



**5** Kyrgyzstan opposition claims power; poll results canceled



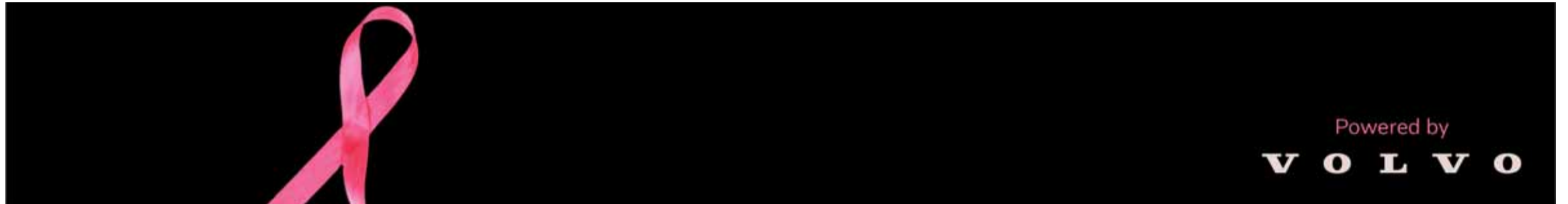
**9** Amid COVID and crime spike, New Yorkers cocoon in plush Hamptons



**12** Dubai Safari Park re-opens after 2-year refurbishment



**16** Collins ends Jabeur's historic run to reach quarterfinals



# Amir asks Cabinet to stay on, prepare for elections

Govt submits resignation • Assembly term to end on Oct 8: Speaker



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday to submit the Cabinet's resignation. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah yesterday submitted the resignation of his Cabinet to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who in turn renewed confidence in the Cabinet and asked it to continue its constitutional duties. The Amir called on the government to continue its preparations for the forthcoming parliamentary elections expected to be held in late November or early December.

According to the constitution, the cabinet must resign immediately after the announcement of the election results to pave the way to form a new cabinet. HH Sheikh Nawaf also called on everyone to abide by their duties and responsibilities in line with the constitution and laws in order to achieve progress for Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the current four-year term of the National Assembly will officially close tomorrow, Oct 8, after a one-week delay due to the demise of late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Assembly was supposed to end its term on Oct 1. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf issued a new Amiri

decree calling to close the Assembly term after withdrawing an earlier decree immediately after taking the oath in the Assembly on Sept 30.

Ghanem insisted that the new procedure is completely in line with the constitution and there are no doubts about the constitutionality of the process. The speaker said if the Amir decides to appoint a new crown prince by today, he will convene a special Assembly session to endorse the crown prince and for him to take the oath. The session will be held tomorrow. If the crown prince is not appointed today, then an extraordinary session will be called immediately after the appointment is made.

According to the constitution, the new Amir has one year to appoint a new crown prince. He can nominate one person as a crown prince who must secure the endorsement of the Assembly. If the Assembly rejects the nominee, then the Amir has to appoint three candidates, from whom the Assembly will elect one on the basis of a majority vote. Ghanem also said two special sessions will be held today - the first at 9 am to pay tribute to late Sheikh Sabah, and the second at 1 pm to debate and approve a number of legislations and reports.

## News in brief

### Intubation less risky

PARIS: Procedures like inserting or removing breathing tubes, which were thought to pose a serious danger of COVID-19 transmission to health workers, produce less aerosols than a normal cough, according to new research published yesterday. Researchers found tube insertion generated approximately one thousandth of the aerosol generated by a single cough. Tube removal produced more aerosol, but researchers said this was still less than 25 percent of that produced by a voluntary cough. — AFP

### UAE passes 100,000 infections

DUBAI: The UAE, with a population of around 9.9 million people, surpassed 100,000 recorded cases of COVID-19 infection yesterday. The UAE, whose tally stands at 100,794 infections and 421 deaths, has seen the number of daily new cases surge over the past two months from 164 on Aug 3 to a new high of 1,231 cases on Saturday. — Reuters

### Iran reports record cases

TEHRAN: Iran announced yesterday more than 4,000 new cases of COVID-19 infection, the most in a single day for the country hardest hit by the pandemic. "The number of infected persons... is 4,151" in the past 24 hours, during which "we unfortunately lost 227 of our dear compatriots", said health ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari. According to Iran's official figures, the pandemic has claimed 27,419 lives out of a total 479,825 cases of infection in the Islamic republic. — AFP

### Palestinian leadership slammed

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's former intelligence chief and ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz, slammed the Palestinian leadership for criticizing the decision of some Gulf states to normalize ties with Israel. In an interview with Saudi-owned Al Arabiya television aired on Monday, the prince labeled the Palestinian authorities' criticism a "transgression" and "reprehensible discourse". — Reuters

## UAE, Israeli ministers hold first meeting

BERLIN: The foreign ministers of Israel and the United Arab Emirates yesterday visited the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin during their "historic" first meeting, a major step forward for their new relations. Israel's Gabi Ashkenazi and UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan bumped elbows in line with measures to halt the spread of the coronavirus. It was their first face-to-face meeting since their countries set asides decades of enmity and signed a US-

brokered deal in mid-September to normalize ties.

Accompanied by their host German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, the pair walked through the sombre monument, a vast undulating labyrinth of more than 2,700 grey concrete blocks spread over an area equivalent to three football fields. It commemorates the slaughter of six million Jews by Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime. Visibly relaxed, Ashkenazi and Sheikh Abdullah shared a few words as they visited the monument's underground museum and signed the visitors' book.

Sheikh Abdullah wrote "never again," according to a photo tweeted by an Israeli diplomat. Ashkenazi looked forward in his message saying the meeting "symbolises the

Continued on Page 2

## US learning to live with virus: Trump

WASHINGTON: Defying critics, US President Donald Trump yesterday said Americans were learning to live with COVID-19, a day after returning to the White House for further intensive treatment after being hospitalized with the coronavirus. Trump, who returned late on Monday after nearly

four days at Walter Reed Medical Center outside Washington, was due to receive a fifth transfusion of the antiviral drug remdesivir while being treated with the steroid dexamethasone, normally used only in the most severe cases.

Trump said yesterday he wants the next debate against his Democratic challenger Joe Biden to go ahead despite his bout of coronavirus. "I am looking forward to the debate on the evening of Thursday, October 15th in Miami. It will be great!" Trump tweeted. The Republican president, who is running against Biden in an election

Continued on Page 2

## Trio win Nobel for black hole discoveries

STOCKHOLM: Roger Penrose of Britain, Reinhard Genzel of Germany and Andrea Ghez of the US won the Nobel Physics Prize yesterday for their research into black holes, the Nobel jury said. The physicists were selected "for their discoveries about one of the

most exotic phenomena in the universe, the black hole," the Nobel Committee said.

Penrose, 89, was honored for showing "that the general theory of relativity leads to the formation of black holes", while Genzel, 68, and Ghez, 55, were jointly awarded for discovering "that an invisible and extremely heavy object governs the orbits of stars at the center of our galaxy," the jury said. Ghez is just the fourth woman to receive the physics prize since 1901 when the first Nobel prizes were handed out.

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BERLIN: Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi (left) greets UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan as German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas looks on during a visit to the Holocaust Memorial yesterday. — AFP



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump removes his mask upon returning to the White House from Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Monday. — AFP



STOCKHOLM: A screen displays the winners of the 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics - (from left) Briton Roger Penrose, Reinhard Genzel of Germany and Andrea Ghez of the US - during a press conference at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences yesterday. — AFP

# Amir receives top Kuwaiti officials at Bayan Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and State Minister of Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received a cable of congratulations from Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, in which he congratulated him on the occasion of assuming power. In the cable, he hoped that bilateral ties may continue being strengthened, wishing His Highness the Amir continued success and wellbeing and Kuwait's growth and development. His Highness the Amir sent a cable back, in which he thanked and appreciated the positive message, embracing historical ties between Kuwait and Algeria, wishing him good health, as well as progress and prosperity under his leadership.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable of congratulations from South Korean President Moon Jae-in, in which he congratulated him on the occasion of assuming power, wishing His Highness the Amir for continued success. His Highness the Amir sent a cable back, in which he thanked and appreciated the positive message, embracing close ties between Kuwait and South Korea, wishing him good health and happiness.

His Highness the Amir received on Monday a similar cable from Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Dr Yousef Al-Othaimeen, in which he congratulated him on the occasion of assuming power. In the cable, he wished His Highness the Amir continued success and wellbeing and growth and development for Kuwait. His Highness the Amir sent a cable back, in which he thanked and appreciated the positive message, wishing him success for the contribution to promoting joint action and achieving the goals of OIC. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and State Minister of Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

## IN MY VIEW

### Leader of humanity



By Muntaha Al-Ajeel  
local@kuwaittimes.com

His name has been embedded in history domestically and globally, and through him Kuwait gained a good reputation and a highly esteemed status around the world as His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was among the most influential personalities worldwide. The person of good vision and balanced diplomacy has left us, after he instilled the pillars of Kuwait's foreign policy.

His Highness earned several titles including the wise leader, as his wisdom prevailed in his glorious and remarkable stands. He played a leadership role and served as a patriotic leader during the GCC crisis, helping protect Kuwait and allow its economy to flourish, while actively participating in resolving the Gulf crisis. He deserved the title of 'Humanitarian Leader' by the United Nations due to His Highness' keenness to carry out many initiatives and humanitarian projects in various parts of the world.

He departed this world after surrounding us with his kindness. He shared with us our happy and sad events. There were no barriers between him and us as Bayan palace was open for Kuwaitis who participated in international events and those who received post graduate degrees. When I received a global award for business leadership, I was honored to meet him and take a picture with him that will always be with me, as he was the supporter of Kuwaiti women in all fields.

He was a father figure for us all. When the coronavirus crises started, he was keen to repatriate all Kuwaiti students abroad and was also keen bring back all Kuwaitis stranded in many countries despite the suspension of air travel in airports around the world.

Today, we congratulate the Amir of Kuwait His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the best successor to the best predecessor, and we wish him all success in Kuwait's development march. We pray to Allah Almighty to keep Kuwait a place of glory, security and safety, and a beacon of development and prosperity.

## Dr Qattan: Sheikh Nawaf can lead Kuwait in peace, wisdom

KUWAIT: Dr Nael Abdul Hameed Ali Al-Qattan released a statement in which he eulogized the late Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and expressed faith in the ability of the new Amir His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to lead the country to a

## US learning to live with...

Continued from Page 1

four weeks away, has repeatedly played down the disease, which has killed more than 1 million people worldwide. The United States has the world's highest death toll from the pandemic, with more than 209,000 deaths.

"Many people every year, sometimes over 100,000, and despite the vaccine, die from the flu. Are we going to close down our Country? No, we have learned to live with it, just like we are learning to live with Covid, in most populations far less lethal!" Trump tweeted yesterday. About 22,000 people are estimated to die from influenza in the 2019-2020 season, according to US government statistics. Even before he contracted COVID-19, Trump acknowledged in taped conversations with a journalist that the disease was deadlier than the flu.

White House physician Dr Sean Conley has also

## Trio win Nobel for black hole...

Continued from Page 1

"I feel delighted to be recognized in that way because I think having visible role models can make a huge impact on young women thinking about becoming scientists," Ghez told AFP. The term "black hole" refers to a point in space where matter is so compressed as to create a gravity field from which even light cannot escape.

## UAE, Israeli ministers hold...

Continued from Page 1

beginning of a new era. An era of peace between peoples. "Our joint signature in the book of remembrance is like a shared cry and oath: to remember and not to forget, to be strong and to promise 'never again'."

The visit by the Emirati minister to the Holocaust Memorial is a highly symbolic step, marking the

new bright and modern future. The following are excerpts of his statement:

"Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad was not a normal leader. He was rather a founder of the modern State of Kuwait. He has left behind a huge heritage, and we must work to protect his legacy by all means.

"Today, Kuwait enters a new phase of overcoming big challenges, which His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will take, following on the footsteps of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah who gave a life of luxury for Kuwaitis - the luxury that can only be realized by through persistent work and seriousness to achieve success through willpower. The

stressed Trump would have world-class medical care available around the clock, something many health experts have noted is unavailable to millions of other Americans. "Don't let it dominate you. Don't be afraid of it," Trump said in a video after his return on Monday night. "I'm better, and maybe I'm immune - I don't know," he added, flanked by American flags and with the Washington Monument in the background. "Get out there. Be careful."

He returned to the White House in a made-for-television spectacle, descending from his Marine One helicopter wearing a white surgical mask, only to remove it as he posed, saluting and waving, on the mansion's South Portico. Trump has repeatedly flouted social-distancing guidelines meant to curb the virus' spread and ignored his own medical advisers. He mocked Biden at last Tuesday's presidential debate for wearing a mask when campaigning.

"I was aghast when he said COVID should not be feared," said William Schaffner, a professor of preventive medicine and infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. "This is a disease that is killing around a thousand people a day, has torpedoed the economy, put people out of work. This is a virus that should be both

Penrose, a professor at the University of Oxford who worked closely with famed physicist Stephen Hawking, used mathematical modeling to prove back in 1965 that black holes can form, becoming an entity from which nothing, not even light, can escape. His calculations proved that black holes - super dense objects formed when a heavy star collapses under the weight of its own gravity - are a direct consequence of Einstein's general theory of relativity.

Genzel and Ghez have led research since the early 1990s focusing on a region called Sagittarius A\* at the center of the Milky Way. Using the world's largest telescopes, they discovered an extremely heavy, invisible object - around 4 million times greater than the mass of our Sun - that pulls on surrounding stars,

shift in attitudes in the Arab world towards Israel and Jews. Political conflicts have led to fierce tensions between Islam and Judaism and Holocaust denial is rampant in many Arab countries.

Maas called it "a great honor that the Israeli and Emirati foreign ministers picked Berlin as the site for their historic first meeting. The most important currency in diplomacy is trust and I am personally thankful to both my colleagues that they are placing this trust in Germany." The ministers were to hold talks later yesterday at the German foreign ministry's retreat before sitting down for dinner together.

Bahrain and the UAE became the first Arab nations to establish relations with Israel since Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994. For the Mideast, the

next phase will be focused on work to complete the development march, which can be realized through the help of the rational voice of His Highness Sheikh Nawaf.

"I am confident that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will fulfill the implementation of the 'New Kuwait Vision 2035' by diversifying the sources of income and supporting Kuwaiti entrepreneurs in all aspects. All Kuwaitis are required to support their Amir, and this means that they should rise to the level of national responsibility for the sake of serving their homeland, and for the sake of protecting it from the storms through which the region is passing."

respected and feared."

Democrats also weighed in. "This is a tragic failure of leadership," Democratic Senator Chris Coons tweeted. But Trump depicted himself as a man who vanquished the disease and emerged stronger. "If the President bounces back onto the campaign trail, he will be an invincible hero, who not only survived every dirty trick the Democrats threw at him, but the Chinese virus as well," he wrote on Twitter.

A Twitter post by Biden showed images of himself donning a mask and Trump removing his. "Masks Matter. They save lives," the caption read. White House spokesman Judd Deere said every precaution was being taken to protect the president and his family. Physical access to Trump would be limited and appropriate protective equipment would be worn by those near him.

Questions swirled around the true state of Trump's health after a weekend when his doctors offered contradictory or opaque assessments of his condition. His oxygen saturation dipped enough to require supplemental oxygen on Friday and Saturday, his doctors said, but have not answered key questions about his lung function, his blood work, or when he last tested negative. — Reuters

giving our galaxy its characteristic swirl. The pair in particular developed methods to see through the huge clouds of interstellar gas and dust to the center of the Milky Way, creating new techniques to compensate for the image distortion caused by Earth's atmosphere. In April 2019, astronomers unveiled the first photo of a black hole.

Martin Ward, a professor of astronomy at Durham University, called the work of the trio "a great example of theoretical insight and prediction followed by state-of-the-art observational evidence". "Using classical Newtonian mechanics the nearest super massive black hole at our galactic centre was revealed, and so 'darkness made visible'," Ward said in a statement. — AFP

deals dubbed the Abraham Accords mark a distinct shift in the status quo where Arab countries have tried to maintain unity against Israel over its treatment of the stateless Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the foreign ministers of Bahrain and the UAE had sealed the historic accords establishing full diplomatic ties with a ceremony at the White House. Maas called the Israel-UAE agreement the "first good news in the Middle East for a long time - and a chance for new movement in the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians". "This opportunity must be seized," said Maas, whose country currently holds the presidency of the EU, voicing the readiness of the bloc to help. — AFP

Local

# Kuwait's Cabinet eulogizes late Amir, praises his 'unforgettable efforts'

## Govt voices concern over 'laxity about health requirements'

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet on Monday praised the great works and praiseworthy sacrifices of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Holding its maiden meeting since Kuwait lost its Amir, the Cabinet said in a statement that His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad had worked sincerely to promote Kuwait's status and reputation and to manifest its civilized and humanitarian image across the world. The Cabinet believed that His Highness the late Amir's outstanding efforts and accomplishments would absolutely remain unforgotten for good.

In this regard, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah voiced much thanks and gratitude to the leaders and representatives of all brotherly and friendly countries for the sincere and heartfelt sentiments they had expressed following the passing of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad. The Prime Minister also congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, wishing him good health and success.

As for the local health situation, the Cabinet voiced concern over laxity about health require-

ments and guidelines amid the continuing spread of COVID-19. It emphasized that everyone in the country should follow and comply with all health conditions and instructions in a bid to curb the outbreak of the globally spreading virus and to ensure



### Ministers laud investment authority

the health and safety of all citizens and residents. Also locally, the ministers lauded the distinguished efforts of Kuwait's Direct Investment Promotion Authority to boost the country's economic position, improve the business environment and draw capital. In addition, the Cabinet thanked



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's meeting. — KUNA

Jawad Bukhamseen for his donation for establishing a cancer early detection center which costs between KD 2.5 and 3.5 million. Regionally, the Cabinet voiced satisfaction with a recent peace agreement between the Sudanese government and Sudan Revolutionary Movements in Juba, hailing it as a step towards promoting security, stability and peace in conflict-hit areas. — KUNA

## Zain supplies KU with health measures to face COVID-19

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, supplied Kuwait University's Admission and Registration Hall in Shuwaikh with a number of MOH-approved precautionary health measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. The move comes in line with the start of the new academic year, as well as under Zain's commitment to contribute to the health and safety of the university's students, faculty, and staff.

Zain's initiative comes as an extension of its previous efforts in fully renovating the hall last year, which showcased the company's keenness in offering a comfortable atmosphere for students and staff during the admission and registration period. Zain has been the hall's main sponsor for over 11 consecutive years, serving over 14,000 students annually.

Zain supplied Kuwait University's Admission and Registration Hall in Shuwaikh with a number of MOH-approved precautionary health measures to curb the spread of COVID-19. The measures include signs and banners to remind visitors of the necessary health guidelines that must be followed while inside, as well as floor stickers to achieve social distancing.

Zain also installed see-through dividers to separate students and staff in a safe manner during registration, while enabling sound to pass efficiently. In addition, some seats were made unavailable inside the hall to guarantee a safe space between students while seated.

This initiative comes in line with Zain's keenness on continuously supporting education by actively partnering with the various education bodies from both the public and private sectors. The company is a firm believer in the importance of supporting the youth and preparing them to become tomorrow's leaders.

Last year, Zain partnered with Kuwait University's Deanship of Admission and Registration to fully renovate the Admission and Registration Hall and prepare it with the necessary furniture and equipment. The hall receives thousands of students throughout the year during the admission approval and freshmen registration period. Zain was keen on offering students with a comfortable atmosphere while visiting the hall to finish their admission and registration.

Zain firmly believes in the importance of educational development, as



KUWAIT: Zain and KU officials in front of the hall.

it is essential for individuals to then go-on to be successful and contributing members of society. The company is committed to playing an active role in the investment of the Kuwaiti

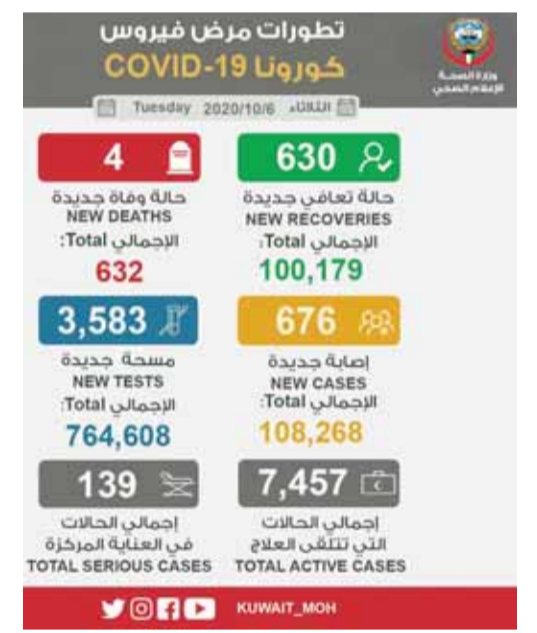
human capital. By adopting such initiatives, Zain seeks to support students and allow them to apply their practical skills, achieve their potential, and fully develop their capabilities.



Some of the health measures Zain implemented in the hall.

## Kuwait COVID-19 cases rise by 676, deaths by four

KUWAIT: Kuwait's confirmed coronavirus cases increased by 676 to 108,268 with four people having succumbed to the disease raising the death toll to 632 in the past 24 hours, the health ministry said yesterday. The figures include people who have come into contact with infected individuals, and others whose source of infection is currently being investigated, read a ministry statement. In terms of health zones, 158 cases were reported in Al-Ahmadi, 140 in Hawally, 131 in Jahra, 130 in Farwaniyah and 117 in the Capital, health ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sabah revealed. Earlier, the ministry said 630 people have recovered from the virus, upping the total number of those to have overcome the disease to 100,179. There are 139 people currently receiving intensive care for the virus out of a total 7,457 patients being hospitalized. Some 3,583 swab tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, out of a total of 764,608 so far, added the spokesman. The official reiterated the strict need to abide by health precautions, urging nationals and expatriates alike that following social distancing rules is the only way to keep the virus at bay. — KUNA



News in brief

Bangladesh President sends condolences

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable of condolences from the President of Bangladesh Mohammad Abdul Hamid, expressing his deepest sorrow and condolences to His Highness the Amir and the people of Kuwait over the passing of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir replied with a cable, expressing Highness's thanks for his sincere condolences and appreciation of late His Highness Sheikh Sabah good deeds, and key role in boosting bilateral ties between both nations, wishing His Highness the Amir everlasting health and wellness. — KUNA

Djibouti leader offers condolences

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received a call from Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh, who expressed his condolences over the demise of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The president prayed for mercy on the soul of the deceased and for solace for the ruling family. In response, His Highness the Amir extended his appreciation and gratitude for the warm sentiments expressed by the president. — KUNA

New Zealand expresses grief

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received a cable of condolences from New Zealand Governor-General Dame Patricia Lee Reddy, expressing her deepest sorrow and condolences over the passing of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. She recalled Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's key role in developing relations between both countries, and his efforts in enhancing peace and stability in the Middle East. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf replied with a cable, expressing His Highness's thanks and gratitude for her sincere condolences and sympathy for this great loss, and His Highness also thanked her for hailing His Highness late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's good deeds, wishing her everlasting health and wellness. — KUNA

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



## Local

## Kuwait Times

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## News in brief

## Kuwait Fire Force announced

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate announced rebranding as Kuwait Fire Force, effective as of yesterday. The Kuwait Fire Force replaced the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate based on law 13/2020 to establish the Kuwait Fire Force, which is a uniformed force led by a chief with the rank of at least lieutenant general, the public relations and information department at the Kuwait Fire Force said. It added that the law was published in the official gazette on Sept 6, 2020. The department said the new law achieves a quality move to improve work in the firefighting field due to its features that contribute to social security to protect lives and property through issuing penalties that achieve societal safety against fire risks by specialized individuals dealing with crises and major incidents. The public relations department said awareness campaigns will launch from today.

## ABK spreads breast cancer awareness

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced its partnership with Royale Hayat Hospital, to raise breast cancer awareness during the month of October. To encourage screening during this special month, ABK female cardholders are offered a consultation with Dr Noha Al-Saleh, Consultant General Surgery and Surgical Oncology at Royale Hayat Hospital, including a mammogram and ultrasound at a special rate.

## Oil price up

KUWAIT: Kuwait oil price rose by 67 cents to \$38.99 per barrel Monday against \$38.32 pb Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. In international markets, Brent crude oil up by \$2.02 to settle at \$41.29 pb. Meanwhile, American West Texas crude rose by \$2.17 to \$39.22 pb.



KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry announced closing the intersection of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Street and Ahmad Al-Jaber Street in Kuwait City, commonly known as 'Derwazat Abdulrazzaq intersection,' for maintenance until further notice. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Kuwait dispatches fresh aid to flood-hit Sudan

KHARTOUM: A fifth Kuwaiti relief plane landed at Khartoum International Airport on Monday, carrying around 40 tons of relief aid for those affected by rain and floods in Sudan. In a press statement, the Sudanese Foreign Ministry's flood committee chief Mohiedin Salem appreciated Kuwait's incessant relief aid to flood-hit people in Sudan. The official seized the opportunity to congratulate His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, praising him as belonging to "the school of diplomacy, humanitarian work and wisdom which we direly need." Meanwhile, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Director General Abdulrahman Al-Aoun said Kuwait's fifth aid plane was loaded with around 40 tons of basic aid, mainly food. Deputy Chairman of the Sudanese Red Crescent Society Mohammad Abdulhamid thanked Kuwait for its constant help to the residents of flood-hit people in Sudan. Sudanese authorities had declared a three-month state of emergency nationwide amid increasing rains and floods, which have killed over 130 people, injured 45 others and destroyed 100,000 homes. — KUNA



## Three hospitalized with gunshot wounds

KUWAIT: A 13-year-old mentally-challenged girl fired her father's military-issue weapon at herself, her 10-year-old brother and 32-year-old domestic helper. The three were taken to hospital. The girl suffered an injury in her thigh and her brother suffered a superficial ear injury, while the helper remains in critical condition from an abdominal injury.

## Home burglar arrested

Police arrested a suspect who burgled eight houses in various areas. The suspect said that another person paid KD 180,000 for the stolen items that are worth KD 1 million. A domestic helper was involved in the crimes, as the suspect gave her some of the stolen items.

## Nurses insulted

The health ministry's information department commented on a video that circulated on social media showing a person who claimed that a nurse at a primary healthcare center refused to dress his wound. It said the person, an expat, doesn't have the right to access the clinic according to his residence and that he insulted nurses on duty. When he was asked to get a doctor's signature to dress a superficial cut, which was not an emergency, he threatened nurses and recorded them, the ministry said, adding that the issue would be sent for investigation.

## Kuwait's embassy staff thank Indian officials for condolences

NEW DELHI: The Embassy of Kuwait in New Delhi yesterday expressed appreciation for solidarity of the government and people of India in the wake of the passing of the late Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In a statement to the Kuwait News Agency, Kuwait's Ambassador to India Jassem Al-Najim thanked the Indian government for observing an official mourning and lowering its flag to half-mast and cancelling all entertainment programs.

This shows the respect and care that the Indian leadership and government have towards the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, he said. He recalled the key role played by the late Amir in cementing the ties between India and Kuwait and his major contributions in preserving global peace and security. The Ambassador also underlined the key role the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah played in enhancing the friendship and strengthening the

exceptional relations between the two nations.

He also expressed his appreciation to all those who condoled especially the Arab, Muslim and other embassies and the multinational organizations in New Delhi for their solidarity with the state of Kuwait and expressing their sorrow at the passing away of humanitarian leader Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Ambassador Najim also congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of his inauguration as Amir of Kuwait and wished him success in leading the nation towards more progress and prosperity.

It is noted that the Indian government had declared mourning and flags were flown at half-mast in the Presidential Palace, Parliament, the Ministry of External Affairs, Headquarters of Air Force and the Navy and other government buildings all over India, and cancelled all official entertainment programs in solidarity with the Kuwaiti people's huge loss. Kuwait's embassies in New Delhi and Nepal had opened a condolence book on the sad demise of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah last week. Several high profile officials, politicians, heads of missions and multi-national organizations accredited in the capital New Delhi had expressed their condolences. —KUNA

## ICSK pays tribute to Kuwait's late Amir

KUWAIT: Indian Community School (ICSK) staff participated in a special assembly organized online to pay respects to the late Amir of Kuwait His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The event took place on Monday, simultaneously with a national day of mourning the government of India had announced as a mark of respect to Sheikh Sabah.

Around 1,000 people including the staff and students of ICSK participated in the assembly. The special assembly was presented by the children of class 11B. The assembly commenced with the Islamic prayer by Suheera Mujeeb of class 11B, which was followed by the Kuwaiti national anthem. The main intention behind arranging this special assembly was to remember in gratitude and respect the Late Amir of Kuwait His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his contributions for the welfare of mankind. As a regular practice in the assembly, Grace Anil shared the word for the day, Lena Elizabeth shared the quote and Esha Mariam and Suha Ahmed shared the day to day news in the assembly to keep the children updated about the news around the globe.

Allen Jacob Alex of class 11B presented a speech on the early life of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Farhan Yousuf present-

ed a very unique and special video presentation on the Late Amir of Kuwait depicting all his contributions that were purely meant for the welfare of mankind and the expatriates in Kuwait. A very special speech was presented by Sreekala Dileep from the History Department of ICSK Senior School, which highlighted the biography of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

ICSK also joined the state mourning and observed two minutes of silence at 11:00 am during the special assembly, and paid respect to the departed soul. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will always be remembered with great respect by all the people for his kindness and generosity towards mankind. Dheera Ragesh and Eldho Tiby from class 11B also presented speeches with immense respect for the Late Amir of Kuwait, sharing details about the great effort and contributions that His Highness had made in these years.

The Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK Senior, Dr V Binumon also spoke about the Late Amir of Kuwait and touched upon the benefits received by the children of Indian residents in Kuwait in the field of education. Dr V Binumon added that His Highness was a true visionary leader in all aspects and also a true friend and a great statesman. He also added that His Highness was a true Dean of Arab Diplomacy and an outstanding humanitarian. He also shared about the humanitarian efforts of His Highness which is worthy of being imbibed by the young students. Aishwarya Sunil presented the school pledge and the assembly was wound up with the Indian national anthem.

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Educating Hima: Doyne on battling poverty in Nepal

Free but in debt: Florida ex-inmates unable to vote

## Kyrgyzstan opposition claims power

President says coup d'état is underway • Election result canceled



BISHKEK: People protest against the results of a parliamentary vote on Monday. —AFP

**BISHKEK:** Opposition groups said they had seized power in Kyrgyzstan yesterday after taking control of government buildings during post-election protests in the strategically important Central Asian state. President Sooronbai Jeenbekov said the country, which hosts a Russian air base and a large Canadian-controlled gold mine, was facing an attempted coup d'état. He called for calm and ordered security forces not to open fire on protesters after overnight unrest in which the government said one person was killed at 590 wounded. Officials said later the vote would be rerun, but it was not clear who would run it.

Burnt out cars littered Bishkek, the capital, after protesters stormed the main government building, known as the White House, which briefly caught fire before emergency services put out the blaze. Debris from inside, including government papers, and office furniture, was strewn outside after protesters ransacked parts of it. Kyrgyzstan, which borders China and is a close ally of Russia, has long been a platform for geopolitical competition between Moscow, Washington

and Beijing and has a history of political volatility: Two of its presidents have been toppled by revolts in the past 15 years.

The opposition said it had set up a coordination council and was discussing the line-up of a provisional government. "The leaders of parties that took part in the election have assumed responsibility for restoring public order," the council said. Opposition groups also had freed Almazbek Atambayev, a former president jailed on corruption charges after falling out with Jeenbekov. Atambayev was not named to any role, however, and Jeenbekov showed no immediate signs of relinquishing power.

The cabinet, which operates out of a building separate from the White House, said it continued to function although Prime Minister Kubatbek Boronov has not appeared in public since the unrest began. The central election commission said it had annulled the results of the election, meaning a new vote would have to be held shortly. Parliament said it would try to hold an emergency meeting today after lawmakers failed to gather

a quorum yesterday. Several opposition politicians urged them to install a provisional cabinet to legitimize a transfer of power.

Interior Minister Kashkar Junushaliyev did not show up for work yesterday, a ministry spokesman said, saying that Kursan Asanov, an opposition politician and a former senior security official, had taken over as acting interior minister. Police had been ordered to ensure citizens' safety and prevent clashes and looting, the same spokesman said. Meanwhile, a factory at the second-largest gold deposit in Kyrgyzstan, Jeruy, was torched by unidentified people yesterday, its Russian-owned operator said. The Russian embassy to Kyrgyzstan said it supported resolving the situation in the country through legal means while ensuring stability and people's safety.

### Contested vote

Trouble erupted on Monday after police used teargas and water cannon to disperse thousands of people demanding the results of the parliamentary election be annulled. Western observers said the election, which appeared to have handed most seats

to two establishment parties supporting closer links between the former Soviet republic and Russia, had been marred by vote buying. One of the parties was close to Jeenbekov, the president.

As well as storming the White House, which houses both the president and parliament, protesters took over several other buildings, including the mayor's office. They appointed their own acting head of national security, acting prosecutor general and a commandant of Bishkek, although there were no indications of how much power they wielded. Protesters also freed several former senior officials jailed under Jeenbekov, including ex-prime minister Sapar Isakov and Atambayev's former chief of staff Farid Niyazov.

Several provincial governors have resigned, according to local media reports which said public rallies had begun on Tuesday in several provincial centres, most of them anti-government. Jeenbekov's supporters were gathering in the southern city of Osh, the same reports said, where his brother Asylbek Jeenbekov called for unity and order. —Reuters

## Pressure over Karabakh truce as clashes rage

**STEPANAKERT, Azerbaijan:** Battles raged between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region yesterday, with both sides vowing to pursue the conflict despite increasing international pressure for a ceasefire. Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu landed in Azerbaijan for talks after Russia, the United States and France on Monday called for an "unconditional" halt to the fighting.

Western powers are urging Turkey, a long-standing ally of Azerbaijan, to use its influence with Baku to restore calm after 10 straight days of clashes that have claimed more than 260 lives. The battles began on Sept 28 in a long-simmering territorial dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, an ethnic Armenian enclave that broke away from Azerbaijan in the 1990s.

Neither side has shown any inclination to slow hostilities despite a mounting civilian death toll. Azerbaijan's defense ministry and Karabakh's foreign ministry both said fighting was continuing on several fronts yesterday morning. Both sides continued to claim to have inflicted heavy losses in manpower and equipment, and to accuse each of other of targeting civilian areas.

The conflict has expanded in the last few days with shelling on big cities, including the regional capital Stepanakert and Azerbaijan's second-largest city, Ganja. After several days of heavy bombing, Stepanakert was calm yesterday, according to an AFP journalist in the city, with the streets nearly empty. Warning sirens rang out and the city was littered with glass and debris from previous shelling, but no explosions had been heard by mid-day.

### Potential 'war crime'

Armenian Health Minister Arsen Torosyan told reporters near the border that he had seen a rocket landing very close to Stepanakert's main hospital. "I'm not ruling out they are deliberately targeting medical facilities, which is a war crime," he said. Azerbaijan's defense ministry claimed yesterday that separatists had incurred major losses and were forced to retreat. It said an ammunition depot near Stepanakert, rocket launchers and artillery had been destroyed.

The two sides have reported 265 deaths since the fighting erupted, including more than 45 civilians, but the real total is expected to be much higher as both sides are claiming to have inflicted heavy military casualties. Most of the confirmed deaths are from the Armenian side, which has reported nearly 220 fatalities among separatist fighters. Azerbaijan is not releasing any figures on its military deaths.

Christian-majority Armenia is in a military alliance of former Soviet states led by Russia, which has a permanent base in the country but has not shown any appetite for a military escalation of the conflict. Turkey is a loyal ally of Azerbaijan, a fellow Muslim and Turkic country, and has been accused of dispatching mercenaries from Syria and Libya to join the fighting. —AFP



STEPANAKERT: Men pass an unexploded rocket in the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region's main city yesterday. —AFP

## Pandemic forces more US women back into home

**WASHINGTON:** As the pandemic rages in the United States, Aracelis Bonet has had to make a choice between her job and caring for her autistic son. The Orlando, Florida, woman decided to largely put on hold her job as a real estate agent to make sure her 14-year-old son had the constant care he needs. She now works at most 15 hours a week, resulting in a big drop in income. "If I was a single mother, with my son, I probably would be homeless right now," said the 50-year-old Bonet. "It's so stressful to be a parent at home, being their teacher, their therapist, etc., being the wife, being the mom, having to have to cook dinner, clean the house. I've forgotten to take care of myself."

Bonet's situation highlights the dilemma facing millions of women in the United States who must manage households with schools closed or limited due to the months-long coronavirus pandemic. Many women are acutely following the political debate over reopening schools and health insurance. The crisis has set back decades of progress by women in terms of labor force participation. A September report by the consulting firm McKinsey found pointed to a stark choice facing many: "Over one in four women are contemplating what many would have considered unthinkable just six months ago: downshifting their careers or leaving the workforce completely."

According to a July report by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly one in four adults aged 24 to

44 said they were not working to be able to manage child care during the pandemic. For women, the figure was 30.9 percent, compared with 11.6 percent for men. The data showed the labor force participation rate for women age 20 and older fell to 56.8 percent in September compared with 69.9 percent for men.

The data showed that women took "another step back" in the workforce and that the trend may be difficult to reverse, said Diane Swonk, chief economist at Grant Thornton. "Women who were in the pipeline to move up are now literally taking furloughs or actually quitting," Swonk said. "They do bear more of the burden and responsibility for childcare, that they just can't work from home, and teach their children." Swonk argued that COVID-19 "has magnified and exacerbated inequality across race, across income data and across gender". The pandemic's impact on women has been felt in numerous sectors, including in science and medicine, where fewer research papers have come in recent months from women in journals such as Nature or the British Medical Journal.

For women who have lost their jobs during the pandemic, the lack of child care has made it doubly difficult to find new employment, adding to their woes, according to Gregory Daco chief economist at Oxford Economics. "The pandemic has disproportionately hurt women in the service sector, the hardest hit by the pandemic," Daco said. "And the data shows the return of employment is much slower for women than for men."

### Weighing the risks

Mary Proffitt of Lexington, Kentucky, is one of those waiting. Caring for her 12-year-old son and leukemia-stricken, 88-year-old father, Proffitt was laid from in March from her restaurant job. But even the idea of going back to work is remote for the women in



ORLANDO: Real estate agent Aracelis Bonet, 50, home schools her son Adam Martinez, 14, who is affected by severe autism, in their home on Oct 1, 2020. —AFP

her sixties, who would have to risk exposure to the coronavirus and transmission to her immunity-deficient father for a job that might not offer health insurance benefits.

"Childcare is ridiculously expensive in the first place and most of the jobs aren't hiring for full time," she said. "So there's no benefits and there's nothing but risk, really to go back to work right now... I don't know why that would be worth risking your life." Proffitt said the crisis has made her more politically active as the Nov 3 vote looms pitting President Donald Trump and Democrat Joe Biden.

"I have been fooled before and thinking that people would open their eyes and see that this is just a disaster," she said. "I've been politically active my whole life, but more so since March because none of this is right... Having the courts to decide whether or not to get rid of health care for millions of people in the middle of a pandemic that's not right." —AFP

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## International

# In Tokyo, Pompeo seeks to shore up support among Asian allies

## US calls for deeper collaboration with Japan, India and Australia

**TOKYO:** US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Japan yesterday to rally support from Washington's closest allies in Asia, calling for deeper collaboration with Japan, India and Australia as a bulwark against China's growing regional influence.

The East Asia visit, Pompeo's first in more than a year, coincides with worsening tensions with China. Yet the call for a united front against Beijing is a sensitive subject for Washington's allies, which are reliant on China for trade. In comments before the start of a meeting of the Quad grouping of the four nations' foreign ministers, Pompeo spoke in typically unsparring terms against Beijing's ruling Chinese Communist Party. That was in contrast to his three counterparts, all of whom avoided calling out China directly.

"As partners in this Quad, it is more critical now than ever that we collaborate to protect our people and partners from the CCP's exploitation, corruption and coercion," Pompeo said, referring to the ruling party. "We see it in the South and East China Seas, the Mekong, the Himalayas, the Taiwan Strait."

China has denounced the Quad as an attempt to contain its development.

Pompeo's visit was supposed to include trips to Mongolia and South Korea but was cut back to one day after President Donald Trump was diagnosed with COVID-19. He also reiterated the Trump administration's criticism of China's handling of COVID-19 after it first broke out in the city of Wuhan.

"When we met, now, last year, the landscape was very different. We couldn't have imagined a pandemic that came from Wuhan. That crisis was made infinitely worse by the Chinese Communist Party's cover-up," he said. "The regime's authoritarian nature led its leaders to lock up and silence the very brave Chinese citizens who were raising the alarm."

### Regional rival

The Quad meeting is unlikely to yield a specific action plan, although the gathering itself may serve as a warning to China and play to its fears that the grouping might one day grow into a formalized structure like NATO, experts have said. The United States and China, the world's top two economies, are at loggerheads over a wide range of issues from Beijing's handling of the coronavirus to its imposition of a new security law in Hong Kong and ambitions in the South China Sea.

Most Asian allies have been pleased with Washington's toughness toward their regional rival China but have not so eagerly welcomed Trump and Pompeo's highly charged recent rhetoric and remain wary of going too far in antagonizing China. Part of the problem for Washington's Asian allies is their dependence on China for trade. China was the top destination for Australian exports in 2019, the No 2 destination for Japanese exports and the No 3 destination for Indian exports, according to IMF direction of trade statistics compiled by Refinitiv.

### Spotlight on infrastructure, cybersecurity



**TOKYO:** Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga (right) and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (left) bump fists as they meet at the prime minister's office in Tokyo yesterday ahead of the four Indo-Pacific nations' foreign ministers meeting. —AFP

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said after the talks the nations had confirmed they would advance with practical talks on infrastructure, cybersecurity and other areas.

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said the Quad promotes an inclusive, open Indo Pacific, a common refrain among the ministers. The United States has said it greatly values the meeting of the

Quad grouping of foreign ministers as a platform to strengthen its solidarity against China with regional allies. "We're hoping to have some significant announcements, significant achievements," Pompeo had told reporters in the United States before departing for Tokyo, declining to say what they would be. As expected, there was no joint statement from the members. —Reuters

## Canada takes in orphaned girl held in Syria camp

**OTTAWA:** The Canadian government announced Monday the repatriation of a young orphan girl who was detained in a jihadist prison camp in Syria, a first for a Canadian national. "I think we have to recognize that this particular situation was an exceptional case of an orphan who no longer had any close family," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said of the decision to take in five-year-old Amira.

About 50 Canadians, about half of them children, are being held in camps in northeastern Syria. "We have no plans to do that for others," Trudeau said, despite other countries having repatriated several of their nationals released from the camps

controlled by Kurdish forces allied with the West against the Islamic State group and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime. An uncle of the girl had taken legal action against the Canadian government to force it to repatriate her.

Amira was born in Syria. Her jihadist parents and brothers were killed in airstrikes in 2019 before the fall of the Islamic State group's "caliphate" five years earlier, according to Canadian media. "Canada is finally taking concrete action to repatriate a 5-year-old Canadian orphan, detained for almost two years in squalid conditions," Farida Deif, Canadian director of Human Rights Watch (HRW), commented on Twitter. Amira was being held in the Al-Hol camp, according to HRW.

"I am happy that this Canadian orphan child will now be reunited with her extended family in Canada," said Foreign Minister Françoise-Philippe Champagne. "The goal now is to protect the privacy of the child and to ensure that she receives the support and care necessary to start a new life in Canada," he said. —AFP

Vanderwaeren, Belgium's customs administrator general, told AFP.

On the street, a gram of cocaine sells for 50 euros, a mark-up on the import price which offers astronomical profits for the networks that control the trade. And a parallel economy has rapidly developed to launder these profits, through luxury cars, small shops and real estate.

"Criminal money has infiltrated the city," says Vanderwaeren. On Antwerp's thousand kilometres of quays, "one can quickly earn 80,000 euros by recovering bags."

"Customs officers have already been convicted for working with criminal networks," he adds.

According to federal prosecutor Frederic Van Leeuw, the highest levels of society are now being targeted by traffickers looking for well-connected accomplices. This week a former head of the gendarmerie and three policemen were arrested in a major investigation launched after a seizure of nearly three tons of cocaine in late 2019 in the northeastern province of Limburg.

Limburg, which borders Antwerp, has become a rear base for organized crime and "quick money", according to investigators. Apart from cocaine, the province is also known to host secret laboratories

Cuban-American from Miami, was released from prison in 2007 after serving a two-year sentence for fraud. She can't vote, either, until she pays back \$500,000 to the state of Florida. "This right was taken from me," the 64-year-old woman, who is blind in one eye, said in Spanish. Each month, 15 percent of her \$800 salary-she works in a fast-food restaurant-is taken out of her paycheck. Florida has nearly 775,000 former inmates who have served their sentences, a population composed mostly of people from underprivileged backgrounds.

### 'Attack against democracy'

Their lack of voting rights is not a new issue. One hundred and fifty years ago, a law designed to prevent newly freed slaves from voting also disenfranchised ex-convicts. In 2018, Floridians voted for Amendment 4, which restored the unconditional right to vote to 1.4 million ex-felons, except for those guilty of rape or murder. But DeSantis signed a law requiring former inmates to repay their fines and fees. Although a federal judge in Florida deemed the law unconstitutional, it was upheld in September by an appeals court.

Since Florida is usually crucial to victory during the US presidential elections-it can take only a few thousand votes to win the state and its 29 electoral college voters-the law may have a significant impact on the upcoming November 3 poll. The law disproportionately affects Hispanic and Black voters. For some human rights activists, the legislation



An orphaned five-year-old Canadian girl known as Amira has been rescued after being stranded in a crowded Syrian refugee camp and is on her way to Canada to be with her uncle. —AFP



**ANTWERP:** General Director of the Belgian custom service, Kristian Vanderwaeren, shows a chart following the dates of cocaine trafficking at the Antwerp Port. —AFP

producing synthetic drugs for gangs mainly based across the border in the Netherlands.

During the coronavirus lockdown in March and April, a 13-year-old was kidnapped and held for more than a month in the Limburg town of Genk because of his family's links with the drug scene. —AFP



**MIAMI:** Supporters of US President Donald Trump drive past supporters of Democratic presidential nominee and former Vice President Joe Biden prior to Biden's arrival for an NBC townhall outside of the Perez Art Museum in Miami, Florida on Monday. —AFP

is a glaring example of voter suppression among minorities, who tend to vote Democratic. "This is not just an attack against returning citizens, this is not an attack against Black people, or Hispanic people, this is a deliberate attack against the democracy that we want in this country," said Desmond Meade, the president of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC), a group that fights for voting rights for "returning citizens." —AFP

### News in brief

#### Ukraine tribute to crash victims

**KHARKIV, Ukraine:** Ukraine yesterday commemorated 26 people who died when a military transport plane crashed near the northeastern city of Kharkiv last month. Only one person survived when the Antonov AN-26 transport aircraft with 20 air force cadets and seven crew members on board crashed and burst into flames on September 25. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky attended the ceremony on Kharkiv's central square where coffins were set on pedestals alongside portraits of the victims. Relatives of the cadets and crew wept and hugged each other while somber music played, an AFP journalist on the scene reported. —AFP

#### EU starts review of virus vaccine

**FRANKFURT:** European regulators are evaluating early data from a coronavirus vaccine being developed by Germany's BioNTech and US giant Pfizer, the firms said yesterday, under a fast-track procedure aimed at speeding up the approvals process. The "rolling review" is the second being conducted by the Amsterdam-based European Medicines Agency (EMA), after it already agreed to evaluate a possible Covid-19 vaccine from AstraZeneca and Britain's Oxford University. Scientists around the world are racing to develop a safe and efficient Covid-19 jab to end a pandemic that has killed more than a million people and devastated the global economy. —AFP

#### Estonia for re-examining ferry wreck

**VILNIUS:** Estonia's government is to propose to Finland and Sweden renewing the investigation into the 1994 sinking of the ferry Estonia in which 852 lives were lost, Europe's worst peacetime maritime disaster since the Titanic sunk in 1912. The official investigation in 1997 concluded that the bow ramp of the ferry had failed during a storm, flooding the car deck and causing the vessel to roll over and sink. A Discovery Network documentary about the disaster aired in September included new underwater video images from the wreck site, showing previously undisclosed damage to the starboard side of the ferry. The proposed investigation would try to determine whether the damage contributed to the sinking, Estonia's government said. —AFP

#### Malaysia plans targeted lockdowns

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin yesterday said targeted lockdowns would be imposed in areas with high rates of coronavirus infections, as the country grapples with a sharp spike in cases over the past two weeks. Malaysia's health ministry reported 691 new COVID-19 cases and four deaths yesterday, setting another new daily record in the aftermath of an election in the state of Sabah last month. "For now we are not thinking of imposing a total lockdown nationwide. If we do that again, it could bring down the country's economic and social systems," Muhyiddin said in a national address on Facebook Live from his home. —Reuters

## Illicit drug trade at Belgian port fuels crime wave

**ANTWERP, Belgium:** Bomb explosions, shootings and even kidnapping of children: drug trafficking around Antwerp in northern Belgium is generating increasingly violent crime, which the authorities are struggling to tackle. Antwerp is Europe's second largest goods port after Rotterdam, but is the number one gateway for cocaine to the continent, thanks to its closer trade links with South America. The drug often arrives concealed in cargos of fruit or in the walls of shipping containers, mainly from Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia.

With almost 40 tons of cocaine seized by the end of September, 2020 is on course to beat the annual record of 61.8 tons. To this figure should be added another 70 or so tons intercepted in Latin America on their way to Antwerp. Even then, according to UN estimates, seizures represent only 10 percent of what enters the country, Kristian

## Free but in debt: Florida ex-inmates unable to vote

**MIAMI:** Davion and Maria have paid their debt to society by serving prison sentences in the US state of Florida, but they're still paying back monetary debts from their cases-and until they do, they won't be allowed to vote. Due to a law signed in 2019 by the state's Republican governor Ron DeSantis, a close ally of US President Donald Trump, and upheld last month by a federal appeals court, former felons are required to repay their debts to the judicial system-fines, legal fees, damages-in order to regain the right to vote.

Davion Hampton, 42, was sentenced in 2008 to 36 months in jail for cocaine trafficking. But when he came out from behind bars, he still owed \$52,000 to the state-not including interest. "I've been paying on for almost 10 years now, and I'm still owing \$46,000," Hampton, who is Black, told AFP in a park in Sanford, central Florida.

"I'd really, really love to have back my voting power, and just letting me know, giving me a sense of security that I am a human, I am a citizen of America," Hampton said. "This is my power. This is my right." Maria Aurora Estevez, a

## International

# Two decades after US invasion, Afghans fear return of Taliban

## Negotiators set ground rules to safeguard peace talks

KABUL: Almost two decades after the United States launched air strikes against Afghanistan's ruling Taliban regime and started what would become America's longest-ever war, the headline group are in a stronger position than ever. The invasion that followed those October 7, 2001 strikes quickly toppled the militants, who had harbored Al-Qaeda, the group behind the September 11 attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people in America just weeks earlier.



**Breakthrough reached in doha talks**

Now, 19 years since the collapse of their brutal Islamist regime, the Taliban are pushing for a return to power, having signed a landmark troop withdrawal deal with Washington in February and currently holding peace talks with the Afghan government. Fearful that the Taliban have changed little since the darkest days of their regime—when they killed women accused of adultery, attacked minority religious groups and barred girls from going to school—many Afghans worry about a new era of Taliban influence.

"I remember the Taliban regime like a nightmare. We are scared for our future and my daughter's future," said Kabul resident Katayoun Ahmadi, a 26-year-old mother. She recalled seeing severed hands and fingers on Kabul's streets following amputations for petty crimes under the Taliban's strict interpretation of Sharia law.

The 2001 invasion heralded some enduring improvements for young Afghans—particularly girls—and ushered in a constitution guaranteeing certain freedoms including the right to an education.

But so far in peace talks in Doha, which started last month, the Taliban have said little about issues such as women's rights or freedom of expression.

### 'Afghan-owned' deal

Ahmadi's husband Farzad Farnood, 35, a researcher for the Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies, said a rise in Taliban violence since a deal was signed between the hardline group and Washington shows the militants have not changed. "Is this creating hope for Afghans? No, it is not," he said.

As a teenager, he witnessed the Taliban stoning a woman to death and public executions and floggings in Kabul's football stadium. His family had to hide their black-and-white television's antenna in a tree when the Taliban banned music and entertainment. "All the achievements we have made in the last 18 years did not exist in the Taliban era," he said.

In a statement released yesterday, the Taliban claimed the US "arrogantly rejected" their appeals for diplomacy in 2001, instead launching a "brutal invasion". "America, its allies and coalitions would have... been spared from infamy and war crimes along with great human and material losses," they said, adding they welcomed an opportunity to usher in a "sovereign Islamic government". Zia-ul-Rahman, a former insurgent who

battled foreign troops and Afghan government forces for four years, told AFP the Taliban were pushing for "the establishment of an Islamic system", even though the country's constitution already gives primacy to the religion.

"We have no problem with girls getting an education or women working, but they have to wear a hijab," he added. US involvement in Afghanistan has proven painfully difficult for the superpower, draining more than \$1 trillion from its coffers and resulting in about 2,400 troop deaths in a war the Pentagon has characterized as a stalemate.

In Doha, the Taliban and the Afghan government are struggling to agree common language on a range of issues before they can even establish an agenda, in talks that could continue for years. Some US lawmakers have said they would oppose any deal that fails to protect women and minorities, but President Donald Trump's administration has stressed it wants little to do with the outcome which he said will be "Afghan-owned".

Jawed Rahmani, a 38-year-old security worker in Kabul, said US disengagement would inevitably lead to

a Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. "These are not peace talks but a deal to hand over the next government to the Taliban," he said. "People are happier with whatever we have right now, compared to the darkest era of the Taliban."

### Ground rules

Taliban and Afghan peace negotiators have agreed on a code of conduct to safeguard against the risk of any breakdown in talks that began last month in Qatar to bring an end to decades of war, three official sources told Reuters yesterday. The breakthrough was achieved with the help of US officials, as the two sides drew up 19 ground rules that their negotiators should observe during talks, the sources said. While the talks have been taking place in Qatar's capital Doha, scores of Afghan soldiers and Taliban fighters have been killed in clashes and suicide attacks in which dozens of civilians have also died in recent weeks.

"Firming up code of conduct was extremely crucial as it proves that both sides are willing to continue talks even as we see that violence has not reduced on the ground," said one senior Western diplomat on conditions of anonymity.

The breakthrough came as Afghan President Ashraf Ghani held bilateral discussions in Qatar's capital of Doha with Zalmay Khalilzad, the US Special Envoy, and Gen Austin Miller, the top commander for US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. The intra-Afghan talks are part of a landmark deal signed between the United States and the Taliban in February.

Under the deal, foreign forces will leave Afghanistan by May 2021 in exchange for counter-terrorism guarantees from the Taliban, which agreed to negotiate a permanent cease-fire and a power-sharing formula with the Afghan government. Diplomats had told Reuters that the talks had got off to a difficult start, with disagreements over how the Hanafi Islamic code could be used to guide negotiations and on whether the deal signed between the United States and the Taliban in February should be the basis for the talks, as demanded by the Taliban.—Agencies



KABUL: In this file photo taken on July 31, 2020, Taliban prisoners walk with their belongings as they are in the process of being potentially released from Pul-e-Charkhi prison, on the outskirts of Kabul. — AFP

## Educating Hima: Doyne on battling poverty in Nepal

SURKHET, Nepal: Maggie Doyne still remembers the moment that changed her life forever. A chance encounter with six-year-old Hima, a little girl forced into manual labor to help her impoverished family, helped transform Doyne from gap-year teenager into a philanthropist on a mission.

Seeing the child—one of around a dozen—working on a dry river bed breaking rocks, she felt compelled to act. Doyne used her savings to pay for Hima's schooling. The child was the first of hundreds of Nepali youngsters she and her team have since helped raise and teach.

Kopila Valley Children's Home in west Nepal's Surkhet, founded by Doyne in 2008, now shelters 54 children. Her school is attended by 450 students who would otherwise have little chance at getting an education. "Empowering children and educating children is the only way to truly end cycles of poverty and violence which we are seeing," US-born Doyne, who decided to stay in Nepal after visiting as a high school graduate, told AFP. In a country where only two-thirds are literate, according to the most recent census, and where the female literacy rate is 57.4 percent—this is already a challenging task.

But the spread of the novel coronavirus and the resulting lockdown made it a Herculean one. Doyne and her team coordinated the relief effort for thousands of Nepali migrant workers stranded without food or shelter as they returned home from India.

"Overnight we found that there were thousands of people crossing over. There was no transportation, no food or water and no one had the ability to buy anything because of COVID," she explained. "It became an emergency life-threatening situation very, very quickly," she said, adding that there was not enough preparation for their arrival.

### 'COVID generation'

Doyne stayed in Nepal while her husband and two-year-old daughter were evacuated to Canada. "Initially I just wanted to make sure that in this new reality that we were set up to keep the kids safe and protected and keep their education going and make sure the families have food security," she said.

But, realizing the gravity of the situation for stranded

families she turned to social media for help.

Within a month, she had provided 35,000 returnees with water, hot meals and emergency kits. Doyne's challenge now is re-double her push for education in Nepal at a time when the pandemic has led to school closures and pushed more families into poverty. Earlier this year, 275 former global leaders, education experts, and economists urged governments and organizations such as the World Bank to ensure the fallout from the coronavirus does not create a "COVID generation... robbed of their education and a fair chance in life."

Her school began as a small bamboo shack, and is now a large complex spanning nearly three acres (1.2 hectares), complete with a sports space and even a farm. The students, selected from vulnerable, impoverished backgrounds, get free education and are also served warm meals every day.

"You would do anything to give your child the best education and so just because these kids don't have an advocate and they are victims of poverty doesn't mean that they deserve anything less," Doyne said. "That's what you see here, a place that you'd want your child to go."

### 'Change makers, leaders'

In 2014 Doyne was awarded the Unsung Hero of Compassion by the Dalai Lama. The next year, she hit headlines after winning the 2015 CNN Hero of the Year Award. Originally from New Jersey, she volunteered at an orphanage in India before arriving in Nepal in 2007.

Hiking through the country's rugged terrain as Nepal's civil war came to a close, Doyne met Hima and other children doing manual labor—and knew in that moment she wanted to stay in Nepal to try to help. "I felt like doing something and trying to make it better would be easier than going back," she said. Instead of applying to colleges, Doyne began to fund more children to go to school.

"But for some kids who aren't fed and don't have the basic safety and family, going to school is just a distant wish," she said. Doyne put her life-savings of \$5,000 and, along with her Nepali co-founder Top Bahadur Malla, opened the doors of Kopila Valley Children's Home, and then the school.

Her non-profit BlinkNow Foundation helps fund social initiatives including a health clinic and a women's center. Doyne has faced some criticism—advocacy group No White Saviors has questioned whether a teenager from another culture with no higher education was best placed to serve the interest of Nepali children. But she is now seeing the first generation of students carve new lives and some are even returning to help her mission: the school's office manager, teaching assistant and accountant were all once its pupils.—AFP

## Delhi graveyard clears space to bury virus dead

NEW DELHI: Workers were clearing undergrowth from wasteland yesterday to add 400 graves to the Indian capital's oldest functioning cemetery beside the ruins of historic city walls, as the death toll from the coronavirus grows. With more than 100,000 deaths nationwide, India's tally of infections has crossed 6.6 million, but there is little sign of any sustained fall in new daily numbers. Since its first virus burial in April, the Islamic graveyard of Jadid Qabristan has seen more than 700 funerals on a patch of adjoining wasteland designated for pandemic victims. "We weren't expecting that we will have to clear more land for the graves," said head gravedigger Mohammad Shameem, a 38-year-old in a pale green traditional tunic, who is the third generation of his family to work in cemeteries.

"But bodies just keep arriving." A respite in infections has cut virus burials to about four a day, from 10 in the summer, but Shameem said the graveyard, founded in 1924, would soon be at capacity.

"The way things are moving, I think we will clear the last remaining patch of land for graves in the coming months." Hindus, who make up the majority of India's population of about 1.4 billion, are typically cremated after death, but its estimated 200 million Muslims typically bury their dead. Like the workers at a nearby crematorium for Hindus, Shameem said he often faced difficult conditions.

"We are doing so much work for the last eight months, but there has been hardly any help from the government, in terms of personal protective equipment," he said. — Reuters

## Pakistan's ex-PM Sharif and daughter face sedition charges

LAHORE: Pakistani police filed sedition charges on Monday against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz and dozens of his party leaders over comments he made criticizing the interference of the military in national politics.

Last month, Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League and eight other opposition parties came together to accuse the military of meddling in politics and of rigging elections in 2018 that brought Prime Minister Imran Khan to power. Sharif left Pakistan last November to get medical treatment after being granted bail from a seven-year jail sentence for corruption, though his daughter remains in the country. Sharif, a long-standing critic of the military, denies the corruption charges.

"We will ensure a court trial against the accused," government official Musarrat Cheema told Reuters regarding the sedition charges. In his recent speeches via video links from his London home, Sharif has said the interference of the military in politics was the root cause of all Pakistan's problems.

The sedition case filed against Sharif, his daughter and 44 top party leaders says he has sought in his speeches to isolate Pakistan internationally and have it declared a rogue state. "Convict Nawaz Sharif has been openly inciting the public to commit treason," said the case, a copy of which was seen by Reuters, adding that it was aimed at maligning the armed forces and the judiciary.—Reuters



KATHMANDU: In this photograph taken on September 10, 2019, American philanthropist Maggie Doyne (center) poses for pictures along with children from the Kopila Valley Children's Home, at Surkhet District, some 600 km west of Kathmandu. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Tsai defiant amid rising tension

TAIPEI: Taiwan will not "yield an inch" in defending itself, President Tsai Ing-wen warned yesterday as new figures revealed the island is scrambling fighter jets at more than double the rate of last year in response to Chinese incursions. Authoritarian China views democratic Taiwan as its own territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary, even though the island has been self-ruled for the last seven decades. Taipei's fighters have taken to the skies to ward off Chinese warplanes more than 4,100 times so far this year, making about 22 sorties a day on average, according to the military — 129 percent up on all of 2019. — AFP

#### Cayman off tax-haven blacklist

BRUSSELS: EU finance ministers yesterday removed the Cayman Islands from the bloc's blacklist of tax havens, but added Anguilla and Barbados, a statement said. Cayman Islands was removed from the EU list after it adopted new reforms, but the decision drew criticism from activists who said it showed the list was ineffective. "While we welcome the addition of Barbados, removing the Cayman Islands, one of the world's most notorious tax havens, from the EU tax haven blacklist is further proof that the process isn't working," said Oxfam's Chiara Puturo. The new entrants join American Samoa, Fiji, Guam, Palau, Panama, Samoa, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, the US Virgin Islands and Vanuatu. — AFP

#### Anglican leaders apologize

LONDON: The archbishops of Canterbury and York, the two most senior Anglican clerics, yesterday apologized to victims of sexual abuse within the church ahead of the publication of what is expected to be a damning report. Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell said the release of the findings of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) would be a "very harrowing time" for survivors of abuse. "We are truly sorry for the shameful way the church has acted and we state our commitment to listen, to learn and to act in response to the report's findings," they wrote in an open letter.

#### Italy softens harsh migrant laws

ROME: Italy's cabinet yesterday softened tough anti-migrant laws penned by far-right chief Matteo Salvini, making it easier for people to apply for humanitarian protection or obtain work permits. The center-left coalition government had pledged on coming to power last year that it would overhaul Salvini's draconian laws, which penalized charity ships rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean, and had been widely criticized by rights campaigners. "A wall has been knocked down in Italy. We took a while, a bit too long, but now Salvini's so-called 'security decrees' are no longer," Giuseppe Provenzano, a minister with the co-ruling Democratic Party (PD) tweeted. — AFP

# Business

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2020

## COVID slump not as bad as feared: IMF

### Georgieva warns coronavirus crisis is not far from over

NEW YORK: Amid a flood of government spending, the global downturn sparked by the coronavirus pandemic will not be as bad as originally feared, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said yesterday, but she warned that the crisis is far from over. "The picture today is less dire ... allowing for a small upward revision to our global forecast for 2020," she said in a speech ahead of IMF-World Bank autumn meetings next week, when the IMF is due to present its updated forecasts.

In June, the Washington-based crisis lender projected a nearly five percent contraction of global GDP, but results in the second and third quarters were better than expected. Georgieva credited the "extraordinary policy measures that put a floor under the world economy" which amounted to \$12 trillion in fiscal support to households and firms.

But she warned governments not to prematurely withdraw the help they have provided, since the outlook for next year is mixed and rife with uncertainties and risks. After more than a million deaths, "this calamity is far from over. All countries are now facing what I would call 'The Long Ascent'—a difficult climb that will be long, uneven, and uncertain."

Georgieva said.

In the United States and Europe the downturn, though painful, was not as bad as economists feared at the outset, and China is seeing "a faster-than-expected recovery." But the news elsewhere is bad: "In low-income countries, the shocks are so profound that we face the risk of a 'lost generation,'" she said.

"There is also now the risk of severe

when leaders "forged a better world in the worst possible moment," and called for governments to continue support for workers as long as it is needed, while spending to create a better, more equitable, economic system. "Where the pandemic persists, it is critical to maintain lifelines across the economy, to firms and workers," she said. "Cut the lifelines too soon, and the Long Ascent becomes a precipitous fall."

But, Georgieva said, "We cannot afford simply to rebuild the old economy, with its low growth, low productivity, high inequality, and worsening climate crisis," and she called for more spending on green jobs which can generate more employment. "This will require both stimuli for job creation, especially in green investment, and cushioning the impact on workers," she said. "Safeguarding social spending will be critical for a just transition to new jobs." She referred to an IMF report released Monday showing that increasing spending by just one percent of GDP could create 33 million new jobs.

#### Central role

Public investment should play a "central role" in boosting the economies of



WASHINGTON DC: The doors of the IMF headquarters building are closed in Washington, DC. — AFP

emerging and advanced economies as they struggle to recover from the coronavirus downturn, the IMF said. With interest rates at rock bottom around the world, the Washington-based crisis lender said now is the time for governments to take action to create jobs by reviving delayed infrastructure projects and tackling new ones, as well as by

investing in maintenance.

"We are in this unprecedented situation of very low cost of borrowing, crumbling infrastructure, even in the advanced economies," said Paolo Mauro, head of the IMF's fiscal affairs department. "Public investment can provide that support to economic activity and job creation that is needed." — Agencies



### Investment key to recovery

economic scarring from job losses, bankruptcies, and the disruption of education." Low-income countries have not had the resources to spend as much to support jobs and businesses, and also will need help to deal with their debt burden, including through more grants and debt restructuring.

She likened the crisis to World War II

### Sunak: Jobs, not tax rises, the priority for now

LONDON: Britain will prioritize trying to save jobs over tax rises while the COVID-19 pandemic batters the economy, though record borrowing and a \$2.6 trillion debt pile cannot be sustained forever, finance minister Rishi Sunak said yesterday. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is grappling with one of the worst economic hits to Britain in three centuries and Sunak has repeatedly warned that relying on such vast borrowing from the bond markets could trigger a financing crunch in the long term.

But with companies from airlines to pubs shedding hundreds of thousands of jobs and government spending soaring, Sunak is looking at ways to boost state revenue. "The priority right now is on jobs," Sunak told Sky News when asked about possible tax rises. "My overwhelming focus at the moment is trying to protect and support as many jobs as possible." Asked about tax rises in a flurry of interviews, Sunak repeatedly stressed that jobs were the short-term focus but made it clear that he would have to tackle Britain's debt mountain in the medium term. "Obviously this can't carry on



LONDON: A man wearing a face mask or covering due to the COVID-19 pandemic, walks past a tree decorated in pumpkins ahead of Halloween, in Manchester, northern England yesterday. — AFP

forever. This level of borrowing, which will be record levels, pretty much, this year, is not sustainable in the long run," he told BBC TV. "Once we get through this I think people should rightly expect us to make sure we have a strong set of public finances."

Sunak's emergency spending measures, including subsidies to slow a jump in unemployment, will cost about 200 billion pounds this year and have already pushed public debt over 2 trillion pounds (\$2.60 trillion), or 100 percent of

gross domestic product.

Sunak also said yesterday the government would stick to its so-called "triple lock" for setting increases in state pensions which could jump next year because of calculation distortions caused by the coronavirus crisis. Asked by LBC radio whether the triple lock was safe, Sunak said: "Yes, our manifesto commitments are there and that is very much the legislative position. We care very much about pensioners and making sure they have security and that's indeed our policy." — Reuters

### Twitter testing how its misinformation labels look and work

NEW YORK: Twitter is rethinking how the labels it applies to misinformation look and work, its head of site integrity told Reuters in an interview, as the social media company tries to make these interventions more obvious and cut its reputation.

Twitter's Yoel Roth said the company is exploring changes to the small blue notices that it attaches to certain false or misleading tweets, to make these signals more 'overt' and be more 'direct' in giving users information. But he did not say whether any new versions would be ready before the US election in the next four weeks, a period that experts say could be rife with false and misleading online content.

Roth said the new efforts at Twitter include testing a more visible reddish-magenta color, and working out whether to flag users who consistently post false information. "We've definitely heard the feedback that it would be useful to see if an account is a repeat offender or has been repeatedly labeled, and we're thinking about the options there," said Roth.

Twitter started labeling manipulated or fabricated media in early 2020, after a public feedback period. It expanded its labels to coronavirus misinformation and then to misleading tweets about elections and civic processes. Twitter says it has now labeled thousands of posts, though most attention has been on the labels applied to tweets by US President Donald Trump.

In September, Twitter announced it would label or remove posts claiming election victory before results were certified. Roth said research undermining the idea that corrections can strengthen people's beliefs in misinformation - known as the 'backfire effect' - had contributed to Twitter



rethinking how its labels could be more obvious. The risk is that label "becomes a badge of honor" that users actively pursue for attention, said Roth.

Though Twitter's labels have been praised by some misinformation experts as a long-overdue intervention, their execution has triggered criticisms from researchers as too slow. "Mostly things take off so fast that if you wait 20 or 30 minutes... most of the spread for someone with a big audience has already happened," said Kate Starbird, an associate professor at the University of Washington who has been analyzing Twitter's labeling responses.

It took Twitter about eight hours to add labels to Trump tweets about mail-in voting the first time it labeled him in May, though Starbird said Twitter was getting quicker. Two Trump tweets in September appeared to have been labeled within two hours. Roth said Twitter reduces the reach of all tweets labeled for misinformation, by limiting their visibility and not recommending them in places like search results. The company declined to share any data about the effectiveness of these steps.

In August, Election Integrity Partnership researchers said Twitter's disabling retweets on a Trump tweet that violated its rules had a clear effect on its spread but was "too little, too late." Roth said Twitter takes into account the number of retweets, engagement and views to prioritize viral content for review to give "the most bang for our buck." But he said Twitter was exploring how to predict which tweets would go viral and conducting exercises on likely new 2020 election claims to get faster. — Reuters

### Spain details software creator McAfee wanted in US

MADRID: Anti-virus software creator John McAfee, who is wanted in the United States for tax evasion, has been arrested at Barcelona airport, police said yesterday. Officers detained the 75-year-old on Saturday as he was about to board a flight to Istanbul and he was being held at a jail near Barcelona awaiting extradition to the United States, a Spanish police source told AFP.

His arrest comes a day after US prosecutors released an indictment against McAfee for allegedly failing to report income made from promoting crypto-currencies, making speaking engagements and selling the rights to his life story for a TV documentary. The indictment, which was issued in June but only unsealed on Monday, said McAfee failed to file tax returns from 2014 to 2018, despite receiving "considerable income" from several sources. McAfee allegedly evaded taxes by directing his income to be paid into bank accounts and crypto-currency exchange accounts in the names of others, according to the indictment. — AFP



In this file photo, John McAfee, founder of the eponymous anti-virus company, speaks during the China Internet Security Conference in Beijing. — AFP

### US trade deficit jumps to largest in 14 years in Aug

WASHINGTON: The US trade deficit surged in August to the largest in 14 years with imports climbing again, suggesting that trade could be a drag on economic growth in the third quarter. The Commerce Department said yesterday the trade deficit jumped 5.9 percent to \$67.1 billion, the widest since August 2006. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the trade gap widening to \$66.1 billion in August.

Imports increased by 3.2 percent to \$239 billion. Goods imports rose \$6.5 billion to \$203 billion. Exports increased 2.2 percent to \$171.9 billion. Goods exports rose \$3.5 billion to \$119.1 billion.

The closely watched trade deficit with China decreased \$1.9 billion to \$26.4 billion in August.

A smaller trade bill contributed to gross domestic product over the last three quarters. The coronavirus crisis severely disrupted trade flows, which are now picking up. — Reuters

### Bank of Spain warns crisis might be deeper

MADRID: Bank of Spain governor Pablo Hernandez de Cos yesterday warned that potential harsher measures to contain the recent wave of COVID-19 contagion in the country may lead to an even deeper crisis than the bank's worst-case scenario. Spain, one of the worst-affected nations with more than 32,000 deaths and more than 800,000 cases, is heading for its worst economic performance on record in 2020, with an expected contraction of 10.5 percent or 12.6 percent, according to the Bank of Spain.

De Cos warned that underlying risks remain tilted downwards. "We cannot rule out more unfavorable developments than the ones we had in our second scenario, the more adverse of the two we considered," he said. In this context, De Cos also urged broad political and social consensus to cope with the economic fallout from the COVID-19 disease as a political spat over how to tackle the crisis is escalating.

The national and regional governments have traded barbs over what to do and who was to blame for an increase in cases in Madrid and its periphery, taking to new heights the political polarization that has characterized much of the response to the pandemic over the past months.

"We must be aware of the magnitude of the challenge we face (...) and therefore I urge that we reach broad political and social agreements to tackle the urgent, ambitious and comprehensive growth strategy that our country needs," De Cos told parliament. Spain's central bank governor also urged politicians to carry out structural reforms on the Spanish labor market to improve productivity, while maintaining some fiscal stimulus in the short-term to weather the crisis.

De Cos, who also sits on the governing council of the European Central Bank (ECB), also said that there was scope for more consolidation in the banking sector in Europe at a moment when lenders are under pressure to deal with rising bad debts and record low interest rates. — Reuters



## Business

# Amid COVID and crime spike, New Yorkers cocoon in plush Hamptons

## City's well-off flock to the Long Island destination

**NEW YORK:** Beach umbrellas are back in garages as temperatures cool, but wealthy New Yorkers are staying in the Hamptons beyond summer, fearful of the pandemic and rising crime in the city. Robert Moore, a silver-haired digital entrepreneur, has been ensconced in his villa in Amagansett, a stone's throw from the beach, since March 13 when coronavirus began spreading across New York.

But the 58-year-old has decided not to return to New York, his home of 26 years. He had planned to "live a more nomadic life" anyway but never envisaged leaving Manhattan. The pandemic changed that. "If I have a choice, I don't have to be there so I'd rather not be," Moore said.

As New York became an early epicenter of America's outbreak earlier this year, the city's well-off flocked to the Long Island destination, which is just two hours by car from the Big Apple. "When Covid hit in mid-March, the rental market blew up," recalled real estate agent James McLaughlin.

"It was just kind of a wild scene. People were bidding \$80,000 for a summer rental that was available for \$50,000. They just wanted to be out here," he added. McLaughlin says several homes have sold for \$30 million or more, and demand is outstripping supply with prices rising 15 percent. The Hamptons, with its golden sandy beaches and quaint harbor towns, have long been a refuge for New York's elite, but normally just between June and the end of August.

### Oversubscribed schools

However, on a recent Wednesday in September, restaurants in Southampton were filling up at lunchtime, much to the delight of owners. "There's definitely more people here at the end of

September than there normally would be. I hope it continues," said Don Sullivan, owner of Southampton Publick House, a pub he opened 24 years ago.

The British auction house Phillips has recently opened a branch in Southampton, as has the Hauser & Wirth gallery, as it chases the fortunes that have fled New York. Retirees, young professionals, families—all age categories are represented as long as they have the means to live in this elite bubble where celebrities such as Steven Spielberg, Jennifer Lopez and Calvin Klein stay every summer.

Ross School, a private school that charges more than \$40,000 a year, welcomed 100 new students at the start of the new school year from nursery through fourth grade, compared to 16 last year, according to head of operations Andi O'Hearn. Our Lady of The Hamptons, a Catholic school, has 30 names on its waiting list and is "still getting calls every day," said the principal, Sister Kathryn Schlueter.

"We took as many students as we could," she said. Orson Miller, a 24-year-old French student, has been staying with friends in the Hamptons while he finishes a Master's degree online from New York University. "As long as nothing is resolved in New York and the situation is not certain, I think people will stay here," he said.

Natalie Simpson has been living in her Hamptons home since the spring and will be relocating to Connecticut rather than returning to New York. The 32-year-old mother says coronavirus is a factor, but that a recent crime spike was more concerning.

### Rising crime

Since the start of 2020, New York has seen a 40



**NEW YORK:** People wearing face masks walk by Main Street in Southampton, New York. Beach umbrellas are in back garages as temperatures cool, but wealthy New Yorkers are staying in the Hamptons beyond summer, fearful of the pandemic and rising crime in the city. — AFP

percent increase of murders and a 42 percent uptick in burglaries. "It's not really a place where we want to raise a child anymore, even though that was fully our plan," Simpson explained.

With tennis, horseback riding, golf and sunsets on the beach, those in the Hamptons experienced a pandemic very different from people who remained in the Big Apple. Moore's eldest son, a recent graduate, chose to stay in Manhattan for work. "I feel for my son, I feel for young kids, I feel for families that don't have the ability that we do," said Moore.

"We're very fortunate. There's a lot of people

that don't have that luxury."

With New York's cultural life also at a standstill and restaurants operating with limitations, many fear New York has changed forever. "It's never going to be the same and that's a little sad," said Moore.

But not everybody is ready to give up on the city that—until recently, anyway—never slept. "I'm missing New York and I'm kind of looking forward to spending a little more time there," said Lori Reinsberg, a 61-year-old art dealer who has been living in the Hamptons since late May. — AFP

## Oracle-Google copyright case in US supreme court

**WASHINGTON:** A decade-old legal battle between Silicon Valley giants Oracle and Google over software rights moves to the Supreme Court today, in a case with enormous implications for copyright in the digital era.

The top court scheduled oral arguments in the case which dates back to a lawsuit filed in 2010 by Oracle seeking billions from Google over its use of Java programming language in its Android mobile operating system. Two separate jury trials ended with a determination that Google's "software interface" did not unfairly use Java code, saving the internet giant from a possible multibillion-dollar verdict.

But an appeals court in 2018 disagreed, saying the software interface is entitled to copyright protection, prompting Google to take the case to the highest US court. Oracle, which in 2010 obtained the rights to Java when it acquired Sun Microsystems—which had supported Google's use of Java for Android-sought \$9 billion in damages in its original complaint. Google and many Silicon Valley allies have argued that extending copyright protection to bits of code, called application programming interfaces, or APIs, would threaten innovation in the fast-evolving digital world.

According to Google, a win for Oracle



This combination of file pictures shows the Oracle logo (top) in San Francisco and a Google logo at the Googleplex in Menlo Park, California. — AFP

would "upend the longstanding expectation of software developers that they are free to use existing computer software interfaces to build new programs."

The Developers Alliance, a nonprofit group which includes app makers and other tech firms, filed a supporting brief making a similar argument, arguing that "without shared APIs, every device and program is an island, and modern software development simply cannot happen."

### The monopoly question

The American Antitrust Institute argued in an amicus brief that allowing Oracle to maintain copyright protection "may slow

innovation and competition in software-dependent markets," and "may cement software-based monopolies." The hearing comes amid heightened scrutiny of large technology firms and with Google having seen its fortunes and dominance grow in the online world.

The political overtones are also apparent in light of Oracle founder Larry Ellison's close ties to US President Donald Trump and Google facing an antitrust investigation. The US government filed a brief supporting Oracle, arguing that copyright cannot be taken away from creators simply because it exists in digital format. — AFP

## Philippine Airlines to slash jobs as virus curbs bite

**MANILA:** Philippine Airlines will cut around a third of its workforce by the end of this year as part of an overhaul triggered by crippling coronavirus travel restrictions. The pandemic has devastated the global aviation industry, forcing airlines to seek government bailouts, furlough workers and slash jobs.

"The collapse in travel demand and persistent travel restrictions on most global and domestic routes have made retrenchment inevitable," the airline said Monday, announcing the loss of up to 35 percent of its more than 7,000 employees through voluntary resignations and forced layoffs. "The retrenchment is part of a larger restructuring and recovery plan as the flag carrier rebuilds its... network amid the global pandemic."



Commercial flights were grounded for more than two months during the country's lockdown, which sent the economy into recession and left millions out of work. Philippine Airlines said it was operating less than 15 percent of its normal number of daily flights after eight months of restrictions.

PAL Holdings, the listed parent of the airline, sank deeper into the red in the first half with a net loss of 20.75 billion pesos (\$428.6 million). That compared with a 2.98 billion peso net loss in the same period last year. The announcement comes as the Philippines takes tentative steps to revive its battered tourism industry by allowing domestic travellers to visit Boracay island, famed for its white sand beaches.

Strict protocols require tourists to test negative for Covid-19 before they can travel to the popular holiday destination. The Philippines has the highest coronavirus caseload in Southeast Asia, with more than 324,000 confirmed infections, including more than 5,800 deaths. — AFP

## Japan eyes stress test on banks to gauge virus impact

**TOKYO:** Japan plan to conduct stress tests on its five major financial institutions this year that look into how the coronavirus pandemic could affect their earnings and capital, the central bank said yesterday. Unlike many Western nations, where regulators stress tests many banks simultaneously based on standardised risk scenarios, Japan had relied on stress tests conducted individually by each bank.

As prolonged ultra-low interest rates prod major banks to diversify operations in search of yields, however, Japanese authorities decided to align their approach to that of their overseas counterparts, the Bank of Japan (BOJ) said in a report. For the first time, the BOJ and banking regulator Financial Services Agency (FSA) conducted joint stress tests on five major financial institutions in December, it said. The regulators presented its findings to the five institutions - Japan's three megabanks plus Norinchukin Bank and Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Holdings - with feedback in July.

The BOJ and FSA will conduct such stress tests regularly, with the one this year likely to scrutinize how resilient the financial institutions are to risks posed by COVID-19, the report said. "The biggest challenge would be on how to set the baseline and 'tail event' scenarios that take into account the impact from the coronavirus pandemic," the report said. The findings of the stress tests will not be published and used mostly as a basis for communication between the regulators and financial institutions, it said. — Reuters

## Google vs French media: Paris court to rule

**PARIS:** A Paris appeals court will rule tomorrow on whether France's competition authority overstepped its jurisdiction in ordering Google to negotiate with media groups in a dispute about digital copyright. The keenly awaited ruling will be the latest chapter in a long-running fight with European news companies demanding payment for content displayed in Google search results.

The outcome could have huge repercussions for the future of the press as it grapples with the decline in traditional print sales. The US internet giant is in a standoff with European media groups, including Agence France-Presse, over its refusal to comply with a new European Union "neighboring rights" law.

The law seeks to give a form of copyright protection to media firms when their content is used on websites, search engines and social media

platforms. But Google, which dominates internet searches, says that articles, pictures and videos will be shown in search results only if media groups consent to let the tech giant use them for free.

The juggernaut insists it should not have to pay to display items produced by news companies since they benefit from seeing hundreds of millions of visits to their websites. If media companies insisted on payment, only a headline and a bare link to their content would appear, Google said, almost certainly resulting in a loss of visibility and potential ad revenue. In 2019, France became the first country to ratify and apply the neighboring rights law adopted by the European Parliament.

AFP and other media groups lodged a complaint against Google with France's competition regulator last November, claiming the company was not negotiating in a good faith attempt to settle the dispute fairly. In April, the competition authority ordered Google "to conduct negotiations in good faith with publishers and news agencies on the remuneration for the re-use of their protected contents." Google contested the decision. — AFP

## Indonesians protest against passage of disputed jobs bill

**JAKARTA:** Thousands of Indonesians took the streets of several cities yesterday to protest the passage a day earlier of a jobs law they say is too pro-business, but which the government has promoted as vital to attract investment. President Joko Widodo's "omnibus" Job Creation bill was passed three days ahead of schedule, revising over 70 existing laws to accelerate reform of Southeast Asia's largest economy.

The passage also came a day before the start of a three-day national strike which unions expected to involve two million workers in protest against the bill. Demonstrations began yesterday in industrial areas around Jakarta includ-

ing Tangerang and Karawang and on Batam island, home to many electronics plants, local media reported.

Kompas TV footage showed thousands of people protesting in Bandung, West Java, wearing face masks but without observing social distancing. So far, workers have been unable to protest in front of parliament in Jakarta as planned. Police have sought to block protesters citing the need to contain the novel coronavirus. "The law will definitely affect the status of our employment," said Anwar Sanusi, a member of FSPMI trade union in Tangerang, who took part in a rally with 400 others.

People fear losing pensions and insurance if they are made contract workers for life due to the law, Sanusi told Reuters. The law removes the three-year maximum duration of contracts and reduces severance benefits - provisions the government said are intended to promote formal hiring. Other reforms include longer working hours and changes to mandatory paid leave. — Reuters



**BANDUNG:** Members of Indonesian trade unions protest against the government's proposed labor reforms in a controversial "jobs creation" bill in Bandung, West Java Province, Indonesia yesterday. — AFP

## Business

# Australia tips into record deficit as govt cuts tax, boosts jobs support

## New budgetary measures could help pull economy out of COVID slump

**SYDNEY:** Australia pledged billions in tax cuts and measures to boost jobs yesterday to help pull the economy out of its historic COVID-19 slump in a budget that tips the country into its deepest deficit on record. Prime Minister Scott Morrison's conservative government has unleashed A\$300 billion in emergency stimulus to prop up growth this year, backpedalling on a previous promise to return the budget to surplus.

budget deficit out to a record A\$213.7 billion, or 11 percent of gross domestic product, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021.

"There is no economic recovery without a jobs recovery," Frydenberg said in prepared remarks to parliament. "There is no budget recovery without a jobs recovery." Australia's unemployment rate hit a 22-year high of 7.5 percent in July as businesses and borders closed due to strict lockdown measures to deal with the coronavirus. While the number of deaths and infections in Australia from COVID-19 has been low compared with many other countries, the hit to GDP has been severe.

Australia's A\$2 trillion economy shrank 7 percent in the three months ended June, the most since records began in 1959. In its new projections, the government expects unemployment to rise to 7.25 percent by the end of the current fiscal year and then fall to 6 percent by June 2023. Australia's GDP is expected to shrink 1.5 percent for the current fiscal year before returning to growth of 4.75 percent in the next.

### Jobs push

Australia will spend A\$4 billion over the next year



Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison speaks at Admiralty House in Sydney in this February 28, 2020 file photo.— Reuters

to pay businesses that hire those under the age of 35 as it targets youth unemployment. The budget also brings forward previously legislated tax cuts for middle-income earners and extends tax breaks for individuals offered in last year's budget for low- and middle-income earners.

Some of these cuts will be retrospectively backdated to July 1, 2020. The government's highly expansion-

ary budget comes shortly after the central bank's policy decision on Tuesday, at which it kept interest rates at a record low and flagged reducing high unemployment rate as a national priority.

The Reserve Bank of Australia has slashed interest rates this year to 0.25 percent and pumped billions into the bond market to keep credit flowing to the economy. Both the fiscal and monetary support this year has helped restore consumption and business confidence and bring the unemployment rate down to 6.8 percent. Frydenberg has pledged to pare the heavy fiscal support once the unemployment rate falls "comfortably below 6 percent".

Australia delayed the release of this year's federal budget, which usually takes place in May, as the coronavirus upended most of the economic assumptions underlying its projections. While most of the measures announced yesterday were not new, the government affirmed its strategic priorities that include boosting domestic energy production and manufacturing and infrastructure investment.

Frydenberg said the plans would "ensure Australian manufacturing plays an even greater role in our economic recovery." — Reuters



### No recovery expected without jobs

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg yesterday announced A\$17.8 billion in personal tax cuts and A\$5.2 billion in new programs to boost employment in a recovery plan aimed at creating one million new jobs over the next four years. Those measures are forecast to push the

## Omar Akar joins as VP and MD of Huawei ME's Cloud, AI Business Group

**KUWAIT:** In line with its commitment to further optimize Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and collaborative work on ecosystems to empower the Middle East's digital transformation, Huawei has announced that Omar Akar will join the leadership team of the Middle East division of its new Cloud and AI Business Group, in the role of Regional Vice President and Managing Director.

With extensive experience within the information and communications technology (ICT) sector within the region, Akar will drive the growth and development of the Cloud and AI Business Group, while contributing to the Middle East's continued digitization initiatives and AI computing power.

Earlier this year, Huawei launched its new Cloud and AI Business Group in the Middle East Region to concentrate specifically on the most in-demand technologies in today's increasingly connected world. The Business Group strengthens Huawei's position as a partner of choice in enabling enterprises' digital transformation journeys, by offering focused products which enable cost reduction and increased business efficiency via modern infrastructure solutions. The BU portfolio also offers a next generation multi-cloud strategy to increase agility via the automation of service delivery. Huawei is also building a team of regional experts to deliver industry specific AI solutions that will accelerate digital transformation across various industries in the Middle East region.

Akar brings more than 16 years of experience to his new role, having worked with clients around the region throughout his career. His areas of expertise include multi-cloud, modern infrastructure, data protection, modern applications, and business intelligence.

Speaking on the appointment, Li Shi, President of Huawei Cloud and AI Business Group in the Middle East, said: "With Omar's extensive experience, the Huawei Cloud and AI Business Group will



Omar Akar

strengthen its optimization process to enable Middle East enterprises in becoming more agile and automate the delivery of next generation services. Omar's expertise makes him well positioned to contribute to our ambitions, while enabling Huawei partners to realize their digital transformation goals."

"It is an honor to be part of the leadership team of Huawei's newest business group," said Akar. "This is an exciting opportunity to contribute towards the Middle East's ongoing digitization efforts. By integrating Huawei cloud and AI solutions with 5G and next-gen connectivity solutions, we can realize a better-connected world, in which we can deliver comprehensive digital transformation industry use cases. The adoption of Huawei's global programs throughout the region will contribute towards increased ICT competitiveness, while supporting communities by cultivating local ICT talents - all of which will contribute towards a more digitally-enabled society."

"Computing power is a cornerstone of today's digital economy. Data is the core asset, and cloud and AI are the tools of productivity. Building stronger computing power in the Middle East will thus require that the ICT industry deliver ubiquitous cloud and pervasive intelligence in the years ahead," Akar added.

According to recent research by Gartner, the global computing market is projected to be worth more than \$2 trillion by 2023. Huawei estimates that in the coming five years, AI computing alone will account for more than 80 percent of computing power used around the world.

## German industrial orders rise at a 'remarkable pace'

**BERLIN:** Orders for German-made goods rose 4.5 percent in August, more than expected, boosting hopes for a robust third-quarter in Europe's largest economy after the coronavirus shock.

The increases were driven by demand from the eurozone, the Federal Statistics Office said yesterday, suggesting companies are making good progress back to pre-crisis levels. A Reuters forecast had predicted a 2.6 percent gain on the previous month. "The catch-up process for new industry orders is continuing at a remarkable pace," the economy ministry said in a statement.

Order intake was now only 3.6 percent lower than in February, before lockdown measures were imposed to slow the spread of the coronavirus, the office said. Economists applauded the strong data, but cautioned that rising infection rates across Europe were increasing the risk of setbacks. "It is difficult to imagine how German manufacturing could escape another round of lockdown measures with important trading partners," said ING Bank economist Carsten Brzeski.

"Nevertheless, today's industrial order data suggest that full order books - at least in the near future - could help the manufacturing sector to overtake the service sector." Official figures released last week showed German retail sales rose much more than expected in August and unemployment fell further in September, boosting hopes that household spending would power a recovery.

Figures from the statistics office showed that orders from abroad increased by 6.5 percent, boosted by a 14.6 percent surge in orders from the rest of the euro zone. —Reuters

## N Korea's Kim orders 80-day 'battle' to boost economy

**SEOUL:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ordered a nationwide drive to boost the ailing economy ahead of a key party congress in January, state media reported yesterday. The decision was made during a meeting of the ruling Workers' Party and comes as the coronavirus pandemic and recent floods have added yet more pressure on the isolated country's flagging economy.

Mandatory mass mobilisation drives, featuring extra-long work hours and additional duties, are commonplace in North Korea in the lead-up to major events. The efforts have usually been dubbed "Battles"-the North often embraces militaristic terminology and notions of struggle-but while the official KCNA news agency described it as such in Korean, in its English version it used the more diplomatic term "campaign". "We have performed historical feats with our costly efforts, boldly overcoming unprecedentedly grave trials and difficulties this year, but we should not rest on our laurels," it said.

"We still face the challenges that cannot be overlooked and there are many goals we have to attain within this year." Participation in the exhausting "battles" is rigorously monitored and used as a measure of loyalty to the regime, with past campaigns denounced by rights groups as exercises in forced labor. North Korea's ruling party is due to lay out a new economic plan at its January congress-the first such meeting in five years. The North has suffered from chronic economic mismanagement and a previous plan was quietly scrapped earlier this year, with a party meeting in August concluding that "goals for improving the national economy have been seriously delayed". It has also been hit by international sanctions imposed in response to its ballistic missile and nuclear programs, which have made rapid progress under Kim's leadership. —AFP

## Plastic pandemic: COVID-19 trashed the recycling dream

**NEW YORK:** The coronavirus pandemic has sparked a rush for plastic. From Wuhan to New York, demand for face shields, gloves, takeaway food containers and bubble wrap for online shopping has surged. Since most of that cannot be recycled, so has the waste.

But there is another consequence. The pandemic has intensified a price war between recycled and new plastic, made by the oil industry. It's a war recyclers worldwide are losing, price data and interviews with more than two dozen businesses across five continents show.

"I really see a lot of people struggling," Steve Wong, CEO of Hong-Kong based Fukutomi Recycling and chairman of the China Scrap Plastics Association told Reuters in an interview. "They don't see a light at the end of the tunnel." The reason: Nearly every piece of plastic begins life as a fossil fuel. The economic slowdown has punctured demand for oil. In turn, that has cut the price of new plastic. Already since 1950, the world has created 6.3 billion tons of plastic waste, 91 percent of which has never been recycled, according to a 2017 study published in the journal Science. Most is hard to recycle, and many recyclers have long depended on government support. New plastic, known to the industry as "virgin" material, can be half the price of the most common recycled plastic.

Since COVID-19, even drinks bottles made of recycled plastic - the most commonly recycled plastic item - have become less viable. The recycled plastic to make them is 83 percent to 93 percent more expensive than new bottle-grade plastic, according to market analysts at the Independent Commodity Intelligence Services (ICIS). The pandemic hit as politicians in many countries promised to wage war on waste from single-use plastics. China, which used to import more than half the world's traded plastic waste, banned imports of most of it in 2018. The European Union plans to ban many single-use plastic items from 2021. The US Senate is considering a ban on single-use plastic and may introduce legal recycling targets. Plastic, most of which does not decompose, is a significant driver of climate change.

The manufacture of four plastic bottles alone releas-

es the equivalent greenhouse gas emissions of driving one mile in a car, according to the World Economic Forum, based on a study by the drinks industry. The United States burns six times more plastic than it recycles, according to research in April 2019 by Jan Dell, a chemical engineer and former vice chair of the US Federal climate committee.

But the coronavirus has accentuated a trend to create more, not less, plastic trash. The oil and gas industry plans to spend around \$400 billion over the next five years on plants to make raw materials for virgin plastic, according to a study in September by Carbon Tracker, an energy think tank. This is because, as a growing fleet of electric vehicles and improved engine efficiency reduce fuel demand, the industry hopes rising demand for new plastic can assure future growth in demand for oil and gas. It is counting on soaring use of plastic-based consumer goods by millions of new middle-class consumers in Asia and elsewhere.

"Over the next few decades, population and income growth are expected to create more demand for plastics, which help support safety, convenience and improved living standards," ExxonMobil spokeswoman Sarah Nordin told Reuters. Most companies say they share concerns about plastic waste and are supporting efforts to reduce it. However, their investments in these efforts are a fraction of those going into making new plastic, Reuters found.

Reuters surveyed 12 of the largest oil and chemicals firms globally - BASF, Chevron, Dow, Exxon, Formosa

Plastics, INEOS, LG Chem, LyondellBasell, Mitsubishi Chemical, SABIC, Shell and Sinopec. Only a handful gave details of how much they are investing in waste reduction. Three declined to comment in detail or did not respond. Most said they channel their efforts through a group called the Alliance to End Plastic Waste, which is also backed by consumer goods companies, and which has pledged \$1.5 billion over the next five years on that effort. Its 47 members, most of whom are in the plastics industry, had combined annual revenue of almost \$2.5 trillion last year, according to a Reuters tally of company results.

In total, commitments by the Alliance and the companies surveyed amounted to less than \$2 billion over five years, or \$400 million a year, the Reuters survey found. That's a fraction of their sales.

Plans to invest so heavily in new plastic are "quite a concerning move," said Lisa Beauvilain, Head of Sustainability at Impax Asset Management, a fund with \$18.5 billion under management. "Countries with often undeveloped waste management and recycling infrastructure will be ill-equipped to handle even larger volumes of plastic waste," she said. "We are literally drowning in plastics."

Since the coronavirus struck, recyclers worldwide told Reuters, their businesses have shrunk, by more than 20 percent in Europe, by 50 percent in parts of Asia and as much as 60 percent for some firms in the United States. Greg Janson, whose St. Louis, Missouri, recycling company QRS has been in business for 46



years, says his position would have been unimaginable a decade ago: The United States has become one of the cheapest places to make virgin plastic, so more is coming onto the market. "The pandemic exacerbated this tsunami," he said. The oil and chemicals companies that Reuters surveyed said plastic can be part of the solution to global challenges related to a growing population. Six said they were also developing new technologies to reuse waste plastic.

Some said other packaging products can cause more emissions than plastics; because plastic is light, it is indispensable for the world's consumers and can help reduce emissions. A few called on governments to improve waste management infrastructure.

"Higher production capacities do not necessarily mean more plastic waste pollution," said a spokesman at BASF SE of Germany, the world's biggest chemicals producer, adding that it has been innovating for many years in packaging materials to reduce the resources required. The new plastic wave is breaking on shores across the globe.

### Make plastic

Richard Pontillas, 33, runs a family-owned "sari-sari" or "sundries" store in Quezon City, the most populous metropolis in the Philippines. The liquid goods he sells used to be packaged in glass. Many customers, in fact, brought in their own bottles to be refilled. Merchants like him are among key targets for the plastic industry, looking to extend a trend established after 1907, when Belgian-American chemist Leo Bakeland invented Bakelite. Since World War Two, mass-produced plastic has fuelled economic growth and spawned a new era of consumerism and convenience packaging.

"Many years ago ... we relied on goods repackaged in bottles and plastic bags," said Pontillas, whose store sells rice, condiments and sachets of coffee, chocolate drink and seasonings. Today, thousands of small-scale vendors in the developing world stock daily goods in plastic pouches, or sachets, which hang in strips from the roofs of roadside shacks and cost a few cents a go.

Already, 164 million such sachets are used every day in the Philippines, according to the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, an NGO. That's nearly 60 billion a year. Consumer goods firms including Nestle and P&G say they are working hard to make their packaging either recyclable or reusable. For example, P&G said it has a project in schools in the Manila region which aims to collect one million sachets for "upcycling." —Reuters

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- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care



People arrive at the Dubai Safari Park on Monday, in the United Arab Emirates. — AFP photos



A tiger swims inside an enclosure at the Dubai Safari Park.



A lion lays on its back in an enclosure at the Dubai Safari Park.



A trainer kisses his parrot during a show at the Dubai Safari Park.



A Hippopotamus swims in an enclosure at the Dubai Safari Park.



A gorilla stands on a tree branch inside an enclosure at the Dubai Safari Park.

## Dubai Safari Park re-opens after two-year refurbishment

Dubai's Safari Park reopened its doors Monday after a two-year expansion, as the emirate seeks to boost its hard-hit tourism sector amid the coronavirus pandemic. The 119-hectare (294-acre) attraction, which is built on the site of a former waste dump, first opened its gates to the public in December 2017, but abruptly closed five months later for "park improvements". After the addition of a variety of animals and plants and a shift in management, the park is open for business again. Operations director Muna Alhajeri said the site-located in the eastern desert region of Dubai, one of the seven emirates that make up the UAE-is home to nearly 3,000 animals. "This includes rare animals that are present for the first time in the United Arab Emirates," she told AFP, with species including the African Elephant, the Asian black bear-or "moon bear"-and the African bongo antelope. "The site was converted from a solid waste dump to a tourist, entertainment and cultural



An aerial view shows elephants running inside their enclosure at the Dubai Safari Park.

destination," Alhajeri said.

From the late 1970s until the early 1990s, the area served as a solid waste facility. Piles of rubbish once rose some 30 meters (100 feet) high,

according to official reports. Alhajeri said that since the construction of the park with pools of water, wild birds have also been attracted to the site. "The place was built in a way to prop-

erly accommodate such natural wildlife," she said. Dubai, which has the most diversified economy in oil-rich Gulf region, has been badly hit by the coronavirus slowdown. Its GDP has contracted 3.5 percent in the first quarter, following two years of modest growth. Tourism has long been a mainstay of the emirate, which welcomed more than 16 million visitors last year. Before the pandemic crippled global travel, the aim was to reach 20 million this year. Dubai is now largely open for business and tourism, but infection rates have been rising in recent weeks. Alhajeri said that visitors to the park must wear masks, undergo temperature checks and follow socially distancing rules, in line with precautions in place across the UAE. — AFP



People attend a show on birds at the Dubai Safari Park.



An aerial view shows flamingos running inside their enclosure at the Dubai Safari Park.



A man feeds a giraffe at the Dubai Safari Park.



Ring-tailed lemurs sit on a wooden structure in their enclosure at the Dubai Safari Park.



A gorilla interacts with visitors from behind a glass screen.



People attend a show on birds at the Dubai Safari Park.



This handout photo courtesy of the Smithsonian's National Zoo, shows the six-week-old male panda cub in Washington, DC. — AFP

## It's a boy: Gender reveal for Washington's new panda cub

Washington zoo revealed on Monday that its new panda cub is male, six weeks after webcam footage of his mother Mei Xiang giving birth was watched around the world. A swab from the cub's cheek was taken for DNA analysis, as male and female giant pandas appear similar at birth. "The cub appears to be healthy and strong," the Smithsonian's National Zoo said, adding he weighed 3.6 pounds (1.6 kilograms) and measured 14 inches (35 centimeters) from nose to tail tip.

"Both of the cub's eyes are starting to open. Keepers are encouraged by his progress," it said. A blue painting-by Tian Tian, the cub's father, who made daubs on a canvas while holding a brush through his cage bars-was unwrapped by zoo keepers to reveal the cub's gender.

Mei Xiang, 22, is the second oldest documented giant panda in the world to give birth. She was artificially inseminated in March with frozen semen from Tian Tian, 23. Mei Xiang has now given birth to

four surviving offspring. All cubs born at the zoo move to China when they are four years old under a partnership contract in which China owns the pandas. Fewer than 2,000 giant pandas still live in their natural habitat in China, while some 600 more live in zoos and breeding centers around the world, according to the Washington zoo. The unnamed cub and his mother can be followed via a webcam on the zoo's website. — AFP

## Lifestyle | Features

## 'Men are so ugly,' says 'Persepolis' author

Iranian Marjane Satrapi is famous for her films and graphic novels, but it is her painting which keeps her sane, she told AFP. The artist who was nominated for an Oscar for "Persepolis", based on her graphic novel on post-revolution Iran, started out as a painter. And that is what she always returns to after writing and shooting films like "Chicken with Plums" and last year's biopic of Marie Curie, "Radioactive". "Painting is about going back to the origin of what I liked doing. And my mental health depends on it," she said in her Paris studio with its view across the rooftops to Montmartre's Sacre Coeur.

In fact Satrapi has become so French-she hasn't been back to Tehran in two decades-that she has rather taken to Parisians' famous foul humor. Her giant canvases feature striking women

like her with red lips and manes of jet black hair. "I really like honest, ferocious women," said Satrapi, 50, who has always worn her feminism on her sleeve. Their sharp contrasts also echo the drawings in her bestselling graphic novels.

## 'Women are much prettier'

"I like figurative painting the most. Like the Old Masters, I would like to fill the public need for beauty." Despite Covid-19, and the risk of another lockdown, she is showing 16 of her paintings in the Francoise Livinec gallery in Paris next month. None of them features men because according to Satrapi, men are just too damn "ugly" to paint. "All that badly shaved skin. The male peacock may be more beautiful than the female, but with humans it's the women



Iranian Marjane Satrapi

who are much prettier," she declared.

Despite her own long history of outspokenness, Satrapi insisted that she is "against all kinds of radicalism where they want to burn everything down. "Feminism is all about doing. If I show that I can do something too, even better than a man, I have won the fight and I also set an example," said the writer,

who described herself as a "big mouth who knows how to defend herself".

## 'Hypocritical moralizing'

But she also hates what she calls a new hypocritical and moralizing strain of feminism, "people who are looking for a new kind of religion", Satrapi claimed. "This moralizing side really pisses me off. I don't want to be called a killer for eating a chicken," she added, saying she was against people's lives being forced into "formats". If "secularism becomes a religion as intolerant as extremist religion, then it's abject," she argued. For Satrapi humour is essential and a key "expression of human intelligence. Life is about losing everything. You die like a worm or a cat-if we can't laugh about all that, we are beyond stupid."

And before she goes herself, Satrapi said she wants to have made eight films, five exhibitions and four books. I have a plan for the next 30 years," she joked. As for her homeland, Satrapi said she no longer "feels credible" in commenting on it. She misses terribly the warmth of "its hospitality, the Elburz mountains and Farsi jokes... and its poetry, the purest form of expression. "We are the only people who, when we want to be really understood, quote Saadi, Hafez and Omar Khayyam. "A people whose mausoleums for its poets are fuller than its mosques cannot be bad," she said. — AFP

## Spike Lee favorite Thomas Jefferson Byrd found shot dead

The Tony-nominated African-American actor Thomas Jefferson Byrd, who appeared in numerous Spike Lee movies, was found shot dead in the southern US city of Atlanta at the weekend, sparking an outpouring of grief and praise for his work. Police found the 70-year-old dead in the southwest of the Georgia state capital on Saturday, with several gunshot wounds to the back, a spokesman told AFP. An emergency medical team rushed to the scene and confirmed he was dead upon their arrival. An investigation has been launched, but police have made no arrests so far. An intense and experienced stage actor, Byrd made his silver screen breakthrough late in life, at the age of 45, when he appeared in Lee's movie "Clockers."



In this file photo taken on June 21, 2014 US actor Thomas Jefferson Byrd attends the "Spike Lee...Ya Dig!" career retrospective and celebration during the 2014 American Black Film Festival at Metropolitan Pavilion in New York City. — AFP photos

Whether he was playing the boss in "Clockers," or the father in "Get on the Bus," his talent and physical presence made him stand out in Lee's films and caught the attention of other directors. But he returned to work with Lee on several other projects, including a 2017-2019 series based on Lee's own movie "She's Gotta Have It," and the 2015 film "Chi-Raq." "Tom is my guy," Lee said on his Instagram account. "I'm so sad." "Byrd was brave, funny, creative, country, smooth, expressive and a joy to be around," said actor Wendell Pierce, who appeared with him in "Get on the Bus." "What a fine actor," said Oscar-winner Viola Davis on Twitter. "Loved working with you Byrd...So sad your life ended this way." — AFP



Director Spike Lee attends the NYFF screening of "David Byrne's American Utopia" presented by HBO at the Brooklyn Army Terminal in the Brooklyn borough of New York City.



In this file photo dancers get ready prior to the opening of the annual gala at the Opera Garnier in Paris. — AFP photos

## Paris Opera ponders blackface as it tackles ballet's race problem

The Paris Opera is looking at banning "blackface" in its ballets and operas after nearly a quarter of its staff called for a major shake-up of how it deals with race. The issue of racism and diversity has been seen simmering since the choreographer Benjamin Millepied of "Black Swan" fame denounced the ballet's "insidious racism" after taking the reins in 2015. He said he had been told that "one does not put a person of color in the corps de ballet because they would be a distraction." "We have to get rid of this racist idea," Millepied said soon after taking over, only to resign a year later.

The institution's new director Alexander Neef has asked outside experts to examine the "ballet blanc", some traditional 19th-century ballets where all the female dancers wear white dresses or tutus, as well as a raft of other race-related issues. French ombudswoman Constance Riviere and historian Pap Ndiaye will deliver their report in December. Millepied renamed "la danse des negrillons" ("The Dance of the Little Negroes") in the ballet "La Bayadere" as "The Dance of the Children" while he was in charge of the opera's ballet company, and forbade dancers at its school from blacking up for it.



In this file photo dancers get ready prior to the opening of the annual gala at the Opera Garnier in Paris.

## 'N' word

But a manifesto signed by 400 of the Paris Opera's staff said the "N" word is still used in speech at the opera. The word is also used for a space inside the Opera Garnier still known as the "carre des negresses" (the Quadrangle of the Negresses), even though it had been officially renamed as the "carre des caritatives". As well as an outright ban on blackface, staff called for an end to "the silence that surrounds" the race issue. Tights and pointes shoes "should correspond to a dancer's color", they insist-

ed, a practice already widespread elsewhere.

Five black and mixed race dancers at the ballet posed together on Instagram in June over the hashtag #blackdancers-matter. Neef—who has spent the last 12 years in charge of the Canadian Opera Company—hailed the "courage" of staff for speaking out and their "very thoughtful" criticisms. "Even before they approached me, we had already started thinking about doing a mission," he told AFP. "We want to create a culture internally so that people come forward to talk about seri-

ous issues, so they know they will be heard and taken seriously," he added. Neef said that "as cultural organizations we need to be part of that change of society, respond to it and even anticipate it.

"You can't be immobile"

"For me it is not about politics-if you want to stay part of society, you can't be immobile and never change anything about yourself." Paris Opera told AFP that "the tights we buy will soon be more nuanced" but said that its workshops have been tinting pointes shoes to the color of the dancers' skin for years. Blackface in opera and ballets has largely been abandoned by most major companies in the West. But the practice still goes on in Russia, with Misty Copeland, the first ever "principal dancer" at the American Ballet Theater, condemning the Bolshoi in Moscow last year for staging a blackface production. It hit back by dismissing her "absurd declarations". The Decolonize the Arts group—which is pushing for racial harassment to be made illegal—told AFP that they welcomed the opera's rethink. "Anti-racist codes of conduct or changing titles is not about censorship, we are in living in a new era," said its head Francoise Verges. — AFP



In this file photo Jimmy Page, guitarist and Led Zeppelin founder, speaks during a media preview for an exhibit called "Play It Loud: Instruments of Rock and Roll" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. — AFP

## Led Zeppelin prevails in 'Stairway' copyright battle

The US Supreme Court on Monday refused to take up a copyright claim over Led Zeppelin's classic "Stairway to Heaven," capping a long-running legal dispute over the song. A lower court in California last March had ruled that the British rockers had not swiped the song's opening riff from "Taurus," which was written by Randy Wolfe of a Los Angeles band called Spirit. The decision on Monday by the country's highest court not to hear the case definitively ends the legal challenges which had been closely watched by the music industry.

Led Zeppelin had initially won the case in 2016, with the court at the time finding no proof that the 1971 classic

breached the copyright of "Taurus." However that ruling was overturned on appeal in 2018. "Stairway" is estimated to have grossed \$3.4 million during a five-year period at issue during the civil trial. Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page—who was sued along with the group's singer Robert Plant and another surviving bandmate John Paul Jones—testified in 2016 that the chord sequence in question had "been around forever." Wolfe's trustee, Michael Skidmore, filed the case in 2014 on behalf of his late friend who long maintained he deserved credit for "Stairway" but drowned in 1997 having never taken legal action over the song.—AFP

## Rare flawless diamond fetches US\$15.7m in Hong Kong auction

An exceedingly rare 102-carat flawless white diamond sold for \$15.7 million at an online auction in Hong Kong on Monday evening. Described as "completely flawless" by auctioneer Sotheby's, the 102.39-carat stone went to an unnamed telephone bidder for HK\$122 million in an auction held online because of the coronavirus pandemic. "The buyer of this diamond has bagged a bargain," said Tobias Kormind, managing director of online jeweler 77 Diamonds. During a time of economic uncertainty, he said, "savvy investors are currently falling over themselves to acquire alternative safe

haven assets like diamonds, property and gold". Only seven other white diamonds bigger than 100 carats and of the same quality have ever gone under the hammer.

The stone was sold without a reserve price, meaning the diamond went to the highest bidder and did not need to meet a minimum threshold, the first time in auction history that a diamond of this calibre has been offered that way. The tactic can be risky but can also generate a buzz that sellers hope will elevate the final price. — AFP



The 102.39-carat stone went to an unnamed telephone bidder for HK\$122 million. — AFP

## Sports

Photo of the day



Motocross racer Glenn Coldenhoff competes during the FIM MXGP Motocross World Championship in Italy. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

# Rabada shines as Delhi rout Bangalore to top IPL table

## Delhi Capitals' Amit Mishra out of IPL after finger injury

**DUBAI:** South African quick Kagiso Rabada claimed four wickets including Virat Kohli's key scalp to lead Delhi Capitals to the top of Indian Premier League table on Monday. Rabada returned figures of 4-28 and topped the IPL bowling chart with 12 wickets in five matches as Delhi outplayed Royal Challengers Bangalore by 59 runs in Dubai. Australia's Marcus Stoinis smashed an unbeaten 53 to guide Delhi to 196 for four, a total Rabada and company defended by restricting the Kohli-led Bangalore to 137 for nine.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel took two wickets and gave away just 18 runs from his four overs and paceman Anrich Nortje also struck twice. "I don't really plan to get wickets, you can only control in which areas to bowl. I

think if you want to be the best you have to adjust to the conditions," said Rabada. "I think the spinners did a really good job today, they set up the game for us in the powerplay. Axar and (Ravichandran) Ashwin actually won us the game." Patel, coming into the XI for injured Amit Mishra who was ruled out of the IPL, was named man of the match for his economical bowling figures.

Bangalore captain Kohli, who was kept under check in his 39-ball 43 before falling to Rabada, admitted his team was far from convincing against a top Delhi unit. "DC are playing some really good cricket. Their batting is fearless. They have got pace, they have got good spinners," said Kohli. "I won't say they are unbeatable, but they will be hard to beat. Against this side, you have

to bring your A game. We didn't tonight." The Twenty20 tournament is into its third week in the United Arab Emirates after being moved out of India due to the coronavirus pandemic.

### Finger injury

Meanwhile, India and Delhi Capitals' leg-spinner Amit Mishra has been ruled out for the remainder of the Indian Premier League season after injuring his finger against the Kolkata Knight Riders, his team said Monday. The 37-year-old, who last played for India in a Twenty20 match against England in February 2017, has been one of the top performers in league cricket. "(Mishra) sustained a flexor tendon injury to the ring

## Teams risk forfeits for coronavirus violations

**NEW YORK:** Teams found violating COVID-19 safety protocols may be forced to forfeit games, the NFL said on Monday, as it ramped up rules designed to prevent spread of the coronavirus. National Football League (NFL) Commissioner Roger Goodell instructed teams to "recommit" to safety protocols in a memo obtained by Reuters after positive tests forced the postponement of two Week 4 games.

"Protocol violations that result in virus spread requiring adjustments to the schedule or otherwise impacting other teams will result in additional financial and competitive discipline, including the adjustment or loss of draft choices or even the forfeit of a game," said Goodell. "Simply put, compliance is mandatory." The memo outlined changes to the league's protocol, including bans on gatherings outside of club facilities, a limit to the number of tryouts allowed each week and an extended "onboarding process" for tryouts among free agents.

The league is implementing a video monitoring system to ensure compliance with the protocols - particularly the mandate that all staff and players wear protective gear such as face masks while in a club facility and traveling. The league pushed a Sunday matchup between the reigning Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs and New England Patriots to Monday, after Patriots quarterback and former league MVP Cam Newton tested positive, along with Chiefs practice squad member Jordan Ta'amu.

The NFL also postponed an Oct. 4 game between the Tennessee Titans and the Pittsburgh Steelers to Oct. 25 after a number of Titans personnel and players tested positive for COVID-19. The NFL kicked off its 2020 campaign last month with numerous protocols in place after cancelling its preseason due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed more than 200,000 lives in the United States. A handful of coaches were fined after appearing on the sidelines of Week 2 games without proper face coverings. Their affiliated teams also received fines. —Reuters

## Serie A president tests positive for coronavirus

**MILAN:** Serie A President Paolo Dal Pino has tested positive for COVID-19, Italy's top flight soccer league said in a statement yesterday, days before an Oct 9 meeting to assess bids by private equity funds for a stake in its media business. A former telecoms executive, Dal Pino was appointed at the helm of Serie A in January, shortly before the COVID-19 outbreak brought the championship to a three-month standstill.

As closed-door matches and broadcasters cutting off money from deals keep club finances under pressure, Dal Pino has been promoting a project to sell a minority stake in the newly-created media company which manages the league's main source of revenue. Two private equity consortia, led by CVC Partners and Bain Capital, are bidding for a stake in the venture offering up to 1.6 billion euros (\$1.89 billion). Serie A's club representatives are expected to hold a meeting on Friday to pick the preferred bidder. The meeting remains scheduled for Friday despite Dal Pino being in self-isolation with symptoms, a source close to the matter said.

### Season not at risk

The Serie A season is not at risk, Italy's sports minister Vincenzo Spadafora said on Monday, one day after the

Juventus-Napoli match was abandoned due to an apparent conflict over implementation of the COVID-19 health rules. Napoli failed to turn up for the match in Turin, saying their local health authority (ASL) would not allow them to leave Naples after two players tested positive for COVID-19.

Serie A, however, refused to postpone the match, arguing that the ASL had failed to take into account the health protocol which had been agreed between the government and football authorities. This stipulates that, even if players test positive, the rest of the squad can continue training and playing provided they remain negative.

As a result of the disagreement, Juventus and match officials went to the stadium and waited in vain for Napoli to arrive, scenes which were highly embarrassing for Italian football. Spadafora said on Monday that the protocol was still valid although he also confirmed that ASLs could intervene in certain circumstances. "We are not at risk of stopping the championship," he told reporters after meeting Italian federation boss Gabriele Gravina. "Everyone must follow the strict rules of the protocol, if the health situation changes, we as a government are also ready to change."

"The local health authority may intervene in special cases," he added. "The important thing is that the intervention is motivated by certain requirements, although these can vary." Gravina was equally optimistic. "If we all care about health protection and the protocol is respected by everyone in its entirety, I think we can rest assured that the championship can be played and run safely," he said. Another concern is that Napoli have said they will challenge any decision to award the match to Juventus, which could lead to a lengthy legal battle. —Agencies

## Golf talking points: Resurgent Sergio, low-key Lawrie



MISSISSIPPI: Sergio Garcia of Spain celebrates with the cheque after winning the Sanderson Farms Championship at The Country Club of Jackson in Jackson, Mississippi. —AFP

**HONG KONG:** Two major winners and an emerging talent with an unusual dress sense feature in AFP Sport's golf talking points this week:

### 'This one's for dad'

Sergio Garcia wasted no time in returning to the world's top 50 after dropping out for only the second time since 1999 last week. One of only five players in history to have spent more than 1,000 weeks ranked at 50 or better, the Spaniard's emotional victory at the Sanderson Farms Championship ensured he will extend that tally as he moved back to 38th place from 51st. Garcia dedicated the win to his family, who have been tragically affected by the coronavirus pandemic. "I lost two uncles because of COVID. It has been tough for my dad. But this one was for him," the 40-year-old said. The win was a fitting reward for the 2017 Masters champion's unrivalled consistency, and his unusual "eyes closed" putting style.

Garcia is the only player to record at least one victory on either the US PGA or European Tour in every calendar year since 2010. World number one Dustin Johnson has won in every PGA Tour season over the same period, but the wrap-around nature of the calendar means his only two "2014 season" victories both came in late 2013. Garcia has also now won in four different decades. His first victory was as a 19-year-old at the 1999 Irish Open and he made his Ryder Cup debut at Brookline later that year.

### Lawrie signs off

Two weeks after Garcia won his maiden event at Druids Glen in Ireland back in 1999, an unheralded Scot enjoyed his greatest moment in the Open Championship at Carnoustie. Paul Lawrie beat Justin Leonard and Jan

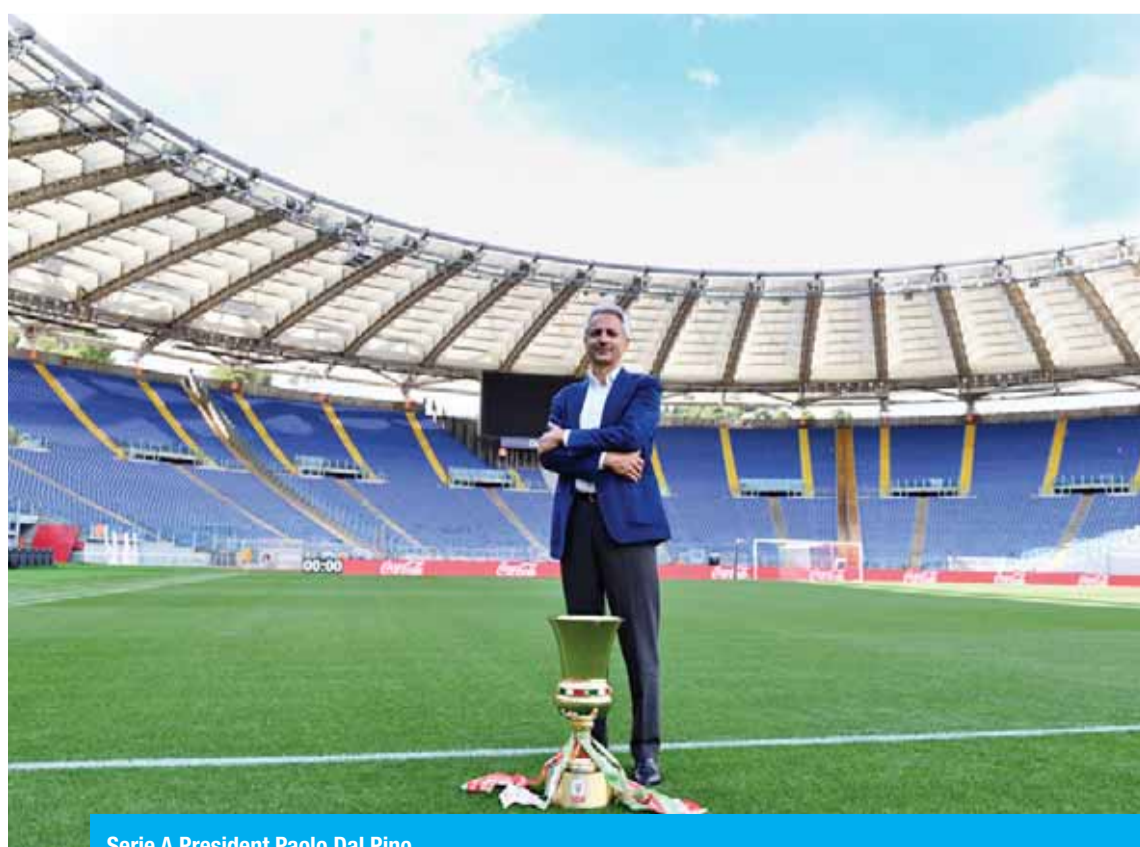
van de Velde in a playoff after the Frenchman's infamous meltdown on the 72nd hole. Lawrie, who turned pro in 1986, was never perturbed that his sole major victory was overshadowed by Van de Velde's socks-off, water-wading antics that blew a three-shot lead with one to play.

And so it seemed in keeping with the Scot's low-key character that last week the 51-year-old announced his retirement from the European Tour during the Scottish Open with few media present, no fans and very little fanfare. "To have played 620 events is not a bad innings, considering I turned pro with a five handicap and didn't think I'd play any," he told IrishGolfier.ie. "I haven't been a great player, but I've been decent and that's all you can ask for."

### Aaron Rai: A glove story

England's Aaron Rai turned heads when he won his first European Tour event in his rookie year at a rain-soaked 2018 Hong Kong Open sporting two gloves, one on each hand, instead of the usual golfer's one. But the quirk has remained and it helped him have the edge - again in filthy weather conditions - as he took his second tour win at the Scottish Open at the weekend in a playoff from Tommy Fleetwood. The extra grip obviously came in handy, as it did in Hong Kong two years ago, where among the luminaries he vanquished in the final round were Fleetwood, Garcia and runner-up Matt Fitzpatrick.

Rai explained at the time that his unusual attire was a longstanding habit he just couldn't break. "It started when I was eight years old," he said. "I just happened to be given these two gloves... and I got into the habit of wearing them." Then, a few weeks down the line, my dad forgot to put the two gloves in the bag so I had to play with one. It was terrible. I couldn't play, I couldn't feel the grip, so I've always stuck with the two gloves ever since. —AFP



Serie A President Paolo Dal Pino

## Sports

## Premier League defies COVID crisis to flex financial muscle

## Manchester Utd ink Cavani in late transfer dash

**LONDON:** The specter of empty stands and uncertainty over future broadcast and commercial contracts failed to halt the Premier League's arms race as clubs again splashed out more than £1 billion in the transfer window. English top-flight clubs committed to deals worth a reported £1.2 billion (\$1.5 billion), the lowest spend for a summer transfer window since 2015. However, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic was more marked when it came to player sales as Europe's other major leagues tightened their belts.

Outgoings of around £400 million mean the £800 million net spend is the second-highest on record in a single window. "The sensible way to look at it was that maybe the transfer market is not going to be as buoyant as in previous years," John Purcell of football finance specialists Vysyble said. "What we've ended up with is actually the second-highest net spend total for a summer window ever. "When clubs are doing these deals it tends to be a low down-payment and then the rest of the amount that needs to be paid is back-ended. "That suggests to us that, firstly, the clubs are thinking this COVID situation is not going to last forever. Secondly, it is forcing the clubs to stack up their risk exposure a little bit further down the track."

## Barca's bleak outlook

In stark contrast to the Premier League's investment, transfer spending in La Liga, Serie A and the Bundesliga shrank dramatically. Far from going for a new Galactico, Real Madrid did not make a single signing. Barcelona's dire financial figures for the 2019/20 season show why they spent most of the summer trying to get the big salaries of Luis Suarez, Arturo Vidal and Ivan Rakitic off their books. All three were sold for nominal fees.

The Catalan giants saw revenue fall by an esti-

mated 203 million euros last season and expect at least a further 60 million euro drop for the current campaign, with more of the season played behind closed doors. Meanwhile spending in Serie A fell by over half a billion euros compared to the 2019 summer window, despite Juventus' 60 million-euro deadline day deal for Italy winger Federico Chiesa and Napoli splashing up to 80 million euros on Nigeria striker Victor Osimhen, according to daily Gazzetta Dello Sport.

However, the competition for lucrative Champions League places and the battle to remain in the top flight is driving the need to spend in the Premier League. Just a month into the new season, champions Liverpool have been thrashed 7-2 by Aston Villa, while Manchester City and Manchester United have been humiliated at home by two sides that finished outside the top four last season - Leicester and Tottenham.

"It's no secret that the Premier League is getting increasingly competitive. We used to talk about the big four, now we talk about the big six," said Chris Winn, football finance expert at the UCFB Global Institute of Sport. "As things are getting more and more competitive, especially in this environment where seemingly anything is possible, the last thing that clubs want to be worrying about beyond the uncertainty of the pandemic is the effect of relegation or not qualifying for Europe. "The impact of that alone could be even greater than the amounts we are seeing spent by clubs on an individual basis this summer."

The huge transfer fees do not even take into account the extra financial commitments some clubs have taken on in terms of salaries - Gareth Bale moved to Tottenham on loan from Real Madrid and Edinson Cavani joined Manchester United on a free transfer. Further financial pressure comes from the British government, which wants the Premier League



Uruguayan forward Edinson Cavani

to help out clubs further down the football pyramid who rely on gate receipts. No rescue package has yet been agreed but failure to do so would risk another PR disaster for the Premier League.

Liverpool and Tottenham backtracked after initially planning to use government funds to furlough non-playing staff earlier this year. And Arsenal faced a backlash after it was reported that the man who

played club mascot Gunnersaurus had been released as part of cost-cutting measures on the same day the club paid £45 million to sign Thomas Partey from Atletico Madrid. On the field, the Premier League has defied the COVID gloom with unpredictable goalfeasts taking the eye off empty backdrops. Now it is betting on that product to sustain revenues even in a global economic crisis.—AFP

## Italy winger Chiesa joins Juventus in 60 million-euro deal

**ROME:** Juventus have signed Italy winger Federico Chiesa from Fiorentina in a deal worth up to 60 million euros (\$71 million), the Italian champions announced on Monday just hours before the close of the transfer window. Juve revealed that Chiesa had signed on an initial two-year loan deal worth 10 million euros, after which they would buy the now 22-year-old for 40 million euros "subject to the achievement of certain given sporting objectives by the end of the season 2021/2022".

The Turin-based club added that the fee could rise by up to a further 10 million euros "upon achievement of further performance objectives over the duration of the employment contract with the player". The transfer was revealed by Serie A on Monday, before either club had made an announce-

ment, when it included the move among the list of completed deals on its website.

Chiesa has reportedly agreed a five million-euro annual salary with Juventus and had his medical in Florence on Monday before joining the Italy squad ahead of three matches facing Roberto Mancini's 'Azzurri' over the next 10 days. He is considered one of Italy's hottest prospects and Juve's interest in the player has been no secret over the last couple of seasons. The pacy winger scored 11 times and made seven assists in 37 appearances in all competitions for Fiorentina in the 2019/20 campaign.

He has played 19 times for his national team since making his international debut in 2018, scoring once. His arrival at Juve follows the departures of defenders Daniele Rugani and Mattia De Sciglio to Ligue 1 teams Rennes and Lyon respectively, as well as Bayern Munich-bound Douglas Costa. Fiorentina meanwhile announced that they had replaced Chiesa with Jose Callejon, who arrives as a free agent following his departure from Napoli in August. Spanish international Callejon, 33, played nearly 350 times for Napoli, scoring 82 times and winning two Italian Cups.—AFP



Italian forward Federico Chiesa

## Serena says 'underpaid, undervalued' as Black women in tennis

**LONDON:** Serena Williams said she has been "underpaid (and) undervalued" as a Black woman in tennis, applauding the Black Lives Matter movement for shining a light on entrenched racism, according to comments published by British Vogue magazine. The US star, who has won 23 Grand Slam titles and been outspoken about sexism and racism during her career, said technology had also played a key role in highlighting racial discrimination and violence.

"Now, we as Black people have a voice - and technology has been a huge part of that," she said in an interview for the upcoming British Vogue November 2020 issue. "We see things that have been hidden for years; the things that we as people have to go through. This has been hap-

pening for years. People just couldn't pull out their phones and video it before. "I think for a minute they (white people) started - not to understand, because I don't think you can understand - but they started to see," she added.

"I was like: well, you didn't see any of this before? I've been talking about this my whole career. It's been one thing after another." Williams is among the world's most successful and well-known tennis stars, along with her sister Venus, and has repeatedly highlighted the prejudice she has faced on and off the court. She boycotted the BNP Paribas Open tournament at the California Indian Wells resort for 14 years after suffering racist jeers there in 2001, an incident which she said left her crying in the locker room for hours.

In 2018, she called out sexism after being deducted a point for smashing her racket in frustration at the US Open, with women's tennis pioneer Billie Jean King praising her for exposing a "double standard" towards female players. But Williams, 39, told British Vogue she was proud to

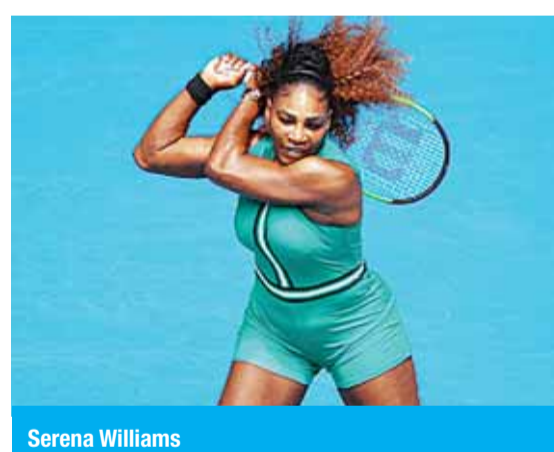
12,700 fans at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Missouri.

Chiefs safety Tyran Mathieu helped seal the victory with a 25-yard interception and return with 8:48 left in the fourth quarter. So far, Newton is the only Patriot to have tested positive for the virus. Organizers moved the game from Sunday to Monday so more tests could be conducted. Chiefs practice squad quarterback Jordan Ta'amu also tested positive. New England's travel plans on Monday were altered to allow the players to travel in two aircraft. One carried the 20 players who have had contact with Newton, who was placed on the Covid-19 list on Saturday.

## Rodgers on song

Backup quarterback Brian Hoyer replaced Newton but failed to get a touchdown despite getting into scoring territory twice. Hoyer was replaced in the third quarter by third-stringer Jarrett Stidham, who engineered a touchdown drive on his first possession. But Stidham also threw two interceptions. The Patriots dropped to 2-2 on the season and are now two games back of the Buffalo Bills in the AFC East. Damien Harris came off injured reserve to gain 100 yards on 17 carries. Harris had missed the first three games due to a hand injury.

The Patriots were missing running back Sony Michel who is out with a quad injury. In the later



Serena Williams

represent "beautiful dark women" and hoped attitudes may be gradually shifting. "Maybe it doesn't get better in time for me, but someone in my position can show women and people of color that we have a voice, because Lord knows I use mine," she was quoted as saying.—Reuters



KANSAS CITY: Brian Hoyer #2 of the New England Patriots hands the ball off to Damien Harris #37 during the second half against the Kansas City Chiefs on October 05, 2020.—AFP

game, Aaron Rodgers and Robert Tonyan connected on three touchdown passes as the Green Bay Packers routed the Atlanta Falcons 30-16. Rodgers completed 27 of 33 passes and finished with four touchdowns for the Packers, who improved to 4-0 on the season. Tonyan caught a career-high three touchdowns and six passes for 98 yards. "He is a very consistent guy," Rodgers said of Tonyan. "Every year he is getting better. He's a really good player."—AFP

## Premier League winners and losers in transfer window

**LONDON:** Premier League clubs embarked on a final flurry of spending on Monday before the international transfer window slammed shut. Manchester United and Arsenal made the biggest headlines on deadline day with deals for Edinson Cavani and Thomas Partey respectively. AFP Sport looks at how the top teams fared in the summer market:

## Liverpool

What do you give the manager who has everything? Heading into the final days of the transfer window, it seemed Jurgen Klopp's desires had been well catered for as he bolstered a squad that powered to the title last term and won the Champions League just two seasons ago. Klopp's headline addition was Spain midfielder Thiago Alcantara, who arrived from Bayern Munich in a £20 million (\$25 million) swoop. The Reds boss also spent £41 million on Wolves forward Diogo Jota, while Greek left-back Kostas Tsimikas arrived from Olympiakos as back-up for Andrew Robertson.

But Sunday's astonishing 7-2 defeat at Aston Villa has cast a fresh spotlight on Liverpool's squad and the glare wasn't entirely flattering. Liverpool have conceded 11 goals in just four league games this season, with Joe Gomez looking especially vulnerable amid suggestions Klopp should have brought in a centre-back to provide competition for the berth alongside Virgil van Dijk at the heart of the defence.

## Manchester City

Frustrated by the defensive deficiencies that ruined City's bid for a third successive title last season, Pep Guardiola spent over £100 million on a pair of centre-backs. Nathan Ake was signed from Bournemouth for £41 million, but after the Dutch international was part of a back four that conceded five goals at home to Leicester, Guardiola decided to double down on the position with a £61 million move from Benfica's Ruben Dias. Dias is regarded as a natural leader and he will need to live up to that billing as City have looked bereft of organisation and fight since Vincent Kompany's departure to Anderlecht last year. Ferran Torres's £20 million arrival from Valencia seemed an extravagance given City's wealth of options on the flanks.

## Manchester United

Lurching from one bungled deal to another, United endured a troubled transfer window that added to boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's problems on the pitch. United's third place finish last season raised hopes of a big leap forward fuelled by a host of star signings, but instead they became embroiled in a protracted and ultimately unsuccessful pursuit of Borussia Dortmund forward Jadon Sancho. Ed Woodward, who takes the lead on United's transfer deals, also failed to land Aston Villa midfielder Jack Grealish and Barcelona forward Ousmane Dembele. Signing former Paris Saint Germain striker Edinson Cavani, 33, on a free transfer on deadline day smacked of desperation and did little to appease frustrated fans still fuming after Sunday's 6-1 thrashing by Tottenham. Porto left-back Alex Telles also arrived on Monday for £13.5 million, but neither he nor Ajax midfielder Donny van de Beek, who joined for £40 million in the close-season, are likely to set pulses racing.

## Chelsea

Snap judgment suggests Frank Lampard was the window's big winner. Looking to close the gap on Liverpool, Lampard convinced Blues owner Roman Abramovich to bankroll a £200 million spree that landed German forwards Timo Werner and Kai Havertz, Ajax playmaker Hakim Ziyech, Leicester defender Ben Chilwell, Rennes keeper Edouard Mendy, plus Thiago Silva on a free transfer. Whether Lampard will be able to gel those new signings into a cohesive unit is the question that will define Chelsea's season as a success or failure.—AFP

**14** Serie A president tests positive for coronavirus



**15** Winger Federico Chiesa joins Juve in 60 million-euro deal



**15** Premier League defies COVID crisis to flex financial muscle



PARIS: Danielle Collins of the US celebrates after winning against Tunisia's Ons Jabeur during their women's singles fourth round tennis match on Day 10 of The Roland Garros 2020 French Open tennis tournament yesterday. —AFP

## Collins ends Jabeur's historic run

### Match-fixing alleged; Podoroska becomes first qualifier

PARIS: Unseeded Danielle Collins battled past Tunisian Ons Jabeur 6-4 4-6 6-4 yesterday to reach the French Open quarter-finals for the first time in her career. World number 57 Collins raised her level after the opening nine games of the first set went with serve, when the American broke to edge ahead in the contest as Jabeur made an unforced error from the back of the court.

The big-hitting 26-year-old then raced to a 3-0 lead in the second set, showing the craftiness more commonly associated with her opponent to pull off a superb drop shot in the second game as Jabeur appeared to wilt on Court Philippe Chatrier. But the Tunisian, who became the first Arab woman to reach the Roland Garros last 16 by beating eighth seed Aryna Sabalenka, regained focus to win the next five games in a row before dragging the match into a deciding set.

In complete contrast to the opener, both players traded breaks freely at the start of the decider before Collins came back from 0-40 to hold for 3-2 and staved off a late comeback attempt to seal the win. "I felt I was in the driver's seat until 6-4 3-0... she's tricky, served really well and hit some drop shots I wasn't expecting," Collins said. "I had to try and dig it out. It broke my rhythm. I lost my way there a little bit, lost some of the shots I'd been hitting earlier and I needed to try and stay positive." Collins, who was without a coach at the US Open where she lost her opener, said she was reaping the rewards of working with Spaniard Nicolas Pietrangeli. "Nico and I started working with each other last week, it's all new," added Collins, who beat 2016 winner Garbine Muguruza in the third round. "... Luckily I found someone with an incredible career... It's a special treat to be able to work with him." She takes on Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin next, after the fourth-seeded American beat Frenchwoman Fiona Ferro 2-6 6-2 6-1 in their last 16 encounter on Monday.

#### World 131 Podoroska

Meanwhile, Argentina's Nadia Podoroska became the first qualifier in the Open era yesterday to reach the women's semi-finals at Roland Garros after stunning third seed Elena Svitolina 6-2, 6-4. World number 131 Podoroska had never

won a Grand Slam main draw match before the tournament and is the first Argentine woman to reach the last four of a major since Paola Suarez in Paris in 2004. The 23-year-old Podoroska will play Polish teenager Iga Swiatek or Italian qualifier Martina Trevisan for a place in Saturday's final. "It's a little bit difficult for me to speak now after the match," said Podoroska, whose only other Grand Slam appearance came at the 2016 US Open.

"We did a very good job with my coaches during the (coronavirus) quarantine. I've been training a lot with all of my team I think that's why I'm here today." It was the first time Podoroska had even faced a player inside the top 20, having started the year ranked a lowly 255. Svitolina suffered a third quarter-final defeat in as many attempts at Roland Garros, having also lost at this stage in 2015 and 2017. The Ukrainian hit just eight winners—the same number of times she dropped serve—as she slumped to her worst defeat at a major in terms of her opponent's ranking.

#### Match-fixing probe

In another development, French prosecutors said yesterday they have opened an investigation into alleged match-fixing in a French Open women's doubles encounter. The probe concerns the first-round match on September 30 between Romanian pair Andreea Mitu and Patricia Maria Tig and Yana Sizikova of Russia playing with US player Madison Brengle, according to French sports daily L'Equipe and German newspaper Die Welt.

The game in question is the fifth of the second set won by love by the Romanian duo after Sizikova served two double faults. L'Equipe reported large sums of money were bet on the Romanians winning the game in question and that the wagers were placed in several countries through Paris-based gambling outlets. Prosecutors said they were probing alleged "fraud in an organized group" and "active and passive corruption in sport".

#### Djokovic suffers deja vu

For the second Grand Slam in succession a line judge was in the firing line from Novak Djokovic but on Monday it did

not cost the Serb anything more than an anxious moment. Top seed Djokovic lunged to make a service return in the eighth game against Karen Khachanov in their French Open fourth-round clash and the ball ricocheted off his frame and straight into the head of a male line judge.

It brought back instant memories of the world number one's dramatic default at the US Open—also in a fourth round match against Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta. On that occasion Djokovic swiped a ball behind him towards the backstop after losing a point and inadvertently hit a female line judge in the throat-leaving tournament officials no choice but to disqualify him. This time there was no blame attached to him



PARIS: Tunisia's Ons Jabeur reacts as she plays against Danielle Collins of the US during their women's singles fourth round tennis match on Day 10 yesterday. —AFP

win, Thomas had started Monday in the strongest position, sitting third overall, but finished with almost no hope of making back lost time. "It's still a long Giro. We have Filippo (Ganna) and Rohan (Dennis) with some good chances in the time trials," Ineos sports director Matteo Tosatto said. But 2020 looks set to become a write off for Ineos, formerly SKY, who dominated cycling for a decade coming into this season. Another British rider, Simon Yates of Mitchelton-Scott, also had a bad day on Monday and stands at 3 minutes 46 seconds adrift of the leader.

With Thomas and Yates out of the equation focus now falls on two-time winner Vincenzo Nibali and Denmark's Jakob Fuglsang. "I saw Thomas fall but we never expected that. Same for Yates, I'm stunned that this happened on these slopes," said Nibali. Nibali won the Giro in 2013 and 2016, and is sixth overall, 55 seconds behind Deceuninck's Joao Almeida, with Fuglsang 1min 13sec behind the race leader. Portugal's Almeida wears the leader's pink jersey for the fourth stage, a 140km run from Catania to Villafranca Tirrena, the last in Sicily before the race heads for mainland Italy. —AFP

as the ball had been in play, but he said it had been a worrying moment all the same.

"My gosh, it was very awkward de:je: vu," Djokovic said after his 6-4 6-3 6-3 defeat of Khachanov that put him in his 47th Grand Slam quarter-final. "I'm actually trying to find the lines person and see if he's okay because I saw he had a little bit of a bruise, like redness, in that place in the head where the ball hit him. "I hope he's fine. He definitely dealt with it in a very strong and brave way. But it was a hit because I was very close. Obviously because of what happened in New York, people... are going to make the story out of this. —Agencies

### 'So frustrating,' Thomas out of Giro d'Italia with pelvis fracture

CATANIA: Geraint Thomas' Giro d'Italia misfortunes continued yesterday when the British rider was forced to withdraw before the start of the fourth stage in Catania, Sicily with a fractured pelvis. The 2018 Tour de France winner's pink jersey ambitions were left in tatters after a heavy crash on Monday saw him lose more than 11 minutes at the arrival at Mount Etna in Sicily, to sit 53rd overall. "It's so frustrating," said the 34-year-old, who fell hard on his left side after he cycled over a discarded water bottle during the pre-race parade on stage three.

The team Ineos rider has never been successful in his four Giro starts, but this is his earliest withdrawal, having also pulled out before the 13th stage in 2017, five

days after a fall. "I'd put so much work in to this race," said the Welshman. "I did everything I could and feel like I was in just as good, if not better shape, than when I won the Tour. I was feeling really good. So for it just to end like this is gutting."

#### 'Shark' Nibali well positioned

It was also another blow for Ineos after their disappointing Tour de France and defending Giro champion Egan Bernal's withdrawal. Of the potential contenders to



LINGUAGLOSSA: Overall leader Team Ineos rider Italy's Filippo Ganna, wearing the pink jersey (left), Team Ineos rider Great Britain's Geraint Thomas (2nd left) and Team Ineos rider Australia's Rohan Dennis (right) ride behind during the 3rd stage of the Giro d'Italia 2020 cycling race. —AFP