



3 Exodus continues: Many expats believe it's time to leave Kuwait



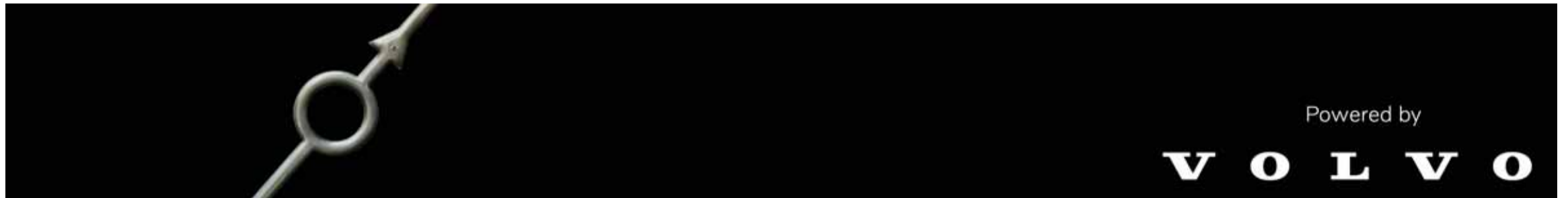
5 Nightmare over, but Iraqi Christians dream of leaving



13 World's deepest diving pool opens in Poland



16 10-man Arsenal hold out for draw at Leeds



G20 leaders pledge fair distribution of vaccines

King Salman urges cooperation to face impact of coronavirus pandemic



RIYADH: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud (right) speaks as Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman attends the second session of the G20 summit yesterday, held virtually due to the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

RIYADH: G20 leaders said yesterday they will "spare no effort" to ensure the fair distribution of coronavirus vaccines worldwide, and support poor countries whose economies have been ravaged by the crisis. As the pandemic rages, the club of the world's richest nations adopted a unified tone on the challenges ahead during a virtual summit hosted by Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia's King Salman said that the "spirit of cooperation" was needed now "more than ever to face the impact of the pandemic and create a prosperous future for the people of the whole world". King Salman said in his closing remarks that the group had "adopted important policies that will achieve recovery all the way to an economy that is resilient, sustainable, inclusive and balanced".

But after a weekend of "digital diplomacy", their closing communique lacked details on many of the issues dominating the talks. "We have mobilized resources to address the immediate financing needs in global health to support the research, development, manufacturing and distribution of safe and effective COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines," they said in the statement. "We will spare no effort to ensure their affordable and equitable access for all people."

While richer nations plan their vaccination programs, with the US expecting to launch in early December, experts warn that developing countries

face hurdles that could deny billions the first proven protection against the virus. Calls are mounting for the G20 to help plug a \$4.5-billion funding gap in the so-called ACT-Accelerator, a mechanism led by the World Health Organization that aims to ensure access to tests, treatments and vaccines for all.

In a comment echoed by other leaders, French President Emmanuel Macron said Saturday that the coronavirus crisis was "a test for the G20", stressing there "will be no effective response to the pandemic unless it is a global response". However, the final communique did not spell out how the massive cost of the exercise would be underwritten.

The unusual format of the summit, in place of a real-life meeting that coronavirus restrictions made impossible, has produced some awkward interactions, and deprived Saudi Arabia of an opportunity to showcase itself on the international stage. US President Donald Trump made a brief appearance at the opening session, lauding his administration's achievements on coronavirus before logging off and going golfing, while other leaders braved technical quirks and the lack of opportunity for spontaneous interactions.

The mercurial president made another splash yesterday, defending his decision to pull out of the Paris climate accord, calling it "unfair and one-sided" and designed to kill the "American economy".

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News in brief

Saliva tests for children

DUBAI: Dubai's health regulator said yesterday children aged between 3-16 could now be tested for COVID-19 by providing a saliva sample instead of the widely used nasal swab. The saliva test had been permitted following a research study by the regulator and a local university, the Dubai Health Authority said on Twitter. The United Arab Emirates has reported 158,990 coronavirus cases and 552 related deaths. — Reuters

US approves Regeneron treatment

WASHINGTON: A COVID-19 antibody therapy used to treat President Donald Trump was approved by the US drug regulator on Saturday for people who aren't yet hospitalized by the disease but are at high risk. The green light for drug maker Regeneron came after REGEN-COV2, a combination of two lab-made antibodies, was shown to reduce COVID-19-related hospitalizations or emergency room visits in patients with underlying conditions. — AFP

Dutch cull 190,000 chickens

THE HAGUE: Dutch authorities have culled some 190,000 chickens after a highly-contagious strain of bird flu broke out at at least two poultry farms, the agriculture ministry said yesterday. Health workers slaughtered around 100,000 hens at a poultry farm at Hekendorp outside Gouda while 90,000 chicks were culled at Witmarsum, in northern Friesland. In both cases "a highly-contagious strain of the H5 variant" was suspected, the ministry said in a statement. — AFP

Man dies in shark attack

SYDNEY: A man has died after being bitten by a shark at a beach popular with tourists on Australia's northwest coast, authorities said yesterday. Police were called to Cable Beach near Broome in the morning after reports of the attack. The man was pulled from the water and given medical treatment but later succumbed to his injuries. The man's death marks the eighth fatal shark attack in Australian waters this year. There have been at least 22 shark maulings in the same period. — AFP

Remains of 7 POWs identified

KUWAIT: Kuwait identified remains belonging to seven Kuwaiti prisoners of war (POWs) or missing persons after DNA tests were conducted by the General Administration of Criminal Evidence, Director-General of the National Committee of POWs and Missing Affairs Rabie Al-Adsani said yesterday. The committee affirmed that the remains belong to Meshaal Ibrahim Al-Khulaf, Barjas Bilal Al-Khaldi,

Salem Rashed Al-Duwseri, Waleed Ibrahim Al-Jeeran, Munther Numaan Al-Saif, Hussein Ali Al-Qabandi and Khaled Faraaj Al-Duwseri.

Adsani said these prisoners had been arrested during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. He added the foreign ministry informed the martyrs' families immediately after the completion of the genetic examination process of all information related to the results of identification and related procedures. Adsani thanked the Iraqi authorities, members of the tripartite and technical subcommittee, International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for their efforts through the work of the subcommittee. — KUNA

Trump digs in amid pressure to concede

WASHINGTON: Despite an emphatic court setback in Pennsylvania, US President Donald Trump showed no sign yesterday of dropping his long-shot efforts to overturn the US presidential election even as Democratic President-elect Joe Biden moves ahead with planning for his incoming administration. Since

Biden was declared the winner of the Nov 3 election two weeks ago, the Republican president has launched a barrage of lawsuits and mounted a pressure campaign to prevent states from certifying their vote totals.

Critics of Trump, including Democrats and some Republicans, have accused him of trying to undermine faith in the American electoral system and delegitimize Biden's victory by promoting false claims of widespread voter fraud. Biden is due to take office on Jan 20. "Fight hard Republicans," Trump wrote on Twitter yesterday morning as he pressed his

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Egypt actor in soup over pics with Israelis

CAIRO: Egypt's self-proclaimed superstar Mohamed Ramadan has sparked a heated political debate after snapping selfies with an Israeli singer and footballer. Ramadan, a 32-year-old actor and rapper, boasts millions of followers in the Arab world, and is the recipient of the 2019 All Africa Music Awards prize.

On Saturday, the official Facebook page of the State of Israel in Arabic linked to the foreign ministry published a photo of Ramadan hugging Israeli singer Omer Adam on a Dubai rooftop. The picture carried the caption "art always brings us together". A short video clip also surfaced on social networks showing Ramadan mingling with fans with the popular Jewish folk song "Hava Nagila" playing in the background. And another widely shared photo of him with Israeli footballer Diaa Saba also caused a stir online.

The pictures and video sparked a storm of protest in Egypt, with many

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Candidates press for dual citizenship, debt write-off

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Candidates for the Dec 5 National Assembly elections are using social media and television interviews to reach out to voters after authorities banned election campaigns because of the coronavirus pandemic. Candidate Jazza Al-Qahs from the fourth constituency said if he gets elected, he will file a draft law calling to allow dual citizenship in the country, currently

banned by law.

Qahs said that hundreds of thousands of Kuwaitis hold citizenship of European countries, the United States, Gulf states and others, effectively violating the law. He said that certain quarters in the society have been using the issue to spread racial divisions within the society, especially about those holding Gulf citizenships.

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump smiles as he departs the White House yesterday. — AFP



CAIRO: This picture taken yesterday shows a man holding a phone showing a picture of Egyptian "superstar" Mohamed Ramadan hugging Israeli singer Omer Adam on a Dubai rooftop. — AFP

Local

Amir receives Kuwait National Guard's new Deputy Chief



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard Lt Gen Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in the attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a copy of an encyclopedia covering parliamentary practice.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard Lt Gen Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf 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 Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard Lt Gen Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, on the occasion of his appointment to his new post. His Highness the Crown

Prince attended the meeting. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received Lt Gen Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf in a separate meeting at Bayan Palace.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime

Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. Also yesterday, His Highness the Amir received Minister of State for Services Affairs and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Mubarak Al-Harees, who presented to His Highness a copy of an encyclopedia covering parliamentary practice from the first through the 10th legislative terms.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and Saleh at Bayan Palace. His Highness also met with Harees who presented to him a copy of the encyclopedia. Furthermore, Minister Harees presented another copy to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled in a separate meeting at Bayan Palace. — KUNA

Egypt actor in soup over pics...

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calling for a boycott of Ramadan and the hashtag "Mohamed Ramadan is a Zionist" trending on Twitter. "Truly there's nothing but entertainment bringing you two together - not religion, not Arab identity, or humanity or land or shared history," someone wrote on Facebook, addressing Ramadan.

Egypt's controversial celebrity, who regularly displays his flashy cars and extravagant lifestyle on social media, shot back at critical fans saying: "I don't ask which country the person who wants to take a photo with me comes from unless they say them-

selves." He also took the opportunity to pay tribute to the Palestinian people. "Palestine is number one", he wrote based on the title of his massively popular song in the Arab world called "Number One", adding: "I salute the brotherly Palestinian people."

Egypt is the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel in 1979 - followed by Jordan in 1994 - but the deal has not gone well with many Egyptians who staunchly oppose Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. The United Arab Emirates normalized ties with the Jewish state earlier this year, in a move quickly followed by Bahrain and Sudan. But not everyone was upset with Ramadan, as attitudes begin to shift towards Israel in the region. "This is the peace we're after... may God bless you Mohamed Ramadan. Peace is the only solution in the Middle East," a Facebook user wrote. — AFP

Trump digs in amid pressure...

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unsubstantiated narrative of voter fraud. So far, attempts to thwart certification of vote tallies have failed in courts in Georgia, Michigan and Arizona. On Saturday, US District Judge Matthew Brann, a Republican appointed by Democratic former President Barack Obama, dismissed a similar effort in Pennsylvania, writing that the case presented by Trump's lawyers claiming voter fraud amounted to "strained legal arguments without merit and speculative accusations". "This claim, like Frankenstein's Monster, has been haphazardly stitched together," Brann wrote.

Some of Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress are now breaking ranks though many, including the most senior ones, have not. Republican Senator Pat Toomey said Brann's ruling "exhausted all plausible legal options" for Trump in Pennsylvania, and he urged the president to "accept the outcome of the election". Toomey also congratulated Biden and

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris and referred to them as "dedicated public servants".

Liz Cheney, a member of the Republican leadership team in the House of Representatives, earlier called on Trump to immediately present evidence of widespread voter fraud or otherwise respect "the sanctity of our electoral process". Ron Klain, Biden's choice as incoming White House chief of staff, and other Biden aides appeared on Sunday morning news shows to give their team's perspective on the transition process.

"You are going to see the first of the president-elect's cabinet picks on Tuesday of this week," Klain told ABC's "This Week" yesterday. Former New Jersey governor Chris Christie, who served as an advisor during the Trump transition, said on ABC that the president's spate of legal challenges was a "national embarrassment". Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, another Republican, said on CNN that Trump was making the country look like a "banana republic," while ex-national security advisor John Bolton said on the same program that the president's actions amounted to "throwing rocks through windows." North Dakota senator Kevin Cramer defended Trump's insistence on ensuring the election was fair, but added on NBC that it is "past time to start a transition". — Reuters

G20 leaders pledge fair distribution...

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In the communique though, the group adopted a consensus position on climate change, reiterating support for tackling "pressing" environmental challenges. Differences within the G20 were made highly public at last year's summit in the Japanese city of Osaka, when the United States demanded the insertion of a separate paragraph on issues such as environmental protection.

G20 nations have contributed more than \$21 billion to combat the pandemic, which has infected 56 million people globally and left 1.3 million dead, and injected \$11 trillion to shore up the battered world economy, summit organizers said. But the group faces mounting pressure to help stave off possible credit defaults among developing nations, as their debt soars amid the economic catastrophe stoked by the virus.

It has extended a debt service suspension initiative (DSSI) for developing countries until June next year, but UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has led calls for a commitment to extend it until the end of 2021. The communique did not offer a firm guarantee, an outcome that is sure to disappoint campaigners. Instead, G20 finance ministers will examine the recommendation when the IMF and World Bank meet next spring "if the economic and



Saudi King Salman delivers an address during the second session of the G20 summit yesterday. — AFP

financial situation requires" an extension by another six months, they said.

With the world in disarray after months of border closures and lockdowns, the group also struck a unified tone on trade, saying that supporting a multilateral system "is now as important as ever". "We strive to realize the goal of a free, fair, inclusive, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade and investment environment, and to keep our markets open," the communique said. — AFP

Candidates press for dual citizenship...

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Former MP Hussein Mazyed, bidding to return to the house after a long absence, accused Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh of failing to curb rampant vote buying. He said that it appears that vote-buying practices are bigger than the interior minister, who has failed to issue the necessary decisions to curb the violation. He urged the prime minister to intervene.

New candidate Hamad Al-Munawer, also from the fourth constituency, said if he is elected to the Assembly, he will immediately file a draft law calling on the government to forgive consumer loans of Kuwaiti citizens. Candidate Sheikh Al-Jassem, contesting from the third constituency, called for changing the current voting system based on a single vote, saying this system has drastically harmed women's chances to win seats in the Assembly.

Former MP Hassan Jowhar, a leading opposition figure who ended his boycott of elections since

2012 and is running in the first constituency, blasted the government for ignoring the decades-old housing problem. He said just KD 1.5 billion is needed to provide necessary housing for 250,000 citizens, but instead of providing this amount, the government offered to pay KD 3 billion to big merchants in compensation for coronavirus-related losses.

Meanwhile, the appeals court will hear tomorrow cases of a number of candidates who were disqualified by an interior ministry commission for being convicted in court over financial and criminal cases. The lower court on Thursday confirmed the disqualification of seven candidates but cancelled the decision for eight others, prompting the candidates and the government's legal department to appeal.

The fatwa and legislation department, which represents the government in court, yesterday filed petitions against the lower court's ruling to rehabilitate eight candidates, while the other candidates appealed the rulings against them. The cases must be completed with final rulings before the general elections on Dec 5. The interior ministry commission had disqualified 34 candidates, many of them over financial cases, but at least two of them - former MP Bader Al-Dahoum and activist Ahmad Al-Fiker - were disqualified on political grounds.

Local

The exodus continues: Many expats believe it's time to leave Kuwait

Over half a million expats reportedly left during pandemic

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A steady exodus of expatriates that began prior to the coronavirus pandemic has picked up steam in recent months. As many as half a million expatriates may have left the country in the last 12 to 18 months, and many more are now looking at returning to their home countries. The exodus is fueled by expanded Kuwait government efforts to reduce the numbers of expatriates working in the public sector as a way to make vacancies available for Kuwaiti citizens. Many are also victims of private sector closures caused by the global pandemic and the downturn in business activity in Kuwait.

A large construction company terminated at least 40 percent of its employees, leaving only those in key positions and essential workers. "I was terminated in October. The company said they decided to terminate many of our colleagues including myself because no contracts are being signed for new projects, plus many of our projects are on hold," said Berto, a Filipino mechanical engineer. "The company promised to hire us again if things get better. The company told us we can transfer our residencies. We are also allowed to maintain our visas as we search for work. All indemnities and fees agreed upon by the company will be paid accordingly," he said.

“It's better to leave and plan for better future”

to 4.29 million, according to United Nations data. The UN estimated Kuwait's population as of July 1, 2020 at 4,270,571. If the figures are correct, more than half a million expats might have left Kuwait.

A report published last week in Al-Rai seems to support that argument - it revealed that the number of expats, which was about 3.3 million before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, has dwindled to just 2.65 million. Official sources cited in the report said that the residences of at least 147,000 expats have expired during the pandemic and tens of thousands of expats departed for their home countries. The sources added that as many as 365,000 expats who have valid residence permits in the country, are currently living abroad, adding that 132,000 expats are living illegally in the country.

‘Waste of time’

Berto tried several times to apply for a new job, but he said it's a waste of time and effort. "I cannot accept the salary offered to me. I cannot survive on it and my family will suffer eventually. So it's better to leave Kuwait so that I can plan for a better future. I don't know when this pandemic will end, but I have a family to feed and I don't want to waste my time here," he said.

"My wife and I agreed to go back to the Philippines, where I will start a new job or a business like buying and selling online. This is a temporary move during the pandemic, and I will be open to any new opportunity abroad," he said. Berto's wife, who is pregnant, works at a private hospital in Kuwait. "My wife is a registered nurse. My decision is always for the good of the family. I will never leave her here even if she is getting a good salary. I should provide for the family, so I need her to be with me and our new baby," he said.



KUWAIT: This May 5, 2020 file photo shows Egyptian nationals waiting in line to check in their luggage at Kuwait International Airport as they prepare to leave to their home country. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Charlie Hipayo, a dental technician in Kuwait, said his family is leaving Kuwait soon to migrate to Canada. "We spent 10 years here and want to move to another country. Our migration to Canada is under process and we'll leave soon," he said. "My growing family and the pandemic were the main considerations as we contemplated to migrate to Canada. My wife is a registered nurse and I am also working in the medical field. We are still young and were offered a great package deal for migrating to Canada," he said.

‘Very depressing’

Charlie said he learned many things in Kuwait, especially during the pandemic. "At the onset of the pandemic, I was scared for my family; I thought it was the end of the world. I did not know how to react and how to respond to people's needs. I read social media posts about suicides by many of our countrymen. Some did not have enough food for the family. Many were unprepared and had no savings, especially during the lockdown. It was a very

depressing scenario, not just for Filipinos, but for people of many other nationalities," he recalled. "We don't want to experience this anymore."

Rose Garcia is also leaving Kuwait for good after she finally realized how vulnerable she was as a senior citizen. "I am now 62 - my visa was renewed by my sponsor in July this year for another two years. But what made me decide to go back home for good was the health problem I encountered last month. I contracted the coronavirus and suffered in hospital. I only got a clean bill of health last week. My children in Manila were praying hard for me to survive the virus, and indeed God is great," she said.

"I agreed with my children that I should go back home to the Philippines. It was an agreement with them that I made when I was in the hospital. I still have residency until the end of 2023, but maybe it's God's purpose that I got COVID so I can leave Kuwait," Rose said. "I have lived in Kuwait for the last 25 years - this is my second home. Kuwait has been very nice to me, but I have to go - my flight is next week," she added.

Fire burns Health Ministry office



Fire engines parked outside the Farwaniya stables where a fire was reported. — Kuwait Fire Force photos



KUWAIT: Heavy damage left by a fire at an office in the Health Ministry building yesterday.



Firemen battle the blaze at the stable.

KUWAIT: Firemen put out a blaze reported yesterday in an office at the Health Ministry's headquarters building, located on the Jamal Abdul-Nasser Road in the Sabah Health Zone, Kuwait Fire Force said. The fire left material damage, while no human

injuries were reported, it said, noting that an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the blaze.

Meanwhile, three fire stations battled a blaze reported in the Farwaniya stables in Kabd on Saturday. The flames spread over

a 500-square-meter area containing lumber and other flammable materials. No injuries were reported, Kuwait Fire Force said, adding that an investigation is underway to determine the cause of the fire.

Kuwait's COVID cases pass 140,000 mark

KUWAIT: Kuwait's confirmed COVID-19 cases reached 140,056 after the Ministry of Health announced 322 new infections yesterday. Meanwhile, the death toll reached 866 after three fatalities were recorded over the previous 24 hours, the ministry said. As for recoveries, the total number reached 132,178 after 618 recovered over the same period. The number of people hospitalized with the virus currently stands at 7,012, with 86 of them in intensive care units, according to a Health ministry statement, adding that some 4,099 swab tests were conducted over the past 24 hours out of a total of 1,052,001 so far. The ministry went on to urge the public to abide by health precautions, mainly following social distancing rules as the only way to halt the spread of the virus. — KUNA

Kuwait National Lab certified for isolating polio

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Laboratory has been certified by the World Health Organization for successfully isolating the polio virus as part of WHO's global testing process, the Ministry of Health said yesterday. Kuwait National Laboratory scored full mark in WHO's testing to isolate the polio virus, said MoH in a statement, thus honoring Kuwait's 2035 Vision. The National Laboratory got WHO's certification after succeeding in isolating random samples sent from Netherlands' national institute for health and environment, as part of WHO's global polio laboratories' efficiency test 2020. Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said he was proud of this achievement, which reflected development of laboratories in Kuwait. — KUNA

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News in brief

Deputy FM meets Qatari ambassador

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met Qatar's Ambassador to Kuwait Bandar bin Mohammad Al-Atiyah yesterday to discuss bilateral ties alongside regional and global developments. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ayham Al-Omar attended the meeting. — KUNA

Locusts detected in north

KUWAIT: A swarm of migratory locust was spotted north of Kuwait, the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources announced yesterday, noting that its teams are monitoring its movement. Strong winds that hit the Arabian Peninsula last week has moved locust swarms from Yemen to various parts in Saudi Arabia, the authority said, noting that the swarms were predicted to continue moving north towards Kuwait and Iraq.

Women exceed men

KUWAIT: The number of Kuwaiti women working in the private sector exceeds that of men by around 700, Al-Qabas reported yesterday, quoting Public Authority for Manpower statistics. The total number of Kuwaiti private sector employees stands at 73,303, including 36,975 female citizens, the statistics show.

Subsidized food

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti and Egyptian authorities are coordinating to stop the smuggling of subsidized food outside Kuwait, Al-Qabas reported yesterday, quoting an 'informed source' at Egypt's Safaja port. "Scores of shipments bound for the port have been stuck in Kuwait due to intensive inspection procedures," the source revealed.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Camels graze at Kuwait's desert. — Photo by Sharifa Sami Khalaf

Govt wary of population imbalance measures

KUWAIT: Government fears with regards to the economic repercussions resulting from the implementation of the population restructuring law have begun to surface, particularly over a rise in wages. Despite the official government support of the population restructuring bill which was approved by the National Assembly recently, official talks revealed warnings from ministers against the hasty treatment of the population imbalance in a way that does not agree with the economic situation and the country's need of labor, according to a report published by Al-Qabas Arabic daily yesterday.

Ministerial sources quoted in the report said it is necessary to study the issue thoroughly as well as its effects, adding that many decisions already reflect the government's seriousness in dealing with the population imbalance. They said that the Public Authority for Housing Welfare has a major

distribution plan for Mutlaa City and South Abdullah Al-Mubarak that will reach 31,500 lots, adding that the implementation of the population restructuring law will lead to the reduction of labor, which will reflect on wages that ordinary citizens may not be able to bear.

Sources said the issue of the population structure has the government's attention, and it began the policy of replacement as one way of remedying the population imbalance. They added that the flexibility of rules and decisions is important to face any new events, as there are many jobs that require foreign labor because of the low number of Kuwaitis who apply for such jobs. The government presented a detailed plan to the parliamentary manpower committee during the discussion of the population restructuring law, and put forward short- and long-term solutions to deal with the issue.

Embassy warns of fraudulent transactions

LONDON: The Kuwaiti embassy in London yesterday issued a statement to Kuwaiti nationals and students, warning them of money transfers to unknown entities. The embassy indicated that it had received various complaints regarding fraudulent transactions involving entities claiming to be representatives of the UK's home office. The statement stressed that any sum of money owed to the British government would be done via legal means and direct contact by mail and not through phone calls. Kuwaiti nationals and students should avoid giving vital information to prevent fraud from occurring, the embassy reiterated. The embassy asked Kuwaiti nationals not to hesitate when seeking assistance on this matter, indicating that the +4402075903400 line will be available to address this issue and other important matters. — KUNA

Italy, Kuwait discuss developing security ties

ROME: Italian Carabinieri police chief, General Giovanni Nistri, expressed yesterday his aspiration to develop security and training cooperation with Kuwait to cope with emerging challenges. In a statement to the press, the Kuwaiti embassy said General Nistri met with Ambassador Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah, where they discussed opportunities for mutual cooperation and exchange of experiences in all security branches. The Carabinieri Military Police Corps is looking forward to resuming cooperation with the Kuwaiti security and guarding services and providing its advanced technical and professional expertise, Nistri stressed. The Carabinieri commander expressed possibility of receiving representatives of the Kuwaiti security services to discuss forms of cooperation from organizing courses to qualify national cadres in all disciplines. Meanwhile, ambassador Sheikh Azzam praised the professionalism of the Carabinieri



ROME: Italian Carabinieri police chief General Giovanni Nistri with Kuwait's Ambassador Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah. — KUNA

police, its role in maintaining order, fighting crime and combating terrorism, and its remarkable role in supporting security around the world as in many Arab countries, stressing Kuwait's keenness to benefit from experiences within the strong Kuwaiti-Italian friendship. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways announced yesterday receiving the fourth Airbus A320neo plane, out of 15 as per a purchase deal signed with the French aircraft maker in 2018.

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Angry protesters burn Guatemalan Congress

Ethiopia army threatens 'no mercy' in an all-out assault

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BAGHDAD: Worshippers attend mass at the Chaldean Church of St Joseph on Nov 7, 2020. — AFP

Iraqi Christians still dream of leaving

'Threats, kidnappings, extortion still persist'

BAGHDAD: The bells of St Joseph's Chaldean Cathedral echo across Baghdad, signaling the start of Mass for the dwindling congregation that has stayed in the scarred Iraqi capital against all odds. "This is a safe space," says Mariam, a 17-year-old Chaldean Catholic among the few dozen attending the service. Elderly women pray solemnly, their hair covered in delicate black veils.

Red ropes block off every other row to enforce social distancing in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, but there aren't enough worshippers to fill the church in any case. A few hundred thousand Christians are left in Iraq, where a US-led invasion in 2003 paved the way for bloody sectarian warfare that devastated the country's historic and diverse Christian communities.

Like Mariam, the 53-year-old deacon of St Joseph's Cathedral preferred to identify himself only by his first name, Nael. "My father, mother and siblings emigrated after 2003. I'm the only one left in Iraq, and I stayed because I was hoping the situation would get better," he said. But after 35 years serving at St Joseph's and watching the parish shrink year by year, Nael has little hope. "It used to be full even on regular weekdays," he recalled. "But

there's been a drop in numbers and ongoing emigration in the last three or four years, especially from this parish," he lamented.

Blast walls, rusted locks

As hardliners fought each other starting in 2006, Iraq's ancient Christian communities - Assyrian, Armenian, Chaldean, Protestant and more - were directly targeted. One of the most horrific attacks was in 2010, when gunmen took hostage and eventually killed dozens of Christians at the Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad. Then in 2014, the Islamic State group swept across Nineveh province, the heartland of Iraq's minorities.

Christians - but also the esoteric Yazidis, Shiite Turkmen and other communities - streamed out of their homes as the jihadists closed in, or were forced to convert under their rule. There are no reliable statistics on the

number of Christians who fled Iraq during these consecutive waves of bloodshed. According to William Warda, co-founder of the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization, Christians left in Iraq number up to 400,000, down from 1.5 million in 2003. Their absence is stark.

Churches across Baghdad have shuttered, including the Holy Trinity Church in the Baladiyat district, closed to regular services for four years. At the Armenian Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a terracotta structure in the Karrada area, a rusted lock has barred entry since 2007. The churches that have remained open are surrounded by a labyrinth of concrete blast walls and security forces. The southern Baghdad district of Dora was once home to a thriving community of 150,000 Christians, including doctors, businessmen and cafe owners, Warda said. Now, "there are only 1,000 left," he said.

'I have no home in Iraq'

Iraq declared IS defeated three years ago, but "threats, kidnappings, extortion and deaths still persist," said Yonadam Kanna, a leading Christian politician. While Iraq's constitution ostensibly affords the same level of protection to all communities, Chaldean Patriarch Louis Sako said de facto prejudice was locking Christians out of society. "There's no direct pressure on Christians today, but there's day-to-day discrimination. If you're Christian, there's no place for you in state institutions," the head of the Chaldean Catholic Church said.

"It's caused by corruption and it leads to emigration." That has eroded the feeling of belonging, some told AFP. "There's a sense among Christians that the country is becoming more conservative, and that Christians - or even secular Muslims - can no longer live in it," Warda said. Ninos, a beautician looking to emigrate, agreed. "Sometimes, I can see myself here. But most of the time, I find I have no home in Iraq," the 25-year-old said. "The situation isn't compatible with my work, the way I think or how I aspire to develop myself." — AFP



Under IS rule, Christians were forced to convert

Masks, screens and empty chairs; Saudi summit goes virtual

RIYADH: Mask-clad reporters filed into a Riyadh ballroom-turned-media centre Saturday after mandatory temperature checks, to cover physically a virtual G20 summit originally conceived as a grand coming-out party for host Saudi Arabia. The media room in the capital's Crown Plaza hotel would have been buzzing with hundreds of international reporters were it not for the coronavirus pandemic that has reduced the annual gathering of world leaders into a giant webinar.

As the summit opened, the handful of foreign media present pointed their cameras to a large flickering screen where world leaders popped up in multiple tiny windows - one shuffling papers, another seen calling for technical help and one casually chatting to an aide. For Saudi Arabia, the first Arab nation to host the summit, the media centre - a cavernous chandelier-studded room filled with mostly unoccupied work stations - is emblematic of a lost opportunity to showcase its ambitious modernization drive. "This is an act of God," said Adel al-Jubeir, the kingdom's minister of state for foreign affairs, referring to the pandemic that made a physical summit impossible.

The austere kingdom has seen a sweeping transformation in the past three years - a driving ban on women has been lifted, cinemas reopened and social mixing of the genders has become increasingly common as the once-feared religious police were rendered toothless. "It would have been nice to have thousands of people come to Saudi Arabia, walk the streets,



RIYADH: Journalists work in an almost empty media room setup for the coverage of the G20 summit, held virtually due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, on Nov 20, 2020. —AFP

meet Saudi men and women, see the changes that have happened in the country, feel the changes," Jubeir said at a media briefing ahead of the summit.

'White oil'

A physical summit would also have been an opportunity to highlight the kingdom's tourism potential - the new "white oil" the petro-state is keen to develop to diversify its revenues. Saudi Arabia is endowed with stunning landscapes, but tourism remains a hard sell in a country with strict social codes and an absolute ban on alcohol.

Still, the government sought to make the most of the physical media centre. Adorned with portraits of Saudi destinations, the centre could be mistaken for a tourism fair. Liveried waiters offered four different types of Arabic coffee - each from a different corner of the kingdom. Coffee table books extolling Saudi culinary delights were placed next to guides on destinations such as the historic city of Al Ula and the mountain resort of Abha - places of immense natural beauty but little known outside the country.

The kingdom hosted a media dinner on the eve of the summit in the historic town

of Diriyah, close to Riyadh and known for its traditional mud-brick architecture. Dressed in loose fitting traditional thobes and clutching daggers, dancers bobbed and swayed amid the ruins. To highlight other government projects, journalists were offered official interviews and briefings on the sidelines of the summit that were unrelated to G20 - including from the Saudi ministers of education and sports. And as global campaigners sought to draw attention to the kingdom's human rights record, the government appeared determined to not let the issue overshadow the forum.

At one such briefing, investment minister Khalid Al-Falih was asked if negative headlines - including those over the grisly 2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul - had damaged investment potential. In a country where officials are unaccustomed to tough questioning from reporters, the moderator asked the journalist to take the query elsewhere. But Falih insisted on answering. "Investors are not journalists, investors are looking for countries where they can place their trust in an effective government that has proper economic decision-making," he said with a shrug. — AFP

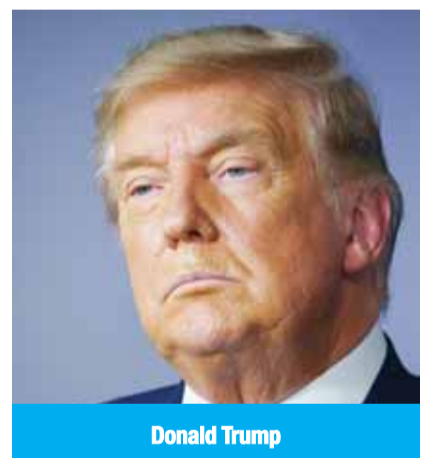
Defiant Trump offers fodder for strongmen

WASHINGTON: The United States has long championed democracy around the world, pushing persistently, if not always consistently, for leaders to give up power when they lose. President Donald Trump is now establishing a new American model - refusing to concede, making unsubstantiated claims of fraud and seeking the intervention of courts and political allies in hopes of reversing his defeat to Joe Biden.

Political figures and experts interviewed in several countries fear that Trump's blueprint will be eagerly embraced in fragile democracies, especially in Africa, letting strongmen point to the world's most powerful nation in justifying their attempts to cling to office. "Donald Trump's refusal to concede reinforces the view of our leaders in Africa that elections should be done in a way so that they don't lose," said Mahamat Ahmat Alhabet, secretary general of the opposition Party for Freedoms and Development in Chad.

Eldred Masunungure, a political scientist at the University of Zimbabwe, said that Trump was singing "sweet music to autocratic rulers". "It's tragic. We are used to that in Africa but when it happens in the US we get shocked because it's happening in a centuries-old democracy," Masunungure said. "It's a dirty lesson our leaders will take advantage of and cite even in the long-term future when they lose and don't want to concede defeat."

Garry Kasparov, the Russian chess legend and outspoken critic of President Vladimir Putin, said that Trump's assault on the democratic



Donald Trump

process will result in "many similar attacks in future elections, in the US and elsewhere". "Democracy discredited, Putin's dream," he wrote on Twitter.

Changing discourse on elections

Thomas Carothers, an expert on democracy promotion, noted that nations such as Russia, China and Egypt hardly needed tips from Trump on how to oppose competitive elections. But he said the effect could be more palpable in problematic democracies as leaders see how Trump can brazenly claim victory and find some support, despite Biden winning nearly six million more votes and edging Trump out 306-232 in the state-by-state Electoral College that determines US elections. "They see the power of that approach, that even a society as educated and sophisticated in certain ways as the United States can fall victim to that kind of big lie," said Carothers, senior vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Studies in Washington. He drew a parallel to Trump's denunciations of "fake news," a term now cited around the world by governments that want to muzzle the media. — AFP

International

US record its 12th million COVID case; more than 255,000 killed

Many Americans defy Thanksgiving travel guidance

WASHINGTON: The United States recorded its 12th million COVID-19 case on Saturday, even as millions of Americans were expected to travel for the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, ignoring warnings from health officials about furthering the spread of the infectious disease. More than 12,010,000 cases of the coronavirus were reported, according to a Reuters tally of public health data, capping a series of days with record-breaking infections, with the Midwest experiencing one of the most dramatic increases in cases per capita.

The COVID-19 epidemic has claimed more than 255,000 lives in the United States - more than in any other nation - according to the Reuters tally - and the recent escalation has prompted more than 20 states to impose sweeping new restrictions this month to curb the virus. Reuters data shows the pace of new US infections has quickened, with nearly one million more cases recorded in just the last 6 days before the latest record. This compares with the 8 days it took to get from 10 million cases to 11 million, and the 10 days it took to get from 9 million to 10 million.

More than 1 million people flew through US airports on Friday, according to data from the Transportation Security Administration, fueling fears of even greater spread of the virus. It was the second-heaviest domestic air traffic day since the start of the pandemic, despite pleas from health officials for Americans to stay home. "This is the 2nd time since the pandemic passenger volume has surpassed 1 million," TSA spokeswoman Lisa Farbstein wrote on Twitter on Saturday.

Friday marked another milestone in the United States as the highest number of new COVID-19 cases was reported - 196,815 infections in a day. Health officials have warned that the burgeoning wave of infections could soon overwhelm the healthcare system if people do not follow public health guidance, particularly around not traveling and mingling with other households for Thursday's traditional Thanksgiving celebration.

Still, video footage on Twitter showed more than a hundred people, wearing masks, crowding departure gates at Sky Harbor airport in Phoenix, Arizona, on Friday. Lines for TSA checkpoints and

kiosks at Chicago O'Hare airport were also long on Friday and "reminiscent of pre-pandemic times," local TV station WGN reported. The number of Thanksgiving air travelers was expected to decline by 47.5% from 2019, but nonetheless, 2.4 million people were forecast to take to the skies, according to a report earlier this month from the American Automobile Association. It said the number traveling by car was expected to fall by only about 4%.

"For those who are considering making a trip, the majority will go by car, which provides the flexibility to modify holiday travel plans up until the day of departure," AAA Senior Vice President Paula Twidale said in a statement. The US Centers for Disease Control has issued a "strong recommendation" to Americans to refrain from all kinds of travel over Thanksgiving. "We're alarmed with the exponential increase in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths," CDC official Henry Walke told reporters on Thursday.

Seven governors of Midwestern states - Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Michigan -



MANHATTAN BEACH, California: A cyclist wearing a facemask rides past outdoor diners on Saturday, a few hours before the start of the new 10:00 pm to 5:00 am curfew. — AFP

encouraged their residents to heed medical advice over the holidays and not to celebrate Thanksgiving with people outside their households. In a video message, the governors also referred to the recent announcement from Pfizer Inc that its COVID-19 vaccine is more than

90% effective. Pfizer said it would seek emergency-use authorization of its vaccine from US regulators, the first such application. "This is great news, but it doesn't mean we can let our guard down," Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker said. — Reuters

'Immense sadness' at funeral of black Brazilian

PORTO ALEGRE: Emotions were running high Saturday at the funeral of a black Brazilian man beaten to death by white security guards in an assault that sparked protests across the country. A video taken Thursday night in the southern city of Porto Alegre showed 40-year-old welder Joao Alberto Silveira Freitas repeatedly being punched in the face and head by a security guard while he is being restrained by another at a Carrefour supermarket.

The clip quickly went viral on social media. "It is an immense sadness. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. I'm struggling to hold back my tears," Silveira Freitas's father, Joao Batista Rodrigues Freitas, told AFP. In the presence of about 40 people, mostly relatives, Silveira Freitas was buried in a somber ceremony. The blue flag of his favorite football club, Sao Jose, was draped over his coffin. "I hope that all the emotion that his death has caused will make our society better... that we teach the principles of equality in school," his father said.

According to the preliminary investigation into his death, Silveira Freitas was beaten for more than five minutes before being immobilized by his attackers and dying of asphyxiation. Saturday morning, in his speech at the virtual G20 summit, Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro once again downplayed structural racism in Brazil, a country where around 55 percent of its population of 212 million identifies as



PORTO ALEGRE, Brazil: Relatives and friends of Joao Alberto Silveira Freitas, who died after being beaten by white security agents in a supermarket, attend his funeral on Saturday. — AFP

black or mixed-race. The far-right leader highlighted the "mixed" nature of Brazil and condemned "those who want to sow conflict and discord" by trying to "import" tensions into the country "that are not part of its history."

"As a man and president, I see everyone as the same color: green and yellow," Bolsonaro said, referring to the colors of the Brazilian flag, and repeating what he had said the night before on Twitter: that he is "color blind." His vice president Hamilton Mourao also caused an outcry Friday when he said "there is no racism" in Brazil. "We know how difficult it is to raise awareness, because the enemies of the fight against racism are currently in power," Matheus Gomes, a left-wing official elected last Sunday to the Porto Alegre legislative assembly, told AFP.

"But I think people are starting to wake up. Young black people are taking to the

streets in revolt to try to change this reality," said the 29-year-old black historian, who attended Silveira Freitas's funeral. Protests broke out Friday-Black Consciousness Day in Brazil - in Sao Paulo, as well as the capital Brasilia, Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro, many in front of branches of the French-owned Carrefour supermarket chain.

Saturday morning, the slogan "Black Lives Matter" had been painted in Portuguese in large white letters on Avenida Paulista, an emblematic street in Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city. Black British racecar driver Lewis Hamilton, a seven-time Formula 1 champion who has been hugely outspoken in his support for the "Black Lives Matter" movement, said in an Instagram story posted Saturday that he was "devastated" by the news of "another black life lost. It's still happening and we have to fight to stop this from continuing," he wrote under a photo of the protests in Porto Alegre. — AFP

Virus swells Montreal's homeless camps

MONTREAL: All along the edges of a long boulevard in Montreal stretches an unprecedented sight in this city: hundreds of tents that have sprung up in a brand new homeless camp since the end of summer, with many of the people thrown out of their homes because of the pandemic. "Welcome to the trendy encampment of Notre-Dame!" quipped Jacques Brochu, dubbed "the mayor" by his neighbors. At 60, Brochu said he found himself homeless and living in a tent on Notre-Dame Street after losing his affordable housing, which was repossessed by its owner.

Like his new neighbors, he is preparing for a cold Quebec winter, where temperatures often plunge to minus 20 Celsius. "I manage to heat my tent very well," Brochu said, showing off his small candles. A tarpaulin covering the shelter does the rest. In the camp in Hochelaga, once a working-class neighborhood in eastern Montreal that is undergoing gentrification, the long-term homeless rub shoulders with people who have recently lost their jobs, as well as students and workers who have lost their homes.

Guylain Levasseur, 55, who has been homeless for six years and lives

in a small caravan, is considered the encampment's "manager." Under a canopy by his caravan, which is lined with armchairs, he has set up a kitchen of sorts, where people can come and take food or donate it. "There are people who come to bring us meals every day," he said. His van is overflowing with sleeping bags and warm clothes also donated by good Samaritans. For the past three months, he has given part of his meager welfare payouts to help buy generators to keep the tents warm. The community has bought seven so far, running on gas donated by well-wishers.

'We have internet'

Another resident managed to set up a Wifi network, under the account name "Notre-Dame camp," and relayed from a router mounted atop his caravan. The homeless people also have access to portable toilets. Serge Lareault, Montreal's commissioner for the homeless, said the coronavirus has "thrown hundreds of people onto the streets." "The phenomenon of homeless encampments is new to Montreal," he said. Last year, there were around 3,000 homeless people in the city, but that number has snowballed since the virus broke out, wreaking havoc on the economy and squeezing affordable housing. "Our emergency shelters are overflowing, and demand is still growing; there are camps pretty much all around the city," he said. — AFP

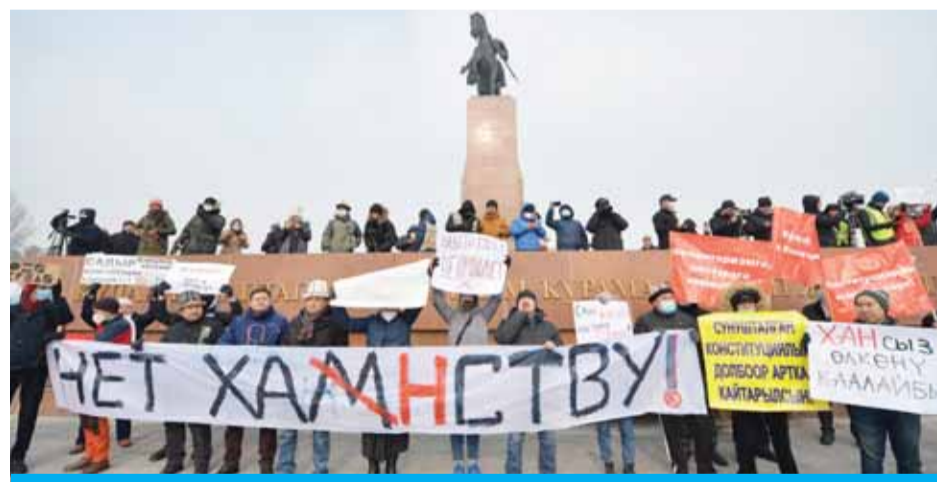
Kyrgyz protest over proposed constitution

BISHKEK: Hundreds took to the streets in Kyrgyzstan yesterday to protest a proposed constitution that critics say would empower the presidency and damage freedom of speech. Constitutional amendments currently undergoing public discussion would return cabinet-forming powers to the president and allow incumbent leaders to run for office.

Initiators say the draft constitution should be put to a referendum on January 10, the same day that the ex-Soviet country is holding presidential elections. In October, Sooronbay Jeenbekov became the third Kyrgyz leader since independence to resign over political unrest - this time over a disputed parliamentary vote. Disarray in the Central Asian country has caused concern for key allies Russia and China.

Several hundred protesters who gathered in the centre of the capital Bishkek held up signs decrying a "Khanstitution" - a reference to the absolutist rulers who dominated Central Asia for centuries. Some chanted against Sadyr Japarov, who this month resigned as acting president and prime minister to compete in a presidential election set for January 10, which he is tipped to win. Japarov has spoken in favor of the constitution and is widely believed to be its driving force. He called naysayers "shameless fools" in a statement relayed via media on Friday, and promised to "unmask the true opponent" of the changes next week.

Daniyar Amanalyev, a businessman who



BISHKEK: People hold placards as they attend a rally against new constitutional amendments yesterday. — AFP

attended the protest, told AFP that the aim of the constitutional reform was to "push the educated people out of the country and leave only those who are toadying to the new khan." Banur Abdiyeva, a 53-year-old who also works in business called the proposed constitution a "rollback" to the era of the country's first two presidents, both of whom were overthrown. Nobody has admitted to authoring the proposed constitution as of yet, Abdiyeva noted.

Rights groups concerned

Constitutional changes passed after an uprising in 2010 had limited Kyrgyz presidents to a single six-year term in office, while strengthening the powers of the parliament. The proposed constitution would reverse those stipulations and introduce a new people's assembly to which parliament and the government should report. International rights groups including Human Rights Watch and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee have raised concerns over the document.

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee warned Friday that a proposed amendment that would allow the banning of publications offending "the morals and culture of the people of Kyrgyzstan" could "seriously violate that same people's right to freedom of speech". Populist Japarov has been accused of using his supporters to force Jeenbekov's resignation and bully the parliament. Prior to the uproar triggered by alleged vote-buying campaigns Japarov was serving a jail sentence for hostage-taking.

That conviction was squashed after he was carried from jail by supporters, while the results of the parliamentary vote were annulled. Fresh parliamentary polls are expected to take place next year, but no date has been set. Talant Mamytov, a Japarov loyalist, is serving as the country's acting president in the period leading up to January's presidential election. Votes in mountainous Kyrgyzstan are traditionally more competitive than in the other ex-Soviet "stans" - Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. — AFP

Protesters burn Guatemalan Congress

GUATEMALA CITY: Hundreds of Guatemalans partly burned the Congress building Saturday in a protest demanding the resignation of President Alejandro Giammattei, following the passage of a budget that has sparked outrage in the impoverished Central American nation. The flames in the legislative building could be seen from the street in Guatemala City, and a spokesman for the Red Cross told journalists the group had treated several people for smoke inhalation.

A separate, peaceful, protest took place in front of the old government palace in the historic center of the

capital, not far from Congress, also urging Giammattei to resign. Carrying the national flag and banners that said "No more corruption," "Giammattei out," and "They messed with the wrong generation," the protesters filled the central square in front of the old palace. Police fired tear gas while protesters - many of whom wore surgical masks or other face coverings - hurled rocks at the officers.

One man was seen being carried away on a stretcher, blood streaming from his head. Police arrested more than 20 people and almost 50 were sent to hospital injured, one of them in a serious condition. "Guatemala is weeping blood," said one protester, who did not give his name. "The people are fed up with being trampled on for over 200 years. A woman at the scene said: "We are tired. There is no other way to show our repudiation: how fed up we are. We are tired of so much abuse by the authorities." — AFP



GUATEMALA CITY: Demonstrators set on fire part of the Congress building during a protest demanding the resignation of Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei on Saturday. — AFP

International

Ethiopia army threatens 'no mercy' in an all-out assault

Troops warn civilians to 'flee while they still can'

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's military yesterday threatened an all-out assault on Mekele, capital of the dissident Tigray region and seat of the local government it is seeking to dislodge, warning civilians to flee while they still can. "The next decisive battle is to surround Mekele with tanks," Dejene Tsegaye, a military spokesman, told state broadcasters yesterday, threatening a siege of the city.

He added a warning for Mekele's half a million residents: "Save yourself. A directive has been communicated for you to dissociate yourself from this junta, after that there will be no mercy." Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed - last year's Nobel Peace Prize winner - launched a military campaign against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) on November 4, accusing its forces of attacking two federal military camps in the region and the party of defying his government and seeking to destabilize it.

Communications blackout

A communications blackout in the region has made claims from both sides in the conflict difficult to verify, but hundreds of people are reported to have been killed while tens of thousands have fled the fighting into neighboring Sudan. Abiy's government has claimed the capture of a string of towns in recent days, including the ancient city of Aksum and the town of Edaga Hamus, 100 kilometers north of Mekele.

"Defense forces have controlled Edaga Hamus city, which is on the road from Adigrat to Mekele,"

the Ethiopia State of Emergency Fact Check, a government agency, said yesterday. "The defense force are currently marching on the campaign's last goal, Mekele city." The TPLF claimed Saturday that civilians had been killed during a "heavy bombardment" of Adigrat town by the Ethiopian Defense Forces (EDF). The government insists it does not target civilians.

Allies to bitter enemies

The TPLF led the overthrow of Mengistu Hailemariam, head of Ethiopia's military Derg regime, in 1991 and dominated the country's politics until Abiy became prime minister in 2018. The party continues to rule Tigray, one of 10 regional states under Ethiopia's system of ethnic federalism where by regions are delineated by ethnicity and language. TPLF leaders have complained of being sidelined by Abiy and blamed for the country's woes. The bitter feud with the central government led the TPLF to hold their own elections this year in defiance of a national postponement due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Military seeks to dislodge Mekele

Abiy has spurned all calls for peace, including from the African Union - which plans to send three former national presidents as special envoys in the coming days - the US and the UN which has warned of a looming humanitarian disaster. His government regards the TPLF as a criminal administration and appears intent on winning the military battle rather than negotiating. Military action has already spread

with a silencer and crammed his corpse into a metal box that they left in the local graveyard, case files say. Court documents seen by AFP show the two were prolific killers-adept not only at setting the deadly "honeytrap" but also at brute murders-including of their own relatives. Two men from their family who worked as policemen died at the women's hands-one was poisoned and the other killed when they planted a "sticky bomb" under the seat of his car.

It is not uncommon for relatives to take opposing sides in Afghanistan's long-running conflict. Before their 2016 arrest, the pair also worked with other people including Muzghan's husband to carry out a deadly grenade and shooting raid on a Sufi shrine, and another on a police station, their rap list adds. "I was arrested for murder, kidnapping and cooperating with the Haqqani network," Muzghan said in a video authorities made prior to her release. "I will not join this group again."

'Ordinary' family members

It is vanishingly rare for women to take part in attacks for the Taliban, notorious for banning school for girls, forcing women to wear burqas and sometimes executing those accused of adultery. Of more than 5,000 Taliban prisoners released under

Kenyan manager, James Nzawala.

Serena Group, which is 45 percent owned by the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development, is betting on a business clientele and the tourism potential of the nearby Virunga National Park, famed for its volcanoes and critically endangered mountain gorillas. The construction of the Serena Hotel took 10 years and was made possible thanks to investment by the most influential businessman in Goma: Vanny Bishweka. The 55-year-old former hardware dealer is already an investor in another hotel on the shores of Lake Kivu, and is a partner in Tunisian firm EPPM which exploits the lake's methane gas.

Security concerns

A single room for 250 dollars (210 euros) a night is the price of entry to the first five-star hotel in town. The guest rooms in the palatial premises opened in September offer a fine view over the swimming pool and the lake, on which Goma lies at the northern tip. On the border with Rwanda, close to Uganda and Tanzania,

The Balkan country of seven million people, the vast majority of whom are Orthodox Christians, declared three days of mourning following the spiritual leader's death on Friday. Two giant screens were installed outside the Church of Saint Sava, the biggest Orthodox temple in the Balkans, so that the faithful can follow the ceremony, after which the patriarch's body will be laid to rest in the crypt. Serbia is currently facing the biggest health crisis since the epidemic erupted in March, recording record numbers of infections and deaths on an almost daily basis last week.

As a result, the health system has been put under great pressure. Since last week there have been no more hospital beds available for patients in Belgrade, the city worst hit by the virus in Serbia. The church has vowed to adhere to the sanitary measures, and while mourners

new and ambiguous border that separates the Armenian fighters and Azerbaijan forces after a recent peace deal ended weeks of fierce clashes.

But wedged in the no man's land between the soldiers is the pomegranate farm planted a decade ago by Vardges Harutyunyan, who is nervous he will not be able to harvest the fruit this year. "Now Azerbaijani soldiers are standing there," Harutyunyan, 64, tells AFP, looking toward the rows of carefully tended trees in the distance. "If this is theirs, what can we do?" Clashes erupted in late September between separatists backed by Armenia who had held the territory for some 30 years and Azerbaijan's army determined to



WASHINGTON: Ethiopians from Tigray region gather near the National Museum of African American History and Culture on Saturday, calling to stop the military conflict in Tigray. —AFP

beyond Tigray's borders with the TPLF firing rockets at Asmara, the capital of neighboring Eritrea to the north, which it accuses of supporting the Ethiopian government, and the city of Bahir Dar to the southwest.

The campaign has seen warplanes bombing Tigray and heavy fighting, while Amnesty

International has documented a gruesome massacre in which "scores, and likely hundreds, of people were stabbed or hacked to death" in the southwestern town of Mai-Kadra. The UN has called for the opening of humanitarian corridors to allow aid agencies access, and has said it is preparing for as many as 200,000 refugees to flee unrest in the coming

The women who served as deadly duo for Taliban

KABUL: Female assassins who lured an Afghan security official to his death with promises of sex before shooting him and dumping his body at a cemetery are among thousands of Taliban criminals freed as part of a fragile peace plan. While the ultra-conservative Islamists ban women from many areas of life-often forcing them to stay home and barring them from most jobs-they are not above using them as killers.

Muzghan and her aunt Nasreen walked free from jail in September after confessing to being members of the Taliban's ultra-violent Haqqani network. The two women had been on death row after several killings, including the murder of an Afghan intelligence agent at their home. They had used Nasreen's daughter as bait "under the pretext of selling her body", on the orders of a Taliban commander, a security official told AFP.

The pair then shot the man with a pistol fitted

Congo hoteliers bet on luxury in troubled east

GOMA: The new five-star Serena Hotel in the city of Goma, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, has more than 100 luxury rooms and all of the amenities: a conference centre, restaurants, spas and a gym. The upscale hotel stands out in the capital of North Kivu province, better known as a stronghold for dozens of armed groups than as a tourist destination. It is the latest project in the region to come to fruition as DR Congo and a local business magnate are eager to turn the page on the country's insecurity and attract investors. "Generally people perceive this place as a war place, a place of instability. Everything negative," said the hotel's

Thousands attend patriarch's funeral amid COVID crisis

BELGRADE: Thousands of mourners paid homage yesterday to Patriarch Irinej, leader of Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC), who died of COVID-19 during the country's record surge in new coronavirus cases. The 90-year-old spiritual leader tested for the virus soon after presiding over the funeral of his number two, who also died of the virus, at a ceremony in which basic safety measures were neglected.

Karabakh's peace deal fuels anxiety and confusion

ASKERAN: An Armenian fighter in camouflage with a Kalashnikov assault rifle slung over his shoulder peers through binoculars over towards an encampment of Azerbaijan troops. The rugged valley in Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region delineates the



KABUL: In this picture taken on Nov 12, 2020, a man watches a video of Afghan woman Muzghan. —AFP

a prisoner swap that the insurgents made a precondition to peace talks with the Afghan government, only five were women. Cases like theirs are "almost unheard" of, analyst Ashley Jackson from the Overseas Development Institute think tank said. "The Taliban's norms and ideology firmly relegate women to the domestic sphere," she said. "To allow them to take part in, or admit that they played a role in waging the war, would go against core ideological tenets of the movement." —AFP



GOMA: A general view of the Serena Hotel on Oct 16, 2020. —AFP

Goma is also at the heart of the two provinces of North and South Kivu, where armed groups have been fighting for control of land, minerals and timber since the two Congo Wars in 1996-2003. —AFP

were allowed inside the church during the liturgy, they were banned from approaching patriarch's coffin. Some people nevertheless remained defiant. "I am not afraid (of the virus)," Mladen Tosic, 32 told AFP outside the church yesterday, wearing his mask under his chin. "Faith is stronger than anything", he insisted.

On Saturday, many worshippers crowded Saint Michael's Cathedral where the patriarch's body was displayed. Many of them kissed the cleric's plexiglass-covered coffin and took the communion traditionally given while sharing the same spoon. His death has dealt a huge blow to SPC, particularly as the powerful Montenegrin bishop Amfilohije, considered his second-in-command, succumbed to the disease in late October. The patriarch was last seen in public when he led Amfilohije's funeral service in Podgorica on November 1. —AFP

wrest the mountainous region back under its control.

Several thousand were killed and many more displaced in the six weeks of fighting that was brought to a halt by a Russia-brokered peace agreement that saw the Armenians cede swathes of territory captured by Azerbaijan. The new geography of Nagorno-Karabakh and several surrounding districts that were held by the separatists is now being overseen by a force of some 2,000 Russian peacekeepers, many of whom previously served in Syria. But until they arrive to mark out land in the valley near the town of Askeran, Harutyunyan and the future of his fruit trees hangs in limbo. —AFP

News in brief

Afghanistan hunts attackers

KABUL: Afghan Vice President Amrullah Saleh vowed yesterday to track down those responsible for a rocket attack on the capital that killed at least 10 people, even as the Islamic State group claimed to have fired the salvo. The rockets struck several densely populated districts of Kabul Saturday - including in and around the heavily fortified Green Zone that houses embassies and foreign firms. The attack came hours before US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was to meet with negotiators from the Taliban and Afghan government in Qatar, amid signs of progress in talks between the two warring groups. "We will find out the networks who facilitated in transporting the materials (rockets) used in the attack," Saleh said on his Facebook page after a meeting with security officials. Saleh said the attack left 10 people dead and another 51 wounded. —AFP

Israel strikes Hamas targets

JERUSALEM: Israel said yesterday its military struck Hamas targets in Gaza in response to a rocket attack launched from the Palestinian enclave. The Israeli air force struck two rocket ammunition manufacturing sites, a military compound and "underground infrastructures", the Israel Defense Forces said. A rocket was fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip on Saturday evening, according to the army, shortly after warning sirens sounded in the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon. The army statement gave no further details, but emergency services said they had no notification of anyone wounded and Israeli media said the projectile fell on open ground. The latest reported fire from the Hamas-ruled Palestinian enclave came after two rockets were fired from the coastal strip into neighboring Israel in the early hours of last Sunday. There were no casualties or damage in that attack. —AFP

N Africa Qaeda appoints leader

PARIS: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has chosen a new leader to replace Abdelmalek Droukdel, who was killed in June by French forces, the SITE monitoring group reported Saturday. Algerian Abu Obaida Yusuf Al-Annabi, the head of AQIM's "Council of Dignitaries", was named as Droukdel's successor, SITE said. Al-Annabi has been on the American "international terrorist" blacklist since September 2015, according to the Counter Extremism Project. He has regularly appeared in the group's propaganda videos, and in 2013 famously demanded that Muslims retaliate against France's intervention in Mali. AQIM also confirmed the death of Swiss national Beatrice Stoeckli, who was abducted in Timbuktu while working as a missionary in 2016. It blamed her death on an attempt by "French crusaders" to free her. —AFP

14 pro-Iran fighters killed

BEIRUT: At least 14 pro-Iran militia fighters from Iraq and Afghanistan were killed in air strikes in war-torn eastern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Sunday. The strikes on Saturday night in Deir Ezzor province, on the border with Iraq, were likely carried out by Israeli war planes, the Observatory said. The Israeli army said it doesn't comment on foreign reports. More than 10 strikes hit positions of Iran-backed militias outside the border town of Albu Kamal, according to the war monitor. The attack killed eight Iraqis and six Afghan fighters, it said. It also destroyed two bases as well as several military vehicles, the Observatory added. Iran-backed fighters are heavily deployed in a stretch of territory between the Syrian towns of Albu Kamal and Mayadeen, both former strongholds of the Islamic

Business

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2020

Zain Kuwait launches new iPhone 12 lineup during biggest virtual event

Followers tuned in LIVE as company gave away tens of valuable prizes

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, launched the all-new iPhone 12 lineup during the biggest virtual event of its kind, broadcasted LIVE over the company's official Instagram channel. The event was hosted by popular social media influencer 'Hamad Qalam', and attended by Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan and the company's executive management. Thousands of Zain's followers and customers tuned in LIVE to watch the virtual event and take part in its exciting program. The launch of the new plans, along with the newest iPhone lineup from Apple, comes as part of Zain's commitment to offer the latest smart devices with the most compet-

Zain offers first 5G iPhone over its network with flexible plans and amazing benefits

itive offerings for its customer base, which represents the biggest family of subscribers in Kuwait, all over the biggest and most powerful network in the nation. Zain is keen on refreshing its offerings with the latest and most advanced products and services to maintain its leadership position in the market and cater to customers' personal and professional needs.

Zain's virtual event, held LIVE over the company's official Instagram account, attracted thousands of followers and customers, and was hosted by popular social media influencer 'Hamad Qalam'. The event featured a discussion about the latest iPhone 12 lineup from Apple, along with the new accessories and unique features supported by the new devices. The company also unveiled its new iPhone 12 plans, and the all-new

Wiyana plans, which include exclusive benefits for Zain customers, giving them the opportunity to enjoy the latest devices with new great benefits. In addition, the event witnessed exciting entertainment segments where Zain gave away tens of valuable instant prizes to viewers and followers, including smart devices, earphones, accessories, and more.

Zain now offers the all-new iPhone 12 devices, which support 5G for the very first time, with many flexible plans and amazing benefits. Zain also offers an exclusive offer for all customers on Zain PLUS, allowing them to add the new device's installments on their subscription with two FREE months, starting at KD 12 monthly only. This offer also includes two FREE months on 5G access fees for 4G LTE customers, giving them the chance to enjoy this revolutionary technology on their new device.

Zain also launched new Wiyana smartphone plans, which feature more benefits, more value, and include the latest smartphones, wearables, and accessories, all along with 5G Internet. Customers can use their plan in Kuwait and while roaming, as well as enjoy many other exclusive benefits.

The plans also feature local minutes, FREE roaming Internet allowance, FREE subscription in the best entertainment platforms (including OSN with a FREE subscription of up to one year), FREE unlimited social media usage, as well as more benefits like the ability to



Hamad Qalam showcasing the new device on Instagram LIVE



KUWAIT: Eaman Al-Roudhan with Hamad Qalam and Zain's team during the event.

add wearables and headsets, accessories (chargers and cases), and Zain smartphone insurance.

Zain recently received 'Kuwait's Fastest Fixed Broadband Network' award for Q1-Q2 2020 from Ookla, the company behind the renowned Speedtest Internet testing platform, and the global leader in transparent Internet testing applications, data, and analysis.

The announcement comes to reinforce Zain's leadership in the Kuwaiti market by offering the largest and most powerful 5G network in Kuwait. Since commercially launching fifth generation wireless technology (5G) back in June 2019, Zain was the first operator



to offer 5G technology in the GCC region via the Kuwaiti market with nationwide coverage of all areas. The company succeeded in designing the first integrated network for 5G services built on a world-class infrastructure, ultimately transforming the telecom sector across the country and region.

Xi says China mulls joining trade pact dumped by Trump

KUALA LUMPUR: China will consider joining a free trade pact once championed by the US but abandoned by Donald Trump, President Xi Jinping said Friday, as Beijing increasingly seeks to influence the global rules of commerce. The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is an updated version of a giant deal originally backed by former US president Barack Obama as an effort to counter China's rising might in Asia.

Trump pulled out of it after winning the presidency in 2016 as he turned away from what he viewed as unfavorable multilateral deals, but 11 countries eventually agreed to sign the new version. Addressing the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, Xi said the grouping "must continue to promote regional economic integration and establish an Asia-Pacific free trade zone at an early date".

China "will actively consider joining" the CPTPP, he said, according to Chinese state media. Trump attended this year's virtual summit, the first time he has participated since 2017, as he continues to challenge his election defeat to Joe Biden. Xi's comments came just days after Beijing and 14 other countries signed what will be the world's biggest trade deal, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. That deal, which comprises 30 percent of the world's total economic output and excludes the United States, was viewed as a major coup for China at a time Washington is retreating.

Singapore-based international trade expert Deborah Elms said if China did join the CPTPP, it could encourage others to follow. "If Xi's statement of interest is pushed forward in the coming weeks and months, it will, of course, lead to a lot of questions from current members, prospective members and others that are not thinking of CPTPP membership at all," said Elms, executive director of the Asian Trade Centre. —AFP

Kazakh fintech star Kaspi a pandemic bright spot

ALMATY: With most staff working from home, the headquarters of Kazakhstan's fintech hero Kaspi.kz exudes a sleepiness ill-fitting for a company whose rapid rise has been accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic. Kaspi, Kazakhstan's payment systems and e-commerce leader, became the Central Asian country's most valuable firm after it was valued at \$6.5 billion on the London stock exchange in October in what was the United Kingdom's second largest float of this year.

The listing took commentators by surprise, coming after a failed attempt—falling short of a \$4 billion market cap valuation—the year before. But Kaspi's Georgia-born CEO Mikheil Lomtadze, told AFP that the company and its investors, including Goldman Sachs and CIS-focused Baring Vostok were not fazed by the false start.

"We believe that we have a lot of space for further growth, and we were not in any hurry to do our IPO," said Lomtadze in the company's head offices in Almaty. Lomtadze, sporting an open-necked shirt and jeans, told AFP that beyond China, where online payment systems Alipay and WeChat have become ubiquitous, there are few markets that have seen user behaviour so utterly transformed by mobile payments as Kazakhstan. "We are frontrunners in digitising the country," Lomtadze said.

Pandemic role

The coronavirus is a stern test of Central Asia's largest economy, with Kazakhstan's gross domestic product expected to shrink year-on-year for the first time in over two decades. Kaspi, which began life as a bank in the ex-Soviet country before expanding into peer-to-peer payments and online marketplaces, is bucking the trend. Active monthly users of its app that offers an array of services rose 70 percent in the first six months of 2020 compared with the same period last year, reaching nearly 8 million in a country of around 19 million people.

Kaspi's online marketplace services and army of couriers—exempted from restrictions on movements during a lockdown in March and April—



ALMATY: Employees of Kaspi, Kazakhstan's payment systems and e-commerce leader, work at its headquarters on Nov 5, 2020. —AFP

proved vital for businesses.

The app meanwhile delivered more than 60 percent of all government coronavirus relief payments to eligible citizens. "During these difficult times... we became even more relevant," Lomtadze said.

Investor interest in Kaspi, limited to funds by the terms of the IPO, points to confidence in a future beyond Kazakhstan for the company. Kaspi has already entered Azerbaijan, another ex-Soviet state, where it owns the leading online marketplaces for cars, used goods and real estate.

There, Lomtadze said, it is pursuing its Kazakh business strategy in reverse—beginning with retail ahead of planned moves into peer-to-peer and banking.

Kazakhstan's neighbor Uzbekistan. Central Asia's most populous country with 34 million people, represents another target, he said.

China trends

Few would have predicted Kaspi's trajectory back in 2014 when a sudden devaluation of the tenge currency weakened confidence in

Kazakhstan's financial sector. There were rumors at the time that prominent banks, including Kaspi, were set to default. In a bid to reassure depositors, Lomtadze and Vyacheslav Kim, a Harvard MBA classmate and Kaspi's chairman, toured Kaspi branches, financial analyst Tulegen Askarov recalled.

"When the owners of a bank talk to ordinary depositors like that, they probably develop a better understanding of what their business should look like," Askarov said. He also noted the influence of next door China, where Kazakh businessmen became acquainted with Alipay and WeChat, in accelerating Kaspi's long-planned shift towards fintech. Kaspi's central role in everyday life was highlighted by a technical hiccup two weeks after the London IPO, which sent services offline and saw users pile onto social media to post light-hearted memes depicting a return to the stone age.

The glitch was corrected within hours, a process Lomtadze likened to "fixing an engine while the plane is flying". Users grew the next day and clients were rewarded for their loyalty with bonuses. —AFP

In US, real estate market highlights rich-poor divide

WASHINGTON: The US real estate market is booming even as the coronavirus crisis intensifies, and the seemingly insatiable appetite for new and older homes has sent prices soaring—meaning more and more families with modest incomes are seeing their dreams of owning property shattered.

"It very much is a tale of haves and have nots," said Dana Scanlon, a property agent in the Washington area. In a bid to mitigate the economic crisis provoked by the pandemic, the US Federal Reserve slashed interest rates in March to near-zero.

As Scanlon explains, "that gives a very big boost to buying power for those people who still have jobs... where they can work from home." For some, it has, perhaps counterintuitively, even meant a "little uptick in savings" as commuting and other costs have been cut due to restrictions on travel and dining out, she says. That means some families have

more money to spend on upgrading to a bigger home—or even considering buying a second home.

With many white-collar employees contemplating a long-term shift to telework, and children still going to school over Zoom, the pandemic is still fueling demand. That soaring increase in home purchases has surprised industry experts, who still remember how the market bottomed out during the financial crisis of 2008-2009. But all is not rosy for all Americans seeking to buy.

'Pyramid' of buyers

"There's a kind of a pyramid, or a ladder, of buyers," says Scanlon, who works in the US capital, Maryland and Virginia. Those living in studios are looking for one-bedroom apartments, people in the one-bedroom places are looking to move to a townhouse in the suburbs, and so it proceeds.

In October, sales of existing homes hit their highest level since early 2006, according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR). But a dip in the number of available homes for sale has sent prices skyrocketing. According to NAR data, the median price for individual houses rose to \$313,500 in the third quarter, up 12 percent year-on-year.

The country's four main regions saw double-digit increases — 13.7 percent in the West, 13 percent in the Northeast, 11.4 percent in the South and 11.1 percent in the central US.

At this rate, the NAR said, house prices are rising four times faster than median household income.

As a result, more and more potential first-time home buyers are finding themselves unable to enter the market. Indeed, the percentage of first-time buyers has dropped to 31 percent of the total in 2020, from 33 percent a year ago, according to the NAR's chief economist Lawrence Yun. —AFP

Business

Boursa Kuwait organizes virtual Corporate Day in collaboration with Morgan Stanley

The recently self-listed exchange highlights its milestones, developments

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait organized a virtual Corporate Day in collaboration with Morgan Stanley, one of the largest banking and financial services institutions in the world, from 18 until 19 November 2020. The conference, held virtually because of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, was to highlight Boursa Kuwait's recent developments, milestones, financial information and business outlook to prospective investors.

The virtual event brought the recently listed exchange in contact with investors from the United States, Europe and Asia, who were keen to find out the latest developments of the first stock exchange in the region fully owned by the private sector. Representatives from the company showcased its financial data and reviewed the company's plans to develop a more transparent and solvent capital market through the implementation of a group of enhancements and regulatory projects as well as the technology to raise the capital market's profile locally, regionally and around the world.

Commenting on the event, Boursa Kuwait's Chief Financial Officer, Naim Azad Din, said,

"Through our continuous efforts to achieve operational excellence and best in class international standards, Boursa Kuwait hopes to continue to set examples for companies, either those that are already listed or those that are looking to list on our markets. We aim towards demonstrating the ongoing value and efficiency of the company, and that the company leads a progressive operation in line with dynamic world-class standards and best practices with ample room for growth and expansion."

He added: "As one of Kuwait's key financial institutions, we have been mindful of taking the necessary and feasible measures since the outbreak of the pandemic to ensure the continuity of our business and our relationships with our many esteemed partners. We are pleased to partner with Morgan Stanley for this event, and I would like to thank the participants for helping make this event a success and a fitting introduction for Boursa Kuwait as a prominent listed entity."

Boursa Kuwait's Head of Markets Noura Al-Abdulkareem also commented on the occasion,



Noura Al-Abdulkareem



Naim Azad Din

saying, "Boursa Kuwait continues to work towards strengthening the infrastructure and operational model to attract investments from international investors and highlight the unique investment opportunities that the company has to offer for all market participants. The company is cognizant of its role, as the engine of growth and development, in the promotion of the Kuwaiti capital market to Emerging Market status in the world's leading

index providers, culminating in its inclusion in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index at the end of the month." Boursa Kuwait's series of Corporate Days showcases some of the standout listed companies and the investment opportunities that reside in the Kuwaiti capital market. Putting these companies in touch with some of the world's leading investment firms and financial institutions, the events aim to highlight these companies' financial health and business strategies and outlooks helping investors gain an in-depth understanding of the benefits and opportunities of investing in Kuwaiti companies.

Since its inception, Boursa Kuwait has worked diligently to create a credible exchange built on efficiency and transparency, creating a liquid capital market, a progressive exchange platform and developing a comprehensive set of reforms and enhancements that has allowed it to compete on an international level. Over the past three years, the company has rolled out numerous market reforms and new initiatives as part of its comprehensive multi-phase market development (MD) plans.

GN6, GS5 and GA8 models now available in Mutawa Alkazi showrooms

KUWAIT: Mutawa Alkazi Co, the sole authorized dealer of GAC Motor vehicles in Kuwait, has unveiled the 2021 GN6, GS5 and GA8 models in its showrooms.

Mutawa Alkazi held a virtual ceremony to celebrate the launch of the new models of GAC MOTOR vehicles, in Al-Tilal complex, in Shuwaikh. The event was attended by Mutawa Alkazi's CEO Omar Sulaiman Alkazi, the General Manager of Sales and Marketing in Mutawa Alkazi, Ahmad Abulhuda, department managers in the company and Vice President/ Chief Representative in China State Construction Engineering Corporation Middle East, Yang Chunshen.

On this occasion, Mutawa Alkazi's CEO Omar Sulaiman Alkazi said that GAC demonstrates once again its ability to successfully face challenges and satisfy its customers by introducing new models that keep pace with developments in the motor world. Al Kazi added that "Mutawa Alkazi" is keen to provide distinguished products to its customers, noting that all-new launched "GS5, GN6" and "GA8" models reflect its keenness to provide the best offers and benefits to its customers.

He stressed that the coming period will witness the launch of more models as part of the huge investments made by the Chinese brand in all car models.

Alkazi said that the three new models are the latest GAC MOTOR innovations in the automobile world, and are divided into the categories of sedans, SUV and family vehicles.

He expressed his pride in the existing partnership between Mutawa Alkazi and GAC MOTOR that has established its position among the best car manufacturers in China and the world, providing global standards and high-quality vehicles based on the experience it has built over the years.

"Spreading in 26 countries around the world, GAC MOTOR has succeeded in enhancing its presence in Kuwait, Middle East and the world", Alkazi added. Meanwhile, the General Manager of Sales and Marketing in Mutawa Alkazi, Ahmad Abulhuda, said that due to that fact most customers prefer SUV cars, with the long-awaited GS5 being now available with a distinctive dynamic design and a spacious cabin equipped with the latest technology, while the 7-passenger family GN6 car comes with a stylish, functional and comfortable cabin.

He added that the new launched models reflect GAC's ability to successfully face up to challenges and the



Ahmad A. Abulhuda



Yang Chunshen



Omar Sulaiman Alkazi



GS5 after unveiling

confidence it attaches to the capabilities of both Mutawa Alkazi and the Kuwaiti market, which is one of its important markets in the Middle East. They also confirm the company's success in meeting the challenges imposed by Coronavirus and its continuous pursuit of launching modern models that satisfy all customers.

He pointed out that GAC Motor has been ranked first in quality for the 8th year in a row by JD Power 2020 which reflects the continuous investments to keep abreast of the developments in the motor industry worldwide. Abulhuda emphasized the commitment of Mutawa Alkazi to provide distinguished products to its customers in the Kuwaiti market, offering best prices and exclusive promotions that meet their needs and requirements.

He added: "Thanks to our exclusive partnerships with banks and financing companies, customers are able to purchase cars with convenient installments and obtain the funding approval within the shortest waiting time".

Vice President / Chief Representative of China State Construction Engineering Corporation in the Middle East, Yang Chunshen said that the company started work in Kuwait with the new headquarters project of the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Kuwait University management center project and various other projects.



GN6... Customer satisfaction

"GAC GN6" is a new star in Mutawa Alkazi showrooms distinguished by its modern and attractive design that reflects the GAC design language to complement its models and catch eyes on Kuwaiti roads.

The "minivan" is an upscale, primarily intended for businessmen and high-end families, who are looking for a car with an exterior design that catches the eye without sacrificing performance. GN6 blends elegance, strength and durability and reflects the keenness of GAC and Mutawa Alkazi to satisfy the requirements of all categories of customers in the Kuwaiti market.

The front is distinguished by three basic features, namely, the front grille

which occupies the largest part of the front, with four wide segments and the company logo in the middle; the "Matrix" headlights (LED) and day lights (DRL) with the property of height adjustment and warning when the headlights are on. The third feature is the front bumper which is blended with the fog lights, along with a wide vent in the middle and side lines inspired by the lines of super yachts.

GS5 Integrated System

The new 2021 model GAC GS5 is equipped with an integrated set of safety and security systems making it a mobile protection castle. These include front double airbags, side and front airbags, side curtain airbags and 3-point safety belts.

The vehicle features an electronic stability system, anti-lock brakes, electric brakes distribution (EBD), traction control system, hydraulic brakes system and uphill and downhill control systems.

The vehicle has solid procedures for ensuring a distinctive driving with the most advanced and efficient power system in the world, reflecting a world innovative power combination through the tireless efforts in modern technology and applications of the international GAC R&D.

GA8...Elegant

The 2021 GA8 is fitted with an independent aluminum alloys 4-wheel suspension with precision sensors that enable it to reduce road vibrations along with extended chassis technology offering extra comfortable driving.

The new car features advanced safe suspension and brake system, employing multi-level braking strategies to effectively reduce discomfort of braking. It also features lane departure warning system that is automatically activated to detect if the car deviates from the main traffic lane, giving ongoing voice and image warnings.



GN6 after the launch



GA8 after the launch

Fed faces ill political winds as Biden gears for White House

WASHINGTON: The US Congress' rapid response to the coronavirus pandemic in March was meant to unleash a \$4 trillion fire hose of credit for a stricken economy, distributed broadly by the Federal Reserve to help firms and markets survive a once-in-a-century collapse. But US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin's decision on Thursday to end some of the US central bank's core pandemic programs at the end of this year marked a return to more longstanding concerns among Republicans about the Fed's influence over and reach into the economy, just as Democratic President-elect Joe Biden prepares to move into the White House.

The emergency lending facilities slated for the scrap heap were among the most novel and controversial established last spring at the urging of lawmakers from both sides of the aisle in Washington. The shuttering of the programs, which many analysts have credited for helping to blunt the economic pain of the pandemic, will push the Fed back behind a line many in the Republican party feel it never should have crossed.

And it's a sign of the colder climate facing the central bank in the aftermath of the Nov. 3 presidential election, one that will test the relationships with lawmakers that Fed Chair Jerome Powell has worked hard to build in his first three years in the job.

"I expect there will now suddenly be Senate Republicans who suddenly criticize the Fed for credit market actions which both proved highly effective this year and had their support up until the election," says Adam Posen, a former Bank of England policymaker who is now president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington.

"I would expect attacking the Fed for doing its job will play into right-wing conspiracy theories and risk damage to the institution."

Old concerns anew

During much of President Donald Trump's administration, Powell's assiduous attention to cementing relationships on Capitol Hill appeared to pay off, insulating him from a hot-tempered president who installed him and later regretted it.

Powell's monthly meeting calendars showed him blitzing the offices of members from both parties and those interactions continued in virtual fashion this year after the coronavirus outbreak sidelined face-to-face visits. Criticism of the Fed from lawmakers was fairly muted, even as Trump lashed out repeatedly and publicly at the central bank's "boneheads" for not easing monetary policy as fast as he wanted. The Fed earlier this year cut interest rates to near zero and ramped up its bond-buying to bolster the economy.

Republicans, who control the Senate, also declined to ratify a string of Trump's controversial picks to fill vacant seats at the central bank's policymaking table.

Once the coronavirus crisis hit, they seemed willing to defer their concerns about the Fed's growing balance sheet - now well above \$7 trillion, and much larger than during the Obama administration, when Republicans took the Fed to task over its bond-buying after the 2007-2009 Great Recession.

And they expressed little concern as Fed policymakers have flagged their plans to begin to incorporate climate change risks into the central bank's supervisory and monetary policymaking, or when Powell in August announced a new policy strategy that would aim for an inclusive definition of full employment. — Reuters

Business

No return to austerity in new British spending plan: Sunak

Finance minister hopes for a Brexit deal 'but not at any price'

LONDON: British Finance Minister Rishi Sunak said there would be no return to austerity and instead he will announce "quite a significant" increase in funding for public services in a one-year spending plan on Wednesday. "You will not see austerity next week," Sunak told Sky News television on Sunday. "What you will see is an increase in the government's spending on day-to-day public services, and quite a significant one, coming on the increase that we had last year."

Sunak will announce the heaviest public borrowing since World War Two after Britain suffered the biggest economic crash in over 300 years. Economists think Britain is on course to borrow about 400 billion pounds (\$531.28 billion) this year, approaching 20 percent of its gross domestic product, or nearly double its borrowing after the global financial crisis.

Sunak told Sky that the forecasts to be published alongside his spending blueprint would show the "enormous strain" that coronavirus has put on the economy and the priority for his plan would be to fight the pandemic.

Britain's finance ministry said on Saturday that Sunak was expected to announce one-year pack-

age worth more than 3 billion pounds (\$3.98 billion) to support the state-run National Health Service (NHS) as it struggles with coronavirus. Asked about reports that he would freeze public sector pay as part of an attempt to slow the surge in borrowing caused by the pandemic, Sunak said it was reasonable to look at state salaries in the context of the broader economy.

"When we think about public pay settlements, I think it would be entirely reasonable to think about those in the context of the wider economic climate," he said. Sunak declined to answer questions on possible tax increases saying he would not be talking now about future budget decisions.

Brexit

Sunak has said there is genuine progress in Brexit talks with the European Union, but that it would be better to walk away from a bad trade deal than tie Britain's hands in the future. Sunak, one of the few members of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's senior ministerial team to have emerged from the COVID pandemic with an enhanced reputation, was thought to be one of the leading voices in the cabinet who wanted a free trade

deal with the EU.

He told the Sunday Times that he hoped Britain and the European Union would secure an agreement.

"Every day I am reviewing bits of text, so there is genuine progress," he said. "Certainly, it would be preferable to have a deal." But he added: "The major impact on our economy is the coronavirus. It's absolutely not (a question of doing) a deal at any price."

"If we don't get a deal, why is that? It is because they are refusing to compromise on what are some completely reasonable and very transparent principles that we've laid out from the beginning. We are not asking for ... super-special treatment." The two sides have been locked in talks for months and, while officials say they have made progress in the last few days, a substantial amount still needs to be done for an agreement to be in place and ratified by the year-end deadline.

Sunak gave the interview ahead of a spending review on Wednesday when he will set out the government's spending over the next year, after COVID-19 blew a 200 billion pound (\$266 billion) hole in Britain's finances. He said he



LONDON: Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak puts on a face covering due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as enters the BBC in central London yesterday to take appear on the BBC political programme The Andrew Marr Show. —AFP

hoped that, by next spring, he would be able to start thinking beyond the current need to support the economy and jobs, and considering how he could return the public finances to a sustainable level. —Reuters

KFH inaugurates revamped Hateen, Airport branches

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House "KFH" inaugurated its two fully revamped branches in Kuwait International Airport and Hateen after fitting them with technological equipment and advanced modern services. This comes in line with the distinction of offering KFH customers an exceptional and unique banking experience while providing them with utmost comfort in conducting their banking transactions.

The two branches were officially opened in the presence of Acting Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO) at KFH, Abdulwahab Issa Al-Roshood and members of the bank executive management team.

In a statement to the press during the inauguration, Al-Roshood explained that the airport branch, located in the departures lounge (first floor) and the Hateen branch stand out for their spaciousness, contemporary design, modern technology, diverse interactive services and utmost privacy, with the Hateen branch featuring a special ladies section as another competitive advantage by the bank.

"Equipped with highly-qualified personnel, the two branches offer sophisticated bank solutions and services with the provision at the airport of an interactive service such as the XTM, advanced ATM machines, cash deposit machines which can accept 300 notes in a single transaction, sophisticated digital platforms, tablets and display screens introducing services and offers." He added.

Leadership in banking digitization

Al-Roshood pointed out that the two branches differ from traditional bank branches in both their design and their reliance on the latest and most advanced banking and interactive services, making a qualitative shift in the design of future branches.

He noted that reliance on technological solutions and digital platforms enhances service efficiency as part of the digital transformation strategy in which the bank made long strides that established its leadership in e-banking services and the world of banking digitization. He stressed the continuous efforts to care for



Al-Roshood touring the women's section at the newly-opened Hateen branch

the customers and introduce a new generation of easy banking services fitted with the best financial technology tools while committing to the highest standards of quality, distinction, efficient techniques and enhancing the E-Systems at international standards in order to meet customers aspirations and reflect KFH leading position globally.

Al-Roshood noted that, by modernizing its branches, KFH follows an ambitious plan that ensures moving towards opening revamped branches to meet the modern aspirations of customers and reflect the bank's care for their comfort, offering them a distinctive banking experience in all its branches in Kuwait. He revealed that the segment of youth seeking digital banking solutions was a major element in the bank's strategy of devising a qualitative service model of the best self-service digital transactions. He stressed that KFH is keen to comply with the protective measures, pointing to the Skipino service for booking appointments by smart phones through KFH.com and the KFHonline application.

Interactive services

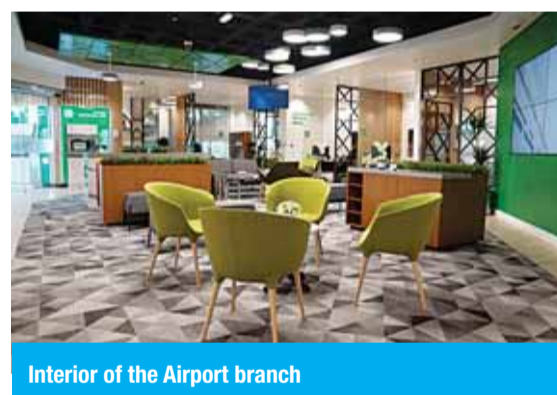
The self-service banking offered by two branches include conducting "Murabaha" financing transactions, requesting credit and prepaid cards, updating data and phone numbers, activating bank cards, opening deposits and accounts, instant cheque printing, receiving gold biscuits (10 grams), opening (gold, savings, Al-Rabeh, electron) accounts, online gold purchase and sell, cardless withdrawals using QR code through mobile, or using ID and many other financing and banking services conducted quickly, easily and safely.



KUWAIT: Abdulwahab Issa Al-Roshood and members of the bank executive management team during the Hateen branch opening



KFH executive management with the staff at the Airport branch



Interior of the Airport branch



Abdulwahab Issa Al-Roshood with Mandani check out banking services at Hateen branch

G20 should boost trade financing, back reforms: WTO

WASHINGTON: Group of 20 major economies should work to provide trillions of dollars in trade financing for developing countries to ensure the recovery of the global economy from the COVID-19 pandemic, a top official with the World Trade Organization said on Saturday.

WTO Deputy Director General Alan Wolff told G20 leaders it was critical to utilize trade to help underwrite the economy, facilitate trade in essential medical supplies, and reform the institutional framework for world trade. "When crops do not move and factories are idled throughout the developing world, the global recovery will be delayed for all," Wolff, a US citizen, told the leaders. "A trade finance initiative should be seen as an essential part of improving the outlook for economic recovery."

The World Economic Forum this year said the COVID-19 pandemic was exacerbating a gap in global trade finance that was already at \$1.5 trillion before the crisis began, with over 50 percent of requests for financial support of trade being rejected.

The lack of access to trade financing hits least developed countries hardest that already suffer from the high cost of financial transactions. Wolff said close cooperation among international financial institutions, the WTO and the large commercial banks would be needed to free up trillions of dollars in required financing. G20 leaders will underscore their commitment to multilateral trading system in a joint statement to be released on Sunday, a draft of the communique showed. —Reuters

Denmark's mink farmers despair as livelihood dies

COPENHAGEN, Denmark: Denmark's mink farmers are mourning what they say is the death of their industry after a government order to cull all of their stocks over a mutated variant of the new coronavirus. On Saturday, angry farmers and supporters plan to demonstrate against the cull in the country's two biggest cities, Copenhagen and Aarhus, with 400 tractors expected to roll in.

"We're in shock," Marianne Norgaard Sorensen tells AFP. "Words can't describe the nightmare we've been through." She and her husband, who has been a mink farmer since 1993, live in North Jutland, the region in northwestern Denmark home to the most mink farms.

Like millions of others across the country, their 27,000 minks were slaughtered in early November and around two thirds of the country's stocks have been culled to date.

"We wrote to the veterinary authorities to ask for two more days but then they came ... and took over. It was very harsh, video of the slaughter went online," she recalls. "If we had only had two more days, we would have done it in a more humane way."

Meanwhile, hundreds of Danish farmers and mink breeders demonstrated with tractors Saturday against a government decision to cull their minks to halt the spread of a coronavirus variant. More than 500 tractors, many decked out with the Danish flag, drove past the

government's offices and parliament in Copenhagen to the port. Another 400 staged a similar protest in the country's second city, Aarhus.

Prime Minister Frederiksen's government has acknowledged that its decision to cull more than 15 million minks had no legal basis for those not contaminated by the COVID-19 variant, infuriating breeders.

Denmark, a country of around 5.8 million people, has been the world's leading exporter of mink fur for several decades. It sells pelts for around 670 million euros (\$792 million) annually, and is the second-biggest producer worldwide, behind China.

Political fiasco

Denmark's mink breeding began in the 1930s, when farmers sought to diversify their business as butter and meat prices tumbled. Boosted by a favorable climate, the sector peaked in the 1960s, when there were some 6,000 farms compared to around 1,000 today.

With three times more minks than people, Denmark is now the world's biggest exporter of pelts, ringing up sales of 670 million euros (\$792 million) annually, and the second-biggest producer behind China. The animal is prized for its soft fur, used in the fashion industry for coats, collars and hats. Wearing fur remains especially popular in China, while attitudes have shifted in the West over the years. But minks have posed a problem in the fight against the new coronavirus. The animals can catch the virus, and also pass it back to humans. In early November, the Danish government sounded the alarm when it announced a nationwide cull of its 15 to 17 million minks, saying they could carry a mutated variant of the virus that could render



COPENHAGEN: Hundreds of Danish farmers and mink breeders demonstrate with tractors against a government decision to cull their minks to halt the spread of a coronavirus variant on Saturday. —AFP

any future vaccine for humans less effective.

The strain, dubbed 'Cluster 5', was detected in 12 people in August and September in North Jutland, and the government swiftly imposed strict restrictions on the region. Since then, no new cases of the strain have been detected in humans or minks, the health ministry said Thursday, saying it has "most likely been eradicated". The cull has turned into a fiasco for the government.

It was forced to admit last week that it had no legal power to order the killing of healthy minks outside the contaminated zones, leading to the resignation on Wednesday of the agriculture minister and dealing a blow to public confidence in the government.

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has nonetheless insisted the cull is "non-negotiable", and her government is now preparing legislation to make it possi-

ble-by banning mink farming until January 1, 2022.

No hope for recovery

Meanwhile, in another part of Jutland, Erik Vammen has held off killing his animals so far, even though that means he forgoes the extra compensation paid to those who cull rapidly. "At night when I see the lights of a car I'm afraid it's the police," admits this 60-something who inherited his mink farm from his father and grandfather before him.

Since neither his nor the neighboring farms have had any cases of coronavirus, his minks are not a priority. But he knows that "if I don't kill the minks they'll come and kill them." He says the state's financial compensation is not enough to make up for his lost livelihood. And, he argues, how can you have confidence in authorities who impose measures without any legal basis?

Classifieds

Monday, November 23, 2020

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate freshening at times over costal areas north westerly wind with speed of 15 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Rather cold with light to moderate freshening at times over costal areas north westerly wind with speed of 10 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 22/11/2020 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	26 °C	17 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	25 °C	17 °C			
ABDALY	26 °C	14 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	26 °C	17 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	18 °C			
SALMIYAH	25 °C	18 °C			
AHMADI	- °C	- °C			
NUWAISIB	27 °C	20 °C			
WAFRA	27 °C	19 °C			
SALMY	25 °C	14 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	11/23	Fair and Partly cloudy	23 °C	15 °C	NW	10 - 32 km/h
Tuesday	11/24	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	24 °C	14 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 38 km/h
Wednesday	11/25	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for rising dust	23 °C	13 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 40 km/h
Thursday	11/26	Fair and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rising dust with a chance for scattered rain	23 °C	13 °C	SE-S	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	04:54
Sunrise	06:17
Zuhr	11:34
Asr	14:31
Sunset	16:51
Isha	18:11

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	32 °C
MIN. Temp.	22 °C
MAX. RH	83 %
MIN. RH	25 %
MAX. Wind	S 57 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
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Send CV by whatsapp: 99271514

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Lijo Gladin Austin Singh D/o Livingston, residing at No. 76, North st., Neyyoor post, Kalkulam Taluk, Kanyakumari dist., Tamilnadu, hereby inform and declare to the public that hereafter change my name as Lijo Gladin Livingston. (C 5817) 23-11-2020

I, Cyrus Louis Britto, 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) 22-11-2020

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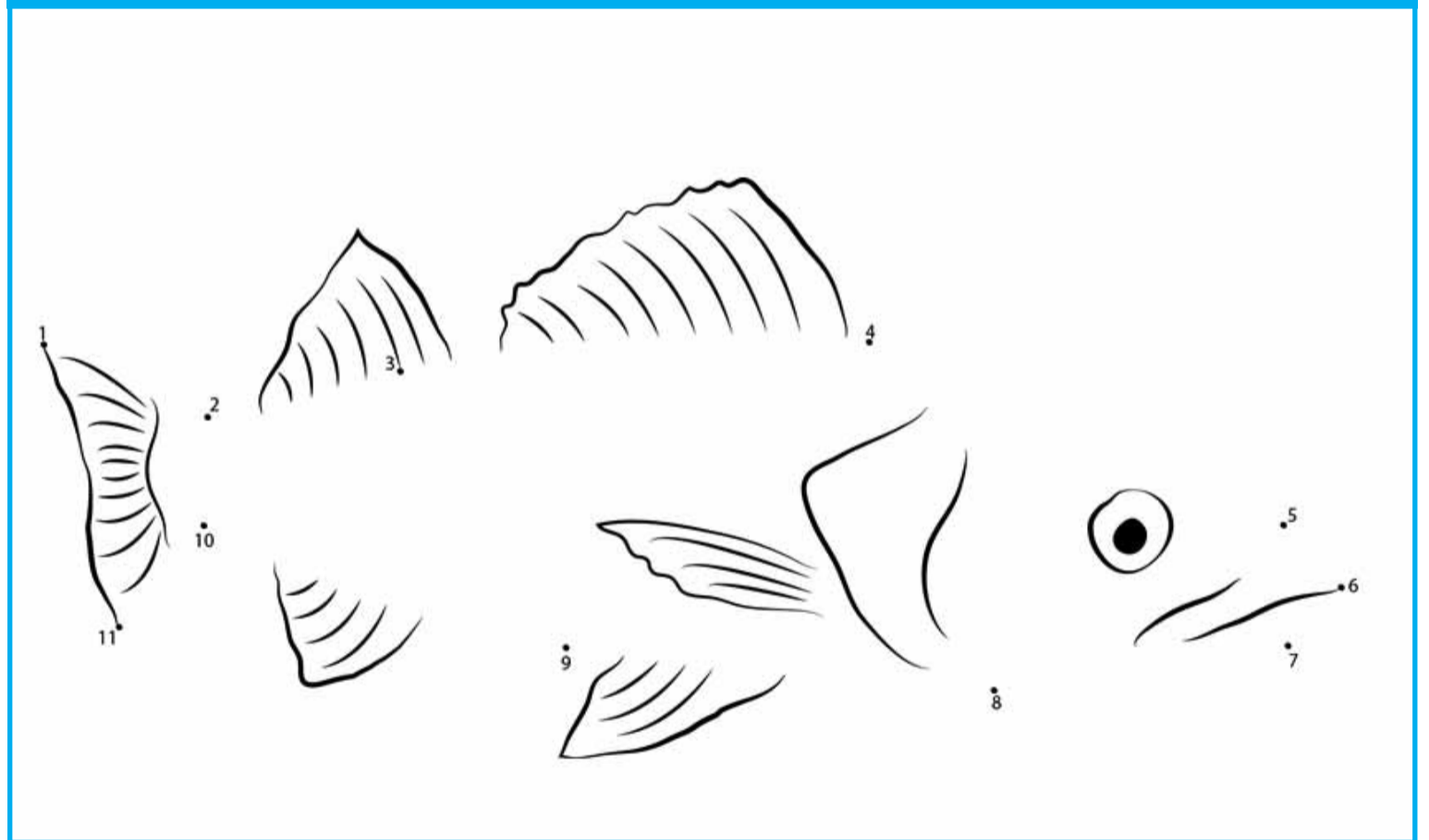
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Ancient Civilizations

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 CELTS
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 FRANKS
 HUNS
 INCAS
 INDIA
 JAPAN
 MAYANS
 MONGOLS

OTTOMAN EMPIRE
 PERSIA
 ROMAN EMPIRE
 VIKINGS

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 You're going to be a valuable asset to others today because of your rational mind and ability to think things through clearly. The stubborn forces around you aren't going to bend, but you have the unique ability to do so. Do your best to avoid fights, even though it will be tempting for you and others to want to let off some steam.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 Your playful attitude is apt to be opposed by someone who refuses to see things your way, Cancer. Walk away from those who aren't committed to helping the situation. It could be that there are people who purposefully try to sabotage your plans. You're too smart to fall into this trap. Prove to others that even though you may be happy, it doesn't mean you're gullible.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 In an attempt to merge with infinity, you might overlook some basic life principles, Libra. Be careful about being seduced by those who want you to be involved in their drama. You might willingly acquiesce at first. You may not even realize how deep a hole you've dug until it's too late. Make sure you haven't alienated everyone so that there's still someone left to dig you out.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 Things may happen right under your nose today, Capricorn, and you may not even be aware of it. The thing that will be obvious is your reaction to the situation when this hidden event suddenly comes to light. A passionate explosion is likely, due to people's heightened emotional state. Try to work with this energy instead of against it.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 In your attempts to always be the nice, helpful one, Taurus, you might find that you're compromising some of your values. Know that balance and harmony are wonderful things, but they aren't always worth the price of self-sacrifice. Don't be someone you aren't just to maintain the peace. Your tolerance is apt to be tested today. Don't feel bad if you suddenly feel like fighting.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 Today may be one of those days in which you're trying to paint a large area, but you only have a small brush. Your strokes are careful and calculated. You're doing a neat and precise job, but you're also doing things the hard way. Go easy on yourself and get a large brush. Make your strokes gigantic so you can cover more area with less effort.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Feel free to stand up for yourself, a cause, or another person today, even if you know it will cause tension among the others around you. A heated argument is likely to ensue, and it wouldn't be surprising if you were the catalyst. Passionate debates are right up your alley, so use this as an opportunity to demonstrate your courage and strength in what you believe.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
 It could be that close friends or family members are in sharp disagreement regarding a certain issue, Aquarius. Try not to be too distressed by divisions among the people you love. Some may want you to take sides and express yourself fully on the situation. You may feel as if you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. Try your best to compromise.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 Actions could be quick and intense today, Gemini. Things may hit you like lightning, so be prepared for just about anything. Mentally stabilize yourself before interacting with others. Dress to demonstrate your power. You're a force to be reckoned with, not one to be stepped on. Violent emotions are apt to emerge. Don't fight the urge to release any anger you feel. Direct it appropriately.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 You may be barking up the wrong tree today, Virgo. Before you waste all your energy on your podium proclaiming your thoughts to the world, it would behoove you to stop, look around, and notice your audience. How are they reacting to your tirade? Are people walking away or are they cheering? Perhaps you need to let someone else have a turn at the microphone.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 Your mind is apt to be fixed on one thing today, Sagittarius, and you won't rest until you've obtained it. Perhaps it's a physical place you're trying to get to, a new gadget that you want to own, or a person you'd like to get to know better. Don't be surprised if you have to put up a bit of a fight in order to accomplish this goal, whatever it may be.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 There is a great deal of emotion and drive to the day, just the way you like it, Pisces. Make sure you don't get stuck with the short end of the stick as the day comes to a close. An honest fight or debate is one thing, but a harsh manipulation of people is another. Make sure you're involved in the former and not the latter.

Rome bar bans virus talk

The message is clear from the hand-written poster above the counter—all talk of coronavirus, lockdowns or virology is strictly forbidden. In this little bar on the outskirts of Rome, the manager hopes to give her clients a brief respite from the global pandemic while they drink their coffee. “We’ve been talking about the same thing for months, so we chose to lighten the atmosphere,” Cristina Mattioli, manager of the Feeling bar, told AFP. As the first European country hit by the pandemic, Italy has been under the shadow of Covid-19 for longer than most, and endured one of the toughest lockdowns.

After a heady few weeks over the summer where life almost returned to normal, the pandemic again dominates everything, with deaths mounting each day. “It’s not at all about denial, or not understanding the difficulty of what the world is going through, but just about giving yourself a break,” Mattioli said.

‘Anything but that’

She said most customers in the bar, adorned with wooden boxes filled with tea on the walls and offering a tempting array of sandwiches and pastries, have reacted positively to the ban. Bruna Piazza, a regular who comes in to buy lottery tickets, thinks it’s a great idea. “We’re fed up with talking about

Covid, we can’t take it anymore, everywhere we go we only talk about Covid,” the 58-year-old said. “I’m happy to talk about anything except that, I’d rather talk about the weather, or celebrities.” Coronavirus is ever present, from the hand sanitiser to the masks worn by everyone not eating and drinking. The cafe itself has to shut early, at 6pm, under government orders designed to stem infection rates.

To help distract people, Mattioli has put up another poster offering ideas for conversation, including history and culture. “It’s a wise initiative, I would even say indispensable,” adds hairdresser Maurizio Ciocari, another regular. “You have to stop talking about it, you have to solve the problem, not talk about it.” As a rock ‘n’ roll fan with the long hair to match, the 63-year-old says he easily finds other things to discuss: “We talk about everything. Me, I love music.” And what happens if clients start inadvertently discussing exponential curves or a potential vaccine? “No sanctions, but I show them the posters,” Mattioli, 35, says with a smile. It seems she is on to something—two new customers have heard about the initiative and come in to congratulate her. “Another cafe manager in Trentino (in northern Italy) has also made similar posters, although she asked my permission first,” she adds with pride. —AFP



A photo taken at the ‘Feeling Bar’ in the outskirts of Rome shows bar owner Cristina Mattioli posing by a sign (Top left) reading “It is forbidden to talk about the coronavirus” and another suggesting to debate about news, people, history or general culture instead, during the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus. —AFP



Taiwanese actress Chen Shu-fang (left) poses with her trophy after winning the Best Leading Actress for the film “Little Big Women” and Taiwanese actor Mao Tzu-yi holds his trophy after winning the Best Leading Actor for the film “Dear Tenant” at the 57th Golden Horse film awards, dubbed the Chinese ‘Oscars’, in Taipei. —AFP photos

Two Hong Kong political films win at Taiwan Golden Horse Awards

Two Hong Kong films that cast an uncomfortable spotlight on China won accolades at Taiwan’s Golden Horse Awards on Saturday, as the island staged its largest film festival after successfully containing the coronavirus. While many film festivals have been forced largely online or cancelled by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Golden Horse Awards—dubbed the Chinese-language ‘Oscars’—went ahead in Taiwan which has seen just 611 infections and seven deaths. US-based Oscar-winning director Ang Lee and Chinese American actress Bai Ling, dressed in a red gown with a long train reading “Love Peace,” were among the legion of entertainers who walked down the red carpet ahead of the ceremony in Taipei’s Sun Yat-sen memorial hall.

Chinese cinematic talents used to dominate the Golden Horse nominations but the festival has fallen victim to the deteriorating relations between Beijing and Taipei. China boycotted the event last year after a Taiwanese director called for the island’s independence during an award acceptance speech the year before. This year featured just two nominations from mainland China—a documentary and an animated short film. Both failed to win any prize. The wins by “Lost Course” on the southern Chinese village of Wukan that became a symbol of resistance against corruption in 2011 as well as “Night is Young” about a taxi driver’s experiences during last year’s pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong are likely to rile Beijing.

“Being recognized by the Golden Horse really means a lot for a new director ... I also want to thank the villagers for accepting me so I was privileged to shoot and document them at

close distance,” Hong Konger Jill Li told the audience as she received her best documentary award. Hong Kong director Kwok Zune did not collect his best short film statuette in person but in an acceptance speech read out by a representative, he declared “May freedom belong to the people. Night is young, we keep on fighting. Save 12,” referring to 12 Hong Kong democracy activists being detained in China.

Hong Kong was rocked by months of massive and sometimes violent protests last year against the tightening grip of Beijing, which has since imposed a sweeping national security law on the city. Taiwanese director Chen Yu-hsun’s romantic comedy “My Missing Valentine,” which led the race with 11 nominations, was the night’s biggest winner taking five gongs including best film and best director. Taiwan’s 81-year-old Chen Shu-fang, who has been in the industry for 63 years, claimed both best leading actress (“Little Big Women”) and best supporting actress (“Dear Tenant”).

The best actor category was the most diverse, with Taiwan’s Mo Tzu-yi defeating rivals including Singapore’s Mark Lee (“Number 1”) and Hong Kong’s Lam Ka-tung (“Hand Rolled Cigarette”) for playing a gay man suspected of murdering his deceased lover’s mother. List of winners in key categories:

Best Feature Film: “My Missing Valentine”
Best Director: Chen Yu-hsun, “My Missing Valentine”
Best Leading Actor: Mo Tzu-yi, “Dear Tenant”
Best Leading Actress: Chen Shu-fang, “Little Big Women”
Best Documentary: “Lost Course”. —AFP



Taiwanese director Chen Yu-hsun applauds after winning the Best Director and Best Original Screenplay for the film “My Missing Valentine”.

Glory days gone, Gabon’s only circus fights for survival



Acrobats train at the facilities of “Le Cirque de l’Equateur” circus troupe in Libreville.

Wilfrid Mabila climbs to the top of a human pyramid—backwards—with the lithe agility of a cat. Six meters (20 feet) below, a thin mat offers little protection if he puts a foot wrong. The leopard-print-clad acrobat is a performer with Le Cirque de l’Equateur, which once represented Gabon at the world’s biggest circus festivals, but now cannot afford even basic safety equipment. The mats are falling apart, the safety ropes have snapped and the acrobatic nets are long gone. The small central African country’s only circus troupe—and its only circus school—is facing ruin. The oldest member of the troupe, Seraphin Abessolo, has spent nearly 30 of his 49 years with the circus.

“The circus is all about stage equipment—trampolines, juggling gear, diabolos. All of that is gone. Even though we have specialists in all those areas,” he says with a sigh. Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, “nobody calls us, it’s been almost nine months since we last performed”. But the circus was struggling even before the pandemic hit.

‘You must control the fear’

At its home in Gabon’s capital Libreville, the trees carry red signs recalling the glory days: Cirque Bougione 1994–1995, Shanghai Festival 1998–2000, Rome Festival 2000. “In the past we had more than 20 bookings a year;” the association’s president Maik Mpoungou said. “The problems started in 2005. We had fewer and fewer contracts, circuses asked for new acts which are more difficult to implement, and our resources dwindled.” Then the culture ministry stopped paying its annual subsidy of 500,000 Central African CFA francs (\$900) in 2009.

It could no longer keep up with the demands of a modern circus, which have themselves recently struggled across the world due to animal welfare concerns, rising touring costs and now the pandemic. The circus still has its home in Libreville on land that late president Omar Bongo Ondimba gave to the Saint Andre church, where the missionary and Le Cirque de l’Equateur’s founder Jean-Yves Thegner had worked. Thegner died from Covid-19 in March. In the small green space in the heart of the capital, the sound of birds singing rings through the mango and banana trees.

Children run, jump, dance and do acrobatics on old tyres. In the shade of a faded umbrella, older people play chess, casting occasional distracted looks at the leaping kids. Free of charge, the circus school trains 19 “student artists” aged from eight to 14, most coming from the local neighborhood. “Stretch your feet!” shouts trainer Corneille Mba Edzang. “You must control the fear,” he tells a student who missed a landing. “What drew me here is doing acrobatics,” says 12-

year-old Brice, in his third year at the school. “We also want to travel and join the professional troupe,” chips in fellow student Emmanuel.

A shared dream

The grounds still bounce to the rhythm of the acrobatics. But according to the older members, the site is a shadow of its former self. “It was once like a small village,” recalls Abessolo. “There was a small stone tunnel at the entrance and when you came out of it, you were amazed,” he said. The tunnel has since caved in. The walls are cracked and crumbling in the makeshift quarters where a dozen members of the troupe live. During the rainy season, water drips through the roof. The circus is now pleading for help from sponsors and the authorities. “We wrote to the minister and even the president of the Republic Ali Bongo Ondimba, but nothing worked,” Mpoungou says.

“The objective of the school is to take unemployed young people and offer them training so they can become seasoned artists, so they can have contracts, travel and live from their art.” Some students become discouraged and quit, but others like Mathieu Bikoumbou, a 28-year-old acrobat who has been with the troupe for five years, refuse to give up hope. “Today I have to do small jobs to survive. But our shared dream is to represent Gabon internationally,” he says. “So I hang on, I work and I tell myself that at the end of all these difficulties, happiness is waiting for us.” —AFP



Acrobats train at the facilities of “Le Cirque de l’Equateur” circus troupe. —AFP photos



Children train at the school of “Le Cirque de l’Equateur” circus troupe in Libreville.



An acrobat trains on a tightrope.



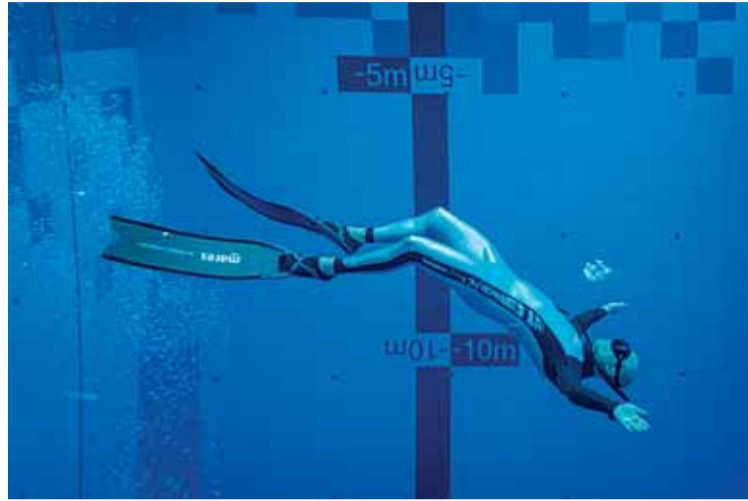
Acrobats train at the facilities of “Le Cirque de l’Equateur” circus troupe.



World's deepest diving pool opens in Poland



A diver is seen in the deepest pool in the world.



A diver is seen in the deepest pool in the world.



A diver is seen in the deepest pool in the world. —AFP photos

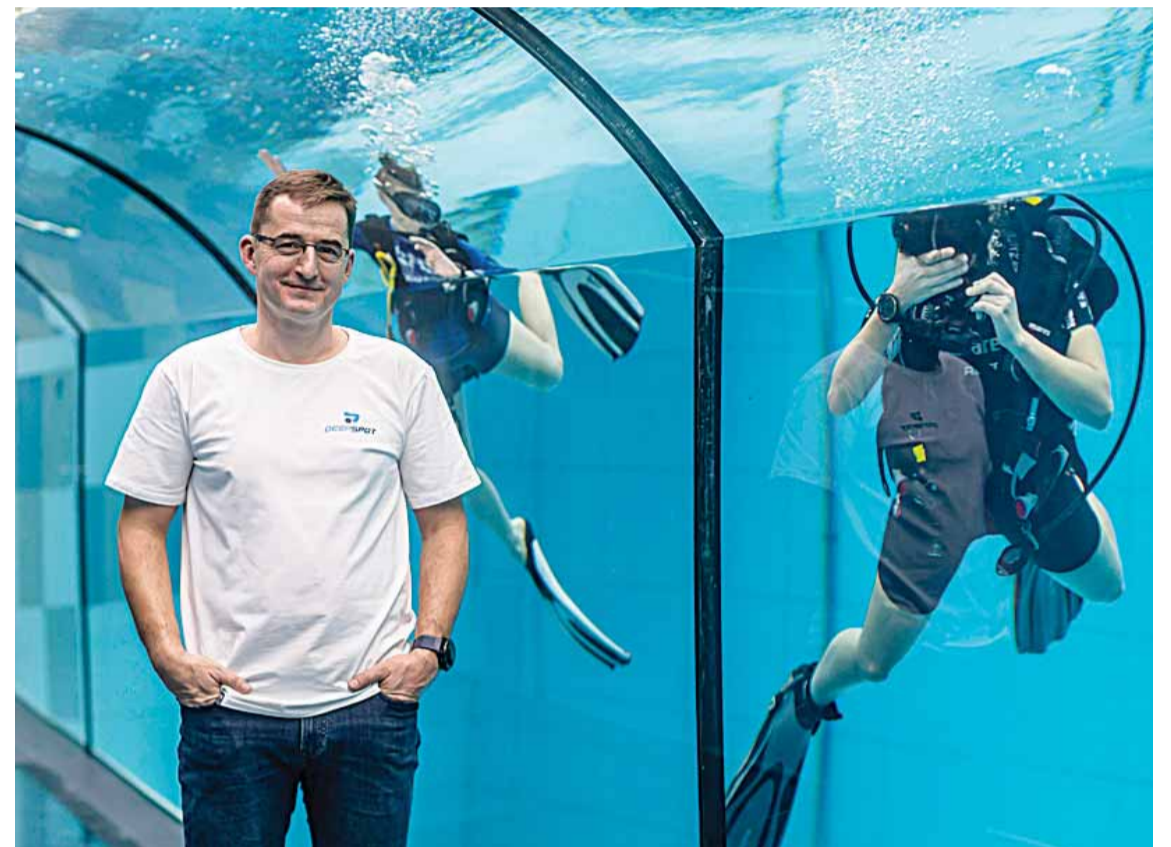


A diver is seen in the deepest pool in the world.

A 45.5-metre (150-foot) deep diving pool with artificial underwater caves and Mayan ruins, the world's deepest such structure, opened near Warsaw this weekend. The complex, named Deepspot, even includes a small wreck for scuba and free divers to explore. It has 8,000 cubic meters of water—more than 20 times the amount in an ordinary 25-metre pool. Unlike regular swimming pools, Deepspot can open despite coronavirus restrictions in Poland because it is a training center that offers courses.

A hotel with rooms from which guests will be able to watch divers at a depth of five meters is also planned. "It's the world's deepest pool," Deepspot director Michal Braszczynski, a 47-year-old diving enthusiast, told AFP at the opening on Saturday. The current holder of the Guinness world record is in Montegrotto Terme in Italy and is 42 meters deep. The Blue Abyss pool planned to open in Britain in 2021 will be 50 meters deep. Around a dozen customers came on the first day, including eight seasoned divers who hoped to pass an exam to become instructors.

"There are no magnificent fish or coral reefs here so it is no substitute for the sea but it is definitely a good place to learn and to train in order to dive safely in open water," said Przemyslaw Kacprzak, a 39-year-old diving instructor. "And it's fun! It's like a kindergarten for divers!" Jerzy Nowacki, a 30-year-old forestry officer and diving novice, said: "For my first time, we went down five metres but you can see all the way to the bottom—the wreck, the caves—it's magnificent!" Braszczynski said the pool "will also be used by the fire brigade and the army. There are many scenarios for training and we can also test different equipment". Some 5,000 cubic meters of concrete were used over the two years it took to build the pool and it cost around 40 million zloty (\$8.9 million euros, \$10.6 million). —AFP



Deepspot director Michal Braszczynski poses at the deepest pool in the world with 45.5-metre (150-foot) located in Mszczonow about 50 km from Warsaw.



This undated photo shows casts of the bodies of two men, a 40-year-old master and his young slave, after they were found during recent excavations of a Villa in Civita Giuliana in the outskirts of Pompeii, as Park officials said conditions were optimal to get casts of the victims, following the technique perfected in 1863 by Giuseppe Fiorelli. —AFP photos

Remains of two victims of 79 AD volcanic eruption unearthed at Pompeii

The remains of two victims of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius almost 2,000 years ago have been unearthed at a grand villa on the fringes of Pompeii, officials at the archaeological site said Saturday. "Two skeletons of individuals caught in the fury of the eruption have been found," the officials at the Italian site near Naples said in a statement. The researchers believe the figures are those of a young slave and a richer older man, around 40 and presumed to be his owner, based on the vestiges of clothing and their physical appearance. The ruined city of Pompeii was submerged in ash after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. It is now Italy's second-most visited tourist attraction after Rome's Colosseum, receiving nearly 4 million visits last year.

The massive site that spreads over 44-hectares (110-acres) is what remains of one of the richest cities in the Roman empire. Layers of ash buried many buildings and objects in a nearly pristine state, including curled-up corpses of victims. After the latest human remains were uncovered, the bones were analysed and then plaster was poured in, a technique invented by Giuseppe Fiorelli in 1867. This creates a plaster cast which shows the shapes of the bodies of the two victims, in a supine position, where they fell. The two skeletons were found, during ongoing excavations at Civita Giuliana, around 700 metres northwest of Pompeii, at a villa overlooking the Bay of Naples where previously a stable and the remains of three harnessed horses had been found. The two bodies were found in a side room of the "cryptoporticus" a corridor below the villa where the could have gone to seek shelter. While excavations continue at the Pompeii site, tourism has stopped due to coronavirus measures. —AFP



A detail of a cast of one of the bodies of two men.



A detail of a cast of one of the bodies of two men.

Black models increasingly visible on Brazil's catwalks

Afro-Brazilian models Shirley Pitta and Gloria Maria Fonseca Siqueira had dreamed of the catwalk since they were girls, but in a Brazilian fashion world much whiter than the country itself, it remained a far-away fantasy until recently. In a sign of changing times in Brazil and elsewhere, the pair saw their dreams come true at this year's Sao Paulo Fashion Week. SPFW, one of the industry's premier events, this year implemented a requirement for at least half of every label's models to be people of color, in a move hailed by black and indigenous rights activists. "It took me a long time to see myself as a beautiful person, a person who exists. Because on television, I always saw things I wasn't," says Pitta, 21, whose portfolio already includes work for leading fashion magazines Vogue, Elle and Marie Claire.

She calls herself a "black favela girl from the Northeast," referring to the slums of Brazil's most impoverished region. Her modern-day Cinderella story has captured as much attention as her striking appearance. Before she was discovered in 2018, she spent her days selling grilled kebabs outside the zoo in her hometown, Salvador. "We were there every day, including Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. We got there in the morning and we worked into the night," she told AFP in between gigs at SPFW, as Brazil prepared to celebrate Black Consciousness Day on Friday.

With her short hair, high cheekbones and piercing gaze, Pitta exudes a confidence she says does not come as easily at it might appear. "When I was little I used to wrap towels around my head," ashamed of the way her hair looked, she says. "It's important to talk about these things, because our children won't have long, straight hair when they grow up, and they need to know that's not a problem. It's something beautiful." In Brazil, the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery—in 1888 — around 55 percent of the population identifies as black or mixed-race.

But although whites earn 74 percent more than people of color on average, a national debate on racial inequality has only begun relatively recently. The conversation was perhaps delayed by a long-held idea among the Brazilian elite that the country was a "racial democracy" protected from racism by the fact that most people have some black or indigenous ancestry. So it was a sign of radical change when SPFW, which was held remotely this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, required more inclusive casting. That opened the doors to Pitta and 17-year-old Siqueira.

'I'll never make it'

Tall and thin, with an exuberant afro, Siqueira says it took her a long time to realize she could have a future in the fashion world, despite people telling her she had potential as a model. "I'll never make it," she remembers thinking when she saw the model catalogue at Ford Models, one of the industry's top agencies, as a 15-year-old. Now, she gives interviews from the agency's headquarters in Sao Paulo. "I wasn't confident. I thought I wasn't beautiful enough," she says. "But now I know I can travel the world through this."

The youngest of seven children from a lower-middle-class family, Siqueira grew up admiring models like Naomi Campbell and Adut Akech. She sees Brazil, home to supermodel Gisele Bündchen, as a country of diversity, something she would like to see it embrace for its positive aspects. "Sometimes people feel like they're less because they're different, and they try to fit a standard that isn't them. They don't realize that



In this file photo Brazilian model Gloria Maria Fonseca Siqueira poses during an interview with AFP at the headquarters of Ford Models in Sao Paulo, Brazil, during the Sao Paulo Fashion Week. —AFP photos



Brazilian model Shirley Pitta poses during an interview with AFP at the headquarters of JOY Model in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

being different is unique," she says. Pitta sees the industry at a turning point. "We're breaking through. I'm not going to sit there thinking about the past. We're moving forward," she says. —AFP

Sports

Photo of the day



Pol Espargaro performs during MotoGP World Championship in Valencia, Spain. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

May at the double as England down Ireland in Nations Cup

TWICKENHAM: Jonny May scored two tries, including a spectacular solo effort, as England once again proved too strong for Ireland in an 18-7 Autumn Nations Cup win at Twickenham on Saturday. England's fourth victory in a row over Ireland meant they also had won both their opening two Pool A matches. Six Nations champions England dominated the opening 40 minutes but still only led 12-0 at half-time thanks to dashing wing May's double, with one try converted by captain Owen Farrell.

But two Farrell penalties early in the second half at a once again eerily quiet Twickenham, with this match being played behind closed doors because of the coronavirus, gave England, last year's losing World Cup finalists, breathing space. By the time Ireland replacement Jacob Stockdale scored a 73rd-minute converted try, England had the game won thanks to resolute defense that saw their pack win several turnover penalties. May has now scored 31 tries in 59 Tests, with only retired wing Rory Underwood (49 tries in 85 Tests) ahead of him in England's all-time list of try-scorers.

"He's right up there — he's 30 and he's still improving," England coach Eddie Jones told reporters when asked how highly he regarded May's finishing ability. Both teams kicked off on the back of decisive home pool wins, England thrashing Georgia 40-0 in a dour, forward-dominated display last week when Ireland overwhelmed Wales 32-9. Ireland, however, were without injured veteran fly-half and captain Johnny Sexton, with Ross Byrne at No 10. Meanwhile Jamison Gibson-Park kept vastly experienced scrum-half Conor Murray on the bench, with lock James Ryan captaining Ireland for the first time. —AFP

Djokovic and Nadal fall as Thiem and Medvedev advance to London finale

Thiem beats Djokovic in thriller to reach title match at ATP Finals

News in brief

Moukoko, 16, makes history

BERLIN: At 16 years and one day, Borussia Dortmund striker Youssoufa Moukoko became the youngest player in Bundesliga history Saturday when he made his German league debut in the 5-2 romp at Hertha Berlin. Moukoko's late cameo off the bench at Berlin's Olympic Stadium broke the previous record set by Nuri Sahin, who was 16 years, 335 days when he made his league debut for Dortmund in 2005. Moukoko came on after 85 minutes to replace Erling Braut Haaland, who scored four second-half goals in a stunning display. "He's only just turned 16, that is amazing," Haaland said of Moukoko. "He has a big career ahead of him." Moukoko made his Bundesliga debut after dazzling in German youth football with a mind-blowing 47 goals in 25 matches for Dortmund U19s. He could also become the youngest player in Champions League history if he features in the home game against Brugge tomorrow. —AFP

Flamengo return to top spot

RIO DE JANEIRO: Flamengo returned to the top of Brazil's Serie A on Saturday with a 3-1 win at home to Coritiba. Bruno Henrique put the home side one up after just three minutes when he headed home a cross from Giorgian De Arrascaeta and then De Arrascaeta turned scorer 24 minutes later when his shot wrongfooted the goalkeeper. Rene completed the scoring for the reigning champions with 15 minutes of the second half gone. William Matheus scored a late consolation for the visitors. The result lifts Flamengo into top spot, one point ahead of Atletico Mineiro, who played Ceara yesterday. Coritiba are in 18th place in the 20-team table. —Reuters

Germain kicks Bayonne to win

PARIS: Full-back Gaetan Germain scored 25 points as Bayonne notched up an invaluable 35-29 victory over Toulon in the Top 14 on Saturday. "The job is done and once again our solidarity was key," said Bayonne lock Guillaume Ducaat. Germain hit seven penalties and converted two first-half tries by Myerick Luc and Filmo Taofifenua. That second try came with Toulon's ex-All Black centre Ma'a Nonu in the sin-bin for a technical foul. Toulon notched up tries from Gervais Cordin, South Africa's World Cup-winning lock Eben Etzebeth, Baptiste Serin as well as a late penalty try with Bayonne down to 13 men. But it was all in vain as the home side, promoted back into the Top 14 in 2019, held on to buck a four-match losing streak against Toulon dating back to 2016 and consolidate their mid-table position. "They deserved their win," said Toulon coach Patrice Collazo, lamenting a first half that featured an "incalculable number of tackles" as Bayonne raced out to a 29-10 lead. —AFP

Norwich take Championship top spot

LONDON: Norwich moved to the top of the Championship with a 1-0 win at Middlesbrough after Reading crashed to a 4-2 defeat at Bournemouth on Saturday. Teemu Pukki sealed the points for Norwich with a late penalty after Middlesbrough's Marcus Tavernier had his earlier successful spot-kick disallowed. Tavernier was adjudged to have touched the ball twice when he slipped during his run-up. At Dean Court, Reading led 2-0 at the break as Lucas Joao's penalty was followed by Sone Aluko's strike. Bournemouth responded superbly and Dominic Solanke's double came either side of goals by Arnaut Danjuma and Lewis Cook to complete the turnaround. Watford could also have gone top but were held 1-1 at QPR, Ben Wilton giving the Hornets the lead before Ilias Chair made the final score 1-1. Swansea kept pace with the leaders as captain Matt Grimes scored the only goal just before the half-hour mark at home to Rotherham. —AFP

LONDON: Rafa Nadal's dream of a first ATP Finals title and Novak Djokovic's quest for a record-equalling sixth vanished in defeats by Daniil Medvedev and Dominic Thiem in two seismic semi-finals on Saturday. As the curtain comes down on London's 12 years as host of the ATP Tour's prestigious season-ender, it would have been fitting for Nadal and Djokovic to face off for the 57th time in their glittering careers.

But times are a changing, or so it seems, and Medvedev and Thiem had not read the script. Nadal, seeking the one major pot missing from his vast collection of silverware, must have seen the door creaking open when Thiem produced a staggering fightback to beat Djokovic 7-5 6-7(10) 7-6(5) in a classic contest lasting almost three hours. He had beaten Medvedev in each of their three meetings, including a memorable US Open final last year.

It seemed like he had exhausted the wily Russian's box of tricks when he served for the match at 5-4 in the second set but Medvedev, 10 years his junior at 24, stormed back to win 3-6 7-6(4) 6-3. Whatever happens on Sunday it will mean a fifth consecutive first-time winner of the tournament. "At 5-4

in the second set I decided to change some small things and start going for things a little more. I had to change and it worked really well," said Medvedev, who was 100% in group play, including a win over Djokovic. To put world number four Medvedev's win into perspective, Nadal had triumphed in the last 71 matches in which he had taken the first set.

"I played a bad game at 5-4, I had a big opportunity, but well played to him," Nadal said. Medvedev looked the more likely winner as he raced through his service games in the opening set while Nadal labored. But the Spaniard pounced as Medvedev suffered a momentary dip at 3-4 and suddenly he was a set to the good. Undeterred, Medvedev kept hammering away and Nadal dipped at the start of the second set, dropping serve with a double fault. Medvedev squandered a point for a 5-1 lead and paid the price as Nadal hurtled back to stand on the brink of victory.

Flukey forehand

Medvedev broke to love, though, and the set moved into a tiebreaker. A flukey forehand winner helped Medvedev into a 5-3 lead and he stayed composed to take it. Nadal

slowed under the relentless barrage in the third, but it was still a surprise to see him fade at the end, losing the last three games as Medvedev romped home. Earlier in the empty arena, the 27-year-old Thiem saw four match points vanish in the second set tiebreak against Djokovic, one with a nervy double-fault, and it seemed he would pay a heavy price. Djokovic, who is one short of Roger Federer's titles record at the ATP Finals, led 4-0 in the deciding set tiebreak. But US Open champion Thiem unleashed a stunning counter-attack to reel off six points, reaching match point with a ripping crosscourt backhand.

Djokovic saved a fifth match point but then floated a defensive forehand long. "What he did from 0-4 in the tiebreak was unreal," Djokovic, who won the title in London from 2012-15, told reporters. "He just crashed the ball and everything went in. What can you do?" Thiem, who racked up his 300th career Tour win, is now established as a major force and will attempt to go one better than last year when he lost to Stefanos Tsitsipas in the final. "From 0-4 in the third-set tiebreak I went for every single shot and every single shot went in. It was amazing," he said. —Reuters

Noor Capital Market lifts the NCM trophy

KUWAIT: As a part of social responsibility and also to promote the game of cricket in Kuwait, NCM Investment Company and AMWAL International Investment conducted a fully sponsored "NCM T20 Premier League" 2020. The initial league round matches were played at UPL grounds earlier this year. NCM won the NCM T20 Premier League held at Sulabiya KC cricket ground on Saturday, 14th Nov 2020 in the final beating Al Hajery cricket club by a margin of 3 runs in a nail-biting final, thus lifting the proud trophy in style and dedicating the huge victory to their strong team performance under the guidance of Captain Khurram Sayeed.

Winning the toss, NCM elected to bat first and scored 198 runs for the loss of 7 wickets. Losing an early wicket in the first over, NCM managed to keep the scoring at fast pace by cracking knocks from Edson Dsilva, who scored 78 runs from just 48 balls and supported by Nassir Hussain, who also finished his half century from 39 balls. Al Hajery tried to restrict the score in the middle overs but a fire cracking innings from Nimish Latheef who made 49 runs from just 21 balls in the end enabled NCM to post a competitive target of 199 runs in their allotted 20 overs. Nithin Simon of Al Hajery CC was the pick of the bowlers and took 2 wickets for 29 runs.

While chasing 199 runs, Al Hajery lost 3 quick wickets within the field restricted overs. NCM pacers Mohammed Usman and Nazmul Hussain bowled exceptionally well, not allowing the batsmen to free their arms in the power play.

Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait tennis star Essa Suleiman Qabazard won the title of the third Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait (RNAK) tournament that started Nov 18th and ended Saturday. This is within the series of tournaments organized by (RNAK) in cooperation with Kuwait Tennis Federation. It game was held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex. Essa Qabazard won the title by defeating Abdelhameed Mahboub Jumaa by the score of 7/5, 4/6, 6/3.

Meanwhile Sarah Behbehani won the women's title by defeating Mariam Siraj 6/2, 6/1. The final match was attended by KTA Secretary General Faleh Al-Otaibi, technical director Abbas Al-Busairi and Head Tennis Coach at (RNAK) Nuno Marques. The first tournament was won by Abdelhameed Mahboub Jumaa, while Iman Mitwalli won that of



While it seemed that the match was tilting towards NCM's favor, Nithin Simon took charge of the innings and single-handedly took the battle by scoring a swashbuckling century in just 48 balls. Leg spinner Nimish Latheef and pacer Meezan Ali, who took 2 wickets, bowled exceptionally well in the middle overs to keep the required rate below 12 runs per over. Having restricted Al Hajery CC to 9 runs in the final over, Captain Khurram Sayeed relied upon his most trusted bowler Usman who bowled a memorable last over by giving away just 6 runs enabling NCM lift the coveted trophy by a margin of 3 runs. Edson Dsilva of NCM was named man of the match as well as the best batsman of the tournament. Shilesh of KNPC was named the best bowler and Wender Bhutejo of NCM was declared named the best all-rounder of the tournament.

Faraz Mushtaq, Head of Marketing, said, "NCM Investment has now earned a name in the Kuwait Cricketing Arena and shall strive hard to continue the winning streak with hard work, dedication, and motivation."



the ladies. The second tournament was won by Abdelrahman Al-Awadhi while Dana Al-Fulaij won the ladies'.

The fourth and final tournament (The masters) will be held December 2-6th with the best 8 men and 8 women - based on their results in the previous three tournaments. KTF Secretary General Faleh Al-Otaibi expressed satisfaction towards the technical level of the players and thanked Rafa Nadal Academy Kuwait.

Shooting Tournament kicks off tomorrow

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Secretary General Obaid Mubahi Al-Osaimi said preparations are ongoing for HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Annual Shooting Tournament which will start tomorrow at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex.

He said the club prepared a comprehensive plan for resuming the sport activity in accordance with the health protocols. The club is honored to launch the 2020/2021 season with the tournament of HH the Crown Prince. The tournament will continue for five days with shooters from the Kuwait Shooting Sport Club, National Guard, Defense and Interior Ministries competing for the titles.

Al-Osaimi, on behalf of the board members of KSSC and the entire shooting sport community thanked HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his continued care and support of Kuwait's athletes. He also lauded his role while he was deputy chief of the National Guard.



Obaid Al-Osaimi

Sports

Atletico Madrid edge past Barcelona, earn title boost

Atletico record first league victory over Barcelona in 10 years

MADRID: Atletico Madrid delivered a major boost to their hopes of winning La Liga on Saturday by beating Barcelona 1-0 and consigning their opponents to their worst start to a league season in 29 years. Yannick Carrasco finished brilliantly from range after mistakes from Gerard Pique and Marc-Andre ter Stegen left the goal gaping but Barca, and a below-par Lionel Messi, failed to respond at the Wanda Metropolitano.

Instead, Atletico recorded their first league victory over Barcelona in 10 years, which puts them three points ahead of Real Madrid, with a game in hand, and second in the table, level on points with early leaders Real Sociedad. It also leaves their opponents languishing in 10th, with Barcelona's 11 points from their first eight games their worst tally at this stage since the 1991-92 season. "Like any coach, I am responsible," said coach Ronald Koeman. "We know we have to improve the results. I continue to trust the players I have."

Real Madrid had earlier been held to a 1-1 draw by in-form Villarreal, another slip-up for the reigning champions to enforce the sense that this could be Atletico's year. And beating Barcelona in La Liga for the first time since 2010 - before Simeone arrived as coach - will do wonders for the team's belief and extends what is now a considerable advantage in the table. It also extends Atletico's unbeaten run in the league to 24 matches.

"Today we were able to win but it absolutely doesn't change anything," said Simeone. "We're working well and I'm excited about this team." Another disappointing day for Barca was soured further by the sight of Pique hobbling off in tears

with what the club said was a "sprained right knee". Pique was hurt during a collision with Angel Correa and was in distress as he departed. "I am worried," said Koeman. "A lot of damage has been done." Antoine Griezmann almost put Barca in front against his old club while Marcos Llorente went closest for Atletico, skimming the crossbar after a neat exchange between Kieran Trippier and Correa down the right.

Messi might have scored but was uncharacteristically hesitant, with an even half about to finish goalless until two errors gifted Atletico the lead. Pique was caught out of position after a heavy touch and Mario Hermoso did well to free Carrasco. Ter Stegen, already upfield, rushed out to fill the gap Pique had left but Carrasco's first touch feathered the ball through the goalkeeper's legs before a curling finish from 50 yards sent the ball into the open net.

Clement Lenglet should have equalised but headed Messi's cross straight at Jan Oblak yet Barcelona were far from dominant and Messi struggled for his usual influence. Philippe Coutinho came on and Pique hobbled off. Messi floated a free-kick wide and saw a shot blocked before substitute Martin Braithwaite was given a late chance after a poor kick by Oblak. But Barca were unable to find a way through.

Real slip up again

Earlier, a patched-up Real Madrid had to hang on for a draw against Villarreal. Mariano Diaz gave Madrid the lead after just 105 seconds but Zinedine Zidane's team faded at La Ceramica and Villarreal



MADRID: Barcelona's Brazilian midfielder Philippe Coutinho (bottom) falls after challenging Atletico Madrid's Spanish midfielder Koke (left) and Atletico Madrid's English defender Kieran Trippier during the Spanish League football match between Club Atletico de Madrid and FC Barcelona on November 21, 2020. — AFP

claimed a deserved point through Gerard Moreno's second-half penalty. "It feels like a small reward," said Zidane. "We deserved more today for the game we played. I'm annoyed because of the effort from

the boys." Mariano was almost sold last summer but had to stand in for Karim Benzema, who is injured, and Luka Jovic, who tested positive for coronavirus on Friday. — AFP

Ronaldo's double lifts Juventus; Atalanta stall

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo scored his third brace in five games as champions Juventus moved up to second place in Serie A on Saturday with a 2-0 win over Cagliari in Turin. Andrea Pirlo's side are one point behind leaders AC Milan, who traveled to fourth-placed Napoli yesterday. Lazio also won 2-0 under torrential rain at Crotona, but Atalanta were held 0-0 at promoted Spezia days before their Champions League trip to Liverpool. Juventus had been held 1-1 at Lazio last time out-one of four stalemates this season for the nine-time reigning champions-but quickly took charge against the Sardinians.

"We needed a match like this," said Pirlo. "There were excellent performances, even from those returning from national teams. A lot of them arrived two days ago and did their first training yesterday and were also tired from the trip. Tonight they also had fun, performances like this allow the players to gain confidence." Federico Bernardeschi had an early goal ruled out for offside before Ronaldo struck

twice in a four-minute spell before the break. The Portuguese striker blasted in an Alvaro Morata cross on 38 minutes, before latching onto a Merih Demiral header from a corner for the second from close range minutes later.

Ronaldo, 35, has come back strong after his coronavirus layoff, scoring eight goals in five games to join Milan's Zlatan Ibrahimovic at the top of the Serie A scorers' chart. Ragnar Klavan had a goal disallowed for Cagliari midway through the second half. But it was Juventus who threatened a third with Demiral, Morata, Bernardeschi and Paulo Dybala having shots at goal. Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt played the entire game in his first match since shoulder surgery in August, a boost for Pirlo's side without injured duo Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini before Tuesday's Champions League game against Hungarian side Ferencvaros.

Atalanta draw a blank
Gian Piero Gasperini's Atalanta



TURIN: Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (left) celebrates with Juventus' Brazilian midfielder Arthur (center) and teammates after opening the scoring during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs Cagliari on November 21, 2020. — AFP

stalled before their big match at Anfield in four days' time, being held to a second consecutive stalemate. Atalanta are sixth, level on points with seventh-placed Lazio after eight games. "Technically it was not a good performance but there are no easy matches and the team did what they had to do," said Gasperini, whose side failed to score for the first time this season.

Diego Farias hit the woodwork for Spezia with Atalanta's Duvan Zapata denied by the post before the break. Germany's Robin Gosens had a goal chalked off for offside on 56 minutes for the visitors. Spezia, in 12th, could thank goalkeeper Ivan Provedel for the point with a double save from Mario Pasalic and Gosens, with the Croatian denied again late on. —AFP

Man United 'must do better' despite ending home drought

MANCHESTER: Bruno Fernandes said Manchester United have the quality to do "much better" after his twice-taken penalty saw off lowly West Brom 1-0 to end a run of six games without a Premier League win at Old Trafford. The Portuguese midfielder got a second chance after Sam Johnstone had saved his first spot-kick, but came off his line in doing so.

United also got a break at the other end moments earlier when a penalty given for a foul by Fernandes on Conor Gallagher was overturned after a VAR review. "First it was very important to win the game, not because it's the first win at Old Trafford, but because we need the points," Fernandes told BT Sport. "We can do much better, we have the qualities to do much better." Just as in United's Champions League win at Paris Saint-

Germain last month, Fernandes made the most of his reprieve of seeing his first spot-kick saved after the goalkeeper came off his line.

But he was still frustrated at missing a third penalty this season, albeit two were retaken, after a perfect record with his first 10 for United. "Ok, I scored the second one but I need to score the first one," added Fernandes. Victory moves Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men up to ninth and within seven points of early pace-setters Tottenham with a game in hand. However, there was little to appease the unease over where the Red Devils are going under Solskjaer as West Brom threatened to collect their first league win since returning to the top flight.

West Brom have now scored just once in their last six games, but Slaven Bilic was left fuming at the game changing decision not to award his side a penalty early in the second half. Fernandes looked to have caught Gallagher inside the area when referee David Coote pointed to the spot. But he infuriated Bilic by overturning the call after reviewing the incident on the pitchside monitor. "Throughout the whole second half I felt like small West Brom. All those crucial decisions went against us," said the Croatian. — AFP

Celtic held by Hibernian; pile pressure on Lennon

GLASGOW: Diego Laxalt's injury-time equalizer salvaged a point for Celtic in a 2-2 draw at Hibernian, but the Hoops' quest for a record 10th successive Scottish Premiership title suffered another huge blow on Saturday. Neil Lennon's men trail Rangers by eight points at the top of the table with now just one game in hand. A series of home defeats in Europe and to Rangers last month had already put Lennon's future in doubt. But his former side may have inflicted the final blow as two goals in seven minutes early in the second half put the hosts in command. On-loan Rangers winger Jamie Murphy lashed in the rebound after Scott Bain had saved Kevin Nisbet's penalty on 52 minutes.

Nisbet made amends moments later when he fired low in off the far post. Lennon had left star striker Odsonne Edouard on the bench as he kept faith with the side that won 4-1 at Motherwell prior to the international break. Edouard came on to breathe new life into the visitors from the penalty spot 11 minutes from time. Laxalt then salvaged a point in stoppage time with his first Celtic goal since joining on loan from AC Milan. But whether it is enough to save his manager's job remains to be seen amid growing supporter unrest for Lennon to be removed. — AFP



MANCHESTER: West Bromwich Albion's English midfielder Conor Gallagher (center) is tackled by Manchester United's Brazilian midfielder Fred during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and West Bromwich Albion on November 21, 2020. — AFP

Orlando advance in wild MLS playoff win, Crew through, too

MIAMI: Orlando City SC, down to nine men when goalkeeper Pedro Gallese was sent off in a penalty shootout, prevailed 6-5 over New York City FC in the chaotic decider to advance in the MLS Cup playoffs on Saturday. It was 1-1 after extra time at Exploria Stadium in Orlando, where both goals came in the first eight minutes.

Orlando players had twice celebrated what they thought was victory before Benji Michel scored the actual game-winner in the seventh round of the shootout. That came after Orlando defender Rodrigo Schlegel made a crucial save on New York's Gudmundur Thorarinnsson, Schlegel taking over in goal when Peruvian keeper Gallese was sent off after a second yellow card for coming off his line prematurely in what first appeared to be a game-winning save.

There was less drama in Columbus, where the Crew also booked a spot in the Eastern Conference semi-finals with a 3-2 victory over New York Red Bulls that spoiled head coach Gerhard Struber's debut at the helm. It was an emotional roller-coaster in Orlando, where the hosts were down to 10 men after Brazilian back Ruan was sent off with a straight red card in the 87th minute for a spikes-up kick at Gary Mackay-Steven-who had brought him down hard and then pushed off against Ruan's body as he hoisted himself back up.

Orlando held on through the rest of regular and extra time, and had the upper hand after Maxi Moralez missed New York City's first effort of the shootout. Orlando made their first four attempts, so when Gallese saved Valentin Castellanos's effort on the fifth attempt for New York, the Lions were celebrating a win, only for VAR to rule Gallese moved too soon. There was confusion as Orlando first tried to bring on backup keeper Brian Rowe before Schlegel eventually donned the gloves and surrendered a penalty to Castellanos that made it 4-4.

Orlando still had a chance to win it through Nani, but he was denied by Sean Johnson, and both teams then converted to make it 5-5. When Schlegel stopped Thorarinnsson, he zoomed off to celebrate with teammates. It was some time before referee Chapman could impress upon them that the affair wasn't over. Michel got his chance and sealed the win. "That's football," said Argentina's Schlegel, who told manager Oscar Pareja he could get the job done in goal. "It's emotion. One minute you think you won, the next you don't. ... What matters is the end result. That's the beauty of sport."

But it was an agonizing defeat for NYCFC, who had stormed home with four straight wins in the regular season but are now 2-7 in playoff games. "Losing in this way is brutal," Anton Tinnerholm said. "Of course, last year was tough as well, but mentally this year has been maybe the toughest in our careers and to end the season this way is 2020 all over this game and the ending of the season unfortunately." It was Tinnerholm's handball in the area that led to Orlando's opening goal, a penalty conversion by Nani in the fifth minute. — AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Burnley v Crystal Palace	20:30	
beIN Sports HD 1		
Wolves v Southampton	23:00	
beIN Sports HD 1		
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Athletic de Bilbao v Real Betis	23:00	
beIN Sports HD 3		

14 Djokovic and Nadal fall as Thiem, Medvedev advance



15 Ronaldo's double lifts Juventus as Atalanta stall before Liverpool trip



15 Atletico Madrid edge past Barcelona, earn title boost



Arsenal hold out for draw at Leeds

Calvert-Lewin at double as Everton beat Fulham, Haller blunts Blades



LEEDS: Leeds United's English striker Patrick Bamford jumps up for a header during the English Premier League football match between Leeds United and Arsenal at Elland Road yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Arsenal held on for a 0-0 draw at Leeds after Nicolas Pepe was sent off for head-butting Ezgjan Alioski, while Dominic Calvert-Lewin scored after just 42 seconds as Everton won 3-2 at Fulham yesterday. Pepe's mindless second-half dismissal left Mikel Arteta's side in trouble at Elland Road and they had to ride their luck to escape with a point. Leeds hit the woodwork three times in the closing stages, but couldn't inflict a second successive defeat on Arsenal, whose problems mounted when Bukayo Saka limped off with a late injury.

Arsenal have won only one of their last five Premier League games and sit in 11th place, while Leeds are 14th after their third consecutive match without a win. At the end of a week in which Arteta had to deal with a training ground row between Dani Ceballos and David Luiz, the Arsenal manager will be relieved his team showed some fighting spirit to keep Leeds at bay.

Pepe had an early sight of goal when the Ivory Coast winger twisted past Luke Ayling for a cross-shot that came back off the bar. Patrick Bamford tested Bernd Leno with a powerful volley - one of 13 shots Leeds had as they dominated the first half without making the breakthrough. Arsenal captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang had been given a rare chance in the central striker's role, but he was largely anonymous and has scored just twice in his last nine games. The Gunners were reduced to 10 men in the 51st minute when Pepe, frustrated by a previous clash with the Leeds player moments earlier, thrust his head into Alioski's face, sending him tumbling to the turf. Referee Anthony Taylor went to check the pitchside monitor and showed Pepe a straight red. Leeds substitute Rodrigo hit the bar with a curling effort from the edge of the area.

Bamford also struck the woodwork with a glancing header before Raphinha's stoppage-time shot came

back off a post to Arsenal's relief. At Craven Cottage, Calvert-Lewin maintained his fine form to put Carlo Ancelotti's side ahead inside a minute. Bobby Decordova-Reid equalized for Fulham, but England striker Calvert-Lewin netted again and Abdoulaye Doucoure got Everton's third before half-time.

Haller ends drought

Fulham's Ivan Cavaleiro sent a second-half penalty over the bar and, although Ruben Loftus-Cheek reduced the deficit, Everton held on to win for the first time in five league games. After a three-game losing streak dented their bid to finish in the top four, Everton are up to sixth place. "The most important part of the game was to be back to winning," Ancelotti said. "We lost energy in the second half, the players were tired. I changed to put more fresh legs on the pitch but we had to defend. In the end it went well." Fulham remain one place above the relegation zone after their third defeat in four games.

Bottom of the table Sheffield United's wait for their first win this season goes on after they were beaten 1-0 by West Ham at Bramall Lane. Chris Wilder's side have lost eight of their first nine league games, making them only the third club to take one point or fewer over that period in the Premier League era. Sebastian Haller broke the deadlock in the 56th minute with his first goal since September.

When Pablo Fornals' blocked effort ricocheted to Haller just outside the area, the Ivory Coast striker unleashed a fierce shot that flashed into the roof of the net. Declan Rice headed against the bar as West Ham looked for a second, but Oli McBurnie was inches away from equalizing when he crashed a left-footed strike off the woodwork. The last game of the day is at Anfield, where Leicester would replace Tottenham on top of the table if they can beat champions Liverpool, who will climb to second with a victory. — AFP

Mateta hat-trick helps Mainz break Bundesliga duck

BERLIN: French striker Jean-Philippe Mateta fired Bundesliga strugglers Mainz to their first win of the season yesterday, scoring three first-half goals to inspire his side to a 3-1 victory away to Freiburg. The 23-year-old notched up his second hat-trick of the season to take his tally to 10 goals in all competitions as Mainz hauled themselves out of the bottom two for the first time since the opening weekend. "I'm very happy about my three goals but the three points are obviously more important. This was a team victory," said Mateta.

Having picked up just a single point from their first seven games, Mainz put their early-season woes behind them with a clinical first-half performance. Mateta opened the scoring after just 61 seconds, breaking Freiburg's high line to pick up a Leandro Barreiro through ball and stroke it past former teammate Florian Mueller in the Freiburg goal. The goal set the tone for a first half in which Mainz landed blow after blow on the counter-attack and Freiburg struggled to keep tabs on Mateta.

The Frenchman doubled the lead just after the half-hour mark, pouncing on the rebound after Mueller spilled a long-range effort from Robin Quaison. He completed his hat-trick a few minutes later, beating the offside trap yet again to slot the ball inside the far post from close range. Nils Petersen pulled a goal back for Freiburg on 64 minutes, tapping in from close range after Robin Zentner palmed away a low shot from Roland Sallai. While Mainz breathe a sigh of relief, defeat heaps pressure on Freiburg, who have not won since the opening day and now sit just one place ahead of Mainz in 14th. — AFP

Sassuolo go top as Lukaku helps Inter Milan fight back

MILAN: Sassuolo took top spot in Serie A yesterday with a 2-0 win over Hellas Verona, as Romelu Lukaku scored twice to help Inter Milan fight back from two goals down to beat Torino. Sassuolo have 18 points from eight games, one point more than AC Milan, who travelled to Napoli later yesterday. Roma move third, level on points with AC Milan, after Henrikh Mkhitaryan scored twice in a 3-0 win over Parma.

Antonio Conte's Inter had been trailing 2-0 after 62 minutes before battling back to win 4-2 at the San Siro, where they host Real Madrid in the Champions League in three days' time. "We are not a great team yet because we're struggling like this," said Lukaku who has scored seven league goals this season. "In the first hour we played badly, we were in difficulty. Then we woke up and won, that's the most important thing." Torino captain Andrea Belotti pulled up with a muscular problem in the warm-up with Simone Zaza taking his place and scoring the opener just before the break. Cristian Ansaldi added a second for the visitors from the penalty spot after an hour. Inter reacted in the 64th minute, with Alexis Sanchez bundling the ball in after Lukaku's initial effort was tipped onto the crossbar, before the Chilean set up his fellow former Manchester United forward for the equalizer three minutes later.

Lukaku pulled Inter ahead from the penalty spot six minutes from time and then provided the cross for substitute Lautaro Martinez to score the fourth on 90 minutes. "I have to congratulate the lads," said Conte. "The 2-0 would have killed anyone, but we proved once again that we have something important in terms of character."

Inter got back to winning ways after two consecutive draws and are fifth in the table. Torino drop into the relegation zone after their fifth defeat of the season, also losing Simone Verdi to injury in the first half. In Verona, Sassuolo continued their impressive run thanks to goals in either half from Jeremie Boga and Domenico Berardi. The side from Emilia Romagna are unbeaten this season and are the top scorers with 20 goals in eight games.

Roma meanwhile stretched their unbeaten run in all competitions to 10 matches, cementing victory with three first-half goals. Borja Mayoral got his first Serie A goal just before the half-hour mark, with Mkhitaryan adding two



MILAN: Inter Milan's Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku shoots and scores a penalty kick during the Italian Serie A football match Inter vs Torino yesterday at the Giuseppe-Meazza (San Siro) stadium. — AFP

more before the break to bring his tally to five goals in two games after scoring a hat-trick last time out against Genoa. In Tuscany, Cesare Prandelli had a nightmare start as coach of struggling Fiorentina with a 1-0 home defeat by promoted Benevento. Former Italy coach Prandelli returned to the 'Viola' a decade after leaving for the Azzurri job in 2010, after Giuseppe Iachini was sacked, but the team fell to their fourth defeat in eight games.

To add to Prandelli's woes, French midfielder Franck Ribery went off injured just before half-time with Italian international Giacomo Bonaventura pulling up during the warm-up. "What worries me most is the fragility," said Prandelli. "At the first difficulty the team lost tactically, technically and personally. Perhaps the team succumbed to their fears and negative thoughts when Franck came off." Riccardo Improbato scored his first Serie A goal for Benevento on 52 minutes, slotting in a Gabriele Moncini cross after a Cristiano Biraghi defensive error. Fiorentina, without a win in three games, slip to 15th in the Serie A table, just behind Benevento, who move into 14th after ending their four-match losing streak. — AFP