



### 3 Amir congratulated for selecting Sheikh Mishal as Crown Prince



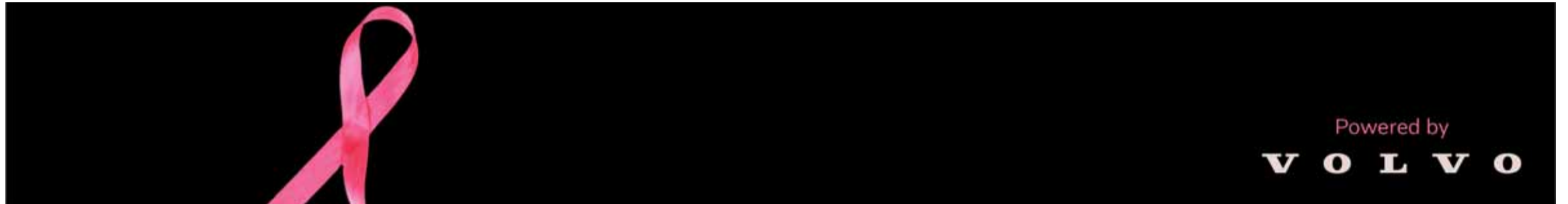
### 5 North Korea unveils giant ICBMs at military parade



### 12 Iranian maestro Shajarian laid to rest beside epic poet



### 16 Heat edge Lakers in thriller to keep title dream alive



# Kuwait reports 13 deaths, 1,127 new cases in 2 days

## 139 patients in ICU as govt mulls measures to curb COVID-19

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait reported 13 deaths from COVID-19 in the past two days, while the number of patients in intensive care units rose by 14 in the past 24 hours. The spike in deaths comes as speculation continues to grow whether the government will reintroduce lockdowns or other measures to curb the spread of the deadly disease.

The number of confirmed coronavirus infections in Kuwait rose by 492 yesterday to take the total to 110,568, while a sixfold increase in fatalities upped the death toll from the outbreak to 655.

health ministry data showed. In terms of health zones, Ahmadi governorate recorded 134 cases, followed by 110 in Farwaniya, 97 in Hawally, 87 in the Capital and 64 in Jahra, ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad revealed.

The number of people hospitalized with the virus stands at 7,191, of whom 139 are in intensive care units, said Sanad. He added 2,805 swab tests were conducted in the past day, taking the total to 779,538 tests so far, while 698 people recovered from the virus in the last 24 hours to raise the total

to 102,722 recoveries. Kuwait reported seven COVID-19 deaths and 635 new infections on Friday, with a total of 125 patients in ICUs. Sanad urged the public to be mindful of health precautions, asserting that following social distancing was the only way to halt the spread of the virus.

The government had warned that recent indicators from the spread of the coronavirus in the country are alarming. "What we have witnessed in the past few days of not applying health guidelines strictly is alarming," HH the Prime Minister Sheikh

Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said during Thursday's National Assembly session. "The death rate has increased and so has the number of admissions into intensive care units and occupancy of hospital beds," he noted.

The premier said these indicators are alarming and warned that the government will implement necessary health measures to contain the spread of the pandemic. He however did not elaborate on the type of measures the government might take. Kuwait had lifted a five-month-long curfew on Aug 30, 2020.

### News in brief

#### Tehran to impose fines

**TEHRAN:** Iran is to start imposing fines for breaches of health regulations in the capital, President Hassan Rouhani announced yesterday, after daily coronavirus infections hit a record high. The police, the Basij paramilitary force and health inspectors will have powers to impose the fines, and offenders will have two weeks to make payment into a health ministry account, Rouhani said. Breaches punishable by a fine include refusal to quarantine while sick and failure to wear a mask in a public space or require a customer to do so. — AFP

#### Toddler's murder sparks outrage

**PESHAWAR:** Police in northwest Pakistan have made a string of arrests as they search for the killer of a two-year-old girl whose rape and murder have drawn comparisons to an infamous 2018 killing that sparked riots. The girl, Zainab, disappeared Tuesday while playing outside her village home in Charsadda district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Her body was discovered a day later, prompting a large-scale manhunt that by yesterday had led to the arrests of at least 17 men. Additionally, police took DNA samples from about 400 people. — AFP

#### WFP hails Peace Nobel

**GENEVA:** The UN World Food Program, which has coordinated medical logistics during the coronavirus pandemic, won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday in what its boss said was a call to action that no one should go hungry with the wealth in the world today. The head of the awards committee called the WFP a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict, and said the COVID-19 pandemic, which the WFP says could double hunger worldwide, had made it even more relevant. — Reuters

#### Pakistan bans TikTok

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan on Friday banned the wildly popular video sharing app TikTok, as authorities press their clampdown on "immoral" content. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) said TikTok had failed to adhere to two warnings, which had demanded it block "immoral, obscene and vulgar" content. Earlier last week, Pakistani TikToker Jannat Mirza became the first in the country to reach 10 million followers, with lip-syncing and slow motion clips among her content. — AFP (See Page 7)



## Shaky Karabakh truce marred by fresh violations

**STEPANAKERT, Azerbaijan:** Armenia and Azerbaijan traded accusations of new attacks yesterday in breach of a ceasefire deal to end nearly two weeks of heavy fighting over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. The two sides agreed to implement the ceasefire from noon (0800 GMT) yesterday, after 11 hours of talks in Moscow, but it took only minutes after the deadline for their forces to claim new attacks.

An ethnic Armenian enclave of Azerbaijan, Karabakh broke from the country's control in a war in the 1990s that killed some 30,000 people. Its separatist government is strongly backed by Armenia, which like Azerbaijan gained independence with the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, and Baku accuses Yerevan of occupying the region.

The heaviest clashes since the war erupted on Sept 27, with more than 450 people reported dead. **Continued on Page 2**

## Nurses in COVID fight face mental health pressures

**GENEVA:** Many nurses caring for COVID-19 patients are suffering burnout or psychological distress, and many have faced abuse or discrimination outside of work, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) said. Supplies of personal pro-



**TERTER:** Yasin Budakov, 40, holds a kitten he found in his damaged flat as residents return to their homes following a ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan yesterday. — AFP

ective equipment for nurses and other health workers in some care homes remain insufficient, it said, marking World Mental Health Day yesterday.

"We are extremely concerned about the mental health impact on nurses," Howard Catton, a British nurse who is the ICN's chief executive, told Reuters Television at the association's headquarters in Geneva. "Our most recent survey of national nurses' associations shows that more than 70 percent of them (the associations) were saying that nurses have been subject to violence or discrimination and as a result of that they are very concerned about extreme cases of psychological

distress and mental health pressure," he said.

The figure was based on responses from roughly a quarter of its national nurses' associations in more than 130 countries. Nurses face a broad spectrum of issues that affect their mental health, including physical and verbal abuse, Catton said. "There are nurses who have been subject to discrimination, where their landlord has not renewed their lease for their apartment, or they can't get child care for their children," he said, without giving specifics of physical or verbal abuse.

**Continued on Page 2**

## Trump restarts campaigning, debate axed

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump was to give a public speech at the White House yesterday for the first time since testing positive for COVID-19, as he prepares a rapid return to the campaign trail just three weeks before the election. The 74-year-old commander-in-chief has also announced a Florida rally tomorrow in an attempt to relaunch his stumbling reelection campaign against surging Democratic rival Joe Biden, who called the president's behavior "reckless".

Seeking to project strength and improved health, Trump had refused to participate in this week's scheduled debate after organizers shifted it to an online format out of coronavirus concerns. On Friday the Commission on Presidential Debates made it official,

saying Thursday's debate is scrapped, leaving an Oct 22 event the final Trump-Biden showdown before election day on Nov 3.

That prompted accusations of bias from Trump campaign communications director Tim Murtaugh, who said "there is no medical reason to stop" the Oct 15 debate from proceeding. Knocked off the campaign trail by his three-night hospitalization last week, the president is in the midst of a frenetic bid to catch Biden. On Friday, during an extended media blitz, Trump falsely claimed that COVID-19 now has a cure.

He also revealed that he'd been told he was near death at the worst of his bout with the virus, which has killed more than 213,000 Americans and severely dented his chances of winning a second term. Tomorrow, Trump will take another major step by holding a rally in a crucial battleground state. "Will be in Sanford, Florida on Monday for a very BIG RALLY!" Trump tweeted.

**Continued on Page 2**



**LAS VEGAS:** Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden poses with supporters after speaking at the East Las Vegas Community Center about the effects of COVID-19 on Latinos on Friday. — AFP

## Local

# Kuwait calls for international cooperation to fight coronavirus

## Kuwait urges greater international efforts to eliminate terror



NEW YORK: (From left) Kuwait's First Secretary to the UN Abdullah Al-Sharrah, Second Secretary Bashar Al-Muwazri and Third Secretary Saba Al-Fuheid speak during the UN General Assembly sessions. — KUNA

NEW YORK: Kuwait affirmed the need for further cooperation to fight the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and prepare for post-pandemic phase to protect and achieve the sustainable development goals. Kuwait's First Secretary Abdullah Al-Sharrah made these remarks during the UN General Assembly's 75th session on rebuilding the world after the COVID-19 pandemic late Thursday. "We were hoping that 2020 would be the year we tackle issues facing the achievement of the 2030 sustainable development goals," he said.

Sharrah expressed his deepest regret over the infection of millions and the death of hundreds of thousands of people due to the pandemic. He called on institutions, governments and companies to cooperate in finding a vaccine for the disease rather than compete, for the sake of saving humanity. He also underlined the importance of coordination to face the economic, social and environmental impact of the virus, especially on more affected countries. Meanwhile, Sharrah noted that Kuwait exerts great efforts to fight the coronavirus virus, not only

nationally but also globally. He added that the country had provided \$290 million to support international efforts to fight the pandemic.

### Eliminate terror

Separately, Kuwait reiterated calls for the international community to double and unify efforts to eradicate the scourge of international terrorism. Speaking at the UN General Assembly's Sixth Committee (Legal) meeting on measures to eliminate international terrorism, Bashar Al-Muwazri, Second Secretary at Kuwait's Permanent Mission at the UN, renewed Kuwait's firm condemnation of terrorism and all its manifestations. He underlined that terrorist acts should not be ever justified or linked to any religion,



## Kuwait sees progress in women's empowerment

nationally, or ethnicity.

Muwazri voiced Kuwait's full support to all the international measures to confront the terror menace. He, however, stressed the need to address the root causes of this problem through combating poverty and promoting sustainable development, good governance, and peaceful co-existence among people of different faiths. On the national level, the Kuwaiti diplomat said that his country is doing a great job to fight terrorism at home and abroad, and deprive terrorist groups of any financial resources.

### Women empowerment

In other news, a Kuwaiti diplomat said that her

country has seen much progress in women's empowerment in 2020, primarily a fresh law that ensures the protection of women from domestic violence. Addressing the General Debate of the Third Committee of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly, Third Secretary of Kuwait's Diplomatic Mission at the UN Saba Al-Fuheid said that the law, which was adopted in Kuwait last month, includes emergency protection orders for women and provides legal counsel and help to victims.

In addition, Kuwait has appointed eight female judges for the first time in its history in a long-awaited step towards women's empowerment in the judicial domain, she said. The Kuwaiti diplomat added that sustainable development and prosperity could not be attained unless youth and women are empowered and all non-governmental organizations are backed. She underlined the need for concerted world efforts not only to fight the COVID-19 pandemic but also to defeat the existing numerous challenges and obstacles worldwide. — KUNA

## Kuwait proud of WFP's Nobel prize win

ROME: Kuwait's representative at the World Food Programme on Friday applauded the

WFP winning of the Nobel Prize in appreciation for its unique role at the humanitarian level across the world. Kuwait takes special pride in the WFP accomplishment as a supporter and partner in its humanitarian endeavors, said Yousef Al-Hujail, Kuwait's representative, adding that the WFP's winning of the prize for 2020 came at the appropriate time to shed light on its high-esteemed mission of saving lives, aiding millions of people as well as for

boosting morale of its frontline personnel.

The State of Kuwait, as an active member, main supporter and partner in the "noble efforts," expresses special pride of this admiration of the leading humanitarian organization, Hujail said.

This is an international recognition of the necessity of the humanitarian work as a basic factor for peace and stability which are among basic principles of the State of Kuwait vision

and its status as Center of Humanitarian Action since era of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, he added. Kuwait, named as partner by the WFP, will remain on side of the program during leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, the representative elaborated. Founded in 1961, the WFP offers various kinds of aid namely food to 97 million people in need worldwide every year. — KUNA

## Shaky Karabakh truce marred by...

Continued from Page 1

thousands forced to flee their homes and fears the fighting could escalate into a devastating all-out conflict. Armenian defense ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanyan said that "in disregard of the previously declared humanitarian ceasefire" Azerbaijani forces had launched an attack on the frontline at 12:05 pm.

Azerbaijan's defense ministry said Armenian forces had also carried out attacks on the frontline and were shelling two populated areas. "Armenia is blatantly violating the ceasefire regime," the ministry said in a statement. The two sides also accused each other of attacks just before the ceasefire deadline.

Karabakh's ombudsman Artak Beglaryan said missiles had been fired at the region's main city Stepanakert while Azerbaijan said at least five populated districts were under heavy shelling. An AFP journalist in Stepanakert reported hearing blasts in the city before the ceasefire took effect, but it was calmer after noon, with isolated explosions in the distance.

Some residents were venturing out of their homes after days of taking shelter from shelling, rocket fire and drone attacks, but there was little hope the ceasefire would take hold for long. "I lived for nearly 20 years in Azerbaijan, these people hate us," Vladimir Barseghyan, 64, told AFP in a workshop making uniforms for fighters at the front. "We don't believe in a ceasefire, they just want to gain some time."

In Barda, an Azerbaijani town about 40 km from the conflict zone, many residents who spoke to AFP were against the ceasefire and in favor of Baku pressing on with its campaign to restore its control of Karabakh. "We don't want a ceasefire. They should leave our lands," said Zemfira Mammadova, a 71-year-old retiree. "They should

get out, and let our people live a normal life. We have nothing to do with them and they should stay away from us."

The ceasefire deal had been announced after talks between the two countries' top diplomats mediated by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. He said the truce had been agreed "on humanitarian grounds" and would allow for exchanges of prisoners and bodies. Lavrov also said that Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed to "substantive negotiations" on resolving the dispute over Karabakh, with France, Russia and the United States continuing as longtime mediators.

Azerbaijan has said it wants a change in the talks' format, has spoken of wanting to get Turkey involved too, and yesterday accused France of not being a neutral mediator. France yesterday called for the ceasefire to be strictly respected "in order to create the conditions for a permanent cessation of hostilities". Russian President Vladimir Putin also spoke with President Hassan Rouhani of Iran, which borders both Armenia and Azerbaijan, about Moscow's mediation efforts, the Kremlin said.

Karabakh's declaration of independence has not been recognized by any country - even Armenia - and the international community regards it as part of Azerbaijan. The return of fighting has stoked fears of a full-blown war embroiling Turkey, which strongly backs Azerbaijan, and Russia, which has a military treaty with Armenia. Turkey said yesterday that the ceasefire agreement was an important first step but that Armenia had a "last chance" to withdraw from Karabakh.

Since the conflict restarted both sides have accused the other of shelling areas populated by civilians and thousands of people have been displaced by the clashes. Stepanakert is dotted with damaged buildings and unexploded ordnance following days of shelling. AFP journalists have also witnessed destruction in villages in Azerbaijan near the front line. More than 50 civilians have been confirmed killed on both sides and the Armenians have acknowledged over 400 military deaths, while Azerbaijan has not admitted to any fatalities among its troops. — AFP

the supplies personal protective equipment. There have been improvements, particularly in hospitals," Catton said. But some care homes and long-term care facilities in Europe, and in North and South America still lack supplies, he said, citing its members' survey.

The World Health Organization said last Monday that services for mentally ill and substance abuse patients have been disrupted worldwide during the pandemic, and COVID-19 is expected to cause further distress for many. — Reuters

## Nurses in COVID fight face mental...

Continued from Page 1

ICN has lobbied for better protection and working conditions for nurses on the frontlines of the pandemic. "We still continue to see problems with



PHILADELPHIA: A group of murals encouraging Philadelphians to vote, called "To The Polls", are displayed in Love Park during early voting at City Hall on Oct 7, 2020. — AFP

## Trump restarts campaigning...

Continued from Page 1

The events come despite continued questions over how sick Trump was and how complete his recovery is now, with White House officials refusing to answer basic queries including when the president first contracted the virus and whether he has tested negative since. After Trump spent months mocking Biden for staying at home during the pandemic, it is Biden who has barnstormed swing states this week.

He visited Arizona Thursday and campaigned Friday in Nevada. Trump won both states in 2016 but they are now narrowly tilting Democratic in polls. At a drive-in style event in Las Vegas, Biden slammed the president. "His reckless personal conduct since his diagnosis, the destabilizing effect it's having on our government, is unconscionable," Biden said. As he boarded his campaign plane he offered a message for those attending Trump's public events: "Good luck. I wouldn't show up unless you had a mask and were distanced."

On Friday, Trump gave a marathon interview to rightwing talk radio host Rush Limbaugh in which he said the experimental Regeneron antibody cocktail that he took as part of therapeutic treatment

was "a cure". It's "a total game changer" and "better than a vaccine", he said. In fact, there is no cure and still no approved vaccine for the coronavirus.

Later Friday he appeared in his first televised interview since he was diagnosed with the virus, telling Fox's Tucker Carlson show he is now "medication-free". In what the White House called an on-air "medical evaluation" the president told Fox contributor doctor Marc Siegel he has been tested again for COVID-19, saying he did not know the "numbers" but "I know I'm at either the bottom of the scale or free". It was not clear when the interview was filmed.

Trump has repeatedly asserted that he feels fine, and he has been backed up by statements from presidential physician Sean Conley. But in his Limbaugh interview, Trump suggested for the first time that he had been close to death, had it not been for his aggressive regimen of therapeutic drugs. "I'm talking to you today because of it. I could have been a bad victim," he said, adding that doctors told him: "You were going into a very bad phase."

Polls show Biden leads heavily in key demographics including women and the elderly, prompting analysts to talk increasingly of a possible landslide victory. Trump's biggest liability - overwhelming public dissatisfaction over his handling of the pandemic - has returned as the headline issue of the campaign thanks to his own infection. Adding to the pressure, Democrats who control the House of Representatives unveiled plans for a commission to investigate a president's fitness for the job - a move clearly meant to jab at Trump. — AFP

## Local

# Kuwait's Amir receives congratulations on choosing Sheikh Mishal as Crown Prince

## Officials confident in Sheikh Mishal's ability to tackle 'huge responsibilities'

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received several cables from senior figures on Saturday, congratulating him on choosing His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as Crown Prince of Kuwait. Sheikh Mishal had taken oath to His Highness the Amir and the National Assembly on Thursday, assuming the Crown Prince position. The first cable, sent by Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, congratulated His Highness the Amir on his nomination of His Highness the Crown Prince and said that the step was a "historic" moment. Ghanem expressed wishes of wellness and health towards His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince and hoped that they continue to lead Kuwait towards a bright future.

Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah also sent a cable, expressing similar sentiments. His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali said that he was confident that His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Sabah will be up to the tasks and huge responsibilities ahead and wished him the best. Similarly, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent cables to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf on this monumental occurrence in Kuwait's history. They reflected their hopes for success and accomplishment towards His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Sabah, saying that the Kuwaiti people will surely support him in his task as Crown Prince. They also wished evermore prosperity and welfare to the Kuwaiti people and leadership.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir also received a cable from His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah who also expressed his congratulations towards choosing His Highness Sheikh Mishal as Crown Prince of Kuwait. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled commended His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his vision and the trust towards

His Highness Sheikh Mishal, saying that both leading figures would work effortlessly to ensure Kuwait's progress and development. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah replied to each figure with cables, thanking them for their sincere wishes towards him and His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Sabah. He affirmed that he and Sheikh Mishal would be standing together in



### Crown Prince grateful for Amir's trust

the quest to help Kuwait prosper and develop in the upcoming period.

#### Crown Prince grateful

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had received a letter from His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Thursday, thanking him on nominating him to be the heir apparent. In his letter sent after the National Assembly's approval of the nomination, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed gratitude to His Highness the Amir for putting his trust in him. He also prayed to Allah Almighty to make him a backer to His Highness the Amir in his pursuit for achieving comprehensive development and modern renaissance for Kuwait.

Speaker Ghanem had also sent a letter to His Highness the Crown Prince, congratulating him on assuming his new post. In his letter, Ghanem, in his capacity and on behalf of all parliament mem-



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

bers, congratulated His Highness Sheikh Mishal on winning His Highness the Amir's trust and nomination for this post. He also congratulated him on the parliament's approval of his nomination and lawmakers pledging allegiance to him. The chief lawmaker hailed Sheikh Mishal's honesty, firmness, wide expertise and leadership capabilities, which made him well-merited for the high post. He noted that he deeply believes that His Highness the Crown Prince would be a great supporter to His Highness the Amir in steering Kuwait's march towards more progress and development. In a reply letter, His Highness Sheikh Mishal thanked Speaker Ghanem and all parliament members on their sincere sentiments.

Furthermore, His Highness the Prime Minister had sent a letter Thursday to the newly-appointed Crown Prince to congratulate him on the new post.

In his letter, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, in his capacity and on behalf of all cabinet members, congratulated His Highness Sheikh Mishal on winning His Highness the Amir's trust and nomination for this post and the parliament's approval of his nomination. His Highness the Premier also wished His Highness the Crown Prince all success in his mission to serve the dear homeland. He expressed deep belief that His Highness the Crown Prince would be a great supporter to His Highness the Amir. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled wished His Highness Sheikh Mishal everlasting wellbeing and wished Kuwait greater security, stability, progress and welfare under the leadership of His Highness the Amir. In a reply letter, His Highness the Crown Prince thanked His Highness the Prime Minister and all cabinet members for their sincere sentiments. — KUNA

## Sheikh Nawaf receives congratulations from Qatar on naming CP

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable from Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, congratulating him on His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's appointment after taking the oath of office and gaining the parliament's pledge of allegiance. The Amir of Qatar wished His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince success, and for Kuwait growth and development under the wise

leadership of His Highness Sheikh Nawaf. In response, His Highness the Amir sent a cable, expressing his appreciation and gratitude for the warm gesture. His Highness the Amir received similar cables from Qatar's Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Thani, and Qatar's Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled bin Khalifa Al-Thani, congratulating him on His Highness the Crown Prince's appointment. In response, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf sent cables expressing his appreciation and gratitude. —KUNA

## Amir receives congratulations

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday received a cable of congratulations from Vietnam President Nguyen Phu Trong, on His Highness' ascension of power. The Vietnamese leader wished His Highness the Amir success. In reply, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to the Vietnamese President expressing gratitude to the good sentiments, lauding the good ties between Kuwait and Vietnam and wishing him well-being. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received a letter of congratulations from President of Kurdistan Region Nechirvan Barzani, wishing the State of Kuwait further prosperity and to His Highness ever-lasting health. In reply, His Highness

the Amir sent a letter to Barzani, appreciating the heartfelt sentiments, wishing him everlasting good health.

In the meantime, the UK congratulated His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on assuming his post. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said, in a statement, that Prime Minister Boris Johnson was looking forward to continue bolstering cooperation and joint work with the State of Kuwait. He affirmed that the British and Kuwaiti leaderships were eager to reach the common interest of people in both nations.

His Highness Sheikh Mishal also received congratulations from Director-General of the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO) Adel Al-Sager, who wished him success, and Kuwait further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. He prayed to Allah Almighty to protect His Highness the Crown Prince and grant him well-being as well as help His Highness the Amir complete construction and development. — KUNA

### News in brief

#### Chinese ambassador congratulates CP

**KUWAIT:** Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Kuwait Li Minggang congratulated His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on taking the oath as Kuwait's new Crown Prince: "I was honored to attend the oath-taking ceremony of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the National Assembly," the ambassador said. "I am glad that the Kuwaiti people have chosen an outstanding leader and a seasoned statesman who values China-Kuwait relations, to assume this great responsibility. I wish His Highness the Crown Prince good health and every success. May the friendly State of Kuwait continue to prosper, and its people enjoy more happiness and well-being."

#### Vietnam Embassy congratulates

**KUWAIT:** The Embassy of Vietnam in Kuwait issued a statement congratulating Kuwait's new Crown Prince His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. "Our warmest congratulations on HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's new noble duty as the Crown Prince of Kuwait," the statement reads. "We strongly believe that under the wise leadership of HH the Amir and HH the new Crown Prince, Kuwait will overcome all challenges and make greater achievements in building a peaceful and prosperous Kuwait."

#### Cuban Embassy congratulates

**KUWAIT:** The Cuban Embassy in Kuwait conveyed its congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on the occasion of his appointment as Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait. "The people and government of the Republic of Cuba express its certainty in the wisdom and love of His Highness Sheikh Mishal towards his people, which will contribute to consolidate its prosperity and unity," the embassy said in a statement.

#### Bangladesh envoy congratulates

**KUWAIT:** Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait Md Ashikuzzaman congratulated His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on being sworn in as Kuwait's new Crown Prince. "We hope that the time tested and cemented bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Kuwait will be further strengthened and will get extra momentum under the dynamic and visionary leadership of His Highness the Crown Prince," the ambassador said. "Bangladesh will remain extremely committed to work shoulder to shoulder with Kuwait to maintain and strengthen our relations and to uphold the sanctity of the Muslim nation."

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

Kuwait Times  
Established 1961  
The First Daily in the Arabian Gulf



## Local

## Kuwait Times

Established 1961  
The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961Founder and Publisher  
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYANEditor-in-Chief  
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.netFM receives phone call  
from US counterpart

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received Thursday a phone call from US State Secretary Mike Pompeo, who conveyed his personal condolences on the demise of His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Sheikh Dr Ahmed thanked Secretary Pompeo for his condolences and the US for facilitating the treatment for the late Amir, which he said, reflects the strength of bilateral relations. He also praised President Donald Trump's initiative to grant the late Amir the Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander award. Reaffirming the deep bond between the two countries, he added this was evident through the US stance to ensure Kuwait's security, stability and legitimacy during the war to liberate Kuwait from Iraq's invasion in 1991. Both officials also discussed developments on the regional and international spectrums along with issues of mutual concern. —KUNA

Fishermen violate  
environment law

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced on Friday the seizure of 11 boats and the arrest of 58 fishermen for violating the Environment Protection Law. The move was taken in cooperation with the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), and the Environment Public Authority, the ministry's security media and public relations department said in a statement. The seized boats were fishing in territorial waters by using illegal nets a mile and a half from the Kuwaiti coast, in violation of Article 100 of the law, it added. Necessary legal measures were taken, and about eight tons and a half of fish were seized and delivered to PAAAFR, it said, noting that PAAAFR registered 11 violations. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Mourners, mask-clad due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, recite prayers by the grave of Kuwait's late Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Sulaibkhat cemetery on Friday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Firemen battle  
workshops blaze  
near highway

KUWAIT: Firemen put out a blaze that broke out in a workers' residence as well as a paper press plant and various workshops that contained highly combustible material off the Sixth Ring Road. Subhan, Farwaniya, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Bidaa and backup centers participated in fighting the blaze, which broke out on Friday. No injuries were reported. Chief of Kuwait Fire Force Lt Gen Khaled Al-Mikrad supervised the efforts while, his deputy, Maj Gen Jamal Al-Bulaihees, was at hand.

## Gatherers summoned

Jahra security dealt with several persons in Abdaly for allegedly violating the government's decision against gatherings and not complying with coronavirus prevention measures. The organizers of the gathering were summoned and face further legal action, the Interior Ministry's relations and security information department said in a statement.



KUWAIT: Firefighters battle the blaze at the paper press plant and workshops.



Drugs found in a parcel that came from Dubai.

## Smuggling foiled

Airport customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle one kilogram of heroin from Dubai. An officer suspected a parcel that arrived via courier, so it was inspected and 121 capsules containing the drug were found, placed in a coffemaker.

## Child drowns

A 14-year-old Asian child drowned in Mahboula while swimming. Salmiya and Shuaiba sea fire stations found the victim's body and handed it to concerned authorities.

## Physical assault

An Asian woman has allegedly beaten a handi-

capped youth and killed his dog before fleeing, Al-Rai reported yesterday. His father lodged a complaint against her along with a report stating his son's injuries. Detectives are investigating.

New academic  
year begins  
without promos

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The new academic year for public schools in Kuwait kicked off last week without much fanfare - no traffic or busy streets and no back-to-school sales. "The reason is obvious - during the pandemic, students are not required to go to school physically as they are taught by teachers at home through online classes. So we haven't displayed bags and notebooks visibly in our store. Students are not also required to wear their school uniforms," said Hassan, an Egyptian manager of a popular budget store in Farwaniya.

"Normally at this time, the back-to-school section at our store is the busiest. We normally put new schoolbag collections and new notebooks on display in a prominent area of the store," he said. "A few teachers visited our store to buy some stuff they needed, but the situation nowadays is completely dif-

ferent from previous years." Teachers are conducting classes from classrooms or the comfort of their homes.

A store attendant at Khaldiya Co-op said that most of their stocks for the school reopening are kept at their storage facilities in Shuwaikh. "I don't know what they are planning to do with the school supplies. I don't think they will display them. There is no demand at all for anything connected to schools. We have some bags and school supplies here, but they are old stocks," he said.

Conversely, sales of electronic devices are booming, as students and parents were told they could access online classes via laptops, smartphones or desktop computers. According to media reports, there have been shortages of laptops in various countries around the world, as learning went online.

Public schools and Arabic private schools in Kuwait reopened virtually October 4th, while foreign private schools reopened weeks ago. At public schools, classes for kindergarten students are held from 8 am to 9:30 am, with four classes daily of 15 minutes each. Elementary students have four 30-minute classes for each subject from 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm. Intermediate students have four 30-minute classes daily from 8 am to 10:30 am, while secondary students have four classes daily from 10:40 am to 1:30 pm.

**Kuwait Times**  
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

**STAY CONNECTED**

• Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**

• Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**

• Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait  
Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621  
E: info@kuwaittimes.net

**DRAW YOUR DREAM CAR**  
EXPRESS YOUR CREATIVITY

Participate in the 14<sup>th</sup> Toyota Dream Car Art Contest

Showrooms to collect free drawing sheets:  
Jahra Showroom, Fahsheel Service Center, Rai Showroom,  
Awwaq Al Quran Showroom, Ardlayah Delivery Center, Parts Center - Shariq.

Submit finished drawings at:  
ALSAYER Holding Building 2 - Shuwaikh Free zone.

Deadline for submission 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020.  
Age Category: Under 15 years.

TOYOTA

Toyota announces  
2020 'Dream Car  
Art Contest'

KUWAIT: Toyota believes in nurturing the creativity of the next generation of great inventors, thinkers and dreamers. Every great idea was born in the glimmer of a dream. The 'Toyota Dream Car Art' Contest one of the largest global art contests for children invites participation from all corners of the globe to share ideas about the future of mobility by drawing their dream cars. This activity is held to cultivate children's imagination and artistic expression through the creation of artworks.

In Kuwait, Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and Sons

Company, a subsidiary of Al-Sayer Holding is announcing the contest and inviting entries for the 14th Toyota Dream Car Art Contest 2020. Al-Sayer is conducting this event to profile the best talent and choose National Winners are eligible to represent Kuwait in the World Toyota Contest. Winners will be announced and awarded with certificates and attractive prizes.

At the World Contest in Japan, the Jury will select Best Finalist from each age category. This year's grand prize winners as well as special award winners and their representative schools will be receiving attractive cash rewards to be utilized for academics per the terms and conditions of the contest.

Al-Sayer ensures all necessary COVID-19 protocols are in place for the safety of to conduct this activity. Toyota and Al-Sayer wish to inspire talents to bring out their best artistic skills by facilitating world leading competitions in Kuwait.



Orthodox Jews in Brooklyn, defiant over shutdown

## Lockdown rules test faith in coronavirus-hit Philippines

# N Korea shows off giant new ICBMs

## Pyongyang defies coronavirus with huge military parade



PYONGYANG: A screen grab taken yesterday shows North Korean Hwasong-12 intercontinental ballistic missiles during a military parade marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Workers' Party of Korea in Kim Il Sung Square. —AFP

SEOUL: North Korea showed off giant new intercontinental ballistic missiles at a military parade yesterday, analysts said as state television broadcast the huge weapons being rolled through Pyongyang. Each weapon was carried on a transporter that was 11 axles long and Ankit Panda of the Federation of American Scientists tweeted that it was the "largest road-mobile liquid-fueled missile anywhere".

North Korea leader Kim Jong Un presided over the giant military parade, with the nuclear-armed country showcasing its latest and most advanced weapons as thousands of maskless troops defied the coronavirus threat. State broadcaster KCTV showed company after company of armed soldiers marching through Kim Il Sung square in a night-time display, with Kim smiling and joking with his generals as he watched them.

Armored vehicles were lined up in the streets of Pyongyang ready to follow them, and none of the participants or the audience lined up in the stands were wearing masks. Kim - whose summit counterpart Donald Trump was recently hospitalized with the illness - wished "good health to all the people around the world who are fighting the ills of the evil virus", although he did not name the US president or his country directly.

The pandemic has swept the world since first emerging in neighboring China, with more than 36 million cases, but Kim closed the North's borders in January to try to prevent contamination said it had not seen a single infection. Women in the crowd wiped tears from their eyes as he spoke, footage broadcast on state media showed.

North Korean military parades normally climax with whatever missiles Pyongyang wants to highlight and are keenly watched by observers for clues to its weapons development. According to Seoul's joint chiefs of staff, the display actually took place in the early hours of yesterday, when they said in a statement that "signs of a military parade - involving equipment and people on a large scale - were detected at Kim Il Sung Square". South Korean and US intelligence agencies were "closely tracking the event", they added.

### 'Big step forward'

The North is widely believed to have pressed on with the development of its arsenal - which it says it needs to protect itself from a US invasion - throughout nuclear negotiations with Washington, deadlocked since the collapse of a summit in Hanoi early last year. And Kim - wearing a grey suit - told the crowd Pyongyang "will continue to

strengthen our military for self-defense and deterrence". "If you don't have the strength, you'll have to wipe away the tears and blood that flow with your two clenched fists," he added.

The widely anticipated display was part of commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the North's ruling Workers' Party. The party anniversary meant North Korea "has a political and strategic need to do something bigger", said Sung-yoon Lee, a Korean studies professor at Tufts University in the United States. Showcasing its most advanced weapons "will signal a big step forward in Pyongyang's credible threat capabilities", he said. But unlike on many previous occasions, no international media were allowed in to watch the parade. And the few foreigners remaining in Pyongyang were not welcome at the commemorations, according to the Russian embassy, which posted a message from the authorities on its Facebook page urging diplomats and other international representatives not to "approach or take photos" of the venues.

At the end of December, Kim threatened to demonstrate a "new strategic weapon", but analysts say Pyongyang will still tread carefully to avoid jeopardizing its chances with Washington ahead of next month's presidential election. Showing off its strate-

gic weapons in a military parade "would be consistent with what Kim Jong Un promised", said former US government North Korea analyst Rachel Lee, while "not provoking the United States as much as a test-launch of a strategic weapon".

### Masks and missiles?

Kim is the third member of his family to lead the country. But in a possible signal of changing emphasis, the large-scale portraits of his grandfather, the North's founder Kim Il Sung, and father Kim Jong Il have been removed from their positions on the rostrum in the square. Instead smaller ones were installed further back and higher up on another building, the Grand People's Study House.

The ruling party anniversary comes during a difficult year for North Korea as the coronavirus pandemic and recent storms add pressure to the heavily sanctioned country. And Harry Kazianis of the Center for the National Interest warned that with thousands of people involved, the parade could turn into a "deadly superspreader-like event" without "extreme precautions". The impoverished nation's crumbling health system would struggle to cope with a major virus outbreak, and he added: "Clearly, masks and missiles don't mix." - AFP

## Trump ramps up sanctions but sees few results

WASHINGTON: As he seeks a second term, US President Donald Trump is accelerating his favorite foreign-policy tool of economic sanctions but his "maximum pressure" campaigns have produced few of the results he has been seeking. The Trump administration on Thursday imposed sweeping sanctions on Iran's banks, hoping for a knock-out blow to the adversary's economy, and in recent weeks has issued nearly daily actions against players in countries that include Belarus, Cuba, Nicaragua, Syria and Venezuela.

"Sanctions have clearly been the tool of choice for the Trump administration to respond to rogue regimes and illicit conduct," said Richard Goldberg of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a hawkish group close to the Trump administration. "Past administrations commonly used sanctions but did so on a more narrow, targeted basis - designating specific entities and individuals rather than attempting to create macroeconomic changes and destabilize governments to force wholesale behavioral change."

No country has been hit harder by US sanctions than Iran, with Trump in 2018 walking out of a denuclearization deal negotiated by former president Barack Obama and moving to block all oil exports from the clerical-run nation. While denying the goal was regime change, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo set 12 conditions for the removal of sanctions that amounted to a full-fledged reversal of Iran's security strategy such as support of regional militants.

More than two years later, the Trump administration claims credit for devastation to Iran's economy, saying that its regional allies such as Hezbollah have been deprived of cash. "In Iran, the regime has considerably less resources

to spend on malign activities, which is itself a national security victory for the United States, and it appears the regime will be forced to negotiate in 2021 with whoever wins the presidential election," Goldberg said.

### No 'real change'

But Iranian-backed militant groups have been stepping up their activities, Iran has taken steps away from the restrictions imposed by the nuclear accord - and none of Pompeo's 12 stated goals have been achieved. "They would say 'we have weakened Iran' - which is true - but there hasn't been a real change in Iranian behavior," said Thomas Wright, a foreign policy expert at the Brookings Institution. "We haven't seen Iran agree to a negotiation, let alone negotiate an alternative to the JCPOA," he said, referring to the Iran accord by its acronym.

Brian O'Toole, who helped implement sanctions under the Obama administration, said the latest sanctions on Iran were more about politics including making it more difficult for a future administration to re-enter the nuclear accord. "The real impact of these sanctions is likely to be marginal, and certainly not to the level of regime collapse as has reportedly been touted by some proponents," said O'Toole, now at the Atlantic Council. "And it will do little to cut down on Iran's bad behavior," he said.

### Maduro stays but Kim negotiates

The Trump administration's goal has been explicit in Venezuela - the removal of leftist leader Nicolas Maduro, whose re-election in 2018 was widely seen as fraudulent. But after more than a year and a half of US efforts including sanctions on Venezuela's oil, Maduro remains in charge with support from Russia, China, Iran and Cuba. The results are more complex on North Korea, which was hit by major UN-blessed sanctions after a series of nuclear and missile tests. Experts see the economic pressure as one reason why North Korean leader Kim Jong Un embraced diplomacy with Trump, whom he met in a landmark 2018 summit and twice again last year. The refusal by Trump, under pressure from his aides, to ease sanctions on



TEHRAN: In this file photo taken on May 20, 2019, Iranian women use automated teller machines (ATM) in the capital. —AFP

North Korea without a final deal scuttled a 2019 summit with Kim in Hanoi. Trump has taken credit for easing warlike tensions with North Korea but the authoritarian state has still been pursuing its nuclear development.

Goldberg saw a sanctions success story with Turkey which freed a detained US pastor after Trump's brief imposition of tariffs rocked the NATO ally's economy. But Trump's enthusiasm for sanctions has tested relations with allies, with European nations struggling to preserve the Iranian nuclear accord. European and other allies have voiced annoyance but reluctantly complied as the United States laid out secondary sanctions, threatening to punish any nation that does business with Iran.

"The US has been very interested in sanctions for a long time, but I think there is some recognition now in both parties this has to be part of a larger strategy and it can't be a strategy in itself, which is less effective," Wright said. "I don't think Trump sees it that way, but I think there is a growing recognition of that." —AFP

## QAnon sows panic with child trafficking misinformation

PARIS: A surge in child trafficking misinformation pushed by QAnon conspiracy theorists is stirring public panic, generating violence and interfering with official efforts to protect minors, experts warn. From the US to South Africa, AFP Fact Check has debunked claims about girls found locked in shipping containers or lured in the street with roses fitted with a location-tracking chip.

A Facebook post shared one million times last month claimed 39 missing children had been found in a trailer in the US state of Georgia. In reality, they were discovered in separate locations in August as part of a police operation and a majority were not trafficking victims. Another hoax falsely accused US furniture retailer Wayfair of trafficking children inside storage cabinets. These stories have stoked the flames of QAnon, a far-right movement claiming that US President Donald Trump is waging a secret war against a global liberal cult of Satan-worshipping pedophiles. QAnon crept up three years ago on the fringes of social media but has since spilled into the mainstream thanks to widely-shared posts on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. "A lot of conspiracy theories are about pure people being exploited by a corrupt and decadent elite," said Paris-based extremism and technology expert Julien Bellaiche. "This is a pro-Donald Trump conspiracy theory but we're also talking about a global cabal and an anti-establishment message that you can identify with practically anywhere in the world."

### Influencers boost QAnon

QAnon has broadened its appeal particularly among women by focusing on child trafficking, experts say. Many of the posts feature the hashtag #SaveTheChildren or #SaveOurChildren, which have become synonymous with QAnon. Influencers on Instagram have helped spread child trafficking misinformation by sharing QAnon narratives in innocent-looking posts, according to Marc-Andre Argentino, a technology and extremist expert at Concordia University in Canada. "These influencers provide an aesthetic and branding to their entire pages, and they in turn apply this to QAnon content, softening the messages, videos and traditional imagery that would be associated with QAnon narratives," he said in a recent Twitter thread. "However, behind the branding and soft colours lies the QAnon we all know, along with all it entails: racism, medical/COVID disinformation, violence, and now the negative impact the hijacking of 'save the children' is having on NGOs... that actually save lives."

International charity Save The Children has also sounded the alarm, saying its name in hashtag form had experienced "unusually high volumes" of traffic and caused "confusion among our supporters and the general public". Influencers are not the only public figures to seemingly promote QAnon. Trump himself at times appears to fan conspiracy theories. In a September interview, he described his presidential race rival Joe Biden as a puppet controlled by "people that you've never heard of, people that are in the dark shadows". —AFP

## International

# Four dead and several wounded in Beirut fuel tank fire and blast

## Panic spreads in a wary city ravaged by monster blast in August

**BEIRUT:** An explosion and a fuel tank fire in the Lebanese capital Friday killed four people, rescuers said as panic spread in a city already ravaged by a monster blast in August. A Beirut television station said more than 30 people were hurt in the conflagration, with a medical source adding that three children were hospitalized with burns. Firefighters using mobile ladders evacuated people from buildings in the bustling district of Tariq Al-Jdide. "The number of victims increased to four," the Lebanese Red Cross said on its Twitter account, updating the toll from two dead.

Red Cross Secretary General Georges Kettaneh added that the "were injured transported to hospital", the national news agency ANI reported. Lebanese television Al-Jadeed reported that more than 30 people were injured as it broadcast images of flames in a street and sounds of people screaming in panic.



**3 children among 30 injured**

took hold in an underground premises where there was also petrol. The source said authorities arrested the owner who manages one of the many private generator services that supply residents with electricity when frequent power outages occur, the source said.

In the last few weeks, Beirut municipality has been looking for warehouses that could be in breach of the law or pose a danger to residential areas, governor Marwan Aboud told Al-Jadeed. "We feared that such an accident could happen,"

Aboud said, adding around 100 sites had been identified as suspect.

"We have ordered some of them to close and required others to put in place procedures to protect the public," he added. Private generator services proliferate across the country, sometimes accused of being veritable

mafia profiting from electricity shortages, which have forced citizens for decades to resort to subscriptions to cope with frequent power outages.

Friday's explosion was the latest in a series of terrible events in a country hit with an unprecedented economic crisis and lacking the most basic public services. Several fires have broken out at Beirut's port since a cataclysmic August 4 explosion killed 203 people, injured at least 6,500 others and ravaged swathes of the capital. That blast



**BEIRUT:** People gather at the site of a fuel tank explosion in Beirut's Tariq Al-Jdide neighborhood on Friday. An explosion and a fuel tank fire in the Lebanese capital killed four people, rescuers said as panic spread in a city already ravaged by a monster blast in August. —AFP

came as Lebanon struggles with its worst financial crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war and political strife, compounded by the coronavirus pandemic.

A large section of public opinion blames the

August 4 explosion on what they see as a corrupt and incompetent class of leaders and politicians who have virtually remained the same for decades. —AFP

## Riot after police clear Berlin squat

**BERLIN:** Hundreds of people rioted in central Berlin late Friday to protest evictions from one of the few remaining squats, a symbol of the German capital's free-spirited ideals.

Berlin mobilized hundreds of law enforcement officials to remove residents of the "Liebig34" site in Friedrichshain, a hip part of former East Berlin where property prices have risen sharply.

It went off peacefully. But in the evening, hundreds of masked and black-clad protesters marched in a driving rain from central Mitte shopping district with a banner: "Defend free spaces, remain on the offensive." Shop windows and cars were set ablaze, police said, adding officers had been pelted with bottles.

Fire crackers were also set off in the central streets, with a thick cloud of smoke rising. A bus stop was destroyed. Berlin police said they deployed 1,900 anti-riot officers to contain the violence over the removal earlier of people from

the squat, which was rife with symbolism.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, blocks of abandoned houses in the east of the capital were taken over by students, young people, artists and activists. Some of the squats were subsequently legalized as housing projects. The self-described "anarchist-queer-feminist" building on the corner of Liebigstrasse, with a facade covered with graffiti and banners, has been offering shelter to about 40 women, trans and intersex people since 1999. A bar and a self-managed cultural center helped the collective to raise part of the money needed to pay the rent. But investor Gijora Padoviz, who owns the building, decided in 2018 not to renew the lease for Liebig34.

Faced with the residents' refusal to leave their homes, he filed a lawsuit, which he won, culminating in Friday's eviction. Police removed residents one by one from the four-storey building, an emblem of Berlin's fading "poor but sexy" image, the marketing slogan of the city's former mayor Klaus Wowereit.

Protesting against the police action, Anna Mai, whistle in hand on the edge of the police cordon, said Liebig34 was "a symbol of the diversity of this

teacher in Saint Petersburg who declined to give his last name, said.

### Training dogs to detect virus

As Russia is experiencing a surge in coronavirus cases, the country's flagship airline Aeroflot is training sniffer dogs to detect the coronavirus by scent. Aeroflot uses a special jackal-dog hybrid called Shalaika in Russian to detect explosives. Now dog handlers say the Shalaikas—who have a powerful sense of smell—can be taught to sniff out the coronavirus. "The dog is not looking for the virus, the dog is looking for a person with signs of the disease," Elena Batayeva, head of canine monitoring at Aeroflot, told reporters.

Russia imposed one of the most severe nationwide lockdowns at the beginning of the pandemic. Non-essential businesses were shuttered and Moscow residents only permitted to move freely with official digital passes. But most restrictions were lifted ahead of a large WWII military parade in June and a nationwide vote on amendments that paved the way for President Vladimir Putin to remain in power until 2036. Officials in Moscow, which is the epicentre of Russia's pandemic, have taken only minor steps to slow the spread of cases. Mayor Sergei Sobyannin has ordered the elderly and vulnerable to stay at home and told employers to keep at least a third of staff working remotely.

Mask-wearing is compulsory on public transport and inside shops, but some Muscovites are not convinced others are doing enough to stop the spread of

change in attitudes did not materialize in the Nordic nation, which regularly scores highly in international measures of equality.

#MeToo was often considered "a minority issue, something that was not really Danish," Camilla Mohring Reestorff, associate professor in culture and media studies at Aarhus University, told AFP.

Danes tend to see themselves as "progressive, free and equal," she said, adding, "It can make us a bit blind when it comes to sexism."

### 'Domino effect'

In recent months, however, the issue has risen to the fore as thousands of women, including celebrities, doctors, academics and musicians, have begun sharing their accounts of sexism or mistreatment. The testimonials are "triggering a domino effect and making people conscious of the need for collective change," said Christian Groes, anthropologist at the University of Roskilde.

"In 2017-2018 there was a debate, now we have a movement of social justice," he told AFP. The issue became a national talking point in late August when



**BERLIN:** Smoke billows past riot policemen during clashes with demonstrators marching in support for the residents of the squatted building at Liebig street 34 in Berlin whom have been evicted on Friday. —AFP

city which shouldn't only belong to the rich. Berlin is dying". "It goes against human rights to throw people out on to the street in the middle of a pandemic, when they cannot pay their rent," Moritz Heusinger, lawyer for the Liebig34 collective, told AFP. "They are becoming homeless." —AFP



**MOSCOW:** A man and a woman wearing face masks to protect against the coronavirus disease stand at a bus stop in central Moscow yesterday. —AFP

infections. "The city is making the necessary decisions. But it won't work without people responding to these measures, helping themselves and those around them," Sobyannin said Friday.

Tatyana Nemirovskaya, a 30-year-old PR specialist, told AFP that Muscovites are "definitely not" following the government's guidelines. The head of Russia's consumer rights watchdog, Rospotrebnadzor, which is spearheading the country's virus response, warned this week of "new measures" if the current rules were not followed. The Kremlin said Friday that if the situation continues to deteriorate it will "require some actions, decisions". —AFP

presenter Sofie Linde, a household name, stunned viewers of a live TV gala by recounting how a senior television executive offered to advance her career in exchange for oral sex, 12 years earlier. The revelation led to Equalities Minister Mogens Jensen saying he wanted to "end sexual harassment in the workplace", and 1,600 women signed an open letter declaring that they had experienced sexism during their careers.

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen also took to Instagram to call for a cultural shift. "We have failed to create workplaces with equal relationships. We're going to change that and it starts now," Frederiksen wrote in late September. However the Social Democrat leader was forced to reiterate her confidence in her foreign minister, Jeppe Kofod, who stepped down in 2008 as his party's foreign affairs spokesman after admitting having sex with a 15-year-old girl at a party event.

### Denmark's age of consent is 15.

Then 34 years old, he apologized at the time for a "lapse of judgment" and a "morally inappropriate relationship." He was appointed foreign minister after 2019 elections. —AFP

## Tripoli mosques open after 7-mth virus closure

**TRIPOLI:** Mosques reopened in and around the Libyan capital Friday almost seven months after they were ordered to close as part of strict curbs to rein in the Covid-19 pandemic. Libya, ravaged by a complex web of conflicts since the ouster of longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi in a 2011 uprising, has seen a surge in contaminations since its first coronavirus case in March.

According to the latest official figures, there have been more than 41,000 confirmed cases of the virus and 621 deaths in Libya, a country of less than seven million people. The UN-recognized Government of National Accord based in the capital Tripoli authorized the reopening of mosques, but with conditions. Mosques in Tripoli and nearby towns reopened for prayers, with the faithful wearing face masks and observing social distancing.

They also brought their own rugs. The imam of Jaafar bin Abi Talib mosque in the western suburb of Janzour told AFP an "awareness" campaign was launched ahead of the reopening.

"We distributed leaflets explaining the conditions under which prayers can resume in the mosques in line with the government's guidelines," Abdel Monem al-Rayani said.

The guidelines restrict numbers in mosques for prayers to half pre-coronavirus levels, he said.

Mosques which fail to comply with government restrictions would be shut. The closure of mosques was ordered nationwide when the first cases of coronavirus emerged in mid-March, although in some towns and districts the ban was ignored. The call to prayers still rang out but with the faithful urged to "pray at home". —AFP

## Orthodox Jews defiant in Brooklyn

**NEW YORK:** In an Orthodox Jewish area of Brooklyn on Friday, community members vowed to defy government attempts to restrict their worship over rising coronavirus concerns as they marked a religious holiday. Borough Park saw angry protests by Hasidic Jews this week after New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced he was partially shutting down the neighborhood to stem a second wave of COVID-19.

The controversy turned political with right-wing figures stoking the demonstrations and Orthodox Jews claiming they are being targeted by the Democratic governor for their support of President Donald Trump. On the final day of Sukkot Friday, which coincided with Cuomo's deadline for religious sites to be capped at ten people and non-essential businesses to close, worshippers were defiant. "He doesn't understand that our whole life is praying and studying the bible. We have to do what we have to do," said grey-haired Moses, declining to give his surname outside the Anshei Sfarad Hasidic synagogue. A few blocks away on 13th Avenue, where demonstrators lit fires and chanted "Jewish Lives Matter" on Tuesday night, 50-year-old Abraham said the community would keep open religious schools and places of worship.

"What's he (Cuomo) going to do? Is he going to bring his sheriffs down and close every synagogue? There are maybe 500 here," he said, also declining to give his full name. Borough Park is part of a large area of Brooklyn declared a "red zone" by Cuomo, and backed by Mayor Bill de Blasio, after the rate of positive cases soared above the three percent threshold. —AFP

## New #MeToo wave challenges Denmark's image

**COPENHAGEN:** Thousands of women across Denmark have come forward in recent weeks with stories of sexism and harassment in the Nordic country which is often viewed as a bastion of gender equality.

On Wednesday Morten Ostergaard, leader of the Social Liberal party, resigned after it emerged he had placed his hand on the thigh of a female colleague ten years earlier. "Morten has apologised and I have forgiven him" MP Lotte Rod wrote on Facebook.

"The problem is no longer what happened but the way it was handled," she added, calling for "a change of culture". In 2017 a public discussion arose in Denmark as the #MeToo movement emboldened women across the world to speak out about their experiences of discrimination and sexual assault. However a widespread

International

# Lockdown rules test faith in coronavirus-hit Philippines

## Churches in Catholic-majority country beginning to reopen

**MANILA:** After months of live-streaming mass to millions of faithful from behind closed doors, churches in the Catholic-majority Philippines are beginning to reopen. But strict coronavirus rules mean worship is still far from normal, and the contagion spreading across the deeply religious country has forced churches to get creative to meet the spiritual needs of their congregations.

prevent people from touching and kissing them—a common practice believed to help cure the sick but that could now help spread Covid-19.

“It feels so strange,” said Rachel Mendioro, who is eight-months pregnant with her first child and is praying for a safe delivery. “Seeing few people (inside the church) gives you a different vibe. It really tells you that the world is facing a problem right now.”

With churches in Manila limited to filling only 10 percent of their seating capacity and many still fearful of infection, online mass remains popular. Services livestreamed on the Baclaran Church’s Facebook page receive as many as 50,000 views—a five-fold increase from before the pandemic.

Elsewhere in the country, drive-by communion services have been introduced and some priests are visiting the homes of their congregants to hear confession. Forced to worship at home since March, when the country began a months-long lockdown, Rederacion Parina said she wept when she recently returned to Baclaran for the first time. The 77-year-old walked the six kilometers (nearly four miles) from her home instead of taking public transport to save money for food. She prayed for help to resolve her financial woes—increasingly aggravated by virus measures crippling the Philippine economy.

“My body is gaining strength when I go out (to visit the church)... I feel calm,” said Parina, lifting her face shield to wipe away tears. “When I’m stuck at home... I feel like I’m nearing my end.”

### Rethinking faith

Other churches have opted to hold their services entirely online until the health crisis eases. Teejay Bagasbas, 51, and her family may have to wait until



**MANILA:** Catholic faithful sit outside the Quiapo church in Manila as health protocols imposed by authorities limit churchgoers inside the church to filling only 10 percent of their seating capacity. — AFP

next year before they can attend a service at the conservative International Churches of Christ.

For now, they sit in their courtyard and watch the livestreamed version, taking communion using pre-packaged bread and grape juice made by local company Holy Cup, which has reported a three-fold increase in sales during the outbreak. “If there is something good that is brought about by the pandemic (it) is that the church was brought into each other’s homes,” Bagasbas said.

But virtual worshipping is not for everyone. “A lot of people... feel the connection is not as intense or not as real,” said Victorino Cueto, rector at the Baclaran Church. The virus offers a new perspective on how people can practice their faith and the church should be quick to adapt to it, said Cueto.

“Covid has shaken all of us and faith is not immune from the whole process,” he said. “Every crisis is an opportunity so I think the pandemic is asking us to reimagine what our faith is now.” — AFP



### Worship is still far from normal

In the usually packed Baclaran Church in the capital Manila—which has the highest number of infections in the archipelago—temperature guns, hand sanitizer, contact-tracing forms and uniformed security guards greet the faithful wearing masks and plastic face shields. Social distancing rules limit three people to pews that normally sit 10 and every second bench is left empty in the cavernous church where thousands of worshippers once flocked for mass.

Face coverings must be worn at all times—even when believers take the piece of bread given to them during the Holy Communion by a priest or minister who is not exempt from the protocols. Holy water fonts—into which people used to dip their fingers to make the sign of the cross—are dry and covered with a white cloth. Religious icons are in storage or behind fences to

## Pakistan bans TikTok over ‘immoral content’

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan on Friday banned the wildly popular video sharing app TikTok, as authorities press their clampdown on “immoral” content.

Chinese-owned TikTok which has become a global sensation with its short video clips has a huge user base among young Pakistanis, with some attracting millions of followers. But it has come up against backlash in the ultra-conservative Islamic country, where in recent months several dating apps including Tinder and Grindr have also been banned and YouTube threatened with shutdown. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) on Friday said TikTok had failed to adhere to two warnings, which had demanded it block “immoral, obscene and vulgar” content.

“The application failed to fully comply with the instructions, therefore, directions were issued for blocking of TikTok application in the country”, the PTA said in a statement.

Pakistanis were unable to access the app on Friday evening. Arslan Khalid, a digital media adviser to Prime Minister Imran Khan, has previously claimed the “exploitation, objectification & sexualization of young girls on TikTok” was causing pain to parents.

Earlier this week, Pakistani TikToker Jannat Mirza became the first in the country to reach 10 million followers, with lip-synching and slow motion clips among her content. “TikTok is a major source of entertainment for lower and middle class Pakistanis, as well as illiterate citizens that includes half the population as it is video based and easy to use,” said Usama Khilji, a digital rights activist, who said the ban violates freedom of speech.

Akhlaq Ahmed, who ran a TikTok account with friends from the remote town of Jhal Magsi in



Balochistan province, said the news was like “losing someone from my family”. “The ban is unfair and unjustified... instead of banning the app the PTA should have called on TikTok to ban those users,” he said of the “immoral” content.

Campaigners have long criticized the creeping censorship and control of Pakistan’s internet, printed and electronic media.

PTA said it would review its decision if the app put in place mechanisms to moderate unlawful content. In a statement TikTok said it was “hopeful to reach a conclusion that helps us serve the country’s vibrant and creative online community”.

The app was blocked in Bangladesh last year as part of a clampdown on pornography, while Indonesia briefly blocked access over blasphemy concerns. Owned by China’s ByteDance, it has also faced increasing controversy over how it collects and uses data although it has repeatedly denied sharing user information with Chinese authorities.

The app is facing a possible ban in the United States, after officials said it was a national security risk and President Donald Trump said he wanted it taken out of Chinese hands. Neighboring India has already banned the app, along with dozens of other Chinese mobile platforms. — AFP

## Twitter tightens rules to thwart election threats

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Twitter said Friday it will take down calls for violence starting after polls close on US election day and slap warnings on premature victory claims to fight efforts to undermine the election. When it comes to a winner in any race, Twitter will require an announcement by an election official or a public projection from at least two authoritative, national news outlets making independent election calls.

The California tech giant will also invite people to add their thoughts to retweets instead of just mindlessly sharing, according to legal lead Vijaya Gadde and product lead Kayvon Beykpour.

The platform, a favorite method of communicating for President Donald Trump, will also broaden its application of warning labels for misleading tweets by candidates leading up to election day on November 3. “Twitter plays a critical role around the globe by empowering democratic conversation, driving civic participation, facilitating meaningful political debate, and enabling people to hold those in power accountable,” Gadde and Beykpour said in a blog post.

“But we know that this cannot be achieved unless the integrity of this critical dialogue on Twitter is protected from attempts—both foreign and domestic—to undermine it.” Social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter have been in the spotlight since massive disinformation campaigns directed by Russian intelligence and other malign actors overshadowed the 2016 election.

Applying existing protocol, Twitter will label tweets that falsely claim a win and will remove “tweets that encourage violence or call for people to interfere with election results or the smooth operation of polling places.” Twitter forbids posts that manipulate or interfere with elections, and the platform already adds labels to tweets that violate rules against doctored media or misleading information concerning voting or COVID-19.

Beginning next week, people who try to retweet posts deserving warning labels because of misleading information will be shown a prompt directing them to credible facts about the topic first, according to the blog post. “These new prompts will give individuals more context on labeled tweets so they can make more informed decisions on whether or not they want to amplify them to their followers,” Gadde and Beykpour said. Twitter will also start adding warnings and restrictions on tweets labeled as containing misleading information when they are from US political figures including candidates and campaign accounts. The same will be done with misleading tweets from US-based accounts with more than 100,000 followers, or that spark significant engagement.

“We have already increased the size and capacity of our teams focused on the US election and will have the necessary staffing to respond rapidly to issues that may arise on Twitter on Election night and in the days that follow,” Gadde and Beykpour said. — AFP

## Texas judge blocks order limiting ballot drop-off sites

**HOUSTON:** A US judge has blocked an order from Texas’ governor cutting the number of sites voters can drop off mail-in ballots for November’s presidential election, which Democrats had said amounted to voter suppression. The order, issued in early October by Republican Governor Greg Abbott, limited the number of drop-off centers to one per county, even as mail-in voting is expected to become much more popular due to the coronavirus pandemic. The move would help curb “illegal

### News in brief

#### Swiss hostage was a missionary

**GENEVA:** A Swiss woman thought to have been killed in Mali was a missionary abducted in 2016, the Swiss foreign ministry said yesterday. Beatrice Stoeckli was a missionary from Basel who was working in Timbuktu when she was taken four years ago—having already been abducted by jihadists once before, in 2012, Swiss news agency Keystone-ATS reported. The Swiss authorities said in a statement released late Friday that for the past four years they had been working with the Malian authorities and other partners for her release. The foreign ministry said the French authorities had informed them of Stoeckli’s fate based on what French hostage Sophie Petronin, who was released earlier this week, had told them. — AFP

#### UK recalls envoy from Belarus

**LONDON:** Britain has joined several eastern European nations in withdrawing its ambassador from strife-torn Belarus in protest at President Alexander Lukashenko’s expulsion of diplomats from Poland and Lithuania. In a tweet late Friday, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the UK “condemns Belarus’ decision to expel Polish & Lithuanian diplomats”. “Completely unjustified and will only isolate the Belarusian people. In solidarity, we are temporarily recalling our Ambassador for consultations on the situation in Belarus,” he said. The ambassadors of Lithuania and Poland were recalled on Monday after Minsk accused them of backing mass protests that have erupted against Lukashenko since a disputed election on August 9. — AFP

#### HK police arrest smuggling group

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong police yesterday arrested a group accused of helping 12 pro-democracy activists detained in mainland China for nearly two months after attempting to flee to Taiwan in a speedboat. The group of nine, some of whom had been previously arrested for participating in the massive protests that threw the financial hub into turmoil last year, were taken into custody for “assisting offenders”. “Their roles include ownership of the boat, financial backing, providing accommodation before the trip, transportation to the pier and arranging their lives after arriving in Taiwan,” a police spokesperson told reporters. China’s coast guard intercepted a boat transporting the 12 Hong Kongers to Taiwan in late August. The self-ruled island routinely offers sanctuary to people attempting to flee the authoritarian mainland China. — AFP



**WASHINGTON, DC:** In this file photo taken on August 05, 2020, Senator Thom Tillis talks with Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham and Senator Joshua “Josh” Hawley during a break in a Senate Judiciary Committee oversight hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. — AFP

## Senator Graham refuses COVID test ahead of debate

**WASHINGTON:** Prominent US lawmaker Lindsey Graham, who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee set to consider President Donald Trump’s Supreme Court nominee next week, refused on Friday to be tested for the coronavirus. The South Carolina ally of Trump said no to a testing request by his Democratic rival in their Senate race, ahead of their scheduled debate in the southern state.

Graham’s move prompted the debate with Jaime Harrison to be scrapped, with separate interviews of

the candidates conducted instead. But the issue could prove to be a critical one in Washington.

Graham is expected to preside in person over next week’s hearings on the confirmation of conservative Judge Amy Coney Barrett to fill the Supreme Court seat made vacant by the death last month of liberal justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Should Graham test positive and be forced into 10 days or more of quarantine, that could postpone the hearings, something Republicans have fiercely opposed.

Two other Republican senators on the committee, Mike Lee and Thom Tillis, tested positive after attending a September 26 ceremony where Trump announced Barrett as his nominee. Most attendees were not wearing masks and several have since tested positive. Of the Judiciary Committee’s 22 members, 10 are age 68 or older. They include the Senate’s two oldest senators, Democrat Dianne Feinstein and Republican Chuck Grassley, both 87.—AFP

voting,” Abbott had said, in line with views expressed by President Donald Trump, who frequently claims without evidence that postal ballots are a source of massive vote fraud. But in a decision published Friday following a challenge by voting rights advocates, federal judge Robert Pitman blocked the order, arguing it “restricts the rights of some voters, those who qualify to vote absentee in larger, more populous counties.”

The order also added to voter confusion, Pitman’s 46-page decision said, and would force voters to travel further to cast their ballot and wait in longer lines to vote, leading to greater risks of exposure to the virus. Claims that the order would reduce voter fraud had no “factual support,” he added.

Texas—a Republican stronghold, but where Democrat Joe Biden is threatening—has some of the most populous counties in the country. More than 2.3 million voters live in Harris County, which includes Houston.—AFP

# Business

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2020

## Wojood: Kuwait's first tech accelerator

### An initiative by Mawaqaa Co for entrepreneurs

**KUWAIT:** Mawaqaa Co for Information Technology and Smart Applications has launched Wojood - the first tech accelerator in Kuwait - to empower online businesses and accelerate the growth of emerging e-commerce businesses by providing a number of specialized programs, consultations with mentors and many other financial services that can develop into a strategic digital partnership.

Chief Executive Officer of Wojood and the President of the Social Media Club Hind Al-Nahedh said the launch of Wojood came in response to increasing demands of the digital market in Kuwait, which has seen a fourfold increase since the beginning of 2020.

While Nahedh clarified that demand for e-commerce services in Kuwait increased by more than

50 percent during the coronavirus pandemic, she expected that 66 percent of customers will continue to order online after the end of the pandemic, especially since the volume of e-commerce in Kuwait recently reached \$1.1 billion locally, while the number of active accounts in this field reached around 2.4 million users, 80 percent of whom have bank accounts.

Among them around 66 percent are youth, indicating that 36 percent of Kuwait's population depends on online purchases, which confirms the importance of launching the Wojood tech accelerator initiative to empower and speed up this growing ecosystem. Nahedh pointed out that Wojood seeks to harness the deep experience of its team of mentors to empower businesses in different fields, whether in e-commerce or onboarding non-

digital stores in general.

Wojood also seeks to accelerate entrepreneurs' businesses and experience by focusing on the real needs and qualifications for growth and then earning revenues, especially since 80 percent of projects fail to do so after launch, lacking a major support system in that phase, and here is where the role of Wojood becomes crucial, eventually making these businesses strategic tech partners with many future investment opportunities.

Nahedh pointed out that the services of Wojood will focus on the needs of the local market, by providing guidance and direction in empowering digital projects in terms of providing all smart solutions and other desired business activities in Kuwait, in addition to providing technical, digital marketing and training support to project owners and upcoming entrepreneurs, as well as future investment opportunities for promising projects with Wojood partners.

Nahedh explained that Wojood tech accelerator will provide ongoing consultations by a team of experts and mentors in various fields, including digital marketing, e-commerce and technical support, along with providing financial opportunities for businesses to accelerate their online presence, making Wojood an integrated tech business accelerator.

Mawaqaa Co, the launch company of Wojood tech accelerator in Kuwait, is considered one of



Hind Al-Nahedh

the leading companies in the Kuwait market and the region in website design and smart applications since 2002. It operates in Kuwait and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

The National Company for Websites (Mawaqaa) was founded in 2002. It is a leading company in providing website solutions for 19 years, with fruitful achievements of more than 970 projects - from government and public institutions, ministries, petroleum, e-commerce, hospitals, general trade, communications, shopping and entertainment and many more, by 130 specialized employees stationed in Kuwait, Dubai and India.

- **Al-Nahedh:** The launch came in response to the increasing demands of e-commerce and online businesses in Kuwait and the world.
- Demand for online stores in Kuwait rose by more than 50 percent in 2020
- More than 18 years of experience in the market will help empower entrepreneurs and accelerate their businesses
- Filling market awareness gap in taking the right steps in e-commerce is Wojood's main mission

## Egypt's Sept inflation of 3.7% could trigger IMF consultation

**CAIRO:** Egypt's headline inflation came in at under 4 percent in September, potentially triggering consultations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that could lead to lower interest rates. Under a one-year, \$5.2 billion loan agreement signed in June, Egypt committed to consult an IMF technical team if year-on-year inflation fell below 6 percent by the end of September and the IMF board itself if it fell below 4 percent.

In September, annual urban consumer price inflation edged up to 3.7 percent from 3.4 percent in August, the country's statistics agency CAPMAS said yesterday. The low inflation rate sharpens a dilemma for the

central bank: whether to keep interest rates high to sell treasury bills and protect the currency, or lower them to encourage growth in an economy battered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some economists have said that if inflation remains low, the IMF could argue the central bank's monetary committee should consider lowering interest rates when it next meets on Nov 12. The slight increase in September inflation went against some analysts' forecasts, who had expected the headline rate to be kept under pressure by lower food prices. However, CAPMAS said food costs increased by 0.3 percent month-on-month.

The August inflation rate was near



CAIRO: Egypt's headline inflation came in at under 4 percent in September, potentially triggering consultations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that could lead to lower interest rates. — Reuters

the lowest since 2005. Inflation soared to a peak of 33.0 percent in July 2017 after Egypt implemented IMF austerity measures including a

fuel price hike, a 13 percent value-added tax and taxes on tobacco, while halving the value of the currency against the dollar. — Reuters

## Iran's rial hits new low against dollar as economy reels

**TEHRAN:** The Iranian rial fell to a new low against the US dollar yesterday as the economy reels under pressure from the COVID-19 pandemic and US sanctions. The dollar was selling for as much as 304,300 rials on the unofficial market, up from 295,940 on Friday, according to the foreign exchange site Bonbast.com. The economic daily Donya-e-Eqtasad's website gave the dollar rate as 303,300, up 6,000 rials from Friday.

The currency has lost about 56 percent of its value in 2020 as a drop in oil prices has deepened the

economic crisis in the country, which also has the highest COVID-19 death toll in the Middle East.

The official exchange rate - used mostly for imports of state-subsidized food and medicine - is 42,000 rials per dollar. The United States on Thursday slapped fresh sanctions on Iran's financial sector, targeting 18 banks to further choke off Iranian revenues as Washington ramps up pressure on Tehran weeks ahead of the US election.

Iranian central bank governor Abdolnaser Hemmati dismissed the sanctions as political propaganda and played down their practical impact. "What needs to be decided in this regard was decided two years ago," Hemmati was quoted as saying by Iranian media. "Therefore, the banks that were party to the agreement with Iran have decided to continue trading with Iran." Analysts said the sanctions may further deter European and other foreign banks from working with Iran, even for permitted humanitarian transactions. — Reuters



TEHRAN: A man pays using Iranian rials at a shop in Tehran. — AFP

was not their fault." That marked the latest dramatic shift from the president who just days ago called off negotiations with Democrats and said there would be no new aid to struggling businesses and unemployed workers until after the election. But as Trump has turned cheerleader and trumpets his newfound optimism, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell poured cold water on the chances for a deal, saying Congress is unlikely to agree on a new stimulus package before the election due to "vast" differences over how much to spend.

"We do need another rescue package, but the proximity to the election and the differences of opinion about what is needed at this particular juncture are pretty vast," McConnell said Friday at a press conference in his home state of Kentucky. While he would like to see legislators rise above their political differences "I think that's unlikely in the next three weeks," the Republican senator said.

'Go Big!'

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin have been negotiating for weeks, raising hopes for a huge, new relief package to follow up on the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act and other measures that brought the total aid passed by Congress to nearly \$3 trillion.

Pelosi said differences remain over policy as well as money. "I do hope that we will have an agreement soon," Pelosi said Friday on MSNBC. "But as you say, they keep changing their minds." — AFP

## White House proposes \$1.8tn stimulus

**WASHINGTON:** With the presidential election fast approaching, the White House on Friday proposed a beefed-up \$1.8 trillion economic rescue plan to try to coax congressional Democrats into an agreement. President Donald Trump, who this week has veered wildly in his position on stimulus to help the world's largest economy recover from the damage done by the COVID-19 pandemic, now seems to be making a major push to roll out funding before he stands for re-election on November 3.

The new proposal, an improvement over the administration's previous \$1.6 trillion offer, brings them closer to the Democrats' latest package costing \$2.2 trillion. White House spokeswoman Alyssa Farah said the administration was "willing to come up on the level" but wanted to keep the price tag "below \$2 trillion."

But Trump, who is trailing in the polls against Democratic rival Joe Biden, said he wants an even more robust plan. "A lot of people are being hurt. I would like to see a bigger stimulus package, frankly, than either the Democrats or the Republicans are offering," Trump said in an interview with conservative talk radio host Rush Limbaugh.

"I would like to see money going to people. It

## Microsoft to let staff work from home permanently

**WASHINGTON:** Software giant Microsoft will let employees work from home permanently if they choose to, US media reported on Friday, becoming the latest employer to expand work-from-home provisions prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

US tech news website The Verge said most Microsoft employees are still at home as the health crisis drags on, and the company doesn't expect to reopen its US offices until January of next year at the earliest. But when it does, workers can choose to work from home permanently with their manager's approval, although they will have to give up their office space. "The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged all of us to think, live and work in new ways," human resources head Kathleen Hogan said in a note to employees obtained by The Verge.

"We will offer as much flexibility as possible to support individual work styles, while balancing business needs and ensuring we live our culture." In a public blog post later in the day, Hogan said the company views employees spending less than 50 percent of their time working from home as "standard," but wasn't abandoning office work entirely. —AFP

## Judge won't force App Store to let Fortnite return

**SAN FRANCISCO:** A federal judge on Friday denied the latest bid by Epic Games to force Fortnite back into the App Store while its lawsuit against Apple heads for trial next year. The two firms are fighting over whether Apple's tight control of the App Store, and its 30 percent cut of revenue, counts as monopolistic behavior. US District Court Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, who had previously rejected a similar request by Epic, rejected the battle royale game maker's motion for an injunction ordering Apple to return Fortnite to the App Store immediately.

"Epic Games has never adequately explained its rush, other than its disdain for the situation," Rogers said in a ruling denying an injunction ahead of trial.

"The current predicament is of its own making," Apple pulled Fortnite from its online mobile apps marketplace on August 13 after Epic released an update that dodges revenue sharing with the iPhone maker.

In her latest ruling, the judge again compared any loss of business suffered by Epic due to Fortnite's eviction by Apple to a "self-inflicted wound." Due to the legal row, Fortnite fans using iPhones or other Apple devices no longer have access to the latest game updates, including the new season released at the end of August.

Rogers expressed empathy for Fortnite lovers unable to get the game on Apple mobile devices.

"This is especially so during these continued difficult times that is the COVID-19 pandemic era, where gaming and virtual worlds are both social and safe," Rogers said in the ruling. "However, there is significant public interest in requiring parties to adhere to their contractual agreements or in resolving business disputes through the normal course."

Rogers pointed out that Epic could get Fortnite back in the App Store by using Apple's payment system for transactions. Apple does not allow users of its popular devices to download apps from anywhere but its App Store, and developers have to use Apple's payment system which takes its cut.

Epic is accusing Apple of being "a monopolist" due to its tight grip on the App Store.

The judge said at a recent hearing that she didn't expect a trial over the dispute to start until July of next year, at the earliest, given her calendar. The legal battle comes as Apple puts priority on selling digital content and subscription services to the one billion-plus people around the world using devices powered by its iOS mobile operating software. Major app developers including Epic and streaming music giant Spotify recently formed a coalition to press for new terms with the major online marketplaces operated by Apple and Google. Google runs a Play Store for apps tailored for devices powered by its Android software and also takes a commission, but people are free to get apps from other online venues. — AFP



## Business

# Fearing Biden tax hikes, wealthy Americans change estate plans

## Democrats want to raise estate taxes to the 'historical norm'

**NEW YORK:** Wealthy Americans are scrambling to change their estate plans before year-end, worried that Democrat Joe Biden will win the US presidential election and raise taxes, say financial advisers to the moneyed set. The biggest concern is that the White House and Congress could get swept up in a "Blue Wave" of Democratic wins that give Biden the power to propose and pass a sweeping set of tax reforms.

Wealthy people are especially nervous that an exemption allowing individuals to leave up to \$11.58 million to heirs, free of estate or gift taxes, could be cut before it expires in 2025. Democrats want to raise estate taxes to the "historical norm," according to the party's platform. That could mean slashing the exemption to \$5.49 million, the figure in place before Republican President Donald Trump signed a sweeping tax bill that included benefits for corporations and wealthy Americans in 2017, advisers said.

It is unclear how the election will go or what, if any, tax reform will pass. Tax code changes can also be complex and time consuming. But as Biden has climbed in the polls, rich people are rushing to set up trusts and revise existing ones before year-end to avoid 2021 tax consequences, advisers said.

"The \$11.58 million question is, 'What is going to happen to the gift and estate tax exclusion?'" said Toni Ann Kruse, a New York estates lawyer who counsels ultra-high net worth people. "We don't know who will win the election or control the House or Senate - and all of those factors will play into what could happen." Biden would also "return the estate tax to 2009 levels" to fund paid family and medical leave, according to his website.

His plan also includes raising taxes on long-term capital gains, which is the profit earned by selling assets whose values have appreciated. Taxpayers with income above \$1 million would pay a 39.6 percent income tax on the profit, instead of the current tiered approach that maxes out at 20 percent for individuals with \$441,450 or more income. In a statement, Biden campaign spokesman Andrew Bates reiterated the candidate's intent to change tax law in ways that benefit less affluent people.

"Joe Biden is running to rebuild the backbone of this nation - the American middle class - by ensuring that our economy rewards work and not just



### Questions over gift and estate tax exclusion

wealth," he said. The uptick in requests for estate changes intensified in June when Biden pulled ahead of Trump in polling, advisers said. Several firms said they have been overwhelmed by requests since then, and expect business to pick up more toward the end of the year. Tax-related workflow is triple the norm at Miller Samuel Inc, a New York-based real estate appraisal firm, said Chief Executive Jonathan Miller.



PHOENIX: US Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden waves as he arrives to speak at a carpenters union in Phoenix, Arizona. — Reuters

"We are flooded with requests for gift and estate tax appraisals right now," he said.

New York estate and tax planning lawyer Philip Michaels has added around 15 high net worth clients during the last several months who are revising estate plans.

Rockefeller Capital Management, a financial advisory firm in New York, is holding virtual events for customers while working with legal and tax advisers to sort through nuances of possible legislation, said

Joe Roberts, Senior Wealth Strategist. Clients are worried about a "quick turn and drastic departure" from the status quo, Roberts said.

At the same time, some customers are worried about making decisions too early. That is because trusts created to use lifetime exemptions are not easily unwound. "It's a lot of money to give away," Indianapolis estate planning lawyer John Olivieri said of some of his clients. "People are struggling with, 'Do I really want to give this away?'" — Reuters

## HSBC bank aims for zero carbon on investments by 2050

**LONDON:** Asia-focused bank HSBC announced Friday that it aims to achieve net-zero carbon emissions across its investments by 2050, but campaigners accused it of falling short on tackling climate change.

"HSBC has both the scale and global reach to play a leading role in guiding its customers through this transition and helping them to achieve this ambitious goal," the lender said in a statement. Its target is to "align its financed emissions—the carbon emissions of its portfolio of customers—to the Paris Agreement goal to achieve net zero by 2050 or sooner".

"The bank also aims to be net zero in its operations and supply chain by 2030." Europe's biggest bank added that it has earmarked between \$750 billion and \$1.0 trillion of finance and investment to assist the transition. CEO Noel Quinn called the 2020s a "pivotal decade of change" towards "a healthier, more resilient and more sustainable future".

The 2015 Paris agreement saw nations



LIVERPOOL: Customers wearing face masks or coverings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, talk to an employee inside a HSBC bank branch in Liverpool, north west England. — AFP

commit to limiting global warming to two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. London-listed HSBC meanwhile follows in the footsteps of rival Barclays, which committed in March to zero-carbon by 2050 under pressure from its shareholders to help tackle climate change. Environmental campaign groups however gave a skeptical response to HSBC's announcement on Friday, arguing that the bank should cease support for coal, gas and oil activities.

"HSBC's net-zero commitment is a bit like saying you'll give up smoking by 2050, but continuing to buy a pack a week, or

even smoking more," said Becky Jarvis, coordinator of campaign group network Fund Our Future UK. "Any further financing of oil, gas, and coal expansion today is utterly at odds with a net-zero commitment by 2050. That's just science, not finance."

And Adam McGibbon, campaigner at Market Forces, argued that the HSBC statement was nothing but "fluffy marketing". "A 550-word statement and not a single concrete commitment made by HSBC. This is zero ambition, not net zero ambition," McGibbon said. — AFP

## Dollar makes a comeback as Cuba eyes devaluation

**HAVANA:** The US dollar is making a comeback as the favored currency in communist-run Cuba as the country prepares to devalue the peso to relieve pressure on a battered economy. Cuba has a unique system whereby two official currencies have existed side-by-side for nearly three decades, the Cuban peso and convertible peso, the CUC. Long lines outside food stores are a common sight in Havana amid chronic shortages of basic goods, and with the government planning to call time on the CUC shopkeepers are already rejecting the currency, driving a rush to dollars for those who can get them.

"CUC not accepted" reads the sign at the entry to one Havana shop.

The island's economy, buffeted by ever-tightening US sanctions, has been hammered by the coronavirus pandemic, which has left Cuba without much-needed foreign revenue provided by its Caribbean beach tourism. The UN Economic Commission for Latin America forecasts GDP to plummet 8.0 percent this year.

In July, Havana opened dozens of state-run "dollar stores" in an effort to rake in foreign currency. The relatively well-stocked stores are a magnet for well-off Cubans and those with dollar remittances sent from US-based Cubans.

### Dollar debit cards

Customers first have to open a dollar-denominated bank account, then use a debit card to pay for the goods in the stores. Economists warn of the creation of



HAVANA: In this file photo, a man shows his wallet with US dollars in it in a street of Havana. With the return of the dollar to the island's economy, no one wants Cuban convertible pesos (CUC). — AFP

a two-tier economy—for the haves who can afford to buy in dollars, and the have-nots in the normal domestic economy.

"Of the 11 million inhabitants, if one million can buy in dollars, what about the other 10? If I don't have family abroad, to send dollars home, I don't have that opportunity," said Aleskis Rodriguez, 31, as he lined up to buy coffee at a Havana market still accepting CUC. Economy Minister Alejandro Gil denied the move would herald "economic apartheid" in Cuba. Instead, he said, it will satisfy the demands of people with the most purchasing power, and add to state coffers.

Economists like Pavel Vidal, a specialist on Cuba from Colombia's Javeriana University, have long argued that the dual-currency system is unwieldy, particularly for exporters.

### Muddled reform

Vidal says Cuba's embrace of the dollar is an admission of failure by the authorities, a consequence of reforms that are "incomplete and well below expectations." The

long-mooted monetary reform is coming "at the worst possible moment," Vidal said. "Because this is monetary reform that implies a significant devaluation of the official currency against the dollar. Something that has never been done." The government in Havana has for years maintained the CUC artificially pegged to the dollar, as a shield for the vulnerable Cuban currency.

"I spent \$30.90 and look at what I bought! Some packages of juice, five packages of spaghetti and five packets of tomato puree, really nothing," said Niuurka Romera, 50, outside a dollar store.

Whatever the currency, one thing is a constant in Cuban life: the long lines outside shops. "I've been here since 5.15 in the morning. It's 11.30 now, but they're already closing the shop and I have to come back tomorrow to buy my coffee," said Magalis, a 52-year-old teacher. She said the government was not doing enough to limit the size of the lines during the pandemic. "If Commander Fidel Castro was still alive, he would have done something beautiful for the people." — AFP

## Saudi PIF in talks to buy stake in UAE supermarket chain Lulu

**ROYADH:** Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), is in early discussions to buy a stake in supermarket chain Lulu Group International, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters. It is in talks with Indian-born businessman Yusuff Ali, who founded Abu Dhabi-based Lulu, one of the largest chains in the Gulf region, the sources said.

Discussions between PIF and Lulu began four to six weeks ago, one of the sources said. It was not immediately clear how big a stake PIF is seeking to buy as discussions are at an early stage, or whether the talks would lead to a final transaction. Lulu operates shopping centers, hypermarkets and other businesses with an annual turnover of \$7.4 billion, according to its website.

It has operations in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states as well as in Egypt, India, Indonesia and Malaysia. PIF, which manages \$360 billion in assets, declined to comment. Lulu's director of marketing & communications, V Nandakumar, said in an emailed response that "as a policy we never comment on market speculations and media rumors." Abu

Dhabi state-owned holding company ADQ invested \$1 billion in Lulu earlier this year, two sources familiar with the talks said. ADQ did not respond to a Reuters request for comment. PIF is seen as a driver of the kingdom's Vision 2030 plan to diversify the economy, with the authorities aiming to turn it into the world's largest sovereign wealth fund.

The Saudi government wants to expand the kingdom's retail sector as part of a drive to create one million jobs by 2020. PIF invested \$500 million in e-commerce venture Noon, which shortly afterwards began operations in Saudi Arabia. It also invested indirectly in the IPO of Saudi mall operator Arabian Centres 4321.SE. PIF was also approached by Reliance to buy a stake in the retail arm of Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd.

The fund, whose board is chaired by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has become a more active investor since 2015, taking a \$3.5 billion stake in Uber Technologies UBER. Nand invested \$45 billion in Softbank's inaugural technology fund.

## 'Polish Amazon' eyes expansion ahead of IPO

**WARSAW:** Gazing out over the skyscrapers on the skyline, the head of Poland's top e-commerce company is unfazed by Amazon's imminent arrival as his business prepares for a record IPO. Instead, Frenchman Francois Nuyts, CEO of Allegro and himself a former Amazon executive, told AFP in an interview that his fast-growing company is ready to expand beyond Poland.

"There are many things we believe we do quite well if not better than any competitors," Nuyts said when asked about reports that Amazon could launch a Polish service within weeks. Set up in 1999 as a homegrown version of eBay, Allegro will list on the Warsaw Stock Exchange on Monday in an IPO valuing the company at around \$11 billion (9.4 billion euros) which is being closely watched by other still sluggish, pandemic-struck European markets. The company, which is owned by London-based private equity funds Cinven, Permira and Mid Europa, has said it is planning to raise around \$256 million and use the proceeds to repay debt.

It is expected to displace Polish video games developer CD Projekt,

the company behind the runaway global hit "The Witcher", as the biggest firm on the Warsaw Stock Exchange.

"Quite a lot of disruption"

Buoyed by the e-commerce boom triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, net profit jumped to 289.7 million Polish zloty (64.2 million euros, \$75.5 million) in the first half of the year from 195.7 million zloty in the same period in 2019. Nuyts pointed to Allegro's "nimble" and "unique" business model connecting more than 100,000 sellers — many of them small "mom and pop stores" — with some 12 million active buyers.

The company has one mid-sized warehouse and is planning to open a larger one along with four smaller ones.

Nuyts said more than 90 percent of products sold never go through a warehouse — moving directly from seller to buyer. "That's really the innovation of Allegro," he said, pointing to other companies that have "global giants" selling through their platforms and move products through several warehouses.

The business model has helped Allegro during the pandemic, which Nuyts said had caused "quite a lot of disruption" at its one warehouse. The company has also relied on an extensive network of lockers across Poland, which allow customers to pick up their purchases without any direct contact with delivery drivers. — AFP

## Business

# Markaz exits industrial property in Phoenix achieving return of 17.44%

## Exit in line with initial business plan of the investment

**KUWAIT:** Delivering on its promise towards creating sustainable wealth for its clients, Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C "Markaz" has successfully exited a commercial real estate investment in the US. The company sold an industrial project in Phoenix, Arizona, achieving a net internal rate of return (IRR) of 17.44 percent for its investors, exceeding initial estimates.

The exit is in line with the initial business plan of the investment which involves the acquisition and development of a 15.91 acre site into two industrial buildings with a total area of 224,471 sq. ft. and the sale of the properties once they are leased.

Commenting on the announcement, Sami Shabshab, President of Mar-Gulf Management Inc, Markaz's US real estate arm, stated: "We are delighted to have successfully executed the sale of our industrial project



### Markaz's fifth exit in 2020

despite prevailing uncertain macroeconomic challenges triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The transaction is a strong testimony to the resilience of our investment portfolio and further strengthens our strong track record in the US market. I would like to thank our partners for their excellent execution and ability to deliver through-

out the unusual circumstances we witnessed this year.

Shabshab added: "We are extremely pleased with the performance of our portfolio this year having achieved 5 exits including the current transaction. The exits resulted in healthy returns and occurred across both our industrial and multifamily investments. The current market conditions will provide intriguing strategic opportunities in existing and new markets across the US, which we are ready to capture."

For his part, Abdullatif W. Al-Nusif, Executive Vice President of Wealth Management and Business Development, Markaz, commented: "Our international real estate program has and continues to deliver consistent performance both in the USA and Europe. As a result, the program has witnessed a growth in assets under management driven by increased demand from

our investors. We remain focused on expanding our portfolio in existing and new markets across the US and Europe, as well as capturing the unique opportunities that the coronavirus pandemic presents by building strategic partnerships with leading institutions in both markets." Markaz has been active in the US real estate market since 1977 with the launching of its first syndicated transaction. Since 1988, Markaz has been conducting real estate transactions in the US through Mar-Gulf, the US real estate arm and wholly-owned subsidiary of Markaz. Over the past thirty years, Markaz and Mar-Gulf have been involved in the ownership and development of real estate properties in a variety of segments including industrial, retail, multifamily and office across the US with a total acquisition cost exceeding \$1.65 billion.

## Virus-hit British firms get extra financial support

**LONDON:** The British government on Friday said it would pay up to two-thirds of staff monthly wages to firms forced to close over the winter months, as infection rates skyrocket. Finance minister Rishi Sunak extended a scheme launched just two weeks ago for workers taking reduced hours to help businesses required to shut as part of efforts to cut transmission rates.

More than 42,000 people have died in the outbreak in Britain—the worst toll in Europe—and concern is mounting about a potentially deadlier second wave, and its social and economic impact. The UK economy grew by a weaker-than-expected 2.1 percent in August and remained far down on pre-pandemic levels, official data showed Friday.

It shrank by a fifth in the second quarter, entering recession on the back of a full lockdown that was only eased in June. Under the extended scheme, businesses will receive grants to pay the wages of staff who cannot work, with the government paying two-thirds of each employee's monthly salary up to a maximum of £2,100 (\$2,715, 2,309 euros) per month each.

Their employers will pay national insurance and pension contributions but will not be asked to contribute towards wages, unlike other firms using the scheme. "Throughout this crisis my priority has always been to protect jobs, so today I'm announcing an expansion of our jobs support scheme, specifically to protect those jobs of people who work in businesses who may be asked to close," Sunak told reporters.

"If that happens those workers will receive two-thirds of their wages for the time that they're unable to go to work."

### 'Safety net'

"I hope this provides reassurance and a safety net for people and businesses in advance of what may be a difficult winter," Sunak added. A Treasury source estimated that the expanded scheme would cost "hundreds of millions" of pounds a month. From November, the government will nevertheless water down its nationwide jobs support that has helped keep millions of people in employment during the pandemic. Many analysts fear this will lead to a surge in unemployment, with the hospitality sector particularly affected.

Sunak denied Friday that his latest enlarged scheme would replicate the so-called furlough plan, which ends in late October. "This is a very different scheme to what we've had before. This is not a universal



In this file photo taken on August 30, 2020, a man walks past an advertisement for beers called 'Sunak's Specials', in reference to Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak, outside of a pub in Manchester. — AFP

approach," he told reporters.

"This is an expansion of the jobs support scheme specifically for those people who are in businesses that will be formally or legally asked to close so in that sense it's very different.

"I've always said that we will adapt and evolve our response as the situation on the health side adapts and evolves. That's what's happening."

### Infections skyrocket

Friday's announcement follows grim new official statistics that laid bare the virus' rapid new trajectory, and as pubs across central Scotland closed for just over two weeks to try to cut close-contact transmission. An estimated 224,400 people—or 1 in 240 — in England had the coronavirus during the week from September 25 to October 1, the Office of National Statistics said.

Although young adults are the main drivers of the surge, there has also been an eight-fold increase in infections of those aged over 65 since last month, according to Britain's largest study, by Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI. The study of 175,000 people estimated that there were 45,000 new infections every day between September 18 and October 5, with the rate doubling every 29 days.

The report warned spiralling levels of infection in northern England will replicate across the rest of the country "in a few weeks' time." "While certain areas are worse affected, if left unabated then infection trends will follow nationwide and could lead to high levels of unnecessary death and illness from the disease," said Imperial's Paul Elliott. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to outline a new three-tier lockdown system, under which hospitality venues such as pubs and restaurants may face temporary closures. — AFP

## IBM reorganizes to focus on cloud computing

**WASHINGTON:** IBM unveiled a corporate reorganization to allow it to focus on cloud computing, spinning off its division for managed infrastructure. The move will create two separate, publicly traded firms by the end of 2021, according to the US computing giant. "IBM is laser-focused on the \$1 trillion hybrid cloud opportunity," said IBM chief executive Arvind Krishna.

"Now is the right time to create two market-leading companies focused on what they do best. IBM will focus on its open hybrid cloud platform and AI capabilities." The infrastructure firm, he said, "will have greater agility to design, run and modernize the infrastructure of the world's most important organizations." The move positions IBM to ramp up competition in cloud computing against rivals such as Amazon, Microsoft and Google. "We have positioned IBM for the new era of hybrid cloud," said IBM executive chairman Ginni Rometty.

"This focus will result in greater value, increased innovation, and faster execution for our clients." IBM shares surged seven percent in early trade on the news. — AFP



A sign marks the entrance to IBM Corporate Headquarters in Armonk, New York. — AFP

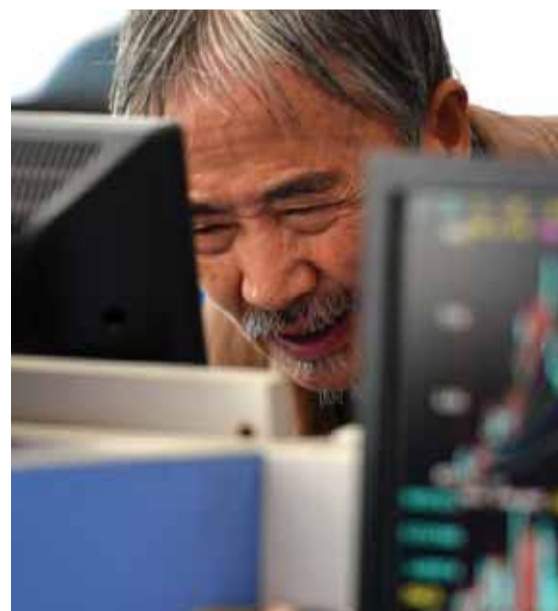
## Stocks gain on hopes for virus medication

**NEW YORK:** Global stocks mostly rose Friday amid increased hopes for a US stimulus package following the latest statements from President Donald Trump and rising confidence about coronavirus therapeutics. Major US indices finished higher for a third straight session, with the tech-rich Nasdaq jumping 1.4 percent as the White House again shifted its stance on the talks.

Earlier, European bourses also climbed despite rising coronavirus cases in the continent.

After markets tanked on Tuesday following President Donald Trump's abrupt move to end stimulus talks, investors have cheered his about face in subsequent days that's seen him calling for a deal. The White House on Friday beefed up its offer, proposing a \$1.8 trillion package as Trump himself said on a radio show that he favored an even larger package.

But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said there was not enough time to complete the talks before the election. Still, analysts said the gains reflected confidence there would be a package soon.



An investor looks at stock prices at a brokerage in Fuyang, in China's eastern Anhui province on Friday. — AFP

Markets also cheered a write-up in the New England Journal of Medicine reporting that Gilead Sciences's remdesivir drug resulted in "consistent, clinically meaningful improvements" in coronavirus patients, the latest positive indicator about a leading treatment. That news follows announcements by Regeneron Pharmaceuticals and Eli Lilly earlier in the week on Covid-19 therapies that have boosted confidence in effectiveness of the treatments for the virus.

The market is "being stimulated more this week by the realization that there just might be a wide-spread, effective COVID treatment regimen that gets approved soon," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick J. O'Hare. "The gist is that, the more confidence there is in potential treatment plans, the more confidence there will be in a potential return to normal activity," he added.

Analysts have also cited increased expectations that the US presidential election won't be contested, given challenger Joe Biden's widening lead over Trump in the polls. A drawn-out and litigious fight over the outcome has been a drag on sentiment in recent weeks.

### Madrid in semi-lockdown

While US stimulus and the election are major drivers of markets, a surge in new virus infections in Europe is causing angst, with several countries reimposing fresh containment measures and considering localized lockdowns. Spain's government declared a state of emergency and new partial lockdown for virus-hit Madrid, while in France, another four cities were placed on maximum coronavirus alert on Thursday, meaning they will have to shut bars and limit public gatherings.

Britain's economy expanded a weaker-than-expected 2.1 percent in August and remained far down from pre-pandemic levels, official data showed Friday, with the government expanding help for workers whose businesses are forced to close. Despite a fourth consecutive monthly increase, gross domestic product was 9.2 percent below February's level, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. — AFP

### News in brief

#### LatAm to bear worst impact: WB

**WASHINGTON:** Latin America and the Caribbean will suffer the worst economic and health impact from the coronavirus, the World Bank said Friday, forecasting a nearly 8.0 percent drop in regional GDP. "Our region is suffering the worst economic and health impacts of Covid-19 of anywhere in the world," according to Carlos Felipe Jaramillo, the Bank's regional vice president. He said the findings in the report "calls for clarity on how to combat the pandemic and put the economies back on track for a swift recovery." In its report, "The Cost of Staying Healthy" the Bank addresses the impact of the pandemic in a region with high COVID-19 mortality and infection rates such as Brazil, Mexico and Peru. "The number of deaths per million people is as high as in advanced economies, if not more, but the resources available to counter the shock are much more constrained," it said. — AFP

#### S Sudan to change currency

**JUBA:** South Sudan's cabinet agreed on Friday to change the country's currency in order to improve the economy, the government spokesman said, without giving further details. "The cabinet has decided that the current currency should be changed... This is to improve our economic situation," information minister Michael Makuei Lueth told a news conference in the capital Juba following a cabinet meeting. The country's currency is the South Sudanese pound, adopted when the country gained independence from Sudan in 2011 after a long civil war. Another war, along with graft and mismanagement, led to an economic crisis in the oil-producing nation. In July, a central bank official announced that South Sudan had run out of foreign exchange reserves and could not stop the pound's depreciation. — Reuters

#### Canada's job gains in Sept

**OTTAWA:** Canada added 378,200 jobs in September and the unemployment rate fell to 9.0 percent, handily beating analyst expectations, as children returned to school and the economy continued to reopen from coronavirus shutdowns, Statistics Canada said on Friday. Analysts in a Reuters poll had predicted a gain of 156,600 jobs and for the unemployment rate to fall to 9.7 percent from 10.2 percent in August. The gain brought employment to within 720,000 of its pre-pandemic level, Statscan said. "It's a good number. It's very encouraging that we didn't decelerate in September," said Andrew Kelvin, chief Canada strategist at TD Securities. The Canadian dollar strengthened to a three-week high at 1.3132 to the greenback, or 76.15 US cents. Full-time employment rose by 334,000 and compared with 44,200 new part-time positions. Employment in the goods-producing sector grew by 75,100 jobs, while the services sector grew by 303,100 positions. — Reuters

#### Alitalia nationalization plans

**MILAN:** Italy has approved the creation of a new company to house the assets of troubled airline Alitalia as the government presses ahead with a plan to nationalize the company. The nationalization plan, which was delayed by political infighting, will now need to be approved by the European Commission. The economy, industry, transport and labor ministers signed late on Friday the decree setting up the new company. "Italy's new flagship carrier was born today," Transport Minister Paola De Micheli said. Alitalia has endured 11 years of difficult private management and three failed restructuring attempts, problems exacerbated by the coronavirus crisis that has devastated the global airline industry. — Reuters



IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva speaks at a press briefing on COVID-19 in Washington, DC. — AFP

## Africa needs \$1.2tn of financing to beat COVID impact: IMF

**WASHINGTON:** African countries will need \$1.2 trillion through 2023 to repair the economic damage inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said Friday.

About \$345 billion in financing has not yet been pledged, Georgieva said in a speech, while commitments from official lenders and international institutions cover less than a quarter of the projected need. "All of us—countries and institutions—must do more to support Africa to cope with the next phase, which is building a recovery from this crisis," Georgieva said.

The Washington-based crisis lender estimates Africa will see its GDP contract 2.5 percent in 2020, one of the worst downturns the continent has ever seen. And while recovery will begin next year, pre-crisis levels of growth won't be reached until 2022. With private sector financing limited, the IMF projects a funding gap of \$44 billion for this year alone, and 43 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty on the continent, wiping out five years of progress in poverty reduction. — AFP

# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times  
248 33 199

## INTERNAL MEDICINE

These services include, but are not limited to, the below:

- Diabetes Mellitus & thyroid dysfunction
- Stomach, colon & gastroenteritis
- Hypertension & high blood lipids
- High fever
- Asthma & chronic breathing conditions
- Chronic cough, rhinitis & sinusitis
- Diagnosing & treating sleep apnea
- Lung tumors & pulmonary tuberculosis
- Pulmonary fibrosis & sarcoidosis
- Urinary tract infections
- Blood conditions such as blood clot anemia & thrombocytopenia



1808088 taibahospital.com  
@taibahospital

## INTERNAL MEDICINE



Dr. Mohamed Bahzad  
Consultant of Internal Medicine,  
Respiratory & Intensive Care



Dr. Abdelsalam Al Najjar  
Consultant of Internal Medicine,  
Hematology & Medical Oncology



Dr. Walid Al Salim  
Consultant of Internal Medicine



Dr. Michel Morris  
Consultant of Internal Medicine



Dr. Yousif Bahbahani  
Consultant of Internal Medicine,  
Nephrology & Hypertension



Prof. Dr. Nabila Abdella  
Consultant of Internal Medicine  
& Diabetes



Dr. Hussain Bahbahani  
Specialist of Internal Medicine  
& Rheumatology



Dr. Naglaa Elwan  
Internal Medicine Doctor



Dr. Abdelrahman Younis  
Internal Medicine Doctor



1808088 taibahospital.com  
@taibahospital

## WELCOME

**Dr Tammam Abou Ali**  
Consultant ENT, Head & Neck,  
Facial Plastic Surgeon.

- Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
- Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF
- Snoring and OSAP Surgery
- Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques
- Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty
- Salivary gland and parotid surgery
- Thyroid and parathyroid surgery
- Micro laryngeal surgery



1 888 883  
www.qmc-kuwait.com



Telephone: 1830003 Ext: 2400

alsalam.int.hospital

**DR KHALED ALMERRI**  
Consultant Interventional Cardiology  
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

### Specialized in:

- 1- Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4- Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring



## To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617  
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

**HADI CLINIC**  
Ophthalmology Services

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally  
Senior Registrar

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid  
Consultant

Dr. Abeer Khattab  
Specialist

Cataract Surgery, Glaucoma, Retina, General Ophthalmology, Follow-Up All Treatments

Tel: 1828282  
Whatsapp Us  
+965-6000 2184

**DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY**  
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology  
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.  
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada  
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- Diagnosis/Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- Diagnosis & treatment of Otolgy and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122

**DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM**  
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368  
Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

**Dr. Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj**  
ENT Consultant, Laryngologist

- ◆ Kuwait Board of Otolaryngology.
- ◆ Laryngology Fellowship, McGill University- Canada.
- ◆ Fellow of the European Board of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck surgery.
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association.
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society.
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.

**Experienced In:**

- Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- Vocal cord augmentation.
- Diagnosis and treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- Myringotomy and ventilation tube insertion.
- Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- Diagnosis and treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- Tympanoplasty.
- Diagnosis and treatment of vertigo.
- Thyroid surgery
- Diagnosis and treatment of snoring.

2536 0000  
www.royalehayat.com

**Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family**  
Book your appointments today!

Dr. Kiran Toraka  
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Zareena Zahir  
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Hasan Khan  
Senior Cardiologist

Dr. P. Seshendra Nath  
Orthopedic Consultant (AUSTRIA)  
Specialised in Neck, Shoulder  
Hip and Knee

50721507  
24551555  
www.exircenterkw.com

**EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALTIES CENTER**  
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES

Tel : 24568857 / 24568859 info@exircenterkw.com www.exircenterkw.com

**Scope of Clinical Practice:**

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscopy)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment  
◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass  
◆ Transanal minimally invasive surgery

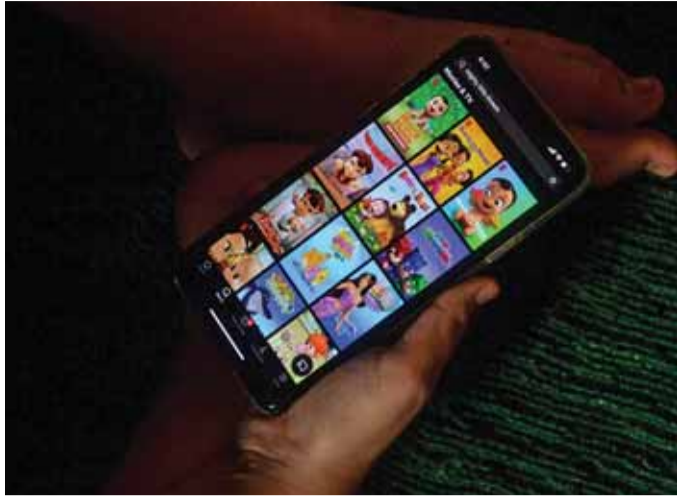
**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

**Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad**  
Surgery Department  
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

1802 555  
daralshifa  
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

## Lifestyle | Features



A child looks at the suggested cartoon series available on Netflix including 'Mighty Little Bheem' (top left corner) on a mobile phone at home in New Delhi. — AFP photos



A child watches 'Mighty Little Bheem' cartoon series on a mobile phone at home in New Delhi.

## Mobile games thrive, even as pandemic keeps players home

Mobile games are thriving as players turn to them for fun and friendship during the pandemic, with increasing numbers of women joining the trend. "Being stuck at home has not stopped people from playing games on their phones," said SensorTower mobile insights strategist Craig Chapple. "To the contrary, mobile gaming is more popular than ever."

Smartphone game play involves taps on touchscreens with just a few moments of play at a time, often while sipping coffee or waiting for transit, in contrast to the console games with immersive worlds that can span hours. Mobile games appeal to a broader demographic than do shooters and other genres popular on console or PC gamers. More than 40 percent of mobile gamers are women, according to research firms Newzoo and Statista. That differs from gamers using consoles or personal computers, who are more likely to be males age 12 to 35 years old, according to analysts.

"We've had loads of people forced inside during lock-downs in need of entertainment," said Futuresource mobile tech and gaming research analyst Morris Garrard. "Gaming being one of the most interactive and engaging forms of entertainment has seen a significant boost." According to the mobile consultancy App Annie, spending on mobile gaming is expected to see strong growth this year and top \$100 billion. Popular titles include Candy Crush Saga, Honor of Kings, Pokemon Go and Gardenscapes.

### Minnnows and whales

Many mobile games are free to download and rely on massive numbers of people spending a little on things like extra lives, virtual outfits, or items that boost in-game abilities. And, paying a dollar or so to upgrade to an ad-free

version of a mobile game is seen by some as a bargain. Mobile players who spend little to nothing are referred to in the industry as "minnows," while those more willing to pay are "dolphins" or "whales" depending on how deep they reach into their wallets. Casual games which rely on short play times such as puzzle and arcade-style games are among the most downloaded mobile titles. A major innovation in recent years has been a "battle pass" system popularized by Fortnite from Epic Games, with players pay for tickets to each "season," according to Chapple.

### Addictive fun?

Mobile game makers, like their console-focused peers, manipulate psychological levers that emotionally reward players and keep them engaged in ways that some say can be addictive. The World Health Organization has classified "gaming disorder" a disease characterized by "impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities" even if it is detrimental to one's life. But, in a stressful world, mobile games can be a relaxing escape while standing in queues, waiting for a food orders, or just whiling away time, according to players.

Playing mobile games can improve moods; boost brain power, and provide a sense of community, according to proponents. "Allocating a bit of time to playing games can improve your mental health in a lot of amazing ways," Lifehack digital marketer Zuhair Sharif said in a blog. "This has led many to incorporate video games into their regular lives." Mobile game lovers are quick to point out that playing console or computer games in planes, buses, or cars is not an option, while smartphones can be whipped out anywhere to make a few moves.

### Mobile millennials

Worldwide, an estimated 72 percent of active mobile game players are "millennials" ranging in age from 23 to 38 years old. The broader audience for mobile games includes those in parts of the world where smartphones are the primary, if not only, way people connect to the internet. "In emerging regions, particularly China and India, it is absolutely huge," Garrard said.

Mobile game revenue is powered by the fact that they are easily available to the more than four billion people in the world with smartphones, according to Garrard. "Maybe they're not spending a lot, but there are many who spend a little bit on mobile games and it really adds up," Garrard said. A trend toward cloud streaming services will likely boost mobile gaming, as titles once limited to consoles will be able to offer more play on smartphones or tablets since action is power by datacenters.

High-capacity, super-fast 5G telecom networks could enable game makers to bring console quality graphics and action to mobile devices, appealing to more hardcore players. "The concept of gaming on the go will be ever more present, supported by improvements in mobile infrastructure," Garrard said. "It's not just the gaming platform will be benefiting, but the likes of kind of Google and Apple." Apple and Google are behind the mobile operating systems, iOS and Android respectively, that power nearly all of the world's smartphones. The US technology titans also run online shops for mobile apps, taking 30 percent commission on transactions in what has become a controversial toll given their dominance in the market. — AFP



In this file photo, Iran's legendary singer, instrumentalist, and composer Mohammad-Reza Shajarian holds a stringed instrument at a house in the capital Tehran. Shajarian, who embodied traditional and classical music in Iran, died in Tehran on October 8, 2020 after a long battle with illness, his son said.

## Iranian maestro Shajarian laid to rest beside epic poet

Legendary Iranian singer Mohammad-Reza Shajarian was buried on Saturday alongside the tomb of the ancient poet Abul Qasem Ferdowsi in the northeast of the country, state news agency IRNA reported. A national treasure in his homeland, the "Ostad" - master in Persian - died at the age of 80 on Thursday in Tehran after a long battle with cancer. His body was taken the day after to the holy city of Mashhad in the northeastern Khorasan Razavi province, where he was born.

He was laid to rest in Tus city, as willed, next to the tomb of the 10th-century poet Ferdowsi, who wrote the epic "Shahnameh," or the Book of Kings. According to IRNA, a crowd of "almost 150 people" consisting of his family, Iranian music icons and some of his fans were present at the burial, due to Covid-19 pandemic and the necessity of social

distancing. But hundreds of others gathered outside the tomb complex and mausoleum, singing the maestro's songs and watching the burial on large television screens, the agency said.

His son, Homayoun, thanked the participants for attending his father's ceremony "despite the difficulties." IRNA said the police and municipal security forces were there to "ensure the safety" of the burial. Shajarian maintained difficult relations with the authorities in Tehran throughout his career, first under the reign of the shah and then with the Islamic republic. Shajarian's death made the front pages of most Saturday newspapers, both conservative and reformist, and even the sports press, with some devoting exclusive front page reports to the maestro. — AFP



Iranians raise portraits of legendary singer Mohammad-Reza Shajarian during his funeral in the city of Tus near the city of Mashhad in northeastern Khorasan Razavi province yesterday. — AFP

## Australian wellness celeb fuels 'infodemic'

One minute Australian "wellness" personality Pete Evans is posting a barbecued prawn recipe to 1.5 million Facebook followers, the next he's claiming the coronavirus pandemic is an elaborate global hoax. During this year of crisis, the ever-smiling, one-time television chef known as "Paleo Pete" has become a leading purveyor of conspiracy and pseudoscience Down Under.

The pandemic has seen a worldwide explosion of misinformation with anti-vaccination groups, the far right, libertarians, state-backed trolls and anarchists forging a loose coalition of the disgruntled. An unlikely mix of celebrities, wellness experts and social media influencers like Evans have become a powerful vector in that "infodemic". While government scientists give earnest daily briefings, Evans turns to social media to question lockdowns and rubbish the use of facemasks.

The content is often up-beat-appearing in a wetsuit with blue eyes beaming, riffing about the joys of being back surfing after injury. He signs off emails with the signature: "Cook with Love and Laughter!" But his most popular content is often recycled from US conspiracy theories. These posts prompt long threads that echo QAnon movement talking points, claiming a "pandemic" manufactured crisis by global elites to enforce lucrative mass vaccinations and control humanity.

A post of Anthony Fauci, who has led the US government's response to every epidemic since the 1980s, being questioned over a potential Covid-19 vaccine was a particular hit for Evans. The post attracted over half a million views and a blizzard of conspiratorial comments against vaccinations and traditional government rule. According to data from social media tracker CrowdTangle, Evans' reach has increased since the pandemic began, growing by up to 15,000 users a week, rather than the net loss he often used to see.

"People are searching for answers," said Mathew Marques, a lecturer in Social Psychology at La Trobe University. "You've got, I guess, charlatans and snake oil salesmen offering a cure." Evans denies trafficking in lies, and denounces what he calls "fear-based propaganda." "The pan-

dem is a hoax. It is as simple as that" he told AFP, claiming that wearing masks and social distancing "are in fact damaging our immune system." "The reason we have become the number one selling health and lifestyle author in this country is because what we share actually keeps people healthy."

### 'Laid back' Aussie bloke

Academics have labelled the mash-up of New Age thinking with conspiracy theories as "conspiracy." "They all see themselves in some way as rebels, as a resistance," Professor Axel Bruns from the Digital Media Research Centre at the Queensland University of Technology told AFP. Those interested in healthy lifestyles and spirituality may have been primed for Covid-19 conspiracies-given existing distrust of western medicine and corporate interests.

The charismatic "laid back, stereotypical Aussie bloke" appeal of Evans helped him weave a narrative which pits him against powerful establishment interests, said Marques. "These kind of big pharma conspiracy theories... these seem to be kind of interlinked with this rise of a wellness alternative." The spread of his beliefs can be seen online, and on the streets of virus-hit Australia's cities.

"He's bringing to light, to the people in Australia and the people around the world, how corrupt the governments are," said Evans fan and naturopath Sheridan Lee at a recent anti-lockdown rally in Melbourne. "If it has to be a celebrity and influencer to bring this out, then so be it." Fellow Melbourne protester Dellacoma Rio said he regularly listened to Evans' livestreams and agreed with his promotion of anti-vaccination views. "I feel like if you follow the money you see who's getting paid to do things and where money is coming from," he said. For some of Evans' critics, the question of money is pertinent. He sells pricey "Thoughtful Food" products like "Dehydrated Beef Bone Broth with Wattleseed, Lemon Myrtle & Kakadu Plum" and has promoted an Aus\$15,000 "light machine"-which looks like a psychedelic countertop blender-to help against Covid-19. —AFP



Police speaking with protester Dellacoma Rio (center), who regularly listens to livestreams of one of Australia's leading purveyors of conspiracy theories, disinformation and pseudoscience 'Paleo' Pete Evans, at an anti-lockdown rally in Melbourne amid the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

## Copenhagen to ban electric scooters from city centre

The city of Copenhagen wants to ban electric scooter rentals from the city centre, officials said, in what would be one most strict regulations against a symbol of the new, "sharing economy". "It will no longer be possible to rent or park an electric scooter in the majority of Copenhagen's most built up areas from January 1," the city's environmental and technical services department said in an email to AFP.

In practice, the measure will ban scooters from the historic city centre and adjacent neighborhoods, where it is already prohibited to park them. "Unfortunately, we have encountered major problems with these electric scooters... It is extremely difficult for seniors to get around when they are left laying about," municipal councillor Rune Dybvad said on TV2.

The measure needs to be approved by the municipal council but enjoys widespread support. Despite being a symbol of the "sharing economy", riders are not always generous or caring of others, zipping between pedestrians and leaving scooters poorly parked, thus prompting a number of cities to adopt strict regulations on their use. — AFP

## EXHIBITION SHOWING HONG KONG PROTEST PHOTOS SHUTS

An annual World Press Photo exhibition featuring images from Hong Kong's huge pro-democracy protests last year has been shut down in Macau without explanation, sparking speculation of political pressure from Beijing. The exhibition has been hosted by the Association Casa de Portugal Macao every year since 2008 and was scheduled to run from late September until October 18.

The exhibition showcased "the best visual journalism" of the past year and included prize-winning images of the Hong Kong protests captured by AFP photographer Nicolas Asfour. The World Press Photo Foundation said in a statement that they "regret" the premature closure and "haven't been able to confirm the reasons" for it. "While the reasons for the closing remain unclear, we are following local media reports suggesting that it might be the result of external pressure on the content of the exhibition," said Laurens Korteweg, director of Exhibitions at the World Press Photo Foundation.

"Supporting the conditions for freedom of expression, freedom of enquiry, freedom of the press is a fundamental part of our work," he added. The exhibition featured photographs from the massive pro-democracy protests that brought Hong Kong to a standstill for months last year. Macau's English and Portuguese Speaking Press Association told local media that the city is "facing something serious and a worrying episode that signals an erosion of the space for freedom and expression", if the closure was due to political pressure.—AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Visitors take pictures on a set of stairs on Patong beach in Phuket, which has seen a lack of tourists due to ongoing restrictions relating to the COVID-19 novel coronavirus. — AFP photos



Foreigners wearing face masks walk past a closed seafood restaurant along Patong beach, in Phuket.



A food vendor waits for customers in front of empty shop houses along Patong beach in Phuket.

# 'GHOST ISLAND' PHUKET HUNKERS DOWN IN TOURIST-FREE THAILAND

Phuket's go-go dancers sit playing on their phones in empty bars lining deserted streets as the Thai tourist island reels from the ravages of the pandemic with little sign of any recovery soon. Swimming pools are empty, chairs are stacked high in deserted restaurants and normally packed beaches are so quiet they are even seeing rare species of sea turtle arriving to nest. Last year, more than nine million tourists visited Phuket, the kingdom's second most popular destination after Bangkok. Today, nearly all the island's 3,000 hotels are closed and the main town of Patong has become a "ghost town", says local tycoon Preechawut Keesin, who owns five night-clubs and around 600 hotel rooms.

Thailand has so far remained relatively unscathed from the global outbreak with around 3,600 confirmed cases and just a few dozen deaths. But the kingdom's decision to concentrate on beating the virus has dealt a brutal blow to the economy, which is expected to contract 7-9 percent this year and leave millions unemployed. "My boss wants to

help the staff keep their jobs, but I don't think we can survive after the end of the year," sighs Jantima Tongsrjriern, manager of Pum Pui bar.

### 'Worse than tsunami'

In normal times, 80 percent of the island's profits come from tourism, a sector that employs more than 300,000 people. Tens of thousands of those who have lost their jobs have returned to their home provinces. Life is hard for those sticking it out. Some have accepted huge pay cuts, while others have little choice but to join the long lines at the food distribution centers or scrape together an income where they can.

Bar owner Orathai Sidel says she used to make 100,000 baht (\$3,200) a month in high season. With her business a victim of the pandemic, she now sells desserts from a street-side cart, making just \$3 a day to try to cover her children's school fees. "We're just fighting to survive," says fellow street vendor Poi, fired in June from the restaurant where she used to work.

Phuket has been due to welcome



Photo shows a stall with stacks of chairs and mats along Patong beach, in Phuket.

Thailand's first foreign tourists since April in a cautious experiment by the kingdom, but their arrival keeps being pushed back. And the two-week compulsory quarantine and high price tag—several thousand dollars a person—will mean this is a niche market. "We will have to focus on developing local customers and individual travellers rather

than mass tourism," says Preechawut Keesin.

Before the pandemic, domestic holidaymakers only made up 30 percent of visitors to Phuket, prompting the local tourism industry to rethink its business model. Trial packages are already being offered to domestic tourists for as low as \$30 for two nights, flights included from



A lone customer walks past a swimming pool at the Vjitt Resort in Phuket.

Bangkok—but the rock-bottom prices mean hotels will likely not even recover their costs. "We don't expect a return to normal for three years," forecasts Kongsak Khoopongsakorn. "The situation is much worse than after the tsunami in 2004." — AFP

## No longer just crime: Nordic TV's new wave

For over a decade, Nordic crime series such as "The Bridge" and "Wallander" have captivated international TV audiences with stories of brooding detectives, elaborate murders and bleak Scandinavian landscapes. But now the success of so-called Nordic noir has spawned overseas interest in a new wave of TV productions from Europe's far north, this time in genres

generated a demand for content that stands out and is still fairly cheap, and this is true for Nordic content," Aarhus University associate professor Pia Jensen told AFP. "Nordic series have for the most part quite high production values, which is key if you want to sell on the international market." The binge-friendly, half-hour episodes of "Cryptid" have a more dynamic feel than the slow-

Nordic noir, everything is very calm and low and melancholy, and this one has that spirit still, but we've added some more spices," Berron said.

### Comic noir

Branded "Nordic comic noir" by the show's makers, the different feel partly stems from Cryptid's originator, the acclaimed French graphic novelist

### New things coming

International interest in non-crime Nordic series has stepped up in recent years. Norway's "Skam" (Shame), a 2015 web series that took an unflinching look at the lives of a group of high school students, broke viewership records in Scandinavia, before sparking remakes across Europe and the United States. "Ride Upon the Storm", from the creator of Danish political drama "Borgen", saw lead actor Lars Mikkelsen win an Emmy in 2018 for his portrayal of a priest at the centre of a family drama.

"Borgen", one of Nordic's first non-crime international successes, has itself now been recommissioned for a fourth series to air in 2022. And in the coming weeks, viewers in Norway will be the first to see the lavish World War II-era drama "Atlantic Crossing". The eight-hour show has been sold throughout Europe and a US deal is in final negotiations, distributor Beta Film said. The action is based on a true story and takes place largely in the US, where Norway's crown princess Martha, played by Sofia Helin of "The Bridge", flees after the Nazis invade her country.

There, she strikes up an intimate friendship with president Franklin Roosevelt, played by "Twin Peaks" star Kyle MacLachlan. While new Nordic genres are growing in popularity though, it is not at the expense of Scandi crime. Netflix this year released "Young Wallander", a new take on novelist Henning Mankell's troubled detective. And last year, the BBC acquired Denmark's "The Investigation", based on the 2017 murder of journalist Kim Wall. "There will be new things coming out of the Nordics," Justus Riesenkaempff from Beta Film told AFP. "But there will always be a lot of crime." — AFP

## Bereft of jet set, New York luxury hotels welcome last-minute locals

John Farrell and his wife booked a \$1,000 room in the morning and were in New York hours later for their one-night stay. The couple is part of a new local and last-minute clientele keeping the lights on at the city's most luxurious hotels now that the coronavirus has chased off the international jet set.

The yellow taxis and limousines that used to pile in front of swanky hotel The Pierre are gone. So are the crowds of foreigners mingling in the lobby. The Central Park hotel once hosted galas and welcomed celebrities—everyone from Audrey Hepburn and Elizabeth Taylor to, more recently, Lady Gaga. But with the coronavirus pandemic in full swing it is a shadow of its former self: Following six months of closure and the travel industry's near collapse due to Covid-19, it reopened in mid-September to smaller crowds and fewer members of the glitterati.

"The hotel, it's kind of like the streets; it's lacking the hustle and bustle and the presence of people," said Farrell, a 38-year-old construction entrepreneur who drove two hours from the suburbs to get there. Usually this time of year the city's hotels are packed, with an average price of \$300 per night. The busy season starts with the US Open and UN General Assembly, said The Pierre's general manager Francois-Olivier Luiggi. Then comes "every convention you can possibly have, fundraising galas, the fall season for the weddings, and then its Thanksgiving all the way to Christmas and New Year's Eve," he said.—AFP



French-Belgian screenwriter and novelist, Sylvain Runberg works at his studio in Stockholm. The success of so-called Nordic noir has spawned overseas interest in a new wave of TV productions from Europe's far north, this time in genres from period drama to teen horror.



French-Belgian screenwriter and novelist Sylvain Runberg poses for photos in Stockholm. — AFP photos

from period drama to teen horror.

One hotly anticipated release is Swedish supernatural series "Cryptid" about unexplained goings-on among a group of college kids in the fictional small town of Morkstad. Premiering in the Nordics this month, the series has generated "strong interest" abroad, according to its international distributor Beta Film, with sales so far to Germany's Joyn and France's Salto streaming services. The 10-part show has also made the official selection for the Cannes TV series festival in the south of France, which opens on Friday, where a record six of the 20 shortlisted series are Scandi productions.

"The rise of streaming platforms has

moving plot lines which often characterize Nordic shows. The format - and the colors - also set the series apart from other Swedish horror hits, like the 2008 vampire film "Let the Right One In".

When AFP visited the "Cryptid" film set in October last year, a small, tree-lined lake close to the southwestern Finnish town of Turku had been turned into the setting of sinister happenings that begin to terrorize the town's youngsters. "There's something lurking underneath the surface but we never know what," director David Berron told AFP. The series will have "a lot more color and flavor" than the gritty, grey realism of Scandi crime successes like "The Bridge" and "The Killing", he added. "In

Sylvain Runberg, known for adapting Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy into the graphic novel format. Runberg, who has divided his time between France and Sweden for the past decade, believes the success of Nordic drama is down to the contrast between the comfortable veneer of Scandinavian society and its dark undercurrents of crime, prejudice and pent-up aggression. "It's a society which everyone can recognize themselves in, not that different to what you experience in France, the US or Britain," Runberg told AFP. But the stories are "often very brutal and violent, which is not at all what you experience day-to-day in Scandinavia," he said. "It gives them a certain feel, a resonance."

## STIFLED BY PANDEMIC, US MOVIE THEATERS SEND SOS

With theaters closed in New York and Los Angeles and would-be moviegoers across the country choosing to stay in, US cinemas are sending out a desperate SOS—so far unanswered by Congress, local officials and studios. Regal Cinemas, the second largest chain in America, officially shut its doors on Thursday for lack of profitability, following an August reopening. It mentioned closures in New York as a major factor in its decision.

"The studios really need New York City in order to get decent growth out of a movie. And without New York they can't do that," said Joseph Masher, chief operating officer of Bow Tie Cinemas, a medium-sized chain. Governor Andrew Cuomo

will not budge on the matter, even though he has allowed partial indoor restaurant dining. He said in mid-September that the state was "not yet at a point where we can get back to normal life."

Andrew Elgart, who owns several theaters in the New York City area, disagrees. "I honestly think that people sitting in a movie theater for two hours with a mask on is safer than sitting in a restaurant for an hour with no mask," he said. Across the country nearly 400 exhibitors, which account for more than 33,000 out of 40,000 overall screens, have adopted a strict health protocol called CinemaSafe, which includes rules on distancing, ventilation and masks. But Cuomo hasn't budged.

To date, no transmission has been linked to a movie theater in the United States or elsewhere. "Right now the infection rates are rising so the idea of opening up now with so many questions up in the air to me feels irresponsible," said Christian Grass, CEO of Metrograph, an independent movie theater in Manhattan. Julia, a 23-year-old who lives in New York, says she'll hold out for a vaccine: "There's so many things to watch streaming that I'd be able to wait," she said. For Michelle, a 42-year-old mother from Brooklyn, waiting was not on the agenda.—AFP



A man pauses in Times Square near Broadway and an empty theater district in New York City. — AFP

## Sports

Photo of the day



Blade Hildebrand races at the SCORE Baja 500 in Mexico. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## Sharks survive Lions' rally as South African rugby resumes

**DURBAN:** The South African Super Rugby Unlocked competition kicked off in Durban Friday with a thriller in which the Sharks edged the visiting Lions 19-16 at Kings Park. It was the first competitive match in the land of the world champion Springboks since mid March when the Sharks beat the Stormers in the five-nation version of Super Rugby. The multi-national competition folded after the coronavirus wreaked havoc with world sport and New Zealand went it alone with a domestic Super Rugby, followed by Australia.

South Africa lagged behind because of far more Covid-19 deaths and after some pre-season warm-ups and a Springboks trial, the real deal returned Friday. Sharks loose forward and man of the match Sikhumbuzo Notshe said: "We lost concentration in the second half and conceded too many silly penalties. "We were repeatedly caught offside and failed to dominate the scrums, which is unacceptable because we take great pride in our set pieces. "Next weekend we have a bye and I would rather play after being out of action for so long. Still, we can look forward to visiting the Bulls the following weekend." While Kings Park was devoid of spectators due to pandemic-related restrictions, TV viewers were treated to a tense climax in which the Lions squandered several scoring chances. Fly-half Elton Jantjies, the 30-year-old talisman of the Johannesburg side and understudy of Springbok playmaker Handre Pollard, hit the post with a kickable penalty on 77 minutes.

The Lions then forced a post-hooter scrum five meters from the Sharks tryline, but after two resets the visitors were penalized, giving the relieved Sharks victory. Such a close finish had seemed unlikely 31 minutes into the opening half on a warm, dry night as the Sharks built a 13-0 advantage. Fly-half Curwin Bosch kicked two penalties and converted a brilliant try on debut by winger Werner Kok, which flanker Phepsi Buthelezi created with a hand-off and a one-hand pass. —AFP

## Rays oust Yankees, advance to face Astros in the MLS playoffs

## Brosseau smashes a solo home run in the eighth inning

**LOS ANGELES:** Mike Brosseau smashed a solo home run in the eighth inning Friday to give Tampa Bay a 2-1 victory over the New York Yankees and advance the Rays in the Major League Baseball playoffs. Brosseau bashed a 100-mph fastball off Yankees ace closing reliever Aroldis Chapman—the same pitcher who struck Brosseau in the head with a fastball last month—to deliver the decisive blow. "No revenge," Brosseau said. "We put that in the past. We came here to do what we do and move on."

Tampa Bay captured the best-of-five second-round series 3-2 and moved on to the best-of-seven American League

Championship Series against the Houston Astros that begins on Sunday. It's only the second time the Rays have reached the ALCS since their 1998 debut. They advanced to the 2008 World Series but lost to Philadelphia. The Los Angeles Dodgers and Atlanta Braves will meet in the best-of-seven National League Championship Series that begins Monday.

The NL and AL champions will meet in the World Series starting October 20 in Arlington, Texas. Aaron Judge smacked a solo homer in the fourth inning to put the Yankees ahead but Austin Meadows blasted his own solo homer in the fifth to lift the Rays level at

1-1. Both teams dug into the bullpen in the later innings as the game, and two seasons, hung on a knife's edge. Brosseau, unselected in the MLB Draft in a snub by all clubs before making the Rays roster last year, entered as a pinch-hitter for Tampa Bay's Choi Ji-man in the sixth inning and remained in the contest as the first baseman.

That set the stage for an emotional rematch in the eighth against Chapman, who struck Brosseau with a 101-mph fastball in a regular season game last month. Then, Chapman went on to strike out the American to complete a 5-3 win but both teams ran from the dugouts for a post-

game confrontation before cooler heads prevailed. This time, Brosseau fouled off a pair of 3-ball, 2-strike pitches to stay at the plate, then pounced on the 10th throw he faced from Chapman and smashed his first playoff homer over the left-field wall into the empty stands in San Diego, fans banned due to the coronavirus pandemic. "I was just trying to get a runner on and get the next guy up, but we knew hits weren't coming very often," Brosseau said. "I went up trying to find the barrel (of the bat) and luckily I got one. It felt good off the bat." Rays teammate Tyler Glasnow became emotional as he watched Brosseau battle Chapman and

then smash the decisive homer.

"He did an amazing job fouling off those pitches," Glasnow said. "To see him go out and do that, it's hard to put into words. It was unbelievable." Tampa Bay pitcher Diego Castillo, who struck out four, sent down the Yankees in order in the ninth to complete the victory and seal the series triumph. The Yankees wore the number 16 on the left sleeve of each jersey in tribute to legendary pitcher Whitey Ford, who died Thursday night at age 91 while watching New York in the playoffs. The left-hander is the winningest pitcher in Yankees history and played on six World Series champions. —AFP

## Andalucia Rally: Off-road legends and rookies are back to business

**KUWAIT:** The best rally-raid racers on the planet are coming to Spain to compete in the brand-new Andalucia Rally. There's a host of Dakar Rally champions in the pack as well as some intriguing rookies to keep an eye on when five days of off-road action get underway tomorrow. Expect a heavyweight tussle in the car category as Carlos Sainz (ESP), Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) and Stephane Peterhansel (FRA) engage in battle. This trio have won the Dakar a staggering 19 times between them as well as picking up a host of other honors, including WRC titles and Olympic medals!

"Despite the difficult time we were able to find some areas that we could improve on. The team has done a great job and I think we have become even better." - Carlos Sainz. Reigning Dakar champion Sainz will be at the wheel of a MINI John Cooper Works Buggy while Peterhansel takes control of the 4x4 MINI Rally which he drove to victory at last month's Baja Poland. Al-Attiyah will continue with the Toyota Hilux he has been helping to develop over the past seasons and brought to victory at the 2019 Dakar.

"It's always great to test ourselves against our Dakar rivals. Our target is to go fast and to win this race." - Nasser Al-Attiyah. There has been plenty of time for reflection for the Red Bull KTM Factory Team after they missed out on victory at the Dakar earlier this year, ending an unprecedented winning streak stretching back nearly two decades. The team take their place in the bike race at the Andalucia Rally with a firm focus on getting back

to winning ways.

"I'm really thankful that the organizers have managed to arrange this rally in Spain, and we get to go racing again. After all, it's what we love to do!" - Toby Price. Former Dakar champions Toby Price (AUS), Sam Sunderland (GBR) and Matthias Walkner (AUT) will all saddle up for the Red Bull KTM Factory Team in Spain. Also along for his first ride as part of the all-conquering KTM team will be new recruit Daniel Sanders (AUS).

"Testing has been going well and the bike is feeling good, so now hopefully a good result in Andalucia and then concentrate on Dakar." - Matthias Walkner. Racing in her homeland will be Laia Sanz (ESP) with a GasGas bike while CS Santosh (IND) will be onboard Hero hardware for the 1,354-kilometre rally in southern Spain. "Coming out of the last Dakar I had two broken ligaments in my hand and these injuries take a long time to recover from. To be coming back now after a long recovery and everything else that has been happening feels good." - Laia Sanz

In the side-by-side (SxS) contest there's another chance to catch the Red Bull Off-Road Junior Team in action. After setting the fastest time on six of the 12 SxS stages at the last Dakar, there's a solid platform in place for the drivers and their OT3 machines to kick on from. Mitch Guthrie Jr (USA) is back behind the wheel of his OT3 by Overdrive while Seth Quintero (USA) who just turned 18 last month and rallycross sensation Kevin Hansen (SWE) are both getting their first drive in Andalucia. 2019 Nitro Rally Cross winner Kevin will be standing-in for Blade Hildebrand (USA) while the American racer sits this one out to recover from his unlucky accident at Baja 500. "I'm going to come out swinging. We've been testing beforehand and I'm super happy with the car and



Carlos Sainz



Nasser Al Attiyah



Sam Sunderland



Stephane Peterhansel

very proud of the team." - Seth Quintero

All racers and all teams are targeting the Andalucia Rally as the key piece of preparation ahead of the 2021 Dakar in Saudi Arabia. In what has been a stop-start year for the competitors, now is the time for the best of the best to show that they have lost none of their speed. Keep up-to-date with

the entire Red Bull Desert Wings convoy on Red Bull Motorsports' social media: Red Bull Motorsport Instagram / Facebook/Twitter/Desert Wings Instagram. You're receiving this newsletter because you're subscribed to the Red Bull Desert Wings newsletter, our distribution service for inside stories covering our Red Bull rally-raid athletes.

## South Korean Kim grabs Women's PGA lead on birdie binge

**NEW YORK:** South Korea's Kim Sei-young, seeking her first major title, birdied five of her last six holes to seize a one-stroke lead after Friday's second round of the Women's PGA Championship. The 27-year-old from Seoul fired a five-under par 65, including an event record-tying 29 for the front nine, to stand on four-under 136 after 36 holes at Aronimink in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania.

"Just strategizing to attack the greens. I'd try to land it a little short so I can have some release, but it really helped me out," Kim said. "I tried to focus on my game. Honestly I didn't look at the leader-

board. I was in a good momentum so I just wanted to ride on that." Seventh-ranked Kim has had six top-five major finishes without a victory, her closest calls being a runner-up finish at the 2015 Women's PGA and a share of second at the 2018 Evian Championship.

Asked if she felt ready for a major win, Kim said, "It's always my goal." Lurking one stroke off the pace were Spain's Carlota Ciganda, Sweden's Anna Nordqvist and Americans Danielle Kang and Jennifer Kupcho. Kim began on the back nine and made bogeys at 11 and 12 to stumble back, but she answered with a birdie at the par-5 16th, then opened and closed the front nine with birdies around a run of four consecutive birdies starting with a 30-foot putt at the par-4 fourth.

## Finishing strong

"That really helped me with momentum and finishing strong," Kim said. "The wind fluctuated

on the back nine, so I struggled with my iron game, but when we entered the front nine, the wind slowed down and it was easier to attack with my irons. "I made a few three-putts, which I regret, but overall I had a good round."

Kupcho, who also fired a 65, was second to England's Mel Reid last week in Atlantic City. She returned to the irons that made her a college star but admits she didn't feel ready to push for her first LPGA title. "Going into last week, I was not prepared. I felt completely unprepared, and honestly, I felt the same way coming into this week," Kupcho said. "Not being prepared brings another challenge for me, and I think that's what helps me play well, just not feeling comfortable with the course."

Third-ranked Kang answered a bogey at the fourth with a birdie at the par-3 fifth, then followed a bogey at the par-3 eighth with a birdie at the par-4 12th and birdied the par-5 16th to match

the leaders. "There are a lot of opportunities that I gave myself but I didn't capitalize on them," Kang said. "But I made some good up-and-downs and some good birdies. It's always good to shoot in the 60s." Ciganda, another back-nine starter, birdied the par-4 12th from 20 feet and tapped in to birdie the par-5 16th but stumbled back to the pack with a bogey at the par-4 fourth.

"The game felt good. I played very solid," she said. "I had a good three, four chances at the end that I didn't make, but I think I am where I want to be for the weekend and very happy with the result." Nordqvist followed birdies at the second and ninth holes with bogeys at the fifth and 10th, then surged late with birdies at the par-3 14th and 16 to join the lead group. World number two Nelly Korda of the United States withdrew after an opening 71 due to a back injury. South Korean Lee Mi-rim withdrew with an injury after nine holes Friday. —AFP

Sports

# Algeria beat Nigeria, extend unbeaten run to 19 matches

## Morocco triumph 3-1 over a depleted Senegal

**JOHANNESBURG:** Algeria extended an unbeaten run to 19 matches with a 1-0 victory over Nigeria Friday in an international friendly between two of the top five ranked African countries. In another high-profile warm-up match behind closed doors ahead of 2021 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying next month, Morocco triumphed 3-1 over a depleted Senegal. Burkina Faso, Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania and Tunisia also won while 2021 Cup of Nations hosts Cameroon drew 0-0 against Japan.

Cup of Nations title-holders Algeria needed less than six minutes to score the goal in the Austrian town of Sankt Veit an der Glan that sank Nigeria in a rematch of the 2019 semi-final at the flagship African competition. Centre-back Ramy Bensebaini ventured forward for a corner and after heading the

ball downward, poked it into the net. Nigeria gave a debut to Frankfurt-born Kevin Akpoguma who, like Bensebaini, plays in the Bundesliga, and represented Germany at under-age level before switching his allegiance.

The defender is the latest of many Europe-born footballers to represent the African country where parents or grandparents come from. Algeria last lost in October 2018 away to Benin and now move to the Netherlands for a friendly against Mexico on Tuesday. Senegal, the top ranked African national team ahead of Tunisia, Nigeria, Algeria and Morocco, suffered a series of major withdrawals from the squad. Liverpool forward and 2019 African Footballer of the Year Sadio Mane tested positive for Covid-19 and injuries ruled out goalkeeper Edouard Mendy and defender Kalidou Koulibaly.

### Challenging task

So a challenging task in Rabat for the Senegalese became that much harder and they trailed by three goals before Ismaila Sarr converted an 88th-minute penalty. Selim Amallah put the Moroccans ahead after 10 minutes and Youssef en Nesry and Youssef el Arabi added to the score-sheet in the second half. On Tuesday, Morocco host a Democratic Republic of Congo team that will be smarting from a 3-0 drubbing by Burkina Faso in Moroccan city El Jadida while Senegal entertain Mauritania.

The Mauritians will travel south to neighboring Senegal boosted by a 2-1 win over Sierra Leone in Nouakchott, where Hemeya Tanjy fired in the 79th-minute winner. Mali shrugged off losing a number of players to injuries and positive coron-

avirus tests to wallop Ghana 3-0 in the Turkish resort city of Antalya. Hamari Traore put the Malians ahead inside three minutes and El Bilal Toure and Amadou Haidara netted early and late in the second half.

Tunisia were another nation to triumph 3-0 with all the goals against Sudan in Rades near Tunis coming during the first half. France-based captain Wahbi Khazri was involved in all the goals, scored by Seifedine Khaoui, Ali Maaloul and Anis Ben Slimane. In other friendlies, the Gambia edged Congo 1-0 in Portugal through an Assan Ceesay goal and a brilliant run and fierce shot from Cliff Nyakeya helped Kenya beat Zambia 2-1 in Nairobi. The coronavirus sidelined African national teams from last November until late September when Sudan won two friendlies against Chad. —AFP

## Drug, sex scandals mar Australian rugby league

**SYDNEY:** Australia's National Rugby League was rocked by twin scandals yesterday, with experienced centre Michael Jennings failing a drugs test and the son of legend Wendell Sailor charged with aggravated sexual assault. Jennings, who has played for both Australia and Tonga, was provisionally suspended after returning a positive A-sample for Ligandrol and Ibutamoren, both prohibited by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

The NRL said the Parramatta Eels player was tested on September 21 with the results coming through on Friday. Reports said he was doorknocked by Sport Integrity Australia agents at his home early yesterday, and his mobile phone and computer were seized. "Mr Jennings is prohibited from participating in any WADA compliant sport, including rugby league, while the provisional suspen-

sion is in place," the NRL added in a statement.

It ruled him out of yesterday's elimination final between the Eels and South Sydney. Under the sport's anti-doping policy, the 32-year-old, who is yet to comment publicly, has the option to have a B-sample analyzed. His club Parramatta said it was in contact with Jennings and "will continue to offer him and his family our full wellbeing support". Ibutamoren is a growth hormone while Ligandrol, an anabolic agent, helps build muscle. Australian relay world-record holder Shayna Jack also tested positive for Ligandrol ahead of last year's world swimming championships.

Meanwhile, police arrested St George Illawarra's Tristan Sailor, 22, at his home south of Sydney yesterday and charged him with aggravated sexual assault. He is the son of Wendell Sailor, who played both rugby league and union for Australia. He is accused of attacking a woman at a home in Sydney last week, a New South Wales police



This handout picture released by Rugby Australia shows Australia's players form a huddle before the captain's run in Christchurch ahead of the first Bledisloe Cup match. - AFP

statement said. Sailor was once rated one of the sport's most promising prospects but managed only five games for the Dragons since his debut last year, and was recently told his contract would not be

renewed. "The club is taking the matter very seriously and will continue to work with Tristan and all relevant authorities," the Dragons said. He was refused bail and is due to appear in court today. —AFP

## Virus stalking NFL ahead of week 5

**LOS ANGELES:** The NFL headed into week five of the 2020 season under a cloud of uncertainty as COVID-19 threatens to further disrupt a schedule already impacted by the first major outbreak of the disease. After a relatively smooth start to the season, where league safety protocols appeared to be working, the coronavirus has struck back with a vengeance in the past fortnight with two teams suffering multiple infections.

The most serious outbreak has swept through the Tennessee Titans, who confirmed a 23rd positive case on Thursday, raising the prospect that the team will be required to scratch Sunday's fixture with the Buffalo Bills. The New England Patriots, meanwhile, were nervously waiting to see if they have additional cases after a positive test for quarterback Cam Newton last week was followed by positives for cornerback Stephon Gilmore and tackle Bill Murray.

The Patriots were somewhat controversially cleared to take to the field to face the Kansas City Chiefs last weekend despite Newton's positive

case. Gilmore, who played in the game which was moved from last Sunday to Monday, was seen embracing Chiefs star quarterback Patrick Mahomes after the contest. The outbreaks have left the Titans and the Patriots forced to work remotely, with both team facilities shut down.

There was no word as yet, however, as to whether the Titans' game against the Bills will go ahead, along with the Patriots' scheduled fixture against the Denver Broncos. Patriots coach Bill Belichick said Thursday the health and safety of his players remained paramount. "There's nothing more important than the health of the team," Belichick said. "That's priority No 1.

### 'A lot of questions'

"When we feel like it's safe for everyone to come back, then we'll do that. I'm sure you have a lot of questions, and I have a lot of questions. "This is really more of a medical situation than a football situation, so we'll work through the decisions and input from the people in the medical field. "We have a lot of questions on our end, but for right now, yesterday and today, we're closed and we're going to work virtually to prepare for Denver and just take it day by day.

"I feel like we did everything that we could control. I think we did everything properly with the extra planes, the extra buses, the same-day



KANSAS CITY: Patrick Mahomes #15 of the Kansas City Chiefs makes a pass against the New England Patriots during the second half at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Missouri. —AFP

travel, etcetera, etcetera. There's multiple things we could list there." The Titans meanwhile could face sanctions from the NFL if it is determined the team knowingly broke league safety protocols. According to reports, a group of Titans players held an unauthorized practice at a Nashville high school last week, a day after being warned not to gather for in-person activities at the team's training facility or any other location. That could potentially leave the Titans open to severe punishment.

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell

warned in a memo sent to all 32 franchises this week that the league was ready to force teams to forfeit games or be doctored draft picks if they were found to have breached safety protocols which resulted in fixtures being postponed. "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," Goodell wrote. "Simply put, compliance is mandatory." —AFP

## Test rugby returns with Australia, NZ grudge match

**WELLINGTON:** New Zealand and Australia will play the first rugby Test since the pandemic today against a backdrop of disagreement and tension after chaos caused by the coronavirus opened up deep divisions. The All Blacks and the Wallabies will take to the field in front of a packed, largely facemask-free crowd in Wellington just under a year since their last games, at the World Cup in Japan. The on-pitch hostilities follow a torrid period this year when the two unions have quarreled over the Rugby Championship internationals and Super Rugby, whose 25-year run has come crashing to a halt.

The opening Bledisloe Cup Test, the first international rugby since Covid-19 halted the Six Nations in March, will be followed by a second

next week in Auckland, before the reformatted Rugby Championship starts in Australia on October 31. Among rugby's many changes since Japan last year, both teams have new coaches already looking ahead to the next World Cup in 2023.

The All Blacks are under Ian Foster, who took over after eight years as assistant to Steve Hansen, while the Wallabies turned to New Zealander Dave Rennie after Michael Cheika's departure. Foster said memories of last year's failed World Cup campaign have already been laid to rest by the three-time world champions. "We don't need that burden," Foster said. "This is about this team. "It's about looking at the foundations and making sure we set that in this Test and subsequent ones to make sure we can launch into the next period."

### 'We have to be aggressive'

The Wallabies' Rennie, a Wellington native, has never coached at Test level before, but he knows exactly what he wants from his team.

"We have to be really aggressive, to try to force them to kick or to turn over some pill," he said. After surviving on Zoom calls with coaches and players for part of the year, Foster

and Rennie get to launch their head-coach careers in front of a big crowd — days after New Zealand declared victory over its second wave of Covid-19. —AFP



WELLINGTON: New Zealand's TJ Perenara walks with the rugby ball during the captain's run in Wellington yesterday, ahead of the first Bledisloe Cup match. - AFP

### News in brief

#### Qatar to host East Zone games

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Qatar will host East Zone matches for Asia's Champions League after the West Zone games were successfully staged in the Gulf state following a long coronavirus hiatus, officials said Friday. The East Zone teams, which come from countries including Japan, China and Australia, will play their remaining matches in Doha from November 18 to December 13, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said. The venue for the single-leg final on December 19 is yet to be confirmed, however. The AFC has had to repeatedly change its calendar due to the virus. East-zone groups G and H had been scheduled to be played in Malaysia, which is currently battling a surge in virus cases. Asia's premier club tournament resumed last month in a bio-secure bubble in Qatar, which is also the host of the next World Cup in 2022. —AFP

#### DC United dumps Olsen

**WASHINGTON:** Major League Soccer doormat DC United relieved Ben Olsen of head coaching duties after 10 years in the post, naming assistant coach Chad Ashton as an interim manager. United own the worst record in the 26-team league at 2-9 with five drawn for 11 points, two adrift of FC Cincinnati and three behind Inter Miami. "It is now time for a change," said Olsen in a statement. "It's the right move. The club needs a new face and this is the right time for the club and also for me personally to move in a different direction." Olsen and the club he has spent two decades with are in talks to find him another role within the organization. "Ben has been a fabric of the DC United organization for more than two decades, including his role as head coach for the last 10 years, and we are forever grateful for his contributions and leadership," said United chief executive officer Jason Levien. —AFP

#### Rapids 4th match delayed

**NEW YORK:** A fourth Major League Soccer match involving the Colorado Rapids was postponed on Friday due to a Covid-19 outbreak that has closed the club's training facility for more than two weeks. The Rapids had their scheduled Saturday home game against the Los Angeles Galaxy postponed after one new coronavirus case in the Rapids player pool. The league, in consultation with state health officials and infectious disease experts, postponed the match to an undetermined date. Also postponed have been a planned Wednesday match against Los Angeles FC, a match last Sunday at Portland and a September 23 home match against Kansas City that was postponed to October 21. The Rapids, who are next set to visit Seattle on Wednesday, closed their training facility on September 24 and multiple players and staffers have tested positive since then, sending much of the organization into self-isolation. —AFP

#### Brazil score 5 against Bolivia

**SAO PAULO:** Roberto Firmino scored twice and Marquinhos and Philippe Coutinho also got on the scoresheet as Brazil hammered Bolivia 5-0 in their opening World Cup qualifier in Sao Paulo on Friday. Marquinhos put the home side 1-0 up with a header after 16 minutes before Firmino scored after 18 and 49 minutes, both times by getting on the end of low crosses into the penalty box. The fourth came after 66 minutes, when a glancing touch from Rodrygo deflected off defender Jose Maria Carrasco's shoulder and Philippe Coutinho completed the rout with a header seven minutes later. The top four teams in the 10-team South American group qualify directly for Qatar 2022 and the fifth-placed side go into an inter-regional playoff. Brazil now travel to Lima to face Peru on Tuesday, while Bolivia are at home the same day to Argentina, who opened their campaign with a 1-0 win over Ecuador on Thursday. —Reuters

#### Colombia overrun Venezuela

**BARRANQUILLA:** Colombia scored three goals in a superb first half to beat Venezuela 3-0 and get their 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign off to an impressive start at home in Barranquilla. Venezuela are the only side in South America never to have reached the World Cup finals and they showed why in a disastrous opening 45 minutes at a fan-free stadium on Colombia's coast. Duvan Zapata put the home side 1-0 up after 16 minutes when he slid in and finished off a delicious low cross from Juan Cuadrado. His Atalanta teammate Luis Muriel made it two nine minutes later when he scored with a first-time shot from 10 meters out. Muriel then got Colombia's third just seconds before the half time whistle, when he completed a rapid counterattack. Colombia took their foot off the pedal in the second-half minutes but Venezuela could make no impact and neither side could add to the scoreline in a calmer second 45 minutes. —Reuters

**14** Rays oust Yankees, advance to face Astros in the MLS playoffs



**14** S Korean Kim grabs Women's PGA lead on the birdie binge



**15** Drug, sex scandals mar Australian rugby league



## Heat stave off elimination

Butler's Herculean NBA effort lifts Heat over Lakers



FLORIDA: LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers and Tyler Herro #14 of the Miami Heat, Jae Crowder #99 of the Miami Heat and Jimmy Butler #22 of the Miami Heat fight for possession during the fourth quarter in Game Five of the 2020 NBA Finals on October 9, 2020. — AFP

ORLANDO: Jimmy Butler's triple-double propelled Miami to a 111-108 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Friday that kept the Heat alive in the NBA Finals. Butler scored 35 points with 12 rebounds and 11 assists and the Heat withstood a 40-point performance from Lakers superstar LeBron James to deny Los Angeles a title-clinching win in the NBA's quarantine bubble at Orlando. The Lakers still lead the best-of-seven series three games to two and can secure the title with a game-six victory on Sunday.

Game seven, if needed, will be on Tuesday. "We've got two more to get," said Butler, who played more than 47 minutes and delivered a stunning display of will and skill. "We just played hard, and just stayed with it," said Butler, who has insisted the Heat can become just the second NBA team to rally from a 3-1 deficit to win the championship series. The only other team to do it was the James-led Cleveland Cavaliers against Golden State in 2016.

"We got where we wanted to on offense, shared the ball like we always do," Butler said. "This is a game of runs-I think we withstood theirs." Butler drained two free throws with 16.8 seconds left to put Miami up by one. James, stymied under the basket, found Danny Green for a wide-open three-pointer with 7.1 seconds remaining but Green missed and Tyler Herro added two more free throws to seal it. "We got a hell of a look to win the game, to win the series," James said. "Didn't go down."

On a night that saw the Heat lead much of the way, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope's three-pointer with 6:18 remaining put the Lakers up 97-96 - their first lead since the first quarter. But the Heat dug in, Duncan Robinson's three-pointer putting Miami back up, 101-99 with 3:16 remaining, and it was a heavyweight slugfest the rest of the way, the lead changing hands seven more times.

"It was all about getting stops, getting what we wanted on offense," Butler said. "I still don't think we

rebounded the ball the way we were supposed to close out the game. "This one, it was a little bit of luck that Danny Green missed that one at the top of the key." Duncan Robinson added 26 points for Miami. Kendrick Nunn had 14, Bam Adebayo 13, Herro 12 and Jae Crowder 11.

### Lakers 'got to be better'

James added 13 rebounds and seven assists for the Lakers. Anthony Davis added 28 points and Caldwell-Pope scored 16. The frantic finish was overshadowed by a first quarter that saw eight lead changes. The tension was palpable when Los Angeles center Dwight Howard tangled with Butler and the two had to be separated less than five minutes into the contest, each receiving a technical foul. The Lakers got an early injury scare when Davis, battling Andre Iguodala for a rebound late in the first quarter, took an awkward hop and limped off the court.

The Lakers, trailing 25-24 through one quarter, said Davis had aggravated a right heel contusion. He stayed on the sideline, testing the injury as the game continued and returning in the second quarter. The Heat twice pushed their lead to 11 points in the second period, Nunn's putback layup making it 50-39 with 3:41 left in the first half.

Butler poured in 22 points in the first half on seven-of-10 shooting on the way to his second triple-double of the series. He's just the sixth player in NBA Finals history to have multiple triple-doubles in the title series, and just the second, along with James, to have multiple 30-point triple-doubles in the same Finals. James made sure the Lakers kept it close with 21 first-half points while Davis had 13 before the break. But the Lakers' bid for a record-equaling 17th NBA title-their first since 2010 - was at least temporarily denied. "We've just got to be better in game six and close the series," James said. — AFP

### Sordo wins four stages to lead the Rally of Sardinia

ALGHERO: Spaniard Dani Sordo won the last three stages and four overall to build a lead of more than 17 seconds in the Rally of Sardinia on Friday. The Hyundai driver has not scored a point in the World Rally Championship this season but won in Sardinia last year. He took the second stage and then grabbed the lead when he was fastest by 9.4sec on the fourth stage, the last one on the morning loop. He then won the two afternoon stages. "I am really happy to come back like this," Sordo said. "We pushed hard and made time with good tyre choices." "We need to stay like this tomorrow, it will not be easy." Finland's Teemu Suninen, who won the opening stage in his M-Sport Ford, lies second.

Sordo's Belgian team-mate Thierry Neuville, who stalled twice during the day, was second on the sixth and final stage of the day to take third from Frenchman Sebastien Ogier. In the driver championship, Ogier is second to Toyota team-mate Elfyn Evans. As leader, the Welshman had to open the road on Friday. — AFP

### Chapter 56 as Djokovic and Nadal eye history

PARIS: Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal meet for the 56th time today in a Roland Garros final blockbuster with history on the line for both men. World number one Djokovic is chasing an 18th Grand Slam title and a second French Open which would make him the first man in half a century to win all four Slams twice. Defending champion Nadal, the world number two, can win a 13th Roland Garros and 20th major which would tie the all-time men's record held by Roger Federer. Victory today would also give the 34-year-old Spaniard a 100th match win in Paris against just two defeats in 15 years.

One of those losses came against Djokovic in the 2015 quarter-finals, the last time the pair clashed on the crushed red brick surface of Court Philippe Chatrier. The Serb has won 37 matches in 2020 with his one defeat self-inflicted via his infamous default at the US Open. Stefanos Tsitsipas, who pushed Djokovic to five sets in a breathless semi-final, sees few flaws in the top seed's game. "He has reached almost perfection," said the Greek. The 22-year-old matched Djokovic when it came to all-out assault on Friday

night but at the crunch moments, the Serbian wall stood firm as the world number one saved 11 of 15 break points he faced.

Djokovic, 33, has a 29-26 edge over Nadal in their long-running rivalry. He has won 14 of their last 18 meetings and the last three at the Slams. However, the pair's most recent three matches on clay have all gone Nadal's way with Djokovic's last victory on the dirt coming in the Rome quarter-finals four years ago. At the French Open, Nadal has a 6-1 advantage, including wins in the 2012 and 2014 finals.

### 'Not my biggest match'

"This is the house of Rafa," said Djokovic, describing facing the Spaniard on clay as the sport's "biggest challenge". However, he insists that he has played far more significant finals and pointed to his first win over Nadal at a Slam at Wimbledon in 2011. "I don't think this is the biggest match that I have ever played in my life," he said. "In terms of importance, probably the first Wimbledon final that I actually played against him."

"Wimbledon was always the one that I wanted to win as a kid and dreamed of winning. That's probably the one that stands out." Djokovic also put his 2016 Paris final win over Andy Murray, which allowed him to celebrate a career Grand Slam, above the latest installment of his Nadal rivalry. "Every French Open final that I played was the match of my life before I actually won it." Despite his high praise for his opponent, Djokovic sees an advantage for him with the tournament being played in the autumn than its traditional spring and early summer slot. — AFP



This combination of pictures shows (up) Spain's Rafael Nadal and Serbia's Novak Djokovic playing. — AFP