions advanced on away goals to Wednesday's final in Rome



**TURIN:** Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) shoots on goal during the Italian Cup (Coppa Italia) semi-final second leg football match Juventus vs AC Milan on June 12, 2020 at the Allianz stadium in Turin, the first to be played in Italy since March 9 and the lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of the COVID-19 infection, caused by the novel coronavirus. — AFP

**ROME:** Juventus reached the Italian Cup final on Friday after a goalless draw with 10-man AC Milan in the semi-final, second leg in Turin on the day football returned to Italy after three months away.

Serie A champions Juve advanced on away goals to Wednesday's final in Rome thanks to February's 1-1 first-leg draw at the San Siro, despite an under-par display against a Milan side who played 74 minutes with a man less and which featured a missed Cristiano Ronaldo penalty.

At the capital's Stadio Olimpico, Maurizio Sarri's side will face either Napoli or Inter Milan, the last side Juve faced before football entered into its coronavirus-enforced hiatus in March.

Napoli take on Antonio Conte's Inter at Naples' Stadio San Paolo on Saturday with a 1-0 lead from the first leg, in another match set for an eerie atmosphere without supporters.

"It was odd and difficult at the start, playing in an empty stadium after 90 days away," said Leonardo Bonucci to public broadcaster RAI 1. "We've shaken off a dark moment for the whole world. I hope being

back will offer the fans at home a bit of hope and joy. We want to give them something more on Wednesday." A feisty start belied the two teams' long absence from the pitch, with Juve — missing the likes of Giorgio Chiellini and Gonzalo Higuain — roaring out of the blocks and Milan putting in some questionable challenges to try to stop themselves from being overrun. Juve should have been ahead in with just 15 minutes on the clock when Andrea Conti clipped the ball in the penalty area with his elbow and conceded a penalty after a VAR check.

Ronaldo hit the woodwork with the resulting spot-kick, but while that should have been a reprieve for the away side, they found themselves a man down seconds later when Ante Rebic kicked Danilo in the head.

With Zlatan Ibrahimovic out injured and Samu Castillejo suspended, Stefano Pioli's side were miss-

ing some firepower going forward, but managed to create problems for Juve despite spending most of the match on the back foot.

Hakan Calhanoglu had Milan's best chance two minutes after the restart, flashing a free header wide, while Simon Kjaer should have done better with another header 10 minutes from the end.

However Juve also had their chances, with Milan stopper Gianluigi Donnarumma doing well to keep out Blaise Matuidi's thumping close range effort on the half-hour mark, and two great efforts from Paulo Dybala and Alex Sandro late in the second half. The match was played on the day Italy would have kicked off Euro 2020 in Rome had the tournament not been postponed for a year. More than 34,000 people on the peninsula have died because of the coronavirus with the vast majority in northern regions like Pied-

mont and Lombardy which host Juve and Milan.

Both teams held a minute's silence before kick-off for those who lost their lives to the virus before breaking out into applause for healthcare workers, three of whom were stood in the centre circle.

Juventus players warmed up before the match in T-shirts with the message "No Racism", while Milan wore tops on with "Black Lives Matter" written on them, in solidarity with global protests over the death of George Floyd. The few fans hanging around the Allianz Stadium told AFP that they were happy to see football come back as the country edges towards normality. However they were sad that matches had to take place without the passionate support that accompanies most matches in Italy. "It's hard for a team not to be able to count on the presence of the cheering fans," said Massimiliano Balduzzi, 47, from Bergamo, one of the country's worst-hit areas.

"I believe that there should always be cheering at the stadium. Unfortunately, with what happened, we can only keep on waiting and hope that everything will go well." — AFP

### Football returns to Italy



### Valencia and Getafe stumble in La Liga race for top four

**MADRID:** Ten-man Levante scored a 98th-minute penalty on Friday to snatch a 1-1 draw against Valencia as La Liga completed its second day of fixtures since its return from the coronavirus suspension.

It was a miserable night for the league's top-four hopefuls as Granada also came from behind to beat Getafe 2-1, meaning Atletico Madrid and Real Sociedad have the chance to capitalise on Sunday.

Valencia looked to have grabbed a later winner themselves at an empty Mestalla when Rodrigo Moreno diverted in at the near post in the 89th minute.

But Mouctar Diakhaby pulled down Ruben Vezo deep into injury-time and Gonzalo Melero made no mis-

take, equalising for Levante from the spot. The visitors also had Roger Marti sent off for a second yellow card in the 74th minute.

Granada, also playing behind closed doors at Los Carmenes, scored in the 70th and 79th minutes as a Djene Dakonam own-goal and Carlos Fernandez's finish wiped out Getafe's lead, given to them in the first half by David Timor. Defeat means Getafe stay fifth, handing Atletico the chance to overtake them if they can win away at Athletic Bilbao on Sunday. Valencia remain seventh, three points of adrift of Real Sociedad, who are at home on Sunday to Osasuna.

Granada, who were only promoted last season, move up to eighth, with the Europa League places now in sight while Levante edge up to 12th.

La Liga became the second of Europe's five major leagues after the German Bundesliga to resume on Thursday, when Sevilla overcame Real Betis 2-0 in the division's first match since March 10.

League leaders Barcelona play away at Real Mallorca on Saturday before Real Madrid, two points behind in second, return at home to Eibar today. — AFP



**VALENCIA:** Valencia's Spanish forward Rodrigo Moreno (L) vies with Levante's Spanish defender Sergio Postigo during the Spanish League football match between Valencia and Levante at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia on June 12, 2020. — AFP