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Iran accuses Israel of killing scientist and seeking 'chaos'

Khamenei vows retaliation • Ex-CIA chief slams 'criminal' assassination

Short burst of rain deluges streets



KUWAIT: A waterlogged street is seen in Fintas after heavy rainfall yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

TEHRAN: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani yesterday accused arch-foe Israel of acting as a "mercenary" for the United States and seeking to create chaos, vowing Tehran would avenge the assassination of a top Iranian nuclear scientist. Islamic Republic's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called for the perpetrators to be punished for Friday's killing, while Rouhani stressed the country would seek its revenge in "due time" and not be rushed into a "trap".

Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, who was dubbed by Israel the "father of Iran's nuclear program", died after being seriously wounded when assailants targeted his car and engaged in a gunfight with his bodyguards outside the capital Tehran on Friday, according to Iran's defense ministry. The assassination comes less than two months before US President-elect Joe Biden is due to take office, after a tumultuous four years of hawkish US foreign policy in the Middle East under President Donald Trump.

"They are thinking of creating chaos, but they should know that we have read their hands and they will not succeed," Iran's president said in televised remarks. He pinned the blame for the killing on "the wicked hands of the global arrogance, with the usurper Zionist regime as the mercenary". Iran generally uses the term "global arrogance" to refer to

the United States.

Trump unilaterally withdrew in 2018 from a multilateral nuclear deal with the Islamic republic, which sought to contain its atomic ambitions, and has re-imposed crippling sanctions. But Biden has signaled his administration may be prepared to rejoin the accord. "This barbaric assassination shows that our enemies are in stressful weeks, during which they feel... their pressure declining, the global situation changing," the Iranian president added. "The nation of Iran is smarter than to fall in the trap of the conspiracy set by the Zionists," Rouhani said in televised remarks.

The United States slapped sanctions on Fakhri-zadeh in 2008 for "activities and transactions that contributed to the development of Iran's nuclear program", and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu once described him as the father of Iran's nuclear weapons program. Iran has repeatedly denied seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

The New York Times said an American official and two other intelligence officials confirmed Israel was behind the attack, without giving further details. "Iran's enemies should know, that the people of Iran and officials are braver than to leave this criminal act unanswered," Rouhani added, talking at

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US aircraft carrier deploys to Gulf

DUBAI: US aircraft carrier USS Nimitz was deployed to the Gulf this week, days before the killing of Iran's top nuclear scientist, although the US Navy said yesterday the deployment was not related to any specific threat. "There were no specific threats that triggered the return of the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group," Commander Rebecca Rebarich, spokeswoman for the US Navy's Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet, said in an emailed statement after the carrier deployed on Wednesday.

Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, the Iranian

scientist suspected by the West of masterminding a secret nuclear bomb programme, was killed in an ambush near Tehran on Friday, threatening to provoke a new confrontation between Iran and its foes in the last weeks of Donald Trump's presidency.

Rebarich said the redeployment was related to a US drawdown in Iraq and Afghanistan. "This action ensures we have sufficient capability available to respond to any threat and to deter any adversary from acting against our troops during the force reduction," she said. — Reuters

Kurds look on as Israel befriends old Arab foes

ARBIL, Iraq: Decades ago, Iraq's Kurds and Israel shared a common enemy and what felt like being targeted in parallel persecutions. Today, Iraqi Kurds - long accused of cozy ties with the Jewish state - are watching on as Israel befriends historically hostile Arab countries. Just weeks after signing US-sponsored normalization deals with Israel, Bahraini officials are visiting Tel Aviv and cargo ships from the United Arab Emirates are docking at Haifa.

It has been a speedy turnaround for the Arab countries that had long sworn to isolate and boycott Israel until it makes peace with the Palestinians. And it's long overdue for many in northern Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, who said they had

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DUBAI: An Israeli man shows his passport while giving a thumbs-up upon arrival from Tel Aviv on Nov 26, 2020 on the first scheduled commercial flight following the normalization of ties between the UAE and Israel. — AFP

First locally-made Chinese nuclear reactor goes online

BEIJING: China has powered up its first domestically developed nuclear reactor - the Hualong One - a significant step in Beijing's attempts to become less dependent on Western allies for energy security and critical technology. The reactor, which was con-

nected to the national grid on Friday, can generate 10 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity each year and cut carbon emissions by 8.16 million tons, according to China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC).

"This marks China breaking the monopoly of foreign nuclear power technology and officially entering the technology's first batch of advanced countries," CNNC said in a statement. Nuclear plants supplied less than five percent of China's annual electricity needs in 2019, according to the National Energy Administration, but this share is expected to grow as Beijing attempts to become carbon neutral by 2060.

Reducing its dependence on Western allies in critical high-tech sectors such as power generation is a key goal in Beijing's "Made in China 2025" plan. Billions of dollars in state subsidies have been given to Chinese companies to speed the process - a move that has angered China's trade partners and sparked a protracted trade row with Washington.

Work on the Hualong One reactor started in 2015 and there are currently six other reactors under construction at home and abroad, state-owned plant operator CNNC said. The Hualong One, deployed at a plant in east China's Fujian province, will be put into commercial use by the end

of the year after undergoing tests.

China has 47 nuclear plants with a total generation capacity of 48.75 million kilowatts - the world's third highest after the United States and France. Beijing has invested billions of dollars to develop its nuclear energy sector in recent years as it struggles to wean its economy from coal. Thirteen nuclear plants are under construction, more than in any other country, despite environmental and safety concerns. In Aug 2016, officials were forced to shelve plans for a nuclear waste facility in Lianyungang, a city in eastern Jiangsu province, after a rare public protest by thousands of residents. — AFP

Gaza nuptials toned down in COVID era

GAZA CITY: To the sound of drums and flutes, a freshly coiffed Palestinian groom dances with his brothers, cousins and friends, anxiously waiting for his veiled bride to arrive in her shimmering gown. It might have been a normal Gaza wedding, except for the venue - not a luxurious seaside hall, but a narrow alley in the Al-Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City.

Welcome to Gaza's new pandemic-era

weddings: they are small because of strict crowd limits, they are held outdoors, and they finish early to beat the curfews. And they are a whole lot cheaper than usual. "I'm not entirely happy because I would have preferred to celebrate it in a wedding hall," said the groom, Mohammed Ahmed Ashour, wearing a blazer and burgundy tie.

But for his family, the 24-year-old merchant told AFP between dances, the pared-down nuptials have also brought welcome savings at a time of economic hardship. Weddings in the Palestinian coastal enclave are usually extravagant affairs, held in large halls that dot the Mediterranean coastline. Despite staggering poverty and unemployment rates of

around 50 percent even before the pandemic, many Gazans spend several thousand dollars on weddings.

This year the virus has further impacted the economy in the strip, which has been under Israeli blockade since 2007, and is currently spreading rapidly across Gaza. In recent weeks infections have multiplied and "the situation is getting out of control", warned Doctor Ahmad al-Jadba of Gaza City's Shifa hospital. On Friday, the Palestinian health ministry announced 922 new cases for the last 24 hours in Gaza, a daily record which takes the total number of people known to have been infected with the virus in the enclave to 18,333, including 86 deaths.

Continued on Page 2



GAZA: Palestinian groom Mohammed Ahmed Ashour (center) dances with male relatives and friends while waiting for his bride during his wedding ceremony on Nov 12, 2020. — AFP

Local

Zain supports Kuwait's efforts to end violence against women

Company lights up headquarters in orange to support UN campaign

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its support to the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign (UNiTE Campaign). The initiative calls for global action to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts, and share knowledge and innovations to address violence against women and girls around the world.

Zain's contribution to this global campaign comes as a continuation of its collaboration with the United Nations' various entities, including the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States. This joint effort reflects Zain's commitment to support initiatives and programs that shed light on the importance of protecting and empowering women, as well as those that enrich gender equality and inclusion

“ Domestic abuse law a source of hope ”

within communities and workplaces.

Commenting on the collaboration, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan said: "It is our utmost pleasure to be a part of the State of Kuwait's participation to support this global initiative by the United Nations, a contribution that seeks to find viable solutions to end violence against women. This issue continues to have a worrying impact on many women and girls in our Arab communities and around the entire world, and it is time to stand together, as one, to fight violence against women."

Roudhan added: "I offer my sincere gratitude to Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel for her trust by inviting us to be a part of this global initiative as one of the Kuwaiti private sector's national entities that represent our beloved country in this campaign. We are proud to light up Zain's main headquarter buildings at Shuwaikh in orange along with the country's many entities from both the public and private sectors to demonstrate Kuwait's role and efforts in advocating this cause."

Roudhan further explained: "It is a huge source of hope and pride to see Kuwait going a long way in supporting and protecting women, something that was strongly reflected by the recent passing of the domestic violence law in August 2020. This



KUWAIT: Zain's headquarters lit up in orange to support the UN campaign.

landmark law is clear proof of the great efforts exerted by the government of Kuwait to protect women and girls, which comes to achieve the fifth Sustainable Development goal under the umbrella of the National Development Plan 'New Kuwait'. The country's participation in this global campaign is nothing short of another step forward towards eliminating this issue from Arab and global communities."

Roudhan continued: "The goals of this campaign are well consistent with those of our sustainability strategy at Zain Kuwait and Group-wide. Our efforts also come in line with our commitment to take part in social campaigns that aim at protecting and enhancing the overall social welfare of Arab communities in particular, and the world as a whole. This is especially true when it comes to issues relat-

ed to protecting women and their rights."

Around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated key risk factors for violence against women and girls, such as unemployment, economic insecurity, and school closures. Under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign (UNiTE Campaign), calls for global action to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts and share knowledge and innovations. Governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, the media, and the UN system must join forces to address the global pandemic of violence against women and girls.

Companies that have committed to the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), including Zain,

recognize the important role of the private sector to support efforts to end violence against women. Sexual harassment and violence incur high costs to women in terms of lost earnings, missed career advancement and overall wellbeing. On the other hand, companies are impacted by employee absenteeism and productivity losses. Employers' investment in prevention and response to violence against women, including domestic violence, is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do.

Zain is keen on actively participating in the various local and regional projects that aim at contributing to the achievement of the country's various developmental goals. The company will spare no efforts to support any entity that serves the global sustainable goals and contributes to the progress and prosperity of the region.



A handout photo made available on Friday shows the damaged car of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh after it was attacked near Tehran. — AFP

Iran accuses Israel of killing scientist...

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Iran's weekly COVID-19 taskforce meeting. "In due time, they will answer for this crime."

Former CIA director John Brennan warned on Friday that the assassination risked sparking a wider conflagration in the Middle East. "This was a criminal act and highly reckless. It risks lethal retaliation and a new round of regional conflict," Brennan tweeted. "I do not know whether a foreign government authorized or carried out the murder of Fakhri-zadeh," he said. "Such an act of state-sponsored terrorism would be a flagrant violation of international law & encourage more governments to carry out lethal attacks against foreign officials."

Brennan noted that Fakhri-zadeh was not a designated terrorist nor a member of Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State group, designated terror groups which would be legal targets. A strong critic of President Donald Trump, Brennan urged Tehran to "resist the urge" to retaliate and "wait for the return of responsible American leadership on the global stage", a reference to Nov 3 election winner Joe Biden, who will replace Trump on Jan 20.

Brennan was director of the CIA from 2013 to 2017, under the administration of president Barack Obama and then-vice president Biden. Brennan did not take part in Biden's election campaign and has not appeared to be involved in his preparations for taking office on Jan 20. But early this week Biden

named Brennan's former deputy director at the CIA, Avril Haines, as his director of national intelligence.

Khamenei called for "punishing the perpetrators and those responsible," in a short statement on his official website, urging that Fakhri-zadeh's "scientific and technical efforts ... in all of the fields he was working in" should be continued. Fakhri-zadeh, who headed the defense ministry's research and innovation organization, died after medics failed to revive him following the attack near Absard city in Tehran province's eastern Damavand county.

Israel has refused to comment on the assassination, but Israeli Channel 12 television reported yesterday that the level of alert had been raised in its embassies worldwide. A spokeswoman for the Israeli foreign ministry in Jerusalem refused to confirm the report. Lebanon's Hezbollah militia early yesterday "strongly" condemned the "terrorist operation that led to the martyrdom" of Fakhri-zadeh.

The killing of Fakhri-zadeh is the latest in a series of killings of nuclear scientists in Iran in recent years that the Islamic republic has blamed on Israel. Iranian media have given little information regarding his work, but the head of Iran's atomic organization Ali Akbar Salehi said yesterday they had "good cooperation especially in the field of nuclear defense".

He told state TV that Fakhri-zadeh had a PhD in "nuclear physics and engineering" and worked on his thesis with Fereydoon Abbasi-Davani, the former head of the atomic organization and himself a survivor of an assassination attempt in 2011. US media reports described Fakhri-zadeh as the "No. 1 target of the Mossad", Israel's spy agency, and the "brains behind Iran's nuclear program". — Agencies

Gaza nuptials toned down...

Continued from Page 1

To contain the spread of coronavirus, the Islamist group Hamas that runs the strip, like authorities elsewhere, has banned large indoor gatherings. Families have been forced to hold smaller weddings in less-than-fairytale settings - like alleys and backyards - but saved bundles in the process. Ashour said these days many couples opt for scaled-back daytime nuptials which take "a little over an hour".

Once the Ashours' wedding was over, the musicians - three percussionists and a player of the traditional reed flute called a ney - headed home before the evening curfew. They had more performances

booked for the next day, as their small, travelling business is now thriving. A few days later they were in Jabaliya, a town in the north of the strip, for the wedding of Ahmed Omar Khallah, a 28-year-old postman.

Khallah said that for him, too, the timing is good: "There is no work, no money, but we have saved a lot by marrying now," he told AFP. He was picking up his bride from a beauty salon called "Al-Hour al-Ayn", an Islamic expression referring to the beautiful eyes of the women of paradise. Its proprietor, Fadwi, confirmed that "many young couples prefer to get married during the corona period because the costs are lower. They don't have to rent wedding halls or pay for large buffets."

Fadwi has changed his business hours to accommodate the new routine as Hamas police patrols enforce the night-time curfews. "We now start work around 7:00 am," he said, "because people only get married in ceremonies until 5:00 pm". — AFP

Kurds look on as Israel befriends...

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always been demonized as Israeli "agents" during their own struggle for independence.

"It's good Arab countries are normalizing with Israel," said Himdad Najat, a 38-year-old English language teacher in the regional capital of Arbil. But, he pointed out, "there's an emotional link between Kurds and Jews because of the injustices we both lived". Kurds make up sizeable communities in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey but have long faced persecution in those countries and do not have a state of their own.

Jews had also faced centuries of ill-treatment and did not have their own state until Israel was created in 1948. When fearful Jews fled Iraq for Israel in the 20th and 21st centuries, they often did so through the Kurdish region. As Arab hostility toward Israel intensified, the new state tried to reach out to non-Arab communities in the Middle East. It found an opening with Iraq's Kurds who, like Israel, were opposed to the central government in Baghdad.

Israel then sought to provide humanitarian and military aid to Kurds who were chafing under strongman Saddam Hussein's brutal military campaigns in the north throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In 2017, Israel backed a controversial independence referendum in northern Iraq, even as Arbil's allies including the United States opposed the vote.

Ahead of the referendum, Kurdish activist Nabaz Rashad was enthusiastically campaigning in favor of independence. Many of his Arab friends across Iraq and other countries criticized his efforts, saying a

Kurdish state would establish a "second Israel in the Middle East". Now, 35-year-old Rashad looks at the wave of "normalization" deals with bitterness. "It's pure hypocrisy," he told AFP.

Still, he hoped it could bring stability to the Middle East, a region torn apart by conflict for decades. "Besides, as a Kurd it gives me hope when I see a new country is recognized or born," he said. "It makes us feel hopeful that one day Kurds will have their own state."

Iraqi Kurdistan is already ruled as an autonomous region, has its own security forces and manages its own land borders with neighboring Iran, Turkey and Syria. Rebwar Babakye, an MP who heads the foreign relations committee in the Iraqi Kurdish parliament, said Iraq should normalize ties with Israel to boost regional peace. "The sooner the better," he told AFP. "It could help Arab countries develop scientific and academic research through exchange programs, as Israel is the leading country in the area when it comes to scientific and technology research."

The Kurdish region cannot do it alone because Baghdad manages foreign policy but, Babakye said, "if an Israeli embassy opens in Baghdad tomorrow, the next day their consulate will be open in Arbil". Despite their historic links, rapprochement between Israel and Iraq's Kurds remains unlikely, said analyst Hiwa Othman. For years, the Kurds sought to leverage their connection to Israel to get access to a world superpower, the United States.

"Today, the US is in Arbil and Kurds do not need a middleman - so they do not need to have a political relationship with Israel," Othman told AFP. He added that, far more than Bahrain or the UAE, Iraq's Kurds have to also manage sensitive ties with Ankara - and Tehran - which both wield considerable sway in Arbil and oppose both Kurdish independence and Israel. — AFP

Local

Kuwait FM heads delegation in OIC conference in Niger

Algeria calls for extra efforts to fight Islamophobia

NIAMEY: Foreign Minister and Acting Information Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah headed Kuwait's delegation in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) 47th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Niamey, Niger on Friday. During the opening session, Sheikh Dr Ahmad delivered a speech highlighting the warm welcome and kind words from various officials at the meeting, including sentiments regarding the passing of late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Foreign Minister also spoke about OIC's historic role and achievements throughout the years.

Meanwhile, Algerian Foreign Minister Sabri Boukadoum reaffirmed his country's stance on fighting all forms and sources of Islamophobia. In a speech during the two-day meeting yesterday, he noted that the meeting comes at a critical time where Islamophobia and campaigns against Islam are rising especially in Europe, as well as terrorism and extremism. The rights of Muslims in non-Muslim countries are being violated, even in job

opportunities and education, Boukadoum said. The minister also called for signing an international agreement to fight terrorism and cut off all of its sources. Meanwhile, he said that the meeting is an opportunity to enhance cooperation between Muslim countries to achieve development and tackle stability and security issues.

The 47th session of OIC was held under the theme 'United against Terrorism for Peace and Development.' Placed on the agenda of this year's CFM session was a list of topics and issues of concern to the Muslim world. In addition to the Palestinian cause, the fight against violence, extremism and terrorism, Islamophobia and defamation of religions, the Council discussed the situation of Muslim minorities and communities in non-member states, fundraising for the Rohingya case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), as well as the promotion of dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions, and other emerging matters. The OIC foreign ministers also discussed political, humanitarian, economic, social and cultural and other issues related to science and



NIAMEY: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah attends the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) 47th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Niamey, Niger. —KUNA

Muslim minorities' situation discussed



technology, the media and the progress made in the implementation of the 'OIC-2025: Plan of Action' document. The Council meeting also featured a

brainstorming session on 'Security and Humanitarian Challenges Confronting African Sahel States Members of the OIC.' —KUNA

Kuwait Foreign Minister, Niger leader discuss ties

NIAMEY: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah held talks on Friday with President of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou, focusing on bilateral relations in addition to current happenings around the world. The meeting, held on the sidelines of pan-Organization of Islamic Cooperation talks in the Nigerien capital Niamey, brought together a bevy of Kuwaiti foreign ministry officials and diplomats.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister also discusses various issues with foreign counterparts in separate meetings held on the summit's sidelines. Sheikh Dr Ahmad met yesterday with Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sabri Boukadoum, and they reviewed bilateral relations and discussed the latest regional and international developments. Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Foreign Minister's Office Counselor Ahmed Al-Shuraim attended the meeting.

During a meeting with his Ivory Coast counterpart Ally Coulibaly yesterday, the two sides examined bilateral relations between the two friendly countries, latest developments on the regional and international arenas. Separately, Sheikh Dr Ahmad met his Senegalese counterpart Aissata Tall Sall, discussing bilateral relations, regional and international issues. Later,



NIAMEY: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah meets with President of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou. —KUNA photos



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah meets Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sabri Boukadoum.

he met Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, examining identical matters.

Sheikh Dr Ahmad met on Friday with his counterpart of Chad Amine Abba Siddick. The two ministers reviewed the relations between the two sisterly countries, and the latest developments on the regional and international arenas. Kuwait's foreign minister held similar meetings on Friday with foreign ministers of Tunisia Othman Jerandi, Afghanistan Mohammad Hanif Atmar, Mauritania Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Libya Mohammad Siala, and Turkey Mevlut Cavusoglu. —KUNA



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah meets Tunisian Foreign Minister Othman Jerandi.



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah meets Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

Kuwait sees 319 new COVID-19 cases, one death

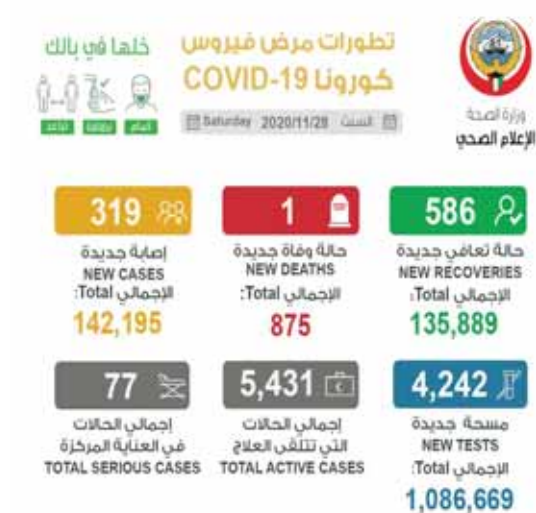
KUWAIT: Kuwait said yesterday it logged 319 new coronavirus infections over the previous 24 hours, raising the total to 142,195, while one fatality recorded over the same period upped its death toll from the outbreak to 875. The number of people hospitalized with the virus stood yesterday at 5,431, with 77 of them in intensive care units, according to ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. The spokesman revealed that 4,242 swab tests were conducted over the past 24 hours taking the total to 1,086,669 so far. The ministry had earlier reported that some 586 patients had recovered from the virus over the same period, raising total recoveries to 135,889. Dr Sanad 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

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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News in brief

Beware of foreign objects

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior issued a warning against touching or picking up foreign objects which could be uncovered by rains. They could be hazardous unexploded ordnance, it clarified in a statement, encouraging citizens and residents to be cautious and vigilant. In case of suspecting any foreign object, call the ministry's emergency hotline (112) for the safety and security of all, the ministry advised.



Body found off Messilah

KUWAIT: A body was found near Messilah beach, and was handed over to the Criminal Evidence Department to identify the victim, Kuwait Fire Force said yesterday. A fisherman reported finding the body two nautical miles away from the beach. A preliminary check revealed that the body had been in the waters for several days.

Kuwaiti oil price up

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil barrel was up four cents to stand at \$47.17 per barrel (pb) on Friday compared to \$47.13 on Thursday. Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. In global markets, the Brent crude increased 38 cents to stand at \$48.18 pb, while West Texas crude lost 18 cents, settling at \$45.53 pb.

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive on Istiqlal Road towards Kuwait City during rainy weather yesterday. The Kuwait Meteorological Center's weather forecast predicts several rain showers throughout the week. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Kuwait University vows to persevere on 54th anniversary

KUWAIT: Kuwait University, marking its 54th anniversary that fell on Friday, has pledged to march on the path for boosting academic education, having successfully grown from only four colleges to 16, currently. The university, in a report released on the occasion, affirmed that it has developed from a local establishment to a regional one, with the number of colleges reaching 16 from only four in the beginning. Moreover, the number of students has substantially grown from 418 to 36,000, with classes and facilities occupying a six million sq m plots of land. On the anniversary of the official opening, on November 27, 1966, "We bring into recollections the term of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on the occasion," where he lauded the KU as a milestone step in the

struggle against backwardness, KU said. The university, since its inauguration, has shouldered the responsibility of graduating effective, trained and qualified cadres, armed with modern sciences, expertise, skills to feed all sectors of life, namely those of the social, political, economic and scientific domains.

After half a century and four years of efforts, continuous giving and the quest for development, the university has witnessed the graduation of many citizens, some won invention patents. The KU report has affirmed that it is seeking to stay abreast of latest developments, its keenness on qualitative education, innovation, sustainable development and adopting thoughts that back up Kuwait development strategy, vision 2035. In line with this approach, the report has underlined the opening of Sabah Al-Salem university complex, one of the largest of such complexes in the world. This year's occasion came amid shadows of the novel coronavirus, where the administration succeeded in pursuing studies online, praising students' determination to cope with the difficult conditions. —KUNA



KUWAIT: The late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on the occasion inaugurates Kuwait University on November 27, 1966. —KUNA

Kuwait partakes in launching digital cooperation organization

RIYADH: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan and Pakistan announced on Thursday the launching of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) that aims at achieving welfare, stability and economic growth through digital transformation. The five-member organization seeks to strengthen cooperation in all innovation driven domains and accelerate growth of the digital economy, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported. Established by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan and Pakistan, the DCO has a vision including making a digital future for all by empowering women, youth and entrepreneurs, and developing the digital economy through developmental leaps based on innovation.

Salim Al-Othaina, Chairman and CEO of Kuwait's Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority, was quoted by the SPA as saying that the DCO would provide key opportunities to develop Kuwait's digital agenda. He added that the organization would back global endeavors to revive the digital sector. Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Swaha, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Communications and Information Technology, stressed the digital cooperation that represents a promising opportunity for youth, women and entrepreneurs to increase the mutual digital economy to one USD trillion within the next five years. He said "our future prosperity will rely on the digital economy. But it can make use of all potential if we as governments work together with the private sector and entrepreneurs so as to support them in this sensitive phase." The launching of the DCO

comes as part of Saudi Arabia's continued efforts through its presidency of the G-20 in accelerating the digital economy and the digital transformation across the globe, he noted.

Ahmad Hanandeh, Jordan's Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, expressed his country's pride for being a founding member of the organization, expressing his confidence that the move will ensure innovative and ambitious economies. "To make a sustainable change, we should work collectively across the globe. It is a collective and global collaboration. We can share knowledge, expertise and support, and this will open doors for our youths and markets to benefit from these efforts," he said. Also, Kamal Mohammed, Bahrain's Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications, said Bahrain is pleased to be part of such a dynamic initiative and a founding member of the DCO. He expressed confidence that the organization would work on enabling members to respond and adapt with the current digital scene.

Finally, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said it is an honor for Pakistan to be a founding member of the DCO and to work closely with its partners to guide and lead a global digital agenda. Earlier on Thursday, the Kuwaiti Cabinet reviewed Saudi Arabia's invitation to join the DCO, and agreed on the charter in principle. It assigned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in coordination with the relevant bodies, to complete the legal measures, in line with the 70th Article of the Constitution. —KUNA

Oil industry requires \$12.6 trillion in investment: OPEC

VIENNA: Secretary-General of OPEC Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo said investment in the global oil industry dropped by nearly 30 percent this year, even more than in the 2014-2016 downturn, from which the industry was still recovering when COVID-19 struck. "The oil industry requires \$12.6 trillion in investment to reduce volatility and avoid a possible future energy crisis," he said in an address to the Eighth Technical Meeting of the OPEC and non-OPEC countries of the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC). The meeting is being held via teleconference in preparation for the 180th Meeting of the OPEC Conference and the 12th OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting, scheduled on 30 November and 1 December, respectively. In his remarks, Barkindo acknowledged the key role played by the DoC technical meetings in providing OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meetings with reliable and accurate analyses, which form a crucial foundation for decision-making. The Secretary-

General highlighted the need for ongoing cooperation and dialogue during the COVID-19 pandemic, noting, "We are facing a resurgence of the pandemic, which is locking down countries and regions once again. And once again we must keep moving forward." In this context, the Secretary-General commended the efforts undertaken by the DoC participants to support oil market stability, stating, "The successes to date have called for great patience, endurance and unwillingness to give up, values strongly displayed by our DoC Countries over these past months. I congratulate you for the fruits of your labor so far."

On the recent COVID-19 vaccine development, Barkindo said, "The perspective of vaccines coming to the market has urged on positive sentiment. Yet, we must continue to hold our ground until these are able to knock down infection rates. We are still in the thick of this disaster." Barkindo also addressed the devastating impact of the pandemic on the world economy and the global oil market, noting that investment in the oil sector has declined tremendously. He praised the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its exemplary leadership of the G20 during a period of unseen challenges and volatility related to the pandemic. He highlighted that the G20 has been instrumental in fostering dialogue, cooperation and multilateralism to underpin the recovery process and help support a sustainable energy future. —KUNA

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Heavy shelling rocks Tigray; Ethiopia steps up offensive

1,300 'test positive' in UK's COVID testing error



PARIS: Demonstrators rally near the Place de la Republique in Paris yesterday during a protest against the 'global security' draft law, which (Article 24) would criminalize the publication of images of on-duty police officers with the intent of harming their "physical or psychological integrity". —AFP

France reels from police brutality

Video footage show officers beating and racially abusing a black man

PARIS: Dozens of rallies were planned yesterday against a new French law that would restrict sharing images of police, only days after the country was shaken by footage showing officers beating and racially abusing a black man. The case shocked France with celebrities and politicians alike condemning the officers' actions, and has brought debate over President Emmanuel Macron's law to boiling point.

Macron on Friday called the incident an "unacceptable attack" and asked the government to come up with proposals to "fight against discrimination". One of the most controversial elements of the new law is Article 24, which would criminalize the publication of images of on-duty police officers with the intent of harming their "physical or psychological integrity".

It was passed by the National Assembly last week—although it is awaiting Senate approval—provoking protests across France. Rally organizers are calling for the article to be withdrawn, claiming that it contradicts the fundamental freedoms of the French republic. "This bill aims to undermine the freedom of the press, the freedom to inform and be informed, the freedom of expression," one of protest organizers said. Trade unions are expected to join the demonstrations, with members of the yellow vests—whose sometimes violent protests in 2018 and 2019 shook the country—also expected.

Fundamental freedoms

In Paris, the authorities had demanded that organizers limit the rally to a single location, but on Friday evening officials authorized a march. And in a sign that the government

could be preparing to backtrack, Prime Minister Jean Castex announced Friday that he would appoint a commission to redraft Article 24. Under the article, offenders could be sentenced to up to a year in jail, and fined 45,000 euros (\$53,000) for sharing images of police officers. The government says the provision is intended to protect officers from doxing and online abuse, but critics say it is further evidence of the Macron administration's slide to the right.

But media unions say it could give police a green light to prevent journalists and social media users from documenting abuses. They point to the case of music producer Michel Zecler, whose racial abuse and beating at the hands of police was recorded by CCTV and later published online, provoking widespread criticism of the officers' actions. In another instance, journalists on the ground at a French migrant camp in Paris witnessed and recorded police brutality on Monday as the area was cleared. Laurent Fabius, a former prime minister who heads the Constitutional Council, said yesterday that the top court would review the law.

"Freedom of opinion, freedom of the press and freedom of demonstration are, for the Council, fundamental freedoms. We will see, after the final vote in parliament, what will be the exact content of this article," he said. In a letter seen by AFP, Paris police chief Didier Lallemand wrote to officers to tell them: "In the coming days, the coming weeks... there's no doubt you will face difficulty, doubt, even anger and fear." But he insisted that he could "count on the integrity, sense of honor and ethics" in the force.

Protests over police brutality have already taken place

weeks of tough restrictions, Europe remains at the heart of the pandemic, recording more cases than the United States in the past week. Until recently, Germany's relative success in containing the virus had offered some sense of hope, with authorities putting in place some precautions that still allowed life to carry on almost as normal. However, its measured approach has failed during the second wave, endangering the health of Europe's biggest economy and weighing on the mood as the northern hemisphere heads into the winter holidays. Germany's Robert Koch Institute recorded more than 22,000 new daily cases on Friday, pushing the overall total beyond the one-million mark. More worryingly, the number of Covid-19 patients in intensive care has soared from around 360 in early October to more than 3,500 last week.

LA restrictions

The United States surpassed 13 million total cases on Friday—the world's highest—and officials were concerned whether gatherings on Thursday for the Thanksgiving holiday would further worsen the situation in the coming weeks. The virus clouded the traditional "Black Friday" shopping day, but experts were expecting strong online sales.

Worry over the virus's rapid spread led Los Angeles county to announce a temporary ban on gatherings of people from different households, with religious services and protests exempt. The order affecting the United States' second-largest city will take effect Monday and last at least three weeks, until December 20, the county's public health department said. California last week imposed a night-time curfew across much of the state.

Sports was also affected in the United States. The NFL postponed a pivotal matchup between the unbeaten Pittsburgh Steelers and the Baltimore Ravens to Tuesday because of a COVID-19 outbreak among Ravens players. Further north in



PARIS: This video grab shows CCTV camera footage producer Michel Zecler being beaten up by police officers at the entrance of a music studio in the 17th arrondissement of Paris. —AFP

elsewhere in country. In the southern city of Toulouse demonstrators took to the streets on Friday evening brandishing placards with slogans such as "police everywhere, justice nowhere". In the western city of Nantes, police said around 3,500 rallied, while organizers put the crowd at 6,000-7,000. Montpellier city officials said 3,800 people were demonstrating yesterday, more than double the number who attended a march a week ago, while organizers said there were 5,000 people. —AFP

Canada, whose largest city Toronto is under lockdown, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that a general who led NATO's mission in Iraq as well as Canadian troops in Afghanistan and Bosnia would spearhead a gigantic vaccination drive. "This will be the biggest immunization in the history of the country," Trudeau said.

Lockdown fatigue

The pandemic is spreading fastest in Asia and Latin America, and is up by a worrying 113 percent over the week in Mexico. Globally, more than 1.4 million deaths and 61 million infections have been officially recorded, although the real numbers are unknown since testing and reporting methods vary greatly. With the virus on the march and the rollout of the first vaccines not expected until next month, much of the world faces a gloomy winter under more lockdowns, with an accompanying increase in economic anxiety and mental strain.

Lockdown fatigue is spreading even as governments unfurl new measures to save healthcare systems from collapse. One hairdresser in northern England has become a cause celebre among social media libertarians after stacking up fines totaling £17,000 (\$23,000), invoking the Magna Carta of 1215. Among others invoking Magna Carta to stay open have been a tattoo parlor in Bristol, western England, and a children's soft-play centre in Liverpool, in the northwest.

Law enforcers have taken a dim view, meting out fines and reminding all businesses that legislation of this year, not 800 years ago, is relevant and binding. Nations are now trying to gauge how people, exhausted by one of the most traumatic years in generations, can enjoy a small holiday break without making things worse. Playing it safe, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has called for all EU resorts to be closed until January 10, making Switzerland—which is outside the bloc and is staying open—the go-to destination for ski fans. —AFP

In European first, Iran envoy faces trial over foiled bomb plot

ANTWERP: An Iranian diplomat and three other Iranians went on trial in Belgium on Friday accused of planning to bomb a meeting of an exiled opposition group in France in 2018, the first time an EU country has put an Iranian official on trial for terrorism. Belgian prosecutors charged Vienna-based diplomat Assadollah Assadi and the three others with plotting an attack on a rally of the Paris-based National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI).

The rally's keynote address was given by US President Donald Trump's lawyer, Rudy Giuliani. Assadi, who was arrested while on holiday in Germany and handed over to Belgium, is refusing to appear in court and did not attend the first day of the trial in Antwerp; he has not commented on the charges.

"My client asked me to represent him today, he let me know he has the fullest respect for these judges but as he considers that he should benefit from immunity, they are not allowed to judge him," his lawyer Dimitri de Beco said. Assadi was the third counselor at Iran's embassy in Vienna. French officials have said he was in charge of intelligence in southern Europe and was acting on orders from Tehran. The Islamic Republic has repeatedly dismissed the charges, calling the attack allegations a "false flag" stunt by the NCRI, which it considers a terrorist group.

The trial is expected to continue next week, with a possible verdict later this month or in early January, lawyers said. Assadi warned authorities in March of possible retaliation by unidentified groups if he is found guilty, according to a police document obtained by Reuters. Authorities say the attack was thwarted by a coordinated operation between French, German and Belgian security services. Two of Assadi's suspected accomplices were arrested in Belgium with the explosive TATP and a detonator. Their lawyers said on Friday that neither had any intention to kill.

Lawyers representing participants of the 2018 rally, who are a civil party to the Belgian prosecution, have argued that diplomatic immunity cannot be used as a cover to carry out a terrorist attack, which carries a maximum 20-year prison term. "I think the words 'brave little Belgium' are entirely appropriate today," said Rik Vanreusel, a lawyer for the civil party. "We are one of the only countries that has dared to put such rather politically sensitive matters in a proper perspective."

Following a 2015 accord between Iran and world powers to curb Tehran's nuclear programme, the European Union has sought closer diplomatic and economic relations with Tehran, but says it cannot turn a blind eye to human rights abuses or terrorism. France has said Iran's intelligence ministry was behind the 2018 plot and it expelled an Iranian diplomat. European countries have blamed Iran for other suspected moves against dissidents, including two killings in the Netherlands in 2015 and 2017 and a foiled assassination in Denmark. The Islamic Republic has denied involvement. —Reuters

Parts of Europe reopen, LA sees new virus curbs

PARIS: Parts of Europe will reopen stores yesterday in time for the holiday season after progress in containing the coronavirus, but Los Angeles will halt nearly all gatherings with the pandemic surging across the United States. Most countries hope to ease their virus rules for Christmas and New Year, allowing families a respite before bracing for what the world hopes is one last wave of restrictions until a clutch of promising new vaccines kick in.

Stores lifted their shutters in France yesterday, while Poland's shopping centers will also reopen. Belgium is to allow shops to reopen from December 1, but keep the current semi-lockdown in place possibly until mid-January. The move mirrors similar easing in Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The Italian government partially lifted restrictions in Lombardy and Piedmont in the north, and Calabria in the south from today, changing their alert levels from red to orange.

And Ireland has also announced a staggered easing of restrictions to allow some businesses to reopen and for families to gather ahead of Christmas. Speaking in a televised address, Irish Taoiseach Micheal Martin said the upcoming festive period "cannot and will not be the kind of Christmas we are used to" but added the easing of restrictions would offer "some respite from the hardships of 2020 and in particular, the last six weeks".

Germany, once a beacon of hope in Europe's coronavirus nightmare, logged more than one million cases on Friday, while Russia asked India to help mass produce its controversial Sputnik vaccine. Although the virus spread is slowing thanks to

International

Rockets target Eritrea as Ethiopia leader resists calls for dialogue

Heavy shelling hits capital of Ethiopia's Tigray

ADDIS ABABA: Heavy shelling struck the capital of Ethiopia's Tigray region yesterday, the local government and humanitarian sources said, as the city of half a million braced for an attack against leaders of the regional ruling party. Ethiopia's military "has started hitting with heavy weaponry and artillery the center of Mekele", the local government said in a statement carried by Tigrayan media—a claim confirmed by two humanitarian officials with staff in the city.

"The Tigray regional state calls upon all who have a clear conscience, including the international community, to condemn the artillery and warplane attacks and massacres being committed," the statement said. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, winner of last year's Nobel Peace Prize, announced November 4 he had ordered military operations against Tigray's ruling party, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

More than three weeks of fierce fighting has left thousands dead "including many civilians as well as security forces", the International Crisis Group said Friday. Tens of thousands of refugees have streamed over the border into Sudan, and rockets launched from Tigray targeted the capital of neighboring Eritrea for a second time Friday night, exacerbating fears the conflict could draw in the wider Horn of Africa region.

Abiy announced Thursday that he had ordered a "final" offensive on TPLF leaders, and Ethiopia's military says it has encircled the city. A communications blackout in Tigray has made it difficult to verify claims from both sides about how the fighting is going.

A spokesperson for a crisis committee formed in response to hostilities in Tigray did not immediately

respond to a request for comment yesterday about reported shelling in Mekele, which has already been hit by air strikes. A spokesperson for Abiy's office referred AFP to past statements indicating military operations would be undertaken "strategically" to avoid undue harm to civilians.

Eritrea's capital came under fire from Ethiopia's breakaway Tigray region Friday, raising fears that Ethiopia's internal conflict could spread as leader Abiy Ahmed resisted calls for dialogue. Global concern remains centered on the half a million residents of Mekele, Tigray's regional capital, which the army says it has encircled ahead of the threatened attack. World leaders and human rights groups have warned such a strike could violate rules of war and were calling for urgent mediation.

Pope Francis was among those worried about the intensifying fighting, growing loss of life and displacement, Vatican media head Matteo Brunni said Friday. Abiy announced military operations in Tigray on November 4 after months of friction between his government and the TPLF, which dominated Ethiopian politics for nearly three decades before Abiy took office in 2018.

The prime minister has refused to negotiate with the TPLF and dismissed calls for dialogue as "interference" in Ethiopia's internal affairs. On Friday he met with three African ex-leaders—Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia and Kgalema Motlanthe of South Africa—dispatched this week by the African Union as mediators.

'Enforce rule of law'

In a statement issued after their meeting in Addis Ababa, Abiy said he appreciated "this gesture and...



Ethiopian refugees who have fled the Tigray conflict, rest in the shade after arriving at a transit centre in the Sudanese border town of Hamdayit on Friday. Over 43,000 refugees have crossed into Sudan since fighting broke out in Tigray on November 4. — AFP

the steadfast commitment this demonstrates to the principle of African solutions to African problems". Even so, the government has a "constitutionally mandated responsibility to enforce rule of law in the region and across the country," his office said in a statement.

"Failure to do so would further a culture of impunity with devastating cost to the survival of the country," it said. UN chief Antonio Guterres wel-

comed the talks with the AU envoys and urged all parties to "peacefully resolve the conflict".

The UN Secretary-General also stressed the need "to ensure the protection of civilians, human rights and access for humanitarian assistance to the affected areas". The Tigrayan government, meanwhile, said Friday the federal army was bombarding towns and villages and inflicting heavy damage, although it did not specifically mention Mekele. — AFP

Toll rises to 6 in clashes among rival Iraq protesters

NASIRIYAH, Iraq: The toll from clashes among rival protesters in Iraq's southern hot spot of Nasiriyah rose to six dead, medics said yesterday, as other cities imposed security measures.

Violence erupted on Friday between the dwindling members of the October 2019 anti-government protest movement and supporters of populist Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, who had called on his followers to hit the streets in a show of force. In the southern city of Nasiriyah, anti-government activists accused Sadrists of shooting at them and torching their tents in their main gathering place of Habboubi Square.

Clashes continued into the night, with medics reporting a total of six dead by yesterday morning,

five of them from bullet wounds, and at least 60 wounded. But on Saturday morning, anti-government protesters were already back in the square to rebuild their camp, an AFP reporter there said.

Authorities sacked the city's police chief, launched an investigation into the events and imposed an overnight curfew in Nasiriyah. Other cities also introduced security measures, with Kut and Amara further north setting new movement restrictions.

Nasiriyah was a major hub for the protest movement that erupted in October 2019 against a government seen by demonstrators as corrupt, inept and beholden to neighboring Iran.

It was also the site of one of the bloodiest incidents of the uprising, when more than three dozen died in protest-related violence on November 28 last year. The deaths sparked outrage across Iraq and prompted the resignation of then-prime minister Adel Abdel Mahdi.

His successor, Mustafa Al-Kadhemi, has sought to reach out to protesters and set June 2021 as a date for early elections—a major demand of the youth-dominated movement. — AFP



NASIRIYAH, Iraq: A demonstrator flashes V signs by burning tyres amid clashes between Iraqi anti-government protesters and supporters of firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, in the southern city of Nasiriyah, on Friday. — AFP

Deported Mexican migrants dream of change under Biden

MEXICO CITY: Mauricio Lopez was deported to Mexico after spending most of his life in the United States. Now he hopes against the odds that Joe Biden's administration will let him return.

The 26-year-old English teacher is one of thousands of migrants known as "dreamers" who as children were taken to the US by their parents. Like many Mexicans who were expelled, in particular under outgoing President Donald Trump, Lopez is hoping that President-elect Biden will push for changes that protect undocumented migrants. "It would be good for us if he relaxes immigration laws ... if there are asylum processes, if he makes it easier for us to obtain work permits or tourist visas, since many of us have families there," he said. Lopez was deported to Mexico from North

Carolina in 2016 after he was unable to renew his residency permit under the DACA program for unauthorized immigrants brought to the United States as children.

He was deported with his mother, leaving behind a sister but joining a brother who had already been sent back to Mexico years earlier.

Biden's hands tied?

Lopez is part of a growing number of deportees trying to integrate into a country that often feels foreign to them. Around 89,000 Mexicans were expelled from the United States in the first half of this year, according to the interior ministry.

Widespread expulsions have also occurred under Democratic administrations. About three million unauthorized immigrants were deported by



Many Mexicans who were deported from the US hope that President-elect Joe Biden will push for changes that protect undocumented migrants.

former president Barack Obama between 2009 and 2016, when Biden was vice president. Biden has signaled a break with the policies of Trump, who vowed to halt almost all immigration and expel the more than 10 million undocumented migrants estimated to

live in the United States.

The Republican sparked anger during his 2016 election campaign when he branded Mexican migrants "rapists" and drug dealers, and vowed to build a wall along the southern US border. — AFP

IS-linked militants kill four Christians in Indonesia

PALU, Indonesia: Islamic State-linked extremists killed four people in a remote Christian community on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, authorities said yesterday, with one victim beheaded and another burned to death. The group of sword-and-gun wielding attackers ambushed Lembantonga village in Central Sulawesi province Friday morning, killing several residents and torching half a dozen homes, including one used for regular prayers and services, police said.

No arrests had yet been made and the motive for the attack was not immediately clear. But authorities pointed the finger at the Sulawesi-based East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT), one of dozens of radical groups

across the Southeast Asian archipelago that have pledged allegiance to IS.

Indonesia, the world's biggest Muslim majority nation, has long wrestled with Islamist militancy and terror attacks, while Central Sulawesi has seen intermittent violence between Christians and Muslims for decades. "We reached the conclusion that they (the attackers) were from MIT after showing pictures of its members to relatives of the victims" who witnessed the ambush, said Sigi Regency police chief Yoga Priyahutama. The makeshift church was empty at the time of the early morning attack by around eight militants, he added. "People were just in their homes when it happened," Priyahutama said.

Lembantonga village head Rifai, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, said one victim was beheaded and another was nearly decapitated. One of the other all-male victims was stabbed while a fourth was burned to death in his home, he added. — AFP

UK testing error wrongly says 1,300 infected

LONDON: Over 1,300 people in Britain were inaccurately informed they were infected with coronavirus after a laboratory error at the government's NHS Test and Trace system, the Department of Health and Social Care told Reuters yesterday. "NHS Test and Trace has contacted 1,311 individuals who were incorrectly told that the result of COVID-19 tests, taken between Nov. 19 and Nov. 23, were positive. An issue with a batch of testing chemicals meant their test results were void," a department spokesman said in an emailed statement.

"Swift action was taken to notify those affected and they have been asked to take another test, and to continue to self-is-

olate if they have symptoms." The laboratory error that led to the problem was an "isolated incident" and was being investigated, the statement said. The government has announced an extra 7 billion pounds (\$9.31 billion) for its COVID-19 testing and contact tracing system as part of an expanded program of mass testing.

The NHS Test and Trace system has been heavily criticized after a series of high-profile failures since its launch earlier this year, and ministers concede it has not performed as well as they had hoped. In September, nearly 16,000 positive case records were lost from the system for several days — causing a delay in contact tracing. — Reuters

News in brief

Thai protesters move to suburbs

BANGKOK: Thai anti-government protesters demonstrated in Bangkok's outskirts yesterday with a duck parade and speeches demanding the removal of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, a new constitution and reforms to the monarchy. Protests have been stepped up this week despite threats by Prayuth, a former junta ruler, to use all available laws against protesters who break them and charges of insulting the monarchy against several protest leaders. Hundreds of people gathered in both Nonthaburi and Bang Na, to the northwest and southeast of Bangkok respectively. — Reuters

HK leader has no bank account

HONG KONG: Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said she has "piles of cash" at home as she has no bank account after the United States slapped sanctions on her in response to a draconian security law China imposed on the city. Lam was targeted, along with 14 other senior city officials, in the toughest US action on Hong Kong since Beijing imposed the new law on the territory in late June. The move by Washington freezes the American assets of the 15 officials and criminalizes any financial transactions in the United States. In an interview with local English TV channel HKIBC aired on Friday night, Lam said she was "using cash every day for all the things" after being sanctioned. — AFP

Pakistan frees left-wing activist

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has freed a political activist who was serving a life sentence in the country's semi-autonomous north, part of the contested Kashmir region also claimed by India, his party told AFP Friday. Baba Jan, a left-wing political and climate activist from the Hunza Valley in northern Gilgit-Baltistan, was convicted by an anti-terrorism court for participating in political riots in 2011 and lost an appeal against his life sentence in 2016. Pakistani media reported his release came after authorities struck a deal with activists, on the heels of recent protests, to free Jan following the local elections completed on Friday. — AFP

700 gang members arrested

MEXICO CITY: El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have brought criminal charges against more than 700 members of cross-border criminal organizations, primarily the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs, in a US-assisted effort, the US Department of Justice said on Friday. "The US Department of Justice and our law enforcement partners in Central America are committed to continued collaboration in locating and arresting gang members and associates engaged in transnational crimes," said US Attorney General William Barr, according to the statement. The charges resulted from a one-week coordinated law enforcement action under Operation Regional Shield (ORS), a DOJ-led initiative to combat transnational organized crime that brings together authorities from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and the United States. — Reuters

International

No easy ride for EU-US with Biden's francophone team

Paris cheers president-elect's choice of French speakers

PARIS: US-president elect Joe Biden's appointment of French speakers to top positions has cheered Paris but France knows it will take more than mother tongue chats to overcome transatlantic strains, even after the departure of Donald Trump. As his future secretary of state, Biden has named former deputy national security advisor Anthony Blinken, who spent part of his childhood in France and is fluent in French. The special envoy for climate, former secretary of state John Kerry, spends his holidays in Brittany, while Michele Flournoy, in the running for defense secretary, studied in Belgium where she learned French.

The atmosphere of exchanges with this team is likely to be markedly more cheerful than contacts with the Trump administration that culminated in a frosty closed door visit to Paris this month by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. But an extra dose of bonhomie will not make strategic disagreements—that range from the future of NATO to policy towards China—go away.

Indeed, with conspicuous timing days after Biden's election victory was confirmed, a French journal published a mammoth interview with Macron where he outlined his vision for a Europe that acts independently of the United States. Europe should have "strategic autonomy", he told Le Grand Continent, adding that it should "not become the vassal of this or that power and no longer have a say".

'Synergy' with Berlin?

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said he was "particularly happy" about Blinken's

appointment as he had worked with him while serving as French defense minister. A French government source described Blinken as "francophone and francophile" and said he and Le Drian used the informal "tu" for "you" when speaking. "Can France take advantage of the Francophile leanings of several officials? Yes, but with conditions", said Jean-Claude Beaujour, vice-president of the France-Americas association.

It will be necessary that "Berlin and Paris have a very strong synergy vis-a-vis the United States" and that "the EU is not as divided as it tends to be".

He emphasized that US officials above all follow a Europe policy, without a specific approach to any single country such as France. But under Macron's rule there has not always been harmony between Paris and Berlin, and in Le Grand Continent interview he rather undiplomatically took aim at German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer who has been a prominent proponent of the United States retaining a key part of Europe's defense calculus.

"Illusions of European strategic autonomy must come to an end: Europeans will not be able to replace America's crucial role as a security provider," she wrote in an opinion piece in Politico this month. Macron said "I profoundly disagree" with her argument, which he described as a "historical misinterpretation", adding icily that "fortunately, if I understood things correctly, the Chancellor (Angela Merkel) does not share this point of view."

'Not fundamentally different'

Benjamin Haddad, Europe director of the Atlantic Council think tank, said the new Biden team will



WILMINGTON: US President-elect Joe Biden speaks during a cabinet announcement event in Wilmington, Delaware. — AFP

want to work better with Europe. "But this will mean more pressure on the Europeans. We should not have any illusions. On questions like 5G and Chinese investment in infrastructure they will ask us to choose sides. But this will be done in concert."

The Trump administration had wanted Europe to match its confrontational approach on China and was unsettled by telecoms giant Huawei eyeing a role in the building of new 5G infrastructure and Europe taking a softer tack towards Beijing. "It will undoubtedly be less unpleasant, but not fundamentally different", said a French government source,

who asked not to be named.

"Europe will undoubtedly be better treated but the United States will not put us back in the center, their concerns will remain centered on Asia," the source said. In his interview, Macron also spoke about the need to "prevent the Chinese-American duopoly" and said that the world was at "breaking point in terms of the capitalist system". An American diplomatic source, who also asked not to be named, added: "I don't think everything reverts back to normal but we will have more normalcy in transatlantic relations." — AFP

Rare Cuba protest over freedom of expression

HAVANA: About 200 Cuban artists demonstrated outside the country's culture ministry on Friday in a rare protest over freedom of expression that received support from leading Cuban cinema figures.

The demonstration followed the expulsion by authorities on Thursday night of protesting members of an artists' collective from their premises in the historic center of Havana. Authorities said the eviction of the 14 members of the San Isidro Movement was necessary due to Covid-19 protocols since one had returned from Mexico via the United States and not properly quarantined.

They had been protesting for 10 days, with six of them on hunger strike, and their movement had gained significant attention. Demonstrators outside the culture ministry on Friday demanded "dialogue" and representatives were waiting to meet with vice minister Fernando Rojas after having gathered there for much of the day. The demonstration was rare in Cuba, where permission for such protests is not often given. Security personnel and uniformed police watched over the protest from a distance but without intervening.

"On the one hand, we do not have much confidence, but on the other we feel that it is an obliga-



HAVANA: A group of young intellectuals and artists demonstrate at the doors of the Ministry of Culture during a protest in Havana, early yesterday. About 200 Cuban artists demonstrated outside the country's culture ministry in a rare protest over freedom of expression that received support from leading Cuban cinema figures. — AFP

tion," said activist Michel Matos. "They are public officials of this country and this has become a political situation." The San Isidro Movement had been demanding the release of another member of the group, rapper Denis Solis, arrested on November 9 and sentenced to eight months in prison for contempt.

After the raid on their premises, the 14 members of the group were given Covid-19 tests and returned to their homes, with the collective's headquarters closed by the authorities, activists said on social media. Two of them refused to go home and

were arrested again: Luis Manuel Otero Alcantara, 32, a plastics artist, and Anamely Ramos, 35. Some activists said on social media that Ramos had been released. The list of demands from Friday's protesters included information on the whereabouts of Otero and Ramos, the release of Solis and an end to the "harassment" of artists.

"It is time for dialogue and I believe that you young people must be listened to," well-known actor and director Jorge Perugorria, 55, told the protesters. He was accompanied by prominent filmmaker Fernando Perez, 76. — AFP

Scotland leader 'never been more certain' of independence

GLASGOW: Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon yesterday said she had "never been more certain" of achieving independence, with Britain's final departure from EU trading arrangements set to precede key Scottish elections in the months ahead. The head of Scotland's devolved government and the leader of the pro-independence SNP told supporters at the party's virtual conference that the prospect of a break between Scotland and the rest of the UK has never been closer.

"Independence is in clear sight - and with unity of purpose, humility and hard work I have never been so certain that we will deliver it," she said. Sturgeon and the SNP have argued for a second referendum on Scottish independence since the party's overwhelming victory among Scottish seats in Britain's 2019 general election. Now she hopes that a further resounding win in May elections to the Edinburgh parliament will hand her party a mandate for a second bid to quit the UK.

Opinion polls in recent months have shown that a majority of public opinion in Scotland now supports independence. The country chose to remain part of the four-nation United Kingdom in a 2014 referendum on the issue.

But Scots later voted by a thumping majority in 2016 to remain in the European Union, a referendum the Leave side won by a narrow margin when taking the rest of Britain into account.

Since then, "we have won a landslide victory in a UK general election and support for independence has risen, it has become the sustained and majority view in public opinion this year," said Sturgeon.

"Who should be taking the decisions that shape our futures? We know that it is the people who live here, wherever they come from, who can best harness Scotland's immense human and natural resources. "Let us reach out to all Scotland like never before," she added. — AFP



KUNDLI: Farmers react as police block a street to impede them from marching to New Delhi to protest against the central government's recent agricultural reforms at the Delhi-Haryana border in Kundli on Friday. — AFP

Protesting Indian farmers in face-off with police in Delhi

NEW DELHI: India deployed hundreds of police and paramilitary forces at a New Delhi border yesterday as thousands of farmers from neighboring states blocked major roads into the capital, in protest against recent agricultural deregulation.

A day after clashes ended with an agreement that the farmers could demonstrate in the capital, tensions rose again in the protests over laws that farmers fear could rob them of minimum guaranteed prices for their produce. Farmers who arrived in trucks, buses and tractors at Delhi's Singhu border with Haryana state on Friday, blocked the main northern highway into the capital yesterday morning, chanting slogans against the government and waved the red, yellow and green flags of farmer's unions.

They appeared ready for a long sit-in and refused to relocate to a designated protest site, raising fears of fresh clashes between security forces and protesters.

On Friday, police fired tear gas and water cannons to disperse the protesters before letting them march into the capital and stage a protest at a designated site. Both security forces and farmers have installed barricades to prevent a repeat of Friday's clashes. Harbhajan Singh, 75, from Amritsar in the major northern farming state of Punjab, said he and others were carrying provisions and were prepared to camp out. "We have been harassed by the government. We want a special parliament session for withdrawal of the new farm laws," Singh said, adding he hopes farmers from other states will join the protests to pressure on the government.

Opposition Congress Party leader Rahul Gandhi also slammed the government. "Our slogan was, 'Hail the Soldier, Hail the Farmer,' but today PM Modi's arrogance made the soldier stand against the farmer. This is very dangerous," Gandhi tweeted in reaction to a photo of a policeman attempting to hit a farmer with a baton.

Modi's laws, enacted in September, let farmers sell their produce anywhere, including to big corporate buyers like Walmart Inc, not just at government-regulated wholesale markets where growers are assured of a minimum procurement price. But many small growers worry they will be left vulnerable to big business and could eventually lose the price supports for key staples such as wheat and rice. — Reuters

News in brief

China reports six new COVID cases

SHANGHAI: China yesterday reported six new coronavirus cases in the mainland for Nov. 27, compared with five cases a day earlier, the health authority said. All of the new infections were imported cases, the National Health Commission said in a statement. There were no new deaths. China also reported four new asymptomatic patients, compared with eight a day earlier. As of Nov. 27, mainland China had a total of 86,501 confirmed coronavirus cases, it said. China's death toll from the coronavirus remained unchanged at 4,634. — Reuters

22 killed in Chad ethnic violence

N'DJAMENA, Chad: At least 22 people have been killed in southern Chad in the latest instance of deadly ethnic violence between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers, the communications minister said Friday. A curfew was imposed in the Kabbia region where the fighting took place and 66 people were arrested following the incident on Monday and Tuesday, minister and government spokesman Cherif Mahamat Zene said. The trigger for the violence was cattle theft, sparked by the animals trampling farmers' fields, another official said. — AFP

Indian Kashmir goes to the polls

SRINAGAR: Voters in Indian-administered Kashmir went to the polls yesterday amid a heavy security presence in the first direct elections in the disputed region since the government stripped its semi-autonomy last year. Under high alert for attacks by separatist militants, dozens of police and paramilitaries carrying machine guns surrounded each voting station while the army kept up street patrols. Observers said only small numbers braved the security, coronavirus fears and snow-covered terrain to elect members of their local councils. Voting is to be held over eight days up to December 19 with the count to start three days later. — Reuters

Scotland begins student virus tests

ST ANDREWS, United Kingdom: As an unusual term comes to a close and Christmas holidays draw closer, students at the University of St Andrews in Scotland filed in and out of a sports hall that has been transformed into a mass coronavirus testing center. "It's a huge piece of mind just to be able to go home and be with my family, knowing that everything is safe," Fiona Waddell, a 19-year-old psychology student said before the center opens for testing yesterday. — AFP

Los Angeles to halt nearly all gatherings

LOS ANGELES: Los Angeles county on Friday announced a temporary ban on gatherings of people from different households under a new "safer-at-home order" triggered by a spike in Covid-19 cases, with religious services and protests exempt. The order affecting the United States' second-largest city will take effect tomorrow and last at least three weeks, until December 20, the county's public health department said. "In the new Order that goes into effect on Monday, residents are advised to stay home as much as possible," said a statement. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020

Economic headwinds await Biden

US sectors boom amid rising unemployment, consumer skepticism

WASHINGTON: The Dow has hit a record high and parts of the US economy are growing, but analysts and government data warn of a worsening employment and spending situation in the final months before President-elect Joe Biden takes office.

Data from the Commerce and Labor departments released showed new filings for jobless claims rising significantly last week, while personal incomes decreased and spending moderated in October, raising fears that employers and consumers are feeling the toll from rising Covid-19 cases and dwindling government aid. The data's release came one day after the Dow Jones Industrial Average crossed the symbolic 30,000-point high for the first time, a record President Donald Trump called "sacred" and touted as a product of his administration's efforts to advance coronavirus vaccines.

Other data released were comparatively positive, showing new home sales remaining strong in October and durable goods orders performing better than expected due to rising demand for defense aircraft and parts. With Trump in his final weeks in office before Biden takes over following a contentious election, analysts warn that whatever economic momentum the economy has may have petered out by the time the president-elect enters the White House.

"We are expecting a small positive but the stage is set for first quarter contraction given the absence of additional fiscal stimulus and threat of untenable surge in cases and hospitalizations," Diane Swonk of Grant Thornton said on Twitter.

'Wrong direction'

The rise in seasonally adjusted weekly jobless claims to 778,000, as reported by the Labor Department in the week ended November 21, was the second consecutive weekly increase, and came

as another 311,675 people, not seasonally adjusted, filed under a program for workers not normally eligible.

The United States has not seen two back-to-back weeks of rising claims since July. And the level still remains above the worst single week of the 2008-2010 global financial crisis, indicating the enduring power of the world's largest COVID-19 outbreak to disrupt business. "Weekly unemployment insurance claims are moving in the wrong direction," Robert Frick of Navy Federal Credit Union said.

Consumers and businesses had been buoyed by the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act passed earlier this year. It expanded unemployment payments and offered loans and grants to small businesses.

But much of those programs expired in recent months, and Democrats and Republicans in Washington have been deadlocked on passing another stimulus measure to aid the recovery. Commerce Department data showed signs of consumers struggling in October after the CARES Act aid and a separate program approved by Trump expired, sending personal incomes falling by 0.7 percent, more than expected. Personal consumption expenditures slowed, growing just 0.5 percent, though that was slightly better than analysts' forecast, and the savings rate fell a full point to 13.6 percent.

Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics warned of a further collapse in both income and savings as the year draws to a close, when programs assisting the long-term unemployed and gig workers expire. "The outlook is dimming as the lift from fiscal support to incomes and savings fades further at year end, when federal unemployment insurance programs expire," she wrote in an analysis.

Goods and sales

However, homebuyers have managed to stay in the market amid the downturn, pushing real estate



COMMERCE: Shoppers walk outside Citadel Outlet shopping mall in Commerce, California. — Reuters

sales and construction up thanks to the Federal Reserve's slashing of its key lending rate to zero as the pandemic began. The Commerce Department reported that trend continuing in October, with new home sales at a seasonally adjusted annualized rate of 999,000, slightly less than in September but way above the previous year.

Durable goods came in above expectations last month, Commerce said, with orders for big-ticket items such as industrial equipment and automobiles up 1.3 percent to \$240.8 billion, fueled by a 79.1 percent jump in orders for defense aircraft and parts. The department also released a revised estimate of third-quarter GDP growth at 33.1 percent annual-

ized, following the historic 31.4 percent annualized contraction in the second quarter. Amid the spending deadlock in Washington, policymakers may indeed be betting on the approval of one of several vaccine candidates to turn business conditions around, but Gregory Daco of Oxford Economics warned the economy was in for some tough times before that happens. "What the economy needs is a heavy dose of realism to go along with a splash of vaccine optimism," he said.

"While the 2021 spring and summer will no doubt be brighter once the US reaches herd immunity via a broad-based diffusion of a Covid-19 vaccine, the economic situation today is distressing." — AFP

Ooredoo Kuwait named 'Best Loyalty and Rewards Program'

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, has been awarded the "Best Loyalty and Rewards Program" at the 14th edition of Telecom Review Leaders' Summit, the ICT industry's biggest and first hybrid event in the Middle East, held November 18, 2020.

Ooredoo Kuwait was honored for its efforts and commitment to recognizing and rewarding customers, as well as connecting them with various international and national brands they love. Nojoom Rewards Program stands out due to its consistent growth, unique offerings, exclusive rewards, and exceptional experiences

and benefits to customers. Nojoom is Ooredoo's loyalty program and the biggest and only one of its kind in Kuwait by a telecom operator.

"Our mission is to be a one-stop-shop provider, and Nojoom Rewards Program offers customers with different tastes and preferences a wide range of choices of brands. This prestigious award is a reflection of a tribute to the hard work of all involved, and we are delighted at Ooredoo Kuwait to be recognized for our leadership and commitment to raising the bar of rewarding our valued customers and honoring their individuality," said Abdulaziz Al-Babtain, Chief Executive Officer - Ooredoo Kuwait.



KUWAIT: (From left), Mijbil Al-Ayoub, Teppan Tripathy, Abdulaziz Al-Babtain and Fadi Qa'war

Nojoom - Kuwait's Largest loyalty program allows its users who are Ooredoo customers to earn points by spending with Ooredoo and Nojoom Earn partners which can be redeemed to enjoy the best offers and exclusive benefits. Joining Nojoom is as simple

as downloading the MyOoredoo app from the App Store or Google Play. The Telecom Review Leaders' Summit is among the largest C-level industry gatherings, bringing together the leaders of the ICT industry and governments from around the world.

UK's sole hydrogen car maker bets on green revolution

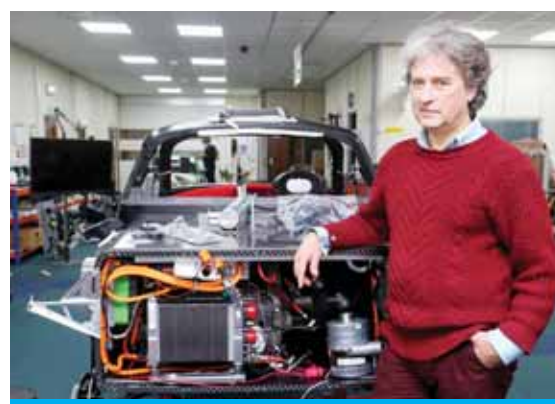
BERGAVENTNY, United Kingdom: Hydrogen-powered car manufacturer Riversimple is hoping to steal a march on competitors ahead of Britain's promised "green revolution" that would see petrol-powered cars banned within 10 years. While conventional battery-powered electric cars may be a few miles ahead in the zero-emission vehicle race, the company is betting that nascent hydrogen technology will fuel the cars of the future.

South Korea's Hyundai claims to be the current world leader, selling 5,000 units of its Nexso model in 2019, followed by the Toyota Mirai. Their sales are dwarfed by those of battery powered cars, of which there are now around five million on the world's roads.

Riversimple is only an ambitious upstart compared with the Asian automotive giants, but is currently the only British manufacturer in the sector with its flagship model, the Rasa. Founder Hugo Spowers is keen to take on the big boys with his self-designed model, whose name derives from the Latin 'tabula rasa', or clean slate. Starting from scratch will give him an advantage, he hopes, over manufacturing giants that are focussed on adapting petrol-driven models to run on hydrogen fuel.

He also believes hydrogen has a clear advantage over electric batteries because it offers a much greater range. "A short-range car can be brilliant running on batteries, and we need them and there's a role for them," he said.

"But if you want the sort of range to which we've become accustomed, of 300 miles (482 kilometers) or more, hydrogen is head and shoulders ahead in terms of the overall efficiency," he added. Rasa will begin advanced testing over the next few months, with paying customers including Monmouthshire District Council in south Wales, which has approved



Hugo Spowers, chief engineer and founder of Riversimple, poses for a photograph with one of his company's hydrogen powered 'Rasa' cars in at his factory in Llandrindod Wells in central Wales. — AFP

a hydrogen refueling station in the town of Abergavenny. It is the only such site in the region, but recharging takes only a few minutes, compared with several hours for an electric battery.

Hire-purchase

The cars turn hydrogen and oxygen into electricity and water, offering the advantages of electric cars—sharp acceleration, torque and quiet operation—with no pollutants emitted.

Their environmental footprint is still a problem however, with the hydrogen mainly sourced from CO2-emitting natural gas. As electricity is increasingly made from renewable sources, there is hope this could be used to create hydrogen from water via electrolysis. Another problem is the vehicle's cost.

Riversimple is trying to resolve that via a hire-purchase scheme that includes maintenance and fuel costs. The vehicle would still belong to Riversimple, giving it a stake in sustainability. "You pay for it monthly by direct debit and everything's all under one umbrella, which I think is fantastic," Jane Pratt, a member of Monmouthshire County Council, said. "This is a much more sustainable method of having a car," she added. — AFP

Mixed retailer optimism on 'Black Friday'

NEW YORK: The coronavirus is clouding "Black Friday" much as it has overshadowed 2020 in general, but some leading experts still expect strong overall sales even as shopping patterns are altered.

The more bullish case for the holiday shopping season cites robust demand for bigger-ticket items such as home improvement projects, new computers and home fitness machines as more people work from home and e-commerce grabs an ever-increasing share of the overall market.

Malls were open for business as usual on Friday, but there were early indications that the day-after-Thanksgiving crowds were more sparse this year as more consumers opt for e-commerce or for curbside pickup options because of the virus. Most individual retailers say there is still too much uncertainty to project fourth-quarter sales, but the National Retail Federation offered a fairly upbeat outlook, saying shoppers "are willing to spend on gifts that lift the spirits of family and friends after such a challenging year." The NRF projects a 2020 jump of between 3.6 percent and 5.2 percent in overall holiday sales compared with the year-ago season.

The trade group points to optimism over Covid-19 vaccines and says many consumers have available cash from an appreciating stock market, a strong housing market and disposable income that would otherwise have gone to travel and entertainment.

But this outlook may understate the impact from elevated unemployment levels in the United States, exacerbated by Washington's inability to produce another round of fiscal support for struggling families. An even bigger source of uncertainty is the coronavirus itself, which has been spreading quickly in much of the country, spurring fresh restrictions in some cities and dampening the holiday mood overall. — AFP

Brexit talks kick off in London as clock ticks down

LONDON: European Union chief negotiator Michel Barnier resumed make-or-break Brexit talks with British counterpart David Frost in London yesterday with the clock ticking for a deal on future trading arrangements. It is the first time they have met face-to-face since Barnier went into self-isolation after a member of his team caught coronavirus. A failure to reach an agreement would see Britain and the EU trading on World Trade Organization terms, with tariffs immediately imposed on goods travelling to and from the continent.

Britain has been largely trading on the same terms with the EU since it officially left the bloc in January as part of a transition agreement that expires at the end of the year. As it stands, it will leave Europe's trade and customs area in five weeks with talks on a follow-on agreement stalled over fishing rights and fair trade rules. Both parties warned on Friday that success was not guaranteed, with Barnier tweeting that the "same significant divergences persist". "We are not far from the take it or leave it moment," he later told ambassadors from member states, according to a European source familiar with the closed-door meeting. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's lead negotiator Frost said that people were "asking me why we are still talking," he tweeted.

"My answer is that it's my job to do my utmost to see if the conditions for a deal exist. It is late but a deal is still possible, and I will continue to talk until it's clear that it isn't."

A no-deal scenario is widely expected to cause economic chaos, with customs checks required at borders. Concern is particularly acute on the border between EU member Ireland and the British province of Northern Ireland, where the sudden imposition of a hard border threatens the delicate peace secured by 1999's Good Friday Agreement. Johnson spoke with Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin late Friday and "underlined his commitment to reaching a deal that respects the sovereignty of the UK". But he also "reaffirmed the need to prioritize the Good Friday Agreement and avoid a hard border on the island of Ireland," according to a summary of the call released by London.

Johnson earlier told reporters the "likelihood of a deal is very much determined by our friends and partners in the EU", adding there were "substantial and important differences to be bridged." A key sticking point is the EU's demand for a post-Brexit "level playing field", with punishing trade penalties if either side diverges from agreed standards or state aid regulations, but Britain does not want to be bound by rules made in Brussels. Britain's fishing waters are also a hot topic, with sources on Friday saying that Barnier told envoys that London was asking that European access to them be cut by 80 percent, while the EU was willing to accept 15 to 18 percent. — AFP

Business

India's economic contraction slows as vaccines boost recovery hopes

Economy contracts 7.5% in Sept quarter vs 23.9% in June quarter

NEW DELHI: The contraction of the Indian economy eased off in the three months to September amid signs of a pickup in manufacturing, and economists expect a steady recovery next year if progress on coronavirus vaccines feeds consumer demand.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose party won elections this month in the eastern state of Bihar, expects the recent easing of farm and labor laws, along with tax incentives, to bolster manufacturing and lure more foreign investment. India's gross domestic product in July-September quarter contracted 7.5 percent on year, data released by the National Statistical Office on Friday showed, compared to a decline of 23.9 percent in the previous three months.

Analysts in a Reuters poll had forecast an 8.8 percent contraction in the latest period. Annual growth of 3.4 percent in farm sector and 0.6 percent in manufacturing during September quarter raised hopes of an early recovery as the government gears up to distribute coronavirus vaccines to a country with about 1.4 billion people. "The Q2 GDP numbers are encouraging," said Krishnamurthy Subramanian, chief economic adviser at the ministry of finance, after the release of the data.

Citing growth in manufacturing and farm sectors, he said there were signs of a "V" shaped recovery helped by a pickup in demand for consumer and investment goods. "Overall, while the

recovery provides optimism, caution on the pandemic and therefore on the economy is still warranted."

Consumer spending - the main driver of the economy - dropped 11.3 percent year-on-year in July-September compared to a revised 26.7 percent fall in the previous quarter, data showed, while capital investments were down 7.3 percent compared to a 47.1 percent fall in the previous quarter.

The Reserve Bank of India, which has slashed its benchmark repo rate by a total of 115 basis points since March to cushion the shock from the crisis, is expected to keep rates on hold at its policy review meeting next week due to growing concerns about inflation. India - the world's fastest-growing major economy until a few years ago - now looks to be headed for its first full-year contraction this fiscal year since 1979, according

to a Reuters poll which predicted gross domestic product would take over a year to return to pre-COVID-19 levels.

Risks of second wave

Private economists, who have marginally raised growth forecasts this month, said the recovery would depend on the wider distribution of vaccines amid risks of a second wave of infections spreading to remote areas limiting the broader gains. Businesses fear new restrictions imposed by some states this week could delay a recovery while con-



Manufacturing grows 0.6% in Sept quarter



AHMEDABAD: An employee works inside the KHS Machinery Pvt. Ltd, a manufacturer of filling and packing equipment for beverage, food and non-food industries at Hirapur village on the outskirts of Ahmedabad on Friday. —AFP

sumer demand could slow down after the festivals. India's tally of COVID-19 infections crossed 9.3 million to stand as the world's second highest after the United States, with 135,715 deaths in the south Asian nation. "The resurgence of COVID cases in many geographies poses a risk to economic revival

in the coming quarters," said Anagha Deodhar, economist at ICICI Securities, Mumbai.

Deodhar like many other economists expected growth to remain negative in the December quarter and post a small positive growth in March quarter. —Reuters

stc is now offering Apple's iPhone 12 series through its postpaid plans

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it is now offering the iconic Apple iPhone 12 series under its Always ON postpaid plans with offers on the most wanted smartphone of the year. Equipped with ultra-fast 5G connectivity, both new stc customers and those renewing their subscriptions can take advantage of the new iPhone 12 series' high internet speeds supported by stc's 5G network, the #1 network in Kuwait.

stc will offer the new iPhone 12 line up, including iPhone 12, iPhone 12 Pro, iPhone 12 Pro Max, and

iPhone 12 mini, introducing a powerful 5G experience. With a beautiful all-new design, iPhone 12 models feature unparalleled new camera systems, edge-to-edge Super Retina XDR displays for a more immersive viewing experience, the biggest jump in durability with the Ceramic Shield front cover, and Apple-designed A14 Bionic chip, the fastest chip in a smartphone.

stc also launched its Trade-In program, which enables customers to exchange older iPhone or iPad models for credit towards the new iPhone 12 series. In order to receive the credit, customers are only required to visit any of stc's designated branches that support the program, and trade in their old device with a new iPhone 12 model. The credit amount of the old device will be transferred to the customer's stc account immediately in order to purchase their new iPhone. The operation is easy, simple and safe.

Customers are able to purchase the iPhone 12 Pro Max, iPhone 12 Pro, iPhone 12, and iPhone 12 mini now, following the pre-order launch which started on November 13. For complete pricing and availability details, please visit www.stc.com.kw.

On this occasion, engineer Nasser Al-Saadoun, Chief Consumer Officer at stc, said, "We are proud

to participate in the official launch of the iPhone 12 series in Kuwait. Partnering with leading companies such as Apple, enables stc to expand the range of newly released products to its customers with special offers designed to enhance the user experience. Each device comes equipped with 5G connectivity, as well as hardware and software upgrades. This launch builds on our commitment to add new lines of 5G enabled devices as we enter the new era of high-speed connectivity." Al-Saadoun added, "The long awaited iPhone 12 series is now available to our customers. To ensure convenient access to all our products and services, customers can take advantage of this limited time offer at one of stc's branches, our website (www.stc.com.kw), or through the mystc App."



Nasser Al-Saadoun

Markaz launches its second sustainability report for 2018/2019

KUWAIT: As a testament to its steadfast commitment to doing business in a responsible and sustainable fashion, Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" announced the release of its second Sustainability Report, for the 2018 and 2019 period, expanding the positive trends demonstrated in the first edition, and reinforcing its commitment to clients, business, people and community at large. Developed in full accordance with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards, it highlights the company's contribution to the global goals. It is strongly tied to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Kuwait National Development Plan (KNDP) and Boursa Kuwait Sustainability Disclosure Guide.

A holistic approach

The report underlines Markaz's continuous commitment to measuring and evaluating its sustainability performance, and to transparently report the results to all stakeholders. The company is a proactive steward of responsible business strategies and practice, and has always been a strong advocate for sustainability. The report is not required under regulation or compliance; therefore, submitting itself to evaluation against these global standards is a compelling affirmation of Markaz's ethical approach and its pursuit of best practices. Doing so reflects a core belief, that the only way to operate is by recognizing and carefully managing the impact of its activities upon its internal and external stakeholders and on the communities it serves.

Deena Y Al-Refai, Senior Vice President Investor

Relations, gave her view: "We see growing social, economic and environmental challenges, but also, of course, many opportunities. Markaz works to provide innovative financial solutions in a time of change. Our holistic approach takes sustainability into account. We engage positively with stakeholders, to embed and optimize governance, economic, people, community and environmental factors. This approach further emphasizes Markaz's sustainable success and its contribution to ESG."

Key components of Markaz's sustainability development

Governance

Al-Refai added: "Markaz is known for its strong and effective governance, the source of its ethical and transparent business practices. Our strategic approach, underpinned by adherence to sound policies and principles, strengthens stakeholder journeys into sustainable growth."

Economy

Striving to deliver healthy returns and contribute to economic development, Markaz has focused on calculating its Sustainability Return on Investments (SROI). Active innovation ensures a wider and longer lasting economic impact, and so its products' growth and performance highlight the wider positive impact of sustainability practices, for both financial and non-financial outcomes.

People

An essential element of Markaz's sustainable development is its people. Markaz establishes a work environment that enables personal best performance, a daily experience that encourages creativity and that attracts and retains professionals committed to the clients, to the community and to the environment. Markaz's reputation emanates from the efforts of team members who embody Markaz's values and ethical reputation, within a cul-

ture that creates opportunities for career growth, optimizing everyone's potential to meet and exceed client expectations.

Community

Keen to fulfill its commitment to providing inclusive solutions, Markaz focuses on the local community as well. Community engagement means delivering on economic needs of the nation in equal consideration of surrounding social needs. These needs go hand in hand when the focus is on sustainable growth.



Deena Al-Refai

The environment

"A sustainable environmental impact cannot be achieved," Al-Refai concluded, "without the consistent availability of solutions that incorporate this thinking, which we ensure through our diligent contribution to ESG. We are primarily experts in finance and client services, but in all we do, we promote and nurture environmental stewardship. Our internal practices focus on digitization to minimize and manage waste, and we work to maximize environmentally-friendly processes and practices." Markaz is keen to add value in all areas of operation, and to lead by example with the various reporting and research efforts it makes throughout the year, with all key stakeholders' interest at heart. One of its recent contributions was the launch of its 'Procurement Guide to contractual arrangements between governmental and quasi-governmental entities and the company', in an effort to establish guided contractual relationships between both the private and government sector.

browse through the participating brands, log in with their Emirates Skywards account details; select their preferred brand; and continue to the brand's website to complete the purchase with their ABK Emirates Visa card.

Skywards Miles earned will be credited to the ABK Emirates Visa Infinite and Signature cardholders' Emirates Skywards membership account within 45 days. Miles can then be redeemed for reward flights, flight upgrades with Emirates and flydubai, hotel stays, and a variety of money-can't-buy experiences. This strategic partnership demonstrates ABK's commitment to enhancing its customer banking experience, and offer innovative products in partnership with leading brands.

ABK partners with Emirates Skywards to offer triple miles

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), has partnered with Emirates Skywards, the award-winning loyalty program of Emirates and flydubai, to launch a lucrative miles multiplier campaign exclusively for ABK Emirates Visa Infinite and Signature credit cardholders.

Frankfurt pharma hub prepares for COVID vaccine task

FRANKFURT: As a string of COVID-19 vaccines near approval, Frankfurt Airport staff are gearing up to handle the unprecedented logistical challenge of transporting millions of life-saving doses worldwide.

Frankfurt is Europe's largest hub for transporting pharmaceutical goods, and will be key to the success of inoculating millions of people against the deadly coronavirus. "The stress is increasing now that we're entering the 'hot' phase," Karin Krestan, Lufthansa Cargo's director of operations, told AFP during a tour of the temperature-controlled "Cargo Cool Center" terminal.

Krestan, who uses her skills as a former nurse, is sure her team is ready for the task. "The processes have been established, we're very confident and we feel well prepared," she said. In fact, Max Philipp Conrady, head of freight infrastructure at Fraport, told AFP: "We've been ready since August".

Keeping cool

Frankfurt's cargo terminal has been working around the clock since the pandemic began, delivering medicine, surgical gowns and masks and supporting global supply chains as passenger numbers collapsed and airlines grounded planes. The vast temperature-controlled hangar, a few kilometers from the main passenger terminal, handled 120,000 tons of vaccines, drugs and other pharmaceutical products in 2019, airport operator Fraport said. It has 12,000 square meters (129,000 square feet) of temperature-controlled warehouses, essential for storing medicines. About 8,000 square meters (86,000 square feet), around the size of a football field, handles Lufthansa cargo alone, Krestan said.

Warehouses hum as ventilation systems pump conditioned air and staff buzz around on forklifts. Boxes packed with measles vaccines stand ready for departure. Frankfurt has 2,000 square meters (21,500 square feet) of cold storage, Krestan said, set at two to eight degrees Celsius (36 to 47 degrees Fahrenheit), which is ideal for vaccines. Fraport recently boosted investment in high-tech refrigerated "dollies" that transport vaccines from cold-storage hangars to planes, and now have 20 so several freighters can be loaded at the same time.

Some vaccines, such as one produced by AstraZeneca and Oxford University, can be shipped at normal refrigerator temperatures. But Pfizer's, developed at the BioNTech lab in Mainz, around 20km (12 miles) from the Frankfurt airport, must remain at around -70 degrees C (-94 F).

That requires car-sized containers which use dry ice to keep contents at stable, ultra-low temperatures.

They can do so for up to 120 hours without a power supply, long enough to reach far-flung destinations.

Flight capacity

The EU recently agreed to buy 300 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, presaging a huge logistical operation, much of which will involve Frankfurt in the coming months. While the airport has the capacity to handle the extra-cold freight, Krestan noted that flight capacity will be a major factor in the pace of distribution. —AFP

Classifieds

Sunday, November 29, 2020

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e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times north easterly wind changing to south easterly wind with speed of 12 - 45 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

BY NIGHT: Cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind to southerly wind with speed of 12 - 42 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WATCH			Thunder Rain	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 28/11/2020 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	25 °C	18 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	25 °C	17 °C		
ABDALY	21 °C	17 °C		
BUBYAN	22 °C	18 °C		
JAHRA	25 °C	17 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	24 °C	19 °C		
SALMIYAH	24 °C	19 °C		
AHMADI	- °C	- °C		
NUWAISIB	30 °C	19 °C		
WAFRA	27 °C	18 °C		
SALMY	21 °C	15 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	11/29	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	27 °C	18 °C	SE-NW	12 - 42 km/h
Monday	11/30	Fair and a significant decrease in temperature and some high clouds will appear	23 °C	14 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Tuesday	12/01	Fair and clouds will increase gradually with a chance for scattered rain	22 °C	13 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Wednesday	12/02	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain with a chance for fog forming over	21 °C	13 °C	SE	10 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:58
Sunrise	06:22
Zuhr	11:36
Asr	14:30
Sunset	16:49
Isha	18:11

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	27 °C
MIN. Temp.	20 °C
MAX. RH	75 %
MIN. RH	35 %
MAX. Wind	SE 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	.27 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP:0 2020/11/28 02:56 UTC V1.00 T2.4 2-1/ع.خ.ق

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

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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

EMERGENCY 112

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AIRPORTS

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CGK (Soekarno-Hatta International)	LAX (Los Angeles International)
CLT (Charlotte Douglas International)	LHR (London Heathrow)
DEL (Indira Gandhi International New Delhi)	MAD (Madrid Barajas International)
DEN (Denver International)	MIA (Miami International)
DFW (Dallas Fort Worth International)	ORD (Chicago O'Hare International)
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FRA (Frankfurt am Main International)	PHX (Phoenix Sky Harbor International)
HKG (Hong Kong International Kai Tak)	PVG (Shanghai Pudong International)
HND (Tokyo International)	SFO (San Francisco International)
IAH (George Bush Intercontinental Houston)	SIN (Singapore Changi International)

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19) Put your foot down today, Aries. Don't let others push you around. It could be that you're used to letting people have their way in order to keep the peace. The problem with this is that your dreams and goals may get lost in the shuffle. Don't lose sight of your true destination. There's much more to life than you might see on the surface. Dig deeper.	Cancer (June 21-July 22) Your heart is in the right place today, Cancer, so feel free to share your good mood with others. Keep things simple and straightforward. Try not to complicate issues with unnecessary garble. Streamline your thoughts and actions. You will find that you can be much more efficient when you cut out the aspects that aren't pertinent or absolutely necessary. Follow your heart.	Libra (September 23-October 22) Feel free to let it all out today, Libra. It's finally your turn to stand up and say what you feel. Don't let others push you into places you don't want to be. The key is to probe deeply with your penetrating mind and share your incredible insights with others. Don't be surprised if your actions cause some tension. Don't let this stop you from doing what you feel is right.	Capricorn (December 22-January 19) Today is a good day for you to follow through, Capricorn. Normally you're much better at tagging along or simply going with the flow of the situation. This way of doing things has proven quite effective for you in the past. Indeed, it has gotten you far. What you have now is a different situation. The things you've started will do you no good until you complete them.
Taurus (April 20-May 20) For goodness' sake, decide today, Taurus. The more you flounder about which way to go, the likelier it is that you will miss the boat altogether. You have all the facts you need, so don't delay any longer. Once you make up your mind, be strong and throw all your weight behind it. Your mind can be like a computer filing away information as long as you stay alert.	Leo (July 23-August 22) You may find it hard to get rolling today, Leo. It's likely that you're caught in a gridlock between your mind and heart. Be careful about letting this tension build. The most important thing for you today is to relax. Tackle things one step at a time and finish one project before starting another. You could get overwhelmed if you have too many things on your plate at once.	Scorpio (October 23-November 21) Emotionally speaking, you're probably doing quite well today, Scorpio. You have extra self-confidence to draw on to tackle your projects. The one difficult aspect of the day probably has to do with some sort of mental challenge that for some reason just isn't making sense. Don't continue to beat a dead horse. If things don't want to budge, let them sit. Tackle them later.	Aquarius (January 20- February 18) Have sympathy for those who need to vent today, Aquarius. Don't be surprised if people line up outside your door for a chance to bend your ear for an hour or two. Your mind is sharp. You will be able to see to the core of any issue brought before you. More than likely, you will understand things intuitively. People will do well to take your advice on any issue they have.
Gemini (May 21-June 20) Mentally, you're apt to do very well today, Gemini. You will find that you can tackle just about any cerebral challenge that comes along. The most difficult aspect of the day will be dealing with your emotions. More than likely, you will feel a great desire for attention. You just want to be loved. Get up on stage and say what's in your heart. This isn't a good time to harbor your feelings.	Virgo (August 23-September 22) You're apt to be spurred into action by strong forces that don't want you to take a break, Virgo. Keep in mind that the more you resist, the more you will be pushed and pulled by outside sources. If you find yourself in a bind, take a deep breath and calm down. Act from a point of neutrality instead of a point of anger or defensiveness.	Sagittarius (November 22-December 21) You might be in a bit of a jam today, Sagittarius, when one person or situation doesn't work well with what you're thinking, and another doesn't fit well with what you're feeling. There's a clash taking place that may be difficult to reconcile, especially if you remain stubbornly in your position. The more flexible you are, the better off you will be.	Pisces (February 19-March 20) You will probably want everyone to know how you feel today, Pisces. You won't be shy about expressing your emotions. Feel free to take the lead on matters, for you have the self-confidence and emotional stability to do quite well at the helm of the ship. Try not to let your mind trip over itself, however. You have the tendency to think about one issue so much that you completely lose perspective.

Lifestyle | Features



The entrance of the famous Hotel Sacher is pictured in Vienna. — AFP photos



General Director of the famous Hotel Sacher, Matthias Winkler poses in the hall of the Hotel in Vienna.



A wall with historical photographs of the inventor of the "Sacher Torte" Franz Sacher (left) and Anna Maria Sacher (right) is pictured in the famous Hotel Sacher in Vienna pictured.

ICONIC VIENNA HOTEL TURNS TO DRIVE-IN CAKE AS PANDEMIC BITES

The coronavirus pandemic may have forced many of Vienna's luxury hotels to close indefinitely as global travel restrictions keep away the many millions of tourists who usually visit the Austrian capital every year. But the city's iconic Hotel Sacher is determined not to let fans of its world-famous chocolate cake go hungry. The hotel's concierge, Uwe Kotzendorfer, is selling "Sacher Torte", as the rich delicacy is known, on a drive-in stand just across the road from Vienna's prestigious State Opera house. "I do a bit of everything now," says Kotzendorfer, standing next to a small two-wheel cart stacked high with cakes, as he hands an imperial red bag containing one of them to a customer driving past in his BMW. "I thought it was a fantastic idea," says another customer, Claudia Bednar.

"Because we can no longer travel, I am going to send one to my aunt in Germany for her 65th wedding anniversary," she explains, then pays for the cake, which typically costs between 50 and 60 euros (\$60 to \$71), with her credit card. The vast majority of the Sacher's staff are now on government-subsidized furlough. And the rooms and dining halls in the six neoclassical buildings-decorated with autographed images of previous guests such as Britain's Prince Charles, Franco-German film star Romy Schneider and US opera singer Jessye Norman-are deserted.

Nevertheless, the hotel insists on displaying fresh flower arrangements in honor of the five business travellers currently staying there. For those parts of the hotel not currently occupied, the management is taking the opportunity to carry out some much-needed maintenance, and Kotzendorfer often guides workmen around the deserted swaths of the building.



The Madame Butterfly Suite is pictured in the famous Hotel Sacher.

Past crises

According to owner and managing director Matthias Winkler, the Sacher is the last five-star hotel in Vienna that is still in family hands. But it has survived a number of existential crises in the past and during the global economic crisis in 1934 event went bankrupt. "We've gone through many trials since the creation of the brand and our family is still planning for the long term", said Winkler, who took over the hotel from his mother-in-law in 2015. The current virus-induced economic downturn is also taking a heavy toll.

International travellers typically account for more than 90 percent of the hotel's annual 23,000 overnight stays, with rooms costing anything between 400 and 2,300 euros (\$480-\$2,700) per night in the low season. However, with the virus lockdowns, that source of income has now been all but wiped out. Sacher's cakes, which are shipped and sold across the world, are helping keep the brand alive.

Although competition in the upscale hotel industry can be ruthless and international brands have larger financial resources, Winkler believes that being family-run is turning out to be an advantage during the pandemic. "Here, decisions are made at a family meeting, without taking orders from abroad,"



A corridor in the hotel with historical photos of famous guests of the Hotel Sacher is pictured in Vienna.

Winkler says.

Imperial cake

The Hotel Sacher and the Sacher Torte have a long history. In 1832, a young pastry chef called Franz Sacher was working on a new recipe he hoped would become all the rage at the Habsburg's imperial court. The ingredients were whipped cream, a lot of cocoa, jam to add moisture, and a rich layer of chocolate frosting. Forty-four years later, Sacher's son, Eduard, opened the hotel in Vienna's first district. But it was really only after Eduard's death in 1892 that the hotel enjoyed its glamorous heyday under the management of Eduard's widow, Anna Sacher.

As one of the first women to be allowed to own and run a business, the visionary matriarch become well-known for her wit. The city's high society normally gathers for a dinner in the Sacher before the famous Opera Ball-but this year's event has fallen victim to the pandemic. "A part of the history of Austria rests in our hands," says the hotel's deputy director, Doris Schwarz. "More than ever, it is a question of being up to the task," she says, standing underneath an imposing portrait of Anna Sacher, a big cigar in her hand and two bulldogs at her feet. — AFP



The marble hall in the famous Hotel Sacher in Vienna is pictured.



The lobby in the famous Hotel Sacher in Vienna.



Packs of the "Sacher Torte" are pictured in Vienna.

Museum to record Londoners' COVID dreams

The Museum of London announced a project to collect the dreams of Londoners during the coronavirus pandemic as a way to document the impact of the crisis. The lives of inhabitants of the British capital have changed "not just in the day to day" because of the pandemic, but also "in relation to how we sleep and dream", the museum said. The project, dubbed "Guardians of Sleep", will look to collect the dreams in the form of oral histories. It will also explore what insight dreams might offer into mental health and ways of coping with external stresses, especially in times of crisis. According to a King's College London/Ipsos MORI survey in June, the global Covid-19 crisis can trouble the mind not just during waking hours but also during sleep.

The Museum of London is launching the initiative in partnership with the Museum of Dreams based at Western

University in Canada. Foteini Aravani, digital curator at the Museum of London, said the recording of dreams would allow it to "document a key shared experience from the pandemic" but also to stretch the definition of a "museum object". "Traditionally, when museums have collected dreams it has been in the form of artistic impression, for example, paintings or drawings influenced by the events. However, this can often dissociate the dream from the dreamer," she said.

"We will collect dreams as first-person oral histories with the aim to provide a more emotional and personal narrative of this time for future generations," she added. Sharon Sliwinski, creator of the Museum of Dreams, said the research with the Museum of London "aims to provide a rich resource for further understanding the significance of dream-life as a mechanism for working through social conflict". The project will take place in February 2021 with the public invited to speak about their Covid dreams with an international team of trained experts. The conversations will last approximately half an hour and will then be considered for acquisition. — AFP

Music icon Cher meets Pakistan PM ahead of elephant's move

American pop icon Cher met Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday ahead of the relocation of an elephant from Islamabad's dilapidated zoo to a Cambodian sanctuary. The famed singer, who has for years campaigned for Kaavan the elephant and is helping pay for his move,

arrived in the Pakistan capital this week to see the animal before the flight to Cambodia on Sunday. "Appreciating her efforts in retiring Kaavan to an elephant sanctuary, the prime minister thanked Cher for her campaign and role in this regard," a statement from Khan's office read.

Cher tweeted that she thanked Khan "For Making It Possible For Me To Take Kaavan To Cambodia". The plight of Kaavan-an overweight, 35-year-old bull elephant-has drawn international condemnation and highlighted the woeful state of Islamabad's zoo, where conditions are so bad a judge in May ordered all the animals to be moved. A team of vets and experts from Four Paws, an Austria-based animal welfare group, has spent months working with Kaavan to get him ready for the journey to Cambodia. Experts have trained Kaavan to enter a large metal crate that will be used to transport the animal to the airport. Volunteers working with Kaavan say he responds well to music and singing, and Cher is expected to belt out a song or two for the elephant before he departs Islamabad. — AFP



In this handout photograph taken and released by the Pakistan's Press Information Department (PID) shows Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan (right) meeting with American pop icon Cher in Islamabad. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



This picture shows a general view of the Jemaph Pizza Kayu Api restaurant-started by a Malaysian family to make ends meet during the economic downturn due to the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic-in Jemaph. — AFP photos



A worker preparing pizza ingredients at the Jemaph Pizza Kayu Api restaurant.



This picture shows pizzas being bake inside a wood-fired oven.



This picture shows customers eating pizzas at the Jemaph Pizza Kayu Api restaurant.



Workers preparing pizzas at the Jemaph Pizza Kayu Api restaurant.

PANDEMIC PIZZA: MALAYSIAN FAMILY COOKS UP SOLUTION TO VIRUS WOES

A Malaysian family have cooked up a tasty solution to their economic woes during the pandemic by opening a backyard pizzeria that has proved a hit in their sleepy village. Millions of people around the world lost their jobs this year as governments introduced economically damaging lockdowns to curb the spread of the coronavirus. But one family in a Malaysian village managed to turn a bumper profit during the downturn by opening up an eatery serving wood-fired pizzas from their home. Based in Jemaph, 120 kilometers (75 miles) south of the capital Kuala Lumpur, the business offers pizzas with herbs and spices, and cut pineapples mixed with meat or tuna, along with a heavy layer of mozzarella and cheddar cheese.

"We did this to get some pocket money," said Raudhah Hassan, 35, the eldest of several siblings and mastermind behind the business. "But-praise be to God-what we did has become the talk of the town." Pizzas have been flying out of the family's makeshift kitchen since late April, a month after authorities implemented curbs that confined people to their homes and saw the closure of most businesses. Restaurants were allowed to keep operating and, after Raudhah's shop selling headscarves saw a fall in business and some of her siblings had their pay cut, the family decided to open the pizzeria. "We were stranded here. We said, we have to do something," explained Raudhah, who runs the business at her parent's house with the help of other family members. The family built a stone oven in their backyard to roll out a few dozen pizzas in time for the holy month of Ramadan in the Muslim-majority country, when the faithful typically enjoy lavish meals to break their fast. The business quickly



Photo shows a pepperoni pizza at the Jemaph Pizza Kayu Api restaurant.

became a hit. "Some pizzas are too salty, but these are really nice," said first-time customer Nurliyana Hidayah. "I will come here again."

The family have now added a shop to their home and hired about 20 people from the village to make up to 800 wood-fired pizzas daily, five days a week. More than 800,000 people have lost their jobs in Malaysia this year as the virus pushed the country into recession, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said in October. Malaysia has largely lifted the toughest of its restrictions and most businesses are operating again, although it has been a battling a virus resurgence in recent weeks.— AFP



This picture shows pizzas being baked inside a wood-fired oven.

The Vietnamese designer convincing the young to choose tradition

Made from delicate silk, intricately embroidered and with vast, flared sleeves: Vietnamese 19th-century outfits do not seem a perfect fit for life in the country's hectic modern cities. But Nguyen Duc Loc, a 28-year-old entrepreneur, together with his 11-strong production team in Hanoi, is convinced the attire of their ancestors can make a return to modern-day living. "My ambition is that in any Vietnamese wardrobe, as well as suits, trousers, dresses, there will be at least one outfit based on an ancient style to wear on important occasions," like festivals and weddings, he told AFP.

Based on his own research, Loc and his company Y Van Hien reproduce outfits largely from the Nguyen dynasty that spanned close to a century and a half from 1802 — a time when the ruling class wore extravagant, brightly coloured designs embellished with symbols of power, such as dragons. He wants everyone, both men and women, to appreciate the "astounding beauty" of ancient imperial-style dress, he says, and understand the part this clothing plays in Vietnam's cultural history.

In one of their first major commissions, Y Van Hien was asked to produce costumes for Phuong Khai, an 18-episode YouTube drama about the emperor and empress of the Nguyen Dynasty. The company—which was set up in 2018 — has also designed costumes for singers, music videos and fashion shows.

Preserving culture

Despite some criticism that the designs have strayed too far from the originals, they are also seeing a growing interest among young people. Many choose to rent an outfit for a photoshoot, with prices starting at \$17. "I think ancient-style costumes... are part of Vietnamese culture that we need to preserve," said Pham Trang Nhung, a 22-year-old student who had come to see Loc's designs. "I think young people today know more about Western dress." Blossoming curiosity over outfits worn by generations past comes as officials from the sports and culture department in the central province of Thua Thien-Hue began wearing the traditional "ao dai"—a long tunic worn over trousers—one day a



Nguyen Duc Loc, founder of the Y Van Hien company, speaking during an interview.

month as a way to promote and preserve cultural values.

Although a far more comfortable and modern prospect than royal 19th-century clothing, some say they are too restrictive and impractical in today's world. Nevertheless, a simplified version of a woman's ao dai still forms part of some school uniforms in the south and central regions, is worn by flight attendants on flag carrier Vietnam Airlines and is

embraced by many on special occasions.

Social media shows plenty of pictures of young women posing in traditional dress—and with more than a dozen Facebook groups catering to those interested in ancient designs, some aficionados have even banded together to create a rival design company to Loc's. Nguyen Duc Binh, an editor of an arts magazine and an expert on traditional culture, said the attraction among the young stems from a desire to assert themselves, and their pride in their country, in a similar way to the youth of other Asian nations. "In some more developed countries such as Japan and South Korea, traditional costumes can be seen as icons for the young people to look at," he said. Young Vietnamese "admire those countries' development" and "they have tried to find some traditional things" from their own country's past to celebrate.— AFP

'Migration corridor'

Fanle, aged in her 30s, is the last fertile female. The father of the baby is believed to be Fouaf, the group's dominant male, or another chimp called Jeje. Both are in their forties. Soumah said females aged between eight and 12 have been recorded leaving Bossou to join other groups—a trek that requires them to cross the open savannah—but "this migration is one way," as chimps are usually loath to venture out into the open. Female chimps are capable of having offspring every four or five years, which means that Fanle "by herself will not be able to reproduce the social dynamic of the group," in terms of numbers and genetic diversity, Soumah cautioned.

But other means are available to buttress the Bossou population after the unexpected birth. The reserve is looking at ways of creating, with foreign help, a "migration corridor" to enable two-way traffic between the isolated community and their cousins in the hills. Eleven hectares of forest have been planted in 2020, and 26 hectares are scheduled for 2021. Another possibility is to introduce young females into the tribe—an idea that has its critics, "who contend that this is a group living in the wild, which should deal with its own natural destiny," Soumah said. The big question now is about what to name her baby. "We are going to invite prominent figures, the local authorities, partners we work with, to find one for her," Soumah said.— AFP

Baby chimp gives hope for Guinea's famous ape tribe

A dwindling tribe of chimpanzees in Guinea that gained global fame for uncanny abilities to use tools has a glimmer of hope after its last fertile female gave birth. The tiny community of apes lives in a forest around the village of Bossou, in the far southeastern corner of the country. Scientists have trekked to the remote location for decades to study the chimps' remarkable use of tools. They include the use of a stone hammer and anvil to crack open nuts—the most sophisticated act ever observed of humanity's genetically closest relative. But the number of chimps at Bossou has slumped to single figures. The tribe is dying off and cannot be replenished by neighboring chimp communities because forest destruction has left it isolated.

But after years of sad decline, there has been good news, said Aly Gaspard Soumah, director of the Bossou Environmental Research Institute. Guides last week spotted the group's last fertile female, Fanle, clutching a tiny baby on her belly, Soumah told AFP. "There's no doubt about it," he said by phone. "Three days ago we were able to confirm the (baby's) sex using binoculars, because they were in the trees at the time—it's a female."

Villagers 'erupted in joy'

The Bossou apes have a unique relationship with the village population. The animals live in the wild but share the territory and its resources with the locals, who protect the chimps, believing them to be the reincarnation of their ancestors. The villagers were jubilant when they heard about the birth, Soumah said. "Everyone, young and old, men and women, erupted in joy—the atmosphere was incredible." Bossou is part of the Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve, a UNESCO-listed site located on the borders with Ivory Coast and Liberia that rises above the surrounding savannah. The famous apes live in forest of 320 hectares (790 acres).

But they are cut off from other chimps, which live on the slopes of Mount Nimba, because of deforestation. Locals practice a traditional slash-and-burn form of agriculture that leaves forest cover fragmented. "It's a geographical and genetic isolation," Soumah explained. Until 2003, the number of Bossou chimps was relatively stable, with around 21 individuals, Soumah said. But seven died of influenza in 2003, and others passed away in the following years, leaving just three adult males and four adult females before the latest birth. Of these, three are aged over 60, while the youngest is an eight-year-old male.



This photograph shows student Pham Trang Nhung (right) posing next to an outfit based on traditional patterns and styles at the Y Van Hien company studio in Hanoi.



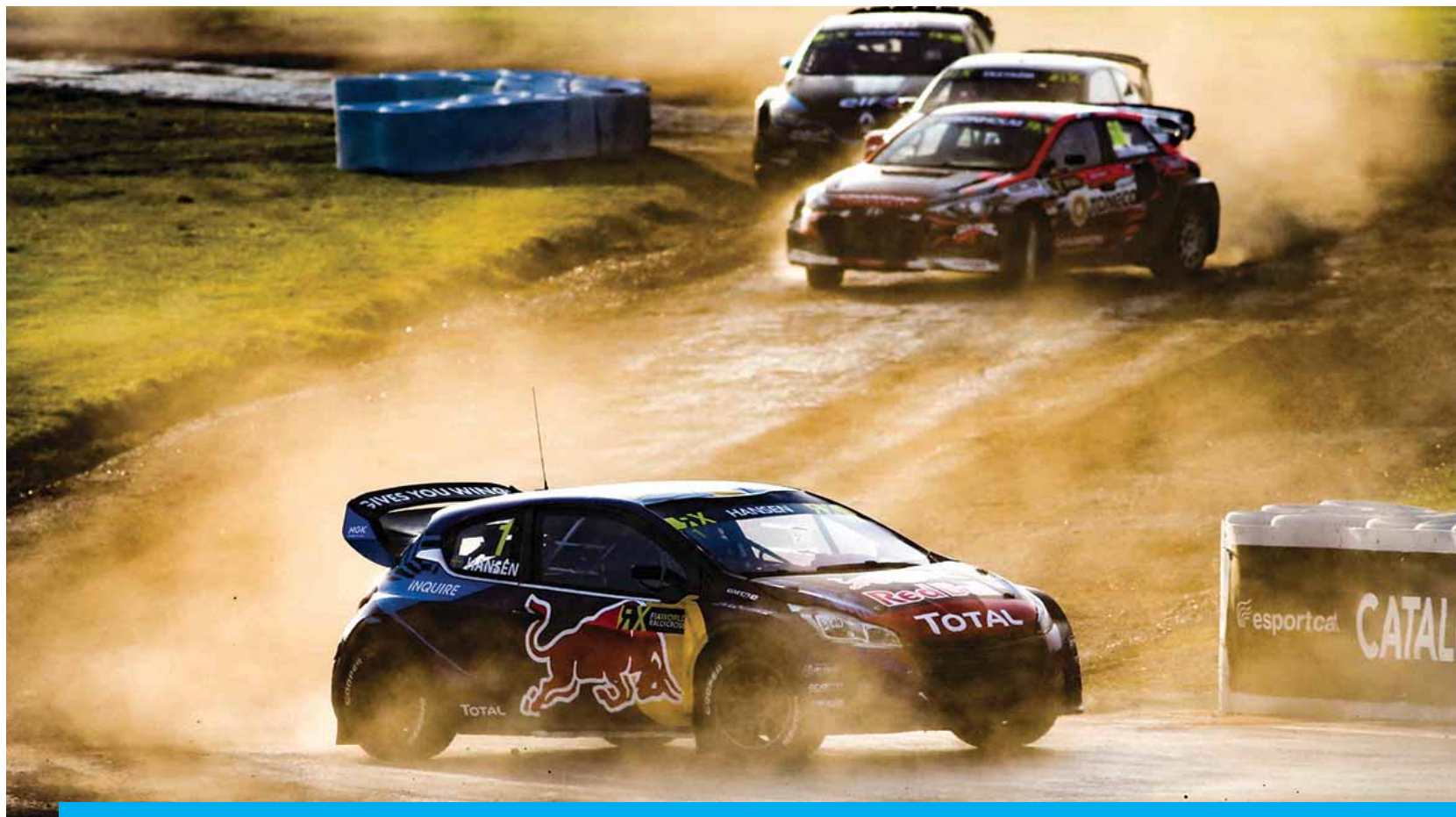
Student Pham Trang Nhung posing for a photograph in an outfit based on traditional patterns and styles at the Y Van Hien company studio.



Nguyen Duc Loc, founder of the Y Van Hien company, checking an outfit based on traditional patterns and styles at his workshop in Hanoi.— AFP photos

Sports

Photo of the Day



Timmy Hansen performs during FIA World Rallycross Championship in Barcelona, Spain. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

All Blacks bounce back to crush grieving Argentina

New Zealand shut out Argentina 38-0 in Tri-Nations test

NEWCASTLE: The All Blacks crushed Argentina 38-0 yesterday to restore some pride as they roared back from two straight defeats to put one hand on the Tri Nations trophy. The three-time world champions were under enormous pressure after slumping to the Wallabies then the Pumas, leaving them facing the prospect of losing three in a row for the first time in more than 20 years.

But spurred on by a backlash from their notoriously demanding fans, Ian Foster's team bounced back emphatically with a five tries to nil win in brutally hot and humid conditions at McDonald Jones Stadium in Newcastle, north of Sydney. It was a far more disciplined All Blacks who dominated the first half, going to the break 10-0 ahead, but there were also missed opportunities with two tries disallowed. Argentina, playing just days after the death of football legend Diego Maradona, lacked cohesion after making 10 changes to the team that drew with the Wallabies last week.

Two tries in quick succession from young fullback Will Jordan in the final quarter sealed the victory and a crucial bonus point for winning by three tries or more. "It's extremely satisfying. There's no hiding that we've had tough few weeks, we felt the pain of the losses and I'm really proud of the work we have put in the last two weeks," said All Blacks captain Sam Cane. "The way that the Pumas defended and kept us out numerous times is a real credit to their desire. But I'm proud of the way we were able to stay patient and we got there in the end."

Maradona tribute

It all but secured the silverware for New Zealand, who have 11 points from four games. Australia play Argentina next week and either side could feasibly edge them out, but it would take a bonus point win and by a huge margin given New Zealand's vastly superior

points differential. Defeat brought Argentina's fairytale run to a shuddering halt in the tournament's penultimate round after they beat New Zealand 25-15 then battled to a 15-15 draw with Australia. It proved extra painful for Mario Ledesma's men, who were hoping to lift the spirits of their nation after Maradona's death aged 60 this week. Cane laid an All Blacks jersey emblazoned with Maradona's name and shirt number, 10, in the centre circle ahead of the kick-off as a mark of respect.

"We were not clinical, there were too many han-

dling errors when we got the ball, some mistakes in defense as well, so not a good thing for us," said Pumas skipper Pablo Matera. "I don't think that was the problem," he added, when asked about the team's wholesale changes. "It was a whole team thing. There were many, many mistakes." Victory eased the pressure on Foster, who had been facing calls for his axing after just five games in charge following their twin defeats. He shuffled his forward pack to better deal with Argentina's physicality and they responded well. —AFP



NEWCASTLE: Argentina players push against New Zealand players in a maul during the 2020 Tri-Nations rugby match between New Zealand and Argentina at the McDonald Jones Stadium in Newcastle yesterday. — AFP

Hamilton tops Bahrain practice, blasts Pirelli

MANAMA: Lewis Hamilton relished his return on Friday after 12 days' off by securing a 'double top' with the fastest lap in both opening practice sessions at the Bahrain Grand Prix. After outpacing Red Bull's Max Verstappen in an incident-filled day, the newly-crowned record-equaling seven-time champion said he was very happy to be back in his Mercedes car - and then lambasted Pirelli as he explained why he was unhappy with their 2021 prototype tyres.

"It is great to be out there again," he said. "I always

love driving! "It has been a bit like a test day with a lot of stuff to do and the track has been very dusty." Hamilton, who was fastest in the morning's opening practice, outpaced his rivals again to top the times in the afternoon's twice red-flagged second session. He clocked a late best lap in one minute and 28.971 seconds at the Bahrain International Circuit at Sakhir, and then hit out at the quality of the new Pirelli tyres being tested for 2021.

"I'm really trying very hard not to say anything," he responded when asked about the tyres. "But they are three kilos heavier and like a second a lap slower." Hamilton prefaced his comments with respect and praise for the role of the Italian tyre suppliers in F1 before he gave vent to his feelings, as shared by many other drivers. "Weekend in and weekend out, every year, we've got a team here from Pirelli and I have the utmost respect for the guys who come here and load our tyres up, bring them here and keep us safe - they do an amazing job. —AFP



SAKHIR: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton drives during the third practice session on the eve of the Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix at the Bahrain International Circuit in the city of Sakhir yesterday. — AFP

Finch, Smith blaze centuries; Aussies crush India in ODI

SYDNEY: Skipper Aaron Finch and Steve Smith blazed centuries and Josh Hazlewood ripped apart the Indian top order as Australia won by 66 runs in the first one-day international at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday. The Indians, coming out of coronavirus quarantine, looked rusty in their first taste of international cricket since February, as the Australians went on a run rampage to reach 374 for six after winning the toss.

Hazlewood then put the skids under the tourists, triggering a top-order wobble. Among his victims was coveited wicket of skipper Virat Kohli, as India amassed 308 for eight in reply. Australia enjoyed perfect batting conditions. Finch belted 114 and shared an opening stand of 156 with David Warner, who made 69 off 75 balls. Smith had some early luck early before taking charge and hitting 105 off 66 balls with four sixes. He was saved by DRS after a confident appeal for leg before wicket on 15. Then Shikhar Dhawan badly missed Smith's miscue on 38 at long on. "I've been searching for something for a couple of months now, but a couple of days ago I started to hit the ball where I wanted it, and everything came back, the rhythm came back," man-of-the-match Smith said. "Finchy and Davey set an excellent platform, we could come and just take off." After Finch raised his 17th ODI century he was out for 114 off 124 balls trying to steer a Jasprit Bumrah lifter behind the wicket in the 40th over. Glenn Maxwell hit a rumbustious 45 off 19 balls as Australia built a massive total to defend under the evening lights. India made a fast start, the openers flaying the Aussie attack for 53 before Mayank Agarwal fell to Hazlewood for 22. Kohli was dropped on one by Adam Zampa at fine leg after top-edging a Pat Cummins lifter. —AFP

News in brief

Aussie McKeown breaks record

SYDNEY: Olympic hopeful Kaylee McKeown set a new 200m backstroke short-course world record at the Australian national championships, officials said yesterday. The teenager clocked a blistering 1:58.94 to smash Hungarian Katinka Hosszu's 2014 mark of 1:59.23. "Short-course is something we don't get to very often so I was excited to see what I could put up after some solid training this year," said McKeown. "I headed over to my teammates and my coach and they said, 'you just got a world-record, and I was like, what?' I didn't actually know till a few minutes later." The Australian short-course championships are being held in virtual format this year due to COVID-19, with swimmers competing at the same time in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Hobart. The titles started on Thursday, with McKeown setting her record in Brisbane on Friday evening, although Swimming Australia only tweeted the result yesterday. — AFP

Thunder clinch League title

SYDNEY: Fine bowling helped propel Sydney Thunder to an upset seven wicket win over Meg Lanning's Melbourne Stars and claim the women's Big Bash League title yesterday. Rachael Haynes' team restricted the Stars to just 86 for nine off their 20 overs after losing the bat flip at North Sydney Oval and chased down the total easily with more than six overs to spare. England star Heather Knight (26 not out) and Haynes (21 not out) steered them home after fast bowlers Shabnim Ismail (2-12) and Sammy-Jo Johnson (2-11) left the Stars' top-order in tatters. It was the Thunder's second title in the tournament's sixth season, having won the inaugural championship in 2016. "It's an incredible feeling. It's an amazing effort from everyone at the club," said Haynes. "I'd like to thank all the international players and staff who went through quarantine to get the tournament up and running." — AFP

'Pintu' edges Kristoffersen

LECH: France's Alexis Pinturault edged Norwegian arch-rival Henrik Kristoffersen to win the World Cup parallel slalom in Lech in Austria on Friday. Pinturault's 30th World Cup victory came by a margin of 0.11sec and saw him take the lead in the overall standings. "Thirty wins, that's starting to look a decent number and I'm proud of it, I hope I can keep it up," said Pinturault. This was only his second win in the discipline, his first coming in Moscow in 2012 for his debut World Cup success. Germany's Alexander Schmidt was third after seeing off Austrian Adrian Pertl. Norwegian Aleksander Aamodt Kilde, overall champion last season, was eliminated in the round of 16 and eventually finished 14th. — AFP

Barca reach deal to cut wages

BARCELONA: Barcelona have reached an agreement with representatives of their players and coaching staff to temporarily cut salaries and post-pone bonuses due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the club said on Friday. The Liga club said it expected to save around 172 million euros (\$205.61 million), with 122 million from reductions to fixed wages this season and a further 50 million euros through the deferral of bonuses for three years. "This principle of agreement is pending ratification in the coming days by the group of players and technical staff affected," the club said in a statement on their website. "The agreement, if it is ratified, will represent a milestone of great importance in redirecting the current economic situation." Last month Barca posted a record loss of 97 million euros after tax for the 2019/20 financial year and a 14% revenue fall and said the club was braced for a bigger drop this season. — Reuters

Tasman edge Auckland

WELLINGTON: An ice-cool David Havili, unwanted by the All Blacks for the past three years, showcased his talent yesterday with the match-winning penalty as Tasman snatched a 13-12 victory over Auckland in the New Zealand provincial championship final. Havili, who played three Tests in 2017, and is a key member of the Super Rugby champion Canterbury Crusaders, slotted a 42-metre penalty with 10 minutes remaining to secure the one-point victory for the defending champions. The match may have been a cliffhanger, but it was not pristine and with current All Blacks away on Tri-Nations duty the scrappy performance from both sides was not a good showcase for New Zealand rugby. Tasman scored the only try and the remaining points came from penalties with 27 awarded in the match, 14 against Auckland. — AFP

Bairstow powers England to victory

CAPE TOWN: Jonny Bairstow powered England to a five-wicket win over South Africa in the first Twenty20 international at Newlands in Cape Town on Friday. Bairstow thrashed 86 not out off 48 balls as England chased down a victory target of 180 with four balls to spare. England were struggling at 34 for three before Bairstow and Ben Stokes (37) changed the momentum of the match with a fourth wicket stand of 85. Even so, South Africa still had a realistic chance of winning as England went into the last four overs needing 51 runs. But left-arm fast bowler Beuran Hendricks conceded 28 runs in the 17th over, including three wickets which cost eight runs, as Bairstow and England captain Eoin Morgan went on the attack. Morgan said the win was "extremely pleasing, given that we were pretty average apart from two or three players." — AFP

Sports

Rare Joelinton strike helps Newcastle seal 2-0 victory

Bruce hopes Joelinton kicks on after downing Palace

LONDON: Perseverance finally paid off for Newcastle United's Brazilian forward Joelinton as he shrugged off a night of frustration to help his side to a 2-0 victory at Crystal Palace in the Premier League on Friday. The 24-year-old's Newcastle career is yet to take off after his 40 million pounds (\$53.22 million) move in July 2019.

But his astute pass set up Callum Wilson for his seventh league goal this season in the 88th minute at a chilly Selhurst Park before Joelinton's deflected shot sealed the points. It was only the South American's third league goal since his move from Hoffenheim but his work rate could not be faulted. Palace were looking threatening late on after manager Roy Hodgson sent on forwards Christian Benteke and Michy Batshuayi to try and win the game, but his side were left deflated.

Newcastle's win, after back-to-back league defeats, lifted them to 10th in the table on 14 points from 10 games with Palace a point behind in 13th place. "We created a few opportunities and missed the right pass but the strikers showed a little bit of quality," Newcastle manager Steve Bruce said. "Joe's price tag and wearing the number nine at Newcastle, he has struggled with it. "But we are starting to see a bit from him with his overall strength and we're pleased for him."

Sprightly visitors

Newcastle's early season promise had stalled but they began in sprightly fashion with Palace defender Gary Cahill having to intercept a dangerous low cross by Joelinton early on. The Brazilian failed to capitalise on a couple of chances, notably just before halftime when Palace defender Scott Dann gifted him the ball but his shot lacked conviction and was straight at goalkeeper Vicente Guaita.

Palace, missing the flair of Wilfried Zaha who has tested positive for COVID-19, picked up after a cagey start and the lively Eberechi Eze stung the fingers of



LONDON: Newcastle United's Brazilian striker Joelinton (left) vies with Crystal Palace's English defender Nathaniel Clyne and Crystal Palace's Senegalese midfielder Cheikhou Kouyate (up) during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Newcastle United at Selhurst Park in south London on November 27, 2020. — AFP

Karl Darlow who then made a fine save to keep out Jeffrey Schlupp's powerful effort. Joelinton had another great chance with 20 minutes left but he failed to make proper contact with an inviting cross.

Benteke's header forced a save by Darlow before Cheikhou Kouyate found space and looked poised to score but his shot was superbly blocked by defender Federico Fernandez. It looked as though the points

would be shared but Newcastle then stunned the hosts on the counter-attack with Joelinton playing in Wilson who finished confidently. Exactly 100 seconds later Joelinton's shot took a big deflection to wrongfoot Guaita. "This is not a performance we can be particularly proud of," Palace boss Hodgson said. "We have to accept that if we want to get points on the board then we need to do better." — Reuters

Golden ticket - How clubs plan to welcome back fans

LEEDS: With 2,000 fans allowed back into stadiums in Tier 2 locations in England, soccer clubs have the unenviable task of trying to decide which supporters get a golden ticket this Christmas. It was the news fans were waiting for as they wondered which tier their area of the country would be in after the national lockdown ends on Wednesday as, among other things, it would determine how many would be able to return to each stadium.

No Premier or Football League clubs fall into Tier 1 of the government's new system, while 10 of the country's top flight clubs cannot welcome any fans back at all after finding themselves in the most restrictive Tier 3. However, 10 Premier League clubs and 34 Football League teams can have 2,000 fans for each match from next week. The problem is how to distribute the limited number of tickets.

The first game involving a Premier League club with fans in attendance will be Arsenal's Europa League clash with Rapid Vienna next Thursday, with the club confirming tickets will be available on a "first come, first served" priority sale. Chelsea and West Ham United, both under London Tier 2 restrictions, are at home on Saturday Dec. 5 but have yet to announce their ticketing policy. Liverpool is another area that benefits from being in Tier 2, with the club able to host fans against Wolverhampton Wanderers on Sunday Dec. 6.

Only season ticket holders or members with sufficient credits, from the Liverpool City region, will be allowed to apply for 75% of the 2,000 tickets, with the

rest going to hospitality and to meet other contractual obligations. Meanwhile, in the world of rugby, the governing RFU has said that 400 of the tickets for England's final Autumn Nations Cup match will be given free to local NHS workers. Around 600 will be for players' families, local rugby clubs and sponsors and around 1,000 seats will be on sale to debenture holders, local residents and England supporters club members.

New normal

Two thousand may seem like a disappointingly low number of fans being allowed to return, but that will be reduced a lot further at League Two (fourth-tier) side Harrogate Town. One of only four northern Tier 2 Football League sides, Harrogate are considering asking fans to bring ID and proof of address to make sure they are not based in one of the many surrounding Tier 3 areas.

One stand is also needed for a "red zone" to keep players separate, another for socially-distanced substitutes, while a third will be required for socially-distanced media. An attendance of less than 1,000 is the likely outcome. Fans expecting anything like a normal festive day out are in for a rude awakening. Liverpool are advising ticketed fans to get a COVID-19 test, while Liverpool Director of Public Health, Matthew Ashton, also called for supporters to make testing part of their routine before going to matches.

Tottenham Hotspur, who can have fans back for the north London derby against Arsenal on Dec. 6, have announced what the fortunate few can expect on a match day, and it sounds like a far cry from leisurely a pie and a pint. There will be timed entry of fans to avoid congestion at the turnstiles and outside the stadium plus enhanced cleaning measures - including infection control fogging, electrostatic spraying and disinfecting - before, during and after the game. Food consumed at the ground will be click and collect, via the Spurs official app, reducing the need to queue. — Reuters



BRIGHTON: Liverpool's Portuguese striker Diogo Jota (3rd right) scores during the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Liverpool at the American Express Community Stadium in Brighton yesterday. — AFP

Doctors warn over New Delhi 'suicidal' half-marathon

NEW DELHI: Top doctors have warned elite runners are taking a major health risk by competing in today's New Delhi half-marathon in the midst of a major coronavirus outbreak and soaring air pollution. Women's marathon world record-holder Brigid Kosgei from Kenya and Ethiopia's two-time men's winner Andamlak Belihu are among the 49 elite athletes running the 21-kilometre race, while thousands of amateurs are taking part virtually.

Organizers say the "highest level of safety-standards, with bio-secure zones" have been laid on for the race starting at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. But with New Delhi recording more than 500,000 virus cases, and air quality in the world's most polluted capital hovering between 'unhealthy' and 'hazardous', health experts said the athletes should think twice.

"It will be suicidal for runners to run the race this time. We have such high levels of pollution, we have the risk of coronavirus," Arvind Kumar, founder trustee of the Lung Care Foundation said. "With the presence of this twin threat if people are still running despite knowing everything, well, I have no words to express my anguish." "Whether you are an international elite runner or you are a small boy from a village, the damaging potential of a damaging agent remains the same," said the doctor.

Burns has Georgia on his mind in Autumn Nations clash

LONDON: Billy Burns' ability to direct Ireland's play in his first Test start against Georgia should not be in doubt given the fearless manner he showed in dealing with his father as a teenage referee. Burns has a golden opportunity to stake a claim to be the long-term successor to Johnny Sexton when the fly-half finally decides to call time on his career. The 26-year-old has impressed in his two performances coming off the bench in the Autumn Nations Cup, including against England, where he was born, and has earned a starting spot for today's match.

Burns played for the England Under-20 side that won the 2014 world championship, "battering" the Irish along the way, in his words. But Ireland have always been on his radar. "My father has always worn the Ireland shirt," Burns said before last week's England game, which Ireland lost 18-7. Jerry, whose father hailed from Cork, gave his each of four sons an Ireland shirt along with an England one when they were young. It was in another shirt that Jerry and Billy had their contretemps, when he was asked to referee his father's club side's game at the age of 15 after the official referee failed to show up.

"I said 'dad I'm so scared, I don't want to do it - I'm so scared,'" Burns told the Irish Independent. "He said 'don't worry about it - if anyone gives you any backchat, I'll come over and sort it out.' "First kick-off it goes off and I give a penalty against Oldfield (Jerry's club) to the other team, and who's the first one to come over shouting in my face but my old man. "So I blew him up and sent him back 10 metres."

Burns' display of authority that day has transferred itself into professional rugby. He made more than 100 appearances for English Premiership side Gloucester before the bold move to Belfast-based Ulster in 2018. The impending arrival of the mercurial Danny Cipriani forced his hand but the decision proved the right one. The calm authority he exudes, which he has shown in his two Tests so far, is referred to by Ulster and Ireland teammate Iain Henderson. "I've great admiration for him taking a leap of faith and backing himself and coming over," said Henderson. "He's worked incredibly hard for what he's got over the last couple of years at Ulster. "He's really fitting into 10, into that commander role if you like, and a lot of the players up in Ulster respect him." —AFP

Toxic mix

Randeep Guleria, director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), the country's top research body, told AFP that "in an ideal situation" the race should not be run. "Because of high levels of air pollution, exercising outside in this weather sometimes can lead to aggravation of underlying lung problems," he said. "Even if you are an elite runner the air pollution would still affect your lung." Normally thousands of amateurs would also take part, but because of the coronavirus they have been told to run their chosen route between Wednesday and Sunday and chart their time on an app.

Delhi has been hit by a winter pollution crisis each year for the past decade when crop-stubble burning from nearby states, cold temperatures and car and industrial pollution produce a toxic mix. This year, the Indian capital is also a major concern in the battle

Gerrard leads Rangers' revival; Celtic crumble

LONDON: Rangers have spent nearly a decade in the doldrums but their revival under Steven Gerrard appears to be coming just in time to stop rivals Celtic from winning a historic 10th consecutive Scottish league title. The club have had a bumpy ride since they last won the league in 2011. Financial troubles led to liquidation and the club were reformed in the fourth tier of Scottish football.

Rangers returned to the Scottish Premiership in 2016, but even then the turmoil did not end as three managers were dismissed in little over a year trying to bridge the chasm Celtic. Now it is the blue half of the Glasgow divide that enjoy an 11-point lead at the top of the Scottish Premiership and are outperforming their rivals on the European stage. Gerrard's men are unbeaten in 22 games in all competitions this season, confirming the steady progress he has made since landing his first senior managerial role in 2018.

The former Liverpool captain famously never won a league title as a player, but he will forever be hailed a Rangers' hero if he denies Celtic the coveted 10-in-a-row. Gerrard has benefited from a level of patience scarcely afforded to Old Firm managers. He is the first Rangers manager to begin a third season in charge without winning a trophy in his first two. Celtic have not just swept the board in the league, but won all of the past 11 domestic trophies on offer in Scotland and can make that 12 in the Scottish Cup final next month.

However, the tide appears to have turned, with Celtic boss Neil Lennon clinging to his job as calls grow from fans for the Northern Irishman to go after a run of two wins in nine games. "I look at the league table every time we play, I'm not going to deny that," said Gerrard after a 4-0 demolition of third-placed Aberdeen last weekend. "But I've never known a manager to get carried away in November. I don't know how many games we've played, but there is a lot of football to be played, a lot of challenges, a lot of big hurdles to get over. "I'd much rather be where we are of course. But stay humble."

Gamble pays off

The experience of Gerrard's first two seasons in charge shows much can change in the second half of the season. In December, for the past two years, Celtic were beaten in a derby to seemingly set up a proper title race, only to come back stronger as Rangers wilted in the New Year. Celtic have two games in hand that could cut the gap to five points, but the Cup final means the Hoops will miss another league match in December, offering Rangers the chance to establish a 14-point lead before the sides meet again on January 2.

Sustained progress in the Europa League over the past three seasons has allowed Rangers to build a depth of squad that should last the course domestically. The club's accounts released last week show the faith that has been placed in Gerrard in terms of their willingness to build a strong squad - the operating loss for the year increased from £11.6 million (\$15.4 million) to £15.9 million. Unlike Celtic, who have consistently sold their biggest assets to keep balancing the books, Rangers' investors are banking on Gerrard delivering a title and potentially Champions League football next season before selling any major players.

"I think the important thing to know is that this team is in much better shape than it was when we came through the door," said Gerrard, in defense of those figures. "The team is littered now with big assets. The team is worth an awful lot of money now compared to what it was." That gamble is paying off. Rangers are off to their best league start in 53 years, with 13 wins and just three goals conceded in their opening 15 games. Gerrard's men also top a Europa League group containing Benfica and saw off Galatasaray in qualifying. Celtic's consistency has set the bar in a nine-year run, but Rangers are now the ones with a ruthless streak. — AFP



ABERDEEN: In this file photo, Rangers' manager Steven Gerrard shouts instructions to his players on the touchline during the Scottish Premier League football match between Aberdeen and Rangers at Pittodrie Stadium in Aberdeen, northeast Scotland. — AFP

against the coronavirus. India is the world's second worst-hit country behind the United States, with about 9.3 million cases. The city is considering imposing a night-time curfew because of the rising number of cases, according to media reports.

Kosgei, who is visiting India for the first time, acknowledged her concerns about travelling for the race. "We have definitely been affected by COVID-19. I had to convince my parents and family back home to allow me to visit Delhi for the half-marathon," she said. "The virus has affected most of the sporting events. But it is important for us to take care of ourselves." As in other countries, nearly all sport in India has been cancelled. After repeated delays, the Indian Premier League cricket went ahead in the United Arab Emirates and the Indian Super League football is being held in a bio-secure "bubble" in Goa. — AFP

Sports

Ahly overpower Zamalek, lift CAF Champions League title

Magnificent Magdi goal hands Al Ahly League title

CAIRO: A late goal from Mohamed 'Afsha' Magdy gave Al Ahly a dramatic 2-1 victory over Zamalek on Friday in an all-Egyptian CAF Champions League final in Cairo. Magdy struck as stoppage time loomed behind closed doors because of the coronavirus pandemic after Amr el Soleya had given Ahly an early lead and 'Shikabala' scored a magnificent equaliser before half-time.

With 85 minutes gone, Magdy controlled the ball with his knee outside the area and hammered it into the net to earn Ahly a record-extending ninth Champions League title and first since 2013. The climax was in keeping with a thrilling final that completed a competition which began in August last year and was constantly delayed by Covid-19.

Success for Ahly meant South African Pitso Mosimane became only the third coach after Argentine Oscar Fullone and Egyptian Mahmoud el Gohary to win the Champions League title with two clubs. Mosimane guided Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa to a 3-1 aggregate victory over Zamalek in the 2016 title decider. Before the kick off in a stadium that would normally be packed to its 74,000 capacity for a Cairo derby, both teams observed a moment of silence in honor of Argentine icon Diego Maradona, who died on Wednesday.

Ahly took a fifth-minute lead when Amr el Soleya rose to powerfully head a corner kick into the net after goalkeeper Mohamed Abou Gabal had conceded the set piece under pressure from Hussein el Shahat. Boosted by the dream start, the Cairo Red Devils use both wings to keep the White Knights under pressure in the first Champions League final featuring clubs from the same country. When Zamalek did push forward they were no match for an Ahly defense that conceded just six goals in 14 matches en route to the final.

Memorable solo goal

But any disappointment Zamalek supporters experienced as they watched the match live on national television disappeared after 31 minutes thanks to



CAIRO: Ahly's players celebrate winning the CAF Champions League Final football match between Egyptian sides Zamalek and Al-Ahly at the Cairo International Stadium in Egypt's capital on November 27, 2020. — AFP

'Shikabala'. One of many Egyptian footballers who favour a nickname over their official name, in his case Mahmoud Abdelrazek Hassan Fadlala, 'Shikabala' levelled with a memorable solo goal.

Receiving possession on the touchline, he burst between two Ahly defenders, took the ball across another, then smashed a left-foot shot into the roof of the net. Ahly goalkeeper Mohamed el Shennawy barely moved such was the power and speed of a shot that

produced one of the greatest goals in the 55-year history of CAF Champions League finals. Under the cosh for much of the opening half, Zamalek would have been the happier team trooping off the pitch at half-time in a contest living up to its billing of the 'derby of the century'.

Ahly should have regained the lead eight minutes into the second half but El Shahat hits a post with an unguarded goal in front of him and Mahmoud Ibrahim

cleared. The woodwork came into play again midway through the half, this time preventing Zamalek taking the lead as Ahmed 'Zizo' Sayed watched his shot cannon off a post. As the frantic pace inevitably slackened, El Soleya was yellow carded for fouling Sayed and Zamalek had a penalty appeal rejected by the Algerian referee. Then, after 54 minutes with the sides equal, Magdy scored his third goal of the African campaign to give Ahly a record-extending 20th CAF title. — AFP



DOHA: Beijing's midfielder Chi Zhongguo (right) is marked by Melbourne's forward Marco Rojas during the AFC Champions League group E football match between Australia's Melbourne Victory and China's Beijing Guoan on November 27, 2020. — AFP

Beijing storm into last 16, deja vu for Perth Glory

DOHA: Beijing Guoan and Ulsan Hyundai Motors continued their relentless march in the Asian Champions League at the expense of Australian sides who suffered another day of misery on Friday. While Beijing Guoan stormed into the last-16 phase of the tournament with a 2-0 win over Melbourne Victory in Group E, Ulsan Hyundai Motors edged past Perth Glory by a similar margin to boost their chances of qualifying from Group F.

Bruno Genesio's Beijing Guoan have yet to drop a point, their fourth win in as many matches proving they are the team to beat in this year's competition as they made the next stage with two matches to spare. Spaniard Jonathan Viera was Beijing's star on Friday, scoring their first goal with a superb finish in the ninth minute and providing the assist to Zhang Yuning in the 35th for their second win over Melbourne Victory in three days.

"Overall the team had a very good performance. We controlled the game very well and scored two goals in the first half which was very important for us," said Frenchman Genesio. "We were also able to keep a clean sheet, but it would have been good had we scored a couple of goals more." Victory's Steve Kean was struggling to cope with the result. "It's obviously a difficult result for us, but I think we need to put the game into perspective," he said. "We said yesterday we had the opportunity to go again against the same side, and we take a lot of positives from the game."

"There are mistakes to work on, but overall, while we are bitterly disappointed with the result, our performance showed we are making strides to get to where we want to go." Meanwhile, Perth Glory were struggling to cope with their fourth straight loss as Ulsan Hyundai notched their third win in four matches. Ulsan had beaten Perth 2-1 three days ago in Doha, first equalising in the 89th minute through Kim In-Sung and then netting the winner through Junior Negao four minutes later when the match was into stoppage time. — AFP

Argentina bids chaotic farewell to Maradona

BUENOS AIRES: Huge crowds bade a grief-filled farewell to Argentina's favorite son Diego Maradona before the football legend was buried on the outskirts of Buenos Aires after a chaotic public wake. The 1986 World Cup winner widely regarded as one of the greatest players in history was laid to rest on Thursday after a ceremony attended by family and close friends in the Bella Vista cemetery. Maradona, who had battled cocaine addiction for decades, died on Wednesday aged 60, sparking mourning around the world.

"I thought Diego was immortal, I thought he would never die on us. I feel a terrible sadness for a person who made us so, so happy," said 63-year-old bus driver Antonio Avila outside the cemetery. The peaceful farewell contrasted sharply with the raucous scenes of his send-off in the Argentine capital that seemed somehow in keeping with the player's tumultuous life.

Riot police fired tear gas and rubber bullets in clashes with stone-throwing fans that briefly threatened to mar the day of mourning. In Naples, where Maradona was adored for leading Napoli to two Italian titles and putting one over their richer northern rivals, fans held an all-day wake and players took to the pitch for a match wearing his number 10 shirt.



BUENOS AIRES: Aerial view of the grave of late Argentinean football legend at the Jardin Bella Vista cemetery, in Buenos Aires, on November 27, 2020. — AFP

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However, the tide appears to have turned, with Celtic boss Neil Lennon clinging to his job as calls grow from fans for the Northern Irishman to go after a run of two wins in nine games. "I look at the league table every time we play, I'm not going to deny that," said Gerrard after a 4-0 demolition of third-placed Aberdeen last weekend. "But I've never known a manager to get carried away in November. I don't know how many games we've played, but there is a lot of football to be played, a lot of challenges, a lot of big hurdles to get over. — AFP

Thousands bid farewell

Tens of thousands of people had queued from early morning in Buenos Aires to file past Maradona's coffin, draped in the Argentine flag, at the presidential palace. As the day wore on, people queuing outside the Casa Rosada grew increasingly impatient, and some took over a courtyard inside, where they chanted slogans, forcing officials to move Maradona's coffin to another room as a security precaution.

Later, the hearse bearing Maradona's coffin rolled through the gates of the presidency building and into the streets of Buenos Aires. Fans crowded onto roadsides and highway bridges as the funeral cortege sped towards the western outskirts, surrounded by police outriders with sirens blaring and pursued by TV crews. The outrageously skillful Maradona, widely remembered for his "Hand of God" goal against England in the 1986 World Cup quarter-finals, died of a heart attack on Wednesday while recovering from brain surgery.

"He was the best in the world, we're going to miss him and his death broke our souls," said Diego Armando Cabral, a 29-year-old bricklayer in Buenos Aires who was named after the footballer. Brazilian legend Pele, 80, said he hoped they would one day "play together in the sky." Lionel Messi, Argentina's modern-day superstar, described Maradona as "eternal." Still the tributes rolled in, with Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho, a former boss of Chelsea, Real Madrid, Inter Milan and Manchester United, recounting how Maradona would call him to offer support after defeats. — AFP



BUENOS AIRES: The coffin with the remains of late Argentine football legend Diego Armando Maradona is carried by his family and friends at the Jardin Bella Vista cemetery in Buenos Aires province. — AFP

Maradona's death may trigger family inheritance battle

BUENOS AIRES: Diego Maradona's tormented private life, with its tangled relationships and paternity suits, suggests distributing his inheritance will be a complex task for lawyers bracing for claims from a slew of children - those he recognized and those he didn't. "There's going to be a big fight. He didn't leave a will," according to a source close to the family who declined to be named. Maradona made and wasted millions over his years at the pinnacle of his fame with Barcelona, Napoli and Argentina, and he also made some shrewd investments. Some reports circulating since his death estimate his estate at around \$90 million.

Angered over a dispute with his daughter Giannina last year, he threatened to donate all his wealth, including properties, luxury cars and sponsorship contracts, to charity. "I know that now, as you get older, people are more concerned about what you leave behind than what you are doing," he was quoted as saying at the time. "And I tell them all that I'm not going to leave them anything, that I'm going to give it all away. Everything I've got in my life I'm going to give away," he said.

Under Argentine law, however, a person can only give away a fifth of their assets. At least two-thirds must be left to the spouse or offspring of the deceased. Giannina, 31, had sparked the row by accusing the former star's entourage of not taking proper care of him, which seems to have been a recurring theme of their relationship. Father and daughter had reconciled by his 60th birthday in October, Giannina lauding him in a series of affectionate messages posted on social media with her sister Dalma. "He is my great example of all the things to do and all the things not to do. I have admired him, yesterday, today and always. He taught me to forgive, to forgive myself," Giannina wrote.

Claudia Villafane was Maradona's childhood sweetheart since the age of 15. His only wife, they divorced in 2003. Their two daughters, Dalma, 33 and Giannina - were the only children he recognized for many years. But there were others, spawning the joke that Maradona had fathered his own soccer team. It threatens to make the task of distributing his inheritance a complicated one for his lawyer Matias Morla. The football icon has been forced to acknowledge three children over the years, including Diego Junior, born a few months before Dalma. — AFP

13 All Blacks bounce back to crush grieving Argentina



14 Rare Joelinton strike helps Newcastle seal 2-0 victory



15 Ahly overpower Zamalek, lift CAF Champions League title



Man City batter Burnley 5-0

Late penalty leaves Liverpool with draw at Brighton



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Spanish midfielder Ferran Torres (left) scores his team's fourth goal during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Burnley at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester yesterday. — AFP

MANCHESTER: Manchester City found their shooting boots as Riyad Mahrez scored a hat-trick in a 5-0 thrashing of Burnley to bounce back to winning ways in the Premier League. Pep Guardiola's men had scored just seven goals in their previous seven league games to slip to 14th in the table before kick-off.

But for the fourth straight visit to the Etihad, Burnley conceded five times as City eased to within six points of league leaders Liverpool with a game in hand. Mahrez was one of four changes Guardiola made from a 1-0 win at Olympiakos in midweek that booked City's place in the last 16 of the Champions League, and took the most of his chance to start with Raheem Sterling left on the bench. The Algerian opened the floodgates on six minutes as he swept home Kevin De Bruyne's pass.

Mahrez then outwitted a sleeping Burnley defense as he latched onto Kyle Walker's throw-in before dancing round three challenges and firing on off the far post. De Bruyne was handed a rare rest in midweek and the Belgian was back to his best with another assist for Benjamin Mendy to score his first City goal over three years since arriving from Monaco. The French left-back produced an exqui-

site finish by cushioning De Bruyne's cross back across Bailey Peacock-Farrell, who had a Premier League debut to forget in the absence of England international Nick Pope.

After City's struggles to score goals in recent weeks, the hosts made sure to cash in after the break rather than saving their energies for a hectic upcoming schedule. Ferran Torres has been prolific in the Champions League since his signing from Valencia, but the Spanish international finally opened his Premier League account with a smart finish from Gabriel Jesus's lay-off. Torres was then replaced by Phil Foden and with his first touch Foden was the provider for Mahrez to complete his hat-trick in uncharacteristic fashion with a bullet header at the back post.

VAR came to Peacock-Farrell's rescue after he turned the ball into his own net after a fine save to deny Jesus, with the goal ruled out for offside against the Brazilian striker, before De Bruyne smashed against the post late on. However, five goals were enough for Guardiola's men to send out the message they are not out of a wide-open title race, especially with a favorable run of fixtures to come as Fulham, West Brom and Newcastle will also visit the Etihad before Boxing Day. — AFP



BRIGHTON: Brighton's English defender Ben White tackles Liverpool's Portuguese striker Diogo Jota (right) during the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Liverpool yesterday. — AFP

Reeling Inter end Sassuolo unbeaten start to go second

MILAN: Inter Milan powered back from their midweek Champions League defeat by Real Madrid to sweep aside Sassuolo 3-0 and move second in Serie A yesterday. Antonio Conte's side are on the brink of elimination from the elite European competition, but inflicted a first defeat this season on high-flying Sassuolo at the Mapei Stadium.

"We always play great games, but we still lack something in the finishing," said Chilean Alexis Sanchez who scored after just four minutes. "Against Real Madrid we made a lot of mistakes and we were timid coming onto the pitch. "But I have faith in my teammates and we have to do well against both the big and the small teams." Top Inter scorer Romelu Lukaku started on the bench along with Ashley Young, with Sassuolo without their number one scorer Francesco Caputo.

Sanchez scored the first minutes into the game following good work from Lautaro Martinez and poor defending from Sassuolo's Vlad Chiriches. It was a nightmare match for

Chiriches who then accidentally turned a powerful Arturo Vidal centre into his own net, with the Romanian later limping off with a muscular problem. Filip Djuricic missed a chance to pull the hosts back into the game, rattling the woodwork after 21 minutes. Roberto Gagliardini added a third after an hour, sealing a win to boost Inter before next week's European trip to Borussia Muenchengladbach.

Lukaku and Young came on in place of Lautaro and Sanchez for the final 10 minutes, with the Belgian forward having a goal ruled offside. Conte also brought on Christian Eriksen, who looks set to leave Inter in January after just one year. The Danish midfielder came on for Ivan Perisic for the final five minutes. "In January, if the player (Eriksen) has not taken part in some matches, he will be the first to ask to be transferred," Inter's CEO Giuseppe Marotta had said before the game.

"But we will have to do it without controversy." Inter move second ahead of Sassuolo, with both teams on 18 points after nine games, two points behind AC Milan who host Fiorentina today. A minute's silence was observed before the game for Diego Maradona with a photo of the former Argentina and Napoli star also projected on giant screens in the 10th minute of all matches in Italy. Champions Juventus, in fifth, headed for Benevento with Atalanta at home against Hellas Verona. — AFP

Lewandowski hits 15th goal of season as Bayern stay top

BERLIN: Robert Lewandowski claimed his 15th goal this season in all competitions as Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich came from behind to claim a 3-1 win at Stuttgart yesterday. Stuttgart striker Tanguy Coulibaly, 19, fired the hosts into a shock early lead after a cross caught Bayern centre-backs David Alaba and Jerome Boateng napping.

However, Kingsley Coman equalized with a superb low finish before Lewandowski drilled home from 20 meters to put Bayern 2-1 up at the break. Brazil winger Douglas Costa, a second-half replacement for Coman, grabbed Bayern's third goal late on to seal a win which leaves the holders two points clear of RB Leipzig. Dortmund are third, four points behind Bayern, after crashing to a shock 2-1 defeat at home to Cologne.

Tunisia midfielder Ellyes Skhiri tapped in both Cologne goals from corners by ex-Dortmund winger Marius Wolf after being left unmarked at the far post on both occasions. With Dortmund 2-0 down on 60 minutes, coach Lucien Favre brought on three forwards - 16-year-old sensation Youssoufa Moukoko, Giovanni Reyna and Thorgan Hazard. Reyna, 18, set up Hazard to pull a goal back, but it was too little, too late. After scoring six goals in his previous two games, Dortmund striker Erling Braut Haaland was held in

check, squandering a golden chance to equalize just before the whistle.

Cologne avoided a club record 19th match without a win with their first victory in Dortmund since 1991. Leipzig climbed above Dortmund to second, two points behind Bayern, thanks to a 2-1 home win over plucky strugglers Arminia Bielefeld. Manchester City loanee Angelino gave Leipzig a first-half lead after a superb pass by 18-year-old Lazar Samardzic split the Bielefeld defense. Just 60 seconds after coming off the bench, forward Christopher Nkunku netted Leipzig's second goal early in the second half.

However, Bielefeld, who are second from bottom, finished the stronger. Their captain Fabian Klos pulled a goal back, just after Leipzig striker Alexander Sorloth had his penalty attempt saved on 73 minutes. The Norway international, bought to replace Timo Werner who joined Chelsea in the summer, is yet to score in 10 games for Leipzig after netting 24 goals in 34 games for Trabzonspor last season. Union Berlin are sixth after their action-packed 3-3 draw at home to Eintracht Frankfurt.

Max Kruse converted a penalty as Union raced into an early 2-0 lead, only for Portugal forward Andre Silva to net twice as Frankfurt led 3-2 late on. Former Germany striker Kruse, 32, bagged a superb strike to claim his sixth goal in nine games to equalise just before the whistle. Freiburg are winless in their last eight games after a 1-1 draw at Augsburg. Wolfsburg are fifth after their 5-3 win over Werder Bremen on Friday. Dutch striker Wout Weghorst struck twice for Wolfsburg while Bremen had goalscorer Kevin Moehwald sent off for a second booking. — AFP