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Biden wins US presidency, ending divisive Trump era

Amir sends congratulations • Trump refuses to concede • Harris makes history



WILMINGTON, Delaware: A supporter holds balloons with the images of US President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris as people celebrate Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election outside the Chase Center yesterday. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Democrat Joe Biden was pronounced winner of the US presidency yesterday, defeating Donald Trump and ending an era that convulsed American politics, shocked the world and left the United States more divided than at any time in decades. In his first statement as president-elect, Biden vowed to "be a president for all Americans - whether you voted for me or not." His running mate Kamala Harris makes history as the first woman, the first black American and the first American of Asian descent to serve as vice president.

Trump - becoming the first one-term president since George HW Bush at the start of the 1990s - refused to concede after the major US television networks announced Biden's win. Biden was "rushing to falsely pose" as the winner, Trump said in a statement as he arrived at a golf course he owns in Virginia, in his first trip outside the White House since Election Day.

There is no evidence to support Trump's unprecedented claims of mass fraud. Tuesday's polling went off without any reported serious incidents or

even technical glitches, despite being held in the shadow of a still out-of-control COVID-19 pandemic and volcanic political tensions.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to Biden in which he expressed his sincere congratulations on the confidence placed in Biden by the American people. HH the Amir also congratulated Harris on her election as vice president. HH the Amir praised the historical and well-established relations between Kuwait and the US, stressing his aspiration for permanent and joint cooperation to strengthen the bonds of these relations, develop joint cooperation in various fields and raise ties to further heights. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Congratulations poured in from other leaders around the world, including Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Omani Sultan

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UAE criminalizes 'honor crimes', lifts cohabitation ban

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates scrapped reduced sentences for so-called "honor" killings in a sweeping overhaul of criminal and family law announced yesterday. The oil-rich Gulf state also lifted a ban on unmarried couples living together and eased restrictions on alcohol consumption, while raising the penalties for rape and sexual harassment.

The legal systems of many Arab countries provide for reduced penalties for "honor" crimes, victims of which are mostly women seen as having brought "dishonor" on their families. But in the UAE, "honor" crimes will now be punishable like any other. There will no longer be separate sentencing guidelines for "honor" killings, which previously provided for jail terms of between three and 15 years, according to Emirati media.

Those convicted will face the death penalty or life imprisonment, unless the victim's family waives its right to "retribution", in which case the penalty will be at least seven years in jail. Human rights groups and women's organizations have long campaigned against those found drinking alcohol without a license. The government said the legal reforms, which they say allows male murderers of women to get off lightly.

Other reforms approved by UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan included changes to the sentencing guidelines for other offences targeting women. Harsher penalties will be stipulated in cases of harassment, while those convicted of "rape of a minor" or of "someone with a limited mental capacity" will face the death penalty, Abu Dhabi-based newspaper The National reported.

Expatriates, who make up some 90 percent of the UAE population, will be able to ask for their own country's law to be applied in cases of divorce and inheritance. Penalties will no longer be imposed against those found drinking alcohol without a license. The government said the legal reforms were part of efforts to improve legislation and the investment climate in the country as well as to consolidate "tolerance principles". — Agencies

Biden has tall order to revive US' global role

WASHINGTON: President-elect Joe Biden has vowed to restore US moral authority in the world but after four years of norms-shattering by Donald Trump, he will have his work cut out for him. After his narrow victory over Trump, the 77-year-old Biden will be the most experienced new president in decades on foreign policy, but he is also facing questions from the left of his Democratic Party on whether his worldview has kept up with the times.

In a speech on foreign policy after he announced

his candidacy, Biden denounced Trump for his flirtation both with autocrats abroad and white supremacists at home. "As president, I will remind the world who we are. The United States of America does not coddle dictators. The United States of America gives hate no safe harbor," Biden said in New York. Writing later in Foreign Affairs, Biden said that for the next president, "picking up the pieces will be an enormous task."

The new president "will have to salvage our reputation, rebuild confidence in our leadership and mobilize our country and our allies to rapidly meet new challenges. There will be no time to lose," he wrote. Biden vowed to hold a summit of democracies within a year and promised immediately to step up international cooperation on the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

Biden's election is welcome news for many close

Trump joins club of losing presidents

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump has boasted of being an atypical leader but he's now entered a rare club he will definitely not appreciate - US presidents who have lost reelection. Since World War II, only two other presidents who sought a second term from

voters have failed: Jimmy Carter and George H W Bush. US TV networks called the race yesterday for Democrat Joe Biden despite the Republican unabashedly seizing on the power of incumbency.

Trump held rallies across the country in front of Air Force One, insisted on putting his name on the 150 million pandemic stimulus checks to Americans and delivered his Republican convention speech at the White House. His actions sparked accusations Trump violated the Hatch Act, which restricts the use of the federal government for political activity. "There is a reason why it's unusual for incumbents to be defeated."

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Biden promises virus action as Europe suffers

WASHINGTON: The United States reported record new coronavirus cases for the third day in a row, as new president-elect Joe Biden vowed to act against the pandemic on "day one" in the world's worst-hit nation. Global infections have surged past 49 million and Europe has become the new pandemic epicenter in recent weeks with more than 300,000 deaths - nearly a quarter of the global total.

More than 127,000 new infections were reported

in the US on Friday, the third straight daily record. As Biden finally emerged as the winner of Tuesday's US presidential election, he promised he would not waste time in addressing the pandemic. "I want everyone, everyone to know on day one we're going to put our plan to control this virus into action," said the Democrat president-elect who won't take office until January.

Across the Atlantic, Greece became the latest European nation to enter lockdown yesterday with the continent reeling from a second, relentless coronavirus wave. Under the measures, which came into force before daybreak, Greeks can only leave home if they receive authorization to a mobile phone request. Essential shops can stay open, including supermarkets and pharmacies. The capital's main shopping thoroughfare Ermou Street was quiet. But hairdressers have been allowed to stay open for two



Joe Biden

US allies, especially in Europe, who have been shell-shocked by Trump's abrasive approach and his enthusiasm for tariffs. Biden is expected to get

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Donald Trump

more days and they were booked out.

The measures follow the imposition of restrictions in Italy, France, Ireland and Britain, while Switzerland is also being hit hard by the virus. Poland was also imposing fresh measures yesterday, closing most shopping centers. The government in Warsaw is also shutting cinemas, theatres, galleries and other cultural institutions and making hotels available only for business travellers.

Denmark and the US are among six countries that have reported new coronavirus cases linked to mink farms, the World Health Organization said. Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden are the other nations to have discovered SARS-CoV-2 in minks, WHO said in a statement. Denmark has imposed strict measures on the north of the country after warning that a mutation of the virus had jumped from minks to humans and infected 12 people. — AFP

Local

Pandemic revealed many outstanding issues in Kuwait: Candidate Souqobi

Parliament hopeful says political system not working properly to combat corruption

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Many new candidates are running in the Dec 5 National Assembly elections, especially from the third constituency, which has a large number of registered candidates. Young people hope they will be able to bring some changes to improve the country, Kuwait Times met Dr Abdulaziz Al-Souqobi, a teacher at the College of Architecture at Kuwait University, who is running for the first time. The slogan of his election campaign is "Survival of a Nation".

"We have chosen this slogan as it reflects the present situation in Kuwait. Unfortunately, today we are going through a state of regression from a political point of view, and this became mostly clear during the pandemic. This crisis revealed many unresolved issues, which are very sensitive and may affect the existence of this country. So the purpose of these elections is to save our country and shape its future," Souqobi told Kuwait Times.

The pandemic exposed various problems in many fields. "It revealed the decline in education and the imbalances in demographics, with its negative repercussions on the security, economic and health systems. Furthermore, it revealed a huge number of corruption cases, which showed the defect in the political system, which is not working properly to combat corruption. These and other issues have been pending for years - their effects were not clear to people but were revealed during this crisis," he said.

Make a change

"Many others and I decided to run in the elections as we hope to make a change, even if it's just partial. We felt the danger, and due to our national responsibility, we decided to help in resolving these issues. This crisis also revealed the unstable economic situation and the mysterious financial situation in the country. Will we face bankruptcy after 20 years as many economists have

predicted? Or is the economic situation stable, and there is merely a problem in managing finances and wastage of money?" Souqobi wondered.

"Based on these issues, we set certain plans. For over five years, I was considering running in the elections and was

“Proposals on demographic imbalance not realistic”

waiting for the proper opportunity to do so, even when I was still studying. When I was working on my PhD, I was looking for the cause of the problems that we have in Kuwait, especially those related to my field. For instance the housing issue, which is a troubling issue for young people, particularly public housing, which is my specialization," he pointed out.

"Demographics is also part of my study, including the categories of communities. I made many studies on this topic and presented a complete initiative on resolving the demography. I explained that resolving this problem can't be limited to figures. Proposals by some MPs to flip the current ratio of 30 percent citizens to 70 percent expats are not realistic, and were only for political gain and media consumption. This is why I didn't set numbers in my initiative; instead I included eight practical projects covering all aspects of this issue, to be changed gradually over years to not affect businesses. This will result in some logical change in the percentage after 10 or 15 years," stressed Souqobi.

Only 4 percent

Today, there are 1.7 million jobs in the private sector, but Kuwaitis make up



KUWAIT: Candidate for National Assembly elections Dr Abdulaziz Al-Souqobi. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

only 4 percent of this number, which is a huge defect. "Kuwaitis refuse to work in low-wage jobs, but 428,000 jobs out of 1.7 million are technical and administrative jobs, which Kuwaitis can do, but they only make up 13 percent (57,000) of this workforce. We should apply job priority that compels an employer to employ citizens first, then expats. We should also apply diversity in nationalities, rather than having 52 percent of expats from just two nationalities. We need diversified experiences from other countries," he said.

"I have a suggestion to encourage Kuwaitis to work in the private sector - employment support. Both the employer and employee are not interested in employing Kuwaitis. Kuwaitis demand high salaries - an employer can employ three expats instead. A Kuwaiti is also not interested in working long hours with no job security. The labor law was issued 20 years ago, but the percentage of Kuwaitis in the private sector only increased from 2 percent to 4 percent, which means the law is not successful," Souqobi pointed out.

"I suggest the government should pay

80 percent of a Kuwaiti employee's salary for the first two years, then 60 percent in the next two years, till it reaches 20 percent after eight years, with training courses paid for by the government. So after 10 years, a Kuwaiti engineer for instance will be experienced and skilled, and more qualified than other engineers from abroad with almost the same salary. Also, there should be a limit on the number of new employees hired from abroad - this doesn't mean banning expats from working here, but only to organize the process," he explained.

Regulating the residence of expats is one of the solutions of the demographic problem. "For instance, more than 328,000 people live over 8 square kilometers in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, which is not acceptable from the human, health, security or social perspectives. The situation is so bad that some laborers rent a bed to sleep for a few hours, then other people rent it. So we need to change this situation to meet international criteria and basic requirements for decent living. The civil ID number should be connected to the address to ensure that all laborers live in proper accommodations. I also

proposed a plan for establishing labor cities to ensure housing for over one million expat workers," Souqobi said.

Corruption exposed

Corruption is another issue Souqobi is focusing on in his agenda. "Many cases of corruption were exposed recently. All the abovementioned issues of demographics, education, housing and others can't be resolved if we don't organize the political system, stop squandering of funds, stop corruption and bribery, and so on. Changing the voting law is one of my priorities," he told Kuwait Times.

"The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) was founded in 2016, yet since that year Kuwait's position on the Corruption Perceptions Index is worsening every year - from 75 to 85 worldwide. I researched why anti-corruption authorities worldwide are successful, and found there are certain criteria like independency, accountability and public participation," Souqobi noted.

"Nazaha was formed by the Cabinet, so it's not independent. How can it judge the authority that supervises it? In countries where watchdogs have been successful, they were formed by the parliament or elected by the people. There is no accountability - Nazaha only collects papers and takes it to the prosecutor, which any person can do by themselves. Other countries have special courts for anti-corruption cases and have real power. People are also not exercising their role in fighting corruption, as protection of whistleblowers is not for real. Whistleblowers' information is not confidential, although Nazaha claims it is. This makes people avoid reporting something," concluded Souqobi.

Souqobi represents the Islamic Constitutional Movement and believes in teamwork. His family is supporting him financially, morally and logistically. He is campaigning on social media and through personal contacts by calling voters or visiting them while respecting social distancing and health recommendations.

Biden wins US presidency...

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Haitham bin Tariq, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, conservative British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

With vote counting nearly complete around the huge country, Biden built up an insurmountable lead. New tallies from the state of Pennsylvania early yesterday put him over the top, ending four days of tense waiting and allowing the TV networks' specialized data analysts to call the overall result, as they do every election.

Biden, 77, and turning 78 later this month, will become the oldest US president to take office when he is sworn in on Jan 20. At 56, Harris will be well placed to try and succeed Biden as the first ever woman in the Oval Office. "Let's get started," she tweeted, saying that the election was "about the soul of America and our willingness to fight for it."

In Washington, people poured spontaneously into the streets to celebrate, car horns honked, and an excited crowd of several thousand gathered on Black Lives Matter Plaza next to the White House. "It's been so many years waiting for this day to happen," said Jack Nugent, a 24-year-old software engineer. There were similar scenes in New York, Trump's birthplace and, like the capital, a Democratic stronghold.

The Republican, whose marathon press conferences, tweeting and raucous campaign rallies have made him a perpetual, noisy presence at home and abroad over the last four years, was true to form. After upending US political norms at every level, he became the first president openly to refuse to accept the results of an election.

Earlier yesterday, he left the White House for the first time since Election Day to play golf, tweeting: "I WON THIS ELECTION, BY A LOT!" In his subsequent statement from the golf course, he claimed that Biden and the media - which Trump has spent his presidency casting as an "enemy of the people" - were inventing the results.

"We all know why Joe Biden is rushing to falsely pose as the winner, and why his media allies are trying so hard to help him: They don't want the truth to be exposed," Trump said in a statement. "The simple fact is this election is far from over."

But despite a slew of Trump legal challenges, the reality is that while it will still take days for states to issue formal certification of results, the outcome is already clear through official partial results. "Donald Trump does not get to decide the winner of elections," Symone Sanders, a senior Biden advisor, told journalists in Wilmington. "The people decide, voters in the country decide, as we

have long said, and voters have made their choice very clear."

For Biden, who got more than 74 million votes, a record, the triumph was the crowning achievement of his half century in US politics - including eight years as deputy to Obama, the first black US president who hailed the "historic and decisive" win. The biggest ever turnout of voters - some 160 million people, according to preliminary estimates - came out across the United States, ultimately favoring Biden's promise of calm to Trump's rollercoaster.

An old school centrist, Biden has fended off the energetic leftist wing of his party, while choosing Harris after promising to make his vice president a woman. Although a career politician - a widely derided group today - he is seen by many as a sympathetic character, humanized by having endured the loss of his wife and baby daughter in a car accident in 1972, then another son to cancer four decades later.

Yet despite his fervent promises to restore America's "soul," Biden will inherit a shaken, angry country. Americans are bitterly split after an election campaign in which Trump deliberately stoked divisions over many of the country's most sensitive issues, including race, immigration and gun ownership.

And despite critics painting Trump as an aberration, he still won the votes of around 70 million people - many of whom may not have liked Trump himself, yet consider Democrats as being out of touch with their traditional values. That gulf in understanding between two Americas will likely continue to rage in Congress, threatening Biden's ability to govern at a time of economic upheaval and an accelerating coronavirus crisis.

For Trump, the defeat and his exit from the White House at the transition on Jan 20 will above all be a story of personal humiliation. He shocked the country and the world when he stormed to victory in 2016 as a political newcomer taking down the seasoned Democrat Hillary Clinton in his first shot at public office. Then for much of his administration he appeared invulnerable to the normal laws of politics.

His showbiz style of running the government made him perhaps the most watched - and controversial - individual on the planet. He survived impeachment, tore up diplomatic norms, and was so omnipresent in the media that he lodged himself in the consciousness of ordinary Americans in a way never previously experienced. A former reality TV star and celebrity real estate developer, he gave the impression of someone who always got his own way.

To crowds at rallies he loved to boast "we're going to win so much, you're going to be so sick and tired of winning." And to people he didn't like, his go-to insult was "loser". Yet now he's a loser himself - as perhaps he already feared on the morning of the election. "Winning is easy," he mused as polls opened. "Losing is never easy. Not for me." — Agencies

Trump joins club of losing...

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Incumbents have the ability to use the bully pulpit to their advantage; they can change the storyline," said Matt Dallek, a political historian at George Washington University. "They have all the trappings of the White House - executive power, the Oval Office, Air Force One. These are powerful symbols that they have at their disposal."

The White House - in the words of one of its fictional inhabitants, President Andrew Shepherd in Rob Reiner's "The American President" (1995) - offers "the single greatest home court advantage in the modern world". For Trump, the first president never to have previously held elected office or a military leadership position, the White House helped normalize a volatile man better known earlier to Americans as a television celebrity.

However un-presidential in tone his tweets, his every formal event took place behind lecterns bearing

the instantly recognizable seal of the US commander in chief. US presidents enjoy wide leeway on diplomacy and Trump, like his predecessors, eagerly brought foreign leaders before the cameras with him at the White House, including in September when the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain agreed to recognize Israel.

Trump is the first president never to cross 50 percent approval in Gallup polls and was intensely divisive over his nearly four years, with wide opposition to his handling of the pandemic, his abrasive rhetoric and incessant personal scandals. George H W Bush, by contrast, basked in nearly 90 percent approval as he led the first Gulf War in 1991. The difference, Dallek said, is that both Bush and Carter failed to unify their parties.

Carter and George H W Bush faced primary challenges from the left and right of their parties respectively that weakened them heading into the general election. Similarly, Lyndon Johnson - who technically did not lose reelection but abruptly decided not to seek a second full term in 1968 - was hit by a revolt on the left over the Vietnam War. Gerald Ford, who took over after Richard Nixon's resignation and was never elected nationally on his own, also faced a spirited challenge in 1976 from Ronald Reagan. — AFP

Biden has tall order to revive...

Continued from Page 1

tougher on some of Trump's close partners such as Saudi Arabia. Biden has promised to reassess relations with the kingdom, saying he will make sure the United States "does not check its values at the door to sell arms or buy oil".

Saudi Arabia held back from Trump's pressure this year to join other Gulf Arabs in recognizing Israel - giving the kingdom a card to play with the new Biden administration. A senator for 36 years and vice president for eight more, Biden has a comparatively cordial relationship with another Trump ally, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But Biden has also promised to work to create a state for the Palestinians, a goal abandoned in all but name by Trump who delivered a wish-list for Netanyahu.

Katrina Mulligan, managing director for national security and international policy at the left-leaning Center for American Progress, said there was a chance for Biden to act on US values rather than just raw interests. "I think Israel's a very important relationship to the United States, but I do think that there should be consequences in terms of the foreign policy relationship for actions that violate our values."

Turkey has already denounced Biden, who has openly spoken of backing the opposition to counter the NATO ally's increasingly authoritarian president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Leftwing activists will be watching Biden's appointments closely and have urged a "fundamental rethinking" of US foreign policy.

A Biden administration "presents an opportunity to begin to challenge the institutions and groupthink that

have led to a disastrous, overly militarized, unilateral approach to foreign affairs," said a letter by groups including Justice Democrats, founded by supporters of Senator Bernie Sanders.

Biden initially backed the 2003 Iraq invasion but he was an early advocate of withdrawing troops from Afghanistan. He agreed with Trump on ending the nearly 20-year war in Afghanistan, although he is unlikely to be as tied to the outgoing president's campaign promise to remove all troops by the end of the year.

An early diplomatic signal will be on Iran, on which Trump slapped punishing sanctions as he pulled out of an accord negotiated by Obama under which Tehran drastically scaled back its nuclear work. Biden has vowed to return to diplomacy. But he has limited time as Iran is widely expected to elect a hardliner in June elections after its moderate president, Hassan Rouhani, was badly burned after betting on improved relations with the United States.

Biden as vice president invested extensive time building a personal relationship with Xi Jinping before he became China's leader. US views across the political spectrum have hardened on China since then as Xi tightens control at home and is increasingly assertive abroad. Bill Burns, a veteran US diplomat on speculative shortlists for a post under Biden, expected Biden to be clear-eyed about competition with China but also to take a more nuanced approach.

The goal is "not so much to prevent China's rise, which I think is beyond the capacity of the United States, but to shape the environment in which it rises and to avoid lazy assumptions about the inevitability of confrontation," Burns said before the election. Burns warned that Biden would not be able to "just flip a switch" and restore US influence to before 2016. "I think that's an illusion, because the world has shifted," he said. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's COVID-19 deaths jump over 800, cases over 130,000

Ministry confirms 742 new cases, four deaths in 24 hours

KUWAIT: Kuwait's confirmed coronavirus cases increased by 742 to 131,205 in the past 24 hours, while the death toll raised to 808 after four patients passed away within the same period, the health ministry said yesterday. In the meantime, 626 people have recovered from the virus in the past 24 hours, upping the total number of recoveries to 121,889, the ministry had confirmed earlier. Kuwait had crossed the 130,000 and 800 thresholds of total cases and deaths respectively on Friday, when the health ministry announced 825 new infections and five fatalities, in addition to 699 recoveries.

There are 114 patients currently receiving intensive care, down from 115 on Friday, out of a total of 8,508 patients being hospitalized, ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said. Some 5,278 swab tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, out of a total of 960,725 so far, added the spokesman. The official reiterated the strict need to abide by health precautions, urging the public to follow social distancing rules as the only way to keep the virus at bay.

'Utmost caution'
Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah had reiterated the need to maintain 'utmost caution' to curb the spread of the disease, and that during a



Total recoveries up to 121,889

briefing on the country's COVID-19 pandemic situation during an extraordinary Cabinet meeting on Thursday. Furthermore, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr Mustafa Redha, Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Affairs Dr Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, and Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Affairs and Dr

Buthaina Al-Mudhaf briefed the Cabinet on the measures taken in face of the COVID-19 pandemic, which included a detailed explanation of the situation. They also explained the treatment protocols used according to global recommendations in the light of infection and post-infection with the virus.

GCC efforts

Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel had also participated in a discussion the GCC countries' effort in controlling the COVID-19 virus. This came during his participation in the 83rd annual Conference of the GCC's Health Ministers' Council on Thursday, which also delved into exchange of views and opinions on a number of health issues, including improving health safety, emergency response and strategies systems, said Dr Rehab Al-Wutayan, Head of the International Relations Administration of the Health Ministry. The 2020-2030 Health cities ideas and programs were also conversed, which include strengthening the abilities of those working in the health field, and encouraging the public towards a healthier lifestyle. — KUNA



stc raises awareness on men's health

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced, in an effort to raise awareness on men's health issues, the launch of an interactive and engaging campaign during the month of November. Holding the title 'Move for Movember', the campaign aims to educate employees and the public on different methods men can adopt into their lifestyles to maintain their health and fitness levels.

Recognized worldwide as the awareness month for prostate cancer, stc released a statement indicating that the multifaceted campaign, led by Public Relations Specialist, Yousef Al-Maqroun, is organized under the #Because_We_Care umbrella. The campaign will run through the month of November, focusing on informing the public through tips and valuable information on ways to stay healthy and fit. To achieve this goal, the company is launching a full-fledged campaign on its digital platforms to support the cause while shedding light on the battle against this disease.

Additionally, stc stated that it is simultaneously launching an internal competition under the 'Move for Movember' initiative. The competition draws employees to register their daily and weekly step counts through any fitness application or device and send their data to the dedicated team within the corporate communications department at stc

responsible for this staff initiative. Upon submitting their movement for the period, the employee with the highest step counts recorded at the end of each week throughout the month will receive a special prize.

stc highly values its employees, and in line with the 'Move for Movember' the company produced a video that comes close to the heart of the stc family dedicated to an employee who survived prostate cancer. The video captures the employee's journey as he battled the harmful disease and heroically became cancer-free.

Raising awareness on widespread causes and health related issues comes as a key pillar in stc's corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda. stc's contribution and dedication in spreading awareness on health-related issues over the years has been a continuous and ongoing commitment that the company stands by to support the community.

stc continues to build on its CSR framework, focusing on causes that affect societies both worldwide and locally. The company launched this campaign with the goal of not only spreading awareness to the public regarding this harmful disease, but also to engage its employees in entertaining activities that promote adopting a healthier lifestyle. Considering the global pandemic the world is currently facing, stc values the importance of raising awareness on such diseases that impact the lives of individuals on a daily basis and may disrupt their lifestyles.

stc concluded: "We will continue to contribute, organize and participate in activities that will offer customers, employees and our society actionable guidance and valuable information that we believe will create a positive impact for our community. Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers among men, yet it is also one of the most treatable if detected at an early stage."

Kuwait marks Int'l Day for Preventing Exploitation of Environment in War

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait attaches great importance to the celebrations marking the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict, Director General of Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) said on Thursday. The UN selection of November 6 for celebrating this occasion serves as a reminder of the same day in 1991 when the Kuwaiti firefighters, backed by the US-led coalition forces, managed to put off the oil fire in Kuwait in the wake of the war against the Iraqi invasion, Dr Samira Al-Sayed Omar said in a press release.

In recognition of the status of Kuwait, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution (A/RES/56/4) in this regard on November 5, 2001, she stressed. It took 240 days to end the fight against the devastating fires, she said, noting that this period of time is far short than the three years previously expected, which is a great achievement testifying to the ability of the sons of Kuwait to overcome any challenges. The active diplomacy of Kuwait had an apparent influence on the international community, Dr Omar pointed out. She

recalled the call by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah during the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1991 for international legislations to criminalize the deliberate infringement on the ecosystem as punishable crime against humanity. The extent of damage to the ecosystem in Kuwait because of the Iraqi invasion is documented at KISR, she went on.

Since 2011, several state agencies have been working together, under the umbrella of the General Secretariat of the Point to Link the Kuwaiti Environment Projects, to rehabilitate environment. These include Public Authority of Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), Kuwait Oil Company, the Environment Public Authority (EPA), the Ministry of Electricity and Water and the Ministry of Defense, she said, noting that KISR coordinates this effort. KISR is carrying out the Marine Nature Reserve project at Sulaibikhat Bay in collaboration with PAAAFR and the General Secretariat. The project aims to survey the marine life in the area, collect accurate data on all species and build a database on the local marine ecosystem that could serve the KISR studies for 15 years and ensure healthy ecosystems and sustainably managed resources, she explained. She highlighted the need to raise public awareness about environment protection. The natural resources are on the verge of relapse due to conflicts and illicit exploitation, Dr Omar said, urging the international community to put an early end to such malpractices. —KUNA

News in brief

Amir's pictures at state departments

KUWAIT: The Cabinet assigned the Ministry of Information to circulate pictures of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in the headquarters of the Kuwaiti ministries, government institutions and diplomatic missions abroad, after the end of the official mourning period which ended yesterday.

'6.5 Ring Road' open

KUWAIT: The '6.5 Ring Road' partially opens today, the Public Authority for Roads and Transport announced. The 5,800-meter-long road connects the Seventh Ring Road with Road 602. The road runs across from Abdullah Al-Mubarak area in a bid to reduce chronic traffic jams on the Sixth Ring Road. It also links adjacent areas including the burgeoning Sabah Al-Salem University City.

Live ammo drill

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior said that the Coast Guard General Administration would carry out training exercises with live ammunition south-east of Bubyah Island and Failaka Island tomorrow and Tuesday. The ministry said that the training would involve 50 caliber 12.7 mm machine guns and 5.56 mm 16M rifle on surface targets not exceeding six thousand feet above sea level.

Oil price down

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 25 cents to \$40.16 per barrel on Friday as oppose to \$40.41 pb the day before, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. Meanwhile, the price of the Brent crude went down by \$1.48 to \$39.45 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which went down \$1.65 cents to \$37.14 pb.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



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ICSK Khaitan triumphs in Coloquio Model Global Summit 2020

KUWAIT: Touching the zenith of pride once again and adding one more feather to the crown of ICSK, Khaitan, 12 vibrant young minds of class 9 to 11 stood out with their outstanding performances in the Coloquio Model Global Summit 2020. Coloquio Model Global Summit 2020 was an initiative by six students from The Doon School, Welham' Girls' School, and Sriram Centennial School in association with Gyan Rashmi Training and Advisory, India. They conducted an Inter school virtual conference for students of classes 9 to 12 recently, wherein they brought together a myriad of portfolios from around the globe, such as South Africa, Uruguay, Nepal, ASEAN, IMF, Cambodia, USA and more. By assigning the students' several portfolios, which helped them understand better functioning of nations and international organizations, it enhanced their critical thinking abilities, helping them hone their leadership qualities and better their communication skills.

They were selected for the outstanding delegations, delegations, position papers, etc. The excellent and unique performance which exhibited their great oratory skills made them victorious. The Award winning delegations represented by ICSK Khaitan are: Verbal mention - World Bank, Honorable mention 2 - Nepal, High commendation 1 - Uruguay, Best Delegation Award - South Africa, Best position paper - South Africa. The Delegate Awardees of ICSK Khaitan are: Best Delegate Award - Akash Alexes, Most Outstanding Delegate - Khaluq Hussain, High Commendation 2- Hima Jameela, Honorable mention 2- Mohammed Abdullah, Verbal Mention - Liana Wilson, Best Position Paper -Hima Jameela. The management of the school congratulated the students for their victorious performances.

Kuwait hosts 4th session of Kuwait-UAE joint committee

KUWAIT: Kuwait on Thursday hosted the fourth session of the Kuwait-UAE Joint Higher Committee via videoconference. Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah headed the Kuwaiti side to the committee, while UAE's Foreign Minister and International Cooperation Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahayan led the Emirati delegation. In his speech, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad said: "At the beginning of this meeting as we are meeting under these exceptional conditions, I'm pleased to welcome you all in my name and on behalf of all members of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the fourth session of the joint higher committee between the State of Kuwait and its sisterly United Arab Emirates. Thank you all and I appreciate your keenness to take part virtually in this important meeting. We pray to Allah Almighty to help us in our job."

He added that he seized this opportunity to thank all sister and brother members of the Preparatory Committee for all efforts they made in distinguished preparation for the committee that contributed to facilitating its work. "This reflects our common desire to advance the strong and solid relations that unite our two brotherly countries in light of the wise and sound directives of our leaders, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah preserve and protect him, and his brother His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the sisterly United Arab Emirates, may Allah preserve and protect him," he noted. "Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, it pleases me to recall proudly the outstanding stations that have contributed to the consolidation of the bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries. Our sisterly ties have been promoted and consolidated due to the courageous historical stances by the UAE during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and its support for Kuwait to get its right in the most difficult circumstances as well as its relentless endeavor for the liberation of the State of Kuwait through the great sacrifices and services provided by the government and people of the UAE that will remain eternal in the history of the relationship between the two brotherly countries," he stressed.

Honorable stances

The late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may Allah rest him in peace, made honorable stances during the occupation of Kuwait that mirrored his keenness on the relations between the two brotherly countries, the minister stated. Under the leadership of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan, the sisterly country of the UAE hosted tens of thousands of the Kuwaiti families on its lands and



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah attends the videoconference. —KUNA



UAE's Foreign Minister and International Cooperation Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed attends the videoconference.

raised the Kuwaiti flag at that time on its official headquarters, he pointed out. The minister went on to say that Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan made the national anthem of the State of Kuwait play alongside the national anthem of the United Arab Emirates, in addition to his decision on the Emirati forces' participation in the war to liberate the State of Kuwait, adding that all these are honorable stations that will remain in the memory of Kuwait and Kuwaitis forever. "Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the Kuwaitis undoubtedly are proud of, and admire the wise leadership of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and the role that he plays with his brothers, the rulers of the United Arab Emirates, in the advancement of the country that has gained a regional and international status through its balanced policies, and due to its economic and developmental achievements," Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad said. "Speaking about several achievements and many initiatives launched by the UAE in varied domains, we express our great pride for these accomplishments and initiatives launched by the UAE in space through launching several satellites, sending the first Emirati and Arab astronaut to the International Space Station and developing the UAE project to explore Mars and the Hope Probe, a mission aiming to reach the orbit of Mars by 2021," he made clear.

Kuwait congratulates the sisterly United Arab Emirates on the celebration of the start of operating the first station of Barakah Nuclear Energy Plants, he said, voicing delight at this remarkable achievement in the field of producing electrical energy from peaceful and environmentally friendly nuclear energy. This reflects the progress made by the UAE in this field and is a translation of the insightful vision of the political leadership with the

efforts of the young Emiratis, he said. Also, this will undoubtedly contribute to promoting the economies of the UAE and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, the minister pointed out.

Facing challenges

Sheikh Ahmad Nasser highlighted the peculiarity of the strong Kuwaiti-UAE relations and the two countries' pursuit for integration on all vital domains to face challenges and meet the aspirations of their people. The foreign minister thanked the UAE for hosting and facilitating the return of Kuwaiti travelers who were stranded abroad during the coronavirus pandemic. He unveiled that Kuwait will participate in the Dubai Expo with its largest ever pavilion in such events, stressing his country's eagerness to see the success of UAE-hosted international exhibition. Sheikh Ahmad expressed satisfaction with the level of cooperation between the two GCC states. He pointed out that some 730 Kuwaiti undergraduate students are studying in the UAE universities and academies.

The minister noted that since 1972 the two countries have signed 33 cooperation agreements that covered a wide array of domains. He disclosed that in today's meeting the two countries inked three memoranda of understanding and one executive programs for joint cooperation. He stated that the trade exchange between Kuwait and UAE in 2019 hit over KD one billion (roughly \$3.27 billion). He estimated the volume of the investments of the Kuwaiti Investment Authority in the UAE at KD 54.382 million (about \$177.93 million). Following the meeting, the foreign ministers signed three memoranda of understanding for cooperation in higher education, education and Islamic affairs as well as an executive program for cooperation in arts and culture. — KUNA

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Ministries Complex car park opens today



KUWAIT: Minister of Finance Barrak Al-Sheetan has approved the opening of a multi-storey car park in Al-Mirqab area close to the Ministries Complex. The eastern part of the building opens today, ahead of its full opening at a later date. The building is open from Sunday to Thursday, from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm.

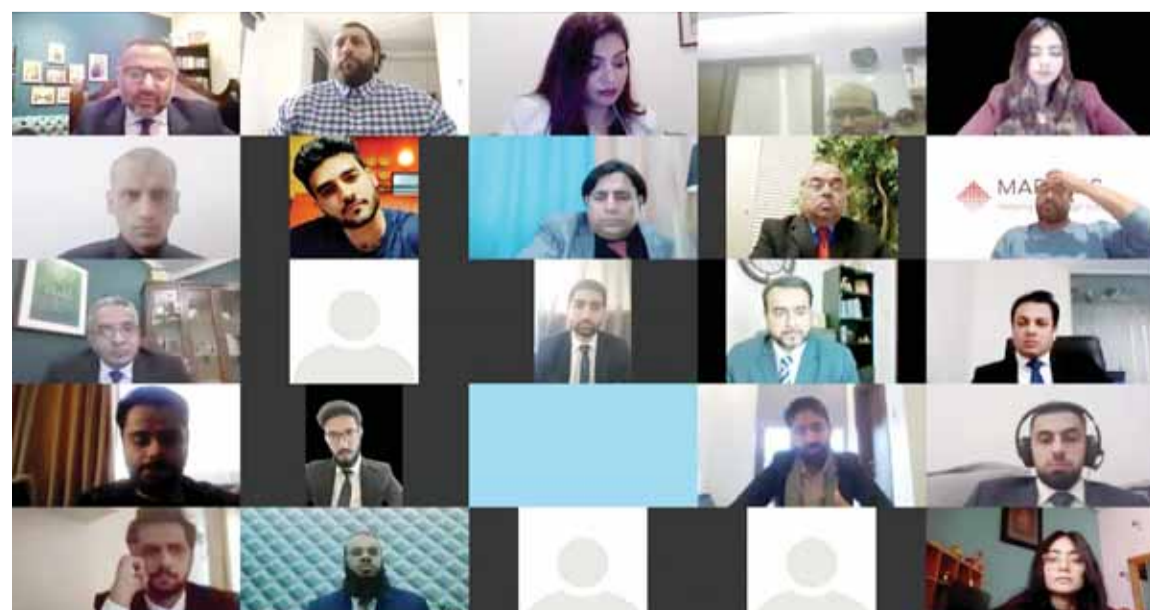
PEOPLE hosts global mentorship webinar

KUWAIT: With ever-growing PEOPLE Platform and making sure we return back to the community, PEOPLE conducted its first mentorship webinar recently, and gathered mentors and mentees across the globe. The session organized as a part PEOPLE's strategy to provide opportunity for all to learn, network and grow.

The session started by the Founder and Chairman of PEOPLE, Kashif Khan, reiterating PEOPLE's vision

and how the current world dynamics has once again given us the opportunity to re-connect on a different platform. He stressed that going forward, PEOPLE Team across the globe, including the Middle East, UK, and North America will be focusing on the mentorship program and will nurture and mentor leaders of tomorrow.

The webinar included a very informative presentation by Mohammed Meghani, a veteran oil and gas professional, explaining the importance of mentorship, followed up a presentation by the mentors representatives from various sectors including Fintech, Supply Chain, Retail and Information Technology.





Bomb attack kills former Afghan TV presenter

Ethiopia vows to replace Tigray government as conflict escalates

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HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania: Representative Jim Jordan stands with dozens of people calling for stopping the vote count in Pennsylvania due to alleged fraud against President Donald Trump on the steps of the State Capitol on Nov 5, 2020. — AFP

Trump supporters discredit election

#StopTheSteal goes viral as 'influencers' propagate conspiracies

Trump fraud claims meet with limited Republican criticism

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's unfounded accusations of fraud in the US presidential election have been condemned by some of his fellow Republicans, but top party figures have maintained their support. With results showing Democratic challenger Joe Biden edging closer to victory, Trump made a series of allegations without evidence on Thursday night in a speech that was widely condemned. Senator Mitt Romney, the former Republican presidential candidate who has been strongly critical of Trump, was among those speaking out.

"He is wrong to say that the election was rigged, corrupt and stolen," Romney said in a statement, while noting that Trump nevertheless had the right to pursue legal remedies if he had evidence of fraud. "Doing so damages the cause of freedom here and around the world, weakens the institutions that lie at the foundation of the republic, and recklessly inflames destructive and dangerous passions."

But his stance was not shared by party leaders. On Friday morning, one of the country's most powerful Republicans, Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, released a vague statement that did not condemn the president's bid to sow doubt over the counting process. "Here's how this must work in our great country: Every legal vote should be counted," he tweeted. "Any illegally submitted ballots must not. All sides must get to observe the process. And the courts are here to apply the laws & resolve disputes."

The top Republican in the House of Representatives, Kevin McCarthy, said on Twitter it was "far from over. Republicans will not back down from this battle". Other Republicans who have also been strong supporters of Trump offered unqualified backing, including Senator Lindsey Graham, who said he was donating \$500,000 to the president's legal defense fund. Senator Ted Cruz of Texas repeated some of the Trump team's allegations on the Fox News show hosted by Sean Hannity - among the president's favorites. "I am angry and I think the American people are angry," Cruz said.

'Very disturbing'

But there were other voices of condemnation from Republicans. Senator Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, whose state is a key battleground in the election and which has been the target of repeated Trump allegations, did so firmly. "The president's speech last night was very disturbing to me because he made very, very serious allegations without any evidence to support it," Toomey told CBS while also criticizing aspects of the vote count in Philadelphia.

US Representative Will Hurd of Texas, a former CIA undercover officer, issued strong criticism, saying on Twitter that the unfounded allegations were "dangerous". "It undermines the very foundation this nation was built upon," he wrote. Illinois congressman Adam Kinzinger, who has regularly criticized Trump's language, wrote on Twitter: "STOP spreading debunked misinformation... This is getting insane." Republican strategist Karl Rove, who helped George W. Bush to victory in the 2000 race eventually decided by the US Supreme Court, said fraud involving hundreds of thousands of ballots would require a James Bond-like conspiracy. John Bolton, Trump's former national security advisor turned critic, said "we Republicans are facing a character test". — AFP

NEW YORK: All it took was a Facebook page and a hashtag: As election tallies trickled in Donald Trump supporters were busy going viral, accelerating the unsubstantiated claim that Democrats were "stealing" the election under the rallying cry #StopTheSteal. It lived just 48 hours but the page quickly racked up 350,000 members, people subscribing to the conspiracy theory the Republican president too has been touting to his 88 million Twitter followers.

Trump's social media "influencers" - his son Donald Trump Jr. or the spokesperson of the Republican party Elizabeth Harrington - also played key roles in spreading the falsehood. And it wasn't long before the hashtag, already popular with Republicans during the 2018 midterms, translated into concrete protests. The "Stop the Steal" page called for demonstrations in states including Georgia, Nevada and Pennsylvania where votes were still being counted and the races were neck-and-neck.

The calls to action sometimes came with allusions aiming to sow violence including slogans like #civilwar - prompting Joe Biden supporters to sound the alarm, demanding Facebook shut down the page. By Thursday midday, the hub for misinformation was no more. "In line with the exceptional measures that we are taking during this period of heightened tension, we have removed the Group 'Stop the Steal,' which was creating real-world events," Facebook said in response to an AFP inquiry. "The group was organized around the delegitimization of the election process, and we saw worrying calls for violence from some members of the group."

But the seeds were planted - and its adherents quickly began denouncing the removal of the page launched by the pro-Trump group "Women for America First" as "censorship". "It's what we call a media manipulation campaign," said Emily Dreyfuss, of Harvard's Media Research center. "It's this really memorable phrase that simplifies a super complex issue," she said. "It sticks in the brain."

Conspiracies abound

These campaigns aren't grassroots, Dreyfuss said, but rather propagated from the upper echelons of the Trump campaign. As with another pro-Trump slogan - #BidenCrimeFamily - that spread an erroneous notion, the hashtag offers "a simple message framed with a specific agenda", she said, a bite-sized way to mislead a nation. The page's closure by no means spells the end of the disinformation campaign - similar groups and hashtags are already springing up.

The slogan "Stop The Steal" is still plastered all over social media, and is also a battle cry at demonstrations or in video clips, images that end up elsewhere on social media, said Renee DiResta, a researcher at the Stanford Internet Observatory. "We see the baton passing also on Twitter, making its way to Facebook and YouTube," she said. "This is presenting enforcement challenges for platforms," which have been working harder to fight disinformation since 2016.

Other far-fetched conspiracies have also been making the rounds since the Nov 3 vote, including one dubbed #Sharpigate that says the felt-tipped pins to fill in ballots could make choices illegible to voting machines. Launched in a county in Arizona, the thesis quickly debunked by local officials quickly spread, resulting in a Wednesday evening protest in front of a local election office demanding a recount.

But facing disinformation, facts often carry little weight: Once they begin spreading, these falsehoods imprint on the minds of people suspicious of the process. Such theories could easily continue propagating after the election, according to Alex Stamos, director of the Stanford Internet Observatory, in the same way as the far-right "QAnon" movement, which claims Trump is waging a secret war against a cabal of global elites who are Satan-worshipping pedophiles. "It's highly unlikely to us that this activity is going to slack, even after the inauguration," Stamos said. "This activity will continue and people will build upon these narratives." — AFP

Iran urges next US admin to learn from sanctions

TEHRAN: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday he hoped the next US administration will have learnt that sanctions cannot make Tehran bow to American policy. US President Donald Trump, who appears to be on the verge of having lost Tuesday's election to challenger Joe Biden, has applied a "maximum pressure" policy and punishing sanctions against Iran since his 2018 withdrawal from a landmark nuclear agreement with Iran.

"We hope the three-year experience will be a lesson for America's next administration to abide by laws and regulations and return to its commitments," Rouhani said in a televised speech. "Our people have faced economic terrorism for the past three years." Rouhani said Iran would "continue its resistance and patience until the other side bows before laws and regulations".

The Islamic republic hoped that "those imposing sanctions realize their path was wrong and that they will not achieve their goals in any way". Iranian officials have said they will focus on the policies of the next US administration rather than who becomes president. Tehran has also stressed that a possible US return to the nuclear agreement would have to be accompanied by compensation for damages caused by the withdrawal and a "guarantee" it will not be repeated. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Tuesday that the US election would have "no effect" on Tehran's policies towards Washington. Biden has said he plans to embark on a "credible path to return to diplomacy" with Iran if he wins the presidency and raised the possibility of returning to the 2015 nuclear deal, negotiated when he was vice president under Barack Obama. — AFP

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International

Biden supporters dance while Trump backers wield guns at counting sites

Philadelphia takes center-stage as a must-win electoral prize

PHILADELPHIA: Joe Biden supporters danced in Philadelphia's streets on Friday, while armed backers of President Donald Trump in Phoenix shouted, "Stop the steal" as a third day of post-election ballot counting brought the Democratic former vice president closer to winning the White House.

In Detroit, several hundred supporters of the Republican president, some carrying guns, raised premature chants of "We won!" outside a vote-counting center for Michigan's largest city, despite news organizations having called the state for Biden. But Philadelphia took center stage as the most populous and ballot-rich city in Pennsylvania - a must-win electoral prize for Trump even as Biden surpassed the president on Friday in the state's vote count.

With 20 electoral votes up for grabs, Pennsylvania was the most consequential of a handful of states where the outcome of Tuesday's election was still too close to call, and many Philadelphians delighted in parading past news cameras playing violins and trombones or dressed in election-themed costumes.

Sean Truppo, 37, a social studies teacher, said he lit fireworks upon awaking to news that Biden had overtaken Trump in the state's count before putting his 4-year-old daughter in a stroller to join the crowds outside the Philadelphia Convention Center. "My daughter was born under Trump and I wanted her to witness the end of Trump," he said.

Biden had amassed a lead of 253 to 214 in the state-by-state Electoral College vote that actually determines the victor, according to Edison Research. Winning in Pennsylvania would give Biden more than the 270 electoral votes needed for him to become the next president. He has already won the popular vote by some 4 million ballots. Weary from one of the most bruising presidential races in modern times, millions of Americans have spent three days since polls closed on Tuesday glued to round-the-clock news coverage of the slowing mounting vote tallies, a process prolonged by a record torrent of mail-in ballots.

Many sought distraction from the strain of prolonged uncertainty through work, chores or exercise.

Some Trump supporters, taking a cue from the president, insisted something must be wrong with any count showing Biden winning, and brought rifles and handguns with them to rallies outside tabulation centers in Detroit and Phoenix. Wearing "Make America Great Again" red baseball caps and other pro-Trump garb, some fell to their knees in public prayer. "It's hard to



PHILADELPHIA: A person dressed as Donald Trump in a prison jumpsuit dances in front of supporters of US President Donald Trump outside of the Philadelphia Convention Center as the counting of ballots continues in the state on Friday.— AFP

believe that we all went to bed Tuesday night and Trump was so far ahead and now he's behind," George Vosca, 72, a retired Illinois government employee, said after driving an hour to join a pro-Trump rally outside the Wisconsin state capitol building in Madison.

His wife, Marcia Vosca, also voted for Trump even as she acknowledged his flaws. "The thing is, he's really a jerk," Vosca, 64, said of Trump, her husband nodding emphatically in agreement. "But we can all relate to being a jerk."

Raised fists and jeers

Pro-Trump rallies organized using the social media hashtag #StopTheSteal were being planned for Saturday in nearly 60 cities across six battleground states, including Michigan and Wisconsin, which were already called for Biden. Most demonstrations on Friday were peaceful and relatively small, though tensions sometimes flared. In Detroit, a few anti-racism protesters rallying behind the Black Lives Matter slogan entered an area cordoned off by police for Trump supporters on Friday. Standing defiantly with fists in the air, a group of Trump backers, including armed members of militia groups, moved closer, jeering,

before police intervened, leading the anti-racism protesters elsewhere.

In Arizona, another closely contested state, a growing crowd of several hundred protesters waving pro-Trump flags, some carrying rifles, returned for a third day to the counting center in Phoenix, Arizona's capital, where some 90,000 ballots from early voting in Maricopa County remained to be counted as of Friday evening. Right-wing radio host and conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, who addressed the Phoenix crowd on Thursday, was back briefly on Friday morning to lead a faction of protesters into the street in chants of "Arrest Joe Biden," while others cried out, "Stop the steal."

The size of the crowd grew to as many as 1,000, as sheriff's deputies watched from the sidelines, allowing them to demonstrate across four lanes of traffic. Among the Trump supporters was Kota Bermudez, a 22-year-old driver for online retailer Amazon, who said he was braced for disappointment. "I know he's kind of losing right now, especially in the battleground states," he said. "But I'm hoping that with all the legal things going on and all these mail-in ballots and so forth, whether they're legal or whatnot - I just want this to be a fair and free election." — Reuters



This combination of pictures created on Friday shows Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden attending various campaign events in the United States.— AFP

Why is US vote count taking so long?

WASHINGTON: Three days after polls closed, the United States and the world still do not have final results from the presidential election, although Democrat Joe Biden was on the brink of unseating Donald Trump. The wait has fueled tension across the polarized nation, with Trump alleging without evidence that Democrats are engineering fraud.

But the delay was widely expected, often for reasons specific to individual states, which under the US system each conduct their own polls:

Competitive states take longer

California, the nation's most populous state, was quickly called for Biden after polls closed Tuesday. But such calls are in fact projections by news outlets rather than official results, meaning that it takes longer to get an accurate picture in narrowly divided states. "The closer the races, the longer it takes," Kathy Boockvar, secretary of the vital state of Pennsylvania, explained to reporters.

States also have diverse deadlines on receiving absentee ballots, especially those coming from the military or other citizens living overseas. North Carolina has held off on counting at least 171,000 ballots-which could make the difference-as by law it accepts votes that arrive by mail through November 12 so long as they were postmarked by Election Day.

Similarly, Nevada, which also has a tight race, will count ballots postmarked by Election Day so long as

they arrive by November 10. Also causing delays are provisional ballots, which are issued to voters if there is confusion about their registration and need verification.

Deluge of mail-in ballots

With concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, states accustomed to limited numbers of absentee votes have been deluged with ballots mailed by citizens who do not want to risk voting in person. Some 65.2 million of the record 160 million Americans who voted this year did so by mail, according to an estimate of the US Elections Project.

In Pennsylvania, the Republican-led legislature rejected an effort to let authorities count ahead of Election Day, contributing to the scenario in which its biggest city Philadelphia—a Democratic stronghold—reported returns last. Some places have unique factors delaying vote-counting such as Chatham County in tightly fought Georgia, where an election division and a registration board separately look at ballots.

Legal challenges

The Trump campaign has seized on the delay to demand a halt to counting in states where it is behind, notably Pennsylvania whose Republican Party approached the US Supreme Court. Republicans had been fighting for months against allowing Pennsylvania to count ballots postmarked by Election Day if they arrive by Friday.

In Wisconsin, where Biden eked out a narrow victory in results made known by early Wednesday, the Supreme Court ruled that only votes received by Election Day would count. Most states allow rival parties to observe counting but challenges on the rules have taken time, with Trump's supporters taking particular issue with Philadelphia's rule that watchers stay at least 15 feet (4.5 meters) away due to COVID risks.— AFP

Ethiopia vows to replace Tigray government

GONDAR, Ethiopia: Ethiopian lawmakers voted yesterday to replace the current government of the federal state of Tigray, after the army launched air strikes to destroy military assets in the region in a worsening internal conflict. Fears are mounting over the prospect of civil war after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent federal troops and aircraft into the region with which Addis Ababa has been embroiled in a bitter feud.

Abiy said Friday that air strikes had already neutralized "rockets that can hit a range of 300 kilometers (186 miles) from where they are stationed in Mekele City and other places in the vicinity", state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate reported. Three days after he announced a military operation against the state's ruling Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) who he has described as a "criminal clique" bent on destabilizing the country, lawmakers voted to abolish the state government.

The upper house of parliament "passed a decision to abolish the existing illegal Tigray regional assembly and executive, and for a caretaker administration to be formed," the state-owned Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) reported. The house of federation's decision was based on a legal provision allowing federal intervention in a region deemed to have "violated the constitution and endangered the constitutional system." "The caretaker administration will be mandated with conducting a constitutionally acceptable election and to implement decisions passed on by the federal government," the EBC said. Despite growing international alarm, Abiy has vowed there will be more air strikes on Tigray, defending his move towards conflict as a "limited" operation necessary to restore law and order to the region.

"In order not to cause collateral damage, I call on civilians in cities to reduce mass gatherings," Abiy said Friday. Abiy's statement indicated military operations were going well for federal forces, but a communications blackout in Tigray made this claim impossible to verify. A UN source told AFP that an internal security report said Tigrayan forces held Ethiopia's Northern Command headquarters in Mekele.—AFP



GONDAR: People walk near a square of Emperor Tewodros II in the city of Gondar, Ethiopia on Friday.— AFP

News in brief

Algeria wildfire kills two

ALGIERS: A wildfire has killed two people west of the Algerian capital, the emergency services said yesterday, one of a spate of seasonal blazes to hit the north African country. Nearby residents were evacuated from their homes after the fire swept through forest near the coastal city of Tipaza trapping and killing two men in a chicken coop. More than 50 additional firefighters were dispatched from Algiers to help tackle the blaze which broke out on Friday night. Over the past 24 hours, fires have been reported in northern Algeria in 10 of the country's 58 provinces.—AFP

'President-elect Biden' posts

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter on Friday flagged as premature posts referring to Joe Biden as "president-elect," as the vote count continued in the knife-edge US election with the Democrat leading Donald Trump in several key states. Tweets referring to the former vice president with the victor's title and his running mate Kamala Harris as "vice president-elect" were tagged with messages saying counts were not yet final. "Official sources may not have called the race when this was tweeted," read a Twitter message below a post from Democratic Coalition co-founder and podcaster Scott Dworkin using the two titles for Biden and Harris.— AFP

Three teens charged in France

PARIS: Three teenagers were indicted Friday in the murder of French history teacher Samuel Paty, beheaded last month after showing cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed to his students during a free speech lesson, a judicial source said. Two 18-year-old men and a 17-year-old girl have been charged with "criminal terrorist conspiracy," the source said. They were arrested on Tuesday. The men-one French and one a Russian of Chechen origin—are suspected of having been in contact with Paty's killer, 18-year-old Abdulkh Anzorov, and have been placed in pre-trial detention.— AFP

Zimbabwe journalist in jail

HARARE: Award-winning Zimbabwean journalist Hopewell Chin'ono was charged on Friday with obstructing justice and ordered held in a maximum security prison. Chin'ono is accused of breaching his bail conditions by tweeting about the court outcome of a gold smuggling scandal despite a ban on him posting on Twitter. He had initially been arrested in July on charges of inciting public violence ahead of planned anti-government protests but was freed in September on bail. The 49-year-old, who was arrested again on Tuesday, arrived at the Harare magistrate's court in leg irons and handcuffs, where he was charged with obstructing justice and contempt of court over the tweet.— Reuters

Aoun seeks proof behind US sanctions on his son-in-law

BEIRUT: President Michel Aoun said yesterday that Lebanon would seek evidence and documents from the United States that led Washington to impose sanctions on his son-in-law Gebran Bassil, a prominent Christian politician. The United States on Friday blacklisted Bassil, leader of Lebanon's biggest Christian political bloc, accusing him of corruption and ties to the Iranian-backed Shi'ite Hezbollah movement that Washington deems a terrorist group.

Aoun asked Lebanon's caretaker foreign minister, Charbel Wehbe, to obtain evidence and documents that should be submitted to Lebanon's judiciary "to take the necessary legal measures", the presidency tweeted. In September, Aoun issued similar directives after Washington blacklisted two former government ministers over accusations of aiding Hezbollah.

Bassil, who harbors presidential ambitions, heads the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) founded by Aoun and has served as minister of telecoms, of energy and water and of foreign affairs.

"Sanctions have not scared me nor promises tempted me," Bassil said in a Twitter post following the announcement. The FPM has a political alliance with Hezbollah, which has become Lebanon's most powerful political force. Bassil has defended the group as vital to the defense of Lebanon.

Hezbollah condemned the sanctions as blatant interference aimed at forcing US "dictates" on Lebanon. The sanctions could complicate efforts by Prime Minister-designate Saad Al-Hariri to navigate Lebanon's sectarian politics and assemble a cabinet to tackle a financial meltdown, the country's worst crisis since its 1975-1990 civil war and which is rooted in endemic corruption, waste and mismanagement. The US Treasury Department accused Bassil of being at the "forefront of corruption in Lebanon". A senior US official said Bassil's support for the armed group Hezbollah was "every bit of the motivation" for targeting him for sanctions.—Reuters

KD 288M SOUTH AL MUTLAA HOUSING PROJECT SUCCESSFULLY HANDED OVER TO PAHW ON TIME!

'Future of this new city will be very bright'



By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A KD 288-million South Al Mutlaa Housing Project executed by Webuild S.p.A. (formerly Salini-Impregilo S.p.A.) and Kolin Insaat, Turizm Sanayi Ve Ticaret A.S was formally hand over on Thursday the 8th of October 2020 to the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW). The event was attended by the Italian Ambassador to Kuwait HE Carlo Baldocci and by the Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait HE Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak.

"The project was completed on time as planned and we are happy that we hand over Phase 1 and 2 without any glitches. Today we are handing over the Phase 2, while last week we organized the Phase 1 hand over of the project. So, the entire KD 288-million project is now formally hand over from the Consortium to the Public Authority for Housing and Welfare," Resident Engineer Eng. Ali Sadeq said. "We encountered several obstacles along the way, but we managed to overcome them all," he added.

According to Eng. Ali Sadeq, the 100-sq-km project comprises of 30 km of depressed roads amongst a total of 149 km of roadways. It's a huge project, and once the area is inhabited, we expect a population of around half a million.

The project included the construction of primary infrastructures, completion and maintenance of the main roads and infrastructure works for the South Al Mutlaa Housing Project. The project is fully financed by the Government of Kuwait through the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. The contract was signed on June 30, 2016 between PAHW and a joint venture between the Italian International Contractor Webuild S.p.A. (formerly Salini Impregilo S.p.A.) and the Turkish International Contractor Kolin Insaat, Turizm Sanayi Ve Ticaret A.S. The works started in Sept 2016.

The project includes asphalt roads (149 km), vehicular bridges (nos. 26), utility bridges (nos. 31), pedestrian bridges (nos. 13) retaining wall construction (32 km), Concrete (1,4 million of m3), Asphalt material (1,8 million of Tons), roadway excavation works (11 million of m3), Roadway backfilling works (11 million of m3), Structural excavation works (10 million of m3), box culvert construction (12 km), micro-tunneling (45 km), Trencher excavation (40 km), Intersections (nos.61), Roundabouts (nos.34), Irrigation system (187 km), storm water system (162 km), Sanitary system (76 km), pumping stations (nos.15), electrical utility ducts (30 km), communication system (244 km) and Street lighting ducts (249 km). "In one area alone - a third of the area -

the proposed number of houses that can be built is around 28,288. There will be space reserved for commercial activities, and probably in the near future you will see a huge business district. The area is called South Al Mutlaa, but I am sure they will come up with a new name in the future. The future of this new city will be very bright," Eng. Ali Sadeq said.

Giancarlo Zannoni, Contractor's Representative and Project Manager of the Consortium lead by Webuild S.p.A., said this day is one of celebration for both the Partners of the Joint Venture. "This is a great day to celebrate for all of us. We realized the primary Infrastructure for this new city and as mentioned by our PAHW's Resident Engineer, we completed the project on time as planned, despite the Covid-19 Pandemic. We are very thankful for the help of each and every one in our project team and I would like to thank our Partner Kolin Insaat, Turizm Sanayi ve Ticaret AS and the Deputy Project Manager Mr. Ayhan Oner for their hard work and contribution to the construction works on site. It would not have been possible without their extreme effort, and of course also without the support from all the authorities in Kuwait, who cooperated and helped us secure all the necessary permits and licenses," Zannoni said. "We carried out the project without any

delay during the execution of the excavation we faced many difficulties due to the nature of the soil, in particular the discovery of a big amount of rock, for which has been required the drilling & blasting method, used for the first time in the Country to break up the rock and for this I would like to do a special thanks to the Ministry of Interior to release us all the required license and permit. We are now hand over this challenging project to our Client PAHW," he added.

The Italian Ambassador to Kuwait HE Carlo Baldocci said that the completion of the project on time is proof that the coronavirus pandemic couldn't hamper their commitment to the Kuwaiti Government and that the Webuild S.p.A. and his partner delivered the project on time. "This is a commitment embraced by the Consortium in cooperation with all the agencies and we are very happy that we managed to deliver it on time. It's a reflection of our commitment and no virus can delay the project. This is very important to us - it's a success story by another Italian company. We shall continue to work with the Kuwaiti Government," the envoy said.

"We have several other projects ongoing in Kuwait and we are happy to be part of a prestigious project like this. Infrastructure projects are such an important sector to be part of and we will continue sharing our

expertise with Kuwaitis come what may," HE Carlo Baldocci said. "Corona is has taught us many lessons in life - the world has been shattered and affected, but we shall all overcome this pandemic and be victorious," he concluded.

The Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait HE Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak, said that ; "As you might know, there are 44 Turkish contractors in the "Top 250 International Contactor List" of Engineering News Record (ENR) Magazine. Turkey ranks second with its number of contractors in this list. Many of our top-listed contractors have been very active also in Kuwait, especially for the last 10 years. Kolin Construction Company is among them".

"Here in Al Mutlaa, Kolin and his partner did a phenomenal job by finishing the project on time with no delays at all. Even though the effects of the global pandemic in Kuwait were very severe in the first half of this year, the Consortium was able to continue its project by taking all the necessary measures. Their efforts in this manner are priceless, because this area is going to be a home for more than 100.000 of our Kuwaiti friends. We are proud of having such successful construction companies, which are also contributing to the infrastructural development of our brotherly nation Kuwait." Said HE Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak.



International

Former TV presenter, two others killed in Kabul car bomb attack

Govt blames group linked to Taliban for attack

KABUL: A former Afghan television presenter and two other civilians were killed in a Kabul bombing yesterday, in an attack officials blamed on a group linked to the Taliban. Yama Siawash was killed when a bomb attached to his vehicle exploded near his home in the Afghan capital, police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz told journalists.

The murder of Siawash comes amid a rise in violence across the country even as the Taliban and Afghan government engage in peace talks in Qatar to end the country's grinding war. Siawash, who recently joined Afghanistan's central bank as an adviser, used to be a prominent political and current affairs presenter with Tolo News, the country's biggest private TV channel, known for his hard-hitting interview style.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack, but the interior ministry blamed the Haqqani network, a group linked to the Taliban. "Such targeted attacks and explosions of sticky bombs is the continuation of crimes by Haqqani network and the Taliban," Tariq Arian, spokesman for the ministry, told reporters.

Washington has listed the Haqqani network as a terrorist group.

Siawash's death drew immediate condemnation from senior Afghan officials and foreign diplomats. "I am shocked at the killing of former Tolo News anchor Yama Siawash," Ross Wilson, US charge d'affaires in Kabul, said on Twitter.

"This attack is an assault on freedom of the press, one of Afghanistan's core democratic principles."

Abdullah Abdullah, who heads the country's overall peace and reconciliation process, also said Siawash's murder targeted freedom of expression in Afghanistan. "This is an unforgivable and unforgettable crime," he said in a statement.

Targeted killings

The Afghan Journalists Safety Committee, a panel set up by media networks to oversee security for journalists in the country, called for "identifying and prosecuting the perpetrators" of the attack. President Ashraf Ghani ordered an investigation into the murders, the

presidential palace said.

Targeted killings of prominent figures, including journalists, clerics, politicians and rights activists, have become more common in recent months amid growing violence in the country. On Thursday, the father of Zarifa Ghafari, one of Afghanistan's first female mayors, was gunned down in front of his house in Kabul. His assassination was condemned by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who had awarded Ghafari with the International Women of Courage award earlier this year.

US watchdog Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said in a report this week that violent attacks in the country had surged by 50 percent during three months to September when compared to the previous quarter.

Dozens of people were killed in less than two weeks in Kabul in brutal attacks that also left scores wounded. On Monday, a deadly raid by militants on Kabul University left 22 people dead, many of them students. The Islamic State militant group claimed responsibility for the attack but the



This handout undated video grab image distributed by Tolo TV shows former Afghan television presenter for Tolo News, Yama Siawash, taking part in a broadcast, at Tolo TV in Kabul. —AFP

government blamed the Haqqani network. The attack on the university came just days after a suicide bombing near an educational centre killed 24 people. That attack was also claimed by IS. —AFP

News in brief

US removes group from terror list

WASHINGTON: The United States said Friday it had removed from its list of terror groups a shadowy faction regularly blamed by China to justify its harsh crackdown in the Muslim-majority Xinjiang region. In a notice in the Federal Register, which publishes new US laws and rules, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he was revoking the designation of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) as a "terrorist organization." "ETIM was removed from the list because, for more than a decade, there has been no credible evidence that ETIM continues to exist," a State Department spokesperson said. The administration of George W. Bush in 2004 added ETIM, also sometimes called the Turkestan Islamic Party, to a blacklist as it found common cause with China in the US-led "war on terror." —AFP

Delhi air pollution 'severe'

MUMBAI: Air quality in India's capital New Delhi remained in the "severe" category for a third straight day yesterday due to increased stubble fires and vehicle emissions, the country's main environment monitoring agency said. The Air Quality Index (AQI) in Delhi state stood at 441 on a scale of 500, indicating "severe" conditions that are hazardous, according to the federal pollution control board's guidance. Delhi's air pollution typically worsens in October and November due to farmers burning off stubble, and on coal-fired power plants in surrounding states and traffic fumes. —Reuters

Doc treated Navalny promoted

MOSCOW: The chief doctor of a hospital in the Siberian city of Omsk that briefly treated poisoned Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny has been promoted to head of the regional health ministry, local authorities said yesterday. In August, 44-year-old Navalny fell severely ill on a flight from Siberia to Moscow and was hospitalized in Omsk after an emergency landing. The anti-graft campaigner was eventually transferred for treatment to Germany where experts ruled he was poisoned with the Soviet-designed nerve agent Novichok. Alexander Murakhovskiy, the head physician of Omsk Emergency Hospital No 1, was among the doctors who claimed no traces of poison were found in Navalny's system and stalled his transportation to Berlin. —AFP

Peru says diphtheria under control

LIMA: Peru's health ministry said Friday that a diphtheria outbreak in the South American country had been brought under control, indicating it was a minor outbreak. Health authorities launched a national epidemiological alert late last month after detecting the country's first case of the deadly disease in 20 years. "So far, the investigation and control allows us to say that no additional cases to the family outbreak have been identified," deputy health minister Luis Suarez told a press conference. Diphtheria is a highly contagious and potentially fatal disease that mainly affects the nose and throat but sometimes also the skin. Five cases of the disease came to light in the La Victoria area of the capital Lima. —AFP

Azerbaijani forces advance in Karabakh

SHUSHA, Azerbaijan: Explosions sound in the distance as Kamo Hayrapetyan kneels to pray at the Holy Saviour Cathedral in Nagorno-Karabakh's historic town of Shusha. Dressed in camouflage and white sneakers, the 60-year-old Armenian reservist lights candles and crosses himself under the partially col-

lapsed roof of the church, which was hit by Azerbaijani rocket fire a month ago.

"They bomb us every day, it has become a habit for them," says Hayrapetyan, whose own home was destroyed in the artillery fire that has been pummeling Shusha. "We will defend our land, we will hold out until the end. And we won't abandon Shusha," he says, using the Armenian name for the town. An ethnic Armenian region of Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh broke away from Baku's control in a war in the early 1990s that left some 30,000 people dead. Decades of stalemate, failed negotiations and sporadic clashes fol-

lowed, until the heaviest fighting since a 1994 ceasefire erupted on September 27.

Nearly six weeks later, the clashes are getting closer every day to Shusha—a sign of how far Azerbaijani forces have advanced in their campaign to retake the region. Karabakh's separatist leader Arayik Harutyunyan sounded the alarm late last month, warning that Azerbaijani forces were only five kilometres (three miles) from Shusha.

"Whoever controls Shusha controls Artsakh," he said in a video filmed in front of the cathedral, using the Armenian names for the town and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Myanmar youth look to election and beyond

YANGON: Five million young voters will be able to cast their ballots for the first time in Myanmar's election today—about 14 percent of the electorate. In a country that emerged less than a decade ago from near total isolation under military rule, the nation's youth defies easy classification.

AFP spoke to a number of Myanmar's Generation Z about the challenges they face and what they hope the next government will bring.

Rakhine anger

History student Wai Wai Tun, 19, can vote because she lives in Rakhine state's capital Sittwe, but her family in her home town will miss out. Myanmar banned voting in a long list of areas for "security reasons", leaving more than a million disenfran-

Archbishop, 90, briefly kidnapped in Cameroon

YAOUNDE, Cameroon: A 90-year-old archbishop was briefly abducted in a western Cameroon region gripped by conflict between anglophone separatists and security forces, the archdiocese said on Friday. Christian Tumi, an archbishop emeritus and retired cardinal who has frequently sought to mediate in the crisis, was kidnapped on Thursday evening on a road near Kumbo in the Northwest Region, it said.

He was released on Friday along with his driver, said Samuel Kleda, archbishop of the port city of Douala. But around 10 other people who were also seized with them have not been freed, a local

Eta leaves 150 dead or missing in Guatemala

GUATEMALA CITY: About 150 people have died or remain unaccounted for in Guatemala due to mudslides caused by powerful storm Eta, which devastated an indigenous village in the country's north, President Alejandro Giammattei said Friday. The toll is in addition to the approximately two dozen people who died elsewhere in Central America since Eta made landfall in Nicaragua on Tuesday as a hurricane.

Giammattei said an army unit had arrived in the northern village of Queja to begin rescue efforts, amid

chised in Rakhine and hundreds of thousands more elsewhere. "I just want the election to be fair and credible," she says, adding the decision has raised already-high tensions.

A civil war between Myanmar's military and the Arakan Army (AA) — militants fighting for more autonomy for the ethnic Rakhine—has killed and wounded hundreds and forced 200,000 from their homes. "We, Rakhine, are citizens of Myanmar and want to live in safety with equal rights too."

Naga tribesman

Man Chen, 18, belongs to the Konyak, a Naga tribe on the Indian border once feared for its head-hunting traditions. The motorbike fanatic describes his identity as "Naga first, Konyak second"—and does not even mention Myanmar. Isolated from the rest of the country by mountains and poor infrastructure, the Konyak are divided by the frontier and rely on markets on the Indian side for food.

official who requested anonymity said.

Among those travelling with Tumi was a local leader, Sehm Mbinglo, the traditional chief of the Nso people, the official said. Local people are negotiating for their release, the source said.

"The cardinal and his driver were released a short time ago. It's a relief, but it is also terrible to know that a 90-year-old cardinal was taken hostage," Kleda told AFP.

More than 3,000 people have been killed and more than 700,000 have fled their homes since October 2017, when militants declared independence in two western regions where English speakers are a majority. The declaration has not been recognized internationally. Rights groups say crimes and abuses have been committed by both separatists and security forces. The separatists frequently carry out kidnappings, often for ransom, although there have also been killings of

fears that most of the residents had been killed. A preliminary report indicated that "150 homes have been buried with 100 people dead," he said.

Giammattei added that another mudslide in the northeastern department of Huehuetenango, on the border with Mexico, had left 10 dead. "We calculate that between the dead and the missing, unofficial figures show about 150 dead," said Giammattei, updating the country's death toll from the 50 fatalities he had reported on Thursday.

He called the situation in Queja "critical," with heavy rain continuing to fall and setting off new mudslides, while roads are still blocked. Some 2,500 people in the impoverished Mayan indigenous area had lost their belongings in the deluge of mud. —AFP



YANGON: Supporters of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party (right) on a motorcade pass supporters of the opposition Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), during an election campaign event on the outskirts of Yangon on Friday ahead of the November 8 general election. —AFP

"I don't have enough money and I don't have a regular job," he says, adding that five of his 12 siblings have died. He worries about the effect of the election on the long-running con-

flict between armed Naga groups and the Myanmar military.

"There was fighting in my village last time, so I'm worried this might happen again." —AFP

abducted security personnel, teachers and civilians accused of collaborating with the authorities.

'Intolerant' militants

On Tuesday, separatists kidnapped 11 teachers in a raid on a Presbyterian school in Kumbo but freed them two days later after local people went to their camp and called for their release, according to Samuel Fonki, head of the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon. The following day, six students in Fundong in the Northwest Region were taken but were released several hours later.

On October 24, seven children were killed in a school in the Southwest Region, which the government has blamed on militants. Tumi has previously the past criticized the separatists for preventing children from going to school, which the militants deem to be a symbol of the state.



Cardinal Wiyghan Christian Tumi of Cameroon

In September 2019, he said "intolerant" militants were "sacrificing the future" of children by denying them an education. In November 2019, the UN children's agency Unicef estimated that 855,000 children were without schooling in the two anglophone regions. —AFP



BAMBITO: People evacuate after the overflow of Bambito river due to heavy rains caused by Hurricane Eta, now degraded to a tropical storm, in Bambito, Chiriqui Province, on Friday. —AFP

Hilltop fortress

The hilltop town, whose cliffs make it a natural fortress, is of huge strategic importance. It sits on high ground over the region's capital Stepanakert and on the main road linking the city with the territory of neighboring Armenia, which backs the separatists. Officials in Karabakh and Armenia have reported numerous attacks to the south of Shusha in recent days. There have been clashes in Karintak, known as Dashaly in Azerbaijan, a town at the base of the Shusha cliffs, and around the town of Lachin to the south. Crucially, Azerbaijani forces have also reached the road that leads south from

Stepanakert, through Shusha and Lachin, to the Armenian border.

This is the main road through the region and its capture would cut off the separatists' most important supply route. It was closed for the first time on Wednesday, with Armenian defense ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanyan saying this was because of "search operations for possible subversive groups". It is unclear how far—and in what strength—Azerbaijani forces have pushed in to the area around Shusha and the road, though Armenian officials have reported regular clashes and the destruction of armored vehicles and tanks. —AFP

Business

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2020

Boursa Kuwait introduces MSCI inclusion measures

Measures being introduced in collaboration with KCC

KUWAIT: In preparation for Kuwait's inclusion in the MSCI Emerging Markets index, Boursa Kuwait is introducing a series of measures in collaboration with the Kuwait Clearing Company. Some of these measures will be temporary and apply on the late November inclusion date only, while some will become a permanent part of the trading mechanism going forward.

Starting today (November 8), Boursa Kuwait and the Kuwait Clearing Company will be making permanent changes to the trading mechanism with the introduction of Allocation Consolidation Module (ACM) accounts. An ACM account is a specialized mechanism for managers of large assets to aggregate orders while settlement happens on the individual's mandated accounts at the end of the trading session.

During the inclusion session, there will be an extension of the Closing Auction and the Trade at Last (TAL) Session. The Closing Auction will go on for 40 minutes, followed by a 30-minute break before the TAL session kicks off for 40 minutes. Buy and sell orders will also be matched at a randomized closing time for the last two minutes of the Closing Auction session. Additionally, order amendments and cancellations will be allowed throughout the Closing Auction session. There will also be an extension on Custodian Rejections during inclusion.

Boursa Kuwait's Head of Markets Sector, Noura Al-Abdulkareem, commented on the measures, saying "In keeping with our ongoing commitment to developing the Kuwaiti capital market to meet international, best-in-class standards and practices, Boursa Kuwait has been working with the Capital Markets Authority, the Kuwait Clearing Company, and our partners locally and around the world to make sure the MSCI inclusion is a smooth and has-



Measures go into effect today

efficiency, appeal, and performance of the market to attract investments from local and international investors and is a testament to Boursa Kuwait's commitment to bolster our reputation for providing issuers with efficient access to capital and investors with diverse return opportunities. I would also like to thank the Capital Markets Authority and the Kuwait Clearing Company for their continuous support, without which we would not have achieved these successes."

Duajj Raed Al-Saleh, Acting Deputy CEO of the Information Technology Sector at the Kuwait Clearing Company, also commented on the inclusion measures, saying "The Kuwait Clearing Company has been working with Boursa Kuwait, the Capital Markets Authority, MSCI Inc. and our partners in the international investment community to insure the seamless undertaking of the inclusion. The introduction of ACM accounts is one of a series of measures that the KCC will be introducing in preparation for inclusion day, and we will continue working with our partners to improve the trading mechanism, whether for future inclusions or for the benefit of the Kuwaiti capital market, going forward."

As a global recognition of the sweeping market development efforts by Boursa Kuwait, the Capital Markets Authority and the Kuwait Clearing Company, MSCI upgraded Kuwait to 'Emerging

Market' status in December 2019. Following the country's inclusion in S&P Dow Jones Indices' Global Equity Indices, with an Emerging Market classification in December 2018 and the FTSE Russell Emerging Markets Index in September 2017.

Since its inception, Boursa Kuwait has worked tirelessly to create a credible exchange built on efficiency and transparency, creating a liquid capital market, a progressive exchange platform and developing a comprehensive set of reforms and enhancements that has allowed it to compete on an international level. The company has rolled out numerous market reforms and new initiatives over the past three years as part of its comprehensive multi-phase market development (MD) plans, and is currently working towards launching new products including margin trading, tradable rights issue, fixed income Bonds and Sukuk, as well as exchange-traded funds (ETFs).

Market' status in December 2019. Following the country's inclusion in S&P Dow Jones Indices' Global Equity Indices, with an Emerging Market classification in December 2018 and the FTSE Russell Emerging Markets Index in September 2017.

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Noura Al-Abdulkareem

Deal or no deal, Brexit to hit UK trade hard

LONDON: Britain's business community has long hoped for a post-Brexit free trade deal-but government failures mean there will still be "significant" disruption when it is fully free of the European Union next year, an official watchdog warned Friday. The coronavirus pandemic, which has already sparked a historic recession in Britain, will add to the strain on freight, farming and other sectors especially in Northern Ireland, with or without an EU trade deal, the National Audit Office (NAO) said in a report.

Britain formally left the bloc in January but remains bound by its rules under a post-Brexit transition period until the end of this year-and still hopes to clinch a trade deal. The two sides are currently battling to thrash out a new economic partnership, but Britain's full exit will mean changes either way, in particular customs checks for trucks heading to the EU from British ports.

The NAO also backed up complaints by business leaders who have been warning for months that the government is putting all the pressure on companies to prepare, but failing to do enough itself.

'Significant disruption'

"Even if government makes further progress with its preparations, there is still likely to be significant disruption at the border from 1 January 2021 as traders will be unprepared for new EU border controls which will require additional administration and checks," the NAO said. The Confederation of British Industry business lobby has already warned that it would be "unconscionable" for Prime



LONDON: Lorries queue up at the port of Dover on the south coast of England. Government failures to prepare for Brexit mean the UK faces "significant disruption" when it is fully free of the European Union on January 1, an official watchdog said Friday. — AFP

Minister Boris Johnson's government to fail to reach a trade deal, given chronic turmoil sparked by the deadly Covid-19 pandemic.

David Henig, trade expert at London-based think-tank the European Centre for International Political Economy, said UK companies faced a historic change in trade relations-regardless of the outcome of talks. "On January 1, the UK faces the biggest change to trade relations in recent history, deal or no-deal," Henig said. "The almost seamless UK-EU trade will be replaced by significant barriers in terms of customs, regulations, and services."

"This will inevitably have an effect on the UK economy. A deal will ease some of the transition, but it will still be a big change." If Johnson's trade talks flounder with the European Union, the UK will end the transition on a bare-bones arrangement with the EU governed by World Trade Organization quotas and tariffs.

Even with a deal, companies will wade through

major European bourses.

Oil fell, with the WTI and Brent Crude falling back nearly four percent after a volatile week as US President Donald Trump continued making unsubstantiated claims he is being cheated of an election victory. Latest vote tallies showed Biden is on his way to the White House.

Betting on Biden

US media reported that the challenger had pulled ahead in the key states of Pennsylvania and Georgia. A victory in Pennsylvania alone would give Biden the presidency based on the Electoral College tally.

Despite some profit taking Friday, stocks generally surged over the week as a Biden win became more likely, with traders betting on him paving the way for a bigger fiscal stimulus package compared to Trump, said Fawad Razaqada, market analyst with ThinkMarkets. While control of the upper chamber has yet to be determined, a "Republican-controlled Senate will make it unlikely that Trump's corporate tax cuts will be rolled back," he added.

Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell on Thursday said more US stimulus was "absolutely essential" to support the economy. Democrats and Republicans failed to reach a deal before the election, owing to disputes over how much to spend. The prospect of further monetary easing measures from the Fed and a new stimulus have weighed on the dollar, boosting safe haven investment gold.

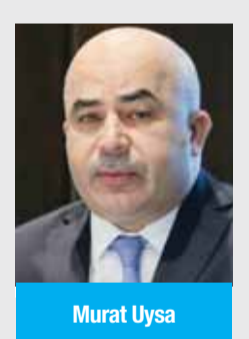
reams of new red tape-particularly for the automotive and food sectors-to ensure that goods comply with EU standards. They will also be compelled to make customs declarations before taking those goods across the border. London's financial sector will lose its so-called passport rights that had allowed them to operate across the bloc.

Under its "reasonable worst-case scenario", the UK government concedes that queues of up to 7,000 heavy-goods vehicles could develop in southeast England from January 1. However, it insists it has ploughed more than £700 million (\$920 million) into border infrastructure, but business groups say they are hampered by the slow rollout of IT systems identified by the NAO. Johnson's spokesman pointed to the government spending already made on areas like border infrastructure. Noting the government's public information campaign and talks with industry groups, he stressed there was also regular contact with businesses. — AFP

Erdogan fires CB chief as lira slides

ISTANBUL/ANKARA:

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan fired central bank governor Murat Uysal on Saturday and replaced him with ex-finance minister Naci Agbal, acting after a 30 percent plunge in the lira currency's value to record lows this year.



Murat Uysal

The decision to replace Murat Uysal gives Turkey its fourth central bank governor in five years and could stoke longstanding criticism about political interference in monetary policy.

The presidential decree was announced in the early hours yesterday in Turkey's Official Gazette and gave no reason for the surprise move. A senior official in Erdogan's AK Party said Uysal was held responsible for the nosedive of the lira, the worst performer in emerging markets this year. Analysts said that while Agbal is a close Erdogan ally, he is seen as a capable manager who could take a more orthodox approach to policy. That could ease concerns that have driven Turks to snap up hard currencies at record levels.

"Uysal's leadership had been utterly disastrous. Agbal cannot be worse, surely. He had a reputation as a decent technocrat," Timothy Ash at BlueBay Asset Management said on Twitter. "Agbal is actually qualified for the job." The lira closed at 8.5445 against the dollar on Friday after touching a record low of 8.58, despite dollar weakness as votes were still being counted in the U.S. election.

Erdogan had appointed then-deputy governor Uysal to head the central bank in July 2019 after sacking predecessor Murat Cetinkaya amid the president's frustration that the bank had not cut interest rates to boost the economy. Erdogan, a self-described enemy of high interest rates, has repeatedly called for lower borrowing costs. Last weekend, he said Turkey was fighting an economic war against those squeezing it in "the devil's triangle of interest and exchange rates and inflation".

Agbal had been finance minister from 2015 until 2018, when he was appointed to head the directorate of presidential strategy and budget. The AK Party official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Agbal faced a "difficult test" at his new post, but that he was a "strong name" who could help alleviate some of the pressure on the lira.

"We will see a stronger central bank governor," the official said. "The steps taken were unable to stop the rise in the exchange rate. Uysal was removed from his post... He received the bill, in a sense," the official said. Agbal "will act smart" and is not seen as someone who would accept political direction, the person added. "It is a difficult post, but steps to stop the rapid rise in the exchange rate must be taken." —Reuters

Wall Street cools as Biden nears the finish line

NEW YORK: World markets lost momentum Friday after four straight days of gains on Wall Street, as vote counting across US battleground states showed Democrat Joe Biden poised for victory.

US stocks from Monday to Thursday posted the best four-day streak since April, and Friday featured positive economic data for traders to peruse as unemployment dropped a full point to 6.9 percent in October, a bigger-than-expected fall.

The US economy regained 638,000 jobs last month, far more than analysts had been expecting, the Labor Department data showed, despite rising coronavirus cases and Congress's failure to pass another spending package to aid the economy's recovery. But the Dow Jones index closed 0.2 percent lower, while the Nasdaq was flat for the day as was the S&P 500. But despite the lackluster Friday, this week was the best since April with a gain of 7.3 percent for the S&P.

In London, the FTSE 100 was almost unchanged but still added six percent for the blue chip index's best week since June, a similar pattern to other



TOKYO: A man rides his bicycle past a quotation board displaying stock prices in Tokyo on Friday. — AFP

The rather less-traditional haven of Bitcoin meanwhile "blitzed through \$15,000 for the first time since the beginning of 2018... as investors rode a momentum trade that has been building up a head of steam ever since PayPal announced it would let users buy, sell and hold a variety of major cryptocurrencies", noted Neil Wilson, chief market analyst at Markets.com. Tokyo was the highlight in Asia as the Nikkei jumped 0.9 percent for its highest close in 29 years. — AFP

Business

Al Mulla Automobiles announces arrival of the new E-Class sedan

Clean yet emotionally appealing design; exclusive, high-quality interior

KUWAIT: Al-Mulla Automobiles Co, the sole authorized distributor and exclusive service partner for Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait, has announced the arrival of the new E-Class Sedan, which is the first of the thoroughly updated model series, to Kuwait. The Coupe and Cabriolet variants are arriving soon thereafter.

The E-Class is perceived by many as the "heart of the brand". The E-Class is known for its clean yet emotionally appealing design; exclusive, high-quality interior; and the wealth of innovations in driving assistance systems. This emotionally appealing and at the same time intelligent combination is extremely successful.

E-Class sedan

- More dynamic design
- Sporty Avantgarde Line as the new entry specification for the exterior
- Redesigned front headlamps (full-LED headlamps as standard, multibeam LED headlamps are optionally available)
- Redesigned tail lamps
- Next generation driving assistance systems, including: New steering wheel generation with capacitive hands-off detection Active Distance Assist distronic with route-based speed adjustment Active Stop-and-Go Assist Active Steering Assist
- Active Brake Assist; in the Driving Assistance Package now also with turning maneuver function
- Active Blind Spot Assist - now also with exit warning
- Parking Package in conjunction with 360° camera: newly expanded side view and for the first-time automatic parking not only in parallel and end-on parking spaces, but also on marked areas
- Even more comfort in the interior
- Widescreen cockpit with two 12.3-inch displays as standard
- MBUX with linguatronic voice control (standard) and augmented reality (optional)
- MBUX Interior Assistant (optional)
- energizing comfort control with energizing coach (optional)
- energizing seat kinetics (optional)

More dynamic design

The enhanced dynamics and the upgrade of the E-Class Sedan are reflected in the model range: the entry-level model already comes with the sporty Avantgarde Line exterior. As a result, the base model of the E-Class Sedan features a central star at the front for the first time. The new front end with increased



chrome content plays a role in the fresh appearance.

The redesigned AMG Line with a new bumper in the style of the AMG Performance models looks even sportier. In addition, the Avantgarde and AMG Lines will feature a bonnet with power domes as standard. The E-Class Sedan features all-LED headlamps as standard. Multibeam LED headlamps including ultra range high beam are available as an option. The three new paint colors available as part of the refresh are high-tech silver metallic, graphite grey metallic and mojav silver metallic. The wheel line-up has also been expanded and now includes aero wheels, which also contribute to saving fuel and thus to sustainability.

New upholstery colors and materials upgrade the interior. These include the new color combinations magma grey/neva grey (Avantgarde), black/nut brown (Exclusive) and magma grey/macchiato beige (Exclusive), and trim in open-pore silver ash wood, burr walnut fondant, brushed aluminum and aluminum with a carbon grain.

Next generation driving assistance systems

The new E-Class Sedan is equipped with the latest Mercedes-Benz driving assistance systems, providing cooperative support to drivers. This results in an especially high level of active safety: the E-Class Sedan reacts if the driver does not. The hands-off recognition now works on a capacitive basis, which enhances user-friendliness when driving in semi-automated mode.

As standard, the E-Class Sedan comes with Active Brake Assist, which in many situations is able to use autonomous braking to prevent a collision or mitigate its severity. The system is also able to brake for stationary vehicles and crossing pedestrians at typical

city speeds and even to prevent collisions, depending on the situation. As part of the optional Driving Assistance Package, this is now also possible when turning off across the oncoming lane. Some Intelligent Drive functions can optionally be added to the Driving Assistance Package. They include Active Distance Assist distronic with route-based speed adjustment, where the E-Class Sedan is now even able to respond to data from LiveTraffic Information. Active Parking Assist with parktronic and 360° camera makes it possible to enter and leave parking spaces automatically. The system facilitates the search for and selection of a parking space as well as entering and leaving (if the vehicle was parked automatically) parallel and end-on parking spaces or garages. For the first time, the new E-Class Sedan is able to recognize and use marked areas as parking spaces. The 360° camera transmits an even more realistic image to the media display, which includes an expanded side view. When leaving a parking space, the system is able to warn of traffic crossing behind the vehicle and can apply the brakes in case of doubt.

Even more comfort in the interior

The new E-Class Sedan is equipped with the latest generation of the MBUX multimedia system (Mercedes-Benz User Experience). As standard for the region, it includes two large 12.3 inch/31.2 cm screens that are arranged side by side for a widescreen look. The information in the instrument cluster and on the media display is easily legible on the large, high-resolution screens. An emotive presentation with brilliant graphics underlines the comprehensibility of the intuitive control structure.



Signs of economic recovery point to smaller US stimulus

WASHINGTON: US Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said on Friday that economic statistics, including a 1 percentage point drop in the unemployment rate, showed that Congress should enact a smaller coronavirus stimulus package that is highly targeted at the pandemic's effects. The Republican senator told a news conference in Kentucky that the fall to a 6.9% jobless rate, combined with recent evidence of overall economic growth, showed the US economy is experiencing a dramatic recovery. "I think it reinforces the argument that I've been making for the last few months, that something smaller - rather than throwing another \$3 trillion at this issue - is more appropriate," McConnell told reporters.

But his call for a narrow package was quickly rejected by House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat, who has been working to broker a COVID-19 stimulus deal near the \$2 trillion mark with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. "It doesn't appeal to me at all, because they still have not agreed to crush the virus. If you don't crush the virus, we're still going to have to be dealing with the consequences of the virus," Pelosi told a news conference on Capitol Hill. —Reuters

US sees surprise dip in jobless rate to 6.9%

WASHINGTON: The US unemployment rate unexpectedly dropped to 6.9 percent in October, a decline of a full point ahead of the presidential election, though the economy is far from healed and rising coronavirus cases could undo the progress. The decrease came as the economy regained 638,000 jobs last month, according to a Labor Department report released Friday, far more than analysts had been expecting as hard-hit sectors continued hiring despite Congress's failure to pass another spending package to aid the recovery.

The downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic was considered one of the main issues facing voters when they went to polls this week to choose whether to give President Donald Trump a second term or replace him with challenger Joe Biden, who leads in key states as vote counting continues.

China exports strong in October, import growth slows

BEIJING: China's exports posted strong growth again last month, extending an upward trend on the back of a consumption rebound among its major trading partners, official data showed yesterday.

Inbound shipments, however, cooled after a surge in September with analysts expecting that a drop in import prices weighed on headline numbers. Although the coronavirus pandemic has battered countries worldwide, foreign trade in the world's second-largest economy fared better than expected, buoyed by healthcare shipments.

Exports rose 11.4 percent on-year in October, customs data showed, better than the 8.9 percent growth predicted by a Bloomberg poll of economists. This marks the fastest pace since March last year, supporting China's economic recovery after lockdowns this year to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Imports, meanwhile, grew 4.7 percent, short of the 8.8 percent on-year rise expected. The customs administration said yesterday that China's exports of mechanical and electrical products rose in the first 10 months, as did outbound shipments of textiles including face masks, which rose around 35 percent from a year ago. Tommy Xie, head of Greater China research at OCBC Bank, told AFP a key driver for October's exports was shipments to the US, noting this could be due to "frontloading... partially because of concerns over a further escalation of tensions, and also ahead of the US elections".

US-China ties have grown increasingly strained in recent years, under President Donald Trump.

Although imports were below expectations, Xie noted that shipments remained robust for iron ore

and integrated circuits amid tensions with Australia - a key exporter of the commodity.

Iris Pang, ING chief economist for Greater China, added that a long holiday in early October could also have weighed on imports. Capital Economics cautioned in a report this week, however, that recent data pointed to a drop in new export orders in October, signalling that "foreign demand has started to soften following fresh lockdowns abroad".

The resurgence of infections in key markets - including the US and Europe - could hit overseas demand, while China has made a renewed push this year for local consumption to underpin growth. "Most measures suggest that domestic demand continued to strengthen and the infrastructure investment at the heart of the ongoing stimulus is particularly import-intensive," said Capital Economics. Meanwhile, China's trade surplus with the US - the core gripe in Washington in the bruising trade war - rose around 19 percent from last year to \$31.4 billion in October. This widened slightly from the \$30.8 billion seen in the month before, marking one of the larger surpluses this year according to Chinese figures. —AFP

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said McConnell's call for a smaller bill "doesn't appeal to me at all, because they still have not agreed to crush the virus." —AFP



SHANGHAI: Passengers arrive at the Hongqiao railway station in Shanghai on Friday. —AFP

DHAMAN launches health prevention services for all organizations

- to reduce the spread of infection and enhance employee safety at work

- Integrated preventive services via calling 1800019



دھمان
DHAMAN



Check the temperature of the staff



Khaled K. Al-Gharabally
Business Development Manager

As part of preventive services provided by Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) to limit the spread of COVID-19 infection, the company launched integrated services for health prevention programs for various government and private organizations to ensure highest safety standards for protecting employees and avoiding mandatory closures due to workplace infections.

These precautionary health services are provided through DHAMAN's Primary Healthcare Centers to all ministries, entities, institutions, companies and others by highly-qualified professional medical staff specialized in preventive and community health to implement all infection control strategies and perform the steps of comprehensive risk assessment. This contributes to protecting, preventing and imparting a sense of confidence and security within workplace employees, guests and visitors.

Organizations wishing to learn more learn more about the details of these services may contact DHAMAN Primary Healthcare Centers at 1800019.

Regarding these services, DHAMAN Manager of Business Development Khalid Al-Gharabally said that

such services target different entities in Kuwait, which are keen to apply health preventive measures based on scientific basis, such as ministries, companies, institutions, hotels, banks, commercial towers, malls, customer service centers, sports clubs/gyms and others.

Al-Gharabally added that the programs were implemented at several organizations and showed notable successes due being based on medical foundations and a holistic approach for the best preventive solutions according to a number of factors relevant to each organization, such as the nature of its activity, workspace size, the intensity of movement within the offices and the reception area, all of which are thoroughly examined by DHAMAN to present a comprehensive plan to the management of the concerned organizations for the protection of all individuals and facilities.

Al-Gharabally noted that the measures outlined by the Ministry of Health (MOH) can only be applied through an integrated community partnership based scientific discoveries and practical steps that benefit all parties.

Monitoring and prevention services

The first program is related to monitoring and prevention services, where a plan is defined to implement evidence-based standards and practices that are aligned with the directives of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Kuwait's MOH. This includes initial examination of the workplace and the identifying where infections might occur, setting standards for occupational health and safety, as well as training employees on safety procedures. It also covers developing a comprehensive management strategy to deal with persons confirmed or suspected to be infected through standardized measures that include isolating the case, conducting required analysis, as well as overseeing the measures of cleaning and environmental sterilization at the workplace to ensure the safe return of employees to work.

Thermal health check services

The second program is the thermal health examination service through DHAMAN medical staff. This service includes monitoring the normal or high temperature of all individuals before entering the workplace through implementing health protocols and standards, requesting medical care for any suspected cases due to having a fever, in addition to having additional routine checks for the body temperature of employees during work hours to ensure maximum safety.

Lifestyle | Features



Members of transgender community read the holy Quran inside the Dawatul Islam Trito Linger Madrasa or the Islamic Seminary for the third gender, in Dhaka on November 6, 2020. — AFP photos



A teacher distributes the holy Quran among the members of transgender community inside the Dawatul Islam Trito Linger Madrasa or the Islamic Seminary for the third gender in Dhaka.

BANGLADESH OPENS FIRST ISLAMIC SCHOOL FOR TRANSGENDER MUSLIMS

Bangladesh opened its first Islamic school for transgender Muslims on Friday with clerics calling it a first step towards integrating the discriminated minority into society. The madrasa is one of a series of recent moves in Bangladesh to make life easier for the Muslim-majority nation's up to 1.5 million transgender people. The LGBT community faces widespread discrimination in the South Asian country, with a colonial-era law still in place that punishes gay sex by prison terms, though enforcement is rare.

But about 50 transgender students

read Koranic verses to mark the opening of the Dawatul Islam Trito Linger Madrasa, or Islamic Third Gender School, on the outskirts of the capital Friday. "I am ecstatic," Shakila Akhter, a 33-year-old student, told AFP. "We are grateful to the clerics for this beautiful move." Akhter was born a girl and had always wanted to become a doctor or lawyer, but those ambitions were thwarted when she left home while still a child to join a transgender commune. "We are Muslims, yet we can't go to a mosque," Akhter said. "We can't even mix with other members of society."

A group of clerics led by Abdur Rahman Azad transformed the top floor of a three-storey building into the school with funding from a local charity. Azad's team already offers Koranic lessons to seven transgender groups in Dhaka and said the madrasa grew out of the need for a permanent base for the community. Up to 150 students - nearly all adults - will get lessons similar to those in a traditional madrasa, where the Koran is taught along with Islamic philosophy, Bengali, English, maths and social sciences.

Azad said transgender people, known as Hijras in Bangladesh, have

suffered too much. "For too long they have been living a miserable life. They can't go to schools, madrasas or mosques. They have been victims of discrimination. We, society and the state are to blame for this," he said. "We want to end this discrimination. Allah does not discriminate between people. Islam treats everyone as a human being. Hijras should enjoy all rights like any other human being."

In 2015 Islamist extremists hacked to death a leading gay activist and editor of an LGBT magazine, while other prominent homosexuals have since

fled the country. But steps forward have been made for the community. Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government has since 2013 allowed trans to be identified as a separate gender. Last year they were allowed to register to vote as a third gender, and their numbers will be counted in a census to be carried out next year across the country of 168 million.— AFP



A sign for biotechnology company, Biogen, Inc is seen on a building in Cambridge, Massachusetts. — AFP

US expert panel votes 'no' on experimental Alzheimer's drug

A US government-convened expert committee on Friday voted against recommending the approval of the first new Alzheimer's drug in almost two decades after finding insufficient evidence of its benefit. The decisions reached by such panels, while nonbinding, are often accepted by the Food and Drug Administration. Maker Biogen was hopeful its drug aducanumab would be the first ever approved to treat the cognitive decline associated with Alzheimer's - a major medical milestone.

It would also have been the first drug approved against the disease since 2003. But an FDA advisory committee concluded that the data in its favor fell well short of the mark. "I think Alzheimer's treatment is a huge, urgent, unmet need — I also think that if we approve something where the data is not strong, we have a risk of delaying good treatments and effective treatment for many years," said Joel Perlmutter, a professor of neurology at Washington University in St. Louis, one of the experts who participated.

Ahead of the meeting, the FDA released a set of documents that signaled a positive tone and raised speculation the panel might vote in favor of the drug. There have been two major late-stage clinical trials to test aducanumab, with one demonstrating benefits from taking the intravenous medicine — and the other failing to produce the same level of evidence. FDA staff wrote that they found the results of one of the trials "highly persuasive" and believed the other also showed benefit once a subset of very sick patients were removed from the analysis.

That view was not shared by the expert panel's 11 members, who after discussing and reviewing the data for several hours voted 10 against, none for, and one "uncertain" on the question of whether, considering the totality of evidence, the drug provided enough evidence it works. The result is a blow to the millions of people around the world who suffer from the neurodegenerative disease and their loved ones, but may not be the end of the line for aducanumab. Biogen could conduct more studies in order to better make its case. —AFP

FOOD EMISSIONS COULD PUSH EARTH PAST GLOBAL WARMING LIMITS

Even if all fossil fuel emissions ended immediately, greenhouse gasses from the food we eat could drive global temperatures above internationally agreed warming limits, a new study has warned. The system to feed Earth's 7.7 billion people accounts for nearly a third of global total greenhouse gas emissions, including from land clearing and deforestation, fertilizer use and livestock. Researchers in the United States and Britain said the only way to avert devastating levels of warming would be to transform what we eat, how it is produced, and the amount we waste.

"Our work shows that food is a much greater contributor to climate change than is widely known," said co-author Jason Hill, a professor in the Department of Bioproducts and Biosystems Engineering at the University of

Minnesota. "Fortunately, we can fix this problem by using fertilizer more efficiently, by eating less meat and more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts, and by making other important changes to our food system."

The study in the journal *Science* forecasts future food system emissions using expected trends in population growth, dietary changes and the additional amount of land thought to be needed to feed the world. The authors found that, if left unaddressed, these future food-related emissions would by themselves push Earth above the 1.5 degrees Celsius warming threshold - seen as the guardrail for avoiding devastating climate impacts - by 2050. By the end of the century, they would lift temperatures to nearly 2C above pre-industrial levels - the limit set in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

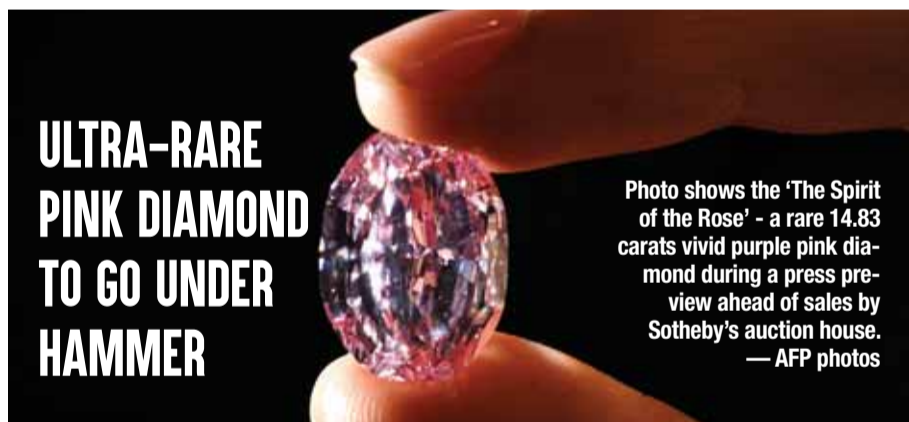
Unsustainable appetite

There are multiple sources of greenhouse gasses in the food system besides carbon dioxide emitted by burning fossil fuels in production and supply chains. Land clearing and deforestation releases carbon dioxide (CO2) and nitrous oxide (N2O), the authors said, while production and the use of fertilizers and other agricultural chemicals emit CO2, N2O and methane. Methane - which has a warming potential 28 times greater than CO2 over a 100-year period - is also released by livestock like cows, sheep and goats as well as rice production.

The 2015 Paris climate deal saw nations commit to limit temperature rises to "well below" two degrees Celsius. Earth has warmed by about 1.2C so far. The United Nations says that to stay under the safer 1.5C cap, emissions must fall 7.6 percent annually this decade.

Most efforts to curb global warming focus on cutting carbon pollution from the transport and energy sectors, noted lead author Michael Clark, a researcher at Oxford University's Nuffield Department of Population Health.

"However, our research emphasizes the importance of also reducing emissions from the global food system," he said in a statement. Research published in July by the Global Carbon Project found that emissions of methane have risen by nine percent in a decade, driven by mankind's growing appetite for energy and food. At the same time, the Diet for a Better Future report on consumption in G20 nations concluded that if everyone ate steaks and dairy the way Brazilians and Americans do, we would need an extra five planets to feed the world.— AFP



ULTRA-RARE PINK DIAMOND TO GO UNDER HAMMER

Photo shows the 'The Spirit of the Rose' - a rare 14.83 carats vivid purple pink diamond during a press preview ahead of sales by Sotheby's auction house. — AFP photos

An extremely rare pink diamond will be auctioned in Geneva on November 11 by Sotheby's, which says it is worth between \$23 and \$38 million. Named "The Spirit of the Rose" after a famous Russian ballet, the 14.83-carat diamond mined in Russia is the biggest ever to go under the hammer in its category - "fancy vivid purple-pink". "The occurrence of pink diamonds in nature is extremely rare in any size," Gary Schuler, head of Sotheby's jewelry division, said in a statement.

"Only one per cent of all pink diamonds are larger than 10-carats." Speaking to AFP, Benoit Repellin, head of fine jewelry auctions at Sotheby's Geneva, said the oval-shaped diamond was "completely pure." The rough diamond was unearthed by Russia's Alosa-one of the world's leading diamond producers-in the Republic of Sakha in the

northeast of the country in July 2017. Repellin said it took a painstaking year for cutting masters to turn the diamond into its polished form.

Sotheby's said the world auction record for a diamond and any gemstone or jewel was the "CTF Pink Star", a 59.60-carat oval pink diamond that sold for \$71.2 million in Hong Kong in 2017. According to Repellin, five out of the 10 most valuable diamonds ever sold at auction were pink. The sale of this gem coincides with the closure of the world's largest pink diamond mine in Australia after it exhausted its reserves of the precious stones. The Argyle mine, in the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia, churned out more than 90 percent of the world's pink diamonds.— AFP



German anthropologist Bettina Jungklaus lays out the skeletal remains of the so-called 'Lady of Bietikow' in Berlin. — AFP

Ancient skeleton find in Germany offers clues on prehistoric era

German researchers are piecing together the life of a prehistoric woman who died more than 5,000 years ago in the Neolithic period, after her skeleton was found during excavation works for wind turbines. The "Lady of Bietikow," as she has been named, was found near a village of the same name in northeastern Germany's Uckermark region. The skeleton had been buried in a squatting position, one of the oldest known forms of burial, according to local media.

Investigations have shown that she was between 30 and 45 years old and died more than 5,000 years ago. That means that she lived during the same period as Oetzi the Iceman, the stunningly preserved corpse found by tourists in the Alps in the 1990s. "You can compare Oetzi and the Lady of Bietikow in terms of age," said Philipp Roskoschinski, one of the two archaeologists who made the discovery in the state of Brandenburg, which surrounds Berlin.

Oetzi was found by two hikers in 1991 in the Oetzal Alps on the border between Austria and Italy. His body was extremely

well preserved, with organs, skin and other organic material still intact - researchers were even able to see what he had eaten hours before he died. "The discovery of Oetzi was much more spectacular due to the conditions of preservation," Roskoschinski said. All that is left of Lady Bietikow are bones and some fragments of clothing, but researchers have still managed to piece together some details about her life.

It was during the Neolithic period that humans first introduced grains into their diet, since they could be stored more easily than meat and could also be used as a means of payment, according to anthropologist Bettina Jungklaus. However, this led to a deterioration in people's general health. This can be seen in the state of the Lady of Bietikow's teeth, which are severely eroded and missing completely in some places, Jungklaus said.

"Normally there is enamel on the surface of the teeth. But here it is heavily worn, chewed off," she said. "This allows us to draw conclusions about her diet: it was probably very rich in fibre, very hard. There are certain grains that cause the teeth to wear out easily." It remains unclear whether the condition of Lady Bietikow's teeth indicates an illness or even the cause of her death. Researchers are now hoping to find out more about her life, including whether she came from the Uckermark region or had immigrated there from elsewhere.— AFP



A model poses with the 'The Spirit of the Rose' a rare 14.83 carats vivid purple pink diamond, during a press preview.

Lifestyle | Features

Could PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X be swansong for consoles?

The upcoming release of a ninth generation of video game consoles by Sony and Microsoft is set to be a sales slam dunk with consumers seeking entertainment during pandemic confinement, but could it also be their swansong as the habits of gamers change? Both companies have been dripping out information for months about the PlayStation 5 (PS5) and the Xbox Series X to build excitement, and gamers will be able to start getting their hands on them next week.



This combination of photos shows the PlayStation logo (top) on display and the Xbox logo displayed at the Microsoft Xbox E3 2012 media briefing in Los Angeles.

In a sign of the keen anticipation of gamers, the allotted pre-orders for the consoles at major retailers were quickly snapped up and both companies expect high demand in the run-up to the end of the year. Sony has said it expects to sell 7.6 million PS5 consoles through the end of March, beating the sales performance of the PS4. And it will be a major upgrade in terms of hardware - the current generation of consoles were released back in 2013. Both new consoles will offer much more powerful central and graphics processors, support 4K televisions, as well as offer ray tracing, which allows for better rendition of how light behaves. "When one looks at the technical specifications of the new consoles, they are 10 times above the current generation. We're going to have games that are more beautiful, more realistic, more immersive. People are going to be more away," said Charles-Louis Planade, a video game expert with Midcap Partners.

Dark cloud in the sky?

Sony sold 110 million PS4 consoles over the past seven years, more than double the number of its competitor the Xbox One. "For Microsoft, the challenge is to not let Sony get too far ahead - maybe even the game with them," Planade told AFP. Taking into account the growing number of players, the analyst believes they could even match their previous success.

Others aren't so sure given the changes in the industry, which is already beginning to move away from big expensive machines to cloud gaming. "This generation could be the last physical consoles. It'll be the last time we'll hear talk of teraflops,"



Sony Playstation 4 gaming controllers for sale at a store in Tokyo.

said Audrey Leprince, co-founder of the independent game studio The Game Bakers. A teraflop refers to the capacity of a processor to calculate a trillion operations, and both Sony and Microsoft have been vaunting the speed and power of their new consoles.

Leprince said there haven't been any major innovations with game interfaces or with the games themselves. But "the stone in the pond... is the shift to the subscription model" which means the console makers are becoming a "Netflix of video games", she said. The subscriptions — Game Pass for Microsoft and PlayStation Plus for Sony "are going to completely revolutionize the industry as was the case for films and music," said Leprince. "The challenge for the console manufacturers is to hold onto their subscribers so as not to give an

opening to challengers" such as Google or Amazon, said Planade.

'A transition phase'

The two web giants are betting on cloud gaming which allows them to dispense with consoles. The games can run on a variety of devices such as smartphones and tablets. Because the servers in the cloud do the heavy lifting in terms of processing, there is no need for powerful and costly consoles. But both firms have also taken a step towards cloud gaming by offering lower priced versions of their new consoles without drives.

Games have to be downloaded from the web or streamed, and have dedicated xCloud and PlayStation Now services. "We're in a transition phase" said Laurent Michaud, an analyst specializing in the

video game industry, who expects consoles and cloud gaming to coexist for a while. The "trends indicate that this won't be the last generation of consoles," he believes. Many gamers value playing on big, high resolution screens, and publishers are going to want to exploit 8K televisions which offer a much superior experience.

"Networks, even in a few years, won't be rapid enough to transport" images for 8K screens, noted Michaud. With "technology putting all the manufacturers on the same level" it is the catalogue of games "that will be even more important than in the past for the success of this generation." Both Sony and Microsoft have lined up a number of eagerly awaited games to launch with the consoles. — AFP

Diversity, streaming reshape video games for a new generation

In the quarter of a century since Sony launched the groundbreaking PlayStation, video games have exploded into the biggest form of entertainment in the world, and analysts say the growing diversity of billions of players is reshaping the industry. The Japanese tech giant and its American rival Microsoft are preparing to launch their latest consoles next week, competing in an estimated \$175 billion global market — bigger than film and music combined.

Earlier seen as niche entertainment usually marketed to young men, gaming has benefited from a 1990s push to attract more customers, analysts say, with the PlayStation leading the way in breaking down gender, age and class barriers. "In the last couple of decades, we have witnessed a strong move towards the democratization of gaming. Twenty-five years ago, gaming was still considered by most people a marginal form of entertainment," said Guilherme Fernandes, a market consultant at the gaming and esports analytics firm Newzoo. After the PlayStation came Microsoft's Xbox in 2001 and Nintendo's Wii in 2006, followed by the smartphone revolution as gaming's popularity skyrocketed.

There are 2.7 billion gamers worldwide, Newzoo estimates, and nearly half are women. Gamers have also become older in many major markets - the age range of the average gamer in the United States is 35-44, according to the Entertainment Software Association. Affordability has also brought in a bigger audience, experts say. Sony caused a stir with a surprisingly low price for the first PlayStation, which proved a commercial success.

"If we correct for inflation, consoles are so much cheaper today than they were in the 80s and 90s. It was really... an upper-middle-class kind of entertainment at that point," said Mikael Jakobsson, research coordinator at the MIT Game Lab. The impact was clear in the United States, he said, "where the PlayStation started to appeal to lower-middle-class, working-class people in a way that previous console generations just hadn't". The spread in recent years of inexpensive yet highly capable smartphones has further broadened audiences, with people playing games on their mobile devices and connecting over social media.

Ugly underbelly

With games becoming a more universal pastime, the impression that they were



Photo shows a Nintendo Super Famicom, a 1990s era 16-bit console that was marketed outside Japan as the Super NES (Nintendo Entertainment System), running the hit Capcom beat 'em up game Street Fighter II, at a retro gaming expo in Hong Kong. — AFP photos

the domain of young men has been challenged. "Developers are increasingly taking diversity seriously, expanding the number of female and minority lead protagonists in their games," said Newzoo's Fernandes. That shift, however, has been far from smooth, and came after years of warnings that misogyny, bullying and other toxic behavior were rampant in gamer culture. The industry was forced to act after the first high-profile wave of harassment in 2014, dubbed Gamergate, which started after an ex-boyfriend falsely accused American game developer Zoe Quinn of seeking favorable reviews in exchange for sex.

Quinn - who goes by non-gendered pronouns - faced rape and death threats, and their personal information was leaked online. Women in the industry and feminist figures were also threatened by people angered by efforts to improve female representation in games. Game giants were accused of tolerating or turning a blind eye to the abuse. "It can sometimes be difficult to explain just how vicious, violent, and cruel" Gamergate was, Anita Sarkeesian, a media critic and target of some of the abuse, wrote on the website Polygon last year.

Major game firms have denounced such behavior and made diversity pledges, including more women and people from underrepresented communities as protagonists. Despite the efforts, critics say such abuse and content remain a

problem in the industry - among players as well as gaming companies. Ubisoft, one of the world's biggest game makers, dismissed some of its top executives this year after a wave of accusations of sexism and harassment shook the firm.

Rise of the streamers

It is not just gamers who are becoming more diverse, but also the ways in which people enjoy games. Video games are now a spectator sport too. Major tournaments attract thousands of fans and \$950 million in esports revenues are expected in 2020, according to Newzoo. Fans have also flocked to watch others play online, a social media-gaming crossover that has pulled in some of the world's biggest tech companies - Amazon-owned Twitch and Google's YouTube are two of the most popular platforms.

"The rise of gaming streamers... has just blown up beyond any expectations," said MIT's Jakobsson. Some have suggested that video games can be seen in the same light as other conventional spectator events. Jesper Juul, a video game theorist at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, had a simple explanation for the growing appeal of video games for spectators: "It's like watching sports, it's not particularly strange in that sense." — AFP

STUDY: ZOO MONKEYS PREFER TRAFFIC NOISE TO NATURAL SOUNDS

They may be naturally suited to swinging in rainforests, but monkeys in a Finnish zoo have demonstrated a "significant" preference for traffic sounds instead of the noises of the jungle, researchers have found. As part of an experiment to see how technology could improve the well-being of captive animals, researchers installed a tunnel fitted with sensors in the enclosure of the monkeys at Helsinki's Korkeasaari Zoo, giving the primates the chance to choose to listen to the sounds of rain, traffic, zen sounds or dance music.

"We thought they would enjoy more calming sounds, such as zen music, but actually they triggered the traffic sounds more," Ilyena Hirskyj-Douglas, a researcher at Finland's Aalto University, told AFP. The soundtrack of vehicles rumbling past proved overwhelmingly the most popular choice for the animals, who sometimes slept or groomed themselves and each other inside the sound tunnel - something they did not do for any of the other sounds, Hirskyj-Douglas said. The zoo's research coordinator, Kirsi Pynnonen, said she believes the road sounds in fact mimic some of the monkeys' natural means of communication.

"In the wild, these monkeys use high-pitched hissing, squeaking and croaking to stay in contact," she said, noises which the animals may hear within the traffic noises. Sound experiments have been performed on animals in captivity before now, but the scientists say this was the first attempt to try and give the creatures full control over what they want to listen to. In the future, it could enable zoos to provide animals with extra stimuli in their enclosures. "Animals could, for instance, control their lighting, heat or the temperature," or even play games, Hirskyj-Douglas said.

"The technology is very much open and we're just starting to bridge into this area." Other zoos around Europe have shown interest in the research findings, Pynnonen said, and the team will look next at installing screens inside the tunnel for the monkeys to watch if they choose. White-faced saki monkeys are mid-sized primates native to the northern countries of South America, where they are "relatively numerous" but threatened by the destruction of the rainforest, Pynnonen said. "Despite what many people think, they don't eat bananas at all, but seeds, insects and some fruits," she added. — AFP



US actor Johnny Depp

Depp dropped from 'Fantastic Beasts' after losing 'wife beater' case

Johnny Depp on Friday was forced out of the "Fantastic Beasts" movie franchise days after losing a libel case in Britain against a tabloid that branded him a "wife beater." The A-list actor, writing on Instagram, said that AT&T Inc's Warner Bros movie studio had asked him to leave his role as villain Gellert Grindelwald. "I have respected and agreed to that request," he said.

Warner Bros said in a statement that Depp "will depart the 'Fantastic Beasts' franchise," and that his role would be recast. Depp recently resumed production on the third film in the spinoff from "Harry Potter" author J.K. Rowling. Warner Bros said on Friday its release date had been pushed back to summer 2022 from November 2021. Rowling - herself a survivor of domestic abuse - declined to comment on Depp's departure.

His exit marked a relatively rare move by Hollywood to recast an actor on ethical grounds. Kevin Spacey's role in "All the Money in the World" was reshoot with Christopher Plummer in 2017 after Spacey was accused by more than 20 men of sexual misconduct. Spacey has not commented since making an apology to his first accuser. Charlie Sheen was fired in 2011 from television's top-rated "Two and a Half Men" after months of drink and drug-fueled partying. He was replaced by Ashton Kutcher.

Depp, 57, who plans to appeal the London libel judgment, wrote that his "life and career will not be defined by this moment." The "Pirates of the Caribbean" star had sued the publishers of the Sun newspaper after it said he had been violent toward former wife Amber Heard, 34. The newspaper also questioned his casting in the "Fantastic Beasts" franchise. The three-week libel trial in July heard evidence from both Depp and Heard about a tempestuous marriage marked by violence on both sides and of heavy drinking by Depp. The judge on Monday ruled against Depp.

Rowling had come under fire in 2017 for casting Depp in the first "Fantastic Beasts" movie after initial details of his 2016 divorce from Heard were made public. Rowling said at the time that the circumstances of the divorce were a private matter. Warner Bros. also said in 2017 that it supported to decision to keep Depp. "Fantastic Beasts," based on the magical adventures of Newt Scamander, is set some 60 years before the "Harry Potter" films but features several of the same key characters when they were younger. The first two of five planned films earned \$1.5 billion at the global box office, according to Box Office Mojo. — Reuters



Visitors play with Xbox video game consoles during the annual Tokyo Game Show at Makuhari, suburban Tokyo.



Photo shows members of the media looking at the unveiling of Japanese electronics giant Sony's new video game console, the PlayStation 2, at a press preview in Tokyo.

Sports

News in brief

Sassuolo squander chance

MILAN: Sassuolo fought out a dreary 0-0 draw with Udinese on Friday to squander an opportunity to take top spot in Italy's Serie A. Udinese, second from bottom in the table, came for the point and were happy to field a five-man defense to thwart a Sassuolo team who are the division's top scorers with 18 goals in seven games. By the end of the game, it was goalkeepers Andrea Consigli and Juan Musso who walked off the Mapei Stadium pitch the happiest after hardly breaking sweat. Sassuolo stay in second place. Today, leaders AC Milan, one point ahead of Sassuolo, can extend their advantage when they host Hellas Verona. Champions Juventus go to Lazio also today, starting the weekend in third place, four points off the top. —AFP

NFL's COVID-19 positives

NEW YORK: The NFL's Atlanta Falcons, Miami Dolphins and Cincinnati Bengals intensified Covid-19 protocols Friday after positive tests for the deadly virus on each team. The infections have not altered plans to have the Falcons play host to Denver or the Dolphins visit to Arizona on Sunday as scheduled. The Bengals have a week off. The Falcons shut down their training facility "out of an abundance of caution" on Friday after a "member of the football staff" tested positive, according to a team statement. The Falcons began contact tracing and adopted such extra protocol measures as deep cleaning the facility and moving to remote work. Atlanta spent time in the extra protocol level last month after rookie defensive tackle Marlon Davidson tested positive. The Dolphins said an unidentified assistant coach had tested positive and was in quarantine. The team planned a walkthrough practice Friday ahead of facing the Cardinals. —AFP

PSG's injury list growing

PARIS: Goalkeeper Keylor Navas and centre-back Presnel Kimpembe joined Paris Saint-Germain's lengthening injury list on Friday, adding to the absences of Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Marco Verratti. Head coach Thomas Tuchel revealed on Friday that Navas and Kimpembe will miss Saturday's match against third-placed Rennes at the Parc de Princes. Navas has struggled with ongoing "muscle problems" as the result of the busy fixture calendar and Kimpembe suffered a foot injury, Tuchel said. Kimpembe was named in Didier Deschamps' France squad for the upcoming international fixtures and the 25-year-old is due to join up with the national squad on Monday. Elsewhere for PSG, Pablo Sarabia's fitness is touch-and-go as the winger battles a muscle strain. The Spaniard has picked up two goals and four assists in his last four league games for the side. —AFP

CAS blocks El Haddadi wish

LAUSANNE: Sevilla attacker Munir El Haddadi, who has already been capped by Spain, has again had his hopes of playing for Morocco dashed after the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) rejected his appeal on Friday. It marks a second disappointment for the 25-year-old who originally applied for a switch of colors before the 2018 World Cup. A recent reform by FIFA of rules concerning dual-national players had raised his hopes and pushed Morocco to call up the former Barcelona winger. El Haddadi played once for Spain in 2014, a European Championships qualifier against the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and was involved until 2016 with the national under-21 team when, crucially, he was himself older than 21. The new FIFA rules, adopted in mid-September, allow switches but the player, who must hold two passports, must be under 21 years of age in the last match played with their first nation. —AFP

Italy's Mancini tests positive

ROME: Italy coach Roberto Mancini has contracted coronavirus but is asymptomatic, the Italian football federation (FIGC) announced on Friday. "As part of the periodic controls undertaken by the FIGC on the Italy coaching staff ahead of the coming break for UEFA competitions, head coach Roberto Mancini tested positive for COVID-19," the governing body said. "He remains asymptomatic and, in compliance with the active guidelines, the Azzurri head coach went into self-isolation at his home in Rome," it added. Mancini's men host Estonia in a friendly on Wednesday before welcoming top of the table Poland on November 15 and travelling to Bosnia and Herzegovina three days later in the final fixtures of their Nations League group campaign. —AFP

Rossi to race in MotoGP

VALENCIA: Valentino Rossi was Friday cleared to race in the European MotoGP after recovering from coronavirus but Yamaha's joy at seeing the return of their seven-time world champion was tempered when title-chasing Maverick Vinales was ordered to start today's race from the pit lane. Rossi flew to Valencia from Italy on Thursday evening after a first negative COVID-19 test. "This morning, Rossi took a second PCR test, as per FIM (International Motorcycling Federation) regulations, and this afternoon it came back negative," said Yamaha in a statement. "The two consecutive negative test results allow Rossi to reunite with the team and take part in this weekend's Gran Premio de Europa." The veteran Italian did not participate in Friday's opening two practice sessions in Valencia. American stand-in Garrett Gerloff managed 19th place. Rossi, 41, missed back-to-back races at MotorLand Aragon last month after testing positive for COVID-19. —AFP

Photo of the day



Hailey Langland performing at the Laax Open 2020 Slopestyle Finals in Laax, Switzerland. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Djokovic clinches sixth year-end No 1 ranking to tie with Sampras

Nadal into Bercy last four as Schwartzman qualifies for Tour Finals

PARIS: Novak Djokovic has sealed the year-end men's world number one tennis ranking for the sixth time to go level with childhood hero Pete Sampras after closest rival Rafael Nadal opted against playing in the ATP Tour event in Sofia next week. Spain's 20-time Grand Slam champion Nadal, ranked second, was the only player who had a chance to stop the Serbian from finishing as the top-ranked player in 2020. "Pete was somebody I looked up to when I was growing up, so to match his record is a dream come true" Djokovic said in an ATP statement.

"I will also keep striving to be a better player, hopefully have more success and break more records in a sport I love with all my heart." During the year Djokovic won the ATP Cup in January before picking up a record-extending eight Australian Open Grand Slam in Melbourne. He also won the Cincinnati Masters and a record 36th ATP Masters title in Rome. In September Djokovic also overtook American Pete Sampras, who ended as No. 1 for six straight years between 1993 and 1998, for the most weeks overall at the top ranking and will begin his 29th week in first spot on Monday.

The 33-year-old Djokovic, the winner of 17 Grand Slam titles, has mentioned that Roger Federer's record of 310 weeks as No. 1 remains his target and he will have a chance to move past the Swiss on March 8 if he can hold on to his top spot. "To finish the year as No 1 is one of the most impressive achievements in our sport, one which requires sustained excellence across the season," ATP Chairman Andrea Gaudenzi added. "To see Novak achieve this for the sixth time and match Pete's record is simply incredible, and he continues to cement his place in the history books."

Nadal into Bercy last 4

Meanwhile, Rafael Nadal came from behind to beat Pablo Carreno Busta and reach the Paris Masters semifinals on Friday, handing Argentinean Diego Schwartzman the last ATP Tour Finals place in the process. The 20-time Grand Slam champion claimed a 4-6, 7-5, 6-1 victory, ending his fellow Spaniard's hopes of qualifying for the season-ending tournament in London.

Nadal will play Alexander Zverev for a place in Sunday's final as he bids to win the trophy for the first time, after the German beat Stan Wawrinka 6-3, 7-6

(7/1). "The thing that really matters to me, I need to return better," said Nadal. "My serve is working well, I think, so the rest of the game more or less I am playing better and better. "I need to return better if I want to have chances to keep going." Schwartzman had his fate taken out of his own hands earlier on Friday with a quarter-final thrashing by Daniil Medvedev, who will face Milos Raonic in the other semi-final.

Top seed Nadal, playing his first event since winning a record-extending 13th French Open title across Paris at Roland Garros last month, would equal Novak Djokovic's record of 36 Masters titles with success this week. The 34-year-old's best effort at Bercy Arena was a 2007 final loss to David Nalbandian. The world number two was in trouble when facing three break points in the opening game of the second set, but he saved them all before forcing a decider in the 12th game with a brilliant forehand winner.

He capped a dominant third-set display by reeling off five successive games. Fourth seed Zverev reached the semis for the first time by extending his winning streak to 11 matches with a hard-fought success over Wawrinka. The 23-year-old German broke Wawrinka when the Swiss served for the second set before overpowering his opponent in the tie-break. "Definitely happy to be in the semis and it'll be an interesting one tomorrow (Saturday)... A lot of people are looking forward to that and I am too," said Zverev, who has a 5-1 losing record against Nadal. —Agencies

Schwartzman hammered by Medvedev

Russian third seed Medvedev raced to a 6-3, 6-1 win over Schwartzman in just 64 minutes to set up a last-four clash with Milos Raonic, who saved two match points to beat in-form Frenchman Ugo Humbert 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (9/7). Schwartzman had to wait for Nadal's victory to be able to celebrate securing a first ATP Finals appearance. World number five Medvedev, whose seven ATP titles have all come on hard courts, broke Schwartzman's serve in the third game and did not let up.

Schwartzman never looked like mounting a comeback, winning just one of 28 points on Medvedev's first serve. "Milos (Raonic) is one of the biggest servers maybe in the history of the sport," said



Serbia's Novak Djokovic

Medvedev. "So it's not going to be that easy, but for sure when you play indoor hard courts you need to serve well." The Tour Finals, being played in London for the last time before moving to Turin, get underway on November 15. Canadian Raonic hammered 25 aces in a typically strong serving display, but had to battle back from the brink of defeat in a deciding-set tie-break against Humbert.

The 22-year-old Humbert was on an eight-match winning streak after triumphing in his last tournament in Antwerp. But Raonic saved a match point on his opponent's serve after a remarkable 30-shot rally, before some big serves saw him over the finish line. The former Wimbledon runner-up, who lost the 2014 Paris Masters final to Novak Djokovic, has been beaten in both of his previous meetings with Medvedev. "It's going to be a tough one, he's been playing especially well this week," Raonic said. "I've just got to be sharp and take care of my serve. —Agencies

Kuwait Football League roundup

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The sixth round of the Kuwait Football League was not any easier for Qadisiya Sport Club as their match against Jahra almost ended in a draw if not for Seif Al-Hashan's goal towards the end of the game - giving his team a 2-1 win. The match began with Qadisiya's Fahad Al-Ansari scoring in the second minute while Ahmad Titi scored Jahra's equalizer in the 45th minute.

This gives Qadisiya 15 points alone on top, while Jahra remains with its 6 points. It was obvious that Qadisiya

was looking for a win as began with an attack. Jahra was preoccupied with defending and counter attack. Attempt by the two teams to score in the second half were futile until Qadisiya's substitute Seif Al-Hashan was able to score from outside the box in the 85th minutes.

In another match, Sahel Sports Club clashed with Khaitan and showed an excellent performance - defeating Khaitan 3-0. Meanwhile, the third and final match saw AlShabab beating Fahheel 2-0. AlShabab's Abdelmohsen Alturkamani began the match with his first goal in the first minute, and ended it with another score in the 90th minute. AlShabab now have 8 points while Fahheel have collected 0 points so far.



Kuwait Swimming Federation backs Al-Musallam

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of Kuwait Swimming Federation Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader Al-Sabah has expressed satisfaction with the Asian and Gulf for Kuwait's candidate

Hussein Al-Musallam for president of the International Swimming Federation. He said the Swimming Federation continues its support for Al-Musallam in order to have Kuwait get this very important international post and will give Kuwait a stronger place at the international arena, adding that the sports will be enhanced with Al-Musallam's knowledge and expertise in this field.

Al-Bader said that coordination is taking place at the highest level with friendly countries to back Kuwait's candidate and there is positive response due to Kuwait's international status under the wise guidance of the political leadership headed by HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Sports

FIFA plans to crackdown on agents with a 'license idea'

FIFA asked to review controversial handball rule

LAUSANNE: FIFA said they plan to reinstate a license for players' agents, banning anyone who has been convicted of "corruption, money laundering, tax evasion, sexual abuse or harassment". The project, started in 2018 and which has major financial implications, should result in a vote by the FIFA Congress and come into force in September 2021.

"We open today the consultation process and before summer, between March and June, the FIFA congress should adopt it. It should be in place as from September 2021," said Emilio Garcia, FIFA's Chief Legal and Compliance Officer. "We have done our homework, prepared our documents. We think that our draft regulations are in line with Swiss law and with European law." FIFA, who insist on wanting to "improve transparency and protect players", want to reverse the deregulation of the transfer market completed by the removal in 2015 of the player's agent licence which was at the time being regulated by national bodies.

Faced with the proliferation of intermediaries with varying skill levels, FIFA say potential agents must undergo an initial examination and then annually accrue training "credits". Candidates must have professional insurance and "never have been convicted of corruption, money laundering, tax evasion, sexual abuse or harassment". This plan to regulate players' agents has been on FIFA's 'to-do' list since 2018. Under the new plans, commission will be capped at

six percent of the total amount of a player's contracted salary or 10 percent of the transfer amount if the agent is paid by the selling club.

The aim is to avoid arrangements such as the transfer of Paul Pogba from Juventus to Manchester United in 2016, for which his agent Mino Raiola reportedly received 49 million euros from the three parties, according to revelations from Football Leaks. However, the subject promises to be an explosive issue. As early as last year, the Football Agents Forum (FAF), chaired by Raiola, had threatened FIFA with a legal challenge over the capping of commission, seeing it as a violation of freedom of competition.

"Sometimes, big numbers can cause the agent to not act in the best interests of their clients," said James Kitching, FIFA's director of football regulation. In addition, FIFA said they intend to limit transactions related to transfers organized through a "clearing house". They also want to limit conflicts of interest by prohibiting "triple representation", a practice illustrated by the transfer of Pogba and which allowed the agent to be paid both by the player, the selling club and the buyer's club.

Controversial handball rule

Meanwhile, UEFA have asked FIFA president Gianni Infantino to change the handball rule to stop "growing frustration" following a spate of penalties awarded for the offence, European football's govern-

ing body confirmed on Thursday. In a letter to Infantino, UEFA chief Aleksander Ceferin asked that football's lawmakers adjust the handball rule - which has been in place since March last year - so that referees can once again judge whether there is intent when a player handles the ball.

"The attempt to strictly define the cases where handling the ball is an offence has resulted in many unfair decisions which have been met with growing frustration and discomfort by the football community," said Ceferin's letter, which was sent on October 27. The contents of the letter were confirmed to AFP's sister sports agency in Germany, SID. The news of the letter comes a day after the latest controversial spot-kick award, which put Chelsea two goals ahead in their 3-0 Champions League win over Rennes on Wednesday.

Rennes defender Dalbert, who had already given away the first penalty which had put Chelsea ahead, was sent off for a second booking following a VAR review when a Tammy Abraham shot bounced off his foot onto his arm. The decision, and Timo Werner's cool finish from the spot, effectively killed off the Ligue 1 side's chances of getting a result at Stamford Bridge in their first ever season in the Champions League. Rennes president Nicolas Holveck was livid after the defeat in London, calling referee Felix Zwayer "the man of the match".

"I would like someone to clearly explain to me the



FIFA president Gianni Infantino

rules for handballs in the box ... the score went to 2-0 without Alfred (Gomis, the Rennes goalkeeper) having to make a save." It was one of many penalty decisions which have angered players and managers and which Ceferin in his letter suggested was against the "spirit of the game". Ceferin wrote to Infantino as it is the FIFA-controlled International Football Association Board which decides on the game's laws, FIFA has half of the eight IFAB votes, with the others belonging to the FA's of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. — Agencies

Sam Burns seizes PGA Houston Open lead; Day lurking

WASHINGTON: Sam Burns, a 24-year-old American seeking his first US PGA title, fired a bogey-free five-under par 65 to grab a two-stroke lead after Friday's second round of the Houston Open. Burns hit 15 of 18 greens in regulation on his way to standing on seven-under 133 after 36 holes at Memorial Park, where 2,000 spectators a day watch under strict Covid-19 safety protocols. "It takes a lot of discipline around here," Burns said. "You get out of position, you just try to get it back to where you can get it up and down." Australia's Jason Day, the 2015 PGA Championship winner, and Mexico's Carlos Ortiz shared second on 135.

South African Dawie van der Walt, Canada's Corey Connors and Americans Brandt Snedeker, Patton Kizzire and Aaron Wise were another stroke adrift. World number 179 Burns birdied three of the first four holes, then added birdies at the par-5 eighth from 11 feet and 12 feet at the par-5 16th on his way to matching the course record. "Fortunately early we got some good looks and was able to convert," Burns said. "So solid. Looking forward to the weekend."

Burns shared seventh at the Safeway Open in

September, where he had his only prior PGA end-of-day lead after round two and learned to be patient. "Slowing down a little bit, really talking through the shot with Travis (Perkins, his caddie) and making sure we have a clear picture of what we're trying to do," Burns said. "That was really helpful to learn." Day, who turns 33 on the opening day of next week's Masters, finds himself playing a patience game as he chases a 13th career PGA title.

"It's very difficult, if you miss the fairway it's hard to reach the green," Day said. "And the greens are very penal. If you've got a good short game this week, that helps. You just can't be aggressive around this course. I'll try and stay as patient as I can over the next two days." Van der Walt, twice a winner on the European Tour in 2013 in his homeland, birdied three of the first four holes and two of the last three to jump into contention as a sponsor exemption starter. "I'm very happy to play well. It's nice to get to the weekend," he said. "I've been rolling it really nicely. Around this course you've got to make some putts."

No 1 Johnson fires 66

Top-ranked Dustin Johnson, in his first tournament since contracting Covid-19 and missing two October events, fired a 66 to stand on 138. "Just a little rusty, but I felt like I swung it pretty well," Johnson said. "Drove it well, hit a lot of quality shots so very pleased with how I played. If I can go out and shoot a good score tomorrow, I'll have a good chance come Sunday. I'm just looking to get a little better each day. I'm happy with where I'm at."

lion, 1 1/16th-mile race came after Cox's Aunt Pearl bolted to an early lead then cruised to a 2 1/2 length victory in the \$1 million Juvenile Fillies Turf.

Ridden by US-based French jockey Florent Geroux, Aunt Pearl surged out of the gate and to the front, turning back a challenge from Campanelle. With plenty in reserve, Aunt Pearl crossed the line comfortably in front of the Aidan O'Brien-trained Mother Earth with another European raider, the Ken Condon-trained Miss Amulet, third under Julien Leparoux. Campanelle, a two-time winner in Europe this year, was fourth with Frankie Dettori aboard.

More than a dozen European hopefuls came up empty on the Breeders' Cup opening day dubbed "Future Stars Friday" and featuring five races for two-year-olds. Fire At Will shot down overseas hopes with an upset triumph in the \$1 million Juvenile Turf as the opening day of the Breeders' Cup showcased a wealth of two-year-old talent.

'Beautiful trip'

With Ricardo Santana in the irons, the 30-1 long-shot gave trainer Michael Maker the victory, tucking in behind early leaders Outadore and Gretzky the Great and gliding through a gap on the final bend to power to a three-length victory over Irish raider Battleground, trained by Aidan O'Brien and ridden

back of four straight wins, the most recent being a gritty 26-23 overtime victory over the Chicago Bears at Soldier Field last Sunday. An intriguing sub-plot to this weekend's battle for divisional supremacy is the see-saw duel between Brady and Brees in the all-time passing touchdown rankings.

'It's pretty cool'

Brady, 43, and Brees, 41, have both occupied top spot at different points of the season, with Brady edging clear on Monday by passing for his 560th and 561st touchdowns in the Bucs win over the Giants. Brees is second with 560 touchdowns. "It's pretty cool," Brees said of the back-and-forth record pursuit. "When in history has that ever happened?" Brees, however, says the pursuit of personal records is an afterthought compared to the task in hand. "I'm just laser-focused on the job that is right in front of me. Winning the football game is the most important thing," Brees said.

"We both play on very good teams for very good organizations for great coaches and great systems, great players around us. I'm just grateful for the opportunity to compete, that we're in a situation where we're battling here in the division." Today's game is the seventh meeting between Brady and Brees in the NFL, a rivalry that dates back to



HOUSTON: Sam Burns of the United States plays his shot from the first tee during the second round of the Houston Open at Memorial Park Golf Course on November 06, 2020. — AFP

Four-time major winner Brooks Koepka, trying to find form after hip and knee injuries, birdied two of the last four holes to shoot 70 and make the weekend on 142, one under the cut line. South African Charl Schwartzel, clinging on the cut line in his final fairway at sunset, completed his second round yesterday, the lone player not to finish. Five-time major winner Phil Mickelson fired an quintuple-bogey eight on the ninth, his highest career score on a par-3 hole. He shot 73 to stand on 149 and missed the cut. — AFP



LEXINGTON: Louis Saez, riding Essential Quality, celebrates after winning the Breeders Cup Juvenile at Keeneland on November 6, 2020 in Lexington, Kentucky. — AFP

by Ryan Moore. "I got a beautiful trip," Santana said. "I had plenty of horse in the tank. He put me where he wanted to be and that's why we won." Outadore, ridden by Jose Ortiz, settled for third ahead of Irish trainer Jessica Harrington's Cadillac, who had to have a shoe tightened in the paddock and then balked at the starting gate before producing a steady effort under Shane Foley. — AFP



CHICAGO: Drew Brees #9 of the New Orleans Saints calls a play in the huddle in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

September 2002, when Brees's San Diego Chargers defeated Brady and the Patriots 21-14. The two quarterbacks' paths had also crossed three years earlier at college level in 1999. On that occasion, Brady led Michigan to a 38-12 rout of Brees's Purdue. Overall, Brees leads the rivalry 4-3. "We've both been around for quite a while," Brady said of Brees. "He's a great quarterback. He's been so productive over a lot of years. He's been a hell of a player." — AFP

Essential Quality grabs Breeders' Cup Juvenile

LOS ANGELES: Essential Quality seized control in the middle of the final stretch Friday to win the Breeders' Cup Juvenile and give trainer Brad Cox his second winner of the day at Keeneland in Lexington, Kentucky. With Luis Saez aboard, Essential Quality powered past 94-1 shot Hot Rod Charlie and 4-5 favorite Jackie's Warrior—who duelled for the lead through the final turn. The unheralded Hot Rod Charlie hung on to finish second ahead of the late-charging Keepmeinmind with Jackie's Warrior relegated to fourth.

"It was a tremendous effort by this horse, and Luis just stayed after him the whole way," Cox said. "He overcame a lot today." Jackie's Warrior trainer Steve Asmussen said a blistering early pace was "too much, too soon" for the favorite. "Pace makes the race, and it did not set up well for us today," a dejected Asmussen said. The victory in the \$2 mil-

Brady, Brees duel as Bucs and Saints battle for division

LOS ANGELES: The latest installment of a four-decade quarterback rivalry takes center stage in the NFL today as Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers host Drew Brees and the New Orleans Saints. The seventh professional meeting of the fortysomething future Hall of Fame quarterbacks could end up shaping the playoff picture, with Tampa Bay (6-2) looking to tighten their grip on the NFC South against the Saints (5-2).

The Bucs head into today's game at the Raymond James Stadium with a score to settle after being well-beaten 34-23 by the Saints in September, when Brady was still adjusting to his new surroundings after two decades in New England. Since that defeat, however, Brady and the Bucs offense have looked a more cohesive unit, and the addition this week of receiver Antonio Brown gives them another potent attacking weapon. The Saints arrive in Florida on the

Racing faces bleak outlook as COVID bites deep

LONDON: Horse racing has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic but is facing even tougher times ahead, according to a bleak assessment by Ascot director of racing Nick Smith. The British horse racing industry is worth an estimated £4 billion (\$5.2 billion) to the economy every year, employing thousands of people in rural businesses. Strong trade at the recent yearling sales at Europe's premier auction house Tattersalls offered a ray of hope in turbulent times. "Remarkably good, as we were fearing the worst," Tattersalls chairman Edmond Mahony said.

But world-famous racecourses including Ascot, Newmarket and Goodwood are taking a battering, with spectators barred due to rules to limit the spread of coronavirus. Owners can still attend but aside from seeing their horses run it is a no-frills experience, with bars and restaurants shut - 70 percent of the revenue for major racecourses. Prize money too has taken a huge hit. The top 10 flat races suffered a precipitous fall of 63 percent from £10.3 million to £3.8 million, according to figures provided by the British Horseracing Authority.

Little wonder Ralph Beckett, the incoming chairman of the National Trainers Federation, fears 10 percent of the 500 members could be forced to hand in their licences. Ascot director of racing Smith says it is frustrating to have no spectators and cannot offer any immediate fix to the prize money quandary, adding "normality" will only return in 2022. A major chunk of the prize money comes from a levy on betting but bookmakers themselves have been hit hard by Covid-19, with negative knock-on effects for the sport.

Live racing was suspended for months earlier this year and thousands of betting shops are currently shut under a new lockdown. One recent boost for the industry is extra income from bookmakers, who now have to pay significantly more for results and TV images. William Woodhams, CEO of bookmaker Fitzdares, said his media-rights costs had rocketed since the start of the year. Smith, though, says that will not solve the overall financial problems next year. "Best possible picture for 2021 is not good, in fact next year will be worse," he said. "The levy subsidies will only last so long, the media rights only go so far and we need to see crowds come back and the tills rolling to turn things round."

'Not everyone has an oil well'

Some in the industry favor a robust approach, pressing the bookmakers to contribute more. "There is such a minute return of betting revenue being invested compared to abroad. We have to fix a broken model," Qatar Racing manager David Redvers told AFP at last month's Tattersalls sales. "If there is anything good to come out of this ridiculous, dreadful year it is that there is a genuine feeling of enough is enough."

"People (owners and breeders) are prepared to put money into legal fees, we have seen bookies have huge legal teams and will fight tooth and nail all the way. We have to ensure we fight the fight in a meaningful fashion so that a greater return comes back to racing." Redvers says even success in the courts would not come in time for some in the industry. "Yes, there will be casualties," he said. "Trainers, breeders and dealers will go to the wall. The owners leaving will be the greatest catalyst for all those going to the wall." — AFP

Sports

MLS' 'sexual harassment' probe reveals unacceptable behavior

Higuain eyes Miami playoff berth as MLS regular season ends

LOS ANGELES: New York City FC says it is making changes to its work climate after an internal investigation revealed that a group of players, including former Spanish star striker David Villa, acted inappropriately towards a female employee. The MLS club launched the probe after allegations of sexual harassment made against ex-Barcelona standout Villa and other staff members by a former club intern.

NYC released a statement Friday saying only one of the accused remains with the team and has been disciplined but did not go into any details. Villa is no longer associated with the team and was not named in the team's statement. "The allegations made during the course of the investigation were that a small number of players and staff did not act in accordance with the club's standards in their interactions with the intern and with other club staff," the statement said.

"This behavior included unnecessary physical contact, teasing, and comments regarding clothing and appearance. The club found that this behavior was inappropriate and unacceptable." Villa, who is retired, denied the charge when the story first appeared in July and again through a spokesman on Friday. "David has taken this issue very seriously and fully cooperated with the investigation. But as he has said from the beginning, these accusations are completely false," said the spokesman. In comments on Twitter in July, the woman identified only as "Skyler B" said she was repeatedly harassed by Villa.

"I rarely went a day without him grabbing me or verbally harassing me," she wrote, saying supervisors at the club thought it was "great comedic material." "Women brave enough to tell their stories this loudly are my heroes," she added. Villa left New York City in 2018 to play one season in Japan and retired in 2019. The 38-year-old Villa played for NYC from 2015-18 after starring in Spain for Barcelona and other clubs. He played on Spain's 2010 World Cup champion team and scored a Spanish-record 59 goals in 98 international appearances from 2005-17. Villa is the first Spanish player to reach 50 international goals and is Spain's all-time top goal scorer in the World Cup with nine goals.

Miami playoff berth

Meanwhile, Gonzalo Higuain is determined to help keep Inter Miami's debut season alive as the curtain comes down on Major League Soccer's pandemic-disrupted regular season today. David Beckham's Miami franchise heads into this week-

end's final round of fixtures with its chances of reaching the post-season dependent on results elsewhere going the correct way.

Montreal Impact and Chicago Fire occupy the final two available playoff berths from the Eastern Conference and will seal their post-season spots with victories over DC United and New York City FC respectively. Miami, who are jostling alongside Atlanta United and DC United for a playoff place, must beat already-eliminated FC Cincinnati to have any realistic chance of prolonging their campaign. But former Real Madrid and Juventus striker Higuain insists Beckham's Florida expansion team can rise to the occasion in today's game in Fort Lauderdale.

"I have great experience in very important games and I am sure I can help the team. I'm used to dealing with the pressure," said Higuain. "I have played at the highest level but there are others in the squad and on the coaching staff who have won titles in the past and I hope we can reach the playoffs," the Argentina international added. "For our first year, that would be great and no team has ever won the MLS Cup in their debut season so that's the dream."

The form book does not augur well for Miami, however. Diego Alonso's team enters today's must-win game on the back of two straight defeats, the latest by 2-1 to Toronto FC last weekend. Higuain, who signed for Miami in September, admitted he was still in the process of adapting to his new surroundings. "Processes take time," said Higuain. "Obviously I have to understand my new teammates, the new teammates have to understand me, I have to understand the coach's ideas, I have to understand the new league, I have to understand the work methodology for how the team works here."

The race to secure the final two playoff places in the Eastern Conference is the main issue to be decided in today's final round of fixtures, although at the other end of the table, first placed Philadelphia are neck and neck with Toronto in the race for top spot. In the Western Conference, meanwhile, all of the playoff places have been settled, meaning remaining interest focuses on the three-way scrap for top seeding between Sporting Kansas City, Portland Timbers and reigning MLS Cup champions Seattle Sounders. The playoffs will kick off after the upcoming international break, with the opening round of post-season fixtures taking place on November 20 and the MLS Cup set for December 12. —Agencies



FOXBOROUGH: Russell Canouse #4 of DC United reacts after scoring an own goal past Bill Hamid #24 during the second half of the game against the New England Revolution at Gillette Stadium. —AFP

Man City, Liverpool's fallibilities promise wide open title race

LONDON: For the past three years Manchester City and Liverpool have dominated the Premier League to an extent never seen before in English football. But after three seasons in which the title winner has averaged 99 points, neither side carries the same fear factor in an unpredictable campaign that offers a series of challenges hope of winning the league. Defending champions Liverpool still head to City today in second place, trailing surprise leaders Southampton only by goal difference. But Jurgen Klopp's men have already dropped more points in seven games than they did in their opening 27 in romping to the title last season. Of more lasting damage to their title credentials, the Reds have also lost the towering presence of defender Virgil van Dijk for what looks set to be the lion's share of the season. Even when the giant Dutchman was still present, Liverpool suffered a historic 7-2 humiliation to Aston Villa a month ago that leaves them with still the worst defensive record in the league.

"So many things are different this year," said Klopp on Friday in a season where a packed schedule and empty stadiums appears to be leveling the playing field. "Nothing is to compare with last year. Nothing is to compare with the year before. We just have to make sure we get through very intense periods, line up the fittest players and play the best football we can. In this case it is against Man City, which is obviously one of the

most difficult games to play in the world." Fitness issues have also contributed to City's shaky start. After a two-week long pre-season due to their Champions League commitments in August, Pep Guardiola's men won just two of their opening five league games, including a 5-2 thrashing at home to Leicester. Injuries to Sergio Aguero and Gabriel Jesus have left City often without a natural striker, while Aymeric Laporte, Riyad Mahrez and Ilkay Gundogan also missed matches due to positive coronavirus tests. City start the weekend down in 10th, albeit just five points off Liverpool and with a game in hand.

Too early to call

Both have steadied the ship in recent weeks and remain bookies favorites to fight for the title. But they face stiff competition with Chelsea and Tottenham significantly strengthening for a title challenge, while Guardiola warned of the threat posed by Leicester and Arsenal. "They (Liverpool) are the biggest favorite, but I think what happened with the pandemic this season is different, so I see other teams really strong," said Guardiola. Yet, the mutual respect between the two managers mean they continue to see each other as the biggest threat for the title. Guardiola admitted earlier this year that Klopp's Liverpool are "the toughest rival I have faced in my career." But City have never lost at home to Liverpool in the league since the Catalan arrived in Manchester, including a 4-0 thrashing of the newly-crowned champions when they last met in July. Clashes between the two have gone a long way to settling the destiny of the title in recent years. After an uncertain start to the season, City's 5-0 triumph over a 10-man Liverpool in September 2017 was the second of an 18-match winning run that catapulted them towards a record 100 Premier League points. —AFP

Southampton beat Newcastle; Burnley remain winless

LONDON: Ralph Hasenhuttl admitted Southampton's "amazing" rise to the top of the Premier League was "a little scary" after they earned pole position for the first time since 1988 with a 2-0 win against Newcastle on Friday. Goals from Che Adams and Stuart Armstrong ensured Southampton finished the day at the summit of the English top-flight table for the first time since Chris Nicholl's team 32 years ago. It is Hasenhuttl in charge of the Saints now and the Austrian has masterminded a remarkable revival on the south-coast.

Just over a year after they were humiliated in a 9-0 thrashing by Leicester at St Mary's, Southampton have been transformed under his leadership. Sustaining their place at the top is likely to prove a step too far, yet there is no reason why they shouldn't dream of European qualification and even a surprise bid to finish in the top four. "It's amazing what my team does in this moment. Congratulations to everybody. Our fans will love it and they'll make a picture of the table," Hasenhuttl said.

"Everybody was on the highest level. It is a little scary what we are doing at the moment to be honest, but not surprising when I see what we are working on." Hasenhuttl recently claimed he wanted his team of "pirates" to stay out of the spotlight, but their swashbuckling form will make that impossible. "I just told the guys that we invested so much in this time together. We made so many big steps forward. We are now a strong side," Hasenhuttl said. "We should stay hungry and we should feel anything is possible with this team."

Southampton, winners in five of their last six games, would be replaced at the top by Everton if they beat Manchester United. If Everton slip up, then second placed Liverpool, currently behind Southampton on goal difference,



SOUTHAMPTON: Southampton's English midfielder Nathan Redmond (right) skips over a challenge from Newcastle United's English defender Jamaal Lascelles during the English Premier League football match between Southampton and Newcastle United on November 6, 2020. —AFP

Leicester and Tottenham all have the chance to move into the first place by Sunday night. Southampton's leading scorer Danny Ings is sidelined for several weeks with a knee injury suffered in last weekend's win at Aston Villa. But Adams is emerging as a fine finisher in his own right and he put Southampton ahead in the seventh minute.

Theo Walcott's pressing was the key as he pounced on Miguel Almiron's ludicrous decision to try a flashy turn under pressure inside his own penalty area. Having stolen possession from Almiron, Walcott quickly flicked a cross to Adams, who guided an excellent volley past Karl Darlow for his third goal in his last four games.

Chasing hard and attacking with purpose, Walcott was completely transformed from the anonymous figure he had become at Everton before rejoining Southampton earlier this season. Teed up by Moussa Djenepo's nimble flick, Walcott nearly doubled Southampton's lead just before half-time with curler from the edge of the area that flashed just wide. Southampton kept up their relentless pressure after the break and Oriol Romeu's 20-yard blast was tipped onto the bar by Darlow. Armstrong wrapped up the points in the 82nd minute when he stole possession from Sean Longstaff and cleverly worked space for a low shot from the edge of the area that gave Darlow no chance. —AFP

more cohesive unit, and the addition this week of receiver Antonio Brown gives them another potent attacking weapon. The Saints arrive in Florida on the back of four straight wins, the most recent being a gritty 26-23 overtime victory over the Chicago Bears at Soldier Field last Sunday. An intriguing sub-plot to this weekend's battle for divisional supremacy is the see-saw duel between Brady and Brees in the all-time passing touchdown rankings.

'It's pretty cool'

Brady, 43, and Brees, 41, have both occupied top spot at different points of the season, with Brady edging clear on Monday by passing for his 560th and 561st touchdowns in the Bucs win over the Giants. Brees is second with 560 touchdowns. "It's pretty cool," Brees said of the back-and-forth record pursuit. "When in history has that ever happened?" Brees, however, says the pursuit of personal records is an afterthought compared to the task in hand. "I'm just laser-focused on the job that is right in front of me. Winning the football game is the most important thing," Brees said. —AFP

Cagliari overpower 10-man Sampdoria

ROME: Second-half goals from Joao Pedro and Nahitan Nandez gave Cagliari a 2-0 win over 10-man Sampdoria who had a player sent off before halftime in Serie A yesterday. The game swung Cagliari's way in the 38th minute when Nandez intercepted a poor back pass and appeared to have a clear run on goal. He was brought down by Tommaso Augello, who was initially given a yellow card which was changed to a red after a VAR review.

Cagliari went ahead three minutes after halftime when Joao Pedro ran into Lorenzo Tonelli and the referee awarded a penalty which the Brazilian converted himself for his fifth goal of the season. Jakub Jankto fired wide for Sampdoria before Giovanni Simeone sent Nandez clear to score Cagliari's second in the 69th minute. The Sardinians thought they had added a third when Riccardo Sottil had the ball in the net but it was disallowed for offside following a long VAR review. The result left both sides with 10 points from seven games. —Reuters

Brady, Brees duel as Bucs and Saints battle for division

LOS ANGELES: The latest installment of a four-decade quarterback rivalry takes center stage in the NFL today as Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers host Drew Brees and the New Orleans Saints. The seventh professional meeting of the fortysomething future Hall of Fame quarterbacks could end up shaping the playoff picture, with Tampa Bay (6-2) looking to tighten their grip on the NFC South against the Saints (5-2).

The Bucs head into today's game at the Raymond James Stadium with a score to settle after being well-beaten 34-23 by the Saints in September, when Brady was still adjusting to his new surroundings after two decades in New England. Since that defeat, however, Brady and the Bucs offense have looked a

Live Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
West Bromwich v Tottenham	15:00
beIN Sports HD 2	
Leicester v Wolves Wanderers	17:00
beIN Sports HD 2	
Manchester City v Liverpool	19:30
beIN Sports HD 1	
Arsenal v Aston Villa	22:15
beIN Sports HD 2	
SPANISH LEAGUE	
Getafe v Villarreal	16:00
beIN Sports HD 3	
Real Sociedad v Granada	18:15
beIN Sports HD 3	
Real Valladolid v Athletic de Bilbao	20:30
beIN Sports HD 3	
Levante v Deportivo Alaves	20:30
beIN Sports HD 5	
Valencia C.F. v Real Madrid	23:00
beIN Sports HD 1	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE	
Lazio v Juventus	14:30
beIN Sports HD 1	
Atalanta v Internazionale Milano	17:00
beIN Sports HD 1	
Genoa v AS Roma	17:00
beIN Sports HD 5	
Torino FC v Crotone	17:00
beIN Sports HD 7	
Bologna v Napoli	20:00
beIN Sports HD 4	
AC Milan v Hellas Verona	22:45
beIN Sports HD 4	
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA	
VfL Wolfsburg v Hoffenheim	17:30
beIN Sports	
Bayer 04 v B Monchengladbach	20:00
beIN Sports	
FRENCH LEAGUE	
Stade Brestois 29 v Lille	15:00
beIN Sports HD 6	
Racing Club de Lens v Stade Reims	17:00
beIN Sports HD 6	
Lorient v Nantes	17:00
beIN Sports HD 8	
Metz v FCO Dijon	17:00
beIN Sports	
Nimes Olympique v Angers	17:00
beIN Sports	
OGC Nice v AS Monaco	19:00
beIN Sports HD 6	
Olympique Lyonnais v Saint Etienne	23:00
beIN Sports HD 6	

13 Djokovic clinches sixth year-end No 1 ranking to tie with Sampras



14 FIFA plans to crackdown on agents with a 'license idea'



15 Southampton top for first time since 1988; Burnley stay winless



Man United thump Everton 3-1

Chelsea climb to third, beat Sheffield Utd 4-1



LIVERPOOL: Everton's English goalkeeper Jordan Pickford (left) saves an attempt by Manchester United's French midfielder Paul Pogba (center) during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Manchester United yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer launched a tirade against the Premier League's fixture schedule after his side's vital win against Everton yesterday as Chelsea pummeled Sheffield United 4-1 to climb to third. The United boss was under intense pressure before the match at Goodison Park after defeat to Arsenal and an embarrassing loss to Istanbul Basaksehir in the Champions League. But man-of-the-match Bruno Fernandes scored twice and new signing Edinson Cavani opened his account as United won 3-1, giving Solskjaer some much-needed breathing space before the international break. Crystal Palace beat Leeds 4-1 to make it three defeats in four for Marcelo Bielsa's men before Frank Lampard's Chelsea came from behind to thump Sheffield United by the same scoreline.

United pressure

United started the match a lowly 15th in the table but showed grit and style as they recovered from going behind to a Bernard goal in the 19th minute.

Fernandes was the standout player for the 20-times champions, thriving in a creative midfield role in the absence of the benched Paul Pogba. The Portuguese powered a header from a Luke Shaw cross past a flailing Jordan Pickford and scored again when an intended cross for Marcus Rashford was missed by the England international and the ball crept in off the far post. Former Paris Saint-Germain striker Cavani made the points safe with a goal deep into stoppage time.

A visibly angry Solskjaer praised his players but fired a broadside at league bosses for scheduling United's match early yesterday after their midweek Champions League commitments. "We were set up to fail," the Norwegian told BT Sport. "The kick-off time set us up to fail. We have been to Turkey, played loads of games this season already, we got back Thursday morning and we are playing at lunchtime, it's an absolute shambles. "These boys deserve better. Luke Shaw has got injured because of it. It's a hamstring which might be a long one and

Marcus Rashford might be struggling."

The victory at the home of Carlo Ancelotti's early-season pacesetters was United's seventh straight Premier League away win. Their form on the road contrasts sharply with their struggles at Old Trafford, where they have not won a single league game so far this season. Everton, who topped the Premier League table earlier this season, have now suffered three consecutive league defeats. "I hope that after the international break we will back in a different shape," said manager Carlo Ancelotti. "It is not only a problem of the defenders, it is all of the team."

Chelsea romp

Chelsea are beginning to pick up the pace after their expensive summer rebuild and are now just one point behind Southampton and Liverpool, who play Manchester City today. Lampard's side, now unbeaten in six Premier League matches, went behind early at Stamford Bridge when David McGoldrick's neat flick put Sheffield United in front.

But they hit back quickly, with England forward Tammy Abraham slotting home from Matteo Kovacic's cutback and Ben Chilwell put Chelsea into a 2-1 lead just past the half-hour. Brazilian veteran Thiago Silva bagged his first Chelsea goal to put the Blues 3-1 up before Timo Werner blasted past Aaron Ramsdale to put the home side in total control. Leeds' fine start to their first top-flight season after a 16-year absence is fading fast as they conceded four for the second time in a week at Crystal Palace.

Goals from Scott Dann and Eberechi Eze gave Palace a 2-0 lead before Patrick Bamford pulled one back. But an own goal from Leeds winger Helder Costa restored the home side's two-goal cushion and Jordan Ayew completed the rout in the second half. Speaking about his side's defensive issues, Bielsa added: "How could it not worry me? It's not a question of training more, and apart from that the international break doesn't help us to train on this as most players will be away." West Ham hosted struggling Fulham in the late evening kick-off. — AFP

Bayern Munich down Dortmund to go top

DORTMUND: Robert Lewandowski scored his 11th goal in just his sixth Bundesliga game this season as Bayern Munich went top of the table yesterday with a 3-2 win at Borussia Dortmund. After Marco Reus put Dortmund ahead, David Alaba blasted home a free-kick to make it 1-1 at half-time behind closed doors at Signal Iduna Park. Lewandowski gave Bayern the lead with a superb header early in the second half before Leroy Sane grabbed the visitors' third. Erling Braut Haaland gave Dortmund hope with a late goal.

The 32-year-old Lewandowski could have finished with a hat-trick against his former club after also having two goals disallowed by the VAR. The win leaves Bayern two points clear of second-placed RB Leipzig with Dortmund third, three points behind Munich. The away win could have come at a cost, however, as Bayern midfielder Joshua Kimmich had to be helped off in clear distress with a first-half knee injury.

After the hosts made a bright start with Haaland firing wide, Lewandowski's effort on 24 minutes was ruled out by the VAR who spotted the Poland star off-side in the build-up. Dortmund took the lead on 45 minutes when centre-half Mats Hummels sent a superb pass down the left flank for Jadon Sancho. The England winger played Raphael Guerreiro into the area to provide the final pass which Reus fired home. However, Bayern leveled four minutes later.

After Dortmund's midfielder enforcer Thomas Delaney brought down Serge Gnabry on the edge of the area, Alaba blasted home a superb free-kick to make it 1-1 at the break. Haaland fired wide at the start of the second half, just before Lewandowski powered home his header from a pin-point Lucas Hernandez cross to put Bayern 2-1 up on 48 minutes. Bayern had their tails up and Kingsley Coman's shot crashed off the post soon after. — AFP

Super-sub Messi scores twice as Barca stun Betis

MADRID: Lionel Messi came on at half-time to rescue Barcelona by scoring twice, including his first goal from open play this season, in a 5-2 victory over Real Betis yesterday. Messi had been rested by Ronald Koeman but was thrown on with the game in the balance after Antoine Griezmann missed a penalty in the Argentinian's absence, before Antonio Sanabria cancelled out Ousmane Dembele's opener. But within four minutes of his introduction, Messi gave Griezmann an open goal with a superb dummy and then scored twice himself, the first a penalty that saw Betis' Aissa Mandi sent off for a handball on the line.

In between, Loren Moron had given Betis brief hope but Messi's second and a late strike from Pedri ensured Barcelona ended their four-match winless run and climbed to eighth in La Liga. "Leo finished the match against Kiev with some problems," said Koeman. "He wasn't in a position to play in the first half but we talked about him being on the bench and said he would come on if he felt good. "He's a

player who in principle always plays, but today he didn't because of some minor problems."

Messi gave a resounding answer to those suggesting his performances this season have been evidence of decline. Even before registering his first goal of the season from open play, the 33-year-old had turned this game, putting Barcelona in control with his brilliant dummy for Griezmann and then a penalty won from a Dembele shot, teed up by his pass. Griezmann also got his goal with Messi on the pitch but was unable to prove a point without him.

Gloomy Griezmann

Despite a lively opening half an hour, Griezmann missed a penalty before Messi scored his and the Frenchman was eventually substituted, pictured sat in the stands with a gloomy expression while Barca romped to victory. "I hope he continues to work like he is working," said Koeman. "To miss opportunities you have to be there. We must highlight his character, to keep working. He knows perfectly well that he has missed a penalty, and some chances, but it means he is always there to score." Neither team seemed too interested in defending early on as Griezmann and Ansu Fati fired off two shots each while Marc-Andre ter Stegen had to be alert to push away William Carvalho's header.



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Argentine forward Lionel Messi kicks the ball during the Spanish league football match between Barcelona and Real Betis at the Camp Nou stadium yesterday. — AFP

Barca broke through after 22 minutes when Dembele cut inside onto his left foot before hammering a finish past Claudio Bravo for his first league goal in 13 months. When Mandi conceded a penalty after sliding in on Ansu at the front post, Griezmann had his chance to add a goal to his busy first-half display. — AFP