



7 Senegalese town fighting losing battle against trash



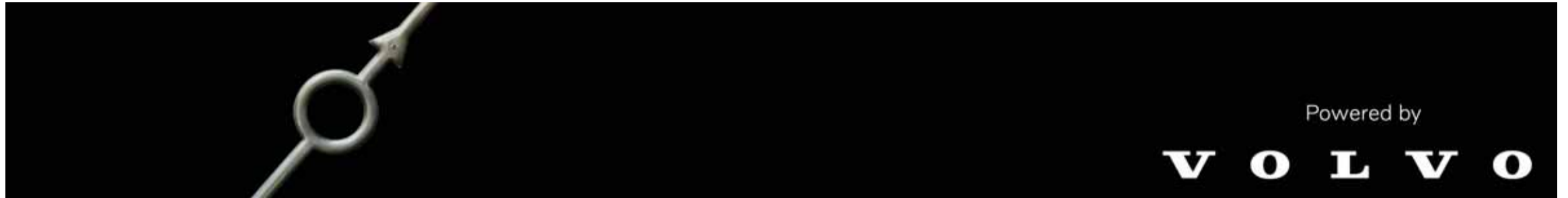
8 Beijing autoshow: China's back, EVs booming, outlook uncertain



12 Back to Venus: Company wants to beat NASA in search for life

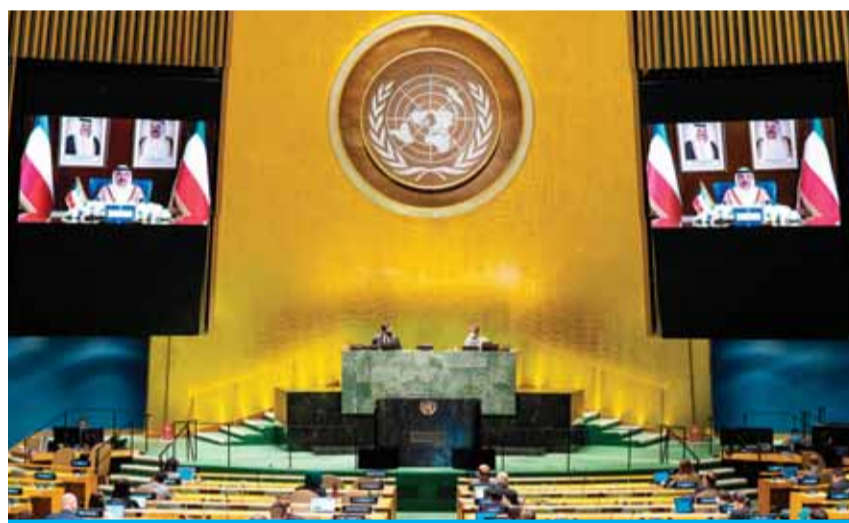


16 100th minute penalty hands Man United win at Brighton



Amir's representative affirms support to Palestinian cause

PM lauds UN's exceptional roles in facing the coronavirus pandemic



UNITED NATIONS: This UN handout photo shows HH the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as he virtually addresses the general debate of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Friday in New York. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, said the Palestinian issue still has a central, historical and pivotal position in the Arab and Islamic worlds, affirming Kuwait's firm and steadfast stance in supporting the choices of the Palestinian people to obtain their legitimate rights. This came during Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's speech at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly on Friday.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also stressed the importance of continuing efforts to resume negotiations within a specific timetable to reach a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with the references of the peace process, international legitimacy decisions, the Arab peace initiative, and ending the Israeli occupation as well as establishing an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital on the borders before June 4, 1967. He appreciated, in this context, all international efforts aimed at resolving this key issue.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled commended the exceptional roles played by the UN to face the novel coronavirus pandemic. The roles were shown through harnessing all methods and measures to address this pandemic by accelerating work on providing vaccines, diagnostic tools and treatment to all people and every-

where, he said.

Within the framework of its responsibilities to back efforts of the international community to combat the pandemic, Kuwait donated about \$290 million, stressing its commitment to cooperation so as to support all international efforts to facilitate producing vaccines and offer them fairly to the neediest countries.

On Yemen, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said that the continuation of Yemen's crisis is a clear signal of a reality on how to deal with relevant resolutions and outcomes of the UN Security Council. The PM stressed Kuwait's firm position that the Syrian crisis can be only solved by negotiations as they are the only way for ending this humanitarian disaster which entered its tenth year. On Libya, he said Kuwait renews its call for all Libyan parties to exercise self-restraint and prioritize peaceful solutions based on dialogue and rejecting violence.

Kuwait renews its call for Iran to take serious measures to build confidence and start dialogue based on respecting the sovereignty of countries and not interfering in their domestic affairs, as well as reducing tensions in the Gulf in a manner that contributes to establishing ties based on mutual respect and cooperation and reflecting future aspirations of all countries of the region, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled added. — KUNA (See Page 2)

Adib bows out from forming Lebanon govt

BEIRUT: Lebanon's premier-designate stepped down yesterday, saying he had been unable to form a reform-minded government to lift the country out of its worst economic crisis in decades. Lebanon's last government

resigned in the aftermath of a colossal blast in Beirut port on Aug 4 that killed more than 190 people, wounded thousands and ravaged swathes of the capital. Since his nomination on August 31, Mustapha Adib has been under pressure to form a new cabinet as soon as possible to carry out the necessary reforms to unlock billions of dollars in foreign aid.

"I excuse myself from continuing the task of forming the government," Adib said in a televised speech. "I apologize to the Lebanese people... for my inability to realize its aspirations for a reformist team," he said. Government formation usually takes months in multi-confessional Lebanon, which has

operated a power-sharing arrangement ever since a devastating 1975-90 civil war that requires consensus among the main parties on major decisions.

Adib's efforts to come up with a new line-up have been effectively blocked by the two main parties representing Lebanon's large Shiite community - Amal and Hezbollah. The two parties have refused to budge on their demand to keep the finance ministry under their control, a position analysts say is linked to recent US sanctions against a former minister from Amal, as well as Hezbollah-linked businesses.

Continued on Page 2



Mustapha Adib

Witness arrests in rape case jolt Egypt's #MeToo

CAIRO: A climate of fear has gripped Egypt's #MeToo movement as the arrests of witnesses in a high-profile rape case threaten to derail efforts to curb male sexual violence in the Arab country. A group of nine men from wealthy families are suspected of drugging and gang-raping a young woman in Cairo's luxury Fairmont hotel and circulating a video of the assault. It allegedly took place in 2014 but the allegations only emerged online in July and a complaint was filed in early August.

Five suspects were arrested, three of them in Lebanon which handed them over to Egyptian authorities this week. Another four fled to the UK and the US, according to a women's activist connected to the case who requested anonymity. But events have taken a sudden U-turn. At the end of last month, authorities also arrested four witnesses, along with two acquaintances with no direct links to the case, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW).

The US-based rights monitor said the six have been accused of "violating laws on 'morality' and 'debauchery'". Several were pressured to alter their accounts, HRW cited activists as saying. Hoda Al-Sadda, an academic at Cairo University, expressed concern at the developments. "That a clear-cut case with tangible evidence turns into a case where the culprits become the victims and witnesses are accused is... frightening," Sadda said.

Some of the detained witnesses have also been the target of smear campaigns, with compromising images posted on the Internet. The anonymous activist told AFP that some had been forced to undergo "virginity tests" and

Continued on Page 2

Top actresses questioned in drugs probe

NEW DELHI: Three popular Bollywood actresses were questioned yesterday in a drug probe that has sent shockwaves through India's film industry, already hurt by COVID-19 lockdowns. Officials from the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) have been investigating alleged drug use in Bollywood for the last month in connection with the death of Sushant Singh Rajput, a popular actor who was found dead at his residence in June. The investigation aims at finding whether there is a nexus between the film industry and the drug trade, a law enforcement official told Reuters.

Continued on Page 2



MUMBAI: (From left) Bollywood actresses Deepika Padukone, Sara Ali Khan and Shraddha Kapoor arrive to attend questioning by Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) officials yesterday. — AFP

Do masks help boost COVID immunity?

PARIS: Could the mask - already seen by many scientists as the most effective shield against COVID-19 - have yet another benefit? Some researchers now believe that they expose wearers to smaller, less harmful doses of the disease which spark an immune response. This as yet unproven theory suggests that masks could help inoculate people while we wait for a vaccine. Non-medical fabric or disposable masks have been recommended across the world, mainly as a way to help stop infected people from spreading the new coronavirus.

While they do not offer full protection, masks may potentially reduce the

amount of virus inhaled by a wearer, according to a recent paper published this month in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM). "We hypothesize that the higher a dose (or inoculum) of virus you get into your body, the more sick you get," one of the authors Monica Gandhi, a specialist in infectious diseases at the University of California San Francisco, told AFP. "We think that masks reduce that dose of virus that you inhale and, thereby, drive up rates of asymptomatic infection."

Gandhi, director of the UCSF-Gladstone Center for AIDS Research, said that asymptomatic infection was linked to a strong immune response from T lymphocytes - a type of white blood cell - that may act against COVID-19. "We think masks can act as a sort of 'bridge' to a vaccine by giving us some immunity", she said, adding that researchers were

Continued on Page 2



BEIJING: A visitor covers his face with a mask as he sleeps on a bench at the Beijing Auto Show yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait supports Palestinian people's choices to obtain legitimate rights

Amir's representative lauds UN's exceptional roles in facing COVID-19

KUWAIT: The Palestinian issue still has a central, historical and pivotal position in the Arab and Islamic worlds, Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said on Friday. He also affirmed Kuwait's firm and steadfast stance in supporting the choices of the Palestinian people to obtain their legitimate rights. Furthermore, he stressed the importance of continuing efforts to resume negotiations within a specific timetable to

“Yemen crisis threatens regional stability”

reach a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with the references of the peaceful process, international legitimacy decisions, the Arab peace initiative, and end the Israeli occupation as well as establish an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the borders before June 4, 1967. He appreciated, in this context, all international efforts aimed at resolving this key issue.

Facing the pandemic

This came during Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's speech at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly via videoconference. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled commended the exceptional roles played by the UN to face the novel coronavirus pandemic. These roles “were shown through harnessing all methods and measures to address this pandemic by accelerating work on providing vaccines, diagnostic tools, and treatment to all people and everywhere,” he said.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled congratulated Volkan Bozkir on being elected President of UN General Assembly, expressing Kuwait's full support to facilitate the assembly's works and responsibilities, and appreciating efforts made by former UNGA presi-



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah delivers a speech at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly via videoconference. — KUNA

dent Tijani Mohammad-Bandi. The 75th session of the UNGA is being held amid unprecedented conditions, which affected the whole world, he said, referring to the repercussions of the novel coronavirus on all countries across the globe. He offered sincere condolences to the world's peoples and countries over those died due to the pandemic. He stressed the importance of enhancing the implemented environmental, social, healthy and economic systems, pointing to the deaths of 960,000 due to the coronavirus pandemic and the infections of more than 3 million others as well as the highest waves of recession the world didn't see since the aftermath of World War II.

The pandemic has contributed to increasing crises the countries are suffering from and enlarged challenges facing their people of which unfortunately the Arab and Middle Eastern region have got the largest share, despite the presence of

written solutions and the described remedial methods represented in the abundant amount of international references of the UN Security Council and the General Assembly's resolutions and outcomes, he noted. However, the chronic challenge regarding implementing and seriously dealing with their provisions remained an obstacle to move forward towards achieving the desired progress, he stated. Within the framework of its responsibilities to back efforts of the international community to combat the pandemic, Kuwait donated about \$290 million, stressing its commitment to cooperation so as to support all international efforts to facilitate producing vaccines and offer them fairly to the neediest countries. He announced that Kuwait is ready to host critical cases of the UN's employees and the field workers in Central and Western Asia infected by the coronavirus to receive treatment in hospitals in Kuwait.

Yemen's crisis

On Yemen, he said that the continuation of Yemen's crisis, which poses dangerous threats to regional stability and security, is a clear signal of a reality on how to deal with the relevant resolutions and outcomes of the UN Security Council, stressing the importance of implementing the Stockholm Agreement. “In this context, we renew our firm position that the Yemeni crisis can only be resolved politically based on the three agreed upon references, the Gulf initiative and its executive mechanisms, the outcomes of the national dialogue and the UN resolutions mainly 2261, renewing our support to all efforts made by UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Yemen aimed at resuming the political process to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis,” he said. He urged all parties to respond positively and agree to the proposals he presented, welcoming the constructive roles played by the sisterly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to activate the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement, renewing Kuwait's condemnation of all the attacks on the Saudi territories, and affirming its support for all measures taken by the Kingdom to preserve its security and stability. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled stressed Kuwait's firm position that the Syrian crisis can be only solved by negotiations as they are the only way for ending this humanitarian disaster which entered its tenth year, calling on all parties to be involved positively in these talks.

On Libya, he said Kuwait renews its call for all Libyan parties to self-restraint and prioritize peaceful solutions based on dialogue and rejecting violence, welcoming the positive results made during the talks to draw a roadmap so as to unify the State's sovereign institutions in line with the UN Security Council resolutions mainly 2501 and the outcomes of the international and regional conferences. Kuwait renews its call for Iran to take serious measures to build confidence and start dialogue based on respecting the sovereignty of the countries and not to interfering into their domestic affairs as well as reducing tensions in the Gulf in a manner that contributes to establishing ties based on mutual respect and cooperation and reflecting future aspirations of all countries of the region, he added. — KUNA

Witness arrests in rape case jolt...

Continued from Page 1

anal examinations - practices HRW describes as “internationally discredited... with no scientific validity to ‘prove’ same-sex conduct or ‘virginity.’”

Rothna Begum, a senior women's rights researcher at HRW, voiced alarm. “The case against the witnesses and the smear campaign against them and the rape survivor send a chilling message to survivors of sexual violence and witnesses that they can go to prison if they report sexual violence,” Begum said.

It is not the first time those denouncing violence against women in Egypt have found themselves targeted. Earlier this year, teenager Menna Abdel-Aziz, her face battered and bruised, posted a video on social media in which she said she had been gang raped. The authorities' response was swift: They arrested the alleged attackers, along with the 17-year-old girl, charging them all with “promoting debauchery”.

Top actresses questioned in...

Continued from Page 1

Actresses Deepika Padukone, Shraddha Kapoor and Sara Ali Khan were seen on television walking into the NCB offices in Mumbai questioning. Padukone, Khan and Kapoor were not immediately available for comment. Officials at NCB's Mumbai offices did not respond to Reuters requests for comments. The NCB questioned several other well-known people connected to the industry this week in Mumbai, including pro-

Adib bows out from forming...

Continued from Page 1

Adib, a little-known 48-year-old former ambassador, was named just hours before French President Emmanuel Macron made his second visit to the country since the Aug 4 blast, pressing for the speedy formation of a reformist government. Macron said he had secured commitments from all of Lebanon's political parties to help Adib form a new cabinet within a fortnight, but that deadline came and went.

Adib said it had become clear he no longer had support from all political forces. “As the efforts to form a government reached their final phase, it became apparent to me that this consensus... was no longer there and that forming one according to the criteria I had determined was bound to fail.”

President Michel Aoun accepted Adib's resignation and was set to “take the appropriate measures

Even female social media influencers have been in the authorities' sights. In July, five were sentenced to jail time on charges of violating public morals over content posted to video-sharing app TikTok. In the Fairmont case, lawyers have fallen silent. And Egypt's National Council for Women, which had encouraged witnesses to come forward, has instead been accused of throwing them to the lions. The head of the council did not respond to an AFP request for comment.

The administrator of Assault Police, an Instagram account advocating justice for rape survivors that had reported the case, suspended the account for several weeks after receiving threats, HRW said. Egypt's parliament in August approved amendments to the criminal code granting victims of sexual assault the right to anonymity.

But developments since have dashed hopes for real progress. Several pro-regime media outlets have given a totally different account of the alleged gang rape, indicating an orgy that went awry. Sada, the academic, expressed pessimism at the impact on what had been a resurgent #MeToo movement in Egypt. The developments “destroy the credibility of institutions” like the National Council for Women, she said, and could sink “a dynamic social movement”. — AFP

ducers, talent managers and a fashion designer.

The 191 billion rupee (\$2.59 billion) Indian film industry, of which Mumbai-based Bollywood forms a major part, has been struggling with a lean year, as theatres remain shut due to the pandemic. Mumbai police initially reported Rajput's death as accidental and local media called it a suicide, but the federal police agency is now investigating whether there was foul play.

On Sept 8 the NCB arrested Rajput's girlfriend, actress Rhea Chakraborty, accusing her of being “active in a drug syndicate connected with drug supplies”, according to her bail order. Chakraborty, who remains in jail in Mumbai, has denied wrongdoing. Her lawyer, Satish Maneshinde, called the arrest “a travesty of justice”. — Reuters

according to the requirements of the constitution”, the president's office said. “The initiative launched by French President Emmanuel Macron is still ongoing and still receives my full support,” it quoted Aoun as saying.

Even before last month's blast, Lebanon was already mired in its worst economic crisis since the civil war and battling the novel coronavirus pandemic. The Lebanese pound has plummeted in value, and poverty rates have doubled to more than half the country's population. Just Wednesday, as frustrations grew over the delay in forming a new government, France urged the international community to apply strong and unified pressure on Lebanon.

Aoun had warned on Monday the country was headed to “hell” if competing political forces did not step up and help Adib form a new cabinet. After the Aug 4 explosion, it emerged the Lebanese authorities had known about the huge stockpile of ammonium nitrate fertilizer that exploded on the dockside, but had not moved it. The port blast has rekindled public anger against Lebanon's entrenched political elite, with protesters accusing politicians across the board of incompetence and corruption. — AFP

Do masks help boost COVID...

Continued from Page 1

launching several studies to try and test the theory. These would include looking at whether the requirement of a mask in certain cities had reduced the severity of the disease there.

They are also looking at antibody studies in Taiwan, where masks are ubiquitous but there are very few restrictions. “Of course, it's still a theory, but there are many arguments in its favor,” Bruno Hoen, director of medical research at the Institut Pasteur in Paris, told AFP. He said we should “take a different look at the use of masks”, which were initially deemed unnecessary by health authorities, against the backdrop of shortages. Today, they are widely recommended to slow the spread of infection.

The theory echoes “variolation”, a rudimentary technique used before the appearance of vaccines that involved giving people a mild illness to try to inoculate them against more serious forms of a disease. In Asia, early variolation often meant blowing dried scabs from smallpox patients up the noses of healthy people, according to the US National Library of Medicine. When it reached Europe and America in the 18th century, the practice - which sometimes killed the patient - commonly involved inserting smallpox under the skin.

The NEJM article suggests a parallel in the idea that being exposed to small doses of virus boosts immunity. “It is an interesting theory with a reasonable hypothesis,” Archie Clements, Vice-Chancellor

Faculty of Health Sciences at Australia's Curtin University, told AFP. But others expressed reservations. Angela Rasmussen, a virologist at Columbia University in New York, said she was “pretty skeptical of this being a good idea”.

She noted that we do not yet know if a lower dose of virus does mean a milder illness. We do not know if masks reduce exposure to the virus, she said on Twitter, adding that the duration and level of immunity are also still poorly understood. “This is an interesting idea, but there are too many unknowns to say that masks should be used as a tool for ‘variating’ people against SARS-CoV-2,” she added.

A key stumbling block to answering these questions is that testing the UCSF researchers' hypothesis is difficult. “It is true that such a hypothesis in humans using gold standard methods (of experimental design) can never be proven given that we cannot expose humans deliberately to the virus,” Gandhi said. But some studies have proved useful, she said, including research conducted in Hong Kong on hamsters.

Scientists simulated mask-wearing by placing one between the cages of infected rodents and healthy ones. They found that hamsters were less likely to catch COVID-19 if they were “masked”, and even if they did catch it, their symptoms were milder. There have also been a few accidental real-world experiments. In one case, a cruise ship that departed from Argentina in mid-March issued everyone on board with surgical masks after the first sign of an infection. Researchers found that 81 percent of those who caught the virus were asymptomatic, which Gandhi said compared to around 40 percent on other vessels where masks were not worn systematically. — AFP



WUHAN, China: A woman wearing a facemask as a preventive measure against COVID-19 talks on her phone next to the Yangtze River in central Hubei province on Friday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait COVID-19 cases rise by 758 to 103,199, deaths by two

Kuwait registers second highest infection numbers among GCC states

KUWAIT: Kuwait's confirmed coronavirus cases increased by 758 to 103,199 in the past 24 hours, with two people having succumbed to the disease, which raised the death toll to 597, the health ministry said yesterday. The figures include people who have come into contact with infected individuals, and others whose source of infection is currently being investigated, read a ministry statement.

There are 108 people currently receiving intensive care for the virus out of a total 8,391 patients being hospitalized. Some 4,138 swab tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, out of a total of 733,893 so far, added the spokesman. Earlier, the ministry said 649 people have recovered from the virus, upping the total number of those to have overcome the disease to 94,211.

Kuwait came second among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in the number of daily cases registered yesterday, according to available data. The United Arab

Emirates recorded the largest number of new infections after registering 1,078 cases, raising the total to 90,618. Two fatalities were registered as the death toll rose to 411, state news agency 'WAM' quoted health authorities



649 patients recovered in 24 hours

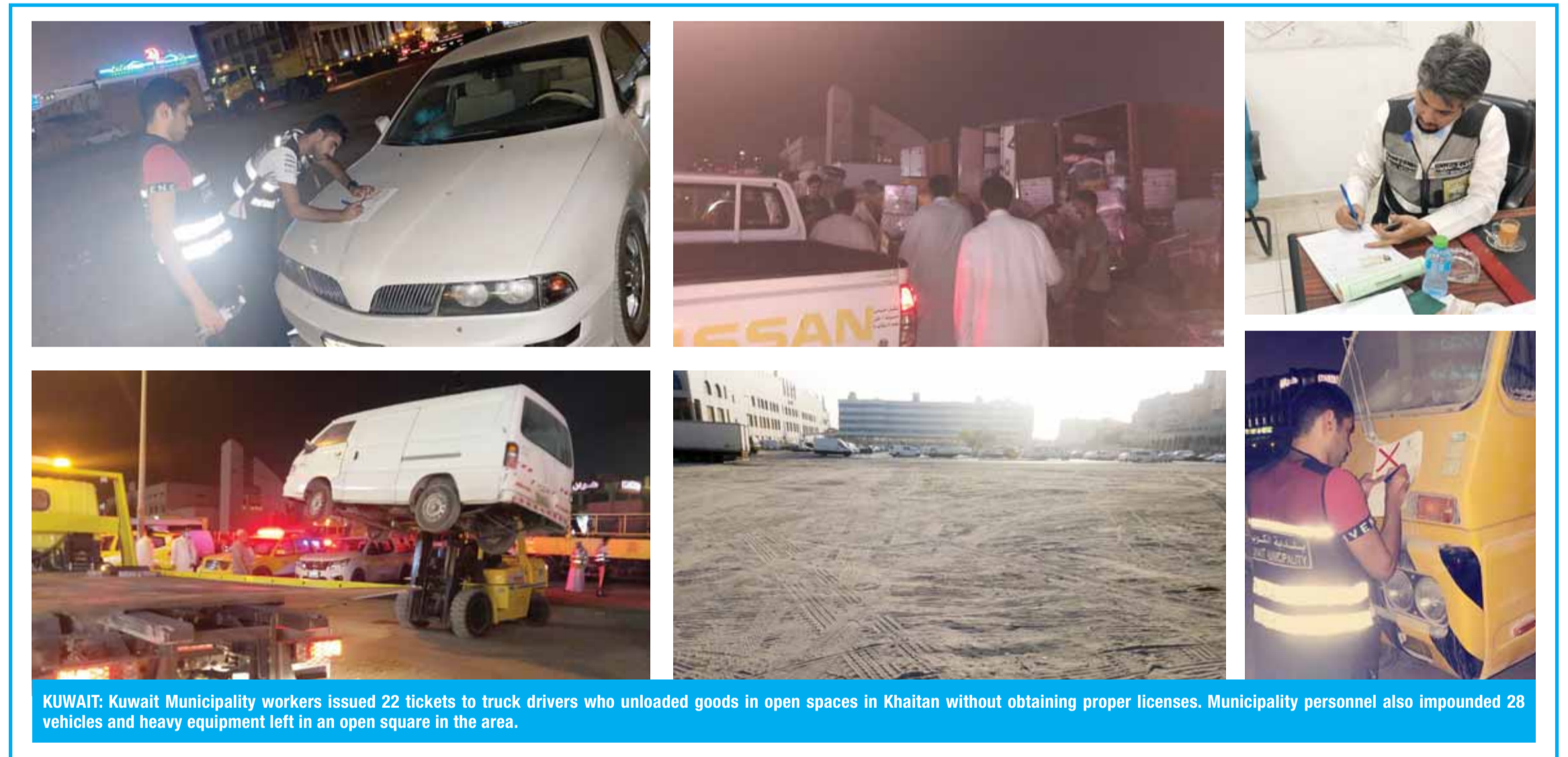
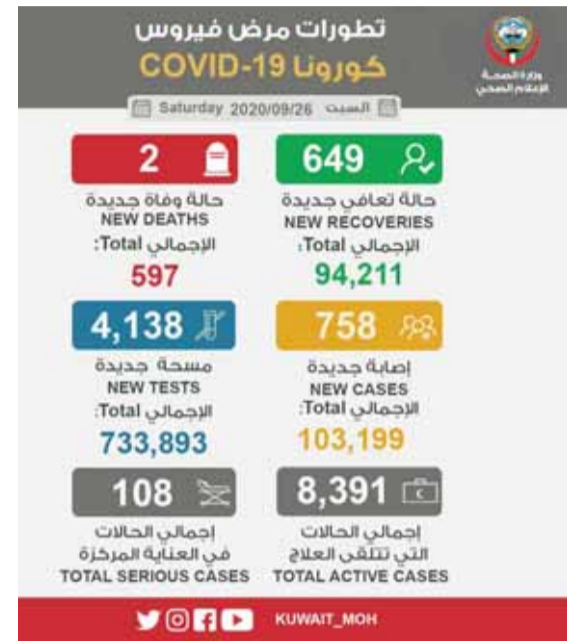
as saying. Meanwhile, some 857 people were cured from the virus, raising the total recoveries to 79,676.

In the meantime, Bahrain said yesterday that the daily confirmed novel coronavirus

cases rose by 489. Some 622 new recoveries were also reported for a total of 61,475, as compared to 6,477 currently active cases, according to a health ministry statement.

Saudi Arabia's confirmed novel coronavirus cases climbed by 461 while related deaths rose by 30 over the past day, the Saudi health ministry said yesterday. The death toll stands at 4,655 as confirmed cases hit 332,790, according to ministry data, which showed the number of recoveries having risen by 769 to 316,405.

Qatar's health ministry said meanwhile that its novel coronavirus case tally reached 124,850 after 200 people were confirmed as testing positive in the previous 24 hours. The number of recoveries in the Gulf state stands at 121,738 after 226 more people were cured, with two virus-induced fatalities raising the death toll to 214, according to a ministry statement. Oman does not announce daily COVID-19 infection cases on weekends. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality workers issued 22 tickets to truck drivers who unloaded goods in open spaces in Khaitan without obtaining proper licenses. Municipality personnel also impounded 23 vehicles and heavy equipment left in an open square in the area.

Kuwait airport travel guidelines

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

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

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

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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Public works minister to terminate all expat staff: Report

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Housing Affairs Dr Rana Al-Fares prepares to sign termination letters for expatriate employees at the Ministry of Public Works, Al-Rai daily reported quoting informed sources. The list contains the names of 400 employees from various departments, and hold administrative, legal and technical positions. It comes weeks after the minister had terminated 150 expat ministry employees, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

"The original plan was to terminate expatriate employees gradually, and the next batch was supposed to happen by year's end," the sources said. "However, the minister decided not to wait and end expatriate employees' contracts immediately." The 550 employees who were released and expected to be released make up the entire expat workforce in the Ministry of Public Works and Public Authority for Roads and Transportation; or five percent of the total staff, the sources said. "Fares eyes full Kuwaitization of her departments' workforce and allowing national manpower to bear full responsibility in the coming years," the sources explained.



Public Works Minister
Dr Rana Al-Fares

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Tower cranes seen at a major construction site in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwaiti ambassador delivers credentials to San Marino leaders

ROME: The State of Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah on Friday handed his credentials as a non-resident ambassador to the Republic of San Marino to the republic's two presidents. The Kuwaiti embassy in Italy said in a statement the two presidents, Alessandro Mancini and Grazia Zafferani, received the credentials at the supreme

court building in San Marino — with attendance of the local foreign minister Luca Beccari. The embassy statement noted that the two presidents, during the audience, hailed His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as a unique leader who had earned unprecedented international designations for his humanitarian initiatives and wisdom. Meanwhile, Minister Beccari hailed accreditation of the second Kuwaiti envoy since establishing relations with the State of Kuwait, addressing greetings from the two presidents and the government of the republic to His Highness the Amir. Moreover, Minister Beccari wished His Highness the Amir full recovery and manifested cordial and warm sentiments toward the friendly Kuwaiti government and people. — KUNA



ROME: Kuwait's Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah (second from left) in a group photo with San Marino officials. — KUNA

In my view

Smart devices: Mixed blessings



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

I cannot imagine seeing any person - young or old - walking down the street without carrying a mobile phone! Granted no one can do without this device in our current era - even those who resist the "mobile" will at least have a basic device of some sorts. I, along with maybe a majority of people, am not worried about adults using smartphones; my worry is about those who are as young as four or five all the way to teenagers.

Smartphones are now replacing all forms of technological devices, and are equipped with all needed tools and applications, enabling users to have instant communications with whoever and wherever, and this exposes our children to many ills by evil-minded people.

What we are seeing now is a meaningless busy life, social isolation, children's "barbarism", relatives' ignorance, diminishing skills, rarity of readers, copying, lavish spending, lesser devotion and more. We are seeing parents not talking to their children, children who cannot tolerate speaking with their parents, loss of moral control, nonsensical wishes, new devices, branded bags and many other negative issues...all this caused by smartphones and other devices that have made most of us stupid and ignorant.

When a father buys his four-year-old a smartphone, or when a girl in fifth grade carries a smartphone that has all social media applications, it is a tragedy. You the parent are the one who committed a crime against your children because they will be exposed to all that you can imagine and cannot imagine.

Believe me, your child will not be deprived if they do not have a smartphone - the fact is that you are giving them a correct and sound life. As for mothers, your preoccupation with your phone will one day make you sorry for their childhood that you did not enjoy.

You will find out that you did not play with them, or give them the warmth and feeling of love they deserve. You did not teach them how to be distinguished persons. Does your child have a skill other than video games? Do you speak enough with them? All these characteristics no longer exist in the mothers of this generation! Life will be tragic despite the bounties we have as we did not invest in the devices the right way.

The maximum ambition of our youth is to have a fancy phone and more virtual friends. A very large percentage of our friends in these programs are not known to us, and we left those who deserve to be friends behind, along with of course parents, siblings, neighbors, schoolmates, teachers and relatives.

Please, wake up! Let us get out of our coma that has lasted for years and its repercussions have hit our children. Now, it is not realistic to tell people to drop their phones - in fact there are those who would think I am crazy when I ask for such a thing. But what is realistic is to give time for family and children - this is the true joy that God gave us. Make sure to designate time for being with your children to guide them, and visit your loved ones. Please!

Financial reforms plan set in motion

KUWAIT: Kuwait has drawn up a roadmap for financial and economic reforms in a bid to upgrade the country's sovereign credit rating, a minister announced. Kuwait's Supreme Council for Planning and Development, in conjunction with other state bodies including the finance ministry and the central bank, has been tasked with forming this plan, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said in a statement on Thursday. A vital component of the plan is proper legislation ensuring that such reforms are sustainable and effective, said the minister, who emphasized that a better sovereign rating for a country "invariably means greater investment and lower borrowing costs." The minister pinpointed the sharp drop in oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic as factors that have led to more "financial strain," saying that long-term economic growth largely hinges on unimpeded reforms. Careful assessment and rigorous planning would pave the way for reforms, subsequently improving Kuwait's sovereign credit rating profile, added the minister. — KUNA



Economic Affairs Minister
Mariam Al-Aqeel



KHARTOUM: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) hosted a fun day at an orphanage in Khartoum, Sudan on Friday. KRCS workers distributed gifts to 150 children during the event that took place as part of the charity organization's humanitarian mission to flood-stricken areas in Sudan. — KUNA

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A life-saving 'game': Bosnia trains world's mine-detecting dogs

Iranian asylum seeker stuck in limbo on divided Cyprus

Page 6

Page 7



PARIS: A picture taken yesterday in Pantin, a suburb of Paris, shows the building, where one of the suspects who seriously wounded two people a day before in a terror attack, was living (first floor, two windows at the center right). A man armed with a meat cleaver wounded two in Paris outside the former offices of satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo before being arrested by police. —AFP

Main suspect in Paris cleaver attack confesses: Sources

This is a new bloody attack on our country: Darmanin

PARIS: A man suspected of wounding two people with a meat cleaver outside the former Paris offices of satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo has confessed to the attack, sources close to the investigation said yesterday.

The man, who said he was born in Pakistan and is 18, "takes responsibility for his action which he places in the context of the republication of cartoons" of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in Charlie Hebdo, one of the sources said. France's PNAT specialist anti-terror prosecution office said it has opened a probe into charges of "attempted murder related to a terrorist enterprise" as well as "conspiracy with terrorists." Seven people including the main suspect were being held for questioning in connection with the attack.

French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said the attack was "clearly an act of Islamist terrorism." "This is a new bloody attack on our country," Darmanin told broadcaster France 2.

Charlie Hebdo has angered many Muslims around the world by publishing cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) over the years, and in a defiant gesture reprinted some of the caricatures ahead of the trial.

Twelve people, including some of France's most celebrated cartoonists, were killed in the attack on Charlie

Hebdo by Islamist gunmen on January 7, 2015. Paris police said two people were "critically wounded" in Friday's attack near the paper's former offices in the French capital's 11th district. The magazine's new address is kept secret. A source close to the investigation confirmed to AFP that a large meat cleaver found near the scene was used by the attacker. Prime Minister Jean Castex, visiting the scene, said the lives of the two victims "are not in danger, thank God".

The Premieres Lignes news production agency said the wounded were its employees — a man and a woman taking a cigarette break outside. "They were both very badly wounded," the founder and co-head of Premieres Lignes, Paul Moreira, told AFP.

Another employee, who asked not to be named, said he heard screams. "I went to the window and saw a colleague, bloodied, being chased by a man with a machete." The company specialises in investigative reports and produces the prize-winning Cash Investigation programme.

'Odious attack'

Paris prosecutors said the "main perpetrator" was arrested not far from the scene of the crime. According to PNAT head Jean-Francois Ricard, the suspect was an 18-year-old man. Initial

indications are that he was born in Pakistan. Child welfare authorities said the suspect had shown "no sign of radicalisation" while under their care after arriving in France in August 2018 and claiming to be a minor.

The suspect was arrested in June for possession of a stabbing weapon, a source close to the case said. A second person, a 33-year-old Algerian, was arrested later for questioning to determine possible links to the "main perpetrator," Ricard said. Five more people — all men born between 1983 and 1996 who were arrested in the Paris suburb of Pantin during a search of a property linked to the main suspect — were also being held for questioning, a judicial source said late Friday. Five schools in the area went into lockdown for several hours after the attack, and half a dozen nearby metro stations were closed.

"Around noon we went for a lunch break at the restaurant. As we arrived, the manager started shouting 'Go, go there is an attack... We ran to lock ourselves in our shop with four customers," Hassani Erwan, a 23-year-old barber, told AFP. In a Twitter post, Charlie Hebdo expressed its support for "the people affected by this odious attack." They were victims of "fanaticism" and "intolerance", Charlie Hebdo said, calling the main suspect and his possible accomplice "terrorists".

'Underestimated the threat'

The stabbing came during the trial of 14 alleged accomplices of brothers Said and Cherif Kouachi, the perpetrators of the 2015 attack on Charlie Hebdo that was claimed by a branch of Al-Qaeda.

A female police officer was killed a day later, followed the next day by the killing of four men in a hostage-taking at a Jewish supermarket by gunman Amedy Coulibaly.

The trial has reopened one of the most painful chapters in France's modern history, with harrowing testimony from survivors and relatives of those who died. The magazine received fresh threats from Al-Qaeda this month after it republished the controversial cartoons. More than 100 French news outlets on Wednesday called for continuing support for Charlie Hebdo against what they described as the "enemies of freedom". Just this week, police relocated the paper's head of human resources, Marika Bret, from her home following death threats.

Darmanin said he had asked the Paris police chief "why we underestimated the threat" in the street next to Charlie Hebdo's former offices. The co-head of Premieres Lignes, Luc Hermann, told BFMTV that since the start of the trial "there has been absolutely no security for this street and symbolic building". —AFP

'Today, I get zero euros'

The WHO warning came as the United States, the hardest-hit nation in the world, crossed seven million cases — more than a fifth of the global total despite accounting for only four percent of the world population.

Many European nations, meanwhile, are struggling with new waves of infections. Spain expanded a lockdown in and around the capital Madrid to cover one million people from Monday. In Britain, authorities announced restrictions now extending to a quarter of the population, while two supermarket chains said they were rationing purchases of certain goods to clamp down on panic buying.

Moscow, meanwhile, ordered vulnerable residents of the Russian capital to avoid infection by staying at home, while Israel tightened its lockdown by stopping people from taking flights out of the country.

France reported record figures — daily cases soared past 16,000 for the first time on Thursday. But moves by the authorities to contain the virus are not popular with many because of their painful economic toll.

Marseille bar and restaurant owners gathered outside the city's commercial courthouse to demonstrate against forced closures starting Sunday evening. "Today, I get zero euros, zero euros," said Sam, a nightclub manager. "I have (to pay) rent because I'm not lucky enough to be a landlord." —AFP

Trump mocks Biden for 'staying in again'

NEWPORT NEWS: With just 39 days until the US election, President Donald Trump ramped up his campaigning with back-to-back events Friday in battleground states — a frenetic pace in contrast with the more sedate approach of Democratic rival Joe Biden.

The 74-year-old president's grueling 12-hour, three-state schedule culminated with a nighttime rally in Newport News, Virginia. By that time US media was reporting that he was set to nominate Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, who if confirmed would cement a solid conservative majority on the country's highest court.

"We are going to be announcing somebody great," he told the crowd without mentioning a name. "Tomorrow [Saturday] I think is going to be a big day!" he added, as the crowd roared with approval.

Trump — who trails Biden in national polling and is narrowly behind in several swing states seen as crucial to his path to re-election — is under pressure to make the most of the remaining weeks before the November 3 election. During his whirlwind day the president mocked his rival for a lower-energy campaign, saying Biden was "staying in again today." "This guy never goes out. It's terrible huh?" he told a black economic empowerment event in Atlanta, where few people wore masks and social distancing was non-existent.

"If I lose to a man who doesn't campaign... I don't know," he told the laughing crowd. Biden traveled from his home in Delaware to Washington on Friday to attend a ceremony at the US Capitol as late Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg lay in state there.

But there was no in-person campaigning on the former vice president's schedule. In a bid to fire up his base over the weekend, the president will announce his pick to replace the liberal icon Ginsburg, who died last week at 87. Trump began the day in Florida with a roundtable with Latino voters, a crucial constituency in the swing state. Biden has "been very bad to Hispanics," the president said at the event which took place at his golf club in Doral, near Miami.

"I'm a wall between the American dream and chaos." Trump next flew to neighboring Georgia, which has voted Republican in the last six elections but is now rated a toss-up, where he insisted that as president he did "even more than I promised" for African Americans.

"I did more for the black community in 47 months... than Joe Biden did in 47 years," he said, repeatedly swiping at Biden's legislative record in co-sponsoring 1990s tough-on-crime legislation that many experts say resulted in high incarceration rates for black Americans. Trump said he was unveiling a "platinum plan" that aims to increase capital to African Americans, create three million new jobs for the black community and implement "the highest standards of policing."

Trump then returned to Washington to gather with supporters and flew to a Make America Great Again nighttime rally in Newport News, Virginia. The state's Democratic governor meanwhile announced that he and his wife have tested positive for Covid-19. —AFP

"As I've been reminding Virginians throughout this crisis, Covid-19 is very real and very contagious," Governor Ralph Northam said in a statement. Trump appears to dismiss coronavirus concerns at his events, where he appears maskless and crowds are often packed together — a scenario his own government experts have warned against. —AFP

WHO warns 2 million virus deaths possible

GENEVA: Coronavirus deaths could more than double to two million without collective action against the pandemic, the World Health Organization has warned, as Australia's prime minister urged any nation that develops a vaccine to share it with the world.

The number of cases worldwide has soared past 32 million, with deaths approaching one million, the global economy devastated, and major cultural and sports events disrupted. But despite the pandemic showing no signs of slowing, Japan's new prime minister Yoshihide Suga struck a defiant note Friday, saying his country was determined to hold the postponed Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

"One million is a terrible number and we need to reflect on that before we start considering a second million," the WHO's emergencies director Michael Ryan told reporters on Friday when asked how high the death toll could go.

"Are we prepared collectively to do what it takes to avoid that number? "If we don't take those actions... yes, we will be looking at that number and sadly much higher." The pandemic has spurred worldwide efforts to develop a vaccine to help defeat Covid-19, as well as efforts to try to ensure fair and widespread distribution.

"Whoever finds the vaccine must share it..."

This is a global responsibility and it's a moral responsibility," Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Friday in a message to the virtual UN General Assembly. "Some might see short-term advantage or even profit, but I assure you... humanity will have a very long memory and be a very, very severe judge."

Japan Olympics vow

Without a vaccine or effective treatment, social distancing and lockdowns remain among the few options for governments to curb the spread of the virus, making large gatherings like spectator sports and music concerts highly risky.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics, postponed for a year, were the biggest such casualty, and Japan's new leader vowed to hold them in 2021. "In the summer of next year, Japan is determined to host the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games as proof that humanity has defeated the pandemic," Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga told the United Nations General Assembly in a video message.

But with continued spikes worldwide, there are concerns about whether the event will be possible even next year if the pandemic is not under control. In a further illustration of the impact of the virus, authorities in Brazil — which has the world's second-highest death toll — indefinitely postponed Rio de Janeiro's carnival.

And just 1,000 fans a day are being allowed at the French Open, with organisers of one of the world's biggest tennis events saying it means "millions of euros up in smoke".

International

Abbas seeks UN Mideast conference after Gulf Arab deals with Israel

Palestinians have also agreed to hold elections in early 2021

UNITED NATIONS: Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas appealed Friday to the United Nations for an international conference on the Middle East in 2021, hoping for a new start after US elections and the milestone of Gulf Arabs' recognition of Israel.

In an address to the General Assembly, Abbas asked Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to convene the meeting on the Palestinian issue "early next year" and bring in "all relevant parties." "The conference should have full authority to launch a genuine peace process based on international law," Abbas told the virtual General Assembly in a recorded address.

"It should aim to end the occupation and grant the Palestinian people their freedom and independence in their own state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and settle final-status issues, notably the refugee question," he said.

Abbas made his appeal amid concerns among Palestinians of dwindling support in the Arab world for their decades-long campaign for an independent state. The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain earlier this month agreed to recognize Israel, a major coup for the Jewish state and diplomatic win for US President Donald Trump.

The two Arab states, while saying they still support a Palestinian state, share the concerns of Israel and the United States about neighboring Iran. Abbas said: "It is delusional to think that the Palestinian people could be sidelined."

"You should all know that there can be no peace, no security, no stability or coexistence in our region without an end to the occupation and without a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question," he said. The Palestinian Authority has refused

diplomatic efforts by Trump due to his administration's staunch advocacy of Israel. If Trump loses in November 3 elections, the conference sought by Abbas would take place under a US president Joe Biden, who is also a supporter of Israel but has vowed to promote a two-state solution.

The Palestinians have also agreed to hold elections in early 2021 as the shock of the Gulf Arabs' moves sparks new talks of reconciliation between Abbas' Fatah movement and Hamas, the Islamist militant group that runs the Gaza Strip.

Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Gilad Erdan, said the 84-year-old Abbas' speech "showed more than anything else that his time is up." "He understood that the peace agreements we have signed shattered the Palestinian veto over peace agreements with the Arab world and what was revealed to all was Palestinian refusal," he said.

Pope backs multilateralism

Pope Francis, addressing the world body for the first time in five years, distanced himself implicitly with Trump's "America First" ideology.

"At present we are witnessing an erosion of multilateralism, which is all the more serious in light of the development of new forms of military technology," he said in his video address.

"We need to break with the present climate of distrust," he said. He said the world faced a choice between multilateralism and a path towards nationalism, protectionism and isolation.

"It excludes the poor, the vulnerable, and those dwelling on the peripheries of life," Francis said, warning that such a path would be "detrimental to the whole community." The pontiff also called for a relaxing of international sanctions, which he called



HEBRON: A family walks by amid clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron. — AFP

harmful to civilians around the world. The UN General Assembly each year packs 10,000 world leaders, delegates and observers into a few congested stretches of New York, which becomes a hub for face-to-face diplomacy. Due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, this year's summit is almost entirely virtual, with leaders sending in recorded

addresses. The summit has nonetheless been characterized by angry exchanges between the United States and China. Trump used his speech on Tuesday to demand action against China over the "plague" of Covid-19, which he blamed on Beijing as it initially covered up news of the disease. — AFP

African court requests I Coast ex-president be added to electoral roll

ABIDJAN: Ivory Coast should allow former president Laurent Gbagbo, who has been barred from running in next month's key presidential election, to vote in the poll, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights said Friday.

The court, established by African Union members in 2004, asked Ivory Coast to "take all necessary steps to immediately remove all obstacles" preventing Gbagbo from being added to the electoral roll.

Ivory Coast withdrew its recognition of the court's jurisdiction in April this year. Gbagbo, who was president from 2000 to 2010, is not on the electoral roll which was updated this year, and thus cannot vote or be a candidate in the October 31 election.

The Constitutional Council, Ivory Coast's top court, has rejected 40 of 44 applications to contest the election, which is taking place against a backdrop of extreme tension. Those barred include Gbagbo, 75, and former rebel leader Guillaume Soro, 47, both of whom played key roles in the crisis that engulfed the country after disputed elections in 2010.

The Ivorian court, however, accepted an application by President Alassane Ouattara, 78, who is seeking a third term despite criticism that this sidesteps constitutional limits. Gbagbo was freed conditionally by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague after he was cleared in January 2019 of crimes against humanity. He is living in Brussels pending the outcome of an appeal against the ICC ruling.

'Provocation'

His candidacy was rejected by the Constitutional Council on the grounds that he was handed a 20-year jail term by an Ivorian court last November over the looting of the local branch of the Central Bank of West African States during the post-election crisis.

The African Court, based in Arusha in Tanzania, also said Gbagbo's conviction should not be included on his judicial record until it had time to deliver a full judgement. On September 15, the African Court handed down a verdict in Soro's favour, saying Ivory Coast should also "immediately remove all obstacles" preventing him from competing in the ballot.

Soro provided military help that enabled Ouattara to come to power after a civil war that erupted when Gbagbo refused to accept defeat in the 2010 election.

More than 3,000 people died in the fighting. Soro, who lives today in France, was barred from contesting the election on the grounds of a 20-year sentence, also in absentia, for alleged embezzlement of public funds, handed down in April.

Ouattara, has blasted attempts by Gbagbo and Soro to contest the presidential election as "provocation" and said one of them belongs behind bars. "Soro, like Gbagbo, was excluded because he has a criminal record," Ouattara told the French magazine Paris Match.

"Each of them are perfectly aware that their candidacies are based on provocation... Guillaume Soro doesn't deserve to be on the campaign trail but in prison," he said. "This young man, drunk on money and power, has simply lost his head." — AFP

S Korea demands Pyongyang probe in killing of official

SEOUL: Seoul said yesterday it will demand further investigation by Pyongyang into the killing of a South Korean official after a rare public apology from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The fisheries official was shot dead by North Korean soldiers on Tuesday, the first such killing of a South Korean civilian in a decade.

In a surprise move, Kim said he was "very sorry"

for the "unexpected and disgraceful event", but South Korea announced it would ask for further investigation.

"We have decided to demand the North carry out a further probe and request a joint investigation if necessary," the Blue House, South Korea's presidential office, said in a statement.

It added that South Korea's own investigation will continue because of "discrepancies" in the accounts of the shooting.

South Korean military officials say the man was interrogated while in the water for several hours and expressed a desire to defect, but was killed after an "order from superior authority".

They also said North Koreans poured oil over his body and burnt it, calling it an "outrageous act".

In contrast, Pyongyang said in a letter sent

Friday — which contained Kim's apology — that the official had "illegally entered our waters" and refused to properly identify himself.

It acknowledged that around 10 rounds were fired at the man, and that he was not visible after the shooting.

Troops then set the official's flotation device — which was covered in blood — on fire in accordance with North Korea's emergency coronavirus regulations, the letter added.

Apologies from North Korea — let alone attributed to Kim personally — are extremely unusual, and the message came with inter-Korean ties in a deep freeze, and nuclear negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington deadlocked.

There have been no North Korean media reports on the contents of the letter. — AFP



NICOSIA: Iranian singer Omid Tootian, 46, poses for a picture during an interview in the UN-controlled buffer zone in the Cypriot capital Nicosia, where he's been stuck since mid-September. — AFP

Iran asylum seeker stuck in limbo on divided Cyprus

NICOSIA: Dissident Iranian singer Omid Tootian has for days been sleeping in a tent in the buffer zone of the world's last divided capital, after being refused entry by the Republic of Cyprus.

"I can't go to one side or the other," the performer, in his mid-40s, whose songs speak out against Iranian authorities, told AFP. "I'm stuck living in the street." His tent is pitched between two checkpoints in western Nicosia, among the weeds outside an abandoned house in the quasi-"no man's land" that separates the northern and southern parts of Cyprus, which has been divided since 1974.

In early September, he travelled to the north of the Mediterranean island, controlled by the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognised only by Ankara. Two weeks later, Tootian, who had been living in Turkey for around three years, tried for the first time to seek asylum in the Republic of Cyprus, which controls the southern two-thirds of the island and is in the European Union.

But once at the green line, the 180 kilometre-(112-mile)-long buffer zone that traverses the island and is patrolled by United Nations peacekeepers, he was denied entry into the south. Refusing to return to the TRNC, where he fears he would be in danger, Tootian found himself in limbo in the few hundred metres of land that divides the two territories.

'Threats'

"I don't know why they haven't approved my entry... but I think it's because of the coronavirus," he said, speaking at the pro-unification Home for Cooperation community centre in the buffer zone where he eats, grooms and spends most of his days.

"But I hope things will become clear because now I don't know what will happen, and it's a very difficult situation." Because his songs are very critical of the Iranian regime, Tootian fears that if he returns to the north of the island, he will first be sent back to Turkey and then to Iran. "Turkey is no longer a safe country for me because the Turkish regime is close to Iran," he said, adding that he had for the past six months been receiving anonymous "threats" from unknown callers using private phone numbers.

In July, three Iranians were sentenced to death by the Islamic republic. Two of them had initially fled to Turkey and, according to the non-governmental group the Center for Human Rights in Iran, Turkish authorities cooperated with Tehran to repatriate them. Since arriving at the checkpoint, Tootian has tried "four or five times" in a week to enter, without success, despite the help of a migrant rights advocacy group known as KISA and the UN mission in the buffer zone.

According to European and international regulations, Cyprus cannot expel an asylum seeker until the application has been considered and a final decision issued. The police said "they have restrictions not to let anybody in", KISA member Doros Polycarpou told AFP.

Cypriot police spokesman Christos Andreou said "it is not the responsibility of the police" to decide who can enter the Republic of Cyprus. They "follow the instructions of the Ministry of Interior", put in place "because of the pandemic", he added.

According to the ministry, "all persons who are willing to cross from a legal entry point to the area controlled by the Republic must present a negative COVID-19 test carried out within the last 72 hours" — a requirement Tootian said he had fulfilled.

Polycarpou charges that the Cypriot "government has used the pandemic to restrict basic human rights". A spokeswoman for the UN refugee agency in Cyprus Emilia Strovolidou said "there are other means to protect asylum seekers and public health at the same time... we can test people when they arrive or take quarantine measures". — AFP

Malaysian PM faces test in state polls

SEMPORNA: Malaysia's embattled leader faces state elections yesterday that are his biggest political test since taking office, with analysts saying he desperately needs a win to strengthen his tenuous hold on power.

A defeat for Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's allies in Sabah state on Borneo will erode support among his seven-month-old government's coalition partners, increasing pressure for snap national polls, observers warn.

Adding to his problems, the election comes just days after opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim launched a bid to topple his administration, claiming he had mustered enough support from MPs to take over. Malaysia has been gripped by political turmoil since the collapse in February of a reformist government, which was headed by Mahathir Mohamad and included Anwar, amid bitter infighting.

Muhyiddin seized power without an election and leads a coalition backed by a scandal-plagued party, but his administration has only a wafer-thin majority in parliament and critics say it is illegitimate. The Sabah elections were called after a Muhyiddin ally launched a bid to take over the opposition-controlled local government. But rather than cede power, the chief minister dissolved the state assembly.

About 1.1 million people are eligible to vote for 73 assembly seats in the state on the northeastern tip of jungle-clad Borneo island, which is home to a dizzying array of indigenous groups.

Loose coalitions are backing the government and the opposition, but analysts say the vote is too close to call. Results are expected late Saturday.

The outcome will not directly affect the balance of power at the national level, but it is a key test of Muhyiddin's popularity.

Despite taking power without a democratic vote, he has won praise for his government's handling of the coronavirus outbreak, and received a 69 per cent approval rating in a recent survey.

"He needs a win to show... that the high popularity he enjoys can be translated into votes on the ground," Ibrahim Suffian, head of independent polling firm Merdeka Center, told AFP.

"If he loses badly, then the government could potentially collapse."

Muhyiddin has faced pressure from his allies to call a general election soon to secure a stronger mandate, but some observers believe he wants to delay as long as possible. That, however, may become difficult if he fares badly in Sabah.

Anwar's power play has added to pressure on Muhyiddin but does not appear to have gained traction for now.

He has refused to reveal the number of MPs backing him while the king, who appoints the country's premier, has postponed an appointment to see him due to ill health. — AFP

International

40 years after Oktoberfest attack, survivor's wounds still healing

Four decades on, prosecutors in July finally classed it a political attack

MUNICH: That evening on September 26, 1980, Robert Platzler, then 12, was having a great night out. He had been on fairground rides, eaten bags of sweets and even bought a helium balloon — all that a child dreams of at the Munich Oktoberfest.

He was just at the exit of the popular beer festival with his parents and four siblings when he saw a man with his arms in the rubbish bin, towards which his family was headed. But at that moment, the bomb went off. "There was a huge flame, I was thrown back several metres," Robert Hoeckmayr, who has since taken his wife's family name, told AFP in an interview. A bomb in the trashcan had exploded just steps away from the merry-go-round and the beer tents. Thirteen people — including the bomber Gundolf Koehler — were killed and more than 200 injured. Four decades on, prosecutors in July finally classed it a political attack — the deadliest far-right assault in post-war Germany.

Investigators initially assumed the 21-year-old Koehler was a depressed geology student, who had acted because of relationship problems and exam stress, downplaying his known links to the extremist scene. But further revelations about the extent of Koehler's involvement with the far-right and speculation he may not have acted alone prompted prosecutors to reopen the investigation in 2014.

After interviewing over a thousand witnesses and combing through 300,000 documents, investigators believe Koehler aimed for the attack to be blamed on the far left. His goal had been to influence that year's general election and usher in a conservative candidate as chancellor.

Survivors need help

The 40th anniversary of the attack yesterday

comes as far-right violence is once again on the rise in Germany, with a deadly attack targeting a synagogue in Halle in 2019 and another that left nine people of migrant origin dead in Hanau in February.

Hoeckmayr did not want to be drawn into discussing the political extremism that has sparked the violence. For him, more must be done to help survivors. "I don't care from which side the attack comes from, the survivors need to be better taken care of," he said. Hoeckmayr's experience underlines how the devastation wrought goes on far beyond that fateful day.

His eight-year-old sister Ilona was killed on the spot. His little brother, six, died on the way to the hospital in the ambulance. His parents were severely wounded. His sister Elisabeth survived but died of a drug overdose at 24. His brother threw himself under a train in 2008, at age 42.

"They could not stand the pain. I am the sole survivor in this family," said Hoeckmayr, now 52 and a Munich city official. He has had 41 operations to remove metal shards lodged all over his body.

"They didn't manage to remove all of them," said the tall man with greying hair. But what was even more difficult to heal was the feeling of being "abandoned" by the German state after the attack.

"We were never offered psychological help. Several months after the attack, the doctors declared that I was healthy, just because I could walk," he said. It was thanks to his wife and three children that he was able to pick up the pieces.

"They gave me the energy to live." Beyond the lack of psychological support, he is also angry about the low level of financial aid provided to people wounded in the attack. But that may soon change, with the city of Munich, the Bavarian state and Chancellor Angela



MUNICH: German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier speaks at 40th anniversary memorial of the Oktoberfest attack in Munich yesterday. The attacker Gundolf Koehler was among the 13 victims killed when his bomb exploded in a rubbish bin at the entrance to the beer festival, in one of the deadliest attacks in Germany's post-war history. — AFP

Merkel's government to stump up 1.2 million euros (\$1.4 million) for victims of the attack. For Hoeckmayr, "40 years later is too late". "It's not just about money but about helping people who have experienced terrible things to return to society," said Hoeckmayr, who refuses to be labelled a victim, saying he is a survivor.

He will participate in a ceremony on Saturday when Munich inaugurates a new information site that tells the story of the attack. Underlining its importance, he said: "Here too, many people know that something happened on September 26, 1980, but they don't know what it is." — AFP

TikTok becomes focus of US-China war

WASHINGTON: Known for its short-form videos popular with teens, TikTok has become a global social media sensation, and at the same time has found itself at the heart of a geopolitical war between the United States and China.

US President Donald Trump has called the app a national security risk, claiming that TikTok and its Chinese parent ByteDance could access user data and deliver it to Chinese intelligence services. Trump's executive order would prohibit new downloads of TikTok from Sunday night and would ban usage from November 12 unless a deal to restructure its ownership comes to fruition.

700 million users

TikTok has seen some two billion downloads and its user base is estimated at 700 million, making it one of the biggest players in the social media space. It is known for its user-generated short videos of 15 to 60 seconds, many featuring dancing, parodies or comments on the news. Filters and special effects can be added.

The coronavirus pandemic has helped TikTok expand its user base beyond young smartphone users, as new kinds of content are added and popular "influencers" join the platform. Created in 2016 as Musically, the app was acquired by ByteDance in 2017 and rebranded as the global version of the Chinese app known as Douyin.

According to the company, TikTok has 100 million users in the United States alone, with 50 million logging on every day. Before July, when reports of a ban began to circulate, TikTok was adding some 400,000 US users every day.

Spy threat?

While its quirky videos seem innocuous, TikTok has drawn scrutiny over potential security threats. Republican Senator Marco Rubio called in 2019 for an investigation in TikTok's links to Chinese authorities, and in 2020 the Defense Department told all its personnel to remove the app.

TikTok has denied ties to the Chinese government and claims its servers are inaccessible to Beijing. "We store all US user data in the United States, with backup redundancy in Singapore," TikTok said in a recent statement.

"TikTok's data centers are located entirely outside of China." But a White House executive order in August claimed TikTok "automatically captures vast swaths of information from its users," and that this "threatens to allow the Chinese Communist Party access to Americans' personal and proprietary information."

This, according to the White House, could allow China to "track the locations of federal employees and contractors, build dossiers of personal information for blackmail, and conduct corporate espionage."

Trump has sought to take TikTok out of Chinese control, and has given his blessing to a deal that would make Silicon Valley giant Oracle the data partner for the application. It remained unclear if Beijing would approve the deal, terms of which remained somewhat murky.

One of the key details is what would happen to the TikTok recommendation algorithm seen as the key to its success. The system uses machine learning to determine user preferences and deliver videos to keep people engaged, without too much repetition. — AFP

Jihadist ambush on Nigeria governor's convoy kills 30

KANO: Jihadist fighters linked to the Islamic State group on Friday killed 30 security personnel in an ambush on the convoy of the regional governor in restive northeast Nigeria, three security said. Sources told AFP that eight policemen, three soldiers and four members of a government-backed militia were killed in the attack on vehicles carrying Borno governor Babagana Umara Zulum near the town of Baga on the shores of Lake Chad.

The insurgents opened fire with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades as the convoy was passing through a village close to the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), a

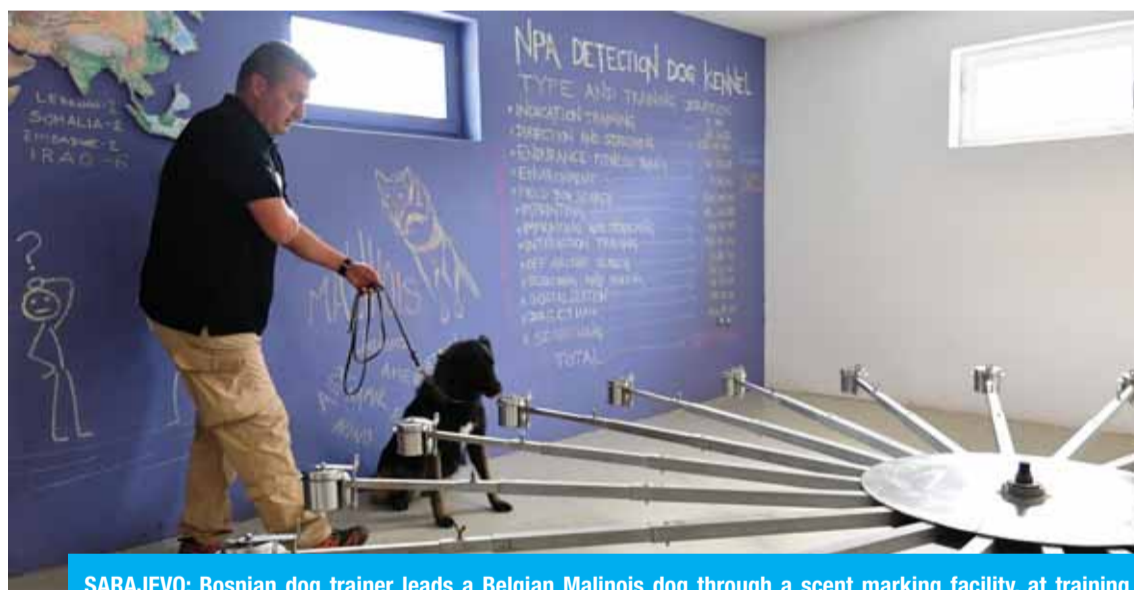
military coalition of troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

"The governor escaped unhurt but 30 security men on the convoy were killed in fierce battle with the terrorists", one source said. Zulum was on an assessment tour of Baga in preparation for the return of thousands of residents displaced from the town by the jihadists in 2014, the sources said.

The governor flew on a helicopter into the garrison town of Monguno, 60 kilometres (40 miles) away, and headed to Baga in a convoy under tight security, one of the sources said.

All three sources were talking on condition of anonymity. The IS-affiliated Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) group maintains most of its camps on islands in Lake Chad and the region is known as a bastion for the jihadists.

The militant group has recently intensified attacks on military and civilian targets in the region. In July Zulum's convoy came under gun attack from ISWAP outside Baga, forcing him to cancel his trip to the town.



SARAJEVO: Bosnian dog trainer leads a Belgian Malinois dog through a scent marking facility, at training facility near Sarajevo, on September 23, 2020. After Bosnia's 1992-1995 bloody conflict, about eight percent of the country's territory remained infested with mines and other explosive devices. — AFP

A life-saving 'game': Bosnia trains world's mine-detecting dogs

VOGOSIA: With her nose in the grass of a Bosnian field, Orna sniffs furiously until she finds her target. She then sits and wags her tail in excitement for the red rubber toy that is her reward. The exercise is only a game for the two-year-old dog, but the mine-detection skill is saving lives in Bosnia and around the world.

The Balkan state, still working to rid its territory of landmines dating back to its 1990s war, has become an important training ground for canines deployed as far afield as Asia, Africa and the Middle East. At the end of Bosnia's 1992-95 conflict, some eight percent of its territory was littered with explosives. Today, experts believe it is down to two percent, thanks in part to the work of the dogs, who have learned the trade at two centres backed by US and Norwegian NGOs.

Orna, a black and brown Belgian Malinois, is undergoing her schooling at the global training centre of the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in a suburb of Sarajevo.

She is among 40 dogs from the hard-working breed currently in training, while 30 other "veterans" are "enjoying their well-deserved retirement", said Gordana Medunjanin, who works at the centre.

All the dogs are the Malinois breed, which is

known to be "energetic, adaptable and have a great desire for work and cooperation", she said. The site's graduates are currently taking part in mine clearance programmes in Bosnia, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia, Zimbabwe and Cambodia.

'It's a game'

Training starts when the puppies are four to six weeks old and lasts up to 18 months, said Orna's trainer Namik Dzanko, 29. One of the important first tests is to confirm the dog's interest in the rubber toy, known as a cong, that helps motivate their work.

The dogs then start honing their skills by detecting the scent of explosives, hidden at random in tin canisters attached to a merry-go-round. The dog circles the structure, stops and sits when it sniffs a mine. Successes are rewarded with some play time with the red toy.

More advanced training continues in the simulation "minefields" outside, where explosives lacking detonators are buried in a 100-square-metre (1,076-square-foot) plot, with zones delineated by yellow tape.

Guided by their trainers, the dogs methodically sniff in straight lines. When they pick up the scent of the explosive, they "mark" it by sitting quietly and pointing their muzzle at the suspected spot.

At a real minefield, the area would then be inspected by a de-mining expert. "The dog does not understand that he is looking for a mine and that it is dangerous. For him, it's a game," said Dzanko.

"He finds something and is rewarded with his toy. Through this positive experience, he does a job which saves lives around the world." — AFP

Last week the group killed a Nigerian army commander along with three soldiers in an ambush near the town of Dambao. Civilians plying highway linking Monguno and the regional capital Maiduguri said the jihadists set up daily checkpoints, robbing, killing and abducting passengers.

The decade-long insurgency in northeast Nigeria has killed 36,000 people and forced over 2 million from their homes. Most of the displaced have been housed into squalid camps where they depend on food handouts from international charities.

Local authorities have been encouraging the displaced to go back to the homes despite concern from aid agencies of the security risks to which the returnees would be exposed.

Last week Zulum said feeding the displaced was not financially sustainable, insisting the only option was for them to return and rebuild their homes and live a "dignified" life.

ISWAP splintered from the main Boko Haram group in 2016 and has gone on to be the dominant insurgent force in the region. — AFP

Senegalese town fights losing battle against trash

BARGNY: Medza remembers the coastline of his native Senegalese town of Bargny as a place where he fished and played as a child before it became a festering rubbish dump. The beach bordering the fishing settlement, about 30 kilometres (18 miles) south of the capital Dakar, is now permanently choked with plastic waste and rotten fish carcasses.

Wedged in by a motorway and industrial sites, Bargny typifies Senegal's jagged economic development — as well as its seemingly endless struggle against pollution and trash. The town borders one of West Africa's largest cement factories and a power plant, and a mineral port is being built nearby. But its 60,000 inhabitants have seen little in the way of beneficial development.

Residents tip out buckets of waste onto the beach for lack of disposal facilities. Local fishermen and industrial trawlers toss refuse overboard which washes back on the beach, according to Medza, whose real name is Medoune N'doye.

"It shocks me. It can't continue like this because it's evil and it's shameful," Medza, a 29-year-old environmental activist, said. For months, he and other local activists have been pushing to clean up the town. On August 15 — after raising money online for wheelbarrows, bags and shovels — they spent three days clearing the beach. But they were fighting a losing battle: after little over a week, the beach was freshly covered with plastic detritus and other waste. "Everything is dirty again," Medza said, looking down at the scattered plastic bottles and pieces of old fish netting surrounding him. "We feel as if our efforts are in vain".

Pink canal water

Much of the coast of Senegal, a poor nation of some 16 million people, is polluted. The government has made attempts to tackle the problem — such as banning single-use plastics this year — but the impact on the ground appears limited.

Bargny's trash problem is particularly severe. The town has a spotty garbage-collection service, but no rubbish bins or sewage system. The deputy mayor of Bargny's town hall, Daouda Moustafa Diouf, told AFP that local authorities had begun to take the problem seriously.

"We made very serious investments last year because we became aware of what existed here, it was really in an indescribable state," Diouf said. The town hall is designating rubbish collection points across town, which it hopes will discourage people from dumping on the beach. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2020

Auto markets face murky outlook

Crowds in face masks pack out China auto show after virus delay

BEIJING: China's auto market has rebounded smartly from the COVID-19 crash in recent months, especially for high-end cars, but questions about the durability of that recovery hung over the Beijing autoshow that started yesterday.

A rare industry event being held in person during the pandemic, the show marks a triumph for the world's biggest car market, pummeled from late last year as lockdowns froze economic activity in the country where the disease erupted. However, this show will be a far cry from the usual ebullience as fewer attend, new models are scant and prospects remain uncertain.

Crowds packed the mega motor show — the only major international auto event this year — as manufacturers hope to boost the world's biggest car market despite the coronavirus battering demand.

Delayed for five months because of the pandemic, the 10-day event opened as China has largely brought the virus outbreak under control, although travel restrictions mean most overseas executives appeared virtually to introduce their new motors. But this did not stop a packed audience in mandatory face masks from cheering as new cars were driven on stage to be shown off.

The fact the glitzy gathering was going ahead marked "a symbol of hope" in the industry, BMW China CEO Jochen Goller told the crowds yesterday morning. Tickets were limited this year in a bid to reduce crowds, although crowds surged through the exhibition center shoulder-to-shoulder.

Among the bright spots: the Chinese market's sharp bounce since April, strong demand for mid-size to large luxury vehicles and a flood of interest — and investment — in electric vehicles. China's auto sales rose 11.6 percent in August from a year earlier, the fifth straight rise after plunging during the lockdown. When almost all residents were told to stay home in February, sales collapsed a record 79 percent to their lowest since 2005.

Guangzhou-based GAC, which has partnerships



BEIJING: Two staffs clean a Volkswagen New Phideon car at the Beijing Auto Show in Beijing yesterday.



BEIJING: People look at the Lynk & Go Zero concept car displayed at the Beijing Auto Show in Beijing yesterday. — AFP photos

with Toyota Motor and Honda Motor, expects sales to grow for the full year, general manager Feng Xingya said on the sidelines of the show, formally the Beijing International Automotive Exhibition 2020.

Germany's BMW expects "single digit growth" in China this year, said Jochen Goller, head of BMW China. "We were heavily affected during quarter one of course, and massively in China," with a 30 percent on-year sales drop, Goller told a small group of reporters. But the second quarter saw a 17 percent rebound and this quarter "is running really well."

"You can say confidence is back," Goller said. China's typically busy car-buying season, "Golden September, Silver October," is off to a good start, according to preliminary data, with passenger car sales up 12 percent in the first 20 days of

September. The rebound means this year's sales will fall less than 10 percent, the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers estimates, better than its May forecast of a 15 percent to 25 percent decline.

Much of the upturn is driven by sales of larger passenger cars by makers such as Daimler and BMW, boosted by new models, automakers' discounts and a broader recovery in the world's second-largest economy. Premium vehicles accounted for a record 15 percent of the Chinese market in August, up from around 10 percent for all of last year, said the China Passenger Car Association.

Electric vehicles are also providing buzz to the Beijing show, as a boom in Tesla shares has propelled interest in China. EV startups like Nio, Xpeng, Li Auto and WM Motor have together raised more than \$8 billion this year. But the recent improvement reflects Chinese carmakers making

earlier model launches as they could not wait for the usual hype from the delayed autoshow before going to market. That suggests a more limited upside to the current sales rise.

"This year's auto sales are very different from previous years," said senior LMC Automotive analyst Alan Kang. "Many cars were sold during summer because customers delayed purchases after the lockdown." Sales of larger sedans and sport-utility vehicles have returned to last year's levels, but competition among mass-market brands is intensifying, said Yale Zhang, head of Shanghai-based consultancy AutoForesight.

That's a key battle ground for international and domestic brands including Volkswagen, Toyota, and Geely. Still, he said, "Sales performance in these two months will give us clue of what will happen next." — Agencies

Facebook strikes deal with Apple on live events cut

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook said Friday it struck a deal in which Apple agreed to temporarily forgo its cut of revenue from paid events at the leading social network to help pandemic-hit performers earn money during the pandemic. The social network had asked Apple to skip its usual 30 percent cut of transactions in mobile apps prior to enable the Facebook Live streaming to be used to create, promote and host paid events from concerts and theatrical performances to yoga classes and cooking lessons.

Apple agreed to a respite through the end of the year "after which struggling businesses will have to, yet again, pay Apple the full 30 percent App Store tax," Facebook spokesman Joe Osborne said in response to an AFP inquiry. Apple originally stuck to its commission, but has since had a change of heart, according to Facebook. The temporary reprieve means that transactions for events in Live on the iOS platform can be handled by Facebook's payment system instead of Apple's network, the social network said. Gaming creators, however, will still have to use Apple's commission-collecting payment system for live events on its mobile devices, according to Facebook gaming vice president Vivek Sharma.

Facebook said it would not collect any fees from paid online events while businesses remain closed for the pandemic, until at least August 2021. Apple did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment. — AFP

Fitch holds UK debt at AA-, outlook negative

WASHINGTON: Fitch Ratings on Friday left Britain's debt rating unchanged at AA- and the outlook at negative, after downgrading both in March on fears of economic damage from Covid-19.

The affirmed negative outlook "reflects the impact the coronavirus pandemic is having on the UK economy and the resulting material deterioration in the public finances, with Fitch forecasting the fiscal deficit to materially widen this year and government debt set to increase to well over 120 percent of GDP over the next few years," the agency said in a statement. Fitch saw Britain's deficit climbing to 17.7 percent of GDP this year from 2.2 percent in 2019, an increase well above that seen during the 2008-2010 global financial crisis, which the agency blamed on the slowdown in economic activity and government measures to fend off the pandemic. — AFP

G7 backs extension of G20 debt freeze

WASHINGTON/PARIS: G7 finance ministers on Friday backed an extension of a G20 bilateral debt relief initiative for the world's poorest countries, but said it must be revised to address shortcomings hindering its implementation. In a lengthy joint statement, the ministers from the Group of Seven advanced economies said they "strongly regret" moves by some countries to skip participation by classifying their state-owned institutions as commercial lenders.

Two officials from G7 countries said the reference was clearly targeted at China, which has refused to include loans by the state-owned China Development Bank and other government-controlled entities in its official bilateral debt totals when dealing with countries seeking debt relief.

The ministers also acknowledged that some countries will need further debt relief going forward, and urged the Group of 20 major economies



and Paris Club creditors to agree on terms by next month's meeting of G20 finance ministers. "Everyone was disappointed by China's lack of transparency and commitment," said one official, who asked not to be named.

At an online meeting hosted by US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, the ministers underscored their commitment to work together to support the poorest and most vulnerable countries, which have been hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic. They asked the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to provide regular updates on the

financing needs of low-income countries and propose solutions for expected financing gaps, including through instruments to leverage access to private finance. They said the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) approved in April by G20 countries, including China, had helped 43 countries defer \$5 billion in official debt service payments to free up money to respond to the pandemic. But the total is far short of the \$12 billion in savings that were initially projected, and represents just over half of the 70-plus countries that were eligible.

The ministers said the initiative should be extended, "in the context of a request for IMF financing," and called for a new term sheet and memorandum of understanding to improve its implementation. The ministers said claims classified as commercial under DSSI would also be treated as such in future debt treatments and for implementation of IMF policies, delivering a stern reminder to China and others that have not been fully transparent about the scope and terms of government lending to poor countries. The ministers also called again on private lenders to implement the debt relief initiative when requested, noting that the absence of private sector participation has limited the potential benefits for several countries. — Reuters

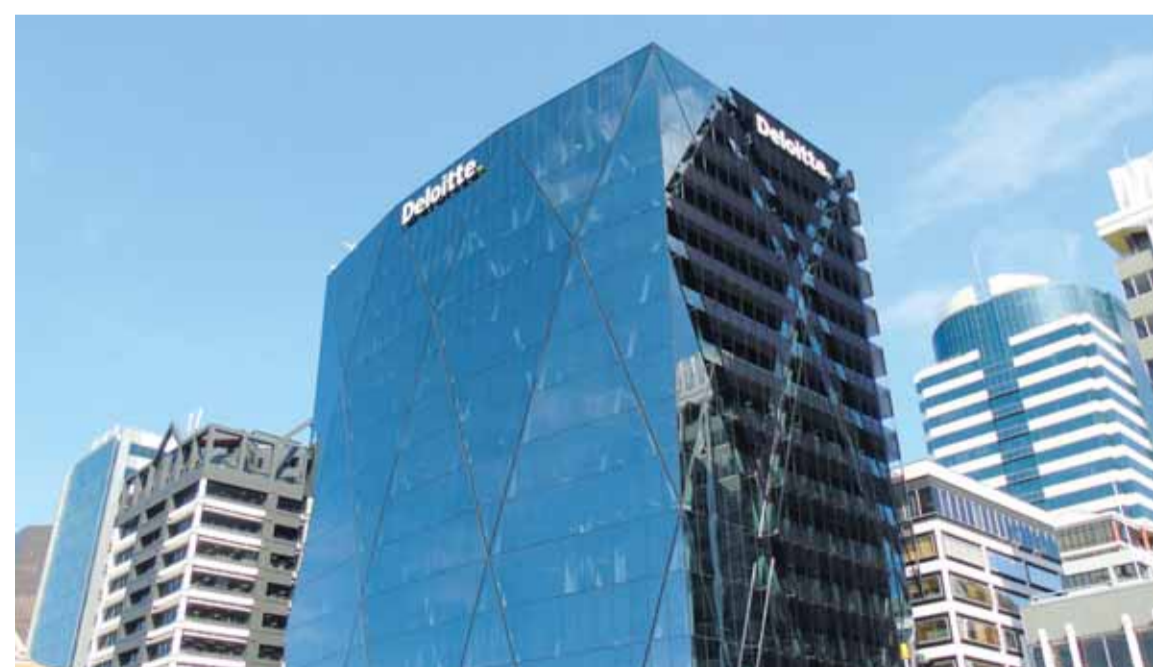
'Big Four' accounting firm sees upside to climate change

PARIS: One of the world's 'Big Four' accounting firms released a report this week concluding that extreme, "business-as-usual" climate change will benefit a third of the world's economies over the course of the 21st century. Published online in Czech, the analysis from Deloitte's Prague office said that countries in colder latitudes such as Canada, Norway and Russia "should benefit the most from rising temperatures."

The Czech Republic's GDP, for example, would likely rise 25 percent by 2100 "in the fastest warming scenarios," according to a summary of the report. The findings-based on the relationship between average annual temperatures and GDP-ly in the face of most research on the long-term economic impacts of climate change. Recent studies in peer-reviewed journals show the world economy taking a huge hit from global warming by century's end, shrinking up to 20 percent by 2100 if greenhouse gases continue unabated. In a more conservative estimate, the IMF said last year that per capita GDP would drop more than seven percent. "Calculating the effects of climate change purely on the basis of changes in mean temperature or rainfall altering GDP is naive and misleading," said Tim Lenton, a professor at the Global System Institute at the University of Exeter, commenting on the Deloitte report. "Climate change is the most profound risk management problem humanity has ever faced."

'Perfectly insane'

Gernot Wagner, an associate professor in climate economics at New York University, said the big risks from global warming come from extreme



weather events such as heatwaves and flooding, not changes in average temperature. "This is an example of a seemingly logical 'study' that is also perfectly insane," he said.

A team of researchers from the Charles University Environment Centre in Prague also slammed the Deloitte analysis, pointing out in a lengthy rebuttal that the Czech Republic's open export economy is dependent on developments in world markets, something ignored in the report.

"Climate is a global phenomenon," noted Wagner. "No country is an island, including the Czech Republic." Surprisingly, the report finds that the most extreme UN climate scenario—which sees the planet heating four degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels by 2100 — would benefit the Czech Republic more than a rise of 2C.

In either scenario, some 70 countries would see

"positive effects", while 125 will experience negative ones, it found. The conclusions would seem to be at odds with objectives and positions laid out by Deloitte Global earlier this month.

The company "believes that urgent and immediate action is needed to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement," Deloitte Global associate director and head of media relations Steve Dutton told AFP.

The 2015 treaty calls for capping global warming at "well below" 2C, and 1.5C if possible. In a press release, Deloitte announced earlier this month a commitment "to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 for our own operations."

Contacted by AFP, Deloitte's director for the Czech Republic, David Marek, said his office stands by the findings. Deloitte's worldwide operations pulled in more than \$45 billion for the fiscal year ending in May 2019. — AFP

Business

US business spending digging out of deep hole; outlook uncertain

Core capital goods orders increase 1.8% in August

WASHINGTON: New orders for key US-made capital goods increased more than expected in August and shipments raced to their highest level in nearly six years, suggesting a rebound in business spending on equipment was underway after a prolonged slump. The show of confidence by businesses in the report from the Commerce Department on Friday also bolstered expectations for a sharp turnaround in economic activity in the third quarter, thanks to government money, after it was hammered by the COVID-19 pandemic in the first half of the year.

But fiscal aid is running out and new coronavirus cases are rising in the country, clouding the fourth-quarter picture. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell this week stressed the need for more fiscal stimulus, telling lawmakers on Thursday that it could make the difference between continued recovery and a much slower economic slog. Another rescue package appears unlikely before the Nov. 3 presidential election. "The recovery in capex is not screeching to a halt," said Sarah House, a senior economist at Wells Fargo Securities in Charlotte, North Carolina. "Equipment spending will be a key contributor to the third-quarter's bounce back in GDP."

Orders for non-defense capital goods excluding aircraft, a closely watched proxy for business spending plans, rose 1.8 percent last month to the highest level since July 2018. Data for July was revised up to show these so-called core capital goods orders increasing 2.5 percent instead of 1.9 percent as previously reported. Core capital goods orders are now above their pre-pandemic level.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast orders for these goods gaining 0.5 percent in August. Core capital goods orders last month were boosted by increased demand for machinery, primary metals and computers and electronic products. But orders for fabricated metals products and electrical equipment, appliances and components fell. Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher. The dollar gained versus a basket of currencies. US Treasury prices rose.

Strong third quarter expected

Shipments of core capital goods increased 1.5 percent last month to the highest level since September 2014. Core capital goods shipments are used to calculate equipment spending in the government's gross domestic product measurement. They advanced 2.8 percent in July. The two straight months of strong growth in shipments are likely to lift overall business investment from a deep hole in the third quarter.

Business investment tumbled at a record 26 percent annualized rate in the second quarter, with spending on equipment collapsing at an all-time pace of 35.9 percent. Investment in equipment has



Durable goods orders gain

contracted for five straight quarters. Economic activity rebounded sharply over the summer as businesses reopened after mandatory closures in mid-March to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Gross domestic product is expected to rebound at as much as a record 35 percent annualized rate in the third quarter after tumbling at a 31.7 percent rate in the April-June period, the worst performance since the government started keeping records in 1947. But the economy is far from being out of the woods. Government loan programs to help businesses and income supplements for the tens of millions of unemployed have either lapsed or are close to expiring.

New claims for unemployment benefits unexpectedly rose last week, businesses activity



Durable goods are seen on sale in a store in Los Angeles, California.

appeared to ebb in September and retail sales slowed in August. Goldman Sachs on Wednesday cut its fourth-quarter GDP growth estimate to a 3 percent rate from a 6 percent pace, citing "lack of further fiscal support." "Decelerating from the reopening-induced, artificially high pace is something everyone is expecting," said Joel Naroff, chief economist at Naroff Economics in Holland, Pennsylvania. "The question is how fast do we slow? The September numbers will start providing some answers."

For now the industrial side of the economy pressing ahead. Orders for durable goods, items ranging from toasters to aircraft that are meant to last three years or more, rose 0.4 percent in August after jumping 11.7 percent in July. Durable goods orders were supported by a 0.5 percent

rise in orders for transportation equipment, though demand for motor vehicles and defense aircraft eased.

Orders for motor vehicles and parts dropped 4.0 percent after accelerating 21.7 percent in July. There were no orders for civilian aircraft reported for the second straight month in August.

Boeing has struggled with cancellations as airlines grapple with sharply reduced demand for air travel because of the pandemic. The grounding of Boeing's best-selling 737 MAX jets since March 2019 after two crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia has also weighed on the company.

There was a continued drawdown of durable goods inventories last month, which bodes well for future production, though unfilled orders declined further. — Reuters

Australia loosens lending laws to revive economy

SYDNEY: Australia said on Friday it would ease lending standards for banks in a move designed to free up credit and revive the economy, which slid into its first recession in nearly 30 years due to the coronavirus pandemic. Shares of Australia's "Big Four" banks rallied after the announcement but the move, which needs legislative approval, has attracted criticism from consumer groups and analysts who say the relaxed laws water down protections designed to reduce financial risks.

Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said the changes will ease the regulatory burden and cut the cost and time faced by consumers and small businesses seeking to access credit.

"The flow of credit will be absolutely critical to our economic recovery," Frydenberg told reporters in Canberra. "But our current regulatory framework, with respect to lending...has become overly prescriptive, and responsible lending has become restrictive lending." The changes remove responsible lending

laws introduced in the wake of the global financial crisis that, among other things, require banks to check whether information provided by borrowers in their loan applications is correct.

They also follow other stimulatory measures such as government guarantees for bad debts and cheap funding lines from the central bank. Australian banks had tightened lending practices following a government-led inquiry, known as the Royal Commission, which found lenders were approving loans to people that were not repay them. But the need to stimulate the country's economy has led lawmakers to now relax their tough stance.

"Before the Royal Commission banks had very poor reputations and after the Royal Commission it got worse because it showed that they've been lending quite irresponsibly," CLSA senior banking analyst Brian Johnson said. "Now what we are seeing is politicians... basically embracing what it previously would have called



A combination of photographs shows people using automated teller machines (ATMs) at Australia's "Big Four" banks - Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd (bottom right), Commonwealth Bank of Australia (top right), National Australia Bank Ltd (bottom left) and Westpac Banking Corp (top left). — Reuters

irresponsible lending."

Banks and investors cheered the news with National Australia Bank and Westpac Banking shares rising over 6 percent, while Commonwealth Bank of Australia was up more than 3 percent. Australia and New Zealand Banking Group rose 5 percent. That helped lift

Australia's benchmark index more than 1 percent. "This is a significant government initiative that will reduce red tape for consumers seeking a loan and importantly speed up the process for customers to obtain approval for a loan," Westpac CEO Peter King said in a statement. — Reuters

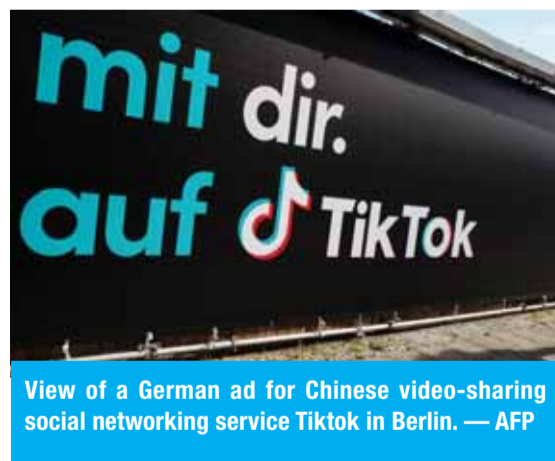
US maintains plan for TikTok download ban

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration said Friday it would not back down from a plan to ban new US downloads of the popular video-sharing app TikTok, setting up a court showdown ahead of a today's deadline. A Justice Department court filing said it opposes TikTok's petition for an injunction to block the order from President Donald Trump, who has called the Chinese-owned social platform a national security risk. US District Judge Carl Nichols set a hearing today at 9 am (1330 GMT) in Washington for TikTok's request to block the president's order before it goes into effect at 11:59 pm Sunday (0359 GMT Monday).

The government lawyers said they wanted to file a brief "under seal," which would not be available as a public record, citing national security and confidential business information. The court filing said TikTok had tentatively agreed to sealed briefs but would reserve the right to request that some documents be made public.

'Irreparable harm'

TikTok has argued that a ban, even if temporary, could cause irreparable harm to the video-sharing application, which has some 100 million US users. Nichols, who sits on the bench in Washington, told a telephone hearing on Thursday he disagreed with government lawyers' claims that the ban—which would not immediately prevent usage of TikTok but prevent downloads by new users and updates—"merely preserves the status quo."



View of a German ad for Chinese video-sharing social networking service Tiktok in Berlin. — AFP

Analysts also pointed out that any ban could prevent users from downloading updates and security patches for TikTok. Earlier this month, Trump cited national security concerns and issued orders to ban both TikTok and the popular Chinese app WeChat—which has been put on hold in a separate court case in California. But the TikTok order stops short of a full ban until November 12, giving the Chinese parent firm ByteDance time to conclude a deal to transfer ownership of the app. A tentative deal unveiled last weekend would make Silicon Valley giant Oracle the technology partner for TikTok and a stakeholder in a new entity to be known as Tik Tok Global. The status of the deal, which would include investment from US retail giant Walmart, remained unclear as the parties awaited word on whether it would win approval in Beijing.

As part of its earlier court filing, a statement from TikTok interim head Vanessa Pappas said the proposed ban would be devastating for the social platform, which had been surging in much of the world. A ban "will cause our user base to stagnate and then precipitously decline," Pappas said. — AFP

IMF raises Colombia's credit line to \$17.2bn

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund on Friday announced it had raised by \$6.5 billion a credit line offered to Colombia to about \$17.2 billion, aiming to help the country cope with the economic effects of COVID-19.

"The augmentation was approved in light of Colombia's continued qualification with very strong institutional policy frameworks, track record of economic performance and policy implementation, and against a backdrop of higher external risks and a larger than expected adverse impact from Covid-19 pandemic," the Washington-based crisis lender said in a statement. Colombia has had a Flexible Credit Line (FCL) since May 2009, and the IMF board has renewed it every two years, providing the country with money that could be deployed to head off a crisis.

The latest renewal in May was for \$10.8 billion, but deputy IMF managing director Antoinette Sayeh said in a statement that Colombia's downturn was deeper than expected and the country is set for its worst recession on record. "The augmentation of access under the current FCL arrangement will help Colombia manage heightened external risks, protect ongoing efforts to effectively respond to the pandemic, continue to integrate migrants from Venezuela, foster inclusive growth and reduce external vulnerabilities," she said.

IMF mission chief for Colombia Hamid Faruque said the country's economy is expected to shrink 8.2 percent this year, worse than the 2.5 percent drop originally forecast. "We do expect growth to rebound," he said, predicting GDP increasing four percent next year. — AFP

Hungary to shore up economy with tax cuts, investments

BRUSSELS: Hungary wants to kickstart its economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic by boosting investments and reducing taxes, Prime Minister Viktor Orban told Reuters on Friday, adding that extending the government's job support scheme was a backup plan.

Nationalist Orban, who has been in power for more than a decade, faces the toughest challenge of his rule now as the economy is expected to shrink by up to 6 percent this year while new COVID-19 infections are surging. Hungary's weakened economic prospects could represent a threat to Orban - once dubbed a "dictator" by the former head of the EU's executive in Brussels - as he prepares to face parliamentary elections in the first half of 2022. The economy, along with a strong anti-immigration campaign, has been a major vote-winner for the premier whose tax policies have favored families and relied strongly on the auto industry.

"Investment, investment, investment. Tax reduction and investment," Orban said in an interview in Brussels when asked how he would try to improve the economy. "We concentrate on investments because if we have investments we have jobs." This, he said, would be enough to get growth going again, even without Hungary's share of the European Union's new recovery fund worth 750 billion euros for the whole bloc. When asked if the government would extend a job support scheme which expired a month ago, he said: "If there is a reason to do so we will do it but up till now we concentrate more on investment."

The economy shrank 13.6 percent in annual terms in the second quarter, the deepest contraction on the EU's eastern flank, and the recovery is expected to be slower than previously expected.

Asked about the forint currency, which dropped to five-month lows versus the euro this week prompting a surprise rate hike by the central bank on Thursday, Orban said the exchange rate was the central bank's job. "The National Bank is independent and I trust the national bank so it's not my job, simply. It's the policy of the national bank," Orban said.

"If they create a strong one (forint), I have to adjust the economic policy to the strong one. If they create a weaker one I have to adjust to a weaker one." He also stood up for central bank Governor Gyorgy Matolcsy, a long-time ally, saying he enjoyed his full confidence. "If you look at the figures of the Hungarian economy of the last several years, they are splendid, and it's partly due to the national bank. Facts create trust." — Reuters

Business

stc awarded 'Leading Corporate for Investor Relations - Kuwait 2020'

Ranked first locally and amongst the top 5 in Middle East

KUWAIT: Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it won the "Leading Corporate for Investor Relations - Kuwait 2020" category.



stc ranked top 10 for 'Best Digital IR - ME'

Additionally, the Company was ranked amongst the top 5 in the Middle East during the Middle East Investor Relations Association (MEIRA) Annual Conference and Awards ceremony held on the 22nd and 23rd of September 2020.

In its statement, stc expressed that CEO, engineer Maziad Bin Nasser Al-Harbi, was nominated amongst the top 5 CEOs for Investor Relations in the Middle East for 2020 while the

Company's CFO, Mohammed Bin Abdulmohsen Al-Assaf was nominated amongst the top 5 CFOs for Investor Relations in the Middle East for 2020. On the other hand, stc Investor Relations General Manager, Wassim M. El Hayek, was recognized during the MEIRA awards as "Best Investor Relations Professional in Kuwait for 2020".

The MEIRA Annual Conference and Awards is considered the largest event to cover best Investor Relations practices in the MENA region, demonstrating the importance of incorporating transparency and corporate governance practices in the Investor Relations functions of listed companies. The event honors and awards each of the leading companies, investor relations professionals, CEOs and CFOs who demonstrate dedication to applying the highest professional standards in investor relations.

On this occasion, engineer Maziad Bin Nasser Al-Harbi, CEO of stc, said, "Being a leader in the telecom industry and a pioneer in providing the digital transformation services in the Middle East, stc is keen on applying the best practices and professional standards across all company functions in order to support its



(From left to right) Mohammed Bin Abdulmohsen Al-Assaf, Maziad Bin Nasser Al-Harbi and Wassim M. El Hayek

employees in achieving the optimal level of operational activities. To achieve its 2020 corporate strategy, which focused on building strategic partnerships in the industry, stc not only considered incorporating the industry's best practices, but also made sure to maintain the highest level of transparency with current and potential investors, while applying the corporate governance principles across all company activities."

Al-Harbi pointed out that stc is amongst the top companies in Kuwait, and one of the leading in the region in terms of investor relations activities. This illustrates the executive management's

and Investor Relations Department's leading role in stc IR activities, which meets global best practices within this area. In addition, the Company was one of the best performing listed companies during the pandemic, demonstrating the great efforts of stc's IR team in fulfilling the needs of the investment community in an efficient, transparent, and timely manner.

The achievements of the IR Department reflect the significant role the department has played in implementing the corporate governance framework at stc, which adheres to Kuwait's regulatory bodies' rules and regulations in

order to ensure a smooth flow of information with our shareholders and investment community.

Al-Harbi added, "Throughout the pandemic, stc proved its ability to overcome economic challenges and potential risks by leveraging its digital platforms and communication channels to serve the investment community and shareholders virtually. Thereby, stc was ranked amongst the top 10 Best Digital IR companies in the Middle East for 2020. During the period of uncertainty, stc's Investor Relations team ensured the investment community was fully informed with the latest developments as well as corporate responses taken by the company to maintain its viability."

Al-Harbi concluded, "At stc, we are open to providing the investment community with information about our market position, competitive advantages, strategy, as well as financial and operational performance. Consequently, stc's prudent management was able to maintain effective communication with stakeholders with the utmost transparency throughout the year, which enhanced their confidence while earning their trust and support."



SALT LAKE CITY: A Delta Airlines Boeing 737 (front) passes another Delta Airlines Boeing 777 (back) on the tarmac at Salt Lake City International Airport. — AFP

Boeing 737 MAX could get EU clearance year-end

NEW YORK: Boeing's troubled 737 MAX airliner, grounded for 18 months after two deadly accidents, could receive certification to fly again in Europe "by the end of the year," the EU's air safety chief said Friday. The statement signaled a light at the end of the tunnel for Boeing after the lengthy grounding. The Federal Aviation Administration also sent positive signs Friday about the embattled plane, saying the agency's chief planned a test flight next week, further boosting shares.

The two crashes, by Lion Air in October 2018 and Ethiopian Airlines in March 2019, claimed 346 lives and badly dented Boeing's reputation and that of the FAA. Now "for the first time in a year and a half, I can see we're in sight of the end of the work on the MAX," European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) chief Patrick Ky told reporters in a video press conference.

"We're starting to look at how we can get the MAX back in service by the end of the year."

Early September certification flights by EASA followed June testing by the FAA in June. But the aircraft must still overcome several hurdles, including in pilot training, before authorities give their green light.

"We continue to follow the lead of global regulators on the process they have laid out for the safe return of the 737 MAX to commercial service," Boeing said in a statement. "We appreciate the rigorous scrutiny that the regulatory authorities are rightly applying at every step of their review and they will determine the schedule for return to service." In Ky's view, even with "just about simultaneous" permission from the EASA and FAA, it

will be up to individual nations and airlines to give the go-ahead for 737 MAX flights to resume.

Ky said that renewed certification from China, the first country to ground the aircraft, would "certainly" take a little longer as the Chinese regulator had yet to envisage resumption of flight tests. But he added that a training review at London's Gatwick airport to help pilots adapt to new procedures had gone well and that a report evaluating that review would be ready in "two to three weeks."

Boeing board is sued

The FAA, along with EASA and regulators from Canada and Brazil, concluded the joint assessment of Boeing's proposed training earlier this week. The plan will be put out for public comment in the "near future," an FAA spokesman said. FAA Administrator Steve Dickson and his deputy, Dan Elwell, will undertake the training next week in Seattle. Dickson is also scheduled to undertake a test flight.

The FAA is reviewing public comments on an airworthiness directive and "will not approve the plane for return to passenger service until it is satisfied that all of the known issues have been adequately," the FAA spokesman said. A US Congressional report published earlier this month called the earlier crashes "the horrific culmination of a series of faulty technical assumptions by Boeing's engineers, a lack of transparency on the part of Boeing's management, and grossly insufficient oversight by the FAA."

Boeing's board of directors is also under increased scrutiny for its oversight of the planemaker ahead of the crashes. Nearly two dozen current and former Boeing officials and board members are named in a recent lawsuit that depicts the board as passive toward operational problems on earlier Boeing models and overly trusting of former chief executive Dennis Muilenburg's explanations for the disasters.—AFP

nies. They run out of financing, they are out of the game." Moody's in a report said the measures negatively impacted the ability of local firms to pay back debt on time. It said there were \$1.253 billion in capital repayments on "negotiable obligations" debt instruments due in the October-March period.

"In this context, we see Argentine companies taking defensive positions, significantly reducing their expansion plans and reviewing their cost structures," the agency said.

Major firms with payments due, according to Moody's, include state energy giant YPF, Banco Hipotecario, real estate group IRSA SA, agriculture firm Cresud SA, and renewable firm Gennia SA.

The companies declined to comment. YPF has already restructured part of the debt and does not expect refinancing problems. "This is a step never taken before, which puts firms in a situation of virtual default beyond the credit risk that they have," said an Argentine executive at an exporting firm facing around \$20 million of payments by the end of the year.

The executive, who asked not to be named, said his firm would present a tentative restructuring plan to the central bank before Sept 30. "This measure where they oblige you to enter a restructuring and do not give you clarity on what happens if there is no success in that restructuring is unprecedented."—Reuters

Rise of zombies? EU's insolvency balancing act

BERLIN: Even as the European economy slumps into its deepest recession in modern history, the number of bankruptcies across the continent has fallen sharply as government subsidies and a temporary loosening of insolvency rules keep companies afloat. During the first half of 2020, countries including Britain, France and Spain saw insolvencies fall by an estimated 20-40 percent year-on-year, official and private sector data show.

But as the region implements new restrictions to control a fresh rise in COVID-19 infections, the question for governments is whether to preserve jobs at the risk of creating a generation of debt-laden "zombie" firms with no real future.

For now, it seems a risk they believe worth taking. In Germany, Europe's biggest economy, there was a 6.2 percent year-on-year drop in insolvency filings in the first half after the government temporarily waived a filing obligation. By contrast, US Chapter 11 bankruptcy filings rose 26 percent, according to legal-services firm Epiq Systems Inc. Now, Berlin plans to give troubled firms yet more leeway.

Local critics say the first-half fall in insolvencies is proof in itself the state has done more than enough and now risks impeding what economic liberals hail as "creative destruction", the term popularised in the 1940s by Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter to describe unviable firms folding to make way for more dynamic newcomers.

But the issue is knowing how to distinguish the zombies - generally defined as companies which would anyway struggle to cover their interest payments - from basically healthy firms that have run into temporary trouble. Jan-Marco Luczak, legal and consumer spokesman for Angela Merkel's conservative CDU/CSU, said it was "good and right" that the government helped businesses quickly and without red tape.

"But it is also clear that we must not permanently switch off the self-cleaning process of the market," he told Reuters. "Companies that are not healthy and have no economic prospects independently of corona must exit the market." Germany's Federal Statistics Office confirms the drop in insolvencies was directly facilitated by government measures, including allowing firms to delay filing for bankruptcy until the end of September, now extended to the end of the year.

A new draft reform, which would take effect at the start of 2021, envisages extending the deadline for firms to file for insolvency to six from three weeks while also giving them the opportunity to terminate onerous contracts. "The company is given a wide margin of manoeuvre in drawing up the restructuring plan, organ-

izing the negotiations and conducting the vote on the restructuring plan," the Justice Ministry said of the proposals in a written statement sent to Reuters.

That has raised alarm bells with the IDW Institute of Public Auditors, which is calling on the government to press struggling companies to restructure earlier, rather than when they face a real threat of insolvency.

Structural change

Jens Weidmann, president of Germany's national central bank and a known fiscal hawk, also has concerns. He acknowledges the "balancing act" involved in countering the pandemic's economic fallout with state support measures but, in a speech this month, highlighted the potential to kick-start what many would see as a long overdue structural change in Germany's economy away from its reliance on the industries of the last century. The auto sector is one such example.

"Digital transformation could get a real boost", he said, giving one example of the creative destruction that pro-market advocates are seeking. Berenberg Bank economist Holger Schmieding said the government was not yet impeding corporate renewal, but was at risk of doing so.

"In this unusual and unusually deep recession, it makes sense to slow down the process of destruction." "Over the course of next year, the balance will shift," he added. "Extending the moratorium on insolvency proceedings into next year would be wrong, in my view."

Reduced prospects

Credit insurance and debt collection group Atradius estimates a 26 percent rise in insolvencies globally this year as governments start to phase out support schemes. However it predicts that any increase in the second half will be much lower in Europe than elsewhere. The Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) last week urged governments to review and refocus pandemic support measures as the recovery progresses. Failure to do so could hinder the recovery by trapping resources in non-productive firms and jobs, reducing prospects for shifting jobs to more productive and higher-paid ones, it said.

In Spain, one of hardest hit European countries both economically and in health terms, some 130 leading economists are urging the government to fine-tune employment protection schemes to avoid non-viable companies being subsidized. "It is key to avoid problems of incentives that could delay the revival of the economy and the reallocation of workers towards more productive enterprises," they wrote. Britain is taking a different tack. While it has announced a wage subsidy scheme modelled loosely on Germany's long-running "Kurzarbeit" short-time work program, Finance Minister Rishi Sunak has made it clear the initiative - a much less costly replacement to furlough measures expiring next month - was not intended to save jobs that were not viable in the long term.— Reuters

Argentina Inc fears 'virtual default' as FX noose tightened

BUENOS AIRES: Argentine companies are facing an increasingly difficult task to keep up with payments on dollar debt, hiking the risk of a wave of corporate defaults after the country tightened access to foreign currency to stem a sharp decline in reserves.

The central bank move, which pressured firms to restructure their debts and tightened individuals' access to greenbacks, jolted local markets, pummeled bond prices and equities and heightened demand for black market dollars. The measures mean companies with debt payments greater than \$1 million per month between mid-October and the end of March next year can only cover 40 percent of that in foreign currency, in effect forcing them to refinance the remainder.

"The source of financing is running out. We are talking about companies whose cash flows are local and cannot acquire foreign currency. It is crazy," said Mariano Sardans, director of Argentine asset manager FDI International. "This is a death warrant for many firms, or even directly means default for these compa-



Building equipment for sale in Spain where despite economic woes there were just 18 insolvencies per 10,000 companies in 2011.

Classifieds

Sunday, September 27, 2020

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Rather hot to fair with light variable wind to light to moderate south westerly wind with speed of 08 - 32 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 26/09/2020 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	43 °C	31 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	44 °C	25 °C			
ABDALY	44 °C	25 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	44 °C	28 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	44 °C	30 °C			
SALMIYAH	40 °C	32 °C			
AHMADI	- °C	- °C			
NUWAISIB	41 °C	27 °C			
WAFRA	43 °C	25 °C			
SALMY	42 °C	26 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	09/27	Hot	45 °C	25 °C	SW-NW	10 - 35 km/h
Monday	09/28	Hot	43 °C	24 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 40 km/h
Tuesday	09/29	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for light fog forming at night	42 °C	23 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Wednesday	09/30	Hot and Humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for fog forming over some areas	40 °C	22 °C	SE-VRB	08 - 38 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:20
Sunrise	05:39
Zuhr	11:40
Asr	15:05
Sunset	17:40
Isha	18:57

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	44 °C
MIN. Temp.	27 °C
MAX. RH	39 %
MIN. RH	10 %
MAX. Wind	N 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

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- राष्ट्रीयता: भारतीय, श्रीलंका, नेपाली और फिलिपिनो
- ट्रान्सफरबल रेसिडेंसी होनी चाहिए (केवल अनुच्छेद 18 वीजा धारक)
- तुरंत काम शुरू करने के लिए तैयार
- 25-40 वर्ष की आयु के बीच
- तैरने की क्षमता (बेहतर)

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Word Search

Football Terms Word Search

BACKFIELD	FIELD GOAL	INTERCEPTION	RUSHING
CENTER	FULLBACK	KICKOFF	SACK
CORNERBACK	FUMBLE	LINEBACKER	SAFETY
DOWN	GUARD	OFFENSIVE LINE	SNAP
DRIVE	HALFBACK	PUNT	SPECIAL TEAMS
END ZONE	HAND OFF	QUARTERBACK	TACKLE
EXTRA POINT	HUDDLE	RED ZONE	TIGHT END
FAIR CATCH	INCOMPLETION	RETURN	WIDE RECEIVER

Join the Dots

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)

A call from someone you haven't heard from in a while could generate mixed feelings, Aries. On the one hand, you're probably glad to resume contact with this person. On the other, because you weren't expecting to hear from them, it could create extra emotions for you - as if you didn't already have enough on your plate! Talk to another friend about how you feel so you can enjoy your evening.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You might have to play nurse today, Cancer. A love partner could claim to feel unwell, and you might expend a lot of energy trying to make your friend feel better. Don't overdo it. There may be psychological factors at work. Your friend could be jealous of the attention you've been giving family and friends. Be attentive, but within limits!

Libra (September 23-October 22)

Happiness reigns in the home as everyone feels the energy changing, Libra. It seems that the end of one cycle brings closure, and now you're free to start a new journey of rebirth. You, above all, are apt to feel a powerful rush of intuition, which could reveal positive events coming up for you and those close to you. A few doubts may cloud your impressions, but let them go.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today you may feel a passionate attraction for someone intelligent who perhaps makes a living in law, education, or publishing, Capricorn. Conversations with this person could touch on some deep issues, such as spiritual matters, the human psyche, or the nature of the universe. You should be deeply affected, not only by the person but also by the subjects. Take a walk later to clear your head.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Someone who's been ill and perhaps undergone surgery might phone you today, Taurus. You could invite this person to join you for a little virtual social gathering. Several people could be involved. All of them will have some interesting and useful information to offer. Enjoy your day.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

You're generally focused on the material world, Leo, but something about the energy generated by today's planetary alignments causes you to look within. You might think about the joys and pains of past family gatherings and wonder how they affect your life now. This is a positive, healing process, so don't fight it. It won't interfere with what's going on around you.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Are you going to go away soon, Scorpio? If not, you may be planning a trip for another month, perhaps going for educational purposes, such as to attend a workshop. You might have agreed to some overseas business travel. You should feel especially energetic, enthusiastic, and optimistic now. You've done well thanks to your diligent work, and you should continue on that path.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

This could be a quiet day for you and your partner, Aquarius. You could spend some time reflecting on past achievements and future goals. It's important to get a clear picture about the past so you can draw conclusions and make workable plans. If you have a family, you'll probably be interested in activities that everyone will enjoy. Make some time to get together when it's possible. Leave tension behind.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

With the planetary atmosphere today, your sensual nature is in full bloom. If there's a romantic partner nearby, that person should be on guard! There may be a lot of other people around, so a chance to be alone probably won't present itself until this evening. If you don't connect with a potential partner, at least you'll have a good time. Hang in there and be patient!

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

A virtual group event could put you in contact with a number of people interested in doing a healing meditation for the planet. This sort of activity can work wonders to strengthen the bond among those performing it. You might not talk much during the discussions, but you're apt to be in total agreement with the idea. Enjoy your day.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Instinct and determination drive you toward unconventional plans for making money, Sagittarius. A finance counselor or other professional could be involved. You may see this as an opportunity to restore your ailing bank account. You may have future purchases in mind, perhaps even a new home. Consider your plans carefully before going ahead. You'll want to be sure it's what you need.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

All the positive energy generated by the celestial atmosphere seems to come together today as you experience a rush of sensual passion for a romantic partner, Pisces. An unexpected encounter could not only fulfill this desire but also bring you closer. If you aren't already committed, expect to discuss it tonight. Be careful to exercise restraint. Your lover could panic if you push too hard.

First Shakespeare in Spain?

Bard's last play found at seminary

It was hidden away for centuries in the archives of a seminary in Spain, a rare edition of a Shakespeare play experts believe may be the earliest copy of his work to reach the country. Published in 1634, "The Two Noble Kinsmen" is a tragicomedy about love, enmity and madness written by Shakespeare in collaboration with Jacobean playwright John Fletcher. "It's likely the play reached Spain between 1635 and 1640," said John Stone, a lecturer in English studies at Barcelona University who discovered it at the Royal Scots College, a seminary in the northwestern town of Salamanca founded after the Catholic Church was outlawed in Scotland.

Collections of English works were rare in Spain and plays were exceptional in the 17th and 18th centuries, with all books subjected to inspection at the frontier by the Spanish Inquisition, particularly those from a heretical Protestant state like England. The tragicomedy was part of a single volume of eight English plays printed from 1630 to 1635 that was likely brought over by a traveller and managed to escape falling into the hands of the Inquisition. "I was going through the section on political economy and on the last shelf, I saw a book that was distinct in its binding from pretty well anything else," Stone told AFP. Having written his dissertation on Shakespeare in Spain, he realized its importance immediately. "I knew the moment I saw it that it was the oldest copy of Shakespeare in Spain," said the Canadian researcher. "The question was whether it had been the first Shakespearean text to reach Spain."

Under nose of Inquisition
Until now, the earliest known work of Shakespeare in Spain was a compilation

of plays found at the Jesuit English College in Valladolid that likely arrived in the late 1640s or early 1650s. It was sold in the 1920s to Henry Clay Folger, a wealthy American industrialist who went on to found the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC. Clues as to when "The Two Noble Kinsmen" arrived lay in the margin notes made by Hugh



This handout pictures show a rare edition of the Shakespeare play "The Two Noble Kinsmen" experts believe may be the earliest copy of the Bard's work to reach Spain.—AFP photos



Simple, a politically-ambitious Scottish Jesuit who was rector of the Royal Scots College. "The handwriting tells us it arrived in Semple's lifetime and he died in the early 1650s," Stone said of this "highly-networked individual" who was friends with Spanish playwright Lope de Vega and known for being able to bring in English books.

His international ties were "very active" in the mid-1630s when he "would have had a great opportunity to import the book," Stone said, suggesting it may have been brought over by a London-based Scottish aristocrat who was liaising between the English and Spanish monarchs. Although the Royal Scots College was located in central Madrid at the time, right under the nose of the Inquisition, there was no sign its "eclectic mix of English books" was ever noticed by the Holy Office.

It is unclear whether the Shakespeare play was ever performed or used as part of the college's curriculum although Stone said theatre was often used as part of Jesuit teaching. Stone is now working with a book historian to see if the binding or stitching of the volume could offer further definitive clues as to when it arrived. — AFP



In this file photo a performer showers revelers with glitter in a street party during the annual 'Ceu Na Terra bloco', in the run up to Rio's carnival, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.—AFP

Rio scraps carnival street parties, along with parades

Revelers hoping to escape the coronavirus doldrums at Rio de Janeiro's world-famous carnival got more bad news Friday as organizers indefinitely postponed the city's epic street parties, a day after the official parades were scrapped. Originally scheduled for February 2021, the Brazilian beach city's carnival is a massive mixture of social-distancing no-no's, from the huge crowds that attend the annual samba school parade competition to the giant free-for-all of street parties known as "blocos." After organizers announced Thursday they were indefinitely postponing the samba school parades because of the pandemic, the association responsible for 11 of the biggest "blocos" said it was following suit.

"The samba school league made the absolutely correct decision. Holding carnival—whether it's samba schools or 'blocos,' any kind of carnival with crowds of people—without certainty on a vaccine or guarantees for people's health is a mistake," said Rita Fernandes, president of the Sebastiana association. "Sebastiana has decided that without a vaccine and especially without health guarantees for the population, we're not going to hold any kind of carnival at all," she told TV network Globo News. Rio's carnival, the

world's biggest, draws millions of tourists from around Brazil and the world each year. But it has become the latest casualty of the pandemic, as Brazil struggles to get a handle on the second-deadliest outbreak of Covid-19 in the world, after the United States.

Alarmingly high numbers

Brazil has registered 4.7 million infections and nearly 140,000 deaths from the virus. And while its spread has slowed somewhat since July, the numbers are still alarmingly high, with an average of nearly 30,000 new cases and 735 new deaths per day over the past two weeks, according to health ministry figures. Rio is the Brazilian city hit second-hardest, after economic capital Sao Paulo, with 10,730 deaths. This is the first time it has postponed carnival since 1912. The pandemic had already forced Rio to scrap another tourist magnet, its annual New Year's Eve celebrations on Copacabana beach. The city's economy will likely take a hit from both decisions. Last year, carnival brought 1.5 million tourists to Rio and added 3.8 billion reais (\$685 million) to the economy. But many residents said they supported the move. — AFP

Art has kept us sane, says Prague coronavirus exhibition curator

Fancy face masks and protective shields feature next to printed-out versions of paintings and graffiti, photographs, sculptures, music and video at a Prague exhibition of Covid-19 art created during the pandemic. Its curator told AFP Friday the travelling exhibition comprising more than 2,000 works by 500 people from 60 countries was meant as a tribute to artists whose work has kept the world sane during the pandemic. "A key motivation was the fact that artists helped us mentally survive the pandemic, so it's a way to thank them," said curator Pavel Stastny, an artist himself. When the pandemic struck Prague in the spring, Stastny slapped a face mask on the large graffiti portrait of John Lennon on Prague's iconic Lennon Wall.

The wall once served as a shrine for those seeking freedom from the Communist regime in the former Czechoslovakia. The regime was toppled in 1989. Stastny said news of the masked Lennon made its way abroad and caught the attention of French collector Blaise

Runart, who added an image of the work to his online collection. "I became part of a group of artists whose works focused on Covid-19," Stastny said. He then began collecting images of works by his peers worldwide via social networks including Instagram and Facebook for the exhibition held through September. Some of the art was mediated by embassies, and some videos were shot and provided by UNESCO as part of its Next Normal campaign focused on life after the pandemic. "The works are fantastic, they capture the ideas and impressions the artists had during the pandemic," visitor Terezie Pokorna told AFP. "This person made fun of it, that one made a big deal out of it." From Prague, the exhibition will move on to another Czech city, and perhaps even abroad. "We are in talks with Belgium, Paris, Serbia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Thailand," Stastny said. — AFP



In this file photo a couple stand in front of the "Lennon Wall" with a face mask attached to the image of John Lennon in Prague where most activities slowed down or came to a halt due to the spread of the novel coronavirus Covid-19.—AFP



In this file photo taken on March 24, 2011 Indian President Pradibha Singh Patil (left) presents Indian singer S P Balasubrahmanyam during the presentation of the 'Padma Awards 2011' at the Presidential House in New Delhi.—AFP

SPB, singer of 40,000 Indian film songs, dies at 74

S.P. Balasubrahmanyam, whose prolific output as a singer included around 40,000 songs in 16 Indian languages, died Friday aged 74 after a prolonged battle with coronavirus. His decades-long career included stints as a musician, composer, producer and voiceover artist, but it was his singing which won him millions of fans across India, with chartbusters in multiple languages. Known to fans as SPB, he was diagnosed with the virus last month and admitted to hospital in the southern city of Chennai. His death comes on the heels of what has been a particularly tragic period for Indian cinema, which in May lost composer Wajid Khan to the disease aged just 42, and luminaries Irrfan Khan and Rishi Kapoor to other illnesses in April.

The June suicide of popular actor Sushant Singh Rajput sent further shockwaves across Bollywood, sparking a media frenzy. Balasubrahmanyam originally intended to be an engineer, but music was never far from his mind, as he entered—and won—singing contests while still at university, eventually making his professional debut in 1966 in a Telugu language film. Accolades quickly followed, bringing him six national awards for songs performed in four languages—Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Hindi. "People gave me an opportunity and I had the strength to work for it, and I did work for it," he said in an interview to The News Minute website in 2015.

A recipient of the Padma Bhushan, India's third highest civilian honor, he was also known as the singing voice of Bollywood superstar Salman Khan. Their partnership began with the 1989 hit "Maine Pyar Kiya" ("I Fell in Love"), which turned Khan into an overnight sensation, and continued with the 1991 romance "Saajan" ("Beloved") and the 1994 blockbuster "Hum Aapke Hain Koun!" ("Who Am I to You!"). Khan was among several industry figures who paid tribute to the singer, tweeting: "Heartbroken to hear about #SPBalasubrahmanyam sir... you will forever live on in your undisputed legacy of music!" In addition to lending his voice to Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's 2013 hit "Chennai Express", Balasubrahmanyam also built a hugely successful career in the southern Tamil and Telugu industries. —AFP

BACK TO VENUS: UPSTART COMPANY WANTS TO BEAT NASA IN SEARCH FOR LIFE

Can a small American aerospace company get to Venus before NASA returns to our superheated planetary neighbor? That's what Peter Beck, the CEO of Rocket Lab, is hoping as he sets his sights on launching a low-cost probe in 2023. Over the past decade his company has become very good at putting satellites in to orbit—and his dream of taking the next step, an interplanetary mission, has received a shot of adrenaline recently with the surprising discovery of a gas linked to living organisms in Venus's corrosive, sulfuric atmosphere. "What we're looking for on Mars is signs of previous life," Beck explains.

"Whereas Venus, it's signs of potential life now." With its hellish landscape, Venus has been largely neglected by the major space agencies since the 1980s in favor of the Solar System's more distant bodies. Dozens of missions have notably been sent to Mars seeking signs of ancient microbes. But the discovery by Earth-based radio telescopes of a gas called phosphine in Venus' atmosphere, reported on September 14, sparked a new wave of enthusiasm among scientists who had for years defended the hypothesis that tiny organisms could live in the planet's clouds.

Phosphine isn't definitive proof of life.

But it is possible its presence is linked to living organisms, as it is on our planet. The finding led NASA to declare it was time to once more prioritize Venus. Beck, however, has always been in the pro-Venus camp, and for two years has been contemplating sending an entirely privately-funded probe there, he said. He calculated, with the help of a PhD student, that a small satellite called "Photon" that Rocket Lab developed in-house could be



This photo released by NASA shows the planet Venus in a composite of data from NASA's Magellan spacecraft and Pioneer Venus Orbiter.—AFP

adapted into a spacecraft for an interplanetary voyage.

Such bids have historically been the domain of national space agencies, given the enormous costs involved—but Beck thinks he has developed a budget solution. "I would expect a mission to Venus to be sort of \$30 million," he told AFP by video from Auckland, New Zealand. "When you can measure interplanetary missions in tens of millions of dollars instead of billions, and months instead of decades, the opportunity for discovery is just incredible," he said.

Free-falling

Rocket Lab's specialty is sending small satellites into Earth orbit with its small 18-meter high rocket—a highly lucrative market in recent years as demand for microsatellites has exploded. The company's Venus probe will be very small, weighing around 80 pounds (37 kilograms) and just a foot (30 centimeters) in diameter. The trip from Earth will take 160 days, then Photon will launch the probe into Venus' clouds, where it will take readings as it falls, without a parachute, at almost 25,000 miles per hour (11 kilometers per second). The probe will have between just 270 and 300 seconds to analyze an atmosphere that is almost a

hundred times denser than Earth's before it disintegrates or crashes on the planet's fiery surface, where temperatures are hot enough to melt lead (900 degrees Fahrenheit, or 480 degrees Celsius).

The hardest part is deciding on the scientific instrument: what molecules should it look for? Miniaturization is another problem. The probe will need to weigh seven pounds (three kilograms), which some experts doubt is possible, but Beck disagrees. Rocket Lab will need help from leading scientists, and has already recruited MIT astronomer and planetary scientist Sara Seager. The adventure is the latest chapter in a new era of space exploration fuelled not by governments but by individual curiosity and ambition, one that so far has been best symbolized by Elon Musk, the iconoclastic founder of SpaceX. SpaceX revolutionized the sector through its reusable rockets that have now sent astronauts to the International Space Station, and has its sights set on colonizing Mars. NASA is no longer afraid to subcontract missions to privateers, and Rocket Lab will be paid \$10 million to send a microsatellite into lunar orbit in 2021. As for Venus, Beck would like to offer his services to NASA. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



A picture taken with fisheye lens shows contemporary British artist Sacha Jafri sitting on his record-breaking painting entitled 'The Journey of Humanity'.



Contemporary British artist Sacha Jafri (center) gestures as he stands on his record-breaking painting entitled 'The Journey of Humanity'.



Photo shows some of the brushes of contemporary British artist Sacha Jafri.

UK artist aims to unite with 'humanity-inspired' work

British artist Sacha Jafri paces bare-foot back and forth across his giant canvas stretched across the ballroom floor of a luxury Dubai hotel, listening to a young girl singing. She performed Friday on the almost-completed canvas measuring just under 2,000 square metres (20,000 sq feet), before it is broken down next week into 60 framed works. His goal is to set a new Guinness World Record for the largest art canvas and raise \$30 million to fund health and education initiatives for children in impoverished parts of the world. The 44-year-old contemporary artist says he hopes to double that amount when parts of his "Journey of Humanity" work go up for auction in February 2021. "They will own a piece of the largest painting ever created, but more than that they'll own a piece of history and, ultimately, humanity," Jafri, in paint-splattered jeans and shirt, told AFP.

For seven months and at a pace of 18-20 hours a day, Jafri has been working on his latest creation with almost 300 layers of paint, using 1,400 gallons (more than 5,000 litres) and about 1,000 brushes. "It's been a big journey," he said. "It depicts the soul of the Earth, nature, humanity itself, the love and nurture of the mother, the guidance and protection of the father as they guide their child through life and enable them to feel safe, loved and brave,

so they can grow their wings, make their dreams come true and take them into the solar system," Jafri said. The artist said coronavirus has focused his efforts towards connecting people to counter its impact on children.

Children from 140 countries submitted paintings online to be included in Jafri's creation with its eight "portals". "I paste those into the circular portals ... I want to take us to a better world through the hearts, minds and souls of our children," said Jafri. The children's paintings depicted their own journeys, with many drawing a spikey ball representing the disease. "Imagine what ... people can do if we actually stopped all the nonsense and realized one world, one soul, one planet," said Jafri, who has four more days to complete the work. For the day's last show on the canvas, girls and boys performed an acrobatic, interpretive dance to John Lennon's "Imagine", with Jafri on the sidelines giving encouragement. "Completely intertwine with what's in front of you. Become one," he appealed. — AFP

In this file photo Contemporary British artist Sacha Jafri (center) lies on his record-breaking painting entitled 'The Journey of Humanity' in the Emirati city of Dubai. — AFP photos



'Mr Snake': Meet the teacher who is France's most tattooed man



French primary school teacher and tattoo enthusiast Sylvain Helaine, known as Freaky Hoody, poses during a photo session in Palaiseau, a south of Paris suburb. — AFP photos

By night he is Freaky Hoody, the most tattooed man in France, whose tongue and even eyes are inked. By day he is Mr Helaine, primary school teacher. "There is always a moment of stunned silence" when he first meets the children and the parents, Sylvain Helaine admitted. "But when I introduce myself and they see that I am a teacher like all the others, it's cool," he told AFP. No part of the 35-year-old's body has been left untouched by a tattooist's needle. "Mr Snake", as some pupils call him, had to travel to Switzerland to get his eyes done—something that is illegal in France. "It was torture. They hold your eyes open and you feel the needle pierce" the white of your eye, he said.

'Don't do it!'

"And you never know what will happen, which is why I say to people, 'Don't do it!'" "But for me, I felt incomplete without it," said Helaine, who has spent 57,000 euros (\$66,000) on his body art over the last eight years. Having his tongue tattooed wasn't the most comfortable of experiences either. "It was so sore, it tripled in size. I was drooling and I couldn't speak afterwards. I couldn't drink for 20 hours and it took two days for me to be able to eat." Known as Freaky Hoody on social media, where he has nearly 60,000 followers, Helaine insists that he does not regret any of his tattoos, from the coloured flowers on his shaved head to the demon head on his back.

"I am probably going to end up completely black at 80," he added. Beyond his school in the suburbs of Paris, Freaky Hoody is something of a star on the tattoo scene. Rather than doors being closed in his face, his tattoos have opened them for him. "Model agencies have taken me on for films and television series. I've met ('The Matrix' director) Lana Wachowski as well as Mathieu Kassovitz," the star of "The Bureau" and director of the classic French film, "La Haine".

'His eyes are scary'

Helaine "came out" as a body art icon at school three years ago when he was still living with his mother, the only way, he said, he could finance his tattoos "on a teacher's salary". His appearance, he argued, was a good lesson for his pupils in accepting and respecting others. "Children who see me learn tolerance of others. When they are adults they may be less likely



to be racist or homophobic, and they will not look at disabled people as if they were something from a circus." And his pupils seem to agree. "You should not judge him because of his appearance," said nine-year-old Gayane. "It is just his eyes which are scary, but he is very nice." Loic, one of his former pupils, said it was "worrying that people get stuck on physical appearance. It is mostly the parents who react because today young people are more educated about respecting all appearances."

Teaches tolerance

Helaine said the only problem he has encountered was with "parents of children who were not in my class." Some sent a letter to the authorities with pictures of him they found on the internet, and he was "sidelined" for seven weeks before being given the green light to go back to his class. "I have nothing against tattoos but I think a teacher should be neutral when everyone is talking about what girls are wearing," said one father, Farid, 45, referring to the controversy in French school about some girls being sent home for wearing "inappropriate" dress. "What he does in his private life is none of our business," insisted Lydie Songo, the mother of another child. "My children call him 'Mr Snake', but I am going to talk to them about that. They have to accept him as he is. "Still it must be annoying for him to have all this attention." — AFP

LANDMINE DETECTION RAT WINS TOP UK ANIMAL BRAVERY AWARD

Heroes come in all shapes and sizes. A five-year-old giant African pouched rat called Magawa, however, has to be one of the world's most unlikely life-savers. The rodent has won the animal equivalent of Britain's highest civilian honor for bravery because of his uncanny knack of sniffing out landmines and unexploded ordnance. British veterinary charity the PDSA on Friday awarded Magawa its Gold Medal "for his life-saving bravery and devotion to duty", which had transformed the lives of people in Cambodia. Magawa, who was trained by the Belgian charity APOPO, has sniffed out 39 landmines and 28 items of unexploded ordnance, making him the organization's most successful "HeroRAT". "The work of HeroRAT Magawa and APOPO is truly unique and outstanding," said PDSA director-general Jan McLoughlin.

"HeroRAT Magawa's work directly saves and changes the lives of men, women and children who are impacted by these landmines." Millions of landmines were laid in Cambodia between 1975 and 1998, causing tens of thousands of casualties. Magawa, based in the northern city of Siem Reap, is the first rat to receive a PDSA medal in the 77 years of the awards, joining an illustrious band of brave canines and felines—and even a pigeon. The PDSA Gold Medal is the animal equivalent of Britain's George Cross. The charity also awards the Dickin Medal, for military animals.



An undated handout picture released by UK veterinary charity PDSA shows Magawa, an African giant pouched rat wearing his gold medal received from PDSA for his work in detecting landmines in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Sniff and scratch
APOPO trained Magawa in his native Tanzania to detect the chemical compound within explosives by rewarding him with tasty treats—his favorite being bananas and peanuts. The rats alert de-miners by scratching the earth. He can scurry across an area the size of a tennis court in just 30 minutes, something that would take four days using a conventional metal detector. He is big enough to be attached to a leash as he goes about his business but light enough not to set off mines. "The PDSA Gold Medal award brings the problem of landmines to global attention," said Christophe Cox of APOPO.

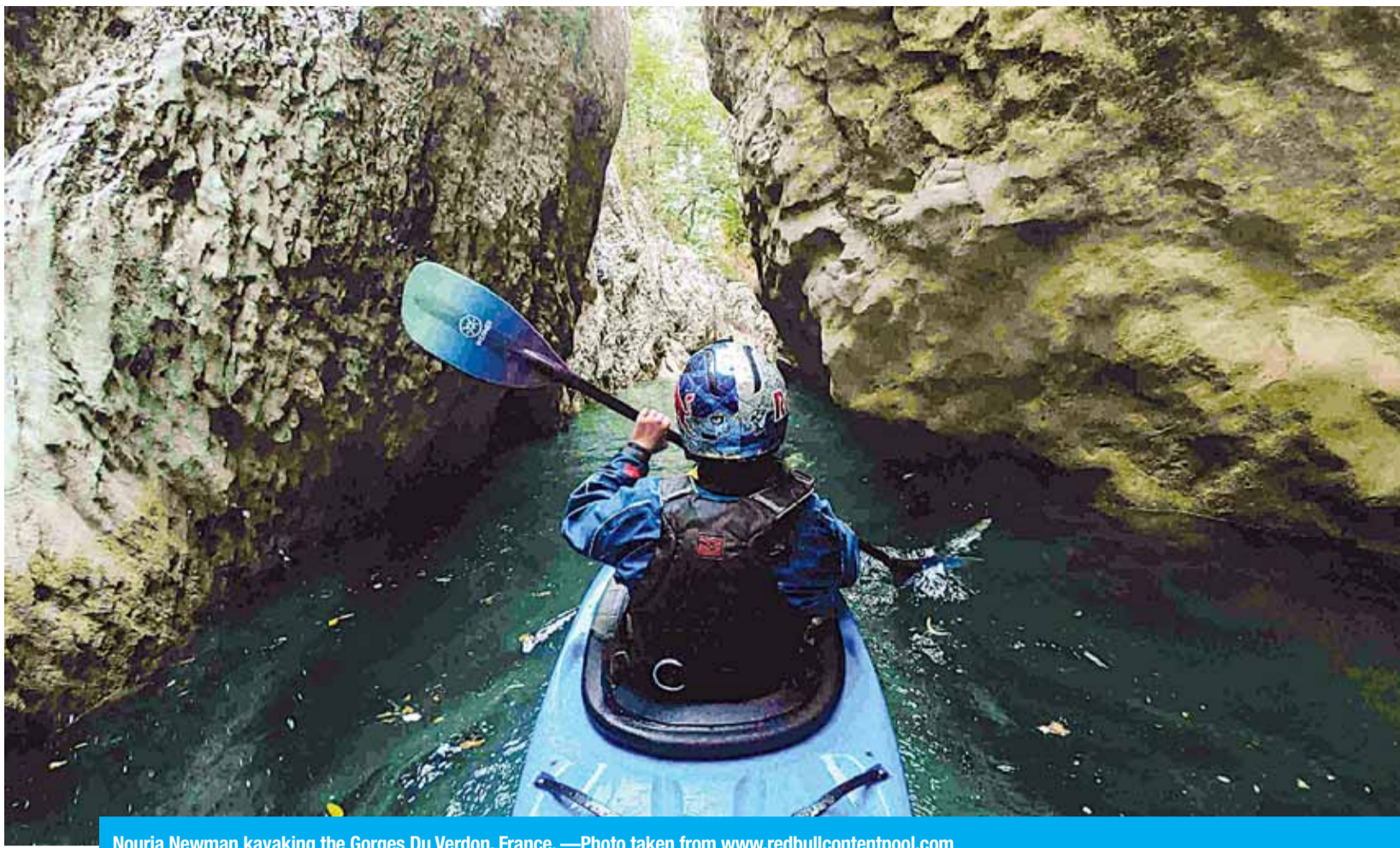
Cox said its team of "HeroRATs" speeded up landmine detection because of their keen sense of smell and recall. "Unlike metal detectors, the rats ignore scrap metal and only sniff out explosives making them fast and efficient landmine detectors," Cox said. "This not only saves lives but returns much-needed safe land back to the communities as quickly and cost-effectively as possible." APOPO currently has 45 rats finding landmines and 31 detecting tuberculosis in Africa and Asia, according to its website. — AFP



An undated handout picture shows Magawa, an African giant pouched rat receiving a treat while at work detecting landmines in Cambodia.—AFP photos

Sports

Photo of the day



Nouria Newman kayaking the Gorges Du Verdon, France. —Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Stung into action: Swafford seizes Puntacana lead

MIAMI: A little adversity did Hudson Swafford no harm on Friday, as the American shook off a hornet sting at his second hole to card a five-under par 67 and take a two-shot lead in the PGA Tour Corales Puntacana Championship. Swafford, who started the day in a four-way tie for the lead, said a "little hornet" stung him as he grabbed a club on the tee box of No. 11 at the Corales Puntacana resort in the Dominican Republic. "Right in the joint of my pinky," he said. "It started swelling up, so I was just kind of rubbing ice on it after tee shots for the first five, six holes on the back side."

Despite "some chaos the first few holes," Swafford said the mishap might have even helped. "I guess it kind of just cleared my mind of the golf thing and just let me focus on something else," said the 33-year-old American, playing on a medical extension in search of a second US PGA Tour title to go with his 2017 victory at La Quinta, California. Swafford had two birdies in his first nine holes. After sandwiching two birdies between bogeys after the turn he closed fast with birdies at the seventh, eighth and ninth holes. His 36-hole total of 132 put him two strokes clear of Luke List, Justin Suh and Sean O'Hair.

List fired seven birdies in his seven-under 65 to reach 10-under while O'Hair and Suh both had five birdies without a bogey in their 67s. "I really was in control of the golf ball today, which was nice," List said. "I hit it everywhere yesterday, so made a little adjustment ... hopefully (I will) keep the ball-striking up for the weekend." Swafford said wind was a factor on his inward run, making the generous fairways feel a little tighter. Apart from a mistake at the fifth, where he made his second bogey of the day, "I honestly played pretty good," Swafford said. —AFP

Marlins down Yankees, clinch the playoff spot

Padres fall to Giants but clinch No 4 seed for playoffs

NEW YORK: Pinch runner Monte Harrison scored on a sacrifice fly by Jesus Aguilar in the 10th inning and the Miami Marlins clinched a playoff spot with a 4-3 victory over the New York Yankees on Friday night at Yankee Stadium. The Marlins had a magic number of one entering the 10th after the Philadelphia Phillies lost to the Tampa Bay Rays earlier in the day. Harrison was the automatic runner at second and moved to third on a sacrifice bunt by Jon Berti off loser Chad Green (3-3). Starling Marte hit a ground ball to shortstop Gleyber Torres and Harrison then got caught in a rundown, but catcher Kyle Higashioka's throw hit him in the back, allowing Harrison to get to third and Marte to second on the error. Harrison then scored on Aguilar's fly ball to the warning track in right field. Brandon Kintzler then nailed down his 12th save despite two walks by getting DJ LeMahieu on a double play to end the game. Brad Boxberger (1-0) got a double play on Luke Voit in a scoreless ninth before Kintzler's escape act.

Rangers 5, Astros 4 (10 innings)

Isiah Kiner-Falefa scored on Joey Gallo fielder's choice grounder and host Texas rallied to stun Houston in 10 innings in Arlington, Texas. By blowing one-run leads in the ninth and 10th innings, the Astros failed to clinch the final American League postseason bid on their own, but they wrapped up the spot later in the evening thanks to the Los Angeles Angels' 9-5 loss to the Los Angeles Dodgers. Houston third baseman Alex Bregman lifted the Astros to a 4-3 lead with his sacrifice fly in the top of the 10th, before the Rangers scored twice off Astros right-hander Enoji Paredes (3-3). Gallo delivered the grounder off lefty Brooks Raley. The Rangers got off the mat with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning when first baseman Ronald Guzman smacked a game-tying home run with two strikes off Astros closer Ryan Pressly. The Astros were one strike away from clinching a postseason berth before Guzman launched a curveball into the right-field seats to tie the game at 3-3 and force extras.

Reds 7, Twins 2

Mike Moustakas hit two home runs and Freddy Galvis drove in two runs as Cincinnati clinched its first postseason berth since 2013 by beating Minnesota in Minneapolis. Shogo Akiyama went 2-for-5 with an RBI and a run scored for Cincinnati, which continued a blazing September with its 10th victory in the last 12 games. Michael Lorenzen (3-1) picked up the victory in relief, allowing one run on three hits over 3 1/3 innings, walking one while striking out four. Eddie Rosario and Jorge Polanco each had two hits to lead Minnesota. The Twins, who missed a chance to clinch home field advantage for the wild-card round, lost for just the second time in 12 September home games but still head into Saturday's action with a one-game lead in the AL Central. Jose Berrios (5-4) suffered the loss, allowing four runs on five hits over five innings.

Dodgers 9, Angels 5

Justin Turner hit two home runs and Will Smith hit a go-ahead two-run shot in the fifth inning as the Dodgers earned a victory and officially eliminated the Angels from playoff contention. AJ Pollock and Edwin Rios also hit home runs for the Dodgers on a night when Clayton Kershaw was far from his best while giving up two home runs himself in four innings. Mike Trout, Justin Upton and Jared Walsh went deep for the Angels. The Dodgers wrapped up the best record in baseball (41-17). The Dodgers have won eight of their last 10 games, while the Angels saw their three-game

winning streak come to an end. They had won six of their previous seven.

Brewers 3, Cardinals 0 (Game 1)

Brent Suter, Devin Williams and Josh Hader combined for a seven-inning shutout as visiting Milwaukee defeated St. Louis in the first half of their doubleheader. The Brewers entered one game back of the NL's last wild-card playoff spot, while the Cardinals fell to 0-8 this season when trying to move to three games above .500. Jack Flaherty (4-2) took the loss after allowing three runs on four hits in five innings. Suter allowed two hits and three baserunners in the first four innings for Milwaukee. Williams (4-1) earned the win after working the fifth and sixth, inducing double-play grounders in each frame. Hader worked around a lead-off walk in the seventh for his 12th save.

Cardinals 9, Brewers 1 (Game 2)

Tommy Edman, Dylan Carlson and Matt Wieters drove in two runs each as St. Louis beat visiting Milwaukee to earn a doubleheader split. Because Game 2 was a makeup game for a COVID-19 postponement in Milwaukee, the Brewers were the designated home team. Cardinals starting pitcher Daniel Ponce de Leon (1-3) yielded just one hit, a solo homer by Orlando Arcia, in his six innings. Ponce de Leon earned his first victory in 20 major league starts. But he has pitched well lately, allowing five runs on eight hits in 17 innings over his last three outings. Brewers starting pitcher Josh Lindblom (2-4) worked just 2 1/3 innings and allowed three runs on four hits.

Cubs 10, White Sox 0

Willson Contreras homered twice and Kyle Schwarber, Javier Baez and Victor Caratini also went deep to beat seven shutout innings from Yu Darvish as visiting Chicago routed reeling Chicago. The Cubs snapped a three-game losing streak and reduced their magic number to clinch the National League Central to one while sending the White Sox to their season-high sixth loss in a row. Darvish defeated the White Sox for the second time this season, scattering three hits, one walk and five strikeouts in seven innings to improve to 8-3 and finish the regular season with a 2.01 ERA. An early power surge against White Sox righty Dylan Cease (5-4) provided plenty of cushion.

Athletics 3, Mariners 1 (10 innings)

Mark Canha hit a two-run homer with two outs in the 10th inning as Oakland defeated visiting Seattle. Ramon Laureano preceded Canha with a double down the left-field line, tying the score at 1-1 after neither team tallied through nine innings. The Mariners scored in the top of the 10th as pinch-runner Dee Strange-Gordon advanced from second to third on a fly-out to right and scored on a passed ball. Mariners rookie right-hander Joey Gerber (1-1) was an out away from his first major league save before giving up the extra-base hits to Laureano and Canha. Oakland left-hander Jake Diekmann (2-0) got the victory despite allowing the game's first run in the top of the 10th.

Blue Jays 10, Orioles 5

Travis Shaw had three hits, including a two-run home run. Randal Grichuk added a solo shot and Toronto defeated visiting Baltimore in the opener of a three-game series at Buffalo. Jonathan Villar and Teoscar Hernandez also had two RBIs each for the Blue Jays, who have won seven of eight meetings

between the teams. Ramon Urias, Cedric Mullins and Jose Iglesias homered for Baltimore. Toronto starter Taijuan Walker pitched three perfect innings with four strikeouts and was removed as he prepares for a start in the postseason. He was replaced by rookie Nate Pearson (1-0), who allowed a walk and a single with two strikeouts in 1 2/3 innings to earn his first major league win. Orioles starter Jorge Lopez (2-2) allowed eight runs and nine hits in two-plus innings.

Diamondbacks 4, Rockies 0 (Game 1)

Christian Walker homered among his two hits, Daulton Varsho also had two hits, and Arizona beat Colorado in Phoenix in the first game of a doubleheader as Zac Gallen struck out 10 in six strong innings for the Diamondbacks, who have won three in a row.

Gallen (3-2) scattered five hits and walked just two and finished the season with a 2.75 ERA. Stefan Crichton got the final out for his fifth save. Raimel Tapia had three hits for the Rockies, who were officially eliminated from the postseason with the loss. Walker has hit Colorado pitching hard this year. Through Friday's first game he is 15-for-28 with four home runs, three doubles and 11 RBIs against the Rockies.

Diamondbacks 11, Rockies 5 (Game 2)

Josh VanMeter and Pavin Smith homered, and Arizona beat Colorado in Phoenix to sweep a doubleheader. David Peralta and Tim Lincecum had three hits each and Stephen Vogt and Jon Jay had two apiece for Arizona, which has won four in a row. Ryan McMahon had two hits, including a home run, and Kevin Pillar had three hits and three RBIs for Colorado.

Braves 8, Red Sox 7 (11 innings)

Freddie Freeman led off the bottom of the 11th inning with a two-run homer over the fence in left-center field to give Atlanta a victory over Boston. Freeman's blast came on a 1-0 sinker from Red Sox left-hander Jeffrey Springs (0-2) and helped the Braves clinch the No. 2 seed in the National League playoffs. The homer is Freeman's 13th of the season and his fifth career walk-off blast. Alex Verdugo hit a sacrifice fly to center in the top of the 11th inning off Braves right-hander Shane Bieber (1-0) to give Boston a 7-6 lead. Jackie Bradley Jr. homered earlier in the game for the Red Sox.

Rays 6, Phillies 4

Joey Wendle's two-out, tiebreaking single in the eighth helped Tampa Bay damage Philadelphia's playoff hopes in St. Petersburg, Fla. Wendle's two-run single broke a 4-4 tie and made a winner of Nick Anderson (2-1), who tossed a scoreless eighth. John Curtiss struck out the side in the ninth for his second save. Brett Phillips had a solo homer for the Rays, and Randy Arozarena had two hits. Bryce Harper lashed a run-scoring triple and went 2-for-3 with two RBIs and a run. Scott Kingery was 2-for-4 with a double and two runs, and Alec Bohm had two hits for the Phillies. Reliever Adam Morgan (0-1) took the loss. Starter Vince Velasquez left after giving up six hits and three runs, with six strikeouts, over 4 1/3 innings.

Indians 4, Pirates 3

Cesar Hernandez hit an RBI double to cap a three-run ninth inning and lift host Cleveland to a victory over Pittsburgh for the team's sixth straight win. The Indians' latest walk-off win came on the same night that Pirates rookie Mitch Keller authored his second straight no-hit performance, albeit it with eight walks over five innings. With the Pirates nursing a 3-1

lead in the ninth, Tyler Naquin worked a walk off Chris Stratton (2-1) to begin the ninth inning and came home on Jordan Luplow's RBI double to left-center field. Delino DeShields, who had a bunt single in the seventh to break up the no-hit bid, added an RBI single to forge a tie at 3. Adam Plutko (2-2) worked a scoreless ninth for the win. With the win, Cleveland moved to within one game of the AL Central lead behind the Minnesota Twins, and forged a tie for second in the division with the Chicago White Sox. The Indians hold the head-to-head tiebreaker with the White Sox.

Giants 5, Padres 4 (Game 1)

Brandon Crawford, Wilmer Flores and Mike Yastrzemski homered on Friday afternoon and host San Francisco held off a seventh-inning San Diego rally to score the victory in the first game of a doubleheader as all three home runs came off Padres starter Chris Paddack (4-5). The win kept the Giants alive in the race for one of the final two wild-card berths in the National League playoffs. Although the Padres lost a third straight game and fell to 2-6 over their last eight games, they clinched the No. 4 seed and homefield for all three games of the first round of the playoffs when St. Louis lost the first game of a doubleheader in Milwaukee. Left-hander Tyler Anderson held the Padres to two runs on five hits over six innings before leaving when Jurickson Proffar opened the seventh with a double. Anderson issued four walks and struck out four Padres while improving to 4-3.

Padres 6, Giants 5 (Game 2)

Trent Grisham hit a three-run, walk-off homer in the bottom of the seventh inning to give San Diego a split of its doubleheader with San Francisco. The Padres were the home team in the second game because it was the makeup of a game postponed in San Diego on Sept 12 due to a false positive COVID-19 test. Luis Patino (1-0) pitched a scoreless top of the seventh to earn his first major league win for the Padres. Brandon Crawford, Flores and Mike Yastrzemski homered off Padres starter Chris Paddack in the opener, and the Giants turned back a seventh-inning Padres rally to win 5-4.

Royals 3, Tigers 2

Adalberto Mondesi had at least three hits for the third straight game as Kansas City defeated Detroit to pick up its 11th win in its last 16 games. Brad Keller (5-3) had another stellar outing at home to pick up the win. He threw six shutout innings, allowing four singles, with five strikeouts and no walks. Keller has allowed just one earned run 33 innings this season at Kauffman Stadium for a 0.27 home ERA, the lowest among pitchers with at least five starts since at least 1920. Spencer Turnbull (4-4) took the loss for Detroit. He allowed three earned runs on six hits in five innings. He struck out five and walked two. Mondesi had a single, double and an RBI triple, and has nine hits in his last 12 at-bats.

Mets at Nationals, postponed

New York and host Washington will play a doubleheader on Saturday after inclement weather forced the postponement of their game on Friday. Max Scherzer (4-4, 3.67 ERA), the Nationals' scheduled starter Friday night, will pitch the first game, and Anibal Sanchez (3-5, 6.80 ERA) will pitch the nightcap. The Mets' pitchers will be Rick Porcello (1-6, 5.46 ERA), who was slated to pitch Friday, and ace Jacob deGrom (4-2, 2.14 ERA). The team did not indicate which pitcher would pitch in which game. —Reuters

Halep heads into 'weird' French Open as a clear favorite

PARIS: Former champion Simona Halep arrives at the rescheduled French Open as the player to beat in a women's draw missing title holder Ashleigh Barty and recent US Open winner Naomi Osaka, two of the world's top three. Serena Williams can never be discounted as she launches another bid for a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam singles crown, but Roland Garros is the American's least successful major despite her wins in 2002, 2013 and 2015.

Garbine Muguruzza, who defeated Williams in the 2016

final, is another contender while fellow former world number one Victoria Azarenka is hoping to take the momentum from her run to the US Open final into the clay swing. Last year's runner-up Marketa Vondrousova will again target a deep run in Paris having rediscovered some form at last week's Italian Open, where she made the semi-finals before losing to compatriot Karolina Pliskova.

The fourth-ranked Czech retired from the final with a thigh injury after dropping the first set to Halep, who extended her winning run to 14 matches after capturing a second consecutive title coming out of lockdown. "I'm honored to hear that I am the favorite, people thinking that I'm the favorite. But I don't look in that direction," said Halep, who plays Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo in round one. "It's not extra pressure. I'm used to this kind of pressure because I've been No 1 seeded in the past. I've been in this position." "To play Roland Garros in September, end of

September, it's a little bit weird," she added. "But it's nice that we have the chance to play at this tournament." No woman has successfully defended the French Open title since Justine Henin won three times in a row between 2005 and 2007, a trend set to continue with Barty pulling out over the coronavirus fears that also prompted her to skip the US Open.

Gloomy conditions await

A sore hamstring has sidelined three-time Grand Slam champion Osaka, while Bianca Andreescu, the 2019 US Open winner, will miss the tournament as well. The Canadian hasn't played since hurting her knee last October at the WTA Finals. Despite the notable absences, the field here is stronger than the US Open where six of the world's top 10 players skipped the event, with the return of Halep, Elina Svitolina and Kiki Bertens. Belinda Bencic was a late

scratch with an arm injury. "As I said always, many girls from the top 10, top 15 have a chance to win a Grand Slam," said Halep. "Roland Garros is very open, because it's clay court but it's a little bit faster, so also the big hitters can win it easily."

The Romanian holds a 20-2 record this season and is unbeaten since January - her only losses came to Aryna Sabalenka in Adelaide and Muguruzza in the Australian Open semi-finals. Players will have to adapt to unfamiliar autumnal conditions, with gusting winds and persistent rain forecast for the start on Sunday. The weather outlook isn't set to improve much either. "It's a big difference between Rome and here, that's for sure. 15 degrees less," said a smiling Halep. "I feel the cold. I feel like struggling a little bit. But for everybody it's the same." As for Williams, who turns 39 on Saturday, she has not added to her Grand Slam haul since winning the 2017 Australian Open while pregnant. —AFP

Sports

Celtics rally to beat Heat; stay alive in NBA playoffs

Tatum leads Celtics' second-half charge to extend series

MIAMI: The Boston Celtics roared back in the second half to beat the Miami Heat 121-108 on Friday to stay alive in the NBA playoffs. Jayson Tatum scored 31 points and pulled down 10 rebounds and Jaylen Brown added 28 points as six Celtics players scored in double figures and Boston cut the deficit in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference finals to three games to two. Goran Dragic led the Heat with 23 points and Duncan Robinson added 20 for Miami, who are trying to reach the NBA finals for the first time since 2014. With their season hanging in the balance, the Celtics exploded for 41 points in the third quarter to turn the tide in a game dominated early by Miami.

Under solid pressure from the Heat defense, the Celtics had made just one of their first 12 shots and connected on just five of 20 from the field in the first quarter. Boston trailed by as many as 12 in the opening period, which ended with the Heat leading 26-18. Miami again built the lead to 12 in the second period and finished the first half with a 58-51 lead. But Boston were beginning to see some shots fall, and as they turned up the intensity on both ends of the floor after the interval Miami had no answer. The Celtics opened the second half with a 20-5 scoring run.

Marcus Smart's three-pointer tied it up at 60-60 and Boston took the lead for the first time in the contest, 62-60, on Brown's layup off a feed from Kemba Walker. They wouldn't trail again. Walker's three-pointer with 4:26 left in the third gave Boston a 10-point lead and the Celtics took a nine-point edge into the final frame, when they continued to

pour it on. Tatum scored 17 in the third and the Celtics out-rebounded the Heat 16-5 in the quarter. "We got back to playing Celtics basketball," Walker said. "I felt like early in the game we were a little frustrated, bickering at each other at the refs. We got out of it, and just let the game come to us."

'Locked in'

The Celtics will try to build on their momentum against a Heat team determined to put them away in game six today. The winners of the series take on either the Los Angeles Lakers or Denver Nuggets for the NBA title in the quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida. The Lakers lead the Nuggets three games to one in the Western Conference finals. Boston's German centre Daniel Theis contributed a double-double of 15 points and 13 rebounds, Smart finished with 12 points and Gordon Hayward chipped in 10. "Boston played great in that second half, they deserved and earned what they got," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

"We did not compete hard enough defensively and we paid the price for that. But you do have to credit Boston, they played with great force particularly off the dribble." Spoelstra noted that the Celtics scored just four points in the paint in the first quarter but added: "It was just a deluge to the rim after that." Boston scored 30 points in the paint in the second half and had 13 fastbreak points to Miami's zero after the break. "We didn't defend as well as we could in the first half and that's what got our offense going in the second half," Tatum said. "We just locked in, we were all on the same page." —AFP



FLORIDA: Jayson Tatum #0 of the Boston Celtics drives to the basket during the third quarter against the Miami Heat in Game Five of the Eastern Conference Finals on September 25, 2020. —AFP

Shattenkirk's goal lifts Lightning to verge of Stanley Cup title

LOS ANGELES: Kevin Shattenkirk scored the game winner at 6:34 of overtime to lift the Tampa Bay Lightning to a 5-4 victory over the Dallas Stars in game four of the Stanley Cup finals on Friday. The Lightning hold a 3-1 lead in the series and are one win away from their second NHL championship to go with a 2004 title. "We have been a real resilient group," said Tampa forward Alex Killorn. "Every time we have had a challenge, we have been able to step up."

Shattenkirk's goal came on the power play as he fired a wrist shot through the legs of Dallas defenceman Jamie Oleksiak that beat goalie Anton Khudobin on the stick side. It was the third power play goal of the game for Tampa and the third of the playoffs for Shattenkirk had to have felt somewhat vindicated after the Stars' game-tying fourth goal bounced off him into his own net.

Brayden Point had two goals, Killorn had a goal and an assist and Shattenkirk also added an assist for the Lightning, who scored late goals at both the end of the first period and the second period to keep the game close. Yannick Gourde also scored and goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 26 shots, including a couple of spectacular saves from point blank range, in the win. Game five will be Saturday night in the NHL's quarantine bubble in Edmonton, Alberta. Tampa coach Jon Cooper said he was especially pleased with the way Point and his linemates played. "I don't know if they were playing against us if we would be able to defend it," Cooper said.

Joe Pavelski scored two goals for Stars, who finally got some much needed offence from their top line of Jamie Benn and Tyler Seguin. Benn had an assist and Seguin finished with two assists. They are the first points of the series for both players. The Lightning were missing Steven Stamkos in game four after their injured captain made his postseason debut in game three and scored a goal. Stamkos played just three minutes of the previous game before appearing to reinjure himself. The Stars now have their work cut out for them as they try to win their second championship and first since 1999.

They are the only team this postseason to win a best-of-seven series after trailing 2-1, but now they are in a much deeper hole than that against the heavily-favored Lightning. The Lightning fell behind early and didn't take their first lead in the game until the third period. Dallas



EDMONTON: Kevin Shattenkirk #22 of the Tampa Bay Lightning is congratulated by his teammates after scoring the game-winning goal during the first overtime period to give his team the 5-4 on September 25, 2020. —AFP

defenceman John Klingberg opened the scoring 7:17 into the first with an unassisted goal. Klingberg broke in on the Tampa defense and his first shot attempt was blocked but the puck bounced back onto his stick and he made no mistake on his second chance. American Pavelski made it 2-0 by finishing off a two-on-one rush with teammate Benn with 9:22 seconds left in the first.

Point cut the lead to one goal with 33 seconds left by executing a nifty move at high speed. The goal was scored in the blink of an eye as it took just two long passes for Tampa to go the full length of the ice and for Point to race in alone and outsmart Khudobin with a forehead to backhand move. Point tied it 2-2 just over two minutes into the second with his second goal by batting the puck out of mid-air into the net. Dallas forward Corey Perry restored the one goal lead, 3-2, by scoring into the open side during a scramble in the crease at 8:26. But the Lightning got another late period goal, this time from Gourde, to tie it 3-3 with 6:26 seconds left in the second.

Tampa's Killorn and Stars' Pavelski traded goals in the third to tie it 4-4. Killorn took a shot from a bad angle that went straight in, while Pavelski's angle shot at 11:35 deflected off Shattenkirk and into his own net. That set the stage for Shattenkirk's winner which came off a suspect tripping call by the officials on Benn. Benn got tangled up with Tyler Johnson in the centre of the rink and the much bigger Benn outmuscled Johnson who fell to the ice. "Jamie breathes on him and the guy falls over," Pavelski said of Johnson. Dallas coach Rick Bowness didn't like the penalty either, calling it a routine "hockey play." —AFP

Jose M Lopez held the advantage at the front of the field for much of the race. The crew had built a one-lap lead by the halfway stage before they had to replace a damaged exhaust manifold, which left them six laps behind in fourth place. This gave the No 8 TS050 HEV a clear lead, and Buemi, Nakajima, and Hartley controlled the rest of the race from the front, establishing a five-lap lead. For the third consecutive year, Nakajima crossed the finish line to win the 24 Hours of Le Mans, cementing his status as the most successful Japanese driver at La Sarthe.

The podium battle came alive during a dramatic final hour when the third-placed car crashed and could not exit the pits, allowing the No 7 TS050 HEV to earn a respectable third, just one lap adrift of the second-placed car. "It was our third straight victory in Le Mans, and the last time for the TS050 HYBRID to compete in the 24-hour race. We could achieve this thanks to our fans, partners and our staff. I am so proud of the big trophy we earned."

Sebastien, Kazuki and Brendon, thank you so much for driving the TS050 for a longer distance than any other car," commented Akio Toyoda, President, Toyota Motor Corporation. "In my heart, I was in Le Mans and stood on the podium with them. We will keep challenging to make ever-better cars so that our drivers can feel comfortable and confident to drive our cars that respond to their requirements and feelings. There were no spectators in Le Mans, but just like I did, I believe many fans all over the world watched the live broadcasting and supported us. Thank you very much for all of your support."

Sebastien Buemi, Driver of the No 8 TS050 HEV, said: "I feel great. My teammates and the team have done such an amazing job. The race once again showed how quickly the luck can turn here at Le Mans. When

Duplantis nails 16th straight pole vault win in Doha

DOHA: Sweden's Armand Duplantis maintained his amazing form to turn the tables on world champion Sam Hendricks for a 16th consecutive victory in the men's pole vault at Friday's Diamond League meet in Doha. American Hendricks was the last person to beat the Swede, in Doha's Khalifa Stadium at last year's world championships. But a couple of kilometers away at the more intimate Qatari Sports Club, Duplantis walked away with victory with a best vault of 5.82 metres, far off the world outdoor record of 6.15m he set in Rome last week.

Duplantis failed once at 5.92 and also 6.00m before calling it a day. "It's been a fantastic season and I enjoyed sharing the moment tonight with the guys," said Duplantis. "I enjoyed the jump and the rivalry with Sam. It's been fun with him as we have always got back at each other." Echoing the views of many athletes, Duplantis added: "It's been a roller-coaster year, sort of. I broke the indoor world record earlier in the year and I was enjoying the season but all of a sudden the pandemic came and everything shut down and no one knew what will happen next."

"It's great (to be) back and I hope things keep improving," Hendricks was second on countback and France's Renaud Lavillenie third in humid, hot conditions with a temperature of 32 degrees Celsius (90F). On the track, Elaine Thompson-Herah of Jamaica followed up on her 10.85sec in Rome with a facile victory in the 100m in 10.87sec. Ivorian Marie-Josée Ta Lou a distant second in 11.21. "I am happy to win but my major focus is to finish the year healthy," said Thompson-Herah. "Preparations for the Olympics is next on my agenda and it begins in earnest."

'Disturbing' year

Kenya's Olympic 1500m champion Faith Kipyegon timed a world leading time of 1:57.61 in winning the women's 800m, an event won by sidelined South African Caster Semenya in the last three meets in the Qatari capital. "I am happy to win here in Doha considering this is my second 800m race after about three years break from it," Kipyegon said, adding that she was looking forward to turning the page on the coronavirus pandemic. "The year has been a disturbing one for everyone and I am glad it is coming to an end. We can't wait enough for 2021 to be here." —AFP



we started the race, I had the feeling everything was against us. But then all of a sudden things started to go well and we were leading the race, then soon we were leading by five laps. Le Mans again proved that you never know what will happen until the race is over." Over the years, Toyota has been participating in many different forms of motorsports, including Formula One, the World Endurance Championship (WEC), and the Nurburgring 24 Hours endurance race.

Toyota's participation in these events was overseen by separate entities within the company until April 2015, when Toyota established GAZOO Racing (GR), to consolidate all of its motorsports activities under one in-house brand. Representing Toyota's belief that 'the roads build the people, and the people build the cars,' GR highlights the role of motorsports as a fundamental pillar of Toyota's commitment to making 'ever-better' cars.

Harnessing years of experience gained under the extreme conditions of various motorsports events, GR aims to forge new technologies and solutions that bring the freedom, adventure, and joy of driving to everyone.

News in brief

Injured Jesus out of qualifiers

SAO PAULO: Manchester City forward Gabriel Jesus has been replaced in Brazil's squad for next month's World Cup qualifiers by Hertha Berlin's uncapped attacker Matheus Cunha, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) announced on Friday. Jesus, 23, who scored in his club's domestic win over Wolves earlier this week, will be unavailable for the matches against Bolivia on October 9 and at Peru four days later. "On Wednesday, the English team contacted Brazil's doctor Rodrigo Lasmar, to tell him about an injury detected after the game against Wolverhampton, on Monday, in the Premier League," the CBF said. The CBF did not disclose further details of Jesus' issue or for how long he would be sidelined. Coach Tite has called up Hertha's 21-year-old Cunha, who featured for his country's under-23s in Olympic Games qualifying, for the first time. —AFP

Lille beat Nantes to go top

PARIS: Unbeaten Lille went provisionally top of the Ligue 1 table with a comfortable 2-0 home win against Nantes thanks to an own goal and a late penalty on Friday. Defender Nicolas Pallois deflected a Mehmet Celik strike into his own net and Burak Yilmaz converted a second-half spot kick, putting Lille on 11 points from five games. They lead St Etienne and Stade Rennes, who meet at Geoffroy Guichard on Saturday, by one point. Nantes, who have not beaten Lille in five years, are 14th on five points. Lille dominated possession but Nantes were well organized in a solid 4-4-2 and kept the hosts at bay until they cracked as a result of Pallois's unfortunate deflection in the 43rd minute. The visitors failed to move up a gear after the interval and grew more nervous towards the end, with Dennis Appiah fouling Yilmaz in the box three minutes from time. The Turkish striker got up to coolly convert the penalty and secure Lille's third victory of the season. —Reuters

Hertha Berlin humbled at home

BERLIN: Eintracht Frankfurt brought Hertha Berlin back down to earth on Friday, beating them 3-1 at the Olympic Stadium to claim their first Bundesliga win of the season. Hertha began their campaign with a 4-1 win at Werder Bremen but were outclassed in the first half as Frankfurt raced into a 2-0 lead in a meeting of two sides who finished in mid-table last season. In front of around 4,000 fans - the limit allowed by local authorities - Andre Silva opened the scoring on the half hour after he was tripped by Hertha captain Dedryck Boyata in the area and he got up to convert the penalty himself. Bas Dost increased Eintracht's lead with the simplest of goals six minutes later, the Dutchman outjumping the home defense to score with a towering header from Daichi Kamada's perfectly weighted free kick. —Reuters

Hamilton fastest in GP practice

LONDON: Formula One world championship leader Lewis Hamilton showed his pace yesterday with the fastest lap in final practice for a Russian Grand Prix that could bring him a record-equalling 91st career win. The 35-year-old Briton led a Mercedes one-two on top of the timesheets, with Finnish team mate Valtteri Bottas 0.776 seconds slower after setting the pace in both Friday sessions. Six-time world champion Hamilton, who set his best time of one minute 33.279 seconds with 14 minutes to go in the session, has won four times in Russia before. Dominant Mercedes have won every race in Russia since the first in Sochi in 2014. A win on Sunday would see Hamilton equal seven-time champion Michael Schumacher's all-time record of 91, a milestone that looked likely to stand the test of time when set by the German with Ferrari in 2006. Hamilton leads Bottas by 55 points in the championship after nine races. —Reuters



A significant points swing in favor of the No 8 TS050 HEV crew at Le Mans means the race for the drivers' World Championship title goes down to the last event of the 2019-2020 season, which takes place in Bahrain on 14 November. The No 8 TS050 HEV now holds a seven-point lead, with a maximum of 39 points up for grabs in the 8 Hours of Bahrain.

GAZOO Racing wins third consecutive Le Mans race

KUWAIT: GAZOO Racing (GR) recently earned a third consecutive 24 Hours of Le Mans victory with the TS050 Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV) following a highly successful race at the legendary Circuit de la Sarthe. Sebastien Buemi, Kazuki Nakajima, and Brendon Hartley completed over 5,000km in the No. 8 TS050 HEV during the gruelling race. The team won by five laps to take the lead in the drivers' World Championship.

For Buemi and Nakajima, this was their third consecutive triumph at Le Mans. They join an elite group of only seven drivers who have previously achieved that feat during the illustrious race's 97-year history, while Hartley won for the second time following his victory in 2017. Today's win in the penultimate round of the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) saw GR crowned World Champions with an unassailable 57-point lead.

This is Toyota's third manufacturers' championship, following its success in the 2014 and 2018-2019 seasons. The race also marked the final appearance at Le Mans for the 1,000PS, four-wheel-drive TS050 HEV, which has set new standards in efficiency and performance at La Sarthe. Using 35% less fuel than the first generation of LMP1 hybrids from 2012, the TS050 HEV holds the fastest-ever lap and race lap records alongside its four consecutive pole positions and three victories.

Having started in pole position, the No 7 TS050 HEV driven by Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi, and

14 Marlins down Yankees, clinch the playoff spot



15 Shattenkirk lifts Lightning to the verge of Stanley Cup title

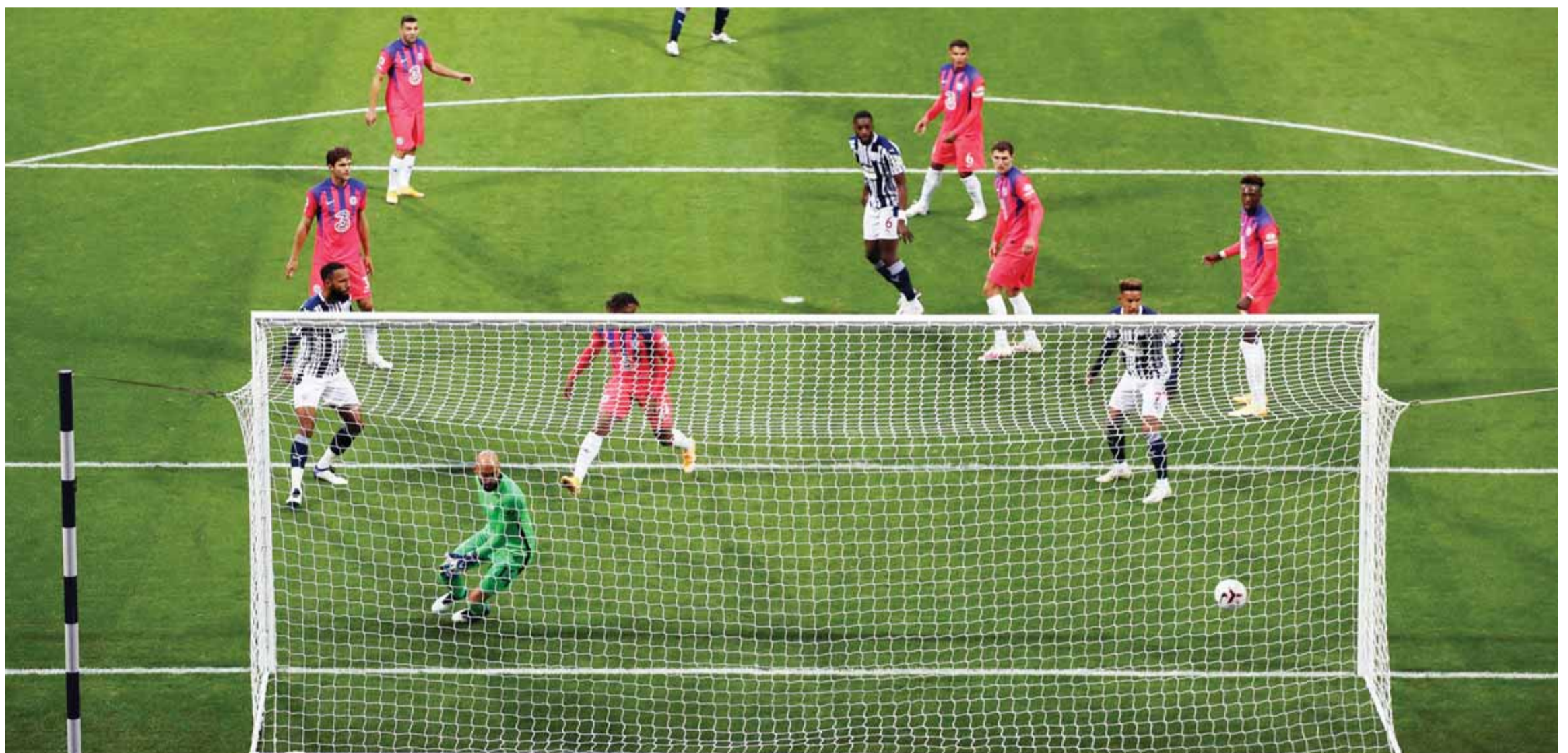


15 Celtics rally to beat Heat; stay alive in NBA playoffs



Chelsea recover, draw at West Brom

Man United snatch 100th-minute win at Brighton



WEST BROMWICH: West Bromwich Albion's English defender Kyle Bartley (left) sees his shot beat Chelsea's Argentinian goalkeeper Willy Caballero for their third goal during the English Premier League football match between West Bromwich Albion and Chelsea yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Free-spending Chelsea came from 3-0 down to salvage a 3-3 draw at newly-promoted West Brom, while Manchester United were rescued by Bruno Fernandes's 100th-minute penalty, awarded after the full-time whistle, to beat Brighton 3-2 yesterday. But it is Everton who are setting the early pace in the Premier League as they secured a third straight win in controversial circumstances, 2-1 at Crystal Palace.

Chelsea manager Frank Lampard handed the captain's armband to Thiago Silva on his Premier League debut, but the Brazilian had a nightmare first 45 minutes as the Blues' defensive deficiencies were easily exposed. Callum Robinson pounced on errors from Marcos Alonso and Silva to fire twice beyond Willy Caballero, who replaced Kepa Arrizabalaga in the Chelsea goal. Kyle Bartley then made it 3-0 to the Baggies, who had lost their opening two games back in the top flight.

Chelsea have spent a reported £220 million (\$280 million) to try and close the gap to Liverpool

and Manchester City in the title race and even a spirited second-half fightback could not hide the embarrassment of his side's defending for Lampard, who have taken just four points from their first three games. Mason Mount got the comeback started to a swerving long-range effort. Substitute Callum Hudson-Odoi then swept home 20 minutes from time after a neat one-two with Kai Havertz. And Tammy Abraham secured a point in stoppage time when he rolled in the rebound after Sam Johnstone had parried Mount's initial effort.

Man Utd 'get away with it'
United bounced back from their 3-1 home defeat to Palace last weekend, but had a lot of fortune on their side after being outplayed by Brighton. The Seagulls hit the woodwork five times and thought they had earned a point themselves five minutes into stoppage time when Solly March headed home at the back post.

However, there just enough time for United to mount another attack and Neal Maupay raised his

arm to block Harry Maguire's header. Referee Chris Kavanagh initially blew for full-time, but then awarded a penalty after consulting the pitchside monitor and Fernandes confidently converted. "We got away with one. Maybe one point we deserved, we didn't deserve more," admitted United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

After Leandro Trossard hit both posts with shots from outside the box, while Adam Webster's looping header came back off the crossbar, Brighton finally got their reward when Fernandes clipped Tariq Lamptey inside the box and Maupay cheekily chipped his penalty down the middle of the goal. Graham Potter's men undid their good work three minutes later when Lewis Dunk's own goal brought United level before the visitors scored a stunning second through Marcus Rashford early in the second-half.

March hit the post before Trossard's unfortunate hat-trick was complete when he smashed off the bar. And even once they did level, Brighton were

denied a point in a chaotic finale. "Sometimes life isn't fair and it feels like that at the moment," said Potter. "The performance level was amazing from us, I'm so proud of the players. It's a sore one. Everton sit top of the embryonic table as they won the battle of two sides who started the day with a perfect record thanks to a controversial penalty on their own."

James Rodriguez again starred for Carlo Ancelotti's men and played his part in Everton's opener, converted by Dominic Calvert-Lewin for already his fifth Premier League goal of the season. Palace quickly responded through Cheikhou Kouyate, but the game was decided by a VAR review five minutes before half-time. After consulting the pitchside monitor, Kevin Friend pointed to the spot for handball by Joel Ward after he was struck on the arm by Lucas Digne's header and Richarlison converted the spot-kick. "I have despair about a rule that I believe is ruining the game of football," said Palace boss Roy Hodgson. — AFP

Haaland draws a blank as Dortmund crash at Augsburg

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund crashed to a 2-0 defeat at Augsburg yesterday as Norway striker Erling Braut Haaland failed to rescue the visitors on his return to Bavaria, where he wrote Bundesliga history in January. With defending champions Bayern Munich at Hoffenheim on Sunday, last season's runners-up Dortmund blew the chance to build on their impressive 3-0 win over Borussia Moenchengladbach last Saturday when Haaland scored twice in an electric display on the opening weekend of the season.

The 20-year-old has netted 18 goals in 21 games this year for Dortmund and wrote himself into Bundesliga history in January when he became the first player to score a hat-trick off the bench on his German league debut. Haaland's three goals in 20 minutes sparked a 5-3 fight-back win. However, the Norwegian hot-shot drew a blank on his return to Augsburg's WWK-Arena with just one clear shot on goal as centre-back Felix Uduokhai powered home a header for the hosts from a free-kick on 40 minutes.

Then former Schalke playmaker Daniel Caligiuri

added to Dortmund's misery by holding off Thomas Meunier to fire home the hosts' second on 54 minutes. Dortmund coach Lucian Favre reacted by bringing on Germany forward Julian Brandt and Marco Reus for the final half hour to no avail. Haaland was booked with a half an hour gone after some pushing and shoving with Augsburg defender Jeffrey Gouweleeuw, who was also shown a yellow card.

RB Leipzig were held to a 1-1 draw at Bayer Leverkusen as Emil Forsberg's superb opening goal for the Champions League semi-finalists was cancelled out by an equally impressive long-range effort from Leverkusen's Kerem Demirbay. Leverkusen's new signing Patrik Schick, who spent last season on loan at Leipzig, curled in a superb shot from 16 meters out but his stunning strike was ruled offside with 23 minutes left. Borussia Moenchengladbach had to settle for a point at home to Union Berlin in their 1-1 draw.

Marcus Thuram's headed goal for Gladbach on 56 minutes was cancelled out by an equalizer from Union defender Nico Schlotterbeck, 20, making his Bundesliga appearance for the Berlin-based club, with 11 minutes left. History was made in Arminia Bielefeld's 1-0 win at Cologne as Joan Simun Edmundsson, 29 came on to score the winner and become the first Faroe Island player to play and score in the Bundesliga. Newly-promoted Stuttgart romped to a thumping 4-1 win at 10-man Mainz. — AFP

Atalanta off the mark in six-goal Torino thriller

MILAN: Atalanta got their Serie A campaign off the mark yesterday with a 4-2 comeback win over Torino. The Bergamo side's Italian league debut had been pushed back a week after they played in the Champions League last eight in Portugal last month. But Gian Piero Gasperini's side proved they had lost none of their attacking style from last season with the most goals scored in Serie A including 7-0 against Torino last January in Turin.

"We are stronger than last year," warned Gasperini, after their third-place finish last campaign. "You learn a lot from playing in Europe, and despite the difficulties we have suffered, we haven't given up. "This year some valuable players have arrived and if we are lucky enough to recover (Josip) Ilicic we will be even stronger."

"It will be a season during which I will be able to rotate more players, last year I had a smaller squad available." Andrea Belotti had put the hosts on the scoresheet first, connecting with a Tomas Rincon pass to rifle in after 11 minutes, the first of a double for the Torino captain. But Atalanta hit back two minutes later with Argentinian Papu Gomez's rifling in from long range for his 100th career goal on his 200th Serie A appearance for Atalanta, leaving Salvatore Sirigu with no chance

in the Torino goal.

Gomez then set up Luis Muriel for the second after 21 minutes, with Hans Hateboer grabbing a third after 42 minutes. Belotti's header rekindled hopes going into the break but Atalanta dominated on returning. Muriel setting up Marten De Roon on 55 minutes to hand new Torino coach Marco Giampaolo his second defeat in as many games. "It was the worst opponent we could have met," said Giampaolo. "They have been playing together for five years and have an extraordinary self awareness, it is difficult even for the most successful teams to face Atalanta, while we're trying to regain self-esteem."

Inter Milan open their campaign later against Fiorentina with Lazio visiting Cagliari with all matches being played on front of a maximum 1,000 spectators because of the coronavirus pandemic. Andrea Pirlo's Juventus face their first major test this season Sunday when the Serie A champions tackle Roma in the Stadio Olimpico. Genoa's match against Napoli has been pushed back three hours on Sunday to 1600GMT after goalkeeper Mattia Perin tested positive for coronavirus. The entire Genoa and staff will have to undergo new tests. — AFP