



3 A look at Kuwaiti political groupings contesting polls



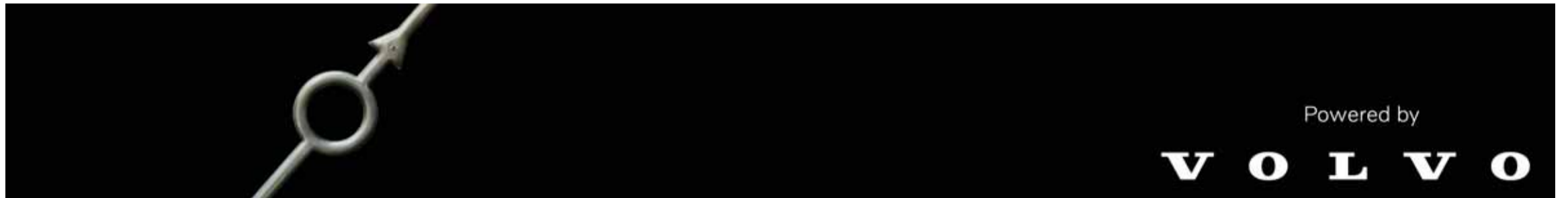
8 Bitcoin climbs to all-time high after topping \$19,000



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16 Rams use air assault to sink Buccaneers



Second amnesty in 2020 for illegals to legalize their stay

Appeals court jails colonel, 7 expats for human trafficking

Kuwait to get COVID vaccine by end of 2020

KUWAIT: The health ministry announced yesterday the arrival of the BNT162 COVID-19 vaccine by the end of this year, while usage will be subject to approval of local regulatory authorities. In a statement, Assistant Undersecretary for Medicines and Medical Supplies Dr Abdullah Al-Bader said an agreement was reached with Pfizer and BioNTech, which developed the vaccine, to supply the vaccine to Kuwait. Based on the ministry's request, the vaccine will arrive by the end of 2020 and during 2021 after completion of clinical tests and necessary approvals from local regulatory authorities, Bader said, pointing out that the financial details of this



agreement have not been disclosed. The ministry has taken all measures to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and store it at the ministry's facilities at a temperature of -70 degrees Celsius, he added. This agreement falls under the global commitment of Pfizer and BioNTech to confront the global COVID-19 crisis, Bader said.

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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The interior ministry yesterday announced a one-month amnesty for expats living illegally in the country, offering them an opportunity to legalize their stay or leave the country after paying fines. The ministry also asked all expats living in the country on temporary visas, which have been automatically extended until Nov 30, to legalize their stay in the country by obtaining residency or leave Kuwait before Nov 30.

This is the second amnesty offered by the interior ministry to illegal expats, estimated at around 150,000 people. In the first amnesty a few months ago, illegals were allowed to leave the country without paying fines and with a free air ticket. Authorities said around 30,000 expats of various nationalities benefited from the amnesty.

The latest amnesty applies to expats who have been living illegally in the country before Jan 1, 2020. The decision by the interior ministry states that illegal expats desiring to legalize their stay in the country should visit the residency affairs department between Dec 1 and 31 and pay the required fines. The residency will be granted based on regulations and conditions.

Illegal expats who wish to leave the country should visit the residency department and pay the required fines. They will then be granted a certain period to leave the country and will be allowed to return to Kuwait.

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Residency law violators since 1/1/2020 and earlier dates

- Whoever desires to be granted a residency must attend to the Residency Affairs Department to pay the legal fines and amend the legal status in accordance with the terms in the period from (1-12-2020 to 31-12-2020).
- Those who wish to leave the country must pay the legal fines in order to get the departure notice, and they will have the chance to return back to the country in the future.
- The violators who do not amend their legal status within the mentioned period will be deported and will not be able to access the country in the future.

Holders of temporary automated residency article no. 14

- They have to leave the country before the deadline date (30-11-2020).
- If they desire to be granted a residency in accordance with the terms, they have to settle their legal status before (30-11-2020).
- Those who do not amend their legal status before the mentioned period (30-11-2020) will be subjected and penalised in accordance to the law of "Foreigners Residency Act", and the law breakers shall be deported and wouldn't be able to access the country in the future.

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News in brief

Sputnik vaccine 95% effective

MOSCOW: Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine is 95 percent effective according to a second interim analysis of clinical trial data, its developers said yesterday. The two-dose vaccine will be available on international markets for less than \$10 per dose, they said, and will be free for Russian citizens. It can be stored at between two and eight degrees Celsius, they said, instead of the temperatures below freezing required for some other vaccines. — AFP

Musk second wealthiest person

NEW YORK: Elon Musk, the charismatic chief of electric automaker Tesla, has overtaken Bill Gates to become the world's second richest person, according to the Bloomberg list of billionaires. The South African-born Musk, 49, added \$7.2 billion in wealth on Monday alone following Tesla's latest surge. He now has an estimated \$128 billion. Now the only person he stands behind is Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos, whose wealth is estimated at \$182 billion. — AFP

French users sue prayer app

PARIS: French users of a Muslim prayer app accused of selling data that ended up with the US army are suing the company. Former subscribers to the Muslim Pro app, which claims to have 95 million users around the world, filed the complaint after media reports accused the group of having shared its data with companies connected to the US army. The lawsuit accuses the company of data protection offences, abuse of trust, endangering other people's lives and conspiracy to commit murder. — AFP

Netanyahu to visit Bahrain soon

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday he will visit Bahrain "soon" at the invitation of the Gulf state's Crown Prince Salman Al-Khalifa. "We are both excited to bring the fruits of peace to our people and countries in such a short time. That's why he invited me to come soon for a formal visit in Bahrain and I will do this happily," Netanyahu said. — Reuters

Govt eyes overseas voting, poll body; 6 hopefuls barred

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The government has sent to the National Assembly major amendments to the election law including an amendment calling for the establishment of a National Election Commission to supervise the entire election process. The amendments also stipulate to allow Kuwaitis living abroad to

vote in parliamentary elections for the first time, and increase candidate registration fees from KD 50 to KD 500. The Municipality said yesterday that it will impose fines between KD 1,000 and KD 3,000 on candidates violating advertising regulations.

Meanwhile, the appeals court yesterday confirmed the disqualification of six candidates from contesting next month's general polls but upheld a ruling to cancel the barring of three other candidates. The court also overturned a ruling by the lower court to disqualify candidate Ladia Al-Othman and allowed her to run in the election.

The court however set tomorrow's date to issue its verdict on five other candidates whose disqualification by the interior ministry commission was confirmed by the lower court. These candidates include

Houthi strike tears hole in Aramco tank

JEDDAH: Saudi Aramco said yesterday that a strike by Yemeni rebels on its plant in Jeddah tore a hole in an oil tank, triggering an explosion and fire in another assault on the kingdom's energy infrastructure. The Iran-backed Houthi rebels said they struck the facility in the Red Sea city on Monday with a Quds-2 missile, as they step up attacks in retaliation for a five-year military campaign led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen.

The latest strike, which underscores the vulnerability of Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure, comes just over a year after aerial assaults on two other Aramco facilities temporarily knocked out half of the kingdom's crude production. Aramco granted foreign media rare access to the Jeddah distribution facility where damage to the storage tank was visible a day after the attack, with the top rim fire-blackened and railings above buckled from the heat.

The roof of the tank suffered "major damage", with a hole measuring two square meters, said Abdullah Al-Ghamdi, manager of the North Jeddah Bulk Plant. "It was a big fire; it was a big explosion," Ghamdi said, adding the

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JEDDAH: A manager at a Saudi Aramco oil facility gestures while standing near a damaged oil tank at the plant yesterday. — AFP

Biden building team; Trump OKs transition

WILMINGTON, Delaware: US President-elect Joe Biden yesterday began a new phase in his transition to the White House after the Trump administration gave the Democrat access to critical resources that will enable him to take the reins of power in January. The General Services Administration's announcement on

Monday that it would formally recognize Biden's transition came after weeks of the president falsely claiming that the Nov 3 election had been marred by widespread voter fraud.

Trump, in a post on Twitter, offered support for the move. Critics have said the president's refusal to accept the results undermined US democracy and undercut the next administration's ability to fight the novel coronavirus. While Trump stopped short of conceding, it was the closest he has come to acknowledging that it is time to hand over power to Biden, who will take office on Jan 20.

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WASHINGTON: This combination of pictures shows (from left) Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Avril Haines, Antony J Blinken, Alejandro Mayorkas and John Kerry, nominated by US President-elect Joe Biden for his cabinet. — AFP

Local

Khashti: Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) one of Kuwait's leading incubators for entrepreneurs

During company's participation at ICICEE 2020

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, took part in the International virtual Conference on Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem (ICICEE 2020). The event, held over video conferencing technology, was organized by Ecosystem Consultants during 19-20 November under the patronage of Minister of Finance Barrak Al Sheetan.

The event's program witnessed wide participation from over 80 global experts, government officials, scientists, academics, and finance institutions, who all exchanged successful applications and future visions related to innovation, management, technology, and entrepreneurship.

The event created a great opportunity for Zain to showcase its future strategic direction in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship, which goes in line with the 'New Kuwait' vision. The discussion panels focused on enriching the innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship setting by developing infrastructures that center around these three aspects. Participants also called for the importance of engaging the local community in creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial activities, as well as supporting the professional community by sustaining smart growth via technology, collaboration, education, and other socio-economic strategies.

During his participation in the conference as a main speaker, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti said: "I am honored to take part in this event that gathers many leaders, experts, and academics from many sectors. Without a doubt, the discussions and ideas presented in this conference offer a clear picture of the upcoming stage through which government entities and the private sector will both prepare their administrative and operational infrastructures to transform along with the tech wave and the new directions of the business sector."

Khashti added: "We all know that innovation is one of those terms that witnessed high popularity in recent times. This is not just because such a term does not create business opportunities or the ability to create new markets, but because it directly contributes to sustainable development plans. This has led countries and major organizations to harness the potential of innovation as a means to enrich the position and competitiveness of their markets."

He continued: "For this, many governments, including the government of Kuwait, sought to create a supportive atmosphere for private sector organizations, because they are capable of delivering innovation. If we are in need of more than mere

ideas or a vision to create our future, then, in this case, we must contribute to spreading the culture of innovation within the business world".

Khashti explained that success stories in the world of ICT reveal that early investments makes it easier to justify each and every investment later. If one does not make the first bet, it will be difficult to keep up with what comes later. Large corporations are now aware, especially in light of the current digital transformations, that they are in need of taking care of the intellectual models that govern the business world.

Khashti went on to explain: "From this point comes change and response to innovation, as innovation is the new headline for the journey of growth within communities. As our Kuwaiti society is a young one, where the youth make up the biggest

Working towards enriching innovation



share (around 72 percent of the total), and because these young people have so many ideas, visions, and aspirations, then these ideas should surely be implemented. For this, we believe that the youth need organizations that believe in their potential and capabilities, as well as support them in implementing and executing these ideas in the real world".

Zain is one of the leading organizations that actively adopted young entrepreneurs, as the company believes in the capabilities and potential of the youth, and in the ideas and innovations they have to offer. This is especially true after the active move witnessed by the Kuwaiti and regional markets towards initiatives and experiences in the digital space.

Because Zain relies, as part of its strategy, on addressing the youth's issues by investing in the future, the company has launched the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC), which is a leading incubator for entrepreneurs in Kuwait. This center aims at supporting and empowering the youth and their capabilities, as well as opening up new horizons for startups.

ZINC represents an incubator for the youth's innovations, and currently encourages exceptional minds to think in an interactive environment, offers a modern and innovative workplace, presents a proper work environment for those who have aspiring ideas and visions, as well as develops and progresses ideas into real projects that can be executed and implemented.

For Zain, ZINC represents the prominent face of this stage. Ideas are always affected by the care they receive, and if global markets look for smart ideas, then private sector organizations in Kuwait are insistently heading towards these areas as well. For this, Zain believes that launching incubators will help discover new ideas and raise new innovations.

The idea behind launching the Zain Innovation

year. Ghamdi likened Monday's incident to the Sept 2019 assault on the Abqaiq processing plant and Khurais oil field in the kingdom's east, which caused turmoil on global energy markets as it temporarily halved the kingdom's crude output. Washington and Riyadh held Iran responsible for that attack.

"What happened yesterday was another hostile attack, similar to what happened at Khurais and Abqaiq," Ghamdi said. "However, this will only demonstrate that Aramco's resilience to such (a) hostile attack will remain, and demonstrate the reliability of our energy supply" within and outside the kingdom, he added.

Houthi missiles and drones have mostly targeted Saudi Arabia's southern provinces along their shared border, many of which the kingdom claims to have successfully intercepted. But the attack on Jeddah, which lies some 600 km from the frontier, is an indication of the rebels' advancing arsenal.

The latest attack occurred as the United States deliberates tagging the rebels a "terrorist organization", a move that has drawn concern from humanitarian agencies who say it could cripple aid delivery and tip the country into famine. Yemeni Information Minister Moammar Al-Eryani said the targeting of Aramco was a "full-fledged war crime", adding it underlined the need for the Houthis to be designated as a terrorist organization. — AFP

lives, stressing that this depends on the success of clinical tests.

Chief Business and Commercial Affairs Officer at BioNTech Shaun Marett thanked the Kuwaiti government for its support and confidence in their ability to develop a vaccine believed to be able to confront this global epidemic. The goal is to provide global supplies of a safe and effective vaccine against COVID-19 to many people around the world as soon as possible, he said. Pfizer and BioNTech began obtaining regulatory approvals in Nov 2020 and are expected to manufacture up to 3.1 billion doses globally by the end of 2021. — KUNA

based on applicable rules and regulations. Those who fail to leave or legalize their stay will be considered as visa violators and legal measures will be taken against them, according to the interior ministry.

In a related development, the appeals court yesterday sentenced an interior ministry colonel and seven Egyptian co-workers to three years in jail after convicting them of trafficking in persons. The colonel was accused of establishing a fake company, and with the help of the Egyptians, recruiting dozens of workers for money without providing them with jobs. This is one of the largest trafficking in persons cases to be handled by Kuwaiti courts. The convicts were arrested several months ago during a crackdown on visa trading by authorities.



Center (ZINC) came as a continuation of Zain's journey that started with entrepreneurs and remarkable people who own bright ideas, and began with the Zain Great Idea accelerator program, which currently continues within the tech and digital sectors.

Khashti further explained: "We believe that innovative ideas are in need of care in order to achieve their goals. For this, Zain's management invited its employees who possess bright ideas to come forward with them, where they get evaluated and considered for support. In fact, we have received tens of ideas from our own employees, and have went on to support many of them. Now, we have the Zain Innovation Center that adopts these ideas within a healthy environment, nurturing them and giving them the space to grow and go on to become successful businesses."

He added: "The company's management always encourages employees to embrace the spirit of innovation and creativity. We have always offered

the proper environment for our employees to adopt their ideas, and we were keen on dedicating an hour per day to join our staff and entrepreneurs together to discuss ideas. Insisting on contributing to a better future should be inclusive and dynamic, and should come in a way that helps people to grow and live prosperously. This will always be at the core of our priorities, and Zain will always implement its strategies in a way that centers around innovation. A generation of innovative idea owners will represent one of the greatest differences between communities that step forward into the future."

Zain is well aware of the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability projects. Springing from its growing commitment towards practicing its social responsibility, the company is committed to printing a positive value through all its activities. This has led Zain to embrace the most influential issues in the community, including the support of youth, entrepreneurship, and innovation.

Houthi strike tears hole in...

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blaze was extinguished within 40 minutes and no casualties were reported. The manager said distribution from the plant, which provides refined products including jet fuel to the country's west, was restored within three hours even though the damaged tank - one of 13 - remained out of action.

Mangled and charred metal debris was put on display near the damaged tank, with company officials saying it would be forensically examined. Aramco was still assessing the cost of the damage and it was unclear how long the repairs would take, Ghamdi said.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab condemned the Jeddah attack, saying it contradicted the rebels' claim that they were serious about ending the conflict. "With Yemen at risk of famine, the Houthis must cease their aggression and work with the UN to achieve peace," Raab wrote on Twitter.

Saudi Arabia has been targeted with dozens of ballistic missile and drone attacks since the start of last

Kuwait to get COVID vaccine...

Continued from Page 1

Pfizer's Chief Business Officer in the Gulf region Lindsey Dietschi expressed pleasure to cooperate with the Kuwaiti government in order to achieve the common goal of providing the potential COVID-19 vaccine to the Kuwaiti people as soon as possible. She expressed hope the vaccine will save people's

Second amnesty in 2020 for illegals...

Continued from Page 1

Illegals who fail to legalize their status or leave the country within the stipulated period will be subjected to legal measures, deported from Kuwait and barred from returning.

Under the new decision, holders of temporary residencies (article 14) should either leave the country or legalize their stay before Nov 30 this year. They can legalize their stay by obtaining residency



WILMINGTON: US President-elect Joe Biden talks to the media as he arrives at the Queen to virtually attend the United States Conference of Mayors on Monday. — AFP

Biden building team; Trump...

Continued from Page 1

The GSA announcement will allow the president-elect to access millions of dollars in funds and focus on putting together a leadership team. It also paves the way for Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris to receive regular national security briefings that Trump also gets. Yesterday, Biden and Harris were expected to formally introduce their appointments to critical national security and foreign policy positions in Wilmington, Delaware.

Two Trump administration officials said the Biden agency review teams could begin interacting with Trump agency officials as soon as yesterday. The Biden transition team said meetings would begin with federal officials on Washington's response to the coronavirus pandemic, along with discussions of national security issues.

Biden on Monday tapped trusted aide Antony Blinken to head the State Department and John Kerry, a former US senator, secretary of state and 2004 Democratic presidential nominee, to serve as his special climate envoy. Biden, who plans to undo many of Trump's "America First" policies, also named Jake Sullivan as his national security adviser and Linda Thomas-Greenfield as US ambassador to the United Nations - both with high-level government experience.

He is likely to tap former Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen to become the next Treasury secretary, according to two Biden allies, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a personnel decision that was not yet public. On Monday evening, Sue Gough, a spokeswoman for the Pentagon, said that the Department of Defense had been contacted by the

Biden-Harris team. "DoD is prepared to provide post-election services and support in a professional, orderly, and efficient manner that is befitting of the public's expectation of the Department and our commitment to national security," Gough said.

While Trump on Monday said he backed GSA Administrator Emily Murphy's decision, he and his advisers vowed to continue fighting the election results. "Our case STRONGLY continues, we will keep up the good ... fight, and I believe we will prevail! Nevertheless, in the best interest of our Country, I am recommending that Emily and her team do what needs to be done with regard to initial protocols, and have told my team to do the same," Trump said on Twitter.

Trump later said on Twitter that his team would move "full speed ahead" with challenging "what will go down as the most corrupt election in American political history," adding that he would "never concede". Biden won 306 state-by-state electoral votes to Trump's 232. Biden also holds a lead of more than 6 million in the national popular vote.

Murphy's decision to allow the formal transition followed weeks of failed legal efforts by Trump and his allies to overturn the election in key battleground states. Murphy, who was appointed to the GSA job by Trump, said she faced threats for not starting the transition earlier and told GSA employees in a letter that the decision to do so was hers alone.

The letter came shortly after Michigan officials certified Biden as the victor in their state. Nevada Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske, a Republican, was due to meet state supreme court justices yesterday to certify that state's vote. Biden won Nevada by more than 33,000 votes, according to the Nevada secretary of state's office. Representative Don Beyer, who led the Obama administration's transition at the Commerce Department in 2008, said on Monday that Murphy's delay was "costly and unnecessary" and warned that Trump could still do great harm in his remaining time in office. — Reuters

Local

A look at Kuwaiti political groupings contesting polls

Blocks representing various segments of the Kuwaiti society



KUWAIT: A billboard promoting fifth constituency candidate for the 2020 National Assembly elections Faisal Al-Kandari in Fahaheel. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Billboards promoting third constituency candidate Jarrah Al-Fowzan.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Political parties are banned in Kuwait and several attempts to legalize parties under Kuwaiti law have been unsuccessful. But since the inception of parliamentary life in the country in 1962, political groupings of various shades acted as de facto political parties, contested the elections and played an important role in domestic politics.

From Muslim Brotherhood to Islamic Salafists, and from liberals to nationalists, political groupings held a sizable number of seats in the 50-member house and on many occasions dictated their terms.

The biggest win for the political groups was scored in the February 2012 general elections when the united opposition groupings bagged as many as 36 seats, an absolute majority for the first time, with Islamists taking over 20 seats. But that parliament was short-lived when the constitutional court in June the same year scrapped general elections on procedural grounds and ordered snap polls.

Most political groupings boycotted the next elections held in December 2012 after the government changed the voting system through an Amiri Decree.

Instead of giving voters the right to elect up to four candidates under the old system, voters were allowed a single vote only, thus depriving the political parties from the capability to elect up to four MPs in each of the five constituencies. The change effectively curbed the strength of all political groupings.

But some of the political groupings later ended their boycott like the Islamic Constitutional Movement, the Salaf Islamic Alliance, the National Democratic Alliance and other opposition independents. But the nationalist Popular Action Alliance and the liberal Kuwait Democratic Forum in addition to several leading independents insisted to continue the boycott.

Main Political Groups contesting polls

1- The Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The group is fielding four candidates and is supporting a few others. Its candidates are MP Osama Al-Shaheen in the first constituency, Hamad Al-Matar in the second constituency, new candidate Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi in the third district and MP Abdullah Fahhad in the fourth constituency. The group is also backing MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari in the third constituency and MP Hamdan Al-Azemi in the fifth.

Several other candidates are believed to be close to the group like Mohammad Al-Moqate, Abdullah Al-Anbuee and Khaled Al-Enezi; all in the second constituency.

The group held four seats in the outgoing assembly: Shaheen, Fahhad, Mohammad Al-Dallal who is not contesting and Jamaan Al-

The group and its supporters are expected to win around two seats.

3- The Islamic Ummah Principles Group
An alliance of headline opposition Islamists who openly call for the implementation of Sharia Islamic law.

The group and its supporters held about four seats in the outgoing assembly. This time, it is (unofficially) fielding three candidates: Former MP Osama Al-Munawer in the third, MP Mohammad Hayef in the fourth and former MP Bader Al-Dahoum in the fifth. Dahoum was disqualified by an interior ministry commission and the decision was confirmed by the lower court. He appealed against the ruling.

The group is also backing MP Adel Al-Damkhi in the first, MP Mohammad Al-Mutair in the second and MP Nayef Al-Merdas in the fifth. It is also backing former MP Jaber Al-Azemi and new candidate Saleh Al-Mutairi in the fifth constituency.

The group and its supporters are projected to bag around four seats.

4- The Islamic National Alliance
The main Shiite Islamic group in Kuwait. It held two seats in the outgoing assembly. The group is fielding three candidates: MP Adnan Abdulsamad in the first, MP Khalil Abul in the third and Hussein Shams in the fifth constituency. The group is expected to maintain its strength in the next assembly.

5- Kuwait National Democratic Alliance
The liberal group held one seat in the outgoing assembly and it has not officially fielded anyone in this year's election but is solidly backing at least one candidate: Hamad Al-Ansari in the third constituency. The group is also believed to be backing a number of other candidates like former MP Hassan Jowhar in the first, MP Omar Al-Tabtabai in the second, MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain in the third and new candidate Anwar Al-Fiker in the fourth constituency. Fiker has been disqualified and he has challenged the decision in court.

The strength of these political groups in the next assembly greatly depends on their unity and coordination, otherwise they will remain scattered and largely ineffective.



Race to 2020 National Assembly

Harbash who was stripped of his membership after the court convicted him of storming the assembly building in 2011.

The group and its supporters are expected to bag around five seats.

2- The Salaf Islamic Alliance
The pro-government Islamist group won no seats in the outgoing assembly. Now, it is officially fielding two new candidates: Fahad Al-Masaud in the second and Yahya Al-Obeid in the third constituency.

The group has announced it is backing deputy speaker Issa Al-Kandari bidding for re-election from the first constituency. It is also believed to be backing well-known Salafi activists Abdullah Al-Mutawa in the second, Waleed Al-Ghanem in the third, Khaled Al-Shulaimi in the fourth and former MPs Ahmad Al-Azemi and Humoud Al-Hamdan in the fifth constituency.



A billboard promoting third constituency candidate Osama Al-Munawer.



A billboard promoting third constituency candidate Saadoun Hammad Al-Otaibi.



A billboard promoting first constituency candidate Abdullah Al-Mudhaf.



A billboard promoting second constituency candidate Mohammad Al-Moqate.



A billboard promoting first constituency candidate Kamel Al-Awadhi.



A billboard promoting first constituency candidate Neveen Maarafi.

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Kuwait's inguinal hernia cases within int'l levels

KUWAIT: Bariatric Surgeon at Sabah Hospital Dr Mohammad Al-Sulaimi said inguinal hernia represents nearly 75 percent of worldwide cases of hernia that take place under the abdominal wall, adding that it occurs on the right side of the abdomen more than the left, and that it occurs in men seven times more often than in women. He said



Dr Mohammad Al-Sulaimi

some inguinal hernia do not cause any symptoms; the patient may even not realize he has hernia, and may discover it by accident during a routine medical checkup. He said the patient may notice or feel the protrusion caused by hernia, adding that it will be more clear when standing, coughing or when the patient is exhausted. He said the general symptoms of the inguinal hernia is having a swelling in the abdominal area that may disappear when the patient lies down, feeling heaviness in the abdominal area, and being uncomfortable when carrying something or bending over.

Dr Sulaimi said the number of cases of inguinal hernia in Kuwait is still within the international rates, adding that there are two types of such hernia: direct, which occurs at the abdominal wall and does not get to the scrotum, and indirect, which may reach there. He said treatment can take place through surgery, to push the hernia back and insert a mesh to strengthen the muscles of the abdominal wall. Dr Sulaimi advised quick treatment of hernia to avoid complications, bearing in mind that prevention is better than treatment. He said prevention includes maintaining a normal weight, exercising regularly, avoiding exhaustion and not picking up heavy things.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Liberation Tower seen through the curtains. — Photo by John Christopher

KJA holds General Assembly meeting



KUWAIT: KJA's secretary Adnan Al-Rashid (second from left) speaks during the meeting.



KJA general assembly members attend the meeting.

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Journalists Association's General Assembly approved the administrative and financial reports of the board of directors for 2019. It also approved the estimated budget for 2020. The assembly meeting was held on Monday at the KJA temporary premise in Shuwaikh, and saw the approval of Al-Buzai office to act as an auditor to inspect the association's accounts for 2020. KJA's

secretary Adnan Al-Rashid and Treasurer Jassem Kamal, in addition to social affairs ministry representative Thafer Al-Ajmi and Al-Buzai office representative Ahmad Shaalan attended the general assembly. KJA secretary thanked general assembly members for their confidence in the board of directors, and the social affairs ministry for their cooperation.

Kuwait reports 402 new COVID cases, two deaths

KUWAIT: Kuwait listed 402 new coronavirus infections yesterday, which health authorities said were recorded over the past 24 hours, raising the total number of infections to 140,795. Meanwhile, two fatalities were recorded over the same period, which upped Kuwait's death toll from the outbreak

to 870, the health ministry said. The number of people hospitalized with the virus currently stands at 6,518, with 75 of them in intensive care units, ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said, adding that 5,583 swab tests were conducted over the same period taking the total to 1,062,076 so far. The ministry had earlier yesterday reported that some 559 more people had recovered from the virus over the past 24 hours, raising the total of those to have overcome the disease to 133,407. The spokesman 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

Chamber optimistic in 'satisfactory' solution on 60+ expats' ban

KUWAIT: As a ban on employment of expatriates without university degrees who reach the age of 60 and above is fast approaching, several questions have been raised about the negative economic repercussions on some activities. Occupational activities may be badly affected because they will lose skilled workers who contributed and are still contributing in developing their work and transferring knowledge and accumulated experience to future generations. Many owners believe that the decision is unjust towards occupational workers who were trained inside and outside Kuwait and honed their skills until they became experts, and it is

not fair to let them go in this fashion, reads a report published by Al-Qabas Arabic daily yesterday.

Kuwait Chamber of Commerce Chairman Mohammad Jassim Al-Saqer says in the report that the chamber is preparing an integrated technical study related to its views on resolving the country's demographic imbalance, which is expected to be ready soon. Commenting on the 60-year decision, Saqer said several meetings with Social Affairs Minister Mariam Al-Aqeel and Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower Ahmad Al-Mousa were held. "We found them cooperative, which indicates that a final solution may be reached on the ban of employing those 60 and above without degrees in a way that satisfies all parties," he said. He added the authority's decision, besides being not right, has negative effects on certain economic activities, adding that the peak of a man's contributions are during the period between 60 and 70 years of age.

Kuwait customs seize suspected Pharaonic artifacts



KUWAIT: Airport customs officers discovered objects suspected of being Pharaonic artifacts, which were hidden in a baggage that arrived to Kuwait yesterday. An officer had suspicions about a personal luggage shipped from Egypt, so it was inspected and the relics were found. The pieces will be handed to the artifacts and museums department of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters.

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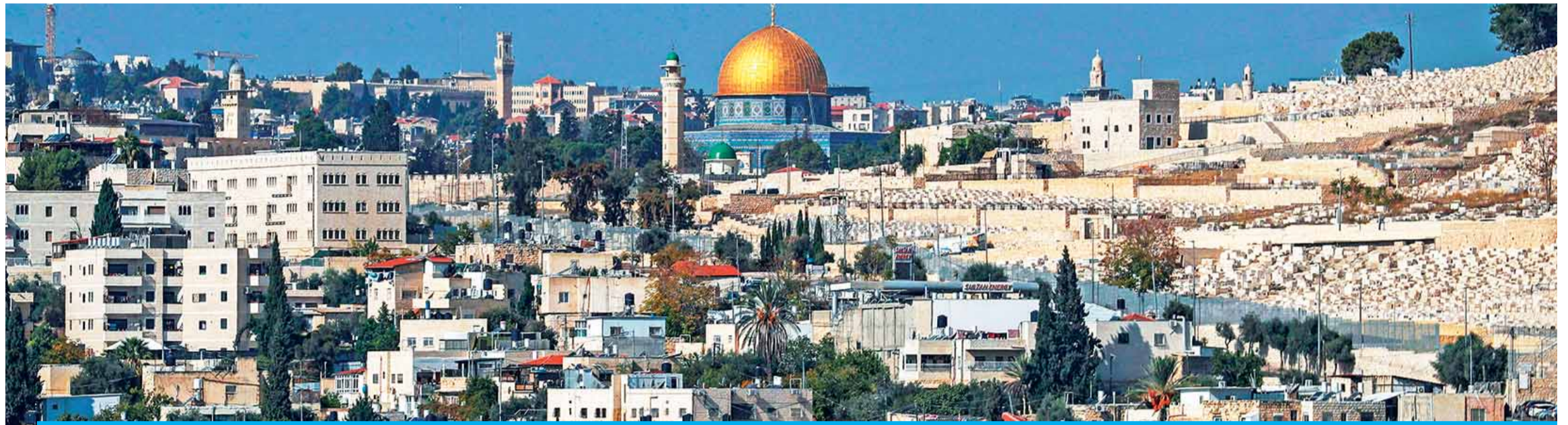


COVID, pollution: Intimately linked, compound threat

Questions swirl as Al-Qaeda names new North Africa chief

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ABU DIS: A picture taken from this West Bank town separated from Jerusalem by Israel's controversial barrier shows the Dome of the Rock (top) in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and the Jewish cemetery of Mount of Olives (right) on Monday. — AFP

Wars and peace: Israel courts Arab world

Speculation mounts as Israel seeks to mend ties

JERUSALEM: Speculation is mounting that Israel and Saudi Arabia may be about to normalize ties after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly held secret talks in the kingdom. If a deal is done, Saudi Arabia would become the sixth Arab nation to recognize Israel after historic accords since September with the UAE, Bahrain and Sudan. We look at the Jewish state's turbulent history with its Arab neighbors with whom it has fought no less than eight wars.

Decades of war

Israel is created on May 14, 1948 on parts of British-mandated Palestine three years after the end of World War II, when the Nazis killed more than six million Jews. It immediately comes under attack from its Arab neighbors, but repels them. More than 760,000 Palestinians are either driven from their homes or flee, becoming refugees. In 1956, Israel attacks Egypt with Britain and France over the nationalization of the Suez Canal. All three are forced to withdraw by the United States and the then-Soviet Union. In June 1967, Israel

wins a crushing victory over its Arab neighbors in the Six-Day War, seizing the West Bank and east Jerusalem from Jordan, the Golan Heights from Syria and the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. In 1973, Egypt and Syria launch a surprise attack on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur but are held off despite initial advances.

First peace treaty

Egyptian president Anwar Sadat becomes the first Arab leader to visit Israel in 1977. Two years later, they sign the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab state. A second peace accord, with Jordan, comes in 1994, formally ending 46 years of war between the two neighbors.

Lebanon invasions

In 1978 and again in 1982, Israel invades civil war-ravaged Lebanon in a bid to halt cross-border attacks by Palestinian militants. Israeli troops remain in southern Lebanon until 2000.

Intifadas, Oslo accords

The first Palestinian intifada, or uprising, erupts in 1987. It ends in 1993 when Israel agrees to limited Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as an interim step towards a comprehensive peace agreement. The so-called Oslo accords are sealed with a historic handshake between Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israel premier Yitzhak Rabin, who is later assassinated by a Jewish extremist. The second intifada breaks out in 2000 when right-wing Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon pays a provocative visit to the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in annexed east Jerusalem.

The wall and Gaza wars

The Israeli army reoccupies much of the West Bank and begins building a separation barrier that cuts deep into occupied territory. In 2005, Israel withdraws all troops and settlers from Gaza after 38 years of occupation. It imposes a crippling blockade on the strip after Islamist group Hamas seizes control in 2007. Israel launches three deadly offensives against Gaza in six years, the latest in 2014.

Trump support

In December 2017, US President Donald Trump recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital, a declaration condemned by the Palestinians who regard east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state. In March 2019, Trump recognizes Israel's 1981 annexation of the Golan Heights. On January 28, 2020, Trump unveils a controversial Middle East peace plan that would pave the way for Israel's annexation of swathes of the West Bank.

Deals with UAE, Bahrain

In a surprise announcement in August, Trump says Israel and the United Arab Emirates have reached an "historic" agreement to normalize ties. Israel agrees to "suspend" annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank, without saying for how long. On September 11, Trump announces that Bahrain and Israel will also normalize ties. The Palestinians condemn the accords as a "stab in the back". Weeks later, Israel approves plans for 4,948 more settler homes in the West Bank.—AFP



KENOSHA, Wisconsin: In this file photo taken on Aug 25, 2020, protesters face off with police outside the county courthouse during demonstrations against the shooting of Jacob Blake. — AFP

'IS bride' a threat to UK national security

LONDON: A woman who joined the Islamic State in Syria would pose "a clear and present threat" to national security if allowed to return to Britain to appeal a decision to revoke her citizenship, the UK government told the Supreme Court on Monday. The Conservative government has asked the country's highest court to decide if Shamima Begum, 21, can come back to pursue an in-person appeal of the 2019 decision to strip her of British citizenship. The Court of Appeal ruled in her favor in July, but the government immediately appealed, insisting she remains "aligned" with the Islamic State (IS) group.

"The exposure of the public to an increased risk of terrorism is not justifiable or appropriate in this case on fairness grounds," James Eadie, a lawyer acting for the interior ministry, told a five-judge panel. "What we submit is that those who travelled (to Syria)... pose a clear and present threat specifically on return." Begum was 15 when she and two other schoolgirls from Bethnal Green, east London, left home to join the jihadist group on February 17, 2015. She claims she married a Dutch convert soon after arriving in IS-held territory. She was discovered, nine months pregnant, in a Syrian refugee camp in February last year.

Her newborn baby died soon after she gave birth. Two of her other children also died under IS rule. Then-home secretary Sajid Javid last year annulled Begum's British citizenship on national security grounds. She took legal action, arguing the decision was unlawful as it had made her stateless and exposed her to the risk of death or inhuman and degrading treatment. British-born Begum is of Bangladeshi heritage. But Bangladesh's foreign minister has said he will not consider granting her citizenship.

'Current threat'

Begum's high-profile flight with her friends from Britain to Syria via Turkey in 2015 was followed by an international manhunt. Her discovery in the Al Roj camp after the group's defeat in Syria and the subsequent months of legal wrangling over her return has regularly prompted outcries in Britain's right-wing press. Rights groups have argued human rights principles are at stake and Begum should answer for any crimes in her home country. Lawyer David Pannick, representing her at the two-day Supreme Court hearing, said Britons have a "fair and effective appeal right unless parliament has clearly indicated to the contrary". "Ms Begum wants to appeal, she wants to exercise a meaningful right of appeal," he added. But the British government is adamant she cannot return. Detailing its various legal arguments, Eadie quoted extensively from a security services' analysis written in 2017 and since updated. Officials believe those who have spent significant time in IS territory have been "radicalized and desensitized to violence," he said.

Eadie cited recent interviews Begum gave to UK newspapers in which she insisted she did not regret travelling to Syria and had not been fazed seeing severed heads dumped in bins. He said Begum's inability to be present at an appeal of the citizenship ruling was due to her original decision to leave Britain. "It was her travel to Syria and alignment with (IS) that provided that basis for deprivation," Eadie said. However, Pannick countered that Begum's circumstances and comments in interview should not prevent her getting "the proper opportunity to present her case". —AFP

Social media fueling real-world violence

NEW YORK: On August 25, Hannah Gittings watched in horror as her friend Anthony Huber was fatally shot during a demonstration in Kenosha, Wisconsin, to protest the police killing of a Black man at the hands of police. The events turned violent when an extreme right militia group called the Kenosha Guard called on Facebook followers to "protect" the city, and a 17-year-old member of the group opened fire on Huber with a semi-automatic rifle. Gittings blamed Facebook for failing to take down what seemed to be a clear incitement of violence.

The page "was left up and not only left up, it was deemed not threatening, not a danger when they're clearly people blatantly inciting violence, saying they're going to shoot Black people," Gittings told a news conference organized by the activist group Avaaz. The tragic incident highlighted concerns that social networks such as Facebook are being used to foment real-world violence with little or no control by the platforms.

Facebook and other social platforms, which are also often used to organize peaceful events and pro-democracy movements, have been condemned for failing to stop a range of abusive and hateful content including organized violence such as the massacre of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar and the beheading of French schoolteacher Samuel Paty near Paris. A Facebook spokesperson, queried by AFP, said, "We remain vigilant when it comes to policing hate speech, calls for violence, and misinformation." The company said that since August it identified over 600 militarized social movements, and removed their pages or accounts, as part of an effort that took down 22.1 million posts containing "hate speech." "We always know there is more to do, which is why we're constantly working to improve our technology and tighten our policies when necessary to keep dangerous content off our platform," the company said.—AFP



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International

Ethiopia's Tigray forces claim victory; global alarm grows

Tigray leader tells Ethiopian PM his people are 'ready to die'

ADDIS ABABA: Tigrayan forces said yesterday they had destroyed an Ethiopian army division in battles to control the northern region where a three-week-old war has killed hundreds and spread global alarm. The leader of Ethiopia's dissident Tigray region has said that his people are "ready to die" defending their homeland, rejecting Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's ultimatum that they surrender within 72 hours.



Impact spills over borders, affecting Eritrea, Sudan

The federal government denied that and said many Tigrayan soldiers were surrendering in line with a 72-hour ultimatum before a threatened attack on the regional capital Mekelle. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's troops launched an offensive against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) local government on Nov. 4 and say they are closing in on Mekelle in a final push to win the conflict. But the battle-hardened TPLF say their troops are keeping the federal army at bay and scoring some big victories.

Their spokesman Getachew Reda told Tigray TV a prestigious army unit - which he termed the 21st mechanized division - had been "completely destroyed" in an assault at Raya-Wahirat led by a former commander of that unit now fighting for the TPLF. Billene Seyoum, the prime minister's spokeswoman, told Reuters that the unit was not true. Reuters has been unable to verify statements made by either side since phone and internet connections to Tigray are down and access to the area is strictly controlled.

Hundreds have died, tens of thousands of refugees have fled to Sudan and there is widespread destruction and uprooting of people from homes, security and aid sources say. The conflict has spread to Eritrea, where the TPLF has fired rockets, and also affected



GONDAR, Ethiopia: Children play on a street on Monday. — AFP

Somalia where Ethiopia has disarmed several hundred Tigrayans in a peacekeeping force fighting al Qaeda-linked militants.

'Tragic conflict'

The United States, which regards Ethiopia as a powerful ally in a turbulent region, became the latest nation to call for peace, saying it supported African Union (AU) mediation efforts "to end this tragic conflict now." Abiy, who won the Nobel Peace Prize last year for ending a standoff with Eritrea, has said he will not negotiate with the TPLF though he does plan to receive AU envoys.

He has given Tigrayan forces until today to surrender or face an assault on the highland city of Mekelle, home to about half a million people. A government taskforce said large numbers of Tigrayan militia and special forces had surrendered and it asked others still with the TPLF to disarm wherever they were.

TPLF leader Debretsion Gebremichael has disputed the government version that Mekelle is encircled at a roughly 50km distance and told Reuters the ultimatum, which ends today, was a cover for government forces to

regroup after defeats. The US embassy in Eritrea's capital Asmara, where TPLF rockets have fallen near the airport, issued an alert saying it had reports that neighborhood wardens advised residents to remain indoors at the instruction of local officials.

"All US Citizens in Asmara are advised to continue to exercise caution, remain in their homes, and conduct only essential travel until further notice," the embassy said. France also expressed concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation, condemned "ethnic violence" and called for protection of civilians.

Abiy, whose parents are from the larger Oromo and Amhara groups, denies any ethnic overtones to his offensive against the TPLF, saying he is pursuing criminals who have revolted against the federal government and ambushed a military base. The TPLF says he wants to subdue Tigray to amass more personal power. Since taking office in 2018, the prime minister has removed many Tigrayans from positions in government and the security forces and arrested some on charges of corruption and human rights abuses, even though he was their former military comrade and coalition partner. — Agencies

"Everybody is terrified in the camp. I'm also afraid of the pandemic, it's deadly."

Conditions 'rapidly worsening'

"The toilets are cleaned only in the morning and within two hours you cannot reach them," said Arezoo, a 15-year-old from Afghanistan who said he had been stuck on Lesbos for a year. "It is disgusting. There is no running water in the showers, so people carry water from their tents in bottles or wash themselves in the sea. Since the tents are far away from the toilets, people make makeshift ones with blankets, cloths and wood."

There is supposed to be electricity for two hours in the morning, two hours at noon and at seven in the evening, he added. But it was intermittent and there was no wifi connection to communicate with friends and family or facilitate work on asylum applications. The improvised schools for the children took place in tents. "The worst part is that you have nothing to do all day," Arezoo said. The Greek authorities set up the Kara Tepe reception centre in just a few days in early September. It was initially intended as a temporary solution to house the thousands left with little or nothing after the Moria blaze. Now however, the migration ministry says the permanent camp intended to replace Moria will not be ready before the summer of 2021. "As with the onset of winter, weather conditions are rapidly worsening, the remaining gaps need to be swiftly addressed, something which UNHCR has offered to help expedite," said Astrid Castelein, head of the UN refugee organization's team in Lesbos. She said they had already asked the authorities in the Lesbos capital of Mytilene to allow them to transfer the most vulnerable asylum-seekers to a local accommodation centre that has empty prefabricated containers. — AFP

Migrants who fled Greek camp blaze face harsh winter

LESBOS: The new camp for migrants on the Greek island of Lesbos was supposed to be a temporary solution for the thousands who escaped a fire that destroyed the infamous Moria camp over two months ago. Now however, many of them will have to stay on through the winter in harsh conditions, as well as facing the threat of the coronavirus, officials say. A fire gutted the sprawling, overcrowded and unsanitary migrant camp of Moria, Europe's largest, on September 8-9, leaving nearly 13,000 homeless. Arson has been blamed.

Some 7,300 migrants, including vulnerable groups, live in the new camp in Kara Tepe a few kilometers away on the same Aegean island of Lesbos, located close to the Turkish coast. They live in tents that are not adapted for winter conditions, without heating or hot water, or enough showers or toilets. This year, as well as the cold and the rain, they also face the risk of catching the coronavirus - and in the camp it is impossible to maintain social distancing, wash hands frequently, or have immediate and proper access to medical care.

Even during the months when the virus restrictions were lifted for Greek citizens, they remained in place at migrant camps throughout the country. "We can only leave the camp once a week for a few hours and we try to manage everything that needs to be done in that short time," said 30-year-old Jean-Pierre from Cameroon.



LESBOS, Greece: In this Sept 9, 2020 file photo, a woman carries a child past flames after a major fire broke out in the Moria migrant camp on this Greek Aegean island. — AFP

Worsening land inequality widens gender, climate change gaps

BANGKOK: Land inequality is growing worldwide, threatening the livelihoods of 2.5 billion people who directly rely on farming and widening disparities in gender, health and climate-change impacts, researchers warned yesterday. The widening gap in ownership and access to land especially hurts small and marginal farmers, women, and indigenous and rural communities, according to a report by the International Land Coalition (ILC) and anti-poverty charity Oxfam. While rural and indigenous communities are being squeezed into smaller parcels of land or uprooted entirely, land is increasingly concentrated in fewer hands, mainly those of large agriculture businesses and investors, the research showed.

"As corporate and financial investments grow, ownership and control of land becomes more concentrated and increasingly opaque," said Ward Anseuw, an analyst at ILC and co-author of the report. "Land inequality

reduces opportunities for younger rural generations, especially girls, to improve their lives. In the longer term, it is detrimental to human development, socio-political stability, and environmental sustainability."

The study, which measured land inequality using traditional census data, as well as tenure, quality of land and other indicators in 17 countries, found that concentration of land has increased in nearly all regions worldwide since 1980. The largest 1% of farms operate more than 70% of the world's farmland, according to the study of countries including India, China, Ecuador, Guatemala, Brazil, Mexico, Ethiopia and Tanzania. Meanwhile, the wealthiest 10% of rural populations control 60% of the value of agricultural land, while the poorest half only have 3%. Latin America is the most unequal region, according to the data that did not include corporate ownership.

"Growing inequality is the greatest obstacle to

Israeli conscientious objector, 19, leaves army prison

ATLIT, Israel: Standing at the gate of an Israeli army jail after being detained for refusing mandatory military service, 19-year-old conscientious objector Hallel Rabin said she was "the happiest person in the world". "My lawyer called me this morning and told me, 'you're free,'" she said. Army service is compulsory for most Israeli citizens and while many seek exemptions on various grounds - some arguably less than truthful - Rabin's case is unusual in that she openly declared herself to be a pacifist.

It's a position that automatically results in prison time, at least while the merits of a case are under consideration. Hallel had served a total of 56 days since August at military prison "number six", and was facing up to 80 more in detention, but was freed on Friday. But after grilling her at four hearings, an army board finally accepted that her pacifism was sincere and not driven by "political considerations," which would have landed her more prison time. The army plays a central role in Israeli society and can impact a young person's social status and job prospects.

Rabin, who was hugged by her mother as she stepped through the prison gate, described military service as a near inescapable certainty with which young Israelis are expected to comply. "You grow up and you know you'll become a soldier. You'll shut up and do your work." At age 18 young women are drafted for two years of military service while men must serve at least 32 months. Ultra-Orthodox women and some men are exempt from the draft, along with Israeli Arabs.



ATLIT: Hallel Rabin, a 19-year-old Israeli conscientious objector, poses for a picture outside the "number six" military prison on Nov 20, 2020 upon release from jail for refusing to serve in the Israeli army. — AFP

To win an exemption some youngsters claim to be studying full-time at a Jewish theological seminary, while others plead mental health problems. Rabin said she chose not to conceal her pacifist convictions and to face the consequences, rejecting "the easy way (out)". "I can say I'm crazy and lie," the ponytailed teenager said. "I'm not crazy. The situation here... is crazy." Asked about Rabin's case, the army offered a procedural response noting that enlistment is mandatory and those who request "an exemption due to conscience-related reasons" are entitled to a hearing before a relevant committee.

'What about Iran?'

Rabin's conduct is not unprecedented. In 2019, five conscientious objectors were jailed by the military, according to Israeli peace group Yesh Gvul. But Rabin faced a severe backlash, including accusations of "treason" and death threats on social media. "I decided not to let it touch me," she said. Rabin said she is not blinded by her pacifism and understands that her country has enemies seeking to destroy it. During questioning, the military board cited arch-foe Iran's efforts to build a nuclear weapon. "Do you think we should let them do it?" she said she was asked. "No, but what can I do about it, it's not my job to do something about it," she replied, unable, she said, to stop herself from laughing in their faces.

She told AFP she would have refused military service had she been born somewhere other than Israel, which has occupied the West Bank since 1967, and blockaded the Gaza Strip for more than a decade. "I would refuse to serve any army in the world," she replied, adding that the reality in the Palestinian Territories merely strengthens her convictions. Exempted from the draft, she says she now intends to volunteer for civilian national service and hopes to help disadvantaged children.

In 2002, Israel's Supreme Court ruled that it was possible to exempt someone for pacifism, but not for what it called "selective conscientious objection", in a precedent setting case of eight officers who were specifically refusing to serve in the occupied territories. "Israel does not want to hear different voices," said Hallel's mother, Irit Rabin, who herself served in the army. "We didn't push her to do it," she added, proud of her daughter's struggle. "We told her 'You have to decide, you have a natural right to choose your steps.'" — AFP

Questions swirl as Qaeda names new North Africa chief

PARIS: The new leader of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is a well-known veteran among the jihadist insurgencies wreaking havoc in North Africa but experts say it's unclear what path he will chart to assert his authority. Abu Obaida Yusuf al-Annabi, an Algerian national born in 1969, replaced Abdelmalek Droukdel following his killing by French forces in Mali last June, according to the SITE terrorism monitoring group. Annabi was already head of AQIM's Council of Dignitaries and "he was also one of its media chiefs," said Laurence Bindner, co-founder of the JOS Project for analysing extremist propaganda online.



Abu Obaida Al-Annabi

"He's the one who pledged allegiance in the group's name to Ayman al-Zawahiri, the main Al-Qaeda chief, in 2011. And he's authored several of its main statements in recent years," she said. The United States placed Annabi, who is thought to still be based in Algeria, on its terrorism watch list in 2015, a move followed by the United Nations the following year. His group has claimed responsibility for several attacks on troops and civilians across the Sahel region, including a 2016 strike on a hotel and restaurant in Burkina Faso that killed 30 people, mainly Westerners.

But Annabi's legitimacy at the head of AQIM might not be clear-cut, particularly among more recent and younger recruits. "Annabi is better known, to me at least, as a propagandist and pseudo-cleric than as an operational figure," said Alex Thurston, a political scientist at the University of Cincinnati who focuses on Islam in northwest Africa. "Tapping someone without the same operational background as Droukdel... would seem to me to be a sign of a weak bench," he said, describing AQIM as "an organization fighting for relevance and lacking in charismatic authority."

Analysts at the Counter Extremism Project say Annabi's relations with his predecessor may have been tense, another potential sign of strategic divisions in the ranks. That in turn could complicate AQIM's relationships with Iyad Ag Ghaly, the Malian tuareg who leads the Group to Support Islam and Muslims, a nominal ally of the group. While Ghaly has pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda, he has like other affiliates in the world significant autonomy - and whether Annabi allows this to continue will determine how jihadist fighting evolves in the coming years. "There have always been tensions between fighters on the ground in northern Mali, and an extremely isolated AQIM emir in Algeria," said Elie Tenenbaum, a researcher at the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI). — AFP

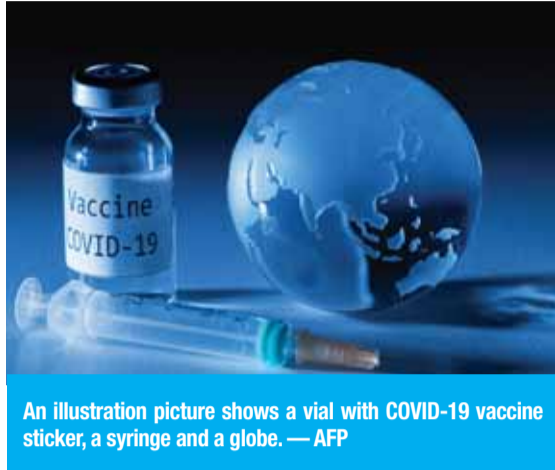
International

COVID-19 vaccines offer hope; World leaders plan for future

'The escape route is in sight' from coronavirus crisis

PARIS: France is expected to loosen its coronavirus restrictions as the boss of a major airline said proof of vaccination will likely become the only way people can fly in a post-pandemic world. Hopes over COVID-19 vaccines have given a boost to virus-weary citizens across the globe, but the disease remains rampant and world leaders are urging people to be patient. French President Emmanuel Macron will address the country - currently under lockdown - to announce a reworking of the rules following a drop in nationwide infections.

Macron's televised speech comes a day after British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said thanks to a major vaccine breakthrough, "the escape route is in sight" from the coronavirus crisis. Johnson said that although the "scientific cavalry" was arriving, he warned "Christmas cannot be normal and there's a long road to spring". The world is still engulfed in the unprecedented health crisis which has shattered economies, infected almost 58.9 million people and left nearly 1.4 million dead.



An illustration picture shows a vial with COVID-19 vaccine sticker, a syringe and a globe. — AFP

to protect its people," Tedros said. "But there is now a real risk that the poorest and most vulnerable will be trampled in the stampede for vaccines."

Qantas vaccine rule

Australia's Qantas announced that international travelers will need to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to fly, becoming the first airline to suggest rules could become common across the industry. Chief executive Alan Joyce said the carrier would implement the measure once a vaccine was made available to the public.

"Certainly, for international visitors coming out (to Australia) and people leaving the country, we think that is a necessity," he told Channel Nine. Joyce predicted the rule would likely become standard practice around the world as governments and airlines consider the introduction of electronic vaccination passports. However, other major regional airlines, such as Korean Air and Japan Airlines, said it was too early to comment on what travel requirements might be when a vaccine becomes widely available.

Following Qantas' announcement, Australian Health Minister Greg Hunt said "no final decision" had yet been

taken on how to proceed when vaccines are available, but indicated vaccination or a strict two-week quarantine would be a condition for entry. "We would expect that people coming to Australia whilst Covid-19 is a significant disease in the world will either be vaccinated or they will isolate," he said. Australia's Victoria state announced its last coronavirus patient had been cleared of COVID-19 - a major milestone for what had been the epicenter of the country's second wave.

But in China, where the virus was first detected late last year, hundreds of flights at Shanghai's Pudong International Airport were cancelled after a small cluster of cases in the city was linked to several cargo handlers. And officials in Hong Kong ramped up already tight social distancing measures following a local spike in infections, shuttering bars, pubs, party rooms and nightclubs. All live performances and dancing have also been banned. Daily case numbers have approached three figures in recent days, prompting the stricter rules.

'Selfish deaf ears'

The United States - by far the worst-hit nation - celebrates Thanksgiving on Thursday, and many Americans plan to spend the holiday with extended family despite authorities warning they risk exacerbating the disease raging across the country. Nearly 258,000 people have died nationwide and the caseload is edging towards 12.4 million, according to Johns Hopkins University.

Stopping short of issuing an outright ban, the US government's health protection agency has for the first time called on Americans not to travel for the annual holiday, which sees families get together over turkey, yams and cranberry sauce. Last weekend was the busiest since the start of the pandemic with more than three million people passing through US airports, according to the Transportation Security Administration, which is responsible for security checks. "Our pleas for help have fallen on selfish deaf ears," tweeted Cleavon Gilman, an emergency doctor in Arizona, where he said hospitals were "overwhelmed" with Covid patients. — AFP

Australia opens up more borders, eyes vaccine

SYDNEY: Australia will lift more internal state border restrictions in a boost for tourism as new coronavirus infections slow to a trickle, while the first vaccines could be available in March, a government minister said yesterday. Queensland state, a popular holiday destination, will allow visitors next week from the country's two most populous states, New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria, after closing its borders in August.

NSW has since notched a month without any COVID-19 cases where the source is unknown and restrictions on arrivals from Sydney will be eased on Dec 1, Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said. Residents of Victoria, previously the country's coronavirus hotspot, will also be welcomed if the state has no new cases on Wednesday, which would mark 26 days without community transmission. "Queensland is good to go," Palaszczuk told reporters in Brisbane.

NSW and Victoria opened their border on Monday, while the South Australia-Victorian border opens fully next week, in welcome news for local airline companies, Qantas Airways and Virgin Australia. Qantas said it will run more than 1,200 return flights from Victoria and NSW into Queensland in the run-up to Christmas. The moves will please Prime Minister Scott Morrison who has pushed state leaders to relax some curbs to help revive the economy, which shrank 7% in the three months to end-June, the most since records began in 1959.

Looking further out, Health Minister Greg Hunt said Australia - which has agreed to buy nearly 34 million doses of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine - is increasingly confident it can complete a vaccination program after the release of preliminary trial results. "Our vaccine timeline is beginning to strengthen. The news from overseas is that we are on track for first vaccines in March," Hunt told reporters in Sydney.

AstraZeneca said its COVID-19 vaccine, cheaper to make, easier to distribute and faster to scale-up than its rivals, could be as much as 90% effective. Australia has reported more than 27,800 cases of COVID-19 and 907 deaths since the pandemic began, but estimates there are fewer than 100 active COVID-19 cases remaining, mostly people in hotel quarantine. — Reuters



ZAGREB: Medical staff in personal protective equipment use a rapid antigen to test people for the novel coronavirus on Monday. — AFP

study found. This is because the novel coronavirus and PM2.5 both cause severe lung conditions, so one compounds the other in patients sick with COVID-19. "They do the same thing: the vasculature inflammation in the lungs, secondary pneumonia, hypertension and also triggering (heart attacks) and heart failure," Thomas Munzel, from the University of Mainz's Centre for Cardiology said. And since air pollution exposure makes pre-existing lung conditions more likely, "when you have already cardiovascular disease you are in

linked deaths in Europe and 24,200 in China. "When we consider the long-term effect too - avoided chronic respiratory problems, cardiovascular diseases, lung cancers and ischaemic heart diseases because of lower levels of air pollution - the number of averted fatalities is much larger," she said.

In Europe, as many as 29,000 long-term air pollution fatalities may have been averted, she said, with up to 287,000 in China. Lauri Myllyvirta, lead analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), said that unless there is an immediate rebound in pollution levels, populations would benefit long term from the cleaner lockdown air. "The long-term exposure of pretty much everyone in Europe would have been reduced because much less fossil fuels were burned in 2020," he said.

'Particular danger'

The lives saved by cleaner air are all the proof campaigners need to continue to push for better air quality regulation going forward, even and especially once the pandemic ends. But there is a more pressing reason to act, according to research. One study published recently in the journal Cardiovascular Research found that long-term exposure to fine PM2.5 particulate matter could be linked to a 15 percent higher risk of dying from COVID-19.

In east Asia, that figure is closer to 30 percent, the



Christmas can't be normal: British PM

AstraZeneca and Oxford University on Monday said their drug had proved on average 70 percent effective at stopping the virus after trying it on 23,000 people, days after tests of two other drugs suggested they were more than 90 percent effective. While World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus hailed the latest batch of results as light at the end of the "long dark tunnel", he cautioned that the world had to ensure drugs were distributed fairly. "Every government rightly wants to do everything it can

John Kerry, who signed Paris accord for US, is Biden's climate envoy

WASHINGTON: Former secretary of state John Kerry helped broker the landmark Paris Agreement and signed it on behalf of the United States, a decision subsequently reversed by President Donald Trump. Now, he is set to be President-elect Joe Biden's climate envoy, in a clear sign of the upcoming administration's renewed commitment to fighting climate change. "I'm returning to government to get America back on track to address the biggest challenge of this generation and those that will follow," Kerry tweeted shortly after his appointment.

"The climate crisis demands nothing less than all hands on deck." The announcement was welcomed by environmental groups such as the World Resources Institute, whose CEO Andrew Steer said: "There are few people in the world with as remarkable a track record on climate change." Kerry, a longtime Senate colleague, friend and political ally of Biden who stood by the president-elect when his candidacy was in crisis, brings to the table the clout and connections associated with being ex-president Barack Obama's top diplomat.

The chief architect of the Iran nuclear deal will need all his skills as a statesman as the US looks to rebuild its strained credibility when it returns to the Paris accord, which Biden has vowed to do on the first day he takes office. At the age of 76, the Democratic Party grandee who unsuccessfully ran for president in 2004 has lost none of his zest for international affairs. Last year he pivoted towards making climate his signature issue, launching a cross-party coalition called "World War Zero" that included top military officials, Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger and celebrities like Leonardo DiCaprio and Emma Watson.

"Things are getting worse, not better. So we have our unlikely allies coming together here... to treat this like a war," he said. The years of climate inaction under Trump have made the war harder to win. Emissions from the world's second-biggest polluter have been falling in recent years thanks to the increased contribution of natural gas and renewables - and this year by the COVID-19 pandemic. But the rate isn't close to what is needed to achieve the goal Biden has set for the United States, of net carbon neutrality by 2050.

COVID, pollution: Intimately linked, compound threat

PARIS: Lockdowns may have temporarily cleared up the skies above big cities this year but experts warn that air pollution remains a COVID-19 threat multiplier, as well as a health hazard that will far outlast the pandemic. As governments ordered temporary confinement measures to battle multiple virus waves, several studies have charted a marked increase in air quality in the US, China, and Europe. In Spain, for example, levels of atmospheric nitrous oxide (NO2) - associated with a host of lung conditions - plummeted 62 percent during the spring lockdown period. France and Italy saw falls of 52 and 48 percent, respectively, according to the European Environment Agency.

Since air pollution kills roughly seven million worldwide people each year, such falls are bound to have prevented deaths. Paola Crippa, assistant professor at Notre Dame's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Earth Sciences, told AFP that lockdowns probably prevented around 2,190 air pollution-

News in brief

Russia hunts Jehovah Witnesses

MOSCOW: Law enforcement authorities carried out mass raids on the Jehovah's Witnesses across Russia yesterday and made a number of arrests as part of a new criminal case against the group, the Investigative Committee said. The law enforcement agency said it had opened an investigation as it suspected the Christian denomination, which Russia has labeled "extremist" and outlawed, was organizing the activity of its national centre in Russia and local affiliates. Russia's Supreme Court ordered the Jehovah's Witnesses to disband in 2017 and some of its adherents have been jailed or hit with criminal charges in an ensuing crackdown. The Investigative Committee said in a statement it had identified a number of the group's organizers and followers in more than 20 regions and had taken them into custody as part of its investigation. — Reuters

NY City first Black mayor dies

WASHINGTON: David Dinkins, New York City's first Black mayor, has died, US media reported late Monday. He was 93. The Democrat served as leader of the city from 1990 to 1993 after defeating Rudy Giuliani and Edward Koch. His tenure was marked by racial strife - most notably the Crown Heights riots - and criticism that he was not up to the job. Dinkins died from natural causes at home, the New York Times reported, less than two months after his wife Joyce also passed away. A compromise candidate who remains New York's only Black mayor, he inherited a city marked by racism, poverty and violence. More than a million New Yorkers were on welfare following the recession, and over 1,000 murders were being reported annually. Dinkins was elected as a stabilizing force, and famously described New York as a "gorgeous mosaic," but he struggled to make headway. — AFP

Shanghai tackles virus outbreak

SHANGHAI: Hundreds of flights at one of China's busiest airports were cancelled yesterday as Shanghai raced to bring a local coronavirus outbreak under control. Health officials have tested thousands of staff at Pudong International Airport since a small cluster of COVID-19 cases in the city was linked to several cargo handlers. China - where the virus first emerged late last year - has largely brought the pandemic under control through travel restrictions and lockdowns, but it is now battling a number of domestic outbreaks in different cities. Shanghai has reported seven local infections linked to the airport this month, with most cases found in the past few days. The outbreak has sparked plans to give high-risk workers at the travel hub an experimental vaccine China has already been providing to state employees, international students and essential workers heading abroad since July. — AFP

Taiwan expands submarine fleet

TAIPEI: Taiwan began construction on a fleet of indigenous submarines yesterday, the latest move by the out-gunned island to bolster its defenses against increasingly bellicose threats from Beijing. Democratic Taiwan lives under the constant threat of invasion by communist China, which views the self-ruled island as part of its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary. Beijing has piled on military, economic and diplomatic pressure since the election of President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016, in part due to her refusal to acknowledge its stance that the island is part of "one China". "We are letting the world see Taiwan's strong will to defend its sovereignty," Tsai said at a ceremony marking the start of construction in a shipyard in southern Kaohsiung city. The long-mooted project aims to deliver eight new submarines, with the first expected by 2025 according to officials. — AFP

particular danger when you get an infection with COVID," he said.

Double hit

Recent analysis of air quality across more than 3,000 US counties showed that an increase in airborne particulate matter of 1 microgram/m3 corresponded with an 11 percent increased risk of dying of COVID-19. Authors of the study, published earlier this month in Science Advances, warned against overreacting to the findings, stressing that far more work was needed on this budding area of research. One thing that remains unclear is what impact exposure to air pollution has on people infected with SARS-CoV-2. "I'm pretty convinced short term reduction of air pollution has an impact, but we don't have the data yet," said Munzel.

Clues are beginning to emerge on how air pollution interacts with the coronavirus, particularly as to the role of the ACE-2 receptor, which facilitates entry in to cells. Described in the Journal of Infection back in Spring as the "double hit hypothesis", the idea is that fine pollution particles damage this receptor and make it easier for the virus to infect more cells. This scenario could potentially be compounded by chronic NO2 exposure, which is known to weaken the lungs. And with the arrival of winter - "pollution season" as Myllyvirta put it - experts have called for continued vigilance as the world grapples with the second COVID-19. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2020

Biden to name Yellen as US Treasury chief

US business leaders move on from Trump to Biden

WASHINGTON: President-elect Joe Biden was poised to nominate former Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen to head the US Treasury, a choice that, if confirmed by the Senate, would make her the first woman in the job. The 74-year-old, whose nomination was confirmed to AFP by a financial source close to the Biden administration, would be tasked with steering the world's largest economy as it struggles with mass layoffs and a sharp growth slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Yellen will be the next treasury secretary" and she could be formally announced early today, the source said, confirming news first reported by The Wall Street Journal. Yellen's candidacy was supported by left-wing members of Biden's Democratic Party, according to the source, and requires Senate confirmation.

Yellen broke barriers when former president Barack Obama nominated her to serve as Fed chair in 2014, a position President Donald Trump ousted her from four years later. At the Fed, Yellen was seen as a "dove" inclined towards low interest rates to support employment.

She would succeed Steven Mnuchin, and likely be faced with breaking a months-long deadlock in Congress over passing a new stimulus spending bill for the US economy—assuming lawmakers don't act before Biden's inauguration in January. Chief econo-

mist at Grant Thornton Diane Swonk called Yellen "a highly talented and gifted economist" on Twitter. "She will make a great treasury secretary at a critical time and write yet another chapter in the history books," she said.

'Essential' spending

The United States is home to the world's largest COVID-19 outbreak, and as the economy convulsed Congress rallied in March to pass the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act that expanded unemployment payments, supported small businesses and allocated money to hard-hit airlines to maintain their staff.

But those provisions expired over the summer, leading to 32,000 furloughs among major airlines alone and raising fears of a renewed economic slump. Congress has been deadlocked on passing more aid, with Democrats supporting another \$2.2 trillion measure but Republicans insisting on a series of smaller bills.

Gregori Volokhine, president of Meeschaert Capital Markets, called Yellen a "friend of the markets" for supporting further spending that would boost equities, and noting her confirmation would mark a return of technocrats to the executive branch.

"After four years of political appointments, we have appointments of professionals, not only political professionals but also professionals in their pro-

fessions," he said. Currently a distinguished fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, Yellen has signaled her support for more spending.

Trump may still be trying to overturn Joe Biden's election win, but the business world—including some Trump backers—is looking ahead towards the new Democratic administration. Less than two months before the 78-year-old Biden takes the oath of office, corporate heavyweights are pushing him to lean on Congress to get a new economic stimulus plan, as the coronavirus pandemic drags on.

"The next two months are critical to our nation's ability to successfully deal with twin crises: controlling the spread of Covid-19 and rebuilding the US economy," the National Association of Manufacturers said.

"There is no time to waste nor room for error," the group added in a statement, calling on the Trump administration to start cooperating with Biden's transition team.

But so far, Trump and his White House staff are not admitting defeat, meaning the resources normally at a president-elect's disposal for a transition are blocked. Several key business leaders and industry organizations, such as United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby and the US Chamber of Commerce, quickly congratulated Biden once he was declared the projected winner on November 7.

Ten days later, Walmart CEO Doug McMillon took a break from an earnings conference call to offer the veteran Democrat his best wishes. "We look forward to working with the administration in both houses of Congress to move the country forward," he said. Trump, a real estate mogul who often brags about his close ties with the corporate



WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen attends the 32nd Annual Group of 30 (G30) International Banking Seminar in Washington, DC. President-elect Joe Biden will nominate former Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen to head the US Treasury. — AFP

world, especially on Wall Street, has been left behind by some of those very contacts.

Steve Schwarzman, the billionaire co-founder of the Blackstone investment group who is a friend and informal advisor to the president, said Monday that Biden had won. "The outcome is very certain today, and the country should move on," he said in a statement sent to AFP.

"I supported President Trump and the strong economic path he built. Like many in the business community, I am ready to help President-elect Biden and his team as they confront the significant challenges of rebuilding our post-COVID economy." — AFP

Bitcoin climbs to all-time high after topping \$19,000

LONDON: Bitcoin moved to within a whisker of its all-time high yesterday, after hitting \$19,000 for the first time in nearly three years. The world's most popular cryptocurrency was last up 4.8 percent at \$19,225, just shy of its all-time record of \$19,666 hit in December 2017. Bitcoin has gained around 25 percent in the last two weeks alone, and is up around 160 percent this year.

Fuelling its rally have been demand for riskier assets amid unprecedented stimulus programs to counter the COVID-19 hit; hunger for assets perceived as resistant to inflation; and expectations cryptocurrencies will win wider acceptance as a method of payments. Bitcoin's 12-year history has been peppered with vertiginous gains and equally sharp drops. Its markets and price discovery is highly opaque compared with traditional assets

such as stocks or bonds.

"My base-case scenario is that we will break the 2017 high and hold above it," said Fawad Razaqada, an analyst at FX brokerage Think Markets. "But if you get an immediate rejection above the all-time, that would raise the possibility of a correction." Smaller digital currencies such as ethereum and XRP - which often move in tandem with bitcoin - took a breather after gaining sharply in recent days.

Crypto markets have matured since bitcoin's December 2017 peak, attracting a greater number of large investors such as family offices and hedge funds. Its 2020 gains have prompted some investors to claim the cryptocurrency could more than quintuple in price to as high as \$100,000 in a year, drawing eye rolls from skeptics who say it is a purely speculative asset.



ISTANBUL: In this file photo, a physical imitation of a Bitcoin is displayed at a crypto currency "Bitcoin Change" shop, near Grand Bazaar, in Istanbul. — AFP

Analysts say bitcoin's limited supply of 21 million makes it a good hedge against inflation. Some investors think the value of traditional currencies will fall as governments and central banks unleash massive stimulus packages to support economies hit by COVID-19.

Yet bitcoin's gains have continued even as gold - traditionally a go-to hedge against inflation - has slipped, with a resurgent pandemic making global growth and inflation recovery a more distant prospect. Gold has shed 3.6 percent this month, versus bitcoin's 40 percent gain. — AFP

Germany's DAX 30 index to add 10 companies

FRANKFURT: Germany's blue-chip DAX 30 index will grow by 10 companies and tighten entry rules following criticism over the spectacular collapse of former member Wirecard, stock exchange operator Deutsche Boerse said yesterday. The changes, which come into effect in September 2021, will raise the flagship index from 30 to 40 members, and require new entrants to have made an operating profit over the last years. They will also be required to publish their audited financial reports.

"The comprehensive changes in the index rules were decided to increase the quality of the DAX indices and to align them with international standards," Deutsche Boerse said in a statement.

"This is a historic milestone," said independent analyst Timo Emden, and one that is "long overdue" for the Frankfurt index, which was launched in 1988 as Germany's answer to the Dow Jones Industrial Average. The DAX suffered a blow to its reputation after digital payments provider Wirecard in June admitted to a 1.9 billion euro hole in its accounts, and top executives were arrested on fraud suspicions soon after.

Wirecard filed for insolvency and its share price plummeted by 98 percent before it was booted off the index, becoming the first DAX company to fail.

More diversity

Deutsche Boerse's chief executive Theodor Weimer has previously made no secret of his desire to expand the DAX, which is smaller than France's



FRANKFURT: Traders working in front of a board displaying the chart of Germany's share index DAX at the stock exchange in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. — AFP

CAC 40 or Britain's FTSE 100. The overhaul promises to diversify the DAX. While technology giants such as Facebook, Amazon and Netflix are spearheading the stock market on the other side of the Atlantic, the DAX is still dominated by the auto and chemicals industries.

Berlin online fashion brand Zalando, biotech lab Qiagen and fragrance maker Symrise are expected to be included in the expanded index. If they had been implemented sooner, the rule changes would have prevented takeover provider Delivery Hero from replacing Wirecard on the DAX 30, given that it has never made a profit despite its multibillion euro market capitalization.

The DAX revamp comes after a review launched in the wake of the Wirecard scandal, with more than 600 market players such as banks, fund companies and shareholder associations weighing in, Deutsche Boerse said. Earlier this year, the market operator already made it easier to expel companies from the index in cases of insolvency. The MDax index of medium-sized companies will decrease by 10 to 50 companies as part of the overhaul, Deutsche Boerse added. — AFP

Britain warns tech firms over risks of China expansion

LONDON: The British government launched a website yesterday warning digital and technology firms of the ethical, legal and commercial risks of expanding into China and accepting Chinese investment.

Britain published this month a bill giving ministers far-reaching power to intervene in corporate deals which could threaten national security, the culmination of years of growing concern about Chinese and other foreign investment in key industries. Launched with the slogan "China. See the Potential. Know the Challenge" the government website is designed as a guide for digital and tech firms, encouraging good practice and raising awareness of potential issues.

"The UK is determined to support our businesses to engage with China in a way that reflects the UK's values and takes account of national security concerns," digital and culture minister Caroline Dinenage said in a statement. Alongside case studies, guides on how to conduct due diligence and links to specialist consultancies, the site contains some stark warnings. "There is a risk that your company's technology could be used to violate human rights," said a section on ethical risks, highlighting concerns about facial recognition software censorship, and mass surveillance among other concerns. Another section warns: "Taking legal steps to protect your IP (Intellectual Property) in China is important, but you should also consider your cybersecurity." Earlier this year, ministers blocked Chinese firm Huawei Technologies Co Ltd from parts of the UK's telecoms network over concerns about spying. — Reuters

Airlines set to lose \$157bn amid slump: IATA



SEOUL: International Air Transport Association (IATA) chief executive Alexandre de Juniac speaks during the opening session of the annual general meeting of IATA in Seoul. — AFP

PARIS: Airlines are on course to lose a total \$157 billion this year and next, their main global body warned yesterday, further downgrading its industry outlook in response to a second wave of coronavirus infections and shutdowns afflicting major markets.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA), which in June had forecast \$100 billion in losses for the two-year period, said it now projects a \$118.5 billion deficit this year alone, and a further \$38.7 billion for 2021. The bleak outlook underscores challenges still facing the sector despite upbeat news on development of COVID-19 vaccines, whose global deployment will continue throughout next year.

"The positive impact it will have on the economy and air traffic will not happen massively before mid-2021," IATA Director General Alexandre de Juniac told Reuters.

Passenger numbers are expected to drop to 1.8 billion this year from 4.5 billion in 2019, IATA estimates, and will recover only partially to 2.8 billion next year. Passenger revenue for 2020 is expected to have plunged 69 percent to \$191 billion. The forecasts assume some re-opening of borders by the middle of next year, helped by some combination of COVID-19 testing and vaccine deployment.

IATA reiterated its call for governments to replace travel-stifling quarantine regimes with widespread testing programs. "We are seeing states progressively coming to listen to us," de Juniac said, citing testing initiatives underway in France, Germany, Italy, Britain, the United States and Singapore.

While some governments and airlines such as Australia's Qantas say passengers are likely to require vaccination for long-haul travel, the approach is unlikely to work everywhere, de Juniac said. "It would prevent people who are refusing (the vaccine) from travelling," the IATA chief said. "Systematic testing is even more critical to reopen borders than the vaccine." — Reuters

Business

\$169bn for 29,000 lives? Study calculates cost of US shutdowns

People's behavior may make renewed business curbs less effective

WASHINGTON: There's little doubt that government-ordered business shutdowns to stop the spread of COVID-19 damaged the US economy, but the exact cost has not been clear. Researchers from HEC Paris business school and Bocconi University in Milan have reached a sobering calculation: the closures beginning at the pandemic's onset in March through May saved 29,000 lives—at a cost of \$169 billion, or around \$6 million per person.

"Governors saved lives on the one hand, but reduced economic activity on the other," Jean-Noel Barrot, a professor at HEC Paris and member of France's National Assembly, told AFP. How to address the world's largest coronavirus outbreak has become a vexing, politically charged question in the United States, where the virus has infected more than 12.2 million people and killed nearly 257,000.

Virus cases are surging nationwide, prompting many states to again implement restrictions on businesses. But Barrot warns that changes in Americans' behavior may make renewed business restrictions less effective. "As people become, perhaps, more responsible, as they wear more masks and so on, the effect that we're seeing on infection is going to probably go down," he said.

Unprecedented shutdown

The March orders were applied unevenly by state and local governments, but caused unprecedented disruptions to the world's largest economy, prompting a

debate over the government's role in forcing people to change their lifestyles in the name of public health. Critics have said the restrictions, which were relaxed to varying degrees in the spring and summer, are a costly assault on personal freedom, while supporters say they're one of the ways the out-of-control virus can be contained.

A June study published in Nature found that without social distancing and business restrictions, the US would have seen cases hit 5.2 million in early April, rather than their actual level of around 365,000.

Researchers at Columbia University meanwhile found that more than 35,000 lives could have been saved had such measures been put in place just a week earlier than their mid-March imposition. Though nowhere near as stringent as in other countries where curfews were strictly enforced and rulebreakers penalized, the restrictions' effects on the US economy were seen almost immediately.

Weekly applications for jobless aid shot up, with nearly 6.9 million filings in the week ended March 28, while the unemployment rate skyrocketed to 14.7 percent in April from its historic low of 3.5 percent in February. Using data from JHU and the US Census Bureau, Barrot determined the various US shutdowns cost about 0.8 percent of total US GDP, but reduced the death toll in the period surveyed by around a quarter.

States' moves to loosen the restrictions and massive stimulus spending helped the economy heal, pushing the



SAN DIEGO, CA: Business owners and local leaders participate in a rally at the County Administration Building in San Diego, California. Business owners gathered to protest against new COVID-19 regulations as purple tier restrictions take effect. — AFP

unemployment rate to 6.9 percent in October and weekly jobless aid filings down to around 750,000 — still higher than the worst single week of the 2008-2010 global financial crisis.

While Barrot said new blanket restrictions may not

be as effective in preventing deaths this time around, but they will certainly remain expensive. "What we need to think of (are) contingency plans to avoid having to, so to speak, burn so much of our collective wealth in order to stay alive," Barrot said. — AFP

US directs GM to recall 5.9m autos with Takata airbags

NEW YORK: US auto safety authorities ordered General Motors to recall nearly six million pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles to replace defective Takata airbags, officials said. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) rejected a four-year old appeal from GM to exempt it from a recall order to replace the Takata airbags, which are prone to exploding in warmer regions.

The agency said exemptions like the one sought by GM are "virtually never granted," as it rejected GM's arguments that Takata airbags in its vehicles posed an "inconsequential" risk to consumers.

"The threshold of evidence necessary to prove the inconsequentiality of a defect such as this one-involving the potential performance failure of safety-critical equipment—is very difficult to overcome," the agency said in its decision. "GM bears a heavy burden, and the evidence and argument GM provides suffers from numerous, significant deficiencies," the agency continued. The decision cited more than 300 public comments from consumers and others opposing the exemption for GM. It also dismissed the significance of the lack of known accidents tied to GM from Takata airbags thus far. "That a rupture has not yet occurred or been reported does not mean that a rupture will not occur in the future, and it provides no support for the notion that in the event of a rupture, the result will be inconsequential to safety."

GM will recall 5.9 million vehicles in the United States and another one million vehicles overseas, a spokesman said. The recall pertains to a dozen vehicles from model years 2007-2014, including the Chevrolet

Silverado, the GMC Sierra and the GMC Yukon, the NHTSA said. GM said safety and trust of consumers "is at the forefront of everything we do at General Motors," according to a statement. "Based on data generated through independent scientific evaluation conducted over several years, we disagree with NHTSA's position. However, we will abide by NHTSA's decision and begin taking the necessary steps."

The agency gave GM 30 days to establish a schedule for notifying vehicle owners and repairing the vehicles. NHTSA has confirmed 18 fatalities in the United States due to Takata airbag explosions and another 250 cases in which people have been injured. About 63 million airbags have been recalled. The Center for Auto Safety applauded the NHTSA, calling its decision "important" in a Monday tweet. In a 2019 letter to NHTSA, the nonprofit said a petition for inconsequentiality "is typically submitted and granted when a vehicle fails to conform to certain safety standards but is at least as safe as if it had conformed.—AFP



In this file photo, line workers work on the chassis of full-size General Motors pickup trucks at the Flint Assembly plant in Flint, Michigan. — AFP

In blow to struggling Cubans, Western Union offices close

HAVANA: Western Union Co suspended its operations across Cuba on Monday evening as new US sanctions kicked in, cutting a key lifeline for many struggling Cuban families as the coronavirus pandemic deepens the Communist-run island's economic crisis.

US President-elect Joe Biden has promised to roll back some sanctions on remittances. But any lifting of the suspension could take time and until then, Cuban Americans are expected to resort to alternatives that are more costly, less secure and less rapid. Remittances to Cuba are believed to be around \$2 billion to \$3 billion annually, representing its third biggest source of dollars after the services industry and tourism.

Money transfers from the United States via Western Union were estimated at more than \$1 billion last year, the majority of which was sent from Florida, according to John Kavulich, president of the US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council. Current options for remittances include agencies that hire "mules" to fly out to Cuba with cash and which predate Western Union's start in Cuba 20 years ago, as well as companies that transfer dollars to Cuban accounts — though that money can only be used at state stores.

Cryptocurrency exchanges are also promoting themselves as an alternative. Cuban Americans can transfer digital currencies to middle men on the island who then give money to the Cuban Americans' relatives. But such platforms lack oversight, cryptocurrencies can fluctuate rapidly and unexpectedly in value and internet access is still not a given in Cuba, Kavulich said.

"We've looked but there are no safe services," said local resident Arturo Labaut. The closures of Western Union's 407 offices in Cuba came into effect after US President Donald Trump's administration banned US firms sending remittances via military-controlled companies that include Western Union's main Cuban partner. His administration has also previously capped the amount Cuban Americans can send family members at \$1,000 per quarter, and transfers of money to non-family members are no longer allowed. The new ban comes just as Cuba has started enacting structural reforms to revive its state-run economy which has been long called for but which will spell pain for its residents in the meantime. "It's a bad time to be doing this because of the suffering it will cause," said Florida International University professor Guillermo Grenier. "It's not governments that suffer, it's people." — Reuters



US manufacturing, services activity expanding rapidly

WASHINGTON: US business activity expanded at the fastest rate in more than five years in November led by the quickest pickup in manufacturing since September 2014, a survey showed on Monday in an indication the economy keeps making progress at clambering out of the COVID-19 recession even as infections surge.

IHS Markit's manufacturing and services sector purchasing managers' indexes both topped even the most optimistic forecasts in a Reuters poll that predicted both would level off, offering a counterweight to data suggesting economic momentum was slackening after the third-quarter's torrid rebound from an historic plunge last spring. The readings also offered one of the first pictures of the state of the US economy after a presidential election three weeks ago in which Democrat Joe Biden beat incumbent Republican President Donald Trump. "The upturn reflected a further strengthening of demand, which in turn encouraged firms to take on staff at a rate not previously seen since the survey began in 2009," IHS Markit Chief Business Economist Chris Williamson said in a statement. Markit's manufacturing index climbed to 56.7 from 53.4 in October, above the median forecast in a Reuters economists' poll of 53. A reading above 50 indicates expansion.

The services index, meanwhile, rose to 57.7 — the highest since April 2015 — from 56.9 a month earlier. The Reuters poll had pegged the expectation at 55.0. Markit's composite index — a blend of the manufacturing and services readings — increased to 57.9 from 56.3 in October. It was also the highest since April 2015. Markit said its subindex for employment also rose at a record pace as well, potentially welcome news in a US job market that still features more than 10 million people without work who had been employed before the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in the first quarter.

With the election now over and subsequent news of successful COVID-19 vaccine candidates, Markit said survey respondents were the most optimistic about the year ahead since May 2014.

Nonetheless, Markit's survey results about current activity are at odds with a number of other recent readings on the US economy that are far less favorable as a result of a resurgence in COVID-19 that has led to record after record of new daily infections and rising deaths. Last week, October retail sales reported from the Commerce Department showed the weakest increase in six months, while the Labor Department reported the first weekly increase in new claims for unemployment benefits in a month.—Reuters

Unlocking value in the Gulf's fight against COVID-19 with 5G

Author: Liam Zhao, President of Huawei Gulf North

Digital infrastructure has played a significant role in helping the Gulf to overcome the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries throughout the region have used resourcefulness and digital tools to successfully mitigate the economic and health impact of the coronavirus. While many of us are still in the midst of the pandemic, it is clear that today's technologies—particularly 5G connectivity—are contributing substantially towards recovery efforts, aiding communities and businesses alike.

While the use of technology in the medical field to help with more effective treatments is by no means an insignificant endeavor, what nations in the Gulf also need to consider is how to best leverage their existing ICT capacity to drive economic stimulus. This will contribute greatly towards igniting industrial activity and spurring investment. 5G infrastructure is key to this, providing the foundation for all industries to become leaner, more efficient, and more intelligent in their operations.

A general assumption is that 5G is simply 'better connectivity'. It is true that 5G is one of the most powerful technologies available to us at present, particularly at a time when societies value convenience and the ability to work remotely and on-the-go more than ever before. But looking at connectivity is only part of the picture.

5G supports an ecosystem that brings together additional technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing, the end result being even greater business continuity and stronger engines for economic recovery. According to one IHS Markit study, 5G could generate a value of around US\$13.2 trillion in global economic output by 2035, as well as generating 22.3 million jobs just in the 5G value chain alone. Investment in building and strengthening 5G networks locally—and the ICT ecosystem as a whole—has thus become a major priority in many government agendas.

Although GCC countries were among the first wave of 5G implementations globally,



the potential of 5G must now be harnessed in the industrial sector in particular. This potential is seen across a wide range of industries from transportation to education, telecommunications, manufacturing, and others. It also enables the introduction of transformative solutions that bridge the digital divide, and which bring more people and businesses into today's digital economy. Furthermore, 5G reinforces the security and privacy of our digital economy, with stronger encryption than earlier network generations.

With that in mind, we must continue to champion open collaboration and dialogue in capturing 5G's potential. Joint innovation programs and public-private partnerships will certainly accelerate new industrial applications in the Gulf. In addition, nurturing local ICT talent development is essential to raising the bar in R&D, promoting future innovation across the ICT ecosystem.

Even in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, 5G connectivity, cloud, AI, computing, and industry applications are now coming together to create unprecedented opportunities. Our focus must now center on creating new value with synergy across these various tech domains, providing scenario-specific solutions to the Gulf. These will ultimately allow enterprises to grow their businesses and help governments achieve their strategic goals of boosting domestic industry, benefiting their constituents, and improving overall governance in the days ahead.

Business

'Alone in the dark': S Korea's small industry reels from new virus curbs

KOSPI stock index hit its all-time high after rate cut

SEOUL: A new round of social distancing rules took effect yesterday in the South Korean capital of Seoul, dealing a blow to small business owners despite brighter hopes for economic recovery after earlier success in battling the coronavirus. The measures range from closures of nightclubs and karaoke bars and curbs on eating in cafes and restaurants to fewer nighttime public transit services and limits on religious services, weddings and funerals for the next two weeks.

"I feel like I am left alone in the dark," said Jung Gong-dan, who runs a pub near the capital's Itaewon district, saying she has lost hope after a ban on dining in restaurants after 9 pm.

The "emergency pause" in activity in the densely-populated capital and surrounding areas aims to damp a resurgence in outbreaks in offices, schools and small gatherings that have combined to drive a third wave of infections. Asia's fourth-largest economy returned to growth in the third quarter, reversing its sharpest contraction in more than a decade, as the government pushed through stimulus measures, and major trading partners eased virus curbs.

The benchmark KOSPI stock index hit its all-time high yesterday, for a dramatic gain of 83 percent from its 2020 low soon after the pandemic hit in late March, as authorities cut interest rates and poured money into the financial system.

But the revival of financial asset prices has shown little spillover into the real economy, as owners of small businesses and street shops shut

down in the face of the new restrictions.

"I'm planning to launch a takeout wine sale with discounts, which is the only way to head off a cash crunch, given revenue drops throughout the year," said a wine bar owner, who runs two stores in downtown Seoul. The owner, who asked to be identified only by her surname, Kim, said she had bought supplies worth 10 million won (\$9,000) in expectation of a surge in year-end reservations.

Calls for government aid

The usual bustling activity and long queues in many of Seoul's shopping streets and nightlife areas was missing on Monday evening. Without government help, said Jung, the pub owner, it would almost be easier to shut permanently than try to stay open under the new curbs, after large losses incurred in the year's earlier outbreaks.

"I hope the government will provide practical measures to help us, because constantly suspending night operations virtually means no business," she added.

The government has yet to propose a new round of stimulus measures, but on Tuesday the main opposition party called for billions of dollars to be diverted from next year's budget proposal as subsidies for those hit by the pandemic.

President Moon Jae-in apologized yesterday for having to re-strengthen distancing measures, but said "there is no other path" to sever infection links and prevent greater hardship. Health authorities have warned the current wave of infections might



A man walks in an empty shopping district in Seoul yesterday.— Reuters

be harder to limit than before, as most occurred in the wider general community around Seoul.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) reported 349 cases, as the daily tally ticked up again after a slight drop reflecting fewer weekend tests. Total infections stand at 31,353, with 510 deaths.

Young people voiced frustration and disappointment at the latest rules, but many supported stronger action. "It is stifling, and so sad that we have to take risks just going outside and meeting someone, but it's the right thing to do and hopefully we'll be able to go back to normal soon," said university student Shin Jong-hyun, 29. — Reuters

KIB announces appointments

KUWAIT: As part of the bank's ongoing and comprehensive strategic plans to invest in its human capital, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently announced the appointment of two high-caliber General Managers after having obtained the necessary approvals from the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK).

KIB has appointed Jassem Al-Abdulhadi as General Manager of the Bank's Real Estate Department, after having served as Assistant General Manager and Acting General Manager of the same department. Al-Abdulhadi has played an integral role in supervising the operational and strategic functions of his department, in addition to leading his team in developing innovative banking solutions tailored to suit customers' needs. The bank has also appointed Mohamed Khadiri as General Manager of International Banking and Large Corporate Department, following his previous position as Deputy General Manager and Acting General Manager of the department, where he has been instrumental in growing the Bank's



international banking function and corporate banking capabilities.

On this occasion, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, Vice Chairman and CEO of KIB, lauded the impressive track records of both Al-Abdulhadi and Khadiri, noting that both managers have amassed extensive and valuable experience in multiple areas of the banking industry. "We wish them both well in their new positions and have full confidence in their abilities to continue to play an active role in shaping and realizing the Bank's forward-thinking strategies," he added.

Bukhamseen further noted: "At KIB, we are proud of our outstanding human capital whose pri-

mary focus is constantly directed towards serving customers and achieving the Bank's goals. For that reason, we are highly geared towards investing in the capabilities and talents of our ambitious human resources and are keen to provide intensive training courses aimed at boosting their professional performance, in addition to leveraging high-potential employees for promotion to senior management positions in line with their expertise, as we strongly believe in the power of putting the right person at the right place."

It serves to note that Al-Abdulhadi had joined KIB team in 1997 and has been overseeing the strategic and operational functions of the Real Estate Department over the past few years. He has led his team in the efforts to develop innovative banking solutions that are uniquely tailored to meet client needs. He is renowned for being an experienced and seasoned banker who has built his career at KIB, with extensive experience in corporate finance, particularly in the field of Real Estate.

Equally seasoned, Khadiri joined the KIB's executive management team in 2016 as Deputy General Manager of Commercial Banking and Head of International Banking with more than 21 years of experience in corporate and investment banking and a career that spans multiple markets in the United States, the Middle East and North Africa.

Suited avatars and digital offices: Traders, bankers embrace VR

LONDON: Once the preserve of gamers, virtual reality (VR) has been seized on by the financial sector as a way of enlivening home working for lonely traders or isolated executives and replicating real-world sales, networking or training events.

With 90 percent of employees at some of the world's biggest financial firms now working at home due to a resurgence in coronavirus infections, more and more companies are experimenting with VR.

Some practices could stick beyond the pandemic, particularly as home working becomes more widespread. At investment manager Fidelity International, executives experimented with a VR auditorium, taking questions from colleagues and even walking up and down the aisles.

"Working from home has massively accelerated the interest in virtual/online spaces," said Stuart Warner, head of technology at Fidelity International which manages \$3.3 trillion in assets.

Having internally explored VR and augmented reality (AR) technology, which unlike VR is not fully immersive and involves computer-generated elements being visible through a smartphone screen for example, Fidelity now aims to trial VR with its sales teams' interactions with clients.

"It brings it to life a bit," Warner said. For London-based Ed Greig, chief disruptor at Deloitte Digital, VR has sparked conversations with potential clients and colleagues in far-flung cities in office get-togethers. "The other day, I was finishing a VR

meeting with somebody and as I was walking out of their office I bumped into a person who was coming in for another meeting and that interaction for a couple of minutes turned into a proper business conversation later," Greig said.

VR can be useful not just for scheduled meetings but also for helping ease feelings of isolation and giving some workers the office buzz they crave and thrive in.

Swiss bank UBS has experimented with issuing its London-based traders with Microsoft HoloLens smart glasses, which it says allows staff to recreate the trading floor experience at home.

Zoom fatigue

VR headsets allow users to see and interact with others in the same digital room, and movements, such as turning one's head, correspond with how the person's avatar moves in the space.

Recreating the feeling of human interaction is what has provided impetus for the VR push. Executives say they are combating so-called Zoom fatigue - exhaustion brought on by a daily barrage of video conferences, meetings and messaging via tools such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, which have replaced face-to-face interaction.

The hope is that virtual reality spaces will resuscitate team spirit, especially when bringing in new employees. Marc Bena, who leads the digital audit business unit at PricewaterhouseCoopers UK, said:

"In a virtual environment you can hear multiple people talking at the same time, which is different in a zoom meeting... when you wear these headsets you are transported into a giant room with a whiteboard and office furniture and you join your other colleagues in brainstorming ideas."

"You can look around you and interact as if you were in an office. That recreates the sensation of



A visitor wears virtual reality glasses during the Websummit in Lisbon, Portugal.— Reuters

being together." After a virtual session he and colleagues had virtual drinks in another zone and could move from table to table.

"You could recreate exactly the same environment as if you were in the cocktail parties with your avatar. The only downside to this is that it can get pretty intense after a couple of hours," he said.

A PwC study in June found participants in a virtual reality workshop were three times more confident about what they had learned than those learning via traditional classrooms or even via e-learning courses. The cost to train 13,000 executives in a classroom at the firm is eight times more expensive than via a virtual reality course for the same number of people, the study found.

PwC and American Express use VRtuoso, a virtual reality presentation platform, that utilizes headsets made by Pico Interactive for training and boosting sales. So far, most of VR's real-world business applications are in medicine and retail, including training department stores salespeople how to deal with difficult customers. — Reuters

Boeing, Boeing, gone! BA sells off jumbo memorabilia

LONDON: British Airways on Monday announced the sale of items from its retired Boeing 747 fleet for frustrated fliers to recreate the airline experience in the comfort of their own home.

Branded crockery, plates, trays, tea cups, champagne flutes, blankets, hot towels, slippers and even catering trolleys are among the items up for grabs

in the online sale. BA director of brand and customer experience Carolina Martinoli called it an "incredible one-off opportunity for people to bring the magic of flying with British Airways in to their own homes". The flag carrier has been badly hit by the global coronavirus pandemic. It is cutting 13,000 jobs-about one-third of its workforce-and operating about one-quarter of its schedule.

Parent company IAG, which also owns Spanish carrier Iberia, on October 30 dived into a net loss of 1.76 billion euros in the third quarter as the COVID-19 crisis crushed demand for global air travel.

The result compared with net profit of 1.0 billion euros a year earlier. BA recently retired its 31 Boeing 747 "Jumbo Jet" fleet as traffic dwindled and it switched to aircraft that used less fuel. — AFP



British Airways recently retired its 31 Boeing 747 "Jumbo Jet" fleet as traffic dwindled and it switched to aircraft that used less fuel.— AFP

Carbon pricing rises as world's weapon of choice

LONDON/BRUSSELS: Can you put a price on pollution? Some of the world's biggest economies are doing just that as they wrestle with how to make good on grand pledges to tame planet-warming emissions. Matters are coming to a head.

China, Japan and South Korea have all followed the European Union in pledging to cut emissions to "net zero" in recent weeks, where they release only as much as they remove from the air. US President-elect Joe Biden made the same promise in his election campaign.

Next year they are set to lay out the first practical measures to meet these targets, as part of commitments under the Paris climate accord, and putting a price on carbon will be front and center, experts told Reuters. "Each country will have to come up with its own path to reaching net zero, but the expectation is carbon pricing is going to be a very important part," said Wendy Hughes, Carbon Markets and Innovation Manager at the World Bank.

The principle is simple: a carbon price establishes how much companies need to pay for their emissions. The higher the price, the greater the incentive to pollute less and invest in low-carbon technology. Governments can force these payments through a carbon tax - a levy companies must pay when they pollute - or through an emissions-trading system (ETS).

An ETS sets a maximum cap on the amount of emissions that a sector, or group of sectors, can produce. It creates "carbon permits" for those emissions, which companies can buy for each ton of CO2 they emit. Many countries, from Europe and South Korea, to China and Kazakhstan have already launched schemes, of various scope. See FACTBOX:

More than fifth of global emissions are covered by 46 national carbon-pricing schemes operating today or in the planning stage, as well as 32 regional systems within countries, according to the World Bank.

The biggest of those - the EU carbon market - is preparing for a major overhaul.

Since the European system was launched in 2005, emissions from participating power plants and factories have dropped by 35 percent - a sharper drop than seen in sectors not covered by the scheme. "The ETS has proven its efficiency," said Frans Timmermans, head of EU climate policy. "The ETS shows how carbon pricing is a strong driver for immediate change in energy consumption."

Price balancing act

In the power sector, the scheme helped make coal plants uneconomic, compared with less-polluting gas plants or renewables. But the trick for these markets is to get the carbon price right. If it's too low, there's little incentive for companies to rein in emissions; too high, and risk knee-capping industry.

The EU, seeking steeper emissions reductions to meet its new 2030 climate targets, will propose to expand and reform its ETS from next year. The changes would involve including more sectors, such as shipping, and curbing the free permits given to EU industry to help it compete with overseas companies that don't pay carbon costs. The carbon price - currently at around 27 euros price per ton of CO2 - needs to hit levels that push industry toward investing in emissions-cutting technologies like hydrogen, analysts say. — Reuters

Classifieds

Wednesday, November 25, 2020

Kuwait Times
 Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

الطيران المدني
Civil Aviation



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

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 12 - 35 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Rather cold with light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 24/11/2020 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	24 °C	16 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	23 °C	12 °C			
ABDALY	24 °C	09 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	25 °C	12 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	23 °C	17 °C			
AHMADI	- °C	- °C			
NUWAISIB	26 °C	12 °C			
WAFRA	25 °C	10 °C			
SALMY	22 °C	09 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	11/25	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	24 °C	12 °C	NW-SE	10 - 32 km/h
Thursday	11/26	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rising dust with a chance for rain that might be	28 °C	17 °C	SE	20 - 55 km/h
Friday	11/27	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	28 °C	18 °C	SE	12 - 45 km/h
Saturday	11/28	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	26 °C	19 °C	SE	12 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:55
Sunrise	06:18
Zuhr	11:34
Asr	14:31
Sunset	16:50
Isha	18:11

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT		
MAX. Temp.	24 °C	
MIN. Temp.	15 °C	
MAX. RH	76 %	
MIN. RH	24 %	
MAX. Wind	NW 43 km/h	
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm	

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

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

LOST

Original document policy no. 633004362 of Mr. Zaheer Ahmed DV the State Life Insurance Corporation Of Pakistan, Gulf Zone is reported to have been lost. Anyone finding the same or claiming any interest in it should communicate with the Manager Kuwait State Life office. Ph: 22452208. (C 5818) 25-11-2020

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

Airlines

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

Word Search

V T O U R N A M E N T E D F K C G E R
 L P T Y I F H V E J J Q E H S E A W E
 M J A Q O U B F U Y Q L B W T W M M H
 G V E T V R S J M A D B G A V X E S C
 K O F C M L X M N S B E M O G A B B S
 R P E H A O K Y B P Q K R H B K X L I
 U R D E M P V Q D W C A B I S H O P F
 E A P S T E R E I E P W K D Y F W O C
 N K M S H N R Z H S A S U R V P N E R
 Z P A B G I E C A X T Z B K Q W I A Z
 Y F T O I N M K D A C H A M P I O N T
 G M C A N G U L L L A V I R A K I N G
 E B H R K A N E K D S V Y M Z L A H T
 T Z E D H X M W C Q T R U L E S R N W
 A P A W N A O A T L L B Z N S T Q Y H
 R I J V T E L R I S I K C A L B S F I
 T E N E E U Q D M L N P P U J A D I T
 S C G Y N C V M E O G N Y I W Y W J E
 S E N V X W C N R U E P O S I T I O N

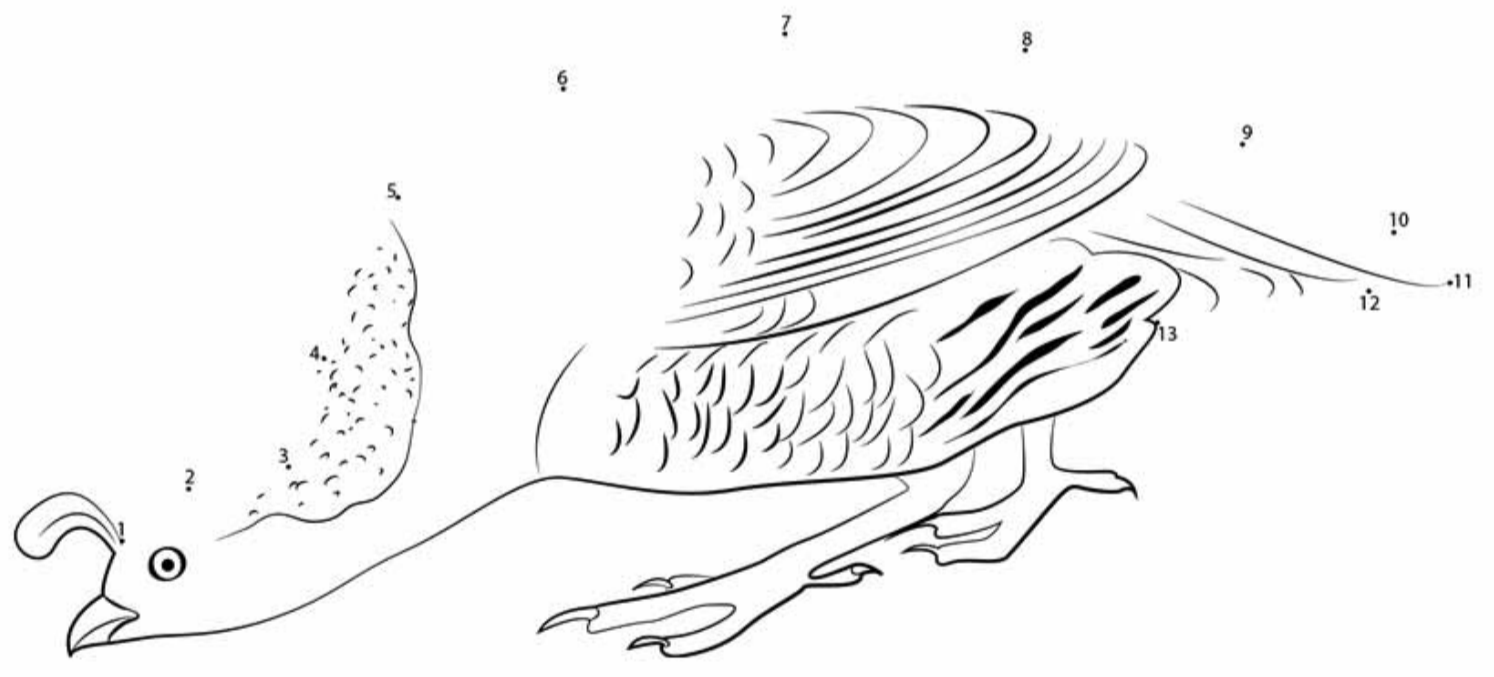
WORD SEARCH DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

C H E S S



BISHOP	GAME	POSITION
BLACK	KARPOV	QUEEN
CASTLING	KASPAROV	RIVAL
CHAMPION	KING	ROOK
CHECKMATE	KNIGHT	RULES
CHESSBOARD	MATCH	STALEMATE
DEFEAT	MOVE	STRATEGY
DRAW	OPENING	TIMER
EN PASSANT	PAWN	TOURNAMENT
FISCHER	PIECE	WHITE

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 Sticks and stones may break your bones, but names will never hurt you, Aries. The problem with the energy today is that there may be some sticks and stones tossed in your direction. Be on the lookout for such objects. There are powerful forces operating that are charged with emotional aggression. War may break out if you aren't careful. Try to maintain the peace.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 Move in for the touchdown today, Cancer, and don't stop until you succeed. Don't let other people's insecurities become yours. Have confidence in yourself and the way you behave around others. Just because someone else feels sad doesn't mean you have to, just to make them feel better. The best thing you can do in this situation is turn it around by exhibiting sheer happiness.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 Your sensitive heart may be sparked by anger today, Libra. Don't be afraid of hurting other people's feelings. You'd be doing yourself and others a disservice by not revealing the true scope of your emotions. The other parties involved may not have all the facts necessary to make the most educated decision. Aid in this process by revealing your perspective.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 You'll want to jump into action today, Capricorn. Feel free to order others around for a change and delegate. An aggressive approach is exactly what's called for, and you have the ability to deliver the goods. Trying to do everything yourself may seem like a great idea at first, but you're better off enlisting help so others can feel involved and you can concentrate on doing a better job on fewer tasks.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 Emotionally, things might get rather tense for you as others tend to demonstrate a selfish attitude, Taurus. Selfishness doesn't always have to be considered a negative. Sometimes it's healthy and necessary to take a more self-centered stance. You need to take care of yourself at all times. So, don't try to pick a fight when other people also demonstrate this behavior.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 Now is the perfect time to say something to someone that you've been meaning to say for quite some time, Leo. Get it out in the open. Keeping it inside will only eat away at you. Stop worrying about the consequences and make the move. Today is the time to be bold and aggressive. Other people might respond in a similar fashion, so if you dish it out, be prepared to take it.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 You might feel a great deal of physical power on a day like today, Scorpio. If someone asks you to come help move a couch, you're likely to be able to pick up the whole thing by yourself. Don't sell yourself short. You have more internal strength than you reveal to others. There's no need to hide it any longer. Feel free to make use of this great power you possess.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
 Guard your heart today, Aquarius, for it's a prime target of the abrasive words flying around. Your sensitive nature feels alone and vulnerable in this harsh atmosphere, so you might be better off just staying in bed. If you decide to go out, make sure to bring your arsenal. Use your sensitivity to your advantage. Scope out your weaknesses so you're able to use your energy most efficiently.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 You might be stirred by the energy present in the air today, Gemini. Put on your armor and get ready to do battle. Others may cover when they look out their window and see what's going on outside, but you want to jump into the fray. Strong, aggressive emotions are the weapons of the day, and everybody knows that you have quite an arsenal in this department.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 Your opinions might be the topic of conversation all day, Virgo. You have a very strong will and you aren't afraid to express it. Today you will get that chance. Feel free to enlighten others with your tremendous wealth of knowledge. Take control of the conversation and accept the mental challenge of trying to win other people over to your side. Whether you're successful or not, you will have fun trying.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 The ship is headed out, so you'd better hop on board, Sagittarius. People aren't apt to be too sympathetic to your emotional sob story today, so keep it under wraps. Whining will get you kicked off the boat altogether. Today's energy is teaching you to toughen up. Don't take it personally. Realize that there are important lessons we all need to learn. One of them is to know when to be silent.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 We need to have more people like you in places of power, Pisces. And don't feel like it's out of the question. Today's astrological weather is helping you find the confidence and physical strength you need to boost your leadership abilities. This is the time to take control of the situation. You can do it!

Lifestyle | Awards



Iranians ride their bicycles around the artificial Chitgar lake in the capital Tehran.



An Iranian woman rides a bicycle around the artificial Chitgar lake.



Farshad Rezayi, a 32-year-old chef, rides over 30 kilometers a day to get to and from work, in Iran's capital Tehran. — AFP photos

UPHILL BATTLE BUT TEHRAN AIMS TO BECOME BIKE-FRIENDLY

On a sunny day, Tehran's mayor and foreign diplomats rode bicycles through the Iranian capital to promote cycling—no mean feat in a city of steep roads, heavy traffic and toxic fumes. The metropolis of over eight million at the foot of the Alborz mountains is choked with vehicles running on subsidized fuel and has limited infrastructure for alternative modes of transport. But its mayor Pirouz Hanachi believes trying to make a dent in the city's traffic and pollution problem by promoting a bike-sharing initiative is worth the effort. Hanachi has tried to promote cycling by launching "Tuesdays without cars" when he and other team members use pedal power to get to and from the office.

"We are not saying this is the solution, but it's a short-term, accessible, cheap and productive" one to help "ease traffic and pollution a bit," he said. "It won't be like Amsterdam, but it can be a new

experience." Downtown Tehran is notorious for its traffic jams and regularly covered in vehicle exhaust smog worsened by pollution from factories around the city limits. That is why the municipality is supporting a bike-sharing start-up called Bdoon ("fumeless" in Farsi), the mayor said. The company's signature orange bikes can now be seen in 147 stations across Tehran, according to the company's website.

'Intruders'

For the mayor, Tehran residents would ideally commute to work by cycling to the nearest metro station then riding the train. The municipality is "increasing cycling paths and trying to make bicycles more accessible," he added. Yet cyclists say a lack of dedicated infrastructure makes it difficult for the city to be bike-friendly. "Not at all," laughed Farshad Rezayi when asked if Tehran

was accommodating to cyclists. "Like, no way!" The 32-year-old chef, who said he is "addicted" to cycling, said he rides over 30 kilometers a day to get to and from work.

He crosses highways and streets with few dedicated bike lanes. Where they do exist, he said, they have mostly been taken over by motorbikes. It is commonplace in Tehran to see motorcycles speeding down sidewalks or taking up empty space not occupied by cars. "A lot more infrastructure is needed for regular cycling to be a thing," Rezayi said, adding that motorists and pedestrians mostly regard cyclists as "intruders". "Sometimes drivers harass you, pedestrians get nasty—from snide remarks to physical stuff, dangerous moves that could get you killed."

'White Pedal'

Tragedy struck in June when a profes-

sional cyclist died in the capital after she was hit by a car. In her memory, a group of Tehran residents have launched a campaign called "White Pedal" to raise awareness about cycling and promote it by sharing articles online. Part of the initiative involves the campaign purchasing bikes for impoverished children, said its co-manager Mahboubeh Kohanzad. Bdoon co-founder Gholamhossein Qasemi said he dreams big, imagining an Iran with electric vehicles and "clean transportation".

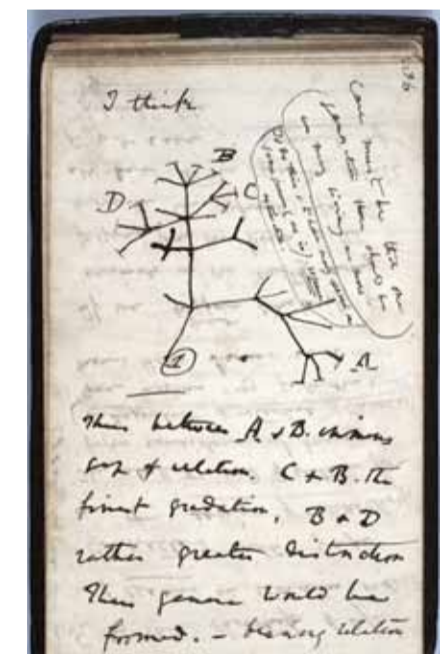
In the meantime, the bike-sharing service costs about 10 US cents for 30 minutes—roughly the same as a short shared-taxi ride—and can be accessed via an app. Sarfaraz, unlocking a Bdoon bike at Tehran's bustling Valiasr Square, said he'd been using the service for over a year and a half and was "very satisfied". Cleaning the handles with a sanitizing swipe, the 30-year-old marketer

said he preferred the orange, gearless bikes to taxis, particularly during the novel coronavirus pandemic—but not for long distances or uphill. Animator Nastaran Jabarnia, 29, said Bdoon's bikes inspired her to repair her own old one, although she said being a woman cyclist in Tehran posed certain additional challenges.

"Being cat-called, whistled at, or even cars tailing you and passing at high speed" were some of the problems she faced, she told AFP in a phone interview. "And then there's the hijab," she added, referring to the mandatory head covering for women. Aside from the physical and environmental hurdles, there is another challenge for Iranian women cyclists: ultra-conservatives consider it to be immoral. "I go out fully covered but still get stressed," she said. — AFP

CHARLES DARWIN NOTEBOOKS 'STOLEN' FROM CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

Two of Charles Darwin's notebooks containing his pioneering ideas on evolution and his famous "Tree of Life" sketch are missing, believed stolen, the Cambridge University Library said yesterday. The British scientist filled the leather notebooks in 1837 after returning from his voyage on the HMS Beagle. The library said they were worth millions of pounds. In one book, he drew a diagram showing several possibilities for the evolution of a species and later published a more developed illustration in his 1859 book "On the Origin of Species".



A handout image released by the University of Cambridge shows the 1837 'Tree of Life' sketch on a page from one of the lost notebooks of British scientist Charles Darwin. — AFP

The University of Cambridge's vast library first listed the notebooks as missing in 2001 after they were moved out of the Special Collections Strong Rooms for photography to be carried out there. They were long believed to have been incorrectly filed within the building, which contains around 10 million books, maps and manuscripts and has one of the world's most significant Darwin archives. However a major search this year—the largest in the library's history—failed to turn up the notebooks. "Curators have concluded the notebooks... have likely been stolen," the library said in a statement. It said it had informed local police and the books had been listed on Interpol's database of stolen artworks, called Psyche.

The University Librarian, Jessica Gardner, released a video statement appealing to the public to help. "It is deeply regretful to me that these notebooks remain missing despite numerous wide-scale searches over the last 20 years," she said, adding that the library has since massively improved its security systems. — AFP

Congolese model challenges China's love for 'tall, light and skinny'

As a young black woman modeling in Hong Kong, Harmony Anne-Marie Ilunga rarely saw anyone who looked like her in the magazines. Now the 22-year-old is trying to change that, one model at a time. While the Black Lives Matter movement fuels debate and change in the fashion worlds of the United States and parts of Europe, industry figures say Asia's beauty and body expectations remain dominated by an ideal that is pale, thin, and unrepresentative of the region. "I would walk into an agency and they told me that they prefer white models to black models," Ilunga, who moved to Hong Kong as a child refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, told AFP. "I remember just being shattered. I was 17, it just broke my heart."

Again and again, she saw that models in the wealthy global finance hub-home to roughly 600,000 people of non-Chinese descent—were expected to be "tall, light, and skinny". The same was true of the massive fashion market in mainland China. "I started lightening my skin, using lightening products... Just so that I could fit into society's norms," Ilunga explained. After rounds of rejections, in 2018 she opened her own small agency to champion models of all skin tones and sizes. "Representation matters so much," she said, adding she believes fashion is an accessible way to change minds—and prevent other young

women from feeling they have to change.

'Too much'

Ilunga's agency now has 32 male and female models on its books from places such as Rwanda, Burundi, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Philippines. They have enjoyed some successes—though she admits changing attitudes is hard. One of her most booked models, she said, is an 18-year-old Burundian. "Most are not local brands, but they are brands that are trying to promote internationally—that's the thing," she said of the kind of clients willing to look beyond white or Asian models. Ilunga said she has found male black models are more sought after, seen as "cool, much more stylish". But there is still resistance to black women. She recalled a pitch meeting with a client featuring a model of mixed black and Asian ethnicity. "She looks Asian, her features, but she has curly hair—and the client was like, 'she is too much for us,'" Ilunga said. "When it comes to certain black girls... I can't categorize it, but I feel like it is still an issue of them being too strong."

One size fits all

The lack of diversity in Asia's fashion world is not just limited to pale skin tones. While the US and Europe's fashion industries are beginning to welcome



This picture shows Harmony Anne-Marie Ilunga, 22, who moved to Hong Kong as a child refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, having her makeup applied in the backstage area before the 'Harmony IV' fashion show in Hong Kong, which aims to celebrate the city's diversity.

campaigns featuring normal bodies—and even ban some size-zero models on health grounds—in much of Asia, skinny remains the expectation. Chinese consumers expect brands to conform to their standards, with an emphasis on pale and slender body types, said Laurence Lim Dally of Cherry Blossoms Intercultural Branding, which helps international brands market to Chinese consumers. "Being fat is seen as self-neglect and the opposite to Confucius' emphasis on self-improvement," she said. That pressure was experienced acutely by 31-year-old Eurasian model Mia Kang, who grew up in Hong Kong and was scouted as a teenager—with her

agencies expecting her to maintain the same youthful physique.

She developed anorexia and bulimia and used drugs, laxatives, supplements and diuretics, doing "anything I could do to be as thin as possible". While she acknowledges that modeling is tough all over the world, the demands made of models in Asia "were some of the strictest I have experienced". In her book "Knockout", detailing her struggles and recovery with the help of Muay Thai boxing, she speaks of returning from modeling in Europe in her twenties to be told she must lose weight.

"What is socially and culturally determined to be a beautiful woman in Asia is a more narrow ideal than what it is in the West," she said, adding she has had far more success since leaving Hong Kong. "I think the Asian market has barely even begun to expand its horizons and work towards diversity," Kang said. "We deserve representation within our own media too." Ilunga maintains some optimism. "At least there is a conversation," she said, describing how one parent thanked her for her work and the impact seeing a working young black model, had on her daughters. "If I had had someone I could look up to when I was young then I would maybe not have lightened my skin." — AFP



Harmony Anne-Marie Ilunga and another model presenting creations during the 'Harmony IV' fashion show.



Models standing in the presentation area during the 'Harmony IV' fashion show.



Harmony Anne-Marie Ilunga (center) taking part in a rehearsal for the upcoming 'Harmony IV' fashion show in Hong Kong.



Harmony Anne-Marie Ilunga (left) and other models getting ready in the backstage area before the 'Harmony IV' fashion show.



Harmony Anne-Marie Ilunga about to show off a creation during the 'Harmony IV' fashion show. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



Displaced Syrian, Wissam Diab, 19, plays the oud at his new home, a tent surrounded by luscious plants, which recreates his childhood home, in the town of Atme in Syria's northwestern Idlib province. — AFP photos

TENT AND GARDEN: DISPLACED SYRIA TEEN RECREATES LOST FAMILY HOME

Among the olive trees in northwestern Syria, displaced teenager Wissam Diab plucks an oud outside his new home, a tent surrounded by luscious plants. Inside, there are more tumbling indoor plants and a collection of tiny cacti, as well as dozens of books lined up on a cloth-covered table from authors such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Haruki Murakami and Egypt's celebrated Naguib Mahfouz, the only Arab to win the Nobel Prize for literature. Syria's war

the area of Atme, in Idlib province near the Turkish border, while his parents and two sisters have a separate tent next door. A patterned stone path leads up to the front door and wooden sticks top the canvas roof. All around, plants and flowering shrubs thrive in large plastic pots, or in neat rows in the soil of his front garden.

Indoors, he has hung a textile curtain along the tarpaulin wall, and made a small living room with a floor-level sofa.

New home 'from scratch'
In October 2016, Diab and his family were forced to flee their home further south, as regime aircraft bombarded the surrounding area in a bloody campaign that killed his only brother. Scrolling through his smart phone, Diab shows images of their old home in Kafr Zita, which he says was blitzed in the fighting. The family lived in a displacement camp until eight months ago.

But as fears mounted over the spread there of the novel coronavirus, they decided to move away to somewhere more secluded.

When they ran for their lives four years ago, the Diabs grabbed the bare necessities and Wissam managed to save a few of his precious books. His collection now contains 85 novels and other books, including translated works by Dostoyevsky or Murakami, he says. "Here I had to start again from scratch. I bought plants and books, and built the library up again," he said. To pass the time, he is also teaching himself to play the oud via tutorials on YouTube. Diab says many of his neighbors were surprised to see how much energy he had poured into transforming his tent. But the young Syrian says he fears it will be some time before anybody can go home. "I know we will be here for a while," he said. So in the meanwhile, he looks after his cacti collection and waters his creeping jasmine. — AFP



Wissam Diab plays the oud at his new home.



Wissam Diab shows his little cactus at his new home.

forced the Diab family to flee their village of Kafr Zita in central Hama province, but when 19-year-old Wissam moved into a tent in northwestern Syria he decided to recreate his childhood home.

"It's been four years, and we haven't been able to find a house or go back home," said the young man with green eyes and shoulder-length brown hair. "What I've done with the tent is me trying to settle down." And settle down he did in his own tent in an olive grove in

An ornate red carpet pads out his tent underfoot. "Our home was like this. We had a garden, we had a library, we had a lot of flowers," he said. It "was like this, but much, much better". Syria's war has killed more than 380,000 people and displaced millions since starting in 2011. In Idlib, a major rebel bastion, around half of the three million inhabitants live in tents or shelters, many after losing their homes in other parts of the country now back under government control.



Wissam Diab shows his books at his new home.



Wissam Diab is pictured at his new home, a tent surrounded by luscious plants, which recreates his childhood home.



Wissam Diab reads a book sited in front of his new home.



Wissam Diab is pictured at his new home.



This handout photo shows the 3-month-old giant panda cub Xiao Qi Ji (SHIAU-chi-ji), which translates as "little miracle" in English. — AFP

Washington zoo panda named 'Little Miracle'

The votes are in and counted and the giant panda born at the Washington zoo three months ago is to be named Xiao Qi Ji, or "Little Miracle," the zoo in the US capital said on Monday. Xiao Qi Ji was one of four Mandarin Chinese names put up for public online vote and nearly 135,000 votes were received between November 16 and 20, the Smithsonian's National Zoo said. "Giant pandas are an international symbol of endangered wildlife and hope, and Xiao Qi Ji's birth offered the world a much-needed moment of joy amidst the Covid-19 pandemic," the zoo said in a statement.

The male panda was born on August 21 to Mei Xiang, 22, the second-oldest documented giant panda in the world to give birth. She was artificially inseminated in March with frozen semen from Tian Tian, 23. More than 1.5 million people have tuned in to watch the baby panda and Mei Xiang on the zoo's Giant Panda Cam. "Watching Xiao Qi Ji always puts a

smile on my face," said Steve Monfort, director of the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute. "We are grateful that those who share in our joy have helped us pick the perfect name for our panda cub." Mei Xiang has now given birth to four surviving offspring.

All cubs born at the zoo move to China when they are four years old under a partnership contract in which China owns the pandas. The zoo's breeding agreement with China expires in December and it is currently discussing an extension with the Chinese authorities. Fewer than 2,000 giant pandas still live in their natural habitat in China, while some 600 more live in zoos and breeding centers around the world, according to the zoo. The Washington zoo closed its doors on Monday for an undetermined time because of the surge in Covid-19 cases in the United States. — AFP

Snapchat challenges TikTok with curated video feed

Snapchat on Monday unveiled a new curated short-form video feed in a stepped up challenge to social media rivals like TikTok. The new format called Spotlight will allow Snapchatters to see content from influencers and other members of the network popular with young smartphone users. Spotlight is aimed at broadening the connections among Snapchat users by enabling anyone to create a video that gets distributed on the platform. It aims to encourage more users to create short-form video "snaps" which can be embellished with filters and augmented reality effects.

Parent firm Snap describes Spotlight as a "new consumption experience" for the social platform with an estimated 249 million active users at the end of September. The company said the new offering could enable anyone to have their videos viewed by millions of users, and potentially earn money from them. Snap said that all videos on Spotlight



This handout picture released by Snapchat shows Snapchat's latest feature called "Spotlight".

public comments on Spotlight, eliminating the need for moderation of abusive or unwelcome content.

Spotlight aims to become a "personalized" feed which will be curated by algorithm based on users' viewing habits—a move following the lead of TikTok which has seen sizzling growth in recent months. The launch comes amid increasing competition among social networks and rivals copying Snapchat's disappearing messages. Facebook's core social network has been losing ground among younger audiences to rivals like Snapchat and TikTok, even as Facebook-owned Instagram continues to grow in that demographic group. A Piper Jaffay survey of US teens last month showed Snapchat is their favorite social media platform, and that TikTok overtook Instagram for second place. — AFP

will be reviewed by human moderators before being shown on the platform—in contrast with rivals which use automated systems and in many cases respond to inappropriate content after the fact. Another difference will be the lack of



This handout picture released by Snapchat shows Snapchat's latest feature called "Spotlight". — AFP photos

Sports

Photo of the Day



Dimitris Kyrsanidis performs during a photoshoot in Greece. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Is tennis Big-Three era drawing to a close?

Younger rivals seek to smash the monopoly

LONDON: Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal have been absent from the title match at the ATP Finals for the past two years, replaced by younger rivals seeking to smash their monopoly. Instead of the "Big Three" it was Dominic Thiem and Daniil Medvedev who took centre stage at London's O2 Arena on Sunday, with Russia's Medvedev coming out on top. But do the results at the season-ending tournament signal the end of an era for men's tennis or another false dawn for the chasing pack?

Poor predictor

The demise of Djokovic and Nadal at the hands of younger rivals on a dramatic Saturday in London felt significant, and not just for the results themselves. Austria's Thiem, 27, produced an astonishing comeback from 4-0 down in the deciding tie-break to beat world number one Djokovic after squandering four match points in the second-set tie-break. Fourth-seed Medvedev did not let the loss of the first set to Nadal faze him, roaring back to end the Spaniard's record of 71 consecutive wins after winning the opening set.

But recent history shows the season-ending ATP Finals do not provide a reliable indicator of what is to come

the following season. Medvedev, 24, is the sixth different winner of the event in six years. Since Andy Murray lifted the trophy in 2016, the champions have been Grigor Dimitrov, Alexander Zverev and Stefanos Tsitsipas, who can boast just one Grand Slam final appearance between them. Indoor hard courts are Nadal's weakest surface while Djokovic has not played his best in London since a run of four titles in a row from 2012 to 2015. Federer, absent this year with an injury, lifted the last of his six titles at the event in 2011.

Grand Slam dominance

The Grand Slams remain the ultimate prizes in tennis and the period of unprecedented dominance for the Big Three is far from over. They have won an astonishing 56 of the past 67 majors between them, including 14 of the last 15. Thiem finally broke the stranglehold by winning this year's US Open but Nadal and Federer did not take part and Djokovic was the clear favorite until his disqualification. Nadal has just won a 13th French Open title without dropping a set and he and Djokovic especially will still be the strong favorites going into 2021. The Spanish veteran issued a chilling warning to the young pretenders after



LONDON: Austria's Dominic Thiem consoles Serbia's Novak Djokovic (left) after his victory in their men's singles semi-final match on day seven of the ATP World Tour Finals tennis tournament at the O2 Arena in London on November 21, 2020. Thiem won the match 7-5, 6-7, 7-6. — AFP

his defeat to Medvedev in London. "My motivation has been always the same," he said. "Next year is going to be an important year. I hope to be ready to fight for the things that I want to fight (for)."

Pundits have predicted a changing of the guard many times over the past few years but such predictions have always proved premature. It is impossible to delay the inevitable of

course-Federer will be 40 next year and has missed almost the whole 2020 season following two knee operations. Nadal is 34 and Djokovic 33 and both can be shakier in the big moments than they once were. Thiem, Medvedev, Zverev and Tsitsipas have had more success against the Big Three than the generations before them, and an even younger generation is making waves. — AFP

Kuwait Shooting Tournament kicks off

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Sport Club Assistant Secretary Eng Mohammad Al-Ghurba said official training for HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Annual Shooting Tournament will start from 4:00 pm today as the championship kicks off in full swing and continue until Saturday.

The organizing committee of the tournament held its final preparatory meeting on Sunday with tournament director Obaid Al-Osaimi. As for refereeing, international referee Hamad Al-Ruwaisan, who heads the shotgun committee said the committee is getting ready as planned, and has held several refresher courses before the launch of the tournament which marks the beginning of the shooting season.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Pistol and Rifle referees committee Khalid Al-Jurayed said it was necessary to start early preparations, as the committee started holding meetings earlier to review the rules and introduce new changes in the international law. He said referees for all events 10m pistol and rifle, 25m rapid pistol, 50 meter rifle are ready. Both Al-Ruwaisan and Al-Jurayed thanked KSSC Board of Directors.



Eng Mohammad Al-Ghurba

'Train the brain': All Blacks test discipline before Pumas crunch

SYDNEY: All Blacks players are being deliberately provoked during practice to improve their discipline ahead of Saturday's grudge match against Argentina, assistant coach John Plumtree revealed yesterday. Plumtree said poor self-control was a major reason why the All Blacks posted back-to-back defeats for the first time since 2011 when they succumbed to Los Pumas on November 14.

Head coach Ian Foster has found unusual ways to ensure there is no repeat during the return Tri Nations fixture in Newcastle on Saturday, Plumtree said. "We've put a big focus on it during training, putting players under pressure," Plumtree told a conference call. "Fozzie's been working really hard on coming up with some creative games where potentially the players might get a little bit upset with some of

Young Woods, bubbly Kim, big-hitter Wilco: Golf talking points

HONG KONG: A family affair, champagne celebrations and some very, very long drives feature in AFP Sport's golf talking points this week:

Tiger and cub

Much excitement is being generated by the news that Tiger Woods and his 15-year-old son Charlie will team up for the first time on a golf course at the PNC Championship over the weekend of December 19-20 in Orlando, Florida. And judging by footage on social media, young Charlie is a chip off the old block when it comes to swinging a club with an action eerily reminiscent of his 15-time major-winning father. But though the all-conquering Woods senior and son have been installed among the favorites for the event, where 20 major-winners partner a family member,

his decisions, particularly on refereeing."

He said the players had "come a long way" in containing their emotions on the pitch and helping one another remain calm in pressure situations. The three-time world champions committed a combined 26 penalties in successive defeats to Australia and Argentina, gifting their opponents decisive points. The South Americans are expected to adopt similar niggling tactics on Saturday. Fullback Beauden Barrett said the players acknowledged the problem and were working to address it.

"It starts with discipline, it starts with the individual," he said. "It's like a skill or physical training. We need to train the brain as well." Barrett said the All Blacks were grateful they still have the chance to win the Tri Nations if they post a convincing win over Argentina on Saturday. He said the there had been an edge at training and the New Zealanders were primed for Argentina after their last encounter. "I don't think you can question our heart but you can probably question the missed opportunities and lack of taking them," he said. "We want to finish strongly in this competition and finish our year on a high." — AFP

they face some stiff competition. Also teeing up will be world number three Justin Thomas and his father Mike, who is a golf teaching professional in the family's home state of Kentucky.

Matt Kuchar and his 13-year son Cameron and Tom Lehman and 25-year-old Tom Junior are expected also to be among the challengers. But don't rule out the defending champions, 63-year-old Bernhard Langer and son Jason, 20, who plays on the University of Pennsylvania team. Bernhard is in tip-top form having just become the oldest player to make the cut at the Masters, where he finished tied 29th at three-under par, and Jason will be raring for some action after his collegiate season was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Drunk on success

Having shaken off the tag of being the best player never to win a women's major when she broke through at the PGA Championship last month, South Korea's Kim Sei-young wasted no time in adding a 12th LPGA Tour title on her next tournament outing last weekend. The 27-year-old Kim's remarkable consistency—she also has 51 top-10 finishes since making her LPGA

News in brief

Saudi to host Formula E

DIRIYAH: Saudi Arabia will host Formula E's first ever night race with a double-header in Diriyah next February, the all-electric series announced yesterday. Organizers said low consumption LED floodlights would be powered by fully renewable energy, using low-carbon certified hydrogenated vegetable oil made from sustainable materials. Diriyah has hosted Formula E since 2018 and next year's races will be the third and fourth in a championship that starts in Chile. Saudi Arabia is also due to host a Formula One race for the first time next year and that will also be at night, in Jeddah in November. —Reuters

NRL shock as rising star dies

SYDNEY: Australia's National Rugby League was in shock yesterday at the sudden death of promising Manly Warringah Sea Eagles rookie Keith Titmuss at the age of just 20. The club said Titmuss "took ill" after training in Sydney on Monday morning and was taken to hospital but died a short time later. "We are all devastated by this news," Manly coach Des Hasler said in a statement late Monday. "Keith was a very popular character amongst the playing group. He will be sorely missed but never forgotten by the Sea Eagles." The club did not give a cause of death for Titmuss, who had advanced through Manly's junior ranks to become a full-time squad member on the brink of breaking into first grade. NRL chief executive Andrew Abdo said the league was offering support to Titmuss' family and teammates. "This is a tragic day for rugby league," he said. "The game has lost a promising young player with the world at his feet." — AFP

Latest EPL COVID-19 tests

LONDON: The English Premier League (EPL) said on Monday that eight people had returned positive results in its latest round of COVID-19 tests conducted on players and staff last week. The league said the individuals who had tested positive for the novel coronavirus would now self-isolate for 10 days. "The Premier League can today confirm that between Monday 16 November and Sunday 22 November, 1,530 players and club staff were tested for COVID-19," the league said in a statement. A total of 76 people have tested positive for the virus in 12 rounds of testing this season. There have been more than 1.5 million COVID-19 infections and over 55,000 deaths in the United Kingdom, according to a Reuters tally. — Reuters

Griezmann denies rift with Messi

BARCELONA: Barcelona forward Antoine Griezmann has dismissed talk of a rift with team mate Lionel Messi and said he had nothing to do with recent comments about the Argentine forward from his former agent and his uncle. Earlier this month, Griezmann's former agent Eric Olhats said Messi's "reign of terror" had made life difficult for Griezmann, while the French forward's uncle said it was not easy to play in the same club as the six-time Ballon d'Or winner. Messi hit back last week, saying he was tired of being blamed for problems at Barcelona. Griezmann said he could no longer remain silent on the matter. "I have been putting up with comments for a long while and now it's time to say enough," he was quoted as saying in an interview with Movistar. "My agent is my sister, but she doesn't speak. Neither do my parents. As no one speaks, Eric offers an opinion but that can do a lot of damage and create doubts about my relationship with Leo." —Reuters

Masks for players on sidelines

NEW YORK: Players in the National Football League (NFL) must wear masks on the sidelines unless they have their helmet on and are preparing to enter the game, the league said on Monday as it unveiled an enhanced set of COVID-19 protocols. In a memo distributed to teams, the NFL also outlined increased safety regulations for play-callers and said post-game interactions between players and staff would be limited. Players that failed to comply would be subject to discipline, the league said. "Clubs are required to enforce these rules. Violations by players and/or staff will result in accountability measures being imposed upon the club," the NFL said. The league added that the maximum number of players permitted to travel to road games would be reduced to 62 and access to club facilities would be limited for non-essential personnel. From Week 13, all members of a team's traveling party must wear N95 or KN95 masks on team planes and buses, it said. —Reuters

debut in 2015, and has not finished lower than tied 18th this year—means she is now within a whisker of becoming world number one for the first time.

Kim is now the third most prolific South Korean LPGA player of all time, trailing only Park In-bee who has 20 wins and Pak Se-ri (25) whose PGA Championship victory in 1998 inspired an explosion of female Korean golfing talent. So Kim could be forgiven for wanting to celebrate a little, after victory at the Pelican Championship in Florida on Sunday, though a drenching in champagne left her a little tipsy, she giggled afterwards. "My friends put it on my head, and then my T-shirt and everything. I feel like I take a shower in the champagne," Kim laughed. "Then I drink a little bit and feel, you know, a little drunk."

Everyone has been fixated by Bryson DeChambeau's quest for speed and power this year but a young South African has smacked a drive that echoed around the world. Wilco Nienaber's 439-yard rocket off the tee at the 597-yard par-five fourth hole in the opening round of the European Tour's Joburg Open—albeit heavily altitude-assisted—launched the 20-year-old into global golfing headlines. — AFP

Sports

'A-League stagnated': Footballers leaving Australia; Indian Super League flourishes

Influx of footballers to India highlights changing fortunes

NEW DELHI: An influx of footballers to India from Australia has highlighted changing fortunes as the Indian Super League flourishes and the A-League hits lean times during the coronavirus pandemic. Just two Australians played in the Indian Super League last year, but 10 were among the 11 teams when the competition got under way in a bio-secure "bubble" in Goa last week.

Non-Australian A-League players have also made the move, including English striker Adam Le Fondre - last season's second highest goal-scorer, with Sydney FC - along with German defender Matti Steinman and Aaron Holloway from Wales. Much of the change is down to money, with the A-League salary cap expected to drop by up to 30 percent next season following a fall in broadcasting revenue.

It has made the ISL, which previously attracted a smattering of fading stars, a more attractive proposition for Australia-based players. One of the players to head to India is Australian defender Dylan Fox, 26, who left the Central Coast Mariners in September to join Northeast United in Guwahati. "With all the uncertainty around the A-League at the moment, it was a good opportunity to head overseas and test myself in Asia," Fox said. "The A-League has stagnated in the last couple of years anyway and the other boys probably feel the same."

'Preference for A-League players'

The ISL has in six years outstripped the older I-League to become India's premier football competition. FC Goa will next year become the first Indian team to play in the Asian Champions League.

Meanwhile the A-League, established in 2005, suffered a drop in revenues when broadcaster Fox Sports cancelled its contract during the coronavirus shutdown, before striking a reportedly cheaper deal.

It has helped give the ISL a sizeable Australian presence, alongside its numerous Spaniards and Brazilians and smattering of Brits, including former Newcastle United defender Steven Taylor. Australian get-togethers, however, will be off-limits as players are confined to their team hotels in the Goa "bubble". "It will be great to see all these familiar faces on the pitch at least," said Fox.

India's interest in Australians is also driven by a requirement that each team signs a player from the Asian Football Confederation. "For Indian clubs when looking at AFC nations, there seems to be a preference for A-League players," said agent Baljit Singh Rihal of Inventive Sports, which specializes in the ISL. "Players from Iran and Uzbekistan are also willing to come to India but it is harder for clubs to find information and stats on these players, whereas the A-League is open in this regard and has all the records available. "Indian clubs know what they are going to get in Australia. It is a known market."

A-League 'uncertain'

There are other reasons too. Former Liverpool and England striker Robbie Fowler left his position as head coach of Brisbane Roar in June. After taking over at East Bengal four months later, Fowler quickly signed three players from the A-League. Defender Erik Paartalu, the longest-serving Australian in India and now into his fourth season

with Bengaluru FC, has received plenty of phone calls. "India provides more stability and things in Australia are a little uncertain," Paartalu said. "It is definitely more money than the A-League - not astronomically more but if boys are being told they will only get 70 percent of their salary then

they will want to recoup what they are not getting. "Now you are seeing players coming who would not have come in the past." Paartalu has told his compatriots that Indian teams treat foreign players well, with none of the payment issues that can occur elsewhere in Asia. —AFP



GOA: In this file photo, Chennaiyin FC captain Lucian Goian (left) shoots the ball during the final match between Chennaiyin FC and ATK FC at the Indian Super League (ISL) football tournament, in Goa. An influx of footballers to India from Australia has highlighted changing fortunes as the Indian Super League flourishes and the A-League hits lean times during the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

Song a star attraction as CAF Confederation Cup kicks off

JOHANNESBURG: The 2021 CAF Confederation Cup kicks off this week with 19 preliminary round first legs and former Arsenal and Barcelona midfielder Alex Song is a probable participant. Cameroonian Song recently joined Djibouti outfit Arta Solar 7, who host three-time Confederation of African Football (CAF) title winners Al Mokawloon Al Arab (formerly Arab Contractors).

Arta rank among the minnows of African football and, despite the presence of 33-year-old Song, are given virtually no chance over two legs of eliminating the Cairo club. Here, AFP Sport presents a guide to the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League that was won last season for the first time by Moroccan side Renaissance Berkane.

Qualifying

The 12 highest ranked countries are permitted two representatives and they ordinarily choose the club that finished third in the national league and the FA Cup winners. Nations who can enter only one team usually choose either the league runners-up or the FA Cup winners, with some clubs reluc-

tant to take part because of prohibitive travel costs. Because of the Libyan civil war, two seasons have passed there without competitions so Tripoli clubs Al Ahly and Al Ittihad, the third-placed league finishers and FA Cup winners in 2018, are taking part.

Long journey

It takes 15 or 17 matches, depending on whether a club starts in the preliminary or first round, spread over eight or nine months to lift the Confederation Cup trophy. After the first round, the 16 survivors face the CAF Champions League last-32 losers in two-leg playoffs and the overall winners secure places in the group stage, where the prize money kicks in. Each club plays six mini-league matches followed by home-and-away quarter-finals and semi-finals before a single-match final with all 54 CAF members eligible to bid for the right to host the title decider.

Favorites

Four former African champions - Entente Setif and JS Kabylie of Algeria, Etoile Sahel of Tunisia and Orlando Pirates of South Africa - have entered and all of them appear capable of going far. There are also three former winners of other CAF competitions among the 51 entrants: title-holders Berkane, Al Mokawloon, and Daring Club Motema Pembe from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Expensively assembled Egyptian outfit Pyramids were runners-up last season to Berkane, who had

transferred," club CEO Giuseppe Marotta said Sunday, confirming Eriksen's impending exit. Conte insisted Eriksen "has had many opportunities and played more than others." "My choices are always made for the good of Inter," said the former Chelsea coach. "When I deem it appropriate he'll be able to play in the starting 11 or during the game." One of the problems facing Eriksen has been that Inter have many options in central and attacking midfield. Chilean Arturo Vidal arrived from Barcelona last summer, with Radja Nainggolan, Marcelo Brozovic, and Ivan Perisic also in the position.

Conte has insisted he will not change the Dane's position to a more defensive one. "Eriksen has an important role and style of play, both on the left and the right," said Conte. "If you take that away and play him deeper in front of the defense you run the risk of distorting the player. It's a technical decision." Eriksen has not featured in Inter's last two league games and also looks set to miss their Champions League Group B clash against Real Madrid at the San Siro today. The Italians are bottom of the group, and lost the away leg 3-2, despite coming from two goals down to equalize before Real snatched victory. In the meantime, Eriksen has been linked with moves to French champions Paris Saint-Germain, or a return to the Premier League with Arsenal or Manchester United. —AFP

penalties but the driving force of a rejuvenated Atletico team and perhaps even the sparkle that could carry them to the Spanish title. If they win their two games in hand, Atletico will be three points clear at the top of the table. Things are also going well in Europe for Atletico. They visit Lokomotiv Moscow in the Champions League today, sitting second in Group A, behind Bayern Munich.

Felix scored his first Champions League goal in this fixture last season. "Joao has always delivered important moments," Simeone said earlier this month. "What is making everyone talk now is the consistency he is showing in his game, in his work." Felix has been compared to Rui Costa, Johan Cruyff, Kaka and Cristiano Ronaldo.

In Portugal, he was dubbed the 'Menino de Ouro' - the Golden Boy - and it was not long before many, including Liverpool's Diogo Jota, were labeling him Ronaldo's natural successor. Atletico paid 126 million euros to sign Felix from Benfica and when he arrived in Madrid, he was unveiled in the Prado Museum, the message obvious: one of the world's most talented artists, ready to be viewed by the world. —AFP



Alex Song

the advantage of playing the final in Morocco, and they could go all the way this time.

Title winners

While the Confederation Cup is officially the secondary African club competition, the list of winners reads like a who's who of club football in the continent. Former title-holders include Al Ahly and Zamalek of Egypt and TP Mazembe of DR Congo, the three most successful clubs in CAF competitions. Etoile Sahel, Hearts of Oak of Ghana and Raja Casablanca of Morocco are other big-name winners while CS Sfaxien of Tunisia hold the record with three titles. —AFP



LEUVEN: Belgium's midfielder Yuri Tielemans (right) fights for the ball with Denmark's midfielder Christian Eriksen during UEFA Nations League football match between Belgium and Denmark at the Den Dreef Stadium in Leuven. — AFP

Can Pep Guardiola arrest City decline?

LONDON: Pep Guardiola has committed to Manchester City for the long term but for the first time in his managerial career, results may determine the Catalan's future rather than his desire for a new challenge or break. City's board showed how fully they remain committed to the Guardiola project by extending his contract to 2023 last week. There is good reason for the club's faith. Guardiola is responsible for two of the three highest point tallies in Premier League history among six major trophies in his first four seasons in charge. But a 2-0 defeat by Tottenham on Saturday that left City already eight points off the top of the table continued the malaise that has set in since the beginning of last season.

Albeit with a game in hand, Guardiola's men are languishing in 13th in the Premier League table. A return of 12 points from their opening eight games of the campaign is the lowest since 2008/2009, just months after an Abu Dhabi takeover starting pouring millions into the club. City even have a negative goal difference after scoring just 10 times in the league, their lowest at this stage of the season since 2006/07 when they finished 14th under Stuart Pearce and failed to score a single goal at home after New Year's Day.

"The reality is we are struggling to score goals this season," admitted Guardiola. "10 goals in eight games is not good enough." The Champions League has normally been the nadir of Guardiola's time in Manchester. In four seasons he has not even been able to match City's best run in the competition to the semi-finals under Manuel Pellegrini in 2015/16. So far this season, Europe has been a blessed relief as the English side have swept aside Porto, Marseille and Olympiakos, scoring three goals in each game to take a firm grip on Group B.

Same mistakes

Another victory away to Olympiakos today will guarantee qualification for the last 16 for the eighth successive season. But City have shown little this term to suggest they have learned from the mistakes that have repeatedly cost them in the knockout stages of the Champions League once the level of opposition improves. The manner of defeat against Spurs was almost an exact replica of the 2-0 victory for Jose Mourinho's men when the sides last met in February.

Over the two matches at the Tottenham Hotspur stadium, the visitors had 41 attempts on goal without scoring, while Spurs netted with four of their five shots on target. Lyon, Mauricio Pochettino's Tottenham, Liverpool and Monaco have also cracked the City code in the Champions League by defending deep and counter-attacking at speed. Guardiola remains confident City will soon start scoring goals with the frequency they have become accustomed to. "We have scored in two seasons more than 100 goals. Eighty or 90 percent of the players are the same, especially up front," he added. But it is without the ball the biggest questions remain. The intense press to get the ball back of the City sides that accumulated 198 Premier League points in two seasons between 2017 and 2019 has gone. Without it, even an incredibly expensive array of talented internationals are too easy to play through. — AFP

Eriksen set for Inter Milan exit as dream Italy move turns sour

MILAN: Christian Eriksen's dream move to Inter Milan looks over with the former Tottenham Hotspur playmaker requesting to leave the Italian giants after just 10 months. The Danish international arrived on a four-and-a-half-year contract worth 20 million euros (\$23 million) plus 7.5 million euros in bonuses in January.

But during a year overshadowed by the coronavirus pandemic, the 28-year-old has been unable to reproduce his form with Spurs, where he scored 69 goals and had 89 assists in 305 appearances, or recently with Denmark. "It wasn't what I had dreamed of," admitted Eriksen, who has fallen down the pecking order under coach Antonio Conte. "People would like to see me play and I would like to do the same, but the coach has different ideas and I have to respect them." The Dane has played seven times this season - four as a starter - with no assists or goals. In total he has scored four goals for Inter in 33 games.

"We must never hold back a player who asks to be

Atletico reaping the rewards as Felix finds feet

MADRID: "It's clear that he's growing," said Diego Simeone, after Joao Felix scored his third and fourth goals in five days last month to put Atletico Madrid within touching distance of the top of the Liga table. Felix's brace against Osasuna would have been a hat-trick had his second penalty of the game not struck the post, but it said something that a 20-year-old, in only third professional season, was taking them. When Felix made his debut for Atletico Madrid in August last year, he won a penalty after a sensational run that humiliated three Getafe defenders, with a nutmeg, a roll of the studs and then a dash bringing 68,000 fans to their feet.

Felix carried the ball under his arm towards the spot but Kieran Trippier was the penalty taker, and he missed. A year later, Felix is not just in charge of

Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
UEFA Champions League			
Borussia M v Shakhtar Donetsk	20:55		
beIN Sports HD 2			
Olympiacos Piraeus v Man City	20:55		
beIN Sports HD 1			
Bayern Munich v Red Bull Salzburg	23:00		
beIN Sports HD 5			
Atletico de Madrid v Lokomotiv	23:00		
beIN Sports HD 3			
Internazionale Milano v Real Madrid	23:00		
beIN Sports HD 1			
Olympique Marseille v Porto	23:00		
beIN Sports HD 6			
Liverpool v Atalanta	23:00		
beIN Sports HD 2			
Ajax Amsterdam v Midtjylland	23:00		
beIN Sports HD 4			

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Rams use air assault to sink Buccaneers

Bengals woes mount; Burrow to undergo reconstructive surgery



TAMPA: Chris Godwin #14 of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers scores on a 13-yard pass during the fourth quarter in the game against the Los Angeles Rams on November 23, 2020 in Tampa, Florida. — AFP

LOS ANGELES: Jared Goff passed for three touchdowns and 376 yards as the Los Angeles Rams showed their offensive versatility on Monday with a 27-24 victory over Tom Brady's Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Goff completed 39 of 51 passes including a combined 23 completions to his favourite targets Robert Woods and Cooper Kupp in front of a pandemic-limited crowd of 33,600 in Tampa Florida.

Woods had a dozen catches for 130 yards and Kupp caught 11 passes for 145 yards as the Rams shelved their traditional running game to beat the Buccaneers with an air assault. "It is about time we started to click a little bit," said Goff of his receiving corps. "It was a fun night. This shows we are versatile. We have been running the ball all year, and we had to throw it tonight." Matt Gay booted a 40-yard field goal with 2:36 left and Jordan Fuller grabbed his second interception of the game less

than a minute later in the battle between two of the top teams in the NFC.

"We got back to ourselves on the last drive and put some points on the board," said Goff. "Our defense stepped up and did a great job. That's a good offence we played today." The Rams improved to 7-3 to keep pace with first place Seattle Seahawks, while the second place Buccaneers lost some ground to the New Orleans Saints in their division. The contest featured an all-Black officiating crew for the first time in NFL history. Leading the way was Jerome Boger, who is in his 15th season as a referee and 17th overall as an NFL official.

Brady's Buccaneers lost for the second time in three games and the NFL's all-time touchdown pass leader had a rough night, throwing two interceptions. "He misread the coverage," Tampa coach Bruce Arians said of Brady's second interception

with just under two minutes left which clinched the win for Los Angeles. Brady completed 26 of 48 passes for 216 yards with two touchdowns. The two TD passes lifted Brady's career number to 566, allowing him to pass injured New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees (565) for the most in league history.

Bengals woes mount

Meanwhile, Cincinnati Bengals rookie quarterback Joe Burrow will undergo season-ending surgery to repair a torn ACL and MCL in his left knee, the US media reported on Monday. Burrow, who started 10 games for the last place Bengals this season, was injured early in the third quarter of a lopsided 20-9 defeat to Washington on Sunday. Burrow was officially placed on the Bengals' injured list on Monday. An MRI on the knee indi-

cated there could be some other structural damage in addition to the torn ACL and MCL. Bengals coach Zac Taylor added that the Bengals "expect him to make a full recovery", but Taylor did not provide details on when they expected him to return, the NFL.com reported.

Burrow went down after getting hit below the waist while another defender hit him high from the opposite side on a throw. Burrow, the overall top pick in the 2020 entry draft, had completed 22 of 34 passing attempts for 203 yards and a touchdown with one fumble against Washington. The Bengals are 2-7-1 this season in the AFC North Division, having failed to win a game on the road. They are 2-2 at home. Burrow has completed 264 of 404 passes for a 65 percent completion ratio. He has thrown 13 touchdown passes but has been intercepted five times and sacked 32 times. — Agencies

Wood ends Burnley's wait

LONDON: Burnley won for the first time in the Premier League this season as Chris Wood sealed a 1-0 victory against Crystal Palace, while Southampton missed a chance to go third in their 1-1 draw at Wolves on Monday. Burnley had failed to win any of their first seven games in the joint worst start to a season in the club's history.

Sean Dyche's side were the only Premier League team yet to score a home goal this term until New Zealand striker Wood put them ahead in the first half against Palace. That was enough to clinch a much-needed three points for Burnley, who climbed out of the relegation zone at the expense of Fulham. "We created two or three golden chances, we take one and it gets a bit nervy because we hadn't found that first win. To get that one done will do us the world of good," Dyche said. "We have got a group that can challenge. We have had a tough start but that has been coming."

Palace were missing Ivory Coast forward Wilfried Zaha after he tested positive for coronavirus and Roy Hodgson's side lacked a cutting edge without him as they slumped to a second defeat in three games. Burnley had managed just three league goals this season and hadn't scored since October 3 when Ashley Westwood netted in

a loss at Newcastle. But Wood ended that four-game goalless run in the eighth minute when he fired home from Jay Rodriguez's flick after a poor headed clearance from Cheikhou Kouyate.

Palace went close to equalizing when Andros Townsend's curling effort forced a fine save from Nick Pope. Burnley were inches away from doubling their lead through Johann Gudmundsson, whose rising strike from the edge of the area cannoned off the bar. Michy Batshuayi should have equalized when he latched onto Dwight McNeil's wayward back-pass, but Pope was quickly off his line to block the Belgian's scuffed shot. Pope was in superb form and he came to Burnley's rescue again in stoppage time when he somehow clawed away Christian Benteke's close-range shot.

Revitalized Walcott

At Molineux, Southampton were on course for a fourth successive win when Theo Walcott put them ahead in the second half.

But Pedro Neto came off the bench to equalize as fifth-placed Southampton had to settle for extending their unbeaten run to seven matches. "I am happy. For everyone it was a tough game, tactically so demanding, it was like chess. They played 4-3-3, we didn't expect that but we found the

answers," Southampton manager Ralph Hasenhuttl said. Wolves boss Nuno Espirito Santo added: "I think it was a foul for their goal. After that it was about reacting to that incident. The boys did that. We finished the game well, creating chances."

Walcott has thrived in a central striker's role for Southampton since Danny Ings was injured and the converted winger tested Wolves keeper Rui Patrício in the first half with a snap shot. Southampton took the lead in the 58th minute, with a touch of controversy about the goal. Wolves were frustrated that Stuart Armstrong's barge into Rayan Ait-Nouri went unpunished in the build-up before Che Adams sent a low cross to the unmarked Walcott, who slotted home

from close-range.

It was the 31-year-old's first goal for Southampton since rejoining them on loan from Everton in October. His last league goal for Southampton came in his first spell there almost 15 years ago. Walcott should have netted again after Adams' pass put him clean through, but this time he side-footed wide from 12 yards. It was a crucial miss as Wolves equalized in the 75th minute as Raul Jimenez's fierce drive bounced back off the post to Neto and the substitute drove his first-time strike past Alex McCarthy. Neto nearly snatched a winner in the closing minute when his low drive was well saved by McCarthy.— AFP

English Premier League standings

English Premier League table after Monday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):															
Tottenham	9	6	2	1	21	9	20	Crystal Palace	9	4	1	4	12	13	13
Liverpool	9	6	2	1	21	16	20	Arsenal	9	4	1	4	9	10	13
Chelsea	9	5	3	1	22	10	18	Man City	8	3	3	2	10	11	12
Leicester	9	6	0	3	18	12	18	Leeds	9	3	2	4	14	17	11
Southampton	9	5	2	2	17	13	17	Newcastle	9	3	2	4	10	15	11
Everton	9	5	1	3	19	16	16	Brighton	9	2	3	4	13	15	9
Aston Villa	8	5	0	3	19	11	15	Burnley	8	1	2	5	4	12	5
West Ham	9	4	2	3	15	10	14	Fulham	9	1	1	7	9	18	4
Wolves	9	4	2	3	9	10	14	West Brom	9	0	3	6	6	18	3
Man Utd	8	4	1	3	13	14	13	Sheffield Utd	9	0	1	8	4	15	1