



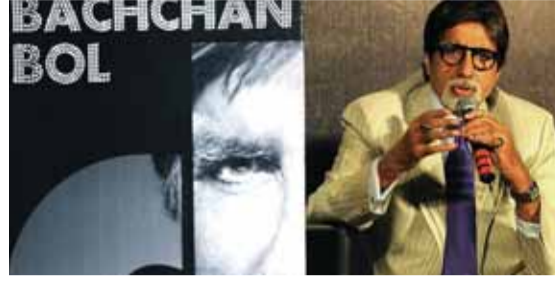
3 Healthcare workers sacrifice their lives for patients' safety



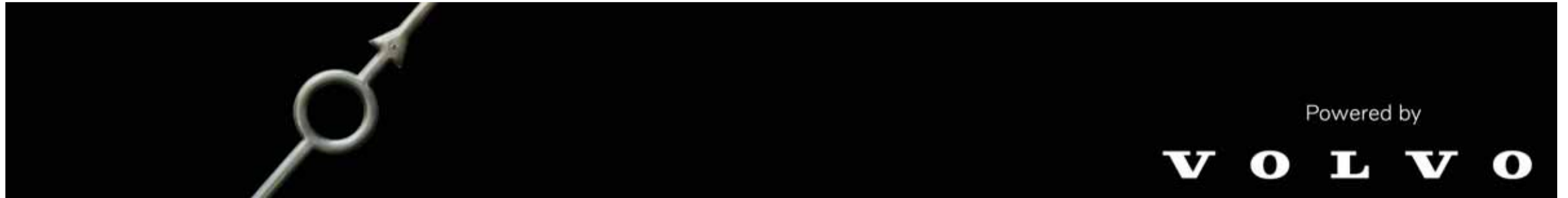
9 Is truck maker Nikola the new Tesla, or just hot air?



12 Namaste Alexa: Amazon signs up superstar Bachchan



16 Messi joins exclusive club of sporting billionaires



UAE, Bahrain normalize ties with Israel at White House

Palestinians mourn 'black day' • Trump hails 'dawn of new Middle East'

Number of infected MPs rises to 8

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The number of members of parliament who have tested positive for the coronavirus increased to eight after three new lawmakers said they are infected with COVID-19.

The new MPs are Safa Al-Hashem, Mohammad Al-Dallal and Mubarak Al-Hajraf. All the three MPs made the announcement on their Twitter accounts.

All 50 MPs and an unspecified number of Assembly staff will be tested for the disease on Saturday as per instructions by the health ministry, which requires that seven days should have passed since any contact took place to ensure accurate results.

Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said on Monday that at least five MPs had tested positive for the coronavirus. He said the Assembly office has decided to postpone this week's session till next week and only healthy MPs will be allowed to attend.

MP Hashem strongly criticized the lawmaker who attended last week's three sessions "despite knowing they had been infected with the disease".

The new developments came as the Cabinet decided to postpone moving to phase five, the final stage of returning to normal life, until further notice amid a sharp increase in the number of new COVID-19 cases.

Health Ministry spokesman Abdullah Al-Sanad however denied Kuwait is witnessing the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, stressing that the country is still battling the first wave.

Continued on Page 2



WASHINGTON: (From left) Bahrain Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al-Zayani, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, US President Donald Trump and UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan participate in the signing of the Abraham Accords at the White House yesterday. — AFP

WASHINGTON: The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed agreements yesterday for normalizing relations with Israel, becoming the latest Arab states to break a longstanding taboo in a strategic realignment of Middle Eastern countries against Iran. US President Donald Trump hosted the White House ceremony, capping a dramatic month when first the UAE and then Bahrain agreed to reverse decades of ill will without a resolution of Israel's decades-old dispute with the Palestinians.

In front of a crowd of several hundred people on the White House lawn, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signed accords with Emirati Foreign

Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al-Zayani. The deals, denounced by the Palestinians, make them the third and fourth Arab states to take such steps to normalize ties since Israel signed peace treaties with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994.

Meeting Netanyahu earlier in the Oval Office, Trump said, "We'll have at least five or six countries coming along very quickly" to forge their own accords with Israel. But he did not name any of the nations involved in such talks.

Speaking from the White House balcony, Trump said: "After decades of

Continued on Page 2



HEBRON: Demonstrators wave Palestinian flags in the center of this flashpoint city in the occupied West Bank yesterday during a protest against decisions by the UAE and Bahrain to normalize relations with Israel. — AFP

Iran warns US after Trump issues threat

WASHINGTON: Iran warned the US yesterday against making a "strategic mistake" after US President Donald Trump threatened Tehran over reports it planned to avenge the killing of top general Qasem Soleimani. "We hope that they do not make a new strategic mistake and certainly in the case of any strategic mistake, they will witness Iran's decisive response," Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiei told a televised news conference.

Trump vowed on Monday that any attack by Iran would be met with a response "1,000 times greater in magnitude", after reports that Iran planned to avenge the killing of Soleimani. A US media report, quoting unnamed officials, said that an alleged Iranian plot to assassinate the US ambassador to South Africa was planned ahead of the US presidential election in November.

"According to press reports, Iran may be planning an assassination, or other attack, against the United States in retaliation for the killing of terrorist leader Soleimani," Trump tweeted. "Any attack by Iran, in any form, against the United States will be met with an attack on Iran that will be 1,000 times greater in magnitude!"

Rabiei expressed regret that "the president of a country who has claims to global management and order would make hasty, agenda-fuelled and dubious remarks on such a weak basis".

Continued on Page 2

Gas found on Venus linked to life on Earth

PARIS: The atmosphere of Venus contains traces of phosphine gas - which on Earth can be attributed to living organisms - scientists said on Monday, in a fresh insight into conditions on our nearest planetary neighbor. Conditions on Venus are often described as hellish with daytime temperatures hot enough to melt lead and an atmosphere comprised almost

entirely of carbon dioxide.

A team of experts used telescopes in Hawaii and Chile's Atacama Desert to observe Venus' upper cloud deck, around 60 km from the surface. They detected traces of phosphine, a flammable gas that on Earth often occurs from the breakdown of organic matter. Writing in Nature Astronomy, the team stressed the presence of phosphine did not prove the presence of life on Venus.

However, as the clouds swirling about its broiling surface are highly acidic and therefore destroy phosphine very quickly, the research did show that something was creating it anew.

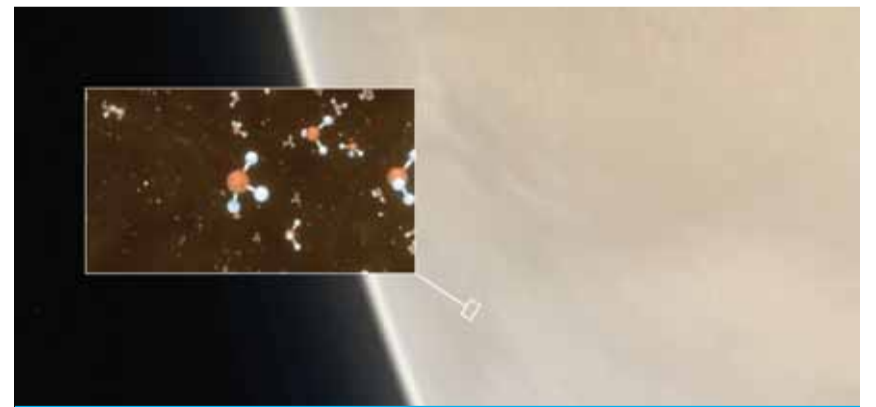
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Camel racing back in Sinai after hiatus

SINAI, Egypt: Spread out at the foot of a vast plateau in the Sinai desert, hundreds of excited Bedouins gathered to race their camels after a six-month break due to coronavirus. Shrouded in a vast sand cloud kicked up by the hump-backed beasts, more than 500 camels were loudly cheered on by their owners dressed in traditional jalabiyas and

headdresses. Camel racing is a popular traditional sport in many Arab countries, most notably in the Gulf region. And in Egypt, Bedouins of the South Sinai desert have kept up the tradition.

But race events have been suspended since March following the COVID-19 outbreak, and orders only came down at the beginning of the month that they could resume last weekend. The camels ran around a two-kilometer track in the Tih plateau, completing it in a matter of minutes, as they were followed by spectators and owners riding in SUVs to get a close-up glimpse of the action. — AFP (See Page 15)



A handout photo made available on Monday shows an artistic impression depicting Venus, where scientists have confirmed the detection of phosphine molecules, a representation of which is shown in the inset. — AFP



SINAI: Camels run on a dirt track during a race in Egypt's South Sinai desert on Sept 12, 2020 after more than six month of hiatus due to the coronavirus outbreak. — AFP

Local

Deputy Amir shows full support to Kuwait fight against corruption

Bring anyone responsible to justice equally: Sheikh Nawaf

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Chairman of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim, who presented to His Highness the Deputy Amir thanked Nazaha members for their efforts in fighting all forms of corruption and achieving justice. He affirmed the need to bring anyone responsible of corruption to justice equally, no matter what their identity may be. His Highness the Deputy Amir also noted that all state's institutions will support Nazaha to execute its tasks. His Highness the Deputy Amir also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdulaziz Al-Ibrahim. — KUNA photos



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

Foreign Minister receives credentials of new ambassadors

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received yesterday the new Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait Laurens Westhoff, new Sudanese Ambassador Abdulmunem Al-Ameen, and new Austrian Ambassador Marian Wrba, who presented copies of their credentials. Sheikh Dr Ahmad wished the new ambassadors best of luck in their tenures, and for bilateral relations to further develop. Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocols Dhari Al-Ajran and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's office Saleh Al-Loughani attended the meetings.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad received Ambassador of the Vatican to Kuwait Rev Francisco Padilla on the occasion of ending his tenure. Sheikh Dr Ahmad commended Padilla's contributions to boosting relations between the two countries. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's office Saleh Al-Loughani attended the meeting. In the meantime, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad received the acclaimed Kuwaiti inventor Jenan Al-Shehab. Sheikh Ahmad congratulated Shehab for bringing the State of Kuwait into global prominence, winning a gold medal and two international awards as 'the top woman inventor at the global level' at the Toronto international inventions exhibition in 2020. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah receives a copy of the credentials of the new Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait Laurens Westhoff. — KUNA photos



Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah receives a copy of the credentials of the new Sudanese Ambassador Abdulmunem Al-Ameen.



Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah receives a copy of the credentials of the new Austrian Ambassador Marian Wrba.



Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of the Vatican to Kuwait Rev Francisco Padilla.

UAE, Bahrain normalize ties...

Continued from Page 1

division and conflict we mark the dawn of a new Middle East. We're here this afternoon to change the course of history." Flags of the United States, Israel, the UAE and Bahrain were in abundance. He called it "a major stride in which people of all faiths and backgrounds live together in peace and prosperity" and declared that the three Middle East countries "are going to work together, they are friends."

Hundreds of Palestinians protested yesterday against the normalization deals as the White House hosted the signing ceremony. Clutching Palestinian flags and wearing blue facemasks for protection against the novel coronavirus, demonstrators rallied in the West Bank cities of Nablus and Hebron and in the Gaza Strip. Hundreds also took part in a demonstration in Ramallah, home of the Palestinian Authority. Banners were displayed at the protests, reading "Treason", "No to normalization with the (Israeli) occupier" and "The agreements of shame". In Gaza, protesters trampled on and set fire to

placards of the leaders. "We say to the Bahraini regime and the Emirates that this normalization is a total betrayal of the Palestinian cause and the hopes of the Arab nation," said Ahmad Al-Medallal, an Islamic Jihad official in Gaza. The signing of normalization agreements with Israel marks a "black day" for the Arab world, Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said Monday.

Israel and the US have for years pressed Gulf countries to establish relations with the Jewish state, particularly in light of their shared animosity towards Iran. The Jewish state has previously signed peace deals with just two Arab nations, Egypt and Jordan, in 1979 and 1994, respectively.

With Trump up for re-election on Nov 3, the accords could help shore up support among pro-Israel Christian evangelical voters, an important part of his political base. Speaking to Fox News hours before the ceremony, Trump predicted the Palestinians would eventually join forge peace with Israel or else be "left out in the cold". Some differences remain despite warming ties. Trump said yesterday he would have no problem selling advanced stealth F-35 fighter jets to the UAE, which for years has sought to obtain them. But Israel, which has the F-35, has made clear it still objects to such a sale. — Agencies

on a rocky planet other than Earth.

Reacting to the study, Alan Duffy, an astronomer from Swinburne University and Lead Scientist of The Royal Institution of Australia, said it while it was tempting to believe that the phosphine was produced by life forms, "we have to rule out all possible other non-biological means of producing it". He called the finding "one of the most exciting signs of the possible presence of life beyond Earth I have ever seen".

Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator of NASA's Science Mission Directorate, which has conducted several fly-bys of Venus, called Monday's research "intriguing". Venus, which rotates in the opposite direction to Earth and where a day lasts 243 times longer, is a subject of intense interest among astronomers. It is so close and of such similar size to our home planet that some experts believe it serves as a warning of the dangers of runaway climate change. Previous studies have unearthed tantalizing clues suggesting Venus has active volcanoes, including signs of recent lava flows. — AFP

Gas found on Venus linked to...

Continued from Page 1

The researchers conducted several modeling calculations in a bid to explain the new phosphine production. They concluded that their research provided evidence "for anomalous and unexplained chemistry" on Venus.

Lead author Jane Greaves, from Cardiff University's School of Physics and Astronomy told AFP that the presence of phosphine alone was not proof of life on Earth's next-door neighbor. "I don't think we can say that - even if a planet was abundant in phosphorus, it might lack something else important to life - some other element, or conditions might be too hot, too dry," she said. Greaves added that it was the first time phosphine had been found

Firefighters put out new Beirut blaze

BEIRUT: Firefighters in Lebanon's capital said yesterday they put out a fire at a building under construction, in what was the third blaze to hit the city since a massive explosion at the port. The building, located about 1.5 km away from the city's port in central Beirut, was designed by the renowned late British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid.

Footage shared on social media showed black clouds of smoke billowing off of bright red flames that climbed up the side of the curvaceous building with latticed covering. AFP reporters at the scene saw firefighters use a crane to aim water hoses at its smoldering facade. "What was on fire was the insulation that separates the

outside from the inside" of the building, a civil defense officer told AFP. "We were able in the fastest time possible to control" the blaze, he said.

It was not immediately clear what caused the fire. The Aug 4 explosion at the port, one of the world's largest non-nuclear blasts ever, killed 190 people, wounded thousands and ravaged building windows and doors in large parts of the city. It was followed by a small fire on Tuesday last week at the port and another huge fire on Thursday at a port warehouse where food aid was stored.

Both the explosion and port fires have revived popular outrage against a political class accused of being inept, corrupt and unable to ensure public safety. Preliminary government findings said sparks from a power saw could have caused Thursday's blaze, echoing a theory that welding was also behind the Aug 4 explosion. — AFP

Number of infected MPs...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the Amiri Diwan confirmed yesterday that HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received veteran politician Ahmad Al-Khatib.

Iran warns US after Trump...

Continued from Page 1

He warned that reacting to such reports would "achieve nothing but disruption to the region and to world calm" and advised Trump to "refrain from fresh adventurism... for the sake of winning a new term as president".

On Monday, Iran's foreign ministry denied the report of an assassination plot as "baseless" and part of "repetitive and rotten methods to create an anti-Iranian atmosphere". Relations between Washington and Tehran have been tense ever since the Islamic revolution of 1979. They have deteriorated sharply since Trump unilaterally pulled out of a landmark international nuclear deal with Iran in May 2018 and reimposed crippling sanctions.

The 93-year-old Khatib is a liberal politician who was one of the members who wrote the Kuwaiti constitution in 1961 and was elected to the National Assembly several times.

The Amiri Diwan published no details about the meeting, only saying it tackled topics that seek the benefit of the nation, adding that details of the meeting published on social media are untrue.

MP Abdullah Fahhad said a state of optimism has prevailed after the meeting. Former liberal MP Saleh Al-Mulla said the meeting is very important in its timing and objectives.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday declined to comment directly on the reported threat to Lana Marks, the US ambassador to South Africa, who is a close ally of Trump. But Pompeo told Fox News that "the Islamic Republic of Iran has engaged in assassination efforts all across the world. They have assassinated people in Europe and in other parts of the world. We take these... allegations seriously."

"We make very clear to the Islamic Republic of Iran that this kind of activity - attacking any American any place at any time, whether it's an American diplomat, an ambassador or one of our service members - is completely unacceptable."

The Iranian navy last week said it drove off US aircraft that flew close to an area where naval exercises were underway near the Strait of Hormuz. The military said three US aircraft were detected by air defenses. One of them was a US RQ-4 drone, the same model as one shot down by Iran in June last year after allegedly violating Iranian airspace - a claim the US has denied— AFP

Local

Expats recount experience of living with COVID-19 in Kuwait

Up to 829 people infected in the past 24 hours, take total to 96,301

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Derek, 45, was about to leave Kuwait for Manila on a chartered flight, but a day before the flight, he was pronounced COVID-19 positive by the Ministry of Health and was not allowed to leave. His employer relocated him to a secluded housing in Shuwaikh away from the crowded company accommodation in Riggae. But he was left there without enough food, he claims. Derek shared his circumstances with a friend, and within a few hours, he received aid from his church and from the Filipino community.

"I was terminated in March and was prepared to fly back to Manila immediately, but I was caught in the lockdown. So I stayed and waited for the opening of the airport again," Derek told Kuwait Times. "This time, I was booked for September 10, but the airline requires a PCR test before the flight. So I went to a private clinic and tested positive."

So far Derek is asymptomatic. "I don't feel anything at all. I was okay before and am okay now. I don't have any fever, any headache, any sore throat, no shortness of breath, nothing. I am definitely fine. I don't have any underlying conditions of any sort, so I am okay, and would like to leave this place now," Derek said.

"Thank God for the supplies from friends who are giving me things that I need here and also from the Filipino community. I got some fruits and vitamins from friends, and a rice cooker and a kettle from other friends. I got supplies from everyone who knows I tested positive," he said.

Waiting it out

Derek is among a growing handful of expatriates currently living with the coronavirus.

They may or may not have symptoms but are not sick enough to be in hospital. Some of them are waiting out their quarantine in order to go back to their home countries, while others are hoping to continue working in Kuwait.

Bruno, 33, and his 27-year-old pregnant wife are both quarantining at their home in Farwaniya. Bruno tested positive for COVID-19, while his wife has tested negative. "I received a message from the ministry of health saying I was COVID-19 positive. It said I have to follow home isolation instructions and download an app - that's it," Bruno said.

Bruno has high blood pressure and is also a chain smoker. But he is still young and very concerned about the fate of his wife. "My concern is that my wife is pregnant and she brings food to my room every now and then. We sleep separately, but she is the only one I have in Kuwait. She wears a facemask and at least until now she is okay. But we live under one roof, so there's no escape. I only have headache and body pain - other than that I am fine," he said.

Jane, 45, works and lives in a Kuwaiti house in Abdullah Salem. Three of the people in her sponsor's household of eight members have COVID-19, including her. "I cannot breathe properly, because I have asthma. I have a bad cough and feel very sick. I feel pain in my body and cannot sleep. I feel very tired. I am fighting and hoping to survive this pandemic

because I have family in the Philippines. I have four kids and I want to see them grow up. This is the reason why I am working hard," she told Kuwait Times.

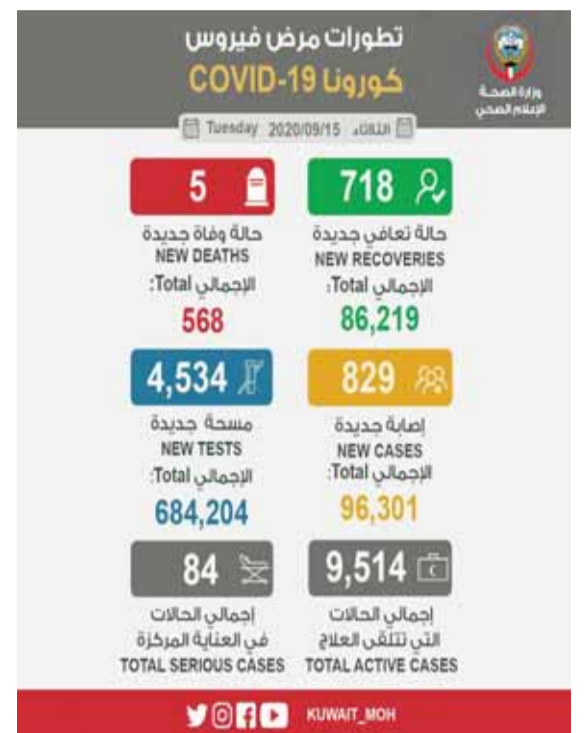
Her male employer was the first to catch the virus in April. "He used to go out of the house almost every day. He got it in April and overcame it. In September, he caught COVID again, and transferred it to me and his five year old son. I am being cared for by my lady employer - they are very kind people. She always asks about me and comes and visits me in my room. I am praying to survive this - hopefully some medicine will work to kill the virus inside me. I will be okay and overcome this COVID and will live long," said Jane, who asked that her real name be withheld.



Five new fatalities, take total to 568

New infections
Up to 829 people contracted the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Kuwait in the past 24 hours, raising the total to 96,301, official spokesman of the Ministry of Health Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad announced yesterday. Meanwhile, five COVID-19 patients died in the same period, raising the total number of fatalities to 568. 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 number of ailed people that continue to receive intensive medical care has amounted to



84, Dr Sanad said, noting that the whole count of proven cases that remain under treatment has reached 9,514. Medical staff conducted, during the past 24 hours, up to 4,534 swab tests, he said, putting the tally of such examinations, so far, at 684,204. The health ministry declared earlier that 718 of COVID-19 patients recovered during the same period, and revealed that the total figure of the recuperated stood at 86,219. Dr Al-Sanad appealed upon the public to remain vigilant and continue to heed the calls for protective measures against the highly contagious pathogen.

Healthcare workers sacrifice lives for safety of patients

KUWAIT: The world is joining forces against the coronavirus pandemic which has emerged as one of the major challenges facing health sectors, while frontline health care workers are sacrificing their lives trying to preserve safety of patients. As the globe celebrates the World Patient Safety Day tomorrow, the world is attempting to include the public in maintaining safety of patients by abiding by medical principles aimed at preserving wellbeing of people. Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MoH) "remembers with pride its heroes at the frontlines regardless of their positions and specialties," Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti, Director of Ahmadi Medical Area, said. The MoH also remembers members of medical teams who lost their lives while doing

their utmost best to provide care for COVID-19 patients, he added.

Highlighting an important factor, Dr Shatti said the safety principle applied to health care workers and patients. "The safety of health care workers and patients is equally important because it is an integral part of the quality of the service the society seeks," he added. Risks facing health care workers are "many and very complicated than many can imagine," he said. It is more than wearing a stethoscope, he added. There are professional risks like exposure to radiation or chemicals like (inhaling) anesthetic gas, or motion-related risks like back pain or falling on the floor, or psychological risks like depression, professional anxiety and excessive working hours, in addition to biological risks and recently COVID-19," said Dr Shatti who also mentioned AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis and meningitis. "All these factors affect health service and practice," he said.

The MoH, added Dr Shatti, celebrates the occasion every year and has the 'Safety Star' award which aimed at promoting quality and

safety of health services. The MoH marks this year's event with a slogan 'Safety health service provider means safe patient,' he said. The World Health Organization (WHO) decided, in a document, to focus on patients' safety for the next 10 years with aim of addressing shortcomings related to health care and clinical practices. WHO, said Dr Shatti, advised health authorities around the world to further promote safety of health care workers particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The working environment is crucial, he said, and it risks infections amidst limited availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other protective means. The WHO document, he noted, aimed at reducing risks against patients to zero as well as clinical measures' safety, establish more connections with patients and their families, knowledge and research. "Patients and their families are partners in health care," he said.

WHO said the overall objectives of World Patient Safety Day were to enhance global understanding of patient safety, increase public

engagement in the safety of health care and promote global actions to enhance patient safety and reduce patient harm. The origin of the occasion is firmly grounded in the fundamental principle of medicine - First, do no harm. The COVID-19 pandemic is presently among the biggest challenges and threats to face the world and humanity, and health care is living its greatest crisis in patient safety ever. The pandemic has exerted unprecedented pressure on health systems worldwide. Health systems can only function with health workers, and a knowledgeable, skilled and motivated health workforce is critical for the provision of safe care to patients. —KUNA



Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti

News in brief

Kuwait still in first wave

KUWAIT: Health Ministry official Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said that Kuwait is still in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the second wave is not necessarily connected to winter season. The rise in infection cases is expected in this time period due to daily activities and poor social distancing measures, Dr Sanad said on Monday. He added that ICU cases rose by five percent last week, calling on people to stick to health measures to avoid a second wave. He stressed on the importance of maintaining social distancing, wash hands regularly, wear a mask everywhere, while advising people with terminal diseases, pregnant women and elderly to avoid leaving the house unless it's necessary.

Land borders reopen

KUWAIT: The Nuwaiseeb border checkpoint is open for GCC nationals carrying negative PCR test certificates to enter Kuwait from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm, and the Salmi checkpoint is open only for people to leave Kuwait as per Saudi Arabia's request, local border authorities said. Exceptions for people to enter from Al-Salmi border is given to first-degree relatives of Kuwaiti citizens, provided that they produce a negative PCR test certificate.

Oil price drops

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil dropped 36 cents during Monday's trading to end the day at \$39.59 per barrel (pb) compared with \$39.95 pb last Friday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. The price of benchmark Brent crude went down by 22 cents to \$39.61 pb and the West Texas Intermediate lost seven cents to \$37.26 pb.

CBK issues bonds

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced Monday issuing KD 290 million (\$957 million) worth of bonds and tawarruk. In a statement to the press, CBK said that the maturity period is three months with a rate of 1.250 percent. Late July, CBK issued bonds and tawarruk valued KD 200 mln (\$660) with three months validity.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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Crimes

Woman drowns at Khairan Resort

KUWAIT: A 29-year-old Ethiopian woman drowned while swimming at Khairan Resort beach, said security sources, noting that the body was referred to forensics. A case was filed for investigations to reveal the circumstances behind the incident.

Reckless driver arrested

A Kuwaiti was arrested for obstructing traffic flow, reckless driving, driving under the effect of drugs, possessing drugs, resisting arrest and attempting to escape from a checkpoint. Case papers indicate that a police patrol stopped the suspect in Hawally and ticketed him, but he tried to escape. He was then controlled and arrested. The suspect was also found to be inebriated, and on impounding the vehicle due to its bad technical condition, agents noticed drugs inside it. A case was filed and the suspect was referred to drugs control pending further investigations.

Search for thief

Someone recently reported that he tried to withdraw KD 500 from an ATM, and when the machine released his card without the money, he thought it was out of order and left to find another one. The man said that he then received an SMS from the bank reporting deducting the sum from his bank account. Checking with his bank, an employee told him that someone visited the ATM after him, took the cash he found in it and left. A case was filed and a search is on for the thief. —Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

Cabinet urges obtaining info about Amir's health from official sources

COVID-19 recovery rate increased, fatalities, hospitalizations went down

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet held its weekly session on Monday at Seif Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. After the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh stated the following: His Highness the Prime Minister briefed the Cabinet at the outset of the meeting on the improvement of His Highness the Amir's health, expressing best wishes and hopes for His Highness's speedy recovery. The Cabinet also urged everyone to obtain information related to His Highness the Amir's health from the official sources. Later, Minister of Health Sheikh Dr. Basel Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on the latest health develop-



Measures taken against 'primaries'

ments in the country in light of statistics and data related to the numbers of coronavirus cases of infection, recovery, deaths and those receiving treatment. He pointed out that recovery rate has increased whereas fatalities and hospitalizations have went down. Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh informed the Cabinet of measures taken by the ministry regarding monitoring a number of locations that held 'primaries' in violation of Law 35/1962 regarding elections for National Assembly membership and its amendments, which criminalizes organization and/or participation of such elections. Furthermore, the Cabinet discussed the outcome of the no-confidence voting session against Saleh, also Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's meeting. — KUNA

Affairs, as well as the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Saud Al-Harbi, held last Thursday regarding the renewal of the parliament's confidence in the two ministers. His Highness the Prime Minister congratulated the ministers on obtaining the confidence of MPs. — KUNA

Failure to follow precaution delays move to fifth phase

KUWAIT: The Cabinet on Monday decided postponing moving into the fifth phase of resuming normal life activities until further notice. The Cabinet blamed the increasing number of new cases of COVID-19 to negligence, not following health precautions and the recent increase of gatherings and crowding. Arabic daily Al-Rai reported yesterday. The Cabinet also urged relevant bodies to activate precautionary measures to limit the spread of infections and ensure the safety of citizens and residents, especially after specialized observers expressed fears that the current state of laxity might lead to re-imposing a partial curfew.

Notably, activities that are still banned and were scheduled to resume in the postponed fifth phase, including full-capacity staff, family gatherings and celebrations, wedding ceremonies, exhibitions, cinema and theatres, while some other activities were allowed to resume ahead of schedule at the beginning of phase four on Aug 18. Moreover, with the total numbers of COVID-19 infections in Kuwait approaching 100,000, the Ministry of Health (MoH) warned that health indicators show that Kuwait is still in the first wave and that the second one might possibly start

unless people respect preventive measures.

Seventh worldwide

Meanwhile, Al-Rai reported that according to the 'World Meter Indicator' which tracks COVID-19 infections worldwide round the clock, Kuwait ranked third in the GCC and the Arab world and seventh worldwide in terms of the number of COVID-19 infections compared to population. The World Meter showed in terms of the number of infections per million, Qatar stands first worldwide with 43,358 infections per million, Bahrain came second worldwide with 35,209 infections, while Kuwait is third in GCC states and seventh worldwide with 22,290 infections per million, which makes the ratio of infections versus the total population in Kuwait ahead of that in the world's most infected countries such as Brazil, US, Colombia and Spain.

The World Meter report also showed that Oman came fourth in GCC states and 12th worldwide with 15,780 infections per million, Saudi Arabia came fifth among GCC states and 33rd worldwide with 9,325 infections per million and UAE came sixth among GCC states and 37th worldwide with 8,018 infections per million.

In addition, the World Meter showed Iraq stands 45th worldwide with 7,186 infections per million, Lebanon 84th worldwide with 3,565 infections per million and Libya 92nd worldwide with 3,306 infections per million, while Morocco registered 2,282 infections per million. Finally, despite the total number of infections reaching 101,009, World Meter showed

Egypt stands 132nd worldwide with only 983 infections per million.

Grade 12 students

In other news, the Ministry of Education (MoE) announced that yesterday was the final date to input grade 12 students' grades in the system, online classes will continue today and tomorrow, and graduation certificates will be distributed on Sunday, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily reported. In this regard, MoE undersecretary Osama Al-Sultan notified all educational zones that the grading system will be closed by the end of working hours yesterday and instructed all school directors to make sure the final grades are entered and online classes continue till Thursday, September 17. Meanwhile, MoE hailed the parliamentary proposal made by MP Osama Al-Shaheen to exempt one of the students' parents from going to their government work in order to stay home and supervise their children during the online learning process.

In my view

Any journey starts with a step



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

Being interested in fighting anything that harms my fellow human beings, I read publications of all types, especially as they speak about something new. I am an optimistic person by nature and what I went through in my life proves it, so a statement by the CEO of a leading tobacco company raised my hopes that first the cigarette as we know will be extinct, then the so-called alternatives will go into the history books once and for all.

"I am convinced it is possible to completely end cigarette sales in many countries within 10 to 15 years," said the company's CEO in a report that was published recently. The statement said that while the company insists smoking alternatives are less harmful than cigarettes, some health groups have expressed concern that heat-not-burn products expose consumers to other toxins and argue that long-term effects are not yet known.

The American FDA which approved the sale of an alternative still did not rule whether it can be marketed as less risky than cigarettes. It is known that what makes one hooked on smoking is nicotine, as the National Institute on Drug Abuse answered the question whether nicotine is addictive as follows:

"Yes. Most smokers use tobacco regularly because they are addicted to nicotine. Addiction is characterized by compulsive drug-seeking and use, even in the face of negative health consequences. The majority of smokers would like to stop smoking, and each year about half try to quit permanently. Yet, only about six percent of smokers are able to quit in a given year. Most smokers will need to make multiple attempts before they are able to quit permanently."

I do understand that companies are always for development and enhancement of their performance in the business world, but all must be careful about what is being delivered into the human body. When a person gets sick and finds it necessary to take medicine, they are most likely to complain of some side effects of the medicine itself despite safety and toxicity studies on it. Although most people can tolerate the side effects, some find themselves compelled to take other medicines to counter the side effects, and so on.

I hope that man will be considerate towards humankind and work towards protecting the race he belongs to from many inflicted harms, the majority of which are manmade, be it in industry or in the streets - even the high seas are not spared.

The journey of 1,000 miles starts with a step, so let us have hope that as tobacco companies are going after alternatives to the traditional cigarette because of its obvious harms, one day even the so-called alternatives will rest in history books and businesses will turn to products beneficial to their fellow brothers and sisters. Nothing is impossible - nothing!

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KUWAIT: A 28-year-old bedoon man died in a three-car accident reported in Sulaibiya Monday night. Sulaibikhat fire station men handled the accident. An investigation was opened.

Kuwait participates in World Cleanup Day

KUWAIT: Chief of the Al-Nowair initiative Sheikh Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah announced a cleaning Kuwait campaign, marking World Cleanup Day, next Saturday in Jahra and Ahmadi governorates. In a statement, Sheikh Intisar said Kuwait's participation at the world Cleanup Day is the first of its kind, as it will enhance Kuwait's environmental position internationally. Last year, 20.1 million people participated in this global campaign from 180 countries around the world, she said, noting that it is the largest environmental cleanup campaign the world has seen. She praised the response of state institutions to this campaign, as the number of participants in the campaign has reached more than 2,000 and is expected to reach 3,000 participants. The goal of adopting this campaign is to promote the culture of cleaning the environment in the Kuwaiti society, she said. Meanwhile, Sheikh Intisar said that awareness meeting was held for representatives of the bodies and institutions participating in the campaign, during which the areas to be covered by the cleaning campaign were reviewed, and they are divided into six sites in Al-Khuwaisat area in Jahra Governorate, as well as Al-Khairan and Al-Wafra in Ahmadi Governorate. — KUNA



Inner Mongolia seethes as China presses Mandarin at school

Ivory Coast court clears president's third-term bid as fresh violence erupts

Page 7

Page 6



TEL AVIV: Israeli protesters gather during an anti-government demonstration outside the Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv on September 13, 2020, demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over several corruption indictments and his handling of the coronavirus crisis, as he prepares to travel to the US. The UAE and Bahrain will sign agreements to recognise Israel, on September 15. — AFP

Netanyahu will not talk to Palestinians

Centrist leader Lapid welcomes Gulf deals

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has "no intention" of discussing peace with the Palestinians, opposition leader Yair Lapid told AFP ahead of the signing of a landmark deal with the UAE.

US President Donald Trump will host a ceremony at which Netanyahu will sign normalisation deals with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, the first Israel has agreed with an Arab state since the 1990s.

While centrist leader Lapid welcomed the Gulf deals, he argued Israel should also resume peace negotiations with the Palestinians. "The current government is saying we have achieved agreements with moderate Sunni countries without paying the price of negotiating with the Palestinians. What I say is it's not a price. It's an Israeli interest," he told AFP at his parliamentary office.

The Palestinian leadership has slammed the Gulf deals for going against decades of consensus among Arab states that a Palestinian peace deal is a prerequisite for ties with Israel. Lapid, who heads the Yesh Atid party, criticised the Palestinians for waiting for the Arab world and the international community to "do the job for them".

"They need to be proactive instead of victimising themselves forever, instead of complaining all

the time," said Lapid, arguing the Palestinians' fundamental demands were unrealistic.

Palestinians have called for an independent state based on the internationally recognised borders that existed before the Six-Day War of 1967, when Israel seized swathes of territory including east Jerusalem and the West Bank.

They have also called for refugees displaced since the creation of Israel in 1948 to be allowed to return along with their descendants. "This is not going to work," said Lapid, a clean-cut former TV journalist. "They need to go back to the table. We need to go back to the table."

'Two-state solution'

The last round of peace talks collapsed in 2014 and the Palestinians have rejected initiatives by the Trump administration for their pro-Israeli bias. Lapid's office is decorated with photos of him with world leaders, including Germany's Angela Merkel and US presidential candidate Joe Biden, while Trump is notably absent.

"I think we need to move forward and discuss this with the Palestinians under the two-state solution, and I don't think this government is going to do anything about it," he said.

Lapid accused Netanyahu's government of hav-

ing "no intention of discussing anything with the Palestinians" as many of the premier's right-wing voters are against the creation of a Palestinian state.

He also pointed to the legal woes of the prime minister, who is currently on trial for corruption, as a further reason peace talks were off the agenda. A former finance minister under Netanyahu, Lapid stood firm in opposition to the veteran premier following March elections.

His former allies Benny Gantz and Gabi Ashkenazi defected to join Netanyahu's government and now serve as defence and foreign ministers respectively.

Pointing to the Gulf deals, Lapid said it was clear both ministers "have no influence whatsoever" in government. Netanyahu "signed the deal with the Emirates and yet later with Bahrain without telling them. It's not only that he didn't consult with them. They didn't even know," Lapid said.

Virus 'failure'

Netanyahu flew to the US just moments after announcing a second nationwide lockdown to tackle the coronavirus, a sign according to Lapid of the government's "complete failure" to address the health crisis.

"It's a very aggressive move. It's devastating for

the economy and it's not that helpful in terms of stopping the epidemic," Lapid said. According to an AFP tally over the past fortnight, Israel is second behind Bahrain for the world's highest coronavirus infection rate.

"The only reason our government has decided to go into the second lockdown is because they're completely lost," Lapid said. Tens of thousands of Israelis have demonstrated in recent weeks, calling for Netanyahu to resign over the graft allegations and his handling of the pandemic and its economic fallout.

While Lapid has steered clear of the rallies outside Netanyahu's Jerusalem residence, he has joined protesters who appear along highways each Saturday evening. "I need to be able to have a clear enough message for the people in order to gain from this," he said.

Although Netanyahu's popularity has waned, his Likud party still tops opinion polls while Lapid's Yesh Atid party is third behind the far-right Yamina party. With many Israelis more focused on coronavirus and the ensuing financial crisis than the Gulf deals, the opposition chief believes he will be in a strong position when the next round of elections comes. "Netanyahu never in his life ran on a bad economy," he said. — AFP

Trump vows greater response to any Iran attack

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Monday vowed that any attack by Iran would be met with a response "1,000 times greater in magnitude," after reports that Iran planned to avenge the killing of top general Qasem Soleimani.

A US media report, quoting unnamed officials, said that an alleged Iranian plot to assassinate the US ambassador to South Africa was planned before the presidential election in November.

"According to press reports, Iran may be planning an assassination, or other attack, against the United States in retaliation for the killing of terrorist leader Soleimani," Trump tweeted.

"Any attack by Iran, in any form, against the United States will be met with an attack on Iran that will be 1,000 times greater in magnitude!"

Relations between Washington and Tehran have been tense since the Iranian revolution, and have spiralled since Trump unilaterally pulled out of a landmark international nuclear deal with Iran in May 2018.

In January, a US drone strike killed Soleimani in Baghdad, and Washington is pushing to extend an arms embargo on Iran that starts to progressively

Iran denies plot

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday declined to comment directly on the reported threat to Lana Marks, the US ambassador to South Africa who is a close ally of Trump.

But Pompeo told Fox News that "the Islamic Republic of Iran has engaged in assassination efforts all across the world. They have assassinated people in Europe and in other parts of the world. We take these... allegations seriously."

"We make very clear to the Islamic Republic of Iran that this kind of activity — attacking any American any place at any time, whether it's an American diplomat, an ambassador, or one of our service members — is completely unacceptable."

The Iranian foreign ministry spokesman on Monday dismissed the report of an assassination plot as "baseless" and part of "repetitive and rotten methods to create an anti-Iranian atmosphere on the international stage."

The Iranian navy last week said it drove off American aircraft that flew close to an area where military exercises were underway near the Strait of Hormuz. The military said three US aircraft were detected by Iran's air force radars after they entered the country's air defence identification zone. In June last year, a US RQ-4 drone was shot down by Iran after allegedly violating Iranian airspace — a claim the US has denied. — AFP

Two dozen HK activists in court over banned Tiananmen vigil

HONG KONG: Hong Kong activists shouted anti-government slogans outside court yesterday as more than two dozen high profile democracy campaigners appeared over a banned vigil to mark the Tiananmen Square crackdown.

Tens of thousands of Hong Kongers defied a ban on rallies on June 4 to mark the anniversary of Beijing's deadly suppression of students pushing for democracy. The annual vigil has been held in Hong Kong for the last three decades and usually attracts huge crowds, but this year's gathering was banned for the first time with authorities citing coronavirus measures — even though local transmission had largely been halted.

The group of defendants represents a broad section of the pro-democracy movement, from 72-year-old media mogul Jimmy Lai to younger campaigners such as Joshua Wong. The 26 accused are charged with either participating in or inciting others to take part in an unlawful assembly. The incitement charge carries up to five years in jail.

Activists gathered at West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts ahead of the procedural hearing to shout slogans and display banners defending their right to hold a Tiananmen vigil.

"It's not a crime to mourn June 4," one poster read, while another said: "Oppose political prosecutions,

Protest political suppression." Veteran activist Lee Cheuk-yan, 63, told the crowd over a loudspeaker: "We must reiterate that mourning June 4 is not a crime."

The vigil, traditionally held in Victoria Park, has taken on particular significance in recent years as the semi-autonomous city chafes under Beijing's increasingly authoritarian rule.

Lee added: "Suppression suffered by activists on June 4, 1989, is very similar to what Hong Kong people suffered in the past year."

Some of those charged face separate prosecutions related to last year's huge and often violent pro-democracy protests.

China's leaders have rejected calls to give Hong Kongers universal suffrage, and portrayed the protests as a plot by foreigners to destabilise the motherland. In late June, Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law aimed at stamping out the demonstrations once and for all.

The legislation targets subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign collusion, with sentences including life in prison. But its broad phrasing — such as a ban on encouraging hatred towards China's government — has sent fear rippling through a city used to being able to speak its mind. — AFP

International

UAE, Bahrain: Normalizing ties with Israel

Abbas calls agreement with UAE an 'aggression' against Palestinians

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain are due to sign at the White House historic deals normalizing ties with Israel, the third and fourth Arab countries to do so. Here is a recap of events in the last month leading to the signing of the landmark accords:

'HUGE breakthrough'

On August 13, 2020, the United Arab Emirates and Israel agree to normalize ties in a US-brokered deal. The bombshell news is broken by US President Donald Trump in a tweet hailing a "HUGE breakthrough" and a "Historic Peace Agreement between our two GREAT friends".



A joint statement by Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the UAE's Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan announces Israel will "suspend declaring sovereignty" over occupied Palestinian West Bank areas as had been slated after a controversial US-proposed Middle East peace plan.

But shortly afterwards, Netanyahu says in a televised address that he has only agreed to delay, not cancel, the annexations. He says the plans remain "on the table" and that he will "never give up our rights to our land".

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas calls the agreement with the UAE an "aggression" against the Palestinian people and a betrayal of their cause.

Direct phone line

On August 14, Netanyahu thanks the leaders of Egypt, Oman and Bahrain for their support of the agreement to normalise ties with the UAE.

Two days later, the Israeli and UAE foreign ministers inaugurate direct phone services between the

two countries in their first announced call after the agreement.

Israel's Mossad spy agency chief, Yossi Cohen, visits the UAE on August 18 for security talks, the first formal visit by an Israeli official since the deal.

'Stab in the back'

On August 19, hundreds of Palestinians hold a protest in the occupied West Bank against the announcement. Members of rival groups Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, and the Fatah faction of Abbas' West Bank-based Palestinian Authority, take part in the rally in a rare joint initiative.

Historic peace agreement

"Any normalisation legitimises the occupation of Palestinian territories," says Palestinian Authority prime minister Mohammed Shtayyeh. "It's a stab in the back," he adds.

Mike Pompeo tour

From August 24 to 27, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo undertakes a Middle East tour in a bid to encourage other Arab states to follow in the footsteps of the UAE. However, his stops in Bahrain, Oman and Sudan fail to produce any public commitments to recognise the Jewish state.

Historic direct flight

On August 31, an Israeli-American delegation takes off on the first commercial flight from Tel Aviv to Abu Dhabi.

Saudi Arabia allowed the flight to cross its airspace, according to White House advisor Jared Kushner, who thanks "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for making that possible" shortly after the flight lands in Abu Dhabi.



WASHINGTON: File photo shows US President Donald Trump listens to applause in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, on September 11, 2020. Trump announced Friday a "peace deal" between Israel and Bahrain, which becomes the second Arab country to settle with its former foe in the last few weeks.— AFP

On September 2, Saudi Arabia agrees to permit UAE flights to all countries to overfly the kingdom. The next day, Bahrain announces a similar decision, saying it agrees to allow UAE flights to and from Israel to overfly its territory.

Bahrain and Israel deal

On September 11, Trump announces a "peace deal" between Israel and Bahrain. "Another HISTORIC breakthrough today!" Trump tweets. The Palestinian Authority and Hamas immediately slam the announcement.— AFP

Fifty years ago: Black September for PLO

PARIS: Fifty years ago, the Jordanian army launched a huge offensive that went down in history as "Black September" in a bid to retake control of territory occupied by the Palestine Liberation Organization in Jordan.

Here is an account of the bloody confrontation on September 17, 1970, based on AFP's copy at the time.

Palestinians radicalise

The Arab defeat in the 1967 Six-Day War in which Israel seized the West Bank and other land, resulted in the Palestinian resistance becoming more radical.

Yasser Arafat, who became PLO chief in 1969, set up training camps and military bases for his 40,000-strong army of fedayeen guerrillas in Jordan, to attack the neighbouring Jewish state.

Jordan had taken in hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees since the creation of Israel in 1948. But the power of the Palestinian armed groups developed into a state within a state.

Insecurity set in and shoot-outs became commonplace in the streets of Amman. King Hussein of Jordan, who struggled to control factions of his own army, narrowly survived a number of assassination attempts. In mid-1970, Egypt and Jordan accepted a US plan, based on UN Security Council Resolution

242, which involved recognition of the state of Israel. The Palestinians rejected it.

Fierce crackdown

In early September 1970, the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a Marxist faction led by George Habash, hijacked five planes, forcing three to land in the Jordan desert.

It blew them up once they had been emptied of several hundred passengers, taking dozens hostage.

On September 17 a deeply frustrated King Hussein responded by ordering his 50,000-strong army to kick the Palestinian fighters out of the Hashemite kingdom. Tank divisions, their faces blackened with soot, pushed into the centre of Amman, refugee camps on the outskirts of the capital and Palestinian training centres.

The next day clashes extended to Irbid, Zarka and al-Ramtha in northern Jordan, which were pounded with heavy artillery by Jordanian troops.

On September 20, Syria intervened to back the Palestinians, sending armoured vehicles into northern Jordan, forcing the Jordanian army to fight on two fronts. Journalists who had been stranded in their hotel overlooking Amman emerged three days later to a battle-scarred capital.

"No neighbourhood has been spared. All the houses show traces of the fighting, some have been gutted by a shell, others hit by volleys of heavy weapons fire," AFP's journalists wrote.

"The Palestinian Wahdat camp in Amman, the PFLP's stronghold, is just a pile of smoking rubble," they added.

In the fighting, 3,000 Palestinian fighters, Jordanian soldiers and civilians were killed according to

Jordan, while the PLO puts the toll in the tens of thousands.

Palestinians expelled

On September 27, after 10 days of bloody fighting, a ceasefire was signed in Cairo.

The last hostages held by the PFLP were freed two days later. But under the deal the Palestinian armed groups got to stay in Jordan, and new fighting took place in January and March 1971.

Prime minister Wasfi al-Tel eventually drove Arafat and the Palestinian fighters out in July 1971, forcing them to seek safe haven in Lebanon.

"It was inevitable, because it was either them or us," King Hussein later said.

In the 1980s Arafat and King Hussein reconciled, but their relationship remained tinged with suspicion.

'Black September' organisation

On November 28, 1971, Tel, regarded as King Hussein's confidant, was assassinated in Cairo by members of the new radical Palestinian "Black September" organisation.

The group would go on to claim numerous attacks, the most spectacular of which was the hostage-taking of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics.

On September 5, 1972, eight gunmen broke into the Israeli team's flat at the Olympic village, shooting dead two and taking nine more Israelis hostage, threatening to kill them all unless 232 Palestinian prisoners were released.

West German police responded with a bungled rescue operation in which all nine hostages were killed, along with five of the eight hostage-takers and a police officer.— AFP

Inner Mongolia seethes as China presses Mandarin at school

TONGLIAO: As his son returned to school under the watchful eye of plainclothes police, an ethnic Mongolian father admitted defeat after days of fighting against a curriculum imposed by the Chinese state, which he fears will suffocate his culture.

"The spirit (of resistance) is still there, but we are scared," said the man, requesting anonymity as he watched other students lugging their suitcases back into Tongliao Mongolian Middle School after a week-long boycott.

"Little by little, parents are sending their kids back." Tens of thousands took part in demonstrations and school boycotts in Inner Mongolia — a vast expanse of northern China where herders marshall livestock across grasslands — to protest against an edict mandating Mandarin-language teaching, over fears it will wipe out their language.

The rare mass rallies held by ethnic Mongolians were the largest China has seen for decades, where authorities under Chinese President Xi Jinping brook no dissent. But then the crackdown came.

Armoured vehicles moved in to surround schools in Tongliao, a stronghold of resistance where ethnic Mongolians make up almost half of the population.

The clampdown echoes Beijing's moves in Xinjiang and Tibet, where similar policies to assimilate local minorities into the dominant Han population were implemented in line with Xi's vision of national and ideological unity through cultural identity.

Police offered cash bounties for leads on ringleaders and publicised the arrests of dozens of suspects accused of gathering signatures and sharing dissenting messages on WeChat. Parents who refused to send their children back to school were threatened with layoffs, fines and students' expulsion. In one district, officials offered cash to students who convinced their peers to return, according to official notices. The dragnet has cowed the most outspoken.

Petitions that circulated in early September and other

outward signs of dissent have evaporated, as fear silences many Inner Mongolians.

During a recent trip to the region, AFP reporters were tailed by a convoy of propaganda officials and unidentified men, leaving contacts jittery and afraid to be named.

In the footsteps of Xinjiang, Tibet

Hastily imposed for the start of term on September 1, the new rules say Mandarin must be taught from first grade — one year earlier than before — across the region's bilingual boarding schools.

History, politics and literature will also be taught in Mandarin now instead of Mongolian. Similar education policies have been introduced in Xinjiang and Tibet, other border regions that have faced government repression and extensive campaigns to rein in their minority education, religions and cultures.

"This is something we cannot accept," the father told AFP. "For young children who are now around seven or eight years old, in a decade or two they will not be able to speak with grandparents in their own language."— AFP

Afghan peace talk negotiators to hold first direct session

KABUL: Afghanistan and Taliban peace talk negotiators will hold their first direct session in Doha, officials said, as the warring sides try to work out an agenda and schedule for how to negotiate a peace deal as the United States withdraws troops.

A small group of negotiators from both sides had met in previous days to try to discuss how the substantial negotiations would take place.

"The contact group from both sides' delegations continued the discussion on rules and procedures and prepared to present it to the general meeting between the two negotiating teams (taking place on Tuesday)," senior Afghan government negotia-

tor Nader Nadery said.

The Taliban's political spokesman Muhammad Naem told Reuters by phone the meeting would be "general" and there were no specific agreed issues on the agenda.

An Afghan presidential palace official said a top priority was getting the Taliban to agree on a ceasefire or significant reduction in violence.

Violence has continued in the country even after the launch of historic peace talks at an opening ceremony in Doha on Saturday.

Talks between the two sides were to begin shortly after a U.S.-Taliban agreement in February, but started only after months of delays, caused in part by continuing Taliban offensives in the war-torn country as well as disagreement over the release of prisoners.

U.S. President Donald Trump has made ending the war in Afghanistan a key election promise and the United States is set to withdraw all its troops by May 2021, subject to the Taliban meeting certain security guarantees.— Reuters

Deadly consequences of Yemen aid obstruction: HRW

DUBAI: Human Rights Watch warned Monday of "deadly consequences" as a result of the obstruction of aid in war-torn Yemen, where the humanitarian effort has already been badly hit by the coronavirus crisis.

Interference by the government and Huthi rebels has hampered the delivery of aid in the country where the risk of famine looms large, the rights group wrote in a report.

Interviews with 35 humanitarian workers, 10 donor officials and 10 Yemeni health workers revealed a complex web of restrictions that hinder the flow of aid.

Tens of thousands of people, mostly civilians, have been killed in the Yemen conflict, which the United Nations describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The United Nations warned in July that Yemen was at risk of returning to "the brink of a full-scale famine" as calls intensified for a ceasefire to help combat the novel coronavirus.

Long delays in approving aid projects, obstruction of aid surveys, and efforts to dictate allocation, alongside violence towards aid workers, all frustrated the flow of essentials, the report said. Aid workers had to "push back" against Huthi insurgents who insisted they hand over cars, laptops and mobile phones when projects concluded in 2019 and 2020.

The UN's World Food Programme last year temporarily suspended deliveries to rebel-held areas following accusations of "diversion of food", after which the Huthis dropped a threat to impose a tax on aid.

Obstacles to aid delivery in government-held areas in the south and east were also on the rise, HRW said. The report also criticised aid agencies for giving in to illegitimate demands, potentially worsening the situation — particularly in Huthi-held areas.

Unnecessary obstacles

Their actions had "encouraged the authorities to seek ever-greater control... channelling vast amounts of money to clearly corrupt ministries", HRW said.

The report urged both the government and the Huthis to "immediately lift all unnecessary obstacles" to the delivery of life-saving aid, demand for which has exploded since the coronavirus pandemic.

Yemen has so far recorded more than 2,000 Covid-19 cases, including 583 deaths, but numbers are likely much higher, the UN says.

More than three million Yemenis have been displaced and three-quarters of Yemen's population of 29 million depend on some form of aid for survival, the UN says.

The UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, Lise Grande, said the UN was alert to the challenges of delivering aid in Yemen. "For every programme we have underway, we identify the risks to principled delivery," she told AFP.

"When those principles are breached, we adjust our delivery — this means that we sometimes have to stop aid." She warned last month millions of Yemenis will "suffer and could die" because of a funding crisis that has forced the UN to close or slash half of its major programmes in Yemen.

An aid conference held in Riyadh in June saw donors pledge just \$1.35 billion of the \$2.41 billion needed to cover essential humanitarian activities until the end of the year.— AFP



TONGLIAO: This photo taken on September 10, 2020 shows policemen standing guard as students arrive at the entrance to the Tongliao Mongolian Middle School in Tongliao in China's northern Inner Mongolia region, following recent protests over a new bilingual education policy by the Chinese government.— AFP

International

Ivory Coast court clears president's third-term bid as fresh violence erupts

Only four cleared of the 44 candidates for October 31 presidential election

ABIDJAN: Ivory Coast's top court on Monday cleared the path for President Alassane Ouattara to seek a contentious third term, as protests turned violent in several cities and fears grew of a repeat of the conflict that claimed 3,000 lives in the West African country a decade ago.

The constitutional council also barred former president Laurent Gbagbo and former rebel leader turned prime minister Guillaume Soro from standing in next month's presidential election.

It cleared only four of the 44 candidates for the October 31 presidential election. The other candidates cleared were former president Henri Konan Bedie from the historically dominant PDCI party, Gbagbo's former prime minister Pascal Affi N'Guessan, and Kouadio Konan Bertin, a dissident from Bedie's party.

In the economic capital Abidjan, protesters torched a bus in the working-class district of Yopougon, an AFP photographer said, after scuffles broke out earlier in the day between security forces and youths. The district is thought to be a fiefdom of exiled former president Gbagbo, whose supporters had filed an application for him to run in the vote.

It was Gbagbo's refusal to concede defeat to Ouattara after the 2010 election that sparked the bloody conflict in the former French colony, for-

merly a beacon of stability and prosperity in the region. In the centre-west city of Bangolo, demonstrators set fire to a mining truck and other vehicles on Monday, according to a resident who requested anonymity, who added that gendarmes dispersed them with tear gas. Witnesses said security forces took down barricades set up by protesters on several roads in the west of the former French colony. Around 15 people have died in violence since Ouattara, 78, announced last month that he would run for a third term.

Although the constitution limits presidents to two terms, Ouattara and his supporters argue that a 2016 constitutional tweak reset the clock.

The president had previously committed to not running again, but he changed his mind after the sudden death of his anointed successor, prime minister Amadou Gon Coulibaly, from a heart attack in July. The electoral commission has said that anyone convicted of a crime will be disqualified from running for the top office and barred Soro from running as he was sentenced in April to 20 years in prison for "concealment of embezzlement of public funds".

Gbagbo has been sentenced in absentia to a 20-year term over the looting of the local branch of the Central Bank of West African States during the 2010-11 crisis. Former president Bedie is expected



ABIDJAN: In this file photo taken on August 22, 2020 Ivory Coast's president Alassane Ouattara speaks at the Felix Houphouet-Boigny stadium in Abidjan during his investiture as presidential candidate. The Ivory Coast's constitutional court cleared the path for President Alassane Ouattara to seek a contentious third term. —AFP

to be the opposition's mean flagbearer, after his PDCI party nominated the 86-year-old as its candidate on Saturday. At a rally attended by tens of thousands of supporters in the capital Yamoussoukro, Bedie pledged if elected to work for "the

unconditional return of all exiles, as well as the release of all political, civilian and military prisoners from the post-election crisis". Bedie is seeking to return to the presidency after he was ousted in the country's first coup in 1999. —AFP

US 'spy' to be charged with terrorism: Venezuela

CARACAS: An "American spy" arrested near Venezuelan oil installations last week will be charged with "terrorism," Attorney General Tarek William Saab announced Monday. Venezuela announced the arrest on Friday, saying a US citizen he identified as Matthew John Heath had been spying on two oil refineries when he was captured with cash and weapons.

Seven Venezuelan citizens were arrested in follow-

up raids over the weekend, Saab said. One of them was a serving member of the Venezuelan Armed Forces. "All the Venezuelan citizens are going to be charged with the crimes of treason, terrorism, illicit traffic of weapons and association (to commit crimes), while the US citizen is going to be charged with terrorism, illicit traffic of weapons and association," Saab told state television.

Saab said the arrest of the American had made it possible to "neutralize" what he described as an attempt to destabilize the oil industry and the national electrical system. A grenade-launcher, a submachine gun and an amount of explosive material were found in Heath's vehicle, the attorney general said.

He said Heath had served a series of three-month missions in Iraq from 2005 to 2016, working "as a communications officer in the CIA's secret base."

Announcing the arrest on Friday, President Nicolas

Maduro said the US citizen had been "spying in Falcon state on the Anmay and Cardon refineries" when he was detained the previous day.

Maduro said the arrest occurred after authorities on Wednesday "discovered and dismantled" a "plan to cause an explosion" at El Palito refinery — the closest to Caracas — located in Carabobo state.

Last month two former US soldiers, Luke Alexander Denman, 34, and Airan Berry, 41, were sentenced to 20 years in prison in Venezuela on charges including terrorism, after a failed bid to invade the Caribbean country last May.

Just hours before Friday's announcement, the Venezuelan government said it was establishing an "emergency plan" intended to regulate "fuel distribution" in light of severe gasoline shortages in the country, where people wait in lines stretching miles to fuel up their vehicles. — AFP

US court sides with Trump on deporting immigrants

LOS ANGELES: A US court of appeals on Monday gave the green light for the Trump administration to expel hundreds of thousands of nationals from four countries who had been granted protected status for humanitarian reasons.

In a 2-1 ruling, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals said a federal court in San Francisco had erred when it issued an injunction protecting more than 300,000 immigrants from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan from being deported from the US.

President Donald Trump's administration has sought to end the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) granted to these people — who have several hundred thousand American children — on the grounds that their countries which were previously wracked by unrest were now safe.

Monday's ruling will not result in the immediate deportation of TPS holders, the American Civil Liberties Union said, as the challengers have vowed to file an appeal.

Writing for the majority, Judge Consuelo Callahan disagreed with arguments that a bid to terminate TPS was influenced by Trump's alleged anti-immigrant bias shown through his controversial remarks, including a 2018 comment in which he referred to "shithole countries."

"Plaintiffs fail to present even 'serious questions' on the merits of their claim that the Secretaries' TPS terminations were improperly influenced by the President's 'animus against non-white, non-European immigrants,'" Callahan wrote, referring to US-citizen children of TPS holders who are behind the case brought before the court.

The court's majority added that while it did not "condone the offensive and disparaging nature" of Trump's remarks, there was no proof his "alleged racial animus was a motivating factor in the TPS decisions."

A statement by the American Civil Liberties Union said Monday's ruling will lead to families who have lived lawfully in the US to be torn apart and vowed to fight the decision.

"The president's vile statements about TPS holders made perfectly clear that his administration acted out of racial animus," Ahilan Arulanantham, senior counsel of the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Southern California, said in a statement. "The Constitution does not permit policy to be driven by racism." Yael Schacher, an immigration historian and senior advocate at Refugees International, also denounced the ruling.

"Many of those with TPS have lived in the United States for more than two decades and are serving as essential workers on the front lines of the pandemic response," she said.

"The pain and fear caused by this decision will be felt deeply in communities across the United States, as long-time residents living with TPS are now left in limbo and face the risk of being separated from their American-born children."

The ACLU noted that TPS holders from the countries concerned will be permitted to maintain their status until at least February, and those from El Salvador until at least November. — AFP

Mexico's invisible heroes battle virus in shadows

MEXICO CITY: Disinfecting emergency rooms, collecting hazardous waste and washing contaminated laundry, Mexican hospital cleaners risk their lives every day during the pandemic, often with little recognition.

Rights campaigners say these unsung heroes are particularly vulnerable to infection by the coronavirus in Mexico, whose Covid-19 death toll of more than 70,000 is one of the world's highest.

Rodolfo Diaz and his colleagues disinfect and wash thousands of sheets and gowns from hospitals in the Mexican capital every day.

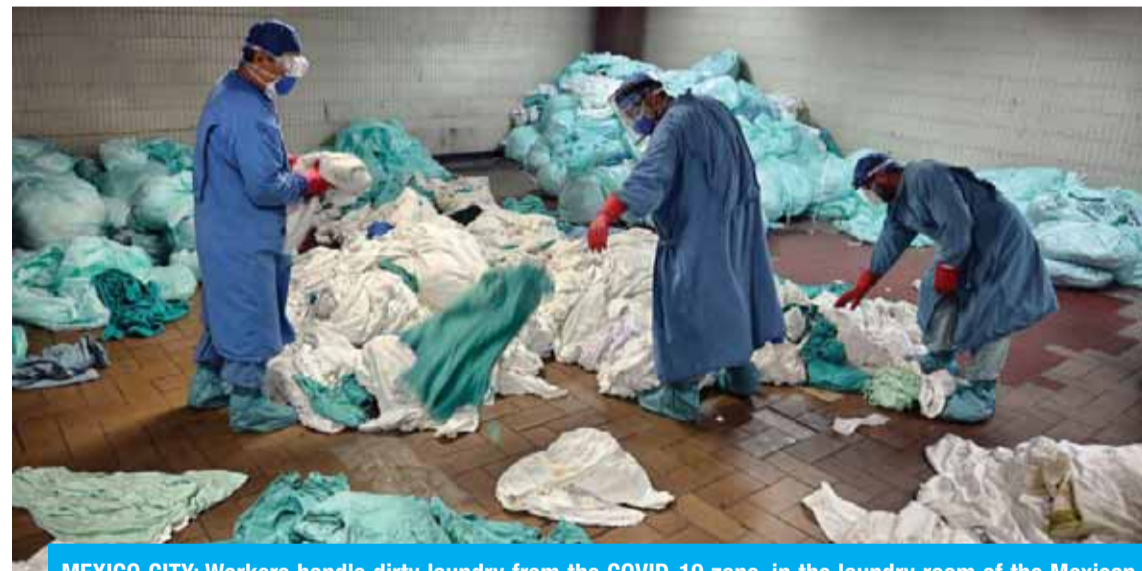
Previously, they received few items considered infectious, but since the pandemic began, the workload has increased significantly.

"We try to protect ourselves every day as a team to do our job," said the 53-year-old, who wears a mask, goggles, gloves and other personal protective equipment. "Yes it's worrying, but I think we're prepared for it because we like our work."

Diaz is aware that his contribution to fighting the pandemic is often overlooked, but for him the most important thing is to ensure hospitals can keep caring for the sick. "As public servants and health workers, we're on the front line and we have to help people," Diaz said.

Erika Ramirez helps to oversee the cleaning of an intensive care unit at a military hospital in the south of Mexico City that treats Covid-19 patients.

The 23-year-old soldier's work includes dealing with infectious waste such as syringes or gauze, and sanitizing other parts of the facility, so she wears a



MEXICO CITY: Workers handle dirty laundry from the COVID-19 zone, in the laundry room of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS), in Mexico City. Cleaning workers also risk their lives in Mexico's pandemic hospitals, knowing that their efforts often go unnoticed. — AFP

protective suit.

"If we do the cleaning well and disinfect and sanitize the areas, then all this can run smoothly," she said. Despite the risk of contagion, she said she goes about her work with no fear, although she has faced a lot of uncertainty since the start of the crisis.

Ramirez said that due to long work days of up to 24 hours, she has missed her daughters' birthdays, but she believes it is part of serving her country.

"It's worth not having a family gathering because we're doing an important job," she said.

Amnesty International said in a report this month that hospital cleaners in Mexico were "especially vulnerable to infection," noting that outsourcing means such workers have less protection.

According to the London-based rights group, Mexico has the world's highest coronavirus toll

organ that would have jeopardized their life immediately," Villanueva told KNX Newsradio, adding that both officers faced a long road to recovery.

He said investigators were working around the clock "to identify and arrest these cowards," referring to the gunman and a suspected getaway driver. Surveillance video of the incident shows the suspect — described as an African American aged between 28 and 30 — approach the patrol car from behind and fire through the passenger side window.

The female officer was struck in the jaw and arms. Her partner was hit in the forehead, arms and hand.

The unexplained shooting, in a neighborhood with a high crime rate and a history of tension between the police and black community, drew media and political attention toward the dangers police face on the job and away from the national Black Lives Matter campaign focused on police shootings of African Americans. "These are real people doing a tough job, and

among health workers — 1,320 dead and almost 100,000 infected at the end of August in the country of 128 million.

Worldwide at least 7,000 health workers have died after being infected with the virus, it said.

"Throughout the pandemic governments have hailed health workers as heroes, but this rings hollow when so many workers are dying from a lack of basic protection," said Steve Cockburn, Amnesty's head of economic and social justice.

Since the health crisis began almost six months ago, Idalia Diaz has seen the amount of garbage that she has to deal with grow relentlessly. "There are more disposables, more masks, more gowns," the 40-year-old cleaner said. But she gets on with her work without complaining. "I get paid to do this job, and I do the best I can." — AFP

it just shows the dangers of the job, in the blink of an eye," Villanueva said after the shooting. President Donald Trump, who has campaigned on his support for police and rejection of Black Lives Matters concerns, retweeted the stark video of the shooting and wrote: "Animals that must be hit hard!"

"If they die," Trump wrote of the police officers, "fast trial death penalty for the killer. Only way to stop this!" "This cold-blooded shooting is unconscionable and the perpetrator must be brought to justice," Trump's Democratic election rival Joe Biden said in a Twitter statement.

"Violence of any kind is wrong; those who commit it should be caught and punished," Villanueva lashed out on Monday at protesters who showed up Saturday night at the hospital where the two officers are being treated, with some reportedly shouting "death to the police" as they tried to force their way into the emergency room. — AFP

LA set \$100,000 reward for shooter of 2 police officers

LOS ANGELES: Detectives offered a \$100,000 reward Monday for information leading to the capture of a fugitive who brazenly shot two US sheriff's deputies at close range as they sat in their car.

The officers targeted Saturday in the Compton neighborhood of Los Angeles — a 24-year-old man and 31-year-old woman — were in a critical condition, but LA County Sheriff Alex Villanueva said he was hopeful they would pull through.

"Fortunately, they were spared any injury to a vital

Business

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

Crises pile up in Sudan as prices soar

Donors are reluctant to hand over aid directly to government

KHARTOUM/CAIRO: Saleha Adam had hoped things would get better after the ousting of Sudan's veteran leader Omar Al-Bashir, and that more food and aid might start flowing into her ramshackle camp on the outskirts of Khartoum. But a year and a half on, prices are still soaring. And an international package of support for the poorest households like Adam's has been delayed, leaving the government racing to stave off more economic turmoil.

"We heard about the (support) plan on TV," said Adam, who fled to Khartoum to escape fighting in Sudan's Nuba Mountains. But then nothing came of the plan. No cash arrived.

"We need help," said the 38-year-old. Crises are piling up for Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok who took over after Bashir to head a shaky coalition with the military and become Sudan's first civilian premier since the 1980s. There are the problems Hamdok inherited, including the loss of most of the country's forex-earning oil reserves with the secession of South Sudan in 2011. There are the new disasters, chief of all the pandemic. Nile floods have also displaced tens of thousands.

Adding to that, many of the benefits that many hoped would come with Bashir's ousting - above all an end of Sudan's pariah status and isolation from world financial markets - have been slow to emerge.

A cash transfer plan - funded by donors and administered by the World Bank to help up to 6.5 million families - was meant to start on Sept. 1. The government had expected \$400 million to start the plan this month, said Adam Harika, Hamdok's economic adviser. But the World Bank told Reuters last week the cash plan was still "under design". "We are presently following up with donors on receipt of

contributions as per their pledges," said a spokeswoman. "The World Bank can pay its grant of up to \$400 million only once they have sufficient donor funds," said a Western diplomat. "Each government has its own approval, even if they committed only \$20 million, and this takes time." While the United States said its pledge of \$356.2 million will be sent by Sept. 30, Germany has only paid parts of its



Sudanese pound collapses

promised \$150 million with the rest to be distributed by year-end, a government source said. The German ministry for international development said the funds were being paid gradually.

"We are in collapse right now"

Diplomats say donors are reluctant to hand over cash directly to the government because of transparency issues. They prefer channeling it through international organizations who take time to draw up specific aid programs. While preparations continue, prices are rising - annual inflation hit 167 percent in August.

And the currency has been collapsing, weakening



KHARTOUM: An international package of support for the poorest households in Sudan has been delayed, leaving the government racing to stave off more economic turmoil. — Reuters

to 234 Sudanese pounds a dollar on the key parallel market from 140 in July. The official rate is 55. The pound stood at 75 on the parallel market when Bashir left in April 2019.

Even some of Hamdok's triumphs have their downside. A much vaunted peace deal with rebel groups last month involved a promise of government positions for some of those insurgents and funding, pledges that will strain state budgets further. "It's a massive expansion of government expenditures," said Sudan analyst Magdi El-Gizouli. Meanwhile key

exports, such as cattle to the Gulf, are declining because the haj pilgrimage where cattle are slaughtered has been downsized due to the coronavirus, El-Gizouli said, and agricultural production has been hit by a lack of fuel. "We are in collapse right now. There is nothing to avert anymore. You have an inflationary crisis. You have a depreciating currency. You have shortages of basic commodities. You don't even have a proper budget." The government has been blaming manipulation by opponents of the revolution that ousted Bashir. — Reuters

Chinese version of TikTok hits 600m daily users

BEIJING: Douyin, the Chinese version of short video app TikTok, hit 600 million daily active users in August, an executive with parent company ByteDance said yesterday, a 50 percent jump since the start of the year.

Users in China are not able to access the TikTok app, which is wildly popular with teenagers worldwide and the subject of a fierce rift between Beijing and Washington over security concerns, but can use Douyin, which is similar in design. Four-year-old Douyin's more than 22 million creators have earned a total of 41.7 billion yuan (\$6.15 billion) over the past year, ByteDance China chief executive officer Kelly Zhang said during an online conference. She said Douyin aimed to help them double that income over the next year.

Douyin's surge comes as TikTok faces a possible ban in the United States by the Trump administration, which wants ByteDance to sell TikTok's US operations. US-listed Oracle Corp said on Monday it would team up with ByteDance, which could help keep TikTok operating in the United States.

Like TikTok, Douyin allows users to watch short videos and livestreams and make in-app purchases.

It is currently one of the most popular social media apps in China and its growth is seen as indicative of TikTok's potential evolution. In comparison, China's messaging app WeChat, which is owned by Tencent Holdings, said it had over 1 billion users using the app everyday in 2018. China had 1.6 billion monthly active mobile internet users as of May, according to market researcher QuestMobile.

ByteDance is considering listing its China business in Hong Kong or Shanghai, amid escalating tensions between world's two largest economies, Reuters has reported. That listing plan was initiated after US regulators started to review ByteDance's acquisition of Musical.ly last year. The bulk of ByteDance's revenue is still generated in China, sources have told Reuters, mainly from ad income on Douyin and its Chinese news aggregator Jinri Toutiao. — Reuters



Oil demand set for slow recovery: IEA

PARIS: With novel coronavirus cases surging in many parts of the world and more people working from home, the recovery in global oil demand is likely to be slow in the coming months, the IEA said yesterday as it lowered its forecasts. Oil demand quickly recovered part of the lost ground from April when much of the world was in lockdown to slow the spread of the virus that causes the Covid-19 illness.

But the International Energy Agency said in its latest monthly report it expected the recovery in demand "to decelerate markedly in the second half of 2020, with most of the easy gains already achieved". "The economic slowdown will take months to reverse completely, while certain sectors such as aviation are unlikely to return to their pre-pandemic levels of consumption even next year," it said.

It also warned that a potential second wave of the virus could propel governments impose renewed restrictions on movement, while the uptake of remote working is also dampening demand for fuel.

"Consumption remains around 10.7 million barrels per day below 2019 levels due to the impact of virus containment measures on transport demand, the uptake of teleworking and the economic crisis unleashed by the virus," said the IEA. "With the oncoming northern hemisphere winter, we will enter uncharted territory regarding the virulence of COVID-19."

It cut its forecast for average 2020 oil demand, now expecting it to fall by 8.4 million barrels per day (mbd) or 8.4 percent from last year, to 91.7 mbd. The

UAE, Israel sign first banking deal

DUBAI: The National Bank of Dubai, the largest banking group in the emirate, signed a memorandum of understanding Monday with Israel's Bank Hapoalim, on the eve of the UAE-Israel normalization accord signing. "It is a great honor to be the first bank to sign such an agreement that will contribute to the establishment of the relationship between the two countries," Bank Hapoalim's CEO, Dov Kotler, said in a statement issued by NBD. It said the MoU was "part of a broader engagement between the UAE and Israel to further peace, dialogue and stability and establish cooperation to promote sustainable development".

An Israeli business and banking delegation arrived in Dubai last Tuesday on the first such visit since the August 13 announcement of a normalization of ties between the Jewish state and the United Arab Emirates, of which Dubai is a member.

Yesterday in Washington, both the UAE and fellow Gulf state Bahrain were to sign normalization accords with Israel. The moment a deal normalizing ties between the United Arab Emirates and Israel was announced, the head of a Tel Aviv technology organization received dozens of LinkedIn invitations from Emiratis. A month on from the August diplomatic breakthrough, Eugene Kandel, CEO of Start-Up Nation Central, was already in Dubai selling Israeli technology. Kandel's organization works to



PARIS: With novel coronavirus cases surging in many parts of the world and more people working from home, the recovery in global oil demand is likely to be slow in the coming months, the IEA said yesterday. — Reuters

OPEC oil cartel similarly trimmed its forecasts in its latest report on Monday. It now expects global demand to fall by 9.5 mbd to 90.2 mbd in 2020. Both organizations pointed in particular to weakness in India, where oil demand dropped in both July and August. But the IEA said oil demand in China has already posted year-on-year increases as the country's economy returns to growth. However, China has recently cut back on oil imports, which were helping support global markets, while OPEC nations and their allies have begun to increase production following temporary additional cuts.

"In last month's Report, we said that the market was in a state of 'delicate re-balancing'. One month

"build bridges" between Israeli technology companies and governments, businesses and organizations.

The launching of public business ties "can provide a lot of opportunities for many Israelis," Kandel told AFP. Rather than wait for the signing ceremony at the White House between the two countries, as well as cementing an Israeli-Bahraini deal, Israeli business leaders rushed to Abu Dhabi and Dubai with catalogues of their wares.

The first business delegation visited the UAE last week, following an official Israeli government visit, and another group of industry leaders was due in the Emirates yesterday. Among them is Kandel, a former economic advisor to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Since the landmark Israel-UAE deal was announced on Aug 13, the average number of Emirati users on the Start-Up Nation Central platform has increased by 122 percent.

The amount of time they have spent looking at Israeli startups on the website has jumped by 600 percent, according to the organization, which did not provide user numbers. Investment in Israel's startup sector grew by 33 percent to \$4.6 billion in the first half of this year, according to an internal study. But the figures include contracts negotiated in 2019, and so do not fully show the impact of coronavirus on the industry.

The pandemic could lead to a "sharp decline" in startup investments over the next few months, especially foreign ones, Kandel warned. In the past, Israeli startups tended to grow locally before being acquired by foreign firms. But that has been changing over the past five years, Kandel said. "We believe that there is a lot of potential to continue this trend, and so that money from the Emirates could replace some of the other money," which was lost due to the pandemic, Kandel said. — AFP

later, the outlook appears even more fragile," said the IEA.

Persistent damage to the global economy from the coronavirus pandemic will hollow out demand for oil more than previously thought, major industry figures said on Monday. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), energy giant BP and commodities trading giant Vitol all made grim forecasts as rising rates of COVID-19 infections sap hopes for quick recovery.

OPEC said in its monthly report that world oil demand would fall by 9.46 million barrels per day (bpd) this year, a decline sharper by 400,000 bpd than predicted in August. — Agencies

Swedish fintech Klarna surpasses \$10bn in valuation

STOCKHOLM: Swedish payment solutions provider Klarna said yesterday it had raised \$650 million (547 million euros) in a funding round, putting the estimated value of the company past \$10 billion for the first time. Launched in 2005, Klarna now offers an app which provides consumers with an easy platform to shop with retailers, automatically giving them four months to pay for purchases and offering plenty of promotions.

Klarna also offers businesses online payment solutions for their proper sites, handling both credit card payments and invoices. Klarna's app has more than 12 million monthly users worldwide and the firm says it has over 200,000 retail partners.

According the company, the new "post money" valuation of \$10.65 billion "means Klarna is the highest valued fintech firm in Europe, and fourth worldwide. Currently operating in 17 countries, the company employs some 3,500 people. Klarna co-founder Sebastian Siemiatkowski said the firm has benefited from "the context of the current accelerated switch to online retail and evolving consumer preferences" due to the Covid-19 pandemic, having added more than 35,000 new retailers during the first half of 2020. The company, which says it is planning on going public, lost money for the first time in 2019 due to heavy investments as it sought to expand in the US. — AFP

Business

China's economic recovery gathers speed as consumers open wallets

Industrial output accelerates, retail sales grow

BEIJING: China's industrial output accelerated the most in eight months in August, while retail sales grew for the first time this year, suggesting the economic recovery is gathering pace as demand starts to improve more broadly from the coronavirus crisis.

An annual decline in fixed-asset investment over January-August also moderated thanks to expanded stimulus from Beijing, but authorities remain wary about the outlook given heightened external risks, including from intensifying Sino-US tensions.

After the pandemic paralyzed the economy, China's recovery has been gaining momentum as pent-up demand, government stimulus and surprisingly resilient exports propel a rebound. Floods across southwestern China that disrupted production in July have receded.

"Strong external demand, a further recovery from the pandemic and pent-up demand from the floods all contributed to the robust activity data in August," Ting Lu, chief China economist at Nomura, said in a note to clients. "We expect a further, albeit gradual, recovery of the services sector, a steady improvement in retail sales and elevated fixed-asset investment growth."

Industrial output growth quickened to 5.6 percent in August from a year earlier, the fastest in eight months, data from the National Statistics Bureau showed yesterday. Analysts polled by Reuters had expected a 5.1 percent rise from 4.8 percent in July. Retail sales also beat analysts' forecast with a 0.5 percent rise on-year, snapping a seven-month downturn and bettering expectations for zero growth. In July, sales dropped 1.1 percent, but consumer confidence has been picking up lately, from spending on automobiles and duty-free shopping.

Auto sales rose 11.8 percent in August year-on-

year while sales of telecoms products jumped 25.1 percent, the data showed. The decline in fixed-asset investment slowed, falling 0.3 percent in January-August from the year-ago period, compared with a forecast 0.4 percent slide and a larger 1.6 percent decline in the first seven months of the year.

Private sector fixed-asset investment, which accounts for 60 percent of total investment, fell a less steep 2.8 percent in January-August, compared with a 5.7 percent decline in the first seven months. Property investment, a crucial growth driver, also jumped the most in 16 months in August.



Trade tension clouds growth outlook

In commodities, China posted record output in both crude steel and aluminum last month thanks to robust demand from the construction sector and recovery in automobile sales.

"We think that China's economic recovery is on a reasonably firm footing now and should continue through Q4 and into 2021, with solid investment growth, gradually recovering consumption momentum and resilient exports," said Louis Kuijs at Oxford Economics. Chinese stocks led Asian markets higher, while the yuan currency rose to 16-



BEIJING: People walk outside a shopping mall in Beijing yesterday. Coronavirus-ravaged economies across the Asia Pacific are expected to contract this year for the first time in nearly six decades, throwing millions of people into poverty, the Asian Development Bank said. — AFP

month highs on the upbeat data.

Risks to recovery

Recent economic indicators ranging from trade to producer prices and factory activity all suggested a further pick up in the industrial sector, and the broader economy. Government stimulus has been a powerful domestic driver, while momentum has also been supported by Beijing's largely successful efforts to get the virus under control. "Fiscal and monetary policy stimulus should continue to support the recov-

ery. But we expect the impact of policy stimulus to lose some punch with credit growth easing in Q4," Oxford Economics' Kuijs said.

Data last week showed China's August exports marking the strongest annual gain since March 2019, as more of its trading partners eased coronavirus lockdowns. Lu at Nomura has raised forecasts on China's third-quarter economic growth to 5.2 percent, versus the actual 3.2 percent pace in April-June, and expects fourth-quarter growth to pick up further to 5.7 percent. — Reuters

Former Ghosn aide Greg Kelly pleads not guilty

TOKYO: Greg Kelly, a former aide to ex-Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn, pleaded not guilty yesterday to a charge of financial misconduct as the trial against him began in Tokyo. Ghosn is now at large as an international fugitive, after jumping bail and fleeing Japan for Lebanon last year, leaving Kelly the only person facing trial in the rollercoaster saga.

Kelly entered a plea of not guilty yesterday to the single charge he faces—conspiring to under-report tens of millions of dollars in pay that Ghosn was allegedly promised after his retirement. "I deny the allegations. I was not involved in a criminal conspiracy," Kelly said.

The trial, expected to last around 10 months, centers around the question of whether Kelly and Nissan between 2010 and 2018 illegally concealed payments of around 9.2 billion yen (\$87 million at today's rates) promised to Ghosn on retirement. Nissan, which is on trial alongside Kelly, says they did, and pleaded guilty to the charge against it yesterday.

But Kelly, who faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted, has consistently denied any wrongdoing, arguing—as does Ghosn—that no final agreement was made on any post-retirement pay and therefore no disclosure was legally required. Kelly, who turned 64 yesterday, entered the court dressed in a dark suit and red striped tie and wearing a surgical mask. He declined to speak to media gathered outside for the trial.



TOKYO: Greg Kelly (left), former representative director of Nissan Motor Co, arrives ahead of his appearance at the Tokyo District Court in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Inside the courtroom, he described Ghosn as an "extraordinary executive" who brought Nissan back from the brink of bankruptcy and was considered a "retention risk" because rules introduced in Japan from 2010 limited executive pay. He said various options for additional pay to Ghosn were considered, and he "took it for granted" that any compensation would be "lawful". "The evidence will show I did not break the law," Kelly added.

Defense 'confident'

Nissan and Japanese prosecutors disagree, arguing they have evidence that future payments were pledged to Ghosn and therefore should have been disclosed in the firm's financial filings as required by Japanese law. Prosecutors have amassed a vast trove of documents, only a small

portion of which the defense have been given so far, according to Kelly's lawyers.

His defense team told AFP they agreed to move to trial despite that, arguing they had "no choice" because Kelly—who has been out on bail in Tokyo since December 2018 — is separated from most of his family while he waits for his case to go to court.

His wife Dee has stayed in Tokyo with him and told reporters it was "disappointing" that Ghosn would not be testifying. "But he is not here and he made the choice and he had to make that choice," she said. "He is going to have to deal with the consequences of the choice he made."

Kelly's legal team say they are confident he can be acquitted—despite the track record of Japan's prosecutors, who win over 99 percent of the criminal cases they bring to court. — AFP

Nigeria's petrol, power price rises hit businesses

ABUJA: Daniel Oyelesi, who runs a laundry business in Nigeria's capital Abuja, is reeling from the double whammy of price rises for petrol and electricity imposed in recent weeks that he says will harm his two-year-old business. Earlier this month Nigeria's president said the increases, announced days apart in early September, were needed to bolster Africa's biggest economy, which for years has been urged by multilateral lenders to remove costly fuel subsidies and change electricity tariffs, both of which held prices artificially low.

Before electricity price rises were implemented, Oyelesi — who works out of a cramped kiosk filled with piles of clothes, a washing machine, tumble dryer and ironing board — spent 20,000 naira (\$52.63) on power each month. He said that sum was now likely to last two weeks.

"I won't say I'm coping... it has not been easy for us," said Oyelesi. He added that he feared losing customers if he raised his prices. Ochuko Kosefe, a barber, also lamented price hikes that made him feel "sick".

Sat behind a cash desk where he watches one of his two hairdressers cut the hair of a young boy, Kosefe said higher fuel costs meant he rationed the use of his diesel powered generator which, like many businesses in Nigeria, is used to make up for the patchy power supply provided by the national grid.

Nigeria's economy contracted by 6.1 percent in the second quarter due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and low oil prices. Africa's top oil exporter relies on crude sales for 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings. Last month sources said a much-needed \$1.5 billion World Bank loan was held up due to concerns over the implementation of reforms such as the fuel and electricity price changes. — Reuters

Is zero-emission truck maker Nikola the new Tesla?

NEW YORK: With its electric and hydrogen-fueled trucks, the firm Nikola aims to revolutionize the future of the transportation sector. But with one investor claiming the group is running on empty, it has been having a rollercoaster ride on the stock exchange for the past week.

Founded in 2015 by Trevor Milton, the company is mainly working on the development of trucks and pick-ups powered by electric batteries or hydrogen fuel cells, as well as building out hydrogen recharging stations. Although it has not yet built anything, it has forged strategic partnerships with several renowned industrial groups including the German engineering giant Bosch, the Italians CNH Industrial and, most recently, US car-maker General Motors.

The announcement of the latter partnership on September 8 caused shares to leap 41 percent on the New York Stock Exchange, where the group was floated in June via a merger with a company called VectoIQ, founded by a former senior executive at GM. Like Tesla, Nikola has benefited on Wall Street from investor infatuation with electric vehicles, considered to be the future of the automobile.

But the investment company Hindenburg Research published a report on September 10 accusing the start-up of "intricate fraud" based on multiple lies by the company's founder Milton, who it said "misled partners into signing agreements by falsely claiming to have extensive



NEW YORK: With its electric and hydrogen-fueled trucks, the firm Nikola aims to revolutionize the future of the transportation sector.

proprietary technology."

That announcement triggered a plummet in share value, with stock diving 36 percent in three days.

Nikola immediately rejected the charges before issuing a more weighty statement of denial on Monday. The group said it had been in touch with the Securities and Exchange Commission about the report, which it said was aimed at manipulating its share value, which climbed back 11 percent on Wall Street Monday.

Staged video

Nikola does not however deny one of the more astounding charges leveled against it by the investment company, which was about the staging of a 2017 video showing one of its pro-

totypes in action. According to Hindenburg, "Nikola had the truck towed to the top of a hill on a remote stretch of road and simply filmed it rolling down the hill."

Nikola responded that it had "never stated its truck was driving under its own propulsion in the video" but had simply said that it had been "in motion."

Hindenburg shot back Monday that the company's explanation was "completely inadequate." The start-up's financial director Kim Brady called the report "offensive" to the company's partners.

Before teaming up with Nikola, he said, Bosch had had its engineers study the project for several months, while GM had taken advice from the major banks and consultancies before buying its 11-percent stake in the company. — AFP

German investor sentiment rises despite headwinds

BERLIN: Investor sentiment in Germany rose unexpectedly in September, the ZEW economic research institute said yesterday, signaling confidence in a recovery from the coronavirus crisis despite headwinds from stalled Brexit talks and rising new infections.

The survey of investors' economic sentiment rose to 77.4 from 71.5 points the previous month, confounding a Reuters poll forecast for a fall to 69.8. "The ZEW Indicator has increased again, signaling that the experts continue to expect a noticeable recovery of the German economy," said ZEW President Achim Wambach.

"Stalled Brexit talks and rising COVID-19 cases could not dampen the positive mood."

A separate gauge of current conditions rose to -66.2 from -81.3 points the previous month. That compared with a consensus forecast of -72.0 points. The German economy has been rebounding since May when lockdowns to slow the spread of the coronavirus were lifted. But activity remains below pre-crisis levels and economists expect a slow recovery.

An economic rescue program approved by Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives and their Social Democrat (SPD) coalition partners is supporting the recovery. It includes lower value-added tax rates to encourage private spending and subsidies for companies to keep employees on the payroll and avoid mass layoffs. ZEW's Wambach said there would be problems ahead for some sectors, especially banks. — Reuters

Business

UK jobless rate rises for first time since COVID lockdown

Official employment data shows smaller-than-expected fall

LONDON: Britain's unemployment rate rose for the first time since the coronavirus lockdown began in March but data published yesterday also suggested the increase in joblessness was, so far at least, not surging. The unemployment rate increased to 4.1 percent in the three months to July from the 3.9 percent it had clung to since early 2020, in line with the median forecast in a Reuters poll of economists. The government's huge coronavirus job subsidy scheme, which is now being wound down, has prevented many layoffs.

Experimental figures showed the number of staff on company payrolls fell by a monthly 36,000 in August. That was more than job losses of 20,000 in July but still only a fraction of mass layoffs in April and May. The ONS had previously reported 114,000 job losses for July, but revised this down sharply after receiving more data.

Overall, the payroll numbers fell by 695,000 between March and August. Samuel Tombs, an economist with Pantheon Macroeconomics, said the payroll numbers were likely to fall much further in September and October when employers will have to pay more towards the cost of the furlough scheme. "The number of people searching on Google for phrases including 'redundancy' rocketed to a record high in July, consistent on past form with the official measure of redundancies peaking in September," he said.

Official data for the three months to July showed a much smaller-than-expected fall in the number of

people in employment at 12,000, just a tenth of the median forecast in the Reuters poll.

The Office for National Statistics said its figures might be "slightly impacted" by a change in the way it interviews households since the COVID-19 pandemic swept Britain. The surveys, which now rely on telephone calls rather than face-to-face interviews, under-represent people who rent their homes and over-represent homeowners who are less at risk of unemployment, the ONS said. Sterling briefly rose after the data was published. Economists expect more jobs to be lost as the government's huge job retention subsidies are wound down before expiring at the end of October. The Bank of England has forecast that the unemployment rate will hit 7.5 percent at the end of this year. "This is a difficult time for many as the pandemic continues to have a profound impact on people's jobs and livelihoods," finance minister Rishi Sunak said in a statement.

"That's why protecting jobs and helping people back into work continues to be my number one priority." The number of job vacancies rose to 434,000 in the three months to August, about 30 percent higher than in the April-to-June period but almost half their level before the pandemic. Companies in sectors such as tourism and high-street retailers, have announced major job losses. London's City Airport said on Monday it needed to cut up to 239 jobs or 35 percent of its staff, echoing expected staffing reductions at Heathrow. Britain's biggest domestic bank Lloyds is making 865 redundancies. — Reuters



LONDON: Commuters wearing masks are seen on a London Underground tube. Britain's unemployment rate rose for the first time since the coronavirus lockdown began in March. — Reuters

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 13 Sept and announced the names of the winners for the week of 6 - 10 September 2020. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

Abdullah Saad Faraj Alsaywaj
Ahmad Nwairan Khalaf Alenezi
Khadeejah Abdulmohsen Shareef Alenezi
Venkata Suryanarayana Murty Bandaru
Dari Nouri Ahmad Albahar

Al-Danah is now offering its biggest prize yet, with an annual draw prize of KD 1,500,000. The annual draw will be held on 14 January 2021, and the last chance to deposit into an Al-Danah account to participate is 30 September 2020.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services. Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al-Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al-Danah customers in 2019, have been added to their 2020 chances, and the same process will take place in 2021, and so on. Terms and conditions apply.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2020 quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

Funds and firms call for tougher 2030 EU climate target

BRUSSELS: Investors managing trillions in assets and more than 120 business leaders called on the European Union to commit to cut emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030 yesterday, saying anything less would fail to unlock the private financing needed. This would be in line with a proposal due to be put forward on Thursday by the European Commission to curb EU greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent from 1990 levels by 2030, draft plans seen by Reuters.

The existing target is a 40 percent cut, and some poorer fossil fuel-dependent EU states are unwilling to commit to deeper cuts. — Reuters

Daimler to pay \$2.2bn in diesel emissions cheating settlements

WASHINGTON: Daimler AG will pay \$2.2 billion to resolve a US government diesel emissions cheating investigation and claims from 250,000 US vehicle owners, court documents show.

The German automaker and its Mercedes-Benz USA LLC unit disclosed on Aug. 13 it had reached a settlement in principle resolving civil and environmental claims tied to 250,000 U.S. diesel cars and vans after the automaker used software to evade emissions rules.

Daimler said in August expected costs of settlements with US authorities would total \$1.5 billion, settling with owners will cost another \$700 million and also disclosed "further expenses of a mid three-digit-million EUR (euro) amount to fulfill requirements of the settlements. Deputy Attorney General Jeff Rosen said the settlements, which follow a nearly five-year investigation, will "serve to deter any others who may be tempted to violate our nation's pollution laws in the future."

In court documents, Daimler agreed to pay



WASHINGTON: Daimler AG will pay \$2.2 billion to resolve a US government diesel emissions cheating investigation and claims from 250,000 US vehicle owners, court documents show.

250,000 owners up to \$3,290 each to get polluting vehicles repaired and agreed not to oppose paying \$83.4 million in attorneys fees and expenses for the owners' lawyers. Owners will get \$800 less if a prior owner files a valid claim. Daimler noted in court papers it denies the allegations "and does not admit any liability. The settlement does not include an external compliance monitor, it added. The German automaker still faces an ongoing criminal back investigation and could face additional US financial penalties.

The settlements require Daimler to address the vehicles' excess emissions as part of binding consent decrees. Daimler will issue recalls and extend-

ed warranties but is not required to buy back vehicles unless it is unable to offer an emissions fix within a required timetable.

The Justice Department said Daimler failed to disclose at least 16 auxiliary emissions control devices, the government alleged, allowing "vehicles to perform in a variety of consumer-desirable ways, including allowing for fewer (diesel exhaust fluid) tank refills (and) better fuel mileage." The settlement includes an \$875 million civil penalty levied under the Clean Air Act and \$546 million to fix the polluting vehicles and offset excess emissions, court papers show. Daimler will pay California \$285.6 million in total.

Diesel vehicles have come under scrutiny in the United States since Volkswagen AG admitted in September 2015 to installing secret software on 580,000 US vehicles that allowed them to emit up to 40 times legally allowable emissions. In September 2019, Daimler in Germany agreed to pay a fine of 870 million euros (\$1 billion) for breaking diesel emissions regulations. Both Volkswagen and Daimler have halted sales of US passenger diesel vehicles. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV in 2019 reached a settlement worth about \$800 million to resolve claims by regulators and owners that it used illegal software that produced false results on diesel-emissions tests. Fiat Chrysler said in July it was in talks to resolve an ongoing Justice Department criminal probe. — Reuters



BEIJING: People walk past the Tencent booth at the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) in Beijing. — AFP

China's Tencent expands in SE Asia amid tensions

SINGAPORE: Chinese tech giant Tencent said yesterday it was opening a new Singapore office to serve as a Southeast Asia hub, as the firm reels from setbacks in the US and India. The firm is the latest Chinese tech leader to expand in the region of 650 million with a rapidly growing middle class, and using the city-state as a base.

Tencent announced the new office in a statement, and said it was "expanding its business presence in Singapore to support our growing business in Southeast Asia and beyond". The company, which already has offices in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, said it was recruiting for various positions.

Bloomberg News, citing anonymous sources,

reported the company's plans for establishing a regional hub in Singapore had been accelerated by geopolitical tensions. In the US, President Donald Trump has announced a ban from mid-September on Tencent's social media platform WeChat, as well as TikTok, which is owned by Chinese tech giant ByteDance.

India has banned scores of Chinese apps, including Tencent's hit games PUBG Mobile and Arena of Valor, after troops engaged in a series of clashes at the neighbors' disputed Himalayan border.

Other firms looking to bolster their presence in the city-state include ByteDance, which plans to spend billions of dollars to expand its presence there, while Alibaba is in talks to invest in Singapore-based ride-hailing firm Grab, Bloomberg reported. Many international companies have chosen to base their regional headquarters in Singapore, and observers believe instability in long-time rival Hong Kong could give it a boost in attracting firms.

Leaders in Singapore, which is majority ethnic Chinese, have been careful to maintain good ties with both the US and China. — AFP

Iran to back OPEC if its interests are protected

LONDON: Iran supports the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) as long as the group protects Iranian interests alongside other members, Iran's OPEC governor Amir Hossein Zamaninia said on Monday. Sixty years after its formation, OPEC's founding 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, according to current and former OPEC officials.

"All OPEC members should denounce, in words and in practice, use of oil as a political tool for imposition of sanctions and pressures on producing countries," Zamaninia was quoted as saying by the oil ministry's news agency SHANA. 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.

"We support OPEC as long as the interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran are served in a balanced way with other members. Otherwise, membership of no international organization is mandatory," Zamaninia said. He added that he believed remaining in OPEC and strengthening the organization was currently in Iran's interests.

To tackle a drop in demand, OPEC and its allies - a grouping known as OPEC+ - agreed to a record supply cut of 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) that started on May 1, while the United States and other nations said they would pump less.

In August, OPEC+ eased its cuts to 7.7 million bpd as demand partially recovered. The OPEC+ Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) will meet on Thursday to discuss the performance of the deal so far. OPEC said on Monday world oil demand will fall more steeply in 2020 than previously forecast due to the coronavirus and recover more slowly than expected next year, potentially making it harder for the group and its allies to support the market.

Zamaninia said "As long as the world economy has not returned to pre-coronavirus state, it would be impossible to offer a realistic outlook about the future of global oil demand." — Reuters

Classifieds

Wednesday, September 16, 2020

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



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www.met.gov.kw

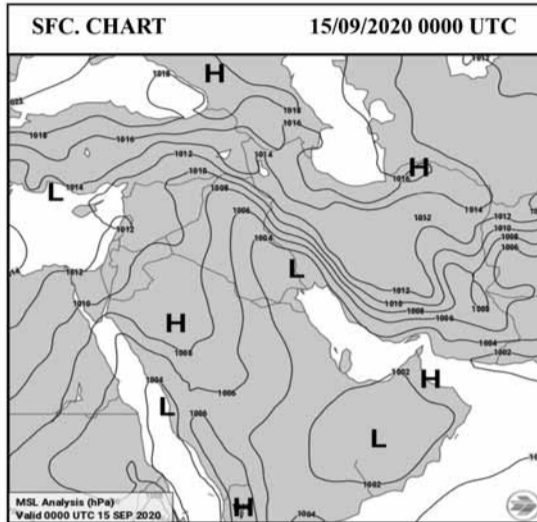
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot and relatively humid over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind with speed of 08 - 28 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Fair and relatively humid weather specially over coastal areas with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind with speed of 06 - 26 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	43 °C	33 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	26 °C
ABDALY	46 °C	28 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	46 °C	32 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	36 °C	33 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	40 °C	29 °C
WAFRA	43 °C	29 °C
SALMY	44 °C	28 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	09/16	Hot and humid specially over coastal areas	43 °C	23 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Thursday	09/17	Hot and relatively humid specially over coastal areas	44 °C	24 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 30 km/h
Friday	09/18	Hot and relatively humid over coastal areas	44 °C	25 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 26 km/h
Saturday	09/19	Very hot	47 °C	27 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:13
Sunrise	05:32
Zuhr	11:43
Asr	15:13
Sunset	17:54
Isha	19:12

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	47 °C
MIN. Temp.	27 °C
MAX. RH	36 %
MIN. RH	05 %
MAX. Wind	S 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

NOTICE
September 8, 2020

Mr. Venkatesh Viswanathan, son of Mr. Viswanathan, resident of No. 4/949, Nehru St, Agastheeswarar Nagar, Pozhichalur, Chennai 600074 and Ms. Deepamalar Ganesan, daughter of Mr. Ganesan, resident of Radhika Bhavan, Kottamala PO, Ulupooni, Vagamon, Idukki, Kerala, both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait have given notice or intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (cw.2.kuwait@mea.gov.in)/ letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22533315, 00965 - 22533125).

(Ranveer Bharti)
Second Secretary (Cons) and Marriage Officer.
Embassy of India, Kuwait.
Email: welfare2@indembkuwt.gov.in

Airlines

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

Word Search



Crime Fiction

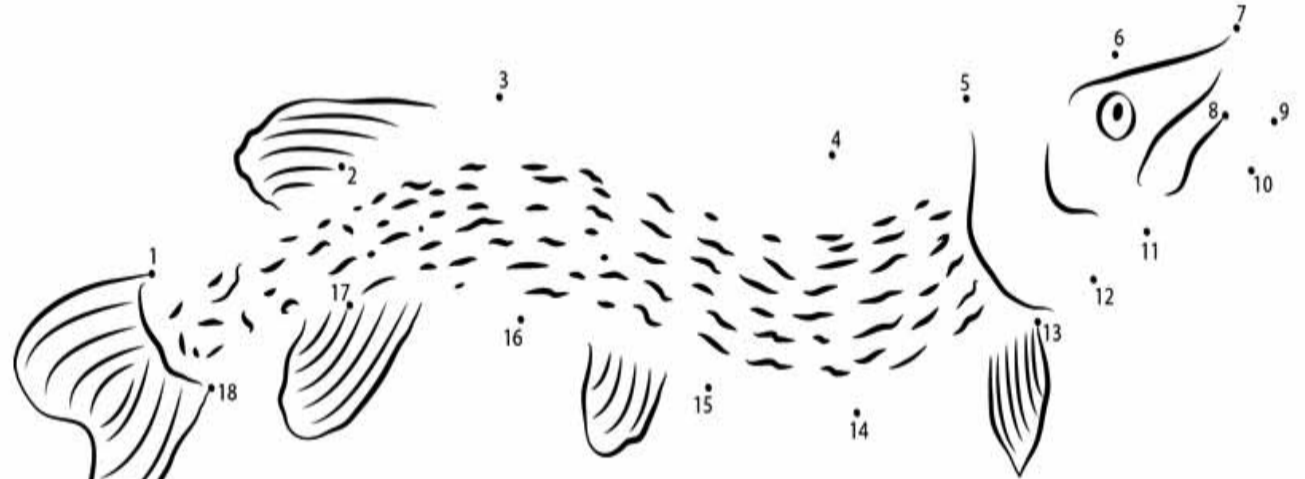
D G D E O H S M U G D F O C O C L Y U C L
 Y R P P I Z Z H U Z I W B E W I T N E S S
 J E R F T Z O F W Q M Y S T E R Y W K E D
 M D I M U X K H U I E O G F E W R C L U E O
 R T V A C M E T H O D C R L Y W J L I U M
 O E A O K K O G H Z R V A O R V N D V G
 T S T W S J X A S Z F D A T D N E L N R O
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

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

- ACCOMPLICE
- ALIBI
- BREAKTHROUGH
- CAPER
- CLUE
- CRIMINAL
- DEDUCTION
- DETECTIVE
- EVIDENCE
- FEMME FATALE
- FLATFOOT
- FORENSICS
- GUMSHOE
- HUNCH
- INVESTIGATOR
- METHOD
- MODUS OPERANDI
- MOTIVE
- MYSTERY
- OBSERVATION
- PRIVATE EYE
- RED HERRING
- SLEUTH
- SUSPENSE
- VILLAIN
- WHODUNIT
- WITNESS



Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 Affection blooms in close relationships as you tune into the thoughts, feelings, needs, and desires of those around you. Communication should be clear, open, and honest without being brutal. Social events should prove especially enjoyable today, Aries, as you're likely to attract interesting people with intriguing and useful information. Reading could also prove beneficial now. Enjoy your day.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 Happiness reigns as you and your household embark on one or more projects that could make your home more cheerful, Cancer. Warm and companionable conversations involve sharing interesting information and bring you closer. Visitors could come by and other people could call with interesting news. This is a good day to throw an impromptu party. Enjoy your day!

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 Communication is likely to be warm, informative, and companionable today, Libra, and you'll probably grow closer to those around you because of it. Your inspiration and imagination flow freely, and you're likely to want to channel much of your energy into creative projects. You may also want to phone a friend who shares your artistic interests.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 A meeting - virtual or otherwise - is likely to happen during the course of the working day, Capricorn. This should lead to pleasant and interesting conversations, possibly involving philosophy, spiritual matters, or the arts. Communication should be clear and open. Correspondence could take up almost as much time as conversations right now.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 You should be in glowing good health today, Taurus. You're feeling especially fit, and your appearance likely reflects that. You're looking for healthy activities that also bring you pleasure, such as exercise and proper diet. Find a cookbook full of tasty recipes and use it. Your relations with others should be warm, loving, and companionable. Exercising with friends, if possible, should encourage you to keep up the good work.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 A conversation with someone in your neighborhood could prove unexpectedly pleasant and enjoyable. You might meet new people and get closer to the ones you already know. A lot of interesting and useful information could be exchanged. There might be a future get-together that you'll want to attend, Leo, so you have something to look forward to. You might also lend or borrow some books today.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 If you're musically or artistically inclined, Scorpio, today you might have visions or melodies in your head that simply cry out to be written down. If you're a writer, you may be filled with story ideas. Whatever your creative interests, inspiration abounds. It's a good idea to start working on these projects today or they could disappear.

Aquarius (January 20-February 18)
 A message or phone call from someone dear who lives far away could arrive today. You've been thinking about this person for a while, Aquarius, so don't be surprised if you hear from him or her. You're especially attuned to the thoughts and feelings of others right now. In fact, you may feel especially inspired to work on projects of your own, as ideas are likely to fill your head. Have fun!

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 Love blossoms in close relationships as communication flows freely. You're intuitive by nature, Gemini, but today you feel especially attuned to others' thoughts, feelings, needs, and desires. Don't be surprised if you grow closer to those around you. Children, in particular, should provide warmth and love. If you're artistically inclined, start a new project today.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 A pleasant surprise comes your way when you receive either a present or small sum of money, perhaps in the mail, Virgo. Someone will either pay you back a loan or you could receive a gift for some small service you performed for someone. You could be tempted to turn that around and buy a present for someone else. Expect some calls that result in long and meaningful conversations.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 Today should be busy with regard to communication, Sagittarius. Calls and emails to people close to you may take up a lot of your time. You could be organizing a meeting or social event of some kind. You're probably feeling optimistic and enthusiastic, and you'll likely spread these feelings to others. You're also better able to intuit what's going on with them.

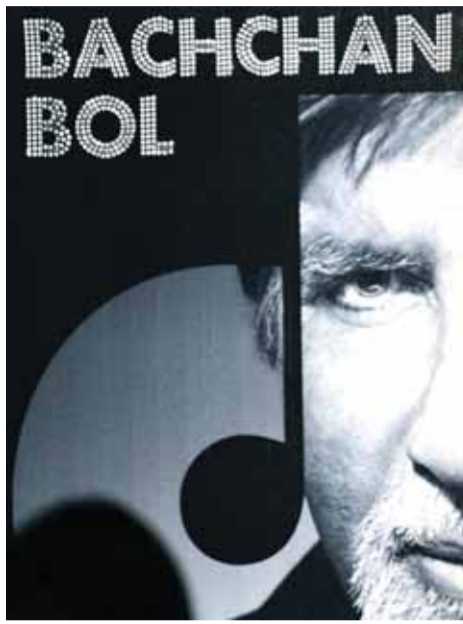
Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 Daydreams and reveries could inspire new ideas for creative projects today. Visions, stories, or melodies might flood your mind, and it might be a good idea to write them down before they disappear. You're also likely to feel more attuned than usual to the thoughts and feelings of others. Don't be surprised if you intuitively give people what they want and need before they ask.

Lifestyle | Features

NAMASTE ALEXA: AMAZON SIGNS UP
BOLLYWOOD SUPERSTAR BACHCHAN

Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan will be the first Indian celebrity to lend his voice to Amazon's Alexa digital assistant starting next year, as the Silicon Valley giant expands its presence in the massive market. The 77-year-old actor has been a household name in India for nearly half a century, and his deep baritone is instantly recognizable to listeners in the country of 1.3 billion. Foreign firms such as Amazon have spent tens of billions of dollars in India in recent years as they fight for a piece of the Asian giant's burgeoning digital economy.

In a blog post on Monday, Amazon India said Bachchan's "voice experience" feature will become available for purchase on Alexa next year. "It will include popular offerings like jokes, weather, shayaris (poetry), motivational quotes, advice and more," the firm said. Alexa first rolled out celebrity voice option last year with actor Samuel L. Jackson, following a similar move by Google the year before, which gave users the option of hearing singer John Legend on the Google Assistant. "I am excited to create this voice experience," the Bollywood megastar said on Amazon's blog. "With voice technology, we are building something to engage



In this file photo Bollywood film actor Amitabh Bachchan launches 'Bachchan Bol-Bachchan Speak' his vlogging or vocal blogging service in Mumbai. — AFP

more effectively with my audience and well-wishers."

His earlier foray into vocal blogging in 2010, "Bachchan Bol-Bachchan Speak", allowed fans to listen to pre-recorded messages by the star at the push of a



button. In addition to competing with voice-activated devices such as Apple's Siri and Google Assistant for consumers, Amazon is battling Walmart-backed Flipkart and JioMart, owned by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani, for a share

of the online retail market. The tech giant, which is owned by Jeff Bezos, the world's richest person, is also trying to win eyeballs with its streaming service that competes with Netflix and Disney+ Hotstar. Bachchan and his family have been among India's highest-profile coronavirus patients.

The superstar, his actor son Abhishek, actress daughter-in-law Aishwarya Rai, and granddaughter Aaradhya were all admitted to hospital in July. All four have since been released. The veteran star returned to work last month filming India's version of "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?" after authorities eased coronavirus curbs on movie and TV shoots. Nevertheless, with cases in India nearing five million, authorities in Mumbai—the home of Bollywood—have asked production houses to ensure that common facilities are regularly sanitised, masks worn and social distancing "followed as far as possible". Bachchan's last film, comedy-drama "Gulabo Sitabo", went straight to Amazon's streaming service in June, after theatres in India shut down in March due to pandemic fears. — AFP

WAHLBERG PROBES
MASCULINITY IN
'GOOD JOE BELL',
SAYS DIRECTOR

Mark Wahlberg interrupted his famously punishing daily workout regimen to hone his heartfelt new anti-bullying movie, its director told AFP as the film premiered in Toronto Monday. "Good Joe Bell" stars Wahlberg as a father attempting to walk coast-to-coast across the United States to raise awareness about the tragic perils of the homophobic taunting his son has suffered. Based on a real story, Joe's odyssey through rural America uncovers how prejudices are handed down from generation to generation, and poses the question of what it means to be a man in today's world. "Does it mean going camping, or fighting? What does toughness mean?" said director Reinaldo Marcus Green, a former athlete himself who tried out for major league baseball.



In this file photo US actor Mark Wahlberg arrives for the premiere of Netflix's "Spenser Confidential" at Regency Village Theatre in Westwood, California. — AFP

Wahlberg's own alpha male reputation was tarnished in 2018 when his schedule-including a 2:30 am wake-up, ahead of twice-daily gym sessions and cryotherapy—became a social media sensation after he shared it on Instagram. But Wahlberg brought that same regimented focus to his preparation for "Good Joe Bell," a film penned by the writers of "Brokeback Mountain" that preaches a manliness that is about "sensitivity, it's about being open, it's about learning to love," said Green. "Mark described it to me as it was going to be the most important role of his career," Green told AFP, ahead of its Toronto film festival premiere.

'Machismo is prevalent'

"We FaceTimed pretty much every day, from the moment I met him in December 2018... in the plane, whether he was in a cryo chamber, Mark would answer anywhere." "He'd be in the dentist's chair and answer and I'd be like 'Mark, you're getting work done on your teeth and you're FaceTiming!' It's unreal." Wahlberg, the youngest of nine Boston siblings whose parents divorced when he was 11, became embroiled in drugs and street violence as a minor. He served time for assault before finding fame as a rapper, model, actor and Hollywood producer. "When I met Mark, we definitely talked about our dads," said Green. "It was just kind of two guys looking at each other, and knowing that we kind of came from certain communities where a lot of that machismo is prevalent."

Green, whose young sporting ambitions were encouraged by his loving but "tough" father, is now directing a biopic of Richard Williams—father to tennis legends Serena and Venus—starring Will Smith. "It's truly an inspirational story, the Venus, Serena Williams, Richard Williams stories—it's so incredible," he said. "I think it can really help." — AFP



Photo shows apartments with balconies covered with plants at a residential community in Chengdu in China's southwestern Sichuan province. — AFP photos

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE:
PLANTS OVERRUN CHINESE
APARTMENT BLOCKS

An experimental green housing project in a Chinese megacity promised prospective residents life in a "vertical forest", with manicured gardens on every balcony. All 826 apartments were sold out by April this year, according to the project's estate agent, but instead of a modern eco-paradise, the towers look like the set of a desolate, post-apocalyptic film. The problem? The mosquitoes love the plants too. Only a handful of families have moved into Chengdu's Qiyi City Forest Garden because of an infestation, state media have reported. The project in the southwestern city was built in 2018, with every private balcony designed to provide space for plants to grow, according to local media reports. Without any tenants

to care for them, the eight towers have been overrun by their own plants—and invaded by mosquitoes.

Plants have almost entirely swallowed up some neglected balconies, with branches hanging over railings all over the towers, footage shot this month showed. Paper was seen taped over some of the windows that were still visible behind the overgrown plants. But some residents appeared to have braved the mosquitoes—a handful of balconies had pruned plants and outdoor furniture, and lights turned on inside the apartments. Only about 10 families have moved in, according to the state-run Global Times newspaper. — AFP



This photo shows residents looking on from a balcony covered with plants in their apartment at a residential community in Chengdu in China's southwestern Sichuan province.

Young Chinese escape reality to ask: 'Whodunnit?'

A scream echoes from behind a black door, while inside a young woman cowers as she hides from an attacker. But Zeng Tian is not in real danger—this is an elaborate role-playing game. The 26-year-old and her seven friends are spending their afternoon locked away in a basement in Shanghai taking part in murder mystery game "The Haunted Mansion". "Every time I join a new play and read the script, I get to live a new life," says Zeng, who is unemployed but hopes to work in the live action

role-play (LARP) industry. "I can spend his or her entire life within four hours and have a taste of their love and hatred," added Zeng, sporting a frilly hooded cloak that is part European medieval, part Red Riding Hood.

The friends sometimes use their mobile phones to help them with clues but they are mainly reading from scripts and debating who could be the killer on the loose. Prices vary around the country, but in Shanghai players pay from about 300 to 800 yuan (\$45-\$120) each to take part.

Prior to the COVID19 pandemic, the live action murder mystery market appeared to have captured the imagination of China's urban youths. The online shopping platform Meituan-Dianping estimated the industry was worth more than 10 billion yuan in 2019 — double the previous year's figure. There are no official figures for 2020, but as virus restrictions ease, young people are returning to these fantasy games, experts say. State media has in recent months run a series of stories about the popularity of role-playing.

China National Radio last month ran a report voicing fears that too many of the scripts rely on murders, violent plots and sexual content, but others see the games as a way to get young people off their smartphones and back interacting with each other in real life. Xinhua News Agency quoted Yuan Hang, an owner of a LARP game studio in the city of Luoyang, central China's Henan Province in a report on the trend. "This type of game, bringing people back to real life from cyberspace, meets the need of young people to have

offline social contact and face-to-face communication," Yuan Hang tells the news outlet. Zhao Qingsong, who works in e-commerce, agrees: "Nowadays people tend to talk to each other on smartphones. But I feel something is missing during that communication compared to the old days when we could sit together and talk face to face. The 25-year-old tells AFP: "This gathering really makes me feel no longer lonely." — AFP



Players preparing to take part in the live action role-play (LARP) murder mystery game "The Haunted Mansion" at a role play studio in Shanghai. — AFP Photos



This photo shows a player taking part in the live action role-play (LARP) murder mystery game "The Haunted Mansion" at a role play studio in Shanghai.



An aerial view shows the Buddhist temple Wat Samphran (Dragon Temple) in Nakhon Pathom, some 40km west of Bangkok. — AFP photos

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS: THAI TEMPLES PUT QUIRKY SPIN ON BUDDHISM

A dragon encircles a tower, wretched souls face torture, superheroes scale a mosaic wall—these may seem like scenes from a half-remembered dream, but are in fact famed Thai temples. The Buddhist-majority kingdom has its share of solemn worship houses and pagodas, but there are also its quirkier counterparts which double as tourist attractions. In Nakhon Pathom, about an hour east from downtown Bangkok, the dragon tower inside Sam Phran temple came from the dreams of its former abbot. The 16-storey jewel-pink tower, with a dragon slithering up it, symbolizes the 16 levels of heaven in Buddhism mythology.

Its hellish counterpart is Saen Suk temple in Chon Buri province, where graphic tableaux of punishment and torture have been erected in a garden-like open-air dungeon for visitors to stroll through. Statues of eagles rip out the intestines of wrongdoers, liars get their tongues cut off,



The large foot of the dragon is pictured on the wall of the Buddhist temple Wat Samphran (Dragon Temple) in Nakhon Pathom.

and men who engage in pre-marital sex get their genitals stabbed with a spear. "If you choose to live an unrighteous life, you'll end up like these statues," says visitor Suchart Klaoteaw, 21, as he passes

other families snapping selfies with their children. "We just need to be conscious about everything we do... because karma is real."

A more light-hearted take on Buddhism will be found at Bangkok's Priwat Ratchasongkhrum temple, where worshippers can see Batman scaling a temple door and Winnie the Pooh trying to remove a beehive from a wall painting. Carrying the base of the Buddha is a David Beckham statue wearing his Manchester United jersey—a testament to the kingdom's football-crazy fans. For 53-year-old Lakkana Cherpichit, the "unique" design of Priwat Ratchasongkhrum is a breath of fresh air. "I really love it... we get to see characters we've never seen before at this temple," she tells AFP. — AFP



An aerial view shows the giant Buddha statue at the Buddhist temple Wat Samphran (Dragon Temple) in Nakhon Pathom.



A giant Buddha statue is pictured at the Buddhist temple Wat Samphran (Dragon Temple) in Nakhon Pathom.



The dragon head is seen on top of the Buddhist temple Wat Samphran (Dragon Temple) in Nakhon Pathom.



A visitor looks at statues illustrating the fate of people who do bad deeds in a garden depicting a Buddhist version of hell at the Wat Saeng Suk temple in the Thai coastal province of Chonburi.



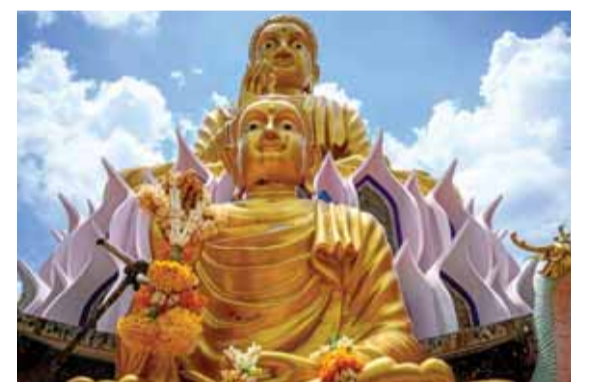
Figure of Captain America (center) among imaginary creatures on the facade of the Wat Pariwat Buddhist temple in Bangkok.



A figure of the cartoon character Popeye among imaginary creatures on the facade of the Wat Pariwat Buddhist temple in Bangkok.



A mythical figure for collecting coins is seen at the Buddhist temple Wat Samphran (Dragon Temple) in Nakhon Pathom.



Two Buddha statues are pictured at the Buddhist temple Wat Samphran (Dragon Temple) in Nakhon Pathom.

Wuhan film captures horror and humanity at coronavirus ground zero

Back in February, when few Americans were aware of a distant and oddly named phenomenon called coronavirus, two Chinese filmmakers strapped on hazmat suits and embedded themselves in Wuhan's overrun hospitals. There, they captured harrowing footage of terrified citizens hammering on hospital doors, medics collapsing from exhaustion, and relatives begging in vain to say goodbye to infected loved ones. Now, those images have been edited together by New York-based director Hao Wu ("People's Republic of Desire"). Premiering at the Toronto film festival Monday, "76 Days"—named for the duration of the central Chinese city's draconian lockdown—is the first major documentary from the disease's original epicenter to hit theaters.

Shot in a claustrophobic, cinema verite style—without voice-over or direct-to-camera interviews—the film relies on the intimacy of the footage of doctors and patients grappling with a terrifying new reality. Wu first contacted the two filmmakers, one of whom is anonymous for his own safety, after witnessing China's early lockdown first-hand during a family visit for Chinese New Year. The footage they sent him revealed how, in the chaos of the disease's early weeks, they were able to get remarkable

access—but at considerable personal risk and suffering. "It was a horrible, horrible shooting experience for them," Wu told AFP. "They were fainting, it was really warm. A few times [filmmaker Weixi Chen] wanted to throw up inside [his] goggles, but he couldn't because once you throw up, once you remove your PPE, you have to get out, you could not come back again." "It was like shooting in a war zone," he added. Wu also had a personal motivation for pursuing the project.

His grandfather died from cancer soon after the outbreak, unable to find a hospital bed as resources strained under the weight of Covid-19. "In the beginning I was angry with the Chinese government—I really wanted to find out who's at fault, what caused this," said Wu. But once the pandemic spread—with exponentially greater tragedy to other countries like the US, the desire to place blame was replaced by a desire to document how "as human beings live through this, how we can share this experience."

'Scar'

Ironically, despite Beijing's tight controls on information, access was in some ways easier in China. Privacy and litigation concerns proved far more of a

barrier to filming in New York hospitals, Wu found.

Wuhan hospitals desperately lacking personal protective equipment initially welcomed coverage that could boost donations and volunteers, he added. The film eschews politics and blame to focus on personal stories of tragedy and bravery, hope and despair, which repeated around the world after emerging in China. Medics tenderly hold the hands of patients locked away from their families, and are distinguishable to viewers only by the colorful doodles they scrawl upon each other's head-toe hazmat suits.

But it remains unclear whether the movie will ever be seen in China, where news about the pandemic has been tightly controlled since day one—leading to many in the West, including US President Donald Trump, accusing Beijing of a vast cover-up. "I would love to show it in China, because I feel that for the entire country with Covid, it has been such a scar on the nation's psyche," said Wu, who hopes it could help his ancestral home to mourn its losses. "Obviously right now most Chinese feel proud the country has been able to control it. But it is a trauma." — AFP

Actor John Boyega quits Jo Malone over Chinese ad

British actor John Boyega yesterday said he had stepped down as brand ambassador for fragrance company Jo Malone, after he was replaced in an aftershave advertising campaign in China. "I have decided to step down as Jo Malone's global ambassador," Boyega, best known for playing stormtrooper Finn in the Star Wars sequels, wrote on his Twitter account. "Their decision to replace my campaign in China by using my concepts and substituting a local brand ambassador for me, without either my consent or prior notice, was wrong. "While many brands understandably use a variety of global and local ambassadors, dismissively trading out one's culture this way is not something I can condone."

The perfume brand responded on the social media platform, calling the 28-year-old Londoner "an incredible talent, artist and person". "We respect John's decision and we wish him all the best," it added. The company, which is

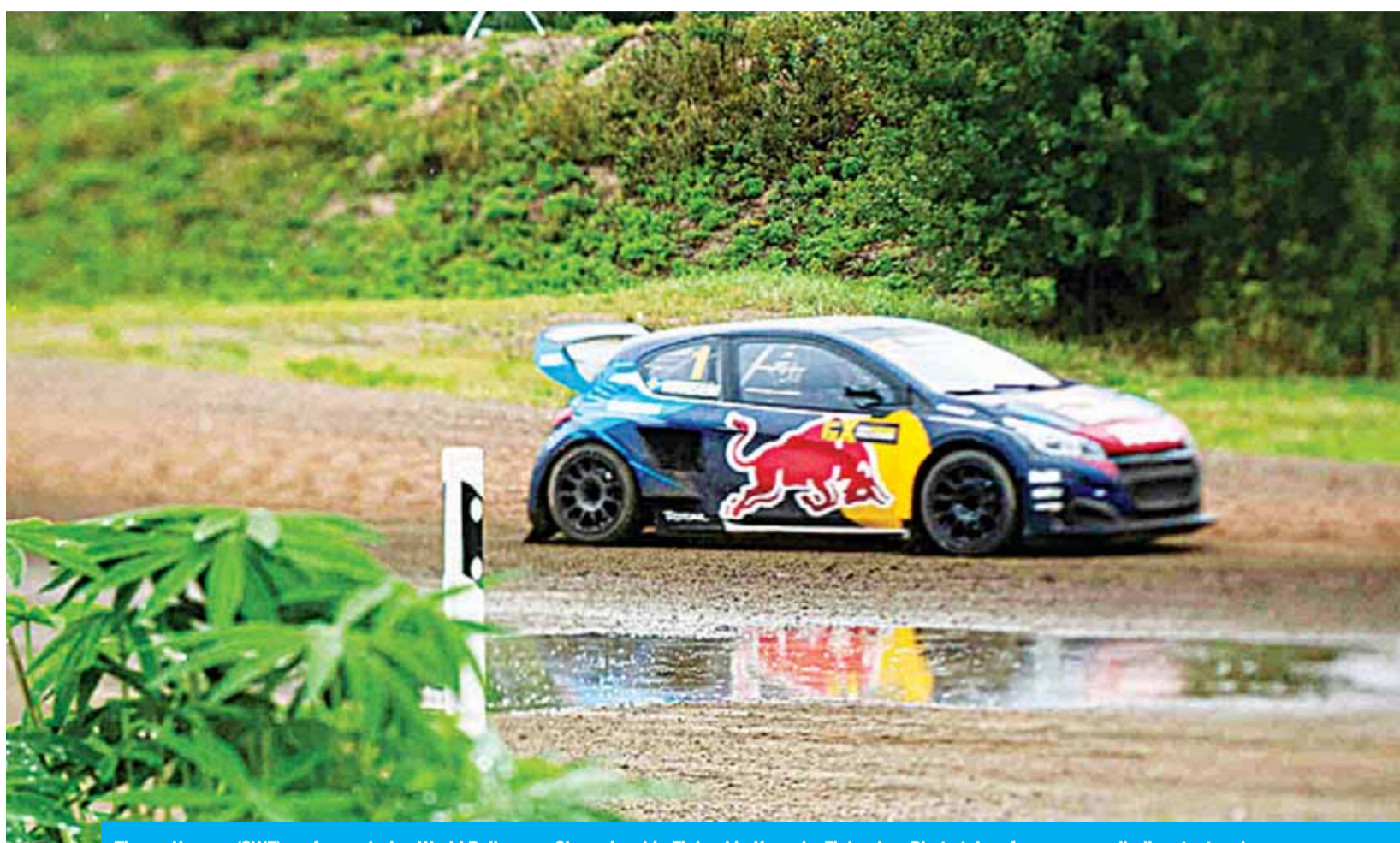


John Boyega

owned by Estee Lauder, was earlier reported as saying that dropping him for the Chinese market was a "misstep". The commercial featuring Boyega was reshot for the Chinese market using the actor Liu Haoran. Boyega's move follows his criticism of the marketing of non-white characters in the latest Star Wars films and his outspoken support for the Black Lives Matter movement. In June, he made an emotional speech in central London at the height of anti-racism protests following the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, during a US police arrest. — AFP

Sports

Photo of the day



Timmy Hansen (SWE) performs during World Rallycross Championship Finland in Kouvolaa, Finland. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

‘I acted like a fool’:
Neymar regrets
Marseille red card

PARIS: Neymar said he “acted like a fool” following his red card against Marseille but called on football officials to do more to combat discrimination after accusing Spanish defender Alvaro Gonzalez of racism. The Brazil forward was one of five players sent off after a mass brawl at the end of PSG’s 1-0 loss in Ligue 1 on Sunday, and later claimed Gonzalez had called him a “monkey” in a series of furious tweets.

PSG have stood by the world’s most expensive player, saying the club “strongly supports” him, but Neymar conceded he would accept his punishment which is expected to be revealed by the French league’s disciplinary commission on Wednesday. “Yesterday I revolted. I was punished with red because I wanted to hit someone who offended me,” Neymar said in a lengthy Instagram post Monday.

“I thought I could not leave without doing something because I realized that those in charge would not do anything, did not notice or ignored the fact.” Neymar was dismissed for slapping Gonzalez on the back of the head, with team-mates Layvin Kurzawa and Leandro Paredes also sent off, as well as Marseille’s Dario Benedetto and Jordan Amavi. “In our sport, aggressions, insults, swearing are part of the game, of the dispute. You can’t be affectionate. I understand this guy partly, all is part of the game, but racism and intolerance are unacceptable,” Neymar continued.

“Should I have ignored it? I don’t know yet... Today, with a cool head, I say yes, but in due course, my companions and I asked the referees for help and we were ignored. “I accept my punishment because I should have followed the path of clean football. I hope, on the other hand, that the offender will also be punished. “Racism exists. It exists, but we have to stop it. No more. Enough!” “The guy was a fool. I also acted like a fool for letting me get involved in that,” he added. —AFP

Padres pound Dodgers 7-2

Padres win their eighth consecutive game

LOS ANGELES: Rookie Jorge Ona hit a tiebreaking double to left in the seventh, and the host Padres added four more runs in the inning after a pair of fielding miscues by Dodgers first baseman Max Muncy to score a 7-2 victory on Monday night. The Padres won their eighth consecutive game and cut their deficit to the first-place Dodgers in the National League West to 1 1/2 games. The big inning broke up a pitching duel between the Padres’ Dinelson Lamet and the Dodgers’ Clayton Kershaw. Lamet (3-1) surrendered one run on three hits and two walks with 11 strikeouts over seven innings. He retired the last 12 Dodgers he faced and became the first pitcher to fan 10 Los Angeles hitters in a game this year. Kershaw (5-2) was charged with three runs on five hits with no walks and nine strikeouts in 6 1/3 innings.

Brewers 2, Cardinals 1 (Game 1, 8 innings)

Keston Hiura delivered a sacrifice fly to cap a two-run eighth inning, and host Milwaukee opened a doubleheader with a victory over St. Louis. After Ryan Braun tied the score with a run-scoring double off the center field wall in the bottom, Hiura came through with the sacrifice fly to left to give the Brewers a walk-off victory. The Cardinals broke a scoreless tie in the top of the eighth when Tommy Edman delivered a two-out single to center field to score Tyler O’Neill, a pinch runner for Yadier Molina, who was placed on second base to start the extra inning. Milwaukee answered in the bottom of the frame to snap a 21-inning scoring drought and avoid a third consecutive defeat.

Cardinals 3, Brewers (Game 2, 9 innings)

Paul DeJong delivered an RBI single in the ninth inning for his third hit of the game, and St. Louis earned a split of a doubleheader at Milwaukee in the nightcap. The Cardinals stranded 14 runners in the second game, but DeJong drove in a run when it mattered with his single to left. The Brewers, two games behind the second-place Cardinals in the NL Central, stranded the bases loaded in the bottom of the eighth and left a man on third in the ninth.

Orioles 14, Braves 1

Baltimore cracked three home runs during a nine-run third inning and set a season high for runs in a game to cruise past visiting Atlanta. Baltimore sent 12 batters to the plate in the third. The Orioles got a three-run homer from DJ Stewart — his seventh home run this season, all of them this month — and a solo shot

from Ryan Mountcastle in back-to-back fashion against Atlanta starter Touki Toussaint, then added a three-run homer from Jose Iglesias. Baltimore added a solo homer in the seventh inning from Pat Valaika, whose fly ball bounced off the glove of right fielder Nick Markakis and caromed over the fence. The 14 runs came on the heels of a four-game series against the Yankees that saw the Orioles score only three times.

Reds 3, Pirates 1 (Game 1)

Tyler Stephenson’s two-run homer in the seventh inning gave Cincinnati a walk-off victory over visiting Pittsburgh in the first game of a doubleheader. Joey Votto hit a solo homer for Cincinnati, which won consecutive games for the first time in nearly two weeks. Colin Moran hit a home run for the Pirates, who have lost five consecutive games. Cincinnati starter Trevor Bauer was dominant for most of the game. In 6 1/3 innings, he struck out 12 and walked two, giving up one run and four hits. Raisel Iglesias (3-3) got the final two outs of the seventh to earn the victory.

Reds 9, Pirates 4 (Game 2)

Mike Moustakas, Brian Goodwin and Joey Votto homered to lift Cincinnati past visiting Pittsburgh for a sweep of the teams’ doubleheader. The Reds, who have won three straight, scored their nine runs on just five hits but were helped by nine walks by Pittsburgh pitching. Ke’Bryan Hayes hit a two-run homer, Josh Bell a solo homer and Colin Moran drove in a run with a double for the Pirates, who lost their sixth in a row.

Marlins 6, Phillies 2

Pablo Lopez snapped his three-game losing streak, leading host Miami to a win over Philadelphia. Miguel Rojas, now batting .370, led Miami’s offense, going 2-for-3 with a homer and two runs. Right fielder Matt Joyce led the defense with a pair of over-the-shoulder catches on the warning track. Lopez (4-4) allowed three hits, no walks and one run in seven innings, striking out six and earning his first win since Aug. 24. Vince Velasquez (0-1) gave up seven hits and four runs.

Mariners 6, Athletics 5 (Game 1)

Kyle Lewis hit a two-run homer and walked with two outs and the bases loaded in the bottom of the sixth to break a tie as Seattle rallied from a five-run deficit to defeat visiting Oakland in the opener of a doubleheader. Mariners ace Marco Gonzales (6-2) allowed a season-



SAN DIEGO: Fernando Tatis Jr #23 of the San Diego Padres is tagged out by Brandon Crawford #35 of the San Francisco Giants as he tries to get back to second base during the fifth inning of a baseball game at Petco Park on September 13, 2020. —AFP

high five runs but became the first left-handed starter to defeat the American League West-leading Athletics in 10 attempts this season. Gonzales, who won his fourth straight start, allowed the five runs on six hits in six innings, with one walk and seven strikeouts. Luis Torrens and Jose Marmolejos added solo homers for the Mariners while Tim Lopes had three doubles.

Athletics 9, Mariners 0 (Game 2)

Mike Minor pitched a two-hitter to earn his first victory of the season as Oakland defeated host Seattle to split a makeup doubleheader. Minor (1-5) entered the game with a 6.35 overall ERA on the season. The left-hander walked two and struck out eight in the seven-inning game. Mark Canha and Jake Lamb both homered for the first-place Athletics. The Mariners were shut out for the second time this season and saw

your family, which is the most important thing.” That perspective just might do the 31-year-old Northern Irish world number four some good as he seeks to end a six-year major drought this week and lift his second US Open after winning his maiden major at Bethesda way back in 2011.

Treachery afoot

This week will mark the sixth US Open at Winged Foot, rated as the most treacherous host of all, with its notorious rough, vast bunkers and multi-crested greens so slick that 2006 runner-up Colin Montgomerie regarded them as harder to master than Augusta. Since it first played host in 1929, only one player has won with a score under par, Fuzzy Zoeller in 1984. Hale Irwin’s victory in 1974’s “massacre at Winged Foot” saw him finish seven-over-a score that remains the highest to win a major since the word “par” entered the golfing lexicon in 1911.

“They had trouble finding their ankles, much less the golf ball,” said one player that year as a succession of the world’s best lost balls in the rough and watched putts run off the greens. The last time Winged Foot staged the US Open, in 2006, Geoff Ogilvy won without breaking par in any round after one of the wildest finishes ever seen in a major. A stroke behind were Montgomerie and Phil Mickelson, who both double-bogeyed the 72nd hole when needing a par to win, and Jim Furyk, who missed a five-foot putt to force a playoff.

Someone has bet \$45,000 on Mickelson to win this week at odds of 75-1. If the 50-year-old does complete his career slam at Winged Foot, the payout would be an astronomical \$3.375 million. “Hoping for both of us I have a 3 shot lead on 18 tee,” Lefty tweeted. “The golf course gets tough on the first tee and never gets any easier,” Jack Nicklaus famously said. He should know. In 1974 on his opening hole of the tournament he had a

their three-game winning streak snapped.

White Sox 3, Twins 1

Pinch hitter Adam Engel grounded a go-ahead single to center field in the eighth inning, and Tim Anderson went 3-for-5 with an RBI as host Chicago defeated Minnesota to extend its lead atop the American League Central. Chicago moved two games ahead of second-place Minnesota behind a two-run eighth that began with two consecutive walks from Twins left-hander Taylor Rogers (1-4). After he showed hurt on the previous pitch, Engel pulled back his bat and delivered a hit past a charging infield. Minnesota stranded 15 runners, and Chicago left 12 on base. White Sox pitching issued 10 walks. Max Kepler had two hits for the Twins while Jose Abreu and Eloy Jimenez both had a pair of hits for the White Sox.—Reuters

downhill 25-footer for birdie. He walked off four putts later with a double-bogey six.

Great wall of Dinah

With no fans, the massive blue barrier behind the 18th green for the LPGA’s ANA Inspiration at the Dinah Shore course in Rancho Mirage should have been surplus to requirements. But the ‘Great Wall of Dinah,’ which normally fronts a temporary grandstand perched above, was installed anyway and ended up stealing the show at the second women’s major of the year. Lee Mi-rim was trailing by two when she deliberately powered her second at the par-five closing hole into the blue fence, which handily also prevents overhit approaches from finding a watery grave. She then chipped in for an eagle and won her first major in a playoff with Nelly Korda and Brooke Henderson. “I definitely thought to utilize the backboard,” the canny Lee said. “I practiced that shot.” Some were not so enamored. “Honestly, I wish they didn’t have that wall there,” Korda said presciently earlier in the week. Television commentator Judy Rankin chimed in: “It has been way too artificial. There was no real reason for it to be there. It has affected play way too much.” World rankings — Top 10s, week beginning September 14, 2020:

Men — (1) Dustin Johnson (USA) 10.16; (2) Jon Rahm (ESP) 9.85; (3) Justin Thomas (USA) 8.68; (4) Rory McIlroy (NIR) 7.91; (5) Collin Morikawa (USA) 7.68; (6) Webb Simpson (USA) 7.11; (7) Xander Schauffele (USA) 6.42; (8) Brooks Koepka (USA) 6.09; (9) Bryson DeChambeau (USA) 5.88; (10) Patrick Reed (USA) 5.79

Women — (1) Ko Jin-young (KOR) 7.97; (2) Nelly Korda (USA) 6.68 (+1); (3) Danielle Kang (USA) 6.43 (-1); (4) Park Sung-hyun (KOR) 5.51; (5) Minjee Lee (AUS) 5.43; (6) Brooke Henderson (CAN) 5.42 (+3); (7) Kim Sei-young (KOR) 5.24 (-1); (8) Nasa Hataoka (JPN) 5.14 (-1) (9) Park In-bee (KOR) 4.90 (-1); (10) Lexi Thompson (USA) 4.77 (+2). —AFP

Al Ahli into last 16;
Asian Champions
League returns

DOHA: Saudi club Al Ahli beat Iraq’s Al Shorta with a late goal from German international Marko Marin to become the first team into the knockout stages of Asian Champions League as the continental club competition returned in Doha on Monday. Seven months after grinding to a halt because of the COVID-19 pandemic, action in Asia’s premier club competition got back underway with three matches in the West Asian hub in Qatar.

The withdrawal of Al Wahda after the Emirati side failed to arrive in the Qatari capital left Group A with only three teams and Al Ahli, runners up in 2012, took full advantage to progress to the last 16. Al Shorta’s resumption hit a road bump just before halftime at an empty Khalifa International Stadium when defender Ali Mhawi was sent off for a second bookable offence. The Iraqis still had the better of the second half and it was not until four minutes from time that winger Marin finished coolly from just outside the six-yard box.

“I am happy to play an official game after a long time on the sidelines,” the former Werder Bremen and Chelsea player told the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) website. “I am happy to start the competition with a win against a strong team like Al Shorta. It was a great performance ...” In later action, reigning champions Al Hilal made it a good night for Saudi clubs when they also got a late winner to beat Uzbeki champions Pakhtakor 2-1 and move three points clear at the top of Group B. Al Hilal lost the services of five players and a coach when they tested positive for COVID-19 last week. —Reuters

McIlroy in the dad club
as toughest test looms:
Golf talking points

HONG KONG: The second majors of the year for both men and women dominate AFP Sport’s golf talking points this week:

Baby boomers

Rory McIlroy will play his first major as a dad at the US Open this week, after his wife Erica gave birth to daughter Poppy on August 31, and now he can join in the baby talk with plenty of his rivals on course. World number one, FedEx Cup champion, PGA Tour player of the year and 2016 US Open champion Dustin Johnson has two sons with partner Paulina Gretzky, five-year-old Tatum and three-year-old River. Defending champion Gary Woodland has three children with wife Gabby: three-year-old son Jaxson and year-old twin girls, Maddox and Lennox.

McIlroy’s Ryder Cup teammate Tommy Fleetwood, the 2018 US Open runner-up, and partner Clare’s son Franklin will be three at the end of this month. While fellow Europe star and 2013 US Open champion Justin Rose has Leo, 11, and Lottie, eight, back home in the Bahamas with wife Kate. And of course McIlroy’s good friend Tiger Woods is a doting dad to 13-year-old daughter Sam and 11-year-old son Charlie—reportedly no mean junior golfer himself—from his previous marriage to Elin Nordegren. “If you look at fathers in all different sports, golf, tennis, it’s not a new lease of life, but it’s a different perspective,” said McIlroy after practice at the New York course at the weekend. “It’s your career, but at the end of the day you get to go home to

Sports

Camel racing storms back in Sinai after virus hiatus

A popular traditional sport in many Arab countries

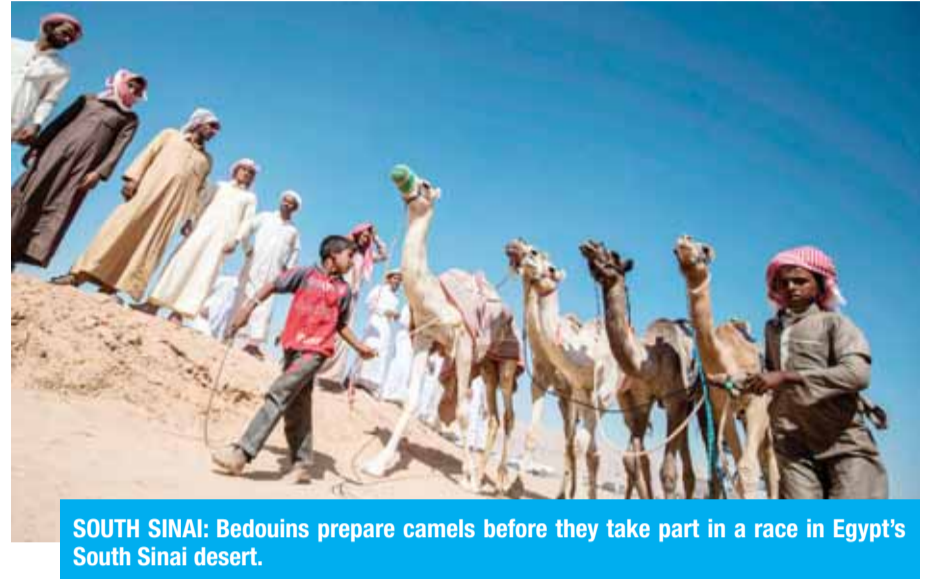
SINAI: Spread out at the foot of a vast plateau in the Sinai desert, hundreds of excited Bedouins gathered to race their camels after a six-month break due to coronavirus. Shrouded in a vast sand cloud kicked up by the hump-backed beasts, more than 500 camels were loudly cheered on by their owners dressed in traditional jalabiyas and headdresses. Camel racing is a popular traditional sport in many Arab countries, most notably in the Gulf region. And in Egypt, Bedouins of the South Sinai desert have kept up the tradition.

But race events have been suspended since March following the Covid-19 outbreak, and orders only came down at the beginning of the month that they could resume last weekend. The camels ran around a two-kilometer track in the Tih plateau, completing it in a matter of minutes, as they were followed by spectators and owners riding in SUVs to get a close-up glimpse of the action. The competition "is a training for the international race, which should take place in October in Sharm El-Sheikh," Saleh Al-Muzaini, head of the Nuweiba camel club said.

One group of camels after another, placed in different categories according to age and whether they were male or female, made their debut on the dirt track lined by sand embankments on each side. On their backs sat mechanical jockeys wearing racing jerseys and brandishing whips, which are lighter than human riders.



SOUTH SINAI, Egypt: Camels carrying jockeys on their backs, run on a dirt track during a race in Egypt's South Sinai desert, after more than six months of hiatus due to the coronavirus outbreak. — AFP photos



SOUTH SINAI: Bedouins prepare camels before they take part in a race in Egypt's South Sinai desert.

In a different race, young boys mount the camels to complete a 10-kilometre course.

Crazy camels

Among the audience was 32-year-old Mostapha Abu al-Fadl, a geologist at an oil company in Cairo, who came especially to watch. "When I heard they were organizing the race again, I told my friends how crazy, how wonderful it is... We had to come and see," he said. To the Bedouins, the race is a way of keeping a traditional heritage alive. "There was camel racing in the past, but we revived it" in recent years,

Sheikh Hassan, of the Alegat tribe, which organizes the event said.

"Camels will not disappear for us. We can use them for centuries. If the camel goes away, the Bedouins will also go away." Egypt has so far registered over 100,000 coronavirus cases, and more than 5,500 fatalities. Strict measures, including banning large gatherings, have been imposed in the country since March to prevent contagion. Camel races - often attract large audiences of tourists, visitors and Bedouins to the middle of the Sinai desert.

Sheikh Hassan, however, says the sparsely populated peninsula with its breezy and dry weather had been only mildly affected by the pandemic, and there were no coronavirus measures noticeably in place for the racing. Suspending the races caused heavy losses for the camel owners, who still had to pay for their animals' training, food and health checkups. Over the six months alone, the owners lost some 10 and 15 million Egyptian pounds (between \$625,000 and \$940,000), according to Sheikh Hassan.

Costly passion

For owner Soleiman Hamad, Saturday's race ended on a high note as his animal came first in its category. There is no prize money, but the winners carry off a prestigious trophy which also helps boost their animal's value. For Hamad and others, camel racing represents a source of additional income, provided they also have the means to train, feed and care for the animal. "It's costly, but it's our passion," he said. Each camel costs up to 2,000 Egyptian pounds monthly to feed. — AFP

Never-say-die Stars stun Knights to reach first Stanley Cup final

LOS ANGELES: Denis Gurianov scored a power-play goal 3:36 into overtime as the Dallas Stars reached their first Stanley Cup final in 20 years with a 3-2 come-from-behind victory over the Vegas Golden Knights. Joel Kiviranta also scored a power-play goal late in the third period to force overtime as the Stars rallied from a 2-0 deficit Monday night to shock the Golden Knights and win the Western Conference final series 4-1. "We found our game. We scored a goal that got us going, then the powerplay took over," said forward Joe Pavelski of the Stars' eighth come-from-behind win in the post season.

On the winning goal, Gurianov, 23, took a pass from John Klingberg and hammered a one-timer past Vegas goalie Robin Lehner on the short side that sparked a mob scene celebration with Dallas goalie Anton Khudobin in the middle. Canada's Jamie Benn also scored while Khudobin stopped 34 shots for the Stars, who advanced to their first Stanley Cup final since 2000. Dallas will play either the New York Islanders or the Tampa Bay Lightning for the NHL championship. The Lightning can wrap their series up with a win on Tuesday in the NHL's quarantine bubble in Edmonton, Alberta.

Dallas has been outshot and outplayed for most of the series, but thanks to timely scoring and brilliant goaltending from Russia's Khudobin they were able to stun the favoured Golden Knights. Khudobin, who stopped 153 of 161 shots in the



EDMONTON: The Dallas Stars pose for a team photo with Bill Daly, the deputy commissioner and chief legal officer of the National Hockey League (NHL) and the Clarence S Campbell Bowl after winning the Western Conference Championship over the Vegas Golden Knights in Game Five during the 2020 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs on September 14, 2020. — AFP

series, assumed the starting role last month from Ben Bishop, who is injured. "He stepped into an unsure situation and just ran with it. He got more confident with every game," Pavelski said of Khudobin. Vegas coach Pete DeBoer said his teams scoring woes started in the previous round against the Vancouver Canucks and carried over into the conference final.

"There's no doubt the last couple games of the Vancouver series against (Canucks goalie

Thatcher) Demko probably rattled our confidence in that area as a group," DeBoer said. "Honestly up to that point, I thought we were creating a ton of offence." Vegas forward Chandler Stephenson opened the scoring on a breakaway near the halfway point of the first after being set up by Knights leading playoff scorer Shea Theodore. Stephenson took a cross-ice pass from Theodore and drove to the net where he neatly slipped a backhand between the legs of Khudobin. — AFP

Pandemic batters market for Brazil's football transfers

SAO PAULO: Brazil exports more footballers than any other country, but the coronavirus pandemic has caused a plunge in international transfers, hitting the finances of clubs that depend on lucrative deals for their young talent. The number of Brazilian footballers transferred to foreign clubs fell 62 percent during the European summer transfer window this year, according to an AFP count based on data from the website Transfermarkt. From June 1 to September 8 last year, 194 players at Brazilian clubs left to play abroad, either on loan or transferred, according to the site.

This year, the number was just 74. "The transfer market has slowed. Clubs are trying not to spend as much because everyone's financial situation is complicated," said ESPN commentator Gustavo Hofman. Brazil leads the world with 2,742 footballers playing abroad, ahead of Argentina (2,330) and France (1,740), according to a May report by the International Centre for Sports Studies, in Switzerland.

In the country of Pele and Neymar, transfers typically generate around one-fourth of clubs' income, second only to TV rights as a revenue source. But the number of transfers is not the only thing that

has fallen. Amid the financial uncertainty unleashed by Covid-19, the amount of money involved in the deals has also dropped. Last year, the three top international transfers brought 77 million euros (\$91.4 million) to Brazilian clubs.

That included a 45-million-euro deal between Real Madrid and Brazilian club Santos for teenage winger Rodrygo. This year, the three top transfers have brought less than 62 million euros to Brazilian clubs. In the biggest, Portuguese club Benfica paid 28 million euros to Gremio for forward and national team standout Everton. The Lisbon club also paid 18 million euros to bring attacking midfielder Pedrinho from Corinthians. "In any other year, (Everton) might have brought a higher price from Benfica," said Hofman.

The slump comes at the worst possible time for Brazilian clubs, which were already struggling with heavy debt. Now, they are also reeling from the economic fallout of Covid-19 in the country that has the second-highest death toll worldwide, after the United States. "Clubs' financial fragility has increased because of the pandemic," said Rodrigo Capelo, a sports business journalist at Brazilian media house Globo. —AFP

Goodbye India, hello IPL: Singh Dhoni set to 'rule roost' in UAE

NEW DELHI: India's Mahendra Singh Dhoni may have signed off from international duties but he'll be at the heart of the action in the Indian Premier League—a tournament he helped inspire, and where he remains a towering figure. Dhoni, who has led the Chennai Super Kings to three titles and five runner-up finishes in the IPL's 12 editions, will feature in the opening match on Saturday against the Mumbai Indians, the defending champions.

The game comes more than a year after the 39-year-old last played for India in their semi-final loss to New Zealand in the 2019 World Cup. After much speculation, the wicketkeeper-batsman finally announced the end of his 16-year international career last month. And without the pressure of having to play well to keep his place in the national team, the flamboyant Dhoni is expected to shine in UAE, the IPL's temporary home as India battles a rampant coronavirus problem.

"He is very fit and I believe he is working very hard on it. Plus he has stopped playing international cricket so there will be less burden on his body," Saba Karim, another former India wicketkeeper, told AFP. "Global cricket still needs an icon like MS Dhoni to continue." Dhoni's captaincy began with India winning the inaugural T20 World Cup title in 2007, a success that triggered the birth of the IPL—the

world's most popular and richest cricket league—a year later.

"Dhoni played an instrumental role in kick-starting the IPL because of the way he brought a different dimension to the shorter format of the game because of his aggressive side with the willow," Karim said. "Also with his calm exterior behind the stumps." Dhoni, once hailed as the world's best finisher, has played 190 IPL matches, scoring 4,432 runs including 23 half-centuries. An exemplary leader with fast glove-work, Dhoni has made Chennai one of IPL's most loved franchises with almost 200,000 people following the team's fan club on Twitter.

'Soul of Chennai'

Chennai chief executive Kasi Viswanathan says Dhoni remains key to the team's plans and they expect him to keep playing till the 2022 edition. The team has been under scrutiny after arriving in the UAE last month with two players testing positive for the coronavirus. Senior batsman Suresh Raina and veteran spinner Harbhajan Singh later opted out of the competition. "I swear if Dhoni pulls out of IPL, there's no IPL for me this year!" a Twitter user wrote after the withdrawals. Cricketer-turned-commentator Aakash Chopra said Dhoni is "the biggest strength of the team and the entire franchise is dependent on him". —AFP

News in brief

NFL issues warning to coaches

LOS ANGELES: The NFL has issued a warning to coaches across the league about wearing face coverings properly after several ignored established guidelines in last weekend's opening round of fixtures. In a memo sent to all 32 teams across the league, NFL executive vice president of operations Troy Vincent said individuals who violated the face covering Covid-19 protocols risked "accountability measures." "We must remain vigilant and disciplined in following the processes and protocols put in place by not only the league, union and clubs, but also by state and local governments," Vincent wrote in the memo. — AFP

FIA investigating Hamilton

MUGELLO: Formula One's ruling body is reported to be considering action against world champion Lewis Hamilton after he wore a t-shirt highlighting police brutality at Sunday's Tuscan Grand Prix. The six-time world champion and series leader, who won the race, wore a t-shirt bearing a message that said "Arrest the cops who killed Breonna Taylor" before and after the race, during an anti-racism ceremony and television interviews. A spokesperson for the International Motoring Federation (FIA) told the BBC that the case against Hamilton is "under active consideration". Hamilton had previously worn a "Black Lives Matter" t-shirt at every race without any comment from the FIA. Taylor, a 26-year-old black woman, was shot by police in Kentucky in March. She was a medical worker and was killed in her own home. — AFP

PGA Tour Player of the Year

NEW YORK: After three tournament wins and a FedExCup title, Dustin Johnson added more hardware to his trophy case on Monday when he was named PGA Tour Player of the Year for a second time. Johnson missed the start of the season while recovering from a knee injury and also had to sit out the COVID-19 shutdown like everyone else. But he then had a blazing end to the campaign with two wins and two runner-up finishes in his last four starts that pushed him back to the top of the world rankings. Victories at the Northern Trust and Tour Championships earned the 36-year-old American a first FedExCup title and the \$15 million payday that goes along with the trophy. His other win came at the Travelers Championship. — Reuters

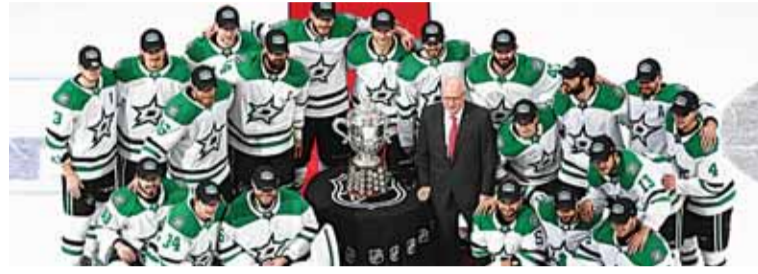
Dates for Bledisloe Cup tests

AUCKLAND: The Bledisloe Cup series between New Zealand and Australia will kick off in Wellington on Oct 11 with the second match in Auckland a week later, New Zealand Rugby (NZR) said yesterday. The announcement comes after New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern telephoned Australian counterpart Scott Morrison to defuse tensions over the scheduling. The tests will be the first involving traditional rugby powers since the northern hemisphere's Six Nations was halted in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The third and fourth matches of the Bledisloe Cup, the annual series involving the trans-Tasman neighbors, will double as games in the four-nation Rugby Championship, which was awarded to Australia last week and begins in November. — Reuters

14 Padres pound Dodgers 7-2, win their eighth consecutive game



15 Never-say-die Stars stun Knights to reach first Stanley Cup final



15 Goodbye India, hello IPL: Singh Dhoni set to 'rule roost' in UAE



BRIGHTON: Chelsea's German striker Timo Werner (left) tackles Brighton's English defender Lewis Dunk during the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Chelsea on September 14, 2020. —AFP

Clinical Chelsea sink Brighton

Big-spending Chelsea start with win at Brighton

BRIGHTON: Frank Lampard believes Chelsea are already showing the benefits of his £200 million (\$257 million) spending spree as they kicked off their Premier League campaign with a 3-1 win at Brighton on Monday. Blues boss Lampard has splashed out on a host of new signings and the early returns on his lavish investment were promising.

Germany striker Timo Werner, a £53 million recruit from Leipzig, won the penalty that Jorginho converted to put Chelsea ahead. Kai Havertz, who made a £70 million switch from Bayer Leverkusen, wasn't quite so impactful, but Lampard will be confident there are better days to come from the young Germany forward. "Timo's speed to win the penalty showed he is sharp and he was a threat all night. He is very mobile and I liked his performance," Lampard said.

"With Kai we saw a lot as well. To get these minutes will only be good and both of them will be huge players for this club." Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga was guilty of another mistake when Leandro

Trossard equalised for Brighton. But Reece James' superb strike put Chelsea back in front before Kurt Zouma's deflected effort sealed the points. It was an encouraging result for Lampard, who has accepted he is under pressure to deliver a title challenge after spending more than any other club so far in the summer transfer window.

"I think to expect everything to click on day one is very difficult. But what they did do was show a bit of determination," Lampard said. "I really liked the work ethic and the discipline of the team. We've been together as a team for four days after the international break. We had a lot of quarantines before that and new signings. "We might have dropped points in this game last season. I'm not getting excited by that on day one, but it had a little bit of determination and resilience about it I thought."

Chelsea finished 33 points behind champions Liverpool in fourth last season before a disappointing FA Cup final defeat against Arsenal, but they

are primed to improve if Lampard can gel his new signings. Lampard's other expensive recruits, former Ajax playmaker Hakim Ziyech and ex-Leicester left-back Ben Chilwell, were both sidelined by injuries, while Thiago Silva wasn't available as he returns to training following his free transfer from Paris Saint-Germain. The historians among Chelsea's fanbase will have noted this was the third time they have started a Premier League campaign with a Monday night victory, with the Blues going on to win the title on the previous occasions in 2014-15 and 2016-17.

The only frustration for Lampard was Kepa's howler. The world's most expensive keeper was already under pressure to improve after an error-strewn season and with Chelsea having spoken to Rennes about Senegal keeper Edouard Mendy, his days as first choice might be numbered. Insisting he has not written off Kepa yet, Lampard said: "I am happy with Kepa, I saw confidence in him, he is here, he is our keeper and I am happy with him."

Classy Werner

Werner was Chelsea's central striker while Havertz lined up on the right flank in the three-man attack. It was Werner who showed all his class as Chelsea took the lead in the 23rd minute. Brighton midfielder Steven Alzate surrendered possession with a wayward pass and Jorginho fed Werner, who raced through on goal and was brought down by Mat Ryan as he rounded the Albion keeper.

Jorginho stepped up to take the penalty and Chelsea's captain sent Ryan the wrong way with his trademark hop before shooting. Brighton equalized in the 54th minute when Trossard's 20-yard shot slipped under Kepa's weak attempted save, Kepa's blunder wasn't fatal for Chelsea as James restored their lead just 100 seconds later with a stunning 30-yard blast.

Chelsea sealed the points in the 66th minute when Zouma met James' corner with a volley that took a heavy deflection of Adam Webster to wrong-foot Ryan. —AFP

Messi joins exclusive club of 'sporting billionaires'



Barcelona's Argentinean forward Lionel Messi

Wolves' fast start subdues Blades

SHEFFIELD: Wolves showed no signs of fatigue as they kicked off their Premier League campaign with a 2-0 win against Sheffield United on Monday. Just 34 days after losing to Sevilla in their final game of the coronavirus-delayed 2019-20 season, Nuno Espirito Santo's side looked fresher than expected as they made a blistering start at Bramall Lane. Raul Jimenez and Romain Saiss put Wolves two goals up after just six minutes and the visitors were in control the rest of the way despite their shorter than usual close season. It was the perfect way to open the season for Nuno, who recently signed a new three-year contract, as he tries to improve on successive seventh-place finishes in the Premier League.

Surpassing Wolves' best performance in back-to-back seasons since the 1960s will not be easy, but there is enough quality in Nuno's team to challenge for European qualification. "This was the first match after a quick turnaround. I'm very pleased," Nuno said. "The character, the ways they worked, the resilience at the end. It's been an amazing three seasons. We can create something really special. We have to stay humble." Blades manager Chris Wilder added: "To recover from as poor a start as I can

remember here against Wolves it was always going to be a tough ask. "I know what I have got in my changing room, they don't go under and they didn't. They made a game of it."

There were just three minutes on the clock when Daniel Podence skipped past John Lundstram on the left flank and whipped his cross to Jimenez, who intelligently peeled away from his marker to guide a sublime half-volley into the roof of the net. Jimenez nearly scored again moments later when the Mexican striker's dipping effort was superbly tipped over by Aaron Ramsdale, who was making his second Blades debut after rejoining the club from Bournemouth in the close season. Ramsdale was unable to stop Wolves doubling their lead in the sixth minute when Saiss met an outswinging corner with a thumping header that looped over the Blades keeper.

In his 100th game in all competitions for Wolves, the prolific Jimenez was proving impossible to contain and he was close to his 32nd Premier League goal when he curled just over. After bullying most opponents at home last season, United were well off the pace and it was almost half-time before Wolves keeper Rui Patricio had to make a save from Oli McBurnie. John Fleck almost reduced the deficit early in the second half when his shot cannoned off the post before George Baldock's follow-up deflected wide. Those near misses could not revive United and Wolves finished on top as Saiss and Jimenez both hit the woodwork.—AFP



SHEFFIELD: Wolverhampton Wanderers' Portuguese midfielder Joao Moutinho (right) jumps to head the ball against Sheffield United's English striker Billy Sharp during the English Premier League football match between Sheffield United and Wolverhampton Wanderers on September 14, 2020. —AFP

PARIS: Lionel Messi may have had to stay put at Barcelona but the Argentine legend did succeed in joining one new club this year—the one reserved for sporting billionaires, according to Forbes magazine. The Argentine striker's career earnings of over one billion dollars (840 million euros) places the six-time Ballon d'Or winner in a group of mega-wealthy sports figures containing just Tiger Woods, Floyd Mayweather and his great rival on the pitch, Cristiano Ronaldo.

Forbes said that in 2020 Messi was the best paid footballer in the world with an income of \$126 million from his Barca salary (\$92 million for the 2020/2021 season) and \$34 million from sponsors and other sources. The 33-year-old knocked Juventus forward Ronaldo (\$117 million) off the top of the football salary chart with Paris Saint-Germain's Neymar (\$96 million) in third place.

Forbes' top 10 earning players made a combined \$570 million this season, a jump of 11 percent despite the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic to European leagues and the global economy. Michael Jordan is also in the billionaire's club but the basketball legend's fortune has largely come after retirement through his longstanding contract with Nike and acquisition of NBA franchise Charlotte Hornets. Messi remains at Barcelona this season after conceding defeat in his attempt to leave without triggering his 700-million euro release. —AFP