

2 more weeks of school closure eyed as coronavirus cases hit 56

Global deaths top 3,000, 66 in Iran • New cases in Saudi, Jordan, Qatar, Egypt, India

5-hour workday for private school teachers cancelled

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The private education department at the ministry of education reversed a decision that allowed schools to require teachers to work up to five hours a day from March 1 to 12, when schools were closed by a Cabinet decision. In an exclusive interview with Kuwait Times, Manager of the Private Education Department Sanad Al-Mutairi explained that a circular was sent to all private schools on Sunday allowing the schools to have teachers work up to five hours daily on campus. However, after a meeting of education officials yesterday morning, this decision has been cancelled.

"This morning, officials from the education ministry held a meeting and

decided to cancel the five hours and not allow schools to require teachers to come to work," he told Kuwait Times during an interview at the private education department offices in Mubarak Al-Kabeer. The private education department is a sub-department within the ministry of education that oversees and organizes private and foreign schools in Kuwait.

On Feb 26, official government spokesman Tarek Al-Mazrem announced a Cabinet decision suspending all learning in schools from March 1 to 12 as a precautionary measure due to the rise in coronavirus infections in the country. On March 1, the private education department issued the widely-shared circular allowing schools to require five

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Sanad Al-Mutairi

By B Izzak, A Saleh and Agencies

KUWAIT: Ten coronavirus cases were registered in Kuwait in the past 24 hours, taking the total number to 56, the health ministry said yesterday. Assistant Undersecretary Dr Buthaina Al-Mudhaf told the daily briefing that the new cases are patients who were in Iran. All cases are of Kuwaitis, she affirmed, adding that all of them are in a stable condition and recovering.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has ordered to honor individuals tasked with containing the coronavirus outbreak in the country, which includes spiritual and financial support, HH the Prime Minister said. At the start of a Cabinet meeting, the prime minister shared a letter from HH the Amir, which heaped praise on his fellow compatriots who formed special teams to fight the virus "day and night". Those individuals should rightfully be honored in recognition of their herculean efforts to keep the deadly disease at bay, according to the letter.

Educational sources said the education ministry is considering suspending school for two more weeks after the 10 cases were detected, noting that the ministry asked supervisors to report on the possibility of constricting the curriculum if the extension is needed. There has been no official confirmation by the education ministry in this regard.



KUWAIT: People wearing protective masks wait at a bus station in Kuwait City yesterday amid a global outbreak of the novel coronavirus. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

MP Osama Al-Shaheen also called on the government to consider extending the suspension of schools because things don't seem to be under full control.

"Things seem hazy and unclear at the education ministry," the sources underlined, noting that some supervisors reported that scores of teachers demanded specific dates on when the summer vacation would start so that they could book their flights home. "The health situation in the country is far beyond flight bookings and no one knows when the

crisis will end," the sources said was the ministry's response to them. The sources said some subject supervisors suggested concluding school by May 15, adding these are mere proposals awaiting the health ministry's assessment of the situation.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Dr Saud Al-Harbi officially announced final exams of the 2019-2020 academic year will start on May 31, that is one week after the Eid holidays.

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Kuwait Fights Coronavirus

Egypt 'fully respects' Kuwait's decision to stop visas as precaution against COVID-19

No infections detected amongst Egyptians in Kuwait: Ambassador

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Following up Kuwait's Interior Ministry decision to suspend the issuance of all visit and work visas for Egyptians until further notice, the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower stressed full respect of the Kuwaiti decision taken as part of precautionary measures to fight the spread of COVID-19. In this regard, the ministry's official spokesperson Haitham Saaduddin said: "The ministry fully respects the Kuwaiti authorities' decision as it is a domestic matter and Egypt has nothing to do with it, as one of the measures taken for Kuwait's greater good and to protect its citizens and visitors." Saaduddin said his ministry will look into the complaints filed by Egyptian holders of entry visas to Kuwait, noting that as it is not the summer vacation, their numbers are limited and will be discussed and sorted out. Meanwhile, Egyptian ambassador to Kuwait Tareq Al-Qouni said the embassy is closely watching the coronavirus developments in Kuwait, and emphasized that no infections have so far been detected amongst Egyptians living in Kuwait or amongst those who arrived in Kuwait through various border posts in the past period.

Qouni stressed constant communication with the Egyptian side, namely with regards to examining

Egyptians at border exits and suspending their entry visas. In addition, Qouni urged all members of the Egyptian community to follow medical prevention guidelines, avoid crowds and strictly follow related official statements.

Qouni underlined the significant care shown by the Egyptian authorities in response to the virus, noting that all related government bodies are closely monitoring the latest domestic and international developments and that President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi himself had met relevant ministers urging them to be fully ready to deal with the possibility of detecting any infections according to World Health Organization (WHO) regulations.

Qouni quoted Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli's confirmations that the Egyptian state will not hide anything and deal with the issue with full transparency, noting that Madbouli also urged relevant authorities to implement their part of the plan and coordinate daily with WHO.

Commenting on social media reports about the spread of the virus in Egypt, Qouni stressed that the total number of infected cases detected up to March 2 is only two, who were foreigners visiting Egypt and that they have been subjected to strict medical measures. He added the Egyptian health minister announced examining 1,443 suspected cases and they were all found free of any infections.

Furthermore, Qouni underlined that the health ministry has examined all the people who had mingled with the Canadian and French nationals found infected on arriving from Egypt. "There is no proof that these cases got infected in Egypt, and both countries have so far

not imposed any additional precautionary measures on other people arriving from Egypt, other than the usual ones imposed on all nationalities," Qouni underlined. Finally, Qouni stressed that there is no good for Egypt in withholding information about the disease spreading in Egypt, especially when Egypt is fully committed to WHO standards and regulations and has always been

fighting bird flu and swine flu, for instance. He also urged all media and social media networks to only procure information from reliable official sources such as WHO, which is closely working with the Egyptian government in this regard.

Separately, well-informed sources said a patient recently suspected to be infected with COVID-19 in the ministry of public works is an Egyptian who had just returned to Kuwait. The sources added that the employee was sweating and suffered from severe coughing, which made his fellow workers report him to the health ministry, which in turn advised the man to have himself checked at Jaber Hospital, where he was advised to go to Farwaniya Hospital instead. The sources added that the man's colleagues panicked and left the ministry building in fear that he had COVID-19 symptoms. In addition, denying that the MPW premises were evacuated, the sources stressed that it is not clear yet whether the man is infected with the virus or suffers from another ailment. The ministry has not confirmed the report as of yesterday.

In other news, the Ministry of Health (MoH) announced providing eight golf karts to serve the citizens quarantined at Khairan Resort. MoH assistant undersecretary for public services affairs Abdul Aziz Al-Tashah said the karts were made available to provide all comforts for quarantined cases 24/7.



KUWAIT: A man is examined at the ministry of education's private education department yesterday.



A man uses a hand sanitizer provided for visitors at the building. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Extra precautions taken at the gate of the ministry of education's private education department.



A man is examined at the ministry of education's private education department yesterday.

Kuwait 'private education' takes measures against COVID-19 infection

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The ministry of education's private education department is implementing strict rules for both visitors and employees to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The entrance is blocked by several security personnel preventing anyone from entering the facilities and dealing with employees directly. The rule is that all transactions must start from the entrance, and all papers will be screened from there and will be delivered to the respective employees or officers for signing or completion. After the signing and completion of the documents, all the papers will be delivered back at the gate and will be handed over to clients. "Our new procedure is because we want zero contact with people in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus in case there are carriers among the visitors. All the clients are instructed to sit in the lobby and wait for 10-15 minutes, and the papers will be delivered to them," said Sanad Mohammed Al-Mutairi, Director of the Ministry of Education's Private Education Department in Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate.

At the entry gate, rubbing alcohol and hand sanitizers are available and anyone who arrives is advised to use

them. Employees are directed to undergo temperature checks in a room inside the compound, and anyone found to have fever or any symptoms will not be permitted to enter the facility. Facemasks and sanitizers are also provided to employees for free at the entry gate. "We have placed this area under strict regulations to prevent any sort of disease to penetrate and affect our daily activities here. We are concerned of the situation and want to help the government in making our country and its people safe at all times," Mutairi said.

Most ministries and major companies in Kuwait are doing the same to prevent the spread of the virus. Most biometric systems have been replaced by cards, canteens that were open to employees can now only be visited by designated staff, and most people walking around are now wearing masks. The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition has instructed workers at restaurants and hotels in Kuwait to wear masks and gloves and instructed them to provide sanitizers for their clients.

"We can help the government resolve the problem of coronavirus. The number of those infected is increasing daily, but God willing, vaccines will be discovered soon to dispel the fear from people," Mutairi noted.

Special circular for foreign, bilingual schools on e-learning platforms

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education's Private Education Department released the following circular yesterday, signed by its director Sanad Al-Mutairi, explaining the stipulations under the Cabinet's decision to suspend classes as a precautionary measure against the coronavirus spread. The following is a transcript of the circular:

In compliance with the state's plan to fight the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and as part of the precautionary measures taken in Kuwait to limit the spread of this virus and ensure using all safety and prevention means, the Cabinet decided suspending all government and private schools and universities for two weeks in the period of March 1 to 12.

The Cabinet's decision also stipulates suspending work at various private schools for all students and administrative and teaching staff. As part of the periodic revision the private education department conducts regarding various precautionary measures designed to achieve greater good and effective measures to ensure the safety of students and all staff members in private schools, we have decided the following:

1- Cancelling the previous circular issued to all foreign and bilingual schools under number 221568 dated 1/3/2020, namely not allowing teaching and administrative staff members to go to school during the suspension period decided by the Cabinet - March 1-12.

2- All private school students and staff are banned from showing up to school during the suspension period.

3- Private foreign and bilingual schools are allowed to activate their e-learning platforms in a way that ensures students contact teachers based on the following conditions:

a. The private school should already have a preset plan to activate the e-learning platform, for which all teaching staff members had been already trained.

b. Full commitment that the e-learning activation plan is administered through the school premises without the presence of any teaching staff member there.

c. Not to mandate students to use these platforms, and according to this circular, make it optional for students.

d. Activities used for e-learning platforms will be limited to developing students' skills in terms of training, thinking, research, creativity and revision related to the pre-suspension curriculum distribution plan, which will develop students' knowledge acquisition without including those parts of the curriculum that had been planned to be covered during the suspension. In case any of these parts are necessary for training and revision purposes, teachers and schools will be committed to re-explain them after the suspension.

e. Private schools and teachers to be responsible for activating the e-learning platforms will be jointly committed to observe public order and behavior and will also abide by the private education department's regulations concerning checking educational textbooks and programs.

4- Taking the suspension period into consideration, all schools included in this circular will abide by adjusting their 2019-2020 school year plans and notify the private education department with the adjustments within two weeks after resuming school.

5- This circular will be effective on issuance and will cancel contradictions in previous ones. Included schools will fully abide with its contents. Penal measures will be applied against schools violating the above regulations.



KUWAIT: A scan of the circular obtained by Kuwait Times yesterday.

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has so far recorded 56 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), which all are for Kuwaiti patients who returned to the country from Iran. All cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Kuwait is taking measures to test Kuwaitis coming from infected areas for potential infection.

Countries' ban list

As a precautionary measure against the spread of the virus, Kuwait has suspended flights from and to China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, South Korea, Japan,

Italy, Iraq and Iran. In the meantime, Kuwait sent charter flights to bring back Kuwaitis from infected areas, mainly Iran, Italy and Thailand, and test them before entering the country. Meanwhile, authorities have reportedly stopped issuing all kinds of visas (visit, work, etc) for Egyptian nationals, while allowing those who already have a visa to enter only after they take tests in Cairo before coming to Kuwait. In the meantime, Iraq has suspended flights from Kuwait, whereas Saudi Arabia stopped issuing umrah visas for all nationalities as a precautionary measures.

Precautions

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. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes for the first two weeks of March at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs). In the meantime, the Civil Service Commission suspended the biometric fingerprint system for staff attendance until further notice.

Hotlines

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

96049698 - 99048619.

Meanwhile, 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).

Local

Amir thankful for Kuwait's ongoing anti-coronavirus efforts

Sheikh Sabah receives Qatari audit bureau chief



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah shared a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday, which expressed gratitude for the efforts of special teams formed to fight an outbreak of coronavirus in Kuwait, said a government spokesman. "His Highness the Amir ordered the honoring of these individuals in recognition of their praiseworthy efforts," government spokesman Tariq Al-Merzem said. Amid a Cabinet meeting, Kuwaiti executives discussed the latest coronavirus updates, he added, saying government bodies have "served the nation well" through their efforts to contain the pneumonia-causing virus. He acknowledged these

"herculean efforts," saying the entire nation is deeply grateful for the government's commitment to rid the country of the deadly virus.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Qatari Audit Bureau Chief Sheikh Bandar Bin Mohammad Al-Thani. State Audit Bureau Chairman Faisal Al-Shaya escorted his Qatari counterpart to the reception attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received the Qatari official separately yesterday. — KUNA



Kuwait imports 3.6 million facemasks



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan oversees the shipment's arrival. — KUNA photos



Facemasks shipment taken out of the plane.

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced importing 3.6 million facemasks to meet the growing demand in local markets. Kuwait Supplies Company is tasked with distributing the masks at supplies centers across the country, said the ministry in a statement yesterday. The masks were imported in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Defense, using the

latter's airplanes to deliver the items, under direct orders from His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, it noted. The health ministry inspected the masks to make sure they fit international standards and directed Kuwaitis and expats on the best way to use them to prevent coronavirus infection, through different media and social media. — KUNA

Kuwait restates unremitting backing to Palestine: Official

CAIRO: Kuwait yesterday reiterated its principled stance and unwavering support for the Palestinian issue as the "central cause of Arabs," said a Kuwaiti official. "Kuwaiti backing to our Palestinian brothers will endure until they obtain all their legitimate rights pursuant to international laws and UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions," Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Fahad Al-Awadhi said while attending a meeting of Arab permanent representatives. He pointed out international and European support for the legitimate rights of

Palestinians, calling for an Arab alternative based on legitimate international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative in order to counter the recently unveiled US peace blueprint. "We, in Kuwait, keep throwing much weight behind our brothers in Palestine in various political and economic domains until an acceptable solution is reached," he insisted. The Kuwaiti official hoped that the meeting would come up with concrete recommendations aiming at providing more support to the Palestinian cause. — KUNA

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Aerial view of Kuwait City. — Photo by Fahad Al-Otaibi (KUNA)

Kuwait sees global cooperation as key to anti-drugs fight

VIENNA: The fight against illicit drugs should be a serious and collective endeavor, said a Kuwaiti diplomat yesterday, pointing out that his country is committed to all UN conventions against narcotics. Kuwait is among the signatories of the three major UN conventions against drugs, its Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Envoy to the UN Sadiq Marafie said on the sidelines of a UN conference over the ill effects of drug addiction. On the agenda for the talks is the issue of how youngsters can contribute towards the fight against drugs and other related matters, added the diplomat, thanking the UN for its efforts to keep such scourges at bay. International bodies and representatives of a number of countries, including Kuwait, have assembled for the talks. — KUNA



VIENNA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Envoy to the UN Sadiq Marafie attends the conference. — KUNA

KFH participates in International Invention Fair of Middle East

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated as a platinum sponsor, in the activities of the 12th International Invention Fair of the Middle East, which was held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in the presence of Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, representing His Highness the Amir. The fair that had more than 100 inventions from 41 countries across the world, was launched in Al-Raya Ballroom, at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel and will continue until February 19.

During his speech at the opening ceremony in the presence of the representative of His Highness the Amir, and Chairman of the Higher Committee of the Exhibition, Talal Al-Kharafi, ambassadors of the countries participating in the exhibition, along with a large number of investors, participants and sponsors, Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media at KFH, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh said: "KFH is keen in participating in such scientific forums that contribute to raising the scientific level of youth. In addition to creating a motivating environment for exploring talents and capabilities that will support the level of development and progress in society."

Ruwaieh affirmed KFH's commitment to supporting the initiatives that constitute a platform for spreading a culture of innovation and creativity, and highlighting Kuwait's role in supporting inventors and talented people. Additionally, highlighting Kuwaiti inventions, noting that this comes within the framework of the bank's social responsibility and sustainable development strategy, in line with His Highness the Amir's New Kuwait Vision 2035 by investing in youth capabilities to achieve progress and competitiveness globally.



KUWAIT: (From left) Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Higher Committee of the Exhibition Talal Al-Kharafi, and Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media at KFH Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh.

He pointed out that KFH continues to support scientific activities and initiatives, not to mention supporting the causes aimed to develop the capabilities of the society and highlight the efforts of young innovators in an invention fair that brings together broad participation from different countries of the world. The exhibition is a platform which allows investors, creators, interested parties, official and governmental bodies to create investment opportunities for the private sector to advance in scientific research. He mentioned that the exhibition is considered the largest exhibition of inventions in the Middle East and the second largest exhibition of inventions in the world after the Geneva exhibition.

Ruwaieh said that KFH is the only bank that launched the platform 'you are our pride' to honor the owners of inventions and accomplishments in all its fields. He noted the leading role in supporting and honoring Kuwaiti cre-

ators that have winning inventions in major international exhibitions, regional and global competitions. In addition to allocating an award for creativity that contributes to encouraging and motivating the creators.

He pointed out that KFH is distinguished by a proven record in social responsibility, encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and creativity among youth. In addition to sponsoring digital transformation initiatives and implementing technological applications to establish the bank's leadership in achieving sustainability strategy in various social aspects.

It is noteworthy mentioning that the International Invention Fair of the Middle East is the first of its kind that offers financial and promotional awards. Totaling more than 50 thousand dollars, to achieve more support and encouragement for inventors and strengthening and supporting cooperation between investors and creators.

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KUWAIT: People wearing protective masks cross the street in Kuwait City yesterday, amid a global outbreak of the novel Coronavirus. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait Fishermen Union laments power cut halting mandatory paperwork

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Processing of transactions of hundreds of people at the sea survey transportation department including fishing boats were ceased, rendering them idle due to a power cut on the ground floor of the

department. President of Kuwait Fishermen's Union Thaher Al-Suwayyan said this situation has been ongoing for weeks, which stopped part of the fishing fleet which is in need of speedy renewal of licenses to resume fishing and support food security, as imports from some countries are banned due to the

COVID-19 outbreak. Suwayyan asked concerned officials to restore power as soon as possible to resolve the problem.

Farwaniya campaign

Kuwait Municipality said Farwaniya inspectors visit-

ed malls to make sure stores there are complying with municipal rules. They were headed by the violations inspection department's Director Amina Al-Enezi, who said the visits covered 60 stores, resulting in issuing 23 citations for having unlicensed signs, adding signs and having signs with expired licenses.

Drugs found with passengers at airport

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti couple was arrested at Kuwait International Airport arriving from Nepal with three pieces of hashish hidden inside spice boxes, said security sources, noting that airport customs inspectors also arrested a female expat arriving from Amsterdam with a piece and a joint of hashish. The drugs were seized and suspects taken to the proper authorities for further legal procedures.



News in brief

Amir condolences Bahrain King

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of condolence to Bahrain's King Hamad bin Eissa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, expressing sincere condolences over the demise of Sheikh Ahmad bin Mohammad bin Salman Al-Khalifa. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Bahraini king. — KUNA

Resignation accepted

KUWAIT: Kuwait Government spokesman Tareq Al-Mezrim announced yesterday accepting resignation of Mohammad Bushehri as minister of electricity and water. In a press release, Mezrim said an Amiri decree was issued in this regard, with another assigning Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel as acting minister of the aforementioned ministry. — KUNA

US Dollar stable at KD 0.305

KUWAIT: The exchange rate of the US Dollar stood still at KD 0.305, while the Euro jumped to KD 0.337 compared to Sunday, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. In its daily bulletin, the CBK noted that the exchange rate of the British Pound Sterling held its KD 0.391 rate, while the Swiss Franc settled at KD 0.317, while the Japanese Yen remained at KD 0.002. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Nearly 100 Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) volunteers joined Ministry of Health staff in their efforts to provide full care to 429 citizens currently quarantined at the Khairan Resort as a precautionary measure against the potential spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). — KUNA photos



Buttigieg exits race as ‘Super Tuesday’ looms

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Nighat Dad, Pakistan’s digital warrior battling the patriarchy



HAZANO: Turkish military vehicles drive through Hazano in the rebel-held northern countryside of Syria's Idlib province on the way to the border to cross back into Turkey yesterday. —AFP

Turkish drones kill 19 Syria troops

UN probe highlights Russia, Turkey roles in Syria ‘war crimes’

ANKARA: Turkish drone strikes in Syria's northwestern Idlib province killed 19 government soldiers, a war monitor reported yesterday, as tensions soared between Damascus and Ankara. The 19 died in strikes on a military convoy in the Jabal Al-Zawiya area and a base near Maaret Al-Numan city, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The report came hours after Turkey shot down two Syrian warplanes, in an escalating offensive against the Damascus government in Idlib, where Islamist fighters backed by Ankara pose the biggest obstacle to Damascus seizing back control over all of Syria. Following weeks of violence in the province, Turkey confirmed a full military operation against Russian-backed Syrian forces after 34 Turkish soldiers were killed last week in an air strike blamed on Damascus.

However Ankara has insisted it does not want to clash directly with Moscow. “One anti-aircraft system that shot down one of our armed drones and two other anti-aircraft systems have been destroyed, and two SU-24 regime planes that were attacking our aircraft have been downed,” Turkey's defense ministry said. Syrian state media said Turkish forces “targeted” two of its planes over Idlib. A rebel group and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, both said the planes had been downed.

The situation in Idlib was already volatile as the government supported by Russian air power pressed an assault on the region in a bid to retake the last opposition enclave in a nine-year civil war. The confrontation between the Russia-backed Syrian forces and NATO-member Turkey, which supports Syrian rebels, has prompted worries over a wider conflict and a migrant crisis in Europe similar to 2015.

Migrant numbers have already surged along the rugged frontier after Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, seeking to pressure the EU over Syria, said the country had “opened the doors” to Europe. Greece said Sunday it has blocked nearly 10,000 migrants at its border with Turkey. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar announced “operation ‘Spring Shield’” for the first time, adding that it “successfully continues”.

Turkish forces hit Syrian government positions after Erdogan warned Damascus would “pay a price” for the air strike. Under a 2018 deal with Russia meant to bring calm to Idlib, Turkey has 12 observation posts in Syria-but several have come under fire from Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's forces. Turkey wants the international community to establish a no-fly zone over Idlib. SANA Syrian state media reported that the government shot down a Turkish drone near the town of Saraqeb, publishing footage of an aircraft tumbling from the sky in flames.

Syria ‘war crimes’

Meanwhile, Moscow has participated in war crimes connected with deadly air strikes in Syria, UN investigators said yesterday, warning that Ankara could also be responsible for similar crimes against Kurds there. The charges come as tensions soar between Turkey and Russian-backed Syrian forces following escalating clashes in the last rebel stronghold of Idlib, but predates the latest unrest. The UN Commission of Inquiry on the rights situation in Syria said in its latest report that it had evidence that Russian planes participated in two air strikes, in Idlib and in rural Damascus last July and August, which killed more than 60 people.

‘Criminal responsibility’

The report, which covers the period from July 2019 to January 10 this year, said there was evidence to prove Russian planes took part in both attacks, and that since the attacks were not directed at military objectives they amounted to a “war crime.” The investigators also said Turkey might be held criminally liable for serious violations by its allies, the Syrian National Army rebel fighters. Turkish troops and their Syrian proxies overran a swathe of northern Syria last October, after a military campaign against Kurdish forces resulted in tens of thousands fleeing their homes.

The UN investigators referred to allegations that Ankara-backed Syrian rebels had carried out executions, home confiscations and looting. They highlighted in particular the case of Hevran Khalaf, the 35-year-old leader of the Future Syria Party, who on October 12 was pulled from her car and executed along with her driver. They had been travelling from Qamishli when members of the Syrian National Army's Brigade 123 pulled Khalaf from the car by her hair and mutilated her body before the executions. The Commission said there were “reasonable grounds” to believe that the Syrian National Army fighters committed several war crimes, including “murder”.

If it could be shown they had acted under “the effective command and control of Turkish forces” it could entail the “criminal responsibility for such commanders who knew or should have known about the crimes,” it warned. While the investigators acknowledged they had not uncovered evidence the Turkish forces gave orders leading to the violations, the report pointed out that liability could also fall on those who “failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures to prevent or repress their commission.”

The investigators also referred to an air strike on a civilian convoy the same day as the Khalaf's murder and in the same region that killed 11 people and wounded 74. And they highlighted the

apparent targeting of non-military sites such as strikes near the Aluk water station that cut the water supply to 460,000 people. Ankara has denied involvement, but the commission urged “Turkish authorities to launch (their) own investigations and make the findings public”.

Children ‘freezing to death’

The UN's Syria commission, set up in 2011 shortly after the civil war began, has repeatedly accused the various sides of war crimes and in some cases crimes against humanity. Yesterday's report was the 19th to date. It also indicated a range of violations by Damascus-backed forces, including targeting civilian sites such as schools and medical facilities in western Syria. The investigators expressed alarm at the growing humanitarian tragedy at Syria's border with Turkey, where they said some 1.5 million people displaced by violence around Idlib had become stranded in desperate conditions.

“It is scandalous that the international community has not been able ... to deal with the situation,” commission chair Paulo Pinheiro told reporters. “You have children in open air with their families, without a tent, without shelter, without blankets,” he said, lamenting that “children are freezing to death.” In nearly nine years of conflict, more than 380,000 people have been killed and millions have been displaced from their homes. —Agencies

Virus reopens religion versus science debate in Iran

TEHRAN: The novel coronavirus has sparked intense debate in Iran between ultra-conservative Shiite clerics and the government on how to most effectively tackle the deadliest outbreak of the disease outside China. The issue has also been divisive among religious authorities. “This is a historic debate between Muslim jurists that dates back to the early days of Islam,” said Mohsen Alviri, an academic and theologian from Qom, a Shiite holy city that is the epicenter of Iran's coronavirus outbreak.

“Some people prioritize religious rituals, which they place above everything, even medical science,” said the hodjatoleslam, or middle-ranking cleric. Others “think we can abandon obligatory prayers to save a human being's life,” he added. Ayatollah Mohammad Saidi, head of the Fatima Masumeh mausoleum in Qom, a place of pilgrimage visited each year by crowds of Shiites from Iran and abroad, is from the first category.

In an online video that went viral last week, Saidi insisted the place of worship should remain open to the faithful, despite the COVID-19 illness outbreak, which Iran

says has claimed 66 lives out of 1,501 cases of infection. “This sacred shrine (is) a house of healing,” he said, inviting pilgrims to come so that they can be “healed of their physical and spiritual illnesses”.

‘Antibacterial effects’

Two days earlier, Qom's top security body had ordered the suspension of collective prayers in the province. It also ordered the disinfection of the mausoleum and the installation of barriers to keep people back from a tomb whose ornate silver-plated enclosure is usually touched or kissed by the faithful. An article published a few hours later on the mausoleum's website criticized the decision as “an error based on lack of faith”.

The article, which was referred to as a statement by Iranian media but is no longer available online, repeatedly referred to what it presented as “the antibacterial effects of silver”. Following the exchange between the government and the mausoleum, Health Minister Saeed Namaki announced restrictions on the entry to Shiite holy sites. The government had to make concessions, he implied, while indicating that it had made proposals that were “stricter” than those that were finally adopted.

Under the government's new guidelines, worshippers would only be allowed to enter pilgrimage sites if they had hand sanitizing liquid and masks, and as long as they avoided close contact with each other and simply prayed before leaving. Advice on ways to prevent novel coronavirus infections has appeared in droves on bill-



TEHRAN: Women wearing protective masks stand at a bus station in the Iranian capital Tehran yesterday, following the COVID-19 illness outbreak, which Iran says has claimed 66 lives out of 1,501 cases of infection since February. —AFP

boards and on television in Iran. Authorities also took the rare decision to cancel the main weekly Muslim prayers in Tehran and other cities, including Mashhad, an important pilgrimage site.

“Nothing justifies the closure of this divine duty,” Ayatollah Ahmad Alamolhoda, the imam who leads prayers in northeastern Mashhad, was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA. But one hodjatoleslam has a different opinion. “If specialist doctors recommend collective prayers should be temporarily suspended or that attendance at religious sites should be reduced, then this should be adhered to,”

Mohammadreza Zaeri said.

“If someone were to be contaminated by (a cleric's) negligence, then (this cleric) would certainly be religiously responsible,” Zaeri, who writes for a religious monthly, said on the messaging service Telegram. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei entered the debate on Thursday, praising doctors and nurses and expressing hope that their dedication would “soon eradicate the sinister virus”. In Qom, Grand Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani issued a fatwa on Saturday calling on the population to “take into account” the health ministry's recommendations. —AFP

Manila mall hostage-taker surrenders

MANILA: A sacked security guard gave himself up and set free dozens of hostages he seized at gunpoint yesterday in a Manila mall, ending a day-long standoff that terrified shoppers and left one man wounded. The gunman, who launched the attack over his dismissal, walked out of the V-Mall and was able to complain to reporters about his former employers before police tackled him. Authorities initially said about 30 people were held in an office inside the mall, but once the standoff ended they said the number was up to 70.

“The crisis is over,” said Francis Zamora, mayor of San Juan City, which includes the mall. “They're all safe now.” The drama kicked off yesterday morning when the suspect shot and wounded another security guard, who was rushed to hospital in stable condition, and barricaded the hostages in an office. The gunman was armed with a pistol and what he claimed was a hand grenade when he burst into the mall, sending terrified shoppers and workers fleeing.

Heavily armed police in battle gear and carrying assault rifles massed at the shopping center while scores of onlookers snapped pictures with their mobile phones. Zamora told reporters the hostage-taker was upset after losing his job, and had turned to violence to air his grievances. Authorities worked for hours to convince him to surrender, and later in the day held a press conference where company officers apologized for upsetting him.

“I deeply regret my shortcomings,” one of his former supervisors said. “Because of this, I will resign from my post... to give way to a solution to our current problem.” Police were in contact with the suspect for hours via a walkie-talkie. —AFP

International

‘No sense of celebration;’ Israel holds third election in one year

Opinion polls predict another stalemate

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought re-election yesterday under the weight of an imminent corruption trial, with the country's third ballot in less than a year predicted to end in another deadlock. The election follows inconclusive votes last April and September that dimmed the aura of political invincibility once enjoyed by Israel's longest-serving prime minister, who has denied wrongdoing in the three graft cases against him.

“Today I have no sense of celebration,” President Reuven Rivlin said after voting, voicing the frustration across the country after a seemingly never-ending election season. “The feeling I have is not simple, it's even one of shame, when I face you, the citizens of Israel.”

Opinion polls forecast that neither Netanyahu's right-wing Likud nor the centrist Blue and White party of his main challenger, former armed forces chief Benny Gantz, will win enough votes on their own, or with coalition allies, for a governing majority in parliament.

Israelis can vote until 10 pm, when media can publish the first exit polls and signal whether the deadlock has been broken. More stalemate could push Israel, where a 2020 budget is still pending, further into economic limbo. The candidates were more upbeat than Rivlin, who, as president, will guide any coalition talks in the weeks ahead.

Voting in his hometown outside Tel Aviv, Gantz told reporters: “I really hope that in the coming weeks, following the results, we can put Israel on a new path.” Netanyahu, who voted in Jerusalem, said: “Go vote. It's a proud day.” He said Israel had taken all precautions needed to control the spread of the

coronavirus and added: “People can go and vote with complete confidence.”

Turnout figures will be watched closely, particularly given concern over the global outbreak and accusations of malicious rumors about contamination in areas seen as strongholds for particular parties. By noon, nearly 28% of eligible voters had cast ballots, the highest level at this stage in two decades. Voters under home-quarantine, such as those who have recently travelled back to Israel from coronavirus hot spots, voted at special polling stations wearing face masks and gloves.

‘The defendant’

Israel's economy has weathered the political turmoil, with growth strong and the labor market tight. But the longer the stalemate continues, the heavier the toll, including the lack of new money for health, education, welfare or infrastructure projects until an annual budget is approved by parliament. Netanyahu, 70, hopes a peace plan that US President Donald Trump presented in

January will help him win an unprecedented fifth term though the Palestinians have rejected it. Netanyahu says recognition of Israeli sovereignty over settlements in the occupied West Bank will enable him to annex them within weeks of the election.

But his re-election bid has been complicated since the last election by his indictment on charges of bribery, breach of trust and fraud over allegations he granted state favors worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Israeli media barons in return for gifts and favorable coverage. The trial is due to begin on March 17,



JERUSALEM: Israelis wearing protective masks vote at one of the special polling station erected for the 5,600 voters under quarantine, many of whom had visited countries where the coronavirus COVID-19 is prevalent, during parliamentary election yesterday. —AFP

when post-election coalition wheeling and dealing is likely to be in full swing. Gantz calls Netanyahu “the defendant” and has accused him of seeking to retain power to promote legislation that would bar authorities from putting a sitting prime minister on trial.

Netanyahu says Gantz, 60, would need Arab politicians' support in parliament to form a government and they would tie his hands in any military action in the

region. He has portrayed Gantz as a “coward” incapable of confronting the many dangers Israel faces in a tense region and has suggested he is hiding secrets that would open him to blackmail by its foe Iran. The Israeli military said in a statement it had targeted a vehicle in the Syrian-controlled Golan Heights yesterday after an attempted sniper attack from the area. The frontier has been tense throughout Syria's civil war. —Reuters

Iraq crisis deepens after PM-designate steps down

BAGHDAD: Protest-torn Iraq yesterday faced more political gridlock after prime minister-designate Mohammed Allawi withdrew overnight, accusing lawmakers of obstructing his attempt to form a government. Oil-rich but poverty-stricken Iraq has for five months been rocked by the biggest wave of anti-government demonstrations since the 2003 US-led invasion toppled former dictator Saddam Hussein. The mostly youthful protesters demand the ouster of Iraq's entire political elite, which they accuse of being inept, corrupt and beholden to powerful neighbor Iran.

Allawi's departure plunges Iraq deeper into uncertainty and leaves President Barham Saleh 15 days to propose a new candidate - likely intelligence chief Mustafa al-Kazimi, according to political sources. Iraq has been in legal limbo since outgoing premier Adel Abdel Mahdi stepped down in December, as the constitution makes no provisions for such a resignation. Allawi's withdrawal a month after his appointment marks another first for

Iraq, which has never seen a premier-designate fail to secure parliamentary backing for a cabinet line-up.

Iraq's bitterly divided parliament had on Sunday failed for a third time to convene a confidence vote on Allawi's proposed government. In a letter to the president, Allawi charged that some factions were “not serious about reform or fulfilling their pledges to the people”. One Iraqi official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that “political leaders are living in a bubble” and dealing with the crisis “as though nothing has happened in the country”.

‘Holding Iraq hostage’

Allawi had been nominated as a consensus candidate among Iraq's divided political parties, and had emphasized that his cabinet would be made up of technocrats and independents. Anti-government demonstrators had nonetheless rejected him as too closely connected to the political elite. Powerful populist cleric Moqtada Sadr - who had backed the protest movement before he withdrew his support last month - condemned “corrupt” politicians for “holding the country hostage”.

He hailed Allawi's decision to bow out as one taken “for the love of Iraq”. The protesters have backed Alaa Al-Rikaby, a



BAGHDAD: Iraqi protesters gather during ongoing anti-government demonstrations in Baghdad's Tahrir Square. —AFP

pharmacist who has emerged as a prominent activist in the southern protest hotspot of Nasiriyah. Many celebrated Allawi's departure as a victory. “We have already removed Adel Mahdi and now Allawi,” said Roqiya, a 20-year-old student demonstrating in Baghdad, who

charged that “political parties pursue only their own interests”. Political commentator Hamid Abou Nour said Allawi's demise came precisely because he tried to reconcile the interests of political parties with those of the street, telling AFP that “he failed on both counts”. —AFP



Photo shows rockets and artillery being fired during a Korean People's Army joint strike drill at an undisclosed location. —AFP

ened to demonstrate a “new strategic weapon” soon. North Korea has a long history of seeking to demonstrate its military capability to try to obtain conces-

sions. “March is pretty reliably missile-testing season for North Korea,” tweeted Ankit Panda, senior fellow at the Federation of American Scientists. —AFP

North Korea fires ‘ballistic missiles’

SEOUL: North Korea fired what appeared to be two short-range ballistic missiles yesterday, the South's military said, weeks after Pyongyang threatened to demonstrate a “new strategic weapon” and its deadline for Washington to offer sanctions relief expired. The launch was the nuclear-armed North's first for more than three months and came as nuclear negotiations with the United States remain at a standstill.

The two devices were fired eastwards over the sea from the Wonsan area on the east coast and flew 240 kilometers at a maximum altitude of 35 kilometers, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. They were “believed to be short-range ballistic missiles,” a JCS official said. South Korea's security ministers expressed “strong concern” the North was “carrying out actions giving rise to military tensions”, the presidential Blue House said.

Japan's defense ministry said there was no indication of anything coming down in its waters or exclusive economic zone, but added: “Recent repeated launches of ballistic and other missiles by North Korea are a serious issue.” The launch came as Pyongyang battles to prevent a coronavirus outbreak and days after the one-year anniversary of the collapsed Hanoi summit between leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump.

Negotiations have since been deadlocked over sanctions relief and what the North would be willing to give up in return, despite a high-profile June meeting in the Demilitarized Zone that divides the peninsula. Pyongyang carried out a series of weapons tests late last year, the last of them in November, often describing them as multiple launch rocket systems. It also carried out static engine tests, most recently in December.

At a party meeting at the end of that month, Kim declared that Pyongyang no longer considered itself bound by its moratoriums on nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests, and threat-

burning and looting homes.

“So far 50 bodies have been recovered but the figure is not conclusive and is very likely to rise as rescue efforts are still under way,” Zayyad Ibrahim, a lawmaker in the Nigerian parliament said yesterday. Several people were injured in the attacks and were taken to nearby hospitals Ibrahim said. The attacks were in retaliation for villagers allegedly assisting recent army operations against the so-called bandits in their forest hideouts, local counsellor Dayyabu Kerawa said.

“The bandits accused residents from the targeted villages of providing information about their hideouts to the military,” said Kerawa. “We buried 51 victims yesterday (Sunday) afternoon,” Kerawa said. Kaduna police spokesman Mohammed Jalige said authorities were investigating the attacks. Violence has soared in

northwest Nigeria in recent years as criminal gangs involved in cattle rustling and kidnapping have carried out bloody raids on villages. The groups attack from hideouts in nearby forests exploiting a lack of security across the region.

The Birnin Gwari and Giwa districts of Kaduna state have been hit by violence and repeated reprisal attacks between bandits and local vigilante groups. Security forces in February announced a sweeping operation aimed at armed gangs in the area. Last month 21 people, including 16 members of one family, were killed when bandits attacked a village in a reprisal attack. Authorities in several states in northwest Nigeria have sought peace deals with the bandits to stop the bloodshed but these have failed to end the instability. —AFP

News in brief

Notorious militant sentenced

CAIRO: An Egyptian court yesterday sentenced to death an ex-special forces officer turned Islamist militant and 36 other jihadists over several terror attacks, including an assassination bid on a former interior minister. The Cairo criminal court condemned Hisham Ashmawy and 36 co-defendants to hang on 54 charges such as leading a terror group and targeting then-interior minister Mohamed Ibrahim in a 2013 suicide car bombing, a judicial source said. Ibrahim survived the bombing near his Cairo home but some 20 policemen and civilians were wounded. The death sentences can be appealed. Known locally as the “Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis”, after the militant outfit he led in the restive Sinai region, Ashmawy later broke with the group after it pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group in November 2014. —AFP

Seven Rohingyas shot dead

COX'S BAZAR: Bangladeshi elite police yesterday shot dead seven suspected Rohingya gangsters involved in drug and people smuggling, a spokesman for the force said. Tensions are rising in south-east Bangladesh two and a half years after hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees fled a military offensive in Myanmar. The latest gunfight came after a recent spike in human smuggling as gangs lure refugees onto rickety fishing boats for often dangerous sea journeys to Malaysia. The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) said it was involved in a three-hour shootout with members of a bandit group led by notorious Rohingya gang leader known as Zokir. “So far we have recovered seven bodies with bullet wounds,” RAB spokesman Abdullah Sheikh Sadi said. He added that it was unclear if Zokir was among the dead. —AFP

Chinese sentenced to death

BEIJING: A Chinese court has sentenced a man to death for fatally stabbing two officials at a checkpoint set up to control the spread of the new coronavirus outbreak. The virus has infected more than 80,000 people and killed nearly 3,000 in mainland China-prompting a wide network of temperature checks, travel restrictions, residential checks and closures nationwide. Many villages and communities have also implemented their own blockades and tough measures to keep people out, fearful that travelers could infect their communities. On Sunday a court handed down a death sentence to a 23-year-old man after he stabbed two officials at one local village checkpoint. The incident happened on February 6 when Ma Jianguo was driving a minivan through a checkpoint at Luo Meng village in Honghe, southwestern Yunnan province, where he was stopped. —AFP

Hanging of rapists postponed

NEW DELHI: The execution of four men convicted of the brutal gang-rape and murder of a student on a New Delhi bus in 2012 was indefinitely postponed by a court yesterday. The special court last month ruled the men were to be hanged today, but postponed the execution after one of them filed a mercy plea - the last remedy for death row convicts in India - to the president. “The execution has been deferred till further notice,” defense lawyer AP Singh told reporters outside the court in the capital. Six people - five men and one juvenile - were charged with the attack on Jyoti Singh in a case that made headlines around the world and triggered massive nationwide protests. One of the men, the suspected ring-leader, allegedly committed suicide in his prison cell, while four others were convicted in 2013. —AFP

At least 50 killed in northern Nigeria ‘bandit’ attacks

KANO: At least 50 people were killed in multiple attacks by armed ‘bandits’ on villages in an area of northern Nigeria rife with cattle theft and kidnappings, local officials said yesterday. Sources said around 100 armed assailants stormed into the villages of Kerawa, Zareyawa and Minda in Kaduna state at dawn on Sunday, gunning down worshippers as they left a mosque for morning prayers before killing residents,

International

Buttigieg exits race, Biden back in contention; ‘Super Tuesday’ looms

Openly gay US presidential candidate ends his campaign

WASHINGTON: Pete Buttigieg, the openly gay US presidential candidate, on Sunday ended his campaign to be the Democratic nominee – giving a major boost to fellow centrist Joe Biden. The 38-year-old Buttigieg’s surprise decision was set to shake up the race this week when 14 states vote on “Super Tuesday.”

It is expected to further boost the fortunes of Biden after the former vice president scored a resounding victory in South Carolina’s primary on Saturday in the contest to see who faces President Donald Trump in November. Biden has emerged as the chief moderate challenger to frontrunner Bernie Sanders, the firebrand leftist who has taken the race by storm and is looking to score big wins today in states such as crown jewel California.

Buttigieg, a military veteran and former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, addressed supporters in his home town. “The truth is that the path has narrowed to a close – for our candidacy, if not for our cause,” he said. Buttigieg did not mention Sanders by name in his speech, but he has publicly stated he believes the 78-year-old senator’s “inflexible” political approach would fail in a match-up against Trump. “We need a broad-based agenda that can truly deliver for the American people, not one that gets lost in ideology,” he said.

Buttigieg however stopped short of endorsing Biden or any other candidate. Buttigieg emerged as a major player by narrowly winning the Iowa caucuses, earning widespread attention for his unflustered and professional approach in an often bitter Democratic nomination battle. But his third place finish in Nevada and a worse showing in South Carolina confirmed he had struggled to build a broad coalition, including support from black voters – a key Democratic demographic.

Biden’s resounding victory Saturday in the first southern state to vote has thrust him back into contention, after miserable showings in the first three states. With 48 percent of the vote in South Carolina, Biden more than doubled the 20 percent won by Sanders – positioning him as the leftist senator’s main rival. “Just days ago the press and the pundits declared my candidacy dead,” Biden told a crowd in Norfolk,

Virginia, one of the states voting on Super Tuesday. “Now, thanks to the heart of the Democratic Party in South Carolina, I’m very much alive,” he said.

“On Tuesday here in Virginia, you could be the launching pad on the path to beat Donald Trump,” Sanders continues to hold poll leads in several Super Tuesday states – including California. “I think we’ve got a great chance to win in California, in Texas, in Massachusetts and a number of states,” Sanders said Sunday on CBS. He later congratulated Buttigieg on “running a strong and historic campaign” and angled for his supporters. “I urge them to join us in the fight for real change in this country,” Sanders tweeted.

In an already turbulent Democratic race – which has gradually winnowed down a diverse and record-large field – Biden’s victory Saturday injected further uncertainty. “The biggest question is whether this will sling-shot Joe Biden into victory in some Super Tuesday states,” said Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia. The win, powered by support from black voters, was Biden’s first in the race, but came at a crucial time, helping dispel doubts about the 77-year-old’s energy level and appeal.

Pressure to drop out

South Carolina brought some clarity: billionaire businessman Tom Steyer, who spent \$23 million campaigning in the state, also dropped out of the race after taking just 11 percent of the vote. Pressure is mounting on other trailing Democrats – including Senator Elizabeth Warren and Senator Amy Klobuchar – to follow Steyer’s and Buttigieg’s example and then swiftly throw their weight behind a frontrunner. Warren, Klobuchar and billionaire Michael Bloomberg have all made it clear that they will stick around at least through Super Tuesday.

Buttigieg was feted by rivals including Bloomberg, another moderate, who has poured a staggering \$500 million from his personal fortune into campaign advertising. Buttigieg “ran a strong campaign that inspired audiences and made history,” Bloomberg said. Biden



INDIANA: With his husband Chasten by his side, former South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg announces he is ending campaign to be the Democratic nominee for president during a speech at the Century Center. —AFP

praised Buttigieg for his “trail-blazing campaign based on courage, compassion, and honesty.” Many Buttigieg supporters are unlikely to shift their backing to Bloomberg, whom Buttigieg openly accused of trying to “buy” his way into the presidential race.

The money factor

As the race goes forward, money will loom ever larger. Biden claimed he had been outspent 40-to-1 in South Carolina, but said he raised \$10 million over the weekend. Sanders has raised huge amounts in mostly

small donations, including \$46 million in February alone.

Biden argued on Sunday that as a centrist, he would be far more effective atop the party’s ticket in November against Trump than Sanders, who calls himself a democratic socialist. “Most Americans don’t want a promise of a revolution. What they want is results,” he said in Virginia. Biden campaigned yesterday in Texas, Super Tuesday’s second largest haul of the delegates who formally pick the party’s nominee in July, while Sanders campaigns in Utah and in Klobuchar’s home state of Minnesota. —AFP

Abortion in the US in facts and figures

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court is to hear a case tomorrow that could have a bearing on the future of abortion in the United States. The following are some facts and figures about abortion in the US:

Legal basis

The US Supreme Court legalized a woman’s right to an abortion in all 50 states in the landmark 1973 case *Roe v Wade*. In a 1992 case, the court ruled that a woman could terminate her pregnancy as long as the fetus is not viable, which is usually before the 24th week. Besides recognizing a woman’s right to an abortion before viability, the court banned restrictions that would put an “undue burden” on access to the procedure.

State laws

What constitutes an “undue burden” has been subject to interpretation, and several conservative states have passed laws restricting access to abortion. These laws have resulted in the closure of numerous abortion clinics. Six states, including Mississippi and Missouri, have only one abortion clinic each. In contrast, the liberal state of California has 150.

The Louisiana law before the Supreme Court requires doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of where the procedure is being performed. Pro-choice groups argue that this would leave Louisiana with just one abortion clinic. Other state laws, for example, prohibit an abortion once a fetal heartbeat can be detected, which can be as early as six weeks – before a woman may even know she is pregnant.

The numbers

More than 862,000 abortions were performed in the United States in 2017, which works out to about 13.5 abortions for every 1,000 women aged 15-44. That rate, which is comparable to the rates in both France and Britain, has been trending downward. According to the non-profit Guttmacher Institute, the 862,320 abortions in the United States in 2017 represented a seven percent decline since 2014. The number of abortions performed each year varies widely by state. In the southern state of Alabama, there are 6.2 abortions per 1,000 women, while the rate in New York is 23.1 per 1,000, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Public opinion

Abortion is one of the most controversial issues in the United States. According to a 2018 survey by the Pew Research Center, 58 percent of Americans believe abortion should remain legal, while 37 percent believe it should be banned. The breakdown largely follows party lines, with most Democrats backing a woman’s right to an abortion and most Republicans opposing the procedure.

Recent developments

During his presidential campaign, Republican Donald Trump courted the religious right with a pledge to name anti-abortion justices to the Supreme Court. Since taking office he has named two conservative justices – Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh – to the nine-member court. Their appointments have galvanized anti-abortion activists in the country’s conservative “Bible Belt,” and several states have passed tough laws restricting the practice, including in Alabama in cases of rape. Most of those laws have been struck down by lower courts, but anti-abortion groups are hoping to put the issue before the Supreme Court and force it to revisit *Roe v Wade*. —AFP

South Korea seeks murder charges as virus kills over 3,000

SEOUL: South Korea sought murder charges against leaders of a secretive church at the centre of a ballooning coronavirus outbreak in the country yesterday as the global death toll rose above 3,000. World stock markets regained some calm as hopes for global interest rate cuts to soften the economic blow of the virus steadied nerves after last week’s worst plunge since the 2008 financial crisis.

South Korea reported 599 new coronavirus cases, taking its national tally to 4,335, following the country’s biggest daily jump on Saturday of 813 confirmed infections. There were 586 more on Sunday, broadening the largest virus outbreak outside China. There have been 26 deaths in total. Worldwide, the death toll has risen to 3,044, according to Reuters figures. Of the new cases in South Korea, 377 were from the southeastern city of Daegu, home to a branch of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, to which most of South Korea’s cases have been traced.

The agency said that in January some members of the church visited the central Chinese city of Wuhan, where the disease emerged late last year. The Seoul government asked prosecutors to launch a murder investigation into

leaders of the church, a movement that reveres founder Lee Man-hee. Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon said that if Lee and other heads of the church had cooperated, preventive measures could have saved the people who died.

“The situation is this serious and urgent, but where are the leaders of the Shincheonji, including Lee Man-hee, the chief director of this crisis?” Park said in a post on his Facebook page late on Sunday. Seoul’s city government said it had filed a criminal complaint with the Seoul Central District Prosecutors’ Office, asking for an investigation of Lee and 12 others on charges of murder and disease control act violations.

Lee apologized yesterday that one of its members had infected many others, calling the epidemic a “great calamity”. “We did our best but was not able to stop the spread of the virus,” Lee told reporters. It was not immediately known how many of South Korea’s dead were directly connected to the church. Wuhan, the Chinese city at the centre of the epidemic, closed the first of 16 specially built hospitals, hurriedly put up to treat people with the virus, after it discharged its last recovered patients, state broadcaster CCTV said yesterday.

‘Outbreaks are curbed’

News of the closure coincided with a steep fall in new cases in Hubei province, but China remained on alert for people returning home with the virus from other countries. “The rapid rising trend of virus cases in Wuhan has been controlled,” Mi Feng, a spokesman for China’s National Health Commission, told a briefing. “Outbreaks



DAEJEON: New nurse officers are trained on the COVID-19 coronavirus before heading to Daegu to help medical staff, at the Korea Armed Forces Nursing Academy in Daejeon yesterday. —AFP

in Hubei outside of Wuhan are curbed and provinces outside of Hubei are showing a positive trend.”

The virus broke out in Wuhan late last year and has since infected more than 86,500 people, the majority in China, with most in Hubei. Outside China, it has in recent days spread rapidly, now to 53 countries, with more than 6,500 cases and more than 100 deaths. Italy has 1,694 cases, the vast majority in the wealthy northern regions of Lombardy, Veneto and Emilia Romagna. —Reuters

No handshake for Merkel as Germany virus cases hit 150

BERLIN: Germany’s interior minister rebuffed Chancellor Angela Merkel’s attempt to shake hands with him yesterday as the number of novel coronavirus cases in the country rose to 150 with Berlin reporting its first infection. When Merkel reached out to greet Horst Seehofer at a meeting on migration in Berlin, he smiled and kept both his hands to himself. They both laughed and Merkel then threw her hand up in the air before taking a seat. Health experts have recommended avoiding handshakes as a way of preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus.

There are now 150 confirmed cases in Germany, Lothar Weiler of the Robert Koch Institute disease control agency said yesterday – up from 129 the previous day. The alert level has been raised from “low to moderate” to “moderate,” Weiler said, with authorities saying there was no need for

drastic measures such as border closures to stem the contagion. The virus has now spread to 10 of Germany’s 16 states, with more than half the confirmed cases in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Germany’s most populous state emerged as a hotspot after an infected couple attended carnival celebrations there, infecting dozens of people. Amid growing fears over contagion, disinfectants, hand sanitizers and other protective products have sold out in many German shops. In Lower Saxony, 1,200 protective face masks were stolen from a hospital in the town of Sulingen near Bremen, news agency DPA reported yesterday, citing local police.

The hospital reported the theft after a stock check revealed that the masks were missing from a storage room. They were probably stolen on Wednesday or Thursday last week, police said. Germany has cancelled several major gatherings in a bid to curb the spread of the virus, including this week’s ITB travel trade fair in Berlin. Health Minister Jens Spahn stressed yesterday that it was too early to say whether further public events would be cancelled. —AFP



BERLIN: (Left to right) German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier, German Labor Minister Hubertus Heil, German State Minister for Migration, Refugees and Integration Annette Widmann-Mauz, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Sylvie Nantcha, head of The African Network of Germany (TANG) give a press conference at the end of a summit on integration at the Chancellery yesterday. —AFP

Germany’s under-fire Catholic Church seeks new leader

BERLIN: German bishops gather for key talks from yesterday where they will choose a new leader to help steer the country’s Catholic Church through a controversial reforms process and settle compensation demands from sexual abuse victims.

The four-day episcopal gathering in the western city of Mainz comes at a time of fierce debate about how to modernize Germany’s Catholic Church, pitting conservative bishops against more progressive ones. Cardinal Reinhard

Marx, a driving force behind efforts to renew the under-fire Church, last month unexpectedly announced he would not seek another six-year term as head of the German Bishops’ Conference, saying he was too old at 66.

The several dozen bishops attending the annual general assembly will choose his successor in a secret vote today, although no clear frontrunner has emerged. Besides confronting calls to relax the rules on priestly celibacy and the roles of women in the clergy, the new chairman will have to deal with the Church’s sexual abuse legacy. Stephan Ackermann, the bishop charged with addressing the historic child abuse scandal, recently said he expected a decision “in the coming months” about financial compensation for survivors.

More than a decade after the first abuse revelations emerged in Germany, victims are losing patience. “There’s no reason to wait any longer,” the Eckiger Tisch victims’ group said, calling for a resolution this year. The group has pro-

posed a one-off sum of around 300,000 euros (\$330,000) per person, or the creation of a fund paid for by the Church but run by independent overseers. Several high-ranking Church officials have rejected the proposals as too costly.

A study commissioned by the German Bishops’ Conference and released in 2018 showed that 1,670 clergymen had committed some form of sexual attack against 3,677 minors, mostly boys, between 1946 and 2014. The revelations, which mirror paedophile scandals in Australia, Chile, France, Ireland and the United States, prompted Cardinal Marx to apologize on behalf of the German Catholic Church. The Church currently pays victims an average sum of 5,000 euros “in recognition of their suffering”, as well as covering their therapy fees. “Recognizing the suffering is not enough,” the Eckiger Tisch said ahead of the episcopal gathering, adding that victims were not asking for “a handout”. —AFP

International

Child drowns at sea off Greece in first fatality after Turkey opens the border

Greeks fear 'invasion' of migrants across Turkish border

KASTANIES: A child died after being pulled from the sea when a boat capsized yesterday off the Greek island of Lesbos, Greek officials said, the first reported fatality since Turkey opened its border last week to let migrants reach Europe. Separately, two Turkish security sources said a Syrian migrant had died from injuries yesterday after Greek security forces intervened to prevent migrants crossing from Turkey into Greece, but Athens branded the claim "fake news".

More than 10,000 migrants, mostly from Syria, other Middle Eastern states and Afghanistan, have reached Turkey's land borders with EU states Greece and Bulgaria since Ankara said last Thursday it would stop keeping them on its territory. Greek and Turkish police fired tear gas into crowds caught between the fences in no-man's land over the weekend. Further south, at least 1,000 migrants have reached Greece's eastern Aegean islands since Sunday morning, Greek police say.

The Greek coast guard said the boat which capsized off Lesbos had been escorted there by a Turkish vessel. Forty-six people were rescued and two children taken to hospital, one of whom could not be revived. Another dinghy with about 30 Afghans arrived on Lesbos early in the morning, a Reuters journalist reported from the island. Thirty-two others were rescued in the seas off Farmakonissi, a small island close to Turkey, the coast guard said.

"This is an invasion," Development Minister Adonis Georgiadis told Skai TV yesterday. The latest migrant surge follows Turkey's decision to stop enforcing a 2016 agreement with the European Union whereby it prevented migrants entering the bloc in return for billions of euros in aid. Turkey, already home to 3.7 million

Syrian refugees, has another million arriving on its doorstep from a new surge of fighting in northern Syria and says it cannot handle any more.

White flags

Greek officials have accused Turkey of orchestrating a coordinated effort to drive migrants across the frontier. One Greek policeman accused Turkish soldiers at the Kastanies border gate of "giving cutters" to migrants to cut holes in the fence to get through. Reuters could not independently verify the report. Migrants on the Turkish side of the border, some holding white flags, called the Greek soldiers and riot police to open the gates to let them through, saying they had kids and women. A Greek government spokesman said a video circulating on social media showing a young man with wounds to the head laid out on the ground near the border was "fake news". Two Turkish security sources said the Syrian man had died of his wounds.

"We call upon everyone to use caution when reporting news that furthers Turkish propaganda," spokesman Stelios Petsas said on Twitter. Earlier, Petsas told reporters after a national security meeting in Athens that the migrant surge posed "an active, serious, severe and asymmetrical threat to national security".

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who has beefed up border security and warned migrants not to try to cross, will visit the frontier on Tuesday with European Council head Charles Michel and European Commission Ursula von der Leyen. Prime Minister Boyko Borissov of Bulgaria, which also shares a land border with Turkey, was due to hold talks in Ankara



KASTANIES: This picture taken from the Greek side of the Greece-Turkey border near Kastanies, shows migrants waiting on the Turkish side yesterday. —AFP

yesterday evening with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on the migrant crisis.

Turkey's decision to open its border threatens to reverse an agreement that halted Western Europe's biggest wave of migration since World War Two, the 2015-2016 crisis when 4,000 people drowned in Aegean and more than a million reached Greece. There

are more than 40,000 migrants still living on Greece's Aegean islands in severely overcrowded camps. Erdogan, who has long accused the EU of failing to provide enough support to Turkey over the migrant crisis, took the decision after at least 33 Turkish soldiers sent to Syria to monitor a crumbling ceasefire there were killed last week. —Reuters

India MPs scuffle over deadly riots

NEW DELHI: Indian lawmakers pushed and shoved each other in parliament yesterday after opposition parties demanded the resignation of interior minister Amit Shah over the handling of deadly riots triggered by a citizenship law that excludes Muslims. Police said yesterday that at least 41 people had died in two days of Hindu-Muslim clashes in New Delhi last week, the worst communal riots in the capital in decades.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party says the law, which grants refuge to non-Muslim minorities from across south Asia, is required to protect those groups from persecution. Critics say it is discriminatory and contravenes the spirit of India's secular constitution. Hundreds of thousands of people - led by students

and Muslim groups - have been demonstrating for more than two months, amid fears that the government will also launch a population register that could leave many Muslims stateless.

A week ago, a mob of several hundred people chanting Hindu nationalist slogans torched two mosques and dozens of Muslim houses, eyewitnesses said, while nearby houses carrying Hindu symbols were left untouched. In parliament yesterday, opposition legislators shouted slogans and waved posters demanding that Shah, who controls Delhi's police and is an key ally of Modi's, step down. In Shiv Vihar, a low-income area in northeast Delhi where some of the worst violence took place, hundreds of paramilitary police patrolled deserted lanes.

"There has been a big improvement in the situation," Delhi's chief of police SN Srivastava said while touring the area, littered with burnt-out vehicles and schoolbooks. "The primary focus is to restore confidence among the people." But there was anger from those affected. "The police took us to another area but



NEW DELHI: Indian Youth Congress activists shout slogans and hold placards during a protest demanding the resignation of Home Minister Amit Shah and the police registration of a First Information Report (FIR) against Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders Kapil Mishra, Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Verma for the hate speeches over last week's sectarian riots in India's capital. —AFP

didn't even ask how we were," said Mohammed Uddin, 70, whose home was

burnt by the mob. "I don't even have clothes." —Reuters

Three generations of Afghans look at Taliban's return

KABUL: Seated on a rug in their Kabul living room, three generations of men from the same family sip tea as they discuss the political changes sweeping Afghanistan. The eldest among them fought the Taliban, the middle one grew up under the shadow of their brutal regime and the youngest has never known them. Now, all three fear the arc of history will place the hardline Islamists back in power.

On Saturday, the US and the Taliban signed a deal that would see US troops begin to quit Afghanistan in return for security guarantees from the insurgents. While the US has heralded the deal as a vital step towards peace, many Afghans are deeply skeptical about what comes next. "This is not the right time for the Americans to leave," said family patriarch Abdul Salam, 68, a former mujahideen fighter who battled the

Taliban in the 1990s.

"Everything will be reversed and the country will go back to civil war like in the '90s. No one will be able to control it," he added, as he displayed a photo of himself standing alongside iconic anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Massoud. The US-Taliban deal will see thousands of American troops leave Afghanistan provided the insurgents stick to key pledges, such as opening talks with the Afghan government and not letting the country become a jihadist safe haven.

But many assume the Taliban will leverage the dwindling American presence and Washington's political disengagement to fight for greater gains across Afghanistan, and eventually exert broad influence in Kabul. While raising his family in the capital in the 1990s, Salam heard the Taliban were torturing people from his home region of Panjshir, one of the few parts of Afghanistan that never fully fell to the insurgents. He decided to join the fight and moved his family to the mountainous region.

"There were no Taliban in my province," he said, as he proudly showed pictures of comrades who lost their lives



ALINGAR: Afghan Taliban militants and villagers attend a gathering as they celebrate the peace deal and their victory in the Afghan conflict on US in Afghanistan, in Alingar district of Laghman Province yesterday. —AFP

fighting the insurgents. But food in the besieged province was so scarce that the family faced starvation-eating grass at one point-and fled in 1999 to neighboring Pakistan. Two years later, Al-

Qaeda, sheltered by the Taliban, conducted the September 11 attacks on America, prompting a US-led invasion and the collapse of the religious fundamentalists' regime. —AFP

Women are suffering

Dad formed the Digital Rights Foundation, a think tank tackling digital rights through a gender lens, in 2012, winning her recognition as one of Time magazine's next generation leaders in 2015 and a Human Rights Tulip award in 2016.

She launched the cyber-harassment helpline that same year, funding it with the 100,000 euros (\$108,000) in Tulip prize money. The idea, she says, "came out of anger" at the violence women were suffering. The helpline now receives up to 20 calls a day and the number is increasing. Callers range from celebrities to poor women in deeply conservative areas whose male relatives do not allow them to leave their homes.

Many call about the non-consensual publication of their intimate images. The issue can be damaging

enough to women in developed countries. In Pakistan, even less severe cases can see families forbidding women from attending school or forcing them into quick marriages to save their "honor", while in the most severe it can be deadly. Much of the work the helpline does is to explain to women what recourse they have.

Social media companies are playing ball, Dad says - some have even agreed to establish "escalation channels" for getting content off the internet quickly when a woman's life is in immediate danger. But she warns that community guidelines developed by such companies, usually US-based, are not appropriate in Pakistan. "I think they need to do more," Dad says. More than three years on, the Tulip money has run out. Now the helpline survives only by the grace of small grants from groups such as the Netherlands-based Digital Defenders Partnership, which supports rights activists. —AFP

Nighat Dad, Pakistan's digital warrior battling the patriarchy

LAHORE: With her flashing rings, green-streaked hair and "Hack the patriarchy" laptop stickers, Nighat Dad is a digital warrior. But this human rights award winner and founder of Pakistan's first cyber-harassment helpline still tears up as she describes receiving calls from women afraid of being killed by male relatives for using the internet. "We sometimes find ourselves helpless... Somebody calls us and asks for help while crying that 'Please, please save my life'," she tells AFP at the offices for her non-profit Digital

Rights Foundation in the eastern city of Lahore.

Much of Pakistani society lives under the patriarchal, outdated code of so-called "honor" that systemizes the oppression of women by preventing them from, for example, choosing their own husband or working outside the home. Activists have denounced pervasive, sometimes deadly violence by men - usually male relatives - against women who break those taboos.

The situation is dire enough in the offline world. But Pakistan is only just beginning to grapple with what violent notions of honor mean for women online, in a country where internet penetration is at 22 percent and growing, but digital literacy is low. There have been examples of men attacking women for using the internet in ways that much of the rest of the world considers normal, such as publishing photos of themselves on a Facebook page.

Analysis

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Years of activism and giving help Bloomberg raise army of backers

Any national election campaign in the vast United States needs an army of volunteer workers if it is to have much hope of success. The billionaire Michael Bloomberg, a Democratic hopeful in this year's presidential race, went about recruiting his own "army" in an unusual way, relying on goodwill generated over the years by his own activism and his millions of dollars of charitable donations.

Healthcare, education, the environment, gun control... the former New York mayor - one of the richest people in the world - has long put his fortune in the service of those and other causes, financing organizations whose members are now more than willing to repay their benefactor through their own time and effort. Among them are the many militant members of the group Moms Demand Action (MDA), an anti-gun violence campaign founded after the 2012 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

They provide much of the energy behind the Everytown for Gun Safety lobbying group, which was founded - and largely financed - by Bloomberg. The group claims six million members nationwide. "There's a lot of Moms Demand Action volunteers that are out canvassing for Mayor Bloomberg" because of his longtime support for gun control efforts, said Ruth Hoffman, a member of the group who had come to hear Bloomberg speak at a rally Saturday in McLean, Virginia. "He saw it was an issue since 2005 and has been committed to the issue," she said. "I think that that says a lot about a person."

On-the-ground experience

Bloomberg's official entry into the Democratic nominating contest will take place on Tuesday, when voters in Virginia and 13 other states cast ballots for the person they hope can unseat President Donald Trump in November. Because he skipped the first four voting states due to his late entrance into the race, Bloomberg is under heavy pressure to perform well on "Super Tuesday". The former mayor has poured enormous sums of money into a slick and professionally run campaign - his TV and social media ads have inundated the airwaves in some markets - but he is also relying on a national network of contacts built up over more than a decade. Bloomberg has spent some \$10 billion on charitable works and political campaigns to advance the causes dearest to his heart, according to a New York Times investigation. (Even after that spending, he is estimated to be worth more than \$60 billion.) Beneficiaries have included the ecology-minded Sierra Club and family planning groups like Planned Parenthood. "When you help someone, like anything in life, they're going to help you back," said Abby Spangler, founder of the Protest Easy Guns group and a co-chair of Bloomberg's campaign in Virginia. "He has always been there for us, fighting for better gun laws in America. And so, when he decided that he was going to run for president, I said, 'I'm all in!'"

If Moms Demand Action has not officially thrown its support behind Bloomberg, many of its members have done so individually - and spontaneously. "We see the type of work that he's done," said Asieh Kehwari, an MDA member who attended Saturday's rally, "so I'm sure that we will definitely assist him." Red T-shirts bearing the "Moms" emblem were seen throughout the crowd at the event, and Bloomberg made sure to salute their contribution in his speech. The 78-year-old businessman, co-founder of the big Bloomberg News group, sees the role of such highly motivated backers as essential to his campaign. The "Moms" actively campaign for their chosen candidates, crisscrossing neighborhoods to drum up support among voters. "We have the ground experience, and we know how important it is," Kehwari said. After the rally, she and other women spent the afternoon going door-to-door on Bloomberg's behalf.

Return on investment

Virginia plays an important role in the Super Tuesday primaries. It will be awarding the fourth largest number of delegates to the party's national nominating convention in July (99 of the 1,991 needed to win the Democratic nomination). Bloomberg has a staff of 80 deployed in seven offices across the mid-Atlantic state - the biggest team in Virginia compared to other candidates, according to his campaign. In this historically conservative state, which in recent years has leaned Democratic as its urban and suburban populations have grown, the support of groups like the "Moms" can make a difference.

In the 2018 midterm elections, they helped three Democratic candidates take seats in the US House of Representatives previously held by Republicans, all three with "A" ratings from the pro-gun National Rifle Association. And in 2019 came a political thunderbolt when Democrats, boosted by Bloomberg's liberal spending, wrested control of both houses of the state's General Assembly from Republicans for the first time in 25 years.

The fight for tougher gun-control laws had become a top issue among voters, coming only months after 12 people died in a mass shooting in the city of Virginia Beach. Today, as the Super Tuesday primaries approach, Bloomberg is hoping for the same sort of outcome: A good return on his investment. —AFP

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Visitors look at one of the artificial lagoons built near Ayacucho, Peru on Jan 30, 2020. —Reuters

As glaciers shrink, Peru sisters build reservoirs

About 40 years ago, the snow that once covered the Andes mountains near the Peruvian city of Ayacucho started to disappear. Water became scarce for more than 200,000 people in the south-central region, most of them from the Quechua indigenous community. "We had to ration water. Some years, we had water for only two hours a day," said Dersi Zevallos, a coordinator with Peru's water and sanitation regulator, SUNASS.

Then, Quechua sisters Magdalena and Marcela Machaca - both agricultural engineers - found a solution by looking to the past. They built reservoirs high in the mountains to harvest and "cultivate" rainwater, the same way their ancestors did. Climate change has led to increasingly dry conditions for communities in the Peruvian Andes, data shows. In 1984, around 130 cm of rainwater fell in Ayacucho, according to SUNASS. Now the city gets only half that much rain every year.

Glaciers, another source of water for the Quechua, have also been affected by warming temperatures. Across Peru, glaciers lost nearly 30 percent of their area between 2000 and 2016, according to a study published last September in geosciences journal The Cryosphere. "Climate is a living being to us," Marcela told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "And lately it's been acting a little crazy."

To help cope with the situation, manmade mountain-top reservoirs - which locals call lagoons - capture and store water during the rainy season from November to February, she explained on a tour of one she and her sister

built. In the dry season, the water filters through the ground to recharge the rivers and aquifers used by local authorities to provide water to residents and farms. "The lagoons play the role that the frozen mountain-tops used to play," Marcela said.

The Quechua people consider the reservoirs sacred, she noted, believing they "nurture" water at the start of its life. "Our communities are the protectors of water and we are proud of that," she added. The sisters built their first reservoir back in 1995 through their organization, the Bartolome Aripaylla Association, which uses traditional knowledge to help indigenous communities improve their economic activities. Since then, they have built more than 120, which together provide Ayacucho with more than 130 million cu m of water for human and agricultural use.

Sally Bunnings, a water management expert at the UN. Food and Agriculture Organization, said the impact of climate change on mountain glaciers, which are melting as global temperatures rise, poses a threat to high-altitude communities. They should follow the Quechua example of trying to use water resources as efficiently as possible, she added. "From an early age they should learn to (recognize) and prevent the effects of abrupt change in temperature and make good use of water," she said.

'Nurturing water'

Almost a quarter of Peru's population identifies itself as Quechua, making up the country's largest ethnic group, according to the latest census in 2017. Marcela said she and her sister

first heard about the ancient spiritual practice of "nurturing water" through their grandfather when they were children in the 1970s. By that time, it was no longer practiced, she added. Then, just as the snow in Ayacucho's mountains started to dwindle, conflict came to the area.

Ayacucho became the base for the Maoist rebel group Shining Path, or Sendero Luminoso in Spanish, which launched a bid to overthrow the state in 1980. Some 70,000 people were killed before the conflict ended nearly 20 years later. "People were just trying to escape with their lives. They disregarded the spiritual practices," Marcela explained. "People forgot to treat nature like a living being."

The El Nino weather phenomenon hit Peru in 1992, making water even more scarce. That was when the sisters were motivated to build their first artificial lagoons, said Magdalena. They choose natural landscapes already shaped like reservoirs, to reduce the amount of digging, she explained. With agreement from local communities and authorities, they seal any leaks with soil and plant native ferns that keep the soil firm, naturally filter the water and shelter birds.

Each reservoir - some up to 600 m in diameter - usually takes just a couple of months to build, Magdalena said, and fills up fast in the rainy season. The sisters create small canals to let water escape and prevent the reservoir overflowing in heavy rains, and those take water to the mountain communities. At the same time, the reservoirs recharge the aquifers and groundwater used for the city's water supply.

According to SUNASS data, in 2010, the

Cachi river basin was estimated to provide around 80 million cu m of water before any reservoirs were built in the area. By the end of the year, 15 million additional cu m of water were flowing from the lagoons. That water was given to farmers who would not otherwise have had enough, Magdalena said. The pair's brother, Nemesio, a farmer lower down the mountain, said the area previously had no water in the dry season. "Our cattle had nothing to drink, so they were very thin. We couldn't extract milk. Now we can," he said.

The city government cannot fund the construction of the reservoirs, which cost about \$1 million each, Magdalena noted. That often leaves the Machaca sisters struggling to find money for new projects, which are almost entirely paid for by their association, she added. But the government does give the sisters technical advice to ensure the reservoirs properly charge local water sources. "If we didn't have these lagoons now, we could not guarantee water for the whole population. They're completely vital," said Zevallos of SUNASS.

Adapting to drought

Other parts of Latin America could learn from Ayacucho's experience with water conservation, said Gustavo Solano, project coordinator at the Association for Investigation and Integral Development, a Peru-based organization that promotes nature-based solutions to climate change. With supervision from the Machaca sisters, it has started replicating the reservoirs in Guanacaste, a region in northern Costa Rica that is regularly hit by drought. —Reuters

Job losses

Manufacturers of textiles, Haiti's top export, have cut around 5 percent of 58,000 jobs due to the lockdown, he said. Three years ago, he had estimated the sector could on the contrary add 300,000 by 2020/2021, granted political stability. According to Haitian economist Elzer Emile, the worst hit are those who do not have the resources to protect themselves in a country where more than half the population lives under the poverty line of \$2.41 per day. "We are seeing an acceleration of poverty," he said, as international organizations warn of a growing hunger crisis.

While the protests have abated somewhat, there is no sign of a resolution to the political malaise and its root causes any time soon. President Moise has been ruling by decree since January after the country failed to hold legislative elections. The opposition has rebuffed his calls for a power-sharing agreement. The political crisis has cut the country of 11.2 million people off from some international funding, further hindering its ability to respond to the worsening economic woes.

"Every time in Haiti you have some plan to succeed, there is a political crisis that destroys everything," said Elie Jean, 27, director of what he called the sole dairy in northwest Haiti, just outside the town of Jean Rabel. The shiny new facility was financed with European Union development funds, he said, but it has struggled to re-open following the lockdown because many farmers sold their cows when the situation got tough. —Reuters

Scarred by unrest, Haiti sinks deeper into poverty

Jacquelin Joseph is struggling to re-open his small food and beverage store in the northern Haitian town of Port-de-Paix, months after the country returned to a semblance of normality following violent anti-government protests. The 45-year-old was forced to shut up shop in December when he ran out of stock after the protests against economic mismanagement and corruption under President Jovenel Moise disrupted transport nationwide. The unrest stoked already high inflation and Joseph quickly used up what little savings he had.

Now, with eight children to feed and bills piling up, he is desperate to get back to business. But rebuilding is no easy task for Haitians like him, who were only scraping by before the crisis. "I have no money left to restart my business," Joseph said, warily watching for those he owes money for rent or deliveries. "I asked the bank for a microcredit but one requirement was for me to have some stock, and I didn't have any."

The economic repercussions of Haiti's three-month country-wide lockdown are still unfolding in what was already the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation, where around two-thirds

of adults are estimated to be unemployed or underemployed. Haitians were decapitalized: Many businesses had to close, others had to slash jobs. In a country where agriculture accounts for half of all jobs, several farmers told Reuters they do not know how they will acquire seeds and fertilizer to plant anew.

The unrest has spooked would-be investors and tourists, causing some hotels to fold and torpedoing attempts to revive the Caribbean nation's beleaguered tourism industry. Violence still flares sporadically. Last weekend, the government cancelled Carnival celebrations in the capital after a police protest spiralled into street clashes and deadly gunfire on the first day, another blow to the \$9.7 billion economy already on its knees.

Junior Ceme, 34, who has a stand selling trinkets on the Champ de Mars public square in Port au Prince where the festivities take place, said he had borrowed around \$150 from a friend to buy more goods for what is usually his busiest time of year. "But I haven't sold anything since this morning," he said. "I don't know how I am going to return the money."

The World Bank estimates Haiti's economy shrank 0.9 percent last year. This year it expects a further 1.4 percent contraction, followed by 0.5 percent in 2021: the first three-year recession since Haiti was crippled by US sanctions imposed on the country after a military coup in the early 1990s. "The consequences of the current crisis are even worse than the embargo, an earthquake or several hurricanes, because we are talking about a breakdown of the state," said Georges Sassine, president of Haiti's Industrial Association. "And the full consequences have yet to be felt."

How one woman is taking on Vietnam's 'big coal'

As a child, Nguy Thi Khanh used to lie in the grass in her Vietnamese village and watch toxic emissions from nearby coal plants float past like clouds. Today she is one of the few voices in Vietnam taking on the industry - a rare female climate crusader pushing for renewables in a country where dirty energy is on the rise. At 43, she has already founded Green ID, Vietnam's best-known environmental NGO, convinced the government to reduce some of its coal targets, helped spark a national conversation about rising air and water pollution, and won international plaudits for her work.

But it is not without risks: Dissent is not tolerated by the Vietnamese government and many activists have wound up in jail for speaking up against authorities. "When we got global recognition, vested interest groups recognized who their enemy is and they are very powerful," she says, adding that she has learnt to safely work within the bounds of civil society laws to try and shift the government's policies on green energy.

Khanh admires Greta Thunberg, who has

brought civil disobedience in the name of the environment to the world's stage for a new generation, but concedes that particular brand of activism is not possible in Vietnam. Even as 2020 is being hailed the year of climate action worldwide, she must walk a tightrope - driving change without falling foul of authorities or well-connected big energy firms in the one-party state.

Khanh has watched with dread as the communist country of 95 million struggled to balance breakneck economic growth with environmental sustainability. "I have three kids, I always remind them that your future will not be like my current life. Our generation has more resources than you will," she says of her motivation to drive change, despite the risks.

Communities destroyed

The nation's annual GDP has risen by six percent annually since 2015 but it has come at a heavy cost. Rapid industrialization has contributed to a steady rise in air and water pollution across the country, while mountains of plastic waste choke landfills and waterways. In a bid to meet its soaring energy demands, the government is racing to build dozens more coal plants over the next decade, even in the face of climate change and its commitments in the Paris Agreement to reduce emissions by 2030.

Electricity generated from coal, which already makes up a third of Vietnam's energy

mix, is expected to increase five-fold in the next decade, according to official figures. But her non-profit has had some success reining in the nation's love affair with fossil fuels. After four years of tireless research and lobbying, it persuaded the government to strip 20,000 megawatts of coal power from the national energy plan by 2030.

Her team of 20 is also publishing some of the country's only air pollution studies, piling pressure on officials to address the growing threat. And she remains committed to the grassroots work, rolling out clean energy programs in schools and homes across the country. Her goal for the next five years is to scale back Vietnam's ambitious coal plans in favor of more renewable energy options. There is no shortage of wind or sunshine in Vietnam, but energy derived from such sources makes up a fraction of the total.

Smear campaigns, harassment

Khanh didn't set out to work in the field she is leading today. After studying international relations at Vietnam's diplomatic academy she pivoted into development work, mostly with the country's ethnic minorities. Soon she saw how mining activity was ravaging Vietnam's most vulnerable from deadly mining accidents to coal-dust coating villages. "It really encouraged me to really focus on energy," she explains of her decision to set up Green ID in 2011.



Nguy Thi Khanh

It was a nascent industry then, she says, and the few firms that did exist were run by men. When she went to register the organization, an official derided her for being a woman, but determined not to let discrimination hamper her ambitions, she pushed back. "I don't feel like a minority because I'm confident," she insists, but she is one of only a few women in her field even now.

In 2018, her work earned her the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2018, which honors grassroots activists around the world. "It surprised me, I never thought that I could get that level of award," she concedes. Khanh is well aware of the fact that three of the award's previous winners were killed - two in Central America and one in Nigeria - reportedly for their work, highlighting the risks people like her face. —AFP

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Business

12 Garment industries in Cambodia, Vietnam hammered by COVID-19



13 UK's demands for US trade talks set to test special relationship



14 GCC markets see biggest monthly drop in 4 years



LINCOLNSHIRE: In this file photo, vapor is pictured rising from British Steel's Scunthorpe plant at dawn in north Lincolnshire, north east England. UK manufacturing activity rebounded in February to a ten-month high on easing Brexit uncertainty, but supply chains were nevertheless pressured by coronavirus concerns, data showed yesterday. — AFP

Virus hits global factories as OECD warns

Outbreak plunges world economy into serious downturn, China's PMI suffers sharp contraction

LONDON/TOKYO: Global factories took a beating in February from the coronavirus outbreak with activity in China shrinking at a record pace, surveys showed yesterday, raising the prospect of a coordinated policy response by central banks to prevent a global recession.

Fears of a pandemic pushed markets off a precipice last week, wiping more than \$5 trillion from global share values as stocks cratered, marking their steepest slump in more than a decade and stoking widespread expectations of monetary easing. The outbreak is plunging the world economy into its worst downturn since the global financial crisis, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development warned yesterday, urging governments and central banks to fight back to avoid an even steeper slump.

Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said yesterday the Bank of Japan would take necessary steps to stabilise financial markets. Futures now imply a full 50 basis point cut by the US Federal Reserve in March, while Australian markets are pricing in a quarter-point cut at the RBA's today's meeting.

Kuroda's comments, made in an emergency statement just days after a similar move by Fed Chair Jerome Powell, were welcomed by markets as a signal the world's biggest central banks were mustering a coordinated response to the crisis, and world stock markets

regained a measure of calm yesterday. China, for its part, has injected large amounts of liquidity to shore up market confidence.

The coronavirus outbreak will have a major impact on economic growth worldwide this year, the OECD warned yesterday as it lowered its global GDP forecast by half a percentage point to 2.4 percent, the lowest rate since the 2008-09 financial crisis.

That forecast assumes the virus outbreak fades this year, but a more severe outbreak "would weaken prospects considerably", the group of free-market economies said.

Already the global economy risks an outright contraction in the first quarter, the OECD said, in its first comprehensive study of the impact on the world's major economies.

Stock markets plummeted worldwide last week as investors fled to bonds and other safe havens on fears that consumer and business spending will freeze up as the virus spreads, curtailing corporate profits. In China, where the virus COVID-19 emerged in December, annual GDP growth is expected to reach just 4.9 percent, a 0.8 point drop from the OECD's original growth forecasts announced last November.

The central People's Bank of China (PBOC) has also told banks to help firms struggling with repayments by

extending loans and not penalize them if they are late with payments.

"Policymakers and the credit rating agencies have taken a 'wait-and-see' approach to the situation, although - as usual - the relative order of willingness to act re: events with policy action was confirmed this past week," said Erik Nielsen, group chief economist at UniCredit.

In Australia, financial regulators held an emergency meeting to discuss the economic impact of the outbreak, two sources told Reuters, as markets moved to price in a central bank rate cut as early as this week. "A rate cut only helps a little bit, by easing debt service costs. But it does little if anything to solve the bigger problems of cash flow interruption," said Rob Carnell, Asia-Pacific chief economist at ING in Singapore.

"This is where the BoJ's special loans ... and the PBOC's suggested easing of banks' response to late or delinquent loans is closer to what is needed."

China brakes

China's factory activity suffered the sharpest contraction on record in February, the Caixin/Markit Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) showed, underlining the crippling effects of tough travel curbs and public health measures taken to contain

the outbreak. That followed the Chinese government's similarly dire PMI release at the weekend, which also showed a record pace of decline.

And while the manufacturing downturn in the euro zone eased last month the virus outbreak is starting to weigh on a post-election recovery in Britain's manufacturing sector, where factories reported a big jump in delays in their supply chains. "Should disruptions continue in China and even spread to other economies, as is looking increasingly likely given the recent news flow, then we could see supply- and demand-side constraints come into effect and the decline in production accelerate anew," said IHS Markit economist Phil Smith.

The slump in China, the world's second-largest economy, dealt a severe blow to factories across Asia, including those in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, offering the clearest evidence yet of the epidemic's damaging effects on global growth and businesses.

"The slump in manufacturing activity looks to have had a significant impact on trade," Capital Economics wrote in a research note on the Caixin PMI. "The PMIs also point to a major hit to employment, the effects of which will take longer to reverse. And with the jump in virus cases overseas, there is a growing risk of a protracted downturn in foreign demand." — Agencies

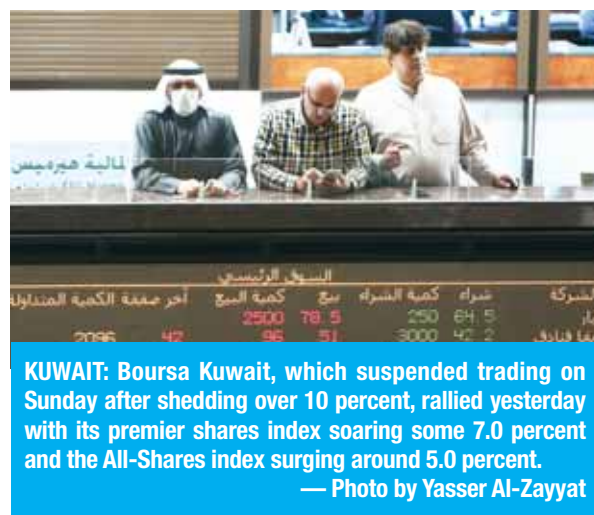
Gulf shares make a comeback after massive losses

DUBAI: Stock markets in the energy-rich Gulf states rebounded yesterday, after huge losses in the previous session driven by fears over the impact of the coronavirus which has sent oil prices below \$50 a barrel.

Kuwait Boursa, which suspended trading Sunday after shedding over 10 percent, led the rally with its premier shares index soaring some 7.0 percent and the All-Shares index surging around 5.0 percent.

Saudi Arabia's Tadawul market gained 2.3 percent at the start of trading with energy giant Saudi Aramco rising 1.0 percent from historic lows on Sunday. Dubai Financial Market Index climbed 2.2 percent and its sister UAE market in Abu Dhabi rose 1.4 percent. The tiny Muscat Securities Market in Oman inched up 0.2 percent while Bahrain bourse rose 2.2 percent. The recovery came as oil prices gained more than 3.0 percent to above \$51 a barrel. Qatar Stock Exchange, which was closed on Sunday for a holiday, bucked the trend to slide 3.1 percent at the start of trading.

On Sunday, the first trading day of the week in the region, all the Gulf bourses except Qatar posted heavy



KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait, which suspended trading on Sunday after shedding over 10 percent, rallied yesterday with its premier shares index soaring some 7.0 percent and the All-Shares index surging around 5.0 percent. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

losses. The Saudi market, the region's largest, had dropped 3.7 percent to an 18-month low with Saudi Aramco diving to its lowest price since listing about three months ago. The United Arab Emirates bourses of Dubai and Abu Dhabi fell 4.5 percent and 3.6 percent respectively. Bahrain shares shed 3.4 percent and the Muscat bourse dropped 1.2 percent. Asian stock markets also made a partial recovery yesterday as the Bank of Japan pledged support following heavy losses last week on concerns over the mounting economic impact of coronavirus. — AFP

G7, eurozone eye coordinated economic response

PARIS: G7 and eurozone finance ministers will hold conference calls tomorrow to "coordinate their responses" to the impact of the coronavirus on the global economy, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said yesterday. "We will have that meeting by phone-because you need to avoid travelling too much for the G7 to coordinate its response," Le Maire said on France 2 television.

He said a similar meeting of eurozone finance ministers would also be held tomorrow, adding "there will be coordinated action". Meanwhile, the head of France's central bank said that governments and not central banks should take action for the moment.

The outbreak of the coronavirus, which has now killed more than 3,000 people and infected almost 90,000, has so far mostly been causing disruptions for businesses, Banque de France chief Francois Villeroy de Galhau told BFM Business television. These are better treated with "targeted measures" from governments to support affected businesses rather than monetary policy from central banks, he said.

De Galhau said monetary policy was already very

accommodative with ample low-rate funds for banks to support firms. "If we need to do more and we believe that it will be effective, we could do it, but we're not there yet," he said.

The Bank of England, for its part, said it was monitoring the situation and working closely with domestic "as well as our international partners to ensure all necessary steps are taken to protect financial and monetary stability." Le Maire pledged the French government would provide the necessary support for domestic companies.

"We will demonstrate total solidarity towards entrepreneurs who are on the front line," he said, noting that the government had already decided to let suppliers out of their contracts due to the coronavirus.

While the coronavirus has yet to shutter or slow many factories outside of China, it has already hit the travel and tourism sectors and seen companies scale back travel and cancel conventions.

France's famed Louvre museum, a key attraction in one of the world's top tourism destinations, closed Sunday and one of the country's major annual trade fairs, the Paris Book Fair, due to be held later this month was cancelled. Le Maire said that the economic impact of the coronavirus on France's economy will be greater than previous estimates. "Now that the epidemic has hit many more countries, in particular France, the impact of the coronavirus on French growth will be much more significant" than if it had been contained to France, he said. — AFP

Business

Garment industries in Cambodia, Vietnam hammered by COVID-19

Outbreak cripples SE Asia’s key industries, bringing border trade to a trickle

LANG SON, Vietnam: Cambodia’s multi-billion-dollar garment industry is at risk of chain disruption from the deadly coronavirus, its strongman premier said yesterday, as the outbreak cripples Southeast Asia’s key industries, bringing border trade to a trickle. The death toll from the virus, which emerged from Wuhan in central China, has reached over 3,000 worldwide-the bulk of the fatalities in the mainland.

Beijing issued unprecedented lockdowns for cities and provinces most affected, bringing to a shuddering halt the so-called “Factory of the World”-key to a global supply chain.

The coronavirus has “shaken the global economy”, said Cambodia’s strongman premier Hun Sen yesterday. Cambodia is already feeling the sting with its \$7 billion dollar garment sector reliant on China for 60 percent of its raw materials. Last week, the labor ministry announced 10 factories had downsized their production lines, leaving 3,000 workers out of work.

But the full impact of the coronavirus is expected to hit in March, when nearly 200 factories are expected to run out of their reserve inventory of materials.

This could spell doom for 160,000 workers and employees-more than 20 percent of the sector’s 700,000-strong workforce. Hun Sen said he had asked China to send materials urgently in order to avoid suspending workers.

A labor ministry official told AFP yesterday the country is expected to receive “some” by the end of March, though it would not meet its full demand. Garment worker Pann Sokchea, who toils in Phnom Penh’s manufacturing district, fears cuts to her crucial overtime pay. “Factories no longer have cloth coming in, so workers are concerned about their jobs,” she told AFP.

Neighboring Vietnam also stands to lose as much as \$2 billion dollars if China-sourced materials are delayed for another fortnight. Le Tien Truong, director general of garment corporation Vinatex, told

state-run media. Like Cambodia, the country’s industry is reliant on China for 60 percent of fabrics to fuel its clothing production lines according to the Vietnam Textile and Apparel Association (VITAS).

So far, its garment exports dropped 1.7 percent to \$4.5 billion in the first two months of this year. But exporters of finished products to China are also feeling the heat as container trucks slow to a crawl at the border.

In northern Lang Son, rows of trucks wait hours-or even days-to bring their goods through the main international crossing. A shortage of Chinese labor means unloading operations, previously completed in just over an hour, can now take an entire day.

Meanwhile, fruits and vegetables languish in over-heated trucks as drivers dressed in protective suits periodically check their freshness. “I’ve been here for four days,” driver Le Thanh Duy, who was transporting dragonfruit, told AFP.

“We can do nothing but wait.” — AFP



PHNOM PENH: Cambodian workers buy food in front of their factory in Phnom Penh. Cambodia’s multi-billion-dollar garment industry is at risk of chain disruption from the deadly coronavirus, its strongman premier said yesterday as its impacts hammer on Southeast Asia’s key industries and bring border trade to a trickle. —AFP

Investors fear IMF negotiations will let Argentina off the fiscal hook

BUENOS AIRES: A new program being discussed by Argentina and its biggest lender, the International Monetary Fund, could set up private bondholders for heavy losses without requiring the spending cuts needed to make the country solvent, investors say.

Argentina and the IMF announced last month they would start Article IV consultations - allowing the Fund to inspect Argentina’s accounts - as a stepping stone to a possible new program that would replace a defunct \$57 billion loan agreement struck by the previous government in 2018.

An IMF technical team is due in Buenos Aires this week to meet with economy ministry officials and review the left-leaning government’s economic plans. The negotiations with the Fund are part of a broader restructuring of about \$100 billion in debt that Argentina’s government says it cannot pay unless given time to revive stalled economic growth.

Analysts and bondholders said discussions on a new program between President Alberto Fernandez’s government and the Fund are better than the alternative of having Argentina unilaterally impose terms without IMF feedback. But so far, the Fund has not challenged Argentina’s refusal to impose fiscal austerity on an economy in recession.

That is stirring unease among investors - who are hoping the new program will include measures to rein in spending - as they brace for hefty “haircuts,” or reductions in principal payments on their bonds. “Our view is that the capacity for Argentina to service its debt is a lot higher than what the government claims and they should be aiming for a higher fiscal surplus,” said Steffen Reichold, portfolio manager at Stone Harbor Investment Partners, which holds some Argentine debt.

“Many people have raised this point. We’ve raised it to IMF. This will be a key issue in the discussions once Argentina makes its first offer,” he said. Economy Minister Martin Guzman has stressed two points in talks with the IMF and comments to Congress: the government, in office since December, will not keep paying debts it considers unsustainable and fiscal austerity would only hinder Argentina’s repayment capacity by worsening the economy. Guzman insists that growth, not fiscal surpluses, should be first on the agenda as he tries to steer Latin America’s third-biggest economy toward sol-



BUENOS AIRES: (Left to right) Argentina’s Minister of Transport Mario Mean, Production Minister Matias Kulfas, Economy Minister Martin Guzman, and Defense Minister Agustin Rossi attend the inauguration of the 138th period of ordinary sessions at the Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina on Sunday. —AFP

veny. Wall Street, aware of Argentina’s decades-long history of financial mismanagement, wants to see close IMF supervision.

“The market would like to see the Fund use its institutional credibility and expertise to encourage the authorities to strengthen their fiscal stance and embrace structural reforms,” said Goldman Sachs emerging markets analyst Alberto Ramos. “But it seems the IMF will not do that. The Fund seems happy with Argentina’s lack of commitment to significantly improve the medium-term fiscal picture and deal with its perennial fiscal imbalances,” Ramos said.

Gender employment gap costs EU 360bn euros a year: Agency

BRUSSELS: The gap between female and male employment costs the European Union 360 billion euros (\$399 billion) of losses a year, or some 2 percent of its total economy, a new study said yesterday.

Italy, Malta and Greece had the worst readings with about a 20 percent gap in 2018, when the data was analyzed, while Lithuania, Sweden and Finland were the best, all below 5 percent. Overall, the average figure for the bloc - including Britain prior to its departure - came in at 15 percent and fell

from 480 billion euros in 2008, according to the EU’s Eurofund agency, which tracks trends to inform policy-making. The cost is an estimate of foregone earnings, missed welfare contributions and public finance costs related to lower female employment, Eurofund said.

The bloc’s executive European Commission will present on Thursday a new gender equality strategy for the 27 member countries, including policies to counter sex-based discrimination and improve women’s access to the labor market. It is expected to move for the first time towards introducing a legal obligation to report on the gender pay gap across the bloc, which currently amounts to some 16 percent, according to an EU official working on the plan. “Where there are legally binding measures, the situation improves,” the official said. —Reuters

Nokia CEO to step down, replaced by Fortum chief

HELSINKI: Nokia’s chief executive officer Rajeev Suri will leave the telecom equipment provider in September and be replaced by the current head of Finnish energy group Fortum, Nokia announced yesterday.

Pekka Lundmark will take over on September 1, Nokia said. Suri, who has been Nokia’s president and CEO since April 2014, had “indicated earlier to the board that he was considering stepping down from his role at some point in the future, provided a solid succession plan was in place,” the company said.

“After 25 years at Nokia, I have wanted to do something different,” Suri said.

Lundmark has also served as CEO of Konecranes, a global material-handling technology leader. Prior to that, from 1990-2000, he held various executive positions at Nokia, including vice president of strategy and business development at Nokia Networks. Lundmark also has “extensive experience in China,” he told a press conference yesterday - a market which Nokia last year announced it was backing away from in the light of growing support there for local vendors.

Nokia’s share price rose by four percent on the Helsinki stock exchange to 3.6 euros shortly after opening at 0800 GMT, before falling back somewhat. The group has remade itself as a 5G network systems company since its mobile phone business was wiped out by Apple and Samsung. Suri is behind Nokia’s recent transformation, including its acquisition of Alcatel-Lucent and the creation of a standalone software business, and the return of the Nokia brand to mobile phones.

He also oversaw the launch of ‘internet of things’ products designed to revolutionize specific sectors, such as soil sensors for agriculture or tracking systems for logistics firms. However Nokia’s attempts to break into the 5G equipment market have faltered in the face of fierce competition from Huawei and Ericsson. Last year Nokia downgraded its 2020 earnings forecast, while chief executive Suri played down the firm’s delays in delivering some equipment orders.

Nokia went on to beat expectations in a “challenging” 2019 and last month posted its first full-year net profit since 2015 of 7.0 million euros, and an operating profit of 2.0 billion euros. At yesterday’s press conference, Suri defended his record, saying that when he took over as CEO of Nokia Siemens Networks in 2009, the year’s operating profit was 28 million euros. “I’m not entirely satisfied with last year but we still had 2 billion compared to that 28 million,” he said. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.830
Indian Rupees	4.253
Pakistani Rupees	1.990
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.682
Nepali Rupees	2.651
Singapore Dollar	221.420
Hongkong Dollar	39.319
Bangladesh Taka	3.598
Philippine Peso	6.055
Thai Baht	9.833
Malaysian Ringgit	78.376

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.775
Qatari Riyal	84.224
ani Riyal	796.491
Bahraini Dinar	814.270
UAE Dirham	83.490

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.000
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	19.666
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.231
Tunisian Dinar	114.350
Jordanian Dinar	432.630
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.204
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.601

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	306.450
Euro	341.690
Sterling Pound	394.250
Canadian dollar	230.930
Turkish lira	49.750
Swiss Franc	320.720
US Dollar Buying	299.000

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	306.100
Canadian Dollar	230.026
Sterling Pound	394.015
Euro	339.770
Swiss Frank	297.740
Bahraini Dinar	814.035
UAE Dirhams	83.740
Qatari Riyals	84.985
Saudi Riyals	82.520
Jordanian Dinar	433.025
Egyptian Pound	19.679
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.682
Indian Rupees	4.240
Pakistani Rupees	1.982
Bangladesh Taka	3.591
Philippines Peso	6.033
Cyprus pound	18.205
Japanese Yen	3.830
Syrian Pound	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.665
Malaysian Ringgit	73.790
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.235

Thai Bhat	10.765
Turkish Lira	49.490
Singapore dollars	221.522

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.385900	0.399800
Czech Korune	0.005261	0.014561
Danish Krone	0.041204	0.046204
Euro	0.330762	0.344462
Georgian Lari	0.109002	0.109002
Hungarian	0.000907	0.001097
Norwegian Krone	0.028604	0.033804
Romanian Leu	0.053279	0.070129
Russian Ruble	0.004577	0.004577
Slovakia	0.009195	0.019195
Slovenia Krona	0.027929	0.032929
Swiss Franc	0.311053	0.322053
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.191349	0.203349
New Zealand Dollar	0.184345	0.193845
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.224155	0.233155
US Dollars	0.302350	0.306900
US Dollars Mint	0.302850	0.306900
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002895	0.003696

Chinese Yuan	0.042493	0.045993
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037281	0.040031
Indian Rupee	0.003635	0.004407
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002748	0.002928
Korean Won	0.000246	0.000261
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069675	0.075675
Nepalese Rupee	0.002613	0.002953
Pakistan Rupee	0.001339	0.002109
Philippine Peso	0.005869	0.006169
Singapore Dollar	0.214727	0.224727
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001325	0.001905
Taiwan	0.010195	0.010375
Thai Baht	0.009369	0.009919
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.000013

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.806689	0.814797
Egyptian Pound	0.019384	0.022124
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000201	0.000261
Jordanian Dinar	0.427331	0.436331
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000102	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021234	0.045234
Omani Riyal	0.790826	0.798774
Qatar Riyal	0.083515	0.084355
Saudi Riyal	0.080633	0.081933
Syrian Pound	0.001300	0.001520
Tunisian Dinar	0.103615	0.111615
Turkish Lira	0.042959	0.052804
UAE Dirhams	0.082799	0.083631
Yemeni Riyal	0.000996	0.001076

Business

UK's demands for US trade talks set to test special relationship

Trade mandate hints Britain could reconsider digital tax

LONDON: Britain unveiled its mandate for trade talks with the United States yesterday, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson vowing to drive a hard bargain in negotiations that are set to test the "special relationship" between the two countries. After leaving the European Union in January, Johnson wants to pursue a trade deal with Washington to try to not only champion Britain's new independence but also to put pressure on the bloc in separate talks on a future relationship.

As a negotiating team heads to Brussels to start those discussions, the government set out its mandate for talks with the United States, warning that London would walk away if its demands are not met.

Britain said it wanted to achieve "huge gains" by removing barriers to trade but that its much-loved National Health Service (NHS) would not be on the table in talks, and that its food standards would be maintained. That could set the two sides on a collision course, putting additional pressure on a relationship already strained by London's decision to allow China's Huawei a limited role in its 5G mobile network and a proposed digital services tax.

"We have the best negotiators in the business and of course, we're going to drive a hard bargain to boost British industry," Johnson said. "Most importantly, this transatlantic trade deal will reflect the unique closeness of our two great nations."

The negotiating mandate hinted that Britain could reconsider the introduction of a digital tax in April which has been criticized by Washington. The government said its analysis showed a deal with the United States could boost transatlantic trade by 15.3 billion pounds (\$19.61 billion), and add 3.4 billion pounds to the British economy.

Britain's overall economy is worth around \$2.7 trillion.

The United States is currently Britain's biggest trading partner after the EU, accounting for nearly 19 percent of all its exports in 2018 and 11 percent of imports. By comparison, the EU accounted for 45 percent of all UK exports and 53 percent of UK imports.

Scottish salmon for Stetson hats

The government said manufacturers of cars, ceramics, food and drink, and professional services including architects and lawyers, would be among the biggest winners from the trade deal. "Trading Scottish smoked salmon for Stetson hats, we will deliver lower prices and more choice for our shoppers," Johnson said.

Both sides hope a deal can be reached as soon as this year, but there are many hurdles. The government reiterated that the NHS was "not for sale"—addressing criticism that a deal could let private U.S. healthcare providers into Britain's state-funded health system.

It also vowed to uphold high standards on food safety and animal welfare amid fears from farmers that the government is ready to allow US-produced chlorine-washed chicken and hormone-treated beef into Britain. "In a trade deal with the US, we will not diminish our food safety standards and we will also not put the NHS on the table," British trade minister Liz Truss said. "If we don't get the deal we want we will be prepared to walk away."

Washington's negotiating objectives, published last year, include pressing for full market access for US pharmaceutical products and medical devices, which would require changes to the NHS pricing restrictions and could increase the cost of drugs. Britain's Chief Trade Negotiation Adviser, Crawford Falconer, who previously



LONDON: US Ambassador to the UK, Robert 'Woody' Johnson arrives at the Cabinet Office on Whitehall in central London yesterday. Britain on Monday will detail its red lines in imminent negotiations with the United States over a free trade deal, vowing to safeguard its health service, food safety and animal welfare. —AFP

worked as New Zealand's chief negotiator, will represent the government in the talks.

Britain also plans to begin negotiating deals with Japan, Australia and New Zealand in the coming

months, alongside talks with the EU on future relations. The government said its aim is to have 80 percent of external trade covered by free trade agreements by 2022. —Reuters

What Britain wants from a trade deal with US

LONDON: Britain outlined its negotiating mandate for talks with the United States yesterday, with the hope of reducing tariffs while shielding the public health service and protecting food and animal welfare standards. Here are some key sections from the mandate document:

National health service

The government said the role of the National Health Service (NHS) will not be on the table in the talks. "The price the NHS pays for drugs will not be on the table," the document said. "The services the NHS provides will not be on the table. The NHS is not, and never will be, for sale to the private sector, whether overseas or domestic."

Boost to UK economy

The government said its analysis showed a deal with the United States, which involved full tariff liberalization

and a 50 percent reduction in non-tariff measures, would increase the size of the British economy by 0.16 percent. The document said if there is a substantial tariff liberalization and a 25 percent reduction in non-tariff measures the boost to the economy will be a more modest 0.07 percent

Food and animal welfare standards

The government said it would maintain high standards for consumers and workers, including on food and animal welfare. "Any agreement will ensure high standards and protections for consumers and workers, and will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards," the document said.

Financial services

Britain said it wants to expand opportunities for UK financial services but the impact of a trade deal on the UK's most important economic sector is "uncertain".

Access for goods and services

The government said it wants to reduce tariffs on goods and win improved access for service companies. The aim for goods is to "secure broad liberalization of

tariffs on a mutually beneficial basis, taking into account UK product sensitivities, in particular for UK agriculture."

The government also wants to "secure ambitious commitments from the US on market access and fair competition for UK services."

Digital tax

The government said it would consider opposition to its plan to impose a new digital tax on big tech companies like Google, Facebook and Amazon as part of its ambition to agree a free trade deal. "We note comments regarding digital taxation and will consider this as part of our policy development," the document said.

Investor rights

The government said any system to protect US companies' interests in the country after a free trade agreement - typically a sensitive issue for civil society groups worried about the power of multinationals - would have to be fair and transparent. "The government also notes the range of perspectives regarding the potential inclusion of investment protection and an associated Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism," the document said. —Reuters

Lebanon prosecutor grills bankers over capital flight

BEIRUT: A Lebanese prosecutor yesterday grilled bankers over more than 2 billion dollars in capital flight in past months despite strict banking restrictions in the crisis-hit country, judicial sources said.

Banks have since September imposed increasingly tight limits on dollar withdrawals and transfers abroad as part of measures to tackle a severe liquidity crisis. But bankers stand accused of having sent millions of dollars abroad despite those limitations since mass anti-government protests erupted on October 17.

Lebanese banking association head Salim Sfeir, as well as representatives from 14 banks, appeared before financial prosecutor Ali Ibrahim, the sources said. They testified "over the transfer abroad of 2.3 billion dollars during the two months since

the start of the popular uprising", they said.

They were questioned over "the causes of the transfers abroad of the money of bank owners, which reduced liquidity in the internal financial markets". They were also asked why other depositors were unable to make transfers abroad for trade or to pay tuition fees.

Bankers were asked to justify "the inability of depositors to withdraw from their US dollar accounts... while that restriction did not apply to the powerful". Lebanon is currently facing its worst economic crisis since its 1975-1990 civil war. The value of the Lebanese pound has plummeted on the black market, prices have risen, and many businesses have been forced to slash salaries, dismiss staff or close.

Lebanon is one of the most indebted countries in the world, with a public debt equivalent to 150 percent of its GDP. The country is now under pressure to pay a \$1.2 billion Eurobond maturity on March 9. Economists warn payment on time would eat away at plummeting foreign currency reserves, while bankers say a default would damage Lebanon's reputation with lenders.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch in a November report estimated that around



50 percent of Eurobonds were held by local banks, while the central bank had around 11 percent.

Foreign investors owned the remainder, or around 39 percent, it said. But these figures may have changed, with local media reporting that local banks have recently

sold a chunk of their Eurobonds to foreign lenders. The judicial sources said those summoned yesterday were also asked about those sales, but they did not provide further details on their answers. Representatives of other banks are to be called in later this week. —AFP

Macau casino takings plunge 88% after virus closures

MACAU: Macau's casino industry suffered its worst monthly downturn on record in February after city-wide closures aimed at stopping the spread of the deadly coronavirus. The former Portuguese colony took the unprecedented step in early February of shutting much of its lucrative entertainment sector for two weeks—including casinos, nightclubs and many bars.

Takings for the month plunged 87.8 percent from the previous year, according to figures released by gaming authorities late Sunday.

Macau has recorded only 10 COVID-19 infections and has not detected any new cases for almost a month. The vast majority of the 35 million tourists visiting each year are mainland Chinese drawn to the city's casinos. Arrivals have plummeted since the outbreak began, with visitor numbers one-fifth of usual

levels. Still, observers expect the former Portuguese colony would bounce back.

"We do not think COVID-19 will curb gamblers' enthusiasm... so its impact on the industry's sustainable earnings power should be limited," JPMorgan Chase analysts said in a note.

Macau's government has been keen to ensure casinos keep on staff through the downturn and avoid lay-offs. But while authorities allowed gaming venues to reopen on February 18, they said operators concerned about low tourist numbers could apply to remain closed for another month.

Officials have ordered all gamblers and casino staff to wear face masks. First found in the city of Wuhan in central China, the new coronavirus has infected nearly 80,000 people on the mainland and 98 in Hong Kong. It has also killed nearly 3,000 on the mainland and two in Hong Kong.

The only other time Macau's casinos closed their doors was in 2018 when the city was hit directly by a typhoon. Macau depends almost entirely on gaming revenue, raking in more in a single week than Las Vegas makes in a month.

The local government has tried to diversify—promoting Macau as a tourism and culinary destination—



The gaming sector accounts for 80 percent of Macau's government revenue. —AFP

but the gaming sector still accounts for 80 percent of government revenue.

Gaming stocks fell slightly yesterday, with Sands China down 0.7 percent and Galaxy Entertainment down 0.6 percent on the Hong Kong bourse. —AFP

CBs urge G20 to back cheaper payments 'roadmap'

LONDON: Central banks will ask world leaders to back a "roadmap" for cutting the cost of cross-border payments, the Bank for International Settlements said on Sunday.

The BIS wants Group of Twenty (G20) leaders to get behind the plan, which is being drawn up by regulators, central banks and treasury officials from across the world and will lay out steps to improve a payments system hindered by high costs. Political will is needed to create conditions for cheaper cross-border payments that are properly regulated at a time when international "correspondent" banks are pulling out from aiding such payments for local lenders.

Cross-border payments, critical for some emerging economies that depend on remittances sent by migrants abroad, are hampered by low speeds, high costs and cumbersome processes.

The roadmap will look at current costs, sticking points and risks in payments and pinpoint how the private and public sectors can tackle them, the Basel-based BIS, an umbrella group for central banks, said. In a rare move, the BIS devoted its quarterly review to payments in a sign of how Facebook's plans to launch its Libra cryptocurrency has forced central banks to look beyond their wholesale payment networks to changes in the retail sector.

Facebook's planned expansion to retail payments has focused regulatory concern over the role of Big Tech in financial services, stoking debate over who will control money in the future.

As technological changes sweep through the domestic and cross-border payments sectors, central banks must accelerate work to guarantee that new services run safely and efficiently, the BIS said. —Reuters

Lufthansa further slashes flight plan over virus

FRANKFURT: German airline group Lufthansa said yesterday it was extending flight cancellations on Iran and China routes until late April, part of a broader rollback because of the novel coronavirus.

The group's namesake carrier and subsidiaries Austrian and Swiss will not fly to and from mainland China until April 24, Lufthansa said in a statement. Meanwhile Tehran flights will be suspended until April 30. The slashes to the flight plan are part of a wider scheme Lufthansa announced Friday that will ground 23 long-haul aircraft and cut short- and medium-haul services by up to 25 percent. Lufthansa said yesterday it was reducing the frequency of flights between major German hubs like Frankfurt and Munich and Seoul and Hong Kong. And the group is also reducing frequency on routes to cities in Italy, including Rome, Venice, and Milan, with subsidiary Brussels Airlines affected alongside low-cost carrier Eurowings, Austrian and Swiss.

In northern Italy, 11 towns have been placed under quarantine because of the virus outbreak. Even within Germany, the group is slashing flight frequency on domestic routes between major cities. Lufthansa said passengers whose flights were affected by the timetable changes should check the company website for updates. The group has also suspended new hires as part of its measures to cushion the business impact of the virus, which it said yesterday was "not yet possible to estimate". —AFP

Business

KAMCO GCC Markets Monthly Report

GCC markets see biggest monthly drop in 4 years on rising coronavirus cases

KUWAIT: GCC markets felt the heat of rising coronavirus cases globally as well as in the region towards the end of February-2020 that pushed most major indices downwards. The MSCI GCC index declined by 7.3 percent during the month, the biggest decline since January-2016, that further pushed its YTD-2020 decline to 8.8 percent. Qatar (-9.1 percent) witnessed the biggest decline during the month, followed by Saudi Arabia's Tadawul (-7.5 percent) and UAE's DFM (-4.9 percent).

The GCC monthly sector performance chart showed a broad-based decline during February-2020 with only the Transportation sector seeing marginal gains during the month on the back of gain in shares of DP World after the company announced plans to delist. On the other hand, the Utilities sector was one of the main large-cap decliners for the month with most of the stocks in the sector seeing double digit declines.

The Materials index was next with a decline of more than 10 percent led by fall in shares of petrochemical companies, in addition to a broad-based decline in shares of cement companies in the region. Banking and Telecom stocks also trended downwards resulting in an aggregate sector decline of around 6 percent for the both the sectors, while the Real Estate sector decline was slightly steeper at around 7 percent for the month.

The fear of spreading coronavirus has affected most major global markets since the start of the year. Almost all the major asset classes declined during February-2020 and were in the red in terms of YTD-2020 returns with only gold, as a safe haven asset, showing gains of around 5 percent since the start of the year. The MSCI World index declined by 8.6 percent during the month, bringing YTD-2020 decline to close to 10 percent. Crude oil was one of the biggest decliners during the month with Brent crude prices hovering near the \$50/b mark registering a monthly decline of 13 percent and YTD-2020 decline of almost 25 percent primarily led by concerns relating to demand outlook in the near term.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti benchmarks trended downward during February-2020 in line with most other GCC and global markets as the number of coronavirus cases increased in the country towards the end of the month. All the three benchmarks declined during the month with the Premier Market index seeing the biggest drop of 4.3 percent followed by the Main Market index that saw a decline of 3.1 percent. The net impact on the All Share Market Index was a fall of 4.0 percent. Declines during the month also wiped off the marginal gains recorded by Kuwaiti indices during the previous month resulting in a YTD-2020 decline of 3.3 percent for the All Share Market Index and 3.5 percent for the Premier Market Index.

As the market prepares to enter the MSCI Emerging Market Index at the end of March-2020, Boursa Kuwait also introduced the Main 50 Index during the month that includes most actively traded stocks in the Main Market. The new index aims to highlight opportunities outside the large-cap Premier Market space and would also help in

addressing investor concerns relating to liquidity of trades in stocks in the Main market.

The sector performance chart also highlighted the broader decline in the market with merely two indices, Oil & Gas and Insurance, showing marginal gains during the month. The two indices have also outperformed the rest of the market in terms of YTD-2020 performance with gains of 5.5 percent for the Oil & Gas index and 2.5 percent for the Insurance index while the rest of the sector indices declined. The monthly gain in the Oil & Gas index was led by gain in shares of NAPESCO and Burgan Co. for Drilling that more than offset declines in the rest of the companies in the sector. The 3.9 percent gain in shares of NAPESCO came after the company announced signing of a KD 109.6 million contract with KOC followed by a smaller contract valued at KD 7.7 million with Kuwait Gulf Oil Co and Saudi Arabian Chevron.

Meanwhile, the 0.9 percent gain in Insurance index came after four out of eight stocks in the index witnessed healthy gains during the month. On the other hand, the Technology index witnessed the steepest decline during the month with a fall of 9.5 percent reflecting an equivalent decline in shares of ASC. The Basic Materials index followed with the second-biggest monthly decline of 7.9 percent followed by Banks and Financial Services Indices with relatively smaller declines of 4.4 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively. The monthly market breadth favored decliners that included 110 companies as compared to 44 gainers. The monthly gainers chart was topped by Investors Holding Group with a gain of 41.3 percent followed by Al-Mal Investment and Wethaq Takaful with gains of 37.8 percent and 22.2 percent, respectively. On the decliners side, Noor Financial topped with a decline of 14 percent followed by First Investment and Kuwait Cement with monthly declines of 13.1 percent and 12.8 percent, respectively.

Saudi Arabia (Tadawul)

Saudi Arabian equity market breached the psychological support of 8,000 points at the start of February-2020 and reached a 4-month low level of 7,628.34 points by the end of the month led by the rising cases of the coronavirus that has affected markets across the globe. The market registered a monthly decline of 7.5 percent, the biggest fall since August-2019, that pushed YTD-2020 decline further in the red to 9.1 percent by the end of February-2020. The sell-off affected all the sectors on the exchange, barring Healthcare and Software & Services, which saw marginal gains during the month.

Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange

ADX reversed gains from Jan-20 (+1.6 percent) and fell by 4.9 percent m-o-m in Feb-20. Global market weakness drove the index to break the 5000-point mark and close at 4901.43 points. Sectoral index performance barring Insurance (+5.9 percent) and Industrials (+2.6 percent) indices was negative. Banks and Real Estate indices came under the most pressure as they dropped by 6.6 percent and 5.0 percent respectively. FAB (-7.5

and audited by Deloitte.

Customers of Al-Jawhara Account are automatically enrolled in the draws. For every KD 50 deposited into their account, they receive a chance to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly and KD 250,000 as the quarterly grand prize. If no withdrawal or transfers occur on the account during the required period, customers will receive an additional chance to enter the draw for every KD 50 held in the account, doubling their chance to win.

"Al-Jawhara account is a pillar in our strategy that aims to spread a culture of saving among every segment of our customers. The account also enables us to provide an exceptional banking experience to our customers by supporting them in saving as well as win and successfully plan for their future," stated Hisham Al-Nusif, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said.

"We are committed at NBK to rewarding our customers and providing them with the unique services, offers and prizes, and are very pleased to be announce-

ing the winner in Al-Jawhara's monthly draw", he added. Al-Nusif affirmed that anyone can open an Al-Jawhara Account by visiting the nearest NBK Branch, or directly through NBK Mobile Banking App and NBK Online Banking which is possible thanks to the bank's digital transformation strategy which aims to enable customers to complete all their transactions online without the need to visit the branch.

NBK also announced the winners in Al-Jawhara's weekly draws for the month of February who were: Mohammed Jawad Mohammed Taqi, Ghanem Farag Salem Braisim Al-Thufiri and Musaed Hameed Mohammad Alazmi.

Since 2012, the National Bank of Kuwait has rewarded loyal customers with a total worth of prizes up to KD 2,200,000 in the weekly, monthly, and quarterly Al-Jawhara draws. NBK is committed to introduce customers with a diversified set of offers and rewards that meet their aspirations throughout the year. It also offers them the most outstanding, disruptive and secure banking services.

Burgan Bank announces winner of Al-Thuraya salary account draw



KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, announced yesterday Vysakh Narayanan Sahadevan as the lucky winner of the draw prize of Al-Thuraya Salary Accounts monthly draw. The draw rewards new and existing customers who transfer their salary to Burgan Bank by offering them a chance to win KD 10,000 every month. Each

account holder has one chance to enter the draw. The Al-Thuraya account holders have the option to hold money in Kuwaiti dinar and other major currencies and can access account-related services such as standing orders, loans and credit cards, and benefit from the discounts and offers throughout the year.

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 1st March 2020 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 23 - 27 February 2020. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

Qassim Mohammed Ali Alsaraf
Farah Anwar Sayed Khadem Almousawi

Ali Abdelkader Abdelatif tuwainah
Fathallah Hashem Mohammad Ali
Ali Hussain Helail Al-Mutairi

Gulf Bank's announced that Al-Danah is now bigger, and that the prize of the annual draw will be KD1,500,000 as of 2020. The annual draw will be held on 14 January 2021, and the last chance to participate by depositing in the Al-Danah account will be on 30 September 2020.

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

services. Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2019, have been added to their 2020 chances, and the same process will take place in 2021, and so on. Terms and conditions apply.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2020 quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.



Bahrain Bourse

The Bahrain All Share index closed broadly flat (+0.2 percent) m-o-m in Feb-20, and remains one of the only two GCC indices to remain the green YTD (+3.1 percent). The index closed at 1660.48 points, while sectoral performance was mixed m-o-m. The Insurance index was the best performing sectoral index as it gained by 3.7 percent m-o-m in Feb-20, led by a 10.7 percent gain for Arab Insurance Group. Services names also moved up by 2.2 percent m-o-m, while Commercial Banks remained broadly flat (+0.1 percent) for the month of Feb-20. Hotels & Tourism was the main laggard, dropping 6.1 percent m-o-m. Trading activity was mixed in Feb-20, as value traded receded by 9.7 percent m-o-m to BHD 16.9 million. Volumes traded however improved by 20.3 percent m-o-m to 70.8 million shares. Market breadth favored gainers as 19 stocks closed in the green while 7 stocks saw lower levels in Feb-20. In earnings releases, Batelco's net profit attributable to equity holders of the company for 2019 came in at BHD 51.6 million up by 3 percent from BHD 50.1 million in 2018, mainly due to a 4 percent increase in operating profit, and the BHD 28.4 million gain on the sale of Qualitynet in May 2019.

Muscat Securities Market

The Omani stock market continued on its growth trajectory for the second consecutive month during February-2020 defying the selling pressure in the region as well as globally. The MSM 30 index was the best performing index in the GCC during the month with a gain of 1.3 percent to close at 4,130.91 points. Gains during February-2020 also pushed YTD-2020 gains to the best in the GCC at 3.8 percent. In terms of sector performance, the Industrial index topped monthly returns with a gain of 0.48 percent, while the Services index declined by 0.9 percent. The Financial index ended flat during the month. Monthly share performance in the regular market, was topped by Oman Cement that recorded a gain of 14.3 percent. The company's board proposed a cash dividend of 20 Baiza/share for the year 2019 as compared to 30 Baiza/share announced in 2018.

Boubyan Bank ready to combat COVID-19

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank's Group General Manager - Administration Group, Waleed Al-Yaqout has confirmed that the bank has been prepared since the first day of announcing the outbreak of COVID-19 in Kuwait in line with the instructions of MOH, and the competent authorities, to protect the health of customers, staff and the society in general.



Al-Yaqout stated: "Out of the bank's keenness on public health, we have taken all precautionary and preventive measures over the past days, as instructed by the Ministry of Health and the competent authorities in addition to following the health instructions issued by the World Health Organization, which will help protect the country from the hazard of this virus."

"Boubyan Bank already started the implementation of the instructions of competent authorities regarding the sterilization of all ATMs, branches, and main buildings in addition to fitting hand sanitizer dispensers at all locations. More than 95 hand sanitizer dispensers were fitted to All ATMs and ITMs of branches in addition to drive-through ATMs. Additionally, locations are visited 4 times a day to be sterilized and to refill hand sanitizer dispensers," he added.

He went on to add: "More than 120 new hand sanitizer dispensers were fitted inside branches and main buildings of the bank. Medical face masks were also distributed to all staff of branches and buildings as of the first day following the national holidays."

Al-Yaqout elaborated: "The bank has also used its various online and social media platforms to publish various awareness messages urging everyone to maintain public health since prevention is better than cure." "Over the past years, the bank has been keen on adopting health and prevention standards across all the bank's buildings in an attempt to safeguard staff and customers' health," he added.

Al-Yaqout concluded his statements by extending his thanks to various entities starting with the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for all the efforts they exerted regarding this issue in collaboration with various government and private institutions.

He concluded: "As per the instructions of the senior management, Boubyan Bank is putting all of its resources at the beck and call of government institutions to face this ongoing crisis, imploring Allah Almighty to bestow health and prosperity upon Kuwait the world."

What's On

CBK celebrates National day with students of Al-Nebras school



Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) concluded its National days celebration program, on the occasion of the 59th Independence and 29th Liberations anniversaries.

Deputy General Manager, Corporate Communications Division Amani Al-Waraa said February brings with it good memories every year, which is an opportunity to

renew commitments to work for the good of Kuwait and society's flourishing.

She said the bank decorated its main building with a picture of HH the Amir and lights that reflects the meaning of this National celebration. Meanwhile, the bank received students from Al-Nebras Model School for those with special needs to celebrate with them the national days.



Four Seasons launches 'Take the Leap' podcast series

Embracing an extra 24 hours in 2020, Four Seasons is spot lighting tangible transformation through travel in a three-part podcast series launching today. Following the release of a global survey looking at varying perspectives on the value of time, Four Seasons further explores how travellers can make the most of this year's 366 days, through dynamic conversations with global adventurers.

The world's leading luxury hospitality company's first-ever podcast series introduces audiences to three influencers, three hosts, and a trio of Four Seasons destinations as they talk meaningful travel moments, stepping outside one's comfort zone, and what it means to truly Take Your Time.

Episode 1: Jessica Nabongo and Alicia Miller

Corbett: The Power of Travelling Outside Your Comfort Zone, Four Seasons Hotel Firenze

Writer, entrepreneur, public speaker and travel influencer Jessica Nabongo is the first documented black woman to visit every country in the world. In Take the Leap's debut episode, together with host Alicia Miller Corbett, Editor in Chief of Four Seasons Magazine, Jessica reflects on her two-and-a-half-year journey, and how breaking free of her comfort zone has led to deeper, life-changing connections. After a Four Seasons experience in the Tuscan countryside foraging with a fourth-generation truffle hunter, a mixology class with head bartender Karem Pasqualetti, and a cooking lesson from Michelin starred Chef Vito Mollica, Jessica encourages listeners to live life without limits, embracing new opportunities at every turn.

Interested in taking the leap with Four Seasons? Take Your Time: Daily Discoveries is a global collection of bookable experiences that require no more than one day, one hour and even one minute. Explore more with #FSTakeYourTime.



Coming up next

Episode 2: Patrick Janelle and Georgina Miranda, Four Seasons Resort Costa Rica at Peninsula Papagayo

After quitting his full-time job as a graphic designer at Bon Appétit magazine to live out his passion, professional Instagrammer and content creator Patrick Janelle hosts episode two of Take the Leap, leading a thought-provoking interview with adventurer Georgina Miranda. Having conquered Mount Everest twice, founded consulting and coaching serv-

ice She Ventures, and currently pursuing the "Explorer's Grand Slam" (a quest to stand on the highest summits in each continent, as well as the North and South Pole), Miranda meets with Janelle in Costa Rica to discuss how travel and work/life balance can fuel success and offer a new mindset about what's possible.

Episode 3: Poppy Jamie conversation with Dave Krugman, Four Seasons Hotel Kyoto

In the final episode of the three-part series, well-being entrepreneur, former television host and Happy Not Perfect app creator Poppy Jamie speaks with professional photographer and passionate traveller Dave Krugman in historic Kyoto, Japan. The pair offer unique perspectives on how travel is essential to creative life, and the question of whether it is possible to take your "vacation self" home with you.

To listen, subscribe to Take the Leap on Spotify, or Apple Podcasts. For extended footage, watch the series unfold on YouTube, with new episodes launching in March and April. Follow @fourseasonson social for updates and join the conversation with #FSTakeYourTime.



PRAYAN 2020 - The beginning of a new journey for Class 10 and 12

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Rightly quoting, the Principal and Senior Administrator of The Indian Community School Senior, Dr V Binumon organized a blessing ceremony for the children of classes 10 and 12 on 18th February 2020 in the school auditorium. The ceremony was collocated in two separate sessions.

PRAYAN for class 12 was solemnized by Rev Fr Lionel Braganza, Principal Don Bosco [IEAS], the Chief Guest for the occasion. The show got on the road with the Islamic prayer by Yusuf Shabbir to invoke the blessings of God Almighty. The very allegorical act of lighting the lamp in order to remove the darkness of ignorance was done by Rev Fr Lionel who was accompanied by Dr V. Binumon.

It was followed by the national anthems of Kuwait and India that was euphoniously rendered by the Senior School choir Swaranjali. The Principal ICSK Senior welcomed the Chief Guest, dignitaries, teachers, parents and the children wholeheartedly. Mrs Susan Rajesh Vice principal ICSK Senior, shared the words of blessings and administered the oath to the children of class 12. An inspirational video was played to motivate and galvanize the minds of the children. Antony Austin, Mrs Musurrat Parker and

Mrs Sandhya Menon from the departments of Science, Commerce and Social Science shared their inspirational messages and advised the children to soar high and reach greater heights according to their potentials.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Mrs Niva Elna Varghese, the Academic Supervisor Senior Secondary.

The second session of PRAYAN 2020 was for the children of class 10. The ceremony got going with the Islamic prayer by Mohammed Haris. The Chief Guest who graced the promising occasion of PRAYAN 2020 of class 10 was Sr Christy Maria A.C Principal Carmel School. Sr Christy Maria lighted the lamp of knowledge and the school choir rendered the Kuwait and Indian national anthems. Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK Senior Dr V Binumon delivered the welcome address and greeted the chief guest, dignitaries, parents, teachers and the children of class 10 with warmth and joy. Sr Christy Maria bestowed the message of blessings upon the children of class 10. Swaranjali rendered with a mellifluous and expressive song leaving a soothing effect.

Sr Christy Maria distributed the attendance registers, class logs and cards to the class teachers of class 10. Binumon distributed the personal logs and time tables to the subject teachers.

As a token of appreciation and gratitude Sr Christy Maria A.C was presented with a memento by Binumon. Mrs Susan Rajesh shared the words of blessings and administered the oath to the children. Dr Saroj, Mrs K Lamba and Jacob George from the Department of English, Hindi and Maths shared inspirational messages with the children with an intention to boost their morale and guide them towards the right path. Mrs Saritha Nair Academic Supervisor Secondary proposed the vote of thanks.



Health & Science

Asia's period problems: Talking about a 'menstrual revolution'

HONG KONG: No more euphemisms, no more opaque marketing, no more superstitions, and no glossing over cramps, bleeding, or pain: Reframing current attitudes is vital for female empowerment and health, as well as the environment, says the 29-year-old founder of LUUNA Naturals, which hails itself as Asia's first period care company with an all-female leadership team.

She is not alone in wanting to change the conversation: Last year the UN warned that taboos around menstrual health were "disempowering" women worldwide, calling for action to end it. "Period stigma is the biggest barrier to the global advancement of women," agrees Cotes-James, adding: "Periods can still cause us to feel dirty, ashamed and frustrated. If menstrual taboos persist and society continues to devalue our fundamental female biology, what hopes do we have of ever being seen as equal?" On average women will spend up to eight years of their lives on their period, according to UNICEF. They are vital to the continuity of the human race, but myths and misconceptions still dominate worldwide.

The arrival of menstrual cups, period underwear, which can remove the need for products entirely, and apps that track your cycle have led to a new culture of openness in a generation keen to verbalize the long-hidden realities of the female experience and reproductive rights - from #MeToo and #ShoutYourAbortion, to miscarriage awareness campaign #IamtheIn4 and #Trustaftertrauma, where women share their stories of

obstetric violence. Bloggers and vloggers lay bare the realities of how period products work on social media. There is even a period emoji in the pipeline.

Myths and Misogyny

Normalizing menstrual health can only be good for women's overall health, says Cotes-James, whose firm sells organic cotton pads, liners, and tampons, as well as medical grade silicone menstrual cups, but also works to help low income communities across Asia who don't have access to safe, hygienic products.

She explains: "Instead of seeing menstruation as a powerful indicator of well-being we are taught to shun it. In doing so, we ignore vital signs of underlying health issues. For example, around 1 in 10 women have endometriosis, yet it still takes almost a decade on average to diagnose. "A huge part of this is the fact that we don't pay attention to telltale signs like how much blood we lose every month, or dismiss painful menstrual symptoms as normal because society has led us to believe that they are."

Using a menstrual cup, could help women gauge if the amount of blood they lose falls within the normal range, she says, adding that open discussions about cramps, nausea, or pain, will help us understand whether there is an issue within our bodies. In parts of Asia, the situation is even more complex for women as deeply ingrained cultural and religious beliefs often add another layer of restrictions on them.

In rural Nepal, women are still exiled to outhouses during their periods, despite the practice being illegal and resulting in deaths from exposure as well as sexual and animal attacks. In parts of South Asia, menstruating women are seen as unclean, spreading disease, and are forbidden from touching communal food, while across the region having a period renders people too impure to visit temples.

Period plastic pollution

Even among tech-savvy professionals in city centers, myths persist - some fear using tampons is akin to a sex act, others believe virgins cannot use menstrual cups or believe they cannot swim or exercise during their period. LUUNA takes a multi-pronged approach to tackling this: With offices in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore, as well as London, the company hosts workshops, myth-busting meet-ups and frank discussions about period products, fertility, and menstrual health for women and men.

Its social impact arm, The LUUNA Period Collective, collaborates with a network of local initiatives. For every cup sold, it donates one, but it also provides education in disadvantaged communities where poor sanitation, a lack of clean water, and restrictive cultural norms, add to the stigma. "For us social impact is not a seasonal campaign, it's at the core of what we do. Encouraging the use of plastic pads in low income communities does not solve period poverty, and it exacerbates another urgent

issue - plastic waste," she says.

In the developed world, the average woman uses 11,000 disposable menstrual products over 30 years, according to the Women's Environment Network. Switching to a cup, which could last up to ten years, would potentially save billions from landfill where they can take centuries to decompose.

Fight for gender equality

Born in New Zealand but raised in the UK, Cotes-James now splits her time between Hong Kong and Shanghai. She's clear that while there are pronounced issues in Asia, universally women have been let down by inequality and archaic approaches to female reproductive health. There is five times more research into erectile dysfunction than Premenstrual Syndrome, for example, according to science forum ResearchGate, despite the latter affecting far more people. A 2005 study by the University of Pennsylvania found female pain is more likely to be underestimated. Cotes-James says it took her years to realise the painful symptoms she was experiencing during her period were actually an allergic reaction to the viscose and polyester found in some sanitary pads and tampons. For decades men have decided everything about periods - from helming companies that make menstrual products and overseeing advertising of them, to setting legislation that taxes them as a luxury item and failing to require firms to declare what period care items are made of, she says. — AFP

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- 1-Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4-Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

Experienced In:

- ◆ Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- ◆ Vocal cord augmentation.
- ◆ Diagnosis and treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- ◆ Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- ◆ Myringotomy and ventilation tube insertion.
- ◆ Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- ◆ Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- ◆ Diagnosis and treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- ◆ Tympanoplasty.
- ◆ Diagnosis and treatment of vertigo.
- ◆ Thyroid surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis and treatment of snoring.

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Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant

American Board Certified in General Surgery
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)
Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation
Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

- ◆ Day case surgeries
- ◆ Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- ◆ Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- ◆ Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- ◆ Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- ◆ Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- ◆ Hernia repair
- ◆ Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- ◆ Surgery for reflux disease.
- ◆ Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

Tel: 1886677

Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo – Rectal Surgeon

Scope of Clinical Practice:

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single-Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastrosocopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo – Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

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DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368
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DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates – Training

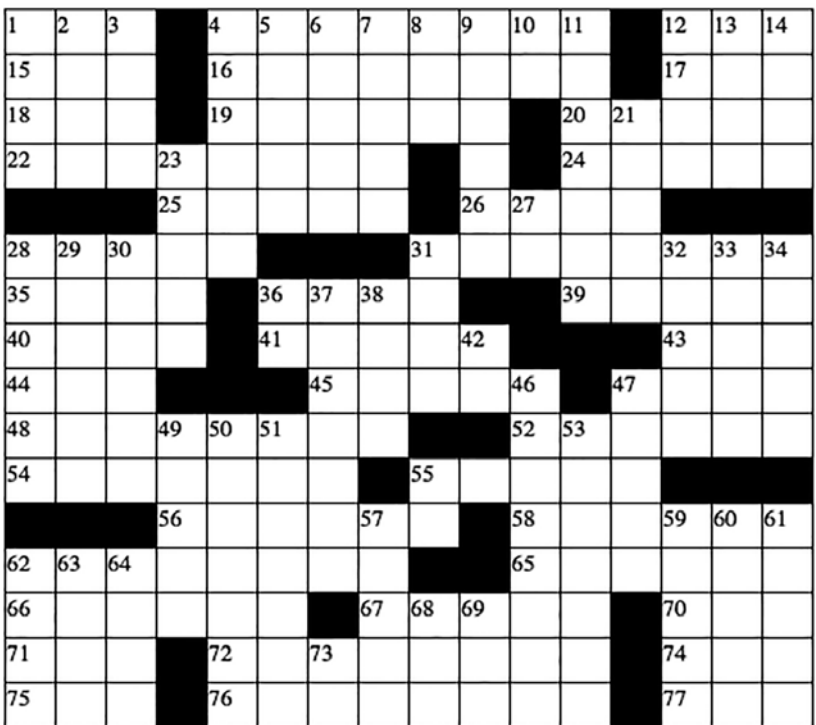
- ◆ Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

email: wbuhaimeed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

CROSSWORD 2448



ACROSS

- 1. The seventh and last day of the week.
- 4. Dog fennel.
- 12. An anxiety disorder characterized by chronic free-floating anxiety and such symptoms as tension or sweating or trembling of light-headedness or irritability etc that has lasted for more than six months.
- 15. Electronic equipment that provides visual images of varying electrical quantities.
- 16. French revolutionary who was prominent in the early days of the French Revolution (1749-1791).
- 17. How long something has existed.
- 18. The month following July and preceding September.
- 19. Drought-resistant Asiatic tree-like shrub bearing pleasantly acid small red edible fruits commonly used in sherbets.
- 20. 100 ngwee equal 1 kwacha.
- 22. Lead someone in the wrong direction.
- 24. Dried out by heat or excessive exposure to sunlight.
- 25. A narrow street with walls on both sides.
- 26. Tall woody perennial grasses with hollow slender stems especially of the genera Arundo and Phragmites.
- 28. Out of fashion.
- 35. A book of the New Testament.
- 39. A member of the extinct Algonquian people formerly living in northern Indiana and southern Michigan.
- 40. Continuing or remaining in a place or state.
- 41. A river in eastern France.
- 43. The first month of the year.
- 44. Separated into parts or laid open or penetrated with a sharp edge or instrument.
- 45. An award for winning a championship or commemorating some other event.
- 48. Long-bodied marine fishes having a long whiplike scaleless body and sharp teeth.
- 52. (prosody) Of or consisting of iambs.
- 54. Greek lyric poet of Lesbos.
- 56. Youngest daughter of the prophet Mohammed and wife of the fourth calif Ali.
- 58. The Mongol people living the the central and eastern parts of Outer Mongolia.
- 62. (trademark) A brand of gramophone.
- 65. A long monotonous harangue.
- 66. A permanent council of the United Nations.
- 67. Informal terms for a mother.
- 70. A master's degree in business.
- 71. A doctor's degree in education.
- 72. A sudden violent spontaneous occurrence of an undesirable condition.
- 74. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
- 75. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
- 76. A white crystalline organic base.
- 77. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- 1. A fraudulent business scheme.
- 2. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
- 3. Informal terms for clothing.
- 4. A small bottle that contains a drug (especially a sealed sterile container for injection by needle).
- 6. Relating to or used in or intended for trade or commerce.
- 7. United States rock singer who was one of the first to popularize rock'n'roll music (1925-1981).
- 8. The compass point that is one point south of due east.
- 9. Deficient in amount or quality or extent.
- 10. A state in midwestern United States.
- 11. A ray of sunlight.
- 12. An awkward stupid person.
- 13. American novelist (1909-1955).
- 14. A notable achievement.
- 21. A cushion on a throne for a prince in India.
- 23. Resembling gass.
- 27. (combining form) Former.
- 29. Presently existing in fact and not merely potential or possible.
- 30. Not active or moving.
- 31. The (prehensile) extremity of the superior limb.
- 32. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
- 33. Of or relating to Oman or its people.
- 34. Ions are accelerated along a linear path by voltage differences on electrodes along the path.
- 36. North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
- 37. An oral antifungal drug (trade name Lamisil) used to treat cases of fungal nail disease.
- 38. Period extending from Dec. 24 to Jan. 6.
- 42. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- 46. Someone who plays the game of golf.
- 47. Slandorous defamation.
- 49. A large number or amount.
- 50. (British) A restaurant where tea and light meals are available.
- 51. A device that displays words for people to read.
- 53. Corn bread wrapped in cabbage leaves and baked in hot ashes (Southern).
- 55. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- 57. Arboreal snake of central and southern Africa whose bite is often fatal.
- 59. A subsidiary proposition that is assumed to be true in order to prove another proposition.
- 60. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- 61. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- 63. Made agreeably cold (especially by ice).
- 64. A set of rules or principles or laws especially written ones.
- 68. A human limb.
- 69. Japanese ornamental tree with fragrant white or pink blossoms and small yellow fruits.
- 73. A soft gray malleable metallic element that resembles tin but discolors on exposure to air.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your health has been glowing over the past few weeks, Aries, but today you're likely to feel a little under the weather. This is probably due to nothing more exotic than stress. You've been working hard and concentrating on little else, so your body is now rebelling. You need some rest. Take time off and relax a little, and don't feel guilty about it. Even the President needs alone time occasionally.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You might have planned an exciting evening with friends or your current love interest, but you have to postpone it due to forces beyond your control. This could prove both disappointing and frustrating, Taurus, but there won't be much you can do about it. Just reschedule and plan something else for tonight. Distracting yourself might be the best way to go. See a movie or play on your own.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Upsetting events in the neighborhood might have family members in a funk. This could be something major like construction crews tearing up the streets, or something as minor as a bout of bad weather. No matter, Gemini, it's going to make your lives a bit more difficult for a while, but you'll have to bear with it. In the meantime, try to cheer everyone up by throwing an impromptu party. This always works!



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Today you might hear a rather distressing rumor about one or more people you know or perhaps about your working situation. Don't be surprised if more than one person phones or emails to fill you in on this. However, Cancer, this information might not be dependable. It could be based on innuendo or even outright lies. Try to track down the facts before you make yourself crazy over it.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Personal or professional projects you've been working on might be moving a bit more slowly than you're comfortable with today, Leo. You may wonder if this is because you aren't doing something right. This probably isn't the case. It's no doubt just a normal lag in the energy, which should pick up again tomorrow. Keep at it, get done what you have to, and don't make yourself crazy over it. Go with the flow.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today you might feel stifled by your current situation. Perhaps you're thinking of changing jobs or professions, or maybe you're considering moving to a more exotic place. These all might be good ideas, Virgo, but today isn't the day to make any definite decisions or even consider your options. You aren't in an objective frame of mind. Wait a few days and then think about this some more. You might change your mind.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Attempts to master a new computer program or other form of high-tech equipment could seem to be going nowhere, Libra. You might tend to doubt your ability and thus feel very frustrated. However, keep at it. You aren't beyond all help! Nothing more than a little focus, concentration, and dogged persistence is required. It might also pay to ask someone's help who knows more about it.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

The rapid level of growth that you've probably been experiencing could suddenly prove too much for you today, Scorpio. You might need to take a little breather to grasp what's happening in your life. New friends, new knowledge, and new opportunities have appeared in profusion, but you could still be feeling a bit down, wondering if you can handle it all. Don't fight these feelings: work through them instead. You'll be better off for it.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

The energy that has propelled you forward for the past several weeks might seem to lag a bit today, causing you momentary panic that your progress won't continue. As a result, you could be feeling a bit blue. Don't fall into this trap, Sagittarius. The pace has been so fast that it had to slow down sometime. It will pick up again, and you'll have had time to catch your breath. Hang in there!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today you might experience a slight (and very temporary) dark night of the soul, Capricorn. You could take a long look at your life and, even though you're doing well, still feel that you aren't yet where you want to be. Spiritually, you might doubt the traditional views you've questioned and still wonder about new concepts you've adopted. Try to distract yourself through reading or perhaps a movie. This feeling will pass by tomorrow.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

A group with which you're affiliated could be excited about a course of action that you might not feel is wise now, Aquarius. You might inform them of your reservations, but they're probably too charged up to listen. You could begin to have doubts about goals of your own that may be taking a long time to manifest. Hang in there. Sometimes things take longer than you'd like, but success is still in the wind.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Plans for getting together with friends or a romantic partner might have to be postponed because of professional responsibilities that need attention. This could prove upsetting, Pisces, especially since you have to disasp- last others, but these things happen. Don't let it get to you. This will have no lasting effect on any of your relationships. Work hard, get it done, and schedule time for some fun a bit later.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Old TV Shows 1

Find and circle all of the old TV shows that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of an additional old TV show.



- Alice

BEN CASEY

BEVERLY HILLBILLIES

CHIPS

CANNON

CAPTAIN KANGAROO

DOBBIE GILLIS

DONNA REED

DR. KILDARE

EMERGENCY FLIPPER
- FLYING NUN

FUGITIVE

GOMER PYLE

GOOD TIMES

GREEN ACRES

GREEN HORNET

HOWDY DOODY

1 SPY

IRONSIDE

JETSONS

KOJAK
- L.A. LAW

LASSIE

LOVE BOAT

MAD ABOUT YOU

MAUDE

MEDICAL CENTER

MIAMI VICE

MOD SQUAD

MOONLIGHTING

MURPHY BROWN
- ODD COUPLE

PEYTON PLACE

RAWHIDE

RIFLEMAN

RIN TIN TIN

SOAP

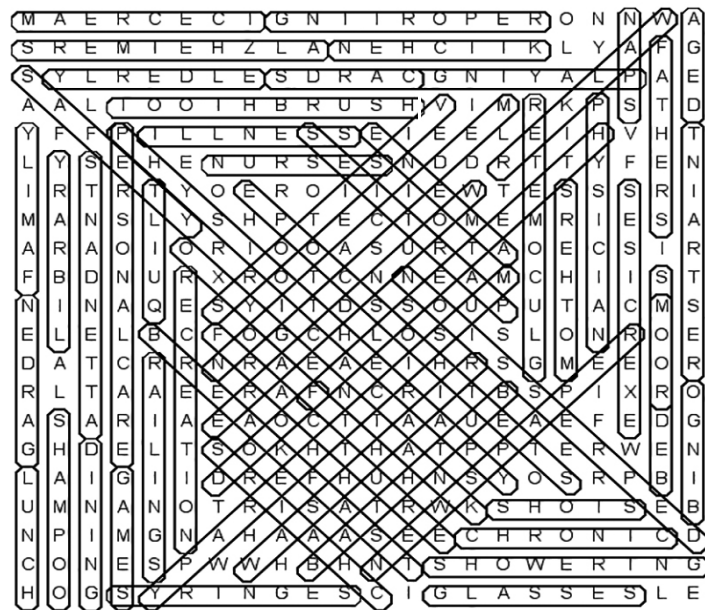
ST. ELSEWHERE

TAXI

THREE'S COMPANY

WALTONS

Nursing Home 3



- AGED

ALZHEIMERS

ATTENDANTS

BATHTUB

BEDROOM

BINGO

BREAKFAST

CARDS

CHAIRS

CHRONIC

DEPRESSION

DINING
- ELDERLY

ENEMA

EXERCISES

FALSE TEETH

FAMILY

FATHERS

FOOD

FRACTURE

GAMES

GARDEN

GLASSES

GLUCOMETER
- ICE CREAM

ILLNESS

KITCHEN

LIBRARY

LUNCH

MEDICATION

MOTHERS

MUSIC THERAPY

NAPS

NEWSPAPER

NURSES

OXYGEN TANK
- PARTIES

PERSONAL CARE

PHYSICIAN

PHYSIOTHERAPY

PLAYING CARDS

QUILT

RAILINGS

RECREATION

REPORTING

RESTRAINT

ROOMS

SAFETY
- SHAMPOO

SHOTS

SHOWERING

STETHOSCOPE

SYRINGES

TOOTHBRUSH

VISITORS

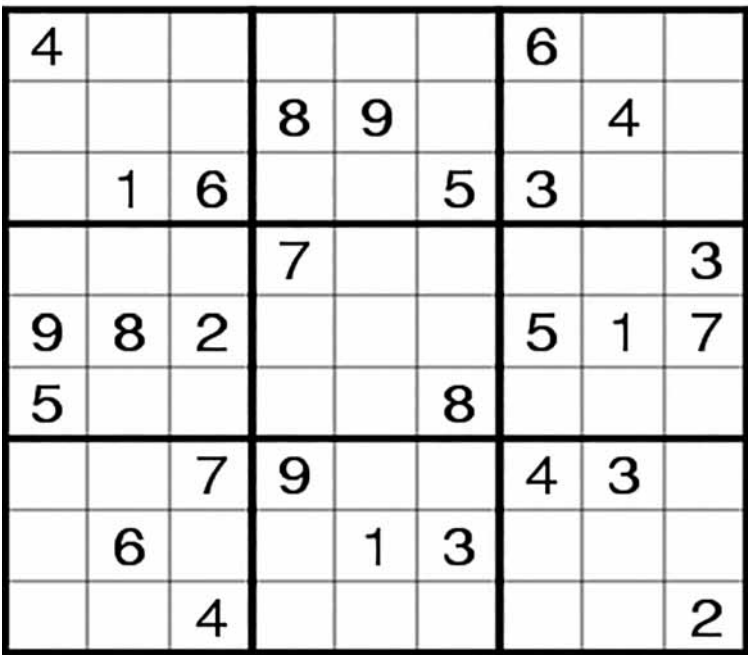
WALKER

WASH HAIR

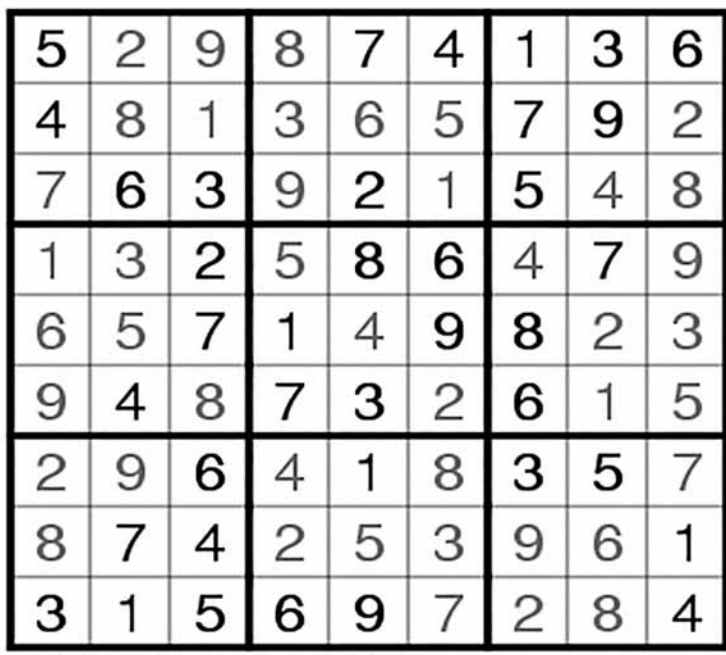
WOUND CARE

The hidden message is: ONLY A LIFE LIVED FOR OTHERS IS A LIFE WORTHWHILE

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2020



A carnival participant in full costume smokes a cigarette through a protective face mask while taking part in the Zambo carnival held in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli on March 1, 2020, marking the last period of excess on the eve of the Christian Greek Orthodox lent. The inspiration of the annual Zambo celebration is unclear, despite it being a tradition that stretches back over a century to when an emigrant to Brazil returned to his native Tripoli bringing the carnival with him. — AFP

‘Immortal Piano’ set for Israel auction



Pictures taken in the Israeli coastal city of Caesarea shows the carvings adorning the Piano of Siena, a 19th century instrument that disappeared for decades and was found recently in an Israeli house. — AFP photos

A rare piano that could fetch more than a million dollars at auction in Israel next week has a history as elaborate as the wood carvings adorning its frame. The Piano of Siena's 221-year journey began in Turin and has included stops in Paris, a second world war battlefield in North Africa, New York and Tel Aviv. Moshe Porat, an Israeli piano tuner who has researched the instrument, told AFP the light brown upright decorated with carvings of wingless cherubs, animals, flora and other instruments was a "visual masterpiece".

"Soon the next chapter will begin with a new owner," Porat said, referring to the sale scheduled for today at Winner's auction house in Jerusalem. Turin-based harpsichord maker Sebastian Marchisio started building the instrument in 1799, according to Winner's. Marchisio died before completing it but his descendants finished the initial build in 1825, giving it as a

wedding gift to Marchisio's granddaughter Rebecca, who lived in Siena. The unusually ornate instrument underwent several modifications before appearing at the 1867 World's Fair in Paris before being gifted to Italy's then-prince and future King Umberto I. The exact circumstances that saw the piano fall into Nazi hands are not clear. But following the 1942 battle of El Alamein, as the British were looking to see what the defeated Germans had left behind, "the piano was discovered in a crate with a mine detector," said Porat. "They were astonished to see a piano inside buried in the desert's sand," he said. The British army had no use for the piano, which had been covered in plaster. It ended up in the hands of an Israeli merchant, who placed it outside the Tel Aviv piano workshop of Avner Carmi, whose "life was changed" when he discovered the treasure, Porat said. Carmi removed the plaster, fixed the

piano's mechanism and eventually took it to the United States, where it was displayed in New York's Steinway Hall and used for recordings in the 1950s and 1960s. Carmi, who co-wrote a book about the piano with his wife Hannah called "The Immortal Piano," sold it to a businessman in 1996. In an interview with AFP in his spacious mansion in the posh coastal town Caesarea, the current owner, who asked that his name be withheld, said parting with the piano was not easy. "The more I learnt about it and its history, the more attached I became to the piano," he said. But "everything has its time," he said. "One needs to know how to let go of beautiful things too." —AFP

Paris' Louvre museum shuttered for second day over staff coronavirus fears

The Louvre in Paris, the world's most visited museum, was closed for a second day running yesterday after staff again refused to work due to coronavirus fears, a union said. The Paris museum insisted that closure was not necessary in response to fears over the virus, which has spread to over 60 countries after first emerging in China late last year. Staff voted yesterday at a meeting, as they had on Sunday, to exercise their legal right not to work due to a threat to their life or health, Christian Galani, a staff representative at the Louvre and member of the CGT union, told AFP. A committee on working conditions at the Louvre will meet this afternoon to decide the further course of action. In a statement on its official Twitter account, the Louvre said: "The museum cannot open at the moment." It offered a refund for tickets bought in advance to visit the museum on Sunday or Monday. The Louvre's management said that health and safety were its top priority but insisted that the closure of the museum was not necessary. "The Louvre museum is fully mobilized. The management is following events in real time. The museum will take all measures needed to ensure the security of its staff and visitors," said the Louvre's general administrator Maxence Langlois-Berthelot. But he added: "The authorities, culture ministry and health ministry have emphasized that the closure of the museum is not necessary," he added. Staff representatives said Sunday they were demanding stepped up protective measures, including the provision of hand sanitizing gel and glass barriers to separate cashiers from members of the public. In January, workers also forced a one-day closure in a strike over the government's pension reform plans. Earlier this week, the museum ended a special Leonardo da Vinci exhibition with an all-time visitors' record of nearly 1.1 million people. France, which has 130 confirmed cases and two deaths from COVID-19, has said it would ban gatherings of 5,000 people or more, closing schools and cancelling religious services in some of the hardest-hit zones. Sunday's half-marathon in Paris was cancelled. — AFP



In this photo fashion designer Anita Dongre gestures as she speaks during an interview with AFP at her factory on the outskirts of Mumbai. — AFP photos



The logo of fashion designer Anita Dongre is seen at her store in Mumbai.



Fashion designer Anita Dongre (left) interacts with a worker at her factory on the outskirts of Mumbai.



Bridal dresses and accessories of fashion designer Anita Dongre are displayed at her store in Mumbai.



Bridal dresses and accessories of fashion designer Anita Dongre are displayed at her store in Mumbai.



Textile workers make clothes at the factory of fashion designer Anita Dongre on the outskirts of Mumbai.

Feminist, fashionable and fighting for sustainability: India's Anita Dongre

With stores in India and New York, multiple clothing brands and a global celebrity following, fashion designer Anita Dongre is a feminist powerhouse in a male-dominated industry. But her true ambition is to create an environmentally sustainable company, she says. "Sometimes I wish I could just give up design and focus on sustainability full-time," the Mumbai-based Dongre tells AFP during an interview at her factory outside India's financial capital. "Time is running out. Climate change is right at our doorstep and we all have to do something," says the 56-year-old, whose clothes have been worn by some of the world's most high-profile women including Hillary Clinton, Kate Middleton, Ivanka Trump, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, and Beyonce.

Turning a company with an annual turnover of \$105 million into a carbon-neutral enterprise is a daunting proposition, but Dongre has never been one to shy away from challenges. When she started her business aged 23, armed with two sewing machines and a staff of two male tailors perched on the balcony of the bedroom she shared with her sisters, she was the first woman in her conservative family to work. Today, she says that of all her accomplishments, she is proudest of her commitment that no woman seeking work will ever be turned away from the gates of the four-storey factory she runs. "I see my journey reflected in theirs," she says, emphasizing her belief that "economic empowerment is the only way a woman can assert herself". Besides producing five clothing lines, hand-crafted fine jewelry and accessories, her foundation provides training and jobs to more than 250 rural women, with plans to cover 30 villages by 2025.

Greenwashing risks

Feminist values have been at the heart of her brand: her clothing has always been size-inclusive, going up to an XXL. Even when she ventured into bridal wear, her advertising campaigns challenged traditional norms and featured women sporting tat-

toos, enjoying their wine, and paying for their weddings. "It is very important for me to show a woman who is not coy or veiled—someone bold and sassy. I was that girl. I drove a jeep. I proposed to my husband," she says. "The world has never been fair to women... and I am not comfortable promoting regressive ideas to sell clothes," she adds. Her decision to focus on the urban professional woman has seen the brand reap dividends as female spending power increases in India.

"It's so rewarding to walk into stores and meet the women who buy my clothes. When a customer tells me, 'I wore your blazer to my first job interview 15 years ago and I got the job', it's thrilling," she says. She will need to rely on that goodwill to convince customers to shop in a wholly different way than they are used to: prioritizing sustainability and slow fashion over instant gratification. On the one hand, Dongre's task has never been easier—when she spoke about environmentally-friendly design more than a decade ago, few paid attention. Today, she says drolly, "I am glad it's finally fashionable to be green". On the other hand, greenwashing remains a huge risk, she explains. "You can't take a sustainable fabric, cover it with plastic sequins and still call it sustainable."

'Do more and more'

She is the only Indian designer to join the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), a global alliance of retailers, brands, suppliers, campaigners and labor groups that provides members with the tools to measure the environmental impact of their activities. The SAC is a non-binding organization, meaning members are largely responsible for their own efforts towards sustainability and transparency.

For her part, Dongre says she feels a drive "to do more and more" on the environmental front. At her factory, cafeteria food waste is composted or used to make biogas while the water utilized in clothing production is recycled and pumped back into the bathrooms. Her lower-priced

brands AND and globaldesi use fabrics such as sustainably-produced tencel—a biodegradable fibre made of wood pulp—while the slow fashion luxury label Grassroot showcases hand-woven, hand-embroidered designs created by Indian artisans.



A man works on an embroidery at the factory of fashion designer Anita Dongre on the outskirts of Mumbai.

Yet this commitment to sustainability and to preserving dying crafts comes with risks attached, as Dongre realizes. "The biggest challenge is educating the consumer to support our efforts," she says. Moreover, it is hard to imagine how a huge company that employs 2,700 people and works with thousands of artisans can be environmentally responsible without compromising on profits. It is a price she is willing to pay. "Companies cannot be driven only by profits... this idea of making money in whatever way possible and then giving large sums to charity, it's not sustainable. Why not make contribution to your community a focus of your business to begin with?" "It's high time companies measured their success in terms of sustainability, not just profit and loss," she says. — AFP

Bali prays as virus hits tourism on Island of the Gods

Bali's Galungan festival celebrates the triumph of good over evil, but a new enemy was threatening that cosmic balance this year—coronavirus. Temples across the Island of the Gods were filled with faithful who hoped incense-and-flower offerings would get Hindu-majority Bali back on its feet after a drastic slump in Chinese visitors hammered the key tourism sector.

"We're praying for good things in this universe and that the virus is gone soon so Bali's tourism can bounce back," priest Made Langgeng Buwana told AFP during the recent February Galungan celebration in the capital Denpasar.

Concerns over the rapidly-spreading outbreak prompted Indonesia to shut down all flights to and from China last month, dealing a body blow to scores of Bali businesses including restaurants, hotels, travel agents, wedding

planners and Mandarin-speaking interpreters. Around a million Chinese tourists visit the holiday island each year—the second-largest group of foreign arrivals after Australians—and inject hundreds of millions of dollars into the local economy. Thousands travelled there from the mainland for last month's Lunar New Year holiday just as the virus outbreak was beginning to snowball, prompting the lockdown of China's Hubei province where the infection was first detected.

Ghost town?

In Bali, some China-focused businesses have closed and others say they're on the brink of bankruptcy. Management at one upscale hotel was so desperate to cut costs they told employees to wear street clothes on the job to reduce uniform cleaning expenses, according to staff. Bali's tourism industry has suffered—

and recovered—before, including when volcano Mount Agung erupted in 2018. "There was a drop then but not something like this," said Robin, 29, an Indonesian interpreter who used to guide wealthy Chinese around the island.

Jakarta has announced more than \$700 million in stimulus to bolster Southeast Asia's biggest economy as its tourism sector takes a hit, while Bali officials hope social media influencers can help draw more visitors. The island's tourism agency head Putu Astawa—barely two months into his new job—acknowledged that losing 100,000 Chinese visitors a month has stung. But the number of visitors from Australia, Japan, North America and Europe is stable, despite unfounded reports that Bali is a ghost town, he insisted. "I don't worry about the virus," Astawa said in an interview. "I worry about social media hoaxes hurting the image of our tourism sector. I'm tired of fighting it."

'Fatally impacted'

The ghost-town image isn't fake news at Dream Island Bali Beach Club, however. Chinese tourists used to roll in for wedding photos, massages in thatched huts, beachside camel rides and a \$17 'Dream Dinner' package with a fire-dance show. The now-empty operation also ferried mainly Chinese visitors on boats to company-run restaurants nearby. Those eateries are now closed, the ferries are beached and Dream Island is headed for bankruptcy with half the staff on leave, said manager Wayan Tirta.

"Now we're trying to get local students to come here because there aren't any tourists," he said, plunging his hand underneath to show the drop in business. "We've been fatally impacted by the outbreak and are just trying to stay afloat." At Dream Island's deserted Mermaid Bay restaurant, Arik and two other

staff played with their smartphones as a pair of unemployed camels lay in the sand nearby. "We don't have anything to do. Hopefully we'll get some more guests," she said.

In Denpasar, OYO 1992 China Town Hotel—draped in bilingual signage and a huge lobby painting of a woman with a Chinese-style fan—is also feeling the pinch. The hotel once employed scores of massage therapists who relied on mainland tourists, but that crucial moneymaker has dried up. "Before coronavirus we were planning to add more massage beds," said manager Vincent Fonda in the hotel's empty Chinese food restaurant. "At the end of the day, we're probably going to close down." —AFP



Balinese people gathering for a prayer event during the Galungan holiday at Jagatnata temple in Denpasar, Indonesia's resort island of Bali. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Music & Movies



In this photo Afghan film producer and director Roya Sadat speaks during an interview with AFP at the Roya Film House in Kabul. — AFP photos



Roya Sadat speaks during an editorial meeting at the Roya Film House in Kabul.



Roya Sadat checks a film in an editing room at the Roya Film House in Kabul.

Voice of the unknown woman: Afghan filmmaker **Roya Sadat**

For a generation, Roya Sadat has been a voice for Afghan women in one of the world's worst places to be one. One of the first female filmmakers to make her name after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, she has won plaudits at home and abroad for works such as "A Letter to the President", and "Three Dots", and "Playing the Taar". She has lived through the Soviet occupation-fleeing with her family for their lives at times-endured the brutality of civil war, and then the violent oppression of Taliban rule, where women existed only in the shadows and basic freedoms were lost.

Her great fear is a return to that kind of fundamentalism: The February 29, US-Taliban deal may be a potential first step for peace in a nation that for decades has only known war, but it offers no guarantees the few women's rights set out in the current constitution will be upheld. "I feel concerned when I remember how we had simply been forgotten during the five-year Taliban rule until 9/11 happened," says the 37-year-old, adding: "If the international community approaches [Afghanistan] as an open and shut scenario and abandons us again, there will undoubtedly be grave consequences."

Almost 39 percent of girls go to secondary

school according to World Bank figures for 2017, while USAid says that of the 300,000 students in universities, around one third are female citing figures from the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education.

These figures are predominantly for urban areas but twenty years ago it would have been all but impossible everywhere. "There are many good changes happening, coming from the heart of society," Sadat says, but concedes there is a huge amount to be done. Afghanistan ranks last in the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security index which measures well-being and self-reliance. In rural areas, female literacy can be less than two percent and rights are often even more constrained by conservative tradition.

'Era of suffocation'

She is not alone in fearing that the small inroads made in women's rights may disappear in urban centers young people have grown up listening to music, watching television, and more recently accessing the internet and social media. Many have only seen the Taliban on the news. Sadat, who has been writing stories, poems and plays since she was a little girl, recalls how her life ground to a halt

in 1996 as the Taliban rolled in.

Schools closed, women were confined to their homes, the televisions and radios stopped playing. A precocious teenager she continued to write indoors, and read books on directing from her father's collection. She was allowed to work as a nurse as women could only get female medical help, and even set up clandestine cultural performances of her plays in the hospital, even though the head of it was linked to the Taliban. "It was very dangerous. I still find it hard to believe that we were able to," she says.

Her first work, "Three Dots", which tells the tale of a single mother who is forced to marry a warlord and become a drug smuggler, was penned during this period, but only made using simple equipment-once the regime changed and she could channel all the knowledge accrued from surreptitious reading, into real world creativity. This determination and persistence has defined her career, and she feels strongly that film has a social purpose. The mother-of-two explains: "I turned to cinema, when I had just come out of an era of suffocation, and had a world to express. "I strongly believe in cinema and that this is the most important art that can influence a positive

change in our society. But change cannot come overnight. The change has to come to the thoughts and minds of people."

'Refuse to be silenced'

In her twenties she set up an independent film company-Roya Film House with her sister Alka, and was awarded a scholarship to study film in South Korea. She has also written television dramas for prominent media firm Moby Group. Her stories are the stories of Afghan women. From the outset of her career she has faced questions from her family and criticisms from the community, but she argues that when locals come to see her work-they understand.

Her 2017 film "A Letter to the President" shows a woman slapping back at her violent husband when he hits her, before accidentally killing him. Sadat depicted an act of female rebellion in a country where women are often forced to stay in abusive marriages, but recalls how she expected a "bad reaction" because of the taboos surrounding female behavior. Instead the audience applauded during the slap scene.

Her work is not without risks

Cinema remains contentious in parts of the

country, and her productions, which shine a light on female inequality and repression, controversial. Hailed by the US for "refusing to be silenced" in the face of threats from conservatives, she was given the International Woman of Courage Award in 2017. She's committed to supporting the next generation of female filmmakers: the latest edition of her International Women's Film Festival in Herat, which first launched in 2013, received more than 2,500 submissions.

She remains hopeful that she can continue to challenge and speak for Afghans, arguing that film is uniquely placed to change hearts and minds. She explains: "Cinema can challenge inequality and injustice, it can turn social taboos into discourse, and it can invite people to dialogue. She adds: "Our people need to criticize themselves, to talk about things that are forbidden. I believe that this society needs a revolution of thought and this cannot be done except with the help of cinema."—AFP

To play Maria Callas, **Monica Bellucci** confronts stage fright

It seems hard to believe, but Monica Bellucci—who has spent four decades in the limelight as a model and actress—says she suffers from stage fright. Now appearing on stage in Paris, incarnating opera singer Maria Callas, the Italian diva confesses experiencing pure "terror". "It is not that I was afraid of theatre, I am still afraid of theatre. I tremble," the 55-year-old told AFP. "Going on stage is almost a kind of violence that I put myself through."



In this file photo Italian actress Monica Bellucci poses during a photocall for the film "The Best Years of a Life (Les Plus Belles Annees D'Une Vie)" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

Bellucci is playing the 20th-century opera star in a month-long show entitled: "Maria Callas: Lettres et Memoirs (Maria Callas: letters and memories) at the Bouffes Parisiens theatre until March 28. Film acting, said the actress who has played in two The Matrix movies and was a Bond girl in the 2015 movie "Spectre", is less intimidating. "When one makes a film, it is as if one is protected from the outside world. With theatre, one breathes in the public and the public breathes you in. There is a direct contact..." It is also less taxing.

With theatre, said Bellucci, one's concentration must last for the duration of the show. With film, scenes are shot one by one, with rests in between. Only once, in Gaspar Noe's film "Irreversible" has she shot a scene that lasted as long as 20 min-

utes, she said. In spite of her fear, Bellucci said she was captivated by Tom Volf's project on Callas, known for her tragic love affair with the Greek billionaire Aristotle Onassis almost as much as for her captivating voice.

'Chemistry'

The biographical show draws heavily on letters and writings by Callas, collected by Volf, who has also made a movie entitled "Maria by Callas". "The letters are so beautiful... it was impossible not to see into the soul of this wonderful artist," said Bellucci. For Volf, a sort of "chemistry" occurred between Bellucci and Callas on stage. The actress, he said, "interpreted with accuracy the strength and vulnerability of the diva. With her celebrity status, Monica was able to understand the woman behind the legend." Bellucci even wears one of Callas's dresses in the play. "What is incredible is that there was no need to make a single adjustment, it was as if it was made to measure," said Volf. The glare of the spotlight is another thing the two women shared.

Callas lived with details of her personal life splashed on the world's front pages—from her legendary success to her alleged capriciousness and the heart-breaking affair with Onassis who ended up marrying Jackie Kennedy, widow of assassinated US President John F. Kennedy. "She showed this smiling public image, and behind it was hidden a woman experiencing something quite different," said Bellucci. "When one is exposed, one is at great risk. Me, I try to protect myself... It is truly important to keep your feet on the ground and to keep a distance from your (public) image," said the actress whose separation from actor Vincent Cassel after a 17-year relationship also received wide press coverage. Does she mind being described as a diva, as was Callas before her? Bellucci laughs. "One of my daughters is named Deva. It is not a negative thing, in Italian, it means someone who takes the light from the sky!"—AFP



Madonna

Injury forces **Madonna** to cancel Paris concert

Pop singer Madonna has cancelled a Sunday night concert in Paris because of an injury, the concert hall where she was due to perform announced. "We regret to inform you that tonight's Madame X concert at the Grand Rex is cancelled as a result of ongoing injuries," said a message at the venue's website. The Paris daily Le Parisien reported that Madonna had suffered torn ligaments in a knee and had struggled during Thursday's concert before bursting into tears.

The Grand Rex did not say whether the 61-year-old star would be able to perform her other shows booked there. Madonna arrived in the French capital on February 22 and was scheduled to perform at the Grand Rex until March 11. The tour started in New York in September, and after dates in the United States moved to Europe with dates in Lisbon and London. Paris is the last stop on the tour. — AFP

'Invisible Man' sees its way to top of N America box office

Enough viewers saw "The Invisible Man" this weekend to propel it to the top of the North American box office, with an estimated \$28.9 million in ticket sales, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. That result for the Friday-to-Sunday period more than justified Universal's bet on a remake of the famous H.G. Wells story—the studio spent a mere \$7 million to produce the film, which has already taken in \$20 million overseas and drawn strong reviews.

The thriller stars the visibly talented Elisabeth Moss as the ex-girlfriend of a man (British actor Oliver Jackson-Cohen) who seems to return to haunt her after supposedly committing suicide. Slipping from the top spot in its third week out was Paramount's adventure comedy "Sonic the Hedgehog," at \$16 million. Jim Carrey stars as the villainous Dr. Robotnik in the video-game-based film. In third place was 20th Century's "The Call of the Wild," starring Harrison Ford, at \$13.2 million.

The story is loosely based on the Jack London classic, set in the wilds of Alaska and Canada's Klondike region.

Fourth spot went to a new Japanese manga film, "My Hero Academia," from Funimation, at \$5.1 million. It tells the story of a young boy, often bullied, who finds his way into a prestigious high school for superheroes-in-training. And in fifth, still strong in its seventh week out, was Sony's "Bad Boys for Life," at \$4.3 million. The action comedy, starring Will Smith and Martin Lawrence, has passed the \$400 million mark worldwide.

Rounding out the top 10 were:

"Birds of Prey" (\$4.1 million)
"Impractical Jokers: The Movie" (\$3.5 million)
"1917" (\$2.7 million)
"Brahms: The Boy II" (\$2.6 million)
"Fantasy Island" (\$2.3 million)—AFP



(From left) Michael Dorman, Aldis Hodge, Elisabeth Moss, Oliver Jackson-Cohen, and Storm Reid attend the Premiere of Universal Pictures' "The Invisible Man" at TCL Chinese Theatre. — AFP



Thom Yorke

Thom Yorke announces rare solo acoustic set at All Points East

Thom Yorke is set to play a rare solo acoustic set at All Points East. The 'Creep' hitmaker will be treating fans to stripped-back renditions of his band Radiohead's biggest hits and his solo material - including tracks from his recent third solo album 'ANIMA' - from the comfort of his piano for the very first time on his own at the Victoria Park festival in east London, where he'll be supporting Massive Attack on May 24. The dance group - comprised of Robert '3D' Del Naja and Grant 'Daddy G' Marshall - who curated the line-up have been mates with

Thom and his bandmates since the 90s'.

Massive Attack also chose the likes of Nils Frahm, Young Fathers, Neneh Cherry, GAIKA and Skinny Pelmbe to join them on their day. Thom's addition comes after Bombay Bicycle Club were announced as the headliners for May 22, when they will be joined by the likes of Everything Everything, Nadine Shah, Lianne La Havas, Loyle Carner, The Orielles and Gengahr. The Ivor Novello-winners have curated a line-up with something for everyone and teased more artists will be unveiled shortly. They tweeted last week:

"London, big news! "We're excited to say we'll be headlining @allpointseastuk on May 22nd. "We've had a great time working with the festival to put together a line up of artists we love, with more names to be announced very soon. Hopefully there's something here for everyone."

The 'Always Like This' group reunited in 2019, following a four-year hiatus, to release their acclaimed LP 'Everything Else Has Gone Wrong'. Bombay's headline slot comes after the band hinted that they will play at Glastonbury this year. When quizzed by a fan about the possibility of

them playing at Michael and Emily Eavis' world famous festival at Worthy Farm for a fifth time by a fan, the group - Jack Steadman, Jamie MacColl, Suren de Saram and Ed Nash - replied: "Working on it." All Points East 2020 - which takes place between May 22 and May 31 - will also see headline performances from the likes of Massive Attack, The Kooks, Kraftwerk, Tame Impala, and The Wombats. —BangShowbiz



Models present creations by Stella McCartney at the end of the Women's Fall-Winter 2020-2021 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show in Paris yesterday.

‘CALL ME STUPID BUT I BELIEVE I CAN CHANGE’ FASHION GIANT, SAYS STELLA MCCARTNEY



Stella McCartney pledged yesterday to try to change the world's biggest luxury fashion group from within after LVMH took a stake in her label, one of the most sustainable in the world. The British designer made a spirited defense of her decision to become "personal sustainability adviser" to LVMH owner Bernard Arnault, who regularly swaps places with Amazon boss Jeff Bezos at the top of the list of the world's richest men.

"My mum (the late animal rights activist Linda McCartney) used to say infiltrate from within," McCartney told AFP hours before her Paris fashion week show, which featured lots of vegan leather and a menagerie of furry-costumed animals who skins are used in fashion. And she batted away fears that Arnault was using her for window dressing after he dismissed teenage Swedish activist Greta Thunberg as not "offering anything other than criticism". "Call me stupid. I hope I am right," McCartney said, after inviting Christiana Figueres, the former UN climate chief who was engineered the Paris agreement, to meet a group of fashion movers and shakers on the eve of her show. "I choose to believe that I can make change, that I can show them a

great example of a different way of doing business," McCartney said.

'I won't let it go'

"If my business is healthy-which I need it to be to shout to them that this can be the future of fashion-then I believe they are not going to sit back and ignore me," she added. LVMH "saw the quality of products I was making and they compared it to the quality being made by all the other brands that are killing millions of animals and the environment, and they said, 'Hey this looks the same,'" McCartney said. But the designer-the daughter of Beatle Paul McCartney-did not defend LVMH's decision not to sign the "Fashion Pact" on fighting climate change at the G7 summit in France last year, which was championed by its main rival, Kering.

LVMH, whose huge stable of labels includes Dior, Louis Vuitton and Givenchy, is seen as lagging behind Kering, which owned half of McCartney's brand until she bought them out last year. "I think it sends out a huge positive message that Mr Arnault has invested in a house that is this sustainable and has this kind of conversation the night before its show. "He is not



Models present creations by Givenchy during the Women's Fall-Winter 2020-2021 Ready-to-Wear collection fashion show at the ParisLongchamp Racecourse in Paris.— AFP photos

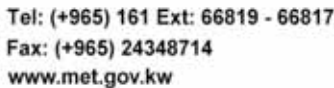
here telling me I can't do this. He is fully behind it," McCartney insisted. "I am his personal adviser on sustainability... and I am hugely passionate about it. I am not going to let it go. We will see what I can do, but my intention is to do something.

'Let's make change'

"Let's make change," she declared. Asked if getting into bed with Arnault-once dubbed "the wolf in a cashmere coat"-wasn't risky for her brand, McCartney hit back that she "might have a few fleas myself-but they are good ones that I am taking into another dog house." "I also showed them a business model that was healthy and was making change and that was accepted and that was beautiful," she added.

The British creator has built up a formidable reputation for producing classy and wearable clothes that are ethically produced, pioneering recycled wool and new vegan materials to replace leather and fur. The climate message has been omnipresent in Paris fashion week LVMH brand Dior festooning its show with neon slogans such as "Patriarchy = CO2" and "Patriarchy = climate emergency" that might make uncomfortable reading for its owner.—AFP

Tuesday, March 3, 2020



BY NIGHT: Rather cold with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 32 km/h .

BY DAY: Warm with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 42 km/h .

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	29 °C
MIN. Temp.	15 °C
MAX. RH	93 %
MIN. RH	19 %
MAX. Wind	S 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm



Arrival Flights on Tuesday 3/3/2020				Departure Flights on Tuesday 3/3/2020				Arrival Flights on Tuesday 3/3/2020				Departure Flights on Tuesday 3/3/2020					
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	QTR	KAC	1078	Doha	13:35	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	JZR	MEA	231	Dammam	12:35
SGL	9031	IOA	00:01	UAE	877	614	Bahrain	13:50	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	JZR	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	FDB	059	877	Dubai	14:10	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	JZR	115	Doha	13:00	
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	KAC	672	059	Dubai	14:20	SVA	503	Jeddah	00:05	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00	
JZR	716	Sohag	00:35	KAC	742	672	Dubai	14:25	JZR	215	Jeddah	00:05	GFA	210	Bahrain	13:05	
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	GFA	221	742	Dammam	14:35	MSC	406	Sohag	00:15	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25	
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC	774	221	Bahrain	14:40	QTR	1093	Doha	00:25	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30	
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	SVA	500	774	Riyadh	14:40	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30	
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	118	500	Jeddah	14:45	JZR	409	Delhi	00:50	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40	
KAC	102	London	01:25	KAC	686	118	New York	14:50	AIC	990	Mumbai	01:10	KAC	541	Cairo	13:45	
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	KAC	292	686	Dhaka	14:55	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15	
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	KAC	618	292	Muscat	15:00	JZR	111	Doha	01:55	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15	
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KNE	529	618	Doha	15:00	KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00	
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	JZR	602	529	Jeddah	15:10	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:00	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10	
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	ETD	303	602	Baku	15:10	JZR	119	Dubai	02:05	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25	
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	KAC	788	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	KAC	677	Dubai	02:10	UAE	878	Dubai	15:40	
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	JZR	222	788	Jeddah	15:25	THY	773	Istanbul	02:20	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45	
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	JZR	232	222	Riyadh	15:30	KAC	417	Manila	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50	
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	OMA	645	232	Dammam	15:30	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:30	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	562	645	Muscat	15:35	IGO	1765	Delhi	02:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	16:00	
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	UAE	857	562	Amman	15:40	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00	
JZR	724	Alexandria	02:55	JZR	732	857	Dubai	15:45	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	KAC	743	Dammam	16:20	
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	ABY	127	732	Cairo	15:50	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20	
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	JZR	212	127	Jeddah	15:55	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30	
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	FEG	241	212	Alexandria	16:25	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35	
LMU	510	Doha	04:00	QTR	1072	241	Doha	16:35	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00	ABY	128	Shanghai	16:38	
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	JZR	116	1072	Doha	16:40	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00	JZR	735	Cairo	16:50	
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:00	KAC	502	116	Beirut	16:45	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50	
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	FDB	8065	502	Dubai	16:45	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:25	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:55	
PGT	7242	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	5												

Sanctions-hit Iran struggles to produce cancer drugs

KARAJ, Iran: A lab-coated technician leans over a bioreactor at an Iranian pharmaceutical plant producing cancer drugs - a tall order since equipment imports fell victim to US sanctions. A huge corridor bathed in artificial light and smelling of disinfectant leads to the bioreactor room at the Actoverco factory, to which AFP was given rare access. Six hundred people run production lines at the facility in an industrial district of Karaj, some 40 km northwest of Tehran.

Technicians wear scrubs, face masks, gloves and surgical caps as they work. In the bioreactor, cells are multiplied then transferred to tanks for use as cultures to produce medication. "Much of the equipment that we are using either in production or in laboratory, they are considered as dual-use and they are sanctioned," said plant manager Reza Mostofi. "We have many issues at the moment. Because of the sanctions, usually we can't either transfer the money or the supplier is not willing to sell the machinery that we need."

Production stoppage

As the new coronavirus spreads in Iran, many people have struggled to find medicine - an issue linked to sanctions reinstated by the United States in 2018 after it withdrew from a landmark nuclear deal. In retaliation, the Islamic republic has gradually reduced its commitments to the deal since May 2019. On paper, humanitarian items are exempt from US sanctions, but in reality banks tend to decline transactions involving Iran to avoid being exposed to potential litigation. "The equipment that we are using, the spare parts and everything, now we have a big issue for repairing the

spare parts that are needed," said Mostofi.

For the past six months, he said, the plant has been unable to produce a drug that is essential for treating leukaemia. "For some time we have not been able to import the ingredients of this material, so our line... is now stopped," said the English-speaking manager. The company hopes to produce the active ingredient itself, with a "very big" bioreactor, but it faces almost insurmountable difficulties because of the sanctions.

Iran's health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour voiced concern about the situation. "Regarding cancer patients, we had no problem because we are producing the medicine ourselves... (but) our companies want to renew, rebuild and replace their industrial equipment," he told AFP. According to him, there are 500,000 cancer patients in Iran, and it is the second biggest cause of death in the country, claiming 30,000 lives a year.

Actoverco, part of a family business established 40 years ago, also produces the drug interferon beta-1a, used to treat multiple sclerosis. "We cannot provide the patients as much as we want," said the company director. "I hope there would (be) a political solution for this because at the end of the day these are people who are suffering" because of medicine shortages. He also voiced concern about the new coronavirus. "Maybe next year there would be a vaccine available (in) some places, but it might not be available here," he said. "This winter we had shortages of vaccines" for flu.

With the sanctions, "work has become more and more difficult, you feel it every day", said medical physicist Maryam Yafian. The 30-year-old works at Roshana,



KARAJ, Iran: Pharmaceutical factory workers prepare drug ampoules at the Actoverco plant about 40 km west of Iran's capital Tehran on Feb 18, 2020. — AFP

private clinic that opened in Tehran three years ago and is equipped with modern facilities. She points to the difficulty of obtaining supplies including medicine and spare parts for two radiotherapy machines bought from an American company prior to the sanctions. For troubleshooting, staff at the clinic hold video conferences with Iranian technicians based abroad.

The sanctions have also caused prices to skyrocket for the clinic which is absorbing some of the increase on behalf of its patients, said its director Touraj Norouzi. In one room, mother of two Seyedeh Hosseini is receiving chemotherapy. Thanks to financial help from her brothers and father, she feels "lucky" to have been able to undergo treatment for bowel cancer with chemo drugs and an imported infusion pump.

Many patients or their relatives seek chemo treatment abroad as they do not trust the quality of local products. The director of a Tehran pharmacy, Shahrzad Shahbani, said she had sought treatment abroad at all costs for her mother, who ultimately lost her battle with cancer. Nevertheless, she said, "If I had a chemo patient right now, I would not advise them to take local drugs." — AFP

New 7-kilo gold coin unveiled to celebrate James Bond film

LONDON: Britain's Royal Mint yesterday unveiled a seven-kilogram gold coin with the highest face value in its 1,100-year history in honor of the latest James Bond film. The one-of-a-kind new coin celebrating the release next month of the 25th movie in the legendary franchise, "No Time To Die", has a face value of £7,000 (\$9,000). At 185 mm in diameter, it is also the largest coin ever made by the Royal Mint, Britain's official coin-maker.

The piece is engraved with an image of the fictional British spy's favorite car - an Aston Martin DB5 - and its famous BMT 216A number plate surrounded by a gun barrel. It is part of a collection of several coins and metal bars launched to mark the release of "No Time To Die", which premieres in London later this month. The ensemble includes gold coins weighing two kilograms, one kilogram and five ounces - with face values ranging from £10 to £2,000 - as well as a number of silver and other coins. The mint did not release the price tag for the seven-kilo gold piece, but the recommended retail price of the two-kilo coin is an eye-watering £129,990.

Meanwhile the metal bars, which will be available in gold and silver, are set to have all of the 25 official



LONDON: Royal Mint designer Laura Clancy poses with a special edition James Bond themed seven-kilogram gold coin to celebrate the upcoming release of the 25th James Bond film yesterday. — AFP

James Bond film titles engraved on them. "The design series focuses on iconic imagery from the Bond films," designers Christian Davies and Matt Dent said in a statement. "Finding the balance between design detail and what can be accomplished in production was a challenge, nowhere more so than the intricate spokes of the DB5's wheel," they added.

The latest installment of the British spy saga, due to start hitting cinemas around the world in early April, sees Bond drawn out of retirement in Jamaica by his old friend and CIA agent Felix Leiter. It is expected to be actor Daniel Craig's last outing as 007, after starring in four previous films. — AFP

Half of world's beaches could vanish by 2100

PARIS: Climate change and sea level rise are currently on track to wipe out half the world's sandy beaches by 2100, researchers warned yesterday. Even if humanity sharply reduces the fossil fuel pollution that drives global warming, more than a third of the planet's sandy shorelines could disappear by then, crippling coastal tourism in countries large and small, they reported in the journal Nature Climate Change.

"Apart from tourism, sandy beaches often act as the first line of defence from coastal storms and flooding, and without them impacts of extreme weather events

will probably be higher," lead author Michalis Voudoukas, a researcher at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, told AFP. "We have to prepare."

Some countries, such as the United States, are already planning extensive defense systems, but in most nations such massive engineering schemes will be unfeasible, unaffordable or both. Australia could be hit hardest, according to the findings, with nearly 15,000 km of white-beach coastline washed away over the next 80 years, followed by Canada, Chile and the United States. The 10 countries that stand to lose the most sandy shoreline also include Mexico, China, Russia, Argentina, India and Brazil.

Sandy beaches occupy more than a third of the global coastline, often in highly populated areas. But new construction, sea level rise, storm surge from hurricanes or typhoons, and reduced sediment from dammed rivers are all eroding these shorelines, threatening livelihoods and infrastructure. To assess how quickly and by how

5-hour workday for private school...

Continued from Page 1

hours of work from teachers daily. The circular also addressed the issue of e-learning, although an official

decision in this regard remains to be finalized by the education ministry.

Mutairi confirmed that private schools are not allowed to require students or teachers or any worker to come to school. "The period of suspension of work in schools determined by the decision of the Council of Ministers referred to March 1 to 12," he said. There are dozens of foreign private schools in Kuwait with thousands of teachers living and working in the country.

2 more weeks of school closure...

Continued from Page 1

Harbi added that extending the school suspension is up to the health ministry's assessment. "We cannot decide on our own but we are ready for any contingency," the minister underlined, noting that contracting the curriculum is not a problem, but it might affect the accreditation of certificates. "So extending the school year would be the best option," he added, noting that any teacher diagnosed with the coronavirus will be suspended until proven healed, and in case of shortages, teachers will be deputized to fill in.

An interior ministry source meanwhile said yesterday that the issuance of visas has not been suspended but massive restrictions have been ordered and a total ban on several infected countries in addition to Egypt and Syria has been imposed. The source said the ministry has imposed a total ban on visit visas on several countries including China, South Korea, Iran, Thailand, Iraq, Italy, Egypt and Syria as a way to prevent the spread of the disease. The source insisted that the issuance of visas to other nationalities has been tightened and applications are being studied on a case-by-case basis.

Only Egyptians who hold legal residencies in Kuwait are allowed to return but after being subjected to extra measures before boarding the plane in Cairo and after arriving in Kuwait. However, there has been no official confirmation by the interior ministry in this regard. MP's Saleh Ashour, Abdulkarim Al-Kandari and Yousef Al-Fadhlah called on authorities to stop suspend flights arriving from Italy and Egypt to prevent the spread of the disease.

Civil aviation authorities have stopped using fingerprint machines for identification and have introduced iris scans instead as a precautionary measure against the virus. The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) also temporarily closed their halls dealing with the public and resorted to online applications for all civil ID transactions. The health ministry also denied rumors that one of the 56 cases has been cured, but insisted that all the patients are in stable condition. The commerce min-

istry said that it had received a shipment of 3.6 million masks that will be distributed, some with ration cards.

The death toll from the new coronavirus epidemic surpassed 3,000 yesterday as more people died in China, Iran and the US, and Europe raised its state of alert. The virus has now infected more than 89,000, spread to over 60 countries and threatens to cause a global economic slowdown - after first emerging in China late last year. With fears of a pandemic on the rise, the World Health Organization urged all countries to stock up on critical care ventilators to treat patients with severe symptoms.

WHO yesterday sent its first planeload of assistance to help fight coronavirus in Iran, the second-worst hit country after China, as the death toll rose by 12 to 66 in the Islamic republic. Iran's confirmed cases leapt by 523 from the previous day to 1,501, said Deputy Health Minister Alireza Raisi. US President Donald Trump had Saturday offered that "if we can help the Iranians with this problem, we are certainly willing to do so... All they have to do is ask".

Tehran yesterday however rejected the offer from Trump - who has heaped sanctions and a campaign of "maximum pressure" on Iran - charging he had made it "for propaganda purposes". "We are suspicious of the intentions of the Americans and do not count on this aid," said foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Moussavi, as quoted by the official agency IRNA.

China's foreign ministry said an expert team from the Chinese Red Cross had arrived yesterday in Tehran "to provide what assistance it can in terms of epidemic prevention and control and medical relief". The WHO meanwhile dispatched six medics with tons of medical equipment and test kits aboard a UAE military aircraft to Iran's capital, where it arrived later yesterday. The six-member medical team is made up of doctors, epidemiologists and laboratory specialists to help the Islamic republic detect and control the virus, the first WHO team to be sent to Iran since the crisis began.

The UAE provided the military transport plane for the flight to Tehran despite having downgraded its relations with the Islamic republic amid fierce rivalry between Iran and regional power Saudi Arabia. "Aid should reach all people regardless of their background," Sultan Mohammed Al Shamsi, the UAE's undersecretary

for humanitarian affairs, said at Dubai's Al Maktoum International Airport.

Iran's IRNA agency meanwhile reported the death of Mohammad Mir mohammadi, 72, a member of the Expediency Council which advises the supreme leader. It did not specify the cause of death but said he had died at Tehran's Massih Danechvari Hospital, the capital's main center for patients suffering from the new coronavirus.

Saudi Arabia yesterday announced its first case of the new coronavirus, a Saudi national returning from Iran through Bahrain, the health ministry said. The ministry said on its official Twitter account that the individual, who is in quarantine in hospital, had not disclosed his visit to Iran when entering Saudi Arabia. The official Saudi Press Agency, citing the health ministry, said people who had interacted with the infected man had been isolated and were being tested.

Qatar's health ministry said yesterday that medical tests had revealed four new cases of coronavirus infection in the country, state news agency QNA said in a tweet. Two Qatari citizens, and two domestic workers who were accompanying them in travel, were diagnosed with COVID-19, the ministry was quoted as saying. They were among a group of citizens who were evacuated by the government on a private plane from Iran on Feb 27, the ministry said.

Egypt yesterday reported its second case of novel coronavirus, more than two weeks after announcing the first confirmed infection in Africa. The foreigner is showing "minor symptoms" and has been quarantined, the ministry and the WHO said in a joint statement. Other people who had contact with the patient are undergoing medical tests, it added. Cairo has been cooperating with French and Canadian authorities after they both announced seven confirmed cases of the virus from travellers coming from Egypt.

With the number of cases rising in the Gulf, Qatar imposed a temporary ban on visitors coming from Egypt via transit points on Sunday citing the spread of COVID-19. Kuwait stopped short of a flight restriction but added extra screening measures for travellers boarding their flights from Egypt.

Egyptian Health Minister Hala Zayed travelled to China yesterday amid mounting criticisms and satirical

posts on social media of her ministry's handling of the outbreak. At a news conference at Cairo airport, she praised Beijing's efforts to contain the spread of the virus. That same evening, Egypt projected the Chinese flag in solidarity with Beijing on some of its most historical monuments.

Jordan said yesterday a man who had flown in from Italy had tested positive for the new coronavirus, the first case confirmed in the country, state news agency Petra reported. The Jordanian citizen had flown back nearly two weeks ago on a plane with around 100 passengers, health minister Saad Jaber told a news conference. The man was quarantined at his home with strict controls on his movement and was in "stable" condition, Jaber said. Another Jordanian was under close observation, the minister added.

An Italian national tested positive for coronavirus in the western Indian state of Rajasthan, a major tourist destination, a hospital official said yesterday, taking the number of people who have tested positive in the country to six. The patient had initially tested negative for the virus but a second test came out positive, a hospital official in Rajasthan's capital city of Jaipur told Reuters. "The patient has been moved to an isolation ward," the official said, adding that a third test would be conducted.

Separately yesterday, the Indian government said two other people had tested positive for the coronavirus. The news hammered already rocky stock markets. One of the new cases was detected in the capital, New Delhi, while the other was in the southern state of Telangana, the government said in a statement. The New Delhi patient had been in Italy and the one in Telangana had been in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, the government said; both were stable and being closely monitored.

In Jaipur, the hospital official said that at least 15 doctors, staff and patients who may have come into contact with the Italian patient would be tested. Meanwhile, the three other patients who had tested positive for coronavirus in India have all been discharged from hospital, and were in quarantine in their homes, the government in Kerala state said last week. All three had returned from Wuhan, the Chinese city at the epicenter of the outbreak.

Sports

Olympic events with no fans possible, says British Cycling performance director

Sporting events hit hard across the globe by coronavirus fears

LONDON: British Cycling's performance director Stephen Park has raised the possibility of some Olympic events taking place without spectators if the coronavirus crisis does not subside.

Park, who joined British Cycling in 2016, remains confident that the Games will go ahead, but says it could be 'different'.

"You would struggle to find a day when the Olympics didn't take part for any reason. But will it mean that they might be different? Possibly," he told reporters.

"Look, at the World Cup (Finals) skiing in two weeks time in Cortina, they are doing it on a closed circuit with no fans. And that's going to an area that doesn't currently have infections.

"So might there be some of those things that happen (at the Olympics)? Possibly."

Sporting events have been hit hard across the globe by coronavirus fears, especially in Asia with this month's Thai Moto GP race the latest to be cancelled.

The Tokyo Marathon held at the weekend had a much-reduced field and few fans showed up to watch.

Cycling was also effected last week when the UAE Tour was cancelled with two stages remaining after two Italian team members were suspected of having tested positive for coronavirus.

Denmark's Michael Morkov was forced to self-isolate when he arrived at the Berlin world track championships last week, having taken part in the UAE race.

Morkov was eventually cleared to race, winning a gold medal in the madison.

Park said British Cycling were well-equipped to avoid any possible coronavirus infections with the national velodrome's changing rooms in Manchester getting a deep clean last week.

"We are preparing as if (the Olympics) are going to happen," he said. "That's all we can do. No point wasting our energy worrying about it, but equally we will take the right advice from the NHS and WHO in terms of making sure we can do everything we can to look after our athletes.

"We are making sure that we don't let it become a distraction or overtake the preparation. As soon as you start doing that, start thinking 'it might not happen' what are you preparing for? We are full steam ahead and expecting to be there in July, in Tokyo, having fun."

Morkov, who spent 34 hours in his hotel room before being given the all-clear, said the "whole world was waiting" to see what happens. "Big things could be cancelled, but it's out of everybody's hands," the 34-year-old said.

Norwegian rider Anita Stenberg, winner of the bronze medal in the points race in Berlin, said, given the choice, she would go to Tokyo irrespective of the coronavirus outbreak.

"So many riders have been fighting to qualify for years. If it would be cancelled it would be a shame. If they say it's my responsibility I would go anyway. I



Stephen Park

would take the risk."

Malaysia's Azizulhasni Awang, who won bronze in the men's sprint and keirin, said he was concerned.

"It's spreading into more and more countries and

getting worse in Japan and Korea," he said. "I believe the government of Japan will do something and the Games will have no problem. "I hope there's a Plan B, but I'm not sure." — Reuters

Burgan Bank continues support for fencing title holder Tareq

KUWAIT: As part of its continuous support to empowering youth and local athletes, Burgan Bank announced its latest sponsorship of Wheelchair Fencing title holder, Tareq Al-Qallaf, for the sixth consecutive year. Established as a role model among the aspiring special needs segment and young Kuwaiti athletes, Tareq Al-Qallaf will once again be representing Kuwait in the global championships that will be running throughout the year 2020.

The homegrown World Champion Tareq Al-Qallaf will kick off his global tour in several states preceded by training camps in each starting with Colorado for the Pennsylvania championship in February, followed by a week's training for the Detroit championship in March, and the Philadelphia championship in May respectively, after which he will prepare for the 'Kuwait Challenge' in November.

Burgan Bank will maintain its long-term partnership with the national athlete and continue to contribute to the champion's successful road ahead as he raises the Kuwaiti flag high on prestigious international platforms. Driven by the belief that sports plays an important part in improving the overall quality of life in the community, the sponsorship falls under Burgan Bank's CSR strate-



Tareq Al-Qallaf

gy, which places fitness and healthy living at its core.

Falling in line with its community program, 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change, Burgan Bank sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare

through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.

Mako Vunipola back in England squad for Wales clash

LONDON: England prop Mako Vunipola will be available for this weekend's Six Nations clash at home to Wales after being named in an extended 34-man training squad yesterday. Eddie Jones, the England coach, had indicated that Vunipola was unlikely to be in contention for Saturday's match against the Grand Slam champions at Twickenham after travelling to Tonga for unspecified personal reasons.

But the Saracens front row is now back at England's training base in Bagshot, southwest of London, and will compete for the loosehead prop berth with Joe Marler and Ellis Genge. Veteran coach Jones also included wing Anthony Watson and hooker Luke Cowan-Dickie in his latest training squad following a win over Ireland last time out that revived World Cup finalists England's hopes of winning this season's Six Nations.

Watson has yet to feature in this season's Championship because of a calf injury but is now fit to push for a place while Cowan-Dickie has been in and out of the squad this season, with the Exeter forward missing the victory over Scotland due to the premature birth of his son.

Yesterday saw Jack Maunder join the squad as Jones selected a third scrum-half for the first time this Six Nations in addition to Ben Youngs and Willi Heinz. Maunder won his lone England cap during the 2017 tour of Argentina and he now has a chance to force his way into a matchday 23 set to be announced by Jones on Thursday.

Meanwhile Mark Wilson, who came through last week's training camp in Oxford, is vying for a back-row place as he continues his return from a knee injury. Grand Slam-chasing France, the only unbeaten side left in this season's Championship, lead the table with three wins from as many matches.

But if they slip up in the final two rounds and England, beaten by France in their tournament opener, finish with four wins from five then Jones' men could yet take the title. — AFP

Coronavirus leaves Six Nations' fate in balance in Paris

LONDON: The future of the 2020 Six Nations Championship is set to be decided at a meeting in Paris yesterday amid fears the coronavirus could wreck this season's edition. An already scheduled World Rugby gathering in the French capital will now also see officials consider if more alterations are needed to the final two rounds of the Championship, with the March 7 meeting between Ireland and Italy in Dublin already postponed by the global COVID-19 outbreak.

No replacement date has yet been set, with the Championship scheduled to conclude with matches involving all six teams on March 14. The Irish Rugby Football Union postponed their match against Italy following consultations with Simon Harris, Ireland's health minister.

Harris had expressed his misgivings about the game going ahead due to deaths from the new coronavirus in Italy, the European Union country that has been hit hardest by the outbreak.

Table-toppers France are the only team left in this season's Six Nations that can complete a Grand Slam. But even if they win their remaining fixtures, away to Scotland this coming weekend and at home to Ireland on March 14 to put the destiny of the title beyond doubt, administrators will still want the Ireland-Italy match, and any other postponed fixtures, to be played rather than called off completely.

The IRFU could lose an estimated 10 million euros (£8.6 million) in revenue if the Italy match is not played. And with the window for earning ranking points ahead of the draw for the 2023 World Cup in France closing in November, there is a further incentive beyond purely financial concerns to play any held over matches.

There is a precedent for rescheduling Six Nations fixtures due to health concerns. In 2001, due to the highly contagious livestock foot and mouth outbreak, Ireland had three matches (against Scotland, Wales and England) rescheduled to September/October of that year.

At the time of the postponements, England were one win away from the Grand Slam but lost 20-14 to Ireland when their delayed fixture was eventually played in Dublin, although they did still win the title despite that defeat.

'MOMENTUM'

Former utility back Austin Healey, a member of that England side, said he feared France could suffer a similar fate after the gap between the initial four matches and the delayed fixture in October "undoubtedly cost us the chance of a Slam".

"When you are playing in the Six Nations, you become a really tight-knit group and get on a roll, gaining momentum," wrote Healey in a recent Daily Telegraph column. "Then you disband for a few months and have to get everybody back together for almost a reunion tour."

But rescheduling matches is now an even harder task, given how much more congested the rugby union calendar has become in the intervening 19 years.

For example, every weekend between now and mid-July features existing club matches across European leagues or already scheduled internationals. The first weekend without matches in the English Premiership or the Pro14, the former Celtic League, is June 27.

But that is when summer tours begin, with England meant to travelling to Japan that day, and Ireland to Australia. Premiership Rugby Limited has an agreement with the Rugby Football Union to release England players for any reschedule international fixtures, but that does not apply to representatives of other nations.

Sergio Parisse saw his planned farewell to Test rugby wrecked last year when Italy's final pool game of the World Cup in Japan was cancelled as a result of Super Typhoon Hagibis.

That led the 36-year-old, a veteran of 142 Tests, to target the Six Nations match against England in Rome on March 14 as a new date for his swansong, even though the Toulon back row, arguably Italy's greatest player, has yet to feature in this season's Championship.

The last time the tournament failed to be completed was in 1972, when Scotland and Wales refused to travel to Ireland for matches in the then Five Nations, because they feared they would be a target for terror-group violence. — AFP

Thailand MotoGP postponed as virus wrecks start

BANGKOK: Thailand's MotoGP was postponed over the new coronavirus yesterday as motorcycling's premier championship took its second hit in two days from the deadly outbreak. A day after the season-opening Qatar MotoGP was axed, Thailand organisers postponed the March 20-22 race in Buriram without setting a new date.

"I don't say it's cancelled. I just say it is postponed until time allows us to do (the event)," Anutin Charnvirakul, chairman of the Thailand MotoGP organising committee, told AFP. "It's because of the coronavirus," added Anutin, who is also Thailand's deputy prime minister and health minister.

"We need to postpone it today until further notice." The move means both of the season's first two races have been shelved. The next race on the schedule is in Austin, Texas on April 5. It could also put renewed focus on Formula One, whose season starts with the Australian Grand Prix on March 15.

The Chinese F1 Grand Prix has already been postponed, and Vietnam is due to host its inaugural race in Hanoi on April 5. However, Hanoi's mayor said last week that the city was "ready to cancel it in case of the epidemic's progression".

The virus originating from China, which has killed more than 3,000 people worldwide, has had a heavy impact on sports events, forcing a long list of postponements and cancellations.

"The committee decided to postpone the race due to the wide spread of COVID-19 around the world," Anutin said in an organising committee statement. "People who attend, racers and teams could come from at-risk countries. Thailand has to postpone for the safety of Thai people until the situation is better."

Even last week Thai MotoGP organisers were upbeat, pledging extra health measures such as temperature checks, face masks and hand sanitisers. Anutin himself had vowed "no cancellation" on Friday. But on Sunday, Thailand's health ministry said a 35-year-old Thai man passed away due to complications caused by the coronavirus. "Things change every day and it has become pandemic," Anutin told AFP yesterday.

"We have to go along with the circumstances worldwide and it (postponement) is in the best interests of the nation as well as the participants." MotoGP's official website confirmed the postponement yesterday afternoon.

"FIM (the International Motorcycling Federation), IRTA (International Road-Racing Teams Association) and Dorna (the commercial rights holder to MotoGP) are currently evaluating if an alternative date is possible for the event later this season," MotoGP said in a statement.

World motorcycling champion Marc Marquez — who last year won his sixth MotoGP world title in Buriram's event — tweeted: "I hope to see all the Thai fans soon!" As the coronavirus has spread, Italy has become the hardest-hit European country with 34 deaths and more than 1,600 confirmed cases. Italian drivers play a "vital role in the championship", said the international motorcycling federation on Sunday following the cancellation of the race in Qatar, which is restricting arrivals from Italy.

Six riders in the elite class are Italian, including seven-time world champion Valentino Rossi as well as 2019 runner-up Andrea Dovizioso, while Ducati and Aprilia are leading Italian manufacturers. Thailand currently has 43 confirmed cases of COVID-19. The bulk of those infected are Chinese tourists or Thais who have come into contact with travellers. — AFP

Sports

Captain Kohli anger as India ‘completely outplayed’ in N Zealand Test clean-sweep

‘We were not positive enough, we were not brave enough’

CHRISTCHURCH: Frustrated India captain Virat Kohli criticised his team and sparred with a journalist as New Zealand won the second Test inside three days to sweep the series yesterday. Home skipper Kane Williamson celebrated “an outstanding performance” as New Zealand, who won the first Test by 10 wickets, claimed the second by seven wickets to wrap it up 2-0.

But it left Kohli, who was caught making a foul-mouthed outburst to the crowd during day two, disappointed with his top-ranked side. “We were completely outplayed in this series, and obviously did not play the kind of cricket that we do play as a team,” Kohli said.

“We were not positive enough, we were not brave enough.” The irritation was clear from the current holder of the “spirit of cricket” award as he lost his world number one batting ranking following a string of low scores.

Kohli gave Williamson a very animated send-off in

the first innings and he was caught on camera yelling an obscenity at a group of New Zealand supporters on Sunday. But he refused to answer questions about his behaviour after the Test.

“What do you think?” he fired back at a journalist, when asked if it was appropriate conduct. “If you want to create controversy this is not the right place to be. I spoke with the match referee and he had no issues with what happened.”

In the two Tests, on traditional New Zealand green wickets, India managed scores of 165, 191, 242 and 124, reflecting Kohli's low contributions of 2, 19, 3 and 14. New Zealand are now unbeaten in their last 13 home Tests, winning nine of them, and in the past decade their record as hosts is played 39, won 20, drawn 13 and lost five.

India started the day at 90 for six and were all out for 124, before New Zealand chased down the required 132 to win for the loss of three wickets in 36 overs.



CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand pose for a photo after beating India 2-0 in the Test series on day three of the second Test cricket match between New Zealand and India at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD			
Final scoreboard after the second Test between New Zealand and India ended in Christchurch yesterday:			
India 1st innings 242 (Vihari 55, Shaw 54, Pujara 54; Jamieson 5-45)			
New Zealand 1st innings 235 (Latham 52, Jamieson 49; Shami 4-81, Bumrah 3-62)			
India 2nd innings (overnight 90-6)			
P. Shaw c Latham b Southee	14	New Zealand 2nd innings	
M. Agarwal lbw Boult	3	T. Latham c Pant b Yadav	52
C. Pujara b Boult	24	T. Blundell b Bumrah	55
V. Kohli lbw de Grandhomme	14	K. Williamson c Rahane b Bumrah	5
A. Rahane b Wagner	9	R. Taylor not out	5
U. Yadav b Boult	1	H. Nicholls not out	5
H. Vihari c Watling b Southee	9	Extras: (b1, lb8, nb1)	10
R. Pant c Watling b Boult	4	Total: (three wickets, 36 overs)	132
R. Jadeja not out	16	Fall of wicket: 1-103 (Latham), 2-112 (Williamson), 3-121 (Blundell)	
M. Shami c Blundell b Southee	5	Bowling: Bumrah 13-2-39-2, Yadav 14-3-45-1, Shami 3-1-11-0,	
J. Bumrah run out (Boult/Williamson)	4	Jadeja 5-0-24-0 (Inb), Kohli 1-0-4-0	
Extras: (b9, lb12)	21	Result: New Zealand won by seven wickets	
Total: (all out, 46 overs)	124	Series: New Zealand won two-match series 2-0.	
Fall of wickets: 1-8 (Agarwal), 2-26 (Shaw), 3-51 (Kohli), 4-72 (Rahane), 5-84 (Pujara), 6-89 (Yadav), 7-97 (Vihari), 8-97 (Pant), 9-108 (Shami), 10-124 (Bumrah)			
Bowling: Southee 11-2-36-3, Boult 14-4-28-4, Jamieson 8-4-18-0, de Grandhomme 5-3-3-1, Wagner 8-1-18-1			

Australia edge NZ to make T20 World Cup semis

MELBOURNE: A stylish 60 from Beth Mooney and controlled bowling yesterday kept intact Australia's record of making at least the semi-finals of every Twenty20 World Cup in a nail-biting four-run win over New Zealand.

The defending champions and four-time winners join India, England and South Africa in the last four, with the games played in Sydney on Thursday. Australia have been dominant since the World Cup was introduced 11 years ago, but were upset by India in the opening game of the tournament.

Rattled, they bounced back emphatically against Sri Lanka and Bangladesh before narrowly accounting for their trans-Tasman rivals, who leave the World Cup empty-handed. The White Ferns won the toss and bowled at Junction Oval in Melbourne, snaring an early breakthrough. But Australia has incredible depth in its batting and Mooney led them to a competitive 155 for five.

Skipper Sophie Devine (31) and Katey Martin (37) led the chase, but Australia's bowlers were up to the task, with spinner Georgia Wareham taking three crucial wickets. “It was a crunch game and I thought we handled it really well,” said skipper Meg Lanning. “I think we showed that we are able to be calm under the pump, we have done the



MELBOURNE: Australia's Ellyse Perry (L) is stumped by New Zealand wicketkeeper Rachel Priest (R) during the Twenty20 women's World Cup cricket match between Australia and New Zealand in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Women's T20 World Cup tables					
Tables from the T20 women's cricket World Cup in Australia after yesterday's matches (played, won, lost, tied, points). The top two from each group advance to the knockout stage. * denotes qualified:					
Group A					
*India	4	4	0	0	8
*Australia	4	3	1	0	6
New Zealand	4	2	2	0	4
Sri Lanka	4	1	3	0	2
Bangladesh	4	0	4	0	0
Group B					
*England	4	3	1	0	6
*South Africa	3	3	0	0	6
West Indies	3	1	2	0	2
Pakistan	3	1	2	0	2
Thailand	3	0	3	0	0

Du Plessis back for S Africa's tour to India

JOHANNESBURG: Former captain Faf du Plessis will return to South Africa's one-day international squad for a three-match tour of India later this month. Du Plessis and fellow batsman Rassie van der Dussen were rested for a current series against Australia but both were named in a 15-man squad announced by Cricket South Africa yesterday.

Orthodox left-arm spinner George Linde,

basics right which gives us confidence going into the semi-finals.”

One worry for Australia is the fitness of the world's top T20 all rounder Ellyse Perry, who limped off while fielding, seemingly with a hamstring problem. New Zealand removed the dangerous Alyssa Healy cheaply with Lanning joining Mooney, but after an attacking 21 she was caught off Anna Peterson's bowling.

Ashleigh Gardner (20) shared in a quickfire 52-run stand with Mooney, who brought up her fifth half-century in nine innings off 42 balls. Playing in her 50th T20, Moody finally departed for 60, but it needed a spectacular catch on the boundary from Suzie Bates to remove her.

Perry (21) and Rachael Haynes (19) added crucial late runs to power the score past 150. Rachel Priest looked dangerous as New Zealand set about the chase, hitting quick three fours, but she was undone by Jess Jonassen.

Australia piled pressure on when Wareham snared the world's number one T20 batswoman Bates for 14, leaving them in trouble on 55 for two at the halfway mark. Devine knew she had to take risks and after reaching 31 charged down the wicket to Wareham and was stumped.

Maddy Green took on the attack in a lightning 28 but Wareham again pounced, with her wickets proving vital as New Zealand fell short.

A LEGEND
Earlier, Sri Lanka ended their tournament

on a high with a crushing victory over Bangladesh in a fitting farewell to retiring veteran Shashikala Siriwardena, who bagged a tournament-best 4-16. The clinical nine-wicket win was their first of the event to leave them fourth in Group A, with Bangladesh beaten in all four games to prop up the table.

While neither team could reach the knock-outs, there was plenty at stake with the winner avoiding having to qualify for the 2022 tournament in South Africa by virtue of finishing as one of the top eight sides.

“Really happy with the performance,” said Sri Lanka captain Chamari Atapattu, who paid tribute to Siriwardena. “She’s a legend in Sri Lanka and she’s the big sister of the Sri Lankan team. I will miss her a lot, but she retired like a champion.”

Bangladesh won the toss but again failed to fire. None of their players managed a half-century during the tournament, with Nigar Sultana Joty once more the standout, smacking 39 in their 91 for eight.

Siriwardena was the top bowler in her last match after a 17-year international career. Sri Lanka made a good start with Atapattu crunching 30 before being stumped. Fellow opener Hasini Perera (39 not out) and Anushka Sanjeevani (16 not out) kept the momentum going to cruise home with 27 balls left. —AFP

selected to put their hands up and show what they are capable of in the tough playing conditions of India,” the statement said. The South African squad will leave for India following the third and final one-day international against Australia in Potchefstroom on Saturday. The first match in India will be played in Dharamsala on March 12. The second and third matches will be in Lucknow on March 15 and Kolkata on March 18.

SOUTH AFRICA SQUAD:
Quinton de Kock (captain, wkt), Temba Bavuma, Faf du Plessis, Beuran Hendricks, Heinrich Klaasen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Andile Phehlukwayo, Lutho Sipamla, Jon-Jon Smuts, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne. — AFP

Flyers beat Rangers for 6th straight win

NEW YORK: Travis Konecny and Derek Grant each recorded a goal and an assist as the Philadelphia Flyers extended their winning streak to a season-high six games with a 5-3 victory over the host New York Rangers on Sunday afternoon. The Flyers tied a season high with three power-play goals and added a short-handed tally en route to their ninth win in the past 10 meetings with the Rangers. Philadelphia also improved to 16-5-1 in its last 22 games and remained three points behind Washington for the lead in the Metropolitan Division. Philadelphia's Matt Niskanen and Sean Couturier scored power-play goals in the first period, while Michael Raffl scored a short-handed marker. Grant scored the Flyers' only even-strength goal, and Konecny added the third power-play goal. New York's Henrik Lundqvist made his first start since Feb. 3 and allowed five goals on 26 shots, as the Rangers dropped consecutive games for the first time since Jan. 19-21.

CAPITALS 4, WILD 3
Alex Ovechkin tallied twice in a three-point outing to carry Washington to a win over Minnesota in St. Paul, Minn. Ovechkin, who scored twice in Washington's three-goal first period, raised his season total to 45, tying him with the Toronto Maple Leafs' Auston Matthews for the NHL's second-most. Richard Panik and Tom Wilson netted goals, and Evgeny Kuznetsov had two assists for Washington, which has won three of four and snapped a four-game road losing streak (0-4-0). Minnesota's Kevin Fiala (goal, assist) and Zach Parise produced power-play tallies, Ryan Donato also scored and Alex Stalock made 26 saves for the Wild, who opened March with a loss after going 9-4-1 last month to move into the playoff race.

BLUE JACKETS 5, CANUCKS 3
Emil Bemstrom scored the go-ahead goal on the power play with 1:37 remaining in regulation as Columbus rallied to defeat visiting Vancouver. Riley Nash, Zach Werenski and Kevin Stenlund each had a goal and an assist for the Blue Jackets, who scored four times in the final 7:21 to overcome a 3-1 deficit. Gustav Nyquist

added an empty-netter with 11 seconds to go, and Ryan Murray had two assists. Goaltender Joonas Korpisalo, making just his second start since a Dec. 29 knee injury that required surgery, stopped 36 shots. The Blue Jackets, who maintained the Eastern Conference's second and final wild-card playoff spot, snapped a two-game skid and won for just the second time in their past 12 games (2-5-5).

KINGS 4, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 1
Rookie goaltender Cal Petersen made 42 saves and Anze Kopitar scored two goals as Los Angeles snapped the franchise-record-tying eight-game winning streak of Vegas in Las Vegas. Alex Iafallo had a goal and an assist and Trevor Lewis scored a goal for Los Angeles, which won its third consecutive game. Drew Doughty and Ben Hutton each added two assists for the Kings, who improved to 6-2-1 in their past nine games. Shea Theodore scored for Pacific Division-leading Vegas, which suffered its first loss since Feb. 11, when it was blanked at Minnesota 4-0. Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 13 of 17 shots, losing for the first time in six starts. The Kings are in last place in the division.

FLAMES 3, PANTHERS 0
Cam Talbot made 38 saves, and captain Mark Giordano had three assists in his third game back from an injury absence, leading Calgary to a shutout win over Florida at Sunrise, Fla. The loss was the seventh in a row at home for Florida, tying a franchise record previously set in 2003. Johnny Gaudreau collected a goal and an assist, and Milan Lucic and defenseman T.J. Brodie also tallied for Calgary, which concluded a five-game road trip with a 3-1-1 record. It was Talbot's second shutout of the season and his first since his 44-save performance in a 6-0 romp over the Anaheim Ducks on Feb. 13.

DEVILS 3, DUCKS 0
Pavel Zacha scored two power-play goals, and Jesper Bratt had two assists as visiting New Jersey shut out Anaheim. Zacha and Bratt connected twice in almost identical plays as the Devils stopped their two-game losing streak. Nico Hischier added one goal for the Devils. Cory Schneider posted his second win and first shutout since returning to the Devils from a monthslong stint with Binghamton of the AHL. Schneider, who started the NHL season 0-6-1 before being sent to the minors, made 34 saves for his 26th career shutout. — Reuters

Sports

Real Madrid defeat Barcelona in Clasico to regain top spot in La Liga

Barcelona’s passing was slow and their lack of urgency obvious

MADRID: Real Madrid won the Clasico and might have saved their season as they ended their slump in the best way possible on Sunday by beating Barcelona 2-0 and returning to the top of La Liga. Vinicius Junior's deflected finish and a stoppage-time goal from Mariano Diaz decided a frenzied contest at the Santiago Bernabeu, where Madrid found new life after a Champions League defeat by Manchester City had left them on the brink of crisis.

“It’s been a tough week,” said Real Madrid manager Zinedine Zidane. “We talked about how we had an opportunity this weekend and we took it.” Victory put them one point clear at the top of the table and shifts focus back to Quique Setien’s Barcelona, who were outfought and, at times, outplayed.

“The reality is we lost a lot of confidence with the ball,” said Setien. “We entered a nervous spell and that’s when the goal came.” Lionel Messi’s rasping shot was saved by Real goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois in the first half but it was the Argentine’s opposing captain, Sergio Ramos, who was thrashing his arms in celebration after the final whistle.

His reaction was an indication of the importance of this victory, not only for the effect it has on the standings but on the dynamic of the title race, which had seemed to be switching firmly in favour of Barca.

OPPORTUNITY MISSED

Cristiano Ronaldo, now of Juventus, was watching from an executive box and Madrid could have done with him during a period in which they had won only one of their last five games. Zidane said on Saturday this match would not decide who lifted the trophy in May but a Barca win and a five-point gap might well have been difficult to close.

Yet from the start Barcelona seemed keener to kill the game than win it, playing for time in the hope of keeping the contest tight, when they might have been

City dominance another death knell for League Cup

LONDON: Manchester City have another piece of silverware to show for the billions invested by the club’s Abu Dhabi owners after lifting a third straight League Cup on Sunday with a 2-1 win over Aston Villa.

The legacy of Pep Guardiola’s reign in charge of the English champions is assured with this his eighth trophy of the last 11 competitions City have entered. However, the long-term future of the League Cup is less secure with pressure being applied for English football to get in line with the rest of Europe’s major leagues and lose one of its two domestic cup competitions.

Despite his success in the competition, Guardiola is even among those calling for its head. “Eliminate competitions, take out this competition,” he said last month when asked how to ease fixture congestion in between the two legs of his side’s semi-final with Manchester United. “So less games, less competitions, less teams, more quality, less quantity. People can live without

Football grinds to a halt as Bundesliga banner insults escalate

BERLIN: Games across Germany were interrupted and delayed over the weekend due to offensive banners, highlighting a growing rift between the game’s governing body and the sport’s passionate ultras.

Stadium announcers in Dortmund and Berlin threatened calling the games off unless the banners were removed, while Bayern Munich’s match at Hoffenheim finished in farcical scenes as the players from both sides kicked the ball to each other to wind the final 10 minutes off the clock.

The interruptions are broadly symbolic of a fierce debate in German football between fans of traditional clubs and those of newer teams who have been bankrolled by investors and private owners.

The protests have targeted the German Football Association (DFB) and its decision to hand down a two-year ban to Dortmund fans from travelling to the club’s games against Hoffenheim, after the Dortmund fans held up offensive banners.

The move has however only served to call fans into action over what they see as “collective punishment”. The fans won support from Cologne captain Jonas Hector after Saturday’s victory over Schalke, as he asked why should “20,000 people who have supported us for the entire 90 minutes be punished for the actions of a few?” Much of the rancour has been directed at Hoffenheim benefactor Dietmar Hopp, who has been widely criticised by fans after circumventing the league’s fan-ownership laws in order to invest more than 350 million euros (\$387 million) into the village club, bringing it into the first division in the process.

Offensive banners critical of Hopp have found their way into the stands in several fan blocks in recent weeks, including depictions of Hopp’s face in crosshairs while also calling him bad names.”

Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge stood side-by-side with Hopp during Saturday’s fixture, shaking his head and pleading with his side’s fans to remove the banners.

After the game, Rummenigge said he was “deeply ashamed” of the fans. “I apologised to him (Hopp), but there are no excuses for what the fans did.”

better off attacking their opponents’ fragility.

“The Madrid we faced in the first half was one of the worst Madrids I have faced at the Bernabeu,” said Gerard Pique. “I don’t say it as a criticism, we also have our problems, but we’ve missed an opportunity.”

There was more tension than creativity in the early stages as Fede Valverde crashed into Arthur Melo before fellow Spain full-backs Dani Carvajal and Jordi Alba were both booked after a disagreement.

Madrid had the better of the play and regularly broke at speed through Vinicius down the left but constantly they failed to make the final pass, with Isco once left with his head in his hands after Marcelo opted not to pull the ball back.

SLOW BARCA

Barcelona’s passing was slow and their lack of urgency obvious. At one point Messi bent to tie his bootlaces and re-spotted the ball before taking a corner. But the visitors also created chances as Antoine Griezmann drove over from Alba’s cutback and then Madrid had Courtois to thank for two excellent saves. First, Arthur held off Toni Kroos to go clear but his finish was blocked by teh foot of Courtois and then the Belgian palmed away Messi’s shot after he had skipped in behind Madrid’s defence.

Ramos was lucky to get away with an error that allowed Nelson Semedo to break past him while Alba risked a second yellow when he checked Valverde but referee Mateu Lahoz was unmoved. Barcelona were sloppy after half-time and Madrid should have capitalised. Instead, Isco’s header beat Marc-Andre ter Stegen but not Pique on the line and Karim Benzema volleyed over after a sloppy pass from Arturo Vidal.

Vidal was replaced by Martin Braithwaite, Barca’s emergency signing, and he sprinted in behind Marcelo twice in his first minute. But Madrid remained in the ascendancy and in the 71st minute

football for a while. It’s too much.” While City gorge on success, defeat for Villa meant their wait to win a trophy since 1996 goes on.

The League Cup is meant to offer a shot at glory for those not bestowed with the wealth to compete at the top end of the Premier League for titles. But City have won the competition for five of the past seven seasons with Chelsea and Manchester United the only other victors in that time. City’s latest success was played out among plenty of empty seats in their end of the ground for what was unquestionably not even the most important game of their week. That was Wednesday’s 2-1 win at Real Madrid in the Champions League, a result that keeps alive the club’s dream of finally winning the competition they really desire before a two-season ban from UEFA comes into force.

City’s dominance of the competition in recent times comes from a strength in depth that means they are simply too good for most opponents even when it is not their top priority. Guardiola could afford the luxury of making eight changes for what was once one of English football’s showpiece occasions.

The gulf in class still showed as Sergio Aguero, David Silva, Raheem Sterling and Fernandinho were among those restored to the City starting line-up, along with 19-year-old Phil Foden, who picked up the man-of-the-match award.

Lyon take derby honors to boost European hopes

PARIS: Lyon built on their midweek Champions League win over Juventus as Moussa Dembele’s brace gave them a 2-0 win over bitter derby rivals Saint-Etienne on Sunday, lifting them up to fifth in France’s top flight.

Former Celtic striker Dembele was left unmarked to convert a Martin Terrier free-kick delivery with his shoulder to open the scoring just before the half-hour mark. He then netted a last-gasp penalty for his 16th league goal of the campaign, sealing a win which increased the pressure on Saint-Etienne coach Claude Puel. It was a third consecutive victory in 10 days for Lyon, who have been enduring a disappointing season in Ligue 1 and are still seven points away from Rennes in third place, the last Champions League qualifying berth in France.

Rudi Garcia’s side had outfought Juventus to claim a 1-0 win against all expectation in midweek in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie. They are due to head to Italy later this month for the return leg, where they will hope to advance from a knockout tie in that competition for the first time in a decade.

Meanwhile, they now go into a French Cup semi-final at home to Paris Saint-Germain tomorrow further boosted by this result, after claiming a deserved victory against their struggling opponents.

“It is good what we are doing at the moment. We are playing good football, we are solid too, and that is three games now without conceding a goal,” Garcia told Canal Plus. “We are playing games every three days but the fatigue goes away quicker when you’re winning. Beating Juve gave the players a big confidence boost, for sure.”

‘IN DANGER’

Lyon had two further goals disallowed in the second half at the Groupama Stadium, with Lucas Tousart — who scored against Juventus — having one effort ruled out in the 64th minute for handball.

Then substitute Karl Toko-Ekambi’s strike from the edge of the area was disallowed because Dembele was standing in an offside position, blocking the goalkeep-



MADRID: Real Madrid’s French forward Karim Benzema (R) heads the ball past Barcelona’s French defender Samuel Umtiti during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid and Barcelona at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. — AFP

they took the lead.

Benzema came short and pointed right to encourage Vinicius to run in behind. Kroos found him and Vinicius’s shot deflected off the sliding Pique to beat Ter Stegen at his near post. The game opened up as Barcelona chased an equaliser. Marcelo celebrated when Messi’s surge through was stopped by Raphael

After Aguero and Rodrigo fired City into a 2-0 lead after half an hour a repeat of a 6-1 win for the visitors when the sides last met at Villa Park last month looked a distinct possibility. Mbwana Samatta’s goal just before half-time helped restore Villa’s pride and some credibility for the competition.

However, a losing battle may be on the horizon for the English Football League, who run the League Cup. Major changes to the football calendar are expected from 2024 onwards, which could include up to four more rounds of Champions League action.

France has already ditched its League Cup from next season and many of England’s biggest clubs give the impression they would shed few tears if the same happens across the Channel.

Liverpool were happy to pave Villa’s way to the final by fielding a youth team in the quarter-finals in December to avoid extra fixture congestion on their return from the Club World Cup in Qatar.

The thousands of fans who poured onto the Villa Park pitch after their dramatic semi-final victory over Leicester showed the League Cup does still have an ability to captivate and excite. However, those moments are becoming far and few between for a 60-year-old tournament struggling to find its place in the modern game where Champions and Premier League riches are king. —AFP



DECINES-CHARPIEU: Lyon’s French forward Moussa Dembele (2nd-R) kicks the ball trying to score a goal during the French L1 football match between Olympique Lyonnais (OL) and AS Saint-Etienne (ASSE) at the Groupama stadium in Decines-Charpieu, central-eastern France. — AFP

er’s view.

Lyon needed goalkeeper Anthony Lopes to save well from a Denis Bouanga free-kick and Brazilian defender Fernando Marcal to make one vital late clearance before Dembele sealed the points in stoppage time.

Timothee Kolodziejczak stopped a net-bound Toko-Ekambi shot with his arm in the box, and Dembele took the resulting penalty, scoring despite goalkeeper Jessy Moulin getting a touch. Saint-Etienne won their last meeting with Lyon in October in what was ex-Leicester City boss Puel’s first match in charge of the former European Cup finalists.

However, this was not an enjoyable return to face Lyon, the club he coached between 2008 and 2011. His current team have now taken just seven points from 13 games played since the start of December and are only two points above the relegation zone.

“We know we are in danger and we need to do much, much more,” defender Mathieu Debuchy told Canal Plus. “It is a shame to be in a situation like this.” Elsewhere on Sunday, fourth-placed Lille won 1-0 at Nantes thanks to a Benjamin Andre goal, as they moved back to within one point of Rennes. Bordeaux and Nice drew 1-1.

PSG remain 13 points ahead of Marseille at the top after easing to a 4-0 win over Dijon on Saturday despite being without the suspended Neymar. Kylian Mbappe scored twice for the capital side. Marseille won 3-2 at Nimes on Friday with Argentine striker Dario Benedetto hitting a hat-trick. — AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

ENGLAND FA CUP		
Chelsea FC v Liverpool		22:45
beIN Sports HD 2		
West Bromwich Albion v Newcastle United		23:00
beIN Sports HD 3		
Reading FC v Sheffield United		23:00
beIN Sports HD 13 EN		

Nations League draw interrupts countdown to Euro 2020

AMSTERDAM: The start of Euro 2020 is just over 100 days away, but this week Europe’s leading national teams will take some time out from their tournament preparations as the draw for the next UEFA Nations League takes place in Amsterdam.

England’s Gareth Southgate and France’s Didier Deschamps will be among the coaches from around the continent descending on the Dutch capital despite the growing concerns about the spread of the coronavirus, with the Netherlands among the many European countries to have reported cases.

European football’s governing body has said that “it is not necessary to modify anything in the planned calendar” ahead of the start of the Euro in Italy — the continent’s worst affected country — on June 12, and its Executive Committee is set to meet in Amsterdam on Monday before a Congress on Tuesday and the Nations League draw from 6pm (1700 GMT) the same day.

The show goes on, for now anyway, even as top-tier games in Italy were postponed over the weekend and France said it would ban gatherings of 5,000 people or more in an attempt to contain the spread.

The introduction of the Nations League after the last World Cup in 2018 was initially met with some scepticism, with many wondering how exactly it was possible to shoehorn yet another competition into an already crowded calendar.

However, the tournament essentially replaced meaningless friendlies with competitive games between national teams of a comparable level.

Time may have been required to get to grips with the format, but ultimately the inaugural competition proved a breath of fresh air and concluded with Cristiano Ronaldo’s Portugal hosting and winning the finals in June 2019, beating the Netherlands 1-0 in the decider.

“The intensity in the groups was really high and the idea to organise the Nations League was a perfect one,” said Dutch coach Ronald Koeman after that game. “We are looking forward to the next one.”

This summer will see Portugal defend the European Championship trophy they won in France four years ago, although they have been drawn in an extremely difficult group along with the French, the World Cup holders, and Germany.

Those three nations will all be in Nations League A but are all in separate pots, so they could again come out in the same group, with matches to be played between September and November before the finals next year.—AFP

25 Olympic events with no fans possible:
British Cycling performance director



26 Kohli anger as India 'completely
outplayed' in NZ Test clean-sweep



27 Real Madrid defeat Barcelona in
Clasico to regain top spot in La Liga



LeBron, Lakers outlast Zion, Pelicans

NEW ORLEANS: LeBron James had a triple-double as the visiting Los Angeles Lakers overcame the absence of All-Star forward Anthony Davis and defeated the New Orleans Pelicans 122-114 on Sunday night. Davis, who averaged 36 points as the Lakers won the first three meetings with his former team, sat out because of knee soreness one night after a 105-88 loss at Memphis in which L.A. had a season-low point total. James, who had 40 points in a 118-109 home victory against the Pelicans on Tuesday, finished with 34 points, 13 assists and 12 rebounds. Kyle Kuzma added 20 points, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 13, and Danny Green, Avery Bradley and Markieff Morris had 10 each. Rookie Zion Williamson led the Pelicans with a career-high 35 points, marking his 11th consecutive game with 20-plus points. Lonzo Ball scored 19, Brandon Ingram had 15 on 5-of-23 shooting, Derrick Favors had 12 points and 14 rebounds, Jrue Holiday scored 11 and Nicolo Melli added 10.

LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS 136 - PHILADELPHIA 76ERS 130

Kawhi Leonard scored 30 points, and Los Angeles rallied for a victory over visiting Philadelphia. Paul George, Montrezl Harrell and Lou Williams each scored 24 points for the Clippers, who won their fourth in a row. Williams also had eight assists, while Harrell pulled down nine rebounds. Reggie Jackson added 13 points. Shake Milton scored a career-high 39 points by making 7 of 9 3-pointers and 14 of 20 shots from the floor for the Sixers, who dropped their eighth straight on the road. Former Clipper Tobias Harris contributed 25 points, while Alec Burks added 15 points. The Sixers lost starting guard Josh

Richardson early in the second quarter to a concussion after initially terming the injury a nose contusion.

MILWAUKEE BUCKS 93 - CHARLOTTE HORNETS 85

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 41 points to go with 20 rebounds as Milwaukee defeated host Charlotte. Antetokounmpo sank 17 of 28 shots and added a team-high six assists and 18 rebounds. Brook Lopez added 16 points, and George Hill had 11 for the Bucks, who won their sixth straight. Devonte' Graham's 17 points paced the Hornets, who had a two-game winning streak snapped. Terry Rozier had 13 points, P.J. Washington scored 12, Cody Martin had 11 and Willy Hernangomez added 10 points and 13 rebounds.

DENVER NUGGETS 133 - TORONTO RAPTORS 118

Nikola Jokic had 23 points, 18 rebounds and 11 assists, Jamal Murray used a hot start to finish with 22 points, and host Denver beat Toronto. Torrey Craig had a season-high 17 points off the bench, Jerami Grant scored 16 and Gary Harris finished with 15 for the Nuggets, who had eight players score in double figures. OG Anunoby had a career-high 32 points, Norman Powell scored 24, Kyle Lowry added 17 and Pascal Siakam finished with 16 for Toronto. The Raptors have lost three straight for the first time in nearly three months.

DALLAS MAVERICKS 111 - MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES 91

Kristaps Porzingis scored 38 points, Seth Curry added 27 points, and Dallas beat Minnesota at Minneapolis. The Mavericks played without All-Star Luka Doncic, who wore

a splint on his thumb in a loss Friday at Miami. Doncic injured the thumb on Feb. 26 against San Antonio. Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 19 points, and Dorian Finney-Smith grabbed 11 rebounds for the Mavericks. D'Angelo Russell led the Timberwolves with 16 points and flirted with a triple-double, registering nine rebounds and seven assists. Russell led four Timberwolves in double figures scoring, with Malik Beasley adding 14 points, Juan Hernangomez hitting for 12 points, and Jarrett Culver adding another 12 off the bench.

SACRAMENTO KINGS 106 - DETROIT PISTONS 100

De'Aaron Fox had 23 points and seven assists as Sacramento won for the fifth time in six games by downing visiting Detroit. Buddy Hield supplied 19 points and six rebounds, and Bogdan Bogdanovic had 15 points for the Kings. Harry Giles contributed 12 points and seven rebounds, Harrison Barnes had 10 points and Alex Len powered for eight points, 13 rebounds and five blocks. Christian Wood led the Pistons, who have lost eight of their past nine games, with 20 points and 12 rebounds. Brandon Knight had 16 points and seven assists. Detroit point guard Derrick Rose left the game in the second quarter with an ankle injury. He finished with nine points.

WASHINGTON WIZARDS 124 - GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 110

Bradley Beal broke the franchise record for consecutive 25-point games with his 18th straight, a game-high 34-point performance that lifted Washington over host Golden State in San Francisco. Beal shot 10 for 24 from the field and 7 for 9 on 3-pointers for the Wizards, who are 1-1 on a four-game



NEW ORLEANS: Zion Williamson #1 of the New Orleans Pelicans dunks the ball during the game against the Los Angeles Lakers at the Smoothie King Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. — AFP

Western swing. He broke Walt Bellamy's record of 17 games, set in 1962, and also had a team-high eight assists and five steals in 35 minutes. Andrew Wiggins had a team-high 27 points for the Warriors, who were seeking their first winning streak since the last time they saw — and beat — the Wizards on Feb. 3 in Washington. — Reuters



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