



4 New academic year begins for public, private Arabic schools



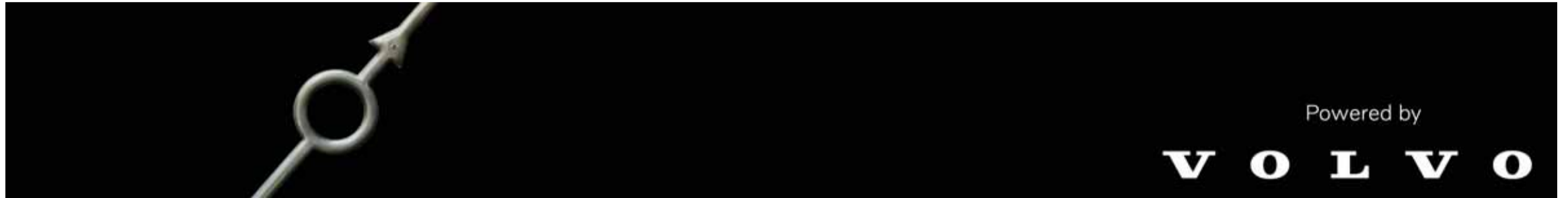
7 Trump positive test underscores this is the Coronavirus Election



12 In Mosul, statues rise from ashes of IS rule



16 Man City held by Leeds; Chelsea click into gear



Trump in military hospital after COVID-19 diagnosis

Amir wishes US president speedy recovery • Trump taking experimental drugs

Amir meets Assembly speaker



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem at Dar Al-Yamama yesterday. — KUNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump was in a military hospital yesterday for treatment after testing positive for COVID-19, an extraordinary development that upended the presidential race a month before the Nov 3 election. Roughly 17 hours after he made his diagnosis public, Trump walked slowly from the White House to a waiting helicopter to be taken to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. He wore a mask and business suit and did not speak to reporters.

"I think I'm doing very well, but we're going to make sure that things work out," Trump said in a brief video message posted on Twitter. Early on Friday, he had tweeted that he and the first lady, Melania Trump, had contracted the virus. Trump will work in a special suite at the hospital for the next few days as a precautionary measure, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah cabled Trump on Friday, wishing him and the First Lady rapid recovery from COVID-19. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable to the US president.

Trump, 74, has a mild fever, according to a source familiar with the matter. White House doctor Sean P. Conley said late on Friday that Trump was doing very well, did not need supplemental oxygen,



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump gives a thumbs up as he walks to Marine One prior to departure from the South Lawn of the White House for Walter Reed Military Medical Center on Friday. — AFP

and had received a first dose of Remdesivir, an intravenous antiviral drug sold by Gilead Sciences Inc that has been shown to shorten hospital stays.

In a tweet late on Friday, the president wrote: "Going well, I think! Thank you to all. LOVE!!!" Online video showed a small group of Trump supporters outside Walter Reed late on Friday waving Trump 2020 flags, most not wearing masks.

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Biden now the only man on campaign trail

GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan: For months Donald Trump mocked Joe Biden for his cautious campaigning during the coronavirus pandemic. But with the president in quarantine from Friday after testing positive for COVID-19, his Trump train derailed for now. Democratic challenger Biden has the stage to himself one month before Election Day. It is too soon to predict how Trump's diagnosis could impact the White House race, already the most turbulent US presidential battle of modern times and one repeatedly upended by history-making events.

But the irony of the latest twist in the septuagenarian showdown was lost on no one. After all, just Tuesday night Trump doubled down on his ribbing of Biden for taking too many virus precautions. "He could be speaking 200 feet away from you, and he shows up with the biggest mask I've seen," the 74-year-old Republican incumbent sneered.

In the early months of the pandemic, as Biden, 77, remained isolated in his Delaware home, Trump belittled "Sleepy Joe" for "hiding" in his basement - a charge his supporters lapped up and repeated ad infinitum. But on Friday, Trump was the one hunkered down, receiving treatment at the Walter Reed military hospital after his positive diagnosis.

Biden mostly has been meticulous about avoiding crowds and wearing masks in public. But he was on stage with the presi-

dent during their off-the-rails debate, three nights before Trump's diagnosis. Biden and his wife were quickly tested for the virus Friday. Minutes after their results came back negative, his team fired up the campaign jet and Biden flew to battleground Michigan, a key Rust Belt state that Trump claimed in 2016.

The somber appearance at a labor union in Grand Rapids had only a few dozen people present and no visible personal interaction with voters. But the message was clear: Biden is not letting Trump's diagnosis upend his own campaigning, which has ramped up recently including Wednesday's whistle-stop train tour across Ohio and Pennsylvania. Michigan voters who lined the road outside Biden's event offered their own take on recent developments, with one woman holding a small sign reading "Masks work".

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Democratic Presidential Candidate Joe Biden departs New Castle Airport in Delaware on Friday. — AFP

Egypt unveils coffins buried 2,500 yrs ago

SAQQARA, Egypt: Archaeologists in Egypt said yesterday they had found 59 well-preserved and sealed wooden coffins over recent weeks that were buried more than 2,500 years ago. Opening one of the ornately decorated sarcophagi before

assembled media, the team revealed mummified remains wrapped in burial cloth that bore hieroglyphic inscriptions in bright colors.

The dramatic find was unearthed south of Cairo in the sprawling burial ground of Saqqara, the necropolis of the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis, a UNESCO World Heritage site. "We are very happy about this discovery," said Mostafa Waziri, secretary general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities. Since the find of the first 13 coffins was announced almost three weeks ago, more have been discovered in shafts at depths of up to 12 m. — AFP



SAQQARA, Egypt: A sarcophagus excavated by the Egyptian archaeological mission working at the Saqqara necropolis is opened yesterday. — AFP

India virus deaths pass 100,000

NEW DELHI: Deaths from the novel coronavirus in India passed 100,000 yesterday, official data showed as the pandemic continued to rage across the world's second most populous country. A total of 100,842 people have now died, health ministry figures showed, giving India the third-highest death toll in the world behind the United States and Brazil. In terms of infections, India has recorded 6.47 million cases and is on course to overtake the US as the country with the most infections in the coming weeks.

India's population of 1.3 billion is, however, around four times larger than that of the United States, which has seen more than twice as many deaths, raising doubts about India's official numbers. "We do not know the reliability of death rates in India," virologist T Jacob John told AFP. "India does not have a public health surveillance system, documenting real-time all disease events and deaths," he said.

Even though India is carrying out around one million tests per day, as a percentage of the population its testing rate is much lower than many other countries. The United States, for example, has tested more than five times as many people as India proportionately, according to tracking website Worldometer.

That India's real numbers might be much worse than the official data suggest is borne out by a string of studies measuring antibodies to the virus among the population. On Tuesday, India's lead pandemic agency released a sur-



MUMBAI: A health worker collects a swab sample from a child during a medical screening for COVID-19 yesterday. — AFP

vey suggesting that more than 60 million people - 10 times the official figure - could have contracted the virus.

At the same time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is pressing ahead with opening up Asia's third-largest economy even as virus cases surge. A strict lockdown imposed in March not only failed to stop the spread of the virus but also caused misery for millions of people suddenly left jobless. In the last quarter, the Indian economy - which even before the pandemic was struggling - shrank 24 percent, one of the steepest drops of any major economy.

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Local

Mourners in Belgium pay respects to late Amir of Kuwait

Sheikh Sabah remembered for 'tireless work' for reconciliation in the region

BRUSSELS: Top officials from the European Union (EU), NATO, Belgium, diplomats, and others visited the Kuwait House in Brussels to pay their respects and sign the book of condolence for His Highness the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from Wednesday till Friday evening in Brussels. EU Commissioner for humanitarian aid and crisis management Janez Lenarcic said, "It is with deep sadness that we in the European Union have learnt the passing away of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Sabah."

"We will remember him for his tireless work for reconciliation in the region as well as beyond," he said after signing the condolence book last evening. "We will cherish his memory as a humanitarian leader and we wish to extend to the people of Kuwait and to his family and to the government of Kuwait our deep condolences," the top EU official added. Meanwhile, NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana said that he came here to the Kuwait residence "to express our condolences on behalf of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and myself for the loss of a great leader."

"The late Amir led his nation in complicated times. He showed wisdom, compassion and a constant determination for peace and security and cooperation in the Gulf, the Arab world and around the globe," said the NATO official. "He will be missed but I think he has accomplished in his long distinguished life as a leader of this great nation many things that would be remembered," Geoana added. "In this moment of mourning and loss our deepest condolences and also our encouragement to further develop our partnership between Kuwait and NATO which is one of the vibrant partnerships we have in that region," he added.

Great statesman

European Parliament President David Sassoli in his message signed on his behalf and on part of the entire EP by a special representative said, "We



BRUSSELS: EU Commissioner for humanitarian aid and crisis management Janez Lenarcic signs the condolence book. — KUNA photos



NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana signs the condolence book.

would like to pay homage to the great statesman widely respected in Kuwait and throughout the region and beyond." "He was the architect of Kuwait's independent foreign policy with peace and reconciliation at its core. Under his leadership Kuwait played an important role as a mediator in the region," said the EP President. "We would like to pay tribute to his exemplary leadership and efforts in making Kuwait a prominent humanitarian donor among the Gulf Cooperation Council countries," he added.

United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium Ronald Gidwitz said, "On behalf of the people of the United States I have come to pay my respects for His Highness the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah." "He has made a magnificent contribution to peace not just in the Middle East but across the world," he

said. "We shall all miss him, May he rest in peace," added the US Ambassador. Head of protocol at the Belgian Foreign Ministry Ambassador Olivier Belle stated, "All our thoughts are with the people of Kuwait and with the family of His Highness the late Amir."

Huge turnout

Kuwait's ambassador to Belgium, the EU and NATO, Jassem Al-Budaiwi, expressed his sincere condolences to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and to the government and the people of Kuwait. "We knew His Highness the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from the beginning of our lives. He dedicated his life to serving not only the Kuwaiti people but the Gulf region and the Arab Islamic world and the international community," Budaiwi said.

"His death will create a big vacuum not only in Kuwait but in the entire world. But we are certain that the new Amir of Kuwait will continue his heritage and the path he has set for Kuwait," Budaiwi added. The huge international reaction to the passing away of His Highness the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks about his high status, he said. "When you see the joint statement released the European Council, the European Commission and the EU, it means that all of Europe is behind the content of this message which expresses sorrow but also recognition of his international role and the appreciation of Europe of his role for maintaining peace and stability in the region," he noted. Ambassador Budaiwi said that the turnout of mourners during the last three days was huge which shows the big status and respect His Highness the late Amir enjoyed. — KUNA



BEIRUT: Former Lebanese President Amin Gemayel signs the book of condolence.



Lebanese information minister Manal Abdulsamad signs the book of condolence.



Lebanese information minister Manal Abdulsamad signs the book of condolence.

Lebanese leaders pack embassy grieving Sheikh Sabah's departure

BEIRUT: Lebanese officials and former leaders on Friday bemoaned death of the late Kuwait Amir Sheikh Sabah

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Kuwaiti embassy was crowded with the officials namely former president

Michel Suleiman who recalled Sheikh Sabah's role in boosting peace in Lebanon after the 1975-1990 civil war and warfare. Sheikh Sabah is remembered "for his white hands," aiding the country in the political, economic, health humanitarian fields, said another former president, Amin Gemayel who also expressed sorrow to Kuwait's Ambassador Abdulal Al-Ginacee. Caretaker Foreign Minister Sherbel

Wehbe stated that he conveyed condolences on behalf of President Michel Aoun to the Kuwaiti envoy, indicating that the president might travel to Kuwait in a few days to manifest sentiments of sorrow and congratulate the newly proclaimed Amir, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The health minister of the caretaking cabinet, Mohammad Hassan, paid homage to Sheikh Sabah as a leader

whose traits combined mercy, wisdom, firmness and courage. Lebanon has lost a dear friend, the resigned information minister Manal Abdulsamad, said. Among the top leaders who were in line to forward their sorrow was Walid Jumblatt, the chief of the Socialist Progressive Party, who dubbed the late Amir as an "Arab and international legendary personality who tackled crises with flexible diplomacy." — KUNA

Trump in military hospital after...

Continued from Page 1

The diagnosis was the latest setback for the Republican president, who is trailing Democratic rival Joe Biden in opinion polls ahead of the Nov 3 presidential election. Trump has played down the threat of the coronavirus pandemic from the outset, even as the disease has killed more than 200,000 Americans and hampered the US economy.

A number of other prominent Republicans also tested positive on Friday, including former White House senior adviser Kellyanne Conway and Republican senators Mike Lee and Thom Tillis. Vice President Mike Pence, who would take over presidential duties if Trump became severely ill, tested negative, a spokesman said. The former Indiana governor, 61, is working from his own residence several miles from the White House.

Trump is at high risk because of his age and weight. He has remained in apparent good health during his time in office but is not known to exercise regularly or to follow a healthy diet.

Conley said earlier on Friday that Trump has received an experimental treatment, Regeneron's REGN-COV2, one of several experimental COVID-19 drugs known as monoclonal antibodies, which are used for treating a wide range of illnesses. Trump is also taking zinc, Vitamin D, famotidine, melatonin and aspirin, Conley said.

With just 31 days to go until Election Day, Trump's campaign said it would postpone rallies and other events where he was scheduled to appear, or take them online. Trump's campaign manager, Bill Stepien, also tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday and will work from home, according to a senior campaign

official.

Biden pulled ads attacking Trump off the air but otherwise continued his campaign, traveling to Michigan on Friday after testing negative for the virus. At a union hall in Grand Rapids, Biden said he was praying for his rival's recovery. However, he also implicitly criticized Trump, who has mocked Biden for routinely wearing a mask and has held huge campaign rallies with little social distancing. "Be patriotic," Biden said. "It's not about being a tough guy. It's about doing your part."

The Republican National Committee would choose a replacement nominee if Trump were to become incapacitated, but it is too late in most states to change the names on the ballot. Some 2.9 million people have already voted, according to figures compiled by University of Florida professor Michael McDonald. Pence took over Trump's planned calls with governors and retirees' organizations. His Oct 7 debate with Democratic vice presidential candidate Kamala Harris will go forward as planned, organizers said. Harris has also tested negative, according to the campaign.

The virus could complicate Trump's push to install conservative judge Amy Coney Barrett on the Supreme Court. In addition to the president and his wife, at least four people who were at a White House event to announce Barrett's nomination - Conway, Lee, Tillis and University of Notre Dame President John Jenkins - said Friday they have tested positive.

Lee and Tillis are both members of the Republican-controlled Senate Judiciary Committee, which is scheduled to begin hearings on Barrett's nomination on Oct 12. Barrett herself tested positive for the virus earlier this year and recovered, according to a person familiar with the matter. Tillis, who said in a statement that he has no symptoms, will isolate at home for 10 days. Polls show a close race between him and Democratic challenger Cal Cunningham for his North Carolina seat, one of several Democrats hope to flip in their quest to win a Senate majority in November. — Agencies

Biden now the only man on...

Continued from Page 1

Biden's speech, which he delivered wearing a face mask, focused on the economy but also touched on the day's bombshell headline. "It's a bracing reminder to all of us that we have to take this virus seriously. It's not going away automatically," he said, perhaps a jab at Trump's repeated insistence that the virus will simply "disappear". "But this cannot be a partisan moment," Biden stressed. "It must be an American moment (when) we come together as a nation."

Biden urged people to wear masks, wash their hands and practice social distancing. "Be patriotic," he said. "It's not about being a tough guy, it's about doing your part." Biden nevertheless refrained from direct criticism of his opponent, and ended his speech with warm wishes for his adversary. "May God protect the first family and every family that is dealing with this virus," Biden said.

His campaign team said it was pulling all negative ads against Trump scheduled to air Friday. Some pro-Biden voices wondered whether he should pull his

punches when the president - who disparages Biden, attacks the integrity of mail-in ballots and trails in the polls - is on the ropes. "Crush Trumpism, beat him. Put your ads back up. This is a fighting hour," Steve Schmidt, an anti-Trump former Republican strategist, tweeted Friday. "Magnanimity and grace in victory. For now total political war."

Others recalled how Trump, at a rally four years ago, openly mocked Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton after she was treated for pneumonia during their 2016 race. Biden only boosted his travel schedule in late August, after months of virtual events or in-person appearances not far from Wilmington. During that time, Trump crisscrossed the nation, holding rallies sometimes with thousands of attendees. These were held mainly outside, but few attendees wore masks.

With only 32 days to go before Election Day, Trump's campaign team announced that his events would either be virtual or postponed until further notice. Meanwhile, Team Biden announced new events: His wife Jill visited Minnesota yesterday, while ex-rival Senator Bernie Sanders stumped for him in New Hampshire. And Biden's running mate, Senator Kamala Harris, was in Nevada Friday. The 55-year-old tested negative Friday - as did Vice President Mike Pence, whom she is set to debate on Oct 7. The next Trump-Biden showdown is scheduled for Oct 15 in Miami but it was unclear if that would take place. — AFP

India virus deaths pass...

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International commercial flights remain suspended although limited services, many to allow citizens to return to their home countries, have been operating. Trains, metros, domestic flights, markets and

restaurants have already reopened or resumed service, with some restrictions. On Wednesday, the government said that all schools could re-open along with cinemas and swimming pools, subject to certain conditions.

Uttar Pradesh state, home to 200 million people, is allowing religious events from Oct 15, clearing the way for major gatherings in India's upcoming festive season. The state of Bihar will allow its 70 million voters to cast ballots in upcoming elections, one of the biggest to take place worldwide since the pandemic began. — AFP

Local

Condolences continue to pour in over Sheikh Sabah's passing

Amir receives condolences from world political, religious leaders

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable of condolences on Friday from Emperor Naruhito of Japan over the passing of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In the cable, the Emperor, and on behalf of his wife, expressed heartfelt condolences to His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people over the death of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, wishing utmost prosperity to His Highness the Amir and the friendly people of Kuwait. His Highness the Amir sent a reply, thanking the Emperor for the sincere sentiments and wishing good health and his people long-lasting prosperity.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable of condolences from Prince Charles of Wales on Friday over the passing of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad. In the cable, Prince Charles voiced profound sadness and sincere condolences to His Highness the Amir, the ruling family and Kuwaitis over the demise of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad. He said that the late Amir's wisdom and commitment to peace and stability were highly admired by many, stressing the deep-rooted ties between the two countries for many years. His Highness the Amir sent a cable of thanks to Prince Charles for such sincere sentiments, wishing him utmost health.

Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received a cable of condolences from Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, who voiced heartfelt condolences to His Highness the Amir and Kuwaitis over the demise of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad. He pointed to his profound sadness following the news of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's demise, noting that he will constantly remember Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's humanitarian stances and commitment to regional peace. His Highness the Amir sent a cable thanking Prince William for such sincere sentiments.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres sent a cable of condolences to His Highness the Amir, in which he commiserated with His Highness Sheikh Nawaf and the Kuwaiti people, recalling the distinguished role of His Highness the late Amir in the political and economic development of Kuwait, as well as his exemplary humanitarian leadership of the world. He noted that the UN recognized the humanitarian leadership of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in September 2014. In a reply message, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf thanked the UN Secretary-General for his sincere sentiments,

expressing the best wishes for him.

His Highness the Amir received a similar cable from NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who said that the late Amir was an "effective partner" to the Alliance, expressed deepest sympathies to His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people over Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's demise. In reply, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to Stoltenberg, thanking him for the sincere sentiments and wishing him good health.

Firm stances

Lebanese President Michel Aoun sent a cable of condolences to His Highness the Amir, in which he voiced sincere sympathies over Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's passing, recalling his firm stances supporting Lebanon in all phases and conditions. In reply, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to President Aoun, thanking him for these heartfelt sentiments, wishing him good health and the brotherly people of Lebanon utmost prosperity.

His Highness the Amir received a cable of condolences from Arif Alvi, President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, who reflected on the numerous contributions of His Highness the late Amir to the development of his homeland and his role as a peacemaker worldwide. In a reply message, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf thanked the Pakistani president for his sincere sentiments and expressed his best wishes for him and the friendly Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received a cable of condolences from Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan over the late Amir's demise. In the cable, Premier Khan expressed sincere condolences to His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people on Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's passing. He lauded Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's contributions to humanitarian issues, as well as boosting peace and security, praying to Allah Almighty to bestow utmost mercy on his soul. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir sent a reply, appreciating the deep condolences and wishing him everlasting well-being.

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck sent a cable to His Highness the Amir over the sad passing of Sheikh Sabah. In reply, Sheikh Nawaf sent a cable, expressing gratitude on the heartfelt sentiments and wishes of good health for the King. His Highness the Amir received a similar cable from Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro Moros, who expressed deepest sympathies over Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's demise. In

reply, His Highness the Amir sent a cable appreciating the sincere sentiments and wishing the President good health.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable of condolences from President Gurbanguly M Berdimuhamedov of the friendly Republic of Turkmenistan, who recalled the numerous contributions of His Highness the late Amir to the development of Kuwait. He commiserated with His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people. In a reply cable, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf thanked the Turkmen leader for her sincere sentiments, expressing his best wishes for him and the friendly Republic of Turkmenistan. Albanian President expressed, in a similar cable to His Highness the Amir, deepest sympathies on behalf of his government and people over Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's demise. He recalled the late Amir's achievements that have contributed to developing bilateral ties with his country. In reply, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to President Meta, thanking him for the sincere sentiments and wishing him good health.

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received a cable from President Ibrahim Mohammad Solih of the Republic of Maldives, who reflected on the countless contributions



Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

reply, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to President Masisi, thanking him for the sincere sentiments and wishing him good health.

His Highness the Amir received a cable of condolences from Henri, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, who expressed deepest sympathies to His Highness and the Kuwaiti people over Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's demise. In reply, His Highness the Amir sent a cable thanking the Grand Duke for the sincere sentiments and wishing him good health. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali sent a similar cable, in which he extended, on behalf of the Ethiopian government and people, sincere condolences over the demise of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, lauding the latter's outstanding contributions to boosting ties between Kuwait and Ethiopia. His Highness the Amir sent a reply thanking the Premier for such sincere sympathies, and wishing him good health and his country further progress.

Great sorrow

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meanwhile received a cable of condolences from Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani over the demise of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad. In the cable, Sistani voiced "great sorrow" over news of the passing away of the late Amir, whose life was full of many wise and distinguished stances that served his people and nation. He prayed to Allah Almighty to bless the late Amir's soul with mercy, and bring solace to his family and loved ones, wishing Kuwait further progress and prosperity. His Highness the Amir sent a

cable thanking Sistani, expressing gratitude to the heartfelt condolences and wishing him good health.

Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Ishaq Al-Fayadh sent a similar cable to His Highness the Amir, in which he said "with great sadness, we received the news of the death of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, praying to Almighty Allah to bless his soul with mercy." His Highness the late Amir was famous for his humanitarian stances, wise leadership and constant efforts to establish care and coexistence, he added, noting that the late Amir was also keen on maintaining stability and security of his country. His Highness the Amir sent a cable to Sheikh Al-Fayadh, expressing appreciation to the heartfelt condolences and wishing him good health.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir received a cable of condolences from President of Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Humam Hamoudi, who expressed his sincere sympathies over Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's passing, praying to Allah Almighty to bless his soul. His Highness the Amir sent a cable thanking Sheikh Hamoudi for the heartfelt sympathies, wishing him good health.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable of condolences from cleric Sheikh Bashir Al-Najafi, expressing sorrow over the passing of Kuwait's late Amir. Najafi lauded Sheikh Sabah's achievements and his service of the Arab and Islamic nations, commending the legacy left by the former leader. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf replied to the cable and thanked Najafi for his sincere condolences and sentiments. — KUNA



Emperor Naruhito, Prince Charles pay respects

of His Highness the late Amir of Kuwait to the promotion of the bilateral ties. In a reply cable, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf thanked the Maldivian leader for his sincere sentiments and expressed his best wishes for him and the friendly Republic of Maldives. His Highness the Amir received a similar cable from Republic of Guinea's President Alpha Conde, who expressed sincere sympathies over Sheikh Sabah's passing. His Highness the Amir sent a reply, thanking the President for the heartfelt solace and wishing him good health. Botswana's President Mokgweetsi Masisi sent a similar cable in which he expressed deepest sympathies over Sheikh Sabah's passing, and recalled the late Amir's achievements that have contributed to developing Kuwait, and support to humanitarian issues: regionally and internationally. In

News in brief

Sheikha Moza offers condolences

KUWAIT: Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, the wife of Qatar's Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, on Friday offered her condolences to women of Al-Sabah family on demise of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Palestinian town honors Amir

RAMALLAH: Al-Zababdeh municipality — near Jenin city, north of West Bank — named a street after the late Amir of Kuwait His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, an official said yesterday. In a press statement, Chief of Zababdeh municipality Munadhel Sharqawi affirmed that the late Kuwaiti leader was a key figure in supporting Palestinians and their lawful rights. He said that Kuwaiti and Palestinian ties were strong and that was evident in the various projects carried out Kuwait in Zababdeh. The official commended the achievements laid out by the former Amir of Kuwait and wished for further progress for Kuwait under current Amir His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Omani officials express grief

MUSCAT: Omani Minister of Foreign Affairs Badr bin Hamad Al-Bu Saidi on Friday expressed condolences on demise of Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Kuwaiti embassy. Omani Minister of Interior Humoud Faisal Al-Bu Saidi, Minister of Health Dr Ahmad bin Mohammad Al-Saidi and Minister of Information Abdulaziz Nasser Al-Hrasi also offered condolences on the late Amir's death, expressing deep distress at his departure. Meanwhile, the State of Kuwait's Ambassador Suleiman Al-Harbi, voiced deep gratitude to the Omani people and government for manifesting sincere sadness at the death of Sheikh Sabah. — KUNA

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Saudi, UAE ministers extend condolences over late Amir



ABU DHABI: Senior Emirati officials pay respects at Kuwait's Embassy in Abu Dhabi.

RIYADH/ABU DHABI: Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubeir offered condolences over the passing of Kuwait's late Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Kuwait's Embassy in Riyadh yesterday. Jubeir expressed his deepest condolences to Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti government and its people on Sheikh Sabah's demise, recalling the late Amir's contributions to the Gulf and Arab regions, as well as the Islamic world and internationally. Kuwait's embassy said in a statement. Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed gratitude to minister Jubeir, the Saudi leadership and people for their sincere sentiments. Meanwhile, Emirati ministers and senior officials extended their con-

dolences over the passing of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad in Kuwait's Embassy in Abu Dhabi yesterday. In a statement while receiving the guests, Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UAE Salah Al-Bouejian noted His Highness' prominent political and diplomatic efforts in supporting regional and international peace and stability. He praised Sheikh Sabah's humanitarian role, which granted him the Humanitarian Leader title, as well as his achievements in executing developmental and cultural projects. The ambassador also spoke of the international medals the late Amir had received, mainly the US Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander medal granted by President Donald Trump. Bouejian expressed his deepest condolences to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti government and



RIYADH: Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubeir arrives at Kuwait's Embassy in Riyadh to offer condolences over the passing of Kuwait's late Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday. — KUNA photos

New school year begins online

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Saud Al-Harbi announced yesterday that the new scholastic year (2020-2021) kicks off today on schedule. Teaching will be online for all levels: pre-school, elementary, intermediate and high school, the minister said in a statement, indicating that the department had worked out an integrated scheme for online teaching. Shifting from conventional to electronic teaching was not easy because it required major preparations, an infrastructure and an integrated scientific substance, he said, affirming that the involved national cadres were quite capable of coping with the novel coronavirus crisis. Kuwait had already established digital teaching after outbreak of the coronavirus months ago. — KUNA

Kuwait reports five COVID-19 deaths

KUWAIT: The number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Kuwait rose by 371 yesterday to take the total count to 106,458, while a fivefold increase in fatalities pushed its death toll from the outbreak to 620, health ministry data showed. The country's Capital governorate logged 92 cases, followed by Ahmadi (89), Hawally (80), Farwaniya (70) and Jahra (40), according to the figures, which distributed the new infections in terms of health zones. The number of people needing hospital care stands at 7,403, 129 of whom are in intensive care units, said ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, who revealed that 1,990 swab tests were conducted in the previous 24 hours out of a total of 755,765 so far. The ministry had earlier registered 537 new recoveries to up the total to 98,435. — KUNA

Prayers for Sheikh Sabah's soul held in mosques worldwide

CAPITALS: Yemenis on Friday performed prayers in absentia for the soul of Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Friday prayers' sermons were distinguished with words of praise for the late Amir who adopted a balanced policy at the Arab and Islamic levels. They noted in this regard Kuwait's abundant aid for the nation during Sheikh Sabah's era noting that His UN designation as the Amir of Humanitarian Action was well earned. In the meantime, Bosnians held prayers in absentia at Gazi Hurev-beg and Al-Fatih mosques in the capital Sarajevo in homage to the soul of Sheikh

Sabah. In the Friday sermons, scholars hailed the late Amir's noticeable humanitarian contributions across the world. Acting Kuwaiti charge d'affaires in Bosnia Herzegovina, Hamad bin Eidan, said that the late Amir set ethical foundations for political and diplomatic tasks. Senior officials and dignitaries flocked to the Kuwaiti embassy expressing deep sorrow for Kuwait's heavy loss.

An Islamic center in the Croatian capital Zagreb also held memorial prayers for Kuwait's late Amir yesterday. Khaled Yaseen, the Islamic Cultural Center's assistant chief, extended his "deepest condolences" over the death of the Kuwaiti Amir, as he prayed for "Allah's mercy upon the soul of the deceased."

Meanwhile, Muslim Cambodians held prayers in absentia for Sheikh Sabah's soul. The Kuwaiti charge d'affaires Dhafer Al-Khuraiej said that the Cambodians in the capital, towns and cities held the prayers, asking Allah Almighty to bestow His mercy



SARAJEVO: Worshippers hold prayers in absentia in Bosnia for the soul of Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

upon his soul. A large number of politicians, diplomats and dignitaries thronged the Kuwaiti embassy building expressing solidarity on the sad event. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: 'Al-Kout' and 'Eyal Al-Deera' voluntary teams distributed food and water to children as a tribute to the late Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Anjefa beach in Salwa Friday night. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Trump age and weight add to COVID-19 risks

Syria rebels sign up to fight for Azeris 'to feed families'

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WASHINGTON: Marine One, the presidential helicopter, arrives at the White House to carry US President Donald Trump to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Friday. —AFP

Why White House is COVID danger zone

Crowded offices, mask-free: White House reels

WASHINGTON: Offices are crowded, visitors are constant, and the boss doesn't like people wearing masks: welcome to the White House where President Donald Trump has tested positive for the coronavirus. The revelation during the early hours of Friday that Trump and his wife Melania were both positive sent staff into a frantic cycle of contact tracing and emergency testing. It's not an easy job.

Crowds and travel

Avoid large groups, stay masked and socially distanced? Not for this president. Trump has been holding growing numbers of reelection rallies with thousands of people pressed tight and in most cases not covering their faces. The last one was in Minnesota on Wednesday, where he was accompanied by close aide Hope Hicks, who was revealed on Thursday to have tested positive.

Another planned for Florida on Friday has been cancelled. Trump had been due to fly for a rally in Wisconsin, a state where infections are rising, on Saturday. Next week it was to have been a long-

distance swing through the west, including Arizona. Many of these events are outside, but last week Trump met indoors with hundreds of supporters in Florida and Georgia. He also hosted a large gathering in the White House Rose Garden last Saturday to announce Amy Coney Barrett as his Supreme Court nominee. The White House said Friday that she has since tested negative.

Tight spaces

The White House is less a typical government office building than a stately home converted for government use, with warrens of small offices and corridors. Even the famed Oval Office gets quickly cramped, while for staff "office" often means little more than a desk crammed into an alcove. Powerful Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner, for example, works out of one of the smaller offices. But as he told Time magazine, it's got "good location"—right by the president's private dining room, a favorite hangout for Trump.

Nearly 400 people work in the White House, aside from the journalists, who work from an even

more cramped press wing. And while journalists rigorously adhere to mask guidelines, few staff do. Trump has frequently mocked masks but says he is safe because of frequent testing. The White House uses the rapid Abbott test, which can give results within minutes, but screening protocols are not watertight. For example, some journalists are tested systematically, while others who are not tested yet still come within a few feet of Trump when he takes questions out by his Marine One helicopter. Even Trump's testing schedule is unclear. In July his spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany said he took a test "multiple times a day." Trump contradicted her saying "on average a test every two days, three days."

Planes, choppers, automobiles

If the White House is crowded, then try Air Force One, Marine One or the limousine known as "the Beast"—all modes of transport where guests are within an arm's length of the president. Hicks, 31, was with Trump when he flew to Cleveland on Tuesday for his first of three debates against

Democratic challenger Joe Biden. She was with him again flying to Minnesota for the following day's rally, including the short but extra close-quarters leg on Marine One. The New York Times reported that Hicks began feeling ill on the plane ride back from Minnesota and self-quarantined while on Air Force One.

Matter of debate

Trump's controversial position on masks—which he has often downplayed or even mocked—could not have been more starkly on display than at Tuesday's debate against Biden. Trump's family and entourage, including the first lady, arrived masked at the Cleveland Clinic which was hosting the event but then took their masks off. An attempt by a doctor to pass out masks was reportedly rejected by the Trump guests. And according to Chris Christie, the former New Jersey governor who helped Trump drill for the debate a few days earlier, "no one was wearing masks in the room when we were prepping." There were "about five or six people" in the debate prep room, Christie said.—AFP

Israel posts video of alleged Hezbollah Beirut arms plants

JERUSALEM: The Israeli army released videos on Friday meant to prove the presence of Hezbollah missile factories in the suburbs of Beirut, despite the denials of the Lebanese Shiite movement. On Tuesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused Hezbollah of manufacturing and storing weapons near fuel facilities in Beirut and warned of a "another tragedy" in the event of an explosion.

On August 4, hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate stored in a warehouse at Beirut's port exploded, killing more than 190 people, injuring thousands and ravaging large parts of the city. Netanyahu has repeatedly accused Hezbollah, backed by Israel's arch-foe Iran, of building missiles to attack the Jewish state. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah charged the Israeli premier with "inciting the Lebanese people against Hezbollah as usual".

"We don't store rockets at Beirut port, nor do we put them next to gas stations," he said in a televised address. "We will allow media outlets to go into this site and see what's there," he said. Dozens of journalists, including an AFP photographer, then went to the site located in Jnah, in Beirut's southern suburbs. There they saw heavy machinery inside a two-storey warehouse. "This is a normal industrial site," said Hezbollah spokesman Mohammad Afif, who accompanied the group.

In the latest salvo in the media war between Israel and Hezbollah, the Israeli army on Friday posted a video on its WhatsApp and Twitter accounts showing the equipment journalists had filmed at the Beirut site. According to the video, the images show a "laser cutting machine", a "hydraulic



JERUSALEM: This image grab taken from a UNTV broadcast on Sept 29, 2020 shows Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressing a virtual meeting of the annual UN General Assembly in which he displayed alleged weapons depots located in Beirut belonging to Hezbollah. —AFP

cutting machine", a "rolling machine" and a machine for bending metal — equipment which it said enables the production of components for precision-guided missiles.

The army said the cutters could be used to create "warheads" and "stabilization fins", and the two other machines to form metal cylinders used in building missiles able to strike strategic targets in Israel. In addition to the Jnah factory, the Israeli military on Tuesday said it had located weapons plants under residential properties in Beirut's Laylaki and Choueifat districts. "It's as if the parking lot of these buildings is a precision missile manufacturing plant," an Israeli military official told AFP on Friday, requesting anonymity.

In a second video, the army showed aerial footage that it said was shot the day after Netanyahu's statement, of "suspicious traffic" between the Choueifat location and "another Hezbollah facility" in the southern suburb of Burj Al-Barajneh, implying that equipment had been moved. Hezbollah and Israel fought a devastating month-long war in 2006 which killed more than 1,200 on the Lebanese side, mainly civilians, and 160 on the Israelis side, most of them soldiers. —AFP

Five police suspended over India gang-rape

NEW DELHI: Five senior police officers have been suspended over their handling of an investigation into the gang-rape and murder of a 19-year-old woman that has sparked outrage across India and triggered days of protests. The seriously injured teenager from the disadvantaged Dalit caste was found in mid-September outside her village in northern India's Uttar Pradesh state and died this week in a New Delhi hospital. The police have arrested four high-caste men on charges of gang-rape and murder.

But the police have faced criticism for cremating the woman's body in the middle of the night — reportedly with the help of some petrol — against the wishes of her family and religious custom. A senior policeman on Thursday sparked further outrage after claiming that a forensic report and an autopsy had shown that the woman had not been raped. This contradicts statements from the victim and her mother and reported hospital findings, while experts said the forensic test was carried out too long after the attack.

Hundreds of police have also barricaded the village, preventing the woman's family from leaving and journalists and opposition politicians from talking to them. The family's mobile phones have also reportedly been seized. The victim's brother told one Indian news channel that the family were scared for their lives. The local high court has ordered authorities to provide the family protection. Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath late Friday announced the suspension of the Hathras district police chief and four others.

The Hindu monk and close ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi also announced that



NOIDA, India: Police stand guard as National Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is allowed to move with his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and other party leaders towards Uttar Pradesh yesterday to meet the relatives of a 19-year-old allegedly gang-raped victim. —AFP

the victim's family, the accused and the suspended policemen would all undergo lie-detector and drug tests. On Friday evening in the latest protest, around 500 people including the capital's chief minister and a prominent Dalit politician gathered in central New Delhi demanding justice. "We (women) are not actually free, even though India is independent," Sanskriti, one of the women at the Delhi protest site told AFP.

"This is something I want to raise my voice against. And I just wish all the people get united and they understand that it is high time to do something about it," she added. The young woman's death comes months after four men were hanged for the 2012 gang-rape and murder of a student on a bus in New Delhi, in a case that came to symbolize India's epidemic of sexual violence. An average of 87 rapes were reported in India every day last year, according to data by the National Crime Records Bureau, but large numbers are thought to go unreported. —AFP

International

Syria rebels sign up to fight for Azeris 'to feed families'

'I signed up ... for 3 months in exchange for \$2,000 a month'

BEIRUT: Desperate to help his family displaced by Syria's war, pro-Turkey rebel fighter Abu Ahmad is waiting to be deployed to Azerbaijan hoping to earn almost 80 times his current salary. "I signed up to fight more than a week ago to go to Azerbaijan... for three months in exchange for \$2,000 a month," the 26-year-old told AFP via a phone messaging service, using a pseudonym for his safety.

Clashes have raged between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces since Sunday over Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian province that broke away from Azerbaijan in a bitterly fought war in the 1990s. Baku and Yerevan have traded accusations over which side initiated the latest round of fighting. Almost 200 deaths have been reported, making it the deadliest round since the all-out war. Ankara is backing its longtime ally Baku in the clashes and has been accused by Yerevan of sending its Syrian proxies to bolster Azerbaijani troops, allegations backed by France despite Azeri denials.

But AFP spoke to Syrian opposition fighters from Aleppo and Idlib preparing to set off for the Caucasus, and one already in the conflict zone. From a camp for the displaced in a part of north Syria controlled by Turkey-backed rebels, Abu Ahmad told AFP he was heading to Karabakh hoping to better provide for his wife and children. "We lost our villages and our homes, and we have nothing left to eat," said Abu Ahmad, who has been a rebel

fighter for five years. "I'm waiting for my turn to go to Azerbaijan to save up some money, to come back and start up some sort of business," he said from the camp in the north of Aleppo province.

'No other option'

Abu Ahmad and his family fled their home earlier this year during a devastating onslaught by Russia-backed government forces, before a ceasefire in March stemmed the fighting. He says his income has been reduced to a pittance now the battles have largely stopped, receiving just 200 Turkish lira (around \$25) from his rebel group last month. He says it is not enough to support his family in a country ravaged by nine years of war, where food prices have soared in recent months.

With reports of Syrians killed in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abu Ahmad realizes he is taking a risk. But "we have no other option," he said. "We've reached the point where we're ready to sacrifice ourselves to provide for our children." The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says 850 Syrian

fighters have already headed to Azerbaijan via Turkey, and hundreds more are preparing to follow suit. The fighters—from pro-Ankara armed opposition groups—were being promised a monthly salary of between \$1,500 and \$2,000, the Britain-based war monitor said.

The first among them arrived in Azerbaijan before the fighting started, thinking they would be guarding oil fields and the frontier, it said. A fighter from the town of Atareb in Aleppo province told AFP that he was on the frontline. "Yes, I am in Azerbaijan," he texted, but declined to give any more details. A source in his hometown said he was in a unit whose commander, Mohammad Shaaban, had died. Shaaban was among four Syrians whose pictures were shared on social media after they were reported to have been killed.

'Not enough to buy bread'

Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said at least 28 Syrian fighters had died in the clashes since Sunday. The relatives of three of them confirmed to

AFP they had been killed. Turkey has admitted to sending Syrian fighters to conflict-racked Libya as part of its support since late last year to the UN-backed government in Tripoli.

Ankara has not officially commented on Syrian mercenaries being sent to Azerbaijan, while Baku says Armenians from the diaspora have enlisted on the side of the separatists. In Syria's northwestern province of Idlib, opposition fighter Abu Adnan, 38, however, said he had been approached about signing up as a combatant in the Caucasus. "Our turn didn't come to go to Libya, so we were told to prepare to head to Azerbaijan," he said using a fake name for fear of repercussions. Abu Adnan said he arrived in the country's north in 2017, having fled his hometown.

He joined a rebel group and had moved from one town to the next with his family until ending up in a camp. "Here we're posted on the front for 200 Turkish lira and it's not enough to buy bread, but over there we do it for \$1,500," he told AFP on WhatsApp. But he said money wasn't the only reason. "We stand with our ally Turkey because it stood with us against Russia and is fighting for Syria, and we need to stand with it at all times," he said. "If Turkey loses any battle, it will become under pressure and forced to surrender our areas to the regime. And then we'll never, ever go home." —AFP

No rapid victory in sight for Caucasus rivals in Karabakh

PARIS: Neither Armenia nor Azerbaijan can be confident of a rapid victory in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, with both geography and the risk of foreign involvement making a military breakthrough unlikely, analysts say. Both sides inherited equipment, military doctrine and tactics from the Soviet era, while even their modern equipment comes mostly from Russia, the analysts say.

Azerbaijan can count on a larger standing army, foreign-supplied drones and a military budget that dwarfs that of Armenia. But this may not be enough to tip the balance in a hugely complex confrontation. Fighting in one of the most combustible frozen conflicts left over from the fall of the Soviet Union erupted late last month, with calls for a ceasefire so far falling on deaf ears. Armenians took control of the Azerbaijani region in a war that followed the collapse of the USSR and declared a breakaway republic that has never been recognized by any state.

Both sides re-equipped intensely following the war, with Azerbaijan never hiding its desire to regain control of the territory. But Azerbaijan was able to easily outpace its neighbor due to its income from hydrocarbon reserves. Pierre Razoux, director of the Mediterranean Foundation of Strategic Studies, says that Armenia can count on a 50,000-strong military, but with the possibility of mobilizing 500,000 soldiers, as well as 20,000 soldiers in Karabakh.

It has 180 tanks and 200 other armored vehicles and above all 35 fighter jets, as well as ballistic missiles which, according to Razoux, "can hit Azeri oil installations". Azerbaijan has a 90,000-strong standing army and a much higher number of tanks at 600, 100 of which are the modernized T-90s preferred by the Russian military. "Its material on land is much more significant," Razoux said. It also has 100 fighter jets and S-300 air defense systems.

Chinese vlogger dies after being set on fire by former husband

BEIJING: The tragic case of a rural livestreamer who died after being set alight by her ex-husband has triggered outrage over domestic violence on Chinese social media. The 30-year-old woman, named Lamu, died on Wednesday after efforts to save her life failed, according to a statement from police in Jinchuan county, in the remote northwest of Sichuan province. She had more than 885,000 followers on Douyin - the Chinese version of TikTok - and regularly posted videos of her daily life foraging in the mountains, cooking and lip syncing to songs dressed in traditional Tibetan clothing.

The police statement on Thursday confirmed earlier local media reports that she was doused in petrol and set alight at home by her ex-husband,

The politics behind Xi's big green promise for China

BEIJING: Xi Jinping's vow to snuff out emissions by 2060 completes a diplomatic pirouette that moves China to the heart of the global green agenda, wrong-foots the US and cuddles up to Europe's climate advocates in one nimble step. The Chinese leader last month chose the UN as the stage for his country's unexpected pledge to reach peak coal use by 2030 and go carbon neutral three decades later. The announcement gives China—the world's biggest polluter and second-largest economy—an opportunity to show environmental leadership at the same time as the United States retreats from the issue under climate



(Left) A serviceman of Karabakh's Defense Army fires an artillery piece towards Azeri positions during fighting over the breakaway Nagorno Karabakh region on Sept 28, 2020. (Right) An image grab shows Azeri artillery strike towards the positions of Armenian separatists in Nagorno Karabakh. —AFP

Azerbaijan can count on drones from its key military supplier Israel, with whom Baku has in the last years built a warm relationship, and possibly also from its main ally Turkey. But the nature of the terrain in the Caucasus mountains and the fact that it is currently controlled by Armenians are major factors counting against rapid Azeri progress. "The mountainous terrain here, the increasingly deadly heavy weaponry, close proximity of villages and towns to the conflict means that it is very hard for one side to 'win' any military contest," commented Tom de Waal, an expert on the Caucasus and senior fellow at Carnegie Europe.

'Not tenable for long'

But the role of foreign powers also points towards a long, drawn-out and grinding conflict. Most importantly, ex-Soviet master Russia has never taken a clear side in the conflict, supplying arms to both Armenia and Azerbaijan. "Russia has tried for years to show its neutrality by delivering arms to both countries and claiming to maintain a balance of power.

But it will soon have to choose," prominent Russian military commentator and deputy editor of the online newspaper Ezhednevny Zhurnal,

surnamed Tang, on September 14. She was transferred to Sichuan Provincial People's hospital for treatment on September 17. Lamu suffered burns to 90 percent of her body, her sister told the Chengdu Commercial Daily. Her ex-husband Tang reportedly attacked her while she was livestreaming and had a history of domestic violence, local media said. He was detained on suspicion of intentional homicide, police said.

Lamu's fans had raised one million yuan (\$150,000) for her hospital treatment shortly after the attack, local media reported. Tens of thousands of grieving followers left comments on her Douyin page, while millions of users on the Twitter-like platform Weibo demanded justice using the trending hashtags "Lamu case" and "Lamu died after being set on fire by her ex-husband" - which were later censored. "Remove the 'internet celebrity' label, she is just an ordinary woman who unfortunately suffered domestic violence and was abused and threatened," read one comment with more than 28,000 likes.

change sceptic Donald Trump. While light on details, the plan is a game-changer if China is good to Xi's word, and the pledge was welcomed by the European Union, which is already toughening up its own emissions targets. "It comes at a very good time," says Wendel Trio, of Climate Action Network Europe, with the European Commission launching its own proposal to deepen its emissions cuts to 55 percent by 2030. China has become a diplomatic pariah after spats with India over borders, the EU over rights abuses, Australia over security and the US over everything from trade and technology to the origins of the coronavirus. The 2060 pledge reflects China's desire to showcase itself as a "responsible international player" after a storm of negative attention, Trio added. While many remain unconvinced China can meet its carbon ambitions—especially as it goes on a coal spending spree at home and sponsors dirty energy projects abroad—the promise gives China helmsmanship of a big global issue for the first time. —AFP



Alexander Golts, told AFP. Crucially, Armenia hosts one of Russia's few remaining military bases in an ex-Soviet state in Gyumri in the northwest. Unlike Azerbaijan, Armenia is a member of the Moscow-led regional security group, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (ODKB).

"Russia is the primary guarantor of Armenia's security, especially its air defense, and Azerbaijan's primary arms supplier. This allows it to have leverage on both, but it is a position that will not be tenable for very long," said Emmanuel Dreyfus, a French specialist on Russian defense issues. A new factor in the current conflict is the strong backing that Turkey has given to its fellow Turkic neighbor, with Karabakh potentially becoming another controversial Turkish military intervention after Libya and Syria.

French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday said hundreds of Syrian fighters had travelled to Azerbaijan via Turkey, a move he described as crossing a "red line". While Israel has warm ties with Baku, Armenia has long enjoyed a cordial relationship with Iran, which has been accused of secretly delivering petrol to Karabakh. The omnipresence of regional powers "may further freeze the positions of the two belligerents," said Dreyfus. —AFP

Others called for her attacker to receive the death sentence. Several other high-profile cases of domestic violence have sparked an outcry in China this year, with people calling on lawmakers to do more to seek justice for victims. In June, a woman from Henan province was denied a divorce after she jumped out of a second-storey window to escape her husband's physical abuse, leaving her paralyzed. The court later granted the divorce after her case attracted nationwide attention on social media.

In June, the eastern city of Yiwu introduced a system that lets women check whether their fiancé has a history of domestic violence, in a move hailed by women's rights advocates. China only criminalized domestic violence in 2016, but the issue remains pervasive and under-reported, especially in underdeveloped rural communities. Activists are worried that a recent change to China's civil code - which introduced a mandatory 30-day "cooling-off" period for couples wishing to divorce - may make it harder for victims to leave abusive marriages. —AFP



BEIJING: In this photo taken on Sept 22, 2020, an image of Chinese President Xi Jinping appearing by video link at the United Nations 75th anniversary is seen on an outdoor screen as a pedestrian walks past below. —AFP

Foreign fighters in Nagorno-Karabakh?

BEIRUT: Armenia and Azerbaijan have traded accusations of using foreign fighters, mostly from Syria, in the battle for Nagorno-Karabakh. Here is an overview:

Syrians in Azeri ranks?

From the onset of the clashes last Sunday, Armenia has accused Turkey of sending mercenaries from northern Syria to fight alongside the Azeris. On Friday, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told French newspaper Le Figaro that Turkey had "transported thousands of mercenaries and terrorists" to Azerbaijan from northern Syria.

Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a phone call, expressed "serious concern" over the reported "involvement in military action of militants of illegal armed groups from the Middle East", the Kremlin said. French President Emmanuel Macron also weighed in, demanding that Turkey explain what he said was the arrival of jihadist fighters in Azerbaijan. "A red line has been crossed, which is unacceptable," said Macron. There has been no official comment from Turkey which backs Baku in the conflict, but Azerbaijan has denied the reports.

"There is yet another disinformation piece against Azerbaijan," Hikmet Hajiyev, a presidential foreign affairs aide, said in a news conference. "We completely reject it, Azerbaijan doesn't need any foreign fighters because we have professional armed forces and we also have enough reserve forces." But the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said more than 850 pro-Turkey Syrian fighters have been sent to Azerbaijan since last week, and at least 28 of them killed in combat. Relatives of three fighters confirmed to AFP they had been killed, while social media users shared pictures of four fighters who died in clashes.

What affiliations?

According to Macron, intelligence reports indicate 300 fighters drawn from "jihadist groups" from the Syrian city of Aleppo have passed through Gaziantep in Turkey en route for Azerbaijan. "These fighters are known, tracked and identified," he said. The Observatory says the Syrian fighters are members of pro-Turkish armed groups mostly active in the northern African region which Ankara seized from Kurds in 2018. They are mostly from the ethnic Turkmen minority living in Syria, said Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman. They fight under the banners of three groups in the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army-Sultan Murad Brigades, Suleiman Shah and Liwa Al-Muntasser bi Allah. But SNA spokesman Youssef Hammoud, in a statement sent to AFP, denied the involvement of his forces in Azerbaijan.

Last month, UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet said armed groups in the area of northern Syria controlled by Turkey may have committed war crimes and other violations of international law. Aymenn Jawad Tamimi, an academic and expert on armed groups in Syria, said the fighters deployed were a mixed bag. "Those going to fight are the same types of people who have been recruited to fight in Turkey's intervention in Libya," he said. They are a "mixture of rebel veterans and newer recruits" and "some of these rebels previously received Western backing".

Foreigners on Armenian side?

Baku says Armenians from the diaspora have been deployed. "Armenians from Syria and Lebanon are being deployed to Armenia and they are in the ranks of the Armenian armed forces fighting against Azerbaijan," Hajiyev said. The Observatory said hundreds of Armenians from Syria have joined the battle, but an Armenian official in northern Syria denied the report. Lebanese Armenian MP Hagop Pakradounian, for his part, said: "Armenian political parties have no intention of sending young people (to Karabakh), there is no such organized action." —AFP

International

Washington hits Belarus with sanctions as Minsk retaliates against EU measures

Foreign media stripped of accreditation in Belarus

MINSK: The United States imposed sanctions on eight Belarusian officials on Friday, accusing them of involvement in rigging President Alexander Lukashenko's reelection victory in August or the violent crackdown on protests that followed. The move came after the European Union announced sanctions on 40 people, including the interior minister and the head of the election commission, achieving a breakthrough on the issue at summit talks in the early hours of Friday morning.

Lukashenko was spared, in line with the EU's policy of punishing powerbrokers as a last resort. He denies electoral fraud and says the protests are backed from abroad. Lukashenko's government announced retaliatory sanctions against unidentified officials, recalled its ambassadors to Poland and Lithuania for consultations and nudged both countries to reduce the size of their embassy staff in Minsk.

Lukashenko is grappling to contain nearly two months of street protests that pose the biggest challenge to his 26-year rule. More than 13,000 people have been arrested, and major opposition figures jailed or exiled. "The United States and our international partners stand united in imposing costs on those who have undermined Belarusian democracy for years," US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement.

The US sanctions also targeted Belarusian Interior Minister Yuri Karaev and his deputy. Those under sanctions are subject to asset freezes and a ban against Americans doing business with them. Washington had originally been expected to impose sanctions in concert with Britain and Canada, which went ahead on Tuesday with travel bans and asset freezes on Lukashenko, his son Viktor and other senior officials. Washington has had sanctions on Lukashenko since 2006 but the president was spared in the latest round of measures.

Lukashenko speaks to Putin

The crisis has pushed Belarus back towards traditional ally Russia, which has propped up Lukashenko's government with loans and the offer of military support. Moscow sees its ex-Soviet neighbor as a strategic buffer against the EU and NATO. Lukashenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone on Friday, expressing confidence that "the problems that have arisen will soon be resolved", the Kremlin said.

Lukashenko's government announced it had drawn up a list of people who were banned from travelling to Belarus in retaliation for the EU sanctions. It did not name the officials or the countries they were from. "...we are imposing visa sanctions against the most biased



Minsk retaliates with travel ban

representatives of European institutions, including the European Parliament and the states - EU members," foreign ministry spokesman Anatoly Glaz was quoted by the official Belta news agency as saying. "The list is symmetrical in many ways. We have decided not to make it public for now."

Russia's foreign ministry said the Belarusian sanctions would apply in Russia as well. Lukashenko's government also asked the Polish and Lithuanian embassies to reduce their staff. Both countries refused. "We are not going to summon our ambassadors for consultations, and we will definitely not do anything to reduce personnel," Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister Linas Linkevicius told reporters. "We are not interested in reducing our communications channel," he said. "If the

advice becomes a request, then we will take appropriate measures."

The Belarusian authorities have detained journalists or stripped them of their accreditation as part of the crackdown on the unrest that followed the Aug. 9 election. On Friday, the foreign ministry announced it was stripping journalists working for foreign media organizations of their accreditation, and asked them to reapply for their permits. "I would like to make it clear that it is in no way some attempt to cleanse the news reporting field," Glaz was quoted by Belta as saying. The EU sanctions had been held up by Cyprus due to an unrelated dispute with Turkey. The delay dented the credibility of the EU's foreign policy, diplomats said.

"That we could now agree to those sanctions is an important signal because it strengthens the hand of those who are protesting for freedom of opinion in Belarus," German Chancellor Angela Merkel told journalists. Merkel will meet on Tuesday with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Lukashenko's main electoral opponent who fled into exile after the vote in the ex-Soviet republic, fearing for her family's safety. French President Emmanuel Macron met Tsikhanouskaya on Tuesday, pledging European support for the Belarusian people. — Reuters



MANALI, India: In this handout photograph taken yesterday, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) greets Defense Minister Rajnath Singh (right) and Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh Jai Ram Thakur on his arrival to inaugurate a Himalayan tunnel. — AFP

Modi opens tunnel route to tense Chinese border

NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday opened a Himalayan tunnel that will drastically reduce the time needed to rush troops to the country's remote Chinese border as tensions grow between the Asian neighbors. The tunnel traverses India's northern Himachal Pradesh state and lies on one of two main routes for troops headed to border areas in Ladakh.

Twenty Indian and an unspecified number of Chinese troops were killed in June during a deadly clash in Ladakh, which shares a disputed boundary with China's restive Xinjiang and Tibet regions. The two nuclear-armed countries have since rushed tens of thousands of additional troops and weapons to the area, and have

been locked in a tense stand-off for months. The \$400-million, nine-kilometer (six miles) tunnel will cut the journey by about 50 kilometers (30 miles) and four hours, enabling travelers to bypass a tricky route across a landslide-prone Himalayan pass. The tunnel, at an altitude of more than 3,000 meters (10,000 feet), has been hailed as a feat of engineering. A decade in the making, freezing temperatures and the challenging terrain meant construction work could only be carried out for about six months each year.

The project is part of New Delhi's push to catch up with Chinese infrastructure development on the other side of the border. In the last six years, Modi's government has expedited several frontier projects including roads, bridges and high-altitude airstrips. "We have put our entire energy in developing our border infrastructure. The country hasn't seen roads, bridges and tunnels built at this scale," the prime minister said after inaugurating the tunnel yesterday. "Besides locals, this (infrastructure) will also hugely benefit the men and women in our army," Modi added. New Delhi hopes such projects will promote tourism and spur economic activity. — AFP

year in a row. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a person in this category is three times as likely to need hospital care than someone with a lower weight. Another high risk factor is age. The CDC reports that eight of 10 Covid-19 related deaths in the US are of people over 65. "In general, your risk of getting severely ill from COVID-19 increases as you get older," it says on its website. Michael Head, senior research fellow in global health at the University of Southampton, said Trump would be classified as "vulnerable". "Many people in their 70s will also have further co-morbidities that increase the risks of a more severe illness," he added.

'Feeling good'

Currently, however, the US leader appears to have few if any symptoms. His official physician, Sean Conley, also described the presidential couple as "both well at this time". "We are feeling good & I have postponed all upcoming engagements," said First Lady Melania Trump in a tweet. Coronavirus infection can begin on a slow burn, often taking several days before symptoms appear.

"Most studies suggest that those with symptomatic COVID-19 infections could remain outside hospital during the first 5-7 days of the illness but thereafter it may become more serious requiring hospitalization-or they start to recover by themselves," said Julian Tang, Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Leicester. Trump is the latest world leader to become infected. Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson was hospitalized with the virus in April and spent three nights in intensive care, before recovering and returning to work.

'High' infection risk

Tang said it was "not so surprising" that both men had caught the virus, given the large number of contacts they would have as part of their everyday duties. Trump has also been reluctant to endorse protective measures. He first appeared in public in a mask in July, but has since rarely been seen wearing one. "That Donald Trump became infected was not an inevitability, but is consistent with him being a high risk candidate for infection," said Rowland Kao, professor of veterinary epidemiology and data science at the University of Edinburgh.

He said this was both because of the "his apparent attitudes towards personal protective measures" such as maintaining physical distance and face masks, as well as his large number of contacts. Kao said this also raised concerns about others he and his entourage may have come into contact with in recent days-which would include this week's televised presidential debate with his 77-year-old electoral challenger Joe Biden. — AFP



BETHESDA, Maryland: White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows (left) watches as US President Donald Trump walks off Marine One while arriving at Walter Reed Medical Center on Friday. — AFP

Trump's positive test underscores this is the Coronavirus Election

WASHINGTON/DETROIT: US President Donald Trump's positive test for COVID-19 confirmed what most voters already knew: This is the Coronavirus Election. During the closing stretch of the presidential race, Trump had worked furiously to shift public attention away from the virus and his handling of the pandemic, urging more states to open up fully and claiming the worst was over.

But the disclosure of Trump's illness on Friday shredded those arguments, returning the virus to center stage with just a month to go until the Nov 3 election, and reminding voters yet again of the biggest public health crisis in a century that has killed more than 200,000 of their fellow Americans. "The more of the spotlight is on coronavirus, the worse it is for the president," said Dennis Damoi, a Republican strategist in the key battleground state of Michigan that Trump won by less than a percentage point in 2016.

Even worse for the president, however, may be that his downplaying from the outset of the danger posed by the virus has come back to haunt him in the most personal way, making Democrat Joe Biden's prudence during the campaign look prescient. A White House official said on Friday that Trump will move into a special suite at the Walter Reed military hospital near Washington for the next few days as a precaution, adding doctors urged the move so he could get immediate care if needed.



GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan: Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden delivers remarks in the parking lot of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union Local 951 on Friday. — AFP

With Trump's health uncertain, his battle against Biden could be on hold for an indefinite period of time, with Trump unable to travel, stage his signature rallies or attend fundraisers during the election's final phase as millions are already casting their votes. More than 2.8 million Americans have voted early for November's election, according to the U.S. Elections Project at the University of Florida. At this point in 2016, fewer than 75,000 people had submitted early ballots.

The White House said on Friday it was exploring ways for Trump to communicate with the public during his quarantine. Biden, who said on Friday he tested negative for coronavirus after sharing the debate stage with Trump on Tuesday, meanwhile has signaled he intends to campaign as normal, proceeding with an event in Michigan on Friday as planned.

Trump's illness stands to send a confusing signal to supporters, many of whom now share his skepticism of using mail-in ballots for the election, wearing masks, practicing social distancing and other virus-related safety protocols. Trump has repeatedly belittled Biden for his light travel schedule and for often wearing a mask in public. He also boasted about holding large rallies featuring maskless supporters packed together, claiming there had been "no problem whatsoever."

"One of the judgments voters are making is which candidate would have better managed the response to the coronavirus and who has the leadership to lead us out of this national emergency," said Ben LaBolt, a former top aide to Democratic President Barack Obama.

Even as Trump has repeatedly suggested the country had turned the corner in the pandemic, voters have felt differently. Every week since March, roughly eight out of 10 American adults have said they are personally concerned about how the virus was spreading, according to Reuters/Ipsos polls. That includes about 9 in 10 Democrats and nearly 7 in 10 Republicans. — Reuters

News in brief

Switzerland arrests four

GENEVA: Swiss prosecutors said Friday they have arrested four people - three from Kosovo and one from Macedonia - with suspected links to banned jihadist organizations Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS) group. The attorney general's office, or MPC, said the arrests were made during searches in the canton of Fribourg in western Switzerland. Given the risk of collusion, "the house searches and arrests were all carried out simultaneously," the office said in a statement. The four suspects - three men and one woman - are accused of violating a law banning both Al-Qaeda and IS and related organizations, as well as supporting or being members of a criminal organization. The MPC told the Swiss news agency ATS that the four had already been questioned. Two of them - a 28-year-old Kosovar woman and a 29-year-old Macedonian man - had since been released. — AFP

Jihadist's wife sentenced

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: A German court sentenced the wife of rapper-turned-jihadist to three and a half years in prison for having taken part in the enslavement of a Yazidi girl in Syria. Named by the court as Omaira A. 36, the German-Tunisian woman was found guilty of belonging to the Islamic State (IS) group by a regional court in Hamburg. The judges also found her in violation of her duty as a mother by taking her three small children to a war zone, and of a war weapons control act for use of a Kalashnikov rifle. Early in 2015, the woman and her three children joined her first husband in IS-controlled areas in Syria. After his death, she married a notorious Berlin gangster rapper who had joined the ranks of the jihadist group. The rapper Denis Cuspert, better known under his pseudonym "Deso Dogg", had joined IS in 2014. According to media reports, he was killed during an air attack in 2018 in Syria. — AFP

'COVID-Organics' capsules

ANTANANARIVO: Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina on Friday launched a capsule version of a herbal drink he touts as a coronavirus treatment and cure. "COVID-Organics" is derived from artemisia - a plant with proven anti-malarial properties - and other indigenous herbs. The infusion's effects have not been scientifically tested and the World Health Organization (WHO) has issued several warnings against its use and distribution. "Today (Friday), we present to the entire world capsules containing extracts of artemisia and ravintsara, a local Malagasy plant, whose virtues are recognized globally," Rajoelina announced at an inauguration ceremony hosted by local pharmaceutical company Pharmagalasy. "Those who struggle to ingest the infusion can now take this CVO+ capsule that will be sold across the world," he added, speaking at the Pharmagalasy plant outside the capital Antananarivo. — AFP

California fires threaten towns

CALISTOGA: California fire crews deploying water-dropping helicopters made a defensive stand on Friday against flames raging in the foothills of the Napa Valley wine region as forecasts called for a return of dangerous high winds and hot weather this weekend. More than 2,500 firefighters were battling the Glass Fire, which broke out last Sunday near the resort community of Calistoga, some 75 miles north of San Francisco, and has already destroyed 248 homes or other structures. Among them were the stately Chateau Boswell Winery north of Napa, and a farmhouse at the landmark Castello di Amorosa winery, where the castle-like main building survived. Thick smoke poured over deserted Napa Valley communities that would typically be bustling with visitors for the grape harvest. "Everyone is hunkered down, it's very, very quiet," said Kari Corte, who works at the Ghost Block Estates Winery outside Oakville. — Reuters

Business

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2020

Trouble for Trump as US job growth slows

Nearly 4 million Americans permanently unemployed

WASHINGTON: US employment growth slowed more than expected in September and over 300,000 Americans lost their jobs permanently, dealing a potential blow to President Donald Trump ahead of the fiercely contested Nov 3 presidential election.

The Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday underscored an urgent need for additional fiscal stimulus to aid the economy's recovery from a recession triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The slowdown in hiring compounds problems for Trump, who announced overnight that he had tested positive for coronavirus.

Just over half of the 22.2 million jobs lost during the pandemic have been recouped. Former Vice President Joe Biden, the Democratic Party nominee, blames the economic turmoil on the White House's handling of the pandemic, which has killed more than 200,000 people and infected over 7 million in the nation. "The jobs report adds to Trump's woes," said James Knightley, chief international economist at ING in New York. "Betting odds signal a diminished chance he will win re-election and a much higher probability of a Democrat clean sweep."

Nonfarm payrolls increased by 661,000 jobs last month, the smallest gain since the jobs recovery started in May, after advancing 1.489 million in August. Every sector added jobs with the exception of government, which shed 216,000 positions because of the departure of temporary workers hired for the Census and layoffs at state and local government education departments as many school districts shift to online learning.

Employment in the leisure and hospitality sector increased by 318,000, accounting for nearly half of the gain in nonfarm employment. Payrolls are 10.7 million below their pre-pandemic level. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 850,000 jobs were created in September. Employment growth peaked in June when payrolls jumped by a record 4.781 million jobs. The unemployment rate fell to 7.9 percent in September as 695,000 people left the labor force from 8.4 percent in August. The jobless rate was again biased down by people misclassifying themselves as being "employed but absent from work."



Unemployment rate falls to 7.9% from 8.4%

Without this error, the government estimated that the unemployment rate would have been about 8.3 percent in September. There were 3.8 million people who had lost their jobs for good, up 345,000 from August. More experienced long bouts of unemployment, with the number of people out of work for more than 27 weeks surging 781,000 to 2.4 million.



OSHKOSH: Supporters listen as US President Donald Trump delivers remarks on the economy at an airport hanger in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. The United States added a less-than-expected 661,000 jobs in September but the unemployment rate fell to 7.9 percent, the Labor Department said Friday. — AFP

The slowing labor market recovery is the strongest sign yet that the economy has shifted into lower gear heading into the fourth quarter. Growth got a boost over the summer from fiscal stimulus. Third-quarter gross domestic product growth estimates are topping a 32 percent annualized rate, which would reverse a historic 31.4 percent pace of contraction in the April-June quarter.

Growth estimates for the fourth quarter have been cut to around a 2.5 percent rate from above a 10 percent pace. "The virus is in the driver's seat in controlling the speed of the recovery and right now the economy is in the slow lane unless Congress and the White House can settle their differences and provide additional stimulus," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFJ in New York. — Reuters

Walmart sells UK supermarket Asda for £6.8bn

LONDON: US retail giant Walmart has agreed to sell its British supermarket chain Asda to billionaire brothers and a private equity group for £6.8 billion (\$8.7 billion, 7.4 billion euros), they announced Friday. The Issa brothers, who run petrol stations and food outlets worldwide, have joined with private equity firm TDR Capital to purchase Asda, which last year regulators blocked from merging with British supermarket group Sainsbury's.

While the brothers and TDR are acquiring a majority stake in Asda, Walmart will retain an investment and have a seat on the new board, a statement said. "I'm delighted that Walmart will retain a significant financial stake... and will continue as a strategic partner," said Judith McKenna, CEO of Walmart International. Mohsin and Zuber Issa said "Asda's performance through the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the fundamental strength and resilience of the business".

The transaction, subject to regulatory approvals, is expected to complete in the first half of next year.

"We are proud to be investing alongside Mohsin and Zuber, who have built EG Group into a global convenience retailer," said Gary Lindsay, a partner at



ASHFORD: Customers arrive and leave from an Asda supermarket store in Ashford, south east England on Friday. US retail giant Walmart has agreed to sell its British supermarket chain Asda to two UK firms for £6.8 billion (\$8.7 billion, 7.4 billion euros). — AFP

TDR Capital.

Walmart bought Asda in 1999. "In a constantly changing retailing environment, our new ownership will further enhance our resilience, whilst creating significant, additional opportunities to drive growth," said Asda chief executive Roger Burnley. While the UK has shed tens of thousands of jobs during the coronavirus pandemic, the country's supermarket sector has embarked on a huge recruitment drive to meet surging demand for online food shopping.

"Considering the Issa brothers and TDR Capital are already present in fore-

court retail through Euro Garages, we would expect them to try to achieve synergies by bringing the Asda brand and products into their forecourts," said research group Euromonitor. "This also fits with the current consumer trend towards more top-up shopping in smaller outlets," Fraser McKeivitt, head of retail and consumer insight at data group Kantar, said there had been "substantial growth in convenience (store) sales during the pandemic". He added: "If people continue to work from home more in future, then grocers with a bigger local store presence could benefit." — AFP

No breakthrough in Brexit talks, but some progress made

BRUSSELS/LONDON: German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she had no breakthrough to announce on Friday as a week of EU talks with Britain ended, but remained optimistic that sealing a deal on a post-Brexit trade relationship was still possible before the end of the year.

Her words were echoed by Britain's chief negotiator, David Frost, who said that while progress had been made in some areas, the main differences between the two sides remained, with the gap on fisheries "unfortunately very large".

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was more blunt, telling the European Union it was up to the bloc to show common sense. Both Johnson and the EU have set a mid-October goal for reaching a trade agreement, but the EU's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier suggested talks would continue up until the end of the month.

There are still major hurdles to ensuring smooth ties after Dec. 31, when a standstill post-Brexit transition ends, and a chaotic split without a new agreement in place would jeopardize an estimated trillion euros worth of annual trade. Barnier noted fresh progress on aviation safety and safeguards of fundamental

rights but said there was none on personal data protection or carbon pricing.

"Serious divergences" persisted, he said, citing a need for level playing field guarantees of fair competition, including on state aid, "robust" mechanisms to solve disputes, including "effective remedies", and an agreement on fisheries. "I can't announce a breakthrough," Merkel told an earlier news conference after two-day talks among the 27 national EU leaders in Brussels. "As long as negotiations on Brexit are ongoing, I'm optimistic."

Johnson again said Britain only wanted a deal similar to the kind that the EU had handed other countries such as Canada. "It's up to our friends and partners to be common-sensical," he told BBC regional journalists.

His chief negotiator, Frost, rapped home London's point that he believed the EU needed to show more "realism and flexibility" to reach an agreement, saying: "I am concerned that there is very little time now to resolve these issues ahead of the European Council on 15 October."

Border

Johnson was expected to speak to the head of the EU's executive, Ursula von



LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the European Union on Friday it was up to the bloc to show common sense. — AFP

der Leyen, yesterday to agree next steps after the bloc launched a legal case against Britain over moving to undercut their Brexit divorce treaty. Speaking after the summit on Friday, von der Leyen said it was time to "intensify" Brexit talks with time available by the end of the year to put a new deal in place running out. "Where there's a will, there's a way," she said. "We have made progress on many, many difficult fields but the main ones all remain very much open," she added, naming guarantees on a level playing field of fair competition as a key sticking point. "There is still a lot of work to do." — Reuters

UK PM launches transport review to boost economy

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson launched a review aimed at improving transport links across the UK, including a possible bridge between Scotland and Northern Ireland, as part of a plan to boost the pandemic-hit economy and strengthen ties between its member nations. The study will consider air links within the country, road and rail links in Scotland, the Welsh rail network, as well as the cost and practicality of building a "fixed link" with Northern Ireland, said a government statement yesterday.

Johnson has in the past spoken of his desire for a 20-mile (32 km) plus bridge between Scotland and Northern Ireland. Coronavirus lockdowns meant

Britain's economic output collapsed 20 percent in the second quarter, and the country faces rising unemployment as its furlough scheme comes to an end, and Brexit.

At the same time, support for Scottish independence has grown due to perceptions that Johnson responded too slowly to the pandemic and Scots' anger over the UK's decision to leave the European Union. Scottish voters opposed leaving the EU in a 2016 referendum. Johnson hopes that transport improvements resulting from the review will help create jobs and bring the UK's member nations closer together.

"Today's announcement follows a recent pledge by the UK Government to bring forward funding to accelerate infrastructure projects in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland," added the statement. The review will be conducted by Peter Hendy, chair of state-owned rail track owner Network Rail, and report its findings in summer 2021. — Reuters

Investors load \$500m into Uber's trucking business

SAN FRANCISCO: Uber on Friday said an investment group led by Greenbriar Equity is pumping \$500 million into its trucking unit. The preferred stock financing values Uber Freight at \$3.3 billion, and comes as the San Francisco-based company's core ride-sharing service is stalled due to the pandemic.

Uber Freight matches truckers to shippers in much the way the ride service connects passengers with drivers in the so-called on-demand economy. While Uber's ride service has suffered due to people hunkering down or being reluctant to get into cars with strangers due to Covid-19 risk, the freight unit, which launched in 2017, has grown. "We have led the industry with technology, transforming dated and analog processes to ensure that both shippers and carriers are equipped to succeed in a rapidly changing industry," said Uber Freight chief Lior Ron.

Uber said it will retain a majority stake in Freight, using the money to expand the logistics platform and speed up technology innovation. "We are excited to support Uber Freight in the next stage of its development," said Greenbriar managing partner Michael Weiss.

"We believe that carriers and shippers will be increasingly attracted to the convenience and simplicity that Uber Freight offers in a complex marketplace."

Greenbriar has been involved in the logistics sector for decades and brings expertise that Uber Freight can tap into, Weiss added. Uber reported a \$1.8 billion loss in the second quarter of this year as the Covid-19 pandemic caused its shared-ride business revenue to plunge.

Meanwhile, California has filed lawsuits against Uber and Lyft for alleged wage theft by misclassifying drivers as independent contractors rather than employees, in violation of a recently enacted state law. Uber, Lyft and DoorDash are backing a state ballot initiative in November's election which would classify rideshare drivers and other gig-economy workers as independent contractors, while offering certain benefits such as minimum wage, sick leave and workers' compensation. — AFP



SAN FRANCISCO: Uber on Friday said an investment group led by Greenbriar Equity is pumping \$500 million into its trucking unit.

Business

Tesla reports record deliveries in Q3, but Model 3 sales underwhelm bulls

CEO Musk suggests India entry in 2021

SAN FRANCISCO: Tesla Inc on Friday said it delivered 139,300 vehicles in the third quarter, a quarterly record for the electric carmaker, but shares fell 5.7 percent in pre-market trading. The company slightly beat consensus estimates by Refinitiv for deliveries of 134,720 vehicles, but fell short of some of Wall Street's most bullish forecasts, with analysts issuing a wide range of estimates.

While the broader market was down on Friday morning, Tesla shares were among the heaviest decliners. Tesla delivered 124,100 Model Y and Model 3 units, slightly below Refinitiv consensus expectations of 128,000 Model 3 and Model Y vehicles combined. Some analysts had expected weaker U.S. demand for the mass-market Model 3 due to the release of the Model Y.

Including the third quarter, Tesla has delivered some 318,000 vehicles this year, putting the company under pressure to increase deliveries once more to nearly 182,000 in the fourth quarter to reach its ambitious year-end target of half a million deliveries.

Tesla's total production in the quarter rose 76 percent to 145,036 vehicles compared with the previous three-month period. The company last quarter said production at its California plant has ramped up to pre-pandemic levels after production at its core vehicle plant suspended from the end of March to early May due to the COVID-19 lockdown orders.

Tesla's delivery push has been supported by its new Shanghai factory, the only plant currently pro-

ducing vehicles outside California. Tesla began delivering Model 3s from its Shanghai factory in December and has said it aims to produce 150,000 Model 3 sedans in the factory per year and later 250,000 vehicles a year, including the Model Y. Some 23,300 Tesla vehicles were registered in China in the months of August and July, with data from September still to come.

Tesla is also building a new vehicle and battery manufacturing facility near Germany's Berlin and



Shares fall 5.7%
in pre-market
trading

seeks to start construction on a vehicle factory in Austin, Texas in the third quarter.

Meanwhile, Tesla Inc chief executive Elon Musk indicated on Friday that the US electric carmaker will make a foray into India in 2021. "Next year for sure," Musk said on Twitter in reply to a post with a photograph of a T-shirt with the message: "India wants Tesla".

"Thanks for waiting," Musk said. Tesla's entry



PETALUMA, California: A view of Tesla Superchargers in Petaluma, California. Tesla Inc on Friday said it delivered 139,300 vehicles in the third quarter, a quarterly record for the electric carmaker, but shares fell 5.7 percent in pre-market trading. — AFP

could come at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi is increasingly becoming focused on promoting the use and manufacture of electric vehicles.

India's auto sector, already reeling from a slowdown in demand last year, has been further hit by the

novel coronavirus pandemic and carmakers are seeking government support to push sales. Musk commented last year about coming to India, in response to someone on Twitter who asked "What about India sir?". "Would love to be there this year. If not, definitely next!" he said in March 2019. — Reuters

Stocks fall, dollar gains after Trump gets coronavirus

NEW YORK/LONDON: Global equity markets slumped and investors piled into gold and the Japanese yen on Friday after US President Donald Trump tested positive for the coronavirus, adding to market uncertainty just 32 days before the US election. Trump's bombshell announcement spurred risk-off moves among investors already concerned about an elusive coronavirus relief package aimed at bolstering a US economy that has lost steam, as seen by slowing jobs growth in the September payrolls data.

Gold posted its best week in eight even after paring gains, while the yen advanced sharply before also retreating a bit. Yields on the 10-year US Treasury note rose slightly, stuck in a narrow trading range it has held for three weeks. How Americans feel about the pandemic when they vote on Nov. 3 could determine the election's outcome, and that is highly unusual, said Michael Arone, chief investment strategist for the US SPDR business at State Street Global Advisors in Boston.

"Today's news demonstrates a bit of a weakness in terms of the Trump re-election campaign," he said. "The range of outcomes has expanded and some of the more extreme outcomes have increased in probability, and markets certainly don't like that."

Trump is experiencing mild symptoms but will keep working after testing positive, administration officials said. The main US stock indexes fell but regional ones in Europe ended slightly higher after an initial sell-off on the Trump news. The FTSEurofirst 300 index rose 0.22 percent to 1,405.35 and the STOXX Europe 600 added 0.25 percent to 362.69.

MSCI's benchmark for global equity markets fell 0.69 percent to 564.07, while its emerging markets index fell 0.29 percent. On Wall Street, the



NEW YORK: People walk near the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in lower Manhattan on Friday in New York City. Stocks and markets around the world have fallen in morning trading as investors digest the overnight news that President Donald Trump has COVID-19. — AFP

Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.48 percent. The S&P 500 lost 0.96 percent and the Nasdaq Composite dropped 2.22 percent, with market leaders Apple Inc, Microsoft Corp and Amazon.com the heaviest drags.

How long risk-aversion will last depends on the extent of the infection within the White House, said Francois Savary, chief investment officer at Swiss wealth manager Prime Partners.

"It will weigh on the market today and early next week but will not induce a long-lasting correction if the infection is contained to Trump," he said. The Labor Department's closely watched employment report on Friday was the last before the presidential election.

September's employment gains were the smallest since the jobs recovery started in May and left the US labor market a long way from recouping the 22.2 million jobs lost in March and April, indicating slow-

er growth heading into the fourth quarter. US non-farm payrolls increased by 661,000 jobs last month, below consensus expectations of 850,000, leading to mostly negative reaction by economists.

But both Arone and Steven Ricchiuto, US chief economist at Mizuho Securities USA in New York, said the loss of government jobs, mostly seasonal in education, pulled numbers lower while the private sector's gains were above overall expectations. "The net result is the seasonal factors pulled down the state and local portion, very, very dramatically, in particular in the education area," Ricchiuto said. "The private sector component, however, continues to improve at a healthy pace."

The government lost more than 200,000 jobs, Arone said. "Those job losses on the government side are real, don't get me wrong. But overall the private sector seems to be hanging in there pretty well," he said. — Reuters

NextEra nears ExxonMobil in market value

NEW YORK: In a sign of shifting fortunes in the energy business, green-oriented power company NextEra Energy on Friday sparred with petroleum giant Exxon Mobil for market capitalization supremacy. NextEra, which owns two Florida electricity utilities and bills itself as the "world's largest generator of renewable energy from the wind and sun," finished Friday's session with a market capitalization of \$137.7 billion.

NextEra actually overtook ExxonMobil during the session, but finished at a level just under the oil giant's market value of \$139.4 billion. Chevron closed the day with a value of \$132.9 billion. Shares of NextEra have risen about 18 percent this year as policies to promote green energy and address climate change gain momentum and raise doubts about the longevity of petroleum.

But NextEra Energy remains a much smaller company than ExxonMobil. In 2019, NextEra reported profits of \$3.8 billion on revenues of \$19 billion and has around 14,000 employees. During the same period, ExxonMobil reported profits of \$14.3 billion on revenues of \$265 billion. The oil giant has 75,000 workers. ExxonMobil has lost more than half its market value in 2020 as oil prices have sunk amid the coronavirus downturn. The company was bumped from the prestigious Dow Jones index in August, reflecting the diminishing prestige of petroleum companies as policies to address climate change boost Tesla and other green companies. — AFP

Life far from sunny in South California where workers face bleak future

LOS ANGELES: Autumn is coming to Southern California, where crowds of visitors normally would have been heading to arts festivals and celebrity events, and chef Nigel Henderson would have been making his living as their caterer. Not this year.

The annual Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Greater Palm Springs, where he works as a private chef, was cancelled after Gov. Gavin Newsom issued a statewide stay-at-home order due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Coachella events alone would have earned Henderson as much as 40% of his year's income.

Then Henderson's monthly series Rhythm and Brunch LA, with DJ Trauma, comedian Dave Chappelle's DJ, was cancelled. A fundraiser for the Dooky Chase Foundation was cancelled, and Kampalooza, a yearly outdoor cooking and camping experience, was cancelled.

"Initially you figure, yes it's serious, but we will get a handle on it," Henderson told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. But the coronavirus, the cancellations and the closings have Henderson and others in Los Angeles' huge hospitality industry lining up at food banks, breaking into their children's piggy banks and skimping on baby diapers to stretch their dollars.

Tens of thousands laid off

Most just do not know how they will survive the dark months ahead.

Hospitality workers - chefs, hotel staff, theme park workers, golf course attendants - make up nearly 10 percent of the workforce in Los Angeles. Before COVID-19, that added up to nearly half a million jobs.

The pandemic has decimated the workforce. Unite Here Local 11, a hospitality workers union, saw nearly 90 percent of its more than 32,000 members laid off, according to union official Maria Hernandez. As the cancellations mounted and the future grew more uncertain, Henderson said his optimism vanished. "I went through a little depression. Running your own business, you don't have anything to fall back on," he said. For a while, his cooking classes at The Gourmandise School went online, but then the school furloughed all of its employees.

As a Black man, Henderson said, losing his livelihood comes amid a broader political context of what is going on across the country. "Who cares about cooking lessons for real, when we're talking about people getting shot in the street," he said. "And there's protest, and riots, and police brutality and a pandemic."

Seeing video of the death of George Floyd in police custody "just brought out PTSD of growing up black in L.A. and all of the interactions I've had with cops," he said. The economic devastation reached high into the luxurious heights of Los Angeles' hospitality sector. Walter

Almendarez can tell stories about a \$40,000 wagon full of oysters and parties thrown by pop royalty Beyonce and Jay-Z at Hollywood's Chateau Marmont, where he worked for 23 years, more than half his life.

The opulent property, a celebrity haunt, boasts of panoramic views of Sunset Strip and poolside cottages nestled among banana trees. It is owned by American luxury hotelier Andre Balazs, who also owns the Mercer Hotel in New York, Shelter Island's Sunset Beach and the Chiltern Firehouse in London.

Almendarez never suspected his wealthy employer would stop paying him. But on March 16, as he was playing with his daughter in the family's living room, he got an email telling him his last day would be March 20 and to collect his things. The hotel was laying off its staff, it said.

Almendarez most recently worked as a hotel bellman and has done every job in the place "besides the kitchen," he said.

The right of recall

He has become a passionate advocate for "right of recall" and "right of retention" laws that would require owners to hire back their former staff and not replace them with less experienced or less costly employees. One such law was adopted by Los Angeles County in June, and a statewide version, Assembly Bill 3216, passed by the California legislature awaits the governor's signature to become law.

In September, a caravan of laid-off hospitality workers - including Almendarez - drove to the state capital in



A person holds a sign as laid off LAX Airport workers protest for a healthcare extension from concessions companies, in Los Angeles, California. — Reuters

Sacramento and delivered a letter to Newsom, asking him to make the provision law as soon as possible. A spokesman for the governor said he would not comment on the legislation under consideration, which is strongly opposed by business groups such as the California Chamber of Commerce.

California has taken other steps to safeguard workers hit hardest by the economic fallout of COVID-19, including passing a measure making it easier for workers infected on the job to access benefits and forcing businesses to report COVID-19 infections at work sites. But even working at Chateau Marmont did not pay enough, and Almendarez drove an Uber to supplement his income and support his wife, 7-month-old daughter

and his parents on \$15.45 per hour plus tips from the hotel.

Room rates at the Chateau Marmont started at \$625 a night, with a minimum of two nights. Almendarez has been cutting costs, withdrawing savings, buying fewer diapers for his baby and going to food banks. "You don't think of shame. It's food. You do what you have to do," he said.

His major concern has been losing health insurance coverage. To stay on the plan he had while working at the hotel would cost him \$500 a month. California has seen a surge in applications for its health care marketplace, "Covered California," which provides subsidies for low-income residents to afford private health care plans. Applications doubled in the early month of the pandemic. — Reuters

Business

Ooredoo wins 2 prestigious awards at 2020 MEIRA annual awards ceremony

Leading Corporate for Investor Relations - Qatar and Best Investor Relations Professional - Qatar

DOHA: Ooredoo QPSC ("Ooredoo") announced that it has won two prestigious awards at the 2020 Middle East Investor Relations Association ("MEIRA") Annual Conference and Awards Ceremony in recognition of its leading position in providing best practice Investor Relations (IR) in the region.

At the MEIRA awards ceremony, held on 22 September, Ooredoo Group has won the "Leading Corporate for Investor Relations - Qatar", and "Best Investor Relations Professional - Qatar".

Sheikh Saud bin Nasser Al-Thani, Group Chief Executive Officer of Ooredoo said: "We are honored that our efforts to provide outstanding investor relations have been recognized for the fifth year in a row, as we seek to provide analysts and shareholders with fair, timely and transparent information

about our performance. Ooredoo Group continues to deliver long term shareholder value, thanks to our strong balance sheet, good revenue generation ability and leadership in 5G deployment and digitalization. I would like to thank our Investor Relations team for their commitment and dedication to maintaining best practices and keeping our shareholders and the wider investment community informed."

The Middle East Investor Relations Association is the largest IR event in the MENA. It was held this year under the theme "Driving stakeholder value," recognizing the importance of all stakeholders who play an essential role in the IR landscape and reflecting the importance of IR in responding to changes in market structure, regulation and technology. This year, the event was held virtually due to the current pandemic environment.



Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 27th September 2020 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 20 - 24 September 2020. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:
Yousaf Bjad Thamer Ateeq
Mohamed Abdullah Saad
Hawraa Ali Mohamad Al-Shawaf
Mohammad Khamis Abdulhafith Abdulhaafeth
Ali Siddiqui Mohammed Afzal

Al-Danah is now offering its biggest prize yet, with an annual draw prize of KD 1,500,000. The annual draw will be held on 14 January 2021. Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2019, have been added to their 2020 chances, and the same process will take place in 2021, and so on. Terms and conditions apply.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2020 quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

Pelosi says airline aid deal is near, asks for halt to job cuts

WASHINGTON/CHICAGO: US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Friday asked airlines to halt furloughs and firings, saying a long-awaited deal to provide another \$25 billion in aid for the struggling sector was "imminent." American Airlines and United Airlines began furloughing 32,000 workers this week but reiterated on Friday that they would reverse course if Congress acts quickly to extend the payroll support program.

A final deal does not appear likely until next week at the earliest when both chambers could vote on a standalone measure or adopt a broad-based coronavirus relief package of \$1.5 trillion or more. Talks between Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on that bigger bill are continuing.

Earlier, Representative Peter DeFazio, chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, failed to win approval of a standalone bipartisan measure under unanimous consent after some Republicans objected. Republicans "killed this legislation," DeFazio said angrily, hitting a lectern. "These people's lives are at stake."

Pelosi said despite the setback "Democrats will



US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi participates in a news conference at the US Capitol in Washington on Friday.—Reuters

continue our efforts to provide direly-needed relief for airline workers."

The House is to return to session Tuesday, and the Senate could take up a standalone measure next week if a broader coronavirus deal is not reached. Last week, Senator Roger Wicker had sought to win unanimous approval of a standalone airline measure but faced opposition from a few senators.

A spokesman for Senator Rick Scott on Friday said his boss still had concerns with the airline payroll assistance bill and at least one other senator reportedly also has concerns according to congress-

sional aides. It is also possible the Senate may not return as scheduled next week after Senator Mike Lee disclosed Friday he had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Still, Pelosi's support was a major step forward, said Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President Sara Nelson, who has rallied thousands of airline workers to keep pressuring lawmakers for a deal.

"We're hopeful that the widely expressed, bipartisan support for saving airline jobs will lead to a legislative breakthrough soon," United Airlines spokesman Frank Benenati said. "But they need to act quickly." Republican Senator John Cornyn, who is up for re-election in Texas where American Airlines is based, applauded Pelosi's decision to advance a standalone relief bill, saying that protecting airline workers jobs "will help keep air travel safe and protect this vital sector of our economy."

Separately, the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) sent a letter on Thursday urging Congress to include new consumer protection measures for passengers on matters including ticket refunds as part of a financial relief package or in separate legislation. Congress in March approved a \$50 billion bailout for the passenger airline industry, half primarily in the form of grants to fund payroll costs and half in government loans. They have asked for another \$25 billion in payroll support to keep their workforce and meet demand as the economy rebounds. — Reuters

US Black-white joblessness gap narrows, but not for right reasons

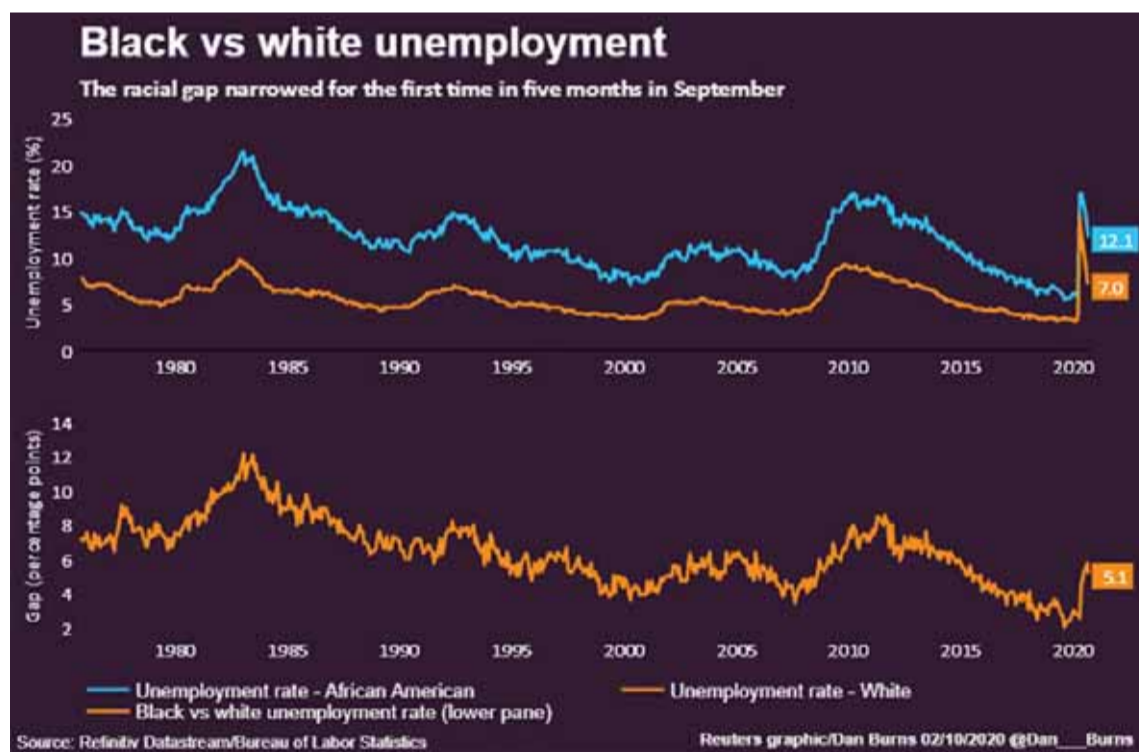
WASHINGTON: The gap in unemployment rates between Blacks and whites in the United States narrowed for the first time in five months in September, although largely for the wrong reasons.

After having mushroomed to the widest level in nearly six years over the summer, the jobless rate for Blacks dropped by 0.9 percentage point to 12.1 percent in September, from 13.0 percent in August, data from the US Labor Department showed on Friday. The rate for whites dropped by 0.3 percentage point to 7.0 percent, from 7.3 percent a month earlier.

The overall US unemployment rate fell more than expected last month to 7.9 percent from 8.4 percent in August. The 5.1 percentage point gap was the narrowest since May, when it began widening as the job market's recovery from record employment losses in March and April benefited whites far more than Blacks. The racial gap in US jobless rates has come under closer scrutiny in the months since the pandemic struck, exacerbating long-standing racial economic inequality. The focus on the inequality occurs against a backdrop of protests against police violence against Blacks, which has become a central issue in the US presidential election campaign.

At a glance, the faster drop in the Black jobless rate would appear welcome news, but a closer examination of the data points to a less heartening conclusion. Nearly 200,000 African-Americans dropped out of the US workforce last month, and 36,000 fewer Blacks over the age of 20 were employed than in August, providing further evidence that the COVID-19 recession is extracting a heavier toll on the Black community than on whites.

The racial discrepancy is starkest when looking at



Black men aged 20 and over versus the same age bracket for white men. Last month, 313,000 more white men were employed than in August, while 84,000 fewer Black men had jobs. The pandemic ended a record-long US economic expansion at a point when a tight labor market had begun delivering benefits to Blacks and other groups left behind in the earlier stages of recovery from the previous recession. In August 2019, the Black unemployment rate was a record-low 5.4 percent, and the gap with the white rate had been its narrowest ever at 2 percentage points.

The employment recovery that began in May has helped restore nearly 1.3 million jobs for African-Americans. Nonetheless, there are still 11.1 percent fewer Blacks working now than in February, before the pandemic struck the US economy, while there are 6.2 percent fewer whites employed. — Reuters

Russian giant Ozon eyes US stock market flotation

MOSCOW: Russian online retailer Ozon said Friday it is planning to list on the US stock exchange after meteoric growth, fuelled most recently by the boom in e-commerce due to coronavirus lockdowns.

Ozon has "submitted a draft registration statement... to the Securities and Exchange Commission relating to the proposed initial public offering of its ordinary shares," the company said in a statement. "The number of shares to be offered and the price range for the proposed offering have not yet been determined. The initial public offering is expected to take place after the SEC completes its review process, subject to market and other conditions," it added.

Earlier, a report in the Wall Street Journal said that Ozon—which began in 1998 as an online bookstore and is often called Russia's Amazon—was preparing an IPO later this year or early next year in a transaction potentially valuing it at \$3.0-5.0 billion. Ozon notched up growth of more than 100 percent in the first quarter and nearly 200 percent in the second, as the pandemic boosted e-commerce platforms by spurring more people to shop online.

Its main shareholders are the private equity firm Baring Vostok Capital and AFK Sistema, a conglomerate controlled by businessman Vladimir Yevtushenkov. With the Russian economy in the doldrums, e-commerce has seen several years of booming sales and a number of large groups, from public bank Sberbank to China's Alibaba, have tried to move into the market by teaming up with local internet giants, Yandex and Mail.ru. — AFP

Argentina cuts soy export tax rate in bid to boost FX reserves

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina has temporarily cut soybean export taxes by 3 percentage points to 30 percent to help stimulate trades, the government announced, as the country struggles with recession and dwindling foreign reserves. Processed soybean and soy oil levies will temporarily be cut to varying rates starting at around 28 percent, according to a detailed breakdown of the tax rates made available by the Economy Ministry on Friday. All the rates would then rise again incrementally until January.

"We are seeking to strengthen the country's international reserves," Economy Minister Martin Guzman said at an event in Buenos Aires to announce a wider raft of economic measures.

But farmers and analysts said the move might not be enough to significantly boost selling by growers and generate much-needed export dollars as the government heads into debt renegotiation talks with the International Monetary Fund.

Soybeans are the main cash crop of Argentina. The country, also a major exporter of corn and wheat, is the world's top supplier of soybean livestock feed used to fatten hogs and poultry from Europe to Southeast Asia. Soybean and soybean export taxes, which had been at 33 percent, will fall to 28 percent in October, then rise to 29.5 percent in November, 30 percent in December and 31 percent in January, under the plan.

Argentina's CIARA soy crushing companies' chamber issued a statement late on Friday calling the tax cut plan insufficient. "CIARA has always held the position that all export taxes and restrictions on grains and their derivatives are distorting the market. We would support a schedule for the reduction and elimination of such duties," the statement said.

Santiago del Solar, a farmer in the bread-basket province of Buenos Aires, said he expected buyers to take advantage of farmers rushing to market during the three-month tax cut window. "Everyone knows we want to sell during these 90 days, including the buyers. They will lower the prices they offer during these three months, so the benefit of the tax reduction will never reach the farm," del Solar said.

Argentina's economy, which has been shrinking since 2018, has been dented further by the lockdown against the coronavirus pandemic in place since March. So far 20,599 Argentines have died from COVID-19, according to the Health Ministry. The central bank last month tightened capital controls in a bid to shore up reserves as Argentines dump the local peso currency in favor of safe-haven US dollars. — Reuters



People who lost their jobs wait in line to file for unemployment following an outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), at an Arkansas Workforce Center in Fayetteville, Arkansas.— Reuters

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Lifestyle | Features



This picture shows the statue of Al-Sawas, which in English means The Licorice Man and depicts a street peddler selling juice and candy made from the plant, in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. — AFP photos



Men pray together on a lawn near the statue of "My Lovely Lady" erected in the center of a square in the western half of Iraq's northern city of Mosul.



This picture shows the statue of the poet Abu Tammam, erected in the center of a square in the western half of Iraq's northern city of Mosul.



This picture shows the statue of Mulla Uthman, a Sufi poet from Iraq's northern city of Mosul, erected in the center of a square in the western half of the city.

IN IRAQ'S MOSUL, NEW STATUES RISE FROM ASHES OF IS RULE

As sunset nears, the residents of Iraq's Mosul flock to a golden-tinted statue of a woman looking out over their scarred city with an expression of steady defiance. It is one of a half-dozen works by local artists that have been erected across the northern Iraqi city since the Islamic State group lost control of it three years ago. The artworks are helping residents shake off memories of brutal punishments meted out by IS in squares and roundabouts, even as much of their city remains in ruins. "My Lovely Lady" was the first, erected in September 2018 in a traffic circle where IS fighters used to behead or lash residents who had broken its ultra-conservative rules.

"By placing this statue here, I was trying to erase these dark, terrifying images from people's minds," said Omar Ibrahim, the 35-year-old artist behind the work. "My Lovely Lady" represents Mosul's beauty, its rebirth after overcoming all the obstacles of this nerve-wracking period," he told AFP. Nerve-wracking it was: Ibrahim created the sculpture in a secret basement studio while the IS was still controlling Mosul. When they first

overran the city, the jihadists smashed works of art, musical instruments and millennia-old artefacts, deeming them violations of their ultra-conservative views. They banned artists from working under penalty of death. It was a devastating blow for Mosul, which had been known for centuries as a hub for musicians, writers and artists.

Symbols of a city

One favorite destroyed by IS was "The Spring Girl," a young woman carrying a bouquet and buffeted by the wind. Mosul is known as "The Mother of Two Springs" because of its mild weather in both spring and autumn. A remake of the sculpture of a woman with flowing hair and a sly half-smile was erected this year against a backdrop of a bullet-riddled building, a reminder of Mosul's grim recent history. Another was "The Licorice Man," which dated back to the 1970s and depicted a street peddler with the beloved candy.

A team of young sculptors has made a new version, which has become such a landmark that the whole area is now dubbed the "Licorice Circle" by resi-

dents. Jihadists also pulverized statues of the poet Abu Tammam and celebrated ballad virtuoso Mulla Uthman, whose remakes were recently installed in western Mosul. While their predecessors were made of local Mosul stone or bronze, the replacements are made of cheaper metal.

Mosul's municipality is looking to pepper the city with more historical symbols, said Fares Mohammad, a local official from the Building Unit. One statue he wants to see installed is of Ibn Sina, the father of early medicine more commonly known as Avicenna, to honor Mosul's past as a destination for top-tier medical care. "These statues represent Mosul's cultural identity, its life, its professions and even its four seasons—especially spring, which is beautiful here," said Ziad Al-Sumeidi, a history and heritage researcher.

'Our devastated Mosul'

Little of Mosul's rich history is visible today. Besides the IS reign of destruction, the grueling and months-long fight to recapture the city from the jihadists ravaged its infrastructure, particularly in

the western half. Only one public hospital now functions, power and water services are intermittent, and children must walk past crumbling buildings to get to the few schools that have reopened. The poor living standards mean hundreds of thousands who were displaced from Mosul in recent years still prefer to live in tented camps rather than return to their scarred home town.

Those who have come back can often be seen relishing a quiet moment near the statues in the evenings. Hadeel Najjar, a 30-year-old housewife, said she was glad to see the larger-than-life figures revive her hometown and hoped that her fellow Mosul residents can return, too. "Erecting these statues is a necessary part of bringing life back to our devastated Mosul," she told AFP. "But people still aren't coming back to their homes and shops, because of delays in compensating war victims or rebuilding the city's infrastructure." — AFP

Gang who stole 'irreplaceable' books jailed in UK

An international gang of thieves whose haul included rare books by historic greats such as Galileo Galilei, Isaac Newton and Dante Alighieri were jailed on Friday by a British court. The 12 men formed a sophisticated network, and travelled to Britain from their Romanian base to commit the "high value and well-planned burglaries", according to London's Metropolitan Police. Romanian prosecutors said last month they had recovered around 200 centuries-old first-edition books, a text by Italian scholar Petrarch, rare versions of Dante and 80 sketches by Spanish painter Francisco de Goya after they were stolen from a depot near London, in 2017.

The thieves often entered properties via the roof using ropes and ladders and also targeted smartphones, laptops and tablet computers, police added. During the rare books raid, the thieves descended 12 meters (40 feet) to the ground after entering via the roof, dodging movement sensors to spend hours rummaging through thousands of works destined for an auction in the United States. They left by the same route with a haul whose total value was estimated at around two million euros (\$2.4 million). The Metropolitan Police said the "irreplaceable" works had been "buried underground", posting a picture on its website of a hidden compartment under a house.

The court heard that the gang carried out their 12 raids in Britain between December 2016 and April 2019 at various locations including Peterborough, Hertfordshire and Enfield near London, and Sheffield, in northern England. The gang flew members into Britain to carry out the robberies, jetting them out straight away afterwards. "These sentences bring a successful conclusion to a complicated three-year investigation, which identified and convicted a previously unknown Romanian organized crime gang," said Detective Inspector Andy Durham, who led the investigation.

The men were sentenced over two days at Kingston Crown Court in southwest London having all been charged with one count of conspiracy to commit burglary and one count of conspiracy to conceal, disguise, transfer and remove criminal property. They each received sentences ranging from three years and three months to five years and eight months. — AFP



Models present creations by Yohji Yamamoto during the Womenswear Spring Summer 2021 as part of the Fashion Week in Paris on Friday. — AFP photos



Lifestyle | Features



This photograph shows people looking at a display of formicariums that house ants inside the "Just Ants" pet shop in Singapore.



Colonies of ants inside a formicarium at the "Just Ants" pet shop in Singapore.



Ants inside a formicarium at the "Just Ants" pet shop.— AFP photos

Singaporean 'ant-repreneur' sells tiny six-legged pets

Ants scurry around in transparent boxes stacked outside a Singaporean store that is tapping into an unlikely but growing local trend of keeping the six-legged creatures as pets. John Ye says he became fascinated with the "altruistic, compassionate" creepy-crawlies after receiving some as a gift from his

brother-in-law. The 41-year-old eventually ditched a job in electronics distribution to open "Just Ants" in January and cater to fellow enthusiasts. "I wish to have a place where people can gather and share insights, and share their ant-keeping journey," Ye told AFP.

The shop sells ant farms along

with specialist equipment, including mini handheld vacuums for catching the insects, tiny feeding dishes and mealworms used as feed. It was forced to close for a period due to a coronavirus lockdown earlier this year but has reopened since restrictions were eased, and business is picking up. It stocks 30 to 40 species, sourced from ant-keeper friends or collected by Ye and his team around Singapore. Catching the creatures is no easy task. It is usually only possible during so-called "nuptial flights"—when new queens and winged male ants take to the air in the hope of finding a mate.

Pets or pests?

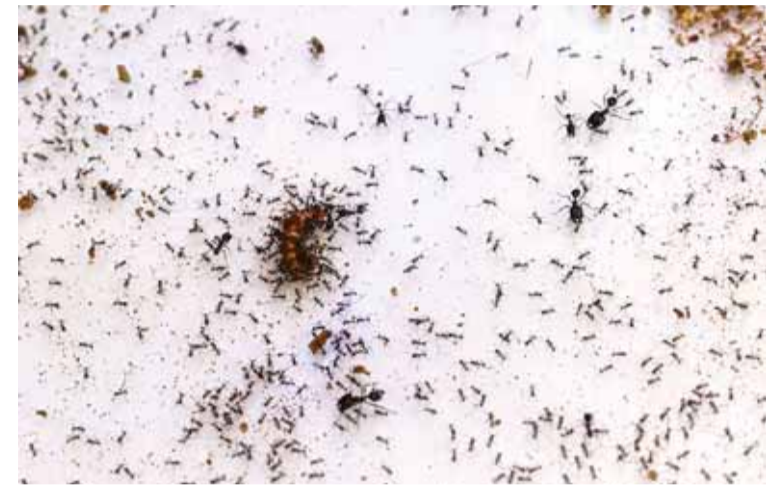
The queen ants are then placed in test tubes or small tanks, where they give birth to a colony of worker ants if they have mated. Ye's personal collection includes tens of thousands of marauder ants, a species of the creature commonly found across Asia, housed in a large box. The number of ant aficionados in Singapore is small but growing,

according to Ye—a Facebook group where keepers exchange advice and information has nearly 4,000 members. But Ye knows he has his work cut out to convince people in Singapore, where ant-keeping is rare, that the creatures are pets and not pests.

Most Singaporeans believe "you should actually not keep ants because ants... are poisonous, they are dirty, disgusting, they carry diseases", he conceded. "We always fear something that we don't understand." Beginner ant-keeper Wei Sern Lim visited the shop to buy a box of food and a new home for his colony. "It's nicer to see the products and a lot more convenient just to have a physical shop," the 30-year-old told AFP. Others simply turned up to see whether such a shop really existed. "I'm very tickled, they are actually selling ants as pets—it's totally unheard of," said visitor Michelle Serio. — AFP



People looking at a display of formicariums that house ants at the "Just Ants" pet shop.



Ants feeding on a worm inside a formicarium at the "Just Ants" pet shop.



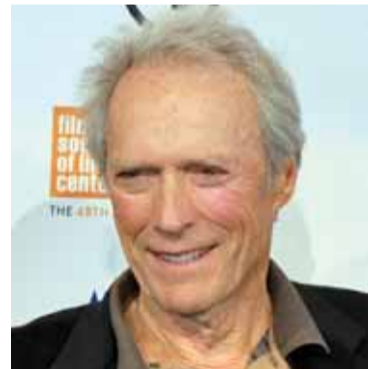
People looking at a display of formicariums that house ants at the "Just Ants" pet shop.

Clint Eastwood prepares for new film and role

Clint Eastwood, 90, will direct and star in a new film, "Cry Macho", US media reported Friday. It is unclear when filming will begin but Eastwood has already started scouting shooting locations, entertainment news site Deadline reported. The screen-

play for "Cry Macho"—which has not been officially given the go-ahead by Warner Bros—was written by N Richard Nash, author of the 1970 novel of the same name. Scriptwriter Nick Schenk, who worked with Eastwood on "Gran Torino" (2008) and "The Mule" (2018), is also reported to be involved.

The story is about a one-time rodeo star turned horse breeder who accepts a mission from a former boss to cross the US-Mexico border to snatch his son from an alcoholic mother and return the child to his father in Texas. Arnold Schwarzenegger had been touted to play the lead role in 2011 but the project was canceled, US media reported. — AFP



Clint Eastwood

FRENCH TV CHIEF TAKES OVER EUROVISION ORGANIZERS EBU

France Television chief executive Delphine Ernotte vowed to defend Europe's "cultural and technological sovereignty" when she was elected Friday as the first female president of the European Broadcasting Union. Ernotte, who had been vice president of the Geneva-based EBU that puts together the annual Eurovision Song Contest, will replace former BBC director-general Tony Hall. Founded in 1950, the EBU is the world's biggest public service media alliance. Chosen by an absolute majority during the alliance's first virtual

general assembly, Ernotte will run the EBU for two years from January 1.

"The health crisis has underlined the major democratic role played by public service media in accessing free and trusted information," Ernotte said. "The diversity of our countries and our cultures is a major strength in confronting global media platforms." Ernotte vowed to uphold Europe's "cultural and technological sovereignty". The EBU has 115 member organizations in 56 countries, as well as 34 associates in Asia, Africa and the Americas.

Famously, it organizes Eurovision, the kitsch annual televised pop music extravaganza watched by hundreds of millions each year. Eurovision was cancelled this year for the first time in its 64-year history due to the coronavirus pandemic. Rotterdam will get its chance to host the glitzy event next year instead. Besides Eurovision, the EBU shares knowledge across the broadcasting industry, particularly in technological advances. It negotiates global sport content deals in a bid to keep major events on public service television. — AFP



In this file photo Chief executive officer of French TV group France Televisions Delphine Ernotte Cunci poses during a photo session in Paris.— AFP



In this file photo Harvey Weinstein arrives at the Manhattan Criminal Court, in New York City.— AFP

Weinstein charged with six new sex crimes counts in LA

Disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein, who has already been convicted of sex crimes in New York, was charged Friday in Los Angeles with six new counts over the alleged rapes of two women. The first incident took place sometime between "September 2004 and September 2005 where Weinstein allegedly raped a woman at a hotel in Beverly Hills," said the office of LA County District Attorney Jackie Lacey. The 68-year-old Weinstein "also is accused of raping another woman on two separate occasions in November 2009 and November 2010 at a hotel in Beverly Hills," Lacey's office said. The statement does not name the victims or offer any other details about the circumstances.

These six new charges come in addition to others he is already facing. In total, Weinstein is accused in Los Angeles of either rape or sexual assault of five women. If convicted, he faces up to 140 years in prison. Weinstein is already serving a 23-year sentence after being convicted in New York in February of a criminal sexual act in the first degree and rape in the third degree. That verdict was a landmark moment for the #MeToo global reckoning against men abusing positions of power. Nearly 90 women, including Angelina Jolie and Salma Hayek, have come forward alleging 40 years of vile predatory behavior by the Oscar-winning producer of "Shakespeare in Love" and numerous other critically acclaimed and box office hits.—AFP

New Bond film release falls victim to virus

The makers of the new James Bond movie—which has already had its release date pushed back once due to the pandemic—on Friday said it would not now be released until April 2021. "No Time to Die", the 25th instalment of the fictional British spy saga, sees Bond drawn out of retirement in Jamaica by his old friend and CIA agent Felix Leiter. It is expected to be actor Daniel Craig's last outing as 007, after starring in four previous films. The movie had been initially set for a London premiere on March 31, 2020 before a rollout worldwide in April.

As the coronavirus pandemic took hold in March, MGM, Universal and Bond producers Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli announced they were delaying the release until November 12, with a US launch on November 25. Then on Friday, they said the film would be delayed further until April 2 "in order to be seen by a worldwide theatrical audience". "We understand the delay will be disappointing to our fans but we now look forward to sharing NO TIME TO DIE next year," they said. — AFP



Security guards sit in the Erawan Shrine compound under an advertisement poster featuring Daniel Craig in the new James Bond movie "No Time to Die" in Bangkok.— AFP

ACTRESS SOFIA VERGARA HIGHEST-PAID IN WORLD

"Modern Family" star Sofia Vergara has topped the Forbes list of the highest paid actresses in the world, leading a charge by small-screen talent in a year when movie theaters have gone dark, the magazine said Friday. Vergara—who is also now a judge on "America's Got Talent"—earned a whopping \$43 million in the past 12 months in salary and endorsements. She moved up from second place last year. The 48-year-old Colombian-born actress earned \$500,000 an episode for the final season of Emmy-winning "Modern Family," which wrapped up earlier this year. Forbes estimated she would earn "at least \$10 million each season" for "AGT," one of the most popular reality competition shows in the United States.

The coronavirus pandemic paralyzed Hollywood, forcing crews to

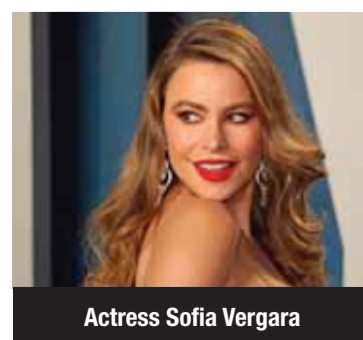
stop production and shuttering movie theaters, so many big-budget films have been delayed. Many film stars also make money by earning a share of the profits—meaning if movies are not released in theaters, their income plummets. Nevertheless, Oscar winner Angelina Jolie was in second place on the Forbes list at \$35 million. But actresses who make most of their money from television

and/or streaming services made up the bulk of the list. "Wonder Woman" star Gal Gadot came in third at \$31 million, but she made a chunk of her money from the Netflix film "Red Notice." "Grey's Anatomy" lead Ellen Pompeo was eighth at \$19 million, and "The Handmaid's Tale" star Elisabeth Moss came in ninth at \$16 million.

Another Oscar winner, Viola Davis, made her first appearance on the top 10 list. The "How To Get Away with Murder" star—who will soon star in Netflix's adaptation of the August Wilson play "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom"—came in 10th at \$15.5 million. Even the venerable Meryl Streep (fifth place) made most of her income in the past year from either films for streaming services or television roles. In total, the top 10 paid actresses in the world in 2020 earned \$254 million in the 12

months leading up to June, Forbes said. That was down 20 percent from last year. The top 10 highest paid actors made nearly double as much—almost \$550 million—in the same period. Last month's list for the men was topped by Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson at \$87.5 million.

- Here is the full list:
1. Sofia Vergara (\$43 million)
 2. Angelina Jolie (\$35.5 million)
 3. Gal Gadot (\$31.5 million)
 4. Melissa McCarthy (\$25 million)
 5. Meryl Streep (\$24 million)
 6. Emily Blunt (\$22.5 million)
 7. Nicole Kidman (\$22 million)
 8. Ellen Pompeo (\$19 million)
 9. Elisabeth Moss (\$16 million)
 10. Viola Davis (\$15.5 million)—AFP



Actress Sofia Vergara

Sports

Photo of the day



Mansour Al Safran is seen in Dubai, UAE. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Crossing the line: Pressure builds for Hawk-Eye at Garros

PARIS: Roland Garros was the last of the four Grand Slams to build a roof on its showpiece court and install floodlights but when it comes to Hawk-Eye technology, it's a resounding 'no!' Fourteen years after the system made its debut at the majors at the 2006 US Open, Paris still relies on the keen eyesight of line judges and chair umpires to spot marks left by balls in the often well-trampled red clay.

After his five-hour, five-set loss to Roberto Carballes Baena in the second round, ninth seed Denis Shapovalov tweeted: "When are we going to have Hawk-Eye on clay @rolandgarros @atptour?" His plea was accompanied by a screenshot of a TV graphic which showed a ball landing well beyond the baseline being called in. Had it been correctly called, it would have taken the Canadian to match point in the fifth set.

Shapovalov has some powerful voices in his corner. On Friday, US Open champion and world number three Dominic Thiem threw his weight behind calls for the available technology to be used in Paris. "I would support 100% Hawk-Eye on clay," said the Austrian after beating Casper Ruud to make the last 16. Ruud had been left as frustrated as Shapovalov over what he believed was a poor call. The Norwegian even snapped the area of contention on his telephone.

"It's not the umpire's mistake, because sometimes you just cannot see the mark. It's too difficult, especially after the set break, because they clean the court, they brush the lines, so it's almost impossible to see where the mark starts," said Thiem. Thiem is one of the few players to have first-hand experience of electronic line-calling on clay after the ATP trialed it at Rio in February. It was to be rolled out again in the European clay court season before the coronavirus pandemic shut down the season. "The FoxTenn system in Rio worked out very well. I played three matches and there were not any issues. —AFP

Padres use 9 pitchers to oust Cardinals

Marlins blank Cubs to advance

LOS ANGELES: The San Diego Padres used nine different pitchers to shut out the St. Louis Cardinals and punch their ticket to the second round of the Major League Baseball playoffs with a 4-0 winner-take-all victory in game three on Friday night. San Diego's bullpen by committee resulted in nine pitchers combining for a nine-inning MLB shutout for the first time since 1901. Austin Adams pitched one third of an inning of relief to get the win and right hander Trevor Rosenthal struck out the side in the ninth as the Padres won the wild card playoff contest at Petco Park in San Diego.

"What those guys did this series and tonight, wow," said Padres manager Jayce Tingler. "They've been overworked, they've been over-taxed. Tonight, for me, was a team-oriented win as so many guys contributed again. That's who we are. That's why we're going to continue to keep playing." The Padres will now face the top seeded Los Angeles Dodgers in a best-of-five NL Divisional Series on Tuesday in the quarantine bubble in Texas.

The Padres' Eric Hosmer started the scoring with a run-batted-in double to the outfield wall in the fifth inning. San Diego broke the game open with a two-run seventh and tacked on another run with a late Jake Cronenworth's homer to win their

first playoff series since 1998 - when they reached the World Series against the New York Yankees. Cronenworth capped the scoring by blasting his towering 407 foot homer in the eighth inning. He finished with three hits and scored two runs and Hosmer brought in runs with his double and a bases-loaded walk. The Padres have no choice but to use their bullpen extensively in the playoffs after starters Dinelson Lamet and Mike Clevinger suffered injuries.

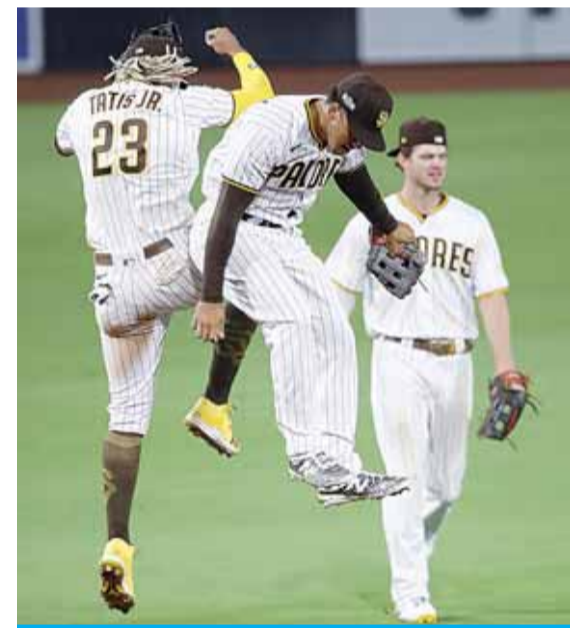
Surprise game three starter Craig Stammen, who was making his first start since 2010 with the Washington Nationals, allowed one hit in 1 2/3 innings. He was followed by Tim Hill (one inning), Pierce Johnson (one-third of an inning), Adrian Morejon (1 2/3 innings), Adams, Luis Patino (one inning), Emilio Pagan (one inning), Drew Pomeranz (one inning) and Rosenthal. "We're trying to write our own piece of history right now," said Stammen. Cards ace Jack Flaherty recorded the loss despite allowing just one run on six hits and striking out eight in six innings of work.

Also, Garrett Cooper smacked a two-out home run off Chicago's Yu Darvish and the Miami Marlins defeated the Cubs 2-0 to advance. The Marlins, who hadn't reached the playoffs since winning the 2003 World Series, captured their best-of-three first round series

with the host Cubs in two games. "That's probably the best feeling I've had in my baseball career, the biggest home run that I've had in my baseball career," Cooper said. "It's just something that you can't explain."

Next to Miami will be National League East division rival Atlanta to decide a berth in the National League Championship Series. Darvish hurled 6 2/3 scoreless innings but was sent to the showers after Cooper homered and Matt Joyce doubled to set up a run-scoring single by Magneuris Sierra for a 2-0 Marlins edge. The 34-year-old Japanese right-hander surrendered two runs on five hits with two walks and six strikeouts, throwing 69 of his 94 pitches for strikes.

Miami rookie starter Sixto Sanchez pitched five scoreless innings allowing four hits and two walks, and he struck out six. Reliever Brad Boxberger got the win pitching 1 1/3 innings. Richard Bleier and Yimi Garcia also held Chicago in check, and Brandon Kintzler completed the five hit shutout by earning the save. Right fielder Matt Joyce also had a strong performance for the Marlins as he cut down a runner at the plate and then doubled, which led to a run. "The one thing that we talked about all year was why not us?" said manager Don Mattingly of the sixth-seeded Marlins, who lost 105 games last year. —AFP



CALIFORNIA: Fernando Tatis Jr #23 of the San Diego Padres and Trent Grisham #2 of the San Diego Padres celebrate a series win against the St Louis Cardinals following Game Three of the National League Wild Card Series on October 02, 2020. —AFP

Mission Impossible? Enable, Dettori bid for Arc immortality

PARIS: Enable, ridden by Frankie Dettori, will bid today to achieve what the Italian jockey labels the "impossible" and become the first horse to win the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe three times. Only eight horses have won the race twice and few have attempted to win it three times. The last one to try, Treve, finished fourth in 2015. If successful in defying her 14 rivals at Longchamp racecourse, the John Gosden-trained superstar will be the first six-year-old to win the marquee race.

Sadly, if history is made it will only be witnessed by 1,000 spectators due to coronavirus restrictions. Four of Enable's opponents will come from the Aidan O'Brien stable, though the heavy rain in Paris has ruled out Love, his formidable Epsom Oaks winner, who was vying with Enable for favoritism. Dettori admits no other horse has taken him to such emotional highs in his extraordinary career. The 49-year-old decided that Enable still had the class to go for the Arc after she won a record third King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes in July. "We have to try the impossible and go for three Arcs," he said.

Dettori knows this is the last roll of the dice for him and his "favorite girl" and hopes it ends happily unlike last year, when Waldgeist denied her victory. "Last year's Arc day was the longest two hours of my riding career, make no mistake," he said. "I had the disappointment of the Arc but unfortunately that was only the third race on the card and I had rides in the following races. It felt like a very long afternoon." Gosden says Enable is a "phenomenal athlete" but he believes her mental strength could prove to be more important. She refuses to crack even when trailing.

'Special horses'

Gosden, who with Dettori is bidding for a fourth win in the Arc in six runnings, says the unknown factor is whether her finishing speed has been blunted. "Enable will be running in her fourth Arc, which is remarkable really," said Gosden. "Like those old boxers, she has taken a while to get up to full fitness at training camp and it depends if they've lost any of their old speed."



PARIS: Italian jockey Frankie Dettori on his horse 'Enable' celebrates after winning the 2018 Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe flat race at the Longchamp race track in Paris. —AFP

Gosden is not worried about the ground for Enable but that is a factor for his other entrant, the legendary stayer Stradivarius. The three-time Ascot Gold Cup winner, also six years old, will be ridden by Frenchman Olivier Peslier, who has won the race four times.

"He (Stradivarius) is battle-hardened, he has maturity on his side and he knows his own mind," Gosden told AFP. "He just would not like bottomless ground." O'Brien's best hopes of winning a third Arc probably lie with Mogul and his shock Epsom Derby winner Serpentine. Mogul is the chosen ride of his stable jockey Ryan Moore after they won the Group One Grand Prix de Paris at Longchamp last month, with Serpentine fourth. However, the 50-year-old Irishman saw enough in Serpentine's performance to give him confidence. "At this stage we don't know how the ground will be exactly but hopefully he (Serpentine) will be OK," said O'Brien.

Of the home contenders, Francis-Henry Graffard's German Derby winner In Swoop and the Jean-Claude Rouget-trained Raabihah look the likeliest to pose a threat to the Gosden and O'Brien camps. Japan dreams of winning the race but the form this season of their one runner Deirdre suggests their wait will go on. For a sport facing tough times due to the financial impact of the pandemic, a victory for Enable would be a shot in the arm. "We really need to cherish these special horses," said Dettori. Today afternoon the racing world will get to do so one more time. —AFP

Japan's Hataoka grabs 1-stroke ShopRite lead

NEW YORK: Japan's Nasa Hataoka fired a four-under par 67 to seize a one-stroke lead over South Korea's Lee Mi-hyang and England's Mel Reid after Friday's second round of the LPGA ShopRite Classic. Hataoka made five birdies against a lone bogey at the Seaview resort in Galloway, New Jersey, to stand on 11-under 131 for 36 holes. "I wasn't striking the ball as well as yesterday, but I was able to convert my birdie chances where I wanted to and that was good," the 21-year-old Asian star said. "The pin placements were pretty difficult, so just didn't really change from the first hole."

Reid fired a bogey-free 64 to share second on 132 with Lee, who stumbled late with bogeys on two of her final four holes, while France's Celine Boutier and American Amy Olson shared fourth on 133. After a birdie-bogey start, Hataoka made back-to-back birdies at the fourth and fifth holes and closed strong with birdie putts from four feet at the 16th and three feet at the par-5 18th. "Today wasn't about making long putts," Hataoka said. "It was more like converting the small chances I had." Eighth-ranked Hataoka seeks her fourth career LPGA victory after the 2018 Northwest Arkansas Championship, 2018 Toto Japan Classic and 2019 Kia Classic. Hataoka had a near miss in January's LPGA Tournament of Champions, losing a playoff to Mexico's Gaby Lopez on the seventh extra hole, and also finished second the next week at the Gainbridge LPGA at Boca Rio. Her best finish since the LPGA returned from a coronavirus shutdown was a share of seventh at last month's ANA Inspiration. Back-nine starter Lee birdied the par-3 17th and par-5 18th, then surged ahead with birdies at the par-5 third and par-4 fifth only to stumble with birdies at the par-4 sixth and par-3 seventh ahead of two closing pars. "It was great to make two birdies in a row on the first nine holes," Lee said. "So it was a great condition. But I made my first bogey and then three-putted. "Still made 2-under par. Really look forward to playing this weekend." Reid also began at the 10th hole and birdied 14 and 18, then birdied the third and fifth as well before closing with three consecutive birdies. The event is the final tuneup for next week's LPGA major, the Women's PGA Championship at Aronimink in nearby Newton Square, Pennsylvania.

PGA Tour lead in Mississippi

In another development, Keegan Bradley rolled in eight birdies in a seven-under par 65 on Friday to seize a two-shot lead in the US PGA Tour Sanderson Farms Championship in Jackson, Mississippi. Bradley, who started the day two shots off the lead, opened his round at the Country Club of Jackson with three straight birdies and he closed with four birdies in his last six holes. That included a birdie at the 18th, where he stuck his approach less than four feet from the pin to take his



GALLOWAY: Nasa Hataoka of Japan strokes a putt on the seventh green during the second round of the ShopRite LPGA Classic on October 02, 2020. —AFP

36-hole total to 13-under par 131. "What a great day, and I'm bringing a lot to the weekend that I'm happy about," said Bradley, whose four US PGA Tour victories include a major title at the 2011 PGA Championship. "I just love the course," added Bradley, who is seeking a first victory since the 2018 BMW Championship. "I love the way it sets up. It's very simple. You just stand object the tee and rip driver in the fairway hopefully and then the greens are small, but if you can find the fairway you can attack it." Bradley was two strokes in front of fellow Americans JT Poston and Charley Hoffman.

Hoffman, who was part of a four-way tie for the first-round lead, had seven birdies and four bogeys in a three-under par 69. "I put myself in position a lot, made a sloppy bogey on my first hole of the day, missed about a four-footer, but then played pretty solid on that front nine," said Hoffman, who teed off on 10. "Then coming down my 11th hole, which was the second hole, I had a perfect yardage, perfect number and I dead fatted it and then dead bladed it back-to-back and actually made, when it's all said and done, a pretty good bogey."

"And then next hole I'm in the middle of the fairway and hit it way right and missed about a four-footer. "But you know what, off the tee I gave myself a ton of chances," said Hoffman, who said if he could polish up his iron play and keep putting well he'd be OK on the weekend. Poston joined Hoffman on 11-under 133 with a five-under 67 that featured six birdies. Poston, chasing a second US PGA Tour title, was even through nine holes but nabbed back-to-back birdies at the 10th and 11th then three in a row at 13, 14 and 15 — where he blasted out of a greenside bunker to a foot. "My caddie was telling me just to stay patient because I didn't really make a whole lot on the front," Poston said, adding that he enjoyed putting on the Bermuda grass greens. He said a par-saving putt at 12 was key and added: "It was nice to get going on the back." South Africa's MJ Duffue was alone in fourth after a 69 for 134. It was a further stroke back to American Denny McCarthy and Norway's Kristoffer Ventura. Colombia's Sebastian Munoz and Americans Jimmy Walker and Kevin Chappell—who shared the first-round lead with Hoffman, couldn't build on that momentum.—Agencies

Sports

LeBron, Davis power Lakers to second straight win over Heat

Davis finishes with 15 baskets in 20 attempts

MIAMI: Anthony Davis and LeBron James powered Los Angeles to a 124-114 victory over the Miami Heat on Friday that put the Lakers two wins away from their first NBA title since 2010. The injury depleted Heat hung on as best they could, but 33 points from James and 32 from Davis were just too much. Davis, playing in his first NBA Finals, overpowered a Heat defense sorely missing injured Bam Adebayo.

He added 14 rebounds as the Lakers took a two games to none lead in the best-of-seven NBA Finals in the league's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida. "He's a big-time player," James, playing in his 10th championship series, said of Davis, whose 14 rebounds included eight offensive boards. "He understands the position we're in."

Davis made 14 of his first 15 shots from the field, finishing with 15 baskets in 20 attempts. For the second straight game James approached a triple-double, adding nine assists and nine rebounds. Rajon Rondo added 16 points off the bench and Kyle Kuzma and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added 11 points apiece for the Lakers. Jimmy Butler led the Heat with 25 points and Kelly Olynyk added 24 off the bench as the Heat had to make do not only without Adebayo but with star guard Goran Dragic, who was sidelined by a left foot injury.

Even without them, James said, Miami remained a dangerous team, adding that the Lakers need to clamp down harder defensively. "Myself, coach and AD were not happy with our defensive presence tonight," James said. "We can do a lot better. 'Myself and AD, we're not satisfied with just the win. We want to be great. 'They have five guys on the floor that's a threat, as they showed tonight,'" James added of Miami. "So we have to continue to stay on our P's and Q's and cross our T's and dot

our I's through the course of a game." Stung by the Heat's quick start in game one, the Lakers came out of the blocks hot.

Chasing a record-equalling 17th NBA title but their first in a decade, the Lakers dominated inside, outscoring the Heat 18-6 in the paint in the first quarter to emerge from the opening period six points up. Danny Green's three-pointer pushed the Lakers lead to 13 three minutes into the second quarter. The Heat got the deficit down to four three times, but Rondo, a former NBA champion with the Boston Celtics, came up big off the Lakers' bench, delivering impressive alley-oup passes first to James and then to Davis, whose dunk and free throw made it 64-49 with 1:48 remaining in the first half.

Rondo himself drove for a layup in the final minute of the half that stretched the Lakers' lead to 17 points, and they took a 68-54 advantage into the break. The Lakers connected on 55.5% of their shots from the field in the opening half. They were less successful from three-point range but not from lack of trying, connecting on nine of their whopping 27 first-half attempts from beyond the arc. They finished with 16 three-pointers on an astonishing 47 attempts. Davis poured it on in the third quarter, piling up 15 points on an array of shots-jumpers, a step-back three and a driving floater just the beginning.

Moments of truth

Although the Lakers stretched the lead to 18 points multiple times, the Heat wouldn't go away. They out-scored Los Angeles 39-35 in the period-but in the end they just didn't have sufficient stopping power and they couldn't get the deficit below nine points in the final quarter. "We need a little bit



FLORIDA: Jimmy Butler #22 of the Miami Heat drives to the basket against LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers during the second half in Game Two of the 2020 NBA Finals on October 02, 2020. —AFP

more from everybody, whatever that is," Olynyk said. Heat coach Erik Spoelstra acknowledged that the Heat face a tough challenge against the bigger, physical Lakers.

"In those moments of truth when we had opportunities to get the game closer it usually seemed to end up in an offensive rebound or something near

the basket," Spoelstra said. "But this is the deal. If you want something badly enough you'll figure out how to overcome it. 'They have great size and Anthony Davis is an elite player. We're trying to get something accomplished and you just have to go to another level,'" added Spoelstra, whose team will try to do just that in game three today. —AFP

Neymar bags brace as PSG crush Angers 6-1

PARIS: Neymar scored twice for Paris Saint-Germain in a crushing 6-1 win over Angers on Friday as the French champions continue to build up momentum following a poor start to the Ligue 1 season. Alessandro Florenzi, Julian Draxler, Idrissa Gana Gueye and Kylian Mbappe were also on target at the Parc des Princes for PSG, who claimed their fourth consecutive victory after starting the campaign with two straight defeats. Thomas Tuchel's side move up to second in the early table, a point behind leaders Rennes who play Reims today. "Scoring goals gives us confidence. It is a great victory," said Tuchel.

There were only 1,000 spectators allowed into the Parc des Princes as authorities clamp down on gatherings amid a new rise in coronavirus cases in the French capital, but the few who were there saw Florenzi open the scoring with a lovely goal in the seventh minute. The Italian right-back, who remains PSG's only new face for this

season so far after joining on loan from Roma, controlled the ball in the box before netting with a delightful volley into the far corner. Mbappe then cut the ball back for Neymar to score in off the underside of the bar as PSG doubled their lead before half-time.

Neymar was starting after avoiding punishment following allegations of racist and homophobic abuse in an ill-tempered defeat by Marseille last month. The French league's disciplinary committee ruled on Wednesday that it did not have sufficient proof to take action against the Brazilian or Marseille defender Alvaro Gonzalez, who Neymar had accused of calling him a "monkey". The world's most expensive player scored his second and PSG's third goal on the night just after half-time, finishing first-time as the ball broke to him in the box.

The goals were his first two of the new season after a start to the campaign disrupted by a positive Covid-19 test and suspension. Ismael Traore soon pulled one back for Angers with a back-post header, but Mitchel Bakker crossed for Draxler to make it 4-1 and Gueye added another with a deflected strike. Mbappe completed the scoring by converting from a Pablo Sarabia assist six minutes from the end, and



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar (right) vies for the ball with Angers' Ivorian defender Abdoulaye Bamba during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Angers (SCO) on October 2, 2020. —AFP

PSG look to have definitively put their defeat by Bayern Munich in the Champions League final in August behind them. Coach Tuchel will now hope to see more new faces arrive before Monday's transfer deadline, with a busy schedule lying in store once the Champions League group stage begins later in October. Paris will start their

continental campaign at home to Manchester United on October 20 before also facing Istanbul Basaksehir and RB Leipzig, who they beat in last season's semi-finals. "It is a very difficult group with Leipzig as the third seed," said Tuchel. "We know how strong they are. We will need to be at our best to go through." —AFP

Nadal cruises into French Open last 16 as new kids emerge

PARIS: Rafael Nadal charged into the French Open last 16 on Friday and took another confident stride towards equaling Roger Federer's record of 20 major titles while a crop of rising youngsters offered tantalizing glimpses of their potential. The 12-time Roland Garros champion dispatched Italian world number 74 Stefano Travaglia 6-1, 6-4, 6-0 in just 95 minutes, notching his 96th victory at the tournament.

"I think today I played the best match this year at Roland Garros," said Nadal. Nadal next faces 213th-ranked American qualifier Sebastian Korda, the son of 1998 Australian Open champion and 1992 French Open runner-up Petr Korda, for a quarter-final spot. "He's my biggest idol. He's one of the reasons I play tennis," Korda said of the Spaniard. "Growing up, I named my cat Rafa after him. That says a lot about how much I love the guy."

The 20-year-old Korda beat Pedro Martinez in straight sets to become the first man outside the top 200 to make the last 16 in Paris since France's Arnaud di Pasquale in 2002. Hugo Gaston, also 20, quickly became the second such lowly-ranked man in the fourth round when the world number 239 shocked 2015 champion Stan Wawrinka 2-6, 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-0 in a rain-interrupted tie. Gaston goes on

to play US Open winner and Austrian third seed Dominic Thiem, the runner-up to Nadal in Paris the past two years. "It's amazing for me, it's a dream. But I try to stay focused," said Gaston, the lone Frenchman remaining in the draw. "I'm feeling tired with the adrenaline rush but I still have some gas."

"I'm not going to put pressure on myself and will try to play relaxed like I did today," he added. At 19, Italian teenager Jannik Sinner is the youngest player to reach the fourth round at Roland Garros since Novak Djokovic in 2006. Last year's Next Gen champion made the second week of a Grand Slam for the first time by beating Federico Coria 6-3, 7-5, 7-5. He will meet the US Open runner-up Alexander Zverev after the German sixth seed ended the run of qualifier and 2018 semi-finalist Marco Cecchinato in three sets. "I'm just trying to improve day after day," said the 75th-ranked Sinner, who is yet to drop a set in Paris.

Halep gets revenge

Top seed and title favorite Simona Halep, the 2018 champion, avenged last year's Roland Garros loss to Amanda Anisimova by thrashing the American teenager 6-0, 6-1 in only 54 minutes. The reigning Wimbledon champion made only seven unforced errors as she stretched her career-best winning run to 17 matches. "I think I played a really good match. I was very aggressive and I knew from last year I had to change something and I did that today," said Halep. "I took the game in my hands." Halep meets another 19-year-old opponent, Poland's Iga Swiatek, for a place in the quarter-finals. She dropped just one game when the pair



PARIS: Spain's Rafael Nadal celebrates after winning against Slovakia's Norbert Gombos at the end of their men's singles third round tennis match on Day 6 of The Roland Garros. —AFP

met here in the last 16 a year ago.

Halep's status as the women's frontrunner was reinforced following the withdrawal of Serena Williams, on top of the absence of world number one and defending champion Ashleigh Barty, as well as US Open winner Naomi Osaka. "I don't feel the pressure. Of course I expect from myself to play good tennis but that doesn't mean I have to win every match," said Halep. "I just want to try to take my chance every time I step on the court, and I'm not thinking about title. It's very far (off)." Thiem made surprisingly short work of Norwegian 28th seed Casper Ruud, who has won more tour-level matches on clay than anyone else this season. —AFP

James, Davis spark memories of Kobe-Shaq Lakers pairing

MIAMI: LeBron James and Anthony Davis delivered a fearsome one-two punch for Los Angeles on Friday, sparking more memories of Lakers legends Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant. James and Davis combined for 65 points in the Lakers' 124-114 victory over the Heat,

which put Los Angeles halfway to victory in the best-of-seven championship series.

They're the first Lakers duo to score 60 points in a Finals game since O'Neal and Bryant achieved the feat in 2002 - when they claimed a third straight title. After O'Neal departed the Lakers - his relationship with Bryant famously soured - Bryant won two more titles with the Lakers in 2009 and 2010. James, playing in his 10th title series and with championships with Miami and Cleveland on his resume, recalled watching the Kobe-Shaq pairing when he was a high school star.

"Obviously we knew the force that Shaq brought to

the table, but the elegance and force that Kobe played with, as well," James said. "They were very dominant in what they did on the floor, on both sides of the floor. So to be in the conversation with those two guys, myself and AD - is just very humbling, because I know I grew up watching those guys." Any memory of Bryant has a special resonance for the Lakers this year. The club icon died in a January helicopter crash that also claimed the life of his 13-year-old daughter and seven other people. The Lakers wore their Bryant-inspired Black Mamba kit on Friday and remained unbeaten in four playoff games when wearing it. —AFP

News in brief

Newgarden wins IndyCar Harvest

WASHINGTON: Defending champion Josef Newgarden won Friday's IndyCar Harvest Grand Prix, closing the gap on season points leader Scott Dixon with two races remaining in the campaign. Newgarden refueled with 23 laps remaining in the 85-lap race and surged to the finish over the 14-turn, 2.439-mile Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course. "We had a rocket ship," Newgarden said. "I had the quickest car. I'm pumped. I'm so excited." Fellow American Alexander Rossi was second with Dutch 20-year-old rookie pole-sitter Rinus VeeKay third and American Colton Herta fourth. It was Newgarden's third victory of the year after oval triumphs at Iowa and Gateway and his 17th career IndyCar win as he chases a third series crown in four seasons. New Zealand's Dixon, who started 12th and finished ninth, still leads the season points battle with 478 to 438 for Newgarden. —AFP

Harris wins lifetime award

NEW YORK: Del Harris, an NBA coach for 32 seasons who guided China at the 2004 Olympics, was named Friday as winner of the National Basketball Coaches Association 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award. The 83-year-old American served as an NBA head coach with the Houston Rockets, Milwaukee Bucks and Los Angeles Lakers from 1979-1999 and had several stints as an assistant as well. Harris was also one of the earliest contributors to growing basketball globally, helping five different teams internationally. "Del Harris' impact on basketball extends beyond the NBA and transcends national borders," said Dallas Mavericks coach Rick Carlisle, the association president. "His success in both the NBA and international competition reflects a lifetime commitment to the global game." —AFP

Napoli record COVID cases

ROME: The wave of COVID-19 cases in Serie A reached league leaders Napoli on Friday as the club said Piotr Zielinski had tested positive two days before their showdown with champions Juventus. The Poland midfielder was one of the scorers last Sunday as Napoli thrashed Genoa who the next day announced 14 positive cases. That total climbed to 19 on Friday including 10 who played against Napoli. "Piotr Zielinski and staff member Giandomenico Costi have tested positive for Covid-19 following Thursday's round of testing," they tweeted. The Italian Football League on Thursday postponed Genoa's match scheduled for Saturday against Torino. This is the first match of the season postponed in Italy because of the pandemic. —AFP

Ethiopia's Bekele withdraws

LONDON: Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele has withdrawn from today's London Marathon with a calf injury, robbing an athletics-starved audience of a showdown with Kenyan world record holder Eliud Kipchoge. "I am very disappointed that I cannot race today," said Bekele. "I was in good shape but then I picked up a niggle in my left calf after two fast training sessions close together in the last weeks of preparation." Today's marathon around the British capital has been touted as one of the most eagerly anticipated running events of the coronavirus-hit year. Deprived of the Olympic Games and a host of other top track meets, the 42.2km circuit around London had been set up as a battle royal between two running legends, Britain's multi-medaled Mo Farah was even brought in to act as a pacemaker. —AFP

14 Padres use 9 pitchers to oust Cardinals; Marlins blank Cubs



15 Neymar bags brace as PSG crush Angers 6-1

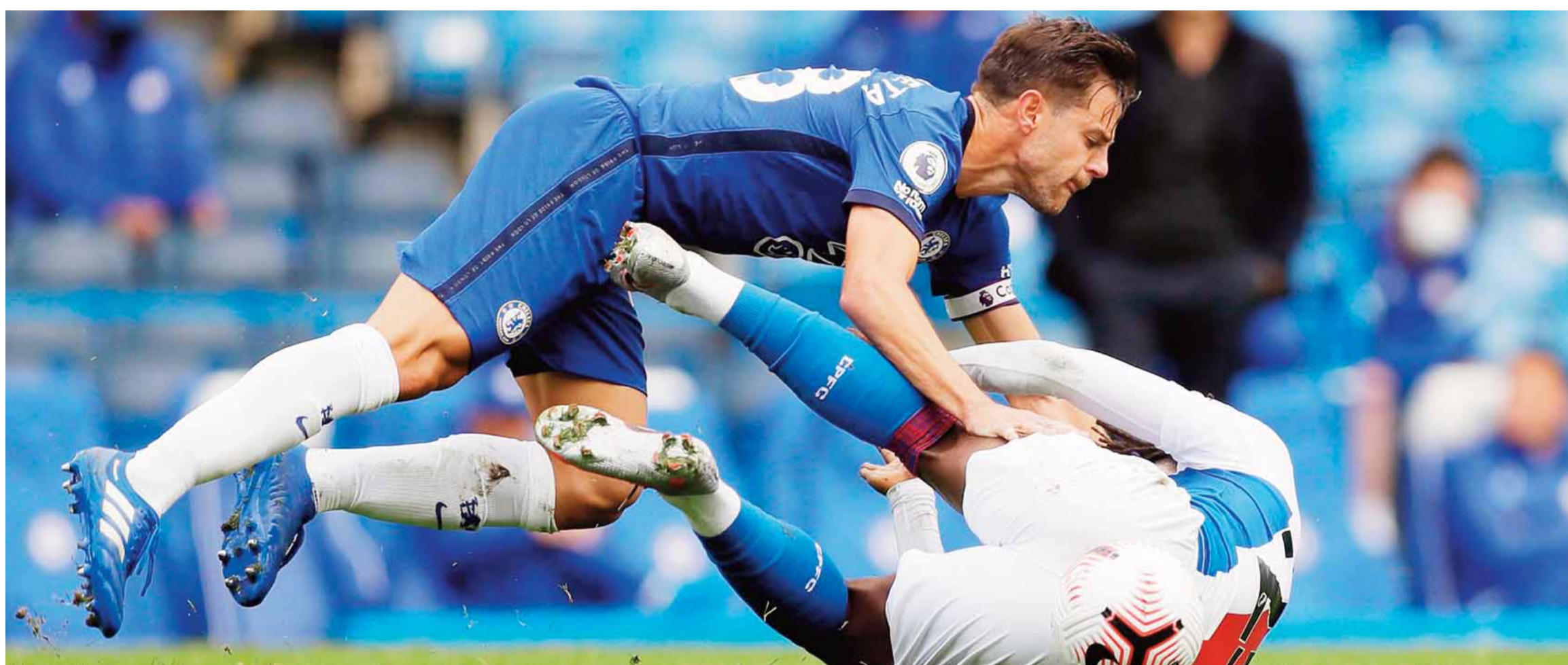


15 LeBron, Davis power Lakers to second straight win over Heat



Chelsea crush Crystal Palace 4-0

'Respect the rules,' Lampard warns Abraham



LONDON: Chelsea's Spanish defender Cesar Azpilicueta (left) vies with Crystal Palace's English midfielder Eberechi Eze during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Crystal Palace at Stamford Bridge yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Frank Lampard warned Tammy Abraham to respect the "rules" after the Chelsea striker argued with Cesar Azpilicueta over who should take a penalty in yesterday's 4-0 thrashing of Crystal Palace. With Chelsea leading 3-0 in the second half, Abraham wanted to take the Blues' second penalty of the match instead of Jorginho, who is the team's spot-kick expert and had already scored one just minutes earlier. Abraham and Timo Werner discussed who should have it before Chelsea captain Azpilicueta intervened in a briefly heated debate.

He took the ball out of Abraham's hands and gave it to Jorginho, prompting a dismissive wave from the striker. But Jorginho scored again to prove Azpilicueta's point before Chelsea boss Lampard made it clear to Abraham that he had been in the wrong. "It's been dealt with. I want leaders and I don't mind a little bit of conflict. If Tammy wanted to take it because he wants a goal or whatever it was then he can get put in his place a little bit," Lampard said.

"I appreciate his eagerness because his performance deserved a goal but the rules are you don't jump up ahead of the list at any moment. So, dealt with." Abraham's outburst, fuelled by his desire to score his first league goal this season, couldn't overshadow Lampard's pleasure as Chelsea got back on track. Hampered by a heel injury, Ben Chilwell had a delayed start to his first season with Chelsea following his £50 million (\$64 million) move from Leicester in August.

But the England left-back is making up for lost time after delivering an influential performance in his third game following a pair of League Cup outings. While Lampard has invested in a host of attacking talent since the end of last season, here it was Chilwell efforts that broke down Palace's stubborn defense at Stamford Bridge. Chilwell's thumping finish put Chelsea ahead soon after half-time and he provided the assist for Kurt Zouma's header as the Blues doubled their lead. Jorginho's penalty double ensured Chelsea would bounce back from

their midweek League Cup defeat against Tottenham and end a run of two successive league games without a win.

The defensive blunders that contributed to their 3-3 draw at West Bromwich Albion were erased and, crucially, Lampard's men found their cutting edge against defensive opponents. "Not too many put four past Crystal Palace. We just needed to up the urgency of our game. We needed to get Ben Chilwell into the game," Lampard said. We couldn't allow Palace's back four to say dealing with Chelsea's front line was easy. "Ben Chilwell was fantastic today. His ability to be so high up the pitch, and that's not a bad thing, and his great quality on the ball."

Knockout blow

Lampard makes six changes to the side that fell three goals down at West Brom last weekend. With the experienced Azpilicueta and Jorginho back in the starting line-up, Chelsea looked more stable and mature.

The first half followed a familiar pattern for Chelsea, who often dominated games without applying the knockout blow last season. But this time they had the solution as the lively Chilwell finally broke the deadlock in the 50th minute. Palace defender Mamadou Sakho made a hash of clearing Callum Hudson-Odoi's cross and Azpilicueta hooked the ball to Abraham, whose determined header allowed Chilwell to fire home from six yards.

Chilwell was proving impossible for Palace to contain and he was catalyst for Chelsea's second goal in the 66th minute. Whipping a teasing cross into the Palace area from wide on the left, Chilwell found Zouma and the defender towered over Sakho to head home. Chelsea were in control now and Jorginho made it three in the 78th minute when he slotted in a penalty after Abraham was fouled by Tyrick Mitchell. Sakho conceded another penalty four minutes later and, after Abraham's tantrum, Jorginho kept his focus to make it four. — AFP

Man City slip up again at Leeds

LEEDS: Manchester City's Premier League title challenge stumbled for the second time in their opening three games as Leeds rallied to earn a 1-1 draw from a wide-open game at Elland Road. City were soundly beaten 5-2 at home by Leicester last weekend and seemed keen to make amends with a dominant start during which Raheem Sterling opened the scoring.

However, despite handing a debut to £62 million centre-back Ruben Dias, Pep Guardiola's men remained unsure in defense and Leeds leveled when Rodrigo pounced on an error from goalkeeper Ederson just before the hour mark. City could now find themselves eight points behind Liverpool by the end of the weekend should Jurgen Klopp's men maintain their perfect start at Aston Villa. A first meeting between Pep Guardiola and Marcelo Bielsa in English football was highly-anticipated and did not disappoint in a pulsating game that somehow ended with only two goals.

Guardiola's men started with intent to quieten their critics as they pounced on Bielsa's determination for his side to play out from the back by forcing the hosts into mistakes with an intense press. Despite City's continued failure to progress beyond the Champions League quarter-finals under Guardiola, Kevin De Bruyne was named UEFA midfielder of the year on Thursday and the Belgian nearly showed why inside three minutes with a stunning effort from a long range free-kick wide on the left that nearly caught out Illan Meslier by hitting his near post.

Ferran Torres had a shot blocked on the line as City cut Leeds open in the opening quarter, but Bielsa's men

could have gone in front when Ezgjan Alioski headed over a great chance. City's pressure was finally rewarded in the opener as Sterling cut inside before burying a low shot into the far corner on 17 minutes. However, Leeds composed themselves as the first-half wore on and City's energy levels dipped. Luke Ayling should have equalized before half-time when he pounced on Benjamin Mendy's poor clearance, but failed to beat Ederson one-on-one.

Everton down Brighton

In another development, James Rodriguez netted twice and Dominic Calvert-Lewin became the first Everton player to score in the opening four matches of a Premier League season as they beat Brighton & Hove Albion 4-2 yesterday to stay top of the table with a maximum 12 points. The hosts produced another classy performance with Rodriguez's fellow Colombian Yerry Mina also on the scoresheet for Carlo Ancelotti's high-flying side who next face champions Liverpool in the Merseyside derby after the international break.

Second-placed Leicester City and Liverpool in third are three points behind Everton with a game in hand, while Brighton slipped to 14th on three points from four games. New England call-up Calvert-Lewin took his tally to nine goals from six games in all competitions when he rose at the far post to head home a Gylfi Sigurdsson cross in the 16th minute before Neil Maupay levelled from close range in the 41st.

Everton's England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford gifted Brighton the equaliser when he spilled a tame mis-hit shot by Leandro Trossard, leaving Neal Maupay with a simple task of tucking the ball in from close range. Yerry Mina restored the home side's lead on the stroke of half-time, heading home an inch-perfect free kick at the near post floated in by Rodriguez, who added a second-half brace. — Agencies

Jabeur 'first Arab woman in last 16'

PARIS: Tunisia's Ons Jabeur yesterday became the first Arab woman to make the last 16 at Roland Garros with a 7-6 (9/7), 2-6, 6-3 win over Belarusian eighth seed Aryna Sabalenka. Jabeur, seeded 30, who made the quarter-finals at the Australian Open in January, faces either 2016 champion Garbine Muguruza from Spain or Danielle Collins of the United States for a place in the last-eight. The 26-year-old Jabeur is a former junior champion in the French capital.

German qualifier Daniel Altmaier, ranked at 186 in the world, stunned seventh seed Matteo Berrettini of Italy to reach the Roland Garros last 16 yesterday with a hat-tip to Stan Wawrinka, Rocky and early morning Zoom calls. The 22-year-old Altmaier triumphed 6-2, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, becoming just the fourth man since 2000 to reach the round of 16 on his Grand Slam debut. Victory also means an unexpected financial windfall for the German who is guaranteed to make at least \$221,400 by reaching the last 16 having earned just \$173,600 in his entire six-year professional career.

It's been a long, tough road for Altmaier who says three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka is his "great role model". A succession of injuries to his back, shoulder as well as hip, caused by a freak slip on a tennis ball on a hard court which sidelined him for most of 2018, put his career, which had shown some promise with a quarter-final run at Antalya in 2017, on hold. Just over 12 months ago, his ranking had slumped to 515.

For Altmaier, the help of Wawrinka has been invaluable and he paid tribute to the 2015 Roland Garros champion after the win yesterday, pressing an index finger to his temple to mark the breakthrough in the



Tunisia's Ons Jabeur

style of the veteran Swiss star. "He also helped me a lot when I was injured," said Altmaier who has an Ukrainian father, a Russian mother and has hit with Roger Federer. "Having a friendly relationship with such a top player who has achieved an incredible amount in our sport is really something special." He added: "When I was watching him, he always says 'Allez, Stan.' I copy him a little bit because I like to say, 'Allez, Dan'." "He has been a huge reason why I'm healthy now."

Altmaier has been working with noted coach Argentine coach Francisco Yunis for a year and worked hard on his fitness during training sessions. It has been tough but rewarding. "If he had done our training program, even Rocky would have collapsed," Altmaier told Eurosport of his brutal workouts under Yunis. Even lockdown didn't save him from physical exertions. "It's a funny story regarding how I got fit in the quarantine and coronavirus time. I was working via Zoom with my physical coach from Argentina," he said.

"We worked 11 weeks basically in a room, every day, five, six times a week. — Agencies