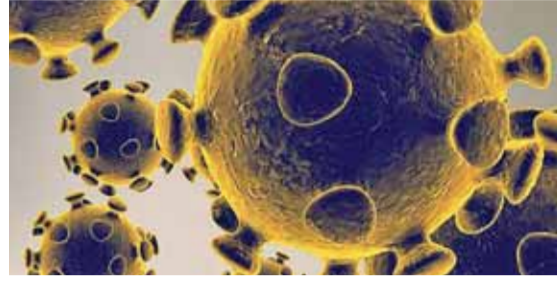




2 Options for spending the summer in Kuwait



7 Coronavirus, race and income: How the virus discriminates



9 Saudi downturn deepens Yemen economic despair



20 Liverpool title march delayed by Everton, Chelsea sink Villa



Inflated prices questioned; MP tests negative for virus

Saudi ends virus lockdown • Dubai opens up to tourists from July 7



KUWAIT: Health ministry workers conduct random field testing for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Hawally on Sunday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



RIYADH: A hairdresser clad in a face shield and mask cuts a client's hair at a women's beauty center on Sunday. — AFP

By B Izzak and Agencies

KUWAIT: MP Khaled Al-Otaibi yesterday sent a series of questions to Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan over what he says is the minister's failure to check soaring consumer prices during the coronavirus crisis. He said that despite repeated statements by the minister and other officials that they would prevent any price hikes through continued inspections, the crisis has revealed that the ministry agencies are weak, as prices of most commodities soared to the extent that budgets of most households have been impacted.

The lawmaker charged that the ministry failed to issue the necessary decisions and failed to act, leaving consumers to become victims of greedy merchants. Otaibi asked Roudhan if the ministry has conducted studies about the inflation rate during the coronavirus crisis and demanded copies of those studies.

He said that at the start of the crisis, the ministry of commerce raised the prices of meat and fixed them.

Continued on Page 16

TikTok, K-pop fans sabotaged Trump rally

WASHINGTON: TikTok users and fans of Korean pop music took partial credit for inflating attendance expectations at a less-than-full arena at President Donald Trump's first political rally in months, held in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on Saturday. Social media users on platforms including the popular video-sharing app have said they completed the free online registration for the rally with no intention of going.

Prior to the event, Trump's campaign manager Brad Parscale said there had been more than one million requests to attend. However, the 19,000-seat BOK Center arena had many empty seats on Saturday evening and Trump and Vice

Continued on Page 16

Losing sight of the future: Palestinians blinded in one eye

GAZA CITY: When Jacqueline Shahada was blinded in one eye during a Palestinian demonstration along the Gaza border, she never thought she would lose her husband and children too. It was Nov 2018 and like every Friday for more than six months, thousands of Palestinians gathered along the Gaza-Israel border demanding the right to return to lands their ancestors fled in 1948 with the creation of Israel.

Protesters burned tyres and threw stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli soldiers on the other side of the heavily-guarded border, who responded by opening fire. Amid the thousands of onlookers was Jacqueline, a slight, veiled woman in her early 30s. Even though the

protests were male-dominated, she told herself women also had a right to participate.

"Suddenly, I felt something burning in my eye and I lost consciousness," she said. She had been hit by a rubber bullet, and despite medical attention, doctors couldn't save her left eye. Her injury is hardly visible now – just a slight glossiness from a tear in the iris – but her life in Hamas-controlled Gaza was destroyed. "I wish I had been killed, it would have been easier," she told AFP.

Her experience has become all too common, and AFP met with 10 Palestinians who lost an eye after being shot by the Israeli army, in Gaza, Jerusalem or the West Bank.

Continued on Page 16



This combination of pictures created on June 11, 2020 shows Palestinians blinded in one eye - (top left to right) Mohammed Burqan, Muath Amareh and Jacqueline Shahada; (middle left to right) Ahmed Al-Louth, Malek Issa and Nafez Al-Damiri; (bottom left to right) Rifaat Barham, Mai Abu Rawda and Sami Marsan. — AFP

Libya slams 'declaration of war' by Egypt

TRIPOLI: Libya's UN-recognized Government of National Accord on Sunday denounced Egypt's warning of military intervention in Libya, labeling it a "declaration of war". "This is a

hostile act, direct interference and amounts to a declaration of war," the GNA said in a statement. The war of words came on the eve of a virtual meeting of Arab League foreign ministers on Libya, in which the GNA declined to participate. That meeting, which had originally been scheduled for yesterday, has been pushed back to today.

On Saturday, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi warned that if

Continued on Page 16

Water hyacinth pest chokes vital Iraq waterways

AL-BADAA, Iraq: The broad leaves and delicate purple flowers floating on the Euphrates look breathtaking – but they are suffocating the waterways of Iraq, celebrated as the "land of the two rivers". The water hyacinth, nicknamed the "Nile flower" in Iraq, is an invasive plant native to South America's Amazon basin that has ravaged ecosystems across the world, from Sri Lanka to Nigeria.

The fast-spreading pest poses a special risk in Iraq, one of the world's hottest countries that is already suffering from regular droughts and shrinking water resources due to overuse, pollution and upstream river dams. The exotic flower was introduced to Iraq just two decades ago as a decorative plant, but now the mighty Tigris and Euphrates rivers are being choked by its rapid spread.

Its glossy leaves form a thick cover, absorbing up to five litres (1.3 gallons) of water per plant a day and blocking sunlight and oxygen vital to the aquatic life below. That has made the hyacinth a formidable floral foe for Iraq's fishermen, who



A boat removes water hyacinth from the surface of the Euphrates River in Iraq's Shatrah district of the southern Dhi Qar province on June 4, 2020. — AFP

sell hauls of river carp in local markets to those cooking "masgouf", a national delicacy. Because of the infestation, carp are dying and fishing nets get caught in the tangle of flat leaves, roots and flowers that also hampers boat travel.

"Our livelihoods are gone, all because of this Nile flower," said Jallab Al-Sharifi, a fisherman in the southern province of Dhi Qar who makes his living on the Euphrates. Another fisherman east of Baghdad who works the Tigris said his haul had dropped

by as much as half. The hyacinths have also impacted Iraqi farmers who already struggle with low water levels due to a series of dams built further upstream in Turkey and Iran. The thick floating vegetation draws down water levels and clogs irrigation channels leading to agricultural fields. "During this harvest, our vegetable sales in the local market were down by a third," said Ahmed Yasser, a farmer in a village near Kut, east of Baghdad.

Continued on Page 16



TRIPOLI: People wave flags of Libya and Turkey during a demonstration in Martyrs' Square in the center of the Libyan capital on Sunday. — AFP

Local

People forced to spend summer in Kuwait amid COVID-19 pandemic

Beaches only outlet amid wide closure of facilities

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Travelling for summer holidays this year seems to be impossible. Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced a three-phase plan for the resumption of commercial flights without mentioning exact dates. Some have mentioned July 15 as the day flights will restart, but this is unofficial, and the entire situation is unclear in Kuwait and in many other countries.

So people are looking for any activities to spend the long summer here in Kuwait. Due to the extremely hot weather and the closure of all facilities including malls, entertainment palaces, parks and other places, options are limited. Beaches are a favorite and almost the only place to go at the moment. Some public beaches are crowded and filthy, yet people can still

enjoy swimming along the coast. Some of these beaches have jet ski rentals, which people can hire to enjoy the sea.

Those who own chalets are blessed – they can spend the summer there, with all the activities related to it. If you are a big family or a group of friends, you can rent a chalet for a week or more – once restrictions on large gatherings are lifted – and enjoy the change in daily routine, along with all the activities you can do at the chalet, including barbecuing. But prices may be higher than usual due to the increased demand during the current situation.

Another option related to the sea is renting a yacht or boat. Different kinds and sizes of boats are available for hire, starting from two hours or more. A captain and crew take care of the boat and navigation so that you can enjoy a leisurely

day on the water. With this boat you can plan a trip to any of the nine Kuwaiti islands, where you can enjoy diving or snorkeling. If staying at home, people can exploit their time by joining activities online. They can register for any of the many available courses online. For instance, they can learn a new language or take a course in marketing, business management or other fields that will improve their skills in their career. They can also learn new artistic skills or do handicrafts. People can also register with a coach for online exercise and improve their physical condition after the months of lockdown. While traveling this summer is not an option, people can look online for new destinations and places, which they can visit during the winter break at the beginning of next year or next summer, depending on when commercial flights resume.



KUWAIT: This file photo shows people fishing on a pier at a beach in Kuwait. Beach activities remain one of the only options available for the public amid the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.



KUWAIT: Vehicles are seen leaving and entering Hawally on Sunday for the first time after the area was removed from the list of areas placed under total lockdown to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 39,650 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Sunday, in addition to 326 deaths. With the exception of 186 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, 31,770 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 7,873 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 on 7:00 pm and end at 5:00 am, starting from June 21, 2020. The first phase also includes a total lockdown on Farwaniya, Khaitan, and Hawally, joining Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh which were put under lockdown earlier. 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 re-

main closed for the time being. Worshippers must wear face masks, keep social distancing between queues and between worshippers must be strictly observed. Worshippers must bring their own mats so they do not get in contact with mosque carpets. Mosques will reopen five minutes before prayer time and close 10 minutes after prayer.

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

Precautions

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

have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facial masks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain accessible to the public.

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

Hotlines

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

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

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

Medicine delivery

Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MOH) launched a new medicine delivery service for people in Kuwait, which they can use to order medications to be delivered during curfew hours. The medications will be delivered within 72 hours after the order is submitted. To place an order, patients should send a WhatsApp to the numbers for the hospitals and medical centers as listed below. The patient should include their name, Civil ID number, hospital or clinic file number, mobile phone number and the medicine needed to the following numbers:
Amiri Hospital: 50880699
Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital: 50880755
Farwaniya Hospital: 50880852
Adan Hospital: 50880908

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

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

Mental health assistance

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

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

Local

Random COVID-19 field testing starts in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Health Ministry workers conduct random field testing for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) for Hawally residents on Sunday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Random field testing for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) started Sunday as a team was sent to test residents of a Hawally building on the first day of the end of the area's

total lockdown. The Health Ministry had announced a day before that it would start field random testing for the coronavirus disease by sending teams to homes selected randomly at dif-

ferent residential areas. The ministry said in a statement the house visits will commence from 5 – 11 pm daily and will cover all residential areas for expats and citizens.

It asked people to demand the identification of the teams and to cooperate with them. The campaign comes after a steep rise in the number of cases reported in the country.

News in brief

Dexamethasone to treat COVID-19 patients

KUWAIT: Intensive care departments in the Ministry of Health approved 'dexamethasone' to be included in the treatment protocol for novel coronavirus (COVID-19) patients in Kuwait. This decision is based on the recommendations of the World Health Organization in this regard, said Dr Abdurrahman Al-Fares, Lead Specialist in Internal Medicine and Intensive Care in the Amiri and Jaber hospitals. "The drug has been available in Kuwait for years and is used to treat various diseases such as asthma, respiratory system, cancer and rheumatism," Dr Fares said, adding that latest studies showed it can help accelerate the recovery of COVID-19 patients from the respiratory disease.

New timings

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality announced the new timings for stores and markets that are allowed to open to be between 6:00 am and 6:30 pm. Meanwhile, the Municipality denied reports about hiring an expatriate consultant, saying that they have only extended the contract of one of its existing employees, noting that this will be his final term.

Frozen assets

KUWAIT: Kuwait has frozen KD 5 million in assets of the Bangladeshi member of parliament taken into custody on charges of human trafficking and money laundering. The man runs a well-known security company as managing director and CEO.

Child abuse

KUWAIT: A security source said two infants were admitted to ICU with suspicion that they may have been beaten, as beating marks were spotted on their bodies. The twins' parents accused their domestic helper of hurting them.

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KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry reopened Sunday the Hawally Governorate's General Traffic Department's building in Jabriya, where people applied to renew expired registrations of their vehicles. Vehicle technical inspections remain on hold due to the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the ministry had announced. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

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Kuwait, Saudi Arabia prepare to reopen shared Wafra oil field

KUWAIT: Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are working to reopen the onshore Wafra oil field in the Neutral Zone shared between both countries, S&P Global Platts reported yesterday. No official start date has been announced but some reports indicated that July 1 may be the target date.

Wafra is scheduled to restart by pumping an initial 10,000 b/d and then building up to 145,000 b/d by mid-2021. Output will be ramped up to 80,000 b/d by the end of this year and then to between 135,000 b/d and 145,000 b/d in mid next year. Reuters reported that the field was being prepped for reopening in February, prior to the pandemic crisis hitting the region.

Wafra shut in 2015 amid a disagreement between the two countries over the role of US energy giant, Chevron, which is a coproducer on

the Saudi side. "Saudi Arabian Chevron (SAC) and its partner, Kuwait Gulf Oil Co, continue to prepare its operations at the Wafra field," the companies said June 21 in a statement. "SAC's priority remains the safety of its people, the communities where it operates, and its facilities. Consequently, SAC remains focused on ensuring its workforce is ready to safely resume operational activities."

Wafra is operated by Kuwait Gulf Oil Co and Saudi Arabian Chevron. Al-Khafji, jointly owned by Saudi Arabia's Aramco Gulf Operations Co and Kuwait Gulf Oil Co, shipped its first cargo in five years in April. The fields, which have a combined capacity of 500,000 b/d, are located in the Neutral Zone, an area straddling the border between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality personnel in cooperation with police Sunday arrested a number of Asian workers who produced alcohol inside two apartments in Al-Ahmadi Governorate. A large amount of equipment and home-made liquor bottles were seized during the operation.



KUWAIT: Police carried out a traffic campaign in Sabah Al-Ahmad following multiple reports received from area residents about reckless drivers roaming its streets during curfew hours. — KUNA

Local

Zain strategic partner of first online Arab Media Forum

Company provided Cisco Webex solutions for secure online seminars

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its strategic sponsorship of the first online Arab Media Forum. The virtual event, which came in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, was held from 20 – 22 June via live virtual seminars through Cisco Webex solutions provided by Zain on its superfast network.

Zain has been the strategic partner of the Arab Media Forum during the past nine consecutive years, as the company strongly believes in supporting media organizations that contribute to enriching cultural aspects within the community. Zain is proud to be a main partner in the success of this forum, which is considered the most prominent event of its kind in the Arab world. This year, the forum was launched as an online event due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the company was keen on continuing its support as it believes in the crucial role of the media in raising public awareness, especially during crises.

Zain provided Cisco Webex video conferencing

solutions to enable the forum's seminars to take place virtually and securely over its superfast network. The company, a Premier Certified Partner of Cisco, is committed to offering the most advanced



Featuring over 1,600 participants

world-class tech solutions to Kuwait's business community.

The online Arab Media Forum witnessed the participation of over 1,600 participants from all

over the Arab world, who joined the live video seminars broadcasted over many online platforms and social media channels. This made the forum the biggest virtual event in the region, hosting many media personalities, ministers of information, academics, students, media channel owners, and more.

Zain's strategic partnership of this forum highlights its social commitment, as the company believes in the important role played by the media in the development of communities. Zain will continue supporting this sector, which enriches communications between community members and raises public awareness during crises.

The Arab Media Forum has proven itself to be one of the region's most prominent events that attend to Arab media. Since 2003, the event brought together many ministers, editors-in-chief of local and regional newspapers, media executives, journalists, academics, authors, actors, businessmen, and social figures from all around the Arab world.



KUWAIT: A poster promoting the first session of the first online Arab Media Forum, which took place on June 20, 2020.

Authority continues serving disabled people online



KUWAIT: Workers fumigate the Kuwait Disabled Sports Club in Hawally. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



KUWAIT: The Public Authority of the Disabled (PADA) said Sunday it would continue serving people with disability and responding to their needs through its website as a precaution against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). In the light of the decisions of the cabinet and the health authorities regarding the combat against the pandemic,

the authority put together a team for handling the requests of the disabled persons, said Amenah Safar, head of PADA's information systems division. "The authority has designated an email account through which PADA services will be accessible for applicants as from this Monday," she said in statements to KUNA.

Safar advised applicants to visit PADA's website (online@pada.gov.kw) and the links (askpay@pada.gov.kw) and (askcertificate@pada.gov.kw) to get more information about the services, guidelines and requirements. In other news, authorities fumigated the Kuwait Disabled Sports Club in Hawally recently to prepare it for welcoming members.



KUWAIT: The Ministry of Public Works carried out road works outside the Hawally governorate's traffic department building in Jabriya as the department started receiving applicants to renew their registrations this week. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

News in brief

Condolences to Britain

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Sunday a cable to Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Elizabeth II and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson to extend sincere condolences after the deadly stabbing attack on park-goers in the southeastern city of Reading. In his cable, His Highness the Amir also wished the injured victims speedy recovery and expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation of this criminal act. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Queen Elizabeth and Premier Johnson, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem on sent cables to the British senate chairman Lord Folwer and speaker of parliament Lindsay Howell.

100th birthday

KUWAIT: Well-known Kuwaiti astronomer Saleh Al-Ojairi celebrates his 100th birthday today. Born on June 23, 1920, Ojairi has written many books, articles and continues to provide astronomical insights and information for Kuwait.

Fourteen flights

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced that 14 flights were to depart from Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying a total of 2,320 passengers. They included eight flights to Egypt, four flights to India, one flight to Qatar, and one flight to Nepal.

Arab meeting postponed

CAIRO: An Arab Foreign Ministers' meeting which was scheduled for tomorrow would be postponed until today because the Arab League was facing technical problems in setting up the virtual communication. The league said in a statement the foreign ministers would be holding two separate sessions, at the request of Egypt. It added Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri would brief his counterpart about the situation in Libya during the first session, and over the Ethiopian dam in the second part.

International

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Brazil's toll hits 50,000 as Spain reopens borders

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Yemen southern separatists take control of Socotra island

Page 7



NEW YORK: A woman sits in the bed of a pickup truck with a dog in the Brooklyn Borough of New York City, amid the novel coronavirus pandemic.—AFP

COVID survivor receives \$1.1 m bill

Virus lawsuits spreading like virus through US courts

WASHINGTON: A 70-year-old American man who nearly died of COVID-19 has been billed a heart-stopping \$1.1 million for his hospital expenses, the Seattle Times reported. Michael Flor was admitted to a hospital in the northwestern city on March 4, and stayed for 62 days - at one point coming so close to death that nurses held up the phone so his wife and children could say goodbye.

But he recovered and was discharged on May 5 to the cheers of nursing staff - only to receive a 181-page bill totaling \$1,122,501.04, he told the newspaper. That includes: \$9,736 per day for the intensive care room, nearly \$409,000 for its transformation into a sterile room for 42 days, \$82,000 for the use of a ventilator for 29 days, and nearly \$100,000 for two days when his prognosis was life-threatening. Flor is covered by Medicare, a government insurance program for the elderly, and should not have to take out his wallet, according to the Times.

But in a country where health care is among the most expensive in the world - and the idea of socializing it remains hugely controversial - he said he feels "guilty" knowing that taxpayers will bear much of the cost. "It was a million bucks to save my life, and of course I'd say that's money well-spent ... But I also know I might be the only one saying that," the Times quoted him as say-

ing. A gigantic plan adopted by Congress to keep the American economy afloat through the coronavirus shutdowns includes a \$100 million budget to compensate hospitals and private insurance companies that treated COVID-19 patients.

Lawsuits spreading

While apps for video-conferencing and online courses have flourished during the COVID-19 pandemic, so have something rather more contentious: lawsuits. More than 1,300 complaints linked to the coronavirus have already been filed in US courts, according to a daily tally kept by the law firm of Hunton Andrews Kurth. "COVID has divided America and it has vast political implications," Lawrence Gostin, a professor of public health law at Georgetown University, told AFP. "There is a conflict between public health and freedom - all kinds of freedoms, like the right to work, to liberty, to protest, to buy a firearm..."

And since the United States is a "highly litigious so-

ciety," he added, these conflicts often end up in court. A first wave of lawsuits has come from prisons and immigration centers, said Torston Kracht, a litigation partner with Hunton Andrews Kurth: prisoners have demanded to be paroled early, arguing that sanitary conditions in their facilities are poor and in some cases are aggravating detainees' existing health problems.

Some prisoners, including former Donald Trump campaign director Paul Manafort and former Trump attorney Michael Cohen, have won early release.

Others have found themselves caught up in epic legal battles: the US government has just asked the Supreme Court to block the early release of 800 inmates from the Elkton Federal Correctional Institution in eastern Ohio. A federal judge in Cleveland had ordered the men liberated after nine of those infected died. Meantime, several employees' groups have sued their employers to demand better protection against the virus. Thus, a union representing New York nurses filed suit to demand more masks, gloves and other protective equipment.



\$1.1 million for hospital expenses

Britain declares deadly stabbing spree 'terrorism'

READING: British police said Sunday they were treating a stabbing spree in which a lone assailant killed three people in a park filled with families and friends in Reading as "terrorism". The police said three people were also seriously injured and a 25-year-old resident of the historic town 60 kilometres (35 miles) west of London was detained. Local and counter-terror police made no reference to reports that the man was a Libyan refugee who has been granted asylum in Britain.

Footage showed what appeared to be a large number of counter-terror police performing a controlled explosion at the suspect's presumed residence shortly after the Saturday evening attack. "This morning, I can formally confirm that this has been declared a terrorist incident," counter-terror police chief Neil Basu said. "Although the motivation for this heinous act is far from certain, Counter Terrorism Policing South East has taken on responsibility for leading this investigation." Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he was "appalled and sickened" by the bloodshed at Forbury Gardens - a popular park situated next to the ruins of the 12th-century Reading Abbey.

"If there are lessons that we need to learn about how we handle such cases, about how we handle events leading up to such cases, then we will learn those lessons, and we will not hesitate to take action when necessary," Johnson said in televised comments. A Black Lives Matter protest took place at the park earlier but police said there was no indication the two were linked. "We had all left by the time this happened," the Reading BLM event organizer Nieema Hassan said. Britain's terror alert level was kept at "substantial" - the third highest on a five-point scale. "There is no specific intelligence to suggest anyone else attending crowded places is at risk," the counter-terror police chief said.

Witnesses reported seeing two air ambulances and



READING: Floral tributes are seen at a police cordon at the Abbey Gateway near Forbury Gardens park in Reading, west of London following a fatal stabbing incident the previous day.—AFP

several police cars rush to the park on Saturday evening. One witness described a lone assailant walking through a park filled with people relaxing on the grass and stabbing them at random. "The park was pretty full. A lot of people sat around drinking with friends," Lawrence Wort told the Press Association. "One lone person walked through, suddenly shouted some unintelligible words and went around a large group of around 10, trying to stab them." Wort said he saw three people being stabbed "in the neck and under the arms".

A local school cancelled Monday's classes after its history teacher was identified as one of the dead. Another witness told The Sunday Mirror that one group of people who were attacked were "just in a circle chatting". A third person who witnessed the arrest said the bloodied suspect looked dazed. "He was just staring," witness Amir Hadyoon told reporters. "He was just completely silent. He wasn't even blinking. He looked really weird." Paramedic teams were seen trying to resuscitate the injured as they lay unresponsive on the ground. "An horrific, dreadful incident," policing minister Kit Malthouse tweeted. The main opposition Labor party's leader Keir Starmer said Britons were "united in their grief". "This is not a time for party politics," the opposition leader said. Britain has witnessed two terror-related attacks in the past year.—AFP

Egypt leverages its 'soft power' through medical aid

CAIRO: A slickly produced video from the office of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi showed crates of medical supplies - stamped in English and Arabic with the words "from the Egyptian people to the American people" - being loaded onto a military cargo plane. The dramatically scored video released last month was Egypt's latest attempt to project soft power globally by sending medical aid to countries that have included China, Italy, Sudan and the United Kingdom.

But analysts described these gestures of political goodwill as tokenistic at a time when Egypt's own healthcare system is overstretched. In March - before the pandemic had claimed over 296,000 lives - Egypt's health minister Hala Zayed was the first minister from abroad to visit Beijing since the outbreak began. Zayed then appeared weeks later in a choreographed trip to Italy, an early European epicenter of the virus, personally delivering masks and gloves to the foreign minister.

Egyptians quickly lampooned her on social media, with one popular joke noting that Sisi was sending Zayed on mercy missions abroad hoping to get rid of her over her handling of the health crisis. Pundits online also criticised her ministry for ignoring shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) among healthcare workers in Egypt. "Health diplomacy has been one of the traditional strategies for global south states who seek to have a more prominent role in the global arena," Gerasimos Tsourapas, a political scientist at the University of Birmingham, told AFP.

"I read this as a short-term strategy that may not be necessarily thought through to the end, given Egypt's growing needs for protective equipment." "In terms of soft power, Egypt tends to prioritize foreign policy considerations over domestic ones," Tsourapas added. Egypt's confirmed COVID-19 cases have reached nearly 10,500 with over 550 fatalities, including nine doctors and six nurses. But some observers say the real toll could

'Force majeure'

And in cases where protective measures were too little or too late, victims' relatives have filed suits charging negligence. Employers including the big-box Walmart stores and the JBS meat-processing company have been targeted, as have some nursing homes. These complaints, however, have prompted legislative pushback: several states have moved to introduce laws to protect healthcare providers from suits, and Republicans in the US Congress want to provide similar protection for companies. "The COVID-19 pandemic will definitely have an effect on legal relationships in the future," Kracht said. Beyond legislative changes, he said, "I think in the future you will see that newly negotiated force majeure clauses will directly deal with the issue of pandemic."

A second big category of lawsuits deals with efforts to seek compensation for financial losses. Ticket-buyers who saw events canceled have filed a class-action suit against the online reservation site Ticketmaster, while others are seeking compensation for lost hotel or airline reservations, or even for memberships in gyms that have been closed for months. Since early May, demands from students seeking to recover tuition expenses and fees have surged.—Agencies

be much higher due to low levels of testing.

'No lasting impact'

Last month, Egypt sent the United States a C-130 military plane loaded with medical equipment. It was a striking role reversal for a country which is a leading recipient of American aid, receiving about \$1.3 billion annually. The plane brought 200,000 masks, 48,000 shoe covers and 20,000 surgical caps among other supplies, said Dutch Ruppertsberger, a Democrat in the US House of Representatives who heads a bipartisan group promoting relations with Egypt. "This is why international diplomacy and maintaining relationships with allies like Egypt are essential not in times of crisis, but every day," he wrote on Twitter. But Yezid Sayigh, an expert on Egypt's military at Carnegie's Middle East Centre in Beirut, suggested the donation reflected the Sisi administration's "special fondness for PR gestures and rhetoric". Sayigh said the message behind Egypt's global outreach was intended to "buttress its claims about its superior wisdom and capability and its demands for respect domestically". But such moves were unlikely to have a lasting impact on Egypt's image abroad, Sayigh said. "What will impress others is success in containing COVID-19 and getting the economy back on its feet," he added.

'Foreign audience'

Since assuming power in 2014, following the military overthrow of former Islamist president Mohamed Morsi the year before, general-turned-president Sisi has cultivated personal relationships with US President Donald Trump, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin. These friendships have translated into considerable arms purchases, with Egypt ranking third globally in weapons imports. Last week, the State Department cleared the way for Egypt to refurbish 43 Apache helicopters in a deal worth \$2.3 billion. The military plays an outsized role in Egyptian public life, with activities ranging from building highways and producing Ramadan soap operas to most recently selling personal PPE to citizens.

"Whilst the gesture of sending medical aid abroad was targeted partly at foreign audiences, it was also very much for domestic consumption," said Reem Abou El-Fadl, a political scientist at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies.—AFP

International

Coronavirus, race and income: How COVID-19 discriminates

Mortality 'substantially higher' among black and Latino patients

PARIS: After COVID-19 first appeared in China late last year, doctors quickly realized what made some patients more vulnerable to the virus than others: age, gender and underlying health problems all played a part. Now, as the pandemic kills hundreds across the world each day, experts say evidence is mounting that other socioeconomic factors - specifically connected to race and income - influence who become sick and who dies. Officials in Europe and the US have insisted that COVID-19 doesn't discriminate. But the figures suggest otherwise. A slew of recent studies have highlighted how people from minority backgrounds in Britain and the United States - two of the hardest hit nations - are disproportionately more likely to die from COVID-19 than their white counterparts.

Research printed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* this month found that COVID-19 mortality was "substantially higher" among black and Latino patients than in white patients. In Chicago, the rate of infection was 925 per 100,000 black people compared with 389 among white people. Age-adjusted black mortality in New York City was more than twice as high as white, a trend backed up by another study carried out by Britain's Institute of Fiscal Studies. That found that black Britons were 2.5 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than their white compatriots. In addition, several studies suggest that deprivation is a key determinant in COVID-19 cases.



Devi Sridhar, professor and chair of Global Public Health at the University of Edinburgh Medical School, said that a lack of preparedness when the pandemic struck exposed "a two-tiered system" in Britain's response to the virus. "If we look back to March - which is astounding - if you were networked enough and rich enough you could go and purchase a COVID test, just if you were curious if you had it or not," she told AFP. "Yet if you were a health worker on a COVID ward and had symptoms, you would not have had access to a test. That's a dual system that is not good for public health because you need people tested on the front line."

'Shocking' death figures

It is among those on the front line, including doctors, nurses and care home workers, that the link between COVID-19 mortality and race becomes particularly stark. Tim Cook, professor of anaesthesia at the Royal United Hospital of Bath and the University of Bristol, keeps a database of health worker COVID-19 deaths. Because official figures are tricky to come by, he and colleagues began by scouring media reports. The results were startling. Of the 63 nurses and midwives killed by the virus in Cook's database, 76 percent were from a BAME (black, Asian, and minority ethnic) background. Of the 32 doctors and dentists who have died from COVID-19 so far, all but two were non-white - 94 percent. Overall, BAME health workers made up 63 percent of the deaths, despite only making up just over 20 percent of the workforce. Chaand Nagpaul, chair of the British Medical Association (BMA), told AFP the figures were "a shock and a cause for alarm".

"None of us could have foreseen this, it goes beyond the margins of statistical variation we would allow for," he said. "Many of these doctors played a very visible role in the care of patients in their com-

Health officials claim the disease spread from neighboring Western Cape province, home to almost 60 percent of cases and around three-quarters of registered deaths. The two provinces together have a population of 13.5 million out of a national population of 58 million.

'Crippled system'

In the province's city of East London, one doctor felt hospitals were under-equipped to handle both coronavirus and their usual flow of patients. South Africa imposed strict confinement measures and banned the sale of alcohol in March to buy time for healthcare facilities to gear up for the pandemic. But emergency wards have been swamped by a resurgence of trauma cases since booze sales resumed on June 1, prompting Eastern Cape Premier Oscar Mabuyane to call for the ban to be reinstated. "It's hard to say whether we will be able to handle it," said the unnamed doctor, who voiced particular concern about the lack of ventilators and coronavirus training. "It is already a crippled system so it's difficult... to prepare for a pandemic."

At least five health facilities across the Eastern Cape have been affected by strike action or closed for decontamination after staff tested positive this month, according to South African hospital union

deal in areas beyond the control of Houthi rebels, who hold the capital Sanaa and much of northern Yemen. The STC, which declared autonomy in southern Yemen on April 26, said it had already begun implementing self-rule on the island. Senior STC official Salem Abdullah al-Socotri congratulated the separatist forces for "normalizing the situation" in Socotra. Military sources told AFP that its fighters took control on Saturday after an operation that began the day before, with only limited clashes with pro-government forces.

STC fighters had entered the capital Hadibo and established checkpoints there, they said. The separatists, who are fiercely hostile to Islamist groups, said the pro-government forces based on the island were largely supporters of Al-Islah, an Islamist party allied with the internationally recognized government. The UAE, which also has a zero tolerance policy towards Islamists, landed troops in Socotra in 2018, angering the government, which said the move was not justified as there were no Houthi forces present. The flare-up, which highlighted the UAE's ambitions to strengthen its presence in Yemen and Africa, was defused when Saudi troops were deployed to the island and the Emirati forces withdrew.

Socotra is famed for its unique and spectacular vegetation, including the Dragon's Blood Tree with its distinctive umbrella-shaped canopy and red

avirus infections, where nurses and doctors try to reassure patients from behind a protective cover. That's where some young Belgian entrepreneurs jumped in to convert their "Cheesebox" photobooth to take a shot of your lower face and welcoming smile, and print it on a mask.

The process takes on a couple of minutes and produces a realistic enough picture to cheer regulars at a Brussels restaurant, happy to see their favourite chefs and waiting staff again after almost three months. "In hospitals, care homes and some businesses, a medical mask can sometimes seem dehumanizing," explained Charles de Bellefroid, once of the co-founders of the company that built and delivered the machine. "By giving the doctor or the carer the true look of a face, patients feel better," he said. "Let's be clear: These aren't



CALIFORNIA: A protester holds a 'Black Lives Matters' sign during a march against racism in Venice, California on June 21, 2020. —AFP

munities and for them to die from COVID is a very noticeable loss." Cook said he was taken aback by the disproportionate number of BAME COVID-19 health worker deaths, especially because it was not initially understood as a risk factor when the pandemic struck. "China did really well in giving us information but they perhaps are less multicultural than other societies in the world," he told AFP. "The risk factors we saw coming out of China were to do with age, diabetes, immunosuppression, those kind of risk factors. So that's what we focused on."

'Constellation' of factors

But while the data shows clearly that BAME peo-

Hospersa. Provincial health spokesman Sizwe Kupelo blasted hospital staff for playing "politics" and shutting down wards unnecessarily. "This is a global pandemic and I have not heard of any country where after each and every positive case, health workers demand that the hospitals should close down," he told AFP. Kupelo said over 200 health workers had tested positive for COVID-19 in Eastern Cape, many of who he believed contracted the virus outside medical facilities.

Feeling 'unsafe'

Meanwhile, hospitals in the Western Cape have been battling with the brunt of South Africa's epidemic. "We have definitely had a lot more patients coming in," said an emergency doctor at a small district hospital outside Cape Town. Speaking on condition of anonymity, she worried about a growing number of patients forced to spend the night on plastic chairs due to lack of beds. "Every time I try to transfer a patient to ICU at our referring hospital they tell me they are full," she said. "It's going to get very very tough," she feared. "We only have so many oxygen ports and having to decide who gets them: that's what terrifies me." Nurses in Western Cape also fretted about over-stretched facilities and being unduly exposed to the virus. —AFP



SANAA: A female Yemeni medic tests blood samples from donors in the capital Sanaa. —AFP

sap. Much of its plant life is found nowhere else on the planet, making it a site of global importance for biodiversity. A government spokesman accused the STC of mounting a "full-fledged coup" on the island, saying its fighters had targeted state institutions and raided military camps and government quarters. In comments carried by the official Saba news agency, he urged the Saudi-led military coalition to stop the STC's "tampering, chaos and attacks" and compel them to implement the power-sharing deal signed late last year. —AFP

medical masks but they're not a gimmick. It's a double cotton layer and filter. They meet safety standards."

Brugmann University Hospital, which specializes in childhood medicine, has been an early customer for the concept. "With a mask it's hard to greet a patient with a smile," says Hind Ouali, deputy director of operations at the large Brussels facility. And it is not just in the health sector that the masks are catching on. After weeks stuck at home, Brussels diners headed out for lunch on Monday and some were delighted to be greeted with a grin. "I think that's great! It's much better, warmer, than the usual anonymous surgical mask," declares young customer Audrey, slipping her new mask on. "Only the mouth doesn't move, but you can at least see the whole face." —AFP

South African health workers sound alarm bells as virus spirals

JOHANNESBURG: Health workers across South Africa's two southernmost provinces have been struggling with a surge in coronavirus patients as the country hurtles towards an expected disease peak in July. "The numbers have been increasing daily - we don't have enough space" said a casualty nurse at Livingstone Hospital, one of the three COVID-designated facilities in Eastern Cape. Asking not to be named, she described a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), back-to-back shifts and chaotic management. "Last time I went on duty I got eight gloves," she told AFP by phone. "How do I work with eight pairs of gloves for a 12-hour shift?"

Coronavirus is pushing already-ailing hospitals in one of South Africa's poorest provinces to the brink. The Eastern Cape has recorded the third-highest number of coronavirus infections in South Africa, accounting for nearly one in seven of more than 80,400 confirmed cases and 1,674 fatalities.

Yemen's southern separatists take control of Socotra

ADEN: Yemen's southern separatists have seized control of the strategic island of Socotra, further undermining the government, which is battling to defeat the Houthi rebels firmly entrenched in the north. The island, located off the Horn of Africa about 350 kilometers from Yemen, lies close to important shipping routes, and with its unique flora and fauna, is sometimes referred to as "the Galapagos of the Indian Ocean". It has largely been spared the violence that has ravaged mainland Yemen, where the government and a Saudi-led military coalition have been battling the Iran-backed Houthi rebels for more than five years. But in recent years, it has become a bone of contention in the anti-Houthi camp, to which both the Saudi-backed government and the separatists - trained by key coalition member United Arab Emirates - belong.

The fall of Socotra on the weekend deepens the crisis between Southern Transitional Council (STC) and the government after the failure of a power-shar-

Printed masks put smile on Belgian faces

BRUSSELS: Belgium was all smiles as lockdown rules were eased on Monday and many cafes and restaurants reopened - even for some of those wearing masks. Diners and drinkers could return to their favorite tables, as long as they kept their distance, but servers still have to wear protective facemasks. The same is true in hospitals, still dealing with a dwindling but ongoing stream of coron-

ple are at great risk of dying from COVID-19, Cook said it was hard to pinpoint precisely why. "BAME individuals are more likely to have a constellation of other risk factors," he said. "Compared to white populations they are more likely to have hypertension, diabetes, to have cardiovascular disease and those factors are known to put people at increased risk of harm from COVID." But that alone doesn't explain the discrepancy, and Sridhar said social factors likely played a significant role. "It could be because there's some underlying genetic predisposition but then we'd expect to see many more deaths in countries that have larger BAME populations," she said. "That's not what we're seeing." —AFP

Shock in Germany as hundreds run riot in Stuttgart

STUTT GART: German authorities expressed shock Sunday over a rampage of an "unprecedented scale" overnight in the city centre of Stuttgart, where hundreds of party-goers ran riot, attacking police and plundering stores after smashing shop windows. Two dozen people, half of them German nationals, were arrested provisionally, as police reported 19 colleagues hurt. "They were unbelievable scenes that have left me speechless. In my 46 years of police service, I have never experienced this," said Stuttgart police chief Frank Lutz. Tensions built up shortly after midnight when officers carried out checks on a 17-year-old German man suspected of using drugs, said Stuttgart deputy police chief Thomas Berger. Crowds who were milling around at the city's biggest square, the Schlossplatz, immediately rallied around the young man and began flinging stones and bottles at police.

The groups of mostly men also used sticks or poles to smash windows of police vehicles parked in the area. "I sharply condemn this brutal outbreak of violence, these acts against people and things are criminal action that must be forcefully prosecuted and condemned," Baden-Wuerttemberg state premier Winfried Kretschmann said in a statement. At the height of the clashes, some 400 to 500 people joined in the battle against police officers and rescue workers. As officers pushed back against the crowd, they broke up into small groups, carrying on their rampage around the city center, smashing shop windows and looting stores along nearby Koeningstrasse, a major shopping street.

'Party scene'

Videos posted on Twitter showed people breaking shop windows, leaving goods strewn on the streets. A jewelry store was completely emptied and a mobile phone shop wrecked, according to regional broadcaster SWR. In all, nine shops were looted while 14 others suffered damage such as broken windows. As smaller scale clashes had already broken out downtown last week between police and groups of young people, officers had already bulked up their deployment overnight with an extra 100-strong team. But the scale of the violence overwhelmed the officers, forcing them to call in reinforcements from other parts of the state. —AFP



STUTT GART: A woman wearing a face mask holds up a placard reading 'God bless Angela Merkel - refugees matter' amidst a Black Lives Matter demonstration against racism in Stuttgart, southern Germany. —AFP

International

Moscow virus doctors see no light at the end of the tunnel

Russia reports record number of new infections

MOSCOW: An exhausted coronavirus patient slowly and deliberately writes his message on a green clipboard one letter at a time: "Doctor, when can I go home?" For the past three weeks, the 54-year-old has been on a ventilator in a hospital in Moscow, the epicenter of the pandemic in Russia, receiving treatment for the virus. "Wait a while longer," says Dmitry Cheboksarov, head of the coronavirus ward at the Vinogradov hospital. "We are teaching you how to breathe," he says softly. "It will be another four days."

Pressure on the hospital in Moscow has eased since Russia reported its record number of new coronavirus infections earlier this month. But doctors and nurses in the coronavirus unit are working long hours and treating a steady flow of patients that has kept their ward at capacity. They say they have yet to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Cheboksarov, wearing a mask, goggles and a full protective suit, explains that his patient's health is improving. But he still needs to be hooked up to respirator, which prevents him from speaking. "Don't be sad," the doctor says. "Your loved ones are kissing you. I'm in touch with them. They'll phone you tomorrow."



Doctor, when can I go home?

joined his team.

'Quiet day, terrible night'

'Try not to think'
The 36 beds in this coronavirus ward have been occupied continuously since mid-April, says Cheboksarov, a father of two who estimates he had slept an average of four hours every night for the past month. "I try not to think about the end of the epidemic. It would get in the way of my work." With more than 290,000 cases, Russia has the

second-highest number of infections in the world, behind only the United States. Yet its death rate is low compared to other countries hit hard by the virus: by Monday, health officials had reported a total of 2,722 fatalities. Critics have cast doubt on the low official mortality rate, accusing authorities of under-reporting deaths in order to play down the scale of the crisis.
Russian health officials say one of the reasons the count is lower is that only deaths directly caused by the virus are being included. They also say that since the virus came later to Russia, the country had more time to prepare hospital beds and launch wide-scale testing to slow its spread. During AFP's visit Sunday, supervised by Moscow health officials, three black body bags could be seen being moved from the ward's "red zone" where the virus patients are treated. The number of medics in this coronavirus unit has grown dramatically in recent weeks, from 20 to more than 90, Cheboksarov said. Medical workers from across the country have



MOSCOW: Russian national guard servicemen wearing face masks stand on a street prior to a rehearsal for the WWII Victory Parade in downtown Moscow. —AFP

works in Ivanovo, she added. Medical workers throughout the country have raised concerns about equipment, including a lack of protective gear for staff, and new ventilators that have been blamed for deadly fires at hospitals in Saint Petersburg and Moscow.

Elena Alkalayeva, 49, from Irkutsk in Siberia, said she responded to a televised appeal for doctors to come to the capital out of a sense of "patriotism". Her temporary contract working in Moscow comes with a salary five times higher than

her job back home, she added, without specifying the amount. "I haven't started to tell myself that things are calming down," she said during a break in her shift. "You can have a quiet day here and then a terrible night. This is how it works in the respiratory ward." Cheboksarov, the head of the ward, likened his team of medics to an "orchestra," which is getting more and more attuned to fighting the virus. "We didn't have very much time to rehearse. But the show has started and we will be here for as long as it takes." —AFP

Lonely, dangerous virus lockdown for LGBTQ in India

MUMBAI: In conservative India, many in the LGBTQ community hide their real selves. But being stuck inside with their families for months in the coronavirus lockdown has made this hard to keep up - with sometimes dire consequences. Kumar, a young gay man living in a town in northern India, was physically assaulted by his family who then called the police when they found out his secret. "They found his phone - he was chatting with someone or sharing photos - and beat him up," said Shruta Neytra, co-founder of the LGBTQ online youth support group Yaariyan.

Kumar - not his real name - reached out to the group seeking help. But because of coronavirus restrictions on travel and movement, there was little anyone could do. And he is not alone. "We are hearing of so many cases where people are facing harassment and psychological torture by their families," Neytra said. "It is very distressing because we can't even tell them to leave home and seek shelter elsewhere." A colonial era law banning gay sex was scrapped in 2018 and transgender Indians were legally recognized four years before that. But outside of big cities LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning) people still face widespread discrimination and violence. The lockdown that began in March brought misery to millions, destroying migrant workers' livelihoods and driving many deeper into poverty. The restrictions also left LGBTQ Indians already living on the margins vulnerable to further abuse, often at the hands of their own families.

'Lonely and claustrophobic'

As a transgender woman, Anjali Siroya saw going to work and seeing friends as a lifeline, away from the hostile environment of the Mumbai tenement flat she shares with her parents and brother. "They don't beat me anymore after I tried to run away once... but being with them 24/7 is still very traumatic," the 21-year-old said. "They insist on using the male pronoun to refer to me even though I have never wanted to hide my identity," she said. As the pressure at home has grown, she has taken to Instagram to celebrate her gender identity with glamorous photographs of herself - shot before the lockdown - and vocal posts about the fight for equality.

"I miss dressing up, putting on lipstick and earrings, and posing for selfies," she said. "I know this might sound silly to some people but it was a way for me to express myself." As LGBTQ Indians have increasingly turned to social media and online communities for support, many have also expressed a mounting urge to come out to their families. A bisexual sociology student in Delhi, Seema - not her real name - told AFP that life under lockdown felt "lonely and claustrophobic". "Everything I say about girls needs to be said in code," she said, describing how she hides her phone from her mother and grandparents to avoid being accidentally outed. —AFP

A landslide win for Serbia ruling party

BELGRADE: Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic declared a landslide victory for his ruling party Sunday in a parliamentary election tarnished by a boycott from much of the opposition, who accuse the leader of burgeoning authoritarianism. With some 63 percent of the vote, according to Vucic, the center-right Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) was set to dramatically expand its dominance in the 250-member parliament. While Vucic did not run for office himself, the 50-year-old tightly controls the party, which has been in power since 2012. "I am grateful to the people for this historic support," he said with elation from the SNS headquarters where brass music blasted in celebration.

"We won everywhere," Vucic continued. "We won in the places where we had never won before." The sweeping success was helped by a boycott from the country's main opposition camp, who decried the elections as neither free nor fair under Vucic's domineering reign. But despite their stay-at-home campaign and lingering concerns about the coronavirus, turnout was

lower than normal - but not dramatically - at slightly under 50 percent according to the independent election monitor CRTA. The boycotting opposition slammed the "fake elections" and claimed their movement was victorious. Either way the ruling party will have few rivals to contend with in the halls of parliament, where they are expected to hold around 189 seats.

Virus bump

In second place was their traditional junior coalition partner, the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), predicted to claim 32 seats, according to the IPSOS polling agency. And next in line was the only opposition party to garner enough votes to pass the three percent threshold to enter parliament: the newly formed Serbian Patriotic Alliance (SPAS) with around a dozen seats. A slate of ethnic minority parties with a lower bar to entry will also take some 17 spots, according to IPSOS. Among those who didn't make the cut was the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party, led by convicted war criminal Vojislav Seselj. Without a meaningful opposition, the "pyrrhic victory" could ultimately discredit Serbia's ruling party as it will be viewed as "less legitimate than ever before", Balkans analyst Florian Bieber commented on Twitter. But in the short term they will be more powerful than ever, capping Vucic's eight-year effort to consolidate control over



BELGRADE: Serbian President, and leader of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), Aleksandar Vucic celebrates his party parliamentary elections in Belgrade. —AFP

the country's democracy, first as prime minister and now as president.

He came into this poll riding a fresh wave of popularity for keeping Serbia's coronavirus situation in check, with around 260 deaths in a country of seven million. Although the post of president is meant to be ceremonial, he remains Serbia's top decision-maker and led the country through the health crisis. Serbian analyst Dusan Spasojevic describes the Balkan state's elections as a form of "competitive

autocracy". "There is a competition but participants are not equal," he explained of a playing field warped by Vucic's outsized influence. Watchdogs say Vucic's power lies in his manipulation of the media, with several outlets effectively serving as SNS propaganda machines. The US-based Freedom House recently declared the country no longer a democracy but a "hybrid regime", due to "years of increasing state capture, abuse of power, and strongman tactics". —AFP

Forced into self-reliance, Taiwan unveils trainer jet

TAICHUNG: Taiwan unveiled a new locally-built training jet yesterday, a boost for the island's push to manufacture its own defense weapons as it faces off against an increasingly belligerent China. President Tsai Ing-wen attended a ceremony for the first public flight of the "Brave Eagle" Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT), describing it as a "historic moment".

"Today is a big day for the Republic of China air force and it's also an important landmark for the domestic aerospace industry," Tsai told a crowd in central Taichung, using Taiwan's official name. "This is a critical part of realizing our defense self-sufficiency." Trainers are what pilots learn on before switching to much more expensive fighter jets and the AJT will allow Taiwan to replace its current fleet of obsolete aircraft. Democratic Taiwan lives with the constant threat of invasion by China which views the self-ruled island as part of its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

In recent decades it has found itself out-num-

bered and out-gunned by China's enormous People's Liberation Army. The imbalance has been compounded by western governments becoming increasingly wary of selling it advanced weapon systems, fearful of incurring Beijing's wrath. That has pushed Taiwan to develop its own hardware, including advanced missiles, boats and the new trainer jet. Beijing has ramped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure since Tsai first took office in 2016 as she has refused to acknowledge that Taiwan is part of "one China".

She won a landslide reelection in January in what was seen as a strong rebuke to China's hardline campaign against the island. The unveiling of the AJT comes as Taiwan's ageing fleet of fighter jets are being scrambled at an unprecedented rate. Chinese jets have entered into Taiwan's air defense identification zone seven times in the last two weeks, according to Taipei's defense ministry. The island currently has some 300 fighter jets, all in service since the 1990s, including US-made F-16s, French-made Mirage 2000-5s and the locally developed Indigenous Defense Fighters.

The United States has remained Taiwan's leading unofficial ally and arms supplier, but until recently Taiwan had struggled to buy new fighter jets. Since



TAICHUNG: Taiwan's 'Brave Eagle' Advanced Jet Trainer takes off for its maiden flight at the Ching Chuan Kang Airbase in Taichung yesterday. —AFP

the election of US President Donald Trump, Washington has been more willing to sell big ticket items. Last year the Trump administration announced it would sell 66 latest generation F-16 jets to Taiwan shortly after another huge military hardware sale including missiles and armoured vehicles. The announcement infuriated Beijing, which vowed to sanction companies involved in the sale if it went through. —AFP

Brazil's toll hits 50,000 as Spain reopens borders

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil registered its 50,000th death from the coronavirus outbreak on Sunday, underlining Latin America's desperate struggle to contain the disease, as Europe's gradual emer-

gence from lockdown was marked by Spain reopening its borders. Brazil is the second worst-affected country behind the United States, and the spread of COVID-19 is accelerating across Latin America, with Mexico, Peru and Chile also hard-hit as death tolls soar and healthcare facilities are pushed toward collapse.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who has been fiercely criticized for comparing the virus to a "little flu," argues the eco-

omic impact of shutdowns is often worse than the virus itself. But Mexico City has delayed reopening markets, restaurants, malls, hotels and places of worship, with the country now recording over 20,000 COVID-19 deaths. Highlighting the region's woes, Peru passed 8,000 deaths on Sunday despite preparing to reopen shopping malls. In contrast, primary and secondary school children will return to class in France on Monday, and cinemas and theaters will also reopen.

One cinema in Paris opened just after midnight to mark the occasion, with audiences cheering the opening credits. "We booked immediately. It's not our usual schedule, but it will create a nice memory after these difficult weeks," one cinema-goer named Loriane told AFP. On Sunday, traffic flowed again across the Spain-France border in a watershed moment for the millions of businesses and workers across Europe who have suffered from the economic downturn. —AFP

Business

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2020

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Energy giant Saudi Aramco shows its gas facilities at Yanbu refinery. On top of war and the coronavirus pandemic, Yemen faces looming economic disaster as a crisis gripping its main benefactor Saudi Arabia dents remittances and leaves state coffers running dry. — AFP

Saudi downturn batters Yemen's economy

Low oil prices, virus shutdowns trigger deep austerity measures in Yemen

RIYADH: On top of war and the coronavirus pandemic, Yemen faces looming economic disaster as a crisis gripping its main benefactor Saudi Arabia dents remittances and leaves state coffers running dry.

Saudi Arabia has poured in tens of billions of dollars to prop up the Arab world's poorest country in the form of humanitarian aid, fuel subsidies and cash to its ailing central bank.

But as the double whammy of low oil prices and virus shutdowns triggers deep austerity measures at home, observers say Saudi Arabia no longer appears willing—or able—to offer Yemen the same level of support even as the kingdom's military spending remains robust.

Saudi Arabia may also be reassessing its role as what observers call a "regional ATM" after its expensive intervention in Yemen produced few tangible gains, while a bitter power struggle between its anti-Houthi allies complicates its efforts to exit the conflict.

"The Saudis are no more (inclined) to pour unlimited millions and billions into Yemen," a Western official tracking the kingdom's engagement in Yemen told AFP. Riyadh is the top donor to Yemen—and the paring back of its support will have the biggest impact, observers say.

Analysts anticipate the Yemeni rial will weaken substantially this year as a \$2 billion central bank deposit from Saudi Arabia in 2018 is nearly exhausted, a scenario

that will diminish purchasing power and leave millions unable to afford basic food staples. Less than \$200 million of that amount remained in May, according to ACAPS, a non-profit project of charities including the Norwegian Refugee Council.

"Yemen is looking increasingly economically vulnerable," ACAPS said in a report, warning that a cessation of Saudi monetary support will lead to a "sharp devaluation" of the local currency.



Riyadh reassesses its role as 'regional ATM'

Donors hold back

A donor conference in Riyadh earlier this month secured little over half its target of \$2.4 billion, as the United Nations warned funding shortages could shutter relief programs just as coronavirus cases spike. Yemen is already gripped by what the UN calls the world's worst

humanitarian crisis, with tens of thousands killed and an estimated four million people displaced by war.

The World Bank says three-quarters of the population lives in poverty and last year the UN estimated 80 percent of Yemenis were at risk of hunger and disease. At the heart of the economic dysfunction is the country's central bank, split into two rival branches controlled by Yemen's main warring parties.

Compounding the crisis is a "war within a war" that pits southern separatists against the Yemeni government—both allied against the Houthis.

The separatists, who have declared self-rule in the de facto capital Aden, recently seized a central bank convoy carrying nearly \$80 million, multiple sources said. A spokesman for the separatist Southern Transitional Council justified the seizure, telling AFP it was meant to protect the currency from sliding further.

The government-controlled central bank now faces the stark prospect of operating with almost no cash. The feud "has created circumstances that will discourage Saudi Arabia from replenishing its foreign reserve support," said the Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies.

"Yemen's northern neighbor is also in the midst of its own massive budget cuts and no other international donor appears eager to step forward and take Riyadh's place," it wrote in a recent report.

Remittances plunge

Charities including Oxfam are also warning of an "unprecedented decline" in remittances to Yemen—a vital lifeline for millions as the cash-strapped government struggles to pay wages. Oxfam said cash transfer providers in six of Yemen's governorates had seen remittances plunge by up to 80 percent between January and April.

There are an estimated 1.6 million Yemenis in Saudi Arabia, where expat workers face sweeping job losses and salary cuts amid the worst economic crisis in decades. "With millions of Yemenis reliant on remittances from Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia in particular, any economic disruption there has huge consequences in Yemen," Abdulwasea Mohammed, Oxfam's policy adviser in Yemen, said.

"Without family members sending money for basics like food and rent, more families will be forced into debt or will have to skip meals to make ends meet," Saudi authorities did not respond to AFP's request for comment. Despite the financial pressure, the kingdom is unlikely to curtail its military spending in Yemen—estimated to be around \$200 million a day—as it views the Iran-linked Houthis as an existential threat.

Just days after Riyadh unveiled austerity measures in May, US officials said Boeing was awarded contracts worth \$2.6 billion to supply the kingdom over 1,000 surface-to-air and anti-ship missiles. — AFP

De-escalation for ECB? Change of guard at top German court

BERLIN: Changes to the composition of Germany's top court are likely to make it less confrontational towards the European Central Bank following a ruling about bond purchases that sent shockwaves around Europe, according to two sources close to the court.

In its ruling last month, the Constitutional Court gave the ECB three months to justify bond purchases under its flagship stimulus program or lose the Bundesbank as a participant, raising questions about the future of the euro.

While Berlin is likely to have the final say on whether the ECB's justification is sufficient, the plaintiffs behind the case have signaled they could bring fresh legal action against new ECB stimulus plans, which could lead to more market turmoil.

However, there will be a changing of the guard at the German court in Karlsruhe yesterday. A key change will be a new judge joining a bench widely seen to have a narrow Eurosceptic majority: Astrid Wallrabenstein, who was nominated by the pro-European Greens and has suggested there should be a thaw in relations with the European Court of Justice (ECJ), which cleared the ECB's plan. She will take the place on the bench vacated by Andreas Voßkuhle, president of the court whose term has expired and is leaving. His role as president

will go to Stephan Harbarth, a conservative lawmaker from 2009-2018.

"She is a lot more Europe-friendly than Voßkuhle," said the first source, a constitutional law professor who is well connected at the court and knows Wallrabenstein. "So my forecast is that in future, such decisions like that on the ECB will no longer be taken."

Wallrabenstein's appointment could help pave the way towards a more conciliatory tone from the court, which experts say has a history of provoking crises before softening its stance. "Typically what happens is the court does something that make people think it's overreached and then they back off a bit," said Justin Collings, historian of the German constitutional court at Brigham Young University in Utah.

A spokesman for the court said he could not speculate on the direction of forthcoming decisions from the court in view of the personnel changes and each decision was taken on its own merit and by a group of eight judges in confidence.

'More than a match'

The constitutional court is divided into two senates, each with eight judges, which handle different cases. Wallrabenstein will join the second senate, which made the May 5 ruling on the ECB's bond purchases.

Although the second senate voted 7-1 to pass the ruling, they aim for consensus. The arrival of Wallrabenstein promises to shift the balance, at least over time, said the second source, who is close to the court, noting that she is the first judge on the second senate to be nominated by the Greens. "Every new justice changes something. In a group of eight people, one new person will make a difference," said the source. "There may well be more vigorous discussions."



The law professor who knows the Karlsruhe judges said the dynamic on the second senate "has been strongly shaped by the interplay of Voßkuhle and (Peter) Huber", a conservative who described the May 5 ruling as "imperative".

Of Wallrabenstein, the professor added: "She won't go looking for open conflict, but she has good arguments and is more than a match for Huber."

Wallrabenstein has shown she is prepared to take a stand. In 2014, as a lawyer, she represented a - failed - case at the Karlsruhe court to have former U.S. spy agency contractor Edward Snowden heard by an investigating committee in Berlin.

She has already suggested a softer approach in relations with the ECJ, which cleared the ECB's stimulus plan in 2018. The Karlsruhe judges decided they were

not bound by that ruling, saying the European court had failed to scrutinize the ECB's actions to the point of making its own verdict "meaningless". "The tone has become harsher lately," Wallrabenstein said late last month of relations between the courts. "Just carrying on like this perhaps becomes a bit difficult now."

Contacted by Reuters at the weekend, Wallrabenstein declined to comment further.

However, she was quoted by Germany's Frankfurter Sonntagszeitung weekly as saying she hoped that "things would move in the right direction", adding it was now about how to carry on after an argument and say: "Forget it, let's move on".

Conundrum for Berlin

The German court has said its May ruling did not apply to new ECB measures, leaving room for a fresh challenge. However, while the plaintiffs behind the original case have signaled they could bring new legal action, the second source told Reuters that the Karlsruhe court felt it had made its point with the May 5 ruling.

Nonetheless, the May 5 decision still poses a conundrum for Berlin, which is bound to respect the Karlsruhe court, but at the same time, does not want to erode the independence of the ECB, whose unprecedented stimulus has kept the euro zone intact.

ECB watchers see two potential exit routes: either the Bundesbank or the European Parliament, which has the right to question the ECB, seeks a clarification about the bond purchases from the eurozone central bank.

Berlin must then either accept or reject the justification. Rejection would require the Bundesbank to pull out of the scheme, and put a question mark over Germany's role in the euro. — Reuters

Business

KAMCO Oil Market Monthly Report

Oil reaches 3-month high on OPEC+ extension, uneven demand recovery

Kuwait lowers oil production to 2.29 million bpd

KUWAIT: Oil prices bounced back during the third week of June-2020 and stabilized at around the \$40/b mark after OPEC+ producers decided to extend the additional production cut agreement by another month until July-2020. Also, the meeting of OPEC+ members held last week concluded on quotas for each producer, especially Iraq, that was aimed at reassuring other producers of stricter compliance which further lent support to prices. Meanwhile, a number of datapoints that suggested a demand revival in the oil market for the remainder of 2020 also supported prices.

The resurgence of demand comes amid deceleration of growth of COVID-19 cases in most parts of the world during the last few weeks, although the recent news of a second wave of virus in the US and China raised concerns. Last week Beijing re-imposed curfews in several parts of the city which was later reported to have been contained with reports saying the peak of the second wave has passed and new cases would be sporadic in nature. Also, the discovery of a widely available existing drug that can increase survival rate has also added to hopes for a containing the pandemic.



Drop in virus cases boosts demand growth

A number of indicators suggested a demand revival in the US as well as other key oil markets, although requirements continue to be well below its five year average. In terms of product category, the latest weekly EIA report showed diesel inventories declining for the first time in 11 weeks indicating a restart to the US economy. Gasoline consumption is also picking up and although some airlines have started operations, jet fuel demand recovery is expected to be delayed until the sector restarts again with a full end to the lockdowns. There were reports of continued high crude inventories, but with consumption increasing across the globe, refinery runs have reportedly started picking up, especially in the Asia Pacific region as well as in a majority of the OECD countries. Meanwhile, in its monthly report, OPEC asserted that demand would remain subdued during the second half of the year despite a gradual economy recovery that would keep the oil market in surplus. As a result, OPEC did not change its demand forecast for 2020, whereas IEA raised its demand expectations by 0.5 mb/d for the year.

In terms of supply, OPEC crude production reached an 18-year low after declining by 5.84 mb/d during May-2020 to reach 24.6 mb/d. The decline came after producers implemented output cuts as per the OPEC+ agreement. This also pushed OPEC's spare capacity to close to 10 mb/d, one of the highest on record. According to our calculations, around 6.6 mb/d of the existing capacity can be quickly utilized in the absence of the voluntary cuts. According to reports, the cuts in May-2020 resulted in a compliance level of around 87 percent for OPEC+ group. OPEC also made an upward revision to its 2H-2020 supply forecast for the non-OPEC producers by

0.3 mb/d and now expects production to decline by 4.3 mb/d vs. 1H-2020.

Oil prices

Spot crude prices traded at 3-month high above the \$40/b mark for the first time since the first week of March-2020. Spot prices of Brent crude reached \$41.18/b during the second week of June-2020 after OPEC+ countries decided to extend the extraordinary production cuts by another month until July-2020. Oil market also moved into backwardation for the first time since March-2020 indicating tighter supplies after a number of OPEC producers pledged to reach compliance levels as per the production cut agreement. The problem of excess oil and storage issues in floating tankers were also reportedly under control. On the other hand, crude oil inventory in the US showed marginal decline in May-2020 but once again increased during June-2020 reflecting the slew of oil tankers shipped when the prices had declined to decades low level. This was also evident from the slumping price of chartering an oil tanker that had surged to record levels during March and April this year. Prices are down to almost a fourth on the Middle East to China route.

The latest weekly report from EIA showed a second consecutive week of increase in US crude inventories totaling 8 million over the last two weeks. However, in terms of output, there was significant pressure as seen from a steep drop of 0.6 mb/d reaching an average of 10.5 mb/d, which also reflected partial shut downs due to a tropical storm. The declining production was also reflected in oil rig count numbers from Baker Hughes. The latest weekly report showed a 14th consecutive week of declining oil rigs in the US bringing the total to a quarter of the total since the mid-March-2020, one of the fastest pace of declines in the US. Last week oil rigs declined by 10 to reach 189 rigs despite higher crude prices.

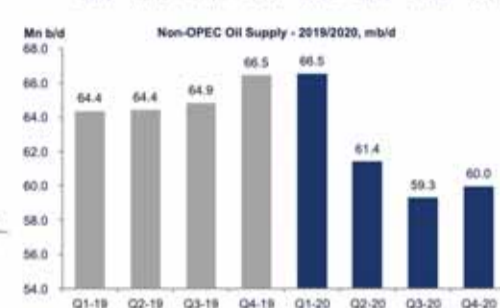
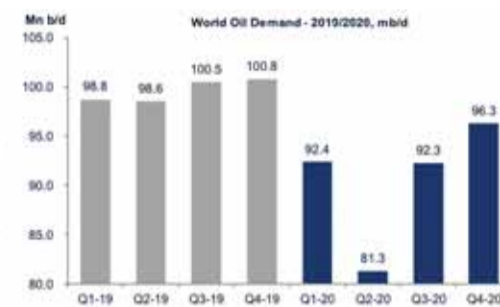
The average Brent crude prices during May-20 reached \$28.8/b, an increase of more than 50 percent, one of the biggest monthly increase on record. OPEC crude spot and Kuwait grade crude increased at a slightly slower pace of 42.5 percent to average at \$25.2/b and \$24.5/b, respectively.

World oil demand

Comments from a number of oil ministers from OPEC+ country as well as a number of oil explorers highlighted demand recovery in the global crude oil market at a faster-than-expected pace but reaffirmed that there is a long way to go in order to balance the oil market. That said, OPEC's assessment of demand growth decline in 2020 remained unchanged in its latest monthly report at 9.1mb/d world oil demand expected to average at 90.6 mb/d. Oil demand is expected to decline by 5.2 mb/d in the OECD region primarily due to the fall in consumption in the transportation sector during Q2-2020. In the non-OECD region, demand is expected to decline by 3.9 mb/d as almost all the key oil market are expected to experience sharp decline in demand. The IEA, in its latest monthly report, said that demand decline during 1H-2020 were less severe than expected and increased its demand estimate for Q2-2020 by 2.1 mb/d. Full year decline this year is expected to be 8.1 mb/d, according to the IEA, as compared to 8.6 mb/d decline estimated in its previous report. According to reports, oil demand recovery was



Sources: OPEC, EIA, Bloomberg



World oil supply growth for 2019 was revised by 0.01 mb/d to 2.03 mb/d and supply is now estimated to have averaged at 65.03 mb/d.

OPEC oil production & spare capacity

After seeing one of the steepest growths in monthly production in April-2020, OPEC crude production reversed in May-2020 to show one of the steepest month declines of 5.84 mb/d to reach an 18-year low monthly average production level of 24.6 mb/d, according to data from Bloomberg. OPEC secondary sources showed an even steeper decline of 6.3 mb/d to reach 24.2 mb/d during May-2020, highlighting an output decline reported by all the producers in the group. Saudi Arabia accounted for 50 percent of the production cuts with a decline of 2.9 mb/d and produced at 8.7 mb/d during the month, the lowest production level since September-2019.

UAE, Iraq and Kuwait also lowered production during the month and together with Saudi Arabia, the four producers accounted for almost 90 percent of production decline. With this decline in production, spare capacity in OPEC has also reached one of the highest on record at 9.4 mb/d.

According to our calculations and based on April-2020 productions, the capacity that can quickly come online stood at 6.6 mb/d from six producers in the group, including countries the top four producers, Nigeria and Libya. Production in UAE saw the biggest decline during May-2020, after Saudi Arabia, after the country lowered production by 1.23 mb/d to 2.45 mb/d, the lowest monthly average since March-2011. Similarly, Kuwait lowered production to 2.29 mb/d, the lowest since October-2010, by slashing output by 610 tb/d.

The month also saw unprecedented efforts from OPEC producers to lower output. Saudi Arabia lowered oil exports to the US to the lowest level in 35 years, according to tanker tracking data from Bloomberg. The Kingdom has also reportedly stopped work on developing some of its crude and natural gas deposits. It was reported that Saudi Aramco has suspended work on two platforms for about a year and has delayed related spending of around \$18 billion by at least six months.

World oil supply

World liquids production declined by 10.04 mb/d during May-2020 to average at 89.89 mb/d mainly led by decline in production by the OPEC+ producers as well as fall in output outside the group, primarily in North America. As a result, the share of OPEC crude in total global production declined by 360 bps to 26.9 percent during May-2020. Compliance to the OPEC+ agreement by non-OPEC countries in the pact resulted in a decline in crude output by more than 2.95 mb/d during May-2020 while the 10 producers in the OPEC lowered production by 6.25 mb/d as compared to the April-2020. Monthly production outside the OPEC+ group declined by 2.0 mb/d in April-2020 and by a further 0.8 mb/d during May-2020 primarily in the US and Canada. Supply from the two producers is expected to decline by 1.8 mb/d in 2020.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced today the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

- The lucky winners are:
1. Ali Jaber Helal Al-Shammari
 2. Ali Ahmad Mohammed Ashkanani
 3. Bader Sagheer Samel Al-Khalidi
 4. Sarah Mohammad Al-Wazzan and Aliah Mohammad Al-Wazzan
 5. Abdullah Faleh Abdullah Al-Daihani

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and Quarterly Draws, wherein the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

NBK resumes Jawhara draws, announces KD 125,000 winner

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is always keen to reward its customers and provide them with top-notch banking experience. And as part of its commitment to always provide customers with the best services and rewards that meet their expectations, the bank resumed Al-Jawhara draws that had been postponed due to the exceptional circumstances in the country because of coronavirus pandemic, after obtaining the approval of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry while adhering to all precautionary measures.

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

Al-Jawhara weekly draws were conducted on Thursday 18th June, in which Mohammad Mustafa Al-Abdulrazzaq was announced as the winner of the KD 5,000 prize for 14th April 2020 postponed draw, and Ahmad Adnan Al-Herz as the winner of

Ahmad Nwairan Khalaf Alenezi Aeshah Abbas Ali Mohammed

The winners for the second week (22 - 26 March 2020) are:

- Zinab Nasser
- Hamda Qassem Ahmad
- Rimas Fahad Al-Azmi
- Laila Ali Mousa Al-Sayegh
- Danah Yaqoub Alkhalidi

The winners for the third week (29 March - 2 April 2020) are:

- Jafar Gulum Ahmad Mohammad
- Khaled Ayed Aldhafer Alenezi
- Khalid Hnetem Shberem Alazme
- Sakeenah Ali Hashem Ali Husain
- Fatemah Mohammad Safar Ashkanani

Al-Danah is now offering its biggest prize yet, with an annual draw prize of KD 1,500,000. The

the KD 5,000 for 21st April 2020 postponed draw.

On Sunday 21st June, the bank conducted Al-Jawhara KD 125,000 draw for 28th April 2020 postponed monthly draw and announced Mohammad Khalifa Baddah Quraieet as the winner.

On the same day, NBK conducted the weekly postponed draw for 5th May 2020 and announced Mahmoud Jaseem Al-Shatti the winner of the KD 5,000 prize. Al-Jawhara Account gives customers the opportunity to enter draws and win prizes of KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly and the grand prize of KD 250,000 quarterly. Every KD 50 deposited into Al-Jawhara Account gives the customer a chance to be one the next lucky winners, and if no withdrawal or transfers are performed on the account during the holding period of each draw, customers will receive an additional chance to enter the draw for every KD 50 held in the account, doubling their chance to win.

Commenting on resuming the Al-Jawhara draws, Hisham Al-Nusif, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We are always keen on preserving our cus-

annual draw will be held on 14 January 2021, and the last chance to deposit into an Al-Danah account to participate is 30 September 2020.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous

tomers' rights, that's why we resumed Al-Jawhara draws that had been postponed due to the recent circumstances, after obtaining the approval of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This comes in line with our efforts to reward our customers all year round, which is a key pillar in our goal to enrich their banking experience."

"Al-Jawhara Account offers various services and benefits, and every customer have the chance to win", he added. Al-Nusif also affirmed that Al-Jawhara Account can be opened easily by visiting the nearest NBK Branch, while NBK Customers can open the account through NBK Online Banking or NBK Mobile Banking.

He further said that NBK continues to reward its customers by providing them with the most advanced and secure banking experience. Al-Jawhara Account provides customers with a unique opportunity to save money and win at the same time, while offering them a variety of services and benefits, including free NBK Debit Card, as well as the ability to manage the account through NBK Online Banking and NBK Mobile Banking. Since 2012, National Bank of Kuwait has rewarded its loyal customers with a total worth prizes of KD 2,200,000 in the weekly, monthly, and quarterly Al-Jawhara draws.

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

Gulf Bank holds three postponed Al-Danah draws

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held three of its postponed Al-Danah weekly draws on 18th June 2020, and announced the names of the winners for the period of 15 March - 2 April 2020. The Al-Danah weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each.

The winners for the first week (15 - 19 March 2020) are:

- Hind Saad Mohammad
- Yaseen Husain
- Salem Mirza Mohammad

year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2019, have been added to their 2020 chances, and the same process will take place in 2021, and so on. Terms and conditions apply. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2020 quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

Global equity markets face high levels of uncertainty

Fed chief uncertain about timing and strength of economic recovery

KUWAIT: High levels of uncertainty have become the new norm in financial markets and last week was no different. There's a lot to be worried about from recent lockdown measures in China, skyrocketing virus cases in America, president Trump threatening to cut ties with China, military tensions in Asia, and frail growth prospects by central banks. A spike in new coronavirus infections in numerous US states and the imposition of travel bans in Beijing serves as a reminder of the risks of reopening the economy before a vaccine has been developed. Looking at the Fed chairman's comment, Powell told lawmakers last week that "significant uncertainty remains about the timing and strength of the economic recovery."

encouraging sign that the economy may be on pace for a V-shaped recovery. In spite of the monthly surge, retail sales are down 6.1 percent from the same period a year ago and almost 8 percent below where they were in February. The pandemic's damage to retail sales remains significant. With the American economy opening up, the Covid-19 cases have increased in states that were among the earliest to reopen, amplifying concerns about another round of shutdowns. Yet, the US Treasury secretary and White House economic have said in recent days that the US cannot shut down the economy again.

Europe & UK

The single currency has depreciated nearly 1.30 percent in less than a week, pressured by the risk-off mode and whether the EU would be able to pass a stimulus plan proposed by the European Commission, given that some countries are opposed to handing out aid as grants.

Grim UK labor data

Applications for unemployment benefits in Britain soared 23 percent last month to a total number of 2.8 million as the pandemic forced thousands of businesses to shut down. The data suggests unemployment is already approaching levels last seen in the 1980s recession and the think-tank (Resolution Foundation) said the figures "reinforced the likelihood that Britain is on course for the biggest jobs crisis for at least a quarter of a century". The hiring rate of new employees is collapsing with job vacancies down by a record 60 percent between March and May alone, are worrying signs for an economy which is heavily dependent on consumer consumption. As the lockdown began, the largest rise in claimant count were seen in areas

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month
	Open	Low	High	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.1242	1.1167	1.1352	1.1175	1.1000	1.1400	1.1203
GBP	1.2499	1.2341	1.2687	1.2356	1.2158	1.2580	1.2367
JPY	107.32	106.70	107.63	106.87	105.00	109.00	106.72
CHF	0.9519	0.9464	0.9547	0.9523	0.9370	0.9750	0.9497

that already had high levels of unemployment. However, the loss of jobs is spreading in more prosperous areas, especially in areas that might be exposed to a long-term structural decline in sectors such as aviation and manufacturing. On a yearly basis, the rise in claimant unemployment was the highest ever recorded, the Institute for Employment Studies said, and went beyond the one million increase in unemployment benefits seen in the first year following the 1929 Wall Street crash.

No BoE rate cut

UK's central bank last week revealed another fiscal stimulus worth £100bn for the economy as it tries to save the economy from the coronavirus recession, which has already resulted in 18 years of growth wiped out in a matter of just two months. The official bank rate remained unchanged at 0.1 percent, the lowest in the Bank's 326-year history and there was no discussion of taking rates below zero. Early in the coronavirus crisis, the central bank lowered interest rates from 0.75 percent to 0.1 percent and announced £200bn of additional QE support, raising the total target purchases to £645bn in two emergency meetings in March. The economy shrank by 20.4 percent in April alone and is expected to shrink by 25 percent between April and June on a quarterly basis as per the Bank's forecast. On the political front, the picture isn't better.

Swiss deposit rate

It seems the ultra-low interest rate environment on CHF sight deposits of -0.75 percent will reside for quite a while, after the frail forecast on inflation by the Swiss National Bank. The SNB assumes consumer prices to fall 0.7 percent in 2020, and a decline of 0.2 percent next year. "We need more inflation and a much better economic outlook," before the Bank could consider a policy change, SNB Chairman told a news conference. The SNB also indicated its willingness to intervene in the FX market to curb the strength of the "highly valued" Swiss franc. As for this year's growth prospects, the Swiss economy is expected to contract by 6 percent.

Asia

Policy board members at the BoJ voted 8-1 to maintain the official bank rate at -0.1 percent, while boosting the coron-

avirus lending package to \$1 trillion from about \$700 billion announced last month. The aforementioned monetary stimulus provides zero interest loans to banks if they increase lending to businesses. As for the official bank rate, the Bank Governor (Haruhiko Kuroda) commented negatively on interest rate prospects. "Whether it's fiscal year 2021 or 2022, we're a long way from a situation where interest rates can go up." Overall, the committee's assessment of the economy was more severe than the last meeting, but BoJ members believe they have taken enough steps to support a gradual recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. Kuroda also stated that the global economy is undergoing a severe situation with the risk of a second wave of Covid-19 infections.



Meanwhile, Japanese exports suffered the biggest fall in more than a decade in May, raising concerns over how quickly the world's third-biggest economy can recover from the pandemic. Exports plunged 28.3 percent from a year earlier to \$39 billion, the sharpest drop since a 30.6 percent decline during the global financial crisis.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar USD/KWD closed the week at 0.30760.



BoE rules out rate cut despite fragile outlook

FX markets were mainly in risk-off mode as concerns for a second wave dictated market sentiment. Currencies such as the EUR, GBP and AUD incurred losses while the Swiss Franc and Japanese Yen held ground. From last week's low, the dollar index is up 1.28 percent versus a basket of currencies. The Australian dollar was one of the worst performers losing 1.60 percent in a span of 4 days.

Record rise in US retail sales

US retail sales data recovered significantly in May by a record jump of 17.7 percent after experiencing two consecutive months of record declines in March and April. The sharp rebound offers an

Don't lose sight of green marine fuels

By Lars Liebig

Two words unfortunately dominate today's headlines: pandemic and recession. Of course, the short-term focus is mitigating the negative impact of both. But while putting out these fires, we cannot forget the roaring blaze over the horizon that must continually be addressed: climate change.



Lars Liebig

Increasing the choice, availability, and price transparency of greener marine fuels in shipping – carrier of 90 percent of global trade – is critical to meeting the challenging green goals set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Paris Agreement. Despite today's major distractions, the marine fuels supply chain – refineries, ports, storage operators, shipping companies et al – must work harder and more collaboratively than ever. The environmental goals will not disappear, so it is a matter of change or risk being left behind in the 2020s.

Tough targets

The IMO's initial Green House Gas (GHG) strategy envisages reducing CO₂ emissions as an average across international shipping by at least 40 percent by 2030. It also includes reducing total annual GHG emissions from international shipping by at least 50 percent by 2050, compared to 2008. These targets are the most ambitious the industry has ever faced. It will take significant efforts to succeed. Slowing resources that could grow the green marine fuels market – financings, research and development, talent enhancement, partnerships and more – jeopardizes both economic and environmental security in the long-term.

Hungary enlists army to combat joblessness

GYOR: As Hungary's coronavirus-hit economy shrinks and unemployment soars, thousands of Hungarians are seeking to join the army, attracted by job stability and a government scheme that fast-tracks recruits toward a military career.

Military service is also one of the Hungarian government's weapons to keep a lid on joblessness.

"Since the crisis began the number of applicants has risen by 100 percent," Major Tamas Durgo, head of military recruitment, told AFP at an army office in Budapest. "We have loosened the admission procedure, that doesn't mean it's easier to get in now, just faster," said Durgo in front of an advertisement for military careers.

After a simplified medical test, applicants can sign up for six months of paid training after which they can either return to civilian life or—if they make the grade—embark on a career path in the army.

Stakeholders' confidence can be buoyed by the ongoing success of IMO 2020. This involved the organization reducing sulfur limits from 3.5 percent to low sulfur fuel oil (LSFO) of 0.5 percent from January 1st this year for more than 50,000 vessels worldwide – one of the shipping industry's biggest challenges since the early 1900s. Five months in and the UAE's Port of Fujairah, the world's second largest bunkering hub, has reported strong compliance. And 96 percent of the ships calling at the Port of Singapore, the world's largest bunkering hub, have complied, according to the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA).

Multifaceted 'menu'

The marine fuels market gets more liquid and multifaceted every year, but far more scalable implementation is needed. Ultra-low sulfur fuel oil (ULSFO), low sulfur fuel oil (LSFO), liquefied natural gas (LNG), scrubbers, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and even methanol and hydrogen – all are viable, cleaner routes that should be explored and leveraged in the 2020s.

For example, in the ULSFO market, this January started with strong demand, driving price margins to levels never predicted. And then on the February 19th, we started to see the economic knock-on effects from Covid-19. While this took some heat out of the initial frenzy, demand remains bullish. Appetite will only increase, which is good news for the environment.

We for one just reported a record high quarterly sales volume of 1.3mn metric tons of VLSFO East of Suez, mainly Fujairah, Singapore, East Africa, Sri Lanka, and China.

Of course, growing a relatively new market in today's uncertain climate is a tall order. The global economy could contract sharply by -3 percent this year, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). But there's relief ahead. If the lockdowns are gradually lifted in the second half of 2020, the economy could climb by 5.8 percent in 2021 – tentatively reassuring. The Middle East is already being proactive and looking at long-term solutions, with governments playing a vital supporting role in technology research and adoption. Efforts to stick to long-term goals amid today's short-term chaos must keep intensifying. Regardless of the pandemic and recession, the environmental clock ticks on. Marine fuels cannot be caught short. Note: Lars Liebig is Managing Director, Uniper Energy DMCC.

Apart from traditional military careers, the army also has jobs for engineers and IT experts, drivers and catering staff, said Durgo. And besides defending the country's borders, or taking part in foreign missions, soldiers also help out during emergencies like floods and epidemics, he said.

Nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban has long underlined the importance of beefing up the military.

His government has been hiking spending on the previously underfunded military since well before the pandemic, with the proportion of GDP spent on defence rising from 0.95 percent in 2013 to 1.21 percent in 2019.

The army has had a high profile in the coronavirus crisis, for example being dispatched to look after hospitals. Orban has emphasized patriotic education in schools while the Hungarian army has expanded a cadet program and unveiled plans this month to operate up to 10 new military high schools by 2030.

With unemployment rocketing due to the coronavirus crisis, officials say many are jumping at the chance of a stable job that the army offers. "Already 2,500 have applied, with 900 starting basic training," said Szilard Nemeth, a government defense official, last week.—AFP



LONDON: A commercial flight takes off from London City Airport.

London City Airport reopens as UK opens up

LONDON: London City Airport received its first commercial flight in nearly three months Sunday as Britain moved another step closer to fully emerging from its coronavirus lockdown on July 4.

The gateway to the once-bustling Canary Wharf and City financial districts welcomed a short flight from the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea. The small turboprop plane's landing and quick departure for its return leg was the only one scheduled—but officials could hardly sound more pleased. "This clear early demand from our passengers to get back to flying is really encouraging," airport chief executive Robert Sinclair said.

Initial routes will be domestic because of international travel restrictions and only a handful of destinations will be served in the first weeks.

London businesses are also unhappy with the government's divisive decision to impose 14-day quarantines on most people arriving in Britain. "Both blanket Foreign Office advice not to travel abroad and the mandatory two-week quarantine for all arrivals into the UK should be limited to the highest risk countries," the London First business lobby said on the airport's website. Heathrow and London's smaller Gatwick and Stansted airports remained partially open throughout the crisis.

Two-meter battle

Britain's official death toll of 42,632 is Europe's highest and third globally behind the United States and Brazil. But health officials lowered the alert level to three on a five-point scale on Friday—a signal the government needed to take a more business-friendly approach.

British pubs and restaurants are most upset about a requirement for people to stay two meters

(six feet) apart in public.

Business owners complain the restriction means they cannot seat enough people to make a profit. The measure is also partially blamed for the government's inability to reopen schools before the summer break.

British newspapers and business figures have been waging a war against it for weeks. Prime Minister Boris Johnson—his approval ratings dropping as the economic toll of the health disaster climbs—is expected Tuesday to give the formal go-ahead for pubs and restaurants to start seating clients on July 4.

Some hair salons have also started taking bookings for July in anticipation. But most will be watching to see what he has to say about the two-meter requirement—an issue that some critics view as emblematic of Johnson's incongruous response to the crisis.

The Telegraph newspaper said Johnson will announce a "one meter plus" rule that allows people everywhere to stand closer together if they wear masks.

Public anger

"There are all sorts of mitigations that can be put in place to be physically closer than two meters but not have the transmission of the virus or the risk of spreading the coronavirus," Health Secretary Matt Hancock told the BBC. But public frustration at the government's response to the crisis is becoming clear.

A YouGov poll showed Johnson's approval rating slipping into negative territory for the first time since he took over last July. Surveys show that not everyone wants an immediate end to restrictions, but the list of grievances appears to be on the rise.

"How can it be that it looks like we are going to end up with a higher death toll, a longer lockdown and a worse economic hit? How does that happen?" a Sky News presenter asked Hancock on a popular Sunday politics show. "Well, there will be a time for this sort of analysis and it's very important in terms of insuring all the lessons are learned," he replied.—AFP

Health & Science

French citizens' council urges vote to make 'ecocide' a crime

PARIS: A citizens' council set up by President Emmanuel Macron to explore measures for cutting carbon emissions urged the French leader on Sunday to hold a referendum on making the destruction of nature a crime. The "ecocide" proposal topped dozens of ideas presented by the 150 randomly picked members of the Citizen's Convention on Climate, along with inscribing the fight against global warming in the French Constitution.

But participants voted against submitting a broader package of measures to the public as it wound up three days of debate during its final session on Sunday.

The move was a rejection of Macron's suggestion last week that a referendum could be held on the individual measures, which range from improving home insulation to cutting maximum highway speeds to 110 km/h from 130 km/h (80 mph to 70 mph). "Let's make this referendum we've decided on the basis for holding all the other discussions," said Hubert, one of the participants, who like the others was identified by his first name only.

Members gathered in separate rooms at the Palais d'Iena in Paris, while others participated by videoconference, to ensure social distancing during the coronavirus outbreak. Macron formed the council in response to demands for greater "direct democracy" in the wake of the "yellow vest" anti-government protests that rocked the country in 2018 and 2019.

The unexpectedly fierce rebellion was sparked by a planned fuel tax hike aimed at funding the climate-change fight, which critics said unfairly targeted people who have no choice but to rely on their cars.

The council was tasked with finding ways to reduce France's carbon emissions by 40 percent by

2030, compared with the levels of 1990 "in a spirit of social justice." Work began last October, and was expected to wind up earlier this year before meetings were halted during the coronavirus lockdown.

Macron has already said he will announce a "first response" when he meets with the 150 members at the Elysee Palace on June 29th.

Italian glacier

A vast tarpaulin unravels, gathering speed as it bounces down the glacier over glinting snow. Summer is here and the alpine ice is being protected from global warming. In northern Italy, the Presena glacier has lost more than one third of its volume since 1993.

Once the ski season is over and cable cars are berthed, conservationists race to try and stop it melting by using white tarps that block the sun's rays. "This area is continuously shrinking, so we cover as much of it as possible," explains Davide Panizza, 34, who heads the Carosello-Tonale company that does the work.

From around 30,000 square meters (36,000 square yards) covered in 2008 when the project began, his team now places 100,000 square meters under wraps.

The coverings are "geotextile tarpaulins that reflect sunlight, maintaining a temperature lower than the external one, and thus preserving as much snow as possible," he told AFP. On the border between the Lombardy and Trentino Alto Adige regions, workers unroll the sheets in long strips, covering an area at an altitude of 2700 to 3000 meters (8,800-9,800 feet).

They move methodically down the mountain under clear blue skies to pull the coverings taut, and sew them together to ensure warm drafts do



People walk through Iraty Forest, known to be Europe's largest beech forest, near Larrau, southwestern France. — AFP

not slip underneath. Bags of sand then act as anchors against the wind. Once in place, the sheets, which measure 70 meters by five meters (230 by 16 feet), are hardly distinguishable from the packed white snow beneath.

"There are glacier cover systems similar to ours on a few Austrian glaciers, but the surface covered by the tarpaulins is much smaller," Panizza said.

The Austrian-made tarps cost up to 400 euros

(\$450) each and it takes the team six weeks to install them—and another six weeks to remove them before winter sets in again. Franco Del Pero, 48, leads the operation and says technological improvements mean contemporary tarps protect better than earlier versions.

"When we remove them in September and we see that they did their job, we feel proud," he says. — AFP

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Lifestyle | Gossip

Tommy Lee doesn't give his sons relationship advice



The Mötley Crüe rocker has Brandon, 23, and Dylan, 22, with his ex-wife Pamela Anderson, but has insisted he doesn't "wave flags and give advice" when it comes to helping them navigate adulthood, because he believes "the best lessons are those self-learned". He said: "Sometimes it's better to kind of fall down and bump your head on your own. I guess it's all part of the learning process. You can sit here and wave flags and give advice and throw flares all you want, but sometimes the best lessons are those self-learned." However, the 57-year-old musician admit-

ted he does "throw in a little two cents here and there" to make sure his sons "avoid mistakes" he's made in the past. He added: "You can help somebody avoid mistakes that you've made." Tommy also said he loves his sons "to death", and revealed the pair are "polar opposites" of each other even though they both carry traits of the 'Kickstart My Heart' hitmaker's personality. Speaking to Us Weekly magazine, he said: "They've grown up - but they'll always be my little monkeys. Those guys are a handful. I love them to death. "Dylan's mellow and musical and he's got that side of [me], and then Brandon's hyper and he's

got that side of [me]. He's outgoing and it's just funny." Meanwhile, things weren't always peaceful between the drummer and his eldest son Brandon, as the pair made headlines in 2018 Tommy claimed that Brandon had hit him during a heated argument. The pair seemed to make up by the end of 2018 following months of social media arguments - in which they accused each other of substance abuse - when Tommy shared a snap on Instagram of himself and Brandon sharing a warm embrace. He captioned the snap: "I love you son @brandonThomasLee (sic)"

Gigi Hadid feels 'heartbroken' by the death of George Floyd



The 25-year-old model has condemned police brutality in the US, where Floyd recently died on the streets of Minneapolis, leading Derek Chauvin, a former officer in the Minneapolis Police Department, to be charged with his murder. Gigi wrote on her Instagram account: "Enraged. Sickened. Heartbroken. But never surprised. This happens way too often - and the videos that go viral are not isolated events. It seems that only when caught on camera are bigots & MURDERERS even getting "investigated" or fired. Unfortunately, the only way things will start changing is if all these racist, ignorant, monsters (badge &/or not) have to face the consequences - behind bars. (sic)" Gigi thinks Americans must "do more" to tackle racism and police brutality. The model - who has more than 54 million followers on Instagram - encouraged her fans to continue to demand justice in order to tackle inequality. Gigi wrote: "feels more disheartening and nauseating because our cries for the Government and Americans to do better seem unheard; but even when we feel like what we do isn't enough or can't help, we have to do more. Keep signing petitions, making calls to demand justice, speaking out (this is not just if you have a big platform- it starts in your homes and communities), and fighting to make a difference for every life that has been wrongly taken or effected by THE PANDEMIC OF RACISM. THIS IS ABOUT BEING AGAINST EVERY SENSELESS ACT OF DISCRIMINATION THAT BURDENS THIS COUNTRY. (sic)"

Kim Kardashian slams ex-bodyguard with \$10 million lawsuit

Kim Kardashian West and Kanye West have threatened to sue the rapper's former bodyguard. The couple have sent a cease and desist letter to Steve Stanulis following his recent appearance on the 'Hollywood Raw Podcast', accusing him of breaching a confidentiality agreement and also making "false and defamatory" statements. Documents obtained by TMZ claim the former bodyguard signed the agreement in February 2016 and it prohibits him from speaking about any personal or business-related information about Kim and Kanye. The letter didn't specify which of Steve's claims were false and defamatory but threatened to sue him for at least \$10 million for breaching the agreement if he does it again in the future. Steve became an actor and director in 2016 and gave the interview to promote his new movie '5th Borough', but his publicist insisted his client hasn't done anything wrong. The representative, Zack Teperman, said: "No breach of any confidentiality agreement was done. My client went on a podcast to promote his new film, and old stories that were already out there were brought up. "For Kanye and Kim's counsel to send out a threatening letter to bully my client against his rights is unwarranted. My client has already made it clear that he respects Kanye, their time working together. "If Kanye and Kim wish to continue this further, that is up to them, but I think their time and money would be better suited helping out with more pressing matters in our society than what happened many years ago." In May 2016, the couple - who have four children together - issued a warning to Steve for the same reasons, but demanded a public apology at the time, something they haven't requested on this occasion. In the interview, Steve spoke about the "ridiculous rules" the 'Famous' hitmaker imposed, which he insisted made his job more difficult. He said: "He had some ridiculous rules ... He wanted you to stay 10 paces behind him on a city street. So obviously if someone is going to come up and do something, by the time I try to run up and prevent it, it would have already happened." And Steve recalled their first meeting, when they argued over the correct protocol in an elevator. He added: "The first day I met him ... it was fashion week. I was supposed to meet him at the studio. When he gets there, we get into the elevator and he says, 'Aren't you going to push what floor we are going to?' I was like, 'I have no idea what floor, it's my first day.' So he starts ranting, 'So you mean you didn't call ahead to find out where I'm supposed to be going?' I said, 'No.' So he's ranting and raving. "So I said, 'Look bro, we can do this one of three ways. One, you could tell me what button to press, and now I'll know. Two, you could press the button, and I'll see which one you press so I'll know. Or three, you can sit in here all day and tell me how important your time is and we are not going to go anywhere.' "Again, that was our first interaction. He went for the first option."



Katie Price wants fans to sign up for chance to win a virtual date with her

Katie Price has urged fans to sign up to a new dating app for the chance to "win a date" with her. The 42-year-old star encouraged her social media followers to register with the platform to be in with a shot of getting a virtual rendezvous with her during the coronavirus lockdown. Taking to Instagram, she said: "Hi guys listen to this. Well I haven't been on a dating app for absolutely ages and now I'm ready to date. "There is this new app called Love At First Swipe and what's good about it is you can do an automatic screen block, and they've launched it so you can do a video virtual date. "Now come on, if you swipe up now you could be in with a chance to win a date with me! I'm so excited let's see who is out there - so come on, swipe up now." Love At First Swipe is launching a virtual date function where users can go on remote dates with each other using the video call function, which will be made available later this month. Last month, the former glamour model downloaded the app in the hopes of finding "love and true happiness" online. She has also praised the site as being a "safe" way to date, especially amid the ongoing global pandemic. A source previously revealed Katie - who has son Harvey, 17, with Dwight Yorke, as well as Junior, 14, and Princess, 12, with ex-husband Peter Andre, and Jet, six, and Bunny, five, with estranged spouse Kieran Hayler - is hoping to find an online beau whom she can continue seeing in the real world once the lockdown restrictions have lifted in the UK. The insider added: "Katie is delighted to be part of this app launch and hopes that it leads to many finding love and true happiness. "Katie is happier than ever with her single independent status and is looking forward to her speed date with the competition winner, Katie's been through a lot but she certainly hasn't lost her sexy, sassy side - Katie's is on fire."



Malkovich says 100 Years will connect different generations

John Malkovich hopes '100 Years' will help to connect people of different generations. The 66-year-old actor teamed up with filmmaker Robert Rodriguez to make the short film - but the project is currently in a vault in France and it won't be released until 94 years from now. He explained: "Robert and I did the thing together, and he wrote some and I wrote some, and we made a little feature - it's a short film, 13 minutes or so, or less, I can't remember. And right now it's in a vault in Cognac, in France, and they'll show it in 94 years. "We have tickets that'll be of no use to us or to our children, but maybe possibly to their children or grandchildren, should they decide to avail themselves of that opportunity. That's all I can really say about it. "On a certain level, it's just like we're greeting them from this once-living past." Malkovich predicts that when the film is eventually removed from the vault, it'll shock its audience. The acclaimed actor told Collider: "It's curious what will happen. What will all the things we talk about now, what will come of them? What will become of them? "All the things they talked about in the '70s turned out to be BS, and in the '90s I'm sure that will too, and in the 2020's, I'm sure it will too. "To hear what people had to say about what was coming, which I've got no small amount of time into doing, was really fascinating. "And you know, on a certain level, it makes you wish you were around just to see what happens, but it's going to happen without us anyway. It was very insane to look at and contemplate."



Kylie Jenner tired of people focusing on her money

Kylie Jenner wants people to "stop focusing on how much money she has". The 22-year-old reality star recently slammed Forbes magazine after they revoked her title of youngest self-made billionaire, claiming she is no longer worth a billion dollars and accusing her of spinning a "web of lies" about her business including her Kylie Cosmetics brand. And now, sources have said Kylie is tired of talking about her finances. One insider told 'Entertainment Tonight': "At the end of the day Kylie just wants people to stop focusing on how much money she has. The article was written by Forbes and they were given proof of everything. This whole thing seems to be a clickbait attempt for Forbes." The 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star - who has two-year-old daughter Stormi with Travis Scott - took to Twitter last week to slam the publication for their scathing article, claiming they made "unproven assumptions". She wrote: "what am i even waking up to, i thought this was a reputable site.. all i see are a number of inaccurate statements and unproven assumptions lol. i've never asked for any title or tried to lie my way there EVER, period ... 'even creating tax returns that were likely forged' that's your proof? "so you just THOUGHT they were forged? like actually what am i reading .. but okay ... i am blessed beyond my years, i have a beautiful daughter, and a successful business and i'm doing perfectly fine. (sic)" And Kylie's attorney, Michael Kump, also dismissed the allegations. He said in a statement: "We have reviewed Forbes' article accusing Kylie of engaging in deceit and a 'web of lies' to inflate her net worth. The article is filled with outright lies. Forbes' accusation that Kylie and her accountants 'forged tax returns' is unequivocally false and we are demanding that Forbes immediately and publicly retract that and other statements. It is sad that, of all things, Forbes has devoted three reporters to investigate the effect of the coronavirus crisis on Kylie's net worth. We would not expect that from a supermarket tabloid, much less from Forbes."—Bang Showbiz



Maurice, the French rooster who ruffled feathers, will crow no more

A French rooster, who became a symbol of tensions between traditional rural France and encroaching urbanity in a court battle over his early-morning crowing, has died, his owner said Thursday. Maurice the cockerel rose to national fame after his dawn cock-a-doodle-does so annoyed a retired couple with a holiday home on the picturesque island of Oleron in western France that they took the owner to court in a bid to silence him. The case last year was seen as a symbol of the strains between the traditions of rural France and city-dwellers, who use the countryside as a place for second homes but have a thin skin for countryside smells and sounds.

His owner Corinne Fesseau told AFP that Maurice,

6, had died of coryza—a respiratory infection common among chickens—during the lockdown against the coronavirus. "We found him dead at the bottom of the chicken coop, we did everything we could," she said. She said that Maurice had died at the beginning of May but she had waited until now before publicising the information due to the health crisis. "COVID-19 was more important than my cockerel," she explained. "Maurice was an emblem, a symbol of rural life and a hero," said Fesseau, who buried him in her garden. Maurice however had the last cock-a-doodle-doo—the French court threw out the legal complaint and he was allowed to carry on with his morning ritual unimpeded.—AFP



In this file photograph taken on June 5, 2019, Corinne Fesseau (right) poses with her rooster "Maurice" in her garden at Saint-Pierre-d'Oleron in La Rochelle, western France.—AFP photos





This aerial photo shows yoga enthusiasts practising yoga at a park in Handan in China's northern Hebei province on June 19, 2020, ahead of International Yoga Day celebrated annually on June 21.—AFP photos



Fakhria Momtaz, 43, (centre) trainer and founder of Kabul's first yoga center for Women, take part in a yoga session during International Yoga Day, at the Shahrak Haji Nabi hilltop on the outskirts of Kabul.



Yoga instructor and champion Kuchipudi Lakshmi performs yoga postures at her institute in Hyderabad.

INDIA CELEBRATES LOW-KEY INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY DURING VIRUS CRISIS

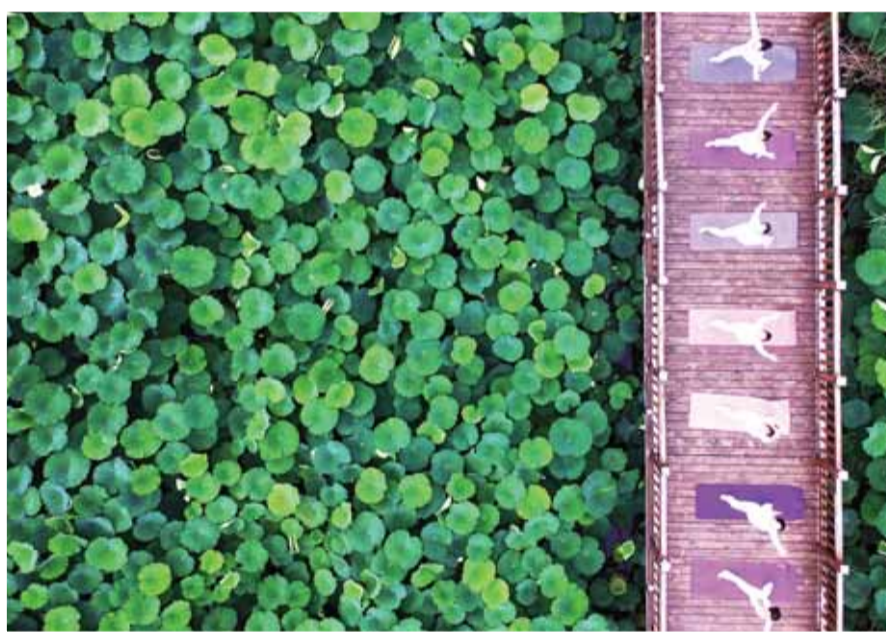
India marked International Yoga Day with low-key events Sunday as the nation battles coronavirus, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the crisis had made the ancient practice even more relevant. The annual event—proposed by Modi and adopted by the United Nations in 2014—is observed mostly in India, but also worldwide on the Northern Hemisphere's longest day. As the virus crisis forced practitioners to

celebrate the occasion indoors, or with small outdoor sessions, Modi—an avid yogi himself—called on people to draw strength from the practice's physical and mental benefits.

"Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the world is realising the need of yoga now more than ever," Modi said in Hindi in a video speech shared on social media Sunday. "COVID-19 virus attacks our respiratory sys-

tem. Pranayam (breathing exercises) helps the most in making our respiratory systems strong." Since taking office in 2014, the Indian leader has spearheaded an initiative to reclaim the practice as a historic part of Indian culture. Indian scholars believe yoga dates back 5,000 years, based on archaeological evidence of poses found inscribed on stones, and references to Yogic teachings in the ancient Hindu scriptures of the Vedas.

The event came as the South Asia nation of 1.3 billion people reported a record single-day spike of 15,413 new coronavirus infections on Sunday. It took the nationwide total to over 410,000 cases, including more than 13,250 deaths.—AFP



This aerial photo shows yoga enthusiasts practising yoga at a park in Handan in China's northern Hebei province.



Spain's 'Shadow of the Wind' author Ruiz Zafon dead at 55

Leading Spanish author Carlos Ruiz Zafon, who scored an international hit with his Barcelona-based mystery "The Shadow of the Wind", died on Friday, his publishing house said. He was 55. "Today Carlos Ruiz Zafon has died, one of the best contemporary novelists. We will remember you forever, Carlos!" Planeta publishing house wrote on Twitter. In a statement, Planeta said Ruiz Zafon had died at his Los Angeles home after battling cancer. "He will live on among us through his books," it added.

Written in 2001, "The Shadow of the Wind" was his best-known work and one of the most successful Spanish novels of recent decades. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez hailed Ruiz Zafon's work and expressed sorrow over his passing. "We have lost one of the most well-read and admired Spanish authors in the world. Carlos Ruiz Zafon, the novelist of reference for our era, left a great mark on modern literature," he wrote on Twitter. "Thank you for transporting us through your stories."

In the statement, Planeta quoted a line from the novel when protagonist Daniel Sempere is first shown the Cemetery of Forgotten Books, a labyrinthine, mystical secret library around which the story is woven. "Every book, every volume you see here, has a soul. The soul of the person who wrote it and of those who read it and lived and dreamed with it. Every time a book changes hands, every time someone runs his eyes down its pages, its spirit grows and strengthens."

Thus begins an atmospheric story set in Ruiz Zafon's native Barcelona in the wake of the Spanish civil war



In this file photo taken on November 17, 2016 Spanish novelist Carlos Ruiz Zafon poses during the presentation of his book "El laberinto de los espiritus" (The spirits' maze) at the Expiatory Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Barcelona.—AFP

(1936-1939) in which Sempere tries to unravel the mystery surrounding the author of a certain book. "Shadow of the Wind" was an immediate hit and has since been translated into some 50 languages, selling millions of copies and becoming the first of a quartet of novels in his "Cemetery of Forgotten Books" series. The last book, "The Labyrinth of Spirits", was published in 2016, two years before he was diagnosed with cancer.

At the time, he explained why he had never let any of his works be adapted for cinema. "For me, these books are a homage to literature, to the written word. For that reason, transforming them for the cinema or television would be a betrayal," he said. Born in Barcelona in 1964, Ruiz Zafon studied at a religious school then earned a degree in information sciences. A lover of books since childhood, he didn't publish his first novel until he was nearly 30 after leaving a career in advertising.—AFP

Bids fly for Victor Hugo's Paris siege balloon sketch

A drawing by the French writer Victor Hugo of a hot air balloon escaping from Paris during the 1870 Prussian siege, sold for more than twice its estimate Thursday. Sotheby's said the sketch by the author of "Les Miserables" went for 37,500 euros (\$42,000) at its auction room in the French capital. Hugo was a talented artist, and the drawing entitled "Departure of the Balloon" showed it floating across the rooftops of the encircled and starving city.

It was his homage to the 67 hot air balloons that were launched from Paris during the four-month siege after Napoleon III's humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian war. One of them in September 1870 even dropped pamphlets by Hugo over the Prussia lines. The great photographer Nadar asked the writer would he lend his name to another balloon carrying mail that took off three weeks later.

"I could not ask for more than to be lifted up into the sky by you," the poet replied, who kept body and soul together by eating animals given to him from the Paris Zoo. Hugo noted in his diary that often he was "eating the unknown". The "Victor Hugo" balloon eventually took from the Tuileries garden near the Louvre to shouts of "Vive la Republique!"

But the writer kept Nadar's letter as a keepsake after ripping off the stamp adorned with the head of Napoleon III, who Hugo called "Napoleon the Small". Hugo had fled into exile in Guernsey in the Channel



A file photo taken on January 2, 1880 shows a portrait of French writer Victor Hugo.—AFP

Islands to escape the lesser Bonaparte after the writer branded him a "traitor" when he seized power in a coup in 1851.—AFP

Morocco opens field hospital after spike in virus infections

MOULAY BOUSSELHAM, Morocco: A new field hospital in eastern Morocco from Sunday was to receive around 700 COVID-19 patients following a sharp spike in infections in the kingdom, the government said. Morocco reported a record single-day rise in novel coronavirus cases on Friday after an outbreak was detected in fruit packing plants in eastern Kenitra province, prompting Rabat to tighten restrictions in the region.

The North African kingdom reported more than

500 cases on Friday, mainly in Kenitra, having recorded on average fewer than 100 new COVID-19 infections daily since confirming its first cases in early March. Authorities closed facilities, tested workers and launched an investigation to “establish responsibility” for the outbreak, Interior Minister Abdelouafi Laftit said, as cited by official news agency MAP. The field hospital will receive from Sunday “around 700 registered cases”, he added.

Strawberry fields in Kenitra – usually busy with

workers harvesting at this time of year – were deserted at the weekend, an AFP photographer said. Several towns in the region were placed under quarantine and screenings were carried out among residents, who were asked to go out only in cases of “extreme necessity”. A dozen ambulances were stationed in Moulay Bousselham, one of the quarantined towns, ready to be dispatched to pick up confirmed cases.

Morocco, with a population of 34 million, has reported just over 9,800 cases and 213 deaths from

the novel coronavirus. On June 9, authorities announced a gradual lifting of restrictions in force since mid-March, though measures remain in place in major cities and a public health state of emergency has been extended until July 10. Wearing masks in public is obligatory, gatherings are prohibited and mosques, cinemas and theatres are closed, while restaurants and cafes are open but limited to take-away orders. The kingdom's borders remain closed “until further notice”. — AFP

TikTok, K-pop fans sabotaged...

Continued from Page 1

President Mike Pence canceled speeches to an expected “overflow” area outside. The Tulsa Fire Department tallied the crowd at about 6,200 people.

The president refrained from commenting on the rally as the dust settled the following morning, tweeting only to deliver a Father's Day greeting. But several US media outlets, citing multiple sources close to the White House, said he was “furious” at the small crowd in Tulsa.

The campaign angrily denied it had been duped, however. “These phony ticket requests never factor into our thinking,” Brad Parscale said in a statement. Parscale instead blamed the poor attendance on the “fake news media” for reporting on health concerns over the staging of a large indoor gathering during the coronavirus outbreak. He said images from the race protests that have gripped the country had also scared away families.

Trump's campaign advisers had seen the rally as a way to rejuvenate his base and demonstrate support when opinion polls have shown him trailing his Democratic rival, former vice president Joe Biden. Oklahoma has reported a surge in new coronavirus cases, and the state's department of health had warned those planning on attending the event that they faced an increased risk of catching the virus.

The Trump campaign said entry was on a “first-come-first-served” basis and no one was issued an actual ticket. “Leftists always fool themselves into thinking they're being clever. Registering for a rally only means you've RSVPed with a cellphone number,” Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh said in a statement. “But we thank them for their contact information.”

Parscale said in a statement the campaign weeds out bogus phone numbers and did this with “tens of thousands” at the Tulsa event in calculating possible attendance. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat, responded with derision to a Twitter post by Parscale that blamed the media for discouraging attendees and cited bad behavior by demonstrators outside.

“Actually you just got ROCKED by teens on TikTok who flooded the Trump campaign w/ fake ticket reservations & tricked you into believing a million people wanted your white supremacist open mic enough to pack an arena during COVID,” she tweeted on Saturday. “KPop allies, we see and appreciate your contributions in the fight for justice too,” she added.

CNN had reported Tuesday that a TikTok video

posted by Mary Jo Laupp, who uses the hashtag #TikTokGrandma, was helping lead the charge. The video now has more than 700,000 likes. Two K-pop fans who spoke to Reuters in Skype and phone interviews on Sunday said they had each registered for two spots, not using their real names and numbers.

Raq, a 22-year-old student and Democratic voter in Minnesota who only wanted to be identified by her nickname, said a key reason she took part was that the rally was in Tulsa, the site of the country's bloodiest outbreaks of racist violence against Black Americans some 100 years ago. “I heard it first from just BTS fans and then once I saw that it got to TikTok, I was like, oh yeah, this is going to blow up,” she said, referring to a popular South Korean boy-band.

Em, a 17-year-old student in Kansas who only wanted to be identified by her username, said she had first heard about the effort on TikTok. She said many of the original tweets sharing information about the rally had been deleted. “I think it was partially the TikTokers and the K-pop fans but also people are not as interested in Trump as he thinks they are,” she said.

Fans of K-pop have rallied around the Black Lives Matter movement on social media in recent weeks, taking over hashtags that opposed the movement and spamming a Dallas police department app that asked for evidence of illegal activity during the protests. On Saturday, there were some shouting matches and scuffles outside the event between around 30 Black Lives Matter demonstrators and some Trump supporters waiting to enter.

A Reuters reporter said police did temporarily close the access gates after protesters arrived at the rally perimeter, but state troopers helped clear the area and the gates were reopened some three hours before the rally began. The Biden campaign denied having any role in the social media registration effort. “Donald Trump has abdicated leadership and it is no surprise that his supporters have responded by abandoning him,” said a campaign spokesman, Andrew Bates.

Coronavirus cases have recently been skyrocketing in Oklahoma, and local health officials had asked the Trump campaign not to go ahead with the rally, fearing it would become a “superspreader” event. “Here's my theory; don't hurt the people that love you,” tweeted triple Grammy Award-winning US singer Pink. “I would never ask people to come to an arena right now. No good person would.”

The pop star, who earlier tweeted that she had “sold that same place out in five minutes” was among a number of public figures who took to Twitter to mock Trump over the disappointing attendance. “The last time I saw a crowd this small was Trump's Inauguration,” tweeted Pennsylvania congressman Brendan Boyle. — Agencies

pilgrimage is due to start.

International flights and religious pilgrimages, however, remain suspended and social gatherings of more than 50 people are prohibited, according to the interior ministry. But Saudi Arabia's General Commission for Audiovisual Media announced the reopening of cinemas across the kingdom with strict guidelines on social distancing.

“We are happy and cautious at the same time... I have been without a haircut for five months,” said Bashayer, a Saudi customer at a Riyadh hair salon. “But we are... scared. I sanitize my hands whenever I touch anything,” she said, while a hairdresser clad in a mask and face shield cut her hair.

The kingdom, which has the highest reported coronavirus infections in the Gulf, has seen a spike in cases after it began a phased easing of stringent lockdown measures in late May. On Sunday, the total number of infections rose to 157,612, while the death toll climbed to 1,267, according to data from the health ministry. Intensive care units in the capital Riyadh and the Red Sea city of Jeddah are crowded with coronavirus patients, putting pressure on the healthcare system, medical sources told AFP.

Neighboring Dubai announced on Sunday it would allow tourists back in the Gulf city state from July 7 after a closure of more than three months to contain the coronavirus. “Dubai to welcome tourists from July 7,” the emirate's media center said, quoting the Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management. It also gave a list of protocols for travellers entering the Gulf emirate.

“Travellers must stringently comply with preventive measures and safety procedures put in place by Dubai and destination countries,” the report said. Tourists are “required to present recent COVID-19 negative certificate or undergo testing at Dubai airports” it said, with those testing positive to observe a 14-day isolation. A test for coronavirus is mandatory and should done 96 hours before travelling to Dubai, the report said.

Visitors are also required to have international health insurance and download a special phone application that lists their details, as well as fill a special “health declaration form”, it added. Dubai also announced that citizens and residents would be allowed to travel abroad from today. The UAE has recorded nearly 45,000 cases of coronavirus, including 302 deaths.

Libya slams ‘declaration of...’

Continued from Page 1

pro-GNA forces advanced on the strategic city of Sirte – some 450 km east of Tripoli – it could provoke a “direct” intervention by Cairo. For the Libyan state, “interference in its internal affairs, attacks on its sovereignty, whether by declarations... like those of the Egyptian president or by support for putschists, militias and mercenaries, is unacceptable,” the GNA said.

The GNA called on the international community to “assume its responsibilities with regard to this escalation”. It said it was open to “all impartial mediation... under the aegis of the UN” but rejected “unilateral or extrajudicial initiatives”. Oil-rich Libya has been torn by violence, drawing in tribal militias, jihadists and mercenaries since the 2011 toppling and killing of longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi in a Western-backed uprising.

Since 2015, a power struggle has pitted the Tripoli-based GNA against strongman Khalifa Haftar, who claims legitimacy from an eastern-based elected parliament. Haftar has been trying unsuccessfully to seize

Water hyacinth pest chokes vital...

Continued from Page 1

The hyacinth causes another type of pressure – a 100 sq m patch can weigh up to five tons, putting major strain on dilapidated riverside infrastructure, Iraqi officials warn. In the village of Al-Badaa, the thick columns of a brick bridge that once spanned a wide stretch of the Euphrates are now covered by hyacinths. A dam further upstream encloses a swamp-like patch of land also covered by the plant.

If the flowers are not removed, “the bridge and dam of Al-Badaa will collapse”, said Jalil Al-Abboudi, the village sheikh. “And if they collapse, the whole water supply system will collapse.” That would deprive vast regions – all the way to Iraq's southernmost province of Basra – of the fragile water resources their ecosystems and economies rely on. Iraq's oil-dependent economy is already projected to shrink by nearly 10 percent this year, according to the World Bank. And a health crisis sparked by a shortage of safe drinking water in the south hospitalized some 100,000 people in 2018.

Locals blame authorities for what they say have been years of neglect and insufficient maintenance.

Losing sight of the future: Palestinians...

Continued from Page 1

Some were taking part in clashes, others were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. All were left scarred and with their lives wrecked, even though in Palestinian society being wounded while standing up to Israeli occupation is often lionised.

Along the border of the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army uses snipers who, according to instructions, open fire only when the soldiers are at risk from intensifying violence from Palestinian rioters. Asked about Jacqueline's case as well as the use of live fire, the Israeli army highlighted the “security challenge” they faced. It said “it took every possible measure to reduce the number of injuries among Gaza residents participating in these violent riots”. “There is smoke from burning tyres, gas and moving crowds. Snipers are at a distance, it's difficult,” said a senior Israeli military official.

Jacqueline, who studied maths, found herself stigmatized. Her children were teased at school about their disabled mother and her husband grew colder and angry. “Society and people blame me, they say: ‘Why (as a woman) did you go to the protest? I expected my family and husband would be proud of me, but I paid a high price,’” she told AFP in Gaza. “My husband divorced me and I lost my kids. If I lost an arm it would be OK, but without an eye, how can you continue with your life? I want to challenge the whole world, to remain strong, but inside I am broken,” she said.

In the Gaza Strip, the cramped territory of two million people controlled by the Islamist militant group Hamas and under Israeli blockade, residents have grown accustomed to traumatic wounds after three wars with Israel in 2008, 2012 and 2014. But even when there is no full-blown conflict, violence erupts. More than 8,000 Palestinians were hit by Israeli fire during the often violent “March of Return” protests which began in March 2018, according to UN figures. Of those injuries, 80 percent were to the lower body, with only around 3 percent to the head.

In Jerusalem, despite there being no full-scale conflict, tensions remain in neighborhoods like Shuafat and Issawiya, parts of the predominantly Palestinian eastern part of the city Israel captured in 1967. There residents complain of increasing violence from the Israeli police, which says it is responding to growing unrest by the population. In recent years police there have used

the capital since April 2019, with support from neighboring Egypt, Russia and the United Arab Emirates.

Since the start of June, increased Turkish support has enabled pro-GNA forces to take control of north-west Libya, ending Haftar's assault on Tripoli. The GNA advance is now halted outside the coastal city of Sirte, a strategic access point to Libya's key oil fields which remains under Haftar's control.

Sirte and Al-Jufra to the south represents a “red line”, Sisi said in a television broadcast on Saturday, citing the need to protect Egypt's porous border. If this line is crossed, Egyptian forces will directly intervene in Libya, Sisi said. “All of Libya is a red line,” the GNA responded. “Whatever the dispute between Libyans, we will not allow our people to be insulted or threatened.”

But the speaker of Libya's eastern-based parliament Aguila Saleh defended Sisi's declaration, saying in a Sunday statement that the Egyptian president was “responding to our appeal to the Egyptian parliament” last January in which Saleh called for Egyptian intervention in Libya. And on Sunday the Jordanian foreign ministry issued a statement saying Amman supports Cairo “against any threat to the security and stability” of Egypt. It came after the foreign ministers of both countries discussed the Libya conflict over the phone. — AFP

“The lack of action by the ministry of water resources, and the fact that there have been no renovations of infrastructure, caused an invasion that reached potable water reserves,” said Abboudi. But Saleh Hadi, head of research at Dhi Qar's agriculture directorate, insisted the ministry was well aware of the dangers and working hard to mitigate them. “The ministry of water resources is working to combat this plant mechanically by uprooting it from irrigation channels,” he told AFP.

The perennial predicament has been made even worse this year because of the coronavirus pandemic. Under normal conditions, Iraqi villagers along the banks of the Euphrates pluck out the plants by hand instead of using a chemical agent that would destroy the delicate ecosystem. But this year, a countrywide lockdown imposed to stem COVID-19 infections has allowed the hyacinth to spread mostly unhampered.

Some vigilantes, however, are defying the curfew to fight the parasitic flower which they see as a bigger threat to their livelihoods than the pandemic. While villagers are sneaking out to uproot the plants by hand, Mohammed Kuwaysh, an environmental activist and member of a farming cooperative, is thinking even bigger. His collective raised about \$800 from local farmers to equip small speedboats to clear waterways by cutting hyacinths en masse. “The government isn't listening, which allowed this flower to spread like wildfire,” Kuwaysh said. — AFP

spongy synthetic rubber bullets, deemed in theory to be less lethal. But when fired at close range, they have been known to cause deaths.

In February, Malek Issa, a nine-year old boxing enthusiast, was hit by a rubber-tipped bullet after buying a sandwich at a shop in Issawiya. He was on his way home from school and his older sister, Tala, immediately rang their father, Wael, to say Malek had been shot in the forehead. “I immediately thought ‘no, he must have been shot in the eye,’” Wael said. “I stayed there, paralyzed for a few minutes.”

Malek was rushed to hospital where his parents found him, head gaping and his left eye hollowed out. “My son is polite, clever and got good grades at school. But this soldier came and shot him. He didn't shoot just my son, he shot the whole family,” said Wael. Malek, who now has a glass eye, sprawled disinterestedly on a sofa next to his father.

“This is not the Malek that we knew, he changed a lot,” added Wael, who works in a restaurant in Tel Aviv. “At night Malek cries out ‘I want my eye, I want my eye back.’ I tried to explain to him this is the will of God,” he said, although the family struggles to understand why Malek was shot when there were no protests going on. Contacted by AFP, the Israeli justice ministry said it had opened an “internal investigation” into the case.

For years freelance cameraman Muath Amarnah covered numerous protests in the occupied West Bank. On Nov 15 last year, he grabbed his video camera and, wearing his helmet and a vest inscribed with the word ‘Press’, rushed to a Palestinian demonstration in the southern village of Surif. “There was a sniper on the ground readying his weapon, saying something to the officer I didn't understand, but they were laughing,” he said.

“I felt that something was going to happen to one of us. The soldiers were provoking us journalists. Then I felt something hit my face, I thought my head had been knocked off,” he said. “I saw there was blood on my face. I fell to my knees.” Witnesses said he was hit by a rubber bullet which had metal inside. And scans show some metal remains inside the excavated eye cavity, which now holds a glass eye.

Israeli authorities say they did not target the journalist, but Muath is convinced his injury is a metaphor for a conflict others don't want to see. “My injury sends a message that our lives depend on the pictures we take. ‘Either you will work as we like or you might die.’” The injury sparked protests, with Palestinian and Arab journalists filming themselves with a eye patch using the slogan “eye of truth”. — AFP

Inflated prices questioned...

Continued from Page 1

But merchants are still selling meat at higher prices without any action from the ministry. The lawmaker asked the minister why the ministry did not take any action to bring the prices of meat down to pre-crisis levels after the situation has relatively returned to normal, and also inquired why prices of imported fish rose sharply at cooperative societies and other supermarkets.

MP Hamdan Al-Azemi, who last week was suspected of being infected with the coronavirus, said yesterday that he has tested negative for the second time, showing that he had not been infected in the first place. Azemi also said he will still complete the remaining part of the 14-day home quarantine advised by the ministry of health for all MPs who attended last Tuesday's Assembly session.

Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said at the start of the session last Wednesday that he was informed by the health ministry that a member of parliament was suspected of being infected with the coronavirus. He advised all MPs who attended Tuesday's session to undergo tests and start a 14-day home quarantine. Azemi had tested negative when he was examined the next day.

MP Adel Al-Damkhi said yesterday that Minister of Social Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel told him that the ministry has not banned a virtual symposium to discuss corruption related to the Malaysian sovereign wealth fund to be organized by the Kuwait Society for the Defense of Public Funds. Initially the ministry objected at the symposium because organizers did not apply for a permit, but later gave the green light to the event. A number of Kuwaiti figures are implicated in the scandal of the fund and the public prosecution is investigating the case.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia on Sunday ended a nationwide coronavirus curfew and lifted restrictions on businesses, including hair salons and cinemas, after three months of stringent curbs, despite a spike in infections. Prayers were also allowed to resume in mosques in the holy city of Makkah, state media reported, just weeks before the annual hajj

Stars

Daily SuDoku

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

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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

hard

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)

This is a good day to add spark to your life, Aries. If things have seemed boring and stagnating lately, you may need to infuse a bit of excitement into the situation. Add flair and dynamism to the mix. Take matters into your own hands and actively pursue your goals. You have a strong inner sense of where you need to go. Trust your instincts and move in that direction. Don't hesitate.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

The fog has lifted and you're ready to take off, Libra. The dreaminess you may have experienced lately has been nice, but now it's time to get moving again. Use all that you have learned from that recent internal processing and put it to use in the practical world. Try not to get caught up in the crossfire of conversations that don't really pertain to you. Feel free to start something new.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You'll notice that your emotions are coming to a monthly climax today, Taurus. Don't be alarmed but do be cautious about lashing out at people for no reason. You may feel on edge. Unintended slights from others could push you over that edge in a fury of emotion. Harsh words spoken today can damage other people's feelings for a long time, so remain silent.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is a terrific day for you, Scorpio, and you'll find that there is a great deal of power at your disposal. This is a day of new beginnings. You have the opportunity now to start over and create a solid emotional base from which to work. Rid yourself of negative feelings and self-doubt. Use this day as an opportunity to strike out on new ground and achieve whatever you set your heart on.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Extremes is the name of the game now, especially for you, Gemini. Today the emphasis is on action. You're the one to call to get the job done. You won't wait another second to simply go for it. Your emotions are flowing, and you have an endless well of internal strength and resources. Use this power to your advantage. Connect with others who share similar viewpoints, and watch the incredible results unfold.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

The fire is raging today, so be careful, Sagittarius. Try not to be too impulsive in your actions. Your natural tendency may be to lash out against others without really thinking about the consequences. If you find yourself getting hot under the collar, you might need to take a step back from the situation and settle down. Pursue your goals, but make sure that you don't do so at the expense of others.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Be adventurous and strike out into new territory, Cancer. Be a pioneer. Work to make some new discoveries in the world. Today isn't a day to worry about consequences. It's a day to get things started. There is a great deal of fiery energy in the cosmos helping you in your quest for the new and fresh. Take the lead and try not to get thrown off course by leeches and party poopers.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Go for the gold, Capricorn. Today marks the beginning of the rest of your life. Treat it with respect. You may be on a crusade and your combative instincts could be working overtime. There's a lot of fuel in your engine, so don't worry about running out. The only thing you really need to be concerned about is possibly stepping on other people's toes. Make sure you consider how your actions affect others.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

Certain situations may be difficult to deal with today as they take an emotional spin, Leo. You're getting anxious. Things are getting started without the careful planning and consideration you feel is necessary. Try not to worry so much. Your own doubt is likely to hinder any project. Have faith that things will work out. Be bold. Take an active role in helping to get the ball rolling instead of holding it back.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may feel as if someone is poking you today, Aquarius, urging you to get up and get moving. Don't be surprised if someone seems to be picking on you for no reason. Other people's lack of sympathy and sensitivity could be acute on a day like this. Try not to take it personally. Your hard outer shell may be put to the test in terms of its ability to protect your soft vulnerability.

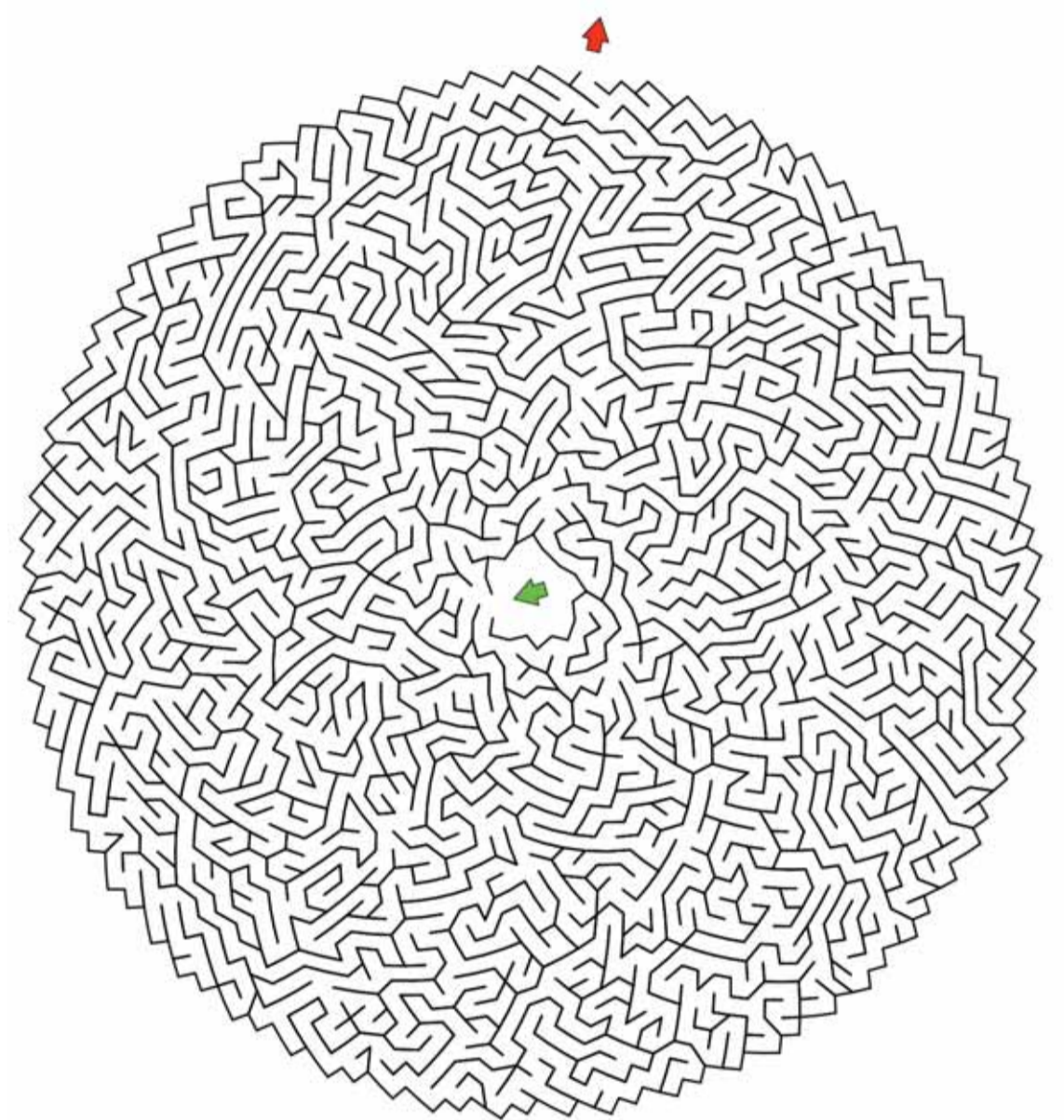
Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You should find that the general mood of the day is favorable to your personality style, Virgo. Take this opportunity to present more of your thoughts and ideas to the world. Let your voice be heard. Use it with strength and vigor. You have partners and friends who are eager to hear what's on your mind. Engage in verbal sparring. You'll find that you can learn a great deal about yourself and others.

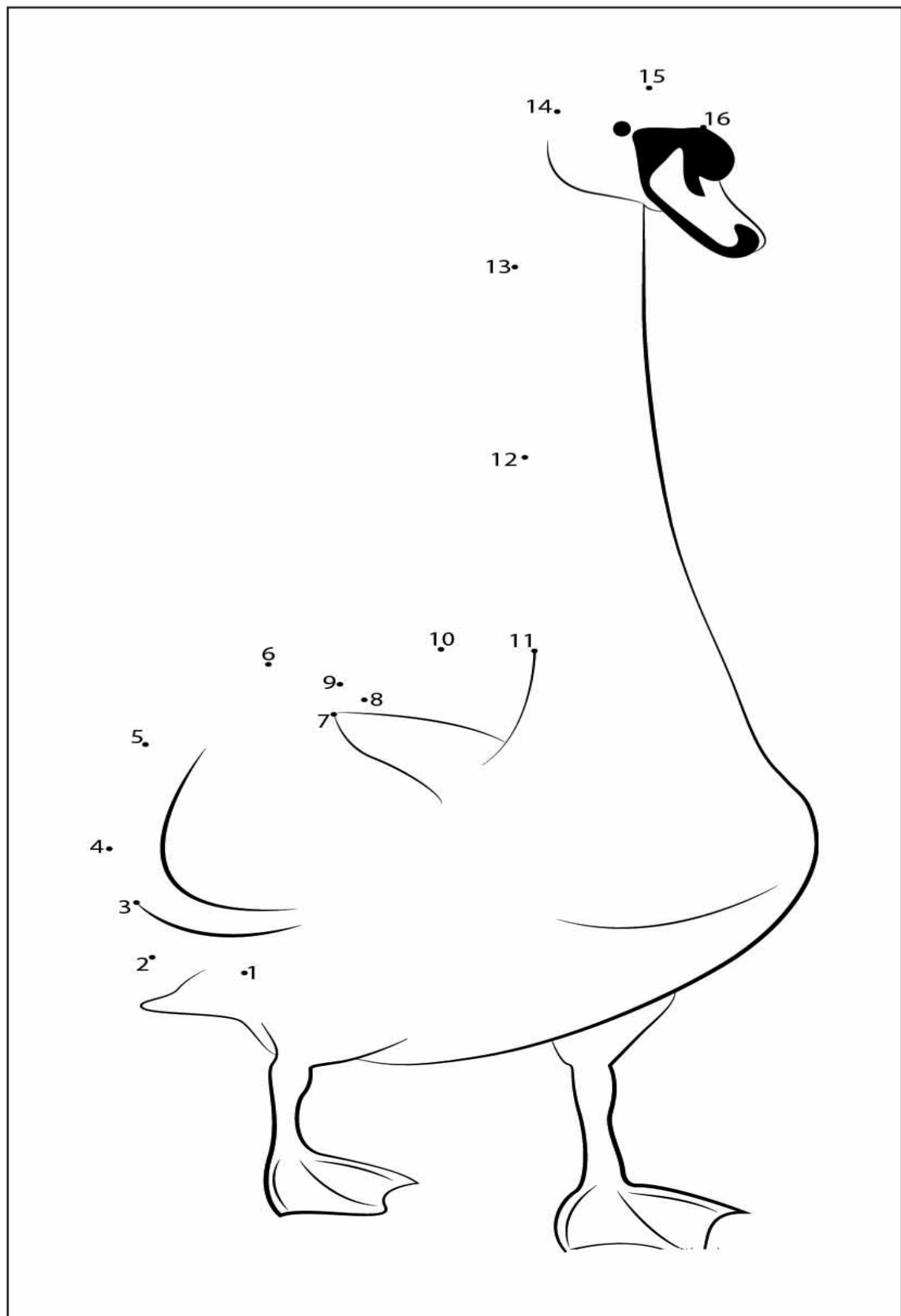
Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is a great day for you to get up on stage and make your presence known, Pisces. Let people know that you're the leader of the pack. There is a great need for you to take the helm now, and you shouldn't back away from this responsibility. The warrior instinct inside you is probably strong, so don't hesitate for a second. Be brave and courageous in all situations.

Find the way



Join the dots



Word Scramble

Computer Terms
Word Scramble

Help! The school computer had its memory scrambled and we need your help to get things back in order. Can you unscramble the computer terms and write the correct word on each line?

EITRNNE	_____	KEERSAP	_____
SAEHRC	_____	UADOLP	_____
LLCORS	_____	NTERPRI	_____
BOKEDYRA	_____	IONC	_____
UNMSAERE	_____	SOTWRFEA	_____
VSIRU	_____	NLDDWAO	_____
EVRSER	_____	SOEUM	_____
FOTN	_____	RSDAWSPO	_____
MONORIT	_____	EACCH	_____
EENSRC	_____	YEAGBTIG	_____
HAKCRE	_____	FODRLE	_____
WSREROB	_____	OEMUDNTC	_____

Sports

Photo of the day



Egor Posokhin performs at Rosa Khutor Peak in Sochi, Russia. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Hamilton marches in anti-racism protest

LONDON: Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton marched in the latest anti-racism protest in London on Sunday, describing the experience as "really moving".

The 35-year-old Hamilton, the only black driver in F1, joined the protests which have become common since the death of George Floyd in the United States last month.

"Went down to Hyde Park today for the peaceful protest and I was so proud to see in person so many people of all races and backgrounds supporting this movement," Hamilton wrote on Instagram. "I was proud to be out there acknowledging and supporting the Black Lives Matter movement, and my black heritage."

"I was also happy to see so many white supporters out there in the name of equality for all. It was really moving. I'm feeling extremely positive that change will come, but we cannot stop now. Keep pushing." Hamilton also posted a photograph of himself holding up a Black Lives Matter sign while his T-shirt slogan said: 'Black is a vibe'.

The six-time world champion also wore a yellow scarf around his face.

Earlier, Hamilton had penned an article for Britain's Sunday Times newspaper in which he said he was launching his own diversity body to attract more black youngsters into motor racing, insisting the "time for token gestures is over".

Hamilton, a powerful and influential voice, said he was teaming up with Britain's Royal Academy of Engineering to launch The Hamilton Commission. "I've been fighting the stigma of racism throughout my racing career — from kids throwing things at me while karting, to being taunted by fans in black face at a 2007 Grand Prix, one of my first Formula One races," wrote Hamilton.

"Despite my success in the sport, the institutional barriers that have kept F1 highly exclusive persist. —AFP

How Mandela inspired Pienaar and Springboks to conquer the world

We talked about all things and not just the World Cup

JOHANNESBURG: Francois Pienaar, even 25 years on, conveys a sense of disbelief and awe when he talks of that crisp Highveld winter's day that the Springboks won the Rugby World Cup for the first time.

The Springbok captain's wonder is not so much about the fact that his team won the Webb Ellis Cup at Ellis Park on June 24 1995, for he says he always felt they could pull it off, but that he received the golden trophy from President Nelson Mandela. "I am probably the luckiest sports person ever because of the unique relationship (with Mandela)," he says of a man who became a father figure to him.

Their close bond, a young white Afrikaner and the famous black prisoner of Robben Island, grew out of Pienaar's captaincy of the Springboks and Mandela's visionary and altruistic support of a team who played in a jersey many of his followers despised.

It started with a cup of tea, he told AFP. "The president invited me to visit him in his office at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. We talked about all things — not just the World Cup. He wanted to know a lot about me."

"There were so many high-powered people waiting outside to see him and every time Mary (Mxadana, Mandela's assistant) would come in to hurry him up he would say to her: 'Mary, I'm speaking to my captain.'"

"I was so nervous before I went into his office and when I left I sat in my car and just felt I had been in the presence of a very wise and caring man and I felt safe. 'I know it sounds bizarre. You have no idea of his aura, the genuineness, the sense of humour. We laughed. There was an immediate bond,'" says Pienaar.

Mandela visited the Springboks at their final pre-World Cup training session at sports fields in Cape Town and wished the awe-struck group of

young men well; receiving in return a Springbok cap from Hennie le Roux, spontaneously removed from the head of Japie Mulder.

To a refrain of "Nelson! Nelson! Nelson!" Mandela officially opened the tournament in Cape Town and the Springboks took what their coach Kitch Christie had referred to as the "high road" by beating defending champions Australia. Thirty-one days and four more games packed full of dramatic incident later Pienaar and his men contested the rugby championship of the world against their oldest and most respected foe, the All Blacks.

EPIC FINAL

An epic final went into extra time before Joel Stransky landed his storied knockout blow sending a wave of patriotic harmony that swept over all creeds and hues such as the country had never experienced before.

Pienaar, interviewed on the field immediately after the final whistle, spoke the inspirational words, "not for 60,000 but for 43 million South Africans" that united a euphoric nation.

Pienaar's men had lived up to their motto "One Team, One Nation" with their 15-12 victory and Madiba's captain recalls in wonderment that as the cup was being handed to him they spoke, almost in unison, exactly the same sentence.

"Francois, thank you for what you've done for this country" — "Mr President, thank you for what you've done for this country." The bond between the rugby player and the struggle hero would extend well beyond the World Cup.

"He invited himself to our wedding," laughs Pienaar. "We were having a celebration at the Union Buildings and I said I wanted to introduce him to my fiancée Nerine. He took her hand and said 'would you feel offended if I come to your wedding Nerine?'"

One Team, One Nation



File photo shows South Africa's rugby captain Francois Pienaar receives the World Cup from President Nelson Mandela.

"When my son Jean was born he said he wanted to be his godfather, 'if we didn't mind', and he gave him a Xhosa name: Mkhokheli, which means leader.

"Madiba regularly invited us for tea and our second son, Stephane, who was four or five at the time asked 'why is Mr Mandela only Jean's godfather and not mine too?' We had to explain that he didn't get the call!

"However Stephane ran straight to Madiba and said to him, 'Mr Mandela, will you please also be my godfather? And Madiba didn't miss a beat, saying of course and adding that his Xhosa name would be Gorha, the brave one."

"We had such intimate conversations. I am truly the luckiest sportsman alive by a long way; to be so privileged at that time to be the captain, to share the platform with him, to be influenced by him and to get to know him so well," Pienaar said.

Pienaar was dropped from the Springbok side in

1996 and when he announced he would be leaving to join Saracens in London, Mandela summoned him to lunch and left him with a final request.

"Francois you promise me you will come back one day and you'll make a difference." On his return to South Africa, Pienaar obliged by establishing the Make a Difference Leadership Foundation (MAD) in Mandela's name with the aim of developing academically talented scholars with leadership potential into future leaders for South Africa.

He runs his own sports eventing company, Advent Sport Entertainment and Media (ASEM), which is responsible for, among other properties, the hugely successful Varsity Cup student rugby competition and the Cape Town Marathon.

Pienaar says the life lesson he learnt from the late president Mandela is that "good leadership is based on good values". —AFP

40 MLB players, staff test positive for COVID-19

LOS ANGELES: Major League Baseball saw 40 players and staff members test positive for COVID-19 in the past week, USA Today reported on Sunday as talks on how to get a 2020 season underway dragged on.

The newspaper cited two sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, saying the coronavirus cases had ramped up the urgency of negotiations between owners and players on a framework for starting a season that was originally scheduled to begin in March.

The MLB Players Association postponed a vote on Sunday on whether to accept or reject MLB's proposal for a 60-game season with players receiving full prorated salaries.

Negotiations had dragged on for weeks as MLB sought not only to prorate salaries based on the number of games played, but also to pay only a percentage of those salaries — something players said they would not accept.

MLB commissioner Rob Manfred thought he'd gotten past that stumbling block on Wednesday after hammering out a potential "framework" for an agreement with union chief Tony Clark that paid full prorated salaries for a 60-game season.

But the players countered, asking for 70 games. —AFP

Outrage as noose found in garage of black NASCAR driver

WASHINGTON: NASCAR said Sunday night that a noose was found in the garage stall of black driver Bubba Wallace at Talladega Superspeedway in Alabama, and they have launched a probe of the "heinous" act. Wallace is the only black driver who races full-time in NASCAR's top Cup series.

"Late this afternoon, NASCAR was made aware that a noose was found in the garage stall of the 43 team," the popular stock car series said in a statement. "We are angry and outraged and cannot state strongly enough how seriously we take this heinous act. We have launched an immediate investigation and will do everything we can to identify the person(s) responsible and eliminate them from the sport. "As we have stated unequivocally, there is no place for

racism in NASCAR and this act only strengthens our resolve to make the sport open and welcoming to all."

Wallace, who has been outspoken about racial injustice in the wake of George Floyd's death in Minneapolis police custody on May 25, commented on the incident in a statement posted on Twitter, saying he was "incredibly saddened" by the "despicable act of racism."

"This will not break me," Wallace said. "I will not give in, nor will I back down."

Wallace was a strong advocate for NASCAR's decision to ban the Confederate flag from its properties on June 10.

The Confederate flag has been a staple at NASCAR tracks, particularly in the sport's southern US heartland that includes Talladega in Alabama. But it remains a symbol of slavery and racism for many. Sunday's race, which was to be NASCAR's first with fans since the coronavirus pandemic erupted, was postponed until Monday by thunderstorms.

Before the heavy weather moved in, a small plane flew above the track trailing a giant Confederate flag and a second banner that read "Defund NASCAR" — its message widely spread on social media. —AFP

Sports

'Reborn' Atalanta lift devastated Bergamo, Inter stay in title hunt

Champions Juventus return at Bologna

MILAN: Atalanta, inspired by the message "I will be reborn, you will be reborn", brought Serie A football back to Bergamo in style on Sunday following the coronavirus lockdown with a 4-1 victory over Sassuolo as Inter Milan enjoyed a 2-1 victory against Sampdoria.

Bergamo was badly hit by the virus, with the city, situated in the northern Lombardy region of which Milan is the capital, at the epicentre of Italy's COVID-19 crisis. Gian Piero Gasperini's side hosted rivals Sassuolo behind closed doors in their Gewiss Stadium in a match played in memory of the city's thousands of virus victims. Duvan Zapata scored a brace with Berat Djimsiti also on target as Sassuolo's Mehdi Bourabia turned into his own net, before pulling a goal back deep into injury time. The province of Bergamo 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.

During a minute's silence before the game, players formed a circle, with the backdrop of the music "Rinascero, Rinascerei" (I will be reborn, you will be reborn), a song composed during lockdown by Roby Facchinetti, an Italian musician from Bergamo.

The club also broadcast on social media a video accompanying the song, in which Atalanta players, Gasperini and doctors and nurses held up the same message: "Rinascero, Rinascerei." Before the match, a few supporters gathered around the stadium to welcome the players as they arrived in the team coach.

"We came to support the team, even if we know we can't get in," fan Giorgio Arboldi, 50, told AFP TV. "The passion is so strong."

Some fans remained opposed to the restart, holding up a banner which read: "Football without tifosi (fans) is not football." On the pitch, Atalanta consolidated their hold on the fourth and final Champions League spot, moving six points ahead of fifth-placed Roma. "It's a very important victory, when you resume after a long time it is inevitable there will be doubts, but we put them to one side by playing an excellent match that led to a great success which was also important for our position in the table," said Gasperini. Atalanta, who are already through to the Champions League quarter-finals this season, were three goals up at the break. Mattia Caldara knocked the ball down for Djimsiti who prodded in on 16 minutes.

Colombian Zapata got the second after half an hour, with Bourabia bundling the ball into his own net minutes later, with two goals ruled out by VAR, with Gasperini banished to the stands

for protesting.

Zapata nodded in his second after an hour with Bourabia scoring a consolation for midtable Sassuolo with a perfect free-kick in the second minute of added time. "The players had a great attachment to the city, nobody left Bergamo and there has always been the belief that sooner or later we would return," added Gasperini.

Champions Juventus return at Bologna. Atalanta host second-placed Lazio on Wednesday, with Inter hosting Sassuolo. Atalanta are six points behind Inter Milan who beat Sampdoria in the San Siro, with goals from Romelu Lukaku and Lautaro Martinez, to close to within six points of leaders Juventus.

"When you have the opportunity, you have to kill off



MILAN: Atalanta's Colombian forward Duvan Zapata (C) heads the ball to score the second goal despite Sassuolo's Italian goalkeeper Andrea Consigli (L) during the Italian Serie A football match Atalanta vs Sassuolo. — AFP

the game," said Inter coach Antonio Conte. "But we are six points behind (Juventus) and there are 12 games left in which we will have to give our life."

Lukaku opened the scoring after ten minutes following good work from Martinez and Christian Eriksen.

The Belgian celebrated his 18th league goal this season by taking the knee, and raising his right fist to the

sky in memory of George Floyd. Lukaku then powered down the right, pulled the ball back for Antonio Candreva, who crossed for Martinez to add a second after half an hour.

Norwegian midfielder Morten Thorsby finished off a rebound to get a goal back for Sampdoria who are hovering above the relegation zone. — AFP

PSG re-emerge but with eyes fixed on Champions League

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain are still optimistic they can win the Champions League for the first time when the tournament is played out in Lisbon in August, even if the coronavirus crisis has left the Qatar-owned club apparently weakened both on the field and off it.

The decision to bring an early end to the French season in late April, with more than a quarter of matches unplayed, did not prevent PSG from being crowned Ligue 1 champions for the third year running, but it was hardly how they wanted things to end.

Without having had the chance to celebrate, the Parisians return to training on Monday, over three months after their last game, the 2-0 defeat of Borussia Dortmund in their Champions League last 16, second leg. Their players have since spent months confined at home before having some time to take a holiday.

PSG's rivals in England, Spain, Germany and Italy are back playing again. In contrast, Neymar returned to France last weekend after three months in Brazil and headed straight to join teammates Marco Verratti, Angel Di Maria, Leandro Paredes and Marquinhos in the glitzy

Mediterranean resort of Saint-Tropez. Meanwhile, Kylian Mbappe posted photos of himself on Instagram along the coast in Monaco. They return this week to a club having to deal with the financial consequences of the pandemic and the early end to the season, with the resulting losses of ticketing and broadcast revenue.

Within PSG, it is estimated they stand to lose over 200 million euros (\$224m), an enormous hit even for a club ranked the fifth-richest in the world in the latest Deloitte Football Money League.

OLD HEADS MOVE ON

That will probably ensure there are no headline-grabbing transfers coming soon, although they recently made Argentine striker Mauro Icardi's loan move from Inter Milan permanent for a reported fee of up to 58 million euros. The financial situation has also helped make up the mind of sporting director Leonardo over the futures of Thiago Silva and Edinson Cavani, two of the biggest figures of the Qatar era whose contracts expire this month and will not be retained. "Maybe we are making a mistake, I don't know, there is never a perfect moment," Leonardo told Le Journal du Dimanche.

It is hoped Brazilian defender Silva, the club captain, can be persuaded to stay to feature in the Champions League later stages, but club record goal-scorer Cavani has reportedly opted to walk away at the end of June.

The exodus will not stop there. Right-back Thomas Meunier, reportedly bound for Dortmund, will not stick around. Highly talented 18-year-old defender Tanguy Kouassi is expected to sign for Bayern Munich.

However, the prospects of either Mbappe or Neymar leaving appear less than slim, given the financial challenges faced by PSG's European rivals.

"He is the future of PSG. That is what everyone wants. Ideally we would extend his contract," Leonardo said of Mbappe. What Mbappe and PSG want now is the Champions League, and after years of underachievement in Europe they are targeting glory when the competition is played out in a "final eight" straight knockout format in Lisbon.

'MORE DIFFICULT'

However, between now and a quarter-final somewhere between August 12 and 15, Thomas Tuchel's team will only have two competitive games, with the French Cup final against Saint-Etienne and League Cup final against Lyon both set to go ahead in late July.

"We have felt good ever since the season began. Unfortunately, we know what happened with the coronavirus and everything had to stop," Di Maria told sports daily L'Equipe. "The other major leagues are restarting. That must not be an excuse but it does make things more difficult for us," he added.

Like Lyon, PSG are therefore completely out of step with their Champions League rivals, although that could still work to their advantage. For example, Spanish and English clubs will have completed an exhausting dash to get their seasons finished in late July. Perhaps Mbappe, Neymar and their teammates will be fresher than ever and therefore primed to go on and win the final in Lisbon on August 23. — AFP

Sarri confident Ronaldo will rediscover form

MILAN: Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri has told Cristiano Ronaldo not to worry about his slow resumption to the season, insisting on Sunday the Portuguese star will return to being "the most incredible player of all time". They will play their first Serie A match in over three months against Bologna, four days after losing the Italian Cup final to Napoli.

The Serie A leaders failed to score in their two Cup matches since the Italian season resumed following the coronavirus lockdown, with goalless draws against AC Milan in the semi-finals, where Ronaldo missed a penalty, and with Napoli in the final before a 4-2 defeat on penalties.

"I spoke to Cristiano again yesterday. He must not worry about trust," Sarri said.

"He must not lose confidence, as soon as he regains his brilliance he will return to being the most incredible player of all time."

"At the moment, physically he cannot give the maximum." Ronaldo, 35, has scored 25 goals for Juventus in all competitions this season.

He spent the coronavirus lockdown in his native Portugal. "We must not forget that we have arrived after being inactive for 60 days and the physical brilliance cannot be at the highest levels," said Sarri.

Ronaldo also failed to find the net in Juventus' last two matches before the lockdown, having scored in nine straight matches before that.

Juventus have just a one-point advantage over Lazio in the Serie A table, as they target a ninth consecutive Scudetto.

The 61-year-old urged his players to "turn the page" quickly having lost two finals this season, after the Italian Super Cup loss to Lazio in December.

"Losing a trophy is always painful, it hurts, it gives disappointment and bitterness, but this is the situation and we must not beat ourselves up," said the former Chelsea coach. "We have to turn the page and think about our next games. We hope to improve quickly in the next 10 days, both in physical and mental condition." Sarri, meanwhile, dismissed reports he had a training ground bust-up with Bosnia midfielder Miralem Pjanic. — AFP



India's record-breaking bowler Rajinder Goel (left) receiving an award.

India cricket mourns record-breaker Goel

NEW DELHI: Indian cricket yesterday mourned the loss of record-breaking bowler Rajinder Goel, who despite taking 750 first-class wickets — including an unmatched 637 in the Ranji Trophy — never played for his country.

Goel, a left-arm spinner, died aged 77 on Sunday, prompting the Board of Control for Cricket in India to pay tribute to the veteran whose career lasted 27 years.

"The Indian cricketing community has lost a giant of domestic cricket today," BCCI president Sourav Ganguly said of Goel, who played to the age of 44.

"His staggering record tells you about his craft and the control he had over it. To have a career that lasts more than 25 years and still be able to perform consistently speaks about his dedication and commitment towards the game."

"To be able to pick 750 wickets needs years and

years of hard work and I salute his efforts. I extend my heartfelt condolences to his family."

Goel plied his trade during India's spin era of former captain Bishan Singh Bedi, who was often said to be the reason for the celebrated bowler not making the national cut.

"It's unjust that 'Goel' with 750 first-class wickets, 637 of them in Ranji Trophy alone, the highest ever — will forever be known as the finest spinner never to have played for India," Bedi said in The Times of India newspaper.

"People still feel that it was my presence which kept him out of India squad — we were both left-arm orthodox spinners — but that's not entirely true. He started before me and ended after me."

Goel played his last game in the 1984-1985 season but his record for wickets in the Ranji Trophy, India's premier domestic first-class competition, remains intact. He died of an age-related illness, Indian media said.

"So who is the finest cricketer never to play for India? Many may well suggest Rajinder Goel," Rajdeep Sardesai, a veteran journalist and son of former India player Dilip Sardesai, wrote on Twitter. — AFP

Dimitrov tests positive for coronavirus

PARIS: Grigor Dimitrov said on Sunday he has tested positive for coronavirus after pulling out of an exhibition tournament which also featured world number one Novak Djokovic.

"I want to reach out and let my fans and friends know that I tested positive back in Monaco for Covid-19," world number 19 Dimitrov wrote on Instagram. "I am so sorry for any harm I might have caused. I am back home now and recovering."

Last weekend, Dimitrov, 29, took part in the Adria Tour event in Belgrade with Djokovic, world number three Dominic Thiem and Alexander Zverev, ranked seven. He also played in the second leg of the Balkans tournament in Zadar on Croatia's Adriatic coast on Saturday. However, he withdrew after losing to Borna Coric, complaining of feeling unwell.

Later on Sunday, the final between Djokovic and Russia's Andrey Rublev was immediately cancelled as a precaution. "This is the best possible decision. We have to take care about security of all involved," former Wimbledon champion Goran Ivanisevic, the tournament director of the Zadar event, said in remarks quoted by local media.

"Those who were in contact with Grigor will be tested. I tested by chance three days ago and I'm negative." Zverev and former US Open winner Marin Cilic were also in the Croatia line-up.

"I want to make sure anyone who has been in contact with me during these past days gets tested and takes the necessary precautions," added Dimitrov. Djokovic's brother Djordje, who is the overall tournament director, told Sportske Novosti daily paper online edition: "Novak? He took this news very hard. We undertook all the measures prescribed by the governments of Serbia and Croatia."

Bulgarian Dimitrov is a former world number three who was the ATP Tour Finals champion in 2017, one of his eight career titles.

The Adria Tour, organised to fill the gap in the virus-hit tennis calendar which has been on ice since mid-March, played out to a daily crowd of 4,000 fans at Djokovic's tennis centre on the banks of the Danube in Belgrade last week.

Dimitrov, Djokovic and Thiem, as well as the other players, were then seen partying at a packed Belgrade night spot. Thiem has since travelled to the south of France to play in another exhibition tournament, the Ultimate Tennis Showdown in Nice.

On Sunday, tournament chief Patrick Mouratoglou, the coach of Serena Williams, tweeted a picture of Thiem undergoing a coronavirus test at the event being staged at his tennis academy.

The Adria Tour had already suffered an embarrassing setback when the planned Montenegro leg of the four-nation tournament was cancelled over coronavirus protocol rules. Montenegro was due to be the third stop on June 27 and 28 after Croatia and before the conclusion in Bosnia. But organisers said the visit to Montenegro had to be called off when it became apparent Serbia did not match strict health requirements. Meanwhile, asked to comment on social distancing measures during the Belgrade leg, Djokovic said both Serbia and the region had been relatively successful in containing the virus.

"Of course you can criticise, you can also say this is dangerous or not, but it's not up to me to make the calls what is health-wise right or wrong," the 17-time Grand Slam winner told reporters, stressing he was acting in line with recommendations of the Serbian government. Last week, the ATP and WTA said they were restarting their tours in August. However, the US Open in New York will be played behind closed doors and under strict health protocols which Djokovic has described as "extreme" and "impossible". — AFP

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Title-chasing Liverpool held by Everton

Lampard heaps praise on Pulisic as Chelsea sink Villa



LONDON: Everton's English striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin (C) heads the ball wide of goal as he gets challenged by Liverpool's Brazilian midfielder Fabinho (R) during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Liverpool at Goodison Park in Liverpool. — AFP

LONDON: Liverpool's march towards the Premier League title was delayed as the leaders returned to action with a goalless draw against Merseyside rivals Everton, while Chelsea fought back for a 2-1 win at Aston Villa on Sunday.

Jürgen Klopp's side picked up following the top-flight resumption on Wednesday needing two wins to secure their first English title for 30 years.

But Liverpool looked rusty in their first game in 106 days following the coronavirus lockdown. Despite their underwhelming display behind closed doors at Goodison Park, Liverpool are now 23 points ahead of second-placed Manchester City.

If City drop points at home to Burnley, then Liverpool can clinch the title against Crystal Palace at Anfield tomorrow.

A City victory would delay Liverpool's coronation until at least their clash with Pep Guardiola's side at the Etihad Stadium on July 2.

Liverpool have won just two of their last seven games in all competitions. "It was a real fight. Both teams showed they understood it was a derby," Klopp said.

"Most of the time we were dominant but they had the biggest chance. We were not smart enough to use the space. "That is normal when you start to play again. Football looks slightly different (since the coronavirus) but I take that."

Reds star Mohamed Salah was left on the bench due to fitness concerns, while Andrew Robertson was also sidelined and they were not at their best as a result. Liverpool improved after the break and Naby Keita fired just wide before Virgil van Dijk's header was saved by Jordan Pickford. But it was Everton who came closest to a winner on the break when Dominic Calvert-Lewin's effort was saved by Alisson Becker and Tom Davies fired the rebound against the post.

Frank Lampard believes Christian Pulisic can be Chelsea's trump card in the race to qualify for the Champions League after his decisive cameo at Villa Park. Lampard's side were rocked when Kortney

Hause put Villa ahead against the run of play in the first half. But Pulisic came off the bench to equalise after the break before Olivier Giroud bagged his fourth club goal of the season two minutes later.

Chelsea's quick-fire blitz moved the fourth-placed west Londoners five points clear of Manchester United in fifth as they fight to qualify for next season's Champions League.

A first away league win of 2020 was the ideal way for Chelsea to return to action in their first match since the Premier League was suspended in March due to the coronavirus.

It was Pulisic's first appearance since January after an abductor muscle injury and Lampard feels the United States winger is ready to make an impact again. "He will start games for us, of course, and I think he's going to be a big player for us, not just in this run-in but going forward," Lampard said. "The ability he's got to arrive in the box, it's a big



Football looks slightly different

Madrid go top after edging out Real Sociedad

MADRID: Real Madrid knocked Barcelona off the top of La Liga by beating Real Sociedad 2-1 on Sunday as Sergio Ramos rolled in another penalty before being forced off due to injury.

Karim Benzema continued his excellent form by adding a second at Anoeta and while Mikel Merino gave Real Sociedad hope with seven minutes left, Madrid held on to go above Barca on head-to-head.

Real Sociedad were contenders for the top four before the three-month suspension but a draw and two defeats since the restart leaves them sixth, five points adrift.

Ramos scored his 20th consecutive spot-kick in the 50th minute to become La Liga's highest ever scoring defender on 68 goals, overtaking Ronald Koeman on the all-time list.

"He's the best defender in the world," said Zinedine Zidane. "What he has been doing and achieving for so many years is incredible."

But Ramos limped off 10 minutes later with what looked like a knee injury, which will be a huge concern for Madrid if the problem proves serious. He was seen sitting with an ice-pack on his left knee in the stands. "Right now it hurts a lot but that's just the bang I think," said Zidane afterwards. "That's the good news but we'll see."

Madrid also benefitted from two tight decisions after Adnan Januzaj drove in an equaliser for Real Sociedad, only to have it ruled out before Benzema doubled the lead and was adjudged not to have controlled with his arm.

Both calls were close and the fact they fell for Madrid will not have gone unnoticed in Barcelona.

"From what we've seen it will be very difficult for Real Madrid to drop points," said Barca defender Gerard Pique on Friday.

It was Barca's failure to score at Sevilla that presented the opportunity to Madrid, whose victory in one of their toughest fixtures left has shifted the title race back in their favour.

Their defence, which boasts the club's best record

at this stage in 32 years, has been key.

CASEMIRO SUSPENDED

Casemiro is suspended after picking up a yellow card although Real Mallorca at home on Wednesday is the kind of fixture Madrid should be able to negotiate, even without Ramos and their only defensive midfielder.

Zinedine Zidane will at least hope to have Eden Hazard fresh again after the Belgian was named on the bench. Gareth Bale was also among the substitutes not to be brought on.

His replacement Vinicius Junior caused Andoni Gorosabel problems with his pace and it was the Brazilian who won the penalty, after nipping inside the defender before his right foot was caught by Diego Llorente.

Ramos made no mistake but seemed to take a bang on his knee shortly after and despite limping on for several minutes, was eventually replaced by Eder Militao. His removal coincided with a surge from Real Sociedad, who thought they had equalised when Januzaj drove into the corner only for Merino to be ruled offside, seen to be close enough to Courtois to be interfering with the goalkeeper's line of sight.

thing, I've spoken about it with him all season." Steve Bruce hopes Joelinton is finally ready to deliver after the Brazilian ended a Premier League goal drought stretching back to August in Newcastle's 3-0 win over 10-man Sheffield United.

Joelinton's close-range finish in the 78th minute completed the scoring after goals from Allan Saint-Maximin and Matt Ritchie.

It was a welcome boost for Joelinton, who has struggled since his move from Hoffenheim last year and missed a glorious opportunity in the first half at St James' Park.

Joelinton was also at the centre of the game's significant moment when he raced away from John Egan in the second half and was hauled back, triggering a red card for the Blades defender that sparked the visitors' collapse.

"He personally has suffered in the lockdown more than anybody. He's had no family here, no friends, holed up in an apartment somewhere," Bruce said.

"He's a really genuinely good lad and he gives his all for the team. We're just delighted that he's managed to score a goal. He can only get better." —AFP

Real Sociedad's sense of frustration was compounded when Benzema made it two. Referee Javier Estrada again consulted VAR but this time allowed the goal to stand, believing Benzema to have controlled with his shoulder before firing in.

Merino set up a nervy finish with a thundering shot in off the crossbar but Madrid held on for an important win.

GUEDES SCORES BRILLIANT SOLO GOAL

Earlier, Goncalo Guedes scored a mesmerising solo goal as Valencia stayed in touch with the Champions League qualification places by beating Osasuna 2-0. Guedes picked the ball up in his own half and surged past four Osasuna players before completing his stunning run with a driven shot into the top corner. Rodrigo Moreno made it two at Mestalla as Valencia reduced the gap behind fourth-placed Sevilla to six points.

Osasuna drop to 12th and their next opponents will be Alaves, who suffered a crushing 6-0 defeat away at fellow strugglers Celta Vigo.

Alaves were reduced to 10 men after 27 minutes when Martin Aguirregabiria was sent off and Celta capitalised. — AFP