



5 Trump fires election official who rejected fraud claims



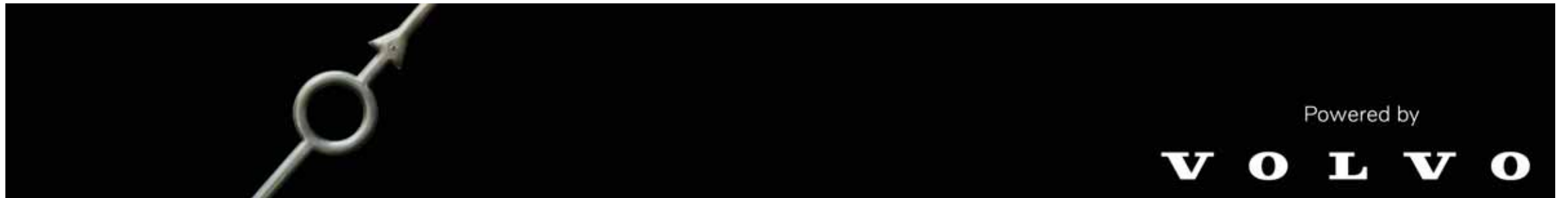
8 Saudi to host G20 summit amid pandemic, recession



13 Streaming giants blow dust off Mideast music business



16 Spain inflict historic defeat on Germany



Bahrain FM in Israel on first official visit

First Gulf Air flight to Tel Aviv • Both countries agree to open embassies

Massive blaze guts Shuwaikh store



KUWAIT: Firemen battle a huge blaze at a Shuwaikh industrial area supermarket yesterday. — KUNA (See Page 4)

JERUSALEM: Bahrain's foreign minister arrived in Israel yesterday on the first official visit from the Gulf kingdom, which normalized relations with the Jewish state in September. The minister, Abdellatif Al-Zayani, was welcomed at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport by his Israeli counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi. Bahrain and its Gulf neighbor the United Arab Emirates both signed US-sponsored normalization accords with Israel at the White House on Sept 15, pacts that were condemned as a "betrayal" by the Palestinians and their allies.

The agreements shattered a longstanding Arab consensus that there should be no normalization with Israel until it reaches a comprehensive peace deal with the Palestinians. At a joint appearance following their talks, Ashkenazi hailed Zayani's visit as "yet another historic day in the Middle East". "It is an exciting moment to meet a friend for the first time, face-to-face," he said.

Ashkenazi confirmed that Israel had agreed to open an embassy in Manama, while Bahrain was expected to soon open an embassy in the Jewish state. Bahraini citizens will be able to apply online for Israeli entry visas from Dec 1, and direct flights between the two countries are expected to begin soon. Ashkenazi said. Zayani expressed "confidence that this historic visit will be a further step on our journey towards a better more peaceful more secure and more prosperous Middle East".

The Bahraini delegation travelled on Gulf Air flight GF972 - a reference to Israel's telephone country code - on the airline's first commercial flight to Tel Aviv. US President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy, Avi Berkowitz, was also on the flight, which flew over Saudi Arabia, an accommodation by the Gulf's powerhouse, which has so far resisted US appeals to normalize ties with Israel.

Zayani was due to hold talks in Jerusalem later yesterday with both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and visiting US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. During his two-day trip, Pompeo is expected to make the first visit by a senior US official to a Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank. All Jewish settlements on occupied Palestinian land are regarded as illegal by most of the international community.

Their persistent expansion under successive Netanyahu-led governments has proved one of the biggest obstacles to the peace process with the Palestinians. The United States has very close relations with Bahrain too. The tiny but strategic kingdom just across the Gulf from Iran is home to the US Fifth Fleet. All three allies - Israel, Bahrain and the US - see the regional power as a common threat. Zayani's visit is expected to be followed by others. On Tuesday, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin sent an official invitation to Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. — Agencies

News in brief

US clears MAX to fly again

WASHINGTON: US regulators yesterday cleared the Boeing 737 MAX to return to the skies, ending its 20-month grounding after two fatal crashes that plunged the company into crisis. The Federal Aviation Administration said the approval followed "an unprecedented level of collaborative and independent reviews by aviation authorities around the world". The plane was grounded after two crashes that killed a total of 346 people in 2018 and 2019. — AFP

4bn overweight by 2050?

PARIS: More than four billion people could be overweight by 2050, with 1.5 billion of them obese, if the current global dietary trend towards processed foods continues, a first-of-its-kind study predicted yesterday. Warning of a health and environmental crisis of "mind-blowing magnitude", experts from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) said that global food demand would leap 50 percent by mid-century, pushing past Earth's capacity to sustain nature. — AFP

Pfizer vaccine 95% effective

WASHINGTON: Pfizer and BioNTech said yesterday that a completed study of their experimental Covid-19 vaccine showed it was 95 percent effective. They said the two-dose vaccine had no serious safety concerns and that the companies will apply for emergency use authorization from US regulators "within days". — AFP

US approves home COVID test

WASHINGTON: The US issued an emergency use authorization for the first self-administered rapid coronavirus test Tuesday. The Food and Drug Administration approved a nasal testing kit developed by Lucira Health for people age 14 and older. The test, which is by prescription only, delivers results in 30 minutes, and is intended to cost less than \$50. — AFP

Iraq and Saudi reopen border after 30 years

BAGHDAD: Iraq and Saudi Arabia yesterday reopened their land border for the first time in 30 years, with closer trade ties between the two countries irking allies of Riyadh's rival, Tehran. Top officials including Iraq's interior minister and the head of its border commission travelled from Baghdad to formally open the Arar crossing. They met up with a delegation who had joined them from Riyadh, all in masks, and cut a red ribbon at the border crossing as a line of cargo trucks waited behind them.

Arar will be open to both goods and people for the first time since Riyadh cut off its diplomatic relationship with Baghdad in 1990, following Iraqi ex-dictator Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Ties have remained rocky ever since, but current Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi has a close personal relationship with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Kadhemi was to travel to Saudi Arabia on his first foreign trip as prime minister in May, but the visit was cancelled at the last minute when Saudi King Salman was hospitalized. He has yet to make the trip, although

Continued on Page 2



A handout picture shows the Arar border crossing between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. — AFP

US to cut troop levels in Iraq, Afghanistan

WASHINGTON: The US will slash troop levels in Afghanistan and Iraq to their lowest levels in nearly 20 years of war after President Donald Trump

pledged to end conflicts abroad, the Pentagon announced Tuesday. Rejecting concerns that precipitous drawdowns could give up all the US has fought for, Acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller said around 2,000 troops would be pulled from Afghanistan by Jan 15. Five hundred more would come back from Iraq by the same date, leaving 2,500 in each country.

The moves reflect Trump's policy "to bring the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to a successful and responsible conclusion and to bring our brave service

members home," Miller said. Miller said the US had met its goals, set in 2001 after the Al Qaeda attacks on the United States, to defeat Islamist extremists and to help "local partners and allies to take the lead in the fight". "With the blessings of providence in the coming year, we will finish this generational war and bring our men and women home," he said. The moves took the United States closer to disengaging from conflicts that have blazed and smoldered through three presidencies with no end in sight since 2001.

Continued on Page 2

Meet Gaza's first woman taxi driver

GAZA CITY: Palestinian mother-of-five Nayla Abu Jubbah launched a small revolution this week by becoming the first female taxi driver in the deeply conservative Gaza Strip. In the impoverished Palestinian territory, women have the same legal rights as men to drive a vehicle, but in practice the trade of taxi driver has been exclusively male - until now.

"One day I was talking with a friend who works as a hairdresser and I said

to her: 'What would you say if we started a taxi service for women?' She said it was a crazy idea," the 39-year-old told AFP. After drinking a steaming cup of tea in her home, the social work graduate in a headscarf puts on a face mask and marches to her car parked outside. After slotting her smartphone into its holder and giving a toot on the horn for show, she starts the engine and is off on the roads of Gaza. Abu Jubbah does not cruise the streets for fares, taking only advance bookings.

She bought the vehicle with her inheritance when her father died. "I said to myself one day that I needed to take advantage of the car, to put it to work," she said. "Hence the project of a taxi service entirely for women, to put them at ease." — AFP (See Page 13)



GAZA: The first female Palestinian taxi driver in the Gaza Strip, Nayla Abu Jubbah, sits in her vehicle in Gaza City on Tuesday. — AFP

Local

UNHCR Kuwait holds strategic dialogue with private sector

Sustainable solutions to support refugees worldwide

KUWAIT: UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, held yesterday a strategic dialogue titled 'The Private Sector and its Humanitarian Role During the Pandemic' to discuss best practices, success stories, and shaping policies and processes to support vulnerable refugees and internally displaced populations worldwide.

The strategic dialogue is part of a series of in-depth and collaborative dialogues organized by UNHCR to highlight the role of the private sector in supporting refugees and internally displaced people (IDP) across the globe. The first virtual event of the series was held on

November 17th and brought together high-level decision makers from the UN refugee agency and international private sector companies including Tarek Abdulaziz Sultan Al-Essa, Vice

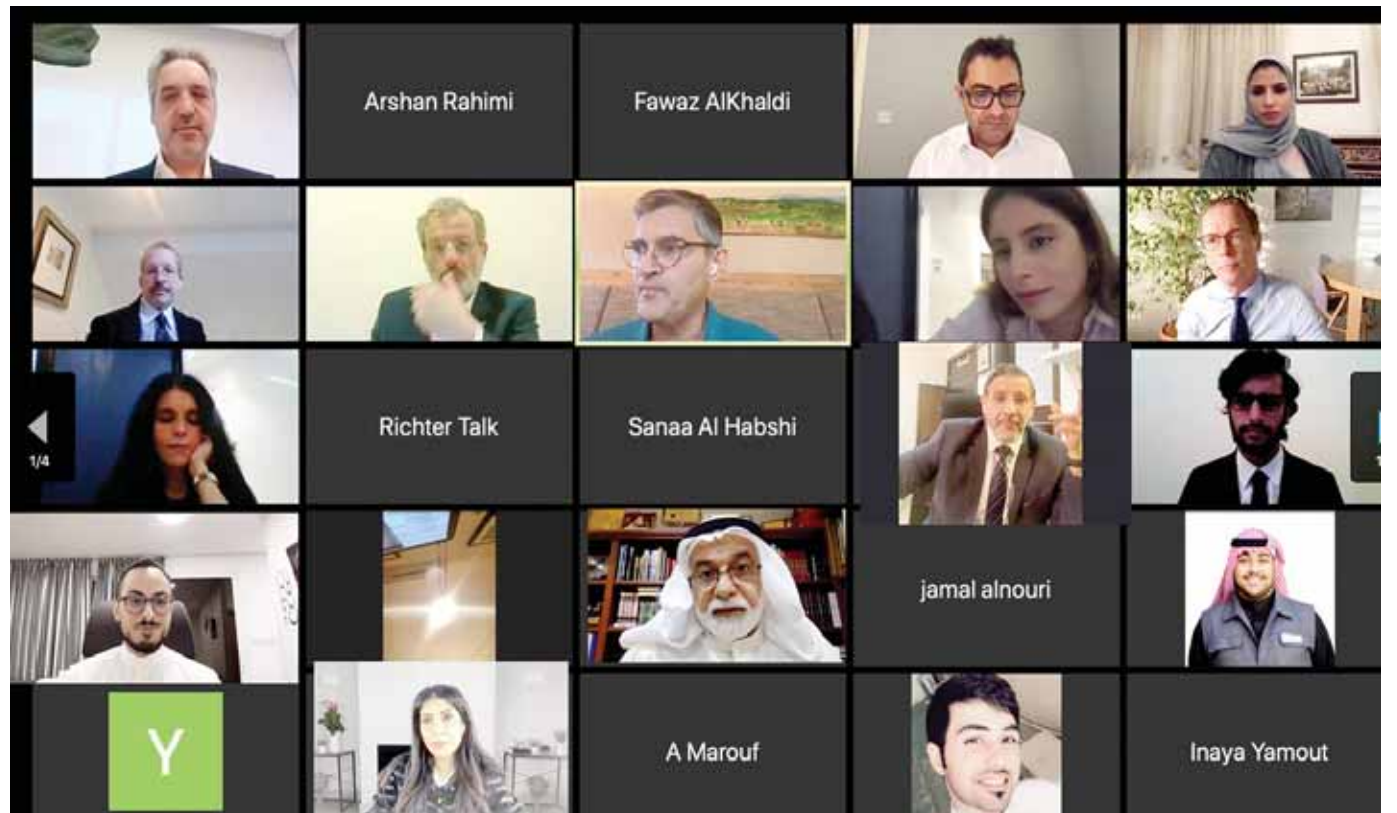
Chairman and CEO of Agility from Kuwait, Prince Jaime de Bourbon de Parme, Senior Advisor to UNHCR from Switzerland; Iman Al-Barwani Director and Vice Chairperson of MB Holdings and Foundation from Oman; and Jim Estill, Chairman of DDE Media from Canada. At the heart of these discussions participants shared experiences and shaping actions to generate long-term solutions and impact in support of refugees.

"Private sector engagement and cross-sector partnerships are more important than ever when it comes to the support of vulnerable refugees, especial-

ly with the current pandemic and its economic repercussions, which has disproportionately affected those living on the margins of society and in low to mid income countries, where 85 percent of refugees globally live," explained Dr Samer Haddadin, Head of UNHCR Kuwait Office. "Therefore, we are delighted to be providing this platform in Kuwait, which will enable us to find long-term solutions to support forcibly displaced worldwide as well as to foster their economic inclusion," he added.

Improving the livelihoods of refugees and displaced persons through economic inclusion is a key component of UNHCR's operations as part of the efforts to provide protection and solution outcomes for vulnerable populations.

"Our ability to protect refugees and vulnerable populations depends on the strength of partnerships between UNHCR and the private sector. UNHCR does the extremely difficult, on-the-ground work to provide refugees with vital assistance and equip them with the necessities to protect themselves and cover their basic needs" stated, Tarek Sultan. Adding that "UNHCR knows what vulnerable populations need, and where obstacles lie, but without the commitment and expertise of private-sector partners, many of those needs would go unmet. So our challenge for the future is to figure out how to work together to be even



more effective."

Key topics from the discussion focused on the empowerment of refugees. This includes innovative solutions on responding effectively to the refugee crisis amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and how private partnerships can take the lead in designing equitable and sustainable responses that position empowered refugees at the center of their design. Other topics focused on the ways in which long-term and financially sustainable solutions can alle-

viate the effects of forced displacement, the private sector's role in providing a safety net around humanitarian issues, and how to raise the interest of other business leaders when it comes to the support of refugees.

"As companies, CSR is more than simply donating money in a hope that the challenges facing society will magically disappear. Corporate Social Responsibility is really an investment in the good of society, and we should treat it as such, with proper planning and

coordinated effort with governments and NGOs to create sustainable positive impact," explained Barwani.

Currently, displaced populations come primarily from five countries including Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Through strategic dialogues as well as other activities, campaigns, and partnerships, UNHCR is working towards building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people across the globe.



Humanitarian role during pandemic



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Belgium to Kuwait Leo Peeters visited Kuwait Times yesterday and discussed matters of mutual concern with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Iraq and Saudi reopen border...

Continued from Page 1

Iraqi ministers have visited Riyadh to meet with their counterparts and a top-level Saudi delegation travelled to Baghdad last week.

Baghdad sees Arar as a potential alternative to its crossings with eastern neighbor Iran, through which Iraq brings in a large share of its imports. The two Arab states are also exploring the reopening of a second border point at Al-Jumayma, along Iraq's southern border with the Saudi kingdom.

But pro-Iran factions in Iraq, which call themselves the "Islamic Resistance", have stood firmly against closer ties with Saudi Arabia. Ahead of Arar's opening, one such group identifying itself as Ashab al-Kahf published a statement announcing its "rejection of the Saudi project in Iraq". "The intelligence cadres of the Islamic Resistance are following all the details of the Saudi enemy's activities on the Iraqi border," it warned.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday evening, Kadhemi fired back against those describing the rapprochement as Saudi "colonialism". "This is a lie. It's shameful," he said. "Let them invest. Welcome to Iraq," Kadhemi added, saying Saudi investment could bring in a flood of new jobs to Iraq where more than one-third of youth are unemployed.

The closer ties have been a long time coming.

They did not improve much after Saddam's toppling in the 2003 US-led invasion, as Riyadh looked at the new Shiite-dominated political class with suspicion due to their ties to Iran. A thaw began in 2017 when then Saudi foreign minister Adel Al-Jubeir travelled to Baghdad - the first such visit in decades - followed by a Riyadh trip by Iraqi premier Haider Al-Abadi.

The first commercial flights resumed between the two countries and officials began discussing Arar, with high-profile US diplomat Brett McGurk even visiting the crossing in 2017 to support its reopening. But those plans were repeatedly delayed, with Arar only opened on rare occasions to allow through Iraqi religious pilgrims on their way to Makkah for the hajj.

Iraq is the second-largest producer in the OPEC oil cartel, outranked only by Saudi Arabia. Its oil, gas and electricity infrastructure is severely outdated and inefficient but low oil prices this year have stymied efforts to revamp it. Baghdad is also notoriously slow to activate external investment, with international firms and foreign countries complaining that rampant corruption hamstrings more investment.

Kadhemi's government has sought to fast-track foreign investment including Saudi support for energy and agriculture. On his trip to Washington this summer, he agreed to a half-dozen projects that would use Saudi funding to finance US energy firms. Last year, Iraq signed a deal to plug into the Gulf Cooperation Council's power grid and add up to 500 MW of electricity to its dilapidated electricity sector. Those deals too have been criticized by pro-Iran factions in Iraq. — AFP

Kuwait calls for fair Arab representation in UNSC

NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait believes reforming the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and fair representation in it constitute some of the bases for its full scale rehabilitation. The Kuwaiti stance was expressed by the acting Charge d'Affaires of the State of Kuwait's Permanent Mission at the UN, Minister Plenipotentiary Bader Al-Munayyehk, while addressing the UN General Assembly on behalf of his country and the Arab Group. The session basically addressed the issue of just representation at the UNSC and related topics.

Munayyehk indicated that the fair representation and other warranted steps were needed to render the council more effective in facing global challenges in a transparent, neutral and credible manner. In shadow of the difficult global conditions due to the novel coronavirus, that has affected various aspects of the life, it has become certain that multi-lateral international action has warranted real and comprehensive reforms in the international organization, the ranking Kuwaiti diplomat noted. The Arab Group, he has added, affirms that the UNGA is the sole platform for reaching a consensus on expanding and rehabilitating the UNSC according to the UNGA Resolution 557/62. Member states of the Arab League have called for permanent Arab representation with full jurisdictions, namely with respect of occupying the UNSC permanent seats, once the council has been expanded. Moreover, fair representation warrants proper representation in the category of non-per-

US to cut troop levels in Iraq...

Continued from Page 1

But critics said they risk appearing like a humiliating defeat, leaving the original threat of extremist attacks intact. The announcement came just weeks before Trump cedes the White House in the wake of his Nov 3 reelection loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

Amid criticism that Trump was acting abruptly since his defeat, White House National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien said the troop cuts have been in the works for some time. "Four years ago President Trump ran on a promise to put a stop to America's endless wars. Today it was just announced at the Pentagon that President Trump is keeping that promise to the American people. By May it is President Trump's hope that they will come home safely and in their entirety."

It comes 10 days after Trump fired defense secretary Mark Esper, who had insisted on keeping 4,500 troops in Afghanistan to support Afghan security forces. Esper had reduced US forces from about 13,000 following a deal with the Taliban in February, in which both sides agreed the Taliban would enter into peace talks with the Kabul government, in return for US troops withdrawing by May 2021.

But until Esper's removal, the Pentagon had argued that the Taliban had not met pledges to reduce violent attacks, which have surged across the country in recent months. President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman



NEW YORK: Acting Charge d'Affaires of the State of Kuwait's Permanent Mission at the UN, Minister Plenipotentiary Bader Al-Munayyehk, addresses the UN General Assembly. — KUNA

manent seats.

"There are several challenges facing us with respect of the council reformation, namely the veto right; arbitrary usage of it in many cases undermined decision making at the Security Council, making it unable to undertake certain responsibilities and necessary measures for safeguarding international peace and security," Munayyehk elaborated. Regrettably, the bulk of veto practicing cases, particularly during the past three decades, were related to issues concerning the Arab region. The main objective for the UNSC reformation and expansion should be ensuring fair representation for all regional and geographical groups, Munayyehk explained further the Kuwaiti stand. The Arab Group deserves to be well represented for it represents some 350 million people and comprises 22 states, 12 percent of the UN memberships. Moreover, in this vein, a large number of the issues brought to the UNSC concern the Arab region, another factor that affirms necessity of fair and adequate Arab representation in an expanded council. — KUNA

Sediq Sediqqi confirmed in a tweet that Ghani and Miller had spoken on the phone about "continued meaningful US military support to the Afghan Security and Defense Forces".

In Iraq, Trump has also pulled back US forces amid dozens of rocket attacks by Iran-allied groups on the US embassy and bases housing American troops. On Tuesday, a volley of rockets slammed into Baghdad's Green Zone, where the US embassy sits, breaking a month-long truce on attacks against the US embassy.

Speaking on grounds of anonymity, a senior US defense official dismissed concerns over the risk of resurgences by Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. "The professionals in the military service have agreed that this is the right move," the official said. "Al Qaeda has been in Afghanistan for decades and the reality is, we'd be fools to say they are going to leave tomorrow."

Allies and senior US politicians though saw US troop cuts as dangerous. On Monday US Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell warned the Afghan cuts could lead to a debacle like the "humiliating American departure from Vietnam" in 1975, and be a propaganda victory for extremists. NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg warned Tuesday that Afghanistan could return to being "a platform for international terrorists to plan and organize attacks on our homelands."

Democratic Senator Jack Reed, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, accused Trump of a "cynical, chaotic approach" designed to burnish his own legacy while leaving a mess to successor Biden. But another senior Democrat, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith, said that after speaking with Miller, he saw the move as "the right policy decision". — AFP

Local

Amir praises markets authority's efforts to strengthen confidence in Kuwaiti economy

Sheikh Nawaf commends developments in Morocco



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a copy of the Capital Markets Authority's annual report during his meeting with Minister of Commerce Khaled Al-Roudhan and the authority's officials. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a copy of the Capital Markets Authority's annual report during his meeting with Minister of Commerce Khaled Al-Roudhan and the authority's officials.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. He received as well His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Moreover, His Highness the Amir hosted Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour at Bayan Palace.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir received Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) Executive Director Dr Ahmad Al-Melhem, CMA Vice-Chairman Othman Al-Issa and Board member Ali Al-Qadhi. During the meeting, they presented to His Highness the authority's ninth annual report and its achievements for the fiscal year 2019-2020.

His Highness the Amir praised the authority Chairman and members' efforts, which strengthen confidence in the Kuwaiti economy and support

the development process that enhances Kuwait's position internationally, wishing them all success. The meeting was also attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Amiri Diwan Chief Sheikh Mubarak Faisal Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah, Director of His Highness the Amir's office Ahmad Fahd Al-Fahad and Chief of the Amiri Protocols and Ceremonies Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received Minister Roudhan and the CMA officials, who presented to him a copy of the authority's annual

report for the fiscal year 2019-2020.

In other news, His Highness the Amir commended yesterday the civilizational achievements and comprehensive development in the Kingdom of Morocco. His Highness the Amir made the remarks in a cable to Moroccan King Mohammad VI to congratulate him on the Kingdom's Independence Day, wishing him good health and for Morocco and its people further progress and prosperity. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent cables to King Mohammad VI to congratulate him on the country's independence day, wishing him good health and further development for Morocco. — KUNA

Kuwait reports nine new COVID deaths

KUWAIT: Nine COVID-19 patients died in Kuwait in the past 24 hours, the Ministry of Health announced yesterday, noting that total fatalities increased to 857. Meanwhile, Kuwait registered 452 new cases during the same period, raising total infections to 138,337. Total recoveries reached 129,839 after the ministry announced 798 patients have recovered in the past 24 hours. Official spokesperson of the Ministry of Health Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said there were 105 patients receiving treatment at intensive care units, while the total number of those still receiving treatment amounted to 7,641. Health workers conducted 6,068 swab tests in the past 24 hours, raising the whole count to 1,029,227.

In other news, Kuwait's Embassy in Turkey yesterday called on Kuwaiti citizens to adhere to a new set of precautions declared by the local authorities to curb the novel coronavirus. The embassy urged Kuwaiti nationals to observe the partial curfew due to be effective as of 8:00 pm Friday until 10:00 am the next day. The new measures are applicable on people aged less than 20 in addition to the partial curfew imposed on those above 65 of age; except for some workers. Also according to the new measures, smoking is prohibited in public. — KUNA

KOTC fleet meets maritime laws

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) Director of the fleet projects group Yousef Al-Saqr yesterday affirmed that all of the company's fleet carriers in conformity with the laws of the International Maritime Organization and the Flag State. Saqr said that the company's carriers operate safely around the clock in different regions and international ports, taking into account the difficulties that these ports and countries are going through to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. He also stressed that the company's carriers are one of the leading in the maritime transport industry in the world. —KUNA

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150 firemen battle massive Shuwaikh supermarket blaze

KUWAIT: Six fire teams battled a huge blaze in a Shuwaikh industrial area supermarket yesterday, Kuwait Fire Force said. Firemen kept the blaze from spreading to nearby buildings while exerting tremendous efforts using hydraulic ladders that helped contain the flames, which spread over 3,000 sq m. A search is going on for a reported missing person, the statement said. Kuwait Fire Force Chief Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad and his deputy for firefighting Maj Gen Jamal Al-Bulaihees were at hand, as 150 firemen from Industrial Shuwaikh, Shuhada, Ardiya, Capital, Salmiya and backup stations participated in fighting the blaze. Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khalid Al-Sabah inspected the scene



News in brief

Family visa only solution for 60+ expats

KUWAIT: As the decision to ban the issuance of work permits for those 60 without a university degree is approaching (from Jan 1), it seems the only solution for thousands from such expats is to transfer to family visas. Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower Ahmad Al-Mousa told Al-Rai the authority is going ahead with implementing the decision, adding that workers were given enough time to adjust their legal status. The decision will be applied as their residency permits expire, which will not be renewed. Mousa said the decision does not prevent such people from adjusting their status through a family visa or any other visa type. He said the decision was made after a comprehensive study based on statistics, reminding that the decision does not apply to expats holding degrees.

800,000 expats deported

KUWAIT: Kuwait has deported 800,000 expatriates of 22 nationalities in the period between 1992 and 2020, Al-Qabas reported yesterday quoting security sources. Meanwhile, the same sources revealed that a special system to detect forged passports has stopped more than 25,000 expats who tried to re-enter Kuwait with forged passports after being deported earlier, and that since the system was installed in 2011.

Medical staff return

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health prepared lists of expatriate medical staff members stuck outside in preparation for their return to Kuwait in the coming few days, Al-Jarida reported yesterday quoting informed sources. The returnees will have to complete a seven-day compulsory quarantine period before returning to work, the sources added.



Kuwait eager to amplify peace, understanding among religions

KUWAIT: Kuwait undertakes the principle of disseminating a peaceful culture, encouraging dialogue between civilizations and religions, as rooted in the history of Kuwaiti society before the emergence of the modern state, said a senior Kuwaiti official Tuesday. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah delivered this statement to the 2020 video ministerial conference, under the title 'Promoting Freedom of Religions and Beliefs,' held in the Polish capital Warsaw. The event aims to circulate the values of tolerance, acceptance of others, peaceful coexistence and dialogue with various cultures and religions. Sheikh Dr Ahmad thanked the Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau for the invitation to participate in the ministerial meeting.

Kuwait's constitution guarantees freedom of opinion, expression and belief, permitting the practice of religious rites safely, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Sabah said while touting his country's attitude of openness and understanding. According to Article 35 of the Constitution, "Freedom of belief is absolute. The state protects the freedom of practicing religion in accordance with established customs, provided that it does not conflict with public policy or morals." Despite the small size of Kuwait, it is considered a meeting place for people, as it embraces over 120 nationalities, where they experience a lot of protection considering the mutual respect, Sheikh Dr Ahmad noted.

Kuwait adopted Law No 19 of 2012 concerning the protection of national unity, which criminalizes matters including the promotion of ideology based on the superiority of any race, group, color, origin, religious sect, gender or lineage, he underscored. In this sense, Kuwait condemned all forms of terrorism and violence that ejected by all religions and human values while being criminalized by international laws and norms, he underlined, pointing out that when extremism occurs, religious freedom diminishes, hate speech amplifies, and opportunities for dialogue are absent, he indicated. Everyone, regardless of their backgrounds, should cooperate in pursuit of mankind's well-being, he pointed out. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah writes in the book of condolence at Ghana's embassy. — Amiri Diwan photo

Amiri Diwan Minister conveys condolences at Ghana's embassy

KUWAIT: Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah visited Ghana's embassy yesterday and conveyed condolences of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown

Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the passing of former President Jerry John Rawlings. — KUNA

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Twitter and Facebook defend election rules at heated US hearing

Will small rockets finally lift off?



A Turkish-backed Syrian fighter of the Sultan Murad Turkoman brigade performs during a military show in the Afrin region in the rebel-held northern countryside of Syria's northern Aleppo province on Tuesday. — AFP

Israel hits Iran targets in Syria

11 Syrian and foreign fighters killed in 'retaliatory attack'

JERUSALEM: Israeli warplanes struck Syria yesterday, hitting Iranian targets and killing 11 Syrian and foreign fighters in what the Israeli army called a retaliatory attack after explosive devices were found near one of its bases on the occupied Golan Heights. The air strikes came hours before US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was to land in Israel for talks including on Iran, in what was likely to be his last visit to the staunch American ally before President Donald Trump leaves office.

An Israeli army statement said its fighter jets had overnight hit "military targets belonging to the Iranian Quds Force and the Syrian armed forces". The elite Quds Force is the main foreign operations arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards. The targets included "storage facilities, headquarters and military compounds" as well as "Syrian surface-to-air missile batteries," it said.

Syrian state news agency SANA said the strikes had killed three of its soldiers and wounded another. The monitoring group Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 11 people were killed, including foreign fighters as well as Syrian soldiers. The foreigners included five fighters who were "likely Iranian and belonging to the Quds force" as well as two pro-Iran fighters of undetermined nationality, the Britain-based monitor said. Israel has carried out hundreds of air and missile strikes on Syria since civil war broke out there in 2011, targeting Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah forces as well as government troops.

Retaliatory strikes

The Jewish state rarely acknowledges individual strikes, but has done so when responding to what it describes as aggression inside Israeli territory. Israel's military said it had discovered improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on its side of the armistice line on the Golan Heights on Tuesday. "We are talking about three connected Claymore anti-personnel charges that were planted close to an IDF position," army spokesman Jonathan Conricus told reporters yesterday. "This was another attempt led by Iranian Quds forces. The actual planting of the IEDs was by Syrian locals but the guidance, instruction and control was by Iranian Quds forces," he said.

Most Arab residents of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights retain Syrian citizenship, having spurned the offer of Israeli papers. Conricus said Israel had carried out retaliatory strikes against eight separate targets inside Syria, from the armistice line on the Golan all the way to the southern outskirts of the capital Damascus. He said they included three Iranian command centers - a headquarters in the Damascus airport, a Quds Force base in the headquarters of Syria's seventh army division and a "secret military site which served as a hosting facility for senior Iranian delegations".

"We hope now that the message is clear - that it is unacceptable that the Syrian regime allows and tolerates and facilitates the use by Iranian forces of Syria as a launchpad for attacks against Israel." Israel and Syria, still technically at war, have a border along the

Golan Heights, which the Jewish State has occupied since the Six-Day War of 1967. Iran has been a key ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime throughout the civil war that erupted after the brutal repression of anti-government protests and has killed more than 380,000 people.

Pompeo visit

The air strikes came hours before Pompeo was to land in Israel, for talks on Iran that are likely to focus on Israeli fears of a softer policy towards Iran after the Trump administration hands over to Democrat Joe Biden in January. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who called Trump his country's strongest ally in the White House, has heaped praise on the administration for its hardline approach towards Iran. Trump's so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against the Islamic Republic has included sanctions and scrapping of the nuclear deal agreed between Tehran and world powers during Barack Obama's presidency. Israeli experts have said Netanyahu is concerned that the president-elect, Obama's former vice president, will seek to re-engage Iran diplomatically, possibly by restoring the 2015 nuclear deal Trump pulled the US out of. Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdellatif Al-Zayani was also due in Israel for the first visit by a senior official of the Gulf Arab state since it signed a normalization deal with Israel on September 15. The deal was condemned as a betrayal by Iran and its regional allies. — AFP



DONGGUAN, China: In this photo taken on Aug 4, 2020, Prince, a member of the hacking group Red Hacker Alliance who refused to give his real name, uses a website that monitors global cyberattacks on his computer at their office in southern Guangdong province. — AFP

Boom in demand for friendly hackers as 5G approaches

HELSINKI: As the number of online devices surges and superfast 5G connections roll out, record numbers of companies are offering handsome rewards to ethical hackers who successfully attack their cybersecurity systems. The fast-expanding field of internet-connected devices, known as the "internet of things" (IoT) which includes smart televisions and home appliances, are set to become more widespread once 5G becomes more available - posing one of the most serious threats to digital security in future.

At a conference hosted by Nokia last week, "friendly hacker" Keren Elazari said that co-opting hackers - many of whom are amateurs - to hunt for vulnerabilities "was looked at as a trendy Silicon Valley thing six to eight years ago". But "bug bounty programs" are now offered by organizations ranging from the Pentagon and banks such as Goldman Sachs to airlines, tech giants and thousands of smaller businesses. The largest bug-bounty platform, HackerOne, has 800,000 hackers on its books and said its organizations paid out a record \$44 million (38.2 million euros) in cash rewards this year, up 87 percent on the previous 12 months.

"Employing just one full-time security engineer in London might cost a company 80,000 pounds (89,000 euros, \$106,000) a year, whereas we open companies up to this global community of hundreds of thousands of hackers with a huge diversity in skills," Prash Somaiya, security solutions architect at HackerOne said. "We're starting to see an uptick in IoT providers taking hacking power seriously," Somaiya said, adding that HackerOne now regularly ships internet-connected toys, thermostats, scooters and cars out to its hackers for them to try to breach.

"We already know from what has happened in the past five years that the criminals find very clever ways to utilise digital devices," Elazari said. A sobering example was the 2016 "Mirai" cyberattack, during which attackers took control of 300,000 unsecured devices, including printers, webcams and TV recorders, and directed them to flood and disable websites of media, companies and governments around the world.

"In the future of 5G we're talking about every possible device having high-bandwidth connections, it's not just your computer or your phone," Elazari warned. In October Nokia announced it had detected a 100 percent increase in malware infections on IoT devices in the previous year, noting in its threat report that each new application of 5G offers criminals "more opportunities for inflicting damage and extracting ransom". — AFP

Trump fires top poll official who defended vote

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump on Tuesday fired the US government's top election security official, who had rejected the president's unsubstantiated claims of "massive" fraud in the vote he lost to Joe Biden. Trump announced on Twitter the termination "effective immediately" of Chris Krebs, who led the agency that jointly declared "the November 3rd election was the most secure in American history."

The US president, who refuses to acknowledge that he lost his bid for reelection to Democrat Biden, has repeatedly claimed without evidence that the voting and count were replete with fraud. "The recent statement by Chris Krebs on the security of the 2020 Election was highly inaccurate, in that there were massive improprieties and fraud," he wrote in a tweet. "Therefore, effective immediately, Chris Krebs has been terminated as Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency."

No evidence

Krebs, who reportedly told friends last week he expected to be removed, appeared to confirm it in a tweet on his personal account. "Honored to serve. We did it right. Defend Today, Secure Tomorrow," he wrote. Krebs was in charge of fending off possible foreign and domestic hacker intrusions into myriad voting, sorting and counting machines, as well as databases and other systems that states and localities rely on to tally ballots.

Senator Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said: "Chris Krebs is an extraordinary public servant and exactly the person Americans want protecting the security of our elections. It speaks volumes that the president chose to fire him simply for telling the truth." Republican senator Richard Burr, who until recently was chairman of the same committee, said Krebs and his team "worked diligently to strengthen our election infrastructure, helping to shore up vulnerabilities and build trust between State and Federal Governments."

Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the House of



Chris Krebs

Representatives, said Krebs was "deeply respected" and accused President Trump of firing him "for speaking truth to power and rejecting Trump's constant campaign of election falsehoods". The challenge of securing the election was even tougher this year because of the complexities of the coronavirus, which forced millions to vote by mail. Under Krebs, CISA had also warned several times that Russians and Iranians were trying to break into US systems, as Kremlin-linked actors had tried in 2016.

The White House was reportedly particularly unhappy about a CISA webpage set up to fight disinformation, called "Rumor vs Reality". The page rejected claims by Trump and others that many votes had been cast in the names of dead people, that counting the ballots days after election day was not normal and that shifting vote counts indicated fraud.

Through numerous reviews, investigations and lawsuits, no evidence has come up of any significant distortion or loss of votes, by accident or fraud. "There is no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes, or was in any way compromised," a group of senior US federal and state election officials said in a report last week. And on Monday, a group of 59 top election security experts also dismissed claims of significant malfunction or fraud, saying the claims "either have been unsubstantiated or are technically incoherent". — AFP

Pads for peace: India activists woo women fighters with pads

BHUBANESWAR: Indian peace activists have come up with an unusual way to engage with leftist fighters waging a decades-long insurgency in one of the country's poorest states - send them sanitary napkins. Women make up a large proportion of the guerrillas fighting government forces in the jungles of central and eastern India, an intractable conflict that one former prime minister called the biggest internal security challenge since independence. Numbering in the tens of thousands, they say they are fighting for the rights of poor farmers and landless laborers.

This month, a group of activists in the central state of Chhattisgarh called the New Peace Process began distributing reusable napkins and menstrual cups to about 2,500 women fighters in a bid to engage them in peace efforts. "Can we break violence and start talking? We are trying to create an environment against violence and violent politics and bring peace," organizer Shubhranshu Chowdhary said. "The activists believe that once these women convince their male counterparts, the process of engaging with the peace process may become possible."

Chowdhary said the idea, timed to coincide with the Diwali festival, was inspired by a scheme to engage rebels in Colombia by sending them Christmas presents. Indian police, often the targets of attacks by the guerrilla fighters known as Naxalites after the village in West Bengal state where the movement began, gave a guarded response. "From the state point of view, we would engage if someone totally discards violence and comes back to the national mainstream," said senior police officer Sunderraj P.

"At the same time, if someone is still fighting inside the jungle against the state, we cannot afford to make their lives so comfortable." Many Indian women lack access to sanitary products - a government health survey in 2015/16 found only about one in three used napkins, while the rest made do with rags. Sneha Mishra, secretary of women's rights group Aaina, welcomed the initiative but said any such outreach programs should include the government. — Reuters

International

US and Europe plan vaccination schemes; 2nd virus wave builds

Surging coronavirus caseloads prompt grueling new restrictions

WASHINGTON: Plans for vaccination programs began taking shape in Europe and the United States following recent breakthroughs, as surging coronavirus caseloads prompted grueling new restrictions, with Austria taking the unpopular step Tuesday of closing schools and shops. Global hopes of vanquishing the coronavirus pandemic were high after US biotech firm Moderna said its vaccine candidate was nearly 95 percent effective in a trial, a week after similar results announced by pharma giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech. Top US infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci hailed the results, telling AFP that the data exceeded expectations. "The idea that we have a 94.5 percent effective vaccine is stunningly impressive," he said. Moderna, whose clinical trial involved more than 30,000 participants, expects to have approximately 20 million doses ready to ship in the United States by year-end-with elderly and at-risk people to be first in line for jabs.

The US Food and Drug Agency may approve both the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines early next month, according to Moncef Slaoui, head of the government's "Operation Warp Speed" vaccine quest. He said that from January, 25 million people would be vaccinated per month. France too said it was "getting on the starting blocks" for a vaccination program to launch in January pending French and EU regulatory approval, budgeting 1.5 billion euros (\$1.8 billion) for the rollout in 2021, according to spokesman Gabriel Attal.

Fauci, who heads the National Institutes of Allergies and Infectious Diseases, warned it would be crucial to convince people to take the vaccine, particularly in the US, where anti-vaccine sentiment runs high. "A vaccine with a high degree of efficacy is of no use if nobody gets vaccinated," he said. Yet with widespread availability of any vaccine still far off, restrictions on free movement, gatherings and business were inevitable as the second wave of the coronavirus continued to build.

In the hardest-hit United States, President-elect Joe

Biden expressed frustration over Donald Trump's refusal to cooperate on the White House transition process, saying "more people may die" of COVID-19 without immediate coordination on fighting the pandemic. Globally, infections have surpassed 55 million with more than 1.3 million deaths, and experts caution the months ahead will still be difficult and dangerous.

'Total loss of control'

Curbs have returned in Europe-often in the face of protests-from Greece to Britain, where Covid-19 survivor Prime Minister Boris Johnson was self-isolating after coming into contact with an MP who later tested positive for the virus. Sweden, which has drawn attention for a softer approach to combating the virus, decided to ban gatherings of more than eight people for the first time.



Infections surpasses 55m with over 1.3m deaths

Tightened restrictions took effect Tuesday in Austria, with schools and shops shut until December 6. Chancellor Sebastian Kurz drew a sharp backlash for the new measures, which Pamela Rendi-Wagner, leader of the opposition Social Democrats, said reflected a "total loss of control". "Austria has gone from being a model country to being the bottom of the table in terms of infections," said Rendi-Wagner, herself a doctor and former health minister. The number of daily infections in the Alpine nation of 8.8 million people grew from 1,000 in early October to 5,984 on Tuesday.

Pompeo affirms support for Georgia as Russian clout grows

TBILISI: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo yesterday sought to reassure Georgia of Washington's commitment to strengthening ties during a visit to the region where Russia is asserting its influence. Pompeo's meetings with leaders of Georgia came a week after Moscow brokered a peace deal between neighbors Azerbaijan and Armenia that sees 2,000 Russian peacekeepers stationed in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Anti-government demonstrators blocked the main street through the capital Tbilisi during the visit to voice anger over recent parliamentary elections the opposition said were rigged. "We've been great friends almost 30 years on for your democracy," Pompeo said during a meeting with Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia.

Pompeo vowed support for Georgia's democratic development and said the United States recognised "the pain and difficulty connected to the occupation of your country," referring to Russian troops stationed in two breakaway regions. "Know that we want to do everything we can to support your democratic process... with free and fair elections," he added. Russia's deployment of peacekeepers to Nagorno-Karabakh last week unsettled Georgia, which in 2008



LIMA: Peruvian interim President Francisco Sagasti gestures before delivering a speech during his swearing-in ceremony at the Congress on Tuesday. — AFP

Sagasti takes the reins as president in crisis-worn Peru

LIMA: Francisco Sagasti, sworn-in as Peru's interim president on Tuesday at the age of 76, is a novice politician with an academic background who has been a member of Congress only since March. Yet his profile as a moderate has won him acceptance as a consensus politician in a nation seeking to navigate its way out of an intense political crisis.

Sagasti was elected president by Congress on Monday, after lawmakers had failed in a first attempt to agree on a candidate the day before. The choice of an unknown as president may be a reflection of how crisis-worn Peru's politics have become. The political centrist, whose gray beard and lanky frame has quickly earned him the nickname Don Quixote from his political admirers, is so far unblemished by the fray of repeated crises that have beset Peruvian politics.

While Cervantes's hero jostled at windmills on a quest to restore chivalry and serve his nation, Sagasti's immediate task is to quell the seething anger in the streets at the ouster of popular president Martin Vizcarra and his replacement by ex-congress speaker Manuel Merino. In a rare feat for Peruvian presidents, Vizcarra had consistently high approval ratings and broad public support for his crusade against political corruption-especially in Congress, half of whose members are embroiled in criminal cases, ranging from money laundering to bribery.

Sagasti joined Congress after winning a seat in March as part of the Morado Party, a centrist grouping he co-founded in 2016 to offer an alternative to leftists and conservatives. The party takes its name from the Spanish word for the color purple, what its founders said represents a mix of leftist red and the blue of the conservative parties. The party took nine seats in the 130-seat Congress in polls that delivered a heavy defeat for right-wing parties and led to a highly-fragmented legislature. Sagasti was one of the few members of Congress to vote against Vizcarra's impeachment, which analysts said may win him support from the street.

An industrial engineer by training, Sagasti was chairman of Congress' Committee on Science, Innovation and Technology before jumping into the spotlight as president. He has taught at universities in Peru, Spain and the United States, where he also studied for a doctorate in social science. More of a technocrat than a political animal, Sagasti also worked at the World Bank in the late 1980s. Born in Lima on October 10, 1944, Sagasti is the grandson of a hero of the country's 1879-1883 war against Chile, a seminal event in Peru's history.—AFP



TBILISI: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meets Georgia's President Salome Zourabichvili at the Presidential Palace yesterday. — AFP

Palestinians restore Israel coordination

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Authority said Tuesday it will restore coordination with Israel, ending a six-month suspension, on the eve of a planned visit to the Jewish state by Washington's top diplomat. Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas had announced a halt to coordination with Israel, including US-backed security cooperation, in May in response to Israeli plans to annex parts of the West Bank.

"In the light of Mahmoud Abbas's international contacts... and given the written and verbal commitments we have received from the Israelis, we will resume relations where they were before May 19, 2020," Hussein Al-Sheikh, the PA's civil affairs minister, said late Tuesday. His announcement comes on the eve of a visit to Israel by Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State in outgoing US President Donald Trump's Republican administration, under which US-Palestinian relations collapsed. Sheikh's announcement follows Abbas congratulat-



PARIS: This picture taken yesterday shows a syringe and a bottle reading "Vaccine Covid-19". — AFP

Italy meanwhile said Tuesday it had inspected over 230 retirement and nursing homes and identified 37 with violations, shutting down four of them outright. The virus tore through the country's care homes during the first wave of the pandemic, with many residents dying before they could be hospitalized and without having been tested. Italy, which is currently reporting over 500 deaths a day from the virus, has seen a spike in the number of contagions in such structures since the start of November. In Greece, tensions were high on the anniversary of a 1973 student uprising against a military junta after police banned public gatherings-including the traditional march recalling the crackdown that killed 24 people, a bloodbath considered to have speeded the restoration of democracy. Some left-wing groups have called on supporters to defy the ban and stage an afternoon demonstration in central Athens, with nearly 6,000 police officers standing by, media reports said. And in Germany, which began a new round of shut-downs earlier in the month, Chancellor Angela Merkel was pushing for tighter measures such as masks in all schools and smaller class sizes.—AFP

lost a brief war with Moscow over the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Russia recognized the breakaway provinces and stationed military bases in the regions, derailing Tbilisi's bid to join NATO, a long-time aspiration backed by the US but angrily opposed by Russia. Pompeo made the visit to Georgia as part of a tour of seven US allies and he held talks with President Salome Zourabichvili and later with Gakharia and Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani. "Our strategic partnership is based first of all on values - freedom, democracy, and of course shared geostrategic interests," Gakharia said during his meeting with Pompeo.

'Political turmoil'

The US embassy said ahead of Pompeo's meetings that he would discuss "the importance of free and fair elections" with Georgian officials. Georgia has recently been destabilized by anger over parliamentary elections which the ruling Georgian Dream party won narrowly on October 31, but which the opposition has denounced as rigged.

Opposition parties have staged mass protests demanding snap polls and refused to enter the new parliament, in a boycott that has undermined the ruling party's legitimacy. Opposition leaders said they hoped Pompeo would push the Georgian Dream-led government towards compromise, an expectation echoed by demonstrators in Tbilisi yesterday. Thousands of opposition protesters formed a human chain in the capital's main thoroughfare, waving US and Georgian flags and holding placards that read "rigged elections" and "we need your voice."—AFP

Hard-hit Brazil threatened by virus 2nd wave

RIO DE JANEIRO: After struggling for months to get its spiraling COVID-19 death toll under control, Brazil is now threatened by the nightmare scenario that has already shaken the United States and Europe: a second wave. Brazil has been one of the countries hit hardest by the pandemic, with more than 166,000 people killed - the second-highest number in the world, following the United States.

After a seemingly endless plateau, with more than 1,000 deaths a day from June to August, on a seven-day rolling average, the numbers had finally been falling in the giant country of 212 million people. But after dropping to as low as 350 deaths per day early last week, the rolling average has now risen above 400 again. There is also a worrying trend in the number of hospitalizations. Sao Paulo, the state hit hardest by the virus, registered an 18-percent increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations last week. That led the state government to put the brakes on its gradual exit from partial lockdown. However, eight months after the pandemic reached the country, Brazilians are showing signs of fatigue with social distancing measures. In the country's largest cities, shops, schools, cinemas and gyms have reopened, and beaches, bars and restaurants are regularly packed with crowds. But experts warn the country's virus ordeal is probably far from over.

'Worrying level'

"For the past three months, we'd been seeing a steady level of 50, 55 COVID cases" at a time, said Sidney Klajner, president of Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo. "But today I think we have 90 patients with COVID or suspected COVID," he said. "Most of them are younger patients who we understand are taking less precautions."

Last weekend, an unauthorized party on Ipanema beach in Rio de Janeiro drew more than 2,000 revelers, most without face masks. That was despite the fact that intensive care units in the city's public hospitals had just hit the dangerous threshold of 95-percent occupancy. "We may already be in a second wave," said Domingos Alves, head of the Health Intelligence Lab at the University of Sao Paulo. He said he was especially worried by the "R value," the number of people an infected person transmits the virus to on average.

When the number is higher than one, experts consider it worrying. "In early October, the national rate was 0.97, with just four (of Brazil's 27) states above one. But a month later, 14 states were above one, and the national average, too," he said. "We're at a worrying level, especially given that testing has decreased and the official figures are under-estimated." He said more political leadership was needed on the pandemic. "Brazil urgently needs to put in place mass testing to try to get the second wave under control, before it gets submerged like the United States and Europe."—AFP

Twitter and Facebook defend election rules at heated US hearing

WASHINGTON: Facebook and Twitter defended their handling of US election misinformation at a heated congressional hearing Tuesday where one key senator assailed the platforms for being the "ultimate editor" of political news. The hearing, the second in less than a month, came with social media under fire from both the left and the right for their handling of political content during a bitter US presidential campaign.

Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg and Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey testified remotely to the session, which was called to discuss "censorship and suppression of news articles" and the "handling of the 2020 election" by the platforms. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, chairing the Judiciary Committee hearing, warned the CEOs that new regulations are needed to ensure the social media giants are held responsible for decisions on removing, filtering or allowing content to remain.

"It seems like you're the ultimate editor," Graham said at the opening as he took aim at decisions by both platforms to limit the distribution of a New York Post article claiming to expose malfeasance involving the son of President-elect Joe Biden during the campaign. "When you have companies that have the power of governments (and) have far more power than traditional media outlets, something has to give," Graham said the law known as Section 230 that gives immunity to online services for content posted by others "needs to be changed."

Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal also called for reform of Section 230 while rebuking the companies for what he said was inadequate action against political misinformation by President Donald Trump. "The president has used this megaphone to spread vicious falsehoods in an apparent attempt to overturn the will of voters," Blumenthal said.

Blumenthal said the social media firms had "power far exceeding the robber barons of the last Gilded Age" and have "profited hugely by strip mining data about our private lives and promoting hate speech and voter suppression."—AFP

International

In jihadist-hit Burkina areas, no elections - and no state

Body of driver of a regional MP found

DORI: Two days before Burkina Faso's President Roch Marc Christian Kabore held a campaign rally in the northern town of Dori earlier this month, the body of a driver for a regional MP was found 15 kilometers away. The death of Sorgho Wendtoin served as a brutal reminder of the difficulty of holding a national election in a country where large areas remain outside the state's control due to a grinding jihadist insurgency.

Amadou Abdouramane Ly, a civil servant in Dori and parliamentary candidate for the ruling party, said "we must tell the truth, the situation is precarious". "This is a new example of it." Burkina Faso is preparing for presidential and parliamentary elections on November 22, while neighboring Niger has its own presidential election on December 27. But no votes will be cast in many districts because the state is absent in the "three borders" region between Burkina, Niger and Mali.

The territory is at the mercy of jihadist forces that have spread across large swathes of the three Sahel nations. Burkina first came under attack in 2015 from groups that have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda. "How are we to organize an election in a zone where the attacks come almost every day?" asked a Burkinabe security specialist. Islamist fighters killed 14 soldiers in a road ambush on November 11, the biggest attack on the army in several months.

'Immense challenge'

On Saturday, a week before the general election, a large group of jihadist fighters with about 100 motorcycles and five other vehicles was reported in Mali's In-Tillit zone, near the border with Burkina Faso. "We know very well that this is going to be an immense challenge," a source close to the authorities in Dori said of the elec-

tion. The toll from jihadist attacks - sometimes intertwined with conflicts between ethnic groups - is heavy in Burkina Faso. Some 1,200 people have been killed, mostly civilians, and about one million have fled their homes over the past five years.

The north is the hardest-hit. The Constitutional Council has acknowledged that the election cannot take place in almost one-fifth of Burkina's territory because of "the presence of terrorist groups in places, the absence of the administration in affected zones, the abandonment by the population of places where they lived." "You have to add the one million displaced persons, who mostly came from these zones, and who will not vote," said Mahamoudou Savadogo, a Burkinabe researcher studying violent extremism.

At the bus station in Dori, the north's biggest city and commercial hub, the drivers look grim. They know there are many routes they can no longer use for fear of a potentially deadly encounter. "There are too many problems on the road," one of them said, withholding his name. Commercial buses must wait for a military escort before heading to Djibo, 200 kilometers west of Dori.

'Children of the nation'

"The victory of the jihadist groups is not so much a military one as having installed a fear that makes people's lives extremely difficult," Rinaldo Depagne of the International Crisis Group said. The jihadists "are the children of the nation. They know the terrain and they're on social networks. The attacks are never a matter of chance," said Saidou Maiga, mayor of the rural commune of Falagoutou, on the border with Niger.

Maiga warned against visiting Gorom-Gorom, 30 kilometers from Dori, "even at midday". He said in the old days "we took the road at night to



OUAGADOUGOU: A newspaper vendor holds a newspaper with Burkina Faso's former president Blaise Compaore's picture on the front page on Tuesday. —AFP

go to drink tea there and drive back to Dori afterwards". "This is not a question that Burkina Faso can answer alone," the mayor added. "As long as together (with Niger and Mali), we don't master these three borders, it won't go well."

The G5 Sahel Joint Force, a regional military body backed by the United Nations, was deployed in 2017, adding troops from Chad and Mauritania to those of the "three borders"

nations. The force, which has yet not had major effect, is also supported by 5,000 troops as part of France's Operation Barkhane, as well as the fledgling European force Operation Takuba. "It's only around the towns that the soldiers are present. In the camps in the bush, there are none left, everybody has gone," Savadogo said. "The state has no more control there. Whole tracts of the country will be unable to vote." —AFP

Escape from massacre: Ethiopians recall Tigray conflict horror

UM RAQUBA REFUGEE CAMP: For Ethiopians who escaped intense fighting in their northern homeland of Tigray by fleeing into Sudan, they are now safe; but the terrifying nightmare of what they witnessed haunts them. "I saw bodies dismembered by the explosions," said Ganet Gazderid, a 75-year-old sitting alone in the dust at Um Raquba refugee camp in the east of the country, newly opened to cope with a sudden influx into Sudan of over 27,000 people fleeing air strikes, artillery barges and massacres in Ethiopia.

"Other bodies were rotting, lying on the road, murdered with a knife", she added. Distraught at having been forced to flee their homes, traumatized by becoming separated from family members in the mad rush, and horrified after witnessing killings, refugees wander as if dazed in the camp. "I lived with my three daughters," said Gazderid, dressed in a blue dress and white headscarf to protect her from the blazing sun.

"When the shells started to rain down on our house, we all panicked and fled in the dark." The bombardment not only destroyed her house in the western Tigray town of Humera, the site of reportedly some of the heaviest fighting, but also separat-

ed her from her family. Everyone scattered, and she has yet to make contact with them.

"I met some friends who were fleeing too, and I followed them," she added. "I looked around several times in search of my daughters, but to no luck." She has found some help at Um Raquba, 80 kilometers from the border, but conditions are spartan, with so far only basic emergency relief set up at the isolated camp. She stops other Ethiopians to tell them her story, but no one pays attention. So many have terrible stories to tell. "I have a daughter who lives in Khartoum but I don't know her address," she said quietly. "How can I find her in the big city?"

Ethnic divides

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced on November 4 he had ordered military operations in Tigray in response to attacks by the regional ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The conflict has turned ethnic divides deadly, said Gerdo Burhan. If you are Tigrayan and captured by government soldiers, you are in trouble, said the 24-year-old.

"They ask you, with a gun pointed at you, if you belong to Tigrayan forces," he said. "At the slightest

Biden may need some Republican support to get his picks confirmed, and would face severe headwinds if he chooses far-left nominees like Senator Elizabeth Warren or Senator Bernie Sanders. Here are some of the politicians, diplomats, businesswomen and defense experts jockeying for spots in Biden's inner circle:

Secretary of State

Former UN ambassador and national security advisor Susan Rice, an experienced foreign policy hand, worked closely with Biden when he was vice president. She would need little on-the-job training in the critical post, freeing up Biden to address the coronavirus pandemic and resulting economic woes. One major strike against Rice, 56, is her association with the 2012 attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya which killed four Americans.

Getting her past hostile Senate Republicans could be difficult. Senator Chris Coons, a close Biden friend, has international experience having served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for years. "If he were to consider me," Coons told Politico in October, "I'd certainly be honored." Also in con-



GADAREF, Sudan: Ethiopians who fled fighting in Tigray province are pictured at a reception center in Sudan on Tuesday. —AFP

hesitation, you are dead. They shoot you down on the spot and leave the body in the street." Pleading with them that you are a civilian does not make a difference, said Burhan. "They beat you, sometimes to death, or they take you with them to an unknown destination - and I doubt if you come back alive from there," he added. "It's terror." Burhan managed to escape to Sudan, trekking through the hot bush across the border, but he was separated from his father, mother and two sisters on the way. "I don't know if they're okay," he said. —AFP



WILMINGTON, Delaware: US President-elect Joe Biden speaks with outside diplomatic, intelligence, and defense experts to discuss readiness at relevant agencies during a video meeting on Tuesday. —AFP

attention: Senator Chris Murphy, whose pick would be a win for the party's progressive faction, and William Burns, a veteran Foreign Service officer and number two at State under Barack Obama. —AFP

Diverse team likely; Biden mulls cabinet

WASHINGTON: President-elect Joe Biden has promised a cabinet that reflects America's diversity, and he is choosing his team even though Donald Trump is refusing to concede or cooperate. Dozens of names are being floated for the most important positions in the executive branch, and the vetting of potential cabinet members has been going on for months. "I said from the outset I wanted a campaign that represented America, and I think we did that," Biden, whose incoming vice president Kamala Harris is a Black and Asian-American woman, said in his victory speech four days after the November 3 election.

"Now that's what I want the administration to look like." But Biden may well be hamstrung by the US Senate, which confirms cabinet picks and whose control is likely - but not guaranteed - to be in Republican hands come January. That means

Small networks boosted as Trump supporters shun Fox

NEW YORK: Tens of thousands of Donald Trump supporters, disbelieving the presidential election results and increasingly frustrated by the conservative Fox News, are turning - often at the president's urging - to smaller, right-wing channels OAN and Newsmax, which still refuse to call the race for Joe Biden. "Democrats planned a coup on the president on the United States," One America News Network (OAN) anchor Christina Bobb insisted Monday. "And Biden still lost! "Trump is getting a second term," she added.

Ten days since Joe Biden was declared president-elect by all the major US news stations, OAN has refused to cave. "We have not called the election for Biden because we believe it's a very close race," Chris Ruddy, the founder

and CEO of Newsmax, the other strongly conservative channel on the rise, told AFP. The approach has hit the nail on the head for Trump supporters disillusioned with Fox News, which they believe was wrong to make the outgoing president's defeat official and failed to support him enough. OAN president Charles Herring told AFP that his channel has been among the top 10 most-watched across the entire US cable industry for the past several weeks. And Newsmax crossed the threshold of one million viewers for the first time in its history last week. Simultaneously, Fox News has been beaten several times by rival CNN since election night on November 3, a rare event, although its audience numbers remain strong.

Herring told AFP that former Fox viewers have written to OAN to express their frustration over the network's apparent leftward turn. Trump himself has encouraged followers to switch to OAN and Newsmax, saying he considered "the biggest difference" between the 2016 election and 2020 was Fox's stance. More and more top-tier Republicans have accepted invitations to speak on the two small channels, including Trump, who has already given them interviews. —AFP

Will small rockets finally lift off?

PARIS: The boom in demand for placing small satellites into orbit has boosted interest in small rockets, but industry players do not think the niche will become a business segment of its own. "This time last year, we were able to count over 120 startups for microlaunchers, small rockets that would carry a single small satellite. As we look today, there is a significantly smaller number of those," said Tory Bruno, CEO of Boeing-Lockheed Martin joint venture United Launch Alliance (ULA), said at a recent industry gathering.

The frenzy of proposals for small rockets, or microlaunchers, comes as new satellite-based phone and internet networks are shifting away from a few satellites in high, geostationary orbits. Instead they use constellations of many, small satellites placed in low earth orbits (LEO). In the past decade

1,805 small satellites have been placed in orbit and the advisory firm Euroconsult expects that number to rise to 10,000 by 2030.

This year, 95 of the 1,079 satellites launched as of November 1 were small satellites. Of those, three-quarters were part of the Starlink network of SpaceX chief Elon Musk. Many startups and small companies believed this would create "a market for microlaunchers that are cheap to build and much cheaper to exploit than a big launcher", such as the Ariane or SpaceX's Falcon 9, said Xavier Pasco, a space industry specialist and head of French think tank the Foundation for Strategic Research.

Only two small rockets are operational for the moment, according to Euroconsult. One is China's Kuaizhou-1 and the other is the Electron by New Zealand-based US firm Rocket Lab. The Virgin Orbit company of British mogul Richard Branson tested its LauncherOne in May, but because of a technical failure the plane-launched rocket failed to reach space. The latest test by US firm Astra in September also failed. —AFP

Poorer nations face vaccine wait as West locks down supply

PARIS: Hailed this week as a pandemic game-changer, the new COVID-19 vaccine offered countries that had pre-ordered doses a potential escape from a cycle of lockdowns and new waves of sickness and death. But while richer nations plan their vaccination programs through the end of 2021, experts warn that poorer and developing countries face hurdles that could deny billions the first proven protection against the coronavirus. Vaccine developers Pfizer and BioNTech plan to roll out the first doses within weeks, once they receive emergency use permissions from drug agencies. They expect to have 1.3 billion doses ready next year.

The results of phase 3 clinical trials showed their mRNA vaccine was 90 percent effective in preventing COVID-19 symptoms and did not produce adverse side effects among thousands of volunteers. At the cost of \$40 per treatment, which consists of two separate shots, richer nations have rushed to order tens of millions of doses. But it is less clear what poorer nations can expect. "If we only have the Pfizer vaccine and everyone needs two doses, clearly that's a difficult ethical dilemma," Trudie Lang, director of The Global Health Network at the University of Oxford's Nuffield Department of Medicine, told AFP.

Anticipating the outside demand for any approved vaccine, the World Health Organization formed the COVAX facility in April to ensure equitable distribution. COVAX brought together governments, scientists, civil society and the private sector - though Pfizer is not currently part of the facility. A company spokesperson told AFP it had "provided an expression of interest for possible supply" to COVAX. Rachel Silverman, a policy fellow at the Center for Global Development, said it was unlikely that much of the first vaccine batch would end up in poorer nations. Based on advance purchase agreements signed with Pfizer, she calculated that 1.1 billion doses had been snapped up entirely by wealthy nations. "There's not much left for everyone else," she told AFP. Some countries that pre-ordered, such as Japan and Britain, are part of COVAX, so some doses are likely to reach less developed nations through their purchase agreements. Conversely, the United States, which has 600 million doses on order, is not a COVAX member, though this may change under a Joe Biden administration. —AFP

Business

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2020

OPEC+ signals readiness to act on output cuts Group seeks to avert another slump in oil prices

VIENNA: Members of the OPEC+ club of oil producers agreed Tuesday that they had to be ready to act on output cuts in order to prevent another slump in prices. A joint statement issued after the monthly meeting said: "All participating countries need to be vigilant, proactive and be prepared to act, when necessary, to the requirements of the market".

Earlier Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, energy minister of OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia, had said in a live-streamed address ahead of the OPEC+ meeting that the group "must be ready to tweak the terms of our agreement if need be."

OPEC+ comprises the OPEC oil cartel member countries as well as allies such as Russia. "Flexibility and pro-activeness must continue to be the guiding principles of our deliberations today and in the future," Prince Abdulaziz added. The alliance is currently sticking to deep cuts to production agreed in April in order to protect prices from a fall similar to that seen when global demand collapsed in the wake of the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the deal currently in force, the current reduction in output of 7.7 million barrels per day (bpd) is due to be tapered to 5.8 million bpd as of January 2021. Despite the lifeline for the market represented by

encouraging news on several coronavirus vaccines, many market watchers expect the January date to shift back by three to six months as the world economy and oil demand remain weak.

The delay would be signed off at the next full meeting of the group on November 30 and December 1. The joint statement issued after Tuesday's meeting noted the positive news on vaccines and robust demand in Asia but said "these developments have been overshadowed by the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in major economies". "More stringent COVID-19 containment measures across continents, including full lockdowns, are impacting the oil demand rebound," the statement said, adding that "the underlying risks and uncertainties remain high". The return of production from the oilfields of Libya to the tune of a million barrels a day according to Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) — has added further downward pressure on prices. The conflict-plagued state had, like Venezuela and Iran, agreed exemptions from the cuts. Prince Abdulaziz congratulated fellow OPEC+ members on their achievements in hitting the targets for cuts thus far.

"We achieved 99.5 percent of what we set out to do," he said, while reminding other countries that "we must maintain high compliance". —AFP



News in brief

Apple to lower App Store fees

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple Inc yesterday said it plans to start a program to lower its App Store commissions for software developers who make \$1 million or less in proceeds each year from the store. Apple takes a 30 percent cut of most purchases made on the App Store, although the commission drops to 15 percent for subscriptions that remain active for more than a year. Apple said yesterday developers will automatically get the lower 15 percent rate if they generate \$1 million or less in proceeds — defined as the portion of App Store purchases that the developer keeps — in a calendar year. — Reuters

Sri Lanka to open up 'port city'

COLOMBO: A mega Chinese real-estate development in Sri Lanka will open early next year offering tax concessions to attract investors and revive the struggling economy, the government said Tuesday in its first budget. Colombo Port City—a \$1.4 billion land reclamation project beside the capital's port which started in 2014 — has doubled the size of Sri Lanka's current financial district. The development—the largest single foreign investment in Sri Lanka so far—is one of several massive Asian infrastructure projects funded by China as Beijing increases its footprint in the region. —AFP

Panasonic deal with Norwegian firms

TOKYO: Japan's Panasonic said yesterday it has signed a partnership with two Norwegian firms to develop a "green battery" business targeting the European market, including for electric cars. Panasonic, energy firm Equinor, and industrial group Hydro, said they would work together "towards summer 2021 to assess the market for lithium-ion batteries in Europe and... the business case for a green battery business located in Norway". The initial phase of the project will involve consulting potential customers and holding talks with Norwegian and European authorities, the companies said in a joint statement. —AFP

RSA agrees to £7.2bn takeover

LONDON: British insurer RSA has agreed to a takeover by Canadian and Danish peers Intact and Tryg for £7.2 billion (\$9.4 billion, 7.9 billion euros), the companies announced yesterday. "Pursuant to the transaction, Intact will retain RSA's Canadian, UK and international operations, Tryg will retain RSA's Swedish and Norwegian businesses, and Intact and Tryg will co-own RSA's Danish business," a statement said. The cash deal sees Tryg paying £4.2 billion and Intact £3.0 billion. —AFP

Weaker dollar adds Paris and Zurich to priciest cities

LONDON: Paris and Zurich have joined Hong Kong as this year's costliest cities worldwide, while Singapore and Osaka have slipped from their joint-top spot after the coronavirus pandemic weakened the dollar, a survey published yesterday showed.

The biggest mover was Tehran, which jumped 27 places on US sanctions. The Economist Intelligence Unit added in its Worldwide Cost of Living 2020 report. The pandemic's effect on the dollar was however the biggest factor for places switching, the financial research group noted.

Saudi to host online G20 summit amid pandemic, recession

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia hosts the G20 summit Saturday in a first for an Arab nation, but the scaled-down virtual format could limit debate on a resurgent coronavirus pandemic and crippling economic crisis. The two-day meeting of the world's wealthiest nations follows a bitter US election the results of which remain disputed by President Donald Trump and comes amid criticism of what campaigners call the group's inadequate response to the worst recession in decades.

Held under the shadow of a raging pandemic, the summit which is usually an opportunity for one-on-one engagements between world leaders, is reduced to brief online sessions on pressing global issues — from climate change to growing inequality. Discussions are expected to be dominated by the "implications of the pandemic" and "steps for reviving the global economy", a source close to the Saudi organizers said.

New vaccine breakthroughs have raised hopes of containing the virus, which has infected 55 million people globally and left 1.3 million dead. The Paris-based OECD projects global economic output will contract by 4.5 percent this year. G20 nations have contributed more than \$21

billion to combat the pandemic, including production of vaccines, and injected \$11 trillion to "safeguard" the virus-battered world economy, organizers said. But the group faces mounting pressure to help stave off possible credit defaults across developing nations.

Last week, G20 finance ministers declared a "common framework" for an extended debt restructuring plan for virus-ravaged countries, but campaign group Action Aid described the measure as "woefully inadequate".

Mistrust between member states has hampered coordination, with a US Treasury official accusing China — a top creditor to poor countries — of a "lack of full participation" and transparency. "We are facing the world's largest humanitarian crisis and women in developing countries are bearing the worst impacts of the health and economic fallout," said Action Aid's Katherine Tu. "Yet the G20 has its head in the sand and is failing to respond to the urgency of the situation."

'Digital diplomacy'

In a letter to G20 leaders released Tuesday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for "bolder measures" and



RIYADH: Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan (right) addresses a G20 meeting in this file photo. Saudi Arabia hosts the G20 summit Saturday in a first for an Arab nation, but the scaled-down virtual format could limit debate on a resurgent coronavirus pandemic and crippling economic crisis. —AFP

emphasized that "further debt relief will be required". G20 nations are moving towards unlocking additional funds from the International Monetary Fund for developing nations "soon", Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan told the Financial Times. World leaders, from German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin, are expected to make speeches at the summit, sources close to the organizers said. Saudi Arabia's King Salman will preside over what some observers call "digital diplomacy". The virtual setting could frustrate "spontaneous combustion" among leaders, limiting "encounters on unscheduled subjects",

said John Kirton, director and founder of the Canada-based G20 Research Group. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a staunch Trump defender, will be present in Saudi Arabia during the summit.

It was unclear whether Trump will speak at the event alongside world leaders, many of whom have already congratulated his successful challenger, President-elect Joe Biden. "Trump's actions at the summit aren't likely to have as much of an effect as they might have in previous years," Ryan Bohl, of US geopolitical think-tank Stratfor, said. "Even should he not attend, his lame duck status will make that relatively palatable — it would be just one more norm he upsets on his way out." —AFP

Britain to ban new petrol cars by 2030

LONDON: Britain will ban the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans from 2030, five years earlier than previously planned, as part of what Prime Minister Boris Johnson is casting as a "green revolution" to cut emissions to net zero by 2050. Johnson, who is grappling with Europe's most deadly COVID-19 crisis, Brexit trade negotiations and the departure of his most senior adviser, wants to underscore his green credentials as part of what he hopes will be a reset for his government.

"Now is the time to plan for a green recovery with high-skilled jobs that give people the satisfaction of knowing they are helping to make the country cleaner, greener and more beautiful," Johnson said in a column published in the Financial Times on Tuesday.

Britain last year became the first G7 country to set in law a net zero emission target by 2050, which will require wholesale changes in the way Britons travel, use

energy and eat. In total the plan would mobilize 12 billion pounds (\$16 billion) of government money, with as much as three times that amount coming from the private sector, and create and support 250,000 highly skilled green jobs by 2030, Johnson said. The new date for a ban on new petrol and diesel cars is five years earlier than the 2035 pledge made by Johnson in February.

Challenge

The plan offers 582 million pounds in grants for those buying zero or ultra-low emission vehicles to make them cheaper to buy, which was welcomed by auto industry group SMMT. "Success will depend on reassuring consumers that they can afford these new technologies," SMMT said in a statement, adding the new deadline posed an "immense challenge" to the sector.

Johnson's plan was broadly welcomed by industry. "It gives a springboard to the huge opportunities for UK-wide investment and green jobs that a true low-carbon economy can bring," said Josh Hardie, acting director at the Confederation of British Industry. Under the plan, the sale of hybrid cars and vans will be banned from 2035. An extra 200 million pounds would create industrial clusters mustering technology to capture, store and use carbon



Vehicles sitting in traffic approach the Blackwall Tunnel, in London.

dioxide emissions by the mid-2020s. Another two hubs are projected by 2030, taking the total investment in the technology to 1 billion pounds. This funding is likely to benefit sites in northern England, such as the Humber region and Teesside, and Port Talbot in south Wales, where industrial carbon capture projects are being developed at sites such as steel works.

Johnson, who has promised to increase Britain's offshore wind power to 40 gigawatts by 2030 from around 10 GW now, pledged up to 500 million pounds for projects trailing the use of hydrogen including for home heating and cooking.

The government also pledged 525 million pounds to develop large- and small-scale nuclear plants. —Reuters

"The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the US dollar to weaken while western European and north Asian currencies have strengthened against it, which in turn has shifted prices for goods and services," said Upasana Dutt, head of worldwide cost of living at The EIU. The EIU said "Singapore and Osaka, which have been dislodged from their joint-first with Hong Kong, find themselves at fourth and fifth ranks, respectively, with Osaka tying with Tel Aviv."

"The movement of Paris and Zurich to join Hong Kong at the top spot was spurred on by the rise of the euro and Swiss franc against the US dollar, as well as the comparative decline in the cost of living in the two Asian cities that previously sat at the top of the table," it added. The report noted that prices in Singapore fell on an exodus of foreign workers.

"With the city state's overall population contracting for the first time since 2003, demand has declined, and deflation has set in. "Osaka has seen

similar trends, with consumer prices stagnating and the Japanese government subsidizing costs such as public transport."

New York, the city the index is benchmarked against, and Los Angeles both fell in the rankings. The Big Apple fell one spot to joint-seventh with Geneva, and Los Angeles dropped to ninth-equal with Copenhagen. "The coronavirus pandemic has impacted spending habits all over the world, with the prices of essential goods proving more resilient than those deemed non-essential," the report said.

"However, this translates to prices for staples, such as coffee, cheese, rice and orange juice, remaining flat, rather than necessarily increasing. "Clothing was the only category to see an average fall in the index... (as) many consumers delayed wardrobe changes."

With office workers doing their jobs from home, consumer electronics saw the largest price rises on production shortages, the EIU added. —AFP



PARIS: A view shows the Eiffel Tower on its reopening day to the public following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak in France, on June 25, 2020. — Reuters

Business

Amid pandemic, big US retailers cash in as small business suffers

Walmart earnings are surging, Amazon expanding into pharmacies

WASHINGTON: Walmart earnings are surging, Amazon is expanding into pharmacies and Wall Street indices are hitting record highs, but data released yesterday shows traditional retailers struggling to keep up as the COVID-19 pandemic disrupts the US economy.

Nationwide retail sales grew by only 0.3 percent last month, the Commerce Department reported, much slower than in September and before the nationwide surge in coronavirus cases seen in recent weeks that has some states reimposing business restrictions.

It also augurs poorly for the overall economy, which seems bound to endure months of widespread COVID-19 infections without renewed aid from Congress, since lawmakers have not managed to bridge the months-long impasse over how much more to spend to help the country recover from the pandemic's damage. "This is consistent with a recovery that's positive but losing momentum and at risk of being knocked off track in the winter," Ernie Tedeschi of Evercore ISI said on Twitter of the data.

Yet even amid the retail sales slowdown, some businesses are still making money in the world's largest economy. Walmart's profits came in well above forecasts with a surge to \$5.1 billion — 56.2 percent more than the year-ago period-based largely on the strength of its online sales.

And Amazon unveiled plans yesterday to expand into the pharmacy business with an online service for US consumers who will be able to order prescription medications directly from its website or mobile app. That announcement poses "a meaningful threat to brick and mortar pharmacies," warned Northwestern University healthcare professor Craig Garthwaite.

"These retail pharmacies must now offer more

than just easy access to a prescription," he said.

The undisputed champion

Amazon's move swamped the share prices of major pharmacy chains but Wall Street has generally been a happy place during the gloom of the pandemic. Both the Dow Jones Industrial Average and the S&P 500 ended at record highs on Monday after the announcement of another successful coronavirus vaccine candidate, but financial markets are a world apart from the job losses and business shutdowns of the real economy.

"The surging stock market is great, but it doesn't add to the disposable income of a huge segment of the population. Wall Street is not Main Street," economist Joel Naroff said. Indeed, the Commerce Department data was full of bad news for the brick-and-mortar retailers that anchor shopping malls and draw visitors to downtowns. Most sectors saw sales decline in October, including department stores, which plunged 4.6 percent, while clothing and clothing accessories retailers fell 4.2 percent.

Food and drinking places, which were hard-hit by business shutdowns to stop the virus and are again facing new restrictions, fell 0.1 percent. "We may be seeing the end of the bounceback in retail sales after the huge dips from February through April now that consumers are growing more cautious, with saved stimulus money gone for many families, dwindling for others, and the prospect of COVID-19 vaccines still months away," Robert Frick of Navy Federal Credit Union said. However the data showed sales rising 3.1 percent at non-store retailers such as e-commerce websites, the undisputed champion of which is Amazon. Other industries benefited from spending priorities tweaked by the pandemic: building materials, gar-



NEW YORK: Nationwide retail sales grew by only 0.3 percent last month, the US Commerce Department reported, much slower than in September and before the nationwide surge in coronavirus cases seen in recent weeks that has some states reimposing business restrictions.

dening equipment and supply dealers saw 1.2 percent growth month-on-month and were up 19.5 percent for the year, fueled by booming home sales and construction.

And motor vehicles and parts dealers edged up 0.4 percent as more people purchased cars to cope with the risks of the pandemic.

The taps are closed

There were signs of progress elsewhere in the economy, with the Federal Reserve reporting a surprise acceleration in October industrial production,

which grew 1.1 percent. But there is plenty to complicate the outlook even for sectors that appear to be recovering. Besides states again imposing virus-containment measures that could disrupt business, Congress does not seem to want to open the taps again like it did earlier in the year, when it passed a \$2.2 trillion bill that gave money to the unemployed and small businesses. "The October sales numbers are old news, and the outlook for November and December, with the exception of online, is looking very uncertain," Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics warned. — AFP

Gulf Bank partners with X-cite to launch 'Blue Friday' offer

KUWAIT: In collaboration with X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, Gulf Bank is participating in the year's biggest online shopping experience, "Blue Friday" promotion. The promotion offers Gulf Bank customers an additional 10 percent discount on the total invoice for all discounted products when paying with Gulf Bank Credit and Prepaid cards on the X-cite by Alghanim Electronics website or app.

X-cite by Alghanim Electronics is set to launch the "Blue Friday" offer exclusively across its website and app starting November 18 in conjunction with global online sales and offers launched across electronic stores around the world. Gulf Bank has partnered with X-cite by Alghanim Electronics in previous years for "Blue Friday" and seeing the offer's demand and popularity among our customers, Gulf Bank is partnering again with the leading electronics retailer in Kuwait to grant its customers an additional discount across their favorite purchases.



Ahmad Al-Amir

The latest limited time offer from Gulf Bank gives Credit and Prepaid cardholders an additional 10 percent discount with a discount cap of KD 10 on the total invoice of any products included in the "Blue Friday" offer from X-cite by Alghanim Electronics. In addition to the "Blue Friday" offer and the 10 percent discount, cardholders will either receive up to 5 percent cashback when using their Gulf Bank's Cashback credit cards, or earn Gulf Bank Points that can be redeemed for flights and hotel booking. With Gulf Bank Easy Pay, Gulf Bank credit cardholders can pay for their new purchases in 12 months without any interest or transaction fees by selecting the "Gulf Bank Easy Pay" payment method at the time of checkout. For example, if the purchase costs KD 300, the customer has to pay KD 25 per month without paying any interest or fees. To get the discount, customers must use the first 6 digits of their card as the coupon code at time of checkout and choose "Gulf Bank Credit and Prepaid Offer" or "Gulf Bank Easy Pay" as the payment method.

Middle East, Levant, and Caucasus region, Bennet Stephens, said: "During these unprecedented times, when millions of people have been separated from their loved ones, Qatar Airways is working relentlessly to make sure families and friends are able to get together and celebrate this special festive season once again." Throughout 2020, Qatar Airways was the largest airline flying consistently throughout in order to fulfil its mission of taking people home as COVID-19 restricted global travel. As a result, Qatar Airways gained unrivalled experience in passenger safety. The airline ensures the highest levels of hygiene standards, recently including Honeywell's Ultraviolet (UV) cabin system, which can inactivate viruses and bacteria. Qatar Airways also provides Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for cabin crew and a complimentary protective kit and disposable face shields for passengers, who can be sure their journey is safe and seamless. To learn more about Qatar Airways stringent safety and hygiene protocols, visit qatarairways.com/safety.

Furthermore, Qatar Airways continues to apply its flexible booking policy, available for all tickets booked before 31 December 2020. Passengers can hold onto their tickets for two years, benefit from

and receive notifications of their purchases. It rivals similar products from gohenry and Monzo in Britain while in the US fintechs Greenlight, Step and Copper are trying to capture the youth market.

JPMorgan Chase & Co also recently entered the space, introducing a children's account in partnership with Greenlight. The companies say they aim to give children a taste of financial freedom and education, while letting parents track and block spending. They hope to capitalize on the digital payment and e-commerce boom, and hold on to new customers into adulthood.

"It's a play on profitability to get lifelong customers," said Kavita Kamdar, who heads JPMorgan's children's venture Chase First Banking. JPMorgan's partner Greenlight has grown from 500,000 to 2 million parent and children customers in a year.

"I think the startups are in a position to take junior accounts away from the high street banks," said Sarah Kocianski, head of research at fintech consultancy 11:FS. "But they have to strike a balance between being appealing to kids and appealing to parents and goodness knows how you do that."

Companies must also be careful in keeping data secure and ensure children and parents understand what they are giving consent to, Kocianski said.

The Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmad Al-Amir, encouraged Gulf Bank customers to take advantage of this offer, saying, "At Gulf Bank, we aim to grant our clients the opportunity to take full advantage of the best deals and greatest value offers around. In light of online retailers around the world celebrating this offers season, we have collaborated with X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, one of the most popular electronics retailers in Kuwait, to grant our customers an extra enjoyable shopping experience this week. We hope all our clients get to take full advantage of the offers to purchase their favorite products not only at lower prices, but with even more Gulf Bank benefits in return."

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank's Easy Pay program includes a thoughtfully chosen selection of customers' preferred shopping outlets, in accordance with their top brand picks and lifestyle aspirations. The process of enrolling any transaction at participating shopping outlets into Easy Pay is seamless. Customers can simply request Easy Pay at the merchant outlet prior to making their purchase, and do not need to submit any additional documents or call the bank. The cashier at the merchant outlet will then process the credit card transaction on the dedicated Easy Pay terminal, and the transaction will be automatically converted into Easy Pay.



unlimited date changes, or exchange their tickets for a future travel voucher with 10 percent extra value. Moreover, passengers whose travel plans were affected by factors outside their control can change their original destination anywhere to within the same continental region for Qatar Airways Privilege Club members or within the same country or a 500 mile radius in the same continental region for non-members. They can also swap their ticket for Qmiles or refund their ticket with no fees applied.



The Hibbs family poses for a selfie in a handout photo. While traditional banks have long offered basic savings accounts to children, fintechs say they have spotted an opportunity to offer better, slicker apps to tech-savvy kids and teenagers, who they say have been under-served.

Atlanta-based Greenlight, which costs \$4.99 a month including debit cards for up to five kids, allows parents to create in-app chore lists for children and tie the work to perks. It also lets parents set and pay interest on their children's savings. — Reuters

News in brief

Bitcoin breaches \$17,500 mark

LONDON: Bitcoin rallied yesterday for the second consecutive day, gaining \$1,500 to approach an all-time high in a market that is now ready to take on risk. In late European trading, the virtual currency was worth \$17,502 and was headed towards its record of \$19,041 reached in late 2017. Forex.com analyst Fawad Razaqzada said "There has been strong appetite for all risk assets, including cryptos, in the wake of extraordinary government and central bank stimulus measures to combat the negative impact of the pandemic." — AFP

Deutsche Boerse snaps up ISS

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German stock market operator Deutsche Boerse said yesterday it had bought around 80 percent of US investor advice firm Institutional Shareholder Services (ISS), valued at \$2.3 billion. The Frankfurt company will take over ISS in partnership with its current management and private equity firm Genstar capital, it said in a statement. ISS offers institutional investors recommendations on how to vote at annual general meetings of the companies whose shares they hold. It has a growing focus on companies' adherence to so-called environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) criteria. — AFP

Iceland makes fifth rate cut

COPENHAGEN: Iceland's central bank yesterday cut its key interest rate for the fifth time this year and said it expected the economy to contract by as much as 8.5 percent in 2020, its worst forecast yet. Like many other countries, Iceland saw its economy pick up during the summer as the government relaxed restrictions, but a second wave of COVID-19 has resulted in the economy flatlining in the second half of the year. "The autumn surge in COVID-19 cases and the tightened public health measures have weakened the economic rebound that began in Q3, following a historically large contraction in Q2," the bank said in a statement. — Reuters

France cuts 2021 growth forecast

PARIS: The French government cut its 2021 growth outlook yesterday, after a COVID-19 resurgence forced it to impose a new lockdown. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said the eurozone's second-biggest economy was now expected to rebound 6 percent next year, instead of the 8 percent expected before France's second lockdown. Le Maire told reporters on a conference call that he was sticking to a forecast for a contraction of 11 percent this year, even though the latest data suggested it might not be that bad. The INSEE official statistics agency estimated yesterday the French economy would pull back 9-10 percent this year, depending on how long the latest lockdown lasts. — Reuters

Qatar Airways helps passengers reconnect with family, friends

KUWAIT: Qatar Airways is making it possible for travellers to reconnect with their family and friends this winter season as they return home, visit friends or enjoy a new destination.

While the winter season is traditionally the time to travel and discover the world, this year families and friends who spent a long time separated from loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic will have an opportunity to come together and cherish memories for years to come. The national carrier of the State of Qatar is flying twice daily from Kuwait, offering more options and enhanced connectivity to the most popular destinations in Europe, the United States, and South East Asia via Hamad International Airport - the Best Airport in the Middle East.

Qatar Airways Vice President of Sales for Gulf,

Cash cards for kids: Digital banks race to capture next gen

LONDON: When John Hibbs' daughter Xanthe received her first bank card in the mail, the six-year-old spent the next week Googling how to buy a horse. Hibbs and his wife Kate had got Xanthe a newly launched children's debit card from UK digital bank Starling, one of a number of new offerings from fintechs aimed at children and teenagers.

"The earlier we can start the learning process of using a card, the earlier she can learn that you can't just go out and buy a horse," said Hibbs, who runs a charity. While traditional banks have long offered basic savings accounts to children, fintechs say they have spotted an opportunity to offer better, slicker apps to tech-savvy kids and teenagers, who they say have been under-served.

Starling's Kite card allows parents to transfer money to their children's account, set spending limits

Business

Al-Sayer brings advanced Toyota air care service for cleaner cabin air, healthier drive

All new air-con cleaning technology powered by specialized machine and technician

KUWAIT: To offer customer a cleaner cabin environment and a healthier drive, Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons has announced the launch of Air Care, only available at Toyota Service Centers. Air Care is a revolutionary air-con cleaning technology jointly introduced in Kuwait by Al-Sayer Group Service and Spare Parts division.

A breath of fresh air for every journey

The automated maintenance service utilizes the Toyota Air Care machine with a unique cleaning solution to remove bacteria, mold and impurities settled in the evaporator coil. The new technology also prevents the inconvenience to the customers from low cooling or expensive repair cost, if the car air conditioner is left unclean for long period.

Evaporator is responsible for cooling the vehicle's cabin air. Some of the benefits for customers with Air Care Service includes:

- Get rid of germs, fungus and bacteria which may lead to allergy and unpleasant odors
- Optimize air-con cooling performance
- Fresher and cleaner air inside the vehicle
- Enhances the life of air-con evaporator



Unique Toyota Patented Technology: Toyota believes that improving quality standards and performance requires innovation and advanced technology.

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Air Care Machine is fully developed by Toyota and the USP's are:

- Air Care service uses special cleaning agent and tools to clean your vehicle's air conditioner.
- It uses robotic technology which eliminates the need to dismantle the dashboard.
- Air care takes only one hour to perform compared to the others which takes longer hours.

Genuine service quality from Toyota

to the others which takes longer hours.

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Toyota Air Care is now available at all Al-Sayer Care Centers, for optimal performance it is recommended at every 30,000 KMS or 12 months (whichever comes first). Book an appointment with



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Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer continues to guarantee highest customer satisfaction with genuine parts

and quality service. Al-Sayer Toyota operates 17 parts outlets and 6 service centers across Kuwait offering best in town convenience for customers.

X-cite's Super Blue Friday & year-end sale just started!

KUWAIT: With the beginning of November and the end of year's celebrations being just around the corner, X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, Kuwait's largest electronic retailer, announced the return of its super year-end sale and Blue Friday offers with discounts and gift coupons on thousands of electronics and home appliances. Today, X-cite's exceptional offerings are back just in time to perfectly celebrate the festive season and the end of the year, allowing customers to take advantage of unique prices and own state-of-the-art products, while enjoying an exclusive and rewarding shopping experience. X-cite will be throwing many surprises at those seeking to keep up the tempo with the latest electronic releases, including the launch of the four all-new Apple iPhones: the iPhone 12 Mini, iPhone 12, iPhone 12 Pro and iPhone 12 Pro Max, in addition to the all-new Xbox Series X from Microsoft and the latest Sony's PlayStation 5. Some of the major brands with huge savings at X-cite include Wansa, EQ, Apple, Philips, Panasonic, Samsung, Beko, Huawei, Microsoft and Nikon.

Buying electronics from X-cite throughout the

sales period just got easier with the Easy Credit program providing customers with the ability to pay for their purchases through easy and flexible monthly installments, whether online or in showrooms, starting at an affordable payment of KD 5 per month.

Whether you are shopping for a new TV, laptop, digital camera, or any other electronic device, drop by any of X-cite's 42 showrooms to benefit from their Blue Friday offers valid until the end of November and the super year-end sale running until December 31st. The super year-end sale includes as well daily exclusive offers to be announced on the company's social media channels. Additionally, purchases are made easier with X-cite's Easy Credit program offering customers instant credit discounts.

Through its customer-centric concept, X-cite offers customers competitive quality and prices to serve every segment, providing them with the highest level of service, engaging with them, and earning their trust through supporting services and offerings. X-cite also enables customers to shop from the comfort of their homes through its free mobile app and shopping website at www.xcite.com.

X-cite has established itself as a leading brand in providing the latest products to customers as it continues to build strong relations with international brands in the electronics sector. Continuously seeking to satisfy the needs of its customers, X-cite provides them with diverse services that enable cus-



tomers to experience products and interact with them, and the service of buy online and pick the product in store, whether in their 42 showrooms or through the website, designed to make online shopping a fast and easy experience. X-cite also offers premium maintenance and purchase services at most of its major showrooms throughout Kuwait and other services such as free delivery and X-care packages.

To stay updated on the latest events, monthly promotions and offers, subscribe to the daily newsletter on xcite.com, follow X-cite's social media channels on Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat, @xcitealghanim, or Facebook, XcitebyAlghanim, or visit the online store at www.xcite.com



A worker pours hot metal at the Kirsh Foundry in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, US. —Reuters

US manufacturing is booming-but not for these guys

NEW YORK: Jim Kirsh initially thought his family-owned foundry in southeastern Wisconsin might stay busy during the pandemic. Kirsh Foundry Inc, a cluster of buildings nestled in Beaver Dam, a city of 16,000 about an hour's drive from Milwaukee, entered the year with a bulging order book, thanks in part to a big customer bringing casting work back from China.

This was quickly followed by an urgent call to make parts for a ventilator being built by General Electric Co in response to the coronavirus. By summer, however, business started to dry up. Today it remains depressed, emblematic of a US manufacturing economy that, for all its apparent resilience, has notable pockets of weakness. Broad measures of manufacturing activity, such as the Institute for Supply Management's purchasing managers' index, suggest the sector has snapped back from the springtime slump delivered by COVID-19. But the revival is uneven. The Federal Reserve reported Tuesday that while output by consumer goods producers has largely recovered to pre-pandemic levels, those who make things for other businesses have not.

Indeed, some US factories are booming, and there are even shortages of some popular consumer goods. Americans stuck at home or hesitant to get on airplanes are snapping up trucks, appliances, recreational vehicles and boats. But a large swath of the US industrial economy consists of companies like Kirsh's - which sell goods to other companies - and many of those firms remain crimped by soft demand.

Caterpillar Inc, seen as an economy bellwether, reported sales fell by at least 20 percent in its three main businesses in the latest quarter, while 3M Co reported sales down in half of its business lines compared with a year ago. Aerospace giant Boeing Co is mired in a deep slump.

A new surge of COVID-19 across the Upper Midwest, where many of these companies have large operations, is the latest challenge. If officials move to curb economic activity again to halt the spread of the virus, it would prolong the downturn for equipment makers and others dependent on strong business spending. "At this point, I'm just figuring all of 2021 will be awful, regardless of who's the president," said Kirsh, whose grandfather founded the business in 1937 amid the Great Depression.

'Open-ended' downturn

There are few more basic industries than foundries. These factories, which produce metal castings, are a good gauge for the health of the larger manufacturing sector. Nine out of every 10 durable goods contain metal castings, which are made by pouring liquid metal into forms to create parts that are then trimmed and polished before they move on to other factories. While castings are found in many consumer goods, including cars and washing machines, a core use is metal parts that go into things like bulldozers, cranes and airplanes. —Reuters

Huawei Watch GT 2 Pro Moon Phase collection now available in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The Huawei Watch GT 2 Pro Moon Phase Collection, is now available across Huawei e-commerce platforms and certified retailers for a price Start from KD 79.900. Bringing together the classic watch aesthetic looks for a regal finish, 2 weeks battery life and advanced health and fitness tracking features.

Boasting a luxurious Moon Phase Collection, the latest smartwatch from Huawei brings to users a unique combination of classic watch design ethos and smartwatch technology. Not only does it add a touch of elegance, but the Moon Phase Collection is also functional, bringing 8 moon phases, tide times, constellations and more all in one dial. Complementing this royal feature is the Huawei Watch GT 2 Pro Moon Phase Collection's minimalist and robust body that uses high-end materials such as titanium for the watch body, ceramic for the back and sapphire for the 1.39 inch amoled Display, all of them carefully chosen for its premium finish and

tough durability. Customization is also available with over 200 watch faces to choose from. Users are also given the option to create their own watch faces with the help of the One Hop feature that allows them to use images from their gallery by simply tapping their Huawei smartphone on the watch.

The Huawei Watch GT 2 Pro Moon Phase Collection also boasts a massive two-week battery life even with everyday normal use with health and fitness tracking features on.

In terms of health monitoring, Huawei has significantly improved its health tracking capabilities on the Huawei Watch GT 2 Pro Moon Phase Collection with an upgraded Huawei TruSeen 4.0+ heart rate monitoring technology for real time heart rate monitoring. Additionally, the smartwatch also tracks blood oxygen levels (SpO2) and takes care of sleep tracking with Huawei TruSleep 2.0. Stress management is monitored with Huawei TruRelax technology as well. In terms of fitness tracking, the Huawei Watch GT 2 Pro Moon Phase Collection packs in more than a 100 workout modes along with 10 pre-installed runner training courses and premium sports like Golf and Skiing. On top of this, the Huawei watch GT 2 Pro Moon Phase Collection is water resistant up to 5ATM.

The Huawei Watch GT 2 Pro Moon Phase Collection also brings to the table a wide range of smart everyday features which includes Bluetooth calling, music playback and even a remote shutter and Find my Phone features. Meta Description: The Huawei Watch GT 2 Pro Moon Phase Collection is



now available for a price starting from KD 79.900 across Huawei e-commerce platforms and certified retail stores.

Sudan banks take first steps to end decades of isolation

CAIRO: Sudanese banks have started moves to re-establish relations with foreign banks as the United States prepares to remove Sudan from its state sponsor of terrorism (SSOT) list, although bankers and analysts say the process will likely be slow. Restoring international banking links could provide a vital boost to an economy still in crisis more than 18 months into a political transition following the overthrow of former president Omar Al-Bashir.

Banks have been blocked from correspondence relationships involving US dollars and have had difficulty dealing in other major currencies for nearly two decades, forcing them to rely mainly on the United Arab Emirates dirham for transactions. Importers have depended

on expensive brokers, mainly in Dubai, to source foreign currency, passing on the extra cost to local consumers and helping to exacerbate inflation, now running at 220 percent.

On Oct 27, Albaraka Bank Sudan completed Sudan's first dollar-denominated cash transfer in years, bringing in dollars sourced in New York through its Cairo-based sister bank Albaraka Bank Egypt, its general manager said. The transfer, for a Sudanese trading company, was the first in almost two decades, Elrasheed Abdel Rahman Ali said. "I think from the early years of the 2000s," he told Reuters.

Most major foreign banks began gradually pulling out in the 2000s as the United States cracked down on transac-



KHARTOUM: People queue to withdraw money from an automated teller machine in Khartoum, Sudan. —Reuters

tions with Khartoum. Washington formally lifted economic sanctions against Sudan in 2017, but continued to classify

the country as a state sponsor of terrorism, in part because of its suppression of a rebellion in Darfur. —AFP

Classifieds

Thursday, November 19, 2020

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 10 - 35 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Rather cold with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 30 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 18/11/2020 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	25 °C	19 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	26 °C	17 °C			
ABDALY	26 °C	13 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	26 °C	17 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	24 °C	20 °C			
AHMADI	- °C	- °C			
NUWAISIB	26 °C	18 °C			
WAFRA	25 °C	15 °C			
SALMY	24 °C	13 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	11/19	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	25 °C	16 °C	NW-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Friday	11/20	Partly cloudy with a chance for rising dust	28 °C	18 °C	SE	15 - 45 km/h
Saturday	11/21	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rising dust with a chance for rain that might be	31 °C	19 °C	SE-NW	25 - 55 km/h
Sunday	11/22	Partly cloudy	27 °C	19 °C	NW	10 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:53
Sunrise	06:15
Zuhr	11:33
Asr	14:32
Sunset	16:52
Isha	18:12

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	27 °C
MIN. Temp.	19 °C
MAX. RH	85 %
MIN. RH	42 %
MAX. Wind	N 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP:0

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Cyrus Louis Brittu**, holder of Indian Passport No. N9723703 presently residing in Kuwait, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: **Cyrius Louis** and surname: **Britto**.
(C 5816) 19-11-2020

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EMBASSY OF INDIA

INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR THE POST OF CHAUFFEUR:

- Minimum Qualifications : School Certificate.
- Age limit : 35 years on 01.11.2020
- Minimum five years driving experience and knowledge of various roads in Kuwait.
- Valid residency (transferable) and driving license of Kuwait
- Knowledge of Arabic language essential.

Interested candidates may send their applications by e-mail with bio-data by 30th November 2020 to Second Secretary(Admin), Embassy of India, P.O. Box No.1450 Safat 13015, Kuwait.

E-mail: chauffeurrecruitmentemb@gmail.com

Hospitals

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

Airlines

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

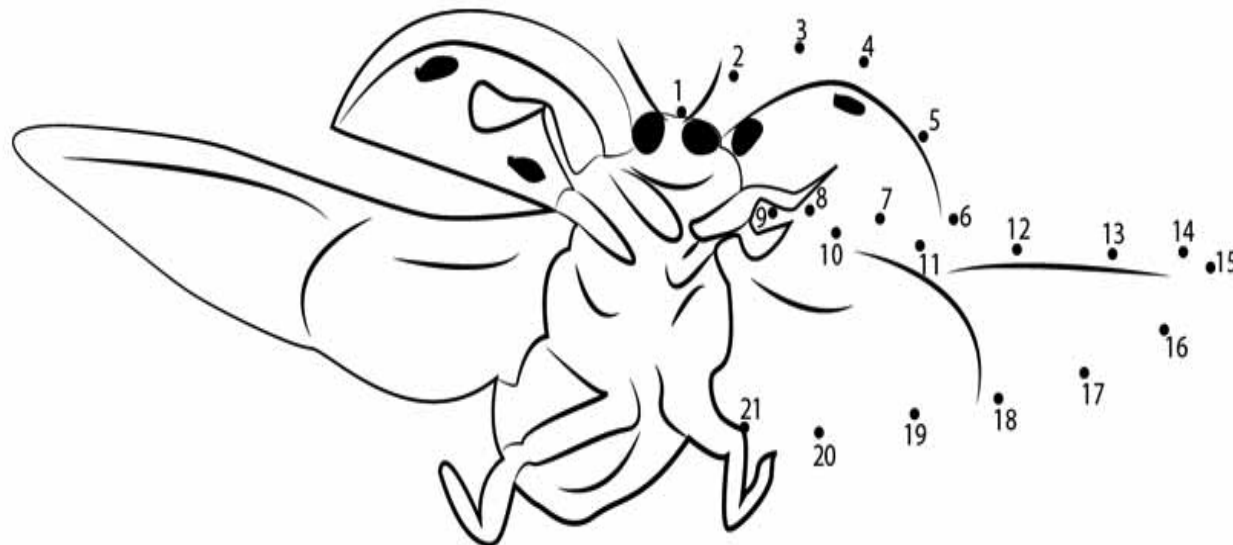
Word Search

Football Terms Word Search



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| BACKFIELD | FIELD GOAL | INTERCEPTION | RUSHING |
| CENTER | FULLBACK | KICKOFF | SACK |
| CORNERBACK | FUMBLE | LINEBACKER | SAFETY |
| DOWN | GUARD | OFFENSIVE LINE | SNAP |
| DRIVE | HALFBACK | PUNT | SPECIAL TEAMS |
| END ZONE | HAND OFF | QUARTERBACK | TACKLE |
| EXTRA POINT | HUDDLE | RED ZONE | TIGHT END |
| FAIR CATCH | INCOMPLETION | RETURN | WIDE RECEIVER |

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

<p>Aries (March 21-April 19) You can never be anyone other than who you are, Aries! That's the way it is, and you can't change it. Other members of your family may have dreamed of getting free of a duty or a moral lesson, but these dreams don't apply to you. Your dreams of being someone else are like phantoms that have come back to haunt you. Simply brush them away!</p>	<p>Cancer (June 21-July 22) The day ahead won't be easy, Cancer. A glimpse at your love life reveals that you will be bridling at certain inhibitions. You long for peace and stability, and at the moment everything is in suspense. Use the day ahead to gain some perspective on the situation. Until the ice melts and the flow of events resumes, why not devote your energy to some other endeavor?</p>	<p>Libra (September 23-October 22) Deep inside, don't you have an urge to breathe new spirit into your love life? Of course, some things are more easily said than done. Currently, you don't have much time to devote to yourself, much less your partner. Affection could thrive if given half a chance. The day suggests that you commit yourself to making some decisions that will help bring you and your mate closer.</p>	<p>Capricorn (December 22-January 19) People are going to think you're a star today, Capricorn! Although you may not feel that way about yourself. What's gotten into you lately? Have you lost confidence in yourself? Are you now compensating for it? Do you feel a need for more success in your life? All this is possible, but you will have to take some risks if you're going to progress.</p>
<p>Taurus (April 20-May 20) The day ahead may bring a storm of individualism and independence. You usually tolerate the quirks and minor shortcomings of your friends or family members, but today they present real obstacles to your relationships. The only way to remedy the situation is to go on vacation. Spending some time alone will keep you out of trouble.</p>	<p>Leo (July 23-August 22) Lately, you've been nursing a feeling that your partner is inattentive. The tension has been building up and today, Leo, you're likely to boil over with the rage that comes from one too many doubts and suspicions. The forecast for love is stormy, without a doubt. But making up after the quarrel promises to be lots of fun.</p>	<p>Scorpio (October 23-November 21) It's time to get what you need, Scorpio. Your desires don't always go in a direction that does you the most good, and this can cause tension. You feel as though it's impossible to combine your desires with what is good for you, notably in your love life. You wrestle with whether you should remain in your "creative" cave or share your life with someone. It doesn't have to be one or the other.</p>	<p>Aquarius (January 20- February 18) Stop asking if you're gifted, Aquarius. This definitely isn't the time for such questions. Now is the time to work on something concrete. You will need the help of others if you're to succeed, so get to work convincing them to ally with you. You may have to reveal more of yourself than you normally do in order to sway people to your side. It's time to get out of your hole and take action!</p>
<p>Gemini (May 21-June 20) If you want to make the best of the day ahead, Gemini, try to convince your team or family to work together. This is tricky to do, what with everyone's schedule being so demanding right now. Hard as it is to coordinate their efforts and orchestrate harmony, the strength of your character and your team spirit will make it all work out.</p>	<p>Virgo (August 23-September 22) Some days it's better to be on vacation! That's what you're liable to think today. All your projects are mired in quicksand, and you feel like you're spinning your wheels. But even if things are momentarily stuck, don't lose faith. Your inner self is gaining stability. When the time is right, it will be strong and reliable.</p>	<p>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21) Take cover, Sagittarius, because today promises to be an emotional roller coaster! Something seems to be askew with your relationships, and you feel torn in opposite directions. One force is pushing you to enrich your inner universe and another force is pushing you into the arms of someone you've recently met. Stay busy to avoid confrontation.</p>	<p>Pisces (February 19-March 20) A partner for life or a brief encounter, which will it be? This is today's question. Why not choose both? Can you imagine being your partner's lover while keeping your independence? Don't be influenced by old models that force you to choose between these two ideas. Don't forget that in our modern world, your choices aren't as limited as you might think!</p>

Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo Lil Wayne performs onstage at the 2019 Governors Ball Music Festival on Randall's Island in New York City. — AFP

RAPPER LIL WAYNE FACES FEDERAL GUN CHARGE IN FLORIDA

US rapper Lil Wayne was charged Tuesday in Florida with possession of a firearm by a convicted felon over an incident dating back to last year—a federal offense that could see him sentenced to up to 10 years in prison. The 38-year-old artist, whose real name is Dwayne Michael Carter Jr., was found to

be carrying a gun and bullets when police searched a private plane in Miami in December last year. The Miami Herald reported that Lil Wayne—who has a home in south Florida—admitted the gold-plated pistol found in his luggage was his.

He told police the weapon had been given to him as a Father's Day gift.

Police also found what was believed to be cocaine, marijuana, ecstasy, heroin, painkillers and more than \$25,000 in cash, the newspaper said. But the sole federal weapons charge filed in federal court in Miami stems from the fact that Lil Wayne was convicted more than a decade ago on a separate firearms

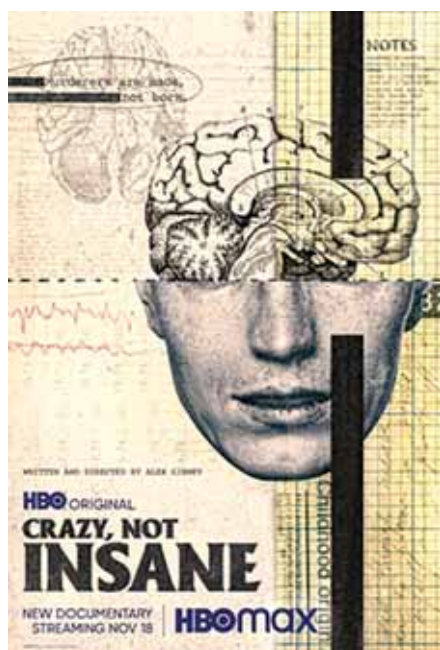
charge. Convicted felons are barred from owning firearms under federal law. The five-time Grammy winner—who recently made headlines for meeting with and voicing support for President Donald Trump—is next due in court on December 11. — AFP

Serial killer specialist 'appalled' by US executions in a new film

Next month, Lisa Montgomery, who strangled a pregnant woman and hacked the unborn child from her womb with a kitchen knife, is due to become the first female executed by the US government in 67 years. The lethal injection was scheduled after President Donald Trump's administration resumed federal executions this summer, and comes after jurors rejected Montgomery's insanity plea despite a law requiring convicts facing death to be mentally competent.

But the controversy over capital punishment and mental illness spans decades, and it is at the heart of new HBO documentary "Crazy, Not Insane," out yesterday, which follows the career of famed psychiatrist Dorothy Otnow Lewis. Lewis, who specializes in serial killers and has interviewed many of the United States' most depraved and notorious murderers from Ted Bundy to Mark David Chapman, told AFP she is "appalled" by the decision to execute Montgomery. "You don't have to be a psychiatrist to know that that woman is mentally very, very disturbed," said Lewis. "I mean, that is such a psychotic piece of behavior."

"Of all cases, to decide you're going to execute someone who, on the face of it, is mad... I don't understand, where does this incredible lust for blood come from?" Having interviewed 22 serial killers, and set up a clinic for juvenile offenders, Lewis argues in the film that disorders leading to violence and murder usually stem from horrific childhood abuse and neurological defects rather than "innate" evil. Indeed, Montgomery's lawyers cited her history of childhood sexual abuse and head injuries.



'Radical empathy'

The film profiles multiple serial killers, concluding with Lewis's most infamous patient - Bundy, who confessed to at least 30 rapes and murders that terrorized the United States during the 1970s, and has come to represent the paradigm of pure evil. While Bundy claimed to have had a perfectly normal and happy childhood, Lewis now believes Bundy suffered from dissociative identity disorder (DID) - or multiple personality disorder - linked to a violent upbringing by his grandfather, Sam.

In the movie, she presents as evidence love letters that Bundy signed "Sam" - DID sufferers often take on the

persona of their abusers as a form of self-protection, she argues. "Dorothy isn't saying that we shouldn't protect society from people like this, who may be unable to control their ability to lash out and to commit violent acts or murder," the film's Oscar-winning director Alex Gibney said. "She's simply saying that you're looking in the wrong place, if you're trying to understand this notion of evil of somebody just deciding one day to do something nasty and bad for fun." "I do think it's important, the radical empathy that Dorothy is engaging in, because it's based in scientific theory," he added.

'Revenge'

President-elect Joe Biden has pledged to scrap the death penalty at the federal level, and incentivize states to do the same—but any such move is likely to come too late for Montgomery. For Gibney, the decision to carry out federal executions has become a "potent political weapon" that is capable of "appealing to voters' basest instincts." Pointing to executions and mass incarcerations authorized by Bill Clinton, Gibney emphasized that this tool is not unique to Trump, but noted the president's long history of support for the death penalty. "Donald Trump lost this election, but he got 70 million votes," Gibney said. "And so much of what his political posture is, it doesn't revolve around policy - it revolves around the ability to marshal a sense of anger and vitriol and revenge." — AFP



UK's Johnson reveals love of Asterix as he backs reading drive

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has revealed his childhood love of French cartoon Asterix with its "magic potion and eating whole boars" as he backed football star Marcus Rashford's literacy campaign. "Well done, Marcus, on your fantastic initiative," Johnson said in comments to the Sun newspaper published yesterday. "I read everything but I loved Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Tintin and especially Asterix - the magic potion and eating whole boars and the tiny Romanosceptic village holding out against the Empire." "It's fantastic that Marcus Rashford is shining a light on the power that books have."

Johnson's choice of Asterix, about a small Gaulish warrior whose village holds out against Roman occupation, comes as Britain is locked in talks with the European Union. London's stubborn resistance to EU pressure is likely to draw comparisons to the popular cartoon series. Rashford has already scored a massive victory after twice forcing the government to climb down

and commit to providing school dinners for children of poorer families during holidays. The Manchester United and England forward launched his new campaign to encourage children to read on Tuesday, but has the government onside this time around. "I only started reading at 17, and it completely changed my outlook and mentality," the 23-year-old striker said.

"I just wish I was offered the opportunity to really engage with reading more as a child, but books were never a thing we could budget for as a family when we needed to put food on the table." Rashford has teamed up with the publisher Macmillan Children's Books to launch a series of youth-oriented titles, starting with "YOU ARE A CHAMPION" in May 2021. Macmillan said each chapter will recap a story from Rashford's own life and will cover topics such as the value of education, understanding culture, and female role models. — AFP



Harry Styles



Harry Styles' viral JW Anderson cardigan to be immortalized at Victoria and Albert Museum

Harry Styles' patchwork JW Anderson cardigan is set to be immortalized at London's Victoria and Albert Museum. The 'Watermelon Sugar' hitmaker's knitwear sparked the viral TikTok challenge #HarryStylesCardigan after fans saw pictures of the pop star wearing it to rehearsals for his appearance on the 'Today' show in February. And now the museum has requested the DIY piece for their permanent collection as an example of how the fashion world is adapting to become more eco-friendly. JW Anderson owner Jonathan Anderson even shared a pattern for the multi-coloured knit after it sparked a frenzy online. He announced on Instagram in July "A gift from Jonathan to all our TikTok Cardigan fans: 'I am so impressed and incredibly humbled by this trend and everyone knitting the cardigan. I really wanted to show our appreciation so we are sharing the pattern with everyone."

Keep it up!" x - Jonathan @Jonathan.anderson Pattern available for download at link in bio. (sic)" Meanwhile, Harry was just named the first-ever male celebrity to top Lyst's Power Dressers list. The 26-year-old singer - who recently

rocked a ball gown in Vogue magazine - came out on top in the annual 'Year in Fashion 2020' report, which records the biggest fashion moments, influential celebrities and brands of the year. The One Direction star is joined by Beyoncé, Kim Namjoon (RM) of BTS, American politician Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, rapper Travis Scott, 'Normal People' hunk Paul Mescal, pop megastar Lizzo, social media star Charli D'Amelio, Britain's Duchess of Cambridge and Italian influencer Chiara Ferragni in the global fashion shopping platform's top 10. Lyst used 100 million search, sales and social media metrics from the site to land the results. And they found that after Harry released his latest single, 'Golden', searches for blue and turquoise blazers, similar to his in the music video, increased 52 per cent on Lyst, while searches for yellow bucket hats like the one he wore spiked by 92 per cent. That's not all, the JW Anderson cardigan saw searches for the piece soar by 166 per cent. — BangShowbiz

SELENA GOMEZ SAYS MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES HAVE MADE HER STRONGER

Selena Gomez thinks her mental health journey has made her stronger. The 28-year-old star has previously undergone treatment for anxiety and depression, and she feels like those experiences have made her more resilient. She shared: "I feel like being able to just be myself is something really hard, and I've had to work on that. 'I used to be terrified about creating my own stuff. Now when I'm on set, on a movie or TV show, or working on music, I feel like just being myself is such a gift. 'Once I started doing it and saw the rewards afterwards, I thought, 'Oh, I made that decision, and I'm really glad!' I feel more free when I'm just myself."

Selena is also glad that she's been so open about her mental health struggles. She told The Newsette: "I'm not ashamed. I feel better, and I feel like I can understand a lot of things now." The brunette beauty - who previously dated the likes of Justin Bieber and The Weeknd - thinks her personal problems have made the success of 'Rare', her most-recent album, even sweeter. She said: "None of what I'm doing now would have stemmed from the mindset I had before. 'My best stuff is happening now. And then the greatest thing ever in my music was 'Lose You to Love Me' ... I remember I had a moment where I couldn't believe it, because the first and second day, the reactions were crazy, and I remember I smiled and I was like, 'That's why it's worth it. All of these years of confusion and being in love, and all of this stuff ... and it was finally a clean slate.' "And it wasn't even because everyone liked it; it was just a realization of why I went through everything I went through." — BangShowbiz



Spears jets out to Hawaii for early birthday getaway with boyfriend

Britney Spears has jetted out to Hawaii for an early birthday getaway with her boyfriend Sam Asghari. The 'Piece of Me' hitmaker and her longtime partner took a private jet to the island of Maui to celebrate the 38-year-old pop star's upcoming 39th birthday on December 2. Alongside a snap of the couple standing in front of the plane, Britney wrote on Instagram: "Felt like a little trip to paradise for an early birthday celebration !!!!!!! @samasghari (sic)" Once onboard, the pair tucked into platters of fresh fruit and broccoli. The 'Lucky' singer added underneath snaps of the fruit: "I'm doing that whole work on yourself thing at the moment !!! PS ... I wanted to get creative !!! (sic)" And once they arrived, Britney shared two selfies of the pair, and captioned the post: "We be like in Maui !!!! PS don't mind my hair !!!! (sic)" The break comes after the mother-of-two lost her bid to stop her father's control of her estate. The 'Toxic' hitmaker recently filed new documents via her lawyer which asked the courts to strip her father, Jamie Spears, from his position as co-conservator, as she no longer wants him in control of her life and career. A source claimed Britney - who has been under a conservatorship since her 2008 breakdown - doesn't want her father involved in making her decisions, because he has "always had a tendency" to ignore her requests.

The insider said: "She feels like he has no respect for her wishes. It's a sad situation. Jamie has always had a tendency to shut down Britney's requests without any discussion." During a court hearing last week, a judge declined to suspend Jamie from his role in her conservatorship, but said she would consider future petitions for his suspension or removal. And during the hearing, Britney's lawyer, Samuel D. Ingham III, claimed the



Britney Spears and Sam Asghari

"Slumber Party" singer is "afraid" of her dad, and doesn't want to step foot on stage until he has been ousted from his role as conservator. He said: "My client has informed me that she is afraid of her father. She also stated that she will not perform as long as her father is in charge of her career. We are really at a crossroads." In response, one of Jamie's lawyers, Vivian Lee Thoreen, reportedly accused Samuel of preventing Britney from speaking to Jamie. In Britney's original request to have her dad removed from his role, it was claimed she wanted the Bessemer Trust Company, who currently jointly hold the position, to become the sole conservator of her finances. The 'Gimme More' singer - who has sons Sean, 15, and Jayden, 14, with ex-husband Kevin Federline - had requested earlier this year to have Jamie removed as sole conservator of her business affairs, but was fine to have him stay on as co-conservator, but she now wants his involvement removed entirely. — BangShowbiz

Lifestyle | Features



The first female Palestinian taxi driver in the Gaza Strip, Nayla Abu Jubbah, 39, drives a client, in Gaza City. — AFP photos



The first female Palestinian taxi driver in the Gaza Strip, Nayla Abu Jubbah, sits at her vehicle as she works in Gaza City.



A client enter the vehicle of the first female Palestinian taxi driver in the Gaza Strip, Nayla Abu Jubbah.



Nayla Abu Jubbah, prepares coffee before starting her work.

Meet Gaza's first woman taxi driver

Palestinian mother-of-five Nayla Abu Jubbah launched a small revolution this week by becoming the first female taxi driver in the deeply conservative Gaza Strip. In the impoverished Palestinian territory, women have the same legal rights as men to drive a vehicle, but in practice the trade of taxi driver has been exclusively male-until now. "One day I was talking with a friend who works as a hairdresser and I said to her: 'What would you say if we started a taxi service for women?' She said it was a crazy idea," the 39-year-old told AFP.

The Israeli-blockaded territory was suffering 50 percent unemployment even before the Covid-19 pandemic. After drinking a steaming cup of tea in her home, the social work graduate in a headscarf puts on a face mask and marches to her car parked outside. After slotting her smartphone into its holder and giving a toot on the horn for show, she starts the engine and is off on the roads of Gaza, where the Islamist Hamas movement has ruled for more than 13 years.

Freedom

Abu Jubbah does not cruise the streets for fares, taking only advance bookings. "I leave my home and I will pick up my clients, to bring them for example from the hairdressing salon to a wedding," she says. She bought the vehicle with her inheritance when her father died. "I said to myself one day



The first female Palestinian taxi driver in the Gaza Strip, Nayla Abu Jubbah, 39, opens her vehicle as she works in Gaza City.

that I needed to take advantage of the car, to put it to work," she said. "Hence the project of a taxi service entirely for women, to put them at ease." Today she is driving through the streets of Gaza City to pick up 27-year-old Aya Saleem for a shopping trip. "We live in a conservative society. So when I saw that there was a taxi company especially for women... I felt a kind of freedom," says Saleem. She wears a long brown tunic, beige headscarf and a pale blue mask and carries a stylish bag.

"When I'm with a woman, I feel comfortable... I feel freer and then we can

talk," she says, adding that women's taxi services are in line with sharia, the Islamic code which Hamas promotes in the Gaza Strip. Saleem is delighted with the idea and hopes to see more female taxi drivers on Gaza's roads soon. Abu Jubbah says she wants to expand her business. "A woman called me recently to tell me that she wanted to work as a taxi driver by my side," she said. "I told her that we would talk again but I already have the feeling that the project will gain momentum." — AFP

Global streaming giants blow dust off Mideast music business

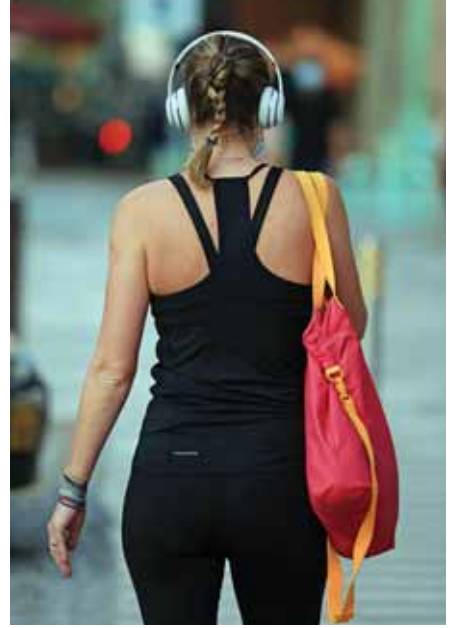
The Arab music industry-plagued by rampant piracy, free YouTube clips and dated channels-is the new target for global streaming giants intent on bringing the outmoded business into the digital era. After their successes in Europe and the Americas, online platforms are looking to invest in emerging markets in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and capture their large populations of hyper-connected youth. In a region plagued by political turmoil and economic crises, streaming giant Spotify is hoping to blow the dust off a Mideast business that has failed to keep up in a world of paid-for digital content. "We arrived with a fully Arabic service, localized playlists and a local team," Claudius Boller, Spotify's Middle East and Africa managing director, told AFP. "We are only just getting started."

Global streaming revenues grew by 22.9 percent to \$11.4 billion in 2019, accounting for more than half of recorded music business for the first time, according to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry. But after its heyday in the 1990s and 2000s, the Arab pop music industry has declined over the past decade in the upheaval that followed the Arab Spring anti-government uprisings.

Demand for homegrown artists

Spotify, which launched in the Middle East in 2018, says it wants to change that by giving regional talent the opportunity for global exposure on its platform. "We came to the region to introduce a service that is not just an addition to MENA but truly adds value by elevating regional music streaming," Boller said. "Today, Arabic music and artists are being showcased to the world and discovered through Spotify," he added, citing a billboard in New York's Times Square that featured Egyptian actor and rapper Mohamed Ramadan. International hip-hop is the most popular genre on Spotify in the region, but the most sought-after artists are all homegrown-including Kuwaiti rapper Queen G, Egypt's Marwan Moussa and Morocco's Stormy.

Boller said the Swedish music giant's growth in the Middle East has been "phenomenal", but declined to give figures. French streaming service Deezer took a bold approach in 2018 with the signing of an exclusive agreement with Rotana, the Arab world's largest record label, owned by businessman and Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal. But Rotana, founded in the '80s and with little digital presence beyond YouTube and an outdated website, has been quickly losing momentum with the departure of many of its top artists. At the time of the signing, Rotana's managing director Salem al-Hendi said there would undoubtedly be a "return of revenues", but two years later, the company has failed to acquire



A woman in headphones walks at Dubai's Jumeirah Beach Residence.

notable new stars or increase production. Neither Deezer nor Rotana responded to AFP's request for comment.

'Mutual ignorance'

Pierre France, a researcher at the Orient Institut Beirut who studies the industry, said that "mutual ignorance" makes cracking the Middle East a tall order. "It is a fool's game because the Arab market is not very well-known," he told AFP. Some streaming services thought they were striking gold, only to realize they were dealing with an industry that is "ageing", "disorganized" and "lacking vision", he said. On the local side, there is "a fantasy" about tapping into the international market, but with little knowledge of what it wants to hear, he added.

Lebanese music streaming platform Anghami, which is popular in the Middle East thanks to its firm understanding of regional tastes and culture, said musicians and labels needed to embrace new technology and paid-for platforms. "Most artists still prefer releasing their tracks on YouTube for free, rather than putting them behind a paywall," said Arun Sajjan, Anghami head of licensing. "There's a clear difference in how the free users listen to Arabic music more than the paid users across the region." Anghami still depends on mobile operator subscribers to reach its paid users, as its customers aren't comfortable with credit cards as a payment choice. "The challenges we face are manifold-the region is constantly in turmoil, and users are still not ready to consider paying for premium services to listen to music," he said. — AFP

Churchill whisky painting fetches almost £1 million

A rare painting by Winston Churchill featuring the famously bibulous British World War II leader's favorite brand of whisky fetched nearly £1 million at auction in London on Tuesday. The 1930s oil painting, of a bottle of Johnny Walker's Black label whisky and a bottle of brandy with a jug and glasses, sparked a bidding battle before it sold for £983,000 (\$1.3 million,

1.1 million euros). The sale, at a Sotheby's online auction of modern and post-war British art, was around five times above pre-sale estimates and among the highest ever reached under the hammer for a Churchill painting.

The war-time leader, who was a keen amateur artist, created the still life work-titled "Jug with Bottles"-in the 1930s at his country house Chartwell, in Kent,

southeast England. It reflected his fondness for the Johnny Walker blend, which he often drank first thing in the morning with soda water, according to Sotheby's. He later gave it to the American businessman W. Averell Harriman, who acted as US special envoy to Europe in the 1940s. Harriman was photographed sitting between Churchill and Stalin in Moscow in 1942, and the gift of the painting suggests he shared convivial drams with Churchill. The famous politician would give paintings to "like-minded people," said Simon Hucker, co-head of modern and post-war British art at Sotheby's, ahead of the auction.

It is unclear whether Churchill knew that Pamela Churchill, the wife of his son Randolph, was having an affair with Harriman during this period, The Times newspaper has reported. Pamela Churchill married Harriman decades later in the 1970s and the painting was sold following her death in 1997. It was back on sale on Tuesday after the deaths of the later owners, US collectors Barbara and Ira Lipman. A similar work by Churchill, featuring a collection of bottles and called "Bottlescape", still hangs at Chartwell. — AFP



In this file photo a member of staff poses with a painting by Britain's former prime minister Winston Churchill entitled "Jug with Bottles" at Sotheby's auction house in London. — AFP



A man walks past a poster of a woman in headphones dancing displayed on a wall at Dubai's Jumeirah Beach Residence. — AFP photos

Normani feels 'more connected' to herself

Normani feels "more connected" to herself than ever before. The 24-year-old singer - who first found fame as part of Fifth Harmony - is currently preparing to release her debut solo album, and she thinks she's finally found the perfect mindset for her new record. She explained: "For a long time, I was stressed out about checking boxes like, 'Is this black enough? Is this pop enough?' But music started feeling way better when I just went into the studio with the mentality of being Normani." The chart-topping singer is determined to be authentic with her solo album.

She told Women's Health magazine: "People will always remember how you made them feel and what a record did for them. 'My lyrics have more depth, and they're more intentional and come from a more authentic place, because I now feel more connected to myself than before.'" The 'Motivation' hitmaker also explained that the coronavirus lockdown has given her the opportunity to focus on her personal wellbeing. She shared:

"I've been able to meditate more and take a time-out before allowing anybody else to affect my energy. 'Before I talk to anybody, before I look at a text, before I go on Instagram, I centre myself in my room and pray and do breathing exercises and create my own space so that I have a foundation to walk on throughout the rest of the day.'" Meanwhile, the pop star previously revealed she wants to "change lives" through her music. Normani believes she has a "bigger" purpose in life than just recording catchy songs. She said: "Honestly, for me, it's bigger than the music." — BangShowbiz



Sports

Photo of the day



Freeride World Tour champion Nadine Wallner performs during a photo shoot in Hintertux, Austria. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

All Blacks captain Cane returns fire at 'brutal' critics

WELLINGTON: All Blacks skipper Sam Cane has hit back at critics questioning his leadership in the wake of last weekend's shock defeat by Argentina, accusing them of being ignorant about rugby. Cane and New Zealand coach Ian Foster have taken most of the flak from irate All Black fans over the 25-15 defeat to Los Pumas, which followed a 24-22 loss to Australia a week earlier. The gritty flanker, who became captain of the three-time world champions earlier this year, said he shared their frustration but "hateful, disrespectful" comments posted online were unhelpful.

"We've got amazing fans but we've also got some pretty brutal ones," he told New Zealand's Sky Sports in an interview aired late Tuesday. "You've just got to remind yourself that they may like to think they know a lot about the game of rugby but in reality they don't." New Zealand rugby followers are notoriously demanding about the All Blacks - who have a winning record of almost 80 percent - but Cane said he paid no heed to online critics. "If I'm having my leadership questioned in public, the opinions that really matter to me are my teammates and the coaches I work with every single day," the 28-year-old said.

"I've got a lot of confidence from them that we're on the right track." Cane also defended Foster's coaching after some pundits called for him to be sacked and replaced with Crusaders' mentor Scott Robertson following Argentina's historic first victory over the All Blacks. "He's given us really clear focuses on where we need to get better, so it's not like we're bogged down and don't have the answers," he said. But Cane conceded criticism had stung the coach, saying: "Foz is only human." Cane's own assessment of the Argentina loss echoed the opinions of many critics as he admitted that the All Blacks lacked discipline and gave away too many defensive penalties, starving their vaunted backline of attacking opportunities. —AFP

IOC, WADA question why US sport exempt from the Rodchenkov Act

No need to include US pro and college sports, says USADA

WASHINGTON: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) on Tuesday acknowledged the passing of the Rodchenkov Anti-Doping Act (RADA) in the US Senate but questioned why American professional and college athletes are exempt from the legislation. The Rodchenkov Act, named after the whistleblower Grigory Rodchenkov who helped expose Russia's state-sponsored doping, will give US justice officials the ability to pursue criminal penalties against anyone involved in doping at international events involving American athletes, sponsors or broadcasters.

The legislation, passed unopposed in the US Senate on Monday, now only needs the signature of the president to become law. Professional leagues and college sports in the US were included in the original draft of the bill, according to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), but were later removed. They also do not

adhere to the World Anti-Doping Code.

"The IOC continues to encourage the US professional leagues, in which the most popular American athletes play, and the US college sports organization (NCAA), from which the vast majority of the most successful US athletes come, to apply the World Anti-Doping Code," the IOC said in a statement. "Unfortunately, they are exempt from this new Act, and they have so far not accepted the World Anti-Doping Code." WADA also expressed concerns over the bill, saying it will destabilize the global anti-doping effort by extending US jurisdiction beyond its own borders while giving US professional and college athletes a free pass.

"We join other stakeholders around the globe in asking why this US legislation, which purports to protect athletes and claims jurisdiction overseas, specifically excludes the hugely popular

and influential professional and college leagues," said WADA president Witold Banka in a statement. "These leagues were originally included in the Act but were subsequently removed without explanation. 'If it is not good enough for American sports, why is it being imposed on the rest of the world?' The United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) said there was no need to include US professional and college sports in the legislation since they could already be prosecuted under existing laws.

"First, the WADA Code is the lynchpin to RADA applying," said USADA in an email to Reuters. "It will apply in the US when events are subject to the Code, like the Olympic Games and World Baseball Classic. 'Additionally, US professional leagues and college athletics are already at risk of criminal prosecution under existing US domestic law for

orchestrating doping conspiracies. 'Any conspiracy to distribute and administer performance-enhancing drugs is already a felony under US conspiracy, narcotics, and fraud laws, which carry stiff sentences.' Athlete groups view the Rodchenkov Act as tool to bring justice to the anti-doping effort.

WADA said it recognized positive elements of the US bill but added that many of its members fear tit-for-tat legislation that would undermine the fight against doping. "No nation has ever before asserted criminal jurisdiction over doping offences that occurred outside its national borders-and for good reason," said WADA. "WADA remains concerned that by unilaterally exerting US criminal jurisdiction over all global doping activity, the Act will likely undermine clean sport by jeopardizing critical partnerships and cooperation between nations." — Reuters

'New challenges' hit Australian Open warm-up events

MELBOURNE: Lead-up events to the Australian Open tennis Grand Slam were thrown into doubt yesterday after organizers flagged "new challenges" around players arriving in the country during the coronavirus pandemic. In a message to players the ATP, the men's tennis tour, said arrivals originally planned for December were now uncertain, potentially disrupting the packed January schedule.

With players facing a 14-day quarantine, any delay could make it difficult to hold the high-profile ATP Cup and other tournaments before the Australian Open's scheduled start on January 18 in Melbourne. "In discussions with Tennis Australia over the past 24 hours, we have been informed there are some new challenges around the previously planned arrival dates for players and team members," read the ATP's message, which was tweeted by world number 193 Lukas Lacko.

"We understand there is uncertainty about the start of the 2021 season, and we are working as hard as possible to deliver the best possible calendar of events," the ATP added. International travel to Australia is still tightly controlled and all overseas arrivals must quarantine for two weeks, while individual states also have their own coronavirus restrictions. It's also unclear whether players will be allowed to train during quarantine.

Tennis Australia on Monday flagged plans to move warm-up events from Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, Hobart, Adelaide and Canberra to the state of Victoria, to mitigate against any possible state border closures. But Victoria's state premier Dan Andrews said the move was "not a done deal", particularly since Melbourne only recently emerged from a month-long lockdown. Australia has been relatively successful in containing the virus, with just over 27,700 cases and 907 deaths recorded since the pandemic began. But an outbreak in South Australia, which neighbors Victoria, triggered a six-day lockdown yesterday as officials rush to contain a cluster in Adelaide. —AFP

Swiss urged to 'hit the slopes' to save ski season

VERBIER: The coronavirus crisis shuttered Switzerland's ski resorts in the spring, but they are banking on tighter precautions and the Swiss love of the mountains to save them as the winter season kicks off. A cable car ride to the top of the slopes at Verbier, where staff wear plastic face shields, reveals the extent to which the pandemic has impacted even the furthest reaches of the pristine Alps. "Wearing face masks is mandatory everywhere except on the slopes, in order to enjoy the great outdoors," Didier Defago, the 2010 Olympic downhill champion now president of the Wallis ski lift association, told AFP.

With skiing already going downhill in recent years owing to less interest and less predictable snowfall, the closure of the slopes in March during the first wave of the pandemic left the resorts fearing the worst. But the industry has been able to adapt and has avoided another closure, even as Switzerland deals with one of the worst outbreaks in Europe. The restaurants may be shut, but recreational skiers from the Wallis region are flocking to the slopes as the season gets underway.

"COVID is a drag," acknowledges 40-year-old Ludovic Guigoz, wearing a tube scarf with an inbuilt

virus filter. "But coming to ski in the morning, it's fine, I feel safe," he said, before setting off down the piste with his family. The resorts and ski lift operators insist everything is being done to ensure safety. "The cable car windows are open all day long. Ventilation, masks, hand gel, distancing," said Laurent Vaucher, the chief executive of Televerbier, the top ski lift firm in French-speaking parts of Switzerland. At Verbier, like at other resorts, police patrol the lift departure area to make sure everyone is respecting the anti-COVID measures.

Glimmer of hope

At the end of October, the Swiss Ski Lift Association tightened measures against the virus, making it mandatory to wear a facemask not only in closed cable car cabins, but also on open-air chair lifts and in queues. The resorts are also counting on the Helvetic love of the outdoors, with lift associations launching a campaign urging the Swiss to "hit the slopes". "This is where we have a trump card to play," said Vaucher, who has given up on US and Asian visitors this year, but hopes his compatriots will head for the mountains in greater numbers.

Gregory Quin, a sports historian at the University of Lausanne, said the medium-altitude resorts could do especially well with the Swiss this year "because people rely on proximity". There is also a glimmer of hope that European tourists could still flock to Switzerland to ski over Christmas after Bern recently lifted quarantine requirements for people arriving from most of the continent. —AFP



VERBIER: Skiers, some wearing protective face masks against the spread of the COVID-19, take to the slopes above the ski resort of Verbier in the Swiss Alps. —AFP

Karachi Kings win COVID-hit Pakistan Super League

KARACHI: One of the world's leading batsman, Babar Azam knocked a commanding half century to help the Karachi Kings win their first Pakistan Super League title with a five-wicket win over the Lahore Qalandars Tuesday. Azam smashed seven boundaries in his 49-ball 63, but it was skipper Imad Wasim who hit the winning boundary to help the Kings overhaul a modest 135-run target in 18.4 overs.

The final - one of the most anticipated in the PSL's short history, given the rivalry between Pakistan's two biggest cities - failed to live up to the hype as Lahore managed just 134-7 after winning the toss and batting on a flat National Stadium pitch. With Azam, the world number two batsman in Twenty20 international rankings, on

Karachi's side it proved an easy chase, despite losing three wickets from 110-2 to 124-5.

The Kings will take home a glittering trophy plus a \$500,000 purse, while Lahore received \$200,000. The fifth edition of Pakistan's inaugural Twenty20 league started on February 20, but was abandoned after 30 of its 34 matches after England player Alex Hales, playing for Kings, reported symptoms of Covid-19. It resumed on Saturday behind closed doors, with the Kings beating the Multan Sultans in the qualifier while Lahore downed Peshawar Zalmi and the Sultans in two eliminators to book a place in the final.

Lahore lost their way after a confident 68-run start in ten overs, provided by Bangladeshi opener Tamim Iqbal (35) and Fakhar Zaman (27). They lost both of them and Mohammad Hafeez in the space of seven deliveries with the addition of just two runs, spoiling a solid start. Iqbal struck four boundaries and a six off 38 balls while Zaman had four boundaries in his 24-ball stay. Karachi pace trio Umaid Asif (2-18), Waqas Maqsood (2-18) and Arshad Iqbal (2-26) bowled nagging line and length to keep the flow of runs down as well as taking wickets. —AFP



KARACHI: Karachi Kings' cricketers celebrate with the trophy after winning the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Twenty20 cricket final match between the Karachi Kings and Lahore Qalandars at the National Stadium on November 17, 2020. —AFP

Sports



KUWAIT: An athlete practices wakeboarding at a cable park at the Green Island off the coast of Kuwait City on November 17, 2020. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Nadal faces Tsitsipas showdown after Thiem loss at the ATP Finals

Inspired Thiem outshines Nadal to reach last four

LONDON: Rafael Nadal insisted he can still win the ATP Finals for the first time despite a damaging 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/4) defeat against Austria's Dominic Thiem on Tuesday. Thiem overpowered Nadal behind closed doors at London's O2 Arena to put a dent in the Spanish star's bid to finally lift the one major prize missing from his packed trophy cabinet. Thiem became the first player to qualify for the semi-finals a few hours later when reigning champion Stefanos Tsitsipas beat Russian seventh seed Andrey Rublev 6-1, 4-6, 7-6 (8/6).

Nadal, who lost the 2010 and 2013 finals of the event, has to beat Tsitsipas in his last group match to reach the semi-finals of the prestigious season-ending tournament. Despite his perilous position, Nadal goes into the showdown against Tsitsipas, with the winner guaranteed to progress to the last four, in confident mood after battling hard against the inspired Thiem. "He played I think an amazing match, and I played well too. So my feeling is not negative. I lost, but I had plenty of chances," said Nadal, who had beaten Rublev in straight sets in his first match.

"I'm happy with the way I played. I

think my chances are bigger to have a very good result now than five days ago because the level of tennis, even if I lost today, for me is much higher." Nadal, who last month equalled Roger Federer's record of 20 Grand Slams by winning the French Open, has won 86 titles but just one of those has come on an indoor hard court. The world number two has qualified for the ATP Finals for 16 years in a row, but his record at the eight-man elite event pales in comparison with Federer and Novak Djokovic after six injury withdrawals.

'I have my chances'

Potentially facing another disappointment in the Finals, Nadal said he couldn't explain his problems at the event. "I think even if I never won here, I don't want to pretend to be arrogant at all, because I am not. But I really don't need to show even to myself or to no one that if I am playing my best tennis I think I can win in every surface and against any player," he said.

"I never won in the World Tour Finals. That's the real thing at the same time. I have a match against Tsitsipas in two days. Gonna be another tough one. "I hope to be ready. I think playing like this I am con-

fidant that I can have my chances in the tournament." World number three Thiem, who defeated Tsitsipas in his opening match, has won his first two matches in this year's tournament as he looks to go one better than last year's runner-up finish. The 27-year-old has already enjoyed a year to remember, reaching two Grand Slam finals and winning one of the four majors for the first time when he defeated Alexander Zverev in the US Open final in September.

"It's definitely one of the better matches I've played so far in my career," Thiem said. "I think that today I played a little bit higher level than at the US Open. It was maybe the best match from me since the restart of the tour and that makes me super happy." Tsitsipas saved a match point in the final set tie-break against Rublev before the Greek sixth seed sealed his first win of the week and eliminated his opponent. "I'm relieved all that effort and fight on the court paid off at the end. I showed determination to not give up when he had match point," Tsitsipas said. "I'm going to try and play an aggressive game against Rafa. You can't be defensive. I have to start strong and finish even stronger." — AFP



LONDON: Spain's Rafael Nadal serves to Austria's Dominic Thiem in their men's singles round-robin match on day three of the ATP World Tour Finals tennis tournament at the O2 Arena in London on November 17, 2020. — AFP

Mali and Tunisia qualify for Africa Cup of Nations

JOHANNESBURG: Mali and Tunisia qualified for the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations finals on Tuesday to follow in the footsteps of title holders Algeria, Senegal and hosts Cameroon. Another 19 places will be up for grabs during the final two matchdays between March 22 and 30 with record seven-time champions Egypt among those close to securing places.

Sekou Koita and Moussa Doumbia scored in Mali's 2-1 win over Namibia in Windhoek, which clinched an eighth consecutive appearance at the African football showcase. Tunisia will be going to the finals for a record-extending 15th consecutive time after drawing 1-1 with Tanzania in Dar es Salaam, where Saïfeddine Khaoui gave them an early lead. Neither Group A frontrunners Mali nor Group J pacesetters Tunisia are assured of winning their four-nation groups, but both are certain of top-two finishes and qualification. Senegal clinched a place Sunday, Algeria did likewise Monday and Cameroon fill the slot automatically reserved for the host nation.

Aston Villa forward Mahmoud Trezeguet scored the final goal as Egypt romped to a 3-0 Group G win over Togo in Lome, with Mohamed 'Afsha' Magdy and Mohamed Sherif also on the scoresheet. Chelsea's Hakim Ziyech scored the first goal and created the second as Group E leaders Morocco won 2-0 against the Central African Republic, who had to stage the match in Cameroon because of security concerns. After the dramatic four-goal comeback by Sierra Leone to force a 4-4 Group L draw in Nigeria last week, the reverse fixture provided little drama and ended 0-0 in Freetown.

A stoppage-time goal from Mohamed Abdelrahman gave Sudan a surprise 1-0 victory over Group C leaders Ghana, who were captained for the first time by Jordan Ayew, the Crystal Palace forward. Injuries ruled out midfielders Andre Ayew and Thomas Partey, the first and second-choice skippers, and the next in line, goalkeeper Richard Ofori, was suspended. — AFP

Barcelona hit hard as La Liga slashes salary caps

MADRID: Barcelona's salary cap for this season has been cut by almost 300 million euros according to La Liga's list of spending limits for Spanish clubs, announced on Tuesday. The coronavirus pandemic has had huge economic effects on Spain's top-flight teams, with Barca among those worst affected. Their wage cap for the 2020-21 season will be 382.7 million euros, down from 671.4 million euros last term, when they had the highest limit in La Liga. Real Madrid will have the biggest budget this season although theirs has also been reduced from 641 million euros to 468.5 million euros.

Atletico Madrid has seen a decrease of 131.8 million euros to 252.7 million euros, which leaves Atletico with nearly half as much to spend as their city rivals Real. La Liga's 20 first division clubs will be able to spend a total of 2.33 billion euros on wages this season, which represents a drop of 610 million euros. Salary allocations in Spain can be spent on players, coaches and academy players, with the aim to bring greater financial stability to the 42 teams in the top two divisions.

Barcelona is already negotiating another round of cuts for their players while Real Madrid may also begin negotiating a reduction in salaries, according to reports in Spain. Both clubs have been heavily impacted by the pandemic, given their heavy reliance on matchday revenue, as well as income generated from museums and club shops. Barcelona allowed Luis Suarez, Arturo Vidal and Ivan Rakitic to leave during the summer transfer window and were open to selling Ousmane Dembele. Real Madrid chose not to make a single new signing for the first time in 40 years. — AFP

Queensland regain Origin crown amid 'biggest crowd'

BRISBANE: Queensland, roared on by a capacity 52,000 home crowd, held off a storming New South Wales finish to regain Australia's State of Origin rugby league crown 20-14 in Brisbane yesterday. The Maroons denied the Blues' bid for a triple Origin series win with a committed effort before the largest sporting crowd in the world during the global pandemic.

New Zealand's rugby union Bledisloe Cup hosted the second largest crowd since coronavirus hit, attracting 46,000 fans in October. Cameron Munster, who was concussed early in his side's 34-10 drubbing in Sydney last week, masterminded Queensland's Origin triumph and veteran coach Wayne Bennett's first since 2001 in his Origin return. It was also Queensland's first State of Origin series victory since 2017 before NSW's wins in

2018 and last year. Queensland's success was down to their intense commitment and pressure on the favored NSW team with their unrelenting defense.

Queensland were up for the contest before their roaring home crowd and scored in the opening four minutes through winger Valentine Holmes. NSW hit back five minutes later when Nathan Cleary's high kick was spilled by debutant fullback Corey Allan with James Tedesco on the spot to ground the ball for the try. But NSW's hopes were rocked midway through the opening half when skipper Tedesco was knocked out by an accidental knee in a tackle by burly prop Josh Papalii and he was led groggily from the field and ruled out of the game with concussion.

Coach Brad Fittler was forced to use interchange forward Isaah Yeo in the centres and switch Clint Gutherson to Tedesco's fullback spot. Queensland applied the pressure on the NSW defense with the Blues having little possession and territory against the relentless Maroons. The breakthrough came three minutes before half-time when Cameron Munster conjured a try for winger Eldrick Lee with a clever kick to open space. Valentine Holmes' conversion gave the home side a deserved 12-6 lead at the break. — AFP



BRISBANE: Queensland players celebrate following their victory in the State of Origin rugby league match between Queensland and New South Wales yesterday. — AFP

14 Swiss urged to 'hit the slopes' to save ski season amid COVID



15 Queensland regain Origin crown amid biggest crowd since COVID



15 Nadal faces Tsitsipas showdown after Thiem loss at the ATP Finals



Spain inflict historic defeat on Germany

Stunning Spain hit Germany for six as Giroud stars for France



SEVILLE: Spain's defender Sergio Ramos heads the ball during the UEFA Nations League football match between Spain and Germany at La Cartuja stadium in Seville on November 17, 2020. — AFP

PARIS: Ferran Torres grabbed a hat-trick as Spain condemned Germany to their worst defeat in 89 years on Tuesday, winning 6-0 in Seville to qualify for the UEFA Nations League finals and join France, who came from behind to beat Sweden 4-2. Manchester City forward Torres was the star for Spain, who were as brilliant as Germany were bad. The result raises further questions about Germany coach Joachim Loew, who was already under pressure coming into this game. "This has been a black day for us," admitted Loew after Germany's heaviest defeat since losing 6-0 to Austria in 1931.

They came into their final game in League A, Group 4 on top, a point clear of Spain, and so only needed a draw at an empty La Cartuja to qualify for the finals in October next year. But Alvaro Morata

headed Spain in front in the 17th minute before Torres crashed in the second on 33 minutes after Dani Olmo's header hit the bar. His City team-mate Rodri headed in another to make it 3-0 for Spain before the end of a first half in which they lost Sergio Canales and skipper Sergio Ramos to injury, with the latter coming off feeling his hamstring.

Germany's defense was posted missing as Jose Gaya burst through and squared for Torres to get the fourth on 55 minutes, and Fabian Ruiz teed up the 20-year-old Torres to complete his hat-trick. Serge Gnabry hit the bar for Germany before substitute Mikel Oyarzabal completed the rout. "It was one of the best and most complete matches of the Spanish national team," said Spain coach Luis Enrique. Germany now have several months to

reflect on this loss before the start of 2022 World Cup qualifying in March and then the delayed Euro 2020 in June and July. Spain, meanwhile, become the second side to qualify for the Nations League finals after France clinched their place by beating Portugal at the weekend.

Portugal win with late goal

The World Cup holders finished off their League A, Group 3 campaign by beating Sweden behind closed doors at the Stade de France as Olivier Giroud continued his remarkable scoring record for Les Bleus with a brace. Viktor Claesson's deflected early strike gave Sweden the lead, but Giroud soon equalised and Benjamin Pavard put France ahead before half-time. Giroud then headed in Kylian Mbappe's cross to make it 3-1 before the hour mark,

and Kingsley Coman scored France's final goal at the death after Robin Quaison had netted Sweden's second.

Having recently overtaken Michel Platini's tally of 41 goals for Les Bleus, Giroud is now on 44 and is closing in on Thierry Henry's overall record mark of 51. The 34-year-old remains a key player for France despite being on the periphery with his club Chelsea, for whom he has started just once this season, in the League Cup. Sweden finish bottom of the group behind Croatia and are relegated to the second-tier League B for the next edition of the competition.

That is despite 10-man Croatia losing 3-2 at home to Portugal in Split, with Manchester City defender Ruben Dias getting a 90th-minute winner for the 2019 Nations League champions. Chelsea's

Mateo Kovacic had scored twice for Croatia, either side of Dias's first of the night and a Joao Felix effort for Portugal, who featured Cristiano Ronaldo wearing the captain's armband.

Marko Rog was sent off for Croatia. The remaining two spots in the Nations League semi-finals will be decided on Wednesday, with Italy and Belgium currently in pole position. Tuesday's other scheduled Group 4 game between Switzerland and Ukraine in Lucerne was postponed after six Covid-19 cases in the Ukrainian squad led to their entire delegation being ordered into quarantine by Swiss health authorities. Elsewhere, Montenegro's 4-0 victory over Cyprus saw them top League C, Group 1 and win promotion to League B. Gibraltar and the Faroe Islands won promotion to League C. — AFP

Club World Cup in Qatar rescheduled for February

DOHA: Qatar will host the coronavirus-delayed Club World Cup, an important test event ahead of the 2022 World Cup, in February, FIFA said on Tuesday. The competition, which had been due to be played in Doha in December of this year, sees club champions from the six regional confederations and the champions of the host nation, Qatar's Al-Duhail, brought together for the annual contest. "The FIFA Club World Cup 2020 will now be held from 1 to 11 February 2021, taking place in Qatar," FIFA said in a statement. "FIFA and the host country will provide the required safeguards for the health and safety of all involved." Local officials have not yet stated which venues will be used for the tournament or what social distancing measures will be applied.

It is the second successive Club World Cup to be held in Qatar. Liverpool lifted the trophy in 2019 after beating Brazil's Flamengo in the final in Doha. European champions Bayern Munich and Qatari side Al-Duhail, who qualify through being hosts, are the only teams yet confirmed for the competition with other continental tournaments around the world delayed by the

coronavirus. "We're looking forward to the tournament," said Bayern coach Hansi Flick. "We want to compete at the Club World Cup and we want to win it."

A revamped 24-team Club World Cup, including eight sides from Europe, was due to be played in China in 2021, but is set to be rescheduled for a later date after the delayed Euro 2020 and the Copa America were penciled in for next June and July. The CONCACAF, South American, Asian and African representatives are all still to be decided. The Copa Libertadores final will be played in Rio de Janeiro in late January, while Cairo rivals Zamalek and Al-Ahly meet in the CAF Champions League final on November 27.

The Asian Champions League is being completed in "bubble" conditions in Qatar, with the final set for December 19. Meanwhile, FIFA announced that the postponed women's under-17 and under-20 World Cups were to be cancelled altogether, but that the 2022 editions would be offered to the countries that were set to act as hosts this year. It means Costa Rica will host the under-20 women's World Cup in 2022 and India will host the under-17 competition. — AFP

Brazil, Argentina win; Uruguay's Cavani sent off

MONTEVIDEO: Brazil continued their perfect start to the qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup with a 2-0 win over Uruguay while rivals Argentina stayed in touch with an easy win in Peru. First-half goals from Arthur and Richarlison helped Brazil to a 2-0 win over Uruguay, who had Manchester United striker Edinson Cavani sent off. Argentina, with Lionel Messi pulling the strings, brushed aside a limited Peru 2-0 in Lima, with goals from Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez and Nicholas Gonzalez in a game in which they were never troubled.

Ecuador, playing on their home turf in high-altitude Quito, hammered Colombia 6-1. Paraguay and Bolivia fought out a 2-2 draw while Venezuela - the only South American team never to qualify for a World Cup finals - picked up their first points in a 2-1 victory over Chile in Caracas. Victory in Montevideo left Brazil on top of South America's qualifying standings on 12 points with four wins from four games. Argentina are second on 10 points after beating Peru, with surprise team Ecuador third on nine points.

Uruguay are fifth on six points, behind Paraguay on goal difference after four matches. The first four teams in South



MONTEVIDEO: Brazil's Marquinhos (left) and Douglas Luiz vie for the ball with Uruguay's Darwin Nunez during their closed-door 2022 FIFA World Cup South American qualifier football match on November 17, 2020. — AFP

America's round-robin competition qualify directly for the World Cup finals in Qatar, while the 5th placed nation faces a playoff against the country qualifying from Oceania. Five-time world champions Brazil were fortunate to be two goals up at half time in Montevideo after Uruguay had hit the woodwork twice at either end of the half. The win also extended Brazil's long reign of dominance over the Celeste, who have not beaten their fierce rivals since 2001.

Cavani misery

Cavani's sending off with 20 minutes to

go capped a miserable night for his side, despite having the better of things for much of the first half. Chilean referee Roberto Tobar showed him a yellow card after his lunge caught Richarlison on the ankle. But after a VAR check, that changed to red, leaving Cavani incredulous, and he left the pitch reluctantly. Brazil almost drew first blood after two minutes of a lively opening, when Uruguay keeper Martin Campana parried a close range shot from Gabriel Jesus after the Manchester City striker bought a yard of space on the edge of the six-yard box. — AFP