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## 20 Solskjaer delighted by Pogba performance in draw at Spurs



# WHO warns world in 'new and dangerous phase' of pandemic

### Saudi virus cases exceed 150,000, Makkah mosques reopen



TABATINGA, Brazil: An indigenous girl of the Ticuna ethnic group receives medical assistance at a health post in Umariacu village in Amazonas state on Friday amid the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** The World Health Organization has warned of a "new and dangerous phase" of the coronavirus pandemic, as infections continued to surge in the Americas, with Brazil registering more than one million cases, Colombia and Mexico also passed bleak milestones, as their death tolls topped 2,000 and 20,000, respectively, showing how the virus continues ravaging the Americas and parts of Asia even as Europe starts to ease out of lockdown.

The measures imposed to halt the spread of the disease have caused crippling economic damage, but the WHO warned against giving in to isolation fatigue. "The world is in a new and dangerous phase. Many people are understandably fed up with being at home... but the virus is still spreading fast," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference.

The virus has now killed more than 458,000 people and infected 8.6 million worldwide. A vaccine remains months off at best despite several trials, and scientists are still making daily discoveries about the virus, its symptoms and the extent to which it may have spread before being identified.

The number of coronavirus cases in Saudi Arabia exceeded 150,000 on Friday following a rise in new infections over the past 10 days. The Saudi Ministry of Health reported 4,301 new cases on Friday, taking the total to 150,292, with 1,184 deaths. The country

hit more than 100,000 cases on June 7. The number of new infections has continued to rise in recent weeks, as authorities began phasing out restrictions on movement and travel on May 28.

Saudi Arabia planned to reopen from yesterday mosques in Makkah, the holiest city in Islam, after they were closed for three months due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, state television reported. The kingdom has taken restrictive measures against the virus, particularly in Makkah, but the number of new coronavirus cases has notably increased in recent days.

"The mosques in the holy city will begin to reopen their doors to the faithful on Sunday after three months of closure due to the coronavirus pandemic," the state-run Al-Ekhabriya channel reported, citing a decision by the Islamic affairs ministry. Some 1,500 holy sites are preparing to welcome visitors, the channel reported, showing footage of workers disinfecting floors and carpets. The decision comes weeks before the hajj. While the hajj is set to be held in late July, authorities are yet to announce if it will go ahead or be cancelled.

Brazil, which has the second-highest number of infections and deaths after the United States, reported a one-day record of nearly 55,000 new infections, becoming the second country to pass one million cases.

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## Modi downplays clash; China hands back 10 soldiers

**NEW DELHI:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi appeared to downplay a clash with Chinese troops in a disputed Himalayan region that left 20 Indian soldiers dead and more than 70 injured, saying on Friday there had been no intrusion across his country's borders. "Nobody has intruded into our border, neither is anybody there now, nor have our posts been captured," Modi said, referring to Ladakh's Galwan valley, where hand-to-hand fighting between soldiers from the nuclear-armed neighbors took place earlier this week.

Amid mounting calls for a boycott of Chinese products and highly-charged public funerals for the dead soldiers, Modi said "the entire country is hurt and angry at the steps taken by China". India and China are attempting to cool tensions after the deadliest clash in at least five decades, with military-level talks taking place in an attempt to deescalate the confrontation. But Modi's comments, made in a televised statement at the end of an all-party meeting to discuss the incident, contrasted with his government's earlier stance.

On Wednesday, Foreign Minister Subrahmanyan Jaishankar had told a senior Chinese diplomat that the dispute was triggered after "the Chinese side sought to erect a structure in Galwan valley on our side of the LAC," according to a ministry statement. The LAC refers to the Line of Actual Control, the de facto border that has been a constant source of friction in the region where India

and China fought a brief war in 1962.

With his nation in shock over the loss its soldiers' lives, Modi faces one of the most difficult foreign policy challenges since he came to power in 2014. On Friday evening, some opposition parties questioned why the government was not better prepared. "Does the government not receive, on a regular basis, satellite pictures of the borders of our country? Did our external intelligence agencies not report any unusual activity along the LAC?" said Sonia Gandhi, president of the opposition Congress party.

Earlier on Friday, an Indian government source said that China had returned 10 Indian soldiers captured during the battle. In a briefing in Beijing, Chinese Foreign

Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian denied any Indian troops had been in its custody. "As far as I know China hasn't seized any Indian

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BHOJRAJ, India: Sandeep Kaur and her brother Prabhjot Singh react after laying wreaths on the coffin of their father Satnam Singh during a cremation ceremony in this village near Gurdaspur on June 18, 2020. — AFP

## Sleep, Netflix for Malala as she graduates

**LONDON:** She is known the world over for her campaign for girls' education. Now Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai has finished her degree at Oxford University and, like all students, is just looking forward to some sleep and some movies. With universities in Britain temporarily closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, Yousafzai posted pictures on social media which showed her celebrating with a cake and balloons, and covered in foam, paint and confetti as per tradition for Oxford students on the last day of their final exams.



Malala Yousafzai

"Hard to express my joy and gratitude right now as I completed my Philosophy, Politics and

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## Iran judge found dead in Romania

**BUCHAREST:** A fugitive Iranian judge sought by Tehran for alleged corruption was found dead after apparently falling from a hotel room in Bucharest, Romanian police said Friday. The police said an investigation was under way after a foreign national aged 52, who they identified as Gholamreza Mansouri, was found in the early afternoon. The circumstances of his death are not yet clear, but the investigators' first lead

is suicide, according to police sources.

Mansouri had been arrested last week in the Romanian capital but afterwards placed under judicial control, meaning he was banned from leaving the country and should regularly report to police. Mansouri was due to appear before a Romanian court on 10 July regarding the Iranian extradition request. Mansouri was wanted in his homeland over alleged corruption within the country's judicial system amid reports he accepted 500,000 euros (\$530,000) in bribes.

Reporters Without Borders meanwhile has accused him of torture and crimes against humanity following

the 2013 detention of 20 journalists in Iran. The pressure group filed a complaint with the public prosecutor general's office in Karlsruhe, Germany, on June 12. The group had said at the time it believed Mansouri was "probably currently in Germany for medical treatment" and demanded his "immediate arrest".

Exiled opposition group People's Mujahedeen Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) reacted by saying that Mansouri's death "is certainly suspicious". "The regime was extremely concerned that in the event of a trial, Mansouri would reveal matters adversely affecting the mullahs", spokesman Shahin Gobadi said. — AFP

## Protesters rally, topple statue on Juneteenth

**WASHINGTON:** Protesters in Washington toppled a statue of a Confederate general late Friday, after nationwide rallies to demand racial justice on a day heavy with symbolism — the Juneteenth holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the United States. Demonstrations were held in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Washington against a backdrop of weeks of protests fueled by the deaths of

African Americans at the hands of police.

In a stark illustration of the tensions roiling the nation, President Donald Trump issued a solemn White House statement commemorating Juneteenth, while also threatening protesters on Twitter ahead of his controversial rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma yesterday. Juneteenth marks the day — June 19, 1865 — when a Union general arrived in Galveston, Texas and informed slaves that they were free — two months after the Civil War had ended and two-and-a-half years after president Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

The date is generally celebrated with prayer services and family

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WASHINGTON: People stand around the statue of Confederate general Albert Pike after it was toppled by protesters at Judiciary square late Friday. — AFP



## Local

# Health measure non-compliance, family visits behind COVID-19 spike in Kuwait

## Hawally emerges out of lockdown; curfew hours reduced

**KUWAIT:** Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said Thursday failure to adhere to precautionary measures and over-indulgence in family visits during lockdown has led to further spread of coronavirus, warning the situation might "get out of hand." Based on state figures, the Cabinet decided to maintain the current first phase of the five-phase restart plan with a continuous reassessment of the health situation, until health standards required to move on safely to the second stage are reached, he said. The minister was speaking to reporters in a remote press conference, following a Cabinet meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, aimed at discussing the health ministry report on the situation.

"Today we are able to control (the pandemic) and we do not want to reach a stage where the pandemic controls us," he said. Many fathers and mothers were tested positive and admitted to the intensive care unit in spite of staying at home, he said. They caught the virus after hosting gatherings and not adhering to social distancing rules or washing their hands, he added. He urged the public to cooperate with authorities in order to proceed to the next phase, quoting His Highness the Prime Minister, who said that "we are at a crossroads." The criteria for moving from one stage to the other are the rate of infection transmission, the stability of patients' numbers for a sufficient period, low levels

of family occupancy at ICUs and hospitals and low infection rates.

Meanwhile, the lifting of the isolation of some areas in the country came after a drop in infection rates there, he explained. Despite having recorded "very good" improvements in four criteria, the rate of transmission remained 1.07 (the normal being one), the minister said, adding this necessitated the continuation of this phase, which will be reassessed over the coming days. He went on to urge the importance of wearing masks, social distancing and washing hands, leaving home only for extreme necessity.

### Eased restrictions

Asked about the application of dexamethasone in Kuwait after its success in limiting coronavirus-related deaths in the UK, he said the drug was available and abundant throughout Kuwaiti hospitals; however, the amount and timing of administering the drug has not yet been determined. He commended the study, saying it has "very good" results amongst coronavirus patients, suffering from acute respiratory problems.

The Kuwaiti government decided Thursday to

ease restrictions imposed due to curb spread of coronavirus as of today but would not allow public sector's workers to return to their offices this week. The government decided to extend the first phase of a plan to restore normal life because of the high number of infections among the Kuwaiti citizens, government spokesman Tareq Al-Mezrem told the online news conference. He said the Ministry of Health would be assessing the health situation of the virus and would refer the assessment to the Cabinet this week. He added the Cabinet assigned the ministers to provide services for the public as of today.

Mezrem said the government also decided to change curfew hours to start at 7:00 pm until 5:00 am starting today morning. He said the government decided to lift a lockdown on areas of Hawally, Nuqra, Maidan restaurants, 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](http://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](http://www.pai.gov.kw), and send the form via email to: [Jasiri@moh.gov.kw](mailto:Jasiri@moh.gov.kw).



### 'Limited' air travel for citizens

Hawally and some blocks in Khaitan as of today. The government, said Mezrem, also allowed limited air travel for citizens with critical health conditions who should travel at their own expense. Students who must travel to attend their tests will be allowed to do so, he said, as well as citizens who have foreign wife or husband abroad and the trip should be for



Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah

30 days minimum.

Any person who wants to travel should submit a request for the Ministry of Interior 10 days before the trip, he said, and citizens should pay for their treatment in case of contraction of the virus. The government compels passengers wishing to come to Kuwait to provide a copy of a certificate in Arabic that they conducted a PCR test four days before the trip, providing they are clean of the virus, said Mezrem. —KUNA

## Beware of rumors



By Abdellatif Sharaa

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In my view

There are circumstances and events that produce different reactions from the same people, yet there are those whose specialty is spreading rumors, most of which are negative, baseless and even destructive, in addition to rumors that are spread by enemies to cause confusion and create rifts in a society's unity.

We have seen in different places and countries unidentified people appearing all of a sudden on social media and taking advantage of certain events or crises and use them to serve their own personal interests, while claiming they are close to decision makers, although they lack any knowledge about what they claim.

Rumors can produce major social problems due to creating illusions and raising false expectations, nothing of which will materialize. Some rumors may cause psychological issues among certain classes of people as they worry about uncertainty about the future, including their livelihood.

They may create rifts among members of the same family, as each member formulates their own opinion and insists on it, to the point that some families may break up because of a false claim, and we all know that family rifts are very hard to mend and leave bitter memories that will not be erased for years and years.

Rumors may compromise national security, as one may not realize that their rumor will expose their country to foreign danger, especially when it contains contradicting information about an issue, which in turn creates confusion in the society and allows for many to start doubting statements of authorities. They may even spread fears and scare the entire population.

I noticed in some countries that rumors have put tremendous pressure on their governments, because they were widespread and gave people high expectations, so decisions and legislations were made in a hasty fashion, only to be revoked or significantly amended later.

Rumors, when they are spread deliberately by officials of some countries against others, may affect the trust between governments and the economic components in them, especially in the private sector, as one institution doubts the other and this may continue for a very long time. Let us not forget what rumors can do to stock markets and how difficult it is to recover if damage occurs.

Please avoid rumors - do not believe them, do not follow them. Be vigilant and aware, think deeply and use logic!

Allah Almighty says: "O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful."

—Holy Quran (49:6)

## Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has recorded 38,678 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Friday, in addition to 313 deaths. With the exception of 193 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, 30,109 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 8,175 people receiving treatment and 23 quarantined.

### Curfew

Kuwait imposed a three-week partial curfew starting May 31 (from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am), 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 curfew hours were later reduced to start 7:00 pm and end at 5:00 am, starting from June 21, 2020. The first phase included a total lockdown on Farwaniya, Khaitan, and Hawally, joining Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh which were put under lockdown earlier. The lockdown ended in Hawally and Khaitan on June 21, 2020.

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

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

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

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

Earlier, Kuwait imposed a total curfew from May 10 to May 30, allowing room for people to walk out for daily exercise between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and to shop at co-ops and supermarkets once every six days during the curfew hours by making an appointment through [www.moci.shop](http://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](http://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](http://www.pai.gov.kw), and send the form via email to: [Jasiri@moh.gov.kw](mailto: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-ehealth.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

### Mental health assistance

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

Dr Rashed Al-Sahl: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.

Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.

Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.

Dr Mohammed Al-Khaldi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.

Dr Ahmad Al-Khaldi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.

Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.

Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.

Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.

Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.



Local

# Kuwaiti man shot during family dispute in Jahra

## Police abort bid to smuggle drugs via sea

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** A man was rushed to Jahra hospital after sustaining a gunshot wound during a family conflict in the Qasr district of Jahra, police said yesterday. The Kuwaiti citizen told officers that his brother-in-law shot him during a dispute at home in the area, and the suspect later turned himself in to Na'em police. He was charged with attempted murder and possession of a fire arm.

### Drug smuggling

In other news, police aborted a bid to smuggle 18 kilograms of narcotics via sea, the Ministry of Interior said in a statement. Drugs Control General Department personnel detained a person after attempting to smuggle 15 kilograms of hashish and three kilograms of 'shabu (methamphetamine). The successful operation to thwart the trafficking bid was coordinated between the Drugs Control General Department and the Directorate General of the Coast Guard, the Interior Ministry said in a statement. The detainee, during interrogations, confessed that he had planned to smuggle the drugs into Kuwait via sea and revealed where the narcotics had been dumped into the waters. He further indicated that he was a member of a network. According to the botched plan, he was supposed to retrieve the drugs after receiving coordinates from his accomplices. Police seized two unlicensed pistols in possession of the detainee, who was referred, along with the seized materials, to the concerned legal authorities.

### Under the influence

Meanwhile, police responded to an emergency

call reporting a person suspected of being under the influence of drugs inside a vehicle in Sabah Al-Ahmad. When police attempted to pull him over, he hit the patrol vehicle in an attempt to escape. He was chased until he hit a checkpoint barrier, forcing him to stop, and was eventually arrested after attempting to run away on foot. The man and another person who was in the car were arrested and sent to concerned authorities for questioning over a large amount of pills suspected of being drugs found in their vehicle.

### Reckless driving

Police also arrested a driver who appeared in a video that circulated on social media recently, showing him driving recklessly and jumping the red light. The man failed to produce a driver's license at the time of arrest. Separately, Ahmadi police arrested a driver who hit a patrol vehicle before hitting two other vehicles in an attempt to escape. Police searched his car and found three air guns and suspected drugs inside. He was sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

### Registrations renewal

The Interior Ministry said that the vehicles' registrations department will start their gradual partial work today from 8 am to 4 pm in all governorates. Department offices will start welcoming car owners wishing to renew registrations of their vehicles that expired on March 3 and onwards. The renewal can be done without technical inspection provided that insurance papers are in order, it explained. Those who choose not to renew their registrations at this time will not be fined, it warned. It further reminded motorists to comply with health procedures.



## Multiple arrests for reckless driving

## Food security

Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Whether we are facing a virus, pandemic or a war, people will not stop demanding food, and this includes production and export and import operations of grains such as wheat and rice, other consumables or even water. I believe the topic of food security is a priority for all countries in the world facing the threat of COVID-19.

It is a challenge that must be faced and addressed in light of the spread of the coronavirus. No one knows for sure when it will end, especially lockdown measures in countries that will have a negative effect if this crisis prolongs. In April, the UN Security Council met to discuss the implications of the spread of the pandemic on global food security, and the G20 agreed to tackle food price turmoil. The G20 ministers of agriculture and food said the emergency measures in the coronavirus pandemic should not put unnecessary barriers to trade or hinder global food supply chains.

The extraordinary meeting occurred because isolation measures around the world slowed down global food supply chains, which made some farmers unable to deliver their products to consumers, while producing countries restricted major exports, which is dangerous for many importing countries. Stopping exports will undoubtedly lead to a global food crisis, especially since no one knows exactly when this nightmare will end!

Last month, UN agencies warned that uncertainties about the availability of food amid the coronavirus epidemic could lead to export restrictions, which would increase and fluctuate prices, and called for measures to reduce the potential impacts on the food supply chain.

For example, main grain supplies such as wheat are available globally, but some producing countries want to place restrictions on foreign sales to give priority to domestic supply. Although this appears to be a sound measure because of the priority of countries towards their populations, it can result in economic damage to importing countries in the long term.

So it is not surprising that an international report issued by the United Nations confirms that the world is experiencing an acute and unprecedented food crisis. The report revealed that by the end of 2019, more than 130 million people in 55 countries suffered from food insecurity, while more than 70 million children face health problems due to hunger. Also, political conflicts in the world add a new dimension to the increase in hunger cases, especially in situations of displacement.

International organizations have previously warned of the risk of food shortages in the global market due to the turmoil in international trade due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, so the demand not to place many restrictions on exports is important to prevent a food crisis. The global Food Security Index for the year 2019 measures progress of countries to maintain food security. The 2019 Food Security Index put Kuwait in a good position with an overall score of 74.8 percent. The index is based on three basic criteria: Food availability and affordability, as well as quality and safety.

During the past five years, for example, Kuwait was able to provide products in the local market, in addition to the adequacy of stocks of goods for the population and their validity for use, as well as agriculture and local production of food, the diversity of supply and import lines across several countries and sales outlets throughout the country.

But I believe that the food safety that lasted for several years was not exposed to a global virus like the one we are facing today, so caution in dealing with the issue of food security is required at this time, because the pandemic threatens the food security system and supply chains, with production disrupted by international measures to prevent the virus from spreading.

The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council are facing a number of important challenges, starting with the increase in demand for food, climate change and the scarcity of freshwater resources. Therefore, working towards finding practical solutions for the food security system in Gulf countries is important, and has become essential in light of the spread of the coronavirus, which is likely to turn into a threat to food security if not eliminated as soon as possible.

I believe that it is imperative to work to stabilize the demand for food and protect supply chains while implementing measures to protect food security, accompanied by the state's tightening of medical procedures to prevent the return of a new wave of the virus, promotion of hygiene measures in the food industry and food safety to reduce the spread of the virus.



**KUWAIT:** A screenshot taken from a video circulating on social media showing a vehicle jumping the red traffic light.



A picture released by the Interior Ministry showing the vehicle after being located.

Legalese

## Salary reductions

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed



My heart goes out to everyone right now that has to deal with consequences because of COVID-19. It is truly a hard time for everyone. I just hope we all come out of this as a stronger society and really learn from this situation. Many people in Kuwait are receiving salary cuts; the majority of whom, mostly from my experience, are non-Kuwaitis. Reducing an employee's salary under the Kuwaiti Labor Law has always been illegal, but unfortunately, companies that wanted to provide cuts have always found creative ways to do so.

Since expats are brought into Kuwait on visas and sponsors, being sponsored by Kuwaitis or Kuwaiti companies to come into Kuwait, then shouldn't those sponsors be responsible for the employees' wellbeing while they are in Kuwait? This is really a time for us to reconsider our system and what works best for the wellbeing of not only the individuals, but the society as a whole. Here are some of the most common questions and my answers on salary cuts.

### No work, no pay

**Question:** I am in a lockdown area and I cannot get to work. My employer is saying if there is no work, then there is no pay. Is this legal?

**Fajer:** If you cannot get to work because you are in a lockdown area and then you cannot fulfill your work obligations under your employment agreement because of force majeure, an unprecedented and unpredictable event, that is out of your control. Also, if you are staying in an accommodation provided by your employer, then your employer should really be more understanding.

### Pay cut

**Question:** What can I do if I am getting a salary reduction?

**Fajer:** Right now if it is affecting your life in an essential way, as in you cannot pay rent or groceries, I highly recommend you do not wait to resolve this from a legal point of view, but to ask for assistance from charities. In the future though, you can file a case with the manpower authority. The government is working on setting up many governmental services online, and I truly hope that they reconsider how they are dealing with employment issues and disputes, and use technology to advance their services, making them more efficient and quicker, as these services can be essential for many expats in the country.

I would also suggest you document this, by emailing your employer and saying you are getting a salary reduction. If you do not have an email, you can try texting this to your employer. Also, definitely do not agree to go to the bank and take an amount out of your account and give it to your employer, or give the employer a credit card.

Just to make it clear, it is illegal and has always been illegal for employers to reduce salaries. With that said, we know this is a hard time for many businesses also. If you do agree, and only if you do agree as an employee, then they can reduce your salary with your permission. If you have any questions or if you are dealing with something similar, please email me at info@ftl-legal.com as we are now working at the law firm with many volunteers and can try to help.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Fishing boats docked in the Shamlan Harbor in Sharq, as the Central Bank's building is seen in the background. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Red Crescent, National Guard distribute food



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Red Crescent (KRCS) continued its coronavirus feeding program, handing out 1,000 food parcels and 1,000 milk cartons to residents in Hawally on Thursday, in cooperation with the Interior Ministry. Since the emergence of the deadly pandemic, the humanitarian society has aimed to offer families in need and underprivileged laborers in the country as much support as possible, Secretary-General Maha Al-Barjas said.

The society's distribution efforts have been targeting areas isolated due to precautionary COVID-19 measures, like Sabhan and Sabah Al-Salem, pro-

viding each individual with enough food for one month, said Barjas. The KRCS official went on to praise the generosity of donors to the society during this pandemic.

Meanwhile, Kuwait National Guard distributed food packages to residents in Hawally on Friday. Financial Affairs and Resources Management Assistant Brigadier Riyadh Tuwari said the initiative came at the instructions of Kuwait National Guard Chief HH Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and his deputy Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



### Kuwait Journalists Association Board members, the Journalists community

announce the passing  
of their colleague,  
General Assembly member  
and journalist at Alanbaa newspaper

### Ibrahim Yaqoub Yousuf Al-Thuwaini

who passed away  
Thursday June 18, 2020

May Allah bestow His mercy on him



Local

# Kuwait calls on nations to ensure civilians' safety during armed conflict

## Preventing people's disappearance important: Kuwait's envoy

KUWAIT: Kuwait expressed hope that warring nations bear the responsibility for ensuring the safety of civilians and preventing their disappearance during armed conflicts, urging the prevention of conflicts. This came as Kuwait's permanent UN representative Mansour Al-Otaibi attended, as a keynote speaker, a virtual meeting discussing Security Council resolution 2474 on missing persons in armed conflicts. Security Council Resolution 2474, submitted by Kuwait during its non-permanent 2018-2019 membership status, was adopted for the first time during Kuwait's presidency of the Council in June 2019.

Otaibi said he wanted opposing sides in any armed conflict to also respect and guarantee human rights for all individuals within their territories in line with international law. It is important to prevent the disappearance of people, he added, urging the sides to enact legisla-

tion that ensures the registration of detainees and the appropriate training of soldiers in handling detainees. He called for adequate identification and search methods, including for soldiers, through

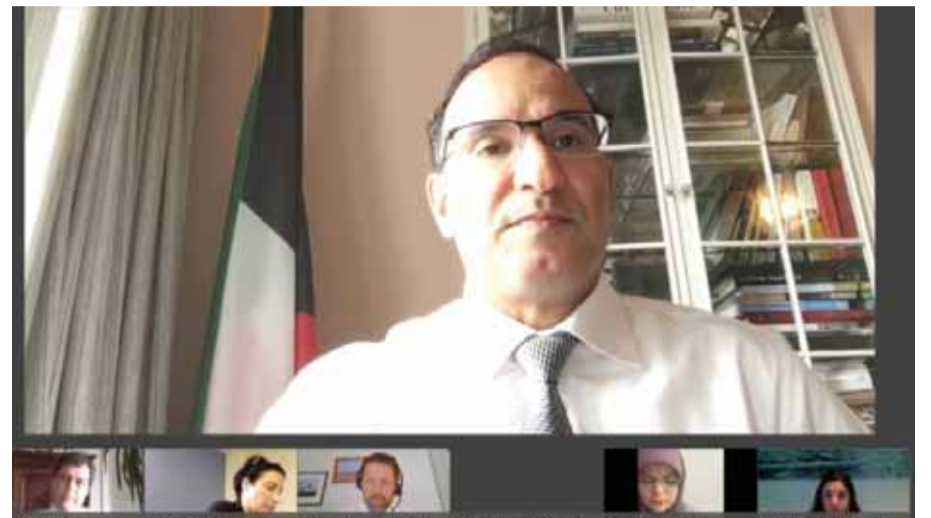


### Forensics helped Kuwait identify nationals

registration offices that monitor fatalities and ensure accountability for any wrongdoing. The Kuwaiti diplomat also urged the adoption of forensics, DNA analysis and satellite imagery to locate the whereabouts of missing persons, say-

ing these helped Kuwait in finding some of its own missing nationals after the 1991 Gulf War.

Speaking of the resolution's significance, he explained it promotes respect for international humanitarian law and addresses the root causes of armed conflicts. It aims to achieve sustainable peace and security through dialogue, mediation, consultation and political negotiation in order to resolve disputes and end conflicts, he added. Otaibi said Kuwait worked hard and long for the resolution to come into place, despite the matter continuously being brought up at numerous Security Council talks and not being granted the rightful attention it deserves. Kuwait's ongoing search for its missing POWs began after the founding of a tripartite commit in 1991, led by the International Committee of the Red Cross, including Kuwait, Iraq and four Allies (US, UK, France and Saudi Arabia). — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's permanent UN representative Mansour Al-Otaibi attends a video-conference discussing the Security Council resolution 2474 on missing persons in armed conflicts. — KUNA

## Kuwait's Army concludes joint training remotely



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Army, on Thursday, concluded the final joint training 2020 for the session of Command and Joint Staff No 24 remotely, under the patronage of the Army's Chief of the General Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Al-Khudher. In a press statement issued by the Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations of the Kuwaiti Army, Khud-

her expressed his pride in the efficiency and high level he witnessed. Khudher and the Deputy Chief of the General Staff Lt Gen Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, and in the presence of a number of members of the Military Defense Council and senior officers, were briefed to a detailed summary of the training stages. — KUNA



## Kuwait opens interim camp for IDPs in Yemen

KUWAIT: Kuwait relief society opened an interim camp for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Yemeni governorate of Maareb, part of the 'Kuwait by Your Side' campaign which was launched six years ago. The Humanitarian and Relief Society, which executed the project, said in a statement Friday that the camp included 200 tents equipped with beds, blankets, toilets, drain system and water supplies. The camp, which was opened last Tuesday, would also provide meals, drinking water and health care for a whole month. The camp is part of Kuwait Relief Society's many projects to alleviate suffering of the Yemeni people. — KUNA



# CONDOLENCES

The Board of Directors  
& Staff of



Jassim Transport & Stevedoring Co. K.S.C.C

extend their deepest condolences to

**Mr. Adel Kohari**

**Mr. Farhan Kohari**

And members of Kohari Family

on the sad demise of their father

**Mr. Mohamed Ismaeel Kohari**

May Allah Almighty bestow His Mercy on him.







## International

# Europe toughens stance on Iran, US over nuke dispute

## A blow to Tehran amid nuclear standoff

PARIS: Europe has toughened its stance on Iran and warned the US against sanctions in the latest bid to stop the unraveling of the international agreement on Tehran's nuclear program. The decision by Germany, France and Britain to back a UN arms embargo extension on Iran follows growing tensions with Tehran since US President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled out of the 2015 nuclear accord and introduced new sanctions.

The three European signatories to the Iran nuclear deal said they had reservations about lifting the arms embargo, a blow to Tehran which had been calling for an end to the restrictions. The joint statement by three European foreign ministers came after the UN nuclear watchdog on Friday also passed a resolution critical of Iran - the first since 2012 - and demanded Tehran allow more inspections of two of its nuclear sites.

Iran agreed with major world powers in 2015 to halt its nuclear program in return for an end to crippling sanctions. But since Trump pulled out of the deal, Iran has begun to roll back its own commitments, fuelling US criticism it wants to build nuclear arms, a claim Tehran denies. The ban on selling weapons - such as battle tanks, combat aircraft, warships and missiles or missile systems - to Iran had been set to be progressively eased from October. "We believe that the planned lifting of the UN conventional arms embargo established by Resolution 2231 next October would have major implications for regional security and stability," the European ministers said.

But the European nations, who remain committed

to the nuclear deal, also said they opposed Washington's "maximum" pressure tactics with sanctions. "We firmly believe that any unilateral attempt to trigger UN sanctions snapback would have serious adverse consequences" in the UN Security Council, they said. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani earlier this month urged UN Security Council members to oppose a US "conspiracy" to extend the arms embargo. The three European powers said they plan to address the arms embargo issue "in close coordination" with UN Security Council permanent members Russia and China.



### Washington warned against sanctions

#### Need for inspections

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) earlier on Friday passed a resolution put forward by European states, urging Tehran to provide inspectors access to two sites in Iran to help clarify whether undeclared nuclear activity took place there in the early 2000s. It calls on Iran to fully cooperate with the IAEA and satisfy its requests without delay, includ-



This picture made available by the Iranian armed forces office on June 18, 2020 shows a missile being fired out to sea from a mobile launch vehicle reportedly on the southern coast of Iran along the Gulf of Oman during a military exercise. — AFP

ing by providing prompt access to the sites. Iran has been blocking access to the sites for months, prompting a growing diplomatic row. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who has advocated a hard line against Iran on multiple fronts, said Tehran must "immediately comply" or face consequences.

"If Iran fails to cooperate, the international community must be prepared to take further action," he said in a statement. But Iran's envoy to the UN in Vienna, Kazem Gharib Abadi, insisted the reso-

lution will not "encourage Iran to grant access to the Agency based on fabricated and unfounded allegations". "Iran categorically deplores this resolution and will take appropriate action in response," he said. Even though the sites in question are not thought to be directly relevant to Iran's current nuclear program, the agency says it needs to know if activities going back almost two decades have been properly declared and all materials accounted for. — AFP

## US' restart hits snags amid new COVID-19 cases

NEW YORK: The US economic restart hit some snags Friday as several states report higher coronavirus cases, with Apple shuttering some recently reopened stores and the US cruise industry extending a suspension. The nation's biggest movie theater chain, AMC Entertainment, also announced it would require face masks at all US theaters, quickly reversing a policy from a day earlier following a public outcry.

The stuttering and fragmented steps to reopen the American economy reflects the absences of national directives on the pandemic, as policies are largely set at the local level and by private industry rather than through Washington mandates. While coronavirus case counts have fallen sharply in the Northeast and much of the Midwest, states including Florida, Nevada and Arizona have seen record COVID-19 case counts in recent days.

Those trends have complicated efforts to revive a US economy, which has seen more than 45 million workers file

for unemployment since March, and at least 20.5 million remain unemployed. Apple said it was closing 11 stores, six of in Arizona, and two each in North Carolina and Florida, as well as one in South Carolina. "Due to current COVID-19 conditions in some of the communities we serve, we are temporarily closing stores in these areas," an Apple spokesperson said in a statement. "We take this step with an abundance of caution as we closely monitor the situation and we look forward to having our teams and customers back as soon as possible."

Meanwhile, the Cruise Line International Association announced Friday it was voluntarily extending a suspension of operations through September 15, beyond the July 24 restriction from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "It is increasingly clear that more time will be needed to resolve barriers to resumption in the United States," the trade group said. "Although we are confident that future cruises will be healthy and safe, and will fully reflect the latest protective measures, we also feel that it is appropriate to err on the side of caution to help ensure the best interests of our passengers and crewmembers."

AMC's about face  
AMC, meanwhile, reversed course on



CALIFORNIA: Medical staff from myCovidMD provide free COVID-19 virus antibody testing in observance of Juneteenth at the Faith Central Bible Church, in the predominately African American city of Inglewood, California. — AFP

its safety policy as it targets July as a timeframe for reopening its 8,000 theaters across the country. While the company had side-stepped the question of whether to require masks of customers, saying it would defer to the rules of local governments, but said it always intended to require masks of employees. Though AMC said it planned to "strongly encourage mask usage," the decision not to mandate masks of all customers "prompted an intense and immediate outcry from our customers." "It is clear from this response that we

did not go far enough on the usage of mask," the company said in a statement, adding that "with the full support of our scientific advisors, we are reversing course and are changing our guest mask policy." Although masks are broadly accepted in much of the US, governments in more politically conservative parts of the country have seen resistance and even protests against obligatory mask usage. The White House has sent mixed messages on masks and President Donald Trump has not been photographed in a face covering. — AFP

## Amid COVID East Africa braces for locust invasion

NAIROBI: East Africa is bracing for a third outbreak of desert locusts, with billions of the destructive insects about to hatch and threaten food supplies in a region already reeling from damaging rains and the coronavirus pandemic. Spurred by favorable weather conditions, the migratory pests have descended on East Africa in record numbers since late 2019 and another wave is about to take to the skies despite the concerted use of pesticides.

"Tens of thousands of hectares of cropland and pasture have already been damaged across the Horn and East Africa," the International Rescue Committee said in a report this month, noting even a small swarm could devour the same amount of food in a day as approximately 35,000 people. In Ethiopia between January and April, locusts destroyed 1.3 million hectares of grazing land and nearly 200,000 hectares of crops, resulting in the loss of 350,000 tons of cereals. IGAD, the East Africa regional organization, said in a June report. But these initial estimates - corresponding to the first and second locust waves - do not fully capture the

extent of damage as field surveys have been hindered by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Until we get extended figures, I would just say Ethiopia was definitely the most affected in terms of croplands, then Somalia," says Kenneth Kemucie Mwangi from ICPAC, the climate monitoring program of IGAD. Somalia, which like Kenya experienced heavy rains and flooding in recent months that left scores dead, had already declared a "national emergency" against the locust scourge in February. So far East African neighbors Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi have been spared the insects, which travel in huge swarms billions of insects strong, and can migrate 150 kilometers in a single day.

#### 400 billion killed

The World Bank in May approved a \$500 million (445 million euro) program to help countries vulnerable to hunger in East Africa fight the pests eating their way across the region. Pesticide spraying operations have been underway since February, helping wipe out staggering numbers of the insects capable of multiplying their numbers 20-fold every three months. "About 400,000 hectares were controlled in the region between January and mid May. We estimate that 400 billion locusts have been exterminated," says Cyril Ferrand, a Nairobi-based expert with the FAO. "We can't estimate the total population because we don't have access to certain areas, especially in Somalia. But we know that it's been seriously reduced." — AFP



In this file photo, locusts swarm from ground vegetation as people approach at Lerata village, near Archers Post in Samburu county, approximately 300 kilometers north of Kenyan capital, Nairobi. — AFP

## Belgium should apologize for its colonial past

BRUSSELS: Belgium is due a reckoning with its colonial past, and things left unsaid must now be discussed, argues the Congolese-born 72-year-old who became the country's first black mayor. Pierre Kompany's family has made a name for itself in Belgium. He is a former refugee turned pioneering politician, and his son Vincent Kompany is a star footballer in the national squad, the world's top-ranked team.

But, in an interview with AFP before the June 30 anniversary of the then Belgian Congo's independence, and against a backdrop of anti-racism protests, Kompany senior said it was time for some home truths. While in the United States activists declaring "Black Lives Matter" have targeted the symbols of the slave-holding Confederacy, in Belgium the protests have focused around statues of Leopold II, "King Builder" of the Belgian nation. Reigning between 1865 and 1909, Leopold held Belgium's central African territory - now the Democratic Republic of Congo - as a personal fiefdom, profiting directly from rubber plantations run with sadistic and murderous brutality.

Historians and writers have documented the crimes of the era, in which up to 10 million Congolese were killed or fell victim to disease and torture, but Leopold's statues still look down on parks and squares across modern Belgium. For Kompany, the monuments should have been taken down and placed in museums years before they became the target of protests and night-raids by activists, as part of a broader reckoning with the past that could heal some modern wounds. "No one would go into a museum to smash them," smiles Kompany, who was elected bourgmestre or mayor of the Brussels suburb of Ganshoren in 2018 and represents the centrist CDH party in the capital's regional parliament. "There is a flagrant reality, it's not in doubt," he says of the crimes carried out in Leopold II's name. For Kompany, Belgium missed an important opportunity to face up to its past in 2009, the centenary of the former king's death, which the Belgium state allowed to pass without fanfare, embarrassed to revive debate over his legacy. — AFP

## Conservative Supreme Court proves 'political bad news' for Trump

WASHINGTON: Just months before President Donald Trump stands for reelection, his central pitch to conservatives - that he has remade the US justice system in their image - is unraveling. Twice this week the Supreme Court dealt defeats on issues dear to Trump's supporters: it expanded equal protection rights to gay and transgender people, and sustained protections for certain undocumented immigrants that Trump had sought to end.

It was not supposed to be this way. In his three and a half years in office Trump has replaced two of the nine justices, seemingly tilting the high court to the right for years to come. But the two rulings this week favored the left - angering conservatives and threatening Trump's reelection. "I think that what has happened could be critical to the campaign," said Carl Tobias, a law professor at the University of Richmond. "Many Trump supporters hold their noses and vote for him because of the judges whom he appoints. But this week seems to show that he cannot deliver on that promise," he said.

#### Keeping a promise

In 2016 the New York billionaire captured the support of the powerful religious right by promising to fill federal courts with judges who are against gun regulation, abortion, gay marriage, and other flashpoint issues. Trump has kept his pledge, naming 195 conservative judges, significantly shifting the pool of 860 federal judges to the right. The centerpiece was naming Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, cementing an apparent 5-4 tilt to the right. On Thursday the Senate confirmed another Trump pick, Justin Walker, to the Washington, DC Court of Appeals. Critics say the 37-year-old is much too inexperienced to sit on one of the country's most powerful courts. But he is closely tied to Republicans. As the White House points out, the average age of Trump's judges is under 50, ensuring they "will make a lasting impact on the courts for decades to come."

#### A week of setbacks

But on Monday, Gorsuch and Chief Justice John Roberts stunned observers in siding with the four Democratic-appointed justices to extend equal rights protections to gay and transgender people. The same day the court refused to take up two administration-backed cases: one to rule on its powers to round up illegal immigrants, the second to rule on gun restrictions dislike by conservatives. Then on Thursday Roberts joined the four liberals to overrule a hallmark of Trump's anti-immigration policies, his cancellation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that gives legal protections to some 700,000 undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children. That added to concerns on the right that Roberts is not the conservative people expected when appointed by Republican president George W. Bush in 2005.

Trump lashed out, calling the DACA decision "highly political" and "seemingly not based on the law." "Do you get the impression that the Supreme Court doesn't like me?" he tweeted. "These horrible & politically charged decisions coming out of the Supreme Court are shotgun blasts into the face of people that are proud to call themselves Republicans or Conservatives." Analysts faulted Trump for making it personal. "It shows how ignorant is Trump's belief that he can manipulate the Supreme Court by appointing justices who will rubberstamp his illegal behavior," said Tobias. — AFP



## International

# Fighting the elements, not the enemy on India-China border

## Brutal hand-to-hand battle with fists, rocks kills 20 Indians

**NEW DELHI:** Death is a real and constant danger for the soldiers serving on India's Himalayan border with China, but until a deadly brawl on June 15 the only killers since 1975 have been the topography and the elements. "We get more than 100 casualties every year just due to terrain, weather conditions, avalanches... There is constant danger," said retired Lt General DS Hooda, who until 2016 headed India's Northern Command.

"You're talking about 14-15,000 feet. It takes a huge toll on your physical and mental condition," Hooda told AFP after Monday's brutal hand-to-hand battle with fists, rocks and clubs which saw the first Indian combat deaths with China in over four decades. In the "cold desert" of the Galwan river valley in the Ladakh region where the fighting took place, winter temperatures can plunge below minus 30 Celsius (minus 22 Fahrenheit), cracking gun barrels and seizing up machinery.

There are few roads so troops - who are fed a special high-protein diet - must slog through the thin air themselves, carrying their own equipment as they navigate treacherous terrain. For those who get injured or fall sick "evacuation becomes an enormous challenge," Hooda said. Getting them to a helipad "can take hours", and as soon as night falls, it's too dangerous for helicopters to fly. This may be why the initial death toll of three shot up to 20 late on Tuesday. Seventeen other troops critically injured in the clashes, which lasted until after midnight, were "exposed to sub-zero temperatures in the high altitude terrain" and succumbed to their injuries, the army said.

### Cold and confused

The terrain is so high that soldiers need time to ac-

climatize to their new posting or they run the risk of serious altitude sickness that can kill even a healthy young person in hours. "For an average human being who is not a resident of that place, survival in itself is a huge challenge," said Colonel S Dinny, who until 2017 commanded an Indian battalion in the region, told AFP. "It is one of the toughest places to serve as a soldier," he said.

Normally soldiers do a two-year posting there, broken up by periods of leave. Those who smoke quickly kick the habit. "With such low oxygen plus the weather plus the smoking, the chances of getting a heart attack shoot up," Dinny added. The cold and the high altitude affects eyesight, adding to troops' disorientation. Weather, which can change quickly with little warning, and the hilly terrain can impair radio communication. Adding to the confusion is the fact that the "Line of Actual Control" (LAC) isn't properly demarcated, meaning that Indian and Chinese troops can bump into each other and believe the other side has trespassed.

"The maps have not even been exchanged so that the other person knows what someone is claiming. There are no boundary markers," said Dinny. To avoid escalations, both sides have over the years developed detailed protocols on the procedures to follow - while also agreeing that neither side shall open fire. If rival patrols bump into each other, they keep their distance and unfurl banners warning each other they have left their territory and should turn back. Apart from occasional flare-ups, when they meet, the troops conduct themselves like "professional soldiers serving their respective countries, they treat each other with that courtesy," Dinny said.



**GAGANGIR:** An Indian Border Security Force (BSF) soldier guards a highway leading towards Leh, bordering China, as villagers carry firewood in Gagangir. — AFP

### Punch-ups

But in recent months confrontations have increased with both sides building up troops and infrastructure. China appears to have been particularly irked by India building a new road. China, according to New Delhi, is encroaching further into new areas, including some of the northern shore of the Pangong Tso lake and the Galwan valley which China now lays

claim to in its entirety. In May there were two punch-ups before the deadly clash in June which reportedly saw Chinese troops attack the Indians with nail-studded batons, rocks and fists. "It is time we revisit our protocol and our rules of engagement so that any disagreements can be handled in a more military fashion rather than fighting it out like goons on the street," Hooda said. — AFP

## Torture video triggers calls for action on domestic violence

**MILAN:** A video of a man abusing his wife as she stands with her hands tied behind her back has provoked outrage in Kyrgyzstan, where women's rights campaigners called for urgent reform of domestic violence laws. A 52-year-old man has been arrested and charged with torture since the footage, which shows a man slapping his wife and pouring buckets of water on her head, appeared online last week. Two tyres weighted down with bricks are tied around her neck. Hillary Margolis, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch, said domestic violence was classed as a misdemeanor in Kyrgyzstan, meaning it does not carry jail time, only fines that can impact the entire family. "It is indescribable how upset we all, as society, are," said Janna Araeva, spokeswoman for women's rights group Bishkek Feminist Initiatives.

"We are only hopeful that those people with high positions will FINALLY notice this problem in our society," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by email. Lawmakers in the central Asian country debated legislation to toughen punishments for abusers and other legal changes on Thursday, days after the clip

emerged. The bill is designed to increase the effectiveness of state policy on combating domestic violence, said Ishak Pirmatov, the lawmaker who initiated the legislation. But women's rights advocates said previous efforts to strengthen laws in the former Soviet republic of 6 million had brought little change.

They said the situation was deteriorating amid a resurgence of right-wing ideology, citing multiple cases of forced marriage and domestic violence. Women often face pressure from family members and authorities to reconcile with their partners and withdraw any complaints they might have filed with police, said Margolis. "There seems to still be this sense in society ... that women shouldn't talk about family problems, that it is kind of airing dirty laundry," she said. Reports are sometimes not thoroughly investigated and women's shelters are short of places, she said.

The interior ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment. On Monday, Bishkek Feminist Initiatives staged a small rally demanding government action that was reportedly broken up by police citing coronavirus restrictions. Vice prime minister Aida Ismailova told an advisory body on women's issues on Sunday that authorities would work to strengthen access to justice and assistance for women who suffer domestic violence. Cases of domestic violence in the first three months of 2020 were up 65% on the same period last year, she said, adding this could be attributed to Covid-19 lockdown measures. — Reuters

## Lenin statue to be unveiled in west Germany

**FRANKFURT AM MAIN:** While a global row rages over the controversial background of historical figures immortalized as statues, yesterday a divisive new monument to Soviet leader Lenin was unveiled in Germany. More than 30 years after the post-World War II communist experiment on German soil ended, the tiny Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD) will install Lenin's likeness in the western city of Gelsenkirchen. The MLPD says it is the first such statue ever to be erected on the territory of the former West Germany, decades after the eastern German Democratic Republic communist state and its deadly Berlin Wall and Stasi secret police collapsed.

"The time for monuments to racists, anti-Semites, fascists, anti-communists and other relics of the past has clearly passed," said MLPD chair Gabi Fechtner in a statement. By contrast, "Lenin was an ahead-of-his-time thinker of world-historical importance, an early fighter for freedom and democracy," she argued. Not everyone in Gelsenkirchen, a center of the former industrial and mining powerhouse Ruhr region, has welcomed the over two-meter (6.5 feet) likeness of the communist leader originally produced in former Czechoslovakia in 1957.

"Lenin stands for violence, repression, terrorism and horrific human suffering," representatives from mainstream parties

on the district council in Gelsenkirchen-West said in a resolution passed in early March. The council "will not tolerate such an anti-democratic symbol in its district," it added, urging "all legal means" be used to block its installation. But later in March the upper state court in Muenster rejected an attempt to stop the statue that it argued would impact a historic building on the same site. The MLPD has trumpeted interest from as far away as Russia, and is celebrating the unveiling with sausages and cake - while urging guests to maintain social distancing and wear nose and mouth coverings against coronavirus infection.

### Paint-splattered Bismarck

The worldwide Black Lives Matter movement following the death of African-American George Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis on May 25 has found some echo in Germany. Unknown people splattered red paint on a statue of Otto von Bismarck in Hamburg's Altona district this week.

The "Iron Chancellor" behind Germany's unification in 1871 is also known for hosting the Berlin Conference of 1884, which became a byword for the carving up of Africa between European colonial powers. Berlin itself has been a hub of activism against commemorations in public space of colonialists, with much ire directed at street names honoring 19th-Century figures in the so-called "African Quarter". But political decisions to rename roads named after figures like Adolf Luederitz, a merchant who played a key role in colonizing Namibia, or Carl Peters, a colonialist behind German expansion in eastern Africa, have met with resistance from locals. — AFP

## India's PM promotes yoga against COVID

**NEW DELHI:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has extolled yoga as a way of building a "protective shield" of immunity against the coronavirus, as his nation battles a surge in infections. Modi, a keen yoga practitioner who has long espoused the benefits of the ancient Indian practice, gave the advice in a YouTube message ahead of World Yoga Day today. "We all know that until now nowhere in the world have they been able to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 or coronavirus," Modi said in the video published Thursday. "Which is why right now, only a strong immunity can act as a protective shield or a bodyguard for us and our family members... yoga is our trusted friend in building this protective shield (of immunity)."

The Indian leader, a teetotal vegetarian, set up a ministry to promote yoga, Ayurveda and other traditional Indian treatments when he came to power in 2014. Modi initially proposed World Yoga Day to the United Nations, winning approval in 2014. The day normally sees masses of people gather for public yoga events not only in India but worldwide but Modi called for people to this year "go indoors". Modi also



**NEW DELHI:** A man stands along a street in front of a billboard displaying an image of Prime Minister Narendra Modi wearing a scarf as a facemask after the government eased a nationwide lockdown as a preventive measure against the COVID-19. — AFP

hailed yoga as a way to ease the extraordinary stresses people are enduring because of the virus. "Yoga has the potential to cater to the mental, physical and psychological challenges. It puts to test how one can live in challenging times," he said.

In January, the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa and Homoeopathy) released an advisory on how ancient homeopathy and Ayurveda remedies could

help Indians combat the coronavirus. But experts, including the US' National Institutes of Health, have warned that "no scientific evidence that any of these alternative remedies can prevent or cure COVID-19". India's national and state governments have also stressed the importance of mask-wearing and social distancing. The South Asian nation of 1.3 billion people is the fourth worst-hit country in the world with more than 380,000 virus infections, official figures show. — AFP

## China charges two Canadians with spying

**OTTAWA:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Friday he is "disappointed" that China has formally charged two Canadians with spying, more than 18 months after their arrest amid a row between Beijing and Ottawa. Former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor were detained in December 2018, nine days after Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was arrested in Canada on a US warrant, in what was seen as tit-for-tat retaliation.

"We're of course disappointed with the decision taken by the Chinese in the case of the two Michaels," Trudeau said, renewing calls for their release. His deputy, Chrystia Freeland, said she was "heartbroken and really angry" and called on China to restore consular access for the pair. Canada's former ambassador to China, Guy Saint-Jacques, urged Ottawa to take a more aggressive stance. "We need a strong reaction from the federal government, not just soft diplomatic talk anymore," he told public broadcaster CBC. The Supreme People's Procuratorate said earlier it has begun the prosecution of Kovrig and Spavor, suspected of "foreign espionage" and "providing state secrets."

The move follows a key ruling allowing Meng to be extradited to the US, which wants to try her on fraud charges related to the Chinese telecom giant's alleged violations of US sanctions against Iran. Relations between Canada and China have hit rock bottom over the arrests. Beijing has blocked billions of dollars' worth of Canadian agricultural exports. Trudeau said Chinese au-



**In this file photo,** Turnisa Matsedik-Qira, of the Vancouver Uyghur Association, demonstrates against China's treatment of Uighurs while holding a photo of detained Canadians Michael Spavor (left) and Michael Kovrig outside a court in Vancouver. — AFP

thorities have "directly linked" the case "to the judicial proceedings against Miss Meng." He called this "extremely disappointing because, for us, there obviously are no links, except in politics."

He vowed with allies to pressure Beijing to "cease the arbitrary detention of these two Canadian citizens who are being held for no other reason than (that) the Chinese government is disappointed with the independent proceedings of the Canadian judiciary," Meng, the eldest daughter of Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei, has been out on bail and living in a mansion in Vancouver. The two Canadians remain in China's opaque penal system. Monthly consular visits for Kovrig and Spavor were suspended mid-January when the coronavirus outbreak hit China. Beijing confirmed Friday that they would not resume until the virus situation improved.

China's foreign ministry has previously

insisted the pair are in good health, held "in a region that is not particularly affected by COVID-19." However, people familiar with the matter have told AFP the two have endured hours of interrogation and during the first six months of detention were forced to sleep with the lights on. Chinese human rights lawyer Li Fangping told AFP their trials would likely be held in secret, with an official lawyer appointed. China's foreign ministry said on Friday the circumstances surrounding the case were "particularly serious... the facts of the crime are clear and the evidence sufficient." Trudeau's foreign minister, Francois-Philippe Champagne, said after the May ruling over Meng that Canada would "continue to pursue principled engagement with China to address our bilateral differences." Champagne said Ottawa also would seek clemency for a third Canadian, Robert Schellenberg, who faces execution on drug charges. — AFP



## Business

SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2020

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FRANKFORT, KY: Hundreds of unemployed Kentucky residents wait in long lines outside the Kentucky Career Center for help with their unemployment claims on Friday in Frankfort, Kentucky. — AFP

# Virus layoffs in US top 45.7 million

## Economy faces a halting recovery from downturn

WASHINGTON: Layoffs caused by the coronavirus pandemic in the United States have passed 45.7 million, raising fears that despite some positive signs, the economy faces a halting recovery from the downturn.

Another 1.5 million US workers filed new claims for unemployment benefits last week, the Labor Department said Thursday, a decrease of only 58,000 from the prior week and higher overall than analysts expected.

An additional 760,526 filed claims under a program for those who would not normally be eligible for benefits, while the insured unemployment rate showing people still receiving aid was unchanged as of the week ended June 6 at 14.1 percent, with 20.5 million people getting benefits.

"Based on this side of the firing and hiring equation, labor market improvement is muted," tweeted Mohamed El-Erian, chief economic adviser at Allianz. The world's largest economy has seen a protracted downturn since businesses began closing in mid-March to stop the spread of the coronavirus, with the unemployment rate climbing to 13.3 percent in May and millions of layoffs reported each week. In an interview with The Wall Street Journal, President Donald Trump reiterated his expectation that the economy would recover by the time voters decide whether to give him a second term.

"We will have created a lot of jobs prior to November

3," Trump told the newspaper on Wednesday. "I expect a tremendous increase in GDP. And we'll be heading for the top. We'll be back."



**CA deficit down; virus curbs trade**

### Claims 'still so high'

The wave of jobless claims peaked in late March and has been decreasing ever since. Yet it remains well above any single week reported during the global financial crisis in 2008, even as states move to reopen businesses and get consumers spending again.

Those efforts have paid off in sectors such as retail sales, which the Commerce Department said spiked 17.7 percent in May, nearly double the gain analysts expected, while other data has shown growing optimism among con-

sumers and businesses. Wall Street has also recovered much of its losses for the year after plunging as the virus arrived, though markets had an uneventful session Thursday, with traders holding back as they weighed the claims data.

"It's not clear why claims are still so high; is it the initial shock still working its way up through businesses away from the consumer-facing jobs lost in the first wave, or is it businesses which thought they could survive now throwing in the towel, or both?" said Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics. "Either way, these are disappointing numbers and serve to emphasize that a full recovery is going to take a long time."

In congressional testimony earlier in the week, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said that unless consumers feel confident COVID-19 has been defeated, "a full recovery is unlikely." "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," Powell told the Senate Banking Committee.

The central bank chief has predicted the contraction of GDP in the April-June quarter "is likely to be the most severe on record," and called for more support to the economy. But the Fed can only lend, not spend, and it will be up to Congress to decide whether to act ahead of the

expiration of parts of the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act stimulus package in the coming weeks.

The United States has seen the world's worst coronavirus outbreak with more than 117,000 deaths and 2.1 million cases diagnosed.

The epicenter has shifted from New York and states in the northeast to the south and west of the country.

Meanwhile, the US current account deficit dipped to a near two-year low in the first quarter as the COVID-19 pandemic restricted the flow of goods and services, while companies continued to repatriate profits back home. The Commerce Department said on Friday the current account deficit, which measures the flow of goods, services and investments into and out of the country, slipped 0.1 percent to \$104.2 billion, the smallest since the second quarter of 2018. A drop in imports and income payments narrowly outpaced a decline in exports and income receipts.

Data for the fourth quarter was revised to show the gap narrowing to \$104.3 billion, instead of \$109.8 billion as previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the current account gap shrinking to \$103 billion in the January-March quarter.

The current account gap represented 1.9 percent of gross domestic product in the first quarter, the smallest share since the third quarter of 2017. —Agencies

## CEO of scandal-hit Wirecard resigns

FRANKFURT: The founder and chief executive of scandal-hit Wirecard resigned on Friday after the German payments provider was hit with fresh fraud allegations that have left it struggling for survival.

Markus Braun "resigned today with immediate effect", the firm said in a statement, adding that the decision was made "in mutual consent with the supervisory board". The 51-year-old Austrian will be replaced on an interim basis by US manager James Freis.

The bombshell comes a day after auditors from Ernst & Young said 1.9 billion euros (\$2.1 billion) were missing from Wirecard's accounts, intensifying a months-long crisis in the company.

The news prompted investors to abandon the once popular fintech company in droves, sending Wirecard's share price into a tailspin. The stock, which had plunged more than 60 percent in Frankfurt on Thursday, lost another 35.3 percent Friday to close at 25.82 euros.

It marks a stunning fall from grace for the Bavarian start-up, set up in 1999 and once seen as a darling of the fintech scene thanks to the global increase in electronic payments. The firm entered Germany's prestigious DAX 30 index with great fanfare in 2018 after nudging out traditional lender Commerzbank.

But since then Wirecard has been dogged

by a series of articles in the Financial Times alleging accounting irregularities in its Asian operations. The company's four board members—including Braun—have been under investigation since early June by Munich prosecutors for "market manipulation", and Wirecard's headquarters were searched as part of the probe.

The scandal deepened on Thursday when the firm was forced to delay the publication of its 2019 results for a fourth time. Instead, Wirecard said in a statement that auditors Ernst & Young had identified "spurious balance confirmations" relating to "cash balances on trust accounts".

### Ticking clock

The auditors' red flag was raised over escrow accounts at two Asian banks, which were supposed to hold 1.9 billion euros to manage risk for merchants using Wirecard's payment services. Wirecard said there were "indications" that the balances had been falsified "in order to deceive the auditor".

The two Philippine banks that were supposed to hold the cash denied having a relationship with Wirecard. "The document claiming the existence of a Wirecard account with BDO is a falsified document and carries forged signatures of bank officers," the

Philippines' largest bank told AFP.

Wirecard's board responded by filing a legal complaint against "unknown persons", saying they could have fallen victim to a vast fraud. "It is currently unclear whether fraudulent transactions to the detriment of Wirecard AG have occurred," Braun said on Thursday.

Meanwhile German financial markets watchdog BaFin said the latest information would flow into its probe that prompted prosecutors' investigation of the board.

### Ticking clock

But the clock is ticking for Wirecard, as two billion euros of credit could be withdrawn if it is unable to publish its results for last year by Friday, Wirecard said Friday it was in "constructive talks with its creditor banks" to avoid that scenario. This week had brought "the worst-case scenario" for the company, CMC Markets analyst Jochen Stanzl said.

"Customers have to do their own due diligence processes, and if this kind of 'red flag' and doubts show up, Wirecard could lose a lot of them." According to preliminary figures, the group said it had processed 173 billion euros of transactions in 2019, up 38.5 percent. Revenues grew 37.5 percent to 2.8 billion euros, while net profits climbed 39 percent to 482 million, Wirecard said. —AFP



Markus Braun, CEO of the technology and financial services company Wirecard, posing at the company's headquarters in Aschheim near Munich. —AFP

## Apple reverses course, closes some US stores

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple said Friday it was closing some stores in US states experiencing a surge in coronavirus infections, reversing course after reopening many of its retail locations.

The iPhone maker said it was closing six of its retail stores in Arizona, along with two each in North Carolina and Florida and one in South Carolina. The stores are in states where COVID-19 infections are on the rise despite a decline in most regions of the United States.

"Due to current COVID-19 conditions in some of the communities we serve, we are temporarily closing stores in these areas," an Apple spokesperson said in a statement. "We take this step with an abundance of caution as we closely monitor the situation and we look forward to having our teams and customers back as soon as possible." Apple closed its US stores as the pandemic hit the country, and last month began gradually reopening the locations as lockdowns and restrictions were relaxed. —AFP



## Business

# Ooredoo Kuwait launches smart solutions for firms for Phase 2

## Al-Babtain: Our priority remains to protect employees and customers

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, is offering an array of smart solutions to companies in the country in preparation for phase two of the gradual return to life. The smart solutions offered by the company include multipurpose thermal cameras, walk through thermal detectors, sanitizer gates equipped with thermal detectors, facial recognition and contactless attendance systems and social distancing solutions with AI Analytics. These smart solutions reiterate

Ooredoo's commitment to being a pioneer of digitalization in Kuwait, and as part of its commitment to keeping up with the latest trends in the tech world and ensuring the safety and well-being of its customers' employees.

Commenting on this, Chief Business Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait Abdulaziz Al-Babtain stressed Ooredoo's pioneering role in digital transformation in Kuwait and how digitalization is the heart of the company's response to COVID-19; which spurred Ooredoo to offer companies in the country with smart solutions. Al-Babtain said, "Ooredoo is committed to ensuring the safety of all employees reporting back to work in the next phase, and for this reason, we are providing a number of smart solutions customized for companies". Al-Babtain added, "The world has changed since the onset of COVID-19, and we must adapt to the 'new normal'. It is our duty to protect the nation by ensuring the availability of smart solutions to control the spread of COVID-19".



Abdulaziz Al-Babtain

Al-Babtain further elaborated, "Ooredoo provides a number of smart solutions used by our enterprises customers to prepare for phase two in which employees will gradually report back to work. These smart solutions include multipurpose thermal cameras used to monitor employees' temperatures and report high temperatures".

Al-Babtain also revealed the utilization of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for facial recognition and contactless attendance to optimize safety and COVID-19 prevention.

Al-Babtain added that Ooredoo is also providing companies with AI tools to enforce social distancing

measures. Line crossing analytics will place virtual lines between employees to keep them within their own working area and will track compliance with health guidelines which also include wearing facemasks.

Ooredoo is also providing other smart solutions such as walk-through thermal detectors, sanitizer gates with thermal detection, occupancy measurement to better manage social distancing and occupancy restrictions to keep in line with the 30% occupancy percentage enforced by the government; in addition to facemask and personal protection equipment detection which informs enterprises of employees not wearing facemasks in real time.

Al-Babtain concluded, "Ooredoo is keen to ensuring the safety and well-being of the employees and customers of its clients, and we will continue to provide our clients and the government with all their needs during this phase and we ask God to protect this great nation and its people from all harm".



### Preparing for the gradual return to life

## NBK serves its customers through 27 branches

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait strives to meet its customers' needs while adhering to the instructions of concerned health authorities regarding safety standards and social distancing rules to ensure the safety of both customers and employees. In this context, NBK has re-opened 8 additional branches in coordination with the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association, bringing the total number of operating branches as of today (Sunday 21st June), to 27 branches serving customers from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM.

NBK abides by safety measures, including checking customers' temperature before entering the branch, asking them to wear medical masks and gloves, and implementing social distancing rules to protect both customers and employees.

And in order to cater to the needs of customers from all segments, NBK has assigned branches to serve individuals and Corporate Banking Customers and Al-Amil Package based on the following governorates:

- Capital Governorate (a total of 10 branches): Rawda, Daiya, Dahiyat Abdullah Al-Salem, Shamiya, Kaifan, Surra, Abdullah Al-Ahmad (Previously Head Office), Ahmed Al-Jaber, Sharq and Ghazali
- Hawalli Governorate (a total of 5 branches): Bayan, South Surra, Salwa, Cinema Al-Salmiya and Al-Salam Mall, Salmiya
- Farwaniya Governorate (a total of 3 branches): Sabah Al-Nasser, Ardiya and Al-Andalus
- Hadiya Governorate: (a total of 5 branches): Hadiya, Sabahiya, Riqqa, Ahmadi and Fintas
- Mubarak Al Kabere Governorate (a total of 3 branches): Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Sabah Al-Salem and Sabhan
- Al-Jahra Governorate (a total of 1 branch): Jahra

Commenting on the re-opening of additional branches, Ali Al-Mulla, Head of Domestic Branches, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We have re-opened



Ali Al-Mulla

8 additional branches after coordinating with the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association to meet our customers' needs, as part of our constant efforts to provide them with the most convenient services since the beginning of coronavirus pandemic outbreak. Our main concern has always been to provide our customers with an integrated banking experience while keeping them safe through full compliance with all the instructions of the concerned authorities as well as precautionary measures."

He added: "We are always keen to stay closer to our customers despite the exceptional circumstances. Throughout this crisis, we have continued to provide our services around the clock through our various digital banking channels, which we continue to develop by adding more services and upgrades, in addition to the exceptional services including the mobile branch."

Al-Mulla stressed that NBK provides an outstanding example in crisis management with a proactive strategy to deal with exceptional circumstances through quick and comprehensive actions to minimize the impact and to ensure the continuation of providing our services with the same efficiency to all customers.

"NBK's team, led by our front-liners, have always demonstrated their commitment especially during these exceptional circumstances, by saving no effort to ensure the continuation of the bank's success journey, and these efforts are highly appreciated by all parties," Al-Mulla concluded.

NBK provides its banking services through NBK ATMs and CDMs for cash deposit and withdrawal available all over the country, comprising 327 ATMs, including more than 100 CDMs. Customers can also reach the bank through multiple channels including, NBK Contact Center on 1801801 and NBK WhatsApp on the same number, or through the bank's social media platforms, where all inquiries are answered.

## Enjoy latest from Huawei with stc 5G post-paid plans

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced the launch of Huawei's latest series of P40 5G smartphones. The series includes the Huawei P40 5G and the Huawei P40 Pro 5G, two revolutionary devices available through stc's 5G postpaid plans with a special internet capacity that offers 5 times the GBs.

stc is offering the devices to customers under its 5G postpaid plans starting at KD27, including the Huawei P40 5G smartphone, 500 local minutes, and a 250GB internet package (instead of 50GB). Customers interested in purchasing the Huawei P40 Pro 5G can do so with a monthly package starting at KD29, also including 500 local minutes, a 250GB internet package, and will receive an additional month for free.

Commenting on the exclusive offer, Chief Consumer Officer (CCO) of stc, Haneen Ibrahim Al-Fulaij, said, "stc aims to offer its customers in Kuwait with exclusive deals on the latest smartphone devices and the fastest broadband connection to meet and exceed the growing demand of its diverse customer base. We strive to enrich our customers' experience through advanced products that are capable of utilizing the 5G technology to its fullest, providing an unrivaled online service that is faster than ever."

Al-Fulaij added, "Through this exclusive offer, we reaffirm our commitment to continue providing our customers with the latest revolutionary products and services available in the market to keep pace with the rapidly developing digital world. This follows our sustainable strategic approach to enable digital transformation and integrate digital solutions to contribute towards enhancing our customers' lifestyles beyond traditional telecom services."

### Huawei's Icon

Huawei's P40 5G series pushes boundaries with limitless potential. The devices are each equipped with the cutting-edge Kirin 990 5G chipset delivering ultra-fast speeds for a real experience. The high processing performance embraces the Ultra Vision Leica Triple Camera's ability to effortlessly capture immaculate photos and videos in any condition thanks to its upgraded AI capability.

The series offer fluent 4K livestream capabilities, a



5G

HUAWEI P40 Pro 5G

promotes high power efficiency allowing the AI mechanism to make the best use of the 3800mAh battery to achieve optimal performance and longer working time.

The series is designed with a matte finish and solid colors revealing elegance from the inside out. Inspired by the beauty and form of flowing water, the Quad-Curve Overflow Display is innovated to dissolve the barriers of vision and imagination on every edge. With the 90 Hz refresh rate, users can enjoy an immersive view over the entire fluid screen. The mounting middle frame and protective round corners enhance the harmonious feel from your eyes to your hand.

The Huawei P40 Pro+ features a refreshed back design using advanced Nano-tech ceramic, polished to be gentle, smooth, and tough, reaching a perfect balance in look and feel. The iconic camera stage and flawless ceramic back are integrated into a consistent design, bringing an inclusive harmony of nature.

The 50MP Ultra Vision camera includes a 16MP Ultra-Wide-Angle camera on the Huawei P40, and a 40MP Ultra-Wide-Angle camera on the Huawei P40 Pro. The Huawei P40 features a 8MP Telephoto camera with 3x Optical Zoom, 5x Hybrid Zoom and 30x Max Zoom, while the Huawei P40 Pro features a 12MP Telephoto Camera with 3x Optical Zoom, 5x Hybrid Zoom and 30x Max Zoom.

Huawei's smartphones also include a multi-spectrum color temperature sensor with a AI AWB algorithm, a 32 MP front camera for beautiful and natural selfies, an AI motion algorithm to detect postures and expressions, AI capability of Gallery Edit to remove passer-by's and specific layers, ultra-fast speeds with the world's first integrated 5G SoC, the Kirin 990 5G chipset, 3800 mAh battery, 22.5 W Huawei SuperCharger, as well as face and fingerprint security lock features.

## Burgan Bank launches new appointment booking service

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announces the launch of its new appointment booking service to benefit its retail banking customers. Accessible through Burgan Bank's official website, online portal and mobile banking application, the service will now save time as well as provide added convenience by avoiding branch visits to make appointments and ensuring customers have a flexible schedule.

Customers can select a branch and appointment time of their choice. With the real-time online booking service, customers are allowed to book face-to-face appointments and visit the branch at the appointed time. Appointments can be booked for the same day and up to five days in advance.

Additionally, the appointment booking service will be further enhanced with new features in the coming months.

Naser Al-Qaisi - Burgan Bank's Chief Retail Banking Officer said, "The new online appointment booking service will give our customers convenient access to our branches, particularly in these times as maintaining social distancing is vital. Through our customer-centric business model, we have adopted technology that will improve our banking processes while addressing our customers varying needs. We have brought to life our multi-channel offerings of which online appointment bookings are just one of the many tools developed to strengthen our services."

Al-Qaisi added, "At Burgan Bank, we are placing a high priority on focusing on progression, technology, and safety. By transforming our retail services in unprecedented times, we aim to accommodate our customers with guaranteed security and deliver an optimal customer experience."



Naser Al-Qaisi

## Lagarde urges quick EU recovery plan

BRUSSELS: European Central Bank head Christine Lagarde urged European Union leaders on Friday to quickly agree on a recovery package that would pull the economy from a "dramatic fall" or risk a change in sentiment on markets, which were expecting a deal soon. Lagarde addressed EU leaders, meeting by videoconference to wrangle over how to engineer a recovery from the deep recession caused by three months of coronavirus lockdowns in most European countries.

"(The) EU economy is experiencing a dramatic fall," she told the gathering, according to officials.

"Decisive and effective action by both national governments and European actors has proven its worth: they paved the way for a rebound towards year-end and helped to buy some time. This is reflected in market sentiment, but failure to deliver could lead to a change in that sentiment," she said.

Lagarde reiterated the ECB's forecasts that the eurozone economy would shrink 13 percent in the second quarter from the first, and contract 8.7 percent overall in 2020, before rebounding by 5.2 percent in 2021. She said the worst impact of the pandemic on labor markets was still to come, and that unemployment, now at 7.3 percent of the workforce, could rise to 10 percent, hitting young people particularly hard.

"It's in our own hands to forge the recovery we want to see," she said. "The recovery package should be far, fast, flexible and firmly anchored in economic reforms. The faster the package is agreed, the better for the EU economy," she said, according to officials. Almost half of so-called "green bonds" issued last year were in euros, the European Central Bank said Tuesday, highlighting an opportunity for the single currency to gain importance on the global stage. "EU residents are the largest issuers of green bonds. —Reuters

## Google loses appeal against \$50m French fine

PARIS: France's highest administrative authority on Friday dismissed a challenge by Google against a fine of 50 million euros (\$56 million) for failing to provide adequate information on its data consent policies. The fine was imposed in 2019 by France's data watchdog, the CNIL.

It found at the time that Google made it too difficult for users to understand and manage preferences on how their personal information is used, in particular with regards to targeted advertising. Its ruling applied principles enshrined in the EU's strict new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Google then appealed. But on Friday, the Council of State, a French government body that is also the court of last resort for matters of administrative justice, confirmed the CNIL ruling.

It agreed the information that Google provided to users "does not meet the requirements of clarity and accessibility required by the GDPR" even when the nature and volume of data collected was "particularly intrusive."

The council said the CNIL's record fine was not disproportionate "given the particular seriousness of the breaches committed, their continuous nature and duration, the ceilings provided for by the GDPR (up to four percent of turnover) and Google's financial situation."

In a statement sent to AFP, the American giant said it would "now examine the changes we need to make".



A logo is pictured above the entrance to the offices of Google in London. — AFP

The matter was brought to the CNIL by two advocacy groups shortly after the landmark GDPR directive came into effect. One was filed on behalf of some 10,000 signatories by France's Quadrature du Net group, and the other by None Of Your Business, created by the Austrian privacy activist Max Schrems.

Schrems had accused Google of securing "forced consent" via its Android mobile operating software through the use of pop-up boxes online or on its apps which imply that its services will not be available unless the conditions of use are accepted.

The CNIL noted in its ruling that details on how long a person's data can be kept and what it is used for were spread over several different web pages.

Modifying a user's data preferences required clicking through a variety of pages such as "More Options", and often the choices to accept Google's terms were pre-checked by default. It was not the first time the regulator had taken Google to task.—AFP



## Business

# Markaz hosts webinar to discuss COVID impact on Kuwait economy

## Sectors with high vulnerability towards lockdown form 67% of Kuwait economy

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" recently hosted a webinar in collaboration with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS), to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on Kuwait economy. The webinar, which was presented by Raghu, EVP and Head of Published Research at Markaz, addressed four key points, namely the impact of COVID-19 on the Kuwait economy, the implications on Kuwait based businesses, the importance of accelerating the adoption process of emerging trends and last but not least,

of these actions, supported by key policy recommendations and short to long term suggestions. The sectors covered were banking, real estate, retail, SME, transportation and logistics, and telecom.

Raghu said: "As Kuwait navigates through the current lock down, businesses of all sizes and nature are grappling with the evolving crisis and trying to mitigate the challenge in various ways. Business leaders need to navigate a variety of issues from keeping their employees and customers safe, shoring up the balance sheet with ample liquidity to ride through the uncertainty amid falling or no revenues and reorienting operations to revising the business model."

The importance of mobility as a key aspect of life and an interlink between various stakeholders was also addressed, with emphasis on the areas enabled by it, such as the supply chain, which impacts the movement of goods and services; transportation services as a means of granting access to students and employees, and fundamental life requirements, such as accessing basic food supplies, medical aid and others.

The impact on the Kuwait economy and businesses was clearly portrayed, where macroeconomic indicators were outlined, along with the multiple headwinds Kuwait is faced with, in terms of the fiscal deficit which is set to widen on back of lower oil receipts; oil prices that plummeted by 55 percent in March this year, and the expected job losses which were observed by sector in Kuwait. The impact on 'Kuwait Household Expenditures' and vulnerability of various sectors in Kuwait was also dis-

cussed, with a look at the sectors that can withstand the current social distancing and lockdown measures, based on the ability of each to operate and survive with the 'work from home' approach.

The webinar showed that hospitality, construction, retail, entertainment, and the oil and gas sectors have low ability to work remotely, as opposed to the banking,

Fishing.

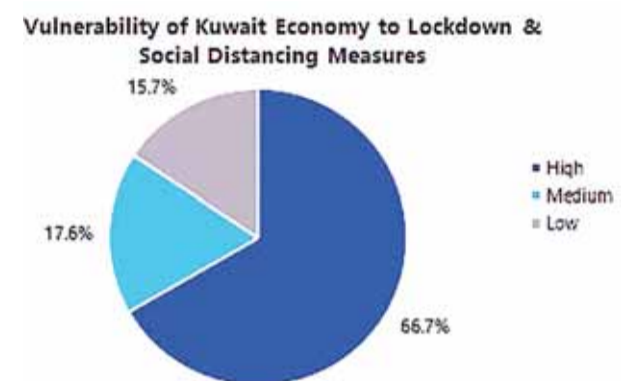
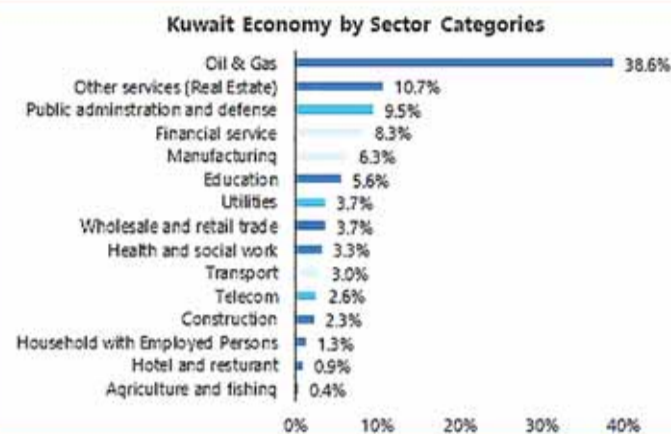
In addition, the webinar addressed the key policy measures that have been taken by the Kuwait government and put forth measures that could be possibly implemented at a later stage. The measures were discussed across households/labor, corporations/organizations, financial sector, real estate sector and labor markets categories

spending should be swift and significant to safeguard the private sector. Another suggestion made was that monetary measures should extend beyond low interest rates and loan deferrals to significant quantitative easing and capital support programs. In addition, fiscal measures should move beyond SME and cater to organizations of all size that have been affected by the cri-

### Pandemic impacts all dimensions of human life

what business leaders and owners need to do, to recover and build up their businesses given the current situation.

Raghu initiated the live talk by illustrating the overall impact of the pandemic, stating that the spread of the COVID-19 has impacted all dimensions of human life, from a physical, emotional and economic perspective. An overview of the ramifications of the pandemic on global markets and key sectors was also presented, with a detailed recap of all actions taken by the Kuwait government to combat the spread of the pandemic, highlighting various parameters, the level of impact as a result



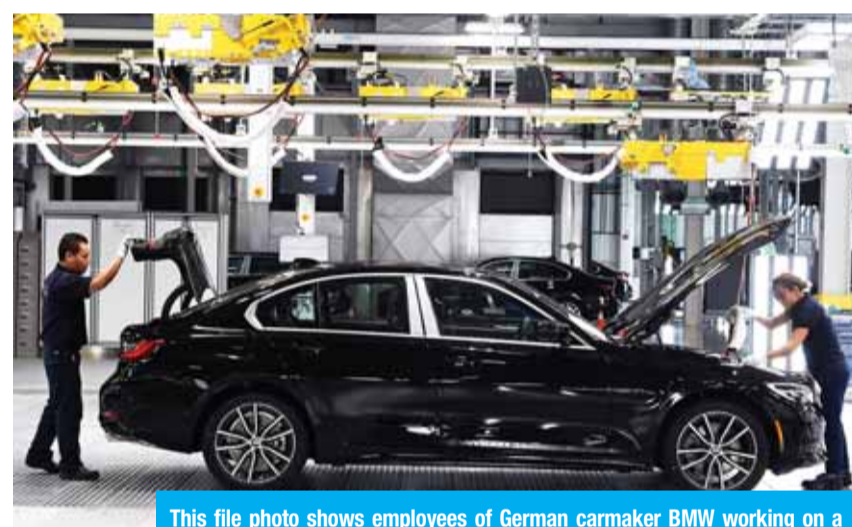
telecommunications and software and IT enabled services that would be able to operate remotely maintaining their key business functions. The sectors with high vulnerability towards the lockdown and social distancing measures constitute almost 67 percent of overall Kuwait's economy, namely Oil & Gas, Real Estate, Education, Wholesale & Retail, Health & Social Work, Construction, Household, Hotels & Restaurants and Agriculture &

from the perspective of liquidity, solvency and legislative measures.

The webinar was concluded with a series of recommendations and thoughts shared by Raghu, where he highlighted that Kuwait is faced with multiple headwinds that are mutually reinforcing – COVID-19, low Oil prices and expected job losses. He added that economic costs will be immense with little or no government interventions, and that government

provisions to ensure solvency through capital provisions to otherwise healthy firms and nurture healthier firms further to flourish and generate jobs, among a few other points.

Markaz continues to engage in strategic initiatives and activations, and share insights that support the overall development of the Kuwait economy. Markaz's most recent input was with regards to a market study on the impact of mobility restrictions on the economy and different stakeholder groups.



This file photo shows employees of German carmaker BMW working on a BMW car assembly plant in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. — AFP

## BMW cuts jobs, ends project with Mercedes

**FRANKFURT:** BMW will slash 6,000 jobs this year and freeze a major self-driving technology collaboration with rival Mercedes-Benz as the German luxury carmaker sees demand plunging because of the coronavirus pandemic. "Further steps are needed to make the BMW Group more resilient to external influences and market fluctuations," bosses said in a statement, adding that the company aims "to achieve planned workforce reductions through attrition and voluntary agreements".

The 6,000 positions make up a considerable chunk of BMW's more than 120,000 worldwide, with the job cuts coming as the industry battles a demand trough and production setbacks from the coronavirus pandemic. Meanwhile BMW and Daimler-owned Mercedes "are putting their cooperation on development of next-generation technology for automated driving on hold," the Munich and Stuttgart-based firms said in a joint statement. The two groups had joined forces to catch up their American and Chinese competitors, including Tesla and Google, which have a head start. But talks begun last year had showed that "in view of the

expense involved in creating a shared technology platform, as well as current business and economic conditions, the timing is not right," they said.

"Cooperation may be resumed at a later date," the two firms added. BMW had already announced in May that it would bulk up a cost-cutting program to tackle the economic devastation of infection control measures introduced to fight the coronavirus. Bosses had already planned to reduce investments, while they hoped to slash labor costs via attrition rather than the additional measures announced Friday.

Now BMW has resorted to slashing two hours a week for some workers and granting others an extra eight days' holiday per year in exchange for lower pay.

Like Daimler and industry behemoth Volkswagen, BMW expects the pandemic to inflict an operating loss for the second quarter. Many of its showrooms had to be closed for weeks. And over the full year, its pre-tax profit is expected to be "significantly lower" than 2019's 7.1 billion euros (\$8 billion).

Europe's auto market collapsed by 52.3 percent year-on-year in May, although the plunge was less steep than in April. Meanwhile 41.5 percent fewer cars were sold in the first five months than last year.

A shrinking car market, a costly transition to electric power and harsh new EU penalties for excessive CO2 emissions were all already sapping Germany's flagship industrial sector before pandemic lockdowns bit. — AFP

## AUB resumes Al-Hassad draws, announces winners

**KUWAIT:** Al-Hassad draws are back! Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced with utmost pleasure the return of draws for Al-Hassad Islamic Account.

AUB resumed Al-Hassad account draws on June 17 after the previous period of business suspension due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In full accordance with guidelines and measures of the Ministry of Health, AUB held three of the previously postponed draws for the following dates and prizes: the March 25 Monthly Draw for KD 100,000 was won by Kausar Islam; the March 25 Privilege Draw for KD 25,000 with Eid Awaad Al-Azmi named as the winner; and the April 22 quarterly draw for KD 250,000 was for the lucky winner Habeeb Hantoum Al-Azmi.

All postponed draws are held to preserve the full legal rights of all qualified AUB Al-Hassad customers who are eligible to enter the draws during the period of suspension. The draws of Al-Hassad include several cash prizes, such as KD 100,000 each Eid and the grand quarterly draw of KD 250,000 prize which continues to be a key aspiration for customers who are wishing to fulfill their dreams. On top of that, Al-Hassad offers a monthly draw of KD 100,000, as well as 20 weekly prizes of KD 1,000 for each winner. In addition to this attractive package of rewards, Al-Hassad Islamic account incorporates a Wakala contract for projected annual profits, making this account beneficial to all customer segments that are aspiring to build their short and long-term savings through a unique savings account with many advantages.

Furthermore, for the first time in Kuwait, the AUB Al-Hassad presents the "Privilege Draw", which is a quarterly draw of KD 25,000 exclusively for Al-Hassad customers who maintained their balances for more than one year and have not won a prize in the past five years.

For all draws, the clients are eligible for one draw chance for each KD 50 deposited in their Al-Hassad account. Al-Hassad Islamic account is an award winning account that received the "Best Savings Product in Kuwait 2019" award by the prestigious Banker Middle East Magazine for the numerous unique features it provides. The features include being a program with a great amount of ease and simplicity, highest number of winners, largest prize value, unique draws during Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, loyalty multipliers, unique online account opening feature, as well as transparent draws held during radio shows with live broadcast on the Bank's social media platforms and much more.

## Reliance debt free after Facebook, Saudi deals: Ambani

**MUMBAI:** Indian tycoon Mukesh Ambani said Friday that his Reliance conglomerate is net debt free after raising more than \$22 billion in a rights issue and selling stakes in its e-commerce unit to Facebook, Saudi Arabia's wealth fund and others.

Asia's richest man after upending the Indian telecoms market, Ambani is attempting to do the same in e-commerce with Jio Platforms, taking on US giants Amazon and Walmart in the vast market of 1.3 billion consumers. "I have fulfilled my promise to the shareholders by making Reliance net debt-free much before our original schedule of 31st March 2021," the chairman of the oil-to-telecoms giant said in a statement.

"I wish to assure them (shareholders) that Reliance in its Golden Decade will set even more ambitious growth goals, and achieve them," he added. Ambani,

63, lives in a 27-storey luxury Mumbai skyscraper believed to have cost more than \$1 billion to build. For years he has been embroiled in an epic feud with his brother Anil Ambani.

In April, Mumbai-based Reliance raised \$5.7 billion by selling a 9.99-percent stake in Jio Platforms to Facebook, in one of the biggest ever foreign investments in India. Further deals quickly followed, including with Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority and private equity firm KKR. To further its e-commerce ambitions, Reliance is also closing in on a stake in units of Future Group, which already has a partnership with Amazon, Bloomberg News reported on Thursday.

Shares in Reliance Industries were up almost four percent in Mumbai after the debt announcement. — AFP



MUMBAI: Traffic pass by advertising boards of Reliance Jio, a digital platform owned by Indian businessman Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries, in Mumbai on Friday. — AFP

## US travel spending to see 40% drop

**WASHINGTON:** Domestic US travel spending is expected to collapse this year amid the coronavirus pandemic, suffering a 40 percent decline compared to 2019, while international spending will plunge 75 percent, according to new research.

The report, commissioned by the US Travel Association, showed spending by US residents will drop to \$583 billion this year from \$972 billion last year.

Total travel spending, including domestic and international visitors, is projected to fall 45 percent to \$622 billion, according to research by Tourism Economics, a division of Oxford Economics.

That decline follows three years of steady, albeit modest, growth of around four percent a year, although international travel dipped in 2019. The association labeled the downturn "The Great Travel Depression," and said 8.1 million travel jobs have been lost.

The group is lobbying Congress to

provide additional support for the travel industry, including expanding the popular Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to include organizations that promote tourist or business venues and also provide \$10 billion in grants to provide healthy travel practices.

"These destination marketing organizations "drive demand and economic development to communities across the country and are vital to recovery," the association said in a LinkedIn post Thursday.

"We need relief, protection and stimulus to revive the travel industry and set America on the path toward recovery." Other sectors also are seeking more support beyond, and a bipartisan group of lawmakers are crafting legislation to help the food services industry, which has been hard hit by the shutdowns and fears of the virus, leaving businesses struggling to attract customers and remain profitable.

Some businesses may face renewed struggles when the short-term PPP funding runs out if shoppers and diners fail to return. The National Press Club in Washington—which has two restaurants and hosts numerous events and luncheons—told its members Friday it will furlough 50 of 113 employees, and cut the pay of remaining workers by 15 percent after its PPP funds were used up. — AFP

## World markets retreat on renewed pandemic fears

**NEW YORK:** Demand for safe havens rose and global equity markets turned south on Friday after Apple Inc said it would temporarily shut 11 US stores as coronavirus cases continue to rise, rekindling fears of a deadly second wave of the pandemic. News of Apple's move involving stores in Florida, Arizona, South Carolina and North Carolina doused hopes for a quick economic recovery that had spurred risk appetite earlier in the day, driving up European and US stocks about 1 percent.

The dollar rebounded from earlier losses and was on track for its best weekly gain in a month, while gold rose more than 1 percent, with futures settling above the technical barrier of \$1,750 an ounce. Treasury yields also fell on safe-haven demand. Apple's decision portends more restrictions coming back as coronavirus cases increase and the reopening process stalls, said Edward Moya, senior market analyst at currency brokerage OANDA.

The \$1,750 mark "has been a big barrier for gold and speaks strongly that the safe-haven trade is not going away anytime soon," Moya said. Stocks in Europe pared some gains but closed higher before the Apple news broke. Investors remained hopeful that a massive 750 billion euro stimulus package will soon be passed, though European Union leaders made little progress in negotiations. The Nasdaq's surge above the 10,000 mark, putting it on track to set a record closing high, was foiled by Apple. MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe shed 0.05 percent while the pan-European STOXX 600 index rose 0.56 percent. Emerging market stocks rose 0.65 percent.

On Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 108.29 points, or 0.42 percent, to 25,971.81. The S&P 500 lost 8.7 points, or 0.28 percent, to 3,106.64 and the Nasdaq Composite dropped 3.15 points, or 0.03 percent, to

9,939.91. Investors have been tugged in opposite directions by improving economic data and new outbreaks of COVID-19 infections. California, North Carolina and a string of US cities have mandated or urged mandatory mask use to contain spiraling coronavirus cases.

Mainland China reported 32 new coronavirus cases as of the end of June 18, 25 of which were reported in Beijing, China's National Health Commission said. Oil prices pulled back sharply from early highs on concerns the pandemic's continued spread could stall the recovery.

Boston Federal Reserve President Eric Rosengren said more fiscal and monetary support for the US economy will likely be needed, echoing comments by the European Central Bank chief, who said the EU's economy was in a "dramatic fall." Brent futures rose 68 cents to settle at \$42.19 a barrel while US crude settled up 91 cents at \$39.75.—Reuters



# Build a better, greener world economy after COVID: Stiglitz

PARIS: Business as usual is not an option once the world emerges from the coronavirus pandemic, according to Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz, who wants new climate-laced metrics to measure growth beyond the blunt instrument of GDP.

Interviewed by AFP, Stiglitz said the debilitating effects of COVID-19 worldwide offered governments a chance to forge a green recovery with a new emphasis on fairness. "And it shouldn't be just going back to where we were," he said.

"GDP does not take into account the inequalities, the lack of resilience or the lack of sustainability. What we want to do now is to lead the economy in a direction that reflects all these concerns," Stiglitz, winner of the Nobel prize for economics in 2001 who served as a top adviser at the World Bank and in Bill Clinton's White House, has long argued that gross domestic product is far too broad a measure.

A decade ago, he co-chaired a commission convened by the French government that recommended a new approach encompassing metrics for sustainability and a "green GDP". "We argued for a dashboard," he told AFP. "We pointed out that if we had had better measures, we would have had a better sense of the damage that the 2008 crisis was doing."

Today, "the most important indicator is the impact of greenhouse gas emissions," Stiglitz said.

"What we've been learning more about is the multiple manifestations of climate change, in terms of for instance how it will affect extreme weather events. What we have learned is the complexity in climate change itself." Stiglitz is not alone in demanding a break with the past as the world strives to overcome a pandemic that has so far killed more than 450,000 people and infected at

least eight million, according to an AFP tally.

### 'No spare tires'

Shutdowns sparked by the outbreak have led to dizzying declines in growth rates and mammoth government bailouts in a number of countries, especially in Europe and the United States. Some of the rescue packages have come attached with strings demanding companies refocus their investment plans on strategies to fight climate change. An overarching plan was unveiled Thursday by the International Energy Agency and International Monetary Fund.

The project aims to boost GDP growth by 1.1 percentage points, "save or create" nine million jobs, and slash CO2 emissions by 1.5 billion tons in each of the next three years. IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol said world leaders have a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" to reboot their economies and tackle global warming at the same time.

But those goals continue to pull against each other, Birol acknowledged, pointing to lessons learned from the global recession triggered by the 2008 collapse of the US housing market. Stiglitz, who has extensively criticized the laissez-faire policies that led up to 2008, said the current crisis had again exposed short-sighted thinking.

"We created an economy without spare tires, without extra hospital beds, we didn't do pandemic preparedness, we didn't do a lot of the things that would have enabled us to respond to the pandemic," he said. "It's not that we could have prevented it, but we could have had a much more resilient economy, more able to respond to that."

Stiglitz said there were grounds for hope now, especially in the European Union, whose executive arm is pushing a five-year "Green Deal" as part of a



PARIS: Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz said the debilitating effects of COVID-19 worldwide offered governments a chance to forge a green recovery with a new emphasis on fairness. — Reuters

strategy to achieve "carbon neutrality" by 2050. But the plan remains hostage to other financial pressures, as EU leaders squabble over a coronavirus recovery plan worth 750 billion euros (\$843 billion).

The 2050 goal is "attainable" and "very positive", Stiglitz said. "But it's not enough to have that aspiration. You have to actually start spending the money. And obviously the pandemic is being a big

impetus to begin spending the money."

Stiglitz said he backed proposals by both the European Commission and by US presidential contender Joe Biden to impose a tax on carbon-intensive goods from abroad.

"I think this is something that needs to be implemented. Of course it would have to be used in a non-protectionist way," the economist said. — AFP

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A lifeguard fisherman and surf teacher, gives surf lessons on the beach in the coastal village of Jisr al-Zarqa, north of Tel Aviv.



Arab-Israeli Hamama Jarban, 41, a lifeguard fisherman and surf teacher, gives surf lessons on the beach in the coastal village of Jisr al-Zarqa, north of Tel Aviv.



Arab-Israeli Hamama Jarban (right), 41, a lifeguard fisherman and surf teacher, gives surf lessons.



Arab-Israeli Hamama Jarban (C), 41, a lifeguard fisherman and surf teacher, gives surf lessons to teenagers and adults on the beach in the coastal village of Jisr al-Zarqa, north of Tel Aviv.



People arrive to have surfing lessons with Arab-Israeli Hamama Jarban (not pictured). — AFP Photos

## Arab Israeli woman draws surfers to her fishing village

Standing barefoot on an Israeli beach, Hamama Jarban blew her whistle and watched her students race towards the water clutching their colorful surfboards. Each weekend she welcomes enthusiastic would-be surfers to the shore, teaching them how to lie and then stand on their boards. "I am a child of the sea, my father used to throw us in the water when we were little and tell us to swim," she said. Wearing a black wetsuit and cap, the 41-year-old's surfing venture brings much needed income to Jisr al-Zarqa, the only remaining Arab village on Israel's Mediterranean coast and one of the poorest in the north.

Her father, together with her grandfather, also taught her how to fish, but Jisr al-Zarqa is nowadays subject to environmental restrictions on fishing. Arabs constitute around 20 percent of Israel's nine million-strong population and say they are discriminated against by the Jewish state. Jarban won qualifications as a surfing and swimming instructor, as well as a lifeguard, from Israel's leading sports training facility, the Wingate Institute. Along with her brother Mohammed, she started teaching surfing six years ago to children and young adults from the village and elsewhere in northern Israel.

While most of the surfers are Israeli Arabs, Jarban said she once taught two Jewish girls on holiday from Jerusalem. On one Saturday morning, some of the young recruits wore blue tops with the club's "Surfing 4 Peace" logo across the back. Thirteen-year-old Sari Ammash said he still finds it hard to balance on the surfboard, but has gained better control since starting lessons last year. The beach sits in an idyllic spot, close to a forest and a river that the surfers must cross before starting their lesson. Ream, a 21-year-old architecture student, travels more than 30 kilometers for the lessons. "I love sport, I used to play basketball, and now I enjoy training with Hamama," she said.

### Worlds apart

Jarban also works as a lifeguard in summer and volunteers with the maritime rescue unit in Caesarea, a nearby upmarket coastal resort. The contrast with her village - with its overcrowded housing and narrow streets - could not be starker. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a home in Caesarea. To physically separate the two places, in 2002 a five-metre-high dirt wall was erected, which Caesarea residents said was intended to

shield them from the noise of the Muslim call to prayer, as well as village parties. The barrier runs for 1.5 kilometers (about a mile) and has been planted with flowers and trees by the resort town's residents. In Jisr al-Zarqa, tin shacks line the shore, while fishing boats bob at anchor, left idle by a dispute over fishing rights.

The Israel Nature and Parks Authority gave the area environmental protection in 2010, restricting fishing and coastal construction. Villagers say they were promised development and infrastructure in return, but this never came. A spokeswoman from the parks authority said they have worked with the village council to invest funds and build a promenade, while stopping construction work on the protected land. "People should dismantle any building that is not legal, we have inspectors to watch," she told AFP. Jarban has herself become embroiled in a dispute after building a wooden hut to store surfboards. In a letter from the authority seen by AFP, she was ordered last month to demolish it or face legal action. "We have suffered heavy losses," Jarban said of her village. — AFP

## Sports, raspberries, but no sea: 5 things about Serbia

Serbs will elect a new parliament yesterday in a vote expected to bolster the rule of a center-right party that has led the Balkan state for the past eight years. Here five things to know about the former communist country that loves sports, food and has a long history of balancing East and West.

### Landlocked country

Like neighboring Hungary and Macedonia, Serbs have to travel abroad to seaside vacation. But that wasn't always the case. Under the former Yugoslavia, Serbia was joined with its Adriatic neighbors Croatia and Montenegro, plus Slovenia, Bosnia and North Macedonia to form the socialist federation. A series of brutal 1990s wars under Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic unraveled the communist country. Today tensions are still high between Serbia and its former province Kosovo, whose 2008 declaration of independence Belgrade has never accepted. With no more access to the sea, Serbian navy ships now sail the country's rivers, notably the Danube that

winds through the capital Belgrade.

### Balancing powers

Serbia has for six years been in negotiations to join the European Union, its main economic partner. But the country also maintains close relations with Russia and China. Some Serbs have a fondness for Moscow as the country's Orthodox Slav "big brother", while China has become growing source of investment. Both powers crucially back Serbia on the Kosovo issue, rejecting its independence and helping shut the former province out of the United Nations. Serbs are in fact used to looking in different directions: trapped for centuries between the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, they did not secure independence until the 19th century, though it has been constantly questioned amid the region's changing borders.

### Serbs home and abroad

According to the 2011 census, ethnic Serbs

account for 83 percent of the population and most of them are Orthodox Christians. There are also about two dozen minorities living in the country including Croats, Roma, Albanians, Hungarians and Slovaks. While 7.1 million people live in Serbia, several million more Serbs live abroad. Vienna is considered the second-largest Serbian town in the world, while there are also large Serb communities in Toronto, Chicago, Paris and Australia. Serbs also make up significant minorities in neighboring Bosnia, Montenegro, Croatia and Kosovo.

### Sports stars

The country's most popular ambassador is probably tennis king Novak Djokovic, the top-ranked player in the world. Though he spends most of his time in Monte Carlo, the Serb regularly visits home and recently brought top players to his native Belgrade for a charity tournament. Football remains the most popular sport, with a fierce rivalry - and rowdy hooligan scene - between Belgrade's main clubs Red Star

and Partizan. Yet Serbs seem to have more success internationally in other team sports such as basketball, volleyball and water polo, where they regularly beat world and European rivals. The country also takes credit for raising NBA center Nikola Jokic, a rising star with the Denver Nuggets.

### The raspberry state

With bucolic rolling hills and rich soil, Serbia is an agricultural country that few may know is one of the world's top raspberry exporters. In 2019, exports came to around 215 million euros (\$242 million), according to the statistics bureau. Come spring, local markets are full of strawberries, blackberries and other fruits, which can be bought in the dried version in winter. Yet the real national passion is for grilled meat, the centre-piece of most meals at the lively kafanas - similar to taverns - where Serbs go to celebrate and enjoy traditional cuisine. — AFP



People eat at a hawker centre in Singapore as restrictions to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus are eased. — AFP photos



People transport their children on personal mobility devices in Singapore as restrictions to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus are eased.

## Cafes, shops reopen as Singapore eases coronavirus curbs

Shops and cafes reopened in Singapore on Friday as coronavirus measures were relaxed - but the city-state's leader warned people "not to go overboard celebrating". More than two months after a partial lockdown was imposed, massage parlors and spas also resumed operations while beaches were no longer off limits and sports and other facilities opened again. "I

feel happy because I can come out... a few restrictions still apply but I'm happy. I feel safe," Mostafa Jamshidian, a computer science researcher, told AFP as he walked through the central business district.

Angelica Stasevich said she was "very happy". "Today it's like I want to sing, I want to dance, I want to walk," the 21-year-old said. Social gatherings of up to five are allowed under the relaxed rules, but people must wear face masks and stay one metre (3.3 feet) apart. Authorities have been gradually easing restrictions imposed in early April that shuttered schools and non-essential businesses, as a test-and-trace effort stabilized infection rates. The city-state's 5.7 million residents had been told to stay home unless they had good reason to go out.

Singapore has the second-highest number of confirmed infections in Southeast Asia with more than 41,000 cases, mostly among foreign workers living in crowded dormitories. The death toll stands at 26. In a Facebook post marking the reopening of most businesses, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said: "I am sure all of us have been eagerly looking forward to this day for a long time! But please don't go overboard celebrating." Potential super-spreader venues such as cinemas, bars and nightclubs remain closed. And live music and TV shows are not allowed at reopened businesses as the noise could cause customers to speak more loudly, spreading droplets which could contain the virus. — AFP

## Colgate ponders more changes to 'Black Person Toothpaste'

Colgate said Friday it would make further changes to a top-selling Chinese toothpaste whose logo once employed blackface and whose name still translates to "Black Person Toothpaste." The move is the latest in the growing wave of companies overhauling marketing of household products with racial stereotypes in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed African American man, at the hands of police. The incident has led to mass nationwide protests for racial justice in the United States and some other countries.

The popular Chinese toothpaste brand "Darlie," which was called "Darkie" until 1989, is owned jointly by Colgate-Palmolive and Hawley & Hazel of Hong Kong and also sells well in other Asian markets. "For more than 35 years, we have been working together to evolve the brand, including substantial changes to the name, logo and packaging," the company said in a statement. "We are currently working with our partner to review and further evolve all aspects of the brand, including the brand name."

Colgate-Palmolive bought a 50 percent stake in Hawley & Hazel in 1985 and overhauled the brand four years later, changing the name and removing the image of a man painted in blackface wearing a top hat, an offensive racist trope. — AFP



## Bob Dylan releases first original album in almost a decade

US folk and rock legend Bob Dylan released his first album of original songs in eight years on Friday with the ten-track "Rough and Rowdy Ways." Dylan's 39th studio album, which comes 58 years after his first, features a 17-minute ballad about the assassination of John F. Kennedy, as well as a tribute to American electric bluesman Jimmy Reed. "Rough and Rowdy Ways" is the Nobel winner's first collection of new material since "Tempest" in 2012, although he has released a number of cover albums in the interim. It sees Dylan mix gritty blues with folksy storytelling, his signature raspy voice delivering lyrics that switch between bleakly haunting and darkly humorous. At times he sounds warm, at other times scathing. In the album's opening song "I Contain Multitudes," the 79-year-old grapples with mortality.

He starts by singing tenderly, "Today and tomorrow and yesterday too / The flowers are dying like all things do." Later he says: "I sleep with life and death

in the same bed." Dylan was asked about the lyrics in a recent interview with The New York Times, his first since he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016. "I think about the death of the human race. The long strange trip of the naked ape," he replied. "Not to be light on it, but everybody's life is so transient. Every human being, no matter how strong or mighty, is frail when it comes to death. I think about it in general terms, not in a personal way."

The songs run through 20th century pop culture, touch on myths and refer to historical and fictional figures - some light, others tragic. In "I Contain Multitudes," Dylan cites Indiana Jones, Anne Frank and the Rolling Stones in the same verse. "Murder Most Foul," first revealed in March, retells the shooting of President Kennedy in Dallas, Texas while describing the evolution of 1960s counterculture. The song, which rose to the top of the Billboard chart, is packed with artist name-drops including the

Eagles, Charlie Parker, Stevie Nicks, Woodstock and The Beatles.

### 'Absolute classic'

Dylan - some of whose most-loved songs from the 1960s and 70s addressed police brutality and racism, such as "Hurricane" - also mentions the Tulsa race massacre of 1921. The "Birdman of Alcatraz," a convicted murderer who became a respected ornithologist raising birds in prison, gets a mention, too. Recounting Kennedy's slaying, Dylan sings: "We're gonna kill you with hatred, without any respect / We'll mock you and shock you and we'll put it in your face / We've already got someone here to take your place." In "False Prophet," the album's six-minute second track, Dylan sounds cocky and unapologetic as he addresses his own mythology. "I ain't no false prophet / I just said what I said / I'm just here to

bring vengeance on somebody's head," he sings over a slow blues riff.

British music magazine NME called the album "arguably his grandest poetic statement yet." In a review on its website, critic Mark Beaumont wrote "Rough? Perhaps, but it certainly has the warmth and lustre of the intimate and home-made." Rolling Stone magazine hailed it an "absolute classic," calling it one of Dylan's "most timely albums ever." "As Dylan pushes 80, his creative vitality remains startling - and a little frightening," wrote critic Rob Sheffield. Despite his years, Dylan, awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Barack Obama in 2012, has toured almost non-stop for the past three decades. The coronavirus crisis forced him to cancel a string of dates in Japan and North America this spring and summer, but he has promised to be back on the road as soon as it's safe to do so. — AFP



Hong Kong actors Ng Chi-sum (left) and Tsang Chi-ho act in the television show 'Headliner' at a studio in Hong Kong. — AFP Photos



Hong Kong actor Ng Chi-sum (center) has his makeup applied before filming the television show 'Headliner'.



Hong Kong actors Tsang Chi-ho (left) and Ng Chi-sum act in the television show 'Headliner' at a studio in Hong Kong.

# CURTAIN FALLS ON HONG KONG'S OLDEST SATIRICAL TV SHOW

Hong Kong's oldest political satire show will air its final episode Friday evening, against a backdrop of pro-democracy unrest and fears that an incoming anti-subversion law will help Beijing trammel local freedoms. The swansong show by "Headliner" also comes after the government launched a review of RTHK, the public broadcaster that makes the program, which has faced accusations from Beijing loyalists of being overly sympathetic to the opposition. For the last 31 years the irreverent show has sparked government ire with its skits and often rough lampooning of public figures.

But a recent episode critical of police, following months of pro-democracy protests, has effectively ended the show, after sparking a rebuke from regulators. Back in February, as the coronavirus first surfaced in Hong Kong, the program featured a scene showing a police officer jumping out of a rubbish bin to deliver a skit about protective equipment. At the time, local media had run reports that police had ample supplies of face masks, while residents and health care workers were scrambling to get their hands on them. The show sparked hundreds of complaints, including from the city's police chief, and a probe by the Communications Authority.

Last month the regulator agreed with the complaints, that the skit showed "denigration and insult" towards the police, contained inaccuracies and failed to show a broad range of views. In a statement, RTHK apologized and said "Headliner" would soon air its last show while it reviewed satirical programming. That sparked criticism from rights and employee groups, which said it had caved to pressure.

"'Headliner' is a satire and different audiences will have different reactions, so it's unfair to ask the show to be responsible for everyone's feelings," Gladys Chiu, head of the RTHK Program Staff Union, said after the decision.

### Caught in the crossfire

On Wednesday, actors from the show were filming their final episode under hot studio lights. "I would like to say 'see you again' but how can I tell such a

big lie," said Ng Chi-sum, a veteran of the show, who was dressed as a dynastic-era empress to mock Hong Kong's deeply unpopular pro-Beijing leader Carrie Lam. RTHK has increasingly found itself caught in the crossfire of Hong Kong's intense political polarisation.

Modeled on Britain's BBC, it is a public broadcaster which officially remains editorially independent of the government. It has long been seen by the city's pro-Beijing camp as biased towards their pro-democracy opponents, a charge the broadcaster

denies. Last month, Lam's government announced it had appointed a task force to "review operations and management of RTHK". Critics fear the move is an attempt to mold RTHK into something that more closely resembles the heavily censored and relentlessly positive state broadcasters of authoritarian mainland China. — AFP



Hong Kong actors Ng Chi-sum (right) and Tsang Chi-ho (left) enter a studio before filming the television show 'Headliner' in Hong Kong.



Hong Kong actor Ng Chi-sum (left) acts with Tsang Chi-ho (shown right in monitor) in the television show at a studio in Hong Kong.

## France shakes off its virus blues as cinemas, casinos set to open

France will begin to shake off its coronavirus blues today with cinemas opening on the stroke of midnight and thousands of people taking to the streets for its midsummer music festival. The annual Festival of Music usually brings millions of people out in towns and cities across the country with a mix of large-scale events and impromptu concerts in cafes and on street corners that go on long into the night.

But this year there are few big set-piece extravaganzas beyond what French electronic music legend Jean-Michel Jarre has billed as the world's first live virtual "avatar" concert - "like in the Matrix". The veteran performer hopes to go one better than the lockdown gig performed by the US rapper Travis Scott inside the shooter game Fortnite in April, which was watched by more than 12 million players. Social distancing means that the Accord Arena in Paris will only be able to welcome 2,000 fans - a tenth of its normal capacity - for a show featuring a stellar line-up of francophone talent.

While gatherings of more than 10 people are still banned in France, its culture ministry said police would be tolerant with outdoor jamming sessions on the night if people keep their distance. Having rushed back to the terraces of their cafes and restaurants earlier this month, millions of French people are also waiting with bated breath for cinemas to reopen Monday. Casinos will also welcome gamblers from Monday while stadiums and racetracks will reopen on July 11, subject to a limit of 5,000 people, the government announced late Friday, due to progress in the fight against COVID-19.

### Red carpet and champagne

Some cinemas will start screenings on the stroke of midnight to celebrate the return of the big screen, with one close to the Champs Elysees in Paris hosting a red-carpet champagne preview screening of "Les Parfums" (The Perfumes), starring Emmanuelle Devos and Sergi Lopez. France is one of the most cinephile countries in the world. A poll earlier this week claimed that 18.7 million people - almost a third of the population - plan to go see a film in the next month. "I only have one word - finally!" Emmanuel Delesse, one of the directors of cinema chain UGC, told AFP as he prepared to reopen the group's near 400 theatres. He said cinemagoers will have to wear masks as they queue for tickets and in the corridors.

The authorities also insisted that screening rooms can never be more than half full with a free seat either side of each filmpoer. But with French as well as Hollywood producers having put back the release of some of their biggest films, there may be very little new fare to see. Instead film fans will have to content themselves with movies like "De Gaulle", a biopic of France's wartime leader, whose release was interrupted by the lockdown. However, a handful of likely Hollywood blockbusters are already looming on the horizon for July, led by Christopher Nolan's thriller "Tenet", about a spy who must stop World War III breaking out, and Disney's Chinese historical action epic, "Mulan". — AFP



Fabrice Fridmann poses with a protective face mask outside his surfing shop in Trois Bassins, a western village on the French Indian Ocean island of La Reunion as France eases lockdown measures taken to curb the spread of the COVID-19. — AFP

## Plants can camouflage odors to avoid being eaten: Study

Plants in dense tropical forests are able to mask their chemical scents in order to avoid being detected and eaten by insects - a key advantage in the "information arms race" between themselves and plant-eating herbivores, according to a new study. International researchers from Europe and North America examined 28 species of insects and 20 plant species in Chamela-Cuixmala, a tropical forest reserve on the western coast of Mexico. Their research - published Thursday in the journal Science - sheds light on how individual members of "complex plant communities" evolve to emit similar odors, a pack mentality that keeps them alive and confuses hungry herbivores.

"Easily distinguished odors are to the herbivores' advantage and plants' disadvantage," said Professor Phil Stevenson, a researcher at Britain's Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. "So, we have an information arms race. Plants want to avoid being located and eaten so do their best to smell like other plants." Thursday's study was the first time scientists were able to analyse the interactions between such a wide variety of plants and insects, lead author Pengjuan Zu at Massachusetts Institute of Technology said.

Previous attempts to understand the cat-and-mouse evolution game between plants and insects relied on the study of only individual plant

species in controlled environments. This is a far cry from the ensemble of plant and insect species that coexist in real-life forests, the authors wrote. To do this, Zu collected chemical odors emitted by nearly two dozen plant species in silicon tubes, which were then brought back to Kew to be analyzed. Through a combination of "information theory" - a technique for understanding communication patterns in humans - and existing understandings of evolutionary biology, scientists were able to construct models of these plant-herbivore communication networks.

"We now know that all the chemicals produced by plants carry information which has an important role in chemically camouflaging plants in a complex plant community," Zu said. The study could also help scientists better understand how information is passed between different species in the food chain, such as carnivores and insect-eating herbivores - potentially paving the way for future research. "Herbivores, consequently, have to evolve to be finer tuned with the information for locating specific plant hosts," Zu said. "The information can be further shared by carnivores that hunt insect herbivores, resulting in an information chain along the food chain." — AFP



# Palestinians try to scrape by in Gaza on World Refugee Day

**GAZA:** On the United Nations' World Refugee Day yesterday, Marwan Kuwaik, a 70-year-old Palestinian in Gaza, was focused on trying to eke out a living by selling snack food on the street. The June 20 event this year is aimed at reminding the world that everyone, including refugees, can contribute to society, the UN said on its website.

In Gaza, Kuwaik earns about 30 shekels (\$8.50) a day selling lupin beans from his bicycle. He is among 1.4 million Palestinians UN-registered refugees in the impoverished and crowded enclave, whose economy has suffered from years of Israeli and Egyptian blockades. "I support my family, 15 people. I have never stopped my work for 40 years, even during wars, curfews and closures, except when I am sick," Kuwaik said.

Kuwaik's parents were among the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled or were forced to leave their homes in what is now Israel during the fighting that surrounded its founding in 1948. He was born two years later in Gaza and lives in the outskirts of its Beach refugee camp. The UN registers as refugees the descendants of those Palestinians displaced more than 70 years ago.

Kuwaik said his family once owned farmland in Lod, a city in Israel. He visited Lod twice in the early 1980s and found a new house of concrete had been built next to his father's old shelter. The new Israeli owners continued to grow olive trees on the farmland as his family long had, he said. "We will return," Kuwaik vowed in his house as he filled small plastic bags with lupin beans. "If we die our sons will rise, and if they die then our grandchildren will do it." Asked about World Refugee Day, he said: "We remain without a solution ... the situation is miserable but we still have hopes." — Reuters



**GAZA:** Palestinian sand sculptor Rana Ramlawi finishes a new artwork creation commemorating World Refugee Day in Gaza City yesterday, depicting a woman carrying a child and a sack of flour bearing the logo of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) with a child behind holding a jerry can of water, all standing before a map of the world. — AFP

## Protesters rally, topple statue...

Continued from Page 1

gatherings, but comes this year amid a national soul-searching over America's legacy of racial injustice. The United States has been gripped by daily "Black Lives Matter" protests since the May 25 death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man killed by a white police officer in Minnesota.

Late on Friday a statue of Confederate general Albert Pike was torn down by demonstrators in the capital and set on fire, in an act labeled a "disgrace" by Trump. "The DC police are not doing their job as they watch a statue be ripped down & burn. These people should be immediately arrested," Trump tweeted.

Earlier, several thousand demonstrators marched across New York's Brooklyn Bridge to Manhattan, chanting the names of black men and women killed by police in recent years. "This year the entire country has had a reckoning," said protester Tabatha Bernard, 38, voicing support for growing calls for Juneteenth to be declared a national holiday. "It's up to us to keep this going until we have change."

Protesters in Atlanta, where a police officer was charged with murder this week for shooting a black man in the back, marched on the Georgia State Capitol. More gathered in Washington outside the Lincoln Memorial and near the White House, while thousands marched in Chicago and danced at festive rallies in South Los Angeles. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, who has a solid lead over Trump in the latest polls, said Juneteenth reminded Americans "that our country is capable of the worst violence and injustice but it also has an

## WHO warns world in 'new and...'

Continued from Page 1

The health ministry said the jump was caused by "instability" in its reporting system, which delayed previous days' figures for some states. Brazil's death toll now stands at nearly 49,000, and has risen by more than 1,000 each of the past four days — though its curve finally appears to be starting to flatten.

Authorities in Mexico City meanwhile pushed back a planned reopening of the economy from next week to the following, saying the rate of infection was still too high. And Argentina, which is reeling from the economic impact of the health crisis, bought more time to negotiate its \$66 billion debt restructuring with creditors, who agreed to extend the deadline once again, to July 24.

In Europe, researchers in Italy said they had found evidence the virus was present there in December, months before its first confirmed cases and about the same time the disease was first reported in China. Researchers discovered genetic traces of SARS-CoV-2 — as the virus is officially known — in samples of waste water collected in Milan and Turin at the end of last year, and Bologna in January, the ISS institute said. Italy's first confirmed cases were not until February.

Italy was the first European country to be hit by the virus and the first in the world to impose a nationwide lockdown, in early March. ISS, Italy's top health agency, also urged caution after last week seeing "warning signs" of virus transmission following two outbreaks in Rome. Many European countries followed Italy into lockdown, and most have only recently begun reopening.

Facing the biggest recession in EU history, leaders held a virtual summit on the European

incredible capacity to be reborn anew."

In Tulsa — where Trump on Saturday is set to hold his first campaign rally since the coronavirus pandemic began — a Juneteenth celebration was attended by several thousand protesters. "We've seen more unity and more blacks and whites together in the last three weeks than we've ever seen in a Trump rally," civil rights activist Al Sharpton told a press conference.

Trump had originally scheduled his Tulsa appearance for Juneteenth, but was forced to change it amid a public outcry over his provocative choice of date and location. The city's Greenwood district was the site of one of the country's worst racist massacres, in 1921, when as many as 300 black Americans were killed. "We just want the world to know what happened here," said Greenwood store owner Tony Williams, labelling Trump's arrival "disrespectful".

About a mile away, dozens of Trump followers have camped out for several nights ahead of the rally in order to get the best seats. "This is a super important moment for all of us... we're out here supporting Trump," said Stephen Corley, 19. Trump, who is facing a tough re-election battle in November and has adopted a hardline "law and order" stance towards protesters, and First Lady Melania Trump issued a joint statement to mark Juneteenth. "Juneteenth reminds us of both the unimaginable injustice of slavery and the incomparable joy that must have attended emancipation," it said.

At the same time, Trump issued a blunt warning to counter-protesters headed to Tulsa. "Any protesters, anarchists, agitators, looters or lowlifes who are going to Oklahoma please understand, you will not be treated like you have been in New York, Seattle, or Minneapolis," he said. "It will be a much different scene!" Tulsa Mayor G T Bynum declared a curfew in the city amid fears of violence but Trump later announced it had been lifted for "our many supporters" attending the rally. — AFP

Commission's proposal for a 750 billion euro (\$840 billion) rescue fund. However, they fell short of reaching a deal. Opposition is fierce from the "frugal four" — Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Austria. But Italy and Spain, hit first and hardest by the pandemic, are crippled by overstretched finances.

After largely bringing the virus under control and easing restrictions, China is now fighting a new cluster linked to a wholesale market in Beijing. Authorities launched a nationwide campaign to inspect food imports, test tens of thousands of people and lock down affected neighborhoods. Chinese officials said genome data suggested the new outbreak in Beijing "came from Europe", but was older than the strain currently spreading there. Zhang Yong of the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) raised the possibility the virus lurked in imported frozen food or in the wholesale market itself, resulting in similarities to older strains.

The United States has the highest death toll by far, at more than 119,000, and the world's largest economy is taking a beating in a year when President Donald Trump seeks re-election. However, top US expert Anthony Fauci said in an interview with AFP he was optimistic America would not impose a new lockdown. He predicted it would instead focus on "trying to better control those areas of the country that seem to be having a surge of cases." Fauci said he was hopeful for a vaccine, calling early trial results "encouraging". Still, Apple said it was closing some stores in US states experiencing a surge in infections.

Normality is returning to cultural and sporting events disrupted by the virus. France said it would reopen cinemas from Monday and stadiums from July 11, though with a 5,000-fan limit. In the country of le grand amour, actors have also started kissing again on film shoots. "No, the kiss is not finished," French Culture Minister Franck Riester declared when asked if social distancing was in danger of killing off love scenes. Actors must however be tested before they resume smooching. — Agencies

## Algeria cracks down on activists in bid to break protest movement

**ALGIERS:** Algeria has intensified a crackdown on an anti-government protest movement, targeting social media users in a bid to stop demonstrations resuming once coronavirus restrictions end. Weekly protests rocked the North African country for more than a year and only stopped in March due to the novel coronavirus outbreak. The "Hirak" protest movement caused the downfall of former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April 2019 after 20 years in power. It has continued demanding an overhaul of Algeria's governance system, in place since independence from France in 1962.

Authorities have made about 200 arrests linked to the protests since the country's coronavirus restrictions came into effect three months ago, according to Said Salhi, vice president of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights. "The authorities have taken advantage of the lull to arrest the maximum number of activists," he said.

Protesters are being pursued for "crimes of opinion and expression connected to posts on social media, particularly Facebook," he said, with some of their homes searched and mobile phones confiscated. Most of the authorities' actions are based on changes to the penal code that were passed in April amid the health crisis and have been denounced by human rights activists.

Salhi called the moves "an irresponsible attack, verging on provocation, against fundamental

human rights". On Thursday, more than 20 opposition activists were summoned to appear in seven separate hearings, mostly in trials that had been delayed due to the pandemic. Those accused include figures in the protest movement, political activists, journalists and people accused of mocking the regime online.

"The government doesn't believe in change, it refuses to listen to the people," lawyer Mustapha Bouchachi was quoted as saying this week in French-language daily Liberte. "In my opinion, it is making these arrests to break the Hirak," he added. According to detainees' rights association CNLD, 60 prisoners of conscience are currently jailed.

In a sign the government might be nervous about the public mood, several academics rushed to its defense in official media this week, accusing a "neo-Hirak" of being "in the service of a foreign plan". But press freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has called on the Algerian authorities to "stop using the justice system to muzzle the media".

"The increase in legal proceedings against Algerian journalists is extremely worrying and indicates a blatant deterioration of press freedom in Algeria," RSF director for North Africa, Souhaieb Khayati, said in a statement. Four Algerian journalists were prosecuted or sentenced to prison last week. — AFP

## Sleep, Netflix for Malala as...

Continued from Page 1

Economics degree at Oxford. I don't know what's ahead. For now, it will be Netflix, reading and sleep," she said on her Twitter and Instagram feeds. Congratulations poured in on social media, including from aid charity Oxfam, which said: "Congratulations, you are an inspiration!". Hollywood and Bollywood star Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who has 54 million Instagram followers, said: "Congratulations Malala!! That's amazing."

Yousafzai, now 22, survived being shot in the head by a Taliban gunman in 2012, after she was targeted for her campaign against efforts by the Taliban to deny women education. She had become known as an 11-year-old writing a blog under a pen

name for the BBC about living under the rule of the Pakistani Taliban. A gunman arrived at her school, asking for her by name. He opened fire on her and two classmates on a bus.

She was airlifted to a hospital first in Pakistan and then to an intensive care unit in England for multiple operations. After recovering, Yousafzai attended school in England, before winning the place at Oxford. At the age of 17, in 2014, Yousafzai became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for her education advocacy. Through her Malala Fund, she has also become a global symbol of the resilience of women in the face of repression.

"Like many of you, the pandemic has changed a lot about my final year of university," she wrote in a post to graduates in the Malala Fund's digital newsletter for young women, Assembly, speaking about how her brothers kept interrupting her studies. "It's hard not to think about all the moments we're missing. But we didn't miss out on the most important thing: Our education." — Reuters

## Modi downplays clash; China hands...

Continued from Page 1

personnel," Zhao said. The Indian army did not comment on the release, which according to the source took place on Thursday evening, instead referring to a government statement that said all of its soldiers were accounted for.

India has said the Chinese side also suffered casualties in the clash, but China has not disclosed any. Military officials have since held talks, but there is no sign of a breakthrough. "The situation remains as it was, there is no disengagement, but there is also no further buildup of forces," said a second Indian government source, who is aware of the ground situation. The official said at least 76 Indian troops were wounded during the clash, and had been hospitalized. "No one is critical as of now," he said.

Funerals for the Indian soldiers, many attended by thousands of people, have become rallying

points for calls to boycott China. Chinese flags and posters of China's President Xi Jinping have been burned in several cities. The Indian Premier League, the world's wealthiest cricket tournament, said its governing council would meet next week to "review" sponsorship deals after "the border skirmish that resulted in the martyrdom of our brave" soldiers. The league's title sponsor is Chinese telephone maker Vivo.

The United States offered condolences to India on Friday. "We extend our deepest condolences to the people of India for the lives lost as a result of the recent confrontation with China," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a message posted on Twitter. "We will remember the soldiers' families, loved ones, and communities as they grieve."

Having actively sought greater economic engagement with China, Modi is compelled to review the state of those ties, just at a time when Sino-US relations have also deteriorated. As a non-aligned nation, India has always sought to balance the influence of super-powers. But in the past two decades, New Delhi has built closer political and defense ties with Washington, and the United States has become one of India's top arms suppliers. — Agencies



Stars

Daily SuDoku

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very hard

Firday's Solution

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

hard

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

This is a good day to stand up for yourself and make it known that you aren't a pushover, Aries. Use the powerful energy of the day to follow through on projects that may have lost momentum. Pick up the reins and take control of the direction of your life. Feel free to be more aggressive than you normally would. Show others your incredible worth.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

There is no need to frown when another person walks by just because you don't know that person, Libra. You must break the habit of living your life in fear. Take active steps toward curing this trend by not stepping down when strong forces try to intimidate you with brute strength. Promote the picture of peace and serenity that you have inside your head. Bring out more of your inner self.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

If you want to shine brightly, Taurus, then do so. Maintaining balance includes sometimes being a bit selfish. Feel free to radiate your beauty to the world. If you aren't in a situation that makes you happy, change the situation. There's no reason for you to be miserable. Don't allow yourself to be pushed around by other people's whims. Be free, be yourself, even if it means you might create tension with others.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A blast of energy is headed your way today, Scorpio. You'll find that there is no shortage of adrenaline in your system. Don't delay - there are opportunities now that may not be there for you later. Action is the name of the game. You'll be noticed and properly rewarded for your efforts. Your emotions have a great deal of strength now.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

People would be wise to get out of your way today, Gemini. You might find yourself feeling like a steam engine that's stoked to the brim with fiery hot coals. You're likely to be adamant about your course, and no one is going to be able to pull you off track. If people look carefully, they might even be able to see the steam coming out of your ears.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You could run into some emotional roadblocks today, Sagittarius. This could be due to a lack of honesty on your part. Make sure you're sticking to the truth at all times. A strong, forceful energy could challenge your ego. Don't be surprised if this force is emotionally highly charged. Conflict is apt to result if you aren't honest about your feelings as soon as they arise.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

The fiery energy of the day is helping you press on with projects you have in the works. Set things in motion now, Cancer. Move out of the background and onto center stage. Your rocket is fueled and ready to take off. All you have to do now is ignite the engine. Use the power of your emotions to deliver a boost that will propel you to the stars.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

There is a fun-loving, boisterous energy to the day that should give you a great deal of power and self-confidence. You'll be extremely effective in everything you put your hand to, Capricorn. Remember to love yourself and believe in the things you say and do. Generate passionate love from your heart. No one will be able to respond with anything but the same.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You might be charged with energy but feel you have nowhere to aim it, Leo. The force is there, but the goal may not be. Talking with others may only confuse you. Listen to yourself. You know yourself better than anyone else does. You have nothing to fear. Don't let doubt consume you. If it doesn't seem like the right time to make a move, don't worry. There's nothing wrong with stillness.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You might be getting a bit forceful with your emotions today, Aquarius. Don't be surprised if you're like a fire-breathing dragon when you speak. Sparks are apt to fly. Strong feelings have been building up inside you. Now is the time to release them in all their intensity. People need to hear the things you have to say. You're doing yourself and others a disservice by keeping it all bottled up inside.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

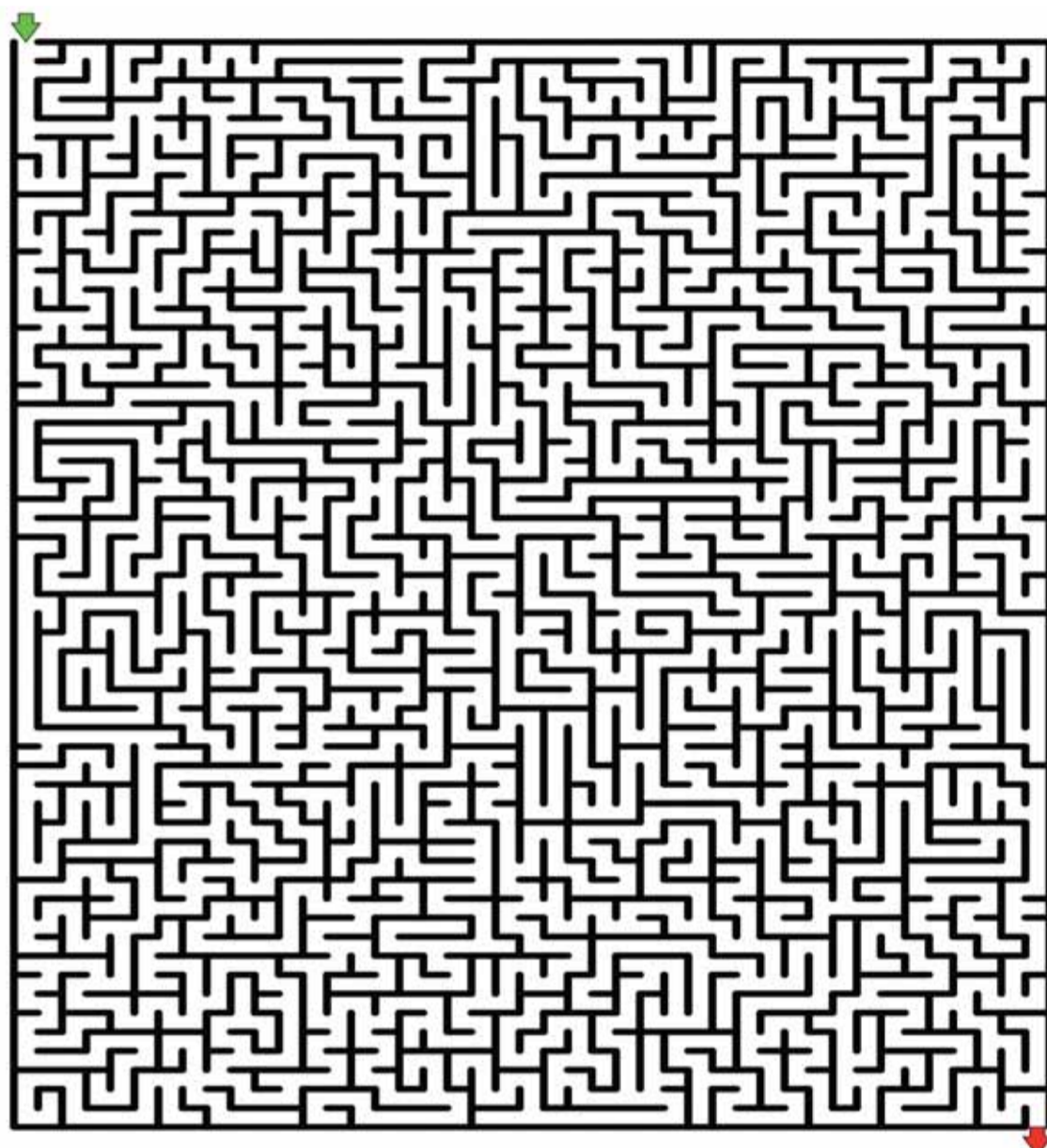
Arguments that have been brewing are coming to a climactic point for you, Virgo. Don't be surprised if heated opposition rears its head today. This is likely a result of your own doing. Cycles of anger are reaching a critical point, and your stubborn character is butting heads with an equally strong force. Try not to take yourself too seriously. Life is meant to be fun. Our objective is to be happy.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is a fantastic day for you, Pisces. You'll have a great deal of physical power. Engage in activities that put this strength to good use. Tackle projects vigorously and feel free to speak up. Make sure that the whole world knows that you're handling every task. People would be unwise to cross you today, because you have a great deal of warrior energy and won't hesitate to strike back.

Find the way



Join the dots



Word Scramble

Beauty And The Beast  
Word Scramble



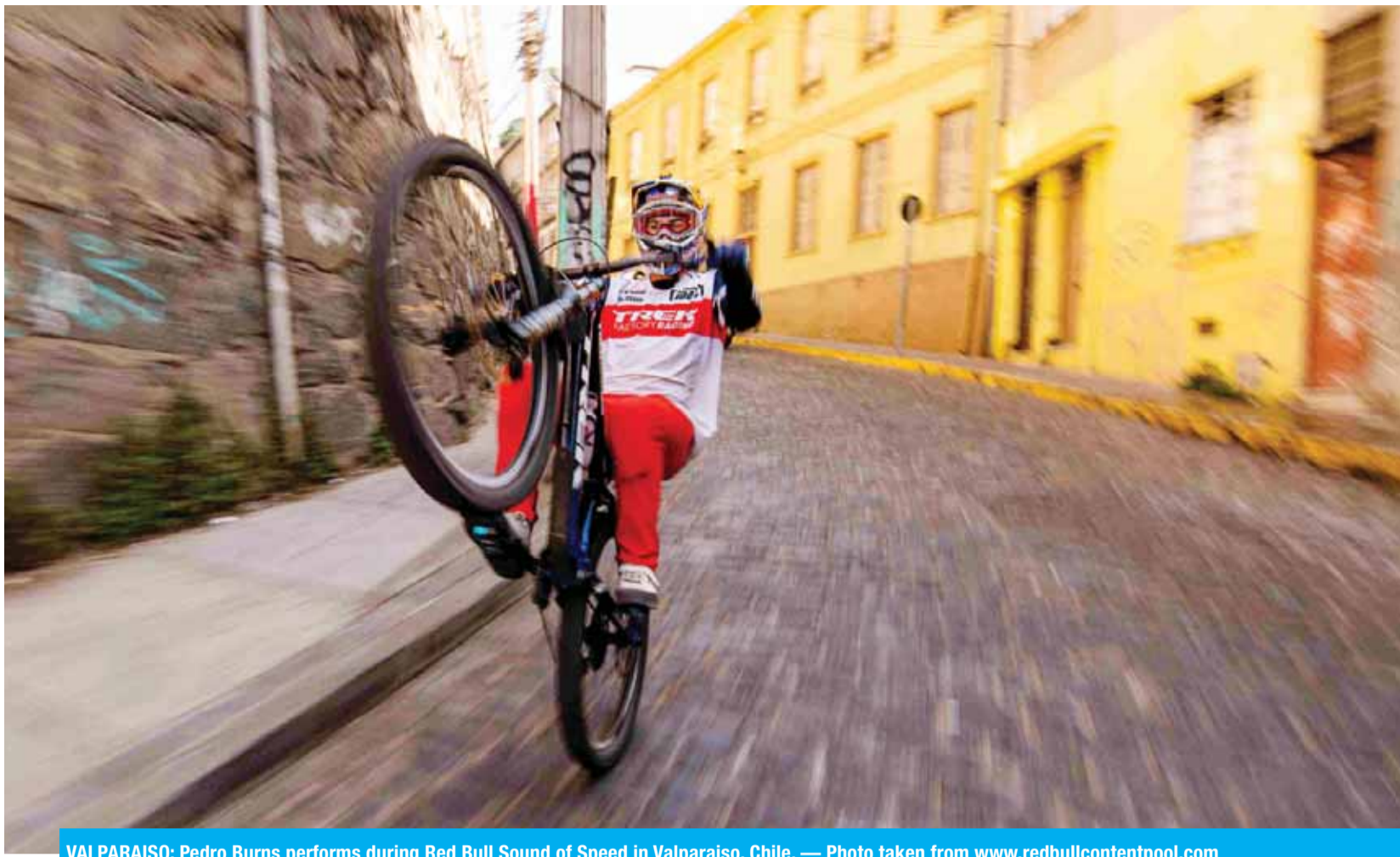
Belle is trying to help the servants to clean up the Beast's castle which is in a state of disarray. Can you sort out the words and help her out? Watch out! Some of the words are actually two.

- |           |       |          |       |
|-----------|-------|----------|-------|
| UTERVENDA | _____ | AICMG    | _____ |
| EUIMLRE   | _____ | OREWT    | _____ |
| ORSE      | _____ | MRIGRAEA | _____ |
| RRYAIBL   | _____ | ELLEB    | _____ |
| RSGOOTHCW | _____ | IMRROR   | _____ |
| RECAIUM   | _____ | OSIRENPR | _____ |
| TGASNO    | _____ | SOLVEW   | _____ |
| OULEF     | _____ | VOEL     | _____ |
| BATES     | _____ | CETSLA   | _____ |
| DNIERN    | _____ | ILAGLVE  | _____ |
| SOWDO     | _____ | NWWSTEIG | _____ |
| BERLJAL   | _____ | CPhi     | _____ |



## Sports

## Photo of the Day



VALPARAISO: Pedro Burns performs during Red Bull Sound of Speed in Valparaiso, Chile. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

FIA green lights  
F1 world  
championship start

PARIS: Motor racing chiefs on Friday rubber-stamped the start of the Formula One world championship with, as expected, eight races in Europe between July and September.

The 2020 campaign, which should have got underway in mid-March in Australia, will open on July 5 at the Red Bull Ring in Spielberg, Austria, behind closed doors. There will be reduced numbers of people in the paddock following strict health protocols.

A second GP is planned in Spielberg on July 12, before Hungary (at the Hungaroring in Budapest) on July 19. Back-to-back events follow in Great Britain (at Silverstone) on August 2 and 9, Spain (at Barcelona) on August 16, Belgium (Spa) on August 30 and Italy (Monza) on September 6.

The continuation of the season, not yet revealed, should in principle take teams and drivers to Asia and the Americas, before finishing in the Middle East in mid-December. Measures to combat the spread of Covid-19 initially provide for the absence of spectators and the reduction of the number of people present on the circuits.

This includes teams, officials, security and media. These will be divided into secure groups and regularly tested. In the event of a positive case, those individuals concerned will be isolated and replaced.

To allow compliance with social and physical distancing measures, the FIA on Friday also authorised race marshals to "operate remotely in exceptional circumstances".

Limits will also be placed on the number of people allowed on the starting grid while podium protocols will also be reviewed. — AFP

# World number one Djokovic puts positive spin on US Open plan

## Cheers to ATP, US Open for further perpetuating my unemployment

PARIS: World number one Novak Djokovic appeared to row back on scepticism over plans to stage the US Open, saying he was "extremely happy" the Grand Slam had escaped the coronavirus cull which claimed Wimbledon and much of the season.

Djokovic had initially voiced unease over the United States Tennis Association's intention to keep the event starting on August 31 at Flushing Meadows despite New York being the hardest-hit city by the US coronavirus crisis.

He described health protocols as "extreme" and "impossible". However, organisers will have been encouraged by the positive noises coming from the three-time US Open champion on Thursday.

"I'm extremely happy and excited to see that all the tournaments, especially Grand Slams, are organising their events," the Serb said in reference also to the French Open, rescheduled now to start in late September.

"I think that a lot of people were sceptical, especially for the US events considering what the US went through as a country during this pandemic," the 17-time Grand Slam winner told Eurosport's Tennis Legends podcast.

"So a lot of people, including myself, were quite sceptical on whether it would happen or not.

"We are very glad that it is happening, of course, and it is very important that we provide opportunities, we provide jobs, we provide opportunities for players to compete.

"Because at the end of the day, this is what we do! As tennis professionals we love the sport; we are pas-

sionate about it. We miss competing and travelling and, at the end of the day, we miss being on tour. So I think this is very positive news."

The 33-year-old said he hoped the stringent restrictions including the existing ban on South American players travelling to compete would be eased before the Grand Slam gets underway.

"Let's hope that in the next two months some of those restrictions will loosen up a bit and that we will have a great, great tournament."

### 'PERPETUATING MY UNEMPLOYMENT'

This month Djokovic had said that most players he had spoken to had "a rather negative view" about playing in New York, and predicted some would instead switch to the delayed clay court season.

A number of other players have also expressed doubts over the US Open including defending champion Rafael Nadal who said that he would not take part if the event was taking place now.

Women's world number one Ashleigh Barty as well as Wimbledon champion Simona Halep have also expressed reservations.

The US Open will be played without fans in attendance while strict health protocols will be in place.

However, there has been anger at the decision to drop qualifying from the tournament. "Cheers to ATP and US Open for further perpetuating my unemployment," tweeted world number 195 Mitchell Krueger of the United States.

Sachia Vickery, the women's world number 158,

holding my breath. I am his fan. I am his friend," tweeted former world Formula One champion Mario Andretti. "Please do what I'm doing and pray pray for this wonderful man."

### 'TRULY INSPIRATIONAL'

Zanardi's life changed forever on September 15, 2001 when he crashed at 320kmh at Lausitzring while taking part in a CART race. But what could have been the end of the sports career for the former Lotus and Williams Formula One driver from Bologna proved to be the start of another.

Zanardi adapted to his prosthetic legs and was back competing in the final race of the European Touring Car Championship at Monza in 2003 driving for BMW.

"Although the situation was really bad at the time, I set myself the goal of leading a normal life again at some time in the future," Zanardi said at the time.

"Today, I can walk, I swim, I go skiing." In addition to his Paralympic medals, Zanardi also competed in the gruelling Ironman triathlon in Hawaii in October 2014.

His most recent feat was last September when he achieved a new Paralympic triathlon world record time at the Ironman of Cervia, Italy of 8 hours, 25 minutes and 30 seconds.

It was a record which he achieved a few days after the conquest of two gold and a silver medal at the world championships in London.

"Alex is one of life's truly inspirational people and as we all know, a fighter through and through. Stay strong and Forza Alex," his former Williams team wrote on Twitter.

"Alex has already had his share of bad luck, which he transcended with a mighty determination and spirit to win again," said former F1 driver Martin Brundle. "Let's hope he's fine and this is nowhere near as serious as it sounds from reports."

Zanardi raced for Jordan, Minardi and Lotus in Formula 1 in the early 1990s before switching to the CART championship in the United States where he was series champion in 1997 and 1998. Zanardi returned to F1 with Williams in 1999 before heading back to the CART series. — AFP



BELGRADE: File photo shows Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic returns the ball to Serbian tennis player Viktor Troicki during their single match at a charity exhibition hosted by Novak Djokovic, on June 13, 2020 in Belgrade. — AFP

tweeted: "What a slap in the face to all the players in qualifying that won't even have a chance to compete and who literally depend on the money from grand slams to survive."

Wary of the fall-out, the USTA said \$6.6 million will be put aside as compensation for those affected by missing out on the 128-player main draw. There was also anger too at the decision not to stage a wheelchair tournament at the US Open this year.

"Massively disappointed to find out on Twitter this

morning that the @usopen plan on cutting wheelchair tennis from this year's tournament," tweeted Paralympic champion Gordon Reid, who is also a four-time doubles winner in New York.

"The wheelchair players have had ZERO communication or consultation from either the ITF or the Grand Slam around this decision." International Paralympic Committee president Andrew Parsons added: "The decision has left a lot of the athlete community rightly upset and angered". — AFP

## Ex-F1 driver Zanardi 'in serious condition' after bike crash

MILAN: Ex-Formula One driver Alex Zanardi, who had both legs amputated in a motor racing accident almost 20 years ago before going on to become a Paralympic champion, was in an "extremely serious condition" in hospital on Friday after crashing into a truck while competing in a handbike race in Italy.

Zanardi was participating in one of the stages of the 'Obiettivo tricolore' relay race in Tuscany when he lost control of his bike on a descent and crossed into the path of an oncoming truck near Montalcino.

The 53-year-old was airlifted to hospital in nearby Siena where he underwent emergency surgery for serious head and facial injuries before being transferred to intensive care.

"Due to the serious head injury, the neurosurgery and facial intervention began shortly after 7 pm and ended shortly before 10 pm," the hospital said in a statement.

"The patient was then transferred to intensive care. His condition is very serious." Mario Valentini, coach of the Italian Paracycling national team, told Corriere Della Sera newspaper: "Alex lost control of the handbike, rolled over twice and collided with a trailer truck. The collision was terrible."

Italy's Zanardi was a former Grand Prix driver who twice won the CART championship in the United States before having both his legs amputated following an accident on the Lausitzring track in Germany in 2001.

He went on to win four gold medals on his handbike in the 2012 and 2016 Paralympic Games, and two silver medals, and ten world championship titles.

"I am so anxious and frightened about Alex Zanardi that I'm

## MLB closes all spring sites as COVID-19 spreads

FLORIDA: With coronavirus infections on the rise in Florida and Arizona, Major League Baseball is closing all spring training sites to have them undergo thorough cleaning, multiple media outlets reported late Friday night.

Earlier Friday, the Philadelphia Phillies, Toronto Blue Jays and San Francisco Giants shut down their training facilities due to positive tests for the coronavirus, and the Houston Astros and Los Angeles Angels announced that players had contracted COVID-19. The spread of the virus at baseball facilities coincides with statewide spikes in both Florida and Arizona. The Florida Department of Health confirmed an additional 3,822 cases on Friday — the highest number of reported cases in the state in a single day. Arizona also saw a single-day high of 3,246 new COVID-19 cases on Friday, per the state's Department of Health Services.

The Phillies closed their Clearwater, Fla., campus after five players and three staff members tested positive for the coronavirus.

The Blue Jays shut their training site in nearby Dunedin, Fla., after a player exhibited symptoms of COVID-19, multiple media outlets reported.

The Giants' camp in Scottsdale, Ariz., was

closed after a person who recently was on site as well as a family member came down with symptoms of the coronavirus. Test results for COVID-19 were pending, Giants president of baseball operations Farhan Zaidi told The Athletic.

The Astros stated in a press release that an unnamed player who had been training at the team's West Palm Beach, Fla., facility tested positive. According to the team, the player dealt with only minor symptoms and was making a smooth recovery.

Angels general manager Billy Eppler told reporters that the organization had two players with COVID-19, but he would not say whether they were major-leaguers or minor-leaguers. The Phillies did not identify the affected players or staff members. In the case of the Blue Jays, ESPN's Jeff Passan reported that the player who tested positive is a pitcher on the 40-man roster who recently had been with the club's minor-leaguers.

Philadelphia managing partner John Middleton said in a statement, "The Phillies are committed to the health and welfare of our players, coaches and staff as our highest priority, and as a result of these confirmed tests, all facilities in Clearwater have been closed indefinitely to all players, coaches and staff and will remain closed until medical authorities are confident that the virus is under control and our facilities are disinfected."

Per the Phillies, the team's first confirmed case occurred on Tuesday. Eight staff members tested negative while 32 others (20 players, 12 staff members) were awaiting test results. — Reuters



## Sports

# Bergamo wakes from virus nightmare to resume Atalanta football dream

## Atalanta take on Sassuolo in first post-virus Italian Serie A match

**BERGAMO:** Bergamo's Atalanta return to action today, hoping that a resumption of their incredible football success will signal the historic Italian city's return to normality after being devastated by coronavirus.

"These have been extremely difficult months," said Mayor Giorgio Gori, remembering the dozens of coffins lined up for burial and the macabre images of the military convoys that carried them which were beamed around the world.

"March was a series of mournings, each bit of news more sad than the last. Now there's relief, we've returned to a relatively normal situation," he told journalists.

The province suffered 6,000 more deaths than usual during the COVID-19 outbreak, including 670 in Bergamo city which has a population of around 122,000.

Almost everyone there has lost a relative, friend, colleague or neighbour. It is now known that the Champions League match between Atalanta and Valencia on February 19 played a significant role in spreading the deadly virus.

Around 46,000 spectators gathered at Milan's San Siro to watch Atalanta crush the Spanish team 4-1. With every goal, local fans fell into each other's arms, at the stadium and in bars.

### 'BIOLOGICAL BOMB'

The coronavirus was already known in China but at the time seemed far away from northern Italy. But that soon changed, and from March 4 the number of cases in Bergamo rose sharply, leading some doctors to label the football match a "biologi-

cal bomb" which had exploded.

After the second leg was played and also won, 4-3, on March 10 in Valencia, Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini called for a big party to be held "later" as the team made it to the Champions League quarter-finals.

There followed over two months of lockdown in Italy, and tourists are yet to return to this pretty UNESCO World Heritage Site city.

Today, Atalanta take on Sassuolo in their first post-virus Italian Serie A match, to be held without fans present, but with the team known as "La Dea" resuming what was far and away their best season ever.

"This match represents a small return to normality," said Atalanta supporter Andrea Sigorini, 36.

"But as the staff and players have said, our thoughts will be with those who have been through such difficult times," he said.

"We're in a hurry to see Atalanta play again, given the level they're playing at," he told AFP.

Marino Lazzarini is head of the Friends of Atalanta fan club with 6,000 members and is also one of the club's directors.

"Counting friends and others I know, I lost 40 people. Football helps us, not to forget, because we don't forget, but to enjoy ourselves," said the 71-year-old, who has been going to the stadium since he was four.

### 'RESUME THE DREAM'

Atalanta's captain, Argentine Alejandro "Papu" Gomez, has also called for football to

resume, despite the opposition of some hardcore "Ultra" fans.

"If you asked me two months ago I would have been against," he told sports newspaper Corriere dello Sport.

"But now it's safer, that the virus appears to have weakened, I'm for it. Bergamo lives for football, breathes football. But Bergamo won't forget."

Those who are rejoicing at the resumption of football, even behind closed doors, are desperate to know how their so-far incredible season ends.



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Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) treasurer Arun Singh Dhumal questioned whether dropping Vivo, which bagged the 2018-22 IPL title rights for 21.9 billion rupees (\$287.21 million), would serve any purpose.

"People are naturally emotional but we have to differentiate — whether it's helping the Chinese companies, or their sponsorship is helping India's cause," Dhumal told Reuters.

"Rather than the money going back to China, if that's retained here as sponsorship money, and I'm able to pay tax to the government, that's helping India's cause, isn't it?"

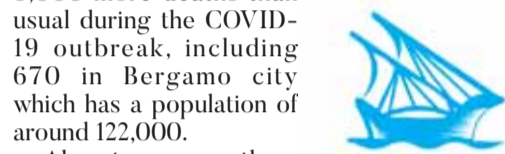
Vivo did not respond to a Reuters request to comment. Dhumal said the BCCI would not engage any Chinese company in stadium construction but sponsorship was a different issue.

"We are not giving any building contract to any Chinese company, when money flows out of BCCI to China. This is the other way round." —Reuters

Atalanta occupy the fourth and final Champions League qualifying spot in Serie A and sit three points clear of fifth-placed Roma with a game in hand.

"The lockdown happened at the most beautiful moment (for the team), an historic moment," said Lazzarini. "We hope that the dream can resume."

After their historic victory in Valencia, players showed off a T-Shirt written in the local dialect: "Bergamo, Mola Mia" or "Never Give Up, Bergamo". —AFP



### Difficult months

## IOA, IPL to review tie-ups amid China protests

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) will review its tie-up with sportswear maker Li Ning while the Indian Premier League (IPL) will review its various sponsorship deals following a public backlash against Chinese companies.

Chinese companies in India are facing a backlash after the killing this week of 20 Indian soldiers by Chinese forces in a Himalayan border dispute.

A wave of anti-China sentiment has led the IOA to reconsider its association with Chinese company Li Ning, its apparel partner.

"We have a tie-up with them until the Tokyo

Olympics," IOA secretary-general Rajeev Mehta told Reuters.

"We'll discuss the matter in our annual general meeting. Our approach will always be country-first."

Reuters has contacted Li Ning for comment. There have also been demands on social media for Chinese smartphone maker Vivo to be dropped as the title sponsor of the country's popular Twenty20 cricket league.

Former Test spinner Harbhajan Singh tweeted: "Ban all Chinese products".

The IPL said in a statement on Friday that its governing council would hold a meeting next week to review its various sponsorship deals.

"Taking note of the border skirmish that resulted in the martyrdom of our brave jawans (soldiers), the IPL Governing Council has convened a meeting next week to review the IPL's various sponsorship deals," the IPL wrote on Twitter.

## Neymar ordered to pay Barcelona 6.7m euros

**BARCELONA:** Neymar must pay 6.7 million euros (\$7.53m) to Barcelona, a court ordered Friday after the player's case against his former employer was dismissed. After his world-record transfer to Paris Saint-Germain in 2017 the Brazilian forward sued Barca for 43.6 million euros that he claimed he was due for various bonuses.

But a judge dismissed Neymar's case and instead sided with Barcelona, who had also sued their former player for breach of contract. Neymar has five days to appeal the decision.

He joined Barca in 2013 and signed a new five-year contract in 2016, which included a renewal bonus worth 43.6 million euros, with 14 million paid up front. The remaining 29 million euros was due to be paid on August 1, 2017 but Neymar left Barcelona on August 3 for Paris Saint-Germain, who activated the striker's 222 million euro release clause.

Barcelona refused to pay Neymar the remainder of the bonus, insisting the terms of his contract had been broken. The club in turn sued Neymar and requested the return of the 14

million euros they had paid him up front, as well as a further 8.5 million euros in damages.

"We express our satisfaction with the verdict announced today," Barcelona said in a statement.

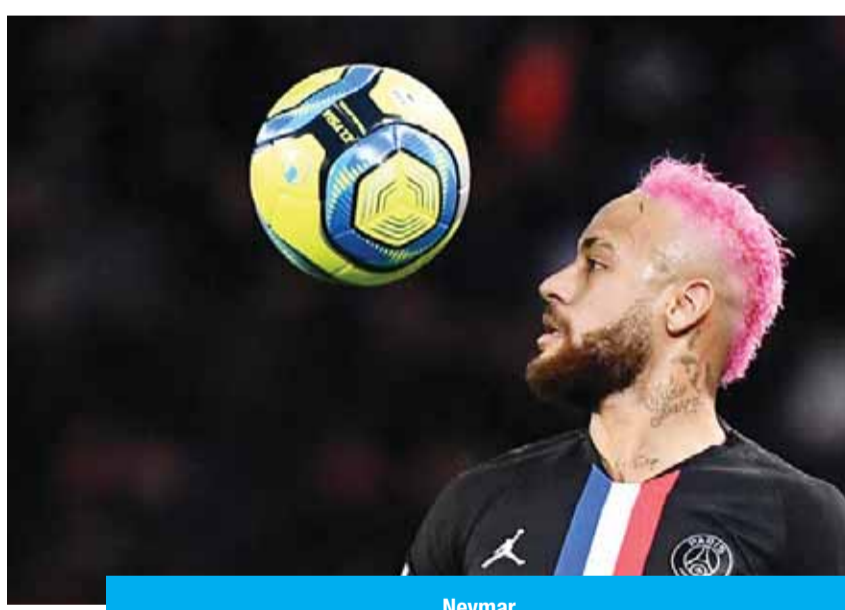
"The ruling has fully dismissed the player's claim for payment of €43.6m, and has accepted a large part of the defence presented by FC Barcelona, as a result of which the player must return €6.7m to the club. "Since the player's representative is entitled to appeal this decision, the club shall continue to fervently defend its legitimate interests." Despite the financial dispute between Barcelona and Neymar, both the club and the player have been eager to be reunited.

There were even discussions last year about coming to an agreement out of court but a compromise could not be reached.

Barca spent most of last year's summer transfer window negotiating a transfer with PSG but were unable to strike a deal, even as a number of different players were offered in exchange.

Neymar remains a popular figure among the leaders of the Barca squad, including Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez, with whom he formed a devastating attacking trio during his time at Camp Nou.

"I've said it many times, as a footballer Ney is one of the best in the world and I would love for him to



Neymar

return," Messi said in an interview with Barcelona newspaper Mundo Deportivo in February.

"He was always happy, he had fun both on and off the pitch. He brought a special sense of joy to the dressing room."

Messi added: "He is eager to return, he was always regretful. He tried a lot to come back and that would be the first step in trying to get him here."

Another attempt to re-sign Neymar was expected this summer but the financial implications of the

coronavirus pandemic make an agreement even more unlikely.

"Neymar-type transfers will not happen," said La Liga president Javier Tebas earlier this month. Neymar was brought to PSG to help them finally win the Champions League but they failed to go past the last 16 in his first two years at the club.

This season, they are one of four teams through to the quarter-finals, which will be played in Lisbon in August, according to an announcement made by UEFA on Wednesday. —AFP

## Leeds desperate for Premier League promotion

**LONDON:** Leeds United return to Championship action with nine games to navigate in their bid to return to the Premier League for the first time since 2004. Marcelo Bielsa's leaders are looking to put last year's play-off misery behind them while West Brom are in the other automatic promotion slot, one point adrift.

Fulham are the closest challengers to the top two, six points behind West Brom, with Brentford and Nottingham Forest having to overcome a 10-point deficit if they are to claim automatic promo-

tion. The battle for a playoff place is much tighter with QPR, all the way down in 13th place, just six points off sixth spot.

Three-time English champions Leeds have suffered plenty of heartache in trying to return to the top-flight over the past 16 years.

An inconsistent spell of form between December and February threatened their promotion challenge once more, but they recovered to win five consecutive matches before the league was suspended in March.

But the lockdown could also come to Leeds' aid as Bielsa sides have historically faded in the final part of the season due to the intense physical demand the Argentine puts his players under.

"The players have made a big effort so far, they've worked very responsibly," said Bielsa, ahead of his side's trip to Cardiff.

"Even though we have had a long period of time

working on the physical preparation and after one month with tactical and technical work, it is not like a normal pre-season."

Bielsa said he was pleased that Leeds could finish the season and earn promotion in the right way, but expressed his sadness that fans would miss out on the action. "We have to say the communication between the players and the supporters makes football," he added. "Without this relationship football is different."

West Brom manager Slaven Bilic said the end of the season would be like a mini "World Cup" as he bids to return the club to the Premier League after two seasons in the Championship.

"It's a lot of games," he added ahead of a home clash against Birmingham. "It's like you can't have a slow start, you have to straight away come out of the blocks. You have to be prepared for such a busy schedule, playing every three days. —AFP

## Flurry of positive tests in athletes hurts US restart plans

**LOS ANGELES:** Hopes that sport in the United States might soon return to business as usual suffered a blow on Friday as athletes from golf to hockey tested positive for the novel coronavirus, triggering a shutdown of some facilities.

The PGA Tour, which only restarted last week after a three-month COVID-19-forced hiatus, confirmed its first positive test, removing Nick Watney from second-round play at the RBC Heritage in Hilton Head, South Carolina.

Over a 24-hour period, Major League Soccer (MLS), National Football League (NFL), National Hockey League (NHL) and Major League Baseball (MLB) confirmed positive tests, and those sports pondered return-to-play scenarios. Leagues are doing extensive testing for coronavirus even among players not showing symptoms. This followed leading US health official Dr. Anthony Fauci on Thursday casting doubt on whether the NFL would get on the field this season.

The MLS and NBA were paying particularly close attention to Friday's events as many of the positive tests occurred in Florida where both leagues have announced plans to restart their seasons at Orlando's Walt Disney World.

Florida is one of several US states where COVID-19 cases have recently surged. The MLS is scheduled to return on July 8 with a World Cup-style tournament featuring all 26 teams. The league, which has said that the health and safety of players and staff were the priority, did not immediately respond to questions about whether the spike in Florida cases would prompt a rethink of those plans.

Inter Miami said on Thursday that one of their players had tested positive for the virus.

MLB's Philadelphia Phillies shut down their Clearwater, Florida, site after five players tested positive while just down the road in Dunedin, the Toronto Blue Jays shuttered training facilities after a player presented symptoms.

The San Francisco Giants closed their spring training facility in Scottsdale, Arizona after a visitor and one family member exhibited symptoms. The Giants said they had tested others who have been at the facility and are awaiting results.

Los Angeles Angels general manager Billy Eppler said two players had tested positive for COVID-19, but did not disclose if they were on the major league roster, citing medical privacy law, the LA Times reported <https://www.latimes.com/sports/angels/story/2020-06-19/angels-say-two-players-in-organization-test-positive-for-covid-19>.

In Tampa, the NHL Lightning closed their arena after three players tested positive. The NHL on Friday said that since June 8, when teams were permitted to open their training facilities, over 200 players have undergone multiple tests and 11 have tested positive.

All of the players who tested positive have been self-isolating, the league said. Even the UFC, who were one of the first sports to resume operations when they staged a mixed martial arts card in Jacksonville, Florida on May 9, are considering another shutdown in wake of the spike. —Reuters



**18** World number one Djokovic puts positive spin on US Open plan



**19** Bergamo wakes from virus nightmare to resume Atalanta football dream



**19** Neymar ordered to pay Barcelona 6.7m euros



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Ivorian defender Serge Aurier (L) vies with Manchester United's Scottish midfielder Scott McTominay (R) during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. —AFP

## Penalty denies Man Utd in draw at Tottenham

### United remain in fifth, two points behind Chelsea

LONDON: Bruno Fernandes's penalty salvaged a 1-1 draw for Manchester United at Tottenham as the Red Devils had another late spot-kick overturned by a VAR review on Friday. Jose Mourinho was on course to get the better of his former club when Steven Bergwijn's strike gave Spurs a half-time lead.

However, United's second half pressure finally told nine minutes from time when Fernandes converted from the spot after Paul Pogba had been brought down in the box.

Fernandes then thought he had won a second penalty, but a VAR review decided there was little contact as he went down under a challenge from Eric Dier. A point does little for either side's chances of breaking into the top four.

United remain in fifth, two points behind Chelsea, while Spurs are four points further back in eighth. In keeping with all matches since the Premier League's return earlier this week, all players and officials took

a knee before kick in protest against racial injustice.

Once the action did get underway, United settled quickest to the eerie surroundings of a 62,000 seater stadium draped in banners with the only fans appearing on giant video screens behind each goal.

Marcus Rashford has had a momentous week as the English international's campaign to ensure vulnerable children are not left without food vouchers during the English school holidays forced a government U-turn.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer described the 22-year-old's action as far "more important than any game of football that he would probably play." However, the England international admitted he was also desperate to get back to the day job after being sidelined since January with a back injury prior to the coronavirus-enforced shutdown of football for three months.

Rashford had the best chance to turn the visitors' early control into a goal as his low shot was beaten

away by the legs of Hugo Lloris. Tottenham could be the Premier League side with most to gain from a three-month stoppage.

Prior to lockdown, Mourinho spoke of his desire to fast forward to the end of the season when he would have Harry Kane, Son Heung-min, Moussa Sissoko and Bergwijn fit again. All four were fit to return to the starting line-up and it was an inspired moment from the Dutchman which opened the scoring.

Bergwijn surged past the leaden-footed Harry Maguire before David de Gea could only parry his powerful shot into the roof of the net. De Gea made amends moments later with a stunning save to prevent Son's looping header from Bergwijn's cross doubling Tottenham's lead.

However, that was the last time the Spaniard was troubled as Tottenham sat on their lead after the break and invited plenty of United pressure. The arrival of Fernandes in January played a huge part in

an 11-game unbeaten run for Solskjaer's men before the break.

Fernandes was inches away from an equaliser as his low drive fizzed just wide. Lloris then produced a stunning save to tip Anthony Martial's rising effort over. Solskjaer had left Pogba on the bench from the start, but the Frenchman made a big impact after being introduced for his first appearance since December 26. Pogba's quick feet left Eric Dier in his wake and Dier then pushed the midfielder over inside the box as he tried to recover.

Fernandes coolly sent Lloris the wrong way from the penalty spot to deservedly level. And United thought they had the chance to win the game when Jon Moss pointed to the spot again in stoppage time.

Rashford was set to take the penalty this time, but was denied the chance to round off his momentous week as VAR overruled the referee's original decision and United had to settle for a point. —AFP

## Barcelona held to a goalless draw at Sevilla

MADRID: Gerard Pique said La Liga's title race is Real Madrid's to lose after Barcelona were held to a goalless draw against Sevilla on Friday. Barca's first slip-up since returning from the three-month hiatus hands Madrid the chance to regain top spot this weekend.

After their emphatic 3-0 win over Valencia on Thursday, Zinedine Zidane's side will move level on points with the Catalans if they beat Real Sociedad on Sunday and above them due to their superior record head-to-head.

"Seeing what we've done in the last two rounds, it's going to be very difficult to win this league," said a despondent Pique afterwards.

"From what I've seen, it's very hard to see Real

Madrid dropping points."

Sevilla, in third, and Valencia, in eighth, always looked capable of shifting the dynamic at the top of the table, with Madrid capitalising to climb back to the summit for the first time since they beat Barcelona on March 1.

Asked about Pique's analysis, Barcelona coach Quique Setien said: "I think it comes from frustration. I am optimistic. I think it will be tough for anyone to take maximum points." A valuable point for Sevilla, meanwhile, gives them a five-point cushion over Getafe in fifth, albeit having played a game more.

Barca could have few complaints at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

They never really troubled Sevilla for any prolonged period and the closest Lionel Messi came to scoring the 700th goal of his career were a pair of free-kicks tipped over.

The sight of goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen jogging up for a late corner demonstrated how big a blow they considered dropping points to be.

Yet Real Sociedad are still in the hunt for Champions League qualification and will offer

Madrid no guarantees on Sunday while games against Getafe, Athletic Bilbao and Villarreal mean there are still plenty of hurdles for Zidane's team to overcome.

Barcelona though would appear to have the tougher run-in, with Athletic Bilbao, Atletico Madrid, Villarreal and local rivals Espanyol coming up.

Messi was well-contained by Sevilla and it could be the Argentinian was feeling the effects of a third consecutive 90 minutes in nine days.

Setien chose not to rest his captain in either of two comfortable wins over Leganes or Real Mallorca.

Instead, Antoine Griezmann dropped to the bench, with Martin Braithwaite preferred in the front three alongside Messi and Luis Suarez, who made his first start since January after recovering from a knee injury.

Sevilla's Jules Kounde shot just wide of the post early on but Barcelona controlled the opening 30 minutes, even if chances were few and far between.

Messi's curled free-kick was headed off the line by Kounde and Braithwaite almost had a tap-in when

Tomas Vaclik spilled, but the ball was hacked away.

The half ended with a scuffle and Messi was at the heart of it, squaring up to and then pushing over Sevilla's centre back Diego Carlos. Messi was unhappy with Carlos' challenge on Suarez but escaped punishment. Ever Banega came on at half-time for Sevilla and gave them more purpose in midfield. Munir El Haddadi's shot from the angle was palmed away by Ter Stegen.

The game opened up in the final 15 minutes as Jordi Alba made a crucial block to prevent Munir's pass setting up an easy finish in the middle.

Alba might then have teed up a winner too but Suarez swept the defender's pull-back over the bar.

Sergio Reguilon, on loan at Sevilla from Madrid, had the best chance but he failed to connect with his weaker right foot.

Earlier, Gerard Moreno's winner gave Villarreal a 1-0 win away at Granada, putting them within touching distance of the top four.

Real Mallorca claimed a 1-1 draw against fellow strugglers Leganes thanks to a stunning late free kick from Oscar Rodriguez. —AFP