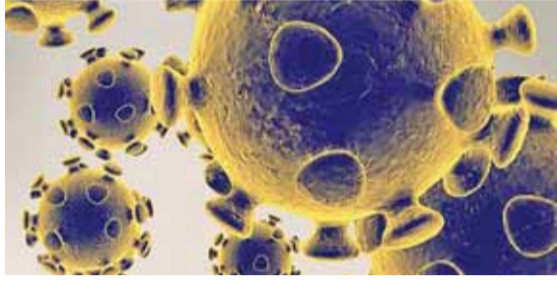




4 Kuwait registers 857 new COVID cases, two deaths



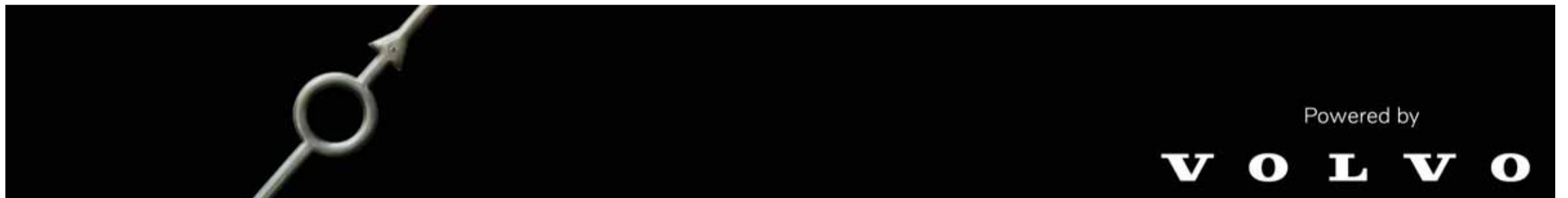
5 Guns and trucks at protest to defend Trump's America



12 Syrian olive trees take root in Iraqi Kurdistan



16 Serena battles into quarters; Thiem, Medvedev march on



KD 945m spending cut from budget as funds exhausted

Assembly approves 2020/21 budgets of 35 independent bodies



By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwait has cut nearly a billion dinars in expenditure from its budget for the 2020/2021 fiscal year, the head of the National Assembly budgets committee said yesterday, adding workers' rights, benefits and subsidies would not be affected. MP Adnan Abdulsamad said the state budget for the current fiscal year - which began on April 1 - projects spending at KD 21.5 billion, after cutting expenditures by over KD 945 million.

During yesterday's session, MPs also approved the 2020/2021 budgets of 35 independent government agencies including Kuwait Petroleum Corp, as lawmakers called on the government to adopt real reforms and stop squandering of public funds.

Abdulsamad said the budget estimates

revenues at KD 7.5 billion after calculating oil income at a price of \$30 a barrel, which leaves a huge deficit of KD 14 billion. But he expected the deficit to be lower as oil prices have recovered. The lawmaker said cash flow in the general state reserve fund deteriorated in recent years because the government failed to take the necessary measures to rationalize spending.

He said the state reserve fund held KD 50 billion during years of surplus when oil prices remained high, but almost all the assets evaporated as the government lacked a prudent fiscal policy. Of the KD 50 billion in assets, KD 24 billion was used to meet the budget deficit in the past few years since oil prices crashed in mid-2014. The remaining cash was used for foreign aid, arms spending, paying the shortfall of the social security agency and other pro-

visions, he said.

Last month, Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan said assets in the state reserve fund had been depleted to around KD 2 billion, adding that the state won't be able to pay wages in November. But Abdulsamad said a series of measures to create cash revenues have provided some KD 8.8 billion, which includes KD 3.7 billion after stopping the deduction in favor of the future generations fund, KD 2.5 billion generated from selling assets to the future generations fund and KD 2.6 billion from transferring profits from other government agencies.

Abdulsamad added Kuwait has not yet received \$4 billion it deposited at the Egyptian Central Bank, which matured two years ago. During the debate, MPs called

Continued on Page 2

News in brief

TikTok warns of suicide video

LOS ANGELES: TikTok is warning parents and users over a suicide video that has been embedded in a clip. The video showing an American man taking his own life came from a Facebook livestream and has been uploaded to various social media platforms, sometimes edited into other, unrelated videos. The short-form video platform said its systems were automatically detecting and flagging the clips for violating its community guidelines. — AFP

Gunfire stirs border blame

NEW DELHI/BEIJING: India and China have accused each other of firing in the air during a new confrontation on their border in the western Himalayas, in a further escalation of military tension between the nuclear-armed nations. Hundreds of troops are in eyeball-to-eyeball proximity along the remote border, which erupted in a clash in June that killed 20 Indian soldiers in hand-to-hand fighting. Both sides have observed a long-held protocol to avoid using firearms on the sensitive, undemarcated frontier. — Reuters (See Page 5)

Mafia boss eats guard's finger

ROME: A Sicilian mafia boss serving a life sentence bit off and swallowed a prison guard's finger during an altercation, an Italian news report said yesterday. Giuseppe Fanara, 60, who was serving a life sentence at Rome's Rebibbia prison, attacked seven guards in June when they came to inspect his cell, the daily *Il Messaggero* reported. Fanara, from Sicily's notorious Cosa Nostra clan, then charged the six other guards, using a broomstick as a weapon, allegedly shouting "I'll slit your throats like pigs!" — AFP

Surfer dies in shark attack

BRISBANE: A man has died after being attacked by a shark off a stretch of Australian coast famous for its surfing yesterday. Rescuers told media they came to the surfer's aid after he was spotted floating face down at Greenmount Beach on the Gold Coast but paramedics were unable to save the man. An individual who helped pull the surfer ashore told Seven News there was big part of the man's left leg missing. It is the first fatal shark attack on the Gold Coast in decades, but the seventh fatal shark attack in Australian waters this year. — AFP

China marks virus win as world suffers

BEIJING: China's leaders staged a triumphant ceremony to celebrate beating the coronavirus yesterday as billions of people around the world still suffer the fallout from the pandemic and the global death toll nears 900,000. The upbeat mood in Beijing comes as concerns grow about a resurgence of COVID-19 across Europe, with France tightening restrictions, cases in Britain spiking and schools resuming around the region.

Tour de France director Christian Prudhomme has tested positive for

COVID-19, prompting French Prime Minister Jean Castex to take a test, officials said, after the pair shared the same car to follow a stage of the cycling's premier sporting event at the weekend. Worldwide infections to date now stand at more than 27 million and over 890,000 people have died from the disease, with the pandemic showing no sign of peaking.

But in China the virus has been all but banished through lockdowns and travel restrictions earlier in the year that have officials touting the nation as a coronavirus success story. President Xi Jinping said China had passed "an extraordinary and historic test" during an awards ceremony for medical professionals decorated with bugle calls and applause. "We quickly achieved initial success in the people's war

Continued on Page 2



BEIJING: Zhang Boli, 72-year-old expert in Traditional Chinese Medicine, receives an award from Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Great Hall of the People yesterday. — AFP

Plasma therapy tried as Egypt cases top 100K

CAIRO: Mohamed Fathi, an Egyptian man who has recovered from COVID-19, winced as he watched tubes running down his arm to donate blood plasma, but insisted: "if I can help just one person, that's a very good thing". The 25-year-old land surveyor from Cairo caught the disease in May, on the eve of the Eid al-Fitr festival, becoming one of over 100,000 reported cases in Egypt, where more than 5,500 people have died of the novel coronavirus.

"Losing the sense of taste was a terrible experience," he told AFP at Egypt's National Blood Transfusion headquarters in Cairo, describing just one of his symptoms. "You feel like you're eating for the sake of it." Things got worse for the family when his elderly father was also infected, making Egypt's blistering hot summer months a hellish period of fretting over his recovery from a loud, dry cough and constant fevers.

"I came to donate today because I didn't want someone else to go through what I and my family went through," said the softly spoken young man, one of about 200 volunteers who have so far taken part in the budding project. Egypt, like the United States and a handful of other countries, is trying to fight the pandemic in part by using convalescent plasma, the watery fluid in the blood of recovered patients that is teeming with antibodies.

After US President Donald Trump touted it as a temporary cure, his administration issued an emergency authorization last month to use plasma from



CAIRO: An Egyptian medical staff works on plasma received from a man who recovered from COVID-19 at the national blood transfusion center on July 22, 2020. — AFP

recovered COVID-19 patients. The idea is to harvest the plasma and inject it into other patients to give them an immunological boost that helps fight the same infection. The scientific community is divided on using plasma to treat COVID-19, but proponents say the technique has proven effective in small studies to treat other infectious diseases, including Ebola and SARS.

Nascent clinical plasma trials to fight the COVID-19 pandemic have also been launched in Bolivia, Britain, Colombia, India, Mexico, Pakistan and South Korea. Ihab Serageldin, director of Egypt's National Blood Transfusion Centre, said he

Continued on Page 2

Israeli brand shoots pajama ad in Dubai

DUBAI: Israeli May Tager has become the first model from her country to pose for a photoshoot in the United Arab Emirates, after the two nations agreed to normalize relations last month. She posed in modest pajamas during a desert shoot alongside a UAE-based model known as Anastasia. Israel and the UAE on Aug 13 agreed to normalize relations, making the UAE the first Gulf country and the third Arab state to do so when a final agreement is signed.

The shoot, which involved the models waving the Israeli and UAE flags, took place in the sands of Dubai, one of the UAE's seven emirates and a regional tourism and business hub. FIX is an Israeli woman's lingerie and pajama brand. Out of respect for customs in the UAE, they modeled only pajamas. "We respect the rules here," said Tager.

Easily accessible visas for Israeli citizens and direct flights between the countries have not yet been established, so the photoshoot team arrived on flights via Europe and on non-Israeli second passports. "The moment we heard about the normalization agreement we thought it would be the most exciting thing to film in Dubai," said producer Noya Yohananoff, adding that getting the right paperwork took some time to figure out.

Meanwhile, the head of Israel's largest bank led a delegation of businesspeople on the first Israeli economy-focused visit to the UAE since the agreement

Continued on Page 2

Local

Kuwait marks anniversary of Amir, country's UN honoring amid pandemic

Honoring recognizes long-term humanitarian relief efforts: Crown Prince

KUWAIT: Kuwait marks today the sixth anniversary of the UN honoring of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait as an 'International Humanitarian Center'. Though COVID-19 continues to infect people and claim lives, His Highness the Amir continued to lead and orchestrate Kuwaiti efforts to provide fellow humans with a helping hand.

On September 9, 2014, then-Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) Ban Ki-moon held a special function at the UN headquarters in New York to commemorate the Kuwaiti leadership and people's commitment to world humanitarian causes. "We thank the Amir and the people of Kuwait for their outstanding generosity... Kuwait's leadership and funding has saved lives, and has galvanized others to participate in coordinated international action," Ban said in remarks at a ceremony recognizing the humanitarian leadership of His Highness the Amir at the UN headquarters in New York. "At a time when so many of our appeals are under-funded, it is good to know we can count on Kuwait's generosity," he added.

His Highness the Amir said, during the ceremony, that Kuwait had always based its foreign policy on "the necessity of providing humanitarian aid for all countries in need" regardless of geographic boundaries, religion or ethnicity. He revealed that in 2008, Kuwait had allocated around 10 percent of its support towards UN relief causes connected with natural disasters and wars. Since ascension to power in 2006, His Highness the Amir made it his and Kuwait's mission to assist countries in the region and the world to fight off poverty and mishaps. Whether aiding Yemen with \$100 million in 2015, holding and co-hosting several conferences to help assist Syrians suffering from war since 2011 or contributing \$176 million during Washington's 2016 donors' conference for Iraq, His Highness the Amir painted a clear picture of Kuwait's humanitarian diplomacy. It is worthy to note that Kuwait had held on February 12-14, 2018 the Kuwait donors

International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq, an event that resulted in a \$30 billion pledge.

Palestinians were not forgotten in Kuwait's humanitarian efforts with the GCC country providing, during the era of His Highness the Amir, \$34 million and \$15 million to UNRWA in 2009 and 2013 respectively. In present times, His Highness the Amir acknowledged the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and issued a decree on March 26, 2020 allocating a sum of KD 10 million to implement the national anti-coronavirus emergency program. His Highness also instructed state bodies to bring back Kuwaitis from abroad and also aid down-



Providing aid regardless of boundaries

on-their-luck expatriates to help pull through during the measures put to halt the spread of the disease.

Top figures celebrate

His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday several congratulatory cables from top Kuwaiti figures marking the anniversary. Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy KNG chief Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah all sent cables, expressing their joy during this occasion.

They reflected upon the importance of the UN honoring, saying that it came to crown His Highness the Amir and

Kuwait's efforts in aiding people affected by war, poverty, and natural disasters. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince replied with cables to the officials commending them on their sincere wishes and gratitude towards His Highness the Amir. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf took the chance to mark this joyous occasion, saying that His Highness the Amir's UN honoring came to recognize his long-term efforts within the domain of humanitarian relief. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf expressed wishes of swift recovery for His Highness the Amir and also hoped for the continuous progress for Kuwait and its people.

In the meantime, representative of the UN General Secretary and Resident Coordinator to the State of Kuwait Dr Tariq Al-Sheikh praised the diplomatic and humanitarian initiatives of His Highness the Amir. He expressed congratulations on the anniversary, and also expressed best wishes to His Highness the Amir for a long life and wellness in leading humanitarian work in various local, regional and international forums. Sheikh said that His Highness the Amir has left a good impression on how Kuwait adopted peace as a base for its national and foreign policies. He noted that cooperation and partnership with the United Nation and all its organizations and programs have helped in the continuous noticeable humanitarian work.

In this regard, he referred to efforts spent by Kuwait during the novel coronavirus pandemic and its generous funding to the World Health Organization (WHO) in response for the call by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to support affected areas around the world. This funding helped in providing healthcare for many countries with refugees and highly affected areas such as Yemen where Kuwait supported more than 100 health centers, Sheikh added. He also pointed to Kuwait's participation in international experiments aiming at a vaccine for COVID-19 in coordination with WHO. On local level, Al-Sheikh praised the strategy undertaken by Kuwait govern-



NEW YORK: In this September 9, 2014 file photo, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon honors His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait as a 'Humanitarian Center'. — KUNA

ment to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic by adopting a comprehensive plan in coordinating with civil and private institutions to decrease the negative impacts of the pandemic on affected people. He noted the coordination, cooperation and consultation between the UN and Kuwait official and civil humanitarian institutions, topped by Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS).

Source of pride

The anniversary is a source of great pride for Kuwait and each national in this country, KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said in a statement, adding that KRCS continues efforts in offering humanitarian aid to people in need all over the world to alleviate their sufferings, with the support of His Highness the Amir. "His Highness the Amir worked tirelessly in making Kuwait a pioneering

country in the humanitarian field, by offering international humanitarian initiatives, and hosting many activities on that matter," he said. "His Highness the Amir is keen on participating in such events, as our country during the recent years totally supported many humanitarian activities," he said. The humanitarian work has flourished during the reign of His Highness the Amir all over the globe, especially through the distinguished effort of KRCS, he added. KRCS with the support of His Highness the Amir has become a prestigious source of welfare, in respect to its fast field response in all regions in need all over the world, as the work of the society reflects Kuwait's foreign official status, he said. Sayer prayed to Allah Almighty for a safe return of His Highness the Amir from the medical trip in the United States. — KUNA

Israeli brand shoots pajama...

Continued from Page 1

to normalize ties. Yesterday's visit, led by Bank Hapoalim CEO Dov Kotler, included a small group of businesspeople from fields including high-tech, financial technology and industry. Kotler described the visit as "the first, groundbreaking step, with great expectations ahead". "We believe that direct and discreet communication with heads of the banking systems and economic figures can enable direct business," he said before boarding the private jet carrying the delegation

to Dubai. He added that in light of the global economic downturn due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, the delegation was looking for "new growth engines".

The two-day trip is set to include meetings with bankers and businesspeople first in Dubai, then in Abu Dhabi, a Hapoalim spokeswoman said. A separate Israeli business delegation led by the heads of Bank Leumi, Israel's other major commercial bank, is due to travel to the UAE on Sept 14. A UAE delegation has been invited to visit the Jewish state by the Israeli government, but no date has been set, an official in Jerusalem told AFP.

Israel and the UAE have stressed the economic benefits that normalization could bring, with several business cooperation agreements already signed. An Israeli delegation last week visited Abu Dhabi for normalization talks. — Agencies

KD 945m spending cut from budget...

Continued from Page 1

on the government to change its fiscal policy by restructuring the government administration, merg-

ing similar government bodies and rationalizing expenditures.

MP Abdullah Al-Roumi said Kuwait is passing through critical times and Kuwaiti people are looking at the prime minister to take some different actions, especially since Kuwait's financial position is not as good as it was in the past. MP Mohammad Al-Dallal called for diversifying sources of income to reduce dependence on oil and eliminate unnecessary government agencies.

trolled, but some parents were left fuming.

Restrictions have also been reimposed in France where seven more regions were placed on a red list after recording daily infection rates of between 7,000 and 9,000. In England, officials fiddled with quarantine rules again, imposing curbs on travellers from seven Greek islands popular with holidaymakers, after Britain at the weekend registered a level of infection not seen since late May.

In Asia, India pressed ahead with reopening its battered economy despite surpassing Brazil on Monday as the second-most infected nation in the world with 4.2 million cases. The country's top tourist attraction the Taj Mahal will reopen on Sept 21, officials said, more than six months after it was shut. Trains began running again in the capital New Delhi after a five-month shutdown and 12 other cities also restarted subway services. South Africa however reported yesterday its economy shrank by more than half in the second quarter, an unprecedented decline, as the pandemic took its toll on Africa's most industrialized state.

French footballer Kylian Mbappe became the latest sports star to test positive for the virus after his club teammate Brazilian forward Neymar was confirmed to have COVID-19 last week. Mbappe was ruled out of France's Nations League game against Croatia yesterday and is the seventh Paris Saint-Germain player to contract the illness. A number of tennis players have also been infected, and yesterday, world number one Ashleigh Barty announced she will not defend her French Open crown due to virus fears. The Australian star said it was a "difficult" decision but the health of her family and team came first. — AFP

Plasma therapy tried as Egypt...

Continued from Page 1

believes convalescent plasma is a promising treatment while the race continues to develop, mass-produce and distribute an effective vaccine. Since April he has spearheaded Egypt's campaign urging the country's more than 79,000 known recovered patients to donate their plasma.

"Coronavirus is one of these viruses that doesn't have a manual... we're combatting an unknown enemy, so any form of treatment that offers a glimmer of hope we need to hold onto," he told AFP. "If the US didn't find it promising then it wouldn't have launched a national campaign urging recovered virus patients to donate their plasma," he said.

Serageldin said in Egypt eligible donors must be aged 18 to 60, weigh at least 50 kg and have produced a certain quality of antibodies. Over 200 people have so far donated plasma, each providing 800 ml of the fluid split into four bags, enough to treat two patients. Serageldin said there was no data yet on the success rate of Egypt's plasma project.

Many more donations are needed, he said, stressing that "blood donations in general are low in Egypt, so we're working on raising awareness among the general public". The meager numbers of donors prompted advertising executive Ahmed Mostafa, 37, to create an app called Mosanda ("Support") to connect recovered patients with those infected. Mostafa has a strong motivation - he had also caught the disease in late May. "After a

month of exhaustion from the virus, I wanted to contribute to making other patients' lives better," he said.

He teamed up with a web developer and medical doctors to design the easy-to-use Android app, which was released in June. "We want to be the link between patients, but the response has been very slow," he said. With the minimal uptake online, he is planning to expand his app to make it a general blood donation service, meeting another pressing need in Egypt's strained healthcare sector.

Mostafa also sees the app, and a regulated, centralized plasma project, as a safe alternative to an emerging black market. In June, local media reported that plasma bags from recovered patients were being informally traded for over 20,000 Egyptian pounds (\$1,200) each. While one parliamentarian called for criminalizing the practice, Egypt's foremost Muslim institution Al-Azhar ruled that it was not permissible under Islamic law to trade plasma informally and lambasted those "profiting from the pandemic".

Egypt has detected more than 100,000 COVID-19 infections and reported 5,541 deaths from the virus disease, the health ministry said yesterday. The North African country of more than 100 million people had imposed a night-time curfew from March to June to curb the spread of the illness but since eased restrictions. Daily life has since returned in the largest Arab country, with cafes, restaurants and tourist sites again open to the public.

Prayers in mosques and churches have also resumed, with social distancing and mask-wearing enforced. The new school year is set to start in October with a mix of classroom and online teaching. The total number of reported cases reached 100,041 yesterday, including 79,008 recoveries, the ministry said. — AFP

China marks virus win as...

Continued from Page 1

against the coronavirus," Xi said. "We are leading the world in economic recovery and in the fight against COVID-19."

The nation's propaganda machine has been attempting to seize the narrative surrounding the pandemic, reframing the episode as an example of the agility and organization of the Communist leadership. Beijing is also touting progress on its vaccines as a sign of global leadership and resilience.

China put its homegrown COVID-19 vaccines on display for the first time at a Beijing trade fair this week and authorities hope the jabs will be approved for use by year-end. The vaccines are among nearly 10 worldwide to enter phase 3 trials, typically the last step ahead of regulatory approval, as countries race to stub out an illness that continues to ravage large parts of the globe. Spain has become the first country in Western Europe to pass half a million infections. The nation had largely gained control over its outbreak but cases have surged since restrictions were removed at the end of June. In Morocco, the government shut all schools and imposed a lockdown on Casablanca on the day classes were supposed to resume after cases surged in the city. Officials said the virus risked overwhelming the North African country if it was not con-



BERN: Swiss MP Beat Flach wearing a protective face mask speaks with MP Leonore Porchet during the autumn session of the Swiss Parliament with new Plexiglas dividers in place and pandemic-related legislation up for debate yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait's Deputy Amir receives newly appointed ambassadors' credentials

Sheikh Nawaf receives Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives credentials of India's Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives credentials of Spain's Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Aguilar.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives credentials of Iraq's Ambassador to Kuwait Al-Manhal Al-Safi.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday the credentials of several newly appointed ambassadors to Kuwait. His Highness received the new ambassadors of India Sibi George, Spain Miguel Aguilar, Iraq Al-Manhal Al-Safi, Belgium Leo Peeters, Oman Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi, and Bangladesh Md Ashikuzzaman. Several officials from the Amiri and Crown Prince Diwans attended the ceremony. Meanwhile, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives credentials of Belgium's Ambassador to Kuwait Leo Peeters.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives credentials of Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh Al-Kharousi.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives credentials of Bangladesh's Ambassador to Kuwait Md Ashikuzzaman.

Cabinet congratulates Amir on anniversary

KUWAIT: The Cabinet held its weekly session at Seif Palace on Monday under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Following the session, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh stated that the ministers expressed sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the sixth anniversary of his designation by the United Nations as Leader of Humanitarian Action along with naming Kuwait Center of Humanitarian Action. The UN had made the gesture in gratitude of His Highness' contributions

worldwide at the level of philanthropic aid, praying to Allah Almighty to safeguard His Highness the Amir, cure him as soon as possible and facilitate his come-back to the homeland to pursue the march of development and progress. On September 9, 2014, former UN chief Ban Ki-moon granted the titles to His Highness the Amir and the State of Kuwait in admiration of the wide-scale philanthropic contributions and aid for nations afflicted with violence and catastrophes.

COVID-19 update

Addressing the session, Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Humoud Al-Sabah talked about the local status of the novel coronavirus in terms of counts of the casualties, the recuperated and the deaths. He noted a noticeable increase in the number of infections with the virus in recent days, which he attributed to "mingling and failure to adhere to health precautions." The Cabinet however praised abidance by the health terms on part of responsible citizens and residents and affirmed its dismay with manifestations of

non-compliance such as failure to put on the protective mask and social distancing. It called on citizens and residents not to be complacent and apply the necessary health terms literally. The ministers examined the health services provided in the fight against COVID-19 with respect of treatment and logistics and decided to task the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to coordinate with the ministries of health and foreign affairs to arrange transfer of medical teams from Pakistan to Kuwait. They discussed and approved the Arab protocol for combating maritime piracy and armed robberies and referred the relevant bill to His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince. They also blessed a bill regarding the agreement for establishing a joint committee for cooperation with South Sudan. Furthermore, they decided to dispatch relief supplies urgently to Sudan to relieve victims of recent floods, and condemned the terrorist act of stabbing in Sousse, Tunisia, affirming support for the Tunisian State in measures it may take to safeguard its security and stability. — KUNA

Japanese Ambassador hails Amir's humanitarian efforts

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Japan to the State of Kuwait Masato Takaoka congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on the sixth anniversary of the UN honoring His Highness as a 'Humanitarian Leader', and the State of Kuwait for being named as an 'International Humanitarian Center'. "Japan recognizes the rising role of Kuwait in the humanitarian assistance in recent years," Ambassador Takaoka said in a press statement. "It reached all

over the world to aid people regardless of their ethnicity or religion. We also recall His Highness' warm sympathy and thoughtfulness to help Japan after the earthquake and Tsunami in 2011." "As for Japan, we continue to extend assistance to people in need around the world, and we are keen to cooperate and join efforts with Kuwait to promote the humanitarian values worldwide," the envoy added. "We pray for His Highness' speedy recovery and safe return to Kuwait."



Masato Takaoka

Palestinian Ambassador extols Amir

KUWAIT: Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the sixth anniversary of the UN honoring of him as a 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait as an 'International Humanitarian Center'. "I am honored, on behalf of the Palestinian community in Kuwait and myself, to convey congratulations, and pray to Allah Almighty to protect His Highness and return him home in good health for the sake of the Arab Nation," Tahboub said.



Rami Tahboub

"I would like on this occasion to reaffirm the gratitude of the State of Palestine, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, for the unlimited support the State of Kuwait under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber A-Sabah, is giving Palestine politically, materially and morally, since the Nakba until now, and Kuwait's opening of its door for the Palestinian people to work and live here," the ambassador said in a press statement. "Palestine's leadership and people will remain the trusted brothers of the State of Kuwait and will protect it as they protect Palestine, its people and cause. May His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people remain in good health and prosperity," he concluded.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.



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

Kuwait registers 857 new COVID-19 cases, two deaths

New recoveries 617, total 81,654

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Health said yesterday 857 people tested positive for the coronavirus in the past 24 hours while two persons died of COVID-19. Ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that total deaths reached 548 and registered infections increased to 91,244. He said distribution of cases over health zones was as follows: 226 in Hawally, 208 in Ahmadi, 156 in Farwaniya, 152 in the Capital and 115 in Jahra.

The ministry had announced earlier the recovery of 617 COVID-19 patients in the past 24 hours, raising total recoveries to 81,654. Dr Sanad said 89 people were in the intensive care units, adding that the number of people receiving treatment is 9,042. Furthermore, Dr Sanad said health care workers conducted 5,048 swab tests in the past 24 hours to increase tests taken since the outbreak to 653,099. Dr Sanad called on the public to remain vigilant and abide by social distancing and health regulations.

Separately, the Ministry of Health issued a decision banning the imports of masks that have exhalation a valve or vent to medical facilities, and that for medical reasons. The decision is based on a recommendation from the ministry's infection prevention and sterilization department, indicating that these



type of masks do not comply with standards for medical masks as they do not prevent the virus from spreading out of the mask, the ministry said in a statement posted on its social media accounts.

Tenants can't be evicted during lockdown

KUWAIT: A decree was issued amending some provisions of law number 35/1978 pertaining real estate rent, adding a new clause to section 1 of article 20, stating that: "Tenants will not be evicted in any case if they fail to pay the rent during a lockdown declared by the Cabinet of all public facilities. The court will later decide how to pay the overdue rent as per each case's circumstances," Al-Anbaa reported quoting legal sources. The sources added that a new comprehensive court department will be established for all rent litigations and that the lockdown period will be excluded from the grace periods given by law, which will be calculated from the day set by the Cabinet to resume normal life activities.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the comprehensive court Adel Borelli issued a decision cancelling all rent departments in all courts including comprehensive and partial ones and establishing new departments at the comprehensive court that will start hearings from 11 am. Accordingly, all current rent cases will be referred to the new departments following the already-set hearing schedule as much as possible. The amendments were issued in law number 15/2020, which is effective from March 12, 2020, meaning that it applies to cases that happened during the lockdown.

Trio arrested with large drug shipments in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Drugs Control Department officers arrested three persons who smuggled illicit tablets into Kuwait, then sealed them in blister packs for sale, reported Al-Qabas. The three were arrested in a Salwa flat where the packing machine and 50,000 tablets were found. 70 gm of shabu and chemical were also found. Tips were received about the three - a Kuwaiti, a bedoon and a Gulf national - who received the drugs in postal parcels and via land borders. The three will be sent to the public prosecution as soon as investigations are completed.

Meanwhile, Hawally security men busted one of the largest liquor breweries in Hawally governorate and arrested two men and two women, reported Al-Qabas. A large quantity of liquor was confiscated - 170 drums were found during the raid. The suspects claimed they made the best local liquor. Police noted that the villa they raided was sealed very well to

prevent fumes from seeping out. A security source said police acted on tips about the villa in block 12 in Jabriya. The same daily also reported that airport customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle 550 gm of chemical paste in a parcel that arrived from China. The officers became suspicious about the box, so they opened it and found the paste. The Drugs Control General Department was informed to collect the box as investigations began.

Domestic violence

Separately, a Kuwaiti woman vehemently rejected her husband's attempts to reconcile after he beat her over some domestic disputes, and insisted on proceeding with a case she filed against him, Al-Rai reported. Case papers indicate that the wife procured medical reports from Adan Hospital and filed a complaint at a Mubarak Al-Kabeer police station accusing her husband of insulting and assaulting her. On being summoned to the station, the husband tried his best to reconcile with his wife, who insisted on moving ahead with the case. The husband was referred to relevant authorities pending further investigations.

Al-Rai also reported an investigation being opened in a suspected scam case after a Kuwaiti man reported that he made an agreement with

GCC countries work together to protect environment

KUWAIT: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are working together to protect the environment which is part of the Gulf bloc's common action, Kuwait's top environment official said yesterday. Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Sabah, Board Chairman and Director General of Environment Public Authority (EPA), made the remarks after a virtual meeting of the GCC ministers responsible for environmental affairs. Kuwait's delegation was chaired by Maryam Al-Aqeel, Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs. Sheikh Abdullah said the ministers discussed the environmental strategy and preserving wildlife. He said they also discussed efforts of the GCC member countries to confront spread of coronavirus. —KUNA

someone via WhatsApp to rent a chalet in Khairan to spend the weekend, only to find out that the chalet was not offered for rent. The citizen explained that he paid the rent value through a link, but when he went to the chalet with his family, he found it was not for rent and no advertisements had been placed in this regard. The man said that he tried to call the so-called owner several times, but his mobile phone was switched off. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress to identify the suspect and arrest him. The same daily also reported a theft case filed after an Egyptian man told police that an unidentified robber broke the window of his vehicle and stole a briefcase containing money and documents belonging to the company he works for. A case was filed at Farwaniya police station and further investigations are in progress.

In my view

Coronavirus: The obnoxious guest

By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com



When the novel coronavirus surfaced, we wondered whether it will reach us from that far part of the world, but then and all of a sudden it was with us: maybe sooner than expected. It then appeared in Latin America among other parts of the Americas - in other words, this novel virus covered the entire globe in lightning speed.

We must thank the authorities, NGOs, Red Crescent, volunteers and others for their hard work day and night in their attempt to contain the virus and prevent its transmission, and at some point there was relative control of the situation.

Now as the country is opening up, are we ready to keep the confrontation going on in our favor? This time all must be involved and cooperate. In fact, it is we the people who must carry the banner and fight, as we learnt and knew what should be done to at least leave the virus out of our bodies. It has been proven that just one person can infect a thousand in a flash, just like what happened in a brotherly country when someone invited more than 500 people to a wedding party. A few days later, infections started to appear in various parts of the country from north to south, as when the invitees returned home, they carried with them the virus that caught hold in their communities, and this led to the country's lockdown for weeks.

We do not need that to happen now. Let us be smart and use our brains to protect each other. We do not need curfews, isolated areas, shutting down government departments, the private sector, schools and so on, and all of this can be avoided if we just follow a few simple steps that we are reminded of several times a day on various media platforms.

Now, many experts are speaking about second and third waves of the virus invasion - they have their reasoning for this and give us warnings about this vicious invisible enemy. They let us behave in a way that recognizes the fact that the virus is still there and it actually did not leave, to return in a second or fifth wave.

The government's gradual return to normal life is justified, of course, as we have seen how people were harmed and economies were badly dented. Many countries watched in despair as unemployment rose to alarming levels, debts deepened and the livelihood of the majority of people was affected.

Governments are taking steps towards normalization of daily life with the fear that we should live with coronavirus as a choice, because the economy must rebound, otherwise hardships will be unbearable. Let there be cooperation between all parties to make the pandemic rest in peace regardless of how long it stays among us.

UN office organizes symposium on education

KUWAIT: The Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Kuwait organized on Monday the first online symposium to discuss education issues during the COVID-19 crisis, in line with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) office for the Gulf states and Yemen, as well as the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the Gulf region in Kuwait. Representative of the UN Resident Coordinator in Kuwait Dr Tariq Al-Sheikh said in a speech at the opening of the symposium that cooperation between the Kuwaiti government and the UN agencies in charge, UNESCO and UNICEF, aim to exchange experiences and studies drawn from challenges and talk about vital solutions regarding education during the pandemic. Sheikh added that this symposium coincided with the first celebration of the International Day to Protect Education from Attack, falling on September 9, in addition to the International Literacy Day on September 8, which was declared by UNESCO in 1966. He explained that the symposium also aims to shed light on online education, with a primary focus on the youth. The Ministry of Education (MOE) aims to be a key player in achieving Kuwait's 2035 Vision and the Incheon Declaration for Global Education 2030 in the best way, he pointed out.

Meanwhile, MOE's Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Osama Al-Sultan said in a speech during the symposium that the ministry developed a plan for online education, keeping pace with developments to ensure the continuity of learning. The ministry carried out this experience for the 12th grade last August with the participation of public and special education students, which resulted in remarkable success from the beginning, through interaction in virtual classes, Sultan noted. Accordingly, Undersecretary of Kuwait's Ministry of State for Youth Affairs Dr Meshaal Al-Rabie spoke about the ministry's experience in implementing national youth policy projects in light of the contagion. Several projects have been operated remotely through Microsoft Teams, including a project which aims to provide learning and training opportunities for young people in several skills, such as programming, robotics and mathematics, he explained.

Consequently, Dr Anna Paolini, director of the UNESCO office in Doha, representing the Arab countries in the Gulf and Yemen, said in her speech that the disruption of the education process for more than 1.5 billion students in over 180 countries showed that no country is excluded, noting that even countries with enormous resources and high technical capabilities were not prepared to face all the challenges arising from the virus and the interruption of learning due to school closures. In turn, UNICEF Representative in the Gulf Area Eltayeb Adam stressed in his speech the need for children to catch up through innovative and alternative educational tools. The symposium was attended by the UN officials, Kuwaiti government, teachers, students and stakeholders in the education field, with the aim of shedding light on the confusion within the education system that countries have not experienced before due to COVID-19. —KUNA

Kuwait Times
THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

- Read Kuwait Times now on your phone for **FREE**
- Send Subscribe to **+965 944 88888**
- Enjoy the first daily paper in Kuwait on your phone

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

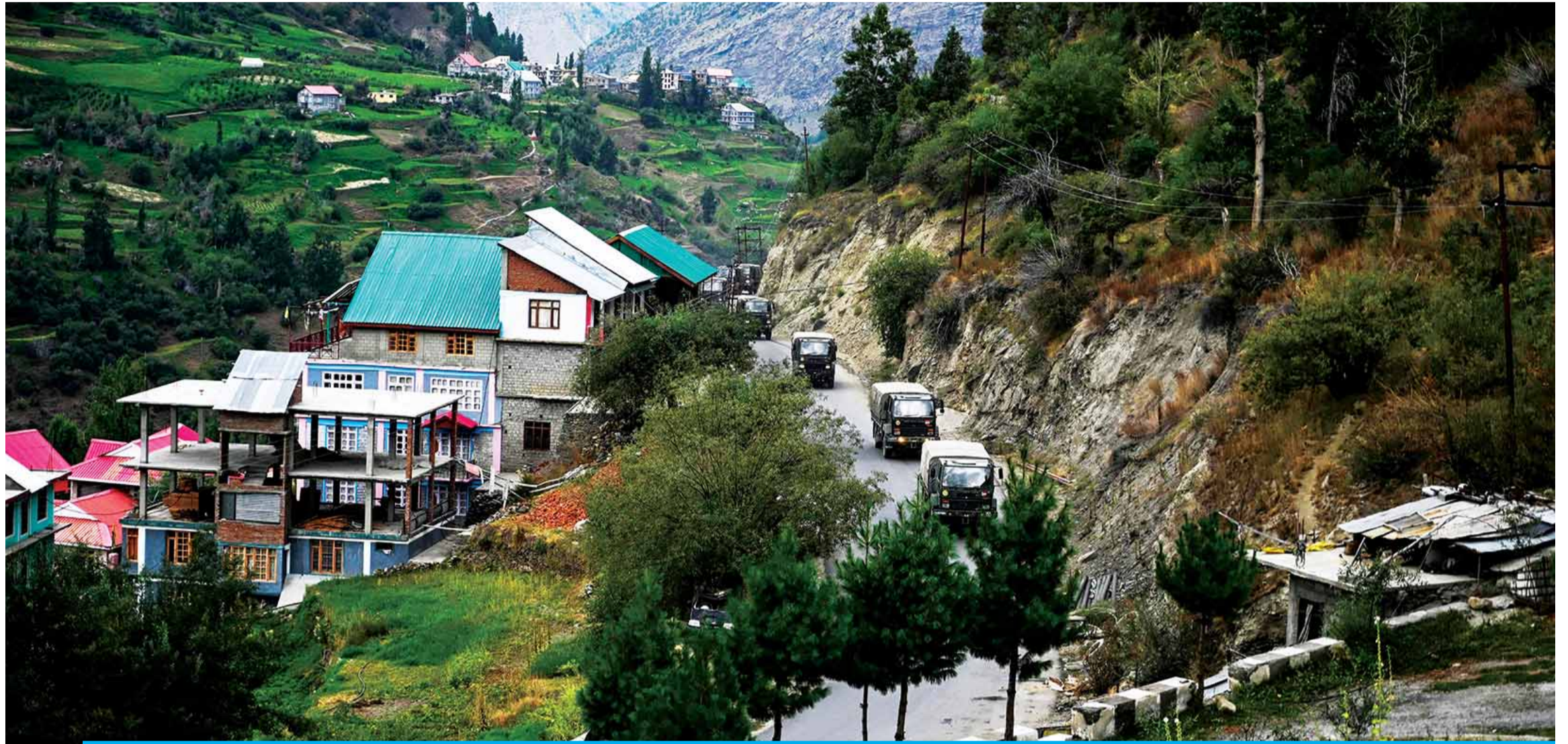


Is Navalny's poisoning a fatal blow for Nord Stream 2?

Page 6

Page 7

Australian journalists flee China fearing arrest



KYELANG, India: An Indian Army convoy makes way along a highway in Kyelang, some 120 kilometers from the Indo-Tibetan border. China and India shifted the blame yesterday after the first shots in decades were fired across a flashpoint Himalayan border, intensifying a months-long standoff between the nuclear-armed neighbors that has already claimed at least 20 lives. — AFP

Rare gunfire stirs border blame game

India, China accuse each other of firing; tension escalates

NEW DELHI: India and China have accused each other of firing in the air during a new confrontation on their border in the western Himalayas, in a further escalation of military tension between the nuclear-armed nations. Hundreds of troops are in eyeball-to-eyeball proximity along the remote border, which erupted in a clash in June that killed 20 Indian soldiers in hand-to-hand fighting.

Both sides have observed a long-held protocol to avoid using firearms on the sensitive, undemarcated frontier, though this agreement has not prevented casualties. On Monday night, troops of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) attempted to close in on a forward Indian position at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), or the de facto border, in the Ladakh sector, the Indian army said in a statement. "And when dis-



Firearms protocol has not prevented casualties

suaed by own (Indian troops), PLA troops fired a few rounds in the air in an attempt to intimidate own troops," the army said in a statement yesterday, adding that the Indian side acted with restraint.

"At no stage has the Indian Army transgressed across the LAC or resorted to use of any aggressive means, including firing," it said. But China said the

Indians had breached the informal border through the southern bank of the Pangong Tso lake, where tension has been rising for more than a week. "The Indian troops brazenly made gunshot threat to the patrolling Chinese border guards who came forwards for negotiations, and the Chinese border guards were forced to take countermeasures to stabilize the situation," said Zhang Shuili, a representative of the PLA's western theater command.

Military commanders and diplomats have held several rounds of talks since July to reduce tension, but have made little progress to thin out forces in the arid high-altitude that both nations claim and consider as vital to their security. The latest uptick in tension around the alpine Pangong lake began late last month when Indian forces mobilized to deter Chinese troops,

whose movements suggested they aimed to occupy a hilltop India regards as its territory, Indian officials said.

Each nation has urged the other to restrain forward troops who have been locked in a faceoff since April, after India said China intruded deep into its side of the LAC. Beijing denies the charge. "We request the Indian side to immediately stop dangerous actions...and strictly investigate and punish personnel who fired shots to ensure that similar incidents do not occur," the PLA's Zhang said in the statement about Monday's incident. India and China fought a border war in 1962 and continue to lay claim to thousands of square kilometers of territory stretching from the snow deserts of Ladakh in the west to mountain forests in the east. — Reuters

Guns and trucks at protest to defend Trump's America

OREGON CITY: Hundreds of Donald Trump's supporters gathered for a large motorcade in support of the US president and police near Portland, where anti-racism activists have clashed continuously with law enforcement for more than 100 days. Small groups of men loaded with paramilitary equipment, many of them armed militants from right-wing extremist groups, milled among the crowd that consisted mostly of families and older people.

About 300 cars, including many massive pickup trucks, then took to the roads surrounding Oregon City, some 30 miles from Portland, before dispersing. But 150 to 200 people, led by members of the far-right Proud Boys militia, which advocates white supremacy, decided to follow the road to Oregon's capital, Salem, for a show of force on the steps of the state capitol building. Tensions in the Portland area heightened on August 29 when Aaron Danielson, 39, a supporter of the far-right group Patriot Prayer, was shot dead in the city.

He had just participated in a pro-Trump motorcade like the one on Monday and left the parade to go into Portland with other attendees. A 48-year-old man named Michael Reinhoehl, who claimed to be an "anti-fascist" on social media, was suspected of the shooting. He was shot dead five days later by police looking

for him. Reinhoehl allegedly tried to escape and grabbed a gun when he was killed. On Monday, the Labor Day holiday in the US, rally organizers stressed their motorcade route would not go near Portland for safety reasons.

'Has the brains'

Hundreds of American flags waved above the motorcade, often with banners calling for Trump's reelection on November 3. Pictures of Trump, depicting him as Rambo with a machine gun in hand, occasionally appeared on the banners as well. "Trump has the brains to get America back on track," said Cassidy Larson, an accountant in a small Oregon town. "He knows what it takes for the capitalism to generate the money to fix the buildings down in downtown Portland that are being destroyed by the other people," she told AFP. She was referring to the protests against racism and police brutality that have rocked the city—and the entire country—since the death in May of George Floyd, a black man, at the hands of white police officers.

Demonstrations have been particularly stormy in Portland, a city of 650,000, where anti-fascist activists frequently clashed with police. Trump has cast the city as being under siege by "thugs" engaged in "domestic terrorism," though the demonstrations have been peaceful for the most part. While protests have continued in Portland, and many downtown businesses have boarded up their storefronts, the damage has been minimal and daily life continues to be calm, an AFP reporter confirmed.

But Carol Williams, a retiree and longtime Republican activist, disagrees: she said downtown Portland "looks like a third-world country with all of the graffiti and the burning and the looting. "We don't stand for violence, even though that's what we're accused of," said Williams, who lives in the small town of Silverton, 37 miles south of Portland. "We are peaceful. We don't go looking for retribution," she added, referring to Danielson's death. Art White, a veteran who spent three and a half years in Vietnam during the war, says he made the trip to show he supports "my president Donald J Trump 1,000 percent."

"We have finally come up with a president that will stand up for our rights" and American values, said the short, mustachioed 70-year-old, proudly sporting a cowboy hat. "I've seen what a socialistic, Communist community state does to their people, and it is not nice," White said, adding he worries about "the socialist outsiders, the Communist outsiders, that has invaded our country in the last 20 years." "I will support my constitutional rights... with my own life if I have to," White said. "It makes me sad that I have to fight in my own country." — AFP



OREGON: Far-right protesters walk past the state capitol with long rifles during a rally in Salem, Oregon. — AFP

Paris, Washington at odds over Hezbollah

BEIRUT: When it comes to Lebanon, the US and France have similar outlooks, but one major point of difference involves the Hezbollah movement - shunned by Washington but tolerated by a pragmatic Parisian leadership. While the United States seeks to isolate and curb the influence of the Iran-backed group it has designated a "terrorist" organization and punished with sanctions, France recognizes it as a key political actor whose cooperation is needed to lift Lebanon out of crisis. Lebanon's government stepped down last month amid popular anger over a massive blast at Beirut's port on August 4 that killed 191 people, wounded thousands and ravaged large parts of the capital. Both Western powers have agreed Lebanon needs a cabinet different from its predecessors to tackle urgent reforms, but all consensus seems to end there. "France's approach tends to be more realistic," analyst Karim Bitar said.

"France views Lebanon as it is, while the (US President Donald) Trump administration tends to view Lebanon as it would like it to be." The US view is that Hezbollah - the only group not to have disarmed after the 1975-1990 civil war - holds excessive influence in Lebanon, "which needs to be contained", Bitar said. But Paris recognizes "Hezbollah in Lebanon is a major political actor, that it has a wide captive constituency in Lebanon's Shiite community, that it is here to stay," he added.

'Elected by the people'

The United States has been following closely as French President Emmanuel Macron twice visited Lebanon since August 4 to press for political change and reforms to unlock financial aid. During his last trip, the French leader differentiated between two facets of Hezbollah - one "terrorist", and the other, a political party "elected by the people" to parliament and allied with the Lebanese president's party that could not be excluded from talks.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah has been notably positive about Macron's visits, not labeling them as "foreign interference" as he might have done for such a move by the US. The Shiite movement's parliamentary bloc leader, Mohammad Raad, was among lawmakers who met Macron before he said all sides had agreed to form a new government within a fortnight. France, which has outlined a roadmap for reforms for the next government, "wants to maintain a channel of dialogue with Hezbollah in order to prevent the desta-



BEIRUT: Rescue workers dig through the rubble of a building in the Lebanese capital's Gemmayze area. — AFP

bilization of Lebanon", Bitar said.

Paris views itself as "an honest broker" to do this in a time when tensions are at a peak between Washington and Tehran. Observers say France is one of the only Western powers to have maintained direct contact with Hezbollah, pointing to the role of the current French ambassador, who formerly held the same post in Tehran. "There has always been direct contact between Paris and Hezbollah," an Arab diplomat in Beirut said. And as Washington is caught up in preparing for the US presidential polls, it appears to be giving France some leeway on Lebanon. "The Americans have set as a condition that Hezbollah not take part in the (next) government, but they could turn a blind eye to them remaining if there were a deal and reforms," the diplomat said.

Hezbollah 'cannot be trusted'

US Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker, also visiting Lebanon last week, told Lebanese newspaper An-Nahar that the US appreciated the French initiative, but differed on a few details, including that Hezbollah was not a legitimate political organization but a "terrorist" group. He did not meet with key political figures, instead seeing army chief Joseph Aoun, lawmakers who resigned after the port blast, civil society activists and Shiite figures opposed to Hezbollah. One such Shiite figure told AFP that Schenker said during their meeting that Hezbollah "cannot be trusted" to lead reforms. "Hezbollah has been given ample opportunity since 2005 to really involve itself in the state and has not changed its behavior," the source reported Schenker as saying. The United States has demanded Hezbollah lay down its weapons, but also echoed the call of a political minority in Lebanon that the country be "neutral", meaning that it break ties with Iran and distance itself from the region's conflicts.—AFP

International

Commuters flash victory signs; India re-opens metro despite COVID surge

India records 71,642 deaths; 4.2 million infections

NEW DELHI: Commuters flashed victory signs as India restarted city metro services after a nearly six-month hiatus, determined to live with the new normal even as the vast nation overtook Brazil as the second-worst coronavirus-affected country. Masked commuters sat in mostly empty coaches as journalists clambered for pictures at metro stations in the capital New Delhi-one of the most badly hit cities, along with financial hub Mumbai.

Passengers had to leave empty seats between each other, and could only enter carriages after undergoing temperature screening. "For our lives to move on, we have to get out of our homes... so this is a good move by the government to start the metro trains," said passenger Deepak Kumar. "Social distancing is being followed and... people are using facemasks and sanitizing," he said. The resumption of metro services came as the South Asian nation recorded 4.2 million infections since the pandemic began, health ministry data showed.

It surpassed Brazil's total, making it the second-highest tally behind the United States' 6.25 million. India has also recorded 71,642 deaths, fewer than the 126,203 in Brazil and 188,540 in the US. Since August the country of 1.3 billion people, home to some of the world's most densely populated cities, has been reporting the highest single-day rises in the world. On Monday it reported an increase of more than 90,000 cases.

'New normal'

Its caseload had moved past four million on Saturday, only 13 days after hitting three million. The re-opening of the metro is part of an effort by the government to gradually restart economic activity after the strict lockdown imposed from late

March saw growth contract by a record 23.9 percent in April to June. Commuters shrugged off the restrictions imposed by metro authorities.

Only one line was operational-for four hours in the morning and four in the afternoon-while trains had to be fully sanitized after each journey. "It's the



S Asian nation overtakes Brazil as second-worst

new normal, and I guess all of us need to take that responsibility," said Rashi Bhargava onboard a train in Delhi. The metro carried 2.7 million passengers a day before the epidemic around the 400-kilometre network.

The city of 20 million people recorded some 3,256 new infections on Sunday-its highest single-day spike in 73 days. It was also the first time cases crossed the 3,000 mark during this period. Virologist Shahid Jameel, who heads the Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance, said the key factor to watch is the growth rate in infections, which he called "quite alarming". "Over the past two weeks, the... average has moved from about 65,000 cases per day to about 83,000 cases per day, that is about a 27 percent increase over two weeks or about two percent per day," Jameel said.



NEW DELHI: A Delhi Metro train (top) and Gurugram Rapid train cross each other at Sikandpur Metro station as Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) resumed its services on Yellow line from Samaypur Badli to Huda city centre in Gurugram. — AFP

India has been testing more than 10 million people per day on average, with plans to ramp it up further. The Indian Council of Medical Research, the scientific agency leading the government's response, on Friday revised the testing criteria, allowing anyone to get a test without a doctor's let-

ter. Jameel said the move was overdue. "This will uncover more asymptomatic people, who are the real source of this expansion in India. There should also be more testing in rural districts and villages, since over two-thirds of the cases are coming from there," he said. — AFP

News in brief



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's convicted murderer Premalal Jayasekara (left) gestures after being sworn in as a member of parliament in Colombo yesterday. — AFP

Convicted murderer becomes MP

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan politician sentenced to death for murder was escorted out of prison yesterday to become the first convict to be sworn in as a member of parliament, to heckles from opposition MPs. Premalal Jayasekara from the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Party (SLPP) was convicted in August of murdering an opposition activist after opening fire at an election rally in 2015. But the 45-year-old's conviction and sentence came after nominations for the August 5 poll, meaning he could still contest the election and take up his seat. Jayasekara was a no-show when the current parliament held its first session on August 20 as prison authorities refused to let him out. However, he petitioned the Court of Appeal which on Monday held that he should be escorted from prison to exercise his rights as an MP. Opposition lawmakers wearing black shawls in protest heckled Jayasekara as he took the oath and several staged a walkout. — AFP

1 in 8 deaths linked to pollution

COPENHAGEN: In the EU, 13 percent of deaths are linked to pollution, said a new report published yesterday by the European Environment Agency (EEA), which stressed the current pandemic put environmental health factors in the spotlight. Europeans are constantly exposed to environmental risks like air pollution, noise and chemicals, and the Covid-19 pandemic provides an example of the links between "human health and ecosystem health." "The emergence of such zoonotic pathogens is linked to environmental degradation and human interactions with animals in the food system," the report said. Zoonosis is an animal disease that transmits to humans. In the 27 countries of the EU and in the United Kingdom, 630,000 deaths in 2012 could be attributed to environmental factors, according to the latest figures available, the report said. — AFP

Deadly Mozambique insurgency

JOHANNESBURG: Tens of thousands of people are being deprived of humanitarian aid in northern Mozambique as extremist militants intensify an Islamist insurgency, the UN agency World Food Program said. Jihadists have been waging a violent campaign in the gas-rich Cabo Delgado province since 2017, launching sporadic attacks on towns and villages in a bid to establish a caliphate. The insurgency has claimed more than 1,500 lives and displaced at least 250,000 - a tenth of the total provincial population. Lola Castro, World Food Program's regional director for southern Africa, said that of those 250,000 internally displaced, "we are accessing 180,000" - leaving 70,000 people without aid. Speaking to journalists in Johannesburg, Castro described northern Mozambique as "a very worrisome area". — AFP

COVID knocks hopes of reviving Southeast Asia holiday hotspots

BALI: A spike in coronavirus infections in Indonesia's holiday island of Bali and Thailand's first locally transmitted case in 100 days have dealt further blows to Southeast Asian hopes of reviving vital tourism industries. Plans to reopen Bali to foreign tourists from September have been postponed indefinitely, while Thailand's proposal for the cautious reopening of Phuket island has come into doubt.

As well as trying to encourage domestic tourism industries, some Southeast Asian countries have been considering "travel bubbles" with others as a way to get businesses restarted. Bali initially appeared to weather the health crisis better than other parts of Indonesia, which has suffered Southeast Asia's biggest death toll by far. But coronavirus cases have spiked after it reopened its borders to domestic tourism at the end of July. "Increasing domestic tourism is one important factor for increasing cases in Bali," said Dr Pandu Riono, an epidemiologist from the University of Indonesia.

While Ketut Suarjaya, the head of Bali's health agency, said domestic tourism was not to blame for the spike in cases, others see Bali's experience as a



BALI: Army and police officers monitor people to ensure they wear face masks as a measure to curb the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus in Denpasar on Indonesia's resort island of Bali yesterday. — AFP

warning of the dangers of reopening borders too soon. Epidemiologists and public health experts said the arrival of tourists in Bali not only made infection from other parts of Indonesia more likely, but underscored shortcomings in fighting the pandemic, namely a lack of testing and contact tracing. Public health experts also said another likely contributing factor was the arrival of the more infectious mutation of the virus, known as D614G.

Bali posted a record 196 coronavirus cases on Friday, the fifth consecutive daily record. Daily cases in the holiday island almost tripled on average over the past six weeks, while the death tally doubled to 116 over that period. Bali souvenir shop

owner Kamil, who goes only by one name as is common in Indonesia, said he still wasn't doing much business but tried not to get too stressed. "I just leave it to God because we cannot predict the future," he said. "All we can do now is run the business according to health protocols."

Indonesia's economy had its first quarterly contraction in over two decades in the second quarter - with Bali's economy shrinking even more than the rest of the country at nearly 11%. Thailand, where foreign visitor spending made up over 11% of GDP last year, has been even harder hit by the collapse in tourism despite better managing the pandemic - also contracting the most since the Asian financial crisis in the second quarter.

The country suspended plans for a "travel bubble" agreement with select countries in August as new daily coronavirus cases rose in parts of Asia. Yuthasak Supasorn, governor of the official Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), said the cautious reopening of Phuket to foreign tourists would likely be delayed until after the planned start date of Oct 1. Yuthasak told Reuters he hoped it would still start during Europe's winter - Thailand's tourist high season. Vietnam's local tourism reopening, after initially clearing itself of the virus, also took a knock when a new outbreak was discovered in the resort city of Danang in July, forcing it to go under a strict lockdown that was only lifted on Monday. Back in Indonesia, Kamil said he remained positive as long as his shop stayed open. "Maybe there will be a customer," he said. — Reuters

Is Navalny's poisoning a fatal blow for Nord Stream 2?

BERLIN: The alleged poisoning of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny may be the final nail in the coffin of the controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline between Russia and Europe through the Baltic Sea. Germany, the pipeline's main supporter in Europe, now won't rule out withdrawing its support for the 10 billion euro (\$11.7 billion) project if Moscow fails to thoroughly investigate the alleged weapons-grade nerve agent attack on Navalny.

What is Nord Stream 2?

The gas pipeline, initially scheduled to come into service in early 2020, would double the capacity of its predecessor Nord Stream 1, which has been fully operational since 2012. They aim to be more secure than other pipelines travelling through Ukraine, which have been disrupted several times due to the ongoing conflict between Moscow and Kiev. The project involves Russian giant Gazprom, which has a majority stake, and an international consortium including France's Engie, Germany's Uniper and Wintershall, Austria's OMV and the Anglo-Dutch oil major Shell.

Why is it so controversial?

Poland, the Baltic states and Ukraine have a dim view of it. They fear that Moscow could use dependence on Russian gas to apply political pressure on Europe. They have also criticized sacrificing the interests of Ukraine, which derives significant income from the transport of Russian gas. The announcement of Nord Stream 2 in 2015 was made at a "very sensitive" time politically, a year after the annexation of Crimea from Ukraine by Russia, foreign policy analyst Kirsten Westphal said. The pipeline will "bypass or at least reduce transit through Ukraine," she said.

The gas pipeline project is economically and geopolitically damaging to the eastern European nation, the very country that the EU claims to support in its conflict with Russia, the German daily



LUBMIN: A road sign directs traffic towards the Nord Stream 2 gas line landfall facility entrance in Lubmin, north eastern Germany. — AFP

FAZ wrote on Monday. The government's support for the pipeline was "a mistake from the start", it said. The project has also run into opposition from environmental activists who are against gas-related infrastructure, and from EU regulation on gas transport, which calls for splitting production and distribution activities. EU member Denmark only gave the project the greenlight to cross its waters in October 2019.

Why is the US opposed?

US President Donald Trump said in 2018 that Germany was "a captive to Russia" because of Nord Stream 2 and demanded that the project be abandoned. And although the pipeline's 1,230 kilometers are almost complete, the project has been at a standstill for months because of the threat of US sanctions against the companies involved. But the US has other reasons to be opposed. It is a major producer of natural gas, and recently launched an

offensive in search of new commercial opportunities, including in Europe.

What are Germany's interests?

German chancellor Angela Merkel announced the abandoning of nuclear power in 2011 in the wake of the Fukushima disaster in Japan and the country has begun to move away from coal, which is highly polluting. Gas is seen as a good compromise. In 2019, gas accounted for 25 percent of Germany's total energy consumption, and Russian gas is particularly cheap. Germany also is concerned about the heavy financial cost of abandoning the project. "I hope that Russia will not force us to change our position on Nord Stream 2. And those who ask for that must be aware of the consequences," Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told Bild, Germany's top-selling newspaper, on Sunday. "More than 100 companies from 12 European countries are participating in Nord Stream 2, more than half of them are German," he warned. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

Brexit poker begins: UK ramps up no-deal EU diplomats try to gauge London's appetite for a showdown

LONDON: Britain went into yesterday's fresh round of Brexit trade talks with a warning to the European Union that it was ramping up preparations to leave without an agreement as both sides bickered over rules governing nearly \$1 trillion in commerce. Britain left the EU on Jan. 31 but talks on new trade terms have made little headway as the clock ticks down to an October deadline for a new deal and then the end of the status-quo transition arrangement in late December.

As diplomats try to gauge whether Prime Minister Boris Johnson is blustering or serious about allowing a tumultuous finale to the four-year Brexit saga, his chief negotiator said yet again that Britain was not afraid of a no-deal exit. That prospect scares business and weakened the British pound on currency markets.

"We have now been talking for six months and can no longer afford to go over well-trodden ground. We need to see more realism from the EU about our status as an independent country," David Frost, Britain's top Brexit negotiator, said in a statement. "If they can't do that in the very limited time we have left then we will be trading on terms like those the EU has with Australia, and we are ramping up our preparations for the end of the year." The EU warned Britain on Monday that its international reputation as a pillar of the West would be tarnished and that there would be no trade deal after the Financial Times reported that London might simply undercut the Withdrawal Agreement treaty signed in January.

Britain said it was committed to the treaty but that it needed minor clarifications and a backup plan to support the 1998 Northern Ireland peace deal. European diplomats said Britain was playing a game of Brexit chicken by threatening to collapse the process and challenging Brussels to compromise first. Some fear Johnson may view a no-deal

exit as useful distraction from the coronavirus crisis.

Ireland worried

Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin said Britain's trade talks with the EU would be pointless if the Brexit withdrawal agreement it signed up to is not implemented in full. "The withdrawal agreement is



Brexit in crisis yet again, sterling jittery

an international treaty and we expect the UK government to implement and to adhere to what was agreed. We trust them to do so or they would render the talks process null and void," Martin told the Irish Examiner. The latest round of negotiations in London are likely to be tough: Britain says the EU has failed to understand that it is now an independent country - especially when it comes to fishing and state aid. The EU, weary of wrangling over Brexit, says it needs specifics from London and that Britain cannot make its own rules and have preferential access to its markets. As Johnson says mid-October is the deadline for a deal, diplomats said the public posturing was to be expected.

"As you get closer to the deadline, it's not surprising people ramp up the pressure," one EU diplomat said. "We all believe there has been movement by the EU towards the UK position, but it has-



An anti-Brexit demonstrator waves a Union flag alongside a European Union flag outside the Houses of Parliament in London. — AFP

n't been reciprocated, and that's the concern. "So, time is running out. If we are to get the deal that everybody wants, given the number of open issues and given the amount of time left, any deal is looking thinner and thinner."

Without agreement, trade and financial ties between the world's sixth largest economy and its biggest trading bloc would be thrown into disarray, spreading havoc among markets and businesses.

Brexit nerves boosted sterling-dollar implied one-month volatility to 10 percent for the first time

since mid-June. "We want to leave with a Canada-style free trade arrangement - that's always been our preference - and we think that's still possible," British Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick told Sky News when asked if he was looking forward to a no-deal Brexit. "But... if they don't show the degree of flexibility and realism that we want them to show... then we'll leave with the kind of trading arrangements that Australia and other countries have and we think that's also a good arrangement for the future." — Reuters

UberEats, Deliveroo workers drive French surge in new firms

PARIS: Food delivery workers fuelled an unexpected jump in the number of new companies created in France in June and July, French commercial court data showed yesterday, though almost all other industries suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ubiquitous on bikes across Paris and other French cities, the number of self-employed riders delivering food for services like Deliveroo, Just Eat or UberEats shot up when consumers were homebound during a two-month lockdown.

Many registered as companies once crisis restrictions eased, according to data from France's commercial court clerks council CNGTC, which showed the number of new transport businesses jumping 29 percent in June and July from a year earlier. That pushed up the overall number of newly-registered companies by 10 percent in those two months, although for the third quarter as a whole including May, registrations were down 5.5 percent, the data compiled by research firm Xerfi I+C showed.

While providing one bright spot as France braces for one of Europe's worst economic slumps, the deliveries boom has also revived concerns over a "gig economy" model at odds with the level of welfare afforded to workers in other sectors. It also contrasts with a worsening outlook for hotel owners, restaurants, retailers and companies in real estate or construction. The number of new company registrations fell in those sectors in the period.

Bankruptcy filings and requests for creditor protection were also down on a year earlier, by 42.5 percent, despite the economic shock dealt by the lockdown. "The measures put in place by the government have prevented a wave of insolvencies," said CNGTC head Sophie Jonval. The third and fourth quarters would be a greater test of companies' financial health, she added. In addition to a 300 billion euro (\$354.5 billion) state-backed loan program, the French government is going to guarantee 3 billion euros in quasi-equity loans to small businesses under its new recovery plan, which can be leveraged to 15 billion in order to shore up balance sheets. — Reuters



Japan's economic downturn could force new leader to boost stimulus

TOKYO: Japan's economy sank deeper into its worst postwar contraction in the second quarter as the coronavirus jolted businesses more than initially thought, underscoring the daunting task the new prime minister faces in averting a steeper recession. Other data put that challenge in perspective, with household spending and wages falling in July as the impact of the pandemic kept consumption frail even after lockdown measures were lifted in May.

The world's third-largest economy shrank an annualized 28.1 percent in April-June, more than a preliminary reading of a 27.8 percent contraction, revised gross domestic product (GDP) data showed on Tuesday, suffering its worst postwar contraction. The data will put the new prime minister, to be elected in a ruling party leadership race on Sept. 14, under pressure to take bolder economic support measures. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, the frontrunner to become next premier, has signalled his readiness to boost spending if he were to lead the country. "The risk ahead is that the effect of measures taken so far, such as pay-outs to households, will peter out," said Koichi Fujishiro, an economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute.

"If COVID-19 weighs heavily on wages, the new administration could take additional steps to help households."

The government has so far unveiled a \$2 trillion package of stimulus measures, adding to an enhanced easing program from the Bank of Japan (BOJ). Japan recently saw a renewed rise in infections but has been spared the kind of big casualties seen in western countries. Total infections stood at 72,321 as of Monday, with 1,380 deaths versus a



TOKYO: A taxi driver reads in his car as he waits for customers at night in Tokyo. Japan's economy sank deeper into its worst postwar contraction in the second quarter. — AFP

global tally of over 27 million cases and more than 888,000 deaths.

The main culprit behind yesterday's downward GDP revision was a 4.7 percent drop in capital expenditure, much bigger than a preliminary 1.5 percent fall, suggesting the pandemic was hitting broader sectors of the economy. "We can't expect capital expenditure to strengthen much ahead. Companies won't boost spending when the outlook is so uncertain," said Hiroshi Miyazaki, senior economist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley Securities.

Japan's economy has shown some signs of life after suffering three straight quarters of contraction, with factory output rising in July at the fastest pace on record thanks to rebounding demand for automobiles. Yet separate data yesterday suggested any recovery will likely be modest, as household spending fell a bigger-than-expected 7.6 percent in July year-on-year, while real wages declined for the fifth straight month, pointing to more pressure on consumer spending.

marketing strategy in partnership with Alphabet Inc's Google, Hershey executives told Reuters.

Hershey will tailor digital ads to households using search data provided by Google to overcome fresh challenges that threaten to derail this year's Halloween. The Pennsylvania-based candymaker struck a deal with Google last month for access to data showing whether people are more or less likely to go outside based on what they search for. For instance, a person who sought out business hours for nearby stores or vacation ideas suggests the likelihood to go outside.

So Jones and other people staying home for the holiday could see videos and clips on social media of people eating KitKats and Reese's Peanut Butter Cups under twinkly lights in their backyards or living rooms. In places where people are more inclined to venture out, they might see ads of mask-clad kids and adults going door-to-door for candy. "On a weekly basis, we can change how we're talking to consumers based on what we're seeing geographically," Phil Stanley, Hershey's chief sales officer, said in an interview in August.

The move is one of many strategic changes to marketing and logistics that US candy companies are making ahead of Halloween, after a disappointing Easter. Halloween is typically the candy industry's biggest holiday season by sales, followed by

Broad impact

The health crisis has ravaged a broad array of sectors, with firms such as automaker Honda Motor Co forecasting a 68 percent decrease in annual operating profit. Analysts polled by Reuters in August said they expect the economy to shrink 5.6 percent in the current fiscal year to next March, and grow just 3.3 percent the following year.

The fresh batch of data will be among factors the BOJ will scrutinize at its rate review next week, when it is widely expected to keep monetary settings unchanged. The central bank eased policy twice this year to pump money to cash-strapped small firms, complementing two big government spending packages. The BOJ is widely expected to hold off on ramping up stimulus for now as steps to spur demand could get people moving more freely into shops and risk spreading the virus. The global and domestic business climate has many Japan observers predicting a long and bumpy road to returning the economy to pre-COVID levels. — Reuters

Scared of COVID this Halloween? Hershey is making an ad for that

CHICAGO: Spooked by COVID-19, Martha Jones of Southern Kentucky will not let her three children trick-or-treat this year. Instead, she is transforming her sun deck into a mini-haunted house and setting up games, a grill and a bonfire in her backyard. "It'll give the children something to be excited about without going door-to-door for candy," said Jones, a 31-year-old chocolatier. Hundreds of miles away in the New York City borough of Brooklyn, 43-year-old musician Paul Lee is figuring out how to make sure his two kids can safely go trick-or-treating - the Halloween custom in some countries of children wearing costumes and going from house to house, asking for candy with the phrase "Trick or treat."

In the weeks leading up to the Oct. 31 event, Jones and Lee will see very different ads on social media and websites from candy maker Hershey Co. based on where they live, how likely they are to be on lockdown, and what Halloween activities they have been searching for online. This is part of a new



People wearing costumes walk during Halloween in Sierra Madre, California. — Reuters

the periods around Christmas, Easter and Valentine's Day. For Hershey, Halloween represents a tenth of its roughly \$8 billion in annual sales.

This year, anticipating a sharp increase in online sales and fewer trick-or-treaters, Hershey, Mondelez International Inc and their rivals are shrinking candy packs, spending more on digital marketing, setting up Halloween store displays earlier in the year, and keeping aside more e-commerce inventory for retailers trying to make up for lost brick-and-mortar sales. — Reuters

Business

How bitcoin met the real world in Africa, driven by small businesses

Monthly crypto transfers to and from Africa rise 55% in a year

LAGOS/LONDON: Four months ago, Abolaji Odujo made a fundamental change to his business selling mobile phones in a bustling street market in Lagos: He started paying his suppliers in bitcoin.

Odujo sources handsets and accessories from China and the United Arab Emirates. His Chinese suppliers asked to be paid in the cryptocurrency, he said, for speed and convenience. The shift has boosted his profits, as he no longer has to buy dollars using the Nigerian naira or shell out fees to money-transfer firms. It is also one example of how, in Africa, bitcoin - the original and biggest cryptocurrency - is finding the practical use that it has largely failed to elsewhere.

"Bitcoin helped to protect my business against the currency devaluation, and enabled me to grow at the same time," Odujo told Reuters from his two-by-eight meter shop. "You don't have to pay charges, you don't have to buy dollars," the 30-year-old said, raising his voice above the sound of loud haggling and the honking horns of scooters.

Odujo is one of many people at the heart of a quiet bitcoin boom in Africa, driven by payments from small businesses as well as remittances sent home from migrant workers, according to data shared exclusively with Reuters and interviews with around 20 bitcoin users and five cryptocurrency exchanges.

Monthly cryptocurrency transfers to and from Africa of under \$10,000 - typically made by individuals and small businesses - jumped more than 55% in a year to reach \$316 million in June, the data from U.S. blockchain research firm Chainalysis shows.

The number of monthly transfers also rose by almost half, surpassing 600,700, according to Chainalysis, which says the research is the most comprehensive effort yet to map out global crypto use. Much of

er to get dollars, the de facto currency of global trade; and complex bureaucracy that complicates money transfers.

The bitcoin users interviewed by Reuters, based in five countries from Nigeria to Botswana, said the cryptocurrency was helping people make their businesses nimbler and more profitable, and helping those working in places like Europe and North America hang on to more of the earnings they send home. Yet risks abound.

Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies are unregulated in many countries and their legal status is unclear, meaning there is no safety net and little recourse if you lose funds.

For many, converting local currencies to and from bitcoin relies on informal brokers. Prices are volatile, and buying and selling is a complex process that demands technical knowledge. In 2018, the Nigerian central bank warned cryptocurrencies were not legal tender, and investors were unprotected.

To shanghai with crypto

A steady stream of customers comes and goes from Odujo's shop, one of a dozen units along a dark corridor in an indoor section of the market known as Computer Village. Odujo makes two or three transfers a month of around 0.5-0.7 bitcoin (\$5,900-\$8,300) each, to suppliers in Shanghai and Zhangzhou. East Asia,



A bitcoin user buys bitcoins with naira on Bitcoin Teller Machine in Lagos

Chainalysis found, is one of the top partners for bitcoin trading with Africa.

Odujo's trades offer a microcosm of the wider trends at play in both Nigeria and across the continent. In Nigeria, small cryptocurrency transfers totalled nearly \$56 million in June, nearly 50% more than a year before. The number of transactions jumped over 55% to 120,000.

Gauging how cryptocurrencies are used in particular locations is tough, though. Digital coins offer a high degree

of anonymity, and though the value of transactions can be tracked on the blockchain, the identity or whereabouts of a user cannot. Chainalysis, which tracks crypto flows for financial firms and U.S. law enforcement, gathered the data by analysing web traffic and trading patterns, though locations can be obscured by virtual private networks. It separated transfers of under \$10,000 from larger sums common among professional traders. —Reuters



Much of activity in Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya

the activity took place in Nigeria, the continent's biggest economy, along with South Africa and Kenya.

This represents a reversal for bitcoin which, despite its birth as a payments tool over a decade ago, has mainly been used for speculation by financial traders rather than for commerce. Why a boom in Africa? Young, tech-savvy populations that have adapted quickly to bitcoin; weaker local currencies that make it hard-

Debt swaps could free funds to tame climate, biodiversity

LONDON: In Kenya, the coronavirus pandemic has dried up eco-tourism, cutting off sources of funding that help protect wildlife and pay an income to communities working to preserve nature.

But forgiving a share of Kenya's hefty foreign debt, in exchange for the government devoting those resources to fighting climate change threats and biodiversity loss, could tackle several big problems at once, researchers said yesterday. "As part of pandemic economic rescue packages, governments have an opportunity to address simultaneously the crises of debt, climate and biodiversity destruction," researchers from the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) wrote in a report. It ranks countries that would benefit most from such "debt swaps" based on their vulnerability to climate change, richness of biodiversity, indebtedness and creditworthiness.

At the top of the list are Cape Verde - an island nation off the coast of West Africa - Vietnam, Honduras, Kenya, Nicaragua and Papua New Guinea.

In Vietnam, for example, swapping debt for nature and climate protection could help farmers in the Mekong Delta - a major food-growing area at high risk of sea level rise - switch to salt-tolerant crop varieties, said report co-author Paul Steele. Opening up budget space could also expand a government effort that pays farmers, particularly in the poorest indigenous communities, to plant trees and conserve forests, he said.

Most of the \$8 trillion in debt owed by developing nations in 2019 - before the virus crisis - is held by wealthy countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, China and large asset managers, Steele said. All might have good reason to consider such swaps, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. China, for instance, is the host of the next Convention on Biological Diversity summit, now delayed to 2021, which aims to increase finance for nature protection, among other goals.

As the biggest holder of bilateral debt with developing nations, China could set an example by testing out debt swaps, and recently mentioned them at an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank meeting, Steele said. Asset managers facing debt write-offs as a result of the coronavirus-linked downturn might opt to put them to productive use - which could both support ailing economies and reduce the need for more debt relief in the future, Steele said.

Some investors that have made commitments to net-zero emissions by 2050 could also consider debt swaps as part of their broader mission, he added. Debt-for-nature and debt-for-climate swaps are a relatively new idea. The Seychelles in 2018 signed a \$27-million deal brokered through The Nature Conservancy, with the freed-up cash going to set up a big marine reserve, Steele said. Similar agreements might particularly suit other small island developing states in the Caribbean or Pacific with large debt, high climate vulnerability and rich biodiversity, he said. — Reuters

German July trade figures point to slow recovery

BERLIN: German exports remained far below their pre-crisis levels in July despite a 4.7 percent increase during the month, data published yesterday showed, adding to signs that Germany's economic recovery from the coronavirus will be slow. Imports rose by only 1.1 percent on the month, taking the seasonally adjusted trade surplus to 18 billion euros, the Federal Statistics Office said.

Economists expect Europe's biggest economy to show a return to growth in the third quarter, helped by higher activity levels domestically and in some of Germany's main trading partners after lockdowns were lifted from April.

Yet weak demand from major economic peers still grappling with the pandemic, such as the United States, is holding back a stronger recovery. The data showed that exports to the United States were 17 percent lower in July year-on-year. Exports to China, however, which is experiencing a more pro-

nounced recovery than the United States, were only 0.1 percent lower.

"While today's numbers are good news for our call of surging GDP growth (in the second half of the year) and suggest that the export sector is flourishing again, we should not get carried away by these numbers," said Carsten Brzeski, euro zone chief economist at ING. He added: "They are still part of the mechanical rebound. In fact, the German export sector is still suffering from structural challenges including trade tensions, Brexit and global supply chain disruptions as well as difficulties among its main trading partners to cope with the virus."

The German economy contracted by a record 9.7 percent in the second quarter as household spending, company investment and trade all collapsed at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Exports were in July still more than 12 percent lower than in February. Trade tensions, uncertainties linked to Britain's departure from the European Union and an automotive sector struggling to adapt to electrification had suppressed demand for German goods and services before the pandemic, setting off a recession in the manufacturing sector.

The COVID-19 crisis makes a full recovery difficult. The VDMA business association said on Tuesday that German engineering firms expected

impacted and therefore lower than previously anticipated," he said.

"We now expect to fly slightly less than 40 percent of our planned schedule over the current quarter. We will continue to take a prudent and conservative approach to capacity, as we have done during this period." The airline, based in Luton, north of London, added it would not issue any financial guidance for 2020 or 2021, due to the continued uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has devastated global demand for air travel.

England on Monday added seven Greek islands to its coronavirus quarantine list, but the mainland remains exempt, as the government seeks a more targeted way to limit new cases from abroad. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said anyone arriving from Lesbos, Tinos, Serifos, Mykonos, Crete, Santorini or Zakynthos from 0300 GMT on Wednesday must self-isolate for two weeks. The UK began introducing quarantine in June as part of efforts to stop new infections. The country has seen more than 41,500 deaths in the outbreak-Europe's worst. —AFP

EasyJet trims flights on weak demand, quarantine rules

LONDON: EasyJet said yesterday that it will cut flights on the uncertain demand outlook after the government decided to impose coronavirus quarantines on seven Greek islands. The British no-frills airline previously said it would operate at 40 percent of capacity between July and September but now admitted it would now be "slightly less".

"We are closely monitoring customer behavior and amending flying to ensure our schedule is aligned with demand," said chief executive Johan Lundgren in a statement. "Following the imposition of additional quarantine restrictions to seven Greek islands and the continued uncertainty this brings for customers, demand is now likely to be further

ByteDance to hand out cash bonuses to staff amid pressure

BEIJING/SHANGHAI: TikTok owner ByteDance said yesterday it would hand out cash bonuses to employees working to help it "overcome challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and changing macro environment". Full-time employees who have worked for 26 or more working days between July to August will be given a bonus worth half their August base salary, according to a letter from ByteDance to its employees that was seen by Reuters.

"Thank you for your hard work and dedication," the letter says. ByteDance has said it has over 60,000 employees globally. The bonus could run into hundreds of

millions of yuan, based on ByteDance's hiring advertisements and company sources. ByteDance confirmed the letter but did not provide details.

ByteDance has come under global scrutiny amid concerns about TikTok's collection of personal data and censoring of political content. The United States has said it will ban the short video app unless ByteDance sells the app's US operations amid rising tensions between Washington and Beijing. ByteDance has said the Chinese government does not have any jurisdiction over TikTok content.

TikTok has also faced challenges in India, where it was among dozens of Chinese apps banned in June following a border clash between the countries. "The TikTok team and especially the deal team have been working day in and day out," a company source said, adding staff morale at TikTok had been hit by the global challenges as well as the departure of its CEO Kevin Mayer who quit after just three months. — Reuters

Focus on supply as Italy sells new 20-year bond

AMSTERDAM: Eurozone bond investors were set to focus on supply yesterday, while attention remained on the European Central Bank's policy decision due later in the week. Bond sales are in focus, after Italy started selling a new 20-year bond via a syndicate of banks.

UniCredit analysts expect it will raise between 6 and 8 billion euros, which would take Italy's progress of funding to 77 percent of their target amount for this year. Italy's 10-year bond yield was unchanged at 1.12 percent. The risk premium it pays for 10-year debt over safe-haven Germany, rising in recent weeks, is at 158 bps, its highest in a month.

"Doubts about the ECB's dovish stance, and the pick-up in rates volatility have weakened buyers' resolve,"



BERLIN: German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier addresses the media during a joint statement with the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission Margrethe Vestager (not in picture) prior to the 'European Competition Day' at the German Economy Ministry in Berlin. — AFP

production to decline by 17 percent this year before growing by only 2 percent in 2021 - barring both a second coronavirus wave and resurgent trade disputes. — Reuters



LONDON: EasyJet said yesterday that it will cut flights on the uncertain demand outlook after the government decided to impose coronavirus quarantines on seven Greek islands.

analysts at ING told clients, adding that any disappointment at the European Central Bank's meeting on Thursday would mean pressure remains on Italian bonds for the time being. In auctions, Austria is scheduled to sell 1.15 billion euros of bonds due 2030 and 2034, and the Netherlands will issue 1.5 to 2.5 billion euros of a bond due 2028. There was also focus on the European Central Bank's weekly bond purchase data released late on Monday ahead of the bank's meeting on Thursday. The data showed the bank's bond buying remained subdued last week as analysts were waiting to see whether it picks up again after the summer lull.

"The data confirm that the ECB can take it easy as long as market conditions are relaxed, controlling average yield levels and spreads with subdued volumes," Commerzbank's head of rates and credit research Christoph Rieger told clients. Executive board member Isabel Schnabel told Reuters in late August that the lower purchase volumes reflected "seasonality patterns", but also improved market conditions. — Reuters

Classifieds

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

Kuwait Times
 THE FIRST COPY OF THE MORNING EDITION

 Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

الطيران المدني
Civil Aviation
 State of Kuwait - دولة الكويت



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 66819 - 66817
 Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

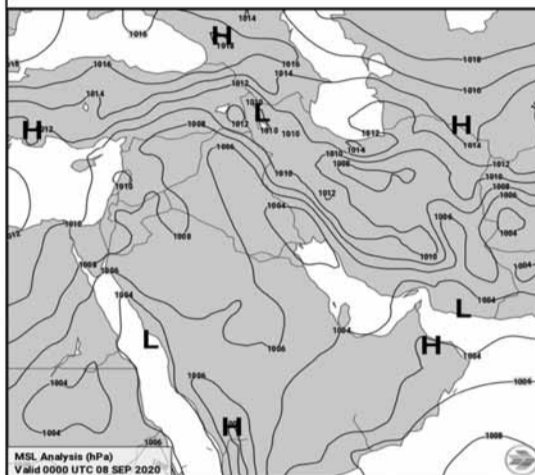
BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 08 - 40 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Rather hot with light to moderate variable wind to north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 32 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	35 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	48 °C	29 °C
ABDALY	48 °C	31 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	49 °C	31 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	46 °C	30 °C
SALMIYAH	44 °C	37 °C
AHMADI	- °C	36 °C
NUWAISIB	43 °C	28 °C
WAFRA	48 °C	29 °C
SALMY	47 °C	27 °C

SFC. CHART 08/09/2020 0000 UTC



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	09/09	Very hot	47 °C	28 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Thursday	09/10	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	46 °C	27 °C	NE-VRB	08 - 28 km/h
Friday	09/11	Very hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	47 °C	26 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 28 km/h
Saturday	09/12	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	46 °C	27 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:08
Sunrise	05:28
Zuhr	11:46
Asr	15:18
Sunset	18:04
Isha	19:22

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	26 °C
MAX. RH	78 %
MIN. RH	06 %
MAX. Wind	SW 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

REQUIRED
Flower
Organiser
 CONTACT:
65058800

Automated
enquiry
about the
Civil ID card
is 1889988

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

The Embassy of Canada in Kuwait seeks a full time Security Officer

The ideal applicant must have experience in the field of security/ crisis management, speak English and Arabic and be legally residing in Kuwait.

To apply, please follow the link www.kuwait.gc.ca complete the online application form and upload a CV and a covering letter by the Closing date: 23 / 09 / 2020

Please note that only those chosen for further consideration will be contacted.

DOOR TO DOOR SERVICES

Groupage /LCL services available to move personal effects (Cargo) to USA, UK, CANADA door to door services at lowest rates (any size of boxes/carton). next available vessel sailing is on Sept 17th 2020

For booking space and details, please contact:
 Nisha Kailash, 90079810
 Email: knisha@global-freight.net

Immediate Position AUTOCAD DRAUGHTSMAN 3D RENDERER

For a reputable Interior Designing Co. Well experienced. English speaking is a must. Email your C.V. with photo to: bia1@mail.com

Hospitals

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

Word Search

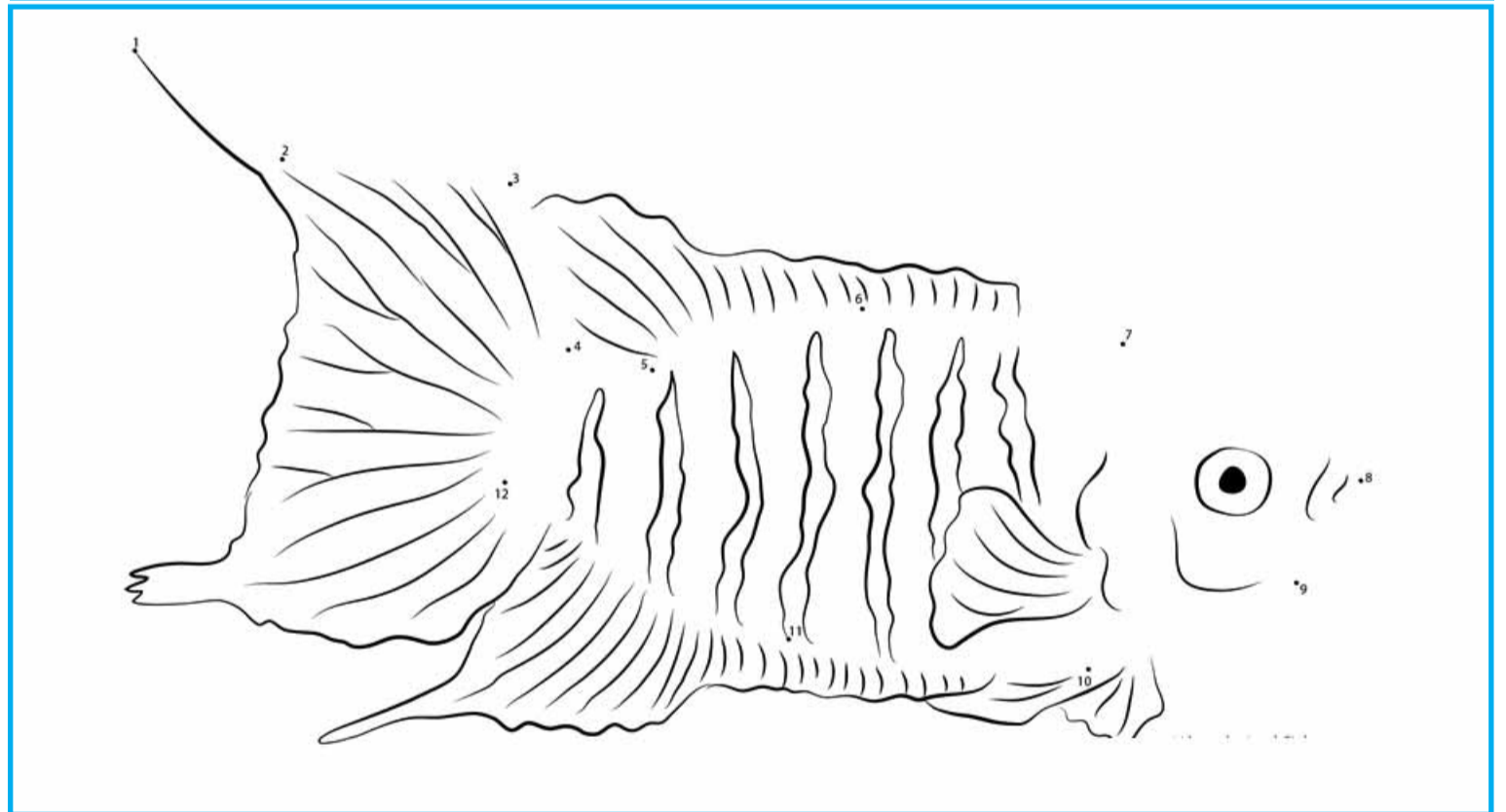
Candy Bar WORD SEARCH



Y S K C O W I L A V T W I X F J X S V
 R R F W E H C N O T S E L R A H C R N
 N E Y B U T T E R F I N G E R O L E Q
 E E A O X Y F P Y D M E T O C X A K D
 H T D L Y A O H E R S S H E Y B A R C E
 H E Y L R E K B G I A C Y P Z W K I V
 O K A E Z E R O V Y H K M V F O V N I
 K S P M Z G O Z S A T Y Y V X I B S F
 C U L A I D Y T Y W A O Z W S R A M E
 E M H R B T U C N Y E J N D I U I L K
 E E L A S H R R V K H D A H I N D H A
 K E R C D O C U A L A N K I T K A T T
 F R K M M A Z N T I F O T X Y W E U D
 T H A Z N J P C Q M T M Z Y W Q S R D
 K T Q C J R M H T A C L C K V D S Y V
 C Z E A K Y F I F T H A V E N U E B C
 A Y R D D E L F X Q C A N U F B X A P
 X Y J D X A L Y F M P G O T U C Q B E
 K K J C T I L L A C A M A H C T A H W

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|
| ALMOND JOY | HERSHEY BAR | PAY DAY |
| BABY RUTH | KIT KAT | SNICKERS |
| BUTTERFINGER | KRACKEL | TAKE FIVE |
| CARAMELLO | MARS | THREE MUSKETEERS |
| CHARLESTON CHEW | MILKY WAY | TWIX |
| CRUNCH | MOUNDS | WHATCHAMACALLIT |
| FIFTH AVENUE | MR. GOODBAR | ZERO |
| HEATH | OH HENRY | |

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

 <p>Aries (March 21-April 19) You like to be honest with those you care about, but today you're likely to be a bit too honest. Don't be too quick to take offense and watch the tendency to be too blunt. If you temper your honesty with some diplomacy, you should get your message across with a minimum of hurt feelings. You create win/win situations that way. It's best for all involved.</p>	 <p>Cancer (June 21-July 22) Don't be surprised if lots of people contact you today. Perhaps you're in the mood to gossip or neighbors have news of changes nearby. You should be brimming with energy, so you can handle it, but you might find it a bit unnerving if communication gets too hectic. It's best just to go with the flow and enjoy situations like this. You can think about what it all means later.</p>	 <p>Libra (September 23-October 22) A friend could ask for a loan and you might hesitate to give him or her the money. Follow your instincts. The person probably isn't too savvy about money. You might want to participate in some group activities, but don't let people take unfair advantage of you. You're willing to serve those who need you but discriminate between those who do and don't really need your help.</p>	 <p>Capricorn (December 22-January 19) You've probably had a busy week, Capricorn, and may feel out of sorts today. Perhaps you had too much good food last night, stayed up too late, or both. It goes against your grain to stay in and rest, but this is the perfect day to curl up with a good book. You're going to want some exercise, but don't overdo it. As you well know, you can get too much of a good thing!</p>
 <p>Taurus (April 20-May 20) It might feel like your home has turned into Grand Central Station. Lots of family members present, deliveries made and phones ringing, and you may just want to watch TV or read a book. This could lead to some understandable irritation. However, be your usual polite self. If possible, get a family member to screen your callers. You might be frustrated, but you don't want to offend anybody.</p>	 <p>Leo (July 23-August 22) You could be feeling a bit antsy today and may want to spend time exercising or trying a new sport or game that you've never played before. This is great. Ask some friends to join you, if possible. Don't push yourself past your limits. This can only bring exhaustion or injury, and it won't help your fitness level. Exercise within your limitations and do it more often.</p>	 <p>Scorpio (October 23-November 21) Today you're likely to experience a powerful burst of energy that may temporarily turn you into a workaholic. Chores may have piled up around the house that desperately need to be done. You may want to go through them like wildfire. You don't have to do them all at once. Take care of the most pressing tasks and then relax. The rest can wait. Ask family members to help.</p>	 <p>Aquarius (January 20- February 18) There might be a lot of work to do at home today. Since certain family members are conveniently absent, you may feel that the burden falls on you. Don't be a martyr, however. Just do what you can and leave the rest. Uncertainties about money could also be on your mind but put these aside for now. You'll be better able to deal with them tomorrow.</p>
 <p>Gemini (May 21-June 20) You might have to do a lot of running around when you probably want to stay home. Obligations to friends and family are likely to come up, and even though you're a bit tired you'll want to help out. The best plan for today is to get everything done as quickly as possible and then spend the rest of the day relaxing alone. You can have it both ways!</p>	 <p>Virgo (August 23-September 22) An exciting communication could inform you of an advancement opportunity that you should explore. While you'd be quick to act under normal circumstances, Virgo, today you might be more cautious. You've sought recognition for a while, so don't be too reticent. Don't let your insecurity get the better of you. Learn all you can about the situation and then make an informed decision.</p>	 <p>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21) Frustration may be the word for today, Sagittarius. You could be experiencing a bit of wanderlust. Distant states and foreign lands may beckon to you, but circumstances could make it hard for you to get away. There might also be friction with your partner. Don't get sucked into a quarrel. Use your placid nature to get grounded, then use your practicality to solve the issues at hand.</p>	 <p>Pisces (February 19-March 20) Too much indulging may leave you with a headache or stomachache to the point where you may want to spend most of today sleeping. The stress of this condition could cause you to snap at family members but remember that they weren't the ones who chose to overindulge. Chill out, get some rest, and regain your strength. You'll be back in the real world soon enough.</p>

Lifestyle | Features

Taj Mahal to reopen even as virus rages in India

India's top tourist attraction the Taj Mahal is set to reopen more than six months after it was shut, officials said yesterday, even as the vast nation battles soaring coronavirus infections. India, home to 1.3 billion people, on Monday overtook Brazil to become the world's second most-infected nation with more than 4.2 million cases, behind only the United States. "The Taj Mahal will reopen on September 21. All Covid-19 protocols, like physical distancing, masks will be followed," northern Uttar Pradesh state's Tourism Department deputy director Amit Srivastava told AFP. Visitors will be limited to 5,000 a day, down from the usual daily average of 20,000, he added.

One of the New Seven Wonders of the World, the shining marble mausoleum south of the capital New Delhi has been closed since mid-March as part of India's strict virus lockdown. Uttar Pradesh, home to Agra city where the Taj is located, is one of the worst-hit states in India with more than 270,000 virus cases recorded so far. India has pushed ahead with reopening to boost its virus-battered economy even as infections have steadily increased. Since August, India has been reporting the highest single-day rises in the world.—AFP

People take pictures with their mobile phones near the Taj Mahal in Agra yesterday. — AFP



(From left) Producer Siena Oberman, producer Fred Berger, US actress Maya Thurman-Hawke, US director Gia Coppola and screenwriter Tom Stuart attend a photocall for the film "Mainstream".—AFP photos

THE COSA CLICK-BAIT: GIA COPPOLA ON HER YOUTUBE CULTURE SATIRE

Her grandfather Francis Ford Coppola made "The Godfather", so it's hardly surprising that family plays an outsized role in Gia Coppola's life and her blossoming career as a director. As the niece of Sofia Coppola—who directed "Virgin Suicides" and "Lost in Translation"—Gia Coppola spent a chunk of her childhood on her aunt's sets. And it clearly rubbed off. Screenings for "Mainstream", her satire on YouTubers and the often toxic culture of social media influencers, booked out at the Venice film festival before you could say click to subscribe. And for once the festival's hottest ticket did not disappoint, with a mesmerizing performance by British actor Andrew Garfield as a charismatic drifter who becomes an online sensation.



US director Gia Coppola arrives for the screening of the film "Mainstream".

are victim to validation through likes and what constitutes popularity were floating in my head" as she wrote the script, she added. "Do we want to come together or are we just going to be selfish and bullying?" she asked. "There was a lot of feeling alien in the current cultural climate, and where do you fit on social media," the 33-year-old said.

Garfield is no relation to Coppola but it sometimes feels like everyone else involved in the movie is somehow related in one way or another to Hollywood royalty. Maya Hawke, the eldest child of Uma Thurman and Ethan Hawke, is the film's heart, a struggling Generation Z bartender trying to break through as a YouTuber. After she chances on Garfield, the star of Netflix's "Stranger Things" gets a helping hand from an online svengali played by Jason Schwartzman (Coppola's cousin, and son of "The Godfather" and "Rocky" stalwart Talia Shire, nee Coppola).—AFP

'Victim to validation'

Made from the gut, and using YouTubers' own graphic tricks and emojis—the female lead vomits broken hearts when her boyfriend cheats on her—Coppola said she felt compelled to recount what she was witnessing around her. "A friend of mine was representing influencers and I just couldn't get it. She said there are so mainstream but mainstream doesn't get it yet," Coppola told AFP. "These people have millions of followers and a huge impact. I was a curious about the power these people can hold."

"All of these questions about how we

Notre-Dame crypt reopens with exhibition 18 months after blaze

The archeological crypt of Notre-Dame reopens today with an exhibition retracing the cathedral's turbulent history nearly 18 months after it was ravaged by fire. The April 2019 blaze toppled the spire of the cathedral and destroyed much of the roof of what is one of France's most cherished national treasures. The crypt, situated below the square in front of the cathedral and containing the remains of fortifications and thermal baths, had to be cleaned of lead dust, an arduous job that took more than a year before visitors could be allowed back in. The exhibition pays homage to French writer Victor Hugo and the architect Eugene Viollet-Le-Duc, the two men behind the resurrection of the cathedral in the 19th century.

'Forbidding and dangerous'

Hugo's novel "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame," published in 1831, was instrumental in winning public backing for the restoration of the monument which had been left in a state of abandon and decay. "The exhibition starts with how the cathedral looked at the time the novel was published," said Vincent Gille, a curator at the Victor

Hugo museum in Paris. "It was a frightfully forbidding and dangerous building which bore no resemblance to a radiant and shining cathedral," he said, pointing to several of Hugo's sketches as evidence. The exhibition consists mostly of photographs, drawings, paintings and film excerpts illustrating the world's fascination with the cathedral, from the beginnings to the animated feature films of today.

'War against the Demolishers'

Notre-Dame was badly damaged by vandalism in the early 19th century, and indifferent city authorities were planning to tear it down when Hugo called for "War against the Demolishers" in a pamphlet published in 1825. "There is perhaps not a single city in France today that is not thinking about, beginning, or completing the destruction of some national monument," he wrote. After the publication of "Hunchback," the exhibition shows, the French public swung behind the idea that Notre-Dame was worth saving and gave crucial support to Viollet-le-Duc's work on the cathedral between 1844 and 1864, which laid the foundations for the national monument status it enjoys today.

The inspiration for some features, such as the malevolent chimeras overlooking Paris, came directly from Hugo's novel, which also, eerily, contained the description of a devastating fire. Organizers see the exhibition as the first step towards a return to normality for the crypt's museum, which before the fire welcomed some 170,000 visitors a year. "The project started very soon after the fire and was motivated by the wish to honor the cathedral," curator Anne de Mondenard told AFP.

Work on Notre-Dame's reconstruction after last year's fire has been plagued by delays due to bad weather, concerns over lead pollution, and most recently the coronavirus pandemic. It was only in early June that workers began the delicate task of removing tons of metal scaffolding that melted together in the fire-removal work was underway when the blaze struck. President Emmanuel Macron in July gave his blessing to a faithful reconstruction of the cathedral's spire, in a change of heart after previously calling for a "contemporary" touch.—AFP



A woman passes by a lithography copy by Feodor Hoffbauer (1839-1922) depicting the Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral between 1595 and 1875 during the press preview of the exhibition "from Victor Hugo to Viollet-le-Duc" in the external crypt of the Cathedral Notre-Dame de Paris, on September 4, 2020 in Paris. — AFP photos



Two persons watch a scene of the movie "Notre-Dame de Paris" (1911) by Albert Capellani (1874-1931) during the press preview of the exhibition "from Victor Hugo to Viollet-le-Duc" in the external crypt of the Cathedral Notre-Dame de Paris.

Syrian olive trees put down roots in Kurdish Iraq

Tucked away in the rolling hills of Iraqi Kurdistan is a hidden treasure: tens of thousands of olive trees, thriving in a new homeland after being smuggled from neighboring Syria. Their branches are heaving with bright purple-black olives ready to be picked. Their caretaker, Syrian Kurdish businessman Suleiman Sheikho, is proud to have brought the olive oil business to Iraq's autonomous north. "This year was a good year," said 58-year-old Sheikho, who has been transporting trees from his native Afrin in northwest Syria into Kurdish Iraq since 2007. "On this farm I have 42,000 olive trees, all of which I brought from Afrin when they were three years old," he told AFP, gesturing to neat rows reaching the horizon. In early 2018, his mission

took on a new urgency.

Turkey, which saw the semi-autonomous Kurdish zone of Afrin on its border as a threat, backed an offensive by Syrian rebel groups to take control of the canton. The operation, dubbed "Olive Branch," displaced tens of thousands, many of whom had made their living for decades by producing olive oil in the area's mild climate. Sheikho himself is a fourth-generation olive farmer and had 4,000 trees in Afrin that are older than a century. The slender businessman, who once served as the head of Afrin Union for Olive Production, sprung into action.

He transported some of his trees legally, but smuggled others across the border, managed on both sides by autonomous Kurdish authorities. Some of

the new transplants joined his orchard, located among luxurious summer villas near the regional capital Arbil. He sold others to farmers across Kurdish Iraq. Raw olives are a staple on Levantine lunch tables, while their oil is both used in cooking and drizzled on top of favorite appetizers like hummus. The oil can also be used to make soap, while the dark, sawdust-like residue from olives pressed in the autumn is often burned to heat houses in winter.

Fertile ground ahead

Olive trees struggle in the blistering heat and desert landscapes of Iraq, so the yellowish-green oil was long imported at great expense from Lebanon, Syria or Turkey. A domestic oil industry could

change all that. Sheikho was relieved to find the soil near Arbil as rich as in his hometown, but the warmer temperatures meant his trees required more robust irrigation networks. There are two harvests a year, in February and November. He built a press, where the olives are separated from twigs and leaves, pitted, then squeezed to produce thick, aromatic oil.

Dressed in a charcoal grey blazer during AFP's visit, Sheikho tested the quality by drinking it raw from the press, before the viscous fluid was poured into plastic jugs. "For every 100 kilos of olives, I produced 23 kilos of olive oil," he told AFP. Olive oil production had not taken root when Sheikho began working there, but has thrived since Syrians displaced by their country's nearly decade-long war

began moving there. According to the Kurdish regional government's (KRG) agriculture ministry, there were just over 169,000 olive trees in the Kurdish region in 2008.

Since then, the ministry invested some \$23 million in planting and importing the trees, which now number around four million, it estimates. There are around a half-dozen olive presses, employing many Syrian Kurds from Afrin. Sheikho sees more fertile ground ahead. "The farmers here have great ideas and they are extremely ambitious," he told AFP. "With the hard work and experience of Afrin's farmers, they are going to create a very bright future for olive business."—AFP



A Syrian Kurdish man from Afrin feeds harvested olives into processing machinery at an olive farm made of trees.



Suleiman Sheikho, a 56-year-old Syrian Kurd from Afrin, stands behind as processed olive oil is poured into a barrel at an olive farm made of trees smuggled from neighboring Syria.



An olive farm made of trees smuggled from neighboring Syria is pictured.—AFP photos





People pray at a Hindu shrine in front of a billboard for Disney's "Mulan" film outside a shopping mall in Bangkok yesterday. — AFP photos



People buy tickets for Disney's Mulan film at a cinema inside a shopping mall in Bangkok.

MULAN MOVIE BOYCOTT CALLS GROW OVER SCENES FILMED IN XINJIANG

Disney's "Mulan" remake is facing fresh boycott calls after it emerged some of the blockbuster's scenes were filmed in China's Xinjiang, where widespread rights abuses against the region's Muslim population have been widely documented. The lavish \$200 million film about a legendary female Chinese warrior was already tangled in political controversy after star Liu Yifei voiced support for Hong Kong's police as they cracked down on democracy protests last year. But the latest furore exploded as soon as the credits stopped rolling after the movie began showing on the Disney+ channel last week.

Viewers spotted that Disney included "special thanks" to eight government entities in Xinjiang-including the public security bureau in Turpan, a city in eastern Xinjiang where multiple internment camps have been documented. Another entity thanked was the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda department in Xinjiang. The revelation has sparked renewed anger at a time of heightened scrutiny over Hollywood's willingness to bow to authoritarian China. Rights groups, academics and journalists have exposed a harsh crack-

down against Uighur and Kazakh Muslims in Xinjiang, including mass internments, enforced sterilizations, forced labor as well as intense religious and movement restrictions.

Isaac Stone Fish, a senior fellow at the Asia Society, said the film was now "arguably Disney's most problematic movie" since "Song of the South"-a 1946 glorification of antebellum plantation life that the company has since pulled. "It's sufficiently astonishing that it bears repeating," he wrote in a Washington Post column. "Disney has thanked four propaganda departments and a public security bureau in Xinjiang, a region in northwest China that is the site of one of the world's worst human rights abuses happening today." Badiucao, a dissident Chinese artist living in Melbourne, said he was currently working on a new cartoon portraying Mulan as a guard at one of the internment camps in Xinjiang to satirize Disney's new film. "It's very problematic and there's no excuse. I mean, it's clear, we have all the evidence showing what is going on in Xinjiang," he told AFP.

Coronavirus victim
Badiucao accused Disney of "double

standards", embracing western social justice movements such as MeToo and Black Lives Matter, while turning a blind eye to China's rights abuses. The live-action remake of Disney's 1998 animation classic, "Mulan" has had a troubled release. It was meant to hit global theatres in March but became an early victim of the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, Disney rocked the industry-and its own cast-by announcing the film would be streamed into living rooms in many markets, including the United States, which it started Friday. Hollywood has been increasingly accused of hypocrisy over its relationship with authoritarian China.

In August the anti-censorship group Pen America published a report which said screenwriters, producers and directors often change scripts, delete scenes and alter content to avoid offending Chinese censors. The actions include everything from deleting the Taiwanese flag from Tom Cruise's bomber jacket in the upcoming "Top Gun: Maverick," to removing China as the source of a zombie virus in 2013's "World War Z." But it also means completely avoiding sensitive issues including Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong politics,



In this file photo taken on March 9, 2020 US-Chinese actress Yifei Liu attends the world premiere of Disney's "Mulan" at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

Xinjiang and the portrayal of LGBTQ characters, the report said.

AFP contacted Disney for comment but has yet to hear back on the Labor Day holiday. Xinjiang is a resource-rich region home to mostly Turkic-speaking Muslim Uighurs and boasts spectacular

desert and mountain backdrops. After sectarian unrest and attacks by Uighur militants, Beijing blanketed the region in a draconian security crackdown, building dozens of huge internment camps. Initially China denied the camps existed before switching to describing them as voluntary re-education centres.

Even before the latest Xinjiang controversy the hashtag #BoycottMulan has been trending in recent weeks Hong Kong, Thailand and Taiwan. Activists in all three places have launched multiple online campaigns critical of China's authoritarianism. Dubbed the "Milk Tea Alliance"-named after a shared love of the drink-they seized on social media comments made last year by actress Liu supporting Hong Kong's police. They have also noted the resemblance of actor Tzi Ma, who plays Mulan's heroic father, to China's leader Xi Jinping. After her arrest last month under Beijing's new security law, young Hong Kong dissident Agnes Chow was dubbed "the real Mulan" by supporters.— AFP



Chef Malin Soderstrom prepares tomatoes, dill and chives as a garnish for the Swedish delicacy surstromming, which she is preparing to serve to a group of friends she invited to her restaurant in the small village of Skarsa. — AFP photos



A member of staff at the restaurant run by chef Malin Soderstrom tries fermented Baltic herring, a Swedish delicacy famous for its strong smell, along with chopped red onions, flat bread, dill, chives, tomatoes and cheese at a lunch organized to sample the food.



A can of fermented Baltic herring, known as surstromming in Swedish, sits on a table in the restaurant belonging to chef Malin Soderstrom.

Harry refunds house refurb bill from Netflix deal

Prince Harry has paid back £2.4 million (\$3.2 million) of British taxpayers' money used to renovate his home at Windsor Castle, using cash from his recent Netflix deal, his spokesman said on Monday. The Duke of Sussex, as he is formally known, and his wife, American former actress Meghan Markle, retired from royal duties earlier this year in a quest for "financial independence". In doing so, the couple said they were giving up their taxpayer-funded income, and promised to reimburse the public money used to renovate their Frogmore House home. Harry's spokesman said: "A contribution has been made to the Sovereign Grant by the Duke of Sussex."

The money "fully covered" the renovation costs of the house, which belongs to his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, and will remain his and the duchess' UK residence, he added. Harry and Meghan spend much of their time in her native US. Britain's domestic Press Association news agency said the payment was made possible because of a deal the couple signed with Netflix, the streaming giant, announced last week. No financial terms were disclosed but it was reported to be a multi-million-dollar deal over several years.—AFP



In this file photo Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex emerge from the West Door of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, in Windsor, after their wedding ceremony. — AFP

Swedish fish dish is so pungent it should be opened outdoors

As chef Malin Soderstrom opened the can, the trapped air escaped with a hiss and filled the balcony of her waterside restaurant with the pungent odor of Sweden's infamous delicacy, surstromming. Likened to the smell of rotten eggs, surstromming - fermented herring - has gained a following online where daring gastronomes film themselves trying the seafood, which should be opened outdoors because of the stench, and preferably underwater in a bucket. From her seaside restaurant in the small fishing village of Skarsa more than 200 kilometers (124 miles) north of Stockholm based in a former herring pro-

cessing factory, Soderstrom tries to defend the delicacy's reputation.

"The sourness with the saltiness together with the bread, potato and butter and onion, it's just fantastic," the 51-year-old said outside the restaurant, dressed in her black chef's uniform. Soderstrom's grandparents lived in one of the village's squat red-wood fishermen's houses near the water and she ate surstromming, directly translated "sour herring", from childhood. Herring caught in the Baltic are salted after being caught and left to ferment for months in barrels before they are canned.

Surstromming hails from northern

Sweden, where it is most commonly eaten, but tins of the seafood are available from most large supermarkets across Sweden. In recent years a museum has been dedicated to the divisive dish, and some restaurants dedicate a whole day to eating it to avoid offending other customers' noses. But with customers down due to Covid-19, Soderstrom and her sister Anna called off their own surstromming day this year. Instead they organized a small demonstration of how the dish should be enjoyed, inviting a handful of friends and colleagues to sample the culinary delight. Opening the cans away from their tables, Soderstrom

served it to the visitors on Swedish flat bread along with chopped red onions, boiled potatoes, dill, tomatoes, chives, sour cream and hard cheese.

A 'strong taste'

Taking a break from the kitchen, 25-year-old chef Joseph Netzler tried the fish for the first time, sniffing it cautiously before tasting it with hard bread, dill and potatoes. "It smelt a lot better than I thought it would, and the taste was good. It was kind of strong, kind of umami," he said, sitting on the restaurant's balcony overlooking the village's small harbor. "I think I've had my fill for a while," he said, but added he might try it again in "one or two years".

Soderstrom was bemused by YouTube videos of non-Swedes opening cans of surstromming indoors and trying to eat it whole with no accompaniments, often struggling to stomach the smell. In one such video, a group of friends in the US opened the can at a table indoors, retching and choking before eventually trying the fish. "The smell, you can't get over it, but the taste is just slimy," one of the challengers said with a grimace after nibbling a piece of the herring with no accompaniments. "Of course they think it's disgusting," Soderstrom said with a smile. "I would think that as well if I had it the same way." —AFP



The restaurant of chef Malin Soderstrom in the village of Skarsa north of Stockholm is pictured.



Cans of surstromming, the Swedish delicacy of fermented Baltic herring, embossed with the face of chef Malin Soderstrom and made near to the restaurant she owns, sit on a table in the Albertina restaurant in Skarsa.

Sports

Photo of the Day



Dorien Llewellyn performing during 2020 World Waterski Open in Steyregg Austria. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Messi trains alone as Barca reintegration begins

MADRID: Lionel Messi returned to Barcelona training for the first time on Monday since his failed attempt to leave the club this summer. Barca confirmed Messi has started by training alone, in line with La Liga protocol. "The 2020/2021 preseason is under way for Leo Messi," the statement read. "The Barca number 10 trained on his own, as did (Philippe) Coutinho, according to La Liga protocol whilst the rest of the squad worked out together."

Messi was seen driving into the Ciutat Esportiva and Barca posted a photo on social media just before 6:30 pm of him training in kit and working with a ball. The 33-year-old was taking part in his first session since Ronald Koeman was appointed coach and his first since he said on Friday he had been forced to stay at Barcelona. In an explosive interview with Goal, Messi blamed the club's president Josep Maria Bartomeu for "breaking his word" over a much-disputed exit clause in his contract.

He said he would continue to give his best for the team but maintained he had tried to leave the club because he "wanted to live his last years of football happily". The return of Barcelona's embittered captain and greatest ever player may not be an easy one, particularly given some of his closest team-mates are likely to leave. Luis Suarez, Messi's best friend and neighbour, as well as Arturo Vidal, are expected to join Juventus and Inter Milan respectively.

"Now I don't know what will happen," Messi said on Friday. "There is a new coach and new ideas. That's good, but then we have to see how the team responds and whether or not it will allow us to compete at the top level. What I can say is that I'm staying and I'm going to give my best for Barcelona."

Messi's decision to notify the club via burofax that he intended to leave came shortly after he met with Koeman, talks that reportedly involved the Dutchman taking a hard line. Koeman said in his first press conference he "only wanted players who want to be here and give everything". —AFP

Ten-run sixth carries Blue Jays past Yankees; Twins stun Tigers

Marlins down Braves; Twins overpower Tigers

NEW YORK: Danny Jansen hit his first career grand slam to cap a 10-run sixth inning, and the Toronto Blue Jays defeated the visiting New York Yankees 12-7 Monday night in the opener of a three-game series at Buffalo. Jansen's fourth homer of the season came against Adam Ottavino (2-3), the second of three Yankee pitchers in the sixth, to highlight Toronto's first 10-run inning since 2010. The Blue Jays moved two games ahead of the Yankees for second place in the American League East and 4 1/2 games behind the first-place Tampa Bay Rays. Luke Voit, Aaron Hicks and Miguel Andujar hit solo home runs for the Yankees, who have lost four straight.

Mariners 8, Rangers 4

Dylan Moore homered and drove in four runs and Marco Gonzales posted his 10th consecutive quality start at home as Seattle completed a four-game sweep of visiting Texas. Kyle Seager also homered for the Mariners, who won their sixth consecutive game to get back into the American League's wild-card race. Joey Gallo had a two-run double for the Rangers, who have lost six games in a row and 18 of their past 21.

Padres 1, Rockies 0

Pinch runner Jorge Mateo raced home from first with the game's only run on a short double down the right field line by Jurickson Profar in the bottom of the ninth to give San Diego a walk-off win over visiting Colorado. The Padres won for the sixth time in eight games. The Rockies had won three of their previous four. San Diego starter Dineson Lamet allowed six hits and no walks with 11 strikeouts over 7 2/3 scoreless innings, the longest outing of his career. Colorado starter Kyle Freeland departed after throwing six shutout innings. He yielded three hits and three walks while striking out six.

Marlins 5, Braves 4 (10 innings)

Shortstop Miguel Rojas did damage with both his bat and glove to lead Miami in an extra-inning win at Atlanta in the first game of a three-game series. Rojas went 4-for-5 at the plate, including a double that drove in the go-ahead run in the 10th. Rojas doubled twice, scored a run and drove in two. He also threw out Adeiny Hechavarria at home plate to save a run in the seventh. Brandon Kintzler (2-3) blew a save in the ninth when the Braves tied it

4-4 on Adam Duvall's 10th homer, but he got the win. Nick Vincent picked up his third save for the Marlins. Atlanta reliever A.J. Minter (1-1) took the loss.

Phillies 9, Mets 8 (10 innings)

Jean Segura hit a two-run homer in the top of the 10th inning and finished with a career-high five RBIs as Philadelphia won at New York to split a four-game series. The Phillies squandered a six-run lead and ran into a pair of outs at home, but Segura's homer made a winner of reliever Brandon Workman (1-1), who threw a scoreless ninth. Hector Neris earned his third save despite giving up an RBI single to Brandon Nimmo in the bottom of the 10th. Miguel Castro (1-1) took the loss for the Mets, who got a three-run homer from Jeff McNeil.

Nationals 6, Rays 1

Max Scherzer fired seven shutout innings as Washington earned an easy victory over visiting Tampa Bay. Scherzer (4-2) yielded six hits and a walk while fanning eight. He recorded 10 consecutive outs from the fourth through seventh innings. Kurt Suzuki had three hits and an RBI, and Michael A. Taylor knocked in two runs. Rays starter Charlie Morton (1-2) allowed three runs on four hits while striking out three and walking one in five innings.

Twins 6, Tigers 2

Eddie Rosario had a three-run double and Ryan Jeffers hit his first major league homer while finishing with two hits and two RBIs to lead Minnesota past Detroit in Minneapolis. Michael Pineda allowed two runs and three hits over seven innings in picking up his first win of the season for the Twins, who won for the sixth time in seven games. Byron Buxton also homered and doubled and Rosario and LaMonte Wade Jr each finished with two hits as Minnesota improved to 18-5 at Target Field.

Cubs 5, Cardinals 1

Kyle Hendricks allowed one run over eight strong innings, and Chicago cruised to a victory over visiting St. Louis. Hendricks (5-4) walked none, struck out four and allowed seven hits while throwing 70 of 97 pitches for strikes. Willson Contreras drove in a pair of runs to lead the Cubs, who snapped a three-game losing streak. Matt Wieters drove in the lone run for St. Louis, which

up a 4-3 series win over the Philadelphia Flyers on Saturday, then travelled from Toronto to the NHL's second playoff hub in Edmonton, Alberta. "This game, we'll wash it away," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said. "We've lost some heartbreakers in overtime, some real hard matches and all that. Sometimes you get it handed to you like we did today." Game two is on Wednesday in Edmonton, where all games in the conference finals and the Stanley Cup final will be played.

Point put the Lightning up 1-0 1:14 into the first period, driving across the crease and shooting past the outstretched pad of Greiss. "We haven't played for a week, and you were wondering how the start was going to be," Hedman said. "And then (Point) went out and did that." Jordan Eberle scored a power-play goal to tie it 1-1 at 4:33 before Hedman gave the Lightning a 2-1 advantage with a power-play goal at 8:12 of the first. Ryan McDonagh's slap shot made it 3-1 at 10:46. Gourde got to a loose puck in the crease to stretch the lead to 4-1 at 4:03 of the second and Point made it 5-1 when he redirected a shot from Hedman on a power play at 13:18.

Kucherov made it 6-1 when he converted a pass from Point on a 2-on-1 at 5:51 of the third period. After Nick Leddy cut it to 6-2 Palat scored for the fifth straight game to make it 7-2, and Gourde scored a power-play goal for the final 8-2 margin. —AFP



BUFFALO: Thairo Estrada #71 of the New York Yankees dives for a ball hit by Travis Shaw #6 of the Toronto Blue Jays during the sixth inning at Sahlen Field on Monday—AFP

dropped to 5-5 against the Cubs on the season. The Cardinals lost for only the third time in their last nine games.

A's 6, Astros 0

Chris Bassitt combined with two relievers on a seven-hitter, and Sean Murphy homered and drove in three runs as Oakland began a five-game showdown against visiting Houston. Oakland's Tony Kemp had an RBI double in a two-run second inning, and Stephen Piscotty hit a run-scoring single to ignite a three-run eighth. The first-place A's earned their fourth win in six meetings with second-place Houston this season. Murphy and Piscotty had two hits each for Oakland, which won for the second time in four games since being quarantined in Houston after a positive coronavirus test. Carlos Correa had two of Houston's seven hits, all of which were singles, in the club's fifth straight loss.

Indians 5, Royals 2

Zach Plesac continued to dominate Kansas City as

host Cleveland defeated the Royals to improve to 21-2 this season when scoring three or more runs. The Indians moved into a first-place tie with the Chicago White Sox in the American League Central. Kansas City has lost seven straight games.

Giants 4, Diamondbacks 2

Darin Ruf's two-run single highlighted a four-run sixth inning, and a strong start from Kevin Gausman led San Francisco to victory over visiting Arizona. Ruf, a mid-at-bat replacement earlier in the game for injured teammate Alex Dickerson, came up with the key hit of the game and helped make a winner of Gausman (3-2). In six innings, Gausman allowed a lone run on two hits with nine strikeouts and three walks. Arizona starter Zac Gallen (1-1) was charged with four runs on five hits in five-plus innings, putting an end to his major-league-record streak of 23 consecutive starts to begin a career allowing three or fewer earned runs. —Reuters

Lightning strike for 8-2 win over Isles in NHL series opener

LOS ANGELES: Brayden Point scored twice and delivered three assists as the Tampa Bay Lightning trounced the New York Islanders 8-2 in game one of the NHL Eastern Conference final on Monday. Nikita Kucherov added one goal and four assists for the Lightning, who looked rested, not rusty, after nearly a week off since their series win over the Boston Bruins.

Yanni Gourde scored twice, Victor Hedman had a goal and two assists, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 23 saves for second-seeded Tampa Bay. "We're playing so well," Point said. "We're playing with structure, we're playing responsible with the puck, we're making the right plays. I think our team has been so good." New York goaltender Thomas Greiss allowed three goals on nine shots before he was pulled at 10:46 of the first period. He was replaced by Semyon Varlamov, who made 20 saves for the sixth-seeded Islanders, who wrapped

Defending champion Barty to skip French Open over COVID-19

SYDNEY: World number one Ashleigh Barty announced yesterday she will not defend her French Open crown, citing the coronavirus fears that also prompted her and several other top players to withdraw from the US Open. The Australian, who claimed her maiden Grand Slam at Roland Garros in 2019, said it was a "difficult" decision but the health of her family and team came first.

"Last year's French Open was the most special tournament of my career so this is not a decision I have made lightly," she said on social media. "There are two reasons for my decision—the first is the health risks that still exist with Covid. The second is my preparation, which has not been ideal without my coach being able to train with me due to the state border closures in Australia." Barty is based in Brisbane while her coach, Craig Tytzer, is in Melbourne and unable to travel as the city battles a significant second-wave virus outbreak.

She announced in late July that she would sit out the

US Open, currently underway in New York, with defending men's champion Rafael Nadal and world number two Simona Halep among those who also opted out because of the pandemic. At the time, Barty was still monitoring the situation with the French Open, which is due to start on September 27, but said yesterday her withdrawal was the latest development in "a challenging year for everyone." "I wish the players and the French Federation all the best for a successful tournament," the 24-year-old said. "I now look forward to a long pre-season and the summer in Australia."

The fate of Barty's home Grand Slam, the Australian Open in January, is yet to be determined, with the possibility it could be moved out of Melbourne if the city's outbreak has not eased. Barty's straight-sets victory over Marketa Vondrousova in the French Open last year helped propel her to world number one, a position she has held since. Her last competitive singles match was in late February at the Qatar Open. Barty's French Open withdrawal comes after tournament organizers said all players at the Grand Slam would be housed in two designated hotels "without exception" to reduce coronavirus risks. Daily crowd numbers have been reduced to 11,500 from 20,000 and the Roland Garros complex is being divided into three independent zones, with no crossover between them. Serena Williams has indicated she would prefer to stay in private accommodation while competing in Paris, as she has done in New York. —AFP

Sports

Clippers out-gun Nuggets, Celtics push champion Raptors to brink

Celtics demolish Raptors for 3-2 series edge

MIAMI: Paul George scored 32 points and the Los Angeles Clippers turned up the heat defensively Monday in a 113-107 victory over the Denver Nuggets for a 2-1 lead in the NBA Western Conference semi-finals. Kawhi Leonard added 23 points, 14 rebounds and six assists for the Clippers, coming up big on both ends of the floor as Los Angeles powered to the finish in the see-saw battle. Denver, blown out in game one but coming off a convincing game-two victory, led 78-68 midway through a third quarter that featured nine lead changes.

It was tied up at 101-101 with less than five minutes remaining and the Clippers closed it out with a 12-6 scoring run. "The game came down to one of the two teams was going to play some defense," Clippers coach Doc Rivers said. "For three and a half quarters both teams were basically scoring and the last six minutes it was our defense." Leonard contributed a breathtaking block, reaching to deny Jamal Murray's dunk attempt with his fingertips at the rim with 1:47 left to play. "That play by Kawhi was amazing," Rivers said. "I don't even know where he came from."

Nikola Jokic scored 32 points with 12 rebounds and eight assists for Denver and Murray scored 14. The Nuggets had their chances late, but after Denver took a 97-90 lead early in the fourth quarter the Clippers came back with eight straight points. Ivica Zubac's dunk - assisted by Leonard - tied it at 101-101 and he followed with a free throw to give the Clippers the lead for good. "We got stops," George said. "It's going to be a battle, (Denver) is a great offensive team. "We're up for the challenge."

There was no suspense in the Boston Celtics' 111-89 blowout victory over the Toronto Raptors, which pushed the reigning NBA champions to the brink of elimination in the Eastern Conference semi-finals. The Celtics, who

had lost two straight as the Raptors clawed their way back into the best-of-seven series, took a 3-2 lead and can clinch a place in the conference finals with a win on Wednesday.

They dominated defensively to hold the Raptors to 20 percent shooting in the first quarter, emerging from the opening period with a 25-11 lead. The Raptors never recovered from the early body blow. The Celtics' 37 points in the second quarter were two more than the Raptors managed in all of the first half. They trailed 62-35 at half-time, and despite a noticeable uptick of energy to start the third, there was too much ground to make up. "The job isn't done," said Jaylen Brown, who led all scorers with 27 points. He grabbed six rebounds and made three of Boston's five steals. "We've got to come out and play with the same intensity." Kemba Walker added 21 points, four rebounds and seven assists. Jayson Tatum delivered 18 points and 10 rebounds, Daniel Theis and reserve Brad Wanamaker scored 15 apiece and Marcus Smart chipped in 12 for the Celtics. Boston coach Brad Stevens kept his starters in for much of the fourth quarter, comfortably keeping the lead in double digits. Fred VanVleet led the Raptors with 18 points, Kyle Lowry and Pascal Siakam scored 10 apiece.

OG Anunoby, who drained the buzzer-beating three-pointer that gave the Raptors their first win of the series in game three, scored seven points - all in the first quarter. "Our offense, we didn't make shots, we weren't aggressive enough," Lowry said. "They were very comfortable from the jump. We weren't as assertive as we should have been." Lowry brushed off suggestions that the Raptors were feeling the effects of the every-other-day schedule in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida. "Nope," he said when asked if fatigue played a part. "We just didn't play well enough." —AFP



FLORIDA: Paul George #13 of the LA Clippers drives to the basket during the fourth quarter against the Denver Nuggets in Game Three of the Western Conference Second Round during the 2020 NBA Playoffs on Monday — AFP

Mbappe to miss Croatia match after positive coronavirus test

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe has been ruled out of France's Nations League game against World Cup runners-up Croatia yesterday after testing positive for Covid-19, national team management said Monday. Mbappe, who took part in Monday evening's training session before learning the result of his test, is the seventh Paris Saint-Germain player to contract the virus. Neymar was among the first to test positive last week. "He was set aside from the group after receiving the results at the end of training before returning to his home in the evening," French team management said.

"Like the rest of the squad, Mbappe had undergone a test prior to meeting up. The result was negative like the one on Wednesday" requested by UEFA ahead of the Sweden fixture on Saturday in Solna, management said. Mbappe scored the winner for the world champions in a 1-0 victory over Sweden in their opening Nations League encounter. However, he was expected to be rested for the game at the Stade de France against Croatia, with PSG's opening match of the Ligue 1 sea-

son scheduled for Thursday away to Lens.

The Lens game was initially due to go ahead on August 29, but was controversially postponed to give the PSG squad a break after their run to the Champions League final in Lisbon on August 23, in which they lost 1-0 to Bayern Munich. Instead of playing the game, their squad were granted time off but the club has now been left to deal with a cluster of coronavirus cases which raise questions about why the French league decided to postpone PSG's match in Lens, only for so many of their players to travel abroad on holiday during a pandemic. Mbappe could also sit out Sunday's clash with bitter rivals Marseille. According to the league's health protocols, a player who tests positive must self-isolate for eight days. The French league (LFP) recently loosened its coronavirus protocols in the top two divisions to allow clubs to play even if 10 players have tested positive. The LFP said it had taken the decision "in conjunction with the public authorities" and in response to "requests from clubs". Up to now, matches could be postponed after four cases at a club over eight consecutive days.

Under the new protocol, the LFP said, a club can fulfill fixtures if 20 of the 30 players registered for league matches, including at least one goalkeeper, test negative. Mbappe is the fourth player to be withdrawn from the France squad following a positive Covid-19 test. Paul Pogba was omitted just before coach Didier De-



SAINT-DENIS: France's forward Kylian Mbappe (left) jokes with France's defender Presnel Kimpembe during a training session at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis. — AFP

schamps revealed his 23-man squad last month, with Houssem Aouar forced out a few days later. Goalkeeper Steve Mandanda, who originally tested positive on August 16 with Marseille, also left camp following two further positive tests likely due to "residual" traces of the virus. — AFP

Liverpool raise the bar, seek back-to-back titles

LONDON: Liverpool raised the bar so high and enjoyed such a huge winning margin in claiming the Premier League title last season it would be churlish to doubt their credentials for a repeat showing. Recent history suggests, however, that retaining the trophy will be far more challenging for Jurgen Klopp's side.

Pep Guardiola's magnificent Manchester City side did win back-to-back titles between 2017-19, but before that bragging rights had changed hands every season since 2009-10. Klopp's side finished 18 points above Manchester City last season and an incredible 33 above Manchester United and Chelsea in third and fourth place respectively. The German knows it will be much closer this time, not because his side are likely to regress, but because the natural evolution of the Premier League means their main rivals will have spared nothing to close the gap.

Catching Liverpool presents arguably the toughest challenge in European football right now though. Klopp has not built a team for a one-off title smash and grab, he has assembled one for lasting dominance. From the back to the front there are no weaknesses and, tellingly, it is difficult to pick out the team's most valuable component, such is the value every player brings to the mix. In keeper Alisson, Liverpool have arguably the best stopper in the world while Virgil van Dijk, in his prime at 29 years of age, would walk into the central defense of any team in Europe.

The midfield, with skipper Jordan Henderson as its beating heart, will continue to stifle the life out of rivals, and when it comes to attacking width, full backs Trent Alexander-Arnold and Andy Robertson are the best duo in the business. Up front the attacking trident of Mo Salah, Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino are not about to go all goal-shy. A bench featuring experienced heads such as James Milner, Xherdan Shaqiri and precocious youth such as full back Neco Williams gives a bountiful options.

Klopp is unlikely to veer away from the formula that has worked so well, even if his side's form after the resumption of last season following the three-month COVID-19 hiatus was less impressive—probably more as a result of the title being a formality rather than any darker reason. But Liverpool will come under attack as the likes of Guardiola, Chelsea's Frank Lampard, Manchester United's Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Tottenham Hotspur's Jose Mourinho, to name a few rival managers, splash the cash and figure out their weaknesses.

"If you can limit the supply and influence of Alexander-Arnold and Robertson, it is a good starting point to stopping them," former Liverpool player Graeme Souness said. "Certainly, do not kick the ball long at Van Dijk's head. "Liverpool are the favorites for the title, but I don't see them running away with it again," he added. Klopp has so far kept his powder dry in the transfer market, signing only Konstantinos Tsimikas from Olympiakos as cover for Robertson. That could change in the coming weeks though, as standing still in the Premier League, even for a team as dominant as Liverpool, is not a viable option. — AFP

Chelsea looking to build new dynasty with string of signings

LONDON: Chelsea are banking on a lavish shopping spree to give them more bite up front and much-needed solidity in defense after coach Frank Lampard spent last season relying heavily on a crop of inexperienced home-grown players. The Londoners have been among the Premier League's most active buyers in the close season in stark contrast to a year ago when they were subject to a FIFA transfer ban, giving their youngsters a chance to shine.

Germany striker Timo Werner arrives in London having scored 28 times in the Bundesliga for RB Leipzig last season, while international team mate Kai Havertz plays like Lampard in his pomp with runs from midfield into the box to score. At the other end, England left-back Ben Chilwell and Brazil veteran Thiago Silva, moving from Leicester City and Paris St Germain respectively, should stiffen the defense.

Chelsea had already snapped up Morocco winger Hakim Ziyech after he bamboozled the Londoners in last season's Champions League group stage playing for Ajax Amsterdam. "Chelsea aren't buying a team, they are buying and building a dynasty, which I think is extraordinarily exciting," former Blues winger Pat Nevin told the BBC. He stressed the young ages of many of the signings. There is also talk of a new goalkeeper to replace, or at least challenge, Spaniard Kepa Arrizabalaga whose erratic form contributed to the leakiest defense in the top half of the league last season.

Lampard exceeded most people's expectations in his first campaign as coach at Stamford Bridge by securing a fourth-place finish and the Champions League spot that goes with it. As well as giving a chance to young players from the academy, such as Mason Mount, Reece James, Tammy Abraham and Billy Gilmour, Lampard got United States winger Christian Pulisic to reproduce the moments of magic that Chelsea fans feared had gone when Eden Hazard was sold to Real Madrid. But Lampard was left with a tinge of disappointment as the COVID-19-interrupted season finally drew to a close. His side lost the FA Cup final to London rivals Arsenal and went out of the Champions League 7-1 on aggregate against eventual title winners Bayern Munich. — Reuters



Pep Guardiola

Man City at crossroads as Guardiola faces up to the future

MANCHESTER: Manchester City head into the new campaign at something of a crossroads, having lost their Premier League crown and failed again in Europe under Pep Guardiola. They have the obvious task of trying to regain the upper hand over Liverpool domestically and finally unlocking the door to Champions League success after another quarter-final exit.

But there is a much bigger and broader long-term challenge to be addressed as the wealthy club face some major decisions about what direction to take with the squad. Spaniard David Silva has left after a decade of delightful light-footed, advanced midfield play and club record scorer Sergio Aguero is moving into the final year of his deal and could also say goodbye to The Etihad at the end of the season.

Even more significantly, Guardiola's deal also runs out in June, 2021. City chief executive Khaldoon Al Mubarak says that situation will be resolved "naturally" but the lack of clarity means the club must decide on a real plan for the years ahead. The two signings so far in the transfer market indicate a move

towards younger players for the future with 25-year-old Dutch defender Nathan Ake and 20-year-old Spanish winger Ferran Torres lowering the average age of the first team. Much is expected of home-grown midfielder Phil Foden, who is also 20 and likely to see more playing time with Silva gone.

The question is whether City can combine a gradual freshening up of their squad at the same time as they fight on the domestic and international front for trophies. There is certainly enough quality in the squad to secure a third title in four seasons—after they finished a massive 18 points adrift of champions Liverpool last term—with City's attacking options looking particularly impressive. A fit-again Aguero will battle with Gabriel Jesus for the central striking role while Raheem Sterling, Riyad Mahrez, Bernardo Silva and Torres offer the wide options.

Ake is likely to be joined by another centre-half before the window closes as Guardiola looks to resolve a problem area given his evident lack of trust in John Stones and Nicolas Otamendi. The danger is that the longer the season progresses without Guardiola committing his future to the club, the more his contract situation will dominate the narrative around the team, with the danger that players sense the uncertainty. However long the Guardiola-era at City lasts, a matter entirely in the Catalan's hands, this season is sure to bring plenty more exhibitions of his entertaining football philosophy. — Reuters

14 Ten-run sixth carries Blue Jays past Yankees; Twins stun Tigers



15 Mbappe to miss Croatia match after positive coronavirus test



15 Clippers out-gun Nuggets, Celtics push champion Raptors to brink



NEW YORK: Serena Williams of the United States serves the ball during her Women's Singles fourth round match against Maria Sakkari of Greece on Day Eight of the 2020 US Open on Monday. — AFP

Serena cruises into US Open quarters

Thiem, Medvedev sail through to the last eight

NEW YORK: Serena Williams battled into the quarter-finals of the US Open on Monday as top men's seeds Dominic Thiem and Daniil Medvedev sailed through to the last eight at Flushing Meadows. After Williams kept her bid for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam singles title alive, second seed Sofia Kenin was sent crashing out in the last 16 by Belgium's Elise Mertens. Williams had to summon up every last ounce of strength to depose 15th seed Maria Sakkari in three hard-fought sets. The 38-year-old American needed almost two and a half hours to dislodge her 25-year-old Greek opponent 6-3, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3 inside an empty Arthur Ashe Stadium in New York.

"She's such a good competitor. It was a really intense match," said Williams, who had been dumped out of a US Open tuneup tournament by the same opponent last month. "I felt like she almost played better today. I was a little fatigued last time and had some cramps. Just felt like I was able to compete longer," Williams added. There was little separating the players throughout the energy-sapping contest, with Williams notching 107 total points to Sakkari's 99.

Williams won 72 percent of points off her first serve while Sakkari won 73 percent. Sakkari also outdid Williams on aces, by 13 to 12. Williams rallied from two games down in the deciding set, pumping herself up with loud screams that echoed around the spectator-free arena as she broke Sakkari twice to clinch the last-eight spot. "I'm super passionate. This is my job. This is what I wake up to do. This is what I train to do 365 days of the year," Williams said af-

terwards. The American will play Tsvetana Pironkova for a place in the semi-finals after the Bulgarian ousted France's Alize Cornet in another draining three-setter.

'Absolutely unreal'

Pironkova, playing her first tournament in three years after a lengthy break in which she gave birth to her son, prevailed 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3 at the Louis Armstrong Stadium. "It's absolutely unreal. I really can't believe it," said Pironkova, whose last tournament appearance before this year's US Open was the 2017 Wimbledon championships when she exited in the second round.

Mertens ousted Kenin, this year's Australian Open champion, 6-3, 6-3 in 1hr 14 mins to set up a last-eight tie with former world number one Victoria Azarenka. The Belarusian overcame 20th seed Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic 5-7, 6-1, 6-4 in 2hr 30min at Louis Armstrong Stadium. In the men's draw, second-seeded Thiem raced into the round of eight with a three-set demolition of Canadian rising star Felix Auger-Aliassime. Thiem dismantled the 20-year-old 15th seed 7-6 (7/4), 6-1, 6-1 in 2hr 7min. "I played a great match today, the best one from my whole America trip," said Thiem.

He will play Australia's 21st seed Alex de Minaur for a spot in the semi-finals after the Australian breezed past unseeded Canadian Vasek Pospisil 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, 6-2, in 2hr 17 min. Third seed Medvedev blew away unseeded American France Tiafoe 6-4, 6-

enough, never getting the deficit below two strokes as Johnson parred nine straight. That run included a 21-foot par-saving putt at the 13th, where he was in the left rough off the tee and right of the green and hit a poor chip but drained the putt to push his lead back to three over Schauffele. "He made that putt, which I didn't," said Schauffele, who bogeyed the 13th. "That was a pinnacle moment, I think."

"Obviously it's a very tough trophy to win. This time I did control my own destiny, I knew what I had to do. "But I still had to go out and play well today. I had a lot of great players right behind me and they played some good golf today. I knew I was going to have to come down the stretch and hit some golf shots." He was in the fairway at the par-five 18th, but his approach hit the bank in front of the green and bounced back into the greenside bunker. He blasted out to five feet and made the putt for a closing birdie.

The 36-year-old claimed his 23rd US PGA Tour title and his third since the tour resumed in June after a three-month coronavirus shutdown. He's the first overall points leader since 2009 to win the season-ending showdown for the \$15 million (12.6 million euro) playoff prize. Johnson had a head start coming



NEW YORK: Alexis Olympia Ohanian Jr, daughter of Serena Williams, attends the Women's Singles during the 2020 US Open at USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in the Queens borough. — AFP

1, 6-0 in only 1hr 38 min. "I'm pleased with the fact that I've won all of these sets and didn't have to stay long on the court. That's always good when you're playing a Grand Slam," said the Russian. Medvedev will face compatriot Andrey Rublev for a spot in the last four after the 10th seed ousted Italy's sixth seed Matteo Berrettini 4-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-3. The men's competition was blown wide open on Sunday after world number one Novak Djokovic was thrown out for accidentally hitting a line judge after smashing a ball in frustration during his last-16 match. His departure means the US Open will this year produce a first-time Grand Slam winner in the men's competition. —AFP

into Eastlake. He began the week on 10-under thanks to his season points edge. Spain's second-ranked Jon Rahm was next on 8-under with third-ranked Thomas on 7-under and others up to 10 shots adrift in the staggered start system.

'Dialed in'

Rahm, who edged Johnson in a playoff at the BMW Championship a week earlier, finished alone in third on 17-under after closing with his second straight 66. Schauffele actually had the week's lowest 72-hole total of 15-under 265, but under the staggered start format he started the week seven adrift. Johnson played 72 holes in 11-under 269. Prior to his dramatic near miss at the BMW Championship, Johnson won the Northern Trust by 11 strokes to seize the world number one ranking. In June, he won the Travelers Championship - his first title since February 2019. "I'm definitely playing probably the best I've ever played," the 2016 US Open champion said. "I really feel like everything is dialed in pretty well." The Tour Championship marked the official end of the US tour's pandemic-disrupted 2019-2020 season. —AFP

Johnson wins Tour Championship and \$15mn FedEx Cup

WASHINGTON: World number one Dustin Johnson capped a two-under-par 68 with a birdie at the last to seal a three-stroke victory in the US PGA Tour Championship and earn the \$15 million FedEx Cup playoff title on Sunday. Johnson finished with a 21-under-par total at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta - three shots clear of Americans Xander Schauffele and Justin Thomas. "I hit the fairways when I needed to come down the stretch," said Johnson, who started the day with a five-shot lead. He rolled in an 18-foot birdie putt at the third, a 10-footer at the fifth and a three-footer at the sixth.

But bogeys at the seventh and eighth - where he was in a fairway bunker - opened the door just a crack for Thomas and Schauffele. Neither could do

Italy beat Dutch to take top spot

AMSTERDAM: Italy moved top of their UEFA Nations League group on Monday after an impressive 1-0 win over the Netherlands that was slightly spoiled by news rising star Nicolo Zaniolo might have suffered another serious knee injury. Nicolo Barella's bullet header in first half stoppage time was enough for Roberto Mancini's side to take all three points in Amsterdam and top spot in League A, Group 1. The 'Azzurri' are a point ahead of the Dutch, who are playing under interim coach Dwight Lodeweges following Ronald Koeman's defection to Barcelona, and third-placed Poland following their 2-1 away win over Bosnia and Herzegovina.

"I'm happy for the mentality, the performance, the boys really played brilliantly," said Mancini to Italian broadcaster Rai. Mancini made seven changes from the team that drew 1-1 with Bosnia on Friday, ending an 11-match winning streak, and his team dominated at the Johan Cruyff Arena. "You don't win 11 games in a row if you don't have a good mentality. The teams we beat (in Euro 2020 qualification) weren't as good as the Netherlands or Germany, but winning games is still tough," the former Inter Milan and Manchester City coach added.

Lorenzo Insigne, Ciro Immobile and Leonardo Spinazzola all had plenty of joy attacking down the left flank, with left-back Spinazzola creating the first chance of the game with a rapid burst towards the byline in the 17th minute. His cross found his Roma teammate Nicolo Zaniolo who was unlucky to not open the scoring with an acrobatic bicycle kick. Two minutes later Immobile cut in from the same flank before firing a shot just wide, and 10 minutes before the break it was Insigne's turn to charge in from the left and curl a decent effort just wide of the far post.

Things took a turn for the worse for Italy when Zaniolo limped off in the first half with a knee problem, a worry for the 21-year-old who only returned from a serious left knee injury in the summer. After the match Italy's chief doctor Andrea Ferretti confirmed that it was a "significant sprain", adding that "he is worried, as are we." —AFP