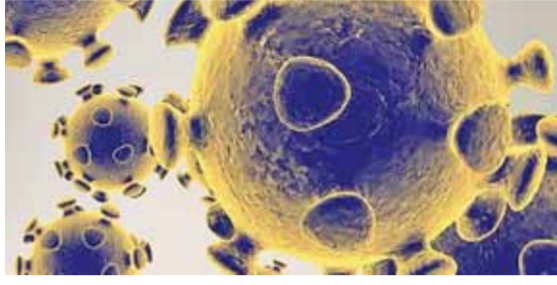




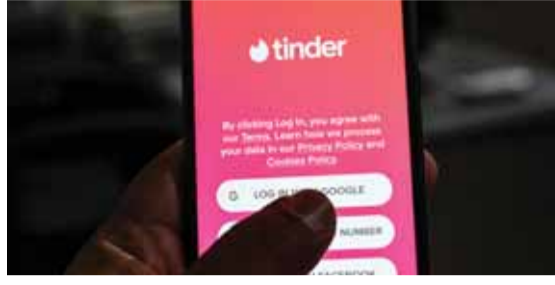
**4** Kuwait reports 6 deaths,  
777 new COVID-19 cases



**8** US auction theory pioneers  
win Nobel economics prize



**13** Swiping right: Slim pickings  
for Pakistan's online daters



**16** Lakers crush Heat to capture  
record-tying 17th NBA title



# Govt proposes instant fines for not wearing facemasks

## Appointment needed at cafes, gyms • Ban on camping, pitching tents

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet yesterday approved an amendment to the law to impose instant fines for people not wearing facemasks and not abiding by health guidelines as part of new restrictions to contain the spread of the coronavirus. The amendment will be sent to HH the Amir and to the National Assembly for approval and implementation.

The decision did not specify the amount of the fine or when it will be implemented. The United Arab Emirates, for example, imposes a 3,000

dirham (KD 250) fine for people not wearing facemasks. The Cabinet also decided during its weekly meeting that customers must make prior reservations to dine at restaurants and cafes or to visit sport clubs in order to avoid crowding.

The Cabinet also decided to ban desert camping and erecting tents in residential areas and chalets. The new measures come amid a rise in the number of new coronavirus cases reported in the country in the past few weeks. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah told the Assembly on Thursday that health conditions in

the country were alarming.

The Cabinet also decided to set up a special committee to oversee the implementation of health guidelines during the forthcoming Assembly elections, expected to be held in late November or early December. The decisions came after the Cabinet was briefed by Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah about health conditions in the country and efforts to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

The minister informed the Cabinet about the rise in the number of deaths, hospitalizations and

the number of patients in intensive care units. The Cabinet urged the public to strictly observe all health guidelines to prevent a new wave of COVID-19.

Government spokesman Tareq Al-Mazrem said since the end of June, 6,112 violations were issued against malls, markets and shops, while 484 orders to shut down shops were issued. But the Cabinet did not decide on any closures or partial curfews as has been reported in the local media over the past few days in a bid to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

## MoCI clamps down on smuggling of subsidized goods

**KUWAIT:** The ministry of commerce and industry has affirmed that distribution of subsidized monthly food rations is controlled by an accurate electronic system as accountants from 51 cooperative store outlets were referred to the public prosecution after discrepancies were discovered in the quantities of subsidized items during inventory.

The ministry's statement also came after Salmi border customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle out large quantities of subsidized powdered milk, rice and oil with an estimated value of tens of thousands of dinars in trucks heading to several Arab countries, according to a MoCI source.

Kuwait Supply Co distributes rations to cooperative societies, which in turn deliver the products to beneficiaries at their respective branches, the ministry said in a press release late Sunday. In case there is any shortage in the commodities, the officials of the concerned cooperatives face legal action without any financial burden to state funds.

Continued on Page 2



## Virus can last for 28 days on surfaces

**BRISBANE/HONG KONG:** The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 can survive on items such as banknotes and phones for up to 28 days in cool, dark conditions, according to a study by Australia's national science agency. Researchers at CSIRO's disease preparedness center tested the longevity of SARS-CoV-2 in the dark at three temperatures, showing survival rates decreased as conditions became hotter, the agency said yesterday.

The scientists found that at 20 degrees Celsius, SARS-CoV-2 was

"extremely robust" on smooth surfaces - like mobile phone screens - surviving for 28 days on glass, steel and plastic banknotes. At 30 degrees Celsius, the survival rate dropped to seven days and plunged to just 24 hours at 40 degrees Celsius. The virus survived for shorter periods on porous surfaces such as cotton - up to 14 days at the lowest temperatures and less than 16 hours at the highest - the researchers said.

This was "significantly longer" than previous studies which found the disease could survive for up to four days on non-porous surfaces, according to the paper published in the peer-reviewed Virology Journal. By comparison, Influenza A virus has been found to survive on surfaces for 17 days.

Continued on Page 2



MELBOURNE: This photo illustration shows three Australian banknotes yesterday as a study shows the coronavirus can survive on items such as banknotes and phones for up to 28 days in cool, dark conditions. — AFP

## Oman brings in 5% VAT in six months

**MUSCAT:** Oman yesterday announced the introduction of five-percent VAT on goods and services, to offset a slump in oil prices and an economic downturn exacerbated by coronavirus. The new tax, announced in a royal decree by leader Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, begins after 180 days in April 2021, state television said. Certain products and services will be exempt, including rent, basic foodstuffs, school fees and public transport.

Oman recorded an average annual

growth of nearly five percent between 2008 and 2016. But growth then dropped sharply - to 0.3 percent in 2017, 1.8 percent in 2018 and 0.5 percent in 2019 - amid struggling oil production. Oman, which is to cut oil production under Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) agreements, is the fourth country in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a traditional tax-free haven, to introduce Value Added Tax.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were the first to introduce five-percent VAT in 2018, with Bahrain following in 2019. Riyadh hiked VAT rates to 15 percent in May 2020, in an austerity program designed to generate extra revenue and control public spending. Oman has recorded 106,575 cases of COVID-19, including 1,046 deaths. — AFP



MUSCAT: Mask-clad Omanis sit in a seafront cafe in the capital yesterday amid the coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

## Bibi calls MBZ as cargo from Dubai arrives in Haifa

**ABU DHABI:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the UAE's Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan have spoken by phone to build on their countries' normalization accord, Sheikh Mohammed said in a tweet yesterday. In the call initiated by Netanyahu, the two leaders agreed the deal signed at the White House on Sept 15 "opens the way to a new era of cooperation", he wrote. They also discussed joint efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an official statement that coincided with an Israeli cabinet vote approving the Sept 15 agreement with the UAE, Netanyahu said he and Sheikh Mohammed would meet soon, without specifying a date. Netanyahu told the Israeli cabinet that he had spoken at the weekend with his "friend" Sheikh Mohammed, who is crown prince of Abu Dhabi. "I invited him to visit Israel, he invited me to visit Abu Dhabi, but before that we'll see here a delegation from the UAE, and another delegation of ours will go there," the prime minister said.

Continued on Page 2

## Images capture black hole devouring star

**PARIS:** Astronomers have captured the moment a supermassive black hole shredded a star the size of our Sun, releasing images yesterday showing the devastating process in unprecedented detail. Using telescopes from the European Southern Observatory (ESO), they were able to monitor light flaring from the process - known as a tidal disruption event - from a black hole just over 215 million light years from Earth.

They observed the star being physically torn apart as it was sucked into the black hole's giant maw. "The idea of a black hole 'sucking in' a nearby star sounds like science fiction," said Matt Nicholl, a lecturer and Royal Astronomical Society research fellow at the University of Birmingham, lead

author of yesterday's study. "But that's exactly what happens in a tidal disruption event."

When a star strays too close to a supermassive black hole, it is subjected to the phenomenal strength of the black hole's gravity. The star can be physically torn apart and its matter pulled into long strings, a process known as "spaghettification".

"When these forces exceed the star's cohesive force, the star loses pieces that rush into the black hole," Stephane Basa, a researcher from the Marseille Astrophysics Laboratory, told AFP. "This exceptional influx of matter produces intense electromagnetic emissions, which last for several months while the debris is digested." — AFP



This handout picture released yesterday shows an illustration depicting a star (in the foreground) experiencing spaghettification as it is sucked in by a supermassive black hole (in the background) during a "tidal disruption event". — AFP

## Local

# Kuwait's Amir keen on strengthening Gulf joint action: GCC Secretary General

## Sheikh Nawaf, Sheikh Mishal receive GCC chief at Seif Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is keen to support and strengthen Gulf Cooperation Council joint cooperation, GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf said after his reception by His Highness the Amir yesterday. In a press statement, Dr Hajraf and on behalf of the GCC staff congratulated His Highness the Amir on assuming

power, wishing His Highness continuing success.

"During the meeting, we listened to the directions of His Highness regarding the GCC's important role, recalling the great contributions His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah made in supporting and strengthening the Gulf joint cooperation," said Dr Hajraf. He praised the signifi-



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf.

cant role the late Kuwaiti ruler had played in the legacy of the regional bloc, alongside his relentless and sincere efforts to support its causes, raise its status and support its growth and development.

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 and His

Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah had separately received Dr Hajraf at Seif Palace yesterday. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah received Dr Hajraf, and the two sides discussed the latest regional and international developments. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf.



Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah meets GCC Secretary General Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf.

## Bahraini King congratulates Amir on naming Crown Prince

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a cable from Bahrain's King Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifah, 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 Bahraini King wished His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince success, and Kuwait growth and development under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In response, His Highness the

Amir Sheikh Nawaf sent a cable, expressing his appreciation and gratitude for the warm gesture.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable from Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifah, 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. In response, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf sent a cable, expressing his appreciation and gratitude for the kind words. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received a similar cable

from Bahrain's Prime Minister Prince Khalifah bin Salman Al-Khalifah, and thanked him for the kind sentiments.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received cables of congratulations from Yemeni President Abd-Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and Sierra Leone President Julius Maada Bio, in which they congratulated him on the occasion of assuming power, wishing His Highness the Amir continued success. His Highness the Amir sent cables back, in which he thanked and appreciated the positive messages, praising the close ties between Kuwait and both countries and wishing the presidents good health and welfare.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable of congratulations from Ecuador's President Lenin Moreno, in which he congratulated him on assuming power. His Highness the Amir, in a reply, appreciated

the heartfelt sentiments, embracing close ties between the two friendly countries and wishing the President good health, as well as progress and prosperity for the people of Ecuador.

In addition, His Highness the Amir received a cable of congratulations from Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega Saavedra and Vice President Rosario Murillo, in which they congratulated His Highness on the occasion of assuming power. Also in the cable, they congratulated His Highness's choosing of His Highness Sheikh Mishal as the Crown Prince, as Nicaragua is eager to continue strengthening ties with the State of Kuwait in various fields. In reply, His Highness the Amir expressed appreciation for the message, embracing close ties between Kuwait and Nicaragua, wishing both the president and vice president

good health, as well as continued progress and prosperity for their country.

Moreover, His Highness the Amir received a cable of congratulations from Malta's President George Vella, in which he congratulated His Highness on assuming power. President Vella also hoped for strengthening ties between the two countries. His Highness the Amir sent a cable back, in which he thanked and appreciated the heartfelt sentiments. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received a letter of congratulations from Pope Tawadros II of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria over His Highness's ascension to power, wishing the State of Kuwait further prosperity and to His Highness everlasting health. In reply, His Highness the Amir sent a letter appreciating the heartfelt sentiments, wishing Pope Tawadros everlasting good health. — KUNA

## Bibi calls MBZ as cargo from Dubai...

Continued from Page 1

The normalization deals signed the same day with both the United Arab Emirates and fellow Gulf state Bahrain "reflect the dramatic change in Israel's regional standing", he said. Netanyahu said he told the prince the Israel-UAE deal would be ratified this week by his government and then in parliament.

A source familiar with plans for the delegations' visits said Israeli representatives accompanied by

US officials will fly to Bahrain on Oct 18 and travel on to the UAE the next day before returning to Israel with a UAE team on Oct 20. Commenting on his conversation with Sheikh Mohammed, Netanyahu said: "We spoke about cooperation that we are promoting in investment, tourism, energy, technology and other spheres".

Netanyahu also hailed the economic boon the deal would offer Israelis, as the first cargo ship from Dubai's Jebel Ali port docked at Israel's port of Haifa, carrying a cargo of 15 containers along a shipping line between India, the UAE, Israel and the United States. Netanyahu said trade with the UAE was the "beginning of something huge". "Today a cargo ship came from Dubai. With goods. Goods that by the way are very cheap and will benefit Israelis," he said in a speech to parliament. — Agencies

## MoCI clamps down on smuggling of

Continued from Page 1

The ministry's inspectors verify the accuracy of cooperatives' inventories regularly and referred 51 co-op branches to the public prosecution recently, the statement said. There are clear-cut ministerial decrees that ban the sale of subsidized ration commodities to illegible persons or entities, whether inside or outside the country, it reminded. The ministry added that it is working with the ministry of social affairs to Kuwaitize administrative positions at all cooperative societies in line with state policy.

The ministry source told Al-Rai Arabic daily strict commerce ministry measures prevent smuggling, yet there will still be such acts - at least one percent. He said subsidized items are only dispensed according to the recipient's civil ID, while the ministry carries out regular inventories, and if there is any shortage, the cooperative's accountant will be referred to prosecution.

The source said some of those eligible to receive subsidized items sell or give them away to expats, warning that this is not allowed. The source said that there is coordination with the ministry of social affairs to Kuwaitize administrative jobs at branches of subsidized supplies to stop employing non-Kuwaitis there to control distribution and prevent waste, claiming that Kuwaitis are "more honest in administrative posts". The source said the presence of any discrepancy in stocks is tantamount to squandering of public funds. — Agencies

## Virus can last for 28 days...

Continued from Page 1

"It really reinforces the importance of washing hands and sanitizing where possible and certainly wiping down surfaces that may be in contact with the virus," said the study's lead researcher Shane Riddell.

Trevor Drew, director of the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, said the study involved drying samples of the virus on different materials before testing them, using an "extremely sensitive" method that found traces of live virus able to infect cell cultures. "This doesn't mean to say that that amount of virus would be capable of infecting someone," he told public broadcaster ABC. He added that if a person was "careless with these materials and touched them and then licked your hands or touched your eyes or your nose, you might well get infected upwards of two weeks after they had been contaminated".

Drew said there were several caveats including that the study was conducted with fixed levels of virus that likely represented the peak of a typical infection, and there was an absence of exposure to ultraviolet light, which can rapidly degrade the virus. Humidity was kept steady at 50 percent, the study said, as increases in humidity have also been found as detrimental to the virus.

"So in the real world results would likely be shorter than what we were able to show," Riddell told Reuters. Researchers said given that proteins and fats in body fluids can also sharply increase virus survival times, their study may help explain

the apparent persistence and spread of the virus in cool environments like meat-packing facilities.

According to the CSIRO, the virus appears to primarily spread through the air but more research was needed to provide further insights into the transmission of the virus via surfaces. "While the precise role of surface transmission, the degree of surface contact and the amount of virus required for infection is yet to be determined, establishing how long this virus remains viable on surfaces is critical for developing risk mitigation strategies in high contact areas," CSIRO's Debbie Eagles said.

The main message remains that "infectious people are far, far more infectious than surfaces", Drew told the ABC. "But nevertheless, it may help to explain why even when we get rid of the infectious people, we do occasionally get these breakouts again, sometimes even in a country which is considered to be free," he said.

Meanwhile, an affordable anti-microbial drug used to treat stomach ulcers and bacterial infections has shown promise in combatting the coronavirus in animals, scientists in Hong Kong announced yesterday. Researchers set out to explore whether metalodrugs - compounds containing metal that are more commonly used against bacteria - might also have anti-viral properties that could fight the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus.

Using Syrian hamsters as test subjects, they found that one of the drugs, ranitidine bismuth citrate (RBC), was "a potent anti-SARS-CoV-2 agent". "RBC is able to lower the viral load in the lung of the infected hamster by tenfold," Hong Kong University researcher Runming Wang told reporters yesterday as the team presented their study. "Our findings demonstrate that RBC is a potential antiviral agent for COVID-19." — Agencies

Local

# Indian minister visits Kuwait, offers condolences to Amir

## Pradhan holds talks with Al-Fadhel

By Sajeev K Peter

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Seif Palace India's Minister of Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan, who arrived in Kuwait on Sunday to offer condolences on behalf of the government and people of India on the sad demise of HH the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Pradhan delivered personal letters from Indian President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to HH the Amir, expressing their condolences and also extending congratulations and best wishes to HH Sheikh Nawaf on assuming responsibilities as the new Amir of Kuwait.

India's Prime Minister also conveyed congratulations and best wishes to HH Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on his assumption of responsibilities as the Crown Prince of Kuwait. HH the Amir praised the relations between Kuwait and India, and said he was keen on further cementing the ties for the best interests of the two countries, according to KUNA.

In an interview with Kuwait Times prior to his visit to Seif Palace, Pradhan praised the multifaceted leadership qualities of Sheikh Sabah. "HH the late Amir was a close friend of India, who played a leading role in strengthening our bilateral relations, and always took special care of the Indian community in Kuwait. The passing away of HH Sheikh Sabah has been received in India with profound sorrow and great grief. We stand by the State of Kuwait and its people in this hour of grief," he said.

India declared a day of national mourning on October 4, 2020 and Indians in Kuwait joined their 1.3 billion brothers and sisters in India in the national mourning by observing a two-minute silence as a



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets India's Minister of Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan. — Amiri Diwan photo



**India's Minister of Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel Dharmendra Pradhan**

mark of respect to the departed leader, he said.

### Voice of moderation

The minister said Sheikh Sabah has left behind an invaluable legacy as a leader. "His Highness was a leading votary of humanitarian action in the world. Under his wise and benevolent leadership, Kuwait gained recognition as the International Center for Humanitarian Action. He played an active and balanced role in the region and contributed immensely to regional peace, security and stability," Pradhan said.

"He was a voice of balance, reason and moderation. The persistent and peaceful endeavors of Sheikh Sabah towards dispute mediation and conflict resolution will always be dearly missed," he added. The visiting minister said His Highness the Amir and the entire leadership of Kuwait have always extended genuine care and affection

towards the Indian community in Kuwait. "I express my sincere gratitude to the leadership of the State of Kuwait for hosting the large Indian community in Kuwait," Pradhan said.

The minister said he is happy to see that Indians in Kuwait have a high reputation in the Gulf state, and that they have earned the respect and trust of the people of Kuwait. "I am also glad to learn that the hardworking nature and overall work ethic of our people is well appreciated by all here in Kuwait," Pradhan added.

Talking about Kuwait-India bilateral relations, Pradhan said: "Kuwait is an important country and a key partner for India in this very important region. It is also our extended neighborhood. India and Kuwait have an excellent relationship, stretching back several decades. Kuwait is a very important partner in India's economic transformation and the partnership is mutually beneficial."

The minister said he saw a huge potential to improve the relationship in areas including economy, trade, science and technology, tourism, etc. "Under the guidance of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the entire leadership of the State of Kuwait, I am quite confident that we will forge a New India and New Kuwait partnership by strengthening our bilateral engagements across all these domains," he concluded.

The visiting minister also met Kuwait's Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Ali Al-Fadhel and held wide-ranging discussions encompassing the entire gamut of bilateral relations. In their talks, they explored potential opportunities for enhancing bilateral cooperation in the domain of energy. Pradhan also visited the Embassy of India in Kuwait and paid a floral tribute at the Mahatma Gandhi statue. The minister returned yesterday after a two-day visit to Kuwait.

## Amir, Crown Prince receive officials



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



**His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.**



**His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah.**

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace yesterday. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, as well as Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah at Seif Palace. —KUNA

### News in brief

#### Amir receives condolences

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday received cables of condolences from Governor General of Canada Julie Payette, President of the Central African Republic Faustin-Archange Touadera, Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno, Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein, Saudi prince Saud Bin Abdulmohsin Al-Saud, Sierra Leone President Julius Maada Bio and Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa over the sad passing of late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir sent cables in reply, expressing gratitude on the heartfelt sentiments and wishes of good health. — KUNA

#### Kuwait, Norway discuss ties

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah received a phone call yesterday from Norwegian Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen, regarding bilateral ties and issues of common interest. The call also dealt with enhancing cooperation towards confronting COVID-19 in addition to regional and international developments. — KUNA

## Medical evacuation plane arrives from Thailand

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Defense Ministry announced yesterday the arrival of a medical evacuation air plane which is affiliated to the air force, boarding several patients who were delegated to receive treatment in Thailand. The Ministry stated in a press release that the evacuation plane was equipped with the latest medical equipment and staff to look after patients during their return trip. All medical tests were performed to all passengers the minute of departure, the Ministry added. Furthermore, it also said that all patients have been transported to Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital and some other hospitals. This trip was under the supervision and instructions of Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Army Lieutenant General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, who was on the top of the patients' receiving team, accompanied by Chief of Medical Services Authority in the Ministry of Defense Dr Abdullah Mishal Al-Sabah, and some ministry's officials. — KUNA

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# Social distancing hard to follow on public buses in peak hours

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: It's been nearly two months since public transport was allowed to operate again in Kuwait while adhering to strict health measures to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. While wearing facemasks and maintaining social distancing are still required to ride on public buses, the demand for public transport limits the options for social distancing onboard during peak times. But social distancing measures remain in place during slower periods.

Several passengers have complained that some bus drivers tend to ignore health guidelines during peak hours in favor of picking up as many passengers as possible. "I always ride bus number 66X from Salmiya to Farwaniya, and I have noticed the drivers don't care at all if the buses are full. They still accept passengers and don't care about social distancing," said Maricel, a regular public transport user. She said during rush hours from 6 am to 8 am and from 6 pm to 8 pm, buses are filled to capacity.

"No social distancing and no police stopping them as well. The problem inside the bus is that some of the passengers are not wearing facemasks - yes they have a mask on their faces, but they don't wear it properly; they put it on their chin allowing them to breathe freely and release the virus if they have it. I have observed this many times and that is why when in the bus, I never remove my facemask," she said.

This reporter traveled by bus from Kuwait City to Salmiya and from Salmiya to Hawally during slower hours and noticed many buses were half empty and people were strictly observing social distancing. "Thank God my work starts at 2 pm, so I



KUWAIT: Photo shows social distancing observed on public buses. — Photo by Ben Garcia

normally ride the bus from 1 pm onwards and back home at 9 pm, so I never encounter rush hours. So I am safe," he said.

On Aug 18, 2020 - after a five-month absence due to coronavirus restrictions - public buses returned to the streets. But along with the return of buses was a 50-fils increase in minimum fare across the board. Public buses were told to strictly implement health guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Seats in buses have stickers with a message to leave them empty to observe a two-meter distance between passengers.

Kuwait Public Transport Company (KPTC) has come up with a slogan 'Together We Can Go Back to Public Transport Safely' that is plastered at its stations and bus stops. Some stickers pasted at the

main depot in Mirqab remind passengers on ways to be safe while using public transportation. The stickers also remind passengers that in case they are sick or have high fever, they must not use public transportation and stay at home instead. They also seek the cooperation of all passengers to not underestimate this pandemic.

Besides KPTC which is owned by the government, there are two more private bus operators in Kuwait - City Bus and Kuwait Gulf Link. In 2016, usage of public transport was 2 percent, a drop from 5 percent in 2006, while private car usage increased by 65 percent between 2006 and 2016. Private cars make up 80 percent of vehicles on the road, with around 1.6 million cars, according to statistics from the interior ministry.

## News in brief

### MPs propose amendments to COVID bailout

KUWAIT: MPs Essa Al-Kandari, Adel Al-Damkhi and Osama Al-Shaheen submitted a proposed amendment to the law supporting and guaranteeing financing of local banks for customers affected by the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic. The proposal stipulates that in reference to the said law which was approved by the Assembly in its first reading, the following amendments are proposed:

- 1- Ensuring that citizens who own small- and medium-sized businesses will benefit from it.
- 2- Financing should comply with Islamic sharia.
- 3- Canceling the maximum financing total from KD 3 billion to what suits the need of small and medium businesses owners.

### Flu vaccines

Seasonal flu vaccines will be available in mid-October at preventive health centers. Al-Anbaa local daily reported. Informed sources said all health authorities are urging people to get the vaccine, particularly those at high risk such as the elderly, those suffering from chronic diseases, pregnant women, children and health-care professionals. The sources said distribution of the vaccine will start on Oct 15.

### Expat employees

The education ministry announced it will no longer allow expat employees to transfer to work in the private sector. The ministry's move follows a decision issued earlier by the Public Authority for Manpower banning the transfer of government workers to the private sector as part of the government's plan to dismiss 50 percent of expats working in the public sector.

## Firemen tackle Mangaf blaze

KUWAIT: Firefighters extinguished a blaze that started in the basement of a Mangaf building Saturday night. The flames started in sponge and consumer products that were stored in the basement. No injuries were reported, and an investigation was opened to determine the cause of the blaze, Kuwait Fire Force said in a statement.

### Gamblers caught

Police arrested four men for gambling in a Capital governorate area. The Interior Ministry said in a press statement that the Asian men were

arrested with KD 197, five mobile phones and a gambling board. They were sent to concerned authorities for further legal action.

### Smuggling foiled

Northern ports customs officials foiled an attempt to smuggle tobacco leaves and paan (betel) leaves hidden between robes in a container that arrived from an Asian country. Officers who searched the container found nearly 250 large bags containing nearly 120,000 packets of the illicit products.

### Search for conman

Police are looking for a suspect who is accused of conning a man by making him a partner in an online project that turned out to be fake. The suspect took KD 4,000 from the citi-



KUWAIT: Firefighters seen outside a Mangaf building where a blaze was reported.

zen before disappearing. The Kuwaiti man had told Jahra police that he agreed with the suspect to take the project online to save time and money, and gave him the funds as a partner.

But the suspect, an expatriate, vanished and did not answer his calls. His phone was later switched off, according to the complainant. Investigations are underway.

## Kuwait reports 6 deaths, 777 COVID-19 cases

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday reported 777 new COVID-19 infections, taking the total to 111,893, while the death toll surged to 664 after confirming

new six fatalities during the last 24 hours, the health ministry said. The number of people hospitalized with the virus stands at 7,427; 139 of whom are in intensive care units, said the ministry's spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, adding that 6,450 swab tests were conducted in the past 24 hours out of a total of 788,705 so far. Some 534 people recovered from the virus in the last 24 hours to raise the total to 103,802, the ministry had earlier said. Urging the public to be mindful of health precautions, Dr Sanad said following social distancing rules was the only way to halt the spread of the virus. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: Awatef Al-Salman from the International Islamic Charity Organization receives a donation from Fawzy Al-Thunayan, GM Board Affairs at ABK, in the presence of Amani Al-Essa and Abdullah Al-Awadhi from the International Islamic Charity Organization and Sahar Al-Therban from ABK.

## ABK sponsors disability authority's national campaign

KUWAIT: As part of its continued commitment to foster an inclusive environment and empowered society, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) sponsored the Kuwait Public Authority for Disability Affairs' (PADA) national campaign. The campaign sheds light on the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on those with special needs.

In line with its primary mission to protect the rights of special needs individuals, PADA's campaign will help families with special needs through this challenging period. It is built on three pillars: rehabilitation, education and entertainment, providing treatment plans and solutions for the fami-

lies, supporting them to overcome the psychological and social challenges of the pandemic.

ABK is committed to Kuwait and the community and will continue to drive inclusivity and empowerment across the country as part of its corporate social responsibility outreach programs. As a firm believer of creating an inclusive, social and sustainable environment ABK will participate in the second recruitment campaign organized by PADA which is scheduled to be held in early 2021. In fulfillment of the bank's continuous efforts to achieve the highest rate of satisfaction for people with disabilities in all areas, ABK regularly holds sign language training courses for branch staff and has a total of 43 fully trained that serve its customers with hearing impediments across seven branches.

Through its collaboration with various organizations, ABK reinforces its commitment to playing an active role in supporting the country's agenda to achieve the full inclusion of People with Disabilities in society.



Displaced Syria civilians long for home a year on

China's Qingdao orders city-wide testing after new COVID-19 infections

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## Karabakh ceasefire fails to stick

Armenia, Azerbaijan clash as Russia urges halt

**STEPANAKERT, Azerbaijan:** Russia yesterday urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to immediately start observing a ceasefire agreed over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region as intense fighting between the two Caucasus rivals cast fresh doubt over the accord. Armenia and Azerbaijan have for the last two weeks engaged in bitter clashes over Nagorno-Karabakh, a breakaway region of Azerbaijan controlled by Armenians after a 1990s war and whose independence is recognised by no other state.

The fighting, the worst since a 1994 ceasefire, has sparked fears of a regional conflict with Turkey backing Azerbaijan, Armenia seeking to pull ex-Soviet ally Russia in on its side and Iran looking on warily. After 11 hours of talks between the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in Moscow, the two sides agreed early Saturday to a humanitarian ceasefire.

But repeated clashes have so far made a mockery of the truce deal, with both sides yesterday accusing the other of repeated violations. "We expect that the decisions that have been adopted will be rigorously observed by both parties," said Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow after hosting his Armenian counterpart Zohrab Mnatsakanyan.

He said the truce - whose immediate aim was to exchange prisoners and the bodies of people killed - had to be implemented on the ground and work was underway to ensure verification mechanisms were in place. Lavrov said he believed the "all-night vigil" that clinched the ceasefire would "not be in vain" and that the issue could be resolved on the ground "in the nearest time".

### Mutual accusations

An AFP correspondent in the Azerbaijani town of Barda not far from the front line heard thumping echoes of shelling yesterday morning and the noise intensified further in the afternoon. In Karabakh's main city of Stepanakert, an AFP photographer heard the sounds of shelling from the direction of the town of Hadrut. "Armenian armed forces, which did not comply with the humanitarian truce, repeatedly tried to attack the positions of the Azerbaijan army," the



STEPANAKERT: An elderly man sits in a playground in front of an apartment building yesterday during the ongoing military conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh. —AFP

Azerbaijani defense ministry said. It said a "large number of enemy forces" had been destroyed as well as one T-72 tank and three Grad multiple rocket launchers.

Armenian defense ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanyan said Azerbaijan was "now intensively shelling the southern front". Armenia said Karabakh forces had shot down an Azerbaijani fighter jet but the claim was dismissed as "nonsense" by the Azerbaijani defense ministry. The 1990s war - which ended with the 1994 ceasefire that did not present a long-term solution to the conflict - resulted in the deaths of about 30,000 people.

Nearly 500 people including more than 60 civilians, have been killed in the latest fighting since last month, according to a tally based on tolls given by both sides. Analysts have long warned that Nagorno-Karabakh was the most combustible of the frozen conflicts left over

after the fall of the Soviet Union, with Azerbaijan vowing to regain control of the territory and Armenians insisting they would never cede ground. The EU's diplomatic chief Josep Borrell said on Sunday he was concerned by "reports of continued military activities, including against civilian targets, as well as civilian casualties" in violation of the ceasefire.

### Turkish support?

The so far fruitless, decades-long search for a settlement over Karabakh has been overseen by the Minsk Group of world and regional powers chaired by senior diplomats from France, Russia and the United States. Mnatsakanyan was due to meet the Minsk Group co-chairs in Moscow after his discussions with Lavrov. Renewed fighting has stoked fears of a full-blown war embroiling Turkey, which strongly backs Azerbaijan and has been accused by Paris and

Moscow of sending pro-Ankara Syrian militiamen to help Baku.

Lavrov said yesterday that his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu had in telephone talks expressed his support for the Moscow ceasefire deal. Russia has a military base in Armenia and counts Yerevan as an ally in the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). However the Kremlin has kept its distance from Armenian encouragement to become involved, saying that the CSTO treaty does not extend to Karabakh.

Iran, which has warm relations with Armenia and is wary of Baku's military cooperation with Israel, has also expressed alarm over the reports of Syrian militia being sent to Azerbaijan. Iran's foreign ministry expressed regret "over the violation of the announced ceasefire", urging both sides to resume talks. —AFP

## Iran says 'historic' US defeat close

**TEHRAN:** Iran yesterday said the US was facing a "historic" defeat as an arms embargo against Tehran is to be lifted within days despite Washington's bid to have it extended. Addressing the issue at a news conference, foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh also lashed out at the "insanity" of the latest US sanctions against banks in the Islamic republic. On Sunday the "historic defeat of the United

States will be realized, and that came to be despite its attempts, trickery and extrajudicial moves," Khatibzadeh said. "Iran again showed that the United States is not as all-powerful as it says," he added. The embargo on the sale of arms to Iran is due to start expiring progressively from Oct 18 under the terms of a UN resolution that blessed the 2015 nuclear deal between the Islamic republic and world powers.

Washington suffered a setback in August when it failed to win support from the United Nations Security Council to indefinitely extend the embargo. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the nuclear deal in 2018 before reimposing US sanctions on Iran. Since then, the US has slapped addi-

tional sanctions on Iran as part of a campaign of "maximum pressure", with the latest on Thursday concerning 18 banks. "We used to say they are addicted to sanctions, but now they have reached insanity," Khatibzadeh said. The spokesman added that the excessive use of sanctions had caused the Americans to "cannibalize" themselves, as well as prompted other countries to find alternatives to the US dollar. The US claims that transactions involving humanitarian goods such as food and medicine are exempt and that sanctions are "directed at the regime". Yet statements from experts and rights groups indicate the sanctions have had dire humanitarian consequences and caused suffering for the people of Iran. —AFP

## Mumbai gets power back after outage

**MUMBAI:** Millions went without power in India's financial capital Mumbai and surrounding areas for hours yesterday, after a grid failure triggered its first major blackout in more than two years. The outage stranded thousands of train passengers, disrupted online college exams and affected mobile telephone services before power was restored to most parts of the city of some 20 million.

The grid failure was caused by "technical problems" during maintenance work, the energy minister of Mumbai's home state of Maharashtra said. In mid-2018, a fire at a transformer sparked similar power cuts in the city and its suburbs. Throughout yesterday's breakdown, Mumbai's international airport and the country's two main stock exchanges located in the city, the National Stock Exchange and BSE, operated normally, their spokespeople said.

"Power supply to all essential services in Mumbai, suburbs ... have been restored. Non-essential services will also be restored shortly," Maharashtra energy minister Nitin Raut said on Twitter. The government-run Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport agency, Adani Power Ltd and Tata Power Co Ltd - the three main



MUMBAI: Passengers walk on a railway track after trains got stranded due to a major power cut in several areas after grid failure yesterday. —AFP

suppliers to Mumbai - had all been affected by the outage that extended to hospitals, many of which are treating COVID-19 patients.

Hospitals and other institutions in India have over the years banked on emergency diesel power generators as a backup due to frequent outages caused by demand outstripping supply. The situation has improved in the big cities but the countryside still has to live with frequent power cuts. Mumbai's trains, which are generally packed and move more than seven mil-

lion people a day to their offices and factories, have resumed operations after more than two hours of inactivity due to the power failure.

Train services in the city have been curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and they are carrying far fewer passengers than usual. Still, social media was splashed with pictures of people stranded inside lightless trains and in railway stations. The Times of India said final-year online exams across Mumbai colleges have been postponed due to the blackout. —Reuters

## 'Five Eyes' alliance demands access to encrypted apps

**WASHINGTON:** The "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance demanded Sunday that tech companies insert "backdoors" in encrypted apps to allow law enforcement agencies the access they say they need to police online criminality. The top justice officials of the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand said in a statement that the growth of end-to-end encrypted apps that make official oversight impossible - like Signal, Telegram, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp - "pose significant challenges to public safety".

"There is increasing consensus across governments and international institutions that action must be taken," they said. "While encryption is vital and privacy and cyber security must be protected, that should not come at the expense of wholly precluding law enforcement, and the tech industry itself, from being able to act against the most serious illegal content and activity online."

They called on tech companies to "embed the safety of the public in system designs," providing access to law enforcement "in a readable and usable format". It was the strongest call yet for programmers to include "backdoor" access to encrypted communications programs. India and Japan, which cooperate in intelligence with the Five Eyes group, added their names to the statement. Law enforcement globally has complained of the difficulty encrypted communications poses to criminal investigations. But end-to-end encryption also offers protection to all sorts of activities from business to political dissent. Pro-privacy advocates say encoding the means for law enforcement to access a user's communications can endanger democracy activists and empower dictatorial governments.

Pressure has built in recent years in the US and Europe to force the makers of encryption apps to provide access to law enforcement. According to the Electronic Frontier Foundation, which advocates for privacy on the internet, European countries have moved closer to regulating such apps. In an article last week, the EFF said that recently leaked European Union documents indicate a plan to introduce anti-encryption laws forcing backdoor access to the European Parliament "within the next year". It would be "a drastically invasive step," EFF said.

The Five Eyes statement says that its proposal would require safeguards and oversight so that authorities cannot take advantage of their access without cause. They justified the need based on the prevalence of child sexual abuse material on the Internet. In the United States, most prominent cases in which law enforcement said it was stymied by encrypted devices and communications have been related to violent extremism. —Reuters



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## International

# Claiming COVID-19 immunity, Trump hits election trail again

## White House race enters its critical final weeks

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump is launching a campaign marathon, holding rallies in three key swing states over the next few days as his White House race against surging rival Joe Biden enters its critical final weeks. The Republican leader will hold a rally in Florida, followed by Pennsylvania and Iowa-states all crucial to clinching a victory on November 3.

Trump will likely try to galvanize his electoral base by touting his nominee for Supreme Court justice, Amy Coney Barrett. The Republican-controlled Senate will begin hearings for the 48-year-old judge, whose confirmation-of which there is little doubt-will shift the nation's highest court firmly to the right for generations.

Trump's doctors gave him the all-clear Saturday to return to the campaign trail after he was ruled no longer a coronavirus transmission risk, and on Sunday he said while calling in to a campaign event that he tested "totally negative." But he has yet to be declared virus-free, and his immunity claim is unproven.

"It looks like I'm immune for, I don't know, maybe a long time and maybe a short time, it could be a lifetime, nobody really knows, but I'm immune," Trump told the Fox News show "Sunday Morning Futures."

"The word 'immunity' means something, having really a protective glow." So now you have a president who doesn't have to hide in a basement like his opponent," Trump added-in a jab at Democratic challenger Biden, who has taken a far more cautious approach to campaigning during the pandemic.

But it is not yet clear to what degree contracting Covid-19 confers immunity, with early studies suggesting a few months while newer ones have indicated it could last longer. Twitter on Sunday

hid a tweet from Trump in which he claimed he was immune, saying the post violated its rules about misleading and potentially harmful misinformation. The tweet was still visible once users clicked through the warning.

### Trailing in polls

Trump, 74, was treated with an experimental antibody cocktail made by Regeneron that may give immunity for just a few months when taken as a treatment rather than as a vaccine. "In some cases, vaccines can last for decades. (But) if you get it in the form of natural immunity, that isn't known yet," Regeneron CEO Leonard Schleifer told CBS's "Face the Nation" on Sunday.

"If you get it in our vial, if you will, that's probably going to last you for months." Badly trailing Biden with just weeks until the November 3 vote, Trump has been counting the days until he can hit the trail again. During his phone interview on Fox News, Trump suggested that his White House rival could himself be sick. "If you look at Joe, he was coughing yesterday horribly and grabbing his mask, as he's coughing," Trump said. "And I don't know what that was all about, and it didn't get much press."

### 'Never endorsed a candidate'

The Biden campaign has been publishing daily coronavirus tests for their 77-year-old candidate since Trump tested positive on October 1 — landing him in a military hospital for three nights and derailing his campaign. There has been less transparency surrounding Trump's own state of health, with his medical team repeatedly refusing to say when he last tested negative for the virus. That has fueled suspicion that he may not have been tested for several days prior to his diagnosis.

### 'Irish soul'

The mural was raised by a band of locals last month, and Ballina is twinned with Scranton, Pennsylvania, where Biden was born in 1942. The 77-year-old politician has visited twice-first in 2016 when crowds turned out to see president Barack Obama's deputy.

In 2017 he came back and turned the first sod for a new regional hospice—a cause near to his heart after his son Beau's death from cancer two years earlier. Biden wrote that when he dies, "northeast Pennsylvania will be written on my heart". "But Ireland will be written on my soul." He is mining a rich tradition of American statesmen touting Irish heritage. In the 20th century, John F. Kennedy was most closely tied to the "Emerald Isle", and had to overcome anti-Irish, anti-Catholic prejudice to win the White House. But others including Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama have all claimed ancestral links to Ireland.

### 'Soft power'

Ten percent of Americans claim Irish heritage—a 31-million-strong bloc vastly larger than the five-million population of Ireland itself. Those links helped give Washington an intermediary role in resolving the 30-year "Troubles" in Northern Ireland, a sectarian conflict that killed 3,500 in Ireland and the British province itself, before it largely ended in 1998. Lately, Britain's Brexit withdrawal

from the European Union has threatened the cohesion promised by Northern Ireland's Good Friday Agreement. US politicians have stepped in, warning London that a post-Brexit UK-US trade pact could be at risk if the peace is undermined. Their alarm has reportedly been stoked by energetic briefing by the Irish embassy in Washington. —AFP

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### 'Like a grave'

The hardest part for Sharmoukh is watching her three daughters grow up in the camps. "I wonder about my daughters' future if things stay this way," she said inside their emergency shelter, her children gathered around her on a mat. "When they grow up, how will they feel when they leave the camp and see how other people are living?"

She is most worried about her five-year-old daughter Roslyn, who is paralyzed in the legs and uses a wheelchair, from which other children sometimes push her to the ground. "I try to keep her

between Cyprus and the Greek island of Crete. Greece claims rights over the waters around its island of Kastellorizo but Turkey says its longer coastline makes the territory a legitimate area for its vessels to explore.

The Turkish navy said the Oruc Reis ship will carry out activities in the region, including the south of Kastellorizo, until October 22 in a message sent to the maritime alert system NAVTEX late on Sunday.

The vessel will be joined in the latest "seismic survey" mission by two other ships called Ataman and Cengiz Han, the message said. Turkish Energy Minister Fatih Donmez delivered a defiant message via Twitter yesterday that Turkey "will continue to search, dig and protect our rights".



A contestant dressed as President Trump participates in a Trump campaign rally named "Trumpfest" at Rocky Point Park in Warwick, Rhode Island on Sunday. Many supporters dressed in political campaign clothing and waved flags while others dressed in festive costumes to take part in a political costume contest. —AFP

Covid-19 has killed more than 214,000 people in the United States, but the president has urged Americans not to fear the virus. A reelection ad that lauds Trump's handling of the outbreak was criticized by top government scientist Anthony Fauci, who said a clip was edited to make him seem to endorse the president's response to the pandemic.

"In my nearly five decades of public service, I have never publicly endorsed any political candidate," Fauci, the longtime director of the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases, said in a statement sent to AFP. Trump defended the clip, and his handling of the pandemic, and

rebutted the doctor's criticism. "They are indeed Dr. Fauci's own words. We have done a 'phenomenal' job, according to certain governors," the president wrote in a tweet.

Biden has slammed Trump's coronavirus response, on Sunday tweeting: "In January, I said President Trump was the worst possible leader to deal with a public health crisis. And everything we've been through in the months since has proven that to be true."

Barack Obama's former vice-president is currently close to 10 points ahead in national polls with a solid lead in some key battleground states. —AFP

## Irish locals show colors in Biden's ancestral home

BALLINA, Ireland: Thousands of miles east of the White House in Ireland, a pop-art portrait of US presidential candidate Joe Biden towers over his ancestral hometown of Ballina. County Mayo.

In the town on Ireland's rugged Atlantic coast, the Democrat's distant relatives are thrilled to have one of their own bidding for America's highest office. "Obviously we're 100 percent behind Joe Biden," Laurita Blewitt, the former vice-president's third cousin, told AFP. "We've got that family connection and we've got that friendship and relationship with him," the 37-year-old said.

Biden's family roots run deep in Ireland, with a heritage described as "roughly five-eighths Irish" by genealogist Megan Smolensky. She has traced his lineage to east-coast County Louth and Ballina—a town of 10,000 people, which is dotted with brightly colored shopfronts and bisected by the River Moy.

In 1851, Biden's great-great-grandfather Edward Blewitt joined the legions of Irish fleeing famine and poverty for a fresh start in New York.

## A year on, displaced Syria civilians long for home

HASAKEH, Syria: The five-month-old baby girl of Wadhwa Sharmoukh has only lived in a tent because Turkish troops and their Syrian proxies captured her family's hometown in northern Syria from Kurdish forces a year ago. She was born in a dusty camp crowded with civilians who fled their towns and villages when Ankara's October 2019 offensive seized a 120-kilometre (70-mile) long strip of land on the Syrian side of its southern border.

"My five-month-old daughter Berivan was born in the camps. She has never seen a home. She has just been squeezed into a tent," she told AFP in the settlement in the northeastern province of Hasakeh.

"What kind of life is that, of a child born and raised in a tent?" asked the 29-year-old woman, an Arab from the town of Ras al-Ain. Sharmoukh and her family are among tens of thousands who have been forced out of their homes and into tented set-

## Turkey restarts Mediterranean Gas exploration

ANKARA: Turkey will redeploy the research ship at the center of an energy row with Greece to the eastern Mediterranean, a decision slammed by Athens as a "direct threat to peace".

The row over gas exploration in the eastern Mediterranean saw the two NATO countries stage rival military drills in August in strategic waters

### News in brief

#### 8 die in Nigeria building crash

LAGOS: Eight people died when a building collapsed in Nigeria's densely populated economic hub Lagos, the emergency services said yesterday. The cause remains unknown but building collapses are common in Africa's most populous country, where millions live in dilapidated properties and construction laws are routinely ignored. "Unfortunately, eight victims were recovered dead, six adult males and two females" the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) tweeted after the collapse on Sunday. Ten people were severely injured and taken to hospital, while 10 others were slightly injured, the agency added. The incident happened at a building under construction in Ikoyi, a wealthy area of Lagos. "The cause of collapse is yet to be ascertained but efforts are presently ongoing by LASEMA and other responders towards salvaging the situation," the city's emergency services said. —AFP

#### 31 held in UK abuse case

LONDON: Police in Britain said yesterday they had arrested 31 suspected online child abusers and seized more than 300 phones, laptops and other items during a recent week-long operation. Officers from a unit dedicated to tackling online child sexual abuse and exploitation, which now features around 200 specialist officers, executed 91 search warrants during the operation across the British capital. The raids took place between September 28 and October 3, with 100 children "protected" as a result, London's Metropolitan Police said. The force added it is now examining tens of thousands of child abuse and exploitation images on phones, tablets, and laptops as part of their investigations. —AFP

#### Pope meets Australian cardinal

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis met yesterday with Australian Cardinal George Pell, who returned to Rome last month for the first time since being jailed and then acquitted on child sex abuse charges. The Argentine pontiff, a fierce defender of the presumption of innocence, held a private audience with Pell, the Vatican said, without providing any further details. But while a reunion between the head of the Roman Catholic Church and the man he once appointed as his trusted anti-corruption tsar had been seen as a certainty, it was not clear that Pell is to be entrusted with a new Vatican role. —AFP

#### Belarus businessmen held

MINSK: Belarus authorities have released from jail and moved to house arrest two entrepreneurs with links to the opposition, after President Alexander Lukashenko held a surprise meeting with jailed critics in prison at the weekend. State television late Sunday said that Yury Voskresensky — a businessman with ties to a top Lukashenko critic — and Dmitry Rabtsevich, head of Minsk office of software company PandaDoc, had been released from jail. Both men took part in an unexpected meeting in a jail run by the KGB security service between Lukashenko and critics jailed in the run-up to and after August's disputed presidential election. The meeting, which state media said lasted some four-and-a-half-hours, was ostensibly set up to discuss plans for constitutional reforms. —AFP



Syrians throw rocks at a Russian Military Convoy near the village of Ein Diwar in Syria's northeastern Hasakeh province on Sunday in an attempt to stop the convoy from reaching its destination in the outskirts of the northeastern Kurdish town of Derik. —AFP

close to me, but she doesn't like to stay in the tent," Sharmoukh said. In a nearby tent, Shams Abdulkader, a 40-year-old Kurdish mother of seven, said she cannot imagine living out the rest of her days in the camp. —AFP

"If there is (natural gas), we will absolutely find it," he said. But Greece's foreign ministry on Monday lambasted the move as a "direct threat to regional peace and security" and accused Turkey of being unreliable. The ministry added in a statement that Ankara did not "sincerely desire dialogue".

Ankara first deployed the Oruc Reis and warships to disputed waters on August 10 and extended the mission, ignoring repeated calls to stop by Greece and the European Union. The Oruc Reis was pulled back to shore last month in what many hoped was a sign the two sides could resolve the issue through dialogue. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said at the time that the withdrawal was designed to give diplomacy a chance. —AFP

## International

# China to test whole city of 9m as Europe rolls out new virus rules

## US reports 7.7 million infections and 214,000 deaths

BEIJING: All nine million people in a major Chinese port city will be tested for Covid-19 following a tiny outbreak, health officials said yesterday, as surging infection numbers in Europe force another round of containment efforts. The virus has been largely brought under control in China where it first emerged last year in stark contrast to many parts of the world still afflicted by rolling lockdowns and high case numbers.

noon yesterday the health commission said more than 277,000 people had already been tested in Qingdao, with nine positive results. In June large areas of the capital Beijing were subject to mass tests after the city of more than 20 million detected virus cases linked to a food market.

China has bounced back since the virus emerged, closing the country down and hammering the world's second largest economy. Hundreds of millions travelled across the country for the "Golden Week" holiday last week as the country edges back to growth, while rapid tests and swift lockdowns have tamped down secondary waves of the virus.

The picture elsewhere in the world, however, is strikingly different as countries battle new waves and alarming spikes.

### Three-tier system

Britain's leader Johnson will unveil his tiered system yesterday, with northwestern Liverpool expected to be the only city placed in the top category. Like governments across Europe, Johnson's Conservative cabinet is seeking to balance bringing down the rate of new infections against frustration and concern about the economy.

The new alert system, which will classify all areas as either "medium", "high" or "very high" risk, is an attempt to bring transparency and uniformity to restrictions introduced to combat the spread of the disease. "This is a critical juncture and it is absolutely vital that everyone follows the clear guidance we have set out to help contain the virus," a Downing Street spokesperson said.

Several urban centers in northern England have already been hit with a range of curbs on social life such as a ban on different households mixing, but the south has escaped stricter restrictions for now. The national death toll from coronavirus in Britain is more than 42,000 — the worst in Europe.



PYONGYANG: This picture taken on Saturday shows a ceremony marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Workers' Party of Korea in Kim Il Sung square. — AFP

Globally more than 37.7 million people have now been infected, and at least 1.07 million have died.

### Trump claims immunity

Trump's doctors gave the president the all-clear Saturday to return to the campaign trail after he was ruled no longer a coronavirus transmission risk, and on Sunday he said he tested "totally negative".

But he has yet to be declared virus-free, and his immunity claim is unproven. "It looks like I'm immune for, I don't know, maybe a long time and maybe a short time, it could be a lifetime, nobody really knows, but

I'm immune," Trump told Fox News. However, it is not yet clear to what degree contracting Covid-19 confers immunity, with early studies suggesting a few months while newer ones have indicated it could last longer. Meanwhile a study by Australia's national science agency found the coronavirus that causes Covid-19 can survive on items such as banknotes and phones for up to 28 days in cool, dark conditions.

Researchers at CSIRO's disease preparedness center tested the longevity of SARS-CoV-2 in the dark at three temperatures, showing survival rates decreased as conditions became hotter. — AFP



### UK considers three-tiered alert system

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was to announce a new three-tiered alert system for coronavirus cases in England, while German authorities shuttered Berlin bars and clubs after 11pm until the end of the month and France is believed to be mulling local lockdowns in major cities. In the United States—the world's worst-affected nation with 7.7 million infections and 214,000 deaths—President Donald Trump controversially declared himself immune after his treatment at a Washington hospital last week.

Six cases of Covid-19 were confirmed on Sunday in Qingdao—a northeastern port city of 9.4 million—prompting health officials to announce China's first mass testing in months. Five districts will be tested "within three days" and the whole city "within five days", a statement from Qingdao's municipal health commission said, although it did not give a precise figure on how many people would be tested.

China has extensive, quick test capabilities and by



Le Minh Tuan, father of the late 30-year-old Le Van Ha who was among 39 people found dead in a truck in Britain last year, holding Ha's son in their home in Vietnam's Nghe An province. — AFP

## Vietnam truck tragedy families speak out one year on

NGHE AN, Vietnam: Le Minh Tuan has curled up in the bed of his deceased son every night since the young man suffocated in a truck in Britain alongside dozens of other Vietnamese migrants one year ago. Four men are on trial in London over the deaths of the 39 Vietnamese men and women, facing various charges including manslaughter and conspiracy to smuggle people. But Tuan-like many of their grieving families—does not hold them responsible for the appalling tragedy. "I don't blame anyone," he told AFP at his run-down home in central Nghe An province, sobbing as he spoke. "I wish I could go to the UK to attend the trial, and to burn incense in the place where they found my dead son."

His 30-year-old child Le Van Ha had paid smugglers for passage from Vietnam to Europe—zigzagging from Turkey to Greece, then France—with Britain as his final destination in his bid for a better life.

A rice farmer whose dream of becoming a policeman never quite materialized, Ha left his two young children and wife last summer. His body was found on October 23 in Essex, southeast England, in an unbearably hot and dark container truck which had been sealed for at least 12 hours.

Among the others who died beside him were 10 teenagers, including two 15-year-old boys, and 20-year-old Nguyen Dinh Luong, who had desperately tried to call emergency services as they began to run out of air. Almost a year since the tragedy, prosecutors say that the four accused smugglers were attempting to move two lorryloads of migrants in one in an effort to avoid interception by authorities.

But like Tuan, Luong's parents bear no anger towards the accused. "They did not let them die deliberately," father Nguyen Van Gia said. At his home in Ha Tinh province, neighboring Nghe An, Gia and his wife have displayed an altar adorned with pictures of their young son. Luong was one of eight children, and had worked and lived in France since 2018 before heading to Britain for better opportunities. "No one forced him to travel, he just had bad luck," Gia said.

### 'The lucky ones'

Like others from Vietnam's impoverished central provinces, the men were enticed by brokers to embark on illegal and dangerous journeys overseas. Young men and women often spend tens of thousands of dollars to escape the region's rice farms, chasing dreams of riches overseas. But many end up illegally working in nail bars or on cannabis farms in Britain, heavily indebted and subject to exploitation. Yet most migrants do not see themselves as victims because they make the choice to leave, according to local charity Blue Dragon's Le Thi Hong Luong, who specializes in anti-trafficking efforts. — AFP

## Floods, rough seas kill 18 in Vietnam

HANOI: At least 18 people died and more than a dozen are missing after floods submerged homes in central Vietnam and rough seas capsized fishing boats, authorities said yesterday, as another storm threatened fresh downpours. Images on state media showed entire villages under water in Quang Tri and Quang Nam, while murky floodwaters swept through the Imperial

City of Hue and the tourist hotspot Hoi An over the weekend. More than a hundred thousand homes have been submerged in the floods and nearly 46,000 people evacuated, Vietnam's disaster management authority said. The military staged a dramatic helicopter rescue of eight fishermen who had been swept away by rough seas off Quang Tri province.

Among the dead are three fishermen, however, and three others are missing. Vietnam is frequently lashed by harsh weather in the rainy season between June and November, with central coast areas most vulnerable. The country is bracing for another storm rolling in from the South China Sea, with heavy rain again expected. Some 132 people were reported dead or missing due to natural disasters in Vietnam last year, according to the General Statistics Office. — AFP



VIETNAM: An aerial picture shows Hue city, submerged in floodwaters caused by heavy downpours, in central Vietnam yesterday. — AFP

## Hong Kong leader postpones policy speech

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's leader yesterday announced she had postponed a policy speech after being ordered to travel to mainland China for meetings with central government officials. Chief executive Carrie Lam had been due to make a key annual address tomorrow outlining her administration's plans for the politically restless city. But the speech clashed with a sudden announcement that Chinese President Xi Jinping would make a visit that day to the neighboring mainland city of Shenzhen. Lam said she would also travel to Shenzhen, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary as a special economic trade zone, ahead of a visit to Beijing later in the month. Her speech, she added, would now be delivered in late November.

"The best way forward is for the chief executive to go to Beijing and personally explain why these measures are important for Hong Kong," Lam said of the speech. Hong Kong is ruled under a "One Country, Two Systems" model that allows it to retain a degree of autonomy and some freedoms that are denied to citizens on the authoritarian mainland. But last year's huge and often violent pro-democracy protests prompted Beijing to ramp up control over a city it now sees as a national security threat. In June it imposed a sweeping new security law on the restless hub which criminalized a range of political offences. It also allowed mainland security agents to operate openly in the city for the first time, as well as grant Beijing jurisdiction over especially serious cases. — AFP

## Tajikistan's leader wins re-election

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan: Tajikistan's leader Emomali Rakhmon was re-elected with over 90 percent of the vote yesterday following a presidential poll in which he faced only token opposition. The win will allow the 68-year-old strongman to pass three decades in power and overtake Kazakhstan's recently retired Nursultan Nazarbayev as the former Soviet Union's longest-ruling leader. The Central Electoral Commission said that 90.9 percent of voters in Sunday's poll had cast their ballot for Rakhmon who will secure a fresh seven-year term, according to preliminary results.

Turnout was over 85 percent, according to the Central Electoral Commission. While disputed ballots in neighboring Kyrgyzstan and fellow former Soviet republic Belarus have triggered massive upheaval, similar developments appear unlikely in Tajikistan. But Rakhmon and his government face unprecedented challenges after the weakest economy of all Soviet successor states joined others in being battered by the coronavirus pandemic. Over a million Tajiks are believed to work abroad, mostly in Russia.

Alex Kokcharov, a country risk research analyst at IHS Markit in London said remittances sent home dropped "by 15-25 percent year on year in the first half, according to differing reports."

If a large number of Tajik migrant workers "would come back to Tajikistan from Russia where many have lost jobs in this year's crisis, it will increase domestic instability - both politically and economically," said Kokcharov, whose company predicts a 6.5 percent contraction of the economy this year. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Dhaka to execute rapists

DHAKA: Bangladesh introduced the death penalty for rape yesterday after days of protests sparked by a string of sexual assaults, the government said. Demonstrations have broken out across the country after harrowing footage of a group of men stripping and attacking a woman went viral on social media. The clip sparked outrage in the South Asian country, where activists say only a tiny percentage of sexual assault victims see justice. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was also facing an internal outcry within the ruling party's ranks over her perceived inaction, before her government approved the capital punishment proposal at a meeting in Dhaka. Justice minister Anisul Huq told AFP the law would be put into effect by the president today. Previously the maximum punishment for rape was life imprisonment. National anger over the issue has been simmering since last month, when members of the ruling party's student wing were arrested and charged in a separate gang rape case. — AFP

#### China bristles at Canada

BEIJING: Beijing yesterday rubbished a Canadian charge that two of its citizens were being arbitrarily detained in China, instead accusing Ottawa of "double standards" over the arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou. Canadian former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor have been held in China for nearly two years and have been charged with spying. Over the weekend the men were granted their first meeting with Canadian embassy officials since January, leading Canada to reiterate its objection to their "arbitrary detention." Meng, the daughter of Huawei's founder, was arrested in Canada in December 2018 on a US warrant during a stopover in Vancouver—just days later Kovrig and Spavor were picked up in China. — AFP

#### Delhi stops displaying notices

NEW DELHI: Delhi authorities have stopped putting notices outside the homes of people infected with coronavirus because this has amplified the social stigma associated with the disease and in turn caused others to hide their illness, officials said yesterday. Early on during the outbreak in the Indian capital, officials would paste a poster on the homes of people in quarantine after they had tested positive for the virus to make sure everyone in the neighborhood was careful. It also deterred people from violating the quarantine. But more than six months into the pandemic people were fully aware of COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the virus, and there was less need to publicize the cases, city officials said. Instead it was important to instill confidence in people to come forward and test themselves. "There is a stigma with the coronavirus disease and posters outside the house amplify that. By doing away with this, we are aiming at increased testing. We want more people to get themselves tested without thinking of stigmas," said Delhi environment minister Kailash Gehlot. — Reuters

# Business

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2020

## Boursa Kuwait participates in webinar

### CMA, HSBC hold virtual roadshow to highlight investment opportunities

**KUWAIT:** Boursa Kuwait participated in a webinar organized by financial services company HSBC and with the participation of the Capital Markets Authority to highlight updates and final preparations for the Kuwaiti capital market's promotion to MSCI Emerging Markets in the November EM inclusion.

Representing Boursa Kuwait during the webinar was Noura Al-Abdulkareem, Boursa Kuwait's Head of Markets Sector, who commented on the significant achievements of Boursa Kuwait as a result of its wide-ranging market development efforts to enhance the Kuwaiti capital market, highlighting recent changes to the exchange's mechanisms to accommodate the inclusion in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index.

Commenting on the roadshow, Al-Abdulkareem said: "Despite the challenges brought forth by the coronavirus pandemic, Boursa Kuwait has continued to pursue its strategic objectives with a commitment to contributing to the advancement of the Kuwaiti capital markets and enticing the international community to invest in it." She added, "Boursa Kuwait made changes to its trading mechanism to accommodate the inclusion in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index with an extension of the Closing Auction and Trade at Last sessions on the day of Inclusion, as well as an extension on Custodian Rejections, Permanent fixtures in the exchange's trading mechanisms going forward also include the introduction of allocation accounts and

the removal of the fresh money rule (Netting) on an investor level."

Boursa Kuwait's participation in the HSBC event marks the second event in collaboration with the financial services company in a virtual capacity this year. In September, Boursa Kuwait organized its first Virtual Corporate Day in collaboration with HSBC from 9 until 10 September 2020. The conference, held virtually because of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, was attended by nine companies listed in the Kuwaiti capital market, who met with 31 of the world's leading institutional investors and asset management firms over the two-day period.

Boursa Kuwait recently listed its shares on the country's financial market

to become the first fully privatized bourse operator and self-listed exchange in the region to reach this achievement. The company's shares had rocketed more than 10-fold on its stellar trading debut on September 14, 2020.

Since its inception, Boursa Kuwait has worked effortlessly to create a credible exchange built on efficiency and transparency, creating a liquid capital market, a progressive exchange platform and developing a comprehensive set of reforms and enhancements that has allowed it to compete on an international level. The company has rolled out numerous market reforms and new initiatives over the past three years as part of its comprehensive multi-phase market development (MD) plans.



Noura Al-Abdulkareem

## American duo wins Nobel Economics Prize

**STOCKHOLM:** US economists Paul Milgrom and Robert Wilson won the Nobel Economics Prize yesterday for work on commercial auctions, including for goods and services difficult to sell in traditional ways such as radio frequencies, the Nobel Committee said.

The duo was honored "for improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auction formats," the jury said. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences noted that the discoveries by Milgrom, 72, and Wilson, 83, "have benefitted sellers, buyers and taxpayers around the world," it said in a statement.

"Auctions affect all of us at every level. Moreover, they are becoming increasingly common and increasingly complicated," the academy said, listing examples such as flexible electricity prices set by daily auctions and countries raising funds through government bond auctions. Wilson, a professor at Stanford in the US, was spotlighted for developing a theory on auctions focusing on a common value, such as the future value of radio frequencies, or the rights to extract minerals in a particular area.

This common value "is uncertain beforehand but, in the end, is the same for everyone," according to the academy. Wilson's work, which resulted in three influential papers in the 1960s and 1970s, showed why bidders tended to bid under what they actually thought the good was worth.

The answer was that they feared the "winner's curse," or winning the auction but paying too much. Milgrom then came up with a more general theory of auctions by analyzing bidding strategies in different



auction forms, publishing his seminal papers around 1980. Also a professor at Stanford, Milgrom and Wilson live on the same street. The academy noted that while "people have always sold things to the highest bidder," societies have also had to allocate "ever more complex objects... such as landing slots and radio frequencies" among users.

"In response, Milgrom and Wilson invented new formats for auctioning off many interrelated objects simultaneously, on behalf of a seller motivated by broad societal benefit rather than maximal revenue," the academy said. Their theories were put into practice by US authorities in 1994 to sell radio frequencies to telecom operators, and are applied by governments around the world in the current rollout of 5G networks. The winners will share the prize sum of 10 million Swedish kronor (about \$1.1 million, 950,000 euros). Speaking to reporters in Stockholm via a telephone link, Wilson said the announce-

ment had been "very happy news," conceding that despite his research focus he himself had "never participated in an auction."

However, he quickly had to retract his statement. "My wife is pointing out that we bought ski boots on eBay, I guess that was an auction," Wilson said. Last year the honor went to French-American Esther Duflo, Indian-born Abhijit Banerjee of the US, and American Michael Kremer for their experimental work on alleviating poverty.

#### Not created by Alfred Nobel

Even if it might be the most prestigious prize an economist can hope to receive, the economics prize has not reached the same status as the awards originally chosen by Alfred Nobel in his 1895 will founding the awards, which included medicine, physics, chemistry, literature and peace. It was instead created in 1968 through a donation from the Swedish central bank and detractors have thus dubbed it "a false Nobel." — AFP



British Airways CEO Alex Cruz speaks to members of staff at the British Airways Maintenance Centre (BAMC) at Cardiff Airport in south Wales. — AFP

it should be."

Cruz meanwhile gave no comment regarding his shock exit.

Speaking last month however, he defended the airline's heavy job cuts and argued that customers were "still afraid of travelling". "Covid has devastated our business, our sector. We're still fighting for our own survival," he told parliament's transport select committee.

IAG has forecast that it will take until at least 2023 for passenger demand to recover to pre-pandemic levels. "As CEO of British Airways, I have to take responsibility. I cannot ignore the situation. I had to act incredibly fast," Cruz said during his parliamentary grilling on September 16.

"I deeply, deeply regret that way too many loyal and hardworking colleagues of mine are having to leave our business and I understand why MPs are concerned... This is an impossible situation." — Reuters

## Remittances to Pakistan top \$2 billion

**KARACHI:** Remittances from Pakistani workers employed abroad increased to \$2.3 billion in September, a 31.2 percent rise year-on-year and up 9 percent compared to the previous month, the country's central bank said yesterday. Remittances remained above \$2 billion for a fourth consecutive month, capping a higher than expected inflow of finances in the first quarter of FY2020-21 for the South Asian nation, which has struggled with current account deficits and a depreciating currency.

"The level of remittances in September was slightly higher than SBP's projections of \$2 billion," the State Bank of Pakistan said in a statement, adding that first quarter figures were 31.1 percent higher year on year. Multiple factors contributed to the increase, including Pakistan's crack-

down on illegal channels, Samiullah Tariq, head of research and development at Pakistan Kuwait Investment Company, told Reuters.

Pakistan's ability to curb illegal financial transactions, including financing of militant and extremist groups, has been under close scrutiny from international financial watchdog the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which meets next week in Paris to review the country's progress on key action points.

"Remittances are consistently increasing due to a combination of factors including limited physical mobility of expats to Pakistani due to COVID-19 resulting in more transfers through official channels," Tariq said. "COVID-19 test requirement is still there for the Middle East, UK and US, major countries from where remittances come, so people are travelling less," Saad Hashemy, Executive Director BMA Capital Management, told Reuters. "Despite COVID-19 more good news for our economy," Prime Minister Imran Khan tweeted yesterday before the central bank released the numbers. — Reuters

## OECD: Global deal on taxing tech giants still beyond reach

**PARIS:** The 137 nations trying to hammer out a new global standard for taxing multinational tech firms will not secure a deal by the end of this year as hoped, the OECD acknowledged yesterday.

"The glass is half full: the package is nearly ready but there is still no political accord," said Pascal Saint-Amans, head of tax policy at the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). But the OECD, which is leading the talks, does expect to finalize a digital tax proposal "sometime in 2021," Saint-Amans added, although he acknowledged persistent US resistance to the plan. Talks have been laboring on under OECD auspices for the past two years on how to ensure that tech giants pay a fair share of taxes in the countries where they operate, even if

their headquarters are elsewhere.

Governments are facing growing pressure to clamp down on the tax avoidance strategies used by multinationals such as Google, Amazon, Facebook and Apple—the so-called "GAFA"—that are accused of shifting their profits to countries with lower tax rates.

The coronavirus crisis hindered progress this year on implementing a levy, even though "the Covid-19 pandemic makes the need for a solution even more compelling," the OECD said.

Failure to reach a global agreement could prompt some countries to go it alone on digital taxation, further stoking global trade tensions. Several European countries including France and Britain have already announced their own levies in the absence of a global accord.

That has infuriated Washington, which says American companies are being unfairly targeted.

"Despite the exceptional circumstances, there are a lot of strong feelings and impatience, and the temptation to take unilateral action faced with a measure that will take years to implement," Saint-Amans said at a press conference at the OECD's headquarters in Paris. — AFP

## Virus-blighted BA announces shock CEO departure

**LONDON:** British Airways, which is slashing thousands of jobs as coronavirus decimates demand for air travel, announced yesterday that CEO Alex Cruz is stepping down "with immediate effect" but gave no reason for his unexpected departure. Parent group IAG added in a statement that the Spanish businessman, who had been BA chief executive for four and half years, will be replaced by its Aer Lingus boss Sean Doyle. New IAG chief executive Luis Gallego, a fellow Spaniard who took the reins from Willie Walsh just last month, said the company's management reshuffle was aimed at emerging stronger from the health crisis.

"We're navigating the worst crisis faced in our industry and I'm confident ... IAG is well placed to emerge in a strong position," Gallego said. "I want to thank Alex for all that he has done at British Airways. He worked tirelessly to modernize the airline. He has led the airline through a particularly demanding period and has secured restructuring agreements with the vast majority of employees."

#### 'New pair of wings'

Investors fretted over the news, sending IAG shares down two percent to 101.45

pence in late yesterday deals. Faced with the global travel crisis, the stock has plummeted by a staggering 75 percent since the start of the year-making it the worst performer listed on London's FTSE 100 index.

"British Airways is going to need a new pair of wings if it is to fly through the pandemic in one piece. The airline is now getting new leadership in the form of Sean Doyle," said Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Susannah Streeter. A company spokeswoman declined to comment on the nature of the departure of Cruz, who has overseen a massive cost-slashing drive and will remain non-executive chairman.

British Airways is in the process of axing 13,000 jobs or about one third of its workforce in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and is currently operating about one quarter of its normal schedule.

BA pilots had voted in July to accept a package including job and pay cuts aimed at avoiding even more redundancies. British pilots' union BALPA welcomed Monday's news.

#### 'Departure lounge'

"Mr Cruz has been in the departure lounge for some time so this is no surprise. He was given a remit to cut costs and found it impossible to do that without alienating BA passengers and employees alike," said BALPA General Secretary Brian Strutton. "Willie Walsh has also gone, BA parted company with its COO earlier this year, and now with the CEO leaving I hope this heralds a new dawn which sees BA behaving like the proud flag carrier airline





## Business

# Pandemic spurs illegal gold rush in Zimbabwe mountains

## Govt bans riverbed alluvial and riverbed mining on rivers

**CHIMANIMANI, Zimbabwe:** Known for their rugged ranges, grassy plains and forest waterfalls, the Chimanimani mountains in eastern Zimbabwe have long been a popular destination for tourists - and gold miners hoping to strike it rich. Travel restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19 have kept the tourists away, although some attractions reopened last month.

But illegal mining has surged as miners take advantage of the lack of visitors, leaving a trail of environmental destruction in their wake, say researchers and activists.

"The waters are being polluted; the biodiversity poisoned; endemic plants dug up (and) trampled; animals and birds poached; (and) litter strewn all over the mountains," said Julia Pierini, head of BirdLife Zimbabwe, a non-profit.

Activists, industry experts and some of the miners themselves say rangers employed by the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (Zimparks) to protect Chimanimani National Park are involved in the illicit activity.

"For the past couple of years, we have been seeing illegal gold miners in the mountains, but suddenly during lockdown we started to see hundreds of them," said Collen Sibanda, vice chairman of the Chimanimani Tourist Association (CTA).

"Zimparks is recruiting people. They are organizing these syndicates."

Lenny Kwaramba told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that he had been mining in the mountains without a license since March.

"I thought it was legal because we were working with the rangers," said Kwaramba, whose name has

been changed to protect his identity.

"We were given a target, we would sell about 40 grams of gold per day," he continued, explaining that as the miners came back down the mountain, the rangers would take the gold and pay them in US dollars. That was until August, when the military and police were deployed to help the rangers evict the miners. "I had to run for my life," Kwaramba said. "They were firing at us. Some (miners) were injured and others are missing."

Zimparks spokesman Tinashe Farawo said the authority was looking into claims that the park's rangers had a hand in the illegal gold mining.

"We have heard such reports. We are currently investigating the allegations," he said in a phone interview.

"We are calling upon (everyone) to forward any evidence that our officers are involved. We want to ensure we protect these forests for the benefit of the future generations." There is no official data on the number of illegal gold miners in the Chimanimani Mountains, but authorities note that around the country their ranks have risen in recent years. As Zimbabwe experiences its worst economic crisis in a decade, with crippling hyperinflation and unemployment, young people are venturing into illegal gold mining in a bid to earn a living.

Gold panning in Chimanimani is mostly small-scale and informal, according to a 2016 research paper by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in London. The paper estimated that the output from artisanal gold panning in the area from 2007 to 2011 was between 600-to-900 kg per year, with less than half of that amount being officially recorded.



Search and rescue operation at Cricket Mine in Kadoma, Zimbabwe where more than 23 illegal miners were trapped underground and feared dead on February 15, 2019 in this file photo. — AFP

### Sacred places

The latest census data shows about 135,000 people live in the area around the Chimanimani Mountains, on the border of Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

That population, made up of various indigenous communities, is still recovering from last year's Cyclone Idai, which caused \$622 million worth of damage, mainly in Chimanimani and Chipinge districts, according to government officials.

And now, say locals, they also have to endure the ecological impacts of illegal mining. Pierini at BirdLife Zimbabwe said the mountains are an important watershed area with ecologically sensitive wetlands that provide most of the water used by communities in the valleys below. "With a changing climate, on the back of Cyclone Idai last year and drought conditions this year, mining in the Chimanimani Mountains represents an ecological catastrophe," she said in emailed comments. — Reuters

## Syria fires ravage livelihoods ahead of harvest

**TARTUS, Syria:** Suhail Deeb was eager to harvest his olives before sweeping forest fires that ravaged parts of Syria at the weekend left him with nothing but charred trunks and branches.

"I used to have 100 trees, but now nothing is left," said the 61-year-old farmer at his blackened olive grove in the western province of Tartus. "Everything has turned to ashes," he said, sadly snapping a soot-covered, dead branch off a tree.

Blazes broke out Friday in the provinces of Homs, Tartus and Latakia, destroying over 9,000 hectares of agricultural and forested land, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The wildfires killed three people in Latakia and displaced thousands across the three provinces, OCHA said.

Authorities on Sunday said that the fires had been brought under control. A day later, smoke still rose from the hills around Latakia and Tartus, previously covered with fields, groves and healthy forests.

"I have never seen fires like this in

my entire life," said Deeb, who had inherited all his trees from his father. The olive farmer, like all Syrians, has been hit hard by a biting economic crisis that has seen the Syrian pound plummet against the dollar.

He was eagerly waiting for this season's harvest which was to begin this month so he could produce some olive oil to sell in the market. "We were depending heavily on this season to compensate for our repeated losses," he said. "The olives were ripe and large and, had it not been for the fires, we would be preparing now to harvest them."

### 'Real catastrophe'

OCHA estimates that the fires affected up to 140,000 people by destroying or damaging homes and other assets, including agricultural land. In the town of Mashta Al-Helu in Tartus, more than 65 farmers were affected by the blaze, including Ali Issa. Sitting on a rock, his back leaning against a burnt tree, Issa lamented his losses, even though many of his crops survived the blaze.

"We have endured very difficult



TARTUS: A Syrian man inspects a scorched area in the aftermath of a forest fire which ravaged swathes of land in the countryside of the western city of Tartus, on Sunday. Dozens of fires that ravaged parts of Syria and Lebanon in recent days were brought under control, authorities in the two countries said. — AFP

conditions during the war," he said. "But the fires are of a different scale. We are facing a real catastrophe." Nine years of war have battered Syria's economy but the country has continued to produce large quantities of olive oil which is among its staple exports.

The agriculture ministry had predicted in August an olive crop harvest of 850,000 tons this season-up from 665,000 the year before. Issa said he was determined to replant what he lost, calling the olive tree both "blessed and holy." "We will replant not so that we can eat from them, but for our children," he said.

The fires across Syria did not only hit agricultural lands but also residential and industrial areas. According to OCHA, up to 25,000 people have been displaced as a result.

On social media, users have been posting photos of the many blazes with the Arabic hashtag "Syria is Burning." Joseph Eid, the mayor of Mashta Al-Helu, assessed the damage in the aftermath of the fires.

He pointed to empty parks that were crowded with families this time last year. "The fires cause a lot of damage," he told AFP. "The land will need years to recover." —AFP

## Nasdaq leads Wall St higher on tech, stimulus hopes

**NEW YORK:** The tech-heavy Nasdaq led Wall Street's main indexes higher yesterday as optimism about an agreement in Washington over more fiscal support lifted sentiment ahead of the start of quarterly corporate earnings. Apple Inc provided the biggest boost to the three main stock indexes with a 3.7 percent gain ahead of a special event on Tuesday, which most analysts believe will be used to unveil the new iPhone with 5G capabilities.

The Trump administration on Sunday called on Congress to pass a stripped-down coronavirus relief bill as negotiations on a broader package ran into resistance. "(President Donald) Trump is falling behind in opinion polls and seems desperate for a deal, so either some agreement will be hammered out soon or the Democrats could win a decisive victory at the ballot box and ultimately deliver an even greater stimulus package," said Marios Hadjikyriacos, investment analyst at online broker XM in Cyprus.

A recent Reuters/Ipsos poll showed Americans were steadily losing confidence in Trump's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, with his net approval on the issue hitting a record low. Growing expectations of a Democratic victory in next month's presidential election as well as bets of fresh federal aid have sent Wall Street's main indexes to one-month highs. With the Oct. 15 presidential debate officially canceled, Trump plans to travel to key battleground states this week as his doctor declared he was no longer a transmission risk for the novel coronavirus.

Results from big U.S. banks will be in focus this week, with JPMorgan & Co and Citigroup set to report on Tuesday. Bank shares were flat to slightly higher in premarket trading.

Goldman Sachs Group Inc, which reports tomorrow, is considering whether to scale back financial targets set earlier this year due to the coronavirus pandemic's impact, analysts and sources inside the



NEW YORK: The tech-heavy Nasdaq led Wall Street's main indexes higher yesterday as optimism about an agreement in Washington over more fiscal support lifted sentiment ahead of the start of quarterly corporate earnings. — Reuters

bank said. The bank's management is not expected to move the goalposts tomorrow, but may change targets in January, a year after they were set, sources said. Overall, analysts expect third-quarter earnings for S&P 500 companies to have fallen 21 percent from a year earlier, smaller than a 30.6 percent slump in the second quarter. At 9:42 am ET, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 122.21 points, or 0.43 percent, at 28,709.11, the S&P 500 was up 27.39 points, or 0.79 percent, at 3,504.52, and the Nasdaq Composite was up 161.88 points, or 1.40 percent, at 11,741.82.

The S&P technology sector climbed 1.5 percent to lead the gainers. The energy index was the weak spot, as oil prices dropped on easing supply worries. Twitter Inc gained 5.3 percent after Deutsche Bank upgraded the social media firm's shares to "buy" on expectations of continued growth in 2021.

Other tech companies such as Netflix Inc, Amazon.com Inc and Microsoft Corp rose between 1.7 percent and 2 percent. Advancing issues outnumbered decliners by a 1.13-to-1 ratio on the NYSE and by a 1.29-to-1 ratio on the Nasdaq. The S&P index recorded 50 new 52-week highs and no new low, while the Nasdaq recorded 112 new highs and three new lows. — Reuters

## Millions of Indians to get Diwali loans to boost economy

**NEW DELHI:** Millions of Indian public servants will be offered loans of around \$135 — to be repaid over 10 months-in a bid to boost spending and salvage the coronavirus-ravaged economy, the government said yesterday. The offer comes days after the World Bank said the economy would contract by nearly 10 percent this year, and coincides with next month's celebration of Diwali, one of the country's most important religious festivals.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said federal government employees would also be allowed to spend about 3.8 billion worth of unused travel benefits-which are part of their salaries-on goods and services. "Festivals are coming... and we want to tell you that in the next six months spend the money on buying goods that will help your family," Sitharaman told a news conference.

With the loan scheme, the government will spend 80 billion rupees (\$1.1 billion) to give government employees a 10,000 rupee (\$135 dollar) salary advance to be repaid over 10 months. Sitharaman said the plan, aimed at encouraging Indians to spend some of their savings, would generate about \$4.9 billion for the economy.

The measures "would energize growth over the remaining part of the year", the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry said following the announcement. The government has also set aside \$1.6 billion for 50-year loans to states to spend on roads, defense and other infrastructure by March. The stimulation measures would not fuel inflation or put public debt "on an unsustainable path", Sitharaman said. India has been easing a nationwide coronavirus lockdown since June but millions have lost their jobs. — AFP

## China expects to meet poverty alleviation goal

**LIANGSHAN, China:** President Xi Jinping beamed down benevolently from a poster in the new flat of unemployed Jigu Gatie, provided by the Chinese government as part of efforts to tackle poverty nationwide. The posters urging residents to listen, follow and "be grateful" to China's ruling Communist Party were common in the homes of the new state housing project visited by Reuters in September during a government-organized trip to the southwestern Sichuan province.

China vowed in 2013 to eradicate extreme rural poverty by the end of this year, and spent 524 billion yuan (\$77.17 billion) between 2016 and 2020 to that end, official data showed. China's economy was hit by the coronavirus pandemic early this year but has since seen a steady recovery.

"Thanks to the party, thanks to the government, thanks to General Secretary Xi," said Jigu, a member of the generally poor Yi ethnic minority. "I'm very satisfied." With over 90 million rural people lifted from extreme poverty over the past seven years, the government says it is on track to achieve its 2020 goal.

But the success could falter if authorities shift priorities after declaring victory on rural poverty, analysts say. "Once poverty alleviation is no longer a political priority, if funding from the government and state-owned enterprises dries up, many will fall back into poverty," said Alfred Wu, associate professor at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore.

The government has said China will continue anti-poverty policies after 2020 but has yet to make an announcement. A State Council official said the government was "rushing to come up with transitional policies."

### Political pressure

Jigu, in his 60s, moved into his new flat in the Liangshan region last year. A message reading "gifted by the Sichuanese party and government" on the chairs and wardrobe of his apartment remind him to be grateful each day. The Sichuan government has invested 77.5 billion yuan to move 1.36 million villagers into new homes within the province, a policy replicated around China.

Under the scheme in Sichuan, each household in the province pays 2,500 yuan per person to secure a new concrete apartment or house, complete with hot showers and cooking gas - an upgrade from the leaky and windowless shacks many of them came from. China's poverty alleviation programs heavily rely on fiscal funding and civil servants for implementation, analysts say, raising questions about their sustainability.

"With the political pressure of meeting the poverty target no longer hanging over them, and with other pressing needs to pay for social programs that would benefit the wider community, local governments would be hard-pressed to devote already-tight budgets to the absolute poor post-2020," said Wang Jun, chief economist at lender Zhongyuan Bank. In addition to funding, the party has encouraged civil servants and party members to "volunteer" to tackle poverty in poor villages. Some 58,000 civil servants have been mobilized in Sichuan province, with each assigned one household to bring out of destitution. — Reuters

## Business

# Markaz launches its 'Procurement Guide' to contractual arrangements

## Reinforcing commitment to promoting public, private sector partnerships

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Financial Centre K.P.S.C "Markaz" recently announced the launch of its 'Procurement Guide to Contractual Arrangements' between governmental and quasi-governmental entities with "Markaz", in an effort to establish guided contractual relationships between both sectors. The development of the guide stems from Markaz's keenness to participate in the sustainable growth and development of the national economy, represented through offering advisory and consultancy services to the government and quasi-government institutions. Accordingly, the guide provides a brief of the capabilities of Markaz in procuring such services to the public sector.

The procurement of services by public sector's entities are subject to the Tender Law 49/2016 as amended by Law 74/2019 and its executive regulations 30/2017 (the "Tender Law"), which regulates public and limited bids or solicitations. The guide outlines what Markaz can offer to meet the needs of a public sector's entity, and the processes and procedures of 'Limited Solicitations'. It also clarifies the parameters for establishing a 'Service Provider' company, the benefits of outsourcing to a 'Joint Venture' and the phases for assessing solicitations and bids by governmental and

quasi-governmental institutions, pursuant to international practices.

Commenting on the Procurement Guide, Sheikh Humoud Salah Al-Sabah, Assistant Vice President, Government Business Relations at "Markaz" said: "The launch of the Procurement Guide to Contractual Arrangements between Governmental & Quasi-Governmental Entities falls in line with Markaz's efforts to reinforce the partnership between the private and public sectors. It is one of the development pillars in the State of Kuwait, which depends on the public sector benefiting from the practices of an efficient private sector, while encouraging competition across the local markets, making it a key area of focus in light of this significant economic transitional period".

He added: "Strategic partnerships between the private and public sectors come in different forms, and it is imperative that each party fully understands how it can benefit from the other, with the aim of improving the overall economic status and increasing productivity levels. Stemming from this belief, Markaz took the initiative to launch the 'Procurement Guide' in an effort to outline the main service offered by Markaz to public entities, and how to fully benefit from them".



Sheikh Humoud Salah Al-Sabah

Markaz's Procurement Guide shares the four different stages of 'Contracting for Advisory Services', which begin with 'Request for Proposal', followed by the 'Invite Response to RFP', also known as 'Prequalification', then the 'Evaluation phase', and last but not least, the 'Project Award'. On a global level, public entities have outlined minimum standards for procurements based on the

monetary value. The policies and procedures revolve around the core procurement principles like fairness, effectiveness, quality, economic benefits and transparency. With the set fundamental principles, the public bodies most likely follow a fit-for-purpose approach depending on the size and the intricacies involved in the project, in addition to observing the value for money principle.

The guide also highlights key factors to ensure the successful implementation of projects between both

sectors, in relation to cultural, technical, strategic, and financial aspects. While quality is the primary factor in consulting services, price is also an important criterion, however the price weight depends on the evaluation methodology chosen. Contracts are awarded to applicants with the highest combined scores that meet the criteria for technical and financial requirements and emphasize the principle of value for money.

The two key services provided by Markaz to government and quasi-government entities are Asset Management Services, and Consultancy and Advisory Services. Asset Management Services covers investment portfolios focused on different types of financial securities in different markets; and investment portfolios in real estate, private equity and other alternative investments. In addition to investments into collective investment schemes and investment funds managed by Markaz. Whereas Consulting and other outsourcing services include financial advisory and restructuring, operational advisory and restructuring, management consultancy, sector studies, and strategy reviews and updates. It also encompasses governance framework and policy reviews and updates and legal and administrative services within the legal framework of the public sector entity.

## Italy ramps up efforts to shield firms from mafia

ROME: Italy has stepped up measures to stem mafia infiltration into companies struggling financially because of the coronavirus crisis, reports said yesterday. Officials have issued an average of 150 "anti-mafia bans" each month so far this year, measures that prevent companies from entering into contracts with the public administration, La Repubblica newspaper reported.

The figure was a 25 percent rise on last year, according to the paper. The efforts are part of a broader attempt to keep European Union recovery funds out of the hands of criminal groups, a risk Interior Minister Luciana Lamorgese warned of earlier this year as the pandemic began to bite.

Police are investigating about 3,000 cases of alleged fraud involving virus funds, the Sole 24 Ore said. The southern regions of Campania, Sicily and Calabria—where the three most powerful mafias originate—have been the primary focus of the bans. But Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna in northern and central Italy have also accounted for a substantial number, underscoring the national reach of organized crime groups.

The groups have been offering loans or buying out companies that hit dire financial difficulties after Italy imposed a more than two-month lockdown in March. "The mafia's movements, in this period, focus more than ever on financing, acquisitions and infiltration into companies," national anti-mafia

prosecutor Cafiero De Raho told Il Sole 24 Ore. "We are checking, for example, for what we define as 'inconsistent' investments, looking at volumes (of funds transferred), subjects and destinations."

The most affected sectors are restaurants, hotels, food production, supermarkets and construction, in addition to private companies in the health sector.

Each group has their own preferences. While the Camorra mafia from Campania has been sourcing masks and Sicily's Cosa Nostra sanitation equipment, Calabria's 'Ndrangheta has targeted public construction including health care projects, Repubblica reported.

A total of 1,400 bans have been issued in 2020 with the rate rising in the last four months, when government aid began to reach companies, the paper wrote. According to Il Sole 24 Ore, police have also seen a sharp increase in cases of mafia lending to the unemployed and poorest sections of the population. — AFP

## CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 240 million for 3 months with a rate of return at 1.25%.



to industry tracker SPAC Research.

Triller said earlier this year it had 65 million monthly active users on its short video app, although many analytics companies have said they have not been provided enough access to independently verify Triller's figures. Triller's celebrity users include musicians Alicia Keys, Cardi B and Eminem, and its financial backers include Kendrick Lamar and The Weeknd.

Triller is owned by media industry veteran Ryan Kavanaugh and healthcare executive Bobby Sarnevesht. Kavanaugh in 2004 founded US film studio Relativity Media LLC, whose films included the award-winning "The Fighter". The studio ended up filing for bankruptcy twice, in 2015 and 2018.

Sarnevesht was a partner at Bay Area Surgical Management, which lost a \$37.4 million legal battle against Aetna Inc after the health insurance firm alleged in 2012 that it had been defrauded by the surgery centers operator.

### Bid for TikTok

Triller sued TikTok in July, alleging it infringed its patent for stitching together multiple music videos with a single audio track. In August, Triller said it had partnered with investment firm Centricus Asset Management Ltd in a bid for TikTok. ByteDance, however, said it was not engaged in such discussions.

Trump last month said he had given his preliminary blessing to a deal that would give a 20 percent stake in TikTok to computer networking conglomerate Oracle Corp and retail giant Walmart Inc. The negotiations subsequently stalled, as ByteDance maintained it would keep an 80 percent stake in TikTok, rather than distribute it to its investors.

TikTok is widely popular with US teenagers, though its advertising business is still nascent. Major companies, including Procter & Gamble Co, Danone and Chipotle Mexican Grill Inc told Reuters last week they would keep spending on advertising with TikTok despite the uncertainty over its future. — Reuters



## Caterpillar bets on self-driving machines during pandemics

CHICAGO: Question: How can a company like Caterpillar try to counter a slump in sales of bulldozers and trucks during a pandemic that has made every human a potential disease vector?

Answer: Cut out human operators, perhaps? Caterpillar's autonomous driving technology, which can be bolted on to existing machines, is helping the US heavy equipment maker mitigate the heavy impact of the coronavirus crisis on sales of its traditional workhorses. With both small and large customers looking to protect their operations from future disruptions, demand has surged for machines that don't require human operators on board. Sales of Caterpillar's autonomous technology for mining operations have been growing at a double-digit percentage clip this year compared with 2019, according to previously unreported internal company data shared with Reuters.

By contrast, sales of its yellow bulldozers, mining trucks and other equipment have been falling for the past nine months, a trend that's also hit its main rivals including Japan's Komatsu Ltd and American player Deere & Co. Fred Rio, worldwide product manager at Caterpillar's construction digital & technology division, told Reuters that a remote-control technology, which allows users to operate machines from several miles away, would be available for construction sites in January.

The company is also working with space agencies to use satellite technology to allow an operator sitting in the United States to remotely communicate with machines on job sites in, say, Africa or elsewhere in the world, he said. Caterpillar's automation strategy was not born during the COVID-19 era, though. The company stepped up investments in such technologies as it emerged in 2017 from the longest downturn in its history, as part of a plan to increase recurring revenue from lucrative sales of services.

But it's early days, and such tech remains a niche part of Caterpillar's operations. Though it does not break out the revenue from technology sales, the rising demand is unlikely to make a major impact anytime soon on the group's revenue, which stood at about \$54 billion last year. It is also a costly endeavor with the company pumping billions into R&D as a whole. Yet it is not clear if demand for autonomous and remote tech will hold up in a post-pandemic world while, in the longer term, there is the risk that a technology-driven improvement in productivity could drive down sales of new equipment.

### 'It has got crazier'

Nonetheless, autonomous technology is helping Caterpillar win equipment deals from customers that were previously not buying a lot of its machines. Last year, Rio Tinto signed up the company to sup-

ply self-driving trucks, autonomous blast drills, loaders and other machines for the construction of the Koodaideri iron ore mine in Australia, which is expected to be operational next year.

Rio Tinto declined to comment on the equipment deal. The mining industry has already adopted some technologies for self-driving trucks and remote operation of load-haul-dump machines. However the suspension in activities worldwide following government-mandated lockdowns at the peak of COVID-19, as well as recent outbreaks of infections at coal mines in Poland, have accelerated the deployment of those technologies. Anthony Cook, general manager for autonomous haulage systems at Caterpillar's rival Komatsu, said a lot of customers had brought forward their spending plans following the pandemic in a bid to take drivers out of mining trucks.

He said the COVID-19 crisis had not hit the fortunes of his autonomous business: "If anything, it has got crazier."

### Caterpillar's in space

Caterpillar and Komatsu hold the lion's share of the global autonomous haulage system market worldwide. But Illinois-based Caterpillar has a competitive advantage, according to some analysts, as its technology can be retrofitted onto competitors' equipment, making it a better fit for mixed fleets. Komatsu's technology currently only works with its own machines.

Komatsu's Cook said that while retrofitting offered a short-term solution, his company was developing technology to allow different brands of equipment to operate together "safely and efficiently", which he added would offer long-term benefits. But Jim Hawkins, general manager at Caterpillar's resource industries division, said the ability to retrofit had helped drive up sales, because mining companies can buy the hardware and software to make machines operate autonomously without paying the much larger cost of overhauling their whole fleet.

That is a selling point at a time when miners are grappling with the virus-induced business uncertainty. Caterpillar sells autonomous operation technology separately from its machines. While retrofitting existing fleets has been the biggest driver for growth until now, Hawkins says an increasing number of customers are now ordering autonomous-ready mining trucks. The company charges mining customers a hardware fee, a software fee and recurring licensing fee. In all, the technology could cost from \$50 million to hundreds of millions of dollars, depending upon the size of the fleet and the duration of the contract, Hawkins said.

All these applications are part of the company's endeavor to increase services revenue, which tends to be more resilient and profitable than equipment sales. It aims to increase services sales to \$28 billion by 2026 from \$18 billion in 2019.

Rob Wertheimer, machinery analyst at Melius Research, said the need for mining companies to replace an aging mining fleet and their growing demand for autonomous upgrades should help Caterpillar, with its tech giving it a "differential" advantage over rivals. "Strategically, they are in a better place," he added. — Reuters

# Classifieds

Tuesday, October 13, 2020

**Kuwait Times**  
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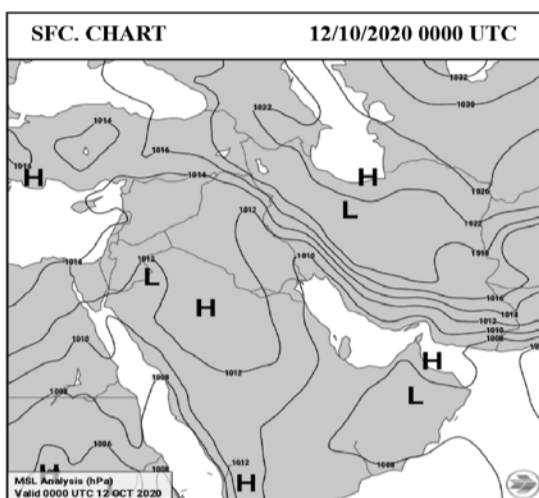
## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Hot to rather hot with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 08 - 28 km/h.

**BY NIGHT:** Fair with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

**WEATHER WARNING** No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	38 °C	27 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	37 °C	20 °C
ABDALY	37 °C	19 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	37 °C	24 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	35 °C	27 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	38 °C	23 °C
WAFRA	37 °C	21 °C
SALMY	34 °C	18 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	10/13	Hot to rather hot	37 °C	21 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 26 km/h
Wednesday	10/14	Hot to rather hot	38 °C	21 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 28 km/h
Thursday	10/15	Hot to rather hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	36 °C	20 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Friday	10/16	Hot to rather hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	37 °C	19 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:29
Sunrise	05:48
Zuhr	11:35
Asr	14:53
Sunset	17:22
Isha	18:39

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	37 °C
MIN. Temp.	21 °C
MAX. RH	36 %
MIN. RH	10 %
MAX. Wind	N 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP:0

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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

## CHANGE OF NAME

In the name change, my name has been changed from Hakimuddin's father Mr. Shabbir Hasan Batetawala to Hakimuddin Merchant's father, Mr. Shabbir Hussain Batetawala, in future I will be known and recognized as my new name Hakimuddin Merchant. Hakimuddin Merchant Father Sh. Shabbir Hussain Batetawala resident Muslim Colony District Banswara. (C 5761) 13-10-2020

I, Querilla Fernandes, w/o Christopher Joseph Antao, r/o bldg. no. 79, Flat 13, Block 10, Salmiya, Kuwait, has changed my name from Querilla Fernandes Antao to Querilla Fernandes. Hereinafter, in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by the name Querilla Fernandes. (C 5804) 8-11-2020

## Airlines

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

**EMERGENCY 112**

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

## Word Search

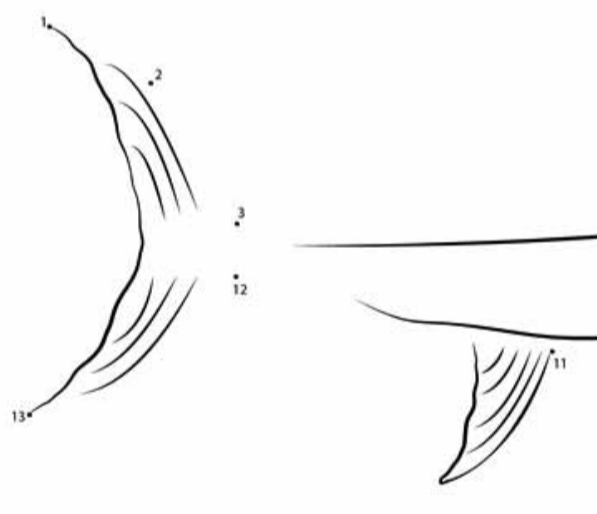
### Zoo Animals

DIRECTIONS: Circle the names of the different animals from the word list in the letter grid below. To find them all you will have to look in every direction, including backwards and diagonally. Good luck!

ALLIGATOR	L K R O T A G I L L A S A L A O K
CAMEL	Y Z U G E U Z R P E J P B K V F L
ELEPHANT	K F G H C C G N C V Y W A G O K U
FLAMINGO	S M O P X P E E O A I N M N O G H
GIRAFFE	I B R O D K L T E I G M A F D P C
GORILLA	P C I G I C N V N A L K E F S A M
HIPPO	O B L H R A V Z R Y K I R O V O O
KANGAROO	L C L I H A Y O J U T C O P N U G
KOALA	A O A P I T O U C A N R E K F H N
LEON	R A E P N I Z E B R A L E N H M I
	B L M O O G J S C G I Y R I I H M
	E U A N Y E M A I C P P D U X K A
	A C I Y Q R M R A J I W D G L Y L
	R A X A D E A N Y F H G T N D P F
	F S F Y L F J P L L T M F E X A U
	R V W M F J H Z U W W F P P H Q
	R K A E J O S B N S Y U W S E A L

MONKEY  
 RHINO  
 PANDA  
 SEAL  
 PELICAN  
 TIGER  
 PENGUIN  
 TOUCAN  
 POLAR BEAR  
 ZEBRA

## Join the Dots



## STAR TRACK

**Aries (March 21-April 19)**  
 Career and financial success might have paved the way for you to fulfill some of your fondest dreams, Aries. Perhaps you've wanted to return to college and get an advanced degree, explore new cultures or try writing and publishing. Whatever it is, your schedule should be freer and more flexible than ever, so this is the time to go for it. Start planning today!

**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**  
 You should be looking especially attractive today and glowing with robust health, Cancer. You're apt to feel warm and loving, particularly toward small animals. If you've considered adopting a pet, this is a good day to do it. Business, work, and money matters continue to go well. You should be in a pretty good space. This frame of mind should last you a long time.

**Libra (September 23-October 22)**  
 A warm and loving communication could come to you today from someone close. This could be an email, call, or even a gift of some kind. This could make your day, Libra, and you will probably pass whatever good feelings you draw from it to other friends and family members. Take a walk around your neighborhood and say hello to whomever you meet. It will make you feel even better!

**Capricorn (December 22-January 19)**  
 Someone you care about but haven't seen for a long time could suddenly contact you. You'd usually love this, Capricorn, but today you could be too caught up in projects of your own to want to put them aside. But you will have a lot of fun with this person, and you might even interest him or her in your project. After finishing your work, get some delicious takeout.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**  
 Now that you feel more secure regarding your business and financial situations, Taurus, you might be looking for ways to feed your spiritual and metaphysical interests. Your intuitive and psychic abilities should be operating at a very high level, causing you to experience some vivid dreams and visions and receive the insights that come from them. Books and online lectures might prove especially enlightening.

**Leo (July 23-August 22)**  
 Today you should be feeling especially warm and loving toward close friends and children, Leo. You could also especially appreciate the arts. You might attend a play or concert or decide to try your hand at one of the fine arts yourself. In the evening, go out and enjoy your friends' company, if possible. Celebrate just being together in whatever way you can!

**Scorpio (October 23-November 21)**  
 A very welcome sum of extra money could come your way today, Scorpio, possibly out of the blue. You might want to put this money to work for you in some way, perhaps investing it or purchasing supplies or materials for personal projects. You should feel especially positive where your resources are concerned, and confident in your ability to earn.

**Aquarius (January 20-February 18)**  
 A goal that you've been working on could finally be reached, Aquarius. A group of friends you might not have seen for a long time could schedule a small get-together that you will be all too glad to attend, if possible. Expect to have a lot of fun exchanging news and ideas with these people. You will probably feel particularly happy to see them. You won't want to let so much time go by before you reconnect again.

**Gemini (May 21-June 20)**  
 Today you should feel especially warm and loving toward everyone close to you, Gemini, particularly a love partner. You may want to spend some time with friends or family, if possible, or schedule a romantic evening with your significant other - or both. If you have paperwork to take care of, this is the day to do it. You're particularly practical and feeling good, so the drudgery won't get you down.

**Virgo (August 23-September 22)**  
 Today you might decide to buy a plant for every room in your house or plant a garden, Virgo. If the weather is good, you might visit a nursery or botanical garden. You may not normally be attracted to plants and gardens, but today both beauty and nature seem especially appealing. Make the most of this, however temporary. Your house will look that much more beautiful because of it!

**Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)**  
 Today you may feel especially warm and loving toward just about everybody in your circle, Sagittarius, even those you usually find irritating. You could also be looking especially attractive and feeling more confident than usual. You might even feel like shopping for new clothes. Artistic ideas could flow freely, and you might think of different ways to put them to work for you.

**Pisces (February 19-March 20)**  
 Today you could talk to some interesting new people, Pisces. Among them is at least one person who shares a lot of your interests and could become a close friend. The joy you receive from communicating with these people is likely to spill over into the rest of your day. You could be warmer and more congenial with everyone else in your life, too. In the evening, have some fun.

## Lifestyle | Features

## 'I INSIST': FILM GIVES NEW VOICE TO JAILED IRAN RIGHTS LAWYER

The lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh reflects on a career that has seen her take on the most sensitive of causes in Iran, including saving juveniles from the death penalty, defending outlawed religious minorities and standing up for women's rights. "Even though this movement did not achieve the desired results, it is an experience and an asset for our future steps. Because of this I should tell myself 'Yes! I should have the right to be happy!'" she smiles. Three months later, in June 2018, Sotoudeh was jailed to serve a five-year sentence on spying charges, after a secret trial she was not even able to attend.

The following year, she received a new 12-year sentence for "encouraging corruption and debauchery". The 2012 winner of the European Parliament's Sakharov prize and the 2020 Right Livelihood Award laureate remains behind bars in Tehran's Evin prison, and her case is generating increasing international concern. Deprived of tools to communicate, Sotoudeh, 57, put her life on the line in a one-and-a-half-month hunger strike from August to September, calling for the release of political prisoners during the Covid-19 pandemic. But the release of a documentary film has given Sotoudeh a new voice for her determination to campaign for justice in Iran.

The film, "Nasrin," shows Sotoudeh going about her daily work in Iran before her latest arrest, defending cases including those of women arrested for removing their compulsory headscarf. "If we are successful in these efforts to gain our freedom through our choice of clothing then it will be a permanent freedom," she tells the camera in the film. "We need to speak out. We need to demand. We need to insist. We need to stand our ground."



Sotoudeh has won several international awards for her human rights works. — AFP

## 'Risk a lot'

The credits in the film, made by documentary maker Jeff Kaufman and narrated by "The Crown" actress Olivia Colman, say the filming on the ground in Iran was carried out by "anonymous" with their names withheld for security reasons. "We found a couple of people we could work with and trusted. They were just amazing. They did risk a lot," Kaufman told AFP. "They felt that getting the story out was important." The film, which had its premiere this month at the GlobeDocs Film Festival, shows Sotoudeh plunged into the intensity of her daily routine, negotiating Tehran's crammed traffic at the wheel of her car as she travels from her office to courthouses.

She gently guides one tearful young woman through the prospect that the judiciary is likely to impose a prison sentence for her bold protest in symbolically removing her headscarf. But the smile and kindness never falter. "You must have one of these pastries," she tells her. Another client is the celebrated Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi-who featured Sotoudeh in a cameo in his prize-winning film "Taxi Tehran," made inside a car due to a ban from filmmaking-as he seeks to have a travel ban overturned. The film also shows the toll on Sotoudeh's family life, with her young daughter and son only able to communicate through phone calls and occasional prison visits behind a thick glass pane. "This call is made by an inmate of Evin prison," says an automatic voice that constantly interrupts one phone call with the family.

## 'Enemy of progress'

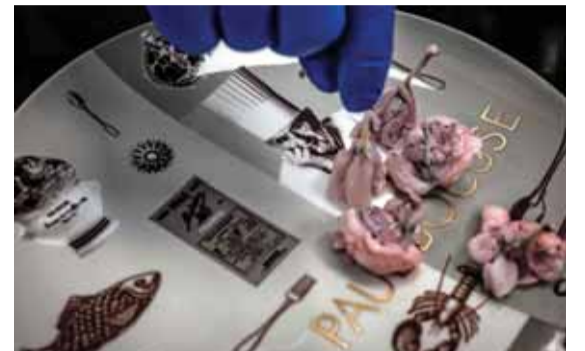
Sotoudeh was previously jailed from 2010 to 2013, during which time she staged several hunger strikes. "One of the problems is that you can never take what they (the authorities) say seriously," her husband Reza Khandan says in the film, "It is never clear if they are telling the truth." Taghi Rahmani, the husband of rights campaigner Narges Mohammadi, who spent half a decade in jail, adds that "Evin is where freedom bleeds and human rights are violated and raped." In a rare flash of hope, Mohammadi was unexpectedly freed last week. Kaufman said Sotoudeh has never had a chance to see the film. "But Reza and the children have, and they have been incredibly supportive," he said, adding that he was optimistic the film would raise awareness of her case. —AFP



Frogs stand in a pond in a frog farm in Pierrelatte, south of Lyon. — AFP photos



French chef Gilles Reinhardt prepares frog legs in the restaurant of Paul Bocuse "Auberge Du Pont de Collonges" in Collonges au Mont D'Or, near Lyon, central France.



A chef prepares frog legs in the restaurant of Paul Bocuse "Auberge Du Pont de Collonges".

## FRENCH FROG FARMERS JUMP TO MEET RESTAURANT DEMAND

Every year, the French consume some 4,000 tons of frogs' legs-the equivalent of 40 blue whales. But nearly all the amphibian limbs that land on French plates come from abroad, since wild harvesting of the protected creatures is all but banned and their cultivation strictly controlled. One of France's handful of frog farmers, Patrice Francois, provides "cuisses de grenouille" to the kitchens of Michelin-starred restaurants and neighborhood bistros alike.

Yet the 100,000 animals being raised at his greenhouses in Pierrelatte in southeast France hardly make a dent in demand for a delicacy that helped earn the French the nickname "frogs," at least in the English-speaking world. "Raising frogs is hard!" Francois told AFP amid a deafening chorus of croaks coming from dozens of ponds teeming with marsh frogs, his farm's specialty. "It is starting to work out, but I am not yet making a living from it," said the 56-year-old, who started France's first frog farm ten years ago. To make ends meet, he also runs a fishmonger's in Roanne, around 230 kilometers (140 miles) north. From the incubation of eggs through raising the tadpoles and fattening up the adults, it takes about a year to produce a frog weighing 50 to 100 grams (1.7-3.5 ounces), each yielding two hind legs much smaller than chicken thighs.

ization by a male frog of eggs deposited by a female can have a success rate of zero to 100 percent, depending on conditions, Francois said.

For a million eggs produced on the farm, some 100,000 or ten percent eventually mature into frogs. The animals are easily stressed, which is harmful to their health and growth, and can suffocate if too

rapidly declining numbers. Only small wild harvests for domestic consumption are allowed, with large fines for anyone trying to catch them for sale. Ninety-nine percent of frogs consumed in the country come from abroad-shipped alive or refrigerated mainly from Albania, Turkey, Bulgaria, Egypt, Belgium and Italy, and in frozen form principally from Indonesia, Vietnam

published this year by Cambridge University Press.

## Michelin-starred

Among Francois's top clients is the storied two-Michelin-star restaurant Bocuse, near Lyon in eastern France, which boasts frogs' legs on its autumn menu. Chef Gilles Reinhardt said the



Chefs and cooks prepare frog legs in the restaurant of Paul Bocuse "Auberge Du Pont de Collonges".



An employee works as frogs stand in a pond in a frog farm in Pierrelatte, south of Lyon.

many are grouped together. The frogs also have to be grouped by size to prevent the larger ones from cannibalizing smaller tank mates.

and India, according to the French agriculture ministry. Frogs are also eaten in other European countries such as Belgium, in the southern United States, and in parts of Asia. Global consumption, according to a 2010 study, was 800 million to 3.2 billion frogs, with the US and European Union the largest importers, and Indonesia and China the main exporters.

Conservationists warn that many frog species are at risk of extinction, driven in large part by human appetites. In key exporter Turkey, harvested species may be extinct by 2032, according to a study

restaurant long had no choice but to rely on imports. "But nothing beats these ultra-fresh French frogs. The clients love them!" he told AFP. "The meat is much more delicate, the frogs fleshier and firmer... while still tender," he said. The restaurant gets 400 legs-or 200 pairs-twice weekly from Patrice Francois. "We are selling them all, despite the context of Covid and the dearth of foreign clients," Reinhardt said. — AFP

## Big-brand BTS promotions disappear as band sparks uproar in China

South Korean boyband BTS is facing a barrage of criticism in China after its leader made remarks about the Korean War and several big-name brands, including Samsung, have apparently distanced themselves from the K-pop group amid the uproar. The controversy is the latest example of the political landmines lying in wait for big brands in China, the world's second-largest economy. The leader of BTS, known by the initials RM, upset many people in China in a speech when the band received an award from a US-based organization for their contribution to South Korea-US relations.

RM invoked a "history of pain" shared between South Korea and the United States and, referring to the 1950-53 Korean War, spoke of "sacrifices of countless men and women". The war pitted South Korean and US forces against those from North Korea and China. The comments touched off heated debate on social media in China.

"They should not make any money from China," one angry user said on the Weibo platform, referring to BTS. "If you want to make money from Chinese fans you have to consider Chinese feelings." Posts featuring Samsung's BTS special edition smartphones and earphones disappeared from Chinese e-commerce platforms Tmall and JD.com as the controversy swirled.

BTS-related posts from other companies including sports fashion brand FILA and automaker Hyundai, which have endorsement deals with the seven-member group, also disappeared from their official Weibo accounts, Chinese users said. It was not clear if the companies or someone else had removed the posts. Samsung, FILA and Hyundai did not respond to requests for comment when contacted by Reuters. The band's management company, Big Hit Entertainment, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. — AFP



A woman walks past a commercial poster showing K-pop group BTS members at a shopping district in Seoul.



## From teens to superstars - Netflix film tracks BLACKPINK's rise

BLACKPINK fans will see a softer side to the K-pop girl power group in a Netflix documentary in which its members open up about their journey from teenage trainees to global superstars. BLACKPINK have become a global phenomenon since their debut in South Korea four years ago. Some of their songs including "Kill This Love" have over one billion hits on YouTube and they have collaborated with stars such as Lady Gaga and Cardi B. In 2018 they worked with Dua Lipa on the single "Kiss and Make up".

The foursome - Jisoo, Jennie, Rose and Lisa - are known for their catchy tunes mixing Korean and English and slick dance routines, but in "BLACKPINK: Light Up The Sky", which premieres on Oct. 14, they wanted to dig deeper, said filmmaker Caroline Suh. Suh combined home videos, behind the scenes footage and candid interviews to tell the life stories of the four women, aged 23 to 25, of whom only Jisoo grew up in Korea. Lisa

is Thai, Rose grew up in Australia and New Zealand and Jennie moved to New Zealand on her own as an 8-year-old, living with a home-stay family.

"I hope that the film humanizes the BLACKPINK members so they are seen as more three dimensional and not as kind of one dimensional K-pop stars and idols," said Suh. "I hope that people are empathetic toward them and cheer them on." As she gained the members' trust, they started to share their experiences, including hardships they endured as trainees, Suh said. Youngsters hoping to make it in the world of K-pop join training programs consisting of hours of daily dance lessons, voice training and school work, alongside weekly auditions. They are not always successful. YG Entertainment, which formed the group, did not set any conditions for the film crew, Suh said. — Reuters

Lifestyle | Features

# Swiping right: Slim pickings for Pakistan's online daters

After endlessly swiping through pictureless profiles on dating apps, Muhammad Ali Shah still hasn't found the one-or really anyone-to get serious with in Pakistan. In the ultra-conservative Islamic republic, where arranged marriages are the norm, he says many women choose to stay anonymous, making online dating matches tricky. "It's slim pickings," sighs the 36-year-old entrepreneur living in the capital Islamabad, saying friends have called him "desperate" after going on dozens of dates over the past three years to little avail. Unlike in many countries where meeting online is routine, Pakistanis who use dating apps regularly face harassment and judgmental relatives-and now also have to contend with a government clampdown.

Women users in particular fear possible retribution and often reveal little about themselves-using cartoons, avatars, or random pictures of nature instead of a profile photo. "Girls aren't comfortable... so they don't really put their pictures or their real names. So it's a guessing game," explains Shah. The self-described conversationalist relies instead on humorous ice breakers with new matches to kickstart chats, and only asks for a picture if the potential date is comfortable and possibly up for meeting. "Most of the time I'm just left swiping because there aren't any pictures. There's no real information. The names are not there," adds Shah. "I don't blame women

for being so careful. I actually think it's very smart." Securing a date is just the first hurdle.

In the self-proclaimed "Land of the Pure"-where sexual relations outside marriage, and homosexuality, are punishable with prison sentences-dating culture is unfamiliar. "People don't really understand the concept (of dating) in Pakistan," explains Shah, who started to use the apps after his divorce. "You meet them once or twice and then they will be like 'we are looking for something serious'."

### 'Taboo'

A 27-year-old woman from Islamabad who was brave enough to post real photos and her name told AFP it was "kind of taboo to be on Tinder". "I was getting phone calls from friends saying 'I can't believe you're on Tinder,'" she said, asking not to be named, adding that she connected with both women and men. But she eventually deleted the app once business clients started trying to interact with her on it. She says some of her friends who were willing to take the risk have found varying levels of success, but only after going on carefully planned dates. "What we do when a friend of ours is going on a Tinder date, we normally just hang out at the same place," she adds. "We make it sort of safe."

If finding love online was already difficult, authorities last month banned Tinder, Grindr and other popular apps for



In this picture a user checks dating apps Grindr (left) and Tinder on mobile phones in Islamabad. — AFP photos



In this picture a user checks the dating app Tinder on a mobile phone in Islamabad.

ailing to "moderate" their content. The move dealt a fresh blow to what is already a niche scene in the country of 220 million people, where most online daters users come from the middle and upper classes in Pakistan's urban areas. The ban leaves other apps like Minder and Bumble outside the dragnet, while savvy users like Shah have already resorted to using VPNs to bypass the prohibition for popular platforms like Tinder. "The biggest impact is the convenience and constancy that major stakeholders like Tinder and Grindr provided Pakistanis," says Zulfiqar Suhail Mannan, a 22-year-old musician and educator liv-

ing in Lahore who identifies as being part of the LGBTQ community.

For the more traditionally inclined, life without dating apps will serve as a return to normality. "Dating is not part of our culture or religion. Things need to be done in a halal way-especially something as important as finding a life partner," explains a 50-year-old matchmaker based in Karachi who has been helping families find suitable partners for arranged marriages for over a decade. "Banning these dating apps is a way to preserve our traditions." But despite the potential pitfalls, some say finding love online is possible and a way to avoid arranged

marriages. "I'd simply had it with the whole culture of arranged marriage in Pakistan, where I'm paraded around in front of mothers, sisters and matchmakers as they pick on my flaws and remind me how I'm not worthy of their son," says a 23-year-old medical student living in Lahore who met her husband on Tinder and asked not to be named. "It took a while until I found someone I could trust, respect, and rely on," she adds. "But I found him on my own terms, and that's what makes it special too." — AFP



In this photo an employee stands in the water tank of the metropolitan outer underground discharge channel in Kasukabe, Saitama prefecture.



An employee walks in the water tank of the metropolitan. — AFP photos



The 72.1 meter-deep number 1 tank of the metropolitan outer underground discharge channel is seen in Kasukabe.



The main building of the metropolitan outer underground discharge channel is pictured in Kasukabe, Saitama prefecture.

## The underground 'Parthenon' protecting Tokyo from floods

It has been called Japan's underground "Parthenon", a cavernous complex charged with protecting Tokyo and surrounding areas from catastrophic flooding-a risk experts warn is growing as climate change advances. Above ground, there is little to give away the cathedral-like feat of engineering that forms the main reservoir of the Kasukabe flood tank, the largest facility of its kind in the world. The immense structure-deep enough in some parts to hold the Statue of Liberty-funnels away and redirects excess water from storms and typhoons, protecting one of the globe's most populous capitals. Soaring pillars

nearby areas by around 90 percent, he said. In Tokyo alone-a city cut through by more than 100 rivers-there are 10 other underground reservoirs and three flood tunnels, and more flood-protection structures are being built. And in western Japan's Osaka, a flood facility similar to the Kasukabe reservoir is being built at a cost of 366 billion yen (\$3.5 billion). Construction is scheduled to finish in 2044.

But experts warn more may be needed, as global warming makes what were previously once-a-century storms increasingly common, and catastrophic. "Japan... has a climate in which floods and heavy rain tend

Japan's Meteorological Agency says the number of typhoons a year that threaten Tokyo has jumped 1.5 times in the last four decades. The Kasukabe reservoir is connected to a 6.3-kilometre (four-mile) tunnel and the system can release accumulated water into the nearby Edogawa river at a rate equivalent to discharging a 25-metre (83-foot) swimming pool every second, with the power of a jumbo-jet engine.

Built in 2006, at a cost of 230 billion yen (\$2.2 billion), the facility swings into action around seven times a year. Excess water flows in automatically, and operators pump it out from the main tank when it approaches capacity, Akiyama said. This year it had already been used seven times by September, with water discharged twice after an unusually long rainy season, he added. Official studies credit the single facility with having saved 148 billion yen in disaster clean-up costs so far.

Japan's anti-flood systems are considered world-class, with the country having learnt bitter lessons from several major disasters after World War II. But experts including Yoshimura say that infrastructure alone isn't enough, especially with advancing climate change, and Japanese authorities have stepped up efforts in recent years to remind citizens to evacuate homes early when requested. The Kasukabe system accepts visitors when it isn't in use, in part to promote the importance of disaster management. "This underground facility is great but it's only one defense measure," Toru Tamai, a 79-year-old pensioner who attended a recent tour, told AFP. "I live on low ground, so floods are a clearer and more present danger than any other natural disasters," he added. "In the end, you can't count on anyone but yourself." — AFP

### More typhoons

In recent years, the rainy and typhoon seasons have brought regular destruction. Massive flooding and landslides killed more than 80 people in west Japan this July, and a typhoon last year killed nearly one hundred people in the country's east.



An employee (right) enters the metropolitan outer underground discharge channel in Kasukabe, Saitama prefecture.

weighing 500 tons each support the main reservoir, a bare concrete tank the length of two football fields. Staff at the facility in Saitama, north of Tokyo, are on constant alert, especially during Japan's rainy and typhoon seasons from June to late October.

"In this area, torrential rain, typhoons and even daily rainfall can cause damage by submerging houses and roads," the site's chief, Nobuyuki Akiyama, told AFP. The reservoir has helped reduce the number of homes affected by water damage in

## Biggest North Pole mission back from 'dying Arctic'

Researchers on the world's biggest mission to the North Pole returned to Germany yesterday, bringing home devastating proof of a dying Arctic Ocean and warnings of ice-free summers in just decades. The German Alfred Wegener Institute's Polarstern ship returned to the port of Bremerhaven after 389 days spent drifting through the Arctic trapped in ice, allowing scientists to gather vital information on the effects of global warming in the region. "I have waited for this moment for so long that my heart is palpating. The ship is now back," said institute director Antje Boetius from on board another ship accompanying the research vessel back to port. Ahead of their return, mission leader Markus Rex told AFP that the team of several hundred scientists from 20 countries have seen for themselves the dramatic effects of global warming on ice in the region considered "the epicentre of climate change."

"We witnessed how the Arctic ocean is dying," Rex said. "We saw this process right outside our windows, or when we walked on the brittle ice." Underlining how much of the sea ice has melted away, Rex said the mission was able to sail through large patches of open water, "sometimes stretching as far as the horizon". "At the North Pole itself, we found badly eroded, melted, thin and brittle ice."

### 'Ice-free Arctic'

If the warming trend in the North Pole continues, then in a few decades we will have "an ice-free Arctic in the summer", Rex said. The researchers' observations have been backed up by US satellite images showing that in 2020, sea ice in the Arctic reached its second-lowest summer minimum on record, after 2012. The Polarstern mission, dubbed MOSAIC, spent over a year collecting data on the atmosphere, ocean, sea ice and ecosystems to help assess the impact of climate change on the region and the world. To carry out the research, four observational sites were set up on the sea ice in a radius of up to 40 kilometers around the ship.

The researchers collected water samples from beneath the ice during the polar night to study plant plankton and bacteria and better understand how the marine ecosystem functions under extreme conditions. The 140-million-euro (\$165 million) expedition is also bringing back 150 terabytes of data and more than 1,000 ice

samples. "The expedition will, of course, produce results on many different levels," Rex said. The team measured more than 100 parameters almost continuously throughout the year and are hoping the information will provide a "breakthrough in understanding the Arctic and climate system", he said. Thomas Krumpfen, sea ice physicist said: "For us the second phase is starting-the analysis of data. A lot of data has returned with the ship and we will likely be busy with it over the next ten years." The aim is to develop models to help predict what heatwaves, heavy rains or storms could look like in 20, 50 or 100 years' time.



People wave from the German icebreaker and research vessel "Polarstern" upon arrival.

### Over 60 polar bears

Since the ship departed from Tromsø, Norway, on September 20, 2019, the crew have seen long months of complete darkness, temperatures as low as -39.5 Celsius (-39.1 Fahrenheit) — and more than 60 polar bears. A shot had to be fired to warn off a polar bear that came too close. But the bigger threat was the coronavirus pandemic in the spring, which left the crew stranded at the North Pole for two months. A multinational team of scientists was due to fly in as part of a scheduled relay to relieve those who had already spent several months on the ice, but the plan had to be redrawn when flights were cancelled across the world as governments scrambled to halt the spread of the coronavirus.

During the course of the expedition, a rotating crew of 300 researchers spent time on board the German ship as it travelled with the ice along a wind-driven route known as the transpolar drift. Radiance Calmer, a researcher at the University of Colorado who was on board the Polarstern from June to September, told AFP that stepping out onto the ice was a "magical" moment. "If you concentrate, you can feel it moving," she said. The voyage was a huge logistical challenge, not least when it came to feeding the crew-during the first three months, the ship's cargo included 14,000 eggs, 2,000 liters of milk and 200 kilograms of rutabaga, a root vegetable. The ship's cook, Sven Schneider, did not underestimate the importance of his role in the mission. "It was my job to maintain the morale of 100 people living in total darkness," he said in an interview with German weekly newspaper Die Zeit. — AFP



German icebreaker and research vessel "Polarstern" arrives at the harbor of northern German town of Bremerhaven, yesterday, after a year-long mission. — AFP photos

## Sports

Photo of the day



Massi Piffa wakeboards on an abandoned boat at sunset in Florida. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## Kim keeps Inbee at bay to claim maiden major title

**PENNSYLVANIA:** With a string of near-misses at the majors and Olympic champion Park In-bee breathing down her neck, it was a relieved Kim Sei-young who tapped in the winning putt to claim the KPMG Women's PGA Championship on Sunday. Kim's triumph at Aronimink Golf Course after a scintillating final round 63 put paid to her status as the most prolific winner on the LPGA Tour among active players never to have won a major title.

"I'm so excited, I'm really hiding my tears at the moment. It was amazing that I really won it. So I'm very happy and excited that I got it done," the 27-year-old South Korean said, beaming next to the winner's trophy. Seven-times major champion Park had beaten Kim for the 2015 title at Westchester Country Club and was only three strokes behind her compatriot going into the final round.

A five-under round might get the job done, she thought. Park duly delivered with a 65 but it was not enough as overnight leader Kim rose to the challenge with her seven-under-par 63. "Obviously Sei-young was just much better than anyone else out there today," said Park, who had been chasing a fourth win in the event. "It was just so hard to believe that she never won a major before because it felt like she won a few," she said of Kim, who has claimed at least one Tour win each season since 2015.

Kim, who was in a tie for second at the 2018 Evian Championship, one of the five women's majors, admitted to struggling with nerves before teeing off on Sunday and kept her eyes averted from the leaderboard during her round. "I won't lie, I did feel the pressure starting last night," she said. "I actually arrived about 30 minutes later than I normally do at the golf course. I did not look at the scoreboard once. I knew In-bee was going to play great. But I had to just focus on playing my own game, one shot at a time." —Reuters

## Dak suffers ugly injury as Cowboys win; Raiders stun NFL champ Chiefs

## Steelers remain unbeaten, knock off Eagles

**TEXAS:** Greg Zuerlein kicked a game-winning field goal from 34 yards out on the final play as Dallas defeated the visiting New York Giants 37-34 Sunday at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, in a game that was overshadowed by an ugly ankle injury suffered by Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott. Midway through the third quarter, Prescott gained 9 yards on a run and was tackled by New York safety Logan Ryan. Prescott immediately clutched his lower right leg. After he was put in a cast, Prescott appeared to be crying as he was carted off the field.

He was transported to an area hospital and ESPN later reported that Prescott was expected to undergo surgery Sunday night. Dallas gained the final possession with 52 seconds left and moved 72 yards in four plays with backup quarterback Andy Dalton at the controls to set up the winning field goal. With the win, the Cowboys (2-3) snapped a two-game losing streak in their first outing against an NFC East Division rival.

The Giants (0-5) went ahead on Devonta Freeman's 4-yard run with 8:46 remaining, extending the lead to 34-31 on Daniel Jones' two-point conversion pass to offensive tackle Andrew Thomas. The 17-yard drive was set up after a fumble by Dalton. Dallas led 24-23 at the time of the injury. Prescott completed 14 of 21 passes for 166 yards and an interception. Dalton was 9-for-11 for 111 yards after replacing Prescott. Jones was 20-for-33 for 222 yards. He was sacked twice.

## Seahawks 27, Vikings 26

Russell Wilson threw a 6-yard touchdown pass to DK Metcalf with 15 seconds to play as Seattle remained undefeated with a victory against visiting Minnesota at an empty CenturyLink Field. The winning drive came after the Vikings (1-4) eschewed a short field-goal attempt that could've given them an eight-point lead with two minutes left. Instead, Alexander Mattison was stopped for no gain on fourth-and-1 from Seattle's 6-yard line. Wilson completed 20 of 32 passes for 217 yards and three touchdowns, helping the Seahawks (5-0) overcome a 13-0 halftime deficit. Minnesota's Kirk Cousins was 27 of 39 for 249 yards and two touchdowns, both to Adam Thielen. But Cousins had a fumble and an interception as Seattle scored 21 points in the opening 6:51 of the second half to take a 21-13 lead.

## Rams 30, Washington Football Team 10

Jared Goff threw for 309 yards and two touchdowns to lead Los Angeles past host Washington in Landover, Md., on a day that Alex Smith played in his first game in nearly two years. Defensive tackle Aaron Donald had four sacks and linebacker Troy Reeder had three as the Rams (4-1) finished with eight on the day. Washington quarterback Josh Allen was sidelined after taking a hit to the head and arm late in the first half by Rams cornerback Jalen Ramsey. He was replaced by Smith, who was making his first NFL appearance since a gruesome leg injury on Nov. 18, 2018 that required 17 separate surgeries

to fix. Smith completed 9 of 17 passes for 37 yards and was sacked six times for Washington (1-4). Allen was 9 of 13 for 74 yards before departing. Washington finished with 108 total yards of offense.

## Dolphins 43, 49ers 17

Ryan Fitzpatrick threw for 350 yards and Miami erupted for 30 first-half points en route to a demolition of San Francisco at Santa Clara, Calif. Fitzpatrick threw touchdown passes to Adam Shaheen, DeVante Parker and Preston Williams during his 14th career 350-yard game, his first since throwing for a career-best 419 against Cincinnati last December. Myles Gaskin added a 1-yard touchdown run for the Dolphins (2-3). The loss was the second straight overall and third in a row at home for the 49ers (2-3), who benched quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo after an ineffective first half in his return from a high-ankle sprain.

## Browns 32, Colts 23

Baker Mayfield threw for 247 yards and two touchdowns, and host Cleveland's defense hassled Indianapolis quarterback Philip Rivers into major mistakes as the Browns won their fourth straight. Mayfield was 21 of 37 with two interceptions as Cleveland improved to (4-1) by complementing its league-best rushing attack with key passes, particularly when it scored on all four first-half possessions. Meanwhile, Rivers completed 21 of 33 for 243 yards, but tossed two interceptions. One was a pick-six that Ronnie Harrison Jr. took 47 yards at the 12:15 mark of the third quarter for a 27-10 Cleveland lead. Rivers was also pressured into an intentional grounding foul in the end zone 16 seconds into the fourth quarter, giving the Browns a safety and a nine-point lead that the Colts (3-2) could not overcome.

## Ravens 27, Bengals 3

Lamar Jackson passed for two touchdowns and the Baltimore defense repeatedly flustered rookie quarterback Joe Burrow as the Ravens cruised past visiting Cincinnati. Mark Andrews and Marquise Brown caught touchdown passes from Jackson, who was 19-of-37 passing for 180 yards and one interception for the Ravens (4-1). Baltimore's defense forced three turnovers, including Patrick Queen's 53-yard fumble return touchdown, and tallied seven sacks. Burrow, the No. 1 overall pick who entered with a rookie-record three consecutive 300-yard games, completed 19 of 30 passes for 183 yards with one interception in his fifth career start for the Bengals (1-3-1).

## Steelers 38, Eagles 29

Rookie Chase Claypool had three scoring catches and ran for another touchdown as Pittsburgh stayed unbeaten with a win over visiting Philadelphia. Pittsburgh, which built a 17-point lead in the third quarter but didn't seal it until Claypool's fourth touchdown with 2:39 left, is 4-0 for the first time since 1979. Claypool had seven catches for 110 yards, Ben



CLEVELAND: Kareem Hunt #27 of the Cleveland Browns runs with the ball in the fourth quarter against the Indianapolis Colts at FirstEnergy Stadium on October 11, 2020 in Cleveland, Ohio. —AFP

Roethlisberger was 27 of 34 for 239 yards and the three touchdowns. For Philadelphia (1-3-1), Miles Sanders had two touchdown runs, and Greg Ward and Travis Fulgham (10 catches, 152 yards) each had a touchdown catch. Carson Wentz was 20 of 35 for 258 yards and two touchdowns against two interceptions.

## Panthers 23, Falcons 16

Teddy Bridgewater threw two touchdown passes in a big first half and it was enough as visiting Carolina won its third game in a row and kept Atlanta winless. Bridgewater completed 27 of 37 passes for 313 yards—including an NFL season-high 261 yards in the first half—and Mike Davis rushed for 89 yards and caught a touchdown pass for the Panthers (3-2). Matt Ryan threw for 226 yards, but had a costly fourth-quarter interception in the end zone for the Falcons (0-5). Calvin Ridley caught eight passes for 136 yards. Todd Gurley rushed for 121 yards and a touchdown on 14 carries.

## Cardinals 30, Jets 10

Kyler Murray accounted for 411 total yards and two touchdowns to lead Arizona past winless New York in East Rutherford, N.J. Murray's 380 passing yards were a career high in his time with Arizona (3-2). DeAndre Hopkins was his top target, finishing with six catches for 131 yards. Joe Flacco started in place of the injured Sam Darnold for the Jets (0-5). Flacco completed 18 of 33 passes for 195 yards and zero interceptions.

## Raider 40, Chiefs 32

Derek Carr passed for 347 yards and three touchdowns, outdueling Patrick Mahomes as Las Vegas stunned previously undefeated Kansas City in Kansas City, Mo. Josh Jacobs added 77 rushing yards and two fourth-quarter touchdowns for the Raiders (3-2), who snapped a seven-game losing streak at Arrowhead Stadium. Carr fired three quick-strike touchdowns in the second quarter on passes of 59, 5 and 72 yards from Carr to Nelson Agholor, Darren Waller and rookie Henry Ruggs. The loss snapped a 13-game winning streak for the Chiefs (4-1) that included last season's Super Bowl run. Mahomes threw for 340 yards and two touchdowns, but was intercepted once—his first of the season—and completed just 22 of 43 passes.

## Texans 30, Jaguars 14

Deshaun Watson tossed three touchdowns, Ka'imi Fairbairn kicked three field goals and Houston defeated visiting Jacksonville for its first victory of the season and first under interim coach Romeo Crennel. Watson passed for 359 yards and finally established a connection with receiver Brandin Cooks, who posted his first 100-yard game with the Texans (1-4). Cooks had eight catches for 161 yards plus a 28-yard touchdown on fourth down with 4:39 left that sealed it. The Jaguars (1-4) lost their fourth straight game, hurt by two costly turnovers and two missed field goals by Stephen Hauschka. —Reuters

## Laird wins playoff for PGA Shriners crown

**LOS ANGELES:** Britain's Martin Laird sank a 22-foot birdie putt on the second playoff hole Sunday to win his first US PGA title in seven years at the Shriners Hospitals for Children Open. The 37-year-old Scotsman made a bogey on the 72nd hole to fall into a playoff with Americans Matthew Wolff and Austin Cook, but responded by curling in the clutch putt at the par-3 17th hole to capture the title. "It has been a while," Laird said. "I've been working hard. I feel like my game is as good as it

has been. Obviously I'm really going to enjoy this one."

World number 351 Laird, who has battled through a knee injury to continue his career, took his fourth US PGA title after wins at the 2009 Shriners, Bay Hill in 2011 and the 2013 Texas Open. "It's amazing," Laird said. "I love this place. I've played well here. Always enjoy coming back here." Since my last win, I've struggled with my game at times. Not getting any younger out here with all these kids, so I've really been working hard and wanted to see what I can still do.

"I'm really proud how I played this week," Laird, Cook and Wolff all finished 72 holes on 23-under 261 at TPC of Summerlin in suburban Las Vegas to set up the event's third playoff in four years, which began with all three parring the 18th hole. On the second extra hole, Wolff came up short from 38 feet and Cook went long from 25, setting the stage for Laird to become the first winner playing on a sponsor exemp-

tion since Wolff last year at Minneapolis.

"Thanks to Shriners for that," said Laird, now set for events through the 2022-23 PGA campaign. US Open runner-up Wolff, 21, missed a chance to become the youngest multiple winner on the PGA Tour since Sergio Garcia in 2001. Clinging to a one-stroke lead in the final round, Laird sent his tee shot right of the cart path at the par-3 17th, trees blocking him from the green and water lurking beyond it. The Scotsman punched the ball under the trees, between bunkers and onto the green, then curled in an 18-foot par putt for an epic up-and-down.

## 'It was pretty special'

Laird, who made a bogey at 18 in his 2009 Shriners win to fall into a playoff, did the same thing again.

This time, his approach went right of the green and he pitched to 28 feet, then two-putted for bogey to set up extra holes. Laird finished on 68 with Cook and Wolff on 66.

"To make that huge par putt I did on 17 in regulation, and then really nearly make two in a row on 18 and then make that (winning putt), it's really nice that the putter saved me coming down the stretch and won it for me," Laird said. Laird made birdie putts from 12 feet at the sixth and 15 feet at the seventh and answered a bogey at the par-3 eighth with an eagle at the par-5 ninth, holing out from 20 feet out of a buried greenside bunker lie.

"A shot I'll always remember," Laird said. "It was pretty special." After opening the back nine with a bogey, Laird birdied the par-5 13th and curled in a 16-foot birdie putt at the par-4 15th to reach 24-under and grab a short-lived two-shot lead. Seconds later, Cook curled in a 39-foot birdie putt at the par-3 17th and Wolff followed moments later by sinking a nine-foot eagle putt at the par-5 16th, staying on Laird's heels to set up the closing drama. —AFP

Sports

# Portugal, Italy hold onto Nations League top spots

## England down Belgium; Netherlands, Bosnia drew 0-0

PARIS: Portugal and Italy kept hold of first place in their UEFA Nations League groups on Sunday with goalless draws against France and Poland on a night of little drama, while England saw off Belgium to take the initiative in their pool. There was not much to talk about at the Stade de France as a star-studded line up of players including Cristiano Ronaldo, Kylian Mbappe and Antoine Griezmann failed to muster much of a spectacle in the League A, Group 3 match.

The 1,000 fans gathered in the cavernous stadium just outside Paris to watch France host the reigning European champions were treated to just four shots on target as two rugged defenses cancelled out each team's attacks. "We didn't score a goal, but we weren't here to score goals," said Portugal coach Fernando Santos.

"France are a great team. They have great players. It's not always possible to create opportunities." Pepe headed home what he thought was a 74th-minute opener when he got on the end of Bruno Fernandes' free-kick but was flagged offside. Ronaldo, chasing his 102nd international goal, was denied by a flying save from Hugo Lloris in added time. Mbappe fluffed France's best when Rui Patricio anticipated his gentle chip when one-on-one with the Portuguese stopper.

Both sides are on seven points, four ahead of Croatia, whose 2-1 home win over Sweden earlier on Sunday was the group's more entertaining match, with a calamitous late lapse from Pontus Jansson allowing the 2018 World Cup finalists to snatch the points in a soaking Zagreb. Defender Jansson dawdled under a high ball into the penalty area with six minutes remaining and allowed Ivan

Perisic to nip in behind. The Inter Milan winger then squared the ball for Andrej Kramaric to tap in from close range. Sweden are stuck on no points after losing all three of their matches.

### Italy settle for Poland point

Italy stretched their unbeaten streak to 18 matches and held onto top spot in League A, Group 1 with their stalemate in Gdansk. New Juventus signing Federico Chiesa missed the chance to win the match for the dominant 'Azzurri' from close range in the 11th minute. Roberto Mancini's side are one point ahead of the Netherlands, who also drew 0-0 with Bosnia and Herzegovina, ahead of their meeting in Bergamo on Wednesday.

"We had several opportunities, especially in the first half when we could have scored at least two goals," said Mancini. "Beyond the result, however, we are happy. We didn't score, but it happens." England manager Gareth Southgate said his side showed what they were made of after coming from behind to beat Belgium 2-1 and move top of League A, Group 2 earlier on Sunday.

The Three Lions are on seven points, one ahead of the world's top-ranked side after Marcus Rashford's spot-kick and Mason Mount's deflected winner 25 minutes from time cancelled out Romelu Lukaku's early penalty. "We are not going to face a more difficult game defensively," said Southgate. "That is the beauty of the Nations League, you get games against this level of opponent. It's a great experience for them and to go and win it should give them a sense of what might be possible in the next few years."

Denmark are three points behind England in



SAINT-DENIS: Portugal's forward Ronaldo (2nd left) vies with France's midfielder Paul Pogba (center) during the Nations League football match between France and Portugal on October 11, 2020. —AFP

third after their simple 3-0 win over bottom side Iceland. In League B, Erling Braut Haaland showed what the rescheduled Euro 2020 would be missing after he slammed home a hat-trick to help Norway to a 4-0 thrashing of Romania. Haaland struck in

the 13th, 64th and 74th minutes as Norway moved level on six points with group leaders Austria, 1-0 winners at Northern Ireland. Norway were knocked out of the Euros playoffs by Serbia on Thursday. —AFP

## Rays edge Astros to win opener in MLB playoff series

LOS ANGELES: Mike Zunino drove in the winning run and Diego Castillo thwarted two comeback bids as the Tampa Bay Rays edged Houston 2-1 Sunday in the Major League Baseball playoffs. The Rays, bolstered by pitching depth and defensive work, captured the opener in the best-of-seven American League Championship Series with game two set for Monday. "We take pride in our pitching and our defense and it was good for us to show that tonight," Zunino said. The Astros are in their fourth consecutive ALCS while the Rays are playing for a World Series berth for only the second time in club history. Houston opened the scoring on Jose Altuve's solo homer in the first inning but Tampa Bay equalized on Randy Arozarena's solo homer in the fourth inning.

The Rays plated the deciding run in the fifth when Willy Adames walked, advanced to second and third on ground outs and scored on Zunino's single to centerfield. "With a guy in scoring position, I was just trying to get something up high in

the zone," Zunino said. "I was lucky enough to get some contact on it." Rays starting pitcher Blake Snell, a 27-year-old US left-hander, allowed one run on six hits with two walks and two strikeouts over five innings. "They made me work a lot," Snell said. "They made it really tough. The bullpen held it down like always but a lot more work to be done."

John Curtiss and Ryan Thompson each pitched an inning of shutout relief and Castillo closed down the Astros in tricky situations in the eighth and ninth innings, delivering Tampa Bay's 60th consecutive victory when leading after seven innings. The Astros tagged Rays relief pitcher Aaron Loup to start the eighth. Houston's Michael Brantley was hit by a pitch, took second on a wild pitch and, after a one-out Carlos Correa walk, took third on a bases-loading single by Kyle Tucker.

That prompted Tampa Bay to bring in Dominican right-hander Castillo, whose first pitch—a 97 mph sinker-enticed Yuli Gurriel to hit into an inning-ending double play to second baseman Brandon Lowe, halting the Astros threat and keeping the Rays ahead. "It hurts to lose these one-run games," Astros manager Dusty Baker said. "You don't have any chance if you don't get any opportunities. We had a heck of a lot of chances tonight and they just got away."

In the bottom of the eighth, Tampa Bay's Yandy Diaz opened with a single and Manuel Margot



CALIFORNIA: The Tampa Bay Rays celebrate their 2-1 victory against the Houston Astros in game one of the American League Championship Series at PETCO Park on October 11, 2020. —AFP

walked with two outs, but Kevin Kiermaier popped up to end the threat, the Rays falling to 1-for-8 at the plate with runners in scoring position. "There's no margin for error and our guys take that approach every time they take the field," Rays manager Kevin Cash said. In the ninth, Castillo surrendered a one-out single to Josh Reddick and George Springer advanced the runner into scoring position on a ground out only to have Castillo strike out Altuve to end the game. —AFP

## Dakar stars take chequered flag as rally-raid roars back to life in Spain

KUWAIT: Following the frantic high-speed action at the Andalucia Rally it's evident that the world's premier off-roaders are back on the pace and already focused on their next trip to Saudi Arabia. The car contest at the Andalucia Rally promised to deliver a heavyweight clash of off-road driving talent and it never disappointed. Even after crossing 1,000 kilometers of perilous terrain in southern Spain, the leading cars were still trading blows right up to the finish line. Coming out on top was three-time Dakar winner Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) behind the wheel of his Toyota Hilux. Podium finishes on all four stages - as well as a decisive stage win on day two - put the Qatari in front of his rivals.

"We tested a lot of things that will help us at the next Dakar. Now we're looking forward to the Dakar where our aim will be to win," - Nasser Al-Attiyah

Second place went to Carlos Sainz (ESP) who finished the rally in his native Spain with a stage win on the 220-kilometre final day. Third placed Yazeed Al-Rajhi (KSA) was followed home by 13-time Dakar champion Stephane Peterhansel (FRA). All these candidates for victory at the 2021 Dakar showed that they still have what it takes to push for rally-raid's biggest prize.

"We got a lot of answers here that we needed before we go to the next Dakar," - Carlos Sainz

The accelerated learning curve of the Red Bull Off-Read Junior Team continued in Spain as the three drivers with an average age of just 21 grew in confidence as the rally progressed. This confidence was underlined by Mitch Guthrie Jr. (USA) winning the final side-by-side (SxS) stage to take third overall in the category.

"This feels like a really important learning experience for the next Dakar," - Mitch Guthrie Jr.

Kevin Hansen (SWE) and Seth Quintero (USA) will also take plenty of positives away from their first-ever rally-raid contest. Rallycross star Hansen impressed the team with his consistency as he took his OT3 to fourth overall. "Today we had a really, really good stage. We really tried to push in the beginning and catch some speed. We had one tricky moment with the navigation but overall we kept



Kevin Hansen

up a great rhythm," - Kevin Hansen

18-year-old Quintero showed incredible mental resilience to battle back from a tough start in Spain and end with a podium finish on stage four.

"We're sitting third and that's great considering how our rally started. I'm really looking forward to the next rally that we do," - Seth Quintero

In the bike race the overall win was claimed by Kevin Benavides (ARG) on his Honda. The Dakar winning members of the Red Bull KTM Factory Team kept on the pace throughout the rally with Toby Price (AUS) the best placed of the bunch in fourth overall. Two-time Dakar champion Price put his focus on regaining the feel of racing ahead of his trip to Saudi Arabia next year.

"Now we're going to do more training and get organized for January," - Toby Price

2018 Dakar winner Matthias Walkner (AUT) bagged sixth place while the Andalucia Rally finished on a massive high for rookie Daniel Sanders (AUS) who took the stage win on the final day in Spain. Also getting in plenty of hours in the saddle in Spain was India's top off-roader CS Santosh (IND).

"I thought I might be on my way to a Top 5 result and then at the finish line they told me I was number one. That was pretty awesome," - Daniel Sanders

2017 Dakar winner Sam Sunderland (GBR)



Nasser Al-Attiyah



joined top female rider Laia Sanz (ESP) in retiring during the opening days of the rally due to injuries caused by crashing on the route. Both Sunderland and Sanz are confident they'll be back to full fitness before the start of the 2021 Dakar next January. The upcoming Dakar, the second to be hosted by Saudi Arabia, now becomes the full focus of all the off-roaders and the teams that paid a visit to Andalucia. Machines will be further tuned and athletes will undergo strict fitness regimes as the January 3 start date of the next Dakar looms on the horizon.

### News in brief

#### Enable retires after stellar career

DUBAI: Enable, one of Europe's most successful horses, has been retired after a career spanning five seasons, owners Juddmonte said yesterday. The six-year-old Enable won 15 of 19 races and became the only mare to win the King George VI & Queen Elizabeth Stakes three times. Enable twice won the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe—Europe's richest race—and earned more than 10 million pounds (\$13.02 million) in career prize money. "After consulting her trainer John Gosden and his racing manager Teddy Grimthorpe, Prince Khalid (Abdullah) has decided that Enable will be retired from racing," Juddmonte CEO Douglas Erskine Crum said in a statement. Enable failed to win the Arc for a record third time last week, finishing sixth, and jockey Frankie Dettori, who rode her to victory in the King George Stakes, said he got emotional when he heard about the retirement decision. —Reuters

#### Brazil's Inter beat Athletico 2

PORTO ALEGRE: Thiago Galhardo got his 13th goal of the season as Internacional edged Athletico Paranaense 2-1 in Brazil's Serie A on Sunday. Galhardo, the league's top scorer, put the home side ahead with a header after seven minutes and then Abel Hernandez doubled their lead, also with a header, with 36 minutes gone. Renato Kayzer pulled one back for Athletico with the third headed goal of the game three minutes before halftime but neither side could score again and Inter took the three points. Athletico Mineiro top the table with 30 points, two ahead of Inter, who have played a game more. Athletico Paranaense are on 15 points and sit 15th in the 20-team league. —Reuters

#### Falcons dump Dan Quinn

NEW YORK: Dan Quinn was fired as coach of the NFL's Atlanta Falcons and general manager Thomas Dimitroff was also axed Sunday, hours after losing to Carolina for a 0-5 start. The Panthers' 23-16 road triumph proved to much for team president Rich McKay, who assumed oversight of operations until an interim coach is named as a search begins for a new top executive. "Decisions like these are very difficult, but the previous two seasons and start to this one have been especially hard for me," team owner Arthur Blank said in a statement. "This is a results business and I owe it to our fans to put the best product we can on the field. We have poured every resource possible into winning and will continue to do so, but the results of late do not meet our standard or what I've promised our fans." —AFP

#### Federer hails Rafael Nadal

PARIS: Roger Federer saw Rafael Nadal equal his all-time record of 20 Grand Slam titles with a 13th French Open victory on Sunday and hailed it as "one of sport's greatest achievements". Nadal demolished Novak Djokovic 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 to add a 13th Roland Garros to his four US Opens, two Wimbledon and one Australian Open crown. "I have always had the utmost respect for my friend Rafa as a person and a champion," tweeted Federer, who sat out the tournament to recover from knee surgery. "As my greatest rival over many years, I believe we have pushed each other to become better players. "Therefore it is a true honor for me to congratulate him on his 20th Grand Slam victory. "It is especially amazing that he has won Roland Garros an incredible 13 times which is one of the greatest achievements in sport. I hope the 20 is just another step on the continuing journey for both of us." —AFP

#### Nene penalty boost Fluminense

RIO DE JANEIRO: A second half penalty from Nene handed Fluminense a 1-0 win over Bahia in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday. The former Paris St Germain and Monaco player scored the only goal of the game from the penalty spot in the 71st minute after he was brought down in the box. The three points lifted Fluminense into fifth place in Serie A, six points behind leaders Atletico Mineiro, who beat Goias 3-0 on Saturday. Bahia are in 13th place in the 20-team table. —Reuters

**14** Dak suffers injury as Cowboys win; Raiders stun NFL champ



**15** Rays edge Astros to win opener in MLB playoff



**15** Portugal, Italy hold onto Nations League top spots



FLORIDA: The Los Angeles Lakers pose for a team photo with the trophy after winning the 2020 NBA Championship over the Miami Heat in Game Six of the 2020 NBA Finals at Advent Health Arena on October 11, 2020. —AFP

## Lakers capture 17th NBA title

### Happy ending to a season marred by death of Bryant

ORLANDO: A Los Angeles Lakers team led by superstar LeBron James dominated the Miami Heat 106-93 on Sunday to win a record-equaling 17th NBA championship but their first in a decade. James added another chapter to an epic career, fueling the Lakers with a triple-double of 28 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists and capturing his fourth NBA title with a third different team, as well as earning NBA Finals Most Valuable Player honors for a fourth time. "It means a lot to represent this franchise," James said, recalling that he told team owner Jeanie Buss when he arrived in Los Angeles in 2018, "I wanted to put this franchise back where it belongs."

"For me to be a part of such a historical franchise is an unbelievable feeling." Anthony Davis, playing in his first championship series after years of frustration in New Orleans, added 19 points and 15 rebounds as the Lakers completed a four-games-to-two triumph in the best-of-seven championship series more than eight months after the death in a helicopter crash of team legend Kobe Bryant—who led the Lakers to their last title in 2010.

The Lakers out-hustled, out-muscled and out-played Miami, the Heat, making sure it wouldn't come down to any last-gasp effort as it did when they were denied in game five on Friday. Los Angeles had blown

it open by halftime, their 36 second-quarter points equaling the Heat's entire first half total as the Lakers took a 64-36 lead into the break.

Four Lakers players had scored in double-figures by halftime. Rajon Rondo was a perfect six-for-six from the floor in the first half as the Lakers built the second-largest halftime lead in NBA Finals history. Rondo, who won a title with the Celtics in 2008, scored 19 points off the bench. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added 17 and Danny Green scored 11 and the Lakers pulled level with the Boston Celtics for most titles all-time. The Heat, who had stunned the Lakers on Friday on the back of Jimmy Butler's gritty triple-

double, couldn't produce another miracle in the face of Los Angeles' stifling defense.

Bam Adebayo led the Heat with 25 points and 10 rebounds and Butler and Jae Crowder added 12 apiece, but Miami simply had no answer for the knockout blow Los Angeles delivered in the first half. The series in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida, capped not only an emotional season for the Lakers with the loss of talisman Bryant but a season of uncertainty and upheaval for the NBA as players grappled with the coronavirus pandemic and the demands for social and racial justice sweeping across the United States. —AFP

### LeBron improves case vs Jordan as all-time NBA best

LOS ANGELES: As the first player to lead three different teams to NBA titles, LeBron James has revived the question of whether he or Michael Jordan is the league's greatest-ever superstar. "I don't know," James said. "I'm going to let you guys talk about it." James captured his fourth NBA title in his 10th finals appearance when the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Miami Heat 106-93 on Sunday to close out the series 4-2. James was named the NBA Finals Most Valuable Player for the fourth time. The only player with more finals MVP awards is Jordan with six. Jordan won six titles in six NBA Finals appearances for the Chicago Bulls during the 1990s, taking most of two seasons off between two three-peats to pursue a baseball career after his father's death.

Jordan's game evolved over time, the high-leaping playmaker who could single-handedly dominate foes giving way to a veteran who could get the most from every teammate and help carry the load during his second title trilogy. Taking full advantage of the era of big money and free agency that Jordan largely created, James maximized his money and turned multiple teams into champions, his role evolving over the years as did his supporting cast.

Where James is clearly king is off the court. His education initiatives and social activism are a far cry from Jordan's infamous comment that "Republicans buy sneakers too," when asked why he was not more politically active. If mere titles alone decided the greatest NBA player, dominant 1960s Boston big man Bill Russell would own the tag with 11, more than Jordan and James combined, in 13 seasons. However, it was Jordan who took the NBA global by leading the 1992 Olympic "Dream

Team" to Barcelona gold, with James responding to a sub-par bronze effort in 2004 by sparking US gold medal runs in 2008 and 2012.

James is only the fourth player in history to reach 10 career NBA Finals. Only Russell and teammate Sam Jones have played more, but James is only 4-6 in the finals. Does the purity of Jordan's 6-for-6 feat beat the longevity and diversity of James's success? Does it even matter? Can't each be king of his era? "The best and most 'complete' player I have seen in my lifetime is @KingJames on and off the floor," long-time Jordan nemesis Isiah Thomas tweeted Thursday. "He passed the eye test and the numbers confirm what my eyes have seen in every statistical category. #GOAT let it be known!"

Thomas is hardly a neutral observer, the bad blood between himself and Jordan clear to see in the Jordan documentary "The Last Dance" that became a global TV hit during the coronavirus shutdown this year. Kendrick Perkins, a 2015 teammate of James in Cleveland who won an NBA crown with Boston in 2008, cast his vote in the debate with LeBron also. "My separator from Bron and everybody else is PRESSURE," he tweeted. "Goat expectations from day 1 at 18 years old, carry the city from day (1), comparisons to legends from day 1. All expectations EXCEEDED!"

James has won his latest title at 35, the same age when Jordan won his last crown. But James is just getting started with the Lakers. "This never gets old," he said. After teen prodigy James was the 2003 NBA Draft top pick, he led Cleveland to the NBA Finals at age 22, his high-leaping, slam dunk, Jordan-esque moves unable to stop the Cavs from being swept by San Antonio in 2007. After dumping the Cavs in 2010 for Miami, James led the Heat to four consecutive NBA Finals and won two titles as part of the "Big Three" with Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh.

James returned to Cleveland in 2014 and with a rebuilt roster brought a title to his home region in 2016, denying a 73-win Golden State team a run of four consecutive titles. His Cavs made the finals four



LOS ANGELES: Lakers fans celebrate in front of the Staples Center on October 11, 2020 in Los Angeles, California. People gathered to celebrate after the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the Miami Heat in Game 6 of the NBA Finals. —AFP

years in a row but only won once. James is the all-time playoff scoring leader, has played a record 260 playoff games, and ranks third on the NBA all-time scoring list. He's a 16-time NBA All-Star and a four-time NBA Most Valuable Player while Jordan is a 14-time NBA All-Star and a five-time NBA MVP.

#### LeBron rules off-court

While Jordan was no activist, he was a pioneer off the court, from sealing landmark deals with Nike and others to pushing the global growth of the game. His efforts helped build a foundation

from which James could be more outspoken. James and his More Than A Vote initiative helped register voters and recruited 10,000 election poll workers. He has been a vocal critic of US President Donald Trump and supported racial justice policies in the wake of George Floyd's death last May. "I do my part on continuing to create change, continuing to educate, continuing to enlighten communities all over the world that listen to me," James said. "You control what you can and what you can't, sometimes as much as it hurts, you just try not to worry about it." —AFP