



HIS MAJESTY OFFERS CONDOLENCES ON DEATH OF SHAIKH SABAH

KUWAIT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and his accompanying delegation on Thursday offered condolences to Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jabir al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, Al Sabah Ruling Family and the brotherly people of Kuwait on the death of the forgiven, by the will of Allah, the late Emir of Kuwait Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jabir al Sabah, when Shaikh

Nawaf received His Majesty the Sultan at the Emiri Airport. During the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere and heartfelt sympathies on the immense loss of the departed Emir, praying to the Almighty Allah to have mercy on his soul, to rest him in peace in heaven and grant Al Sabah Family and the brotherly people of Kuwait fortitude to bear the

loss. In his turn, the Emir of Kuwait expressed his deep thanks and appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan and his accompanying delegation for their ardent sentiments. He prayed to the Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty the Sultan, grant him continued good health and spare Omani people all harm. His Majesty the Sultan was

accompanied during condolence offering by an official delegation comprising: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar al Said, Special Envoy of His Majesty the Sultan, HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal

bin Saud al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, General Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Hamad bin Said al Afu, Head of the Private Office of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Sayyid Saud

bin Hilal bin Hamad al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, Dr Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al Harrasi, Minister of Information, Qais bin Mohammed bin Moosa al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Dr Saleh bin A'amir al Kharousi, the Sultanate's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait. — ONA

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OMAN

Oman, India form 'air bubble'

MUSCAT: The bilateral air bubble travel arrangement is now in place for flights between India & Oman, the Indian Embassy in Oman announced on Thursday. The agreement with Oman will be effective from October 1 till November 30, 2020. The designated carriers of both the countries are now permitted to operate services between Oman and India with certain conditions. 'Air bubble' arrangements are established between two countries under a certain set of safety and passenger travelling conditions.

WEATHER TODAY

MUSCAT
MAX: 35°C
MIN: 27°C

SALALAH
MAX: 30°C
MIN: 25°C

NIZWA
MAX: 38°C
MIN: 25°C

SUNRISE 05.59 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

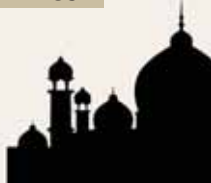
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DHUHR: 12:01

ASR: 15:25

MAGHRIB: 17:58

ISHA: 19:08



EU sues Britain over Brexit deal breach

BRUSSELS/LONDON: The European Commission has launched legal action against Britain over its new Internal Market Bill. "The commission has decided to send a letter of formal notice to the UK government. This is the first step in an infringement procedure", European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Thursday. "This draft bill is by its very nature a breach of the obligation of good faith laid down by the withdrawal agreement", she added. The EU executive had warned Britain to withdraw its proposed Internal Market Bill by the end of September. The Internal Market Bill gives Prime Minister Boris Johnson the power to override a provision in the withdrawal agreement that

would impose different post-Brexit customs rules on Northern Ireland than the rest of the United Kingdom. "If adopted as is, it will be in full contradiction to the protocol of Ireland/Northern Ireland", von der Leyen said on Thursday. The commission's letter requests Britain provide further information within a month, the first step in an infringement procedure. Von der Leyen added that the commission sent the letter "because we want this situation clarified." "We are working hard to have the withdrawal agreement implemented fully and timely", she said. The infringement process can ultimately result in the top EU court imposing sanctions, but this process takes at least several months. — dpa

Oman is Middle East's best expat sustainable living destination

BERLIN: The Sultanate took the lead among Middle East countries in the Sustainable Expatriate Living Index for the year 2020 survey conducted by the German network InterNations and published in its website. The concept of sustainable living denotes the conservation of the world of nature and responsible use of natural resources in a manner that ensures air quality, water cleanliness and use of low-pollution renewable energy. The Sultanate occupied the 21st global position in the said index which the German network said has prepared on the basis of exploring foreigners' opinions about the best sustainable living destinations through a survey of availability of goods, green services in countries of residence or the ones that the expats visit,



as well as the extent to which they think the local government supports environment protection policies and the foreigners' satisfaction with the natural environment and air quality. Finland took first place internationally, followed by Sweden, Norway, Austria and Switzerland. InterNations' interview covered more than

15,000 people in 181 countries around the world. It reaffirmed that the rating classifies levels of personal satisfaction about a number of environment and sustainability factors, including air quality, natural environment, water, hygiene, availability of goods, green services and the population's attention to environment. — ONA



HM offers condolences on death of Shaikh Sabah

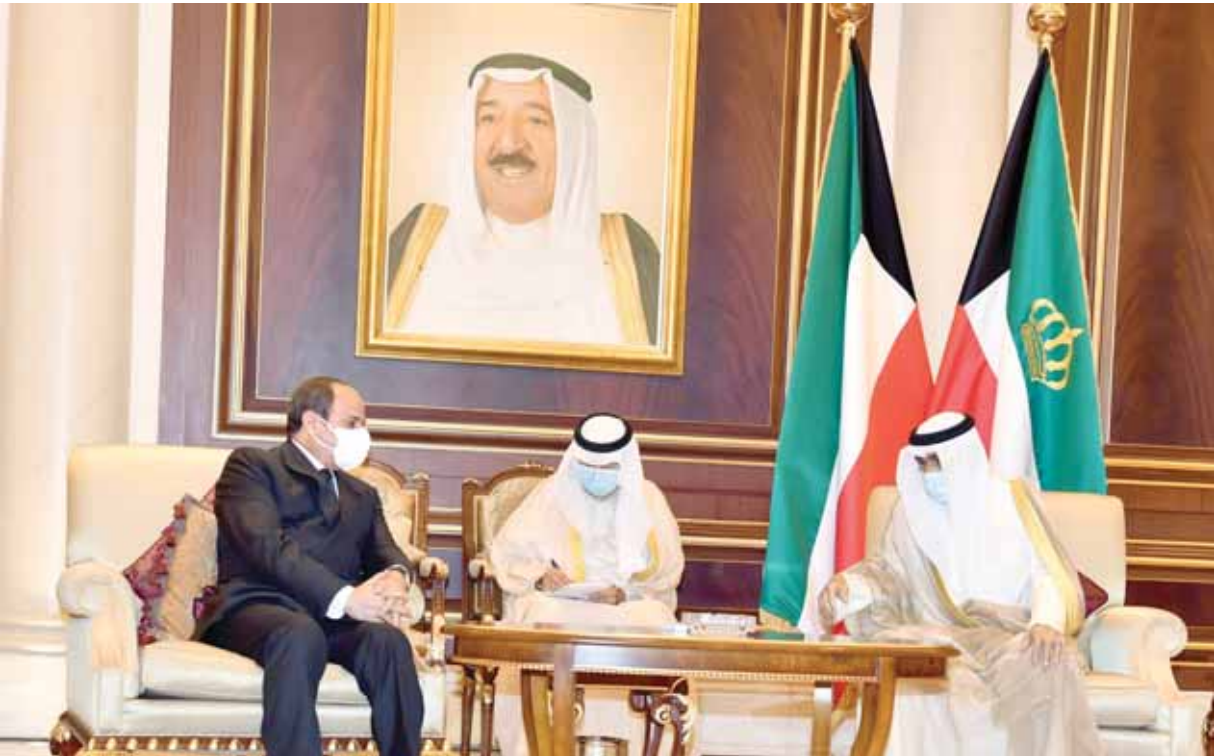


KUWAIT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his accompanying delegation on Thursday offered condolences to Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jabir al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, Al Sabah Ruling Family and the brotherly people of Kuwait on the death of the forgiven, by the will of Allah, the late Emir of Kuwait Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jabir al Sabah, when Shaikh Nawaf received His Majesty the Sultan at the Emiri Airport. – **ONA**

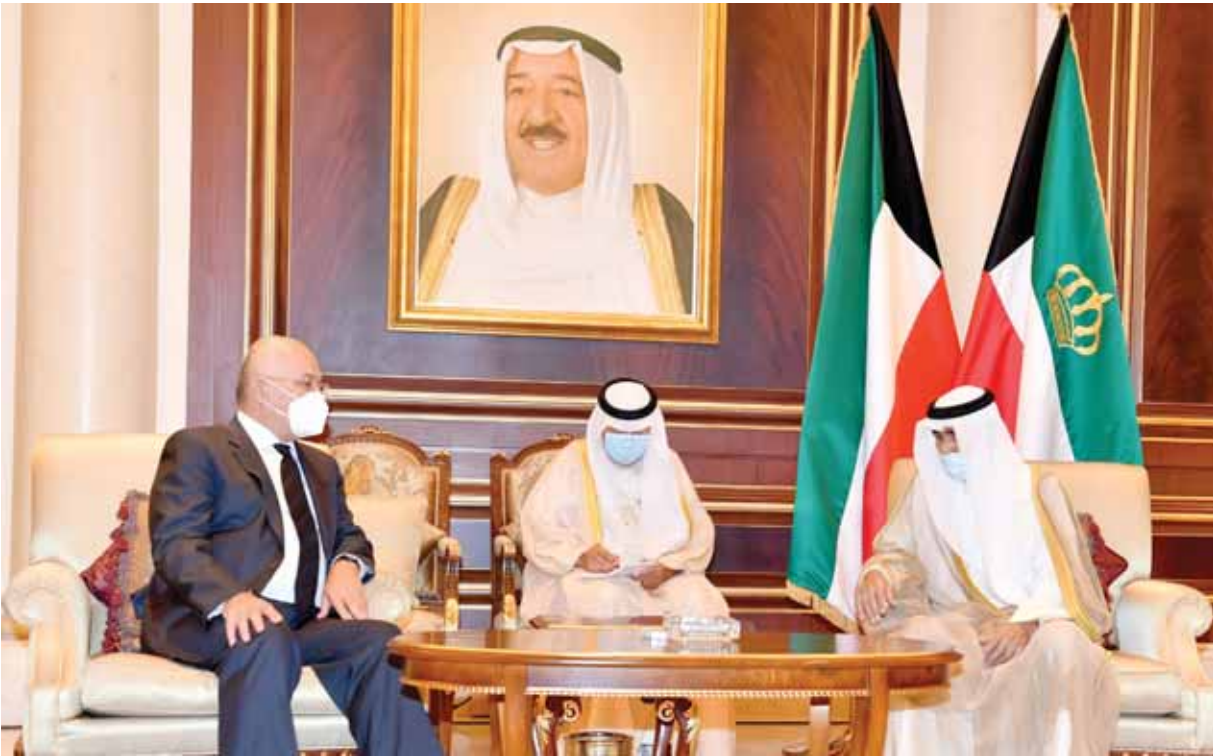




Arab leaders pay tributes to late emir of Kuwait



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi offers condolences to Kuwait's new Emir Nawaf Al Ahmad al Sabah on the death of late Emir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad al Sabah, in Kuwait City, Kuwait. – Reuters



Iraq's President Barham Salih offers condolences to Kuwait's new Emir Nawaf Al Ahmad al Sabah on the death of late Emir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad al Sabah, in Kuwait City, Kuwait. – Reuters



Jordan's King Abdullah II and his son Crown Prince Hussein offering their condolences to the Kuwaiti Royal Family at the Emiri Terminal of Kuwait International Airport. – AFP



Tunisia's President Kais Saied offering condolences to Kuwait's new Emir Sheikh Nawaf al Ahmad al Jaber al Sabah in Kuwait City on Thursday. – AFP



Palestinian artists put the final touches on a sand sculpture paying tribute to Kuwait's late Emir on a beach in Gaza City on Thursday. – Reuters

CAIRO: Several Arab leaders arrived in Kuwait on Thursday offered their condolences for the death of the Gulf country's ruler, Emir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad al Sabah, earlier this week.

Kuwait's new Emir Nawaf Al Ahmad al Sabah on Thursday held separate meetings with Iraqi President Barham Salih, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi, HM Sultan Haitham bin Tarik al Said and Jordanian King Abdullah II, the state Kuwaiti news agency KUNA reported.

Nawaf, the half-brother of Sabah, was sworn in on Wednesday to rule the country.

In a speech after taking the oath, Nawaf, 83, said Kuwait was facing "delicate circumstances and dangerous challenges."

Dignitaries from around the world paid respects to the seasoned diplomat and savvy politician, widely respected as a humanitarian who strove to heal rifts in the Middle East, mending ties with Iraq, maintaining dialogue with Iran and championing the Palestinian cause. — **Agencies**



A man reads a copy of the Kuwait Times showing a photograph of Kuwait's late Emir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah who passed away two days before, in Kuwait City. – AFP

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In brief

■ KUALA LUMPUR

**MALAYSIA FEARS
NEW WAVE OF
CORONAVIRUS**



Malaysian authorities warned of a new wave of coronavirus after 260 new infections were reported on Thursday, the biggest daily spike since early June, following an election in the country's second-largest state Sabah.

Malaysia has largely avoided a massive outbreak thanks to strict early lockdowns but daily new infections have climbed in the past week, after an increase in travellers to Sabah ahead of its state elections last Saturday.

"It is up to us now to flatten the curve. We have done it before and we can do it again," he told a news conference.

■ NEW DELHI

**AIRLINES ORDERED
TO REFUND BOOKINGS
DURING LOCKDOWN**

India's top court on Friday ordered airlines to refund passengers who were forced to cancel tickets booked during a two-month, nationwide lockdown to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The Supreme Court told airlines to refund the money within three weeks in a decision that will add to the burden on cash-strapped Indian carriers whose revenues have been hit by coronavirus restrictions on air travel.

The lockdown, imposed on March 25, banned domestic and international travel, closed factories, schools, offices and all shops other than those supplying essential services. — **Reuters**

India detains Opposition leaders as unrest flares over gang-abuse

ANOTHER VICTIM: A 22-year-old Dalit woman dies after being assaulted by two people in UP

LUCKNOW/DELHI: Indian police arrested several opposition leaders on Thursday heading for the site where a low-caste woman died after being gang-raped in the latest high-profile assault to whip up nationwide anger and protests.

The 19-year-old victim from the Dalit community, which often faces violence and discrimination, died from injuries on Tuesday after the September 14 attack in a field near her home in Hathras district, authorities said. Police have arrested four men for rape.

Priyanka and Rahul Gandhi, siblings and leaders of the main opposition Congress Party, were blocked and arrested by police as they tried to drive then walk to see the woman's family in Hathras about 100 km from Delhi, the party said.

Video footage from ANI news agency showed Rahul jostling with police before falling to the ground. Congress said other senior party members were also detained, without giving more details.

Protesters and security forces had clashed in the district of northern Uttar Pradesh state on Wednesday after police cremated the woman's body. The victim's brother told Reuters the cremation was against the wishes



Police personnel detain students during a protest following accusations of police forcibly cremating the body of a 19-year-old rape victim, outside the Delhi University campus on Thursday. — **AFP**

of her family, who had wanted to perform funeral rites. Local officials deny this. Twenty-five people were arrested over the unrest, according to a police information report.

A witness told Reuters police had wielded batons. Authorities on Thursday said they were barring gatherings of five or more people and would block politicians from the area. The victim and her brother are not being identified due to laws against naming victims of sexual violence.

The four men arrested were all from a higher caste, her brother told Reuters. Uttar Pradesh, with a population of more than 200 million people and ruled by Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, ranks as particularly unsafe for women.

Opposition leaders have highlighted several other violent incidents in Uttar Pradesh in recent days, including allegations of a similar gang-rape of a Dalit woman in Balrampur.

ANOTHER VICTIM

In another incident, a Dalit woman has died after being gang-raped, police said on Thursday.

The 22-year-old, a member of "untouchable" Dalit community, was allegedly raped by two men on Tuesday and died while being taken to hospital, police in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh said.

The latest assaults come months after four men were hanged for the 2012 gang rape and murder of a student on a bus in Delhi, a case that came to symbolise the nation's problems with sexual violence.

Police said that two men in the latest case had been arrested on charges of gang-rape and murder, without giving further details on their identities.

An investigation was under way and the suspects may be tried in a special fast-track court, they added.

"A rickshaw-wallah (driver) brought her home. (She) was thrown in front of our house. My child could barely stand or speak," the NDTV news channel quoted her mother as saying. The incident took place in Balrampur district in Uttar Pradesh state, around 500 kilometres from where the other Dalit girl was allegedly gang-raped in mid-September by four upper-caste men. — **Reuters/AFP**

Thailand's annual buffalo festival races on

CHON BURI: Thailand's annual water buffalo racing festival ploughed ahead on Thursday despite coronavirus travel restrictions leaving the event with a fraction of its usual tourist crowds.

The sturdy bovines were used as draught animals in farms across the kingdom until they were largely replaced by tractors and modern machinery just a few decades ago.

But farmers in Chonburi province near Bangkok have kept up traditional buffalo racing as a way to mark the start of the annual rice planting season and the end of Buddhist Lent.

Prized buffaloes pulling carts joined festive floats decorated with mythical naga serpents, while dancers in traditional golden costumes marched in a parade before the competition began. The beasts thundered down the 100-metre track with jockeys balanced precariously on their rumps before leaping off at the finish line. — **AFP**



A jockey rides a water buffalo during the annual Chonburi Buffalo Race in Chonburi on Thursday. — **AFP**

Philippines' top island destination re-opens to domestic tourists

MANILA: The Philippines' top island destination on Thursday re-opened to more tourists, nearly seven months since inter-island travel was halted in the country amid a coronavirus lockdown. Tourists from all over the Philippines can now travel for leisure to Boracay Island, 311 kilometres south of Manila, which allowed visitors from nearby provinces in June.

"We call on all Filipinos to please bring your friends and families and enjoy our beautiful island," said Frolibar Bautista, mayor of Malay town, which has jurisdiction over

Boracay.

"Boracay is very beautiful now because it has been able to rest for many months," he said. Tourists need to pre-register and submit a negative COVID-19 test to be allowed to travel to Boracay, said presidential spokesman Harry Roque. Tourists will then get a QR code, which they have to present upon arrival, he added.

The government hopes the re-opening of Boracay would jump-start the revival of its tourism industry, which has been badly hit by the coronavirus outbreak. — **dpa**

US envoy in Doha to propel stalled Afghan peace talks

DOHA: The US negotiator on Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, was in Doha on Thursday for shuttle diplomacy between the Afghan government and Taliban negotiators, who are believed to be nearing a compromise on a key sticking point.

Discussions that began in the Qatari capital in mid-September, aimed at ending Afghanistan's 19-year conflict, have stalled over disagreements on how to frame a code of conduct that will guide the broader talks.

The veteran US diplomat is to meet with both teams "to hear updates on their efforts to negotiate a settlement", the US State Department said in a statement before Khalilzad's arrival late on Wednesday.

Headline issues, including a ceasefire or the type of governance that will shape Afghanistan's future, have yet to be discussed.

But Abdullah Abdullah, chairman of the High Council for National

Reconciliation, which is overseeing Kabul's peace push, said on Wednesday there could be progress on a row over which interpretation of Islam should be used to frame laws in post-conflict Afghanistan.

The Taliban, who are hardliners, had insisted on adherence to the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence, but government negotiators worried this could be used to discriminate against the predominantly Hazaras and other minorities.

Another contentious topic is how the US-Taliban deal will shape a future peace deal and how it will be referred to.

Khalilzad, who brokered Washington's deal with the Taliban in February, is not mediating the talks and has insisted on the importance of "Afghan-to-Afghan reconciliation".

"The Afghan people and international community are watching closely and expect the negotiations



People ride on motorbikes along a road in Kandahar on Thursday. — **AFP**

to make progress towards producing a roadmap for Afghanistan's political future and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire," he tweeted before his arrival in Doha.

Despite the hiccups, which have cooled the mood after an optimistic start, both sides are nonetheless committed to pursuing the talks, said Matin Bek, a negotiator on the Afghan team.

"Efforts are on the way to move forward and break this impasse," he said on Wednesday.

"It takes a lot of courage to sit and leave behind what they (the Taliban) have done, but we are in it to solve it. To end this war," Nader Naderi, a key member of the Afghan negotiating team, said earlier this week.

Although no official meeting between the two sides has taken place in the last three days, discussions are ongoing behind the scenes. — **AFP**

Putin, Trump and Macron urge 'immediate' Karabakh truce

PARIS: The presidents of Russia, the United States and France called on Thursday for a ceasefire in the Nagorny Karabakh region, urging Armenia and Azerbaijan to commit to talks without delay or preconditions.

"We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities between the relevant military forces", French President Emmanuel Macron, Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump of the US said in a statement released by the Elysee.

"We also call on the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to commit without delay to resuming substantive negotiations", said the leaders, whose countries are the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk group that has sought a solution to the conflict since the 1990s.

The statement said such talks should be "in good faith and without preconditions" and be held under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs.

The Minsk group, which was created by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1992, has on occasion overseen summits between Armenian and Azeri leaders but has failed to find any lasting resolution to the conflict.

The fiercest clashes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in years over the region erupted last Sunday. The number of confirmed deaths neared 130 as fighting raged for



The picture shows a rocket shell in the Ivanyan community in the breakaway Nagorny Karabakh region on Thursday. — AFP

a fifth day. The rival Caucasus nations have been locked in a bitter stalemate over the Karabakh region since the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the ethnic Armenian region broke away from Azerbaijan.

Karabakh's declaration of independence from Azerbaijan sparked a war in the early 1990s that

claimed 30,000 lives. Controlled by ethnic Armenians, the region is still not recognised as independent by any country, including Armenia.

TURKEY REBUFFS CALL

Meanwhile, Turkey said the three big powers should have no role in peace moves. In a speech to the

Turkish parliament just before the three countries' statement, President Tayyip Erdogan said he opposed their involvement. "Given that the USA, Russia and France have neglected this problem for nearly 30 years, it is unacceptable that they are involved in a search for a ceasefire", Erdogan said.

— AFP/Reuters

Europe's worst infection hotspot Madrid heads for lockdown

MADRID: Madrid is to go into lockdown in coming days after the region's leader reluctantly agreed on Thursday to obey a central government order to ban non-essential travel in the Spanish capital that is Europe's worst COVID-19 hotspot. The Madrid region has 859 cases per 100,000 people, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), during a resurgence of the coronavirus in Spain, which was one of the worst-hit countries during the first wave. Spain's Socialist-led government — which puts cases in Madrid at 735 per 100,000 — decided late on Wednesday to impose a new lockdown on the city of more than 3 million people.

That infuriated the conservative-led local authority worried about the impact on livelihoods in a city famous for its bars, restaurants and bustle of tourists in normal times. But Madrid region chief Isabel Diaz Ayuso told the regional assembly on Thursday she had no choice but to follow the lockdown — even though she would mount a legal challenge.

"This region is not in rebellion and will strictly comply with all the orders", she said. "But yes, we will go to the courts... to stand up for the rights of the Madrilenos." Madrid and nine nearby municipalities will see borders closed to outsiders for non-essential visits, with only travel for work, school, doctors' visits or shopping allowed. A curfew for bars and restaurants moved to 11 pm from 1 am.

The government dropped a plan to shut parks and playgrounds, though local authorities could do that later. Madrid's COVID case load is double the national rate in Spain, which has recorded 769,188 cases — the highest in Western Europe — and 31,791 deaths. The Madrid region has until Friday evening to publish final details of the lockdown, including the start date. — Reuters



A medical worker of the Medical Emergency Services of Madrid (SUMMA 112) takes a swab sample from a woman at the Lope de Vega Cultural Center in the Vallecas neighbourhood, in Madrid, on Thursday while testing for potential coronavirus disease cases. — AFP

Europe lays ground for fast-tracking COVID-19 vaccine reviews

LONDON: The European health regulator has started reviewing data on AstraZeneca and Oxford University's potential COVID-19 vaccine in real time, the first of such moves aimed at speeding up any approval process in the region for a vaccine.

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) said on Thursday its human medicines committee is evaluating the first batch of non-clinical data on the vaccine from laboratory studies, and will continue to do so till sufficient data is available for a final decision.

The EMA uses "rolling reviews" to speed up evaluations of promising drugs or vaccines during a public health emergency, subverting the typical process by assessing data as it is submitted, rather than waiting for all data to be made available along with a formal application.

The healthcare regulator employed a similar real-time review of Gilead's remdesivir as a treatment for COVID-19 earlier this year, and the antiviral treatment was given conditional

approval for use just months later in July. The news of the European review also raises chances of the British vaccine becoming the first to be approved in Europe for the disease caused by the novel coronavirus which has killed more than a million people globally.

Called AZD1222 or ChAdOx1 nCoV-19, it is seen as leading the race for a successful vaccine against COVID-19. Other vaccine hopefuls in advanced stages include those from Pfizer, Moderna and Sinovac. Thursday's news also comes just weeks after several global trials of AZD1222 were halted due to an unexplained illness in a study participant. While most studies have resumed, US trials are still on pause as regulators widened their probe, Reuters reported on Wednesday. "This (review) does not mean that a conclusion can be reached yet on the vaccine's safety and effectiveness, as much of the evidence is still to be submitted to the committee", the EMA said.

— Reuters

Nigeria leader urges 'healing' as country turns 60

ABUJA: Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari called for "national healing" on Thursday as the West African giant marked 60 years of independence in the face of deep economic and security challenges.

Africa's most populous nation is holding scaled-down celebrations due to the coronavirus pandemic to commemorate six decades since it gained self-rule from Britain in 1960.

Buhari, wearing a facemask, inspected a military parade from the back of an open-top truck at a sparsely-attended stadium in the capital Abuja.

In an earlier televised speech he insisted that Nigeria was "bound by destiny to be the largest and greatest black nation on earth" but faced major problems.

"Today, we grapple with multiple challenges with a population exceeding 200 million", Buhari, 77, said.

"Our economy along with every single economy in the world is in crisis. We still face security challenges in parts of the country, while our society suffers from a high loss of moral rectitude which is driven by unbridled craving for political control."

Africa's biggest oil producer has been battered by the global economic fallout from the pandemic as a drop in crude prices has robbed it of key revenues.

The country is battling a decade-long insurgency in its northeast and has failed to tamp down bloody clashes, kidnappings and insecurity in the northwest.



Members of the Nigerian Guards Brigade march at the Eagles Square in Abuja, during the country's 60th Independence Celebration on Thursday. — AFP

Almost half of the population is estimated to live in extreme poverty, and rampant corruption has drained away decades of oil wealth.

The deep-seated woes are a far cry from the widespread optimism that greeted independence.

But those hopes evaporated as the country went through coups, a civil war that left a million dead and over thirty years of military dictatorship.

The nation still struggles for unity

as the toxic legacy of Britain's divide-and-rule strategy continues to pit regions and ethnic groups against each other.

"An underlying cause of most of the problems we have faced as a nation is our consistent harping on artificially contrived fault-lines", Buhari said.

"We need to begin a sincere process of national healing, and this anniversary presents a genuine opportunity to eliminate old and

outworn perceptions."

Buhari, who first ruled Nigeria as a military leader in the 1980s, has failed to make good on pledges to uproot corruption and end insecurity since he was elected in 2015.

He is currently facing popular discontent after his cash-strapped government scrapped a costly petrol subsidy that has kept a cap on pump prices.

— Reuters

BERLIN

Vowing return to Russia, Navalny blames Putin

Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny accused President Vladimir Putin of being behind his poisoning on Thursday, as he vowed to return to Russia to press on with his opposition campaign.

In the first media interview since his poisoning, Navalny gave harrowing details of his collapse on a flight from Tomsk to Moscow after he was poisoned by what the West identified as the Soviet-era nerve agent Novichok.

The 44-year-old anti-corruption campaigner also said he would not be



cowed by the experience, pledging to get fit as soon as possible to continue his fight. — AFP

OHIO

Next election debate to have new rules

The group that manages US presidential election debates said on Wednesday it will take steps to bring order to the final two contests between President Donald Trump and Joe Biden, following widespread criticism.

The 90-minute debate on Tuesday night was chaotic, marred by the Republican president's constant interjections and interruptions of both his Democratic rival and the host, as well as Biden's angry rejoinders.

The Commission on Presidential

Debates, a nonpartisan group that has organised the events since 1988, said it would make unspecified changes to the format to prevent chaos.

"Last night's debate made clear that additional structure should be added to the format of the remaining debates to ensure a more orderly discussion of the issues", the group said in a statement, adding that it is "carefully considering the changes that it will adopt and will announce those measures shortly."

— Reuters

WASHINGTON

Trump signs bill averting govt shutdown

President Donald Trump signed on Thursday a spending bill that averts a government shutdown and extends funding weeks beyond the November 3 presidential election, after Democrats reached a deal with the White House and Republicans.

The bipartisan text easily cleared the Senate on Wednesday by 84 votes to 10 a week after it passed the House of Representatives.

It then went to Trump, who signed the so-called Continuing Resolution in the wee hours of Thursday, White House spokesman Judd Deere said.



Trump needed to sign the stop-gap measure by 11:59 pm on Wednesday to avoid a partial government shutdown, as fiscal year 2021 technically begins on October 1.

SHORT TAKES

Fears of voter intimidation as Trump calls for poll watchers

MICHAEL MARTINA,
ANDY SULLIVAN

US Democrats and nonpartisan election experts denounced President Donald Trump’s calls for his supporters to act as ad-hoc poll watchers in the November election, saying they were an oblique call for illegal voter intimidation.

While US election conduct is governed by a patchwork of state and federal laws, they generally apply strict rules of conduct to partisan election monitors, who are not supposed to interfere in the electoral process.

During Tuesday night’s first debate here with Democratic challenger Joe Biden, Republican Trump urged supporters to “go into the polls and watch very carefully,” arguing as he has done repeatedly without evidence that the election would be marred by widespread fraud.

“I am urging my people — I hope it’s going to be a fair election — if it’s a fair election I am 100% on board. But if I see tens of thousands of ballots being manipulated I can’t go along with it,” Trump said.

Democrats accused Trump of trying to scare voters.

“Voter intimidation is illegal in

SOME 40 STATES
REQUIRE
PARTISAN
ELECTION
MONITORS TO
BE FORMALLY
ACCREDITED
AHEAD OF THE
ELECTION, AND
MANY LIMIT
THE NUMBER
WHO CAN BE AT
A PARTICULAR
LOCATION

Nevada. Believe me when I say it: You do it, and you will be prosecuted,” Nevada Attorney General Aaron Ford said on Twitter.

“He is intimidating people,” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on MSNBC.

Rules vary by state as to how poll watchers must operate, but Democrats and Republicans both have said they expect to have record levels of volunteers on November 3.

Some 40 states require partisan election monitors to be formally accredited ahead of the election, and many limit the number who can be at a particular location.

“Most states allow for parties and candidates to have some degree of measured poll watching,” said David Becker, director of the Center for Election Innovation and Research. “We need to also have functional polling places where voters feel safe.”

The national Republican party for more than three decades was limited by federal courts from mounting national voter monitoring operations after instances of voter intimidation. That ban was lifted in 2018.

In the battleground state of Pennsylvania, the Trump campaign is trying to overturn a state law that requires partisan observers to be registered voters in the county.

Philadelphia officials on Tuesday prohibited a self-identified Trump election monitor from entering a voting facility because she was not approved to be there.

“People are simply not allowed to stand around here and intimidate people,” Mayor Jim Kenney told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* newspaper on Wednesday.

Democrats have expressed concerns that some right-wing groups with firearms could try to gather near polling places, particularly in close districts or areas with high minority populations, as a way to suppress Democratic turnout. Democrats have hired voter protection here, directors in 19 states and thousands of volunteers and lawyers will be mobilised on Election Day.

Asked about potential voter intimidation by Republicans, Scott Hagerstrom, Trump’s 2016 Michigan campaign director and now a political consultant said: “I think that’s ridiculous” and “I just don’t see it happening.” He also dismissed Trump’s claims that there would be widespread voter fraud.

Last week, Democrats accused Trump supporters of voter intimidation after they held a rally outside a voting centre in Virginia. — Reuters

MUCH-NEEDED SPENDING

Millions on the move as China eyes holiday bounce

Hundreds of millions in China hustled to enjoy their first major national holiday since the country beat its coronavirus outbreak, filling airports and train stations on Thursday.

The Golden Week holiday marks the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 and sees an astonishing annual movement of people trying to get home or take holidays.

But this year has added significance, with the crowds filling the concourses pointing to a country rebounding from the outbreak and parading the freedom to travel as a contrast to the rolling lockdowns hitting much of the world.

“Normally, we would take a family holiday abroad during the Golden Week, but this year we opted for a staycation instead,” said Niu Honglin from Shanghai.

Niu booked rooms in a boutique hotel near Shanghai Disneyland but quickly encountered the problem of millions of extra tourists hunting fun at home.

“My daughter had to wait in line for nearly three hours to get on a ride,” she said.

Domestic travel has sprung back to life and given the economy a boost after the virus shuttered businesses and scared away tourists following its emergence in Wuhan late last year.

“The Chinese economy has shown strong resilience,” Premier Li Keqiang told parliament on Wednesday.

“We will nurture new drivers of growth” he vowed, hailing the “rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”.

Wuhan in central

China is back in business too, with visitors thronging to the Yellow Crane Tower — a Taoist shrine — according to the country’s biggest travel agency Ctrip.

More than 600 million trips will be taken during the holiday, down 20 per cent from a year ago, Ctrip estimated, but they will still force the state railway to lay on an 1,000 extra trains a day.

Around 108 million passengers will take trains during the eight-day holidays — around 13.5 million a day.

They are likely to bring much-needed spending to far-flung parts of China — last year, travellers spent \$9.5 billion during the Golden Week. Many will take luxury holidays at home, travel operator Quanar said, amid global travel restrictions.

But the absence of their tourist dollars this year will leave regional nations — from Thailand to Cambodia — wincing from the economic pain caused by the prolonged closure of borders.

At Beijing’s Capital Airport — whose check-in rows and aisles were empty in February — thousands of passengers queued up with their luggage and children in tow.

Life in the Chinese capital has gradually returned to normal after ghostly scenes of empty roads in January and February, and a second virus outbreak in June.

The once eerily empty streets in the city’s financial district are packed, previously deserted malls are full of shoppers and ice rinks have filled with children learning to skate again.

Chinese retail sales edged back to growth in August for the first time since the pandemic struck, signalling a rebound for the world’s second-largest economy. — AFP

BACK TO SCHOOL

No clear link between school opening and COVID surge

KATE KELLAND

Widespread reopening of schools after lockdowns and vacations is generally not linked to rising COVID-19 rates, a study of 191 countries has found, but lockdown closures will leave a 2020 “pandemic learning debt” of 300 billion missed school days.

The analysis, by the Geneva-based independent educational foundation Insights for Education, said 84 per cent of those 300 billion days would be lost by children in poorer countries, and warned that 711 million pupils were still out of school.

“It’s been assumed that opening schools will drive infections, and that closing schools will reduce transmission, but the reality is much more complex,” said IfE’s founder and chief executive Randa Grob-Zakhary.

The vast majority — 92 per cent — of countries that are through their first wave of COVID-19 infections have started to reopen school systems, even as some are seeing a second surge.

IfE found that 52 countries that sent students back to school in August and September — including France and Spain — saw infection rates rise during the vacation compared to when they were closed.

In Britain and Hungary, however, infection levels dropped after initial school closures, remained low during the holidays, and began rising after reopening.

Full analysis of these 52 countries



IfE found that 52 countries that sent students back to school in August and September saw infection rates rise during the vacation compared to when they were closed. — AFP

COUNTRIES THAT
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found no firm correlation between school status and infections — pointing to a need to consider other factors, IfE said. “The key now is to learn from those countries that are reopening effectively against a backdrop of rising infections,” Grob-Zakhary said.

The report said 44 countries have kept schools closed.

It found countries are developing strategies for schools during the pandemic — including some, such as Italy, France, which order temporary

school closures on a case-by-case basis.

Other measures include policies on masks, class rotations and combining remote with in-school lessons.

“This first real global test highlights what school life looks like in a COVID-world,” said Grob-Zakhary. “Understanding how countries undergoing a massive second wave are dealing with this new reality in the classroom is essential to guide future reopening decisions and to help schools remain open.” — Reuters

Oman-Kuwait economic ties on upswing

Kuwait's participation as a joint venture partner in a giant, integrated refining and petrochemicals complex currently under development at Duqm is the defining element in Oman-Kuwait economic relations

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

As the Sultanate joins brotherly Arab states and the wider international community in mourning the passing of Kuwait's beloved leader, Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmad al Sabah, the *Observer* looks at the role of the State of Kuwait to Oman's in furthering economic development under the leadership of the late Emir. This contribution, exemplified by, among other things, Kuwait's partnership with Oman in the development of a mega refining and petrochemicals complex at Duqm in the southeast of the country, promises to be momentous and long-term in its positive impact to the Omani economy.

Indeed, Oman's bilateral relationship with fellow GCC member state Kuwait has included a strong economic and commercial component as well, encompassing the energy sector, iron and steel production, renewables, foodstuff, real estate and developmental assistance, among other areas.

But it's Kuwait's participation as a joint venture partner in an integrated refining and petrochemicals complex currently under development at the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Duqm is the defining element in Oman-Kuwait economic relations. Wholly state-owned Kuwait Petroleum International Limited, which is the downstream international arm of global energy conglomerate Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), is a 50 per cent partner in Duqm Refinery & Petroleum Industries Company LLC (DRPIC) — the JV behind the mega venture at Duqm. Its Omani counterpart is OQ, the wholly Omani government-owned energy group (formerly known as Oman Oil & Orpic Group).

DRPIC is making excellent headway in the delivery of a grassroots refinery with an investment of around RO 7 billion. The 230,000 barrels per day (bpd) capacity refinery will process various types of crudes, including substantial



volumes of Kuwaiti crude, into diesel, jet fuel, naphtha and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Linkages with a Liquid Berth at the nearby port and a world-scale Crude Oil Storage Terminal at Ras Markaz, some 80 kilometres south, ensure that the refinery investment is anything but modest.

MEGA VENTURE

Indeed, the two joint venture partners have been pushing ahead with the addition of an even larger petrochemical complex downstream of the refinery. Total investment in the petrochemicals complex, featuring an array of units that seek to maximise value generation from crude and other feedstocks flowing downstream from Duqm Refinery as well as other sources, is estimated at over \$10 billion.

FEED work for the giant petrochemicals complex is being undertaken by UK-based international energy services specialist Wood Group. The FEED package covers not only the Natural Gas Liquids (NGL) extraction facility, to be located in Central Oman, but also a 230 km pipeline connecting the facility with Duqm. The centerpiece of the complex in Duqm is a giant mixed-feed 1.6 million tonnes per annum (TPA) capacity Steam Cracker that will process select product streams from Duqm Refinery, as well as Liquefied

Petroleum Gas (LPG), Full Range Naphtha (FRN), off gases and Natural Gas Liquids (NGL) extracted from natural gas available in Central Oman.

Significantly, the complex plans to produce a string of new products for the first time in Oman, notably Ethylene Glycols, Oxo Chemicals and Butadiene, thereby adding to the portfolio of petrochemicals already produced in the Sultanate. New grades of polyethylene and polypropylene proposed to be produced at the Duqm complex will also complement the existing product portfolio. Additionally, these product streams will serve as feedstock for value-adding downstream investments, thus driving the growth of a vibrant chemicals and petrochemicals-based industry in Duqm and beyond.

As the single biggest energy-related investment in the Sultanate, the refinery and petrochemicals project will undoubtedly fuel the country's long-term economic development, according to market pundits.

Better known by its trademark Q8, Kuwait Petroleum International's joint venture partnership in the Duqm venture has contributed to a significant uptick in Kuwait FDI into the Sultanate. It surpassed \$1 billion in 2017 and has continued to climb in recent years, soaring

to \$2.2 billion by the third quarter of 2019, according to official figures.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

Other Kuwait-based institutions too have been investing in key areas of Oman's economy over the past decade. Notable is the example of the Gulf Investment Corporation (GIC), an investment company owned equally by the governments of the six member states of the GCC, including Oman. GIC, which was incorporated in the State of Kuwait as a Gulf Shareholding Company in 1983, has been fostering economic growth, economic diversification and capital markets development across the Gulf region, including Oman.

Over the past decade, GIC has invested in a number of strategically important ventures across the renewables, iron and steel, and food sectors. It has a 25 per cent stake in Moon Iron & Steel Company (MISCO), which recently brought into operation a 1.2 million tonnes capacity steel complex with billet and rebar manufacturing facility at Suhar Industrial City. Kuwait-based GIC is also a 14.2 per cent investor in TMK Gulf International Pipe Industry, a Suhar based plant that manufactures high pressure steel line pipes and casing pipes for the Oil & Gas sector.

In the food sector, GIC owns a 20 per cent interest in A'Saffa Foods, which is currently the largest fully integrated poultry company in the Sultanate. More recently, it acquired a 26.68 per cent stake in Osool Poultry, which is nearing completion at Haima in central Oman. When operational later this year, the facility will supply boiler farms in Oman and the wider region with fertilised/hatching eggs.

But GIC's signature investment is in Oman's biggest solar PV based Independent Power Project (IPP), which is set to come into operation at Ibri during 2021. GIC owns 40 per cent of Shams Ad-Dhahira Generating Company, which is developing the 500 MW scheme with ACWA Power as the main developer. The project is being developed on a Build-Own-Operate basis under a 15-year offtake agreement with Oman's sole power procurer.

MULTI-SECTORAL INVESTMENT

Another key institution that has played a substantive role in Oman's infrastructure development is the Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD). A pan-Arab development finance institution, the Fund's funding support for Oman's infrastructure and public sector projects totaled over 800 million Kuwaiti dinars as of December 31, 2019. This vital source of financing assistance has helped the Sultanate execute important infrastructure schemes spanning road transport, water and wastewater services, and utilities, among other sectors. Oman was also among the biggest beneficiaries, among the Arab states, of funding assistance disbursed by the Kuwait-based fund in 2020.

Beyond Kuwaiti public sector institutions, a number of private Kuwaiti businesses have also either directly or in partnership with Omani players invested in key sectors that have benefited the domestic economy. Target sectors have included real estate, tourism, and education and healthcare services. Majority Omani government-owned Omantel, the nation's biggest telecom operator, has also made a significant investment in Kuwait's telecom operator, Mobile Telecommunications Company (Zain), which underscores the strength of bilateral ties enjoyed by the two brotherly countries.

TRADE AGREEMENT

EU takes action over UK's blow to Brexit bill

BRUSSELS: The European Union launched a legal case against the United Kingdom on Thursday for undercutting their earlier divorce deal and a senior UK minister said differences remained in talks on a post-Brexit trade agreement.

Controversy over the Internal Market Bill has thrown the tortuous Brexit process into a new crisis while disagreements over corporate subsidies, fisheries and ways to solve disputes overshadow parallel trade negotiations.

"We had invited our British friends to remove the problematic parts of their draft Internal Market Bill by the end of September," the head of the EU's executive Commission, Ursula von der Leyen (pictured) said. "The deadline lapsed yesterday."

With London not budging, she said the Commission started a so-called infringement, an EU legal procedure against countries that violate the bloc's laws.

"At the same time, the Commission will continue to work hard towards a full and timely implementation of the



We had invited our British friends to remove the problematic parts of their draft Internal Market Bill by the end of September

URSULA VON DER LEYEN,
Head of the EU's executive Commission

Withdrawal Agreement. We stand by our commitments," von der Leyen said.

London now has one month to reply to the Commission's formal letter of complaint and even more

time to change tack before the Brussels-based executive can sue at the bloc's top court. The case could lead to hefty fines, but that takes years.

But sterling slipped 0.6%

against the euro and the dollar after the case was announced. "A no-deal is looking more likely," said Neil Jones, head of FX sales at Mizuho, who predicted further falls. Britain's lower house of parliament approved the Internal Market Bill on Tuesday and it is now with the House of Lords.

The United Kingdom says ensuring that its nations can trade freely with each other after Brexit would require breaking the divorce deal provisions on the sensitive Irish border. A UK government spokesman said in reacting to the news from Brussels that Britain has "clearly set out reasons" to change its Brexit treaty provisions.

The EU is adamant, however, that it would not implement any new UK deal as long as London undermines the divorce treaty. With talks on the new trade agreement nearing crunch time, the EU's 27 national leaders gathering in Brussels on Thursday and Friday would also get an update on the latest.

— Reuters



Banks in the Canary Wharf financial district are pictured in London. — Reuters

More than 7,500 finance jobs have left UK for EU

LONDON: More than 7,500 finance jobs and a trillion pounds in assets have already left Britain for the European Union as banks prepare for full-blown Brexit in January, consultants EY said on Thursday.

Banks, insurers and asset managers have opened new or expanded existing hubs in the EU to continue serving their clients given that future access will be more limited once transition arrangements expire on December 31. The

number of jobs and amount of assets is still a fraction of total jobs and assets held by Britain's financial sector.

But there could still be a flurry of further staff and operational announcements in the weeks before the year end, said Omar Ali, UK financial services managing partner at EY.

"Firms must now ensure that as a minimum they will be operational and can serve clients on the 1st of January 2021," Ali said. — Reuters

Big US banks to report profit plunge as recession takes hold

While capital markets and investment banking revenue is expected to be up from 5 per cent to 20 per cent, that won't be enough to make up for the decline in interest income from loans and securities

NEW YORK: As big US commercial banks close their books on the third-quarter, analysts expect them to report a 30 per cent to 60 per cent plunge in profits on the year-ago period due to the pandemic-induced recession and near record low interest rates.

That slump in third quarter net income comes even though lenders are not going to make outsized provisions for expected loan losses as they did in the first and second quarters.

And, while capital markets and investment banking revenue is expected to be up from 5 per cent to 20 per cent, that won't be enough to make up for the decline in interest income from loans and securities.

"You have soft loan growth



A man withdraws cash from a Bank of America automated teller machine (ATM) in Hollywood, California. — Reuters

and you're still feeling the impact from aggressive Fed actions earlier this year," said analyst Jason Goldberg of Barclays.

Citigroup and Wells Fargo & Co, the third and fourth-biggest US banks by assets respectively, will report net income down by about 60 per cent, according to I/B/E/S analyst survey data from Refinitiv.

JPMorgan Chase & Co and Bank of America Corp, which

rank first and second in assets respectively, are expected to show profits down about 30 per cent.

Investment banks Goldman Sachs Group Inc and Morgan Stanley, which are benefitting from being more concentrated in the busy capital markets, are expected to report more modest profit declines of about 5 per cent to 10 per cent.

JPMorgan and Citigroup will

kick off the third-quarter bank earnings season on Oct 13.

Pandemic-driven lockdowns have put tens of millions of Americans out of work and plunged the US into a recession. US output is forecast to fall 3.7 per cent in 2020, the Federal Reserve said here last month. That is not as bad as feared earlier in June, allowing banks to hold off on adding to their loss reserves. — Reuters

IMF pushes for changes governing debt restructurings

WASHINGTON: International Monetary Fund officials on Thursday warned that risks of a sovereign debt crisis sparked by the coronavirus pandemic will rise without changes to the international debt architecture, including more transparency for government borrowing.

In a blog post and speech, IMF officials called for the G20 debt service suspension initiative to be extended for another 12 months until the end of 2021, and a common restructuring approach across all official bilateral creditors, including China. A new IMF research paper also laid out options for improving debt transparency and restructurings.

"A pandemic-induced systemic debt crisis cannot be ruled out," IMF First Deputy Managing Director Geoffrey Okamoto (pictured) said in remarks prepared for delivery to



a Peterson Institute for International Economics online event. "The longer the problem is postponed, the worse it will become."

IMF researchers said in a new paper published on Thursday that prior to the coronavirus pandemic,

the existing legal architecture governing sovereign debt restructurings had worked fairly well, especially compared with the 1980s, when Latin American debt restructurings dragged on for years, often blocked by small numbers of

bondholders.

More recent innovations including enhanced Collective Action Clauses, which allow larger majorities of bondholders to impose new terms on holdouts, have facilitated faster restructurings, they said, citing Argentina's agreement a month ago with creditors to restructure nearly \$65 billion in international bonds.

But a large stock of outstanding international sovereign bonds, often in low-income countries, lack such clauses, and non-bonded debt typically does not include such majority restructuring provisions, making it difficult to restructure debt that becomes unsustainable.

Private-sector participation in the debt service suspension initiative has failed to materialise, limiting relief for poor countries hit hard by the coronavirus.

— Reuters

Oil slips on higher Opec supplies



A man fixes the logo of Opec in its headquarters in Vienna, in this file photo. — Reuters

LONDON: Oil prices fell on Thursday as rising coronavirus cases dampened the demand outlook, with further price pressure from a rise in Opec output last month, though losses were capped by renewed hopes for US fiscal stimulus.

Brent crude futures fell 65, or 1.5 per cent, to \$41.65 a barrel by 1153 GMT and US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were down 69 cents, or 1.7 per cent, at \$39.53.

"It has become evident that the virus has not been contained. Infection rates are going up, the global death toll has surpassed the 1 million mark and the world is becoming a gloomy place once again," said PVM Oil analyst Tamas Varga.

In the United States alone the pandemic has infected more than 7.2 million and killed more than 206,000.

Increasing oil supply from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) also weighed on the market, with output in September up 160,000 barrels per day (bpd) from August, a Reuters survey found.

The rise was largely on the back of higher supplies from Libya and Iran, both exempt from an oil supply pact between Opec and allies led by Russia, a grouping known as Opec+.

"Increasing supplies from Opec+ will be risking the rebalancing effort as the market is still grappling with weak demand," ANZ Research said. — Reuters

Rolls-Royce to raise \$6.5 bn to cope with cash crunch

LONDON: Rolls-Royce plans to raise a total of 5 billion pounds (\$6.5 billion), including 2 billion from shareholders, to cope with a "worst-case scenario" as the coronavirus travel crisis crushes the British engine maker's cashflow.

Airlines pay Rolls based on how many hours its engines fly in their larger jets and worries over a long-haul travel slump have knocked more than 80% off its shares this year, reducing its market value to just 2.5 billion pounds.

Rolls, whose engines power the Boeing 787 and Airbus 350, said in May it would cut 9,000 jobs as a result of the pandemic and its finances have come under intense scrutiny, which its chief executive said should end with Thursday's plan.

"This is a comprehensive package which will take any liquidity questions off the table through this crisis," CEO Warren East told reporters on a call. "We wanted this package to provide sufficient headroom even through our worst-case scenario," East said.

A rights issue has been mooted as an option since July, but East said Rolls had to first demonstrate its restructuring plan was working before it could tap shareholders. "We couldn't really have done this much quicker," he said. — Reuters

US airlines start 32,000 furloughs as bailout hopes fade

CHICAGO: American Airlines and United Airlines, two of the largest US carriers, said they were beginning furloughs of over 32,000 workers on Thursday as hopes faded for a last-minute bailout from Washington.

Both airlines told employees, however, in memos seen by Reuters on Wednesday that they stood ready to reverse the furloughs, which affect about 13 per cent of their workforces before the pandemic if a deal was reached.

Tens of thousands of other employees at those airlines and others including Delta Air Lines and Southwest Airlines have accepted buyouts or leaves of absence aimed at reducing headcount as carriers battle a health crisis that has upended the global travel industry.

US airlines have been pleading for another \$25 billion in payroll support to protect jobs for a further six months once the current package, which banned furloughs, expires at midnight EDT.

Earlier, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said talks with House of

Tomorrow, tens of thousands of essential aviation workers will wake up without a job or health care and tens of thousands more will be without a paycheck

SARA NELSON,
Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President

Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi had made progress on a bipartisan aid plan, although no deal was reached and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell called a \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief proposal "outlandish."

In a memo to employees, American Chief Executive Doug Parker said Mnuchin told him that he and Pelosi were continuing to negotiate on a



American Airlines Boeing 737 MAX jets sit parked at a facility in Tulsa, Oklahoma. — Reuters

bipartisan COVID-19 relief package that would include an extension of aid for airlines and could reach an agreement in coming days.

"Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that any of these efforts will come to fruition," Parker said.

American will furlough 19,000 employees, including some 1,600 pilots. More than 13,000 United employees

will be on furlough, but not any pilots following an agreement reached this week.

"Tomorrow, tens of thousands of essential aviation workers will wake up without a job or health care and tens of thousands more will be without a paycheck," Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President Sara Nelson said in a statement that urged lawmakers

to reach a deal.

Nick Calio, who heads the airline trade group Airlines for America, said earlier that the industry was still pursuing all potential avenues for new assistance as time runs short.

"People keep talking, but we need results," Calio said. "We are hopeful but not confident about them reaching a deal on a larger bill."

US airline shares ended flat on Wednesday.

Weeks of intense airline lobbying has won over many but not all Washington lawmakers while drawing attention to the plight of other pandemic-hit industries as the crisis persists.

US airlines are operating about half their 2019 flying schedules and suffering a 68 per cent decline in passenger volumes.

The impact of the coronavirus on travel may cost as many as 46 million jobs globally, according to projections published on Wednesday by the Air Transport Action Group. — Reuters

MAVI, NAGARKOTI HELP KOLKATA WIN BIG IN IPL



SCOREBOARD

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS:		S Smith c Karthik b Cummins.....3
Shubman Gill c&b J Archer.....47		S Samson c Narine b Mavi.....8
S Narine b J Unadkat.....15		R Uthappa c Mavi b Nagarkoti.....2
N Rana c R Parag b R Tewatia.....22		R Parag c S Gill b Nagarkoti.....1
A Russell c J Unadkat b A Rajpoot.....24		R Tewatia b V Chakravarthy.....14
D Karthik c J Buttler b J Archer.....1		T Curran (not out).....54
E Morgan (not out).....34		S Gopal c D Karthik b S Narine.....5
P Cummins c S Samson b T Curran.....12		J Archer c K Nagarkoti b V Chakravarthy.....6
K Nagarkoti (not out).....8		J Unadkat c K Nagarkoti b K Yadav.....9
Extras: (LB-3, W-8).....11		A Rajpoot (not out).....7
Total: (For 6 wks, 20 overs).....174		Extras: (LB-6, W-1).....7
Fall of wickets: 1-36, 2-82, 3-89, 4-106, 5-115, 6-149.		Total: (For 9 wks, 20 overs).....137
Bowling: J Archer 4-0-18-2, A Rajpoot 4-0-39-1, J Unadkat 2-0-14-1, T Curran 4-0-37-1, S Gopal 4-0-43-0, R Parag 1-0-14-0, R Tewatia 1-0-6-1.		Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-30, 3-39, 4-41, 5-42, 6-66, 7-81, 8-88, 9-106.
RAJASTHAN ROYALS		Bowling: S Narine 4-0-40-1, P Cummins 3-0-13-1, S Mavi 4-0-20-2, K Nagarkoti 2-0-13-2, V Chakravarthy 4-0-25-2, K Yadav 3-0-20-1.
J Buttler c V Chakravarthy b S Mavi 21		

DUBAI: Indian quicks Shivam Mavi and Kamlesh Nagarkoti on Wednesday led Kolkata Knight Riders to a big IPL win after the franchise had persisted with the bowling duo through injury layoffs since 2018.

Both Mavi and Nagarkoti, who were brought by Kolkata two years ago after an eye catching performance in India's Under-19 World Cup win, claimed two wickets each in the 37-run win over Rajasthan Royals in Dubai.

Mavi, 21, who played nine games for the two-time IPL winners in the 2018 season before being sidelined

with injuries, returned figures of 2-20 including the prized scalp of Jos Buttler.

The 20-year-old Nagarkoti made his debut for Kolkata in their previous win against Sunrisers Hyderabad after staying out of the cricket field for more than a year due to a back injury.

"It's a very special thing — these boys, the journey they've gone through when not playing", Kolkata skipper Dinesh Karthik said after his team's second successive win.

"And for them to just come out and express themselves with the ball

and bat was incredible."

Kolkata, co-owned by Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, kept faith in their young pacemen and facilitated their rehabilitation process.

The young pace pair bowled alongside Australian paceman Pat Cummins — the most expensive foreign player for the 2020 season with a \$2.17 million fee. Cummins

returned figures of 1-13 in his three overs. "A player like Cummins around is a confidence booster. He is so good with the young kids", said Karthik.

"The boys are learning a lot (from him). For all fast bowlers around the world, Cummins is an extraordinary role model."

Opener Shubman Gill top-scored with 47 and England's Eoin Morgan hit an unbeaten 34 to guide Kolkata to 174 for six while batting first.

The bowlers then combined to keep down Royals to 137 for nine with spinner Varun Chakravarthy also taking two wickets. — AFP

Italian football hit again by coronavirus with Genoa-Torino postponed



MILAN: Italy's football league has again been hit by coronavirus with Saturday's Serie A game between Genoa and Torino postponed after 15 positive tests at the Ligurian club.

The third-round match is the first in Serie A to be postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic since the championship started on September 19.

A meeting of the Extraordinary Council of the Lega Serie A confirmed the application of UEFA rules whereby a match can only take place as long as a side have 13 healthy players, including a goalkeeper.

Genoa published a list of 11 players and four staff members who had contracted the virus.

Goalkeeper Mattia Perin and midfielder Lasse Schoene both missed Genoa's 6-0 Serie A defeat at Napoli on Sunday, and 13 others returned positive tests since the game.

Genoa had demanded that the match be pushed back with health authorities cancelling the team's Thursday training session with players undergoing a new round of tests.

In the case of 10 positive players detected within a week, a club can request the postponement of a match. The request can only be granted once within a season.

Torino president Urbano Cairo hit out at Italian football chiefs' slowness in deciding on how to proceed.

"The important thing is that a rule had to be established, like UEFA did some time ago by establishing when to play and when not to play", Cairo told Sky Sports Italia. — AFP

Atletico frustrated against dogged Huesca in away draw

HUESCA: Atletico Madrid were unable to break down Huesca and had to settle for a 0-0 draw in their second game of the La Liga season on Wednesday as Luis Suarez drew a blank in his first start for the club.

Suarez went closest to breaking the deadlock when he sprinted on to a through ball to go one-on-one with Huesca's Andres Fernandez in the second half but failed to successfully dribble around the keeper.

Atletico continued to bombard the home side in the closing stages but kept being thwarted by Fernandez, who got down low to deny Joao Felix in the final minute, while Huesca's defenders also did their bit to get their bodies in the way.

The draw brought Atletico back down to earth after their 6-1 win over Granada on Sunday in their first game, in which Suarez struck twice after coming off the bench, with Huesca doing a far more effective job of shutting down Diego Simeone's side.

"We gave everything but in the



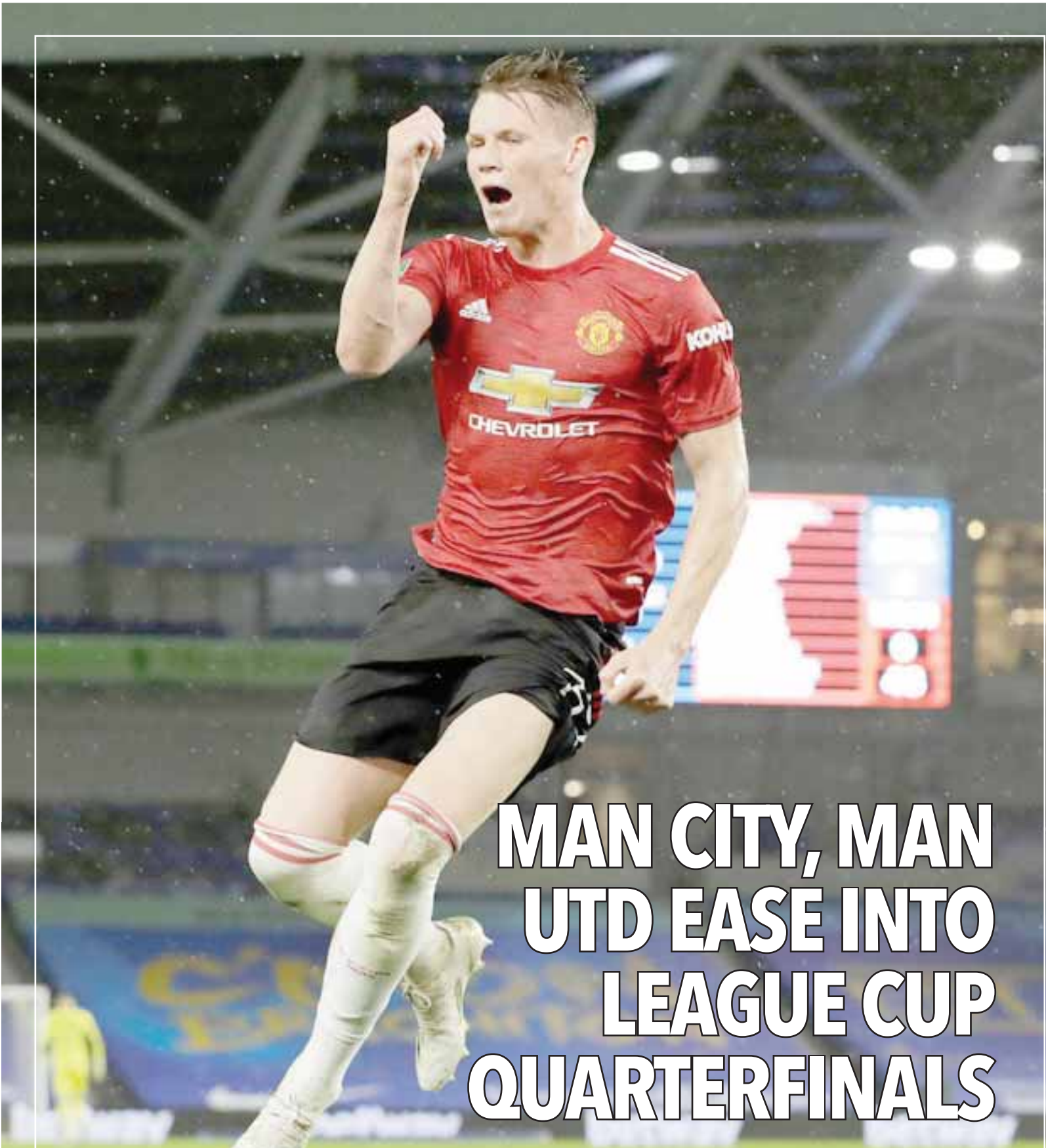
Huesca's Javi Galan (left) challenges Atletico Madrid's Renan Lodi during the Spanish league match in Madrid. — AFP

end we didn't create the chances we wanted to", said Atletico midfielder Saul Niguez. "We expect to be fighting for the La Liga title this season like everyone else, it's a pity it didn't work for us today, I think we deserved to win but we're playing against a tough team who didn't let us get the three points."

Huesca midfielder Borja Garcia said his side had to sacrifice their usual style of play to get a result. "We knew they were a very good team and would dominate play, they would press us and suffocate us and that's what they did, especially in the first half", he said.

"We normally like to have the ball and play possession football but that wasn't going to happen today, we had to focus on defending and we are happy with the point we have got considering who we were up against and how well we played."

Also on Wednesday, Paco Alcacer scored twice as Villarreal beat Alaves 3-1 at home to ease the pain of last Sunday's 4-0 thrashing at Barcelona. — Reuters



MAN CITY, MAN UTD EASE INTO LEAGUE CUP QUARTERFINALS

LONDON: Pep Guardiola admitted it was vital to keep a clean-sheet as League Cup holders Manchester City got back on track with a 3-0 win against Burnley, while Manchester United joined their rivals in the quarterfinals after beating Brighton 3-0 on Wednesday.

Guardiola's side suffered their heaviest home Premier League loss under the Spaniard on Sunday when Leicester handed them a humiliating 5-2 defeat.

A brace from Raheem Sterling at Turf Moor ensured they washed away some of that bitter taste from that defeat and Spanish forward Ferran Torres, a close-season signing from Valencia, added City's third goal with his first for the club.

"It was important we didn't concede and the team was good in general," Guardiola said. "When you lose a game the most important thing is the next one. Firstly, because if you lose in this competition, you're out.

"We are still far away from our best because we're not training much. We have a lot of players out, six because of Covid and

four injuries.

"But step by step when we have all the squad we will get better. We are in the quarterfinals of this competition again so it's good."

City have won the League Cup four times in the last five seasons and they remain on course to retain the trophy.

Guardiola's men would have won by an even bigger scoreline but for a fine display from Burnley keeper Bailey Peacock-Farrell.

Sterling and Kevin De Bruyne both started in a strong City side that also included Riyad Mahrez and a debut for 18-year-old midfielder Cole Palmer.

Sterling made the breakthrough 10 minutes before the interval with a powerful strike from Benjamin Mendy's cross.

The City forward doubled his tally on 49 minutes, finishing off a good move involving De Bruyne and Torres.

City put the result beyond doubt in the 65th minute when Sterling failed to control a Mahrez pass and the ball ran through for the 20-year-old Torres to slam past Peacock-Farrell.

'NEVER SURPRISED'

At the Amex Stadium, Manchester United inflicted more misery on Brighton four days after beating them 3-2 in a dramatic Premier League game.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side needed a 100th minute Bruno Fernandes penalty to see off Albion on that occasion and conceding an equaliser moments early.

There was less drama this time as United made 10 changes and Brighton nine, with Solskjaer's stand-ins proving far superior.

United, who last won the League Cup in 2017, took the lead in the 44th minute when Scott McTominay headed home from Juan Mata's free-kick.

United doubled their advantage in the 73rd minute, with Donny Van De Beek finding Spanish midfielder Mata, who showed slotted home his 50th goal for the club.

Paul Pogba came off the bench to score seven minutes later when his free-kick curled in via a deflection off Brighton's Joel Veltman. — AFP

Lakers power past Heat in NBA Finals opener

MIAMI: The Los Angeles Lakers manhandled the Miami Heat 116-98 in game one of the NBA Finals on Wednesday in a dominant start to their quest for a 17th championship.

After a 10-year absence from the championship series, the Lakers returned with a vengeance in the NBA's quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida.

Anthony Davis, in the best-of-seven title series for the first time after years of frustration in New Orleans, scored 34 points to lead the Lakers.

"I felt good," Davis said. "A little nervous, but when the ball was tipped up, I just went out there and played basketball. This is a moment I've waited for my entire career and I want to make sure I take the opportunity, because it doesn't come around too often."

LeBron James, the fourth player to make a 10th appearance in the NBA Finals, was just shy of a triple double with 25 points, 13 rebounds and nine assists.

"We've got a lot more work to do," James said afterwards. "The job is not done. We're not satisfied winning one game. It's that simple."

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added 13 points and Danny Green contributed 11 for the Lakers, who led by as many as 32 points.

The Heat, the Eastern Conference fifth seeds who swept the Indiana Pacers before toppling the top-seeded Milwaukee Bucks and the Boston Celtics on the way to the Finals, showed no sign of nerves in an energetic start against the Western Conference top seeds, racing to a 13-point lead midway through the first quarter. But the Lakers inexorably seized control and the Heat's dream start devolved into a nightmare with key contributors Goran Dragic and Bam Adebayo exiting with injuries and star forward Jimmy Butler hobbled by a twisted ankle.

Butler still scored 23 points to lead the Heat, who will try to bounce back in game two on Friday.

'WE CAME OUT SLOW'

Davis and James both said the

Lakers need to start stronger in game two, after Miami came out firing.

"They came out very hot, we came out slow."

Added James: "I think they smacked us in the mouth, and we got a sense of that.

"And so we knew how hard we had to play if we wanted to try to make it a game. From that moment when it was 23-10, we started to play to our capabilities. We started flying around. We started getting defensive stops. We started sharing the ball a lot better offensively and just got into a really good groove."

Caldwell-Pope drained back-to-back three-pointers to trim the deficit to 25-18 and Davis knotted the score 28-28 on a layup off an assist from James before finding reserve Alex Caruso for a three-pointer to end the first with the Lakers up 31-28.

Los Angeles continued to pour it on in the second quarter, out-scoring the Heat 34-20 to take a 48-65 lead into the break.

Three-pointers from Kyle Kuzma and Rajon Rondo pushed the Lakers' lead to 37-32 less than two minutes into the second period.

Two three-pointers from rookie Tyler Herro briefly saw the Heat lead 43-41 — but the Lakers responded and pulled away courtesy of a 64.7 per cent success rate from three-point range in the first half, when they made 11 of 17 from beyond the arc.

Overall the Lakers shot 45.2 per cent from the field and made 15 three-pointers. They out-rebounded the Heat 54-36.

After Caldwell-Pope came up with a steal a driving Kuzma found Davis for a dunk that made it 61-48 with 1:15 left in the first half.

James made two free throws and Davis threw down a dunk to stretch the Lakers' lead to 17 after a first half that saw James shaking out a shoulder after colliding on the floor with Jae Crowder in pursuit of a loose ball.

But Miami endured worse injury news, with Dragic — the Heat's leading scorer in the playoffs — exiting at half-time with a left foot injury. — AFP



Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James (23) handles the ball against Miami Heat guard Duncan Robinson (55) during the first quarter in game one of the 2020 NBA Finals at AdventHealth Arena. — USA Today Sports

SHORT TAKES

DUBAI

Chahal adds 'quicker googly' to leg-spin repertoire

India's Yuzvendra Chahal said on Thursday he had added a "quicker googly" to his leg-spin repertoire after exchanging notes with Indian Premier League team-mate Adam Zampa of Australia.

Zampa joined the Virat Kohli-led Royal Challengers Bangalore last month after replacing fellow Australian Kane Richardson for the 13th edition of the Twenty20 tournament being held in the United Arab Emirates. Chahal, who has been with Bangalore since 2014, said he had learnt a few tricks from his fellow wrist spinner.

"When we go to the nets, we do discuss the wicket and our plan," Chahal said. — AFP



LONDON

Simmons wants England to return favour

West Indies coach Phil Simmons says he hopes England will tour the Caribbean in the future as a token of gratitude for his team's visit to the United Kingdom this year during the COVID-19 pandemic. England's board had projected losses of up to \$491 million if no cricket was played during the summer and the West Indies were praised for agreeing to a three-test series in July despite Britain struggling to curb the spread of the virus.

The matches, played in a bio-secure environment without spectators in Manchester and Southampton, marked the return of international cricket



after a 117-day hiatus and England won a compelling series 2-1. "England know that at some point they will have to give us back something," Simmons told the BBC. — Reuters

DUBAI

Spin hero Khan pays tribute to late mother

An emotional Rashid Khan dedicated his man-of-the-match performance to his mother, who died earlier this year, after he bowled Sunrisers Hyderabad to their first win of the Indian Premier League.

The Afghan leg-spinner took 3-14 from his four overs to restrict Delhi Capitals to 147 for seven in their chase of 163, handing Hyderabad a win by 15 runs in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

Khan, who tops the world Twenty20 bowling rankings, said his mother was his "biggest fan".

"Tough one-and-a-half years for me, first my dad expired and then my mom three-four months ago," said the 22-year-old.



"And it took a bit of time for me to come back. My mom was my biggest fan, especially in the IPL and when I was the man of the match, she would always talk to me through the night." — AFP

POGBA RETURNS TO FRANCE SQUAD

PARIS: Paul Pogba returns to the France squad for the first time since June last year after being included on Thursday by coach Didier Deschamps for the upcoming friendly against Ukraine and UEFA Nations League double-header against Portugal and Croatia.



KENIN HUFFS AND PUFFS INTO THIRD ROUND

PARIS: American fourth seed Sofia Kenin ran into a spot of bother before reaching the French Open third round with a 3-6 6-3 6-2 victory against Romanian Anna Bogdan on Thursday. Kenin was out of sorts in the opening set before finding her range. — **Reuters**



Gomez double punishes Lazio, five-goal Inter beat Benevento



MILAN: Papu Gomez scored twice as Atalanta overpowered Lazio 4-1 in Rome while Serie A title rivals Inter Milan crushed promoted Benevento 5-2 on Wednesday.

The two scheduled season-opening matches had been pushed back because of Atalanta and Inter's European campaigns in August.

And the two northern rivals gave a demonstration of their firepower which they hope will deny Juventus a 10th consecutive Serie A title, with the champions settling for a point at Roma on Sunday.

These players are growing from a technical point of view. The technique is endless, but we will never stop trying to improve ourselves. We made the best leap in this respect and the quality of the goals

Atalanta and Inter are now both top of the Serie A table alongside Napoli, Hellas Verona and AC Milan with a maximum of six points from two games.

Juve have four points before they host Napoli on Sunday.

Atalanta were three goals up at half-time with Robin Gosens, Hans Hateboer and Gomez all scoring, and avoided last season's slip-up where Lazio came back from three goals down to draw 3-3.

"We all knew what had happened last time and we talked about it at half-time," said Netherlands defender Hateboer.

"We knew that when they score a goal they could score others, but when they scored we got the fourth and closed it."

Felipe Caicedo pulled a goal back for Lazio after 57 minutes but Gomez completed his brace just after the hour mark rifling in to deny any Roman comeback.

"The squad is the same (as last season) and this is a strength," added Hateboer of his side who finished fourth last campaign.

"But it's too early to talk about the Scudetto."

Simone Inzaghi's Lazio have another tough fixture on Sunday when they host Inter.

After their last-gasp 4-3 win over Fiorentina last weekend Antonio Conte's Inter achieved another big win over Benevento who had shocked Sampdoria 3-2 last time out.

"The defeat hurts and burns, but the performance was there," said Inzaghi.

"The result does not reflect the match."

'ENJOY WATCHING'

Romelu Lukaku scored twice, the first within 30 seconds and Achraf Hakimi impressed on his debut start.

Hakimi, who has spent the past two seasons on loan from Real Madrid at Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund, unlocked the match with his acceleration down the right finding Lukaku to blast in the opener.

The Morocco international then set up Roberto Gagliardini to volley in after 25 minutes and Lukaku for Belgium's second just before the half-hour.

Hakimi got on the scoresheet himself three minutes before the break, catching the Benevento defence napping with Argentine Lautaro Martinez making in five with 20 minutes to play.

"I enjoy watching the team play like they did tonight, with incisive attacking moves," said Conte.

"The outright biggest source of satisfaction for a coach is to see that, no matter who's playing, the idea of the game doesn't change.

"We've got more options and we're a team that likes to play, that attacks and that creates lots and lots of chances.

"We've got to work more on our balance because today we also conceded two goals. But it seems that the new arrivals have slotted in rapidly to a tried-and-tested system from last season."

Arthur Vidal and Christian Eriksen also came close to scoring for last season's runners-up, the Dane rattling the crossbar late.

Gianluca Caprari scored for Benevento after 34 and 76 minutes.

"I'm very happy with how I have adapted to the team even if I still have to learn certain mechanisms," said Hakimi.

"Some moves are similar to those I did in Dortmund, I have the skills to play in this team.

"The teammates helped me a lot, and I'm learning quickly.

"The Scudetto? We are working towards this, we have a great team to fight for this goal."

Promoted La Spezia got their first-ever top-flight win 2-0 against Udinese despite being a man down for the final half an hour with Andrey Galabinov scoring both goals. — **AFP**

OTTA gears up to organise the Sultanate TT championship

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, OCTOBER 1

The Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) are gearing up to organise the first TT event after the decision of resumption of sporting activities in the Sultanate.

The Sultanate table tennis championship (Teams) will start on October 29 at the main hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The three days tournament will be dedicated for the general category and will feature eight teams only which will secure the spots from the qualification rounds.

The first round of the qualification will begin on October 16 and 17 for Dhofar Governorates clubs at Al Saada Sports Complex. The second and final round of qualification will be held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex for all the rest of the teams on October 23 and 24.

It is an exceptional edition of the top domestic table tennis event as it will be under the implementation of the medical protocol and the precautionary measures which are



circulated to all the domestic teams and players to ensure the safety of the players and avoid spreading of the COVID-19 virus.

Earlier in the previous month, the OTTA representatives had

explained the medical protocol and the precautionary procedures to all the teams. They had mentioned that this is a significant subject where everyone must pay full focus and attention with full implementation of

the protocol to avoid spreading of the COVID-19 during the tournament and training sessions. The officials at OTTA had recommended all to follow the guidelines and directives at the table tennis venues.

Saham club paddlers were the champions of the last edition of the Sultanate Table Tennis Championship as they were crowned champions of the Junior and general categories.

Ibri team were the defending champions for the cadet category while the Sultanate's top team player Asad al Raisi was the champion for the singles (General) title as he had defeated his opponent Muhannad al Balushi 3-1.

On the other hand, the national team table tennis paddlers will begin from Sunday the training sessions at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher under supervision of the Jordanian Coach Mohammed Atoum. According to the plan, there will be five sessions daily for the general category and three sessions weekly for the junior category.

It was scheduled that the Sultanate's paddlers, Seeb and Saham's players as well will to take part at the Arabian Table Tennis Championship in Jordan and Arabian Clubs Table Tennis Championship in Lebanon.

Both events were postponed due to the pandemic crisis. The Arabian Table Tennis Union will announce the new dates of the tournaments soon.



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ZVEREV PROVES FIVE-SET MASTER IN PARIS AS HE EDGES HERBERT

PARIS: Critics have often questioned Alexander Zverev’s mental toughness but when it comes to five-set marathons at the French Open the German’s fortitude cannot be doubted.

On Wednesday the 23-year-old sixth seed was nowhere near his best against French doubles specialist Pierre-Hugues Herbert but chiselled out a 2-6 6-4 7-6(5) 4-6 6-4 victory.

He has now won all six of his matches that have gone to a deciding

fifth set in Paris and six of his last seven anywhere — the one loss coming in a heartbreaking defeat to Dominic Thiem in this month’s US Open final.

“I’m pretty fit,” Zverev said after battling Herbert for a minute under four hours when asked for the key to his success in fifth-set deciders.

“You know, sometimes I just feel like I find a way, like today. Today I was not the better player on the court. “I was not doing anything better than

he did. But I found a way, which was the most important. But, yeah, I think I lost the most important five-setter in my career so far, which is upsetting but it’s okay.”

Zverev was two sets ahead in that Flushing Meadows final and also served for his maiden Grand Slam title in the fifth set only to see glory slip through his fingers.

Yet any suggestion he would arrive in Paris a damaged man was put to bed on Wednesday as he showed

the kind of fighting qualities for which new coach David Ferrer was renowned.

A flat-looking Zverev wasted two break points in the opening game, then served two double-faults to drop serve. The skilful Herbert, who has a career Grand Slam in doubles, broke again to take the opener and looked in total control in the second in which he had a point to take a 5-1 lead.

Zverev finally found his aggressive game and hit back to snatch the set

before the third set went with serve to set up a tiebreaker.

Herbert looked favourite to take it when he had the court gaping at 5-3 but swung a forehand drive volley wide when setpoints beckoned.

The 78th-ranked Frenchman then lost the next three points. With a small but vocal crowd urging him on Herbert seized on another Zverev dip in the fourth set to take it into a decider.

Even when Zverev moved 3-0

ahead there was another twist as Herbert produced some dazzling tennis to break back with a searing backhand pass after a drop shot. Zverev responded to move 5-3 ahead only to falter when serving for the match.

But Herbert served a nervy double-fault in the next game and Zverev grabbed his chance. Zverev will next face Italian Marco Cecchinato who he beat en route to this year’s Australian Open semi-final. — Reuters



Ostapenko crushes second seed Pliskova

PARIS: Former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko ousted second seed Karolina Pliskova 6-4 6-2 in the second round at Roland Garros on Thursday after her Czech opponent produced a performance riddled with mistakes.

The 28-year-old Pliskova had also struggled with unforced errors in her opener against Egyptian qualifier Mayar Sherif but managed to get through that match using all her experience.

Latvian Ostapenko, who won the 2017 title as an unseeded player, remained solid throughout and did not allow a sluggish-looking Pliskova to get a foothold in the match.

“I was just trying to play my game,

but I knew I had to return well today because she obviously has, like, one of the best serves on tour, Ostapenko told reporters. “I think I was returning very well today. Also, I had to hold my serve, which I did pretty good. Also to use some drop shots, because it’s a very good shot in these conditions.”

The 23-year-old Ostapenko, ranked 43rd, was aggressive from the start as her strangely subdued opponent struggled to rein in the mistakes under the closed Court Philippe Chatrier roof.

Pliskova, known as one of the biggest servers in the women’s game, committed three unforced errors and a double fault in the opening game of the match to be broken to love.

The script did not change much for Pliskova for the rest of the afternoon. Ostapenko went on to break three times in the first set and twice in the second to seal victory in 69 minutes.

Ostapenko went on to break three times in the first set and twice in the second to seal victory in 69 minutes

She converted her third match point when Pliskova, who had 25 unforced errors, sent a forehand long. The Latvian painted the red clay with 27 winners against her opponent’s nine while keeping her unforced errors to 19.

“I’m sure I could do much better. I know that she can be tough if she’s playing well, but I think everything started with me,” Pliskova told reporters, adding that she would possibly not play anymore in the 2020 season.

“Definitely I was not playing great. I think maybe the same level as the match before but of course, she’s a much better player. Not much to say about this match.” — Reuters