



3 Indian ambassador reaches out to community, bolsters engagement



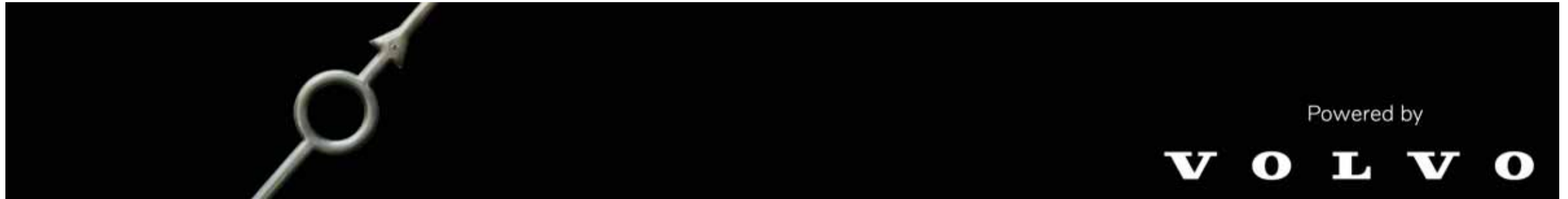
5 Thousands homeless as blaze guts Greece's migrant camp



8 India syringe maker boosts production to meet demand



15 Ronaldo brace sees him up to 101 Portugal goals



Assembly approves budget, discusses financial situation

MPs warn budget deficit could hit KD 64 billion in 5 years

Friday Market reopens today

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The Friday Market in Rai will finally reopen today after it was closed almost six months ago to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. Officials at the market said they will strictly observe the health ministry's directives. The Friday Market initially reopened on July 9, but the Municipality sealed it later in the evening due to crowding and lack of social distancing.

On March 13, the Municipality closed the market as a precautionary measure to stop the spread of COVID-19. The reopening of the market today means new measures have been taken to prevent overcrowding. The Friday Market is very popular among people looking for used items and cheap goods.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday approved the 2020/2021 state budget after a brief debate after the house held a closed session to discuss the financial status of the country, which centers mainly on the sovereign wealth fund, estimated to hold assets worth \$533 billion. Thirty-two MPs voted for the budget while as many as 19 members opposed it amid calls for wider and deeper reforms, halting squandering of public funds and diversifying the sources of income away from oil.

The budget projects a deficit of KD 14 billion, which MP Saleh Ashour said was the largest in a decade. It estimates revenues at KD 7.5 billion

and spending at KD 21.5 billion, after reducing expenditures by KD 945 million. Ashour blamed what he described as the government's incompetence for causing part of the deficit, saying the government contributed to a rise in spending and drop in non-oil revenues.

Head of the budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad told the Assembly on Tuesday that oil income, which makes up the majority of public revenues, was calculated on the basis of \$30 a barrel, while oil prices currently hover around \$40 a barrel. Oil income in the budget was estimated at KD 5.6 billion and non-oil revenues at KD 1.9 billion. In addition, as part of the OPEC+ deal to cut production by

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KUWAIT: Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem is seen during a session of the National Assembly yesterday. — KUNA

Diesel leaks from tanker off Lanka

COLOMBO: A blaze on a stricken oil tanker off Sri Lanka was finally extinguished yesterday, authorities said, but while no crude has escaped the cargo, diesel leaking from the ship's engine raised fears for the environment.

Sri Lanka's air force said the week-long fire had damaged much of the Panamanian-registered New Diamond's super structure, as well as the engine room and living quarters.

The tanker was travelling from Kuwait to the Indian port of Paradip

carrying crude for the Indian Oil Company. While the cargo of 270,000 tons of crude oil was unaffected, some of the 1,700 tons of diesel fuel had leaked into the Indian Ocean, creating a half-mile slick visible from the air. "We have observed no smoke or flames from the tanker since this morning," air force spokesman Dushan Wijesinghe told AFP. "But tugboats are spraying water to cool the vessel."

Sri Lanka's disaster management chief Sudantha Ranasinghe said the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) was spraying chemicals to disperse the diesel spill. Officials said they hoped experts flown in by the Dutch salvage company SMIT would be able to board the tanker later yesterday or today to carry out an assessment.

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This handout picture taken yesterday shows the Panamanian-registered oil tanker New Diamond in the Indian Ocean off Sri Lanka's eastern coast. — AFP

News in brief

US cuts troops in Iraq

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon will slash the level of US troops in Iraq to 3,000 this month, a senior general said yesterday, as President Donald Trump seeks to honor a pledge to withdraw from foreign conflicts. "In consultation and coordination with the government of Iraq and our coalition partners, the United States has decided to reduce our troop presence in Iraq from about 5,200 to 3,000 troops during the month of September," said General Kenneth McKenzie, the head of the US military's Central Command. — AFP

Israel-UAE accord on Sept 15

WASHINGTON: Israel and the UAE will sign a US-brokered agreement normalizing their relations at the White House on Sept 15, a US official said Tuesday. "President Trump will host a historic signing ceremony of the Abraham Accords on September 15 at the White House," a senior White House official said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is "likely" to lead the contingent from the Jewish state, while Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed will lead the UAE delegation, the official added. — AFP

Jordan reopens main airport

AMMAN: Flights resumed Tuesday at Jordan's main airport after a near six-month shutdown to stem cases of the novel coronavirus. A Fly Jordan plane carrying 141 passengers from Istanbul landed at Queen Alia Airport near Amman on Tuesday evening. Thermal temperature scanners and other testing equipment have been installed at the airport. Depending on where they are arriving from, some passengers will have to go into quarantine. — AFP

Iran launches new centrifuges

TEHRAN: Iran's nuclear body said Tuesday it had launched a new "advanced centrifuges" facility to replace one badly damaged by "sabotage" at its main Natanz nuclear fuel plant in July. "It was decided to create a more modern, larger and more improved station in the heart of the mountains around Natanz, and the implementation of this project has started," Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's atomic agency said. — AFP

Actor's death grips India with news frenzy

MUMBAI: The demise of a young movie star has transfixed India like no other news in a year of bad headlines. The abrupt death of Sushant Singh Rajput has spurred a debate about the stigma of mental health, the rarefied insider world of Bollywood, and, more recently, condemnation of the media for the non-stop coverage of the dueling accusations between Rajput's family and his girlfriend.

Mumbai police initially reported Rajput's death as accidental and local media called it a suicide. But the federal police agency is now investigating if there was any foul play and is questioning Rajput's girlfriend, Rhea Chakraborty, and others. On Tuesday, Chakraborty was arrested by India's narcotics department, which is investigating a drugs case linked to the probe of Rajput's death. She denies any wrongdoing and her lawyer, Satish Maneshinde, called the arrest "a travesty of justice". Police have also detained others in connection with the case including Chakraborty's brother and a member of Rajput's house staff.

Along the way, the story has become a media obsession in India, fed by a wave of TV coverage still swelling almost three months after Rajput, 34, was found dead in his Mumbai apartment. In recent weeks, India's TV channels have given more airtime to the Rajput case than India's surging COVID-19 caseload, a plane crash and top political stories, according to the Broadcast Audience Research Council.

India's boisterous TV networks, which include more than 350 news channels in English and several local languages, have flashed photos of Rajput's body, analyzed his medical prescriptions, even used voodoo dolls and graphics of a skull to hype allegations that



MUMBAI: Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty is arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau in connection with late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death case on Tuesday. — AFP

"black magic" was performed on the actor. The federal police, the High Court in Mumbai, and the government watchdog Press Council of India have all criticized coverage of the investigation.

"I spent 21 years in television and I've never seen a race to the bottom this bad," said Nidhi Razdan, who recently left Indian news network NDTV to teach journalism. "It is a media trial. What else is it?" she said. "I haven't seen this kind of viciousness in coverage before."

Before his June 14 death, Rajput, most famous for portraying India's cricket captain in a biopic, and his girlfriend were more likely to be depicted as a down-to-earth - if Bollywood-beautiful - couple, cuddling tousled-haired at home or sitting playfully in jeans on a rundown park bench.

Chakraborty, 28, was regularly hounded by reporters when she appeared in public, with news commentators opining on her innocence or guilt. Rajput's family claims she poisoned him, used black magic and is responsible for his death. "There has been a conspiracy to break me and my family and my spirit," Chakraborty said in an interview with television anchor Rajdeep Sardesai in late August. — Agencies

Returnees from Gulf seek justice over unpaid wages

CHENNAI/DHAKA/AMMAN: Nizar Kochery has been fighting for migrant workers' rights in the courts for decades, but he has never felt so overwhelmed. As the coronavirus pandemic forced tens of thousands of South Asian migrants to leave the Gulf countries where they worked, the Doha-based lawyer was flooded with calls about unpaid wages and job losses.

"Non-payment of wages or benefits has always plagued migrant workers in Gulf countries," said Kochery, who specializes in labor law and advises many embassies in Qatar. "But during COVID, the impact is being felt 100 times more. People left in fear, in a hurry, and most did not have time to collect pending wages or benefits as they boarded special flights to return home. Now they are counting their losses."

South Asians have for years travelled to wealthier Gulf countries for employment, mostly as domestic workers or in the construction and hospitality sectors. One migrant worker often supports many relatives and can earn far more than they would make in the same job at home. But their migrant status makes it much harder for them to seek justice when things go wrong - as they have for large numbers in recent months as the pandemic has closed borders and devastated economies.

Even before the pandemic, unions and lawyers like Kochery say, the system for dealing with such cases was lacking. Now, they say, there is a desperate need for an overhaul to cope with the challenges that come with the large-scale return of migrants. The number of wage theft cases reported from Gulf

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Local

Kuwait's Deputy Amir receives Assembly Speaker, Prime Minister

Sheikh Nawaf receives call from Saudi Crown Prince

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a phone call Tuesday evening from Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Premier, and Minister of Defense Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, inquiring about the health of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



Kuwait leadership sends condolences to Japan

Meanwhile, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a phone call Tuesday evening from Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Premier, and Minister of Defense Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, inquiring about the health of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In his call, the Saudi Crown Prince also wished His Highness the Amir everlasting health and wellbeing. His Highness the Deputy Amir thanked Prince Mohammad bin



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Salman for his call and sincere sentiments which embody the deeply-rooted and strong ties between the two Gulf nations.

In other news, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable on Tuesday to the Emperor Naruhito of Japan, expressing his

heartfelt condolences over the victims of Typhoon Haishen. The storm has hit regions south of the country, resulting in several casualties and destruction to homes and public property. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also wished those injured a speedy recovery and hoped that the country be able to overcome the repercussions

of this natural disaster. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem sent cables of condolences to his Japanese counterpart Tadamori Oshima and President of the House of Councilors Akiko Santo. — KUNA

Kuwait funding saved tens of thousands of lives worldwide: EU

KUWAIT: Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to the State of Kuwait Dr Cristian Tudor released a statement yesterday on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of the recognition of humanitarian leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah by the UN.

"On September 9, 2020 we mark the sixth anniversary of the recognition of humanitarian leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah by then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. On this occasion, I would like to express sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir, the Government and the people of Kuwait," Tudor said. "Kuwait is a true center of humanitarian action. Under His Highness the Amir's wise policy and guidance over the years, Kuwait has increased its support for multi-lateral humanitarian action exponentially. In the last decade, Kuwait's leadership and funding has saved tens of thousands of lives worldwide."

"I am proud to note that the European Union is an active supporter and a reliable partner in Kuwait's humanitarian efforts," the ambassador added. "Most notably, Kuwait and the EU have been supporting international humanitarian efforts to help communities affected by the Syria crisis: Kuwait hosted the first pledging conferences



Ambassador Dr Cristian Tudor

for Syria and co-chaired ensuing pledging events with the EU, its Member States, the UN and other leading humanitarian actors. COVID-19 global response is again another example where the EU and Kuwait are working together. During the Global Coronavirus Response Conference organized on May 4, 2020 by the European Commission, Kuwait pledged \$40 million in addition to the \$60 million already pledged to WHO at the onset of the pandemic."

"The EU will continue to work with Kuwait to galvanize other international donors to support and participate in coordinated international actions in order to ensure that common global challenges are effectively addressed, leaving no-one behind," Ambassador Tudor concluded.

Azerbaijan Ambassador congratulates Amir

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Kuwait Elkhan Gahraman released a statement yesterday, congratulating Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the State of Kuwait on the 6th anniversary of being awarded the honorary titles of 'Humanitarian Leader' and 'International Humanitarian Center' by the United Nations.

"Under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the activities of the State of Kuwait to further improve the social welfare of its citizens, to further strengthen the image of the State of Kuwait in the international arena are immeasurable," Ambassador Gahraman said. "Kuwait's successful fight against the new COVID-19



Ambassador Elkhann Gahraman

pandemic has been an example for many countries and has rightly been praised by the World Health Organization."

"Almighty Allah said in the Holy Quran: '...And cooperate in righteousness and piety (charity), but do not cooperate in sin and

aggression...' (Surah Al-Maida, 2). The State of Kuwait has made great contributions not only to the Gulf region, but to the entire Islamic world and other parts of the world, to the restoration of peace and stability, to people suffering from war and natural disasters, and to countries in need of development," Ambassador Gahraman noted.

Furthermore, the envoy indicated that since gaining independence in 1991, the Republic of Azerbaijan has always had the close support of Kuwait. "This mutual support is reflected both in bilateral relations and continues today successfully within the framework of international organizations like as the UN, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and others," he stated. "I wish the people and State of Kuwait prosperity and development, and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah a speedy recovery and return to his homeland," he concluded.

Foreign Minister praises Amir's humanitarian role

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah expressed pleasure and praised on Tuesday the sixth anniversary of naming His Highness the Amir as a 'Humanitarian Leader' and the State of Kuwait as a 'Humanitarian center' by the UN. The minister, in a press statement directed to His Highness the Amir, added that such recognition reflects Kuwait's leading philanthropic status, and congratulated the Amir on the occasion. The minister said that the honoring also reflects on the State of Kuwait's relentless efforts during the exceptional circumstances due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The minister concluded by praying to Allah

Almighty for a speedy recovery and return of His highness the Amir to the homeland.

Meanwhile, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Muhammad Al-Jabri recalled with pride the anniversary of honoring. "As we live this national occasion, we pray to Allah Almighty to bless His Highness the Amir and perpetuates his health, wellness and wishing the safe return of His Highness to his homeland and his people," Jabri said in a press statement. "His Highness the Amir's keenness to provide humanitarian initiatives and hosting many international humanitarian and relief conferences has made the State of Kuwait a pioneering leader in the field of humanitarian work." Jabri said that in spite of the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Kuwait continued its humanitarian and relief role under the directives of the high political leadership to help in reducing the negative impacts of the pandemic on peoples and countries.

In the meantime, Chairperson of Board of Trustees of Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award Sheikhha Aida Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah said Tuesday that Kuwait has played a leading humanitarian role worldwide, thanks to the efforts of His Highness the Amir. She expressed, in a press statement, her congratulations on the anniversary, which she said, reflects Kuwait's leading philanthropic status. She added that His Highness the Amir's distinguished role extended to all people of the world, and witnessed the humanitarian efforts, development initiatives and donor conferences, launched from Kuwait, which saved many afflicted people. She mentioned that Kuwait, being dubbed center for humanitarian action, is a result of its role in providing aid and assistance across continents, particularly during economic crises and natural disasters. Sheikhha Aida also affirmed that Kuwait will always remain the source of goodness and generosity and wished a speedy recovery to His Highness the Amir. — KUNA

Diesel leaks from tanker...

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Sri Lanka was taking precautionary measures should the slick reach its shores around 70 km away, Ranasinghe said. "At the moment, there is no danger of the diesel reaching our coasts," he told AFP. "But, should the worst happen, we are ready to deal with that." The diesel is thought to have seeped out when

the ship's fuel storage tanks ruptured and mixed with seawater used to douse the flames.

The major fire was thought to have been completely doused on Sunday, but reignited a day later as heavy winds lashed the extremely hot surfaces of the stern. Strong winds also pushed the crippled vessel about 20 km closer to Sri Lanka's eastern shores on Tuesday, but it has now been towed further out, the Sri Lanka navy said. The ICG said it provided 2,200 kilos of dry chemical powder to the Sri Lankan air force to drop on the burning tanker on Tuesday as a fire retardant. The blaze had weakened the structure of the 330-m tanker and the vessel was listing slightly to port, the ICG said. — AFP

Assembly approves budget, discusses...

Continued from Page 1

close to 10 million barrels per day, Kuwait has slashed its own oil output by around 600,000 barrels per day, thus further denting revenues.

The Assembly also approved the final accounts of the state for the 2018/2019 fiscal year. Actual spending reached KD 21.8 billion and revenues hit KD 20.5 billion, leaving an actual deficit of KD 1.3 billion. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said after the closed session that Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan made a presentation on the financial status of the country and a number of recommendations were submitted. He provided no further details.

MP Abdullah Al-Kandari said spending in 2011 was

just KD 11 billion and rose to KD 21.5 billion in 2020, while it is expected to rise to KD 36 billion in 2030, "so how can we pay it?" MP Ahmad Al-Fadhil called for diversifying sources of income and reducing unnecessary spending, urging the prime minister to take the initiative to salvage the country's finances.

MP Osama Al-Shaheen said the expenditures of the Amiri Diwan have swelled to become equal to that of the ministry of Islamic Affairs and must be checked and monitored. He said he is not talking about HH the Amir's allocations. MPs also warned that the deficit was expected to continue to rise and is estimated to reach KD 64 billion in the next five years. MP Ali Al-Deqbasi said that a large portion of expenditures under the coronavirus crisis was unnecessary and simply squandered.

The Assembly also agreed to issue a statement condemning the burning of the Holy Quran by some groups in Sweden. The Assembly will meet today in a special session to vote on two no-confidence motions against the ministers of interior and education.

Returnees from Gulf seek justice...

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countries rose more than three-fold between April and July compared with the same period last year, says the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, which advocates for human rights in business.

Bhoomaiah Motapalkula, 38, who worked as an office messenger, had not been paid his full salary since April 2019 when he had to return to India. Now home, he is talking to lawyers about getting the AED 25,000 (\$6,800) he says his employer in Dubai owes him. "I trusted my employer each time he reassured me about my wages and handed me a little money to meet my needs," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "I came home with nothing."

In Bangladesh, returning migrants have on an average lost about 175,000 taka (\$2,000), according to a study by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit. The charity, which based its figures on interviews with about 50 migrants, found most of the losses were unpaid wages.

Many workers have also lost out on the end-of-service benefits that they typically receive in the Gulf, said Ryszard Cholewinski, senior migration specialist for Arab states with the International Labor Organization (ILO). "Workers that have been affected by the crisis and have lost their employment are leaving without payment of those contractual end of year benefits," he said. "If you've been working in the Gulf for say 15 years, that's a substantial sum."

S Irudaya Rajan, a professor with the Centre for Development Studies, estimates up to 1 million South

Asian migrant workers have headed home since April and expects many more will do so in the coming months as job losses mount. In 2017, the Gulf region was home to 23 million migrant workers, most of them Asians, according to the ILO.

A petition filed in an Indian court by Lawyers Beyond Borders, a network of legal experts, said employers were taking advantage of mass repatriation programs to repatriate workers who had not been paid their dues. They sought legal remedy from the Indian government for all workers, asking for the claims and grievances of all repatriated Indian migrants to be documented.

India said there were existing mechanisms to help migrants, including online complaint portals and legal aid at embassies, and on Monday the court asked workers to make use of these, calling for proper documentation and follow-up of complaints. But Kochery believes individual workers cannot fight alone. Instead, cases "have to be taken up collectively because workers have just one year to file these cases," he said, citing labor laws that give workers up to 12 months.

The Qatar government said its Wage Protection System obliges employers to pay all outstanding dues to employees who have left and are unable to return during the pandemic. Workers who have left the country can submit and follow up complaints electronically on the labor ministry's website, it said in a statement, adding the ministry had resolved 91 percent of complaints lodged between March and August. Companies that violate the Wage Protection System face penalties including one month imprisonment, up to QAR 6,000 (\$1,648) in fines, and a ban on issuing new work permits.

Neither Oman nor the United Arab Emirates responded to requests for comment. The Saudi government said workers can log violations through its online dispute settlement platform or, if that fails, take their case to a labor court. — Reuters

Local

Indian ambassador reaches out to community, bolsters engagement

George seeks to take Kuwait-India partnership to a new high level

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: India's new Ambassador to Kuwait Sibi George said he is looking forward to working with every Indian resident in Kuwait and expressed confidence that both Kuwait and India would be able to further strengthen their long-standing dynamic partnership. The ambassador presented his credentials to His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday.

In an in-depth interview with Kuwait Times, the ambassador stated that the Indian Embassy in Kuwait has reinstated the registrations of all Indian associations which were de-registered by it in the past. George also spoke at length about the improved consular services at the embassy, the issue of Indian engineers and the utilization of embassy's welfare fund, among other topics.

"My endeavor here is to work under the guidance of the leadership of our two countries and work closely with each of the stakeholders to strengthen our partnership and to take it to a new high level. There is huge potential in building our relationship in several areas and I am confident that we will be able to further strengthen this longstanding dynamic partnership," he explained.

"I am much honored to represent India to the State of Kuwait, which is an important country and key partner for India in this very important region. It is also our extended neighborhood. India and Kuwait are having an excellent relationship, stretching back to several decades. I would like to call our relationship a 'longstanding dynamic partnership,'" he pointed out. India considers countries like Kuwait as a key partner in its economic transformation and in its efforts to build an 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) and also in its flagship projects.

The ambassador thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwait's leadership for hosting the large Indian community in Kuwait. He expressed his gratitude to the Kuwaiti government and the people of Kuwait for their efforts and support in strengthening the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Community outreach

"As Ambassador of India in Kuwait, I represent each and every citizen of India in this country. I look forward to working with each and every one of them to further strengthen our partnership with Kuwait. I am keen to engage each one of my countrymen to get their ideas and suggestions in strengthening our relationship with Kuwait," the ambassador, said expressing his desire to improve the embassy's outreach and engagement with the community.

George said he is delighted to see a large and



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George poses for a photograph at his office Tuesday. — Photos by Sajeev K Peter

talented Indian community in Kuwait, contributing to the economic progress of this country. "I am so happy to see that the Indians in Kuwait have a high reputation here and that they have earned the respect and trust of the people of Kuwait," he said.

The ambassador has launched an open house at the embassy to hear the ideas and suggestions of the members of the Indian community. "On every Wednesday at 3:30 pm, I, along with my colleagues in the embassy, look forward to meet-

“Welfare fund to support people in 'distress'”

ing directly with my fellow Indians at the embassy," he said.

The embassy has launched a few social media platforms to connect with the community such as ICN (Indian Cultural Network), IPN (Indian Professionals Network), IBN (Indian Business Network) and a digital thematic library to reach out to everyone sharing the India story, its cultural heritage and the story of new India, he explained.

Role of associations

When asked about the issue of de-registration of some of the Indian associations by the embassy in the past, he said the embassy is fully conscious of the diversity of the Indian diaspora in Kuwait and their cultural and professional



The Indian Embassy's building.

yearnings. "The main objective and rationale of these forums is to provide a platform for the members and their families to be able to come together as cohesive groups for cultural, professional and sports purposes within the parameters of local laws and regulations. In this context, I reviewed the decision to de-register some of our groups in the past. All are now part of our team. I look forward to work with each of them, so long as they do not violate any of the laws of their host country or that of their motherland," he explained.

Community welfare fund

The ambassador said the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) was set up in 2009 to assist overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency in the 'most deserving cases' on a 'means tested basis'. In 2017, the ICWF guidelines were revised further to make them more broad-based and expand the scope of welfare measures that can be extended through the fund.

"The guidelines cover a wide range of areas including providing boarding and lodging for deserving distressed Indians for a limited duration, air passage to India to stranded Indians, transportation of mortal remains, emergency medical care, etc. The guidelines approved by the cabinet are very clear on how to operate the fund. I have set up a committee of senior officers in the mission to examine each of the requests carefully as per guidelines and provide all possible assistance immediately to all deserving applications. I am keen that this fund is effectively used to provide support to any Indian in dis-

tress," he pointed out.

Issue of engineers

Asked about the reports of difficulties being faced by Indian engineers for renewal of their residency due to accreditation issues related to their educational institutions back in India, he said, "It is one of the issues that was brought to my attention by a large number of engineers. I am confident that we will be able to address each of the issues involving Indian engineers here. We may not have immediate solutions for some issues, but we will work with the concerned authorities to find amicable solutions to all issues," he explained.

Referring to the consular services, he said that the embassy has a set of parameters to ensure that there is 'ease of getting services' at the embassy and at outsourcing centers. It aims at reducing the time required to get the services done and to make the visit to the embassy a pleasant experience to everyone. "To achieve this objective, it is important that there is absolutely zero tolerance in the embassy for any form of corruption, dishonesty, exploitation, fraud, bias or partisanship. There are no agents or middlemen to get any services done at the embassy or at the outsourcing centers. This is what makes the embassy a 'home away from home' for one and all," he remarked.

The embassy has kept suggestion and complaint boxes prominently at the chancery premises and its passport offices. "We take every suggestion and complaint seriously and act upon to ensure ease of getting services at the embassy," he concluded.



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Oman's new Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi. — KUNA photos



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Spain's new Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Moro Aguilar.

Deputy Foreign Minister meets new envoys

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah held talks yesterday with Oman's new Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh bin Amer Al-Kharousi. The two diplomats discussed bilateral relations, as well as regional and international issues, the foreign ministry said in a statement. Jarallah also met with Spain's new Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Moro Aguilar and discussed a host of regional and international issues, added the statement. Assistant Foreign Minister for Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ayham Al-Omar attended the meetings. — KUNA

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Teachers allege 'mass cheating' in online reports

KUWAIT: A group of female teachers at public schools described final reports submitted online by grade 12 students for the 2019-2020 supplementary academic year as 'mass cheating', 'private tuition-encouraged' and with repeated technical errors, which makes the outcome of the experience a total failure, because all reports got the total marks of 25.

"All the reports students submitted were copy and paste reports made by student service centers. We initially rejected them, but were later obliged to accept them on administrative instructions," Al-Rai reported quoting the teachers who describe themselves as being 'keen on the future of education in Kuwait.' "Student service centers are the only winners in this process."

Another teacher said that one of her students used to sleep in class all the time, skip classes and was very negligent, but is now doing extraordinarily great online. "She is on top of her class now in home assignments that usually contain very difficult questions in Arabic grammar set for outstanding students," the teacher said, noting that the student has apparently hired a private tutor and gains no knowledge this way. The teacher added that the system malfunctions often, which forces teaching to be done only by audio.

While the teachers urged the Ministry of Education (MoE) to reopen school to "save the educational process from the online system," MoE's assistant undersecretary for general education Osama Al-Sultan stressed all kindergarten, primary and intermediate teachers' accounts were activated by the beginning of the month and they have started training and preparing for online education during the 2020-2021 academic year. Sultan also urged all administrative and teaching staff members to combine efforts to resume education during the COVID-19 crisis.

Kuwait reports 800+ COVID-19 cases for third straight day

Four patients passed away, 838 new cases in 24 hours

KUWAIT: Kuwait announced registering 838 new COVID-19 infection cases yesterday, marking the third straight day in which the country recorded over 800 new cases in a single day. The new cases raise the total number of infections Kuwait has registered since the outbreak of the disease to 92,082, while total deaths reached 552 after four patients passed away in the past 24 hours, the Ministry of Health announced. The ministry had announced earlier that 568 people have recovered from the virus, increasing the number of total recoveries to 82,222.

Kuwait had reported 857 and 805 new infections on Tuesday and Monday respectively, after recording 619 infections on Sunday. In comparison, 617 recoveries were registered on Tuesday, 516 on Monday and 618 on Sunday. The new infected cases include people who have come in contact with infected individuals, and others whose source of infection is currently being investigated, Ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said. In terms of health zones, 202 cases were reported in Hawally, 181 in Ahmadi, 172 in

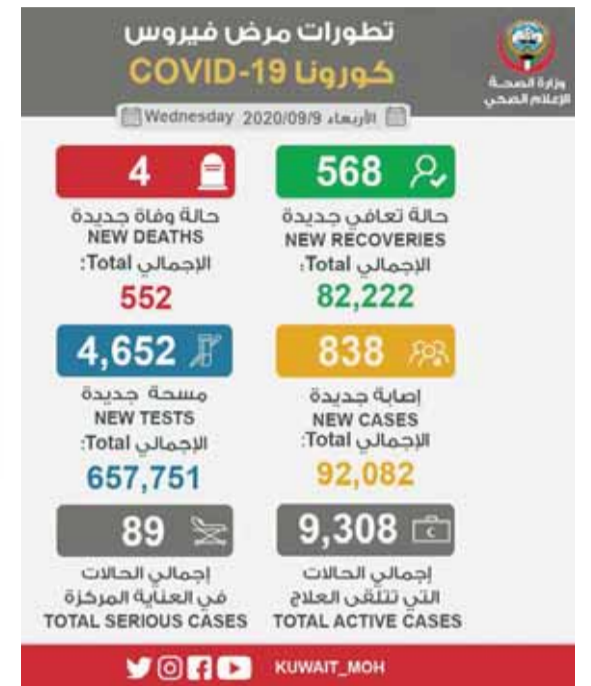
Farwaniya, 169 in the Capital, and 114 in Jahra, added the official.

There are 89 patients currently receiving intensive care out of a total 9,308 currently hos-



568 patients recovered in one day

pitalized, Dr Sanad said. A total of 4,425 swab tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, raising the total to 657,524 so far, added the spokesman. The official reiterated the strict need to abide by health precautions, urging nationals and expatriates alike to follow social distancing rules as the only way to keep the virus at bay. — KUNA



Man assaults Civil Service Commission employees

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man suddenly attacked and insulted Civil Service Commission (CSC) employees at the reception marquee yesterday before he barged into the main reception hall accompanied by his son, who was carrying a blade in his hand, which created a state of panic amongst the employees. The citizen was arrested and a case was filed against him by the employees he attacked and insulted when he refused to abide by preventive measures and procedures followed to enter the building during the COVID-19 crisis.

CSC public relations manager Rania Al-Kouh told Kuwait local daily Al-Rai that the CSC is keen on implementing all precautionary measures to protect both employees and the public. She added things had been going smoothly since resuming work until yesterday, when the

assailant came with his son to inquire about a transaction but refused to follow the instructions explained by the employees there, then insulted both male and female employees, assaulted others and ran into the main hall, where he attacked other employees.

A CSC employee said that the assailant suddenly started insulting and assaulting the security officers and some other employees. "He also tried to break the reception tent's poles," she said, noting that CSC employees tried to calm him down, especially since he hadn't worn a mask. CCTV cameras installed in the reception tent recorded the assault and include audiovisual recording to be used as evidence in the case filed against the assailant.

Separately, Al-Rai also reported that the public prosecution ordered summoning the fourth electoral constituency parliamentary election candidate accused in a vote-buying case filed recently after the Interior Ministry announced arresting a number of citizens buying votes, who had cash, lists and voter documents.

Meanwhile, a young man was arrested for assaulting a young girl in Mishref Co-op's parking lot, Al-Rai reported quoting security

sources, who noted that during a fight witnessed by a large number of people, the young man hit the girl with a metal rod on her head before fleeing. Arriving at the scene, detectives took the girl for treatment before she was escorted to a police station to file a case. She provided detectives with information about the assailant - a former acquaintance - who was later arrested. A case was filed pending further legal actions.

In another case, custom inspectors at the northern ports department managed to foil an attempt to smuggle counterfeit products inside incoming mail parcels, said security sources, noting that the parcels included fake garments, fabrics, women's purses, shoes and T-shirts bearing fake brand names. A case was filed. In the meantime, a Ministry of Electricity and Water legal representative reported the theft of cables from a main power unit in Dasma. The representative reported that unidentified robbers had broken into the power unit at night and stole eight cables and a distribution board unit. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress. This case comes only 48 hours after police arrested six people while stealing electric cables in Khairan.

Companies receiving assistance must pay full salaries

KUWAIT: All facilities receiving extra subsidies as per the Cabinet decision number 654 issued on May 18, 2020 are fully mandated to pay the past and future salaries of Kuwaitis registered in their files, and not lay off any of them until June 30, 2021, Al-Rai reported quoting a senior Public Authority of Manpower official.

"The sums spent on extra subsidies for those companies came to protect the rights of national workers in the private sector and provide job security for them, as it is their right to get full salaries according to the contracts signed between them and the private sector companies they work for," the authority's official spokesperson and public relations manager Aseel Al-Mazyad added, noting

that if any of those companies had deducted Kuwaiti workers' salaries during the coronavirus crisis and had applied for extra subsidies and received them, they will be obliged to deposit all deducted sums in those employees' bank accounts before Sept 15.

"Kuwaitis working in the private sector are entitled to full salaries in addition to national labor support monthly paid by the manpower authority as an incentive. The extra subsidies were paid to the companies to make up for the sums deducted from citizens' salaries," Mazyad stressed, pointing out that the manpower authority had deposited the June, July and August extra subsidies in employers' bank accounts last Wednesday and the remaining three months' subsidies will be monthly paid until November.

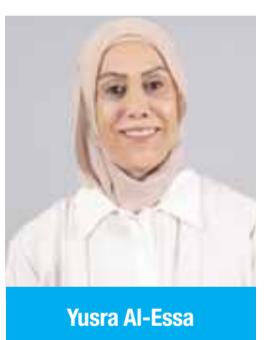
Finally, Mazyad stressed that the manpower authority will check with local banks and financial establishments to verify whether the concerned companies have deposited Kuwaiti employees' salaries. For non-complying companies, the fourth payment (for September) will be suspended and the first three months' payments will be considered as debts.

'Little Loyacers' program underway

KUWAIT: LOYAC recently organized the first and second phases of its 'Little Loyacers' online program, which still has two more phases remaining. The program helps create a supportive environment for children and gives them the ability to practice and develop their talent, as well as attain knowledge and new experiences, LOYAC explained in a press statement, adding that it is designed for children aged 8-12. In this regard, LOYAC's social services manager Yusra Al-Essa said that the pro-

gram provides a number of workshops to enable children to develop their knowledge and gain new varied experiences.

Further, Essa said that the program was presented online via Zoom in order to protect the health of participating children in view of current health conditions. She added that the third phase of the program would be presented in the period of September 9-17 followed by the fourth phase in the period of September 20 - October 1.



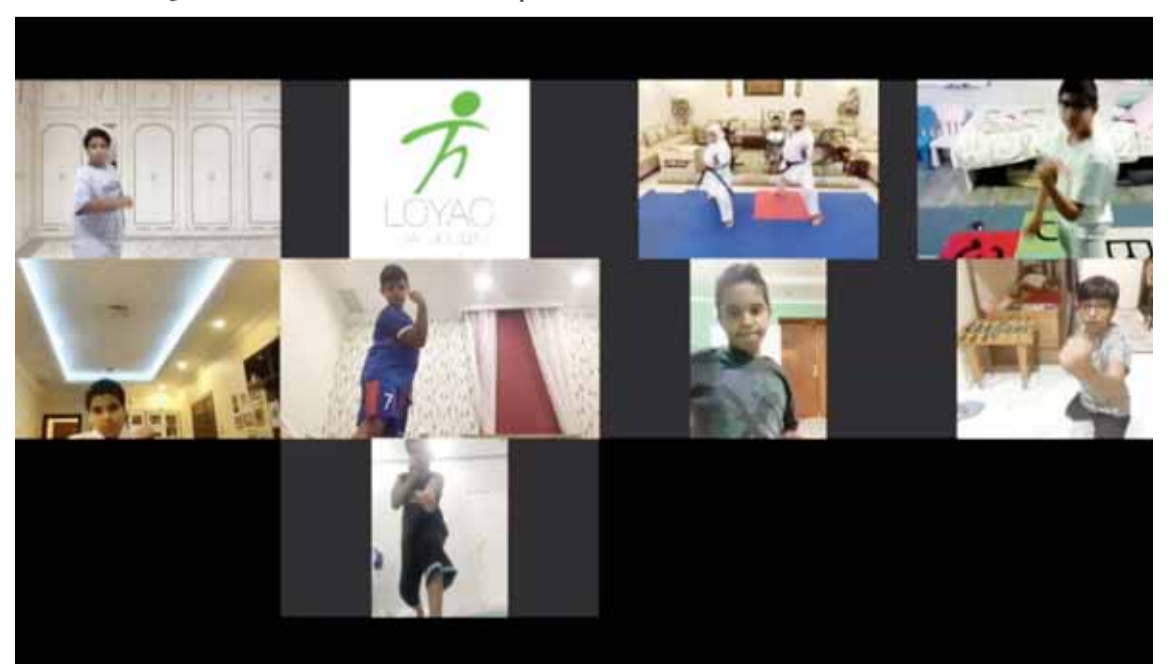
Yusra Al-Essa

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Strategic Somaliland touts its oil and gas; opens Taiwan office

COVID vaccine trial paused after 'unexplained' illness



MORIA: Children sit on the ground in the burnt camp of Moria on the island of Lesbos after a major fire broke out yesterday. — AFP

Migrant camp gutted by huge blaze

Moria - Greece's largest and most notorious migrant facility

LESBOS: Thousands of asylum seekers on the Greek island of Lesbos fled for their lives yesterday as a huge fire ripped through the camp of Moria, the country's largest and most notorious migrant facility. Over 12,000 men, women and children ran in panic out of containers and tents and into adjoining olive groves and fields as the fire destroyed most of the overcrowded, squalid camp. The blaze started just hours after the migration ministry said that 35 people had tested positive at the camp.

Firemen said Moria had been mostly destroyed but there were no known casualties so far, although a number of people were suffering minor respiratory problems from exposure to smoke. Black smoke was still belching out of the camp hours after the fire started late on Tuesday, television footage showed. Government spokesman Stelios Petsas said an emergency would be declared across the entire island and that reports of arson were under investigation.

Additional riot police were rushed to Lesbos yesterday, and a cabinet meeting will be held later to address the emergency, the government said. Petsas warned that authorities faced a "titanic" effort to shelter asylum seekers rendered homeless by the blaze, as well as track down and isolate dozens of confirmed coronavirus infections among them. Greek news agency ANA said the fires had started after a revolt by asylum seekers who were to be placed in isolation after testing positive for coronavirus or coming into close contact with an infected patient.

Moria had already been placed in quarantine until September 15, with only security personnel granted access after temperature tests. "There are 35 positive cases and they need to be isolated... to prevent an out-



Thousands of asylum seekers flee

break among the local population," Petsas told state television station ERT. Hundreds of asylum seekers attempted to flee on foot towards the port town of Mytilene but were blocked by police vehicles, while others took shelter in the hills surrounding the camps. Unable to pass, scores bedded down and slept on the ground. All of Moria's former residents are now banned from leaving the island, Petsas said.

Camp '99 percent' destroyed

Refugee support group Stand by Me Lesbos said on Twitter it had received reports that Greek locals on the island had blocked fleeing asylum seekers from heading into a nearby village. "The whole camp is on fire. Everything is burning. People are escaping. Their homes in Moria are gone," the organization said. "The camp is 99-percent destroyed... and the fire is still burning," local fire supervisor Yorgos Ntinos told AFP. A force of over 20 firefighters, 10 fire engines and a helicopter has been deployed to the scene. Administration offices, a clinic inside the camp and thousands of tents and were damaged by the fire, according to local news site Lesvospost. Firefighters

also said they had been blocked from entering the camp to battle the blaze by a group of refugees and had asked for police assistance.

Months of lockdowns

The camp had reported its first coronavirus case last Wednesday. Migrant camps on the islands have endured months of lockdowns as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, with access severely restricted. But at Moria, the restrictions have been harder to enforce because of the large number of asylum seekers sleeping outside the camp's walls. Rights groups including the UN refugee agency have repeatedly urged Greece to reduce congestion in its migrant camps.

The Moria camp, which was built to hold fewer than 2,800 people, had been routinely criticised for its lack of hygiene and overcrowding. Violence outbreaks in Moria and other island camps are common. Prostitution, sexual assault, disappearances of minors, drug trafficking and fights occurred almost daily in the camp, where dozens of people have been stabbed, burnt to death in their tents or have committed suicide. From January to the end of August, five people were stabbed in more than 15 attacks.

The government has in recent months moved thousands of refugees from Lesbos and other islands to the mainland. But many refugees have been unable to find lodgings and jobs after leaving the camps, with housing and cash benefits recently scaled back by the government. The government has also for months been attempting to build a new camp on Lesbos to replace Moria. But Lesbos locals have resisted the move, clashing with riot police earlier this year to prevent construction from going ahead.— AFP



Lebanon's President Michel Aoun

Sri Lanka tea storm swirls around Aoun

BEIRUT: Lebanon's President Michel Aoun has come under fire after it emerged that tea donated by Sri Lanka for victims of the Beirut blast was distributed instead to families of his presidential guards. Critics see it as yet another example of official corruption in a country reeling from the August 4 explosion that killed more than 190 people, wounded thousands and ravaged central Beirut. Sri Lanka, many of whose expat community in Lebanon work as housemaids, was one of several nations that rushed to show support in the wake of Lebanon's worst peace-time disaster.

The president's office on August 24 released a picture of Aoun receiving the Sri Lankan ambassador, and quoted her as saying Colombo had "donated 1,675 kilos (3,685 pounds) of Ceylon tea to those affected by the Beirut blast". After Lebanese media and social media asked what happened to the donation, it issued a second statement on Tuesday. The presidency said Aoun had written to his Sri Lankan counterpart to thank him for "a gift of Ceylon tea that had been received by the army... and distributed to the families of soldiers in the presidential guard".

Social media erupted in criticism, with the hashtags "tea thief" and "Ceylon tea" trending on Twitter. "The tea was sent to the Lebanese, particularly those affected by the explosion. Of course it wasn't a present for those who don't need it," wrote Paula Yacoubian, a former MP who resigned after the blast many blame on official neglect. "Distributing the aid to your entourage is shameful," she wrote. Another user quipped: "The excuse that it was a present for the president is even worse than the sin itself."

Beside the tea controversy, social media users have also been up in arms over the fate of 12 tons of fish that Mauritania sent in mid-August. After widespread calls to know its whereabouts, the army said Monday it had received the fish and "stored it according to public safety standards". It was talking to several associations preparing meals for those in need "to cook it and distribute it to those affected by the port blast". On Twitter, yet another user made light of the food aid controversy. "The presidential palace, or the palace of the people, invites you to a free lunch on Sunday," she wrote. "Open buffet on Mauritanian fish, and open bar on Ceylon tea." — AFP

Afghan VP lightly wounded in blast

KABUL: Afghanistan's vice president sustained minor injuries yesterday in an explosion targeting his convoy that killed at least 10 people, as government-backed negotiators and the Taliban prepared to meet in Doha for the long-delayed peace talks. The attack in the capital Kabul was quickly condemned as an attempt to frustrate the peace process, with top Afghan and foreign officials calling for an end to violence for negotiations between the two warring sides to succeed.

In a video posted on Facebook soon after the explosion, Amrullah Saleh, an outspoken Taliban critic, said he had been travelling to his office when his convoy was attacked. "I am fine but some of my guards have been wounded. My son, who was in the car with me, and I are both fine," Saleh said, with bandages on his left hand. "I have some burns on my face and hand. The blast was strong."

The ministry of interior said the bomb was placed on a hand cart and detonated remotely when Saleh's convoy passed by. "Unfortunately, 10 civilians, mostly people who were working in the area, were killed, and 15, including a number of the first VP's bodyguards, were wounded," Tareq Arian, spokesman to the ministry, told reporters at the scene. The Taliban, who have pledged not to launch attacks in urban areas under a deal with the United States, denied responsibility.

Abdullah, a shopkeeper who gave only one name, said the blast had blown out windows of his shop. "A shop that sold gas cylinders also caught fire, causing the cylinders to blow up," he said. Saleh, the senior of Afghanistan's two vice presidents, survived an assass-

ination attempt last year ahead of presidential elections. At least 20 people—most of them civilians—were killed and 50 others wounded when a suicide attacker and gunmen targeted Saleh's Kabul office at that time.

'Enemies of peace'

The EU in Afghanistan said yesterday's attack was a "desperate act by spoilers of peace efforts", while NATO's mission in the country said in a statement that "enemies of peace" were ignoring the will of the Afghan people for peace talks to begin. President Ashraf Ghani, who met Saleh soon after yesterday's blast, condemned what he said was a "terrorist attack" on his first deputy.

"The terrorists and their foreign backers cannot undermine the people's strong faith in peace, democracy and the bright future of our country," Ghani said in a statement. The head of the Afghan negotiating team, Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, called for violence to stop if the peace process was to succeed. "The time for making excuses has passed. The killing of the people must end," he said in a statement. Even as preparations for negotiations continue, violence on the ground has carried on unabated, with the Taliban unleashing daily attacks.

Saleh on Sunday said Kabul's negotiating team would push early on at peace talks for a permanent truce. "The first test for the Taliban is (a) ceasefire," Saleh told Tolo News. "If they accept the ceasefire, they are committed to peace. If not, they are not." Peace talks were supposed to begin in March but were repeatedly delayed over a prisoner swap that included the release of hundreds of battle-hardened insurgents. Paris and Canberra in particular have opposed the release of six Taliban militants because of their links to the killings of French and Australian civilians and troops. Saleh said Sunday the six inmates would be sent to Qatar. — AFP



KABUL: A smoke plume rises following an explosion targeting the convoy of Afghanistan's vice president Amrullah Saleh in Kabul yesterday. — AFP

International

'Masked men' detain Belarus' high-profile opposition lawyer

Opposition figure 'tore passport to pieces' to avoid expulsion

MINSK: Masked men detained one of the last high-profile opposition figures still free in Belarus yesterday, his colleagues said, the latest in a series of detentions and expulsions of those leading mass protests. Maxim Znak, who had worked as a lawyer for jailed presidential hopeful Viktor Babaryko, had been due to participate in a video call but did not show up, instead sending the word "masks" to the group, Babaryko's press service said.

It said a witness had also seen Znak, 39, being led down the street near his offices by several men in civilian clothes and wearing masks. Along with Svetlana Alexievich, a 72-year-old Nobel Prize-winning author, Znak was the last of the seven members of the opposition Coordination Council's governing presidium to remain free. Others have been detained or forced to leave Belarus, in an intensifying crackdown by President Alexander Lukashenko's regime over a disputed election.

Znak's apparent detention came a day after the most prominent opposition figure still in Belarus, Maria Kolesnikova, was detained at the Ukrainian border after she prevented authorities from expelling her by tearing up her passport and jumping out of a car. The Coordination Council was set up to ensure a peaceful transfer of power after main opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhonovskaya rejected Lukashenko's claim to have been re-elected to a sixth term in an August 9 vote.

The election has sparked the biggest anti-government demonstrations of Lukashenko's 26-year rule, with tens of thousands taking to the streets for weeks to demand he resign. Lukashenko's security services have hit back with waves of arrests, deadly violence against protesters and a campaign of

intimidation and expulsion against opposition leaders. Kolesnikova's fate was unknown after the dramatic events yesterday, when she and two other



Latest in series of detentions and expulsions

members of the Council were taken in a car to the buffer zone between the Belarusian and Ukrainian borders.

Appeal to Russians

The other two council members, press secretary Anton Rodnenkov and executive secretary Ivan Kravtsov, told a press conference in Kiev that Kolesnikova had torn her passport "into small pieces" and climbed out of the back window of the car to avoid expulsion. Border police said she was being held pending an investigation. Kolesnikova had gone missing on Monday, with witnesses saying she was bundled into a minibus by unidentified masked men on the street in Minsk. Kolesnikova, 38, is the only one of the trio of women who fronted Tikhonovskaya's campaign still in Belarus. Tikhonovskaya left the country under pressure from the authorities and was granted refuge in EU mem-



MINSK: Law enforcement officers detain participants of a rally to support detained opposition figure Maria Kolesnikova in Minsk. — AFP

ber state Lithuania. Her other campaign partner, Veronika Tsepkalo, is now in Ukraine.

Tikhonovskaya yesterday called on Russians not to believe propaganda trying to "poison" ties between the two peoples and thanked those backing Belarusians' "fight for freedom". Her first major address to Russians came after Lukashenko gave a wide-ranging interview to a group of journalists from Russian state media on Tuesday. "It is very

important not to damage ties between the two countries," 37-year-old Tikhonovskaya said in the video address. "Let's not allow propaganda to poison ties between two friendly peoples, and unscrupulous politicians to damage the interests of both Belarus and Russia," she said. No date has been set, but Lukashenko is preparing to travel to Moscow for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. — AFP

News in brief

Chad mulls embassy in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM: A delegation from Chad discussed the possible opening of an embassy in Jerusalem, in a meeting Tuesday with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli leader said. The premier, whose country is to sign a US-brokered deal normalizing relations with the UAE, had announced a renewal of ties with Chad after a 47-year hiatus during a 2019 visit to the central African country. Chad, one of the world's poorest countries, is not an Arab League member state but belongs to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Netanyahu has sought to normalize the Jewish state's ties with Arab and Muslim nations as well as pushing for greater international recognition of the disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. — AFP

Netanyahu apologizes to Arab family

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has apologized to the family of an Israeli Arab killed by police in 2017 after being wrongly identified as a terrorist. "I want to apologize to the Al-Qiyan family whose father, an Israeli citizen, was killed on the pretext that he was a terrorist when he wasn't," he said. During a January 2017 demolition operation in a Bedouin village, policeman Erez Levi and the Israeli Arab, Yacoub Mussa Abu Al-Qiyan, were killed in disputed circumstances. Levi died in a "car ramming" and the driver was shot dead as a "terrorist", police said, whereas villagers said Qiyan was gunned down at the wheel of his car while driving at normal speed. On Monday night, a journalist with Israel's Channel 12 television showed documents from an internal police inquiry that determined police had been mistaken. — AFP

Iran hosts 2nd India minister

TEHRAN: India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar held talks Tuesday in the Iranian capital, becoming the second senior Indian minister to visit the Islamic republic this week. "A productive meeting with FM @JZarif during a stopover in Tehran," he tweeted, after a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif. Jaishankar said they "discussed strengthening our bilateral cooperation and reviewed regional developments". Zarif, also on Twitter, wrote: "Our active engagement with our neighborhood is our top priority." On Sunday, Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh Amir Hatami also held talks in Tehran. During Jaishankar's last visit in December, before the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic which has hit both countries hard, Tehran and Delhi said they had agreed to speed up the development of the Iranian port of Chabahar on the Indian Ocean. — AFP

US police shoot autistic child

LOS ANGELES: Police in Salt Lake City shot and seriously wounded an autistic child whose mother had called 911 for help when her 13-year-old son started shouting in mental distress. Linden Cameron suffered from separation anxiety, his mother Golda Barton told reporters, and reacted angrily when she had to return to work for the first time in almost a year. She called 911 to ask police officers for help in taking the boy to hospital. "I told them, 'Look, he's unarmed, he doesn't have anything, he just gets mad and he starts yelling and screaming. He's a kid, he's trying to get attention'," she told local station KUTV. When the teenager started running from the police, one of the officers opened fire and injured the boy, who is white, with gunshots to the shoulder, intestine, bladder and ankle. — AFP

Ethiopia region defies Abiy with 'illegal' election

MEKELE: Ageing war veterans and university students joined long pre-dawn lines in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region to vote yesterday in parliamentary elections that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government has deemed illegal. Polls opened at 6am across the mountainous northern Tigray region despite a federal decision to postpone all elections because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The election represents the latest challenge to Abiy's authority as he navigates a democratic transition hobbled by deep political and ethnic divisions, and a low point in the bitter dispute between the federal government in Addis Ababa and Tigray. The region sharing a border with Eritrea and Sudan dominated Ethiopian politics for nearly three decades before anti-government protests swept Abiy to power in 2018.

Ethiopia was supposed to hold national elections in August, but the national poll body announced in March they would need to be postponed because of the pandemic. Tigrayan leaders rejected the extension of mandates - which would have expired in October - contending Abiy will have no legitimacy



MEKELE: Women wait in line in order to enter a polling station during Tigray's regional elections in the city of Mekele, Ethiopia yesterday. — AFP

after that. Their decision to unilaterally hold their own elections has clearly rankled federal officials, who have said they have "no legal basis" and are "null and void".

In the regional capital Mekele, some voters struck a defiant note as they waited to cast ballots. "We want the federal government to take a lesson from this: They need to hold elections, too, so we can work together to build the country," said Hailay Haileselassie, a 37-year-old who works for a construction company. More than 600 candidates from five parties are vying for 152 regional parliamentary seats, and the parties will decide how to allocate the remaining 38 seats at a later date, said election

commissioner Muluwork Kidanemariam. The heavy favourite is the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which led the armed struggle to topple the brutal Derg regime in 1991 and went on to control the ruling coalition that took over. Though the TPLF has been sidelined under Abiy, it remains in command in Tigray, which makes up six percent of Ethiopia's population of 110 million. Hailu Kiros, 62, was one of many wheelchair-bound TPLF veterans who cast votes yesterday morning. "This is important for me. We fought for this, so that elections could be held every five years," he said.

The TPLF is facing off against four other parties, one of which - the Tigray Independence Party - is calling for Tigray to secede and form its own country. The campaign featured televised debates among party leaders, and opposition politicians say they have had good access to regional media. Yet some opposition politicians have been harassed and briefly detained by security forces in recent days and pressured into dropping out, said Hayalu Godefay, chairman of opposition party Salsay Woyane Tigray. "When the election got closer, I think the TPLF changed toward the opposition. I think they didn't expect such support for the opposition from the people," Hayalu said. It remains unclear whether Tigray will face federal retaliation for going ahead with the vote. Abiy, winner of last year's Nobel Peace Prize, has previously ruled out a military intervention or budget cuts. In an interview with state media Tuesday night, he resorted to metaphor to issue a vague threat. — AFP



BERLIN: Overall view shows the main building of the Charite hospital in Berlin's Mitte. Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who Germany says was poisoned by a weapons-grade Novichok nerve agent, is now out of a medically induced coma and reacting to speech. — AFP

Navalny poisoning shatters Macron's Russia reset dream

PARIS: The poisoning of Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny with the Novichok nerve agent has dealt a blow to French President Emmanuel Macron's strategy of rapprochement with Russia, which troubled some EU allies, analysts say. France has throughout the crisis stood shoulder to shoulder with its close partner Germany, where Navalny is being treated after falling ill on a flight from Siberia and which has told Moscow only a full investigation can lift suspicions of a state-sponsored attack.

Analysts say Macron's much-heralded outreach to Russian counterpart President Vladimir Putin had-despite some high-profile diplomacy-so far failed to bring any concrete results. Paris-Moscow dialogue is unlikely to be severed completely but the dispute has already claimed its first casualty in relations with the cancellation of a planned meeting in Paris next week between the countries' foreign and defense ministers.

Next to go could be a trip by Macron to Moscow that had been scheduled for the early autumn. "We can continue to discuss, yes. But to continue this illusion of rapprochement only weakens Europe and the cohesion of the EU," said Nicolas Tenzer, professor at the Paris School of International Affairs. "I do not see how this can continue in these conditions without sending extremely disturbing signals to our European allies," he told AFP.

Macron, he added, should be careful not to harm his credibility as a European leader after successfully spearheading a post-coronavirus economic relaunch plan with Germany. "All this risks being undermined by a position that no one would understand towards Russia," he warned. Putin and Macron had agreed in telephone talks this summer that the French president would visit, but this is now under threat, a French diplomatic source said. "Everything is possible," the source added.

The crisis moved to a new level last week after Germany announced that Navalny had been poisoned with Novichok, the same nerve agent used to poison former agent Sergei Skripal in Britain in 2018, an attack the West blamed on Russian military intelligence. "It is a chemical, military weapon, it is the State that manufactures it. Moreover, it happened before." — AFP

Tighter socializing rules in England after virus spike

LONDON: The UK government yesterday set out tighter rules on social gatherings to curb the spread of the coronavirus, with concern mounting at rising infection rates among the young. The law in England will change from next week to reduce the number of people who can gather socially from 30 to six, with some exemptions.

A new public information campaign was also launched to emphasize the importance of hand washing, the use of face coverings and maintaining social distancing. "We need to act now to stop the virus spreading," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in comments before an expected news conference later. More than 41,500 people confirmed to have coronavirus have died in Britain, the worst toll in Europe. The death rate has now fallen to its lowest level since mid-March. But as in other parts of Europe, cases are increasing, with almost 3,000 daily infections reported in recent days, and concern the outbreak is slipping out of control. Johnson's office said medical and scientific advisers had agreed that "urgent action is needed", while police had also asked for the rules to be simplified. Current guidelines stipulate that people must not socialize outside in a group of more than six people from different households.

But the law actually puts that limit at 30 in private spaces. From Monday, this will be reduced to six, except for large families, weddings, funerals, organised team sports, workplaces and educational settings. Health Secretary Matt Hancock told Sky News television in an interview: "Abiding by these rules is absolutely vital to protect life. We've seen the increase in the number of cases, sadly, in the last few days. We've seen that across Europe, there's a second wave that many countries have experienced."

The UK government, which controls health policy in England, imposed tougher restrictions on Bolton, near the northwest city of Manchester, after a "very significant rise" in cases. Bolton was found to have 120 cases per 100,000 people-the highest in the country. — AFP

International

COVID vaccine trial paused after 'unexplained' illness

Pandemic threatens lives of millions of children: UN

LONDON: Clinical trials on one of the most advanced experimental Covid-19 vaccines, which is being developed by pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca and Oxford University, were "paused" Tuesday after a volunteer developed an unexplained illness. With billions of people around the world still suffering with the fallout of the pandemic and the global death toll nearing 900,000, a worldwide race for a vaccine is underway, with nine companies already in late-stage Phase 3 trials.

Worldwide infections to date now stand at more than 27 million, and more than 890,000 people have died from the disease. Russia has already approved a vaccine, and research published in The Lancet medical journal last week said patients involved in early tests developed antibodies with "no serious adverse events", although scientists cautioned the trials were too small.

A spokesperson for the AstraZeneca vaccine said in a statement "we voluntarily paused vaccination to allow review of safety data by an independent committee". "This is a routine action which has to happen whenever there is a potentially unexplained illness in one of the trials, while it is investigated, ensuring we maintain the integrity of the trials." The company said that in large-scale trials, illnesses will sometimes happen by chance, but must be reviewed independently. AstraZeneca did not offer further details, but David Lo, a professor of biomedical sciences at the University of California, Riverside, told AFP the pause may not necessarily be a setback. "Probably right now it's just being cautious-it's a pause, it's not the same thing as saying, 'We can't move forward,'" said Lo. "In some ways I'm quite relieved, it means they're really paying attention." The volunteer may have experienced an adverse reaction already seen in

earlier patients such as fever and soreness, but in a more severe form, Lo added.

'Standard process'

Britain's health minister Matt Hancock said it was not the first pause in the trials of the AstraZeneca vaccine.



Global death toll nearing 900,000

"It's a standard process in clinical trials. There was a pause earlier in the summer and that was resolved without a problem," he told Sky News. China, meanwhile, put its homegrown vaccines on display for the first time at a Beijing trade fair this week, and authorities hope it will be approved for use by the end of the year.

The economic fallout from the virus continues to wreak havoc on economies around the world, with governments desperate to get back to normality. South Africa announced its economy had shrunk by more than half in the second quarter, as the epidemic took its toll on Africa's most industrialized state. Latin America and the Caribbean surpassed 300,000 virus deaths. Argentina's caseload surpassed the half-million mark, while in Peru, which has the highest per capita coronavirus death rate in the world, fatalities climbed beyond 30,000. European countries were



PUNE: Christian volunteer Sagai Nair (right) and volunteers from a Muslim group carry the coffin of a COVID-19 Coronavirus victim for burial during a funeral at a cemetery in Pune, India has overtook Brazil as the country with the second highest number of confirmed coronavirus cases. — AFP

battling with high-profile sporting and political fallout from the pandemic on Tuesday.

Tour de France director Christian Prudhomme has tested positive for the virus, 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 event. Meanwhile, disruptions to health services due to the pandemic are putting millions of additional lives at risk worldwide, the United Nations said yesterday, warning that Covid-19 could reverse decades of progress in reducing child mortality. — AFP

US-China tensions dominate Southeast Asian summit

HANOI: US-China rivalry dominated discussions as the foreign ministers of 10 Southeast Asian countries began an online summit yesterday, with Washington's top diplomat ready to take aim at Beijing's "bullying" in the South China Sea. The summit comes just days after China launched ballistic missiles in the flashpoint waters as part of live-fire exercises and as Washington and Beijing clash over a range of issues from trade to the coronavirus.

Ministers will be joined by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi for their first summit since the US announced sanctions on Chinese companies over Beijing's construction of artificial islands in the disputed waters. The resource-rich South China Sea is claimed in its entirety by Beijing but is also contested by Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

A fresh spat between China and the Philippines over Scarborough Shoal - one of the region's richest fishing grounds - also hangs over the talks. "The Chinese Communist Party is engaged in a clear and intensifying pattern of bullying its neighbors," Pompeo said ahead of the summit. Tensions over the Korean Peninsula will also be high on the agenda. Talks between Pyongyang and Washington on North Korea's nuclear arsenal have been stalled since the collapse of a Hanoi summit between leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump last year.

The coronavirus pandemic is set to feature heavily in discussions, after Vietnam, the current chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, warned at a meeting in June that the fallout from the virus had swept away years of economic gains in the region. Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc said in opening remarks that "people and enterprises are suffering from huge losses" and "the geopolitical environment, regional economy, including that of the East Sea (South China Sea), are experiencing several upheavals, influencing peace and stability".

The "power rivalry" between the US and China will likely steal the limelight, a senior Southeast Asian diplomat told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. "The United States and China will likely use the meetings as a platform to throw everything at each other," he said. Smaller countries will "say their usual lines" and then take cover as Washington and Beijing fight, he added. Friction between the two powers is already high over trade, blame for the coronavirus pandemic and China's policies in Hong Kong, where Beijing has imposed a draconian national security law.

There is also angst that the virus may have provided cover for China to make new plays in the South China Sea. Zachary Abuza, an expert on Southeast Asian politics at the National War College in Washington, said there was unlikely to be much progress in talks over the disputed waters. "China has effectively used Covid-19 assistance and promises of vaccines - and trials in the Philippines and Indonesia - to really try to quash any diplomatic momentum towards a discussion of the South China Sea," he said. — AFP

Strategic Somaliland touts its oil and gas; opens Taiwan office

TAIPEI: The strategically located, self-declared African nation of Somaliland touted potential oil, gas and tourism resources for investment as it opened a de facto embassy in Taiwan yesterday, a relationship that has angered China and Somalia. Taiwan signed the agreement on establishing representative offices with Somaliland in February, but did not make it public until July. Situated on the Horn of Africa, Somaliland borders Djibouti, where China maintains its first ever overseas military base.

Both China, which claims Taiwan as its own, and Somalia have expressed their opposition to Taiwan and Somaliland's forging of ties. Somaliland declared independence in 1991 but is recognized internationally only as an autonomous region of



TAIPEI: Mohamed Hagi, Somaliland's Taiwan representative, bumps elbows with Taiwan's Foreign Minister Joseph Wu during the opening ceremony of the Somaliland representative office in Taipei yesterday. — AFP

Somalia. Somaliland's chief representative in Taiwan Mohamed Omar Hagi Mohamoud said at the opening of the office in Taipei that they were an independent state establishing ties with Taiwan based on the common values of freedom and democracy.

Somaliland wants investment in areas like min-

ing, oil exploration, fishing and eco-tourism for its "beautiful beaches", Mohamoud said. "In the mining sector Somaliland has huge potential for foreign investment, including hydrocarbon deposits, oil and gas, as well as coal," he added. Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu said they look forward to "exploring common interests and mutual benefits in areas such as fishery, energy, agriculture and others." "We both face external pressures. But both are proud of our sovereignty and ready to defend it," Wu added.

Taiwan has formal diplomatic ties with just 15 countries because of pressure from China, which says the island has no right to claim to be a country. In Africa, only tiny eSwatini maintains full relations with Taiwan. Mohamoud told Reuters that loans or money offers from Taiwan were not part of the deal to open the offices, and dismissed criticism from China. "Other countries cannot dictate to Somaliland what Somaliland wants to do and who Somaliland makes relations with. Yes of course we want to make relations with China, but that doesn't mean they can dictate to us." — Reuters



ULSAN: People look at an electric pole downed by Typhoon Maysak in the southeastern port city of Ulsan. — AFP

59 bridges, 2,000 houses destroyed by Korea typhoon

SEOUL: A typhoon that struck North Korea wrecked nearly 60 bridges and destroyed or inundated more than 2,000 houses, state media reported yesterday, with leader Kim Jong Un saying the damage had disrupted central planning for the rest of the year. Typhoon Maysak brought days of heavy downpours to the country's east coast last week even as the North was still reeling from earlier flooding and typhoon damage, and this week it was followed by Typhoon Haishen. Maysak "destroyed or inundated" more than 2,000 houses and tens of public buildings in the affected regions, the official KCNA news agency said, while 60 kilometers of roads and 59 bridges collapsed, with over 3,500 metres of railway roadbeds "swept away".

Natural disasters tend to have a greater impact in the North due to its creaking infrastructure, and the country is vulnerable to flooding as many mountains and hills have long been deforested. The damage obliged the authorities to "change the direction of our struggle after comprehensively considering the year-end tasks that were underway", Kim told a top committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, according to KCNA. It did not give specific details.

Pyongyang march

Kim has ordered some 12,000 Pyongyang-based party members to help with recovery efforts in affected rural regions, and they attended a rally on Tuesday before being dispatched. "We are afraid of nothing," said Kang Chol Jin, a party member at the event in front of the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, the giant mausoleum that holds the bodies of Kim's grandfather and father, the North's founder Kim Il Sung and his son and successor Kim Jong Il. "We firmly confirm our determination to go to the typhoon-afflicted areas and complete our missions as soon as possible," Kang added.

Residents cheered and waved flowers as the rally participants marched in uniform through the streets of the capital. Kim stressed the importance of completing the recovery efforts before next month's commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the Workers' Party founding on October 10. Authorities have previously promised to open the Pyongyang General Hospital, currently under construction, on that date, and according to reports preparations are underway for a possible military parade.

It was not clear whether the "change" Kim mentioned was a reference to either of those. While localized, the typhoon damage is testing the North's state capacity and resources, said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "The political risk to Kim of failing to deliver promised reconstruction may be limited, but an accumulation of economic failures will strain his regime." The impoverished country is subject to multiple UN Security Council sanctions over its banned weapons programs. — AFP

CO2 makes trees live fast - and die young

LONDON: Trees that grow quickly die younger, risking a release of carbon dioxide that challenges forecasts that forests will continue to be a "sink" for planet-warming emissions, scientists said. Tree cover absorbs a significant proportion of carbon dioxide emitted by burning fossil fuels and plays a crucial role in projections for our ability to wrestle down CO2 levels. Researchers said current climate models expect forests to continue to act as a carbon sink through this century, with high temperatures and concentrations of CO2 thought to stimulate tree growth and so help them absorb more carbon as they mature quicker.

But in the study, led by England's Leeds University and published in the journal Nature Communications, they warned that this faster growth was also linked to trees dying younger-suggesting increases in the role of forests as carbon storage may be "short lived". The researchers examined more than 200,000 tree-ring records from tree species across the globe and found that trade-offs between growth and lifespans occurred in almost all of them, including tropical trees.

Society has benefited from the increasing ability of forests to soak up carbon in recent decades, said co-author Steve Voelker, from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, in a Leeds University statement. But these CO2 uptake rates are "likely to be on the wane as slow-growing and persistent trees are supplanted by fast-growing but vulnerable trees", he added. "Our findings, very much like the story of the tortoise and the hare, indicate that there are traits within the fastest growing trees that make them vulnerable, whereas slower growing trees have traits that allow them to persist," he said.

The researchers said the findings suggest that the chances of dying increase dramatically as trees reach their maximum potential size. But they said it might also be that fast-growing trees invest less in defenses against diseases or insect attacks, or are more vulnerable to drought. Earth's average surface temperature has risen just over one degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels, enough to boost the severity of droughts, heatwaves and superstorms made more destructive by rising seas.

Commenting on the study David Lee, professor of atmospheric science, at England's Manchester Metropolitan University, said Earth system climate models currently predict the carbon storage of forests to continue or increase. — AFP

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2020

Business

Bezos tops Forbes list of richest Americans

COVID knocks Trump's ranking lower to No 352; his net worth fell to \$2.5bn

NEW YORK: Amazon Chief Executive Jeff Bezos topped Forbes' list of richest Americans for the third year in a row, while US President Donald Trump's ranking dropped as the coronavirus pandemic slammed his office buildings, hotels and resorts, the magazine said Tuesday.

The aggregate wealth of the Forbes 400 list rose to a record \$3.2 trillion, as the richest Americans continued to do well even though the pandemic has devastated the economy, which is short about 11 million jobs compared to where it was in February.

Eric Yuan, chief executive officer of Zoom Video Communications, which has become ubiquitous in the work-from-home era, was one of 18 newcomers on the list with a net worth of \$11 billion. Trump's ranking dropped to No 352 from 275 last year and his net worth fell to \$2.5 billion from \$3.1 billion, as office buildings, hotels and resorts, have suffered during the pandemic. His business, the Trump Organization, owns property in all three categories.

Trump has long refused to release his tax records, and has been locked in a battle with Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance, who subpoenaed Trump for eight years of personal and corporate returns. The annual list can serve as a way to track the wealthiest people in the country who hold the most power, said Kerry Dolan, assistant man-

aging editor of wealth at Forbes, in an interview with Reuters TV. "As a society, we all should know who is behind the biggest companies and what they're doing with their money," she said.

Forbes Tuesday released the 39th annual Forbes 400 list, the definitive ranking of the wealthiest Americans-including a comprehensive report of not only what these billionaires are worth, but how they are using their money to drive change and make an impact, a press release issued by Forbes added.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, America's super-rich are doing better than ever. The aggregate wealth of the list is \$3.2 trillion, up 8 percent from a year ago and a record in the four decades Forbes has tracked the richest Americans' fortunes. A record 233 US billionaires did not make the cut this year, falling short of the \$2.1 billion minimum needed to make the list. Jeff Bezos, CEO and founder of Amazon, remains in the top spot on the 2020 Forbes 400 list for the third consecutive year. Bezos' fortune of \$179 billion, as of

July 24, 2020, is up 57 percent from last year.

"The remarkable growth in fortunes of The Forbes 400 stands out at a time of pandemic-induced economic upheaval," said Kerry A Dolan, Assistant Managing Editor, Wealth at Forbes. "Much of the wealth is highly concentrated. The top 21 richest on the list (there is a tie at No 20) account for 42 percent of the total wealth."

The Forbes 400 list is a snapshot in time of wealth using stock prices and exchange rates from July 24, 2020. Since then Forbes reported in late August that Bezos' net worth reached a record-breaking \$200 billion, with Bezos the first person in history to cross this milestone.

There were 25 drop-offs who made the 2019 list but fell off this year's ranking; ten of those were due in part to setbacks related to the Covid-19 outbreak. There are 18 newcomers on this year's list including: Eric Yuan, CEO of Zoom Video Communications, with a net worth of \$11 billion; Jim



Forbes releases 39th annual 400 ranking



Amazon Chief Executive Jeff Bezos (left) topped Forbes' list of richest Americans for the third year in a row, while US President Donald Trump's ranking dropped. —Reuters

Koch, cofounder and chairman of the Boston Beer Company, producer of Samuel Adams Beer, with a net worth of \$2.6 billion; and at age 38 the youngest newcomer, Trevor Milton, founder of electric and hydrogen-electric truck maker Nikola. Donald Trump's ranking dropped to No. 352 from 275 in 2019, and his net worth dropped to \$2.5 billion from last year's \$3.1 billion, as the value of office buildings, hotels and resorts have taken a hit amid the pandemic. —Agencies

India syringe maker boosts production

FARIDABAD: India's biggest syringe manufacturer is ramping up production to churn out a billion units, anticipating a surge in demand as the global race to find a coronavirus vaccine heats up.

While the focus on tackling the pandemic has mostly been on the development of vaccines, experts say medical essentials to administer them are also vital. Hindustan Syringes—one of the world's largest makers of the item—said it is increasing its output of auto-disable devices (which prevent reuse) from 700 million a year to one billion by 2021 to meet the expected demand.

"Even if 60 percent of the world's population is immunized, it would mean four to five billion syringes would be required," Hindustan Syringes managing director Rajiv Nath told AFP at their factory in northern Haryana state. There are currently more than 30 candidate vaccines being tested on humans, with governments hoping to deploy one as soon as possible with the coronavirus wrecking lives and economies.

Shortages of PPE such as masks hampered early responses to the pandemic, and countries have now started building up their stockpile of syringes, vials and needles. "We may have sufficient capacity for the first wave of vaccines which would only be administered to priority groups," Prashant Yadav, a



Workers pack syringes at the Hindustan Syringes factory in Faridabad. —AFP

healthcare supply chains expert at Harvard Medical School, said.

"(But) when we get to a large-scale vaccination in late 2021 or 2022 and the dose demand estimates would be greater than 10 billion, that's when syringe supply starts becoming a constraint." So far,

UNICEF has ordered 140 million syringes from Hindustan for COVAX, a global initiative aimed at ensuring a more equitable distribution of vaccines to poorer nations. Much of the world's demand for syringes is expected to be met by factories in China and India. —AFP

Tunisia oil shutdown drags on as firms threaten layoffs

TUNIS: Operations at blockaded oil and gas facilities in Tunisia's impoverished south have been halted for nearly two months, protesters and authorities said Tuesday, as energy firms threatened to lay off staff. Demonstrators have been staging sit-ins and cutting off production since mid-July to demand the state follow through on promises to create thousands of jobs under deals ending previous rounds of protests.

They have cut off a key pipeline that normally transports half of the North African country's oil and hundreds stormed a crude production site, slashing gas production by around 40 percent and halving that of oil, according to the energy ministry. "Our sit-in will continue and the oil valves will stay closed pending a meeting with the new government soon," Khalifa Bouhaouach, a protest organizer, told AFP.

The protests in the long-marginalized southern region of Tataouine have come as bitterly divided politicians in Tunis, some 420 kilometers (260 miles) to the north, squabbled

over the formation of another new government to lead a country wracked by economic woes and the coronavirus pandemic.

Demonstrators are demanding that the new government of Hichem Mechichi, sworn in last week, honour a 2017 pledge to invest millions to develop the region. Tunisia's south is one of the countries most marginalized regions, burdened with above-average unemployment, failing infrastructure and a stunted private sector.

In July dozens of demonstrators set up a protest camp in the desert near El-Kamour, before hundreds forced their way into the oil production site on Thursday, pushing their way past troops deployed to guard it. Tunisia's modest oil sector normally produces up to 40,000 barrels per day, just over half of it from Tataouine, where Austria's OMV, Italy's ENI and Anglo Tunisian Oil & Gas have exploration rights, according to the energy ministry.

Successive governments have promised more investment in the region, but many of these promises have not been fulfilled. Officials in mid-August proposed creating 250 jobs over three years, according to Bouhaouach, who slammed the offer as "unacceptable".

Tataouine already suffered over 30 percent unemployment, one of the highest rates in the country, before the coronavirus pandemic wiped out thousands of informal jobs and strangled illicit cross-border trading networks



A Tunisian protester shutting down a valve as others behind pose for a picture at the oil and gas plant in El-Kamour, in the desert of Tunisia's southern state of Tataouine. —AFP

with Libya and Algeria that bring vital income to many of the region's households. Energy firms affected by the shutdown in early August wrote to president Kais Saied, according to media reports confirmed by the energy ministry, threatening to close down facilities and potentially lay off "thousands" of workers. —AFP

Global shares resilient after US tech sell-off

LONDON: Shares yesterday shrugged off heavy losses for US tech stocks and a major drugmaker delaying testing of a coronavirus vaccine, as investors kept faith in an economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. The broad Euro STOXX 600 gained 0.5 percent, steadying after a hefty decline a day earlier, sparked by a rout of a US tech sector that has been a key driver of the stunning recovery for global stocks from coronavirus-induced lows.

Wall Street futures were pointing to a bounce for the tech-heavy Nasdaq and the

S&P 500, up 1.8 percent and 0.7 percent respectively. London shares gained 0.7 percent, helped by a pound buffeted by worries about a no-deal Brexit that could hit Britain's economy. Indexes in Frankfurt and Paris also gained.

Utilities, telecoms and healthcare all rose by between 0.6 percent-2 percent. AstraZeneca shares fell 1.4 percent after global trials of its experimental COVID-19 vaccine were paused due to an unexplained illness in a study participant. It clawed back heavier losses incurred in premarket trading.

The news had earlier unnerved investors in Asia hoping that the quick introduction of a vaccine would accelerate the recovery for global economies ravaged by the pandemic.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan slid 1 percent, with indexes in Australia, China and Japan all skidding. The Japanese yen climbed to a

one-week high as investors sought safety, before giving up some of its gains to last stand 0.1 percent up at 106.13 per dollar.

With Big Tech one of the biggest main winners in the global recovery from the coronavirus, benefiting from stay-at-home spenders, investors were mostly sanguine about the sector's prospects, even after the bruising sell-off.

The Nasdaq has shed \$1.5 trillion since its Sept 2 high. "This has been a correction that was probably not that surprising, given the move in August in the tech sector," said Salman Baig, an investment manager at Unigestion, adding that the outlook for Big Tech was positive.

"It's exactly those companies that are new economy - they are benefiting because of their model, the industry, the virus." Those attributes have sparked heavy bets from the likes of SoftBank, which has traded heavily in

tech stocks call options. The bets have unnerved investors worried about its exposure to the sector. SoftBank Group shares lost 3 percent in Tokyo, extending this week's slump that has wiped \$15 billion from its market capitalization. The MSCI world equity index, which tracks shares in nearly 50 countries, was down 0.2 percent.

Despite renewed appetite for stocks, safe-haven German government bond yields fell to their lowest in two-weeks. The fall in tech shares also boosted demand for US Treasuries, even though heavy supply this week is expected to weigh on the bonds.

Vaccine blow

The remarkable rally in global shares from their March lows has been driven in part by expectations that a COVID-19 vaccine would be found, helping to accelerate the economic recovery from the coronavirus

pandemic. Yet AstraZeneca's move dims prospects for an early rollout of its vaccine, described by the World Health Organization as probably the world's leading candidate and the most advanced in terms of development. Deutsche Bank strategists called the suspension of the trials "a blow". Elsewhere, sterling was stalked by fears that Britain is preparing to undercut its Brexit divorce treaty. Britain will set out later on Wednesday new details of its blueprint for life outside the European Union, publishing legislation a minister acknowledged would break international law and which could sour trade talks.

Sterling dipped 0.4 percent to \$1.2928, its lowest since the end of July, and also fell the same amount against the euro to 90.70 pence, its lowest for six weeks. One-month implied volatility also hit its highest level in nearly five months. —Reuters

First 5G iPhone at Apple online event Sept 15

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple on Tuesday fired off invitations to a September 15 online event expected to star the first iPhone tailored for superfast 5G telecom networks.

The typically tight-lipped technology titan revealed only that the presentation would be streamed starting at 1700 GMT from its headquarters in Silicon Valley. Copies of the emailed invitation spread quickly on social media, featuring a video-snippet version of the Apple logo in blue that unraveled into the event date. The invitation was also posted at the Apple website, where the event will be streamed.

Apple has routinely held events this time of year to unveil new iPhones, and expectations are that this time around the spotlight will shine on a 5G model, with other new handsets possible as well. Wedbush analyst Daniel Ives said in a note to investors that a check of Apple's supply chain in Asian strengthened his confidence in an iPhone 12 "supercycle" kicked off by the release of several new models in October. Ives saw the China market as a "key ingredient in Apple's recipe for success," expecting it to account for about 20 percent of iPhone upgrades in the coming year.

5G networks are touted as promising an exponential leap in the amount and speed of wireless data, enabling advances in self-driving vehicles, virtual reality, connected health and more as sensors and servers communicate instantly. Technology analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group cautioned that Apple might not have the chip technology in place for a 5G iPhone despite wanting one on the market.

Apple last year made \$1 billion deal to acquire the majority of Intel's smartphone modem business, a move giving the iPhone maker more control over its supply chain. The deal came after Intel announced it was abandoning efforts to compete with modem chips for smartphones synched to 5G networks. Apple has been investing in its own mobile chips to ramp up performance and features in its devices and reduce its dependence on sector leader Qualcomm.

"If you have a premium phone, I don't see how you do it without 5G," Enderle said. Smartphone rivals typically launch updated models before the year-end gift-giving season, which could be tempered this time around by economic disruption caused by the pandemic. —AFP

Business

China factory prices fall at slowest rate in 5 months

Industries continue to recover from pandemic slump

BEIJING: China's factory gate prices fell at their slowest annual pace in five months in August as the world's second-largest economy and its industries continued to recover from a slump caused by the coronavirus pandemic earlier this year. Annual producer prices fell for a seventh straight month but at a slower pace, while consumer prices saw more moderate growth due to falling pork price inflation. Core consumer prices however rose month-on-month for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic worsened in China in January.

China's economy returned to growth in the second quarter of this year, underpinned by government stimulus and as the country managed to get the virus broadly under control. Recent indicators have pointed to a sustained recovery. "Looking through the volatility in food prices, the broader disinflationary impact from the COVID-19 downturn continues to ease," said Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics.

The producer price index (PPI) fell 2.0 percent from a year earlier in August, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said yesterday. That was in line with expectations in a Reuters poll, but the decline was more modest than the 2.4 percent drop in July.

The consumer price index meanwhile rose 2.4 percent last month from a year earlier, as expected, but slower than a 2.7 percent annual increase in July, as food price inflation eased, driven by pork prices. Pork price inflation slowed last month from a higher base a year ago, when prices began to surge in August 2019 as the African swine fever decimated China's pig herd. Pork prices rose 52.6 percent in

August from a year earlier, easing sharply from a 85.7 percent annual jump in July.

"Looking ahead, headline consumer price inflation probably has further to fall as pork supply continues to recover from last year's African swine fever outbreak," Evans-Pritchard added.

Uncertainty still 'huge'

Core inflation, excluding volatile food and energy prices, rose 0.5 percent in August from a year earlier



China August PPI drops 2.0%

er, unchanged from July, suggesting domestic demand still remained soft.

On a month-on-month basis, core inflation rose 0.1 percent in August, the first monthly rise since January, while producer prices rose 0.3 percent, slowing from 0.4 percent in July. "In August, industrial production continued to improve while market demand kept recovering," said Dong Lijuan, senior statistician with the NBS, in a statement accompanying the data release.



People wait in line to eat at a recently opened Shake Shack restaurant in Beijing yesterday. China's factory gate prices fell at their slowest annual pace in five months in August. —AFP

But Nie Wen, economist at Shanghai-based Hwabao Trust, does not expect annual PPI to turn positive by the end of the year. "(It) would ultimately depend on when the global pandemic will

be brought under control. Given China is very likely to see a resurgence of infections during winter, the uncertainty (on the industrial recovery) is still huge." — Reuters

US firms in China fear trade tensions will last for years

SHANGHAI: US companies in China are increasingly fretful that trade tensions between the world's two biggest economies will drag out over years and nearly a third said their ability to retain staff had been affected, a survey showed.

Half of the firms said they believe soured ties will last at least three years, up sharply from 30 percent in 2019, according to an annual business sentiment survey conducted by the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai and consultancy PwC China. Of those, 27 percent said they believe tensions will last indefinitely, compared with just 13 percent last year.

"U.S.-China tension is the top concern for the American business community here," Ker Gibbs, president of the business chamber, said at an event to mark the release of the report.

"This Beijing, Washington dialogue, they need to work this out, because it's having an impact on business performance here." US-China tensions, already high after last year's trade war, have further intensified this year due to the COVID-19 outbreak and as Washington blacklists or threatens to blacklist Chinese technology companies on national security grounds.

With the US election approaching, President Donald Trump this week again raised the idea of separating the US and Chinese economies, also known as decoupling, suggesting the United States would not lose money if the countries no longer did business. Underscoring the worries about bilateral tensions as well as economic uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic, only 29 percent of firms plan to increase their investment in China this year, down from 47 percent in 2019.

And 32 percent of respondents said they believe the deterioration in relations was affecting their ability to retain both local and expatriate staff - a view that was particularly pronounced in the education and logistics sectors.

"It's about the attractiveness of a US brand given this atmosphere of tensions," Mark Gilbraith, management consulting leader for PwC China. However, the proportion of companies with a pessimistic five-year outlook receded slightly, at 18.5 percent versus 21.1 percent in 2019.

The improvement may be attributable to the Phase One trade deal, the report said, although it noted pessimism remained historically high. Until 2019, firms with pessimistic five-year outlooks had hovered at around 7 percent for several years. This year's survey was conducted June 16-July 16 and garnered responses from 346 companies spanning sectors such as industrial manufacturing, automotive and pharmaceutical. More than 90 percent of respondents said they were committed to remaining in China and around 70 percent of the more than 200 firms surveyed that own or outsource production in China said they did not intend to shift manufacturing to other countries.

Less than 4 percent are shifting some production back to the United States while 14 percent are moving some production to non-US locations. The rest represent a mix of moving some production within China and some outside China. — Reuters

Junk bonds boom as virus lures investors to risk

PARIS: When the economic seas become stormy, investors usually tend to seek out "safe haven" assets—low-risk, low-yielding financial vessels—in which to place their money. But, as in other areas of society, the coronavirus pandemic has skewed long-held ways of thinking.

Yield-hungry investors are venturing into ever riskier assets in their search for rapidly diminishing returns, their appetites whetted by the vast safety nets central banks have placed under their national economies. Demand for so-called "junk" or non-investment grade bonds is booming.

By mid-August, a total \$274 billion in junk bonds had been issued in the US, exceeding the total for the whole of 2019, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. Europe, too, where the junk bond market is much less developed than on the other side of the Atlantic, saw an "acceleration" in the issuance of non-investment grade debt at the end of first half of this year, according to ratings agency Fitch.

A "junk" bond is the rather derogatory sounding term used where there is an increased likelihood of the issuer defaulting on their loan repayment. In return for the increased risk of investing in them, the borrower promises the lender a higher rate of interest on their money. But with some central banks now even agreeing to buy junk-grade bonds as part of a barrage of measures to keep credit flowing in their financial systems, investors are having fewer qualms about taking on such risk.

S African economy plunged during strict lockdown

PRETORIA: South Africa's economic output plunged in the second quarter, recording its largest contraction ever as a strict lockdown to curb the spread of the coronavirus shut down most activity, data showed on Tuesday. Output fell 51.0 percent in quarter-on-quarter annualised terms, the main reading presented by Statistics South Africa to show how the economy would perform over a full year if the quarter-on-quarter growth rate were to occur four times in succession.

In unadjusted terms, which is how many countries present their data, the contraction was 16.4 percent, and in year-on-year terms it was 17.1 percent, showing the extent of the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Africa's most industrialized nation. Analysts polled by Reuters had predicted a 47.3 percent annualized contraction because of the lockdown restrictions, among the



Shoppers stand in a queue outside a supermarket in Johannesburg.

Central bank aid

As part of its pandemic-fighting strategy, the US Federal Reserve is supporting companies that have seen their credit ratings downgraded recently, such as Ford and Occidental Petroleum, by buying their bonds directly. The European Central Bank is not quite at that point yet, but has agreed to accept them as collateral when banks borrow from it.

Over the summer, aluminum can maker Ball Corporation raised eyebrows by securing the lowest-ever borrowing costs for a US junk-rated company, paying an annual coupon of 2.875 percent on a 10-year bond. By comparison, pharmaceuticals giant Johnson & Johnson, which enjoys a top-notch triple-A rating, issued a 10-year bond with a coupon of 1.3 percent.

Zombies and fallen angels

With terms such as "zombies" and "fallen angels" appearing increasingly frequently in the financial press, readers could be forgiven for feeling as if they have wandered onto a dystopian fiction during these coronavirus-ridden days. "Fallen angel" is the term used for a company that has seen its normally solid-or investment-grade-credit rating slashed to junk because its business has been brought to a standstill by the virus lockdowns.

French hotel chain Accor is one such example and was relegated to junk status by S&P in August.

For asset managers, the key question is how much risk to continue taking on while the economic cost of the pandemic is still being counted. "Companies which were already in a bit of difficulty before are even more so now," said Alain Krief, head of fixed income at Rothschild Asset Management.

"That's our job, identifying them and not necessarily investing at all cost," he said, pointing to ailing companies in sectors such as car rentals or auto parts supply.

harshest in the world as South Africa has suffered the seventh-largest number of coronavirus cases worldwide.

"This is the first time in history that the South African economy has contracted for four straight quarters," Statistician-General Risenga Maluleke told a news conference. The rand fell more than 1 percent against the dollar on the data to trade at 16.9375 per dollar. Joe de Beer, another top official at the statistics agency, said that after adjusting for inflation the economy was roughly the same size in the April-June quarter of this year as in the first quarter of 2007.

Most sectors declined steeply except for agriculture, which grew 15.1 percent in the second quarter from January-March, helped by fruit and nut exports, and better-than-average winter rainfall.

Mining declined 73.1 percent, manufacturing 74.9 percent and construction 76.6 percent. Gross domestic product (GDP) for the whole economy shrank 17.1 percent from the same period in 2019. Reacting to the data, President Cyril Ramaphosa said his government was finalizing an economic recovery strategy to enable a rapid rebound. The strategy will include fast-tracking reforms, employment programs, large-scale investment in infrastructure, he said. — Reuters



Demand for so-called "junk" or non-investment grade bonds is booming

Dawn of the corporate dead

The huge concern is that so-called "zombie" companies could make the downturn still worse. These are businesses whose interest costs exceed their annual earnings and have been kept alive by years of cheap borrowing costs, not least thanks to state and central bank rescue programs.

According to rating agency S&P Global, Europe's speculative-grade corporate default rate is expected to more than treble to 8.5 percent by the middle of next year, and in a more pessimistic scenario it could leap as far as 11.5 percent. "Expansive monetary and fiscal support could lessen defaults over the near term, but, with basic revenues flagging, the proportion of 'CCC/C' issuers has risen sharply, raising default risk," S&P wrote in a recent study. Marina Cohen, head of high yield Europe at Amundi Asset Management, said the risk of corporate defaults would merely be delayed, but not allayed completely.

"It's the specific risk of this crisis that has led the authorities to act so quickly. But instead of seeing an immediate wave of bankruptcies, we will probably now see a lag in corporate failures," she said. — AFP

Little stimulus, tight debt targets in Mexico's budget

MEXICO CITY: Mexico's government plans to keep a lid on spending while offering some support for hospitals, pensioners and infrastructure in a lean 2021 budget that forecasts only partial recovery for an economy hammered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Delivering the budget proposal to Congress, Finance Minister Arturo Herrera said Mexico could ill-afford the kind of government largesse that advanced economies had unleashed to recover from coronavirus lockdowns.

"We would like to think there is money for everyone, but that is not the reality we are facing," Herrera said, comparing the economic crisis to the 1930s Great Depression.

The budget will be closely watched by ratings agencies which stripped ailing state oil company Pemex of its investment grade rating this year and have warned Mexico's sovereign debt could suffer the same fate. The proposal, which must be approved by Congress, appears to outline a slight increase in real terms over Pemex's planned 2020 budget, which suffered cuts after oil prices collapsed.

A draft circulated by members of Congress earlier on Tuesday detailed some \$2 billion for Pemex's Dos Bocas refinery, which is under construction, but the shorter final proposal does not appear to mention the number. Overall the budget was tight, in line with President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's view that successive governments wasted public funds on excess and corruption.

Lopez Obrador is an outlier among both wealthy and emerging nations, insisting on controlling spending even in the face of the economic destruction wrought by coronavirus lockdowns. Instead of borrowing, he says additional funds for social programs can be found by cutting fat from the budget. — Reuters

Business

Boursa Kuwait organizes first 'Virtual Corporate Day' in tie-up with HSBC

Nine listed companies and 31 leading financial institutions take part

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait organized its first Virtual Corporate Day in collaboration with HSBC, one of the largest banking and financial services institutions in the world, from 9 until 10 September 2020. The conference, held virtually because of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, was attended by nine companies listed in the Kuwaiti capital market, who met with 31 of the world's leading institutional investors and asset management firms over the two-day period.

The listed Kuwaiti companies came from the banking, telecom, industrials and the consumer services sectors, holding 160 meetings with institutional investors and asset management firms including commercial banks, mutual funds, hedge funds, pension funds and insurance firms. The meetings enabled the international investors to gain an in-

depth understanding of the benefits and opportunities of investing in the Kuwaiti companies, and offered deeper insights into the financial performance, business strategy and outlook of the publicly traded companies.

Commenting on the event, Boursa Kuwait's Head of Markets Noura Al-Abdulkareem said, "Boursa Kuwait continues to promote the Kuwaiti capital market to institutional investors and asset management firms across the globe, highlighting the unique investment opportunities this market



160 meetings held over two days

has to offer for all market participants. As one of Kuwait's key financial institutions, we have been mindful of taking the necessary and feasible measures since the outbreak of the pandemic to ensure the continuity of our business and our relationships with our many esteemed partners. I would like to thank HSBC and the participants in our fifth, and first virtual, edition of our series of Corporate Days, for helping make this event a success."

Boursa Kuwait's series of Corporate Days

showcases some of its standout listed companies and the investment opportunities that reside in the Kuwaiti capital market. Putting these companies in touch with some of the world's leading investment firms and financial institutions, the events aim to highlight these companies' financial health and business strategies and outlooks helping investors gain an in-depth understanding of the benefits and opportunities of investing in Kuwaiti companies.



Noura Al-Abdulkareem

Suga vows to put growth ahead of fiscal reform

TOKYO: Yoshihide Suga, on course to become Japan's next prime minister, said he would maintain incumbent premier Shinzo Abe's policy prioritizing economic growth over efforts to fix the country's tattered finances. Suga, Japan's chief cabinet secretary, also said he would continue to focus on revitalizing regional economies, which he described as among key pillars of "Abenomics".

"A strong economy is necessary for social welfare, national security and fiscal reform," Suga told a debate hosted by the ruling party yesterday. "We must first revive the economy, because only then can we push through fiscal reform."

The remarks reinforce market expectations that an administration led by Suga won't trigger big changes to the pro-growth economic policies Shinzo Abe championed during his nearly eight-year stint as prime minister. If he becomes Japan's next leader, Suga will face the daunting task of containing the coronavirus pandemic while managing the economic consequences.

Japan, the world's third-largest economy, sank deeper into its worst postwar recession in the second quarter, data showed on Tuesday, underscoring the challenges policymakers faces in dealing with the economic blow from COVID-19.

Suga enjoys a comfortable lead in the ruling party's race against two rival candidates vying to succeed Abe. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leadership election will be held on Sept. 14, a date set after Abe's decision to step down for health reasons. The winner is virtually assured of becoming premier because of the LDP's parliamentary majority. An Asahi newspaper tally showed Suga has support to become the LDP's leader from 308 - almost 80 percent - of ruling party members with seats in parliament. —Reuters

BoE tells insurers to step up climate change preparations

LONDON: How much capital insurers and other financial firms must hold could be directly linked to their readiness to cope with risks from climate change, a senior Bank of England official said yesterday.

While insurers have shown resilience in the face of COVID-19, adapting to the longer-term threat of climate change is likely to be a far greater challenge, said BoE executive director Anna Sweeney. Insurers face several risks from climate change, such as heavier policy claims due to more physical damage from fires and storms, and from the impact on their investments while transitioning to a lower carbon economy.

The kind of once-in-100-years flood in Britain that today racks up industry losses of 7 billion pounds could in future lead to double that figure in damages, Sweeney said.

There is "still some way to go" for a number of insurers in dealing with the impact of climate change on their balance sheets, she said. "It is therefore possible that the incentives to address climate change risk for both firms and supervisors could be enhanced if it were incorporated explicitly into firms' capital requirements," Sweeney told an event held by Moody's rating agency.

"Whether and how this should be achieved is not an easy question to answer. But it is surely a necessary one, and one that we must begin to address in a timely manner, for insurers and for the wider regulated financial services industry." —Reuters

Liquidation business booms in South Korea

SEOUL: You Young-sik has tried his luck running businesses, but when his convenience store, a sausage factory and a second-hand furniture shop all failed, he realized he had found a niche, one that he understood well: helping people go out of business.

You says he is now busier than ever, due to the resurgence in coronavirus, tearing down sign boards and cash registers at shuttered hair salons, BBQ buffets and other places whose business model is based around human contact. "This is my busiest year so far, having done this for 10 years. Inquiries are about four to five times higher," said 54-year-old liquidation specialist, who added that his business started taking off about two years ago as a street-level economic downturn began.

"I can't do them all but I still take about twice the work I used to, which is why I need to head out at 4 or 5 in the morning," said You in the city of Suwon, south of Seoul, as he answers telephone calls and tightens ropes around tables and chairs on his truck. Tough social distancing rules to curb a second wave of coronavirus have markedly slowed retail traffic and emptied cafes across Seoul since mid-August.

The tables and chairs that You collects from closing businesses will end up in recycled kitchenware shops, such as Dajoobang in a run-down part of Seoul's Hwanghakdong.

China's biggest airshow cancelled for first time

BEIJING: China has called off its biennial airshow due to the coronavirus, a further blow to a global aviation industry heavily disrupted by the pandemic. The show, scheduled to take place in the southern coastal city of Zhuhai from November 10, was set to feature major companies such as Boeing.

But China remains closed off to most international travellers due to tight restrictions to stop a resurgence of the coronavirus, which first surfaced in the central city of Wuhan before spreading across the globe. The event takes place every two years and is China's main aerospace industry exhibition, with

"Our 600-pyeong (21,350 square feet) storage warehouse has been completely full for about two months," said Cho Gye-su, a 53-year-old manager at Dajoobang.

"Second-hand goods have been piling up and we have nowhere to sell them to, so the coronavirus has been really bad for us," said Cho, pointing to used fridges, rice cookers and waffle makers all cleaned up and displayed in glass racks.

Family retailers battered

Inventory glut at recycled kitchenware stores and booming liquidation businesses point to battered family retailers in every corner of the country. While policymakers brag that retail sales returned to growth in June and per-day exports recorded the slowest decline in 7 months in August, small businesses are failing at a rate not seen since the global financial crisis, data from the Korea Statistics shows.

The hardest hit sectors in Asia's fourth largest economy include hospitality, retail and restaurants, which are traditionally small, family-run businesses. South Korea has one of the world's highest proportion of self-employed people, about 25 percent of the job market, making it very vulnerable to downturns. A 2017 Bank of Korea study showed only 38 percent of the self-employed businesses survive three years.

New retirees seeking to supplement pensions by opening fried chicken diners or coffee shops and unemployed youth starting their own cafes have driven demand for second-hand

products, trade talks and a flying display. It has been a platform for Beijing to show off military equipment and technology such as stealth drones, as well as to unveil a replica of China's first permanently crewed space station.

While Asia's biggest air show in Singapore went ahead in February with measures in place to guard against the deadly pathogen-over 70 exhibitors including industry giant Lockheed Martin chose to skip the show. This year global air travel has been decimated as countries close borders and tourists stay home.

Qatar Airways said in June it will not take any new aircraft in 2020 or 2021, deferring orders with Boeing and Airbus as demand diminishes amid the coronavirus crisis. The virus has also led to the cancellation or postponement of major events including the Olympic Games in Japan. —AFP



SEOUL: Tough social distancing rules have markedly slowed retail traffic and emptied cafes across Seoul. —AFP

sales for liquidators like You.

But unprecedented social distancing restrictions imposed on eateries in Seoul since late August, banning onsite dining after 9 p.m. and limiting coffee and bakery franchises to takeout and delivery, has made trading tough for new startups. The government has warned South Koreans for several years not to open more fried chicken shops or cafes as the small hospitality sector is saturated.

Small business profit margins were thinning before COVID-19. On top of the coronavirus pandemic, that has also fuelled an acceleration of e-commerce, small businesses are fighting spiking rents, a shorter work week and higher minimum wages under the left-leaning President Moon Jae-in.

Moon has raised the legal minimum wage by about a third in the

past three years to 8,720 won (\$7.2) an hour for 2021 and capped weekly work hours to 52 hours, raising costs and making layoffs inevitable for small businesses.

Statistics Korea data show the number of self-employed businesses were down by 128,000 in July from a year earlier to 5.55 million, logging the biggest drop since the comparable period of 2009. Kim Da-eun, 27, ran a private tuition school for the past three years in Anseong, south of Seoul, but is now shuttering it as the number of students has dropped below 10, down from 40 last year, as the coronavirus outbreak kept many at home.

"I'm now looking for a job but I don't see anyone hiring. So I will be sticking to my delivery part-time for a while," Kim said, observing the demolition of her business. —Reuters



BEIJING: China has called off its biennial airshow due to the coronavirus, a further blow to a global aviation industry heavily disrupted by the pandemic.

Ogilvy first agency brand to reach 1m followers on LinkedIn

NEW YORK: Ogilvy has become the first agency brand to reach an impressive social media milestone: one million followers on LinkedIn. LinkedIn has become the social destination for business, employment, and company culture content. Ogilvy's global social and thought leadership strategy is a natural fit with LinkedIn. The one million follower landmark is the result of the cultivation of a community where big ideas that shape brands are shared, celebrated, and discussed.

Ogilvy's one million LinkedIn followers come from across the globe and the business spectrum. The top five nations represented in Ogilvy's LinkedIn community are the United States, India, United Kingdom, Brazil, and Spain; its followers come from industries as varied as Marketing and Advertising to

Information Technology and Services, to Design, Higher Education and Financial Services.

Ogilvy's LinkedIn following has grown rapidly; just two years ago, Ogilvy had 500,000 followers, itself an impressive mark for an agency. John Vetrano, Ogilvy's Worldwide Social Media Manager and Community Growth Strategist said: "Our success can be attributed to the relentless pursuit of crafting compelling content around the incredible minds and creative genius of our amazing colleagues. Tapping into Ogilvy's rich heritage of creative and strategic excellence has provided the fuel that has allowed us to drive increased interest, engagements, and ultimately growth."

Ogilvy's strong presence on LinkedIn doesn't just benefit the agency itself, but its clients and partners as well, with their work and ideas being amplified to the agency's robust following. Ogilvy's strategy of engaging its audience on LinkedIn through relevant, entertaining and shareable content is a blueprint for any company or brand looking to grow its reach and its business.

Britain plans hiring spree to harness big data in recovery

LONDON: Britain is planning to train hundreds of data scientists as part of a new strategy to drive an economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic through smarter use of data and technology in policy-making. The National Data Strategy project reflects calls from Prime Minister Boris Johnson's top adviser Dominic Cummings for an overhaul of the way the government makes decisions, and an appeal earlier this year for "weirdos and misfits" to shake up official thinking.

The government promises to train up 500 data scientists by 2021, announced new fellowships to work inside the prime minister's office, and proposed new ways of working with data, including sharing information with the private sector. "The new strategy will put data at the heart of the country's recovery from the pandemic so companies and organizations can use it to drive digital transformation, innovate and boost growth across the economy," the government said in a statement. —Reuters

Classifieds

Thursday, September 10, 2020

Kuwait Times
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 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



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

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

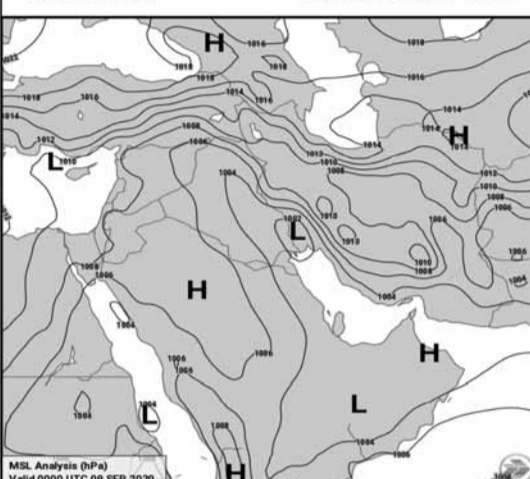
BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate north westerly wind to variable wind with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Rather hot with light to moderate variable wind to north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	37 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	29 °C
ABDALY	48 °C	30 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	48 °C	32 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	44 °C	32 °C
SALMIYAH	46 °C	37 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	49 °C	28 °C
WAFRA	48 °C	30 °C
SALMY	45 °C	30 °C

SFC. CHART 09/09/2020 0000 UTC



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	09/10	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	46 °C	27 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 26 km/h
Friday	09/11	Very hot and some scattered clouds will appear	47 °C	28 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 35 km/h
Saturday	09/12	Hot and some scattered clouds will appear	45 °C	28 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Sunday	09/13	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	45 °C	26 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:09
Sunrise	05:29
Zuhr	11:46
Asr	15:18
Sunset	18:02
Isha	19:21

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	47 °C
MIN. Temp.	28 °C
MAX. RH	33 %
MIN. RH	06 %
MAX. Wind	NW 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. U.P.0

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Shaik Firdose Begum** (old name), Indian national, holder of Indian passport no. K8034676 hereby change my name to **Shaik Firdous Begum** (corrected name). I will be known as **Shaik Firdous Begum** from now on, and my old name will no more be valid. (C 5756)

I, **Santosh Tucarama Raicar** holder of Indian passport no. K2098137 & Civil ID no. 282111902689 has changed my name from **Santosh Tucaram Raikar** to **Santosh Tucarama Raicar** hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of **Santosh Tucarama Raicar**. (C 5757) 10-9-2020

EMERGENCY 112

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



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

Word Search

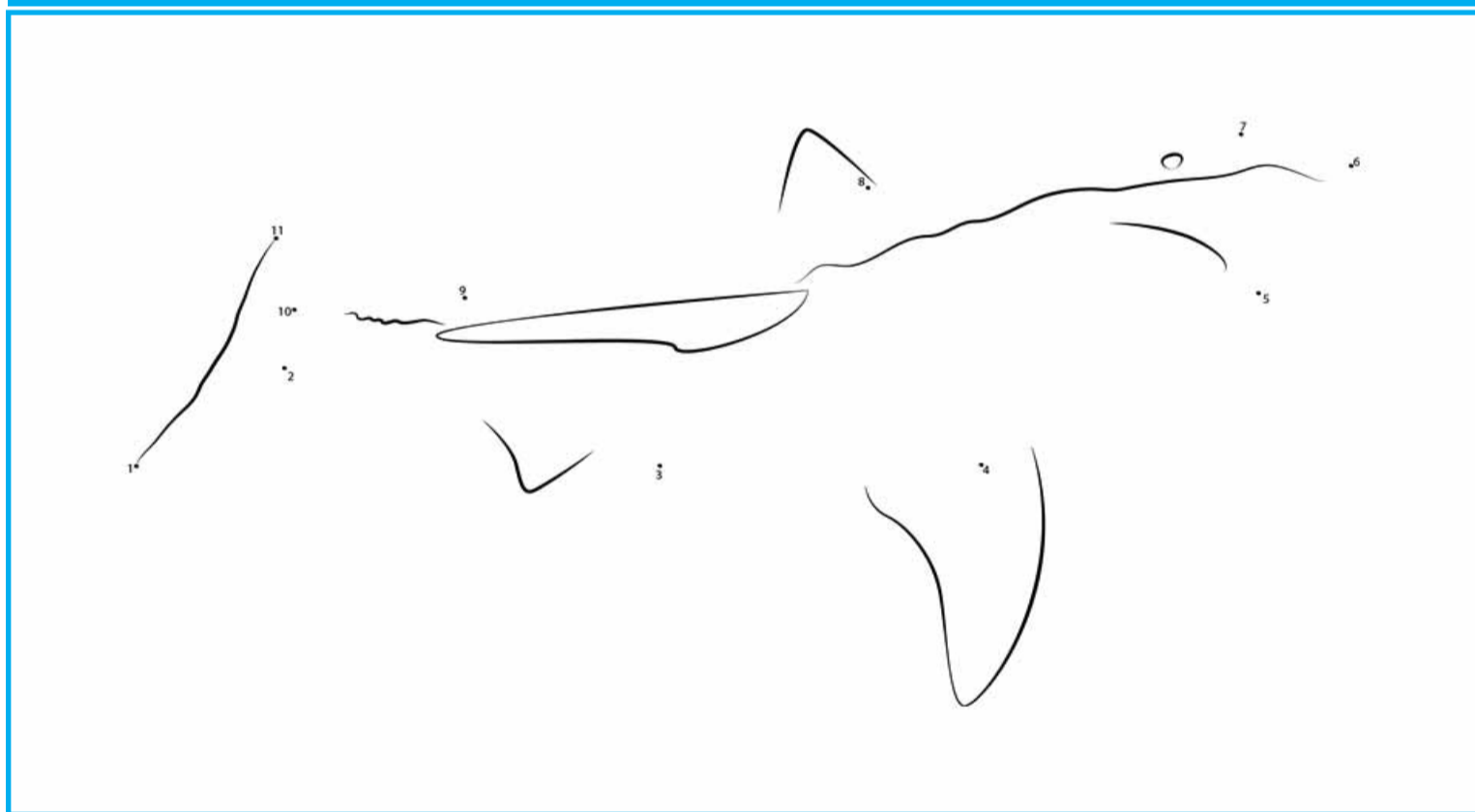


WORD SEARCH DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.



BISHOP	GAME	POSITION
BLACK	KARPOV	QUEEN
CASTLING	KASPAROV	RIVAL
CHAMPION	KING	ROOK
CHECKMATE	KNIGHT	RULES
CHESSBOARD	MATCH	STALEMATE
DEFEAT	MOVE	STRATEGY
DRAW	OPENING	TIMER
EN PASSANT	PAWN	TOURNAMENT
FISCHER	PIECE	WHITE

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 Don't let others' bad moods get you down, Aries. And don't feel it's your responsibility to cheer them up. Their moodiness is their business, not yours. You could be a little bit anxious today, and allowing yourself to be negatively influenced by others will do you no good at all. The general atmosphere will improve in a few days.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 The glass may look half empty, but only at first glance. Keep looking at it, or perhaps change the way you look at it, and you'll see that it indeed is half full. You may be experiencing some frustration. Computers could be down, or communication hindered in some way. Don't get stressed. See this as an ideal time to relax since you can't get any work done anyway.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 It looks as though change is on the horizon at work, Libra. You've just recently completed some long-term projects and are being recognized for your efforts. Perhaps a bonus or promotion is in store. Your affinity for technology and ability to quickly absorb new information makes you a prime candidate for a new position that's just opened up. Grab the chance!

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 Your world is changing, Capricorn, both internally and externally. You feel a need to broaden your horizons. You may be contemplating a move to a new neighborhood or trip to a faraway land. The people in your life will change as a result of this. You're about to embark on a new phase of life, and these new friends will act as able guides.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 It's time to let go of the past and focus only on the future, Taurus. A new person may come into your life who can help you do just that. Communication with close friends and relatives is highlighted, and you may find yourself spending more time on the phone than usual. Enjoy this day as you anticipate your brilliant future!

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 There are lots of personal and financial issues to resolve today, Leo. You may hear from your bank or see some alarming numbers on an ATM receipt. Don't get upset. Ultimately, these matters will be resolved to your benefit. As for personal matters, you may learn some new information about someone you thought you knew well. A relationship you once considered close may not be.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Crazy as it seems, why not plan that trip you've been eager to go on, Scorpio? Adventure calls, and although there are a few obstacles to stop you from answering, you can't wait to get out of your rut. There is a great big world out there, and you can't wait to make the time to go and see some of it!

Aquarius (January 20-February 18)
 Romance is in the air today, Aquarius. It's likely that your relationship with your loved ones will see a dramatic improvement. Perhaps some flowers will arrive unexpectedly, or you'll be paid a sincere compliment. Harmony reigns in the work environment as well. Both people and machines run smoothly and efficiently.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 There's definitely a downside to home ownership! Much as you love projects, Gemini, the joy is tempered when the chores never end. While your home is structurally sound, it may need some cosmetic enhancement. Try adding plants and flowers indoors. Outside, a few strategically placed pots can act as attractive focal points. You can make a difference with little effort or expense.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 A rising tide lifts all boats. When someone close experiences a windfall or especially good luck, Virgo, the ripple effect reaches you. Change is in the air. While everything happening is positive, sometimes it feels like it's going too quickly. You feel a bit off balance, with little or no time to adjust. Even windfalls take some getting used to. Give yourself time to settle into the new circumstances.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 Prosperity is just around the corner, Sagittarius. With it comes change. Change in your job, career, or environment figures prominently today. However this change manifests, it's bound to be positive. You're lucky, and you're about to hit the road to even greater success. Savor this moment, for you'll be busy soon!

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 You're focused and attentive to detail. Some longstanding projects benefit from this sudden spurt of energy and get completed in record time. Children figure prominently in your life right now, Pisces. Is there one child in particular who needs some extra attention from you? Your love and support mean a lot more than you realize.

'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' show to end in 2021



In this file photo Corey Gamble, Kris Jenner, Kanye West, Kim Kardashian West, Kendall Jenner, Kylie Jenner and Travis Scott arrives for the 2019 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. — AFP photos

Fans will have to find another way to keep up with the Kardashians, as the mega-celebrity family announced Tuesday that their reality show will end next year. "It is with heavy hearts that we've made the difficult decision as a family to say goodbye to Keeping Up with the Kardashians," Kim Kardashian wrote in a post to her 188 million Instagram followers. "After what will be 14 years, 20 seasons, hundreds of episodes and numerous spin-off shows, we are beyond grateful to all of you who've watched us for all of these years—through the good times, the bad times, the happiness, the tears, and the many relationships and children," she said. "Our last season will air early next year in 2021," wrote the businesswoman and wife of rapper Kanye West.

"Without Keeping Up with The Kardashians, I wouldn't be where I am today," she added. "This show made us who we are and I will be forever in debt to everyone who played a role in shaping our careers and changing our lives forever." The statement was also shared by Kardashian's mother, Kris Jenner, the family's highly adept "mom-ager." The post was signed by the three Kardashian sisters—Kourtney, Kim and Khloe—their mother, their brother Rob, their half-sisters Kendall and Kylie Jenner and Scott Disick, the father of Kourtney's three children. The family gave no explanation for the decision to end the popular show.

The announcement comes after that of rap star



In this file photo TV personality Kim Kardashian (left) and her mother Kris Jenner attend the 2018 MTV Movie & TV awards, at the Barker Hangar in Santa Monica.

West, who has four children with Kim Kardashian, that he is running for US president. West has also recently made enigmatic and disjointed, even incoherent, remarks on Twitter and at a campaign event, prompting his wife to open up about his bipolar disorder and ask for "compassion and empathy." "Keeping Up with the Kardashians" skyrocketed the entire family to fame, turning them into regulars in celebrity tabloids and helping them leverage their notoriety into multi-million dollar careers in makeup, perfume and modeling. — AFP

You can always get what you want: Stones open new store

The Rolling Stones on Tuesday defied the gloom of the coronavirus outbreak to launch the band's first flagship store in the heart of Swinging Sixties London. "Why would you open a shop during a pandemic?" joked singer Mick Jagger in a video message released before the shop opened its doors to the public yesterday. "It's our eternal optimism," he said. In the current climate, face masks emblazoned with the band's famous lips and tongue logo promise to be a best-seller. The band's branding features throughout the store on t-shirts, jackets, water bottles, notebooks, umbrellas and plectrum packs for those hoping to emulate guitarist Keith Richards.

But the team behind the project hope that it will become more than just a shop. "The product is dear to our hearts, but it is the experience that is just as important," said David Boyne, managing director of Bravado, the merchandising arm of Universal Music. A giant lips and tongue sculpture takes up the window display, beckoning passers-by on Carnaby Street, the epicentre of the capital's explosion of music and fashion in the 1960s. Giant screens inside broadcast high-definition footage of



People, some wearing face masks or coverings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, queue to enter The Rolling Stones new flagship store.

the band's decades of live tours, while their biggest hits and blues classics provide the soundtrack for shoppers.

Jointly curated by the Stones and Bravado, the decor stays loyal to the band's red and black brand, while a glass floor, featuring Stones lyrics,

provides a view to the basement floor. "That experiential element was really important to us," explained Boyne. "My favorite space is downstairs, the sound room, with the insulated red paneling and the super-red neon light. "It's just a great spot and great for that Instagram moment."

Textiles on Main Street

Jagger recalled how the band used to visit Carnaby Street before it became associated with London's 1960s music scene including The Who and David Bowie. "We used to work around there, we rehearsed there, we used to eat near there. It's not a bad place to have a shop," he added. Shoppers have deserted central London since Britain locked down in March, but the owners hope their high-profile store will help boost the area. "It's a super-positive message both for Carnaby Street and the Rolling Stones," said Boyne. "I've spoken to people in the world of retail and Carnaby Street who think what we are doing is incredible and will give a great boost to the retail landscape." — AFP



People queue to enter The Rolling Stones new flagship store in London yesterday ahead of its first day of opening. — AFP photos



HOLLYWOOD SEEKS VIRTUAL HYPE AT 'HYBRID' TORONTO FESTIVAL

Hollywood's annual exodus to Toronto for North America's biggest film festival will be online-only this week, as coronavirus and a closed Canadian border force A-listers to stay home and peddle their upcoming films remotely. The Toronto International Film Festival typically draws half a million attendees to its celebrity-studded red carpets and diverse lineup of world premieres, which include early Oscars frontrunners looking to spark momentum and unheralded art-house flicks hoping to find distributors. This year, even the stars themselves are not on the guest list. Only movie lovers who are already based in town will be able to attend drive-in premieres and socially distanced screenings at a dramatically pared-down festival boasting just 50 feature films on show—compared with a typical 300-odd.

But organizers insisted the show must go on, and have called on movie legends including Martin Scorsese, Anthony Hopkins, Nicole Kidman and Kate Winslet to participate in virtual talks and galas, in an unprecedented "hybrid" format starting Thursday. "We still wanted to do a



In this file photo Kate Winslet attends the Longines Masters of New York at Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale New York Hollywood's annual exodus to Toronto.

festival... it's important for our audience, and I think we just all need some inspiration that art can provide," co-head Cameron Bailey told AFP. "And there's also just the fact that the business of the film industry as well—the buying and selling of film that happens at our festival and others as well—needs to continue."

'So much at stake'

Several festivals have been scrapped this year, including the glamorous Cannes and the elite Telluride gathering in Colorado. At a perilous time for the industry at large, Hollywood productions have been brought to a months-long standstill by Covid-19, and the Oscars themselves postponed. As a result, Toronto officials announced a collaboration with those fall festivals pushing ahead—including the ongoing Venice and upcoming New York—to jointly promote new cinema. Screenings of hotly Oscar-tipped "Nomadland," starring Frances McDormand, will take place "almost simultaneously" on Friday at Toronto and Venice—which would normally compete for world premieres—said Bailey.



In this file photo Welsh actor Anthony Hopkins attends the AFI FEST gala screening of "The Two Popes" at TCL Chinese Theatre Hollywood. — AFP photos

"It didn't make sense to be competitive this year, with so much at stake," he said, calling the film about transient older Americans roaming the Midwest in search of seasonal jobs a "wonderful story" featuring "certainly one of the best performances I've seen all year." Other buzzy award season titles airing at Toronto include Winslet's 19th century lesbian romance "Ammonite," Idris Elba's neo-Western family drama "Concrete Cowboy" and Regina King's racial politics adaptation "One Night in Miami." Winslet will receive the festival's second annual achievement award along with Anthony Hopkins—whose acclaimed dementia drama "The Father" also screens—and rising "Nomadland" director Chloe Zhao.

'Resonating'

The festival in Canada's largest city is often seen as a key step on the journey to Oscar glory—recent best picture winners including "Green Book" and "The Shape of Water" emerged as frontrunners at Toronto. Last year, Taika Waititi's Nazi satire "Jojo Rabbit" received a major boost by winning the Toronto People's Choice Award. It

Oscars set minimum diversity rules for best picture prize

Hollywood's motion picture academy unveiled strict new eligibility rules to boost diversity among best picture Oscars nominees and the wider movie industry in a landmark announcement Tuesday. From 2024, all films hoping to win Tinseltown's most coveted prize will need to either employ a minimum number of cast, crew and administrative employees from under-represented backgrounds, or directly tackle themes affecting those communities. The groundbreaking move comes after years of criticism over a lack of diversity among the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' members, and among the Oscar nominees and winners they select.

While the Academy has already taken steps to diversify its membership, Tuesday's new rules mark a more aggressive bid to reshape Hollywood's broader performance on diversity. "We believe these inclusion standards will be a catalyst for long-lasting, essential change in our industry," said President David Rubin and CEO Dawn Hudson in a statement. Under the new rules, films vying for best picture will need to comply with at least two of four criteria designed to improve hiring practices and representation on and off screen.

The first criteria requires the movie to feature either a prominent actor from an under-represented group, 30 percent of its smaller roles from minorities, or to address issues surrounding these communities as its main theme. The second stipulates that behind-the-scenes senior leadership or technical crew members must be drawn from historically disadvantaged groups, which also include women, LGBT and disabled communities. The final two measures concern offering internships and training to underrepresented workers, and diversity in the movie's marketing and distribution teams.

Push for diversity

Since 2015 and the #OscarsSoWhite social media campaign, the Academy has made concerted efforts to broaden its membership. The board of governors vowed to double the number of women and non-white members by 2020, following calls to boycott the glitzy Oscars. The Academy surpassed those membership goals, with 45 percent of this year's intake women, and 36 percent minorities. The latest move is the product of a new diversity task force announced in June—weeks after mass anti-racism protests swept the United States following the killing of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis.



In this file photo an Oscars statue is displayed on the red carpet area on the eve of the 92nd Oscars ceremony at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

The standards are based on those already employed by Britain's BAFTA, and "are designed to encourage equitable representation on and off screen in order to better reflect the diversity of the movie-going audience," said the statement. Films contending for the best picture Oscar in 2022 and 2023 will not be bound by the rules, but will need to submit to the Academy confidential data on the movies' diversity based on the new criteria. The Academy also recently began hosting a series of panel discussions on racist tropes and harmful stereotypes in Hollywood films. — AFP



In this file photo a general view shows the stage during the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival Awards Ceremony at the TIFF Bell Lightbox in Toronto, Ontario.

Lifestyle | Features



This file photo shows an art installation made by the artist collective Anonymouse in the Nygatan street in Lund, Sweden. — AFP photos



A man takes pictures of a street installation of a mini restaurant and deli-shop for mice created by Swedish artist collective "Anonymouse" in central Malmö, Sweden.



A street installation of a mini restaurant and deli-shop for mice created by Swedish artist collective "Anonymouse".

Tiny mouse-size art proves a hit in Sweden

They're drawing crowds in Sweden: cute and quirky shopfronts, delis and restaurants created by a mystery art collective called "Anonymouse" that have popped up out of nowhere in some cities. The catch? You have to get down on all fours to see them, tucked away as they are at the bottom of buildings, just big enough for mice. "It's like a treasure hunt," 29-year-old Madeleine tells AFP in Lund, a picturesque university town in the south of the Nordic country where the collective's latest works are on display.

Hidden away in knee-high crevices around the city, the works often take the form of mundane locations, such as student dorms or a restaurant, but always at a scale more welcoming to small rodents than humans. Most often they include cheesy puns, like the music shop "Ricotta Records" which sells classic albums like

"Back to Brie" by "Amy Winemouse" and "Stilton John's" "Goodbye Yellow Cheese Roll". The anonymous team behind the creations has been working together for four years, and the installations, which are temporary, are exclusively made of recycled materials.

"It's the big world made small," 64-year-old social worker Bengt tells AFP, walking past to admire one of the works. "There is almost always a message in them, it makes you think a little about how people are doing," 43-year-old Maria adds. Remaining clandestine is a top priority for "Anonymouse."

So when the Lund municipality commissioned some of the works, they did not even know where to send the check.

They now have 26 creations to their name, including soup kitchens, antique shops and a private detective's office,

though they are always temporary and usually stay up for a few months. Their works have also been seen in other cities in Sweden and beyond, in Bayonne in France and on the Isle of Man in the UK. Reflecting on the Covid-19 pandemic, their first creation in Lund was a mouse pharmacy, complete with a sign encouraging visitors to "Wash your paws."

"The only thing that made sense was to build a pharmacy to somehow comment on the current global situation," a spokesperson, who introduced himself as Yasha Mousekewitz, told AFP via email.

Their creations have also been a hit on social media and the collective has garnered more than 139,000 followers on Instagram. — AFP



This file photo shows an art installation made by the artist collective Anonymouse in the Nygatan street in Lund, Sweden.



British designer Kim Jones

Britain's Kim Jones named as designer by Fendi

British designer Kim Jones is to join Italian fashion house Fendi as its lead designer for womenswear while retaining his job as artistic director for Dior, Fendi announced on Wednesday. Jones, 46, will succeed the late Karl Lagerfeld who was responsible for Fendi womenswear until his death in 2019. Silvia Venturini Fendi, from the Fendi family, will continue with responsibility for menswear and accessories, the statement from Fendi and parent company LVMH said.

"Kim Jones is a great talent and since joining, he has continuously proven his ability to adapt to the codes and heritage of the LVMH houses while revisiting them with great modernity and audacity," LVMH chief Bernard Arnault said. Jones, who has already worked on menswear at Louis Vuitton, has been chief designer at Dior since March 2018. — AFP

Mammoth graveyard unearthed at Mexico's new airport

Archaeologists in hard hats and face masks carefully remove earth from around enormous bones at the site of Mexico City's new airport, where construction work has uncovered a huge trove of mammoth skeletons. The remains of dozens of the extinct giants and other prehistoric creatures have been found in Zumpango on the northern edge of the capital, which sits on an ancient lake bed. "More than 100 individual mammoths, individual camels, horses, bison, fish, birds, antelopes and rodents have already been recovered," said army captain Jesus Cantoral, who heads the excavation team.

In total remains have been found at 194 spots across the site since the first discoveries were made in October last year during work on a fuel terminal, he told AFP. Most of the animals are believed to have roamed the Earth between 10,000 and 25,000 years ago. Experts worked painstakingly to extract the bones of a one of the mammoth skeletons, taking care not to disturb a mound of earth supporting another specimen. At the same time thousands of construction workers continued to labor away across the site as dozens of excavators and trucks shifted earth and transported building materials. The authorities say they have kept a careful



Paleontologists of the National Institute of Anthropology work on the preservation of the skeletons of mammoths.

watch to ensure the precious remains are preserved during work on the airport, which President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador has promised will be inaugurated in March 2022.

Stuck in mud

Experts believe the mammoths were drawn to the area by food and water provided by a lake that existed in prehistoric times. "The place had a lot of natural resources, enough for these

individuals to survive for a long time and for many generations," said archaeologist Araceli Yanez. In winter the lake area became muddy, trapping the giant mammals who starved, she said. "It attracted a large number of mammoths, and they got stuck, as is the case with this individual, and died here," Yanez added. The lake was also very good for preserving the remains. Mexico has been the scene of surprising mammoth discoveries before. In the

1970s, workers building the Mexico City subway found a mammoth skeleton while digging on the capital's north side. In 2012, workers digging to build a wastewater treatment plant outside the capital discovered hundreds of bones belonging to mammoths and other Ice Age animals.

And last year archaeologists found the skeletons of 14 mammoths in Tultepec, near the site of the new airport. Some bore signs that the animals had been hunted, leading experts to conclude at the time that they had found "the world's first mammoth trap." The government began construction of the new aviation hub in 2019 at the Santa Lucia military airbase, months after canceling work on another partially completed airport.

Lopez Obrador, who ran on a pro-austerity, anti-graft platform, had criticized that project championed by his predecessor Enrique Pena Nieto as an unnecessary mega-project marred by corruption. His administration has tasked the military with overseeing construction of the new airport, which will house a museum showcasing the mammoth skeletons and other ancient remains. — AFP



Paleontologists of the National Institute of Anthropology work on the preservation of the skeletons of mammoths found during a recent excavation, at the Santa Lucia Military Base in the Municipality of Zumpango, Mexico.



Partial view of part of the skeletons of mammoths. — AFP photos

NO HOLLYWOOD ENDING FOR FLOOD- AND VIRUS-HAUNTED VENICE

In November, the highest tides in over 50 years left it submerged—the famous Italian lagoon city drenched, despondent and economically devastated. Fast forward to February when the surrounding region, Veneto, saw Italy's first death from coronavirus—an epidemic that went on to kill over 35,000 people in the country. Finally this month, the opening of the prestigious Venice film festival on

September 2 was trumpeted as a sign of hope and renewal for the beloved yet beleaguered city. But one week into the world-renowned "Mostra del Cinema" on the beachfront Lido, a twenty-minute boat ride from Venice, many Venetians say there is still little to celebrate.

"Nothing has changed much," said Francesca, a tour operator manning a stand on the Venice waterfront who

declined to give her last name. For those locals accustomed to the estimated 30 million tourists who visit each year, whose presence makes it a challenge to cross the Rialto Bridge or snap a photo of the Bridge of Sighs, the city feels empty, she said. Visibly missing are visitors from the United States and China, among other countries, who are still prohibited from travelling to the country. "All

my family works in tourism. It makes me sad on one hand, but it's beautiful," she said, referring to the fewer tourists.

Although visitors now outnumber pigeons and seagulls in Saint Mark's Square, and hotels are at 40 to 50 percent capacity, according to the mayor, the city has not yet hit its stride. Many businesses are still shuttered from the coronavirus lockdown. About a third of shops lining Saint Mark's Square were closed on Tuesday, as a few hundred tourists meandered around, enjoying the sunny weather. Venetians also point out that those who attend the festival don't necessarily move outside their film industry bubble on the Lido. "People come but it's not like people come to buy fish," said Andrea Dei Rossi, a seller inside the Mercato di Rialto, whose fish market has been in operation since the 11th century. "It's been a hard year for all of us," Dei Rossi said. "The fact that we're open is wonderful." Dei Rossi's business is down 80 percent this year, he said, due prima-

rily to the closure of many of the city's restaurants.

'A matter of image'

The festival, now in its 77th year, is a scaled-down version of its former self this September amid ongoing travel restrictions preventing many stars, filmmakers and industry executives from attending. But restaurants, bars and other businesses on the Lido are enjoying at least a temporary boost with the arrival of the film crowd. One waitress, Betelehem Pilastro, described the festival as a yearly "adventure" that "gives so much work to so many people."

Others are more skeptical, like water taxi driver Walter, who asked his last name not be used. "There are hardly any films, just some Italian productions. It's a political festival that had to happen no matter what, even without content, to show that Venice is alive," he said. "I consider this festival just a matter of image." — AFP



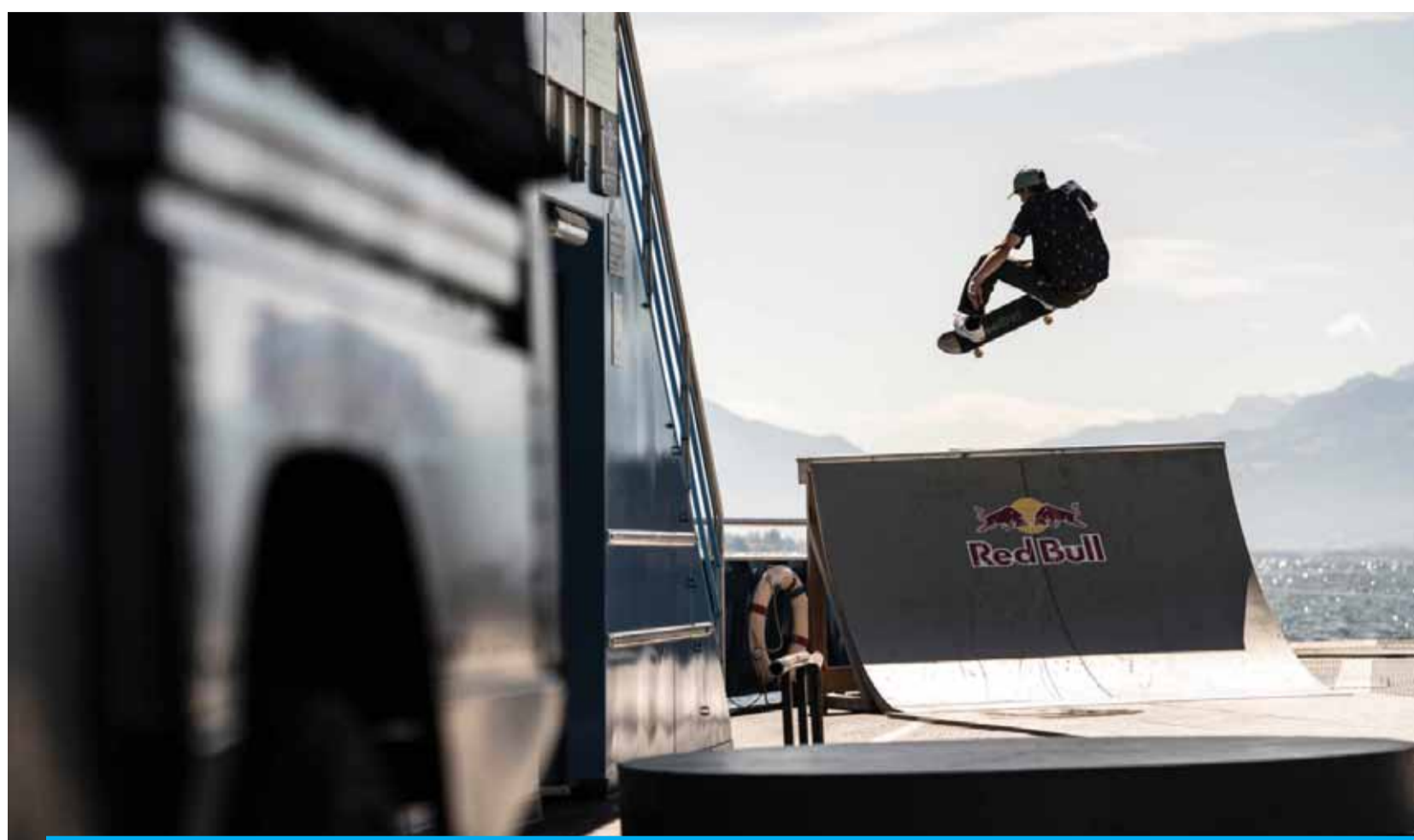
In this file photo a gondolier wearing a face mask (Rear) transports his very first customer as service resumes at the San Toma embankment on a Venice canal. — AFP photos



In this file photo (from left) Italian writer Nicola Lagioia, British director Joanna Hogg, Austrian director Veronika Franz, Australian-US actress Cate Blanchett, US actor Matt Dillon, French actress Ludvine Sagnier and German director Christian Petzold pose during a photocall of the Venezia 77 main competition jury.

Sports

Photo of the Day



Jan Hirt performs during the shoot of Red Bull Ferry Tale in Zurich, Switzerland. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Rights groups urge IOC to strip Beijing of Winter Olympics

BEIJING: A coalition of human rights groups around the world has urged the International Olympic Committee to strip Beijing of the 2022 Winter Olympics over its rights record. The call comes as China faces increased global scrutiny and backlash over its clampdown in Hong Kong and the mass internment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. The letter, dated Tuesday (Sep 8, 2020) and signed by over 160 groups and addressed to the IOC president, warned that the 2022 Games "could even contribute to more repression" in China.

It charged that after the 2008 Summer Olympic Games were awarded to Beijing, there was a "gross increase on the assault on communities living under its rule". The groups cited the internment of Uighurs in Xinjiang and the controversial new security law in Hong Kong as examples. "Despite appeals... the IOC has repeated the same mistakes as the past and remained unresponsive to evidence of the sharp decline in human rights protections before and after the 2008 Games in Beijing," the letter said.

"The IOC must recognize that the Olympic spirit and the reputation of the Olympic Games will suffer further damage if the worsening human rights crisis, across all areas under China's control, is simply ignored." Among its signatories are the Uyghur Human Rights Project, World Uyghur Congress, Tibetan Youth Congress and other Hong Kong and Mongolian rights groups based across several continents. China has insisted that Xinjiang's internment camps are "vocational education centres", maintaining that its policies in regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet are for national security and to counter extremism.— AFP

Dodgers rally, hang on in 10th

Padres hammer Rockies; Royals beat Indians

LOS ANGELES: Gavin Lux homered twice, including a three-run shot in the top of the 10th inning, and the Los Angeles Dodgers rallied from a four-run deficit for a 10-9 win over the Arizona Diamondbacks on Tuesday night in Phoenix. Lux went 3-for-5 with five RBIs and three runs in his first career multi-home run game. He hadn't homered in 27 at-bats this year before Tuesday. The Dodgers (31-12) scored four runs (two unearned) in the 10th off Diamondbacks reliever Yoan Lopez (0-1). Kenley Jansen, the Dodgers' closer, worked 1 1/3 innings for the win to improve to 3-0. However, he gave up Christian Walker's two-run home run and David Peralta's two-out, run-scoring single in the bottom of the 10th before getting the final out. Arizona (15-28) had the winning run at the plate and the tying run on base but lost its fourth consecutive game.

Padres 14, Rockies 5

San Diego spotted visiting Colorado a three-run lead in the top of the first, then stormed back with five runs in each the first and second innings—featuring a grand slam by Wil Myers and a three-run shot by Austin Nola—in a blowout win. Myers also hit a solo homer in the seventh to give him 11 homers on the season. Manny Machado added three hits and two RBIs for San Diego. Mike Clevinger (2-2) allowed four runs with eight strikeouts over five innings to earn his first win as a Padre. However, Rockies starter Chi Chi Gonzalez (0-1) was charged with four runs without allowing a hit, and reliever Jose Mujica served up the slam to Myers on his second pitch in the major leagues.

Nationals 5, Rays 3

Washington scored four early runs. Anibal Sanchez won for the second time in his last four starts and the Nationals held on in a victory over visiting Tampa Bay. Brock Holt was 2-for-4 with a run and a double, and Trea Turner (double, stolen base), Carter Kieboom (double) and Juan Soto each had a hit, run and an RBI for the Nationals, who swept the two-game series. Tampa Bay's Ryan Yarbrough (0-3) returned from the injured list and wasn't sharp after an 11-day absence. The left-hander allowed four runs on six hits in 2 2/3 innings and tossed 70 pitches.

Royals 8, Indians 6

Maikel Franco's sacrifice fly plated the go-ahead run in the eighth inning as Kansas City snapped a seven-game losing streak with a victory over Cleveland. Whit Merrifield crushed a three-run homer and Nicky Lopez joined Franco with two RBIs for the Royals, who posted their first win since a 2-1 victory over Cleveland on Aug 31. Francisco Lindor and Carlos Santana each belted a two-run homer and Sandy Leon also went deep for the Indians, who saw their three-game winning streak come to a halt.

Pirates 5, White Sox 4

Jason Martin scored the winning run in the ninth inning for a Pittsburgh victory when catcher Yasmani Grandal dropped a toss home, ending visiting Chicago's four-game winning streak. Jacob Stallings had an RBI double, Ke'Bryan Hayes stroked a run-scoring triple, and Kevin Newman and Erik Gonzalez each hit RBI singles for Pittsburgh. Grandal hit a two-run homer and Yoan Muncada added an RBI single for the White Sox.

Twins 7, Cardinals 3 (Game 1)

Josh Donaldson smacked a three-run homer to power visiting Minnesota past St. Louis in the first half of an interleague doubleheader. Miguel Sano hit a two-run homer and Nelson Cruz hit a solo shot as the Twins won for the seventh time in their last eight games. They won their third straight game against the Cardinals. Winning pitcher Jose Berrios (4-3) allowed three runs on four hits in five-plus innings. Losing pitcher Carlos Martinez (0-2) allowed four runs on seven hits in 3 2/3 innings in his first outing since recovering from COVID-19.

Cardinals 6, Twins 4 (Game 2)

Matt Carpenter triggered a five-run rally to lead St. Louis past visiting Minnesota 6-4 in the second half of their twin bill. Carpenter hit a single, scored a run and later drew a run-scoring walk as the Cardinals scored five times in the third inning. They erased a 2-0 deficit against losing pitcher Randy Dobnak (6-3), who retired just eight batters. Cardinals starting pitcher Daniel Ponce de Leon allowed two runs on five hits in three innings. Reliever Genesis Cabrera (3-1) earned the victory and closer Giovanny Gallegos earned his fourth save.

Phillies 6, Red Sox 5 (Game 1)

Alec Bohm hit a two-run single with two outs in the bottom of the seventh inning to lift host Philadelphia past Boston in the first game of a doubleheader. Bohm finished with three hits and a career-high four RBI while Didi Gregorius homered, singled, walked and scored three runs for the Phillies. Hector Neris (2-1) earned the win with 1 1/3 scoreless innings of relief. Rafael Devers homered twice, doubled and drove in three runs for the Red Sox. Alex Verdugo and Bobby Dalbec each added solo homers and Christian Vazquez had four hits for the Red Sox, who dropped their second in a row.

Red Sox 5, Phillies 2 (Game 2)

Bobby Dalbec homered, singled and drove in three runs to lift visiting Boston past Philadelphia for a doubleheader split. Jackie Bradley Jr had three hits, a walk and three runs while Tzu-Wei Lin added two hits for the Red Sox, who snapped their two-game losing streak. Chris Mazza (1-1) allowed four hits and two runs in five innings while striking out four and walking one to record his second major league win. Marcus Walden retired Jean Segura and Rhys Hoskins with runners on first and second in the seventh inning for his first save of the season.

A's 4, Astros 2 (Game 1)

Robbie Grossman broke a sixth-inning tie with an RBI single and Kris Davis drove in two runs, one with his first home run in more than a month, sending Oakland to a win over visiting Houston in the first game of a doubleheader. Davis, who had totaled just nine hits all season in a part-time role, had two hits for Oakland, as did Laureano and Pinder. Attempting to prevent the Astros from losing a sixth straight, Greinke went six innings, allowing a season-high four runs and seven hits. Michael Brantley finished with three of Houston's seven hits in a lineup that included Alex Bregman, activated off the injured list before the game.

Astros 5, A's 4 (Game 2)

Yuli Gurriel's sacrifice fly broke a seventh-inning tie and allowed Houston to salvage a split of its doubleheader at Oakland. The win ended a six-game losing streak for the Astros. Having used a four-run fourth inning to erase a four-run deficit, the Astros pushed across the decisive run after an error by A's shortstop Vimal Machin opened the door in the seventh. Enoli Paredes (2-2) was credited with the win after getting the final two outs of the sixth inning. Ryan Pressly notched his eighth save. J.B. Wendelen (1-1), who worked the sixth and seventh innings and allowed just the one unearned run, took the loss.

Giants 6, Mariners 5

Pinch hitter Darin Ruf hit a tiebreaking home run in the seventh, and the San Francisco bullpen combined for four scoreless innings as the Giants rallied to defeat visiting Seattle. Alex Dickerson and Mauricio Dubon also homered for the Giants, who have used a 14-5 run to move above .500 for the first time since Aug. 1. Tyler Rogers (2-3) earned the victory with a scoreless inning of relief. Tony Watson pitched the ninth for his second save of the season. The Mariners had their six-game winning streak snapped, which had been the longest current run in the majors. Anthony Misiewicz (0-2) took the loss, allowing Ruf's one-out homer to left-center in the seventh.

Blue Jays 2, Yankees 1

Jonathan Davis, playing his first game of the season, hit a two-run homer in the second inning and Toronto defeated visiting New York in Buffalo. It was the fifth loss in a row for the Yankees, including the first two games of the three-game series with the Blue Jays. The Blue Jays have won three in a row and occupy second place in the American League East, three games ahead of the Yankees. Toronto starter Taijuan Walker allowed no runs, two hits and five walks in four innings. He was replaced by right-hander Shun Yamaguchi (2-3), who allowed one run in two innings. Yankees left-hander J.A. Happ (1-2) struck out 10 in 6 1/3 innings in defeat.

Marlins 8, Braves 0

Visiting Miami hit three home runs to back the stellar pitching of rookie Sixto Sanchez in blanking Atlanta. The Marlins have won the first two games of the three-game series to clinch their first series win against Atlanta in three years. Atlanta has lost four of its last five games. Matt Joyce and Jorge Alfaro hit solo homers and Garrett



PHOENIX: Infielder Ketel Marte #4 of the Arizona Diamondbacks catches the baseball as Cody Bellinger #35 of the Los Angeles Dodgers safely steals second base during the eighth inning of the MLB game at Chase Field on Tuesday — AFP

Cooper added a two-run blast. That was all the support needed for Sanchez (2-1), the team's top-rated prospect. In his fourth career start, he pitched six-plus shutout innings and lowered his ERA to 1.80.

Orioles 11, Mets 2

John Means tossed six strong innings to earn his first win of the season as visiting Baltimore hit four homers as it continued surging with a blowout win over New York. The Orioles have won four straight and six of eight to move within a half-game of the New York Yankees in the race for the final playoff spot in the American League. The Mets, who entered Tuesday two games out of the NL's last postseason spot, have lost eight of 12. Means (1-3) allowed one run on a Jake Marisnick homer in the second and three hits while walking one and striking out five to earn his first victory since last Sept. 28. Marisnick and Jeff McNeil had two hits each for the Mets, who lost by at least nine runs for the third time this year.

Cubs 3, Reds 0

Alec Mills threw six strong innings, and Chicago tripled home all of its runs during a win over visiting Cincinnati. With the wind briskly blowing in, offense was at a premium in the opener of a three-game set. The teams combined for nine hits, but the NL Central-leading Cubs made two of their four count. Mills (4-3) gave up four hits while striking out six and overcoming three walks to rebound following two consecutive sub-par outings. The Reds' Tyler Mahle (1-2) took the hard-luck loss. Aside from two triples, the right-hander allowed only two other hits while striking out 10 and walking one in seven innings.

Tigers 8, Brewers 3

Jeimer Candelario homered and drove in four runs, Spencer Turnbull pitched six shutout innings and host Detroit cruised over Milwaukee. Turnbull (4-2) allowed just three hits and struck out three with three walks for the Tigers, who had lost five of their previous six games. Detroit second baseman Jonathan Schoop left the game in the fourth inning after being hit on his right wrist by a pitch. Milwaukee scored all of its runs in the ninth on RBI singles by Jedd Gyorko, Avisail Garcia and Omar Narvaez. Christian Yelich reached base three times for the Brewers with two hits and a walk.

Rangers 7, Angels 1

Lance Lynn gave up just one run and four hits in seven innings, leading Texas to victory over Los Angeles in Arlington, Texas. The Rangers ended their losing streak at six games, while the Angels saw their winning streak snapped at five. It was Lynn's second victory in two starts against Los Angeles this season. Lynn (5-2), who was coming off his worst start of the season (six runs in six innings in a loss to Houston on Thursday), struck out six. Every hitter in the Texas starting lineup reached base either by hit or walk.—Reuters

Ireland's Bennett in the green; Tour survives virus test

SAINT-MARTIN-DE-RE: Irishman Sam Bennett was left in tears after sprinting to a maiden stage win on the Tour de France on Tuesday after an Atlantic coast run between the islands of Oleron and Re. The Deceuninck team rider's stage 10 victory, on his Tour debut, ensured he reclaimed the sprint points green jersey, a similar shade to the rugby and football shirts of the Ireland national team. It also followed a dramatic start to the day as Tour director Christian Prudhomme tested positive for Covid-19 while the entire peloton returned negative tests. There was a negative test result, however, for French Prime Minister Jean Castex, whom Prudhomme had sat alongside in his car for Saturday's stage.

Wearing his Irish champion's tunic Bennett narrowly edged Australia's Caleb Ewan while peloton superstar Peter Sagan came third to cede the green jersey on a sunny day attended by more fans than on any previous day in the region famous for its huge, luscious oysters and other shellfish in the mud flats. After the finish line on the chic Island of Re Ewan quickly rode alongside the winner to fist bump in a rare show of empathy between sprinters.

Surrounded by his teammates Bennett watched a replay before clenching his fist and cheering. "It's almost a relief," said the 29-year-old who had four near misses before finally clinching this win after a frantic 168.5km-long stage 10 that featured 78 roundabouts. Bennett said he could hardly think straight at the end of the stage. "I threw my bike over the line to get the win but I was so excited I almost forgot to do it," he said. "It hasn't sunk in yet." Bennett added at the finish line before bursting into tears and thanking his team and his family.

"I don't want to be a cry baby," said the powerfully built Belgian-born sprinter. "I want to bring this shirt home for Ireland, but Peter Sagan is a master of this game." Bennett now has stage wins on all three Grand Tours, his stage win here following stage victories on the Giro d'Italia (three) and the Vuelta a Espana (two). He said his next goal would be a Tour de France final day win on the cobbled Parisian streets of the Champs-Élysées, before concentrating post-Tour on the Milan-San Remo race and the World Cycling Championships.—AFP

Sports

Australia regain top spot in T20 rankings from England

Marsh stars as Australia beat England by five wickets

SOUTHAMPTON: Mitchell Marsh marked his return to the world stage by leading Australia to a five-wicket consolation win over England at Southampton on Tuesday as they regained top spot in the global Twenty20 rankings from their arch-rivals. Australia were cruising to a modest target of 146 at 70-1 even though they had rested dynamic opener David Warner in one of three changes to their side. But they lost three wickets for 17 runs to be 87-4 before Marsh (39 not out) and Ashton Agar (16 not out) saw Australia to victory with three balls to spare.

"Six months is a long time without cricket so it's great to get the opportunity today," player-of-the-match Marsh told Sky Sports. "It's nice to finish off the series and nice to contribute. 'I would've liked my first game back to be a bit easier than that... I certainly looked up to make sure (Adil) Rashid had bowled out and I do like pace on the ball.'" England, however, still won the three-match series 2-1.

'Got us over the line'

"The first couple of games, we played such good cricket for a lot of it and didn't finish it off," Australia captain Aaron Finch told Sky Sports. "But tonight Mitch and Ash got us over the line." Australia's slump started when Marcus Stoinis holed out off Tom Curran before dangerman Glenn Maxwell fell for six when he reverse-swept leg-spinner Rashid to short third man. Rashid, who should have dismissed Finch for 27 only for wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow to drop a skyed chance, then bowled the Australia captain for 39 with a superb googly.

And with the last ball of his spell, Rashid caught and bowled star batsman Steve Smith to finish with excellent figures of 3-21 from his four overs. Australia were now 100-5, needing 46 more to win off the last seven overs. But the recalled Marsh, in his first competitive match for Australia since a one-day international in March, settled their nerves with a six and a four in a 16th over from fast bowler Mark Wood that cost 14 runs. When Agar drove Curran down the ground for four, Australia needed just one off the last over, bowled by Chris Jordan. Marsh, however, could not score off the first two balls.

But the third saw him run the decisive single, although he would have been out if Joe Denly had hit the stumps with his throw from mid-off. Earlier, Mitchell Starc led a disciplined bowling display as Australia held a revamped England to 145-6. Fast bowler Starc took 1-20, with leg-spinner Adam Zampa returning fine figures of 2-34. Jonny Bairstow, with 55, was the only England batsman to pass 30. But England were without captain Eoin Morgan (dislocated finger) and fellow star batsman Jos Buttler, absent for personal reasons after making a match-winning 77 not out in a six-wicket victory on Sunday.

They were also missing opener Jason Roy (side injury) and star all-rounder Ben Stokes, with his ill father in New Zealand, for the whole of this series. But stand-in skipper Moeen Ali was grateful to have captained his country for the first time. "It was a very proud moment and an amazing experience, sadly we didn't win but I thought we showed good



SOUTHAMPTON: England's bowler Chris Jordan (left) looks on as the ball goes past the stumps as Australia's Mitchell Marsh (center) scores the winning run during the international Twenty20 cricket match between England and Australia on September 8, 2020. — AFP

fight in the end," he said. "Generally in the field we weren't great and we didn't back the bowlers up as we would have liked."

Bairstow, who struggled early on, struck left-arm spinner Ashton Agar and Zampa for two huge sixes. He completed a 41-ball fifty with a superb straight six off Zampa. However, Bairstow was out soon af-

terwards when caught and bowled after mistiming a pull off Agar. England, the 50-over world champions, and Australia now head north to Manchester for a three-match one-day international series starting on Friday. It will be the first time they have played an ODI since England beat Australia in the semi-finals of last year's World Cup.—AFP



Kazma Sports Club cruise into semis

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kazma Sports Club cruise into semi finals of HHI the Amir cup after defeating Qadisiya 7-6 in penalty shootout after extra time periods ended in a

2-2 draw during the match that was held on Tuesday night. Kazima opened the score when Shibeb Al-Khladi sent the ball to the back of the net in the 33rd-minute then Qadisiya equalized in the 40th minute when Bader Al-Mutawaa scored from the penalty spot. Kazma's Bandar Burisli restored his team's lead in the 85th minute. When everyone thought that Kazma had won the match, the referee awarded Qadisiya another free kick which was also taken by Bader Al-Mutawaa. The extra time also ended in a draw and the teams went for the penalty shootout.

Lehner shines; Golden Knights blank Stars to level NHL series

LOS ANGELES: Robin Lehner made 24 saves as the top-seeded Vegas Golden Knights shut out the Dallas Stars 3-0 to level their NHL Western Conference final at one game apiece on Tuesday. It was Lehner's second straight shutout and fourth in his past seven starts. He had backed up Marc-Andre Fleury in a 1-0 defeat in game one on Sunday after making 14 saves in a series-clinching 3-0 win over Vancouver on Friday. Paul Stastny, William Karlsson and Tomas Nosek scored for the Golden Knights. Stastny opened the scoring at 4:53 of the second off a pass from Max Pacioretty and Karlsson made it 2-0 with a power-play goal from the left face-off circle at 8:24. Nosek finished off an exchange with Chandler Stephenson and Nicolas Roy to make it 3-0 at 14:32 of the second.

"We didn't play our game in game one," Golden Knights coach Peter DeBoer said of the 1-0 defeat in the series opener. "Tonight, we got our game back, and once we got that first goal, I thought we looked like we normally do, which is making plays and sticking pucks in the net." Anton Khudobin allowed three goals on 27 shots for Dallas. He was replaced to start the third period by Jake Oettinger, who made his NHL debut and saved all five shots he faced. "He got killed in that second period," Dallas coach Rick Bowness said of Khudobin. "Give him a breather, and you hope it'll spark some life into the guys."

"You put a kid in the net for his first NHL action, and you hope it'll spark some life," added Bowness, who added that "without Anton, that's 6-0 after the second period." Nosek was playing his third straight game and seventh of the playoffs after he was a healthy scratch for four of five games in the first round against the Chicago Blackhawks and the first six games against Vancouver. "We have a lot of great players, pretty good players, so someone has to stay out sometimes," he said. "I just try to stay ready, keep focusing and work hard every practice, and if the chance comes, I'll be ready and do my best."

Game three is today in Edmonton, the NHL's hub city for both the Eastern and Western conference finals and the Stanley Cup Final. Dallas forward Tyler Seguin said the Stars weren't surprised to see the Golden Knights come out firing after their opening defeat.—AFP

Monsieur Dakar back to winning ways at Baja Poland

KUWAIT: Stephane Peterhansel (FRA) wasted no time in reminding Europe's offroaders that he's still the man to beat on his return to competitive racing at Baja Poland. He took control of the contest before the midway point and the 13-time Dakar Rally winner went on to claim the chequered flag behind the wheel of his MINI John Cooper Works Rally.

Peterhansel quickly answered any questions about how he would cope with eight months away from racing and how he would adapt to having a new co-driver. It was soon evident that Monsieur Dakar still had plenty of speed and the pace notes of Edouard Boulanger (FRA) had the duo on the path to success. "Getting a win in our first rally together is a great start. This has been one of the most difficult rallies I have ever competed in. We are used to desert conditions, and here we struggled with water and mud." - Stephane Peterhansel

Following 444 kilometers of timed racing spread over seven special stages, the final winning margin of French pair Peterhansel and Boulanger stood at over 12 minutes. They were able to celebrate on Sunday thanks in large part to staying out of trouble on the previous day when torrential rain had seen a number of their rivals fall away as track conditions worsened.

In the second match, Kuwait Club joined Kazma in the semi-final by overcoming a goal deficit and ended the match 4-2 in their favor. Salmiya's Patrick Fabiano scored first in the 16th minute, ending the first half (1-0). In the second half, Kuwait equalized when Faisal Zayed scored from the penalty spot in the 61st-minute. The game continued until the 90th minute when Abdool Cisco scored. Musaed Nada's own goal in the 113th-minute handed the match to Kuwait Club and Jumaa Saeed ended the match with a goal in 120th minute.

Ronaldo at the double, France see off Croatia in World Cup final repeat

PARIS: Cristiano Ronaldo scored a stunning brace to take him to 101 international goals for Portugal in a 2-0 victory over 10-man Sweden in the Nations League on Tuesday, while France won a repeat of the 2018 World Cup final 4-2 over Croatia. Ronaldo broke the mythical 100-goal mark on the stroke of half-time, the 35-year-old Juventus attacker curling in a free-kick from 25 yards over the wall and into the far left corner beyond Sweden's stranded goalkeeper Robin Olsen for a memorable milestone in his trophy-laden career. The bonus second goal, and his 101st, came in the 72nd minute, the former Manchester United and Real Madrid forward cutting back inside the Swedish defence and producing a deft finish into the far corner from 20 yards.

"They are two important goals because it means I managed to reach this mark I'd been seeking," Ronaldo told Portuguese public television RTP. "I'm very happy, first because the team won and of course to score the 100th and then the 101st, two great goals." While acknowledging health came first, he lamented the Covid-19 enforced empty stadium in Solna. "It's sad playing without fans, it's like going to the circus with no clowns or into a garden with no flowers," Ronaldo said. "Speaking for myself, when I play away matches I like being whistled, it gives me motivation."

After making his first senior international appearance as an 18-year-old in 2003, Ronaldo notched up his first goal for Portugal in a 2-1 defeat by eventual winners Greece at Euro 2004. Ronaldo, capped 165 times by Portugal, is second only to Iran's Ali Daei, on 109, in the list of top men's international goal scorers. "The record, it's step by step," Ronaldo said. "It's not an obsession because I think records come naturally." Incredibly for Ronaldo, just 17 of his 100 goals have come in friendly matches, and his nine hat-tricks all came in FIFA or UEFA tournaments or qualifying games.

At the Stade de France north of Paris, Eduardo Camavinga became France's youngest international in 96 years as les Bleus won a repeat of the 2018 World Cup final over Croatia. Midfielder Camavinga, aged 17 years and nine months, replaced Ngolo Kante in the second half and is only surpassed by Julien Verbrugghe, aged 16 years and 10 months in 1906, and Maurice Gastiger, at 17 years and 4 months in 1914.

Deschamps made seven changes from Saturday's win over Sweden in Solna with Wissam Ben Yedder and Anthony Martial leading the attack after Kylian Mbappe contracted Covid-19. Antoine Griezmann, Dayot Upamecano, Olivier Giroud as well as an own goal from the visitors' goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic secured a repeat result from Russia two years ago after Dejan Lovren had opened the scoring for Croatia, Wolfsburg's Josip Brekalo adding their second in the 55th minute. The result sees Didier Deschamps' World Cup winners second on goal difference in Group A behind Portugal.

FIFA's number one ranked side Belgium, led superbly by Manchester City playmaker Kevin De Bruyne, handed Iceland a 5-1 drubbing to follow up on their 2-0 win over Denmark. The Islanders actually opened the scoring through an 11th-minute deflected shot from Holmber Fridjonsson. But a reshuffled Red Devils outfit hit back almost immediately through Axel Witsel in the 13th minute, before a Michy Batshuayi double (17, 70) coupled with goals from Dries Mertens (50) and new cap Jeremy Doku (80) combined to put the top of League A Group 2 ahead of their trip next month to England, who were lucky to escape with a 0-0 draw away to Denmark in Copenhagen on Tuesday.—AFP



Clogged filters and the threat of engine failure forced Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) and co-driver Mathieu Baumel (FRA) to retire during the third special stage.

Stage three also saw the chances of KubaPrzygonski (POL) winning his home race suffer a blow as he lost a wheel and spent over 40 minutes on repairs. "I was very surprised that we finished the third stage in first place, especially since I wasn't pushing hard. I saw the crews stopping. We didn't have it easy either due to problems with the car." - Stephane Peterhansel

With three-time Dakar winner Al-Attiyah out of the race and Przygonski left to target stage wins, Peterhansel used all his experience to bring home the victory. The reigning FIA World Cup for Cross-Country Rallies champion can now turn his attention to next month's Rally of Andalusia as preparations continue ahead of the 2021 Dakar in Saudi Arabia.

14 Dodgers rally, hang on in 10th; Padres beat Rockies



15 Lehner shines; Golden Knights blank Stars to level NHL series



15 Ronaldo at the double; France see off Croatia



NEW YORK: Naomi Osaka of Japan serves during her Women's Singles quarter-finals match against Shelby Rogers of the United States on Day Nine of the 2020 US Open on September 8, 2020. —AFP

Osaka, Zverev into US Open last 4

Busta tames erratic Shapovalov to claim place in last four

NEW YORK: Japan's Naomi Osaka sailed into the semi-finals of the US Open on Tuesday as Alexander Zverev of Germany booked his spot in the last four of the men's draw. Osaka, the tournament's fourth seed, swept aside unseeded Shelby Rogers in straight sets to set up a match with Jennifer Brady for a place in Saturday's final. The 22-year-old Osaka required just 1hr 20 min inside an empty Arthur Ashe Stadium to defeat the 27-year-old Rogers 6-3, 6-4.

Osaka, the world number 9, said her victory was payback for three previous defeats to the 93rd-ranked Rogers. They included a 2017 loss on clay in Charleston that Osaka said had left "a really bad aftertaste in my mouth." "Honestly, I just felt like she had the upper hand because I've never beaten her," Osaka said. "And those memories are stuck in my head so I consider this a little bit of revenge," she added. Osaka's dominant service game contributed to a comfortable runout for

the 2018 US Open champion. She won 83 percent of points on her first serve and 70 percent on her second.

In contrast, Rogers managed only 66 percent and 33 percent respectively. Rogers hit 29 unforced errors compared to just eight committed by Osaka. Brady conquered some serious nerves to defeat Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva and reach the semi-finals of a Grand Slam for the first time. The American 28th seed needed just 1hr 9 min to blow away her 23rd-seeded opponent 6-3, 6-2. "Coming into the match today, honestly I was feeling like I was going to poop my pants. I was very nervous," said the 25-year-old Brady. "I just tried to really stay calm and keep it cool as a cucumber out there," she added.

Brady is yet to drop a set and has lost only 24 games during her march to the semis, the fewest of anyone left in the draw. Osaka said Brady would be a formidable opponent. "I think she's a really amazing

player she has the variety that I wish I had, so I'm a bit jealous," said the Japanese. Zverev bounced back from a shocking start to oust 27th-seeded Croatian Borna Coric in four sets.

'Hungry'

The 23-year-old German prevailed 1-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 in 3hr 25min. He began playing more aggressively after finding himself a set down, and 4-2 behind in the second set. "I thought to myself I'm down 6-1, 4-2, I have nothing to lose at the moment," Zverev. The German will play Spain's 20th seed Pablo Carreno Busta for a place in Sunday's final. The Spaniard defeated 12th-seeded Canadian Denis Shapovalov 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/4), 0-6, 6-3 in an epic five-setter that ended in the early hours of yesterday. The disqualification of top seed Novak Djokovic on Sunday has blown the men's competition at Flushing Meadows wide open. His departure means

the US Open will crown a first-time Grand Slam winner on Sunday. "I know that all the young guys are hungry for it. It's going to be interesting," said Zverev, who will play either 12th-seeded Canadian Denis Shapovalov or Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta in the last four.

Zverev, who is in his second-consecutive Grand Slam semi-final after reaching the last four at the Australian Open this year, said he was yet to kick into fifth gear. "I feel like I can still improve a few more things and that only gives me confidence," he told reporters. Yesterday, second seed Dominic Thiem faced Australian Alex de Minaur and third seed Daniil Medvedev plays compatriot Andrey Rublev for the other semi-final spot. In the women's draw, Serena Williams faces unseeded Bulgarian Tsvetana Pironkova and former world number one Victoria Azarenka takes on 16th seed Elise Mertens in the remaining quarter-finals. —AFP

COVID cloud over NFL; new season kicks off

LOS ANGELES: The NFL kicks off its new season shrouded in trepidation on Thursday as America's most popular sport grapples with the new realities of life in the age of COVID-19. An array of carefully crafted safety protocols designed to mitigate the threat of coronavirus face their first serious test when the reigning Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs host the Houston Texans. It marks the start of a five-month campaign that is scheduled to culminate with the Super Bowl next February in Tampa, Florida, one of the states worst affected by the pandemic which has claimed around 190,000 American lives.

Unlike sports such as basketball and ice hockey, which returned to play by basing multiple teams in a single location, the NFL season is taking place with teams playing at their home stadiums. For the most part, those stadiums will be empty. Of the 32 teams in the NFL, 26 say games will take place without spectators. Six teams, including the Chiefs, say they will allow a limited number of fans into each game. COVID-19 has already upended parts of the NFL calendar. The NFL Draft due to take place in Las Vegas in April was cancelled and conducted virtually, while the entire slate of pre-season games due to start in August was also scrapped. Players meanwhile have been undergoing daily COVID-19 testing at pre-season training camps which have seen squads operate in reconfigured locker rooms to allow for social distancing between team-mates.

So far the safety measures put in place have yielded encouraging results. No team has suffered a major outbreak of COVID-19. In its most recent set of test results covering the period August 30-September 5, out of 44,510 tests given to 8,349 players and personnel, only eight came back positive. "We have been really fortunate," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said on a conference call with reporters. "The cases of COVID-19 are very low across the league. It is a testament to the plans but most importantly to the diligence to the players, the teams and their staffs." "I think the big thing for us, again, is not to get comfortable. The protocols are working. But we're dealing with a lot of uncertainty here. This is a pandemic that we're still learning about." —AFP

Heat oust depleted Bucks; Lakers down Rockets

MIAMI: The Miami Heat punched their ticket to the NBA Eastern Conference finals Tuesday, beating top-seeded Milwaukee 103-94 as injured Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo watched from the bench. Jimmy Butler and Goran Dragic finished with 17 points apiece as six Heat players scored in double figures and Miami completed a 4-1 series victory in a bruising encounter against the league's top defensive team. Khris Middleton led the Bucks with 23 points. Antetokounmpo - tipped to scoop a second straight NBA Most Valuable Player award this season - aggravated his sprained right ankle in the first half of the Bucks' game-four overtime victory over the Heat.

The Bucks declared him inactive less than an hour before tipoff on Tuesday. The loss of Antetokounmpo, who averaged career highs of 29.5 points and 13.6 rebounds per game this season, was a huge blow for the Bucks, as they tried to do what no NBA team has done before: come back from an 0-3 deficit to win a seven-game playoff series. It's the second straight campaign that the Bucks built the best regular-season record only to come up short in the playoffs. In 2019 they fell to the eventual champion Toronto Raptors in six games in the Eastern Conference finals.

The fifth-seeded Heat will face either the Boston Celtics or Toronto Raptors for a place in the NBA Finals. The Celtics lead their series against the defending NBA champion Raptors three games to two. Butler, who added 10 rebounds and six assists and was a perfect

eight-for-eight from the foul line, said the Heat's impressive 8-1 record so far in the playoffs means nothing now. "All of that is behind us now," he said. "We'll wait and see who we get out of Toronto and Boston and then we'll lock in on that." "But it's zero-zero now, we've got eight more to get."

The Heat trailed 28-19 after a chaotic first quarter in which they committed six turnovers leading to nine Bucks points. They trailed by as many as 13 in the first period, but settled down in the second, out-scoring the Bucks 33-18 to take a 52-46 lead into halftime. But Milwaukee, with Middleton leading the way, refused to go away. After going scoreless for more than six minutes in the third period the Bucks put together an 8-0 run to pull within five points.

Trailing 73-65 going into the final period, the Bucks trimmed the deficit to four multiple times, but the Heat's depth finally proved too much. "Obviously they missed their MVP," Butler said. "But we knew we were going to have to get one out of the mud and I think this was the one." Antetokounmpo said he felt "lost" as he was unable to contribute. "Mentally it was a battle, but at the end of the day you've got to trust your teammates and that's what I decided to do," he said after the Bucks medical staff persuaded him not to risk further injury by playing.

LeBron leads Lakers

In Western Conference action, LeBron James scored 36 points and Anthony Davis added 26 as the Los Angeles Lakers powered to the finish in a 112-102 victory over the Houston Rockets. The Lakers grabbed a 2-1 series lead and James notched an NBA record 162nd career playoff win. "It says that I've played with a lot of great teams," said James, who won two NBA titles with the Miami Heat and one with the Cleveland Cavaliers. "It says that I've played with a lot of great teammates and some great coaches."



FLORIDA: Anthony Davis #3 of the Los Angeles Lakers and Robert Covington #33 of the Houston Rockets react after colliding during the fourth quarter in Game Three of the Western Conference Second Round on Tuesday. —AFP

James Harden scored 33 points with nine rebounds and nine assists and Russell Westbrook added 30 points for Houston in a back and forth battle that saw 16 lead changes. The Lakers' reserves scored 42 points, with Houston's only points off the bench the 16 of Jeff Green. Rajon Rondo, who scored 21 off the bench for Los Angeles, hit back-to-back three-pointers and came up with a steal and layup as the Lakers surged ahead with a 17-5 scoring run to start the fourth quarter.

After putting up 64 points in the first half Houston scored just 38 in the second and the Lakers posted their second straight win of the series. There was a frightening moment in the fourth quarter, as Robert Covington and Davis collided as Davis rose for a rebound. Davis's elbow appeared to hit Covington in head and he left the court holding a bloodied towel to his face, while Davis was hurting from Covington's elbow in his side. —AFP



LOS ANGELES: The NFL logo is seen on a football packaging in Los Angeles. The NFL kicks off its new season shrouded in trepidation as America's most popular sport grapples with the new realities of life in the age of Covid-19. —AFP