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Prosecution seeks to probe 2 MPs over corruption scandal

Kuwait moves into second phase of easing of virus restrictions

Amiri Diwan denies remarks by Duwailah

KUWAIT: The Amiri Diwan on Sunday termed as "totally untrue and fabrications" remarks made former MP Mubarak Al-Duwailah that he briefed HH the Amir about details of his meeting with former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, in a statement, also denied that HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah asked Duwailah to convey the contents of the meeting with Gaddafi to Saudi

King Salman bin Abdulaziz. Duwailah made the claims during a TV show with Mohammad Talal Al-Saeed, aired on June 23, 2020, as well as in a tweet on June 25, 2020. His remarks are "totally untrue and fabrications", asserted Sheikh Ali. He said no one can attribute anything to HH the Amir without "official approval by the Amiri Diwan". Sheikh Ali warned against such actions, which would entail legal action. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The public prosecution yesterday asked the National Assembly to lift the immunity of two lawmakers suspected of links to a major corruption scam led by a Bangladeshi MP who is under interrogation in the country. Both the MPs have denied any links to the scandal, saying their names were dragged into the case for political reasons.

The requests were submitted to the speaker through the ministry of justice. The Assembly must vote on the request within 30 days of receiving the application, otherwise the immunity ceases automatically. Under Kuwaiti law, MPs enjoy powerful immunity under which they cannot be arrested, detained or questioned by the prosecution or courts unless their

immunity is lifted or they voluntarily agree to the interrogation. The immunity ceases during parliamentary recess periods.

The Bangladeshi MP has been under detention for several weeks on suspicion of corruption, bribery and trafficking in persons. He has reportedly revealed a large number of names of his links, who include senior government officials, MPs and businessmen.

MP Riyadh Al-Adasani vowed that he will highlight the case of the Bangladeshi MP and suspected money laundering and inflated accounts of some MPs in a grilling he intends to file against the finance minister. Adasani already grilled the finance minister earlier this month on charges of failure to perform his duty, intention to raise charges on public services and impose taxes. The grilling ended without

filing a no-confidence motion.

The lawmaker said that supervisory departments, especially the finance ministry's financial intelligence unit and the Central Bank should have carried out their duty promptly and reported such issues without delay, adding he will prove this in the grilling.

MPs Mohammad Al-Dallal and Osama Al-Sheen yesterday proposed that the Cabinet should ask the Anti-Corruption Authority to prepare a report every four months to highlight the main corruption cases raised locally. They also proposed that the report should include alleged corruption cases received by the authority from the government or from individuals, and measures taken towards such allegations.

Continued on Page 16

Six killed in attack on Pak stock exchange

KARACHI: Baloch separatists opened fire and hurled a grenade at the Pakistan Stock Exchange in Karachi yesterday, authorities said, killing six people including a policeman. Four security guards, a police officer and a bystander were killed in the melee, while local police chief Ghulam Nabi Memon said all four assailants were also dead. "Police have recovered modern automatic weapons and explosive materials from the terrorists," Karachi police said in a statement.

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) later claimed responsibility in a message

sent to AFP, saying an elite unit of fighters had carried out the assault. The separatists have carried out a string of high-profile attacks across the country in recent years — including in the southern port city. The BLA is one of several insurgent groups fighting primarily in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, which has been rocked by separatist, Islamist and sectarian violence for years.

The group has targeted infrastructure projects and Chinese workers in Pakistan multiple times in recent years, including during a brazen daylight attack on Beijing's consulate in Karachi which killed four people in 2018. In May last year, the BLA attacked a luxury hotel near the Afghan border at Gwadar, where a port development is the flagship project of a multi-billion dollar national infrastructure project funded by China.

Last year, the US State Department

designated the BLA as a global terrorist group, making it a crime for anyone in the United States to assist the militants and freezing any US assets they may have. Following yesterday's attack Pakistani authorities vowed to strike back against any group found responsible for the onslaught, promising to dismantle their networks and destroy their bases.

"An investigation has been launched and very soon we will reach their masterminds," interior minister Ijaz Ahmad Shah said in a video message posted after the attack. Business continued as usual at the Karachi stock exchange after the attack. "Trading is smooth and continuing. PSX benchmark index one of the Best Performer in Asia today so far," tweeted Mohammed Sohail, a broker at the exchange.

For a while after the attack the bodies of at least two gunmen could be seen in a

Continued on Page 16



KARACHI: Policemen secure an area around a body outside the Pakistan Stock Exchange building yesterday. — AFP

Outrage mounts over India police custody deaths

NEW DELHI: The deaths of a father and son from alleged torture at the hands of police have sparked outrage across India, with many drawing parallels with the killing of George Floyd in the United States. Their case has thrown a new spotlight on police brutality just weeks after the killing of Floyd, an African-American

man, by a white police officer in the US led to worldwide protests.

J Jayaraj, 58, and Bennicks Immanuel, 31, were arrested on June 19 and accused of keeping their store open past permitted hours in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, which has reimposed a lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus. They died in hospital a few days later, officials said, with their family alleging in written complaints that they were severely abused by police and had suffered rectal bleeding.

Two policemen involved in the alleged torture were suspended, the state's Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami said. He added Sunday that the case would be

transferred to federal agency the Central Bureau of Investigation, pending the approval of the Madras High Court. The deaths in the small town of Sathankulam triggered a protest last week and shopkeepers across Tamil Nadu staged a strike on Wednesday.

"Reeling from what I'm hearing. Absolutely stunned, sad and angry... the guilty must not be allowed to go unpunished," tweeted Bollywood star Priyanka Chopra Jonas on Saturday. "Let's demand for the same justice we did for George Floyd," said actress Krystle D'Souza. State politician, social activist and lawyer

Continued on Page 16



SATHANKULAM, India: In this picture taken on June 26, 2020, residents gather as they carry the coffin of Jayaraj and his son Bennicks in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu. — AFP

Baking up a 'blessing' in Tehran

TEHRAN: They bake what Iranians call "the barakat (blessing) of the table", and it is eaten for breakfast, lunch and dinner — traditional breads are a staple of the Iranian diet. Bakeries are easy to locate in urban centers of Iran where all one has to do is spot a queue spilling onto sidewalks or simply detect the irresistible scent of freshly baked flatbreads.

Exclusively the job of men in the Islamic republic, bakers get up well before the crack of dawn while everyone else is still asleep. Dressed in all-white clothing that can include caps, they hail from across the country and are usually made up of ethnic Azeris, Kurds and Lurs. The walls around them are a patchwork of flatbreads in four different shapes and sizes — barbari, lavash, sangak and taftoon. —AFP (See Page 15)



TEHRAN: This combination of pictures created on June 24, 2020 shows Iranian bakers in the capital (from left) Mohammad Abdi posing with lavash bread; Mohammad Mirzakhani posing with taftoon bread; Ali posing with sangak bread; Esmail Asghari posing with barbari bread; and Hasan posing with fantezi bread. — AFP

Local

Kuwait reports 582 new COVID-19 cases, two deaths

Total recoveries 36,313 compared to 45,524 infections

KUWAIT: The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infected 582 people in Kuwait during the past 24 hours, official spokesperson of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health announced yesterday. Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, speaking during his daily update about the pandemic status locally, said the total number of infection cases with the contagion climbed to 45,524.

Moreover, the virus claimed the lives of two persons during the same period of time, raising the total tally of deaths from the fatal pathogen to 350. The confirmed cases included patients who had contracted the virus due to mingling with infected persons. Others remained under examination to determine the source of the contamination. The latest infections include 319 Kuwaiti citizens and 263



Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad



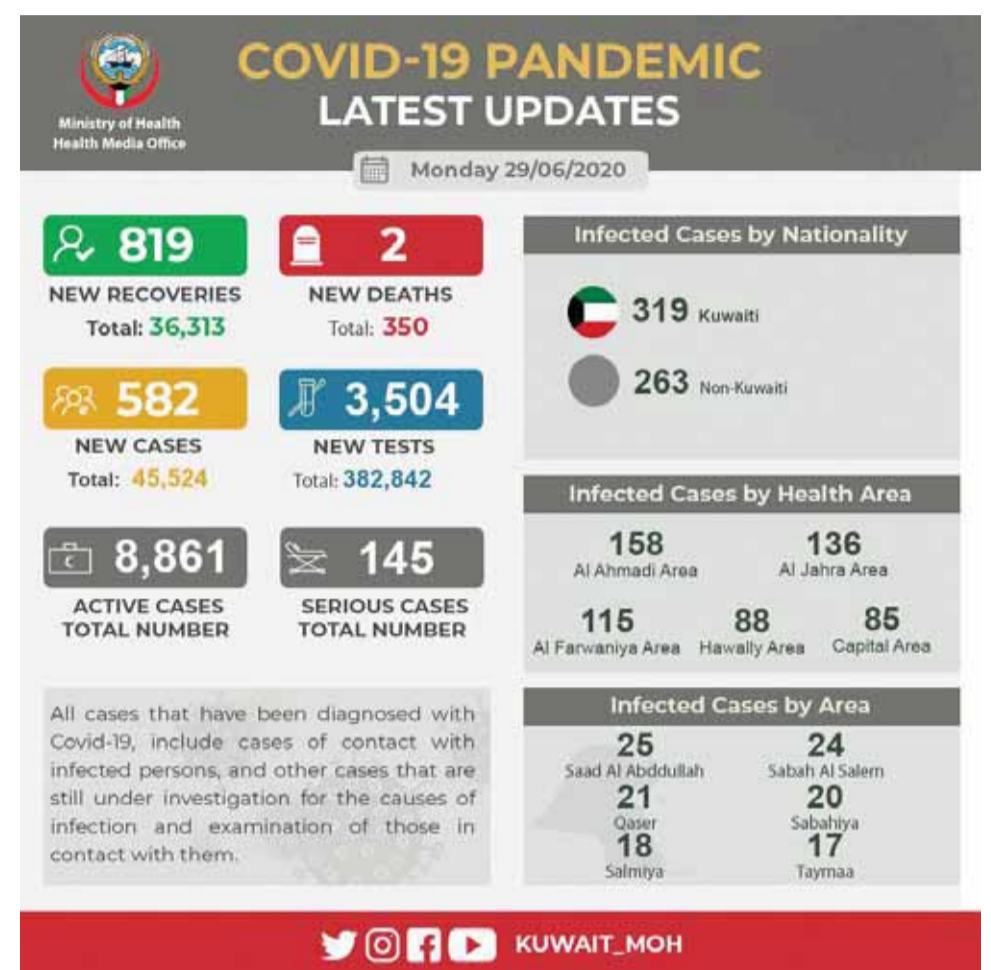
819 persons recovered in 24 hours

non-Kuwaiti residents of the country, he said.

Dr Sanad said the cases were recorded in health districts as follows: 158 in Al-Ahmadi, 136 in Al-Jahra, 115 in Farwaniya, 88 in Hawally and 85 in the Capital. The number of cases undergoing treatment at intensive care units reached 145, with the total count of cases that continued

to get medical care amounting to 8,861. Up to 70 patients were discharged from quarantines however they would sequester themselves at their houses for 14 days.

Dr Sanad revealed that more than 3,504 swab tests for the virus were conducted during the past 24 hours, thus the tally of these examinations exceeded 382,842 since breakout of the contagion in the country, months ago. He appealed, anew, upon citizens and expatriates to continue taking necessary precautions against the infectious disease, be keen on maintaining social distancing and examining online accounts of relevant authorities to remain acquainted with latest directions in this respect. The Kuwaiti Ministry of Health announced earlier yesterday that 819 persons recovered from the coronavirus in the past 24 hours, with the overall count of the recuperated amounting to 36,313. —KUNA



KUWAIT_MOH

Teamwork

In my view



By Abdellatif Sharaa

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As countries started to open up and restore certain activities including sports, we noticed that some athletes are being affected with the virus. Even if the numbers are low and percentages are around 10 percent, there is still a chance that the virus may move to healthy teammates, because testing cannot be done daily - rather it is being done selectively.

In Kuwait, the Public Authority for Sport allowed the return to training starting with individual sports, gave instructions put forth by health authorities and started to take swabs and carry out tests. Results showed that by June 27, 1,198 tests were carried out, out of which 52 were positive, in addition to 59 described as unclear, which will be retested.

Mathematically the percentage is low, but health-wise it is critical, because if one person can infect 50 others and each of those 50 can infect 50 more, then it is really a very long chain. We must be vigilant and follow instructions to the letter no matter where we may be.

I hope that the opening of the government and private sector does not give the general public a false indication that the pandemic is over or under control, because the fact is quite the opposite and as we are seeing that cases are on the rise and there is no relenting.

Many, including the World Health Organization (WHO), are saying we have to brace for a second wave of COVID-19. I am not sure this wave has started yet, but second wave or not, we must be careful and act for a very long time as if the virus is still there.

There are many contaminants surrounding us and we must learn how to properly deal with them. Our joint efforts must be directed towards cooperation in following preventive measures, which will actually help ward off the coronavirus and any other disease.

The National Center of Biotechnology Information (NCBI), which is part of the US National Library of Medicine, spoke about the roles and responsibilities in preparedness and response. It said while all sectors of society are involved in pandemic preparedness and response, the national government is the natural leader for overall coordination and communication efforts.

NCBI added that a whole-of-society approach to pandemic preparedness emphasizes the significant roles played not only by the health sector, but also by all other sectors - individuals, families and communities - in mitigating the effects of a pandemic.

Developing capacities for mitigating the effects of a pandemic, including robust contingency and business continuity plans, is at the heart of preparing the whole society for a pandemic. Activities such as capacity development, planning, coordination and communication are cross-cutting and require action by all parties.

Final Word: Teamwork: Coming together is the beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success. —Henry Ford

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 45,524 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of yesterday, in addition to 350 deaths. With the exception of 145 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, 36,313 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 8,861 people receiving treatment.

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 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 resumed in the first phase included home deliveries of restaurants, telecommunication companies, food retailers, companies' transportation of employees, gas stations, private clinics and car workshops.

The government decided to move to the second phase starting from June 30, 2020. The second phase sees the curfew shortened to be between 8:00 pm and 5:00 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, pickups from restaurants, as well as reopening of commercial complexes, malls, parks, and other places of leisure between 10:00 am and 06:00 pm.

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 at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs): first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages. State departments have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facial masks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain accessible to the public.

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

Hotlines

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

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

- 24970967 (24/7 hotline)
- 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone)
- 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone)

- 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone)
- 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)
- 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)
- 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone)
- 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)
- 51588599 (Private Education Department)
- 51592515 (Services Department)
- 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

Medicine delivery

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

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

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

Mental health assistance

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

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

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

Arab ministers call for helping Palestinians respond to coronavirus

Kuwait's COVID-19 response consistent with int'l standards: Minister

CAIRO/KUWAIT: The council of Arab ministers of social affairs called for helping the Palestinian authorities combat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and control its fallout on economic and social situations. Acting on request from Jordan - the current presidency of the 39th session of the council, the ministers adopted a statement at the end of their emergency videoconference on Sunday, calling for joining forces with Palestinians in the face of the pandemic. The ministers urged regional government and nongovernment organizations to step in immediately and help the countries that have been already overwhelmed by internal conflicts, or vulnerable communities such as internally displaced people and refugees. They highlighted the need of sharing information and programs of social integration in a bid to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on day laborers, low-income families and the jobless persons, as well as people with special needs, women, children and the elderly.

The ministers appreciated the national initiatives for digitalizing the social services for vulnerable people including the online reporting of cases that require social or medical help amidst the current lockdowns, according to the statement. They reiterated the call for implementing the Arab strategic framework for poverty eradication, adopted in the fourth Arab development summit in Beirut last year. Highlighting the need to implement the Arab strategy for the elderly, adopted in the 30th Arab summit in Tunis in March 2019, the ministers called for updating the Arab family strategy in order to make it adapt to the impacts of coronavirus. They suggested working out a roadmap for helping people with special needs in the face of the pandemic in collaboration with regional and international partners.

Human rights

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Minister of Social Af-



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel and other ministry officials attend the videoconference. — KUNA

fairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said the measures and



Efforts to help vulnerable communities

initiatives taken by Kuwait to combat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and

mitigates its economic and social fallout were in keeping with international human rights standards. "The measures implemented by Kuwait have won praise of the World Health Organization (WHO)," she said in a speech during the videoconference.

"In its response to the pandemic, the State of Kuwait took stock of the right to decent living and ensured accessibility to health services for everybody as per the instructions of His Highness the Amir," Aqeel pointed out. The government spared no effort in providing social protection and assistance to vulnerable people, particularly the expatriates, and helped non-government organizations raise funds to these people, she added. — KUNA

News in brief

School ordered to return fees

KUWAIT: The Education Ministry's Private Education Department ordered a bilingual school to refund within 30 days fees that were taken from parents unlawfully. Al-Anbaa reported quoting Department Director Sanad Al-Mutairi. Mutairi explained that the school collected KD 25 from each student in exchange for their certificates, pointing out that this is considered a violation especially since students' parents have paid the tuition fees in full.

Rumors denied

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways denied social media reports claiming that they have terminated the contracts of a number of Pakistani pilots after discovering that their licenses were fake. The airline said in a statement that their pilot crew does not include Pakistani nationals, noting that the company only employs 13 Pakistani engineers who hold certified degrees accredited by international safety and maintenance organizations, "and they are currently working with their colleagues efficiently and professionally."

4,295 passengers

KUWAIT: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation announced that 26 flights were set to depart from Kuwait International Airport yesterday, carrying a total of 4,295 passengers. They included 14 flights to India, six flights to Egypt, one flight to Qatar, one flight to Thailand, one flight to Sudan, one flight to Nepal, one flight to Ethiopia, and one flight to Kyrgyzstan.

Barcode system

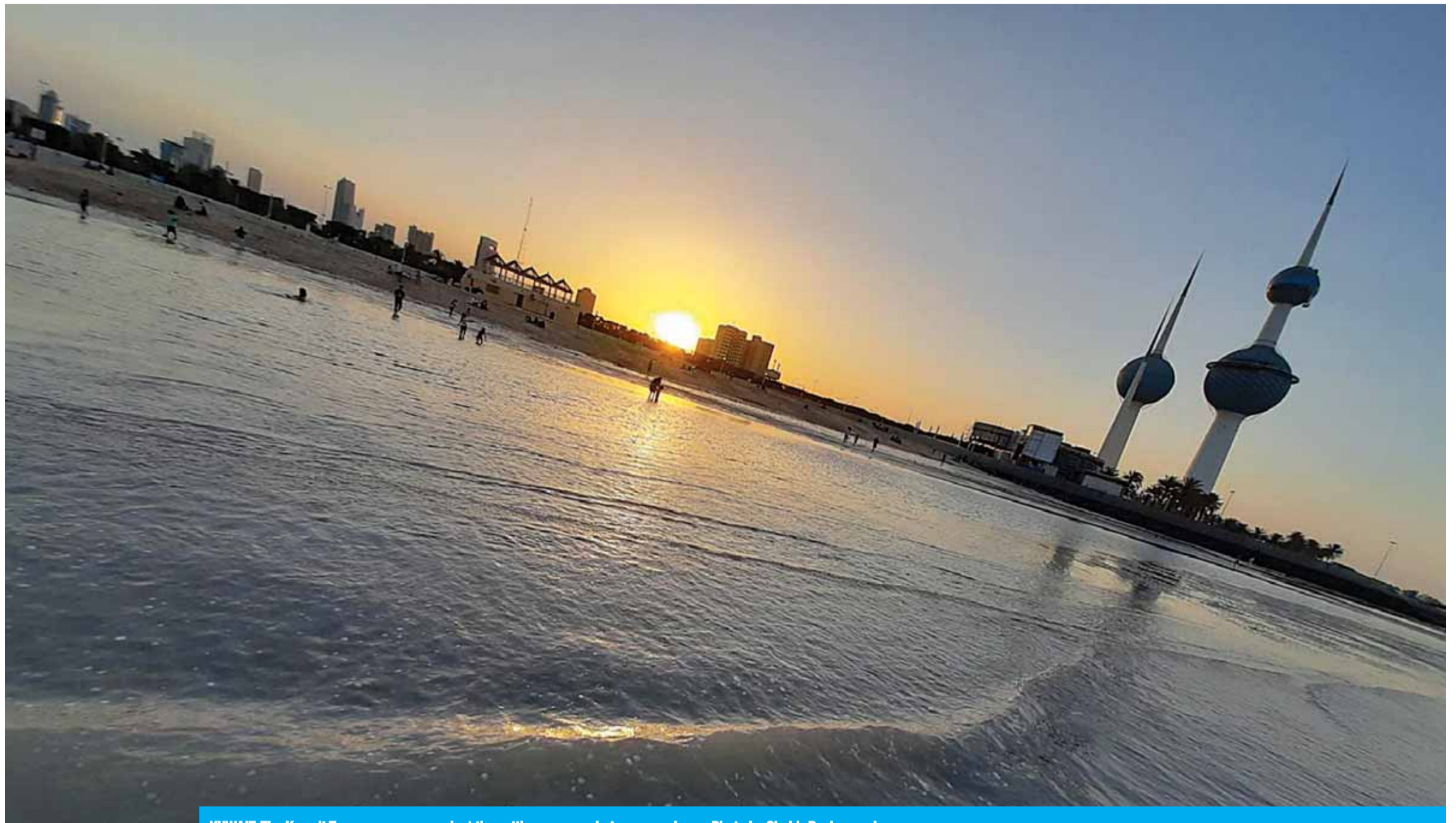
KUWAIT: President of the Union of Consumer Co-operative Societies Fahd Al-Kashti asked the Ministry of Commerce to end the barcode system to receive customers at co-ops via appointments, as the country moves into the second phase of easing the coronavirus restrictions today.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

Kuwait Times
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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The Kuwait Towers are seen against the setting sun on a hot summer day. —Photo by Shakir Reshamwala

Kuwait Association of Surgeons receives COVID-19 prevention supplies from Taiwan

KUWAIT: Taipei Commercial Representative Office in Kuwait teams up with Kuwait Association of Surgeons to contribute 10,000 N95 masks, 800 protective gowns, and 200 protection suits for the healthcare professionals in Kuwait. A total of 37 boxes of epidemic prevention supplies airlifted from Taiwan have arrived

in Kuwait on June 15, which will be in aid of frontline medical workers to fight COVID-19.

President of Kuwait Association of Surgeons Dr Salman Al-Sabah expressed sincere appreciation to Taiwan's government for its generous contribution of the equipment in need. He expressed to Taiwan Commercial Representative

in Kuwait Hua-Wei Mou that the association will cooperate with Jaber Ahmad Al-Sabah Hospital to distribute prevention supplies to the medical doctors and nurses who are taking care of the COVID-19 patients tirelessly.

Only a week ago, Taiwan donated 50,000 surgical masks to UN-HABITAT GCC, which is based in Kuwait. These high-quality masks are expected to be used by Kuwaiti medical workers and volunteers.

Representative Hua-Wei Mou said that this teamwork between his office and the Kuwaiti counterparts symbolizes international collective efforts in diminishing the pandemic, adding that he is looking forward to seeing more cooperation between the two countries in the dimensions of public health and medical training.



KUWAIT: President of Kuwait Association of Surgeons Dr Salman Al-Sabah receives the equipment from Taiwan Commercial Representative in Kuwait Hua-Wei Mou.

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KPA to launch industrial port South of Kuwait

KUWAIT: Director-General of Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) Sheikh Youssef Abdullah Al-Sabah said KPA has formally asked the competent authorities to allocate a site for launching an industrial port in the framework of the state's third layout. Soon after allocation of the site, KPA would start planning, designing and then constructing the port, Sheikh Youssef told reporters Sunday evening. "The authority is keen on backing up the development projects and the initiatives to curb overreliance on oil revenues, increase domestic production, make

better use of national industrial cadres and attract foreign direct investment," he pointed out. On May 20, 2020, KPA and the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) signed a memorandum of understanding on laying the groundwork of an industrial port to the south of the country as part of the state restructuring layout. The memo aims to elevate Kuwait among the ranks of the advanced country and enhance its industrial capabilities, PAI Director-General Abdulkarim Taqi said, noting that the memo has to be finally endorsed by boards of PAI and KPA. —KUNA



Sheikh Youssef Al-Sabah

Customs officers seize 33 kg drug shipment

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Customs officers seized 33 kilograms of

drugs that arrived in a shipment from China on Sunday. A customs inspector had grown suspicious of three packages that arrived on a cargo plane via express mail, then obtained permission to inspect them, and discovered that they've contained 11 kilograms of drugs each. Police were called to locate and arrest the person who imported the shipment for questioning. In a separate case, police arrested three persons who were out during partial curfew hours, as they found drugs in their possession.



KUWAIT: A picture released by the Customs General Department showing drugs found in a shipment that arrived by express mail Sunday.



Drugs found with three suspects arrested for breaking the partial curfew.

Local

Defense Ministry highlights efforts in support of Kuwait's fight against COVID-19



KUWAIT: The Defense Ministry's quarantine camp in Sabhan — Defense Ministry photos

The quarantine building in Julaia.

KUWAIT: The Defense Ministry released a report yesterday highlighting its contributions in support of state departments' efforts to contain the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In this

regard, the ministry pointed out that it established full cooperation with the Ministry of Health since the beginning of the crisis in Kuwait, which resulted in setting up a quarantine camp in Sabhan with a

1000-bed capacity, in addition to three quarantine buildings in Jahra with a 150-bed capacity. Furthermore, the Defense Ministry prepared a quarantine building in Julaia with a 450-bed capacity, in ad-

dition to the 'medical service quarantine' with a 595-bed capacity. The ministry provided full logistic support to quarantine sites as well as the Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital, and maintained

full coordination with relevant authorities to make sure that all quarantine sites are on par with international standards, the ministry's Moral Guidance and Public Relations Department said in the report.



Medical staff at the Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital.

Medical staff at the 'Northern Military Medical Complex' in Jahra.



A patient receives medical attention at the Sabhan camp.



Ambulances at the field hospital in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.



Medical staff inside the field hospital in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.



Beds inside the field hospital in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.



Beds inside the 'Northern Military Medical Complex' in Jahra.



Beds inside the Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital.



The intensive care unit inside the 'Northern Military Medical Complex' in Jahra.



Paramedics at the 'Northern Military Medical Complex' in Jahra.



Australia sees biggest 'daily rise' in COVID

Coronavirus rekindles global trade disputes

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ANTIGUO CUSCATLAN: Workers at the Municipal Pantheon carry the coffin during the burial of an alleged COVID-19 coronavirus victim, in the municipality of Antigua Cuscatlan, El Salvador. — AFP

Virus death toll hits 500,000

LA shuts bars again as US struggles

PARIS: More than half a million people have died in the coronavirus pandemic, an AFP tally showed Sunday, as bars in Los Angeles were ordered to close again due to surging cases in the United States. The worldwide number of recorded infections is now just over 10 million from the virus that first emerged in China late last year, with fears growing of a full-blown second wave. The rate of contagion has doubled since May 21. One million new infections were recorded in just six days, according to the AFP count based on official sources, even as some countries loosen punishing lockdowns that have devastated their economies and thrown millions out of work.

The United States, the hardest-hit country, has more than 2.5 million cases alone, and efforts to reopen the world's biggest economy have been set back by a jump in new infections in big states such as Florida and California. President Donald Trump was under growing pressure to set an example by wearing a face mask as his health secretary warned the "window is closing" for the country to gain control of the situation. The disease is also rampaging through Latin America, where Brazil alone has over 1.3 million cases. Infections are up too in some other parts of the world that have reopened, with Europe registering a caseload of over 2.6 million, although daily rates have stabilized.

'Severe and complicated'

The US state of California was the latest authority to reimpose restrictions, ordering bars in Los Angeles and six other counties - an area with 13.5 million residents - to close because of the rising number of cases. The hardest-hit parts of the US are in the south and west, where many state leaders had pushed for early economic reopenings. But Los An-



More than 10 million infected worldwide

geles, the second-largest US city, only re-opened its bars on June 19. California had already ordered some areas to reinstate stay-at-home orders, while San Francisco announced a "pause" in its reopening.

In Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis conceded there had been an "explosion" in new cases as the

state notched a record 9,585 cases in 24 hours. Young people frustrated by months of confinement have poured back to the state's beaches, boardwalks and bars, often without masks and seemingly unconcerned about social distancing. Miami announced beaches would close over the July 4 holiday weekend and bars are also shutting their doors. New coronavirus cases have been surging in more than half of US states, reaching record highs.

Several other countries have also imposed new restrictions to counter fresh outbreaks. China imposed a strict lockdown on nearly half a million people in a province surrounding Beijing to contain a fresh cluster. Beijing official Xu Hejian described the situation as "severe and complicated". And while the British government warned it might have to shut down the city of Leicester because of a spike in cases, it still plans a July 4 reopening of pubs, restaurants and hairdressers across England. In Paris, police used tear gas to disperse crowds of young people who had gathered for an impromptu party on Saturday evening.

'Very serious situation'

The tension between reopening battered economies - efforts pushed in the US by Trump - and public health concerns is a source of debate in

nearly every country. US deaths now exceed 125,000, about a quarter of the world total. "This is a very, very serious situation and the window is closing for us to take action and get this under control," Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said on CNN.

The EU has pushed back a decision on a list of "safe countries" from which travellers can visit Europe - a list which could exclude the US. With Trump struggling to get his re-election bid off the ground ahead of the November vote, the campaign confirmed that planned events featuring Vice President Mike Pence in Arizona and Florida next week had been postponed "out of an abundance of caution".

Infections are also running higher in India, with densely populated cities particularly hard hit. Although a nationwide lockdown is gradually being eased, the country set a daily record Saturday with 18,500 new cases and 385 deaths. Total infections are at 509,000, with more than 15,600 deaths. Iran, which has struggled to curb its outbreak even as it gradually lifted restrictions from April, said it would make mask-wearing mandatory in certain areas from next week. Many global events have had to be curtailed because of the pandemic, with the 50th anniversary of the first Gay Pride march marked mostly online. — AFP

Colombian with COVID-19 gives birth in coma

CALI: Diana Angola was fighting for her own life when she gave birth to son Jefferson. The 36-year-old had been put into a coma having contracted the novel coronavirus, which left her lungs barely able cope. Doctors performed a caesarian section due to the state of her lungs and Jefferson was born at least 14 weeks prematurely. The case generated "a lot of shock," Paula Velasquez, a doctor specializing in internal medicine at the Versailles clinic in the southeastern city of Cali, told AFP. "We knew that there were few reported cases of survival in a context as severe as our patient," said Velasquez. Angola, who also has a daughter, was taken to hospital on May 15 with a terrible fever. Three days later she was put into an induced coma and kept that way until surgery.

Because of her pregnancy, she was kept sitting up at a 45 degree angle, when those suffering from pneumonia are normally laid down flat to help their breathing. Jefferson, though premature, was born without the coronavirus - but doctors said he struggled to breathe, and that they had to revive him. "We had to go through the whole procedure of a critical patient," pediatrician Edwin Olivo, who was one of the specialists involved in the birth, said. But, he added, though the baby remains in an incubator he quickly started putting on weight and breathing more easily. "A human being can survive from 24 weeks with a good weight, but with a lot of technology and an effect



CALI: Diana Paola Angola who recovered of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, caress her son Jefferson at the neonatal room in the Versailles Clinic, in Cali, Colombia. — AFP

on neurological development and the lungs," said Velasquez.

Painful memories

Now recovered from the virus, Angola is desperate to be discharged with her son. "It's really emotional knowing that we fought, that the doctors helped us survive," she said, her voice faint. She says she doesn't know how she contracted the virus and her family insists she complied rigidly with the lockdown, first imposed on March 25 but which has been easing recently. In the hospital corridors, her sister Angela breathes a sigh of relief. Hospitals bring back painful memories: two years ago her mother and another sister died in intensive care, where Diana was for several weeks. Angela remembers her sister screaming:

"Don't let them put me on artificial ventilation, get me out of here, I don't want to die," after doctors told her what treatment they were proposing.

With Latin America now the epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic, Angola wants her sister and nephew's case to act as a lesson for others. "There are many people who go around without face masks, who go to parties, because they don't know anyone (with the virus) they don't realize" how dangerous it is. With more than 2,600 deaths and 80,000 cases, Colombia is the sixth most affected country in Latin America in terms of fatalities and fifth worst for infections. However, the virus is spreading quickly in the country of 50 million, with a quarter of those deaths and cases reported just last week. — AFP

Virus-hit Iran to make masks compulsory

TEHRAN: Iran said Sunday it will make mask-wearing mandatory in certain areas and has allowed virus-hit provinces to reimpose restrictions, as novel coronavirus deaths mounted in the Middle East's worst-hit country. The new steps were announced as Iran counted 144 new fatalities from the COVID-19 disease, its highest death toll for a single day in almost three months. The Islamic republic has refrained from enforcing full lockdowns to stop the pandemic's spread, and the use of masks and protective equipment has been optional in most areas.

President Hassan Rouhani said Iran would have to live with the virus for the "long haul", as he announced the latest measures to combat it. Mask-wearing would be "obligatory in covered spaces where there are gatherings", he said during a televised meeting of the country's anti-virus taskforce. According to him, the measure would come into force as of next week, continue until July 22 and would be extended if necessary. Rouhani said the health ministry had devised "a clear list" of the types of spaces and gatherings deemed high-risk, but he did not elaborate.

He also did not say what the penalty would be for those who fail to observe the measure. According to deputy health minister Iraj Harirchi, services would not be provided to those without masks in areas such as government organizations and shopping malls. But implementing the measure may be difficult, as according to

Tehran's mayor, many do not wear masks in places like the capital's public transport network, where it is already mandatory. "Fifty percent of metro passengers wear masks... and even fewer in buses," Mayor Pirouz Hanachi was quoted as saying by the semi-official ISNA news agency. "We can't forcefully confront people without masks," he added.

'Red' counties

Iran reported its first COVID-19 cases on February 19 and it has since struggled to contain the outbreak. The health ministry on Sunday announced 144 virus deaths in the past 24 hours, its highest for a single day since April 5, raising the total to 10,508. Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari also raised total confirmed infections to 222,669, with 2,489 new cases during the same period. Official figures have shown an upward trajectory in new confirmed cases since early May, when Iran hit a near two-month low in daily recorded infections. "Considering the rising numbers, I plead with you to definitely use masks outside and in covered places," Lari said. Iran closed schools, cancelled public events and banned movement between its 31 provinces in March, but the government progressively lifted restrictions from April to try to reopen its sanctions-hit economy.

The economy is starting to suffer under the pressures of the health crisis. The country's currency, the rial, has hit new lows against the US dollar in recent days, mostly over border closures and a halt in non-oil exports, according to analysts. The increasing virus caseload has seen some previously unscathed provinces classified as "red" - the highest level on Iran's colour-coded risk scale - with authorities allowing them to reimpose restrictive measures if required. — AFP

International

France's Macron takes drubbing in local elections, Greens surge

Elections are mid-term test for French president

PARIS: France President Emmanuel Macron's centrist party received a drubbing on Sunday in municipal elections, as the Greens celebrated victories in several big cities after a surge in support. Macron had hoped the elections would help anchor his young party in towns and cities across France, including Paris, ahead of an anticipated 2022 re-election bid.

But aides had more recently been playing down expectations and the sweeping wins by the Greens, who in some cities joined forces with leftist allies, may compel Macron to reshuffle his government to win back disenfranchised left-wing voters. In a rare bright spot for Macron, his prime minister, Edouard Philippe, won his bid to become mayor of the northern port city of Le Havre. Although the French constitution allows Philippe to name someone to act as mayor while he remains prime minister, his win deepens questions over his job as premier.

Exit polls showed the Greens winning in Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux and Strasbourg, building on the momentum created by their strong performance in France in last year's European Parliament elections. Yannick Jadot, a European Parliament lawmaker from the Europe Ecology - The Greens, hailed an historic victory. "It's an incredible green wave," he said. In Paris, the biggest prize of all, the incumbent Socialist mayor Anne Hidalgo celebrated victory after a sham-bolic campaign by Macron's camp.

France's 35,000 mayors set policy on issues from urban planning to education and the environment. While local factors typically drive voter choices, they give the electorate an opportunity to support or punish a president mid-mandate. "We have a government that is completely disconnected from reality," said

Naouel, a voter in Paris' 9th district who said she was backing the center-right opposition candidate. In Perpignan, Marine Le Pen's far-right Rassemblement National (National Rally) claimed victory, the first time the protectionist, anti-EU party has taken control of a town with a population of more than 100,000 people.



Macron's party may fail to win a big city

Reshuffle?

In this second round of voting, turnout was low and people wore masks because of the novel coronavirus pandemic. The first round was held just days before Macron imposed one of Europe's strictest lockdowns in mid-March. Turnout was just 40.5%, interior ministry data showed. The weak performance of Macron's La Republique en Marche will prompt much soul-searching for the president, who in the run-up to the vote said he wanted to reinvent his presidency with two years left in his mandate. Early in his presidency, Macron's left-wing opponents derided him as a 'president of the rich' as he eased taxes



MONTPELLIER: Montpellier city hall candidate leading the Montpellier Unie (Montpellier United) electoral list, Michael Delafosse (left) of the Socialist Party (PS), Montpellier Unie co-lister Coralie Manton (center) of the Europe Ecologie - Les Verts (EELV) green party, and European Member of Parliament Yannick Jadot of EELV react as they sit at a cafe terrace in Montpellier. — AFP

on companies and relaxed worker protections as he enacted reforms to liberalize France's regulation-choked economy. The reforms were bearing fruit: growth was robust among euro zone peers and stubbornly high unemployment was falling.

But the past three years have been mired in social unrest and the pandemic's impact is reversing some of Macron's hard-fought gains, as disillusion amongst the leftist faction of his party grows. The Green's stunning performance on Sunday may per-

suaude Macron to put more emphasis on the environment in his policies if he seeks to shore up his support on the left. "Ecology is the area where Macron is perceived as having done nothing," said Frederic Dabi, director of pollster Ifoop. "The French will want results on green issues." Macron will hold talks with his prime minister, presidency officials said. Asked about Philippe's future, a source close to Macron said: "What follows will be enshrined in continuity." — Reuters

Civilians among over 100 victims of Libya mines

TRIPOLI: Mines have killed or wounded more than 100 people, including many civilians, south of Libya's capital following deadly combat between rival forces, the UN said Sunday. "Mines and improvised explosive devices (planted) in or near homes have caused more than 100 victims," including civilians and mine disposal experts. UNSMIL, the UN mission in Libya, said in a statement.

It did not give a breakdown of killed or wounded. The toll was for casualties since early June, it said following a meeting in Rome between interim UN envoy to Libya Stephanie Williams and Government of National Accord head Fayez al-Sarraj. Earlier this month, the Tripoli-based GNA recognized by the UN regained full control of the capital and its suburbs after more than a year of fighting off an offensive by eastern strongman Khalifa Haftar. Haftar's forces have been accused by the GNA, the UN and Human Rights Watch (HRW) of laying mines in residential southern suburbs of the capital.

HRW said earlier this month that antipersonnel mines discovered in May were "of Soviet and Russian origin". At the Rome



TARHUNA: An aerial view shows Libyan experts searching for human remains during the exhumation of mass graves in Tarhuna, southeast of the capital Tripoli. — AFP

meeting, Williams also expressed concern over reports claiming that "mercenaries of various nationalities" had been deployed in Libyan oil installations. On Friday, the country's National Oil Corporation said Russian and other foreign mercenaries had entered the key Al-Sharara oil field the previous day. Al-Sharara is under the control of forces loyal to Haftar, who is backed by Russia. Williams said the presence of mercenaries there "threatens" to transform Libya's so-called oil crescent region into a "battlefield".

Plunged into chaos by the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed its

longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi, oil-rich Libya has two rival administrations. Haftar's forces, which are also backed by Egypt and the UAE, launched an assault in April 2019 to wrest control of the capital Tripoli from the GNA. Haftar's fighters withdrew from the southern outskirts of Tripoli and the entire west of the country earlier this month after a string of battlefield defeats to the Turkish-backed GNA. On Saturday, Sarraj also held talks in Rome with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte during which he stressed that a solution to the Libyan conflict cannot be military, the GNA said. — AFP

Israel orders evangelical's GOD TV off air

JERUSALEM: Israel's media watchdog said Sunday that it had withdrawn the broadcast license from US-based evangelical network GOD TV, accusing it of seeking to target Jews with Christian content. International Christian network's GOD TV launched its Shelanu (Hebrew for "ours") channel at the end of April on Israeli cable provider Hot, describing it as catering to Christians. But the channel provoked an immediate outcry in Israel, with then-communications minister David Amsalem accusing it of being a "missionary channel" seeking to convert Jews to Christianity. The Cable and Satellite Broadcasting Council launched an investigation to determine if GOD TV had misrepresented its content when it applied for a licence.

Council chairman Asher Bitton said on Sunday that following the probe and a hearing, he had informed Hot that Shelanu broadcasts must be removed within seven days. "The channel is aimed at Jews with Christian content, in contrast to the original broadcast request, which stated it was designated for Christians," Bitton said in a council statement. It said

that a Christian channel for Jews would not be automatically disqualified in the future, but that it would have to seek council approval, which Shelanu had not done. Hot could file a new request for Shelanu that would include "a truthful and detailed" characterisation of the channel, the statement added.

A spokeswoman for Hot said that the company was "cooperating with the council and will act in accordance with its decisions on the matter". In one promotional clip for Shelanu, GOD TV director Ward Simpson tells viewers, "we're going to preach the Jewish Jesus to the nation of Israel... they're going to hear the gospel presented to them in their native tongue". In a separate online video response to the criticism, he acknowledged that "proselytising in Israel is a very touchy subject" but went on to say that preaching about Jesus was a mission.

GOD TV broadcasts religious content in around 200 countries and claims to have several hundred million viewers. Israel enjoys vigorous support from evangelical movements in the United States but keeps a lid on missionary work in the Holy Land. While Israeli law only expressly forbids the giving of money or gifts to encourage conversions to another religion, missionary activities in general are closely monitored by the authorities and are offensive to many Israelis. According to Israeli government data, around two percent of the population is Christian, mainly Arabs. — AFP

Mississippi votes to remove Confederate symbol

JACKSON: Lawmakers in Mississippi voted Sunday to remove the Confederate battle standard from the state flag, after nationwide protests drew renewed attention to symbols of the United States' racist past. The measure passed with a 91-23 majority vote in the House of Representatives, triggering cheers in the Senate gallery. A few hours later, the Senate voted 37-14 for the bill. "In the name of history, whether you're black or white, rich or poor, Democrat or Republican, I ask you today to stand in the name of history," Democratic senator Derrick T. Simmons urged his colleagues before the vote.

"I ask each of you as we recognize and understand the Mississippi of yesterday, let's vote today for the Mississippi of tomorrow." Senators celebrated with cheers, hugs and fist-bumps. Mississippi is the only American state to incorporate the Confederate standard on its official flag, after nearby Georgia dropped it in 2003. The criss-crossed diagonal stars pattern was used by southern troops, including Mississippians, during the 1861-1865 American Civil War - the bloody conflict that brought an end to slavery - and for many it remains a symbol of the country's dark racial legacy.

The bill calls for a nine-member commission to design a new flag that does not use the Confederate standard and does include the phrase "In God, We Trust." State residents would vote on the design in November. If they reject the new design, Mississippi will go without a state flag until a new design is



MISSISSIPPI: The Mississippi state flag flies in front of the Mississippi State Capitol building in Jackson, Mississippi. — AFP

approved. Democratic senator John Horhn said changing the flag was a "big step... in the journey we are on to recognize everybody's God-given humanity."

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden also hailed the decision. "The arc of the moral universe bent a little more today," he wrote on Twitter, in reference to a famous quote on justice by civil rights campaigner Martin Luther King. Votes in both houses of the state's legislature followed weeks of mounting pressure and hours of impassioned debate. Governor Tate Reeves said Saturday that he would sign the bill into law. Racial injustice has been the subject of a renewed and fiery national conversation in the US since the death in May of unarmed African-American man George Floyd at the hands of a white police officer. His killing ignited mass protests and civil unrest across the country that has also led to the destruction of statues of former Confederate military leaders.

'Symbol of terror'

Mississippi in 2001 voted overwhelmingly

to retain its current flag, hailed by its defenders as a proud symbol of southern heritage and history. The push to change the flag has grown dramatically in the past week. "Either change the flag or I won't be representing this State anymore," a star Mississippi State University football player tweeted in recent days. "I meant that," senior running back Kylin Hill, who is African-American, added. "I'm tired." The day after Hill's tweet, the powerful Mississippi Baptist Convention, an association of the state's Baptist churches, called to change the flag's design.

They were soon joined by state business associations. Athletic directors and coaches from Mississippi universities have also urged lawmakers to act. "I understand many view the current flag as a symbol of heritage and Southern pride," country music star Faith Hill, a Mississippi native, tweeted. "But we have to realize that this flag is a direct symbol of terror for our black brothers and sisters." But Governor Reeves warned Saturday that changing the flag would not end racism or end divisions in his state. — AFP

Germany takes on high-stakes EU presidency

BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel hosted French President Emmanuel Macron for talks yesterday, just days before Germany takes on the rotating presidency of the European Union with an economy mired in the worst crisis since World War II. Berlin's chairing of the 27-member bloc will be its last with Merkel in charge, and could be the one that defines the legacy of the leader dubbed the "eternal chancellor".

With the future of the bloc's relationship with Britain still to be determined, a crucial shift to a lower carbon world in the balance and crises from Libya to Syria all jostling for attention, there is no shortage of burning issues to tackle. But it is the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic devastation it has wrought which will dominate and concentrate minds. "This crisis that we're currently experiencing is different compared to any other we have experienced since the founding of Europe," Merkel, in power since 2005, told parliament in an address laying out Berlin's priorities for the EU presidency.

"Alone in Europe, it has claimed more than 100,000 lives. A few weeks of economic standstill was enough to endanger what we have built up over years." With all to play for, member states are anxiously looking to Europe's biggest economy to take charge. In an interview published Saturday, Eu-

ropean Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said it was "very fortunate that Germany is taking over the presidency at this time of a major crisis." Merkel's long experience and credibility "helps enormously," she told the Handelsblatt newspaper.

German 'bulldozer'

Besides its geopolitical weight and economic heft, Germany takes on custodianship of the bloc with a strong hand as it has so far withstood the health emergency better than most other member states. Compared to the debt crisis that threatened to sink the single currency zone in 2009-2010, Germany looks very different today - it's out with Scrooge and in with Lady Bountiful. Once an obstinate champion of budgetary rigor, Merkel's government has ditched its no-new-debt dogma to throw resources at the crisis. Its program to shore up the economy totals more than a trillion euros in spending, loans and guarantees.

Together with Macron, Merkel sketched out the backbone of the 750 million-euro (\$840-million) fund proposed by von der Leyen to bolster the bloc's economy. The fund would offer grants - with no repayment obligation - to countries hardest hit by the pandemic, a major policy U-turn for Berlin. With an eye on the devastating blow taken by the worst-hit countries like Spain or Italy, Merkel explained that it was "imperative that Germany not only thinks of itself but is prepared for an extraordinary act of solidarity". "In such a crisis, everyone is expected to do what is necessary. And what is necessary in this case is rather extraordinary," she told the Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper. — AFP

International

Coronavirus rekindles global trade disputes

Mistrust grew, notably between US and China

BRUSSELS: At the start of the year, US-China tensions were easing after their Phase 1 trade deal, while Washington, Brussels and Tokyo agreed on new global trading rules to curb subsidies. A relative calm had set in. Then the new coronavirus struck. Countries across the world imposed 222 export curbs on medical supplies and medicines and in some cases food, according to Global Trade Alert, a Swiss monitoring group. For medical products, it was more than 20 times the usual level. Those curbs are now being lifted, but the pandemic has reinforced protectionist arguments by highlighting how global supply chains can deprive people of essential medical protection and disrupt food supplies, as well as threaten jobs. US President Donald Trump has said he wants to cut ties with China, the European Union is planning barriers to state-backed investment from China and elsewhere and China is demanding declarations that food imports are virus-free.

Former EU trade chief Cecilia Malmstrom said there was a "worrying" tendency towards protectionism in the world and the re-emergence of trade conflicts briefly paused by the health crisis. "Trade-wise we should be concerned," she told a seminar on Wednesday. The World Trade Organization said on Tuesday that global trade in goods was set for a record fall this year and that wider restrictions could see a 2021 rebound falling short. In the past fortnight, the United States has withdrawn from negotiations with European countries over a tax on digital firms and pledged a "broad reset" of its set of tariffs agreed with World Trade Organization partners. It has also threatened tariffs on a new range of European products, including fresh olives, bakery items and gin, to maintain pressure in a 16-year dispute over aircraft subsidies.

Rhetoric vs reality

To some extent, political rhetoric is running ahead of reality: US-China trade rose in April after COVID-19-related falls and US officials have said China is committed to buying more US goods in line with the Phase 1 deal. Chinese leaders and EU chiefs met virtually last Monday, although Brussels told China to make good on its promise to allow greater access for European companies and criticised its actions on the coronavirus and



US election a pivotal moment for global trade

Hong Kong. China offered deeper cooperation on COVID-19 and urged the EU to relax export controls. On Wednesday, Beijing said it was opening up seven more sectors to foreign investors. Beijing and Brussels are keeping up contacts with Washington and some progress has been made in limited EU-US talks on food standards and technology cooperation. Senior EU and US trade officers are holding talks every three weeks, officials say. China's most senior diplomat Yang Jiechi also met with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Hawaii on Wednesday, although Trump renewed his threat to cut ties with Beijing the next day.



BEIJING: A woman and a child wearing face masks walk past a row of fountains in a business district in Beijing, China reported another 17 cases of the coronavirus, of which 14 were local cases in Beijing. — AFP

Joe Biden

Trade is a bellwether for the cooperation and trust needed to help economies recover, particularly those of smaller countries, said Rohinton Medhora, president of Canada-based think tank the Centre for International Governance Innovation. Both China and Europe are bracing for rocky relations in the leadup to the US presidential election, but see some hope if Trump's Democrat

challenger Joe Biden wins. "Biden as president is the only chance for China-US relations to regain rationality," said Zhu Feng, dean of the Institute of International Studies at Shanghai's Fudan University. But he did not expect relations to change dramatically in the short term. There is broad bipartisan support in the US Congress for being tough on China, and European optimism over more cooperation with Washington is also tempered. — Reuters

Wang Yi delivers a speech on the Middle East

KUWAIT: On June 24, 2020 local time, State Councilor and Foreign Minister delivered a written speech entitled Upholding International Fairness and Justice and Advancing the Middle East Peace Process at the Security Council Open VTC on the Middle East, Including the Palestinian Question. Wang Yi noted, the Palestinian question remains at the heart of the Middle East situation. Its just, equitable settlement is a prerequisite for lasting peace and security in the region. Recently, the persistent tension between Palestine and Israel and this development is deeply unsettling. Wang Yi expressed, such a situation has further highlighted the significance of the four-point proposal on the Palestinian question put forth by President Xi Jinping in 2017. Building on this proposal, the Chinese side wishes to emphasize the following four points:

First, international consensus must not be contravened. The two-state solution is a bottom line of international justice, on which there should be no backtracking. China supports the establishment of an independent state of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 borders and with east Jerusalem as its capital. This is an inalienable right of the Palestinian people, one that cannot be bargained away. At the same time, Israel's right to survival and legitimate security concerns should be fully respected. Relevant UN resolutions, the "land for peace" principle and the two-state solution set out the overall direction of the final settlement. As such, they should be duly observed and reaffirmed.

Second, peace talks must not be abandoned. Palestine and Israel need to resume dialogues on an equal footing as soon as possible in order to rebuild trust, deescalate disputes and work out a way to live in peace as neighbors. The question of occupied territories in the West Bank should be resolved as early as possible based on relevant UN resolutions, and the final Palestine-Israel border delineated through peace talks.

Third, international support must not slacken. The Palestinian question should remain front and center of the international agenda. The global community should stick to an impartial and just position, and push forward the Middle East peace process with sincere efforts. Solution that departs from the track of peace will never bring enduring peace to the Middle East.

Fourth, humanitarian issues must not be ignored. It is imperative to end the blockade on the Gaza Strip as soon as possible and earnestly fulfill the obligations under the Paris Protocol and other international treaties. The international community should support Palestine in growing its economy, facilitate the work of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East and help improve the humanitarian situation in Palestine.

Wang Yi said, China is a sincere friend of the Palestinian people. We have all along followed the Middle East peace process with concern, and remained a staunch force for international justice and fairness and for all efforts conducive to de-escalation. Shouldering the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council should play its due role in bringing about a comprehensive, just and enduring solution to the Palestinian question.

Palestinians struggle to mobilize against Israel annexation

RAMALLAH: With loudspeakers mounted, Palestinian flags unfurled and civil servants allowed off work, everything appeared set for a large protest in Ramallah against Israel's annexation plans in the occupied West Bank. But only 200 people turned up for the June 8 demonstration, in a sign of the struggles the Palestinian Authority (PA) has faced generating outrage on the street against the prospective Israeli moves.

International condemnation of possible Israeli annexations has mounted ahead of July 1, when the Jewish state could take its first steps toward implementing part of a US-proposed Middle East peace plan. President Donald Trump's proposals, rejected outright by the Palestinians, pave the way for annexing key parts of the West Bank, including settlements long considered illegal by the majority of the international community. But on Palestinian streets, mobilisation against looming Israeli actions has been muted. "There is fatigue," Palestinian analyst Nour Odeh said. "Fatigue from the usual - to stand in Ramallah and wait for the cameras to show how angry we are," she added.

"You're talking to yourself, and then what?" There was a substantially larger rally in the West Bank city of Jericho on Monday, where crowds sang in unison and hoisted banners declaring "Palestine is not for sale," in condemnation of the Trump plan. The crowd of several thousand was brought to the protest site on



WEST BANK: Photo shows a view of ongoing construction work at the Israeli settlement of Givat Zeev, near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. — AFP

buses chartered by the event organizers - the Palestine Liberation Organization and Fatah party - but many left even before the speeches began. Odeh said the malaise was driven in part by frustration with Palestinian leaders who "promised to deliver peace through negotiation, (but) they failed."

'No power'

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six Day War. The 1993 Oslo peace accords were designed to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and establish the scope of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank. But nearly three decades on, doubts have grown

among some Palestinians about their leaders' ability to secure a deal with Israel that would be accepted on the Palestinian streets. "The PA is so weak! It has no power," said a farmer who requested anonymity in the Jordan Valley, a strategically crucial West Bank area targeted for annexation in the Trump plan. For Ghasan Khatib, an academic and former PA official, signs of apathy about the prospect of annexation reveal a widening "gap" between the Palestinian people and their leaders. Khatib blames this gap in part on "the absence of elections," last held in 2006 and on a disconnect between an ageing Palestinian leadership and a young population. — AFP

Australia sees biggest daily rise in COVID cases in two months

SYDNEY: Australia's second most populous state said yesterday it is considering reimposing social distancing restrictions after the country reported its biggest one-day rise in new coronavirus infections in more than two months. Propelled by Victoria state reporting 75 cases, Australia recorded 85 new COVID-19 infections in the past 24 hours, its biggest daily outbreak since April 11. Australia has fared better than many countries in the coronavirus pandemic, with around 7,800 cases and 104 deaths, but the recent surge has stoked fears of a second wave after several weeks of fewer than 20 new cases a day.

The resurgence in Australia comes as total infections hit 10 million cases worldwide and the global death toll from the virus tops half a million people. As new coronavirus cases have mounted, Victoria has embarked on a massive testing regime and the state's chief health officer said the state may need to re-introduce social distancing restrictions. "Changing the law is something we have to consider because we have to do whatever is required to turn this around," Brett Sutton told reporters in Melbourne, referring to questions about enforcing localized lockdowns.

Victorian state officials last week deployed ambulances and mobile test centers in a bid to test

most residents in 10 hotspot suburbs. However, some locals declined the voluntary throat and nasal swab tests. Victoria is hoping a new saliva test, which is less intrusive, will encourage more people to get tested - even though it is slightly less accurate. "We think it will play a role in bolstering testing reach across the state," said Professor Sharon Lewin, Director of the Doherty Institute, which developed the test. "Vulnerable populations or in people who have trouble with the throat swab, such as children or other individuals who find it more acceptable."



MELBOURNE: A member of the Australian Defence Force (right) takes a swab for a COVID-19 coronavirus test on a member of the public as people queue outside in their cars at a drive through testing facility in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

More stimulus needed

In May, Victoria - home to more than 6 million people - began lifting restrictions imposed a month earlier to slow the spread of the virus. It has pledged to remove the bulk of restrictions by the end of July. The restrictions, including forcing restaurants and cafes to offer only takeaway services, shutting schools and halting sports proved successful in slowing the spread of COVID-19. But it was a hammer blow to Australia's economy, which is heading into its first recession in three decades as the unemployment rate hits a 19-year high of 7.1%. Prime Minister Scott Morrison has called on states to continue easing restrictions, insisting the country's economy must be revived. — Reuters

Fighting in Taiwan parliament as oppn occupies chamber

TAIPEI: Fighting erupted in Taiwan's parliament yesterday as lawmakers from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) broke through barricades erected by the main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) who had occupied it to protest against government "tyranny". Taiwan is a rambunctious democracy and fights and protests inside the parliament building are not uncommon.

More than 20 KMT lawmakers occupied the legislature overnight on Monday, blocking entry to the main chamber with chains and chairs, saying the government was trying to force through legislation and demanding the president withdraw the nomination of a close aide to a high-level watchdog. Late morning yesterday, DPP lawmakers pulled down the barricades and forced their way in, surrounding the main podium where their KMT opposite numbers had holed up. There were scuffles and shouting as the KMT, including its youthful new chairman Johnny Chiang, struggled to hold their position.

The KMT lawmakers eventually withdrew, but denounced their DPP counterparts for using violence against them. "This is a very dangerous thing. You can't treat lawmaker colleagues like that," KMT lawmaker Wayne Chiang, the great-grandson of late autocratic leader Chiang Kai-shek, told reporters. Wayne Chiang is not related to the party chairman. The KMT, trounced in January's parliamentary and presidential elections, began their protest in parliament on Sunday afternoon. The party traditionally favours close ties with China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory. The KMT said it was protesting the DPP and President Tsai Ing-wen's forcing through bills and Tsai's nomination of her senior aide Chen Chu to head the Control Yuan, an independent government watchdog, calling Tsai's government "more tyrannical than before". — Reuters

Business

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10 Pakistan eventually launches its ambitious electric vehicle plan**10** Ooredoo Group ranked 25th in ME's top 100 firms: Forbes**11** Shale pioneer Chesapeake Energy files for bankruptcy

TOKYO: Pedestrians walk on a zebra crossing during a rainy morning outside Shinjuku station in Tokyo. Retail sales in Japan tumbled at a double-digit pace for the second straight month in May. — AFP

Japan's retail sales extend slump

Coronavirus curbs keep shoppers away

TOKYO: Retail sales in Japan tumbled at a double-digit pace for the second straight month in May as the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown measures delivered a heavy blow to consumer confidence and economic recovery prospects. The sustained downturn in demand raises risks that the world's third-largest economy could remain mired in recession longer than expected and a revival may be more sluggish. Retail sales fell 12.3 percent in May from a year earlier, pulled down by a slump in spending on big ticket items such as cars as well as clothing and general merchandise, trade ministry data showed yesterday.

The decline followed a 13.9 percent drop in April, which was the biggest fall since March 1998, and was worse than a 11.6 percent fall forecast by economists in a Reuters poll. Policymakers are hoping a rebound in private spending, which accounts for more than half of the economy, will help support growth as uncertainty over the global demand outlook threatens to delay a recovery.

Compared to a month earlier, retail sales in May saw their first rise in three months, increasing a sea-

sonally adjusted 2.1 percent following a 9.9 percent drop in April. "Although consumption has picked up a little, there was a strong sense of caution towards the infection and customers were slow to come back," said Takumi Tsunoda, senior economist at Shinkin Central Bank Research.



Consumer confidence tumbles

Some analysts say cash payouts of 100,000 yen (\$933) per citizen in response to the pandemic could fuel a bout of "revenge spending" following the lifting of a state of emergency in May and as more people get used to social distancing measures, which remain

in place in crowded areas. Midori, a 29-year-old worker at an electric instrument maker who declined to give her last name, said only one of her friends has received the government payout so far.

"I think consumption will decline compared to before the coronavirus outbreak," she said on Saturday while going shopping in Yokohama, adding that she plans to invest part of the cash handout and spend the rest on daily life essentials. Shinkin's Tsunoda worries that a weakening economy and "strong sense of uncertainty about the future" could lead to cuts in year-end bonus payouts and employment adjustments by firms.

The economy is forecast to contract by more than 20 percent on an annualized basis this quarter, marking the third straight quarter of decline, with business activity hit by lockdown measures from April through late May.

Nikkei falls 2%

Meanwhile, Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei index lost more than two percent yesterday following a rout on

US markets as fears grow over a resurgence of coronavirus infections.

The Nikkei 225 dropped 2.30 percent, or 517.04 points, to end at 21,995.04 — its first close below the 22,000 level since June 15th. The broader Topix index fell 1.78 percent, or 28.15 points, to 1,549.22. "The Nikkei index fell following sharp losses on US shares over fears of the spread of new coronavirus infections," Yoshihiro Ito, chief strategist at Okasan Online Securities, said in a commentary.

In Tokyo trading, SoftBank Group dropped 2.76 percent to 5,380 yen after it announced estimates it will gain 600 billion yen (\$5.6 billion) from the initial sale of T-mobile shares. Last week, the investment giant said it will sell the US firm shares worth over \$21 billion as it sheds assets to shore up its financial health.

Uniqlo casual wear operator Fast Retailing fell 2.35 percent to 60,640 yen while Sony shed 2.73 percent to 7,313 yen. Nissan tumbled 3.40 percent to 394.7 yen and Toyota 1.58 percent to 6,759 yen.

The dollar fetched 107.13 yen in Asian trade, against 107.22 yen in New York. — Agencies

Australian economy faces long road to recovery

SYDNEY: Coronavirus has done to Australia what even the global financial crisis couldn't: abruptly end a record growth run and help trigger a deep recession from which the country will take time to recover.

While Australia has had great success so far in heading off the pandemic, with just over 100 deaths, the cure of shutting out the rest of the world means massive hits to three key growth drivers — tourism, education and immigration. Fiona Gulin was 18 when the last recession hit Australia in the early 1990s. Back then, she managed to keep a part-time job at a music publication, before moving on to full-time work and a lucrative career in the entertainment industry.

This time, she hasn't been so lucky.

"I have been hit hard in this recession," said Gulin, who was laid off in April as the marketing director of the ANZ Stadium in Sydney, prompting her to ditch her rented house in the city and move back to her home in Melbourne. Gulin is among the hundreds of thousands who have lost their livelihoods overnight to the COVID-19 pandemic as Australia suffers its first recession in 30 years and its unemployment rate hits a 19-year high of 7.1 percent.

Even though Australia's economy was among the first to reopen after lockdowns worldwide and earlier than the government expected, it contracted 0.3 percent in the first quarter and a new wave of coronavirus cases could put a recovery at risk.

Women have been particularly hard hit. The unem-

ployment rate for females looking for full-time work surged to 8.3 percent in May from 5.4 percent in February before coronavirus-driven shutdowns kicked in. That compares with 7 percent for men from 4.8 percent in February.

"Australia is known as the lucky country but I am not very lucky at the moment," Gulin, who is receiving government welfare payments, told Reuters. "I have been talking to a few people about some opportunities but nothing has come up yet."

Vulnerable services

During the unprecedented run of growth, Australia transformed into an open, services-driven economy, feeding China's rise with its mineral and commodity wealth and shedding much of its manufacturing capability. The services sector accounts for almost two-thirds of Australia's A\$2 trillion (\$1.4 trillion) annual economic output — but is now particularly vulnerable to the closure of national borders and social distancing measures to tame coronavirus. "The

tourism-dependent economies are the ones we worry about the most," said Citi's global chief economist, Catherine Mann. Mann sees a V-shaped rebound for manufacturing generally but for the services or consumer discretionary sector, "it is absolutely an L-shaped recovery," she said, meaning it could take a while for growth to fully recover. "What was lost in the early part of this year will never be recovered from the standpoint of revenues for a company."

Virus shadow

Policymakers, too, are worried about the long road back to economic health. The Reserve Bank of Australia has pledged to keep its benchmark cash rate at a record low 0.25 percent until there is progress in achieving its employment and inflation goals. "We're going to have low interest rates for a long period of time," central bank Governor Philip Lowe said last week, adding that there would be "a shadow from the virus for quite a few years."

"People will be more risk averse, they won't want to borrow. In Australia, we're going to have lower population dynamics," Lowe said, referring to the idea that fewer foreigners entering the country would lead to lower consumer demand and a tighter labor market. Puja Basnet, an international student from Nepal, is reconsidering her options in Australia after losing her part-time job as a waitress. "I was at home for two months without work and I have almost run out of my savings. As a non-Australian I don't even have access to Centrelink," she said, referring to government welfare payments. For Basnet, the future is even more challenging as more people are now jostling for each job. An L-shaped recovery also means the unemployment rate will stay higher for longer. "I am really worried about the future. I have been applying for 30-40 jobs a week but there has been zero responses." — Reuters



SYDNEY: People are seen on the nearly deserted steps of the Sydney Opera House, in the wake of New South Wales implementing measures shutting down non-essential businesses. — Reuters

Business

Pakistan eventually launches its ambitious electric vehicle plan

Late-stage change leaves cars out of first phase

ISLAMABAD: Ghulam Hussain was used to zipping through the streets of Lahore with his wife and three young children perched perilously on his motorbike, whenever they visited relatives or ran errands.

But now that Pakistan has launched a plan to move vehicles over to electric power, Hussain is excited about the prospect of no longer spending 4,000 rupees (\$24) each month on petrol. "It would be a substantial saving for me to switch to an electric motorbike," said Hussain, who works as a driver for a family in the upscale Gulberg district, earning about 20,000 rupees a month.

"Eventually I'd like to buy a small car for the family, as the children are getting older. I would buy an electric car, if they are affordable." He will have to wait a while to find out. After a lengthy delay, Pakistan's ambitious electric vehicle (EV) policy was approved for implementation this month, but a late-stage change leaves cars out of its first phase. Critics warn this means it will take longer for Pakistan to reap the policy's environmental and financial benefits.

Covering buses and trucks, as well as two- and three-wheel vehicles, including rickshaws and motorcycles, the new policy introduces a raft of incentives to encourage manufacturers to start producing electric vehicles and customers to buy them.

Passed on June 10, the new policy was originally approved by Prime Minister Imran Khan in November, with the goal of cutting air pollution and curbing climate change. It aims to bring half a million electric motorcycles and rickshaws, along with more than 100,000 electric cars, buses and trucks, into the transportation system over the next five years.

The goal is to have at least 30 percent of all vehicles running on electricity by 2030. After pushback from traditional automakers, the first stage of the policy bypasses cars to focus on motorbikes and rick-

shaws - the most common form of transport in Pakistan's densely populated urban areas - as well as buses and trucks.

Malik Amin Aslam, climate change advisor to the prime minister, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that incentives for cars would be added to the policy "at a later stage", without specifying when. Leaving out cars makes the new policy "like a wedding party arriving with no bridegroom", said Shaukat Qureshi, general secretary of the Pakistan Electric Vehicles and Parts Manufacturers and Traders Association (PEVPMITA).

"The rest of the world is adopting this technology and it is pollution-free. The sooner it comes, the better it is for everyone," he said. Abdul Waheed Khan, director general of the Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association, which represents petrol-powered carmakers, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that the policy "states the broad parameters to which we agreed".

"We appreciate the direction and are awaiting further details," he added.

Policy offers incentives to manufacturers

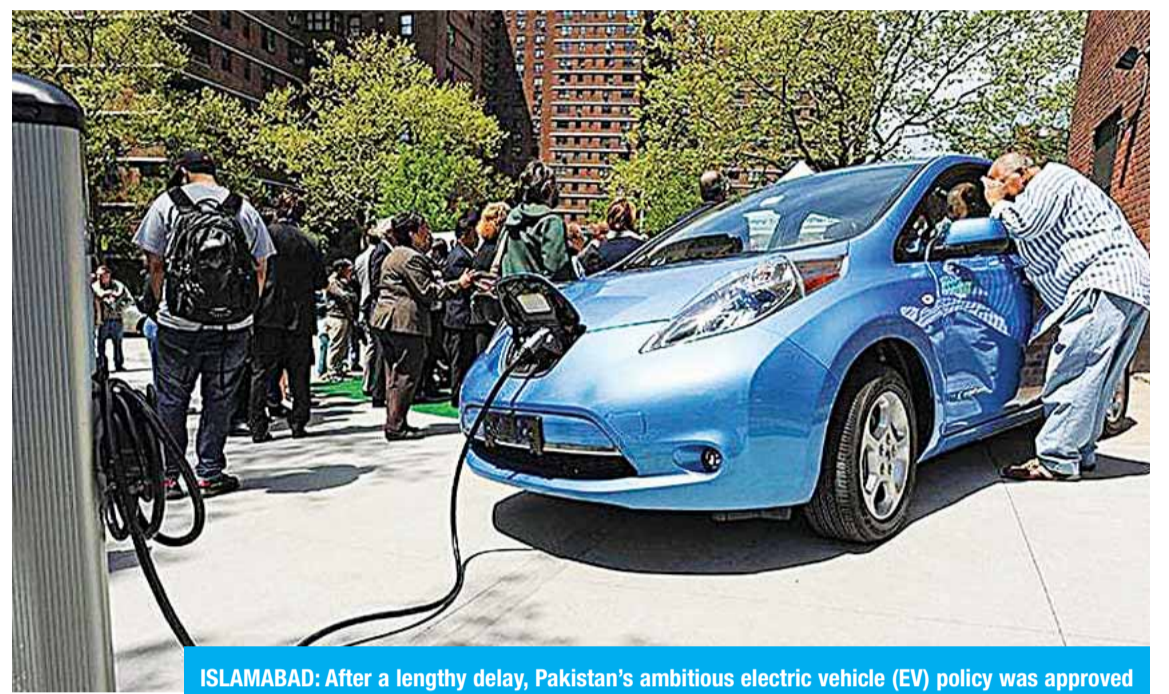
Poorer families left behind

Mian Ali Hameed, marketing director at Sazgar Engineering Works Limited, a leading rickshaw

manufacturer, said his company was ready to start producing electric rickshaws before the end of 2020.

Hameed confirmed that Sazgar's e-rickshaws will be more expensive than traditional versions, costing about 400,000 rupees, compared with 250,000 rupees for a petrol-powered ride. However, customers will soon see savings, as their petrol use drops dramatically and they spend less on maintenance like oil and filter changes, he explained.

"Customers could recover the (purchase) cost in one year, according to our estimates," he said. One potential obstacle to the speedy uptake of EVs is a lack of charging infrastructure. To address that, the



ISLAMABAD: After a lengthy delay, Pakistan's ambitious electric vehicle (EV) policy was approved for implementation this month. —AFP

policy makes it cheaper for authorities and companies to install charging stations in cities and along motorways.

But Qureshi of the PEVPMITA noted that owners of electric motorbikes, e-rickshaws and small electric cars do not need to wait. "You just plug them in at home, like a fan," he said.

Qureshi worries that leaving cars out of the policy for now will disadvantage lower-income families, estimating that switching to a small electric car could save up to 25,000 rupees a month in fuel costs.

"For many families in Pakistan, this much savings per month means a change in their lifestyles," he said.

Good for health

Addressing concerns about the cost of electric vehicles, climate advisor Aslam said the policy

includes incentives for their owners, such as removing yearly registration fees and a 50 percent discount on motorway tolls. In a country where large cities routinely suffer high levels of air pollution, the benefits to Pakistan's environmental health will also be significant, he added.

Each electric vehicle produces 65 percent fewer pollutants than traditional petrol-powered engines, he said. According to the latest World Air Quality Report, Pakistani and Indian cities dominated the most polluted cities in 2019.

Much of that pollution is due to Pakistan's rapid motorization, environmental experts say. A World Bank study published in 2014 noted that the number of vehicles on the country's roads jumped from about 2 million in 1991 to more than 10 million two decades later. —Reuters

Burgan Bank's new KD 125,000 cash prize winner

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced Faisal Faleh Aayed Al-Subaiei as the new KD 125,000 cash prize winner in the Yawmi quarterly draw. The winner expressed his excitement for being the winner of the rewarding cash prize with Yawmi Account from Burgan Bank.

The Yawmi quarterly draw offers customers chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 cash prize every three months.

To enter Burgan Bank's Yawmi quarterly draws, customers should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning.

Huawei loses out in 5G bid in Singapore

SINGAPORE: Nokia and Ericsson have been chosen as Singapore's main 5G network providers, telecom operators said, leaving Huawei with only a minor role as the Chinese tech giant faces growing US pressure.

Huawei has been dogged by allegations of stealing American trade secrets and aiding China's espionage efforts, with Washington pushing countries to bar the company from involvement in their next-generation networks.

Huawei has denied ties with the Chinese government. Singtel, one of the city-state's main telecom operators, said Wednesday it had chosen Sweden's Ericsson to build its 5G network after the government gave final approval.

A joint venture that includes the country's two other major telecom operators, M1 and StarHub, announced it had opted for Nokia to build its main 5G infrastructure. However, both M1 and StarHub said that other firms, including Huawei, could have some involvement in the project.

Huawei only won the contract to be a provider for a smaller, local network system, operated by TPG Telecom, a more minor player. The Southeast Asian city-state tries to maintain good relations with both the US and China, and Information Minister S. Iswaran insisted that no company had been excluded in the selection process.

"We have run a robust process spelling out our requirements in terms of performance, security and resilience," he said, adding that mobile network operators also had their own criteria. "There is a diversity of vendors participating in different parts of the 5G ecosystem, and... there remain prospects for greater involvement in our 5G system going forward."

Iswaran said the 5G investments will run into "billions of dollars". —AFP

Ooredoo Group ranked 25th in ME's top 100 firms: Forbes

DOHA: Ooredoo Group was honored recently when Forbes, the prestigious global business brand founded in 1917, published its listing of the leading 100 enterprises in the region. Ranked 25th, Ooredoo Group is in the top quarter of all MENA-based enterprises, thanks to the efforts of its companies across the Middle East, North Africa and South East Asia.

Targeting an audience of business leaders and influencers, Forbes promises 'Global 2000

Boeing 737 MAX ready to take off

NEW YORK: Boeing's 737 MAX plane could take its first test flight today, a crucial step for the survival of the company's star model that has been grounded for 14 months. Two sources close to the case told AFP Friday the flight could take place early the following week.

Neither Boeing nor the Federal Aviation Administration confirmed the flight when asked for comment on Sunday. "We continue to work diligently on safely returning the 737 MAX to service. We defer to the FAA and global regulators on the process," a Boeing spokesperson said.

The MAX has been grounded globally since March 13, 2019, following an Ethiopian Airlines crash that killed 157 people. That catastrophe came just a few months after a Lion Air MAX crash that killed 189 people.

The troubling similarities between the two accidents, both of which occurred shortly after takeoff, along with the pilots' inability to regain control of the plane, led global aviation authorities to ground the model indefinitely.

For months, the US aviation giant has been struggling to get its medium-haul aircraft — whose sales were its main

source of revenue before the grounding — back into service.

The model's anti-stall flight system, the MCAS, was partially to blame for both crashes. But other technical malfunctions, including one involving electrical wiring, were subsequently detected during the aircraft's modification process, slowing down its recertification. For weeks, Boeing has been awaiting the green light from authorities to conduct test flights to prove the modifications provide maximum safety.

Boeing Field

Civil aviation authorities cannot approve the modified model until they have examined how it performs in flight. They will also look at the thousands of data points collected during the flights.

For this reason, three days of test flights have been planned, according to the New York Times. They will take off from Boeing Field, just outside Seattle, the manufacturer's birthplace in the northwestern US state of Washington.

The weather is difficult to predict, but forecasts show Monday will be partially cloudy, with little wind and a 10 percent chance of rain. According to the Times, an FAA pilot will be at the controls to test out the modifications conducted on the plane, and a Boeing test pilot will also be on board. In general, test flights are meticulously prepared for.

Delay after delay

A few months ago, Boeing anticipated

Highlights', by taking readers 'Inside the Numbers of the World's Largest Public Companies'. From this perspective, the magazine also profiles Ooredoo at the end of March 2020 as one of the top three regional telecommunications operators, with sales worth \$8.2 billion and profits of \$611 million.

Reflecting upon this news, Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Group Chief Executive Officer, Ooredoo, said: "This latest accolade reflects our phenomenal growth and vision. We have taken giant leaps since the company was founded as the Qatar National Telecom Service in 1949, with one Doha telephone exchange and a capacity of just 50 lines — as Forbes correctly deduces from its thorough overview of the region."

Forbes' commentary is framed by the economic uncertainty which has accompanied the novel coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these difficult conditions — to which Ooredoo has developed a robust response — the Group has retained

assets worth \$24.2 billion and an overall market value of \$5.2 billion. Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani added: "Our teams around the world are working together as one to enable the communities we serve by providing much needed relief measures, innovative solutions and digital services."

Forbes also notes that the group employs over 16,000 people, and has football's Leo Messi as a global brand ambassador. According to Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, such colleagues "exemplify Ooredoo Group's vision and values— expressed in a genuine commitment to our company's goals".



Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani



In this file photo, Boeing 737 MAX 9 airliners are pictured on the flight line at the Boeing Renton Factory in Renton, Washington. —AFP

the MAX would return to service in mid-2020, around June. But the coronavirus pandemic, which resulted in travel restrictions and lockdown measures to try and slow its spread, has upset the schedule.

According to The Seattle Times, European and Canadian aviation authorities have demanded substantial new changes to the plane's flight control system. The two regulators, along with the FAA "have agreed Boeing will be required to make these additional design changes... only after the MAX returns to service," the newspaper reported.

When asked by AFP for further details, a Boeing spokesperson said Friday that safety is the company's top priority.

The spokesperson also said that Boeing is committed to answering regula-

tor questions and meeting all certification and regulatory requirements.

Boeing urgently needs to get the 737 MAX back in the air in order to pull itself out of a historic crisis.

The aircraft accounts for more than two-thirds of the company's order book and is therefore crucial to the mid-term survival of the manufacturer — which, like the entire aviation industry, is suffering from the effects of the coronavirus crisis.

At the end of April, Boeing released details on a downsizing plan to cut total headcount by 10 percent, or roughly 16,000 employees in all.

In March, credit ratings agency S&P downgraded its rating for Boeing to BBB from A-, moving it into a speculative category. —AFP

Global stocks hit two-week lows, oil slides

LONDON: World shares hit two-week lows and oil fell nearly 2 percent yesterday as the relentless spread of the coronavirus curbed optimism on the global economy, prompting investors to take shelter

in safe-haven bonds and gold. European stocks opened slightly lower, after Asian shares ended deep in the red playing catch up with Wall Street's ugly close on Friday as some US states reconsidered their reopening plans.

The global death toll from COVID-19 reached half a million people on Sunday, with one quarter of those in the United States, where cases have surged in a handful of southern and western states. MSCI's world shares index was off 0.2 percent, hitting its lowest level since June 15 dragged down by Japan's Nikkei shedding 2.2 percent and Chinese blue chips

off 0.9 percent. E-Mini futures for the S&P 500 were up 0.1 percent.

"The market is caught in a real battle between recovery optimism and news of increasing cases in certain geographical areas such as the US" said John Woolfitt, director of trading at Atlantic Capital Markets. "I think this battle will remain until the US get a handle on it."

Sovereign bonds benefited from the shift to safety with yields on US 10-year notes near 0.64 percent, having briefly been as high as 0.96 percent early in June. —Reuters

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

US dollar sell-off moderates; trade tensions back into focus

UK prepares list of businesses for July 4 reopening

KUWAIT: The US dollar's performance last week continued to be driven mainly by the day-to-day fluctuations in investor risk sentiment. However, the dollar sell-off that began mid-May seemed to have flattened out with a more balanced risk appetite from market participants given some renewed evidence of further COVID-19 spreading.

The US dollar softened at the start of the week alongside a modest improvement in investor risk sentiment as fears over the COVID-19 outbreak in Beijing had eased. The move was short-lived as trade policy uncertainty was thrust back into focus on comments from a White House advisor. In an interview, the advisor implied that the phase one China trade deal was "over." However, President Trump moved quickly to debunk the statement by tweeting that

legally impose tariffs on \$11.2 billion of US imports in retaliation for similar illegal subsidies provided to US's Boeing. Renewed trade tensions threaten to undermine the economic recovery and the reaction seen highlighted the FX market's continued sensitivity to trade policy uncertainty.

Partially supported by fresh trade uncertainty, the US dollar moved higher towards the end of the week as COVID fears in the US were rekindled. The spread of the virus continued in multiple states across the country while others such as New York and New Jersey imposed 14-day quarantines for incoming travelers from eight states. If one message can be seen in last week's volatile FX activity, it is a more challenging environment for risk assets which may see the dollar's sell-off moderate. Indeed, most global stocks were lower while the move towards treasuries was evident. Going forward however, the US dollar's performance will continue to be driven by fluctuations in risk-off/risk-on sentiment until the COVID shock fades and there is more clarity over the outlook for the global economy.

ized 46 percent in the second quarter.

ECB minutes

The ECB was under close monitoring last week as market participants carefully went through the minutes of the Central Bank's last meeting. First, there was the increase of the new Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program stimulus and second, a response to the German constitutional court controversy from May.

The minutes suggested that an increase in stimulus was warranted by two main factors. One, the medium-term outlook for price stability was threatened by the fallout from the coronavirus crisis. New projections see 0.3 percent and 0.6 percent downward revisions in the 2022 headline and core inflation rates respectively. And

agreement" that the "negative side effects had been clearly outweighed by the positive effects of asset purchases on the economy in the pursuit of price stability".

To further ease and resolve the stand-off with Germany's court, the ECB agreed to give unpublished documents underpinning its policy decisions to Bundesbank chief Jens Weidmann. Weidmann can then present them to the German parliament and government, as demanded by the court ruling. Most sources, expect that this would be sufficient enough for the Bundesbank to defend the ECB's policy in court. Still, the ECB revealed contingency plans should the court rule against its favor. In this worst-case scenario, the ECB would launch an unprecedented legal action against the German central bank, its

fears of a second wave of infections and Brexit uncertainties kept the pound in check.

EU Brexit Michel Barnier negotiator voiced his frustration with the UK saying London needs to give "clear signals" that it is ready to work towards a resolution. "I believe that the deal is still possible," he said, but "Our problem is not related to timing, but to substance, in particular that the UK keeps backtracking on its commitments in the political declaration." While it is reassuring that the EU believes a deal can be made, the possibility of a failure still weighs heavily on the pound.

Oil & gold prices

Oil prices inched lower at the end of the week but remained supported above the \$40 level as signs of fuel demand recovery was kept in check by a rising number of new coronavirus cases in the US and China. Analysts said satellite data showing a strong pick-up in traffic in China, Europe and across the United States pointed to an improvement in fuel demand. However, the prospect of increased US crude production also kept a lid on gains Friday. The recovery in oil prices makes some shale oil wells profitable again with larger producers reopening, increasing supply.

Gold prices hit a fresh eight year high last week heading for a third weekly gain on worries about rising coronavirus infections worldwide. Low interest rates and fresh money from stimulus measures are currently benefiting gold, which is viewed as a hedge against inflation and currency devaluation.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30770
The USDKWD closed last week at 0.30770.



Oil and gold prices remain supported

"the China trade deal is fully intact. At the same time, it was reported that the US is weighing up imposing new tariffs on \$3.1 billion of imports from the EU including products like olives, alcohol and trucks while also increasing existing tariff rates on other products like aircrafts, cheese and yoghurt. The move from the Trump administration is a continuation of the EU's "punishment" for providing illegal subsidies to Airbus. The tariffs are expected to come into effect in September if the US decides to go ahead. At which point, the WTO is also expected to determine if the EU can

Economic data

US data released last week continues to project a slow recovery in the world's largest economy. The number of Americans filing claims for unemployment benefits fell moderately as a second wave of layoffs partially offset hiring by businesses reopening. Furthermore, while orders for key capital goods rebounded in May, the increase recouped only a fraction of the prior declines. The recovery expected from reopening regional economies is currently being hampered by the labor market. While the figures seem to be improving, high unemployment is undercutting demand slowing the process. Economists expect GDP could shrink at as much as an annual-

two, financial conditions for the euro area as a whole were significantly tighter compared with the period before the pandemic, whereas the growth and inflation outlook called for looser financial conditions.

In May, the German constitutional court ruled that the ECB overstepped its mandate with over two trillion euros of government bond purchases and ordered the German federal bank—the Bundesbank should stop participating. In response, the minutes showed that ECB council members debated the effectiveness of their monetary policy. In the end, the ECB said there was "broad

biggest shareholder, to bring it back into the program.

UK eases restrictions

The British pound was relatively stable last week in comparison to its counterparts supported by euro weakness and further easing of COVID restrictions. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson revealed a list of eighteen businesses and venues including restaurants, bars, and places of worship that can reopen from July 4. Also, people will be able to meet and gather with friends and family more easily outdoors. However,

Smart action to overcome COVID impact

KUWAIT: To know more about COVID-19 impact on the IT and financial market and action to overcome the situation, we spoke with the industry expert Jacob Zachariah Karuvellil. An MBA holder from the University of Liverpool, UK, Jacob is a visionary business leader who brings over 3 decades of experience in the fields of IT, Banking, Finance, Operations, Organization Development, Compliance and Standards, Legal and Core Banking System end-to-end services to clientele. Jacob is currently the Partner of Testhouse, an organization that is the global leader in pure-play Quality Assurance and DevOps services.

Jacob enlightens us that, like any other sector the impact on the financial and affiliated services industries is expected to be equally bad and restoration to the norm will require some serious planning and action by the industry leaders. Banking and financial management will never be the same. It is evident that based on how long we take to settle after this pandemic, the way people bank, the use of the latest technology for work and life, and the value of brands will inevitably change. Banks being one of the most integrated establishments to the general public will play a key role in the restitution of tomorrow.

Executive management focus: McKinsey in a report has indicated the relevance of risk and capital management—credit-loss to be key differentiators in managing performance post-COVID-19. It becomes quintessential that processes are reviewed and revamped while ensuring that the organizations' IT function is well aligned with the business goals. The need to be Agile has been proven to be a significant virtue operating under the current crisis conditions and Executive Management should imbibe these principles into their core values and how they for evolve into a more effective and efficient organization.

Branchless banking

Banks of today should look to transform the way they engage their customers with the bank. Just as we have seen how the usage of the cheque for financial transactions is almost on the verge of becoming obsolete, the banking sector should be prepared for the evolving nature of way transactions will be carried out in the Post COVID-19 era. Customers would be driven to interact



Jacob Zachariah

with tech kiosks for most transactions, reserving real person interaction for indulging unique requirements that cannot be managed otherwise. More of Interactive teller machines (ITMs) will be the norm, enabling users to directly deposit and withdraw funds, or inquire balances, and going one step further, this can include video screens so

that in case customers would need further assistance they can use it to speak with human tellers. ATM innovations are already available globally for example, biometric authentication is already used in several countries, and iris recognition is in place at ATMs in middle-east. These technologies can further help ensure better security by protecting against ATM hacks.

Contactless payment options are rapidly being adopted across most banks where cards have been the norm for quite some time. Technologies that use radio-frequency identification (RFID) or near field communication (NFC) allow smartphones and other mobile devices to be used for payments. Mobile wallets are very common now; these applications emphasize convenience allowing their users to make purchases with their smartphones – without ever having to take out their physical credit card. These new options would be the new standard; typical Branches and ATM are a dying mode of banking. At the same time, this can also be considered as an opportunity to transform regular branches into a network of highly connected smaller, digitally enabled, multi-format units that offer an engaging personalized experience that supplements the customer's digital interaction with the bank.

Products innovation

Innovation will be the keyword - banks need to innovate and come up with an alternative and revolutionary measures and products that could provide customers' newer ways to manage, save, and even source income. This will sway existing customers to engage more and attract new ones. As per 'Business Insider Intelligence', mobile banking is flourishing at five times the rate of online banking. Successful mobile banking options that new banks are providing also include money management features. Savings and financial wellness scoring tools, are seen to be attracting millennials and is essential with new-age mobile banking

Replace legacy systems and outdated IT technology:

Software providers and banks using outdated IT technology and product will be out from the market shortly. So, the priority should be to have an advanced product with the latest technology. The growth of mobile and digital transformation in the banking system is already explosive. Some of the new technologies such as blockchain, machine learning, and cloud computing will enable banks to improve numerous facets of banking and automate their operation. Artificial intelligence solutions, such as Chabot's, often assist customers in simple tasks such as providing customer support (now 24x7) and for making payments.

Omni-channels

Almost all banks were already talking about digital transformation, most had initiated it and many have implemented it but the time has now become inevitable that if one isn't ready they won't survive anymore. Banks management should provide top priority to transform the operations to cater to the digital world and being customer-centered, and that means offering seamless Omni-channel experiences. Banks should use customer journey mapping tools to engage with customers beyond traditional financial channels. Understanding mobile banking or digital banking usage of customers will help guide on how to make the best use of existing digital channels. Banks can then use re-targeting options to reach out to customers who have not made any transactions. The successful banks and financial institutions would proactively update their customers much before they feel the need to reach out for help, especially in times of crisis.

Better usage of resources and reduction of overhead: As per the latest edition of the "Global Economic Prospect report", the current recession is said to be the first such for over 100 years that has been sparked by an epidemic.

Importance of work from home

While the impact of COVID 19 has touched all facet of our lives globally, it also has revealed the advantages which a WFH solution can provide. Owing to adherence to best service practices, the transition to WFH has been particularly smooth for the IT industry and banking sectors which have continued to provide the same level of service without having a significant impact on productivity. Collaboration tools like Zoom, MS Teams, WebEx have greatly helped to promote teamwork and discussion even though physically we may be miles apart. This indicates that organizations and business leaders need to seriously evaluate the pros and cons of establishing the WFH as a permanent strategy even after the impact of COVID-19 diminishes.

Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc said in a sobering opening address. He emphasized the "serious consequences" of the pandemic for economic development among ASEAN'S members. ASEAN General Secretary Lim Jock Hoi confirmed the bleak outlook, warning the region's economy is expected to contract for the first time in 22 years.

There is also increasing angst that the fallout from the virus has provided cover for new Chinese plays in the South China Sea, the resource-rich waterway Beijing claims most of but is also contested by Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Taiwan.

In a draft statement seen by AFP, ASEAN leaders noted concerns over "land reclamations, recent developments and serious incidents" in the South China Sea.

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte—using strong language for a leader that is seen as having pivoted toward China from its traditional ally the United States—urged all parties "to refrain from escalating tensions and abide by responsibilities under international law".—AFP

Vietnam warns of economic calamity at ASEAN summit

HANOI: South East Asian leaders warned the virus pandemic had swept away years of economic gains and was hindering negotiations over the flashpoint South China Sea as they met online for a delayed summit.

Vietnam, the current chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), had wanted to use the summit to inject momentum into talks on a sprawling China-backed trade pact. But the immediate focus for the 10-member bloc was the crippling cost of the coronavirus, which has ravaged the economies of tourism and export-reliant countries such as Thailand and Vietnam. "It has swept away the successes of recent years... threatening the lives of millions of people," Vietnam's



HANOI: Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc addresses regional leaders during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit, held online due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, in Hanoi.—AFP

CBK's Najma Account prizes

KUWAIT: Najma account prizes include a weekly KD 5000 award, a monthly KD 20,000 award, a biannual KD 500,000 award and the world's largest annual and Guinness world record certified award of KD 1.5 million.

Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said that the Najma Account can be opened by depositing a minimum of KD 100 but clarified that the account balance must be at least KD 500 in order to enter all draws and that each KD 25 provides an entry chance in the draw in addition to other benefits such as ATM card and credit cards and other banking services.



NEW YORK: Chesapeake Energy Corp filed for Chapter 11 on Sunday, becoming the largest US oil and gas producer to seek bankruptcy protection in recent years – Reuters

Shale pioneer Chesapeake files for bankruptcy

NEW YORK: Chesapeake Energy Corp filed for Chapter 11 on Sunday, becoming the largest US oil and gas producer to seek bankruptcy protection in recent years as it bowed to heavy debts and the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on energy markets.

The filing marks an end of an era for the Oklahoma City-based shale pioneer, and comes after months of negotiations with creditors. Reuters first reported in March the company had retained debt advisers. Chesapeake was co-founded by Aubrey McClendon, an early and high profile advocate of shale drilling who died in 2016 in a fiery one-car crash in Oklahoma while facing a federal probe into bid rigging. Over more than two decades, McClendon built Chesapeake from a small wild-catter to a top US producer of natural gas. It remains the sixth-largest producer by volume.

Current CEO Doug Lawler, who inherited a company saddled with about \$13 billion in debt in 2013, managed to chip at the debt pile with spending cuts and asset sales, but this year's historic oil price rout left Chesapeake without the ability to refinance that debt. "Despite having removed over \$20 billion of leverage and financial commitments, we believe this restructuring is necessary for the long-term success and value creation of the business," Lawler said in a statement announcing the filing.—Reuters

Russian mining giant admits 'violations' at Arctic plant

MOSCOW: A Russian mining giant behind an enormous Arctic fuel spill last month said Sunday it had suspended workers at a metals plant who were responsible for pumping wastewater into nearby tundra. Norilsk Nickel cited a "flagrant violation of operating rules" in a statement announcing it had suspended employees responsible for dumping wastewater from a dangerously full reservoir into wildlife. The incident occurred at the Talnakh enrichment plant near the Arctic city of Norilsk, the company said, one month after the unprecedented fuel leak sparked a state of emergency declared by President Vladimir Putin.

More than 21,000 tons of diesel leaked from a fuel storage tank at one of the company's subsidiary plants near Norilsk. The fuel seeped into the soil and dyed nearby waterways bright red.

A source told Interfax news agency Sunday that in the most recent case, around 6,000 cubic meters of liquid used to process minerals at the facility had been dumped and that the discharge had lasted "several hours".

It was impossible to determine how far the wastewater had dispersed, the source said. Independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta published videos from the scene showing large metal pipes carrying wastewater from the reservoir and dumping foaming liquid into nearby trees.

The journalists claimed the factory deliberately funneled the wastewater into wildlife areas and hastily removed their pipes when investigators and emergency services arrived on the scene.

Unauthorized dumping

The Investigative Committee, which probes serious crimes, said it had received reports of "unauthorized dumping of liquid waste into the tundra"

on the site of the facility, and had opened an enquiry.

Heavy machinery used to clear the pipes crushed a car delivering officials to the scene, Novaya Gazeta reported. Interfax said no one was injured in the incident which was also being probed.

Norilsk Nickel spokeswoman Tatiana Egorova earlier Sunday told AFP that employees of the factory had pumped out "purified water" and that an internal investigation was under way. Russia's natural resources agency said the decision to remove water from the reservoir was taken to avoid an emergency after heavy rains and recent tests had caused water levels to increase dramatically.

The local emergency services in a statement said the wastewater was not likely to reach the nearby Kharayelakh river. The massive fuel spill last month took place at a plant owned by a subsidiary of Norilsk Nickel, which had said that the fuel tank had collapsed or sank due to melting permafrost due to climate change.

Putin declared an emergency situation after the accident and the head of Norilsk Nickel, oligarch Vladimir Potanin, promised to pay the costs of the clean-up. The Russian authorities said earlier this month they had cleared the spill from the surface of a river, but the full clean-up could take years.

Fuel spill

Meanwhile, water and soil samples that were taken near the site of a giant fuel spill in the Russia's Arctic and prepared for tests at an independent lab have been held up at the Norilsk airport, a lawmaker and Greenpeace said. A vast fuel tank lost pressure in the end of May and released more than 20,000 tons of diesel into rivers and subsoil near Norilsk, an incident that Greenpeace has compared



A view of the site of a diesel fuel spill at Norilsk's Combined Heat and Power Plant No 3.

to the devastating 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill off Alaska.

The city of Norilsk is home to mining giant Norilsk Nickel. The company and emergency specialists are collecting contaminated soil and fuel from local rivers into containers. Sergei Mitrokhin, a lawmaker at Moscow legislature, said he was trying to fly out of Norilsk on Saturday with samples in his baggage, when the airport security held him up on suspicion he was trying to carry combustible materials.

"I had to leave the baggage behind. First, they had referred to the order of the security service of Norilsk, which had to clear transportation of all the samples," he told Reuters.

"Then they said the police had received an anonymous call that the baggage could contain some combustible materials," Norilsk Nickel, in emailed

comments, cited Sergei Erastov, deputy head of security at the Norilsk airport as saying that the passengers carried samples of water and soil without necessary documents.

He said they were given the option of leaving the samples at a temporary baggage storage or doing the right paperwork.

A police serviceman on duty at the airport, Sergei Kuzmin, told Reuters that the security service had not allowed the samples to be taken on board due to lack of clearance documents. Mitrokhin was in Norilsk at the request of reporters from Novaya Gazeta newspaper, who have been covering the spill for the past two weeks. They shared details of the fallout from the spill and handed over the samples, collected by the activists from Greenpeace. — Agencies

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Lifestyle | Features



These handout pictures taken in the park of the United Nations office in Geneva shows a giant land art painting by French artist Saype (Guillaume Legros) commissioned by Switzerland to mark the 75th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter. Entitled 'World in Progress' the 6000 square meters ephemeral land art painting represents two children drawing their ideal world.—AFP photos

Hey, You! Rolling Stones warns Trump of legal action over song use

British rock legends The Rolling Stones have threatened legal action against Donald Trump for the US president's use of their song "You Can't Always Get What You Want" at campaign rallies. The band has appointed performing rights organisation BMI to try to stop him using the song, according to a statement given to US website, Deadline, overnight Saturday. "The BMI have notified the Trump campaign on behalf of the Stones that the unauthorised use of their songs will constitute a breach of its licensing agreement," read the statement, which was retweeted by the Rolling Stones official Twitter account. "If Donald Trump disregards the exclusion and persists then he would face a lawsuit for breaking the embargo and playing music that has not been licensed."

The letter is the latest in a campaign to stop Trump using the song at rallies which dates back to 2016. It was initially played at Republican party primaries. The BMI added that it has not yet received any response from lawyers acting for Trump. The Stones are not the first major act to call on the president to stop using their songs.

Earlier this month, the family of rock musician Tom Petty issued a cease and desist letter over Trump's use of "I Won't Back Down" at a rally in Tulsa on June 20. His family posted an open letter on Twitter saying the late singer "would never want a song of his used for a campaign of hate". Queen complained when Trump walked on stage to their anthem "We Are The Champions" during a Republican Party event in Cleveland, Ohio, in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election.

Pharrell Williams, Rihanna, Aerosmith, Adele, Neil Young and the estate of singer Prince have all hit out



In this file photo Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones performs as they resume their 'No Filter Tour' and North American Tour at the Soldier Field in Chicago.—AFP

after the use of songs by Trump. And singer Betty Buckley also recently urged composer Andrew Lloyd Webber to stop the president using "Memory" at his campaign rallies. Buckley sang the song in the original Broadway production of "Cats" in the early 1980s. "You Can't Always Get What You Want" was a track first heard 51 years ago, on the 1969 album "Let It Bleed". Written by frontman Mick Jagger and guitarist Keith Richards, it was voted by Rolling Stone magazine as one of the 500 greatest songs of all time.—AFP

France arrests six over Banksy artwork stolen from Bataclan

Six people have been arrested in France over the theft of an artwork by street artist Banksy commemorating the victims of the 2015 Paris attacks that was stolen from the Bataclan concert hall, sources said Saturday. The suspects were arrested across France this week after the artwork, an image of a girl in mourning painted on one of the Paris venue's emergency doors, was found in Italy earlier in the month, judicial and police sources told AFP. On Friday, two were charged with theft while the other four were charged with concealing theft, the sources added. All six were placed in pre-trial detention.

The door with the artwork was cut out and taken in January last year at the Bataclan, where Islamic State gunmen massacred 90 people in one of a series of bloody attacks in Paris in November 2015. French and Italian police said two weeks ago that they found the work—still in good condition—in the attic of an abandoned farmhouse in Italy's central east Abruzzo region.

Its theft—which was caught on surveillance videos showing hooded figures using an angle grinder to cut the door out—had caused "deep indignation," the Bataclan said last year. It was "a symbol of recollection and belonging to all: locals, Parisians, citizens of the world has been taken from us", the venue said.

'Symbolic and emotional value'

One of the French policeman who intervened in the 2015 Bataclan attack was present when the door was found, Christophe Cengig from the Organised Crime Unit at the French embassy in Rome told AFP. "It was a very emotional moment for my colleague," he said. "Coming here, finding it... it has a strong symbolic and



In this file photo Italian Carabinieri pose near a piece of art attributed to Banksy, that was stolen at the Bataclan in Paris in 2019, and found in Italy, during a press conference in L'Aquila.—AFP

emotional value, so we're very, very, very happy". The dramatic white stencil of a sad-faced girl on a black door was created when the artist "blitzed" the French capital with murals during a whirlwind 2018 trip.

Works by Banksy, known for their distinctive style, irreverent humour and thought-provoking themes, have been found on walls, buildings and bridges from the West Bank to post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans. At auction, they have sold for more than \$1 million.

Banksy is believed to have started out as a graffiti artist in London, although he has kept his identity a secret. The Bataclan door is not the only of his works to have been stolen from Paris. Others include a mural of a businessman in a suit offering a dog a bone, having just sawed the animal's leg off, and an image of a masked rat wielding a box cutter, which disappeared from outside the Pompidou Centre. Some of the stolen works have since been recovered and fans have covered some of his Paris street art with Plexiglass to protect them.—AFP



Assa Traore (left), the sister of Adama Traore, a black man who died in police custody in 2016, and the father of Lamine Dieng (third right), a French-Senegalese 25 year-old who died after his arrest in 2007, shake hands during a demonstration against racism and police brutality and in memory of Lamine Dieng, a French-Senegalese 25 year-old who died after his arrest in 2007, on June 20, 2020, in Paris.—AFP

France's Assa Traore honoured at BET Awards

International activist Assa Traore, whose brother Adama was killed in French police custody four years ago, was given the BET Global Good award on Sunday. Traore thanked BET, an American television channel dedicated to African-American and minority people, for the award, calling it "an acknowledgment of our fight." "It's an acknowledgment for all the victims, for all the families who keep fighting for truth and justice," she said in a video message played during the virtual awards ceremony.

The award is "BET International's recognition of public figures who use their platform for social responsibility and goodness while demonstrating a commitment to the welfare of the global Black community," according to the channel's website. Before her brother's death, Traore, who has been dubbed the French Angela Davis after the US political activist, had never been someone who campaigned for a cause. But the 35-year-old mother of three was thrust into the heart of the global fight against police violence and racism by the death in Minneapolis police custody last month of George Floyd. For four years, she campaigned, organized demonstrations, spoke out publicly and gave numerous interviews after alleging her brother was killed by the police. An investigation is still ongoing. For a long time, the "Adama fight" remained a local battle unnoticed outside France. But the death of George Floyd has catapulted it into the global consciousness.—AFP

Acclaimed Russian director given suspended sentence after fraud conviction

A Moscow court on Friday handed outspoken Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov a three-year suspended sentence following a fraud conviction denounced by his supporters as politically motivated. Known for his daring statements and groundbreaking projects, Serebrennikov has angered Russian conservatives and criticised censorship of the arts in Russia, warning of a return "to the most pathetic Soviet practices". "Serebrennikov's rehabilitation is possible without a real prison term," judge Olesya Mendeleyeva said, adding that the acclaimed theatre and film director would have to pay a fine and be on probation for three years.

Hundreds of supporters who had gathered outside the courthouse broke into applause on hearing news of the sentence. "A huge thank you for your support and for the fact that you believe in my innocence," Serebrennikov, 50, told supporters, wearing sunglasses and a black facemask. "Respect social distancing, do not infect each other. Because you have to fight for the truth," he said. Prosecutors had asked for a six-year prison term for Serebrennikov, who was on Friday found guilty of misappropriating the equivalent of two million dollars in state funds meant for a theatrical project. The judge had said that Serebrennikov and co-defendants Yury Itin and Konstantin Malobrodsky "carried out actions directed at personal enrichment" that misled employees of the culture ministry.—AFP



Russian theatre and film director Kirill Serebrennikov speaks to journalists outside a court building in Moscow on Friday.—AFP



Performer La Kim Quyen (left) of the "Sai Gon Tan Thoi" (Modern Saigon) LGBT LoTo troupe during a lotto show in Ho Chi Minh City.—AFP photos



Photograph shows performers Nha Vy (centre left) and La Kim Quyen (centre right) of the "Sai Gon Tan Thoi" (Modern Saigon) LGBT troupe during a lotto show in Binh Duong province.

Vietnam lotto shows just the ticket for marginalised LGBT community

Each night that Nha Vy steps proudly on stage in her traditional Vietnamese ao dai, or sometimes mini dress and heels, memories grow fainter of the taunts she endured as a transgender woman in her rural village. Nha Vy is one of hundreds of LGBT performers in Vietnam who have found confidence, and a way to earn a living, through lotto shows, a form of entertainment dating back to the French colonial era and now wildly popular in the south. Like many sexual and gender minority people in Vietnam, the 26-year-old has faced stigma and discrimination for much of her life—despite a gradual change in social attitudes in the communist state.

"Not many people from the LGBT community have top class jobs... we generally don't make it to higher education because we are bullied at school," she told AFP, perching on a tired floor sleeping mattress in her rented flat in Ho Chi Minh City. "Even if I had a diploma, I would still feel inferior and not dare (to apply for an office job).

"So I do this performance to earn money... (but also) whenever I am on stage as a woman I feel at ease," said Nha Vy, who goes by this stage name as she sings, dances and deals out lotto tickets at her tri-weekly shows with the Sai Gon Tan Thoi, or Modern Saigon, troupe. Up until the 1990s, such performances were a regular part of rural life in the south but their

appeal began to fade until Sai Gon Tan Thoi burst onto the mainstream nightlife circuit in 2017.

Boosted by a feature film that year and the hugely successful documentary "Madam Phung's Last Journey" in 2014 that detailed the life of a monk turned head of a transgender troupe, Sai Gon Tan Thoi—and other modern rivals—started attracting more than a hundred people each night. Much of the audience at the shows in Ho Chi Minh City and next door Binh Duong province is young, and view the rainbow of swishing gowns through their phone screens.

'Just the entertainment?'

"We perform with our sweat, tears and blood—not just to sell fun but because I want people to understand this is a real profession," said La Kim Quyen, a transgender woman, who has been performing with Sai Gon Tan Thoi and other lotto troupes — known as Lo To in Vietnam—since she was a teenager. "I am happy with my life, with what I have achieved... earning enough for myself and my mother," added the 39-year-old, softly dabbing blusher on her cheeks ahead of the night's show.

Vietnam is seen as relatively progressive on LGBT issues—the one-party state lifted the ban on same-sex marriage in 2015 — although it stopped short of full legal recognition for the unions and a long-promised transgender law to allow legal gender changes has not yet materialised. In schools, misinformation about sexual orientation and gender identity is rife and some children are taught by both teachers and parents that homosexuality is a mental illness, according to a Human Rights Watch report published this year. Vuong Kha Phong, LGBT rights programme officer at Vietnamese NGO iSEE, said shows that help promote visibility of sexual and gender minorities can boost tolerance but warned that while they were "a good first step", they are not enough.—AFP



Iranian baker Esmail Asghari, 66, poses with Barbari bread in Tehran.



Iranian baker Farzad Rabiei, 30, poses with Barbari bread dough



This combination of pictures show various types of bread being baked in traditional ovens in Iran's capital Tehran, Barbari bread (top left, bottom left); Taftoon bread (top right) and Sangak bread (bottom right).—AFP photos

THE MEN WHO BAKE UP A 'BLESSING' IN TEHRAN



This combination of pictures show (top, left to right) baker Mohammad Mirzakhani, 41, making Taftoon bread; baker Mohammad Abdi, 24, cooking Lavash bread; (bottom, left to right) baker Esmail Asghari, 66, making Barbari bread and baker Hasan, 17, displaying Fantezi bread.



Iranian baker Abbas Abdi, 24 (not seen), prepares Lavash bread dough in Tehran.



(From left to right) Iranian bakers Hasan, 17, and Mohsen, 23, pose behind a plastic sheet to protect their products, at their bakery in Tehran.

They bake what Iranians call “the barakat (blessing) of the table”, and it is eaten for breakfast, lunch and dinner—traditional breads are a staple of the Iranian diet. Bakeries are easy to locate in urban centres of Iran where all one has to do is spot a queue spilling onto sidewalks or simply detect the irresistible scent of freshly baked flatbreads. Exclusively the job of men in the Islamic republic, bakers get up well before the crack of dawn while everyone else is still asleep.

Dressed in all-white clothing that can include caps, they hail from across the country and are usually made up of ethnic Azeris, Kurds and Lurs. The baker moves and gesticulates constantly as he works in what resembles a dance in front of gas-fired ovens. He takes a ball of dough and spreads it on a board before placing it on the inside walls of the glowing furnace using a long set of tongs.



Iranian baker Hasan, 17, poses with loaves of bread in Tehran.

‘ Bread is the staple and the main food of our people ’

Baking in the time of corona

The coronavirus has also affected the bakers’ profession like so many others, and their income has decreased as a result. “At the beginning of the pandemic, some of our customers who had been quarantined bought ingredients from us to bake bread at home,” said baker Esmail Asghari. But making traditional bread at home is difficult, meaning customers were quick to return to their local bakery. “During isolation, I made bread twice at home, but it didn’t go well and I realised it wasn’t a good idea!” said Negar Rezai, a customer clutching some sangak outside a bakery in north Tehran. “We have bread for breakfast and dinner and often eat rice for lunch,” adds the 50-year-old housewife.

In order to ensure hygiene, one baker has enforced the strict sanitary instructions imposed by the health ministry, including social distancing and use of bank cards instead of cash. “We had a lot of difficulty during the fasting month of Ramadan,” said Mohammad Mirzakhani, a 41-year-old taftoon maker. “The line became long and many people did not respect (health) protocols.” The health ministry reported in January that on average Iranians consume 310 grams (nearly 11 ounces) of bread per day. “Bread is the staple and the main food of our people,” it said.

If eating bread is a choice for some, it remains an obligation for others who can’t afford rice, another staple food in Iran. “Rice has recently become so expensive that we can no longer eat it regularly,” said Mirzakhani. “We now eat most of our food with bread.”—AFP

Once they are done, the baker again uses the tongs to retrieve the bread, and hangs it on the wall or piles it up. The walls around them are a patchwork of flatbreads in four different shapes and sizes—barbari, lavash, sangak and taftoon. But they don’t stay there for long, as customers jostling near the entrance are eager to snap them up while they are still hot.

A freshly baked Iranian flatbread usually accompanies a piece of feta cheese and sweet tea for breakfast or a plate of kebab for lunch. Of the four main traditional types, sangak is the most popular and is seen as Iran’s national bread. It is made from wholewheat flour and topped with a sprinkling of sesame seeds and sometimes poppy seeds at the customer’s request.



This combination of pictures show (top, left to right) bakers Farzad Rabiei 30, Esmail Asghari, 66, and Mojtaba Haydari, 23, making Barbari bread; bakers Mohammad, 30 and Ali, 21, making Sangak bread; (bottom, left to right) bakers Farzad Rabiei, Esmail Asghari, and Mojtaba Haydari, 23 posing with Barbari bread; and bakers Esmail Asghari, Farzad Rabiei, and Mojtaba Haydari, posing with Barbari bread.

This combination of pictures show (top) bakers Amir Jafari, 58, and Mohammad Mirzakhani, 41, making Taftoon bread; and (bottom) bakers Mohammad, 30, and Ali, 21, making Sangak bread; at separate bakeries in Iran’s capital Tehran.

Lebanon summons US envoy over criticism of Hezbollah

BEIRUT: Lebanon's foreign ministry has summoned the US ambassador over remarks criticizing Hezbollah, a day after a judge slapped a controversial ban on local media covering her statements, state media said Sunday. In an interview with Saudi-owned news channel Al-Hadath aired on Friday, Dorothy Shea said the United States had "grave concerns about the role of Hezbollah, a designated terrorist organization".

"It has syphoned off billions of dollars that should have gone into government coffers so that the government can provide basic services to its people," she said. "It has obstructed some of the economic reforms the Lebanese economy so desperately needs," she added. On Saturday, a judge in the southern city of Tyre issued an order banning local and foreign media working in the country from airing or publishing locally comments by Shea for a year because of her remarks on Hezbollah.

The Lebanese Shiite movement and its allies command a majority in parliament and the cabinet. Judge Mohamad Mazeh said Shea's comments incited sectarian strife and served to "turn the Lebanese people against each other". State-owned National News Agency (NAA) said media that violate the ban would be fined \$200,000.

But Lebanese media ignored the ruling. In one of several media appearances on Sunday, Shea told broadcaster MTV that a senior government official had assured her the court did not have the authority to order the ban, and that the government would take steps to reverse it. She described the ruling as a "really pathetic" attempt to silence the media, and said the government should focus more on implementing economic reforms. "I would suggest that we all try to put this chapter behind us," she said.

Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah on Sunday condemned the ambassador's "hostile behavior", saying her remarks constituted an "attack" on the country's "sovereignty and dignity". He called on Lebanese authorities, and especially the foreign ministry, to "compel the ambassador to respect international treaties that define the duties of diplomats".

The State Department issued a fiery response to the judge's order on Saturday, stating: "Hezbollah's attempt to silence the Lebanese media is pathetic." In Lebanon itself, Information Minister Manal Abdel Samad dismissed the judge's order, saying: "No one has the right to ban the media from covering the news."

Local broadcaster LBC said it would not abide by the ruling, calling it a "non-binding and unenforceable" decision that violated press freedom. A senior judicial source told AFP that Mazeh had "overstepped his prerogatives as a judge". Mazeh responded to the criticism on Sunday, saying his "conscious is clear" and that he was "fully convinced" he had made the right decision. He was prepared, however, to resign if there was a judicial review.

On Sunday afternoon, hundreds of people demonstrated in Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold, expressing anger at the US and support of the judge. They brandished the flags of Hezbollah and its Shiite ally Amal, as well as signs with slogans that read: "We'd rather die than be humiliated" and "We are all Mohamad Mazeh".

The dispute comes as Lebanon grapples with its worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war. The Lebanese pound has nosedived against the dollar on the black market, sending prices soaring. The Iran-backed Hezbollah has blamed



BEIRUT: Supporters of Lebanese Shiite movements Hezbollah and Amal brandish flags and placards as they protest a statement made by the US ambassador at a rally in the southern suburbs of the capital on Sunday. — AFP

Washington for the economic downturn, accusing it of preventing dollars from entering the cash-strapped country. The United States and Israel have long designated Hezbollah a terrorist group

and urged allies to follow suit. Hezbollah is the only group to have kept its weapons since the end of Lebanon's civil war on the grounds of defending the country against Israel. — Agencies

Trump under pressure to adopt mask

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump faced mounting bipartisan pressure Sunday to set an example by wearing a face mask, as his health secretary warned the "window is closing" to gain control of an explosion of infections in conservative-led US states. New coronavirus cases have been surging in more than half of US states, reaching record new highs after months of mitigation efforts applied unevenly across the country and sometimes contradictory messaging from the government.

Hardest hit have been southern and western states that pushed for early economic reopenings. But the latest upsurge, pushing the nation's total of declared cases over 2.5 million and its death toll

past 125,000, has prompted a growing chorus of calls for much tougher rules and enforcement. "This is a very, very serious situation and the window is closing for us to take action and get this under control," Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said on CNN.

'A unique position'

Azar was asked why Trump has refused to set an example by wearing a protective mask in public — even when standing next to mask-wearing health advisors — and reiterated the White House explanation that the president is tested daily and is "in a unique position" as a world leader. But many Republicans who are normally reluctant to criticize the president have been calling more insistently for mask use, with some urging a clearer example from the nation's leader.

"If wearing masks is important, and all the health experts tell us that it is... it would help if from time to time the president would wear one to help us get rid of this political debate that says if you're for Trump, you don't wear a mask, if you're against Trump, you do," Republican Senator Lamar

Alexander said Sunday on CNN.

In some areas, mask-wearing has taken on a political edge rather than being seen as a straightforward health choice. Among Republicans calling strongly for mask-wearing are Senator Marco Rubio of Florida — which has set daily records of new COVID-19 cases; Senate leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky; and Governor Greg Abbott of Texas, another state that has seen a major uptick in cases after moving aggressively to reopen its economy.

In Phoenix, Governor Doug Ducey wore a mask on Thursday when he warned fellow Arizonans that "we are getting hit hard right now." The best defense against COVID-19, he told local media, is to wear protective masks.

'Long overdue'

Liz Cheney, a member of the House leadership, has tweeted a picture of her father, the former US vice president, wearing a mask under the words: "Dick Cheney says WEAR A MASK #realmen-wearmasks." Vice President Mike Pence has sometimes worn masks in public but stopped short of

advocating mask-wearing when he chaired the first briefing in two months of the White House coronavirus task force on Friday.

Pence travelled Sunday to Texas for a briefing with Governor Abbott on the pandemic response, but has cancelled upcoming events in Arizona and Florida "out of an abundance of caution". Asked why the administration hasn't pushed harder for masks, Pence told CBS on Sunday that "we believe that every state has a unique situation" and that "we want to defer to governors" to decide on rules for their own states.

Some Democrats want Trump not only to set an example but to mandate mask-wearing nationwide — including Trump's White House rival Joe Biden who says he would seek to make masks compulsory in public spaces. Asked on ABC if she would support such a move, House speaker Nancy Pelosi called it "definitely long overdue." "We have the worst record of any country in the world. And the president says we're making progress." She added, "The president should be an example. Real men wear masks. Be an example to the country and wear the mask." — AFP



A picture taken from the Israeli settlement of Naale in the occupied West Bank northwest of the Palestinian city of Ramallah shows the skyline of the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv on June 17, 2020. — AFP

Outrage mounts over India police...

Continued from Page 1

Jignesh Mevani wrote that the "George Floyds of India are far too many". "Will Indians march on streets in thousands like in America?" he tweeted.

Rahul Gandhi, a leader of the opposition Congress party, described it as a "tragedy when our

protectors turn into oppressors". Several reports by human rights groups in India have detailed cases of alleged torture of suspects in custody, with deaths often blamed by police on suicide or natural causes.

According to the National Human Rights Commission, 3,146 people died in police and judicial custody in 2017-18. "Custodial violence and torture is so rampant in India that it has become almost routine," it said in a report. "It represents the worst form of excesses by public servants entrusted with the duty of law enforcement." Convictions in such cases are extremely rare, according to activists. — AFP

Prosecution seeks to probe 2...

Continued from Page 1

Separately, the prosecution also asked the Assembly to lift the immunity of MP Majed Al-Mutairi regarding a problem with a police patrol. Meanwhile, Kuwait is preparing to move into the second phase of easing coronavirus restrictions

today as malls, restaurants and cafes, in addition to public parks, are due to reopen following a closure that exceeded three months.

Curfew hours will be relaxed to start from 8 pm instead of 7 pm and end at 5 am. Malls will be allowed to operate until 6 pm. Restaurants and cafes can operate but dine-in is not allowed. Government offices will reopen partially at a capacity not exceeding 30 percent. The second phase is scheduled to continue for 30 days. MP Ali Al-Deqbasii protested yesterday at the government's continued lockdown of Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula, claiming he did not understand the logic behind the lengthy closure.

Israel annexation plans 'illegal': UN rights chief

GENEVA: Israel's aim to annex parts of the occupied West Bank was clearly "illegal", the UN's human rights chief said yesterday, warning that the consequences could be "disastrous". Just days before Israel intends to kick-start plans to annex its West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley, Michelle Bachelet added her voice to the chorus urging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to drop the proposal.

"Annexation is illegal. Period," the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a statement. "Any annexation. Whether it is 30 percent of the West Bank, or five percent," she said, urging Israel to "listen to its own former senior officials and generals, as well as to the multitude of voices around the world, warning it not to proceed along this dangerous path."

International condemnation of the possible Israeli annexations has mounted ahead of July 1, when the Jewish state could take its first steps toward implementing part of a US-proposed Middle East peace plan. US President Donald Trump's proposals, rejected outright by the Palestinians, pave the way for annexing key parts of the West Bank, including settlements long considered illegal by the majority of the international community.

Bachelet urged Israel to shift course, warning that "the shockwaves of annexation will last for decades, and will be extremely damaging to Israel, as well as to the Palestinians". "The precise consequences of annexation cannot be predicted," she said. "But they are likely to be disastrous for the Palestinians, for Israel itself, and for the wider region."

The UN rights chief warned that "any attempt to annex any part of the occupied Palestinian territory

will not only seriously damage efforts to achieve lasting peace in the region, it is likely to entrench, perpetuate and further heighten serious human rights violations that have characterized the conflict for decades."

Her statement cautioned that such a move would almost certainly lead to increased restrictions on Palestinians' right to freedom of movement, as their population centers would become enclaves. In addition, significant tracts of private land would likely be illegally expropriated, and even in cases where this does not occur, many Palestinians could lose access to cultivate their own lands.

And Palestinians who found themselves living inside the annexed areas would likely experience greater difficulty accessing essential services like healthcare and education, while humanitarian access could also be blocked.

Bachelet's office warned that Palestinians inside the annexed area would come under heavy pressure to move out, pointing out that entire communities currently not recognized under Israeli planning would be at high risk of "forcible transfer". And settlements, which are already recognized as a clear violation of international law, would almost certainly expand. "This is a highly combustible mix," Bachelet said.

"I am deeply concerned that even the most minimalist form of annexation would lead to increased violence and loss of life, as walls are erected, security forces deployed and the two populations brought into closer proximity." The UN rights chief warned that "the existing two-tier system of law in the same territory will become embedded, with devastating impacts on the lives of Palestinians who have little or no access to legal remedy".

Bachelet said illegal annexation would not change Israel's obligations under international law as an occupying power towards the occupied population. "Instead, it will grievously harm the prospect of a two-state solution, undercut the possibilities of a renewal of negotiations, and perpetuate the serious existing human rights and international humanitarian law violations we witness today." — AFP

Six killed in attack on Pak ...

Continued from Page 1

pool of blood near the exchange. Karachi was once a hotspot for crime and violence, with heavily armed groups tied to politicians frequently gunning down opponents and launching attacks on

residential areas. But the situation has largely stabilized in recent years following operations by security agencies against armed political outfits and Islamist militants.

Militant groups still retain the ability to launch periodic attacks in many rural areas and occasionally in urban centers. Yesterday's attack comes more than a week after a grenade was thrown at a line of people waiting outside a government welfare office in the city, killing one and injuring eight others, according to a statement from municipal authorities. — AFP

Stars

Daily SuDoku

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

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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

medium

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A good tip for you to remember is to be careful about what you say about others, Aries. If you're talking about someone who isn't present, act as if he or she is. What is your motivation for saying those things? Is it necessary to speak in such a manner? A negative comment about someone else is going to resonate in the cosmos. People could lose trust in you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You might be called upon to choose between two ways of handling a situation, Libra. The old ways of doing things are in conflict with the new. Which way are you going to proceed? Don't be thrown off course by fast talk and sleight of hand. Also, don't assume that the way that has worked forever is still the best solution. Use your intuition to choose the best route for you.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You might need some time alone today to bring yourself back to center, Taurus. Independence is a keyword, so keep it in the back of your mind. Make sure you aren't the victim of a commitment you made long ago. As the landscape changes, we must also change. Stubborn actions will be extremely detrimental on a day like this. Be honest and grateful for the things you have.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Unexpected events may be shuffling the cards when you least expect it, Scorpio. If you have kept a close eye on the deck, counting the jacks as they turn up, you might get thrown for a loop. Don't be discouraged. Everyone else is subject to the same rules as you are. If the dealer seems crooked, go to another table. Don't fall for the same trick twice.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Don't automatically think that beauty always has to be defined by old-fashioned standards, Gemini. It's time to create your own definition. There's no need to fit into some socially constructed mold that doesn't resonate with who you truly are. Your job isn't to try and make sure that everyone loves you. There's only one person you need to satisfy, and that is you.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your sense of self may be a bit challenged today, Sagittarius. You might just have trouble getting out of bed at all. Remember that the way others see you doesn't necessarily mean that's the way you really are. Don't feel like you have to change in order to please anyone. Ultimately, your only responsibility is to you. Bizarre events could occur that prompt you to change your way of thinking.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Issues may get a little heavier than you'd perhaps like today, Cancer. Your job is to infuse some amusement into the situation. Your powers of adaptability will be put to the test, as other people seem to be completely fixated on their opinions. Be extra conscious of how your words. Other people, especially superiors or elders, are apt to be offended by careless, offhand remarks.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

As you follow the path toward acquiring the latest, greatest, fastest, and best, you might find that you're leaving behind some fundamental principles and values along the way, Capricorn. Don't lose sight of your foundation. Things could get shaken up today. Your ego might be on trial for pig-headed behavior. Keep yourself in check and be aware of the way you project yourself to others.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

If the doorknob doesn't want to turn today, Leo, don't force it. You'll only succeed in breaking the key. Perhaps you just need to try another door. If things don't flow smoothly into place, then they probably weren't meant to be. Life shouldn't have to be a struggle. Our job is to be happy. Remember that the next time you're in a long line. View the situation as a rest period.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Key into your sensual, beautiful nature, Aquarius. Take time each day to attend to your soul and make sure it's getting the nourishment it needs to radiate into the world. Unexpected people could pop up out of nowhere, so don't be surprised if a former lover texts or calls. Things from the past may be coming back to the present in order to teach you a valuable life lesson.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

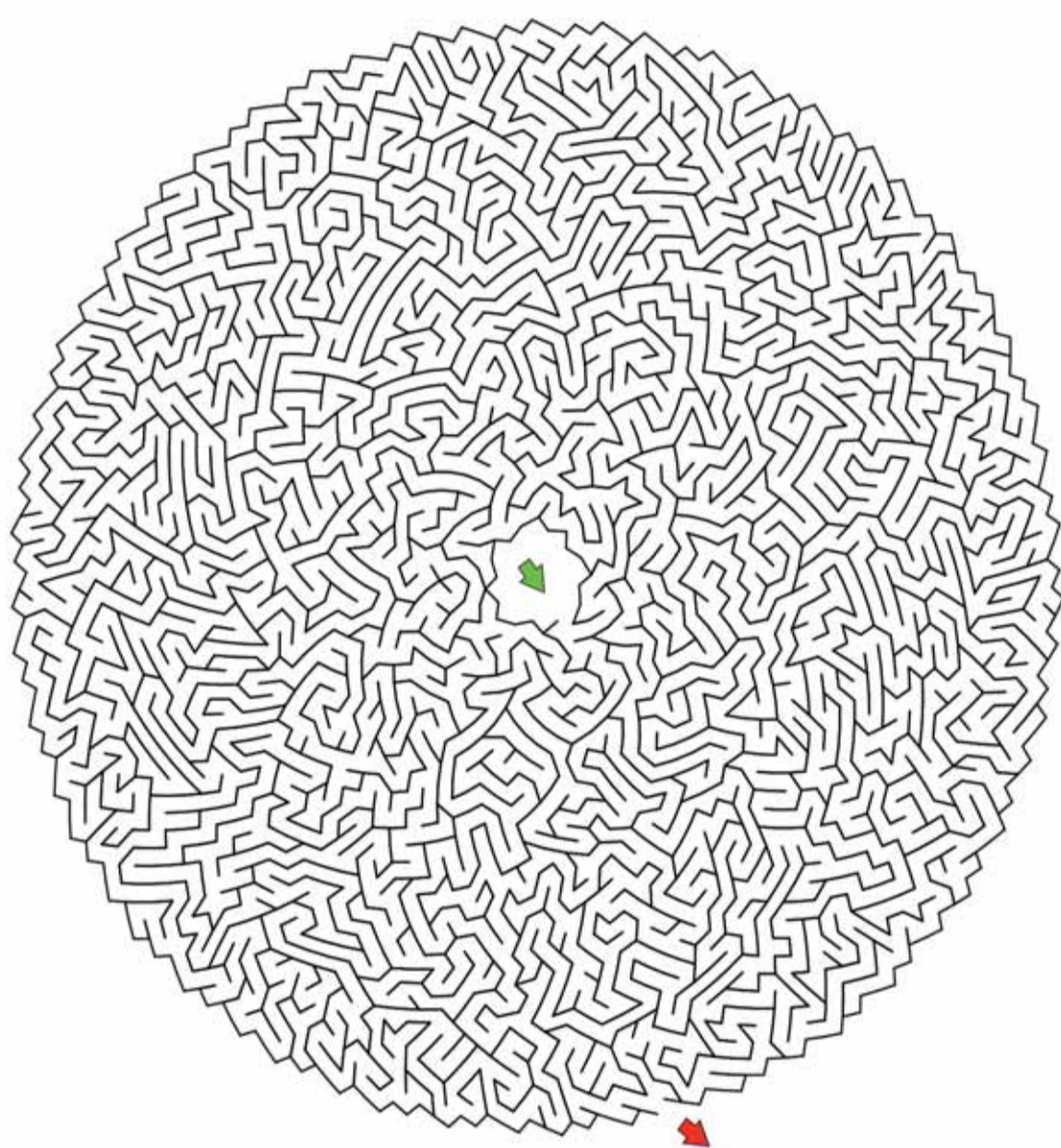
Your newfangled approach to things might get some serious flak from others today, Virgo, but don't let that stop you. Realize that your independent and somewhat rebellious nature is a key ingredient in keeping the world in balance. Don't give up the fight when old, tired ways of doing things insist on taking the upper hand. Use your power from within to combat the forces from above.



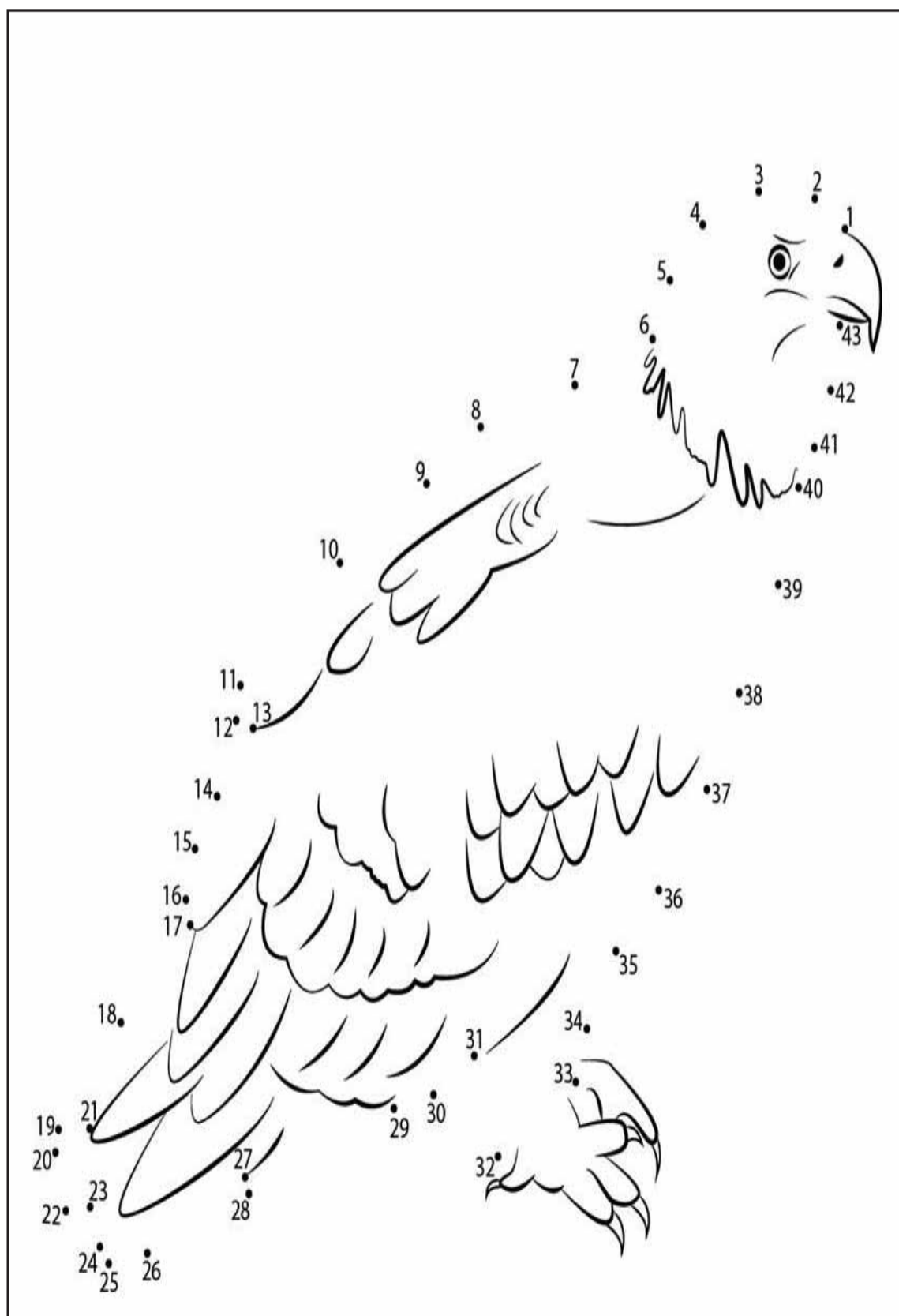
Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may sense a nervous restlessness today that urges you to act, Pisces. A journey to one place may have you bouncing off to another place that may lead you on an adventure to someplace completely different. It might seem like you're on some crazy scavenger hunt toward a pot of gold. The energy of the day may leave you feeling ragged, but don't give up. Persistence will eventually pay off.

Find the way



Join the dots



Word Scramble

Costume Store
Word Scramble

The costume store is a mess and Halloween is only a few days away! Can you help to unscramble the costume names so that all of the kids have something to wear on October 31st?

- TWCIH _____
- OMEZIB _____
- WRZDAI _____
- TOROB _____
- KOTESLEN _____
- BOCOYW _____
- IESRDP _____
- UKMNIPP _____
- ARYFI _____
- EALGN _____
- MYMUM _____

- OWLCN _____
- PEHRSERUO _____
- OCASCWERR _____
- TOHSG _____
- EISNRPS _____
- RMNEAIF _____
- IDELV _____
- EMIRPVA _____
- ANIJN _____
- ARPEIT _____
- EMMIRDA _____



Sports

Photo of the Day



Abdo Feghali seen during Red Bull Car Park Drift World Championship Qualifier 2019 in Georgia. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

NFL players union unhappy at Brady, Wilson workouts

LOS ANGELES: The NFL players union on Sunday criticised unofficial workouts conducted by star quarterbacks Tom Brady and Russell Wilson, saying the practices were risking player safety during the coronavirus crisis.

Tampa Bay Buccaneers star Brady and Seattle Seahawks signal-caller Wilson have both faced scrutiny recently after conducting throwing sessions with receivers in the build-up to official pre-season training camps.

However NFL Players Association executive director DeMaurice Smith told USA Today in an interview on Sunday that the sessions were potentially compromising players and the upcoming season.

"Those practices are not in the best interests of player safety," Smith said. "They're not in the best interests of protecting our players heading into training camp and I don't think they're in the best interests of us getting through an entire season."

Smith said the practices could complicate the NFLPA's negotiations with the league over how players who contract COVID-19 will be classified and compensated.

"I certainly understand how competitive our players are and I get that," Smith said. "But at the same time we are in the process of trying to negotiate with the league about what happens to a player if they test positive during the season."

"Does that player go on injured reserve? Does that player go on short-term IR? If you test positive for the virus after training camp, is that a work-related injury? Are you covered under worker's comp?"

"What benefits are available to you if you have downstream injuries from contacting COVID-19? All of the things that players may want to do during the off-season have a direct impact on how well we can negotiate protections for them once the season starts." —AFP

'Mr Fixit' Jake White hopes spending spree can lift Bulls from doldrums

Seeks to make the Northern Bulls a powerhouse again

JOHANNESBURG: Rugby World Cup-winning coach Jake White has embarked on the biggest modern-era South African spending spree as he seeks to make the Northern Bulls a powerhouse again.

The Pretoria team were the dominant southern hemisphere franchise between 2007 and 2010, winning three of the four Super Rugby competitions during that period.

Loftus Versfeld, the 50,000-seat fortress of the Bulls in a leafy suburb, was the scene of the many great triumphs, notably a 61-17 thrashing of the Waikato Chiefs in the 2009 final. The ground was regularly packed as adoring supporters turned up to watch stars like fly-half Derick Hougaard, scrum-half Fourie du Preez and locks Victor Matfield and Bakkies Botha.

It was a very different story this year in Super Rugby, however, before the coronavirus pandemic brought the five-nation competition to a close after just seven rounds. A Bulls side shorn of stars like playmaker Handre Pollard, who moved abroad after helping South Africa win the World Cup a third time last November, lost five of six matches.

The packed stands at Loftus were a distant memory with only a few thousand hard-core supporters turning up to witness one inept display after another. It left the three-time champions 12th in the overall standings and hopes of a top-eight finish and a quarter-finals slot already gone less than halfway through the regular season. Something had to give and coach Pote Human was fired, paving the way for the 'Mr Fixit' of rugby, White, to take control last March and immediately embark on a signing spree.

"We need to rebuild a winning culture at Loftus," White, 56, told AFP. "Winning matches will bring thousands of supporters back. It will not be an easy task as the team has been struggling for some time, but we are up for it." White has hired a flood of experienced players, many of them former Springboks who opted

to return home from Europe and Japan and spend the twilight of their careers in Pretoria.

The backs who were bought include Gio Aplon and Travis Ismael, both past 30 but with a lot to still offer, according to White, who coached the 2007 World Cup-winning Springboks. To bolster the pack he

wooded World Cup winner Duane Vermeulen back to South Africa after the forward spent a year cashing in on the riches of Japanese club rugby. Arno Botha, Nizaam Carr, Sintu Manjezi, Marcel van der Merwe and Walt Steenkamp have also been signed to create a virtual new Bulls pack for the post-coronavirus pandemic era. It was not one-way traffic toward the Loftus changing rooms though with backs Warrick Gelant, Johnny Kotze, Manie Libbok, Divan Rossouw and Rosko Specman leaving.

South Africa-born former Scotland loose forward Josh Strauss was the latest departee after failing to make an impact in Super Rugby this season. There were also coaching changes, notably the hiring of Russell Winter and the recall of former Bulls Super Rugby handler Nollis Marais.

Once dismissed by a rival coach as nothing more than a "video operator at training sessions", White has succeeded wherever he has worked. Assisted by wily Australian Eddie Jones, he guided the Springboks to



It's a different story this year



South Africa's Rugby World Cup-winning coach Jake White.

2007 World Cup glory with a 15-6 final triumph over England in Paris.

Told to reapply for his national team post by officials he did not click with, White refused and Peter de Villiers became the first black coach of the Springboks. He later dramatically improved the Super Rugby fortunes of the ACT Brumbies in Australia and the Coastal Sharks in his homeland, taking both to the knockout stages. White won the second-tier European Rugby Challenge Cup with French outfit Montpellier and later coached Toyota Verblitz in Japan. When Verblitz hired outgoing New Zealand coach Steve Hansen this year, White came home and after talks with PRO14 strugglers the Southern Kings, agreed to join the Bulls.

Forwards coach Winter is convinced White can make the Bulls a force to reckon with again in Super Rugby. "We should never be shy of touting the South African style of play. When I coach forwards, I want them to play to their strengths — a brutal, confrontational type of game."

"South African forwards are naturally attuned to that way of playing and it can work so well for us." No rugby has been played in South Africa since mid-March because of the COVID-19 crisis and the most optimistic date for a resumption of matches is August. SA Rugby hope to stage a domestic Super Rugby competition, similar to the one already under way in New Zealand, with Australia set to follow suit in July. — AFP

5 talking points ahead of F1 start in Austria

LONDON: Formula One emerges from its three-month coronavirus lockdown with Sunday's new season curtain-raiser, the Austrian Grand Prix. AFP Sport looks at five talking points ahead of the start of the behind-closed doors race at the Spielberg circuit.

CAN HAMILTON RETAIN FOCUS?

The main threat to Lewis Hamilton's bid to land a record-equalling seventh drivers' title is likely to be himself — just ahead of Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas and Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

The sport's first black champion has admitted he is committed to racing for more than personal or team triumphs.

"I'm racing for all of you out there who may feel that you don't have a voice," said the Briton, who made his voice heard in support of recent anti-racism protests during the enforced time-out.

"In the world, in the society that we live in, I think making it as a young black kid from a council estate in Stevenage, making it to F1 through the tiniest window of opportunity — that's a very, very important part of my journey and then staying there and continuing to deliver against adversity."

Asked where F1 should race, he added: "Africa. It's such an important place to go back. At the moment,

F1 goes to countries and doesn't really leave much behind, if anything. Formula 1 has to shift into being a sport that does go to places and leaves behind something that can really help the communities."

VERSTAPPEN'S CHANCE

Having proved his speed and racing talent this is the time for Max Verstappen and Red Bull to seize their moment and emerge from the opening trio of races as championship leaders.

A year ago, the young Dutchman bullied his way to victory at the Red Bull Ring and a double repeat of that plus a strong result at Budapest would see the Milton Keynes-based team on top of the embryonic title race.

Pre-season testing in Barcelona suggested their car is very fast, but also 'skittish' and may face reliability problems.

But the driver pairing of Verstappen and Alex Albon has a proven ability to shine in challenging conditions and can beat Ferrari to take the fight to champions Mercedes.

WILL VETTEL SHINE?

After confirming he is leaving Ferrari at the end of this year, Sebastian Vettel may feel freed and capable of delivering the consistency and speed that can inspire the team again despite the threat of Charles Leclerc.

The four-time champion has the speed and quality, but Ferrari have to deliver a car that can show immediate performance development as the season unfolds.

Pre-season testing suggested that this year's machine had sacrificed some of last year's outright straight-line speed for improved pace in slow and medium corners.

IS IT THE END OF THE ROAD FOR WILLIAMS?

George Russell and Williams face a defining challenge and season after the famous British team was put up for sale during the lockdown — leaving their young and talented English driver to race for his future this year.

Russell, a member of the Mercedes junior driver programme, is tipped to have a big future, but needs a stronger team in 2021 to prove himself unless Williams find some resurgent form and haul themselves off the bottom of the championship.

Russell made good use of the lockdown to become F1's 'virtual champion' during e-racing from his home computer and said recently he is "very excited" to return to racing. "It's going to be surreal, but I can't wait for it — I just want to be back in a car."

NO HUGGING

Daniel Ricciardo is famous for his beaming smile and big hugs, but he has had to abandon his tactile approach to life. He will be joined by a new Renault team-mate in Frenchman Esteban Ocon, but decided during lockdown to leave the team next year and switch to McLaren as successor to departing Spaniard Carlos Sainz, who is joining Ferrari.

The fact that McLaren are switching to Mercedes engines was a factor and one that may not have enhanced his standing with Renault as he starts his final season.

"I've got to keep my distance," he admitted in a team video call last week. "We're going to find some new ways to embrace each other, especially after a good result, but obviously we're going to do what we can to keep this thing out of the paddock." — AFP

Cheika linked to top job at Beziers

SYDNEY: Former Wallabies coach Michael Cheika was yesterday linked with the top job at second-tier French rugby side Beziers, who are in talks with wealthy UAE investors about a takeover.

Beziers were a powerhouse team in the 1970s and 1980s, winning 11 championships, but are now languishing in the Pro D2 second division.

The club confirmed over the weekend that they were negotiating with United Arab Emirates investors, led by former France international Christophe Dominici, who are keen to return the side to former glories.

The Sydney Morning Herald yesterday said it was "a done deal" for Cheika to join as coach if the takeover proceeded. Other reports have named All Blacks Ma'a Nonu and Beauden Barrett as players on Beziers' radar.

Cheika quit as Wallabies coach in October after Australia's humiliating 40-16 World Cup quarter-final exit against England and is currently a consultant with rugby league side Sydney Roosters.

Earlier this month, he told reporters he had been in Europe talking to people about opportunities, but nothing fitted so far. He was most recently linked with the vacant job at English Premiership side Gloucester, but insisted he had "nothing to do with them".

Cheika has a history of turning around under-performing clubs, notably Leinster and the NSW Waratahs, helping both win silverware. — AFP

Sports

Inter Milan rally to beat Parma as Atalanta win again

Inter stay eight points adrift of leaders Juventus, four behind Lazio in second

MILAN: Alessandro Bastoni completed Inter Milan's late turnaround as they scored twice in the final six minutes to beat Parma 2-1 on Sunday, while Atalanta made it three wins in a row since the Serie A restart.

Gervinho gave Parma a first-half lead at the Stadio Ennio Tardini but Inter, who conceded a last-gasp equaliser at home to Sassuolo in midweek, fought back with headers from Stefan de Vrij and Bastoni to snatch a vital win.

Inter stay eight points adrift of leaders Juventus and four behind Lazio in second with 10 rounds of matches remaining. "I thought it was a more than deserved victory. Thoroughly deserved," Inter assistant Cristian Stellini told Sky Sport Italia, with coach Antonio Conte forced to watch from the stands as he served a touchline ban.

Atalanta consolidated their grip on fourth place thanks to two stunning goals from Luis Muriel, who came on as a second-half substitute in their 3-2 victory at Udinese.

The Colombia international put his team back ahead with a magnificent 71st-minute free-kick, after Kevin Lasagna had levelled for Udinese in the 31st minute following Duvan Zapata's early opener for away side.

Muriel then put Atalanta two goals ahead with a superb volley that ensured Lasagna's second three minutes from time made no difference to the result.

Roma are facing another season without Champions League football after losing 2-0 at AC Milan. Ante Rebic and Hakan Calhanoglu scored late to give Milan victory at a stifling San Siro to put Stefano Pioli's side

three points away from the last Europa League place held by Napoli, who beat bottom side SPAL 3-1 in Naples.

Gennaro Gattuso's side, who have already won the Italian Cup this season, came out on top at the Stadio San Paolo thanks to goals from Dries Mertens, Jose Callejon and Amin Younes.

Roma stay fifth but are only three points ahead of Napoli and nine behind Atalanta in fourth, who are now clear favourites to qualify for Europe's top club competition.

Both teams started slowly but Milan dominated after the break with Rebic breaking through on 76 minutes, rifling the ball into the roof of the net at the third attempt after a frantic scramble following a Davide Zappacosta blunder.

Calhanoglu converted a penalty with a minute to go after Chris Smalling fouled Theo Hernandez in the area to earn a second win this week, despite the absence of star striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic with a calf problem.

"We were looking for a win against a strong opponent and we deserved to get it," said Pioli after their first win over one of the top-six sides this season. "This victory gives us confidence to try to hit the goal of bringing Milan back to Europe."

"(Ibra) helped us raise our level. Let's not forget that we only lost one game with him. "But the team is doing well without him and his return gives us other solutions." Roma coach Paulo Fonseca conceded his side were struggling for fitness after the three-month coronavirus shutdown.



PARMA: Inter Milan's Italian midfielder Nicolò Barella (R) and Parma's Italian defender Matteo Darmian go for the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Parma vs Inter played on June 28, 2020 behind closed doors at the Ennio-Tardini stadium in Parma.—AFP

"They (Milan) were fresher in the second half," said Fonseca. "Let's not forget that they had seven days to prepare and it's their third game, it's not an excuse, it's the truth."

"I'm worried about physical fitness, we will play in two days." Sampdoria sank further into the relegation

mire after a 2-1 home defeat to Bologna which leaves them just a point above the drop zone, while Rogerio struck in the sixth minute of stoppage time to earn a 3-3 draw for Sassuolo against Hellas Verona. Juventus beat Lecce 4-0 on Friday and Lazio came from behind to see off Fiorentina 2-1 on Saturday.—AFP

Watford relegation fears mount after Southampton defeat

LONDON: Watford were dealt a major blow in their bid to avoid relegation as they suffered a 3-1 home defeat by Southampton after a Danny Ings double and James Ward-Prowse's stunning late free kick for the visitors in their Premier League game on Sunday.

Saints started strongly and took a well-deserved lead in the 16th minute when Ings glided past the challenge of two Watford defenders before curling a low effort into the far corner.

Ralph Hasenhuetl's side were unlucky not to grab a second in the 24th minute when Ward-Prowse skied his effort from close range after latching on to a cross-field pass from Oriol Romeu.

Watford, who had omitted Andre Gray, Nathaniel Chalobah and Domingos Quina from their squad after British media reported a lockdown breach, started the second half strongly but failed to test Saints keeper Alex McCarthy.

However, the hosts found themselves two goals down in the 70th minute when Ings intercepted a wayward throw out from goalkeeper Ben Foster before driving towards the penalty area and firing home his 18th league goal of the season.

"It was a physical battle and the lads really fought hard," Ings said as Southampton bounced back from a 2-0 home loss against Arsenal on Thursday.

"After the last game, we were very disappointed. It was important we came here and did something about that. I just want to play each game and score as many goals as I can," he added.

Jan Bednarek's own goal handed the Hornets a late lifeline but Ward-Prowse's free kick in the 82nd minute sealed the victory for Saints, who set a club record with eight away wins in a single top-flight league campaign.

Southampton could have added a fourth goal late on but Che Adams' effort was kept out by Foster before Nathan Redmond's curling strike ricocheted off the post. Hasenhuetl said he was pleased with the way his side responded after their defeat by Arsenal.

"Today, we were more concentrated, more clinical and made better decisions," he said. "This is what we have to learn and when I see the performance in general, today was absolutely a step forward."

Watford manager Nigel Pearson bemoaned his side's lack of intent and application from kick-off.

"It is frustrating, because we are not achieving the performances we know we are capable of," he said as Watford suffered their second straight league defeat. "It is about us approaching games with the pos-



WATFORD: Southampton's English midfielder Nathan Redmond gestures as he takes a knee in support of the Black Lives Matter movement during the English Premier League football match between Watford and Southampton at Vicarage Road Stadium in Watford, north of London.—AFP

itive intent, showing more support for each other on the pitch," he added.

The result took Saints up to 13th place with 40

points, while Watford remain in 16th with 28 points, one point ahead of third-bottom Bournemouth, who have a game in hand.—Reuters

Liverpool great Fowler parts ways with Brisbane Roar

BRISBANE: Former England and Liverpool striker Robbie Fowler's time as coach of Australian side Brisbane Roar ended yesterday, with the club blaming the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Fowler was appointed in April last year and he set about overhauling the squad, lifting them to fourth in the table before the A-League was suspended on March 24.

He headed back to England and had been non-committal when asked by British media when he would return. "I would like to thank the club for the opportunity, and the Brisbane Roar FC fans for the warm welcome and support for me and the team. We are very proud of what we achieved," Fowler said in a statement.

The club cited "the current and ongoing coron-

avirus situation" as the reason for Fowler's departure. "We are disappointed that the global pandemic has impacted our plans together but completely understand that family comes first during these difficult times," said club deputy chairman Chris Fong.

Anyone entering Australia currently must undergo a 14-day quarantine and time was running out for Fowler to return with the league due to resume on July 16.

He played 369 matches for Liverpool, scoring 183 goals in two stints between 1993 and 2007. He also played for Leeds, Cardiff and Blackburn before a spell in the A-League with the now-defunct North Queensland. Fowler was capped 26 times by England, scoring seven goals.—AFP

Half of Tokyo residents oppose Olympics in 2021

TOKYO: Just over half of Tokyo's residents don't think the postponed 2020 Olympics should be held next year, backing either a further delay or outright cancellation because of fears over the coronavirus, according to a poll published yesterday.

The survey carried out by two Japanese news organisations is only a single data point, but comes after health experts warned that even a year's delay may not be sufficient to hold the Games safely.

The poll conducted over the weekend found 51.7 percent of respondents hope the Games in 2021 are postponed again or cancelled, while 46.3 percent want to see the rescheduled Olympics go ahead.

Among those opposed to a 2021 Games, 27.7 percent said they want them cancelled altogether, while 24.0 percent would prefer a second postponement.

The telephone poll, conducted by Kyodo News and Tokyo MX television between June 26-28, received 1,030 replies. Of those who said they want to see the Games held next year, 31.1 percent said the event should be in a scaled-back form, including without spectators, while 15.2 percent said they wanted to see a full-blown Olympics.

Tokyo 2020 was postponed in March as the coronavirus spread across the globe, causing the worst disruption to the Olympics since two editions were cancelled during World War II.

The Games are now scheduled to begin on July 23, 2021, although they will still be known as the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Officials from Japan and the International Olympic Committee have warned it will not be possible to postpone again, and even the year-long delay has created significant financial and logistical headaches.

The poll, conducted ahead of the Tokyo gubernatorial election on July 5, also found incumbent Yuriko Koike leading her opponents "by a large margin". Her precise lead was not specified, in keeping with a media tradition of not publishing polling figures in the days before a vote.

Koike has been heavily involved in preparations for the Games, travelling to Rio for the handover ceremony after the last Summer Olympics. Earlier this month, she told AFP that the rescheduled Olympics will be safe despite the coronavirus pandemic, pledging a "120-percent effort" to ensure the first-ever postponed Games can go ahead.—AFP

Kuwait's national bowling team begins training

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: As the Bowling Club completed all precautionary and preventive measures as required by the three party committee of Health Ministry, Public Authority for Sport and Olympic Committee, national team training began yesterday to prepare for upcoming events.

The building was sterilized and equipped with thermometers, and self sterilizing system. There is also a team that carries out sterilization and cleaning in order to safeguard the health of all those at the club. Swabs were taken from athletes who were told not to enter the club unless they have a message on their mobiles stating they are free of the virus, and once in to maintain social distances.



18 'Mr Fixit' Jake White hopes spending spree can lift Bulls from doldrums



19 Inter Milan rally to beat Parma as Atalanta win again



19 Watford relegation fears mount after Southampton defeat



NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE: Manchester City's Argentinian defender Nicolas Otamendi (L) challenges Newcastle United's English striker Andy Carroll (R) during the English FA Cup quarter-final football match between Newcastle United and Manchester City at St James' Park in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, north east England. — AFP

Man City regain FA Cup 'focus'

Chelsea, Arsenal also reach semis; City to face Arsenal in the last four next month

LONDON: Pep Guardiola believes it is easier for Manchester City to focus on cup glory for the rest of the season as the holders reached the FA Cup semi-finals with a 2-0 win at Newcastle on Sunday.

City will face Arsenal at an empty Wembley in the last four next month after the Gunners struck in stoppage time to beat Sheffield United 2-1. Chelsea were 1-0 victors at Leicester thanks to Ross Barkley's winner which set up a semi-final clash with Manchester United. Kevin De Bruyne's penalty and a stunning strike from Raheem Sterling got City back to winning ways on Tyneside after a 2-1 defeat at Chelsea in mid-week crowned Liverpool Premier League champions for the first time in 30 years.

"In the Premier League we are struggling to focus," admitted Guardiola. "Now the Cup and the Champions League it is a little bit different." City were utterly dominant in the first half but had to wait until Gabriel Jesus was pushed by Javier Manquillo inside the box eight minutes before half-time for De Bruyne to break the deadlock.

"We should score more but we played really well and created enough chances to score a lot of goals," said De Bruyne. "We know it is really weird (to play behind closed doors), it is not something that I enjoy, but we are professionals and we need to keep going. We wanted to respond in a good way. We are happy we are in a semi-final now."

City's eighth league defeat of the season in mid-week again exposed the defensive deficiencies they have to solve if they are to add the club's first ever Champions League and another FA Cup to the League Cup they retained in March.

Newcastle had a glorious opportunity to equalise when Dwight Gayle somehow fired over Allan Saint-Maximin's cross. However, City possess plenty of firepower at the other end and moments later Sterling cut inside to curl into the bottom corner from outside the box to kill the tie as a contest.

Chelsea boss Frank Lampard made six changes to the team that beat City and was nearly made to pay by a very slow start from his side at the King Power.

focused on our own league. There are not many games left and every game now is a final."

Zinedine Zidane said Eden Hazard took a knock to his ankle. "He took a big hit but it's just a knock I think," said Zidane.

By the time his side play at home to Getafe on Thursday they might even have the chance to move further clear, if in-form Atletico Madrid avoid defeat on Tuesday at Camp Nou. Barcelona certainly have the harder run-in, with a resurgent Villarreal side to follow Atletico and then local rivals Espanyol, who have shown they might yet finish strong after a determined performance under new coach Francisco Rufete. Rufete, who was previously the club's sporting director, is Espanyol's fourth coach of the season after the sacking of Abelardo Fernandez on Saturday. His task is now to make up a nine-point gap between his team in 20th and Celta in 17th. They were undone by a piece of instinctive brilliance from Benzema, who has been the catalyst for Madrid sealing five wins out of five since La Liga restarted on June 11.

SENSATIONAL ASSISTS

Benzema's backheel came on an afternoon of sensational assists after Villarreal's Santi Cazorla earlier set

up Gerard Moreno with an incredible, cushioned touch in their 2-0 win over Valencia.

"I have to give huge credit to Karim," said Casemiro. "It was an incredible assist. We're used to how good he is, I know the quality he possesses so I was expecting something. He heard me asking for it and he played it in a brilliant way."

Madrid, though, were scruffy and ponderous at the RCDE Stadium, this perhaps their least impressive win over the last three weeks.

But solidity and steel ensured they came through unscathed and it was no surprise that defensive midfielder Casemiro, arguably the team's best player this term, was named man of the match.

Espanyol were far from outplayed and might have been ahead if they had capitalised on a series of forays down Madrid's left in the first half.

With Marcelo repeatedly caught up field, Wu Lei was able to sprint clear and his early pull-back was met by Sergi Darder at the back post, only for his shot to be blocked by Dani Carvajal.

Madrid were sloppy but created chances. Sergio Ramos headed over Casemiro's smashed effort across goal. A scrap in the penalty area ended with Diego

with a first-half penalty after Chris Basham fouled Alexandre Lacazette.

United had two goals ruled out for offside by VAR either side of Pepe's penalty and Basham also headed a huge chance wide. The hosts finally got their reward when David McGoldrick equalised with three minutes left before Emiliano Martinez produced a fine save to deny Billy Sharp a winner.

But in the first minute of stoppage time, Arsenal broke and on-loan Real Madrid midfielder Ceballos slotted low past Dean Henderson from a narrow angle. Former City assistant manager Arteta will now face his old boss Guardiola on the weekend of July 18-19. "This is a difficult place to get a win. We are back at Wembley. I am really happy with the attitude and performance of the players," Arteta said.

"It is a great opportunity to try and win a title and play in Europe."

Manchester United booked their place in the semi-finals on Saturday but needed extra time to see off 10-man Norwich 2-1. — AFP

Lopez palming over a half-volley from the quiet Eden Hazard. Espanyol were hanging on for half-time and they were caught out by Benzema. Ramos flicked on Marcelo's crossfield pass and Benzema, moving away from goal, backheeled off the bounce through the legs of Bernardo Espinosa for the arriving Casemiro to finish. Wu had another chance early in the second half but scuffed his shot and both teams seemed content to let the score lie until the latter stages, when Espanyol began to take more risks.

Their best chance came in the 87th minute when a free-kick evaded the entire Madrid defence but Leandro Cabrera was just short at the back post. Marcelo almost deflected into his own net for the last action before the whistle blew.

Earlier, Villarreal continued their surge towards Champions League qualification with a victory over Valencia, inspired by Cazorla.

The 35-year-old found himself under a 60-yard punt from his goalkeeper before cushioning the ball out of the air perfectly for Gerard Moreno to volley in.

Paco Alcacer also scored against his former club as Villarreal moved just three points behind fourth-placed Sevilla. — AFP

Madrid edge past Espanyol to go two clear of Barcelona

MADRID: Karim Benzema delivered another moment of magic on Sunday as Real Madrid took a two-point lead over Barcelona at the top of La Liga by beating bottom club Espanyol.

Benzema's volley against Valencia could be goal of the season and he might now have a claim to best assist too after his brilliant backheel teed up Casemiro to finish for a crucial 1-0 win.

Madrid's advantage in the table, coming after Barca's draw away at Celta Vigo on Saturday, is their biggest since February and puts them within sight of their second league title in eight years.

"It's a very important win," said Benzema. "I can't say we don't look at Barcelona, of course we do. But we're