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# Macron understands Muslims could be 'shocked' by cartoons

## Red lines, high stakes for Brand France in conservative Gulf

### Zain: The only company from Kuwait in Forbes' World's Best Employers list

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator operating across the Middle East and Africa, is proud to announce its categorization as the region's highest ranked telecom group and only company from Kuwait in Forbes magazine's The World's Best Employers list for 2020. The list also saw Zain ranked fourth best employer across all industries in the Middle East.

First published in 1917, the world-renowned American business magazine, Forbes, is one of the most reputable and respected names in business publishing globally, and Zain's inclusion in its list of best employers for 2020 underpins the Middle East company's professionalism on a global level.

Commenting on Zain's inclusion in Forbes' The World's Best Employers list for 2020, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Bader Al-Kharafi said: "The emergence of Zain as the leading regional telecom group and only Kuwaiti company categorized in this prestigious list highlights the institutional excellence of Zain's executive management in providing a working environment that offers the optimum atmosphere for employees to give their best and delight our customers." (See Page 8)



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron expressed understanding that cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) could shock Muslims, but said that this could never be used to justify violence, in an interview with Al-Jazeera broadcast yesterday. "I can understand that people could be shocked by the caricatures, but I will never accept that violence can be justified," he told the channel in the wake of the killing of three people inside a Nice church by a young Tunisian.

"I consider it our duty to protect our freedoms and our rights," he added. Protests erupted Friday in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Mali, Mauritania and Lebanon, the latest in a string of mass rallies denouncing France. Indonesian President Joko Widodo yesterday "strongly condemned" Macron's defense of the right to publish such cartoons. In an apparent bid to reach out to Muslims, Macron gave a long interview setting out his vision to Qatar-based Al-Jazeera, seeking to strike a softer tone.

French brands have long enjoyed prestige in the Gulf, but the country's clout in the conservative region is in jeopardy amid fury over the French president's defense of cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In Saudi Arabia, a Saudi citizen wielding a knife wounded a guard at the French consulate in the Red Sea city of Jeddah on Thursday, while in parts of the Gulf retailers and consumers have boycotted French products.

In Kuwait, 60 supermarkets have stripped French products from shelves and several travel agents have

discontinued trips to France. "We are boycotting French products to deliver an economic message, which is that the Prophet (PBUH) is a red line that cannot be crossed," said Kuwait City store manager Khaled Hussein.

Qatar's Al-Meera, a supermarket chain with a government minister as its chairman, has stopped stocking all French products. Two official sources told AFP Qatar will boycott the Paris Peace Forum due to be held Nov 11-13, though the government would not confirm such a decision had been made.

Gerd Nonneman, a professor of Gulf studies at Georgetown University in Qatar, said the long-term impact of the controversy depended on Macron's next steps. "If Macron continues to double down, then there will indeed be a longer-term reputational effect and probably a modest commercial one as well," he told AFP. "But that won't be a long-term effect - as long as Macron finds different language in the next few months."

Dozens of prominent French brands are active in the Gulf, including construction companies, retailers and luxury labels like Louis Vuitton, beloved in the wealthy region. French showpieces in the Gulf include the Louvre Abu Dhabi gallery in the United Arab Emirates, the Jean Nouvel-designed National Museum in the Qatari capital, Doha, and the under-construction Jeddah metro.

France also sells billions of euros worth of military hardware and tech to wealthy Gulf monarchies.

Continued on Page 2

### News in brief

#### Saudi rams car into Grand Mosque

RIYADH: A Saudi man rammed a car at high speed into the outer walls of Makkah's Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest site, authorities said yesterday. Guards chased the driver as he crashed through two barriers before hitting one of the southern entrances of the mosque late Friday, according to officials in the holy city and videos on social media. Makkah authorities said the man appeared to be in an "abnormal condition". — AFP

#### Qatar to charge 'violators'

DOHA: Qatar said on Friday that those responsible for invasive gynecological searches of passengers at Doha airport had been referred for prosecution over the "violations" following widespread outrage. Women on 10 Qatar Airways flights out of Doha were subject to the examinations as authorities searched for the mother of a newborn baby found abandoned in an airport bathroom on Oct 2. — AFP

#### Patients infect half of household

WASHINGTON: People who develop COVID-19 infect around half of their household members, with adults only slightly more likely than children to spread the virus, a US government study said Friday. The paper by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is the latest to attempt to quantify the household transmission rate of the disease, with previous research varying widely but generally suggesting that adults are bigger drivers than children. — AFP

#### Iran brands US 'pirates'

DUBAI: Iran accused the US on Friday of acting like the "Pirates of the Caribbean" after Washington said it had sold off 1.1 million barrels of Iranian crude oil shipments that it seized on their way to Venezuela. "The Pirates of the Caribbean openly boasting about their booty... No one civilized brags about stealing," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Twitter. — Reuters

## Mother, kids rescued from quake rubble

IZMIR, Turkey: A mother and three of her children were pulled to safety yesterday after being trapped for almost 18 hours under a building in the western Turkish city of Izmir that was flattened in a powerful earthquake. Rescuers were continuing efforts to free the woman's fourth child, as the Aegean port city's major said around 180 people remained trapped. "In the meantime, we are delighted to be hearing miracles happening as a result of diligent work by rescue teams," Mayor Tunc Soyer told television channel Fox TV.

Friday's quake killed 35 people in Turkey and two on the Greek island of Samos, officials said. It destroyed at least 20 buildings in Izmir, causing panic in the city and setting off tidal waves that slammed into coastal areas and islands. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, speaking in a televised address, said 885 people were injured, 15 of them critically.

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## Canada aims to welcome 1.2m immigrants

OTTAWA: Canada will aim to welcome 1.2 million immigrants from 2021 to 2023 to make up for a shortfall this year blamed on the pandemic, the immigration minister announced Friday. The plan calls for accepting 401,000 new permanent residents in 2021, 411,000 in 2022 and 421,000 in 2023 - an immigration rate equal to about one percent of Canada's population.

"The key to both short-term economic recovery and long-term prosperity is immigration," Immigration Minister Marco Mendicino told a news conference. Canada had expected to bring in 341,000 skilled workers, family members of Canadians and refugees this year. But because of



IZMIR: Search and rescue teams search the rubble of a collapsed building for survivors yesterday after a powerful earthquake struck Turkey's western coast and parts of Greece. — AFP

closed borders and visa offices, quarantines and few available international flights, only a fraction came.

"As with every other aspect of our lives, the pandemic has affected migration to Canada," the minister commented. The new target is about 50,000 per year higher than the previous goal. To help make up the shortfall, Mendicino said the government would offer permanent resident status to temporary foreign workers, international students and asylum claimants already in Canada.

He noted that immigrants have been "critical" to Canada's pandemic response, representing one in four healthcare workers in hospitals and elderly care homes. They also account for one-third of business owners in Canada. "Whether they've been taking care of our most vulnerable, or putting food on our tables, newcomers have played an outsized role in our response to COVID-19," he said.

Meanwhile, Canada on Friday extended a restriction on non-essential international entries until the end of November as COVID-19 cases rise, while easing quarantine rules for some cut-off Canada-

US border communities. The travel ban has been in force since mid-March, while Ottawa and Washington have a separate arrangement prohibiting non-essential travel between their two countries set to expire one week earlier.

Travellers allowed into Canada despite the ban - including essential workers, students, and spouses, children, parents or guardians of Canadian citizens - must still quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. But Public Safety Minister Bill Blair said "some practical adjustments" to the rule would be made to allow residents of a few outlier communities to cross the border to access necessities such as food and medical care without having to self-isolate after each trip.

He named specifically Campobello Island in New Brunswick; Stewart, British Columbia; Northwest Angle, Minnesota; and Hyder, Alaska - all cut off from their respective countries due to border irregularities, such as panhandles. The government will also allow exemptions for a pilot project with the province of Alberta on alternatives to quarantines. — AFP

## Local

# Kuwait Amir sends condolence cable to Turkey president on earthquake victims

## Kuwait's consul confirms safety of Kuwaitis in Turkey

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday sent a cable to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, voicing heartfelt and sincere condolences over the victims of an earthquake that rocked western Turkey and left a number of people dead or injured. In the cable, His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah

nationals in Turkey are safe following the earthquake that hit some areas southeast of Turkey. The consul, in a statement to the press, urged all Kuwaitis to be cautious and abide by the competent authorities' instructions in such cases. He expressed the consulate's readiness to provide assistance and respond to all inquiries at: 05306902097.

Kuwait's Ambassador to Turkey Ghassan Al-Zawawi had appealed to Kuwaiti nationals in Turkey to be vigilant and keep away from the areas affected by the earthquake. Zawawi affirmed the safety of all Kuwaiti citizens in Izmir city hit by the earthquake. The embassy has not received any complaints about the injury of any Kuwaiti in the

quake so far, he said. He appealed to Kuwaitis in Izmir to communicate with the embassy in emergency at: 00905331648479. Zawawi offered his sincere condolences to the Turkish people over the victims of the quake, praying to Allah to help the wounded recover rapidly. Earlier in the day, Turkish emergency and disaster department reported a 6.6-magnitude earthquake in Aegean Sea off Izmir city, west of Turkey, that led to dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries. — KUNA



### Citizens urged to avoid affected areas

Almighty to bestow mercy upon the victims and swift recovery upon those injured, and to help Turkish officials face the aftershocks of this disaster. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah voiced identical sentiments in two separate cables addressed to the Turkish president.

Kuwait's Consul General in Istanbul Mohammad Al-Mohammad has meanwhile affirmed that all Kuwaiti



**IZMIR, Turkey:** Rescuers search for survivors among the rubble of a collapsed building after a powerful earthquake struck Turkey's western coast and parts of Greece, in Izmir, on October 30, 2020. — AFP

## Macron understands Muslims could be...

Continued from Page 1

showcasing its air force at the Dubai airshow by filling the sky with a vapor trail in the colors of the French flag. The UAE and Saudi Arabia have been more muted than Kuwait and Qatar in their criticisms of France in the wake of Macron's comments.

Saudi Arabia is France's largest regional trade partner, with bilateral exchange worth €10 billion (\$11.7 billion) in 2018, while Paris' economic ties with the UAE were worth €4.5 billion, according to the latest French treasury figures. In both countries, boycott calls were confined to social media. Riyadh issued a statement criticizing "offensive cartoons of the Prophet (PBUH)", but Royal United Services Institute associate fellow Michael Stephens said there was no concrete action from the kingdom.

"The UAE and Saudi Arabia have allowed a gentle criticism from their clerical establishment, but there has been no pushback at all from the government," he said. European Council on Foreign Relations Research fellow Cinzia Bianco said the UAE was "restraining their reactions" on the cartoon issue. "It comes even easier when the target is someone they consider an ally."

H A Hellyer, nonresident scholar with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Gulf countries' actions could also be tempered in the wake of the Jeddah attack and another on the same day in Nice. "After the Nice killings on Thursday, there will be less appetite to criticize France," Hellyer said.

Bianco pointed to another way the recent controversy could further jeopardize French relations in the region if it were to drive a wedge between France and Qatar. As a result of an embargo imposed on Qatar in 2017, the kingdom has grown closer to Turkey, whose president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has denounced Macron's defense of the cartoon and joined calls for a boycott of French goods. "France's growing geopolitical hostility (to) Turkey could really harm relations between France and Turkey's closest ally in the Gulf - Qatar," said Bianco.

For three years, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain have boycotted Qatari goods, closed their airspace, and barred entry to Qataris over allegations Doha backs radical Islamist groups and Riyadh's arch-rival Iran - claims Qatar denies. In Qatar today, however, the talk of boycotts is focused on France. One resident showed AFP an illustrated cheat-sheet of 100 French brands to boycott, including Evian water and Lacoste clothes. "Offending our religion and our Prophet (PBUH) is something that you shouldn't do - I won't be buying or supporting any French brands," he said. — Agencies

## Mother, kids rescued from...

Continued from Page 1

In Izmir, the rescue work was punctuated by frequent aftershocks, of which Turkey's disaster agency recorded around 520. By yesterday afternoon search operations had been completed in eight buildings and were continuing in nine others, officials said. One resident said both her parents were still trapped. "I couldn't get any news. I couldn't get any news," the woman told Reuters, when asked about attempts to reach them.

As bulldozers removed debris from collapsed buildings while rescuers dismantled walls by hand,

Environment Minister Murat Kurum said some 100 people had been rescued so far. The first 300 of 900 tents provided for those made homeless were erected in the city. In a rare show of warmth between Turkey and Greece - caught up in a bitter dispute over energy exploration rights in the eastern Mediterranean - Erdogan and his counterpart in Athens, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, exchanged solidarity messages on Friday.

"Whatever our differences, these are times when our people need to stand together," Mitsotakis tweeted. Erdogan responded in a tweet: "Turkey, too, is always ready to help Greece heal its wounds. That two neighbors show solidarity in difficult times is more valuable than many things in life." Turkey is crossed by fault lines and is prone to earthquakes. Cooperation between the two countries after a devastating quake in 1999 led to a period of warmer ties between them. — Reuters

## In game changer, US seeks to sell F-35 jets to UAE

**WASHINGTON:** The United States has agreed to sell more than \$10 billion of top-of-the-line F-35 fighter jets to the United Arab Emirates to reward its recognition of Israel, potentially reshaping power

dynamics in the turbulent region, Congress was informed Thursday. In an informal but required notification to Congress, US President Donald Trump's administration said it had approved the sale of 50 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters - equivalent to Israel's fleet of the jets - worth an estimated \$10.4 billion, a congressional aide said.

If it goes ahead, the sale could "significantly change the military balance in the Gulf and affect Israel's military edge", said Representative Eliot Engel, a Democrat who leads the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Robert Menendez, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, voiced skepticism, saying Trump was rushing a deal without thinking through the consequences. "Claiming Israel will maintain its edge while offering Abu Dhabi the same number of these sophisticated stealth warplanes as Israel simply does not add up," Menendez said.

The United Arab Emirates - which has been increasingly assertive in the region, including in Yemen and Libya - sought the advanced warplanes as it was speaking to the United States ahead of its landmark recognition of Israel last month. The normalization - followed by similar moves by Bahrain and Sudan - was a diplomatic coup for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump, but the Jewish state has also long opposed US sales of top-end warplanes to any Arab states including Egypt and Jordan, which already have peace treaties with Israel.

Netanyahu, however, indicated last week that Israel would not object to the UAE deal after Defense Minister Benny Gantz, his uneasy coalition partner, received assurances during a trip to the Pentagon that Israel would maintain its military advantage. US Defense Secretary Mark Esper visited Israel on Thursday to follow up on ways to bolster the US ally, an undeclared nuclear power. News site Breaking Defense said Israel was seeking to preserve its edge by buying other advanced weapons including the V-22 Osprey helicopter-aircraft hybrid.

The F-35 is considered one of the world's most advanced - and most expensive - warplanes. Built by Lockheed Martin, the F-35 has stealth capability as well as high-end sensors and data-collection tools, meaning the plane can be deployed for airstrikes, air-to-air combat or intelligence gathering. A State Department official declined to confirm the UAE sale, saying that it does not comment on notifications to Congress.

The notification comes days before US elections in which Trump is trailing to Democrat Joe Biden. Congress, where the Democrats control the House of Representatives and are seen as having a substantial chance of winning the Senate, has the power to block the UAE sale. "Rushing these sales is not in anyone's interest," said Engel, a staunch supporter of Israel who was defeated by a Democratic primary challenger to his left. — AFP

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Local

# Kuwait reports 12 COVID-19 deaths, 1,260 cases in two days

Total cases reached 125,926, fatalities at 779

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MoH) announced yesterday registering 589 new COVID-19 cases during the past 24 hours, raising the tally to 125,926. MoH spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a statement to the press that six patients passed away during the same period, putting the total number of mortalities at 779. The ministry had announced earlier that 660 patients recovered during the past 24 hours, with the total number of recoveries reaching 116,862. On Friday, the ministry announced registering 671 new cases, six deaths and 727 recoveries.

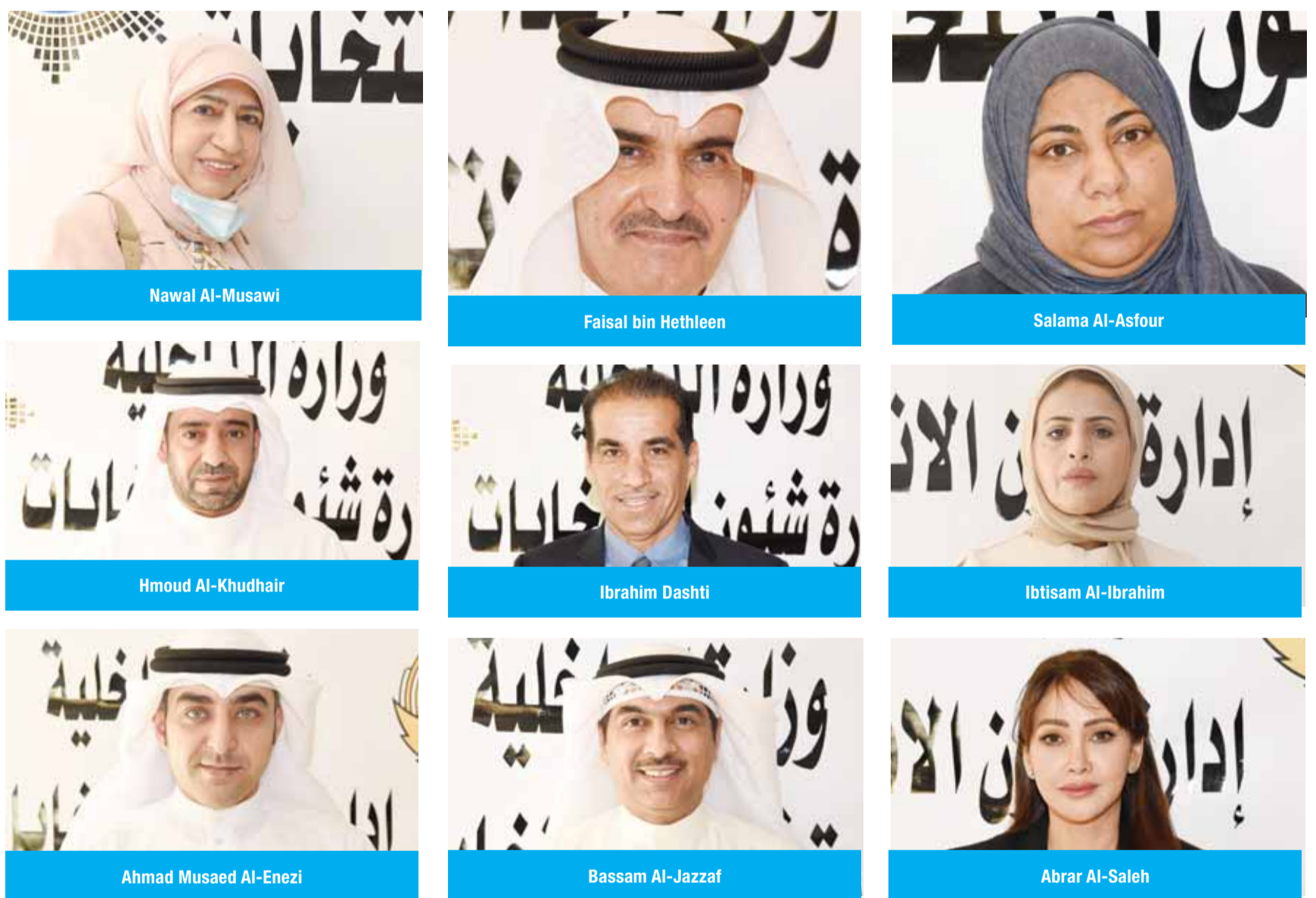
The number of patients receiving medical care at intensive care units reached 110 as of yesterday, Dr Sanad said, adding that all confirmed infection cases that continued to receive medical care reached 8,285. The number of patients in intensive care units had stood at 108 on Friday. Meanwhile, Dr Sanad revealed yesterday that 5,171 swab tests were conducted during the past 24 hours, raising the total number of tests taken in Kuwait to 916,525. A total of 6,221 tests were made on Friday. Dr Sanad appealed to the public to take all necessary precautions against the pandemic. — KUNA



## Twenty one parliament elections' candidates registered yesterday

**KUWAIT:** Twenty one candidates registered for parliament elections yesterday, raising the total number of candidates to 260, including 23 women, since registration opened last week. Three candidates filed their papers in the first constituency candidates, including Salama Al-Asfour, Nawal Al-Musawi and Bassam Al-Jazzaf. Meanwhile, candidate Ibtisam Al-Ibrahim registered in the second constituency, while Ali Al-Fadhalah, Ibrahim Dashti and Abrar Al-Saleh registered in the third constituency. In the meantime, five candidates registered in the fourth constituency, including Sayyed Hamza, Faraz Al-Daihani, Nayef Al-Rashidi, Anwar Al-Thafiri and Ahmad Mutaq Al-Enezi.

The fifth constituency had the largest number of candidates registering yesterday with nine, including Faisal bin Hethleen, Ahmad Musaed Al-Enezi, Hmoud Al-Khudhair, Khaled Al-Mutairi, Abdullah Al-Enezi, Khalaf Al-Failakawi, Yousuf Al-Majadi, Mubarak Al-Ajmi and Majed Al-Mutairi. The registration of candidates closes on November 4. Withdrawal of candidates will continue until one week before the election date set on December 5. — KUNA



## Crimes

### 13,000 expats deported

**KUWAIT:** Around 13,000 expatriates have been deported from Kuwait in the past 10 months over involvement in offences, according to a media report. Some of the deportees, who belonged to multiple nationalities, were sent home in a step dictated by protecting Kuwait's public interests, Al-Qabas newspaper reported, citing security sources that did not elaborate. Ninety percent of the deportees were expelled upon court rulings related to criminal and misdemeanor cases while the remaining 10 percent were deported in response to administrative orders, they said. There are 900 more foreign men and women who are being kept in Kuwait's deportation prison and their deportation is a "matter of time," according to the source. However, the numbers of foreigners deported so far from Kuwait are below those of the deportees over the past two years. Around 40,000 expatriates were deported last year and 34,000 in 2018, according to the same sources. The low figures of the current year are due to measures taken to curb the spread of the new coronavirus, including the suspension of global air travel.

### Passenger passes away

**KUWAIT:** A 56-year-old Bangladeshi passenger passed away at Kuwait International Airport 30 minutes before the time of his flight to Dhaka. The body was taken to the forensic department. Preliminary investigations indicate that the man died of a heart attack.

### Scoters banned

**KUWAIT:** The General Traffic Department has prohibited the use of all types of electric scooters and ATVs on public roads. Driving unlicensed motorized vehicles on the road will lead to impoundment of the vehicle for two months, the ministry explained in a statement.

**Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.**

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# Kuwaitis in Europe urged to abide by COVID-19 measures

## 'World facing toughest challenge since WWII'

**CAPITALS:** Kuwait called on its nationals in the UK on Friday to comply with government health and safety measures aimed to curb the spread of coronavirus. Kuwait's embassy in London reiterated the importance of adhering to social distancing, in a statement, alongside the need to wear facemasks in public spaces, particularly restaurants, shops and on public transport. Commitment to these measures is to protect peoples' lives and to prevent the spread of the virus, the embassy added, warning that those found not wearing a facemask could face legal charges and a fine of up to GBP 100 pounds (\$130).

Kuwaiti citizens were urged to contact the embassy consulate department's 24-hour hotline 0207-590-3400 if in need of assistance. "The UK and the rest of the world are facing their toughest challenge since WWII as COVID-19 has caused the death of more than one million people to date, according to World Health Organization (WHO) statistics," the embassy said. The British government, since mid-September, has introduced strict measures across several cities, including the likes of Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and Nottingham, in a bid to halt the spread of the disease. These consist of the prevention of convergence between different family members and the closing of restaurants, cafes, gyms and entertainment venues.

## Kuwait Amir's envoy hands letter to Saudi King

**RIYADH:** Representing His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah on Thursday evening delivered a letter from His Highness the Amir to Saudi King Salman bin

### Serbia

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Embassy in Belgrade on Friday appealed to its nationals in Serbia to stick necessarily to preventive and precautionary measures as well as instructions taken by the authorities so as to curb the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). In a statement distributed to press, the embassy said that Kuwaitis should abide by health restrictions in Serbia like wearing facemask in indoor and public areas in order to avoid deterioration in the country's health situation. Over the last days, Serbia has witnessed a noticeable rise in coronavirus infections, leading to care in hospitals and intensive care units, according to the statement. The embassy stressed the importance of being committed to WHO's instructions like keeping away from the crowded areas and staying at home as much as possible as well as others.

### Montenegro

In Montenegro, the embassy in a statement advised its citizens to abide by procedures and restrictions applied there, mainly wearing facemask and banning gatherings for more than 40 people in outdoor places and 20 persons in indoor areas. In light of the high rates of coronavirus infections, competent authorities in Montenegro have decided to impose a curfew from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am in Kolasin



**MULHOUSE, France:** Shoppers buy food at an open market in Mulhouse yesterday, on the second day of a new national lockdown in France aimed at curbing the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, caused by the novel coronavirus. — AFP

Municipality and ban visits in some areas. The embassy affirmed that it is ready to reply to all inquiries of citizens so as to provide required advice and services to ensure protecting them from the virus. It urged them to call in emergency at: 0038162259374.

### Greece

Kuwait has called on its nationals in Greece to adhere to measures issued by local health authorities aimed at curbing the spread of coronavirus. Kuwait's embassy in Athens, in a statement, also warned its citizens against leaving their homes during curfew hours. The embassy told its nationals to call (+30) 69-4301-0301 in the event of an emergency.

### France

In France, Kuwait's embassy called on its nationals to adhere to new measures aimed at curbing spiraling coronavirus rates, a day before France goes back into a nationwide lockdown. The measures announced by President Emmanuel Macron, which came into force on Friday, mean that people are only allowed out of their homes for essential purposes such as buying goods or seeking medical attention, said an embassy statement. It urged Kuwaiti citizens to fully comply with the new rules, adding that anyone in need of urgent assistance should call 0033147235425 or 0033670673834. The new nationwide lockdown, France's second in as many months, will last until at least December 1, Macron said. — KUNA

## Amir sends cable to French president on Nice attack

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Thursday sent a cable to French President Emmanuel Macron, voicing Kuwait's emphatic condemnation and denunciation of the dreadful crime in the French city of Nice, which left a number of people dead or injured. In the cable, His Highness the Amir underscored that this criminal act, which targeted innocent people, runs counter to all heavenly values and religions, and international laws and norms. Sheikh Nawaf restated Kuwait's unwavering stance that decries all forms of terrorism and extremism, while offering sincere condolences and commiserations over the victims of this odious act, and wishing mercy for the victims and a speedy recovery for those injured. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah voiced identical sentiments in two separate cables addressed to the French president.

Kuwait's Foreign Ministry had reiterated in an earlier statement the country's strong condemnation of the "brutal terrorist crime" that occurred at the French city of Nice, which witnessed the killing and injury of a number innocent people, the Foreign Ministry said on Thursday. In a statement, the ministry outlined Kuwait's "principled and firm stance against all forms of terrorism, extremism and violence, rejected by all divine religions and human values and criminalized by international laws and norms." Kuwait underlined the need to increase global efforts to reject practices that may generate hatred between peoples and fuel extremism, radicalism and terrorism. The Gulf Arab nation went on to extend its sincere condolences and commiserations to the families of the victims and wished those injured a speedy recovery. — KUNA

Abdulaziz Al Saud. The letter addresses the firm fraternal relations between both countries and peoples, ways of bolstering them in various fields, issues of mutual interest and the latest regional and international developments. The Kuwaiti envoy handed the letter to Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud. The encounter was attended by Kuwaiti Ambassador in Riyadh Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Affairs Ambassador Nasser Hajji Al-Muzain and Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's Office Counselor Ahmad Abdulrahman Shuraim. — KUNA



**RIYADH:** Foreign Minister and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah hands the letter to Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud. — KUNA

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## Oil Minister says Kuwait supports production cuts

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Oil Minister Dr Khaled Ali Al-Fadhel denied the content of an international news agency's report issued on Thursday which stated that Kuwait and other countries are debating whether they should roll over existing oil supply cuts into 2021, as they struggle to stick to their agreed reductions, according to OPEC and industry sources. "I am surprised at bringing Kuwait's name into this report", adding that "no Kuwaiti officials were contacted in connection with this report," Minister Fadhel, who doubles as Minister of Electricity and Water, said in a statement to the press.

"Kuwait has supported this deal from day one, and has been one of the leading countries in terms of compliance with its agreed cuts in line with its longstanding history of impeccable compliance," said the Kuwaiti oil minister. He added "The production cuts were agreed to by all of us back in April 2020, and we all signed this agreement. Kuwait fully supports the joint OPEC+ efforts to restore balance to the oil market, and going forward we will also support whatever necessary joint decisions will be agreed to under the OPEC+ framework." The minister stressed that there should be no doubt that "the established coordination with the Gulf countries will continue in this regard."

**Oil exports to Japan down**  
In other news, Kuwait's crude oil exports to



Kuwait's Oil Minister Dr Khaled Ali Al-Fadhel

Japan in September declined 41.6 percent from a year earlier to 5.14 million barrels, or 171,000 barrels per day (bpd), for the sixth consecutive monthly drop, government data showed Friday. As Japan's third-biggest oil provider, Kuwait supplied 8.0 percent of its total crude imports, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency said in a preliminary report. Japan's overall imports of crude oil in September plummeted 22.6 percent year-on-year to 2.14 million bpd, down for the ninth straight month.

Shipments from the Middle East accounted for 90.5 percent of the total, down 0.8 percentage points from the year before. Saudi Arabia remained Japan's No.1 oil supplier, although imports from the kingdom fell 13.1 percent from a year earlier to 858,000 bpd, followed by the United Arab Emirates with 672,000 bpd, down 18.6 percent. Qatar ranked fourth with 161,000 bpd and Russia fifth with 73,000 bpd, respectively. Japan is the world's-third biggest oil consumer after China and the US. — KUNA

## Kuwait oil price sheds 97 cents to \$36.86 a barrel

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's crude oil dropped 97 cents during Friday's transactions closing at \$36.86 a barrel compared with \$37.83 a barrel a day prior, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Elsewhere, Brent dropped 19 cents to \$37.46 as did West Texas Intermediate 38 cents to \$35.79 a barrel. — KUNA





Europeans urge wider curbs as COVID weeps continent, batters US

## Palestinian marks shoes in stamp of disapproval

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JERUSALEM: Palestinians gather to protest against French President Emmanuel Macron in the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the Old City of Jerusalem on Friday. — AFP

# France on high security alert

## Protests flare in parts of Muslim world



JERUSALEM: US ambassador to Israel David Friedman (right) holds a passport presented to Menachem Zivotofsky at the American Embassy on Friday. — AFP

## Jerusalem-born man gets passport listing 'Israel' as birthplace

JERUSALEM: A Jerusalem-born American citizen on Friday became the first to receive a US passport listing "Israel" as his place of birth. The move came just days before the US election, in which President Donald Trump has promoted his steadfast support of the Jewish state, a key cause for his evangelical Christian base. "I'm humbled and honored to receive this passport," said 18-year-old Menachem Zivotofsky during a ceremony at the US embassy. Until now, Americans born in the city had simply "Jerusalem" listed in their passports, without specifying the country. Israel seized control of East Jerusalem in 1967 and later annexed it, in moves never recognized by the international community.

The Jewish state considers the city its undivided capital, but Palestinians see the mostly Arab eastern part of Jerusalem, including the Old City with its holy sites, as the illegally occupied capital of their future state. In his first year in office, Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and later moved the US embassy there—putting the United States at odds with virtually every other country. Zivotofsky has "waited a long time for this moment to come," said US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman while presenting the passport. "Today... you have a nation of birth—the state of Israel."

The US had announced on Thursday that Jerusalem-born American citizens could now elect to list Israel as their place of birth on their passports, but said the default would remain "Jerusalem". Senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi slammed the move as an "attempt to erase Palestinians". "The US State Department's new decision to allow the labeling of Jerusalem as part of Israel in official US documents is a falsification of the city's history and identity," Ashrawi said in a statement on Friday. Until now, international consensus had been to list Jerusalem as "undefined" on official documents. — AFP

PARIS: France has stepped up security nationwide to guard against Islamist attacks after the fatal stabbings at a church in Nice, while protests flared in parts of the Middle East, Asia and Africa over French caricatures of the Prophet Mohammad. President Emmanuel Macron deployed thousands of soldiers to protect sites including places of worship and schools, and the nation was at its highest level of security alert after the second deadly knife attack in its cities in two weeks.

Police were holding a 21-year-old Tunisian migrant, identified by a French police source and Tunisian officials as Brahim al-Aouissouou, over the attack in which a man shouting "Allahu Akbar" (God is Greatest) decapitated a woman and killed two other people in Notre Dame Basilica in Nice on Thursday.

The attack took place at a time of growing anger among Muslims in many countries over the issue of French cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad, which they deem insulting and blasphemous. It occurred almost two weeks after Samuel Paty, a school teacher in a Paris suburb, was beheaded by an 18-year-old Chechen. Paty had shown his pupils such cartoons in a class on freedom of expression. France, home to Europe's largest Muslim com-

munity and hit by a string of militant attacks in recent years, has defended the right to publish such cartoons. Macron has insisted France will not compromise on its basic freedoms of belief and expression.

In Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Palestinian territories, tens of thousands of Muslims staged anti-French protests after Friday prayers. In Islamabad, police briefly fired tear gas at protesters who broke through security blockades in a failed attempt to demonstrate at the French embassy. In Bangladesh, marchers in the capital Dhaka chanted "Boycott French products" and carried banners calling Macron "the world's biggest terrorist". Some burned effigies of the French president.

"Macron is leading Islamophobia," said Dhaka demonstrator Akramul Haq. "The Muslim world will not let this go in vain. We'll rise and stand in solidarity against him." Protests also took place in India, Lebanon and Somalia. The leader of Lebanon's Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, said the cartoons were an aggression. He condemned the Nice stabbings, but said Western leaders also bore responsibility for such crimes because of their roles in Middle East conflicts.

### Embassies step up security

Interior Minister Gerald Damarnin said France was engaged in a war against Islamist ideology and more attacks on its soil were likely. "We are in a war against an enemy that is both inside and outside," he told RTL radio. Nice Police Chief Richard Gianotti said any symbol of the republic or Christianity was a potential target. "We have to be vigilant, we have to be attentive," he told Reuters. French embassies were also told to step up security. Police used a Taser and rubber bullets to overpower a man in Paris on Friday when he threatened officers with two knives after they challenged him. The motive was not immediately clear.

In Nice, residents mourned the victims of what was the second attack in the Mediterranean city in recent years. In July 2016, a militant drove a truck through a seafront crowd celebrating Bastille Day, killing 86 people. People gathered in front of the Notre Dame church to lay flowers and light candles. "I'm from Nice and this is a tragedy

once again," said Frederic Lefevre, 50, who wore a French national rugby shirt. "We're a free country. Let's love freedom - that's a message to the world. No god should kill," he said.

France's chief anti-terrorism prosecutor, Jean-Francois Ricard, said the suspect was a Tunisian born in 1999 who arrived in Europe on Sept. 20 in Lampedusa, the Italian island off Tunisia that is a main landing point for migrants from Africa. He arrived in Nice by train on Thursday morning and made his way to the church, where he stabbed and killed the 55-year-old sexton and beheaded a 60-year-old woman. He also stabbed a 44-year-old woman, who fled to a nearby cafe where she raised the alarm before dying, Ricard said. Police then arrived and shot and wounded him.

The woman who died after raising the alarm was identified as mother-of-three Simone Barreto Silva, who moved to France from Brazil as a teenager. "She crossed the road, covered in blood," said Brahim Jelloule, manager of the Unik cafe. —Reuters

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## International

# Europeans urge wider curbs as COVID sweeps continent

## US, Europe at epicenter of new wave of infections

**BRUSSELS:** EU officials warned Europe to be ready for wider COVID restrictions as infections surged across the continent, France and Germany prepared curbs almost as strict as their spring lockdowns and cases soared across the United States. Europe and the United States have emerged as the current danger zones for COVID-19, which was first identified in China in December, in a global crisis in which more than 44.94 million people have been infected and 1,178,943 have died.

"Given the very dynamic situation in all of Europe, we need to equally reduce contact in almost all European countries," German Health Minister Jens Spahn told journalists after a video conference of EU health ministers that he chaired. EU Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides echoed the call. "We need to pull through this, where needed, with restrictions on everyday life to break the chain of transmission," she told the video conference.

France and Germany announced new lockdowns this week as infections on the continent passed the 10-million milestone and hospitals and intensive care units filled up again. Bars, restaurants, sports and cultural events have been restricted or closed in several other European countries. Belgium, one of Europe's worst-affected countries, recorded an average of 15,316 new infections per day in mid-October. Italy and Austria recorded their highest daily number of infections to date on Friday.

Checkpoints have been set up across Portugal to stop unauthorized travel during a five-day movement ban which began on Friday. Russia has seen coronavirus cases swell in recent weeks and reported 18,283 new infections on Friday, the highest tally recorded since the pandemic began, and 355 deaths. Poland reported a fourth consecutive daily record for new cases. Britain resisted the idea of a

new national lockdown, even as a survey showed soaring infections.

### 'American fiasco'

Gloom over the rising infections has hit financial markets. US stocks fell, dragged down by a slide in shares of tech heavyweights following their quarterly results, with a record rise in coronavirus cases and nerves over the presidential election adding to a downbeat mood globally. Illustrating the difficulty in reining in the virus without destroying the economy, Britain's "eat out to help out" discount scheme to boost spending at restaurants, cafes and pubs over the summer helped spread the coronavirus, according to a new study.

European Central Bank policymakers said governments must be selective in shutting down economic activity to combat the pandemic and need to keep spending up to support businesses and families. "We must try to defeat the virus without totally shutting down the economy because the consequences in terms of loss of economic activity are very, very intense," ECB

Vice President Luis de Guindos said. A record surge of infections in the United States is pushing hospitals to the brink of capacity and killing up to 1,000 people a day before the Nov 3 election, in which handling of the pandemic has become the main issue.

The United States broke its single-day record for new coronavirus infections on Thursday, reporting at least 91,248 new cases, as 21 states reported their highest daily number of hospitalized patients since the pandemic started, according to a Reuters tally of publicly reported data. "We're going in the wrong direction," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, a leading White House task force member and director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious

The virus is 'an American fiasco', say Democrats



## Slovenia cools on Melania

**SEVNICA, Slovenia:** In contrast to the enthusiasm evident four years ago in Melania Trump's homeland Slovenia as she ascended to the status of US First Lady, now even her hometown has cooled on the country's most famous daughter. In 2016 Slovenia's media followed the US presidential campaign with bated breath, but now the coronavirus pandemic is dominating headlines and crowding out coverage of whether Melania will stay in the White House alongside her husband President Donald Trump after Tuesday's US election.

Most Slovenian media have portrayed Trump's bid for re-election as an uphill struggle and many speak of disappointment at the low-key role Melania has played. A rare voice of enthusiasm for Trump has been center-right Prime Minister Janez Jansa, who tweeted his support earlier this month - but even he forgot to mention the family ties to Slovenia.

Jansa said Trump's Democratic opponent Joe Biden "would be one of the weakest presidents in history," adding: "a free world desperately needs STRONG US as never before. Go, win, Donald Trump!" Jansa thus joined his political ally, nationalist Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, in openly backing Trump for a

second term. But unlike Jansa, many politicians in Slovenia have backed Biden or diplomatically avoided taking sides. Even Srečko Ocvirk, mayor of Melania's hometown Sevnica, can't bring himself to utter an endorsement. "As a Slovenian citizen I elect our country's president, therefore I can't comment on the US elections," Ocvirk told AFP.

### Dashed hopes

In a rare article dedicated to Melania Trump entitled "A woman that never looks back", weekly newspaper Nedeljski Dnevnik noted that many Slovenians had high hopes four years ago for how Melania's homeland might benefit from her newfound fame. "In 2016 a variety of products with Melania's image and name popped up as many wanted to cash in on her global fame in an innovative way," the paper wrote in an editorial.

"Politicians and businessmen hoped it would strengthen ties with the White House... but all those hopes have been proved wrong," the paper added. The article noted that Melania rarely even mentioned Slovenia except when talking about her early life in an "un-free Communist state".

Despite invitations being extended, the Slovenian media have not published a single interview or direct address by Melania to her compatriots. Communication has largely been limited to a warning from Trump family lawyers addressed to entrepreneurs, deterring them from unauthorized use of

making - as the first female president of the United States. "My mother raised me to see what could be, unburdened by what has been," Harris, 56, wrote on Twitter. Since being tapped as Biden's running mate in August, she has slammed President Donald Trump on his chaotic handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also racism, the economy and the president's crackdown on immigration.

Harris was born to immigrants to the United States - her father from Jamaica, her mother from India - and their lives and her own have in some ways embodied the American dream. She was born on October 20, 1964 in Oakland, California, then a hub for civil rights and anti-war activism. Her diploma from historically Black Howard University in Washington was the start of a steady rise that took her from prosecutor, to two elected terms as San Francisco's district attorney and then California's attorney general in 2010.

However, Harris's self-description as a "progressive prosecutor" has been seized upon by critics who say she fought to uphold wrongful convictions and opposed certain reforms in California, like a bill requiring that the attorney general probe shootings

while never expressing overt disagreement with the president. Republicans have characterized it as the work of a loyal deputy, but critics have branded him a servile "sycophant-in-chief" more interested in keeping his job.

A lawyer by training and former radio talk show host who served in Congress for 12 years, Pence was plucked from his post as Indiana's governor by Trump's 2016 campaign. The 61-year-old brought credibility as a traditional evangelical Christian who could appeal to church-going Americans and farm-belt conservatives. He's been the yin to the president's yang: where Trump plays the unorthodox outsider, Pence is reserved and courteous; where Trump flouts tradition, Pence is deeply pious. Born June 7, 1959 in Columbus, Indiana, he grew up idolizing liberal icons like John F Kennedy before veering right in adulthood.



**BARCELONA:** Members of the Catalan regional police force Mossos d'Esquadra take position next to burning trash set on fire by protesters during a demonstration against new coronavirus restrictions on Friday. —AFP

Diseases. The surge has revived some of the worst images of the first wave of the virus in March, April and May, with people on ventilators dying alone in isolation and medical staff physically and mentally exhausted.

Among the hardest hit states are those most hotly contested in the election campaign between Republican President Donald Trump and Democratic challenger Joe Biden, such as Ohio, Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Trump has downplayed the virus since the pandemic began, ridiculing Fauci and mocking social distancing and the wearing of masks. He has repeatedly told campaign rallies the country is

"rounding the turn" on the pandemic to the delight of his mostly non-mask wearing supporters but infuriating Democrats.

"The virus is a global scourge, but it has been an American fiasco, killing more people in the United States than in any other country," said an interim report by Democratic staff of the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis. The World Health Organization's (WHO) top emergency expert, Mike Ryan, told a virtual briefing in Geneva that early voting in the United States seems to have gone well from a health point of view. "From what we observe, the early voting process seems to have been undertaken with great care," he said. —Reuters



**SEVNICA:** This general view shows the US First Lady's hometown on Friday. —AFP

Melania's name and image.

Sevnica - a small town on the banks of the Sava river some 100 km east of the capital Ljubljana - has at least seen some benefits from Melania's status. Thousands of tourists from the US and elsewhere have gone out of their way and braved the sometimes basic roads to reach the town, visit its 900-year-old castle and buy some of those Melania-themed products. A local bakery says a "Melania cake" has become particularly popular and the local tourist office even offers a "First Lady" luxury package including high-end wine, salami, cookies and chocolates. —AFP

involving police. "Time after time, when progressives urged her to embrace criminal justice reforms as a district attorney and then the state's attorney general, Ms. Harris opposed them or stayed silent," law professor Lara Bazelon wrote in The New York Times last year.

Yet Harris's work was key to forging a platform and profile from which she launched a successful Senate campaign in 2016, becoming just the second Black female senator ever. Her stint as attorney general also helped her forge a connection with Biden's son Beau, who held the same position in the state of Delaware, and died of cancer at the age of 46 in 2015. "I know how much Beau respected Kamala and her work, and that mattered a lot to me, to be honest with you, as I made this decision," Biden said during his first appearance with Harris as running mates. —AFP



**Kamala Harris**

## Kamala Harris: On the cusp of US election history

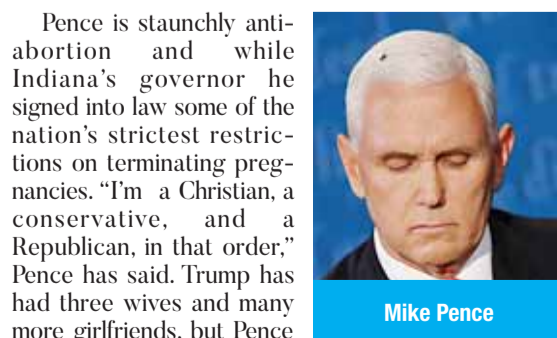
**WASHINGTON:** Kamala Harris is on the verge of what would be a double-dream for US Democrats: becoming the nation's first woman vice president and ending Donald Trump's turbulent rule. Harris comes into the November 3 election already a repeat trailblazer as California's first Black attorney general and the first woman of South Asian heritage elected to the US Senate. But winning the vice presidency, a heartbeat away from leading the United States, would be the most significant barrier she has broken yet and a stepping stone to the ultimate prize.

With the 77-year-Biden expected to serve only a single term if elected, Harris would be favored to win the Democratic presidential nomination four years from now. That could give her a shot at more history-

## Pence: The calm to Trump storm

**WASHINGTON:** Vice President Mike Pence is the calm to Donald Trump's storm, bringing a sedate demeanor and the religious, conservative ballast the men hope will spare them from losing the White House. Pence has served as a pillar of stability in an administration that has churned through top officials, and a steady campaigner ahead of next week's election.

Over the past four years he has also been a lure for a part of the Republican base dubious of a thrice-married reality TV star from New York. Trump publicly bellows and tweets controversy that Pence is often called in to smooth over or dial back in private, all



**Mike Pence**

Pence is staunchly anti-abortion and while Indiana's governor he signed into law some of the nation's strictest restrictions on terminating pregnancies. "I'm a Christian, a conservative, and a Republican, in that order," Pence has said. Trump has had three wives and many more girlfriends, but Pence is famous for his self-imposed proscription on being alone with any woman who is not his wife. "Trump's got the populist nationalists," former Trump aide Steve Bannon told the New Yorker. "But Pence is the base. —AFP

## Fears of transition 'chaos' if Joe Biden defeats Trump

**WASHINGTON:** Donald Trump said on the campaign that he wants a "smooth, beautiful transition" after Election Day, but he offered an ambiguous follow-up caveat: "But it's got to be an honest vote." For months, the US president - who on Tuesday will battle Joe Biden at the polls to win another four years in the White House - has planted seeds of doubt about the legitimacy of the election. The Republican incumbent has questioned the validity of mail-in ballots, demurred on whether he will accept the results if he loses to the veteran Democrat, and been vague about what a transition to his rival would look like. The transition between election and inauguration is a quirk of American politics: the more than two-month gap is particularly long. After a campaign marked by its unrelenting nastiness, and amid a health crisis of a magnitude never before seen in modern times, what would a transition from Trump to Biden look like?

### What happens during transition?

During a presidential transition, the team entering the White House - though they still don't have the keys - prepares to take power alongside the outgoing administration. In the words of Martin Anderson, author of "Revolution: The Reagan Legacy," it's a time of "delicious chaos." The Center for Presidential Transition has prepared a how-to guide for government agencies that summarizes the enormity of the task at hand: Staffing the White House and the Executive Office of the President; - Making more than 4,000 presidential appointments, about 1,200 of which require Senate confirmation; - Learning the ins and out of more than 100 federal agencies; - Preparing the first 100 days of the new administration; - Biden has put in place a transition team that, following tradition, is raising funds to be able to get up and running. According to Politico, it hopes to have at least \$7 million in hand by Election Day, and a staff of at least 350 people by Inauguration Day in January 2021.

### How will Trump act if he loses?

It's hard to say what the 45th president of the United States will do if he loses to Biden. The question has forced observers to look back at what the 74-year-old Trump has said in recent months - and whether to take him at his word or assume some of those comments were for shock value. For veteran political analyst Larry Sabato at the University of Virginia, that "depends heavily on the margin of Biden's victory (assuming he wins)." "If Trump loses by a wide margin, he will grumpily do the minimum to pass the torch to Biden," Sabato said. If the result is close, all bets are off and anything - even violent protest - is possible, the expert added. If the last four years are any indication, some observers say, there is cause for concern. A coalition of 12 non-governmental organizations wrote to the National Archives to express their fears. "We are alarmed and deeply concerned by the Trump administration's failure to honor its legal responsibility to create and preserve records," they said in a letter. It remains an open question what Trump would do in the final 77 days of his administration if he loses. History is full of examples of controversial presidential pardons during the so-called "lame duck" period.

### Tradition and tensions

US law stipulates that the incoming president should have wide access to whatever is needed during the transition, but of course, some of that depends on the goodwill of the ousted administration, especially the president. Sometimes, the heat of the campaign is hard to forget. One anecdote remains the stuff of Washington lore: during the transition from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush in late 2000 and early 2001, the letter "W" was damaged or removed from numerous White House computer keyboards. —AFP

International

# Saudi Arabia angers India with independent Kashmir banknote

## Indian Kashmir shuts down over land rights law

**NEW DELHI:** India has complained to Saudi Arabia over a banknote that shows Kashmir as a separate country, in the latest protest over maps of the disputed region that have also targeted foreign media outlets and a social media giant. The foreign ministry in New Delhi said it expressed "serious concern" over a new 20 riyal note issued to mark Saudi Arabia's presidency of the powerful G20 bloc of countries, which includes India. Kashmir is contested between India, Pakistan and China but the world map on the note's background shows it as a separate country, including the part of the territory administered by India.

The ministry said Thursday it had asked Saudi authorities to take "corrective steps". Saudi authorities have yet to publicly respond. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is still expected to address a virtual G20 summit in November. India has become increasingly assertive in expressing its custodianship of the former princely state, which was split between India and Pakistan when the two countries were partitioned in 1947. Tens of thousands have died in a three-decade insurgency on the Indian side.

The Indian government this week warned social media giant Twitter over geo-tagging data that showed Ladakh region - a part of greater Kashmir administered by New Delhi - as belonging to China. Three years ago India ushered in new laws that made erroneous depictions of the country's map a

criminal act, punishable by a three-year prison sentence. New Delhi banned broadcaster Al-Jazeera in 2015 for nearly a week after it published an Indian map that excluded Kashmir. It has also regularly censored The Economist magazine for showing Kashmir as a disputed region.

### Kashmir shuts down

In another development, Indian Kashmir was hit yesterday by its biggest general strike since losing its semi-autonomous status last year, with local anger brewing over a new measure allowing outsiders to buy land in the disputed territory. The Himalayan region has been divided and disputed between India and Pakistan for more than 70 years and has seen decades of unrest that has claimed tens of thousands of lives. Modi's Hindu nationalist government changed the constitution to bring the territory under direct federal rule last year, sparking protests and a months-long internet blackout.

Shops and businesses stayed shut yesterday and most residents kept at home after a shutdown was called by a coalition of political and religious groups that want self-determination for the region. Extra Indian security forces patrolled the nearly empty streets. This week New Delhi announced the abolition of laws that meant only the 12 million permanent Indian Kashmir residents could own land there. Even Kashmir groups normally supportive of



**SRINAGAR:** A resident walks past Indian army soldiers standing guard next to closed shops during a one-day strike called yesterday by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) against the Indian government decision to open Kashmir's land for all Indians. —AFP

Indian rule have opposed the changes, which also allow the Indian armed forces to designate strategic zones for building military infrastructure.

Many Kashmiris accuse the government of seeking to water down the local population in India's only Muslim-majority territory. Former chief minister Omar Abdullah said Kashmir had been "put up for sale and left bereft of any basic protections".

"The amendments add to the fear of demographic changes. They want to alter the character of this place," said Abdullah, who was among hundreds of political leaders detained for months during last year's protests. More than 500,000 Indian troops are based in Kashmir, where an insurgency has been waged against security forces for more than three decades. —Agencies



### Foreign ministry 'concerned' over new 20 riyal note

## Georgia opposition unites to oust billionaire's party

**TBILISI:** Georgians voted yesterday in tightly contested parliamentary elections pitting an unlikely union of opposition forces against the increasingly unpopular ruling party led by the country's richest man. Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia has promised free and fair polls and encouraged citizens to vote in the elections which "will define Georgia's further successful development". "We can show the world another example by holding exemplary elections - free, open, democratic, and transparent," he said in a statement. Nestled between the Caucasus mountains and the Black Sea, Georgia is seen as a rare example of a democracy among ex-Soviet countries.

But elections in the country of nearly four million people regularly spark mass protests, with only one orderly transition of power, after a parliamentary vote in 2012. Two colorful personalities dominate politics in the tiny Caucasus country - the former president Mikheil Saakashvili, who lives in exile in Ukraine, and the billionaire and ex-prime minister Bidzina Ivanishvili. In an unprecedented show of unity, Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) and smaller opposition groups have joined forces to challenge the ruling Georgian Dream party chaired by Ivanishvili.

## Journalist murdered in Mexico; sixth this year

**MEXICO CITY:** A journalist has been shot dead in crime-ridden northern Mexico, authorities said Friday, the sixth such murder this year in one of the world's most dangerous countries for reporters. Chihuahua state governor Javier Corral condemned the "cowardly" killing of Arturo Alba Medina in Ciudad Juarez near the US border. Corral said on Twitter that he had told prosecutors to ensure the perpetrators are punished, adding: "Justice will be done." The 49-year-old journalist and television news show host was assassinated a few minutes after the end of his program on Thursday night, according to media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

"This was clearly an execution and his media

## Palestinian marks shoes in stamp of disapproval

**RAMALLAH:** Palestinian shoemaker Imad Mohammad makes handcrafted footwear with a difference: they are stamped with the names of the US and French presidents in Arabic calligraphy to show his disapproval of them. "Shoes touch the ground, dust and dirt. So if we write someone's name on them and that also gets dirty, then it shows... how you value that person," Mohammad told AFP.

He said he chose to stamp the name of US President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron on the shoes he crafts because they "assaulted our people". Initially the mustachioed shoemaker, who has a shop in Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, launched a line dedicated to Trump. That was after Trump moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in May 2018, putting the United States at odds with the international community.

Trump's move, a year after he recognized the dis-

### 'Georgia has awakened'

Dozens of voters queued in an autumn sunshine outside a polling station in downtown Tbilisi's Vake neighborhood minutes after polls opened at 0400 GMT. "I am very optimistic. Georgia will today get rid of Ivanishvili and his corrupt government," plumber Lasha Guruli told AFP after having cast his ballot. Another voter, mathematician Lamara Lagvilava, said she had voted for the opposition. "Georgia can't stand any longer the incompetence of the Georgian Dream government," she added. On Thursday, tens of thousands of Saakashvili supporters staged a rally in Tbilisi's central square, cheering as Saakashvili addressed them by video link.

The charismatic reformer was forced to flee Georgia at the end of his second term in 2013, fearing arrest after prosecutors accused him of abusing power - charges he has denied, insisting they were politically motivated. In power since 2012, Georgian Dream's popularity has plummeted due to discontent over its failure to address economic stagnation and perceived backsliding on its commitment to democracy. Critics accuse Ivanishvili - who is widely seen to be calling the shots in Georgia - of persecuting political opponents and creating a corrupt system in which private interests permeate politics.

"An oligarch who owns some 40 percent of Georgia's national wealth has appropriated the country and is ruling it as his fiefdom," Saakashvili told AFP in an interview. "How could an election be seen as free and fair if the main opposition leader is robbed of a possibility to return to the country and campaign?" he said. Western capitals have accused the

colleagues where he worked are afraid and don't know the reason for the crime," Balbina Flores, RSF representative in Mexico, told AFP. Medina's last show included talk of police corruption, the alleged murder of a minor by state agents and clashes between drug traffickers, according to local media. The journalist's body was found inside a vehicle along with eleven bullet shells, the reports said. Chihuahua attorney general Cesar Augusto Peniche promised to give "all the resources available to the prosecution to resolve this case."

### 'Silence zones'

RSF regularly ranks Mexico alongside war-torn Syria and Afghanistan as the world's most dangerous countries for news media. In September journalist Julio Valdivia was found decapitated in eastern Veracruz state, a flashpoint in turf wars between rival drug cartels. More than 100 reporters have been murdered since 2000 in Mexico, where asking

questions about political corruption or powerful drug cartels can be a deadly business. Only a fraction of those crimes have resulted in convictions. Such impunity has led to "silence zones" where journalists have chosen not to investigate topics related to organized crime or corruption for fear of being killed.

### Apologies sought

"Why, Macron, did you attack a prophet who died 1,500 years ago?" said Mohammad, who accused the French leader of seeking to "insult Muslims". "And I, as a Muslim, reject this contempt and reject this offence," he added, demanding an apology from Macron. "The apology is for my people because the insult was against my people... and my Islamic nation," he said. Any US and French clients who enter the Ramallah shop are greeted with signs demanding they too apologize for the words and deeds of their presidents.

The French are told they can only enter if they apologize for Macron's statements. American customers are asked to seek forgiveness for Trump's recognition of Jerusalem and the embassy move. But Mohammad said



**TBILISI:** A man casts his ballot at a polling station during Georgia's parliamentary election yesterday. —AFP

Georgian Dream-led government of mounting a political witch-hunt. Nearly all of Georgia's opposition parties, including Saakashvili's UNM, held talks on forming a coalition government if elected.

Both the ruling party and the opposition have said they are sure to win, but analysts believe the outcome is uncertain, with the opposition enjoying only a narrow lead. Due to Georgia's complex election rules the final makeup of the 150-seat parliament may only become clear by late November. Voting, which ends at 1600 GMT, will be monitored by international observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Exit polls are set to be published when polls close and the release of preliminary results is expected to begin after midnight. —AFP

In a rare case, a man convicted of ordering the 2017 murder of prominent journalist Miroslava Breach in Chihuahua state was condemned in August to 50 years in prison. Prosecutors said the sentence was precedent-setting and the longest yet for such a crime. But rights group Propuesta Civica called for further investigations of others involved as well as an inquiry into the "possible involvement of officials of the current government of Chihuahua." Since the killing of Breach, who covered the country's drug war, "many reporters have been forced to quit journalism or not carry out investigations," Flores said. —AFP



**RAMALLAH:** Palestinian shoemaker Imad Mohammad displays his handcrafted footwear at his shop in this city in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Friday. —AFP

he is willing to remove that last poster should Trump challenger Joe Biden win Tuesday's US presidential election and "rescind" Trump's policies. "I will not remove the demand for an apology from the Americans unless America's decision (to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital) is cancelled. "If Biden rescinds the decision, I will remove the sign and I will be happy," he said. —AFP

### News in brief

#### India records 48,268 new cases

**MUMBAI:** India's coronavirus caseload stood at 8.1 million yesterday, with 48,268 new cases being recorded in the last 24 hours, data from the health ministry showed. India has the world's second-highest caseload, behind only the United States, but new infections have seen a dip since September. Deaths rose up by 551, taking total mortalities to 121,641, the health ministry said. —Reuters

#### Philippines orders evacuation

**MANILA:** More than 200,000 people in the Philippines were ordered to evacuate their homes yesterday as the most powerful typhoon of the year so far barrels towards the country, with authorities warning of "destructive" winds and storm surges. Typhoon Goni is expected to graze the southeastern tip of the main island of Luzon early Sunday before making landfall in the afternoon with wind speeds of up to 205 kilometers per hour, the state weather forecaster said. It comes a week after Typhoon Molave slammed into the same region, killing 22 people and flooding low-lying villages and farmland, before sweeping across the South China Sea to Vietnam. Schools which have been empty since the start of the coronavirus pandemic will be used as emergency shelters as well as government-run evacuation centers and gymnasiums. —AFP

#### Free speech has limits: Trudeau

**OTTAWA:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau defended free speech on Friday, but added that it was "not without limits" and should not "arbitrarily and needlessly hurt" certain communities. "We will always defend freedom of expression," Trudeau said in response to a question about the right to show a caricature of the Prophet Mohammed, as France's Charlie Hebdo magazine did. "But freedom of expression is not without limits," he added. "We owe it to ourselves to act with respect for others and to seek not to arbitrarily or unnecessarily injure those with whom we are sharing a society and a planet." "We do not have the right for example to shout fire in a movie theatre crowded with people, there are always limits," he argued. Distancing himself from the position of French President Emmanuel Macron, Trudeau pleaded for a careful use of free speech. —AFP

#### Ivorian leader seeks 3rd term

**ABIDJAN:** Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara seeks reelection in a presidential vote yesterday marked by an opposition boycott and clashes over his bid to secure a contested third term. At least 30 people have been killed in pre-election violence, evoking memories of a 2010-2011 crisis that turned Abidjan into a battleground and left 3,000 dead. A former IMF official in power since 2010, Ouattara is facing off with veteran opposition leader Henri Konan Bedie in a feud among the country's ageing leaders that has defined Ivorian politics for decades. Ouattara's decision to run sparked tensions with Bedie and another opposition candidate, Pascal Affi N'Guessan, who called for a boycott of the vote on the grounds a third mandate was unconstitutional. The ballot in French-speaking West Africa's economic powerhouse is a crunch test in a region where Nigeria faces widespread social protests, Mali is emerging from a coup and jihadist violence wracks the Sahel. —AFP

# Business

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2020

## Zain: The only company from Kuwait in Forbes' World's Best Employers list

### Highest ranked telecom group and fourth best employer in region

**KUWAIT:** Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator operating across the Middle East and Africa is proud to announce its categorization as the region's highest ranked telecom group and only company from Kuwait in Forbes magazine's The World's Best Employers list for 2020. The list also saw Zain ranked fourth best employer across all industries in the Middle East.

First published in 1917, the world-renowned American business magazine, Forbes, is one of the most reputable and respected names in business publishing globally, and Zain's inclusion in its list of best employers for 2020 underpins the Middle East company's professionalism on a global level.



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

With respect to the compilation of the list, Forbes partnered with market research firm Statista to compile its fourth-annual summary of The World's Best Employers. The publication surveyed 160,000 full-time and part-time workers from 58 countries working for businesses with operations in multiple countries or regions. Surveys were conducted on a rolling basis from June 2019 to July 2020, and participants were asked to rate their willingness to recommend their own employers to friends and family. They were also asked to rate their satisfaction with their employers' COVID-19 responses and score their employers on image, economic footprint, talent development, gender equality and corporate sustainability. The final list is composed of 750 multinational and large corporations headquartered in 45 countries.

- **Al-Kharafi: This recognition acknowledges Zain's strategic agility, concern for the well-being of staff, pedigree of innovation, and sense of responsibility to its employees and customers**

- **Forbes methodology takes into account companies' economic footprint, interest in talent development, gender equality initiatives and sustainability**

- **Zain remains a magnet to attract and nurture high-caliber talent**

Embedding sustainability and meaningful connectivity in every aspect of its business, Zain is dedicated to its digital strategy of consistently working towards developing the mobile telecommunications ecosystem centered on a vision of inclusive development that leads to socio-economic growth, aligning to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals of leaving no one behind.

Commenting on Zain's inclusion in Forbes' The World's Best Employers list for 2020, Zain Vice-

## Eurozone economy surges before blow from new lockdowns

**BRUSSELS:** The eurozone economy rebounded much more than expected in the third quarter from its coronavirus-induced slump, but the recovery is likely to be cut short as countries reintroduce restrictions to stem a second wave of the pandemic. Gross domestic product in the 19 countries sharing the euro surged 12.7 percent quarter-on-quarter in the third quarter after contracting 11.8 percent in the second, the European Union's statistics office, Eurostat, said. Economists polled by Reuters had expected a 9.4 percent quarterly rise.

"A whopping 12.7 percent rebound in GDP in the third quarter is a bittersweet result with new lockdowns just being announced. That makes a double-dip unavoidable," said ING economist Bert Colijn. The eurozone average was boosted mainly by the countries that experienced the harshest lockdowns in the second quarter—France, Italy and Spain—which all registered quarterly growth between 16.1 percent and 18.2 percent, preliminary data showed.



Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi said, "The emergence of Zain as the leading regional Telecom Group and only Kuwaiti company categorized in this prestigious list, highlights the institutional excellence of Zain's executive management in providing a working environment that offers the optimum atmosphere for employees to give their best and delight our customers. This recognition and success that also saw Zain ranked 4th best employer across all industries in the region, indicates and rewards the dedication of all the talented 7,000 Zainers that are passionate in everything they do."

Al-Kharafi continued, "With the advent of COVID-19, Zain's strategic agility, concern for the well-being of its staff, pedigree of innovation, and sense of responsibility to continue providing quality services to its customers despite challenging circumstances, has guided the company to remaining resilient despite the new operating norms. I am proud to see how the entire company has rallied around these difficult circumstances and continued to operate at an extremely high level. We shall endeavor to maintain this positive momentum and ensure the company remains a magnet for the best talent in the world to be attracted to and nurtured."

Zain's inclusion in Forbes' exclusive list is a culmination of years of prioritizing staff well-being and ongoing investment in staff development that extends to activities such as Zain's agreement with LinkedIn and other leading talent resources and agencies to enhance the company's strategy to attract, recruit and retain the best talent globally.

The motivation of employees within Zain is driven by the company's digital strategy of investing in 4G, 5G and FTTH networks to offer more innovative customer focused and B2B services to government, business, IoT, and smart city sectors, bolstering the digital economy. Moreover, the Group API platform continues to grow exponentially, offering rich entertainment content and gaming, with Zain making substantial progress in various fintech and e-health services.

Yet, France and Germany will introduce extensive lockdowns for all of November raising the prospect of another economic contraction in the fourth quarter. European Central Bank Vice President Luis de Guindos said he expected economic growth in the final three months of the year to disappoint.

Keen to avoid a repeat of the recession, Italian Economy Minister Roberto Gualtieri said it was the government's "absolute priority" to avoid a national lockdown that would derail the third quarter recovery. Year-on-year eurozone economic output was still 4.3 percent lower in the third quarter, though an improvement on the 14.8 percent annual contraction in the previous three months. That beat market expectations of a 7.0 percent year-on-year decline.

Germany, the eurozone's biggest economy, grew 8.2 percent quarter-on-quarter. The increase led Germany to revise its economic forecast for the year to a 5.5 percent contraction, instead of the 5.8 percent it had expected earlier. "Large parts of the euro area economy recovered quickly from the sudden stop in spring. Private households, who have consumed almost as much as before the crisis, have made a major contribution," said Commerzbank economist Christoph Weil.

But signs of weakness were already showing. German retail sales fell more than expected in September. "The outlook for the final quarter of 2020 has recently become noticeably gloomier. Corona

restrictions have been drastically tightened again in many countries. This will not remain without consequences for the economy," Weil said.

Consumer prices continued to fall in October, as expected, Eurostat estimated, pulled down by plunging energy costs despite more expensive food, alcohol and tobacco. Consumer prices in October were 0.3 percent lower year-on-year, as expected by economists polled by Reuters, the same rate as in September, after a 0.2 percent month-on-month increase, vindicating the European Central Bank's plans for further monetary support for the economy in December. Energy prices plunged 8.4 percent year-on-year, offsetting a 4.3 percent rise in unprocessed food prices. Amid the economic rebound, eurozone unemployment was flat in September from August at 8.3 percent of the workforce, as expected, despite edging higher in absolute numbers by 75,000 people. "Today's figures reflect only partially the situation of the labor market given that furlough and short-time work schemes are still in place to prevent mass layoffs," said Rosie Colthorpe, economist at Oxford Economics.

## Forbes

In July 2020, Zain was included in The Valuable 500, an initiative striving to place disability on the leadership agenda within corporates across the globe. The initiative aims to unite 500 business leaders to serve as role models and ignite social change by shining the light on people living with disabilities and showcasing how people in these communities remain a significant and contributing sector of society. Zain was the first corporation from the GCC to join the program along with 285 other leading global corporates including Coca-Cola European Partners, Citi Group, Microsoft, Virgin, and Shell.

Separately to employee-oriented activities, Zain was also one of the first companies to take a proactive approach to COVID-19, cooperating with government authorities, circulating internal and external communications across its social and print media, email, SMS and contact centers requesting all employees in the country to work remotely early on.

These initiatives provide employees with a greater sense of purpose and work satisfaction.

Zain's Diversity and Inclusion program has proven extremely successful in further motivating employees given it is one of the most progressive of any entity in the region, with initiatives focusing on Gender Diversity (WE); aiming to become Disability Inclusive by 2022 (WE ABLE); becoming a signatory to the International Labor Organization (ILO) Global Business and Disability Network Charter: Reverse Mentoring; and our Generation Z graduate program (ZY). Zain's internal innovation program (ZAINIAC) and other initiatives have all become central to the company's development as an organization, with the overwhelming success of these initiatives seeing all operations immediately enjoy direct benefits.

Zain personnel were quickly provided with the necessary tools and resources to effectively work from home, including secure connections to the company's virtual private network, and encouragement to use specific work systems ensuring operational efficiency and business continuity.

From a customer support perspective during the pandemic, Zain redesigned direct and indirect sales channels to ensure availability of devices and lines while reducing human contact with employees; doubled systems and staff capabilities to support online sales; and introduced innovative measures such as mobile branches for door-to-door delivery and arrangements with delivery platforms to sell SIM cards. Zain has consistently provided safety instructions and requirements for market-facing employees in branches, for example, in parallel to a program to boost its online and digital engagement with customers to reduce in-person interaction.

Despite the disruption brought about by the pandemic, Zain has continued to pay its employees full salaries, across all its operations, firmly believing that its people are the company's greatest single differentiator, and as such, the organization takes pride in the ongoing efforts to develop, support and uplift employees in every facet of their roles and lives.

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## US jury tells Apple to pay \$503m in patent case

**SAN FRANCISCO:** A jury in Texas on Friday decided that Apple should pay \$503 million for infringing virtual private network technology patented by software security firm VirmetX. The legal battle between Apple and Nevada-based VirmetX involved data transmission security in devices such as iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch, according to court documents.

"We thank the jury for their time and appreciate their consideration but are disappointed with the verdict and plan to appeal," Apple said in reply to an AFP inquiry. "This case has been going on for over a decade, with patents that are unrelated to the core operations of our products and have been found to be invalid by the patent office." VirmetX contended in the suit that Apple VPN On Demand functions used its patented technology.

VirmetX is based in Nevada, but patent suits are typically filed in states where jurors have been found more inclined to rule against Silicon Valley giants. Apple had challenged the validity of the VirmetX patent. VirmetX, which hasn't been able to gain traction with its own software, relies on patent royalties for its revenue, according to a Dallas Morning News report on the jury verdict. "Cases like this only serve to stifle innovation and harm consumers," Apple said. VirmetX did not immediately reply to a request for comment. — AFP



## Business

# Big Tech delivers strong profits amid COVID, political scrutiny

## Profits for Facebook, Amazon and Alphabet rise

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Big Tech powerhouses delivered robust quarterly earnings reports, leveraging the needs of pandemic-hit consumers amid heightened scrutiny of their economic power. Profits were up for Facebook, Amazon and Google-parent Alphabet, while Apple saw a modest dip in earnings on weakness in iPhone sales. The results—showing a combined profit of \$38 billion for the four companies—highlighted the massive economic power of the tech firms which have been able to ride out the global coronavirus pandemic better than most businesses. But critics say they are too big and too powerful.

US authorities have filed an antitrust complaint against Google and are reportedly considering action against Facebook. Meanwhile, lawmakers have sharpened attacks on social media firms for how they handle political content and “hate speech.” “Even the strongest free expression advocates don’t think you should be able to yell ‘Fire’ in a crowded theater,” Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said on an earnings call.

“Our policies try to balance free expression and safety as well,” Zuckerberg stated anew that he is in favor of regulation when it comes to deciding what should be allowed on social media, but worried poorly crafted laws could undermine online platforms.

“I worry that some proposals especially in the EU and actions planned by platform companies like Apple could have a meaningful negative effect on small businesses and economic recovery in 2021 and beyond,” Zuckerberg said. Alphabet chief executive Sundar Pichai said during an earnings call that the tech giant is confident it will make its case that the platform popularity comes from delivering a valued service, not abusing market power.

### Holiday shop early?

Amazon’s third-quarter profits tripled from a year ago to \$6.3 billion on strong retail sales and growth in

cloud computing. Revenues jumped 37 percent to \$96 billion for the technology and retail colossus.

Shares in Amazon dipped around one percent in after-hours trading following the results amid a weaker-than-expected holiday quarter outlook. “There is no doubt that Amazon’s latest results show it continues to be a winner from disruption caused by the pandemic,” said Neil Saunders of the research firm GlobalData.

But Saunders said growth was slower than in recent quarters as rivals ramped up competition, and that “Amazon’s share of wallet dropped back a little.” Amazon executives said they are ramping up distribution and delivery operations for what promises to be a blockbuster year-end online shopping season.

The company advised those planning on shopping online for the holidays to tend to it early to take pressure off delivery operations that will be stretched thin.

Facebook’s profit jumped 29 percent to \$7.8 billion in the quarter as the social network saw a rebound in the online ad market, despite an ad boycott over how it handles abusive content.

Revenue climbed to \$21.2 billion as Facebook continued to benefit from people relying on the internet to stay connected amid the pandemic. “Facebook has rebounded nicely from both the early-pandemic advertiser pullout, when marketers pulled ads across all media to redo messaging or conserve funds, and from the July ad boycott,” said eMarketer analyst Debra Aho Williamson.

“Despite its challenges with election turmoil and content moderation, it remains a go-to for advertisers,” she continued. Google-parent Alphabet said its profit climbed to \$11.2 billion in the latest quarter, also lifted by a rebound in digital advertising.

Money made from cloud computing offerings and from its Google Play shop for smartphones powered by its Android software also helped fuel the 42 percent jump in revenue to \$46.2 billion in the quarter, the company said. “None of the political machinations made any difference at all,” said analyst Patrick

Moorehead of Moor Insights and Strategy. “We had a Facebook boycott and a lot of regulatory scrutiny about Google. Digital advertising is back.” Blockbuster revenue in the quarter was led by an increase in ad spending at Google’s search engine and video streaming platform YouTube, according to chief financial officer Ruth Porat.



WASHINGTON, DC: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg testifies remotely during a Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee hearing with big tech companies on Friday on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. —AFP

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### Slow on 5G?

Apple, the richest member of the quartet with a market value near \$2 trillion, offered the most disappointing results of the group. Apple profit dipped 7 percent to \$12.7 billion, according to earnings figures. The tech giant’s total revenue edged up from last year’s level to \$64.7 billion in the quarter, but revenue

from iPhone sales—the major income driver for Apple—slid some 20 percent from a year ago, unsettling investors.

Apple revenue was down nearly 25 percent to \$7.9 billion in its important Greater China market, where 5G capabilities are factors in smartphone buying decisions. Apple just fielded its first 5G models in a new iPhone 12 line-up. China was a market “most heavily impacted” by the absence of the new iPhones in the quarter, Apple chief Tim Cook said on an earnings call.

The company’s share price sank more than four percent in after-hours trading.

“Financial performance aside, I don’t think this year will be a time that any of us look back on with great fondness or nostalgia,” Cook said. —AFP

## China’s factory activity growth slows in October

**BEIJING:** China’s factory activity expanded at a slightly slower pace in October but was slightly above analysts’ expectations, suggesting a continuing economic recovery as the country rebounds from the coronavirus shock.

The official manufacturing Purchasing Manager’s Index (PMI) fell to 51.4 in October from 51.5 in September, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed yesterday, remaining above the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction.

Analysts had expected it to slip slightly to 51.3 but said a broader recovery still appeared to be solidly on track. The data, particularly new export orders, indicates October’s trade figures should stay strong. Zhou Maohua, an analyst at China Everbright Bank, said in a note. However, the epidemic’s spread overseas could increase uncertainties for China’s exports over the next few months, said Zhou.

China’s vast industrial sector is steadily returning to the levels seen before the pandemic para-

lyzed huge swathes of the economy. Pent-up demand, stimulus-driven infrastructure expansion and surprisingly resilient exports are propelling the rebound, though the global outlook is dimming as many Western countries battle renewed surges in the virus that causes COVID-19, with some going back into virus lockdowns. The official PMI, which largely focuses on big and state-owned firms, showed overall new orders remained steady at 52.8, while new export orders rose to 51.0, improving from 50.8 a month earlier.

But smaller firms continued to struggle. A sub-index for those companies stood at 49.4 in October, slipping back into contraction from September’s 50.1. Companies also shed jobs for a sixth month in a row, and at a faster pace. A sub-index for employment fell to 49.3 from September’s 49.6.

“The manufacturing industry overall continues to pick up,” said NBS official Zhao Qinghe, while noting that small companies face weak market demand. Some companies reported that the resurgence of the epidemic overseas had lengthened procurement periods for imports of raw materials and increased transport costs. Zhao said in a statement released with the data. China’s economy grew a weaker-than-expected 4.9 percent in the third quarter year-on-year. It is expected to expand around 2 percent for the full year – the weakest in over three decades but still much



This photo taken on Friday shows people walking outside a shopping mall in Beijing. —AFP

stronger than other major economies.

The pandemic has been largely controlled in China, with daily life in much of the country returning to normal, although an outbreak emerged recently in the western region of Xinjiang.

A sister survey on the services sector showed activity expanded for the eighth straight month, hitting the highest level since October 2013, as the removal of restrictions on public gatherings and movement bolstered consumer demand. —Reuters

## US consumer income, spending gain in September

**WASHINGTON:** US consumers saw their incomes rise slightly in September, even as government support lapsed, and spending also rose modestly, the government reported Friday. Personal income rose 0.9 percent last month, beating analysts’ expectations, after a 2.5 percent drop in August, and personal consumption expenditures (PCE) rose 1.4 percent, according to the Commerce Department data. “Federal economic recovery payments slowed, as pandemic-related assistance programs continued to wind down,” the report said, but income gain was boosted by private wages and rents. The data was already incorporated into the third quarter GDP report released Thursday, which showed a 33.1 jump in growth, but the monthly report reveals spending held up in the most recent weeks.

However, economists have raised questions about

whether that can be sustained without additional government aid, especially as Covid-19 infections are surging. “Household spending provided a strong boost to growth in Q3. However, the outlook is less certain given rising virus cases that will restrict activity, close businesses and result in job losses,” Rubeela Farooqi, chief economist at High Frequency Economics said in an analysis.

And she warned that “savings, which provided a cushion to households, will diminish further in the absence of fiscal support. That will weigh on incomes and spending going forward.”

Policymakers in Washington have not been able to break the impasse over a new relief package to succeed the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act that Congress approved in late March which is credited with preventing an even worse economic collapse. The extra \$600 weekly unemployment benefits under the CARES Act expired at the end of July, but a few pandemic programs remain in place.

The \$159.2 billion increase in personal spending in September was driven by purchases of clothing and footwear as well as autos, the report said.

A smaller share of the increase was on services, where the largest contributors were health care



WASHINGTON: US consumers saw their incomes rise slightly in September, even as government support lapsed, and spending also rose modestly, the government reported Friday. —AFP

and fitness clubs, among others. The PCE price index, both overall and excluding food and energy, rose a modest 0.2 percent. The headline index was up 1.4 percent for the full year, meaning inflation remains tame. —AFP

## Profits at India’s Reliance slump

**MUMBAI:** Indian conglomerate Reliance Industries on Friday reported a 15 percent fall in its quarterly profits, as the coronavirus pandemic slowed demand, hitting its crucial oil refinery business.

The Mumbai-based behemoth—which is owned by Asia’s richest man, Mukesh Ambani—said its consolidated net profit for the July-September period dipped to 95.67 billion rupees (\$1.29 billion) from 112.62 billion rupees a year earlier. But the company beat estimates,

with a Bloomberg survey of analysts forecasting profits of 90.17 billion rupees.

“Retail business activity has normalized with strong growth in key consumption baskets as lockdowns ease across the country,” Ambani said in a statement. The oil-to-telecoms giant said its operating revenues fell 24 percent to 1.16 trillion rupees for the quarter, while refining revenues plunged 36 percent.

Its gross refining margin, the profit earned from each barrel of crude, was down to \$5.70 in the quarter ending in September, from \$6.30 in the previous quarter. Refining margins are a key profitability gauge for the company, which operates the world’s biggest refinery in Gujarat state.

But its telecom arm Jio saw revenues increase by 33

percent, offering investors some relief.

“With large capital raise in the last six months across Jio and Retail business, we have welcomed several strategic and financial investors into the Reliance family,” Ambani said. Ambani is locked in a high-stakes battle with Jeff Bezos, the world’s richest man, as Amazon and Reliance fight for a share of India’s massive e-commerce market.

The two firms are currently engaged in a row over Ambani’s acquisition of domestic retail giant Future Group—which Amazon has sought to delay, with a Singapore-based arbitration panel asking Reliance to halt the deal. Reliance has dismissed the panel’s order, saying its agreement with Future Group complies with Indian law. —AFP

## HK recession shows signs of slowing

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong’s long recession showed signs of easing in the third quarter, with a gradual improvement in domestic and external demand from an improving Chinese economy, an easing of the COVID-19 outbreak and stronger financial market activity. The economy shrank 3.4 percent in July-September from a year earlier, its fifth straight quarterly contraction, government advance estimates showed on Friday. That compared with a year-on-year contraction of 9.0 percent in April-June.

Activity picked up markedly from a slump early in the year as anti-virus measures were gradually relaxed and people returned to offices and stores.

“Looking ahead, the continued solid recovery of the mainland (Chinese) economy should render support to Hong Kong’s exports in the coming few months,” a government spokesman said in a statement.

The government said global demand and trade flows would further improve if the recovery of major advanced economies continues, and economic activities should keep recovering this year if local COVID-19 infections stabilize. “Now Hong Kong’s third wave of the COVID-19 outbreak is behind them, we expect a sizeable revival in the economy in Q4, barring another severe outbreak,” said Tommy Wu, lead economist at Oxford Economics, said in a research note, forecasting the city’s GDP growth to recover to around 5 percent in 2021. On a seasonally adjusted quarter-on-quarter comparison basis, gross domestic product (GDP) increased 3.0 percent from the second quarter, compared with a 0.1 percent slide in the previous three months.

Economic conditions had deteriorated with a third local wave of infections from the pandemic, but the pressure showed signs of stabilizing as the virus situation abated in September.

“I hope that the immigration policies can be relaxed by the first quarter of next year, then the economy can really begin to recover,” said Samuel Tse, an economist at DBS Bank.

The global financial hub’s economy had already been hit by often violent anti-government protests late last year and the US-China trade war.

Advance readings showed consumption and investment remaining weak in the third quarter, though economic activity likely drew some support from a strong bounce in China’s economy and from the Hong Kong government’s stimulus measures. Hong Kong’s unemployment rate rose to 6.4 percent in July-September, the highest in around 16 years. The city’s tourist arrivals in September plunged 99.7 percent from a year earlier to a provisional 9,132 visitors, the tourism board said, largely due to COVID curbs on visitors.

“COVID-19 will remain a major downside risk to the global and local economy until effective vaccines are widely available,” the government spokesman said. “The tourism industry is unlikely to see a swift rebound with widespread travel restrictions in place.” Longer term, questions are being raised about Hong Kong’s role as a finance centre, after Beijing imposed a sweeping security law on the city on July 1, heralding a more authoritarian era for China’s freest city. —Reuters

## Business

# Exxon Mobil, Chevron again report losses on low oil prices

## Coronavirus forces petroleum sector to rein in spending

NEW YORK: US oil giants ExxonMobil and Chevron reported another quarter of red ink Friday as uncertainty over oil demand dented by the coronavirus forced the petroleum sector to rein in spending. While both companies were hit by low commodity prices, driven by worldwide business and travel shutdowns, ExxonMobil had the bigger loss and again faced tough questions from investors over its strategy as shares tumbled.

The reports came a day after ExxonMobil announced it was cutting 1,900 US jobs, part of a plan to reduce global headcount by about 15 percent through 2022. Chevron has also trimmed spending this year. Company executives said they have been heartened by the comeback in consumption for diesel and gasoline but that jet fuel demand is still 45 percent below pre-Covid-19 levels.

ExxonMobil stressed that it expects demand to normalize after the pandemic, making continued investment in petroleum necessary. The company has long argued that a transition to zero-emission energy is years off. "We remain confident in our long-term strategy and the fundamentals of our business, and are taking the necessary actions to preserve value while protecting the balance sheet and dividend," ExxonMobil Chief Executive Darren Woods said in a statement.

"We are on pace to achieve our 2020 cost-reduction targets and are progressing additional savings next year as we manage through this unprecedented down cycle," ExxonMobil, which was bumped from the prestigious Dow Jones stock index in August following a plunge in its market value, reported a loss of \$680 million, the third straight quarter without profitability. The company reported \$3.2 billion profit in the same period of 2019.

Revenues fell 29 percent to \$46.2 billion in the quarter. At Chevron, which has much lower debt than ExxonMobil, the loss came in at \$207 million, compared with profits of \$2.6 billion in the year-ago period, as revenues fell 32.3 percent to 24.5 billion.

### Delayed recovery?

Industry experts expect oil and refined product demand to recover once the world economy gets past the pandemic, but there remains much uncertainty on when that will happen. A "delayed recovery scenario" in which the global economy comes



### ExxonMobil to cut 1,900 US jobs

back only in 2023 would require about four million barrels per day less of oil than if Covid-19 is gradually brought under control in 2021, according to a report released earlier this month by the International Energy Agency.

Under an IEA "sustainable development" scenario with more aggressive action to address climate change, oil demand through 2040 could fall to under 70 million barrels a day compared with around 100 million or more in the other scenarios.



In this file photo, Exxon signs at a station in Manassas, Virginia. — Afp

Peter McNally, an analyst at consultancy Third Bridge, said he expects a partial recovery in oil demand in 2021 and a full recovery in 2022 and "some growth over the next decade."

The speed of a shift to electric cars should not be overstated, McNally said. "Not everyone is going to buy a Tesla," he said. "It's going to take some time for that." Shares of ExxonMobil dropped 0.9 percent to \$32.67, while Chevron rose 1.0 percent to \$69.50.

### Dividend debate

ExxonMobil executives were pressed repeatedly on a conference call about their intention to

maintain a generous dividend, which the company has long championed as a priority for it and its shareholders.

Earlier this week, ExxonMobil maintained its payment of 87 cents per share. CFRA Research has estimated the dividend will cost ExxonMobil about \$15 billion for the year, not far under the expected capital budget for 2021. Senior Vice President Andrew Swiger said the company's base plan "conservatively assumes a gradual economic recovery" that includes somewhat higher oil prices consistent with leading third-party forecasts. But he acknowledged that "all bets are off" if things turn out much different from that. — AFP

## Oncost announces winners of membership draw

KUWAIT: Oncost, Kuwait's leading family grocer, launched its weekly membership draw campaign offering a variety of attractive prizes to customers who have joined their exclusive membership program, and shop at their various stores. Following the first draw, a felicitation ceremony was held at its Al-Qurain store on 26 October to announce the first group of 25 winners of the cash prizes. The first place winner is Khaled Al-Naser, who received KD 1000, second place is Mohammad Golam, who won KD 500, and third place is Mohammad Jahangheer with KD250. The remaining winners will be presented a cash prize of KD 100 and KD 50 each.

A small gathering was present on the occasion with adherence to health ministry instructions including social distancing. Saleh Al-Tunaib CEO, Oncost thanked the customers for helping their brand to grow, and for being loyal patrons. Remesh Anandadas, COO also thanked all the valued customers for their valuable support, especially while Oncost is launching their exciting membership draw campaign.

During the campaign customers who shop at any Oncost stores are entitled to enter the draw on every KD 5 worth of their purchase. Winners, chosen from customers who are Oncost members, will be picked every week from an electronic draw to receive up to KD 3,000 in cash. The campaign is ongoing till 31st of December



2020, and the last date to redeem your cash prize is on the 30th of January, 2021.

This campaign further rewards members of Oncost's Membership Program, which was launched on the 1st of January, 2018. Members can take advantage of up to 4 percent cash back on their purchases made during their membership period. The Membership Program seeks to reward members for their loyalty to the brand, in addition to providing them with a large

range of products at very cost-effective prices. Members can also enroll in the family program, taking advantage of additional savings and other privileges including special offers year-round. Oncost is your ultimate one-stop shopping destination for its customer-centric approach that ensures its patrons receive additional value when shopping at its stores that offers a range of high quality products at competitive prices.

## Oil prices slide on demand worries

NEW YORK: Oil prices dropped on demand fears as more nations go into lockdown to staunch the spread of the coronavirus, while global stocks mostly rose after the prior session's rout.

Both main oil contracts fell five percent for part of the day before clawing back some of their losses, extending this week's meltdown to plumb four-month lows on virus-driven demand fears. "The new lockdowns have since yesterday caused a carnage in the oil market," said Bjornar Tonhaugen, head of oil markets at Rystad Energy. "Oil demand will lose ground as a result of the new lockdowns... Prices now naturally decline on this grim prospect," he added.

Meanwhile, stocks were spared Wednesday's bloodbath which saw losses of more than three percentage points in several major markets. Wall Street enjoyed a much better session, led by the Nasdaq, which jumped 1.8 percent ahead of major earnings reports from large tech companies.

Apple, Amazon, Facebook and Google parent Alphabet all won gains during the session, but Apple and Amazon fell after their reports were

released in after-hours trading.

The gains came as the United States reported a 33.1 percent growth rate in the third quarter, a stunning improvement following a similar drop in the prior quarter. The record result was driven by consumer spending supported by a massive \$3 trillion in government aid, much of which has since expired. Analysts have cautioned that Washington's inability to approve a new stimulus package leaves the economy vulnerable in the fourth quarter, especially if the US coronavirus outbreak worsens. The data are "akin to looking in the rear-view mirror, as the US economy is now slowing and the economic outlook deteriorating amid surging new cases of COVID-19 across almost all US states," said UniCredit analyst Daniel Vernazza.

After spending part of the day in the red, European stocks moved higher in the afternoon after the European Central Bank signaled it would bolster its pandemic response in December. The recovery is "losing momentum more rapidly than expected" after the partial rebound seen in the summer, ECB president Christine Lagarde said after a virtual meeting of the 25-member governing council. With risks "clearly tilted to the downside", she said ECB governors will use next month's updated growth and inflation forecasts to "recalibrate our instruments" to keep credit flowing in the 19-nation currency club. — AFP

## Delta reaches deal with pilots union to avert furloughs

NEW YORK: Delta Air Lines reached a preliminary agreement with its pilots union to avert furloughs through January 2022, the company and union said Friday. The agreement in principle saves money for Delta at a time when passenger travel is only a fraction of its pre-pandemic level and averts the prospect of involuntary job cuts with the expiration of a federal payroll support plan for carriers.

The agreement "can help Delta to be better positioned through the long and choppy COVID-19 pandemic recovery," Delta Senior Vice President John Laughter said in a memo to flight operations staff. "It contains several quality of life improvements while allowing Delta to generate much needed savings through a path to help avoid furloughs—a key goal of ours from the beginning."

A statement from the Air Line Pilots Association, which represents Delta's 13,000 pilots, said the agreement allows the company to save five percent in monthly costs for pilots in exchange for permitting pilots higher tax-deferred savings for retirement. Delta also agreed to "several scheduling improvements" for pilots, the ALPA said.

Both sides are hoping for another round of federal spending to support airline payrolls. The Cares Act enacted in the spring provided billions of dollars in payroll support aid to Delta and other carriers but barred involuntary airline furloughs through the end of September. — AFP

## ABK launches promotion with Talabat

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced the launch of its new campaign with Talabat, the Middle East's largest online food ordering platform, for its credit and prepaid cardholders. The scheme runs from 1st November 2020 until 31st December 2020, offering foodies a chance to enter the lucky draw and win their total monthly spend back of KD50 credited into Talabat's wallet.



## Mexico's economic slump eases in third quarter

MEXICO CITY: Mexico said Friday its economy, the second-biggest in Latin America, showed signs of recovery in the third quarter after it relaxed pandemic control measures that had triggered an unprecedented slump. Gross domestic product (GDP) rebounded 12.0 percent in the July-September period from the previous quarter, the most since record-keeping began several decades ago, according to an official preliminary estimate.

Compared with a year earlier, GDP was down 8.6 percent, national statistics institute INEGI reported.

"Our economy is recovering," said President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. "Our forecast is coming true that we would fall due to the pandemic, but rebound quickly, like a V," he told reporters.

The economy suffered a record 18.7 percent plunge in the second quarter from a year earlier after the country was semi-paralyzed by lockdown measures. Mexico has registered more than 90,000 coronavirus deaths—one of the world's highest tolls. The government imposed lockdown measures at the end of March and started gradually reopening the economy in June.

A rise in employment in September and October means the labor market

could return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of the first quarter of 2021, Lopez Obrador said.

The first draw date will take place on the 10th December 2020, whereby 18 lucky winners will receive their month's spend back, and the second draw will take place on 7th January 2021, with the remaining 18 winners announced, earning cardholders one chance per KD 50 to enter the monthly draw. The diversification of the bank's offerings is yet another milestone in ABK's commitment to providing its customers with smart and rewarding spending solutions, while safeguarding their wellness through contactless transactions.

could return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of the first quarter of 2021, Lopez Obrador said.

### "Second wave"

Analysts, however, struck a more cautious tone, saying that the economy still faces a difficult path ahead. "The recovery is far from complete," said Gabriela Siller, an economist at Banco BASE, noting that Mexico was still in the grips of the pandemic.

"A second wave (of infections) is likely to slow down the recovery," she warned. The Mexican economy has now posted six straight quarters of year-on-year declines, something not seen since 1983 during a severe financial crisis, Siller noted. Some analysts have criticized Lopez Obrador for not spending more to boost the economy, particularly the private sector, in the face of the coronavirus outbreak.

The left-wing populist says his priority is helping ordinary Mexicans with social aid and loans while avoiding saddling the country with increased debt. The central bank warned last month that the economy was in danger of shrinking by 12.8 percent for the whole of 2020 if the pandemic worsens.

The International Monetary Fund has urged Mexico to do more to boost the economy with fiscal and monetary stimulus. It forecasts that Mexican GDP will shrink 9.0 percent in 2020 before rebounding 3.5 percent in 2021. The government announced a \$14 billion investment plan this month in cooperation with the private sector to boost the economy through infrastructure projects. — AFP

# Classifieds

Sunday, November 1, 2020

**Kuwait Times**  
 Now you can browse  
[www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net)  
 e-mail: [info@kuwaittimes.net](mailto:info@kuwaittimes.net)

الطيران المدني  
**Civil Aviation**  
 State of Kuwait - دولة الكويت



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 66819 - 66817  
 Fax: (+965) 24348714  
[www.met.gov.kw](http://www.met.gov.kw)

## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

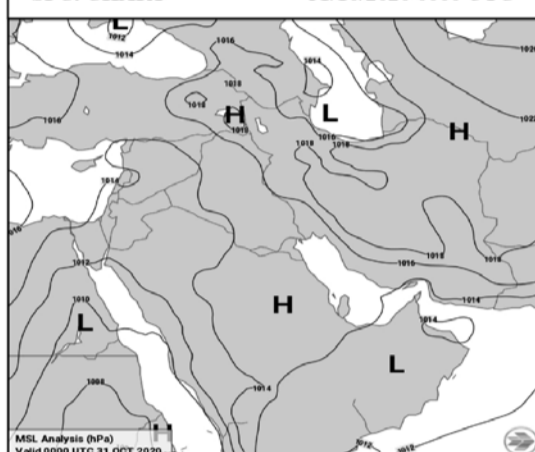
**BY DAY:** Rather hot with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind with speed of 06 - 28 km/h.

**BY NIGHT:** Fair and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate south westerly wind with speed of 06 - 30 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

**WEATHER WARNING** No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	34 °C	21 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	35 °C	15 °C
ABDALY	35 °C	17 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	35 °C	18 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	30 °C	24 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	33 °C	18 °C
WAFRA	34 °C	15 °C
SALMY	33 °C	15 °C

**SFC. CHART** 31/10/2020 0000 UTC



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	11/01	Rather hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas	34 °C	16 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 30 km/h
Monday	11/02	Rather hot and Relatively humid with a chance for fog forming at night and some scattered	34 °C	15 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 30 km/h
Tuesday	11/03	Rather hot and Humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for fog forming at night	35 °C	15 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Wednesday	11/04	Rather hot and Humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for fog forming at night and	34 °C	18 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:40
Sunrise	06:01
Zuhr	11:32
Asr	14:40
Sunset	17:03
Isha	18:21

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	34 °C
MIN. Temp.	14 °C
MAX. RH	47 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	S 18 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. U.P.O

## Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Shaikh Hassan Bathusha Azhikottayil Kunhimon**, holder of Indian passport no. M5457545 issued at Kuwait on 03.03.2015 hereby change my name to Shaikh Hassan Bathusha. (C 5808) 29-10-2020

## Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1

**EMERGENCY 112**

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

## Word Search

### The Sciences



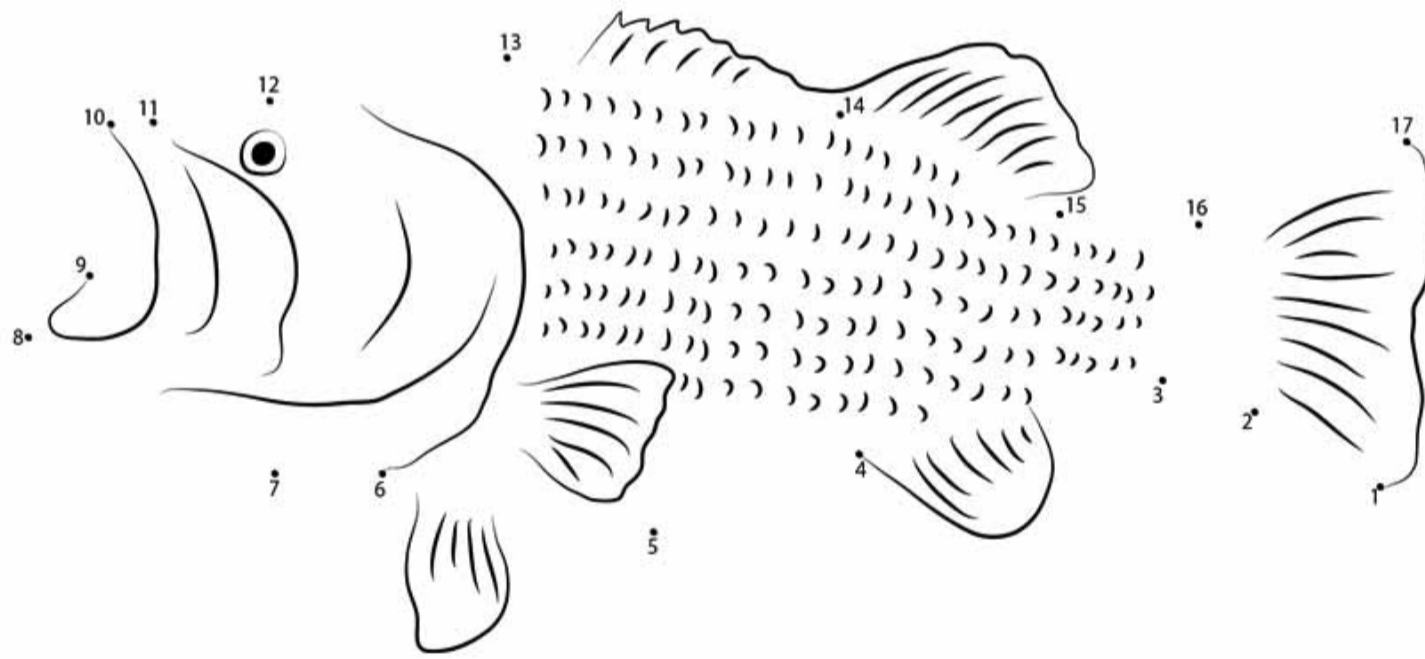
ANATOMY  
 ANTHROPOLOGY  
 ARCHEOLOGY  
 ASTRONOMY  
 BIOLOGY  
 BOTANY  
 CHEMISTRY  
 COMPUTER SCIENCE  
 ECOLOGY

ELECTRONICS  
 ENGINEERING  
 ENTOMOLOGY  
 FORESTRY  
 GENETICS  
 GEOLOGY  
 MATHEMATICS  
 MEDICINE  
 METEOROLOGY

OCEANOGRAPHY  
 PALEONTOLOGY  
 PHYSICS  
 PHYSIOLOGY  
 SEISMOLOGY  
 TAXONOMY  
 ZOOLOGY



## Join the Dots



## STAR TRACK

**Aries (March 21-April 19)**  
 Powerful issues arise in your life that make it difficult to find peace, Aries. Perhaps your first tendency is to confide in your partner. More than likely, this person is contributing to the difficulties you're now having. Your best bet is to spend some time alone. If you're already alone, so much the better. Cherish this time instead of letting it make you mad.

**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**  
 You may be like a giant trying to befriend a small bug, Cancer. You have absolutely nothing in common and don't even speak the same language. With one accidental move, you could easily squash that little bug. This isn't to say that you can't learn to become best friends. Just know that this kind of relationship is going to take some work.

**Libra (September 23-October 22)**  
 If you're in the market for romance, Libra, whether with a new partner or rekindling the fire with a current partner, be careful. Small issues could rage out control today. Extreme conditions are likely to occur, thanks to your sensitive emotions combined with a surge of energy from the outside. Try not to get too upset when tension rises because of something unimportant.

**Capricorn (December 22-January 19)**  
 At the end of the day, you're the one who has to look in the mirror and know who you are, Capricorn. Think about this the next time you're tempted to make a rude comment or spread a displeasing fact about someone else. One side of you may be able to rationalize behavior that the other side simply despises. Today look at both of sides of yourself, not just the one that pleases you.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**  
 You may be trying to get to the end of the road too quickly without really enjoying all the steps along the way, Taurus. This is especially true when it comes to any sort of artistic project or romantic partnership that you might be involved in at this time. If you aren't savoring every part of your journey, then perhaps this isn't the path you should be on.

**Leo (July 23-August 22)**  
 There is irony in today's situation, Leo. The only real remedy for situations like this is to accept them and joke about it. If you try to take yourself too seriously, especially when it comes to art or romance, you will inevitably fail. Your heart is sensual and your emotions profound. Bring yourself into balance by laughing instead of crying about the events of the day.

**Scorpio (October 23-November 21)**  
 Things may get a bit difficult in your romantic life because of someone in the partnership who isn't necessarily taking a very realistic approach to the situation, Scorpio. There's a bit of a power play going on as someone tries to throw their weight around without considering the other person's feelings. Tension is brewing, and you'd be wise to deal with it now.

**Aquarius (January 20- February 18)**  
 When it comes to romance, your body is apt to turn to jelly today. You may be so emotional that you can't function, Aquarius. That's love. And even though it can be heavenly, it can also be debilitating. You could deliberate for hours about an issue because you don't want to make a move without your partner's input. If you don't have a romantic partner now, find one soon, but not today.

**Gemini (May 21-June 20)**  
 When your heart is gently touched, it feels loving, generous, and supportive of everyone, Gemini. If your heart is lonely, it feels deserted by everyone. It would be impossible to try to make sense of why things need to be so extreme for you, but the fact of the matter is that you don't need to figure it out rationally. You only need to accept that this is how you feel.

**Virgo (August 23-September 22)**  
 The hungrier you get, the more determined you will become, Virgo. Be careful that your determination doesn't turn into desperation and neediness. It's unattractive and will get you nowhere. Keep on the upward spiral, and let determination turn into inspiration and cooperation. You will find this especially true when it comes to matters of the heart. You have a great deal of power. Put it to good use.

**Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)**  
 Your creative juices are flowing freely, Sagittarius, but there appears to be a roadblock. Something or someone apparently doesn't want you to continue down the path you're on. Perhaps he or she is scared that you're going to discover a whole new passion in life that they don't necessarily agree with. Don't forget who is running your show - you and no one else.

**Pisces (February 19-March 20)**  
 Will you go out with me? Be careful if a person says yes when you ask that question today, Pisces. You could take the nature of this situation to the extreme. Saying yes doesn't mean you're suddenly in charge of his or her life. Nor are you responsible for anything that person does or how they feel. If you're still asking the question without getting any positive responses, don't worry.

## Lifestyle | Features



A recent undated picture released by Lebanon's Imagic company shows actress Siham Haddad on the set of Emile Slailaty short movie "The pianist", part of the "Beirut 6:07" series that started airing on streaming platform Shahid VIP. — AFP photos



A recent undated picture released by Lebanon's Imagic company shows actor Mohammad Akil (left) and actress Mireille Panossian (right) on the set of the short-movie "Abbas and Fadel".



A recent undated picture released by Lebanon's Imagic company shows actor Mohammad Akil (left) and director Mazen Fayad (right) on the set of the short movie "Abbas and Fadel".

## MONTHS AFTER BEIRUT BLAST, CINEMATIC TRIBUTES STREAM ONLINE

A distressed son looks for his father, a lazy beach day ends in tragedy: Lebanese can now stream short films about this summer's devastating port blast-but some say it's just too soon. Only months after the August 4 explosion killed more than 200 people and ravaged large parts of the capital, the Shahid VIP streaming platform says its aim is to pay tribute to the victims. But some say they do not want to relive the trauma shown in the "Beirut 6:07" pm series, named after the exact time a huge stash of ammonium nitrate detonated in a dockside warehouse after it caught fire. Mazen Fayad, one of the project's producers and a director of one of the films making their online premiere this month, said the intention was to honor those killed.

"We have the responsibility to talk about them and to keep the memory of these people alive," he said. "We didn't have to look very far, the stories were in front of us, we were hearing about

them every day." The explosion, which also injured thousands, was the latest blow to Lebanese already reeling from an economic crisis that sparked mass anti-government protests. In the short film Fayed co-directed with Nadia Tabbara, a young man desperately runs around the ravaged port, looking for any trace of his father who works there. Just a few hours earlier they had argued, we learn, as flashbacks recount the story of this Shiite family of modest means. The father, who fought in the 1975-1990 civil war, had despaired to see his son caught up in sectarian politics and taking part in violent counter-protests.

## 'Too soon?'

In another film, filmmaker Caroline Labaki imagines what could have happened if the explosion had been prevented. It shows Beirut firefighters celebrating a birthday, before rushing out to put out a fire on the docks. A news

report announces the blaze has been put out before reaching the massive stockpile of fertilizer, averting disaster. But in real life, the explosion could not be prevented and 10 firefighters were among those who lost their lives in Lebanon's worst peacetime disaster. Directors worked pro-bono to make the 15 films each 10 minutes long, produced by Big Picture Studios and Imagic, Fayad said.

The streaming platform covered the production costs including pay for part of the crews. But the concept has received mixed reviews online. Several social media users have questioned its timing, including after the series' action-film-like trailer was released. "I almost had a panic attack just watching this trailer," one Instagram user wrote. "You are making us relive the horror we have been trying to forget." Another wrote: "People haven't been dead three months... people are still traumatized." "You think it's the time to

make a show about our tragedies?" Another commented: "Way too soon, very disrespectful." On November 22, Lebanon's Independence Day, Saudi-financed satellite television channel MBC4, which owns Shahid, is to air the films to audiences across the Arabic-speaking region. Until then, viewers can watch 11 of the films already available on Shahid VIP for a fee. The streaming platform refused to give figures but said the series had been "well-received in the Levant region, where it quickly became among the most watched titles".

## 'Like group therapy'

Among the short films, filmmaker Ingrid Bawab chose to portray a couple at the beach. The camera films seawater gently lapping against the beach, before panning back over the pebbles towards a couple taking in the last rays, then packing up to drive home. Then disaster strikes. "It's about

dreams, hopes and plans that got shattered," Bawab said. It's about "what was before and what was ruined. It's not a film that sears your eyes, it's one that breaks your heart." The director said it was the most emotionally charged project she had ever worked on. "It was like group therapy," she said. "The crew were people who had escaped the blast, lost their home or people they knew," she said. Streaming giant Netflix too has taken an interest in Lebanon.

This month, the platform said it and the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture had set up a \$500,000 emergency relief fund to support struggling workers in its film and television industry. Netflix is also showcasing 34 Lebanese cinematic gems "to give audiences from around the world a glimpse into the struggles, hopes and dreams of Lebanon". — AFP

## Ariana Grande drops sultry new album, backs Biden

Ariana Grande had the twitterati abuzz Friday after dropping her third album in three years, a pandemic-era meld of juicy pop and soulful R&B that sees the superstar's soaring vocals turn increasingly carnal. After releasing the title track "positions" last week along with a presidential cosplay music video-in which Grande and her all-female aides conduct White House business looking very Jackie O-the 27-year-old issued her sixth studio album days before a US election playing out during a still-raging pandemic. "love u so much i am so so grateful and excited," she wrote on Instagram hours before the album's release. "can't stop cryin. hooooo00000000."



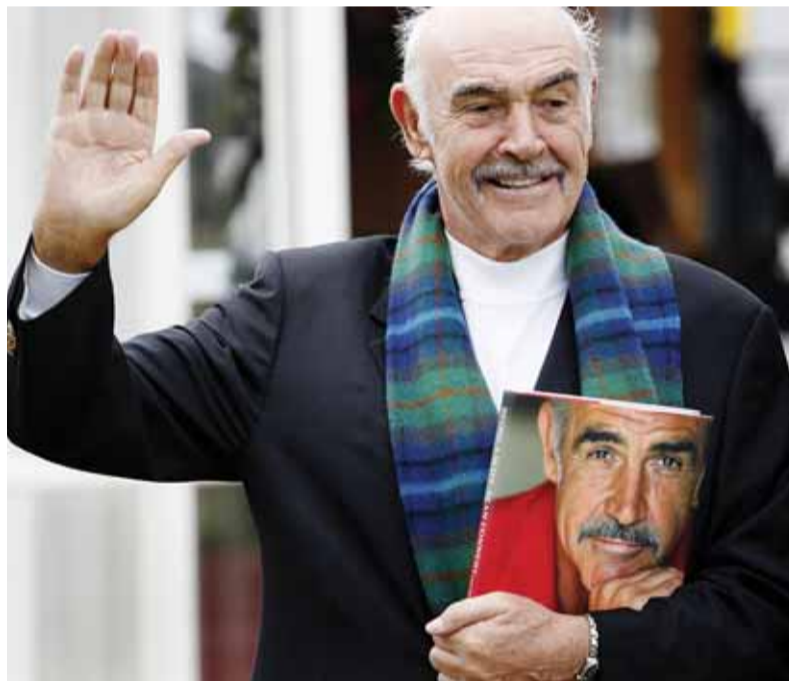
In this file photo US singer Ariana Grande attends Billboard's 13th Annual Women In Music event at Pier 36 in New York City. — AFP

Grande's album drop comes at a devastating moment for the music industry, with the lucrative tours artists rely on indefinitely stalled. "positions" sees the artist-who spent her early 20s tonally wavering between bubblegum eyelash batting and seductive lip-bites-lean into the raunch, pairing a more mature sound with unabashedly sexual lyrics. The particularly thirsty "34+35"-you do the math-had social media flushed. Tracks including "nasty," "obvious," and collaborations with The Weeknd, Doja Cat and Ty Dolla \$ign also jumped out as fan favorites. "baby pardon my french, but can you speak in tongues," Grande sings in "love language," swinging between her signature breathy lilt and impressive four-octave range.

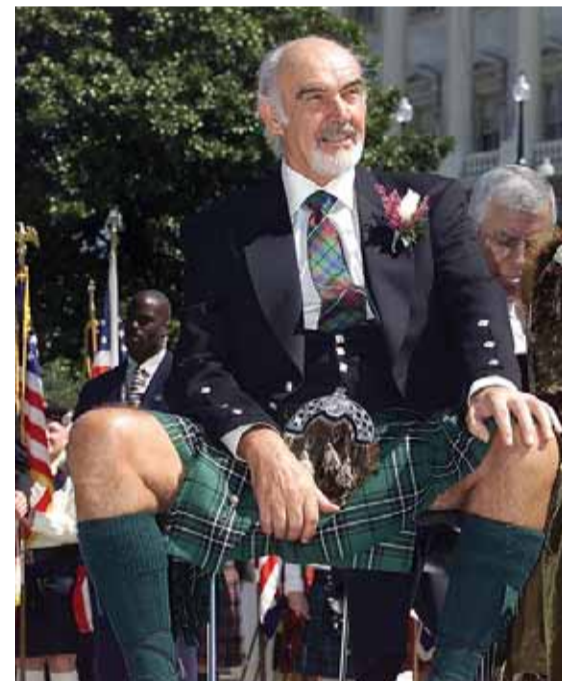
And "my hair" is a sensual jazz number in which Grande instructs her listeners how to stroke her waist-length locks. The video for "positions" brought Grande glam to the Oval Office-but the song itself was more about politics of the heart. "boy, I'm tryna meet your mama on a Sunday / Then make a lotta love on a Monday," she sings. But in speaking to her nearly 300 million followers between Instagram and Twitter, Grande has made her electoral views clear and encouraged fans to get out and vote. "me on my way to remind u all to vote early and also on my way to switch them positions for u," the Italian-American New Yorker posted along with a promo clip of her strutting through an ersatz West Wing, in a clear nod to Democrat Joe Biden.—AFP



In this file photo taken on October 22, 1982 British actor Sean Connery poses in Nice during the making of the film "Never say, never again". — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on August 25, 2008 British actor Sean Connery poses as he promotes his new book, called 'Being a Scot' at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, in Charlotte Square gardens, in Edinburgh.



In this file photo taken on April 05, 2001 British actor Sean Connery wears his family colors before receiving the Wallace Award from the American Scottish Foundation on the West Steps of the US Capitol in Washington, DC.

## FORMER JAMES BOND ACTOR SEAN CONNERY DIES AGED 90

Scottish movie legend Sean Connery, who shot to international stardom as the suave, sexy and sophisticated British agent James Bond and went on to dominate the silver screen for four decades, has died aged 90, the BBC and Sky News reported yesterday. Connery was raised in near poverty in the slums of Edinburgh and worked as a coffin polisher, milkman and lifeguard before his bodybuilding hobby helped launch an acting career that made him one of the world's biggest stars. He will be remembered first as British agent 007, the character created by novelist Ian Fleming and immortalized by Connery in films starting with "Dr. No" in 1962.

As Bond, his debonair manner and wry humor in foiling flamboyant villains and cavorting with beautiful women belied a darker, violent edge, and he crafted a depth of character that set the standard for those who followed him in the role. He would introduce himself in the movies with the signature line, "Bond - James Bond." But Connery was unhappy being defined by the role and once said he "hated that damned James Bond". Tall and handsome, with a throaty voice to match a sometimes crusty personality, Connery played a series of noteworthy roles besides Bond and won an Academy Award for his portrayal of a tough Chicago cop in "The Untouchables" (1987). He was 59 when People magazine declared him the "sexiest man alive" in 1989.

Connery was an ardent supporter of Scotland's independence and had the words "Scotland Forever" tattooed on his arm while serving in the Royal Navy. When he was knighted at the age of 69 by Britain's Queen Elizabeth in 2000 at Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh, he wore full Scottish dress including the green-

and-black plaid kilt of his mother's MacLeod clan.

## Became fed up with 'idiots'

Some noteworthy non-Bond films included director Alfred Hitchcock's "Marnie" (1964), "The Wind and the Lion" (1975) with Candice Bergen, director John Huston's "The Man Who Would Be King" (1975) with Michael Caine, director Steven Spielberg's "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (1989) and the Cold War tale "The Hunt for Red October" (1990). Fans of alternative cinema will always remember him starring as the "Brutal Exterminator" Zed in John Boorman's mind-bending fantasy epic "Zardoz" (1974), where a heavily moustached



In this file photo taken on March 7, 1987 Connery, President of 12th French Academy Cesar Awards, winks at the photographer while dancing in Paris with French actress Jeanne Moreau.

Connery spent much of the movie running around in a skimpy red loin-cloth, thigh-high leather boots and a pony tail. Connery retired from movies after disputes with the director of his final outing, the forgettable "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen" in 2003. "I get fed up dealing with idiots," he said.

The Bond franchise was still going strong more than five decades after Connery started it. The lavishly produced movies, packed with high-tech gadgetry and spectacular effects, broke box office records and grossed hundreds of millions of dollars. After the smashing success of "Dr. No," more Bond movies followed for Connery in quick succession: "From Russia with Love" (1963), "Goldfinger" (1964), "Thunderball" (1965) and "You Only Live Twice" (1967). Connery then grew concerned about being typecast and decided to break away. Australian actor George Lazenby succeeded him as Bond in "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" in 1969.

But without Connery it lacked what the public wanted and he was lured back in 1971 for "Diamonds Are Forever" with temptations that included a slice of the profits, which he said would go to a Scottish educational trust. He insisted it would be his last time as Bond. Twelve years later, at age 53, Connery was back as 007 in "Never Say Never Again" (1983), an independent production that enraged his old mentor, producer Albert "Cubby" Broccoli.

## Preferred beer to martinis

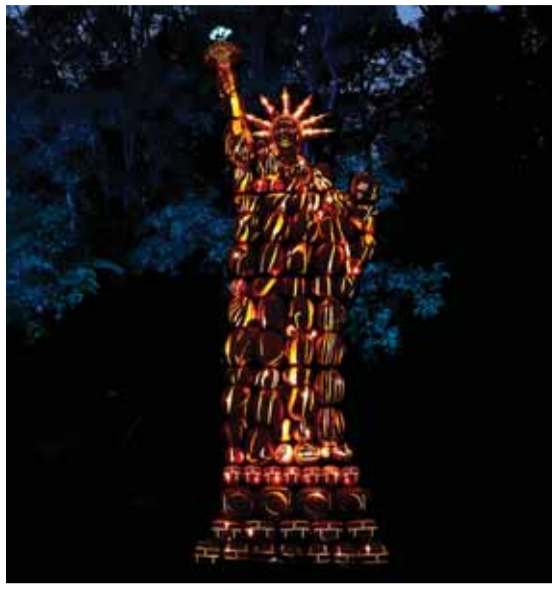
In a 1983 interview, Connery summed up the ideal Bond film as having "marvelous locations, interesting ambience, good stories, interesting characters - like a detective story with espionage and exotic settings and nice birds." Connery

was a very different type from Fleming's Bond character with his impeccable social background, preferring beer to Bond's vodka martini cocktails that were "shaken not stirred". But Connery's influence helped shape the character in the books as well as the films. He never attempted to disguise his Scottish accent, leading Fleming to give Bond Scottish heritage in the books that were released after Connery's debut.

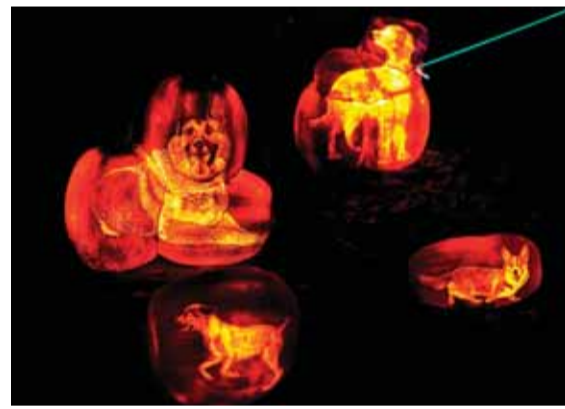
Born Thomas Connery on Aug. 25, 1930, he was the elder of two sons of a long-distance truck driver and a mother who worked as a cleaner. He dropped out of school at age 13 and worked in a variety of menial jobs. At 16, two years after World War Two ended, Connery was drafted into the Royal Navy, and served three years. "I grew up with no notion of a career, much less acting," he once said. "I certainly never have plotted it out. It was all happenstance, really." Connery played small parts with theatre repertory companies before graduating to films and television.

It was his part in a 1959 Disney leprechaun movie, "Darby O'Gill and the Little People," that helped land the role of Bond. Broccoli, a producer of the Bond films, asked his wife to watch Connery in the Disney movie while he was searching for the right leading actor. Dana Broccoli said her husband told her he was not sure Connery had sex appeal. "I saw that face and the way he moved and talked and I said: 'Cubby, he's fabulous!'" she said. "He was just perfect, he had star material right there." Connery married actress Diane Cilento in 1962. Before divorcing 11 years later, they had a son, Jason, who became an actor. He married French artist Micheline Roquebrune, whom he met playing golf, in 1975. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Halloween decorations are seen on display during the Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, featuring over 7,000 hand-carved, illuminated pumpkins set against the mysterious backdrop of Van Cortlandt Manor's 17th-century buildings and riverside landscape. — AFP photos



# PANDEMIC, ELECTION BREW AN EXTRA-SPOOKY HALLOWEEN

Croton-on-Hudson is a quaint village an hour north of New York City that has thrived thanks to a spooky tale written some 200 years ago. The town is still holding its annual Halloween bash this year—with the US election and the coronavirus pandemic lending an extra dose of chills. The October 31 holiday is an industry of its own in this picturesque corner of the Hudson River Valley. Tens of thousands of tourists from all over the world venture there seeking the spirit of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," an 1820 story by Washington Irving about a headless horseman who haunts a superstitious schoolteacher.

But the coronavirus has killed more than 226,000 people in the United States and is still sweeping the nation. It's forced the cancellation of many Halloween events and haunted house attractions, where maniacal clowns and monsters terrorize visitors in the dark. Still, Croton-on-Hudson is clinging to its major "Jack O'Lantern Blaze," where more than 7,000 hand-carved pumpkins come to life for a sound and light show in the gardens of the historic Van Cortlandt mansion. "I am just so glad that this was going on this year to keep just something for them," said Sarah Nocerino, referring to her primary school-aged daughters, who visit the festivities every fall. "They've had so much that they couldn't do this year, it was nice to have a tradition that we can still participate in for Halloween," the 36-year-old from nearby Connecticut told AFP.

### 'Halloween is Christmas here'

Organizers have reduced capacity by 33 percent, and aren't selling food or drinks. But visitors, many in costume, can still stand in awe of the pumpkins, which morph into every-



thing from a huge Statue of Liberty to a planetarium and a carousel with skeleton horses. Not to mention a Museum of Pumpkin Art (MoPA), which features Edvard Munch's "The Scream" along with the Mona Lisa and a Banksy. The fete usually draws more than 100,000 visitors and boosts area businesses. But this year, tourism is scaled back and most of it is local. "We take all the precautions for a safe experience," said Rob Schweitzer of the Historic Hudson Valley non-profit behind the event. "It's really good for a morale booster also!"

And another town near Croton, once called North Tarrytown, is itself now called Sleepy Hollow after residents here voted to change the community's name in 1996. In the Sleepy Hollow cemetery, a group of teenagers tour the Old Dutch Church on a late October afternoon. "Halloween is Christmas here," said John Paine, the 54-year-old church custodian, in front of Irving's grave that's situated among the oak and cypress trees that are losing their ochre leaves in the brisk autumn wind. The author's tombstone has been replaced several times, as fans of his

work hammer off pieces as souvenirs. Since the name change, it's Halloween all year long in Sleepy Hollow.

The Headless Horseman's image appears on sculptures and even ambulances, while fire trucks and street signs are orange and black. The church-dating back to 1685 — that figures in Irving's tale canceled its annual theatrical performance of the legend, but tours of the cemetery by lantern continue. According to Paine, the fellow New England town of Salem, Massachusetts—where the famed witch trials took place in the 1600s—"is big enough that they can do (spooky festivities) year round." "We only get our one shot in October; it'd be a sad season indeed if we didn't have pumpkins and ghosts and goblins and skeletons."

### 'Spooky but safe'

Falling days before a polarizing vote between the Republican president Donald Trump and his Democratic rival Joe Biden, there is a strong electoral undercurrent this Halloween. "You know what's scarier than Halloween? People not voting!" said Dana Nessel, the attorney general of Michigan, in a Twitter video where she sports a skull mask. Stores are proffering vote-by-

mail costumes, as well as a wig of Vice President Mike Pence with a fly on it, mimicking the infamous insect incident during his debate with rival Kamala Harris. Some lawns feature decorations inspired by Covid-19, and prop skeletons wear masks.

From California to Massachusetts, several states have discouraged kids from participating in the traditional trick-or-treat on October 31. Some cities have cancelled their events altogether. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has warned of the risks, recommending that candy be left far from the door and in individual bags. In New York, the annual Halloween parade that attracts some 60,000 people is being replaced with a virtual puppet show, performed by unemployed Broadway artists. But Croton-on-Hudson is keeping its goblin parade, said its mayor Brian Pugh. "Seven months into the pandemic, the emotional toll of social distancing is draining many people's spirits," he said. "I hope that residents will take advantage of these opportunities to safely celebrate and enjoy a Halloween that's spooky but safe." — AFP



## Scarlett Johansson remarries in 'intimate ceremony'

Hollywood star Scarlett Johansson has married for a third time, tying the knot at an "intimate ceremony" over the weekend with comedian Colin Jost, it was announced Thursday. Johansson, the world's top-paid actress last year who is set to star in the much-delayed Marvel superhero film "Black Widow," announced the nuptials through food charity Meals on Wheels. The pair wed in front of "immediate family and loved ones, following COVID-19 safety precautions," the charity wrote on Instagram. "Their wedding wish is to help make a difference for vulnerable older adults during this difficult time by supporting @mealsonwheelsamerica," said the post, inviting donations. The 35-year-old star became engaged to "Saturday Night Live" writer and actor Jost, 38, in May 2019 after two years of dating.



In this file photo Scarlett Johansson and Colin Jost arrive for the 70th Emmy Awards at the Microsoft Theatre in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Natasha Romanoff, and earned \$56 million to top Forbes' 2019 top-paid actress list. Johansson earned two Oscar nominations last year, for "Jojo Rabbit" and "Marriage Story." In addition to her acting, Johansson has previously spoken out for women's causes: she was one of the first to join and help finance the Time's Up movement that works to defend victims of sexual harassment and abuse. — AFP

## ACTRESS LORI LOUGHLIN BEGINS PRISON TERM FOR US COLLEGE ADMISSIONS SCAM

American actress Lori Loughlin began her two-month prison term in California Friday after admitting to conspiracy to commit fraud as part of her role in a sprawling college admissions scandal. Loughlin—best known for playing Aunt Becky in the 1980s-90s hit sitcom "Full House"—reported to a low-security federal camp in Dublin, some 30 miles east of San Francisco. She and her husband, designer Mossimo Giannulli, were among some 50 people indicted over an elaborate scam to secure spots for already privileged children at prestigious US universities. Actress Felicity Huffman of "Desperate Housewives" fame was released last October from the same prison, after serving 11 days of a two-week sentence for her role in the scam.

Loughlin, 56, had been ordered to surrender to the US Bureau of Prisons before November 19. She also faces two years of supervised release, a \$150,000 fine and 100 hours of commu-

nity service. She and her husband were sentenced by a federal judge in August. The pair admitted to paying \$500,000 to gain admission for their two daughters at the University of Southern California as recruits to the rowing crew team—a sport neither had ever trained in. Giannulli, 57, described in the prosecutors' sentencing memo as the more active participant of the duo, is due to serve five months, pay a \$250,000 fine and do 250 hours of community service.

Loughlin, among the most high-profile personalities indicted in the wide-reaching case, initially denied any guilt for more than a year, but apologized for her part prior to sentencing. "I'm ready to face the consequences and make amends," she said. In admitting guilt, the pair were spared from potentially

much stiffer sentences: their original charges carried penalties of up to 45 years in prison. Some 55 people have been charged in the scandal. Most of the 41 who have pleaded guilty received punishments of less than a few months behind bars. Huffman had admitted during a tearful court appearance to paying \$15,000 to boost her daughter's SAT college entrance exam score. The ringleader behind the college admissions scam, William "Rick" Singer, who authorities say was paid about \$25 million to bribe coaches and university administrators, has pleaded guilty and is awaiting sentencing, expected sometime next year. — AFP



In this file photo Actress Lori Loughlin (center) arrives at the court to appear before Judge M. Page Kelley. — AFP

## Sports

## Photo of the Day



Fabio Wibmer performs in Austria. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

# Djokovic suffers heaviest loss but securing top spot priority

‘He just blew me off the court, that’s all’

VIENNA: Novak Djokovic shrugged off his heaviest defeat on Friday by insisting he had achieved his goal of wrapping up the year-end world number one spot for a record-equaling sixth time. Djokovic was stunned 6-2, 6-1 by Italian lucky loser Lorenzo Sonego in the quarter-finals of the Vienna ATP tournament.

But having won two rounds in the Austrian capital, 33-year-old Djokovic is virtually guaranteed equalling Pete Sampras's record of securing the year-ending top ranking for the sixth time. “Climbing the year-end number one had an effect on me,” Djokovic told a news conference. “I have done what I came here for, securing the number one. And I’m completely fine with today’s result. “I’m healthy and looking forward to a strong finish in London (the season-ending ATP Finals).”

Italian Sonego, ranked 42 and who had initially lost in qualifying last weekend, is the first lucky loser ever to beat Djokovic. The only other time Djokovic had won just three games was at the 2005 Australian Open at the hands of Marat Safin in a best-of-five set encounter. “He just blew me off the court, that’s all,” Djokovic told aptour.com. “He was better in every segment of the game. It was a pretty bad match from my side, but amazing from his side. “He definitely deserved this result,” added the Serb star who was playing his first tournament since his Roland Garros final defeat to Rafael Nadal three weeks ago.

‘Unbelievable, amazing’

Djokovic can only be denied the end of year world number one ranking if Nadal takes an unlikely wild card into the Sofia tournament next month. The Spaniard has already said, however, that travelling to Bulgaria after next week’s Paris Masters and before London is not on his agenda. Sonego fired 26 winners past Djokovic who lost for only the third time in 2020 against 39 victories

Djokovic, a 17-time major champion, managed just seven winners against 25 unforced errors. “For sure it’s the best victory of my life. Novak is the best in the world. Today I played so, so good,” Sonego said. “It’s unbelievable. It’s amazing. I played the best match in my life. I’m so happy for this.” Sonego goes on to face Britain’s Dan Evans, who defeated Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria 7-6 (7/3), 4-6, 6-3, for a place in Sunday’s final. Second seed and defending champion Dominic Thiem also lost Friday, going down 7-6 (7/5), 6-2 to Russian world number eight Andrey Rublev.

Rublev hit 30 winners past the US Open champion and goes on to face South Africa’s Kevin Anderson for a place in the final. “I came here with the mood that I have nothing to lose,” said Rublev who is chasing a fifth title of the year. “I had already a really great season. I came here with zero expectations, just wanting to do my best. To try to fight every match. At the end, I am here in the semi-finals.” Anderson made the semi-finals by account-

ing for Russian fourth seed Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 7-6 (7/5). It was 2018 champion Anderson’s first top 10 win in two years. — AFP



VIENNA: Serbia’s Novak Djokovic returns the ball to Italy’s Lorenzo Sonego during their quarter-final match of the ATP tennis tournament in Vienna, Austria, on October 30, 2020. — AFP

## Singapore MMA show ‘test case’ for return of sports fans

SINGAPORE: Singapore’s pilot initiative to carry out rapid coronavirus testing to allow fans into a One Championship MMA show could pave the way for other countries to host sports events during the pandemic, organizers said. Sports have been slowly resuming worldwide after a months-long shutdown, but many events have gone ahead with no spectators, to reduce infection risks. About 250 mask-wearing fans on Friday attended the mixed martial arts card, “One: Inside the Matrix”, at an indoor stadium – the city state’s first sports event with an audience for months.

Spectators had to first get negative results in antigen tests, which can identify at least 80 percent of infected people and provide results in about 15 minutes. The screenings are part of a government pilot program under which people will be tested for Covid-19 before large-scale gatherings, and comes as Singapore prepares to further ease restrictions as its outbreak slows. Teh Hua Fung, group president of Asia’s biggest MMA promotion One Championship, said it was a “first for Singapore” which he hoped could “pave the way for others to follow as we safely return to some normalcy”. Spectators also sat apart from one another to reduce the risk of infection, and no food and drinks were on sale, with fans instead given goody bags.

### Quick results

Ahead of the show, mask-wearing fans waited outside the stadium holding their test results, and were allowed in after having their temperatures checked and scanning a QR code. Julien Bely, a 35-year-old spectator, said the testing process was “super easy, very well managed”. “Fifteen minutes, you get your results,” he said. “I’m pumped to see everything’s going back to normal safely, and hopefully it’s going to be a good night.” Another fan, Dennis Tan, said he would be prepared to do the same thing for other sports events. “If it’s a sport that I love to attend, definitely I don’t mind doing that... I think it’s worth it.” Ninety-eight people, including 42 athletes, have been flown into the city state for the event featuring six fights. Fifteen fights will also be pre-recorded for release at a later date. — AFP

## Defense a worry for Titans and Bengals

TENNESSEE: As the Tennessee Titans won four one-possession games during a 5-0 start, their explosive offense and the clutch kicks of veteran Stephen Gostkowski obscured some developing issues. Last week’s 27-24 loss to the 6-0 Pittsburgh Steelers shined a bright light on those problems, which Tennessee will try to solve today when it travels to Cincinnati for a date with the 1-5-1 Bengals at Paul Brown Stadium. Slow starts have been a problem, but the biggest worry is a defense that’s allowing 401.8 yards per game. The major reason for that is its stunning inability to make a stop on third down. Opponents are converting 61 percent of the time, the worst mark for an NFL team in 30 years.

Pittsburgh’s 13 of 18 success rate on third down was a big factor last week. Yet the Titans almost wiped out a 27-7 third-quarter deficit, and had Gostkowski’s 45-yard field-goal try not gone wide right with 14 seconds left, a third-down interception

in the end zone with less than three minutes left would have been the reason why. But third-year coach Mike Vrabel knows the defense, especially on third down, has to improve for his team to win the championship to which it aspires.

“It all has to be tied together,” he said. “We have to have 11 guys executing. We have to coach it better, and we have to execute it better. We have to make sure that we are all on the same page, that we are coaching as well as we can, and that we are executing better.” Part of Tennessee’s problem on third down is a lack of pass rush. It has managed only seven sacks in six games despite adding accomplished edge rushers like Jadeveon Clowney and Vic Beasley. By contrast, Cleveland Browns defensive end Myles Garrett (9) and Los Angeles Rams defensive tackle Aaron Donald (8) own more sacks than the Titans.

If Tennessee can’t create more pressure in the pocket, Cincinnati’s rookie quarterback, Joe Burrow, is more than capable of exposing its secondary. Burrow’s 406 yards and three touchdowns last week put the Bengals in position before their defense permitted Cleveland to drive 75 yards in the final 55 seconds to pull out a 37-34 win. — Reuters



TENNESSEE: The ball bounces after quarterback Ryan Tannehill #17 of the Tennessee Titans is knocked to the ground by Robert Spillane #41 of the Pittsburgh Steelers during the first half at Nissan Stadium on October 25, 2020. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Schalke held by Stuttgart

BERLIN: Schalke 04 had to settle for a 1-1 draw against visitors VfB Stuttgart on Friday after leading for the first time this season and have now gone 22 Bundesliga games without a win. The Royal Blues, who last week earned their first point of the season, looked sharper in the first half than in past weeks and went ahead with 19-year-old Malick Thiaw’s diving header at the far post in the 30th minute. A handball by Salif Sane gave the visitors a penalty in the 56th and Nicolas Gonzalez stepped up to equalize. Stuttgart then took complete control of the game, with Schalke pulling back deep into their own half, and would have left with all three points were it not for Schalke goalkeeper Frederik Ronnow’s fine saves late in the game. Stuttgart move up to fourth place on nine points while Schalke are 17th with two after six games. — Reuters

#### Cadiz join Sociedad on top

MADRID: Promoted Cadiz scored two goals in three minutes to beat hosts Eibar 2-0 on Friday and provisionally join La Liga leaders Real Sociedad at the top of the table. Goals from Alvaro Negredo in the 36th minute and Salvador Sanchez Ponce three minutes later put the visitors on 14 points from eight games, with Sociedad ahead on goal difference and with a game in hand at Celta Vigo today. Real Madrid, who hosted Huesca yesterday, are a point behind in third and have played two games fewer than Cadiz. Cadiz have already caused a stir this season, notching a shock 1-0 win at Real Madrid earlier this month. — Reuters

#### Gayle fined for flinging bat

DUBAI: West Indies batsman Chris Gayle has been fined for throwing his bat in frustration after missing out on a record-extending seventh IPL century by one run. The 41-year-old, who became the first batsman in Twenty20 history to hit 1,000 sixes during his 99 innings for King’s XI Punjab, was fined 10 percent of his match fee for a “code of conduct” violation, said an Indian Premier League statement. “Mr Gayle admitted to the Level 1 offence 2.2 of the IPL’s Code of Conduct and accepted the sanction,” it added. The statement did not give details of his action, but throwing bats and other equipment normally comes under this offence. The left-hander was bowled in the final over by Rajasthan Royals’ Jofra Archer after his 66-ball blitz that included eight sixes. Gayle then flung his bat, which hit the ground and bounced away. He appeared to apologize to the umpire before walking off. — AFP

#### Afridi leads Pakistan’s victory

RAWALPINDI: Shaheen Shah Afridi grabbed five wickets and Wahab Riaz took four as Pakistan thwarted a fighting Zimbabwe to win the first one-day international by 26 runs in Rawalpindi on Friday. Afridi finished with 5-49 while Riaz had figures of 4-41 as Pakistan survived a brilliant knock of 112 by Brendan Taylor, who put Zimbabwe briefly on course for an upset as they chased a daunting 282-run target. The experienced Taylor lifted Zimbabwe from a struggling 115-4 with a solid partnership of 119 for the fifth wicket with newcomer Wesley Madhevere, who finished with a career-best 55. Taylor knocked 11 boundaries and three well-timed sixes in his 117-ball knock, but holed out to Afridi at mid-off in the 47th over, leaving Pakistan to wrap up the last four wickets for just 15 runs. The win gives Pakistan a 1-0 lead in the three-match series with the remaining matches at the same venue on Sunday and Tuesday. — AFP

#### F1 pencils in record 23 races

IMOLA: Formula One has put a brave face on the coronavirus pandemic by publishing a proposed program on Friday of a record 23 Grand Prix for the 2021 season, including one in Saudi Arabia. The previous record for races in a season stands at 21. Twenty-two races were slated for 2020 but the pandemic reduced that to 17. The program reveals several sets of three races in successive weekends, something which is likely to stretch the teams. “It would represent a huge job for the mechanics,” said Christian Horner, team principal of Red Bull. “This is 23 weeks away from home. We are approaching saturation point at which we would need two teams,” said the Briton. While the drivers would need to be at every race, other teams are also thinking of switching their mechanics. — AFP

#### NBA extends opt-out deadline

NEW YORK: The NBA announced Friday it has extended the deadline for opting out of the CBA, as both the owners and the players union work through key issues regarding a return to play for the 2020-21 season. The two sides agreed to push back the deadline by one week until November 6, and talks will continue in the interim regarding the numerous issues that have to be decided before next season begins. The move was expected and it is the fourth extension of the opt-out deadline since the coronavirus pandemic started in March. “The NBA and the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) announced today that they have agreed to push back to November 6 the date by which either party may notify the other of an intention to terminate the current Collective Bargaining Agreement. — AFP

## Sports

# Ronaldo COVID-free after 19 days but virus hits other Serie A teams

## Atalanta, Sassuolo, Crotone and Parma reveal new cases

**MILAN:** Juventus star Cristiano Ronaldo has tested negative for coronavirus after nearly three weeks but Serie A clubs Atalanta, Sassuolo, Crotone and Parma on Friday revealed new cases. Ronaldo first tested positive for COVID-19 on October 13 while playing with Portugal. "Ronaldo carried out a check with a diagnostic test (swab) for COVID-19. The exam provided a negative result," the Italian champions said in a statement. "The player has, therefore, recovered after 19 days and is no longer subjected to home isolation."

Juventus next play at promoted Spezia today, with all matches now behind closed doors. Serie A leaders AC Milan also announced that defender Matteo Gabbia, goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma and striker Jens Petter Hauge have all tested negative. Donnarumma and Hauge "are authorized to return to training" before unbeaten Milan travel to Udinese today, with Gabbia "undergoing medical screening". A record number of over 31,000 people on Friday tested positive for COVID-19 in a 24-hour period in Italy.

The 35-year-old Ronaldo had missed four games including Wednesday's 2-0 Champions League defeat to Lionel Messi's Barcelona, and Juventus's 2-0 win at Dynamo Kiev in their Group G opener. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner's return will be a boost for Andrea Pirlo's faltering side who are fifth in Serie A, four points behind leaders AC Milan. Ronaldo scored three goals in Juventus's first two league games — a 3-0 win over Sampdoria and both goals in a 2-2 draw at AS Roma.

But the nine-time reigning champions have been

held to three consecutive league draws, Roma (2-2), Crotone (1-1) and Verona (1-1). They were awarded a 3-0 victory after Napoli refused to travel to Turin on October 4 because of coronavirus cases. Ronaldo was furious at missing out on this week's reunion with Messi, after reportedly testing positive for an 18th time. They have not faced off since the five-time Ballon d'Or winner left Real Madrid for Juventus in 2018.

### Lazio tests

Ronaldo had caused controversy even before testing positive by travelling to Portugal while Juventus were in isolation after two virus cases. On his return to Italy on October 14, the day after testing positive, Sports Minister Vincenzo Spadafora accused the star of "violating" Italian coronavirus measures.

Other Juventus players including Blaise Matuidi and Paulo Dybala, tested positive during the first wave of the pandemic earlier this year, the Argentine only testing negative after 45 days. But as Ronaldo recovered, other cases were announced in the Italian league. In Bergamo, Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini's pre-match press conference Friday before this weekend's game at Crotone was cancelled after a positive case among the coaching staff. Crotone also confirmed that their midfielder Salvatore Molina had 'slight symptoms' and was isolating at home.

Sassuolo, who travel to Napoli, have three new cases, one a player, while Parma who play at Inter Milan, revealed two players had become infected for a second time. Lazio are awaiting tests results



Cristiano Ronaldo

after players including star striker Ciro Immobile and Luis Alberto missed their Champions League draw at Club Brugge as a precautionary measure. Coach Simone Inzaghi's press conference before today's game against Torino has been cancelled with half the squad reported to be self-isolating.

The Rome club are scheduled to travel to Torino today before hosting Juventus the following weekend. Serie A are applying UEFA rules whereby a

match can take place as long as a side have 13 healthy players, including a goalkeeper. The only possible exemption would be a club which has an active outbreak of COVID-19 with more than 10 new positive cases in a week. In that case the club can request a postponement, but only once in the season, which was the case of Genoa's game against Torino earlier this month. That match has been rescheduled for next Wednesday. —AFP

## Tributes pour in as Maradona marks his 60th birthday

**BUENOS AIRES:** Diego Maradona celebrated his 60th birthday on Friday with a comprehensive league victory for the club he coaches, cake presented to him inside a shuttered stadium and a 100-metre long billboard erected in his honor in the centre of Buenos Aires. Although he had been reported to be self-isolating after coming into contact with someone who displayed COVID-19 symptoms, Maradona appeared at his club's stadium on Friday evening. The Gimnasia y Esgrima coach unexpectedly turned up ahead of their game against Patronato, the first match in a season that kicked off on Friday night after a seven-month hiatus caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Officials presented him with a plaque, he was given several birthday cakes and fans who gathered outside the ground sang "Happy Birthday" and let off fireworks. "It's a special day," head of the Argentine Football Association Claudio Tapia told local TV. "We're very happy to be able to salute a player as great as Diego." Maradona left the ground before Gimnasia kicked off their closed doors match and he missed their 3-0 victory. Earlier in the day, friends sent tributes to the flamboyant player best known for leading Argentina to the 1986 World Cup title.

A billboard featuring Maradona's face was unveiled on Buenos Aires' majestic central Avenida, alongside the obelisk where fans traditionally gather to celebrate major victories. On Instagram, football

greats from around the world — former Brazil striker Ronaldo Nazario, manager Jose Mourinho and former Italy captain Franco Baresi among them — shared their best wishes. "I start my 60th with these marvelous messages that you've all sent me," Maradona said in response. "Thanks for your love and your friendship. This is the best present you could have given me."

Maradona is widely acknowledged to be one of the greatest footballers of all time. He won the 1986 World Cup with Argentina and his two goals against England in the quarter-final victory — one the infamous Hand of God, the second a brilliant solo goal — are unforgettable moments in sporting history. He also transformed Italian club Napoli, helping them to their first league title in 1987, as well as to the UEFA Cup in 1989 and another Serie A trophy a year later.

But there was also a dark side that cost him dearly. Maradona's drug addiction tainted his later years in Italy and led to him being kicked out of the 1994 World Cup and banned from the game for 15 months. Knee injuries took their toll as did weight problems and he was hospitalized in 2004 with severe heart and respiratory problems linked to cocaine use. He now often uses crutches to walk.

### Pele greets 'great friend'

Fresh off celebrating a milestone birthday of his own, Brazilian football great Pele wished his fellow legend Diego Maradona a happy birthday Friday as the mercurial Argentine celebrated his 60th. "My great friend, Maradona. I will always applaud you. I will always root for you. May your journey be long and may you always smile, and make me smile too! Happy Birthday!" Pele wrote on Instagram, along with a picture of him and Maradona.



In this file picture, Argentina's football legend Diego Maradona smokes a cigar as he attends a football match. Argentine football legend Diego Maradona turned 60 on October 30, 2020. —AFP

The message came a week after Maradona wished Pele a happy birthday on his 80th, joining what he called "the universal tribute to the King." Pele and Maradona often vie for the title of best footballer in history. The Brazilian and Argentine were jointly named best player of the 20th century by FIFA in 2000. Afflicted with various health issues, both spent their birthdays this year in self-isolation because of the coronavirus pandemic —Agencies

## PSG's Al-Khelaifi acquitted in TV rights trial

**BELLINZONA:** Paris Saint-Germain president Nasser Al-Khelaifi was on Friday acquitted by a Swiss court of corruption over the allocation of World Cup TV rights, while former FIFA number two Jerome Valcke was handed a suspended 120-day sentence for a secondary charge and fined 1.65 million euros (\$1.92 million). Al-Khelaifi, the chairman of beIN Media, was cleared of inciting aggravated criminal mismanagement, with Valcke found guilty of a separate charge of forging documents related to the attribution of Italian and Greek World Cup TV rights.

Valcke was ordered to pay 1.65 million euros in compensation to FIFA, including 400,000 euros in the main case, as well as 80,000 Swiss francs (\$87,000) in legal costs. "The defendants receive a yellow card, but no

more", concluded the president of the court, Stephan Zenger. A delighted Marc Bonnant, one of Al-Khelaifi's lawyers, was overheard to say outside the court that they had "debagged" the prosecution.

Prosecutors had called for a jail term of three years for Valcke and a 28-month sentence for Al-Khelaifi following 10 days of hearings at the Swiss Federal Criminal Court of Bellinzona in September. They also requested 30 months for Greek businessman Dinos Deris-with partial suspension in all three cases. Deris was found not guilty on Friday on a charge of "private corruption". It was the first judgment handed down in Switzerland, the seat of most international sports organizations, in the 20 or so proceedings opened in the last five years involving FIFA.

Two former Latin American football leaders have been jailed in the United States. "After a relentless four-year campaign against me that ignored the basic facts and the law at every turn, I have finally, fully and completely cleared my name. Today's verdict is a total vindication," Al-Khelaifi said in a

statement. "It restores my faith in the rule of law and in due process, after four years of baseless allegations, fictitious charges and constant smears of my reputation — all of which have been proven to be completely and wholly unsubstantiated."

"I can now devote all my energy to my various roles, which are all focused on building a positive future for world sport — at a time when the industry needs strong leadership the most," he added. Valcke, the former right-hand man of disgraced FIFA president Sepp Blatter, and Al-Khelaifi were accused of a "corrupt agreement" over Qatari-owned broadcaster beIN's extension of its media rights in North Africa and the Middle East for the 2026 and 2030 World Cups.

### Luxury villa in question

The public prosecutor's office said Valcke sought the Qatari's help in the summer of 2003 to buy a luxury villa in Sardinia, at a time when beIN was negotiating the extension. The prosecutor said Al-Khelaifi



Paris Saint-Germain chief Nasser Al-Khelaifi

acquired the house for five million euros (\$5.85 million), via a company that was transferred almost immediately to the brother of one of his close collaborators, before it was made available to Valcke. —AFP

Meanwhile Nuno said being deprived of their passionate fans, with spectators barred from grounds because of British government COVID-19 protocols, made home games tough for Wolves. "It's all about the performance, the table is not important," he insisted. "The work is important. Playing without fans requires a lot of focus, we haven't the edge of Molineux." VAR denied Palace a penalty when Palace's Patrick van Aanholt was found to be offside, before being fouled by Willy Boly. —AFP

## Ait-Nouri scores on debut; Wolves beat Palace 2-0

**WOLVERHAMPTON:** Teenage defender Rayan Ait-Nouri marked his Wolves debut with a goal as the Midlands club beat Crystal Palace 2-0 at Molineux on Friday in the Premier League match. Victory put Wolves level on points with the leading Merseyside

duo of Everton and reigning champions Liverpool ahead of the bulk of this weekend's fixtures. France Under-21 left-back Ait-Nouri joined Wolves on a season-long loan with an option to buy-from Ligue 1 Angers this month.

It took him just 18 minutes to open the scoring with a first-time shot. Portuguese winger Daniel Podence doubled Wolves' lead nine minutes later, when he turned in Pedro Neto's cross from close range. "For Rayan Ait-Nouri I am really pleased because it is the first game and what a better

start can he have?" Wolves manager Nuno Espirito Santo told the BBC. "He is 19 with a lot of things to improve. He has to get so many things on board and that's the work."

Wolves almost had a third goal before half-time as Nelson Semedo and Leander Dendoncker went close with long-range efforts. "I think we were good but we should play better," added Nuno. "We started well. We had a good team in front of us. At the end of the first half we slowed down our pressure and Palace had chances."

## Clubs grumble as Bundesliga goes back behind closed doors

**BERLIN:** The Bundesliga goes back behind closed doors this weekend with Borussia Dortmund leading the complaints against the government's decision to lock out fans in an attempt to help curb record coronavirus numbers. On Friday, Germany reported a record 18,681 new cases of COVID-19 in the previous 24 hours. Amid measures announced Wednesday, all professional sport, including the Bundesliga, must be played behind closed doors until at least the end of November, a return to the end of last season when terraces had to remain empty.

The clubs can survive on money from the sale of the German Football League's broadcasting rights, but their funds are hit hard by a lack of matchday revenue. Christian Seifert, managing director of the German Football League (DFL) has advised clubs to take cost-cutting steps. "It would be very optimistic to assume that large amounts of spectator income will flow this season," Seifert told daily Handelsblatt on Friday. "Every club is well advised these days to reduce fixed costs. And that includes personnel costs." Since the season started in mid-September, Germany's top-flight clubs had been allowed to admit small number of fans, providing their hygiene plan was approved by the local health authority, but even that is now on hold. Dortmund has posted an open letter on their website questioning the decision to exclude spectators again despite having had their 'complex hygiene concept' approved. "It's difficult to accept that facts do not count," said the statement.

"Every spectator in our stadiums was disciplined. Nobody was infected in the fresh air. "However, we accept the situation as it is and continue to do our small part to flatten the curve," the club said, urging fans to "keep their distance, wear masks, avoid gatherings and parties". Dortmund's home league showdown with Bayern Munich on November 7 will be behind closed doors. Yet 11,500 fans were allowed to watch a 4-0 home win over Freiburg in early October.

As the rate of infection has risen, so the allowed attendance limit dwindled to just 300 for last Saturday's 3-0 win over Schalke in the Ruhr derby. Dortmund's stance is backed by a study of large events, published Thursday, which found that if hygiene measures are followed, the risk of infection would be "low to very low overall". The results are from August's 'RESTART-19' project when scientists collected data from an indoor concert in Leipzig attended by 1,400 volunteers. For European champions Bayern Munich, all home games since the pandemic hit Europe in mid-March have been behind closed doors on advice from the local health authority.

### Survival

Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge says they expect "more than 100 million euros (\$117 million) in lost revenues" this season. "Across Europe, every club loses between 50 and 200 million euros in a season that it has to play without spectators," Rummenigge told German daily Bild last Sunday. "You can count on five fingers how long a football club can survive that". Current Bundesliga leaders RB Leipzig are backed by the deep pockets of Austrian energy drinks giants Red Bull. Commercial director Florian Scholz says they factored a lack of matchday revenue this season in their planning, as all clubs were advised to do by the league, "but that won't work out well over a long period of time". —AFP

**14** Djokovic suffers heaviest loss but securing top spot priority



**15** Ronaldo COVID-free after 19 days but virus hits other Serie A teams



**15** Ait-Nouri scores on debut as Wolves beat Palace 2-0



## Jota caps Liverpool's fightback

Ziyech stars as Chelsea sweep aside Burnley; Man City win



**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool's Portuguese striker Diogo Jota (center) celebrates scoring his team's second goal during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and West Ham United at Anfield yesterday. Liverpool won the game 2-1. — AFP

**LONDON:** Diogo Jota capped Liverpool's dramatic fightback as the Premier League champions beat West Ham 2-1 to move three points clear at the top, while Manchester City and Chelsea both won to keep in touch with the leaders yesterday. Jurgen Klopp's side were rocked by Pablo Fornals' early strike at Anfield as the West Ham midfielder punished a poor header from Joe Gomez in the 10th minute. The Reds drew level in the 42nd minute when Mohamed Salah was fouled by Arthur Masuaku and the Egyptian stepped up to convert the penalty for his eighth goal of the season. Liverpool thought they had claimed the lead with just over 10 minutes remaining when substitute Jota turned in a loose ball.

Jota had pounced after Lukasz Fabianski saved Sadio Mane's shot but after a lengthy delay that saw referee Kevin Friend make use of the pitchside monitor, the goal was ruled out for a foul by the Senegal winger. With time running out, Jota ensured

he would still finish as Liverpool's hero. In the 85th minute, the Portugal forward ran onto Xherdan Shaqiri's pass to score his third goal since joining from Wolves in September. It was Liverpool's fourth successive victory since influential defender Virgil van Dijk was sidelined for several months with a serious knee injury suffered against Everton.

Despite their defensive issues this term, Liverpool have opened up a three-point lead over second placed Everton, with their Merseyside rivals in action at Newcastle today. Title rivals City have yet to hit the free-scoring form of Pep Guardiola's side at their best, as for the third consecutive league game they were held to a solitary goal. But Kyle Walker's long-range strike against his former club was good enough to earn a 1-0 win at goal-shy Sheffield United. A fourth win in five games in all competition edges City up to eighth, five points behind Liverpool.

And there was another boost for City after the game as Guardiola ruled out a return to Barcelona

despite interest from presidential candidates at the Catalan giants to bring the club's most successful ever coach back to the Camp Nou. "I said many times, my period as a manager in Barcelona is over," said Guardiola, whose contract at the Etihad expires at the end of the season. "I am incredibly happy here, still I have the desire to do well and this is the most important thing."

On the field, there were plenty of positives for City as the newly-formed centre-back pairing of Aymeric Laporte and Ruben Dias played their part in a second consecutive clean sheet. However, without injured strikers Sergio Aguero and Gabriel Jesus, City struggled to turn their dominance into goals. "We played really well," added Guardiola. "We struggled to score goals for the chances we created, 16 shots, eight on target, is a lot against this team." Instead, Walker was the unlikely match-winner with his first goal for a year in his 100th Premier League appearance for City.

### Chelsea hit their stride

Chelsea are also finding their form after a slow start to the season as Frank Lampard's men ran out 3-0 winners at Burnley to stretch their unbeaten run to nine games. Hakim Ziyech was handed his first Premier League start after scoring in a 4-0 Champions League win away to Krasnodar in midweek and the Moroccan's shot wrong-footed Nick Pope to open the floodgates for the visitors on 26 minutes.

Kurt Zouma's bullet header then doubled Chelsea's advantage from Mason Mount's corner just after the hour mark. Timo Werner was due to be rested until an injury in the warm-up to Christian Pulisic forced the German international into Lampard's line-up. And Werner rounded off an excellent second-half performance from the Blues with a fine finish from Ziyech's pass. After much criticism of his side's defending, Lampard will be equally delighted at a fourth straight clean sheet as Chelsea moved up to fourth place. — AFP

## Mueller equals Kahn's record; Bayern go top

**BERLIN:** European champions Bayern Munich went top of the Bundesliga yesterday as Thomas Mueller equaled Oliver Kahn's record for most league wins in the famous shirt in yesterday's 2-1 victory at Cologne. Mueller, 31, converted an early penalty to put the visitors on the way to a success which saw him match the tally of legendary goalkeeper Kahn on 260 league wins. Robert Lewandowski, who scored 10 goals in the opening five league games, was rested ahead of Bayern's midweek Champions League match at Salzburg and the Bundesliga showdown at second-placed Dortmund next Saturday.

"(We were) too nonchalant up front, even though the passion was there," said Mueller despite the reigning champions' victory. Serge Gnabry, who scored Bayern's second goal, admitted: "We let the opponent back into the

game, it wasn't our best performance." An early header by Gnabry led to Cologne defender Marius Wolf giving away the 13th-minute penalty which Mueller scored. Gnabry added the second on the stroke of half-time when he rolled the ball into the net to finish a counter-attack. However, Cologne improved in the second half and substitute midfielder Dominick Drexler pulled back a late goal. Dortmund climbed to second, despite resting striker Erling Braut Haaland, as defender Mats Hummels scored both goals in a 2-0 win at Arminia Bielefeld.

Hummels picked up a late thigh injury while making a tackle. However, Dortmund forward Julian Brandt backed Hummels to be fit for their Champions League match at Club Brugge on Wednesday, saying: "He'll make it-he heals quick." — AFP

## Real thrash Huesca 4-1

**MADRID:** Eden Hazard scored his first goal for Real Madrid in over a year and his team appeared to turn a corner as they beat newly-promoted Huesca 4-1 in La Liga yesterday. Hazard has had a terrible time with injuries since joining Madrid for 100 million euros (\$113 million) from Chelsea in 2019 but the Belgian will hope his stunning strike from distance at the Alfredo di Stefano can kick-start his career in Spain.

"I'm happy with his performance," said Zidane. "The other day he played 20 minutes, now a little more. It's step by step." Karim Benzema and the excellent Fede Valverde made the win secure before Huesca scored through David Ferreira, only for Benzema to add his second and Madrid's fourth in injury-time. Zinedine Zidane's side jump above Real Sociedad to the top of the table to cap an encouraging week, which began with a Clasico win over Barcelona at Camp Nou and finishes with them moving nine points clear of the Catalans, who played away at Alaves later.

In between, Madrid came too close for comfort to another damaging defeat in the Champions League but two late goals salvaged a draw at Borussia Monchengladbach that in the end felt like a win. Huesca, who are yet to win this season, might feel the scoreline was harsh after they squandered early chances. Madrid will hope the dip that put Zidane under pressure earlier this month is over. Zidane will have been particularly delighted with Hazard, whose goal was his first for Madrid since he scored against Granada in October last year, and his second overall in La Liga.

Ankle surgery kept Hazard out for the majority of last season and he was not fit for the start of this one, with Madrid only describing his latest setback as a "muscle injury". But he made his first appearance off the bench in the Champions League in midweek and, against Huesca, marked his first start with a brilliant goal in the first half. "We know the quality that Eden has," Zidane said. "He scored a good goal and we needed it in the first half, because after his first goal the game was different."

Until then, Huesca had been the better team but Hazard's strike turned the contest in the 40th minute, when he received the ball on the half-turn and swerved a superb shot into the



**VALDEBEBAS:** Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior jumps over Huesca's Spanish defender Jorge Pulido (bottom) during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid and SD Huesca yesterday. — AFP

corner from 30 yards out. Benzema made it two, chesting down Lucas Vazquez's cross at the back post and driving in, before Valverde struck a sweet half-volley into the corner. Ferreira gave Huesca brief hope with 16 minutes left but Madrid were never overly troubled and Benzema rounded off the win in injury-time, converting a smart header back from Rodrygo. — AFP