



**6** US on brink as vigilantes, guns and hate stoke fears



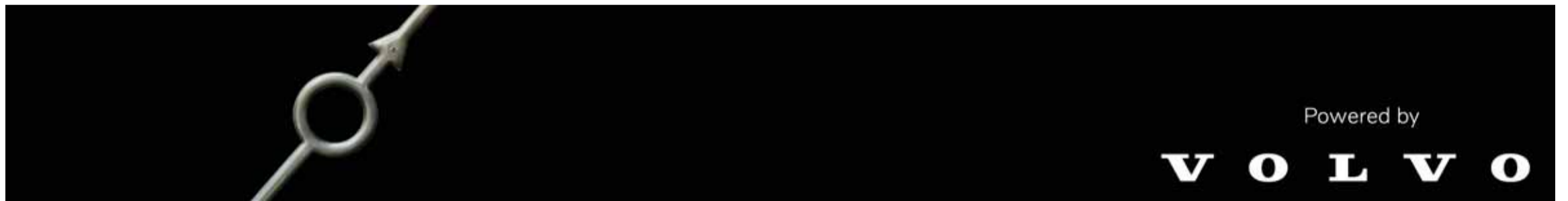
**7** Despair forces girls across Asia into child marriage



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# Education minister grilled over e-learning, 'mismanagement'

## Assembly to study delaying payment of installments for six more months



KUWAIT: Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi is seen during his grilling at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Three MPs yesterday grilled Education Minister Saud Al-Harbi over a variety of allegations including failing to introduce distance learning at schools and preferring to appoint expat teachers instead of Kuwaitis and stateless people (bedoons). The minister categorically denied the allegations, saying priority in appointments has always been for Kuwaitis, adding that many relatives of Kuwaitis and bedoons have been appointed.

MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei said the minister had 1,032 vacancies for appointments of Kuwaitis and children of Kuwaiti women married to foreign husbands, but the minister appointed expats, turning the education ministry into a ministry of expats. The lawmaker also accused the minister of "slaugh-

tering" the education ministry by transferring the head of the systems department to a remote area after the completion of a key project related to distance learning. He claimed the minister randomly punished others too.

Subaei said that a number of private schools also forced students to buy school uniforms even though education is being conducted through distance learning. In another grilling, MP Khalil Abul said the minister failed in introducing distance learning and has ignored appeals to meet with specialists in the field. He said the minister also failed in implementing an adequate educational policy amidst the coronavirus pandemic, labeling what he has done as disappointing. He charged the minister of "wasting" a whole year of students as he remained hesitant between adopting distance learning and regular education.

MP Awdah Al-Awdah accused the minister of failing to give educational certificates to bedoons, thus delaying them the opportunity to secure jobs. The minister denied the allegations, saying the claims made by MPs did not even amount to accusations, regretting that the grillings were not for the sake of educational reforms. He insisted that priority of appointment has remained for Kuwaitis, adding that the appointment of bedoons and children of Kuwaiti women are made only when there is need for them. The minister said the ministry has cracked down on forged degrees and in the past few months referred five people to the public prosecution.

Meanwhile, the Assembly agreed to study a proposal to delay payment of loan installments for another six months.

## Macron demands change as Lebanon marks centenary

BEIRUT: French President Emmanuel Macron pressed his "risky" drive for political change in Lebanon yesterday, as the former French mandate marked its centenary while teetering on the brink of the abyss. Macron has set an ambitious goal for his second visit since a deadly August 4 explosion ravaged Beirut: to press for change without being seen as a meddler. He kicked off his trip on Monday, not by visiting political leaders, but by spending more than an hour with singing legend Fairuz, who at 85 is a rare unifying figure in Lebanon.

Macron ticked off more symbols to mark 100 years yesterday since French mandate authorities proclaimed the creation of Greater Lebanon. In the Jaj forest northeast of Beirut, he planted a cedar tree - Lebanon's national symbol - to express "confidence in the future of the country," his office said in a statement. The French air force flew over-

head leaving a trail of red, white and green smoke - the colors of the country's flag. Lebanon "will be able to rise again," Macron later said in a post on Twitter.

Macron then returned for a second visit to Beirut port, ground zero of the colossal blast that killed more than 180 people, wounded at least 6,500 others and laid waste to entire districts of the capital. He oversaw the distribution of aid from the French helicopter carrier Tonnerre which arrived in Beirut on Aug 14. Macron also met with some 400 French soldiers working with the Lebanese army to clear thousands of tons of debris from the port, vital for a country whose food is 85 percent imported.

The Beirut explosion compounded Lebanon's worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war, with a UN agency warning on Sunday that more than half of the population risk a food crisis by the end of the year. It caused up to \$4.6 billion worth of damage and a blow to economic activity of up to \$3.5 billion, according to a World Bank assessment.

On Aug 9, the international community pledged \$252.7 million (around \$300 million) in emergency aid during a video conference jointly organized by France and the United Nations.

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French President Emmanuel Macron plants a cedar tree alongside members of the NGO Jouzour Loubnan during a ceremony marking Lebanon's centenary in Jaj Cedar Reserve Forest yesterday. — AFP

## Junk food linked to age-marker in chromosomes

PARIS: People who eat a lot of industrially processed junk food are more likely to exhibit a change in their chromosomes linked to ageing, according to research presented yesterday at an online medical conference. Three or more servings of so-called "ultra-processed food" per day doubled the odds that strands of DNA and proteins called telomeres, found on the end of chromosomes, would be shorter compared to people who rarely consumed such foods, scientists reported at the European and International Conference on Obesity.

Short telomeres are a marker of biological ageing at the cellular level, and the study suggests that diet is a factor in driving the cells to age faster. While the correlation is strong, however, the causal relationship between eating highly processed foods and diminished telomeres remains speculative, the authors cautioned. Each human cell has 23 pairs of chromosomes that contain our genetic code.

Telomeres do not carry genetic information, but are vital for preserving the stability and

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## #MeToo in Iran: Women break long silence

TEHRAN: Three years after the #MeToo movement spread globally, Iranian women have broken their silence on sexual violence, raising awareness about a subject that's taboo in the Islamic republic.

## All schools, nurseries in Wuhan open

BEIJING: Students in face masks returned to class yesterday in Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the coronavirus first emerged last year, as the city opened schools and kindergartens for the first time in seven months. Nearly 1.4 million students resumed classes at some 2,800 kindergartens, primary and middle schools across the city, following the re-opening of high schools in May.

State media broadcast images of

thousands of students hoisting the Chinese flag - a daily routine at all public schools - despite warnings to avoid mass gatherings. Schools have drawn up plans to switch back to online teaching should new outbreaks emerge, city officials said last week. Students were advised to wear masks to and from school and avoid public buses or trains if possible. Schools were also ordered to conduct drills and training sessions to help prepare for new outbreaks.

Official figures show Wuhan accounted for 80 percent of China's more than 4,600 coronavirus-related deaths and was under a strict lockdown for more than two months from late January.

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WUHAN: Elementary school students attend class on the first day of the new semester in this city in China's central Hubei province yesterday. — AFP

For the past week, many mostly anonymous Internet users in Iran have come forward with allegations of falling unconscious and being raped after having their drinks spiked, all by the same man.

The method used by the alleged rapist has provoked outrage on social media, encouraging others to reveal cases of sexual assault experienced when they were still youths. They have taken to Twitter to air their allegations, although they have done so without using the #MeToo hashtag. Other Iranians, including a school teacher, an academic, a novelist, a renowned painter, a prominent singer, an actor and

a tech executive are among the others to have faced accusations of rape and sexual assault.

The majority of the testimonies date back more than a decade. This has caused some to deplore the lack of support in the face of such sexual violence that has been ignored for many years. They have pointed the finger at society, the Iranian intelligentsia and even families as accomplices of the perpetrators of violence against women. "This movement should have started much earlier," said Hana Jalali, a 25-year-old accountant in Tehran.

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## Local

# Five-year-old falls to death in Hawally

## Businessman wanted for over KD 22 million in unpaid debts arrested

KUWAIT: A five-year-old child died after he fell from the window of his family's apartment on the fifth floor of a Hawally building, Al-Rai reported yesterday quoting security sources. Case papers indicate that Mubarak Hospital reported admitting a five-year-old Egyptian boy with serious head injuries and various fractures to the ICU, where he later died. According to the father's statement, the child was playing when he fell from the window, landing on the roof of the building's annex. A case was filed and further legal measures are ongoing.

### KD 22 million

Criminal evidence detectives arrested an Arab businessman wanted for over KD 22 million in unpaid debts, Al-Anbaa reported, quoting sources familiar with the case. The suspect, whose visa had expired since July 2018, was ambushed in Dasma following investigations after detectives were tipped off about his whereabouts, and that he was hiding in a villa in the area. He was taken to the proper authorities for further action.

### Domestic violence

A Kuwaiti woman reported that her husband had beaten and insulted her over some family disputes, Al-Rai reported. Security sources said the woman



## Kuwaiti patient quarantined in Italy

provided Mubarak Al-Kabeer detectives with medical reports about the injuries she sustained. The sources added that the woman also provided detectives with her husband's information and that a case was filed pending summoning the man for further investigations.

### Quarantined in Italy

Italian security authorities mandated a Kuwaiti to be quarantined in hospital after he tested positive for COVID-19 on docking in a harbor in southern Italy. Al-Rai learnt that the 71-year-old citizen was sailing a boat with a group of friends from Croatia to Nice, when they stopped at a southern Italian harbor for fuel and supplies. However, as part of precautionary measures followed in Italy, they were all tested to make sure they were free of the coronavirus. But the Kuwaiti man's test came positive and he was referred to the infectious diseases hospital in Catanzaro to be quarantined before resuming his cruise.

### Yacht on fire

A fire broke out in yacht docked at Al-Zour marina, said security sources, noting that firemen managed to control the fire before it spread to other yachts. No casualties were reported and further investigations are in progress to determine the cause of the blaze, reported Al-Rai.

### Police impersonator

An Indian reported that someone impersonating as a police detective threatened him and stole his wallet and mobile phone, security sources told Al-Rai. Case papers indicate that the victim told detectives at Salmiya police station that the suspect stopped him while he was driving and claimed to be a police detective. He added that the suspect then pointed a knife at him and took his wallet and mobile phone by force, before fleeing the scene. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress to identify and arrest the suspect.

### Fraud case

A Kuwaiti woman filed a case at Adan police station against a Kuwaiti man, who she accused of taking KD 3,200 from her to allegedly invest in profitable projects, said security sources, noting that the woman said the suspect instead spent the money and didn't keep his promises. A fraud case was filed and the suspect is being summoned for further investigations, Al-Rai reported.

## Firemen rescue young swimmers off Blajat beach

KUWAIT: Firemen rescued two juveniles who almost drowned while swimming on Blajat beach Monday evening. The two Kuwaiti kids were swimming near the beach when strong waves almost swept them further out to the sea. They swam towards breakwater rocks and clung to them until help arrived, Kuwait Fire Service Department said. They were both in good health condition. Meanwhile, firemen were able to free the hand of a seven-year-old child from a meat grinder Monday evening. The Arab boy was taken to Adan Hospital for a medical checkup, KFSD said.



KUWAIT: Firemen work on freeing a child's hand from a meat grinder.

## Kuwait COVID-19 cases rise by 702, deaths by three

KUWAIT: Kuwait recorded 702 confirmed novel coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours, raising the tally to 85,811, with three people having succumbed to the disease as the death toll reached 534, a health ministry official said yesterday. The figures include people who have come into contact with infected individuals, and others whose source of infection is currently being investigated,

ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said. In terms of health zones, 163 cases were reported in Al-Ahmadi, 152 in Jahra, 142 in Hawalli, 126 in the Capital and 119 in Farwaniya, added the official. Earlier, the ministry said 433 people have recovered from the virus, upping the total number of those to have overcome the disease to 77,657. There are 90 patients currently receiving intensive care out of a total 7,620 patients being hospitalized. Some 3,997 swab tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, out of a total of 621,616 so far, added the spokesman. The official reiterated the strict need to abide by health precautions, urging nationals and expatriates alike that following social distancing rules is the only way to keep the virus at bay. — KUNA



## Kuwait condemns Houthi attack on Saudi airport

KUWAIT: Kuwait condemns and denounces, in the strongest terms, an unmanned drone attack by Houthi militia on Abha International Airport in Saudi Arabia, a Foreign Ministry official said yesterday. These ongoing criminal attacks, that target civilians and commercial air traffic movement, strongly violate the rules of international humanitarian law and other international conventions and are a threat to the security of Saudi Arabia and the stability of the region, said the source. This requires swift and effective

action by the international community to curb these attacks and stop them and support the efforts of the United Nations Secretary General special envoy to Yemen, to reach a political solution according to the three references, in a manner that guarantees the security and stability of Yemen and the region, it was added. Kuwait fully stands by the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and supports all measures it takes to ensure its security and stability, the source concluded. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Airport customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle 330 grams of marijuana yesterday. The contrabands were found hidden in a chocolate box that arrived from the UK by courier.

## Junk food linked to age-marker in...

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integrity of chromosomes and, by extension, the DNA that all the cells in our body relies on to function. As we get older, our telomeres shorten naturally because each time a cell divides, part of the telomere is lost. That reduction in length has long been recognized as a marker of biological age. Scientists led by professors Maria Bes-Rastrollo and Amelia Marti, both of the University of Navarra in Spain, wanted to explore a suspected connection between the regular consumption of highly processed junk food and shrinking telomeres.

Earlier studies had pointed to a possible link with sugar-sweetened drinks, processed meats and other foods loaded with saturated fats and sugar, but the findings were inconclusive. Ultra-processed foods are industrially manufactured substances composed of some mix of oils, fats, sugars, starch and proteins that contain little if any whole or natural foods. They often include artificial flavorings, colorings, emulsifiers, preservatives and other additives that increase shelf-life and profit margins.

These same properties, however, also mean that such foods are nutritionally poor compared to less processed alternatives, the researchers said. Earlier studies have shown strong correlations between ultra-processed foods and hypertension, obesity, depression, type 2 diabetes and some forms of cancer. These conditions are often age-related in so far as they are linked to oxidative stress and inflammation known to influence telomere length.

Marti and colleagues looked at health data for nearly 900 people aged 55 or older who provided DNA samples in 2008 and provided detailed data about their eating habits every two years thereafter. The 645 men and 241 women were equally divided into four groups, depending on their consumption of ultra-processed foods. Those in the high-intake group were more likely to have a family history of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and abnormal blood fats.

That also consumed less foods associated with the Mediterranean diet - fiber, olive oil, fruits, vegetable and nuts. Compared to the group who ate the fewest ultra-processed foods, the other three showed an increased likelihood - 29, 40 and 82 percent, respectively - of having shortened telomeres. The findings were published earlier this year in the peer-reviewed American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. — AFP

## Macron demands change as Lebanon...

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Macron said yesterday that he is ready to host a second aid conference for blast-hit Lebanon next month. "I am ready for us to organize, maybe around mid or late October, another international support conference with the United Nations," he said after meeting UN representatives and local aid groups in Beirut.

Later yesterday, Macron was to meet with under-fire political leaders widely blamed for the explosion, which was caused by a stockpile of ammonium nitrate fertilizer that had languished in the port for years. Macron, who upon arriving on Monday called for a so-called "mission government", has said his position towards Lebanon's political establishment "is unchanged: Demanding without interfering".

This is why he said it was not his place to "approve" of Monday's designation of Mustapha Adib as prime minister. But Adib, a little known 48-year-old diplomat who since 2013 had served as Lebanon's ambassador to Germany, "has to be given

all the tools to succeed... so he can implement reforms" long demanded by the international community, Macron said yesterday.

Adib was named on Monday by political leaders widely seen as inept and corrupt by demonstrators who have taken to the streets in mass protests since Oct 17 against the entire political class. The protest camp has already rejected the choice of Adib as premier, charging that he is too close to established political circles. "No cabinet by or with the murderers" said posters brandished by demonstrators who waited for Macron outside Fairouz's home.

After a lunch with Aoun in the presidential palace yesterday, Macron was to meet representatives of the country's top nine political blocs in the second such talks since the blast. Representatives of the powerful Hezbollah movement, designated by the US as a terrorist group, will be among those meeting Macron. The French president has justified his openness to "talk with everyone", including Hezbollah, by saying the Iran-backed group is "a political force that is represented in parliament".

With the protest camp warning against giving another lease of life to a hereditary ruling class that will only pay lip service to reform, Macron admitted in an interview that his brokering drive was a gamble. "It's a risky bet I'm making, I am aware of it... I am putting the only thing I have on the table: my political capital," he told Politico. — AFP

## Kushner visits UAE base where coveted F-35 jets deployed

AL DHAFRA AIRBASE, United Arab Emirates: White House advisor Jared Kushner visited a UAE airbase yesterday where the US operates F-35 fighter jets coveted by Abu Dhabi - the thorniest issue in the Emirates' newly established ties with Israel. Kushner, President Donald Trump's son-in-law, is in Abu Dhabi as part of a US-Israeli delegation that arrived on a historic direct flight from Tel Aviv Monday, to mark an accord struck last month to normalize relations between the Jewish state and the UAE.

Israel has denied reports that the deal hinges on the

## All schools, nurseries in...

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The city also conducted a mass testing campaign targeting 11 million residents in May. China has now largely controlled the spread of the virus, and

sale of US F-35 stealth fighter jets to the UAE, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying he opposes a move that could reduce its strategic edge in the region. Kushner said Monday that the US could maintain that edge "while also advancing our military relationship with the United Arab Emirates" and that the issue would be discussed further in coming weeks.

He signed a guest book at Al Dhafra with the message: "May the relationship with America continue to grow and together, through strength, ... benefit as we bring more peace and prosperity to the Middle East and beyond!" Gulf Arab nations have had increasingly public ties with Israel in recent years, seeking to link their powerful economies but also to join forces in their shared rivalry with Iran.

Major General Falah Al-Qahtani, assistant under-secretary at the defense ministry, cast the UAE as a reliable partner in a dangerous region, as he welcomed Kushner and US national security adviser Robert O'Brien to the Al Dhafra airbase. — AFP

schools across the country - which were closed in late January - have gradually re-opened.

Shanghai re-opened schools in May, and the capital city Beijing, which recently suffered from a local outbreak of the virus, said it will resume all schools including kindergartens in September. Beijing authorities require teachers and students to wear face masks on campus. China has not reported any new local transmissions of the coronavirus in recent days. — AFP

## #MeToo in Iran: Women break...

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"I believe talking about these issues, them being publicized, is a great thing," she told AFP.

Somayeh Qodussi, a journalist with the monthly magazine Zanan ("Women" in Farsi), said the issue is highly sensitive in Iran. "Rape is a taboo subject in Iran's society and it is difficult to talk about it even in one's own family," she said. But "now we are seeing girls who seem willing to stand in the central square of the city" and make such allegations, she told AFP.

At least 20 women have come forward with accusations of having had their drinks spiked in the case that sparked Iran's #MeToo movement. The anonymous Twitter users in Iran have adapted the #Rape hashtag to draw attention to their cause. The police have called on the accusers to file a complaint against the alleged offender, Keyvan Emamverdi, a former bookshop owner who studied archaeology. They have sought to assure women that they can do so anonymously and without fear

of being accused of drinking alcohol or having extramarital affairs, both of which are illegal in Iran.

"They expose the suffering they have endured for years by expressing themselves in order to remedy a long-hidden trauma," said Azar Tashakor, a sociologist. The scope of the controversy was unexpected, and even the government has reacted. One of Iran's vice presidents on Friday praised women for speaking out and called on the judiciary to "confront" sex offenders. "In the absence of a legal structure in Iran to systematically prosecute rapes, victims use disclosure as a weapon to obtain justice," Tashakor said. But she expressed concerns that such disclosures "will not lead to profound social change".

On social media, Internet users have raised many concerns of their own, including over the tendency to blame and mistreat victims. "It's hard to know if people are telling the truth or not," said Samaneh Rostami, a graphic designer in the Iranian capital. "But talking about this issue is still a good thing, to be able to focus the public on what's happening, what's been happening for years," she said.

For the journalist Qodussi, it is crucial that the polemical issue has been brought to the public's attention. "Many people have gained knowledge of the subject" for the first time, she said, adding that that was a "great achievement for Iranian women". — AFP

Local

# Prime Minister briefs Cabinet on Kuwait Amir's improving health

## Cabinet approves increasing traffic fines, renames highway after Late Sultan



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (center) chairs the Cabinet's meeting on Monday. — KUNA photos



(From left) Health Minister Dr Basel Al-Sabah, Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel and Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah attend the meeting.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on the improvement of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's health, expressing best wishes and hopes for a speedy recovery. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh made that statement following the Cabinet's weekly meeting held Monday at Seif Palace and chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister.

Based on a previous order by His Highness the Amir, the Cabinet was briefed on a decision made by the Municipal Council to name the Seventh Ring Road after the Late Sultan of Oman Qaboos bin Saeed in appreciation of his important roles and efforts to support the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the Arab and Islamic causes.

In implementation of the directives of His Highness Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in his recent address to the nation, the Cabinet approved the formation of five expert teams to help government agencies improve handling of the following dossiers: the government cooperation with the National Assembly, combating corruption, reforming the economy, addressing demographic imbalances and social media challenges.

### COVID-19 update

Later, Minister of Health, Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, briefed the Cabinet on the latest health developments in the country in light of the statistics and data related to the numbers of coronavirus cases of infection, recovery, deaths and those receiving treatment. He pointed out that the recovery rate has increased whereas fatalities and hospitalizations have went down. The council also followed up on the latest developments on the curative and preventive levels and logistical services related to efforts to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

The Cabinet underlined the importance of maintaining compliance with health guidelines, despite the end of the partial curfew across Kuwait, which

was lifted on Sunday, in order to ensure success in the coming weeks. In this regard, the Cabinet thanked all citizens and residents for their commitment to the preventive measures, but it called on all to continue their adherence to physical and social distancing rules and wearing facemasks to prevent the spread of infection. It praised the security measures taken to implement the curfew, expressing its deep thanks and appreciation to all employees of the Ministry of Interior, the National Guard, and the Kuwaiti Army for their sincere efforts around the clock which contributed to the overall success.



### Ministers briefed on financial situation

#### Traffic fines

The Cabinet reviewed a draft law for amending some provisions of Decree Law No. (67) of 1976 on traffic regulation to increase traffic violation penalties and fines. It also discussed a draft law to encourage local banks to offer required finance to clients affected by the coronavirus crisis. The Cabinet mulled a bill ratifying the Arab treaty for banning human cloning. It approved all the draft laws and referred them to His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince to refer it to the National Assembly.

Meanwhile, Minister of Finance Barrak Al-Sheetan along with senior officials in the Ministry of Finance and the Kuwait Investment Authority made a presentation on the financial situation of the country based on the statistics of last fiscal year, which ended on March 31, 2020. The Cabinet also decided



(From left) Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah, Education Minister Dr Saud Al-Harbi and Services Minister Mubarak Al-Harees attend the meeting.



(From left) Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan, Municipal Affairs Minister Waleed Al-Jassem and Public Works Minister Dr Rana Al-Fares attend the meeting.

to task the minister of finance with referring all these data and reports to the National Assembly. It hailed the efforts of the Ministry of Finance and the Kuwait Investment Authority to preserve and develop public funds, expressing satisfaction about the strength of the financial situation of the state.

Ministers also examined the Cabinet's Legal Affairs Committee's proposed draft law on limiting the right to import goods on those who have rele-

vant licenses from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and are registered in the Commercial Registry. The Cabinet thoroughly studied the two grilling motions filed by two lawmakers against His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled. Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Saud Al-Harbi also briefed the Cabinet about the grilling motions filed against him by two lawmakers. — KUNA

### News in brief

#### Labor law amendments rejected

KUWAIT: The Cabinet has rejected a bill the parliament had recently passed containing to the labor law in the private sector, and tasked Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel with preparing a decree to return the draft law, Al-Jarida reported yesterday. The National Assembly had approved on August 19 amendments to state that Kuwaitis working in the private sector are entitled to end-of-service indemnity on top of their pensions, with retroactive effect starting from 2010.

#### Vaccine before classes

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health informed the Ministry of Education that students would not be allowed to return to classes before a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available, Al-Anbaa reported yesterday familiar with a letter they said the former had sent to the latter on that regard.

#### 4,500,000 users

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said that 4,500,000 people have booked an appointment through www.moci.shop, which was set up to allow people to shop at co-ops and supermarkets during curfew hours. The ministry added that Amazon chose the website, which was available between April 14 and August 30, as the best innovative application in Middle East and north Africa during the coronavirus crisis.

#### Oil price up

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil was up 78 cents during Monday's trading session to close at \$46.11 per barrel (pb) compared with \$45.33 pb Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. Benchmark Brent crude dropped 53 cents to \$45.28 and the West Texas Intermediate lost 36 cents to \$42.61 pb.

#### Outdoor labor ban

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower announced the end of the period in which outdoor labor was banned from 11 am to 4 pm every day. The daily ban period had lasted from June 1 to August 31.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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## Local

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## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Vehicles pass by a police patrol car stationed next to a sign the general traffic and police departments have set up by a street in Kuwait City to thank the public for their cooperation during the curfew period which ended on August 30, 2020. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Kuwait welcomes Sudan agreement

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait has welcomed the peace agreement initiated by the Transitional Government of Sudan and the Sudan Revolutionary Front, successfully mediated by South Sudan. In a press statement, Kuwait's Foreign Ministry affirmed the country's support for Sudan at this stage, amid its efforts to achieve security and peace on the path to the stability, prosperity and development that meets the Sudanese people's aspirations. —KUNA

## GCC condemns drone attack

**RIYADH:** Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf condemned on Monday the bomb-laden UAV launched by terrorist Houthi militia, which targeted the Saudi Abha Airport last night. In a statement, Hajraf also condemned Houthi terrorists for continuing to commit terrorist acts in a systematic and deliberate manner to target civilian infrastructure and civilians in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He stressed that these repeated and deliberate terrorist attacks do not target only the security of Saudi Arabia, but the security and stability of the Gulf region, and represent a flagrant violation of international laws and norms that prohibit targeting civilians and civilian facilities. The Secretary-General praised the efficiency and readiness of the Saudi Royal Air Defense Forces, which managed to intercept the drone before it reached its target, stressing that the GCC backs the Kingdom and its measures to preserve security, stability and ensure safety of its citizens. Hajraf also called on the international community to bear its responsibilities and stand firmly against Houthi militias in their continuous attempts to destabilize security and peace in the region. —KUNA

## ACK participates in e-workshop organized by KFAS

**KUWAIT:** Prof Isam Zabalawi, President of the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), representing the College, participated in an electronic workshop organized by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancements of Sciences (KFAS) titled 'Distance Learning - Challenges and Opportunities.'

The workshop was organized based on the vision of KFAS in support of a sustainable practical culture, and within the framework of the emergency response program for the COVID-19 pandemic, and in line with the strategic goals of the Ministry of Education. The workshop was held in order to highlight the success stories and research on the challenges facing distance learning in Kuwait, and also to discuss effective solutions that can be followed to successfully implement distance learning in Kuwait.

The workshop included two sessions, the first titled: 'Electronic Higher Education - Challenges and Opportunities after the Effects of the Corona Pandemic,' and the second entitled: 'General Education under the Conditions of the Corona Pandemic.'

The participation of Prof Zabalawi came in the first session, where he highlighted the importance of working to develop distance learning and preparing instructors and students to succeed in it. He stressed the importance of training faculty members to prepare the teaching material to be compatible with the data of distance education, along with training students to use information and communication technology tools, and to interact with educational platforms.

Further in this regard, Prof Zabalawi said: "Distance education includes visual and audio teaching material, data, and interaction between instructor and student; therefore, a training program must be provided for faculty members to enable them to prepare for the use of distance learning (e-learning) platforms." Prof Zabalawi also explained the first experience for ACK students with distance learning (e-learning) encouraged them to enroll in the follow-

ing stages, meaning that the demand for the summer semester was greater than the demand for the spring-continuation semester. He also stressed that from ACK's distance learning (e-learning) experience; successfully implementing a student-centric approach is easier in distance learning than in traditional classroom learning.

In conclusion, Prof Zabalawi invited KFAS to collaborate with universities to work on developing projects to build laboratories that can be operated remotely to serve different specializations. He also highlighted the importance of focusing on the development of distance learning as it is uncertain when the COVID-19 pandemic will pass; therefore it is a necessity to be prepared in a serious and practical manner for distance learning in the coming semesters.



ACK President  
Prof Isam Zabalawi



KUWAIT: Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah received yesterday Chief of Mission for the International Organization Migration (IOM) in Kuwait Iman Ereiqaq, whose tenure is ending, wishing her best of luck in her new assignment. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ayham Al-Omar attended the meeting. —KUNA

## COVID-19 and mental health hotlines

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619. Meanwhile, the Kuwait Center for Mental Health provides help through its suicide hotline: 24621770 (8 am - 5 pm). Furthermore, the Kuwait Psychological Association (KPA) is providing consultation through the phone for people suffering from the psychological impacts of coronavirus. Different doctors are working on the hotline in different timings as follows:

Dr Rashed Al-Sahh: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.

Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.

Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.

Dr Mohammed Al-Khaldi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.

Dr Ahmad Al-Khaldi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.

Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.

Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.

Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.

Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.

For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

## Kuwait commercial flights travel guidelines

**KUWAIT:** Commercial flights resumed on August 1, while the airport will operate at 30 percent capacity during the six-month first phase of a three-stage airport reopening plan. However, flights to and from the following countries are suspended until further notice: Afghanistan, Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Kosovo, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Nepal, Northern Macedonia, Panama, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Serbia, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka and Syria.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation presented a set of rules for the safe resumption of air travel. The new rules mandate all travelers to wear protective facemasks and keep a hand sanitizer in

their possession, besides strictly abiding by social distancing guidelines and keeping hand luggage to a minimum. Departing passengers are required to register to the 'Kuwait Mosafer' app, and provide negative COVID-19 test results before boarding their flights to destinations where such tests are required. Citizens are also required to obtain travel insurance that covers COVID-19 treatment. Manual checks of tickets have now been scaled back as a result of the pandemic in favor of the more popular digital e-tickets, whose scanning requires no physical contact. Passengers must be present at the airport no less than four hours before departure to ensure a smooth and convenient journey.

Meanwhile, arriving passengers must register to the 'Shlonik' app before boarding, and obtain an accredited PCR certificate showing negative COVID-19 test results valid for 72 hours from the test's date. Passengers will have their temperatures checked before boarding the plane and upon arrival, while a random PCR test will be conducted for 10 percent of passengers on each flight. All arriving passengers must home quarantine for 14 days upon arrival.

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Virus despair forces girls across Asia into child marriage

## US on brink as vigilantes, guns and hate stoke fears

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ABU DHABI: The Emirati, Israeli and US flags are picture attached to an air-plane of Israel's El Al, adorned with the word 'peace' in Arabic, English and Hebrew, upon its arrival at the Abu Dhabi airport in the first-ever commercial flight from Israel to the UAE. — AFP

# Security, Arabic greeting on historic flight

## El Al flight LY971 - the first Israeli direct flight from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi



ABU DHABI: A flight attendant hands out chocolates with a greeting card to passengers on an El Al plane from Israel en route to Abu Dhabi, on August 31, 2020. — AFP

**OVER SAUDI ARABIA:** High above a vast expanse of desert the Israeli pilot's voice broke through the passengers' chatter on Monday to announce that the plane had just crossed into Saudi airspace. Members of the Israeli and US delegations paused for a light ripple of applause, as food carts moved through the aisle with barely enough room to squeeze past the throng of White House aides, officials and journalists. El Al flight LY971, the first Israeli direct flight from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi, had just made aviation history by flying over Saudi territory en route to US-brokered normalization talks between Israel and the Emirates.

Security had been tight in advance - the route had been kept under wraps by officials for as long as possible, even though the schedule of the flight all but confirmed that it would pass over Saudi territory - an alternative route would have doubled the flying time. And even before take-off, when traveling reporters arrived for COVID-19 testing they were given a code-phrase - "I'm here for the 'experiment'" - to be fast-tracked through by the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Wishing us all salaam, peace and shalom, have a safe flight," Captain Tal Becker told the passengers in Arabic, English and Hebrew - matching the words painted above the cockpit window - as they boarded at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport in the morning. The delegates included President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner. US national security adviser Robert O'Brien and his Israeli counterpart, Meir Ben-Shabbat. All sat cheek by jowl with agents from the US Secret Service and Israel's Shin Bet domestic security agency. Netanyahu himself delivered a mid-flight message to mark the occasion.

A spokesman for El Al said the plane was equipped with a C-Music anti-missile system on its rear carriage - standard for the 737s in the carrier's fleet. As the aircraft passed over Oman and approached the UAE - an unusually indirect route, perhaps to keep away from Iran on the other side of the Gulf - passengers took photographs and video of the coastline beneath them. Then after three hours and 20 minutes, the Boeing 737 touched down in Abu Dhabi and came to a halt, ready for the red carpet reception by Emirates officials. Protocol over, the politics could begin. — Reuters

## UAE 'betrayed Muslim world' with Israel deal

**TEHRAN:** Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday accused the United Arab Emirates of betraying the Muslim world with its agreement to normalize relations with Tehran's arch-foe Israel. "The #UAE betrayed the world of Islam, the Arab nations, the region's countries, and #Palestine," Khamenei said, according to his official Twitter account. "Of course, this betrayal won't last long but the stigma will stay with them," he added in a series of tweets.

In the agreement, only the third such deal it has struck with an Arab country, Israel pledged to suspend annexation of Palestinian lands. But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stressed that did not mean Israel was abandoning plans to annex the Jordan Valley and Jewish settlements across the occupied West Bank. "I hope the Emiratis soon wake up and compensate for what they have done," Khamenei said.

"The UAE rulers opened the door of the region to the Zionists, and they have ignored and normalised the question of Palestine." It was Khamenei's first reaction to the agreement between the UAE and Israel that US President Donald Trump announced on August 13. His remarks came after a US-Israeli delegation landed in Abu Dhabi on Monday on the first direct commercial flight from Tel Aviv to mark the normalization of ties, with Saudi Arabia allowing the flight to cross its airspace.

The Iranian foreign ministry had previously denounced the deal as an act of "strategic stupidity". The UAE downgraded its relations with Iran in January 2016 amid rising tensions between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic republic. Tehran-Riyadh relations deteriorated further last year following a series of attacks on tankers in sensitive Gulf waters, which Washington blamed on Iran. Tehran denied the allegation. Saudi Arabia and Iran, the region's two leading powers, take opposing sides in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen. — AFP

## What they said: 'Historic' Israel to UAE flight

**ABU DHABI:** Israel and the UAE made history on Monday when an El Al jet flew from the Jewish state to Abu Dhabi, the first time an Israeli commercial flight made the journey. Here is a pick of quotes from the key players following the trip which came after the surprise announcement of the US-brokered deal which normalized ties between Israel and the UAE.

### 'Truly historic'

White House adviser Jared Kushner led the joint Israeli-US delegation that flew on the landmark service between Israel and United Arab Emirates, describing it as "truly historic". "I ask everyone today to join us in celebrating this peace, and to help us expand it throughout the region," he said as Washington publicly holds out hope its other allies in the region might follow the UAE and do a deal with Israel. No such breakthrough has been forthcoming despite vigorous US diplomacy.

### Fly faster... over Saudi

Kushner said the delegation had asked the El Al pilots, who are typically recruited from the ranks of Israel's airforce, to "fly faster because there is great urgency (for) the people of both countries to break down barriers". US President Donald Trump's son-in-law, who is also his Middle East fixer, said the flight had crossed Saudi Arabia - a first for an Israeli commercial jet. The El Al pilot used an inflight announcement to point out that the green light from the kingdom cut the journey from more than seven hours to just over three hours. "We are all excited and look forward to more historic flights that will take us to other capital cities in the region,"

he said to applause, in an on-board video featuring a beaming Kushner that was posted by his wife Ivanka. "History Made!" she said in the tweet.

### 'No limits'

Much has been made by Washington of the potential for trade and exchange between the two highly developed Middle East economies. "There are no limits to cooperation... in the fields of education, innovation, health, aviation, agriculture, energy and many other fields," said Israeli National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat, who spoke Arabic standing beside Kushner on the tarmac shortly after arrival.

### First Pope, now Israel

Kushner was fulsome in his praise for Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed. "Last year he celebrated the year of tolerance and welcomed Pope Francis to the Gulf - and this year he welcomes Israel," he said. He went on to describe Sheikh Mohamed, Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as "three great leaders (who) came together and... started writing the script for a new Middle East".

### The Palestinians

The festivities on the tarmac of Abu Dhabi airport were staged in front of an aircraft adorned with the word "peace" in English, Hebrew and Arabic. But Palestinians have protested the UAE deal, seeing it as a betrayal by a major player in the Arab world, which has largely held that normalization with Israel is workable only once the Palestinian question resolved. Kushner told the Palestinian leadership not to be "stuck in the past". "They have to come to the table, they have to figure out how do we do something that benefits everybody and allow everyone to move forward," he said. He had stern words for unspecified figures who have rejected the deal, accusing them of "trapping their own people in misery and poverty". — AFP



The Kuwaiti Danish Dairy Co. (KDD) is recruiting the below professions for its Kuwait Factory:

### Maintenance Supervisor

#### Aseptic Packaging Section:

Proven extensive technical experience on TBA filling machines and Tetra Pak DE machines, Basic PLC knowledge of LM 90, Proficy and RS Logix. Hands on preventive and corrective maintenance (Reference KDDHR-001).

### Maintenance Engineers / Technicians

#### Mechanical or Electrical -UHT:

Experience in the food industry with hands on experience on process plant, pumps, PHEs, valves, date print machines, homogenizers, filling machines and calibration. IT user knowledge, attend PM, EM, CM and written reporting (Reference KDDHR-002).

### Maintenance Engineers /Technicians

#### Mechanical or Electrical -Utility:

Experience in Industrial ammonia cooling system, steam boilers, compressed air, water plants and calibration. Driving license would be an advantage. IT user knowledge, attend PM, EM, CM and written reporting (Reference KDDHR-003).

Candidates fulfilling any of the 3 positions above are welcome to send their CVs to [hr@kddc.com](mailto:hr@kddc.com) by mentioning the profession reference.

## International

# US on brink as vigilantes, guns and hate stoke fears ahead of election

## Deeply divided US heads into elections amid deadly pandemic

WASHINGTON: Shootings that left three dead at protests against police brutality have stoked fears of rising violence as a deeply divided US heads into elections amid economic collapse, a deadly pandemic and the worst social upheaval since the 1960s. President Donald Trump, hoping to secure a second term in November despite the crisis, heads Tuesday to Kenosha, the Wisconsin town which descended into violence last week after police shot a young black father seven times in the back.

The governor of the state, Democrat Tony Evers, called on Trump in vain to reconsider his visit, warning it would "hinder our healing" and arguing that the citizens of the town are already traumatized. One of them, Gregory Bennett, said he no longer feels safe in the town where last Tuesday night, a 17-year-old who had joined a far-right militia protecting private property shot dead two protesters.

Local white people "are in fear, they look for a reason to defend themselves and we have people over here [the militias] looking for a reason to attack," said Bennett, a social worker and former member of the military who said he no longer leaves his house without a bulletproof jacket and a pistol in his belt. In the United States, where the right to defend oneself is part of the national identity, some 30 percent of the adult population owns at least one firearm.

### 'All kinds of populists'

Shots were also fired over the weekend in Portland, Oregon, where left-wing protesters have regularly faced off with police for the past three months. As a group of Trump supporters clashed with the protestors, one of them, who was wearing a

baseball cap with a local far-right group's logo, was shot dead on the fringes of the confrontation, in circumstances that are still unclear. Between now and the election, "certainly there could be more shootings," said Spencer Sunshine, who researches far-right groups in the United States. "It could get a lot worse because I don't think either side is going to back down," he warned.

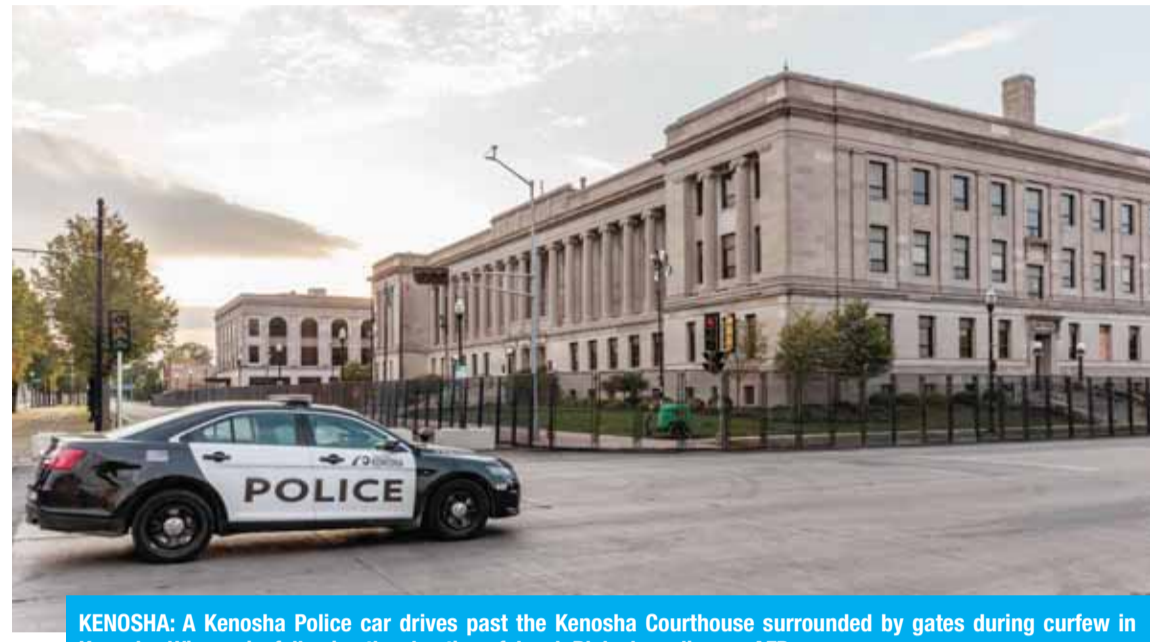
Extremist groups have always existed in the United States, said Sunshine, an independent expert. After



### Trump hoping to secure a second term despite crisis

Trump's election, radical right-wing and left-wing groups regularly faced off in Seattle, Washington, as well as in Portland. What is new, he said, is the widespread presence of firearms at demonstrations. "More than four years ago, you would only see an armed demonstration like in Arizona, where they have very liberal gun laws," he said.

Weapons have been particularly visible since May 1, when hundreds of men armed with assault rifles tried to enter the state capitol building in Michigan to protest against lockdown measures introduced to limit the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. Sunshine said that show of force also



KENOSHA: A Kenosha Police car drives past the Kenosha Courthouse surrounded by gates during curfew in Kenosha, Wisconsin, following the shooting of Jacob Blake by police. — AFP

illustrated the arrival of new recruits to the extreme right. "It's no longer really white nationalists during the clashes, or white nationalists' collaborators," Sunshine said, indicating that right-wing populists, militias and conspiratorial Trump supporters were now also showing up, motivated by "social anxiety about what's going to happen to the country."

### 'Zeal of new converts'

"The radical right is actively looking to exploit today's historically polarized political climate - one

that has become even more uncertain under the strain of the coronavirus pandemic and protests for racial justice," warned the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks extremist groups. "With the 2020 presidential election fast approaching, the prospect that extremists might resort to political violence is a very real one," it said. Up against the extreme right is a more diverse coalition of activists that Trump collectively calls "Antifa," short for "Anti-fascist," whom he accuses of being "rioters, anarchists, agitators and looters." —AFP

## Venezuela president pardons opposition lawmakers

CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Monday pardoned more than 100 lawmakers and associates of opposition leader Juan Guaido "in the interests of promoting national reconciliation," the government said. Guaido's assistant Roberto Marrero and lawmakers Gilber Caro and Renzo Prieto were among the names read out by Communications Minister Jorge Rodríguez live on state television. The three were released in Caracas on Monday night just hours after the announcement, according to opposition leaders and confirmed by AFP. Other detainees were also freed.

The presidential decree "comes into force from its publication" after which the courts "must implement immediate measures to liberate the persons mentioned," said Rodríguez. Marrero was arrested in March 2019 and accused of being part of a "terrorist cell" planning attacks to destabilize the Maduro government. "Freedom is always welcome, whatever people might say," he told media upon leaving intelligence service headquarters.

Guaido himself was not among those pardoned, though, despite several cases open against him. He insisted that Maduro's government was using the pardons "as trading pieces" to "legitimize a farce," referring to upcoming legislative elections. "It is a

trap and we are not going to fall for it," he wrote on Twitter, emphasizing that "you cannot pardon those already innocent or who have immunity." The list of 110 people included lawmakers whose immunity had been lifted and people with outstanding judicial cases, including opposition lawmakers living in exile.

Opposition lawmaker Freddy Guevara, who fled to the Chilean embassy in the capital Caracas in 2017 after leading anti-government protests that left 125 people dead, was among those pardoned. The Supreme Court—which has been accused of pandering to the regime-ordered that he be denied the freedom to leave the country. Also among the pardoned is Henry Ramos Allup, the head of the Democratic Action party which is the oldest in Venezuela.

"Pardon or insult, Maduro is neither president, nor am I a criminal," wrote Americo De Grazia, a lawmaker living in exile. "If you (Maduro) want to contribute to peace in Venezuela, pardon the country from the usurpation of power, quit the occupation that has resulted in a tragedy inflicted on our people and maybe then we'll have something to thank you for." The opposition considers Maduro a usurper over his 2018 re-election in a poll widely seen as fraudulent. In January 2019, Guaido launched a challenge to Maduro's authority by declaring himself acting president, quickly receiving the backing of more than 50 countries.

### Quest for 'legitimacy'

The pardons announcement came a day after Maduro claimed to be supporting measures to bring "reconciliation" and "dialogue" to the deeply



CARACAS: Political activist Jose Daniel Hernandez (center) leaves the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) headquarters, known as El Helicoido, after Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro pardoned more than 100 lawmakers and associates of opposition leader Juan Guaido. —AFP

polarized South American country ahead of December legislative elections.

Guaido and leading opposition figures have already vowed to boycott those polls over a lack of transparency after the Supreme Court appointed election officials—a role that should have been conducted by the opposition-controlled legislature. The "number one aim" of the pardons is to "legitimize" the December elections, analyst Felix Seijas from pollsters Delfhos said. Maduro "is giving in to one of the opposition's long-standing demands in negotiations," Seijas added. —AFP

## Facebook to block news on Australia sites after new law

SYDNEY: Facebook Inc yesterday said it would stop Australians sharing news content on its platforms if a proposal to make it pay local media outlets for their content becomes law, escalating tension with the Australian government. Under Australia's closely watched internet reform, the country will become the first to make the social media behemoth and Alphabet Inc's Google pay for news sourced from local providers under a royalty-style system.

Facebook's plan to block the sharing of news on Australian user accounts, rather than pay royalties, puts the firm broadly in step with Google on the matter and pushes the prospect of an agreement with the government further out of reach. "Assuming this draft code becomes law, we will reluctantly stop allowing publishers and people in Australia from sharing local and international news on Facebook and Instagram," Facebook Australia Managing Director Will Easton said in a blog post, referring to two Facebook-owned platforms.

"This is not our first choice - it is our last. It is the only way to protect against an outcome that defies logic and will hurt, not help, the long-term vibrancy of Australia's news and media sector". Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg yesterday said the proposed law was in the national interest, followed 18 months of public inquiry and would create a more sustainable local media industry where original content was paid for.

"We don't respond to coercion or heavy handed threats wherever they come from," Frydenberg said in an emailed response to Reuters' request for comment. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) Chair Rod Sims, who is overseeing the proposed law, said



ARLINGTON: A Facebook App logo is displayed on a smartphone in Arlington, Virginia. —AFP

Facebook's response was "ill-timed and misconceived", and that the proposal "simply aims to bring fairness and transparency to Facebook and Google's relationships with Australian news media businesses".

"As the ACCC and the Government work to finalise the draft legislation, we hope all parties will engage in constructive discussions," Sims said in a statement. Bridget Fair, chief executive of Free TV Australia, a lobby group for free-to-air broadcasters, said Facebook's plan amounted to "bullying" and that the U.S. firm would "say and do anything to avoid making a fair payment for news content".

"Australian Facebook users are being held to ransom as a tactic to intimidate the Australian government into backing down on this issue," she said in a statement. The proposed law was "the only reasonable way to even up the bargaining power between Facebook, Google and Australian News Media Businesses," Fair said. Facebook's Easton in his blog post called the proposed law "unprecedented in its reach", and said the company could either remove news entirely or agree to pay publishers for as much content as they wanted at a price with no clear limits. — Reuters

## Hong Kong starts mass virus tests undermined by distrust of China

HONG KONG: Hong Kong launched a mass coronavirus testing scheme yesterday, but calls for millions to take up the offer have been undermined by deep distrust of the government following China's crushing of the city's democracy movement. The free voluntary tests are part of an attempt to stamp out a third wave of infections that began in late June and saw the densely populated city reimpose economically painful social distancing measures.

But the program has been hampered by a limited response due to the involvement of mainland Chinese testing firms and doctors - and swirling public fears of the harvesting of data and DNA as Beijing cracks down on calls for democratic reform. Since registration began on Saturday, 510,000 people have signed up - around seven percent of the city's 7.5 million population.

About 10,000 people were tested yesterday morning, city leader Carrie Lam said, including government ministers. "It will help Hong Kong emerge from the pandemic unscathed and is conducive to the resumption of daily activities," she told reporters. But health experts advising the government have said as many as five million people might need to be tested to comprehensively uncover hidden transmissions and end the current wave.

Hong Kong has recorded just over 4,800 infections since the virus first hit the city in late January but about 75 percent of those cases were detected since the start of July. "I am doing this for myself and for others," Winnie Chan, a mother in her thirties, told AFP as she entered a test centre. "I am confident and I support the government's policy." Others said they had no plans to sign up. "I think it's a waste of time," local resident Emily Li told AFP. "The government can't convince me in terms of the effectiveness of the testing program." —AFP

### News in brief

#### Australian journalist detained

BEIJING: The Australian journalist detained without charge in China for at least a fortnight is a high-profile anchor for CGTN, the country's English-language state broadcaster. Cheng Lei has been held since at least August 14 without charge and with no reason being given for her detention. China is yet to comment on the issue, but the case is the latest to fray relations between the two countries, which have withered over trade, security concerns about Chinese tech and Canberra's push for a probe into the origins of the coronavirus. Cheng has not been seen in public since being held, although Australian diplomats in Beijing say they were able to speak to her on August 27. She is under "residential surveillance" according to Australia's ABC News, raising fears of a protracted detention. —AFP

#### Boat heading for funeral sinks

LAGOS: Two people died and another is missing after a boat taking mourners to a funeral capsized outside Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos, a government safety agency said Tuesday. Four people were also rescued after the boat sank in bad weather on Monday as it was heading through waterways to the Ikorodu area of the sprawling city of over 20 million, the Lagos State Waterways Authority (LASWA) said. It said the vessel was a fishing boat that had been converted to carry passengers in order to take the mourners to the funeral. "Four passengers were rescued alive, two fatalities and one passenger missing." —AFP

#### UAE records highest infections

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates on Monday recorded more than 500 daily COVID-19 infections, the highest number over a 24-hour period in nearly two months. The Gulf Arab state saw 541 infections and two deaths, the government's communications office tweeted, the highest since 683 cases were recorded on July 5. Health minister Abdulrahman Bin Mohammed Al-Owais said on Aug. 18 infections could rise after an "alarming" increase over the previous two weeks. A government official later warned a de-facto overnight curfew could be reinstated in some areas if there were a high number of infections. Businesses and public venues have gradually reopened since a nationwide curfew in place since mid-March was lifted on June 24. —AFP

#### Mob torches Iraq TV station

BAGHDAD: A mob stormed and set fire to an Iraqi television station Monday, a security source told AFP, over its airing of a "festive" program on a religious day of mourning. On Sunday, Shiite-majority Iraq commemorated the killing of the Prophet Mohammed's grandson Hussein in 680 AD, with ceremonies held nationwide. The same day, local television station Dijlah aired a regularly scheduled program that included singing and dancing, irking Iraqis who saw the tone as inappropriate. Dijlah swiftly apologized, saying it was an "unintended" mistake, but many had already taken offence. "Today, several dozen protesters angry at the festive program stormed Dijlah's Baghdad bureau in the eastern district of Jadriyah," a security source told AFP on Monday. "They torched the office. Four of Dijlah's employees were wounded, and much of the bureau's equipment was destroyed," the source added. —AFP

## International

# Lebanese turn their back on 'hopeless' country after blast

## Beirut blast sparks new brain drain

**BEIRUT:** Days after the port explosion that ravaged Beirut, a news anchor at a little-watched state TV channel declared he was leaving Lebanon for good. "I can no longer stay in a land that is a graveyard for dreams. I'm leaving because I'm disgusted by you," Wassim Oraby said in an angry tirade against the ruling elite.

The broadcast resonated with Lebanese who blame sectarian, political leaders for pushing their country to ruin with decades of corruption and infighting. It is a well-worn path for the Lebanese: to emigrate in search of "any kind of normal", in the words of 30-year-old web developer Darine Tamer, who is filling out immigration forms. The warehouse explosion on Aug. 4, which killed at least 190 people, served as a final wake-up call for her and many others who were already suffering from an economic collapse without precedent, soaring prices and bouts of unrest.

She will join a diaspora thought to be three times

the size of the country's population due to past emigration waves in Lebanon's tumultuous history. Google Trends shows searches for the word "immi-



### Lebanese blame political elite for country's woes

gration" from Lebanon hit a 10-year peak after the huge stockpile of ammonium nitrate detonated at Beirut port. Officials have blamed it on negligence. The blast injured thousands, destroying the homes

of people who had just lost jobs and whose savings were trapped in the banks. The latest exodus of Lebanese packing their bags will strip the country of academics, doctors, artists and others it needs if it is to start over.

They include some who returned in the 1990s to a reconstruction boom after 15 years of civil war, which Lebanon never fully recovered from. Now, they were sending their kids off. As the last of her siblings still in Lebanon, Tamer never thought she would go too. Her brother lives in Australia and her sister left to Canada. But she is forced to maintain two jobs to catch up with a spiraling currency crash. A startup where she loved working closed this year when investor money dried up. "Your life is worthless here. You can't build anything. Every few years, you have to reset, and it's hopeless. It's just insane to keep hoping."

Anywhere but here

Jess Talhame, a 23-year-old psychology gradu-

ate, is among Lebanese who can draw on dual nationalities their families acquired in past migrations. Her parents fled the civil war to spend three decades in Canada, popular among Lebanese emigrants. They returned to raise their kids in the country they called home. Now Talhame, who has been without work for a year, has booked a one-way ticket out.

"When the blast hit, I was done," Talhame said. She shuttled between hospital beds after the blast shattered her friend's cheekbones, and days later, her boyfriend was hit by a rubber bullet at a protest against the political elite. "It's like you want to fight for your country but you also want to stay alive so you can fight for it." Many with lesser means and fortunes will not be able to leave. At a recent job interview, Tamer recalled, she laughed when someone asked where she sees herself in five years. "I can't even tell you where I see myself tomorrow, but it's not here." — Reuters

## Virus despair forces girls into child marriage

**NEW DELHI:** Tens of thousands of girls across Asia are being forced into marriage by desperate families plunged into poverty because of the coronavirus pandemic, as campaigners warn years of progress tackling the practice is being undone. Child marriage has long been common in traditional communities from the Indonesian archipelago to India, Pakistan and Vietnam, but numbers had been decreasing as charities made inroads by encouraging access to education and women's health services.

These improvements are being eroded as the impact of the virus causes mass job losses leaving parents struggling to feed their families, experts say. "All of the gains we've made in the past decade are really going to suffer," explains Shipra Jha, head of Asia engagement, at NGO Girls Not Brides. "Child marriage is firmly rooted in gender inequality and patriarchal structures. What's happened is that it's become compounded in the Covid era," she adds.

Poverty, lack of education, and insecurity, drive child marriage even in stable times, so periods of crises exacerbate the problem, the charity says. Worldwide, an estimated 12 million girls are wed every year before the age of 18, according to the UN. But the organization has now warned that unless urgent action is taken to tackle the economic and social impact of the virus-an additional 13 million child marriages will take place in the next decade.

In Asia, charities report the snowball of forced unions has already begun, estimating tens of thousands are already affected-though hard data is yet to be collated.



**GALUNG LOMBOK:** Nurlina, 19, who got married in 2017, holding her daughter in the village of Galung Lombok in West Sulawesi. —AFP

"There has been an increase in child marriages during this lockdown period. There is rampant unemployment, job loss. Families are barely able to make ends meet, so they think it's best to get their young daughters married off," says Rolee Singh who runs India's "1 Step 2 Stop Child Marriage" campaign.

### 'COVID generation'

Fifteen-year-old Muskaan says she is being forced to marry the 21-year-old boy next door by her mother and father, who are street cleaners in the Indian city of Varanasi and have six other children to feed. "My parents are poor, what else could they have done? I fought as much as I could but eventually had to give in," the teenager explains in tears. Save the Children has already warned that violence against girls and the risk of forced unions, particularly among minors, "could become more of a threat than the virus itself".

And while education has been hailed as the central tenet in the battle against child marriage, activists warn that with lockdowns forcing hundreds of millions out of school, girls in the poorest parts of the world will be worst affected. Earlier this month, 275 former global leaders, education experts, and economists urged governments and organizations such as the World Bank to ensure the fallout from the coronavirus does not create a "COVID generation... robbed of their education and a fair chance in life."

"Many of these children are adolescent girls for whom being in school is the best defense against forced marriage and the best hope for a life of expanded opportunity," said an open letter signed by dignitaries including Ban Ki-moon, previously UN Secretary General, UNICEF's Carol Bellamy, and former prime ministers such as Pakistan's Shaukat Aziz, and the UK's Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. —AFP

## 'Who was that?' New PM visits blast-hit Beirut

**BEIRUT:** When Lebanon's new premier-designate Mustapha Adib went for a surprise stroll through Beirut's disaster zone Monday, he shook hands, chatted with baffled passers-by, then earned hostile shouts of "revolution". In a country traumatized by the massive August 4 explosion and worn down by political turmoil and economic pain, the brief encounter between the new leader and the people signaled the difficulties ahead for Adib.

In the capital's blast-ravaged Gemmayzeh neighbourhood, most residents did not immediately recognize the man in a pressed white shirt and dark tie who had come down to greet and comfort them. But they soon realized their clean-cut visitor, a former diplomat sporting neatly trimmed grey hair and surrounded by a small entourage, was none other than their brand new prime minister. "Who's that? A Canadian minister?" one security guard asked as Lebanon's 48-year-old former ambassador to Germany walked past, before it dawned on him: "Is it Adib?"

Strolling along a road flanked by gutted and half-collapsed buildings, Adib was the first top Lebanese politician to visit the devastated district since the massive blast at the nearby port. His surprise walk came over three weeks after French President Emmanuel Macron had been cheered by crowds there. The French leader drew angry crowds who blamed official neglect and corruption for the blast that killed at least 188 people, wounded thousands and wrecked homes and businesses in much of the city. Almost a month after Lebanon's greatest peacetime disaster, it was Adib's turn.



**BEIRUT:** Protesters confront newly-appointed Prime Minister Mustapha Adib during his tour of the badly-hit Gemmayzeh neighborhood on Monday. —AFP

### 'I'm one of you'

The incoming premier entered a grocery shop, a butcher's and a laundromat. He shook hands with the owner of a restaurant. The windows of many buildings he passed had been blown to smithereens in the explosion. Someone asked for a picture with Adib, others whipped out their mobile phones for a memento. On either side of the road, volunteers were still busy after spending weeks carting off rubble and bringing food and water to the most needy, filling in for a largely absent state.

Adib approached a stand making Lebanese flat breads and was handed one covered in dried oregano and sesame seeds. A few steps away, he greeted another group of volunteers mapping out the blighted neighborhood. "Who was that?" one asked after Adib left. After learning who had just walked by, another quipped: "Tell him we've finished all the hard work. It's too late." But Adib pressed on, rolling up his sleeves. "I will do every-

thing in my capacity" to help, he told a passerby, speaking through a pale blue surgical mask to protect him against the coronavirus. "I came immediately. Nobody knows about it. I came to say I want your trust," he said. "I am one of you. We must work together."

### 'Our children are dead'

After the prime minister visited his shop, butcher Tony Kiyame said: "It's positive. He's the first to come down to see people and speak to them. "But we need action, not words." Nearby, pharmacist Paul Sakr was not remotely impressed. "For a whole month, we saw no one," said the man who has lived in the area for 35 years. "Now he's been named, and he's down here for a publicity stunt." Outside the damaged headquarters of the state electricity company—a symbol of official waste and the state's inability to fix power cuts in three decades since the civil war-tension mounted. —AFP

## Israel hits Syria targets, kills 11

**BEIRUT:** Israeli strikes on Syria killed one civilian, three government troops and seven allied foreign fighters, a war monitor said yesterday in a new toll. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which had previously put the toll from Monday's strikes at five, said Iran-backed paramilitary fighters were among those killed in the attack.

The Britain-based monitor said the strikes hit Syrian army positions south of Damascus as well as positions belonging to Iran-backed paramilitaries, including fighters of the Lebanese Hezbollah movement, in the southern province of Daraa. The Observatory said it could not confirm if Hezbollah fighters were among those killed.

Late on Monday, the Syrian state news agency SANA reported that "the

Zionist enemy carried out a strike... on some of our military positions south of Damascus and our air defenses confronted them". "The Israeli attack led to two martyrs being killed and seven soldiers being wounded," the source said, adding the fire had come from the direction of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. It later said that one civilian was also killed in the attack. Israel has carried out hundreds of raids in Syria since the civil war broke out in 2011, targeting Iranian and Hezbollah forces as well as government troops.

The Israeli army rarely acknowledges individual strikes, but said that on August 3 it had used fighter jets, attack helicopters and other warplanes to hit Syrian military targets in southern Syria. Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah warned on Sunday that the group would kill an Israeli soldier for each of its fighters slain by the Jewish state, after one of its combatants was killed in an Israeli strike in Syria on July 20. —AFP

## Hamas and Israel strike deal

**GAZA:** Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas said Monday they had reached a Qatari-mediated deal with Israel to end more than three weeks of cross-border attacks. In the latest escalation, Israel has bombed Gaza almost daily since August 6 in response to airborne incendiary devices and, less frequently, rockets launched across the border. The fire bombs - crude devices fitted to balloons, inflated condoms or plastic bags - have triggered more than 400 blazes and damaged swathes of farmland in southern Israel, according to the fire brigade.

After talks with Qatari envoy Mohammed el-Emadi, "an understanding was reached to rein in the latest escalation and end (Israeli) aggression against our people," said the office of the Palestinian group's Gaza leader Yahya Sinwar. An Egyptian delegation had been shuttling between the two sides to try to broker the renewal of an informal truce under which Israel committed to ease its 13-year-old blockade of Gaza in return for calm on the border. The delegation was joined by Emadi, who also held talks with Israeli officials in Tel Aviv.

In a statement, he praised the Hamas leadership for reaching a deal in light of the "difficult conditions of Gaza's inhabitants, especially in view of the spread of the coronavirus". A Hamas source told AFP there had been "a total halt" to balloon and other attacks against Israel, in agreement with other factions in the coastal strip, home to some two million people. "Fuel supplies will return and the power station will be restarted from Tuesday," the source said. A punitive Israeli-

imposed ban on fuel deliveries cut electricity to just four hours a day, supplied from the Israeli grid.

### Crossing to reopen

COGAT, the Israeli defence ministry unit that oversees civilian affairs in the occupied Palestinian territories, said in a statement that after "efforts to calm the situation", it would "resume the routine activity of the Kerem Shalom Crossing, including the entry of fuel products", starting Tuesday. "In addition, the fishing zone of the Gaza Strip will be expanded to 15 nautical miles," it said. But, COGAT warned: "If Hamas, which is accountable for all actions that are taken in the Gaza Strip, fails to stand (by) its obligations, Israel will act accordingly."

The Hamas source added that work would be allowed to start on the construction of a new power line, while a \$30 million Qatari aid tranche for Gaza would be expanded to \$35 million, with the difference used to cover public servants' salaries. Financial aid from gas-rich Qatar has been a major component of a truce first agreed more than a year ago and renewed several times since. The fire balloons launched in recent weeks were widely seen as an attempt by Hamas to improve the terms of the informal deal.

Sources close to Hamas had said it also wanted other measures to ease living conditions in the territory, including the extension of an industrial zone in the east and an increase in the number of Israeli work permits issued to Gazans once anti-coronavirus restrictions have been lifted. But disagreements over implementation have fuelled repeated flare-ups with the Islamist group, which has controlled Gaza since 2007. Such flare-ups escalated into full-blown conflicts in 2008, 2012 and 2014, and mediators have been working to prevent a new war. —AFP



**GAZA:** Palestinian Hamas policemen wearing protective masks stand guard on a street in Gaza City. —AFP

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2020

# Business

## Factories shaking off COVID gloom

### Resurgence in COVID infections weigh on outlook, business mood

**LONDON/TOKYO:** Factories across Europe and Asia continued to shake off the coronavirus gloom in August as the global economy gradually emerges from a downturn triggered by the health crisis, thanks in part to massive fiscal and monetary stimulus programs.

Surveys showing an expansion in manufacturing activity may reduce pressure on policymakers to take bolder steps to avert a deeper recession. Many analysts expect recovery to be feeble, however, as renewed waves of infections curb business activity and prevent some nations from fully reopening their economies. Fears of a resurgence in infections in some economies may discourage firms from boosting capital expenditure and delay a sustained rebound, some analysts say.

"In most major economies, except for China, factories are still running well below pre-pandemic capacity levels," said Ryutaro Kono, chief Japan economist at BNP Paribas.

"The recent recovery is largely due to pent-up demand after lockdown measures were lifted, which will dwindle ahead."

Euro zone manufacturing activity remained on a recovery path last month but factory managers were wary about investing and hiring workers as the pandemic rages on. Manufacturing output, which didn't suffer quite as sharp a decline as the services industry during coronavirus lockdowns, increased for a second straight month.

IHS Markit's final Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) dipped to 51.7 in August from July's 51.8, in line with an earlier flash reading and comfortably ahead of the 50 mark separating

growth from contraction. Unemployment in the 19-country eurozone only nudged up to 7.9 percent in July, official data showed, but consumer prices fell in August, against market expectations of a small increase.

"Some modest good news, the manufacturing sector for now remains a bit of a bright spot. Short-term work schemes across Europe are working so well that unemployment has increased to just 7.9 percent — without them unemployment would be around 10 percent," said Bert Colijn at ING.

"With concerns about double-dips increasing and virus cases up across Europe, the PMI—especially on the services side—provides reason to worry about the pace of the recovery and perhaps even a reversal of output growth."

German manufacturers' recovery from lockdown measures continued last month, but in France activity slipped back into contractionary territory as the second-biggest euro zone economy grappled with hits to business caused by the pandemic. British factory output recovered some ground lost as output rose at the fastest

pace in more than six years.

#### Strong China

Manufacturing activity in China expanded at the fastest clip in nearly a decade in August, as factories ramped up output to meet rebounding demand, a private survey showed. New export orders rose for the first time this year. The upbeat findings contrasted with an official survey on Monday, which showed China's factory activity grew at a slightly slower pace in August.

nomics and public policy at the University of Michigan. "Of course we're facing mass layoffs, but the bulk of people have maintained their wages and earnings."

#### Unprecedented pressure

Shoppers paid roughly 8 percent more on average for JM Smucker's instant coffees, including Folger's and Dunkin', at bricks-and-mortar stores in the four weeks to Aug. 8 versus a year before, according to Nielsen data analyzed by Bernstein. They shelled out nearly 10 percent more for Kraft Heinz sauces and about 5 percent extra for Tyson Foods' sliced hams.

Such inflation might make commercial sense, given the bump in demand for home staples. But some consumer experts complain retailers and big brands are cutting back on promotions and using their power to shore up profits during a health crisis that has led to millions losing their livelihoods. "Brand manufacturers have been fattening their pockets with profits while putting unprecedented pressure on the consumer who has to pay those higher prices," said Burt Flickinger, retail consultant at Strategic Resource Group.

JM Smucker said it did not raise prices of its instant coffees in the four weeks to Aug. 8, but did cut back on some promotions for in-demand products. Kraft Heinz declined to comment, but said during earnings in July that second-quarter prices went up as it pulled some offers and discounts for scarce products. Tyson did not respond to a request for comment. Other industry experts point out that companies have had to grapple with costly production shifts to adapt to the new landscape. They note that before the pandemic, when costs were lower and there were more promotions and discounts, prices of Heinz sauces were declining.

Pre-COVID-19, tens of millions of commuters grabbed a coffee to-go en route to work. Suddenly, instead of 20-pound (9.1 kg) bags of coffee for restaurants, or large containers of ketchup, producers have had to switch to smaller, home-use packaging. As ketchup, mayonnaise and vinegar sales surged, Kraft Heinz diverted resources to running these production lines around the clock, while suspending others. It added extra shifts for factory workers to make grocery-sized bottles.

Egg suppliers, like market leader Cal-Maine Foods Inc., have had to overcome a shortage of cartons. "If you look at eggs, before they'd be powdered to send to restaurants and now they have to be put in cardboard containers to go to supermarkets," said Daniel Bachman, senior U.S. economist at Deloitte. "It took a high price to

naval exercises with several EU allies and the United Arab Emirates not far from smaller ones Turkey conducted between Cyprus and Crete last week.

Turkey's most recent extension of the mission was until Tuesday, raising the possibility of a respite in a fast-escalating conflict that includes deals the two countries struck with war-torn Libya and Egypt. But in a message on NAVTEX, the international maritime navigational telex system, Turkey said late Monday the seismic vessel's stay in the eastern Mediterranean would be extended until September 12.

The Turkish message said the Oruc Reis was being accompanied by Turkey's two other auxiliary vessels, the Cengiz Han and the Ataman. Showing no sign of compromise, Erdogan said Turkey would not be intimidated by Greece's alliance with European military powers such as France.

"Even if hostile fronts unite, they cannot stop the rise of Turkey," Erdogan said. "It's laughable now to use as bait a country (Greece) which could not even fight its way out of a paper bag against a regional and global power like Turkey," Erdogan said in a speech at his palace in Ankara.

Erdogan said attempts to deny Turkey's right to the Mediterranean's "riches" were "an example of modern colonialism".



**BEIJING:** Global factories continued to shake off the coronavirus gloom in August as more bright signs in China raised hopes of a firmer recovery in global demand, reducing pressure on policymakers to take bolder steps to avert a deeper recession.

China's Caixin/Markit PMI rose to 53.1 in August from July's 52.8, marking the biggest rate of expansion since January 2011. Japan and South Korea both saw factory output contract at the slowest pace in six months, reinforcing expectations the region's export powerhouses are past the worst from a collapse in demand after COVID-19 struck.

The spill-over to other parts of Asia, however, remains patchy. While manufacturing activity rose in Taiwan and Indonesia, it slid in the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia. India's factory output grew in August for the first time in five months as the easing of lockdown restrictions spurred demand. But analysts do not expect a quick turnaround in the economy, which contracted at its

steepest pace on record last quarter.

While South Korea's exports fell for a sixth straight month in August, trade data-first to be reported among major exporting economies—signalled a gradual recovery in global demand. Japan is meanwhile in the midst of a leadership change after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said last week he would step down, raising uncertainty about the policy outlook.

"There is ... a risk that the leadership transition could bring about a period of policy paralysis and uncertainty, should Japan experience a run of frequent changes in premierships, as occurred prior to 2012," Fitch Ratings said in a research note. —Reuters

## Coffee, ketchup and Nike Air Max: It's the COVID economy

**LONDON:** Instant coffee, ketchup, Lululemon yoga pants and Nike Air Max sneakers are all in. Bottled water, pricey diapers and Burberry luxury trench coats are out. Welcome to America's pandemic consumer economy. And it's like nothing we've seen before. "Everything we knew about supply and demand, we can essentially throw out the window because consumer behavior has changed completely," said Piotr Dworzak, assistant professor of economics at Northwestern University.

A Reuters analysis of a varied basket of goods shows how the COVID-19 crisis has upturned a decades-old consumer model for everything from clothing to food. This has given some companies surprising power to raise prices or withdraw discounts. Many of the new trends can be attributed to one factor, according to retail specialists: working from home.

Almost overnight, a consumer-driven economy with clearly delineated work and home spending, changed profoundly. Rising demand for certain items, as well as global supply-chain disruptions, has driven up prices.

Americans are now shelling out significantly more than a year before for coffee, eggs, sliced ham, ketchup and cheese, for example, according to the Reuters analysis of the latest pricing data from Nielsen Co, the Brewers Association and StyleSage Co. Yet it's a complex picture, and some of the changes in behavior seem counter-intuitive during a time of deep economic uncertainty.

Demand and prices have also increased for more expensive, or "splurge", items like \$106 men's Nike Air Max sneakers, \$105 Lululemon yoga pants and even a \$1,500 Louis Vuitton handbag.

Economists put this apparent discrepancy in behavior down to the fact that many people, unable to spend outside, have more cash in hand. Even many workers on furlough are receiving jobless benefits that match their wages under a federal stimulus plan. "If I were to consider the consumer situation right now, in a strange way, they may have more disposable income, if they kept their job," said Nirupama Rao, an assistant professor of business eco-

## Turkey extends Mediterranean gas exploration

**ANKARA:** President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday played up Turkey's military might after extending a Mediterranean gas exploration mission that has pitted it against Greece and the rest of the EU. Turkey's push into disputed waters has raised the stakes in the energy-rich but volatile region, reviving long-standing hostilities between the two neighbors.

Greece accuses Turkey of violating its sovereignty, while Ankara says its NATO ally is pursuing a "maximalist" approach that offers no room for talks. The European Union is watching the conflict with growing concern, with Germany spearheading efforts to get the sides to temper the rhetoric and settle their differences through talks.

Turkey deployed the Oruc Reis research vessel and warships to the disputed waters on August 10 and prolonged the mission twice. Greece responded by staging



**Destiny USA mall reopens as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) restrictions are eased in Syracuse, New York. —Reuters**

induce the change."

Yet consumer companies cannot take demand for granted and can be burnt by raising prices.

Prices for bottled water and disposable diapers have gone up, while demand has fallen for most of the pandemic. People are unwilling to pay out extra when they can drink their own water at home, and can opt for reusable or cheaper generic diapers at a time when there's a lack of child daycare, some economists say. "You're at home anyway so you're not sending your child off somewhere in a diaper that fails," said Rao.

Lockdowns have meant many Americans do not travel, eat out, or go to movie theaters. As they have not been commuting or taking kids to school, many are using less gas in their cars. So they can now splash out on other things, perhaps. Michael Collins, a professor at the University of Wisconsin's consumer science department, calls this a "substitution effect." "It's pretty clear people behave as if they have different pots of money," he said. "Now I don't eat out at all, so I have a couple of hundred dollars of new income not allocated to anything. I can substitute that money away from eating out and treat myself to other things." This effect could help explain the rise in demand and prices for the Air Max. Nike sold about 63 percent of their online stocks of the shoes in July, compared with only 10 percent a year earlier, according to apparel data company StyleSage which collects sales information from brand websites. Air Max prices surged 10.5 percent on average versus a year before. —Reuters

#### Greece will lose

Ankara's relations with Athens have deteriorated sharply, with strains over issues including migration and Turkey's decision to convert Byzantine-era churches into mosques including the Istanbul landmark Hagia Sophia. Images published in the media last week showing Greek soldiers arriving on the island of Kastellorizo, known as Meis in Turkish, appear to have opened another front in the dispute.

The island is only two kilometers (1.2 miles) from Turkey's ancient seaside town of Kas in the Antalya province. The Oruc Reis mission is being conducted near that island, with the navy also scheduling a series of live fire exercises further to the east this month.

Turkey accused Greece of trying to "arm the island" despite a 1947 peace treaty that established its demilitarized status. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Greece appeared to be arming its security personnel on the islands beyond the limits established by international law.

"You can have police and gendarmerie officers for internal security... without heavy weaponry, but there is a limit," Cavusoglu told reporters. "If there is a militarization that goes beyond that, it will be Greece who loses."

## Germany sees economy recovering faster than expected in 2020

**BERLIN:** Germany expects the economic devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to be less severe than originally feared this year, but it sees a weaker rebound for Europe's largest economy next year due to sluggish foreign demand. Presenting the government's updated forecasts yesterday Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said the economy was doing better than expected and was recovering quickly from the coronavirus shock thanks to a strong response from the state.

"Overall, we can say that at least for now, we are dealing with a V-shaped development," Altmaier told reporters, adding that he did not expect authorities to impose another round of lockdown measures as in March and April. Confirming an earlier Reuters report, Altmaier said Berlin had revised upwards its 2020 forecast to a decline of 5.8 percent from a previous estimate of 6.3 percent. Still, this would represent the biggest economic slump since the end of World War Two. During the global financial crisis, the economy contracted by 5.7 percent in 2009. For 2021, the government revised downward its growth forecast to an expansion of 4.4 percent from its previous estimate of 5.2 percent. This means the economy will not reach its pre-pandemic size before early 2022, Altmaier said.

The government expects exports to tumble by 12.2 percent this year before jumping by 8.8 percent in 2021. Private consumption is seen falling by 6.9 percent this year and then rising by 4.7 percent in 2021.

The revised forecasts will form the basis of tax revenue estimates, which the finance ministry is expected to update next week. This will be followed by Finance Minister Olaf Scholz's proposal for the federal government's budget in 2021. —Reuters



**Turkish drilling vessel Yavuz is escorted by Turkish Navy frigate TCG Gemlik (F-492) in the eastern Mediterranean Sea off Cyprus. —Reuters**

But a Greek official said soldiers had already been stationed on the island and the photos were from a "routine troop rotation". The EU has repeatedly urged Turkey to stop the exploration activities and threatened to slap sanctions on Ankara if it refused to solve the dispute through talks. —AFP



## Business

# Samsung leader Jay Y Lee indicted on allegations concerning 2015 merger

## Prosecutors allege accounting fraud in succession-linked deal

SEOUL: South Korean prosecutors indicted the heir to the Samsung empire yesterday over a controversial merger of two business units seen as a key step towards his succession, in the latest legal blow to the sprawling conglomerate.

Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, committed stock manipulation, breach of trust and other offences when two other subsidiaries, Samsung C&T and Cheil Industries, merged in 2015, the prosecutors said. Ten other current and former top Samsung executives were also charged.

Lee and his subordinates had carried out "a systemic scheme to take control of the Samsung Group with the least cost", said the prosecution, by deploying "various unfair transactions" that damaged other shareholders' interests.

Lee is already separately being re-tried on charges of bribery, embezzlement and other offences in connection with the corruption scandal that brought down former South Korean president Park Geun-hye.

The businessman was not detained, but the charges are likely to prove a distraction as his firm seeks to navigate the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

Samsung Electronics is the flagship subsidiary of the group, which was founded by Lee's grandfather and has grown to become by far the biggest of the family-controlled conglomerates, or chaebols, that dominate business in the world's 12th-largest economy.

Its overall turnover is equivalent to a fifth of South Korea's gross domestic product and is crucial

to the country's economic health. The firm saw profits rise in April-July with data centers moving to stockpile its DRAM chips to meet surging demand for online activities as a result of global lockdowns.

But the South's economy shrank 3.2 percent year-on-year in the same period, according to a revised estimate by the central Bank of Korea yesterday. Samsung Electronics declined to comment on yesterday's charges, referring inquiries to Lee's legal team, who did not immediately issue a statement.

### 'Cloud of uncertainty'

Chaebol families often have only a small ownership stake in their empires, but maintain control through complex webs of cross-shareholdings between units. Lee was the largest shareholder in Cheil Industries, and critics say Samsung sought to artificially lower the price of C&T to give him a bigger stake in the merged entity—a key part of the Samsung structure-consolidating his grip on the conglomerate. Lee's latest legal troubles add a layer of "uncertainty" to the

company and could "burden the South's economy as a whole", said Kim Dae-jong, a business professor at Sejong University in Seoul.

"The fact that he will have to stand another trial creates a cloud of uncertainty and probably affects Samsung's long-term investment plans," he said. With the country feeling the economic pain from the outbreak, "the timing isn't good", he added. Some chaebol leaders who have been convicted in the past have subsequently received presidential pardons in recognition of their economic roles.

### Latest legal blow to the conglomerate



SEOUL: Samsung heir Lee Jae-yong (center), vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, arrives at court for a hearing to review the issuing of his arrest warrant over a controversial merger of two Samsung units, at the Seoul Central District Court in Seoul. —AFP

South Korean President Moon Jae-in campaigned in part on a promise of reforming the chaebols and the prosecution's move came despite a civilian review panel recommending Lee should not be indicted, citing a lack of evidence. Lee was jailed for five years in 2017 after being found guilty of bribery and other offences linked to former president Park, before being cleared of the most serious charges on appeal and released a year later. That

case is currently being retried.

Lee apologized in May over the issues, pledging to ensure "there will be no more controversy over the succession" and that he would not allow his children to take over from him at the firm. "Our technology and products are being hailed as first-class but the public gaze towards Samsung still remains harsh," he said, bowing to the cameras. "This is my fault. I apologize." —AFP

## Betting on Asia's debt, Europe's hunt for yield heads east

SINGAPORE/AMSTERDAM: Low yields at home are sending some previously shy European investors into Asia's credit markets, money managers say, lured by the promise of higher returns and a hope that rebounding economies can hold defaults at bay.

Unlike in Europe or the United States, Asia's central banks have not stepped in to put a floor under corporate debt prices. That has the market's recovery in Asia trailing the rest of the world.

"Now people are looking for the valuation gap to close," said Hayden Briscoe, head of Asia-Pacific fixed income at UBS Asset Management. Starting with family offices, then private banks, flows from Italy, Germany, Switzerland and the United Kingdom have broadened over the past few months, he said.

"I don't think it's slowing down," he said. "We haven't had a day of outflows, it's just been continuous." Like elsewhere Asia's junk bond spreads, the premium over safer assets that buyers demand for riskier debt, have narrowed sharply since March.

## Argentina defuses default crisis with 'massive' debt deal

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina has defused fears of a messy default after it gained backing from creditors, allowing it to exchange 99 percent of the bonds involved in a \$65 billion restructuring, a deal that could set a precedent for future sovereign crises. After months of winding and tense negotiations, framed by the coronavirus pandemic, bondholders tendered 93.55 percent of the eligible bonds in the exchange. Economy Minister Martin Guzman said at a news conference on Monday.

"In recent days we have worked on the conditions of an offer that gained massive acceptance by our creditors as a result of the dialogue process in past months," Guzman said. A strong deal is a major win for Argentina, Latin America's No. 3 economy, as it looks to escape from its ninth sovereign default and revive an economy in its third year of recession and expected to contract around 12.5 percent this year. Reuters reported on Friday, when the deal deadline closed, that the government was confident of high creditor support after winning over its main three creditor groups to a deal in principle earlier in August.

Center-left President Alberto Fernandez, who took power in December, said Argentina had been in a "labyrinth" of debt that had now been solved.

## Eurozone inflation turns to negative in August

BRUSSELS: Eurozone consumer prices fell in August, official data showed yesterday, with inflation in negative territory for the first time since May 2016 as a result of plummeting demand due to the coronavirus crisis.

The EU's Eurostat data agency said inflation fell to negative 0.2 percent in August, a steep drop from a

positive 0.4 percent in July and even further off the official target of near two percent. The descent into deflationary territory comes despite historic stimulus measures by the European Central Bank to stimulate prices and breathe life into the European economy. The ECB, led by Christine Lagarde, has pumped in 1.35 trillion euros as well as cut interest rates to negative levels in order to keep borrowing costs low and boost demand.

"The data released today put the ECB's challenge in stark relief," said Jack Allen-Reynolds, Senior Europe Economist at Capital Economics. "Monetary policy in the eurozone will need to remain extremely loose for many more years to come," he added.

The step into deflation puts even more pressure on

### Best in class

Along with UBS, HSBC and Goldman, J P Morgan Asset Management, Pictet Wealth Management and Credit Suisse are among advisors to sound upbeat on Asian credit. Goldman, like UBS' Briscoe and HSBC's Allen, told Reuters it has noticed demand from Europe lately.

Beyond the economic factors, the composition of Asia's debt market is another attraction,

He thanked allies, including Pope Francis, an Argentine, and Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. The government said the deal and a separate restructuring of local law dollar debt combined would bring financial relief of \$37.7 billion over the 2020-2030 period, and help cut average interest payments on foreign law bonds to 3 percent from 7 percent. "Now there are other challenges, the first of which is to reactivate the domestic market," Fernandez said at the Casa Rosada presidential palace.

### What next?

Guzman said Argentina now needed to turn attention to sealing a new program with the International Monetary Fund to replace a defunct \$57 billion facility agreed in 2018, as well as tackling provincial debt amid various smaller regional restructurings. He said the government planned to send a 2021 budget bill to Congress in mid-September, which would include a forecast for a primary fiscal deficit next year of around 4.5 percent. A new deal with the IMF is unlikely before March next year, said Guzman.

The 1 percent of bonds that did not meet collective action clause (CAC) thresholds of support for a restructuring indicates there were some pockets of holdouts on individual bonds, though Guzman told reporters it was not a major issue and would be resolved. The bonds being restructured have CACs that mean the government needs a certain level of support to restructure them. Older 2005 indenture bonds require a combined 85 percent of creditor

support, with two-thirds of support needed on each individual series. The strong support and few holdouts stands in contrast to Argentina's 2005 debt restructuring, which saw creditors holding around a quarter of bonds reject a deal, leading to over a decade of legal battles. "I was expecting them to easily clear the CAC threshold on most of the bonds, but this result was on the high side of my expectations," said Ajata Mediratta, president of Greylock Capital Management in New York, which was involved in the talks. —Reuters

governments to increase public spending to restore demand and the economy. Some European capitals have already opened the money taps, with the German government leading the way in efforts to jump start its coronavirus recovery.

EU leaders in July agreed on a huge recovery plan for Europe but this would not kick in until early next year at the earliest, with the details yet to be worked out.

Eurostat also said that in July, the unemployment rate stood at 7.9 percent compared to 7.7 percent in June, but it stressed that its method of calculation does not fully account for the consequences of the virus-related confinement. —AFP



SHANGHAI: A pedestrian wearing a face mask walks near an overpass with an electronic board showing stock information, following an outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), at Lujiazui financial district in Shanghai. —Reuters

investors say, because exposure to sectors hardest hit by the virus - such as energy, travel and other cyclicals - is lower than in Europe or the United States. "The dominant sector is really the Chinese property names," said Tiansi Wang, Senior Credit Analyst at Dutch fund manager Robeco in Hong Kong, adding the well-capitalized industry is driven by supportive domestic factors. —Reuters



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's Vice-President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (left) and President Alberto Fernandez (right) pass behind deputy Sergio Massa before the announcement of the restructure of a \$66 billion foreign-law debt, during a ceremony at Casa Rosada Presidential Palace in Buenos Aires on Monday. —AFP

## Gazprom posts massive slump in first half

MOSCOW: Russian energy giant Gazprom announced Monday that net profit fell 25-fold in the first half of 2020 due to the economic crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic and low oil and gas prices. The state-controlled group posted a net profit of 32.9 billion rubles (\$447 million) in the six months to June, compared to 836.5 billion rubles in the same period last year. Turnover fell almost a third to 2.9 trillion rubles. Hydrocarbon producers globally have been hit hard by a sharp fall in prices and demand as a result of restrictions imposed to combat the coronavirus, especially limits on travel.

Russian producers have been additionally hit by a falling ruble. After a net loss of 116.2 billion rubles in the first quarter, Gazprom recovered slightly in the three months to June, posting a net profit of 149.2 billion rubles. Monday's figures are mainly the result of lower prices and a drop in sales to Europe which is a crucial market for the gas giant, Gazprom said in a statement.

Year-on-year sales to Europe dropped 16 percent by volume in the first half of 2020, while revenues fell by almost half. Famil Sadigov, the vice chairman of the management committee of Gazprom, said in comments after the results that challenges facing the oil and gas industry "cannot be overestimated".

He pointed to "a sharp drop in demand for energy resources, gas prices in Europe reaching historic lows, and multi-directional volatility of exchange rates." Sadigov said that in these "extreme conditions," Gazprom had showed decent results compared with many other oil and gas companies, pointing to "measures to optimize operating and capital expenditures."

He added that the outlook for the third quarter already suggested an improvement. Gazprom announced a 17 percent drop in net profit last year compared to 2018, over lower prices and falling sales to Europe. —AFP

## Oceanwood urges UK govt to boost rail transport

LONDON: British hedge fund manager Oceanwood Capital Management has written to the UK government, asking it to redirect public transport policy towards railways rather than short-haul flights and cross-channel ferry transport. "We believe rail to be the most efficient mode of transport currently available for short journeys on congested routes, longer domestic journeys, short-haul international travel and freight," the fund told UK transport secretary Grant Schapps in a letter dated Aug. 27 and seen by Reuters yesterday. Oceanwood, which has \$1.3 billion in assets under management, holds a position in Channel tunnel operator Getlink, according to the letter.

Oceanwood also has positions in other renewable energy companies, including in Dutch offshore wind company Orsted, according to the letter. "We believe that the use of air travel for anything other than mid to long-haul, and ferries for freight, are not just inefficient, but generally the most carbon intensive options... and should be heavily discouraged," it said. Oceanwood's deputy chief investment officer Julian Garcia Woods noted that while CO2 emissions have fallen during the coronavirus pandemic, governments should encourage a shift in transport habits as economies begin to return to normal. —Reuters

## Business

# India economic growth hit by record slump amid virus surge

## Manufacturing and productivity battered by a strict coronavirus lockdown

**MUMBAI:** India's economic growth suffered a historic 23.9 percent decline between April and June, official figures showed Monday, as manufacturing and productivity were battered by a strict coronavirus lockdown. The contraction was the biggest since New Delhi started publishing quarterly statistics in 1996, and the latest figures came as the country's coronavirus cases surged past 3.6 million.

The steep dip in Asia's third-largest economy reflected the impact of a months-long nationwide shutdown that saw most industrial and manufacturing activity grind to a halt.

The virus restrictions dealt a severe blow to an economy already struggling with a protracted slowdown through 2019, hit by the twin shocks of shrinking consumer demand and rising unemployment levels. The decline was worse than expected, with a survey of economists by Bloomberg earlier predicting a contraction of 18 percent.

On Monday the government warned the figures could be revised further since the pandemic had also affected the ability to collect accurate data on economic activity. "The entire quarter was spent in lockdown and it was a complete washout for the Indian economy," Mumbai-based economist Ashutosh Datar told AFP.

He added that the economic gloom was unlikely to lift "for the next few quarters".

"We started publishing quarterly growth figures only from 1996 and this is the worst quarterly performance on record ever since," he said. The sudden shutdown from late March prompted a huge exodus by millions of migrant workers who fled cities for

their villages due to a lack of food and money. Many have yet to return even as restrictions have eased, leaving factories struggling with labor shortages.

### Bleak outlook

"This is a health crisis that has metamorphosed into an economic crisis," State Bank of Baroda chief economist Sameer Narang said. "Manufacturing, trade, construction, transport and communication have all suffered." With the exception of agriculture, which registered modest growth, every other sector showed sharp losses. Construction activity was halved, while manufacturing plummeted by nearly 40 percent compared to the previous year.

Daily wage earners and small business owners were hit particularly hard, with Mumbai-based shopkeeper Himanshu Patel saying he dipped into his savings for months to keep his store afloat.

"This has been the worst period of business we have ever seen in our lives so far," the 43-year-old said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced a \$266 billion package — 10 percent of the country's GDP to revive the battered economy, while India's central bank has slashed interest rates and transferred billions of rupees in annual dividends to the government.

But the measures have yet to yield any positive economic impact or spur a pick-up in demand, while inflation has jumped to over six percent far above the bank's target range of four percent.

Rising inflation and unemployment have sharply hit demand, analysts said, underlining the need for



**MUMBAI:** India's virus restrictions dealt a severe blow to an economy already struggling with a protracted slowdown through 2019, hit by the twin shocks of shrinking consumer demand and rising unemployment levels.

the government to act quickly to jumpstart the economy. "We have ample reasons to be pessimistic about demand as there is a huge... job and income loss so demand will not (return) rapidly," said Sujana Hajra, a Mumbai-based economist with Anand Rathi securities.

"The Modi government has to come forward with some form of fiscal stimulus urgently to help economic recovery." Opposition leader and former finance minister P. Chidambaram criticised the government for "doing nothing, literally nothing, to cushion the fall by taking suitable fiscal and welfare measures".

"We had warned the government and urged the government to take preventive and preemptive

measures. Our pleas fell on deaf ears. The country, as a whole, is paying a heavy price", he said in an online press briefing. "The inaction and ineptitude of the government gives us no hope that we will see light at the end of the tunnel at any time soon."

As the economy has contracted, coronavirus infections have hit new records across the country. India on Monday reached almost 65,000 virus deaths, overtaking Mexico with the world's third-highest toll behind the United States and Brazil. The nation of 1.3 billion also has the third-highest number of infections worldwide. The lockdown has failed to contain the spread of the disease which has travelled from crowded cities to remote villages where access to healthcare remains a huge issue. —AFP



### Outlook remains bleak

## UAE-Israel deal opens doors to business

**DUBAI:** The UAE and Israel are opening their doors to a wide range of business opportunities after the surprise agreement to normalize relations. The two states have long forged commercial and technology links, but with the arrival of a joint US-Israeli delegation on Monday they can now work out in the open. "We came here to transform a vision into a reality. There are no limits to cooperation... in education, innovation, health, aviation, agriculture, energy and many other fields," Israeli National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat said in Abu Dhabi. Here are some key areas where Israel and its new Arab partner share economic interests.

### COVID-19 research

The two already collaborate on research in various fields and even before the deal was announced on August 13, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his country was working with the United Arab Emirates on ways to combat coronavirus. "It seems as if the immediate priority will be cooperation on research and development to combat Covid-19," said Kristian Ulrichsen from Rice University's Baker Institute in the United States.

"This could be a popular way of normalizing people, both in Israel and the UAE, to the idea that coordination on such an urgent issue is in the greater good of both countries." Last month, two Israeli companies signed a deal with an Emirati firm to work together on the development of a non-invasive coronavirus screening test.

### Oil sales

The Gulf state's immense oil reserves are a big draw for Israel, whose best source of oil currently is Kurdish crude from Iraq, said Ellen R. Wald, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Global Energy Center. "Israel would benefit greatly if it can purchase UAE oil, and the UAE will benefit if it can sell to a hungry customer," she said.

Gulf Arab countries have always refused to sell oil to Israel, and so far no other governments in the region have followed the UAE move to establish ties.

### Tourism

Expanding two-way tourism is a key focus of the post-accord trade push. With some popular majority-Muslim tourism destinations currently off-limits to Israelis, the millions who go abroad each year typically head to Europe or the US. Now those travellers will be able to take a short flight to the resorts and attractions that line the Emirati coast.

Israel also wants to lure business for its own tourism industry, especially to the Mediterranean metropolis of Tel Aviv, and to attract Muslim visitors to Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound, Islam's third-holiest site.

### Tech and start-ups

Israel's high-tech sector—an industry that has earned the nickname "start-up nation"—makes up more than 40 percent of the country's exports. The UAE has forged a similar reputation, with more than a third of start-ups in the Middle East and North Africa reported to be based in the country, which seeks to be a powerhouse in the technology sector. —AFP

## ABK - Egypt delivers strong results in H1 2020

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (ABK-Egypt) released its financial results for the first half of 2020, demonstrating positive growth rates. The bank reported a net profit of EGP 354 million for the period ending 30th June 2020, representing growth of 54 percent. Net operating profit for the same period was EGP 631 million, an increase of 44 percent over the same period last year. Total Assets stood at EGP 37.6 billion, a 5.3 percent growth over the previous fiscal year, registering EGP 35.7 billion at the end of 2019.

Customer deposits grew by 5 percent to reach EGP 29.5 Billion, and the Bank's loan portfolio grew by 9 percent to EGP 21.2 billion. Commenting on the results, Ali Marafie, Chairman of ABK - Egypt, said, "This has been a period dedicated to supporting our customers and the economy through the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a bridge to recovery in every way possible through this difficult period. We are focused on working closely with the Egyptian government and the Central Bank of Egypt to ensure that our employees and customers are protected from any risk, and an action plan has already been set in line with the Egyptian Ministry

## Bangladesh garment exports rebound from virus crunch

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh's crucial textile industry saw a sharp rebound from the coronavirus crisis in August, with exports surging nearly 50 percent as factories swung into full gear to meet orders from global retailers, officials said yesterday. Shipments of ready-made clothes hit \$3.3 billion, up from \$2.3 billion a year earlier, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) said.

The garment industry is the cornerstone of the economy in Bangladesh, the world's second largest exporter of the goods after China. The reinstatement of cancelled orders from retail titans including H&M,

of Health precautionary measures. Despite the unprecedented conditions facing the banking sector worldwide due to the pandemic, ABK has maintained healthy growth rates, and a solid overall performance during the first half of the year. I take this opportunity to thank the Executive Management team and all the employees for their efficiency and dedication and we will continue to work hard to ensure growth."

Khaled El Salawy, CEO & Managing Director of ABK - Egypt, said, "At ABK-Egypt, we are conscious of the economic impact that the coronavirus has had on our customers and on the economy. In line with the Central Bank of Egypt initiatives and thanks to the excellent guidance received at the onset of the pandemic to ease the stress on all clients as well as banks, we have managed to record a very solid performance. The initiatives implemented by the Central Bank of Egypt have played a major role in navigating the economy away from this crisis and mitigating its impact.

"We have done all we can to support our clients through these trying times, including offering increased flexibility to ease the financial burdens for those facing hardships by introducing a six-month payment holiday for all credit facilities and credit cards, without any late payment penalties. We have also taken prudent measures on cost cutting, and have ensured we move swiftly on digital initiatives with a view to encouraging contactless banking wherever possible.

"I express gratitude and appreciation to our

Primark and Walmart has revived the industry even though Bangladesh is still suffering from the pandemic, BGMEA spokesman Khan Monirul Alam Shuvo said. Some companies say they are now looking for thousands of workers to cope with new orders.

The association said in April that western retailers, who normally buy around \$30 billion worth of garments each year, cancelled \$3.2 billion-worth after the virus forced stores to shut down. Shipments collapsed 83 percent in April and more than 50 percent in May.

"Some 80 percent of those orders have since been reinstated," Shuvo said. "Still, we have to wait another five months to see a clear picture." Because of the pandemic, Bangladesh closed factories for one month from March 26. The 4,500 garment factories employ more than four million workers — about two-thirds of them women — and hundreds of thousands were laid off. Hannan Group, which exports high-end fashion to brands such as Esprit and Casamoda in Europe, said it has recruited nearly 1,600 workers in the past two months.

out of a stellar summer, markets should not be allowed to breed complacency," said Mizuho Bank's Hayaki Narita. "The climate may not be as conducive for extending 'risk on' asset market rallies and one-way USD decline, especially amid an unpredictable political weather."

South Africa's rand jumped 1.2 percent after sliding 2 percent on Monday amid fears of potential cabinet changes due to infighting within the ruling African National Congress. But the Turkish lira slipped another 0.3 percent as geopolitical tensions ratcheted up after it said it would carry out seismic surveys in a disputed area of the eastern Mediterranean until Sept. 12, provoking an angry response from neighboring Greece.

The Russian ruble bounced off four-month lows and the stock index gained 0.5 percent as data showed the country's manufacturing activity returned to growth in August after falling for 15 months in a row. "It will be the right time to get some guidance from central bank officials about the path of the policy rate in light of the recent sharp weakening of the ruble," said Alexey Pogorelov, director at Credit Suisse. Among stocks, South Africa's Old Mutual slipped 0.4



Ali Marafie

Khaled El Salawy

Bank's employees for their proven resolve, loyalty, and resilience, which has contributed to the achievement of these results, and I thank our clients for their ongoing loyalty." He concluded.

During 2020, ABK-Egypt continued its investment in enhancing its online and digital services as a key part of its strategy for future digital transformation and growth.

Earlier this year, ABK-Egypt was named 'Best Performing Bank', by The European Magazine, one of the leading business magazines that monitors the outstanding performance in the Banking services sector at the international level. In addition, the Bank was also named 'Most Innovative Bank' by the International Finance Magazine, cementing the Bank's strong performance and flexibility, complementing advanced trends in the Egyptian Banking sector.



**DHAKA:** Bangladesh's crucial textile industry saw a sharp rebound from the coronavirus crisis in August

"I think the worst is over. Some retailers have placed new orders and revived some old orders. We need new workers to make the shipment deadline," Hannan chairman A.B.M Shamsuddin, whose companies employ 12,000 people, said. —AFP



percent after putting its interim dividend on hold, withdrawing financial targets and warning of a drop in full-year profit. The wider stock index jumped 1.7 percent. A basket of emerging market stocks rose 0.9 percent, tracking gains in Asia, as data showed manufacturing activity in China expanded at the fastest clip in nearly a decade in August, reducing pressure on policymakers to take bolder steps to avert a deeper global recession. The Chinese yuan jumped to its strongest level in more than a year. —Reuters

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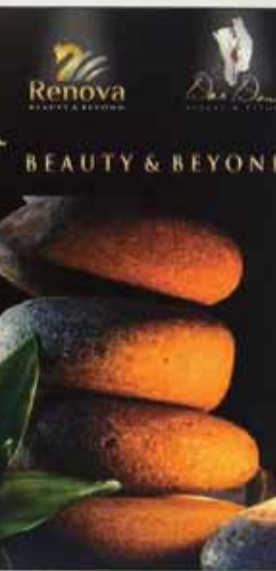
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Yvonne Sursock Cochrane



A partial view shows the damaged Sursock Palace (1860) following the colossal port explosion in the Lebanese capital Beirut.

## LEBANON LOSES DEFENDER OF HERITAGE ARCHITECTURE LADY COCHRANE



Damaged windows are seen at Sursock Palace (1860) following the colossal port explosion in the Lebanese capital Beirut. — AFP photos

A veteran advocate of the arts and Lebanon's cultural heritage, Yvonne Sursock Cochrane died Monday aged 98, four weeks after the devastating Beirut blast in which she was injured. Born into a wealthy Greek Orthodox family-famed for their Sursock Museum and married to an Irish nobleman, Lady Cochrane died on the eve of the centenary of Lebanon, friends and family said on Facebook. As head of the Association for the Protection of the Sites and Ancient Homes of Lebanon (APSAD), she devoted her life to the preservation of her country's rich architectural heritage.

She had labeled the capital's chaotic and profit-driven reconstruction after its devastating 1975-1990 civil war as little more than an "archaeological massacre". "Beirut, once a joy of the Mediterranean, has been turned into a junkyard," she said of the decade that followed the war. But she voiced confidence that Beirut would once again become "the garden of the

Middle East". The massive blast at Beirut port on August 4 hurled her several metres (yards) from the terrace where she was taking afternoon tea with friends, leaving her with cuts and bruises. The explosion ripped through swathes of the city, killing at least 188 people and injuring more than 6,500 others. Her listed Ottoman mansion with gardens looking down onto the sea was left in near ruins, like many architectural marvels, including the Sursock Museum, converted from a house donated by Lady Cochrane's uncle. "We shall rebuild," she vowed afterwards.

The death of a woman esteemed as "the memory of Lebanon" stirred outpourings of grief and nostalgia on social media. "A grand figure of the Lebanon of old is gone. A page has turned on a certain refined, cultivated and cosmopolitan Lebanon," Marlene Kanaan wrote on Facebook. — AFP



Yvonne Sursock Cochrane

### Jackie Chan's luxury Beijing condos up for auction in ownership row



A general view shows a luxury apartment building, where two flats in which Hong Kong-born actor Jackie Chan and his family had lived, in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

Two luxury Beijing apartments seized from martial arts film star Jackie Chan will be put up for auction for around \$10 million due to an ownership dispute, according to court documents seen by AFP. The action star, 66, best known for hit movies "Rush Hour" and "Police Story", sparked controversy in 2013 when he joined China's top political advisory body despite being born in Hong Kong, where his reputation has taken a beating over his pro-Beijing stance. Chan and his wife Joan Lin and son Jaycee Chan have lived in the high-end properties since 2007.

But a legal dispute between two real estate firms has resulted in the properties being commandeered and put up for sale, despite appeals by the star. Chan signed an agreement with Yujia Real Estate in 2006 to buy the two units, which cover more than 1,200 square meters (13,000 square feet), according to a court judgment published in July. The actor paid 13 million yuan (\$1.9 million) — a 20.6 million yuan discount over the original purchase price, in exchange for a celebrity endorsement of the compound in a prime area of central Beijing. But court papers outline problems including a change in Yujia's company name, as well as tax arrears, which delayed the transfer of the property rights to Chan.

Another developer, Tenhong Real Estate, later filed for arbitration with Yujia to settle debts and the two properties were among those seized in 2017. According to an online listing seen by AFP, the price for the two flats in the Chinese capital will now start from 71.9 million yuan (\$10.5 million), with bidding to begin later this month. A virtual tour of the property showed a maze-like space with a pool table, at least two walk-in wardrobes, a wine fridge and a framed photograph of Chan meeting former US president Barack Obama. The property was also the scene of a 2014 drug scandal involving Chan's son Jaycee, who served six months in a Chinese prison after he was found to be providing a venue for others to use drugs and possession of 100 grams (3.5 ounces) of marijuana. The properties are now valued at more than 100 million yuan, according to the auction listing. — AFP

## Organized by LOYAC's LAPA, a Scenography design workshop was held

Dr Khalifa Al-Hajri recently concluded Scenography design workshop held within the Theatre Sanctuary 2 festival organized by LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA). The workshop was held for ten days via ZOOM focusing on scenography concepts and training participants on designing various theatrical scene elements and turning written scripts into tangible images on stage using selected international plays.

Al-Hajri stressed that this was the first time in the Arab world where a practical scenography training program is presented online thanks to efforts exerted by LAPA during the corona virus crisis. Further, Al-Hajri said that participants from Kuwait, Oman, Lebanon and Syria took part in the workshop and

noted that the results came far beyond expectations.

Speaking on the occasion, artist, Essam Al-Kathemi expressed his joy for taking part in the workshop presented by Dr Khalifa Al-Hajeri adding that trainees applied what they learnt in performing some international plays such as 'CATS'. Lebanese participant, Karim Iskandarani said that the workshop was a magnificent experience during which participants learned to use recycled material to create new designs. Participant, Hessa Al-Abbadi also thanked LAPA for providing the opportunity to develop theatrical knowledge and stressed that the workshop was very useful and enjoyable.



Artist Essam Al-Kathmi



Artist Essam Al-Kathmi's design



Artist Dr Khalifa Al-Hajeri's design



A woman walks in front of a mural in Bangkok on August 29, 2020. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

## Nigeria's 'Kannywood' films soar online thanks to virus

At a time when the coronavirus is wreaking havoc on businesses around the world, the film industry in Nigeria's mainly Muslim north is going from strength to strength. The region's movie machine-dubbed Kannywood after its largest city Kano-has become the dominant source of entertainment for West Africa's 80 million Hausa speakers. Since springing up in 1992 with just seven production companies, the industry has grown to include 502 production outfits and 97 editing studios. It now employs more than 30,000 people, according to the Kano chapter of the Motion Pictures Practitioners Association of Nigeria.

While Kannywood films have the same themes of love, revenge and betrayal as those churned out by the prolific Nollywood film industry in the

predominantly Christian south, the content must adhere to strict Islamic rules. Northflx, Kannywood's fledgling online streaming platform, has seen its client base soar since authorities imposed lockdowns to contain the coronavirus pandemic in March. Its subscriber base of 40,000 has nearly doubled, while revenue has tripled, CEO and co-founder Jamil Abdussalam told AFP. "Coronavirus has been a blessing to us business-wise, despite the disruptions it has caused to the global economy," he said. "It was not by chance, but a result of a conscious and concerted business strategy".

Kabiru Sufi, a Kano-based economist who follows trends in Kannywood, attributed the success of streaming platforms to their astute business sense and technology. Abdussalam said Northflx for-

merly used the pay-per-view system but quickly switched to flat-rate subscriptions after the virus emerged in Asia and Europe, knowing that it "would reach all corners of the world". The fee is just 1,500 naira (\$4) a month in addition to subscribers' smartphone and internet costs. The lockdown, which saw cinemas, hotels, bars and other recreational outlets shut down, was a boon for Northflx as idle Nigerians turned to their mobile phones to stream their favorite movies. That opportunity also came as producers were desperately seeking an alternative market for their films with cinemas and DVD stores shuttered.

### 'A lifesaver'

Northflx was the answer. "It was a lifesaver for film producers who would not have had the avenue of making money

from their movies," said Kano-based filmmaker Abdulkarim Mohammed. And subscribers have stuck to the platform despite the easing of the lockdown, according to Abdussalam, because of the convenience it offers as well as the fact that pirated copies can no longer be found on the streets. The new business environment has challenges both old and new. Nigerian telecom services are notoriously poor, with frequent signal disruptions, coupled with exorbitant data costs which affect online-based firms. But Northflx has been coping, the owners say. "With a single (reception signal) bar, you can watch a movie without disruption, it doesn't freeze and our network is capable of buffering the video," Abdussalam said.

Other issues include censorship, criticism on religious grounds and piracy.

Muslim clerics and government officials say the platform promotes foreign values by mimicking Hollywood and Bollywood productions at the expense of the regional Hausa culture. The industry has also come under state-imposed restrictions and scrutiny which filmmakers say are killing creativity. Under the law, every film must be cleared by the censorship board which requires strict adherence to Islamic injunctions, including a ban on touching between men and women. Defaulters are usually sanctioned. But Northflx's location in the capital Abuja puts it beyond the jurisdiction of the Kano censoring agency. "It has helped us bypass the restrictions... and fight piracy," said Sani Danja, a leading Kannywood actor and producer. — AFP



This handout image released courtesy of MTV shows South Korean boy band BTS performing from South Korea during the 2020 MTV Video Music Awards, being held virtually amid the coronavirus pandemic, broadcast on August 30, 2020 in New York. — AFP photos



In this photo illustration, BTS viewed on a laptop, speak during the 2020 MTV Video Music Awards pre-show broadcast on August 30, 2020 in New York City.



BTS performs during the 2018 Billboard Music Awards at MGM Grand Garden Arena on May 20, 2018 in Las Vegas, Nevada.



In this file photo South Korean boy band BTS arrives for the 62nd Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles.

## K-POP'S BTS FIRST ALL-SOUTH KOREAN ACT TO TOP US SINGLES CHARTS

K-pop sensation BTS has become the first all-South Korean act to rule the top US singles chart, industry tracker Billboard announced Monday, with their English-language "Dynamite" hitting number one. It is another milestone cementing the seven-member boy band's global dominance, coming hours after BTS beat American heavyweights including Lady Gaga, Ariana Grande and Taylor Swift to score the Best Pop award at Sunday's MTV Video Music Awards. The first BTS single sung completely in English, "Dynamite" was released August 21 and tallied 33.9 million US streams in just a week, with

300,000 units sold. In securing the top spot, the song unseats Cardi B's raunchy hit "WAP" featuring fellow rapper Megan Thee Stallion, a not-safe-for-work bop that held number one for two consecutive weeks.

The South's President Moon Jae-in congratulated the septet, calling their latest achievement "truly amazing". "It is a splendid feat that further raises pride in K-pop," Moon said in a statement. The milestone is "all the more meaningful" as the song was composed to comfort those affected by Covid-19 worldwide, he added. BTS's achievement comes after it reached the Billboard Hot 100's fourth slot

in March with its song "On." Three of BTS' albums have hit number one on Billboard's album charts, but this is their first Hot 100 top single. Billboard's all-genre Hot 100 blends US streaming, radio airplay and digital sales data to rank the top hits.

Fans around the world were overjoyed by the news, with one saying in a tweet: "I'm so proud of our boys! They are finally reaping the harvest of their hard work and perseverance!" BTS is the first all-South Korean group-comprised of J-Hope, Jimin, Jin, Jungkook, RM, Suga and V-to reign over the chart. South Korean soloist PSY reached number two for seven

weeks in the fall of 2012 with his viral dance juggernaut "Gangnam Style." The first Asian artist to top the chart was Japanese-born crooner Kyu Sakamoto, whose "Sukiyaki" held the ranking for three weeks in June 1963. K-pop-along with K-drama soap operas-has been one of South Korea's most successful cultural exports. A key component of the "Korean Wave" that has swept Asia and beyond over the last two decades, the K-pop industry is estimated to be worth about \$5 billion. — AFP

## Death of 'Black Panther' star spotlights early-onset colon cancer

Actor Chadwick Boseman's death from colon cancer at the age of 43 has highlighted the growing rate of this disease among younger adults, who are often diagnosed at later stages. According to Kimmie Ng, director of Dana-Farber's Young-Onset Colorectal Cancer Center in Boston, it shows how important it is for more research into what is driving the rise, as well as greater awareness and screening. "We are losing way too many young lives to this disease without a clear understanding of what the causes are," she told AFP.

The suspicion is that environmental factors, such as shifts in diets and lifestyle, could be behind the increase. While studies are underway, US statistics are alarming, and the trend is similar in Europe. Since 1994, US cases of young-onset colorectal cancer-defined as a diagnosis before the age of 50 — have increased by 50 percent.

Colorectal cancers will affect more than 140,000 Americans in 2020, with under-50s accounting for about 11 percent of colon cancers and 18 percent of rectal cancers. By the year 2030 the rates among this age group are expected to double and quadruple, respectively. As a result, the American Cancer Society recently updated its advice, saying most people should get screened at 45, not 50. Symptoms to watch for include changes to bowel habits that last more than a few days, such as diarrhea, constipation or narrow stool. They also include feelings of having to pass stool that don't go away by doing so, rectal bleeding or blood in the stool, abdominal pain, weakness, fatigue and weight loss.



### Worst pain in life

For David Thau, it took shooting pain in the abdomen-the worst he'd ever felt in his life-for him to go see his primary care doctor in June 2019. The Washington-based political consultant, then 34, had been ignoring the blood that had recently been appearing in his stool. "I've always been the kind of person who just says, 'Well, I don't need to go to the doctor,'" he told AFP. A former high school athlete, he was otherwise healthy with no family history of colon cancer.

Thau's doctor told him he might have an ulcer or appendicitis, so he checked into an emergency room. A CT scan detected a 7.5-centimeter (three-inch) mass that almost completely blocked his colon. He was diagnosed as having Stage 3C cancer, the last before a cancer has metastasized, and days later had surgery to remove the tumor. Fortunately, surgeons were able to extract it using small incisions and he did not require an ileostomy—a surgical opening to a bag that holds stool. —AFP



Smoke from a wildfire billows over the archaeological site of Mycenae in the northeastern Peloponnese, on August 30, 2020. — AFP

## GREEK WILDFIRE SPARES KEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

One of Greece's most important archaeological sites escaped serious damage after firefighters tamed a wildfire that lashed the surrounding countryside, officials said on Monday. The fire erupted at noon on Sunday near the ruins of Mycenae, one of the centers of ancient Greek civilization, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) south-west of Athens, prompting the evacuation of visitors and staff. "The damage caused to the archaeological site was the least possible, as the fire service acted swiftly and dry vegetation from the area had been

cleared away," Culture Minister Lina Mendoni said after inspecting the area.

The flames licked the Bronze Age ruins near the tomb of Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae and leader of the Greek city-state forces during the Trojan War. The second millennium BC fortress city was one of the major centers of ancient Greek civilization. Photos on Monday showed the 3,250-year-old stone Lion Gate, the entrance into the ancient city, blackened by smoke. The site remained closed to visitors on Monday, but the archaeological museum has reopened. Mendoni

said the site would also reopen soon, adding that the "visitors will see only a little burnt grass on the ground". Greece grapples with wildfires every summer, with strong winds and temperatures frequently exceeding 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit). Thirteen years ago, a fire threatened the temples and stadiums of ancient Olympia, birthplace of the modern Olympic Games. Firefighters were able to save the site, but dozens of people in the broader area died. — AFP

## In Mexico, free 'COVID-19 survivor' tattoos

A Mexican tattooist is offering free "Covid-19 survivor" tattoos to people who have beaten the coronavirus as an indelible reminder of the pandemic that has swept through the country. "In a few years they can tell their grandchildren and their children 'look, I remember when back in 2020 I got Covid... a super deadly disease and I was a survivor, here's my tattoo,'" Omi Debuta told AFP. Oscar Morales went to get his first tattoo after seeing the offer by the artist in the northern city of Monterrey on social media.

The 20-year-old tested positive for the virus and was asymptomatic, but worries that he was the one who infected his father, sister and grandfather, who was hospitalized. "I work a lot in the street. Maybe I infected them. Unfortunately many people don't survive. Thank God, and all my family and I are fine," he said. Mexico has registered more than 64,000 deaths from the coronavirus-one of the world's highest tolls. Morales admits that he underestimated the risks at first and did not take precautions even though his work involved going from one factory to another in the industrial hub. "Since I tested positive I'm really careful, always wearing a mask and disinfecting my hands," he said. — AFP

## Sports

## Photo of the Day



MUSCAT: Red Bull Sailing Team at the GC32 Oman Cup in Muscat, Oman.— Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## PGA Tour's 'Asian swing' wiped out by virus

TOKYO: Japan's Zozo Championship, launched last year and memorably won by Tiger Woods, has been moved to California because of coronavirus restrictions, effectively wiping out the 2020 US PGA Tour's \$30 million 'Asian Swing', organisers announced yesterday.

The event was scheduled to take place from October 22-25 but will now be held at Sherwood Country Club in Thousand Oaks, California, on the same dates but without spectators. With combined purses of \$29.75 million, the PGA Tour's three-stop Asian swing has been the highlight of Asia's golf calendar in recent seasons.

But South Korea's CJ Cup on October 15-18 was last week moved from Jeju Island to Las Vegas and the WGC-HSBC Champions from October 29 to November 1 looks certain to be cancelled. The \$10.25 million Shanghai tournament has been in doubt since Chinese authorities banned almost all international sports events for the rest of the year to guard against coronavirus outbreaks.

With leading players based in the US and the postponed Masters due to take place at Augusta in November, the PGA Tour "have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to invite players to compete in Japan," a statement said.

Japan has essentially closed its borders to most foreigners in a national drive to reduce risks of coronavirus infections. The pandemic has forced a one-year delay of the Tokyo Olympics but some professional sports in Japan such as baseball and football have started allowing limited numbers of spectators.

The nation has so far detected about 68,000 coronavirus infections, and recorded roughly 1,300 deaths. The Zozo Championship is Japan's first US PGA Tour event and was launched last year to great fanfare with Woods thrilling huge crowds.— AFP

# McIlroy ready for baby dash, Johnson on pole: Golf talking points

## BMW Championship winner Rahm begins at eight-under

HONG KONG: We've reached the final week of the truncated 2019-20 US PGA Tour season, but some players' minds are already on other matters. AFP Sport looks at this week's talking points in golf:

### RORY 'CAN'T WAIT' FOR BABY

Before the coronavirus shutdown Rory McIlroy was close to his very best — back at world number one after six consecutive top-five finishes, including a WGC victory in Shanghai. Since the restart, his struggles with only two top-15 finishes in eight starts had seemed inexplicable... until now.

During the BMW Championship last weekend, the Northern Irishman revealed why his mind may have been elsewhere. McIlroy and wife Erica are expecting the birth of their first child, a daughter, any day now.

"I think from the get-go my mind has been wandering the last few weeks, and now you guys

sort of know the reason why," said the four-time major winner. "I didn't think it was something that I really particularly needed to share out there. It's a private matter, but we're really excited and can't wait for her to get here.

"You're going out to play and maybe not knowing whether you're going to finish the round or not. Look, it's definitely not an excuse. I just haven't played well enough." He still intends to defend his Tour Championship and FedEx Cup crown this week in Atlanta, but will not hesitate to jump on a plane if he gets a call. "I'm going to play in many more Tour Championships and it's only going to be the birth of your first child once."

### DJ IN DRIVING SEAT

For the first time since the US PGA Tour playoffs began, the top three players in the FedEx Cup standings entering the Tour Championship are also the top three players in the rankings — Dustin Johnson, Jon Rahm and Justin Thomas.

For the second year running the FedEx points are

wiped clean and replaced by a handicapped leaderboard for the winner-takes-all shootout at East Lake.

With a victory and runner-up finish in the two playoff events so far, "DJ" Johnson is rewarded by starting at a nominal 10-under par with at least a two-shot cushion to everyone else in the 30-man elite field chasing the massive \$15 million first prize.

BMW Championship winner Rahm begins at eight-under, Thomas seven-under but world number four McIlroy, if baby allows, will have to make up seven shots from three-under par to become the first player to win the FedEx Cup three times.

Bringing up the rear at even par are numbers 26-30 in standings Cameron Smith, Viktor Hovland, Mackenzie Hughes, Cameron Champ and Billy Horschel. The 2018 Tour Championship winner, Tiger Woods, did not make the top 30, so will instead be able to rest his creaking body ahead of an assault on a 16th major at the US Open in two weeks. He also can look forward to a title defence at the Zozo Championship next month, not in Japan where he won it last year, but in California after the event was moved because of coronavirus restrictions. Woods won't be too unhappy at the new, temporary venue. He has six victories at Sherwood Country Club in Thousand Oaks.

It was the site of the Woods-hosted World Challenge from 2000-2013, where he didn't afford his guests many favours, winning five times. He also beat David Duval in the televised "Showdown at Sherwood" match between the world's top two in 1999. Last October Woods won the Zozo Championship — the first US PGA Tour event in Japan — to tie Sam Snead's all-time tour victory mark of 82. Claiming the outright record at Sherwood might just set up the 15-time major winner nicely for his rescheduled Masters defence in November.

### WORLD RANKINGS

Top 10s, week beginning August 31, 2020:



## FedEx points are wiped clean

## Ewan rockets to Tour de France sprint victory

SISTERON: Australian rider Caleb Ewan produced an irresistible late burst of speed to pip a stunned Sam Bennett of Ireland on the finish line of stage three of the Tour de France on Monday.

France's Julian Alaphilippe retained the leader's yellow jersey after the 198-kilometre stage from the Nice football stadium to the hilltop town of Sisteron in Provence.

Ewan, 26, won three stages on the 2019 Tour but started this edition on his backside after a fall on the crash-strewn opening stage.

Ewan, known as the 'Pocket Rocket' and standing 1.65 metres, bided his time and overtook Bennett right on the line.

The timely win gave Lotto a double boost after the team was reduced from eight to six riders on stage one when

Philippe Gilbert broke a knee while John Degenkolb was thrown off the race for missing the time cut after a nasty fall.

"It worked perfectly to plan, I had to move just at the right moment. It was disappointing to lose two riders on day one, but everyone has pulled together and we've done quite well," Ewan said.

"The world is watching and everyone would like to be here at this, it's the biggest race in the world and I'm delighted."

After a rampaging climax to Sunday's race provided by Alaphilippe, this stage was a more leisurely run through a national park located between the Mediterranean and the foot of the Alps, winding through oak and pine-forested hills.

With around a third of the peloton nursing grazes and bumps from that bruising first stage, and with Sunday's speedy stage in their legs, the teams took it slowly before the Tour was treated to its first real sprint. "Today was one of the few real sprint opportunities, so we weren't going to give that up," Ewan said after stepping from the podium.

Superstar sprinter Peter Sagan was again in the mix and gleaned enough

points from his fifth position to take the green jersey he has won a record seven times.

Despite the Covid-19 resurgence in France, the roadsides in this pastoral part of France were packed with fans on Tuesday. Schoolchildren were out in force chasing the sweets and goodies thrown from the publicity caravan, which is about 70 percent smaller this year, and many were cheering home hero Alaphilippe.

"Winning yesterday really relaxed me," said Alaphilippe. "It's a great honour to wear the jersey and I'll be defending it day by day."

Tuesday's stage features a summit finish and a tricky hill-laden route from Sisteron to Orcieres where Alaphilippe faces a real fight from British rider Adam Yates for the overall lead. Just four seconds separate the two.

"I know it'll be interesting with Adam Yates tomorrow," said Alaphilippe, who now surpasses former winner Geraint Thomas in days wearing the yellow jersey.

"It's a difficult stage, I hear. I haven't really studied it yet, but we'll keep an eye on him (Yates)," Alaphilippe added.

Yates, who has signed a deal to switch



OLYMPIA FIELDS: File photo shows Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland plays his shot from the first tee during the final round of the BMW Championship on the North Course at Olympia Fields Country Club in Olympia Fields, Illinois.—AFP

### Men

1. Dustin Johnson (USA) 9.96
2. Jon Rahm (ESP) 9.87
3. Justin Thomas (USA) 8.34
4. Rory McIlroy (NIR) 7.86
5. Collin Morikawa (USA) 7.53
6. Webb Simpson (USA) 7.03
7. Brooks Koepka (USA) 6.14
8. Bryson DeChambeau (USA) 6.02
9. Patrick Reed (USA) 5.76
10. Adam Scott (AUS) 5.42 (+1)

### Women

1. Ko Jin-young (KOR) 7.97
2. Danielle Kang (USA) 6.28
3. Nelly Korda (USA) 5.67 (+1)
4. Park Sung-hyun (KOR) 5.57 (-1)
5. Minjee Lee (AUS) 5.24
6. Kim Sei-young (KOR) 5.19
7. Nasa Hataoka (JPN) 4.94
8. Park In-bee (KOR) 4.88
9. Brooke Henderson (CAN) 4.65
10. Kim Hyo-joo (KOR) 4.48. — AFP



SISTERON: Team Lotto rider Australia's Caleb Ewan celebrates on the podium after winning the 3rd stage of the 107th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 198 km between Nice and Sisteron.—AFP

to Ineos, came fourth in the 2016 Tour de France where he also won the white jersey for the best under-25 rider.

Frenchman Anthony Lopez broke a shoulder in a collision with a Cofidis team

car that is being investigated, but amazingly, given how many falls there have been each day, he was just the fourth of the original field of 176 to leave the Tour so far. — AFP

Sports

# Chicago White Sox alone atop American League Central with win

## Padres continue to roll, shut out host Rockies

**MINNEAPOLIS:** Luis Robert homered in the seventh inning and drove in the winning run with a ground-rule double in the ninth as the Chicago White Sox grabbed sole possession of first place in the American League Central with an 8-5 victory over the Minnesota Twins on Monday night in Minneapolis. Jose Abreu had a two-run double among his two hits, and James McCann, Nick Madrigal, Nomar Mazara and Robert also had two hits for Chicago, which won for the 12th time in 14 games and broke a first-place tie with Cleveland. The White Sox won it with three unearned runs in the ninth off reliever Taylor Rogers (1-3), taking advantage of a drop of a routine fly ball by Max Kepler on Edwin Encarnacion's one-out fly to right. Lucas Giolito, making his first start for the White Sox since no-hitting the Pittsburgh Pirates on Tuesday, retired the side in order in the first to extend his hitless innings streak to 12 and his scoreless innings streak to 18 before the Twins sent eight batters to the plate in the second. Miguel Sano went 2-for-3 with a home run and three runs scored for slumping Minnesota, which lost its sixth consecutive game.

### RAYS 5, YANKEES 3

Tyler Glasnow took a no-hitter into the sixth inning and pitched six dominant innings as surging Tampa Bay widened its lead in the AL East over New York with a victory at Yankee Stadium. The Rays improved to 7-1 in the season series against the Yankees and moved 4 1/2 games over New York. Tampa Bay also matched a season high with its sixth straight win and moved to 13-2 in its last 15 games. The Yankees lost for the eighth time in 11 games. Glasnow (2-1) allowed two singles on grounders that didn't go much beyond the infield. He struck out nine, walked one and threw 87 pitches. Yankees ace Gerrit Cole (4-2) allowed four runs on eight hits in five innings and lost his second straight start after winning his previous 20 decisions.

### PADRES 6, ROCKIES 0

Piggy-backing starting pitchers Garrett Richards and Adrian Morejon pitched 6 2/3 innings on five hits, Fernando Tatis Jr. hit a two-run triple, and Wil Myers hit his ninth homer as San Diego defeated Colorado in

Denver. The Padres won three of the four games in the series. Two of the position players — first baseman Mitch Moreland and catcher Austin Nola — San Diego acquired during their 36-hour trading frenzy debuted as Padres Monday night. And new Padres reliever Trevor Rosenthal pitched a scoreless ninth in his Padres debut to complete the shutout. Richards allowed one hit with four strikeouts over 3 2/3 innings. Morejon (1-0) allowed four hits with two strikeouts in three innings to get credit for the win. Meanwhile, the Padres scored five runs on eight hits and two walks in six innings against German Marquez, who fell to 2-5.

### MARLINS 5, METS 3

Miami made an extra trip to New York worth its while, saddling Mets ace Jacob deGrom with his first loss of the season while earning a victory in a makeup game. The Marlins scored four runs off deGrom (2-1) in the sixth inning, with three of them unearned.

Marlins rookie starter Trevor Rogers (1-0) gave up two runs on five hits over five innings with two walks and five strikeouts to earn his first career victory in his second career appearance. He also started against the Mets on Tuesday and went four scoreless innings in a no-decision.

### MARINERS 2, ANGELS 1

Marco Gonzales threw a complete-game four-hitter to lift Seattle to a victory over Los Angeles in Anaheim, Calif. The Mariners left-hander allowed only a leadoff home run to Justin Upton in the second inning, but had to survive a difficult ninth inning to finish it off. For Gonzales (4-2), who finished with 102 pitches, it was his second career complete game, the last one coming in June of 2018 against Kansas City. Joseph Odom's RBI single in the third inning provided Seattle with its first run, and Jose Marmolejos homered in the sixth off Angels reliever Matt Andriese (1-2) to give the Mariners a margin for victory.

### CARDINALS 7, REDS 5

Paul DeJong clubbed a fourth-inning grand slam and St. Louis opened its three-game road series against Cincinnati with a victory. Paul Goldschmidt



MINNEAPOLIS: Eloy Jimenez #74 of the Chicago White Sox is out at first base as Miguel Sano #22 of the Minnesota Twins catches the ball during the first inning of the game at Target Field in Minneapolis, Minnesota. — AFP

recorded three hits while DeJong, Kolten Wong and Tommy Edman each had two hits for the Cardinals, who have won two straight following a four-game skid. It was the second straight loss for the Reds, who got a three-run homer from Eugenio Suarez in the ninth to make things interesting. Suarez drove in four runs.

### BRAVES 6, RED SOX 3

Austin Riley broke open a tie game with a bases-loaded triple and propelled left-hander Max Fried to his sixth victory as Atlanta won at Boston. In the fifth inning with score even at 2-2, Riley greeted reliever Phillips Valdez with a line drive off the low wall in right field, just beyond the Pesky Pole. It was Riley's first triple of the year and extended his hitting streak to five games. Fried (6-0) racked up a high pitch count (93) and left after five innings. He allowed two

runs on five hits with two walks and five strikeouts. Fried extended his streak of homerless innings to 58 1/3, the longest in the major leagues.

### ROYALS 2, INDIANS 1

Back-to-back, run-scoring hits in the eighth inning allowed host Kansas City to defeat Cleveland in the opener of a three-game series. Maikel Franco drove in the tying run with a single, and Bubba Starling followed with the game-winning single. Brad Keller and Shane Bieber put on an old-fashioned pitchers' duel. Bieber pitched six scoreless innings, lowering his major-league-leading ERA to 1.20. He allowed just one hit while walking four and striking out nine. He also leads the majors with 84 strikeouts. Keller gave up one run on three hits in 6 1/3 innings. — Reuters

## KSC wins stc football league title

By Abdellatif Sharaa,

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Sports Club (KSC) secured the Kuwait stc Football league title Monday after beating Salmiya 4-1 in the 17th round with one match remaining. Kuwait collected its 40th point to officially become champion as the point difference with Qadisiya in 34 points and Salmiya has 32 points and is in third place.

Fahad Humoud scored Kuwait's first goal in the 13th minute, while Yousuf Nasser scored twice in the 40th and 43rd minute, and Alaa Abbas capped Kuwait's scoring at the 74th minute. Meanwhile Salmiya's Hussein Al-Mousawi scored Salmiya's consolation goal in the 82nd minute. This marks Kuwait's 16th league title equalling Al-Arabi's record, which one title behind Al-Qadisiya which has 17 titles.

It was obvious from the onset that Kuwait players were in focus and determined to score as early as possible to take control of the match, while Salmiya players seemed confused and unable to execute or move cor-



rectly, and it did not take long before a corner kick was awarded to Kuwait that was coveted to an early goal by Fahad Humoud's header.

Kuwait continued its dominance despite Salmiya's futile attempts to score until the 40th minute when a penalty was awarded and converted by Yousuf Nasser who scored the club's third goal in the 42nd minute.

Kuwait's club continued its overall dominance in the second half as Jumaa Saeed scored a goal in the 52nd

minute only to be cancelled after referring to the VAR (Video Assisted Referee) because of a foul committed by Sami Al-Sane.

Kuwait's substitute Alaa Abbas scored his team's fourth goal with a header after a cross pass from Faisal Zayed. In a second match Al-Qadisiya football club defeated Kazima 1-0 with Bader Al-Mutawaa's goal in the 38th minute raising its point total to 36 and secured second place.

## Root returns for Australia ODIs but misses T20s

**MANCHESTER:** England announced Monday they had recalled several World Cup winners for their upcoming white-ball series against Australia but Test captain Joe Root has again been omitted from the Twenty20 squad.

Fifty-over world champions England have been fielding separate red and white ball squads in a season hit by the coronavirus pandemic. But with all six Tests spanning two series wins against the West Indies and Pakistan now completed, England have recalled some of their multi-format players for next month's limited-overs matches against Australia.

Root was the third-highest run-scorer at the 2016 T20 World Cup but has not played a T20 international for over a year, despite still wanting to feature in the format. He has, however, hit scores of 64 and 65 for Yorkshire in this season's Twenty20 Blast. But with England white-ball captain Eoin Morgan and Dawid Malan both compiling fine fifties during a five-wicket win over Pakistan in the second T20 at Old Trafford on Sunday, it is hard to see where Root fits into the national side's Twenty20 XI.

England national selector Ed Smith said Root was not currently in their best T20 team "although no doors are closed to him in the future". "Joe plays so much cricket, gives so much to England every time he plays, it's not right for him that we have him in the squad if he's not likely to be starting," added former England batsman Smith. Meanwhile fellow World Cup winners Jofra Archer, Jos Buttler, and Mark Wood all return for both the T20 and ODI series, while Chris Woakes is back in the 50-over squad.

Jason Roy, another member of England's World Cup winning side, has been ruled out of the T20s with the same side strain that has sidelined him for all three Pakistan T20s, although England hope the opener will be fit for the one-dayers. —AFP

## Zampa replaces Richardson in Bangalore IPL

**NEW DELHI:** Leg-spinner Adam Zampa has been called up by Royal Challengers Bangalore to replace fellow Australian Kane Richardson, who pulled out of the Indian Premier League for the birth of his first child. Bangalore, led by India skipper Virat Kohli, welcomed the 28-year-old Zampa in RCB colours late Monday for the Twenty20 tournament in the United Arab Emirates starting September 19.

Richardson, who went for \$533,333 in the IPL auction in December to bolster Bangalore's pace attack, is expecting his first child to be born during the 53-day tournament. "We are disappointed to not have Kane's skills with us this IPL as he certainly on top of his game," Bangalore team director Mike Hesson said.

"However once we found out Kane and Nyki's baby was due during the IPL, it's an exciting time and we were fully supportive of Kane wanting to be at the birth of the first child." Zampa will add to Bangalore's already impressive spin options including Indians Yuzvendra Chahal, Washington Sundar and Pawan Negi, and Moeen Ali from England.

Both Richardson and Zampa are currently in Britain as part of Australia's 21-man squad for the three T20 and three one-day internationals against England.

The world's wealthiest T20 league, which was shifted out of India due to the pandemic, has been hit by further coronavirus concerns after two players tested positive last week. —AFP



Adam Zampa

## Lightning eliminate Bruins in second OT

**LOS ANGELES:** Victor Hedman scored with 5:50 left in the second overtime as the Tampa Bay Lightning booked their spot in the Eastern Conference playoff finals with a 3-2 win over the Boston Bruins on Monday.

Sweden's Hedman snapped a shot through the legs of Bruin defender Brandon Carlo and beat goaltender Jaroslav Halak to give the Lightning a 4-1 series victory and their fourth appearance in the NHL final four in the past six seasons.

Forward Patrick Maroon provided the screen in front of the net for Hedman, who timed his snap shot perfectly.

"Obviously, a great feeling. We battled really hard today," Hedman said. "We're very happy, as a group, to move to the conference final."

It was redemption for Tampa who were swept out of the playoffs last year in the first round after a record-setting regular season.

Tampa will face either the Philadelphia Flyers or the New York Islanders in the next round.

"It was gutsy," Tampa coach Jon Cooper said. "We needed every bit of energy to get through that first overtime. Tongues were dragging. I'm proud of this team."

Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 45 shots, and Ondrej Palat and Anthony Cirelli scored a goal each for the Lightning. Palat has stepped up offensively for Tampa in the postseason to fill the void left by an injury to their top scorer Steven Stamkos.

The Lightning also lost Russian forward Nikita Kucherov, who left the game with an injury in the second period.

Palat scored on a tip of a one-timer from Kevin Shattenkirk to give Tampa Bay a 1-0 lead early in the second. The goal was Palat's fifth in his last four games.

Halak, who finished with 32 saves, started the playoffs as the Bruins No. 2 goaltender but he was thrust into the starting role when Finland's Tuukka Rask opted out of the NHL's quarantine bubble in Toronto, Ontario.

David Pastrnak and David Krejci scored for the Bruins, whose impressive campaign as one of the top teams in the league during the regular season came to a frustrating finish.

In Edmonton, Swedish forward Andre Burakovsky had two goals and an assist as the Colorado Avalanche kept their playoff hopes alive with a 6-3 victory over the Dallas Stars.

The Avalanche scored five goals over a 10-minute stretch during the first period to cut their deficit to three games to two in the Western Conference semi-final series.

Game six is scheduled for Wednesday.

Nathan MacKinnon and Mikko Rantanen each added a goal and an assist for the Avalanche. France's Pierre-Edouard Bellemare and Nazem Kadri also scored, and Canadian goaltender Michael Hutchinson stopped 31 shots.

Joe Pavelski, Miro Heiskanen and Jamie Benn scored for the Stars, who were attempting to reach the conference final for the first time in a dozen years. —AFP

**14** Ewan rockets to Tour de France sprint victory



**15** Chicago White Sox alone atop American League Central with win



**15** Zampa replaces Richardson in Bangalore IPL



NEW YORK: Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic returns a shot during her Women's Singles first round match against Anhelina Kalinina of the Ukraine on Day One of the 2020 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. — AFP

## Pliskova leads seeds into US Open

### Djokovic marches on at US Open with straight-sets win

NEW YORK: Karolina Pliskova led a day of dominance for seeded players as the underdogs failed to bite at the US Open on Monday.

Meanwhile, pre-tournament favorite Novak Djokovic marched into round two of the US Open Monday as he launched his bid for a 18th Grand Slam with a straight-sets win.

The world number one dispatched unheralded Damir Dzumhur of Bosnia-Herzegovina 6-1, 6-4, 6-1 under floodlights at an empty Arthur Ashe Stadium in New York.

The Serbian superstar took just 23 minutes to win the first set before laboring to a narrow victory in an hour-long second set.

With Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer absent, Djokovic is looking to close the gap on them in the race for the all-time men's singles Grand Slam record.

Top seed Pliskova shrugged off the surreal setting of an empty arena at Arthur Ashe Stadium to breeze past Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina 6-4, 6-0 in 1hr 3min.

Pliskova's brisk victory set the tone for the remainder of the opening day in the women's draw, where 15 of the 16 seeds in action progressed safely.

World number three Pliskova, elevated to top seed

in the absence of world number one Ashleigh Barty and second-ranked Simona Halep, faces France's Caroline Garcia in the second round.

Pliskova, who made a disappointing early exit at last week's ATP/WTA Western & Southern Open tune-up event in New York, said she was adjusting to playing before empty stands at the Open, where spectators are barred because of Covid-19 protocols.

"I felt better than in my previous match, last week," the Czech star said. "I think the center court is better place to play no matter — I mean, it's still without people, but I just felt somehow a little better."

Fourth seed Naomi Osaka meanwhile proved her fitness in a gruelling 6-2, 5-7, 6-2 win over Japanese compatriot Misaki Doi.

Osaka, 22, had withdrawn from Saturday's Western & Southern Open final with a hamstring problem, but did not appear to be hampered by the injury during her three-set win in just over two hours. Osaka, the 2018 US Open champion, arrived on court wearing a face mask bearing the name of Breonna Taylor, the African-American nurse who was shot by US police in her apartment in Kentucky in March.

Taylor's case has been widely publicised during

months of protests against police brutality and racial injustice in the United States, and Osaka said she planned to wear face masks carrying the names of other victims as the tournament goes on.

"I have seven and it's quite sad that seven is not enough for the amount of names," Osaka said.

"Hopefully I'll get to the finals and you'll see all of them," added Osaka, who last week threatened to withdraw from the Western & Southern tournament following the police shooting of African-American man Jacob Blake in Wisconsin.

#### NO COCO-MANIA

With the draw going largely to form, Coco Gauff's hopes of launching another giant-killing run were halted in their tracks after a 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 loss to Latvia's Anastasija Sevastova.

The 16-year-old from Florida delighted fans at Wimbledon last year by advancing to the fourth round as a qualifier but was unable to take her chances as slid to defeat against her 31st-seeded opponent.

Gauff said her development this year had been hampered by lack of tournament match practice fol-

lowing a season which was decimated by the coronavirus shutdown.

"That's what I need on tour. I'm playing against people older than me who have been in more situations, difficult situations, than I have," Gauff said.

"I think the biggest thing is I just need experience." Elsewhere Monday, sixth seed Petra Kvitova also advanced safely, downing Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu 6-3, 6-2.

The 30-year-old two-time Wimbledon champion, who has never gone beyond the quarter-finals in New York, said she was adjusting to the empty stands, as well as tournament regulations which prevent players from sightseeing in the city.

"It's been different, for sure," Kvitova said. "I'm glad that I had a couple of matches before to kind of get used to these new things."

"I really had to get used to being in the bubble. It's something totally different, which I was normally doing — going out for a coffee, sitting in Central Park."

"Suddenly this is not the option." Germany's 17th seed Angelique Kerber, the 2016 US Open champion, booked her second-round berth with a 6-4, 6-4 defeat of Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic. — AFP

### Kuwait's motocross champion being prepared for summer

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti athlete and motocross star Fahad Al Musallam has provided his essential packing guide for any person heading to the beach, chalet, or pool during the hot summer months. His expertise is greatly appreciated, and many fans look forward to more podium wins for the champion.

Beachgoers understand the extent to which it is easy to miss a few items here and there, thus Fahad Al Musallam's reminders should prove useful to them.

An item of personal importance to Fahad is the camera, which he carries with him to capture the moment. "I'm a photography buff," Al Musallam said. "You never know when an opportunity might come up, and I also generally just like to go around with my camera and see what I can find when I'm out." Fahad went on to say that the contrast between his adrenaline and endurance-based sport and a still image camera may seem odd, but the two balance each other out in meaningful ways for him.

"Always pack a sun-related lotion. Sometimes you need to cover up and shield against UV, and at other

times you are looking to improve color and vitamin D consumption." He said. "Vitamin D is essential to healthy body function, and the scientific community is still learning about how important a little sun each day is beneficial to us. For one, even the absorption of calcium is dependent upon Vitamin D levels."

Fahad Al Musallam recounted other essentials to keep packed at the ready for would be weekenders. He said to keep a pair of sunglasses handy, or a hat to protect during peak hours, and while swimming gear remains a must-have, an extra towel and set of clothes after the day ended should also be considered.

A wet bag was one item that most people can forget in their haste, but its value cannot be understated. "You think you might not need one because everything just goes into the wash, but a wet bag to hold all your used clothes and towels means you won't ruin your electronics," Al Musallam said. "Or anything else for that matter that you don't want to get dirty."

He said he likes to bring a bluetooth-capable speaker with him, so he can play his own music. He will take some time after being in the water to go through a magazine, or simply take in the sun and clear his head after a quad session with friends.

"You can't always go at full speed," He said. "You have to try to take in what's around you."

Fahad's story began at the age of six when his father purchased him his very first ATV Dirt Bike. Since then his passion has flourished into a full-



fledged career. He has always had the urge and passion for competition and quad racing provided him with the outlet for his passion. Taking his game to the next level natural. "Going head to head with the best is always a challenge that will never fade" explains Fahad. He takes on every challenge as an exciting endeavor. Even when it comes to downtime due

to an injury, Fahad is consistently enthusiastic to overcome a challenge and cross the finish line.

As he continues to build a name for himself, Fahad has one ultimate goal in mind. That goal is to compete in the Dakar Rally and complete it as champion and that is no easy feat. But with Fahad's natural talent and drive, it is most definitely a possible one.