



2 Deputy Amir receives new state security chief



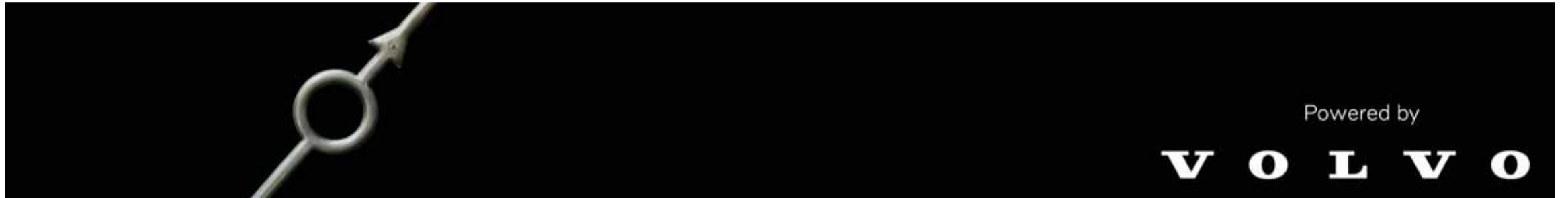
8 Once a US foe, now a friend: OPEC turns 60



9 TikTok rejects Microsoft offer, Oracle sole remaining bidder



15 Thiem beats Zverev to win US Open for first Grand Slam title



Boursa Kuwait skyrockets tenfold on record-breaking trading debut

Stock surges 1,100% since 100 files IPO



KUWAIT: (From left) Boursa Kuwait CEO Mohammed Saud Al-Osaimi, Board Member Faleh Abdullah Al-Ruqba, Board Member and Chairman of the Executive Committee Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, Chairman of the Executive Committee at Boursa Kuwait Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Boursa Kuwait Chairman Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi, Board Member Talal Jassem Al-Bahar and Chairman of the Risk Committee Khalid Waleed Al-Falah applaud during Boursa Kuwait's market debut yesterday.

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait surged more than tenfold in its trading debut yesterday as it became only the third publicly traded exchange in the Middle East. Shares in the bourse operator rose as high as 1,210 fils, after being sold at 100 fils in an offering to Kuwaiti citizens last year. Boursa Kuwait ("Boursa") owns and operates Kuwait's stock exchange, one of the oldest and largest exchanges in the Middle East.

It has exclusive rights on all local listings and public trading in Kuwait, and therefore has a captive market. Boursa has delivered a strong performance over the last 12 months, with trailing earnings per share (EPS) of 57.1 fils/share and a return on average equity of 39 percent, with no financial leverage and considerable cash flow. This has provided a strong platform for future growth and performance.

Boursa Kuwait yesterday completed its final milestone of its privatization and IPO process through listing on Boursa Kuwait itself. It closed its

first successful day of trading at KD 1.055 a share. The current price translates into a trailing price-to-earnings (P/E) multiple of 18.5x.

The Kuwaiti market is in the process of being upgraded to Emerging Market status in the MSCI Reclassification (effective Nov 2020), which has the potential to attract significant inflows from passive and active investors globally. Stock exchanges generally trade at high earnings multiples to reflect captive markets and low competition, recurring/predictive nature of revenues, high margins and strong operating cash flows.

To put Boursa Kuwait's valuation into perspective, consider the following: Listed exchanges globally generally trade at earnings multiples of between 20.0x and 30.0x, with a median multiple of 26.3x. Emerging market exchanges trade at average (median) earnings multiple of 28.2x. Examples: Dubai Financial Market trades at a P/E multiple of 49.4x and Deutsche Boerse trades at 25.8x.

No grace period for iqamas that expired in September

KUWAIT: Well-informed security sources said residency affairs departments have received instructions to apply the law on expats whose residencies expired on Sept 1 and who haven't renewed them, pointing out that they are not included in the grace extension period given till the end of Nov 2020.

The sources told local Arabic daily Al-Anbaa that others whose residency or visit visas had expired

from March till the end of August will be exempted from the fines, while those whose visas expired starting Sept 1 will be fined KD 2 a day unless they apply at a residency affairs department to get extensions.

Further, the sources justified the verbal instructions already in effect to the fact that expats whose visas expired on Sept 1 have no excuse for not renewing them, especially

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Assembly session postponed after 5 MPs catch virus

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly office yesterday decided to postpone its regular session scheduled for today until next week after at least five MPs tested COVID-19 positive, the Assembly speaker said. Marzouq Al-Ghanem told reporters that "more than five MPs have tested positive" for coronavirus and the health ministry will carry out tests on the remaining lawmakers and Assembly staff who came

in contact with the infected MPs.

Ghanem did not disclose the names of the infected MPs, but three of them - Adel Al-Damkhi, Yousef Al-Roudhan and Faisal Al-Kandari - announced they were infected on their Twitter accounts. The speaker said the ministry of health decided to conduct the tests on Saturday in order to allow seven days from the day of contact, so the results will be accurate.

Replying to a call by some MPs to hold the session with the remaining lawmakers, the speaker said no one knows who is healthy and who is infected until the tests have been conducted. He added that because the Assembly held sessions for three days last week, it is possible that the infected people came in contact with a large number of MPs and staff, and it's better to test all those who may have con-

tacted them.

The next session is scheduled to debate two grillings against HHI the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah filed by MPs Abdulkarim Al-Kandari and Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei over alleged mismanagement and violations. Also yesterday, the Cabinet postponed until further notice the start of the fifth phase of return to normal life amid the coronavirus pandemic, government spokesman Tariq Al-Mezrem said.

Meanwhile, MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari asked the prime minister if Kuwait has been asked to open its airspace to Israeli overflights and if Kuwait is taking part in today's ceremony at the White House to celebrate the official signing of normalization of ties between Israel with United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Israel-Gulf deals chart new era for Middle East

DUBAI: A new era for the Middle East will be charted today when the UAE and Bahrain sign agreements to recognize Israel, in a move that shatters the Arab world's consensus on the Palestinian cause. A jubilant US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are to sign the so-called Abraham Accords - a reference to the common traditions of Islam, Judaism and Christianity - at a White House ceremony.

Alongside them will be foreign ministers from the two Gulf states who will ink a deal that is expected to sketch out a highly fruitful collaboration among some of the Middle East's biggest economies, stretching across security, business, energy and science. They are not natural allies of Israel, but they share a common enmity towards Iran, which lies across a narrow strait from the island kingdom of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates' glitzy cities of Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Many of the oil-rich Gulf states have been quietly cultivating ties with Israel for years, but the normalization deal allows those relationships to burst into the open, offering rich opportunities as they try to repair economies savaged by the coronavirus crisis. For Trump, the accord is a significant win ahead of November's presidential election, and he

has revealed in his achievement, with the White House trumpeting his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize by a far right member of the Norwegian parliament.

"Another HISTORIC breakthrough today! Our two GREAT friends Israel and the Kingdom of Bahrain agree to a Peace Deal - the second Arab country to make peace with Israel in 30 days!" Trump tweeted. He said it was "so interesting" that he was able to announce the deal on the anniversary of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks by Islamist radicals against the United States.

Palestinian leaders have called for protests against the "shameful deals" over fears their drive for a homeland is losing steam in the Arab world, which had held fast to a 2002 Saudi-sponsored initiative calling for Israel's complete withdrawal from occupied territories.

The recognition is a huge coup for Netanyahu, bringing the Jewish state closer to its goal of acceptance on the world stage, and the reaction in Israel has been effervescent. "It feels like our countries are dating," said Jerusalem's deputy mayor Fleur Hassan-Nahoum. "We both see each other as exotic birds. There's such excitement in the air, both sides are thirsty for peace."

In the Gulf states though, the response to the deals has been much more restrained. The Emirati flag has been projected onto Tel Aviv's city hall, but the Israeli flag has not yet featured on Dubai's Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest tower which typically showcases the Gulf state's achievements and allies with flashy illuminations.

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Marrakesh 'suffocates' sans tourists

MARRAKESH: Snake charmers, storytellers and crowds of tourists: the legendary Jemaa El Fna square of Morocco's Marrakesh is almost as famous for the number of visitors as its colorful performers. But with tough government restrictions imposed to stem the spread of the novel coronavirus, the

tourism industry on which Marrakesh depends screeched to a halt. Now the 11th century UNESCO World Heritage site is almost empty, and the city is facing an unprecedented crisis.

"Before, you had to wait your turn to get a table," said Bachir, a waiter who has worked in the square for two decades, waving at the empty cafe terrace. His neighbor Mohamed Bassir worries for the future. "This is the first time I've seen the Jamaa El Fna so empty," the orange juice seller said, sitting behind his stall decorated in plastic fruit. "It makes me sad," Bassir said, waiting to squeeze fruit for customers who do not come.

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MARRAKESH: A man walks by mostly-closed stalls in the Jemaa El-Fna Square on Sept 8, 2020, currently empty of its usual crowds due to the COVID-19 pandemic. — AFP

Local

Deputy Amir receives new Kuwait State Security Chief



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (center) meets with Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh (left), and Chief of the State Security Bureau Major General Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh at Seif Palace yesterday. During the meeting,



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (center) meets with Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh (left), and Chief of the State Security Bureau Major General Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

minister Saleh presented to His Highness the Deputy Amir Major General Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, on the occasion of his appointment as Chief of the State Security Bureau. Minister Saleh also presented the new State Security Bureau chief to His



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

Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Separately, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

KRCS sends third relief plane to Sudan

KUWAIT/KHARTOUM: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) sent yesterday a third relief plane to Sudan, carrying humanitarian aid meant for the victims of flashfloods. In a statement to the press, KRCS's emergency management director Yousef Al-Miraj said the third plane contained humanitarian aid and 10 tons of blankets. He expressed his gratitude to the donors who contributed to the 'Relief Sudan' campaign, which was launched through the society's website, adding that they are coordinating with the Kuwaiti embassy in Sudan and the Sudanese Red Crescent to rapidly distribute the aid to affected people. Al-Miraj thanked Kuwait's defense and foreign ministries for facilitating the delivery of aid to help Sudan recover from this disaster.

A second planeload of relief supplies dispatched by Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) had arrived on Sunday in the Sudanese capital to relieve victims of wide-scale flash floods that made thousands of people homeless and inflicted heavy damage. Abbas Fadlallah, the humanitarian affairs commissioner in Sudan, expressed in a statement upon the plane's arrival deep gratitude to the State of Kuwait for the generous and ongoing support for the nation particularly during dire times. The KRCS General director Abdulrahman Al-Aoun indicated that camps would be built to shelter people whose houses were destroyed or washed away with the raging waters that also swamped large swathes of land in the nation. The aircraft that took off from Kuwait earlier on Sunday carried 40 tons of humanitarian aid meant for the victims affected by the flash floods. Miraj had said in an earlier statement that the plane contained foodstuffs, medicines, tents and water pumps. Miraj added that the association will inspect affected places and determine requirements of those affected by the natural disaster. "This is an obligation towards our brothers in Sudan," he said.

Sudanese authorities, since September 5, have



KUWAIT: This photo released by the Defense Ministry yesterday shows humanitarian aid being loaded into a plane heading to Sudan yesterday.

enforced a three-month state of emergency throughout the country amid mounting natural disasters, namely fall of heavy rain and overflow of the Nile. More than 557,000 people have been adversely affected with the catastrophes in 17 states of

Sudan. The torrential rainfalls and the raging waters have caused deaths of more than 100 people and injured at least 50 others. Thousands of houses have been demolished or swept away and many cattle have perished. — KUNA

KRCS restores 150 homes in Beirut

BEIRUT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) signed an agreement yesterday with the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) to restore homes of 150 families affected by the Beirut Port explosion which occurred on August 4. The Secretary General of LRC George Ketani said in a press statement that this agreement comes within the framework of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's keenness to providing humanitarian aid to those in need "in difficult times." He indicated that the restoration cost will be determined in line with condition of each family, especially those whose breadwinners were killed or

injured by the massive blast that claimed lives of at least 170 people and injured over 6,000 others. Meanwhile, head of KRCS mission to Lebanon Dr Musaed Al-Enezi affirmed the society's keenness to support the affected families, especially those who were unable to repair their homes in such difficult economic conditions. He pointed out that the society also provided medical equipment to hospitals affected by the explosion, as well as health supplies, food and electrical tools for the affected families. KRCS continues its humanitarian efforts in supporting Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon following the port explosion. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met yesterday US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski. During the meeting, both sides discussed mutual relations besides regional and international developments. — KUNA

Marrakesh 'suffocates'...

Continued from Page 1

Usually teeming with people, the square lies forlorn and empty of the musicians, souvenir sellers and fortune tellers who ordinarily ply their trade. Morocco declared a state of health emergency in mid-March and shut its borders to stop coronavirus from spreading. The North African nation of 35 million inhabitants has recorded over 1,500 deaths from coronavirus and more than 86,600 confirmed cases.

In the labyrinth of alleys leading from the Jamaa El Fna, the narrow streets once packed with stalls selling everything from slippers to spices are largely shuttered. Only a few are open, but the shopkeepers have little hope. "Most of the traders have closed their shops," said Mohamed Challah, who sells flowing caftan robes. "The others are opening to kill time because there is nothing to do at home," he said, adding that his store "no longer sells anything".

After the initial pandemic restrictions were eased, traders and tourist operators hoped domestic tourism might mitigate their losses. But then the surprise announcement of new restrictions, including the closure of Marrakesh and seven other cities, shattered hopes of a revival. Last year, the city attracted three of the 13 million tourists who came to the country.

For Jalil Habti Idrissi, who runs a 45-year-old travel agency, it will be "very difficult to bounce back". "We have experienced major crises in the past, but never of this magnitude," Idrissi said, adding his business had "collapsed." On social media, there are calls to "save" the city, with many using the hashtag "Marrakesh suffocates".

But many are also worried about the COVID-19 crisis itself, posting images of patients suffering from the virus. They show patients sleeping on the floor in the hospital in Marrakesh. The city's testing laboratories were overwhelmed. Marrakesh, along with the economic capital Casablanca, is among the most affected cities.

Like all governments, the authorities have to weigh lockdown measures against the need to keep the economy alive. Official figures predict the pandemic could push the country into its worst recession since 1996, with a contraction of more than five percent of its GDP. In desperation, some took to the streets to protest, calling on the government for help. "The coronavirus will not have time to kill us, hunger will take care of it before," read one banner held by protesters in Marrakesh on September 11.

Tourist operators cling on to a glimmer of hope, with the government allowing travellers not needing a visa to fly to Morocco - upon the presentation of a hotel reservation and a negative coronavirus test. But it is only a "partial opening of borders", said Ibtissam Jamili, who runs a five-star hotel in Marrakesh, mourning what he calls "colossal losses". — AFP

In addition, the sources stressed that other residency and visit visas that had expired before the end of August will be automatically extended till the end of November without any fines, and holders will have to legalize their status as soon as possible. Finally, the sources noted that new instructions indicate that no further grace periods would be given beyond the end of November, adding that extending absence permits for expats stranded abroad will continue provided their residency visas remain valid.

No grace period for iqamas...

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since residency affairs departments had started receiving the public by the end of June.

Backlash after gender reveal on Dubai tower

DUBAI: Social media stars in Dubai are facing an online backlash after staging what they billed as the "biggest baby gender reveal ever" on the world's tallest building in Dubai. While some were quick to congratulate Anas Marwah and Asala Maleh on their second child as the needle-like Burj Khalifa lit up in blue for a boy, others criticized the extravagant light show. Gender reveal parties are held during pregnancy to unveil the sex of the expected child, sometimes announced by pink or blue smoke fireworks.

The Dubai show coincided with a deadly blaze in California ignited by a firework at a gender reveal party. "What a waste!" said one Twitter user, after reports that the couple - whose families originally come from war-ravaged Syria - had spent tens of thousands of dollars on the stunt, allegations they denied. "We want to do something special but also memorable," Asala said.

The video of the event has been popular. By Sunday, it had been viewed more than 19 million times on the family's

YouTube account, which has more than 7.8 million followers. One critic took a more humorous approach to the event, tweeting: "Can you imagine the flex of these kids when they are older? 'Dubai kid: My gender was revealed at the Burj Khalifa! American kid: that is nothing, mine caused fire in California, burned more than 10,000 acres and caused pollution!'"

The display also came amid a spike in coronavirus cases in the United Arab Emirates, whose daily toll hit an all-time high on Saturday with 1,007 infections. "Glad to see the negative reactions towards the influencer gender reveal event on Burj Khalifa," said another Twitter user. "Thought the pandemic would cause an end to how grossly money is spent for PR stunts."

Gender reveal parties have fallen out of favor recently. Apart from the use of pink or blue fireworks, which are prone to causing accidents and fires, they are accused of reinforcing gender stereotypes. Even the woman credited with inventing the trend - lifestyle blogger Jenna Karvunidis, who wrote about her own party in 2008 - has urged people to stop. "Stop having these stupid parties," she said in a Facebook post last week. "For the love of God, stop burning things down to tell everyone about your kid's penis. No one cares but you." — AFP

"getting to know you" phase that observers say could be marked with rows and misunderstandings as well as declarations of affection.

"It's not like they're oil and water cultures - but they are very, very different social and political cultures," said Barbara Leaf, a former US ambassador to the UAE and now a fellow at the Washington Institute. In Emirati circles, "their hair was blown back by the clamor of the Israeli discussion on everything.. and so they're going to now meet and it's going to be pretty interesting to watch", she told AFP.

As the two sides head into uncharted territory, the framework in the accord will give confidence in what to discuss and how, said Moran Zaga, a researcher on the Gulf at Haifa University. "We're going to see a boom in almost every field," she said. "On a civilian level, science, culture, musicians performing here and there" along with endless business and diplomatic delegations exploring collaborations. "We haven't been talking about peace for the last 25 years, it was a word that wasn't heard much in my lifetime. So this is something that Israelis are so enthusiastic about hearing again... it has given them a sense of hope." — AFP

Israel-Gulf deals chart new era...

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Within minutes of the stunning announcement on Aug 13, there was a tussle over the terms of the deal with the UAE saying that plans to annex Jewish settlements had been stopped, only for Israel to insist they were merely suspended. There was also a testy exchange over the UAE's long-held ambitions to buy F-35 stealth fighter jets - which the accord could make a reality - after Netanyahu said he opposes a move that could blunt Israel's strategic edge.

But analysts say that despite the jarring optics, the UAE with its highly pragmatic brand of foreign policy is very much on board with a deal that will drive its goal of becoming a leading international player in a region long dominated by traditional powers Saudi Arabia and Egypt. To follow the Jerusalem deputy mayor's dating analogy, the two sides are now in a

Local

Kuwait's Foreign Minister meets Bahrain's Ambassador

Kuwait, GCC discuss boosting cooperation among members



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Bahrain's Ambassador to Kuwait Salah Al-Malki. —KUNA



Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan meets with Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf.

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received Bahrain's Ambassador to Kuwait Salah Al-Malki at his office yesterday. Assistant Foreign Minister for GCC Affairs Nasser Al-Muzayyen and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of Foreign Minister Saleh Al-Loughani attended the meeting, the ministry said in a statement.

In the meantime, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan and Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf discussed boosting cooperation between Gulf states on Sunday. The meeting also discussed joint GCC economic efforts in light of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a statement. Moreover, they discussed a patent protecting local

distributors and tackling issues facing the GCC countries in the commerce field. Senior state officials representing different state institutions attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Minister of Finance Barrak Al-Sheetan discussed with Dr Hajraf economic issues facing the Gulf states on Sunday. The two sides also discussed means of tackling economic difficulties caused by the coronavirus crisis, the Ministry of Finance said in a statement. The talks also dealt with boosting the work system of the GCC Customs Union, patent rights, as well as enhancing development and economic activities. GCC General Secretariat's assistant secretary for economic and developmental affairs Khalifa Al-Abri and a number of senior GCC and Finance Ministry officials attended the meeting. —KUNA



Minister of Finance Barrak Al-Sheetan meets with Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf.

Kuwait: 708 diagnosed with COVID-19 in 24 hours

KUWAIT: Up to 708 people contracted the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Kuwait in the past 24 hours, official spokesman of the Ministry of Health Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad announced yesterday. Dr Sanad, in a statement to the press, said the new batch of infected cases included a number of persons who contracted the virus due to mingling with people sickened with COVID-19, adding that infection circumstances of others were still to be determined. The latest group of people who tested positive for the globally spread pandemic were recorded, according to the country's health zones, as follows: 189 in Hawally, 165 in Al-Ahmadi, 157 in Farwaniya, 121 in the capital and 76 in Al-Jahraa. The number of ailed people that continue to receive intensive medical care has amounted to 86, Dr Sanad said, noting that the whole count of proven cases that remain under treatment has reached 9,408.

Medical staff conducted, during the past 24 hours, up to 3,928 swab tests, he said, putting the tally of such examinations, so far, at 679,670. The health ministry declared earlier that 506 of COVID-19 patients recovered during the same period, and revealed that the total figure of the recuperated stood at 85,501. Dr Al-Sanad appealed upon the public to remain vigilant and continue to heed the calls for protective measures against the highly contagious pathogen. —KUNA

Kuwaitis' 60 years efforts in OPEC prominent: Official

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti employees at OPEC played a big role in developing the organization's work for 60 years, said Kuwait's Governor at OPEC Haitham Al-Ghais yesterday. Kuwait is one of the founding countries of OPEC in 1960, Ghais said in a press statement on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of establishment. He noted that the organization is run by the Governors Council and the economic council, hailing the efforts of all Kuwaitis who worked in these positions. The hard work of Kuwaiti employees represents the great reputation of Kuwait in the oil field, said Ghais.

OPEC Secretary-General Mohammad Sanusi Barkindo, marking the organization's 60th anniversary, had highlighted the vital role of the organization in maintaining the stability of the global oil market. In a message to the press, Barkindo said the

organization stood the test of time over the past six decades and continued contributing to the world's economic development. OPEC was founded on September 14, 1960, in Baghdad in the presence of the oil ministers of the five co-founders, namely, Ahmad Sayed Omar (Kuwait), Dr Fuad Rouhani (Iran), Talaat Al-Shibani (Iraq), Abdullah Tariki (Saudi Arabia) and Juan Pablo Perez Alfonzo (Venezuela).

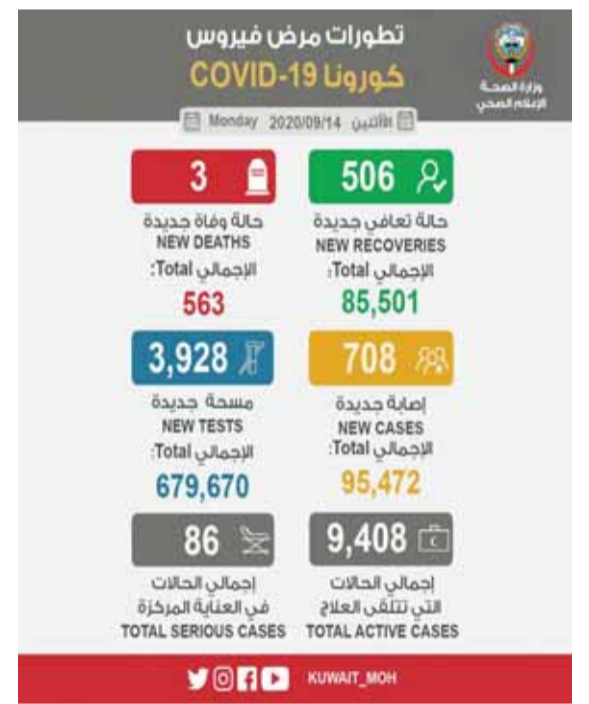
The OPEC chief recalled the late Venezuelan minister's statement at the founding ceremony that the founding countries got united "to make history." The organization has become an integral part of the global energy community and plays an indispensable role in the policymaking of the oil industry, Barkindo stressed. It also backs up the humanitarian issues through contributions to the sustainable development, the combat against poverty, environ-



Haitham Al-Ghais

ment protection and ensuring energy for all, he pointed out. Barkindo renewed OPEC's resolve to address all challenges and continue its commitment to striking a balance in the oil market so as to serve the interests of producers and consumers alike.

OPEC will also continue strengthening cooperation and dialogue with non-OPEC countries with a view to addressing the challenges lying ahead in the humanitarian issues and sustainable development, he vowed. Concluding, he thanked Austria, on behalf of the OPEC members, for hosting the Organization's HQ in Vienna and facilitating all activities of the Organization for more than 55 years. Early this month, OPEC decided to postpone sine die the celebrations of its Diamond Anniversary, originally scheduled to take place in the Al-Shaab Hall in Bab Al-Muaadham in Baghdad, due to outbreak of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19). In a letter to Barkindo, Iraq's Oil Minister Ihsan Abdul-Jabbar Ismael said, "It is very unfortunate that we are unable to mark OPEC's Diamond Anniversary in September at the same site where the historic Baghdad Conference took place." He added, "The health and safety of all are of utmost importance." —KUNA



News in brief

265 companies suspected of human trafficking

KUWAIT: Kuwait referred 265 companies to authorities during the COVID-19 crisis on human trafficking suspicions, Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said. She also revealed that the government signed 4,497 contracts with private companies in the past 10 years. There are 28,748 expatriate employees whose visas have expired, out of a total of 419,421 hired under those contracts, the minister said in response to an inquiry filed by MP Khaled Al-Otaibi, and published by Al-Anbaa yesterday. There are 1,348 companies that have contracts with the government, employing around 100,000 employees, the minister said.

Rent cases back in court

KUWAIT: Head of Kuwait High Court Dr Adel Bourseli ordered rent judicial departments in courts around Kuwait to handle a total of 132 rent cases a day, Al-Qabas reported yesterday. There are 66 rent judicial departments in five governorates, operating for five days a week. This decision helps address the large number of rent court cases that were put on hold during the COVID-19 crisis, said sources quoted in the report, adding that the crisis itself has caused an increase in the number of rent cases due to several tenants' failure to pay rent.

Bureau sends warning

KUWAIT: Used tires continue to pile up in Shaqaya due to lack of coordination between state departments and failure to push forward recycling projects, the State Audit Bureau said. The bureau warned that unless action is done to regulate the area, it might end up facing a similar scenario as Erhaiya which had witnessed a huge blaze in a massive used tire dump in recent years, Al-Jarida reported.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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Jason Khai Phan

US service member dies in accident

KUWAIT: A US service member has died in a non-combat incident at an air base in Kuwait, the US Department of Defense announced Sunday.

Senior Airman Jason Khai Phan, assigned to the 66th Security Forces Squadron at Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts died Saturday in "a single-vehicle, non-combat related accident while conducting a routine patrol outside the perimeter of Ali Al Salem Air Base," according to a release.

Two other airmen were injured in the same accident: both were sent to a medical facility at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, with "non-life-threatening injuries," according to military releases.

Phan, 26, from Anaheim, California, was supporting Operation Inherent Resolve, the US Defense Department's campaign against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. According to Hanscom officials, his work while deployed included helping with preliminary criminal investigations, supporting base security, rendering emergency first aid and other base support functions.

Human trafficking suspect paid 'huge bribe' to leave Kuwait: Report

Sabah health zone fire under control after 40 hours

KUWAIT: As the criminal court set the first hearing in the case filed against a Bangladeshi lawmaker and others accused of human trafficking, Bangladeshi criminal investigators leaked the details of investigations conducted with suspect A Hussein (aka Sirajuddin), about whom Al-Rai had written on August 20 as one of the main suspects detained in Kuwait.

However, Sirajuddin managed to flee Kuwait. According to Bangladeshi newspaper Dhaka Tribune and during investigations conducted with him in Bangladesh, he claimed that he paid a huge bribe to Kuwaiti immigration investigation officials who helped him flee Kuwait after the Bangladeshi lawmaker was arrested with six others on June 6, 2020.

Sirajuddin told his interrogators that he had been detained in Kuwait after the Bangladeshi MP was arrested. He was then released on bail along with two other leaders of the human trafficking network pending further legal action, but then disappeared.

The suspect added that with the help of immigration investigation officials whom he bribed with a large sum of money, he managed to fly back to Bangladesh despite not having any passport or other legal documents. He explained that the bribed Kuwaiti officials arranged to switch off CCTV surveillance cameras on his path to board a plane at Kuwait International Airport.

Bangladeshi criminal investigation officials told the newspaper that they are currently working on investigating how Sirajuddin and two other suspects managed to enter Bangladesh through Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka. Notably, Bangladeshi criminal investigators had arrested Sirajuddin in August based on information provided by their Kuwaiti peers, as he is one of the major associates of the detained Bangladeshi MP.

Two perish in Wafra blaze

KUWAIT: Two people died in a fire that broke out in a workers' residence in a Wafra farm at dawn yesterday. Firefighters from the Nuwaiseeb and Wafra fire stations responded and put out the blaze, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate said in a press statement. The bodies of the two Asian men were taken to the coroner for an autopsy. Meanwhile, an investigation was opened into the case.



Health zone fire

Following up on the fire that recently broke out in a parking building in Sabah health zone, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) sources said it took around 300 firefighters, of whom 55 were injured, some 40 hours to control the fire. The sources added that firefighting teams have started final inspections of the building to make sure the fire is completely put out and that investigations are in progress to determine the cause of the fire pending referring the final report to relevant authorities soon.

The sources explained that the construction contractors had taken advantage of the lockdown during the coronavirus crisis and used the parking building - comprising of two basements and ground, first and second floors - to store construction materials, tools and sanitary ware, dividing the parking lot into storage sections, which impeded firefighters' efforts. The sources added that the building is still in the contractor's custody and that he had not turned it over to MoH or KFSD, which means that they are not responsible for the building.

Stabbing suspect at large

A search is on for a young man who stabbed two brothers inside their diwaniya in Sabahiya before fleeing the scene, Al-Rai reported quoting security sources. Case papers said police detectives and paramedics rushed to the scene on receiving a report about the incident. The two brothers received medical treatment, while a third brother told detectives that a friend with whom they had a disagreement barged into the diwaniya waving a knife, which he used to stab his brothers before fleeing the scene. In a separate case, two Kuwaitis settled a dispute by stabbing each other in Salihiya, said security sources.

noting one of them fled the scene and the other rushed to a hospital to get a medical report about his injuries and filed a complaint. A case was filed and a search is on for the other suspect.

Landmine found

Kuwait Army explosive experts blew up an old landmine found near Sulaibiya farms only 300 m away from the main road, said security sources, noting that further inspection of the surrounding area is in progress to make sure no more landmines are buried there. Meanwhile, an interior ministry bomb squad was dispatched to deal with an RPG shell and dozens of bullets found by a worker at the Shadadiya university project site along Mutlaa highway, said security sources, noting that the ammunition had been left over by invading Iraqi troops. Separately, Mubarak Al-Kabeer hazardous substances combat teams managed to control a diesel leak after a fuel tanker turned over along King Fahd Highway, injuring the driver.

Landlord, tenant dispute

A Kuwaiti tenant filed a complaint against his landlord accusing him of banging his door and threatening to break it down due to some disagreements between them. The tenant added that when he told the house owner that he will call Rawda police, the latter insulted him and dared him to do so. A case was filed and the owner is being summoned for further investigations.

Deadly accident

A Pakistani ready mix truck driver was killed when he lost control over his truck and it turned over along Nuwaiseeb road.

In my view

Let us eliminate the burning stick



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

I must start right away by saying that smoking tobacco is harmful, dangerous and fatal in many different ways regardless of its type, form, full strength, light, etc. All tobacco is bad. Many out there will say we already know that it is harmful and many of them are smokers who might skip a meal but never a cigarette! Allow me here to say that such smokers are slaves to this burning stick and are in its control.

I had a chance to work in the field of fighting smoking, during which I met many people, young and old, women and men, and yes children only 13 and 14 years old who were smoking. The majority of them claimed they wanted to quit smoking, but very few actually did, as most of them could not kick the habit. I cannot describe to you how horrible was the cough of some of the children I dealt with because of smoking. Here is what the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says about the adverse effects of smoking regarding cardiovascular diseases:

Smokers are at greater risk for diseases that affect the heart and blood vessels (cardiovascular disease).

- Smoking causes stroke and coronary heart disease, which are among the leading causes of death in the United States.

- Even people who smoke fewer than five cigarettes a day can have early signs of cardiovascular disease.

- Smoking damages blood vessels and can make them thicken and grow narrower. This makes your heart beat faster and your blood pressure go up. Clots can also form.

- A stroke occurs when:
 - A clot blocks blood flow to part of your brain;
 - A blood vessel in or around your brain bursts.
- Blockages caused by smoking can also reduce blood flow to your legs and skin.

Smoking can cause lung disease by damaging your airways and the small air sacs (alveoli) found in your lungs.

- Lung diseases caused by smoking include COPD, which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

- Cigarette smoking causes most cases of lung cancer. If you have asthma, tobacco smoke can trigger an attack or make an attack worse.

- Smokers are 12 to 13 times more likely to die from COPD than nonsmokers.

Believe me, these are just few things smoking cause. Actually what prompted me to write about this is that there are some prominent companies in the tobacco field who are now directly or indirectly saying that smoking is bad and harmful by introducing new forms of smoking or nicotine delivery devices into the body, but for me smoking or anything close to it is smoking and harmful.

A personal note - my father was a heavy smoker, and smoked for many years. He was healthy and active until one day he was diagnosed with ischemia, which is a condition of narrowing of the arteries, and had to undergo bypass surgery, which was a major thing at the time. He suffered a lot and passed away, all because of smoking.

Please, for the sake of yourself, and for those who love you: Stop smoking!

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KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry recently conducted an inspection tour at markets and shops in Fahaheel to monitor prices.



Bodies recovered at DR Congo mine accident site

Navalny's allies claim symbolic council seat wins in regional polls

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TOKYO: (From L to R) Japan's former foreign minister Fumio Kishida, outgoing Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, newly elected leader of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Yoshihide Suga and former defence minister Shigeru Ishiba celebrate after ruling party's leadership election in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Japan ruling party picks successor to Abe

Next prime minister will face a raft of complicated challenges

TOKYO: Japan's ruling party voted yesterday for its next leader, with top government adviser Yoshihide Suga all but certain to win and replace Shinzo Abe as the country's new prime minister. Chief cabinet secretary Suga is heavily tipped to win the Liberal Democratic Party ballot, with a parliamentary vote tomorrow set to elevate him to the country's top job.

Even before he formally announced his run, the 71-year-old had won the support of key factions within the ruling party, with his candidacy viewed as promising stability and a continuation of Abe's policies. The LDP has chosen to poll only its lawmakers in parliament and three representatives from each of the country's 47 regions, eschewing a broader ballot including rank-and-file members that officials said would have taken too long to organise.

The format is expected to further bolster Suga against his two competitors, former defence minister Shigeru Ishiba and LDP policy chief Fumio Kishida.

Ishiba is popular with Japanese voters, but viewed with suspicion by some in his party for having once left its ranks and also challenging Abe's

leadership. Kishida was formerly viewed as Abe's favoured successor, but appeared to fall from grace in the months before the prime minister decided to step down.



Abe smashed records

Abe, who smashed records as Japan's longest-serving prime minister with more than eight years in power over two terms, has declined to endorse any one candidate. He made the shock announcement he would step down with a year left in his mandate in late August, saying a recurrence of the ulcerative

colitis he has long battled made it impossible for him to stay on.

If Suga succeeds him, analysts say no major policy reversals are on the agenda, and the candidate himself has said his run is intended to ensure a continuation of Abe's key policies.

Snap election?

The next prime minister will face a raft of complicated challenges. The country was already in recession before the coronavirus pandemic, and many of the gains of the signature Abenomics economic policy are now in danger.

Suga has said kickstarting the economy will be a top priority, along with containing the virus — essential if the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics are to open as planned in July 2021. There are also diplomatic challenges on the agenda, including protecting the US alliance and navigating ties with China as global opinion hardens against Beijing after the coronavirus and unrest in Hong Kong.

"Now is a difficult time for Japan as the US is

putting pressure on China," said Makoto Iokibe, a professor of political and diplomatic history at University of Hyogo. "But simply following the path Washington is pursuing and raising tensions with China is not in Japan's interest," he told AFP.

One key unknown remains whether Suga will decide to call a snap general election to consolidate his position and avoid being seen as a caretaker facing a new vote in a year — when Abe's mandate would have ended. Several senior government officials have mooted the possibility, perhaps as early as October, but Suga has been circumspect so far. A large part of Japan's fractious opposition has recently come together in a new bloc, hoping to pose a stronger challenge to a ruling party that has held power for all but a few years in the last six decades.

But the LDP would still be heavily favoured in any new elections, even if Suga's personal appeal to voters remains an open question. "Mr Suga is capable of implementing policies by controlling bureaucrats, but his weakness is in winning the heart of the public," said Iokibe. — AFP

Israel to reimpose lockdown as WHO reports record cases

JERUSALEM: Israel said it will reimpose a national lockdown to battle a coronavirus surge, as the number of daily infections around the world reached a record high. Britain, France, Austria and the Czech Republic also reported spikes, as global cases rapidly approached 29 million with more than 921,000 Covid-19 deaths, according to an AFP tally. The Israel lockdown will last three weeks starting Friday, keeping people to within 500 metres (yards) of their homes. It is the first developed economy to take such drastic steps to contain a second wave of infections.

"I know these measures will exact a heavy price from all of us," said Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu. The World Health Organization reported 307,930 new cases worldwide on Sunday, the highest daily figure in its database since the beginning of the pandemic.

The surge has sparked concern in Europe, where Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz warned that his country was facing "the beginning of the second wave". The Czech Republic has also faced a surge, with one epidemiologist saying over the weekend that at the current rate, cases could overwhelm hospitals.

New restrictions are set to come into force across England, with social gatherings limited to no more than six people. Other

parts of the world are still battling their first coronavirus waves, including some of the most populous nations such as Indonesia, where new restrictions came into effect yesterday.

'Reckless and selfish'

Governments are being forced to balance the devastating economic cost of lockdowns with the need to contain the deadly virus. Schools in some European nations were set to open on Monday, with millions returning to classrooms in Italy, Greece and Romania.

And Saudi Arabia announced it would partially lift its suspension of international flights from September 15, six months after travel curbs were imposed. South Korea's coronavirus restrictions will also be eased temporarily in the greater Seoul area from yesterday after cases declined.

Many nations have seen backlash and protests against lockdowns. In Australia on Sunday, police arrested dozens at an anti-lockdown rally in Melbourne after crowds defied stay-at-home orders.

That rally followed demonstrations in Germany and Poland on Saturday, which were attended by anti-vaccine campaigners, conspiracy theorists and far-right activists. Such rallies have also been organised frequently in the United States, the hardest-hit nation in the world with more than 6.5 million infections and 194,000 deaths. President Donald Trump is under pressure over his handling of the outbreak, and was slammed for holding big rallies over the weekend, including an indoor event on Sunday.

"Tonight, President Donald Trump is taking reckless and selfish actions that are putting countless lives in danger here in Nevada," state governor Steve Sisolak, who is from the rival Democratic Party, tweeted ahead of the Sunday rally. "The President appears to have forgotten that this country is still in the middle of a global pandemic." — AFP



JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gives a briefing on coronavirus developments in Israel at his office in Jerusalem. Israel's government announced it would impose a three-week nationwide lockdown in an effort to stem one of the world's highest novel coronavirus infection rates after a surge in cases. — AFP

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International

Trump and Harris head for California as US wildfires ignite political row

'This isn't about forest management or raking'

PORTLAND: President Donald Trump was due to visit California for a briefing on record wildfires that have killed 35 people, as West Coast officials and political opponents accused him of being in denial about climate change.

The history-making blazes have now burned through nearly five million acres (two million hectares) across the US West, torching an area roughly the size of the state of New Jersey, with fears the death toll may rise.

Kamala Harris, the Democratic vice-presidential candidate who tweeted that Trump "denied evidence" the flames were "intensified by the climate crisis," is also set to tour the damage, as the infernos ignite a political conflagration.

"This is climate change, and this is an administration that's put its head in the sand," Eric Garcetti, the Democratic mayor of Los Angeles, told CNN's "State of the Union" Sunday.

Of at least 35 people killed by the blazes since the beginning of summer, 27 died this week alone. Dozens were still missing on Sunday. Trump has made little comment about the blazes in recent weeks, but at a Nevada campaign event on Saturday he acknowledged the scope of the disaster.

"They never had anything like this," said Trump, who systematically downplays global warming. "Please remember the words, very simple, forest management." He plans to meet today with the heads of California's emergency services, while California senator Harris will tour the damage a day later. Garcetti hit back at the president's earlier remarks, saying that "anybody that lives in California is insulted by that." "Talk to a firefighter if you think that climate change isn't real... This isn't about forest management or raking."

With battle lines drawn ahead of November's election, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden is also due to address the wildfires and their cause. He recently called the threat of climate change "undeniable" and "existential."

Much of the West Coast remained coated in dense smog through Sunday, with Portland by a distance the world's most air-polluted city according to IQAir. "It's apocalyptic," Washington state Governor Jay Inslee told ABC's "This Week."

"It's maddening right now we have this cosmic challenge to our communities, the entire West Coast of the United States on fire, to have a president to deny that these are not just wildfires, these are climate fires," he said.

Most of the fatalities have occurred in California and Oregon, with emergency services in the two states recording 34 deaths. More than 30,000 firefighters are battling the blazes, with officials warning that improved weather could end Monday as windier conditions return to the dry region.

Residents of Arcadia, on the outskirts of Los Angeles, were ordered to evacuate Sunday as the nearby Bobcat Fire spread south through forested terrain toward the metropolis. Two new deaths were confirmed from the North Complex Fire, which swept at unprecedented speeds this week into areas already ravaged less than two years ago by the Camp Fire — California's deadliest ever blaze.

"There are still active fires, power lines are down, trees are down, there are roads that are impassable," said Sheriff Kory Honea, warning evacuees it could take "weeks and weeks" to return to their homes.

Paul Clement described to AFP how he fled his home in Berry Creek. "When I came around the bend, everything was on fire — an entire hillside. So I ended up driving through and you couldn't see fifty feet (15 meters)."

"It was worse than the Camp Fire, which I didn't think was possible." California has seen 3.3 million acres burn — an annual record, with more than three months of the fire season still to come — and over 4,100 structures destroyed.

Near the Beachie Creek Fire, east of Oregon state capital Salem, police had set up multiple road-



HENDERSON: US President Donald Trump speaks during a campaign event at Xtreme Manufacturing on September 13, 2020 in Henderson, Nevada. Trump's visit comes after Nevada Republicans blamed Democratic Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak for blocking other events he had planned in the state. —AFP

blocks on Sunday. Long lines of cars stretched in front of them, waiting in the thick fog to pass through.

Many were farmers trying to go home and feed their livestock. "We went back to Mill City this morning, but police advised us not to as it is dangerous," resident Elaine Early told AFP. "The house is ok, but we leave now because the conditions are

really not good."

"My son is six and he is in shock, it's hard for him," the 36-year-old added. "He keeps telling me, 'We live in a hotel now?'"

Preparations have been hampered by online claims that "extremists" are intentionally setting fires in Oregon, rumors debunked by the FBI. Facebook said it was removing the posts. —AFP

Japan next premier's hometown highlights challenges ahead

YUZAWA: It's noon on a warm day in the Japanese town where Yoshihide Suga, Japan's next prime minister, grew up, but more than half the stores in a downtown shopping arcade are shuttered and sidewalks stretch empty except for the rare elderly passerby.

A building proclaiming "I Love Yuzawa" stands abandoned. A giant department store nearby hulks over the street, mostly unusable because it doesn't meet earthquake safety standards but too expensive to tear down.

The remote part of Yuzawa where Suga grew up, 480 km (300 miles) northeast of Tokyo, captures key challenges his administration will face: half the residents in the area are over 60. Depopulation and ageing have meant a dramatic fall in tax revenue, pushing the town's government, reliant on support from Tokyo, to consider merging with other towns in Akita prefecture.

"Japan is the world's fastest-aging nation, Akita the fastest-aging prefecture and Yuzawa one of the worst in Akita," said town employee Toru Abe, noting that close to 40% of all Yuzawa residents are over 65, compared to 28% for the nation.

"If we didn't have fiscal support from the central government, we couldn't make ends meet," said Abe. Of the town's annual budget of 27 billion yen (\$250 million), he said, only about a fifth comes from taxes.

Suga is on track to be chosen leader of Japan's ruling party yesterday and elected prime minister on Wednesday, succeeding long-serving Shinzo Abe, who is resigning for health reasons.

Yuzawa, which sees two-metre (6 1/2-foot) snowfalls that locals say make them tough, has marked Suga, 71, as a self-made politician among hereditary lawmakers from wealthy families. It has also influenced his best-known policies.

These include promoting inbound tourism, reforming the country's vast agricultural cooperative network and introducing a "hometown tax" — a system allowing people to pay local taxes to an area other than where they live and, in return, getting deductions and local delicacies like beef or rice.

"He talked about it long before then, saying he grew up in Akita and benefited from tax revenues, then moved down here and feels strange not paying anything. He wondered if there was a system to make it possible," said Hiromi Okazaki, a retired bureaucrat who worked for Suga in the Internal Affairs Ministry when Suga ran it and introduced the scheme in the 2000s.

Most residents in Yuzawa blame the economic decline on the devastating population slide, largely due to a low birth rate and lack of jobs in the town reliant primarily on rice farming. In 1955, Yuzawa had 80,000 residents, some working at a now played-out silver mine. The population has since shrivelled by half. Only 442 high school students graduated last year. With 16.4 deaths for every 1,000 residents in 2019, Akita has Japan's highest death rate. That compares with 11.2 deaths nationwide. Its birth rate, 4.9 per 1,000, is Japan's lowest. Town officials project 400 million yen (\$3.8 million) in revenue from Suga's "hometown tax" in the fiscal year through March. It's not enough to turn its fortunes around, they say, but

in Yuzawa, every bit helps.

By a row of cigarette vending machines in the city centre hangs a sign: "Tobacco taxes are important for our area. Let's buy cigarettes!" In 2019, the tax brought in 209 million yen, it says.

In 2015, Akita crafted a plan to stem the demographic decline with steps such as expanding medical subsidies for schoolchildren, providing extra daycare support and helping workers repay student loans. But local residents say it's hard to revive an aging economy. "If only we had places people wanted to come, like shops," said Momoko Takahashi, 33, a Yuzawa native, preparing to open a cafe in October. "Even a big supermarket would help."

Suga's family home still stands in a remote part of Yuzawa, empty since his aging mother moved to a nursing home three years ago.

The Akinomiya hamlet was known for its rice fields, and adult male farmers left their families each winter to work in Tokyo to make ends meet — a practice Suga's father, Wasaburo, helped eliminate by venturing into more lucrative strawberry farming and forming a co-op.

"He would have seen his father's thinking, his father's initiatives and that would have grown up in him naturally," said Masashi Yuri, 71, who lived just a few houses away from Suga.

Suga helped out in the strawberry fields and was quiet and stubborn as a classmate, practicing baseball for hours at night to get the third-baseman spot he wanted, Yuri said.

"He doesn't show anything on his face, he doesn't show his emotions, but in the shadows, he makes extreme efforts," Yuri said. Of the 200 strawberry farmers who made the area famous for tart summer berries, only some 60 remain. More than half are elderly. — Reuters

US, Iran battle over sanctions at world court

THE HAGUE: The United States and Iran will face off at the UN's top court yesterday in the latest round of a battle over sanctions on Tehran reimposed by President Donald Trump. Tehran dragged Washington to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague in 2018 after Trump pulled the US out of a landmark international nuclear deal with Iran.

They will argue over the coming week about whether the court, set up after World War II to deal with disputes between UN member states, actually has jurisdiction in the case. Iran says the sanctions brought back by the Trump administration breach the 1955 "Treaty of Amity" between the two countries, signed long before the 1979 Iranian revolution severed ties.

Tehran won an early victory in October 2018 when the ICJ ordered sanctions on humanitarian goods to be eased as an emergency measure while the overall lawsuit is dealt with. The US responded by formally ending the treaty, agreed when Iran was ruled by the Western-oriented shah, and accusing Iran of using the ICJ for "propaganda" purposes.

The United States will first address the court on Monday at 1300 GMT about whether judges have jurisdiction in the case, while Iran will speak tomorrow. A decision on that issue could take several months, while a final judgment will take years.

'Unclean Hands'

Relations between Washington and Tehran have been tense since the Iranian revolution, and have spiralled since Trump unilaterally pulled out of the nuclear deal in May 2018. The deal, involving the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States, plus Germany — had limited Iran's nuclear programme.

Washington then reimposed sanctions on Iran and companies with ties to it, notably hitting Iran's vital oil sector and central bank, while major global firms halted their activities in Iran. Tehran took the case to the ICJ and, in response to Iran's request for so-called "provisional measures" while the case is resolved, the judges two years ago found that some of the sanctions breached the 1955 treaty.

The court ordered Washington to lift measures on medicines, medical equipment, food, agricultural goods, and airplane parts and services. The ICJ is also dealing with a separate case over Tehran's bid to unfreeze \$2 billion in assets frozen in the United States.

In February 2019 the court said the case could go ahead, rejecting US arguments that Iran's "unclean hands" — Tehran's alleged backing for terror groups — should disqualify its lawsuit. —AFP

Bodies recovered at DR Congo mine accident site

BUKAVU: Emergency workers late Sunday recovered the first bodies of miners who perished in a disaster at a makeshift goldmine in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, witnesses told AFP.

A total of 18 bodies have been recovered to nearby mining town Kamituga, according to a local resident at the scene, Jean Nondo.

The governor of the South Kivu province has said that 50 miners had died, caught underground when heavy rains flooded their mine on Friday.

"When people wanted to get out, there was no way to because the water was pouring in at a great pressure," Nondo said. Kamituga mayor Alexandre Bundy said he did not know how many miners were working at the time of the flooding, but that 19 families were searching for missing loved ones.

For a second day running, hundreds of people gathered at the site as emergency workers brought the first bodies out and into nearby tents, video footage viewed by AFP showed.

While the emergency workers were working with shovels and their bare hands on Saturday, by Sunday a hydraulic shovel had been brought to the site to help them with their work.

The mine was on a concession held by Kamituga mining, a subsidiary of Canadian gold mining com-

pany Banro, Raoul Kitungano, of the Congolese campaign group Justice Pour Tous (Justice for All), told AFP. Banro announced in September 2019 it was suspending its operations there.

The mine was thus left to the artisanal miners, who earn their living by selling the minerals they manage to dig up themselves to local traders, who sell it on to large foreign companies. Accidents in DR Congo's makeshift mines are common and often deadly.

In June 2019, at least 39 men died when a copper mine in Kolwezi, in the southeastern Katanga region, partially collapsed. Because many such mines are in remote areas however, the accidents are under-reported. DR Congo has huge reserves of gold, cobalt, copper and coltan. It is the world's largest producer of cobalt, crucial for making the batteries used in mobile phones and electric vehicles.

DR Congo's mineral-rich but volatile east faces regular attacks from a plethora of militias and rebel groups which operate freely in the region. —AFP

Three Lebanese soldiers killed

BEYROUTH: The Lebanese army said three of its troops were killed and another wounded while attempting to arrest a suspected "terrorist" at his north Lebanon home. "While raiding the house of a wanted terrorist in the Mount Beiddawi-Minyeh area, a military intelligence patrol was hit by gunfire and hand



KAMITUGA: Hundreds of people gather in Kamituga, South Kivu, at the entrance of one of the mines where dozens of Congolese artisanal miners are feared to be killed after heavy rain filled the mine tunnels. —AFP

grenades," the army said in a statement late Sunday.

"Three soldiers were killed and another was seriously wounded," it added, saying that the army was chasing the perpetrators. It did not say whether it had arrested the suspect or give any details on his identity. Local media reports said that the army had been chasing a militant cell known as the Khalid al-Tallawi group, believed to be behind the August 21 murder of two police officers and the son of the mayor of Kaftoun village in north Lebanon. Police had already arrested a suspect the day after the murders took place in the Beiddawi camp for Palestinian refugees near the northern port city of Tripoli. —AFP

International

Navalny's allies claim symbolic council seat wins in regional polls

Ruling party faces sinking popularity over economic woes

NOVOSIBIRSK: Allies of poisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said yesterday they had secured city council seats in Siberia as independent monitors condemned a reported "stream" of voting irregularities in regional polls.

In several dozen of the country's 85 regions, Russians voted for regional governors and lawmakers in regional and city legislatures as well as in several by-elections for national MPs.

The polls came a year ahead of parliamentary elections and are seen as a test for the Kremlin, as the ruling party faces sinking popularity and simmering public anger over economic woes. In an effort to fight President Vladimir Putin's electoral machine, Navalny and his team have urged Russians to vote tactically by backing the strongest candidates against the ruling party United Russia.

Some of the highest-profile campaigns have taken place in Novosibirsk, Russia's third-largest city, and neighbouring Tomsk where Navalny travelled last month. On Sunday night, his team said that the heads of Navalny's offices for Novosibirsk and Tomsk both secured city council seats. Navalny had been in Siberia to promote his "smart voting" campaign when he was poisoned with what Germany says was a Novichok nerve agent.

Ksenia Fadeyeva, the 28-year-old head of Navalny's Tomsk office, said she won a city council seat along with another Navalny ally. "This is the first victory of a Navalny office head," Ivan Zhdanov, director of the opposition politician's Anti-Corruption Foundation, said on Twitter.

"It was in Tomsk where Navalny was poisoned," In Novosibirsk, the 37-year-old head of Navalny's local office, Sergei Boiko, also won a council seat. To counter United Russia and the Communist Party, Boiko has created an opposition alliance, which has put forward around 30 candidates for the city legislature. Voter Damir Adgamov, a 26-year-old dental

technician, said he backed Boiko's coalition after watching Navalny's videos on YouTube. "I decided to try," he said. "I don't know if things will be better with Navalny or Boiko or worse, but at least we'll see."

Vladimir Semyonov, a 57-year-old retired army officer, said he had also voted for an opposition candidate, "to change something, so we don't have stagnation".

Boiko said his supporters had recorded dozens of violations, including an attempt to illegally remove observers while a safe containing early votes at one polling station had its seals broken.

United Russia chairman Dmitry Medvedev praised the party's electoral successes,

saying that according to exit polls it was heading for victory in regional legislatures. According to initial results, a second-round runoff was not expected in any of 18 regions that elected governors. Several regions recorded large turnouts in two days of early voting, with more than 50 percent of the electorate casting ballots early in the far eastern Jewish Autonomous Region and in Tatarstan.

The independent election monitor group Golos said it had received a "stream of reports" that observers had been denied their legal rights to view documents and submit complaints, with conflicts sometimes ending in "fisticuffs".

It had also received reports of ballot stuffing and officials switching ballot papers cast by real voters for ones they had filled in, the group added. For the first time, elections in the country were held over three days and some polling stations for early voting were open-air.

Navalny's ally Leonid Volkov said the scheme was thought up to combat the tactical voting system.

"At night, God alone knows what happens to the ballots and it's not clear how to monitor and count this," he said. Electoral chief Ella Pamillova denounced such "unobjective and mean" accusations.

nese journalists were questioned by Australia's intelligence agency in June, saying an investigation was still underway, but said there was some "activity" by the country's intelligence agency.

"Where (the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) has sufficient grounds for the execution of a search warrant, or for activities otherwise, then they'll undertake that activity," Dutton said on the Australian Broadcasting Corp (ABC) television.

"If people are masquerading as journalists or business leaders or whoever they might be, and there's evidence that they are acting in a contrary nature to Australian law, then (the agencies will act.)"

The raids were revealed by China's foreign min-



NOVOSIBIRSK: File photo shows Sergei Boiko, the head of Alexei Navalny's Novosibirsk headquarters and the city council candidate in September 13 regional elections, meets with his electorate in Novosibirsk on September 9, 2020. — AFP

"Currently we do not see that many violations," she said. The three-day system was first used this summer for a national vote on constitutional amendments that made it possible for Putin to stay in power until 2036.

Political analysts say the results of the polls will help the Kremlin determine whether the unpopular ruling party needs to be reformed. The poisoning of Navalny could have also influenced voters.

After he was evacuated from Siberia to Berlin, German doctors said Navalny had been poisoned with a Novichok nerve agent. His associates believe the use of the banned chemical weapon shows that only the Russian state could be responsible.

Navalny is now out of a medically induced coma and reacting to speech, the Berlin hospital treating him said yesterday. — AFP

Tensions soar over Australia's state border closures

SYDNEY: A torrid row over Australia's state border closures has pushed the country's prime minister to tears, sparked bitter recriminations among rival regional leaders and even talk of secession. Travel between the nation's independent-minded states and territories has been mostly banned since Covid-19 hit Australia in March.

But an unhappy federal government is ratcheting pressure on premiers to open up, sending the argument into overdrive. Campaigning media coverage has highlighted the plight of grieving families separated by the closures and targeted state officials they deem responsible.

One family facing a huge quarantine bill to see their dying father received over Aus\$200,000 (US\$148,000) in donations when their ordeal became public. The family of Mark Keans, who has terminal cancer, had previously been told only one of his four children would be able to enter Queensland to see him.

The state currently blocks almost all arrivals from New South Wales — which it considers a Covid-19 hotspot. "How do you choose which child gets that chance to see their dad for the last time?" Keans' sister Tamara Langborne told national broadcaster ABC. Such is the level of anger that Queensland's chief medical officer has been forced to seek police protection after threats on her life.

Australia began life as six self-governing British states and territories that agreed to form a federation around 1900. Rivalry between those regions had persisted — usually on the sports field and in lighthearted jokes — but coronavirus has made regional sentiment more pronounced, and more popular. Many premiers advocating state lockdowns have seen their public approval ratings rocket. West Australia's centre-left premier Mark McGowan was cheered on as he pilloried the "Pinot grigio-sipping" commentator in Sydney — near where he was born — for telling him to open up.

West Australia, he insisted, will remain "an island within an island." An approving local paper declared its own "Westralia Day" and #WAexit has trended on social media, a West Australian echo of Britain's rancorous exit of the European Union.

Labor member of parliament Patrick Gorman, writing in The Australian on Friday, warned such talk cannot be dismissed lightly. "The dangerous idea of secession has been reignited in Perth and across our state," he said. "Those on the east coast of Australia greatly underestimate the damage this might do to the federation." Conservative Prime Minister Scott Morrison has even expressed concern that "at times" over the past months "it has felt like Australia could break apart." Although he had long sought to appear above the fray, even as party attack dogs were set on those who support restrictions, he has now joined the fight.

In a recent radio interview, Morrison said he had personally pleaded with the centre-left Queensland premier to allow Sarah Caisip to attend her father's funeral after travelling from Canberra.

"I've appealed to her to overrule the decision that would allow Sarah to go to the funeral," he told 2GB tearfully. "It's not about borders, it's not about federation, it's not about politicians, it's not about elections."

Morrison's critics say that is exactly what the row is about. Many of the border rows are fought down political lines, with Morrison's ruling conservative national government routinely targeting states with opposition Labor party leaders.

Queensland's premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, happens to be in the thick of a hard-fought re-election campaign against Morrison's conservative coalition candidate. She has since responded, acknowledging "heartbreaking" cases, but insisting she will not be bullied or intimidated over policies designed to keep Queenslanders safe.

Western Australian Premier McGowan suggested Queensland's leader was being singled out ahead of a state election in October. "Tasmania and South Australia have borders — I don't see them being attacked," McGowan said of the Liberal-run states. — AFP

Australia defends intelligence raids as spat with China grows

MELBOURNE: Australia's Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton on Sunday defended the government's right to intelligence raids to prevent foreign interference, after China condemned searches on the homes of its journalists working in Australia.

Dutton declined to directly confirm that the Chi-

Belarus leader looks to Putin to help him cling on to power

MOSCOW: President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus will seek the backing of Russia's Vladimir Putin at a crucial meeting yesterday after a fifth consecutive weekend of huge protests demanding that he step down.

Lukashenko, facing the gravest crisis of his 26 years in power, will travel to Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi with his fate in Putin's hands. Economic and military support from Moscow could help tip the balance in his favour as his security forces crack down hard on the opposition.

The Belarusian opposition accuses Lukashenko of rigging last month's presidential election, which he says he won fairly with 80% of the vote. Since then, thousands of people have been arrested and nearly all the opposition's key leaders have been detained, deported or forced to flee the country.

At least 100,000 protesters took to the streets of the capital Minsk on Sunday, taunting Lukashenko with chants of "You're a rat". Police said they detained over 400 people.

Putin's actions so far suggest he has no desire to see the leader of a neighbouring ex-Soviet country toppled by pressure from the streets — even if Lukashenko has often proved a prickly and difficult ally.

The Kremlin leader said last month he had set up a "reserve police force" at Lukashenko's request, but it would be deployed only if needed. On Monday Russia will send paratroopers to Belarus for joint "Slavic brotherhood" military drills until Sept. 25, RIA



MINSK: A law enforcement officer detains a woman with a huge former white-red-white flag of Belarus during a rally to protest against the presidential election results in Minsk. Belarusians have been demonstrating against the disputed re-election of President Alexander Lukashenko for a month, with more than 100,000 people flooding the streets of Minsk for four straight weekends. — AFP

news agency quoted the defence ministry as saying.

Russia has also offered to restructure Belarusian debt and support the banking system. The cost of further Moscow backing could be Lukashenko's acceptance of even greater Russian dominance in the relationship between the two countries.

The Kremlin has long pushed for closer political and economic integration with Minsk, including a joint currency, but Lukashenko has resisted the pres-

Middleton to capture a snapshot of the nation in coronavirus lockdown.

The project received more than 30,000 submissions, from which Kate and four other judges picked 100 final images that will be published online by the National Portrait Gallery on Monday.

"The Duchess of Cambridge and I were inspired to see how the photographs have captured the resilience of the British people at such a challenging time, whether that is through celebrating frontline workers, recognising community spirit or showing the efforts of individuals supporting those in need," the queen said in a letter to entrants.

sure from his more powerful neighbour.

Yet the veteran Belarusian leader's position could become increasingly precarious should the protests persist, and grow. Sunday's demonstration was one of the biggest yet. "We have to show with this march that he doesn't control the country, that he is not in a position to speak on behalf of Belarusians," said Genady, 35, a logistics worker who declined to give his last name. — Reuters

Since its launch in May, the project invited people of all ages from across Britain to submit a photographic portrait they had taken during the COVID-19 lockdown that started in March.

Focused on three main themes: Helpers and Heroes, Your New Normal and Acts of Kindness, some of the photographs will also go on show in towns and cities across Britain later in the year.

Kate — wife of Prince William and a keen photographer herself — and other members of the panel assessed the images on the emotions and experiences they convey rather than on their photographic quality or technical expertise. — Reuters

Queen applauds photographers in lockdown Britain

LONDON: Britain's Queen Elizabeth yesterday congratulated entrants to Hold Still, a photography project launched by the Duchess of Cambridge Kate

Business

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

Zain introduces all-new 5G Internet plans Two SIM cards with unlimited 5G Internet starting at KD 20 monthly

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the launch of all-new 5G Internet plans for postpaid customers. The new plans feature a number of options that suit customers' various needs; including a number of exclusive revolutionary Internet devices, and the ability to enjoy unlimited 5G Internet on two separate SIM cards on one subscription.

All of Zain's new 5G Internet plans now include a free one-year subscription to OSN streaming, allowing customers to enjoy exclusive award-winning series, the biggest Hollywood blockbusters, Disney+ Originals, HBO and more.

In addition, OSN streaming features Arabic shows and movies, exclusive Turkish series, as well as lifestyle talk-shows and reality TV. All with options for Arabic subtitles and audio dubbing, stunning HD quality, and the ability to watch on computers, smartphones, and tablets.

Zain's new 5G plans include a wide range of revolutionary fixed and mobile Internet devices, including two that are exclusively available at Zain: the 5G Netgear M5 Hotspot with 1 TB of 5G Internet starting at KD 15 monthly, and the Zain 5G HUB; powered by HTC, with 1 TB of 5G Internet for KD 20 monthly only. In addition, the plans include the all-new Huawei 5G CPE PRO 2 with 1 TB of 5G Internet starting at KD 17 monthly, as well as many more devices that meet customers' various personal and professional needs.

Zain is also introducing a new offer that allows

postpaid customers to enjoy unlimited 5G Internet on two separate SIM cards with one subscription, starting at KD 20 monthly only. The offer includes one free Internet device, as well as the ability to add an additional device if needed. This offer also includes a free one-year subscription to OSN streaming.

Customers can easily get any of these offers by



**Plan includes
free one-year
subscription
to OSN**

visiting Zain's branches or through the Zain Online Store (kw.zain.com/5G) and enjoy free delivery to their doorstep, noting that Zain follows strict protocols that adhere to official health guidelines to ensure the safety of customers and staff.

Zain recently received 'Kuwait's Fastest Fixed Broadband Network' award for Q1-Q2 2020 from Ookla, the company behind the renowned Speedtest Internet testing platform, and the global leader in transparent Internet testing applications,



data and analysis. The announcement comes to reinforce Zain's leadership in the Kuwaiti market by offering the largest and most powerful 5G network in Kuwait. Since commercially launching fifth generation wireless technology (5G) back in June 2019, Zain was the first operator to offer 5G technology in the GCC region via the Kuwaiti market with nationwide coverage of all areas. The company succeeded in designing the first integrated network for 5G services built on a world-class infrastructure, ulti-

mately transforming the telecom sector across the country and region.

Zain continuously works on improving all its services to continue its tireless efforts towards adopting the latest and most advanced solutions, with the aim of maintaining its leadership position in the Kuwaiti market. The company affirms its promise to always offer a variety of services and solutions to meet the personal and professional needs of Kuwait's largest family of subscribers.

France urges firms to avert layoffs via part-time schemes

MONTEVRAIN, France: France's prime minister yesterday called on companies to negotiate part-time work accords with employees, financed in part by the state, to avoid outright layoffs as the COVID-19 crisis hammers the economy.

"I strongly encourage you to sign a massive number of long-term partial activity agreements within sectors and companies, and very quickly, between now and November 1," Jean Castex said during a visit to a factory east of Paris. For companies that sign up, the government will pay 93 percent of an employee's net salary even if they are no longer working full time. The scheme is scheduled to run at least until next summer.

The government has already spent billions of euros to keep paying most of the salaries for people who otherwise would have been dismissed during the coronavirus lockdown from March to May this year, and the subsequent business slump. The goal is to limit unemployment that is expected to reach 9.5 percent by the end of 2020 after 715,000 jobs were lost during the first half of this year.

France has unveiled plans to spend a further 100 billion euros (\$119 billion) to help the economy recover, but "this will work depending on one single condition: your total mobilization," Castex said. Already 345 part-time agreements have been signed between employers and staff bodies since March, saving 50,000 jobs overall, according to the labor ministry.

"These accords also allow you to organize professional training for your teams when they are unemployed," Castex said. The government estimates the economy will contract by 11 percent this year, though Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has hinted that officials are preparing to release a less pessimistic number this month.

France's economy will contract in 2020 by less than expected only a few months ago as business activity and consumer spending bounced back after the country emerged from one of Europe's strictest coronavirus lockdowns, the central bank said yesterday. The forced closure of most shops, offices and cafes for nearly two months until May 11 plunged the economy into one of the deepest recessions in Europe with an unprecedented 13.8 percent slump in the second quarter from the previous three months. The central bank estimated in its quarterly outlook that activity was now back to running 5 percent below normal levels, which translated into a 16 percent surge in third quarter gross domestic product from the previous quarter. — Reuters



PARIS: French Prime Minister Jean Castex (center) visits a plant of manufacturing corporation Bic, yesterday in Montevrain. — AFP

OPEC@60: Once a US foe, now a friend

LONDON: In 1973, Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries brought the US economy to its knees. Now, the cartel created 60 years ago is more likely to do Washington's bidding. Since Saudi Arabia and other Arab OPEC members imposed their famous oil embargo as retribution for US support for Israel during the Yom Kippur War, shifts in global politics and a surge in America's oil production have tamed the group.

OPEC's most hawkish members, Iran and Venezuela, have been sidelined by US sanctions while its kingpin, Saudi Arabia, has shown it would rather appease Washington than risk losing US support, current and former OPEC officials say.

While OPEC as a bloc resisted US pressure to lower oil prices for decades, notably in 2011 during the uprising against Libya's Muammar Gaddafi, its record over the past three years has largely been one of capitulation, these officials say.

Founded in Baghdad on Sept 14, 1960 to counter the power of seven US and British oil companies, OPEC has repeatedly yielded to pressure from Washington to pump more oil since US President Donald Trump took office at the start of 2017.

Trump has regularly called for lower gasoline prices to help US consumers. And when prices got too low for US drilling companies to make money this year, OPEC hashed out a deal to bring them back up slightly, in an agreement spurred on by Washington's threat to reduce its military backing for Riyadh, sources have told Reuters.

"Trump orders from Saudi Arabia what he needs for the oil price - and he is served," Chakib Khelil, who was Algeria's oil minister for a decade and OPEC's president in 2001 and 2008, told Reuters. "So indeed OPEC has changed." The Saudi Energy Ministry declined to comment.

The White House declined to comment. Reuters spoke to eight current and former OPEC officials, representing over a third of the group's output, as well as analysts, traders and investors to ask how U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuela had affected Saudi Arabia's influence within OPEC, and whether that had changed the dynamic with Washington.

An OPEC official at the group's Vienna headquarters declined to comment, saying Reuters should ask member states. Oil and other government officials in Iran and Venezuela did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

US output soars

Saudi Arabia has been the leading OPEC producer for decades, giving it the biggest sway over policy, but the sidelining of Iran and Venezuela has only increased its influence. Iran's share of OPEC output has nearly halved to 7.5 percent since 2010 while Venezuela's has collapsed to 2.3 percent from almost 10 percent, according to Reuters calculations based on OPEC data. Saudi Arabia's share, meanwhile, has risen 7 percentage points to 35 percent. Iran and Venezuela, which founded OPEC along with Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, had routinely opposed any moves to bring oil prices down in the face of US pressure.

The increased dominance of Saudi Arabia within OPEC has also come at a time of higher US oil and gas production, which has turned the United States into the world's biggest petroleum producer and slashed its dependence on foreign fuel. US production more than doubled in a decade to reach over 12 million barrels a day in 2019, according to the Energy Information Administration, as improved drilling technology made previously untapped basins accessible. OPEC figures show the US share



of the global oil market has doubled since 2010, while OPEC's has fallen.

OPEC teamed up with Russia and nine other oil producers in 2016 to form a group known as OPEC+ to boost their collective leverage but a senior Trump administration official said even the new group's influence had waned as US output soared.

OPEC is at it again

Trump has engaged more actively with OPEC than his predecessors, often taking to Twitter to comment on production decisions and oil price moves. Trump has also developed a close relationship with Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Mohammed bin Salman, or "MBS", who relies on the United States for weapons and protection against regional rivals such as Iran.

"There has never been a US administration more involved in international oil policy and OPEC than the Trump presidency," said Gary Ross, founder of Black Gold Investors and an OPEC expert.

In 2018, as oil prices spiked over \$70 a barrel, a level Washington viewed as too high for US consumers, Trump fired a barrage of tweets at the cartel. "Oil prices are too high, OPEC is at it again. Not good!" he tweeted on June 13, 2018, nine days ahead of an OPEC meeting. As OPEC gathered in Austria on June 22, Trump wrote: "Hope OPEC will increase output substantially. Need to keep prices down!"

Later that day, OPEC agreed to raise its output by a million barrels a day. Two OPEC officials, who asked not to be identified due to the sensitivity of the issue, said a Trump intervention on oil prices effectively nudges the organization to discuss, or even adjust, its production policy. And Trump's Twitter feed has become a source of anxiety.

"I hope no tweet will follow," one top OPEC official told Reuters on April 9, 2019 after oil prices hit \$71 a barrel, a five-month high at the time. Oil market watchers including OPEC officials say the irony is that the price rises in 2018 and 2019 were both due mainly to Washington's sanctions on Iran and Venezuela - policies that slashed some 3 million barrels off daily oil production.

Great for the industry!

Earlier this year, Trump wanted something new from OPEC: a production cut, to help U.S. oil companies make money. Oil prices had tanked because of a supply glut caused by a price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia at the same time as a collapse in demand due to worldwide coronavirus lockdowns. "Just spoke to my friend MBS (Crown Prince) of Saudi Arabia, who spoke with President Putin of Russia, & I expect & hope that they will be

cutting back approximately 10 Million Barrels, and maybe substantially more which, if it happens, will be GREAT for the oil & gas industry!" Trump tweeted on April 2.

On April 12, OPEC+ agreed to a record cut in production equivalent to a 10th of global output. Reuters reported on April 30 that Trump had presented bin Salman with an ultimatum: cut production or risk a withdrawal of US troops from the kingdom. Asked about the ultimatum at the time, Trump said: "I didn't have to tell him." He said he had spoken to MBS by phone and they were able to reach a deal on production cuts. Saudi Arabia's government media office did not respond to a request for comment on the April report.

"In sum, OPEC does not make decisions anymore on what is best for its members economically, as it is supposed to according to its statutes," Algeria's Khelil said.

'Gift to Trump'

In 2011, when Libyan output was hit by the uprising against Gaddafi, Saudi Arabia tried to convince OPEC to lift production to lower prices. But Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Iran, Iraq, Libya and Venezuela all resisted. "Previously, you had a bloc which could become quite vocal and actually upend meetings," said Samuel Ciszuk, who founded consultancy ELS Analysis and used to work for the Swedish Energy Agency.

"Now, Iran and Venezuela still have votes but they are sidelined and have such desperate economic and marketing situations that other countries are more careful about lining up politically with them," he said. Iran's former OPEC governor Hossein Kazempour Ardebili told Reuters in 2018, when OPEC+ had just raised output following pressure from Trump, that both OPEC and the broader group had begun acting against the interests of their smaller members.

"They gave an oil price gift to Trump while inflicting revenue loss on all OPEC members," he said. While there is no suggestion OPEC is about to suffer an exodus of smaller members as a result of the shifting dynamic - and there have been new entrants - some countries have left.

Qatar quit in 2019, partly due to a political row with Riyadh. Another small producer, Ecuador, left this year and Indonesia departed in 2016. Both said they did not want to be constrained by OPEC production quotas. Others that may be unhappy with OPEC's trajectory, however, plan to remain so they can still have a say. As one source familiar with Iran's oil policy put it: "It's important to be a member of OPEC or OPEC+ so that you can maximize your interests." — Reuters

Business

TikTok rejects Microsoft's buyout offer; Oracle sole remaining bidder

ByteDance proposes a technology partnership with Oracle

NEW YORK: US tech giant Microsoft said Sunday its offer to buy TikTok was rejected, leaving Oracle as the sole remaining bidder ahead of a looming deadline for the Chinese-owned video app to sell or shut down its US operations.

The Wall Street Journal and New York Times reported that Oracle had won the bidding war, citing people familiar with the deal, although the company did not immediately confirm the matter to AFP. The Oracle bid would next need approval from the White House and Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, a source told the Journal, with both parties under the belief it would meet US data security concerns.

ByteDance has abandoned the sale of TikTok in the United States to pursue a partnership with Oracle Corp that it hopes will spare it a US ban while appeasing China, people familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The Beijing-based firm had been in talks to divest the business to Oracle or a consortium led by Microsoft Corp after US President Donald Trump ordered the sale last month and threatened to shut down the short-video app in the country.

While TikTok is best known for dancing videos that go viral among teenagers, US officials are concerned user information could be passed to China's communist government. TikTok, which has as many as 100 million US users, has said it would never share such data with Chinese authorities.

TikTok has been at the center of a diplomatic storm between Washington and Beijing, and President Donald Trump has given Americans a deadline to stop doing

business with TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance-effectively compelling a sale of the app to a US company. Microsoft had indicated at the beginning of August that it was interested in acquiring TikTok's US operations, but said Sunday that bid had been rejected.

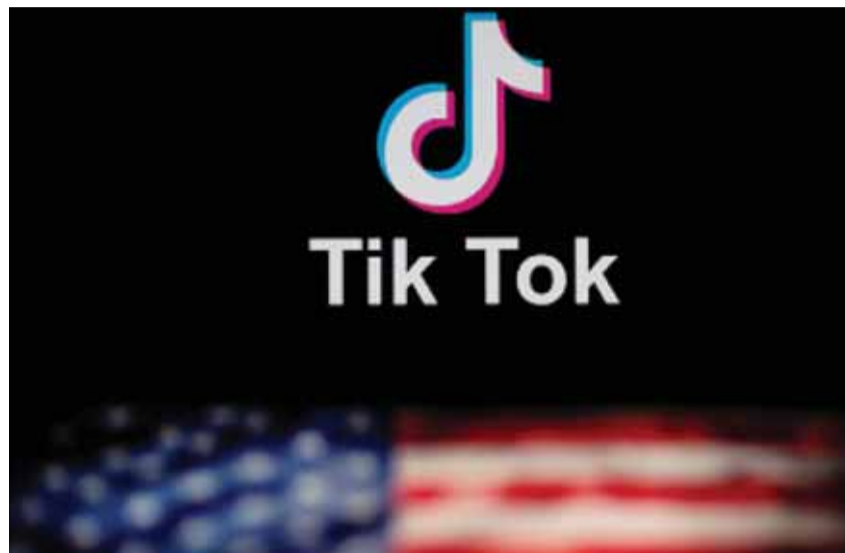
"ByteDance let us know today they would not be selling TikTok's US operations to Microsoft," the US tech giant said in a statement. "We are confident our proposal would have been good for TikTok's users, while protecting national security interests," it added. In early August, Trump issued an executive order stating that if a purchase agreement were not reached by September 20, the platform would have to close in the United States. Trump claims that TikTok could be used by China to track the locations of federal employees, build dossiers on people for blackmail and conduct corporate espionage.

Disputed dangers In late August China's commerce



Deadline for Chinese-owned app looms

ministry published new rules potentially making it more difficult for ByteDance to sell TikTok to a US entity by adding "civilian use" to a list of technologies that are restricted for export. ByteDance had vowed to



This photo illustration taken yesterday shows the logo of the social network application TikTok (top) and a US flag (bottom) shown on the screens of two laptops in Beijing. — AFP

"strictly abide" by new export rules. "We believe Microsoft would only buy TikTok WITH its core algorithm which the Chinese government and ByteDance was not willing to budge," Wedbush analyst Daniel Ives said in a note. "Given the need now to get a green light from Beijing after its export rules were changed a few weeks ago, TikTok's days in the US likely are numbered with a shut-down now the next step," the analyst said.

Downloaded 175 million times in the United States, TikTok is used by as many as a billion people worldwide to make quirky, short-form videos on their cell-phones. It has repeatedly denied sharing data with Beijing. Microsoft said it would have "made significant changes to ensure the service met

the highest standards for security, privacy, online safety, and combating disinformation."

A deal with Microsoft could also have included Walmart, which joined forces with the tech giant in negotiations. Ives said that even with Microsoft out of the picture, "while Oracle is technically the remaining bidder, without willing to sell its core algorithm we see no TikTok sale on the horizon."

"Oracle could be a technology partner, but a sale/divestiture of the US operations for TikTok remains the focus," he said. TikTok meanwhile has filed a lawsuit challenging the crack-down by the US government, contending that Trump's order was a misuse of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act because the platform is not "an unusual and extraordinary threat." —Agencies

Canada eyes fight over C\$1bn bill for Huawei gear

OTTAWA: Canada is signaling it might not compensate major telecommunications providers if the federal government bans equipment made by China's Huawei from 5G networks, setting up a potential fight over a bill that could hit C\$1 billion (\$758 million).

Canada, under pressure from the United States to ban Huawei Technologies Co Ltd gear on security grounds, is studying whether to allow the firm into the country's next-generation 5G networks. If Ottawa does announce a formal ban, the affected companies have made clear they want compensation for tearing out their existing Huawei gear, said two sources close to the matter.

But the Liberal government, already pressing wireless providers to cut what it says are excessively high bills, seems less convinced. "I'm not sure there is a solid legal case that we would have to compensate for making a proper national security decision," said a government source who requested anonymity given the sensitivity of the situation.

Federal politicians, said the source, also had to worry about "the public perception of handing over a billion dollars or more to very large companies." Ottawa has spent almost two years studying whether to allow Huawei into 5G networks and in June, with no sign of a decision coming any time soon, impatient Canadian providers took matters into their own hands.

Bell Canada and Telus Corp said they would partner with Ericsson and Nokia Oyj, even though they use Huawei in their 4G networks. Technical experts say it is hard to marry one company's 5G equipment with 4G gear from another provider. — Reuters

Thai Airways gets court nod for restructuring

BANGKOK: A Thailand court yesterday approved the restructuring of Thai Airways, which is billions of dollars in debt and struggling to survive the coronavirus tourism crash. The global aviation sector was plunged into crisis by the pandemic as countries severely restricted travel, forcing airlines to ground vast numbers of planes and seek government help as they haemorrhaged cash.

The kingdom, once a majority shareholder in Thai, reduced its stake in May and went to the insolvency court to resolve the airline's debt—which totalled 332.2 billion baht (\$10.6 billion) by the end of June, according to local media. "The problem that caused debtor's financial situation is not from

its business but from the rapid change in aviation, particularly the impact from Covid-19," Bangkok's Central Bankruptcy Court said yesterday.

It approved Thai's request for a rehabilitation plan, which would see its debt and company organization restructured. Thai said after the ruling that it would propose that plan by the end of the year. It has long been accused of mismanagement, and Thailand's transport ministry found in August that some of its financial damage was due to corruption, including "bribes" paid for the acquisition of 10 aircraft.

The government was previously mulling a 54 billion baht bailout for the airline, which was met with a public outcry. Thai has restructured multiple times over the last several years but it never "went deep enough to resolve many of the long-standing systemic issues", aviation expert Brendan Sobie told AFP.

Thailand's tourism-reliant economy has been battered by the pandemic, and is expected to shrink by more than seven percent this year according to government estimates. — AFP



BANGKOK: A Thai Airways aircraft is parked on the tarmac at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok. A Thai court gave green signal yesterday to restructuring the kingdom's cash-strapped national carrier. —AFP

China investment in Australia drops as tensions mount

SYDNEY: Chinese investment in Australia almost halved in 2019, new data released yesterday showed, as relations between the two countries deteriorated. Researchers from the Australian National University said Chinese investment Down Under plunged from Aus\$4.8 billion (\$3.5 billion) to just Aus\$2.5 billion last year.

Professor Peter Drysdale, who led the data research, said the Aus\$1.43 billion purchase of infant formula producer Bellamy's Australia by China's Mengniu Dairy accounted for more than half of that investment. It was the third consecutive year that Chinese investment in Australia dropped since peaking at Aus\$15.8 billion in 2016. The steep fall far outpaced a global decline in China's overseas ventures of 9.8 percent last year, reflecting the bilateral political tensions, Drysdale said.

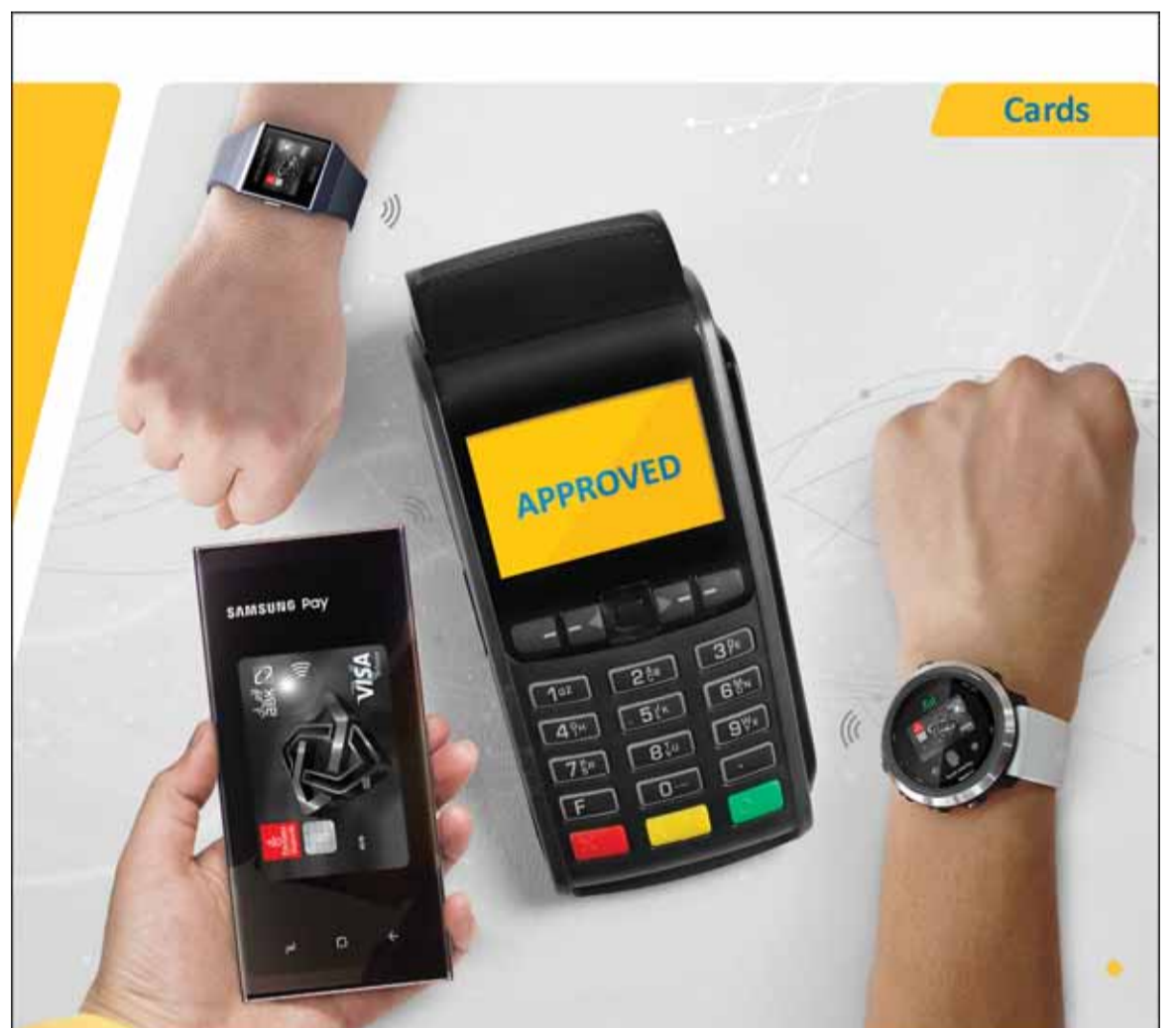
"(In) the last few years, clearly Chinese investors

have found the investment environment in Australia less certain and have been more cautious about undertaking investment in Australia," he told AFP. In June, Australia announced tougher measures to block or overturn new foreign investments deemed to compromise national security—a move widely viewed as an effort to limit growing Chinese influence.

The country has barred Chinese telecoms giant Huawei from being a major player in its 5G rollout owing to concerns about its relationship with state security agencies, a decision that riled Beijing.

Drysdale said structural changes were also partly to blame, with Chinese investors retreating from mining and resources as the commodity boom weakened. While Chinese investment in Australian real estate and agriculture also fell in 2019, the ANU researchers found some "modest gains" in the construction, education and finance sectors.

Drysdale said it was important for Australia to consider how to reverse the "continuing downward trend" due to the key role of foreign investment in supporting economic growth and trade. "Whether that can be changed quickly or not is another question altogether because it very much depends on how purposeful (an) approach there is to mending the relationship between the two countries," he said. — AFP



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Business

stc levels up unlimited 5G roaming service to span all GCC countries

First local and regional operator to offer ultra-fast roaming speeds

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it will be the first operator in the Middle East to offer unlimited 5G roaming for all its postpaid, prepaid and enterprise customers across all GCC countries. The innovative and ground-breaking service can be added to any of stc's packages for both existing and new customers starting at only KD 7.

stc released a statement indicating that the first-to-market offering will permit stc customers to enjoy the telecom operator's ultra-fast 5G speeds throughout all GCC countries without any price increases to offered roaming packages. The



Maziad Al-Harbi

Company is also planning on offering a wide range of roaming services to countries within Europe and the United States of America, which will be announced in the coming period.

Through its pioneering role in the local and regional telecom sector, stc is offering this breakthrough service with unlimited internet usage, allowing users to stay connected at all times, even when traveling to GCC countries. As the first telecom operator to

rollout this unique service in Kuwait and the Middle East, unlimited 5G roaming is available to customers traveling to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar. This initiative builds on the Company's previous promotion, which offered 5G roaming services to KSA and the UAE with packages starting at KD7 a month.

Commenting on the first-of-its-kind service, CEO of stc, engineer Maziad Al-Harbi, said, "We are proud to offer this innovative service that goes beyond border boundaries and represents the strong bond shared between the GCC countries. The unlimited 5G roaming service allows our valued customers to experience the same quality of internet service and high-speed connectivity

while traveling anywhere in the GCC. Possessing the network with the largest coverage in Kuwait, our goal is to enrich our customers' experiences by offering them telecommunication and internet roaming services wherever they are."

Al-Harbi added, "Our strategic approach targeting sustainable development in the digital and telecom realm drives us to explore customer-centric solutions that grasp the power of true 5G technology to enable digital transformation. At stc, we stand by our commitment to utilize our resources and network to diversify our offerings, delivering an unrivaled experience and range of options that meet the needs of our diverse customer base."

Brexit risk premium returns to UK markets

LONDON: The latest bout of sabre-rattling between Britain and the EU is upping the premium investors demand for holding UK assets for fear of a chaotic Brexit outcome with hugely damaging consequences for the economy.

The pound is down 4 percent against the dollar this month. Now as the UK parliament starts debating legislation that defies international law by breaching the EU divorce treaty, British shares, option markets and bonds are also swiftly pricing the Brexit premium. The pricing of Brexit risk is filtering through to interest rate futures and inflation expectations too. Here are some examples of the Brexit premium:

1) Sterling implied volatility

Implied volatility, options that show investor expectations of future price swings in a currency, has shot up on sterling/dollar. One-month volatility, or 'vol' in trader parlance, is at five-month highs around 12 percent-well above implied vol on other G7 currencies. The one-month vol spike has sent it above the 12-month gauge, inverting the options curve for the first time since March and implying a rise in near-term risks.

Options called risk reversals too show the implied vol premium to buy sterling 'puts' over 'calls' has risen sharply this month.

2) Equity risk

Since Britain voted in a June 2016 referendum to exit the EU, its stocks have underperformed. This year, the FTSE index lags the European STOXX benchmark by 17 percent-partly because the former is heavy on poorly performing energy and commodity firms. But Brexit is also to blame. A sector-based comparison of performance and valuations shows evidence of a Brexit premium.

"If you look at sector differentials-for instance UK energy or financials versus the rest of the world, you can see an additional risk premium on the UK," said Justin Onuekwusi, portfolio manager at Legal & General Investment Management.

"UK assets look cheap relative to rest of world."

3) Borrowing premium

Investors also want a Brexit premium to lend to British companies, reflected above all in bonds issued by banks. For instance, the gap between the yield on Barclays's September 2023 euro-denominated bond and a Deutsche Bank note maturing the same month has widened of late to the highest in nearly three months around 38 basis points.

ABN Amro analysts noted that spreads on euro-denominated bank bonds widened around 3 basis points last week, but UK lenders saw spreads blow out by 20-30 bps. "We anticipate that Brexit negotiations will continue to exert negative headlines. UK risk premiums are likely to stay elevated for the remainder of this year," they told clients.

4) Curve steepening

Brexit premia may also be contained in a steeper UK gilt yield curve. Money markets have brought forward bets of a Bank of England rate cut, pricing negative interest rates for early-2021. "If you looked at the UK curve relative to Bund curve, our curve is now steeper. Given the currency is unable to get cheaper and cheaper, it's easier for other things to move a little bit. The steepening in the curve offers a premium," Societe Generale analyst Kit Juckes said.

5) Inflation expectations

Market-based measures of future UK inflation have ticked up, a pattern seen also after the 2016 referendum when the pound crash lifted inflation expectations. The latest rise in inflation expectations coincided with the bout of pound weakness, suggesting it is Brexit-related and not down to COVID-19 reflation, said Viraj Patel, global macro and currency strategist at Arker. — Reuters

Novo Nordisk Gulf Cluster and Sheikh Al-Khalifa sign MoU

MANAMA: On 18 August, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been signed between Novo Nordisk Gulf Cluster represented by its Vice President and General Manager Dr Akin Aksekili and Lieutenant General Doctor Sheikh Mohamed Bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health in Bahrain & President of Bahrain Diabetes Society in the presence of Ole Moesby, the Ambassador of Denmark to KSA, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Yemen.

The signing of memorandum of understanding aims to raise awareness of obesity as a disease and its complications by conducting and officially launching Fit-your-life campaign which is a patient awareness campaign for people living with obesity.

The two parties seek through this memorandum of understanding to prepare educational programs, events and activities related to obesity for Healthcare Professionals. In addition, will be a national reference for the current gaps in obesity treatment and the options to tackle this chronic disease.

Vice President and General Manager of Novo



Sheikh Mohamed Al-Khalifa



Ole Moesby



Akin Aksekili

Nordisk Company Dr Akin Aksekili mentioned the importance of tackling this epidemic disease by training healthcare professionals so that they can effectively support people with obesity in Bahrain and Gulf Cluster.

Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health & President of Bahrain Diabetes Society Sheikh Mohamed Al-Khalifa assured that the memorandum of understanding and the unprecedented partnership aims to activate different aspects to tackle overweight & obesity, like community activation campaign and Healthcare educational activities.

Ambassador of Denmark Ole Moesby described this memorandum of understanding as a distinguished milestone in tackling one of the major health challenges and hoped that the partnership between Novo Nordisk Gulf and the

Supreme Council of Health in creating obesity awareness will open the door for similar partnerships in other countries in the region.

Head of Patient Access and Public Affairs Department of Novo Nordisk company Dr. Ahmed Magdy, referred to the company's activities in the area of partnerships with the

international health organizations and its impacts on patients services. The signing event was attended by assistant undersecretary for public health at Ministry of Health and vice president of Bahrain Diabetes Society Dr Mariam Al-Hajeri, Consultant Endocrinologist and chair of scientific committee at Bahrain Diabetes Society Dr Dalal Alromaihi, Chief of health policies and programs at the Supreme Council of Health Dr Mohamed Al-Shabaan, Chief of Nutrition Section Public Health at Ministry of Health Dr. Buthaina Yusuf Ahmed Ajan, Senior consultant Paediatric Endocrinologist Bahrain Defense Force Hospital Prof Haya Al-Khayat, Assistant professor of Public health Arabian Gulf University Dr Salman Al-Zayani, from the Embassy of Denmark, Commercial Advisor Mary Guirguis, Cultural and Media Officer Julie Regitze Andersen participated in the ceremony.



TOKYO: SoftBank Group Representative Masayoshi Son speaking at a press conference to announce the company's financial results in Tokyo. SoftBank Group said yesterday it is selling British chip designer Arm to US chip company NVIDIA for up to \$40 billion. — AFP

SoftBank Group selling Arm to NVIDIA for \$40bn

TOKYO: Japan's SoftBank Group said yesterday it is selling British chip designer Arm to US chip company NVIDIA for up to \$40 billion, potentially creating a new giant in the industry. If approved, the deal will be one of the largest acquisitions anywhere in the world this year, and will propel NVIDIA to the forefront of the semiconductor sector.

The announcement also renewed speculation about SoftBank Group's future, with Bloomberg News reporting it is set to revive talks about going private via a management buyout plan. The Arm sale is valued at up to \$40 billion and is subject to approval by authorities in several jurisdictions, including Britain, China, the United States and European Union, SoftBank Group said.

It hopes the deal will be completed by around March 2022, it added in a statement. SoftBank Group shares soared in early morning trade in Tokyo, rising by almost 10 percent before settling slightly, up 7.78 percent to 6,316.0 yen around 30 minutes into the day.

Founded in 1990 in the United Kingdom, Arm specializes in microprocessors, and dominates the global smartphone market. But its chips are also found in countless sensors, smart devices and cloud services.

NVIDIA, well known for graphics cards that are favored in the video game industry, has seen sales skyrocket during the coronavirus crisis, with gaming a popular past-time in lockdown. Its products are also increasingly used for artificial intelligence and in data centers.

SoftBank bought Arm in 2016 for \$32 billion in a deal that left investors cold and saw the conglomerate's stock plunge sharply. Analysts at the time said SoftBank had paid too much for the firm and the

purchase revived concerns about the Japanese company's balance sheet.

SoftBank speculation

NVIDIA said in a statement that under the deal it will pay SoftBank \$21.5 billion in common stock and \$12 billion in cash, \$2 billion of which will be payable at signing. SoftBank may receive up to another \$5 billion in cash or stock, dependent on Arm's performance. And NVIDIA will also issue \$1.5 billion in equity to Arm employees, for a deal worth a total of up to \$40 billion. SoftBank said it felt Arm would perform better in combination with NVIDIA and the sale would "contribute to an increase in our company's value for shareholders".

It said the deal would give it a combined total of 6.7-8.1 percent in NVIDIA's outstanding shares, but insisted that would not make the US firm a subsidiary or affiliate. "Our belief in the power of Arm's technology and its potential remains unchanged, and we, as a strategic major shareholder in NVIDIA, will be committed to Arm's long-term success," SoftBank added. NVIDIA said the acquisition would help "create the premier computing company for the age of artificial intelligence".

It said Arm would retain its name and remain in Cambridge in the UK, where a new global centre for excellence in AI will be set up. The sale, which comes as SoftBank engages in a massive push to boost its cash reserves, renewed speculation about the firm's future plans. Bloomberg News, citing unnamed people familiar with the matter, said senior SoftBank executives planned to revisit a management buyout, which had previously met with internal opposition. The report said the discussions were at an early stage and might not result in the firm going private, but reflected pressure from those who feel SoftBank would be subject to less scrutiny if it were not publicly listed. SoftBank chief Masayoshi Son has made no secret of his frustration with varied criticism of his investment strategy, from his dogged commitment to floundering start-up WeWork to recent derivative trading that spooked investors. — AFP

CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 290 million for three months with a rate of return at 1.250 percent.

Euronext, Italian groups bid to buy Milan bourse

PARIS: Pan-European stock market operator Euronext announced yesterday it has submitted an offer to buy Milan's Borsa Italiana from the London Stock Exchange Group in partnership with Italy's CDP Equity and Intesa Sanpaolo. Euronext, which is competing against at least Germany's Deutsche Boerse for the Italian stock exchange operator, said there is no certainty that the "non-binding" bid will lead to a transaction.

"The proposed combination of Borsa Italiana and Euronext would create a leading player in continental European capital markets, where Italy would be the largest revenue contributor to the enlarged Euronext group," it said in a statement. "This transformational project would effectively position the newly formed group to deliver the ambition of further building the backbone of the Capital Markets Union in Europe, while at the same time supporting local economies." Both Euronext and 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. — AFP

Iraqi PM appoints Mustafa Ghaleb as CB governor

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi appointed Mustafa Ghaleb as central bank governor, state news agency INA said yesterday. Kadhimi also appointed Suha Dawood Elias as head of the National Investment Commission and Salem Jawad Abdul Hadi Al-Jalabi as chairman of state-owned Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI), among other appointments, INA said.

INA did not provide further details. Iraq's economy and oil sector were battered by years of wars, sanctions and a stubborn Islamist insurgency triggered by the US invasion. Iraq relies on oil to fund 97 percent of its state budget. Iraqi Finance Minister Ali Allawi told parliament last week 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. — Reuters

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Photo shows visitors taking pictures outside a retired Airbus 330 air-plane turned into a coffee shop.



People sit on airplane seats as they dine in at a Thai Airways pop-up airplane-themed restaurant at the airline's headquarters in Bangkok. — AFP photos

WITH TRAVEL LIMITED, PLANE CAFES TAKE OFF IN THAILAND



A Thai Airways flight attendant wears a face shield as she speaks to a customer at a pop-up airplane-themed restaurant at the airline's headquarters in Bangkok.

With millions around the world stuck at home due to the pandemic, "plane cafes" in Thailand are offering customers the chance to pretend they are in the sky—and the idea seems to have taken off. On board a retired commercial airplane in the coastal city of Pattaya, coffee drinkers make themselves comfy on first-class-style seats and pose for photos by the overhead lockers. Boarding passes in hand, some "passengers" even opt for a tour of the cockpit. "With this cafe I can sit in first class and also mess around in the cockpit pretending to be the captain of the plane," 26-year-old Thipsuda Faksathong told AFP. "It's a lot of fun."

Chalisa Chuensranoi, 25, said her visit was as good as any trip she had taken before the pandemic, which shuttered Thailand's borders in March. "Sitting right here in the first-class section... really gives me the feeling of actually being on a plane, cruising through the air," she said. In another cafe at the headquarters of national carrier Thai Airways in Bangkok, hungry diners appear even to have missed plane food as they gobble up spaghetti carbonara and Thai-style beef served on plastic trays by cabin crew.

But for Intrawut Simapichet, 38, who came to the cafe with his wife and baby, the experience is about more than a meal. "Normally I'm a person who travels very



People walk up a jet bridge, normally used by passengers to board an airplane, at a Thai Airways pop-up airplane-themed at the airline's headquarters in Bangkok.

often, and when we are forced to stay at home... it's kind of depressing," he said as fellow passengers posed with luggage by a fake airplane door. "(The cafe) relieves what's missing." Thailand was the first country outside China to detect a coronavirus case, but it has since registered a low toll, with about 3,400 infections and 58 deaths. Travel restrictions

have nevertheless eviscerated the tourism-reliant economy, while Thais have founded themselves stuck due to quarantine requirements in other countries. The government is currently mulling travel bubbles with select countries that also have low tolls. — AFP



Photo shows visitors sitting in the cockpit of a retired Airbus 330 air-plane turned into a coffee shop.



This photograph shows visitors enjoying business class seats in a retired Airbus 330 air-plane turned into a coffee shop at an attraction site, outside Pattaya in Chonburi province.



A macaron is presented at a Thai Airways pop-up airplane-themed.



A Thai Airways flight attendant wears a face shield at a pop-up airplane-themed.



Photo shows the tail of a retired Airbus 330 air-plane turned into a coffee shop.



A visitor walking past figures of soldiers displayed outside a retired Airbus 330 air-plane turned into a coffee shop at an attraction site, outside Pattaya in Chonburi province.



A Thai Airways flight attendant wears a face shield as she helps customers to take a photo with a mobile phone at a pop-up airplane-themed at the airline's headquarters in Bangkok.

Lifestyle | Features



Photo shows visitors drinking coffee in the economy class seats in a retired Airbus 330 air-plane turned into a coffee shop.



Photo shows visitors enjoying coffee in a retired Airbus 330 air-plane turned into a coffee shop.

FOR BROADWAY ACTORS, A DISTANT STAGE RETURN RIFE WITH UNKNOWNNS

Broadway stars who once lit up New York's most bankable stages now face a reckoning over the future of the performing arts, in an industry that has bled money since the pandemic began. Like essentially all other cultural institutions, New York's famed musical theater district shut down as the city became the US epicenter of the Covid-19 outbreak in the spring. When the crisis took hold, performer Derrick Davis was set to play Martin Luther King Jr in "I Dream," to be staged in North Carolina. Suddenly, Davis—who has played major parts in "The Lion King," and was the first black person in the title role on a national tour of "The Phantom Of The Opera"—was unemployed.

As the weeks dragged on, "depression started to set in; the money started to fall through the sieve," the 41-year-

old said. With every postponement-New York actors are now hoping for a summer 2021 reopening—he pondered a return to an earlier career in real estate. "I can't sit and survive on hope," Davis said. "Many of my friends have gotten on planes and gone home... saying that they may never come back." For now, Davis is holding on, taking virtual university teaching gigs and honing his craft. "There's still that fire inside," he said. "I've worked my life to get to this level." "I can't throw in the towel just yet."

Pressure in isolation

In its 2018-2019 season, Broadway grossed \$1.83 billion, according to the Broadway League, a trade organization that says in normal times the industry supports nearly 97,000 local jobs. The pandemic financial hit absorbed by the theater district is severe, and industry



Performers Derrick Davis (left) and Chondra Profit speak during an interview with AFP.



Artists Taharqa Patterson (left) and Angela Birchett perform during an interview with AFP.

leaders say they would lose money operating at a limited capacity—unlike museums, which have started opening in New York—meaning live theater will likely be among the last sectors to return. Chondra Profit, a leading "Lion King" actor for a decade, said that while she feared burning through savings waiting to get back onstage, over the past few months she has gone into "full mother mode," caring for her energetic two-year-old. But even using the time for her family felt like a risk, the 36-year-old said, as pressure grew to use the period of isolation as fuel for new work.

"You have to create the next best play, and you have to create all this music... artists are putting out videos every other day," Profit said. "It was starting to suffocate me." Taking a step back, Profit began reading new scripts, and considering how she could feel out new pathways, such as directing or casting.

'Different consciousness'

Their professional creative outlets stifled, Profit and Davis have found soli-

arity with fellow performers they have collaborated with for "Lights Out On Broadway," an open-mic event which has been kept up online. The show started as an avenue for actors to let loose on nights when they were not performing in regular shows. They, along with the show's hosts Angela Birchett and Taharqa Patterson, have taken this time to reflect how theater's return might evolve post-pandemic—in terms of health precautions, but also given the sharp rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in recent months.

"Our culture and our people are going through a metamorphosis... our responsibility is going to be different in terms of our output," Birchett, 41, said. "Art and music are going to be a vehicle that will continue to move things forward." "We have to make that a part of our absolute obligation," Patterson, 38, agreed, saying the performing arts would be key to "healing" for both audiences and performers, who have been deprived of creative release for many stressful months. Though none of the performers could predict how

live shows would evolve post-coronavirus, Patterson was positive of one thing: "There is no going back to business as usual."

"There will be a new normal, because we're rocking with a different consciousness, a different awareness and different skills that have been sharpened and honed while we've been home," he said. Davis said he was "motivated" to keep pushing boundaries and find new ways to create, but cautioned that the pandemic had taken its toll on artists just like everyone else. At times, the depression runs deep. He recalled a moment when "I didn't even have the energy to call somebody and say hello... because of the uncertainty and because of the lack of ability to just be around people that you're normally around in a normal way." "It's a challenge," Davis said. "But as performers, we rise to that challenge, and we persevere." "Hopefully we will get to the other side." — AFP



In this file photo Signage of the Broadway play "The Phantom of the Opera" seen at Time Square in New York City.—AFP photos

Idris Elba talks US racism as 'Concrete Cowboy' rides into Toronto

Its biggest star is British, and its director is white. But "Concrete Cowboy," a critically acclaimed new film about at-risk black youths and horse owners in urban Philadelphia, offers a poignant message at a time of mass anti-racism protests in the United States, Idris Elba said Sunday. The film follows a young black man (Caleb McLaughlin of "Stranger Things") who returns to an impoverished Philadelphia ghetto. He must choose between a life of crime and the close-knit horse-rearing community of his estranged father (Elba). "It was incredibly important to us... that we tell this story of the fork in the road that you can take as a young man in this country," Elba told the Toronto film festival, when asked about US anti-black police violence in an online talk. "America didn't change overnight. These are issues that have been going on for a long time—even where I'm from in England where there's a huge knife-crime problem," added the London-born star.

Director Ricky Staub stumbled upon the story, adapted from a novel, after spying a black cowboy riding a horse and a bright-red, decked-out buggy down the street outside his Philadelphia office window. As characters in the film discuss, black cowboys were widespread but have been white-washed out of history by Hollywood, and black urban riding clubs remain a proud if little-known tradition. Lee Daniels, best known for directing the Oscar-winning "Precious," admitted he was "shocked" to learn Staub was white, and initially declined to produce the project. "For a quick minute... you had to really think about it, because I was out," he said. "And then I thought, I prayed, and I was... 'this is ridiculous, I'm in! This cat knows what he's doing.' "And so then I opened myself up to him."



In this file photo English actor Idris Elba attends the world premiere of "Fast & Furious presents Hobbs & Shaw," at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood California.

Reportedly shot for less than \$10 million, the movie premiered in Toronto on Sunday. Reviews praised an "astounding street-level debut" for shining a light on a unique but fading subculture by using real-life "urban cowboys" as actors. Elba himself had to overcome a severe horse allergy to film the movie. "I'm hoping that as a result... people look back at their communities and respect the role that communities play in young men's lives, young people's lives," said Elba, who played a Baltimore slum drug boss to massive acclaim in television's "The Wire." "Because oftentimes it takes a village."

'Delicate'

Another film to use non-actors playing themselves—"Nomadland," about America's fleet of aging, itinerant van-dwellers, starring Frances McDormand—screened in Toronto and scooped the Venice festival's top prize earlier this weekend. Saoirse Ronan ("Lady Bird" and "Little Women") on Sunday discussed another potential Oscar contender that premiered in Toronto—"Ammonite," in which she stars



In this file photo English actor Idris Elba attends the world premiere of "Fast & Furious presents Hobbs & Shaw," at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood California. — AFP photos

opposite Academy Award winner Kate Winslet.

The film was inspired by the real life of British fossil-gathering paleontologist Mary Anning (Winslet) and depicts a lesbian relationship with a grieving mother (Ronan) in 19th-century England. The follow-up to director Francis Lee's "God's Own Country" moves at a gentle pace, but has received a number of rave reviews, with one Hollywood Reporter critic left unable to "think of a single aspect that could be improved upon."

"It takes so much time and care and patience to find the beauty in something and the strength of something—and that is what these two women sort of do for one another," said Ronan, drawing parallels between searching for ammonite and love. She added: "It's a very delicate movie." Toronto, North America's biggest film festival, is taking place mainly online this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. It runs until September 20. — AFP

Busan film festival cut back, delayed over virus

The Busan International Film Festival, Asia's biggest gathering of its kind, will be reduced to a fraction of its usual scale with several sections moved online because of the coronavirus pandemic, organizers said yesterday. The event normally sees a host of stars and industry figures from across Asia and further afield, including some from Hollywood, descend on the South Korean port city for 10 days of critical consideration and financial deal-making. But South Korea—which largely overcame an early coronavirus surge with extensive tracing and testing—has seen several clusters in recent weeks, raising concerns of a second wave and prompting authorities to tighten social distancing measures last month.

Those curbs are being temporarily eased in the greater Seoul area, officials announced at the weekend, but Busan organizers said they had no choice but to cut back on the festival—which will also be delayed by two weeks. "We agonized over whether we should go ahead with hosting the event," festival chairman Lee Yong-kwan told reporters. And he hinted that it could still be cancelled altogether if Korea's traditional Chuseok harvest festival triggers a new surge in infections. "There could be a situation in

which we won't be able to host the event," he said. Originally set for early October, organizers said it will be pushed back to October 21-30 and gave details of the cutbacks in a statement. "All outdoor events are cancelled, including the opening and closing ceremonies," they said, "in order to prevent crowds from gathering".

"There will be no international invitations, nor will there be any receptions or parties hosted to provide networking opportunities for film industry professionals." A total of 192 films from 68 countries will still be shown, but each movie will only be screened once, compared with two or three times last year. All judging for the festival's prestigious awards will take place online, as will its film and project markets, and discussion forum. The multi-director anthology "Septet: The Story of Hong Kong," which pays tribute to the territory ranging from the 1950s to the present day, will open the festival. The closing film will be Japanese director Kotaro Tamura's animated movie "Josee, the Tiger and the Fish", centered on a reclusive, disabled young woman. — AFP



This handout photo taken yesterday and provided by the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) shows the festival chairman Lee Yong-Kwan speaking during a press conference in Busan. — AFP

Sports

5 sent off as Marseille grab a rare win at PSG

Furious Neymar alleges racism; Marseille end long PSG curse

PARIS: Florian Thauvin snapped Marseille's 20-match winless run against Paris Saint-Germain as the Ligue 1 champions suffered another 1-0 defeat on Sunday and had Neymar sent off on his return from quarantine after contracting Covid-19. France winger Thauvin missed most of last season with an ankle injury but his close-range volley on 31 minutes at the Parc des Princes earned Marseille a first victory over their bitter rivals since November 2011.

PSG, who lost the Champions League final to Bayern Munich last month, have now lost their opening two games of a season without scoring for the first time since 1978/79 and the task for Thomas Tuchel's coronavirus-afflicted side does not get any easier this month. A frenzied schedule awaits, starting with the visit of Metz in midweek and a trip to Nice next Sunday, and Neymar now faces a suspension for a slap on Marseille defender Alvaro Gonzalez in an injury-time scuffle that resulted in five red cards.

The Brazilian appeared to accuse his opponent of racism as he followed Layvin Kurzawa and Leandro Paredes down the tunnel after he was sent off following a VAR review. Argentine striker Dario Benedetto and left-back Jordan Amavi were shown red cards for the visitors. Marseille are attempting to close the gap on PSG after coming a distant second last season and find themselves with an early six-point advantage over a club that has won the title seven of the past eight years.

After fielding a depleted line-up at Lens on Thursday, Tuchel was able to recall Neymar and Angel Di Maria for a match played in front of around 4,000 supporters in Paris. However, Kylian Mbappe remained absent after testing positive for Covid-19 on France duty at the start of the week with Mauro Icardi and Marquinhos also still missing.

PSG handed a debut to Italy international Alessandro Florenzi following his arrival on a season-long loan from Roma while Sergio Rico started in goal after rejoining on a long-term deal. Marseille keeper Steve Mandanda produced a magnificent reflex to keep out an effort from Marco Verratti just a minute in as tempers bubbled over frequently in the capital. Thauvin, who shone in Marseille's opening 3-2 win at Brest before the international break, made the breakthrough when he turned in a Dimitri Payet free-kick from point-blank range.

Di Maria found the net for PSG just past the hour but had strayed clearly behind the last defender, and Marseille's celebrations were cut short in similar fashion moments later when a Benedetto goal was ruled offside. The Argentine rifled in a rebound after Rico parried from Thauvin, who was controversially adjudged to be in an offside position much to the frustration of Marseille. PSG's last goal came in the 3-0 win over RB Leipzig in the Champions League semi-final on August 18, and Neymar poked wide from a Pablo Sarabia cross before the contest turned ugly at the finish. — AFP



PARIS: Marseille's French defender Jordan Amavi (right) and Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar jump for the ball during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Marseille (OM) on September 13, 2020. — AFP

Valencia fight back to win 6-goal thriller against Levante

MADRID: Valencia twice came from behind to beat local rivals Levante 4-2 on Sunday, a welcome boost to morale following a turbulent summer for the club. Manu Vallejo scored the decisive late goals in a goal-fest at Mestalla after Jose Luis Morales's double for Levante had been cancelled out by Gabriel Paulista and the excellent Maxi Gomez. The victory was Javi Gracia's first since being appointed Valencia coach in July and gets the team off to a positive start in La Liga, despite simmering tensions off the pitch.

Manuel Pellegrini also enjoyed a successful start in charge of Real Betis after they won 1-0 away at Alaves. But Unai Emery's first game as coach of Villarreal ended in a 1-1 draw at home to newly-promoted Huesca. Valencia would hope to be challenging the likes of Villarreal for a place in the top four this season but several key players have been sold, with unpopular owner Peter Lim determined to improve the club's financial situation.

Gracia said on Friday he felt "sad" because the squad had been "weakened", a brave move given the board's impatience with previous coaches. Yet this was a gutsy performance that Gracia could have been proud of, even if Valencia were behind after just 37 seconds, Morales weaving his way through four defenders before poking in. Gabriel pulled Valencia level when his header crept inside



VALENCIA: Levante's North Macedonian forward Enis Bardhi (right) challenges Valencia's Danish midfielder Daniel Wass during the Spanish league football match Valencia CF against Levante UD at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia on September 13, 2020. — AFP

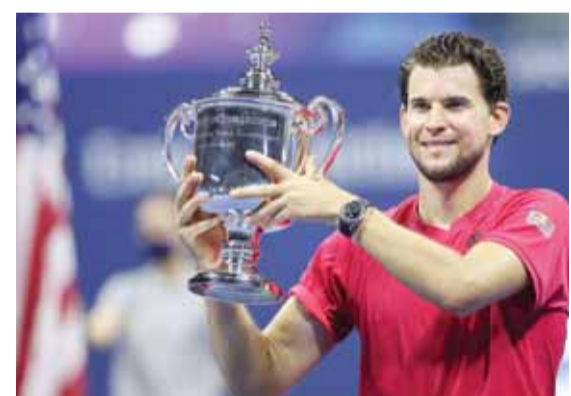
the near post from a corner but Levante scored again, Morales driving into the top corner after more sloppy Valencia defending.

But Valencia came back again, Maxi sliding a shot into the far corner and then Yunus Musah, the 17-year-old who left Arsenal's academy last year, clipped the crossbar with a shot in the second half.

Valencia looked more likely to snatch a third and Vallejo kept a cool head when it mattered, tucking a finish into the corner after a smart dummy by Maxi. There was time even for a fourth in injury-time as Maxi pulled clear on the break and when his shot cannoned back off the post, Vallejo was perfectly placed. — AFP

Thiem wins US Open for first Grand Slam title

NEW YORK: Dominic Thiem produced a historic comeback to beat Alexander Zverev in a nervy five-setter and win the US Open on Sunday for his first Grand Slam title. The second seeded Austrian beat the fifth seed 2-6, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) in 4hr 2min inside a near-empty Arthur Ashe Stadium. It marked the first time in the US Open's Open era history that a player had recovered from losing the opening two sets to win the title. It was also the first time the final had been settled by a tie-break. "I wish we could have two winners today. I think we both deserved it," said Thiem. The title is the 27-year-old Thiem's maiden Grand Slam trophy after three previous defeats in finals of tennis majors.



NEW YORK: Dominic Thiem of Austria celebrates with championship trophy after winning in a tie-breaker during his Men's Singles final match against Alexander Zverev of Germany on September 13, 2020. — AFP

serving for the championship at 5-3 in the fifth set. But he could not hold and soon Thiem found himself 6-5 ahead. He took a medical timeout before it was his turn to serve for the championship. However, like Zverev moments earlier, Thiem failed to clinch the match and it went to a tie-break. He found himself 5-3 up after two double faults by Zverev but Thiem, by now exhausted and limping, blew two championship points. He won the title and the winner's cheque of \$3 million on his third after Zverev hit a backhand wide. Thiem collapsed to the ground with his head in his hands before the pair, who are close friends, embraced on the court.

"It was a tough battle," said Zverev, who burst into tears during his runner-up speech. "I wish you would have missed a little bit more so I could have hold that trophy up," he added. Zverev said losing in a tie-break after being two sets and a break up "is not easy," but said his time would come. "I don't think it's my last chance. I do believe that I will be a Grand Slam champion at some point," he told reporters. The match was watched by just a few dozen people, mostly officials, journalists and event staff after the coronavirus pandemic forced the tournament to be held behind closed doors. It was a scrappy, timid affair, with both players desperate to win their first Slams. Zverev smashed 15 aces compared to Thiem's two. But the German also hit 15 double faults, with Thiem hitting eight. — AFP

Point-led Lightning sink Islanders for 3-1 series lead

LOS ANGELES: Ondrej Palat and Blake Coleman scored 12 seconds apart in the second period and the Tampa Bay Lightning put the New York Islanders on the brink of Stanley Cup playoff elimination with a 4-1 win on Sunday. Palat finished with a goal and an assist and Brayden Point returned from injury to score his ninth of the playoffs as the Lightning seized a commanding 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference finals. "We played a complete game. They had some pushes but we got a lot of pucks behind their defence and our forwards made the right plays," said Lightning forward Coleman.

Nikita Kucherov and Yanni Gourde both had two assists and Patrick Maroon scored into an empty net for the Lightning. Game five is today in the COVID-19 quarantine bubble in Edmonton, Canada. Point was injured in game two and missed game three of the series with an undisclosed injury but wasted no time getting back into playoff mode as he and Kucherov lead the team in scoring. Point has 25 points, including nine goals, in 16 playoff games and Kucherov has 19 assists and 25 points in 17 games.

"He's the most dangerous guy in the playoffs this year," said Coleman of Point. Point scored 3:33 into the third from in close to break game four open for Tampa, giving the Lightning a 3-1 lead. Palat did all the heavy lifting on the goal, deftly kicking the puck to Kucherov in the centre zone then getting the it back and passing cross ice to Point, who was left wide open in front of the goal after Isles forward Mathew Barzal skated past. Point had plenty of time to take two chops at the puck and beat Islanders goaltender Semyon Varlamov.

Brock Nelson opened the scoring for the Islanders at 11:27 of the second period to make it 1-0, setting off a quick succession of goals by both teams. Just 15 seconds later, Coleman broke loose and scored on a breakaway to tie it. Palat then finished off a beautiful three-man passing play at 11:54 of the second. — AFP

Nuggets rally past Clippers to level NBA playoff series

MIAMI: Denver's Nikola Jokic had game highs of 34 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists Sunday, powering the Nuggets over the Los Angeles Clippers 111-98 to level their NBA playoff series. The Nuggets, who also had 21 points from Jamal Murray and Gary Harris, recovered from a 19-point deficit in the third quarter to match the Clippers at 3-3 in the Western Conference semi-final, setting up a winner-take-all game seven today.

"We don't have pressure," Jokic said. "All the pressure is on them. We have to play at a high level and give our best. To us it's just another game seven. We're going to go out there and play." It's the fourth consecutive playoff series over two seasons in which the Nuggets have faced a seventh game. They are 5-0 in elimination games and have rallied from 16-point or worse deficits in the past three such games. "The effort was amazing," Jokic said. "We were down 16 last time, down 16 to Utah - we don't want it but maybe we like it. We're good at it."

"The whole team played well. It was an amazing game for us." The 25-year-old 7-foot (2.13m) Serbian center hit 13-of-22 shots, 4-of-6 from 3-point range and 4-of-5 from the free throw line. "I think it's defense," Jokic said. "When we get a couple stops, we are flying and the ball is moving. When we start running the offense, we're a really good team." The Clippers, who have squandered a 3-1 series edge, have never reached a conference final in their 50-year history. They missed 10 shots in a row in the third period during a 17-0 Nuggets run.

"They came down and scored or got fouled in the third quarter and we couldn't buy a basket," Clippers star Kawhi Leonard said. "We've just got to leave it all out on the floor, communicate and play hard on the defensive end." Paul George scored 33 points and Leonard, last year's NBA Finals Most Valuable Player for Toronto, added 25 to lead the Clippers, who were outscored 64-35 in the second half. "It was beautiful playing," Clippers coach Doc Rivers said. "Then we stopped moving the ball, stopped playing. That's what let them get back in the game. We clearly have the right formula. We just lost it. We lost our pace."

The Nuggets became the first team since the 1970 Los Angeles Lakers to force multiple game sevens in the same playoff run. No team has ever recovered from a 3-1 deficit twice in the same playoff run but the Nuggets could be the first. "I'm running out of superlatives to say about our team. I love our team. I love our toughness," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "We were down 16 at half. We weren't down on ourselves. We knew what we were going to have to go through. The question was how are we going to get out of it. "One of the best third quarters I can ever remember in my five years."

Malone has no idea what gives his team the ability to climb out of deep deficits. "I think it's an inner belief, a confidence. We believe we have what it takes to win a championship," said Malone. "We have a tremendous belief and confidence in who we are, how we play and what our talent level is. We're enjoying this. We're embracing this. "But we have a lot of work to do." Tuesday will also see Miami and Boston meet in the Eastern Conference final opener. All games are being played without spectators in a coronavirus quarantine bubble at Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Torrey Craig's 3-pointer a minute into the fourth quarter gave the Nuggets an 82-79 lead, their first edge since 8-7 in the first quarter. — AFP

'Tough battle'

After Thiem took set four, Zverev found himself

15 Thiem wins US Open for first Grand Slam title



15 Nuggets rally past Clippers to level NBA playoff series



15 Furious Neymar alleges racism as five sent off in PSG storm



NEW ORLEANS: Alvin Kamara #41 of the New Orleans Saints is tackled by Lavonte David #54 and Jordan Whitehead #33 of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers during the third quarter at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome on September 13, 2020. —AFP

Brees, Saints spoil Bucs debut

Rocky start for Brady as Saints down Bucs

LOS ANGELES: Alvin Kamara scored two touchdowns as the host New Orleans Saints defeated Tampa Bay 34-23 on Sunday, spoiling Tom Brady's debut with the Buccaneers (Bucs). Kamara, who agreed to a five-year, \$75 million contract extension Thursday, caught a 12-yard touchdown pass from Drew Brees and ran 6 yards for another score. Brees, who passed Brett Favre for the NFL career lead in pass attempts, finished 18 of 30 for 160 yards with two touchdowns and no interceptions.

Brady, who spent 20 seasons in New England and won six Super Bowls before signing with Tampa Bay in the offseason, completed 23 of 36 for 239 yards and two touchdowns, but threw two interceptions that led to 14 Saints points. New Orleans led 17-7 at halftime and was on defense to open the third quarter when, on the sixth play of the drive, Janoris Jenkins intercepted Brady and returned 36 yards for a touchdown to extend the lead to 24-7 and the Bucs could never catch up.

Rams 20, Cowboys 17

Malcolm Brown rushed for two touchdowns and Jared Goff passed for 275 yards as Los Angeles opened its new \$5 billion SoFi Stadium by defeating Dallas in Inglewood, Calif. Brown finished with 79 yards on the ground, as the team's three-headed rushing attack of Brown, Cam Akers and Darrell Henderson Jr. gained a combined 124 yards. Los Angeles wide receiver Robert Woods caught six passes for 105 yards and had another 14 on a carry of his own. Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott was 25 of 39 for 266 yards and one touchdown, while Ezekiel Elliott rushed for 96 yards and a touchdown on 22 carries.

Ravens 38, Browns 6

Quarterback Lamar Jackson picked up where he left off last season, completing 20 of 25 passes for 275 yards and three touchdowns, and rushed for a team-high 45 yards as host Baltimore routed Cleveland. Tight end Mark Andrews caught two touchdown passes, Marquise Brown had five catches for 101 yards, and rookie running back JK Dobbins rushed for two scores for the Ravens, who picked up their 13th consecutive regular-season victory. Browns quarterback Baker Mayfield threw for 189 yards, with a touchdown and an interception, and running backs Kareem Hunt and Nick Chubb combined for 132 rushing yards for Cleveland, which failed to win its season opener for the 16th consecutive year.

Raiders 34, Panthers 30

Josh Jacobs' third touchdown run provided the go-ahead points as Las Vegas posted a victory over Carolina in Charlotte, N.C. The outcome spoiled the debut for Panthers coach Matt Rhule and was the first game for the Raiders since the franchise relocated to Las Vegas from Oakland. Trailing 30-27, Jacobs scooted around the right side for a 6-yard scoring run with 4:08 remaining in the fourth quarter. It marked the seventh lead change of the game. The Raiders defense made a fourth-and-1 stop at their own 46-yard line with 1:11 left to help clinch the outcome. By the time the Panthers regained possession at their own 27, there were eight seconds to play.

Seahawks 38, Falcons 25

Russell Wilson completed 31 of 35 passes for 322 yards and four touchdowns and added a team-high 29 yards rushing as Seattle beat host Atlanta in the season opener for both teams. Safety Jamal Adams, acquired in an offseason trade with the New York Jets, made an immediate impact for the Seahawks (1-0) with a game-high 12 tackles to go with a sack and two tackles for loss. For Atlanta, Matt Ryan was 37 of 54 passing for 450 yards and two touchdowns, with one interception.

Washington Football Team 27, Eagles 17

Peyton Barber rushed for two touchdowns and the Washington Football Team registered eight sacks in the victory over visiting Philadelphia in the season opener for both teams. Washington scored 27 unanswered points and gave head coach Ron Rivera a victory in his debut. It was the largest deficit overcome against Philadelphia in the series history. Quarterback Dwayne Haskins completed 17 of 31 passes for 178 yards and one touchdown as Washington won a home opener for the first time since 2014. The Eagles entered the game without injured running back Miles Sanders and right tackle Lane Johnson. Despite those absences, the team bolted to a 17-0 lead thanks to a pair of touchdown passes by quarterback Carson Wentz, who was 24 of 42 for 270 yards with two interceptions.

Jaguars 27, Colts 20

Gardner Minshew completed 19 of 20 passes for 173 yards and three touchdowns, including the go-ahead score in the fourth quarter that lifted Jacksonville past visiting

Indianapolis. Minshew, who hit his last 15 passes, found Keelan Cole wide open down the right sideline for a 22-yard touchdown pass with 5:56 left. Josh Lambo added a 46-yard field goal with 2:50 to play, his 45th consecutive successful field goal at home. Indianapolis reached the Jacksonville 26 on its final possession, but Philip Rivers' fourth-down pass for TY Hilton was knocked away by rookie cornerback C.J. Henderson with 49 seconds remaining. Rivers connected on 36 of 46 passes for 363 yards with a touchdown and two interceptions.

Patriots 21, Dolphins 11

Cam Newton looked like his former self by scoring twice and amassing a combined 230 yards passing and rushing to lead New England to a season-opening win over Miami in Foxborough, Mass. In his Patriots' debut, Newton showed signs of what New England hoped for when it signed him to replace the departed Tom Brady as its starting quarterback. Newton's ability to keep the Dolphins off balance with zone-read options allowed the Patriots to seize control following a scoreless first quarter.

Bills 27, Jets 17

Josh Allen completed 33 of 46 passes for 312 yards and two touchdowns, rushed for 57 yards and another touchdown, and Buffalo cruised to a win over visiting New York. Zack Moss and John Brown each caught touchdown passes for Buffalo, which beat the Jets in Week 1 for the second year in a row. Stefon Diggs added a team-high eight catches for 86 yards in his Bills debut. Jets quarterback Sam Darnold completed 21 of 35 passes for 215 yards, one touchdown and one interception. Jamison Crowder had seven catches for 115 yards and a touchdown for New York.

Bears 27, Lions 23

Mitchell Trubisky threw three fourth-quarter touchdown passes, including the go-ahead score to Anthony Miller with 1:54 remaining, as Chicago erased a 17-point deficit to stun host Detroit. Trubisky finished with 242 passing yards. Miller had 76 yards on four catches in the season opener for both teams. Matthew Stafford threw for 297 yards and a score but also had a crucial fourth-quarter interception for Detroit. Adrian Peterson, making his Lions debut, rushed for 93 yards on 14 carries and caught three passes for 21 yards.

Packers 43, Vikings 34

Aaron Rodgers threw two of his four touchdown passes to Davante Adams and Green Bay opened with a high-scoring win at Minnesota. Rodgers completed 32 of 44 passes for 364 yards and Adams tied a franchise record with a career-high 14 receptions for 156 yards. Marquez Valdes-Scantling added 96 yards and a touchdown on four catches for the Packers, who racked up 522 total yards and dominated time of possession 41:16 to 18:44. Minnesota running back Dalvin Cook rushed for 50 yards, two touchdowns and a pair of two-point conversions. Kirk Cousins was 19-for-25 passing for 259 yards with two fourth-quarter TD passes to Adam Thielen (six catches, 110 yards) and an interception. The Vikings had the game's only turnover and gave up a second-quarter safety.

Chargers 16, Bengals 13

An offensive pass-interference penalty by Cincinnati on the potential go-ahead touchdown and the ensuing missed field-goal attempt spoiled the debut of No. 1 draft pick Joe Burrow, and Los Angeles held off the host Bengals. Burrow, who went 23 of 36 passing for 193 yards with an interception in his pro debut, led a torrid final drive that covered 79 yards in less than three minutes. He capped the possession with a 3-yard strike to wide receiver AJ Green near the pylon, but Green was flagged for pushing off Chargers defensive back Casey Hayward. Bengals kicker Randy Bullock, who made his previous 24 field-goal attempts, including two earlier on Sunday, then pulled up with an apparent hamstring injury as he badly missed a 31-yarder that would have forced overtime.

Cardinals 24, 49ers 20

Kyler Murray ran for a game-high 91 yards, threw for 230 and accounted for two touchdowns and the Arizona defense came up with a key late stop as visiting Arizona stunned the defending NFC champions in the opener for both teams. DeAndre Hopkins notched a career-high 14 catches for 151 yards as the Cardinals overcame an early 10-0 deficit. Kenyan Drake scored the go-ahead touchdown on a 1-yard run with 5:03 to go after the teams traded the lead three times in the fourth quarter. Murray completed 26 of 40 passes with one interception. Raheem Mostert led the 49ers in both receiving (95) and rushing (56) yards, with 76 receiving yards coming on a first-quarter catch-and-run for San Francisco's first score. Jimmy Garoppolo finished 19-for-33 passing for 259 yards and two touchdowns. —Reuters

Kuwait Football Club beat Kazma in semi final

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Club moved one step closer to keep the Cup of HH the Amir by defeating Kazma in their semi final match that was held Sunday evening with the score of 8-7 in penalty kicks after drawing 1-1 in regulation and extra time. Kuwait scored first in the 42nd minute when Faisal Zayed succeeded in converting a penalty kick, then Bandar Bourisli

equalized in the 50th minute.

Amjad Atwan failed to score while Shaheen Al-Khamees, Yaqoub Tararwah, Sami Al-Sane, Fahad Al-Hajiri, Fahad Humoud, Abdelaziz Naji and Abdul Cisco scored for Kuwait. While Hamid Marios and Khalid Al-Obaid missed their kicks as Hamad Harby, Abdallah Al-Fahad, Shabeeb Al-Khalidi, Naser Faraj, Mohammad Al-Azmi and Bandar Bourisli scored for Kazma. Meanwhile, Al-Arabi Football club joined Kuwait in the final match by defeating Yarmouk 5-4 from the penalty spot as regulation and extra time ended 0-0. This will be the 58th Amir Cup match to be held, and the date is yet to be determined.

