



**6** China virus cluster grows  
as Europe borders reopen



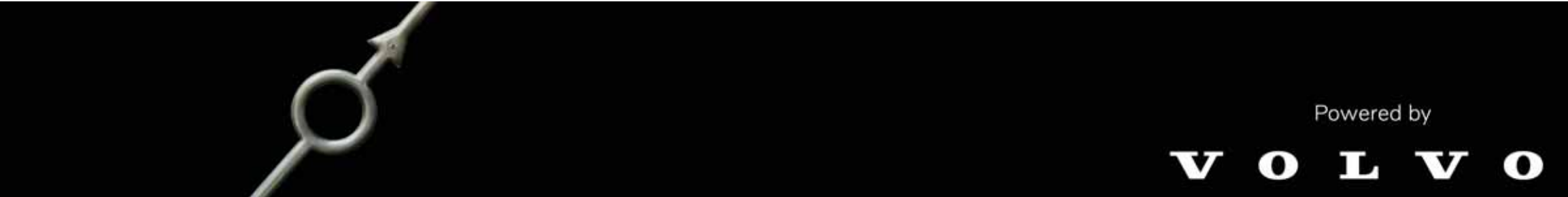
**9** China industrial output  
continues slow recovery



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young heartthrob Rajput



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off as Real return with win



# Assembly session to go ahead despite govt health warning

Action demanded against human trafficking • MP asks about 60,000 ‘missing’ files

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday that the Assembly sessions today and tomorrow will go ahead as scheduled to debate the questioning of two ministers and other issues related to the coronavirus. The speaker's announcement came after a strong warning by the health ministry that it was not responsible for the consequences of the sessions because they do not meet health requirements in the face of the coronavirus outbreak.

The health ministry warning was expressed in a letter sent by the government to the Assembly, saying that because the number of those expected to attend will exceed 100 people, the ministry is not responsible for the consequences. The ministry demanded that “virtual sessions” should be held to conduct Assembly business, but Ghanem said there are legislative and constitutional restrictions against holding sessions online.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah visited the Assembly yesterday and informed the speaker that the government presence will be limited just to secure the legal requirements of the sessions. Ghanem said the government letter will be placed on the agenda for debate. He said the Assembly may also meet on

Thursday if necessary.

He said the first day will be allocated to debating two grillings against Minister of Education Saud Al-Harbi for not cancelling the current school year over the virus, and Minister of Finance Barrak Al-Sheetan over a variety of issues, mainly contracts signed during the coronavirus crisis, not acting sufficiently regarding a major corruption scam and others. Sheetan yesterday denied rumors on social media that he has resigned, insisting that he will attend the Assembly session to refute all allegations.

The Audit Bureau said yesterday that government agencies signed some 732 contracts in the past three months during the coronavirus crisis and the contracts are worth KD 916 million. The health ministry signed 248 contracts worth KD 249 million.

In the meantime, MPs yesterday called on authorities to reveal the names of MPs and officials suspected of playing a major role in a visa trading scam run by a Bangladeshi lawmaker. The interior ministry has described the scam as one of the biggest “trafficking in persons” and residency scams in the country, saying that a network of government officials and companies were involved in the scam.

MPs and local media however said at least two current MPs and a former MP are involved in the case and called for the publication

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KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem speaks during a press conference at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Another killing of black man in US fuels tension

WASHINGTON: The fatal shooting of a black man by a white police officer in Atlanta has poured more fuel on the raging US debate over racism, prompting another round of street protests and the resignation of the southern city's police chief. The death of 27-year-old Rayshard Brooks was ruled a homicide by the county medical examiner's office on Sunday, a day after the Wendy's restaurant where he died was set on fire and hundreds of people marched to denounce the killing.

His deadly encounter with police on Friday drew expressions of outrage, shock and dismay in a country deeply shaken by civil unrest since the May 25 police killing in Minneapolis, Minnesota of George Floyd, an unarmed black man. Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms announced at a news conference Saturday that Police Chief Erika Shields had decided to step down. “I do not believe this was a justified use of deadly force,” Bottoms said.

The officer who shot Brooks — identified as Garrett Rolfe — has been dismissed. Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard said his office would decide whether to lay criminal charges against Rolfe by mid-week, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. James Clyburn, an African-American member of Congress from South Carolina, said he was incensed by the killing.

“This did not call for lethal force. And I don't know what's in the culture that would make this guy do that. It has got to be the culture. It's got to be the system,” he said, speaking on CNN's “State of the Union”. Clyburn is among the lawmakers debating how to reform a judicial system seen by critics as stacked against poor and minority citizens and which has proved stubbornly resistant to change.

Some activists on the left have taken up “defund the police” as a rallying cry, one that US President Donald Trump has jumped on to use as a cudgel against his Democratic rival for the White House, Joe Biden. Biden, for his part, has tried to distance the party from the defund movement, instead advocating increased funding for community policing.

Ilhan Omar, a Somali-American congresswoman from Minnesota, called his proposal “ludicrous” and instead supported dismantling troubled police

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ATLANTA: People use their cellphones to document a muralist painting the face of Rayshard Brooks outside a burned Wendy's restaurant on Sunday. — AFP

## Unsteady Trump ramp walk raises health questions

WASHINGTON: As US President Donald Trump turned 74 on Sunday, an incident a day earlier in which he appeared unsteady on his feet has revived questions about his health as he heads into a grueling re-election campaign. Scrutiny of a president's health is always intense, and Trump has generally appeared vigorous for his age. Results of a routine physical released early this month showed he was overweight — 110 kg — but with otherwise normal test results.

But his appearance Saturday at the US military academy in West Point, New York raised new questions about apparent signs of unsteadiness, balance problems and trouble enunciating certain words. Since Trump has regularly mocked the health and acuity of his presumptive election opponent, Democrat Joe Biden — who is three years his senior — the question of physical fitness could weigh heavily in the campaign ahead.

After a widely circulated video on Saturday showed Trump walking tentatively and unsteadily down a long ramp after delivering a

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## Retirement home offers ‘hug curtain’

SAO PAULO: A retirement home in Brazil has come up with a creative solution to allow friends and families to enjoy personal contact with aging residents particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus: a “hugging curtain”. The large plastic curtain, installed in a retirement home in the city of Sao Paulo, allows residents on one side and visitors on the other to engage in the sort of comforting hugs that COVID-19 has made impossible for months.

The curtain has pockets through which resident and



SAO PAULO: Suzane Valverde hugs her 85-year-old mother Carmelita Valverde through a transparent plastic curtain at a senior nursing home on June 13, 2020. — AFP

visitor can insert their arms, and they are outfitted with shoulder-length black gloves for added protection. “It really feels good; I missed her so much!” 68-year-old Silvio Nagata told AFP after enjoying a long, emotional hug with his sister, Luiza Yassuko, who is 76, at a retirement home in the affluent Morumbi neighborhood.

“Because of the pandemic, I wasn't able to visit her, especially because at my age I'm also part of a high-risk group,” Nagata said. “It's an excellent system — it's great to be able to take her in my arms,” said Nagata, a retired civil servant. “There were 12 of us brothers and sisters, and she was practically a mother to me,” he went on. “She didn't get married so she could take care of us.”

Nurses carefully disinfect the plastic curtain after each use. “When we saw that this pandemic was going to last a long time, we had to find a safe way to let families see the residents and let the aging residents know that their loved ones are thinking of them,” said Mairo Martins, an physical therapist at the facility.

For visitors, the feeling of being able to take a loved one in their arms is deeply moving, especially as the pandemic continues to rule out normal human contact. “It's good for them, but for us too; it's been a while since we could hug anyone,” said Murilo Meira, 51, during a visit to 90-year-old Nair da Costa Marques, who needed a nurse's help to stand for the much-awaited hug.

Sao Paulo state is Brazil's richest and most populous state, with 46 million inhabitants, but it is also the hardest-hit by the coronavirus. There have been 172,875 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 10,581 deaths, according to the latest official tally. Brazil has registered the second-largest number of coronavirus deaths in the world, at 42,720, and of people infected (850,514), after the United States. — AFP

## Philippine journalist convicted



MANILA: Philippine journalist Maria Ressa speaks during a press conference after attending the court's verdict promulgation yesterday. — AFP

MANILA: The head of a Philippine news website known for its tough scrutiny of President Rodrigo Duterte was convicted of libel yesterday and faces a lengthy jail term in what is being seen as a blow to media freedom in the country. Maria Ressa, chief executive of Rappler and a former CNN journalist, was charged with “cyber libel” over a 2012 article that linked a businessman to illegal activities.

In handing down the verdict, Judge Rainelda Estacio-Montesa said the exercise of a freedom

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## Local

# APICORP: \$792bn planned investments for 2020-2024 in MENA's energy sector

## Decline in investments largely attributed to the 2020 triple crisis

**KUWAIT:** The Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation (APICORP), a multilateral development financial institution, estimates that planned and committed investments in the MENA region will exceed \$792bn over the next five years (2020–2024). As per APICORP's MENA Energy Investment Outlook 2020-2024, which it launched today, the amount marks a \$173mn decline from the \$965bn in last year's five-year outlook.

The overall decline in the investment outlook - mostly in planned investments - is largely attributed to the 2020 triple crisis: the COVID-19-related health crisis, oil crisis and a looming financial crisis. Despite these difficult circumstances however, the GCC region's committed investments increased by 2.3 percent compared to a 6 percent overall decrease in the MENA region as a whole, indicating a higher project execution rate in the GCC.

### 2020 triple crisis

At the end of the first quarter of 2020, most countries around the world were facing the same dilemma in how to deal with the COVID-19 health crisis: choosing between maintaining business as usual and thus risking a massive loss of lives, or imposing lockdowns and restrictions to contain the virus. This dilemma called for uncoordinated trade-offs among countries. The resumption of travel and trade however will require international coordination.

With regards to the decline in oil prices, which was driven by the supply surplus and exacerbated by a historic demand contraction due to the COVID-19 pandemic, APICORP expects that it will lead to a restructuring of the oil and associated gas industry, as well as an accelerated closure of the lowest efficiency parts of the capital stock, and mergers and acquisitions (M&A). Considering the various market forces such as crude price differentials and discrepancies between actual markets versus futures markets, APICORP projects average Brent oil prices to stay in the \$30-40 range in 2020 and 2021 before reflecting a more balanced market.

The third episode of the triple crisis is a potential financial crisis, manifested by a global liquidity crunch that is taking hold as more financial assets shed their value. Although central banks and multilateral financial institutions are stepping up, concerns linger that such massive stimulus plans might create enormous unproductive debt overhangs that will slow economic growth.

Dr Ahmed Ali Attiga, Chief Executive Officer of APICORP, said: "The impact of COVID-19 is already deeper and longer lasting than past downturns. Indeed, the nature of this triple crisis and the profound restructuring in oil and gas will hit energy investments for a potentially long period of time, sowing the seeds of supply crunches and price volatility. Therefore, we expect a W-shaped recovery for the MENA region. Furthermore, despite the positive effects of digitization and automation on efficiencies across the value chains, many fundamental questions remain that will negatively affect investments. International collaboration between the private and public sector will



## Private sector's share falls to 19%



therefore be critical to counter the expected shortfalls in investment, and APICORP will continue to play a lead support role in this regard as a trusted financial partner to the region's energy sector."

Dr Leila R Benali, Chief Economist, Head of Strategy, Energy Economics and Sustainability of APICORP, said: "The impact of the triple crisis has led to sharp cuts in capital expenditures and restrictions to projects and supply chains. It has also brought to the forefront a possible restructuring of the oil and gas industry, accelerated the closure of the lowest efficiency parts of the capital stock, and energized mergers and acquisition activity. As we mention in the outlook, we expect a restructuring of the value chain, thus putting the strongest countries and companies from a total cost and leverage standpoint in the best position to preserve their long-term value proposition and return to their respective shareholders."

### Driving investments

The MENA Energy Investments Outlook 2020 indicates that energy investments are primarily driven by several countries, namely investments by Saudi Arabia in the gas and power sectors (\$39bn and \$41bn, respectively); Iraq's reconstruction efforts and gas-to-power (\$33bn); the UAE's oil capacity maximization (\$45bn); and Egypt's new petrochemicals drive (\$38bn). Notably, APICORP puts private sector's share in energy project investments at 19 percent after climbing to 22 percent in last year's outlook.

### Key developments

In terms of planned investments, the biggest gain was in the gas value chain, which jumped by \$28 billion, a 13 percent increase compared to last year's outlook. The increase signals the developing of unconventional gas in the GCC, namely in Jafura and

Hail gas fields in Saudi Arabia and Ghasha in the UAE, as well as the increasing production capacity in Qatar, Egypt and Oman.

In the petrochemicals sector, APICORP expects countries to consolidate their respective strategy in order to increase monetization and maximize value from the hydrocarbons they produce. Key investments in this sector include Duqm (\$8.67bn) and Sur (\$6.73bn) in Oman; Al-Zor (\$6.5bn) in Kuwait; SATORP Amiral (\$6.34bn) in Saudi Arabia; and the QCHEM Complex (\$4.5bn) in Ras Laffan in Qatar.

The power sector meanwhile registered a \$114bn decline in investments due to the commissioning of several projects during 2019 in Egypt, UAE and Saudi Arabia. Globally and in the region however, utilities' share prices did not fall as much as their counterparts in the oil and gas sector. This was due to a relatively milder decrease in demand for electricity and government utilities subsidies in select countries.

Although the power sector has not witnessed major credit issues so far, the impact on investments has been more acute in 2020. Spending on renewable projects and transmission and distribution (T&D) networks were cut due to delays in project development, the various restrictions imposed and expectations of lower demand. As per the outlook however, the MENA region does not seem to have been affected so far as renewables auctions remained unchanged, namely Saudi Arabia's Renewable Energy Development Office (REPDO) program.

Compared to 2020's initial figures, planned upstream spending has been cut by 20-30 percent across the board by oil majors, National Oil Companies and large Independents as a result of the decline in oil and gas prices and unprecedented drop in demand. However, unconventional gas and non-associated gas developments aimed at domestic consumption and strategic market share positioning for exports are expected to offset the impact on the upstream sector in the MENA relative to the rest of the world.

### In My View

## Patience is a virtue



By Abdellatif Sharaa

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When I was at a clinic earlier in the week to get my medicine, we heard screams mixed with profanities from the matron's office. This made us jump spontaneously and head to where the shouts were coming from, bearing in mind what was reported about healthcare providers being attacked while on duty.

I personally took a few steps towards an angry woman - she was so upset that I am sure she was not seeing or hearing anything at the moment. She was shaking so hard I was afraid she would pass out, but she finally calmed down, which allowed the matron to ask her about her complaint, and it did not take long to find out that the woman wanted to see the doctor and the nurse asked her to wait for her turn. This angered the woman, whose reaction was very "violent", and I am sure she was not aware of what she was saying.

This is the nature of many of the human race - the lack of patience, although it is a virtue that all of us must try hard to have. We should take pause before reacting to anything. Anyway, the woman, after calming down, insisted to apologize to the nurse.

I learned early on that to face difficult problems and complicated circumstances needs patience. Such situations may include perseverance in facing delays, being tolerant towards provocation without getting angry or forbearance when under strain, especially if problems persist for longer times. Patience is the level of endurance one can have before negativity.

The three heavenly religions addressed patience and paid special attention to it. The Talmud extols patience as an important personal trait, while in Christianity patience is one of the most valuable virtues of life.

Meanwhile, Islam considers patience (sabr) one of the best virtues of life. Muslims believe that with patience one can grow closer to God (Allah), and with it can reach true peace. It is also stressed that God is with those who are patient, more specifically during calamities and suffering. Several verses of the Holy Quran urge Muslims to seek Allah's help when faced with fear and loss with patience, prayers and perseverance:

"Be sure We test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give good tidings to those who patiently persevere: who say, when afflicted with calamity 'to Allah we belong and to Him is our return'." - Quran (2:155-156)

Patience is also referred to in the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Sahih Al-Bukhari: Narrated Aisha (RA): I asked the Messenger of Allah about the plague. He said "that was a means of torture which Allah used to send upon whomsoever He wished, but He made it a source of mercy for the believers, for anyone who is residing in the town in which this disease is present, and remains there and does not leave that town, but has patience and hopes for Allah's reward, and knows that nothing will befall him except what Allah has written for him, then he will get such reward as that of a martyr."

With this I conclude and say — patience is a virtue!

## Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has recorded 36,431 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of yesterday, in addition to 298 deaths. With the exception of 184 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, 27,531 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 8,602 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: Jasir@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 times 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-Khalidi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.
  - Dr Ahmad Al-Khalidi: 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

# Iraq keen on strong ties with Kuwait: President

## Kuwaiti FM hands letter from Amir to Iraq PM



**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi President Barham Salih meets with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.



**Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi reads a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, during his meeting with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.**



**Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohammad Al-Halbousi meets with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.**



**Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein meets with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.**

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq is keen to establish strong relations with Kuwait, based on the brotherly ties and historical relationships between the two peoples, Iraqi President Barham Salih said Sunday. A statement issued by the Iraqi Presidency quoted Salih as saying, during his meeting with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah that the two countries took advanced steps in joint cooperation and collaboration. The Iraqi President also stressed the importance of economic cooperation between the two countries, considering that political and economic crises, as well as the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, require joint coordination in order to consolidate the pillars of stability and peace and achieve both peoples' prosperity. According to the statement, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister conveyed to the Iraqi President an invitation from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to visit Kuwait.

Sheikh Dr Ahmad visited Iraq on Sunday, representing His Highness the Amir Sheikh

Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. During the meeting with the Iraqi President, Sheikh Dr Ahmad conveyed greetings from the Kuwaiti leadership and people, and discussed with him issues related to bilateral ties. He also reflected Kuwait's supportive stance towards the stability and progress of the fellow Arab country. The Iraqi President, meanwhile, con-



### Iraqi President invited to visit Kuwait

veyed similar sentiments towards the Kuwaiti leadership and people during his meeting with the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister.

Earlier on Sunday, Sheikh Dr Ahmad de-

livered a letter from His Highness the Amir to Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi. The letter is related to close relations between both countries, ways of promoting and developing them in various domains and several issues of mutual concern. The Kuwaiti foreign minister handed the letter as he was welcomed by the Iraqi prime minister during his official visit to the Iraqi capital of Baghdad.

Furthermore, the Kuwaiti official held another meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein. The meeting touched on ways to bolster relations and also focused on recent regional and international developments namely the ones connected with the global fight against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad also met with Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mohammad Al-Halbousi. The two officials discussed ways of further boosting bilateral relations and cooperation in different domains to serve best interest of the two countries and their people. — KUNA



**Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein receives Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.**

#### News in brief

##### Institute postpones doctors' interviews

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Institute for Medical Specializations announced that it will postpone personal interviews of doctors from June 28 to July 2. Dr Fawaz Al-Rifai, Secretary-General of the Institute, said that the interviews include applicants for specialized training programs and fellowship programs for the Kuwaiti Board for the academic year 2020/2021, stressing the need for applicants to confirm the date of the interview by visiting or calling the institute in case they did not receive an email with the date of interview.

##### Elderly care

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Maryam Al-Aqeel affirmed Sunday that the elderly people are of the ministry's priorities despite the coronavirus pandemic situation. In a press statement on the occasion of the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, which falls on June 15, Aqeel said that Kuwait pays great attention to the elderly people, noting that the high number of senior citizens in the country proves the government's care for this group, especially in the health aspect. The minister also affirmed that Kuwait issued Law 18/2016 that protects the elderly from violence and negligence. — KUNA

##### 27 flights

**KUWAIT:** The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced that 27 flights departed Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying a total of 4,758 passengers. They included 14 flights to Egypt, five flights to India, two flights to Qatar, two flights to Turkey, two flights to Ethiopia, one flight to Afghanistan, and one flight to Bulgaria.

##### Curfew violators

**KUWAIT:** Police arrested 10 curfew violators on Sunday, including seven Kuwaitis and three expatriates, the Interior Ministry announced yesterday. The arrests were made as follows: Three in the Capital Governorate, one in Farwaniya, three in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, and three in Al-Ahmadi.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Television production trucks are seen outside the Grand Mosque in Kuwait City on Friday, as the Friday Prayer resumed solely at the country's official mosque amid restrictions to limit the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Anti-Corruption Authority follows up trafficking case

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Public Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) confirmed that it will follow-up with a human trafficking case currently under investigation in Kuwait, indicating its cooperation with the Public Prosecution, the judicial investigation body responsible for related cases. Nazaha spokesperson Dr Mohammad Buzber said that his authority has started examining all financial disclosure statements, analyzing them, and reviewing all data pertaining to them. He pointed out that they will cooperate with the Public Prosecution as the judicial investigation authority responsible for the case and provide it with any information or data obtained.

Separately, a local report indicated that thousands of residency visa violators have responded to the amnesty decision made in April, which allowed them to leave the country without paying any fines.



Around 55,000 were reportedly deported to their countries, a majority of whom were from Egypt, India, and Bangladesh. However, statistics indicate that a larger segment of the violators had not taken opportunity of the amnesty, and thus, stricter measures will be taken to regulate recruiting expat laborers, their arrival and ensure deporting 'marginal laborers'.

Further, the government is eying efforts to 'regulate' expats' presence in Kuwait, by introducing tough measures that focus on closing companies that manipulate residency visas, referring them to public prosecution and deporting expats sponsored by them. Notably, 368 flights have left Kuwait since March 16 carrying a total of 110,000 expats back to their home countries, including visitors or those who



**KUWAIT:** Ministry of Health personnel fumigate the Fahad Al-Ahmad Co-op Society's main branch in preparation for its re-opening after its staff were tested for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

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KUWAIT: People shop Sunday at the re-opened vegetables market in Andalus. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh







Saudi Arabia calls for compliance as COVID cases rise

## Iran daily virus deaths tops 100



SHENYANG: Workers package rabies vaccine at a lab at the Yisheng Biopharma company, where researchers are trying to develop a vaccine for the COVID-19 coronavirus, in Shenyang, in China's northeast Liaoning province. —AFP

# China virus cluster grows

## Pandemic gathering pace in Latin America, Iran, India

**BEIJING:** China reported dozens of new coronavirus cases for the second consecutive day yesterday as a growing cluster of infections stoked fears of a second wave, while more borders were opened in Europe ahead of the summer holiday season. Streams of people queued in a stadium as mass testing was carried out in Beijing, the capital of the country where the disease emerged late last year. The pandemic is gathering pace in Latin America, and Iran and India have reported worrying increases in deaths and infections - adding to concern over challenges the world will face in the long fight against COVID-19.

But for the moment news has been better in Europe, which has mostly seen caseloads fall steadily in recent weeks. Many countries are further lifting painful lockdowns that have saved lives, but have also devastated economies and wearied confined populations. "Very few people have been infected... it's why I've chosen to travel to Santorini. Next week I'm going to Crete," Max Han, a young Chinese tourist, told AFP on the Greek island as he admired the sunset. Greece is already allowing travellers from nations deemed low-risk, and yesterday it opened its borders to EU countries - as did Germany, Belgium, France, with Austria to follow the next day.

China was the first country to implement extreme restrictions on movement early this year, forcing local transmission down to near-zero as the crisis walloped the rest of the world. But yesterday Chinese health

officials reported there have now been 75 cases of the respiratory illness in Beijing where the fresh cluster has been linked to a wholesale food market. More than 10,000 people there have already been tested, including workers at the Xinfadi market, local residents and anyone who visited it in recent weeks. Officials have said they plan to test 46,000 people



### European borders reopen

who live in the area, and a strict lockdown was extended across 21 neighborhoods in the capital.

#### 'Micro-outbreaks'

More than 430,000 people worldwide have died from COVID-19, nearly halfway through a year in which countless lives have been upended and the global economy ravaged by the crisis. The United

States - by far the hardest-hit country with more than 115,700 recorded fatalities - yesterday reported its lowest 24-hour death toll since its infection rate peaked in mid-April. President Donald Trump's administration has noted that some states have seen new flare-ups, but insists there will be no shutdown of the economy if a second full-blown wave arises. The Middle East's worst-hit country, Iran, reported its own uptick on Sunday, recording more than 100 new virus deaths in a single day for the first time in two months. And there have been two new outbreaks in Rome, with 109 infections including five deaths diagnosed at a hospital and 15 cases detected at a building inhabited by squatters.

"It means the virus hasn't lost its infectiousness, it isn't weakening... we shouldn't let down our guard," World Health Organization deputy director Ranieri Guerra told Italian journalists. "Such micro-outbreaks were inevitable, but they are limited in time and space. And today we have the tools to intercept them and confine them." Despite fears over fresh clusters, many countries are making moves towards semi-normality. Egypt is set to welcome tourists to beach resorts in July, and Peru's Machu Picchu will also reopen next month, although it will sharply reduce the number of daily visitors. And the English Premier League finally makes its long-awaited return this week following a three-month virus suspension. —AFP

## Arms control outlook 'bleak'; Nuke powers modernizing: Report

**STOCKHOLM:** Nuclear powers continue to modernize their arsenals, researchers said yesterday, warning that tensions were rising and the outlook for arms control was "bleak". "The loss of key channels of communication between Russia and the USA... could potentially lead to a new nuclear arms race," said Shannon Kile, director of the nuclear arms control program at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and co-author of the report. Russia and the US account for more than 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons. Kile was referring to the future of the New START treaty between the US and Russia, which is set to expire in February 2021.

It is the final nuclear deal still in force between the two superpowers, aimed at maintaining their nuclear arsenals below Cold War levels. "Discussions to extend New START or to negotiate a new treaty made no progress in 2019," the SIPRI researchers noted. At the same time, nuclear powers continue to modernize their weapons while China and India are increasing the size of their arsenals. "China is in the middle of a significant modernization of its nuclear arsenal. It is developing a so-called nuclear triad for the first time, made up of new land- and sea-based missiles and nuclear-capable aircraft," SIPRI said. The country has repeatedly rejected Washington's insistence that it join any future nuclear arms reduction talks.

The number of nuclear warheads declined in the past year. At the start of 2020, the United States, Russia, Britain, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea together had 13,400 nuclear arms, according to SIPRI's estimates, 465 fewer than at the start of 2019. The decline was attributed mainly to the United States and Russia. While the future of the New START treaty remains uncertain, Washington and Moscow have continued to respect their obligations under the accord. "In 2019 the forces of both countries remained below the limits specified by the treaty," the report said. But both nations "have extensive and expensive programs under way to replace and modernize their nuclear warheads, missile and aircraft delivery systems, and nuclear weapon production facilities," it added.

"Both countries have also given new or expanded roles to nuclear weapons in their military plans and doctrines, which marks a significant reversal of the post-Cold War trend towards the gradual marginalization of nuclear weapons." The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), a cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. —AFP

## Record spikes in new coronavirus cases sweep US

**TEXAS:** New coronavirus cases and hospitalizations in record numbers swept through more US states, including Florida and Texas, as most push ahead with reopening and President Donald Trump plans an indoor rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Alabama reported a record number of new cases for the fourth day in a row on Sunday. Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, North Carolina, Oklahoma and South Carolina all had record numbers of new cases in the past three days, according to a Reuters tally.

Many state health officials partly attribute the increase to gatherings over the Memorial Day holiday weekend in late May. In Louisiana, which had been one of the earlier virus hot spots, new cases were again on the rise with over 1,200 - the most there since May 21. Nationally, there were over 25,000 new cases reported on Saturday, the highest tally for a Saturday since May 2, in part due to a significant increase in testing over the past six weeks. Perhaps more troubling for health officials, many of these states are also seeing record hospitalizations - a metric not affected by increased testing.

Arkansas, North Carolina, Texas and Utah all had a record number of patients enter the hospital on Saturday. In South Carolina, 69% to 77% of hospital beds are occupied, depend-

ing on the region. While Utah's governor announced last week that most counties there would pause their reopenings, most states are not considering a second shutdown as they face budget shortfalls and double-digit unemployment. Many went ahead with reopenings before meeting government infection rate guidelines for doing so.

New York, the hardest hit state, has utilized health guidelines to instruct its reopening and continued to see all measures of infection drop - new cases, deaths, hospitalizations and positive rates among those getting tested. However, Governor Andrew Cuomo warned New York City and Long Island officials on Sunday that their reopenings were at risk if they do not stop further large public gatherings that he said are threatening progress on curbing the spread of the coronavirus.

Cuomo said the state has received 25,000 complaints recently of violations of social distancing and other emergency requirements, mostly in Manhattan and the Hamptons, affluent beach communities on the east end of Long Island. "Yes, there is a very real possibility that we would roll back the reopening in those areas," he said at a briefing. Fears that a second wave of infections is happening - or that states failed to curb their first wave - prompted health officials to plead with the public to wear masks and avoid large gatherings. Trump still plans to hold his first campaign rally since early March on Saturday in Tulsa, although those attending will have to agree not to hold the campaign responsible if they contract COVID-19.

About a third of the record new cases in the state came from Tulsa County, according to state data. The Tulsa Health Department on Friday said the outbreak was linked to indoor gatherings. Hospitalizations and the percent of tests coming



CHICAGO: Photo shows transplant surgeon, Ankit Bharat, at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. Surgeons have performed a double-lung transplant on a COVID-19 patient in Chicago, the hospital that carried out the procedure said Thursday, in what is thought to be a first in the US. —AFP

back positive have been steady in the state. "I have concerns about large groups of people gathering indoors for prolonged lengths of time. It is imperative that anyone who chooses to host or attend a gathering take the steps to stay safe," said Bruce Dart, the department's executive director, in a statement that advised people at gatherings to wear masks. Trump has refused to wear a mask at a series of recent public events. —Reuters



## International

# Peru frees 1,500 inmates out of fear of COVID-19

## ‘Punish with lashes’: Militias dole out rough justice in coronavirus fight

**LIMA:** Peru has freed 1,500 inmates over the past two months to ease overcrowding in prisons that have seen riots and deaths from the coronavirus. The announcement of the freeing of people serving time for minor offenses was made in a weekend statement by Justice Minister Fernando Castaneda. On April 14, the government pledged to free 3,000 prisoners to ease overcrowding. Peru has the second-most coronavirus cases in Latin America after Brazil, reporting 229,736. It is third in deaths after Brazil and Mexico, with 6,688.

Inmates fearing contagion with the virus in jam-packed prisons have staged several riots in Peru. The last of these came on May 19 in the south of the country, and left 14 prisoners and guards injured. The government says at least 212 inmates have died of COVID-19 and at least 67 are being treated for it in hospitals. Another 15 prison guards have died of the disease and 17 have been hospitalized. Hundreds more have resigned, fearing infection. In the worst prison riot, nine inmates died in an uprising in late April at a prison near Lima. A total of 67 prisoners, guards and police were injured. The Justice Ministry says 97,000 people are in prison in Peru - representing roughly double the capacity of the country's 68 prisons.

### ‘Punish with lashes’

Peruvian peasant brigades, who decades ago battled leftist rebel groups, are now doling out rough justice in a bid to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus in the Andean country, which has the region's

second highest number of cases after Brazil. The elected community militias, who in normal times solve odd cases of infidelity, robberies of chickens, or go after badly-behaved mayors, judges and other officials, say they now use lashes to punish those breaking quarantine.

“According to the crime, you can punish with lashes,” Aladino Fernández, the president of a group in the northern highland region of Cajamarca, told Reuters by telephone. “A serious crime would be about 15 lashes.” After their creation in the 1970s the militias expanded throughout the country's rural



**Peru reports  
229,736 virus  
cases**



**LIMA:** Workers carry a coffin made of Mapresa (pressed wood) to be stored at a factory at Juan de Lurigancho district in Lima amid the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

area low with just over 1,000 diagnosed infections.

In the southern area of Puno, with 1.2 million inhabitants, there have been 526 infections and 9 deaths. In that region the militias also took control after the start of the lockdown. “For a person to correct himself, according to our grandparents, it has to be three lashes, it has to be an odd number. If it's two

the person doesn't correct himself, that is the belief,” said Vinter Apaza, president of one local group. While critics say these groups over-use violence, the brigades' activities are recognized under Peruvian law after they played an important role in the decades-ago fight against leftist Maoist rebels known as the Shining Path. — Agencies

## Berliners form a socially-distanced chain against racism

**BERLIN:** Thousands demonstrated in Berlin against racism and for broader fairness, including sharing the coronavirus burden, as they stretched a human chain through the German capital Sunday while keeping safe distances. Hundreds also turned out in other cities like Leipzig and Hamburg, although some faced rainstorms in the tail-end of a weekend of harsh weather across Germany. A spokesman for progressive movement Unteilbar (Indivisible) told AFP “more than 20,000 people” had participated in the event in Berlin, while police estimated around 8,000.

The route of the human chain - stretching from the world-famous Brandenburg Gate past the landmark Communist-era TV tower at Alexanderplatz and down into the ethnically diverse Neukölln district - had to be extended to accommodate the numbers. “The coronavirus is worsening existing inequalities. Many people are threatened with being left behind. We will not allow that,” said Unteilbar spokesman Georg Wissmeier in a statement. “Human rights, social justice and climate justice belong together indivisibly.” Over 10,000 people gathered in Berlin under the banner of Black Lives Matter last weekend in response to the May 25 killing of African-American George Floyd in Minneapolis, and the slogan was also in evidence on banners and T-shirts Sunday. But the organizers of the latest demonstration posted a broader set of aims on their website.

### Coal mines to migrant camps

Their demands include better working conditions and pay for all including migrants, affordable housing, upholding asylum rights, relaunching the economy along green lines and allowing workers more say in how companies are run. “Who bears



**BERLIN:** A woman holds a 'Black Lives Matter' placard as protesters form a human chain in Berlin's Kreuzberg district, as they take part in a demonstration organised by the “#unteilbar” (indivisible) movement. — AFP

the costs of the global crisis, who will be stronger afterwards and who weaker - that's being decided now,” Unteilbar organizers wrote. Different groups ran individual stretches of the human chain, ranging from political parties like the Greens and Left party to civil society organizations like “Grannies against the far right” and the Fridays for Future youth climate movement.

And appearances by musicians and campaigners along the demonstration route were broadcast by organizers in a live stream of the event. Messages from the “Ende Gelaende” group that has staged sit-ins at open-cast coal mines and fossil power plants appeared alongside an appeal from an Afghan filmmaker who lived in Greece's overcrowded Moria refugee camp for six months. “Everything is getting worse on the island” of Lesbos, where many people fleeing the Middle East via Turkey first reach European soil, Ahmad Ebrahimi told viewers. “Please do anything you can” to help, he urged.

### Virus fears

Ahead of Sunday's demonstration, some had warned that the gatherings could provoke new transmission of the coronavirus. “People not maintaining distance, shouting and chanting when packed close together - those are ideal conditions” for infection, Social Democratic Party (SPD) MP and epidemiologist Karl Lauterbach told the Tagesspiegel newspaper. On their website, Unteilbar organisers urged sticking to “a responsible form of protest in times of pandemic and crisis”, telling participants to remain three metres (yards) apart to minimise the risk of coronavirus transmission. As the human chain got under way, stewards handed out strips of brightly coloured tape cut to the right length as a guide. Participants' infection control precautions had been “exemplary”, a police spokesman told AFP, adding that people had kept their distance and worn facemasks. — AFP

## Media calls on EU to crack down on online disinfo

**BRUSSELS:** Broadcasters, publishers and journalists called on the European Commission yesterday to implement “much stronger measures” to combat disinformation on internet platforms such as Google and Facebook. A joint declaration, signed notably by the European Federation of Journalists, the European Publishers Council and the Association of Commercial Television in Europe (ACT), follows a presentation on Wednesday by Brussels of new measures against disinformation, prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The signatories say they are “alarmed by the rise in online disinformation during the pandemic”, which has had “a devastating impact on public health efforts”. They say the European “code of good practice”, signed in 2018 by internet platforms, “has shown to be inadequate to address the source and drivers of disinformation propagated online”.

“There is an urgent need for effective instruments to better assess and successfully tackle the issue,” they write, saying that Europe is over-reliant on the “good will of systemic actors”. Among the measures urged is a “meaningful” sanctions regime to ensure that the co-signatories of the code of practice have an incentive to act. These measures should be applied in a way that “boosts rather than penalizes media” and should ensure that “journalistic freedom, fundamental rights and editorial freedom are guaranteed”. Finally, they ask that the dialogue with the online platforms be carried out in a more “structured” way, while “a certain number of commissioners” deal directly with platforms.

The EU last week called on the internet giants to do more to fight the “huge wave of disinformation” caused by the pandemic, by publishing a monthly report on the actions implemented. The vice president of the EU commission in charge of values and transparency, Vera Jourova, said the reports would have to relate to the nature of the disinformation, the dimension of the network involved, its geopolitical origin and the target audience. The approach is based on the good will of platforms, but she said it was in their interest to gain the “confidence” of their users. The pandemic has already led the EU to ask platforms to put forward information from health authorities like the WHO, and to withdraw advertisements for fake medicines in particular. — AFP

## ‘Disinfecting non-stop’ as Italy faces two new COVID-19 outbreaks

**ROME:** Yellow police tape - a familiar sight across Italy since the coronavirus began sweeping the country in March - reappeared at the weekend outside a Rome squat where around 15 new cases have emerged. Health workers insist the outbreak among squatters including a Peruvian family is under control, at a time when Italy is cautiously relaxing measures to contain the disease that has claimed more than 34,000 lives. A second outbreak was far bigger and occurred at a hospital on the western edge of Rome, with 109 cases and five deaths.

Rome's regional COVID-19 crisis centre said all those who tested positive for the virus at the illegally occupied building had been transferred. All their contacts were identified and 108 tests were carried out. After the uproar of blaring ambulances to handle the new cluster of cases, the southern working-class district of Garbatella returned to normal on Sunday, apart from the police tape and a squad car outside the building, as well as a posse of journalists. Mask-wearing shoppers could be seen buying groceries, a man walking his dog, another throwing garbage into an overflowing bin. “Occupants who are still in the building are confined there,” a police officer told AFP, adding that the Red Cross was delivering food to them.

Many of the windows were shuttered in the orange brick block of flats, typical of the buildings that sprang up in the outskirts of Rome during the 1970s. The squatters also receive aid from an



**ROME:** Doctor Marco (left) and nurse Manu, wearing protective gear, greet as they take care of a patient at the level intensive care unit, treating COVID-19 patients, at the San Filippo Neri hospital in Rome during the country's lockdown aimed at stopping the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

NGO. An employee at a nearby grocery store who gave his name only as Ion said the inhabitants were both South American and Italian, “working people, mainly families”. He added that some of the flats share toilets. “This doesn't worry us very much,” he said. “We're wearing masks and being careful.” But Raffaele, a 77-year-old who lives nearby, complained that “there is absolutely no check (on) constant comings and goings of people from all over the world.” He said he feared that such transience could help spread the coronavirus. “Let's say we are being very careful, we are disinfecting non-stop.”

### ‘No illusions’

Meanwhile two army vehicles were stationed outside the San Raffaele Pisana hospital on Sunday, but the situation appeared under control. Health officials said rigorous contact tracing was under way, with some 200 recent patients being tested. The two new outbreaks of COVID-19 came as Italy was re-emerging from lockdown in a phased process that began in early May. The epidemic appeared under control even in its epicentre in the northern Lombardy region. “No one had any illusions that the problems were over,” WHO deputy director Ranieri Guerra told Italian journalists. — AFP

## France urged to end ‘abusive’ ID checks

**PARIS:** France should halt identity checks by the police that are “abusive and discriminatory”, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on Sunday, following angry protests over alleged racism in the security forces. France has seen a number of demonstrations over the last days protesting the actions of police and highlighting the death of young black man Adama Traore in police custody in 2016. The protests have been given additional impetus by the death in the US of George Floyd, with thousands turning out in Paris on Saturday for a new protest that ended with clashes against police.

HRW said French President Emmanuel Macron, who is due to address the nation at 1800 GMT, should identify concrete reforms to end racism within the police. “These reforms should include an end to abusive and discriminatory identity checks,” it said, describing them as a “longstanding problem” and “at the heart of concerns around institutional racism and discrimination.” Benedicte Jeannerod, HRW's France director, said: “President Macron should not just condemn racism, but announce specific reforms to end ethnic profiling and abusive identity checks that all too often cause real harm... particularly for minorities in France.”

HRW said next week it will publish a report documenting the “overly broad powers” of French police to conduct “discriminatory” stop-and-search checks on black and Arab males. The rights group said that it had documented “repetitive, baseless” police checks targeting ethnic minorities, including children as young as 10. It called on Macron to endorse reforms to require reasonable suspicion based on individual behavior as the grounds for all stops and to explicitly prohibit discrimination. France's police forces vehemently reject allegations of institutionalized racism, saying that while there have been problems they are down to individuals. — AFP



## International

# From crowded tubes to pedal power, London's COVID transport challenge

## Bicycle sales soar, Thames Clippers may increase services

**LONDON:** The crowded daily commute in London has long been a source of misery for millions. But getting to work will be even more of a challenge following Britain's coronavirus lockdown. Capacity on the transport network in one of the world's biggest financial hubs has been reduced by 85% to comply with social-distancing rules, protecting commuters by preventing them cramming into trains, the London Underground and buses. Everyone using public transport must also now wear a face covering. As the lockdown restrictions are gradually eased, many now face the quandary of how to reach the City of London, Canary Wharf and other business areas both quickly and safely. "The COVID crisis is making us have to radically rethink the way we move around our city, how transport operates," said Will Norman, the London mayor's commissioner for walking and cycling.

It's a crucial issue. Even before the coronavirus outbreak, London faced increased competition for the title of Europe's most important financial center from cities such as Paris and Frankfurt because it has quit the European Union. "Forty years of public policy about transport has gone into reverse," said Tony Travers of London School of Economics. "This is a big existential issue for cities." Even a small increase in the number of car journeys would lead to gridlock, Norman warned. Before the pandemic, up to 5 million

people a day packed onto the London Underground and 1 million arrived by train. After working successfully from home during the lockdown, some may continue doing so after all restrictions are lifted. Others will be considering alternative ways to get to work.

### Bikes, by foot or boat?

London authorities are adding new routes for cyclists and pedestrians, bicycle sales are soaring and boat operators are considering increasing their services on the River Thames which runs through the city. Bike sales tripled in March and April compared to last year, said Terry Green of the Brixton Cycle co-operative in south London.

"Every time we order bikes, they just go straight out," he said. But Greater London is much larger than financial centers such as Hong Kong and New York, and is widely seen as less cycle-friendly than many other cities.

The number of cycle journeys has risen by 160% since 2000, following the introduction of cycle "superhighway" dedicated paths, but still accounted for only 2.5% of journeys in London before the pandemic, according to Transport for London, which is responsible for the transport system in Greater London. "Even if cycling quintupled, which is very unlikely, or if it doubled or tripled, you're talking about making a tiny inroad in the amount of travel by railway," Travers said.



**LONDON:** A man pulls a wheelie on a bike as he cycles past demonstrators during a Stand up to Racism protest outside of Downing Street on Whitehall, central London in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died after a police officer knelt on his neck in Minneapolis, US. — AFP

Distance is a problem for many - 2015 data from the Greater London Authority put the average daily commute of people working in London at 11.2 miles. Simon Munk, a campaigner for the charity London Cycling Campaign, called for a huge network of cycle roads reaching into outer London "so that people feel comfortable riding from their home to

work." Tim Schwanen, Professor of Transport Studies and Geography at the University of Oxford, said the high cost of living in central London meant many workers with lower-paid jobs, who are less likely to cycle, live further out. "Good infrastructure alone is not enough to get many people to change their behaviour," he said. — Reuters

## Iran daily virus deaths tops 100

**TEHRAN:** Iran has reported over 100 deaths in a single day from the novel coronavirus for the first time in two months, with authorities saying a recent surge in confirmed cases is due to increased testing. The Islamic republic has struggled to contain what has become the Middle East's deadliest outbreak of the COVID-19 illness since it reported its first cases in the Shiite holy city of Qom in February. But since April, the country has progressively lifted restrictions aimed at containing the outbreak to ease the intense pressure on its sanctions-hit economy. Official figures have shown a rising trajectory in new confirmed cases since early May, when Iran hit a near two-month low in daily recorded infections.

In televised remarks, health ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari announced 107 deaths from COVID-19 in the past 24 hours, raising the overall toll to 8,837. "It was very painful for us to announce the triple digit figure," Lari said. "This is an unpredictable and wild virus and may surprise us at any time," she added, urging Iranians to observe health protocols. Iran last recorded over 100 fatalities on April 13, with 111 dead. Lari also announced 2,472 new cases confirmed in the past day, bringing the

total infection caseload to 187,427, with over 148,000 recoveries. There has been skepticism at home and abroad about Iran's official COVID-19 figures, with concerns the real toll could be much higher.

### Increased testing

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Saturday reproached citizens for failing to observe measures designed to rein in the virus. It was "disturbing" to see that only "18 to 20 percent of people" observe health protocols and social distancing, down from "80 percent or more" between April 20 and May 20, he said, citing a report. According to Lari, seven of Iran's 31 provinces are currently classified as "red" - the highest level on Iran's color-coded risk scale.

But Rouhani has said the increase in reported infections should not be taken as a sign of a worsening health situation. "When more tests are done, then naturally more cases are identified," he told a cabinet meeting on Wednesday. The high number of recent cases "does not have a negative aspect to it and people should not worry," he added. Iran has carried out more than 1.2 million COVID-19 tests since its first cases were reported, according to Lari. The health ministry's head epidemiologist, Mohammad-Mehdi Gouya, said last week that the primary cause of the surge in reported infections was due to testing those "with no or light symptoms". The gradual easing of lockdown measures has also partly contributed to higher infections, he added. — AFP

## Saudi Arabia calls for compliance as COVID cases rise

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia called on people to comply with health measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus on Sunday, as its daily tally of cases rose above 4,000 for the first time. The Saudi Arabian health ministry reported 4,233 new coronavirus cases to bring the total to 127,541, with 972 deaths, the highest among the six Gulf Arab states. Saudi Arabia, which has a population of some 30 million, allowed employees to return to offices, commercial centers to reopen and prayers at mosques to resume in a three phase plan which began last month. A curfew is due to end by June 21. "There are two paths before us. The average infection rate could rise if people continue not to comply, or we could bring the rate back down," a health ministry spokesman said. The move follows a similar warning from Iran.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that Iran will reimpose restrictions to stem a surge in coronavirus cases if health regulations are not observed. After gradually relaxing its lockdown, Iran has seen a sharp rise of new infections. Saudi authorities reimposed curfew hours in the Red Sea port



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

city of Jeddah on June 5 and suspended work at offices for two weeks as the number of infections there increased. "We will intervene or apply additional measures in any region that requires that," the ministry spokesman said during a virtual news briefing. The Saudi capital Riyadh recorded the

biggest spike in the last 24 hours, with 1,735 more infections, followed by Jeddah and the holy city of Mecca with more than 300 each. The total number of cases in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is more than 326,760, with some 1,770 deaths, Reuters calculations show. — Reuters

## Somali govt recognizes leader in restive state

**MOGADISHU:** The Somali government on Sunday officially recognised the contested leader of the semi-autonomous Jubaland state after months of tensions, however only as "interim leader", a term he promptly rejected. Ahmed Madobe, a former warlord, was re-elected as president of the state in August 2019 in an election boycotted by the federal government, who backed a loyalist candidate in a parallel election.

The Jubaland crisis strained ties between Kenya, which backed Madobe, and Somalia, which has long accused its larger neighbor of meddling in its affairs. Those tensions escalated in March, when heavy fighting broke out near the Kenyan border between Somali troops and Jubaland forces. Kenya accused Somali troops of violating its territorial integrity. The rival leaders in Jubaland signed a peace pact in April.

"In considering the need to have an administration that is mutually accepted by all the local people, and in order to end the protracted conflicts" the government recognizes Madobe as head of the "Jubaland interim administration", said a statement from the Somali president's office. Mogadishu said this would be a two-year interim mandate, as op-

posed to the four-year mandate set out in the Jubaland constitution. "The mandate of the leader of Jubaland expires in four years in accordance with the Jubaland State Constitution therefore, no one can decide the mandate expiration against the favor of the provisions in the constitution," Jubaland's government said in a statement.

### Political feuds

The government has invited heads of the various states to Mogadishu next week to discuss national elections due before February 2021. Somalia has faced criticism from observers for engaging in political feuds with federal states to gain control in the upcoming election, rather than focusing on the fight against Islamist group Al-Shabaab. The leaders of Somalia and breakaway state Somaliland met Sunday in Djibouti a bid to renew dialogue, with Somaliland calling for a "two-state" process and defending its right to independence. The meeting took place in Djibouti, chaired by the country's President Ismail Omar Guelleh, and was attended by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

Somaliland declared independence in 1991, and while anarchic southern Somalia has been riven by years of fighting between multiple militia forces and Islamist violence, Somaliland has enjoyed relative peace. However it has never achieved the international recognition it desires. Somali analyst Omar Mahmood, of the International Crisis Group, told AFP the "huge tensions" between Mogadishu and its federal states which don't feel consulted, were a major obstacle to the election process. — AFP

## Taiwan pedals faster to meet bikes demand

**TAICHUNG:** Deserted streets, cabin fever and worries over COVID-enabling commutes in Europe and America have sent demand for bikes into high gear - with factories in Taiwan racing to push out new units and scrambling to find parts. The deadly virus has sparked a global recession and hammered many industries, but it is boom time in the bike world and a major bonus for Taiwan, which is a leading bicycle producer and has managed to avoid mass lockdowns by defeating the coronavirus early on. At Giant, the world's largest bike company, it has been a dizzying few months, according to CEO Bonnie Tu.

"We saw what happened and then we reacted quickly," Tu told AFP in an interview last week at their new headquarters in the industrial city of Taichung. "We mobilize our companies, including our factories and sales company... in order to meet the consumer demand." The orders have kept on coming, with reports of empty bike racks at dealers and long waits for resupply across Europe and North America. In Britain, the Association of Cycle Traders said some 20,000 bikes awaiting manufacturing and delivery had already been sold or reserved. "We've seen a mixture of everybody to be honest," Lincoln Romain, director of Brixton Cycles, in London, told AFP last month. "People that commute all the time, we've seen new cyclists, we've seen people that have to get in so they have bikes that have been in the shed a little while."

### Waiting for suppliers

Across the Atlantic, demand has also rocketed. Year-on-year sales of commuter



**TAICHUNG:** A worker checks an e-bike at a factory of Giant - the world's biggest bicycle manufacturer - in Taichung. — AFP

and fitness bikes increased 66 percent in March, leisure bikes leaped 121 percent and electric bikes rose 85 percent, according to market research firm The NPD Group. Giant's Tu said demand in both the US and Europe has centered on the more affordable "\$1,000 and under" category of bikes. While Giant's factories in Taiwan kept rolling, many of their facilities on the Chinese mainland had to temporarily shut down when the virus first spread from the central city of Wuhan. A return to full capacity has been slowed by struggles to get parts from suppliers as they refill factory floors and restock inventories.

"We have to wait for them," Tu said. "So it is actually quite difficult, but we manage." For Europe, Giant will soon benefit from a large factory it has built in Hungary, part of a gradual shift many Taiwanese manufacturers are making to diversify away from China and be closer to consumer markets. Gina Chang, secretary-general of the Taiwan Bicycle Association, said manufacturers ini-

tially suffered in the first quarter from cancelled or postponed orders when the virus first spread. But since then, demand has roared back. "We are seeing rush orders or even panic buying," she told AFP. "Taiwan's top two bike makers have orders lined up till the end of this year."

### Taiwanese renaissance

The coronavirus boom is the latest chapter in a renaissance for Taiwan's bike industry. The self-ruled island had for years been the world's number-one bike producer until the 1990s, when mainland China's economic reforms saw firms - including many Taiwanese manufacturers - take advantage of a vast, cheap labor force. But while Chinese factories continue to play a dominant role in terms of sheer numbers, Taiwan production is bouncing back, especially when it comes to higher-quality models and in the rapidly growing electric bike market. Last year, Taiwan exported \$1.36 billion in non-electric bicycles, down from \$1.5 billion the year before. — AFP



## Business

TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2020

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**LIANYUNGANG:** An employee works at a textile machine factory in Lianyungang in China's eastern Jiangsu province yesterday. China's factory output rose again in May, while official data also showed retail sales improved further after collapsing at the start of the year.—AFP

# China's factory output inches higher

## Second wave fears cloud recovery prospects, consumers stay cautious

**BEIJING:** China's factories stepped up production for a second straight month in May, as the country shook off the economic torpor of the coronavirus, although the weaker-than-expected gain suggested the recovery remained fragile.

Patchy data yesterday also showed sustained contractions in retail sales and investment, a sign many sectors were still struggling with the effects of heavy shutdowns across the world's second-largest economy earlier this year. Global leaders are closely watching China to see how long it takes to get back on its feet as they begin to relax their own stringent anti-virus measures and reboot their economies.

Analysts say signs of improvement continue to be seen in China from increased steel production and car sales to more industrial parks restarting. However, concerns about a second wave of infections are now casting a dark cloud over recovery prospects. "Industrial production is on the whole getting better, but there are still quite a few difficulties and uncertainties," said Jiang Yuan, an official at the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in a statement.

Industrial output growth quickened to 4.4 percent in May from a year earlier, the highest reading since

December, official data showed yesterday. Analysts polled by Reuters had expected a 5.0 percent rise from 3.9 percent in April, the first expansion since the virus emerged in China late last year.



Retail sales,  
investment  
edge lower

But a collapse in export orders amid global lockdowns has left factories more reliant on domestic demand, which is recovering at a more sluggish pace. Retail sales fell for a fourth straight month. While the 2.8 percent drop was smaller than the 7.5 percent slump in April, it was larger than the 2.0 percent fall tipped by analysts. Heavy job losses and fears of a second infection wave have kept consumers cautious.

"There are still restrictions in some demand areas, people remain worried and not many are traveling or going to cinemas, plus there are some virus flare-ups, which will have some impact on consumption," said Tang Jianwei, senior economist at Bank of Communications in Shanghai. Fixed asset investment fell 6.3 percent in January-May from the same period last year, compared with a forecast 5.9 percent fall and a 10.3 percent decline in the first four months of the year.

As in past downturns, Beijing is banking on higher infrastructure spending to lead a recovery, and steel mills have cranked up furnaces to over 92 percent of capacity. Private sector fixed-asset investment, which accounts for 60 percent of total investment, fell 9.6 percent in January-May, compared with a 13.3 percent decline in the first four months of the year.

Other data showed real estate investment fell 0.3 percent in January-May from a year earlier, far less than in previous months.

### Growth forecasts

China's gross domestic product shrank 6.8 percent in the first quarter, the first contraction on record.

Highlighting the uncertain outlook, the government did not set a GDP growth target at its annual parliament gathering in May, the first time in nearly two decades it has not done so. The NBS said China's economy has not yet returned to normal and external risks have clearly increased. China would need to see further recovery in June for the economy to eke out an expansion in the current quarter, it added.

Some analysts saw May's factory data pointing to a more optimistic outlook than previously feared. Bank of Communications' Tang now expects China's GDP to return to modest growth in the second quarter, helped by the recovery in property investment.

However, others still see risks as fragile employment weighs on consumption. ING economists maintained their forecasts for GDP to fall 3.1 percent in the second quarter and 1.5 percent in 2020.

"We believe that the unstable job market and healthcare concerns are the main factors slowing down the recovery," said ING Chief Economist Greater China Iris Pang. "This means that even during the long holiday month of May, people were still spending carefully." — Reuters

## Gulf markets slip on fears of second wave

**DUBAI/LONDON:** All major Gulf markets fell yesterday in line with oil and global stocks as growing fears of a second wave of coronavirus infections revived economic worries. Saudi Arabia's benchmark index eased 0.4 percent, with National Commercial Bank, the kingdom's largest lender, dropping 1.4 percent and Al-Rajhi Bank down 0.3 percent. State-owned Saudi Aramco was down 0.2 percent.

Global equities tumbled yesterday extending last week's losses on fears of a second wave of virus infections around the world that could put the brakes on the easing of lockdowns and a budding economic recovery.

On Sunday, the oil giant bought 2.1 billion shares of Saudi Basic Industries (SABIC) on the stock market, completing a deal to buy 70 percent of the petrochemical giant, according to sources and market data. SABIC traded 0.3 percent lower. The benchmark index in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates' business and tourism hub, was 1.2 percent lower, weighed down by a 1.8 percent fall in Emaar Properties and a 1.6 percent drop in Dubai Islamic Bank. The Abu Dhabi index slipped 0.5 percent, with top lender First Abu Dhabi Bank easing 1.8 percent.

The Qatari index lost 0.7 percent, with Qatar Islamic Bank shedding 1.8 percent and petrochemical firm Industries Qatar down 1.2 percent.

Brent crude futures were \$1.02, or 2.6 percent lower, at \$37.71 a barrel by 0750 GMT, as new coron-

avirus infections hit China and the United States, raising the prospect that renewed outbreaks could weigh on the recovery of fuel demand.

While European nations press ahead with their reopening after months of strict shutdowns, there are signs that the deadly disease is coming back in China and seeing a resurgence in the United States too.

European stock markets lost more than two percent in opening deals yesterday, as investors fretted over a second wave of coronavirus infections that could derail economic recovery. In initial trade, London's benchmark FTSE 100 index of blue-chip companies slid 2.2 percent to 5,970.86 points.

In the eurozone, Frankfurt's DAX 30 index sank 2.7 percent to 11,630.85 points and the Paris CAC 40 also lost 2.7 percent to 4,707.04. Milan's FTSE Mib shed 2.7 percent to 18,386.29 and Madrid's IBEX 35 dropped almost 3.8 percent to 7,077.10 points. "Investors are waking up to the threat of a second wave and the damage that it could cause to the global economic recovery," said City Index analyst Fiona Cincotta.

The worrying figures will provide a test for stock markets, which have soared up to 50 percent from their March troughs thanks to the lifting of stay-at-home orders and trillions of dollars of stimulus and central bank backstopping.

Beijing has carried out mass testing and locked down several neighborhoods after 75 cases were linked to a single wholesale food market in the capital. City official Li Junjie said yesterday that cases had also been found at another market.

"It means the virus hasn't lost its infectiousness, it isn't weakening... we shouldn't let down our guard," World Health Organization deputy director Rianieri Guerra told Italian journalists.

AxiCorp's Stephen Innes said in a note: "Falling infection rates have provided investors the confidence

that the lockdown approach was working, allowing equity investors to look forward to 2021 as impressive monetary and fiscal policy provide a post-pandemic bridge." "However, rising new daily COVID-19 cases in two of the three most populous states in the US will test that resolve."

### Reopening borders

Tokyo tumbled 3.5 percent and Seoul sank 4.8 percent, while Hong Kong, Sydney, Singapore, Mumbai and Bangkok were all down more than two percent. Shanghai was one percent off, Manila also lost 4.8 percent and Taipei slipped 1.1 percent, with

Wellington off 0.4 percent. London, Paris and Frankfurt all lost more than two percent at the start of trade. Still, there is hope for the recovery in Europe, with Germany, Belgium, France and Greece opening their borders to EU countries from yesterday. Austria will follow today while Spain said it will do so on June 21.

Oil prices extended last week's losses on fears that a second wave could lead to new lockdowns and hit demand for the commodity again. Traders are also keeping tabs on a technical meeting of key producers led by Russia and Saudi Arabia, with a panel discussing output cuts. — Agencies



**RIYADH:** In this file photo, a Saudi investor monitors the Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul). All major Gulf markets fell yesterday in line with oil and global stocks as growing fears of a second wave of coronavirus infections revived economic worries. — AFP



# Kuwait's inflation rises in 1Q20, to ease on softer economic conditions

## Food inflation jumps, housing costs fall at a slower pace

**KUWAIT:** Consumer price inflation rose to 1.9 percent y/y in March from 1.7 percent in February and 1.5 percent at the end of 4Q19. The pick-up in inflation appears to have been driven by a combination of rising prices in the food and furnishing & household maintenance categories as well as by a lessening of deflation in housing rents.

'Core' inflation, which excludes both food and housing, was quite strong at 3.1 percent. It is worth noting, however, that given the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdown and business closures in place since mid-March, it is likely that statistical sampling was difficult, affecting the quality of the data.

### Food inflation

Food price inflation jumped from 1.8 percent y/y in December 2019 to an almost four-year high of 2.8 percent in March 2020, in part reflecting a low base and as inflation in the volatile fish and seafood category remained in double digits (11.2 percent).

International food prices, by comparison, remained in decline, and are likely to keep local food prices in check, which are also subject to subsidies and price controls. Indeed, local authorities ramped up efforts to prevent price gouging, especially during the height of the pandemic, when travel restrictions and fear of food shortages led to sharp rises in front-loaded purchases of consumer staples.

Meanwhile, housing costs declined by 0.2 percent y/y in March, decelerating at the slowest pace in almost three years and versus -0.9 percent

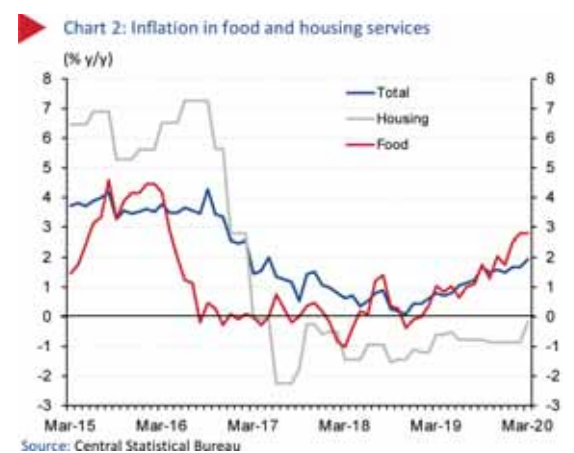
in December. While the rate of decline in housing rents appears to have bottomed out after seeing years of weakness due to oversupply in the apartment market, the segment is likely to face a fresh wave of declines in the months ahead on the back of weaker growth and a fall in housing demand as the number of expats potentially drop.

### Core inflation

Core inflation held firm at 3.1 percent y/y in March, up slightly from 3.0 percent in December, as higher inflation in the 'services and miscellaneous goods' (up 1.5 percent q/q to 4.0 percent y/y) and clothing (up 0.4 percent q/q to 2.8 percent y/y) categories more than offset lower inflation rates in other core components such as transportation (down 0.2 percent q/q to 3.6 percent y/y) and household goods.

Inflation in the miscellaneous segment was mainly driven by a rise in jewelry prices, which were mostly likely driven by higher gold prices, not least because of increased economic uncertainty in the three months to March. Meanwhile, the pick-up in inflation in the clothing segment was in part due to a low base.

That said, with consumer spending taking a major hit in 2Q20 from strict virus-containment measures in place since mid-March (including a full 24-hour lockdown through most of May), a slowdown or drop in spending on these items as well as other discretionary items may weigh on



prices in the months to come.

### Wholesale price inflation

Wholesale price inflation, which measures prices charged between some businesses rather than to consumers, stood at a subdued 0.7 percent in March, unchanged from December. Although not a complete measure of businesses' costs, subdued wholesale price inflation should limit the pressure on retailers to increase prices.

While inflation in the price of imported goods was relatively constant during the same period, inflation in the price of locally produced goods eased from 0.8 percent to a mere 0.4 percent, pointing to limited upward inflationary pressures from domestic wholesale prices.

### Inflation to ease in 2020

Given the economic fallout from the pandemic in relation to consumer demand, we now expect

inflation to ease from an annual average of 1.1 percent in 2019 to likely 1.0 percent or lower in 2020. Downside risks predominate, with weaker housing demand on the back of a possible drop in expat numbers likely to usher in a fresh wave of declines in rents and thus weigh on headline inflation. Additionally, food price inflation will likely be kept in check by government initiatives to prevent price gouging during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, core components, especially discretionary consumer items such as clothing and household goods are also likely to face downward pressures. While we may see continued strength in the miscellaneous segment and a pick-up in transport costs, led by potential hikes in airfares due to limited travel capacities, and communication costs, not least because of pent up demand for video-conferencing services, these are likely to be offset by lower inflation rates in the other core components.

## Market jitters, an overdue pullback?

**SINGAPORE:** A second straight day of record new COVID-19 cases in Beijing and a spike in infections across a swathe of the United States has dented investor sentiment and sent stocks sharply lower yesterday.

Here are analyst views on the shifting mood and the outlook from here:

James McGlew, executive director of corporate stockbroking, Argonaut, Perth:

"This is a healthy correction, but I feel there is some way to go as investors try and quantify what lies ahead. "The market had run up sharply since hitting a low in March and that was based on a lot of optimism about the economy. But now investors are getting a reality check. Markets are now realizing the COVID situation is not under control yet."

Masaru Ishibashi, joint general manager of trading, Sumitomo Mitsui Bank, Tokyo:

"Markets have ignored the number of new cases and rallied until now because everyone jumped on the economic recovery bandwagon. Now positions are so long that people are more likely to react to negative news, like what is happening in Beijing. "Another factor to consider is volatility has been rising in some markets, which supports risk-off trades. This means sell currencies, sell stocks and buy bonds. In addition, worries about Brexit are starting to return, and this is not fully priced in. There are more downside risks for financial markets."

Steven Leung, executive director for institutional sales, UOB Kay Hian, Hong Kong:

"The market was pricing in a V-shape recovery. This can't be the case if there is indeed a second wave, the best scenario is U-shaped. There will be a bigger impact this time on all those stocks tied to the expected economic recovery such as travel, hotel, if we see a second wave. "These past few trading days, when there were uncertainties around the epidemic, the dollar index has been bouncing back. That means pressure on the Asian currencies. Capital may leave Asia for the US, that is negative for Asian markets."

Moh Siong Sim, FX analyst, Bank of Singapore:

"Usually after such a long run, there's a pause. There's a lot we don't know about the virus itself, and the market is grappling with that uncertainty. But we are now better prepared. We know what sensible things to do."

"So do we get a double dip? I'm not so sure. I tend to think it's a more of a scenario where the recovery might not be as strong as what is hoped for. The market is saying a V-shape, the economy is saying a U and the market is beginning to think it's not a V, it's more of a U." —Reuters

## Wholesale prices remain subdued

jewelry prices, which were mostly likely driven by higher gold prices, not least because of increased economic uncertainty in the three months to March. Meanwhile, the pick-up in inflation in the clothing segment was in part due to a low base.

That said, with consumer spending taking a major hit in 2Q20 from strict virus-containment measures in place since mid-March (including a full 24-hour lockdown through most of May), a slowdown or drop in spending on these items as well as other discretionary items may weigh on

## Gulf Bank resumes Al-Danah, Salary Account draws

**KUWAIT:** As part of the phased national transition plan and in coordination with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Gulf Bank announced it would be resuming its periodic Al-Danah and Salary Account draws, following a brief hiatus of three months due to restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic. During this period, and as a reward for their loyalty, Al-Danah account holders were accumulating their chances of winning, and all chances amassed during this last year will be added to their chances of winning draws in the upcoming year.

The upcoming draws will include the weekly Al-Danah draw, in which five winners will take home KD 1,000 each, and the quarterly Al-Danah draw (initially scheduled for March), in which the winner will receive KD 250,000. Gulf Bank will also be conducting retroactive monthly draws for Salary Account holders, whose winners will take home cash prizes of up to 12 times their salaries. All draws that had been postponed will now be held weekly in concurrence with the current Al-Danah and Salary Account draws.

Mohammad Al-Qattan, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, said: "With the gradual return to normalcy, Gulf Bank was keen to coordinate with the Ministry of Trade and Industry to resume our periodic draws and grant our clients as many opportunities to win as possible, and reward them for choosing to save with Gulf Bank. Starting this week, we will be holding both the current and postponed draws simultaneously, and announcing their winners accordingly. We wish all our esteemed clients the best of luck!"

### Regarding the resumption of the Al-Danah draws:

- The Bank was requested by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to temporarily stop all draws due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- Customers' chances of winning were not affected nor were they lost; chances have been accumulating daily despite the postponement of the draws.
- All draw files have been safely stored to ensure that upon the resumption of the draws, the correct number of chances will be used for the draws that had been postponed.
- The Bank's draw process has not been changed, and draws will continue to be overseen by representatives

from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

- The set prize scheme has not been changed.
- The Al-Danah quarterly draw will be held on June 28, 2020.
- The Bank will commence with the previously postponed weekly Al-Danah draws starting June 18, 2020. Any remaining draws will be held as per the above schedule.
- The draws will be held at Gulf Bank's Head Office building under the supervision of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. No customers will be allowed due to strict safety protections against COVID-19. The number of people managing the draws will also be limited to ensure the draws are conducted in a safe environment.
- By law, the Bank is required to publish the names of the winners in all local newspapers, on the Bank's website, and on various social media channels.
- Customers may check their accumulated chances either by logging into their accounts online or by using Gulf Bank's mobile app.
- All salaries transferred during March 2020 will enter the March Salary Account Draw, as well as any consecutive draws.

### About Al-Danah draw

Al-Danah is Gulf Bank's flagship account, open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. The Al-Danah draw distributes more than KD 2 million in prizes every year.

Al-Danah offers several unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their weekly, quarterly, and yearly chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app.

To take part in the upcoming Al-Danah quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw. Al-Danah chances are added on a daily basis, and the more customers save and the longer they save for, the higher their chances of winning. Furthermore, loyal customers will be rewarded and have their previous year's chances transferred to the next year.

### About Salary Draw

The 2020 Kuwaiti Salary Package automatically enrolls new Kuwaiti customers who transfer their

salaries to Gulf Bank in the monthly and annual Salary Account draws. The monthly draws allow customers the chance to win cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary, while the yearly draw gives them the opportunity to win Kuwait's largest salary prize of up to 100 times their salary. The Salary Account also gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank or an interest-free loan of up to KD 15,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and will be eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank.

Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a Visa or MasterCard credit card free of charge for a year, as well as a chance to apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000 or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000.

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank is currently welcoming customers at a select number of branches throughout the country, and is keen on applying all the necessary precautionary measures to ensure the regular sterilization of its locations. These measures include taking customers' temperatures at the entrance, maintaining physical distance, and ensuring both customers and staff are wearing gloves and masks at all times. Gulf Bank is committed to applying the best preventive health measure to ensure the safety of both its clients and staff.



Mohammad Al-Qattan

Thursday 18 June 2020	Price Amount	Winners (Qty)	Description
	KD 1,000	15	3 Postponed Weekly Al Danah Draws - (initially planned for March 15, 22, 29)
Sunday 28 June 2020	KD 1,000	5	Weekly Al Danah Draw
	KD 250,000	1	First Quarterly Al Danah Draw (initially planned for April 18)
	12 times salary	1	March 2020 Salary Account Draw
Sunday 5 July 2020	KD 1,000	5	Weekly Al Danah Draw
	KD 1,000	15	3 Postponed Weekly Al Danah Draws - (initially planned for April 5, 19, 26)
	12 times salary	1	April 2020 Salary Account Draw
Thursday 16 July 2020	KD 250,000	1	Second Quarterly Al Danah Draw
	KD 1,000	25	5 Postponed Weekly Al Danah Draws (initially planned for May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31)
	12 times salary	1	May 2020 Monthly Salary Account Draw
Thursday 19 July 2020	KD 1,000	5	Weekly Al Danah Draw
	KD 1,000	15	3 Postponed Al Danah Draws - (initially planned for June 7, 14, 21)
	12 times salary	1	June 2020 Monthly Salary Account Draw
Sunday 26 July 2020	KD 1,000	5	Weekly Al Danah Draw

## BP to take up to \$17.5bn hit on coronavirus

**LONDON:** British energy giant BP said yesterday that it will take a hit of up to \$17.5 billion in the second quarter as "sustained" coronavirus fallout ravages global oil demand.

The company, fresh from outlining plans to axe almost 10,000 jobs on COVID-19 fallout, said in a statement that it will suffer a negative impact of between \$13 billion and \$17.5 billion (11.4 billion euros and 15.3 billion euros) in non-cash impairments and write-offs.

BP also cut its long-term oil price forecast after the deadly virus outbreak slammed the brakes on the global economy and hurt oil prices this year.

"With the COVID-19 pandemic having continued during the second quarter of 2020, BP now sees the prospect of the pandemic having an enduring impact on the global economy, with the potential for weaker demand for energy for a sustained period," BP said, adding the virus was set to accelerate a transition to lower carbon energy.

The group continued: "BP has revised its long-term price assumptions, lowering them and extending the period covered to 2050. "As part of its long-term strategic planning, and in the context of its continuing focus on capital discipline, BP is also reviewing its intent

to develop some of its exploration intangible assets.

"These actions will lead to non-cash impairment charges and write-offs in the second quarter, estimated to be in an aggregate range of \$13 billion to \$17.5 billion post-tax." BP Chief Executive Bernard Looney warned that the COVID-19 pandemic "increasingly looks as if it will have an enduring economic impact".

"So, we have reset our price outlook to reflect that impact ... We are also reviewing our development plans. "All that will result in a significant change in our upcoming results, but I am confident that these difficult decisions ... will better enable us to compete through the energy transition."

BP now expects European bench-

mark London Brent North Sea oil prices to average \$55 per barrel between 2021 and 2050, while it also lowered its guidance for gas prices. The London-listed energy major had announced plans one week ago to axe "close to 10,000" jobs, or almost 15 percent of its global workforce.

And it warned that oil prices had plunged well below the level which the group needed to turn a profit. After companies worldwide closed their doors and airlines grounded planes towards the end of the first quarter, oil dropped off a cliff, causing prices to briefly turn negative.

Prices have however rebounded sharply in recent weeks as governments ease lockdowns and businesses slowly reopen. —AFP



## Business

## NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

# A surprisingly dovish Fed leaves rates unchanged , sends dollar up

## US policymakers reinforce grim assessment of economic outlook

**KUWAIT:** Markets were expecting to hear a somewhat positive note from the Federal Reserve meeting, hoping to see projections from policymakers that indicate a turnaround in the US economy after the shock of the coronavirus pandemic, with the jobs markets showing early recovery and a rally in equities.

Instead, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell and his fellow monetary policymakers reinforced their grim assessment of the country's economic prospects for the coming years. Reiterating the need for a heavy dose of support from the regulator as far over the economic horizon as they can see.

The US Federal Reserve left interest rates unchanged, pledging to maintain its unprecedented stimulus until the economy "has weathered recent events". Current expectations are for no rate hikes this year or in 2021. "We're not thinking about raising rates—we're not even thinking about thinking about raising rates," Chairman Jerome Powell told reporters. The Federal Open Market Committee said it was "committed to using its full range of tools to support the US economy in this challenging time." The bank has also opposed negative interest rates through opinions supporting such moves have grown. All but two Fed officials predicted its main interest rate would remain close to zero through 2022.

In December 2019, Fed policymakers said they expected the US economy to grow about 2 percent this year and the unemployment rate to remain around 3.5 percent. In the Fed's meeting, they announced they now expect the economy to shrink by 6.5 percent in 2020 and unemployment to reach 9.3 percent from 13.3 percent in May, before falling to 6.5 percent in 2021. "The path ahead for the economy is highly uncertain and continues to depend to a significant degree on the path of the pandemic," Powell said.

Powell added that the Fed was considering "explicit forms" of forward guidance on interest rates and asset purchases, a part of its traditional crisis fighting toolkit. As well as an approach dating back to the 1930s involving targeting interest rates along the yield curve, he said that the usefulness of the so called "yield curve control" remained "an open question."

### Mixed data

Data released Wednesday revealed consumer prices in the US declined for a third straight month in May, dipping 0.1 percent last month following a 0.8 percent plunge in April. The report showed that demand remained subdued amid a recession caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Prices were mainly pres-

sured by a 3.5 percent drop in the cost of gasoline, which followed a 20.6 percent drop in April.

Producer prices on the other hand showed a recovery in May as the index gained 0.4 percent against the previous month. The figure exceeded forecasts for an increase of 0.1 percent making economists look at it as a sign that the worst of the disinflationary impulse from the coronavirus crisis is behind us. It is worth noting that the figure in April showed that producer prices were down 1.3 percent, the steepest monthly drop since 2009.

On the jobs front, the number of Americans applying for initial unemployment benefits totaled 1.54 million in the week ending June 6, the initial claims number was slightly better than forecasts of 1.55 million and down from 1.89 million in the prior week. The number of continuing claims remained above the 20 million figure, reinforcing the view that the labor market could take years to recover from the pandemic even as businesses re-open. The latest jobless claims report comes after data showed US employers unexpectedly added 2.5m jobs in May, bringing the jobless rate down from 14.7 percent to 13.3 percent.

However, even with the decline in unemployment, the US joblessness remains well above its peak after the 2008-09 financial crisis. Fed officials had warned of further job losses on top of those experienced in the first two months of the pandemic and cautioned that a full recovery may not materialize until the end of next year.

### Market reaction

US stocks were starting to erase their losses in the beginning of the week after some tentative signs of recovery had been noted, investors also started to ditch the US dollar as they felt safer. This sentiment turned around after the Fed announcement which brought back risk aversion in full swing, stocks were in selloff mode for the past three days and saw their sharpest losses on Thursday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average tumbled 6.9 percent or 1800 points, its biggest one day drop in three months, and closed the week down 7.22 percent at 25,605.5. The S&P 500 Index saw the same trajectory, closing the week down 6.24 percent at 3,041.3. The US dollar traded higher on safe haven clouds, with the index ending the week up 1.42 percent at 97.319. The pound sterling saw a dip against the dollar with the cable closing the week at 1.2540, while the euro dropped to 1.1260. The movements came as a result of the Fed's meeting in addition to a plethora of factors, including the fear of a second wave of coron-

Previous Week Levels					This Week's Expected Range		3-Month
Currencies	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.1301	1.1213	1.1325	1.1254	1.1165	1.1404	1.1279
GBP	1.2619	1.2475	1.2637	1.2540	1.2522	1.2788	1.2551
JPY	107.42	107.22	107.52	107.34	106.42	109.32	107.19
CHF	0.9469	0.9456	0.9553	0.9523	0.9452	0.9736	0.9497

avirus cases in the US, driving investors to seek safety in the US dollar in addition to the Japanese yen and Swiss franc.

### Lagarde defends ECB

"The COVID-19 pandemic and measures to contain the spread of the virus have caused an unprecedented contraction of economic activity in the euro area," Christine Lagarde said in a speech on Monday. The ECB President addressed charges by Germany's constitutional court that bond purchases conducted to lift inflation in the past five years might have disproportionate side effects. She went on to defend the most recent moves made by the ECB, saying the latest decision to expand the emergency bond-buying program by 600 billion euros to 1.35 trillion euros is "overwhelmingly positive." Still, the ECB expects an economic contraction of 8.7 percent in the euro area this year.

The eurozone's largest economy saw industrial production fall by 17.9 percent in April following an 8.9 percent drop in March. The plummet came during the height of lockdowns for Germany, with the auto industry alone suffering a decline of 74.6 percent m/m. The figures are the worst on record, despite the country having a less severe epidemic than its peers.

### UK economy faces drops

GDP figures from the UK showed that the economy shrunk by a record 20.4 percent in April, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The drop is by far the largest contraction since monthly records began in 1997 and follows the previous record drop of 5.7 percent clocked in March. The readings meant that by the end of April, the economy was about 25 percent smaller than in February. The decline exceeded the 18.4 percent contraction forecasted by economists polled by Reuters. The figure dwarfed the downturn of 2008-09 financial crisis, when the fastest contraction was a monthly fall of 1 percent in March 2009. It also exceeds the 6 percent cumulative output lost during the

### China trade surplus surges

China's trade surplus surged to a record \$62.93 billion in May following a \$45.34 billion surplus in April. The figure marks the highest on record and came in well above expectations of \$39 billion. Exports, devastated by demand though aided by an increase in medical-related sales, fell less than expected dropping 3.3 percent y/y in May. Imports on the other hand plunged 16.7 percent y/y, a sharper-than-expected drop which illustrates the pressure on global manufacturers as growth stalls. Commodities China buys and depends on such as crude oil, natural gas, and soybeans have declined significantly in price amidst the global pandemic. This led to a growth in China's foreign exchange reserves to \$3.1017 trillion by the end of May, from \$3.0915 trillion in late April.

China's economy took the bulk of the damage during the first quarter of 2020, shrinking 6.8 percent y/y. The government announced it would not set an annual growth target for the first time since 2002. Looking at US-China trade developments, many expect US President Donald Trump has no option but to stick with a Phase 1 trade deal for now – a relief for many investors.

### Drop in Japan's GDP

Japan's GDP contracted less than initially estimated for the first quarter of 2020. The economy shrank 2.2 percent annually, far better than the initial estimate of a 3.4 percent contraction. Still, Japan has experienced two straight quarters of declines and the expectations are even worse for the second quarter of 2020. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe ended the national state of emergency two weeks ago, slightly ahead of schedule, and is now focused on a swift economic recovery. However, a resurgence of the virus in Tokyo suggests consumer spending could stay subdued for some time while export markets also struggle to reopen.

## FB rejects call to share revenue with Australian media

**SYDNEY:** Facebook yesterday rejected calls from the Australian government and news companies that it share advertising revenue with the media, suggesting it would rather cut news content from its platform.

The US tech giant said in a submission to Australia's competition watchdog that news represents a "very small fraction" of the content in an average user's news feed. "If there were no news content available on Facebook in Australia, we are confident the impact on Facebook's community metrics and revenues in Australia would not be significant," it said in a thinly veiled threat to boycott local news companies.

"Given the social value and benefit to news publishers, we would strongly prefer to continue enabling news publishers' content to be available on our platform," it said. In an effort being closely watched around the world, Australia is set to unveil plans to force Facebook and Google to share advertising revenue they earn from news featured in their services.

The initiative has been strongly pushed by Australia's two biggest media companies, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and Nine Entertainment. They argue that the crisis roiling the news industry worldwide is mainly because of Google, Facebook and other large tech firms capturing the vast majority of online advertising revenues, without fairly compensating media companies for advertisements placed against news content. Newspapers' loss of advertising

dollars has forced cutbacks and bankruptcies across the sector, a process exacerbated by the economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic. More than 170 newsrooms have seen cuts or halted publication in recent years.

### Code of conduct

Australia's competition regulator, the ACCC, has estimated that Google and Facebook together earn some Aus\$6 billion (\$4 billion) a year from advertising in the country. Leading news publishers have demanded the two companies pay at least 10 percent of that money each year to local news organizations.

Google last month already rejected the demand, saying it made barely Aus\$10 million a year from news-linked advertising. Google and Facebook both argue they provide hundreds of millions of dollars in value to Australian news companies by driving traffic to their websites, where they can be monetized through ads or turned into paying subscribers.

"We allow news organizations of all sizes, not just the big ones, to post links, raise awareness of their brands and drive monetizable traffic to their websites, free of charge," said Mia Garlick, Facebook's director of public policy for Australia and New Zealand.

Facebook and Google also say they provide millions of dollars to media companies through grant programs and limited pur-



Australia is set to unveil plans to force Facebook and Google to share advertising revenue but the tech giants have pushed back against the plans.

chases of news content. Both companies say they are willing to participate on a collaborative "code of conduct" in Australia to mediate complaints, provide greater transparency in how they rank and distribute news on their platforms and share data on user interactions with their content.

But Facebook insisted yesterday it was "not healthy" to expect two private companies to solve the challenges facing Australian media. The rejection bodes ill for ACCC-led negotiations. The watchdog has until the end of July to draw up the final code, which the government has vowed to implement quickly. — AFP

endured a higher level of unemployment than whites.

Overall unemployment, which spiked dramatically during the shutdowns, is on the way down, Kaplan said, adding that he expects to see positive job growth starting this month. He said fiscal policy, which is set by Congress, will be a critical element of the recovery, including unemployment benefits, possibly "restructured to create more incentives for people to go back to work," and benefits to state and local governments.

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow cited positive signs as the economy reopens, telling CNN, "We are in the recovery stage." — Reuters

## Systemic racism slows economic growth: Fed official

**WASHINGTON:** Systemic racism and high unemployment levels among black and Hispanic Americans create a drag on the US economy, Dallas Federal Reserve President Robert Kaplan said on Sunday.

"A more inclusive economy where everyone has an opportunity will mean faster workforce growth, faster productivity growth and will grow faster," Kaplan said on CBS' "Face the Nation." Kaplan said he agreed with his counterpart at the Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank, Raphael Bostic - the Fed's only African-American policymaker - who on Friday called for an end to racism and laid out ways the US central bank can help.

The comments by the Fed policymakers follow weeks of nationwide protests against police brutality and racism after the May 25 death of George Floyd, a black man, in Minneapolis. The white police officer who knelt on Floyd's neck has been fired and charged with murder. "It's in the interest of the US," Kaplan said. "The fastest-growing demographic groups in this country are blacks and Hispanics. If they don't participate equally, then we're going to grow more slowly."

Kaplan said the Dallas Fed and the Federal Reserve System have been working for years to improve skills training and education for blacks and Hispanics, who have long

## Ooredoo reaches 10,000 customers with ANA plans



**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, announced its latest achievement of reaching 10,000 customers that have successfully activated their ANA digital plans using the MyOoredoo app. Whereby Ooredoo is the first operator in the Kuwait market to launch such a service, which provides an all-digital, individually customized mobile product that gives customers complete control of their mobile plans and digital worlds, and makes it easier to buy, use and pay for Ooredoo services directly from their mobile phones.

This great achievement is added to the other outstanding initiatives led by Ooredoo in its digital transformation journey, such as the launch of the first eSIM in Kuwait, the first 5G international call in the region between Ooredoo Kuwait and Ooredoo Qatar, and the groundbreaking 5G trials. Whereby this reflects on Ooredoo's role as private sector institute to partake

and stay in line with Kuwait's Government wider digital transformation plans related to New Kuwait 2035.

Worth mentioning that Ooredoo Kuwait was awarded 'Best Digital Service' for ANA at Telecoms World Middle East Awards 2019, making it the first operator to provide personalized mobile plans to enrich customers' digital lives in partnership with Matrixx Software, a Silicon Valley-based company that specializes in advanced mobile software, to digitally transform the mobile experience for mobile customers in Kuwait. Making it the go to platform that specializes in helping mobile customers buy, manage, share and pay for digital services.

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



# As virus hits tourism, islands seek to mend ties with nature

**WASHINGTON:** Since coronavirus emptied Hawaii of tourists, seals have been lounging on beaches, fish are swimming closer to shore and the turquoise water of the US islands' famous Hanauma Bay is 55 percent clearer, one marine biologist said.

The pandemic has been devastating economically for Hawaii, whose \$18-billion tourism industry employs more than 200,000 people, or about a third of the workforce. It is among the US states with the highest unemployment rate since March. But the absence of thousands of visitors a day has been a boon for fisheries, coral reefs and other aspects of the fragile island ecosystem that has become degraded by too much tourism and climate change.

As islands around the world grapple with similar challenges, some authorities see the pandemic as an opportunity for change. Before they open the floodgates to mass tourism again, some are questioning how much they want to go back to that model. "The path we were on prior to COVID wasn't sustainable," said Celeste Connors, executive director of Hawaii Green Growth, one of several UN hubs set up around the world to advance sustainable development locally.

"The numbers of tourists that were coming were actually taking a toll on the community and environmental resources," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Hawaii has not yet set a date for reopening to tourists, nor has it announced any plans to limit visitors. But officials said they do want to make a shift, and coronavirus may accelerate it.

"If we can move away from the mass, sort of industrial way tourism has been done and get into a more community and connected type of tourism, I think that's where Hawaii can really shine," said Kalani Kaanaana, director of cultural affairs and natural resources at the Hawaii Tourism Authority.

The pandemic could help small-scale tourism offerings thrive because they will be less risky for disease transmission than large resorts and attractions, he added.

Many island destinations, including Hawaii, were already discussing how to make tourism more sustainable before the novel coronavirus swept around the world this year. Popular spots from the Philippines to the Faroe Islands have briefly closed to visitors in recent years, to allow their ecosystems to recover. But none could have imagined the months-long closure coronavirus has imposed.

Scientists at the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology are doing surveys of water quality and wildlife, and are observing changes they have never seen before, said Kuulei Rodgers, principal investigator for the Coral Reef Ecology Lab. The work could allow them to monitor for the first time just how big an impact tourism has on the local ecosystem.

"There's hope that if we can establish a baseline from what we learn now, we have an argument for trying to preserve that," said Kevin Chang, the head of KUA, an organization advocating for community-based natural resource management in Hawaii. KUA has compiled a list of dozens of ideas for a green post-pandemic recovery, such as using federal stimulus funds to create a conservation corps and making some tourist sites accessible only with guides to create jobs and limit capacity.

These have been shared with the state government, which has yet to put forward a recovery plan. In the South Pacific, the Cook Islands were already planning a re-branding that would emphasize environmental stewardship.

Coronavirus offers a good chance to make that transition, said Metua Vaimene, the government's director of destination development. "We have resolved to use this opportunity to reset and refresh our tourism industry," Vaimene told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

But not all islands feel the same. "I think what COVID-19 is doing is shaking things up enough that change is possible in places that want to do that," said Kate Brown, executive director of the Global Island Partnership, an alliance spearheaded by island leaders.



The pandemic has been devastating for Hawaii economically whose \$18-billion tourism industry employs more than 200,000 people.

"Some will just go back to business as usual," Brown said. In some places, the shift away from mass tourism may be out of necessity rather than choice. On the Philippines island of Siargao, farmers quit the fields to become tour guides when visitor numbers surged about three years ago, said Alfredo Coro, vice mayor of the city of Del Carmen.

Siargao was voted best island in the world in a poll by Condé Nast Traveler magazine last year. But since coronavirus hit, the government has encouraged people to return to farming, and many are doing so, Coro said. The state has provided seeds and is buying up locally grown rice to distribute it back to the population.

"When they moved to tourism, it was good for their income, but what happened was we became import-dependent," he said. "I think (the people) are starting to see what we have been preaching all along," Coro hopes

that when tourism resumes, some islanders will continue farming because they recognize the value of it, if only for keeping their families fed during a disaster.

Similarly, some Hawaiians are turning back to fishing since the onset of the pandemic, said Mac Poepoe, a native fisherman and community leader on the island of Molokai. "Now everybody wants to learn how to hunt, they want to learn how to catch fish," Poepoe said.

Molokai has resisted tourism for years and its residents rely largely on subsistence fishing and farming.

It has been less affected by the coronavirus crisis than other islands, Poepoe said, although statistics show that many Molokai residents already lived in poverty. "I think it sheds a lot of light on the reality that maybe we should get back to the land and manage (it) properly so that we can take care of our people, rather than rely on outside sources," he said. — Reuters

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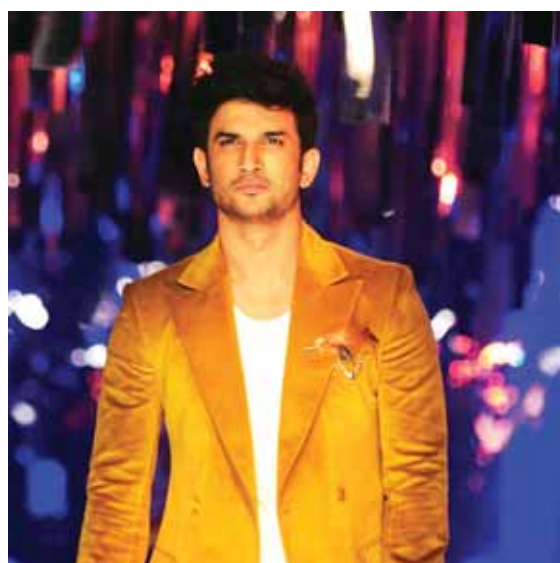
# Bollywood mourns death of young heartthrob



In this file photo taken on July 6, 2013 Indian Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput (center) dances at the 14th International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) at The Venetian hotel in Macau.—AFP photos



In this file photo taken on July 15, 2017 Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput performs during IIFA award of the 18th International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Festival at the MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey.



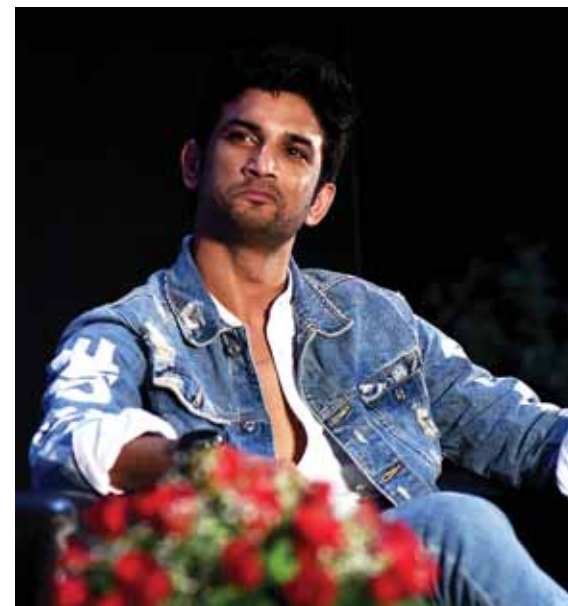
In this file photo taken on August 20, 2017 Indian Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput poses for a photograph during the grand finale of Lakme Fashion Week (LFW) Winter/Festive 2017 in Mumbai.



In this file photo taken on January 21, 2017 Indian Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput performs at the 'Umag Mumbai Police Show 2017' in Mumbai.



In this file photo taken on August 11, 2016, Indian Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput (right) and Indian cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni pose during the trailer launch of the upcoming biographical film "MS Dhoni: The Untold Story" directed by Neeraj Pandey, in Mumbai.



In this file photo taken on April 10, 2019 Indian Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput attends the book launch of 'Boundless' in Mumbai.



An ambulance (top center) carrying the body of Indian Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput is seen leaving after he took his own life, near his residence in Mumbai on Sunday.



Police personnel stand as hospital staff take the body of Indian Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput after he took his own life, into a hospital for post mortem report, in Mumbai.

## Death of exiled singer sparks controversy in Iran

The death this month of exiled Iranian actress and singer Marjan has sparked controversy in her home country, with conservative pressure forcing some famous Iranians to retract their condolences. Shahla Safi Zamir, better known by her stage name Marjan, died aged 71 in a Los Angeles hospital on June 6, the Boston Globe reported, citing a statement by outlawed opposition group The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI). After starting her career in Iranian cinema, Marjan became a pop singer, famous for her disco hit "Kavire Del" (Desert of the Heart), before the Islamic Revolution of 1979 halted her career.

Several celebrities in Iran paid homage to her, including film director Tahmineh Milani who offered condolences "to the daughter and family of Marjan". Popular ex-footballer Ali Karimi published a Marjan song on his Instagram page. These messages were aggressively attacked by ultraconservatives like Raja News website, which published an article accusing celebrities of encouraging people "to admire hypocrites" or Monafeghin in Persian. Monafeghin is a term Iran uses to refer to the People's Mujahdeen of Iran, an exiled opposition group it considers a "terror-

ist" cult led by Maryam Rajavi. Rajavi, who is also head of the NCRI, paid her respects to Marjan and her "songs of freedom".

She also claimed that the actress had joined the People's Mujahedin after "long and painful years of incarceration" in Iran. Following the attacks by ultra-conservatives, several of the targeted personalities accused the People's Mujahedin of appropriating their condolences for propaganda purposes. The condolences were not "proof of any political alignment with Rajavi's positions," Milani said on Instagram. The director, who is also a feminist activist, said she was unaware Marjan was sympathetic to the People's Mujahedin. "I have never been member to any party," actor Ashkan Khatibi wrote on Instagram, accusing the People's Mujahedin of exploiting the condolences of artists. "Shame on you," he wrote. On Sunday, the ultra-conservative newspaper Kayhan wrote that it regretted that "censorship" prevented Iranian media from reporting on these messages of "condemnation" of the People's Mujahedin.—AFP



Iranian actress and singer Shahla Safi Zamir.



## Graham thought she had pre-natal depression

Ashley Graham thought she was suffering pre-natal depression during her pregnancy. The 32-year-old model - who gave birth to her son Isaac on January 18 - experienced dramatic mood swings during her pregnancy, but she's subsequently realised it was "normal". Recalling her first pregnancy experience, Ashley said: "I was so excited. I knew immediately I was going to be a great mom. That was the wildest part. I thought, 'What about the things I've told myself? What about the affirmations I've gone through?' None of these mattered because my body was changing so rapidly. It really took me some time to figure it out mentally, because it was like there was an alien taking over my body." At the time, Ashley thought she had pre-natal depression. She told Harper's Bazaar UK magazine: "When you go from laughing to crying in 30 seconds, you do wonder if you are OK. Unbeknown to me, that's pregnancy. One of the best things I did for myself was to make pregnant friends, and then I realised I wasn't alone, I was normal, and that calmed me down. I started to enjoy being pregnant in my third trimester." Ashley gave birth at her home in Brooklyn, New York. And her husband Justin Ervin was a helpless - and emotional - onlooker as they welcomed their first child into the world. The brunette beauty recalled: "Justin wanted to be as helpful as possible, and the midwife told him: there's nothing you can do, nothing. There's a photo of him rubbing my arm as I'm hanging over the edge of the pool, gazing into the eyes of the midwife, who's keeping me focused and helping me count. You can tell there's a tear running down his face - it was agonising for him to see me in so much pain and not to be able to do anything about it. I was in the pool, and I looked over to see him in the kitchen cutting up meat and adding seasoning, because it was all he could do ..."

—BangShowbiz

## Aldridge is writing 'gratitude lists' amid lockdown

Lily Aldridge is writing "gratitude lists" amid the coronavirus lockdown. The 34-year-old model has revealed she's managed to pass the time during the pandemic by writing a new list every day at her home in Nashville, Tennessee. In a video on her YouTube channel, Lily shared: "One of my favourite things to do every day is to do a gratitude list. I'll usually do three to five things that I'm grateful for. It can be really simple things, it can be more serious things. When this was all starting and I was full of anxiety and worry, just writing down what I was grateful for instantly made me feel happier and also realise, 'I'm OK right now, you don't have to consume yourself with worry and stress.' Practising gratitude is something I'm really grateful for - you could keep a little gratitude journal next to your bed so it's really easy. My sister also does gratitude lists but she does it with her friends. They do a gratitude text chain, which I really love, so it becomes more of a communal thing." Lily has kept in touch with her friends and family via video chats during the lockdown. The model has also enjoyed the challenge of home-schooling her seven-year-old daughter Dixie, whom she has with her husband Caleb Followill. Lily said: "She has definitely reminded me more than once that I'm not an actual teacher. Cause I get really into it. When it's the weekend, I'm like, 'We don't get to go to school.' I really love it."—BangShowbiz





## Lifestyle | Features



Members of a commission of authorities and experts led by the the Governor of Cusco, Jean Paul Benavente, visit the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu on June 12, 2020, assessing the new health and distancing protocols in order to reopen to the public on July 1.—AFP photos



Jean Paul Benavente, Governor of Cusco, talks to experts and authorities.



A detail view of cut stone areas in the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, Peru.



A llama pastures in the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, Peru.



A detail view of cut stone areas in the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, Peru.



Maintenance staff in the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, Peru, work on the ancient rock structure that deteriorates constantly due to weather conditions.



A general view of the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, Peru.

## MACHU PICCHU TO SHARPLY LIMIT VISITS AFTER JULY REOPENING IN PERU

The ancient Inca citadel of Machu Picchu, a jewel of Peruvian tourism, will sharply reduce the number of daily visitors once it reopens from a virus-imposed closure in July, officials said. Given the need for social distancing and other measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, only 675 visitors will be allowed in each day—one-quarter the usual number, Jean Paul Benavente, governor of the Cusco region, told AFP. Guides will lead tours of only seven visitors, and people will be required to wear masks.

The July reopening is linked to a lifting of national

confinement measures in place since March 16, the governor said. Airports in Peru remain closed for now and many shops are shuttered. But despite some of Latin America's earliest and most stringent measures, the country has logged the second-highest number of cases in the region, at 225,000, along with some 6,500 deaths. The government announced plans in May to try to revive its important tourism industry by offering free entry to nature reserves and archaeological sites including Machu Picchu for children, public employees and the elderly.

Peruvian tourists will be able to fly again sometime in July or August, but with no decision on the reopening of borders, it remains unclear when foreign tourists will be returning. Before the pandemic, Machu Picchu saw an average of 2,000 to 3,000 visitors a day, with peaks of 5,000 in high season. The pandemic has caused a collapse of Peru's tourism industry. In the city of Cusco, the ancient Incan capital 70 kilometres (42 miles) from Machu Picchu, tourism employs 100,000 people. Machu Picchu, which opened to tourists in 1948, last closed to visi-

tors in 2010 after a flood damaged the access railway.

During the latest closure the government added security to prevent thefts of archaeological treasures from the site, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Peruvian tourism industry has suffered losses totaling \$3.3 billion this year, according to Prime Minister Vicente Zaballos.—AFP



In this file photo taken on March 14, 2020 a man takes a photo outside the gates of Disneyland Park on the first day of the closure of Disneyland and Disney California Adventure theme parks.—AFP

## Hong Kong Disneyland to reopen after five-month virus closure

Hong Kong's Disneyland will reopen its doors on Thursday following nearly five months of closure, the park said yesterday in a fresh boost for a city that has largely managed to defeat the coronavirus. Visitors will need to sign health declarations, submit to regular temperature checks and wear masks at all times unless eating, the park said in a statement yesterday. It is just the second Disneyland around the world to resume services during the pandemic after Shanghai turned its lights and rides back on last month. Tokyo and Paris remain closed while the company's flagship park in California is eyeing a July reopening.

Hong Kong was one of the first places to record coronavirus infections after the disease first emerged in central China, morphing into a global pandemic and enveloping much of the world in a recession. But the finance hub has since managed to largely halt local transmission with just over 1,100 infections and four deaths. All overseas passengers are screened at the airport and quarantined by authorities if found to be infected—on top of a mandatory 14-day home quarantine for arrivals.

Across the globe, tourism operators are desperate to restart business, trialling different forms of social distancing as lockdowns ease. Last month, a group of Japanese amusement parks announced guidelines on how to operate safely under the threat of the virus, including asking guests to "refrain from vocalising loudly" on rollercoasters and other rides. Park staff, including those dressed up as stuffed animal mascots and superheroes, were also advised to not shake hands or high-five with young fans.

Hong Kong authorities currently ban gatherings of more than eight people because of the virus. That ban is up for renewal on Thursday, the day Disneyland reopens. David Hui, a leading infectious disease expert in the city, told RTHK radio yesterday that the anti-virus ban could be further relaxed as most activities in the city have resumed.—AFP

## For Europeans, a post-virus summer at the beach?

After anxious months confined at home, eager Europeans are digging out their suitcases, sunscreen and flipflops, and daring to plan a post-coronavirus summer holiday. With restrictions being lifted and the tourism industry up against the wall, the European Union reopened its internal borders yesterday.

But even if travel within much of the EU is permitted, many Europeans are expected to stay put and take holidays in their own countries this year. From Spain and Italy, to France, Greece and Britain, the picture of what holidaymakers in search of sun, sea or culture can expect, remains very mixed.

## Une Staycation?

In France, the world's number one tourist destination, the government is banking on the French staying in the country for their holidays, to help kickstart the key tourism sector. To hammer home the message and remind the French what's on offer at home, it is about to launch a #CetejevisitelafFrance campaign, meaning This summer I'm visiting France. Many seem to have already heeded the call.

According to the head of France's Entreprises du Voyage association, which represents sectors of the travel industry, just 20 percent of summer bookings in travel agencies so far are for trips abroad, compared to 66 percent normally. With just over 90 million visitors from abroad last year, France has backed the resumption of quarantine-free travel within the EU from Monday. But says it will apply reciprocal measures if other countries impose quarantine requirements for French citizens. Paris, Europe's most visited city, has gradually begun coming back to life, with cafe terraces open again.

The Eiffel Tower reopens on June 25, albeit with limits on the numbers of visitors, who will only at first be able to go up the monument by the stairs, among other restrictions. The enigmatic Mona Lisa and other artworks will again be on view at the Louvre from July 6.

## What's fiesta in German?

Spain's borders will remain closed Monday as it goes through the final stages of rolling back one of the strictest lockdowns in the world—although German tourists will be allowed to visit the Balearic Islands as part of a pilot project. So, for a few more weeks, Spaniards have their tourist sites to themselves. But, from July 1, the likes of Barcelona's monumental Sagrada Familia or the ancient Alhambra in Granada will reopen to foreign visitors. Madrid has set that target date for the opening of its borders, the resumption of international tourism, as well as ending quarantine for arrivals.

With tourism accounting for 12 percent of GDP, it's hard to imagine a summer season in Spain without its

foreign visitors. Masks will remain compulsory in public and closed spaces until the virus is defeated, authorities have warned. In the meantime, Ibiza's lively nightlife gets a boost. Spain's Balearic Islands, which also include Mallorca and Menorca, will be allowed to welcome almost 11,000 German tourists during the second half of June under the pilot project. Travellers will have their temperature taken on arrival under the scheme, which will be conducted according to "strict health guidelines", the region has said.

## Welcome to... quarantine

Britain is not strictly speaking affected by Monday's reopening since it didn't close its borders in the first place. However, it has imposed a 14-day quarantine on all arrivals from abroad, including British nationals, to avoid new COVID-19 cases entering the country, which has the highest death toll in Europe. The move is likely to hit international tourism, with Big Ben, Buckingham Palace and other hotspots unlikely to see foreign tourists flocking to them while most people arriving from overseas are required to self-isolate for a fortnight. On the other hand, to enable Brits to head to sunnier climes, the government has said it is looking at establishing "air bridges" with countries with low rates of the virus.

The move calls for bilateral agreements with individual countries but would get around the quarantine requirement. Even without the controversial measure, travel to Britain remains tricky, with hotel bookings and rentals still off the cards, unless for business reasons. Restaurants and tourist attractions are also still shuttered.



## Roman holiday

Benvenuti in Italia! is the catchword in Italy, which was the first European country to be hit hard by the coronavirus. Three months after going into lockdown, but keen to turn a page and revive its key tourism sector, Italy reopened to travellers from Europe on June 3. In fact, many of its world renowned historic sites and monuments have been reopening since May, including Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican and Rome's Colosseum.

But, just like Venice's canals where gondolas await punters, the landmarks currently remain quiet, with low numbers of mostly Italian visitors. With tourism making up 13 percent of GDP, authorities are keen to push the Italy brand. Nevertheless, foreign tourists, gelato in hand as they meander along Rome's streets taking in the sights, remain few and far between. Switzerland and Austria have only agreed in recent days to reopen their borders with northern Italy, a significant move due to the alpine Brenner Pass on the Austrian-Italian border which is a major axis for traffic between northern and southern Europe, especially for German tourists.

## Sorry, the buffet is closed

From Monday, whether you're visiting from Germany, Switzerland or Albania, the Acropolis and the turquoise waters of the Greek islands are back on the itinerary. Greece plans to reopen its borders to the majority of European tourists, as well as those from certain other parts of the world, including Australia, Japan and New Zealand. However, anyone from a region particularly badly hit by the virus will have to undergo mandatory tests and spend their first night on Greek soil in a designated hotel. These include the Paris region, Madrid and Italy's northern Lombardy region, among others.

Greece's two main airports in Athens and Thessaloniki will reopen to arrivals from 29 countries from Monday, the start of the tourist season. For those headed to the beaches of Corfu or Crete for instance, a domestic flight or boat will have to be the order of the day. Sea connections with Italy and land borders with the Balkans reopened yesterday.

Across the country, tourists will have access to all of Greece's tourist gems, including archaeological sites and museums, with systems in place to filter visitors at the entrance. While open-air cinemas, nightclubs and tavernas are already open, and parasols and beach towels will have to be kept well spaced out on the sand, there is one downside—buffets are off the menu in hotels.—AFP

Many Europeans are expected to stay put and take holidays in their own countries this year.—AFP





Palestinian men watch artist Taqi Spateen paint a mural of Iyad Hallak, a 32-year-old autistic Palestinian man shot dead by Israeli police, on a section of Israel's controversial separation barrier in the city of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank on Sunday. — AFP

## Beirut's nightlife on the brink as virus compounds financial crisis

**BEIRUT:** Beirut loves to party, even when the going gets tough. Which is often. The city and its nightlife has weathered wars, bombing campaigns and assassinations, and prides itself on always bouncing back. But this time is different, say Beirut bar and restaurant owners, who fear that a devastating financial crisis, compounded by the global coronavirus pandemic, may finally be their undoing.

At Le Pêcheur, a 20-year-old seafood restaurant, a veteran waiter stood at the entrance, armed with a face shield and antiseptic spray, on the first weekend after the government lifted restrictions on June 1. There were no customers. "I have been through the civil war as a child...We saw dead people and shells exploding, but wherever you went, no one ever said they had no money or they can't afford to eat," said Ahmad Kassem, 49, Le Pêcheur's owner. "Now, we have people around us with empty stomachs. No work, no money."

Since late last year, Lebanon's local currency has lost more than 60 percent of its value, as prices soar. The crisis has slashed jobs, fuelled unrest and pushed the government to seek aid it badly needs from the IMF. Hundreds of restaurants, cafes and bars have closed in a country where the service industry was long a pillar of the economy and employed a big chunk of the workforce.

Meanwhile waiters at Baron, a restaurant that can seat 200 people in a hip district of Beirut, served a lone table. "We're living day by day, we're trying our best to plan ahead but every plan we have can change in a matter of seconds," said Baron's founder Etienne Sabbagh, 37. He said industry leaders had only received empty promises of help from the government as banks cut access to cash and credit facilities.

Across the city in the Hamra district, home to

some of Lebanon's oldest nightlife spots, Barometre was one of the few drinking holes open that weekend. The bar, open for 24 years, has lived through all that has befallen Beirut in that time, including two wars with Israel. A few customers relax at the bar, while some people have dinner and others sway to the music. Still, the mood is tinged with sadness.

As he pours drinks behind the bar, owner Rabih Al-Zaher says he has come to terms with making less profit as a result of not hiking prices. "You have to build a place that resembles the city, that is able to cope with its ebbs and flows...What can we do? Give up?" he said. "Now, shall I pour you a drink?"

Protests broke out last Thursday after the currency plunged to new lows over the past week, with rising anger over the government's inability to contain an economic crisis that has devastated living conditions. The currency, which had hit about 5,000 to the dollar, appeared to reverse its slide on Friday after a government announcement that the central bank would inject dollars into the market yesterday.

In a televised address on Saturday, Diab said political opponents looking to thwart government efforts to investigate and crack down on corruption were stirring the latest unrest. Diab, who took office in January with the backing of the powerful Iran-aligned Hezbollah, did not name the opponents.

Protesters returned to streets across Lebanon on Saturday, with demonstrations in Beirut, the northern city of Tripoli, and Sidon in the south, expressing outrage over the deteriorating conditions and many calling on the government to resign. The renewed unrest could complicate Beirut's ongoing talks with the International Monetary Fund over a reform program it hopes will secure billions in financing and kickstart a recovery. — Reuters

who managed to grab the stun gun and run away, the video images show. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation, which probes police-involved killings, also released restaurant surveillance video that showed Brooks turn and appear to fire the Taser at the officers. An officer reached for his service weapon, and as Brooks turned back "the weapon goes off", GBI director Vic Reynolds told reporters. Brooks was taken to the hospital but died after surgery, the GBI said, adding that one officer was injured.

A lawyer acting for the dead man's family said disproportionate force was used in the confrontation. "In Georgia, a Taser is not a deadly weapon — that's the law," L Chris Stewart told reporters. "Support came, in I think two minutes. He would have been boxed in and trapped. Why did you have to kill him? (The officer) had other options than shooting a man in the back."

Brooks had four children, Stewart added, and had celebrated the birthday of his eight-year-old daughter earlier on Friday. His death is the 48th shooting involving an officer that the GBI has been asked to investigate this year, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Fifteen of those incidents were fatal. — AFP

Riyadh Al-Adasani said that all government agencies should be transparent while dealing with the scam and should submit all necessary documents to the public prosecution.

Meanwhile, MP Mohammad Al-Mutair asked the interior minister yesterday if around 60,000 criminal files have disappeared from the ministry database over the past five years. He asked the minister if an investigation was launched into these allegations and what was the outcome, and if the files were used in any way against the national interests of the country.

## Philippine journalist...

Continued from Page 1

"should and must be used with due regard to the freedom of others". Ressa, a dual US-Filipino citizen, faced up to six years in jail, the judge said. Responding to the verdict, Ressa vowed not be silenced and accused the judiciary of becoming complicit in a campaign to stifle press freedom.

"We are going to stand up against any kind of attacks against press freedom," a defiant Ressa told journalists after the conviction in Manila. "I began as a reporter in 1986 and I have worked in so many countries around the world. I have been shot at and threatened but never this kind of death by a thousand cuts," she said.

"Freedom of the press is the foundation of every single right you have as a Filipino citizen," she separately told reporters. "We're at the precipice, if we fall over we're no longer a democracy." Reynaldo Santos, a former Rappler researcher and writer, was also found guilty in the case. Ressa and Santos were allowed to post bail pending an appeal.

Presidential spokesman Harry Roque said Duterte supported freedom of speech and expression and it was a previous administration that pushed for the "cyber libel" law. "There was never an instance when the president filed a libel case against a journalist," Roque told a news conference.

The verdict comes after the telecoms regulator last month caused widespread shock by shutting down the country's leading broadcaster ABS-CBN Corp, which had regularly criticized Duterte, after its license expired. Duterte is also expected to sign into law soon an anti-terrorism bill, which activists fear could be used to suppress free speech and harass those challenging the government. The administration has said the bill is modelled on those used in countries that had dealt effectively with extremism.

Human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, who is part of a legal team representing Ressa, called the conviction "an affront to the rule of law, a stark warning to the press, and a blow to democracy in the Philippines". "I hope that the appeals court will set the record straight in this case. And that the United

States will take action to protect their citizen and the values of their Constitution," Clooney said in a statement. US lawmakers have previously criticized what they see as harassment.

The cyber libel case is one of numerous lawsuits the government has filed against Ressa and Rappler that have drawn global concern about the intimidation of reporters in the Southeast Asian country. Media watchdogs and human rights groups condemned yesterday's verdict, which Amnesty International described as a "sham" that "should be quashed".

"With this latest assault on independent media, the human rights record of the Philippines continues its free fall," said Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Regional Director, Nicholas Bequelin in a statement. The Philippines slipped two places in the World Press Freedom Index to 136 this year out of 180 countries, down from 134 in 2019.

Businessman Wilfredo Keng featured in a 2012 Rappler story, updated in 2014, linking him to illegal activities, citing information contained in an intelligence report from an unspecified agency. In his complaint, Keng said the Rappler story included "malicious imputations of crimes, vices and defects".

Ressa, who Time magazine named as a Person of the Year in 2018, did not write the article and government investigators initially dismissed the businessman's allegation. But state prosecutors later filed charges against her and Santos, the former Rappler journalist who wrote it, under a controversial cyber crime statute aimed at online offences such as stalking and child pornography.

Media watchdogs have said the numerous charges against Ressa, which include alleged foreign ownership violations and alleged tax evasion, were aimed at intimidating critics of Duterte. Rappler has questioned the accuracy of Duterte's public statements and scrutinized his bloody war on drugs and his foreign policies. Some of the crack-down's highest-profile critics have wound up behind bars, including Senator Leila de Lima, who is serving three years in jail on drug charges she insists were fabricated to silence her.

Duterte has lashed out at the news site in several public speeches. In 2018, Duterte denounced Rappler as a "fake news outlet" and subsequently banned Ressa and her colleagues from his public engagements. — Agencies

## Another killing of black man in...

Continued from Page 1

forces in places like Minneapolis, her hometown, and rebuilding them from the ground up. "Nobody is going to defund the police," said Clyburn, the third-ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives. "The fact of the matter is, the police have a role to play," he said. "What we have got to do is make sure that their role is one that meets the times."

Friday's incident began when police responded to a complaint that Brooks was asleep in his car, blocking the drive-in lane at the Wendy's. Brooks allegedly failed a sobriety test administered by police, and when the officers tried to arrest him, a struggle broke out. Video of the incident circulating on social media showed two white police officers wrestling Brooks to the ground in the parking lot.

One of them attempts to use a Taser on Brooks,

## Assembly session to go ahead despite...

Continued from Page 1

of their names. MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain called for publishing the names of all those suspected to be involved in the scam, adding they should be held to account and become an example for others. MP

## Unsteady Trump ramp walk raises...

Continued from Page 1

commencement speech at West Point, he took to Twitter to issue an explanation. "The ramp that I descended after my West Point Commencement speech was very long & steep, had no handrail and, most importantly, was very slippery," Trump said. "The last thing I was going to do is 'fall' for the Fake News to have fun with. Final ten feet I ran down to level ground. Momentum!" Reporters at the scene said the weather was dry and the ramp not particularly steep.

But Trump also appeared to have trouble Saturday lifting a glass of water to his lips — beginning the gesture with his right hand but then raising his left hand apparently to help. And, not for the first time, he seemed to mispronounce a number of names of well-known Americans, including those of army generals Ulysses S Grant and Douglas MacArthur.

His West Point performance was not the first time Trump's health has been questioned, particularly by his avowed political critics, whose speculation has run the gamut from early dementia to a minor stroke. Late last month, Trump seemed to have trouble standing still during a solemn wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, though some commentators said he

might simply have been weary.

That appearance also came at a time when Trump said he had been taking a course of hydroxychloroquine, a drug he believed could help fend off the coronavirus, despite a lack of medical evidence. Side effects of the drug include dizziness and nausea. Trump has repeatedly tested negative for COVID-19.

Speculation had been fueled last November, when Trump made an unscheduled and secretive visit to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. The White House called the visit an "interim checkup" — though it was unusual, coming just nine months after his previous exam — and rejected speculation about any "urgent or acute issues". A spokeswoman insisted that Trump had more energy "than anyone in the White House."

Should Trump show signs of physical weakness, it could undercut his frequent attacks on Biden, his presumptive opponent in November. In March, Trump tweeted that Biden was "weak, both mentally and physically". And on June 11, he said on Twitter that Biden "acts different than he used to, he's even slower than he used to be".

During his 2016 campaign, Trump had attacked then-opponent Hillary Clinton after she fell ill at a campaign event, saying she was not physically up to the task of being president. During that campaign, Trump's longtime doctor, Harold Bornstein, wrote in a letter that his patient's health was "astonishingly excellent" and that his strength and stamina were "extraordinary". But in 2018, Bornstein told CNN that Trump himself "dictated that whole letter. I didn't write that letter". — AFP



Stars

Daily SuDoku

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

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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

hard

STAR TRACK




Aries (March 21-April 19)

Matters involving creativity, romance, and children could require considerable thought today, Aries. Some exciting new options may be available to you and your loved ones. You might be inclined to mull over the possibilities. You could consult others to get more opinions. For the most part, you'll want to decide on your own. In the meantime, you could keep yourself occupied by working on ongoing projects.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Matters involving the home could suddenly grow serious. This is a positive development, Taurus, but new possibilities could be opening up and force you to make a decision. The value of your home could have gone up and you might consider selling it and moving. Or you could have the opportunity to work out of your home and save commuting costs. Whatever it is, you've reached a milestone.




Libra (September 23-October 22)

Contemplation is the word for today. At some point, you might receive a call from a friend wanting advice on a serious decision. Don't be surprised if you spend more time listening than advising, Libra. Goals of your own might need some thought and possibly reevaluation, as changes in your immediate environment could present new and exciting possibilities to you. Think about it.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today much of your mental - and possibly physical - energy could be directed at career matters. You might reevaluate goals and ambitions, Scorpio, and consider other possibilities. The desire for more income might be the catalyst, but there's more to it than that. This is definitely a good day to think about a number of options. You might have to make a few decisions by this time next week.




Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today you might consider entering into a business partnership with a relative or neighbor. This could show promise of success, Gemini, and is definitely worth serious consideration. You'll want to be sure it's right for you, so caution is recommended. You might even get around to considering the nitty-gritty of a possible agreement, but for the most part, it isn't likely that you'll be making any final decisions yet.




Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

The desire for personal and career advancement could cause you to consider furthering your education in some way, Sagittarius. Someone close to you, probably a woman, could wake you up to the advantages of returning to school and getting an advanced degree at some point in the future. You may want to wait a little bit before deciding, but something has shifted within you. It's time for some kind of change. Be prepared.




Cancer (June 21-July 22)

The value of any investment you may have made in land, including your home, could come into your thoughts today. Whatever time and energy you've put into it is likely to pay off, Cancer, and this might make a difference to you when formulating plans for the future. You might spend some time working outside, which should clear your head and enable you to get your thoughts together. A female friend could join you.




Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today you're apt to be a bit preoccupied, Capricorn. You might find yourself considering concepts that others think are strange and impractical. This might involve metaphysics or the occult or unusual ways of making a living - or all of the above. You might want to discuss this with others. However, you should make a decision based on your preferences without influence from those who aren't directly involved.




Leo (July 23-August 22)

A partnership of some kind, perhaps business, perhaps romantic, is likely to be on your mind today. You might want to seriously consider whether or not it has a future, and if it does, what to do next. You could spend time socializing, if possible, but you could be too preoccupied to participate much. A lot of serious decisions need to be made, Leo. The outcome is likely to be positive. Try to relax and have some fun.




Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Today is likely to be a gratifying day, Aquarius, but perhaps more serious than you'd planned. A longtime friend might call and want to talk. This person or another might want to discuss a possible business enterprise that's apt to be worthy of consideration. Everyone around you might seem egocentric, and you could feel that your concerns are of no interest to anyone. Don't let that upset you.



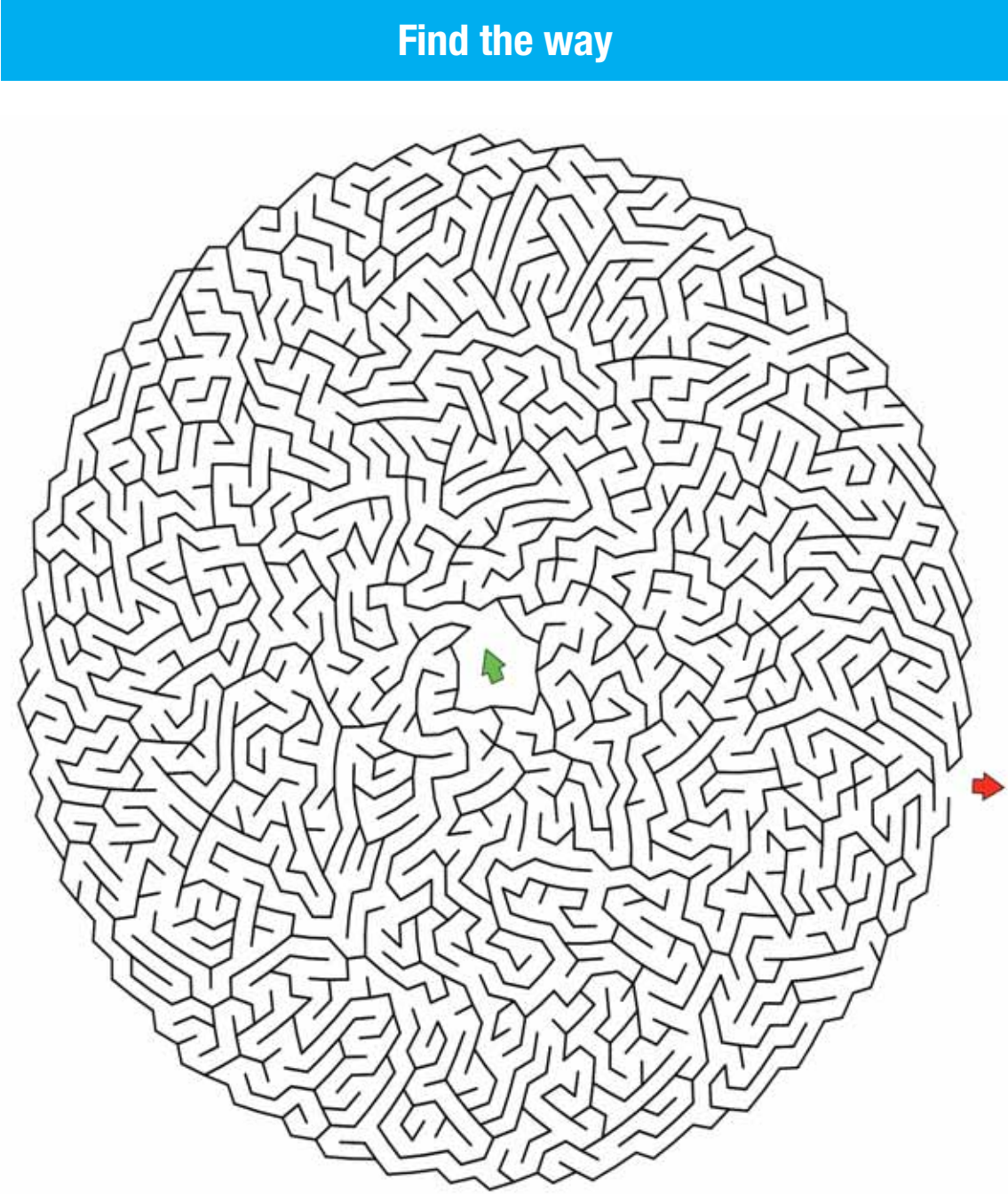
Virgo (August 23-September 22)

A lot of serious matters are on your mind, perhaps involving plans for the future. It's likely that you'll want to stay home today and do some contemplating. Various new opportunities could be coming your way, Virgo, and you won't want to let them pass you by without serious consideration. Chores around the house could prove a valuable outlet for physical energy while allowing thoughts to churn in your mind.




Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Career and business matters are likely to be very much on your mind today, Pisces. Perhaps a new opportunity has come your way, or you're thinking of becoming involved in a new enterprise on your own or with a partner. This might not be a good day to make a decision, so don't rush it. Before you make any dramatic changes, think things through carefully. You may regret it otherwise.



Word Scramble



Everything was almost ready to start the new school year but the labels for the classroom got jumbled. Can you unscramble the letters to form the names of 24 things you might find in your classroom? Watch out, one of the objects is formed from two words.

IRCAH

FGAL

BKOENOTO

CDLNARAE

REEARS

LSARTPE

EGLU

IRFLEAAMR

CNLEPI

KSED

OASOCBEK

TXOKBTOE

CRTOLUALCA

RRAMEK

KACKCBAP

ROSSSICS

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## Sports

## Photo of the Day



Ice climber Will Gadd climbs new routes on Irish sea stacks in Donegal, Ireland. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## One Championship cuts staff as MMA shows halted by virus

**SINGAPORE:** Asia's largest mixed martial arts promotion, One Championship, said yesterday it was cutting 20 percent of its staff worldwide after being unable to stage fight cards for almost four months because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Singapore-based organisation, which promotes cards across Asia in mixed martial arts, Muay Thai and kickboxing, has between 201-500 employees, according to its LinkedIn profile.

One Championship said in a statement it had raised an additional \$70 million to its "war chest", bringing its total capital to \$346 million but added it had also "streamlined operations, including a 20 percent reduction of total worldwide headcount".

Social distancing and other measures to contain the virus have forced the closure of sporting events worldwide and One Championship's last event was held behind closed doors in Singapore on February 28, said a spokesman. Four events were planned to be held without fans in Singapore during April and May, but they had to be shelved because of the city's tough anti-virus rules.

Another event on May 29 in Manila was also cancelled because the Philippines remained under lockdown. One Championship chairman and chief executive Chatri Sityodtong has said it is unclear when fights can resume, because of the travel restrictions, quarantine and distancing rules imposed by governments across Asia.

Apart from fighters, the company also has to bring in referees, ring girls, coaches, training partners and its own staff into any country hosting an event. Infrastructure such as the fighting cage has to be shipped and constructed at each venue, and although local staff are used for installations the company needs to provide its own supervisors, the spokesperson said. — AFP

## Djokovic breaks down in tears after hosting Belgrade exhibition

## Ultimate Tennis Showdown debuts with Sniper beating Underdog

**BELGRADE:** An emotional Novak Djokovic could not hold back the tears while hosting a charity event at his tennis complex by the Danube River on Sunday.

Although the world number one missed out on Sunday's Adria Tour final, in which Dominic Thiem beat Serbian Filip Krajinovic 4-3 2-4 4-2, the event revived a lot of fond memories for the 17-time Grand Slam champion who staged the exhibition while international tennis remains suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I was very emotional on the court today. Childhood memories started flooding back, including those of growing up on these courts and playing here as a young boy," the 33-year-old told reporters after being cheered on by a 4,000-strong capacity crowd.

"I was overwhelmed and those were tears of joy after the match. I try to give back to where I come from and be conscious of my childhood and my upbringing. This tennis was an epicentre of people from my childhood days getting together for this tournament, including my former coaches. They were all here."

Djokovic beat Germany's Alexander Zverev on Sunday in his last round robin

match but failed to secure his place in the final after both players and Krajinovic ended up with 2-1 win-loss records and an identical 5-3 set difference in their section.

Krajinovic, who stunned Djokovic on Saturday, squeezed through on the basis of having the best games differential among the three.

more streamlined format than what is seen on the main tour, with sets slashed to best-of-seven games.

The second leg of the tour will be held in Croatia's coastal resort Zadar next weekend. The third leg due in Montenegro on June 27 and 28 was scrapped on Saturday over coronavirus concerns and the final leg is set for Bosnia's Banja Luka on July 3 and 4.

Meanwhile, with new rules and new formats, Patrick Mouratoglou, the coach of Serena Williams, unveiled his Ultimate Tennis Showdown tournament in the south of France on Sunday.

Targeting a younger audience, the players were allotted nicknames such as the 'Sniper', 'Underdog', 'Rebel' and 'Artist' and its ambitious host hopes he can launch a parallel circuit to the ATP.

Whether it catches on or not remains to be seen but the 'Sniper', better known as Australia's Alexei Popyrin, went down as the first match winner beating the 'Underdog' Elliot Benchetrit, the world 208.

The matches pan out very differently to the way tennis is traditionally scored, with four quarters, noisy countdowns, timeouts, and even bonus cards to prolong a service game.

Even the commentators are visible on a mini-screen. There will be 50 matches in total over five weekends of tennis where every player faces each other before a



## Players allotted nicknames

However, he was powerless to stop Thiem in the final. "This tournament was for a good cause and we all gave our best," Thiem said after finishing off the weekend with a 100% winning record.

"Many high quality matches in a great atmosphere, in front of a full crowd, so it was a perfect weekend.

"A very big thank you to everyone including Novak and his team, you all made my first trip to Serbia a very special one."

The eight-man tournament featured a

in regards to using saliva on the ball," he added.

For Javed Iqbal, a 39-year-old Pakistani-born bowler with the Bohemian Cricket Club, the virus restrictions pose no problem.

"Yesterday it was very hot so we didn't need saliva, it was enough to wet our fingers against the forehead," said the former athlete and basketball player, who came to Prague in 2014 to get a degree in forestry.

"It's not that difficult, especially here in these wet conditions," he told AFP as the organisers cancelled his team's match against the United Cricket Club amid steady rain.

Iqbal let his face mask — still mandatory in some places in the Czech Republic — hang loosely down his neck.

"We keep a distance from one another. And we're like a family and in a family you don't need to be restricted," he chuckled. While Iqbal's native Pakistan, and other cricket powerhouses are still taking a break from the sport, Bohemian Cricket Club — relying largely on Asian students — won their two opening matches on Saturday.

"Wherever there are Pakistanis, Indians and Sri Lankans, they will definitely play cricket because it's in their blood," Iqbal said. "Even if they were on the Moon they would start cricket there."

## 'CZECHS ON THE TEAM'

Iqbal, who sees his future as the Bohemian Cricket Club manager, has played for the Czech national team in the past.



BELGRADE: Austrian tennis player Dominic Thiem poses for a photo with Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic after winning the final match against Serbian tennis player Filip Krajinovic at the Adria Tour, Novak Djokovic's Balkans charity tennis tournament in Belgrade on June 14, 2020. — AFP

round-robin final of six.

Although he was absent this weekend, world number three Dominic Thiem is the highest-ranked player.

Stefanos Tsitsipas, Matteo Berrettini and David Goffin, who are all in the world top 10, are also involved.

Dustin Brown, dubbed the 'Artist' for his serve-and-volley style, also featured

at the weekend. The tournament package is sold over the internet and organisers are hoping to sign up 50,000 subscribers, paying between 10 and 12 euros to watch the action.

There is also potential income from paying fans, but Sunday's action took place behind closed doors due to the coronavirus restrictions. — Agencies

## If we were on the moon, we'd start cricket

**PRAGUE:** Hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, cricket resumed in Prague this weekend where players shrugged off the summer rain by declaring: "If we were on the moon, we'd start cricket".

Featuring largely expats, the European Cricket Network's (ECN) Czech Super Series is one of the first cricket events worldwide played in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdowns.

"We've only been able to play here now because of the way the whole country responded" to the pandemic, said Terry O'Connor, Czech cricket league administrator.

He pointed out the recent easing of restrictions taken by the EU member country of 10.7 million people in March when the virus began to spread across Europe.

For the event pitting 16 Czech teams, and spread over five weekends until July 12, the Vinor grounds on Prague's outskirts are divided in three parts to separate the players, the crowd and officials. "We're keeping everyone distanced — but cricket is not a contact sport," said O'Connor.

"There aren't really any adjustments to play other than following the International Cricket Council's (ICC) guidelines

## Roach warns Archer of rough ride for WI snub

**LONDON:** West Indies fast bowler Kemar Roach has warned Jofra Archer not to expect a warm welcome from the players he snubbed in order to represent England.

Barbados-born Archer is eligible to play for England because his father was born there and the paceman made his debut for the team last year. His decision to reject the West Indies did not go down well and fellow Barbadian Roach says Archer is unlikely to be given a friendly reception in the forthcoming Test series between the sides.

It will be the first time Archer, who featured for the West Indies Under-19s before moving to England in 2016, has faced the country of his birth in Test cricket.

"Jofra made his decision and he's done a fantastic job for England so far but there will be no friendships during this series," Roach told reporters in a Zoom press conference on Sunday.

"It's all about winning and playing hard cricket. We will devise a plan for our batsmen to counter him and I'm looking forward to that battle.

"I saw him as a youngster in domestic cricket back home in Barbados and always thought he was talented. He has

come over here and shown what he can do and I want to wish him all the best in his career.

"But you will definitely see if we have any words for him on the field when that comes around." The West Indies are currently quarantining in Manchester as they prepare for the start of the three-Test series in July.

When the action gets underway behind closed doors, the West Indies will be looking to emulate last year's 2-1 Test series victory against England in the Caribbean. That success was inspired by a fierce West Indies pace attack that left England shell-shocked Roach took five wickets as England were bowled out for 77 in the first Test and the 31-year-old believes they can take the fight to the hosts again.

"It's different conditions to the Caribbean and the ball will do a bit more here but I don't think our mode of attack will change much," Roach said. "We saw what happened in the Caribbean and that's pretty fresh in our minds and if we can get stuck into the batsmen we will have a great chance of defeating England.

"We have always had a history of fast bowling and we just needed the pitches to bowl on which our curators have given us. "Our bowlers have done a tremendous job over the last couple of years and if we continue to work hard there are some great things ahead of us." Roach also revealed the West Indies squad are still discussing ways to acknowledge the Black Lives Matter cause when they play. — AFP



## Sports

# ‘Seal the deal’: Flick urges Bayern to wrap up eighth consecutive title

## ‘It’s our plan to bring the trophy back home’

**BERLIN:** Bayern Munich coach Hansi Flick wants his side to “seal the deal” and wrap up an eighth consecutive Bundesliga title today with victory at relegation-threatened Werder Bremen.

Top scorer Robert Lewandowski and Thomas Mueller, one shy of the record for assists in a single season, are both available again after missing Bayern’s 2-1 win over Borussia Moenchengladbach due to suspension.

Victory at Bremen, where Bayern have won all 12 games over the last decade, will clinch a record-extending 30th league title, and the first leg of a potential treble in Flick’s debut season in charge.

“We want to finish the job today. That is our goal. We have an excellent run and want to continue our winning streak,” said Flick, who stepped in when Niko Kovac was sacked last November.

“The target is to win again in Bremen. We want to just seal the deal.” Bayern have won their last 10 league games and another victory today would leave them an unsailable 10 points clear before second-placed Borussia Dortmund, who have three matches left, host strugglers Mainz tomorrow.

“It’s our plan to bring it (the trophy) back home,” said midfielder Leon Goretzka. Lewandowski, the league’s leading scorer with 30 goals this term, netted twice while Mueller, who is sitting on 20 assists, also got on the scoresheet when Bayern thrashed Bremen 6-1 when the sides met in December.

Poland star Lewandowski has struck 45 goals in all competitions this campaign and needs one more to establish a new Bundesliga personal best, having also reached the 30-goal plateau in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Despite laboured displays in their last two games, including a 2-1 semi-final win over Frankfurt in the German Cup, Bayern have a legitimate shot at landing a second treble in seven years.

First, Bayern, who are also well within reach of the Champions League quarter-finals, must take care of a Bremen side fighting for Bundesliga survival.

Bremen have taken 10 points from a possible 18 recently, boosting their hopes with a 5-1 rout of bottom side Paderborn on Saturday, but head coach Florian Kohfeldt played down any talk of an upset.

“There’s no reason to go into this with any kind of euphoria. We haven’t won anything yet and we’re still in a relegation zone,” said the 37-year-old Kohfeldt, who has lost all five games against Bayern.

### PLAYER TO WATCH: ANDRE SILVA

The Portugal international has struck a rich vein of form since the season’s resumption, with a return of six goals in seven appearances — more than any other player in the league.

The 24-year-old striker is rebuilding his young career while on loan in Germany, after struggling



**MUNICH:** (L-R) Bayern Munich’s French defender Benjamin Pavard, Bayern Munich’s Austrian defender David Alaba and Bayern Munich’s French defender Lucas Hernandez react during the warm-up prior to the German first division Bundesliga football match FC Bayern Munich v Borussia Moenchengladbach in Munich. —AFP

with AC Milan following a big-money move from Porto in 2017.

He has scored 10 times in 22 Bundesliga appearances with Eintracht, and came off the bench to net twice and grab an assist in Saturday’s 4-1 win at Hertha Berlin.

17 - yellow cards received this season by

Paderborn’s Klaus Gjasula, the most in a single Bundesliga campaign.

19 - longest winning run in the German top-flight, a record set by Bayern under Pep Guardiola in 2013-14.

106 - away wins in the Bundesliga this term, more than in any other previous year. —AFP

## Premier League lockdown: Winners and losers

**LONDON:** The Premier League finally makes its long-awaited return on June 17 following a three-month coronavirus lockdown.

The landscape has changed since March — clubs have welcomed back injured players, others have had a chance to regroup and Liverpool have had to come to terms with a low-key title celebration.

AFP Sport looks at the winners and losers as teams emerge from the lockdown.

### HEALED STARS BOOST SPURS, MAN UTD

When we last saw Jose Mourinho, the Tottenham manager cut a despondent figure as he admitted he wished he could fast-forward to next season.

At the time, injury-hit Tottenham were on a six-match winless run that saw them knocked out of the Champions League and FA Cup, while falling seven points adrift of the top four.

However, no boss has benefited more from the three-month break than Mourinho and eighth-placed Tottenham will return rejuvenated after Harry Kane, Son Heung-min, Steven Bergwijn, Erik Lamela and Moussa Sissoko regained their fitness.

That should be the ideal boost for the race to qualify for the Champions League, especially with a crucial first game of the restart against top-four rivals Manchester United.

## Watford’s Deeney claims every team has ‘one gay player’

**LONDON:** Watford striker Troy Deeney believes there is probably “one gay player in every football team”. Deeney suspects gay footballers are worried about the scrutiny that would follow if they reveal their sexuality while still playing.

But the 31-year-old claims one top player com-

ing out would lead to others following their lead. Talking on the BBC’s Grounded with Louis Theroux podcast, Deeney said: “I would go on record saying that there is probably one gay or bi-person in every football team. They’re there, they are 100 percent there.

“I think people that are gay or from that community definitely are very worried about having to shoulder the responsibility of being the first. I think once the first comes out, there would be loads.

“If he come out and said it, I genuinely believe you would get in the first week at least 100 people that went ‘me too’. Just because they don’t want to be the face of it.” —AFP

### RELEGATION RIVALS SCRAP FOR SURVIVAL

With dire warnings over the long-term financial health of football ringing in their ears, clubs embroiled in the relegation dogfight have been focused on self-preservation.

Feuding over how to decide the season in the event it has to be abandoned, complaining about potentially playing at neutral venues and arguing that the season was restarting too soon have all been public relations own goals from clubs most in danger of going down. Brighton will be under immense pressure to perform, having argued so vocally against neutral venues.

Without a win in 2020, they are just two points above the relegation zone and have games against Arsenal, Manchester United, Liverpool and Manchester City to come.

Watford, out of the bottom three by virtue of goal difference, were also vocal critics of the neutral venue proposal.

The Hornets would fall into the relegation zone if Aston Villa won their game in hand, but favourable

home matches against Southampton, Norwich and Newcastle offer hope of beating the drop. —AFP

Second-bottom Villa, who have suffered four straight league defeats, have had a chance to regroup at a time when they were in danger of collapsing.

Third-bottom Bournemouth, winless in four matches, will also hope the break provides a springboard to survival.

### LIVERPOOL’S TITLE ANTI-CLIMAX

Instead of jubilant supporters hailing their heroes for ending Liverpool’s 30-year wait to be crowned English champions, the Reds’ impending title triumph in an empty stadium is likely to feel anti-climatic. Jurgen Klopp’s side are 25 points clear at the top and need a maximum of two wins from their remaining nine games to seal a 19th English title in emphatic fashion.

The trophy could be theirs as soon as June 21 if second-placed Manchester City lose to Arsenal and Liverpool beat Merseyside rivals Everton.

But with the rest of the season to be played behind closed doors, the mood around the club has gone slightly flat.

The prospect of Liverpool having to delay their parade through the city with the trophy until next year due to social-distancing rules is another blow.

No wonder former Arsenal striker Alan Smith, who famously won the title at Anfield with the Gunners on the last day of the 1988/89 season, said: “If Liverpool do eventually get crowned, it’s going to prove a massive anti-climax.

“I can’t help but feel sorry for Sadio Mane, Mo Salah, Virgil van Dijk and all who deserve every plaudit going for a magnificent effort.” —AFP



Troy Deeney

### ON A KNIFE EDGE

While Bayern and Liverpool await their coronations, there is plenty at stake elsewhere. Juventus have usually burned off their pursuers in the final straight on their way to eight straight Serie A titles, but Lazio have been proving dogged, and the long break may change the equation.

In Spain, Barcelona, whose form had been erratic before the enforced break returned with a bang on Saturday, winning 4-0 at Mallorca to ensure they stayed ahead of Real Madrid. The pace will be frantic. Barcelona return with three matches in six days.

The battle for precious Champions League berths is tight everywhere. In England it is complicated by the possibility that Manchester City will be banned from next season’s competition.

While Paderborn in Germany, Norwich in England, and SPAL and Brescia in Serie A need near miracles to escape relegation, every one of the four big leagues has at least half a dozen clubs embroiled in the survival battle.

Yet Espanyol, who returned in La Liga on Saturday by ending a run of six matches, and more than four months, without a win suggested the break may help some strugglers.

## Football’s A-League to kick off July 16 after virus shutdown

**SYDNEY:** Australia’s domestic football league plans to restart on July 16, officials said yesterday, with the 27 remaining regular season games crammed into less than a month.

The A-League was the country’s final active sport when the coronavirus pandemic began to take hold before being suspended on March 24. But it is one of the last to resume, with rugby league and Australian Rules football already underway and Super Rugby due to kick off on July 3.

Football Federation Australia chief James Johnson said the A-League’s return followed a new pay agreement with players to cover the now extended season. “We have all had to readjust to this new landscape and this has meant coming together to make sacrifices for the greater good of the game,” he said, without spelling out what the pay deal looked like.

The 11-team A-League kicked off in October and was nearing the end of its regular season when it was halted. Head of Leagues Greg O’Rourke said the remaining 27 league matches will be contested over 28 days, starting on July 16, with five finals series games to follow.

“We can now focus on the testing of all players for COVID-19 before a return to training for the clubs this week,” he added. Fans could be allowed into stadiums to cheer on their teams. The Australian government last week announced plans to allow up to 10,000 spectators from a yet-to-be-decided date next month.

Football is not Australia’s most popular spectator sport, but more than two million people play the game countrywide. —AFP

### MADE FORTY

Having been starved of live games, fans still cannot go to matches but can suddenly choose from a crowded menu - if they have the right subscriptions. When he gave the green light for Italian football to return, Sports Minister Vincent Spadafora said the sport was part of the country’s “return to normal life again”.

The first match suggested the appetite was there as a goalless cup semi-final between Juventus and Inter Milan on Friday drew the biggest football audience for more than a year. But it was shown free-to-air on national broadcaster RAI. When Serie A returns so will the pay wall, with most matches on Sky Italia. In Germany, the local Sky arm owns the rights and broadcast live action free for the first two rounds. In England, where the Premier League has become a political football for battered politicians, the schedule has been arranged so all the 92 games can be screened live.

Of those 33, 25 on Sky and four each on the BBC and Amazon, will be available free, including the Merseyside derby. In Spain, the format is unchanged with one game a week available free, but Movistar, which owns the rights to the other nine matches, has reduced its price for the remaining games. —AFP

## European football picks up speed after virus interruption

**PARIS:** The European club football trophies should already be stowed in the cabinets, instead most of the top leagues are only just resuming after the coronavirus interruption.

While the Germans returned on May 16, the top two Spanish divisions have only just resumed, and the English Premier League and Serie A reappear this week. AFP Sport picks out key issues as elite European club football gets back into its stride.

### IT’S ALL KICKING OFF

The Premier League returns on Wednesday and Serie A on Saturday, joining the Bundesliga and La Liga in rebooting their seasons. Aston Villa, who lost to Leicester on Match 9 in the last match before the lockdown, will kick off against Champions League chasing Sheffield United.

The potentially pivotal game on re-opening day pits Manchester City, clinging to their hopes

of retaining their title, against visiting Arsenal. Serie A makes a stuttering comeback with four fixtures called off when Italian sport was suspended on March 9 midway through the 26th round of matches.

Torino kick off at home to Parma in a mid-table battle on Saturday. On Sunday third-place Inter Milan and fourth-place Atalanta both have home games.

### WE ARE ALMOST THE CHAMPIONS

Two of the leagues could be settled by the end of the week. Bayern Munich have been in rude health since the restart, winning all six matches, five in the league and one in the cup, including a pivotal victory at challengers Borussia Dortmund.

They can clinch an eighth straight title with victory at struggling Werder Bremen on Tuesday. But Bremen showed signs of life on Saturday with a 5-1 victory in Paderborn.

It could be one and done for Liverpool. If Manchester City fail to beat Arsenal, Liverpool can clinch their first title since 1990 away to neighbours Everton on Sunday. The prospect of Liverpool winning the title in their own city led police to briefly suggest the match be moved to avoid fans ignoring social distancing rules and gathering to celebrate.



**18** Djokovic breaks down in tears after hosting Belgrade exhibition



**19** 'Seal the deal': Flick urges Bayern to wrap up eighth consecutive title



**19** Watford's Deeney claims every team has 'one gay player'



## Leverkusen eye Champions League

Mainz forward Awoniyi taken to hospital after concussion



**GELSENKIRCHEN:** Schalke's German midfielder Daniel Caligiuri (C) and Leverkusen's German defender Sven Bender (R) vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match FC Schalke 04 v Bayer Leverkusen on June 14, 2020 in Gelsenkirchen, western Germany. — AFP

**BERLIN:** Bayer Leverkusen moved back into the Bundesliga's Champions League places with a 1-1 draw on Sunday at injury-hit Schalke, who set a new club record of 13 league games without a win.

The result leaves Schalke winless since January's 2-0 victory at home to Moenchengladbach, as they drop to ninth in the table having been third in December.

A penalty early in the second-half was converted by Schalke's Daniel Caligiuri after a handball by Burkina Faso defender Edmond Tapsoba.

However, Schalke defender Juan Miranda then turned the ball into his own net nine minutes from time to extend the winless streak. Caligiuri was partly to blame for the late own goal as he lost the ball to Leverkusen's Brazilian defender Wendell, who crossed low into the Schalke box and into the path of Miranda.

Leverkusen, who booked their place in the German Cup final on July 4 in mid-week, are now fourth with

three games left and heading for next season's Champions League group stages.

Schalke are suffering from a mounting injury list with ten players out. "I've stopped counting," said head coach David Wagner, the former Huddersfield manager, before kick-off as he made four changes from the team which drew 1-1 at Union Berlin last weekend.

"We have to stand together as a team and fight, that was another step today after the game in Berlin," added Wagner after Sunday's result.

The Royal Blues' Under-19 captain Can Bozdogan made his debut on the right wing while second-half replacement Jonas Hofmann, 23, also played his first Bundesliga match having been promoted from the reserves.

Nigerian forward Taiwo Awoniyi was hospitalised with a severe concussion after a nasty clash of heads during Mainz's 1-0 loss to Augsburg in Sunday's relegation battle. Liverpool loanee Awoniyi, 22, was left motionless after landing awkwardly following an aerial collision with Augsburg defender Felix Uduokhai in the first half.

Awoniyi was stretchered off with his neck in a brace after a long delay while he received medical attention on the pitch. Mainz said Awoniyi, a former Under-17 World Cup winner, was responsive and taken to hospital for observation. "We have received the all-clear from the doctors," said Mainz coach Achim Beierlorzer.

"He has regained consciousness and can remember the things that happened. "He has a severe concussion and has to stay in hospital for observation."

Awoniyi has yet to make an appearance for Liverpool since joining the club in 2015, spending numerous spells on loan in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium.

Augsburg moved seven points clear of the relegation play-off place after striker Florian Niederlechner scored the only goal just 43 seconds into Sunday's match.

Niederlechner was happy to atone for his penalty

miss in last weekend's 1-1 draw with Cologne.

"Last week I was the idiot, this week I am the hero," he said. "That was a big step (towards safety), but we can't afford to relax." Augsburg must still face Hoffenheim, third-from-bottom Dueseldorf and Champions League quarter-finalists RB Leipzig.

Mainz stayed three points above the bottom three. They came closest to equalising when French striker Jean-Philippe Mateta rounded the Augsburg goalkeeper but had his shot cleared off the line by defender Philipp Max. Mainz face second-placed Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday before Saturday's crucial home match against Werder Bremen, who are second from bottom and three points behind them in the table.

League leaders Bayern Munich can claim an eighth straight Bundesliga title at Bremen on Tuesday after Saturday's 2-1 win at home to Moenchengladbach left them seven points clear with three games left. — AFP

## Marcelo takes knee as Madrid return with win over Eibar

**MADRID:** Marcelo celebrated by taking a knee as Real Madrid returned from three months away following the coronavirus suspension by beating Eibar 3-1 on Sunday.

After scoring Madrid's third goal in the 37th minute, Marcelo dropped onto his left knee and raised his clinched right fist into the air, apparently in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Madrid's win may have come at a cost as Eden Hazard and Sergio Ramos were both substituted early in the second half and were seen with ice packs strapped to them while sitting in the stands.

Hazard was making his first start since February and his ice pack appeared to be around his troublesome right ankle, which he injured in November and February, before undergoing surgery in March.

"We knew Eden would lack a bit of rhythm playing the whole game," coach Zinedine Zidane said. "He

played well for an hour, he took a knock which was a scare but at half-time he said he was fine. He is happy with what he has done and we are happy with him."

Madrid's win means they reduce the gap behind league leaders Barcelona back to two points after the Catalans thrashed Real Mallorca 4-0 on Saturday.

Madrid struck in the fourth minute after a superb strike from Toni Kroos before Ramos tucked away Hazard's pass on the counter-attack.

Eibar pulled one back in the second half through Pedro Bigas but never found the second to make Madrid nervous, despite a brief spell of pressure. Before going off, Hazard was busy, the Belgian involved in all three goals. His weaving run through midfield led to Kroos' shot and it was his effort that was cleared out to Marcelo, who drove into the corner. After a miserable opening season in Spain, it was a bright start for Hazard, who could now redeem himself by playing a crucial role in the run-in, if he can stay injury-free. Perhaps even more impressive though was Karim Benzema, who linked up brilliantly with Hazard and was unfortunate not to get the goal an excellent all-round performance deserved.

Gareth Bale started on the bench but came on and could start against Valencia on Thursday. Zidane is likely to rotate heavily over the next few weeks, with the games coming thick and fast. — AFP



**VALDEBEBAS:** Real Madrid's Brazilian defender Marcelo kneels on the field to celebrate his goal during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid CF and SD Eibar at the Alfredo di Stefano stadium in Valdebebas, on the outskirts of Madrid. — AFP