



5 People resorting to barter to survive amid pandemic



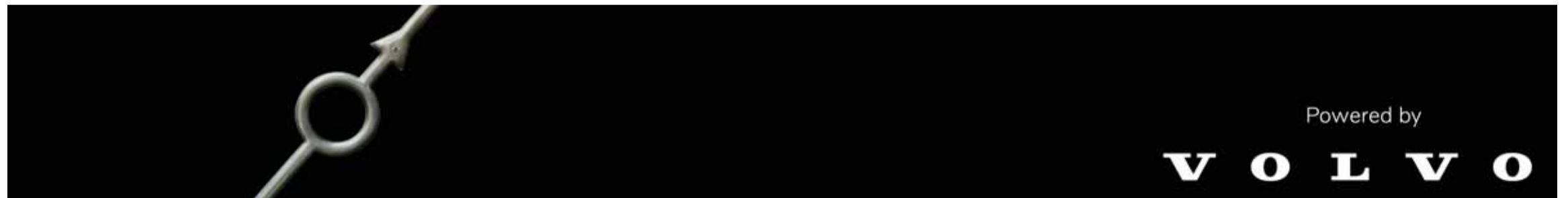
8 India, Pak expel embassy staff in tit-for-tat spy row



16 Lebanon economic crisis bites: Refrigerators empty



19 1983 World Cup win triggered India's obsession with cricket



MP says govt statements on demographics 'not serious'

Lawmakers slam opposition of judges to law allowing challenges to final rulings

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei yesterday played down the value of the government's highly ambitious statements on amending the population structure in the country to make Kuwaitis the majority. Subaei said although the prime minister has said the government hopes to make Kuwaitis 70 percent of the population - although currently they only make up just 30 percent - "we have not seen any action or plan to achieve this remote goal".

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah told editors of local dailies earlier this month that the ideal

composition is for Kuwaitis to be 70 percent and expats 30 percent of the country's population. At present, expats number 3.35 million or 70 percent of the population, and Kuwaitis make up just 30 percent or 1.45 million.

The lawmaker said that to achieve that goal, the number of expats should be reduced to around 400,000, which does not seem to be realistic. A number of ministers have already announced plans to lay off hundreds of expat employees as part of a process to substitute them with Kuwaitis. But Subaei said these efforts lack coordination and are well short of achieving the target. Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel said yesterday that he ordered the cancellation

of a contract that would have hired 500 expat employees in the oil sector.

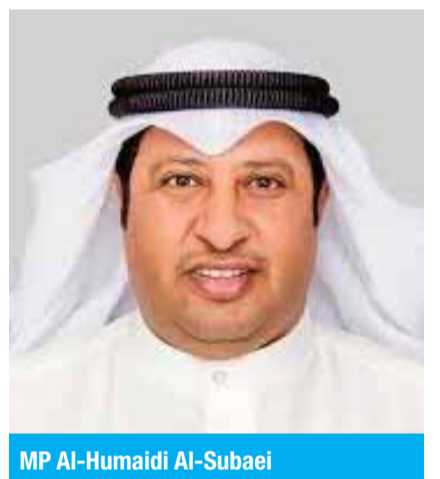
Meanwhile, several MPs yesterday criticized efforts by some to influence the government to reject a law passed by the Assembly last week that allows challenging final court rulings, which is not possible now. The law was passed unanimously and MPs say it was made by the cooperation of the Assembly, the government and the judiciary.

But around 300 judges have signed a statement strongly criticizing the legislation, saying it undermines the immunity of judges, could lead to convicting them for criminal offenses and will lead to disrupting court and public prosecution proce-

dures.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said the anger of judges in their statement and calls for the government to reject the legislation or to challenge its constitutionality in the court are actions that distort the image of judges. MP Subaei said the legislation was originally a proposal by the government and another by lawmakers, and both were merged to reach the final law, which was unanimously approved in the Assembly.

Former MP Obaid Al-Wasmi said judges are the only public employees who have the authority to "end a human life", and accordingly they should be questioned for professional and technical errors while applying the law.



MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei

News in brief

MSCI to reclassify Boursa

KUWAIT: Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) will implement the reclassification of the MSCI Kuwait Indexes from Frontier Markets status to Emerging Markets status. This step will coincide with "the November 2020 Semi Annual Index Review (SAIR)", Kuwait Capital Market Authority (CMA) said in a statement on Twitter account on Tuesday, citing a reminder by MSCI.MSCI - a leading provider of critical decision support tools and services, issued the reminder earlier in the day. — KUNA

Indian guru warned

NEW DELHI: A hugely popular Indian guru touting herbal remedies as a \$7 cure for coronavirus was told by the government Tuesday that he needed to prove his claims before further marketing. Baba Ramdev, a supporter of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said the remedy would be available from next week through his lucrative Patanjali Ayurved company, claiming it was 100 percent successful on nearly 300 test patients. — AFP

Erekat's nephew killed

ABU DIS: The nephew of a senior Palestinian official was shot dead Tuesday at a checkpoint in the occupied West Bank after Israeli police claimed he drove his car at speed toward a policewoman. The deceased was identified as Ahmad Erakat, nephew of Saeb Erakat, secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Ahmad, 27, was "executed" by the Israeli police, his uncle told AFP, adding that he held Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responsible for "this crime". — AFP

UN chief cautions Israel

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged Israel to drop plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, saying it would be a "most serious violation of international law," in a report made public Tuesday. In the document, Guterres says an Israeli annexation would be "devastating" for hopes of fresh negotiations and an eventual two-state solution. — AFP

Egypt eases restrictions

CAIRO: Egypt will partially reopen cafes, restaurants, places of worship, cinemas and sporting clubs on Saturday, relaxing a lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus, Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouli announced. A night-time curfew that was imposed in late March will now run from midnight to 4 am. Mabouli said in a televised address Tuesday, announcing a slew of decisions taking effect on June 27. Madbouli warned that shisha smoking is still banned to prevent the spread of the disease. — AFP

#Djokovid: Tennis star mauled over virus 'horror show'

PARIS: World number one Novak Djokovic was widely condemned yesterday for hosting a tennis exhibition where he was one of four players to test positive for the coronavirus, a lapse that sent shudders through a sport struggling to get back on its feet. The Serbian star said he was "deeply sorry" in

an unflinching apology for the now-cancelled Adria Tour, where social distancing was minimal and matches were played in front of thousands of fans.

However, criticism was swift and heavy, with many voicing concerns over attempts to restart professional tournaments in August, including the US Open Grand Slam which is scheduled to begin on Aug 31. Djokovic, Grigor Dimitrov, Borna Coric and Viktor Troicki all tested positive after taking part in the Adria Tour, where players embraced across the net, played basketball and even danced in a nightclub.

Continued on Page 16



Novak Djokovic

Jericho fears isolation in annexation

JERICHO: Mamoun Jasn has grown hundreds of date palms near Jericho, but now the farmer fears being marooned on a scrap of Palestinian land if Israel forges ahead with its plans to annex the Jordan Valley. A qualified accountant, Jasn has spent the past decade on an ambitious mission to learn how to cultivate his fields as an "act of resistance" against Israel's occupation of the West Bank.

His palm grove now boasts 1,300 trees planted near the oasis city of Jericho, home to 20,000 Palestinians. But the nearby area is also dotted with Israeli settlements, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says will be annexed along with the fertile Jordan Valley. When Netanyahu unveiled a map of his plans in September, the premier pointed to a long blue zone to be annexed, leaving a brown speck in the middle: Jericho.

Continued on Page 16



JERICHO: Palestinian farmer Judeh Aseed from Jericho's agricultural union stands in a palm grove in this West Bank city on June 21, 2020. — AFP

Bodybuilders in Egypt feel pain, no gain

CAIRO: Egypt's musclemen are frustrated with working out from home due to coronavirus restrictions and are raring to get back to gruelling routines at their gyms, where they also earn a living. With massive biceps and a gleaming six-pack, Mohamed Ali - who goes by his nickname Asab, a reference in Arabic to his bulging veins - is normally an enthusiastic exhibitionist.

The 33-year-old is a personal trainer and veteran participant of several bodybuilding championships with Egypt's national team, which has a history of garnering gold medals on

the world stage. But when AFP visited his sunny home in an upscale gated community in eastern Cairo, Asab chuckled modestly that he was not in top shape. "I've taken it upon myself... to use the lockdown to start competing again at the end of the year, since I have a lot of time on my hands these days," he told AFP.

Egypt has been under a night-time curfew for the past three months to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus, but the number of infections continues to rise. The North African country, with a population of over 100 million, has officially recorded over 58,000 COVID-19 cases and 2,365 deaths. Gyms have been shuttered as part of nationwide restrictions, but that has not deterred Asab from hitting his home gym hard.

He is re-sculpting a taut physique through an extremely demanding

Continued on Page 16



6TH OF OCTOBER CITY: Bodybuilder coach Mohamed Nassim, a 33-year-old Syrian exile, takes part in a training session in a public park on the outskirts of the Egyptian capital on June 15, 2020. — AFP

Local

EU official praises Kuwait's preventive measures to confront COVID-19

Kuwait's \$60 million helped Iraq, Palestine and Syria

KUWAIT: The European Union Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Cristian Tudor praised preventive measures taken by the Kuwaiti government in face of the COVID-19 pandemic. In an inclusive interview Tuesday, Tudor said that Kuwait had responded very quickly, resolutely and effectively and began imposing restrictions to help contain the virus spread at an early stage. Tudor affirmed that despite these difficulties, Kuwait is helping other countries to reduce the spread of the disease, valuing Kuwait's decision to provide \$60 million to finance the World Health Organization to help countries most affected such as Iraq, Palestine and Syria. He also hailed Kuwait's participation in the global response conference to confront the COVID-19 last May, which was organized by the EU with several partner governments and organizations in order to raise funds to accelerate the development of vaccination, treatment and diagnosis for the disease.

Foreign policy

Regarding Kuwait's foreign policy, he said that Kuwait represents wisdom and peace in the region, and this what made the EU and Kuwait natural partners in these difficult times. He also stressed that Kuwait has consistently formulated mediation policies that seek bringing peace and stability to the Gulf region, indicating that the EU welcomes the Kuwaiti leadership's continued efforts to help solve the Gulf dispute. The EU considers the State of Kuwait as an increasingly important partner, and hopes to have more comprehensive and multi-dimensional cooperation covering political and economic dialogue, as well

as sectorial and regional cooperation, he added. The Ambassador noted that Kuwait was the first in the Gulf region to sign a cooperation agreement with the European External Action Service in July 2016, which provided a platform for regular political consultations covering joint regional challenges in the Middle East in addition to bilateral relations.

The agreement includes sectorial consultations in the areas of clean and renewable energy, security, counter-terrorism, development cooperation, and other areas of common interests, he added.



Kuwait an increasingly important partner

He emphasized the Union's interest in strengthening close cooperation with Kuwait in the field of crisis preparedness, pointing out that the recent health crisis clearly highlighted the importance of unified global efforts in this field. The EU is Kuwait's third-largest trading partner, which has been a major investor in Europe for a long time, noted Tudor.

Future goals

Regarding the mission's future goals in Kuwait, he pointed out that one of the objectives is to

establish an EU brand in the country to overcome a widespread misconception that the Union is only linked to the Schengen visa. "Therefore, we are trying to raise awareness of the Union through the use of various tools. We are trying to be closer to the Kuwaiti public, especially the youth, by using social media platforms that are very popular here, and we recently participated in a live streaming on social media focusing on the youth," said the Ambassador.

On the actual steps of the EU to support the 'New Kuwait 2035 Vision', he stressed that the Union has extensive experience in the fields related to helping diversify the economy. He pointed out that linking Kuwait to the fields of work in the EU through the use of various tools will facilitate the concrete realization of dialogue, especially at the level of electronic commerce between enterprises, which generates business and commercial opportunities for both the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Among tangible examples of such steps in this regard are the organized participation by the Kuwait National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises Development in the European network of projects that will be facilitated through the EU project and the EU-funded GCC countries on economic diversification. —KUNA



The European Union Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Cristian Tudor

GCC condemns Houthis' terrorist attacks on Saudi

RIYADH: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) condemned Houthi militias for launching a number of ballistic missiles towards populated areas in southern Saudi Arabia, as well as on the capital Riyadh on Monday. These terrorist attacks of bobby-trapped drones aimed at destabilizing security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf said in a statement Tuesday. The drone attacks, he added, were blatant violations of international laws, which prohibits attacks of civilians and civilian areas. Hajraf commended the Saudi air force for intercepting and destroying the drones before reaching their targets. The GCC stands firmly with Saudi Arabia in all measure the Kingdom have been taking to preserve its security, stability and safety of the population, he said. Hajraf also urged the international community to live up to its responsibility and make the Houthis stop their hostile acts. —KUNA



Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf

In my view

The pencil and eraser



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

Life is all about trials – we succeed sometimes and fail too, but the proven fact is that life goes on according to a certain plan. We all sleep, then wake up to resume our business - be it to go to work, process transactions, go to school to check on our children, repair the car, buy groceries, pay bills, and on and on. This is the daily routine of the globe's inhabitants.

That is why each one of us must care for the other because what affects my neighbor today may come around and affect me tomorrow - be it good or bad -and I can benefit from his experience to better handle the situation and deal with it correctly.

We are encouraged to look at the bright side of things, and always see the cup half full, and once we remain optimistic, we will always find a way to move on as a society because one can never live alone - at least not like a human being. The following dialogue by an anonymous writer has a message that I wish to deliver and hope to be successful in doing so:

The eraser once asked the pencil: how are you my friend? The pencil answered in anger: I am not your friend, I hate you. Astonished and sad, the eraser asked: Why? The pencil said: Because you erase what I write. The eraser said: I only erase mistakes. The pencil said: What do you have to do with it? The eraser said: I am an eraser and this is my job.

The pencil said: This is not a job. The eraser said: My job is beneficial just like yours. The pencil said: You are wrong and arrogant, because the one that writes is better than one who erases. The eraser said: Removing the mistake equals writing the right.

The pencil paused, then said with sadness: But I see you are getting smaller day after day. The eraser said: Because I sacrifice something out of me each time I erase a mistake. The pencil said: I feel that I am shorter than I was. The eraser said: We cannot help others unless we sacrifice for their sake. Then she looked at the pencil and asked: Do you still hate me? The pencil smiled and said: How can I hate you while sacrifice brought us together?

Each time you wake up, you lose a day from your age, so if you cannot be a pencil to write happiness for others, then be an eraser to remove their sadness and give them hope and optimism that the future will always be better.

Was the message delivered? I hope so!

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 41,033 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Tuesday, in addition to 334 deaths. With the exception of 165 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, 32,809 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 7,890 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 remain closed for the time being. Worshippers must wear face masks, keep social distancing between queues and between worshippers must be strictly observed. Worshippers must bring their own mats so they do not get in contact with mosque carpets. Mosques will reopen five minutes before prayer time and close 10 minutes after prayer.

Earlier, Kuwait imposed a total curfew from May 10 to May 30, allowing room for people to walk out for daily exercise between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and to shop at co-ops and supermarkets once every six days during the curfew hours by making an appointment through www.moci.shop. Before that, Kuwait enforced a country-wide partial curfew from 5:00 pm to 6:00 am, which was later extended to start from 4:00 pm until 8:00 am during Ramadan, while allowing restaurants and food stores to make home deliveries from 5:00 pm until 1:00 am. The government also locked down Mahboula and

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

Precautions

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

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

Hotlines

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

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

- 24970967 (24/7 hotline)
- 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone)
- 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone)
- 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone)
- 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)
- 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)

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

Medicine delivery

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

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

Meanwhile, all licensed pharmacies in Kuwait delivering medicine are allowed to continue their services 24 hours a day. The Ministry of Health is also asking doctors and nurses affiliated with the private medical sector to volunteer in order to contribute to the fight against the virus. Volunteering is available through the link: <http://volunteering.q8-chealth.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-Sahh: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.
 - Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.
 - Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.
 - 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 Munceera 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

Arab foreign ministers reiterate commitment to Libya's stability

Ministers refuse acts harming Egypt, Sudan's shares of River Nile



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah takes part in Arab League online extraordinary session at the ministerial level. — KUNA



Participants in the meeting.

CAIRO/KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah headed the Kuwaiti delegation in Arab League extraordinary session at the ministerial level held online, Tuesday, at the request of Egypt to discuss developments in Libya. During the meeting, member states affirmed commitment to unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity and stability of Libya and the security and safety of its brotherly people. They also emphasized support for international cooperation, initiatives and efforts aimed at a ceasefire, ending military operations and resuming the political process in the violence-torn Arab country. The Kuwaiti delegation included Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Arab World Ambassador Fahad Al-Awadhi, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Saleh Al-Loughani, and a number of senior ministry officials.

gotiations between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, a final statement said. They said negotiations should be based on good will in order to reach an agreement honoring interests of all Nile basin countries.

The ministers called on all parties to refrain from taking unilateral measures, including need of Ethiopia not to fill the reservoir nor operating the dam before reaching an agreement. Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia,



Kuwaiti, Brazilian FMs hold talks

Renaissance Dam

Meanwhile, Arab foreign ministers said water security for Egypt and Sudan was an integral part of the Arab national security, refusing any act undermining shares of countries in River Nile. The foreign ministers, holding an extraordinary virtual meeting over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) at the request of Egypt, expressed grave concern over the failure of ne-

gotiations between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, a final statement said. They said negotiations should be based on good will in order to reach an agreement honoring interests of all Nile basin countries. The ministers called on all parties to refrain from taking unilateral measures, including need of Ethiopia not to fill the reservoir nor operating the dam before reaching an agreement. Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, they said, should abide by the international law. They called for finalizing technical studies over the economic, social and environmental impacts of the dam on Sudan and Egypt. They appreciated Sudan's call on Cairo and Addis Ababa to hold negotiations to reach an agreement on the filling and operation.



Phone call

In other news, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad received on Tuesday a phone call from Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo. Both top diplomats

discussed bilateral ties and means to enhance cooperation in various fields, especially in combating the impacts of COVID-19. Recent regional and global political developments were discussed as well during the call. — KUNA

Kuwait reiterates support to UNRWA

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah reiterated support to, and solidarity with, cash-strapped UN Relief Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), amidst spread of coronavirus. Sheikh Ahmad, addressing a virtual ministerial meeting, co-sponsored by Jordan and Sweden, over promoting UNRWA's role, called for solidarity of the international community towards their "moral and humanitarian responsibility" to guarantee sustainability of UNRWA funding. This funding, he added, would alleviate suffering of the Palestinian people. UNRWA should continue its oper-

ations as mandated by the UN, said Kuwait's top diplomat, until a permanent and just solution was reached for the Palestinian refugees based on relevant UN resolutions.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for providing political and financial support for UNRWA which was carrying out vital operations, considered to be the lifeline for millions of Palestinian refugees thus contributed to regional stability. UNRWA contributes to educating more than half a million students, he said, and the UN agency reported more than eight million visits to its medical facilities every year. UNRWA, added Guterres, provide food and financial aid for around 1.8 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza Strip, as well as funding for businesses. He said UNRWA was contributing in human development and stability on a daily basis and in the midst of the spread of the coronavirus. Guterres said UNRWA has been providing essential sup-



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah speaks during the meeting. — KUNA

port for the Palestinian refugees for over 70 years. "We share the responsibility towards" the Palestinian refugees until a just solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is reached, he said. — KUNA



Participants in a virtual ministerial meeting co-sponsored by Jordan and Sweden over promoting UNRWA's role.

News in brief

Amir congratulates astronomer

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday sent a cable to renowned Kuwaiti astronomer Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi, congratulating him on his 100th birthday. His Highness expressed sincere wishes of wellbeing for Ojairi, whose scientific achievements spanned for decades in serving and developing the fields of astronomy and meteorology in Kuwait and the world. 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 have sent similar cables to Dr Ojairi.

Silk City

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah gave orders to shift supervision over the Silk City and Boubyan Island Development Authority to the Minister of State for Municipality Affairs.

Oil price up

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up by \$1.04 to \$37.96 per barrel on Tuesday after it was \$36.92 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. Globally, the price of the Brent crude went down by 45 cents to \$42.63 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which fell by 36 cents to \$40.37 pb.

Duo arrested

KUWAIT: Police arrested a fellow officer and a fugitive who attempted to escape from a check point on Al-Khattabi Road Tuesday. Police chased the suspects' vehicle as it drove wrong way to Blajat Road, before it stopped following a collision with a police patrol. The suspects were taken to the proper authorities for further action.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: An archive photo showing sunset over Kuwait City. —KUNA

KOC underlines importance of relying on national youths

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) affirmed Tuesday its reliance on national cadres and its keenness to recruit them in the oil sector through a plan to employ fresh graduates. KOC added that such action is part of its contribution to creating job opportunities for Kuwaiti new graduates and meeting their operational needs, which is in line with its strategic goals. The remarks came in a press statement reacting to comments circulated in social media and some newspapers regarding a tender for the recruitment of 500 expatriates to work in the production centers in the com-

pany's various sites.

KOC indicated that it succeeded, for many years, on maintaining 100 percent of the national employment in production work centers. The company also stated that they employed more than 500 Kuwaitis who hold a diploma, in the past fiscal year, in the production and operations departments, confirming that they will continue this approach for the current year and the coming years. KOC explained that such contract is a renewal of previous contracts that are used only in emergency cases, indicating that no workers were called upon in previous contracts because there

was no need.

The company noted that this tender is among several tenders submitted to the Central Tenders Committee before the coronavirus pandemic, affirming they were not formally approved, stressing these contracts are among the current and upcoming contracts that have been reviewed and were suspended. KOC also confirmed that it, like its associate companies in the oil sector, and based on the directives of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, is currently reviewing all contracts to reduce the percentage of non-Kuwaiti workers. —KUNA

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Kuwaiti officers graduate from Jordan colleges

AMMAN: Eleven Kuwaiti officers graduated from Jordan's Royal Command and Staff College on Tuesday, among 279 officers from various Gulf, Arab and foreign countries. The graduation ceremony of the 24th Joint Staff was held under the patronage of Jordan's Crown Prince Al-Hussein bin Abdullah and was attended by the head of the Jordanian Joint Chiefs of Staff, Major General Yusef Al-Hunaiti, and Kuwaiti Assistant military Attache Lieutenant Colonel Hamad Al-Buajjan.

Kuwaiti military attache, Brigadier General Mishaal Fulaiteh said the graduates, which included six officers from the Kuwaiti Army and five officers

from Kuwaiti National Guard, did receive the most important modern military training skills, like public administration, joint operations, defense operations, and research. Fulaiteh added that the training course, which began last August, contributes to the appropriate scientific and military qualification of graduates, which enables them to obtain the leadership and advanced staffs needed, through participation in extensive research and studies and various exercises that depend on scientific methods in addressing dilemmas and finding solutions for decision makers at all levels.

On military cooperation with the Jordanian side, he emphasized the depth of relations between the two countries, pointing out that the participation of Kuwaiti officers in various training courses comes upon directives of the military leadership. At the end of the ceremony, certificates were distributed to 279 graduates from Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Lebanon, Sudan, Pakistan and Taiwan, as well as officers from the Jordanian Armed Forces. —KUNA

Local

Barter community thrives in Kuwait in time of COVID-19 pandemic crisis

Jobless expats offer household goods in exchange of basic commodities

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Salmiya's old souq has become a meeting point for many Filipinos wanting to sell something or barter anything in exchange for groceries or cash to help their families survive during the coronavirus crisis. The old souq is a popular hangout for Filipinos in Kuwait, with many Filipino restaurants and groceries serving the area.

To survive with no work and no pay, many expats have turned to selling homemade and ready-to-eat food, and many are engaged in bartering. They sit on the benches in one corner carrying with them something to sell or barter.

Rolieto was waiting for a buyer, with whom he earlier spoke through Facebook Messenger, in the old souq to sell his mountain bike because he said he no longer had enough money to send to his family back home. He said he had bought it brand new for KD 120 as a means of transport to his workplace located nearby.

Over three months

"I don't have work for more than three months now, and no salary too. But I was able to survive because I have good flat mates sharing food almost every day. I had little savings, and I withdrew my money to pay for rent and to send money back home," he said. "I got KD 50 for the bike, but the buyer said he will get back to me when he gets more money so he can add KD 20 more. I accepted the initial KD 50 so I can send money to my family in the Philippines," Rolieto said. "I had been waiting for cash assistance from the Philippine Embassy, but it seems I was not approved for the program, so I have to do something to help myself and my family," he added.

There are more than a dozen barter-focused pages

for Kuwait on Facebook and many people post items they want to sell or barter there before meeting potential buyers in person. Jay posted images of baking utensils which he wanted to exchange for a portable AC. "Without bartering, we'll all end up in the hospital because the heat is unbearable. When I posted it, within a few hours I got an offer and I immediately requested him to send the portable AC to us," he said.

"It was timely because of the lockdown and curfew. We couldn't wait for the electrician, who was in the locked down area of Hawally at that time. The AC condenser was not working and the parts needed for the repair could only be purchased in Shuwaikh, and the store was closed. Imagine the days and nights spent without the AC - it was unbearable and in fact my wife is still sick because of the AC problem we experienced," Jay added.

Salmiya's old souq hotspot for barter

Serious crisis

A barter page administrator who spoke to Kuwait Times on the condition of anonymity said: "When I created it, I never knew that it would catch the attention of so many people. Now I realize how serious the crisis is and how this small community of bartering people is able to save families during the pandemic. When people posted to barter bags and shoes in exchange of milk and diapers for babies, I cried and I realized the importance of this page to Filipinos in Kuwait. They are ready to exchange their valuables for baby food! They even post to barter watches, bags, clothes, refrigerators and washing machines in exchange of food. That is really something serious and I thank God I made this page."

Items for barter run the gamut from shoes, handbags and clothing to household goods, musical instruments, makeup, toys and electronics, with most asking for food, diapers and other basic commodities in re-

#KBCMoment
#KBCStory
My first barter
Maraming salamat sa group na to, marami pong natulungan, natutulungan at matutulungan pa ❤️
From 1 bag to grocery items na napaka laking tulong sa taong pinagbigyan ko nito.



KUWAIT: Facebook screenshots showing barter deals made by residents in Kuwait during the COVID-19 crisis (used with permission).

turn. "Cleenwood flat iron - used once, in good working condition, with free 3 Sensodyne toothpaste 15 ml," reads a post. "Willing to barter for 3 liters of cooking oil, plus 3 kg of detergent," the post adds. Another post reads: "Sofa (5-seater), clean and excellent condition...for baby formula S-26 stage 3 900 gm (2 pieces), baby diapers."

"Normally you only barter with people you know. Now everything is being bartered in exchange for food. The rise of the bartering community is phenomenal because of the fact that we are in a crisis situation now and many need food to survive," the barter page administrator said.



KUWAIT: Salmiya sea firemen rescued three Kuwaiti men who went swimming in a restricted area off of Abu Al-Hasaniya. The three were hospitalized, and one of them was admitted inside the intensive care unit in a critical condition. —By Hanan Al-Saadoun



Roads authority completes works during curfew



KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Roads and Transportation completed the maintenance of Jahra Road westward towards Abdaly, the author-

ity announced Tuesday. The completed works spanned over 3.9 kilometers in length, with five lanes in each direction covering an area of 77,690



square meters, the authority said, noting that 2,249 tons of asphalt were used. The maintenance works were carried out between June 17 and June 21,

2020 taking advantage of the curfew hours to carry out as much road maintenance works as possible, the authority explained.



International

THURSDAY, JUNE 25 2020



Europol: Virus lockdown fuels radicalisation

Pakistan's Sheedi lawmaker targets 'scourge of racism'

Page 8

Page 8



The medical team of the Brazilian Armed Forces sails on a boat along the Javari River on their way to the Cruzeiroinho village, near Palmeiras do Javari, Amazonas state, northern Brazil to assist indigenous population amid the COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

Fight coronavirus or flee

Amazon indigenous groups face choice

CRUZEIRINHO: Cruzeiroinho, a small indigenous village of wooden shacks deep in the Amazon, is nearly empty these days - all but five of its 32 families have fled into the rainforest to escape the coronavirus pandemic. A week's trip by boat from there, the inhabitants of the Umariacu indigenous reserve are trying a different strategy against the virus. "Attention: indigenous land. Closed for 15 days," says a hand-painted sign next to a roadblock at the entrance to the reserve, a 5,000-hectare territory in northern Brazil near the Peruvian and Colombian borders. As the new coronavirus has ravaged Brazil, the country with the second-highest death toll after the United States - 51,000 and counting - it has hit particularly hard among indigenous peoples, who have a tragic history of vulnerability to outside diseases.

Isolated tribes have been decimated in the past by diseases such as measles and influenza. Now, there is widespread fear of the new coronavirus in the Amazon region, one of the areas hit hardest in Brazil. More than 7,700 indigenous people have contracted the virus in Brazil, and nearly 350 have died, according to the Brazil-

ian Indigenous Peoples' Association (APIB). It accuses the government of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro of having "done nothing" to prevent the relentless spread of coronavirus among Brazil's 900,000 indigenous people. Many indigenous groups are taking matters into their own hands.

Barrier gestures

At the Umariacu reserve, the Ticuna people banned outsiders and put up a makeshift roadblock at the entrance to their territory, which sits on the outskirts of Tabatinga, a border city of 65,000 people. It was a difficult choice, but a necessary one, given the reserve sits near a triple frontier with heavy traffic, said its chief, Sildonei Mendes da Silva.

"This pandemic has been very damaging," he told AFP, wearing a black face mask printed with the words "indigenous health." "We're 15 minutes from Colombia, and people from there come here to buy our fish, fruit and other things" - a business that ground to a halt with the self-imposed quarantine. Unfortunately, the measure

did not stop the virus entirely. Twenty-four people have been infected on the reserve, and two have died. At the entrance to the reserve, home to 7,000 inhabitants, the man coordinating Tabatinga's response to the pandemic, Weydson Gossel Pereira, was monitoring traffic.

"If anyone comes to the roadblock without a mask, we invite them to go back and get one," he said. On the reserve, however, masks are rare, and crowds of people could be seen before a mass at the local church, apparently unconcerned with social distancing. APIB urged younger indigenous community members Monday to stay home when possible, to avoid spreading the virus to older relatives. "The virus is killing chiefs, elders and traditional healers," it said. "The pandemic could cause irreparable damage to our communities' knowledge of our culture, oral history and natural medicine."

Into the forest

Far up the Javari river, a tributary of the Amazon, the remote village of Cruzeiroinho took a different approach. Rather than lock the world out, most villagers have fled

into the jungle. "There are five families here in the village who didn't want to leave for the forest. The rest want to take care of themselves and don't want contact with anyone," said resident Bene Mayuruna. A lone pair of chickens roamed behind him in the otherwise silent village, where people subsist mainly on cassava and fish from the river that forms the border with Peru.

The refugees in the forest are not alone. "We are hearing reports from Peru, Indonesia, Colombia and Brazil of indigenous people fleeing from the coronavirus," Oyvind Eggen, the head of the Rainforest Foundation Norway, said in a statement in April. "The corona crisis is creating additional pressure on what is already a very difficult situation for rainforest inhabitants." The Brazilian army recently deployed a team of health workers to Cruzeiroinho to provide care for the remaining members of the local tribe, the Mayuruna. Working with interpreters, they help community members combine their traditional remedies with modern medicine. The diagnosis in Cruzeiroinho was a hopeful one, for now: no COVID-19 cases were found.—AFP

Virus surges in Latin America as deaths surpass 100,000

MEXICO CITY: Latin America's death toll from the coronavirus pandemic surpassed 100,000 on Tuesday, according to a Reuters tally, with few signs of the outbreak easing in a region marked by crowded cities and high poverty levels. Latin America has seen an alarming spike in cases and deaths even as the tide of infection recedes in Europe and parts of Asia. The number of infections, at 2.2 million, has doubled in less than a month. Brazil - Latin America's largest and most populous nation - this week became only the second country to reach the 50,000 deaths milestone, after the United States. Mexico on Tuesday registered a fresh one-day record for confirmed infections.

The true scale of the coronavirus damage to Latin America is likely to be much deeper, experts say, as countries across the region have failed to implement rigorous testing programs. Many officials concede the death toll is likely far higher. Hugo Lopez-Gatell, Mexico's deputy health minister and the country's coronavirus tsar, on Tuesday signaled that his nation is in for a long battle against coronavirus. "We must learn to live with the SARS-CoV-2 virus and permanently incorporate hygiene and prevention practices into the new reality," said Lopez-Gatell, urging the Mexican society to adapt its response to the threat.

On top of creaking healthcare systems in many countries across the region, Latin America's battle against the virus has been hamstrung by widespread poverty and many workers living a hand-to-mouth existence in the informal sector that has hindered quarantine efforts. The leaders of regional heavyweights Brazil and Mexico have also been chastised for not



RIO DE JANEIRO: A COVID-19 patient is treated at the Oceanico hospital in Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro during the coronavirus pandemic. —AFP

taking the virus seriously enough and for pushing for a reopening of their economies before the virus has been tamed. A Brazilian judge on Tuesday ordered President Jair Bolsonaro to wear a mask in public after the right-wing populist attended political rallies without one in the middle of the world's second-worst coronavirus outbreak.

Brazil registered an additional 1,374 deaths on Tuesday from the virus and 39,436 new cases, pushing the death toll from the novel coronavirus to 52,000 people in Latin America's biggest economy. More than 1.1 million have been infected. Mexico, the worst hit-nation in the region after Brazil in terms of overall figures, on Tuesday registered 6,288 new infections and 793 additional deaths. That brought the totals for the country to 191,410 cases and 23,377 deaths. The virus also appears to be on the rise in Central America, where Guatemala on Tuesday recorded more than 700 new infections for the first time. An additional 35 deaths were registered in Guatemala, taking its deaths total to 582. — Reuters

US facing 'critical' coronavirus surge

WASHINGTON: Coronavirus infections are surging across large parts of the United States, the top US infectious disease expert has warned, as the death toll in Latin America passed 100,000. The developments highlighted how far away the world remains from ending the pandemic, six months into a crisis that has claimed nearly 500,000 lives and devastated the global economy.

Even in Europe, which has been loosening travel restrictions following a brutal few months when it was the epicentre of the pandemic, there have been major setbacks. Germany on Tuesday reimposed lockdowns on more than 600,000 people following a cluster of infections at a slaughterhouse, while world men's tennis number one Novak Djokovic tested positive after hosting an exhibition tournament in the Balkans. In the United States, White House advisor Anthony Fauci warned the next two weeks would be "critical to our ability to address... surgings" in Florida, Texas and other states.

The United States has already recorded more deaths than any other nation, with nearly 800 more fatalities on Tuesday taking its toll past 121,000. However President Donald Trump, whose handling of the crisis has been widely criticized as erratic, is determined to fast-track efforts to restore normality. He continued to stoke controversy on Tuesday, doubling down on weekend comments he wanted to slow testing because so many confirmed infections made the United States look bad. "I don't kid," Trump said, after a White House official described his initial comments as just a joke.

With the parts of the United States unable to contain the pandemic, the European Union was considering blocking US travellers as it reopens its borders to tourism, the New York Times reported. Reflecting the sentiments of many around the world, New York food shop manager Ian Joskowitz said he was determined not

to think about the dangers of the virus as he tried to continue running his business. "If I thought about it too much, I probably may have a problem doing this. So I put it out of my mind," Joskowitz said. "With my employees, I have an agreement with them. They keep coming in. I'll continue to do everything humanly possible to keep them safe."

'Little flu'

Latin America has been one of the world's worst hotspots for weeks, and the number of deaths there and the Caribbean surpassed 100,000 on Tuesday, according to an AFP tally. Brazil, where President Jair Bolsonaro has flouted containment measures and described the virus as a "little flu", is officially the worst-hit country after the United States. More than 1,300 people were confirmed to have died of the virus in Brazil on Tuesday, after a federal judge ordered Bolsonaro to wear a face mask in public. "The president has a constitutional obligation to follow the laws in force in the country, as well as to promote the general welfare of the people," the judge wrote.

German setback

Germany was the first major EU nation to begin easing lockdown measures about seven weeks ago, but two districts in the west of the country were forced to apply the brakes once again. An outbreak at a slaughterhouse that has infected more than 1,500 workers prompted authorities in to impose fresh restrictions on nearly 640,000 people.

Portugal also imposed new restrictions in and around its capital Lisbon on Tuesday. And the future of sporting events suffered a major blow when Djokovic, who had organized a series of exhibition events in the Balkans at which social distancing was minimal, tested positive for the virus. Tennis was hoping to follow team sports like football back into arenas and stadiums, but the positive tests of Djokovic and three others have dampened its prospects. "I am so deeply sorry our tournament has caused harm," the 17-time Grand Slam champion wrote on Twitter, adding, "It was too soon." — AFP

International

Moroccan teenagers' death sparks reform push in Spain

Leaked video shows Tahiri's last moments

MADRID: A leaked video showing the death of a Moroccan teenager at a Spanish juvenile detention Centre has sparked demands for his case to be reopened and the method used to restrain him banned. Iliass Tahiri, 18, died on July 1, 2019 at Tierras de Oria detention Centre in the southern Almeria province as security staff strapped him to a bed, using a procedure denounced by rights groups as dangerous. Police opened an inquiry at the time but the case was closed after a judge ruled it "accidental" death.

However, CCTV footage of Tahiri's last moments in which he shows no signs of violence - a requisite for authorities to resort to such a restraint - was leaked to a Spanish newspaper. "If you see the video, you'll never believe it was accidental as the judge said," his brother Anass Tahiri, 22 said. "The video shows how they killed him. It's murder," said Anass, whose family has lodged an official appeal against the case's dismissal. Published by El Pais, the footage emerged as global protests raged following the death of George Floyd in the US when a policeman knelt on his neck.

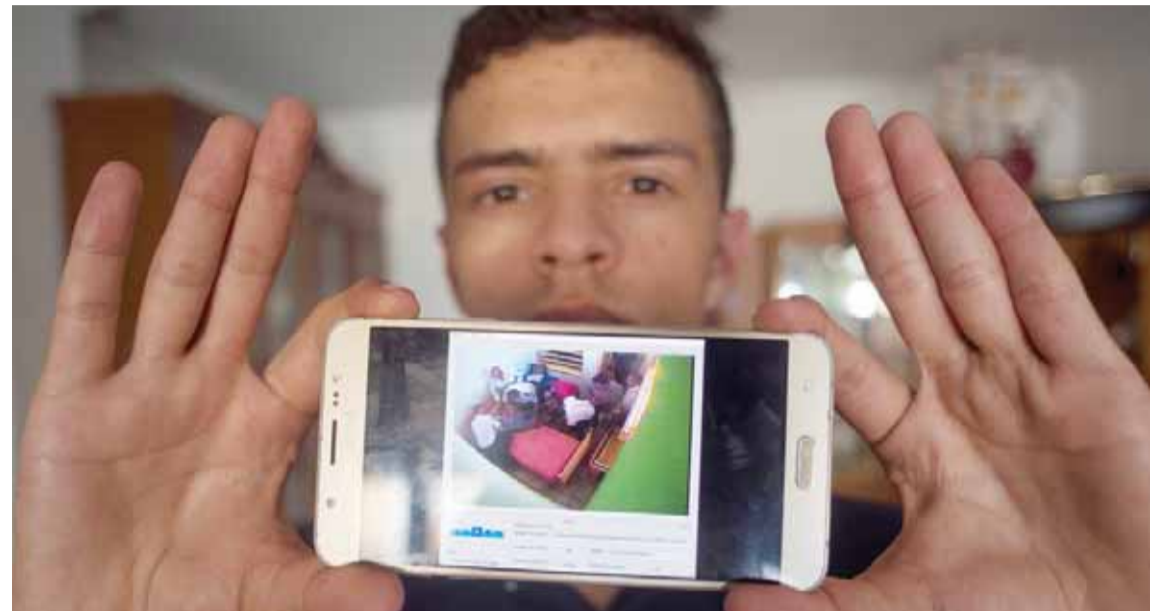
The video's authenticity has been confirmed by a spokeswoman for Ginso, the private company managing Tierras de Oria. Within a week of its publication, the Spanish ombudsman's office called for the abolition of such procedures in juvenile detention centers. On June 18, the Almeria public prosecutor's office asked for the case to be reopened, denouncing as "illegal" the protocol for using such restraints. Tahiri's case centers on mechanical restraint - strapping a person to a bed so they can't hurt themselves or anyone else - but can only be used if they are agitated, aggressive or violent.

'Unnecessary aggression'

In the video, six men roughly wrestle Tahiri on to a bed face down, at one point kneeling on his buttocks to tighten a strap around his waist, eventually realizing he's no longer breathing. Tahiri, who arrived in Spain in 2017, was placed in juvenile detention over "some problems in the street", his brother said. He had been at Tierras de Oria for two months when he died. The day before, the teenager was visited by his mother and told her he'd been subjected to threats and abuse, Anass recalled. "He wanted her to get a lawyer to get him out because he'd reached the point that he'd rather be in prison than in that Centre," he said, adding that his brother had been on suicide watch.

In a statement to AFP, Ginso said "the need for the restraint procedure was demonstrated (during the investigation) as was its correct application by staff who complied scrupulously with the protocol," saying its use was "exceptional" and only undertaken with the "minimum necessary force".

But Andalusia's Human Rights Association (APDHA) says mechanical restraint is "standard practice" in juvenile centres, where it is often used for discipline or punishment. "What the video shows is a grossly disproportionate use of force given Iliass' attitude, involving completely unnecessary aggression and violence when he was restrained," APDHA's Francisco Fernandez Caparros told AFP. "Clearly his death occurred while they were applying the restraints... it was this situation of stress and violence that killed him," he said. Two other youngsters have died after being restrained: one in Madrid in 2011, and another in Spain's Melilla enclave in 2018.



SAN ROQUE: Anass Tahiri, 22, shows a video on his mobilephone capturing the death of his brother Iliass, at his home in San Roque, near Algeciras. — AFP

A swift reaction

Ombudsman Francisco Fernandez Marugan called on the government to change the law. "A swift and radical decision is needed that will end the use of mechanical restraints once and for all," he said. "Nobody else must die in these circumstances in Spain." The Almeria public prosecutor also ordered that all such restraints be "immediately" suspended. The restraint protocol puts

youngsters "at serious unjustified risk", and where that results in injury, those responsible for approving such procedures will be held criminally liable, it said in a legal document. Contacted by AFP, the regional justice ministry declined to comment on the prosecutor's statement. But a spokeswoman said it would "respect and abide by" all judicial decisions. The closing of the Tahiri case "is currently being appealed," she said. — AFP

Second wave worry stirs in Australia

SYDNEY: Australia's second most populous state yesterday said a man in his 80s died overnight from the coronavirus, the country's first death from the virus in more than a month, as concerns about a second wave of infections saw thousands queue for COVID-19 tests and supermarkets impose new restrictions. Victoria state reported 20 overnight cases, Victoria Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton told reporters in Melbourne, taking the state tally to nearly 1,900 after recording 17 on Tuesday and 16 the day before.

"When we get additional cases, there will be a risk of people dying or be at risk of further cases being hospitalized and going to intensive care," Sutton said. "That's why we need to get on top of numbers." The upswing in new cases in Victoria has sparked fears of a second wave, with 241 cases in the state so far identified as community transmission, an increase of eight from Tuesday. Victoria has asked for assistance from the country's military, a spokeswoman for Premier Daniel Andrews said. Those personnel will assist Victoria in enforcing a 14-day quarantine requirement imposed on all Australians and permanent residents returning from overseas.

Authorities in Victoria, which has become the virus hotspot in Australia, have been trying to contain the spread of the virus in half a dozen suburbs in the largest city of Melbourne hit by a spike in cases. Authorities believe the surge in new cases has been



MELBOURNE: A long queue of cars wait at a drive-through COVID-19 testing site located in a shopping centre carpark in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

caused by family get-togethers attended by people with mild symptoms. The state on the weekend extended its state of emergency for another month and reimposed restrictions on gatherings after seeing a sharp rise in daily infections.

The uptick in new infections has seen thousands of people seek COVID-19 tests. With elevated demand, police shut one drive-by clinic 20 minutes after it opened as it quickly became overwhelmed. Testing facilities that have been able to stay open have reported wait times of up to four hours, though authorities said anyone who wants a test will be accommodated. The concern has also seen people rush to supermarkets in Victoria, with Australia's

biggest supermarket chain, Woolworths Group, imposing fresh limits on specific goods in the state.

Shoppers in the state will be limited to two items of products including toilet paper, hand sanitizer, flour, sugar, pasta, long-life milk, eggs and rice. "While we have healthy stock levels to draw on, we're taking this precautionary step to help prevent excessive buying and support appropriate social distancing in our Victorian stores," said Claire Peters, managing director of Woolworths' supermarkets division. In March, Australia's major grocers put strict limits on purchases of toilet paper as shoppers stripped shelves in a rush of panic buying spurred by fears over a coronavirus lockdown. — Reuters

India and Pakistan to expel embassy staff in spy row

NEW DELHI: India said on Tuesday it would expel half the staff in Pakistan's embassy in New Delhi over alleged spying by officials there, prompting Islamabad to say it would respond in kind. Relations between the nuclear-armed rivals are strained and tit-for-tat expulsions of diplomats, often on charges of espionage, are common. Neither country has a permanent ambassador in place and in the last month each country has accused the other of illegally detaining and torturing its diplomats. "They (Pakistan) have been engaged in acts of espionage and maintained dealings with terrorist organizations," the Indian foreign ministry said in a statement.

In response, Pakistan's foreign ministry said its staff had acted lawfully, and that it would expel half of India's embassy in Islamabad "as a reciprocal measure". India earlier said it intended to voluntarily cut staff at its embassy in Islamabad by the same amount. Both countries said the affected officials had been asked to leave within a week. The latest round of hostility began when India expelled two Pakistani diplomats on May 31, after they were held for alleged spying, claims Islamabad said were "baseless". Last month Indian police released a pigeon belonging to a Pakistani fisherman after an investigation found that the bird, which had flown across the contentious border between the two countries, was not engaged in spying. — Reuters



Indian High Commission officials Dwimu Brahms (right) and Selvadhas Paul sit in a car after their release from the Pakistan authorities for the accusation of been involved in a hit-and-run incident, as they return to India at the India Pakistan Wagah Border Post about 35 km from Amritsar. — AFP

Ghana apologizes to Nigeria over the embassy demolition

ABUJA: The Ghanaian leader has apologized to Nigeria over the demolition of its embassy building in Accra, the Nigerian presidency said. "President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana Tuesday spoke with President Muhammadu Buhari, expressing his sincere apology for demolition of a building on the premises of Nigerian High Commission in Accra, Ghana," said a statement from the presidency late Tuesday. Akufo-Addo has also ordered investigation into the incident, it said, adding that some suspects had been arrested and would be charged. Armed men reportedly entered the Nigerian High Commission compound

in Accra on Friday to supervise bulldozers to demolish a building under construction.

Nigeria summons envoy

Meanwhile, Nigeria summoned a senior Ghanaian diplomat to complain over "attacks" on its embassy compound in Accra that saw a building demolished, the foreign minister said. Nigeria "summoned the Charge d'Affaires of the High Commission of Ghana to Nigeria, Ms Iva Denoo to demand urgent explanation on the recent attacks on a residential building in our diplomatic premises and reinforcement of security around diplomatic premises and staff," Geoffrey Onyeama wrote on Twitter. Armed men reportedly entered the Nigerian High Commission compound in Ghana's capital Accra on Friday to supervise bulldozers to demolish a building under construction. Onyeama on Sunday demanded those responsible must be punished, adding that Nigeria was in talks with the Ghanaian authorities over the matter. — Agencies

Jordan Valley: Strategic plain with resources

JERUSALEM: An agricultural plain with precious water resources, the Jordan Valley makes up nearly a third of the occupied West Bank and is in Israel's sights to annex. Israel considers control of the plain, which sits between two desert mountain ranges, essential for its security. If Israel presses ahead with annexation, the valley will mark the country's western border with Jordan. The kingdom is just one of two Arab nations, along with Egypt, to have a peace deal with Israel.

But the Israeli military sees the sparsely populated valley as a potential buffer zone in case of ground attacks. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in January described it as "vital" to Israel, vowing his government would "apply sovereignty" to the area. For the Palestinians, such a step would destroy "all chances of peace". Ne-

tanyahu has said annexation would exclude Palestinian population hubs such as the city of Jericho, which risks becoming an enclave surrounded by Israeli territory under the plan.

Controlled by Israel

Around 10,000 Israeli settlers live in the Jordan Valley, out of more than 450,000 in the entire West Bank, according to figures from NGOs and the Israeli government. The valley is home to some 65,000 Palestinians, including around 20,000 Jericho residents, according to Israeli anti-occupation organization B'Tselem. Israeli settlements are viewed as illegal under international law, but Washington broke with this consensus in November and said it should be up to Israeli courts to decide on their legality. The majority of the Jordan Valley is already administered by Israel, as it forms part of the West Bank's "Area C" as outlined in the Oslo peace accords of the 1990s. Area C covers around 60 percent of the West Bank, while Area B, which accounts for roughly 22 percent, is under Palestinian civil rule but Israeli security control. — AFP

Quake in south Mexico kills 6

OAXACA: A 7.4 magnitude earthquake struck southern Mexico on Tuesday, killing six people, sending hundreds fleeing from their homes and forcing the closure of a major state-owned oil refinery. Hundreds of aftershocks were reported in the hours following the initial tremor, which was felt in Mexico City, some 700 kilometers (430 miles) distant from the epicenter in Crucecita, in Oaxaca state.

"We had to leave because there is a risk that the market will collapse. We are hardly selling anything because of the pandemic and now if the market is closed we will have a worse time," said Juana Martinez, 60, a flower-seller in Oaxaca city. All the deaths occurred in Oaxaca, with the majority due to the collapse of buildings. A woman died near Crucecita, and five other people died in towns located within 150 kilometers of the epicenter, officials said.

The 7.4 quake struck at a depth of 23 kilometers, the US Geological Survey reported. An initial tsunami warning was later reversed. There was no damage reported to "strategic infrastructure" including ports, airports, refineries and hydroelectric plants, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said in a video published on social media. Mexican Oil said its refinery in Salina Cruz in Oaxaca had been shut down as a precaution after a fire broke out at the plant "that was immediately stifled." One of the dead from the earthquake was a worker at the refinery, who was killed after falling off a high structure.

Other refineries in the state are operating as normal, Mexican Oil said. Rescuers were battling to reach a remote area of the rugged state amid reports that 15 workers had become trapped while constructing a highway. The quake also caused slight damage to four hospitals and a clinic, as well as to churches, markets and other buildings, authorities said. Six hours after the quake, 447 aftershocks had been recorded across the region, the strongest at a magnitude of 4.6. The US Pacific Tsunami warning center initially said hazardous waves as high as three meters could strike anywhere within 1,000 kilometers of the quake's epicenter, affecting the Pacific coast of Mexico and Central and South America.

Quake adding to virus woes

Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum also activated response protocols, adding that two people had been injured. Apart from some building facades falling, she said there had been "no major incidents" reported. The earthquake was felt in several parts of the capital of 8.8 million people which in 2017 was hit by a 7.1 magnitude quake that left 360 people dead throughout the country. That same year, 96 people died after an 8.1 magnitude quake struck the south of the country, with Oaxaca the worst affected state. The quake has hit at a time when Mexico is already reeling from the coronavirus pandemic. It has suffered more than 23,000 COVID-19 deaths - the second most in Latin America - and 191,410 cases. On Tuesday the country recorded its highest number of cases in a 24-hour period, with 6,288 new infections, according to the Ministry of Health.

Medical staff were evacuated from some hospitals in the capital alongside patients, although those suffering from the coronavirus remained isolated inside the buildings, alongside their caretakers. "All those that are in an area with COVID patients remain inside, only those of us who weren't there at the time" have come out, said Jaime Gomez, a nurse at a hospital caring for coronavirus patients. — AFP

International

Hunger or COVID-19? In fast-growing Kabul, poor Afghans dice with death

Afghanistan records 30,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and 600 deaths

KABUL: Shir Jan came to Kabul 10 years ago, excited by the Afghan capital's modern buildings, many lights and the promise of a better life - but none of his dreams have materialized and the new coronavirus pandemic has reduced him to a beggar. Like many others, Shir and his children now beg for money and food and scavenge for plastic to fuel their small cooking stove as the outbreak has led to widespread layoffs, including on construction sites where he earned 150 Afghani (\$1.95) a day. "We escaped the war in our province, but we have neither found safety nor money," said Shir, 40, who lives with his two wives and eight children in an informal settlement in Kabul's Karte Naw neighborhood. "We can't even afford transportation to the main hospital that is treating the coronavirus. I pray this disease won't kill us, but I am afraid poverty might," said Shir, from eastern Laghman Province.

“We have neither found safety nor money”

one of Shir's wives, standing in front of a piece of cloth acting as a door to her small mud home.

"Our basic needs, like a toilet, water and electricity are not provided, and we even scramble for food," she said, as electricity pylons towered above her crumbling walls, serving brightly-lit apartments in the distance. While the wealthy can stay home to decrease infection risks, Shir's family share a public water pump and bathroom facilities with their neighbors, next to a busy road where bombs occasionally target passing officials in armored vehicles. "Some people, who have the means to do so, take lockdown restrictions more seriously," Qadir Qadir, director of policy and planning in the ministry of public health said. "But half of the city is poor and many live below the poverty line. They depend on a daily income."

Plans on hold

Afghanistan has about 30,000 confirmed coronavirus cases and 600 deaths, according to a tally by the Johns Hopkins University, although the number of infections among its 37 million people is likely to be higher, given limited testing. Beset by decades of conflict, a weak healthcare system and high rates of malnutrition, Afghanistan has urged people to respect social distancing to avoid the virus but few in the teeming markets of Kabul have been seen following instructions. "Every time we go out, we risk getting infected but we're left with no choice," said Gul, 35,

Urban poverty has long been an issue in rapidly-growing Kabul, where 28% of people - some 2.2 million - fall below the poverty line of 70 Afghani (\$0.91) a day, UN-Habitat data shows. An influx of displaced people, refugees returning home, rural migrants and natural population growth have made the provision of decent housing a major challenge.

Afghanistan has one of the world's fastest urban growth rates. By 2060, 15 million Afghans will live in cities - up from the current 8 million, according to UN-Habitat. Amid a push for peace talks to end 18



KABUL: A street vendor selling facemasks wait for customers in Kabul. — AFP

years of conflict since the U.S.-led ousting of the Taliban, Kabul residents and authorities have been repairing historic homes, clearing roads and upgrading informal settlements. "The majority of the city - over 70% - is unplanned, with some areas barely accessible by car," said Kabul's mayor Daoud Sultanzy, who aimed to hire hundreds of people this year to upgrade sidewalks and provide electricity to parts of the city.

But the scheme has been upended by the coron-

avirus. "Construction plans are on hold; maintenance and repair is delayed. Instead of hiring, the municipality is now donating over 3 million pieces of bread every day to help families get through," said Sultanzy. Sultanzy predicts that the pandemic - and the economic crisis brought by lockdown restrictions since March - will push thousands more of the city's residents into hardship. "Oftentimes, families depend on a daily-earned income through casual labor, of which less is available now," he said. — Reuters

Europol: Virus lockdown fuels radicalisation

THE HAGUE: Coronavirus lockdowns could radicalize more terror suspects, the EU's police agency warned Tuesday, saying both right and leftwing violence were on the rise. Europol director Catherine De Bolle said as she unveiled the organization's latest terrorism trends report that the pandemic's worldwide economic and social impacts could escalate existing discontents. "These developments have the potential to further fuel the radicalization of some individuals, regardless of their ideological persuasion," De Bolle said in the report.

"Activists both on the extreme left and right and those involved in jihadist terrorism attempt to seize the opportunity the pandemic has created to further propagate their aims." The report said Islamist terror attacks in Europe had decreased, mainly due to better law enforcement, with only seven "completed or failed" jihadist attacks in 2019. However Europol

warned of an increase in attacks by right-wing extremists, partly inspired by attacks such as the 2019 attack in Christchurch, New Zealand.

"While many right-wing extremist groups across the EU have not resorted to violence, they contribute to a climate of fear and animosity against minority groups," De Bolle said. "Such a climate, built on xenophobia, hatred for Jews and Muslims and anti-immigration sentiments, may lower the threshold for some radicalized individuals to use violence against people". Last year three EU member states reported a total of six right-wing attacks of which one was completed, as opposed to only one the year before.

One of the worst attacks was the shooting at a synagogue in the German city of Halle last October in which two people were killed. There were 26 leftwing and anarchist attacks in Europe, mainly in Italy, Greece and Spain - a similar number to two years ago after a drop in 2018. But the number of arrests on suspicion of leftwing or anarchist terrorist offences more than tripled, compared to previous years, Europol added, with the majority linked to violent demonstrations and confrontations with Italian police. — AFP

the Sheedis in Pakistan limit the community's educational and employment prospects, keeping many in poverty, Qambrani said.

"We are considered 'jahil' (ignorant) and 'jungli' (wild) and assumed to be involved in criminal activity. This stereotype has kept our community from progressing," she said, and called for educational funds to be allocated for young Sheedis. "Education is our way out of poverty," she said, noting the prejudice that many young Sheedis face at school. "Most young people from our community are bullied and ridiculed in school, not just by their peers, but teachers as well, who tell them they are good for nothing," said Qambrani, daughter of a lawyer and a headteacher. The mother-of-three said Sheedi women often face a double discrimination due to South Asian beauty ideals that make it harder for them to find a spouse.

"The (Sheedi) men want to marry outside to dilute the skin tone of their offspring, leaving Sheedi women with no option as the wider Pakistani community is also looking for fairer skins for their spouses," she said. Qambrani's appointment to the Sindh parliament in 2018, by Bilawal Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and son of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, was hailed as a huge victory by Pakistan's marginalized communities. Now a well-known voice for her community, Qambrani said for many years her comfortable middle-class upbringing had shielded her from deep-seated prejudice against Sheedi people. "I lived in a bubble and never realized what all my community suffered," she said. — Reuters

Holiday homes and battlefields: Legacies of the Korean War

GOSEONG: From North Korean party headquarters to holiday homes to cemeteries, 70 years after the Korean War began its legacies line the Demilitarized Zone that marks where the fighting came to a standstill. A few kilometers from the DMZ's eastern end, a small stone villa stands on a cliff overlooking the white sands of Hwajinpo Beach in Goseong, South Korea.

It lay in the North's territory before the outbreak of war, when it was the summer home of its founder Kim Il Sung, grandfather of current leader Kim Jong Un. Next to the stony steps leading up to the villa - now a museum - is a reprint of a faded 1948 black-and-white photo showing five children, among them Kim Jong Un's father and predecessor Kim Jong Il. Goseong county, along with a swathe of what is now South Korea's Gangwon province, is north of the 38th parallel line of latitude where the US and Soviet Union divided the peninsula after Japan's surrender ended the Second World War and its colonial rule over Korea.

Surrounded by mountain ridges, the peaceful farming village of Haeon was the site of some of the most fierce and bloody battles of the war, nicknamed the "Punchbowl" by a US war correspondent who said the area resembled a cocktail glass. "The South Korean and UN forces had to cross our village in order to advance northwards," explained tour guide and villager Lee Byeong-deuk. Pointing to a faint North Korean mountain top in the distance, Lee, who was born and grew up in Haeon, said his

One conflict, two museums: Korean War still divides the peninsula

SEOUL: In the capitals of the two Koreas, flagship museums offer radically different accounts of the same conflict - the war launched to unify the peninsula but that now defines its division. In Pyongyang, a giant statue of a North Korean soldier holding aloft a flag stands in front of the museum to the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War, as the conflict is known in the country. An enormous stone tablet stands nearby, engraved with the handwriting of the North's founder Kim Il Sung, grandfather of current leader Kim Jong Un, proclaiming that his forces' "heroic achievements shall shine for ten thousand generations".

In Seoul, metal plaques lining the wall of the War Memorial of Korea list more than 190,000 South Koreans and members of the US-led United Nations coalition "who died defending the Republic of Korea". Both museums feature monumental statues of combatants and civilians engaged in the struggle. The war began 70 years ago on Thursday, when North Korean forces poured across the 38th parallel, where Moscow and Washington had divided the peninsula - then



GOSEONG: Visitors (standing at the Goseong observatory before the Demilitarized Zone) look towards North Korea (background) from Goseong. — AFP

hometown was also used for propaganda: a 1970s government housing project combined every two homes into one to make them look larger - all of them facing north.

Cheorwon county, 60 kilometers north of the 38th parallel, also changed hands after the 1950-53 conflict ended with an armistice. On a nearly empty road leading to a military checkpoint stands the concrete shell of a three-storey building - once the regional headquarters for the North's ruling Workers' Party. "Where we are standing now used to be North Korea," said tour guide Gim Yong-sun. Before the war, she said, the building was a site for questioning and torturing those accused of anti-communist activities. Now the tank treads left at the entrance by advancing South Korean and UN forces in October 1950 serve as a reminder of the brutality of a conflict that killed millions.

Barbed wire fence

Hundreds of North Korean troops who never made it home lie in a field outside Paju, the only cemetery in the South for enemy combatants. Many of the graves hold multiple remains, their simple granite markers saying only the number of they contain, and just a handful are named. At Panmunjom, the truce village in the DMZ with its emblematic blue huts, their successors on both sides come face-to-face. In recent years it has seen a series of summits bringing together the North's Kim, the South's President Moon Jae-in, and US President Donald Trump. But the armistice has never been replaced by a peace treaty, leaving the peninsula technically still at war, and inter-Korean relations are now in the deep freeze with nuclear negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington at a deadlock. — AFP



YANGGU: Tank traps on a road leading to the 'Punchbowl', near the Demilitarized Zone separating north and south Korea, in the Haeon area of Yanggu. — AFP

a Japanese colony - in the closing days of the Second World War. The North insists to this day that it was attacked first by the United States and its South Korean "puppets".

After two days of "preliminary bombardment", said guide Choe Un Jong at the Pyongyang museum, "the enemies intruded one or two kilometres into our country". "Our Korean People's Army frustrated the enemy's surprise attack and immediately they turned over to the counter-offensive." But historians have found extensive documents in Soviet archives on Kim's requests for permission to invade from his main backer Joseph Stalin, and the planning for the operation. And at the Seoul museum, curator Go Hanbin was dismissive. "No one else in the world but the North is making such a claim," he said. "The war stemmed from their drive to unify the whole Korean peninsula under the communist regime."

'Sworn enemies'

North Korean forces took Seoul in just three days as the South's ill-equipped army crumbled, and pressed on almost to victory before the defenders turned the tide with the Incheon Landing, recapturing Seoul and advancing rapidly northwards. Pyongyang fell in October and the South and UN coalition advanced almost to the Chinese frontier - the North calls it a "temporary strategic retreat" on its part. Alarmed, China's Communist leader Mao Zedong sent millions of his forces - dubbed "People's Volunteers" rather than soldiers - to intervene, who mounted "human wave" attacks in a conflict marked by brutal combat in bitter conditions. Seoul fell again, before being recaptured once more as the conflict settled into a war of attrition, accompanied by saturation US bombing of the North. — AFP

Pakistan's MP targets scourge of racism

KARACHI: Pakistan's first lawmaker from the Sheedi minority is on a mission to fight centuries-old discrimination against her community of African descent, saying it has been held back by entrenched racism. "Being penalized for something that is beyond our control - our black skin - is a reality all Black people face every day in big and small measures in every country," said Tanzeela Ume Habiba Qambrani, a member of the Sindh provincial legislature.

"The majority brown skin community considers itself the white community of America and superior to us," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone from the southern Badin district, where many Sheedis live. Many of Pakistan's Sheedi people - whose numbers are unclear due to widely differing estimates - are descendants of East Africans who were brought to South Asia as slaves or soldiers by Arab traders.

Qambrani, 41, who traces her own roots back to Tanzania, lodged a protest resolution in the provincial assembly against a "wave of racism", condemning last month's killing of Black American George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody. "This House strives to nip the scourge of racism in the bud through this resolution and aims at seeing our society free of such inhuman tendencies," her letter read. Persistent negative stereotypes about

Business

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2020

10 Trump threat to 'decouple' US and China hits trade, investment reality**10** Argentina faces double whammy of virus, recession**11** US economy improving, but rising COVID cases a threat

MOUNTAIN VIEW: The logo of internet search engine company Google headquarters is seen in Mountain View in Silicon Valley, south of San Francisco. US President Donald Trump will prolong a ban on US employment permits to year-end and broaden it to include H1-B visas used widely in the tech industry, the White House said. —AFP

Trump visa freeze hits tech sector

Move could undermine American innovation and leadership

WASHINGTON: The US tech sector is likely to be hit hard by President Donald Trump's decision to extend a freeze on most immigrant visas, with critics saying the move could undermine American innovation and leadership.

Trump this week said he would extend the ban through the end of the year and broaden it to include H-1B visas for highly skilled workers, as well as L visas used by companies to transfer their own employees.

The move could deal a blow to Silicon Valley and the rest of the tech sector, which has long relied on skilled immigrants to fill key positions of engineers, data scientists and other jobs in high demand.

While Trump has argued the temporary freeze was aimed at helping US workers facing high unemployment during the coronavirus pandemic, critics said the move would backfire and hurt one of the key segments of the American economy.

The freeze "stands to upend the ability of US employers—in the tech sector and beyond—to hire the men and women they need to strengthen their workforce, repower the economy, and drive innovation," said Jason Oxman, president of the Information Technology Industry Council, a trade group that includes more than 70 companies including Apple, Amazon, Google, Facebook and Microsoft.

"At a critical time for the US economy, it will have a dangerous impact on the economic recovery and growth for years to come."

More about politics

Darrell West, who heads the center for technology innovation at the Brookings Institution, said the announcement was "more about politics than good policy," coming

at a time when the White House is feuding with Silicon Valley over social media and other issues.

"Trump's executive order is short-sighted in that it will make it difficult for tech companies, farmers, and the hospitality sector to find the workers they need," West said. FWD.us, an immigration advocacy group founded by tech executives including Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, also said the order would be counterproductive by limiting immigrants who will contribute to science and technology.

"This is a full-frontal attack on American innovation and



Tech leaders slam visa ban extension

our nation's ability to benefit from attracting talent from around the world," the group's president Todd Schulte said.

A senior administration official said the order would affect 525,000 jobs in the US, which is currently reeling from a high unemployment rate caused by the pandemic.

It will affect H-1B visas provided to 85,000 workers each year with special skills, many of them joining the US technology industry, as well as J visas, common for aca-

demics and researchers, and L visas used by companies to shift workers.

US government launched a worldwide campaign against the firm about 18 months ago. Huawei is the world's largest supplier of telecom network equipment and planet's number two smartphone maker. The Trump administration accuses Huawei of stealing American trade secrets and says its telecommunications equipment could be used by Beijing for espionage. Washington has essentially banned Huawei from the US market, urged other countries to shun its network gear, and is seeking to cut it off from global semiconductor suppliers.

The international rancor was on 80-year-old retiree Chen Yannian's mind as he shopped for a new hand phone.

"To be honest, with the United States suppressing Huawei, we must support Huawei," Chen said. He also cited the ongoing detention in Canada of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou—daughter of company founder Ren Zhengfei. She is fighting a US extradition request related to charges that Huawei violated Iran sanctions. —AFP

demics and researchers, and L visas used by companies to shift workers.

Trump aides said they want to restructure the H-1B visa program from an annual lottery to a system that gives priority to those foreign workers with the most value. But a recent Georgetown University study found that the US is struggling to compete for global workers with key skills including artificial intelligence and that without easing immigration "other countries may begin to draw AI talent away from American schools and employers."

Personal stories

Some tech executives added their own personal stories in countering the administration's arguments. India-born Google CEO Sundar Pichai said "Immigration has contributed immensely to America's economic success, making it a global leader in tech."

Susan Wojcicki, head of Google-owned YouTube and the daughter of Polish immigrants, echoed those remarks. "My family escaped danger and found a new home in America," Wojcicki said on Twitter. "We join Google in standing with immigrants and working to expand opportunity for all."

South African-born Elon Musk, who founded Tesla and SpaceX, said he disagreed with the freeze: "In my experience, these skill sets (of tech workers) are net job creators. Visa reform makes sense, but this is too broad."

Andrew Ng, a British-born Chinese-American computer scientist who heads the online education firm Coursera, said the suspension "is bad for the US, bad for innovation, and will shatter dreams and disrupt lives." He added: "as a former H1B visa holder, my heart goes out to all the families affected." —AFP

Google to invest \$2bn in Poland

WARSAW: Google plans to invest up to two billion dollars in a data hub in Poland, a leading Polish business daily reported yesterday echoing a move by Microsoft announced earlier this year.

"The Google Cloud region in Warsaw is the largest investment in this type of infrastructure in Poland," Magdalena Dziejguc, Google Cloud's business development director for Poland and the region told "Puls Biznesu". Although she did not provide a specific sum for the investment, Puls Biznesu said it would be between \$1.5 and \$2.0 billion (1.3 billion and 1.8 billion euros). Dziejguc said the project was to be operational by early next year.

"This is part of the expansion of computing and telecommunications infrastructure in Europe, which has cost more than 15 billion euros since 2007," Puls Biznesu said.

Microsoft announced in May that it would invest one billion dollars in Poland to expand its operations, including the creation of a new regional cloud-computing data hub.

Both investments come at a crucial time for the Polish economy as the coronavirus crisis means that the EU country of 38 million is facing its first recession since the collapse of communism three decades ago. Google and Microsoft are among the global leaders in providing cloud services—an industry worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

As well as charging for the service, cloud operators are able to harvest huge amounts of data and open up many other revenue streams. —AFP

Huawei opens its Shanghai flagship store

SHANGHAI: Chinese telecom giant Huawei opened its second global flagship store in Shanghai yesterday part of plans to strengthen its brand in its core Chinese consumer market as it faces headwinds overseas. Hundreds of face mask-wearing customers queued up to enter the 5,000-square-metre (54,000-square-foot) store—Huawei's largest—located on the city's busiest shopping street and directly across from a retail outlet of rival Apple.

Company representatives said Huawei intends to open several more such stores in China in the coming year to showcase its smartphones and other consumer tech, plans that they said were conceived before the



SHANGHAI: Customers look at Huawei laptops at a newly opened Huawei global flagship store in Shanghai yesterday. Chinese telecoms giant Huawei opened the doors on its second global flagship store in Shanghai's commercial heart yesterday part of plans to strengthen the brand in its core domestic market at a time when it faces headwinds overseas. —AFP

Business

Trump threat to 'decouple' US and China hits trade, investment reality

Chinese imports of US goods rising, US investment in China continues

WASHINGTON: Conflicting talk from Trump administration officials about "decoupling" the US economy from China is running into challenging reality: Chinese imports of US goods are rising, investment by American companies into China continues, and markets are wary of separating the world's biggest economies.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro gave Asian markets a scare on Monday night by telling Fox News Channel that the US-China trade deal was "over." US stock futures dropped, the dollar rose, and volatility indices climbed.

Navarro quickly backtracked on Monday night, saying he was referring to a lack of trust between the United States and China over the coronavirus outbreak. President Donald Trump also quickly tweeted that the deal was intact.

On Tuesday, National Economic Council

Director Larry Kudlow praised Beijing, telling Fox Business Network "they've actually picked up their game" when it comes to the trade deal.

The damage-control efforts by the Trump administration come after Trump said last week that "a complete decoupling from China" was an option, overruling US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, who had told lawmakers that decoupling was not realistic. The Trump re-election campaign has made being "tough on China" a key part of his platform.

The White House has blamed Beijing for the spread of the coronavirus that has killed more than 120,000 Americans, more than any other country.

But part of that message - that the United States is able and willing to walk away from its largest sup-

plier - is challenged by on-the-ground realities.

US-China trade is actually increasing, after the coronavirus caused major drops shortly after the trade deal was signed in January. US exports to China rose to \$8.6 billion in April, up from a 10-year monthly trough of \$6.8 billion in February, according to US Census Bureau data. Imports from China shot up to \$31.1 billion from \$19.8 billion in March, which marked the lowest monthly total in 11 years.

US Department of Agriculture data showed that soybean exports to China rose to 423,891 metric tons in April, more than doubling the 208,505 tons imported in March. US officials, including Lighthizer and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, have recently affirmed China's commitment to meet the terms of the Phase 1 trade deal, which calls for China to boost purchases of US farm and manufactured goods, energy and services

by \$200 billion over two years.

Lighthizer said last week that about \$10 billion in Chinese purchase commitments had been made under the deal, including \$1 billion worth of cotton. A person familiar with both US and Chinese thinking on the trade deal said that Navarro's comments appeared to be a "slip of the tongue," reflecting his personal hawkish views on China and not administration policy. The person also said that Chinese officials have indicated that June imports from the United States were expected to show a dramatic increase after falls in recent months due to the outbreak.

Strong investment

US companies had announced \$2.3 billion in new direct investment projects in the first quarter



LIANYUNANG: This aerial photo shows cars to be exported parked in a holding area at a port in Lianyungang in China's eastern Jiangsu province. —AFP

of 2020, only slightly down from last year's quarterly average despite the coronavirus, the Rhodium Group said in a recent study indicating that US companies are not significantly reducing their China footprint.

Bill Reinsch, a senior adviser and trade expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said it took over 20 years for the US and Chinese economies to grow together, and decoupling cannot be accomplished easily.

Some companies are leaving, not because of Trump, but because of rising Chinese wage rates and Chinese policies that have disadvantaged foreign-owned businesses, he said.

"If you're in China to serve the Chinese market, you're going to stay because you can't serve it as well from the outside," Reinsch said. "The president can't simply order everybody to come home. Businesses will make rational, economic decisions." —Reuters



Markets are wary of decoupling

Argentina faces double whammy of virus, recession

Argentina faces double whammy of virus, recession

BUENOS AIRES: After stuttering through two years of recession and three months of grim coronavirus lockdown, many businesses in the Argentine capital Buenos Aires have had enough and are closing their doors.

"I made the decision to auction off the contents and with the capital that comes from the sale, pay the staff and get rid of the business," Ricardo Klausner told AFP at the door of his restaurant Latakla.

"The quarantine gave me time to mourn and today I actually feel very relieved." Workers were taking out crates of glasses and crockery, chairs and an industrial kneading machine from the restaurant Klausner operated for 26 years in downtown Buenos Aires, employing seven people.

"We had one of the worst Christmases in history in terms of consumption. The summer was also very bad and then we started with the pandemic. Once the coronavirus ends, the crisis will continue.

"People cook at home, save, take care of their money, because they don't know what the future holds for them," Klausner said. According to a survey by the Federation of Commerce and Industry of Buenos Aires, at least 18 percent of the 110,000

businesses in the capital have shut down since the coronavirus began.

Hotels, gyms, car wash services and hairdressers have yet to be given permission to open up, and restaurants have only been authorized for deliveries, which has reduced their profits by 25 percent, according to FECOBA. "By the time it is decided to resume activity, 25 - 35 percent of businesses will have disappeared, leaving a string of unemployed, having been made defunct by the state because it was impossible to pay taxes," said Fabian Castillo, FECOBA's president.

Desolate nights

The streets around the Plaza Cortazar in the Palermo Viejo neighborhood in the heart of Buenos Aires, look desolate these nights. The trendy bars and restaurants that used to overflow with customers now have their blinds down and there is little traffic.

For Santiago Olivera, who owned the Bad Toro Bar for nine years, it was impossible to go on. "The costs of this place were very high and we are coming from two years of fairly bad consumption. Three months without making any money was the last straw."

Olivera pointed out that because it was closed, he was only charged half the rent. "But we are still getting tax and service bills as if we were open. On top of that, a government decree prohibited us from reducing or suspending employees, which is why we find ourselves closed for three months and with a full complement of staff."



BUENOS AIRES: Argentine Economy Minister Martin Guzman taking part in a video conference organized by the Council of the Americas (COA) and the Americas Society (AS), from his office in Buenos Aires, on Tuesday in which he referred to the restructuring of the Argentine debt, its creditors and the COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic. —AFP

Five other businesses in his street have decided against reopening, he said. Argentina's economy has been limping through recession since 2018, exacerbated this year by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Authorities estimate GDP will fall 6.5 percent.

The government is currently locked in complex negotiations on restructuring \$66 billion of its debt, which soared to \$324 billion overall last year—the equivalent of around 90 percent of its GDP.

Around 35 percent of its 44 million people live below the poverty line. —AFP

Apple, Google, Amazon slam Trump visa ban

SAN FRANCISCO: US President Donald Trump has suspended the entry of some foreign workers in a bid to boost domestic hiring, sparking opposition from corporate America and tech sector executives including Google's Sundar Pichai and Tesla's Elon Musk.

The visa suspension, effective June 24, will last until the end of the year and is expected to open up 525,000 jobs for US workers. Alphabet Inc's Google:

Pichai, Alphabet's chief executive officer, said in a tweet, "Immigration has contributed immensely to America's economic success, making it a global leader in tech, and also Google the company it is today. Disappointed by today's proclamation - we'll continue to stand with immigrants and work to expand opportunity for all."

Susan Wojcicki, the chief of Alphabet's YouTube, tweeted: "Immigration is central to America's story, and it's central to my own family's story. My family escaped danger and found a new home in America ... at Youtube, we join Google in standing with immigrants and working to expand opportunity for all."

Google had 2,678 H1B visa approvals in 2019, according to US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Amazon.com Inc

"Amazon opposes the Administration's short-sighted decision to pause high-skill visa programs. Welcoming the best & the brightest global talent is critical to America's economic recovery. We will continue to support these programs & efforts to protect the rights of immigrants," the company said. The company had the most number of H1B visa approvals at 3,026 in 2019.

Apple Inc

"Like Apple, this nation of immigrants has always found strength in our diversity, and hope in the enduring promise of the American Dream. There is no new prosperity without both. Deeply disappointed by this proclamation," Chief Executive Tim Cook said in a tweet. Apple had 1,136 H1B visa approvals in 2019.

Box Inc

"This is unbelievably bad policy on every level. It will only mean more jobs move outside the US, and in no way makes America better or more competitive," CEO Aaron Levie tweeted. Box had 21 H1B visa approvals in 2019.

Facebook Inc

"President Trump's latest proclamation uses the COVID-19 pandemic as justification for limiting immigration. In reality, the move to keep highly-skilled talent out of the US will make our country's recovery even more difficult. America is a nation of immigrants and our economy and country benefit when we encourage talented people from around the world to live, work, and contribute here. That's more true now than ever," the company said. Facebook had 1,518 H1B visa approvals in 2019. —Reuters

Indonesia's Gojek to cut jobs as virus takes toll

JAKARTA: Indonesian app giant Gojek said it will cut hundreds of jobs and ditch at-home massage and cleaning services as the global pandemic slashes demand for face-to-face businesses, after Singapore-based rival Grab also announced layoffs.

Starting as a ride-hailing service in 2010, Gojek launched an app five years later with a wide range of offerings, including deliveries, takeaway food and financial services, that could be ordered via smartphone. The company attracted investments from tech giants including Google, Facebook and Tencent.

But on Tuesday it said it would cut 430 posts—or about nine percent of its

full-time staff—as it cancels massage, house cleaning and GoFood Festivals, which supplies vending space for food sellers. "These businesses are dependent on close human interaction, and have seen a significant downturn over the past few months as the COVID-19 pandemic has affected consumer habits," the firm said in a statement.

"These will be the only COVID-19-related layoffs," it added.

However, Gojek said its logistics and grocery delivery businesses had surged since the pandemic hit. The firm—which claims some 170 million users in Indonesia and has expanded to other Southeast Asian markets—employs freelancers for many of its services, including ride-hailing drivers. It did not respond to requests for comment on how many of its freelance staff would be affected by the cuts.

Last week, rival Grab announced that it would dismiss 360 employers, or about five percent of its full-time work-



JAKARTA: Indonesian drivers of ride-hailing service Gojek and Grab wait for passengers in Jakarta yesterday. —AFP

force. In May, US-based ridesharing giant Uber said it was slashing a quarter of its global workforce—about 3,000

employees—and trimming investment to survive the financial hit to its business from the disease crisis. —AFP

Markets mixed as investors track 2nd wave

HONG KONG: Equities were mixed yesterday in Asia after a healthy run-up the day before as traders weigh positive data suggesting economies are recovering against signs of a second wave of infections and the reintroduction of some lockdowns. While governments and central banks have provided a wall of cash to support markets, investors are walking a tightrope between hopes

the easing of restrictions will lead to a rebound and the possibility that looser measures will inflame the pandemic again. After a rally across most regional bourses Tuesday, Wall Street and Europe followed suit after figures pointed to a big improvement in eurozone private-sector activity in June as well as a jump in US new home sales.

Meanwhile, several countries continued to loosen up, including in Britain where pubs, restaurants, hotels and cinemas were told they could open again from July 4. "Through the lens of survey data, at least for now, the world's essential economies are seeing a V-shaped and coordinated rebound that looks set to (continue) through the summer in the northern hemisphere," said Stephen Innes at AxiCorp. "Fingers crossed a second wave super

spread does not land in our lap."

However, there are growing concerns of a relapse in some countries that had been opening up, with Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike yesterday warning a number of new cases had been found at one workplace.

That comes after Germany reimposed containment measures in two western districts—home to almost 640,000 people—after an outbreak at a slaughterhouse infected more than 1,500 workers.

Portugal has also announced new restrictions in and around Lisbon. And leading US health officials headed by top infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci warned of "historic" challenges, adding: "COVID-19 activity will likely continue for some time." —AFP

Business

US economy improving, but rising COVID cases a threat

Business activity contraction slows in June

WASHINGTON: Sales of new US single-family homes increased more than expected in May and business activity contracted moderately this month, suggesting the economy was on the cusp of recovering from the recession caused by the COVID-19 crisis.

But a resurgence in confirmed coronavirus cases across the country threatens the nascent signs of improvement evident in Tuesday's economic data. Many states have reported record daily increases in COVID-19 infections, which health experts have blamed on local governments reopening their economies too soon. The economy has stabilized as businesses reopened after closing in mid-March to control the spread of the respiratory illness.



Unemployment remains a major hurdle

"The renewed upsurge in COVID-19 cases across the South and the West poses a clear downside risk over the coming months but, with a second wave of state-wide lockdowns appearing unlikely for now, we are assuming this will act as a modest drag on the economic recovery, rather than resulting in a renewed downturn," said Andrew Hunter, senior US economist at Capital Economics.

New home sales jumped 16.6 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 676,000 units last month, the Commerce Department said. New home sales are counted at the signing of a contract, making them a leading housing market indicator. Last month's increase left sales just shy of their pre-COVID-19 level.

Sales dropped 5.2 percent in April to a pace of

580,000 units. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast new home sales, which account for about 14.7 percent of housing market sales, rising 2.9 percent to a pace of 640,000 in May.

New home sales are drawn from building permits. Sales surged 12.7 percent from a year ago in May. The report followed on the heels of data last week showing home purchase applications at an 11-year high in mid-June and permits rebounding strongly in May.

The broader economy slipped into recession in February, leaving nearly 20 million people unemployed as of May. In a separate report on Tuesday, data firm IHS Markit said its flash US Composite Output Index, which tracks the manufacturing and services sectors, rose to a reading of 46.8 in June from 37 in May. A reading below 50 indicates contraction in private sector output.

The improvement was led by an ebb in the manufacturing sector downturn, with the flash Purchasing Managers Index climbing to 49.6 from 39.8 in May. The survey's services sector flash PMI rose to 46.7 from 37.5 in May.

Activity is also picking up around the globe. The IHS Markit's euro zone Flash Composite Purchasing Managers' Index recovered to 47.5 from May's 31.9. Stocks on Wall Street extended gains on the data and hopes of more fiscal stimulus. The dollar fell against a basket of currencies. US Treasury prices were lower.

Unemployment hurdle

The market for new homes is being supported by historic low interest rates and a preference among buyers for single-family homes away from city centers as companies allow employees more flexibility to work from home amid the coronavirus crisis. But with record unemployment and companies freezing hiring to deal with weak demand and keep costs under control, a sharp rebound in the housing market is unlikely.

"If the overall economy seems to be slowing, the public may not be quite as confident about putting a down payment on an expensive new home," said Chris



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

Rupkey, chief economist at MUFG in New York. "Many businesses are insolvent and there will be less spending from unemployed Americans as well that could keep this economic recovery in the slow lane for some time."

Last month's increase in new home sales did little to offset a plunge in sales of existing homes in April and May, leaving intact economists' expectations for a record tumble in residential investment in the second quarter. Homebuilding also rebounded moderately in May after slumping in April.

Last month, new home sales shot up 45.5 percent in the Northeast and advanced 29 percent in the West. They rose 15.2 percent in the South, which accounts

for the bulk of transactions, but fell 6.4 percent in the Midwest.

The median new house price rose 1.7 percent to \$317,900 in May from a year ago. New home sales last month were concentrated in the \$200,000 to \$400,000 price range. New homes priced below \$200,000, the most sought after, accounted for about 15 percent of sales.

There were 318,000 new homes on the market in May, down from 325,000 in April. At May's sales pace it would take 5.6 months to clear the supply of houses on the market, down from 6.7 months in April. Nearly two-thirds of the homes sold last month were either under construction or yet to be built.—Reuters



In this file photo the Amazon logo is seen on a podium during a press conference in New York. Amazon on Tuesday pledged to invest \$2 billion in projects aimed at combatting climate change, stepping up efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of the tech giant and others.—AFP

Amazon pledges \$2bn to fight climate change

WASHINGTON: Amazon on Tuesday pledged to invest \$2 billion in projects aimed at combatting climate change, stepping up efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of the tech giant and others.

The Climate Pledge Fund will back efforts by startups and other firms in multiple sectors to "facilitate the transition to a zero carbon economy," Amazon said in a statement. The initiative "will look to invest in the visionary entrepreneurs and innovators who are building products and services to help companies reduce their carbon impact and operate more sustainably," said Amazon founder and chief executive Jeff Bezos.

"Companies from around the world of all sizes and stages will be considered, from pre-product startups to well-established enterprises. Each prospective investment will be judged on its potential to accelerate the path to zero carbon and help protect the planet for future generations."

The move follows an announcement by Bezos last year that Amazon would accelerate its own efforts to cut its carbon footprint while encouraging others to join his "Climate Pledge" aimed at meeting goals of the Paris accord on climate ahead of schedule.

Since then, the pledge has been joined by other companies including US-based telecom giant Verizon, British consumer goods firm Reckitt Benckiser and India-based tech giant Infosys. Amazon has said it is on track to run on 100 percent renewable energy by 2025 and would become carbon neutral by 2040.

It also will deploy more than 100,000 electric delivery vans to replace gasoline-powered vehicles for its logistics operations. The first will hit the road in 2021, with the fleet to be fully operational in 2030. The new fund will invest in companies in multiple industries, including transportation and logistics, energy generation, storage and utilization, manufacturing and materials, circular economy, and food and agriculture.

Amazon will also seek other investors to add to the fund which is aimed at efforts to "decarbonize the economy and protect the planet."

Sense of urgency

The news comes amid growing concerns on climate change and with the US administration on course to withdraw from the global agreement aimed at curbing emissions. Some scientists have warned that climate change is accelerating, making mitigation efforts more urgent. The last five years have been the hottest on record, as has been the last decade, according to the European climate monitoring network.

Amazon has faced criticism, including from some of its own employees, that it has failed to move quickly enough on climate change. The company, which is a major cloud computing service provider, says it has invested in 91 renewable energy projects around the globe.—AFP

Cisco expands portfolio to serve SMEs

KUWAIT: Today, Cisco is accelerating its focus on serving small businesses by announcing new offers tailored to the small business buyer. In November 2019, Cisco introduced the new Cisco 'Designed for Business' portfolio at Partner Summit. Now the portfolio is growing with the addition of Cisco technology that originally powered Fortune 100 organizations and can now bring the same technology innovation to meet the needs of small businesses.

Small business is big business and accounts for 44 percent of all IT spending – as a segment it's faster growing than the enterprises segment. Now more than ever, small businesses need to be agile when digitizing their business models. Ultimately, technology is critical to helping them grow their revenue, optimize their customer experiences and differentiate themselves to remain competitive. Small businesses need to connect securely and focus on protecting their users, data and devices at all times.

To help address these needs, and allow small businesses to focus on their core activities, Cisco is announcing brand new updates to the Cisco 'Designed for Business' portfolio bringing together the power of machine learning, AI and cloud-driven solutions, and created to make buying, installation and maintenance simple.

The simplified experience includes:

- New App to manage small business networks: IT systems can be complex and expensive to maintain, especially with the limited IT resources of a small business. The new Cisco Business Wireless Mobile App provides a simple way for an individual or company to configure and manage networks in any location, all from the convenience of their smartphone. Available in the Apple App Store (iOS) or on Google Play (Android).
- New user experience. Simpler to buy: We now have a new button to connect small business customers to a Cisco partner to buy directly on Cisco.com. Plus, faster access to technical and sales specialists is now available, in 24 languages, globally, through live chat or call back in 15 minutes or less.
- New bundles and offers scaled for small businesses: To further reduce cost and complexity while improving operational efficiency, bundled solutions will be available that focus on key technology areas to support rapidly growing businesses.
- Secure connectivity via Meraki: Network downtime and security issues can impact revenue, customer loyalty and data security. Bringing together the high-speed and high-density capabilities of Wi-Fi 6 to the cloud-managed Meraki portfolio of access points, the new Meraki Wi-Fi 6 Access points bring simple network management and help with improved network performance, reliability and security – without the need for more IT staff. Cisco's first Wi-Fi 6 access point for Small Businesses brings flexibility to growing businesses looking to digitize quickly. The technology will enable their network to scale to effectively manage more connected device and richer content like video, as well as provide better performance as new applications

- emerge.
- Meraki Cloud-managed Smart Cameras: Not only can cameras help reduce inventory shrinkage and other risks, they are also powered to deliver valuable business insights on areas ranging from foot traffic to identifying which displays are attracting attention to parking utilization. These new cameras include high-quality video, wireless connectivity, on-appliance storage and built-in advanced analytics, eliminating costs involved in sending traffic to a data center. They offer a 360-degree view through a fisheye camera, and one unit can cover an entire premise efficiently for small businesses.

"Our mission at Stratus Information Systems is to find the right networking solutions for our SMB customers that can free them up to focus on their core businesses rather than the complexity of a pieced together network and security products. Whether it's the cloud-managed Meraki portfolio or the zero-config Cisco Business Products or the new wireless mobile application it makes it simpler for us and our customers to install, manage and expand," said Jason Lacey, Regional Sales Director Stratus Information Systems.

"Small businesses have tremendous opportunity to thrive: to do so, it is important that they remain agile, adaptable and innovative. At Cisco, one of our key focus points is to provide small businesses with the right tools and solutions so they can harness the power of technology to establish secure, reliable and robust businesses" said Hani Raad, General Manager of Small Business at Cisco MEA.

Availability:

All new small business products have been available globally from March 2020.

Russia plans to hike taxes on high earners

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that Russia will from next year increase taxes on high earners, the first hike in decades, as he laid out measures to tackle the economic fallout of the coronavirus.

Addressing Russians in a lengthy televised speech, Putin said the country is facing huge economic challenges after the coronavirus epidemic and associated restrictions on business. A week before Russia votes for constitutional changes that give him the possibility to run for president two more times, Putin praised Russians for coming through "the most dangerous stage of the epidemic".

"In all, we have forced the epidemic to retreat... but the virus is still dangerous," he said. "The fight against the epidemic is ongoing." Russia is currently ranked third in the world for the total number of cases with nearly 600,000 people having tested positive for the coronavirus.

The country has however reported a considerably lower number of deaths associated with the infection than other countries where the epidemic was severe, with the total toll at 8,359. Announcing an extension of the government's financial aid to families and healthcare workers, Putin suddenly suggested that the country's income tax policy be changed in order to finance treatment of children with rare diseases.

He said that from January 1, 2021 the tax rate will rise from 13 percent to 15 percent on income over five million rubles (\$73,000), in Russia's first move away from a flat tax rate introduced in 2001. "Since 2001 we have had a flat tax.—AFP

Fed was right on US economic outlook: Poll

BENGALURU: The Federal Reserve struck the right tone in its first pandemic-era economic outlook, suggesting years of extraordinary policy support for an economy facing a slow and long slog back, according to a majority of economists in a Reuters poll.

While the June 15-22 poll of over 100 economists showed a recovery from the steepest economic downturn was underway as commerce reopens, the loss of output in the first half of this year was not expected to be recouped by the end of next year.

The central bank at its policy meeting on June 10 pledged to keep monetary policy loose for years to help an economy that has buckled under the shutdowns, restrictions and other measures to battle the coronavirus pandemic, which has infected around 9 million people worldwide and killed nearly 120,000 in the United States. While unprecedented fiscal and economic stimulus sparked a rally in stock markets after a trough in late-March, three-quarters of economists polled, or 45 of 60, said the Fed's somber economic projections and its ultra-easy policy stance was "about right."

Ten respondents said the Fed's projections were "too pessimistic" and only five said "too optimistic."

Economic data appear to back up the Fed's economic projections, with jobless claims still more than double their peak during the Great Recession. Fed Chair Jerome Powell has acknowledged it could take years for all the people left unemployed during the pandemic to reacquire jobs. "I think the Fed is trying to convey a realistic assessment," said Steven Englander, global head of G10 FX Research and North America macro strategy at Standard Chartered.

"We have 20.1 million more unemployed people and in the next couple of months a lot of those people are



The Federal Reserve building is seen in Washington, DC.—AFP

likely to come back to work. So, if that doesn't happen, it's a disaster. Because, it means that even with all the stimulus, nothing's working." The May employment report showing a gain of 2.5 million jobs was unexpectedly strong, wrongfooting every forecaster who expected many millions more people out of work.

Asked what best describes that report, over 60 percent of 58 economists who responded said it "overstates the strength of the job market recovery," while the other 40 percent said it was "about right." None said it understated job market strength.

"The May numbers are a reopening bounce with an unemployment rate that understates the true level of labor market dislocation due to misclassification errors," said Scott Anderson, chief economist at Bank of the West in San Francisco. The unemployment rate was forecast to fall gradually over the next two years, but still remain well above pre-COVID levels, averaging 9.8 percent this year and 8.0 percent next year, meaning the Fed would not meet its dual mandate – 2 percent inflation and full employment – until at least 2022. The central bank was expected to keep rates near zero over the forecast horizon and expand its balance sheet, at a little over \$7 trillion currently, to \$9 trillion by end-2020 and to \$10 trillion by end-2021.—Reuters

Health & Science

UN seeking to verify Arctic heat record

GENEVA: The United Nations said Tuesday it was working to verify reports of a new Arctic record temperature of 38 degrees Celsius (100.4 degrees Fahrenheit) in a Siberian town over the weekend.

The suspected record temperature was measured in the Russian town of Verkhoyansk on Saturday during a prolonged heatwave, which has also seen a hike in wildfires, the UN's World Meteorological Organization said. The region of eastern Siberia is known for extreme temperatures both in winter and summer months, WMO spokeswoman Clare Nullis told reporters in Geneva.

"Temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius in July are not unusual, but obviously 38 degrees Celsius is exceptional," she said. Describing satellite images of the area as "just a mass of red", she said the situation was "striking and worrying".

Nullis said that a WMO fast-response evaluation team had tentatively accepted the Verkhoyansk reading as "a legitimate observation".

But she stressed that full-scale verification was a lengthy process that took time. The Russian Federal Service for Hydrometeorological and Environmental Monitoring (Roshydromet) said temperatures above 31 C had been recorded at the Verkhoyansk station since June 18, peaking at 38 C on June 20.

"This is the highest temperature ever measured at this station since measurements began" in the late 19th century, Marina Makarova of Roshydromet said Monday.



Melting polar ice on Atlantic Ocean. Higher temperatures cause land ice in the Arctic to melt at a faster rate, leading to greater run-off into the ocean where it contributes to sea-level rise. — AFP

Extreme weather events

The WMO is currently seeking confirmation and details of the temperature measurements. If confirmed, the UN agency will refer the finding to its Weather and Climate Extremes Archive to verify if it does constitute a record, Nullis said.

Until now the archive, which is like a Guinness book of records for weather and climatic extremes, has not had a category for heat north of the Arctic Circle, Nullis pointed out. "We are now actively considering setting up this new category," she

added. Nullis said the soaring temperatures seen in the Arctic were indicative of continuing global warming, even as the world has turned its attention to the novel coronavirus pandemic. "Climate change isn't taking a break because of COVID," she said.

"Temperatures are carrying on rising. We are seeing continuing extreme weather events."

The Arctic is among the fastest-warming regions in the world, heating at twice the global average. Siberia, which is home to much of the Earth's permafrost, has recently witnessed exceptional heat.

Temperatures there soared 10 C above the average

last month, helping push global May temperatures to their highest on record, according to the European Union's Copernicus climate monitoring network (C3S).

'Zombie' fires

Globally, Earth's average surface temperature for the 12 months to May 2020 is close to 1.3 C above pre-industrial levels—the benchmark by which global warming is often measured—according to C3S data published earlier this month. Under the 2015 Paris Agreement, nearly 200 countries have pledged to cap the rise in Earth average surface

temperature to "well below" 2 C, and to 1.5 C if possible. The heatwave across parts of Siberia and Alaska is causing particular alarm in regions that were engulfed by huge forest fires last year fuelled by record heat, and where the EU's Copernicus has warned that "zombie" blazes smoldering underground may be reigniting.

The number and intensity of wildfires in north-eastern Siberia and the Arctic Circle has continued to increase in recent days, says Copernicus—bringing the daily total intensity to similar levels as that observed last year. — AFP

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Lifestyle | Features



The Ritz hotel, currently closed to visitors due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, is pictured in central London.—AFP

Paris Ritz hotel items sell for quadruple the auction estimate

Historic silver, crystal and even towels sold off at auction by the swanky Paris Ritz hotel were snapped up for a total of 1.7 million euros (\$1.9 million), more than four times the pre-sale estimate, the Artcurial auctioneers said Tuesday. Some 1,500 lots of bed linen to bathrobes and ashtrays were sold to buyers from 25 countries, after more than 500 people registered online for the luxury sell-off.

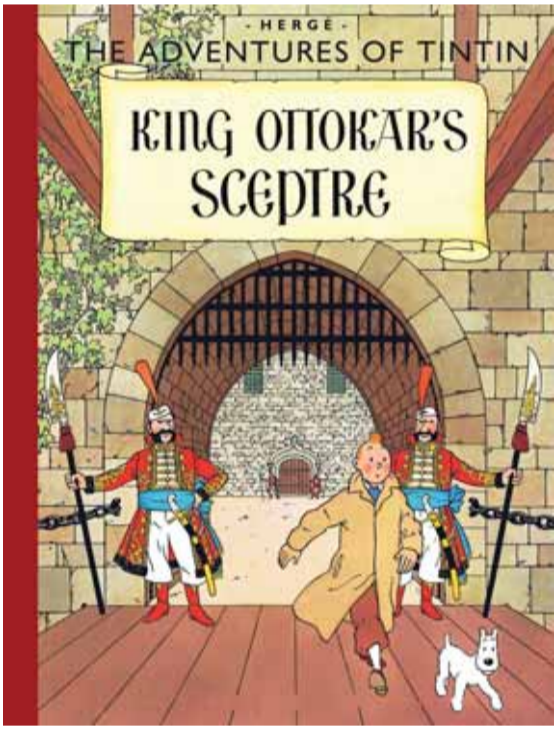
The famous hotel on Place Vendôme in the French capital was a favourite of such icons as actress Audrey Hepburn, fashion designer Coco Chanel—who spent part of World War II tucked up there with her lover, a German spy—and the American writer Ernest Hemingway, who “liberated” its bar when the Allies retook the city. Among the used items on sale, a 12-plate “Marthe service” commissioned by Cesar Ritz in 1898 for the opening of the hotel was sold for 13,000 euros, 45 times

the estimate. Christoffe serving trollies also sold well while champagne buckets brought in up to 11,700 euros, a mighty 58 times the auction estimate. The auction had been originally scheduled to take place in April but was postponed due to the coronavirus epidemic. Two years ago some of the hotel’s historic furniture was sold off for 7.2 million euros—seven times the estimate—after a major refurbishment of the hotel.—AFP

Tintin’s Hitler skit cover goes under hammer

The cover of a Tintin story that satirised Hitler’s German expansionism could go for more than a 350,000 euros (\$395,000) when it comes up for auction in Paris Saturday. In “King Ottokar’s Sceptre”, the boy detective’s Belgian creator Hergé was taking a dig at the Nazi leader after his annexation of Austria in 1938. Tintin and his faithful hound Snowy find themselves trying to foil a plot by spies to overthrow the king of the fictional Balkan land of Syldavia. The story was first published in the children’s supplement of the conservative Brussels newspaper Le Petit Vingtième. The cover shows Tintin tripping as he gets out of the plane in Prague and having to grab his new friend Professor Alembick’s beard to right himself.

The drawing is part of a major sale of classic cartoon images at Artcurial auction house in the French capital, which was postponed in March because of the coronavirus pandemic. Also going under the hammer is painting of Asterix and Obelix by their creator Albert Uderzo for a 1966 colouring book, which is expected to sell for up to 25,000 euros. But the biggest bids are expected to go to a 1954 ink drawing called “Le pirogue” (The Dugout Canoe) of the Marsupilami, the fictional South American animal invented by the legendary Belgian artist Andre Franquin. It has an estimate of between 350,000 and 450,000 euros. Franquin was one of the most influential postwar comic book artists, and Marsupilami often appeared alongside the characters Spirou & Fantasio, which he drew from 1949 to 1969.—AFP



Netflix to screen Kristen Stewart’s lockdown short

Netflix said Tuesday that it challenged some of the world’s hottest directors to make a short film when they were cooked up at home during the coronavirus lockdown. The results, made with whatever equipment and family members were close at hand, will be streamed next week. Hollywood stars Kristen Stewart and Maggie Gyllenhaal were among 17 of those who rose to the challenge, with Stewart shooting hers in Los Angeles while Gyllenhaal sheltered in Vermont.

“Jackie” director Pablo Larrain made his film at home in Santiago, Chile—which had been battered by months of civil unrest before the virus struck—while French-Malian film-maker Ladj Ly shot around the tough Paris suburb where his Oscar-nominated movie “Les Misérables” is set. David Mackenzie of “Hell or High Water” fame got to grips with his hometown Glasgow, while Nadine Labaki used the backdrop of Beirut, which also featured in her 2018 hit “Capernaum”. Larrain said it was “an extraordinary chance to keep working... in days (that were) so confusing and unique.” The shorts will be streamed on Netflix from June 30, with the US giant saying a donation is being made to its hardship fund for cast and crew who have lost their jobs in the crisis.—AFP



Kristen Stewart and Maggie Gyllenhaal



This picture shows longtail macaques sitting on a rooftop in the town of Lopburi, some 155km north of Bangkok.—AFP photos



Longtail macaques pull the tail of a cat in an abandoned building in the town of Lopburi.

Macaque attack: humans try to take back Thai city from monkeys

Residents barricaded indoors, rival gang fights and no-go zones for humans. Welcome to Lopburi, an ancient Thai city overrun by monkeys super-charged on junk food, whose population is growing out of control. Pointing to the overhead netting covering her terrace, Kuljira Taechawattanawanna bemoans the monkey menace across the heart of the 13th-century city in the central province of the same name. “We live in a cage but the monkeys live outside,” she tells AFP. “Their excrement is everywhere, the smell is unbearable especially when it rains.”

The fearless primates rule the streets around the Prang Sam Yod temple in the centre of Lopburi, patrolling the tops of walls and brazenly ripping the rubber seals from car doors. Their antics were largely tolerated as a major lure for the tourist hordes who descended on the city before the coronavirus outbreak to feed and snap selfies with the plucky animals. But a government sterilisation campaign is now being waged against the creatures after the epidemic provoked an unexpected change in their behaviour.

As foreign tourism—Thailand’s cash cow—seized up so did the flow of free bananas tossed their way, prodding the macaques to turn to violence. Footage of hundreds of them brawling over food in the streets went viral on social media in March. Their growing numbers—doubling in three years to 6,000—have made an uneasy coexistence with their human peers almost intolerable. Some areas of the city have simply been surrendered to the monkeys. An abandoned cinema is the macaques’ headquarters—and cemetery. Dead monkeys are laid to rest by their peers in the projection room in the cinema’s rear and any human who enters is attacked. Nearby, a shop owner displays stuffed tiger and crocodile toys to try to scare off the monkeys, who regularly snatch spray-paint cans from his store.

Simians in the city

No one in Lopburi seems to remember a time with-



Park rangers prepare to sterilise longtail macaques in the town of Lopburi.

out the monkeys, with some speculating that the urban creep into nearby forest displaced the simians into the city. Residents have taken it upon themselves to feed the macaques to prevent clashes. But locals say the sugary diet of fizzy drinks, cereal and sweets has fuelled their sex lives. “The more they eat, the more energy they have... so they breed more,” says Pramot Ketampai, who manages the Prang Sam Yod temple’s surrounding shrines.

The macaques’ mob fights have drawn the attention of authorities, who restarted a sterilisation programme this month after a three-year pause. Wildlife department officers lure the animals into cages with fruit and take them to a clinic where they are anaesthetised, sterilised and left with a tattoo to mark their neutering. They aim to fix 500 of the creatures by Friday. But the campaign may not be enough to quell their numbers

and the department has a long-term plan to build a sanctuary in another part of the city. But that will likely be met with resistance from the human residents. “We need to do a survey of the people living in the area first,” said Narongporn Daudduem from the wildlife department. “It’s like dumping garbage in front of their houses and asking them if they’re happy or not.”

Taweesak Srisaguan, the shop owner in Lopburi who uses stuffed animals as a deterrent to the unwanted monkey visitors, says that despite his daily joust with the creatures, he will miss them if they are moved. “I’m used to seeing them walking around, playing on the street,” he says. “If they’re all gone, I’d definitely be lonely.”—AFP



A longtail macaque climbing on top of a monkey statue in the town of Lopburi.



Longtail macaques gathering outside a closed shop in the town of Lopburi.

Tolkien TV show seeks burns victims, amputees as extras

A New Zealand casting agency is appealing for aspiring actors with facial burns, missing limbs and other “funky” looks to become extras in a Lord of the Rings television series. The Amazon Studios’ show is set to resume shooting in Auckland after a coronavirus-related halt in production, prompting an urgent casting call from tal-

ent agency BGT. “Funky looking people needed!” the company posted on its Facebook page, urging readers to tag a suitable friend.

“Do you have an overbite, face burns, long skinny limbs, deep cheekbones, lines on your face, acne scars, ears that stick out, bulbous or interesting noses, small eyes, big eyes, any deformities, skinny faces, missing limbs—do you look unusual?” Amazon is reportedly spending US\$1 billion-plus on the series as it seeks to emulate the runaway success enjoyed by “Games of Thrones”.

New Zealand was selected as the shooting location last year, although the production is not linked to Peter Jackson’s “Lord of the Rings” and “Hobbit” trilogies, which were also filmed in the Kiwi director’s homeland. The series is expected to explore

storylines set in author J.R.R. Tolkien’s fantasy realm of Middle Earth long before the events depicted in Jackson’s films. Previous BGT casting calls for the series have sought “hairy, hairy people”, “stocky mean-looking bikers”, redheads, Eurasians, and people who are androgynous, freckled or wrinkled. Extras who stand over 1.95 metres (6’ 5”) or below 1.45 metres (4’ 8”) are also in demand, as are sword fighters, archers, and gymnasts. The show is scheduled to debut next year, although it is unclear whether plans have been delayed by the virus-enforced shutdown.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features

World's best restaurant serves food in phase with the moon

The world's best restaurant is now serving food according to the phases of the moon, its chef told AFP. Argentinian Mauro Colagreco already uses biodynamic principles—following the natural cycles—in the kitchen garden of his Mirazur restaurant overlooking the Mediterranean on the French Riviera. From now on, he said, he would follow the same principles on the plate too. Colagreco, the first foreign chef ever to get the maximum three Michelin stars in France, said he decided to make the leap during the coronavirus lockdown as he sought solace in his vegetable patch. "I did not see myself reopening in the same way that I had closed three months earlier," Colagreco told AFP.

The chef was hailed as a magician last year when the Mirazur topped the 50 Best Restaurants in the World ranking for his "exquisite seasonal food", often drawn from his own "cascading vegetable gardens". But Colagreco said that he wanted to go further, "not in changing the style of my cooking but in the soul of the restaurant". Since the Mirazur at Menton reopened on June 12, it has been serving menus based

on flowers, fruit, leaves and roots, all intricately linked to the lunar cycle.

Leaves best with rising moon

And the chef said some of his classic dishes, such as salt-crusted beetroot with caviar cream, might have to wait their turn. On "leaf days", for example, when the moon is rising, the leaves that go with the alpine lamb and algae strudel would be at their best. "During the lockdown, I worked a lot in the garden. It allowed me to work out all my worries and to really be in contact with the earth," the 43-year-old said. "I began to question a lot of things—the way we work, the way society is developing and the way we produce and consume. We wanted to shake that equation and to say that the garden was part of the restaurant and the restaurant was part of the garden."

Farmers traditionally planted and harvested according to the moon, said Colagreco and "the lunar calendar is one of our guides in the garden. A lot of what we do is biodynamic. For example, when we sow spinach we do it on a leaf day (when the moon is ris-

ing) because there will be a bigger concentration of energy on that part of the plant."

Shrimps with rose petals

Colagreco is convinced his customers will be able to taste the difference. And on a flower day, when the moon is in any of the air signs, shrimps with rose petals, rhubarb and almond milk is likely to tickle the tastebuds that bit more. "We are trying to get a message across about seeing nature in another way and having a more direct contact with it," the chef told AFP. He said he wasn't forcing biodynamic ideas down anyone's throat and he didn't want it to become "a dogma" in his kitchen. "We are introducing the idea with tact," Colagreco insisted.

While the chef said it might take some time for Asian and American foodies to return to the Mirazur on the French-Italian border, he saw encouraging signs of a post-lockdown recovery. His Paris restaurant, Grandcoeur, was doing well since it reopened and "everything points to a strong revival", he added.—AFP



Colagreco is the first foreign chef to get the maximum three Michelin stars in France.—AFP



A view shows shared electric scooters parked in front of the Coliseum monument in Rome, as the country eases its lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of the COVID-19 infection, caused by the novel coronavirus.—AFP photos



A man rides a bicycle past a shared electric scooter.



Youth ride a shared electric scooter.



A young man rides a shared electric scooter.

Rome sees scooter invasion as city emerges from lockdown

With Rome emerging from lockdown into warm summer days, electric scooters have invaded its streets as the Italian capital joins the debate over urban public transport during the pandemic. During a recent sunny weekend, thousands of users, mostly young people, slalomed through Rome's historic centre, on the road leading to the Colosseum and around the famed Piazza Venezia. Two-wheel scooters were parked on the sidewalks, arranged side by side, or in other cases isolated on street corners, or lying abandoned in the roads.

For some Romans the self-service battery-run scooters, already common in other European cities, ease congestion and help people avoid packed-out public transport in times of pandemic. For others they are messy, unregulated nuisance. "Rome is full of cars and mopeds, so it's important to use this kind of means of transport for the environment," said Vito, a tourist visiting Rome with his family. "We are tourists, and to avoid any contact with public transport, we decided to take the scooter."

As European cities lift virus lockdowns and reopen, many are keeping social distancing restrictions on public transport as a way to stop the spread of the virus. As people look to alternatives, bike sales are up and cities from Paris to Athens have introduced more cycling lanes, with plans for greener transport.

'Small revolution'

Rome was one of the last major European cities to make self-service scooters available to its pedestrians, residents and tourists. In other cities such as Paris they are well established, though often the source of debate over their benefits and drawbacks, and the question of safety regulations.



Residents listen to a so-called 'Hofkonzert' (backyard concert) by members of the Staatskapelle Berlin orchestra in Berlin.—AFP

all, meaning auditoriums will have space for only a fraction of their normal audiences. Berlin's Volksbuehne launched its 2020/21 season in mid-June with the caveat that capacity in the auditorium will be cut to just 130, from the usual 800.

In neighbouring Austria, the Vienna State Opera has resumed performances to audiences of just 100 at a time, compared to 1,700 on a normal night. The Salzburg Festival will also go ahead this summer with the repertoire reduced by about half and limited to a select few venues. Performers, too, must remain socially distanced, meaning fewer of them on stage—bad news for freelancers in particular, who have already seen their income fall off a cliff during the pandemic. The Berlin Philharmonic offered a first glimpse in early May of what indoor orchestral concerts might look like in a post-lockdown world with a socially distanced concert featuring just 15 musicians. Thanks to generous state funding, German arts organisations are better placed to cope with reduced income from ticket sales than many of their European and international peers. But even they say there is only so long they can survive like this.—AFP

"Electric scooters represent a small revolution for our city," said Rome Mayor Virginia Raggi. E-scooters are already present in other cities in Italy, such as Milan, Bologna, Turin, Verona. Four self-service scooter companies have been operating in the capital since their authorisation on March 1: Lime, Bird, Helbiz and Dott. The municipality's project provides for a two-year experimental phase.

Rome's historic city centre is relatively untouched by traffic jams, but the car remains favoured means of transport in the Italian capital, which has few bike paths, and often poorly maintained roads, potholes and damaged asphalt. Several attempts were made in the past to promote self-service bicycles, but without success, many ending up vandalised or thrown into the waters of the Tiber.

In the current scheme, a maximum of 16,000 scooters will be allowed, with the usual operating rules about speed limits and an age limit of 14 years and above. Their use remains limited for the moment in the historic centre. It is impossible, for example, to leave them parked on Vatican territory. Rome scooter riders face another problem: the city's omnipresent cobblestones, which are difficult to avoid in the streets and alleys of the Eternal City. Still, not all Romans are happy with the flood of electric scooters in the heart of Rome. According to Italian press reports, the development is already arousing protests from taxi associations, who are denouncing the chaos on the streets and "non-compliance with the law", which forces drivers to be extra vigilant because of scooter "mania". One local newspaper reported 14 accidents in the capital and several cases of vandalism since the scooters began flooding the city.—AFP

Kennedy Center arts honours postponed to 2021

Washington's Kennedy Center has pushed back its prestigious annual arts awards gala due to the coronavirus pandemic, setting a new date of March 7, 2021. Each year the Kennedy Center—Washington's performing arts complex that serves as a living monument to slain president John F. Kennedy—holds a night of red-carpet glitz to induct cultural and entertainment figures into its arts pantheon. But the ceremony normally held in December will no longer take place in 2020, the latest postponement of the winter awards season after the Oscars and the Golden Globes also scheduled later ceremonies than usual.

"Our lives as we have known them have been upended by COVID-19, but the world continues to spin forward and we need artists now more than ever to help light the way," said Kennedy Center President Deborah Rutter in a statement. A broadcast version of the event will also air at a later date.



Snail-inspired video opera launched to aid jailed Turkish civic leader

Supporters of a jailed Turkish civil society leader unveiled a unique video opera yesterday to highlight his plight—themed around two snails, a salad and solitary confinement. British performing arts company Opera Circus produced the online mini-opera—"Osman Bey and the Snails"—to draw attention to Osman Kavala's case. The troupe tapped into its community of artists in four countries to create what it called a "lockdown opera" during the coronavirus pandemic, as the Turkish businessman and philanthropist approaches 1,000 days behind bars.

The 11-minute performance draws inspiration from Kavala purportedly finding two snails in his lunchtime prison salad and adopting them to keep him company in solitary confinement. After he was acquitted in February of orchestrating 2013 anti-government protests, but then swiftly detained again in a separate case, Kavala gave the snails to his lawyer for safekeeping. "The true story of Osman and his snail-friends is like a fairy story," said Nigel Osborne, the mini-opera's composer. "But it presents all of the truths about the loneliness of imprisonment in isolation and about Osman's compassion and love of nature and beauty."



In this file photo a journalist stands in front of a poster featuring jailed businessman and philanthropist Osman Kavala during a press conference of his lawyers.—AFP

Its creators said the "contemporary classical work" is also a gift to Kavala to thank him for promoting "culture to bridge divides between Turkey and other nations". They added Osborne had tried to evoke the different musical cultures, including Armenian, Greek and Kurdish, as well as Sevda—"the Balkan music of love"—that Kavala had previously worked with. They hope to publicise his plight with the mini-opera's release alongside the hashtags #OsmanBeyandtheSnails and #FreeOsmanKavala.

After his acquittal by a Turkish court in February over the anti-government "Gezi Park" protests of 2013, police held Kavala on a fresh arrest warrant linking him to the failed coup attempt in 2016. Kavala, who was one of nine defendants found not guilty of seeking to overthrow the government, was the only one kept in jail throughout the trial. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who stands accused of dismantling Turkish civil society, locking up activists and political opponents, and shutting down organisations, has criticised the prominent detainee.—AFP

Kissing starts again in French films

Actors have started kissing again on French film shoots, the country's culture minister said Friday. Franck Riester said "kissing has started again on sets" where the "actors have been tested" for the coronavirus. And he insisted that the love is not completely dead despite the pandemic. The ministers told French radio that while shooting in Europe's biggest film industry was allowed to restart earlier this month, "they waited a bit before doing that kiss that is so important in cinema".

Riester did not say which film or which actors were the first to get back to on-screen smooching. "No, the kiss is not over with," the politician declared when asked if social distancing was in danger of killing off love scenes altogether. French cinemas are to reopen after a three-month coronavirus closure on Monday but with drastic distancing measures that mean they can never be more than half full.—AFP

Germany strives to kickstart culture in a world blighted by virus

Musician Cristina Gomez Godoy casts an excited glance towards the leafy stage where she is about to perform in front of an audience for the first time in three months. "I'm actually nervous," said the oboist, 30, a member of Berlin's Staatskapelle orchestra, which has been unable to perform live since concert halls were shut in March to control the spread of the coronavirus. Gomez and four colleagues are tuning up for a short concert in the courtyard of an apartment building in Berlin, accompanied by the buzzing of bees and against a backdrop of ivy tumbling down the walls.

The show illustrates how arts organisations across Germany are having to think creatively as they strive to get up and running again in a world where they must coexist with the coronavirus. "It is a pleasure for us as musicians to play together again, despite the smaller format, and I think the audience will enjoy it too," Gomez said. The courtyard has space for only a handful of socially distanced audience members, while those who live on the upper floors have enjoy the best seats—lounging on window ledges, beers in hands. Ursula Dyckhoff, 77, lives in an apartment on the first floor. "It was wonderful, the acoustic and the view too," she said after the concert.

Limited audiences

Libraries, museums and art galleries were allowed to reopen in Germany in April and the government published guidelines in May aimed at getting the rest of the cultural sector back to work, at least in some form. But many challenges remain, especially for theatres, concert halls, opera houses and cinemas. The guidelines include limiting numbers and ensuring 1.5 metres space between

Empty fridges as Lebanon economic crisis bites



This combination of pictures created on June 22, 2020 shows Lebanese citizens across the country displaying the content of their refrigerators. —AFP

TRIPOLI, Lebanon: Lebanon's economic crisis has led to a collapse of the local currency and purchasing power, plunging whole segments of society into poverty as exemplified by near-empty fridges in many households. Earlier this year, Lebanon defaulted on its debt and, while the peg to the dollar remains unchanged, the pound has since nosedived on the black market.

In a country so heavily reliant on imports, the blow is huge and thousands of businesses were

doomed even before the coronavirus lockdown shuttered the economy. Prices have soared almost as fast as the currency has plummeted, meaning that a salary of one million pounds is now worth around \$200, instead of almost \$700 last year.

The crisis is sounding the death knell of a middle class that is sliding into the half of the population the World Bank now estimates lives under the poverty line. A far cry from the country's erst-

while image as the "Switzerland of the Middle East" famed for its nightlife and entrepreneurial genius, a class of destitute Lebanese is emerging across the country.

AFP photographers spent several days in June visiting people's homes in the main cities of Beirut, Tripoli, Byblos, Jounieh and Saida to ask them how they managed to put food on the table. Those who accepted to be photographed posed in front of open refrigerators whose bare shelves

often hinted at the leanest of diets.

Holding her fridge door open, Fadwa Merhebi explains she already downsized once because she could not afford enough food to fill it up. Now it contains only a bottle of mineral water and two cucumbers. "If there were smaller fridges on the market, I would sell this one and buy a smaller one," says the 60-year-old, who lives alone in a tiny flat in Tripoli. "At least I could use the money to buy something to eat." — AFP

Bodybuilders in Egypt feel...

Continued from Page 1

workout, in the hope of competing in Mr Olympia - the world's premier bodybuilding competition, tentatively scheduled for December in Las Vegas. But more than his competitive aspirations, Asab is worried about his business and his livelihood. The owner of 16 gyms in Cairo said he was paying several hundred staff out of his own pocket.

Normally buzzing weight machines have stood idle for three months as the lockdown shuttered his facilities and cut off his only source of income.

Earlier this month, the government said gyms would partially re-open, without giving a clear indication of when. "We're like other industries such as tourism and restaurants that have been affected 100 percent," Asab said. "I have a whole team who depend on commissions from memberships... I really don't know if we'll be able to go on living like before or not," he said, surrounded by dumbbells on his living-room floor.

Mohamed Nassim, a 33-year-old Syrian who fled his country after war broke out in 2011, was also somewhat shy about showing off his muscles. He said that when competing, he trims his body fat down to a lean three percent. "I started getting into bodybuilding in Syria back around 2003, and it was only to bulk up initially because I was really skinny," he said. "The first championship I competed in was around 2010, and I actually won in 2011, taking first

place in a national competition - but after the events we headed to Egypt." Nassim added, referring to start of Syria's civil war. His Facebook account boasts an impressive gallery of images of him oiled up and flexing in regional competitions. "I had plans to go up on stage again, but all that stopped with the coronavirus," he told AFP in a Cairo park. Nassim said he had been trying to stay in shape "using dumbbells at home and maintaining the physical form I had built up over many years."

Several champion Egyptian bodybuilders such as Big Ramy - lauded by Arnold Schwarzenegger - have turned into social media celebrities, heading overseas to compete professionally or even dabble in acting. But Nassim has developed more modest, short-term goals since his bodybuilding career has taken a hit. He is keen to return to being a hands-on personal trainer at his local franchise of World Gym,

the American fitness behemoth, where he used to coach budding bodybuilders and those looking to stay in shape.

"The shutdown has really affected us financially and psychologically," he said. "I really don't see any reason for gyms to be closed because it (working out) is actually good for people's immunity as long as they take all the necessary precautions."

His friend, Mostafa Al-Roubi, also a Cairo gym owner and bodybuilder, shared similar frustration, as other businesses such as malls open up. "The coronavirus has completely wiped out the field of bodybuilding," the 27-year-old told AFP. He said he was still having to pay rent as he waited for the green light from the authorities to reopen his gym. "If we really want to control this disease then we should open up the fitness world so people can get healthy," Roubi said. — AFP

#Djokovic: Tennis star mauled over...

Continued from Page 1

"I am so deeply sorry our tournament has caused harm," Djokovic, 33, said in a statement. His wife Jelena also tested positive after attending the "philanthropic" tour in the once war-torn Balkans. As the mocking hashtag #Djokovid circulated online, Australia's Nick Kyrgios, so often in the crosshairs for his own on-court indiscretions, said the incident was pure "stupidity". "Don't @ me for anything I've done that has been 'irresponsible' or classified as 'stupidity' - this takes the cake," tweeted the world number 40.

Britain's Andy Murray, a three-time Grand Slam winner who has known Djokovic since their junior days, said: "I don't think it has been a great look for tennis." "In hindsight, it's not something that should have gone ahead," Murray told reporters. "It's not surprising how many people have tested positive after seeing some of the images of the players' party and the kids' day. There was no social distancing in place. Some people have said maybe this has put the US Open in doubt - which it may well do. But the measures and the protocols they have in place at the USA (United States Tennis Association) are different to Serbia and Croatia. No fans for a start." Djokovic is unbeaten this year, a run that includes winning his 17th Grand Slam title at the Australian Open, but COVID-19 has been a public relations disaster for the eccentric Serb. Even

before the Adria Tour, he was criticized for breaking lockdown rules to train in Spain, and he then raised eyebrows by insisting he wouldn't be prepared to vaccinate against the coronavirus.

Djokovic also described limits on players' entourages at the US Open as "extreme" and "impossible", again putting him at odds with much of public opinion. His latest misstep has caused some to question his presidency of the ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals, or men's tour) Player Council, which advises the ATP board.

Tennis has been particularly hard-hit by the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting travel restrictions because it is a global circuit with players from all over the world. "I think there's a lot of his peer group who are scratching their heads," celebrated coach Paul Annacone told Tennis.com. "I was totally anxiety-ridden and very disappointed because the restart, or the reimagining of how we can start (tennis) is just about eight weeks away. And with all these opportunities to try to start in a progression, to me, it felt like they skipped about 15 steps."

Martina Navratilova, who won 18 Grand Slam singles titles, tweeted: "Yikes... this is not good and it's a pattern... What now, US Open? Roland Garros? We have a lot of work to do." Brazil's Bruno Soares, a doubles player who sits on the Player Council, called the Adria Tour a "horror show", while ATP chairman Andrea Gaudenzi said it was a lesson for other tournaments. "It's a little bit like when you tell your kids when they try to learn to ride the bike to wear the helmet," Gaudenzi said. "It's 'no, no, no'. And they ride the bike, they fall, and then they wear the helmet." — AFP

Jericho fears isolation in...

Continued from Page 1

The idea of leaving the city under Palestinian rule, while the surrounding territory becomes Israeli, was also included in a broader US peace plan published in January. Israel has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War and more than 450,000 settlers now live alongside 2.8 million Palestinians.

Netanyahu said the government could put the annexation plans in motion from July 1, despite vocal opposition from a host of countries and the United Nations. "Jericho will become an enclave," said Jasr, inspecting his palm trees as they cast shadows across the plain, worried like many Palestinians that the Israeli proposals will leave him stranded.

The 50-year-old currently divides his time between his office in the city of Qalqilya, in the northern West Bank, and his farmland near the Jordanian border. "Who knows if I will be able to leave to sell my dates? And who knows if I will be able to return to the 'island of Jericho' if I need to go to Qalqilya?" he asked.

The full details of Israel's annexation plans remain unknown, with some observers predicting that Netanyahu could first annex only a few settlements and hold off initially on the wider Jordan Valley. Even

so, the uncertainty and fears that Jericho will become isolated are unsettling farmers here. "What will happen to residents whose land is located outside? What type of permit will Israel give them to go and cultivate it?" said Judeh Aseed, from Jericho's agricultural union. "If we leave our fields for even one or two days without anyone taking care of them, they will become unworkable," he added.

The land needs regular irrigation, Aseed said, raising concerns Israel could prevent Palestinian farmers from watering or fertilizing their land. Jericho's mayor, Salem Ghrouf, predicated annexation would trigger a "major economic problem" as many residents would lose their work. "Jericho is the heart of the Jordan Valley and depends on surrounding villages, whose residents come and do their shopping and work," he said.

For Ghrouf, trying to do a deal to grant Palestinian farmers access to their land after annexation would amount to capitulation to Israel. "Jericho is part of Palestine and cannot be separated under any circumstances," he said.

Meanwhile, Jasr remains uneasy and expects Israeli soldiers to arrive on his land imminently - and not for the first time. Five years ago, he was served an expulsion notice by the Israeli army which claimed his date palms stood on Israeli land. Jasr challenged the order in Israel's supreme court and won, but he worries he will be unable to withstand annexation. "If the army comes back, this time I have no chance," he said. "I put all my money into this farm and now I'm scared of losing everything." — AFP

Stars

Daily SuDoku

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Yesterday's Solution

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medium

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You've been doing well, Aries, but today you might be feeling more focused than ever. The path ahead seems clear and well defined. You're looking forward to the future with motivation and anticipation. You might be considering a travel adventure or perhaps going back to school for an advanced degree. Today is a good day to start doing some research and finalizing your plans. Go to it.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Paperwork, perhaps contracts or other legal documents of some kind, might need attention so you can move ahead with some of your projects. These projects could involve writing or speaking. Your mind is in just the right space to participate in anything involving communication, Libra, and doors of opportunity may open up for you in this field. Gird your loins and get to it. You'll be glad you did.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

The astral energy indicates positive financial news. A settlement, grant, or bonus of some kind that you've anticipated for a long time may finally manifest. You might want to celebrate, Taurus. A chance to attend a large gathering might come your way. Have fun. Tonight, don't be surprised if you have vivid dreams - some great, some sad. Keep paper and pen handy so you can write them down.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

The financial picture continues to improve, Scorpio. At some point during the day, you might have the feeling that you aren't working hard enough to keep the forward motion going, and you might feel panic rise. This could prove a good motivating factor, but you don't need to push yourself harder than you're going now. You're on a roll and it's likely to continue. Just pace yourself.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today you'll put a lot of energy into business, personal, or romantic partnerships. They're likely to be especially beneficial now, Gemini. So even if you prefer to work alone, this is the time to explore the possibility of joining with those who share your ambitions. Romantic partnerships formed or advanced today are likely to prove stable and enduring. Don't let fear stand in your way. Move ahead.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Even though all continues to go well for you, Sagittarius, your mood may go up and down today. In spite of all the great things in your life, you might find yourself feeling a little blue sometime during the day. Don't read too much into it. It's probably just the result of low biorhythms. Try to distract yourself with work. This evening talk or text with some friends who always cheer you up.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Too much work and the resulting pressure over the past few days could have you feeling too tired to do anything more, Cancer, although your optimism and enthusiasm are still intact. Don't be too hard on yourself if you're dragging a little toward the end of the day. You'll be able to recharge your batteries before tomorrow. In the evening, relax at home with a good book.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Trying to get too much work done in the course of one day might prove self-defeating today, Capricorn. Your energy isn't what it usually is, and you're probably operating on nervous energy. Consider the situation and list your tasks in order of urgency. The world won't come to an end if you don't get them all done today. In the evening, rent a pile of DVDs, order a pizza, and relax.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Romance blossoms for you tonight, Leo, perhaps after a long period of standing still. A new sense of stability and security may settle on love relationships and close friendships. Children could also be a source of warmth and pleasure. You might want to channel some of this positive energy into creative activity of some kind, which will increase your sense of contentment and well-being.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

A depressed friend may need cheering up. Your ability to nurture and listen sympathetically will prove beneficial, Aquarius. Take care not to absorb any of this person's dejection. Your own life should continue to go well, with business and career successes leading to new friendships and goals. Hang onto your own enthusiasm and optimism while extending a compassionate ear to others.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

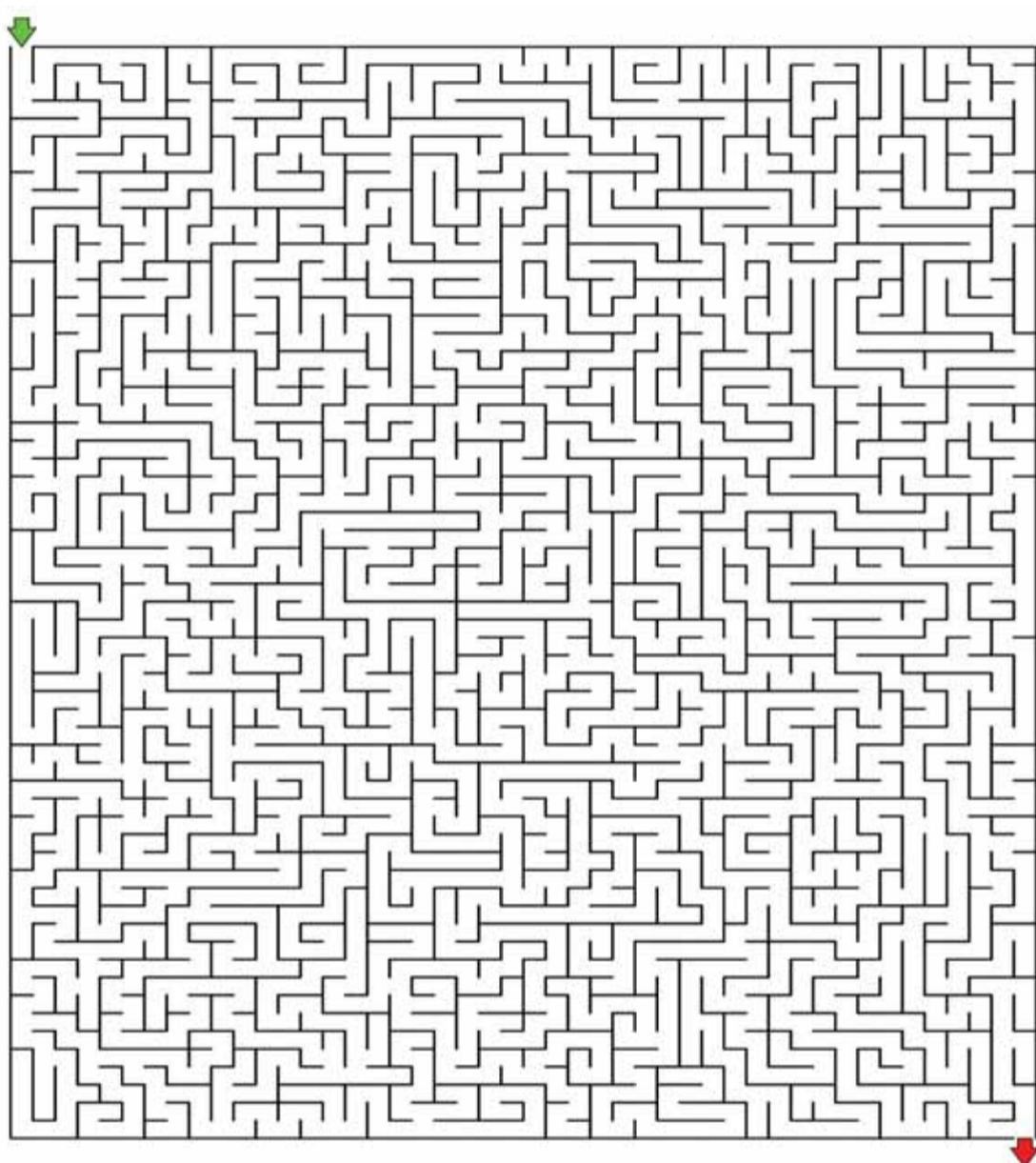
Tonight you might host a virtual social event, perhaps for business associates. You could be nervous at first, Virgo, wondering if all will go as well as you hope, but your efforts should produce the results you want. You might be introduced to new contacts, leading to increased opportunities. Take a walk after it's over. Your mind will be churning, and you'll want to clear your head.



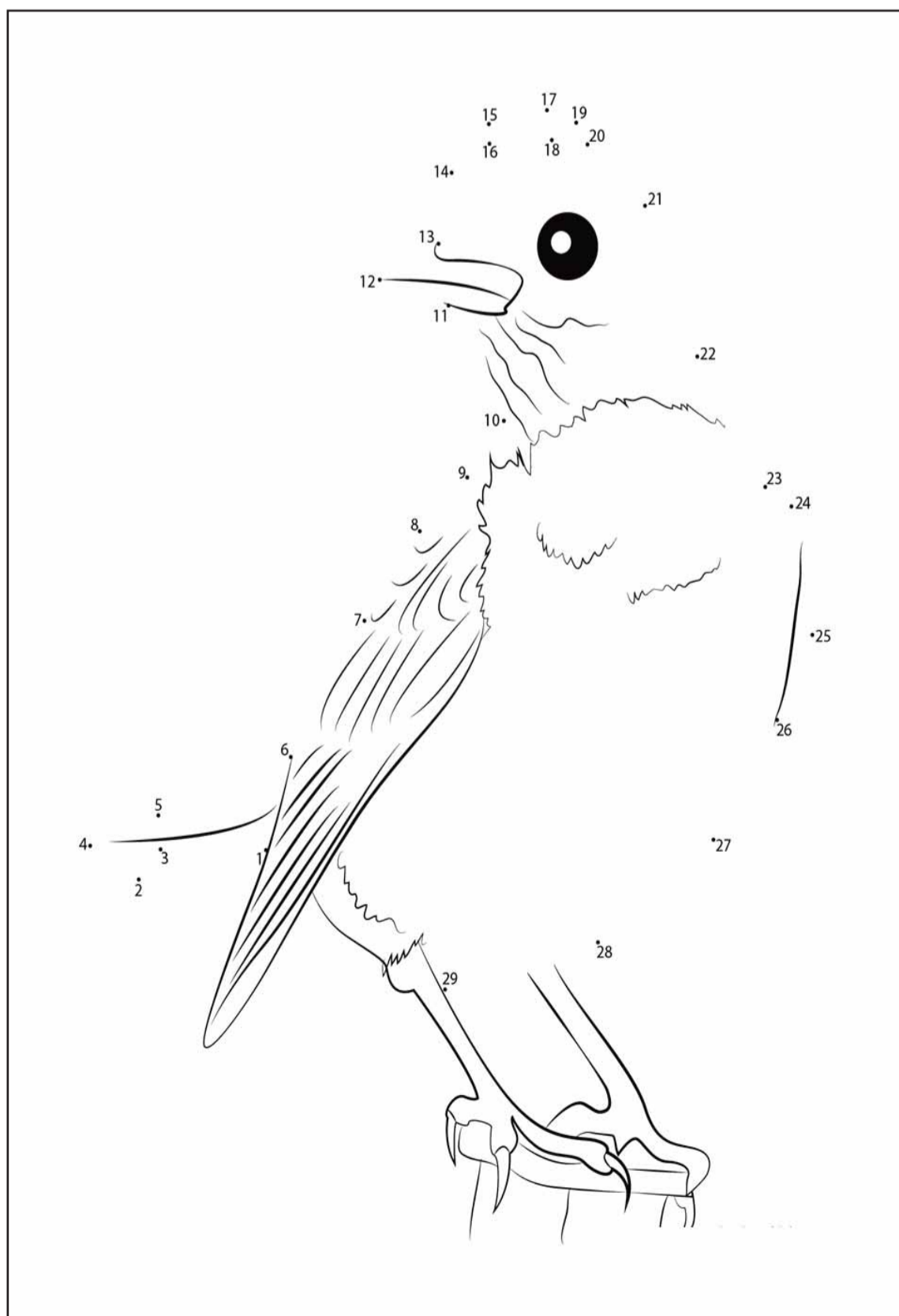
Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Too many projects to complete might have you feeling just a little bit pressured, Pisces. However, your innate determination is likely to drive you on to try to get it all done even if it seems impossible. Don't try to do it all yourself. Don't be afraid to ask for a little help. This might accomplish your ends without putting undue burdens on yourself.

Find the way



Join the dots



Word Scramble

Fall Word Scramble

Unscramble the words and write the letters in the boxes. Use the letters in the shaded boxes to form a new word that answers the riddle.

ULQIT

--	--	--	--	--	--

LAVEES

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BEEESTRMP

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SVRTAEH

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TECTHUNS

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

AUMUTN

--	--	--	--	--	--

ATOLFLOB

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Q. What do you get when you drop a pumpkin?

--	--	--	--	--	--

Sports

Photo of the Day



Mohammed Balooshi (ARE) races during stage 4 of Rally Dakar 2020 from Neom to Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia.. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

MLB season to start in July: Commissioner

LOS ANGELES: The 2020 Major League Baseball season is set to start in July, commissioner Rob Manfred said Tuesday, after players signed off on health protocols and agreed to report to training.

The announcement that the season will begin July 23 or 24 comes after weeks of wrangling between owners and players over a framework for a season shortened by the coronavirus pandemic.

"Major League Baseball is thrilled to announce that the 2020 season is on the horizon," Manfred said in a statement.

"We have provided the Players Association with a schedule to play 60 games and are excited to provide our great fans with baseball again soon."

Manfred's comments came after the Major League Baseball Players Association said its members would report to training camps on July 1.

"All remaining issues have been resolved and players are reporting to training camps," the union said.

MLB and the MLBPA had been at loggerheads over how to salvage a season that should have begun on March 26.

The league proposed a succession of deals that would have seen the players receive only a percentage of their salaries, prorated by number of games played.

Players pushed back against the league proposals, noting that they had already agreed to a pay cut in March and should not be required to accept a further reduction in salary. — AFP

Djokovic's charity event exposes risks faced by professional athletes

Kyrgios hits out at Djokovic 'stupidity'

BELGRADE: Novak Djokovic aimed to help people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with his charity tournament but with a number of players testing positive for the virus after attending the event, it could imperil the resumption of professional tennis.

The men's world number one was the fourth player to contract the virus after Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov, Croatia's Borna Coric and Viktor Troicki previously tested positive after playing in the Adria Tour event in the Balkan region.

The tournament was among many events that have recently been held while professional tennis remains suspended due to the pandemic.

But there was one key difference about Djokovic's event. While the other tournaments were contested without any fans in attendance and those present adhered to social distancing rules, Djokovic's Adria Tour attracted a capacity crowd in the Serbian capital, where players interacted, embraced and partied like they did in pre-COVID-19 days.

"Djokovic shot himself in the foot by organising the Adria Tour," Radmilo Armenulic, a former Yugoslavia Davis Cup coach, told Reuters by phone.

"The organisation of the Belgrade leg was catastrophic, the stands were so full that fans were virtually sitting on top of each other. He staged this event with the

best of intentions but it turns out it was a big mistake."

While the players hugged at the net, played basketball, posed for pictures and attended news conferences together, Djokovic also organised nights out in Belgrade and pictures and videos of him dancing with the players made it to social media.

The players, however, did not break any government protocols in Serbia or Croatia with both countries easing lockdown

measures weeks before the event.

But it highlighted the risks of athletes from different countries being in close proximity to one another, which could be a concern for the men's ATP and women's WTA Tour when they resume the professional circuit in August after five months.

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) has also announced plans for the US Open Grand Slam to be held as scheduled from Aug. 31 in New York and govern-

ing bodies are expected to have strict protocols in place.

"We have to be careful because we also have to be conscious that even with extreme measures, you could actually end up having some players testing positive," ATP chairman Andrea Gaudenzi told the New York Times.

BUBBLE

During the US Open, players and guests must wear masks when onsite unless practising or competing and testing will be conducted before travelling to the United States and at least once per week along with daily temperature checks.

Top players, including Djokovic, have in recent times expressed their displeasure at the stringent measures, something that the ATP and the WTA are also expected to incorporate at their tournaments.

Gaudenzi said he hoped players will be more receptive to restrictions following the Adria Tour fiasco.

Stacey Allaster, the new US Open tournament director, said organisers had to take a "leap of faith" regarding players' willingness to follow the protocols. "If you think about it, we really designed this tournament around a bubble," said Brian Hainline, the chief medical officer for the NCAA.

"If someone becomes infected, that's a possibility, if they go out and they put

“

It was a big mistake

”

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Japan 2019 left 'huge legacy', says World Rugby CEO

LONDON: The 2019 Rugby World Cup has left a "huge legacy" in Japan and its success should embolden countries such as the United States to bid for future events, says World Rugby CEO Brett Gosper.

The 61-year-old Australian spoke to AFP as audit giant EY released its report, "The economic impact of Rugby World Cup 2019".

EY estimated that 46,000 jobs were created or sustained for the tournament and £4.3 billion (\$5.4 billion) — a record for a Rugby World Cup — was generated in economic output.

Gosper said "Japan 2019 was one of the greatest, maybe the greatest, of all World Cups" and exceeded all expectations. "For Japan there is a huge legacy," he said via video call. "There was an uptick in participation at schools, younger audiences on social media and, on TV, 58 million watched the Scotland v Japan game.

"It shows it was a major national ubiquitous event for all age groups."

Gosper said the tournament had attracted swathes of new players to the sport in Asia and also created a new source of income alongside traditional markets.

"The legacy is beyond stadia facilities, gym equipment and higher participation — the legacy for World Rugby is that it also created the third-biggest broadcast market," he said.

"That is a legacy for all rugby because our revenues get pushed around 120 unions."

Gosper said the rugby world had traditionally been reliant on France and Britain and the challenge now was to sustain a third sizeable market.

"That is the reason we went to Japan and Asia, was to create new markets and participation," he said.

"It gives us a bigger commercial footprint to put back into other areas of the world."

'RISKING THEIR LIVES?'

Gosper believes the success of Japan 2019 will give World Rugby chiefs confidence that rugby-playing nations with a similar profile can host the tournament. USA Rugby filed for bankruptcy earlier this year but Gosper said that did not rule the United States out of bidding for the 2027 or 2031 tournaments.

"I am sure that their time will come," he said. "The bankruptcy does make it slightly more complex but everything is more complex in the world now in both the short term and medium."

"We are looking at 2027 and 2031 (both bids will run at the same time)."

"To put on a Rugby World Cup it requires financial effort beyond any one union."

"England and France have economic muscle from their governments and in the USA case it would be more private concerns. — AFP

Fahad Al Musallam discusses quads

KUWAIT: Kuwait's quad athlete and motocross champion Fahad Al Musallam has recently been interviewed on the sport. Speaking enthusiastically, he shared his professional opinion to help those interested in also taking the dive into this unique all-terrain vehicle.

The now ubiquitous 4-wheel vehicle that seats up to two people can be seen on beachside paths all across the GCC, where their universal utility is of advantage across dunes and on the grounds of family beach houses.

Fahad Al Musallam encourages those who have an interest and are still at a young age to begin with a 50cc engine. This will give the basics without any extraneous bells and whistles.

"From there you should upgrade to a 90cc." Said Al Musallam. "Something along the lines of a Yamaha Raptor 90, for example, will expand your knowledge base and prepare you for the upscale of even higher cc quads."

He stressed the importance of gradually upgrading as the quad rider had the current bike down to pat. Furthermore, Al Musallam went on discussing the reasons behind this method as a logical progression and relationship between the driver and the motor vehicle, wherein one continues to build on what they have learned through continuous expansion of their understanding and experience until they finally reached the level of expert.

For adults, he recommends skipping the



BELGRADE: Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic (L) talks to his wife Jelena during a match at the Adria Tour, Novak Djokovic's Balkans charity tennis tournament in Belgrade. —AFP

themselves at a behaviour where their behaviour is risky, they're really taking on a responsibility of saying what I'm doing is not that important to my fellow players."

Armenulic, however, believes it will take the sport at least a year to go back to where it was before the pandemic and professional circuit should not resume before next year's Australian Open.

"Unfortunately, this virus is still present, and it is a new reality that we are still learn-

ing to cope and live with," Djokovic, a 17-times Grand Slam singles champion, said.

"I am hoping things will ease with time so we can all resume lives the way they were. I am so deeply sorry our tournament has caused harm. We were wrong and it was too soon."

Australian tennis star Nick Kyrgios has taken aim at Novak Djokovic's "stupidity" after the world number one contracted coronavirus at an exhibition tennis tournament in the Balkans. —Agencies



50cc and 90cc quads, and beginning with the 450cc variety. He is secure in his trust in suggesting Yamaha as a maker of quads in good standing. As such he has stated that the Yamaha YFZ450R as a contender to consider when researching suitable quads for enthusiasts and adrenaline seekers alike.

The advantage of the Yamaha YFZ450R is its large body, capable of carrying equipment with no added stress to its body and engine, and its already proven reliability over the years.

For any person thinking of practicing daily in the pursuit of professional status, he also states that the Yamaha Raptor 700R is an equally superb option to the YFZ450R.

"These two models will definitely help you hone your skills as a hobbyist quad rider." He said. "The main difference between the two is that 700R has a massive

engine and a lower seated position, so you'll be extremely comfortable on it. Plus the lower center of gravity ensures a firmer handling grip."

But Fahad Al Musallam also made sure to address the needs of casual enthusiasts. These are people who enjoy quads for the sake of the ride, and for whom driving for personal satisfaction was the main goal. "You can't go wrong trying out the Yamaha Grizzly 700. Take it anywhere. Do anything with it and just enjoy the ride." He said.

When it came to the topic of safety, Fahad had a few important words to say on the subject. "Always wear full gear and a helmet. It makes all the difference if an unexpected tumble should ever happen." He also said to consider the corner turn, as oversteering was the most common error that quad users made.

Sports

Milik, Lozano goals help Napoli with a 2-0 win on Serie A return

Andreas Cornelius scores second hat-trick of the season

MILAN: Arkadiusz Milik and Hirving Lozano both scored headers as Napoli followed their Italian Cup triumph with a 2-0 win at Hellas Verona in their return to Serie A on Tuesday. Napoli beat Juventus on penalties in the Italian Cup final last week after eliminating Inter Milan in the semi-finals, but this was their first league match since beating Torino on February 29 before the coronavirus lockdown.

Almost four months later, they extended their Serie A winning streak to four games against one of their rivals for a European place, while keeping their slim hopes of Champions League qualification alive by moving to within nine points of fourth-placed Atalanta.

Gennaro Gattuso's side remain sixth, three points behind fifth-placed Roma, who play Sampdoria later, and four points ahead of ninth-placed Verona. "We will not relax, we have to create an identity and fight for goals like the Champions League," said Gattuso, as last year's Serie A runners-up face struggling SPAL on Sunday.

"We must continue on this path, believe that work gives us important things, as happened in the Cup. I don't know if these 11 games will be enough for us to get into the Champions League, we must already think about the challenge against SPAL."

Polish forward Milik opened the scoring on 36 minutes, nodding in Matteo Politano's corner. Davide Faraoni thought he had equalised for the hosts after

an hour, but his goal was ruled out for a Mattia Zaccagni handball in the build-up.

Lorenzo Insigne missed a chance for a second for the visitors with 10 minutes remaining by curling a shot over. But Mexican international Lozano, on as an 84th-minute substitute, rose high to head home a Faouzi Ghoulam cross six minutes later.

Napoli goalkeeper David Ospina denied Samuel Di Carmine and Miguel Veloso as Verona suffered their first defeat since the league returned to action.

Insigne credited Gattuso for turning around the team's fortunes since he took over from the sacked Carlo Ancelotti last December. "The coach has given us the right determination," said Insigne.

"It can also be seen in the fact that two players who haven't played for a long time, like Ghoulam and Lozano, they came on and were ready. His (Gattuso's) imprint can be seen and can help us grow further."

In Genoa, Andreas Cornelius scored his second hat-trick of the season as Parma moved seventh with a 4-1 win over the port city side. Cornelius also teed up Dejan Kulusevski to add a fourth three minutes from time. Iago Falque pulled a goal back for Genoa from the spot after Parma goalkeeper Luigi Sepe had earlier stopped Domenico Criscito's penalty. Parma are level on points with AC Milan and three points off Napoli, with Genoa just above the relegation zone.

Cagliari, meanwhile, earned their first league win

We must continue on this path



Napoli versus Hellas Verona game in action.

since December 2 with Giovanni Simeone scoring three minutes into injury time for a 1-0 win over SPAL. The Sardinian side move up to 10th place with SPAL second from bottom and facing relegation to Serie B next season.

Torino beat direct relegation rivals Udinese 1-0 for their first win since January 12, moving six points clear of the drop zone. Torino captain Andrea Belotti rifled in from an angle after quarter of an hour for his 10th league goal this season. — AFP

Judge denies US women footballers appeal of pay claim

LOS ANGELES: US women footballers will have to wait on their appeal against the dismissal of their equal pay lawsuit after a Tuesday ruling by federal judge Gary Klausner.

US District Judge Klausner had dismissed the players' equal pay claim in their lawsuit against the US Soccer Federation in May.

Lawyers for the women had asked him to enter a final judgment on that decision, which would have allowed them to take the case to the US Court of Ap-

peals in San Francisco.

But Klausner, who has scheduled a trial to begin September 15 on the players' remaining claim of discriminatory work conditions, ruled that no appeal should go ahead before then — and that trial should not be delayed pending an appeal of the pay claim.

"The granting of an immediate appeal will not eliminate the possibility of two trials or the possibility of successive appeals involving interlocking facts," Klausner wrote Tuesday. "The court has declined the parties' request to stay trial pending the resolution of any appeal."

"And should a jury render a verdict unfavorable to plaintiffs on their remaining claims, there is no reason to think plaintiffs will not appeal that decision."

The US women, who clinched back-to-back World Cup wins with victory at last year's finals in France, had based their claim for back pay in the disparities between prize money distributed by FIFA at the men's

and women's World Cups.

Klausner ruled in May that the women couldn't prove pay discrimination because they had previously turned down an offer in Collective Bargaining Agreement negotiations to be paid along the lines of the US men's team.

He allowed claims of gender discrimination, such as discrepancies in areas of travel, housing and medical support to go ahead.

"One way or another, we intend to appeal the court's decision which does not account for the central fact in this case that women players have been paid at lesser rates than men who do the same job," Molly Levinson, a spokeswoman for the players, said in a statement.

"(Tuesday's) ruling simply means that an appeal may take longer to file and is a reminder that we must not give up our efforts both on and off the field to fight injustice," Levinson said. — AFP

Burnley chairman vows to 'root out racists' after banner stunt

LONDON: Burnley chairman Mike Garlick has pledged to "root out the racists" behind the White Lives Matter banner that flew over his team's match at Manchester City.

A plane towing a banner that read "White Lives Matter Burnley" was seen in the sky above the Etihad Stadium on Monday shortly after both teams had taken a knee in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Burnley have promised to hand lifetime bans to those responsible and Garlick told ESPN: "We will root out these racists and I am sure they will be dealt with in due course. We will do whatever we can to make sure justice is done against these people. Let's be clear. The plane didn't fly in our name. It has absolutely nothing to do with Burnley Football Club and we absolutely deplore it. But we have to talk about it. We cannot and will not sweep it under the carpet."

"I was at the game and I have been chairman or co-chairman for eight years. I have always been proud to be in that position, but I can tell you that I wasn't proud to be Burnley chairman last night."

However despite a storm of criticism for the banner, Lancashire police investigated the incident and said no crime was committed. "Today Lancashire Constabulary has been in liaison with Greater Manchester Police, the Aviation Authority and the Crown Prosecution Service regards the 'White Lives Matter' banner that was flown over the Etihad Stadium last night," Chief Superintendent Russ Procter said.

"After assessing all the information available surrounding this incident we have concluded that there are no criminal offences that have been disclosed at this time."

Burnley captain Ben Mee, in his post-match comments after his side's 5-0 defeat at City, said he was "ashamed", urging people to "come into the 21st century".

Iffy Onuora, an equalities officer for the Professional Footballers' Association, said Mee's strong words had been well-chosen. "You get that moment of deflation but then there's the positive reaction since," he said.

"I thought Ben Mee was absolutely fantastic. You feel inspired again. These are uncomfortable conversations but in order to progress, you have to have them."

The words "Black Lives Matter" have been printed on the back of shirts in place of players' names for the first 12 games of the Premier League's return.

Players, coaches and referees have taken a knee before kick-off in every match to show their support for the fight against racial injustice following the death of George Floyd in the United States last month.

"In itself, the words themselves aren't offensive, it's the context," said Onuora, a former head coach of the Ethiopia national side, referring to the banner. "It's the rejection of conversations we are having at the moment and that's what it represents."

The aircraft took off and landed at Blackpool Airport, which said it would stop operating banner flights in the wake of the incident.

Sanjay Bhandari, chairman of Kick It Out, English football's anti-racism charity, said the fans who had organised the stunt were missing the point.

"The point of Black Lives Matter is not to diminish the importance of other people's lives," he said. "It is to highlight that black people are being denied certain human rights simply by virtue of the colour of their skin. It is about equality." — AFP

How 1983 WCup win triggered India's obsession with cricket

NEW DELHI: "First love cannot be forgotten," is how one member of Kapil Dev's team describes India's debut cricket World Cup win in 1983 — a victory that aroused passions so fierce they would change the game forever.

When 'Kapil Devils' stunned the West Indies at Lord's, the traditional home of cricket, it triggered an obsession with the sport in India and created its biggest market — ultimately making India's board the richest and most powerful in the world.

India was previously a hockey-loving nation, owing to their five Olympic gold medals between 1948 and 1980. But on June 25, 1983, India's cricketers became world-beaters.

Nobody saw the victory coming, after India came into the one-day tournament with just one win — against East Africa — in the previous two editions.

"We never, ever imagined we would reach the quarter-final or the knockout stage," Syed Kirmani, the team's flamboyant wicketkeeper-batsman, told AFP.

"A few of my colleagues in that team had expressed themselves that 'we are going to have fun, enjoy ourselves and that's it'."

"But we laid a very strong foundation by winning the Cup. It is like the first love cannot be forgotten. Thirty-seven years have gone, people still remember our victory." He added: "The younger generation are also keen to know when we won the first World Cup and who were the players. Oh God, it is a fantastic, nostalgic feeling."

India's run to the title is soon to get the Bollywood treatment, with popular actor Ranveer Singh playing Dev. MS Dhoni later led India to the inaugural Twenty20 World Cup title in 2007 and their second ODI world trophy in 2011, but the victory in England will always remain a watershed moment.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India is now the wealthiest association in the game and players like Sunil Gavaskar, part of the 1983 team, Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli have been instrumental in taking Indian cricket to greater heights.

"The board started getting commercial benefits only after the World Cup win and for us it was a game-changer," Sunil Valsan, who was part of the 14-member squad, told AFP.

"Understand nowadays whenever the Indian team goes for a World Cup the expectations are so high on them. But in '83 nobody expected it, but the way we played was just amazing."

"'83 will be '83, that changed the passion, the trend. Money came into the sport much later, but certainly it was a great victory that came against any expectations."

India were reeling at 17 for five in a crucial group match against Zimbabwe when Dev's unbeaten 175 won the game and proved to be the turning point for their campaign. Kapil's Devils outplayed hosts England in the semi-finals and then defended a modest total of 183 in the title clash. Roger Binny, who sent back West Indies skipper Clive Lloyd for eight in the final, said Dev's leadership and India's all-rounders were key to the team's success. — AFP



LEICESTER: Brighton's English defender Lewis Dunk (L) and Leicester City's English striker Jamie Vardy (2nd L) jump for the ball during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Brighton and Hove Albion at the King Power Stadium in Leicester, central England. — AFP

Schmeichel saves Leicester with penalty stop

LEICESTER: Brendan Rodgers hailed Kasper Schmeichel as "world class" after the Leicester goalkeeper saved Neal Maupay's penalty in his side's 0-0 draw with Brighton on Tuesday.

Schmeichel came to Leicester's rescue when he plunged to his right to stop Maupay's spot-kick early in the first half at the King Power Stadium.

That was the highlight of a patchy performance from third-placed Leicester in Rodgers' 50th game in charge.

"Kasper has made a great save from the penalty, he's invaluable," Rodgers said of the Denmark international.

"He's a world-class goalkeeper. There is absolutely no doubt that he is one of the top goalkeepers in this league. Just his presence in the goal and his leadership. He studies penalty takers and puts in the work and he's so agile. He's been absolutely brilliant in the two games back."

The Foxes are now four points clear of fourth-placed Chelsea and nine ahead of fifth-placed Manchester United in the race to qualify for the Champions League. Brighton move six points clear of the relegation zone, but Maupay's miss denied them a second successive victory after the French striker scored the winner against Arsenal on Saturday.

Brighton gave first Premier League starts to Tariq Lamptey, 19, and Alexis Mac Allister, 21, making Graham Potter's starting line-up the youngest the Seagulls had ever fielded in the Premier League.

Potter hailed his raw team's never-say-die spirit, say-

ing: "We have to fight all the way. From the last two games, you can see we are ready for the fight."

"We had to battle. The first half we were really good, carried a threat and reduced a good side to not too much. I'm proud of the endeavour and work rate. Sometimes Kasper Schmeichel is good at saving them. It happens, you move on."

Just 24 hours after a 'White Lives Matters' banner organised by Burnley fans flew over their match against Manchester City, both teams at the King Power maintained the trend of taking a knee before kick-off in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Leicester were held to a 1-1 draw at Watford in their first game back from the coronavirus hiatus on Saturday, with Ben Chilwell's 90th-minute strike cancelled out by Craig Dawson's stoppage-time equaliser for the hosts.

The only drama came early this time and it was another of Brighton's youngsters, 20-year-old Aaron Connolly, who unlocked the Leicester defence in the 14th minute. Racing onto Aaron Mooy's long pass, Connolly muscled his way ahead of Leicester defender James Justin, who responded to the threat by clipping the forward in the penalty area.

The penalty was confirmed after a VAR review, but Schmeichel came to Leicester's rescue as he dived to his right to save Maupay's strike.

It was a miss that might have drawn a few smiles from the Arsenal players Maupay accused of lacking "humility" after a stormy clash that saw the forward accused of deliberately injuring Gunners keeper Bernd Leno.

Brighton keeper Mat Ryan nearly gifted Leicester a goal when he threw the ball behind him by mistake as he attempted a roll out, only avoiding huge embarrassment by scrambling to save at Jamie Vardy's feet. On a scorching hot summer evening, Leicester were dominating possession but their top-scorer Vardy was held in check as he chased his 100th Premier League goal. — AFP

18 Djokovic's charity event exposes risks faced by professional athletes



19 Milik, Lozano goals help Napoli with a 2-0 win on Serie A return



19 Schmeichel saves Leicester with penalty stop



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (R) shoots past West Ham United's Spanish midfielder Pablo Fornals during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and West Ham United at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. — AFP

Kane strikes to keep Tottenham in chase

I can't believe they have ruled that as a goal: Moyes

LONDON: Harry Kane believes he is as fit as he has ever been after netting his first goal of 2020 as Tottenham kickstarted their challenge for a Champions League place next season with a 2-0 win over West Ham on Tuesday.

The England captain looked far more like his old self after a laboured performance in his first appearance for six months against Manchester United on Friday, and was rewarded with a goal eight minutes from time.

"I'm in good shape. I've been working very hard through my rehab, lockdown and training. I feel as fit as I probably ever have done before," Kane, who had surgery on a hamstring injury prior to the season's shutdown due to coronavirus, told Sky Sports.

"When you have been out for six months it is just getting that feeling back on the pitch. You can train as much as you want but being out here is totally different."

Tomas Soucek's own goal had opened the scoring as West Ham remain precariously poised outside the

relegation zone only on goal difference.

But Hammers boss David Moyes was furious the opener was not ruled out for a handball by Davinson Sanchez as he flicked a corner into Soucek's path.

"I can't believe they have ruled that as a goal," said Moyes. "Who is on VAR tonight? He needs subbed I know that. That's the rules."

Jose Mourinho's men were well worthy of a first win in eight games dating back to February. Victory takes Spurs to within six points of the top four and within one of Manchester United in fifth.

Should Manchester City's appeal against a two-season ban from European competitions not prove successful, fifth would be good enough to qualify for the 2020/21 Champions League. "I am happy with the result, the clean sheet, it means the team is more solid, the players have less

doubts," said Mourinho.

In keeping with many of the 14 games since the Premier League's restart seven days ago, this was another slow burner as Spurs took time to start picking holes in West Ham's rearguard.

Son Heung-min thought he had broken the deadlock on the stroke of half-time with a smart finish at Lukasz Fabianski's near post, but the goal was ruled out for offside after a VAR review.

Mourinho launched an impassioned defence of his record of working with world-class strikers on the eve of the game after criticism that his playing style could see Kane look for pastures new.

And Kane had no shortage of opportunities after the break as his near post flick was turned behind by Fabianski before he fired wide after sprinting the full length of the field as Spurs broke dangerously from a

West Ham corner. "He has been phenomenal in lockdown, he did amazing work at home and he is in the condition to help the team," added Mourinho.

In between times, Pablo Fornals dragged wide West Ham's big chance to go in front and aid their battle to beat the drop.

Moyes's men were undone by one of their own when Soucek unwittingly turned a corner into his own net 26 minutes from time.

Jarrod Bowen smashed a shot against the post as the visitors suddenly had to alter their gameplan of containing Tottenham to look for an equaliser.

But in doing so, they left themselves exposed at the back and Kane timed his run perfectly from a Son pass before coolly slotting past Fabianski and collapsing to the ground in a mixture of relief and exhaustion.

"I probably should have scored one other but it was nice to put that one away," added Kane.

"As a striker it's what you want to do. You want to score goals and want to help win the games." — AFP

Barcelona grind out Bilbao win to put pressure on Real

MADRID: Barcelona limped to a 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao on Tuesday that sends them back to the top of La Liga, for 24 hours at least, three points ahead of Real Madrid.

Only a goal from substitute Ivan Rakitic in the 71st minute prevented Barca from another stalemate after a draw at Sevilla on Friday had allowed Real to go top on head-to-head.

Madrid will return to the summit if they beat struggling Real Mallorca on Wednesday but Barcelona's victory at least puts the pressure back on Zinedine Zidane's side, whose upward momentum is yet to be reflected by the table.

This Barca performance though was hardly a

statement of intent, devoid of chances, lacking zip and tinged with frustration rather than the free-flowing football Quique Setien was appointed to bring in.

"We knew it was going to be complicated," Setien said. "Also because of the situation there is some anxiety because there's less and less margin for error."

"Sometimes we didn't play with that composure and that showed in the first half when we were more inaccurate than usual. We gave some belief and confidence to Athletic."

Lionel Messi looked particularly wearied by his team's display. The Argentinian was creator-in-chief again but the dependence on him was high and he remains one away from the 700th goal of his career.

Rakitic is likely to be among a handful of players allowed to leave this summer. He has not been a regular this season and this was his first Barca goal since the Clasico in March last year.

"It's a difficult period but we have to stick together," said Rakitic. "It was an important goal, it was a tough game, it was hard for us to open the game up." Arthur Melo started, despite reports he could be close to joining Juventus, and struggled.

Sergio Busquets picked up a yellow card and will be suspended against Celta Vigo on Saturday but that should be a simpler assignment than the ones that come after against in-form Atletico Madrid and Villarreal.

Athletic Bilbao stay 10th after suffering their first defeat since La Liga returned.

They created the better chances in the first half. Inaki Williams, playing his 150th game in a row, darted in behind and Yeray Alvarez should have scored when free at the back post but missed from four yards.

Messi cut a frustrated figure as he tried to create a spark but his efforts from distance, including one chip easily collected, hinted at desperation too.

In the second half, Messi's lifted pass found Antoine Griezmann clear in the area but Unai Simon was quick to close the space and Griezmann failed to react. Griezmann's disappointing night came to an end when he was replaced by Ansu Fati, who headed over with his first touch. Riqui Puig also came on and it was the 20-year-old's pass that started the attack for the goal. Messi crossed to the back post and Ar-

turo Vidal's header should have been cleared by Mikel Balenziaga. Instead, he gave it back to Messi, whose reverse pass was taken on by Rakitic, who bundled through and finished.

Raul Garcia had an open net late on after Gerard Pique and Marc-Andre ter Stegen both evaded a cross but he failed to connect. Fati struck the post with a rebound in injury-time.

Earlier, Atletico Madrid continued their surge towards Champions League qualification by winning 1-0 at Levante to climb to third, thanks to an early own goal by Bruno Gonzalez.

Since matches restarted in Spain two weeks ago, Atletico have taken 10 points from a possible 12 and are now six points clear of fifth, as their top-four rivals have crumbled around them.

One of them is Getafe, who continued their post-suspension slump as they were held to a 1-1 draw against struggling Real Valladolid.

Getafe are fifth but without a win in the four games since La Liga resumed.

Valladolid are 15th, seven points clear of the relegation zone. Levante stay 11th. — AFP

“Fitter than ever”