



**3** Pandemic cuts daily flights from T4 from 100 to 30



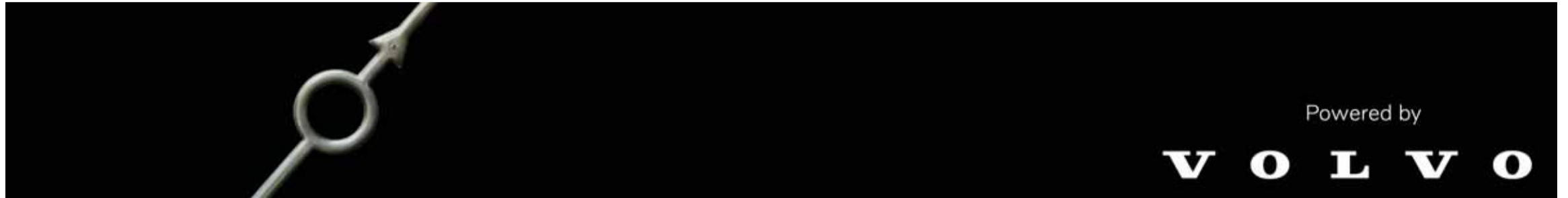
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# Palestinians in search of new allies after Bahrain-Israel deal

'Stab in the back' slammed • Iran, Turkey condemn accord • Trump hails 'historic day'

## Abdullah Boftain named Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times

To build integrated media org with 'Kuwait News' online

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times newspaper, the first English daily in the Arabian Gulf, announced Abdullah Boftain has joined Kuwait Times as deputy editor-in-chief, in addition to being a partner and manager of Kuwait News e-paper - one of the first in Kuwait and GCC states. Kuwait Times and Kuwait News thus form a nucleus for developing a media group, which on launch will attract prominent bilingual creative individuals, journalists and media figures in Kuwait to build an integrated modern media organization.



Abdullah Boftain

College of Administrative Sciences, he got a job in National Bank of Kuwait's PR and media office. He was then appointed manager of corporate communication at Mohamed Hamoud Al-Shaya Company, then as marketing manager at Qualitynet.

Boftain has also presented a number of political TV shows on

Al-Rai TV, such as 'Ummah 2009', 'Ummah 2012' and 'Al-Rai Interview', where he hosted a number of heads of state, prime ministers and local and international political figures. He founded and ran the Local Flavor Company, which specializes in marketing consultancy, PR services, journalism, organizing institutional and recreational activities and producing advertisements and creative content.

Boftain's most recent media activity was in March during the COVID-19 crisis, when he presented a program on KTV titled 'Exceptional Circumstances', which played a vital role in keeping viewers updated with the latest developments and in constant contact with ministers and officials. He is also scheduled to present 'Ummah 2020' on Al-Rai TV and Al-Qabas TV in October during the parliamentary elections.

JERUSALEM: The Palestinian cause has long cemented ties between Middle East nations with divergent interests, but amid shifting regional alliances they are increasingly isolated and in need of new friends, analysts say. In the latest blow, Bahrain broke ranks and agreed on Friday to open diplomatic ties with Israel, in a deal announced in Washington by President Donald Trump.

Calling it a "truly historic day", Trump said Israel and Bahrain were establishing full diplomatic and commercial relations. "They will exchange embassies and ambassadors, begin direct flights between their countries and launch cooperation initiatives across a broad range of sectors, including health, business, technology, education, security and agriculture," he told reporters. Bahrain said in a joint statement that Bahrain's King Hamad, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump talked earlier Friday before announcing the new breakthrough.

Palestinian anger was swift. The deal was "a stab in the back of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people" like the UAE-Israel deal announced last month, a top official from the Palestinian Authority told AFP. At a summit of the 22-member Arab League this week, foreign ministers failed to back a Palestinian push to condemn last month's US-brokered normalization deal between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

"May you never be sold out by your 'friends,'" read one bitter tweet by senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi after the UAE-Israel deal was announced in August. With the accord set to be signed on Tuesday at the White House, the Emirates will become only the third Arab country, after Egypt and Jordan decades ago, to establish full relations with the Jewish state. In a statement Trump tweeted about the Bahrain-Israel deal, he revealed Tuesday's signing ceremony would also be attended by Bahraini officials.

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Benjamin Netanyahu



King Hamad

## Missing girl's body found in water tank

KUWAIT: Police found the body of a missing girl inside the water tank of her family's home in Jahra yesterday. A search for the six-year-old girl had been underway since she went missing from her family's home on Friday. The interior ministry announced late yesterday that police were able to find the victim's body. Investigations have been launched to determine the circumstances behind the incident. The girl's father had earlier made an impassioned appeal to the public to help find his daughter.

Op-Ed

## OPEC's 60th anniversary



By Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo  
OPEC Secretary General

On Sept 14, 1960, the five founding fathers of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Juan Pablo Perez Alfonso of Venezuela; Abdullah Al-Tariki of Saudi Arabia; Dr Tala'at Al-Shaibani of Iraq; Dr Fuad Rouhani of Iran and Ahmed Sayed Omar of Kuwait gathered together in Al-Shaab Hall in Baghdad.

The historic 'Baghdad Conference' saw these five visionaries gathered together around the premise of cooperation and with the need to write their own story. Perez Alfonso said after the meeting and the creation of OPEC: "We are now united. We are making history."

It is a story that encapsulates a family of nations, people and populations, of feelings and emotions of countries rich in culture and heritage, and of the struggle of a group of developing countries to exercise their inalienable right to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources in the interest of their national development.

The history of OPEC is also part of the history of the modern oil industry; a fuel that has been the lifeblood of industrialized nations and helped shape the modern world. Oil is omnipresent in the lives of most people on this planet, accounting for over 30 percent of the global energy mix. The way people live, work and travel all depend on oil.

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## Talks between Taliban, govt open in Qatar

DOHA: Peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government opened in Qatar yesterday, marking what US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo heralded as a "truly momentous" breakthrough in nearly two decades of relentless conflict. The talks will be arduous and complex, delegates acknowledged at an opening ceremony in Doha, and are starting even as deadly violence continues to grip Afghanistan.

"We will undoubtedly encounter many challenges in the talks over the coming days, weeks and months," Pompeo said as he called for the war-

ring sides to "seize this opportunity" to secure peace. "Remember you are acting not only for this generation of Afghans but for future generations as well, your children and your grandchildren."

Nineteen years since the US-led invasion that toppled the Taliban, Afghanistan's war is still killing dozens of people daily. Abdullah Abdullah, who is heading the peace process for Kabul, said 12,000 civilians have been killed and another 15,000 wounded just since the US signed a withdrawal agreement with the Taliban on Feb 29.

Abdullah called for an immediate, humanitarian ceasefire - but his plea went unanswered by Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, who made no mention of a truce in his opening remarks. The Taliban have long worried that reducing violence

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## Trump, Biden vie to show leadership

SHANKSVILLE, United States: US President Donald Trump struck a somber tone Friday on the anniversary of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks as his Democratic rival Joe Biden comforted relatives of victims - in dueling bids to unite a deeply-divided nation. Nineteen years after the devastating Al-Qaeda attacks, former vice president Biden began the day in New York for an annual event honoring the nearly 3,000 who died in the destruction of the World Trade Center.

Trump did not attend the ceremony in his home city, sending Mike Pence

instead. Biden and the vice president tapped elbows and chatted briefly. The Republican president instead traveled to Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where an airliner crashed after passengers tried to wrest control of the jet from the hijackers. The president and First Lady Melania Trump listened in silence as the names of the 40 passengers and crew killed aboard Flight 93 were read aloud - with two bells tolling after each.

In brief prepared remarks, the incumbent - who is hoping to defeat Biden and win a second term - paid "tribute to their sacrifice" along with all those who perished in the attacks. He also honored first responders as well as military personnel who fought to "preserve our freedom" in the subsequent wars launched under former president George W Bush.

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DOHA: (From left) US Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Thani attend the Afghan peace talks yesterday. — AFP



NEW YORK: Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden (left) greets US Vice President Mike Pence as they attend a ceremony at the 9/11 Memorial to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks on Friday. —AFP

## Local

# Kuwait reports 736 new COVID-19 infections, single death, 744 recoveries

## Total cases 94,211 compared to 84,404 total recoveries

KUWAIT: Up to 736 persons tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Kuwait in the past 24 hours, official spokesman of the Ministry of Health announced yesterday. Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad, in a statement to the press, said the total caseload of infections climbed to 94,211. There was a single death due to infection with the pathogen during the same period of time, raising the death toll to 558 since the outbreak of the disease in the country months ago. The health ministry had reported earlier that the number of recovery cases during the past 24 hours stood at 744, with the whole number of the recuperated since the outbreak amounting to 84,404. Among those infected in the latest group,

there were cases that had contracted the virus from infected persons, but contamination cir-



### Death toll up to 558

cumstances of the other cases were not determined. The new infection cases were recorded in the health zones as following: 181 in Hawally,

156 in Al-Ahmadi, 150 in Farwaniya, 143 in the capital and 106 in Al-Jahraa. Moreover, there are currently 94 patients receiving medical aid in intensive care wards, with the whole count of those of confirmed infection and remained under treatment standing at 9,249. The number of swab tests conducted over the past 24 hours reached 4,998 and the whole number of such tests stood at 673,003, Dr Sanad said. He reiterated the call upon citizens and residents to take all necessary precautions against the virus, abstain from mingling with others, observe social distancing and examine medical guidelines posted online by state departments, namely the health ministry. — KUNA



## Over 50 firemen hurt in Sabah health zone blaze

KUWAIT: At least 54 firefighters were injured while tackling a blaze that broke out in a car parking building under construction at Sabah health zone, which started Friday afternoon and was still raging at press time yesterday, a Kuwait Fire Service Directorate official confirmed.

Seven fire teams consisting of 220 commissioned and noncommissioned officers were battling the blaze as off yesterday, KFSD social media official Captain Redha Al-Salman told Al-Rai, noting that some of the injured firefighters needed to be taken to hospital while suffering from various injuries and heat exhaustion.

The reason behind the large fire is the fact that con-



struction material and paints were stored in the multi-storey parking lot building, which consists of three floors and two basements, the official explained. "The material kept burning for 24 hours and is expected to

go out by midnight," Salman said. He appreciated firemen's role containing the fire and keeping flames from spreading further in an area that contains sensitive buildings such as hospitals and health centers.

## Trump, Biden vie to show...

Continued from Page 1

"We resolve to stand united as one American nation, to defend our freedoms, to uphold our values, to love our neighbors, to cherish our country... and to never, ever forget," Trump said. It was a rare call for unity from a leader who normally plays political divisions to his advantage.

Biden also traveled to Shanksville but there was no chance of the rivals crossing paths, as Trump left well before the Democratic candidate and his wife Jill arrived. As a few hundred spectators watched from the Flight 93 national memorial park, Biden laid a wreath of white flowers at the stone bearing the victims' names. He and Jill again spoke with families, later meeting with local firefighters to whom the couple brought sweets and beer.

At his first stop in New York, Biden did not deliver a speech - the ceremony generally reserves that privilege to the close ones of victims - but his mere presence drew attention at an event broadcast live on main US television networks. The ceremony was as usual punctuated by poignant moments of silence, the first one coming at 8:46 am (12:46 GMT), when the first plane hit one of the Twin Towers.

The 77-year-old Biden - wearing a mask - appeared in his element at the relatively crowded event, surrounded by people after months of keeping a low profile in line with coronavirus prevention measures. At one point, he sought common ground

with a 90-year-old woman whose son died at age 43 in the attacks, reflecting on the loss of his own son Beau to cancer. "It never goes away," the pair told each other.

In addition to stopping by the official Ground Zero museum ceremony, Pence attended another nearby foundation-organized commemoration where some 100 relatives gathered to read the names of love ones they lost. The vice president delivered a brief address and his wife read a verse from the Bible. None of the appearances featured prominent political showmanship, though the ceremonies were closely followed by the media and gave the candidates what political scientist Robert Shapiro dubbed a chance to "show their leadership and empathy".

The choice of Trump and Biden to both head to Pennsylvania, a vital election battleground state, illustrates the "obvious calculations" their advisors have made, the Columbia University scholar said. Long a Democratic stronghold and Biden's native state, Pennsylvania swung narrowly to Trump in the 2016 election, helping him secure victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton. Polls show Trump and Biden nearly even in Pennsylvania, and Democrats hope to win the state back in the Nov 3 vote.

But if the somber commemorations mark a "truce" of sorts on the campaign trail, it is likely to be a short-lived one, as was the case in 2016. Clinton took part in the New York memorial but left the event early because she was feeling ill. Her doctor later revealed he had diagnosed her two days earlier with pneumonia, which she had kept secret. Trump jumped on the incident and for weeks mercilessly mocked his rival's health. — AFP

## Talks between Taliban, govt...

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could lessen their leverage. Instead, Baradar repeated the insurgents' message that Afghanistan should be run according to Islamic law, highlighting what likely will be the main sticking point in negotiations.

The Taliban want to reshape Afghanistan as an Islamic "emirate", while the administration of President Ashraf Ghani wants to maintain the Western-backed status quo of a constitutional republic that has enshrined many rights, including greater freedoms for women. Norwegian Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soleide urged all sides to include "women, victims and minorities and other stakeholders" in the process, saying such inclusivity is the key to an enduring accord.

Four of the 21 people on the Kabul negotiating team are women. The Taliban's delegation of the same size has none. Habiba Sarabi, one of the women negotiators, told AFP the talks' opening had been "very positive". "Everybody including Secretary Pompeo shared their solidarity, from the Taliban side also. They were in a better position compared to the last meetings. We're on the way to building the trust," she said.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the US envoy who led talks with the Taliban, said the timetable for foreign troops to quit Afghanistan by May remained on track, and that he wanted a comprehensive ceasefire

## Couple arrested in housemaid's death

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti couple are held for questioning over accusations of torturing their domestic helper to death, a local daily reported. Police apprehended the 46-year-old man, after he had rushed the domestic helper to Amiri Hospital, where she arrived in a critical condition and later succumbed to her injuries inside the ICU. Doctors found burn marks and cuts on the body of the victim, a 31-year-old female domestic helper from Sri Lanka. They informed police who arrested the suspect and later his wife as well after he denied knowledge about the victim's injuries. Investigations are ongoing in the case.

before then. US President Donald Trump, up for reelection in November, has pushed hard to end the United States' longest war. Khalilzad cautioned that Washington would not underwrite a future Afghan state that was not in line with "universal values", including women's rights. "There is no blank cheque," Khalilzad said.

In the Afghan capital, residents were glued to their televisions as the opening ceremony unfolded. The US-backed negotiations come six months later than planned owing to disagreements over a controversial prisoner swap agreed in February. A comprehensive peace deal could take years, and will depend on the willingness of both sides to tailor their competing visions.

"My beard was black when the war began, it is snow white now and we are still in war," said Kabul resident Obaidullah, 50, a retired civil servant. "I don't believe the war will end that soon. I am skeptical about the talks because both sides want their full agenda and their system enforced."

The talks are being held in a luxury hotel in Doha, where chairs were dotted at socially distanced intervals facing a banner emblazoned with the words "Afghan Peace Negotiations" in four languages. Doha also hosted the signing of the US-Taliban deal in February that paved the way for peace talks. The Taliban claimed "victory" after the deal and see their bargaining position as stronger now than at any time in the last two decades.

A who's who of international stakeholders in the Afghanistan conflict spoke at the opening ceremony, including UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif had been scheduled to speak but did not. — AFP

## Palestinians in search of new...

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Emirates' Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Hend Al-Otaiba congratulated Bahrain and Israel, saying it marked "another significant and historic achievement which will contribute enormously to the stability and prosperity of the region". The UAE has defended its move in part as a way of halting Netanyahu's proposed annexation of settlements in parts of the occupied West Bank. The Israel-UAE deal "suspended" those annexation plans - but Netanyahu has insisted they are not off the table in the long run.

Despite this, the Palestinians' traditional Arab allies have either welcomed or silently endorsed the normalization agreement with the US and Israel voicing hope more Arab states would follow suit. "The leadership is very upset," said Sari Nusseibeh, a former top official with the Palestine Liberation

Organization. "But I don't think they are more upset than in the past about the Arab world in general. Palestinians have always complained that the Arab world has not stood behind them as they should have."

Bahrainis opposed to their government's agreement to establish diplomatic relations with Israel vented their frustration on social media yesterday, underlining the complexities of the Gulf's rapprochement with the Jewish state. Former MP Ali Alaswad wrote that it was "a black day in the history of Bahrain". Other anti-normalization groups, based both inside Bahrain and abroad, expressed their anger in statements sent to media, calling the deal "shameful".

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry said the Palestinian ambassador to Bahrain was called back for consultations. In Gaza, Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said Bahrain's decision to normalize relations with Israel "represents a grave harm to the Palestinian cause, and it supports the occupation".

The Palestinian cause had already become less central as the region has been rocked by the Arab Spring

upheavals, the Syria war and the bloody reign of the Islamic State group. At the same time, hostility has deepened between US ally Saudi Arabia and Iran, its Shiite rival which supports proxy forces from Syria to Lebanon.

"There have been all kinds of problems in the Arab world - disputes, revolutions, civil wars, tensions between different Arab countries," said Palestinian analyst Ghassan Khatib. "Palestinians are now paying the price for the deterioration in Arab unity." Ramallah maintains the validity of the so-called "Arab consensus" and rejects the notion that it is isolated.

That consensus has long held that Arab states will only normalize ties if Israel meets a number of conditions. One demand is for Israel to withdraw from the territories it occupied in the Six-Day War of 1967. Another is to agree to a Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital, and a third to find a just solution for the millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants.

"We hope that the Arab countries will remain committed to this consensus," said Jibril Rajoub, a senior Palestinian official, "adding that straying from it "will lead to nothing". "Those who are violating the Arab consensus ... will be isolated" in the long term, he warned. One Western diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, shared the view that at the moment "the Palestinians don't really have a way out, they are stuck". "They are also stuck because of those who want to support their cause, whether it is Turkey or Iran."

Iran said yesterday that Bahrain is now partner to the "crimes" of Israel. Iran accused its arch foe Israel of "decades of violence, slaughter, war, terror and bloodshed in oppressed Palestine and the region". Iran said that through this "shameful" deal, Bahrain has "sacrificed the Palestinian cause at the altar of American elections". Its "result will undoubtedly be growing anger and the lasting hatred of the oppressed people of Palestine, Muslims and the free nations of the world".

Turkey's foreign ministry late Friday said Ankara was "concerned" by the move and "strongly condemned" the deal. "The step will be a fresh blow to efforts to defend the Palestinian cause and will further embolden Israel to continue its illegal practices toward Palestine and its attempts to make the occupation of Palestinian territories permanent," the ministry said in a statement. — Agencies

## OPEC's 60th anniversary....

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Sixty years alone is a monumental achievement for an organization, but especially so for one representing one of the most volatile commodities - oil. Since the early 1970s we have seen seven major market cycles, including the latest in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, each of which has seen severe and sudden imbalances threaten the oil market and global economic development.

Throughout the organization's history there have been one recurring theme that has transcended across the decades and guided the organization's work to support sustainable oil market stability: Cooperation.

This has come in the form of building the organization from the five founders in September 1960 to the 13 members today; evolving dialogues, bilateral and multilateral, with other producers and consumers; establishing the OPEC Fund, now the OPEC Fund for International Development in 1976, to help address, among other things, energy poverty; and in OPEC's involvement in the UN climate change talks since they began in 1991, and in the continued support of the Paris Agreement.

This is not an exhaustive list, but underscores some of what has been accomplished through cooperation over the decades. The most recent demonstration has been through the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC) that helped restore balance, stability and confidence to the oil market in 2017-19, following the downturn of 2014-16, and has played a major role in reviving the oil industry on the back of the unprecedented oil demand impact as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The decisions taken by the 23 DoC countries in April and June 2020 were well-informed and well-

communicated and provided reassurance to the market that the DoC group is proactive and fully observant of the ever-evolving oil market fundamentals.

The spirit of cooperation that guided the founding of OPEC in Baghdad back in Sept 1960 has been clearly present in the decisions taken in 2020. The idea that the five founder members of OPEC were stronger together 60 years ago was channeled into the response of DoC participants as they responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The DoC has been a platform that has built on OPEC's previous cooperative efforts and has also installed a platform for the future through the endorsement in 2019 of the Charter of Cooperation (CoC). The forward looking trajectory that underpins the CoC means that it is an important platform for participating countries, not only in helping maintain a sustainable oil market stability, but also in evolving a future for oil and all energies in the energy transition.

The challenges the oil market faces in sustaining balance and stability requires the participation of all stakeholders. The challenges our planet faces requires comprehensive solutions - no single energy source is a panacea - and the need to look for cleaner and more efficient technological solutions everywhere, across all available energies. When tackling emissions there are many avenues to take and we need to pursue them all. There needs to be an appreciation of the nuances in the debate, balancing the needs of people in relation to their social welfare, the economy and the environment.

In looking ahead, OPEC reaffirms its faith in the need for broader and deeper dialogue and cooperation and the need for respect among all participants in the energy community. We are open to engage with all stakeholders. We can no longer work in silos; we can no longer see our futures

in polarized terms. We need to talk to each other and not at each other. We need to ensure sustainable growth, development and prosperity for ourselves, for our children and for our children's children.

Local

# Pandemic dropped T4 daily flights from up to 100 to 30: Operator

## Incheon proposes new services to cope with pandemic demands

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the number of passengers and flights dropped significantly this year compared to last year during the same period. During the period from August 1 to 31, 2019 at Kuwait airport's Terminal 4, 1,426 flights departed carrying 211,475 passengers, while 1,422 flights arrived carrying 247,478 passengers. During the same period in 2020, only 223 flights departed with 24,202 passengers, and 222 flights arrived with 9,341 passengers.

The T4 terminal of Kuwait International Airport opened on Aug 15, 2018. "This terminal - which is used exclusively by Kuwait Airways - is now operating 10 to 30 flights daily (both departures and arrivals), while it was 92 to 100 flights before the pandemic, with an average of 14,000 passengers daily," Kwang-Soo Lee, CEO of Incheon Korea for Airports Services (IKAS), the operator of T4, told Kuwait Times.

Today, T4 is fully equipped with all necessary services for passengers, and facilities will be further improved. "We aim to develop our services to be more comfortable for passengers. We will be conducting surveys on passenger satisfaction with the services and compare them with other airports, such as those in Dubai, Qatar and others. Until now there has been no evaluation of Kuwait airport, which is done by Airport Council International (ACI). This organization

evaluates the service levels of airports around the world," he said.

### New demands

The pandemic has resulted in new demands by passengers, so Incheon proposed new services to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). "Now with COVID-19, people are afraid of contacts with others, which requires the concept of a smart airport. Passengers now demand self check-in rather than



### Company trains young Kuwaiti employees

coming in contact with staff. There are some machines for self check-in, but they even want baggage self-service, which is not available yet. Self check-in can be done at home or at the airport at the self check-in kiosks," explained Lee.

According to Lee, there is a need to improve facilities and the system. "Due to the pandemic, the budget for developing services was postponed. We have received many complaints from passengers that the transit area is very narrow and small, and is always crowded. So I suggested to the civil aviation to extend

it to be well-organized," he noted.

"This terminal was built with a capacity of 4.5 million passengers per year. Last year we already exceeded this capacity, as we had 4.9 million passengers using it. Also, the baggage area is always crowded. But all work is stopped now due to the pandemic."

More improvements are in the works. "We need to improve advertising at T4. We want to install big multimedia screens to make passengers enjoy viewing them. Most passengers want quick services at the airport and don't want to wait in long queues, so we want to make procedures faster. We have 50 counters, but they are not all working at the same time. We need a service level agreement with Kuwait Airways, as we need to have at least 30 to 35 counters operating if there are four flights arriving at the same time. If they don't provide us this number, we can penalize KAC. But during the pandemic, there are no queues, as there are only a few flights," Lee said.

"Also, the baggage claim is problematic and passengers have to wait for long periods. The capacity is not enough, as each plane uses one carousel, which has a 400-bag capacity. When a plane arrives with over 300 passengers and 700 pieces of luggage, it can't handle everything at the same time, which causes a delay. Also, sometimes there is a delay from the customs. We operators don't have any power as a foreign company. Also, we need an upgrade of the automation system connecting all termi-



**KUWAIT:** Kwang-Soo Lee, CEO of Incheon Korea for Airports Services, stands in Terminal 4 of Kuwait International Airport. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

nals. Improving services needs investment, and the budget is important for any development," Lee pointed out.

### Training Kuwaitis

Incheon is training young Kuwaiti employees as part of its contract. "We do everything including maintenance, operations, training, service improvement, security and others. Jobs are limited to Kuwaitis, and training is very important. Some passengers complain why foreigners are screening them, as there are only a few Kuwaitis working as screeners. I hope in the future more Kuwaitis will work at the airport," he said.

"We are very competitive operators, as we won the bid with 70 percent of the highest bid. We operate very effi-

ciently and we are doing our best to improve services for passengers. Incheon has ISO 10040 and ISO 10002 service standard certificates for customer satisfaction," he added.

Safety and security is Incheon's no. 1 priority. "Due to security measures to avoid the spread of COVID-19, the number of greeters was limited to maintain social distancing and avoid crowding. The government has allowed only one greeter for each family, with a maximum of 60 greeters inside the airport, with priority to those who come first. People are complaining of the limited space and of waiting outside in the hot weather. Safety is important, but we also have to consider passenger convenience," concluded Lee.

## Kuwait commercial flights travel guidelines

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

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

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

Meanwhile, arriving passengers must register to the 'Shlonik' app before boarding, and obtain an accredited PCR certificate showing negative COVID-19 test results valid for 96 hours from the test's date (excluding children under the age of six). Passengers will have their temperatures checked before boarding the plane and upon arrival, while a random PCR test will be conducted for 10 percent of passengers on each flight. All arriving passengers must home quarantine for 14 days upon arrival.

## Surgeons Association welcomes int'l patients' safety plan

**KUWAIT:** Head of Kuwait Surgeons Association Dr Salman Al-Sabah welcomed the working plan that the World Health Organization (WHO) launched recently to guarantee patients' safety, and called for its implementation in Kuwait within the next 10 years. The plan calls for spreading the culture and principles of patients' safety and safe health care within all procedures, protocols and policies and in various medical fields. "Saudi Arabia already adopts WHO's interna-

tional working plan as a reference document and a solid foundation on which all policies related to patients' safety rely on," Dr Salman said, adding that the kingdom uses it within its plan to develop its health performance systems, achieve comprehensive health coverage, and meet international goals for sustainable development related to health as approved by the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit that was held in September 2015. "Kuwait Surgeons Association is



**Dr Salman Al-Sabah**

proud to be a major partner with the Health Ministry in preparing and following up programs and policies that focus on patients' safety within the rights of patients," Dr Salman said. WHO's program covers an important part of accidents that patients may be exposed to during treatment.

### News in brief

#### Diwan: Amir's health stable

**KUWAIT:** The Amiri Diwan has dismissed as untrue circulated reports about His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, stressing that his health condition is stable. Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah stated that the Amiri Diwan is in touch with Deputy National Guard chief Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who accompanies His Highness the Amir in his treatment trip, and he affirmed that His Highness the Amir's health condition is stable and he is receiving his prescribed treatment.

#### Kuwait, US talk regional developments

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah received a phone call from a senior General of US National Security Agency (NSA). In a statement, the foreign ministry said the call highlighted bilateral relations and recent development in the region and international arena.

#### Army denies rumors

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Army Chief of Staff denied rumors circulated through various media outlets, stressing that various sectors of the army are operating according to the readiness status set for them to maintain the country's security and territorial integrity. In a press release of the Army's Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations said, they called upon all to be accurate and to obtain information and news from its official sources, represented by the directorate.

#### Kuwait oil price down

**KUWAIT:** The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by 47 cents to \$39.95 per barrel (pb) on Friday in contrast with \$40.42 pb last Thursday, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. The price of the Brent crude went down by 23 cents to \$39.83 per barrel, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which went down by 3 cents to \$37.33 pb. — KUNA

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THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961

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## Kuwait welcomes outcome of Libyan talks

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait on Friday welcomed the positive and constructive outcome of the intra-Libyan talks held recently in Morocco after reaching an agreement on a roadmap for unifying the country's sovereign state institutions. In an official statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, a ministry official praised the efforts made by the sisterly Kingdom of Morocco by hosting and sponsoring the dialogue sessions. The official urged all Libyan parties to abide by the agreement to help reach a comprehensive political settlement that guarantees restoration of the country's security, stability and territorial integrity of Libya as well as meet the aspirations of its people. — KUNA

## EPA denies hydrogen sulfide leak

**KUWAIT:** The Environment Public Authority (EPA) on Thursday denied reports about hydrogen sulfide leak in several areas in the country. In a press statement, the EPA emphasized that what has been circulated by some social media networks in this regard is untrue. No rise in hydrogen sulfide gas was detected in Al-Salam, Al-Qurain and Al-Rumaihiya, the three stations close to Sabah Al-Salem area, it confirmed. The highest reading recorded in Al-Salam station was 13 parts per billion (ppb), it added, noting that the reference number is 100 parts per billion (ppb). The authority appealed to all people to be accurate when publishing information so as to avoid legal accountability. — KUNA

# Baqala shoppers don't mind paying more for convenience

## Stores free to set their own prices as they consider suitable

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Baqalas (grocery stores) are the place to buy most necessary things when you don't want to bother dressing up to go shopping. Most - if not all - baqalas offer delivery service to your doorstep, and are open till late in the night. Also, many of them offer credit facilities (to pay at the end of the month).

A few years ago, baqalas were shut down in all residential areas except in zones providing services (near the co-op branch). In commercial areas with much larger populations, baqalas are very popular, and even people from outside the area may buy from them as they pass by in their vehicles.

Some people depend on baqalas more than supermarkets. "During the partial curfew, I bought most of my food needs from the baqala. I noticed that since the curfew and lockdown were imposed, my baqala had a much broader selection of fresh vegetables as well as dairy products. The one near my house is big and has almost everything," said Sawsan, an expat who lives in Salmiya.

## Burgan Bank supports 'Saveq8c' beach cleaning campaign

**KUWAIT:** As part of its social responsibility and integrated environmental practices, Burgan Bank adopts the national campaign in cooperation with 'Saveq8c' team to protect and clean Kuwait's beaches. The campaign's aim is to enhance environmental awareness among community members and shed light on the negative impact on Kuwait's environment and marine life due to the dumping of waste on local beaches.

The active team of 'Saveq8c' has made waves in a short span of time by engaging the community through activities and strong messages and social media campaign focusing on the importance of the preservation of Kuwait's pristine beaches and marine life. This grassroots activity motivated people from all parts of the community, ranging from the youth, adults and children who participated in the waste collection from various beaches and shared it with the team.

The country has recently witnessed an increasing occurrence of throwing gloves and masks on the streets and beaches which leads to health and envi-

"I know some of the products are a bit more expensive at the baqala, but that didn't bother me because it was easier than getting a permit and going to the supermarket. Since we are only two people in the house, the price difference didn't



### Customers can file complaints with ministry

ffect us too much," she added. "The one product that I did notice was much more expensive was coconut water - at my baqala it's 500 fils, while at the supermarkets it's only 320 fils. But other than that one specific product, I didn't notice a huge difference," explained Sawsan.

It's known that baqalas are more expensive than

co-ops or other big supermarkets, as they run small businesses with lower revenues. For big families, buying from baqalas is noticeably dearer, so they resort to them only when it's necessary.

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, there are no fixed prices for goods and foodstuff, so each store can set the price they consider suitable. "Kuwait is an open market, and stores can set the prices they want. But they have to obtain permission from the ministry to increase the prices once set. For instance, bottled water is sold for KD 1 at cinemas, so it's normal to see the same item with a different price at the baqala," Abdullah from the ministry's customer protection department told Kuwait Times.

Customers can always file a complaint. "If the customer notices any price hike in items sold at the baqala, they can always complain at the department with the receipt. Baqalas usually don't give receipts, but if the customer asks for it, the vendor has to give him one even if it is handwritten. If the salesman refuses to provide a receipt, then the customer can also complain of being denied a receipt," Abdullah added.

ronmental risks and may also aid in the rapid spread of the emerging coronavirus. Through the campaign, Burgan Bank strives to rectify unhealthy practices and inspire an environmentally conscious community that will properly utilize the waste containers designated to maintain a healthy and clean environment.

Manager - Public Relations at Burgan Bank, Ms Hessa Hussain Al-Najadah said: "Our slogan "Driven by you. Motivated by Sustainability" is a core part of our culture, and reflects Burgan's responsibility towards community. This promising collaboration falls under one of our sustainability pillars which focusses on the welfare of the environment. We, at Burgan Bank are proud to adopt the national campaign that was established by Kuwaiti youths concerned about environmental protection and cleaner shores. Our role in the society extends from being a leading financial institution, as we believe we are entrusted with a duty towards the betterment of our country. We hope to achieve this by conducting initiatives and targeted environmental and pollution campaigns that highlight health risks caused by the spread of waste, both on human and marine life."

The 'Saveq8c' team commented: "We are delighted to collaborate with Burgan Bank through whose close cooperation and support, will help educate our community on the significance of social responsibility towards preservation and cleanliness of local beaches and marine life. Dating back to the time of our ances-

tors, Kuwait's historical relationship with the sea and its blessings are countless. Hence, our simplest mission would be to pay closer attention to the protection of our national treasure and join hands to raise everyone's consciousness on safeguarding public spaces that we all mutually share and respect. The efforts of the country represented by the Environment Public Authority, environmental activists, both individuals and volunteer groups, including supporters of recycling waste are increasing in Kuwait. We can achieve much more if everyone in our society were to be equally involved and committed to ensuring marine conservation and cleanliness within our local beaches."

Burgan Bank and the 'Saveq8c' team will together conduct several engagements and share important messages on environmental protection and maintaining waste-free beaches in Kuwait as part of a comprehensive one-year program. The bank's support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.

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## Kuwait sends relief plane to Sudan

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) yesterday sent a relief plane to Sudan carrying 40 tons of humanitarian aid meant for the victims affected by flash floods. KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said the plane included foodstuff, tents and water pumps, adding that a number of other



planes will also head to Sudan to help the fellow Arab country face the aftermath of the recent floods. KRCS will coordinate with the Sudanese Red Crescent to distribute the aid urgently and to see the needs of affected people to provide them in the coming days, Dr Sayer said. He expressed thanks and gratitude to Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs in helping to deliver the aid to affected people. Dr Sayer said KRCS has opened its door for donating through its website, calling people and the private sector to assist the people of Sudan. — KUNA

## Kuwait renews solidarity with Lebanon blast

**KUWAIT:** The State of Kuwait renewed its solidarity and support to Lebanon and its people during their darkest times especially within the efforts recovering from the deadly explosion in Beirut Port, amidst Coronavirus, social and economic challenges. Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi delivered this statement during a virtual meeting chaired by Kuwait and UN Development Program on the response to Lebanon following Beirut's explosion. The discussion focused on the fallout of the explosion, giving a better view of what UN Development Program is doing to provide short-term relief for sustainable recovery, Otaibi said.

Following August 4 tragic explosions, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince of Kuwait, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, issued immediate nationwide instructions to provide humanitarian aid and assistance to our brothers and sisters in Lebanon he added. During the past month, Kuwait made major pledges with \$30 million to support the reconstruction efforts in Lebanon, which were announced at the International Aid Conference to Support Lebanon, organized by France and the UN, through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development for food security, Otaibi added. Kuwait



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi attends the virtual meeting. — KUNA

also provided \$11 million of emergency medical and food aid in addition to other donations from Kuwaiti charities, he said.

Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), since the instructions issued by His Highness the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince, has been sending continuous aid, medical supplies and food aid to the Lebanese Red Cross via an air bridge in cooperation with government agencies, including the Kuwaiti foreign ministries, health and trade. It also offered nearly 1,000 tons of humanitarian to support aid efforts in Lebanon, he confirmed. Otaibi urged the international community to continue supporting the Lebanese people during these difficult times. He also praised UN Development Program work, which had provided immediate relief since the day of the explosion aim of supporting recovery and development in Lebanon. — KUNA



Huge explosions rock Jordan military facility

## Death toll mounts as US firefighters battle wildfires

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WASHINGTON: This combination of pictures shows a Bahraini man waving a national flag (left) in the capital Manama and an Israeli man holding his country's national flag, US President and Israel premier announced on September 11, 2020, a normalization deal between Bahrain and Israel. — AFP

# Bahrain-Israel: From discreet to public

## The second Gulf state to announce a normalization deal

MANAMA: Bahrain's contacts with Israel, thought to have started discreetly in the 1990s, accelerated in recent years towards the historic agreement to establish diplomatic relations announced on Friday. Bahrain is the second Gulf state to announce a normalization deal in the space of a month, following in the footsteps of its neighbor the United Arab Emirates, which agreed an accord seen as a "betrayal" by Palestinians longing for an independent state. Like most other Gulf countries, Bahrain shares with Israel a common enemy in Iran, which Manama accuses of instigating protests by the nation's Shiite Muslim community against the ruling Sunni Al-Khalifa dynasty. But it is not likely to have acted without a nod from Saudi Arabia, its close ally just across a narrow causeway from the island state.

### First meetings

Following years of low-key contact, Bahrain's crown prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa kicked off official diplomacy with talks with Israeli officials during World Economic Forum summits in 2000 and 2003. The two nations' foreign ministers

met at the United Nations in 2007 and two years later, Israel's then-president Shimon Peres and Bahrain's king reportedly met in New York on the sidelines of a UN conference.

An official Bahraini delegation travelled to Israel the same year on an unprecedented trip to recover a group of nationals held by the Jewish state. The Bahrainis in custody were among pro-Palestinian activists on a ship seized by the Israeli navy as it headed for the Gaza Strip in defiance of Israel's blockade. Bahrain's parliament, ignoring government objections, passed a bill in October 2009 to outlaw any contact with Israel on pain of prison. The bill needed clearance by the consultative council, a body appointed by the king, which rejected it.

### 'Defending' Israel

The 2011 Arab Spring movement slowed down normalization efforts while the monarchy faced a wave of protests led by Shiite Muslims demanding reforms. But in September 2016, Bahrain's foreign minister Sheikh Khalid Al-Khalifa paid tribute to

Shimon Peres when the former leader passed away, in a surprise statement that drew strong Arab criticism on social media.

In 2017, the rapprochement went public when an Israeli delegation was allowed to take part in the FIFA Congress taking place in Manama. Sports diplomacy featured again when an Israeli driver was permitted to participate in a major car race. Also that year, an interfaith group from Bahrain said it had sent a delegation to Israel to promote "tolerance and coexistence" at a time of Arab anger over the fate of Jerusalem. And in May 2018, the foreign minister backed Israel's right to "defend itself" after the Israeli military said it struck dozens of Iranian military targets in Syria, marking a rare, if not unprecedented public stance by an Arab government.

### Accelerating efforts

In 2019, the countries drew noticeably closer to each other. In June, a US-organized economic workshop in Bahrain failed to deliver tangible results over the long-awaited Middle East peace plan, but it opened the door for closer Israel-Gulf ties. In an

unprecedented interview of a senior Gulf official by an Israeli journalist, Bahrain's foreign minister said on the sidelines of the two-day workshop that Israel is part of the region's heritage.

A month later, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz announced that he had met his Bahraini counterpart during a visit to Washington. In October, representatives from more than 60 countries, including Israel, met in Bahrain to discuss maritime security following attacks on tankers in the Gulf and Saudi oil installations. Iran, which was accused of the strikes, was not present.

Bahrain welcomed the surprise UAE deal with Israel on August 13, calling it a "historic" step. However, King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa said he told visiting US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that his country remained committed to the Saudi-sponsored Arab Peace Initiative, which calls for Israel's complete withdrawal from the Palestinian territories occupied after 1967. Nevertheless, Manama later agreed to allow UAE flights to and from Israel to overfly the kingdom, a day after a similar decision was announced by Saudi Arabia. — AFP

## Palestinian leadership rejects US, Bahrain, Israel declaration

KUWAIT: The Palestinian leadership declares its strong rejection and condemnation of the US, Israeli, and Bahraini tripartite declaration on the normalization of relations between the Israeli occupation state and the Kingdom of Bahrain. It considers it a betrayal of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa, and the Palestinian cause and a step in support of legalizing the ugly crimes of the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people. Israel continues to control and annex the Palestinian lands by military force and actively works to Judaize Jerusalem, control the Islamic and Christian holy sites, and commit crimes against the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian leadership considers this step extremely dangerous, as it torpedoed the Arab peace initiative, the decisions of the Arab and Islamic summits, and international legitimacy. The Palestinian leadership rejects this step taken by the Kingdom of Bahrain and calls on it to immediately retreat from it due to the great harm it causes to the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people and joint Arab action. The Palestinian leadership also renews its call to the brotherly Arab nations to adhere to the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 and calls on the international community to adhere to international law and international legitimacy decisions.

The Palestinian leadership affirms once again that it has not and will not delegate anyone to speak in its name. It also confirms that peace and stability in the region will only be achieved by ending Israel's occupation of all Palestinian and Arab lands - and with the Palestinian people gaining their independence in their sovereign state, on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and resolving the refugee issue based on UNGA 194. It's delusional to believe that these concessions at the expense of the Palestinian people's rights will serve peace, security, and stability in the region.

## Israel ties: After UAE and Bahrain, which Arab state is next?

DUBAI: Bahrain has become the second Arab country in a month, after the UAE, to normalize ties with Israel under US mediation after decades of animosity. The rapprochement has been welcomed by some Arab countries, but others have rejected the US initiative and many view it with caution. During a Middle East tour in late August which took in Israel, Sudan, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo expressed optimism that more Arab nations would sign up.

Analysts had seen Manama and Khartoum as most likely to follow in the footsteps of the UAE, which on August 13 became only the third Arab nation to have diplomatic ties with the Jewish state. Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia, while not condemning the deal, has refused to normalize ties until Israel signs an internationally recognized peace accord with the Palestinians. But it has allowed virtual client state Bahrain, on the 9/11 anniversary, to follow in the footsteps of Riyadh's ally Abu Dhabi.

### Oman

Oman also welcomed neighbor UAE's deal with Israel but said it stayed committed to "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people who aspire to an independent state" with east Jerusalem as its capital. The country is also a close US ally but at the same time has good relations with Iran. It maintains a policy of neutrality and has over the years played a mediating role in regional conflicts. There have been several contacts between

Oman and Israel, including in 2018 when the late Sultan Qaboos received Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Muscat. Sultan Haitham, who was sworn in in January after the death of Qaboos, is "already treading lightly due to possible economic-related grievances and would not risk such a controversial move at this time", according to Cinzia Bianco, a research fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

### Qatar

Qatar has not responded to the surprise UAE announcement amid a protracted diplomatic standoff with Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Manama and Manama - which accuse it of supporting Islamist movements and conniving with Iran, charges it denies. Doha, which is also close to the US, has an on-again, off-again relationship with Israel, after hosting an Israeli economic interests office from 1996 until 2000. It is heavily engaged in the Gaza Strip, managing and funding welfare payments to the Palestinian people of the impoverished coastal territory with Israel's blessing. "While Qatar cooperates with Israel in support of the Palestinian cause... it will not normalize relations as long as the peace process is stalled," Krieg said.

### Kuwait

Kuwait has likewise opted to stay silent. The wealthy emirate is the only country in the Gulf with a genuine political and parliamentary life, and at times permits lively pub-

lic debate. Some political groups and civil society organizations have condemned the UAE's decision, while others have defended it. But formalization of ties with Israel is unlikely, as the National Assembly has capitalized "on hostility towards Israel to claim its place as the voice of the people", Bianco said.

### Sudan

Several factors could encourage Sudan to move towards normalization, but it told Pompeo during his visit that Khartoum could not establish diplomatic relations for now, dashing hopes for a speedy breakthrough. Sudan, grappling with an acute economic crisis, seeks to be removed from a US blacklist as an alleged state sponsor of terrorism. And General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, who heads Sudan's transitional sovereign council, met with Netanyahu in Uganda in February. After the UAE's announcement, offi-

cially issued contradictory comments. Foreign ministry spokesman Haider Badawi voiced backing for such an accord, but Foreign Minister Omar Gamaledin said it "has never been discussed by the Sudanese government" and promptly fired him. Late last month, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok told Pompeo that Sudan's transitional government - which replaced ousted strongman Omar Al-Bashir last year and is set to rule until 2022 polls - has "no mandate" to take such a weighty step. But Bahrain, during Pompeo's charm offensive across the region, had initially also distanced itself from a swift normalization with the Jewish state.

Sudan, unlike Gulf states, has for decades been technically at war with US ally Israel. Under Bashir, the central African country for years supported hardline Islamist forces. — AFP

**SEVERANCE OF TIES**




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## International

# Desperate, stranded migrants seek shelter as Europe weighs options

## Islanders oppose plans to rehouse migrants on Lesbos

**LESBOS:** Despairing migrants left without shelter on the island of Lesbos after a fire destroyed Greece's biggest refugee camp faced off against police on Friday as authorities began setting up hundreds of tents to try to contain the crisis. With more than 12,000 former occupants of the overcrowded Moria reception centre now camping out in fields and along roadsides without food or water and threatened by a possible spread of coronavirus infections, the need for a solution has become increasingly urgent. But the Greek government has been forced to tread warily due to growing anger among residents of an island whose location a few miles off the Turkish coast has kept them on the frontline of Europe's migrant crisis for years.

"Moria is a monstrosity," Dimitris Koursoubas, a senior official responsible for migration in the northern Aegean islands, said, saying the fire which destroyed the camp on Wednesday presented a "tragic opportunity" to find a solution. "We want all the migrants out, for national reasons. Moria is over," he said. The migrants, most from Africa, Syria or Afghanistan, have been desperate to get off the island and a group of several hundred gathered a few miles outside the main port of Mytilene, near a supermarket where helicopters landed tents and supplies.

Shouting "Freedom!" and "No police!" and waving handmade signs reading "No new camp", or "Please Help Us!" they faced off against police who blocked them going down the road into town. Greek officials say they believe the fire in the Moria centre was lit deliberately by migrants reacting to quarantine measures after COVID-19 was detected in the camp last week. The emergency has once again

highlighted Europe's patchy response to a multi-year crisis that has seen more than a million migrants reach its shores, often on board flimsy ves-



**Thousands forced to sleep in fields**

sels and fleeing wars and poverty in the Middle East and beyond.

### 'Sleeping among graves'

"The clock has run out on how long Europe can be without a migration policy. Now is the time to change this," Margaritis Schinas, the European commissioner responsible for migration and asylum policy, said at a news conference in Berlin. Mediterranean countries such as Greece and Italy, where most migrant boats arrive, have long demanded that other EU states take in more asylum seekers, but Hungary and Poland, among others, have refused to share the burden. German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, speaking alongside Schinas, said France and Germany had agreed to take in most of around 400 minors who have been moved from Lesbos to the Greek mainland.

But there has been no wider agreement on reset-



**LESBOS:** A migrant woman and children react after police threw tear gas during clashes near the city Mytilene on the Greek island of Lesbos yesterday - few days after a fire destroyed the Moria refugee camp. — AFP

tlement and Greek authorities have refused any mass transfers off Lesbos. "Life meets death here," said Eftychia Sougioultzi, a 64-year-old local woman, visiting a cemetery where her daughter is buried. "Yesterday I saw children sobbing, sleeping among the graves." For the migrants seeking shade from the blazing late summer heat, many of whom lost whatever possessions they had in the blaze, the outlook is bleak.

"I want somebody to help us because this is too much, you know, I wake up in the morning, I think things will change but nothing changes," said Pamela, a Congolese woman who escaped the fire with just her children and has since slept in the open. "All my things are gone, I don't have anything, no clothes, like nothing." The World Health Organization said it was sending two emergency medical teams. — Reuters

### News in brief

#### 6 women killed in Mali

**BAMAKO:** Six women, one of whom was pregnant, were killed in a landmine blast in southern Mali on Friday, officials said, in the latest violence to hit the war-torn Sahel state. The women were travelling in an ambulance in the southern Sikasso region, which rode over a mine, regional public prosecutor Dramane Diarra said. The ambulance driver was the sole survivor of the explosion, but was "seriously wounded". A local elected official, who declined to be named, told AFP that the driver had been taken to hospital. Photos of the destroyed ambulance—which AFP was unable to independently verify—circulated on social media on Friday. Violence in the southern region where the blast occurred, near the border with Burkina Faso, has steadily increased in recent years. — AFP

#### Amnesty slams Nigeria

**LAGOS:** Amnesty International on Friday urged Nigeria to release the findings of a report on rights abuses by security forces three years after the government ordered the probe. The campaigning group has accused security forces of hundreds of extra-judicial killings, rape, torture, and enforced disappearances, claims the military has always denied. A presidential panel was set up in 2017 and investigators submitted a report a year later but it was never released to the public, a decision that Amnesty described as "a gross display of contempt for victims". "Victims and the larger public in Nigeria deserve to see and scrutinize the findings," said Osai Ojigbo, Nigeria director of Amnesty in a statement. "We are calling on President Muhammadu Buhari to fulfill the promise he made in 2015 to end impunity by immediately releasing the report," he added. — AFP

#### UAE daily virus cases surge

**DUBAI:** The United Arab Emirates health ministry reported on Friday 931 new daily cases of the coronavirus following a recent surge in infections that are near the highest since the pandemic broke out. Until last month, there had been a generally falling trend since the UAE's new daily cases peaked at 994 in May, but numbers have surged from 164 cases on Aug 3. The Gulf Arab state has recorded 77,842 infections and 398 deaths from COVID-19. The government does not disclose where in the country of seven emirates the infections or deaths occurred. About 10 million people, mostly foreigners, live in the UAE. A health ministry official on Thursday asked the public to adhere to social distancing and avoid gatherings and mixing with people known to have the virus, which she said accounted for about 88% of cases. — Reuters

#### Gunmen kill 6 in Burundi

**NAIROBI:** Unidentified gunmen killed six civilians and wounded three others in a restive part of northern Burundi, a government official said Friday, the latest in a string of deadly attacks. The assailants launched a series of coordinated assaults late Thursday on several locations in the village of Matongo, before retreating to the dense cover of a nearby jungle that has long served as a rebel hideout. One victim was still missing, said Alice Nsabiyanva, the administrator of Matongo, about 70 kilometers northeast of the main city of Bujumbura. Four men and two children were killed, said one witness to the attacks who declined to be identified. — AFP

## Death toll mounts as US firefighters battle wildfires

**FRESNO:** US officials warned Friday of potential "mass" fatalities as more than 20,000 firefighters from across the country battled sprawling deadly wildfires up and down the West Coast. A prediction of cooler weather offered some hope of respite in coming days, but the true scale of the destruction from dozens of massive blazes in California, Oregon and Washington states remained hard to gauge.

There were 16 deaths confirmed this week, with wide stretches of land still cut off by flames. "We're preparing for a mass fatality incident based on what we know and the number of structures that have been lost," warned Andrew Phelps, director of the office of emergency management in Oregon on Friday. Oregon defines "mass fatality incident" as one that causes death and suffering which cannot be met by usual individual or community resources, according to the Washington Post.

"We anticipate that number (of deaths) may potentially go up as we get back into areas that have been ravaged by flame and obviously, smoke begins to clear," warned California governor Gavin Newsom, as he visited a scorched forest near the



**AUBERRY:** A row of burnt vehicles are pictured during the Creek fire in Auberry, Fresno County on September 11, 2020. — AFP

raging North Complex Fire. Ten people have been confirmed dead from that blaze in Butte County, which was driven at unprecedented pace toward the city of Oroville earlier in the week by strong, dry winds and soaring temperatures.

But Newsom said the weather "is beginning to cooperate," with winds settling down and some rain forecast. In neighboring Oregon, where one million acres have burned and three people are reported dead with dozens still unaccounted for, governor Kate Brown also expressed hope a corner had been turned. More than 40,000 Oregonians have fled their homes so far, with around half a million under evacuation warnings, Brown told a press conference - clarifying previous higher figures given by state



**BOGOTA:** Protesters gather during a third day of protests over the death of a man in police custody, in Bogota yesterday. — AFP

## Colombia's apology for police brutality fails to stop protests

**BOGOTA:** An apology from Colombia's defense minister for police brutality failed to stop a third night of protests Friday, after the death of a man in custody sparked deadly rioting in the capital and other cities. "I'm tired of police abuse. It's time to show that people are furious," a demonstrator, 20-year-old musician Camilo Medina told AFP.

At least 13 people were killed and more than 400 wounded during widespread disturbances on Wednesday and Thursday nights after a video released on social media showed Javier Ordonez being repeatedly tasered by police during a street arrest. He later died in custody. Flanked by police commanders at a news conference, Defense Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo on Friday expressed his "pain and indignation" over the death of Ordonez, an engineer and father of two in his 40s who was studying to become a lawyer.

"The national police apologize for any violation

of the law or ignorance of the regulations incurred by any of the members of the institution," said Trujillo, the minister with responsibility for the police. But this was not enough to calm smaller crowds of demonstrators, who clashed sporadically with police as they protested once more in the capital Friday as well as in Medellin and other cities. "What's an apology worth when you get shot in the back," raged a 26-year-old teacher, who did not want to reveal his identity for fear of reprisals, in Bogota. Some 2,000 police and military were called in to reinforce security in the capital.

### 'Please, no more'

A lawyer for the victim's family claimed Ordonez had died after being brutally beaten at a police station, following the repeated taser shocks. Ordonez is heard repeatedly crying "please, no more" in the widely circulated footage of his arrest, taken by a friend. "I have photos of how they left the victim. Javier was massacred—the crime of aggravated homicide and the crime of torture was committed," lawyer Vadith Gomez told Bogota's Radio Blu. Ordonez's family said he had gone out to buy alcohol when he was arrested. Police authorities have opened an internal investigation against two uniformed officers "for the alleged crime of abuse of authority and homicide," the defense minister said. — AFP

officials. "The weather system fueling these fires over the past few days has finally broken down," she said. "We anticipate cooler air and moisture coming in the next few days, which is really good news." Dozens of people remained missing in connection with the fires, Brown said. Even as the weather forecast offered hope, Newsom painted a grim picture of California as the canary in the climate-change coal mine.

"I'm a little bit exhausted that we have to continue to debate this issue," he said in televised comments as he toured the damage. "This is a climate damn emergency. This is real, and it's happening. 'This is the perfect storm.' He added: "California, folks, is America fast-forward. What we're experiencing right here is coming to communities all across the United States of America unless we get our act together on climate change, unless we disabuse ourselves of all the BS that's been spewed by a very small group of people."

The August Complex Fire this week became by far the biggest recorded blaze in Californian history, ripping through 746,000 acres of dry vegetation in the state's north, as multiple fires combined. But it is just one of around 100 large fires on the West Coast, and other rapidly growing blazes closer to populated areas have proven deadlier. "We are at a complete loss for words right now," Bobbie Zedaker told the San Francisco Chronicle, after DNA tests proved her missing 16-year-old nephew was among those killed by the North Complex Fire. — AFP

## France's COVID-19 crisis 'worsening'

**PARIS:** French Prime Minister Jean Castex warned Friday the country was seeing a "clear worsening" of the coronavirus pandemic, but aimed to avoid a new nationwide lockdown that would hammer the economy. In an eagerly-awaited statement after a meeting of ministers and health experts, Castex did not announce any new restrictions but promised more efficient testing and said it was up to local authorities to decide additional measures. Nearly 10,000 new cases have been recorded daily in the last two days, a record since wide-scale testing began, but Castex said a recent increase in Covid-19 hospitalizations was particularly worrying.

"We have to succeed in living with this virus, without returning to the idea of a generalized lockdown," he said in a televised statement from his official residence in Paris. "Our strategy is not changing. We must fight the virus without putting on hold our social, cultural and economic life, the education of our children and our ability to live normally," he added. Castex said 42 of France's 101 departments are now classified as "red zones" where the virus is circulating rapidly, up from 28 earlier this week.

### 'Reaches most vulnerable'

He said the authorities in Marseille, Bordeaux and the overseas territory of Guadeloupe should by Monday present plans to deal with significant local outbreaks. "There is no Maginot Line—inevitably it ends up reaching the most vulnerable," he said in reference to supposedly impenetrable defenses France built ahead of World War II. But he did not announce any major new restrictions, urging people instead to respect social distancing guidelines and to wear face masks. And the quarantine period for people who catch the virus will be shortened to just seven days from 14, to better match "the period when there is a real risk of contagion," he said. Castex also said that testing capacities would be ramped up in response to long wait times for appointments and results. Priority cases involving people with confirmed exposure to Covid-19 patients or already showing symptoms will be given reserved spots at testing centres, and 2,000 more people will be hired to carry out contact tracing. — AFP

## International

# In Israel, new COVID wave hits Arabs with full force

## Arab-Israelis account for 30% of Israel coronavirus caseload

HAIFA: Israel this week imposed new restrictions on parts of the country to confront a resurgence of Covid-19 infections, with the Arab-Israeli community especially hard hit in a second wave. When the virus emerged in March, only five percent of recorded cases were among Arab-Israelis, the descendents of Palestinians who stayed on their land after Israel's creation in 1948. Arab-Israelis represent about 20 percent of Israel's population but, according to the government, they account for 30 percent of the country's coronavirus caseload.

"I don't want to scare you, but dozens of Arab citizens will die in the coming weeks if we don't control the epidemic," said Ronni Gamzu, who heads Israel's battle against Covid-19. Each day around 750 new COVID cases are detected among Arab-Israelis, said the professor. "We will register hundreds of victims if Arab citizens do not act responsibly," he said this week during a trip to Daliyat Al-Carmel, an Arab-populated town near the northern city of Haifa.

In an attempt to stop the spread of the virus,

the authorities imposed a night-time curfew for a week from Tuesday in 40 localities, where gatherings are limited. Twenty-nine of these localities



### Authorities impose a night-time curfew

are Arab, while most of the others are populated by ultra-Orthodox Jews. In both cases, the communities are made up of large families living in small homes, which explains the higher infection rate, said Doctor Zahi Said, a health ministry spokesman.

### Weddings behind spike

Another factor behind the second wave is the continuation of gatherings such as weddings, he said. "The profusion of weddings, long awaited since they have been postponed many times, has become the main cause" of the spike in cases, the spokesman added. "Who is going to put on their mask or keep their distance while dancing?" But for the authorities in the northern Arab town of Umm al-Fahm, the spread of the virus is largely because the closure of halls saw people organize weddings in other uncontrolled places.

"There are no temperature controls at the entrance, nor is there any limitation on the number of guests," said Abdelmoneim Fuad, spokesman for the town's council. Rather than being cancelled, many celebrations were held in places where health protocols were still not in force, or a few days before the new measures took effect. As a result, 50 weddings happened last weekend in the town of 56,000 people, said Fuad.

### Awareness

Across Israel, 144,673 cases have been registered, with 1,053 people dying from the virus, according to figures released on Thursday. But the country also posted a single-day record of 4,038 new cases on Thursday, prompting the government to aim to decide on new containment measures on Sunday. The finance ministry has put a damper on the plans, estimating it could cost the economy \$1 billion a week and leave hundreds of thousands jobless.

In addition, the government has been targeted by a protest movement that denounces its management of the Covid-19 pandemic. For the health ministry's Doctor Zahi, the lifting of restrictions in spring, aimed at putting the economy back on track, came too soon and prompted people to be less vigilant. But for the United List of Arab-Israeli parties, the problem is mainly a lack of awareness in Arab localities. "We hold the government responsible for the health situation," they wrote, criticizing its "slowness" to set up screening centers in their community compared with the rest of the country. — AFP

## Indian state uses draconian law to detain cows killers

LUCKNOW: More than half the arrests this year under a tough national security law in India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh have involved suspects in cases of cow slaughter, data showed. The northern state has used the National Security Act (NSA), which allows for those deemed a threat to national security to be detained without charge for up to a year, almost 140 times in the first eight months of the year. "The NSA has been invoked in 139 cases across Uttar Pradesh, of which 76 have been against the slaughter of cows," Awanish Awasthi, a top state official, said in a statement. The figure, for the year to August 18, was first reported by the Indian Express newspaper on Friday.

The cow is considered sacred by India's Hindu-majority population, and most states, including Uttar Pradesh, have laws against slaughter of the animals. Vigilante attacks on those accused of killing the animal for meat, often people belonging to the tiny Muslim minority, are common. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has repeatedly urged use of the NSA to combat law and order issues in the state of more than 200 million people.

The Hindu monk is a high-profile figure in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party. The NSA, which Indian rights activists have described as draconian, is also frequently used in the contested region of Kashmir to detain people suspected of separatist activity. "In many cases the charges of NSA are dropped because the authorities fail to prove it in court," said Irfan Ghazi, a lawyer based in the state's city of Aligarh, who has defended clients held under the act. — Reuters

## Around 50 feared dead in DR Congo mine collapse

BUKAVU: About 50 people are feared dead after a gold mine collapsed in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo following torrential rain, local authorities said yesterday. The accident in the makeshift mine occurred on Friday in the town of Kamituga, in South Kivu province. Provincial governor Theo Ngwabidje Kasi deplored "the tragic deaths of 50 people, most of them young".

However, Kamituga mayor Alexandre Bundya said "we are not yet sure of the exact number" of victims. A local resident who was at the scene, Jean Nondo, told AFP that "according to witnesses, there are more than 50 dead. There is only one survivor." He said a river close to the mine had flooded after torrential rain. "Water went into the three tunnels. When people tried to get out, there was no way as the water was flowing strongly, with high pressure," he said. Bundya blamed "soil subsidence caused by torrential rain" for the accident.

The mayor decreed a two-day mourning period and called on local residents to help extract the bodies from the ground. Accidents in DR Congo's makeshift mines are a common occurrence, and are often deadly. Many such mines are in remote areas, meaning the accidents are under-reported. The miners sell what they find to local traders, who sell it on to large foreign companies. "Investigations must be carried out to find out the causes of this disaster," said a representative of the civil society, Nicolas Kyalangaliwa. "The authorities must take responsibility instead of taxing" these miners. — AFP

## Huge explosions rock Jordan military facility

AMMAN: A series of massive explosions that rocked Jordan's second largest city early on Friday was caused by mortar shells stored at an army munitions depot warping in an intense heat wave, the army said. The government had earlier blamed an electric short circuit for the dawn blasts, which lit the desert sky and could be seen in the capital Amman, 35 km to the southwest. Both it and the army command said there were no reports of injuries.

Army spokesman Brigadier General Talal al Ghobain said investigations now indicated the intense heat caused the "thermal expansion of mortar shells" in the arms depot on the eastern outskirts of the sprawling city of 1.5 million people. The blast site lies within a high security zone where some of the country's major U.S.-equipped



ZARQA, Jordan: This image shows an explosion at a military munitions depot in the city of Zarqa, 25 kilometers east of the capital Amman. — AFP

army bases are located, military sources say. "We felt like an earthquake had struck. Our windows shook and glass shattered. My kids started crying," said Zarqa resident Nabila Issa, a housewife and mother of five children.



DOHA: Members of the Taliban delegation leave their seats at the end of the session during the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in the Qatari capital yesterday. — AFP

## Afghan talks: Bitter foes with incompatible goals

KABUL: Peace talks between the Taliban and Afghan government negotiators offer no easy route to bridging deep ideological divides and resolving the bitter legacy of two decades of war. AFP takes a look at the main issues:

### Why now?

Afghanistan's war has killed tens of thousands of people, displaced millions more, killed about 2,400 US troops and cost the American taxpayer more than \$1 trillion. Exasperated by what he has described as America's "crazy, endless wars", President Donald Trump has repeatedly expressed his determination to achieve a full military exit from Afghanistan. The peace talks "are clearly driven by a US desire to disengage from Afghanistan", said Kate Clark, co-director of the Afghanistan Analysts Network. "The main goal for the US is to leave, or to leave without leaving behind a bigger mess." Washington signed a deal with the Taliban in February that paves the way for all foreign forces to pull out of Afghanistan by May 2021. In return, the Taliban—who control large swathes of rural Afghanistan—gave some security guarantees and a promise to hold talks with Kabul after completing a lengthy prisoner exchange.

### What's on the agenda?

The two sides are poles apart when it comes to the kind of Afghanistan they want, and at this stage, there is no certain agenda. "The Taliban have always been clear about what they want and that is a pure Islamic government, which is incompatible with the current liberal democratic Islamic political order," said Nishank Motwani, deputy director at

the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. The Taliban declared "victory" after signing the deal with the US and have often stated maximalist goals: they consider themselves Afghanistan's legitimate leaders and want to return to power. "The Taliban's leadership, rank and file fundamentally believe that victory is theirs and as victors, they will claim nothing short of power," Motwani said. However, in a New York Times op-ed published in February, the Taliban's deputy leader Sirajuddin Haqqani expressed optimism over "intra-Afghan talks". Some observers have suggested the militants could offer to negotiate a power-sharing deal.

"If we can reach an agreement with a foreign enemy, we must be able to resolve intra-Afghan disagreements through talks," Haqqani wrote. But few trust the Taliban, whose hardline rule in the late 1990s terrorized many Afghans. The militants imposed Islamic punishments like stoning women to death, while girls were banned from schools. Kabul's negotiators want the Taliban to recognize the government, which the militants see as a US "puppet". They also want the Taliban to agree to a ceasefire, acknowledge women's rights and recognize other achievements of the past two decades. "All of which is wishful thinking," Motwani said.

### Will the talks succeed?

Emboldened by their deal with Washington, the Taliban are not expected to offer concessions in what are expected to be lengthy talks. But they face difficult questions like whether to declare a ceasefire and agree to a pluralistic political order. While an agreement over key issues could raise prospects of long term peace, a breakdown could throw the country into a new civil war. It remains to be seen whether the Taliban agreed for talks just to minimize the presence of their main enemy, the Americans, Clark said. Whereas "for Kabul, they are just delaying (the whole process). They would rather the US troops stayed," she added. "The parties to the conflict have got to have the same goal, which is peace... I fear that's not really the case this time." — AFP

Government spokesman Amjad Adailah said earlier that mortars stored at the facility were old and not usable. An army source said on condition of anonymity that some of the weapons at the site were precision-guided anti-aircraft missiles; an army spokesman said no such missiles were stored there. Temperatures in the kingdom, along with neighbors Syria, Israel, Palestinian territories and Iraq, have topped 45 degrees Celsius (113°F) this month, levels not seen in decades.

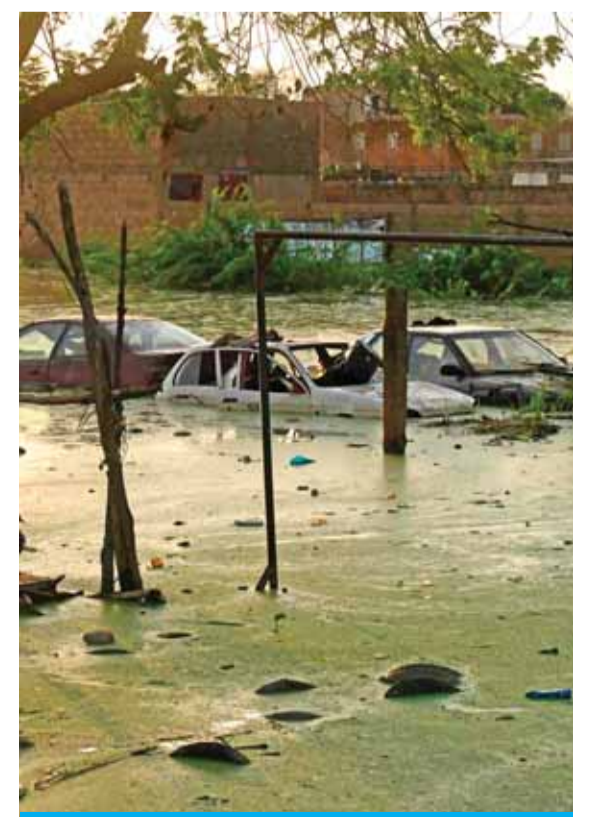
Army Chief of Staff Major General Yusef Al Huneiti told state media the speedy response in dealing with the accident had lessened losses. Security forces sealed off Zarqa and prevented traffic from leaving or entering. Journalists wanting to travel through to the blast site about 10 km to the east were prevented from doing so. Jordan's location makes it an ideal logistics and supply hub for the United States, including for the US military's garrison at Tanf in southeastern Syria. US officials say that military aid to Jordan helps to build the kingdom's defensive capabilities as part of a wider regional strategy. — Reuters

## Over 200 killed in Africa floods

NIAMEY: Floods generated by exceptional rainfall have killed more than 200 people and affected over a million more, in a band of countries from Senegal to Sudan, the UN and local authorities said Friday. Aid needs are likely to surpass 2019 levels, according to the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said.

In 11 countries in West and Central Africa, 760,000 people have been impacted and 110 killed, "and the rains are not over," Julie Belanger, OCHA's head for West and Central Africa, told AFP. Another 103 people have died in Sudan, according to the country's civil defense organization, and OCHA said that more than half a million people were affected there. In Niger, one of the worst-hit countries, Prime Minister Brigi Rafini appealed for "support" during a meeting Friday in the capital Niamey with international NGOs and foreign diplomats.

Seventy-one people have died and 350,000 people have been affected. Niger alone will need \$10 million (8.4 million euros) in humanitarian assistance, according to OCHA. Senegal has recorded six deaths, while nearly 190,000 people have been affected by floods in Chad, it said. In Nigeria's northeastern Borno state, 26,000 people were impacted by the elevated waters. The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) released \$29 million in aid in 2019 for 1.1 million people in 11 flood-affected countries, Belanger said. — AFP



NIAMEY: Cars that drifted away due to flood waters from the Niger river are seen in Niamey after heavy torrential rain. — AFP

# Business

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2020

## Iraq may seek exemption from OPEC+ cuts

### Low prices squeeze Iraq's finances, challenge government

**DUBAI/BAGHDAD/LONDON:** A debate within Iraq over whether it should ask to be exempt from OPEC+ oil supply cuts has resurfaced as low prices squeeze its finances, challenging a government struggling to tackle the destruction of years of war and rampant corruption.

OPEC's second-biggest producer, Iraq has failed in the past to fully comply with OPEC+ oil output reductions, pumping above its production targets since the pact was first signed in 2016 between OPEC and its allies led by Russia. "Iraq always believed they were not properly treated in December 2016 when they were not exempted. As the economy continues to reel from low prices this issue keeps resurfacing," said an OPEC source.

Iraq's economy and oil sector were battered by years of wars, sanctions and a stubborn Islamist insurgency triggered by the US invasion. Baghdad complained it had struggled to revive its stagnating oil industry, at a time where other OPEC members benefited and boosted their market share.

Iraq relies on oil to fund 97 percent of its state budget. Iraqi Finance Minister Ali Allawi told parliament on Wednesday that reforming Iraq's economy would take five years of work and that state debt amounted to 80-90 percent of national product, while foreign debt was at \$133 billion.

From May 1, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, a grouping known as

OPEC+, made a record cut of 9.7 million bpd, or 10 percent of global output, after the coronaries destroyed a third of world demand. From Aug. 1, the cut tapered to 7.7 million bpd until December. Iraqi politicians have criticized the pact which was signed by the previous caretaker government under which Baghdad had committed to a big cut in its output.

With oil prices currently trading at around \$40 a barrel, opposition to the oil cuts is rising behind closed doors and talks of reviving old calls to review the size of the reductions have resurfaced. Iraq and OPEC sources told Reuters. A senior Iraqi official with knowledge of the talks said there were differing views between the oil ministry and the prime minister's office over whether to fully comply with the cuts or ask for an exemption for next year.

The oil ministry wants to ask for an exemption, the official, who declined to be identified, said, while officials in the prime minister's office insist on compliance. The disagreement revolves around Iraq's current financial issues, the official added. In May and June, Iraq had agreed to

reduce its crude output by just over 1 million barrel per day, which would then ease to 849,000 bpd from July until end of the year.

Iraq has continued as a member of the deal but has overproduced above its quota. But now Iraq needs to fully comply with the agreed output targets and even compensate for its previous overproduction in May-July by cutting deeper for the following months. "There is strong opposition ... for their (Iraq's) continued participation in the supply cuts," the OPEC source said, adding that there has been unofficial talk about Baghdad's need to seek an exemption from the oil cuts in 2021 but it was not clear whether Iraq would actually take that step or not.

In August, Iraq has reached its highest compliance in recent years but it has said it may need to extend the compensation period by two months.

Current Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi took office in May, becoming the third Iraqi head of government in a chaotic 10-week period that followed months of deadly protests in the country, which has been exhausted



**Country's foreign debt stood at \$133 billion**



In this file photo, flames emerge from a pipeline at the oil fields in Basra, southeast of Baghdad. — Reuters

by decades of sanctions, war, corruption and economic challenges. Iraq's oil ministry spokesman said last week that Baghdad remained fully committed to the OPEC+ oil supply cut agreement, denying a media report that it was seeking an exemption from the reduction pact during the first quarter of 2021.

In June, Iraq has said it asked OPEC to take into consideration the members' economic situation in sharing the burden of future oil cuts. The World Bank estimates Iraq's economy will shrink 9.7 percent in 2020 on back of lower oil prices and coronavirus, compared to 4.4 percent growth in 2019. —Reuters

## Virus pushes world's biggest jobs scheme to brink in rural India

**MUMBAI:** Omkar Rathod was thankful for the company of hundreds of fellow migrant workers as they trudged home to far-flung villages once lockdown had shut Indian industry.

But he didn't realise he would soon be competing with them for jobs. Back in his village in northern India since March, Rathod is vying for work under the world's largest jobs programs: the only option for the millions of migrant workers who face mass job losses in a struggling economy and a raging pandemic. "If there were 15 people for a job earlier, now there are 200. Work for eight days is getting done in one day," Rathod, 45, said from Nawabganj in Uttar Pradesh. "This scheme is our only hope for work in our village. I got 15 days of work under the job scheme in May but nothing after that," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone.

More than 82 million of the 98 million people who applied for jobs under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act since April have secured work, a record that tops the number of new jobs created under the program each year in India. But the scheme - worth billions of dollars - still falls far short of what is needed in a country with an estimated 100 million migrant workers. Experts say the fund - which has already been topped up - is once more close to spent. "This meets the demand up to September. But it is not enough. States should be asked to redraw labor budgets and be assured that adequate funding will be provided," said Ravi Srivastava, director of the Centre for Employment Studies at research organization Institute for Human Development.

The rural development ministry did not respond to repeated requests for comment, but officials of five states that recorded among the highest number of applicants said they had provided work to almost every job seeker. The scheme was created to provide steady wages and jobs for people, who were in turn creating assets for their villages, be it conserving water or improving roads. It was never envisioned as a bandage in a global pandemic. Vallabhacharya Pandey, a social activist who works with migrant workers in Uttar Pradesh, said the scheme had worked well in the initial



AHMEDABAD: In this file photo, migrant workers walk on a flyover as they look for transport to return to their home state of northern Uttar Pradesh, during an extended nationwide lockdown to slow the spreading of COVID-19, in Ahmedabad. —Reuters

weeks of the pandemic, when the only people seeking work were locals. "But the return of migrant workers has overburdened the program," he said.

#### 'Where do they go?'

India's estimated 100 million migrant workers were among the worst hit by India's strict lockdown, which triggered a mass exodus from city jobs at garment factories, building sites and brick kilns.

Migrant laborers took to the roads en masse and walked back to the countless villages that dot the map and offer few opportunities to earn. After months back home, they said some employers were now sending buses or buying air tickets to get workers back, but many were still sat idle in their rural outposts awaiting any word on work. India's economy shrank by almost 24 percent on year in the second quarter, the worst of all major economies, even as the number of Indians with the virus topped 4.2 million, exceeded only by the U.S. tally of 6.2 million. "The pandemic has come at a time when sectors of construction and manufacturing were already ailing. So even if they want to migrate to cities again, where do they go?" asked Raghunath Singh, vice-president of the All India Centre of Indian Trade Unions. Besides, jobs in cities have lost their sheen for

many as nearly half of urban workers went without work, pay or financial assistance in the first three months of lockdown, studies show, with many reluctant to return.

#### 100 days

Launched more than 15 years ago to offer a secure livelihood to rural India, the scheme guarantees applicants at least 100 days of work for average daily wages of 200 rupees. It has been credited with saving families from poverty, and empowering women and the socially-marginalized. The scheme has provided about 800,000 households with an average of 34 work days this year, according to official data, with no data available for individuals. But those figures do not begin to tell the whole story, according to a group of activists, academics and researchers tracking the scheme.

"Unmet demand is wider than it appears in the data as even a single day of work gets recorded as job provided," said M.S. Raunag, secretary of the collective, called Peoples' Action of Employment Guarantee (PAEG). Local officials said that "satiating the demand" was a challenge and attributed the shortfall to delays in feeding data, and jobs offered at a time when the workers were not available. —Reuters

## Samsung touts Lee's role in Verizon deal

**SEOUL:** As Samsung Electronics' leader Jay Y. Lee readies for a new trial next month, the tech giant has quietly ramped up a public relations campaign touting Lee's deal-making expertise including in winning a \$6.6 billion contract from Verizon. Praising the Samsung heir as 'the best salesman', the firm has over the past year released a flurry of statements and photos of his visits to its many business sites, showcasing a side of the normally-reserved Lee whose public image has taken a battering over a lengthy bribery scandal.

The mounting legal travails for Lee, which have cast a cloud over the leadership of one of the world's biggest tech companies, coincide with the reformist drive of President Moon Jae-in, elected three years ago after the impeachment and jailing of his predecessor Park Geun-hye.

Lee was indicted last week on suspicions of accounting fraud and stock price manipulation. A trial is scheduled to start on Oct. 22. The stakes are high, and Samsung's public relations machine has stepped up a charm offensive, telling local media in a message this week that it expected cutting-edge network equipment business to grow into "the first flagship business of the Lee Jae-yong era," using the Vice Chairman of Samsung Electronics' Korean name.

According to the message seen by Reuters, Samsung said Lee actively engaged Verizon CEO Hans Vestberg on his visit to South Korea last year, and made several video

calls with him ahead of clinching a \$6.64 billion contract. Samsung on Monday announced the contract to provide network equipment to Verizon in the United States, considered a major win as the firm seeks to narrow the gap in the 5G network market with frontrunner Huawei, which is grappling with US restrictions.

In a statement to Reuters, Samsung said: "Vice Chairman Jay Y. Lee has played a key role in developing new growth businesses and relationship with global clients and partners." "The company responded to media requests and inquiries about his role and client relations," it added, saying that this "was part of normal communications with journalists."

In the message, Samsung also highlighted Lee's role in its 5G deal with Japan's KDDI last year despite the worsening bilateral relations. "Samsung keeps exposing Lee to the media, to give the message that Lee plays a big role, so if he goes to jail or faces lengthy trials, this would disrupt management, put Samsung in difficulty, and Korean economy in difficulty," said Professor Park Sang-in of Seoul National University, a governance expert.

#### Reputational damage

The fresh charges against Lee has further scarred the 52-year old Samsung scion's reputation and come at a time the world's biggest memory chip maker and No 2 smartphone manufacturer navigates intensifying competition and the coronavirus pandemic. Lee is also facing a separate trial on charges of bribing former president Park in an influence-peddling scandal to take control of the business empire from his father, group patriarch Lee Kun-Hee, who has been incapacitated since suffering a heart attack in 2014.

President Moon has pledged to curb the power of South Korea's chaebol, or family-owned conglomerates. In the past, convicted business tycoons were shown leniency



Jay Y. Lee

by courts for their economic contributions, but in a departure, Lee was jailed for nearly a year over the scandal involving Park.

Lee's father was convicted previously of breach of trust and tax evasion charges, but later received a presidential pardon. In June, while refuting media reports on Lee's alleged wrongdoings, Samsung said such reports are "never desirable not only for Samsung's future but the future of the Korean economy."

Samsung Electronics, the crown jewel in the Samsung group, reported annual revenue in 2019 equivalent to 12 percent of South Korea's economic output. A jump in chip exports helped slow the pace of decline in South Korean exports in the first 10 days of September, trade data showed on Friday.

"Samsung's PR efforts seem to be to build Lee's good image," said Park Ju-gun, head of research firm CEO Score. "If Lee cannot serve his role then it could adversely affect the economy, seems to be the nuance." —Reuters

## Citigroup's Jane Fraser first woman to break Wall St's glass ceiling

**NEW YORK:** Citigroup's Jane Fraser will become the first woman to lead a major Wall Street firm after the banking giant picked her as its next chief executive. Fraser is set to take over the top job in February, replacing Michael Corbat who will retire. Her appointment was touted on social media for shattering Wall Street's glass ceiling and comes amid intensifying focus on the need to diversify American corporate leadership in the aftermath of the "Me Too" movement on workplace equity and mass protests in the US for racial justice.

"Jane Fraser's appointment is an historic moment for women," Texas Democratic Representative Al Green said on Twitter. "But we still have a way to go to achieve diversity & inclusion that captures the whole of our nation." In April 2019, Green pressed Corbat and six other Wall Street CEOs at a congressional hearing, asking the seven white men if they foresaw a successor who was a woman or a person of color—none raised his hand. Fraser, who has served as president and CEO of Citigroup's global consumer banking since 2019, will join the board of directors immediately, the bank said. She has held prior roles for Citi in Latin America and in investment banking. "I am honored by the Board's decision and grateful to Mike for his leadership and support," Fraser, 53, said in a press release. "Our balance sheet is strong and our commitment to serving our clients and communities is even stronger. I will do everything I can to make all our stakeholders proud of our firm as we continue to build a better bank and improve our returns." The move comes as Citi pivots to a more challenging operating environment as large banks set aside billions of dollars to cover the potential for bad loans due to the coronavirus.

Other women have become CEOs of big financial companies or in related industries, such as Abigail Johnson at Fidelity Investments and Julie Sweet at Accenture. But in taking the helm of the fourth-biggest US bank by assets, Fraser joins a group of Wall Street CEOs that until now has been exclusively led by white men. Her appointment to the top job had been telegraphed from her prior promotion in October 2019 to president and head of global consumer banking. Senior women at JPMorgan Chase also are in line to potentially succeed Jamie Dimon, who is expected to retire in the coming years. —AFP

## UK to invest £23.8m in Omani port

**LONDON:** Britain on Friday announced a £23.8 million (\$30.5 million, 25.7 million euros) investment to triple the size of its base in an Omani port close to the sensitive waters of the Gulf. The expansion of the "logistics hub" at Duqm will "facilitate Royal Navy deployments to the Indian Ocean" and "further support British Army training in Oman," the Ministry of Defense said.

"The long-standing friendships between the UK and the Gulf states are more important than ever," said Defense Secretary Ben Wallace as he visited Oman and Qatar. "Whether tackling Daesh (the so-called Islamic State group), or making our streets in the UK safer thanks to our intelligence networks, these are hugely valuable relationships that I am pleased to be able to renew this week," he added.

The port has a dry dock facility which could support Britain's two aircraft carriers, HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales, the ministry said. Britain sent warships to the Gulf last year to escort freight vessels after Iranian Revolutionary Guards stormed and detained the UK-flagged Stena Impero and its 23 crew as they sailed through the Strait of Hormuz. —AFP



## Business

# Used cars drive US consumer prices higher; inflation pressures firming

## Americans shun public transportation amid fears of COVID-19

WASHINGTON: US consumer prices rose solidly in August, with the cost of used cars and trucks accelerating by the most in more than 51 years likely as Americans shunned public transportation because of fears of contracting COVID-19. The report from the Labor Department on Friday also showed a firming in underlying inflation last month, putting fears of deflation to rest. Deflation, a decline in the general price level, is harmful during a recession as consumers and businesses may delay purchases in anticipation of lower prices.

Still, stirring inflation is unlikely to discourage the Federal Reserve from pumping more money into the economy to aid the recovery from the COVID-19 recession amid considerable labor market slack. The US central bank in August rewrote its framework, putting new emphasis on the labor market and less on worries about too-high inflation. "Consumer prices are rebounding from the pandemic shock, but as supply shortages are resolved, upward price increases should moderate," said Kathy Bostjancic, chief US financial economist at Oxford Economics in New York. "The Fed's new policy objectives underscore that monetary policy will remain very accommodative for a considerable time."

The consumer price index increased 0.4 percent last month, also lifted by gains in the costs of gasoline, recreation and household furnishings and operations. The CPI advanced 0.6 percent in both June and July after falling in the prior three months as business closures to slow the spread of the coronavirus depressed demand. In the 12 months through August, the CPI increased 1.3 percent after gaining

1.0 percent in the 12 months through July.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the CPI would rise 0.3 percent in August and climb 1.2 percent on a year-on-year basis. Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the CPI gained 0.4 percent last month after surging 0.6 percent in July, the largest gain since January 1991. A 5.4 percent jump in prices of used cars and trucks, the largest gain since March 1969, accounted for more than 40 percent of the rise in the so-called



**Core CPI gains 0.4% in August**

core CPI last month.

In the 12 months through August, the core CPI climbed 1.7 percent after rising 1.6 percent in July.

Though the Fed's embrace of what it calls "flexible average inflation targeting" is still shy of many details, in theory it could see policymakers tolerate price increases above its 2 percent target for a period of perhaps several years to offset years in which inflation was lodged below its goal.

Policymakers have expressed a range of ideas



Used cars and trucks drove the growth with a 5.4 percent gain, while gasoline rose 2.0 percent, though that was less than its 5.6 percent rise in July. — Reuters

about how this might work in practice, but agree the aim is to let prices rise fast enough that household and businesses take their inflation target seriously. The Fed's preferred inflation measure, the core personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index rose 1.3 percent in the 12 months through July. August's core PCE price index data is scheduled to be released at the end of this month. Some economists questioned the need for higher

inflation as many households were struggling because of the pandemic.

"For the individual worker, rising inflation is not good news, no matter what the Fed thinks," said Joel Naroff, chief economist at Naroff Economics in Holland, Pennsylvania. Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher after pulling back in the previous session. The dollar was slightly lower against a basket of currencies. Prices of US Treasuries rose. — Reuters

## Markets mixed as traders brush off Wall St retreat

HONG KONG: Asia markets were mixed Friday as investors largely brushed off another tech-led rout on Wall Street but they remain concerned about high valuations, while the failure of US lawmakers to reach agreement on a much needed stimulus weighed on sentiment. The pound struggled to fight its way out of a trough as sparring between Britain and the European Union raised the prospect they will not reach a trade agreement.

A day after Wednesday's healthy bounce, New York's three main indexes went into reverse again led by global tech titans including Apple, Amazon and Microsoft, and that spread into other sectors leading analysts to warn of more such volatility. Large tech firms have soared during the pandemic thanks to a surge in demand for digital services, streaming and e-commerce but there is a growing concern that the "work from home" trade may have been overblown.

"Ahead of the (November) US election we have been highlighting the potential for markets to become unsettled over September and October with many known unknowns entering crucial stages," said National Australia Bank's Rodrigo Catril. "Brexit is back in focus... hopes of a new US fiscal stimulus have faded even more alongside an uptick in jobless claims, meanwhile the EU has surpassed the US in new COVID-19 cases. All of this against a backdrop of elevated equity prices."

Despite the US sell-off, Asian investors pushed some local markets higher, with Hong Kong, Tokyo, Shanghai, Mumbai and Seoul all up. Manila put on one percent and Jakarta surged more than two percent a day after losing five percent on news of fresh containment measures in the city. But Sydney, Taipei, Singapore, Wellington and Bangkok fell, while London, Paris and Frankfurt opened in negative territory. There was more disappointment from Washington after a \$500 billion relief package aimed at the most pressing areas failed to pass the Republican-led Senate, making a second round of much needed help for Americans unlikely any time soon.

Democrats voted against the bill, meaning Republicans could not get the 60 votes needed to get it through, as they said it was too small to help people. The proposed amount was half of what Republicans had previously pushed for, and a quarter of the Democrats' plan.

### 'Families going hungry'

Capitol Hill has been bickering over the deal for months, even after emergency cash handouts to the most needy ran out last month, putting millions in financial crisis. Stephen Innes at AxiCorp pointed out that with US consumers the crucial driver of the world's top economy unable to spend, the recovery was in danger of coming off the rails.

"With services making up around two-thirds of overall spending, the recovery in this part of the economy is crucial if the US economy hopes to strongly finish the year," he said. "With 28 million people needing this check to put food on their table, the fall in consumer spending is leaking into every part of the economy, be it staples, gasoline, or evictions, it's starting to show up in the demand picture. 'Forget about high-tech and \$2,000 mobile phones; this is about families going hungry.'" — AFP

## Euronext, Deutsche Boerse vie for Milan exchange

PARIS: Pan-European stock market operator Euronext and Germany's Deutsche Boerse on Friday announced rival offers to try to buy Milan's Borsa Italiana, setting the stage for a bidding war. Switzerland's SIX is also reportedly considering joining the race for the Milan stock exchange.

Euronext was the first to show its hand, saying it was teaming up with Italian lender CDP to submit a joint bid for Milan's Borsa Italiana. Euronext—which operates the exchanges of Amsterdam, Brussels, Dublin, Lisbon, Oslo and Paris—said in a statement that it was "currently in discussions with Cassa Depositi e Prestiti to submit an offer to London Stock Exchange Group plc for the acquisition of the business and key operational assets of Borsa Italiana".

"A further announcement will be made as and when appropriate," the Paris-based company said.

According to Bloomberg, the joint bid values Borsa Italiana at 3.5-4.0 billion euros (\$4.2-4.7 billion). And CDP would get around eight percent of Euronext under the terms of the deal.

## How Tiffany might fare without Luxury giant LVMH

NEW YORK/MILAN/PARIS: LVMH, the world's biggest luxury group, has called off its \$16-billion engagement to Tiffany. Wall Street however seems to think the US jeweler will fare just fine by itself.

The jilted bride thinks so, too. On Wednesday, after news that LVMH would not proceed with its takeover deal, Tiffany Chief Executive Alessandro Bogliolo held a call with employees, saying the executives are in wait-and-see mode. He told employees that Tiffany executives hadn't solicited LVMH's takeover. If the deal collapses, he said, Tiffany will be fine as it is. Tiffany declined to comment.

Tiffany's shares ended trading Thursday at \$114.36. Before news of the deal - in which LVMH offered \$135 per share to Tiffany's investors - came out in October, Tiffany shares were at \$98.55. That means that investors value Tiffany 16 percent higher despite both COVID-19's blow to sales and the prospect of no LVMH deal. "It certainly seemed as if this deal was a strength in numbers for both sides," said Robert Burke, founder of an eponymous luxury retail consulting firm. "But at the end of the day, Tiffany will be OK... it offers an image and a history that is kind of second to none and is highly attractive because of that."

LVMH, led by billionaire Bernard Arnault, said earlier this week it could not complete its purchase after the French government requested a delay on closing the transaction.

Tiffany executives were thrilled with the deal when it was agreed with LVMH last year, seeing it as the culmination of their turnaround efforts, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Longer-term, there are questions about Tiffany's prospects in a prolonged economic downturn, particularly if governments raise taxes and property prices plummet. In a lawsuit filed in Delaware on Wednesday, Tiffany alleged that starting in late March, LVMH began foot-dragging on antitrust compliance as a strategy to kill the deal.

"LVMH has sought to delay and impede the regulatory approval processes in every manner possible," Tiffany stated in its complaint. The deal would

Bloomberg said.

Later on Friday, German stock exchange operator Deutsche Boerse released a statement after markets closed stating that "Deutsche Boerse has submitted a bid for Borsa Italiana Group".

The statement did not provide any financial details. "As a global player, we are offering a high value for the future growth and development of an autonomous Borsa Italiana Group, thereby strengthening its crucial role for the Italian economy and the European capital markets," the DAX 30 owner added.

The London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) said in July that it was prepared to sell its Borsa Italiana subsidiary in order to win approval by the EU Commission of its planned purchase of US financial data provider Refinitiv.

### Shopping spree

Euronext chief Stephane Boujnah had said at the start of the year that his company could be interested if LSEG were willing to sell. Euronext has been on a shopping spree recently, buying the Danish Central Securities Depository, VP Securities, last month to expand its Nordic footprint.

It also acquired the Scandinavian electricity exchange Nord Pool in January and the Oslo Stock Exchange in June 2019. By contrast, it decided not to buy the Madrid stock exchange, which was eventually snapped up Swiss operator SIX.

In Italy, state-owned CDF confirmed it was "pro-



LVMH Chairman and Chief Executive, Bernard Arnault, addresses the presentation of the group's 2019 results at LVMH headquarters in Paris. — AFP

have been the biggest-ever in the global luxury industry, allowing Tiffany to quickly expand its global presence and invest more money in spruced-up stores and new collections without having to report quarterly earnings to shareholders. LVMH could use Tiffany to broaden its US presence and help grow its smallest jewelry and watch business.

### Other takeover targets?

Asked whether LVMH had any other US acquisition plans, LVMH Chief Financial Officer Jean Jacques Guiony said Tiffany is the only major jewelry player in the country and would not speculate further.

Shares of a rival, the Switzerland-based luxury jeweler and watchmaker Richemont, were up 5 percent Thursday as its name surfaced in analyst reports as a possible alternative target for LVMH. Some industry insiders say LVMH's U-turn opens the way to negotiations rather than an acrimonious break-up. Brokerage Oppenheimer expects LVMH to cut its bid to \$108 per Tiffany share.

Bernstein analyst Luca Solca said Richemont, as well as LVMH's French rival Kering, could emerge as suitors for Tiffany. "While it is unclear if and at what level these companies could be interested, the notion that Tiffany is open to M&A should be a support," he said.

To be sure, Tiffany and peers face major headwinds as the health emergency has plunged major economies into recession and brought international tourism to a halt, and it may have less of a buffer against them on its own. — Reuters



The Euronext logo at the company headquarters in the La Defense District on the outskirts of Paris. — AFP

ceeding jointly with Euronext to submit a non-binding bid for Borsa Italiana". Italian news agency Radiocor, quoting sources familiar with the matter, said the deadline for bids had been set back until September 14.

Rome has said all offers will be examined closely by the government and the regulatory authorities.

Economy and finance minister Roberto Gualtieri said he hoped Borsa Italiana would "find its strategic place within the single market and the eurozone, with industrial and financial partners able to support and strengthen in the project for a single capital market at a European level". — AFP

## Eurozone ministers pledge lasting fiscal support for economy

BERLIN: Eurozone finance ministers pledged continued fiscal support on Friday to get their economies running again after the COVID-19 crisis, chairman of the Eurogroup Paschal Donohoe said after they met in Berlin. At their first in-person meeting since February, finance ministers from the 19 countries that share the euro talked informally about the fiscal response to the pandemic that has savaged the European economy since March.

"There will be no sudden stop, no policy cliff-edge and overall budgetary policy will continue to support the economy," Donohoe, who is Ireland's finance minister, told a news conference after the meeting. While the ministers did not pledge any addition to the vast sums already promised to keep the economy going, they made clear there would not be fiscal tightening any time soon and that they would keep their foot on the accelerator as long as needed.

European Union governments have already announced more than 3.7 trillion euros in various support measures for their economies since the pandemic started and the bloc has added another 1.3 trillion euros that could be tapped over time. The latter includes a recovery package of 750 billion euros in grants and loans that the EU as a whole will borrow on financial markets and spend over the next three years to boost growth. The package is now going through the European Parliament and is expected to be ready by Jan 1.

In total, government support in various forms is almost 36 percent of EU gross domestic product, on top of unprecedented European Central Bank support measures. This is boosting European public debt levels, but growth is now the ministers' priority. "Concerning the fiscal stance for 2021, given the current high level of uncertainty ... a premature withdrawal of support would put the fragile recovery in jeopardy," EU Economics Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni said. "If we miscalculate the timing of this landing, we risk damaging the European economy." Ministers also expressed support for pushing forward with stalled projects such as the EU's banking union, which still lacks a common deposit guarantee scheme. — Reuters

## Business

# Southeast Asia slipping to bottom of global investors' shopping lists

## Singapore, Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia markets lag Asia

**SINGAPORE/HONG KONG:** Southeast Asia is slipping to the bottom of global investors' shopping lists, and fund managers expect to stay away from the region as COVID-19 rages across Indonesia and the Philippines and wrecks the economies of Singapore and Thailand. Southeast Asia, once sought for yield and growth, now attracts the worst earnings projections in Asia, and even upbeat managers say it is too soon to buy back in.

"ASEAN used to be a darling of investors," said Binay Chandgothia, head of Asia at Principal Global Asset Allocation. But with tourism in the doldrums, a big growth driver is missing, he said. It will probably return slowly - so, too, the tide of investment - which has been running steadily out, removing at least \$16 billion from the region so far this year.

"Investors are not going to miss everything if they don't allocate today in anticipation of things getting better," Chandgothia said. Investors have certainly not missed much the last few months.

Stock markets in Singapore, Jakarta, Manila and Bangkok are down about 20 percent this year - even more in dollar terms - putting them not far behind the worst performers in the world. Indonesia and the Philippines have the highest COVID-19 death tolls in Southeast Asia, while Singapore and Thailand are among the most economically exposed in the world.

Analysts have been slashing forecasts viciously

and expect company earnings to drop around 30 percent or more in these four markets, compared with a forecast of a 4.2 percent decline in Asia generally and falls of 22 percent in the United States and 40 percent in Europe.

A fresh plunge in Indonesian shares, after the announcement of a return to distancing restrictions in Jakarta, has underscored the risks. "While there are lockdowns happening it's difficult to put extra money there, not knowing how long you're going to wait for," said Sean Taylor, chief investment officer in Asia for German asset manager DWS, who is underweight in countries belonging to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

"To be prudent, we're waiting, particularly when we've got better opportunities through China and North Asia."

### Investors see no flows until a rebound



**Tech bets take the cake**  
Uncertainty over progress on vaccine candidates and a mania for tech stocks has also sent money earmarked for Southeast Asia elsewhere, most notably to China, South Korea and Japan.

For many, the major buying trigger would be a viable vaccine before bringing back capital flows of any size, according to Nader Naeimi, AMP Capital's head of dynamic markets. To be sure, investment isn't entirely absent. Bankers say there is interest in upcoming listings, and stockpickers who delve below macro trends have been active. "We are more exposed in Indonesia," said Will Malcolm, a



**SINGAPORE/HONG KONG:** Southeast Asia is slipping to the bottom of global investors' shopping lists, and fund managers expect to stay away from the region as COVID-19 rages across Indonesia and the Philippines and wrecks the economies of Singapore and Thailand.

Singapore-based portfolio manager at Aviva Investors, which holds shares in Bank Rakyat and broadcaster Surya Citra Media, partly in a bet on consumer spending.

But others who are positive say investors are holding back.

"We're telling our clients that these (markets) are likely to have a strong tactical performance in the next 6-12 months," said Ken Peng, Citi Private Bank's head of Asia Investment Strategy.

"But in terms of global investors, you don't really see that much interest." —Reuters

## ABK partners with Samsung Pay to boost payment capabilities

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) yesterday announced its collaboration with Samsung to enable Samsung Pay, a leading digital payment and digital wallet solution, to further enhance and simplify its customers' banking experience. The partnership offers a simpler, safer and faster payment method for the Bank's customers as it accelerates the adoption of mobile payment solutions towards a cashless future.

Customers can easily access the service by simply registering their debit, credit or prepaid card through scanning or manually entering the card's details onto the Samsung Pay application. Once added, users can swipe to launch the Samsung Pay app, authenticate their details via fingerprint or PIN, and tap the phone to pay. Customers of the bank will be able to connect their ABK debit and credit cards to Samsung Pay for efficient use in-store, online and via apps. The service is available across almost all stores in Kuwait and abroad, making on-the-go payments more convenient and safe.

The partnership highlights ABK's focused efforts in providing cutting-edge digital financial solutions, addressing growing consumer demand for seamless digital banking and reiterating the importance of social distancing. Digitizing operations across its diversified banking portfolio, improving customer experience and offering value-added services remains the bank's key driver.

## US economy is improving: Will Trump benefit?

**WASHINGTON:** The US labor market and broader economy made some gains this week, which history shows should be good news for President Donald Trump's re-election campaign. But the gains may be overshadowed by the tens of millions of Americans still out of work because of coronavirus-related shutdowns and growing concerns that there is no new government relief package in sight.

Job openings, a measure of labor demand, in July soared to 6.6 million, nearly back to their pre-crisis level, a Labor Department report showed this week. Inflation firmed last month, vanquishing fears of growth-stunting deflation. Higher frequency data tracking people's visits to stores and restaurants also pointed to an economic upswing. However, the economy is nowhere near to rounding the corner to recovery. At least 29.6 million people were still receiving unemployment benefits as of Aug. 22, a report on Thursday showed, and the number of new applicants for jobless benefits was stuck at a high level, at 884,000.

Deadlock in Washington over a new fiscal relief bill could mean this is as good as things get for the economy for some time. On Thursday, the Senate failed to pass a Republican bill that would have provided around \$300 billion in new coronavirus relief. Democrats are pushing for a \$3 trillion bill.

"Part of the healthy recovery owes to generous fiscal stimulus policies which have started to fade," Bank of America economists said in a note on Friday. "It has become unlikely that another round of fiscal stimulus will be passed before the election." —Reuters

## KFH mobile banking services at your convenience

**KUWAIT:** Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer at Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Waleed Khaled Mandani, said that KFH uniquely offers innovative financial solutions available on the KFHonline mobile application, which is designed to meet the customers' requirements to complete financial and banking transactions for free at any time and place in a streamlined, easy and secure manner.

Mandani added, in a press release, that the mobile App is available in Arabic and English for iPhone devices through the App Store and for Android devices via Google Play Store, indicating users can easily login the application and complete banking transactions through "Face ID", or with one touch via fingerprint technology.

### E-banking

Mandani showcased some of the innovative financial solutions provided by KFHonline mobile application, which are: The free of charge "SWIFT GPI" service to track local and international banking transfers electronically for individuals and corporate via KFHonline, Kuwait Clearing Company KCC dividend subscription, transfer to KFH Trade, opening fixed deposits, opening new bank account, viewing the PINs for credit and debit cards, transfer to credit and prepaid card, cheque book request, deposit of cheques via mobile, Cardless cash with-

## Big EU states want cryptocurrency curbs to protect consumers

**BERLIN:** Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands called on the European Commission to draw up strict regulation for asset-backed cryptocurrencies such as stablecoins to protect consumers and preserve state sovereignty in monetary policy.

The finance ministers of the five European Union member states said in a joint statement on Friday that stablecoins should not be allowed to operate in the 27-member bloc until legal, regulatory and oversight challenges had been addressed. Stablecoins, a type of cryptocurrency often backed by traditional assets, leapt onto policymakers' agendas last year when Facebook revealed plans for its Libra token.

Some central banks and financial regulators, concerned that Libra could destabilize monetary policy, facilitate money laundering and erode privacy, threatened to block it and the project has been delayed and reshaped as a result. The EU's regulatory

## Brazil resumes zero-tariff ethanol imports from US

**RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil:** The United States and Brazil said Friday they had reached a deal for the South American country to temporarily resume tariff-free ethanol imports, a political win for President Donald Trump. Ethanol is a key agricultural export for Iowa, a battleground state in the upcoming US election, and the Trump administration had lobbied to retain zero-tariff access to Brazil, a leading mar-

ket. Brazil had previously exempted up to 750 million liters (200 million gallons) a year of imported ethanol from tariffs. However, it let the benefit expire on September 1, reinstating a 20-percent tariff. In a joint statement, the two countries said they had agreed to hold trade talks for a 90-day period starting September 14, and return to the previous tariff-free arrangement during that time.

The talks will focus on ethanol, sugar-which Brazilian producers want to sell tariff-free in the US-and possibly corn, the two sides said. "The discussions should aim to achieve reciprocal and proportional outcomes that generate trade and open markets to the benefit of both countries," they said.

The US ambassador in Brazil, Todd Chapman, has reportedly lobbied hard to retain the ethanol

drawal by (QR Code, Civil ID & Mobile Number), and a complete update of KYC request "Know your customer". Mandani noted that the mobile App also provides a service for viewing financing obligations and investment plans, obtaining a summary of account balances and deposits, perform money transfers to other KFH customers and customers in local and international banks for free, in addition to many other highly efficient digital services.

Mandani added: "The application also provides the Skiplino service to book appointments electronically in the banking branches, KFH Pay electronic payment service through which the customer can pay through the KFHonline mobile application or via the K-Net page. Moreover, KFH offers the KFH-Wallet service, which is an innovative in the world of electronic payments which is supported by the MDES digital enablement service for smart phone payments.

He pointed out the possibility of opening a gold account with options of selling, buying and trading of gold through the mobile application, indicating that the application also provides "request financing online" service. The Mobile App offers Push Notification service that is important in the case of traveling and the text messaging service is not available. It offers the services of activating new bank cards, reporting a lost card whether credit or ATM cards, bank account linking service, and standing order management service (add, amend, cancel).

Mandani continued: "To speed up electronic payment processes and enhance security, 3D Secure service has been developed so that the verification process is done through the verification code (OTP) technology that reaches the customer

### 'Very clear rules'

Scholz said authorities should take a tough approach and this should include a ban on any private sector activities if regulatory requirements were not met. The five countries want all stablecoins to be pledged at a ratio of 1:1 with fiat currency, with reserve assets denominated in the euro or other currencies of EU members states, and deposited in an EU-approved institution. All entities operating as part of a stablecoin scheme should be registered in the EU, they said. Such a move would likely impact the Geneva-based Libra Association, which plans to

even if he is outside Kuwait via SMS or through the Push Notification service in the KFH mobile application."

Mandani said that KFH provides, through the KFHonline mobile application, a service that enables customers to postpone the payment of one of the due installments annually throughout the financing period under the title of KFH-Pass. The customer who recently contracted with the bank can change the date of the installments he postponed upon contracting.

### Leading digital development

Mandani confirmed that KFH continues to develop its technological infrastructure and digital applications, while strengthening partnerships with the world leading FinTech companies for utilizing their high capabilities and innovative strategies to provide the best digital financial solutions that serve the requirements of millennial customers as well as all segments of customers at the Group level within highest standards of professionalism.

Mandani stated that the innovation mentality has become an integral part of KFH's strategy. The Bank takes this approach to constantly enhance the customer's banking experience as per highest levels of sustainability and excellence. This comes in line with the Bank's strategy for digital transformation and embodies its vision of leading the global development of the banking industry.



Waleed Khaled Mandani



issue and govern Libra.

The association declined to comment. It has previously said that it welcomed regulatory scrutiny. "We're waiting for the Commission to issue very strong and very clear rules to avoid the misuse of cryptocurrencies for terrorist activities or for money laundering," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said.

"The central bank, I mean the ECB, is the only one to be allowed to issue a currency. And this point, it's something that cannot be jeopardized or weakened by any kind of project including the so-called Libra project," Le Maire added. —Reuters

exemption. Chapman is now facing an inquiry before the US House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee over reports he violated a law barring federal officials from engaging in partisan activities by telling Brazilian counterparts that a renewal of the ethanol exemption would help Trump's re-election chances.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has sought to cultivate a close relationship with Trump, whom he openly admires. But Bolsonaro also faces a powerful agricultural lobby at home.

Ethanol is big business for sugarcane producers in Brazil, who are pushing for tariff-free access to the US sugar market. Brazil and the United States lead the world in ethanol production, together accounting for nearly 85 percent of supply. —AFP

# Classifieds

Sunday, September 13, 2020

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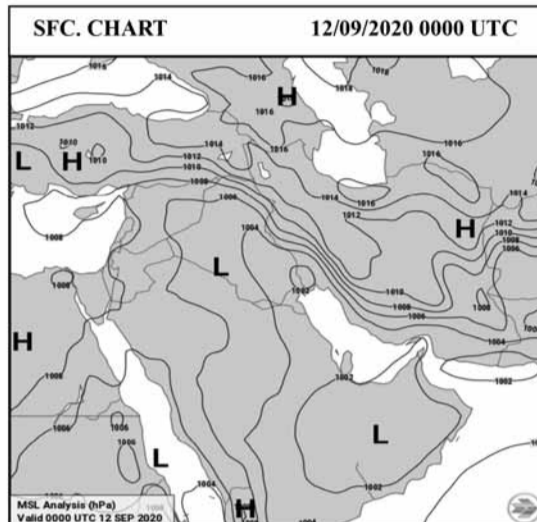
## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Rather hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate south easterly wind to south westerly wind with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	43 °C	32 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	26 °C
ABDALY	46 °C	28 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	47 °C	29 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	42 °C	31 °C
SALMIYAH	39 °C	34 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWASIB	46 °C	27 °C
WAFRA	46 °C	26 °C
SALMY	45 °C	27 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	09/13	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some high clouds will appear	44 °C	26 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 28 km/h
Monday	09/14	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	44 °C	28 °C	SE-VRB	06 - 30 km/h
Tuesday	09/15	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	43 °C	27 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Wednesday	09/16	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	42 °C	25 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:11
Sunrise	05:31
Zuhr	11:44
Asr	15:15
Sunset	17:58
Isha	19:15

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	27 °C
MAX. RH	56 %
MIN. RH	08 %
MAX. Wind	E 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

## 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 Tucarama Raicar 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**

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada

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

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

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

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

## 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

## Airlines

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

## Word Search

**65 Cooking Terms Word Search**

AL DENTE BASTE BEAT BLANCH BLEND BLIND BAKE BOIL BRAISE BROIL CARAMELIZE CHIFFONADE CHOP CLARIFY COAT CREAM CRUSH CUBE

DASH DEEP FRY DICE DILUTE DREDGE DUST EMULSIFY FILET FILTER FLAMBE FOLD GLAZE GRATE GREASE GRILL GRIND HULL

JULIENNE KNEAD MAKE DOINE MARINATE MASH MIREPOIX SIK MOISTEN MULL PARE PINCH POACH PUREE REDUCE ROUX SAUTE SCALD

SCORE SEAR SEASON SHUCK SIFT SUMMER STEAM STEEP STIR TOSS TRUSS WHIP WHISK ZEST

## Join the Dots

## STAR TRACK

<p><b>Aries (March 21-April 19)</b>                      A financial windfall might open new doors for you, Aries, and you could consider making some major changes in your life. You might think about moving to a nicer home. Romance is definitely on your mind. If you aren't already involved in a domestic situation, you might consider it seriously right now. Change can be frightening, but these changes are good. Don't hesitate.</p>	<p><b>Cancer (June 21-July 22)</b>                      Have you been thinking about relocating, Cancer? The siren song of distant states or exotic lands may play constantly in your ears. Foreign cultures could inspire you artistically, spiritually, and personally. This is actually a time when few things are out of your reach. If you're serious about this, look into it. You can decide once you have all the facts.</p>	<p><b>Libra (September 23-October 22)</b>                      An opportunity to bring in extra income might arrive today, Libra, possibly through a female friend. Another Libra might be involved. This probably involves a special, temporary project, but it could prove enjoyable and profitable. A love partner might want to participate, too. Think about it before committing. Talk to people who have done this before. It's worth a try, anyway.</p>	<p><b>Capricorn (December 22-January 19)</b>                      You could encounter a potential romantic partner today, Capricorn. You'll probably communicate with this person at a virtual group event and hit it off immediately. This person is likely to be bright, physically attractive, kindhearted, and sensitive. If you're single and available, don't pass up this opportunity. Take advantage of the chance to get to know each other. Who knows where this might lead?</p>
<p><b>Taurus (April 20-May 20)</b>                      Expect some positive changes in a current partnership, Taurus. If this is a business partnership, a new agreement between you shows promise of success and good fortune. If this is a romance, you might be so perfectly compatible that you're considering moving to the next level of commitment. Any new partnership begun today should be promising and bring you whatever you hope to gain.</p>	<p><b>Leo (July 23-August 22)</b>                      Expect something new to take place regarding your home today, Leo. A family member could come for a visit or even move in. You could be redecorating, landscaping, or buying new furniture. There is always the possibility that you're moving. Whatever the changes, they're likely to be positive despite the messy and disruptive process of making them. You've got a lot to look forward to!</p>	<p><b>Scorpio (October 23-November 21)</b>                      This is a day of fresh beginnings for you, Scorpio. Accomplishments in the past foster a new sense of self-confidence, along with optimism and enthusiasm for the future. Travel lies ahead in the distant future, and possibly advancing your education in some way. Romance also looks promising. Go for a facial or massage today, if possible, or buy some new clothes. Start the new cycle by making your appearance match what you feel inside.</p>	<p><b>Aquarius (January 20-February 18)</b>                      A lot of changes could be taking place in your life now, Aquarius. Even though most of them are positive, the upheaval can be unsettling right now. Don't give in to panic. Nothing needs to be done that you can't handle. Take each task one step at a time. As you vault each hurdle, the road ahead seems that much smoother. When you arrive, all will be well. Keep going!</p>
<p><b>Gemini (May 21-June 20)</b>                      Have you been working out, following a new dietary program, or both, Gemini? If so, today you could look in the mirror and for the first time see some tangible and positive results. You're probably looking and feeling great. Don't abandon your efforts. You'll want to continue the progress. Keep the energy flowing by going for a run or other workout, then treat yourself to a small indulgence.</p>	<p><b>Virgo (August 23-September 22)</b>                      Some wonderful news could come to you, Virgo, possibly from a sibling or neighbor. It might involve money or a new opportunity that's opening up nearby. A group event concerning a subject you're very interested in could also take place. You might feel you have a lot of phone calls to make and plans to think about. The future looks bright. Enjoy!</p>	<p><b>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)</b>                      If you've never tried your hand at the arts, Sagittarius, this is the day to do it. Your imagination and ingenuity are flying high, and your aesthetic sense is acute right now. If you aren't already involved with such activities, look online to see what classes or workshops are offered. Get a friend to sign up with you. You'll probably have a great time!</p>	<p><b>Pisces (February 19-March 20)</b>                      New beginnings and promising new opportunities may appear from a distant state or foreign country, Pisces. Your adventurous side is excited and enthusiastic, but the side of you that wants to stay settled could put up some resistance. Don't feel you have to jump into anything. Get all the facts and assess the situation objectively. Think seriously about it all. What do you most want?</p>



In this photograph a man walks in front of the entrance of an outlet of CoCo Ichibanya Japanese curry chain restaurant in Gurgaon on the outskirts of New Delhi. — AFP photos



Customers eat sitting at a table at CoCo Ichibanya Japanese curry chain restaurant in Gurgaon on the outskirts of New Delhi.

## JAPANESE DINING CHAIN CURRIES FAVOR WITH INDIAN MARKET



A chef prepares a dish for a customer at CoCo Ichibanya Japanese curry chain restaurant.

One of Japan's most popular restaurant chains is embarking on what could become one of the all-time crowning achievements of salesmanship—selling curry to India. CoCo Ichibanya has more than 1,400 locations worldwide but its owners are eager to find a foothold in the world's second-biggest nation, and favor among a middle class with a growing appetite for international food. But it remains to be seen whether its own signature curry dish—a distinctive, thick brown sauce and sticky white rice—can lure diners accustomed to local varieties honed over thousands of years. “We are not here to compete with Indian curries,” Ichibanya India's assistant chief executive, Devesh Srivastava, told AFP.

“We have a flavorful Japanese curry which is a bit different from the Indian one... and the response has been pretty good so far. People are coming back as well.” Beef and pork are absent from the tailor-made menu, in deference to religious requirements and local tastes. Substitutes such as paneer and eggplant are on offer instead, making a unique global hybrid cuisine reflecting the chain's dual origins. Curry originat-



Customers eat sitting at a table at CoCo Ichibanya Japanese curry chain restaurant in Gurgaon.



A chef holds a curry dish in a container prepared for a customer.

ed in India thousands of years ago but in the late 19th century British seafarers introduced it to Japan, where it evolved into a beloved national comfort food.

Rising disposable incomes have left India an attractive market for Japanese companies, which are looking to offset declining consumer spending at home by expanding abroad. Ichibanya believes its successful step into Thailand, another curry-loving nation, is a sign the chain could succeed in

India. “Initially there is going to be a lot of interest,” Kavita Devgan, an author and food columnist, told AFP. “If the curry works for the Indian palate and is not very unfamiliar, then it has a chance.” It has shrugged off the challenges of opening in India during the coronavirus pandemic, at a time when many restaurant-goers are tightening their purse strings and eating at home.

Its first Indian franchise opened in August near the capital New Delhi and

immediately piqued local interest. Diners said they enjoyed exploring the contrast between the flavor of the Japanese sauce and the familiar Indian varieties laden with onion, tomatoes and local spices. “The taste is something that is very addictive,” said Aakash Nakra. “You want to eat more and more and more.” — AFP

## NO FLOPS, BUT LITTLE SIZZLE ON VENICE FILM FESTIVAL RED CARPET

A cinema festival red carpet without internationally known celebrities, screaming fans and over-the-top fashion excess turns out to be, well, not much more than a carpet that's red. Such has been the case over the past two weeks at the Venice film festival, which is set to award its top film on Saturday, due to the absence of A-list Hollywood celebrities and throngs of frenzied admirers. To be sure, the ruffles, sparkles, plunging necklines and gravity-defying heels have been in full show at the glitzy festival on the beachfront Lido.

But for dedicated fashion watchers accustomed to the high drama of prancing, preening stars in more normal years, Italy's world renowned cinema catwalk has lacked sparkle, like an Aperol Spritz without the prosecco. “It's a festival without stars because Hollywood is still in lockdown,” Festival Director Alberto Barbera explained to

AFP the day before the 11-day event began. “Will there be less glamour? Yes. Will there be fewer stars on the red carpet? Certainly.”

### Wearing it twice

Gone were the top Hollywood faces that flocked to the festival last year—Penelope Cruz, Kristen Stewart, Iman, Kate Upton, Scarlett Johansson and Sienna Miller, among others, with Brad Pitt and Johnny Depp representing the tuxedo-clad men. Instead, Cate Blanchett, president of the jury, took on the mantle of fashion authority, making her opening night appearance in a shimmering midnight blue Esteban Cortazar caped gown, a look she wore once before in 2015. The Australian actress repeated again another night, pairing an Alexander McQueen floral top with black pants, replacing the long skirt it originally accompanied in 2016.

While Tilda Swinton chose a white



File photo shows Jury President of the 77th Venice Film festival, Australian-US actress Cate Blanchett arrives for the opening ceremony and the screening of the film “Lacci”.



US actress Maya Thurman-Hawke and US director Gia Coppola (right) arrive for the screening of the film “Mainstream”.



A general view shows press photographers waiting for guests to arrive at the festival's palace for the screening of the film “Nomadland” presented in competition on the tenth day of the 77th Venice Film Festival. — AFP photos

and black flouncy skirt and blouse from French house Chanel to accept her lifetime achievement award, top Italian designers dominated the red carpet elsewhere. Gia Coppola sported a yellow, pink and green boho chic look from Gucci, while Vanessa Kirby opted for a dramatic crimson Valentino gown with a turtleneck and an exposed back. The British “The Crown” actress, who stars in two films in competition at the festival, also showed up on the red carpet in a severe but sexy black square-shouldered Armani suit with plunging neckline. Another Italian label, Ermanno Scervino, was unwittingly caught up in the festival's only fashion faux-pas, witnessed by sharp-eyed paparazzi. The girlfriend of football star Cristiano Ronaldo, Georgina Rodriguez, showed up at the Lido in a water-taxi, posing for photos in a sharp white jacket and pants created by the fashion house—but forgot to remove the label inside.

### Insiders only

Fans wanting to follow the latest red carpet looks have been following the

internet or Instagram for inspiration, as Covid-19 regulations have prohibited their presence at the event. “The red carpet of this edition is a bit like those (football) league games we have seen in the last two months: without fans, with only insiders,” wrote Grazia magazine. Still, one veteran photographer who has covered the festival's red carpet for 21 years said this year's version was still rewarding, despite its lower profile.

“If there were George Clooney, Lady Gaga or Madonna it would be the best,” Getty Images photographer Daniele Venturini told AFP. “But we can be satisfied.” “I'm very happy it's happened,” he said. “It's a good sign.” Volume levels on the red carpet were still high despite the lack of fans, Venturini said, given that the photographers shout, hoping to catch the eye of the stars in their finery. “It seems like we're the fans,” he said. “Photographers who transform into fans, because we're screaming all of us.” — AFP



British actress Vanessa Kirby arrives for the screening of the film “Pieces of a Woman”.



British actress Tilda Swinton arrives for the opening ceremony and the screening of the film “Lacci”.



## Flaming haircut puts French salon in hot spot

Those who think they have had a bad hair day might want to think again. A man who went to a French hair salon walked out with a burnt forehead that forced him off work for a week after his stylist attempted an Egyptian burning technique he hadn't actually mastered. Police said Friday that the client, who remains anonymous,

filed a complaint last week after going for a haircut in the small Brittany town of Lannion. His stylist “put gel on his hair, took a lighter and suddenly, he lit it on his hair. The victim panicked and was burned on the forehead,” police officer Daniel Kerdraon told AFP. “We were surprised by this story, we didn't understand why he set the

hair on fire.”

After investigating, police discovered an “Egyptian technique, which has only recently arrived in France, where you burn a bit of hair to make it more malleable to style, more for kinky hair,” Kerdraon said. But the hairdresser, a Libyan in his 30s who speaks English, “didn't master this technique.”

Police discovered that the salon owner, a mechanic, did not have the necessary professional diploma, and nor did his three employees. Kerdraon said the salon has been shut as they probe alleged illegal employment and tax fraud. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



In this picture miniature model artist Leon Huang poses for a photograph with his work during an interview at FM Dioramas in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan. — AFP photos



Miniature model artist Chen Shih-jen poses for a photograph with his work during an interview at FM Dioramas in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan.

## Arabic theatre is cultural lifeline for Sweden's migrants

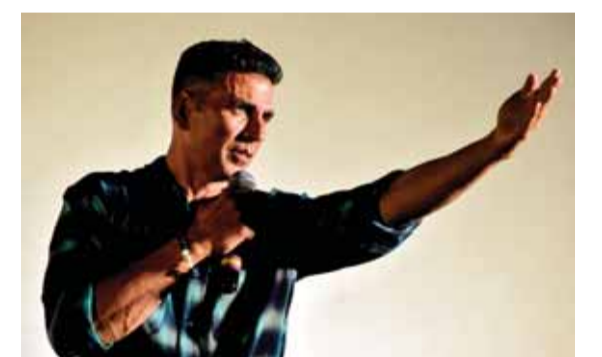
In a theatre in Stockholm's suburbs, a small crowd gathered to watch three actors, two Syrian and one Swedish, act out the lives of a young migrant couple settling into life in Sweden. But the language spoken by the troupe on the sparsely decorated stage in the small municipal theatre was Arabic, not Swedish. This group has spent four years performing in the language, making it the first of its kind catering to Sweden's Arabic speakers. Their Stockholm play was based on interviews with young migrants who arrived in Sweden from 2015, when more than one million people mostly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan made their way to Europe.

Sweden took in some 160,000 asylum seekers, the highest number per capita of any European Union nation. After the performance—one of the last before anti-coronavirus measures shut theatres—Iraqi-Syrian actor Helen al-Janabi said the lack of opportunities for young Arabic speakers in Sweden to express themselves prompted her to launch the company with her Swedish husband in 2015. "There's a serious lack of Arabic cultural activities," she said at the Stockholm office she shares with her husband, Oskar Rosen. That gap was a particularly sore spot for Janabi, 40, who had worked in theatre in Damascus before arriving in Sweden and found next to no chance of using her skills in her new home. With Rosen, 55, she tours small theatres with a rotating cast, often in areas with high populations of recently arrived migrants. So far they have performed 400 times in front of an estimated 20,000 people in total. While all performances are in Arabic, the group also aims to attract as wide an audience as possible, and an LED board over the stage always gives a translation of the dialogue into Swedish.

### Integration themes

Most recently, they produced *Midnight Sun*, the story of a young couple - an Iraqi man and a Syrian woman - who arrived in Sweden in 2015, depicting their trials with integration, the asylum process and racism. Syrian playwright Waseem al-Sharqi, who now lives in Berlin, wrote the script after reading through the transcripts. He picked out recurring themes and experiences the migrants talked about, such as loneliness and the difficulties of integration. "A large part of the audience tell us after the performance they either see themselves in the performing characters, or part of the processes they've been through," the 30-year-old said during a visit to the Swedish capital. Farah Jarrar, a Syrian in her early thirties living in Stockholm who watched the performance, agreed. "I've been in this country for more than two years, it's very hard transiting from one society to another," she said as actors and the audience mingled behind her.

The group has also travelled to several countries outside Sweden to put on theatre workshops, but the company has put performances on hold since gatherings of more than 50 to curb the novel coronavirus have been banned. "We aren't performing at all, and we don't know when we can perform again," Rosen said. "We have scaled down our work and are trying to survive." In the meantime, Janabi and Rosen are recording productions and posting them online in hopes of getting back into theatres again in the future. — AFP



In this file photo Indian Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar speaks as he attends the trailer launch of his upcoming Hindi drama film 'Mission Mangal' in Mumbai. — AFP

## BOLLYWOOD STAR AKSHAY KUMAR DRINKS COW URINE DAILY

Bollywood star Akshay Kumar has revealed that he drinks cow urine daily, joining a growing number of Indians who believe it has medicinal benefits—including against the coronavirus. Kumar is considered a staunch supporter of Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party, which has earmarked millions of dollars for research into products using bovine waste to cure diseases like diabetes and cancer. There is no comprehensive scientific evidence of any medicinal benefits, but several politicians from Modi's right-wing ruling party have advocated using the dung and urine to cure coronavirus.

The 53-year-old actor was promoting his appearance on a show with British television adventurer Bear Grylls, in which they drink tea made from elephant dung in an Indian tiger reserve. "I was too excited to be worried. I have cow urine because of ayurvedic reasons every day, so that was okay," Kumar said on a social media live chat posted Thursday.

Many Hindus believe cows are sacred and drink its urine for medicinal benefits. Modi's government created a ministry of ayurveda and yoga, with Modi suggesting in June that yoga could help create a "protective shield" against the novel coronavirus. Covid-19 has infected 4.6 million people in India and killed 76,000. — AFP

## Taiwan artisans fuse reality and fantasy in miniature worlds

From a bucolic rural grocery shop to fictional battlefields and robot warrior bases, Taiwanese artisans are meticulously hand-crafting miniature worlds that fuse reality and fantasy. When he is not designing interiors, 51-year-old Hank Cheng can usually be found in his studio conjuring tiny but intricately detailed scenes. "I like to try to make anything, whether it's clean, old or dirty, to let my imagination run wild," he told AFP. His creations range from a replica of a 40-year-old grocery store in central Taiwan that caught his eye, to an imaginary "secret maintenance base" for a legion of Minions made from a discarded Minion-shaped cookie box he recycled. "When people ask me is there anything I can't make, I joke: 'Only air and sunshine.'"

In his youth, Cheng studied illustrations in Japan, where miniatures and dioramas have long been popular. But he only started making miniatures himself five years ago, after spotting a photo of a Japanese artist's work that was so realistic he thought it was real at first sight. Recycling is a recurring theme for Cheng, who was raised to cherish finite resources in a thrifty family. One of his most detailed pieces is a painstakingly accurate model of an old Japanese restaurant selling eel rice dishes—complete with smoke-stained kitchen and greased floor—which won awards at a Japanese competition. Another favorite design is a run-down bar with rowdy patrons, graffitied walls and a back alley littered with garbage so realistic Cheng hopes viewers can "smell the odour" just by looking at it. "I hope each of my creations tells a story to get people interested, and it does not just look pretty or look realistic," said Cheng, who has also published a book on making miniatures and held solo exhibitions. "I hope it shows some 'warmth' and the traces of real things."

### Miniature therapy

Hikari Yang, 39, started making miniatures at a time in her life when she was feeling low. She recalled that by the time she completed her first work—a Japanese-styled town of her dreams—she felt "healed" by the process and had forgotten about her troubles. She set up the FM Dioramas studio in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan, in late 2016 with several partners, maintaining a day job until she was recently able to switch to making models full time. The group's portfolio is filled with detailed models featuring real-life or sci-fi scenes that on average take some eight to nine months to complete.

Her studio has cultivated a growing following by giving miniature-making classes across Taiwan and it also creates miniature items that are shipped to fellow modelers around the world.



Miniature model artists (from left) Leon Huang, Hikari Yang and Chen Shih-jen pose for a photograph during an interview at FM Dioramas in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan.

"People come to our classes to learn to make what we call 'healing little items' like a tree in a park. Making the miniature from scratch provides a release of the stress in their busy lives," Yang said. Her partner Chen Shih-jen, 45, said building dioramas helps take the edge off his full-time computer programming job. Commissions are varied. One custom order Chen received from a government agency was to recreate a miniature traditional house of the Seediq, one of Taiwan's many indigenous tribes. Another came from a couple who wanted a model of the restaurant they had their first date in.

A more elaborate diorama he built for his own collection contains an environmental message. The futuristic gas station-servicing flying cars in a world where rising oceans have swallowed the land—won a prize in Hungary. "The work depicts how people would live when the land disappears," he said. "Climate change and global warming are happening right now and I hope people will cherish the present. What we see as normal resources are limited and could be gone one day." — AFP



Miniature model artist Hank Cheng poses for a photograph with his work 'Happy Time' during an interview in a showroom in Taipei.



Miniature model artist Hank Cheng poses for a photograph with his work 'Taiwan water'.



Miniature models of artist Chen Shih-jen.



Miniature artist Hank Cheng poses for a photograph with his work.



Miniature model artist Hank Cheng poses for a photograph with his work 'Happy Time'.



Miniature model artist Hikari Yang poses for a photograph with her work.



Miniature model artist Chen Shih-jen poses for a photograph.

## Rare white diamond up for auction in Hong Kong

A flawless 102-carat oval diamond will head to auction on October 5 in Hong Kong at Sotheby's. The auction house has not given an official price estimate for the egg-shaped stone of exactly 102.39 carats, which has the highest color grade, D, for a white diamond and is rated Type IIA for its chemical purity and exceptional transparency. Quig Bruning, Sotheby's New York head of jewelry, said the house is "letting the market decide what the value of this diamond is." "Historically, diamonds of this caliber and this size have sold anywhere from about \$11 million up to \$33 million," he told AFP.

"We're offering without reserve and without estimate," he said, meaning the highest bid will be the winning bid with no minimum price. Only seven other white diamonds of more than 100 carats—a carat's mass is equal to 0.2 grams—and similar quality have appeared at auction, five of them with Sotheby's. In November 2017, the largest diamond ever presented at auction, with more than 163.41 carats, sold in Geneva for more than \$33.8 million,

fees and commissions included—a global record in this category.

But it's not a record overall for a diamond: in April 2017, the giant "Pink Star" pink diamond sold for \$71.2 million at a Sotheby's auction in Hong Kong. Collectors will be able to start bidding on September 15, with a starting price of only one



Hong Kong dollar, or 13 US cents. "Diamonds, like anything else, aren't immune to market fluctuations," Bruning said. "That said, what we've seen in the past six months is a real demand for jewelry and for gem stones." He said "the market, maybe a little counterintuitively, has been very robust in the past six months," saying perhaps people are seeking "additional places into which to place their funds." The diamond will be offered in a stand-alone, single lot live auction in Hong Kong, which collectors will be able to attend in person. The gem was cut from a 271-carat rough stone discovered in Ontario's Victor Mine, in Canada, where production ceased last year. — AFP

A Sotheby's employee hold a 102.39-carat D Color Flawless Oval Diamond during a media preview at Sotheby's in New York City. — AFP

## Sports

## Photo of the day



JaanRoose performs during the longest slackline walk in Tartu, Estonia. Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## Smith to have new concussion test ahead of 2nd England ODI

**MANCHESTER:** Australia star batsman Steve Smith is set to undergo a fresh concussion test before the second one-day international against England at Old Trafford today. Smith missed Australia's 19-run win in the first of a three-match series against world champions England after being hit on the head by a throw-down from a member of the tourists' coaching staff while batting in the nets on Thursday.

An Australia spokesman said Smith was being rested as a precaution despite passing a concussion assessment and would have another such test on Saturday. "Steve Smith got a knock on the head yesterday (Thursday) in practice so it's a precautionary measure to leave him out," Australia captain Aaron Finch told Sky Sports at Friday's toss. "(Marcus) Stoinis will bat at three."

Stoinis made a useful 43 as Australia, following a sticky start, compiled a total of 294-9 in their first match against England at this level since last year's World Cup semi-final defeat. Fast bowler Josh Hazlewood and leg-spinner Adam Zampa then reduced England to 57-4. Australia remained on top despite a maiden ODI hundred from Sam Billings, out for 118 off the last ball of the match as England finished on 275-9. But on a chilly evening in this day/night clash, left-arm quick Australia's Mitchell Starc appeared to be struggling towards the end of a wicketless 10-over spell that cost just 47 runs. The team spokesman said Starc had a "minor amount of soreness in the top of his leg/groin area" that ought to benefit from a day's rest on Saturday. — AFP

# Hazlewood strikes as Australia defeat England in one-day opener

## 'Marsh and Maxwell paced their partnership really well'

**MANCHESTER:** Josh Hazlewood took three wickets as Australia beat world champions England by 19 runs to win the first one-day international at Old Trafford on Friday.

Hazlewood struck twice early on during a miserly haul of 3-26 from his full 10 overs as Australia defeated arch-rivals England for just the third time in 14 ODIs. England, chasing 295 for victory, were a mere 22-2 off their first 10 overs.

And they were 57-4 when leg-spinner Adam Zampa struck twice in quick succession on his way to 4-55. But Sam Billings, one of just two members of the England side who didn't play in last year's World Cup final, hit 118 — his maiden ODI hundred — after sharing a fifth-wicket stand of 113 with Jonny Bairstow (84) that gave the hosts hope of an unlikely win.

Earlier Australia, in their first match at this level against England since a World Cup semi-final loss last year, made 294-9. They were in trouble at 123-5 before a stand of 126 between all-rounders Glenn Maxwell (77) and Mitchell Marsh (73) gave their bowlers enough runs to defend as they went 1-0 up in a three-match series.

"Marsh and Maxwell paced their partnership really well — they timed when to attack and when to soak up pressure and played two smart, mature innings," Australia captain Aaron Finch told Sky Sports. Player of the match Hazlewood added: "There was a bit there with the new ball and we made the most of it." England opener Jason Roy, fit again following a side injury, was brilliantly caught and bowled one-handed by Hazlewood for three before the fast bowler had Test captain Joe Root

caught behind for one.

Zampa then removed Morgan (23) and danger-man Jos Buttler in quick succession, the latter to a fine running catch by Marnus Labuschagne.

### 'RESILIENT' BILLINGS

Bairstow, however, hung in to complete a 78-ball, fifty. But after upping the tempo, the opener mistimed a drive off Zampa and was well caught by Hazlewood, running in from wide long-on.

Yet England, with all-rounder Ben Stokes still on compassionate leave with his ill father in New Zealand, were not quite out of the game.

Billings, having 'ramped' a boundary off left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc, pulled a four off Pat Cummins at the start of the penultimate over to complete a 101-ball hundred.

But a target of 28 off the last over, from Mitchell Marsh, proved too much and Billings was dismissed off the last ball of the match, having surpassed his previous ODI best of 67 not out against Ireland at Southampton in July.

Morgan praised Billings, 29, for retaining the "desire" to push for a place despite making just 19 ODI appearances in a five-year England career.

"To come in and have his maiden hundred here is outstanding," said Morgan. "It shows a lot of resilience and a lot of character."

Fast bowlers Jofra Archer and Mark Wood, in their first one-day international since last year's World Cup final, took three wickets apiece, with Australia in trouble at 123-5 after losing the toss on a blustery afternoon.

Archer, who bowled the decisive Super Over in



MANCHESTER: England's Sam Billings plays a ramp shot during the one-day international (ODI) cricket match between England and Australia at Old Trafford in Manchester. — AFP

England's dramatic World Cup final win over New Zealand at Lord's, clean bowled dynamic opener David Warner for just six on his way to figures of 3-57 and Wood's 3-54 saw him strike first ball when Finch edged behind. Australia were without Steve

Smith who was hit on the head batting in the nets on Thursday but Marcus Stoinis, filling in at number three, made 43 before he was well caught by diving wicketkeeper Buttler off Wood. The series continues at Old Trafford today. — AFP



## Rajasthan Royals launch 2020 jersey in most epic way possible

**DUBAI:** Rajasthan Royals have been enjoying a good pre-season, stationed at One & Only Resort, Royal Mirage in Dubai, ahead of the start of the 2020 campaign. On a relaxed morning at the beach of One & Only Resort, Royal Mirage, Dubai, Team Rajasthan Royals were in for a mind blowing surprise when they witnessed the Red Bull Skydiving and Wingsuit Athlete Dani Roman twist and turn through the air at break-neck speed.

The Spanish skydiving athlete jumped out of a plane, several thousand feet above the Palm Islands, carrying with him a Rajasthan Royals bag. Flying over the awe-struck Rajasthan Royals players as he left a strew of smoke through the air, he parachuted on to the beach and dropped off a bag full of Rajasthan Royals 2020 jersey for the players to grab them later.

The Rajasthan Royals players, excited by the thrilling official launch of their IPL 2020 jersey were able to touch, feel and of course proudly flaunt it.

Sharing his experience on this unique Rajasthan Royals jersey launch for IPL 2020 on the beaches of Dubai, Rajasthan Royals all-rounder and Red Bull athlete Riyan Parag said "I am aware of how Red Bull is about extreme sports and adventures so I was



excited and expecting something crazy to happen today. Sky diving is something on my bucket list and seeing someone come down from the sky today and land with our jerseys was amazing."

Rajasthan Royals' left-handed batsman David Miller, thrilled witnessing the Red Bull athlete Dani Roman fly down to their beach side to reveal and handover their amazing IPL 2020 team jerseys, said "Our mornings are generally very quiet but today it turned around totally with us being asked to head to the beach for a surprise. It was such a great view to see someone jumping off a plane and land to deliver our jerseys for the season. I have myself experienced skydiving in Dubai a couple of years back, brought back a lot of memories."

## Pollard 'in hospital', Beale sent off, in Racing's win

**PARIS:** Rugby World Cup winner Handre Pollard was taken to hospital with a knee injury after Montpellier's 41-17 Top 14 loss at Racing 92 on Friday as the hosts' Kurtley Beale was sent off on his home debut at Paris La Defense Arena.

South African Pollard, 26, who joined Montpellier on a reported annual salary of 1.06 million euros (\$1.2 million) after lifting the Webb Ellis trophy last November, was hurt while attempting to tackle Racing's Baptiste Chouzenoux in the second-half and was taken to a local hospital.

"Generally when someone leaves on a stretcher it's never very good despite the fact there can be different degrees of knee injuries," Montpellier coach Xavier Garbajosa said.

"I hope for him and the team it's benign. He's left for hospital," he added. Wallaby Beale was shown a red card with a quarter of the game to play after a dangerous tackle on France centre Arthur Vincent and could be a doubt for next Saturday's Champions Cup quarter-final at Clermont. "Of course it's bad news. It's frustrating, it's part of the game, I haven't seen it again, but it's a red card," said Racing's forwards coach Dimitri Szarzewski. "Now other players have a chance to express themselves," he added.

France prop Mohamed Haouas was brought back into the fold by the visitors after being disciplined for a reported altercation with a club spon-

sor and turning up late to training.

The Parisians' head coach Laurent Travers brought in eight new faces after last Saturday's win at Lyon but Wallaby Beale retained his place at full-back to make his home bow. They led 11-0 after 20 minutes thanks to Teddy Iribaren's two penalty kicks and Teddy Baubigny's try. Pollard claimed his team's first points with a shot at goal five minutes later before Juan Imhoff claimed Racing's second try of the evening just before the break.

### Russell assists

The home side's dominance continued into the second half as Virimi Vakatawa and Antonie Claassen benefited to touch down after delicate Finn Russell kicks. With 18 minutes to play Beale was given his marching orders for as his arm made contact with Vincent's head in a tackle.

Montpellier lock Janse van Rensburg made the most of the one-man advantage as he crashed over and France full-back Anthony Bouthier, who took over the kicking duties from Pollard, converted to make it 31-10 with a quarter of an hour to play. Substitute scrum-half Maxime Machenaud extended Racing's lead to 34-10 with a 67th minute penalty but the red card had a further impact as Travers conceded again. Pollard's club and country half-back partner Cobus Reinach raced through after a line-out move to dive over and Bouthier's extras made it 34-17. — AFP

## Sports

# Blackmon, Rockies slam past Angels

## Smith belts grand slam to power Mets past Blue Jays

DENVER: Charlie Blackmon's two-out grand slam in the bottom of the ninth capped a five-run rally and lifted the Colorado Rockies to an 8-4 victory over the Los Angeles Angels on Friday night in Denver. The Rockies entered the ninth inning trailing 4-3 after Angels catcher Anthony Bemboom homered in the top of the inning off Daniel Bard (3-2). Ryan McMahon's one-out homer off Angels reliever Ty Buttrey got the Rockies even in the bottom of the ninth, but they weren't finished. After Josh Fuentes doubled and pinch hitter Daniel Murphy walked, Angels manager Joe Maddon removed Buttrey (1-3) in favor of Jose Quijada. The lefty struck out Raimel Tapia for the second out but walked Trevor Story on four pitches to load the bases for Blackmon. Quijada fell behind in the count 3-1, then grooved a fastball that Blackmon hit over the fence in right-center field to end it. Tapia, Story, Blackmon and Fuentes each had two hits for Colorado, while Jared Walsh and Mike Trout had two hits apiece for Los Angeles.

### BREWERS 1, CUBS 0

Ryan Braun hit a walk-off sacrifice fly in the bottom of the ninth inning to lift Milwaukee over visiting Chicago. Christian Yelich drew a leadoff walk and moved to third on Jedd Gyorko's single to right against Rowan Wick (0-1). Jeremy Jeffress came in to face Braun, but his third pitch was the last of the game. Josh Hader (1-1) earned the win with a perfect inning. He and fellow reliever Devin Williams followed starter Brandon Woodruff, who struck out 12 over seven scoreless innings while yielding just one hit, two hit batters and no walks. Cubs starter Jon Lester tossed six scoreless innings.

### METS 18, BLUE JAYS 1

Dominic Smith hit a grand slam, Michael Conforto hit a three-run homer and had four RBIs, Jacob deGrom struck out nine and visiting New York defeated Toronto at Buffalo. Wilson Ramos added a three-run double in New York's 10-run fourth inning in the opener of a three-game series. Ramos finished with two doubles, a solo homer and four RBIs. It was the second straight lopsided win in a start by deGrom (4-1), who allowed one run, three hits and two walks

in six innings. The Mets defeated the Philadelphia Phillies 14-1 on Sunday. Toronto starter Chase Anderson (0-1) allowed four runs, four hits and three walks in 2 2/3 innings. Blue Jays shortstop Santiago Espinal pitched the ninth and allowed one run.

### YANKEES 6, ORIOLES 0 (GAME 1)

Gerrit Cole pitched a dominant two-hitter and New York beat visiting Baltimore to open a doubleheader, winning for only the seventh time in its past



**Voit hit three-run homers**

22 games. Cole (5-3) held the Orioles hitless for 4 2/3 innings until Hanser Alberto cleanly singled to right field. Before Alberto's hit, Ryan Mountcastle was the lone Oriole to reach as he reached on a throwing error by third baseman DJ LeMahieu in the second and walked in the fourth. LeMahieu hit a solo homer. Brett Gardner and Kyle Higashioka slugged two-run drives for New York, which won consecutive games for the first time since winning three games against the New York Mets on Aug. 29-30.

### YANKEES 10, ORIOLES 1 (GAME 2)

Luke Voit hit three-run homers in consecutive innings. Masahiro Tanaka (2-2) pitched five strong innings, and New York completed a doubleheader sweep of visiting Baltimore, sweeping a doubleheader for the second time this season. Baltimore lost its third straight following a four-game winning streak that included three home wins over the Yankees last weekend. Voit hit his first homer when he slugged a 1-2 fastball from Asher Wojciechowski into the Yankee bullpen in center field with no outs in the

Bay goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy.

Jean-Gabriel Pageau capped the scoring by writing a shot into an empty net with just 36 seconds remaining despite being hounded by Tampa's Nikita Kucherov.

Pageau was poked and prodded as he drove the empty net and then slashed by Kucherov as he scored. He turned to fight Kucherov, which set off a skirmish near the Lightning net involving all the skaters for both teams.

The Islanders' Matt Martin and Tampa Bay's Barclay Goodrow then fought immediately after the faceoff with Martin getting the upper hand.

Cal Clutterbuck and Adam Pelech also scored and goalie Semyon Varlamov stopped 34 shots for the Islanders in the NHL's quarantine bubble.

Mikhail Sergachev, Ondrej Palat and Tyler Johnson scored for the Lightning, who had their six-game winning streak snapped. Tampa is trying to reach their first Stanley Cup final since 2015.

New York bounced back from a heartbreaking loss in game two when Russian forward Kucherov scored the tiebreaking goal with eight seconds left to give the Lightning a 2-1 victory.

Tampa had to play without right winger Alex Killorn, who was suspended for an illegal hit that sent Nelson crashing into the boards in game two. Tampa Bay was also missing its leading playoff scorer, centre Brayden Point, who has an undisclosed injury. — AFP

Middlesbrough nearly grabbed an instant equaliser when Ashley Fletcher's deflected shot flashed just past the far post. But Warnock was left to bemoaning the sloppy winner.

"Sunday League goal, what can you say?" he said. "I don't expect to concede them at any stage of the season. It is just elementary."

### 'MY BLOOD IS YELLOW'

The rest of the Championship's opening round of matches take place on Saturday, with Norwich in the spotlight as they head to Huddersfield looking to bounce straight back to the Premier League after last season's relegation.

Daniel Farke's team could only manage a one-season stay in the top tier and finished a woeful 13 points adrift at the bottom.

Of their key players, Norwich have only sold Jamal Lewis so far and Farke is confident they can repeat their promotion success of two seasons ago.

"My blood is already yellow and for that I am keen to bounce back with this club," he said.

Huddersfield are beginning a new era under Carlos Corberan, who served as Marcelo Bielsa's assistant at Leeds.

Bournemouth, who were relegated after five seasons in the Premier League, are also starting life under a new manager.

The Cherries host Blackburn in Jason Tindall's first match since succeeding Eddie Howe.

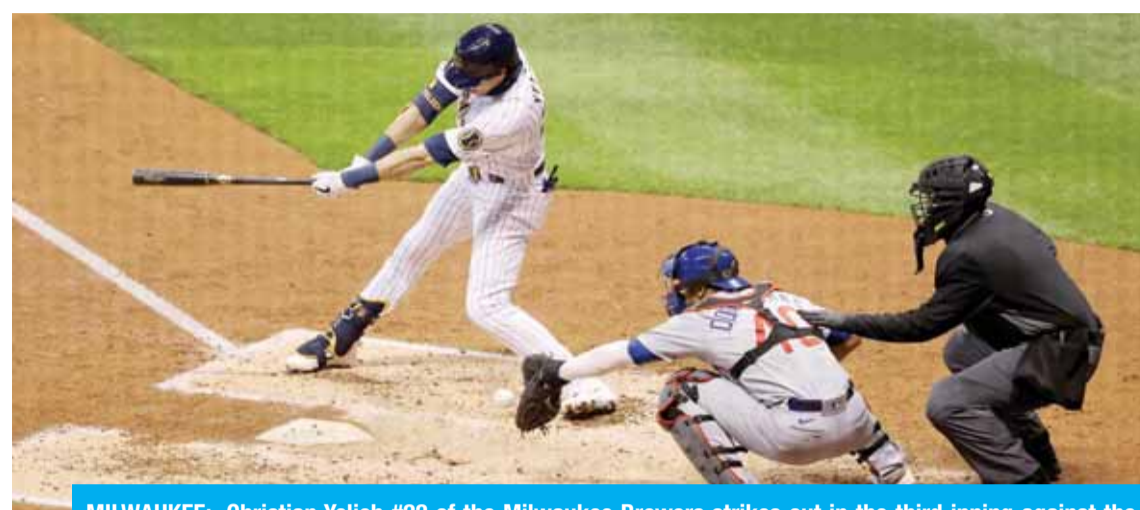
Ryan Fraser, Callum Wilson, Aaron Ramsdale and Nathan Ake have left but promotion is a clear target for Tindall.

"That is our aim, it has to be. We are ambitious. That is what I want to achieve, it is what the players want to achieve, it is what the club wants," he said.

Sheffiel Wednesday begin what could be a difficult season after their 12-point deduction with a trip to Cardiff.

Having won two Premier League titles and a Champions League crown, the most decorated new addition to the Championship is John Obi Mikel, the former Chelsea midfielder who has joined Stoke.

Wycombe will play their first ever match in the second tier when they host fellow promoted side Rotherham. — AFP



MILWAUKEE: Christian Yelich #22 of the Milwaukee Brewers strikes out in the third inning against the Chicago Cubs at Miller Park in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. — AFP

fourth. He tied Mike Trout for the major league lead with 16 homers when he blasted a 2-0 slider from Wojciechowski into the left field seats in the fifth.

### PHILLIES 11, MARLINS 0 (GAME 1)

Aaron Nola struck out 10, and Andrew McCutchen went 3-for-4 with three RBIs, leading Philadelphia to a win at Miami in the first game of the doubleheader. Nola (5-3) pitched a complete-game, seven-inning three-hitter — all singles — walking none. Two of the singles were by Brian Anderson, who produced Miami's first hit of the game in the fifth inning. It was Nola's first career complete game. Marlins rookie lefty Trevor Rogers (1-1), who struck out 10 in his previous start, had his first rough outing, allowing nine hits and nine runs, eight earned, in three-plus innings. He struck out the side in the first and finished with five punchouts.

### MARLINS 5, PHILLIES 3 (GAME 2)

Jorge Alfaro produced his fourth straight multiple-RBI game, leading host Miami to a doubleheader split with Philadelphia. The Marlins are now a half-game back of the Phillies in the battle for sec-

ond place in the NL East, which comes with an automatic playoff berth. Miami's offense was led by Alfaro's two-run single, Lewis Brinson's solo homer and RBI singles from Isan Diaz and Starling Marte. Alfaro has 10 RBIs on the season but eight in his past four games. Reliever James Hoyt (2-0) threw three pitches and earned the win. Yimi Garcia pitched a one-run ninth for his first save since 2015, doubling his career total.

### NATIONALS 8, BRAVES 7 (12 INNINGS)

Michael A. Taylor's two-out, two-strike hit into right field drove in Adam Eaton and gave host Washington an extra-innings win over Atlanta — just the Nationals' second extra-innings win of the season. The Braves rallied from a five-run deficit for the second straight night and scored three times in the ninth to tie the game 7-7. Marcell Ozuna, who was 5-for-6 with a double and a home run, drove in two of his four runs with a single that inning and Travis d'Arnaud tied it with a single to right. Atlanta outfielder Ronald Acuna Jr. had to leave the game in the fourth inning when he fouled a pitch off his left foot. X-rays revealed no fracture, and Acuna is listed as day-to-day. — Reuters

## Islanders snap Lightning's six game win streak

LOS ANGELES: Brock Nelson scored the eventual game winner as the New York Islanders avoided falling into a huge hole in their Eastern Conference final series by beating the Tampa Bay Lightning 5-3 on Friday in Edmonton.

American forward Nelson and Anthony Beauvillier both had a goal and an assist for the Islanders, who cut the Lightning's lead in the best-of-seven Stanley Cup playoff series to 2-1.

"This is a big win for us after being down 2-0 in the series," said Canada's Beauvillier. "We need to play the Islanders' way, be relentless, physical and work hard at both ends of the ice." Game four is today in Edmonton.

Nelson scored the tie-breaking goal with 3:25 left in the third period as New York squandered a 3-1 lead but managed to pull out the victory with two late goals.

Nelson picked off a Ryan McDonagh clearing pass to begin a play that ended with Nelson taking a pass from Beauvillier and firing a shot past Tampa

## Watford win in Championship opener

LONDON: Watford's bid for an immediate return to the Premier League got off to a promising start as they opened the Championship season with a 1-0 win against Middlesbrough on Friday.

The Hornets were relegated on the final day of last season after five years in England's top flight.

But they are among the favourites for promotion this term and Craig Cathcart's early goal at Vicarage Road ensured they made a winning start under new Serbian boss Vladimir Ivic.

"It is a good start, a clean sheet and we won the game so we can be satisfied," Ivic said.

After a close-season break lasting just 38 days, the English Football League has returned for a campaign that promises drama and despair in equal measures. The coronavirus-delayed finish to last season saw Leeds, West Bromwich Albion and Fulham reach the Premier League after a thrilling promotion race and play-off battle.

With promotion worth an estimated £160 million (\$204 million), clubs will be more desperate than ever to go up as football faces up to an uncertain future off the pitch.

Fans are still locked out of stadiums due to the pandemic and some teams are teetering on the edge of financial ruin as a result.

Against that troubled backdrop, Watford were especially keen for a convincing start.

They were without several injured players including Troy Deeney, Ismaila Sarr and Gerard Deulofeu, but Cathcart opened the scoring as he headed home from Ken Sema's cross from a short corner in the 11th minute.

Neil Warnock remains in charge of Middlesbrough after saving club from relegation when he took over on a caretaker basis towards the end of last season.



EDMONTON: Brock Nelson #29 of the New York Islanders is congratulated by Josh Bailey #12 after scoring a goal against the Tampa Bay Lightning during the third period in Game Three of the Eastern Conference Final during the 2020 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at Rogers Place in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. — AFP

## Klopp dismayed by end to five-sub rule in EPL

LONDON: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp branded the decision to not extend the use of five substitutes in the Premier League as a lack of common sense as he voiced his concerns for player welfare in a congested season.

The Reds begin the defence of their Premier League title at home to Leeds on Saturday in a campaign that is starting a month later than normal due to the three-month halt to last season caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Both domestic cup competitions in England have been retained, while Liverpool are among the clubs who will face six Champions League group games in seven weeks between late October and early December.

Despite the fixture pile up, the Premier League has not followed the example of other major European leagues in extending a temporary rule after the resumption of last season that allowed matchday squads to increase from 18 to 20 and managers to make five substitutions instead of three.

"We press a normal season into a shorter period which will be a proper challenge, especially with the wonderful rule we set up with 18 (players) and three (substitutes)," Klopp said on Friday.

"It's only about player welfare, nothing else, but I don't know why we have to discuss it at all and not everybody says yes of course, like the whole world is doing, at least the whole of Europe!"

Two votes on the rule found a majority of Premier League clubs were against the rule being extended with those nearer the bottom of the table fearing it gave the bigger clubs with better squads an even greater advantage. "I thought from a common sense point of view that for this year, only this year not forever, that we would have 20 and five," added Klopp. "What I really don't like is that we deal with this thing based on the wrong facts. — AFP

## Korda grabs two-stroke lead on Lee

LOS ANGELES: Third-ranked Nelly Korda, chasing her first major golf title, fired a five-under-par 67 to seize a two-stroke lead after Friday's second round of the LPGA ANA Inspiration. The 22-year-old American daughter of Czech tennis star Petr Korda, the 1998 Australian Open champion, stood on 11-under 133 after 36 holes at Mission Hills Country Club in Rancho Mirage, California.

"Everything in golf I feel like is all about confidence and momentum, so just having that confidence and believing in yourself is definitely really important," Korda said. South Korea's Lee Mi-rim was second on 135 after a bogey-free 65 with Denmark's Nanna Madsen and American Lexi Thompson — the 2014 winner — sharing third on 137. South Korea's Chun In-gee and Malaysia's Kelly Tan shared fifth on 138.

Korda, who began on the back nine, birdied the par-3 14th and 17th holes then birdied the first and made key par saves from 20 feet at the par-5 second and 25 feet at the par-4 third. "Definitely really important. I did not know what I was doing on those two holes. I was happy those two (par threes) went in."

"Golf is all about momentum. When those roll in, it makes it a lot easier," Korda, who led by one after 18 holes, rolled in a 10-foot downhill putt to birdie the par-3 eighth as well in desert heat.

"Thank God for my putting today," she said. "Just consistent play and having fun. We have a lot of fun on the golf course and try to keep it super light." Korda won last year's Women's Australian Open and French Ladies Open while defending her title at the LPGA Swinging Skirts Taiwan event.

"She played really well," Thompson said of Korda. "I'm just going to try to play my own game out here this weekend and see how it goes." Lee birdied the par-5 second and ninth holes as well as the par-3 fifth, then opened the back nine with a birdie and birdied three of the last five holes to stand second.

"It feels so good to be back and playing competitively," said Lee, who spent the shutdown in her homeland. Madsen birdied the par-5 ninth and 11th holes and sank another at the par-3 17th in a bogey-free 69 round.

"I was feeling pretty good," Madsen said. "Only hit four fairways today. I'm just happy I kept it going. I've been out of position a lot, so it has been very defensive."

Chun began on the back nine with back-to-back bogeys, but ran off three birdies in a row starting at 18 and battled to a 71. "I started to focus after first and second hole. Good concentration after," Chun said. "I kept trying. Enjoyed the play out there. It was a great comeback."

Chun, whose major titles include the 2015 US Women's Open and 2016 Evian Championship, rediscovered her love for golf after the coronavirus layoff. "Did weight training when we got the break," she said. "Now I've got the passion back to play golf a lot." — AFP

## 14 Hazlewood strikes as Australia defeat England



## 15 Blackmon, Rockies slam past Angels



## 15 Islanders snap Lightning's six game winning streak



NEW YORK: Dominic Thiem of Austria serves the ball in the first set during his Men's Singles semifinal match against Daniil Medvedev of Russia on Day Twelve of the 2020 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. —AFP

# Thiem beats Medvedev to reach final

## Osaka, Azarenka seek third Grand Slam in US Open final

**NEW YORK:** Dominic Thiem of Austria defeated Russia's Daniil Medvedev in straight sets to reach the final of the US Open on Friday. The second seed beat the third seed 6-2, 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (7/5) in 2hr 56min inside Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Thiem, 27, will play fifth-seeded German Alexander Zverev in today's final when they will both be looking for their first Grand Slam title. The score was slightly flattering to Thiem following what was a hard-fought close encounter that saw small shifts in momentum in both players' direction at different stages.

"It was great tennis from both of us," Thiem said. "Really, really happy to be through and I think it was a great semi-final." Thiem and Medvedev, last year's losing finalist at Flushing Meadows, traded long rallies with booming baseline forehands.

Both also brought their impressive defensive games to court and ultimately the match was decided by Thiem winning points at key moments.

Thiem comfortably took set one, dealing Medvedev his first loss of set during the tournament.

The Russian then squandered a 4-2 lead in the second set to lose it on a tie-break.

In set three Medvedev was on set point while serving at 5-3 but Thiem won a 38-shot rally to take game and

bring the set back on serve.

He then raced to a 5-1 lead that was reduced to 5-4 before he held his nerve to enter his fourth Grand Slam final and second in a row after his appearance in the last-two at this year's Australian Open.

Meanwhile, Naomi Osaka and Victoria Azarenka will both be looking to capture a third Grand Slam title when they clash in the final of the behind-closed-doors US Open. For Osaka, the fourth seed, it would be a third tennis major trophy in two years. For Azarenka, a former world number one, it would be a first since 2013.

It's a matchup between one of the game's young stars, going from strength to strength, and a veteran whose career is rejuvenated after several years in the doldrums. The 22-year-old Osaka, her profile rapidly rising due to a combination of powerful tennis and Black Lives Matter activism, says she's better prepared than when she stunned Serena Williams in the 2018 US Open final.

"I would say I feel like my mindset is much different this time around," said Japan's Osaka, following her three-set semi-final win over American Jennifer Brady.

"I feel like I've learned so much through the ups and downs, not even counting the finals, but just regular tour tournaments. "I would say mentally I feel stronger. I feel

fitter now. It's going to be interesting to see what happens," Osaka added.

Osaka, of Japanese and Haitian heritage, is wearing different masks honoring victims of racial injustice and police brutality throughout the tournament.

The 2019 Australian Open champion has donned face coverings bearing the names of Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, Ahmaud Arbery, Trayvon Martin, George Floyd and Philando Castile.

She will wear another for the Arthur Ashe showdown, which will take place without fans due to the coronavirus pandemic. "I do think it's a very big motivating factor for me just to try to, like, get the names out to as many people as I can," Osaka said.

Azarenka, 31, is brimming with confidence after coming from a set down to stun her old rival Williams and book a third US Open final. It will be her first appearance in the final of a tennis major since Williams beat her in the last-two of the US Open in 2013.

The Nuggets also suffered a heartbreaking loss to Williams in the 2012 US Open, when she served for the match at 5-3 in the third set only to lose 7-5. Azarenka's two major titles came at the Australian Open in 2012 and 2013.

She has endured a difficult few years. Injury plagued

2014 and 2015 before her career was further disrupted by a custody battle over her son, born in December 2016. Azarenka is back up to 27th in the rankings though, and is enjoying a fairytale run at the US Open after claiming last month's Western and Southern Open tune-up event in New York.

If she defeats Osaka then she will become only the fourth woman — after Belgium's Kim Clijsters, Court and fellow Australian Evonne Goolagong — to win Grand Slam singles titles in the Open era after having children.

Azarenka says she is benefitting from a more Zen outlook on life and revelling in the fact that few commentators expected the unseeded player to mount a challenge. "Mentally I'm in such a different place. I think seven years ago, after I won the Australian Open... it was kind of expected for me to be in the final.

"I don't think that was the case this year. It feels more fun this year, more fulfilling, more pleasant for me." Osaka and Azarenka have unfinished business after the Japanese pulled out of the Western & Southern final due to a hamstring injury, handing the title to Azarenka.

"She's a very, very powerful player," Azarenka said of Osaka. "She's a great champion. She's won two already. Aren't we both looking for a third one?" —AFP

## Celtics beat Raptors to advance, Nuggets stave off elimination

**LOS ANGELES:** Jayson Tatum finished with 29 points and 12 rebounds as the Boston Celtics booked their spot in the NBA's Eastern Conference finals with a 92-87 game seven win over the defending league champion Toronto Raptors on Friday.

Jaylen Brown scored 21 points, Marcus Smart added 16 points and Kemba Walker 14 for the Celtics who won the series 4-3 and advanced to their third Eastern Conference finals in the past four seasons.

"If you want to achieve something great, if you want to win, it's not going to be easy," Tatum said. "That's

what we're here for." Boston will play the Miami Heat with game one of the best-of-seven series scheduled for Tuesday in the quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida.

Fred VanVleet had 20 points to lead the Raptors, whose title defence came to a close after battling back from 2-0 and 3-2 deficits in the series.

"We didn't play great in this series. There is no denying that. But pretty much everything else we did this season, we were awesome," Toronto coach Nick Nurse said.

Kyle Lowry had 16 points before fouling out in the final minute. Pascal Siakam scored 13 points with 11 rebounds as the Raptors turned the ball over 18 times, including a half dozen times in the fourth quarter.

Celtics Smart made a clutch block on Siakam late in the fourth with Boston up by just two, 89-87. Lowry fouled out on the other end with 35 seconds to go.

Celtics rookie Grant Williams missed two free throw chances, but Tatum got fouled on the rebound and made one free throw for a 90-87 lead.

VanVleet missed a potential game-tying three with 12 seconds left by putting up an air ball. Walker made two free throws at the other end to seal the victory.

In the Western Conference, Jamal Murray sparked a fourth-quarter rally and rookie Michael Porter made several clutch plays down the stretch as the Denver Nuggets stayed alive with a 111-105 upset of the Los Angeles Clippers.

The Nuggets turned up the heat on the Clippers in the fourth quarter to cut Los Angeles' lead in the semi-final series to 3-2. Canada's Murray scored a team high 26 points, Nikola Jokic had 22 points, 14 rebounds, five assists and Paul Millsap tallied 17 points for the Nuggets, who were also down 3-1 in the previous series before storming back to win three straight against the Utah Jazz. Murray was able to bust loose in game five after being contained for much of the series by a rotating trio of Clippers defenders, including Kawhi Leonard, Paul George and Patrick Beverley.

"We play the best when our backs are against the wall," said Murray. "It is as simple as that. We came up fighting. They had a good start but we had to fight back."

American Porter made a series of key plays late in the game including a three-point dagger from 27 feet out with 71 seconds remaining to give the Nuggets a five point lead, 105-100.

Porter, 22, also had a clutch block on Ivica Zubac 35 seconds later and drained four free throws in the final 21 seconds. Leonard scored a game-high 36 points and George finished with 26 for the second seeded Clippers, who are trying to advance to their first Western Conference final. Leonard has scored at least 30 points in seven playoff games. He is averaging almost 30 points per game in the postseason but he didn't get much help from the Clippers bench in game five.

Murray rebounded nicely on Friday, making five of seven baskets from beyond the arc after shooting six-of-15 from the field in game four. —AFP