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Finance, education ministers survive marathon grillings

Premier concerned over rise in virus cases among citizens

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: In a marathon Assembly session that continued until midnight, grillings against the finance and education ministers ended without filing no-confidence motions, as the two ministers separately denied alleged violations and mismanagement charges.

Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi was grilled by MP Faisal Al-Kandari for not ending the current school year because of the coronavirus pandemic, while Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan was grilled by MP Riyadh Al-Adasani over a series of allegations that included failure to perform his duties over a number of key issues. The two ministers categorically denied the allegations.

Ahead of the grilling debate, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah expressed concern over a steep rise in the number of coronavirus cases, specifically among Kuwaitis, saying the causes have been unnecessary gatherings and contacts.

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KUWAIT: Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi and Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan speak during their interpellations at the National Assembly on Tuesday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Modi response awaited after 20 soldiers killed

NEW DELHI/BEIJING: India impatiently awaited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's response yesterday to the death of at least 20 soldiers in a border clash with Chinese troops as the country's media vented its fury and political rivals goaded Modi over his silence. China said it does not want to see any more clashes on the border with India following Monday's violence. Foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian reiterated that China was not to be

blamed for the clash and said the overall situation at the border was stable and controllable.

According to Indian officials no shots were fired, but soldiers were hit with clubs and stones during a brawl that erupted between the two sides in the remote Galwan Valley, high in the mountains where India's Ladakh region borders China's Aksai Chin to the east. India's foreign ministry said there had been casualties on both sides, but China has not disclosed any casualties so far.

Modi, who rode to power on a nationalist platform, met his defense and foreign ministers and the military chiefs late on Tuesday, but he had yet to speak publicly on the worst clash between the two countries since 1967, five years after China had humiliated India in a war.

Continued on Page 16

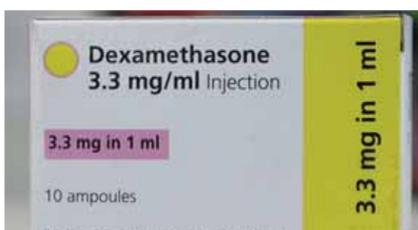


GANGANIR, India: An Indian army convoy makes its way towards Leh, bordering China, yesterday. — AFP

India sees jump of 2,000 deaths; drug raises hope

NEW DELHI: India's official coronavirus death toll leapt by more than 2,000 yesterday as the hard-hit country struggles to contain a ballooning health crisis that has overwhelmed hospitals. Meanwhile, a cheap and widely-used steroid called dexamethasone has become the first drug shown to be able to save lives among COVID-19 patients in what scientists said is a "major breakthrough" in the coronavirus pandemic.

Germany urged its nationals in India to consider leaving for their own safety, while France warned its citizens in New Delhi to stay home unless going to an airport to return to Europe. Authorities said the



LONDON: A box of dexamethasone injection ampoules is photographed at a pharmacy on Tuesday. — AFP

sharp increase in fatalities to 11,903 was mainly due to Mumbai and Delhi updating their figures.

The epidemic has badly hit India's densely populated major cities and Chennai in the south has ordered a new lockdown from Friday because of a surge in cases. Hospitals in Mumbai have been overwhelmed, while the government has sent

Continued on Page 16

CONDOLENCES

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

deepest condolences to

**Behbehani
family**

on the sad demise of

**Ahmed Yousef
Behbehani**

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him

Local

Rise in suicide rates in Kuwait raises alarm amid COVID-19 crisis

Psychological support important for COVID-19 patients, medical staff

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The spread of COVID-19 around the world has raised anxiety and fear among people. Some handle it by taking precautions, while others have taken their lives, fearing an unknown future. Suicide rates in Kuwait have been rising since the start of the coronavirus crisis, where around 31 people have committed suicide, mostly expats. Some ended their lives due to being infected, while others were suspected of being infected with the virus.

Dr Amal Farwiz, a licensed psychiatrist who works at a local clinic, explained: "Coronavirus has affected people mentally. Patients who are infected with coronavirus and have a history of depression are more likely to see an exacerbated psychological impact, while some healthy patients can get negativity from family and friends, which could lead to self-harm."

The doctor stressed the importance of studying the patient's psychological history and family record to understand the case and the importance of psychological support for coronavirus patients and medical staff. "Medical staff can support patients infected with coronavirus by providing positive information to them - that this virus kills only 2 percent of those infected with it, which means recovery is a possible option for them," she told Kuwait Times. Psychotherapy should not be limited to patients only. According to Farwiz, support must also be provided to doctors via constant contact with psychiatrists through social media to comfort them and train them to identify the symptoms of depression in patients.

Social pressure

On the other hand, Dr Farwiz noted that some people commit suicide due to pressures faced currently. "Coronavirus has caused people to lose their jobs, income and left some families hungry, which may lead to negative thoughts that life isn't worth living anymore," she said.

The doctor shared the importance of psychological support for coronavirus patients, as psy-

chologists and sociologists must be available to follow up with them. She explained that signs of depression can be noticeable. "Family, friends or even medical staff can notice the signs that could lead to suicide. People with depression always have sleeping problems - either sleeping too much or too little. Also, feelings of worthlessness and helplessness are the main reasons that push someone to kill themselves, which sometimes comes with sadness, anxiety or emptiness, in addition to mood swings and change in appetite."

Farwiz believes there should also be activities in hospitals for patients to prevent overthinking and improve their psychological condition. In 2018, the crude mortality rate was 1.65 percent for the total population in Kuwait. The percentage of self-harm deaths was 0.98 percent for Kuwaitis, 15.41 percent for non-Kuwaitis, and 10.13 percent as a total.

The Kuwait Psychological Association is providing consultation through the phone for people suffering during these uncertain times, where it has set up a rapid intervention team to help those suffering from the psychological impacts of COVID-19 as well as the lockdown imposed as a countermeasure to prevent the disease's spread.

Various doctors are working on the hotline at different timings as follows:

Dr Rashed Al-Sahh
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

coronavirus pandemic.

Ambassador Ghunaim affirmed that the Israeli decision violates the legitimate and historical rights of the Palestinian people and is contrary to the relevant international resolutions. Ghunaim expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation of these Israeli intentions because it is a flagrant violation of international law, the UN Charter, and relevant international legitimacy resolutions and represents an undermining of international efforts aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

He stressed Kuwait's support to the Palestinian people and its just causes, adding that the Palestinian cause will remain Kuwait's top priority. He also expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation of all flagrant violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by the Israeli occupation, especially killings, land confiscation, house demolitions, and other violations. Kuwait calls on the international community to initiate an emergency process to help Palestinians to



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 94014283



Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim

face the economic and social repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic, he added. — KUNA

In My View

Humanity: A relative term



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

One morning, while heading to my car after being allowed to move about, I found six newborn puppies in a shallow hole dug behind a tire. So I started thinking about moving them to a safe place until a solution is found. It was not too long before their mother came, and somehow was not scared or at least did not look at me as an enemy.

I started to pick up the puppies to put them in a safe place, but every time I picked one up and placed it on the other side, the mother would carry it back to the original hole. Anyhow, my neighbor and I cared for the dog and her puppies for a few days, then his wife was able to take them to a shelter in Wafra. You would not believe how grateful that dog was in that period and I am sure she was thanking us all the time.

Who among us nowadays can be sure about the attributes given to mankind - what are called humanitarian feelings, such as love, hate, compassion and many others? In fact I am no longer sure about the claims that such emotions do not exist in what we call animals.

If you look closely at what is going on in this universe and follow the behavior of animals, you will find behavior that can be described as "humane", as long as the term humanitarian is for acts describing compassion and love, happiness and sadness, and so on. I do not think that there is anyone among us who did not see an animal or even a bird that does not favor its babies over itself when it comes to food, or expose itself to imminent danger while attempting to defend them.

Most of us learned or heard about animals expressing their faithfulness and loyalty to their "human" masters. Some animals may refrain from eating because of sadness over the loss of another animal or a person who used to care for it. The animal's love and compassion can be seen in the care of their babies, and yet we insist on keeping these noble acts for human beings only.

Look at what human beings are doing to each other - this should prompt us to wait a minute before giving them the term humane, unless such a term means something else! Is it humane to let blood spill in the horrifying fashion that we see on screens every day in the four corners of the globe, while many countries look on without making any move? Is it humane to bury infants alive under the rubble of their bombed houses or sheds?

Is it humane to waste the lives of men, women and children by spraying deadly gas on them? Is it humane to see sick and displaced people out there in the street without feeling their suffering, pain and unmatched sadness? Is it humane to wipe out entire cities and neighborhoods for the sake of individual interests? Is it humane to besiege cities and deprive their inhabitants from food and water?

If we insist on describing those who commit such atrocities as "human", and those who keep silent towards them, then it is also not our right to call them savage and animalistic, because animals are more caring for their own and have more feelings and mercy than human beings. If what human beings are doing to themselves is considered humane, then animal acts can be considered angelic.

Allah says in the Holy Quran: "...whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or corruption (done) in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he saved mankind entirely." (5:32)

Kuwait condemns Israel's plans to seize lands in West Bank

GENEVA: Kuwait on Tuesday stressed that the Israeli occupation's implementation of its plans to annex lands from the occupied West Bank and impose sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea regions is provocative, aggressive and illegal. This came in the speech of Kuwait delivered by Permanent Representative to the UN and international organizations in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim to the UN Human Rights Council, in the 43rd session of the Council, which resumed yesterday after a three-month hiatus due to the

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 36,958 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Tuesday, in addition to 303 deaths. With the exception of 194 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, 28,896 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 7,759 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' re-

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

Earlier, Kuwait imposed a total curfew from May 10 to May 30, allowing room for people to walk out for daily exercise between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and to shop at co-ops and supermarkets once every six days during the curfew hours by making an appointment through www.moci.shop. Before that, Kuwait enforced a country-wide partial curfew from 5:00 pm to 6:00 am, which was later extended to start from 4:00 pm until 8:00 am during Ramadan, while allowing restaurants and food stores to make home deliveries from 5:00 pm until 1:00 am. The government also locked down Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh in a bid to contain the spread of the virus and enable health workers to test inhabitants. Earlier, the government decided to close all shopping malls, beauty salons and barber shops as part of its measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The government also allowed supermarkets, restaurants and shops to host a maximum of five people at a time and in case there are lines, the distance must be at least one meter between people. The Ministry of Commerce launched a website (www.moci.shop) to enable people to book appointments to shop at co-operative societies in their areas. The Public Authority for Industry also announced that companies can apply to evacuate their workers from Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula. To do so, they must fill a 'workers evacuation form' available on www.pai.gov.kw, and send the form via email to: Jasiri@moh.gov.kw.

Precautions

Kuwait halted all commercial flights until further notice, and has sent special flights to repatriate Kuwaitis back home from countries affected with the virus' spread. Kuwait took all measures to test Kuwaitis repatriated from infected areas for potential infection. Kuwait had required all expatriates who arrived from travel on March 1 and beyond to visit Kuwait International Fairground where the

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

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

Hotlines

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

The Education Ministry set the following hotlines to receive inquiries on school closures related to the anti-coronavirus measures: - 24970967 (24/7 hotline) - 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone) - 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone) - 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone) - 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone) - 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone) - 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone) - 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)

- 51588599 (Private Education Department)
- 51592515 (Services Department)
- 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

Medicine delivery

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

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

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

Local

Interior Minister says combating human trafficking is a top priority right now

Public health top concern: Prime Minister



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (left) and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem walk side by side at the end of the session.



KUWAIT: MPs attend a regular parliament session at the National Assembly building on Tuesday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh stressed that Kuwait's security is a red line and combating human trafficking is one of the most important priorities of the current stage. This came by Al-Saleh during the parliament's discussion of a letter from MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain regarding the assignment of the Interior Minister to prepare a report on human trafficking and the Ministry's mechanism to combat this phenomenon. Saleh affirmed that the names of those involved in the so-called human trafficking are with the Public Prosecution. The minister expressed sincere thanks and gratitude to all the ministry staff for their efforts in serving all citizens and residents and preserving the security and stability in the country.

Public health

Earlier during the session, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah stressed on necessity of ongoing cooperation between the government and the National Assembly for maintaining health guidelines and placing public health above all considerations. His Highness the Prime Minister, addressing lawmakers during a regular parliament session, indicated that he had addressed a message to the assembly requesting presentation of the government stance toward the issue of holding parliamentary sessions, in light of the efforts against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The message was addressed, he noted, with the aim of maintaining the cooperation, adhering to the health instructions .. "for public health comes first and if there is no possibility to hold the National Assembly sessions virtually, there should be special sessions, along with specifying the topics (to be examined) as

well as the duration to accomplish what is required in a matter of two to three hours." His Highness the Prime Minister re-emphasized necessity to hold the sessions in shortest possible time, along with compliance by the health directions so that the National Assembly and the government present themselves as an example to be followed.

"Let me be frank, I am currently focusing on the number of beds available at the hospitals for those infected as well as those in the intensive care (wards) and the breathing apparatuses," he said, also noting his special attention to maintaining sufficient medical teams, doctors and nurses and passing the crisis with the least possible damage. His Highness the Prime Minister, in his address to the legislators, urged them

work with the same spirit in the coming period, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled added. His Highness the Prime Minister attributed large numbers of coronavirus infections among citizens to non-abidance by the health regulations. He further noted the government's deep concern with the recent hike of infections among the citizens and re-stressed on the necessity of cooperation between the government and the parliament.

Thirteen letters

Meanwhile, the National Assembly approved during its regular session 13 letters under the item list of incoming messages during the session. Among those approved by the parliament is a letter regarding Decree No. 68 of 2020, concerning a draft law authorizing the government to hold public loans and financing operations from local and international financial markets, which was previously submitted to Assembly in Decree No. 183 of 2017. The Assembly also approved a letter from MPs Mohammad Al-Dalal and Abdullah Al-Kandari, requesting that the Parliamentary Public Utilities Committee commission to prepare an integrated report on the availability of agricultural and animal food security entrusted to the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, and such report by the committee should be submitted in this regard within a period not exceeding one month from the mandate.

The Assembly also approved a letter from the Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Resources Development Committee MP Khalil Al-Saleh, requesting that all proposals related to the issue of demographics and listed on the agendas of other parliamentary committees be referred to the Parliamentary Human Resources Committee for engagement. The parliament approved as well a letter from

MP Mohammad Al-Dalal and Osama Al-Shaheen requesting that the State Audit Bureau be commissioned to prepare an integrated report on all government expenditures and procedures for the use of public funds in general and funds allocated to confront the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, to be submitted to the Assembly within three months. Among other letters approved by the Assembly is a one from MP Abdul Wahab Al-Babtain calling on the government represented by the Minister of Information to prepare a report on the irregular agricultural holdings that were withdrawn in the previous period and to clarify whether monitoring of all unexploited holdings and procedures has been completed followed in this regard within a month from the date of approval of this mandate.

Set of recommendations

A grilling by MP Faisal Al-Kandari against Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education, Dr Saud Al-Harbi ended Tuesday with a set of recommendations aimed at addressing shortcomings in educational process. Parliament speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem announced the end of the interpellation with the house approving recommendations, like a bill on state universities and enlisting a fourth warning for university students struggling with studies. The house also recommended a detailed plan for online education, transferring educational platform from its commercial domain to the government domains. The MPs called for reconsidering decreasing tuition of private schools and universities. MP Kandari questioned Harbi on mismanagement during the coronavirus crisis which negatively affected students, private schools' collection of fees despite them being closed and lack of a vision for the online education. — KUNA



Parliament approves 13 letters

to tackle and discuss matters quickly and set an example "to those whom we have imposed on a curfew and remained in their houses for 20 days."

"The State of Kuwait has not reached the safe zone in facing the coronavirus yet," he declared, confirming health authorities' statistics that the infection cases reached some 37,000 and deaths nearly 300. Intensive care wards are occupied by 44 percent and this should be taken into consideration and pursue the

News in brief

Interior launches online booking

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry prepares to launch a service allowing citizens and expats to book appointments online to finalize transactions at some of its departments as efforts are ongoing for the gradual return to work while following the instructions of health authorities. The system allows people to choose the department and time through the ministry's website www.moi.gov.kw.

Football back Aug 15

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association (KFA) on Tuesday decided to resume the current football season (2020/2019) on August 15, after addressing the tripartite committee consisting of the Ministry of Health, the Public Authority for Sports and the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee. In a press statement after the meeting of the Board of Directors headed by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Youssef Al-Sabah, the attendees unanimously adopted the League next season to be played with one division. The statement noted that His Highness the Amir Cup and His Highness the Crown Prince Cup will be played with the knockout system.

21 flights

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced that 21 flights departed from Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying a total of 3,217 passengers. They included 10 flights to Egypt, eight flights to India, one flight to Qatar, one flight to Nepal, and one flight to Turkey.

Medical equipment

KUWAIT: A cargo plane from China arrived at Kuwait International Airport Tuesday, carrying around 65 tons of medical equipment and devices for making sterilizers and face masks.

Curfew violators

KUWAIT: Police arrested 11 Kuwaiti nationals on Tuesday for breaking the curfew, the Interior Ministry announced. Two of the suspects were arrested in Hawally and Farwaniya governorates respectively, while the nine others have violated the mandatory home quarantine condition, the ministry said.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A crowd of people shop at the main fish market in Sharq on Tuesday. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Red Crescent distributes food in Sabah Al-Salem



KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent (KRCS) handed out 1,000 food parcels and 1,000 milk cartons to residents in Sabah Al-Salem, in cooperation with the Interior Ministry on Tuesday. Through the endeavor, the organisation intends to fulfill its humanitarian role and social responsibility following similar initiatives in the areas of Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Khaitan and Farwaniya, KRCS Secretary General Maha Al-Barjas said. KRCS would resume its operations the following day in Sabhan, targeting labourers and less fortunate families, she added, noting that the food parcels contain essential food items that will last over a month. Barjas went on to praise the generosity of the Kuwaiti people during times of struggle, particularly in light of the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. —KUNA



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Local

SPECIAL REPORT

Pressure on Kuwait to adapt, regain public trust in post-coronavirus era

Analysis on the impact of coronavirus on the GCC

KUWAIT: Analysts from three British consulting firms who specialize in Middle East trends collaborated with Reconnaissance Research to examine the outlook for Gulf investment given developments over the past few months. Foreign investors have long acknowledged volatile oil prices, inconsistent legal frameworks, and opaque business environments as weaknesses in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies. However, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has exposed just how wide-reaching the consequences of these weaknesses can be, as GCC countries are being forced to dramatically accelerate their efforts to diversify their sources of revenue and expand private sector activity.

Kuwait is no different, though recent events have underscored the prevalence of corruption and the impact it can have on foreign investment. More specifically, details emerged in May regarding the alleged involvement of one Kuwaiti royal family member in a massive international money-laundering scandal.

Consultants from Castlereagh Associates, Alaco Limited, and Wallbrook each assessed how these events will impact the GCC and Kuwait. Their answers share a number of similarities: while they agree the GCC's outlook is concerning, the general sentiment is that progress can—and must—be made. For Kuwait specifically, it seems the pressure is on now more than ever to adapt and regain public trust as it defines itself to investors in the post-coronavirus era.



Investment climate as precarious as ever

Although many GCC governments have implemented regulatory measures to mitigate corruption, wealth mismanagement, and money laundering, their implementation is patchwork and insufficient. Ultimately, according to Austen Josephs, an associate director at Alaco, "the perception is that the authorities lack the will or the legal tools to properly investigate and clamp down," and "Western clients particularly in financial services consider the Gulf 'high risk.'" There is even a perception that "international accounting firms tend to not apply the same strict standards to review Gulf financial budgets as they do or are expected to do in other places."

With that said, Gulf countries have exhibited tepid improvement in their commitment to anti-corruption measures. Radway notes that "Gulf states have made moves to improve anti-money laundering controls in recent years." Additionally, Josephs suggests that compliance procedures for state-owned companies and sovereign wealth funds have been beefed up, though they still lack transparency.

Investment in the age of COVID-19

The most glaring result of the coronavirus impact on GCC countries is its widespread suppressive impact on demand for oil. Prices for oil famously fell into the negatives briefly in April as global production outpaced storage capacity, spurred on by tensions between Russia and Saudi Arabia. As Radway put it,

"GCC governments can no longer rely on vast oil reserves to prop up their sclerotic economies."

The immediate impact will be a rapid reduction in GCC foreign currency reserves and capital flight to markets perceived less risky by both domestic and foreign investors. Further, Josephs warns that indebted companies may collapse, which could lead to "claims of mismanagement and fraud," reinforcing foreigners' poor perceptions of the GCC investment climate.

Gulf economies' heavy reliance upon oil prices is well known, and several governments have taken steps to diversify their sources of revenue and promote private sector growth. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Kuwait's Vision 2035 both feature among them. However, the coronavirus is forcing Gulf countries to implement measures much more rapidly than previously anticipated, likely at great short-term cost. These measures would have to feature a more robust and onerous system of taxation to replace oil receipts, according to Josephs.

Corruption in Kuwait

For Kuwait, each of the aforementioned weaknesses in Gulf financial systems combined in dramatic fashion last month. According to a series of exclusive stories published in May, about the claims of collaborated involvement of a prominent figure with a Chinese bank to allegedly launder money for Jho Low, the infamous Malaysian businessman at the center of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal. Though the scandal first came to light in 2015, investigators from the US Department of Justice and the Malaysian government are still uncovering new evidence.

As the story goes, the Kuwaiti government became aware of the businessman's alleged involvement in this scandal in early 2019 and seems to have allegedly actively worked to conceal it from the public, until Reconnaissance Research broke the story officially in Kuwait in May 2020. In spite of whistleblower protection laws, Kuwaiti officials also allegedly tried to prevent details from leaking.

The reports also call for extra scrutiny into the Chinese-led Silk City project across the bay from Kuwait City, given China's presumed role in money laundering efforts. Fortunately, according to Uppal, the Kuwaiti government's Financial Intelligence Unit is now probing the scandal and its reports have so far been favorably received. However, as she notes, "the true test will be whether any punitive measures will be imposed." Even if they are, Josephs points out that "international investors will likely continue to see



Kuwait's political system as dysfunctional [and] its legal system as unpredictable."

Next Steps

There are a number of steps that Kuwait must take in order to improve its international reputation in light of these scandals, according to Josephs. With regards to IMDB, authorities must comply fully with US and Malaysian authorities seeking to recover embezzled funds, and courts must determine any wrongdoing independently. Whistleblower protection laws must be reinforced and implemented more consistently. The head of the money laundering authority, who resigned after the Kuwaiti government allegedly suppressed investigation into the scandal, must be replaced. Speaking more broadly, the culture must change so that due diligence becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Along those lines, Kuwaiti Members of Parliament have been pushing for greater government accountability. And yet, the coronavirus pandemic has already exposed these issues' persistence; Uppal notes that there have already been some tensions over the award of contracts worth billions of dollars to purchase medical supplies and equipment—without bids—to a select group of companies and individuals.

The next few months will prove instrumental in determining whether Kuwait and the rest of the GCC are able to successfully attract investment and expand their private sectors. As each expert pointed out, failing either of these goals will expose still deeper fault lines across the GCC's economies.

— Reconnaissance Research



Beaches are public spaces: Municipality

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Beaches in Kuwait are state property and considered public spaces, according to an official from Kuwait Municipality. "According to the municipal law, beaches should stay open and no one has the right to restrict access to them. This is supervised by the Municipality, which is responsible for cleaning beaches through contracts with cleaning companies," Abdullah from the Municipality call center told Kuwait Times.

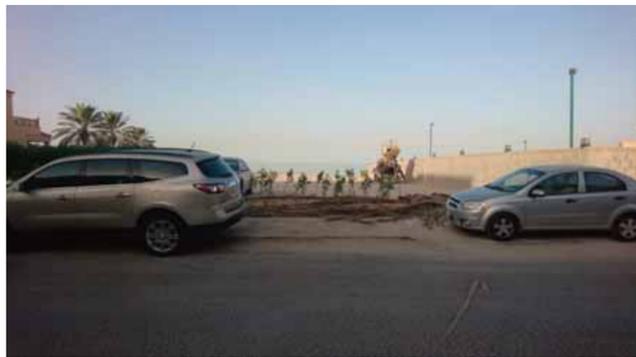
During the total curfew, people were only allowed two hours of walking in their area. So many Salwa residents crossed Al-Tawoun Street and walked along the seaside. But in several sec-

tions, homes are built by the sea. Further down in Messila, residents have pushed back against the use of the beach by people not living in the area by closing access and even warning visitors that the beaches are private and that they will call the police on anyone who doesn't belong there.

Those living in the area have used vehicles to block the parking near the beach or even planted shrubbery to deter non-residents from using the beach. Recently, Kuwait Times witnessed moves by local residents to block public access to a beach in Messila.

Several years ago, the Municipality formed demolition teams to investigate and remove all buildings and structures on state property, including any extensions of housing, fencing and other structures onto beaches around Kuwait.

Khaled Al-Mohsen, a former head of one of the Municipality's demolition teams, recalls having problems in the same area previously. The teams removed many violations including demolishing a complete villa that was built



on state property in the area, he noted. The cement barricades of the emergency teams are still found in the area.

The emergency team that was formed by the Cabinet to demolish all violations on state property was dissolved in Feb 2019. Yet people can still report any encroachment on state property to the Municipality by calling the hotline #139 or sending a WhatsApp message on +965/2472-7732,

which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If someone has a complaint, they can send it to the number above. The complaint will be reviewed and sent to the governorate in charge according to the location. Then the complainant will receive an answer. "We have inspectors who are in charge of dealing with such complaints of violations of state property," Abdullah said.

Kuwait oil price up to \$34.91 pb

KUWAIT: Price of Kuwaiti oil rose by \$1.96 to \$34.91 per barrel (pb) on Tuesday, compared with \$32.95 pb on Monday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. In international markets, the price of Brent crude on Tuesday closed up by \$1.24, 3.1 percent, to \$40.96 pb and the West Texas Intermediate rate climbed by

\$1.26, 3.4 percent, to \$38.38 pb. Price of the Kuwaiti crude oil has been steady above the \$30 pb level after dropping to the \$14 pb in early phases of the coronavirus COVID-19 crisis. There were same effects on the crude rates globally but the prices turned recently bullish amid easing of containment restrictions, enforced due to the outbreak where people's movement was restricted and many businesses were paralyzed. The drop of the oil prices had come amid drastic fall of demand, with paralysis of sectors that largely depend on fossil fuel, namely transports, shipping and aviation.

Recycling project

In other news, Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) said Tuesday it has already completed its acid gas recycling project at Mina Al-Ahmadi Refinery. The project (NAGR) mainly aims at the recycling of acid gas and condensates that are produced by the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) in the country's western oilfields, KNPC Deputy CEO for Projects and Spokesman Abdullah Al-Ajmi said in a press statement. It is intended to contribute to realizing one of the most significant goals of the strategy of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), which is to cut gas emissions to less than one percent.

The project will lead to reducing sulfur dioxide to the allowed limit according to the criteria of the Environment Public Authority and turning hydrogen sulfide into sulfur before sending them to sulfur handling facilities for export purposes, he said. Recycled gas and condensates are to be sent to the gas plant in order to boost production capacity and contribute to producing more varied gas byproducts, he added. The project can produce 146 million cubic feet of acid gas per day if hydrogen sulfide is five percent, he said, noting that the production could rise to 231 million cubic feet in case hydrogen sulfide drops to 2.5 percent. — KUWA

Housing authority terminates 135 expat employees



Dr Rana Al-Fares

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) notified 135 expat employees that they would be terminated effective July 1, 2020 to create room for hiring of Kuwaiti employees. This comes as part of a three-phase plan Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr Rana Al-Fares has launched to substitute expat employees in PAHW with Kuwaiti jobseekers. The plan is expected to conclude by the beginning of April 2021, with hopes of declaring PAHW 'expat-free' by the beginning of May 2021.

In a letter she sent to PAHW management, Dr Fares stressed that this plan is part of the government's strategy to 'Kuwaitize' jobs in the public sector according to Civil Service Commission (CSC) instructions to substitute expats with citizens in the jobs of legal staffs, executive and administrative staffs, engineers, assistant engineers, engineering drafting supervisors, air-conditioning technicians, services technicians, warehouse, media, lab and accounting personnel, representatives, couriers, drivers, office boys and janitors.

WANTED
HOUSEMAID
WANTED
Full-time, live-in
Must speak English
Must be good
with children
Contact: 50440044



Kim Yo: North Korean leader's powerful sister

Beijing imposes partial travel ban, closes schools over virus outbreak

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LIMA: Workers carry a bag with the body of a COVID-19 victim out of a refrigerated container before its cremation at the El Angel crematorium in Lima. —AFP

'Hunger pandemic' threatens Latin America

Brazil reports highest daily jump in virus cases

GENEVA: The coronavirus crisis is pushing 40 million people into food insecurity in South and Central America and the Caribbean, the UN warned Tuesday, calling for urgent action to avert a "hunger pandemic". The UN's World Food Program says that in the 11 countries where it operates in the region, the number of people facing severe food insecurity has increased from 3.4 million at the start of the year to 14 million. But including those in moderate food insecurity would take the number up to around 40 million, due to the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, Miguel Barreto, the WFP's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean, said Tuesday.

The alarm came as Latin America and the Caribbean on Monday passed 80,000 COVID-19 deaths, according to an AFP count based on official figures, as the virus accelerates across the region. "We are really worried about this health trend," Barreto told reporters in Geneva via video-link from Panama. "Unfortunately, the news is not good either when it comes to the food security situation. Our projections paint a stark picture. We need to act quickly to prevent this crisis from becoming a hunger pandemic," he said.

Harvest fears

In the region, the WFP operates in the Central American "Dry Corridor" states of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua; in Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia and Peru in South America; and in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti in the Caribbean. Barreto said the three main concerns were Haiti, the Dry Corridor, and migrants in South America. In Haiti, the number of people in severe food insecurity has doubled from 700,000 in December to more than 1.7 million. There, as in the Dry Corridor, "they had a drought at the end of 2019. Now, with COVID-19, they are more impacted and devastated and these people are suffering much", said Barreto.

Flirting with danger: Message apps add to China marital woes

SHANGHAI: Echo couldn't figure out why her Shanghai businessman husband routinely came home well past midnight, straining their 10-year marriage - until she looked at his phone. Flirtatious messages from other women revealed a pattern of affairs facilitated by WeChat, China's top messaging app. WeChat and other platforms have helped revolutionize inter-personal relations in China, but are also blamed for adding to growing strain on Chinese marriages by making it easier to flirt with potential new partners.

Divorce is rising in China due to a range of factors, causing a concerned government pass a law in May imposing a month-long "cooling-off" period on feuding couples before they split. But thanks to technology, "making acquaintances has become more convenient. It's possible there will be temptations," said Echo, who declined to give her full name and is now seeing a marriage counselor along with her husband. Extramarital sex is hardly a new phenomenon in China, with its thriving sex industry and hostess bars, and a 2015 study by a respected Chinese sex researcher found a sharp increase in affairs in recent years.

The errant-partner issue went viral in April when

If the next harvest in September is poor, "the situation is going to deteriorate further", he warned. Barreto said WFP needed \$400 million to provide assistance in the region just for 2020, but so far, the financial support forecast was "very low". Barreto said the WFP across the region was mostly working through cash-based transfers rather than food distribution, which had reduced the loss rate along the way. While the WFP does not operate in troubled Venezuela - from which many have fled as migrants to neighboring countries - it is negotiating with the gov-



Peru's virus deaths surge past 7,000

ernment and expects to return before the end of 2020 after a 45-year absence.

Brazil's virus cases

Brazil on Tuesday recorded its highest daily jump in new coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic, with nearly 35,000 registered in 24 hours, the health ministry said. The country, which has the second-highest number of coronavirus cases and deaths in the world, after the United States, reported 34,918 new cases and 1,282 new deaths in the past 24 hours. That brought Brazil's total caseload to more than 923,000, and its death toll to 45,241. Experts say under-testing in the country of 212 million people probably means the real figures are much higher. The grim new record

Chinese model-celebrity Zhou Yangqing revealed that her boyfriend of nine years, Taiwanese singer Show Lo, had used WeChat and other platforms for dalliances with multiple women. Technology adds to rising socio-economic stresses on couples, said Zhu Shenyong, a Shanghai marriage counselor. They include growing career and financial pressures, surging business travel, meddling in-laws, and less willingness by Chinese women to endure a poor marriage. "(Chinese) society is developing too fast, extremely fast," he said. "We have quickly become a relatively well-off society, but material happiness means working more and spending less time building and maintaining marriages."

Casual hook-ups

Many find an outlet through technology-enabled dalliances, Zhu said. In particular, he cites WeChat's "People Near Me" function, which is often used for casual hook-ups. But even seemingly innocent use of WeChat, China's default communication tool, can lead people astray. Zhu recalled a recent counseling case that grew from a man and woman becoming business contacts through a "friend" group. "The man said, 'You're divorced. I actually want to divorce too,'" Zhu said. "After discussing business and signing a deal, they went out for a drink and ended up together." WeChat makes it "incredibly easy to find the opposite sex", Zhu said. Annual Chinese marriage registrations grew nearly 14 percent from 1998-2018 to more than 10 million, according to government figures.

But divorces nearly quadrupled to 4.5 million per year

came as the World Health Organization's top official for the Americas again voiced concern over the situation in Brazil.

"Brazil has 23 percent of all cases and 21 percent of all deaths in our region. And we are not seeing transmission slowing down," Carissa Etienne, director of the Pan American Health Organization, told a news conference. Brazil has struggled to set a strategy for dealing with the virus. President Jair Bolsonaro, who has famously compared the virus to a "little flu," has clashed with state and local authorities over their use of stay-at-home measures to contain it. The far-right leader argues the economic impact of such measures risks being worse than the virus itself, and has instead touted the drugs chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine as treatments, despite uncertainty about their effectiveness against COVID-19.

Peru's deaths surge

Peru's health ministry said Tuesday that the hard-hit nation's coronavirus death toll had reached 7,056, the third-highest in Latin America after Brazil and Mexico. Officials said the number of confirmed cases is now beyond 237,000 in Peru, which has been under a nationwide lockdown for three months. With a population of 33 million, Peru has the second-highest number of confirmed cases in Latin America after Brazil.

Nevertheless, Health Minister Victor Zamora told reporters that the number of new cases has begun to decrease. Peru's healthcare system is on the verge of collapse, with more than 10,000 COVID-19 patients in hospitals. Seventy percent of Peru's cases have been reported in the Lima metropolitan area, home to a third of the country's population. The death toll includes more than 200 inmates who caught the disease in Peru's overcrowded prisons, at least 170 police officers working to enforce curfews and border closures, and more than 50 medical personnel, according to official figures. —Agencies

over that span. Dai Pengjun, a Shanghai private detective who investigates suspected infidelities, says messaging apps are a common thread in cases.

'More and more affairs'

Business has taken off in recent years and he now has seven staff handling around 10 cases monthly across the country, 40 percent of which involve unfaithful women. "I've thought a lot about why there are more and more affairs nowadays," Dai said. "Is it because of lower morals? I don't think so. It has a lot to do with people's material lives and technological development." Cases typically involve staking out, tailing, and photographing "targets". An AFP journalist tagged along as Dai and his team tailed a man - whose wife suspected him of mid-day trysts - for several hours through Shanghai's financial district and subway system. Nothing overtly incriminating was observed.

In extreme cases, Dai has found male targets who juggled not one, but two long-term extramarital affairs, including some that produced offspring. Lack of education is a problem, said Zhu. "Our sex education starts from primary school, but education on love and marriage is non-existent," he said. Chinese media have speculated that lengthy COVID-19 lockdowns earlier this year could fuel more divorce as hunkered-down couples tire of each other. Echo experienced the opposite. Shanghai's shutdown gave the couple time to work on their marriage. She is hopeful. "Sometimes I even feel thankful to the other women," she said. —AFP

Pakistan accused of torturing diplomats

ISLAMABAD: A new spat between Pakistan and India deepened Tuesday after New Delhi accused Islamabad of torturing two Indian diplomats who had been arrested in an alleged hit-and-run in the Pakistani capital. According to Pakistani authorities, Monday's incident saw the two Indian high commission officials crash a speeding car into a pedestrian, causing serious injuries. They allegedly then tried to flee the scene but were arrested and detained for several hours. On Tuesday, India's external affairs ministry said the men had been held on "coerced" charges and had been subjected to "torture and physical assault".

Islamabad reacted furiously, saying it "categorically rejects" New Delhi's claims. The two Indian men were eventually released after asserting diplomatic immunity, but only after India protested to Pakistan's envoy in New Delhi. "The (Indian) ministry of external affairs statement is a reprehensible attempt to distort facts and deny the culpability of these officials in criminal offences," Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a statement. Pakistan officials went on to allege the two Indian men had also been carrying fake currency and said India's claims were "part of desperate efforts to divert attention from India's state-terrorism" in Kashmir. Tensions are already heightened between the neighboring foes over the Himalayan region, which was split between them in 1947 when they gained independence from Britain. Kashmir has become a bigger source of tension after New Delhi last August scrapped the Muslim-majority region's semi-autonomous status and imposed a curfew. In response, Islamabad at that time said it would recall its ambassador from Delhi and send back the Indian envoy. The latest fracas comes after New Delhi expelled two officials from Pakistan's high commission on June 1 for alleged "espionage activities" - claims Islamabad rejected. —AFP



NEW DELHI: A man reads a newspaper sitting in front of closed shop at a market area in New Delhi. —AFP

International

Robots: Allies during virus crisis - and enemies later?

'These guys are going to take away our jobs'

PARIS: When human contact needs to be kept to a minimum, robots can save lives and factories. But when the coronavirus crisis is over, will they amplify job losses? It may be a mechanized arm pulling beers in a Seville bar, a dog-like dispenser of hand sanitizer in a Bangkok mall, a cooler on wheels that delivers groceries in Washington, or a vaguely humanoid greeter at a Belgian hospital that also checks you are not running a fever. These are some of the new jobs that robots have taken on as lockdown measures have seen humans confined to their homes.

'Resistance falls away'

"The moment there is a threat for humans, you should send a robot," said Cyril Kabbara, co-founder of the French start-up Sharks Robotics. Its robot Colossus helped save Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral when flames engulfed its roof in 2019, and has been adapted to help remove lead that contaminated the site. "Four or five years ago, when we went presented the Colossus, they laughed at us. The firefighters said: 'These guys are going to take away our jobs,'" said the entrepreneur. But the Colossus has since been successfully integrated into the Paris and Marseille fire services.

"The more we advance, the more the resistance falls away," he said. It is not just in the hygiene and medical spheres where robots have made advances. "This crisis has demonstrated that you have to have a capacity to continue activity even when a health or another type of crisis strikes," said Kabbara. "We've had quite a few manufacturers tell us that the robots allowed them to continue operating. And if they hadn't had them, they'd be at a dead stop." While owners like robots as they



BANGALORE: A hospital staff stands in front of 'Mitra', a robot equipped with a thermal camera installed to register and conduct preliminary screening of patients before directing them to respective medical specialists at Fortis hospital in Bangalore.

can keep operations running, workers can see them as a risk to their jobs. Rightly so, according to Brookings Institution researcher Mark Muro. "Recent research suggests that the deepening recession is likely to bring a surge of labour-replacing automation," he said in a recent note for the Economist Intelligence Unit.

'Robophobia'

"People who suggest that automation is not taking away jobs in manufacturing, they're just wrong," said Oxford University economist Carl Frey. He pointed to



ROME: One of the six robots of the Circolo di Varese hospital stands near a patient, to help the healthcare staff of the High Intensity Medicine department to assist twelve patients suffering from the epidemic Covid-19. — AFP photos

China, a country which is rapidly installing industrial robots, with 650,000 going online in 2018 alone, and which lost 12.5 million manufacturing jobs between 2013 and 2017. The country has seen an explosion in "robophobia" during the coronavirus crisis, according to a study by Spanish university IE. While only 27 percent of Chinese supported limiting automation before the crisis struck, the figure has doubled to 54 percent.

The Chinese are now close to the French, who at 59 percent, are the most hostile to automation. The

study also revealed that hostility towards automation was tied to age and education, with the younger and less educated people most hostile towards robots. "Historically, technology has created a lot of jobs as well, but you see less of that happening in the digital world," said Frey. He pointed to automakers or manufacturers like General Electric still employing many workers even after adopting automation. "The leading techs of today are not creating so many jobs, apart from Amazon," he told AFP. — AFP

Saudi-led Yemen coalition pulled from blacklist

UNITED NATIONS: Campaigners have reacted angrily to the removal of the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen from a list of groups violating children's rights, in a report by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "The Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen will be delisted for the violation of killing and maiming, following a sustained significant decrease... due to air strikes," said the UN's newly-published annual report on children in conflict zones. It said the toll had fallen since an agreement signed in March 2019. The coalition intervened in 2015 in Yemen to support the government against Iran-backed Huthi rebels. It has been widely blamed for civilian casualties in bombing raids that campaigners say have pushed the country deeper into crisis.

Human Rights Watch denounced Guterres for dropping the coalition from the "list of shame," saying he was "ignoring the UN's own evidence of continued grave violations against children." The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict said that "by absolving the Saudi- and Emirati-led coalition of any responsibility for killing and maiming children in Yemen, the UN Secretary-General has left children vulnerable to further attacks." It said the coalition was responsible for the death or injury of 222 children in Yemen last year.

Inger Ashing of Save the Children called it a "shocking decision" by Guterres. But the secretary general's envoy for children and armed conflict, Virginia Gamba, said the UN had come "under no pressure" from Saudi



SANAA: Smoke billows following an airstrike by Saudi-led coalition in the Yemeni capital Sanaa, on June 16, 2020. Yemen is wracked by a war which has killed tens of thousands of people and led to the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the United Nations. — AFP

Arabia and that the removal from the list was based on data. In 2016 the coalition was briefly included on the annual list before a threat by Saudi Arabia to cut off funding to UN programs forced a reversal. The following year, after Guterres assumed the UN leadership, the coalition was placed in a sub-section of the report created for those making efforts to avoid deaths of children. It remained there in 2018 and 2019.

The report, which reviews several conflicts worldwide each year, said 4,019 children were verified as hav-

ing been killed and more than 6,000 maimed in 2019. The numbers were similar to 2018, according to the UN. The report partially removed the Myanmar armed forces, called Tatmadaw, from the blacklist. They no longer appear for recruitment of children but remain on the list for their death, mutilation and rape. Guterres cited "a continued significant decrease in recruitment, ongoing prosecutions and an agreement to continue to trace and release cases." Save the Children described the move as "premature and dangerous." — AFP

supremacist group the Ku Klux Klan was responsible for many of those deaths as they hanged black Americans from trees.

The two deaths in California also took place as there are renewed calls for racial justice in the US following the May 25 police killing of George Floyd, another black man, in Minneapolis. Several vigils and protests for Fuller and Harsch were held in recent days, and on Tuesday more than 200 people gathered again near Palmdale City Hall, where Fuller's body was found, demanding answers. At the base of the tree where he died, dozens of votive candles, bouquets and messages covered the ground. "Stop killing & lynching us," read one sign, while another said: "AmeriKKKa is Lucky Black People want Justice and not Vengeance."

Several people interviewed by AFP dismissed the idea that Fuller could have taken his own life and said they suspected a "lynching" and possible involvement by sympathizers of the Ku Klux Klan. "Black people don't hang themselves," said Dee Johnson, 64. "That's something we don't do." "We are not going to repeat history," she added. Johnson said followers of the Ku Klux Klan had been more vocal in the area since the election of US President Donald Trump, and that more Confederate flags have been seen flying in the region. "They've been coming out more than they ever had," she said, referring to the KKK. — AFP

Hanging death of black man: 'This is racial'

PALMDALE: For Shawna Green and many other residents of Palmdale, a city in California's Mojave Desert, there is no question that Robert Fuller's death was racially motivated. "In a word, this is a cover-up," said Green, 46, commenting about the 24-year-old black man who was found dead hanging from a tree on June 10. Authorities initially labeled Fuller's death a suicide, but then backtracked following an outcry from his family and civic leaders who demanded a full investigation and have sought an independent probe and autopsy.

The FBI has now also said it will look into this case, as well as the May 31 hanging death of another black man, 38-year-old Malcolm Harsch, in Victorville - about 50 miles east of Palmdale - to determine whether both men took their own lives or if there was foul play involved. For many, the two deaths evoke a painful period in US history in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when thousands of African Americans were lynched in racist extrajudicial killings. Infamous white



CALIFORNIA: Balloons hang from a tree as a makeshift memorial for Robert Fuller, with the US flag in the background at Palmdale City Hall, as people gather to demand justice for Robert Fuller, a young black man who was found hanging from a tree in Palmdale, California. — AFP

Trump government sues to block ex-aide John Bolton's book

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration filed a lawsuit Tuesday seeking to prevent publication of former national security advisor John Bolton's book, which is expected to provide a damning insider portrait of the White House. The Department of Justice alleged in its suit, filed in federal court in Washington, that publication of the book risks "compromising national security" through revelation of classified information that Bolton had access to during his turbulent 17-month stint in the White House. The suit says Bolton failed to have the text vetted, meaning his book would be in "clear breach of agreements he signed as a condition of his employment and as a condition of gaining access to highly classified information."

The book, "The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir," is due to hit the shelves next Tuesday. Bolton, a veteran Washington insider and a controversial conservative hawk, was a close advisor to President Donald Trump. He is believed to have taken meticulous notes during his various meetings with Trump and other senior personnel. After the two had a public falling out, Bolton in January threatened to become a prime witness against Trump in the US leader's Senate impeachment trial, but only if the Senate issued a subpoena for his testimony.

The administration pressured the chamber's Republican majority, and the opposition Democrats fell short of the necessary votes to issue a subpoena compelling Bolton to testify. Bolton left in September after disagreeing with Trump's diplomatic outreach to adversaries, notably North Korea and Afghanistan's Taliban. Since then the two have become openly hostile and Bolton's book has been touted as a tell-all from the Oval Office. "This is the book Donald Trump doesn't want you to read," teased publishers Simon and Schuster. In particular, Bolton alleges that Trump committed a host of impeachable offenses beyond pressuring Ukraine to investigate his political rival, Democrat Joe Biden.

'Doomed to fail'

Bolton, in the book's epilogue, also accuses Trump of seizing Bolton's advisors' documents, obstructing his Twitter account and "making outright threats of censorship," according to Axios. The government says Bolton is in breach of basic secrecy rules after refusing to wait for the National Security Council to go through the text, as required. The NSC found "significant quantities of classified information that it asked Defendant to remove," the court docket said, but the "Defendant apparently became dissatisfied at the pace of NSC's review." It said Bolton and publishers reportedly resolved to release the book on June 23 "without Defendant giving any prior notice to the NSC" or completing the pre-publication review process.

"Simply put, Defendant struck a bargain with the United States as a condition of his employment in one of the most sensitive and important national security positions in the United States Government and now wants to renege on that bargain." In a brief statement, Simon & Schuster said that leading up to the book's publication Bolton "worked in cooperation with the National Security Council to incorporate changes to the text that addressed NSC concerns." The final, published version "reflects those changes, and Simon & Schuster is fully supportive of Ambassador Bolton's First Amendment right to tell the story of his time in the Trump White House." — AFP

Palestinian security shred files in fear of Israeli incursion

RAMALLAH: Palestinian security services have been destroying secret files, fearing Israeli raids on their offices as the Jewish state weighs annexing parts of the occupied West Bank, sources in such organs say. "We have been ordered to destroy confidential documents in our possession and we have obeyed this order," a Palestinian security source told AFP on condition of anonymity, saying that the instructions came from "high up".

During the Palestinian uprising known as the Second Intifada, which erupted in the early 2000s and included waves of suicide bombings, Israeli security forces repeatedly stormed Palestinian security services' offices and removed confidential documents. Several Palestinian security sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the services are concerned that this could happen again if Israel moves ahead with annexation. US President Donald Trump's Middle East peace plan, unveiled in late January, envisions Israel annexing its settlements and the Jordan Valley in the West Bank.

More than 450,000 Israelis live in settlements deemed illegal under international law, alongside 2.7 million Palestinians in the wider West Bank. Washington's proposals provide for the creation of a Palestinian state, but on reduced territory and without Palestinians' core demand of a capital in east Jerusalem. The plan has been rejected in its entirety by the Palestinians. One Palestinian security source, who did not describe the nature of the documents, said the security services began destroying them a month ago, around the time Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said he was ending security coordination with Israel. Two other security sources said some documents were destroyed after they were scanned and transferred to USB drives, which were then put in "secret places". — AFP

International

Beijing imposes partial travel ban, closes schools over virus outbreak

Authorities scramble to contain a 'severe' new outbreak

BEIJING: Beijing has urged its residents to not leave the city and closed schools again as authorities scramble to contain a "severe" new coronavirus outbreak in the city of 21 million people. The coronavirus resurgence - believed to have started in the capital's sprawling Xinfadi wholesale food market - has prompted alarm as China had largely brought its outbreak under control through mass testing and draconian lockdowns.

The country had eased much of its anti-coronavirus measures in recent months as the government all but declared victory against the disease that emerged in the central city of Wuhan late last year. Fearing that progress could unravel, authorities locked down several residential areas and announced new restrictions on Tuesday, with group sports banned, people ordered to wear masks in crowded enclosed spaces, and inter-provincial group tours suspended.

The city government said residents should avoid "non-essential travel" out of the capital. "Anyone leaving Beijing must have a negative reading on a nucleic acid test taken within seven days (prior to departure)," Chen Bei, deputy secretary general of Beijing municipal government, said at a press conference. Residents of "medium- or high-risk" areas of infection are completely banned from leaving. Non-residents and outside vehicles are prohibited from entering com-

munities and villages in medium and high risk areas, Chen said.

He added that the higher risk residential areas are "fully enclosed and controlled" - similar to strict local measures imposed in Wuhan at the height of the pandemic. The local education commission announced that all schools, which had mostly reopened, would close again and return to online classes. Universities were told to suspend the return of students. "The epidemic situation in the capital is extremely severe," Beijing city spokesman Xu Hejian warned at a press conference. Another 27 cases were reported

on Tuesday. They took the number of confirmed infections in Beijing over the past five days to 106, as authorities locked down almost 30 communities in the city and tested tens of thousands of people.

Trace and test

Officials in the city said they would test stall owners and managers at all of its food markets, restaurants and government canteens. Beijing's testing capacity has been expanded to 90,000 a day, according to state news agency Xinhua. Retiree Wu Yaling, 57, was in a long queue of masked people waiting in the scorching heat for tests at a park opposite one city-center hospital. "I try not to go out as much as possible," she said, adding that her home is near one of the closed markets. On Tuesday, the capital's transport commission

Virus resurgence prompts alarm



Activists fear no justice for Iran protest killings

PARIS: Half a year after protests which Iran has now acknowledged claimed more than 200 lives, rights groups fear the real toll from the crackdown was far higher and that nobody will be brought to justice. Protests erupted across Iran from November 15-19 after a sudden fuel price hike, in the most vocal eruption of public dissent since the 2009 "green movement" rocked the Islamic Republic in the wake of disputed elections.

Activists say the latest crackdown on protests by the Iranian security forces, accompanied by a near-total internet blackout, was even fiercer than that of 10 years earlier. For the first time this month, Iran acknowledged there had been civilian deaths on a major scale. Mojtaba Zolnour, head of the Iranian parliament's national security and foreign affairs committee, said on June 1 that 230 people were killed - including six members of the security forces. But Amnesty International issued a report in May detailing 304 verified protester deaths, which it said was in no way a final toll.

"We believe that the real number of deaths is far higher than what they have announced," Raha Bahreini, Amnesty International's Iran researcher told AFP. "Our report details the cases of men, women and children we have been able

to document. The authorities are still actively suppressing the truth," she added. The Iranian authorities, she said, had failed to provide any detail - the victims' names, ages, or genders. "The latest official statement reflects the continuation of the authorities' strategy to deny and distort the truth and escape accountability and justice," Bahreini said.

'Investigate each case'

Scrutiny of how Iran deals with the protest aftermath comes at a tricky moment for its leadership. Its economy already driven into crisis by sanctions, the shooting down of a Ukrainian airliner in January sparked further protests while the coronavirus has extracted a heavy human toll and caused more economic pain. Rights groups outside Iran complain that not a single person of any rank has been investigated to date. According to Amnesty, all but four of the victims were shot dead by the Iranian security forces.

Shots to the head or neck were the most commonly-listed cause of death. "By announcing that number they did not admit to their wrongdoings and violation of the right to life," Shadi Sadr, a lawyer who leads the Justice for Iran (FJI) accountability group said. "They have to open an investigation for every individual case," she said. A directive issued by the office of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has classified victims into three categories - bystanders, protesters with weapons, and those without. The directive considered all the killings lawful and did not recommend any investigation, said Sadr. — AFP

How will new US sanctions affect Syria?

BEIRUT: The United States is imposing new sanctions this week against the Syrian government over alleged crimes during the nine-year war, just as Damascus hopes to launch post-conflict reconstruction. What does the Caesar Act aim to achieve? How will these new restrictions likely affect ordinary Syrians? And what are the repercussions for other countries?

To what end?

Syrian government officials and associated businessmen have already come under US and EU sanctions. But under the Caesar Act, the US aims to hamper any foreign person who deals with the Damascus government, or the Iranian and Russian presence on the ground in support of the regime. They target sectors including construction, the military, and oil and gas, while the central bank could be labelled a "financial institution of primary money laundering concern".

"The US has yet to clarify where - or to what extent - the sanctions will be implemented, but it's safe to say that the real estate, construction, energy and infrastructure sectors will be particularly affected," said Edward Dehnert, an analyst at The Economist Intelligence Unit. Among Washington's many con-

ditions for any future lifting of sanctions are establishing "meaningful accountability for perpetrators of war crimes", an end to regime or Russian bombardment of civilians, the freeing of political detainees, and the safe return of refugees.

"The Caesar Act is the latest iteration of ongoing US efforts to force a political settlement, and enact... the removal of (President) Bashar al-Assad," Dehnert said. "We don't see this happening any time soon. Mr Assad's position is secure," he added. But the sanctions might be somewhat successful in "impeding the extent to which the regime and its cronies are able to profit from the economic opportunities" provided by reconstruction. "The sanctions are designed to maintain the Assad regime's status as a pariah, and the threat of US punitive action will be enough to scare off the majority of foreign investment," he said.

How will Syrians be affected?

Damascus has condemned the measures, and said they would compound "the suffering of the Syrian people" in a war-battered economy. Analysts from the International Crisis Group and Chatham House have said mere expectations of the sanctions have already accelerated the Syrian pound's recent plunge in value on the black market. Dehnert said the measures would complicate food and fuel imports, and push more Syrians into poverty. "Unfortunately the Syrian people will suffer the most," he said. "Syrians will suffer a further erosion to their purchasing power, while employment opportunities continue to contract." — AFP

Kim Yo: North Korean leader's powerful sister

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister warned at the weekend that a Korean liaison office would soon be seen "completely collapsed". On Tuesday, Pyongyang reduced it to rubble. Kim Yo Jong is one of her brother's most trusted advisers and among the most powerful women in the isolated regime, but her public profile is mounting rapidly and she has been mooted as a potential successor. The first statement issued in her name came only in March this year, but in recent days and weeks, she has been at the forefront of Pyongyang's denunciations of defectors in the South sending leaflets across the border.

Officially she is only an alternate member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee, but in a weekend statement carried by the official KCNA news agency, she referred to "my power authorized by the Supreme Leader, our Party and the state". Born in 1988, according to the Unification ministry, Yo Jong is one of three children born to Kim's predecessor Kim Jong Il and his third known partner, former dancer Ko Yong Hui. She was educated in Switzerland alongside her brother and rose rapidly up the ranks once he inherited power after their father's death in 2011.

Her existence was barely known to the wider world until his funeral, when she was seen standing right behind Kim Jong Un on state television, looking tearful and ashen-

More than nine years of conflict in Syria

BEIRUT: Syria's war since 2011 has involved a host of regional and international players, created millions of refugees and displaced, and left more than 380,000 people dead. Here is a summary of the main events in the nine-year conflict:

Revolt to repression

In March 2011, protests break out to demand political change after four decades of repressive rule by the Assad dynasty. President Bashar al-Assad's regime cracks down on demonstrations but rallies continue. In July, an army colonel who has defected from the military sets up the Turkey-based opposition Free Syrian Army (FSA). An armed rebellion erupts with support from Western and Arab countries. The rebels seize key territory, including large swathes of the third city Homs and a chunk of Aleppo, the second city.

Air strikes

In 2012, regime forces step up their crackdown, carrying out bloody operations, notably in the central city of Hama, a bastion of opposition to the Assad regime. FSA fighters in July launch a battle for Damascus. The government retains control of the capital, but rebels seize parts of the suburbs. From 2013, regime helicopters and planes unleash air strikes, some of them using barrel bombs, on rebel zones, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Hezbollah, Iran

The Iran-backed Lebanese Shiite militant group Hezbollah says in 2013 it has deployed fighters to back Syrian government forces. Iran also boosts its support for Assad.

US steps back

On August 21, 2013, a chemical attack on two rebel-held areas near Damascus reportedly kills more than 1,400 people. The regime denies responsibility. US president Barack Obama pulls back from threatened punitive strikes, instead agreeing a deal with Moscow meant to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons arsenal.

Islamic State group

In June 2014, the jihadist Islamic State group (IS) proclaims a "caliphate" over terri-

tory it has seized in Syria and Iraq. In September, a US-led coalition launches air strikes against IS in Syria. Kurdish groups, which since 2013 have set up autonomous administrations in Kurdish-majority areas, join with Arabs to form the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The alliance ousts IS from key areas, including its de facto capital Raqa, in 2017, and then in 2019, the group's last Syrian holdout in the village of Baghuz near the border with Iraq.

Russia rescues Assad

In September 2015, Syria's main ally Russia launches air strikes in support of Assad's beleaguered troops, a turning point in the war. In a string of deadly campaigns, the regime retakes key rebel bastions, from Aleppo in 2016 to Eastern Ghouta on the outskirts of the capital in 2018. — AFP



BEIJING: Travellers wearing face masks inspect their tickets after conducting self check-in procedures at the Beijing International Airport yesterday. Beijing's airports cancelled more than 1,200 flights and schools in the Chinese capital were closed again as authorities rushed to contain a new coronavirus outbreak linked to a wholesale food market. — AFP

banned taxi- and ride-hailing services from carrying passengers out of the city, Xinhua said.

Companies were told to encourage flexible work arrangements such as teleworking, while libraries, museums, art galleries and parks must now limit capacity to 30 percent. All indoor sports and entertainment venues in Beijing were ordered to shut on Monday, while some other cities across China warned they would quarantine arrivals from the capital. Authorities also reported four new domestic infections in neighbouring Hebei province, while a case reported in Sichuan province was linked to the

Beijing cluster. Officials were racing to track people from Beijing who had travelled to other parts of China, and encouraging those who visited the capital to get tested.

Beijing officials closed 11 markets and disinfected 276 agricultural markets and 33,000 food and beverage businesses. Seven more residential estates were also locked down on Tuesday. "Beijing's outbreak will probably be controlled quite quickly," said Wu Hulin, a 23-year-old tech worker in Xicheng district who got tested. "I think (China) is doing a better job compared to overseas." — AFP



File photo shows South Korea's President Moon Jae-in (left) welcoming North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister Kim Yo Jong (right) before their meeting at the presidential Blue House in Seoul. — AFP

faced. But more recently she has seemed to be constantly at her brother's side. Yo Jong has "been very faithful in promoting him as the supreme leader, burnishing his domestic and international image, and helping him practically as his de facto chief of staff," said Katharine Moon, a politics professor at Wellesley College in the United States.

On their 60-hour train journey to Hanoi for his summit with Trump - which collapsed without a nuclear deal - Yo Jong was seen bringing him an ashtray when he stepped off for a cigarette break. There was "no doubt" that Kim has an exceptionally close relationship with his sister, said Yang Moo-jin, of the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul.

"Jong Un and Yo Jong spent much of their lonely childhood overseas together - I think this is when they developed something that is similar to comradeship, on top of sibling love," he told AFP.

The North has never had a woman leader but speculation swirled over Yo Jong as a potential successor in the event of the death of her brother, after he was absent from public view for weeks earlier this year. Leadership has always been a family affair in the North, and she is now one of the most prominent members of the "Paektu bloodline" - a Northern term for Kim Il Sung and his descendants, who have led the nuclear-armed country since its foundation. — AFP



QAMISHLI: Smoke billows from an oil field as Kurdish female volunteers, from the newly formed Community Protection Forces, guard a wheat field, against threats by jihadists to burn the crops, during harvest season in the countryside east of Qamishli in Syria's northeastern Hasakah province. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2020

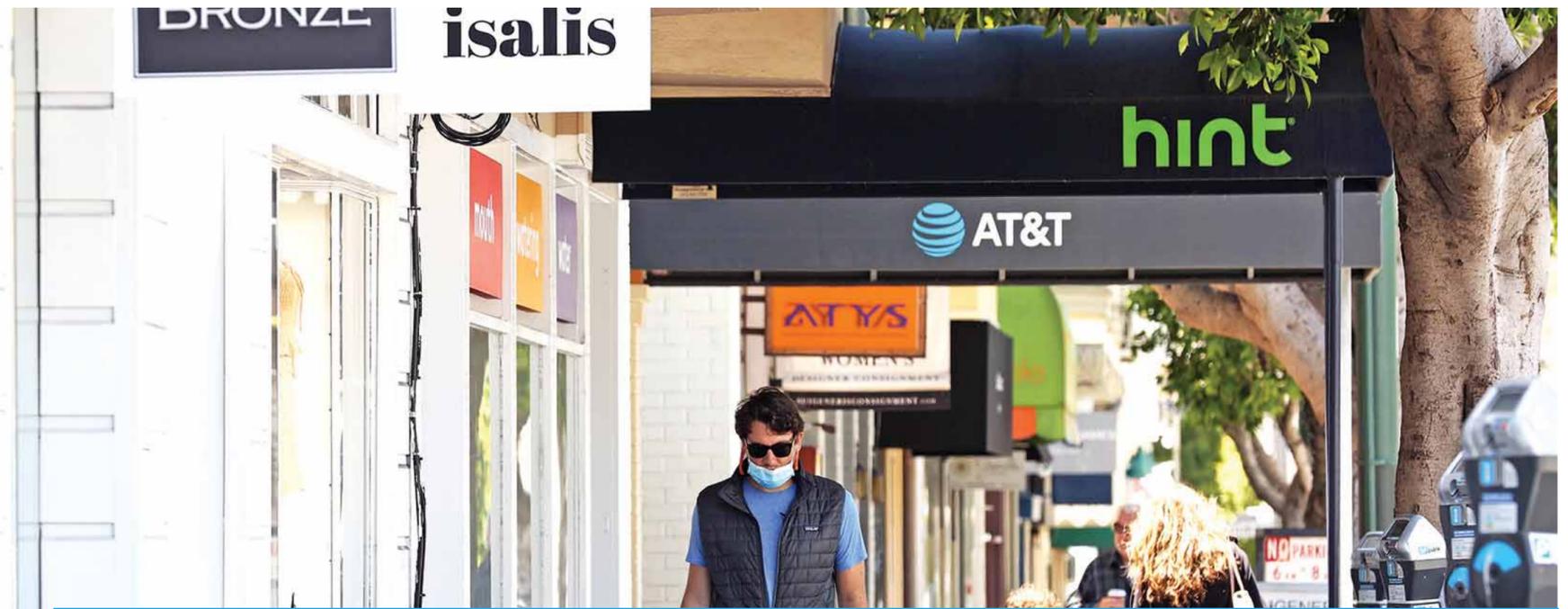
10 Second-wave wobble reveals more about markets than virus



11 European airlines face longer haul to recovery



11 How Germany's 'Mr Thrift' came to splash the cash



SAN FRANCISCO: A pedestrian walks by a retail store that has reopened on Tuesday in San Francisco, California. According to a report by the US Commerce Department, retail sales surged 17.7 percent in May as more states begin the process of reopening.—AFP

'Significant uncertainty' around US recovery

Fed says a full recovery without consumer confidence unlikely

WASHINGTON: Despite some recent positive signs, "significant uncertainty" remains about the recovery of the US economy from the coronavirus pandemic, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Tuesday. And unless consumers feel confident COVID-19 has been defeated, "a full recovery is unlikely," Powell warned in his semi-annual testimony before the Senate Banking Committee.

The central bank chief once again pledged that the Fed will use all of its policy tools to ensure the economy recovers from the pandemic, which he said has inflicted its worst consequences on low-income and minority groups. Despite a surprising rebound in employment in May, the world's largest economy has shed nearly 20 million jobs since February and the contraction of GDP in the April-June quarter "is likely to be the most severe on record," said Powell, who was testifying via video link.

Recent economic data reports have given some promising signs that a recovery is underway, cheering Wall Street investors and pushing stocks higher. US retail sales posted a surprise spike of 17.7 percent in May, the Commerce Department said Tuesday, coming in nearly double the gain economists had expected.

And the Fed reported that industrial production rebounded by 1.4 percent, after two months of steep declines. That adds to the data earlier this month showing the economy adding 2.5 million positions in May and the unemployment rate ticking down to a still-high 13.3 percent, as well as various surveys showing consumers and businesses becoming more optimistic about their prospects. President Donald Trump, who has downplayed risks of the virus and instead focused on reviving the

economy as he faces a tough re-election battle in November, cheered Tuesday's data.

"Wow! May retail sales show biggest one-month increase of ALL TIME, up 17.7 percent. Far bigger than projected. Looks like a BIG DAY FOR THE STOCK MARKET, AND JOBS!" he tweeted.



Retail sales post surprise spike in May

Widening inequalities

But Powell cautioned that despite the positive data, "The levels of output and employment remain far below their pre-pandemic levels, and significant uncertainty remains about the timing and strength of the recovery." In fact, signs of the devastation wrought by the pandemic were still apparent in the retail sector, with sales in the period between March, when the business disruptions started, and May down 10.5 percent compared to the same months in 2019.

The Fed chief once again condemned racial injustice amid nationwide protests over the killings of African

Americans, and noted that the burden from the business shutdowns to contain the spread of the virus "has not fallen equally on all Americans."

"Instead, those least able to withstand the downturn have been affected most," with the heaviest job losses felt by Hispanics, African Americans and women, Powell said. "If not contained and reversed, the downturn could further widen gaps in economic wellbeing that the long expansion had made some progress in closing," he said.

In response to a question from a senator, Powell noted that racial gaps in employment are "not a healthy feature" of the US economy. Even before the lockdowns were in full effect nationwide, the Fed slashed interest rates to zero and flooded the financial system with cash, then rushed out a series of lending programs to support businesses as well as state and local governments.

The central bank is also working on a facility to help nonprofit organizations. "We are committed to using our full range of tools to support the economy and to help assure that the recovery from this difficult period will be as robust as possible," he said.

However the Fed can only lend, not spend, and Powell told lawmakers, "I think you'll want to continue support for workers in some form. I think there'll be an awfully lot of unemployed people for some time."

Congress continues to debate whether to extend the extraordinary unemployment benefits put in place in the CARES Act passed to counter the pandemic. On Monday, White House economic advisor Larry Kudlow said the additional \$600 weekly payments to the unemployed will expire as planned in July, saying they discourage workers

foreign currency dealers agreed with the government earlier this month to work to gradually reduce the exchange rate to 3,200 pounds per dollar.

On the parallel market yesterday one dealer said he bought dollars at a rate of 4,700 and another at 4,800. The official rates on offer at licensed dealers were 3,860/3,910. Queues formed outside some licensed dealers, where several customers said they had bought a maximum of \$200 at the 3,910 rate.

Lebanon still applies an official peg of 1,507.5 pounds to the dollar for imports of fuel, medicine and

wheat. A new electronic exchange trading platform will open on June 23 as part of the effort to unify the rates. The platform was intended to act as a market maker, Salameh said.

"The daily volume is \$4 million on average. These amounts are purchased from the market and sold to the market. Thus the reserves of the central bank are not at stake," he wrote. "The central bank has always been committed to preserve the stability of the pound or at least to moderate the volatility of the fluctuations in the exchange market." — Reuters



TRIPOLI: A grocer sits near produce outside his shop in the Bab al-Tabbaneh neighborhood of Lebanon's northern city of Tripoli. — AFP

Lebanon CB aims to bring dollar price down: Chief

BEIRUT: The Lebanese central bank aims to bring down the price of the US dollar progressively with the agreement of licensed foreign currency dealers to help stabilize prices as much as it can, governor Riad Salameh told Reuters on Tuesday.

President Michel Aoun said on Friday the central bank would supply the currency market with dollars from Monday as part of an effort to prop up the Lebanese pound, which has shed more than 60 percent of its value since October.

Responding to a written question from Reuters, Salameh did not say if the central bank had started supplying the market with dollars. "Our aim is with the agreement of the licensed exchangers to bring the price of the dollar progressively lower, contributing as much as we can to stabilize the prices," he wrote.

"This approach is necessary in a cash economy," he said. "We hope that reforms will be enacted ... to bring confidence."

Lebanon is grappling with an acute financial crisis seen as the biggest threat to its stability since the 1975-90 civil war. Its currency has fallen amid a hard currency liquidity crunch, which led the state to default on its sovereign debt in March.

Dollars continue to trade on a parallel market despite official efforts to regulate dealing. Licensed

IEA: Aviation to hold back oil recovery

PARIS: Demand for petrol and diesel is set to heal by the end of the year but the coronavirus crisis is likely to leave scars on the airline industry and the oil market, the International Energy Agency said on Tuesday.

The IEA continued to upgrade its forecasts for the oil market in its latest monthly report as more countries ease lockdown measures that have pushed the world economy into its greatest crisis since the Great Depression. It now expects 2020 oil demand to come in at 91.7 million barrels per day, a drop of 8.1 mbd from last year. That is an improvement on its May estimate of an 8.6 mbd reduction and the April estimate of a 9.3 mbd drop.

The IEA noted that year-on-year consumption figures have been rising steadily since "Black April" when the lockdown measures were at their peak. The 21.8 mbd drop in April was pared to an estimated 18.6 mbd reduction in May. The drop is expected to narrow to 12.9 mbd in June and 7.4 mbd in July.

The Paris-based IEA pointed to a number of encouraging signs of a recovery. "For demand, increased mobility indicators in the March-May period provided support; in particular, China's strong exit from lockdown measures has seen demand in April almost back to year-ago levels," it said.

It also noted a strong rebound in India in May, although demand was still well below last year's level. "In the second half of the year the easing of lockdown measures in many countries should provide a boost," it said.

Aviation in 'dire situation'

The IEA released its first forecasts for 2021, when it sees demand rising by 5.7 mbd "as activity begins to return to normal across vast swathes of the economy". That will bring global oil demand back up to 97.4 mbd, which it noted will still be 2.4 mbd below the 2019 level, which it said "is largely explained by the dire situation of the aviation sector".

The IEA estimated that demand for jet fuel and kerosene will fall by 62 percent in the second quarter from the same time last year, and only slowly recover as air travel is likely to be held back by restrictions and lower demand until a vaccine is found. "Unlike gasoline and diesel, which are likely to recover to close to pre-crisis levels by the end of 2020, the outlook for jet fuel is more uncertain," it said.—AFP

Business

stc launches remote collaboration solutions for Kuwait businesses

Video conferencing and e-learning tools for B2B segment

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its new bundle of revolutionary remote collaboration tools and integrated video conferencing services targeting the B2B segment.

The solutions offered by stc to its wide network of relationships with businesses and companies in Kuwait, aim to assist customers in overcoming obstacles that have risen due to the COVID-19 pandemic while providing the latest solutions in maintaining clear and consistent communication channels with employees and customers. The advanced technology will allow business owners and companies to enhance their performance and ensure operational continuity while abiding to the regulations imposed under the government's curfew guidelines.

Commenting on this, General Manager of Sales & Account Management at stc, Meshari Al-Hamad stated, "The COVID-19 pandemic forced companies to shut down their offices, led higher educational institutions to postpone academic activities, halted governmental procedures, and disrupted training academies and schools in Kuwait. Our new bundle of services and equipment allows organizations and institutions to resume their functions online with the option of conducting business meetings, trainings, workshops, and online learning sessions."

Al-Hamad added, "stc is offering these new solutions to both corporate and institutional customers

with a range of video conferencing solutions. The solutions include stc's connectivity options and a variety of endpoints that include 4K touch-screen whiteboards, high-resolution conference cameras, superior quality microphones as well as other products to support advanced online communication."

He also highlighted that stc is launching these new solutions to provide a safe and effective way to share ideas, hold discussions and interact with colleagues remotely and efficiently. They also allow organizations to conduct business meetings and training sessions via video conferencing tools to interact with team members in real-time. The new systems require minimal setup by the user and are equipped with a range of hi-tech features to generate effective results.

Due to its revolutionary 5G network, stc offers nationwide connectivity, allowing users to enjoy ultra HD quality powered by artificial intelligence to deliver an ultimate, seamless, noiseless, and engaging meeting experience, coupled with high-end conferencing and



Meshari Al-Hamad

collaboration equipment.

stc's unified solutions fall in line with the Company's strategy to enable digital transformation by ensuring business continuity and enhancing the performance of businesses of all sizes efficiently and with ease. The offerings are applicable to digitize government initiatives such as command centers, public safety through mobile policing, smart education through live e-classrooms and interactive teaching, smart healthcare through remote consultation for tele-medicine, business continuity tools for meetings, enterprise training and mobile office collaboration.

stc's remote collaboration and video conferencing solutions converge audio, video, presentations, and data to deliver a full rounded collaborating system for work teams, with cutting-edge high-quality audio and video output. Intelligent Network Detection and Ultra-Low bandwidth ensure a superior streaming experience with an artificial intelligence system enabling on-screen name tags, real-time translations through subtitles, minute count, and intelligent tracking for optimal viewership. They also provide a 360 audio and video live stream feed with the option of inviting additional participants to attend the online meeting with a virtual reality experience. Through the virtual reality experience, attendees get to experience the setting of where the event is initiated as if they were there in person.

The services are offered through dynamic, affordable packages that cater to stc's wide customer base with flexible monthly installment plans. The successful implementation of this initiative also comes as an addi-

stc
Collaborate with your team
anytime, anywhere.
with stc Remote Collaboration



tional milestone achieved under the series of programs launched by stc since the COVID-19 outbreak. stc will continue to launch initiatives in support of the decisions and regulations implemented by the Kuwaiti government in containing the virus, which highlights the consistent level of support witnessed by stc and the private sector towards local business owners and Kuwait's economy.

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

Burgan Bank resumes its account draws

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank has resumed its exciting account draws that were temporarily suspended due to the recent coronavirus pandemic. Now, the bank announces the names of the 9 lucky winners for each of the Yawmi Daily & Quarterly draws, Al-Thuraya Salary Account, and the Value Account.

The winner of the KD 125,000 cash prize in the Yawmi Quarterly draw is:

Amer Abdulqader Baqer Al-Awadhi
The winners of the Yawmi Account daily draw of KD 5,000:

- Abdulaziz Fuad Yaqoub Al-Ghareeb
- Ganesan Panneer Selvam
- Ahmed Mohammed Al-Shahat Mohammed
- Nabeel Yousef Asaad Al-Abdullah

The winners of the Al-Thuraya Salary Account Monthly draw:

- Ghalya Fadhel Saleh Darweesh
- Nawal Rajab Ebrahim Al-Bader
- Mansour Faraj Abdullah Al-Khudhari

The winner of the Value Account KD 4,000 draw is:

- Solata Hegde Sadashef Hegde

CBK resumes Najma draws

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced resuming its weekly and monthly Najma and 'Your Salary & More' draws in addition to the recently launched 'YOU' account awards.

The resumption of draws started on June 16 at CBK's headquarters with the attendance of MOCI representative while observing health precautions recommended by health authorities.

In this regard, CBK's banking services acting general manager, Hanadi Al-Mislem said: "We at CBK are pleased to announce the resumption of organizing Najma account weekly and monthly draws that had been halted due to the spread of COVID-19."

Al-Mislem added that 17 Najma account draws, including the weekly KD 5000 and monthly KD 20,000, in addition to the deferred 'Your Salary & More' and 'YOU' accounts draws would be held covering the period of April-June.

Al-Mislem concluded wishing good luck for all CBK clients and stressed that ever since the COVID-19 breakout, CBK has been keen on communicating with its clients to provide various e-services and pinpoint operating branch locations using various social media networks.



BEIJING: A worker stocks shelves in the vegetables section of a supermarket in Beijing yesterday. The supermarket, which has its own supply chain not linked to the Xinfadi market, has seen a 20 percent increase in online orders since a new outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus in Beijing last week. — AFP

China seeks to benefit from sick US assets

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers and policymakers should be wary of China's moves to target vulnerable US assets and expand its market share in the wake of the global economic crisis triggered by the novel coronavirus, according to a study prepared for a US trade group and released on Tuesday. The Horizon Advisory report for the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM) said the Chinese Communist Party viewed the crisis as "a chance to expand its position in US markets, supply chains and critical infrastructure."

The consultancy said Beijing used the 2008-2009 global financial crisis to accelerate its "Go Out" industrial offensive in the United States, and was positioning to benefit from a likely spike in US infrastructure spending.

"It's a very sophisticated strategy," AAM President

Scott Paul said in an interview. "There's a very legitimate debate that needs to occur about the appropriate role of Beijing in the US economy, and there are reasons to be wary of including Chinese state-owned enterprises in our recovery effort."

Paul said his lobby group was working with Democratic and Republican lawmakers to strengthen and expand provisions that earmark government funds for US companies, and ensure they do not wind up in the hands of Chinese state-owned firms or investors. The group was formed in 2007 by US companies and the United Steelworkers to push for policies to expand US manufacturing. US President Donald Trump has long pledged to bring manufacturing back from overseas, but the coronavirus pandemic has sparked a government-wide push to move US production and supply chain dependency away from China. Paul said the report showed China had identified "friendly" public officials and states including Kentucky, home of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, which has attracted increased Chinese investment in recent years.

Chinese acquisitions have come under greater US scrutiny to determine their effect on national security, but takeovers could increase if the crisis left many distressed assets, as expected, he said. — Reuters

Navigating the new normal: auto industry in post-COVID era

By Thierry Sabbagh

The current COVID-19 pandemic has brought forth unprecedented times for the automotive industry both globally and regionally. Car brands have had to quickly learn how to address global disruptions in supply chains, and during extended periods of lockdowns and restrictions. However, this pause in activity gives automotive brands the opportunity to reflect on the way we communicate and engage with existing and prospective consumers, partners and dealerships – and how this needs to evolve as we step into a post-COVID-19 world.

With a surge in online consumption habits and engagement, there is a growing consumer expectation for brands to be socially responsible while remaining relevant. We need to strike the right balance between driving the right level and type of engagement, and nurturing brand loyalty. This directly translates into dialing down product and sales-led communications and ensuring all approaches are responsible, transparent and consumer-centric.

We identified three groups that needed swift and effective communication as the pandemic hit – customers, employees and partners – each requiring a different approach. For customers, we highlighted precautionary measures put in place and alternate channels for vehicle support; for employees, we facilitated a remote-working process to prioritize their health and well-being; and engaged in discussions with our partners to address their immediate concerns and plan for the future.

Many car manufacturers, including Nissan, have also pivoted logistics and production experts to 'crisis engineering', stepping up to manufacture and deliver specialist medical equipment to hospitals around the world. We have seen the production of Q-Vent respirators in our Barcelona plant, sorting and packing of protective face visors for the NHS in our Sunderland plant in London, and face shields being manufactured in Japan.

We need to keep in mind that priorities can shift overnight and as such, keeping the finger on the pulse is key. Whilst Nissan Middle East launched a video called 'Ode to Empty Roads' echoing the authorities' direction to stay home at the very beginning of the crisis, the easing of restrictions over the last few weeks signals a need to reconsider the impact on consumer behavior and needs. We can already see trends that have been emerging and will continue to shape the automotive sector in a post-COVID-19 era.

1. Digital takeover: For years, experts have highlighted the growing importance of online and social media for consumer engagement; however, the current pandemic has kicked this into high gear. Online is not just a preference, it is now a way of life – and audiences beyond digital natives are getting on board.

The post-COVID-19 customer journey will have a

longer online phase – making it paramount for car brands to accelerate their digital footprint and provide multiple touch-points for audiences – right from the discovery phase to sales and beyond. More brands will need to look at refreshing the typical car launch program and explore technology-driven solutions to connect with customers more directly.

2. Value for money: As countries continue to tackle the long-term effects of COVID-19 on economies, consumers are bracing themselves for a long recovery period, which will in turn effect their spending patterns over the coming months. While cars are already viewed as a sizeable investment, existing and prospective buyers will be even more keen to derive the maximum value for their purchase. While car brands have already started rolling out flexible financing options during this time, we will also need to look at other value-added services to attract and serve customers, including extended warranty and service contracts, which can also potentially boost car resale value.

3. Heightened health and safety consideration: Although mobility is expected to pick back up when the pandemic eventually abates, most consumers will apply a lens of caution when it comes to health and safety. While safety has always been a key purchase driver, we expect an increased demand for features such as air purifying systems and filters – particularly for family cars.

The safety element has already understandably trickled into the aftersales segment with strict disinfection measures in place for all vehicles being delivered to customers, and we expect this to surely continue in the coming months.

4. Convenience is king: As the current situation progresses, people are looking at brands to provide solutions that can ease their lives, as well as support their future plans – and car brands are no exception. There is a need to broaden the range of aftersales services for customers, as well as bring these online for ease of access and use. Many vehicle dealers in the region have already begun offering door-to-door vehicle maintenance and test drives, and we see this trend staying for a prolonged time even after COVID-19, with the most convenient options edging out the competition.

While the above are some of the trends we anticipate from a consumer perspective, the biggest imperative for car brands in a post COVID-19 era will be to remain agile. As restrictions look to ease up in the coming weeks, the automotive industry needs to adopt a more hands-on approach to gathering and analyzing customer sentiment, in order to build capabilities in real-time and provide effective solutions that will not only drive awareness and consideration for their products and services, but also garner brand loyalty in the longer run.

Note: Thierry Sabbagh is
Managing Director, Nissan Middle East

Second-wave wobble reveals more about markets than virus

LONDON: It's hard to find an investor who hadn't already assumed some form of second wave of COVID-19 when economies reopen, so why did stock markets panic at the hint of a relapse last week?

A sudden bout of angst about resurgent coronavirus cases in parts of the United States and China was enough to ensure last week was the worst for world equity markets since March. Both the second-wave narrative and much of the evidence for it have since dissipated, allowing almost an instant rebound this week. But the whole episode revealed something about the speculative froth in market pricing, as opposed to considered assumptions about a clearly ongoing recovery.

"Second wave" assumptions are nigh on the consensus. Previous pandemics point in that direction and it's a likely feature of lifting lockdowns and renewed human contact.

There have been few, if any, research reports from major banks or asset managers over the past couple of months that have not cited a second wave as a central assumption, or at least a significant risk. In Bank of America's widely followed monthly fund manager survey for June, respondents overwhelmingly identified a "Coronavirus 2nd wave" as their "biggest tail risk" for the third month running – suggesting it's at least baked into assumptions about the pitfalls going forward.

For context, the survey's most cited tail risk in all but one of the 18 months to the end of last year was "Trade War". One can argue whether a tail risk – defined broadly as a low probability but high impact event – forms part of central expectations.

But looking at how often "Trade War" was top of the list during the protracted Sino-US showdown over the past couple of years, it's hard to see how these respondents would then see it as unexpected. What's more, even the most bullish banks and brokers have a second wave built into their standing assumptions. Morgan Stanley, for example, trumpets its expectation of a V-shaped economic recovery from the pandemic that sees a deep contraction in global output of 8.6 percent this quarter as the trough, then a rebound to annual expansion of 3 percent by early 2021.—Reuters

Business

European airlines face longer haul to recovery

Big domestic markets help American, Asian airlines

PARIS: A patchwork of national restrictions and a reluctance among travellers to cross borders mean European airlines face a bumpy return to the skies from coronavirus lockdowns than US and Asian rivals.

After almost three months of bleeding cash as air travel was brought to a virtual halt, airlines are returning to service or announcing more flights.

But while US and Chinese domestic markets are starting to recover, the prospects in Europe look shakier. "In comparison to every other part of the world, it's lagging," aviation analyst John Grant said of Europe during a recent presentation by industry data and analytics firm OAG.

Wariness of foreign travel weighs more heavily on European airlines, whose domestic markets are smaller and less profitable than US and Asian rivals', and more exposed to rail and road competition. They must also contend with a variety of European restrictions, including Britain's 14-day quarantine, which has prolonged the slump on contested health grounds.

That contrasts with larger unified markets in Asia and the Americas. In Brazil and India, domestic operations are picking up despite COVID-19 rates still growing faster than Europe's. Even shorter European trips put you in "a different country, with a different language and where you don't know how the health system works," said Joao Pita, head of airline business at Sao Paulo's Guarulhos airport. "That's different from domestic Brazil or domestic China."

EasyJet and Lufthansa-owned Brussels Airlines restarted operations this week as European internal borders reopened. Others including Air France, British Airways and Wizz Air are increasing frequencies.

"We're focusing on the performance of the flights and to make sure that we have flights where the Belgians want to fly," Brussels Airlines CEO Dieter Vranckx said. The problem is, many Belgians don't want to fly anywhere much.

Among the 63 percent of Belgians still planning a 2020 holiday, the new top destination is Belgium, according to a survey reported by travel newsletter Pagtour. Runners-up France and the Netherlands are accessible by road or rail.

Cancelled flights

Despite the pared-down food service and mandatory masks on board, avoiding planes may not be the main concern. Consumers in France are more interested in flying nine hours to the country's Caribbean territory of Martinique than in a short hop to Spain or Italy, according to Google search data described to Reuters by an airline sales manager.

"Their thinking goes, 'At least if I'm in a French overseas territory the government will have some obligation to look after me. I can turn up to a hospital and be served as if I'm in Paris,'" the manager said.

That spells bad news for all but a handful of European departures operated by the likes of Air Caraïbes or Air France. For European carriers forecast to lose



COPENHAGEN: An aircraft of Nordic airline company SAS parked on the tarmac at Copenhagen's Airport, as most of the flights have cancelled due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. European airlines face a bumpy return to the skies from coronavirus lockdowns than US and Asian rivals.—AFP

\$21.5 billion this year, a return to service promises no swift return to profit, with many flights expected to run below two-thirds full. The hope is to burn less cash in the air than on the ground.

The European sector is on course for a negative 14.3 percent return on invested capital this year, compared with projected deficits of 12.7 percent for Asia and 10.5 percent for North America, according to global airline body IATA.

Behind the relaunch publicity, airlines are still making schedule cuts that go deeper in Europe, experts say. Undersold flights are cancelled at least two weeks before departure, when passengers gain compensation rights. Global schedules for this week have been reduced by 28.5 million seats to 40 million since late May, according to OAG. Western European capacity was slashed from 17.8 million seats to 3.9 million as rebound hopes receded.

"We're keen to publish capacity because our mes-

saging to the market is that none of us are blinking," said one executive at a major European airline. "We don't want rivals to think they can add more capacity in our key markets," he added. "Everyone's playing that game at the moment - then we cancel if we see very poor bookings."

Competitive pressure on fares may bring more pain as pent-up demand for travel thwarted by lockdowns is exhausted. Ryanair CEO Michael O'Leary expects a price war, and many analysts agree. Fares for July-September are down 7 percent year-on-year from Britain, 8 percent from France, 10 percent from Italy and 12 percent from Germany, according to Airbus-owned Skytra, which offers pricing data and risk management to airlines. "Countries that are further along with the lifting of restrictions actually have the cheaper pricing," the firm's strategy chief Matthew Tringham said. "Probably because they're trying to stimulate demand." — Reuters



Cancellations still heavy in Europe

German investors confident of economic upturn

BERLIN: Investors are confident the worst of Germany's sharp economic downturn linked to the coronavirus pandemic will be over by the end of the summer, a survey showed on Tuesday. The ZEW research institute said its monthly survey showed investor sentiment rose to 63.4 in June from 51.0 in May. Economists had expected a reading of 60.0.

"There is growing confidence that the economy will bottom out by (the end of) summer 2020," ZEW President Achim Wambach said in a statement. A robust health care system and widespread testing has helped Germany record fewer fatalities linked to COVID-19 than many other European countries.

The government has approved two huge rescue packages for the economy, which has also been helped to withstand the impact of the epidemic better than neighbors like France, Britain and Italy by a decision to allow factories and construction sites to remain open throughout Germany's lockdown.

Even so, Europe's largest economy is facing its worst recession since World War Two, with the government predicting in April that gross domestic product would shrink 6.3 percent this year.

Wambach said the anticipated pick-up in activity after the summer would vary from sector to sector. "Earnings expectations are strongly negative for export-oriented sectors such as automotive and mechanical engineering, as well as the financial sector," he said.

"In contrast, forecasts are fairly positive for information technologies, telecommunications and consumer-oriented services." Thomas Gitzel, chief economist at VP Bank, linked the improvement in investor confidence to the gradual lifting of lockdown measures starting at the end of April.

"Undoubtedly the next months will see considerable gains in economic data... The comparative basis is so low that even the slightest improvement will translate into big growth rates." Data for April, which coincided with the lockdown, showed that industrial orders, production and exports all posted record contractions.—Reuters

How Germany's 'Mr Thrift' came to splash cash

BERLIN: Four months is an eternity in pandemic politics. As recently as February, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz was Germany's Mr Thrift, a devotee of the "black zero" balanced-budget rule.

Since then he has jettisoned the country's deep-rooted fiscal conservatism and outstripped more free-wheeling European allies to push for its biggest debt-financed stimulus package during peace time. Scholz will present a supplementary budget that pushes up new debt to a record 218.5 billion euros this year - equal to about 6.5 percent of German output.

Even his tone and language has marked a departure for the usually reserved and technical Scholz, who pledged to use a "bazooka" to help struggling companies and get Europe's largest economy out of the crisis "with a ka-boom".

The pandemic has reversed his fading political fortunes, according to three government officials, a parliamentary budget source and a member of the leadership team of his Social Democratic Party (SPD). This has allowed him to gather support from the left of the coalition government without being seen to betray the fiscal orthodoxy of the right, they said.

It has even put the 62-year-old in the running to become the next German leader. "The coronavirus crisis is giving Scholz new momentum. He can implement a policy shift without violating his own principles," said a senior government official and veteran member of Scholz's SPD. This momentum is also making its mark on Europe, according to the sources, who declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

Scholz sees the turmoil as a window of opportunity to advance his long-term goals, they said: strengthening EU integration and making a big leap towards a closer fiscal union, at a time when the bloc's cohesion is threatened by Brexit and challenges from the United States and China.

"Never let a good crisis go to waste," the finance minister said himself last month, quoting Winston Churchill. Such ambitions seemed unlikely at the end of last year when Scholz suffered the biggest political defeat of his career, losing the race to become leader of the SPD, which governs in coalition with Chancellor Angela



BERLIN: German Finance Minister and Vice-Chancellor Olaf Scholz (left) and German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier give a joint press conference on the virus recovery plan, in Berlin.—AFP

Merkel's conservatives. Now, though, Scholz has no serious rival standing in his way to become his centre-left party's candidate to replace Merkel in an election next year. However political analyst Lucas Guttenberg, deputy director at the Jacques Delors Centre in Berlin, cautioned that the fiscal shift that has boosted Scholz's standing at home and abroad could be temporary.

"Calls for belt-tightening both domestically and in Europe will re-emerge as soon as the immediate crisis fades," he said.

Such a reversal could see longstanding criticism of Scholz resurface, including those from the SPD left, which accused him of mimicking the fiscally prudent policies of his conservative predecessor Wolfgang Schäuble and said his apparent lack of emotion alienated voters.

When asked to comment for this article, Scholz's spokesman said the minister's recent fiscal change of tack was entirely consistent with his support of the Keynesian theory of counter-cyclical spending - taking on new debt in a downturn and reducing the debt burden during good times.

"Use your full strength in a crisis and use it quickly," he added. Indeed, in a Reuters interview about the balanced budget last October, he insisted he saw no need to take on new debt, as weaker growth was still growth - but he also said, presciently as it turned out, that he would go all-in if a crisis struck.

"Scholz can style himself as a competent, decisive crisis manager now while putting Berlin's fiscal policy upside down," another official close to Scholz told Reuters, adding that the finance minister was liaising closely with Merkel on the matter.—Reuters

NBK resumes its Al-Jawhara draws, announces winner

KUWAIT: As part of its continuous commitment to offer a variety of prizes and rewards to its customers all year round, National Bank of Kuwait resumed Al-Jawhara draws that have been postponed due to the exceptional circumstances in the country because of Coronavirus pandemic, and after obtaining the approval of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry while adhering to all precautionary health measures.

Al-Jawhara weekly draw was conducted on 14th June, in which Amirah Ali Ibrahim Ashkanani was announced as the winner of the KD 5,000 prize for 17th March 2020 postponed draw, and Yahya Abdulfahedh Yousef Yahya as the winner of the KD 5,000 for 24th March 2020 postponed draw.

The bank also conducted Al-Jawhara KD 250,000 quarterly postponed draw for 31st March 2020 on 16th June 2020 and announced minor Ali Rashid Ali Alqalaf as the winner.

On the same day, the bank conducted the weekly postponed draw for 7th April, and announced Maha Ali Mohamed Alshahaf the winner of the KD 5,000 prize.

The draws were held live on NBK Instagram page in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives from NBK. Al-Jawhara monthly and quarterly draws are supervised and audited by Deloitte.

Al-Jawhara Account gives customers the opportunity to enter draws and win prizes of KD 5,000 weekly, and KD 125,000 monthly as well as the grand prize of KD 250,000 quarterly. Every KD 50 deposited into Al-Jawhara Account gives customers a chance to be one the next lucky winners, and if no withdrawal or transfers occur on the account during the required period, customers will receive an additional chance to enter the draw for every KD 50 held in the account, doubling their chance to win.

Commenting on resuming the Al-Jawhara draws, Mohammed Al-Othman, General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We, at NBK, are always keen on rewarding our customers and offering them a top-notch banking experience. Al-Jawhara Account provides customers with an opportunity to win through weekly, monthly and quarterly draws, in addition to saving money and planning for their future."

"We are always committed to rewarding our customers and protecting their rights to benefit from all draws, rewards and prizes that have been postponed due to the current exceptional circumstances. In the coming days, we will be conducting all of Al-Jawhara draws that were postponed during the past period," he added.

Al-Othman pointed out that NBK resumed Al-Jawhara Draws after obtaining the approval from Ministry of Commerce and Industry, affirming that NBK follows all the guidelines of health authorities to ensure the safety of everyone during the draw process.

"Al-Jawhara Account offers a variety of services and benefits, including free NBK Visa Debit Card, as well as the ability to manage the account through NBK Online Banking and NBK Mobile Banking," he noted.

Al-Othman also affirmed that anyone could open an Al-Jawhara Account by visiting the nearest NBK Branch, while NBK Customers can open an account through NBK Online Banking or NBK Mobile Banking. Since 2012, the National Bank of Kuwait has rewarded loyal customers with a total worth of prizes up to KD 2,200,000 in the weekly, monthly, and quarterly Al-Jawhara draws.

The bank will be conducting additional Al-Jawhara draws for the period during which the draws were postponed. All draw dates will be announced in advance on the bank's social media pages @nbkgroup.



Mohammed Al-Othman

US eases rules for working with Huawei on 5G

SAN FRANCISCO: The US is letting blacklisted Chinese technology giant Huawei back into the fold when it comes to companies working together to set standards for 5G telecom networks.

US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross this week announced a new rule allowing companies to share technology with Huawei for the purpose of developing standards for the new generation of wireless services.

The change returns US companies to the "status quo ante," essentially the way it was before Huawei was put on an "entity" list, when it comes to collaborations for standards-setting purposes only, not commercial purposes, Ross said Monday. The US last year essentially shut the door to US firms sharing technology with Huawei, saying the Chinese company posed a significant risk of involvement in activities contrary to US national security or foreign policy interests. The rule change is intended to make it clear that US companies can take part in setting international 5G standards in organizations that also involve Huawei. "The Department is committed to protecting US national security and foreign policy interests by encouraging US industry to fully engage and advocate for US technologies to become international standards," Ross said in a release.—AFP

Seoul to tighten property rules as prices surge

SEOUL: South Korea said yesterday it will further tighten mortgage rules and apply property market curbs to additional areas outside the capital Seoul to tackle surging home prices in the metropolitan area.

In addition to Seoul, pockets of Gyeonggi-do province surrounding the capital would be designated as "speculative zones" subject to tougher borrowing rules including a mortgage ban on properties valued over 1.5 billion won (\$1.23 million). The government also said it would increase capital gains tax and other taxes on property ownership by corporations to rein in speculative investments, as leveraged buying by big companies is increasingly blamed for stoking a housing bubble.

The government of President Moon Jae-in has introduced a raft of measures to cool property price rises since he took office in May 2017 amid a buying frenzy in the overcrowded capital region.

"Under the current administration, property market rules are going only one way, and that's tougher lending rules and higher levies. Those with enough cash won't have much problem, but those who need to borrow to buy homes will," said an analyst at the Korea Appraisal



SEOUL: Shoppers walk through a market in Seoul. South Korea said yesterday it will further tighten mortgage rules and apply property market curbs to additional areas outside Seoul to tackle surging home prices in the metropolitan area.—AFP

Board. "The local market may pause from speculative investments for a while, as there are some excessively heavy restrictions (in Wednesday's announcement) especially with purchasing rights of apartments under construction." The median apartment price in Seoul was 920 million won (\$759,873) as of May, having increased every month so far this year through the course of the coronavirus outbreak. They are up about 52 percent since Moon took office in 2017. The median in pockets of Gyeonggi-do province was 379.6 million won, according to data from KB Bank.—Reuters

Millions of abandoned oil wells leaking methane, a climate menace

SALYERSVILLE, Kentucky: In May 2012, Hanson and Michael Rowe noticed an overpowering smell, like rotten eggs, seeping from an abandoned gas well on their land in Kentucky. The fumes made the retired couple feel nauseous, dizzy, and short of breath.

Regulators responding to the leak couldn't find an owner to fix it. JD Carty Resources LLC had drilled the well near the Rowes' home in 2006 - promising the family a 12.5 percent royalty and free natural gas, which they never got. But Carty went bust in 2008 and sold the site to a company that was later acquired by Blue Energy LLC. Lawyers for both companies deny any responsibility for the leak.

A year later, Kentucky's Division of Oil and Gas declared the well an environmental emergency and hired Boots & Coots Inc - the Texas contractor that doused oil-well fires after the Gulf War - to plug it. During the 40-day operation, the Rowes retreated to a trailer on their property and lived with no running water to escape the gases and noise. Regulators determined the leak was a toxic blend of hydrogen sulfide, a common drilling byproduct, and the potent greenhouse gas methane.

"I wouldn't go through this again for \$1 million," said Hanson Rowe, who with his wife is suing the energy companies for compensation. The incident, while extreme, reflects a growing global problem: More than a century of oil and gas drilling has left behind millions of abandoned wells, many of which are leaching pollutants into the air and water. And drilling companies are likely to abandon many more wells due to bankruptcies, as oil prices struggle to recover from historic lows after the coronavirus pandemic crushed

global fuel demand, according to bankruptcy lawyers, industry analysts and state regulators.

Leaks from abandoned wells have long been recognized as an environmental problem, a health hazard and a public nuisance. They have been linked to dozens of instances of groundwater contamination by research commissioned by the Groundwater Protection Council, whose members include state ground water agencies. Orphaned wells have been blamed for a slew of public safety incidents over the years, including a methane blowout at the construction site of a waterfront hotel in California last year.

They also pose a serious threat to the climate that researchers and world governments are only starting to understand, according to a Reuters review of government data and interviews with scientists, regulators, and United Nations officials. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change last year recommended that UN member countries start tracking and publishing the amount of methane leaching from their abandoned oil and gas wells after scientists started flagging it as a global warming risk. So far, the United States and Canada are the only nations to do so.

The US figures are sobering: More than 3.2 million abandoned oil and gas wells together emitted 281 kilotons of methane in 2018, according to the data, which was included in the US Environmental Protection Agency's most recent report on April 14 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. That's the climate-damage equivalent of burning 16.2 million barrels of crude oil, according to an EPA calculation. That's more than the United States, the



Hanson Rowe, a landowner who blames a leaky gas well on his property for health problems, smells for the odor of gas emanating from an abandoned well on his property in Salyersville, Kentucky. — Reuters

world's biggest oil consumer, uses in two days. The actual amount could be as much as three times higher, the EPA says, because of incomplete data. The agency believes most of the methane comes from the more than 2 million abandoned wells it estimates were never properly plugged.

The problem is less severe in Canada, where the bulk of oil production comes from oil sands mining instead of traditional drilling. The government estimated that its 313,000 abandoned wells emitted 10.1 kt of methane in 2018, far less than in the United States.

The global impact is harder to measure. The governments of Russia, Saudi Arabia,

and China - which round out the top five world oil-and-gas producers - did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment on their abandoned wells and have not published reports on the wells' methane leakage. Researchers say it's impossible to accurately estimate global emissions from leaky abandoned wells without better data. But a rough Reuters calculation, based on the US share of global crude oil and natural gas production, would place the number of abandoned wells around the world at more than 29 million, with emissions of 2.5 million tons of methane per year - the climate-damage equivalent of three weeks of US oil consumption.

In a forested area of western New York state in February, a group of state regulators, along with researchers from the State University of New York at Binghamton, trudged through the snow. They stopped at a rotting wooden structure encircling a rusted pipe. Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) official Charlie Dietrich held a bright orange device over the heap. It emitted a high-pitched signal, and its screen showed a code indicating the presence of ignitable gas. A scent of petroleum wafted through the air.

"There's some methane coming up out of there," DEC Mineral Resources Specialist Nathan Graber said. The abandoned well lies in the forests of Olean, New York, which was an oil boomtown at the turn of the 20th century. The site was one of 72 locations logged by geophysicists Tim de Smet and Alex Nikulin in December, researchers from Binghamton, using a drone equipped with a metal detector, part of a program launched in 2013 to help New York identify and plug abandoned wells.

New York's DEC has records of 2,200 abandoned wells dating back to the late 1800s. But the state believes the actual number could be much higher, because of incomplete records. "It's a lot easier to find stuff when you know where to look," Nikulin said.

The group is among an array of regulators, activists and federal agencies now seeking out abandoned wells from the US Northeast to California. The heightened interest in the climate threat posed by the wells started with a 2014 study by Princeton graduate student Mary Kang, who was the first to measure methane emissions from old drilling sites in Pennsylvania. — Reuters

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- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

- Bariatric surgeries.
- Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- G.I. surgeries.
- Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- Anal surgeries.

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Lifestyle | Features



A peacock is pictured at the Coujan castle in Murviel-les-Beziers, near Beziers on Tuesday.—AFP

Harry Potter star Emma Watson joins board of fashion giant Kering

Emma Watson, the actress and activist who made her name as Hermione Granger in the "Harry Potter" films, joined the board of the French fashion giant Kering Tuesday, in a major coup for the world's second biggest luxury group. The British star, who was born in Paris, is the face of the Good On You app, which rates fashion brands on their ethical and sustainability credentials. Although Kering is seen to have the environmental edge on its rival LVMH, its top labels Gucci, Saint Laurent and Balenciaga are only rated "Not good enough" or "It's a start" by Good On You.

Saint Laurent has also run into trouble with feminists and the regulators over a 2017 "porno chic" advertising campaign that was condemned as degrading to women. Watson "is one of the world's most popular actors and best-known activists," Kering said in a statement after the appointment of the 30-year-old, a high-profile women's rights advocate as well as a UN goodwill ambassador. "Emma Watson is also a pioneer in advocating for sustainable fashion," Kering added. She was nominated onto the board alongside the Ivory Coast-born former CEO of Credit Suisse Group Tidjane Thiam and Jean Liu, the president of "the Chinese Uber" Didi Chuxing, by shareholders at Kering's AGM.

Millennial moral compass

Since the end of the "Harry Potter" franchise in 2010, Watson, has combined acting in hit films such as "Little Women" with going back to university, championing reading groups and heading up the UN's HeForShe gender equality campaign. She also coined the phrase "self-partnered" to describe her contentment as being single. Having lost Stella McCartney—arguably the world's most ethical luxury label—to LVMH earlier this year, recruiting Watson is a coup for Kering which is keen to win



In this file photo Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck poses on the red carpet upon arrival at the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards at the Royal Albert Hall in London.—AFP

Black director says France 'in denial' of its racism and its past

Acclaimed black film-maker Raoul Peck has accused France of being in denial of its racism, its colonial past and its wealth "built on the misery of others". The Haitian-born maker of the Oscar-nominated documentary, "I Am Not Your Negro", said he was with young people who have taken to the streets in France and the US to protest against police violence in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd. "They are right to rise up. They are right to protest, they may even be right to smash everything," Peck wrote in a piece to be published Wednesday in the French weekly, Le I.

Headlined "I Can't Breathe", echoing Floyd's last words as a white US police officer knelt on his neck, Peck said "France is in denial and its 'adulterated' children no longer have the time to wait," he added, referring to its ethnic minorities. "Every citizen has to take their part of the burden and to stop looking on from a distance," he said.

"I thought that another world was possible without burning everything," said the director, who made his name with "Lumumba", the story of the murder of DR Congo's independence leader Patrice Lumumba in a plot involving the CIA and the country's former Belgian colonial masters. "Now I am not so sure," Peck added.

His comments come after French President Emmanuel Macron all but ignored the wave of protests in a major address Sunday except to warn that he would not take down statues of controversial historical figures from the country's past. "The Republic will not wipe away any trace or any name from its history... but lucidly look at our history and our memory together," he said. His government also backtracked Tuesday on a ban on the use of chokeholds by the police after a backlash by police unions who deny claims of systemic racism and violence.—AFP

over millennials. Watson is often seen as a moral compass for her generation.

Thiam, 57, resigned from his position at Credit Suisse in February following a scandal involving internal espionage of former executives of the bank, of which he said he had no knowledge. "Throughout his career, Mr. Thiam has led organisations in both the private and public sectors, and has developed projects and programmes that stimulate businesses and economies," Kering said. The appointment of Jean Liu, 42, president of the mobile transport platform Didi Chuxing, means that China, a crucial country for Kering in terms of sales, is represented on the board for the first time, said Sophie L'Helias, lead independent director.



In this file photo Emma Watson attends the "Manus x Machina: Fashion In An Age Of Technology" Costume Institute Gala at Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.—AFP

Kering chairman and CEO Francois-Henri Pinault—who is married to Hollywood star and activist Salma Hayek—welcomed the appointments. "Their respective knowledge and competences, and the multiplicity of their backgrounds and perspectives will be invaluable additions," he said. "The collective intelligence that comes from diverse points of view and the richness of different experiences are crucial to the future of our organisation." The Kering group employed more than 38,000 people worldwide at the end of 2019. Its turnover stood at 15.9 billion euros (\$17.9 billion) last year, for a net profit of 2.3 billion euros.—AFP

Aiming big: Ivory Coast's 'Dallas' pitches for African following

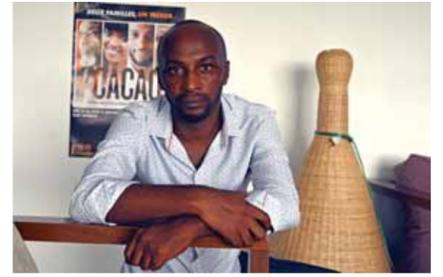
The stakes are big, and so are the egos. Two clans, the Desvas and the Ahiteys, are fighting it out for control of the local cocoa industry... and boardroom thuggery, love, betrayal and guns are the tools of their trade. "Cacao", an Ivorian TV soap that began airing on Monday, has ambitions as outsized as the shoulder pads that Joan Collins wore in "Dallas," the 1980s drama to which it is being likened. In one of the most lavish investments in African programming, French producers Canal Plus have signed up a roster of stars and splashed out on big locations, convinced of a potential audience across the continent and beyond.

Whereas the Ewing oil family feuded over black gold in Texas, the rivals in this tale are in the imaginary town of Caodji, fighting over brown gold—cacao, the raw material of cocoa, of which Ivory Coast is the world's biggest exporter. "Two families are engaged in a merciless fight for control of the market and the farmers," says Ivorian-French director Alex Ogou, 40, who shot to prominence with a hit series, "Invisible", about Ivory Coast's street children.

The idea for the series comes from Ivorian producer Yolande Bogui, whose father once worked in the cacao industry—a business as flinty and competitive as chocolate is sweet and pleasurable. The show—which once carried the punchy working title "Guns and Chocolate"—hit the screens after 18 months in production that involved a thousand people. Canal Plus on Monday broadcast the first two episodes for free, hoping to hook subscribers for the following 10, to be aired every Monday. The company told AFP it did not have the ratings for the first episode—but reaction on social media suggested it could have a hit on its hands. "We've only had two episodes... and it's already the best Ivorian series ever," tweeted one fan, Inzho MotO-MotO.

Big budget

Filming took eight months, using 90 studio sets and outside locations ranging from Abidjan, Ivory Coast's economic hub, to the port of San Pedro and the deep bush, the heart of Ivory Coast's "Cacao Belt". The 70-strong cast includes Ivorian stars Evelyne Ily, Naky Sy Savane, Serge Abessolo and former top model Fate Toure. The plum role of the evil Jean Ahitey—already a buzz on Twitter—is being played by Fargass Assande, who gained a wide following in Africa for the



Alex Ogou, Ivorian-French director and producer of the TV movie Cacao, poses for a photograph during an interview with AFP in Abidjan.—AFP

2015 "L'Oeil du Cyclone" (The Eye of the Storm) by Burkina Faso's Sekou Traore.

Ahitey is a study in ruthlessness whose incongruous sayings ("Whoever accepts birds in his mango tree should not fear the sound of their wings") seem fast-tracked to become memes. The exceptional budget—the figures are secret—was put to good use, Ogou said. The writers "spent time in the places where it all happens, so that they could get a feel for it," he added. The plotlines touch on trigger-sensitive issues—the destruction of a sacred wood, deforestation generally, violence by middle-men who refuse to pay peasants the minimum price set by the state, corruption, weaselly traders...

Universal themes

One thing he learned, Ogou said, was that "wealth never trickles down to the farmers—unscrupulous people exploit weakness or isolation in the bush." "There are sharks in this business but the themes are the same that you see elsewhere, wherever natural resources attract predators," he said. Such universality—and family tensions and loyalties familiar to everyone—should give "Cacao" a broad appeal, he hoped. "A film is just a pretext for telling a story. It could be in Africa, in Sweden, at the North Pole or the South Pole—at the end of the day, you are talking about human beings, feelings, emotions, ambitions, betrayal."—AFP



A man walks past a billboard advertising the Ivorian TV series Cacao in the residential district of Riviera in Abidjan.—AFP

The next stage: UK theatres adapt to social distancing

London's West End has traditionally drawn people from all over the world to see its shows but theatres have been forced to reinvent themselves because of the coronavirus outbreak. Fifteen million tickets are sold each year for performances including top attractions such as "The Phantom of the Opera", "Les Miserables" and Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap", a play that has been performed since 1952. But the pandemic brought the curtain down on venues in March, leaving theatres facing an uncertain future where continued social distancing measures threaten their existence.

Louis Hartshorn and Brian Hook, co-founders of Hartshorn-Hook Productions, are among the first to adapt to the new reality, announcing the reopening of an immersive adaptation of "The Great Gatsby" to open in October. "The show will be reimagined as a masquerade ball," Hook told AFP. Spectators are invited to wear masks, which they can integrate into their disguise, and gloves if they wish. The audience will also be reduced to 90, down from 240 previously, and the schedule has been changed to allow for thorough clean-ups. The good news is that tickets are "selling and people want to come back", added Hook. But Hartshorn admitted that "we have to do extremely well in order to break even because the numbers are against us".

Tourist trouble

Another immediate challenge is the lack of tourists, with hotels, restaurants and museums closed until at least early July. The introduction on June 8 of a 14-day quaran-

tine for most travellers arriving in the country has also tempered hopes of a swift recovery. "Around a third of attendees in London theatres are overseas tourists... and for the moment of course there is very little prospect of having overseas visitors," Julian Bird, head of the UK Theatre lobby group, told a recent parliamentary committee. Up to 70 percent of theatres could go bankrupt by the end of the year, he warned.

Immersive experiences

The current crisis has left a £3 billion (\$3.7 billion, 3.3 billion euro) hole in theatre revenues this year, a fall of more than 60 percent, according to a study by Oxford Economics for the Creative Industries Federation. This estimate does not take into account the possible reluctance of the public to return when allowed, with the federation warning of 200,000 job cuts without government intervention. To survive, some theatres are offering alternative products.

At London's Old Vic Theatre, actors Claire Foy and Matt Smith, stars of the hit TV series "The Crown", will perform the play "Lungs" without an audience, while keeping their distance. Each performance will be filmed and broadcast live to the 1,000 people who purchased tickets at the usual prices of between £10 and £65, although all will enjoy the same view. It's a bold gamble when many other theatres, such as the National Theatre in London, have posted free online performances of plays filmed before the pandemic.

Shows that involve audience participation could be the

big winners, according to Brian Hook. "We were already on a boom for immersive theatre before this crisis... I think now might be a very positive time for that," he said. One Night Records will launch one such project in early October, taking ticket-holders on a journey through musical genres from the 1920s to the 1950s in a secret location called "Lockdown Town".

"Because the venue is so large and because immersive has this special gift—which is territory, you know, space. That's why we're able to do it." One Night Records general manager Tim Wilson told AFP. But he, too, has had to adapt, selling tickets in groups of four and transforming the free stroll into a linear route.

Performance anxiety

In the traditional world of theatre, social distancing measures are a real headache. With people having to remain two metres (six feet) apart, under current rules, the Royal Shakespeare Company said it can only accommodate 20 percent of its usual audience. "With the furlough scheme changing in nature over the coming months and then coming to an end, that's a moment of extreme vulnerability," Catherine Mallyon, executive director of the Stratford-upon-Avon based company told AFP. "And how would we do the performances with social distancing? 'Romeo and Juliet' two metres apart, it's quite hard to imagine," she said.—AFP



A man wearing PPE (personal protective equipment), of a face mask or covering as a precautionary measure against COVID-19, walks past the Lyric Theatre, which would be showing "Thriller Live", but is closed down as part of the COVID-19 pandemic enforced lockdown measures, in London on June 11, 2020.—AFP photos



Pedestrians walk past the Sondheim Theatre.



Jachym Version, account manager of AMI Communications shows the visualization of the 3D printing of the first-ever concrete house in Czech Republic on Tuesday in Prague.—AFP photos



Workers check the 3D printing of the first-ever concrete house in Czech Republic.



Workers check the 3D printing of the first-ever concrete house in Czech Republic.

Czech sculptor creates 3D-printed floating house

A Czech sculptor has teamed up with a group of architects to create a 3D-printed house prototype that could become a holiday home for the future. The house is being printed from special concrete in the southern Czech city of Ceske Budejovice and is planned to float on the Vltava river in Prague in August. "I dare say it's the first-ever floating 3D-printed building in the world," sculptor Michal Trpak, the mastermind behind the project, told AFP. The design of the house, which can be printed in two days, was inspired by a single-celled creature known as a protozoa, he says.

As an added attraction, Trpak plans to turn the abode into a floating garden, with plants covering its roof and outside walls. The simple 43-square metre (51.4 square yards) floor plan includes a living room with kitchen, a bedroom and bathroom. "3D houses will adapt to the people or the countryside. The robot doesn't care about the shape of the curve," Trpak said

to the hum of a mechanic hand with a nozzle patiently piling up layer after layer of concrete strips. "The house is intended as a leisure-time house to stand in the countryside, ideally for a couple or a small family," added Trpak, who drew inspiration from 3D-printed housing projects in the Netherlands.

'Trial and error'

To finance the project, dubbed the "Protozoan", its creators have teamed up with a Czech building society. "This one is pretty expensive because it's a prototype and we needed many tests... But the second generation should cost around three million (Czech) crowns (112,600 euros; \$127,500) and the third generation may cost about half of that amount," Trpak said. When the robot is done, the concrete bedroom and bathroom modules will be attached to a wooden core with large windows and completed with a wooden roof.

The house will then be transported to Prague,

installed on a pontoon and displayed on the Vltava river in Prague's broader centre for two months. "We didn't have a plot of land to place it on, and anyway, to do that, you need a building permit and that takes up to two years" to secure, said Trpak. "But if you float it on a river, you only need consent from the navigation body, which is much faster." Trpak said the construction had not been trouble-free as the concrete is sensitive to temperature changes. "When it's very warm it hardens faster, when it's cold it hardens more slowly so now we're adding warm water from a boiler," he added as the weather changed for the worse. "We keep researching and developing. It's a process of trial and error."—AFP

Sculptor Michal Trpak checks the 3D printing of first-ever concrete house in Czech Republic.



Photos show Antino Pansa, 20, a student and circus artist specialising in slackline, trains in his backyard in Montreal, Canada.—AFP photos

Tightrope act for Canada circus students facing unemployment

Students soon to graduate from Montreal's esteemed National Circus School expect months of uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic, which has closed shows around the world and thrust their career prospects into doubt. Head upside down, feet pointed to the sky, Antino Pansa balances on a slack wire strung in the courtyard of his apartment building, a few feet off the ground. The makeshift installation allows the 20-year-old circus student to stay in shape despite the school's closure in early March, due to the coronavirus pandemic. "Several months without training is a lot," Pansa tells AFP. "My only solution was to install a wire between two trees."

"It creates a lot of constraints: I can't do all my tricks on it," he says, complaining of too many trees, a nearby staircase and other physical obstacles. Pansa had expected to join a circus troupe in Switzerland for a six-month gig upon graduating at the end of June, but the offer was postponed. In the meantime he has been forced to take a job as a security guard.

Sad clown, brave face

The pandemic has similarly upset career plans of 60 other students at this internationally renowned school. At the end of three years of study, each normally puts on a show in front of headhunters from around the world scouting new circus talent. But the pandemic has forced the cancellation of the performances. "It's unfortunate that we had to cancel, it's a big loss, because it serves as a launching pad for graduates to enter the labor force," said school director Eric Langlois.

Joaquim Verrier puts on a brave face, but says: "It is also very demoralizing to say that the culture and entertainment industry is at a standstill." Going from 15 hours of training per week at school to three or four hours in his apartment, the cigar box juggler says it is "very difficult to stay motivated," but he considers himself "lucky" at least to be able to continue practicing. Others cannot and worry about it. "I worked so much, so much, it's hard to get to my level," says tightrope walker Joel Malkoff. The 25-year-old American, who used to train every day, is alarmed by the idea that he may not be able to practice his discipline again on a professional level: "That's what scares me."

Circus is not hiring

Cirque du Soleil, Canada's cultural flagship on the brink of bankruptcy, had to cancel 44 productions worldwide and lay off 4,679 acrobats and technicians, amounting to 95 percent of its workforce. Aware of the grim job market, the National Circus School has implemented

entrepreneurship training aimed at supporting students. While 95 percent of its graduates normally find work at circus companies, in cabarets or aboard cruise ships, its director says nobody is hiring at the moment and the sector is not expected to bounce back for another 18 to 24 months.

This year's graduating class of 21 students is facing a total loss, Langlois said. According to an April survey of 561 circus workers and organizations, 66 percent expect to have to retrain in another field. At 23, Verrier brushes aside the idea of letting go of his passion. "I trained for five years to become a circus artist and I would find it a shame not to be one," he said, refusing to let the pandemic "stop me from following my dream."—AFP

Vienna man fined 500 euros for deliberate 'massive flatulence'

Austrian police fined a man 500 euros for loudly breaking wind after officers stopped him earlier this month to check his identity. The police defended the massive fine saying he had deliberately emitted a "massive flatulence," lifting his backside from the bench where he was sitting. The accused complained of what he called the disproportionate and unjustified fine when he gave his account of the June 5 events on the O24 news website.

In reply to social media commentaries that followed, the police in the Austrian capital justified their reaction on Twitter. "Of course, nobody is put on the spot if one slips off by accident," the police said. However, in this case, the police said, the young man had appeared "provocative and uncooperative" in general.

He then "slightly raised himself from the bench, looked at the officers and patently, in a completely deliberate way, emitted a massive flatulence in their immediate proximity." The police said the man can challenge the fine in the legal system.—AFP

Van Gogh, Gauguin brothel letter sells for 210,000 euros

A letter written jointly by Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin in which they talk of their brothel visits and share their mutual admiration, sold for 210,000 euros (\$236,000) at auction in Paris on Tuesday. The letter, which mentions how they wanted to revive modern art and set up an "association of painters", was signed by both painters. It is addressed from Arles to their painter friend Emile Bernard and dated November 1/2, 1888, less than two years before Van Gogh died at the age of 37. Gauguin arrived in Arles, where Van Gogh was living, on October 23, 1888 and the two spent several stormy months painting together.

It was during the fateful visit that Van Gogh lost his ear, presenting it to a brothel maid. The incident effectively ended his often strained relationship with Gauguin. In the letter sold by Aristophil Collections at the Drouot auction rooms in Paris, both men insisted that art was surging towards what Van Gogh called "an immense renaissance". The Dutchman also writes about his visitor and their escapades. "Gauguin interests me a lot as a man," he said.

"It has long seemed to me that in our dirty profession of painter, we have the greatest need for people with workers' hands and stomachs, with more natural tastes, more loving and more charitable temperaments than the decadent and exhausted Parisian boulevardier." He describes Gauguin as "a virgin being with wild animal instincts. In Gauguin, blood and sex prevail over ambition. "We made some excursions to the brothels and it is probable that we will often end up



An auctioneer holds a letter co-written by Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh and French painter Paul Gauguin on the eve of its auction sale at Drouot auction house in Paris.—AFP

going to work there." Van Gogh yields the pen on the last page to Gauguin who would have a successful sale of paintings at Drouot in 1891.

"Do not listen to Vincent," he wrote. "As you know he is easy to impress." As for "his idea on the future of a new generation in the tropics as a painter", it "seems absolutely right to me and I continue to intend to return to it". Gauguin fulfilled the "tropics" idea by going to live in French Polynesia where he died in 1903, aged 54.—AFP

Relief for Paris restaurants as virus lockdown ends

Paris cafe and restaurant owners cheered Monday as the government allowed them to reopen their dining rooms after three months of lost revenue during the coronavirus lockdown. The sooner-than-expected reopening for the Paris region was announced by President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday as news came of France's lowest daily COVID-19 toll since March—nine deaths in 24 hours. While restaurants across most of France were allowed to open earlier this month, those in and around the capital, where circulation of the coronavirus remained high, could serve clients only on outdoor terraces until now.

"The question now is whether clients will come back," Albert Aidan, the manager at L'Ami Georges, a few blocks from the Opera Garnier, told AFP. "Most companies are still having their employees work from home," he said. Several nearby restaurants remained closed. Many shared Macron's optimism that France has marked a "first victory" against the coronavirus thanks to strict stay-at-home orders imposed in March. "It's going to be a party," Stephane Manigold, owner of four Paris restaurants, including the two-starred Maison Rostang, told AFP. Manigold has successfully sued his insurer, French giant Axa, to pay some 70,000 euros (\$79,000) in compensation for lost business.

Didier Chenet, head of the GNI association of independent hotel and restaurant owners, estimates that social distancing rules which saw restaurants remove tables to ensure a distance of one metre (3.3 feet) between diners, have cut capacity by half at least. Unless the government lifts the one-metre rule, he said, "recovery will be very slow, with economic conditions that are not viable for our businesses," he said.

'Can't open in a day'

Foreign tourists, the key ingredient for success at Paris restaurants in particular, are not expected to arrive in pre-COVID numbers anytime soon, even as the EU begins to tentatively open up its internal bor-



Customers eat at the restaurant Garnier in Paris, on Monday, as cafes and restaurants are allowed to serve customers inside, as well as on terraces.—AFP

ders. The first train from Paris to Germany since mid-March left the Gare du Nord station early Monday, heading for Dortmund. "We're taking the children to see their grandmother and spend some holiday time together as a family. It feels good after so long!" said one passenger, Alexis. Not all borders are open, though. Hard-hit Spain, for example, will allow free travel with the rest of the EU only from June 21.

Many Paris restaurants said they will need time to restock and get their employees back, and some complained about the short notice that came from Macron only Sunday evening. "At best we'll open two restaurants on Wednesday, and the others next week," said Manigold. "One day maybe politicians will understand that you can't just open a restaurant in a day. They could have avoided the abruptness," he added. Francisco Ferrandez of La Bocca in central Paris said he started calling his employees after Macron's address.

"It's like with the closure, everything at the last minute. When they announced the closure, we had to throw away fresh produce, and for the reopening they tell us from one day to the next." The COVID-19 epidemic has claimed more than 29,000 lives in France, one of the world's highest reported tolls. Health Minister Olivier Veran on Monday proclaimed that "the bulk of the epidemic is behind us" but warned the virus was "not completely defeated." This meant things will not be returning quite to normal for a while.—AFP

India media fear virus finally brings end of newspaper era

NEW DELHI: Indian newspapers, which just a few months ago had defied the global trend by gaining circulation, are now buckling under the weight of coronavirus losses that have killed some off and critically wounded other big names. Newspapers have remained a mainstay in the country of 1.3 billion people in recent years, when the rise of digital news has seen sales slump around the world.

But as a result of a lockdown that started on March 25 dailies were unable to print, delivery boys were attacked by householders fearing they were also bringing the virus and – crucially – advertisers fled. And according to some estimates, normal sales of more than 50 million newspapers a day across the country fell by two thirds. Hundreds of journalists have been laid off or seen wages slashed and in Mumbai, one charity is organizing food parcels for unemployed reporters. “India

resisted the digital onslaught for a long time but now some city papers have gone and some of the national papers must be worrying about how will they get readers back,” one editor told AFP. English newspapers in Pune and Goa closed this month and nationals such as the Hindustan Times and Times of India, which had a circulation of more than two million before the crisis, have laid off scores of staff, cut wages and closed offices.

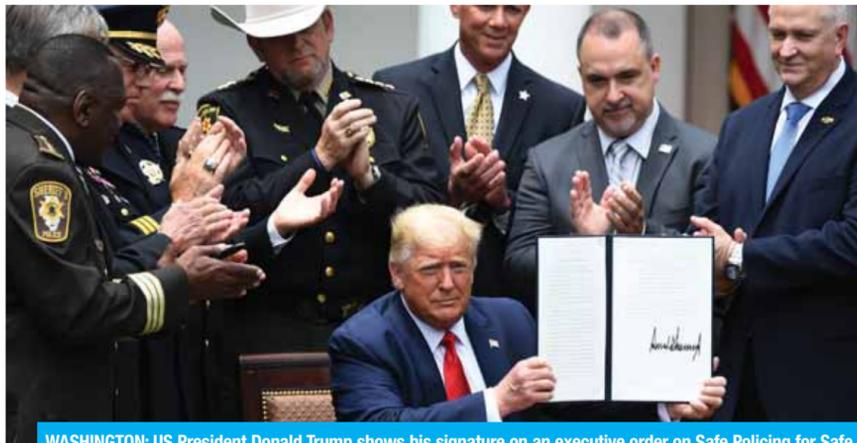
The Hindustan Times said in an email to staff that it was losing about \$500,000 a day. The Mathrubhumi regional newspaper, based in the southern state of Kerala, has seen advertising fall from up to \$6 million a month to \$500,000, said joint managing director Shreyams Kumar. Indian newspapers had been hit by a faltering economy even before the pandemic, but N Ram, a director of the group that publishes The Hindu daily and other regional papers, said events had become criti-

cal as advertising has “collapsed”. The group expects to lose millions of dollars. “We don’t know when the advertising market will recover,” he told AFP.

According to the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), Indian newspapers and magazines used to attract about \$3 billion dollars of advertising a year. Magdood Mohamed, WAN-IFRA business development manager in India, said newspapers lost 75-85 percent of their advertising in March and April alone. While Indian media groups are starting to invest heavily in online news, Ram said the advertising did not compensate for the sudden losses. Indian journalists feel they have been badly treated by the panic measures, with wages cut and often paid late. Many say they have been going out to cover tragic stories on the coronavirus without proper protective equipment. “I came back one day to be told there was a

pay cut,” said one at the Indian Express.

“While the media has been facing the strain, the fact that it moved so fast to do these salary cuts at a time when there is extreme uncertainty and anxiety – it’s very unethical,” Geeta Seshu, co-founder of the Free Speech Collective said. “They have been showing a lack of concern for their employees.” The main media groups are concentrating more on the future of the business, say analysts. Consultancy KPMG had predicted before the pandemic that advertising revenue for newspapers would remain stable for a few years. “Now all that has changed,” said the newspaper editor, speaking on condition of anonymity as he had been told not to discuss company business. “It was only the over-35s who read newspapers and even they have had to get their news from digital sources and television for more than two months.” — AFP



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump shows his signature on an executive order on Safe Policing for Safe Communities in the Rose Garden of the White House on Tuesday. — AFP

Trump signs order to reduce police violence

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump issued an order to improve policing Tuesday, calling for a ban on dangerous chokeholds, but he stopped well short of demands made at nationwide protests against racism and police brutality. “We have to break old patterns of failure,” Trump said in a Rose Garden ceremony attended by police and Republican congressional allies, though no black civil rights representatives or political opponents.

The president has limited power over policing, which is run mostly at a state and local level.

However, Trump said that he would use access to federal funding grants as leverage to persuade departments “to adopt the highest professional standards”. His executive order encourages de-escalation training, better recruitment, sharing of data on police who have had records, and money to support police in complicated duties related to people with mental or drug issues.

A highlight of Trump’s proposals, which he said could be complemented by legislation being negotiated in the Republican-controlled Senate, was ending chokeholds “except if an officer’s life is at risk”, he said. Trump called his initiative “a tremendous step” toward “safe, beautiful and elegant justice”. Critics, including the Democratic

speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, derided his efforts. “The president’s weak executive order falls sadly and seriously short of what is required to combat the epidemic of racial injustice and police brutality,” she said in a statement. “During this moment of national anguish, we must insist on bold change, not meekly surrender to the bare minimum.”

Trump began by announcing he’d just met in private with families of several black people killed in encounters with the police. “We are one nation. We grieve together and we heal together,” he said. However, Trump’s choice to keep the televised audience overwhelmingly white, male and focused on law enforcement representatives reinforced his main message. “Americans know the truth: without police, there is chaos,” Trump said.

Only a “very tiny” number of police commit wrongdoing, he said in remarks that frequently veered into a campaign speech about his accomplishments. Democrats and civil rights groups say that full-scale rethinking of police culture, and even cuts in police funding, are needed to bring necessary change. A first wave of unrest began more than three weeks ago, after the May 25 death of George Floyd, an African-American man, in Minneapolis.

Floyd stopped breathing when a white officer knelt on his neck, having already handcuffed him during arrest for a minor offense. Amateur video of the incident sparked demonstrations nationwide and in some places looting and arson. New tension erupted last week after the death in Atlanta, Georgia, of Rayshard Brooks, another African American whom police say was shot in the back as he ran away from arresting officers, having grabbed one of their tasers and aimed it at them. — AFP

professor of Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Nuffield Department of Medicine, University of Oxford. “Dexamethasone is inexpensive, on the shelf, and can be used immediately to save lives worldwide.” Britain’s Health Secretary Matt Hancock said the country’s patients would start to receive the drug immediately. Hancock said the government had started stockpiling dexamethasone back in March after preliminary trials showed “early signs” of the drug’s potential.

The trial results are particularly promising as around 40 percent of COVID-19 patients who require a ventilator end up dying, often because of the body’s uncontrolled inflammatory response to the virus. For those receiving the new treatment, the mortality rate dropped to less than 30 percent. The trial showed dexamethasone to be ineffective in treating patients with milder forms of COVID-19, however.

A number of existing drugs have been trialed as a treatment against the novel coronavirus, with mixed results. Trials of treatment of the anti-arthritis drug hydroxychloroquine were halted in several countries after a major study in The Lancet medical journal suggested it showed no benefit among COVID-19 patients and even increased the risk of death. Remdesivir, an anti-viral that appears to reduce the length of treatment in some patients, is already being used in Britain, but one study in April showed it had “no significant clinical benefit”.

China closed schools in Beijing and restricted air travel from the capital yesterday to prevent a second wave of coronavirus infections. The new Chinese cluster and surging infections in Latin America and South Asia have raised fresh doubts about how soon the world can control the pandemic, which has seen more than 8.1 million cases and nearly 440,000 deaths.

After 31 more cases were reported in Beijing, Chinese authorities yesterday cancelled more than 1,200 flights from the capital’s main airports, state media reported, adding to restrictions placed earlier on close to 30 residential compounds. With nearly 140 cases now reported from Beijing, authorities in the city shut schools once again and urged residents not to leave as thousands were tested for the coronavirus.

There have been surges too in Iran and Saudi Arabia, while eyes remain on Latin America, the new epicenter. Brazil, the worst-hit nation after the United States, reported its highest daily jump in cases, while Peru’s death toll surged past 7,000. European nations including Belgium, France, Germany and Greece have begun lifting border restrictions, hoping to save the summer tourism season. But life is far from normal despite dropping case numbers in such countries. — Agencies

Finance, education ministers survive...

Continued from Page 1

He attributed the rise in cases among citizens to failure to observe instructions for social distancing, as some of them acknowledged they were performing night prayers in the month of Ramadan in basements in groups.

“Now, we are into the third week (of the first phase of easing) and the highest number of cases is among citizens for failure to abide by instructions,” the premier said. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said Kuwait has not reached the “safe area” in the fight against the deadly virus despite decisions taken to ease restrictions and shutdowns.

He said the number of cases is close to 37,000 and the number of deaths is around 300, while around 44 percent of intensive care beds are occupied by coronavirus patients. He said he is focused now on the number of beds for general and intensive care units.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also called on the National Assembly to hold virtual sessions, but Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said laws do not allow such meetings and has asked a group of MPs who are lawyers to study the issue.

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh told the session that the names of all those suspected of involvement in a visa trading scam are with the public prosecution, which is investigating the case. The ministry has referred several visa trading cases to the public prosecution in the past several weeks, the latest of which is the case of a Bangladeshi MP and a number of officials.

Minister of Social Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said yesterday she has suspended a senior official at the manpower authority suspected of having links to the Bangladeshi-led scam. The Assembly also raised a number of issues regarding expatriates and voted to refer all proposals and draft laws related to the population structure to the manpower resources panel to prepare a comprehensive proposal on the issue.

The Assembly also voted to ask the interior minister to prepare a report within one month about visa trading and “marginal” labor and measures taken by the ministry. Minister of Public Works and State Minister of Housing Rana Al-Fares said yesterday she has decided to lay off all 400 expat employees at the public housing authority within a year. The first phase will start next month.

As MP Adasani began to question the finance minister, he showed a document saying that the minister has submitted proposals to the Cabinet suggesting a series of drastic measures to boost public revenues that include lifting subsidies,

imposing taxes and raising public service charges. Based on the document, the proposals forecast boosting revenues by some KD 2.5 billion annually if implemented and saving over KD 500 million in spending.

Although the minister acknowledged that he authored the document, he stressed that these are mere draft proposals for discussions at the Council of Ministers before coming up with concrete proposals for debate with the National Assembly. But Sheetan insisted that the welfare of Kuwaiti citizens will not be undermined. He also wondered how such a highly confidential document reached the lawmaker.

Adasani accused the minister of failing to supply all the necessary documents to the public prosecution in the case of the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund and suspected Kuwaiti figures and companies involved. He said that a small company was established specifically to carry out suspected money laundering operations and offer bribes, adding that the company transferred sums amounting to KD 340 million and was involved in other illicit businesses.

He charged that although the finance ministry has sent the file to the public prosecution, the complaint is incomplete and does not include key documents. But the minister insisted that all available documents have been referred to the public prosecution and asked Adasani to provide any document he has.

Adasani also criticized the minister’s policies of trying to make cash available for the state, saying that the Kuwait sovereign fund has plenty of cash and there is lots of cash available in various ministries and these must be used instead of raising debt. The minister admitted that state coffers are facing some cash shortages and said he has been taking measures to provide the needed funds.

Sheetan said the grilling includes constitutional flaws as it holds him accountable for major allegations, although he has been in office for just 50 days, adding that he has been fighting all forms of corruption and has taken several decisions in this regard. The minister said that the grilling consists of 100 pages and many accusations but he could not find anything that concerns him.

MP Safa Al-Hashem spoke in support of the grilling and accused the minister of being incompetent and inconsistent. MP Ali Al-Deqbas defended the minister, saying that he should be given sufficient time to perform. After the grilling ended, MP Adasani said that he plans to file another grilling against Sheetan focusing on his proposals to tax people and raise charges.

In the education minister’s grilling, MP Kandari accused the minister of putting the lives of 700,000 students at risk for not cancelling the school year. The minister however said a decision like this is not easy because it has to consider the interests of all the students, adding that he has been evaluating the situation and will take the appropriate decision.

Indian soldiers who died had succumbed to their wounds, having been unable to survive the night in freezing temperatures.

Unlike in India, the incident did not receive wall-to-wall coverage in China, where official media reported a statement on the incident from the spokesperson for the Chinese army’s Western Command. On social media, bloggers and media aggregating platforms shared Indian media reports, such as the Indian army’s announcement acknowledging that the death toll had risen to 20.

Most vocal was the Global Times, a paper published by the official paper of the country’s ruling Communist Party. Its editor-in-chief, Hu Xijin, took to domestic and global social media platforms to scold India, saying “Indian public opinion needs to stay sober” and to warn that China did not fear a clash.

Meanwhile, state broadcaster CCTV and the Communist Party-owned People’s Daily republished the Chinese military’s official statement on social media, without any additional reports. CCTV’s widely watched daily Xinwen Lianbo evening news broadcast made no mention of the border confrontation yesterday. The foreign ministry’s official transcripts of its press briefing yesterday redacted remarks from its spokesman about the clashes.

The Global Times said in an editorial that China did not disclose the death toll of the confrontation “to avoid comparing and preventing confrontational sentiments from escalating”. “China does not want to turn border issues with India into a confrontation,” the editorial said, blaming India for “arrogance and recklessness”.

But users on Weibo, China’s Twitter-like social platform, were baying for blood. “If we don’t beat India to death, this kind of provocation will never end,” one user wrote. “Read from foreign media reports that 5 People’s Liberation Army soldiers died. I’m so angry that my blood is rushing to my head,” another said. — Agencies

India sees jump of 2,000 deaths...

Continued from Page 1

specially-adapted railway carriages to Delhi and authorities have taken over hotels and banquet halls to accommodate coronavirus patients.

Germany recommended its citizens in India to “seriously consider whether a temporary return to Germany or another country with an assured health-care system makes sense”. “Case numbers are still rising strongly. This increases considerably the risk of infection,” the foreign ministry said. People with the coronavirus or other serious medical needs have “no or very little chance of being admitted to hospitals. This increases considerably the health risks of a stay in India,” it added.

The French embassy in Delhi also sent a warning to its nationals saying that hospitals in the city are “more and more saturated”. It said people should stay home unless there is an emergency “or it is to reach an airport for a flight to Europe”. Air France and German carrier Lufthansa have organized a number of special flights from Delhi to Europe this month for people trying to leave the country.

The steroid dexamethasone was shown Tuesday to be the first drug to significantly reduce the risk of death among severe COVID-19 cases, in trial results hailed as a “major breakthrough” in the fight against the disease. Researchers led by a team from the University of Oxford administered the widely available drug to more than 2,000 severely ill COVID-19 patients.

Among those who could only breathe with the help of a ventilator, dexamethasone reduced deaths by one third, and by one-fifth in other patients receiving oxygen only, according to preliminary results. Normally used to treat a range of allergic reactions as well as rheumatoid arthritis and asthma, dexamethasone is an anti-inflammatory. Daily doses of the steroid could prevent one-in-eight ventilated patient deaths and save one out of every 25 patients requiring oxygen alone, the team said.

The trial, carried out by the RECOVERY research group that is searching for effective COVID-19 treatments, included a control group of 4,000 patients who did not receive the drug. “Dexamethasone is the first drug to be shown to improve survival in COVID-19. This is an extremely welcome result,” said Peter Horby,

Stars

Daily SuDoku

8			2					
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4		9			5			
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		2	8				7	1
			9			7		2
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medium

Yesterday's Solution

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

hard

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)



People will understand and appreciate your desire to stand out from the crowd today, Aries. This isn't a sign of arrogance on your part. It's just that you're particularly perceptive right now and people need your good advice. Since you're ready to step into the spotlight and shine like the stars that are giving you all this wonderful energy, go for it. You'd kick yourself if you let this opportunity pass.

Libra (September 23-October 22)



As the real Libra that you are, you aren't in the habit of talking without saying anything constructive. Sometimes people accuse you of having nothing to say. When you're just being patient, they say that you're ignorant. When you're demonstrating your tolerance, they say you're indifferent. Today it's time for those people to learn the real truth about you and understand just how much you have to say about the world.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)



You love everyone on this planet, Taurus, and this isn't the day to come bothering you with all the little details of everyday life. You're in orbit, on a voyage to the stars, and this great feeling of freedom is pushing you to demand more justice for all. You might even find the perfect situation today to use your wonderful diplomatic skills. It's the least you can do.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)



The people around you would really appreciate it if you'd slow down and relax a little. You always seem to be running around, so much so, in fact, that you've been neglecting the people close to you, especially your family. They really need you. They have issues to discuss with you. They need to feel the comfort of your arms. Your arms need to open up to them first.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)



Sometimes you make mistakes because of your lack of objectivity, Gemini. You have a certain tendency to wish that other people were just like you. Yet this won't be the case today. You're using your good sense and reason, or rather your reason is doing the talking for you. It would be a great day for people to listen to you since your judgments have nothing to do with your personal feelings.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)



You did the right thing to put off those important decisions and not give in to pressure, Sagittarius. You know well that sometimes it's important to relax and rest for the busy times ahead. Today you'll feel refreshed and ready to tackle the world. You see your problems from a different point of view, and you're much more optimistic about things. Now you can take a calm look at the situation.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)



You were once a creature of reason, Cancer. For you, everything had an explanation, a reason to exist, and a place in the world. You never missed a chance to share your viewpoint. Then all of a sudden, silence. Perhaps you needed to get some perspective, not necessarily on the things you know, but on how you express that knowledge. Now words have come back into your life and your ideas are more moderate.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)



You have a generous nature, Capricorn. You know how to give and devote yourself to solving the problems others that confide in you. This will still be true today, but not entirely in the same way. In fact, it wouldn't be wise for people to bother you with their problems if they really aren't all that important. It's high time for you to take care of yourself for a while.

Leo (July 23-August 22)



How about changing roles today, Leo? It's true that you aren't one for idle chat. You prefer taking action rather than talking about grandiose ideas that never go anywhere. Yet today you may actually feel like discussing things in depth. The stars' alignments are bringing out this other side of you, so take advantage of the energy. Other people will be grateful since they've been waiting a long time for this day.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)



It's always like this at first with you, Aquarius. You know something is happening but have no idea what. It's as if electricity flows through you. You're practically vibrating with emotion. You can feel other people's emotions, too. Begin by listening to your heart and feeling the sensation in your body. Only then will you be able to judge the intensity of your feelings. Could this be desire - or love?

Virgo (August 23-September 22)



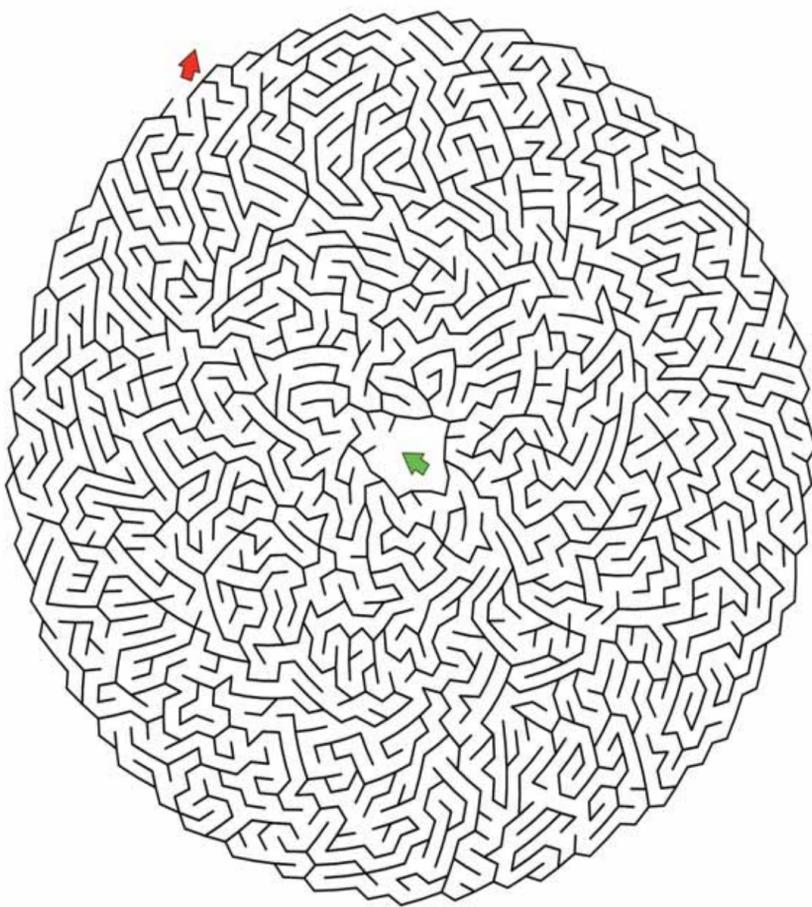
Scientists are sometimes pretty strange. They can be so engrossed in reality that they seem almost absent from it, as if they float above the Earth. That's a bit how you feel about things, too, Virgo. You like to explain the world in your own special way, the way you see it and not necessarily the way it really is. That's your secret. You know that no one else can see the world the way you do.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

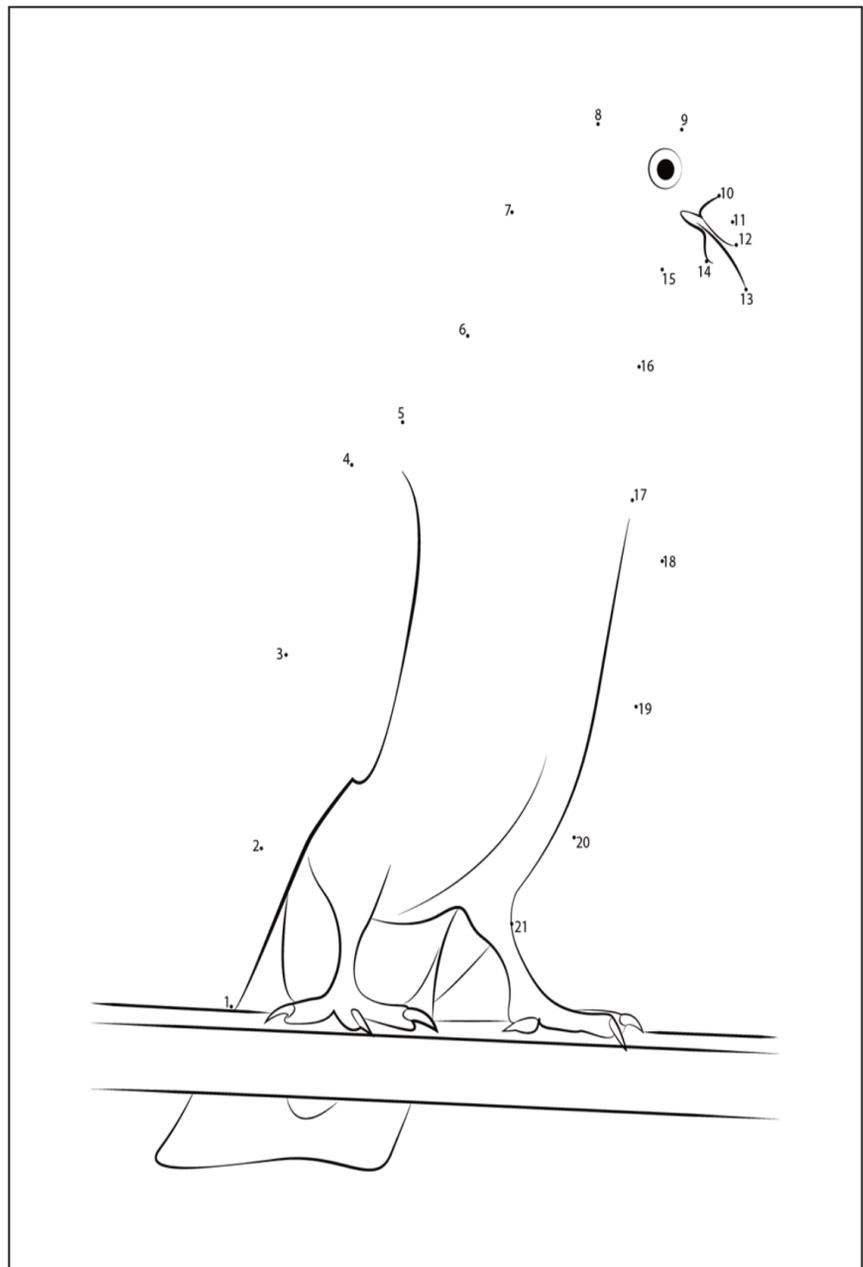


Are you sure that other people wouldn't like you to be in another space than where you are right now, Pisces, or even be a different person than the one you always thought you were? These questions are beginning to bother you. Devote some time to thinking about them. The answers you come up with won't be entirely meaningful for a few more weeks. Try looking at the essential things today.

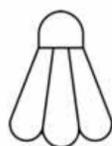
Find the way



Join the dots



Word Scramble



Badminton Word Scramble

All of the scrambled words below are badminton vocabulary words. Can you put the letters in the right order to spell the different words correctly? Careful! Some of the "words" are made up of two words.

FTNEI	
AHMSS	
ERSEV	
RSEAEVCIAR	
ILTLOKHS	
CRELA	
ODPRHOST	
SOTODOHW	
AYRLL	
PHUS	
ECATRK	
ENT	
BEDIIR	
LNIEENTCER	
OLB	
URTCO	
ULFAT	
CEA	
AYRRC	
BDNAHCAK	
ELT	
SIELANEB	
NLE EDIIS	
DEVRI	

Sports

Photo of the Day



Canoeist, Vavrinec Hradilek seen in Wanaka, New Zealand. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Sagan confirms epic 'Pink and Green' Tour-Giro quest

PARIS: Cycling superstar Sagan will race the Tour de France and the Giro d'Italia, but will skip the majority of the one-day classics this season, he told a press conference on Tuesday.

The Bora-hansgrohe leader said an eighth green jersey awarded for the best sprinter at the Tour was the key target this season, while respecting a promise to race the Giro just 13 days later was important to him as a man. "Yes, it's green and pink," Sagan confirmed when asked if his main season came down to the bold double bid of the Tour and the Giro, where the leader wears the revered pink jersey.

The programme means Sagan, known for exceptional endurance, will race a staggering 42 Grand Tour stages in just 58 days after the original cycling calendar was crammed into a few months following the coronavirus lockdown.

"I promised them (the Giro) before the date changed, and I really want to respect that promise," added the 30-year-old Slovak. The Tour, where Sagan will target a record eighth sprint points title, runs from August 29 to September 20, then embark on his first Giro on October 3. Sagan's German team have emerged as a major player in cycling just behind Britain's Ineos and the Dutch Jumbo-Visma outfit.

At the Tour, Bora will be led by German climber Emanuel Buchmann after his fourth place overall result in the 2019 edition, and will also field this year's Paris-Nice winner Maximilian Schachmann.

"It's the Tour then the Giro, if the world championships are in Switzerland in between that will be too hard for me and I'll skip it."

The former three-time world champion said he may change his mind on the world championships if the location of the race is moved away from the mountains, which is a possibility. — AFP

Battaash the crowning moment for Crowley in Royal Ascot treble

Queen hails Royal Ascot for putting on a show

LONDON: Jim Crowley stole the show on the first day of Royal Ascot on Tuesday, riding three winners including a sparkling victory on Battaash in the Group One King's Stand Stakes. Battaash's win brought the 34-year-old the most joy and a sense of relief too as the duo put behind them two previous runners-up spots in the race with a dominant performance.

Crowley's other wins came with Motakhayel in the Buckingham Palace Handicap — one of the races added to this year's meeting — and Nazeef in the Duke of Cambridge Stakes. Nazeef was winner number 51 at the historic meeting for trainer John Gosden — whose 50th had come earlier with Frankie Dettori's only win of the day on Frankly Darling in the Ribblesdale Stakes.

Sadly for both Crowley and Gosden, their feats took place before only a smattering of people as spectators, including even owners, are not permitted to attend due to the coronavirus pandemic. The meeting's patron and most famous attendee Queen Elizabeth II watched on television from nearby Windsor Castle. She had, though, written the foreword to the racecard and the UK national anthem was sung remotely by Laura Wright and the Royal Holloway Choir.

Crowley still enjoyed the moment of glory with Battaash, whose trainer Charlie Hills also saddled the runner-up Equilateral. "It was redemption for Battaash today. He had a bit of unfinished business and he got it done," said Crowley. "I would say he's number one in my career. He has so much natural talent."

'NICE BOTTLE OF RED'

Ryan Moore came out on top in the first Group

One of the day, the Queen Anne Stakes, prevailing with favourite Circus Maximus after a terrific duel with Dettori on Terebellum. It was Moore's 59th success at the meeting and trainer Aidan O'Brien's 71st, while Circus Maximus added this prize to his St James's Palace Stakes victory last year.

His victory enriched one punter who put on £100,000 (\$126,000) each-way at 4/1. "We're very happy. We are racing. Obviously it is not the same and detracts from the moment but that is the world we are living in," said Moore.

O'Brien had remained back in Ireland — he would have to self isolate on his return home — and said he was enjoying watching the spectacle from afar. "It's very exciting," said O'Brien. "Ascot is usually a very busy week for us, so it's brilliant today to see all the preliminaries and everything."

Dettori rebounded immediately by landing his 68th victory at the meeting — his first coming 30 years ago — with Frankly Darling. Bookies shortened her to 4/1 for the Oaks on July 4.

Dettori was excited enough to cup his ears and perform one of his trademark flying dismounts, even though he had said that it would be anti-climactic behind closed doors.

"The first race was very strange," said Dettori after presenting Gosden with a saddlecloth with 50 marked on it. "I love this place when it has a roar but I am warmed up now with the first big win, why not celebrate!"

There was a David and Goliath story in the Derby trial the King Edward VII Stakes. Pyledriver — who could not find a buyer at 10,000 Guineas when he was



LONDON: Jockey Jim Crowley rides Battaash (R) to victory in The King's Stand Stakes race on day one of the Royal Ascot horse racing meet, in Ascot, west of London, on June 16, 2020, which is taking place behind 'closed doors' due to the ongoing novel coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

put up for sale as a yearling in 2017 — won as O'Brien's favourite Mogul looked nothing like a horse that cost 3.4 million guineas, finishing fourth.

It was very much a family affair with jockey Martin Dwyer — who first won the King Edward VII 17 years ago — the son-in-law of trainer William Muir. "I was out of my big chair, jumping up and down. I am rather hoarse," said owner Guy Leach, watching from his

home in Cardiff.

"I have a very nice bottle of red going but it will be a very quiet evening. I'll sit with a glass and watch it over and over again."

Queen Elizabeth II said Royal Ascot would "remain one of Britain's finest sporting occasions" despite being forced behind closed doors as the meeting got under way on Tuesday. — AFP

Fouad Omran duels his way to victory

KUWAIT: In an exhilarating tournament, with close to 200 hopefuls aiming for the title in Kuwait and the opportunity to head to the Red Bull Solo Q world final, Fouad Omran was able to secure the win of Red Bull Solo Q.

"Winning in a big event such as Red Bull Solo Q was a huge deal for me, my happiness could not be described, I was living in a dream that actually came to reality."

Red Bull Solo Q puts a twist on a typical League of Legends match, pitting player against player in a bracket of 1v1 duels. The first player to earn 'first blood', destroy the opponents' tower or reach a 100-minion score wins the duel.

Omran will proceed to the Red Bull Solo Q World Finals, where he will compete against over 30 other finalists coming from all over the world, from Chile all the way to Australia. This year it will be held in Germany towards the end of 2020.

At the finals Omran is looking forward to representing both Kuwait, the country he lives in and Lebanon, the country he is from. He continues, "Achieving a win in the world is not my main intention, but rather competing and showing a good performance against other regions and proving that we have players with amazing talents that can actually compete in esports."



As part of the partnership with League of Legends Global Esports Events, the winner of Red Bull Solo Q will get to experience the 2020 League of Legends all-star event first-hand! The Kuwaiti champion will participate in the league's annual year-end celebration alongside some of the game's biggest esports athletes and streaming personalities, playing in special showcases and attending exclusive parties.

The online qualifiers in Kuwait kicked off on June 9th and continued until the 11th with the semifinals held on the 12th and the finals on the 13th. Only the top 8 made it to the final on the 13th where Fouad Omran and Houssam Merachli went head to head to clinch the title.

Interestingly enough, Houssam was crowned champion of Red Bull Player One in Kuwait in 2018 and proceeded to the world final in Brazil where he ultimately secured a

2nd place win.

Red Bull also continues their collaboration with one of the most popular faces in the League of Legends community: sjokz, who will return as the global brand ambassador for Red Bull Solo Q. Last year, she was live on stage for the National Finals in Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom — and even cast some games. This year, she will be involved with the European Regional Finals as well as the World Finals. Top athletes and many more well-known faces from the LoL scene will also make special appearances throughout the tournament.

In Kuwait, Red Bull Solo Q was held in partnership with Room Service, X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, Cyber Sports League and Kuwait Times. The caster will be none other than Deli Gaming, making the national final even more engaging.

Player unease as US Open to go ahead without fans

NEW YORK: The US Open tennis championships will go ahead as scheduled in August but without spectators, officials confirmed on Tuesday.

After weeks of uncertainty surrounding the tournament — which is being staged in the epicentre of the US coronavirus crisis — New York Governor Andrew Cuomo formally gave the event the green light. "The @usopen will be held in Queens, NY, without fans from August 31 to September 13," Cuomo announced on Twitter.

The New York leader said the US Tennis Association would take "extraordinary precautions" to protect players and staff during the event.

"It will be held without fans, but we can watch it on TV, and I'll take that," Cuomo later said during a briefing.

Safety protocols in force at the tournament include testing, additional cleaning, extra locker room space, and dedicated housing and transportation.

The decision had been anticipated after reports on Monday said the USTA's plans for the tournament had received support from the ATP and WTA Tours. The ATP/WTA Cincinnati hardcourt event — the Western & Southern Open — will also be staged

at the USTA's Billie Jean King National Tennis Center as a lead-in tournament.

The USTA opted to move the tournament to New York in order to minimise travel for players taking part in both tournaments. USTA Mike Dowse said the US Open would be held in the "safest manner possible, mitigating all potential risks".

Several leading players have expressed reservations about the prospect of playing a tournament in New York, and it remains to be seen how many of the games elite will commit to playing the event. World number one Novak Djokovic has been one of the most vocal critics, saying that safety measures and restrictions on the numbers of support staff allowed for each player were problematical.

'SELFISH' DECISION

"We would not have access to Manhattan, we would have to sleep in hotels at the airport, to be tested twice or three times per week," Djokovic said.

"Also, we could bring one person to the club, which is really impossible. I mean, you need your coach, then a fitness trainer, then a physiotherapist."

Djokovic's misgivings have been shared by defending men's singles champion Rafael Nadal, who would be chasing a 20th Grand Slam title at Flushing Meadows, the world number two, said earlier this month he would not play in New York if the tournament was taking place now, adding that tennis should not resume until it is "completely safe" for competitors. — AFP

Sports

World 100m champion Coleman suspended after whereabouts failure

Willing to take test every day to prove he is clean

LONDON: World 100 metres champion Christian Coleman was provisionally suspended by the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) yesterday and could miss next year's Tokyo Olympics after violating anti-doping whereabouts rules.

The American sprinter, in a lengthy statement on Twitter on Tuesday, said he could be hit with a ban from the AIU after missing a test on Dec. 9, 2019.

Three failures to properly file whereabouts information in a 12-month period can result in a one- or two-year suspension. "The AIU confirms a provisional suspension against Christian Coleman of the USA for whereabouts failures, a violation of the @WorldAthletics Anti-Doping Rules," the AIU said in a tweet.

Coleman, who also helped the United States to 4x100m gold at the World Championships in Doha, acknowledged the failure would count as his third in a 12-month span but said he was willing to take responsibility for only one.

"I want to make you all aware of a situation I'm currently dealing with," Coleman said. "A few days ago, the AIU came to a decision that I've been appealing for six months that I missed a test on December 9th, 2019.

"And now this might result in me being suspended from other filing failures that occurred well over a

year ago at this point." The two other failures occurred on January 16, 2019 and April 26, 2019.

The sprinter said he was out Christmas shopping on December 9 accusing anti-doping agents of setting a trap to get him. "Don't tell me I 'missed' a test if you sneak up on my door (parked outside the gate and walked through...there's no record of anyone coming to my place) without my knowledge," said Coleman. "Knocked while I was Christmas shopping five minutes away at the mall (I have receipts and bank statements) and didn't even bother to call me or attempt to reach me.

"I was more than ready and available for testing if I had received a phone call," adding he believed it was "a purposeful attempt to get me to miss a test."

Coleman, a double silver medalist in the 100m and 4x100m relay at the 2017 worlds in London, escaped suspension last year when USADA, after receiving guidance from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on how to calculate the 12-month window, withdrew the charge.

The sprinter later demanded an apology from USADA. "I have never and never will use performance-enhancing supplements or drugs," said Coleman. "I am willing to take a drug test every single day for the rest of my career for all I care to prove my innocence." —Reuters



DOHA: File photo taken on September 28, 2019 shows Christian Coleman of the US reacting after winning the men's 100m final at the 2019 IAAF World Athletics Championships at the Khalifa International stadium in Doha. Reigning world 100m champion Christian Coleman was provisionally suspended on June 17, 2020 after missing a doping test, the Athletics Integrity Unit said.—AFP



Setting a trap to get him

Bowling Centre sterilized



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Bowling Center in Salmiya was sterilized in preparation for the resumption of train-



ing following the Cabinet's decision to allow sports training. The club's administration will follow the prescribed precautionary measures as well as the designated times. The national team will be prepar-

ing for upcoming international events, while complying with conditions stipulated by the tripartite committee of the Public Authority for Sport, Olympic Committee and Health Ministry.

Guardiola praises health workers

LONDON: Pep Guardiola heaped praise on global healthcare workers as his Manchester City side braced for an avalanche of Premier League games over the coming weeks.

The reigning champions are in action against Arsenal — the day the English top flight returns after a three-month coronavirus-enforced break.

Guardiola said football was an "important part of society" but urged people not to forget the true heroes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Premier League teams will wear a

badge on their shirts thanking Britain's National Health Service for their hard work.

"The NHS, they went to work every single day," Guardiola told reporters by video call on Tuesday. "They deserve a huge, incredible compliment, not just the nurses, the scientists, the doctors — the cleaners. The people are there every day to make our lives easier, to put their lives at risk to save ours.

"At the end it's nice to come back. Hopefully it will go well. Hopefully we will not regret... but the real heroes of society must be these people."

With Britain badly hit by the pandemic and Guardiola's own mother dying of the virus in Spain, the City boss was asked if he had doubts about whether the Premier League should return now. "Sometimes," he said. "I

understand we have to do it. Always you had the feeling the damage for the clubs was huge. You have to do it to reduce the impact as much as possible."

The City boss said packing 92 games into less than six weeks to finish the season would present tough challenges.

"The problem is not to play one game, the first one and the second one," said Guardiola, whose team are 25 points behind runaway leaders Liverpool.

"The lack of recovery, you have to play another game with lack of physical training, physical conditioning or being prepared. That is a problem, but we have to adapt."

Guardiola said players would have to adapt as quickly as possible to games in empty stadiums. But he said: "When they were little kids they

played in the school, in the square, in the street without spectators. They played well in that period so that is what they have to do."

Guardiola will go head-to-head with his former assistant Mikel Arteta at the Etihad. The Premier League was suspended in mid-March after the Arsenal boss tested positive for the coronavirus.

Guardiola said he had been concerned for Arteta but that the Arsenal boss had recovered well. The City manager also said veteran midfielder David Silva, due to leave at the end of the season, would get a proper send-off from the club in the future.

"It's unfortunate that he's going to finish his last games here without people but he's coming back and hopefully himself, the club can organise a real farewell," he said. —AFP

Footballer Rashford forces change on child poverty

LONDON: Britain's government on Tuesday bowed to demands by Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford to change its policy on free school meals for the poorest children, amid growing concerns about the impact of the coronavirus lockdown on low-income families.

The England international drew on his own experience of growing up in poverty to lead an impassioned campaign for the programme to be extended through the summer holidays.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government had initially resisted making the change, which would see 1.3 million children in England receive vouchers for an extra six weeks.

But as the story dominated the headlines and opposition MPs and members of his own Conservative party backed Rashford, Johnson gave in.

"Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, the prime minister fully understands that children and parents face an entirely unprecedented situation over the summer," his spokesman said.

"To reflect this we will be providing a Covid summer food fund. This will provide food vouchers covering the six-week holiday period."

Rashford, 22, won widespread praise from politi-

cians, charities and education leaders for his campaign. He said he was proud to have helped give a voice to "vulnerable parents".

"There is still a long way to go but I am thankful to you all that we have given these families just one less thing to worry about tonight," he added.

The striker had written to Johnson and MPs and on Tuesday wrote in The Times newspaper that he understood personally how much free school meals mattered to children receiving them.

"Ten years ago, I was one of them. I know what it feels like to be hungry," he wrote.

Ahead of a parliamentary debate called by the main opposition Labour party, he urged MPs to put aside their political differences and back his campaign.

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon also announced Tuesday that she would extend the meals scheme to the summer holidays in Scotland, following a move already made by the devolved government in Wales.

EDUCATIONAL POVERTY

Johnson had highlighted how much his government has already done to help people hit by nationwide stay-at-home orders imposed in March to stem the spread of COVID-19.

When schools were shut, pupils eligible for free meals were offered vouchers instead, and the government has boosted welfare payments and provided targeted funds for the most vulnerable.

It has also paid the salaries of 9.1 million people in its furlough scheme as of June 14, although new figures show a surge in claims for out-of-work ben-

efits to 2.8 million people in the three months to May.

With a deep recession looming however, fears are growing for how many people will cope when the furlough scheme ends in October.

Several Conservative MPs had called on Johnson to "do the right thing" and extend the school meal programme. Commentators also questioned why the prime minister was picking such a fight when he was already on the back foot over his response to the coronavirus outbreak, which has claimed more than 41,000 lives.

"@MarcusRashford is right. Public know it. Politicians know it," tweeted Conservative MP Robert Halfon, the chairman of the Commons education committee.

"He's lived food hunger and helps food charities," he said, referring to Rashford's help in raising £20 million (\$25 million) for FareShare, a charity that fights hunger and food waste.

Halfon had previously warned about "an epidemic of educational poverty" after the government conceded most children would not return to school until September.

Earlier, Labour's education spokeswoman, Rebecca Long-Bailey, said Rashford was "one of the best of us", accusing the government of being "callous".

Downing Street has said the cost of the scheme will come to £120 million in additional spending.

A new study from UCL's Institute for Education found just 19 percent of children were spending more than four hours a day on school work, falling to 11 percent for those on free school meals. —AFP

Premier League returns after coronavirus exile

LONDON: The Premier League makes its eagerly anticipated return after 100 days in lockdown, with Manchester City's clash against Arsenal taking centre stage at the start of a frenetic dash to finish the season.

While the coronavirus pandemic means the Premier League will look very different from three months ago, football-starved fans will be able to feast on 92 games crammed into less than six weeks.

There is still much to decide over the rest of the season, with Liverpool on the brink of their first English title for 30 years, Champions League places up for grabs and a heated relegation battle going down to the wire.

Relegation-threatened Aston Villa get the ball rolling with their home game against European hopefuls Sheffield United. Pep Guardiola's second-placed City provide the star power when Arsenal visit the Etihad Stadium a few hours later.

A City defeat would mean leaders Liverpool would clinch the title if they won at Merseyside rivals Everton on Sunday. It was the announcement that Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta had contracted the virus in March that forced the Premier League to press pause.

With all games being played behind closed doors, players will have to get used to the eerie silence in the usually noisy stands.

Piping crowd chants into stadiums, cardboard cut-outs of supporters and live video fan walls will add colour but the absence of fans will be a jarring sight at first.

In total, about 300 people will be allowed in stadiums for each match, with strict health protocols in place.

There will be widespread disinfection of changing facilities, dugouts, matchballs, goalposts, corner flags and substitution boards.

People other than players and coaching staff on team benches must wear face coverings. Players have been told to maintain social-distancing during goal celebrations and encouraged not to spit.

'A LITTLE BIT WEIRD'

Having followed the return of Germany's Bundesliga and La Liga in Spain, City manager Pep Guardiola is well aware what an unusual experience it will be.

"It was a little bit weird watching the games," he said. "When you play at home you have that extra intensity and passion from the crowd. That is not going to happen.

"But when the players were little kids they played in the streets without spectators and they played good. That is what they have to do. It is a football game. Try to follow what they know."

Concerned that the hectic schedule will impact his players' fitness and the quality of their performances, Guardiola added: "The problem is not to play one game, it is to play another and another with a lack of physical training to be prepared.

"They had six weeks (to prepare) in Germany, double what we had, and five weeks in Spain.

"We have to adapt as quick as possible. In terms of the rhythm, if teams don't rotate their performance goes down immediately. There will be a lot of ups and downs in the games."

The Premier League's rush to finish the season has drawn criticism from some clubs and players, including City stars Sergio Aguerre and Raheem Sterling. —AFP

18 Battaash the crowning moment for Crowley in Royal Ascot treble



19 World 100m champion Coleman suspended after whereabouts failure



19 Footballer Rashford forces change on child poverty



Bayern win eighth straight Bundesliga

Paderborn relegated from the Bundesliga



MUNICH: Bremen's Czech defender Theodor Gebre Selassie and Bayern Munich's French forward Kingsley Coman both jump to head the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match SV Werder Bremen v FC Bayern Munich in Bremen, northern Germany. — AFP

BERLIN: Bayern Munich were crowned Bundesliga champions on Tuesday for an eighth straight season as Robert Lewandowski's volley secured a 1-0 win at Werder Bremen, while Paderborn were relegated from the top flight in Berlin.

Bayern picked up their eighth consecutive win since the Bundesliga resumed in mid-May behind closed doors due to the coronavirus, as coach Hansi Flick won the league title in his first season in charge.

"Compliments to the team, it is sensational what we have achieved in the past few months," said Flick whose side have won all of their last 14 games.

"Today there is no criticism, you have to emphasise the way the players have done it. "Player and coach, team have simply been one unit."

A deft chip over the Bremen defence from Jerome Boateng was chested down and volleyed home by Lewandowski, who claimed his 31st league goal this season and his 46th in all competitions, shortly before half-time.

But Bayern endured a nervy finale after teenage

left-back Alphonso Davies was sent off 11 minutes before the final whistle for a second yellow card.

He was lucky to avoid a straight red after a kick on Leonardo Bittencourt which earned him his first yellow on 19 minutes.

The result keeps Werder Bremen second-from-bottom with just two games left to avoid dropping down to the second-tier for the first time since 1980.

Bottom side Paderborn had their relegation confirmed with a 1-0 defeat at Union Berlin after an own goal from the visitors by Ben Zolinski.

"There was always a little bit missing in our game", said Paderborn captain Christian Strohdiek. "When the disappointment fades, we can simply be proud of what we have achieved in the last few years," added Strohdiek after Paderborn had earned back-to-back promotions in



There is no criticism

the previous seasons. Union's win in Berlin means they are guaranteed a second Bundesliga season having come up for the first time in 2018/19. Seventh-placed Freiburg stayed in the hunt for a Europa League place next season after replacement striker Nils Petersen came off the bench to net the winning goal and seal a 2-1 win at home to Hertha Berlin.

It was Petersen's 11th goal of the season, but the 25th of his career which he has scored as a substitute.

Earlier, Borussia Muenchengladbach stayed in the hunt for a Champions League berth with an emphatic 3-0 home win over Wolfsburg as midfielder Jonas Hofmann scored twice.

After consecutive defeats by Freiburg and Bayern, Gladbach raced into a two-goal lead after half an hour at Borussia Park.

Barca cruise past Leganes to turn up heat on Real Madrid

MADRID: Lionel Messi was rugby tackled and then scored a penalty as Barcelona put the pressure back on Real Madrid by easing to a 2-0 victory over Leganes at an empty Camp Nou on Tuesday.

Messi was hauled to the ground in the first half by a diving Unai Bustinza wrapping two arms around his waist and he was knocked over again in the second, this time earning a penalty, which he converted.

After 33 appearances, Messi now has 26 goals this season. In his last eight games, he has seven goals and eight assists. The 17-year-old Ansu Fati had earlier given

Barcelona the lead, continuing his breakthrough season with a fifth goal in eight league starts.

Leganes could have made the reigning champions feel uncomfortable if Miguel-Angel Guerrero had taken either of two golden early opportunities but the first was cleared off the line and the second denied by the post.

"We had a bit of luck at the beginning," admitted Barca coach Quique Setien. But his team's reward for a rather underwhelming performance is a five-point advantage over Madrid, who can reduce that back to two by winning at home to Valencia on Thursday.

Valencia will be a more thorough examination of Madrid's sharpness after the three-month break and Barca can expect tougher tests to come than Leganes too, starting with a trip to third-placed Sevilla on Friday.

Setien will hope Gerard Pique recovers from a nasty challenge that means he will need stitches in his shin. "It split his shinpad," said Setien. "We hope it's not serious." Leganes have dropped to the bottom of the table and look doomed to relegation, their chances

of survival damaged by Barcelona snatching away their top scorer Martin Braithwaite as an emergency signing in February.

Leganes were not alone in feeling the rule had hurt them disproportionately and their sense of injustice might have been deepened by the fact Braithwaite was left on the bench for the entire 90 minutes.

Barcelona controlled possession in the first half but created little and would have been behind early on if Guerrero had been more precise. First, Javier Eraso sprinted clear and despite taking too long to shoot, the ball spilled out for Guerrero, whose drive hit the foot of Clement Lenglet on the line.

Guerrero had another go moments later, this time from an acute angle, but his rasping half-volley flew across the area and shaved the far post. Barca were laboured, even as they dominated the ball, but Leganes might have been tiring by the 42nd minute when Junior Firpo's bustling run allowed Fati to take an instinctive shot, which he fired through the legs of Rodri Tarin and

Hofmann scored twice before Germany international Lars Stindl swept a third into the net following a second-half counter-attack.

"We scored three goals, didn't concede and picked up three points with an ambitious performance in difficult conditions, so I am happy with that," said Gladbach head coach Marco Rose. The result was all the more impressive as Gladbach eased to victory without injured French forwards Marcus Thuram and Alassane Plea. Gladbach moved back into the fourth and final Champions League spot, two points ahead of Bayer Leverkusen, who host Cologne on Wednesday in their game in hand.

Bayern and Borussia Dortmund have already qualified for next season's group stage, while RB Leipzig sit third, five points clear of Leverkusen.

The defeat leaves Wolfsburg sixth, which carries a Europa League place next season. Gladbach face Paderborn on Saturday, then mid-table Hertha Berlin on the final day of the season, while Leverkusen face Hertha and Mainz in their last two games. —AFP

into the bottom corner.

In the 69th minute, Messi gave his team the cushion they wanted, earning a dubious penalty with a storming run. He won the ball on the halfway line, nutmegged one defender and held off two more.

After an exchange with Luis Suarez, he was finally knocked over, even if it appeared less of a foul than the previous attempts to stop him. Messi curled into the bottom corner. Suarez had come on for Fati and Sergio Busquets. Gerard Pique, Arthur Melo all departed too as Setien turned his attention to Sevilla. Leganes coach Javier Aguirre was sent off for whistling on the sidelines in injury-time. Earlier, Getafe dropped more points in the race for Champions League qualification as they failed to break down Espanyol despite their opponents playing most of the match with 10 men. A goalless draw represents a missed opportunity for Jose Bordalas' side and they could even have lost to Espanyol, who had Bernardo Espinosa sent off in the 16th minute but are building momentum. —AFP