



**3** Health minister opens health centers in Sabah Al-Ahmad



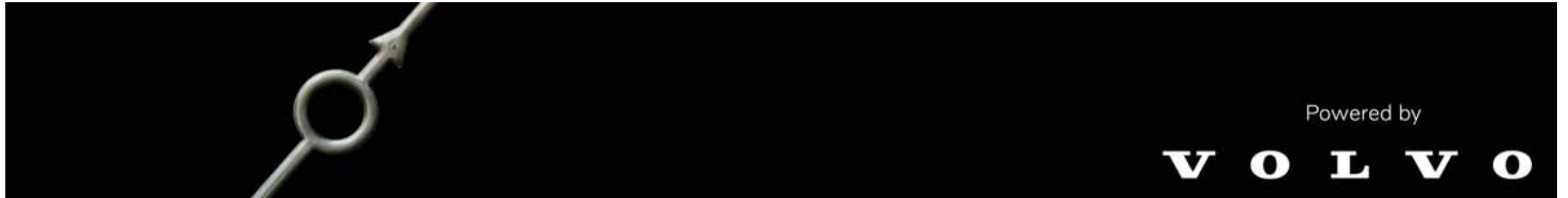
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# Assembly panel approves law to cut expat numbers

MPs to meet to debate PM's grillings • Audiovisual law amendments proposed

## Kuwait's COVID cases hit 99,964, with 585 deaths

KUWAIT: The ministry of health yesterday registered 530 additional COVID-19 cases over the past 24 hours, increasing the total number of infections to 99,964, while one new fatality took the death toll to 585. Ministry Spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said the confirmed cases include patients who contracted the virus due to contact with infected people, while others remain under examination to determine the source.

The cases include 137 in Ahmadi health zone, 129 in Hawally, 102 in the Capital, 91 in Jahra health zone and 71 in Farwaniya. Active cases amount to 8,449, with 93 in intensive care units, Sanad elaborated. Health authorities conducted 3,944 swab tests in 24 hours to reach a total of 711,236, he added. Earlier, the ministry confirmed 762 fresh recovery cases, raising total recoveries to 90,930. — KUNA



By B Izzak

KUWAIT: A National Assembly panel yesterday passed a draft law to reduce the number of expats in the country over the next five years, but did not impose specific caps or percentages, resting this power in the hands of the government. Head of the human resources development committee MP Khalil Al-Saleh said the panel framed the bill after studying eight legislations proposed by MPs and the government, with the main objective of slashing the number of expats, especially unskilled laborers, to rectify the population structure which is heavily in favor of expats.

Saleh said the law will be sent to the Assembly for debate tomorrow. The draft law gives the government six months to determine the number of expats needed by the country and stipulates that a certain percentage of expats will be deter-

mined with regards to the number of citizens. It also stipulates setting specific percentages of various expat communities.

The bill does not include any figures and leaves that to the government to determine. According to the bill, the government must set within six months of issuing this legislation a specific number of expats the country needs, and also the number of expats that are allowed to be recruited. To achieve the population target, the government must continue to reduce the number of expats gradually over the next five years. The result should restore the balance between Kuwaitis and expats.

The bill excludes a number of categories from the cap on expats. They include Gulf citizens, domestic helpers, judges, diplomatic corps, aviation operators, expat workers recruited for mega projects, spouses

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## Taj reopens even as virus cases soar

AGRA, India: India's famed Taj Mahal and some schools reopened yesterday as authorities pressed ahead with kick-starting the nation's coronavirus-battered economy despite soaring infection numbers. India, home to 1.3 billion people and some of the world's most crowded cities, has recorded more than 5.4 million COVID-19 cases, second only to the United States which it could overtake soon. Authorities reported 86,961 new coronavirus infections across the country yesterday, with no signs of a peak yet. The death toll of 87,882 was up 1,130 from the previous day, health ministry figures showed.

But after a strict lockdown in March that devastated the livelihoods of tens of millions of people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is reluctant to copy some other nations and tighten the screw on activity again. Instead in recent months his government has eased more and more restrictions including on many train routes, domestic flights, markets, restaur-

rants - and now, visiting the Taj Mahal, built by a 17th-century Mughal emperor for his wife.

"So many people lost their job during the lockdown. People have suffered a lot and it is time the country opens up fully," said bank official Ayub Sheikh, 35, visiting the Taj with his wife and baby daughter. "We are not afraid of the virus. If it has to infect us, it will," Sheikh told AFP. "Not many people are dying now. I don't think it is going to go away soon. We have to get used to it now."

The jaw-dropping white-marble mausoleum in Agra south of New Delhi is India's most popular tourist site. It usually draws seven million visitors a year, but has been closed since March. Officials said strict social distancing rules were in place and visitors were not allowed to touch the marble. The famous bench where visitors sit for a photo - most memorably Princess Diana in 1992 - has been specially laminated so that it can be regularly sanitized without damage.

Early yesterday, a couple of hundred of visitors were inside. Security personnel were reminding everyone to wear masks once photos have been clicked. Daily visitor numbers have been capped at 5,000 - a quarter the normal rate. "Coronavirus is there in every country," Spanish visitor Ainhoa Parra told AFP.

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AGRA: Tourists take a selfie at the Taj Mahal yesterday. — AFP (See Page 6)

## Trump to name court nominee at end of week

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said yesterday he will announce his nominee for the empty Supreme Court seat at the end of this

week, kick-starting a political fight set to upend the already nail-biting US election. "I will announce it either Friday or Saturday and then the work begins, but hopefully it won't be too much work," Trump said in an interview with Fox News.

Down in the polls against Democratic opponent Joe Biden and widely criticized for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, the

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## 10 dead, dozens trapped in India building collapse

BHIWANDI, India: At least 10 people were killed yesterday and dozens were feared trapped when a portion of a three-storey residential building collapsed on the outskirts of the Indian city of Mumbai, officials said. Some residents were trying to get out of the building, in the industrial town of Bhiwandi, 40 km northeast of Mumbai, after cracks appeared in it in the middle of the night, when it crashed down.

"Half of the building collapsed and nearly 25 to 26 families are feared trapped," Pankaj Ashiya, the municipal commissioner of Bhiwandi, told reporters. It was not clear why the building, which had 54 apartments on three floors, collapsed. At least 11 injured people were rescued. Teams of police, city workers and members of the National Disaster Response Force removed debris in the cramped lanes of the neighborhood, trying to reach people calling out for help under the rubble, a Reuters witness said.

"We heard a noise and I noticed that there were cracks on the floor," resident Sharif Ansari, 35, told Reuters. "I woke up my neighbors and my wife and we rushed everyone down." Ansari said he went back up to alert more people and was on the first floor with some other residents when the building came down. "We jumped from there and managed to escape but there are at least another 60 people trapped," he said.



BHIWANDI, India: Rescue workers carry a survivor from the rubble of a collapsed residential building yesterday. — AFP

Torrential rain is often blamed for building collapses in India, with the number of incidents, often involving old or illegally built buildings, rising during the June-September monsoon. Last month, more than a dozen people were killed when a building collapsed in the industrial town of Mahad, 165 km south of Mumbai. — Reuters



WASHINGTON: Signs and flowers are left at a makeshift memorial in front of the US Supreme Court for the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg yesterday. — AFP

## Local

## Deputy Amir receives Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak

Amiri Diwan officials meet Oman, Japan, US ambassadors



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA and Amiri Diwan photos



Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh bin Amer Al-Khrosi.



Amiri Diwan Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Japan's Ambassador to Kuwait Masato Takaoka.



Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah meets with US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace yesterday.

In other news, Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah received Dr Saleh bin Amer Al-Khrosi, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, at his office in Seif Palace yesterday. Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah attended the meeting. The minister, with presence of his deputy, also hosted Japanese Ambassador to Kuwait Masato Takaoka.

Separately, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-

Mubarak received US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina Romanowski yesterday at Seif Palace. The two sides examined the solid and cordial bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and peoples. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti charity equips medical center in Yemen

ADEN: Authorities in Lahij governorate, south of Yemen, on Sunday opened a medical center in Al-Qabbaytah District that was equipped with basic supplies by Kuwait's Al-Najat Charitable Society as part of 'Kuwait by your side' campaign. In a statement, Yanabia Al-Khair Charity Foundation said the project funded by Zakat Kaifan committee and supervised by Al-Najat Charitable Society aims to overhaul the center's utilities to provide adequate medical services to

the citizens of Al-Mo'qem area and alleviate their sufferings. It added that the center has been equipped with several devices and equipment like an ultrasound device, basic laboratory equipment, oxygen cylinders, a solar-powered electricity system, a refrigerator for preserving fluids and medicines, and others. Saleh Al-Khalaqi, adviser to Lahij Governor, expressed his appreciation to the Kuwaiti people and government for this important humanitarian aid that meets demands of the poor communities in the remote countryside. This project will save a lot of efforts and mitigate sufferings of hundreds of families that cut risky and long distances to get costly basic medical services, he said. Equipping the center is an appropriate solution to harsh sufferings facing these families and facilitates supporting and operating it after providing its basic equipment, he noted. — KUNA



## Assembly panel approves law...

Continued from Page 1

of Kuwaitis and their children, medical and educational staff and any other category that may be added by the Cabinet. The number of these expats exceeds one million.

The law also forbids the transfer of residency of domestic helpers to the private sector and transferring visit visas to work permits or dependent visas. The bill sets a penalty of three years in jail and a fine of up to KD 5,000 for violators.

Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday said all MPs have been tested for the coronavirus but declined to reveal the number of those who tested positive for the disease. He said the Assembly will convene with MPs who are healthy and will debate two grillings against HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. It will also discuss a number of legislations before closing the term on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the Assembly's educational commit-

tee sent its report to the Assembly on proposed amendments to the audiovisual law which includes abolishing jail terms for certain penalties and reducing the number of barred topics. The amendments retained four main issues that cannot be abused or criticized - religious offences, criticizing HH the Amir, revealing confidential state information, and if a channel deviates from its stated objectives.

The amendments scrapped offenses like criticizing the judiciary and court verdicts, criticizing the constitution, broadcasting material that could impact the national currency, broadcasting material deemed offensive to public morals, broadcasting information about secret state contacts and undermining the integrity of people.

The amendments also abolish the jail term for broadcasting material without a license and replace it with a fine of between KD 5,000 and KD 10,000. The amendments also exempt the director of the channel, producer and presenter from violations committed during live programs by guests, and only punish the guests. If the material is recorded, the penalty will be applied to all. If the violation involves religious violations, the penalty will be a maximum of one year jail and/or a fine between KD 5,000 and 20,000.

9.2 percent of India's gross domestic product in 2018, employing more than 42 million people, World Travel and Tourism Council data show.

However, foreign tourists were unlikely to return until at least April, said Manu PV, secretary of the Association of Tourism Trade Organizations India, a month that traditionally signals the end of the tourist season. And a confusing system of regional lockdowns and quarantine rules is deterring domestic tourists. "People don't want to go on holiday," Manu said. "They are very worried. There is the fear factor."

Elsewhere in India, particularly in rural areas where infections are soaring, anecdotal evidence suggests that government guidelines on avoiding the virus are more often ignored than adhered to. "I think, not just in India but all over the world, fatigue with extreme measures that were taken to restrict the growth of the coronavirus is setting in," said Gautam Menon, professor of physics and biology at Ashoka University, predicting that infections will keep rising as a result. — AFP

## Taj reopens even as virus...

Continued from Page 1

We are taking all the safety measures that we can. We have to be careful but if we have to get infected we will." "So many livelihoods depend on the Taj. It's great to be back in business," said local official Satish Joshi.

"We can survive for another four to six months. After that we will have to take some serious calls," said Abid Naqvi, who saw bookings at his boutique hotel in Agra drop to zero overnight after India's abrupt lockdown in March. Until then, the 13-room Ekaa Villa, which opened last year at a cost of almost \$1 million, had been operating at close to capacity. Tourism contributed about \$240 billion, or

## Trump to name court nominee...

Continued from Page 1

Republican is seizing on the sudden vacancy at the constitutional court as a way to change the subject and supercharge his rightwing base. The death last week of Ruth Bader Ginsburg stripped the court, which was already tilted to the right, of one of its steadiest liberal votes.

With a chance to name his third new justice since entering the White House, Trump is now on the cusp of installing a firmly conservative majority for many years to come. Biden is leading calls for the Republican-controlled Senate to delay voting on a nominee until the results of the November 3 election are known, arguing that to rush through confirmation would be an "abuse of power."

But Trump made clear yesterday that he has no qualms in flexing his political muscle and his allies in the Senate have said they intend to deliver. Trump said his nominee announcement will wait until after memorial services for Ginsburg are completed. But then he wants to move full speed ahead. "The final vote should be taken before the election. We have plenty of time for that," Trump said.

Trump cited fears that a court with only eight judges left could end up in a 4-4 split on rulings following what is likely to be a close and contentious election. "We don't want to have a tie," Trump said. He rejected Democratic complaints, saying if they "were in the same position there is zero chance that they wouldn't do it." "They wouldn't even talk about it. They'd say 'you're crazy.'"

Trump confirmed that two women - Judge Amy Coney Barrett and Judge Barbara Lagoa - feature prominently on his short list. He also noted Lagoa is a Hispanic-American from Florida, a state that by some projections he has to win if he has any hope of securing a second term. Lagoa is "excellent, she's Hispanic, she's a terrific woman," he said. "We love Florida."

Analysts say that a Supreme Court nomination saga could also shift attention away from the coronavirus pandemic, which has already killed nearly 200,000

Americans, and inspire Republican voters who want the Supreme Court to reflect their conservative views on issues like immigration, abortion and healthcare.

There are risks for Trump, though. Ginsburg was an icon to the left and the fight to replace her with a conservative ahead of an election that Biden is currently on track to win might stir Democrats even more than Republicans. A Reuters/Ipsos poll found that 62 percent of Americans, including one in two Republicans, think the vacant court seat should be filled only after the election.

In another potential warning sign to gung-ho Republicans, the Democratic fundraising group ActBlue reported Sunday that small donors had given a total of \$100 million since Ginsburg's death. Trump, however, signaled he'll play hardball, rejecting reports that Ginsburg while on her deathbed told her granddaughter that her final wish was for her seat to be filled by the new president. "I don't know she said that," Trump said, suggesting the statement was "written out" by Democratic leaders. "That came out of the wind."

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden urged Senate Republicans not to vote on any candidate nominated to the US Supreme Court as the November election nears, calling Trump's plan an "exercise of raw political power." "Voters of this country should be heard ... they're the ones who this Constitution envisions should decide who has the power to make this appointment," Biden, who leads Trump in national opinion polls, said in Philadelphia. "To jam this nomination through the Senate is just an exercise of raw political power."

Republican Senator John Barrasso on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday brushed off Democratic complaints. "Let's be very clear - if the shoe were on the other foot and the Democrats had the White House and the Senate, they would right now be trying to confirm another member of the Supreme Court," Barrasso said.

Democrat Hillary Clinton, whom Trump defeated in the 2016 election, on the same program called that view "indefensible." "What's happening in our country is incredibly dangerous," said Clinton, a former secretary of state whose husband, Bill Clinton, nominated Ginsburg to the court in 1993. "Our institutions are being basically undermined by the lust for power." — Agencies

Local

# Kuwait scrambles to return expat public sector staff stranded abroad

## No update on private sector employees' return from 'ban list' countries

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's government is expected to announce soon a new online platform to facilitate the return of expatriate public sector employees who are stuck in countries where commercial flights with the Gulf state are banned, according to multiple local reports published yesterday.

The education ministry is reportedly coordinating with other state departments to bring in public school teachers stuck abroad before the 2020/2021 school year starts in October 4. The ministry's acting undersecretary Faisal Al-Maqseed confirmed in statements to Al-Jarida Arabic daily that coordination is ongoing with the interior and health ministries to secure teachers' return, promising that this issue will be resolved "soon." To help achieve that, authorities are looking to develop a smartphone app or website where eligible expat state employees can register, and their respective employers can follow up their return process.

Meanwhile, Al-Anbaa Arabic daily quoted "informed government sources" who said that the education and health ministries, which employ the largest numbers of expatriates among all state departments, have already provided lists of their employees stuck abroad and whose services are needed. "They have also presented recommendations on employees' dates return and necessary quarantine measures they should take upon arrival," the anonymous sources said.

### 'Hotspot' countries

While the airport is open for flights from around the world, Kuwait announced a list of 34 'hotspot' countries to and from which flights are suspended until further notice. A considerable number of state employees from countries on the list, mainly Egypt and India, became stranded abroad after Kuwait closed its airport on March 13 due to the COVID-19 spread. The government hasn't made available the official number of staff who are unable to return to Kuwait due to travel restrictions, but their numbers are estimated to be in the thousands.

Although there are efforts to come up with a mechanism to return public sector employees, there hasn't been any internal discussion regarding the fate of stranded expatriate private sector employees, whose only way to return to Kuwait is through a 'third party' country where they must stay for a 14-day quarantine period and obtain a PCR test certificate showing a negative COVID-19 test result before flying to Kuwait. The other countries included in the list are Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chile, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, France, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Kosovo, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Nepal, Northern Macedonia, Panama, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Serbia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syria and Yemen.

### 100 percent capacity

Commercial flights had resumed at Kuwait International Airport on August 1 after months of closure, operating at a 30 percent capacity during the six-month first phase of a three-stage airport reopening plan. However, the operational plan has not exceeded 15 percent so far, according to a senior official at the airport. "Travel restrictions will automatically be lifted and operational capacity will go back to 100 percent once a vaccine becomes available in Kuwait," Saleh Al-Fadhaghi, Deputy General Manager for the Airport Affairs, told Al-Qabas Arabic daily.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has also outlined a set of rules for the safe resumption of air travel. The rules mandate all travelers to wear protective facemasks and keep a hand sanitizer in their possession, besides strictly abiding by social distancing guidelines and keeping hand luggage to a minimum. Arriving passengers must register to the 'Shlonik' app before boarding, and obtain an accredited PCR certificate showing negative COVID-19 test results valid for 96 hours from the test's date (excluding children under the age of six). Passengers will have their temperatures checked

FLIGHT	FROM	VIA	REMARKS	قائمة الرحلات	من طريق	ملاحظات
KE 604	Beirut			KE 604	بيروت	
KU 604	Doha			KU 604	دoha	
QJ 794	Cairo		On Time	QJ 794	القاهرة	
3S 774	Singapore			3S 774	سنگاپور	
FT 841	Alexandria			FT 841	الإسكندرية	
3S 324	Dubai			3S 324	دبي	
3S 122	Bahrain			3S 122	البحرين	
3M 602	Singapore			3M 602	سنگاپور	
KU 694	Dubai			KU 694	دبي	
KU 616	Bahrain			KU 616	البحرين	
PS 602	Cairo			PS 602	القاهرة	



**KUWAIT:** Passengers arrive at Kuwait International Airport on August 1, 2020, the day commercial flights resumed after months of shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

before boarding the plane and upon arrival, while a random PCR test will be conducted for 10 percent of passengers on each flight. All arriving passengers must home quarantine for 14 days upon arrival. Meanwhile, the DGCA has reportedly suggested reducing the quarantine period to seven days in a bid to help recover a Kuwaiti aviation industry hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. In the meantime, the Public Authority for Civil Information announced that expatriates can use the 'Kuwait Mobile ID' smartphone application as proof of having residency permit while traveling and to enter Kuwait.

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

## Health Minister inaugurates clinics in Sabah Al-Ahmad



Health ministry officials are seen during the tour.

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah inaugurated two polyclinics in the Sabah Al-Ahmad area south of Kuwait yesterday. The event which saw the official opening of the 'Sabah Al-Ahmad E' and 'Sabah Al-Ahmad D' health centers was attended by head of the Ahmadi health area Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti, head of primary care Dr Fahad Al-Azmi and head of Sabah Al-Ahmad health centers Dr Aseel Al-Sabri. "Center D is like a mini hospital that has 14 specialized clinics in different medical fields," said Dr Sabri in statement. She added that patients are required to take appointments for examinations at the clinics. Furthermore, she indicated that center E has a department for chronic non-infectious diseases, a laboratory and a pharmacy, noting that it is open Sunday to Thursday from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. Sabah Al-Ahmad residential area provides better health care services compared to other areas, said Dr Sabri. It includes Sabah Al-Ahmad primary care center A which is open 24/7, and has recorded 13,425 visitors in August. She added that the area also includes Sabah Al-Ahmad emergency center which is also open 24/7. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah tours one of two clinics that opened in Sabah Al-Ahmad yesterday. —KUNA photos



Sabah Al-Ahmad Health Center E.

## Kuwait says human remains handover follows protocols

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait said on Sunday that the process of receiving human remains from Iraq, believed to belong to some of its nationals who had gone missing during the 1991 Gulf war, is in line with established protocols. Given the humanitarian nature of the issue, the process is overseen by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said Rabie Al-Adsani, the head of a foreign ministry committee investigating the matter. "Proper DNA analysis determines if the human remains truly belong to Kuwaiti prisoners of war," he said, adding that if the identity of the remains is "proven beyond doubt," then the families of the victims would be notified immediately. The ministry has always kept the families of Kuwaiti prisoners of war abreast of the latest information on the fate of their loved ones, the official highlighted, saying it was a "humanitarian and legal obligation." Conversely, if DNA analysis proves that the remains do not belong to Kuwaiti nationals, then the bodies would be "handed back" to Iraq, through the works of a ICRC-chaired committee linking the Gulf neighbors, Saudi Arabia, the US, Britain and France, added the official. He went on to thank all parties involved for their efforts to "bring closure" to this pressing matter. —KUNA

**Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.**

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# Kuwait expats lament non-payment of salary despite working from home

## Workers forced to hand over ATM cards after salaries deposited

By Ben Garcia

**KUWAIT:** John was told to work from home during the lockdown, but he did not receive his salary. To add insult to injury, he was asked to hand over his ATM card in order for the company to deposit his salary in the bank and withdraw it a few moments later. So John ended up without any salary for four months, although he worked from home.

Many companies have fired thousands of employees, cut salaries of others and forced many to take unpaid leave to counter the financial impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The parliament discussed the problem in March on how to deal with the impact on workers, including proposals to reduce salaries of private sector employees by up to 50 percent, but the draft law to reduce salaries was rejected in August.

"This is really unfair. I work for nothing? I told them I am not giving them my ATM card, but the man-doubt threatened I would be fired," John said, using the Arabic word for 'representative', referring to the company employee responsible for handling labor-related works. "So in April, May, June and July, the company did not give us any salary. In May, they faced a problem at the [Public Authority for Manpower] because they could not renew their permit. To open the file, they needed to pay our salaries. So they took our ATM cards in order to deposit the money and withdraw it at the same time. It will appear to the bank that we got the salary, but the reality is it only passes through our bank accounts and we did not get anything."

### Legal protection

Kuwait's labor law provides protection to private sector workers against non-payment of salary. Employees can report such cases to the Public Authority of Manpower, who would then contact the company in question and request bank statements of its employees to make sure that all staff are paid on time. If the company is found to have failed to pay its employees, the manpower authority suspends its file in the system, making them unable to process any labor-related transactions unless they pay their staff in full. However, many companies circumvent this condition by depositing the salaries in employees' bank accounts, and then require staff to return the money back, often threatening them with termination and other retaliatory measures should they refuse to cooperate.

John works as a store controller at an electrical shop in Shuwaikh. He received his August salary, and said maybe he will get paid for September too. "But I've been working from April to July at home, yet I was not paid. They only started paying us by August, so my work during the time our company was closed is not

counted? Why did they ask me to work then," he demanded.

Another case of non-payment of salary is of workers in the children entertainment sector. A majority of operations in this field, including cinemas, are yet to open. Zeny and her colleagues complained of non-payment of salaries since April. "They gave us half the salary in March and April, then from May to July, [we received] no salary. We were called by the company to report to work at the end of July amid hopes of opening soon, but they were not allowed to reopen. So, it means we have no salary until now. We were told to accompany our mandoub to the ATM to withdraw money to appear that our company is paying our salaries, while in fact they gave us nothing. We have not received salaries from April to August," she said.

"It is painful to see your money in the bank, supposedly your salary from April to August, but they only deposited it in the bank and took it back," she said.



### Noncooperation could lead to termination

"Don't we have families to feed? In an effort to earn some money, I go with my colleague to clean houses of Kuwaitis for KD 1 per hour. At least I can get something and thank God my husband is working now, so he is paying for rent and food," she said.

### 30 percent off

Lito, another worker, mentioned his company took at least 30 percent of their salaries from April to July 2020. "My company deducted 30 percent of my salary from April to June. For me, I understand their decision on the matter - it's about money and business. They also have to balance expenses against profit. However, I hope we can get the money later, when the company gets business back," he said.

Until now there are raging debates on whether employees are entitled to wages during the mandatory closure of private establishments by the state as a precautionary measure following the outbreak of COVID-19. A parliament committee had discussed a draft law stipulating that those affected by the anti-coronavirus measures including those who had to completely or partially shut their businesses can agree with employ-

ees to reduce their salaries throughout the suspension period up to 50 percent. However, the draft law was not approved, which means all employers should follow and adhere to the Kuwait labor law.

There are no official statistics for the number of workers who have lost their jobs in Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, but unofficial estimations indicate that private companies have already terminated hundreds of thousands of employees, a vast majority of whom are expatriates, or have taken other measures such as cutting employees' salaries and forcing many to take unpaid leaves.

## Ministry confirms hospital brawl report

**KUWAIT:** Police arrested 15 people who engaged in a huge brawl inside Mubarak Hospital recently. The suspects, who are of different nationalities, used sharp objects during their fight, the Interior Ministry said in a statement, noting that search is still on for other suspects who remain at large.

Local dailies had reported on Sunday that a huge fight broke out at Mubarak Hospital where 26 young men including Kuwaitis, Jordanians and Syrians fought using knives and surgical scissors. Many of them sustained medium and serious injuries before security forces and medical staff controlled the fight. Al-Rai reported on Sunday. Police arrested 21 of those involved, while a search is on for five others.

Case papers indicate that the fight started between two groups in a Hawally governorate area, where two Kuwaitis, a Jordanian and three Syrians were injured and taken to hospital by friends. However, 20 opponents attacked them, starting a fierce fight. The sources added that some of the attackers had knives they used in stabbing their rivals, while others grabbed scissors from the nursing room before a Kuwaiti collapsed in a pool of blood. On arriving at the scene, policemen immediately arrested 15 of the attacker's friends, while five, including the attacker, managed to flee the scene. A case was filed and a search is on for the suspects.

## Woman arrested for dancing in public

**KUWAIT:** A Kuwaiti woman was arrested for dancing in the middle of Taawon Street, said security sources. Case papers indicate that motorists and passersby reported that the girl pulled over, put the music on loudly and started dancing. A video was recorded of the girl dancing and posted on social media. Criminal investigators immediately dispatched a nearby police patrol and the girl was arrested. She is facing charges of committing indecent acts, obstructing traffic flow and suspicions of abnormal behavior.

### Fashionista prosecuted

The district attorney and e-crimes investigation department ordered summoning and arresting a fashionista after an alleged audio recording was circulated of her abusing and insulting the public prosecution after she was interrogated over suspicions of involvement in money laundering.

### Alleged insult

A Kuwaiti man filed a complaint against a female tenant living in his house, accusing her of spitting in his face and insulting him. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

— Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

## Kuwait still against Israel normalization Education ministry's cleaning contracts renewed

**KUWAIT:** Statements by US President Donald Trump about Kuwait being the next country to normalize relations with Israel prompted wide-ranging reactions locally. Meanwhile, high-ranking government sources renewed confirmation of Kuwait's stand towards normalization with Israel, that it will be the last country to do so.

Trump's recent statements were not on the sidelines of his meeting with Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who represented His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to receive the Legion of Merit award, the sources told Al-Qabas Arabic daily. The sources stressed that Kuwait is not facing any pressure to change its steadfast stand of rejecting normalization with Israel, adding that this is a sovereign decision that hasn't changed.

The sources said Kuwait stands with the Palestinian people to obtain their full rights and reach a just solution based on peace headed by international resolutions, the Arab peace initiative and the two-state solution.

## Kuwait acts against gatherings

**KUWAIT:** The Interior Ministry urged security teams to follow up on advertisements inviting guests to banquets, parties or any other gatherings, dispatching security teams to those locations to file reports and citations about such actions committed in violation of Cabinet instructions to ban all types of gatherings and

**KUWAIT:** The Civil Service Commission (CSC) finally approved extending cleaning contracts at the buildings of the Ministry of Education's (MoE) headquarters and three educational zones - Jahra, Hawally and Mubarak Al-Kabeer - of a total estimated value of KD 3 million, said informed educational sources. "MoE's financial affairs sector is still awaiting official notification of the ministry's new budget, which was recently approved by the parliament," the sources told Al-Rai daily.

The sources predicted that the finance ministry will approve a request made by MoE to be exempt from cutting its budget by 20 percent and that its 2020-2021 budget will not be less than KD 2 billion. Further, the sources said MoE's services department contacted the general education sector concerning the CSC's inquiry about extending the kindergarten catering contract, noting that the contract will be extended if pupils return to school in November, otherwise it would be cancelled and a new tender will be offered for public bidding for the 2021-2022 school year.

immediately refer the reports for investigation in collaboration with the Health Ministry, high-ranking sources told Kuwait local daily Al-Anbaa.

The sources said the new instructions came in view of the recent increase in infected cases and proving that this is due to neglecting preventive measures, including banning gatherings. "We have put these instructions into practice over the past 24 hours and contacted the organizers and hosts. Some of them apologized and called such illegal events off, declaring so on social media," the sources explained.



## Firemen battle equestrian club blaze

**KUWAIT:** A fire broke out inside the Jahra equestrian club in Salmi yesterday morning. Two fire teams battled the blaze which started in the stands, and managed to extinguish it before the flames could spread any further. No injuries were reported, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate said in a statement, adding that an investigation was opened to determine the cause of the fire.



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Tens of thousands defy police crackdown to protest in Belarus

## Thai protesters plaque removed after calls for royal reform

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This photo taken on September 8, 2020 shows Thet Thet Khine (C), chairman of the People's Pioneer Party (PPP), giving out campaign literature to vendors during the launch of the party's campaign ahead of the upcoming general election in Yangon. — AFP

# Ousted and outspoken: The lady taking on The Lady in Myanmar

‘The way the party is run is very chaotic and very autocratic’

**YANGON:** Booted from Aung San Suu Kyi's "chaotic and autocratic" party, one female MP is now taking on Myanmar's national heroine in the upcoming election, claiming the country needs to work with, not against, a military accused of genocide. Voters are expected to return Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party to power at the Nov 8 polls - only the second since the country emerged from decades of outright military rule - but Thet Thet Khine is still hoping to make her mark.

She has undergone many incarnations, from student activist to medical doctor then businesswoman and jewellery magnate - before being elected as an NLD MP at Suu Kyi's side in 2015. But she has since fallen from grace. Ousted from the NLD last year - she says for speaking her mind - the 53-year-old hopes to entice voters to her People's Pioneer Party (PPP).

"The NLD is no longer the solution for the country," she tells AFP at her Yangon mansion, decorated with neoclassical columns, chandeliers and gold-trimmed furniture. "The way the party is run is very chaotic and very autocratic," she says, claiming loyalty is valued over competence, and that there is a culture of micro-management and an overriding fear of upsetting 'The Lady.' "One person makes all the decisions."

There is widespread disillusionment with the NLD

in many ethnic minority areas, but the party boasts a loyal fanbase in the dominant Bamar heartlands. And, for many, Suu Kyi embodies the NLD. She leads the government as state counsellor, holds the reins to international relations as foreign minister and has been front and center in the country's fight against coronavirus. Thet Thet Khine says speaking out publicly, has meant she and relatives have faced online abuse.

### 'Middle way'?

Thet Thet Khine's family made its wealth in Myanmar's prized ruby industry. As a medical student, she joined the pro-democracy movement that swept the country in 1988 before it was brutally suppressed by military force. The protests also propelled to fame Suu Kyi, who was "so special to us," she remembers. After the crackdown, she chose business but returned to politics after the country emerged from military rule.

Now head of her own party in a fiercely patriarchal society, she describes a collective leadership in her relatively youthful PPP, where the average candidate's age is 46. The party promises more jobs, higher wages and lower taxes although gives few details about how this would be financed. It seems to be targeting a broad demographic, fielding Myanmar's first openly gay candidate, one Muslim nominee and one hardline Buddhist,

known for his Islamophobic stance. "Few politicians understand the business world so that's a plus for her," says Yangon-based analyst Khin Zaw Win. One priority is bridging the rift between the civilian government and military, a strained relationship mirrored by that of Suu Kyi and army chief Min Aung Hlaing. "If the father and mother are fighting...the kids don't know what to do," Thet Thet Khine explains, adding the military is "part of the solution" in the state-building process.

Under a constitution it scripted, the armed forces retain immense powers, holding three key ministries and a quarter of all parliamentary seats - giving it an effective veto on legislation. Her party, Thet Thet Khine claims, offers a "middle way". But half a century of brutal junta rule has left many deeply suspicious of a military that jailed thousands for their beliefs, subjugated ethnic minorities and oversaw steep economic decline. "They made a lot of wrong decisions and did a lot of mismanagement in the past," she admits but insists the new generation of soldiers are "embracing professionalism".

### Rohingya crackdown an 'overreaction'

Allying herself with the military will mean "she'll lose a certain amount of support", predicts Khin Zaw Win - who puts the tactic down to pragmatism. "She needs

something to lean on." The military stands accused of ongoing rights abuses in decades-long wars against several ethnic armed groups. In 2017, Rohingya Muslims recounted widespread murder, rape and arson in military operations that now see the country charged with genocide at the UN's top court - a trial Thet Thet Khine claims is "unnecessary". The military "maybe overreacted...but it's not genocide or ethnic cleansing".

Rohingya ancestry has been evident for centuries in Rakhine, but they are widely seen as illegal interlopers. The Rohingya "will never be indigenous", she says but concedes those whose families migrated more than three or four generations ago should have been accepted. "They should have citizenship and therefore (face) no more discrimination".

Instead, virtually all the 600,000 Rohingya remaining in Myanmar will be disenfranchised in this election, just like the last. Their plight is not a priority for most parties, including the PPP. Running in under a third of constituencies, Thet Thet Khine says she would be happy to clinch five percent of seats, admitting this is a dry run for the 2025 election when Suu Kyi will be 80. Suu Kyi "doesn't believe in a succession plan, so after her era...the NLD will go bankrupt in business terms". "But I think she will hold onto power until her last day." — AFP

## US grapples with grief as COVID deaths near 200K

**LOS ANGELES/NEW YORK:** Anthony and Rosemary Terio, married for 65 years, died five days apart in separate New York hospitals last spring, two lives among the nearly 200,000 that the United States has now lost to the coronavirus pandemic. "This pain will never go away for me," said one of their daughters, Lisa Terio-Heath, who, because of the pandemic, had to remain at her home in Greensboro, North Carolina, and witness her family's loss from afar. It has turned into a year of anguish in the United States and around the world where the death toll stands at nearly 1 million.

For many, the grieving has taken place at a terrible distance. Being present bedside in the hospital, attending funerals, and even simple hugs and the company from friends is often impossible. "There's a grief tsunami," said Dr. Toni Miles, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of Georgia. Every COVID-19 death in the United States results in about nine survivors who have lost a grandparent, parent, sibling, spouse or child. Pennsylvania State associate sociology professor Ashtyn Verdery and other researchers wrote in a study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in July.

And swift, unexpected deaths like many of those from COVID-19 can be a potent trigger for depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, which can manifest in myriad ways - including absenteeism, accidents, alcoholism, assault and self harm, experts said. They can fuel rumination about what could have been different which, left unchecked, can derail the grieving process, said Dr. Katherine Shear, director of the Center for Complicated Grief at Columbia University. "Whenever anyone dies suddenly, a person is going to say, 'If only...'" Shear said.

The United States has lost almost 70 times more

people to the pandemic than it lost in the Sept 11, 2001 attacks, the anniversary of which the nation stopped to mourn earlier this month. So far, there has been no pause yet to collectively mark the losses from the pandemic - an important moment, experts say - perhaps because the death toll is still climbing. By year's end, COVID-19 deaths could top 378,000, according to a projection from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington. That would be close to the number of American military deaths during World War Two.

The losses have been particularly pronounced in Hispanic and Black communities, and among the elderly and front line workers. At the end of May, a research report from Yale University found: "Nationally, the new age-adjusted analysis shows Black people are more than 3.5 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than white people, and Latino people are nearly twice as likely to die of the virus as white people." In the early weeks, New York City emerged as the epicenter of loss, but since then the disease has spread across the country, leaving a trail of suffering from major cities to small towns in all 50 states.

At a Houston hospital earlier this month, Angelica Mendez, 38, was permitted to spend less than an hour with her mother Catalina before the 86-year-old woman succumbed to COVID-19, leaving seven children and more than 30 grandchildren to mourn her. Hospital safety rules restricted contact with the family matriarch, with her family saying final goodbyes in a video-call that Mendez made from the hospital.

Compounding the close-knit family's trauma, Mendez said, her father was admitted to the hospital's intensive care unit after testing positive for coronavirus. He was expected to recover. Similarly, the Terio children saw both their parents, Anthony and Rosemary, hospitalized with COVID-19. Anthony, 86, died on March 31. Five days later, Rosemary, 82, succumbed to the illness. In all, eight members of the family were infected.

"It went the whole gamut," said Lisa Terio-Heath. "My sister, taking care of my mother, caught it. Then she gave it to her son and her son gave it to his partner. And my brother gave it to his wife. And my other brother caught it and gave it to his wife. Nobody could help each other. Everybody was sick," she said. "It was just a really hard, horrible, horrible situation." — Reuters



A handout photo taken and released yesterday shows whales stranded on a sandbar in Macquarie Harbour on the rugged west coast of Tasmania. — AFP

## Hundreds of whales stranded in Australia

**SYDNEY:** At least twenty-five whales have died and scientists are trying to rescue 250 more that are stranded in a remote bay on the Australian island of Tasmania, officials said yesterday. Tasmania's environment department said the whales had become stuck on a sandbar in Macquarie Harbor, on the island's rugged and sparsely populated west coast. Nic Deka, who is managing the incident response, said two large pods were stranded on sandbars a few hundred meters apart inside the harbor.

"They are in water but it's very difficult to see how many of those whales are deceased or what condition they're in," he told reporters in the nearby town of Strahan. They are believed to be pilot whales but the environment department is yet to confirm the species. Police are on site and marine experts are assessing the

situation ahead of plans to launch a rescue mission early Tuesday morning.

"In terms of the tides, when we start making an effort tomorrow it will be with an outgoing tide, so that'll be in our favor, but obviously tides go up and come down so we'll be aiming to make the most of the windows that we have," Deka said. Mass whale strandings occur relatively often in Tasmania, but the large numbers involved present a daunting rescue prospect. Authorities may call on a network of local volunteers to assist but have cordoned off the area to the general public.

The latest stranding comes as a humpback whale that was stuck in a tropical river in Australia's north finally returned to the ocean after more than two weeks. Public broadcaster ABC reported the creature, which spent 17 days in the crocodile-infested waters of Kakadu National Park, has been spotted in open seas off Darwin. Scientists had been weighing options for guiding the humpback to safety after it became the first known whale to travel up the muddy river, but were relieved when it returned to sea on its own. — AFP

## International

# Thai protesters plaque removed after calls for royal reform

## Growing acrimony could lead to state violence against protesters

**BANGKOK:** A plaque installed on the weekend by activists in Bangkok declaring Thailand "belongs to the people" had been removed yesterday, after a show of force by pro-democracy protesters calling for the royal family to stay out of the country's politics.

The kingdom has seen near-daily protests for the past two months led by students demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, a former army chief who masterminded the 2014 coup.

Some 30,000 demonstrators rallied Saturday close to Bangkok's Grand Palace — where organisers took a stronger line on monarchical reform — before installing a commemorative "People's Plaque" the morning after. But by yesterday, the plaque had vanished.

"I heard it's missing and we're investigating the case," Bangkok's deputy police chief Piya Tawichai told AFP.

AFP journalists confirmed the removal. The almost-immediate removal of the plaque "reflects the fact that arch-royalists are not only incensed by demands for monarchical reform but are not going to put up with any symbols that even reflect opposition to the palace," said Paul Chambers of Naresuan University.

The plaque, placed in the historic Sanam Luang field, had read: "The people have expressed the intention that this country belongs to the people, and not the king."

At its installation during Saturday's protest, prominent activist Parit Chivarak shouted "Down with feudalism, long live the people," as the crowd cheered. The new medallion referenced the original brass one embedded for decades in the grounds of Bangkok's Royal Plaza.

It commemorated the end of royal absolutism in 1932 after a revolution that transitioned the kingdom into a constitutional monarchy. But it mysteriously disappeared in 2017 — after King Maha Vajiralongkorn took power following the death of his father — replaced with one

bearing a reminder for Thais to remain loyal to the "nation, religion, king". Some factions within the movement — including the organisers of the weekend demonstrations — have also called for frank discussions on the monarchy, a once-taboo topic due to tough royal defamation laws. Activists say the missing plaque is emblematic of a wider whitewashing of Thai political history. Palace officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Organisers had initially planned to march to Government House, but a last-minute change of plans saw protesters move to the Privy Council's office — opposite the Grand Palace — to submit a list of demands addressed to the king. The highly influential board of royal advisors wields significant influence in Thailand. Dozens of officers stood guard, alongside water cannon trucks in front of the palace.

The largely leaderless youth-organised movement, partly inspired by Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests, is calling for Prayut's government to be dissolved, a rewrite of the 2017 military-scripted constitution, and for authorities to stop "harassing" political opponents.

Some factions within the movement have also called for greater accounting of the palace's finances, the abolition of royal defamation laws and a call for the king to remain outside of politics.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn sits at the apex of Thai power, bolstered by a powerful military and conservative establishment. He spends long periods in Europe, his absence from Thailand raising ire on social media in recent months as the economy tumbled because of the pandemic. The new Sanam Luang plaque will be regarded "as an immediate challenge", said analyst Paul Chambers, warning that the growing acrimony could lead to "state violence against protesters". — AFP



**BANGKOK:** An art professor from the Silpakorn University makes a stencil over an empty space in Bangkok yesterday, where a commemorative plaque had been placed by pro-democracy protest leaders. — AFP

## Taiwan military says it has right to counter attack amid China threats

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan said yesterday its armed forces have the right to self-defence and counter attack amid "harassment and threats", in an apparent warning to China, which last week sent numerous jets across the mid-line of the sensitive Taiwan Strait.

Tensions have sharply spiked in recent months between Taipei and Beijing, which claims democratically run Taiwan as its own territory, to be taken by force if needed.

Multiple Chinese aircraft flew across the mid-line

of the Taiwan Strait and into the island's air defence identification zone on Friday and Saturday, prompting Taiwan to scramble jets to intercept and President Tsai Ing-wen to call China a threat to the region.

Taiwan's defence ministry said in a statement it had "clearly defined" procedures for the island's first response amid "high frequency of harassment and threats from the enemy's warships and aircraft this year".

It said Taiwan had the right to "self-defence and to counter attack" and that it followed the guideline of "no escalation of conflict and no triggering incidents". Taiwan would not provoke but is also was "not afraid of the enemy", it added.

The Chinese drills took place last week as Beijing expressed anger at the visit of a senior US official to Taipei, yesterday, the official China Daily newspaper said in an editorial the United States was trying to use

Taiwan to contain China but nobody should underestimate its determination to assert its sovereignty over the island.

"The US administration should not be blinkered in its desperation to contain the peaceful rise of China and indulge in the US addiction to its hegemony," it said. China has been angered by stepped-up US support for Taiwan, including two visits in as many months by top officials, one in August by Health Secretary Alex Azar and the other last week by Keith Krach, undersecretary for economic affairs.

The United States, which has no official diplomatic ties with the island but is its strongest international backer, is also planning major new arms sales to Taiwan. China this month held rare large-scale drills near Taiwan, which Taipei called serious provocation. China said the exercise was a necessity to protect its sovereignty. — Reuters

## Iraq's faith, and fury, in the time of corona

**KARBALA:** For millennia, Iraqis have turned to religion as they grieve their dead. This year, a pandemic and the killings of hundreds of young protesters have lent greater sorrow to the Shiite mourning ceremonies of Ashura. "Iraq has been through so much misery — from war to torture to imprisonment to forced emigration and now the coronavirus pandemic," said sheikh Hassan Dhakeri, a cleric in Iraq's shrine city of Karbala.

Iraq's majority Shiite Muslims are marking a month of mourning for Hussein, the Prophet Mohammed's grandson, killed by followers of Caliph Yazid in the seventh century — the seminal moment in Islam's Sunni-Shiite schism.

Since then the country has been through relentless cycles of sadness. Many turn to religion for solace, Dhakeri said. Every year, thousands of Shiite Muslims mark Ashura with a pilgrimage to Imam Hussein's resting place inside a glittering shrine in the holy city of Karbala. Visitors are often so moved by the story of his death that they sob uncontrollably at the mausoleum's golden gates. "When we make this pilgrimage, and we're carrying all our worries and tragedies and needs, we begin to cry," Dhakeri said. "That is the first step to having our prayers answered."

### 'We haven't known joy'

In the last century alone, Iraq underwent several bloody changes of power that culminated in the rule of Saddam Hussein. Iraqis lived through war with Iran in the 1980s, crippling international sanctions in the 1990s and the US-led invasion of 2003, which brought sectarian infighting and the fight against the Islamic State group. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis fled their homeland and those who stayed endured violence and the destruction of critical infrastructure, healthcare and access to education. "Iraq is a sad country. From Saddam's time until now, we haven't known joy," said Mohammad Karbalai, a 31-year-old religious chanter from Karbala. Every year, he performs poetic eulogies or emotional retellings of Hussein's death, a story Shiites see as representing the ultimate injustice, but also triumph over death.

"People feel that there is injustice but there is also good — and that in the end, all throughout history, good always wins," Karbalai told AFP. It's a powerful message for Iraqi youth marking their first Ashura since nearly 600 people were killed in anti-government protests that erupted last October. This year, Ashura mourners have combined their religious rites with demands for justice, their eyes flashing with pain as they lift framed portraits of slain friends and relatives. "Imam Hussein is the treatment for these wounds," Karbalai told AFP.

Iraqis are also mourning more than 8,000 loved ones who have lost their lives to Covid-19, among nearly 300,000 confirmed cases in the country. In a bid to stem the spread of the virus, Iraq has kept its borders closed to non-residents and urged citizens not to attend large gatherings. But tens of thousands of Iraqis are estimated to have attended Ashura rituals in Karbala. Even higher numbers are expected to attend Arbeen in early October, marking the close of the traditional 40-day grieving period since Hussein's death.

"This year is an exceptional year because of the virus," said Riyad Salman, who heads the Department of Rituals at Karbala's shrines. The slender, blue-eyed Iraqi is usually responsible for organising thousands of prayer groups during Ashura. — AFP

## 'Don't touch the marble': Visiting the Taj Mahal

**AGRA, India:** From Princess Diana to President Trump, everyone wants to visit the Taj Mahal, but in the middle of a global pandemic the bucket-list experience is just a little less special. As India's "monument to love" re-opened yesterday after a six-month hiatus, special rules were introduced - including no touching the white marble walls of the mausoleum built for a Mughal emperor's favorite wife.

Only 5,000 visitors are allowed daily - a quarter of usual capacity - and all have their temperature taken by staff wearing face shields, masks and gloves. Visitors can whip off their masks for a photo, but security personnel are quick to remind them to put them back on once the shutter has been pressed.

And the famous bench where people usually sit to have their picture taken has been laminated in plastic, to help cleaning between every photo op. "We have all the safety measures in place," said Vasant Swarnkar from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which oversees the UNESCO world heritage site in Agra south of New Delhi. "We want to send out the message that things are not so bad and you will be safe if you follow the instructions."

Neither the new rules nor the dangers of catching the coronavirus put off a steady stream of visitors to the breathtaking 17th-century monument yesterday morning.

### Relief for locals

"The moment I heard the Taj is re-opening I decided to visit. I had been planning it for so many years," said engineer Debargha Sengupta, 25, who took a train from Allahabad 500 km away. "It's amazing, it's incredible. I had read about the Taj in books and seen the pictures but to see it in real is so amazing," he told AFP. "I am not worried about the coronavirus. It's been six months and I am totally fed up now. We cannot sit at home forever."

The return of visitors is a huge relief to the many people of Agra who depend on Taj Mahal tourists for their livelihoods. "It was so frustrating to sit idle at home for six months," said an elated Zahid Baig, a rickshaw driver. "Agra looked like a ghost city without the Taj tourists," he said.

The re-opening comes as the Indian government seeks to get Asia's third-largest economy moving again even as virus cases surge. So far it has recorded more than 5.4 million coronavirus cases - second only to the United States, which it could overtake in the coming weeks.

### 'We have to get used to it'

A lockdown imposed in March left tens of millions out of work almost overnight, while the economy shrank by almost a quarter between April and June. "People have suffered a lot and it is time the country opens up fully," said bank official Ayub



**AGRA:** Tourists visit the Taj Mahal yesterday. — AFP

Sheikh, 35, visiting with his wife and baby daughter. "We are not afraid of the virus. If it has to infect us, it will," he told AFP. "Not many people are dying now. I don't think it is going to go away soon. We have to get used to it now."

There were few foreigners present yesterday as India has not yet opened up to international tourists. But Spaniard Ainhoa Parra - who lives in India - did make the trip. "Coronavirus is in every country," Parra

told AFP after posing for a selfie with her husband and two friends. "We have to be careful, but if we have to get infected we will."

The allure of the monument, commissioned around 1630 by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan for his wife Mumtaz Mahal, looks set to endure. "Taj has a magnetic effect on people. They are crazy about it," said ASI's Vasant. "Everyone wants to visit it at least once in their lifetime." — AFP

## Duterte eases overseas travel ban on health workers

**MANILA:** The Philippines' president has eased an overseas travel ban on Filipino nurses and other medical workers to allow more to take jobs abroad, his spokesman said yesterday, as his government believes it has its coronavirus outbreak under control.

Thousands of health workers, who call themselves "priso-nurses", had appealed to the government to let them travel, Reuters reported last week. The nurses say they feel underpaid, under-appreciated and unprotected in the Philippines.

President Rodrigo Duterte approved the proposal of the labour ministry to expand exemptions from the ban to those who had overseas contracts and complete documents as of Aug. 31, spokesman

Harry Roque told a regular briefing.

So far only those with contracts as of March 8 have been allowed to travel. Roque said the president's decision would benefit 1,500 health personnel. "These are nurses who already spent a lot (of money) processing their papers. They are not that many so we allowed them to leave," Roque said.

Healthcare workers from the Philippines are on the front lines of the pandemic at hospitals in the United States, Europe and the Middle East as well as at home.

Duterte's government in April barred nurses, doctors and other medical workers from leaving, saying they were needed to fight the coronavirus crisis in the Philippines, which is still tackling its first wave of infections.

The country has the highest number of recorded coronavirus infections in Southeast Asia with 286,743 cases. Its 4,984 deaths are second only to Indonesia. But Roque insisted there was no reason to panic and said: "We are in control." "We know the enemy and we know how to fight the enemy through isolation, tracing and treatment," Roque added. — Reuters

## International

# Biden calls Trump's US Supreme Court push 'abuse of power'

## No vote should take place before the election: Lisa Murkowski

**PHILADELPHIA:** White House hopeful Joe Biden on Sunday branded Donald Trump's moves to fill a Supreme Court vacancy less than two months before the US presidential election an "abuse of power," as some of the president's own party also objected.

The prospect of an expedited Senate confirmation vote has sparked furious pushback from Democrats desperate to stop Trump moving the court lastingly to the right. Two Republican senators have also registered their opposition to any rushed vote to replace Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the popular liberal justice who died Friday at 87.

Biden, speaking Sunday in Philadelphia, accused Trump of exercising "raw political power" by attempting to "ram" through his court choice amidst a bitterly fought election campaign.

"I believe voters will make it clear — they will not stand for this abuse of power, this constitutional abuse," said Biden, who urged the Senate not to act until after the November 3 election.

"If Donald Trump wins the election, then the Senate should move on his selection — and weigh that nominee fairly. But if I win the election, President Trump's nomination should be withdrawn."

The president said Saturday that he is going to "move quickly" and that he expected to announce his nominee in the coming week and that it "will be a woman — a very talented, very brilliant woman."

Biden urged a handful of wavering Republican senators to "follow your conscience." The timing of a Senate vote — before the election or in the lame-duck session immediately afterward — remains unclear. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska said no vote should take place before the election, and Susan Collins of Maine asserted that the choice should be left to whoever is elected in November.

With Republicans holding 53 of the 100 Senate seats, Democrats face an uphill battle in blocking a Trump nominee. Either way, politicians in both parties are bracing for a seismic battle in a year that has already seen an impeachment vote, the Covid-19 pandemic and a bruising economic collapse. Among the Democrats' few options: delaying tactics in the Senate and efforts to mobilize public pressure on more moderate Republicans to split with their party. "We have our options... arrows in our quiver," House speaker Nancy Pelosi, a senior Democrat, said Sunday on ABC's "This Week." She offered few details but ruled out the possibility of a government shutdown.

The court vacancy has provided a welcome new theme for Trump — who has struggled to play down the toll of the coronavirus pandemic, now fast nearing the grim total of 200,000 deaths.

Pelosi seemed intent on keeping the virus issue front and center, returning to that theme repeatedly

### Raw political power



## 'Who is our enemy?' Neutral Switzerland votes on fighter jets

**ZURICH:** Switzerland, which last fought a foreign war more than 200 years ago and has no discernible enemies, wants to spend billions on new fighter jets. Many oppose the idea, saying the neutral country neither can afford nor needs cutting-edge warplanes to defend Alpine territory which a supersonic jet can cross in 10 minutes.

Ireland, Malta and Luxembourg don't have jets, they say, making the 6 billion Swiss franc (\$6.6 billion)

plan a waste of money. "Who is our enemy? Who is attacking a small, neutral country - surrounded by NATO?" asked Priska Seiler Graf, a member of parliament for the left-leaning Social Democrats. "It's really absurd." Voters get their say on Sunday Sept. 27. Approving funding in the binding referendum would let the government decide next year among the Eurofighter from Airbus, the Rafale from France's Dassault, Boeing's F/A-18 Super Hornet, or the Lockheed Martin F35-A Lightning II.

The aircraft would replace Switzerland's aging fleet of 30 F/A-18 Hornets which will go out of service in 2030. Seiler Graf said cheaper alternatives, such as a fighter version of Leonardo's M346 trainer, offered better value than the "expensive toys" under consideration.

"We need new aircraft, that is not disputed, but buying lighter, simpler aircraft would be enough," she



**PHILADELPHIA:** Democratic presidential nominee and former Vice President Joe Biden speaks at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to make a statement on the nomination for replacement of recently deceased Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. —AFP

during her ABC interview, just as Biden emphasized it in his speech.

Democrats are decrying what they say is the hypocrisy of Republicans — particularly Senate leader Mitch McConnell — who in 2016 blocked

Barack Obama's attempt, much earlier in that election year, to fill another Supreme Court vacancy.

But Republicans now insist that the situation this year is different, with the same party controlling both the Senate and White House. —AFP

## Tens of thousands defy police crackdown to protest in Belarus

**MINSK:** Tens of thousands of opposition supporters marched in the Belarusian capital of Minsk Sunday, defying a heavy security presence that included water cannon and armoured vehicles. More than 100 people were arrested on the sidelines of that demonstration and similar protests in other major cities, the rights group Viasna said.

The protests came a day after police officers detained hundreds of demonstrators at a women's march in the capital. The opposition movement has kept up a wave of big demonstrations every Sunday since President Alexander Lukashenko won a disputed victory in August 9 polls.

In Minsk, people holding red-and-white protest flags gathered for the "March of Justice" walked through central streets holding placards with slogans such as "Cowards beat up women" and "Get out!".

Natalya Chizhevich, a 60-year-old retired teacher said she came every week. "Europe won't help us get rid of Lukashenko, the people themselves have to remove him," she said. Several independent media outlets estimated numbers at tens of thousands, while the opposition newspaper Nasha Niva put the figure much higher at 150,000. Previous marches have drawn estimated turnouts of at least 100,000.

"I hope this won't die down. We come out every time, it's such a breath of fresh air," said Maxim Karpov, 33. "This all gives us strength to fight on." Police and internal troops drove military trucks, water cannon and armoured personnel carriers into the city centre and set up barbed wire.

In the evening, large numbers of riot police with shields faced off against flag-waving protesters after detaining small numbers at the start. Viasna said at least 80 had been detained in Minsk and 47 in other cities. In the southwestern city of Brest, police said they fired tear gas at protesters during tense street



**MINSK:** A woman hustles with law enforcement officers as they block the road during a demonstration called by opposition movement for an end to the regime of authoritarian leader in Minsk. — AFP

clashes and added that one officer fired a stun grenade into the air. The government ordered a reduction in mobile internet coverage during the protests, and central Minsk metro stations were closed. Opposition leader Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, who has claimed victory over Lukashenko in the polls and taken shelter in Lithuania, praised demonstrators for coming out "to bravely stand up for what they want".

The mass protest followed a police crackdown Saturday on peaceful women demonstrators who wore shiny accessories for a "Sparkly March". Protesters were dragged into vans, and some were lifted off their feet and carried.

Belarusian interior ministry spokeswoman Olga Chemodanova said Sunday that police had detained 415 people in Minsk and 15 in other cities Saturday for breaking rules on mass demonstrations. She said

number of people at schools at any given time. Students will attend in-person classes once or twice a week.

South Korea managed to contain the virus and avoid a full lockdown earlier this year, but infections at a church and political rally in August sparked the country's largest outbreak forcing authorities to impose social distancing curbs. Many schools closed on Aug. 26, though high school seniors facing a key test were allowed to continue in-person classes.

Authorities on Sunday, meanwhile, extended phase 2 social distancing for a week until Sept. 27, which limits indoor gatherings to below 50 and outdoor to less than 100.

They said they would impose stricter restrictions on Sept. 28, ahead of the three-day Chuseok holiday

said. "It would be better to have a Fiat than a Maserati." Voters six years ago rejected the purchase of Gripen jets from Sweden. In 1989 a proposal to scrap its entire army got 35% of voter support.

Pollster Lukas Golder from GFS.Bern said voters are likely to back the plan to buy the jets. Armed neutrality is crucial to how Switzerland defines itself, he said, going back to the belief a strong army deterred invasion by Nazi Germany in World War II. The Pope's Swiss guards are also a reminder of the country's mercenary past.

Lawmaker Thomas Hurter from the right-wing Swiss People's Party, a former air force pilot, said Switzerland had to protect itself without relying on other countries. "If we don't replace these old aircraft, that means we have no air force, there is no protection anymore and we are not fulfilling our constitution," he said. —Reuters

## N Zealand eases virus controls, eyes elimination

**WELLINGTON:** Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern moved most of New Zealand to the lowest virus alert setting yesterday, saying the country was edging towards eliminating Covid-19.

Ardern announced New Zealand would from late yesterday move down to virus level one in its four-tier alert system, except for Auckland, where the country's most recent outbreak emerged.

"Our actions collectively have managed to get the virus under control," said Ardern, whose government has been widely praised internationally for its coronavirus response.

The decision means that mass gatherings, such as the first Bledisloe Cup rugby Test between the All Blacks and Australia in Wellington on October 11, can proceed without restrictions. New Zealand has recorded just 25 deaths in a population of five million, with no new cases reported on Monday.

The virus was believed to have been eradicated at one point, with the country enjoying 102 days without community transmission after a strict national lockdown that ran from late March to late May. Ardern said elimination was still New Zealand's target. "Analysis completed for the ministry of health suggests that by the end of this month, there is still a 50-50 chance of having eliminated Covid once again," she said.

But she said Auckland "needs more time" to eliminate a stubborn cluster of infections that was detected last month in the city of 1.5 million. "This was the centre of the outbreak and that's why caution is required here," she said.

The origin of the Auckland cluster remains unknown, but health authorities say it is not the same strain of the virus experienced earlier this year. Despite the mystery, Ardern said extensive testing and effective contact tracing were keeping it contained.

Auckland's alert will move down slightly from 2.5 to two on Wednesday, meaning the maximum number at social gatherings increases from 10 to 100. The city's virus setting will be reviewed in two weeks, with the possibility it could join the rest of the country at level one on October 7. — AFP

## Fire at Greek migrant camp under control

**ATHENS:** A fire that broke out on Sunday at a reception centre for asylum-seekers on the Greek island of Samos was under control, police and the fire services said. The fire came after 12,000 people including entire families with elderly and newborns were left homeless earlier this month when fire broke out in the overcrowded and unsanitary Moria camp on Lesbos, another island in the Aegean.

Two or three containers at the Samos centre were destroyed but no-one was injured, a police source said. "There is no risk of the fire spreading," a spokeswoman for the fire service told AFP.

Like the camp in Moria, the Samos centre was one of five set up during the 2015 migrant crisis on Aegean islands to deal with a flow from nearby Turkey.

Both camps had far exceeded initial capacity, in the case of Samos, which was expected to house 650 migrants, almost 6,000 eventually found their way there. The result was poor hygiene, frequent fires and fights.

Camps across Greece are still subject to coronavirus confinement measures, while the rest of the country began returning to some sense of normality in early May. That fuelled tension in the centres, where relatively few cases of the virus had been detected as of early September. —AFP

## Seoul schools resume in-person classes as virus cases dip

**SEOUL:** Schools in the South Korean capital Seoul and nearby areas resumed in-person classes for the first time in almost a month yesterday after daily coronavirus cases dropped to the lowest levels since mid-August.

Students returned to schools under a hybrid schedule of in-person and online classes to limit the

when people traditionally reunite with families. "We are not at a stage to let our guard down yet," health ministry official Yoon Tae-ho told a briefing.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency reported 70 new cases as of midnight Sunday, the lowest daily increase since the middle of August. The latest outbreak peaked at more than 440 new cases at the end of August, and despite the steady decline officials say they fear the upcoming holiday may lead to another spike.

Yoon urged residents to hold online visits during the holiday, and said the government is arranging for proxy services for some of the Chuseok traditions, including tidying around ancestors' graves. Overall South Korea has reported 23,045 coronavirus cases with 385 deaths. —Reuters

# Business

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2020

## HSBC and StanChart shares nosedive

### Falls follow reports on movements of allegedly illicit funds

**HONG KONG/LONDON:** HSBC's shares in Hong Kong and Standard Chartered's in London fell yesterday to their lowest since at least 1998 after media reports that they and other banks, including Barclays and Deutsche Bank, moved large sums of allegedly illicit funds over nearly two decades despite red flags about the origins of the money.

The BuzzFeed and other media articles were based on leaked suspicious activity reports (SARs) filed by banks and other financial firms with the US Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCen). HSBC shares in London fell as much as 5 percent to 288 pence, their lowest intraday level since 2009, after the lender's Hong Kong shares earlier touched a 25-year low. The stock has now nearly halved since the start of the year.

StanChart dropped as much as 4.6 percent in London to its lowest since 1998, against the backdrop of a broader selloff in the market with the STOXX European banks index down 4.8 percent.

More than 2,100 SARs, which are in themselves not necessarily proof of wrongdoing, were obtained by BuzzFeed News and shared with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and other media organizations. In a statement to Reuters on Sunday, HSBC said "all of the information provided by the ICIJ is historical." The bank said that as of 2012 it had embarked on a "multi-year journey to overhaul its ability to combat financial crime."

StanChart said in a statement it took its "responsibility to fight financial crime extremely seriously and have invested substantially in our compliance programs". Barclays said it believes it has complied

with "all its legal and regulatory obligations, including in relation to US sanctions." The most number of SARs in the cache related to Deutsche Bank, whose shares fell 5.2 percent on Monday. In a statement on Sunday, Deutsche Bank said the ICIJ had "reported on a number of historic issues."

"We have devoted significant resources to strengthening our controls and we are very focused



**Banks say  
have complied  
with all  
regulations**

on meeting our responsibilities and obligations," a spokesperson for the bank said. London-headquartered HSBC and StanChart, among other global banks, have paid billions of dollars in fines in recent years for violating US sanctions on Iran and anti-money laundering rules.

The files contained information about more than \$2 trillion worth of transactions between 1999 and 2017, which were flagged by internal compliance departments of financial institutions as suspicious.

The ICIJ reported the leaked documents were a tiny fraction of the reports filed with FinCEN. HSBC and StanChart were among the five banks that appeared most often in the documents, the ICIJ



**HONG KONG:** Pedestrians wear face masks as they walk past HSBC signage outside a branch of the bank in Hong Kong. — AFP

reported. "It confirms what we already knew - that there are huge numbers of SARs being filed with relatively low numbers of cases brought through to prosecution," said Etelka Bogardi, a Hong Kong-based financial services regulatory partner at law firm Norton Rose Fulbright.

The SARs showed that banks often moved funds for companies that were registered in offshore havens, such as the British Virgin Islands, and did not know the ultimate owner of the account, the

report said. Staff at major banks often used Google searches to learn who was behind large transactions, it said. In some cases the banks kept moving illicit funds even after US officials warned them they could face criminal prosecutions if they continued to do business with criminals or corrupt regimes, it said. Global banks in the recent years have boosted investments on technology and staff to deal with tighter anti-money laundering and sanctions regulatory requirements across the world. — Reuters

## Europe lockdown fears trigger stocks sell-off

**LONDON:** European stocks were headed for their worst fall in three months yesterday as fears that a second wave of COVID-19 infections would lead to new social distancing measures hit travel and leisure shares and banks amid a new dirty money scandal. There could be up to 50,000 new cases per day in Britain by the middle of October if the epidemic continues at its current pace, the country's chief scientist adviser warned amid speculation over new "stay-at-home" orders from the government.

"I think they're (investors) clearly nervous on chances of a second lockdown", said Jane Shoemake, an investment director at Janus Henderson. London's FTSE 100 was the worst-hit blue chip index in Europe, falling about 3.5 percent with UK-focused midcaps in the FTSE 250 dropping over 4 percent.

The pan-European STOXX 600 was down 2.9 percent, a fall not matched since the beginning of June.

Europe's travel and leisure index fell 5.7 percent, its worst drop since April with airlines such as BA owner IAG retreating 13.5 percent or Lufthansa 8 percent. European banks fell over 6 percent just a few points from a record low following reports that banks such as HSBC and Standard Chartered were among those moving large sums of allegedly illicit funds over the past two decades.

HSBC's shares in Hong Kong and Standard Chartered's in London fell yesterday to their lowest since at least 1998 after media reports that they and other banks, including Barclays and Deutsche Bank, moved large sums of allegedly illicit funds over nearly two decades despite red flags about the origins of the money. Barclays and Deutsche Bank, which were also mentioned in the reports, fell 5.6 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively.

Meanwhile, a report from China's state-run Global Times suggested that HSBC could be a possible candidate for inclusion in the country's "unreliable entity list" that targets foreign firms which violate Chinese laws or commit "illegal acts". Among other individual stocks, Britain's Rolls-Royce Holdings slumped 9.6 percent after the aero-engine maker said it was looking to raise up to 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.2 billion) in an effort to strengthen its balance sheet.

German telecom 1&1 Drillisch dropped 28 percent after warning that an increase in the cost of its network access deal with Telefonica Deutschland would hit profits this year. Its parent United Internet fell 26.1 percent. Adding to recent string of M&A activity, Play Communications soared 37.2 percent after French telecoms group Iliad said it plans to acquire the Polish mobile phone operator in a 3.5 billion euros (\$4.15 billion) deal. Iliad slipped 2.3 percent. — Reuters

## Judge halts WeChat download ban in US-China tech battle

**NEW YORK:** A US judge on Sunday blocked the government's ban on WeChat downloads, hours before it was due to take effect in an ongoing technology and espionage battle between Washington and Beijing. The Trump administration had ordered a ban on downloads of the messaging platform WeChat as well as hugely popular video-sharing app TikTok, both owned by Chinese companies. Both bans have now been suspended.

A California court ruling said it granted a "motion for a nationwide injunction against the implementation" of the government order on WeChat, with the judge citing concerns over free speech. The order would have slowed WeChat down and made it unusable in the United States for video chats with family and friends, according to experts. Owned by technology giant Tencent, WeChat has around 19 million active daily users in the United States. When contacted by AFP, Tencent declined to comment on the ruling. The ruling "is a short-term relief for the plaintiffs, who wanted to be sure that

## ByteDance says TikTok will be its subsidiary under deal with Trump

**NEW YORK/BEIJING:** China's ByteDance said yesterday that TikTok's global business will become its subsidiary, even as Oracle Corp and Walmart Inc said over the weekend that they and US investors would own the majority of the video app following a deal with US President Donald Trump's administration.

Trump signed an executive order on Aug. 14 giving ByteDance 90 days to sell TikTok, amid concerns that the personal data of as many as 100 million Americans that use the app could be passed on to China's Communist Party government. On Saturday, he said he supported a deal in principle that would allow TikTok to continue to operate in the United States. Accounts of the deal differ. ByteDance said on Monday that it will own 80 percent of TikTok Global, a newly created US company that will own most of the app's operations worldwide. Oracle and Walmart, which have agreed to take stakes in TikTok Global of 12.5 percent and 7.5 percent respectively, had said on Saturday that majority ownership of TikTok would be in American hands.

ByteDance in its statement yesterday said it was a "rumor" that US investors would be TikTok Global's majority owners and that ByteDance would lose control over TikTok. Oracle declined to comment on ByteDance's statement, while Walmart did not respond to a request for comment.

Some sources close to the deal have sought to reconcile the discrepancy by pointing out that 41 percent of ByteDance is owned by US investors, so by counting this indirect ownership TikTok Global would be majority owned by US parties. One of the sources said the deal with Oracle and Walmart values TikTok Global at more than \$50 billion.

TikTok also confirmed plans for an initial public

offering of TikTok Global. The Beijing-based firm said TikTok Global's board of directors will include ByteDance founder Zhang Yiming as well as Walmart's chief executive Doug McMillon and current directors of ByteDance. The company declined to further comment on who else would be among the directors. Oracle and Walmart said in a joint statement on Saturday that four out of the five board of directors will be Americans. The current plan for TikTok Global does not involve any transfer of algorithms or technologies, and Oracle will be able to inspect TikTok US's source code, ByteDance said. This is akin to US companies such as Microsoft Corp sharing their source code with Chinese technology experts, ByteDance added.

Oracle and Walmart have said all of TikTok's technology will be in possession of TikTok Global. ByteDance also said a \$5 billion payment of taxes TikTok Global is reportedly supposed to make to the US Treasury is based on estimated income and other taxes the company will need to pay over the

the app was not shut down tonight," said Carl Tobias, a law professor at the University of Richmond. If the government appeals and wins, the plaintiffs can appeal that decision. "The plaintiffs wanted to just buy time," Tobias said. "It may be very soon that the president is no longer the president."

As President Donald Trump seeks a breakthrough with voters to win a second term in the November 3 election, he has increasingly put national security and his aggressive stance toward China at the center of his campaign.

He regularly accuses Democratic opponent Joe Biden of weakness toward Beijing. The president said Saturday that he had approved a deal allowing Silicon Valley giant Oracle to become data partner for TikTok to avert a shutdown of that app. The deal, announced by the companies, includes Walmart as a commercial partner and would create a new US company named TikTok Global.

### National security threat?

TikTok-owned by China's ByteDance-confirmed the Oracle agreement, which came as companies raced against the Sunday deadline. The US Department of Commerce on Saturday announced it was postponing the ban on TikTok downloads until September 27, due to "recent positive developments." Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross on Friday accused China of using the two apps "to threaten the national security, foreign policy, and



**WASHINGTON:** The WeChat app is displayed in the App Store on an Apple iPhone in Washington, DC. — AFP

the economy of the US." WeChat is "mostly used by Chinese visiting or working here or by Chinese-Americans staying in touch with their relatives," said William Reinsch of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

That includes several hundred thousand Chinese students in the United States, who use it for daily online conversations. Trump has often claimed, without providing evidence, that TikTok and WeChat are collecting user data for Beijing.

In early August, he gave ByteDance until September 20 to hand over TikTok's US operations to an American company. — AFP

next few years and has nothing to do with the deal reached with Oracle and Walmart.

Trump last week had said there would be a \$5 billion US education fund as part of the deal but ByteDance has said it was not aware of this. ByteDance owning the majority of TikTok Global and the algorithms means that ByteDance is "not out of the game" and has avoided the worst-case scenario, China's state-run newspaper Global Times said in an editorial published on Sunday.

Shen Yi, a Fudan University professor, said in a separate article published in the Global Times on Monday that Trump's nod to the deal "could even be seen as a reversal of US President Donald Trump's executive order issued in August" and that it was helped by a "concerted effort" by the Chinese government, ByteDance and US domestic forces. "If the Trump administration makes more moves to block the deal, it may encounter direct checks and balances from interest groups of Wall Street." — Reuters



**BEIJING:** A woman walks past the headquarters of ByteDance, the parent company of video sharing app TikTok, in Beijing. — AFP



## Business

# India's street vendors 'shattered' as coronavirus wrecks livelihoods

## Customers stay away from streets as virus cases skyrocket

**NEW DELHI:** A stack of unsold shawls is an unsettling sight for street vendor K Kunjalata Devi, reminding her of the daily struggle to feed her family as COVID-19 threatens the livelihoods of millions of informal traders across India.

India - one of the countries worst-hit by the coronavirus - has eased most lockdown restrictions and sought to reopen its battered economy, but some curbs on street trade remain and many customers are staying away. That is taking a heavy toll on the nation's ubiquitous street vendors, who sell everything from snacks and cups of tea to toys and shoes at traffic lights, on pavements or from carts.

"Financially, we are shattered and that has led to a near mental breakdown with stress and tension building up every passing day," said Devi, 64, who had been selling the handwoven shawls for four decades before the lockdown hit in March. Devi and several thousand fellow vendors at a market run by women in the remote northeastern state of Manipur have still not been able to return to their stalls because authorities ruled that the many elderly vendors were at high risk from the virus.

"Making ends meet and having two meals a day is now a big problem... life for many of us has been hell," Devi, the sole breadwinner in her household, said by phone from the state capital, Imphal.

Coronavirus infections are rising faster in India than anywhere else in the world as it repeatedly reports the highest global daily caseloads, with the total surging to 5.4 million on Sunday, according to the latest official data. It is the world's second-worst affected country after the United States, which has 6.7 million cases.

The pandemic has also pummeled the Indian economy, which shrank by nearly a quarter between April and June, when a strict lockdown brought businesses to a halt and left millions jobless.

Consumer spending, the economy's main driver, fell about 31 percent from the same quarter last year, taking an especially heavy toll on traders like Devi and prompting state and federal governments to scramble emergency aid.

### Pocket change

Imphal Mayor L. Lokesore said the state government would provide 10,000 rupees (\$136) in assistance to the women like Devi. "We have already processed their documents and very soon we shall release the payments," he said.

In June, the federal government launched a scheme offering collateral-free loans of 10,000 rupees to about 5 million street vendors - about half of the country's total, according to the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI).

Of 15 street vendors interviewed by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in New Delhi, only three said they had applied for the loan. Others said they did not plan to apply, citing reasons including red tape or lack of interest in the amount on offer. "It's a lot of effort for just pocket change. They don't realize how much we have to spend on raw material, transport and helpers," said Pappu Gupta, 50, who runs a food stall near Connaught Place, the capital's central business district.

Nearby, roadside cobbler Santosh Kumar said: "What's the point of a loan if people are too scared to come out? Who will I expand my business for?" Calling street vendors an "inseparable constituent of the urban informal economy", Rajeev Jain, a spokesman for the ministry of housing and urban affairs, said 470,000 loans had been approved of the 1.3 million applications received.

The scheme will also help traders get a positive credit record and reduce their reliance of illegal money lenders, he said in emailed comments. Street ven-

and capital spending on new projects, two sources involved with the review told Reuters.

Shell now wants to focus its oil and gas production on a few key hubs, including the Gulf of Mexico, Nigeria and the North Sea, the sources said. The company's integrated gas division, which runs Shell's liquefied natural gas (LNG) operations as well as some gas production, is also looking at deep cuts, the sources said. For downstream, the review is focusing on cutting costs from Shell's network of 45,000 service stations - the world's biggest - which is seen as one of its "most high-value activities" and is expected to play a pivotal role in the transition, two more sources involved with the review told Reuters.

"We are undergoing a strategic review of the organization, which intends to ensure we are set up to thrive throughout the energy transition and be a simpler organization, which is also cost competitive. We are looking at a range of options and scenarios at this time, which are being carefully evaluated," a spokeswoman for Shell said in a statement. Shell's restructuring drive mirrors moves in recent months by European rivals BP and Eni which both plan to reduce their focus on oil and gas in the coming decade and build new low-carbon businesses.

The review, which company sources say is the largest in Shell's modern history, is expected to be completed by the end of 2020 when Shell wants to announce a major restructuring. It will hold an investor day in February 2021.

Speaking to analysts on July 30, Shell Chief Executive Ben van Beurden said Shell had launched a program to "redesign" the Anglo-Dutch company.

Teams in Shell's three main divisions are also studying

Kariuki, strolling through his small farm in Kariko village, picking tomatoes to take home.

"But I can't see myself breaking even this year. We have an abundance of produce and now we have no or very low market," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Farmers in Kirinyaga County say they are stuck with more produce than they can sell, as early rains and the financial pain of COVID-19 prompt more people to take to the fields.

This year's ample rainfall has also financially hit farmers who irrigate their crops instead of relying on the rain, said Gachara Gikungu, a consultant with Kilimo Biashara Promoters, which provides agricultural extension services. Usually, those farmers count on selling their produce during dry spells without competition from rain-fed farms, but with the early rains they have lost that advantage, he explained.

And the impact of the pandemic means Kenyans also have less money to spend on fresh fruit and vegetables, Gikungu noted. "With many now lacking purchasing power, the demand for some commodities remains low," he said. Kariuki said in previous

placements.

An analysis led by Oxfam showed that between 1990 and 2015, when annual emissions ballooned 60 percent, that rich nations were responsible for depleting nearly a third of Earth's carbon budget.

The carbon budget is the limit of cumulative greenhouse gas emissions mankind may produce before rendering catastrophic temperature rises unavoidable. Just 63 million people - the "one percent" - took up nine percent of the carbon budget since 1990, research conducted for Oxfam by the Stockholm Environment Institute found.

Highlighting an ever-widening "carbon inequality", the analysis said the growth rate of the one percent's emissions was three times that of the poorest half of humanity. "It's not just that extreme economic inequali-



HYDERABAD: A farmer rests as he sells vegetables at an open house used as a market in a village on the outskirts of Hyderabad. —AFP

dors say they often have to pay bribes to police and flee eviction drives ordered by officials who see them as a blemish on the city's image or an obstacle to progress.

Advocates for informal workers said such incidents had increased during the lockdown - with numerous cases of baton-wielding police beating workers for going out, continuing even after the curbs were lifted. "The main problems are municipal bodies and police. They are not changing their old ways," said Arbind Singh, NASVI's national coordinator, calling for the loan scheme to be replaced with aid as vendors' earnings sink to 30 percent of pre-crisis levels.

The government's financing program has had some

positive outcomes, he added, allowing street vendors to attain a vending certificate and access bank credit, which could help reduce their heavy reliance on loan sharks. "We're hoping that once they get a certificate of vending and get linked with banks, they can break out of this mafia nexus," Singh said.

Ranjana, 38, used to sell thousands of rupees worth of colorful, hand-embroidered bags and cushion covers to foreign tourists before the lockdown. Now, she gets two customers on a good day and has started wearing a face mask and using hand sanitizer, hoping that will convince buyers to come back. "People need to see that we're the ones who can help fix the economy," said Ranjana, who goes by one name. —Reuters

## Shell launches major cost-cutting drive ahead of energy transition

**LONDON:** Royal Dutch Shell is looking to slash up to 40 percent off the cost of producing oil and gas in a major drive to save cash so it can overhaul its business and focus more on renewable energy and power markets, sources told Reuters. Shell's new cost-cutting review, known internally as Project Reshape and expected to be completed this year, will affect its three main divisions and any savings will come on top of a \$4 billion target set in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

Reducing costs is vital for Shell's plans to move into the power sector and renewables where margins are relatively low. Competition is also likely to intensify with utilities and rival oil firms including BP and Total all battling for market share as economies around the world go green.

"We had a great model but is it right for the future? There will be differences, this is not just about structure but culture and about the type of company we want to be," said a senior Shell source, who declined to be named. Last year, Shell's overall operating costs came to \$38 billion and capital spending totaled \$24 billion.

Shell is exploring ways to reduce spending on oil and gas production, its largest division known as upstream, by 30 percent to 40 percent through cuts in operating costs

## Amid bountiful harvest, Kenyan farmers count cost of COVID

**KARIKO:** In a change from the droughts and floods that often plague his tomato plantation in central Kenya, David Kariuki's latest harvest has been more bountiful than he could have hoped - and yet, he is not sure he can afford his children's school fees.

A stretch of favorable weather has led to a bumper crop for Kariuki, 34, and other farmers in Kirinyaga County, whose numbers have swelled as workers made jobless by the coronavirus pandemic turned to farming to make ends meet. With the market flush with fresh produce, buyers are offering only a fraction of the usual price, if they are buying at all.

"I have always relied on farming horticultural produce to pay for educating my children," said

## Study: Richest 1%'s emissions twice that of poorest 50%

**PARIS:** The richest one percent of people are responsible for more than twice as much carbon pollution as the poorest half of the world's population - 3.1 billion people - new research showed yesterday. Despite a sharp decrease in carbon emissions due to the pandemic, the world remains on pace to warm several degrees this century, threatening poor and developing nations with the full gamut of natural disasters and dis-



LONDON: Shell's new cost-cutting review, known internally as Project Reshape and expected to be completed this year, will affect its three main divisions.

how to reshape the business by cutting thousands of jobs and removing management layers both to save money and create a nimble company as it prepares to restructure, the sources said. Shell, which had 83,000 employees at the end of 2019, carried out a major cost-cutting drive after its \$54 billion acquisition of BG Group 2016, which has helped boost its cash generation significantly in recent years.

Shell's operating costs, which include production, manufacturing, sales, distribution, administration and research and development expenses, fell by 15 percent, or roughly \$7 billion, between 2014 and 2017. But the sharp global economic slowdown in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic coupled with Shell's plans to slash its carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 have led to the new push. —Reuters



A farmer poses in front of a banana tree

years he could sell a 100-kg (220-pound) box of tomatoes for up to 8,000 Kenyan shillings (\$74) - now he can only get a quarter of that. He fears he could lose more than 300,000 shillings by the end of the season. "I have been growing tomatoes for the last six years, and I have not experienced such a crisis," he said. —Reuters

ty is divisive in our societies, it's not just that it slows the rate of poverty reduction," Tim Gore, head of policy, advocacy and research, told AFP.

"But there is also a third cost which is that it depletes the carbon budget solely for the purpose of the already affluent growing their consumption." "And that of course has the worse impacts on the poorest and least responsible," Gore added. The 2015 Paris climate deal commits nations to limit global temperature rise to "well below" two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

But emissions have continued to rise since then, and several analyses have warned that without a thoroughly re-tooled global economy prioritizing green growth, the pollutions savings due to Covid-19 will have an insignificant mitigating impact on climate change. —AFP

## Tesla traders bet on Musk battery pitch to spark rally

**NEW YORK:** Fasten your seatbelt, because Tuesday is Tesla's "Battery Day", and some investors expect Chief Executive Elon Musk's pitch on the electric car maker's energy storage advances to re-energize its rally following a recent 21 percent stock slump. Tesla's stock has risen in recent sessions ahead of the event scheduled for Tuesday after the close of trading. Many analysts expect Musk to unveil battery improvements extending the Palo Alto, California automaker's lead over General Motors, Volkswagen and other rivals.

Tesla options are pricing in a stock move of around 17 percent - up or down - by Friday, said Christopher Murphy, co-head of derivatives strategy at Susquehanna Financial Group. Tesla's stock has more than made up for a historic slump on Sept. 8 after it was unexpectedly left out of a group of companies joining the S&P 500, and it has surged over 400 percent year to date. Still, Tesla remains below its Aug. 31 record high close. Analysts, including those with neutral ratings on Tesla's stock, expect major advances from Musk.

"We (and the market) expect the announcements to be significant, cementing Tesla's cost and technology lead for several more years," UBS analyst Patrick Hummel wrote in a client note on Sept. 11, adding he expects a new dry electrode cell technology to help speed manufacturing and lower costs.

Batteries make electric cars cost more than gasoline-powered ones, so the ability to produce low-cost, long-lasting batteries could put Tesla cars on a more equal footing and help usher in mainstream acceptance. Musk in August suggested on Twitter that Tesla may be able to mass produce batteries with 50 percent more energy density in three to four years, which could even enable electric airplanes.

A much hyped "Autonomy Investor Day" in April last year failed to stop a five-month decline in the company's stock. At that 2019 event, Musk said that Tesla robotaxis with no human drivers would be available in some US markets in 2020, continuing a habit of making bold pronouncements and setting deadlines Tesla does not meet. "Even if Tesla provides overly ambitious aspirations at Battery Day, we nevertheless expect the event to reinforce Tesla's long-term growth narrative - central to the stock, while also reinforcing investor perception that Tesla is ahead of other automakers," wrote Credit Suisse analyst Dan Levy in a Sept. 16 research note.

New battery cell designs, chemistries and manufacturing processes are just some developments that would allow Tesla to reduce its reliance on its long-time battery partner, Japan's Panasonic. Cowen analyst Jeffrey Osborne said in a recent client note he expects Tesla to announce it is bringing battery cell production in-house, and for Musk to focus on work done on "million mile" batteries. Eight Wall Street analysts recommend buying Tesla's stock, while 10 recommend selling and another 15 are neutral. The median average price target is \$305, which is 31 percent below Friday's close.

Underscoring many investors' concerns that Tesla's stock has become overvalued, it is trading at about 150 times expected earnings over the next 12 months, about double its five year average, according to Refinitiv. —Reuters

## Business

# Land to lose: Virus compounds debt crisis in rural Cambodia

## Pandemic pummels tourism, construction and garment export industries

**SIEM REAP, Cambodia:** As dark clouds approached her village in northwestern Cambodia one afternoon in July, Set Sreylon prepared for the monsoon that threatened to flood her new family home. While the rains were a concern, the 37-year-old feared a bigger threat to her property - the daily visits from debt collectors demanding repayments on her microfinance loan and ensuing credit she had taken out to keep up with the repayments.

With the coronavirus pandemic ending Sreylon and her husband's jobs in the tourism industry, the mother-of-two was at a loss as to how she would keep the lenders at bay, and clear a growing debt secured by the title to her family's land. Her debt - originally a single loan from a microfinance institution (MFI) - had almost doubled in a year to \$8,000 and was pursued by various loan sharks charging up to 40 percent interest.

"You borrow from A to pay B, then you borrow from B to pay C," she said outside her home in Pouk district, a few miles from Cambodia's Angkor temples and the tourism hotspot of Siem Reap.

"What's the end result? You run out of letters and you have to sell your land," Sreylon told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Microfinance was pioneered in the 1970s by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus to give low interest credit to poor or rural people to set up businesses but the fast-growing sector has been invaded by predatory lenders who can strip people of everything.

Dozens of interviews with indebted villagers, charity staff, economists, lenders and officials revealed how the coronavirus fallout has compounded microfinance debts, with fears growing that countless Cambodians could end up destitute and homeless. "The Cambodian microfinance sector was already headed for a meltdown," said Milford Bateman, a visiting professor of economics at Juraj Dobrila University of Pula in Croatia, and one of the world's leading academics and authors on the issue.

"COVID-19 has accelerated a slow-moving disaster for the poor as they are gradually stripped of their land," he added.

### Poverty to profit

Sreylon is far from alone. She holds one of 2.7 million microloans in a country of 3.3 million households, where the average debt per borrower is the world's highest at \$3,800 - more than twice Cambodia's gross domestic product per capita. Since the Southeast Asian nation emerged from decades of war in the 1990s, microfinance has evolved into a \$10 billion sector profiting international financial institutions.

The model has been credited with helping drag millions out of poverty by funding farming equip-

ment or small businesses, but activists and academics said it has driven a rising number of borrowers to sell land, migrate or put their children to work. About one in two Cambodians were landless in 2016, up from a third in 2009, the latest state data shows. It is unknown to what extent this rise was fuelled by the microfinance industry. Organizations including the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund have in recent years warned that microfinance poses a risk to the Cambodian economy and ever-bigger loans would only push borrowers deeper into poverty.

The World Bank said in 2019 that "deteriorating lending practices and low financial literacy" in Cambodia had helped drive a tenfold increase in average loan size over five years.

High interest rates, the use of land titles as collateral, and pressure to repay have led to a "predatory form of lending", said human rights groups Licadho and Salmakum Teang Tnaut (STT).

A spokesman for the finance ministry said Cambodia had a contingency plan for a potential microfinance crash, but did not give details and referred further questions to the central bank.

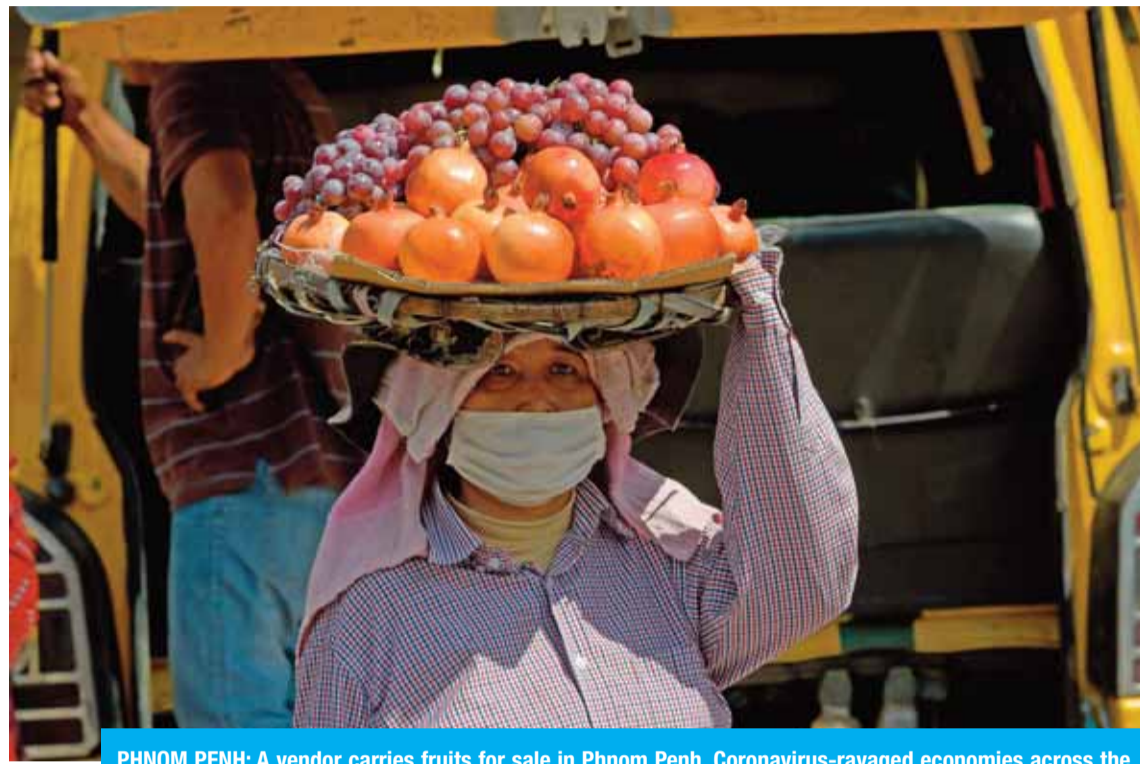
The central bank said it was working to crack down on informal lenders while also running numerous campaigns to boost people's financial literacy. "Education is the most sustainable and impactful solution, but takes time to bear fruits," said Chea Serey, the National Bank of Cambodia's director general. She also urged caution over recent reports about more borrowers falling further into debt.

"As policymakers, we need to be cautious of 'studies' and 'research' that could lead to misleading conclusions," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by email. The chairman of the Cambodian Microfinance Association (CMA), Kea Borann, rejected claims of predatory lending and said that no land had been seized by any of its 90 members during the coronavirus pandemic.

### Families in crisis

The government in 2017 imposed an annual interest-rate cap of 18 percent on MFIs in a bid to help borrowers. But activists said lenders responded by imposing new loan fees, covering their losses as debts continued to soar.

Borrowers who are unable to make repayments often double down on MFI loans, or turn to unregulated loan sharks who fly under the radar and offer instant cash at rates as high as 50 percent. About 45 percent of Cambodians fell deeper into debt from January to April, while one in eight had to sell assets, from livestock and machinery to land, according to a survey of 54 village chiefs and 1,000 households by consultancy firm Angkor Research. A third of new



PHNOM PENH: A vendor carries fruits for sale in Phnom Penh. Coronavirus-ravaged economies across the Asia Pacific region 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

loans were taken to pay off existing loans or cover living costs, while the proportion of households that borrowed from informal lenders rose to 18 percent from 8.6 percent in that period, showed the data, which covered five of 25 provinces.

Dorm Diem, a village chief in Siem Reap whose residents have combined debt worth over \$250,000, said this had led to community tensions and people threatening each other. "Families are losing everything. Parents are being locked up in Thailand and children are left behind ... All villages around here are the same," he said. "Microfinance has done more harm than good. The problem is only getting worse and I don't see how it can be solved."

One of the villagers, 38-year-old Pherl Pheap, said several of his neighbors had sold their homes this year to clear their debts and headed to Thailand, willing to risk possible arrest at closed borders in the hope of finding work. Official data is lacking but media reports have detailed the arrests of hundreds of Cambodians trying to cross the border since it was closed in March. About 2 million are estimated to work in Thailand in sectors ranging from fishing to farming. "It's a fire sale: sell your house, pay your debts, go to Thailand and start again," Pheap said. "I am one of the lucky ones. I

managed to stay ahead of my debt, but there are others who have borrowed so much that they will never come back."

While Cambodia has recorded zero deaths and fewer than 300 cases of COVID-19, the pandemic has pummeled the tourism, construction and garment export industries that prop up its economy, wiping out hundreds of thousands of jobs.

At least 1.76 million jobs in the nation of about 16 million people are at risk due to COVID-19, while the poverty rate could double, to about one-in-four people, the World Bank said in May.

Cambodian human rights groups have this year called for a freeze on loan repayments due to the virus and for lenders to return more than one million land titles held as collateral. Nine major lenders hold 90 percent of Cambodia's \$10 billion in registered microdebt, including two former MFIs that have since become banks. Yet the real figure is likely to be far higher as it does not include microloans given out by dozens of other banks or the growing number of informal lenders, activists and experts said. CMA Chairman Borann said repayments had been frozen for 25,000 people among about 250,000 loans restructured to ease pressure on borrowers since March when the outbreak began. — Reuters

## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 20th September 2020 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 13 - 17 September 2020. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

Mohammed Salem Mohammed Altheyab  
Khaled Fahad Falih Alajmi  
Fatimah Anas Hasan Almutawaa  
Abdul-Mutaleb Jawad Ramadan Ahmad  
Bader Naser Abdullah Bourisli

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 KD200 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.



MADRID: The Spanish economy slumped 18.5 percent in the second quarter, a contraction exceeded in Europe only by Britain.

## Spain faces unusual crisis: How to spend billions in crisis funds

**MADRID:** After securing a generous portion of European Union recovery funds for the coronavirus crisis, Spain faces an unlikely problem-how to make use of all the money, government sources told Reuters. "This is not a crisis of dough (money), it is a crisis of ideas," one of the sources said, referring to concrete investment projects to help the economy out of a record recession.

In a country that has not managed to approve a full-year budget since 2016 because of a prolonged political paralysis, the need to suddenly absorb extra cash is a challenge, said the sources. Spain has been hit particularly badly by the pandemic. It has recorded more than 640,000 COVID-19 cases, the highest number in Western Europe, and the disease has killed more than 30,000.

The economy slumped 18.5 percent in the second quarter, a contraction exceeded in Europe only by Britain. To help Spain recover, it will receive around 140 billion euros (\$166 billion) in grants and loans out of the EU 750-billion-euro coronavirus recovery package.

That includes 43 billion euros in grants in the next two years alone - equivalent to about 8 percent of annual expenditure. "Spending that money is not easy," a second government source said. Four sources close to the management of the funds said there were concerns and some anxiety about how to set up the machinery to take on this amount of liquidity.

Another source with direct knowledge of the management of the funds said the main projects to receive the funds had already been earmarked and that Spain would certainly comply with deadlines and requirements imposed by Brussels.

The European Commission has recommended EU governments spend money from the recovery package on green energy, transport and investment in digitalization. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who fought hard at an EU summit in July for the recovery fund to be approved, has put his office in charge of supervising the implementation of the recovery plan, with an advisory group made up of corporate executives to be set up, another source said.

Economy Minister Nadia Calvino is also closely involved as she is finalizing a reform plan to be presented to Brussels by Oct. 15, which must outline the main projects eligible for the EU money.

"Right now the challenge is how the money that arrives will be fully applied, and there will have to be projects with a lot of absorption (investment take-up)," said Jose Moises Martin, director of Red2Red consultancy that caters to public authorities. Aside from the recovery funds, Brussels has approved a 21 billion euro soft loan for Spain to finance employment support schemes, which should alleviate pressure on the Treasury, which has been borrowing for months for this purpose.

A source close to the budget ministry said revenues had recently been better than expected, and September debt issuance has slowed down from the previous months. But on Wednesday the central bank cut its 2021 growth forecast to 4.1 percent-7.3 percent.

Its chief economist, Oscar Arce, said that under the best-case scenario, EU funds could boost medium-term GDP growth by two percentage points, but success would hinge on choosing the right investment projects. — Reuters

## Major banks moved vast sums of illicit money: ICIJ

**WASHINGTON:** Massive sums of allegedly dirty money have flowed for years through some of the world's largest banking institutions, said an international journalism investigation published Sunday, which denounced shortcomings in sector regulations. "Profits from deadly drug wars, fortunes embezzled from developing countries, and hard-earned savings stolen in a Ponzi scheme were all allowed to flow into and out of these financial institutions, despite warnings from the banks' own employees," according to the probe from BuzzFeed News and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).

The investigation, which was led by 108 international media outlets from 88 different countries, is based on thousands of suspicious activity reports (SARs) submitted to the US Treasury Department's financial law enforcement agency, FinCEN, by banks from around the world. "These documents, compiled by banks, shared with the government, but kept from public view, expose the hollowness of banking safeguards, and the ease with which criminals have exploited them," wrote US outlet BuzzFeed News, in the introduction of its report. — AFP

## Sweden promises \$12bn to kick-start economy in budget

**STOCKHOLM:** Sweden's government will pump 105 billion crowns (\$12 billion) into the economy in 2021 in tax cuts and spending measures in a record give-away aimed at getting the economy back on its feet after the coronavirus pandemic-induced slump.

The government forecast Sweden's gross domestic product will shrink around 4.6 percent this year in its budget yesterday, a milder hit than many other European countries. But the government said record fiscal stimulus was needed to get the country moving again. "Together we are going to work Sweden's way out of the crisis and build a more sustainable society," the minority coalition said in a statement. While many countries in Europe are re-imposing COVID restrictions after a surge in new cases, attention is turning to how to kick-start economies to ensure those who lost their jobs during the pandemic are not permanently sidelined and to support an new era of environmentally sustainable growth. — Reuters

# Classifieds

Tuesday, September 22, 2020

**Kuwait Times**  
 THE FIRST STEP TO THE ARABIAN GULF  
 Now you can browse  
[www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net)  
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

الطيران المدني  
**Civil Aviation**  
 State of Kuwait - دولة الكويت



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

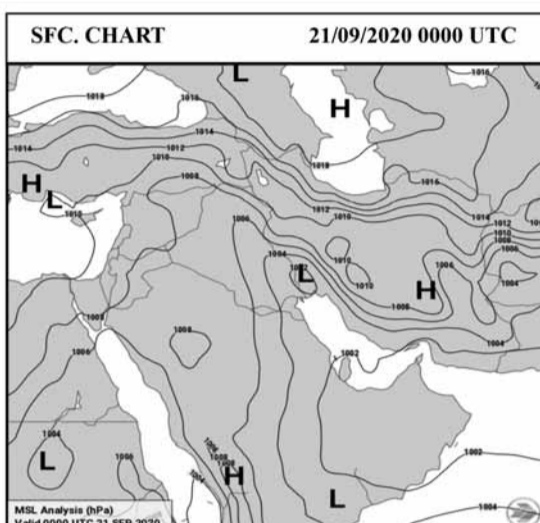
## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Hot with moderate to fresh north westerly wind to north easterly wind with speed of 20 - 60 km/h causing rising dust specially over open areas.

**BY NIGHT:** Rather hot to fair and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate variable wind to north westerly wind with speed of 08 - 28 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING	Fresh wind + dust
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STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	41 °C	31 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	42 °C	32 °C
ABDALY	43 °C	28 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	43 °C	32 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	36 °C	32 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	40 °C	29 °C
WAFRA	43 °C	31 °C
SALMY	40 °C	27 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	09/22	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	45 °C	26 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Wednesday	09/23	Hot and some scattered clouds will appear	44 °C	27 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Thursday	09/24	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	45 °C	27 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 35 km/h
Friday	09/25	Hot	45 °C	26 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:17
Sunrise	05:35
Zuhr	11:41
Asr	15:09
Sunset	17:47
Isha	19:03

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	44 °C
MIN. Temp.	32 °C
MAX. RH	35 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	N 64 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

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Carmina** Leticia Falcao, r/o H.no. 66/A Binvaddo Betalbatim Salcete South Goa would like to correct my name from Carmina Leticia Pereira to Carmina Leticia Falcao. Hereafter in all my dealings and documents I will be known as Carmina Leticia Falcao. (C 5759) 21-9-2020

I, **Masood** S/o. Abdul Ameen (Old name), hereby Shaik Masood Ameen S/o. Abdul Ameen (New name), my Passport no: Z3200563. (C 5758) 18-9-2020

## EMERGENCY 112

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



## 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
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1

## Word Search

**Donuts by the Dozen**  
 Don't forget to celebrate National Doughnut Day, June 7th, with a little sweet something.

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

DONUT	FROSTING	OLD FASHIONED
APPLE	GLAZED	SPRINKLES
BERLINER	HOLE	STICKY
BLUEBERRY	HOLE	SUGAR
BOX	JELLY	SWEET
CHOCOLATE	MAPLE	TWIST
CIDER		
CINNAMON		
COCONUT		
COFFEE		
CREAM		
CRULLER		
DOUGHNUT		
DOZEN		
ÉCLAIR		
FRIED		
FRITTER		

## Join the Dots



## STAR TRACK

<p><b>Aries (March 21-April 19)</b></p> <p>The time is right to pursue training for a particular skill or finish a degree in a field of interest to you, Aries. Presently, great success and good fortune are indicated when you assert your considerable energy and focus on the subject matter. If you've been considering honing your communication skills, consider a writing course. Perhaps you want to organize a long-desired trip.</p>	<p><b>Cancer (June 21-July 22)</b></p> <p>If it's true that you reap what you sow, Cancer, you're in for a great harvest in the coming months. Your hard work and focus will start to pay off handsomely with promotions and raises just when you may have given up on being acknowledged for all you do. Hang on to your great energy, passion, and enthusiasm. Doors are about to open for you. Get ready to walk through them.</p>	<p><b>Libra (September 23-October 22)</b></p> <p>Expect to receive interesting communications today, Libra. You might hear from a long-lost friend and have a chance to catch up on the news. Perhaps you'll hear something about success in reaching a goal you've been striving for these past few months. Expect some interesting conversations. Have a great time exchanging ideas on everything from politics to child rearing.</p>	<p><b>Capricorn (December 22-January 19)</b></p> <p>Don't be surprised if money comes from an unlikely source. It could be a surprisingly good return on an investment or a bequest from a relative. Pay attention to any dreams that seem to repeat. They may hold a lesson about understanding your life path. You may receive an unexpected visit from a dear friend you haven't heard from in years. All in all, this is a great time.</p>
<p><b>Taurus (April 20-May 20)</b></p> <p>Circumstances are favorable for you if you're contemplating investment in real estate. Any sort of investment looks good for you right now, Taurus. Be ready to have an important conversation with a young person today. You may benefit from a significant piece of mail or phone call. Even if you hadn't planned on it, you may want to visit an older friend or relative tonight, if possible.</p>	<p><b>Leo (July 23-August 22)</b></p> <p>You're highly esteemed in your profession because of your strong business acumen and no-nonsense approach to problem solving. Recent successes may be preparing you for the next leap in the progression. Be open to opportunities involving the Internet that present themselves. Remember, there's no glass ceiling online. Today may be peppered with all sorts of communications from friends.</p>	<p><b>Scorpio (October 23-November 21)</b></p> <p>You're in a great position to reap the rewards from all your past hard work, Scorpio. In the coming weeks you'll be able to realize important gains in your career and personal projects. Not only should you see significant advancements in your work life, but you'll also achieve greater personal happiness. You have great momentum, so keep it up and you'll realize your goals.</p>	<p><b>Aquarius (January 20- February 18)</b></p> <p>This is a good time to forge new relationships, Aquarius. Be open-minded if someone you know approaches with a proposal. Do your homework and examine the potential risks, but this is a fine period in which to pursue something new. Success and good fortune are coming. Keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities. You may hear some important news from your love interest.</p>
<p><b>Gemini (May 21-June 20)</b></p> <p>Did you forget to take two aspirin before you fell into bed last night? This morning you may feel in a fog, but it should lift around midday. You could be surprised by some heartening news from a friend or relative regarding a difficult situation that is now being resolved. Enjoy the boost of energy that this good news gives you.</p>	<p><b>Virgo (August 23-September 22)</b></p> <p>Opportunity may knock for you today from an unlikely source, perhaps total strangers! Use your intuition to follow potential leads. Real estate, particularly residential, looks especially promising for realizing financial gain for you right now. Follow your hunches and see what develops. Don't let your caution bog you down at the moment. It could be surprisingly wonderful.</p>	<p><b>Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)</b></p> <p>With the current celestial energy, you might be going on a trip, Sagittarius. It may be for business, pleasure, or both. It's likely that this trip will achieve certain goals. Perhaps you're aiming for a promotion. Chances are you'll be successful in your ambitions. Or you may be ready to set out on your own and start a new business. It's an excellent time for this, too.</p>	<p><b>Pisces (February 19-March 20)</b></p> <p>You're feeling your power and strength today, Pisces. You've worked hard to get into good physical shape. Similarly, you've exerted a great deal of energy in your work life and it's paying off. With today's planetary energy, you can also expect greater intimacy in your personal life. Enjoy this special time.</p>

## Lifestyle | Awards



This handout shows host Jimmy Kimmel in front of a wall of nominees watching remotely at the Staples Center during the 72nd Primetime Emmy Awards ceremony held virtually on Sunday. — AFP photos



This handout screen shot shows US actress Regina King wearing a Breonna Taylor shirt as she wins the Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress In A Limited Series Or Movie with Watchmen.



This handout picture shows Damon Lindelof and Cord Jefferson after receiving the Emmy for Watchmen.

## RACE SUPERHERO SERIES 'WATCHMEN' WINS BIG AT 'REMOTE' EMMYS



This handout screen shot shows Canadian actress Catherine O'Hara being handed the Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series for Schitt's Creek.



This handout screen shot shows actor Jeremy Strong winning Outstanding Lead Actor In A Drama Series for "Succession".



This handout screen shot shows actor Billy Crudup react as he wins Outstanding Supporting Actor In A Drama Series for "The Morning Show".



In this file photo US actor Yahya Abdul-Mateen arrives for the Los Angeles premiere of the new HBO series "Watchmen" at the Cinerama Dome in Hollywood.

"**W**atchmen," a dark superhero series that tackles US racism, triumphed at the Emmys on Sunday as the stars beamed in live to an empty Los Angeles theater for Hollywood's first major Covid-era awards show. Fellow HBO show "Succession"-the saga of a powerful, backstabbing family-won big in the drama categories, while offbeat Canadian hit "Schitt's Creek" performed a clean sweep of the night's comedy prizes. With four victories in major categories, "Watchmen" amassed a total of 11 Emmys-television's equivalent of the Oscars. A timely blend of sociopathic superheroes and political satire based on a seminal 1980s graphic novel, the show won rave reviews from critics and audiences alike.

Its creators dedicated their win for best limited series to African-American victims of the 1921 Tulsa massacre. "The only way to put the fires out is to fight them together," said showrunner Damon Lindelof. "History is mystery-it's broken into a million puzzle pieces. We know finding them will hurt. Sometimes we caused that hurt, maybe we even benefited from it," added Lindelof, who is white. The series, which debuted last year, depicts white supremacists, police brutality and rows over mask-wearing-all subjects of intensely polarized national debate as the United States gears up for November's presidential election. "Have a voting plan," said the show's star Regina King, as she accepted her prize. Many viewers learned about the real-life, deadly destruction of "Black Wall Street" in Oklahoma for the first time through the show's pilot. Its 11 wins left it two short of the all-time record of 13 held by historic mini-series "John Adams."

### 'Succession' and 'Schitt's Creek'

Nominees and winners for the 72nd Emmys dialed in from their homes and socially distanced gatherings via video call, as Los Angeles is still under tough coronavirus-related restrictions. They were handed trophies in a variety of ways-delivermen knocking on front doors, even a "decapitated hand" emerging from a mysterious box, as winner John Oliver called it. The night spotlighted everyday heroes such as a medical worker, a teacher and even an astronaut. Some presented awards. The creator of "Succession"-a dark portrait of a Murdoch-esque family's wrangling for control of a dynastic media empire-sounded one of several political notes by "un-thinking" world leaders for their handling of the pandemic.

"Un-thank you to President (Donald) Trump for his crummy and uncoordinated response. Un-thank you to Boris Johnson for the same thing in our country," said British showrunner Jesse Armstrong, accepting best drama series, the night's final prize. The show also won for best drama writing and directing, while star Jeremy Strong bagged best actor honors.

On a banner pulled for HBO, former Disney child star Zendaya pulled off a surprise win for best drama actress with bleak, hard-hitting "Euphoria"-she is the youngest woman ever to claim the award. The show depicts high school students struggling with sex, drugs and crime-in explicit detail. The cast of "Schitt's Creek" gathered in Toronto for a night to remember, as they swept the "virtual" ceremony's



In this file photo "Schitt's Creek" cast members arrive for the 71st Emmy Awards at the Microsoft Theatre in Los Angeles.

comedy prizes. "Our show at its core is about the transformational effects of love and acceptance. We need it now more than ever before," said supporting actor winner and co-creator Daniel Levy, who also won for directing, writing and overall comedy series.

Catherine O'Hara was given the night's first statuette for best comedy actress by a presenter in a hazmat suit. Eugene Levy, her on-screen husband, scooped best actor. Annie Murphy also won for supporting actress-for a series. "Schitt's Creek"-about a privileged family forced to live in a rundown motel-failed to earn a single nomination in its first four years, but it gained attention by later airing on Netflix and signed off with a heartwarming final season. Ironically, Netflix itself landed just two prizes during the broadcast-a disappointing night for the streaming giant.

### 'The pand-Emmys'

Racism and politics were prominent themes all night, with actors and creators donning tee-shirts bearing slogans for black victims of police violence and the Tulsa massacre. Mark Ruffalo, who won for limited series "I Know This Much Is True," spoke for many in famously liberal Hollywood by appearing to warn voters over Trump's re-election bid. "We have a big, important moment ahead of us-are we going to be a country of division and hatred... or are we going to be one of love, strength, and fighting for all of us?" he asked. Another major theme was the pandemic itself, which has turned Tinseltown upside down, bringing productions to a halt even as binge-watching skyrocketed during the crisis.

Host Jimmy Kimmel opened the Emmys from a theater filled with cardboard cutouts of A-listers, quipping: "Hello and welcome to the pand-Emmys." Around 130 nominees-who wore gowns, tuxedos, casual wear and everything in between-were sent cameras to hook up in venues of their choosing. Reviews marveled at the show's lack of technical

hitches, with Variety praising the "surprising triumph of producing" and Deadline calling it "an awards show for the ages." — AFP



This handout screen shot shows actress Uzo Aduba wearing a Breonna Taylor shirt as she wins for Outstanding Supporting Actress In A Limited Series Or Movie for "Mrs. America".



This handout screen shot shows actress Julia Garner and her husband singer Mark Foster react as she wins for Outstanding Supporting Actress In A Drama Series for "Ozark".



This handout screen shot shows actress Zendaya as she wins Outstanding Lead Actress In A Drama Series for "Euphoria".



This handout screen shot shows nominee Kerry Washington (right) and Reese Witherspoon (left) celebrating an early 2021 while watching remotely the 72nd Primetime Emmy Awards ceremony held virtually.

## Emmy winners in key categories

Here is a list of the winners in key categories for the 72nd Emmy Awards, which were handed out in Los Angeles on Sunday. HBO's "Watchmen" led the way with a total of 11 wins, including the prize for best limited series. Cult favorite "Schitt's Creek" cleaned up in the comedy awards, taking home a total of nine prizes, including four for creator and star Daniel Levy. And among the dramas, "Succession" took home top honors for best series, best lead actor, best writing and best directing.

- OUTSTANDING DRAMA SERIES:** "Succession"
- OUTSTANDING COMEDY SERIES:** "Schitt's Creek"
- LEAD ACTOR, DRAMA:** Jeremy Strong, "Succession"
- LEAD ACTRESS, DRAMA:** Zendaya, "Euphoria"
- SUPPORTING ACTOR, DRAMA:** Billy Crudup, "The Morning Show"

- SUPPORTING ACTRESS, DRAMA:** Julia Garner, "Ozark"
- LEAD ACTOR, COMEDY:** Eugene Levy, "Schitt's Creek"
- LEAD ACTRESS, COMEDY:** Catherine O'Hara, "Schitt's Creek"
- SUPPORTING ACTOR, COMEDY:** Daniel Levy, "Schitt's Creek"
- SUPPORTING ACTRESS, COMEDY:** Annie Murphy, "Schitt's Creek"
- OUTSTANDING LIMITED SERIES:** "Watchmen"
- LEAD ACTOR, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE:** Mark Ruffalo, "I Know This Much Is True"
- LEAD ACTRESS, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE:** Regina King, "Watchmen"
- SUPPORTING ACTOR, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE:** Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, "Watchmen"
- SUPPORTING ACTRESS, LIMITED SERIES OR MOVIE:** Uzo Aduba, "Mrs America"
- OUTSTANDING TELEVISION MOVIE:** "Bad Education". — AFP



This handout screen shot shows actor/producer/director Tyler Perry as he accepts the Governors Award on stage.



This handout screen shot shows talk show host John Oliver as he wins the Emmy for Outstanding Variety Talk Series with "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver".



This handout screen shot shows host Jimmy Kimmel sitting among celebrities' cardboard cutouts during the 72nd Primetime Emmy Awards ceremony.



This handout screen shot shows actors Anthony Anderson (left) and Sterling K. Brown (right) holding face shields at the Staples Center during the 72nd Primetime Emmy Awards ceremony.

## Emmys style: Gowns, pajamas and... hazmat tuxedos

The Emmys on Sunday basically turned into the world's most glamorous Zoom call, with Hollywood A-listers beaming into an empty Staples Center in Los Angeles from their apartments, guest houses and various other locations in 10 countries. Here are some takeaways about how Tinseltown's top stars suited up for the coronavirus era's first major awards show:

### Making a statement

Politics often take center stage at the Emmys, and even without a traditional red carpet, this year was no different. Winner Regina King ("Watchmen") paired a pink power suit with a tee-shirt bearing the image of Breonna Taylor, an African-American woman killed in a police shooting in her own home, and the words "Say Her Name." Uzo Aduba, who won the Emmy for best supporting actress in a limited series or television movie for "Mrs America," wore a simple black tee-shirt with Taylor's name in script and a gold ball skirt.

"Watchmen" creator Damon Lindelof sported a tee-shirt under his jacket that read "Remember Tulsa '21"—a reference to a racial massacre in the Oklahoma city of Tulsa that left up to 300 black people dead in 1921, which figures in the show. And the final presenter of the night, "This Is Us" star Sterling K. Brown, wore a Black Lives Matter tee-shirt with a clenched fist.

### Glamming it up

Of course, the few stars who took the stage with host Jimmy Kimmel had to dress to impress, and they did not disappoint. Surprise winner Zendaya ("Euphoria") wowed in a sculptural black and purple gown from African-American designer Christopher John Rogers.



This handout screen shot shows actor Randall Park walking with an alpaca during the 72nd Primetime Emmy Awards ceremony held virtually.

Jennifer Aniston donned a black Dior dress and managed to look glam wielding a fire extinguisher for an onstage joke. And nominee Tracee Ellis Ross ("black-ish") oozed sex appeal in a gold Alexandre Vauthier gown — cut down to there, and with a high central slit revealing her legs.

Reese Witherspoon and Kerry Washington hosted a faux New Year's Eve party to honor their limited series "Little Fires Everywhere"—and wish an early end to a tough 2020. They wore gowns, but one guest wore a vintage Nirvana tee-shirt. Daniel Levy, creator and star of "Schitt's Creek," opted for a chic gray Thom Browne suit with a kilt that got a lot of air time, given the show's multiple wins and the fun socially distanced event the cast and crew held in Toronto. His outfit was a nod to the show's finale, in which his character wore similar attire for his same-sex wedding.



This handout screen shot shows US actress Zendaya during the 72nd Primetime Emmy Awards ceremony.

### Pajamas! And animals!

Of course, organizers told participants that informal chic was encouraged, and many stars took the note, with some wearing glammed up pajamas and others bringing their canine companions to the party. Nominee Octavia Spencer ("Self Made") donned a floral robe and drank wine, while past winner Alex Borstein lounged on a giant bed in a silky pink and black nightgown/robe combo. Borstein's co-star on "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel," past winner Rachel Brosnahan, adopted all the trends, wearing a chic pajama top AND having her "farty"-her word-dog Winston by her side.

Jane Lynch, also a cast member on "Maisel," invited her dog Rumi, named for the Persian poet, to join her on camera. And actor Randall Park ("Fresh Off the Boat") was upstaged at the Staples Center... by an alpaca in a bow tie. "When you read an email too quickly, the phrase 'You're presenting with an alpaca' looks a lot like the phrase 'You're presenting with Al Pacino,'" Park quipped.

### The ultimate Covid formal wear

Perhaps the most on-point outfit of the night was the hazmat tuxedo, worn by those tasked with visiting some of the Emmy winners at their home to deliver their golden statuettes. Organizers told Variety that the suit was designed in conjunction with a hazmat manufacturer, to ensure top protection for the awards couriers. — AFP

## Five takeaways from Emmys night - RBG, 'Friends' and HBO

Sunday's Emmy Awards had a bit of everything, from tributes to late Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, to history made by the young actress Zendaya, to big wins for HBO. Here are five key takeaways from the event, which honors the best in television:

### Stars honor RBG

Host Jimmy Kimmel and several stars paid tribute to the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who died Friday after a long battle with cancer at age 87. "On Friday, we lost a great American," Kimmel said. "Ruth Bader Ginsburg was a compassionate and tireless champion of equality and justice. She said her legacy was to make her life a little better for people less fortunate than she." Regina King, who took home the award for best actress in a limited series for her role in HBO's "Watchmen," honored Ginsburg in her acceptance speech, saying "Rest in power, RBG." Uzo Aduba, who nabbed a supporting actress Emmy for FX limited series "Mrs America," for her part described the feminist icon's death as "absolutely devastating."



This handout screen shot shows nominee Jennifer Aniston watching remotely with her friends Lisa Kudrow and Courtney Cox.

### 'Friends' reunited

HBO's own streaming service was meant to launch this summer with a much-hyped "Friends" reunion, which would have drawn new subscribers to the platform. But the planned, unscripted show featuring the six stars of the popular 1990s sitcom has been delayed indefinitely, with Los Angeles under tough coronavirus-related restrictions. On Sunday, the show's three female leads—Jennifer Aniston, Courtney Cox and Lisa Kudrow—dialed in from Aniston's "home" to the apparent surprise of Emmys host Jimmy Kimmel. "Of course I am (here). We live together," joked Cox. "Yeah, we've been roommates since 1994," Aniston chimed in. "Where else would I live?" added Kudrow.

### Virtual Emmys zoom onward

Anyone who has suffered endless, technically-challenged Zoom calls during lockdown will have questioned the wisdom of hosting a prestigious awards ceremony while relying on dozens of remote video calls. Listing 2020's many miseries in his opening monologue, host Kimmel inserted "Zoom school" alongside "division, injustice, disease... disaster and death." But the internet connections ran smoothly throughout, surprising and even disappointing those predicting a high-tech car crash on the night. "Everything went off flawlessly from a technical point of view," Deadline said in its review of the night. Its analysis called it "an awards show for the ages." "To all the winners tonight and all the nominees, I'll see you guys at the sad Zoom after-party," Kimmel signed off. "Meeting ID: 459 956 7155. Stay safe." — AFP

### Zendaya makes history

At 24, Zendaya on Sunday became the youngest winner in the lead actress in a drama series category for her searing breakthrough turn on "Euphoria." The actress won for her gritty portrayal of teenage drug addict Rue in HBO's bleak drama that follows a group of high school students as they navigate drugs, sex, love, identity and trauma. "I appreciate you so much, you're my family," said Zendaya, addressing Sam Levinson, creator of the controversial show, who based the series on his own battle with addiction. "I'm so grateful for Rue. I'm so grateful that you trusted me with your story."

### HBO prospers without 'Thrones'

HBO is used to winning the annual Emmys battle-of-the-networks, despite recent fierce competition from streaming upstart Netflix. But if executives were worried about their first year without "Game of Thrones," a behemoth that amassed a record 59 Emmys, it didn't show. Sunday proved that there is life beyond the dragons of Westeros for HBO, with "Succession" and "Watchmen" scoring big wins across the drama and limited series categories, plus "Euphoria" delivering a surprise bonus victory for young starlet Zendaya. HBO ends this television year with a whopping 30 statuettes. Netflix had to settle for 21 total, including just two handed out during the main broadcast-acting and director wins for dramas "Ozark" and "Unorthodox."



This handout screen shot shows Lin-Manuel Miranda and Count Von Count during the 72nd Primetime Emmy Awards ceremony held virtually.



This handout screen shot shows host Jimmy Kimmel standing before a photo of the late Supreme Court Justice of the United States Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

## Sports

## Photo of the day



The Flying Bulls Aerobatics Team performs in Jaromer, Czech Republic. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

## Boxing, mental health coach for Australia's 'bubble' cricketers

**SYDNEY:** Australia have appointed a mental health manager and introduced boxing sessions to help players cope with life in anti-coronavirus 'bubbles', with some facing the prospect of months in controlled environments as international cricket resumes. The Australians, minus those at the Indian Premier League, are now in 14 days' isolation at a hotel adjoining Adelaide Oval after five weeks in a bio-secure environment in England, where they pulled off a dramatic one-day series win over the world champions.

Some, like coach Justin Langer, face a further fortnight in quarantine when they cross state borders and return to their home bases, with more of the same awaiting players throughout the Australian cricketing summer. With players spending extended periods in bubbles, away from their families, Langer is acutely aware that managing mental health is as important as his players' physical wellbeing as they prepare to take on India in a Test series.

"We've got to always recognize that when we talk about our sports people, whether it's cricketers or football players or rugby players, they are also human beings and we must respect that," he said in a Zoom call yesterday. "There are certainly challenges, but we are aware of that. We are keep-

ing an eye on them to make sure they are all staying physically and mentally healthy."

When Cricket Australia explained to the players what the summer schedule might look like, "the blood drained out of some of their faces", Langer added. Depending on playing commitments, Cricket Australia has forecast some could experience up to 150 days in the controlled environments required by coronavirus protocols. "It's a long time away from our families and home. But we know the sacrifices we have to take to ensure cricket stays up and running and we keep entertaining people," he said.

To help them cope, Cricket Australia has appointed a new mental health manager and Langer has introduced boxing. "I know from a lifetime of doing it, there is a real advantage of staying fit and healthy and letting off some steam," he said. "It's as much to keep us stimulated." But for the ever-competitive Langer, it is not all just for fun. "I've said for many, many years that the best form of training for batting, particularly, is boxing because you have to concentrate, it's footwork, it's technique. You've got to have good defence and offence."

Australia are scheduled to play four Tests against India from early December, with a one-off Test against Afghanistan in November, although the dates and venues have yet to be confirmed. "We will take real confidence out of England, the guys coming back from the IPL will take real confidence out of that, there will be four Sheffield Shield (red ball) games leading up to the summer," he said. "So we will be well prepared and we'll be hanging out to play cricket for Australia and we'll be ready to take on India, and what a huge contest." —AFP

## IPL cricket team appeals over 'short run' error

**DUBAI:** Kings XI Punjab lodged a formal complaint yesterday over an umpiring error which proved critical in their narrow Indian Premier League loss to the Delhi Capitals. The second match of the world's richest Twenty20 tournament ended in a tie on Sunday before Punjab lost out in a super over. But in the 19th over of Punjab's chase, square-leg umpire Nitin Menon had signaled Chris Jordan for a short run - not grounding his bat inside the crease when running between the wickets.

TV replays showed Jordan's bat was in the crease. But nothing could be done as the third umpire does not have the authority to overturn an on-field call, unless it is referred for review. "We have appealed against the decision which could have been corrected had technology been brought into play."

a senior Kings XI official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "This one run could prove costly at the business end of the tournament when teams battle for a play-off berth." Appeals are made to the match referee, who in this case was India's Javagal Srinath. However, there is no provision for overturning an on-field decision after a match. In the super over, South African quick Kagiso Rabada struck twice to limit Punjab to two runs, a total that Delhi overhauled in just three balls. As social media erupted over the short-run decision, former India opener Virender Sehwag tweeted: "I don't agree with the man of the match choice. The umpire who gave this short run should have been man of the match."

Cricketer-turned-commentator Aakash Chopra posted: "One short that wasn't. Technology must take over in these cases... What if #KXIP don't make it to the final four by 2 points???" Umpiring standards also came into question in last year's IPL, during which India captain Virat Kohli tersely commented: "We are not playing club cricket." Kohli's team Royal Challengers Bangalore were denied a win when the umpires missed a clear no-ball by the Mumbai Indians' Lasith Malinga on the final delivery. The IPL is being played in the United Arab Emirates after being shifted out of India due to rising coronavirus cases. —AFP

# Padres clinch rare playoff berth

## Indians overpower Tigers 7-4

**CALIFORNIA:** Mitch Moreland's bloop double down the left-field line scored Manny Machado with the go-ahead run in the top of the 11th inning Sunday as the San Diego Padres clinched their first National League playoff berth in 14 years with a 7-4 victory over the Seattle Mariners at Petco Park. Wil Myers hit a three-run homer for the Padres (34-20), who captured at least a wild-card berth. Right-hander Trevor Rosenthal (1-0) got the victory with two innings of relief. Mariners right-hander Casey Sadler (1-1) took the loss. The Mariners (23-30) were considered the home team after the three-game series was moved to San Diego because of hazardous air conditions in the Pacific Northwest due to wildfires.

### Red Sox 10, Yankees 2

Michael Chavis homered in consecutive at-bats and rookie Tanner Houck pitched six innings of one-hit ball as host Boston ended a 12-game losing streak to rival New York with an easy win at Fenway Park. The Yankees saw their first 10-game winning streak since June 2012 halted. New York missed a chance at clinching a playoff spot on its own but booked its spot in the postseason a few hours later when the Seattle Mariners lost to the San Diego Padres. The Red Sox beat the Yankees for the first time since Sept 6, 2019, as Chavis recorded his third career multi-homer game after entering the game hitless in his previous 14 at-bats.

### Astros 3, Diamondbacks 2

George Springer hit a pair of solo home runs and Carlos Correa delivered a redemptive sacrifice fly in the eighth inning as Houston won the rubber match of its three-game interleague series with Arizona at Minute Maid Park. Astros closer Ryan Pressly notched his 12th save with a perfect 14-pitch ninth. Left-hander Blake Taylor (2-1), the third pitcher of the game for Houston, earned the win in relief. Diamondbacks left-hander Madison Bumgarner recorded his first scoreless outing of the season. Bumgarner allowed two hits across the first three batters he faced before settling into a groove and retiring five consecutive batters.

### Indians 7, Tigers 4

Jose Ramirez hit two home runs and Carlos Carrasco tossed seven shutout innings as Cleveland took three of four from host Detroit to tighten its hold on the first American League wild-card slot. The Indians broke a scoreless tie in the top of the fifth, scoring three runs. The first run came on an RBI single to left by Jordan Luplow, then Delino DeShields added a two-out, two-run single to make it 3-0. Cleveland chased Detroit starter Matthew Boyd in the sixth when Ramirez lined a two-run home run to left for a 5-0 lead. Carrasco (3-4)

struck out 11, allowed just one hit and walked three in seven innings of work, throwing a season-high 109 pitches.

### Orioles 2, Rays 1

Renato Nunez banged out an early two-run single while starter John Means struck out 12 in just 5 2/3 innings as Baltimore defeated visiting Tampa Bay. Baltimore's victory prevented Tampa Bay from pulling a sweep of the rare five-game series. The Rays won the first four-limiting Baltimore to just a run in three of them-before the Orioles took the final game. Means (2-3) gave up just one run on three hits. The left-hander struck out seven straight batters between the first and third innings. He also struck out the side in the fourth, sandwiched around a homer by Willy Adames.

### Reds 7, White Sox 3

Aristides Aquino hit a two-run homer in the fifth inning and had an RBI during Cincinnati's five-run fourth as the host Reds took advantage of 11 walks by Chicago pitchers. It took some time, but the Reds made Chicago starter Dylan Cease (5-3) pay for his wildness. In a strange circumstance, Cease did not allow a hit while pitching into the fourth, but he walked seven and left after issuing free passes to the first three batters of his final inning—all would score. For Chicago (34-19), star shortstop Tim Anderson exited in the seventh inning with a reported hamstring injury.

### Braves 7, Mets 0

Kyle Wright turned in his best career start, and Ronald Acuna Jr homered and drove in four runs to lift Atlanta over host New York. Wright, Will Smith, Chris Martin and Mark Melancon combined on a three-hit shutout for the National League East-leading Braves, who won seven of 10 in the season series vs. the Mets. In his seventh start this season, Wright (2-4) retired 19 of 20 batters he faced in 6 1/3 outstanding innings. He surrendered just a two-out double to Wilson Ramos in the third inning and a one-out walk to J.D. Davis in the seventh that chased him.

### Rockies 6, Dodgers 3

Antonio Senzatela pitched into the seventh inning. Josh Fuentes had three hits, and Colorado beat Los Angeles in Denver to win its home finale. Senzatela (5-2) followed up the first complete game of his career with 6 1/3 solid innings against the NL West-leading Dodgers. He gave up one run on three hits and struck out three. Mychal Givens earned his first save for the Rockies, who finished 12-18 at Coors Field. Zach McKinstry doubled in the third inning for his first major league hit and added a single in the ninth for L.A., which saw its five-game winning streak snapped.

### Twins 4, Cubs 0

Jose Berrios pitched six scoreless innings, Max Kepler went 3 for 5 with a double, a homer and three RBIs, and Minnesota shut out host Chicago. Minnesota won the finale of the three-game series and finished its extended stay in Chicago at 3-4. The Twins started the trip with a four-game set against the White Sox. The Cubs dropped their second straight game after winning the previous five. The right-hander Berrios (5-3) extended his unbeaten streak to six starts. He scattered four hits across his six innings while walking one and striking out four. Cubs right-hander Yu Darvish (7-3) gave up four runs on nine hits in six innings. He walked one and struck out nine.

### Cardinals 2, Pirates 1

Yadier Molina's two-run homer in the seventh inning gave visiting St. Louis its fourth straight win over Pittsburgh and allowed the Cardinals to remain in playoff contention. St. Louis won the final four games of the five-game series and maintained a one-game lead over Milwaukee and Cincinnati in the chase for second place, and therefore a guaranteed postseason spot, in the National League Central. It was a pitching duel between Pittsburgh's Joe Musgrove and St. Louis' Jack Flaherty through six innings. Flaherty (4-2) allowed one run and two hits in six innings, with 11 strikeouts and two walks. Musgrove pitched six scoreless innings with a career-high 11 strikeouts.

### Marlins 2, Nationals 1 (Game 1)

Miami scored two unearned runs against three-time Cy Young Award winner Max Scherzer, and that was all the host Marlins needed to edge Washington in the first game of a doubleheader. Errors led to the runs in the first and sixth innings against Scherzer (4-4), who went 5 2/3 innings and matched his season high with 119 pitches while walking two, striking out six and giving up five hits. Miami's Sandy Alcantara (3-2) earned the win, allowing five hits, two walks and one run, striking out four in six innings. He threw 100 pitches—one short of his season high.

### Nationals 15, Marlins 0 (Game 2)

Asdrubal Cabrera drove in four runs, Kurt Suzuki had three RBIs, and Ben Braymer earned his first major league victory as Washington earned a split of its doubleheader with host Miami. Washington had 18 hits, including homers by Trea Turner, Suzuki, Michael A Taylor, Cabrera and Victor Robles. Miami had just two hits after getting five hits in winning the opener. Braymer (1-0), making his first major league start and only his third appearance, allowed one hit, three walks and no runs in five innings.



CALIFORNIA: Trent Grisham #2, Jurickson Profar #10 and Fernando Tatis Jr #23 of the San Diego Padres react after defeating the Seattle Mariners 7-4 to clinch a spot in the playoffs on September 20, 2020. —AFP

### Blue Jays 6, Phillies 3

Teoscar Hernandez hit a two-run homer, Jonathan Davis had a two-run double and visiting Toronto ended a six-game losing streak with a victory over Philadelphia. The Phillies lost right fielder Bryce Harper to an apparent hip injury after he struck out in the seventh inning. Toronto right-hander Taijuan Walker (4-3) allowed one run, four hits and two walks in six innings while matching his season best with eight strikeouts.

### Brewers 5, Royals 3

Daniel Vogelbach hit two home runs and drove in five runs to lift host Milwaukee over Kansas City. The Brewers kept their playoff hopes on pace after completing a three-game sweep of the Royals. Milwaukee scored 16 of their 19 runs in the series on home runs, including a grand slam and a trio of three-run shots.

### Rangers 7, Angels 2

Kyle Cody recorded his first major league victory for Texas after allowing one run over five innings in the win over Los Angeles in Anaheim, Calif.

Cody (1-1) allowed three hits, struck out five and didn't walk a batter in his fourth MLB start. Texas benefited from the long ball in the third game of the four-game series, getting home runs from Joey Gallo, Anderson Tejada, Sam Huff, Rougned Odor and Derek Dietrich.

### Giants 14, Athletics 2

Left-hander Tyler Anderson rebounded from an early ejection in his last start to pitch into the sixth inning, and visiting San Francisco vented five games' worth of frustration on Oakland, beating its cross-bay rivals in the finale of a three-game interleague series. Brandon Crawford belted a grand slam and Darin Ruf also drove in four runs, two with a home run, as the Giants finally broke through against the A's after losses in all five previous meetings this season. Anderson (3-3), who was given the heave-ho after pitching just two innings Thursday against Seattle, returned on two days' rest and dominated the A's, shutting them out for five innings before allowing two unearned runs in the sixth. —Reuters

## Sports

# Davis' buzzer-beating 3 lifts Lakers over Denver Nuggets

## Davis scores 31 points and pulled down 9 rebounds

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Davis drained a three-pointer as time expired to seal the Los Angeles Lakers' 105-103 victory over the Denver Nuggets Sunday for a 2-0 lead in the NBA Western Conference finals. "People talk about (I've) never been in this moment before, pressure, am I ready for it," Davis said. "I want to take those shots."

Davis scored 31 points and pulled down nine rebounds, and LeBron James added 11 rebounds as the Lakers turned back the determined Nuggets—who had taken a 103-102 lead on Nikola Jokic's driving basket with 20.8 seconds remaining. Jokic scored 11 straight points for the Nuggets down the stretch, finishing with 30 points, six rebounds and nine assists to lead Denver.

Jamal Murray added 25 points, and the Nuggets battled in a furious fourth quarter but finally came up short. Davis and Jokic traded baskets down the stretch, Jokic tipping in a miss from teammate Murray to put the Nuggets up 101-100 with 31.8 seconds left, only for Davis to answer at the other end. After Jokic scored to put the Nuggets ahead by one again, the Lakers' Alex Caruso missed a three-pointer, and Murray blocked a shot by Danny Green, giving the Lakers a chance to inbound the ball.

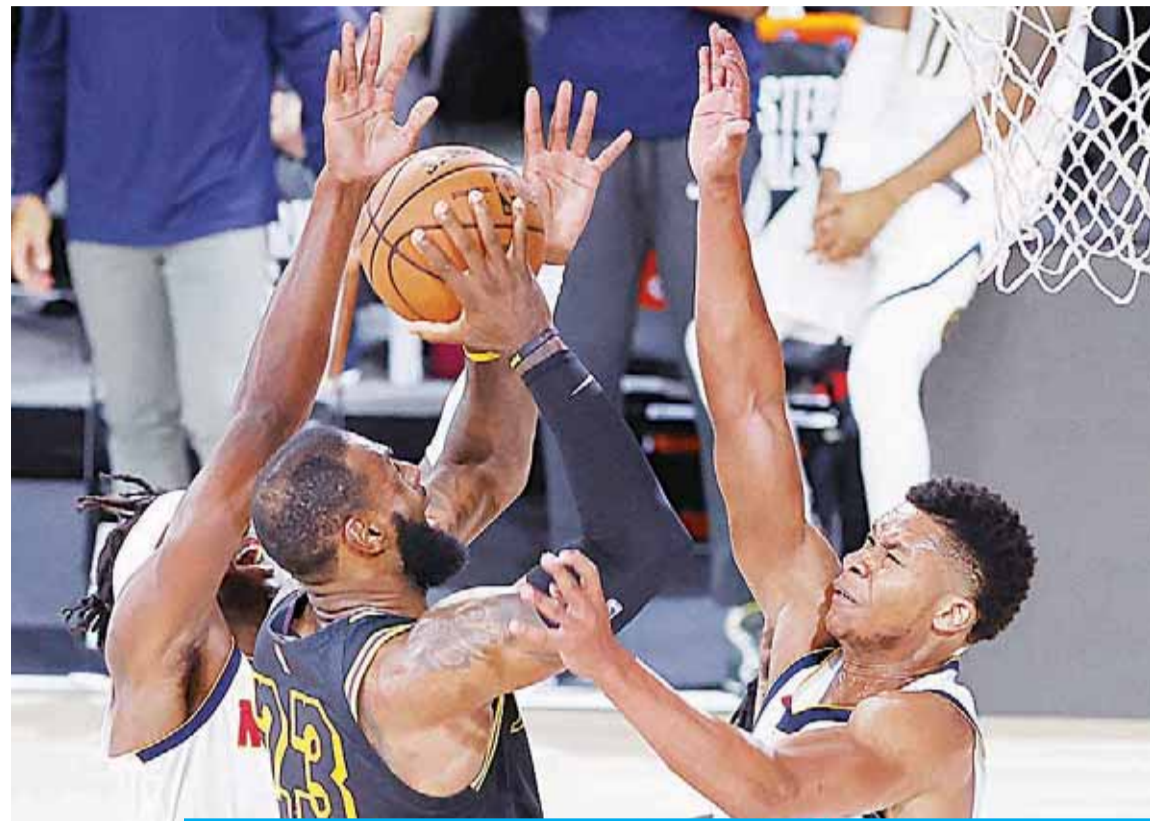
Rajon Rondo found Davis, and the All-Star forward drained the game-winner over Jokic. The Lakers will try to take a 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven series on Tuesday in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida. James powered the Lakers early, scoring Los Angeles' first 12 points. But the rest of the Lakers warmed up and Los Angeles put

together an 18-3 scoring run that included a galvanizing dunk from Caruso. The Lakers pushed the lead to as many as 16 points in the second quarter, but the Nuggets never surrendered.

### Special moment for Davis

Murray scored nine of his 25 points in a Nuggets surge that spanned the third and fourth quarters. His reverse layup gave Denver an 87-86 lead with 7:26 left in the fourth quarter—the Nuggets' first lead since the first quarter. "We put the effort, we put the fight," Jokic said. "Maybe we lost the game, but I think we played well. "Most of the game we were down, but we came back again, so we're going to keep our heads up and (go) on to the next one." For Davis, the game-winner was a career moment for a player who sought a trade from the New Orleans Pelicans so he would have a chance to challenge for an NBA title.

"Special moment for a special player," James said. "It's not about making the shot, it's about having the belief of just taking it, and living with the result. "You're not going to make them all. Tonight was his moment—Rondo was able to find him and he knocked it down—big-time play." The only thing that might have made it better, both James and Davis said, was if the big shot had come at Staples Center before a packed house of Lakers fans instead of in the bubble where only some friends and family of players are in attendance. "I wish we were playing at Staples," James said. "I miss our fans so much. I would have loved for him to have that moment." —AFP



FLORIDA: PJ Dozier #35 of the Denver Nuggets and Jerami Grant #9 of the Denver Nuggets defend LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers during the fourth quarter in Game Two of the Western Conference Finals on September 20, 2020. —AFP

## False 'age 41' claim held back my career: Minala

SHANGHAI: Joseph Minala does not wish to dwell on the bizarre age claim which propelled him into the headlines in 2014, but there is just no getting away from it. "It held back my career and is (still) holding back my career," the Cameroonian tells AFP. Minala was a budding star at Italian giants Lazio when a report out of Senegal claimed that he was not aged 17, as he said, but 41.

The allegation gained traction because Minala's rugged appearance and well-developed physique made him look significantly older. He was subjected to cruel ridicule on social media. But Italy's football association conducted an investigation and concluded that he was telling the truth. Minala turned 24 last month and is now playing in the Chinese Super League, but the midfielder says that he cannot shake off the stigma. "I had opportunities at some clubs (to move there), but I think it didn't happen because of this business," he said.

"This is an image that some people unfortunately have of me," Minala added. "I had the opportunity to go to France, I had the opportunity to go to Paris Saint-Germain at the time... but it didn't happen." Speaking by telephone from Suzhou, where his new team Qingdao Huanghai are playing in a 'bubble' to thwart the coronavirus, Minala said: "I would have had a different career (without this controversy). "Sometimes

people prefer to ignore that I'm a good player and only point out that aspect of me."

### Begging to go home

Minala's agent at the time explained that Minala looked older because of his difficult back story, which includes a spell in an Italian care home. The player was spotted as a talented youngster in Cameroon, and a former player who was also an agent promised him a trial at AC Milan. His parents spent "a lot of money" to finance the trip to Italy, but after arriving the 14-year-old Minala found himself stranded at a Rome train station. "I was told that people were coming to pick me up for the trial but I waited an hour, an hour-and-a-half, and still no one was there," he said.

"I only knew two words of Italian. I was abandoned at the station with my two suitcases and a mobile phone without a SIM card in it. "In the end, it was a scam that I never understood." Not knowing what to do, Minala went to a police station. "I didn't know anyone, I didn't know where to go, I wanted to tell my story to the police and return to my country," he recalled. "But since I was an unaccompanied minor, they took me to a hospital for tests, then to a social welfare centre and I was enrolled in an Italian school. "This is where my adventure began."

### 'People thought I'd go crazy'

Minala lived in the housing centre with other youths and it was there that he trained to do another job in case his football dreams failed to materialize. "I'm good at baking. Maybe after football, I'll open a bakery, you never know," he laughed. Mino Raiola, the high-profile agent who represents Paul Pogba and a slew of other stars, spotted Minala

said Djokovic, who has played five of his nine finals against Nadal in Rome. "So it's going to be strange not facing him, but at the same time, I won't underestimate anybody that steps on the court against me tomorrow." The Serb can win a record 36th Masters title on Monday. He is currently tied on 35 with Nadal. Of his four titles in Rome his last was in 2015, with three lost finals in 2016, 2017 and 2019.

### Top women's seeds clash

World number two Halep ousted Garbine Muguruza 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 to meet second seed Pliskova who eased past fellow Czech Marketa Vondrousova 6-2, 6-4. "Thank God I don't play (Elina) Svitolina, because I lost two times against her," joked Halep of the Ukrainian she twice fell to in the final. Wimbledon champion Halep held off a fightback from her Spanish rival. After pulling level at a set all, the ninth seed slumped to 5-1 down in the third, before pulling out a string of winners to draw the match back to 4-5.

Serving to stay in the match, though, she hit successive double faults to hand Halep victory. Halep extended her winning streak this season to 13 consecutive victories, with her last defeat coming against Muguruza in the Australian Open. She won the Dubai title in February, before the coronavirus lockdown,

take inspiration from teams that have impressed - there was little time, the lads returned from the national teams, we only worked together for a week. "Today and already with (the friendly against) Novara we have seen something, it will take time. We lack players but we're trying to do the best with what we have." Juventus handed debut to new signing Weston McKennie and Kulusevski, who joined from Atalanta in January before immediately returning to Parma on loan. Kulusevski curled in the first goal in a move started by Ronaldo, who hit the bar minutes later.

But it was not until the last quarter of an hour that the champions finally killed off the game they dominated, with Aaron Ramsey missing a chance for a fourth late. "I am very disappointed, I didn't expect such an opaque performance from my side," said Ranieri. "We were timid, fearful. Juventus were hungry, we were not." Juventus next head to Roma next week after the side from the capital were held to a goalless draw in their opener on Saturday, before hosting Napoli, 2-0 winners this weekend against Parma.

### Osimhen inspires Napoli

Victor Osimhen proved decisive on his Serie A debut inspiring Napoli as they target a return to



SUZHOU: Qingdao Huanghai's Joseph Minala (center) fights for the ball during the Chinese Super League football match (CSL) between Shanghai SIPG and Qingdao Huanghai in Suzhou in China's eastern Jiangsu province. —AFP

playing in amateur football in the Rome region and took him south to Napoli.

After one year as a youth player at Napoli there was interest from Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan, he says, but in 2013 he joined Lazio's under-19 squad. It was a year later that the claims were made about his age and he then made several loan moves, notably to Bari and Salernitana in Italy's second tier. At the start of this year he moved to Qingdao on loan, but the coronavirus pandemic delayed his debut until last month. —AFP



ROME: Serbia's Novak Djokovic plays a backhand to Norway's Casper Ruud during their semi final match of the Men's Italian Open at Foro Italico in Rome on September 20, 2020. —AFP

coming back to claim victory in Prague last month having skipped the US Open. Italy's government from Sunday allowed up to 1,000 spectators at open-air sports events for the first time since the coronavirus lockdown. "That definitely was nice to have some people out there," said Pliskova. "It felt super empty, like super lonely." —AFP

Champions League football having finished seventh last season. After a barren first hour in Emilia Romagna, Osimhen came off the bench to provide an electric shock for Gennaro Gattuso's side. Dries Mertens and Lorenzo Insigne scored both goals after his arrival which were set up by Mexican Hirving Lozano.

"Osimhen at this moment has an extra gear," said Gattuso of the 21-year-old who Napoli paid Lille a club record 80 million euros (\$94.6 million) for this summer. "He's a serious lad who does not forget where he comes from, he lost his parents as a child, he is a young man with the head of a 40-year-old." The decisive tactical switch lifted Napoli from zero opportunities to six, with two goals, and as many near misses.

Just after his introduction, Osimhen picked up a Lozano cross to force a poor clearance from Parma defender Simone Iacoponi into the path of Mertens who finished after 63 minutes. Insigne hit the post before he made it 2-0 after 77 minutes, to hand Parma, 11th last season, a first defeat on front of their new owner US billionaire Kyle Krause who purchased a 90 percent stake in the club during the week. Genoa kicked off their campaign with a 4-0 win at home against promoted Crotone with Sassuolo and Cagliari settling for a 1-1 draw. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Marseille salvage draw

PARIS: Olympique de Marseille needed a late goal from substitute Valere Germain, an excellent performance from goalkeeper Steve Mandanda and some help from the woodwork to salvage a 1-1 draw at home to Lille in Ligue 1 on Sunday. The visitors dominated the first half and finally went ahead two minutes after the restart when Luiz Araujo collected a pass from Jonathan Bamba, cut inside his marker and slotted a low shot into the far corner. Mandanda then made key saves from Araujo and Jonathan David while Burak Yilmaz and Araujo also hit the woodwork in a spell of intense Lille pressure. But Lille sat back in the closing minutes and paid the price when Germain equalised from a corner with five minutes remaining. Lille, fifth in the standings, remained unbeaten after four games with eight points while Marseille are one point behind in seventh. —Reuters

#### Gundogan tests positive

LONDON: Manchester City midfielder Ilkay Gundogan has tested positive for COVID-19, the Premier League club said yesterday, making him the third player in the squad to return a positive test in recent weeks. City winger Riyad Mahrez and defender Aymeric Laporte previously tested positive for the novel coronavirus earlier this month. "Ilkay is now observing a 10-day period of self-isolation in accordance with Premier League and UK Government protocol on quarantine," the club said in a statement. Gundogan is likely to miss three matches for City while he self-isolates, including yesterday's league clash against Wolverhampton Wanderers, Thursday's League Cup tie against Bournemouth and Sunday's league game against Leicester City. —Reuters

#### Palmeiras remain unbeaten

PORTO ALEGRE: A stoppage time goal from Ferreira won a point for Gremio at home to Palmeiras on Sunday and prevented the Sao Paulo club from moving into third spot in Brazil's Serie A table. Raphael Veiga scored with 19 minutes remaining to give Palmeiras the lead but Ferreira's late header left honours even. Palmeiras have now gone 17 matches unbeaten. Palmeiras, who are still the only undefeated team in the league after 10 rounds of matches, are now in fourth place, three points behind leaders Atletico Mineiro. Gremio, who have won only once in their last seven games, are five points behind in 11th place. —Reuters

#### Santos draw at Botafogo

RIO DE JANEIRO: Santos could not turn their dominance into goals as they shared the points with Botafogo in a 0-0 draw in Rio de Janeiro. The visitors had the lion's share of the possession and 14 shots on goal to Botafogo's three, but profligacy and a fine performance from Gaito in the Botafogo goal helped the home side to a point that extended their winless streak to seven games. Santos remain in seventh place in the Serie A table with 15 points, six points behind leaders Atletico Mineiro, while Botafogo are third from bottom with 10 points. —Reuters

#### Delhi edge out Kings XI

NEW DELHI: Australia's Marcus Stoinis smashed a whirlwind half-century as Delhi Capitals edged out Kings XI Punjab in a super-over thriller after the second match of the Indian Premier League ended in a tie on Sunday. Stoinis proved his worth for Delhi, who brought the all-rounder in the December auction, with his 21-ball 53 to lift the side to 157 for eight after being put into bat in Dubai. Mayank Agarwal nearly trumped the batting blitz with his 89 off 60 balls as Punjab closed in on their target but Stoinis claimed two wickets on successive balls in the final over to take the match into a super over. —AFP

## Top seeds Djokovic, Halep cruise into Italian Open finals

ROME: Top seeds Novak Djokovic and Simona Halep both advanced to the finals of the Italian Open on Sunday as fans returned to the stands at the Foro Italico for the first time. World number one Djokovic beat Norway's Casper Ruud 7-5, 6-3 and will play Argentine Diego Schwartzman for his fifth Rome title. Top women's seed Simona Halep reached a third final where she faces defending champion Karolina Pliskova for a trophy the Romanian narrowly missed out on in 2017 and 2018.

Djokovic had been on a collision course for another final showdown with Nadal a week before the French Open at Roland Garros. But Schwartzman eliminated the nine-time Rome winner in the quarter-finals, and booked his ticket to the final with a 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (7/4) win over Canadian Denis Shapovalov.

"Of course, you know, with Nadal in the finals and without Nadal in the finals makes a big difference,"

## Pirlo off to dream start as Juve open bid for 10th title

MILAN: Andrea Pirlo got his coaching career off to a winning start as Juventus launched their bid for a 10th consecutive league title with a 3-0 win over Sampdoria on Sunday. Swedish debutant Dejan Kulusevski opened the scoring after 13 minutes in Turin with Leonardo Bonucci adding a second on 78 minutes and Cristiano Ronaldo a late third. The match was played in front of 1,000 spectators as Serie A stadiums reopened on Sunday to a limited number of fans after a seven-month coronavirus lockdown.

Pirlo could not have hoped for a better start to his coaching career having taken over from Maurizio Sarri this summer. The win against Sampdoria, coached by veteran Claudio Ranieri, came just days after the former Italy and Juventus star received his coaching diploma. "It will take time to put together the mode of play, but I will not copy and paste," warned the 41-year-old. "I will

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## Seahawks outlast Patriots 35-30

Cowboys down Falcons; Wilson tosses 5 TDs as



SEATTLE: Shaquill Griffin #26 of the Seattle Seahawks defends a pass intended for NiKeal Harry #15 of the New England Patriots during the second half at CenturyLink Field on September 20, 2020. — AFP

**NEW YORK:** Russell Wilson threw five touchdown passes and the Seattle Seahawks made a defensive stand at the goal line on the game's final play to defeat the visiting New England Patriots 35-30 on Sunday night. Cam Newton nearly rallied the Patriots from a 12-point deficit in the final 4:32. He scored on a 1-yard TD run with 2:16 left to make the score 35-30 and, after Seattle went three-and-out, drove to New England's 1-yard line with two seconds left. Newton tried to run for the score, but was stopped by Seattle's LJ Collier for a 1-yard loss.

Wilson completed 21 of 28 passes for 288 yards and rushed for 39 yards for the Seahawks (2-0). Wilson threw four TDs last week in a 38-25 victory at Atlanta. DK Metcalf, Tyler Lockett, David Moore, Freddie Swain and Chris Carson made TD receptions for the Seahawks, who outscored New England (1-1) 14-3 in the third quarter to pull away from a 14-all halftime tie. Newton completed 30 of 44 passes for 397 yards and a touchdown and had a team-high 47 yards rushing and two TDs. The Patriots' Julian Edelman made eight receptions for 179 yards.

### Cowboys 40, Falcons 39

Dak Prescott threw for 450 yards and a touchdown and ran for three scores, and Dallas pulled off an improbable comeback with a win over Atlanta in Arlington, Texas. Greg Zuerlein's 46-yard field goal on the game's final play completed a wild rally including Dallas' recovery of an onside kick after the Cowboys trailed by 20 points in the first half, by 15 in the fourth quarter, and by nine with two minutes left. Dallas (1-1) avoided its first 0-2 start since 2010. Atlanta is 0-2 for the first time since 2007.

### Chiefs 23, Chargers 20 (OT)

Patrick Mahomes passed for two touchdowns, and Harrison Butker's franchise record-tying 58-yard field goal in overtime spoiled Justin Herbert's impressive debut, as Kansas City beat AFC West rival Los Angeles at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif. The Chiefs (2-0) fell behind 17-6 in the second half, but erased the deficit with 11 unanswered points in the fourth quarter. The run capped when Mahomes threw for 54 of his 302 yards on a one-footed toss to Tyreek Hill for a touchdown.

Hill finished with 99 yards on five receptions. Herbert, the Chargers' first-round draft choice, was a late insert into the lineup with Week 1 starter

Tyrod Taylor scratched just before kickoff due to a chest injury. Herbert led the Chargers (1-1) on an opening 79-yard, eight-play drive, capped on a 4-yard run for a touchdown. He finished with 311 yards passing, threw a touchdown and ran for a score.

### Ravens 33, Texans 16

Lamar Jackson threw a touchdown pass and Mark Ingram II rushed for a score as Baltimore pounded host Houston with more than 200 yards rushing. LJ Fort added a fumble return for a touchdown and Justin Tucker kicked four field goals as the Ravens (2-0) didn't trail in a game that never turned into a shootout between Jackson—the reigning NFL Most Valuable Player—and Texans star quarterback DeShaun Watson. Jackson completed 18 of 24 for 204 yards and connected with Patrick Ricard on a 1-yard touchdown. Watson completed 25 of 36 for 275 yards with a touchdown and an interception for the Texans (0-2). He rushed for just 17 yards. Baltimore outrushed Houston 230-51.

### Bears 17, Giants 13

Mitchell Trubisky threw two touchdown passes, and Chicago (2-0) held on for the win over visiting New York (0-2), which lost star running back Saquon Barkley to a right knee injury on the first play of the second quarter. David Montgomery and Darnell Mooney each caught a touchdown pass for Chicago, which has won its first two games of the season for the first time since 2013. A bad start to the season quickly got worse for New York. Barkley is scheduled to undergo tests on his right knee on Monday, but ESPN's Adam Schefter reported the Giants fear he might have a torn ACL.

### Steelers 26, Broncos 21

Ben Roethlisberger completed 29 of 41 passes for 311 yards, two touchdowns and an interception, James Conner rushed for 106 yards and a score, and Pittsburgh beat visiting Denver. Diontae Johnson had eight receptions for 92 yards and a TD, and Chase Claypool had 88 yards receiving, including an 84-yard touchdown, for the Steelers (2-0). Broncos backup quarterback Jeff Driskel completed 18 of 34 passes for 256 yards with two touchdowns and an interception in relief of injured Drew Lock, who suffered a right shoulder injury when he was sacked and fumbled in the first quarter. Denver (0-2) drove to the Steelers' 15 with about two minutes left, but the

Steelers sacked Driskel on fourth-and-2 and then ran out the clock.

### Buccaneers 31, Panthers 17

Tom Brady threw a touchdown pass and Leonard Fournette scored two touchdowns as Tampa Bay defeated Carolina in Tampa, Fla. Brady, a week after receiving criticism from coach Bruce Arians in his debut with the Buccaneers, completed 23 of 35 passes for 217 yards with an interception. Fournette's 46-yard touchdown ramble with 1:48 to go put him at 103 rushing yards on 12 carries for the Bucs (1-1). The Panthers (0-2) committed turnovers on their first two possessions and fell into a 21-0 hole at halftime. Christian McCaffrey scored on second-half runs of 1 and 7 yards for Carolina. Teddy Bridgewater completed 33 of 42 passes for 367 yards with two interceptions.

### 49ers 31, Jets 13

San Francisco overcame injuries to Jimmy Garoppolo, Raheem Mostert, Nick Bosa and Solomon Thomas with a stellar defensive effort, limiting host New York to just two field goals before a meaningless late touchdown in a one-sided romp. A gimpy Garoppolo threw two touchdown passes to tight end Jordan Reed before calling it a day at halftime, and Mostert dashed 80 yards for a TD on the first offensive play of the game, helping the 49ers (1-1) overcome an opening loss to Arizona with a decisive win. The 49ers led 21-3 at the half after Reed hauled in 18- and 4-yard touchdowns from Garoppolo. Sam Darnold went 21-of-32 for 179 yards with a 30-yard TD to Braxton Berrios for the Jets (0-2), who opened last week with a loss at Buffalo. New York managed just 277 yards, with 80 coming on the final drive, after playing without running back Le'Veon Bell and wideout Jamison Crowder.

### Titans 33, Jaguars 30

Ryan Tannehill completed four touchdown passes and Stephen Gostkowski made a 49-yard field goal with 1:41 left in regulation to lead Tennessee over division rival Jacksonville in Nashville. Tannehill completed 18 of 24 pass attempts for 239 yards, including 172 in the first half, and did not throw an interception as the Titans improved to 2-0 for the first time since 2008. Derrick Henry finished with 84 yards on 25 carries. Gardner Minshew was inter-

cepted with 51 seconds left at the Jacksonville 45 after Jeffrey Simmons batted a pass and Harold Landry made the catch as the Jaguars (1-1) failed to finish off the comeback attempt. Jacksonville trailed 21-7 at the half, but tied it 30-30 in the fourth quarter. Minshew finished with 339 yards passing and three touchdowns to go with two interceptions.

### Packers 42, Lions 21

Aaron Jones had scoring runs of 75 and 14 yards and caught a touchdown pass from Aaron Rodgers, and host Green Bay cruised to a win over Detroit. Jones rushed for 168 yards on 18 carries and caught four passes for 68 yards for the Packers (2-0). Rodgers passed for 240 yards and two touchdowns without an interception. Detroit's Matthew Stafford threw for 244 yards and two touchdowns but also had an interception returned for a score. Kerryon Johnson added a rushing touchdown and Marvin Jones caught four passes, including a touchdown, for the Lions (0-2).

### Rams 37, Eagles 19

Tyler Higbee caught three touchdown passes from Jared Goff, and Los Angeles recovered after nearly coughing up a three-score lead to beat host Philadelphia (0-2). Los Angeles (2-0) jumped out to a 21-3 lead early in the second quarter on the second of Higbee's career-high three scoring grabs. The tight end matched his touchdown total from the entire 2019 season in Sunday's effort. Eagles quarterback Carson Wentz finished the day 26-of-43 passing for 242 yards but he threw two interceptions. Goff completed his first 13 pass attempts on the day and finished 20-of-27 for 267 yards and the three touchdowns.

### Colts 28, Vikings 11

Jonathan Taylor rushed for 101 yards and one touchdown and Indianapolis intercepted Kirk Cousins three times en route to an easy victory over visiting Minnesota. Philip Rivers completed 19 of 25 passes for 214 yards, one touchdown and one interception for Indianapolis (1-1). The touchdown throw was the 399th of Rivers' career and he is one shy of becoming the sixth player in NFL history to reach at least 400 scoring passes. Cousins was just 11-of-26 passing for 113 yards in addition to the interceptions for the Vikings (0-2). Dalvin Cook rushed for 63 yards and one touchdown on 14 carries but Minnesota totaled just 175 yards and 12 first downs. — Reuters

## Real Madrid toil in goalless draw

**MADRID:** Real Madrid began the defense of their Spanish title with a tepid 0-0 draw at Real Sociedad on Sunday as Martin Odegaard made his first league start for the reigning champions against his former club. Madrid are heading into the La Liga season after making no new signings this summer, with president Florentino Perez admitting the club has to be cautious amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Odegaard is the closest thing to a new arrival, the attacking midfielder returning early from his two

year loan with Real Sociedad, after he shone for them last season. But there have been a string of sales, including Gareth Bale, whose move back to Tottenham was confirmed on Saturday, and James Rodriguez, who has already impressed after joining Everton.

Norwegian Odegaard, whose only other league appearance for Madrid came in May 2015, lasted 69 minutes before he was replaced by Casemiro. "We didn't get the win. I'm not happy about that, but I'm pleased to play with Real Madrid," Odegaard told Movistar. "It's always a bit difficult at the start but it's easier for me with all these incredible players I have around me." Zinedine Zidane has brushed off suggestions his Real Madrid side could lack freshness this season, with a very familiar XI starting this first game.

One notable omission was Eden Hazard, whose fitness remains unresolved, even after the summer break. Zidane admitted on Saturday he was unsure whether Hazard has recovered from the ankle injury that required him to have surgery earlier this year. Sergio Ramos, three goals shy of a century for Madrid, watched an acrobatic effort blocked in a quiet first half before Karim Benzema dragged wide of the post after rounding the goalkeeper. Alexander Isak spurned the best chance when Thibaut Courtois spread his body well to block from the young Swedish striker.

Teenager Ander Barrenetxea side-footed just past the post early in the second half for the hosts while Alex Remiro made comfortable stops from Dani Carvajal and Benzema. David Silva made his

La Liga return after a decade with Manchester City as he took the place of Isak for the final 25 minutes. "It's two points lost but we struggled to make chances, particularly in the second half. We had two or three in the first half," said Zidane.

"We played a good game, especially defensively. We didn't concede anything but we lacked a bit in attack, and above all, a goal." Barcelona do not start their league campaign under new coach Ronald Koeman until next weekend against Villarreal. Granada lead the table with maximum points after two rounds following Sunday's 2-1 victory over Alaves. Real Betis trail on goal difference after beating Real Valladolid 2-0 with a penalty from Nabil Fekir and a William Carvalho goal. — AFP