

Spain legend Casillas retires

Spanish World Cup winner Casillas called time on career after being sidelined for more than a year with a heart problem | P 08

THE DAILY tribune

Cate Blanchett: Have always identified as a feminist

7 CELEBS



BUSINESS 4

ByteDance founder defends TikTok's US strategy in staff letter

One COVID-19 death; total confirmed cases surpass 42,000

TD | Manama

The coronavirus (COVID-19) took the life of a 48-year-old expatriate man yesterday, the Ministry of Health announced.

His passing brought the total number of virus-related deaths in Bahrain to 151.

The Health Ministry expressed its condolences to the victim's family.

Meanwhile, the ministry announced early this morning that out of 7,601 COVID-19 tests conducted yesterday, 297 new cases were detected. These included 132 expatriate workers, 163 contacts of active cases, and two travel-related cases.

The new active cases brought the overall number of confirmed registered cases in Bahrain to 42,132, dating back to when the first case was reported in February of this year.

There were also 328 additional recoveries from the virus yesterday, bringing the Kingdom's total number of discharged individuals to 39,335.

Following those recoveries, the total number of current active cases continued to drop to 2,646, with 43 in critical condition and 95 receiving treatment. The remaining 2,603 cases are stable.

The total tests conducted in Bahrain increased to 858,249.

Deadly blasts rock Beirut

● **Enormous explosions rip through Lebanese capital, killing more than 27 as death toll continues to climb**

● **Thousands wounded as local hospitals overwhelmed, while many others remained trapped under rubble**

● **Cause of explosions not immediately known; confiscated explosive materials stored at city's port among suspected reasons**

● **Lebanese president calls for emergency Supreme Defence Council meeting, while the prime minister declares today a national day of mourning for the victims**

● **Bahrain expresses deep regret, voices solidarity with people of Lebanon; Foreign Ministry source reveals no Bahrainis were among casualties**

AFP | Beirut

Two enormous explosions rocked Beirut's port yesterday, killing at least 27 people and wounding thousands, shaking distant buildings and leaving the Lebanese capital in fear and chaos.

The number of dead continued to climb as updates were reported by officials.

The deafening second blast sent an enormous orange fireball into the sky, flattened the harbourside, and sent a tornado-like shockwave ripping through the city, shattering windows kilometres away.

Bloodied casualties stumbled among debris and burning buildings across central Beirut as health minister Hamad Hassan reported an initial estimated toll of 27 dead and 2,500 injured, calling it "a disaster in every sense of the word".

A soldier at the port told AFP: "It's a catastrophe inside. There are corpses on the ground."

Relatives of people who worked inside the blast zone gathered at a security cordon as they scrambled for news of their loved ones.

"Ambulances are still lifting the dead," the soldier said.

The blasts were heard as far away as Nicosia on the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus, 240 kilometres away.

The country's Red Cross reported "hundreds of wounded" and called for urgent blood donations.

The cause of the explosions was not immediately known but a top official, general security chief Abbas Ibrahim, said confiscated explosive materials

had been stored at the city's port. "It appears that there is a warehouse containing material that was confiscated years ago, and it appears that it was highly explosive material," he said.

An Israeli government official who requested anonymity told AFP: "Israel had nothing to do with the incident."

Retired US nuclear scientist Cheryl Rofer wrote on Twitter that the "red cloud" of the massive blast was "very likely ammonium nitrate", a common agricultural fertiliser that is a highly explosive compound.

Lebanon's President Michel Aoun called for "urgent" defence council talks, while Prime Minister Hasan Diab declared today as a day of mourning.

Beirut governor Marwan Abboud told Lebanese journalists that he was at the site to search for firefighters who were on the site fighting the fire that broke out before the explosion, but have not been seen since.

He said: "This reminds me of what happened in Japan, to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I've never seen damage of this size and width, and so catastrophic. This is a national catastrophe. This is a problem for Lebanon, and we don't know how we're going to get out of it."

Foreign Ministry source: No Bahrainis among blast victims

No Bahraini citizens were among the victims of the explosion that rocked Beirut yesterday, a source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told our sister paper Al Ayam.

The source pointed out that



Residents tend to the body of a victim near the blast site

"I've never seen damage of this size and width, and so catastrophic. This is a national catastrophe. This is a problem for Lebanon, and we don't know how we're going to get out of it."

BEIRUT GOVERNOR MARWAN ABOUD

off the site of the incident, while the Red Cross was transporting victims from the location, which was declared a disaster area.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry expressed its deep regret regarding the horrific explosion, it said in a statement.

The Foreign Ministry stressed the solidarity of Bahrain with the brotherly people of Lebanon during these horrible times. It also expressed its sincere condolences to the families of the victims and the Lebanese government, and wished those injured a speedy recovery.

The Foreign Ministry called on Bahraini citizens in Lebanon to communicate with the ministry through one of the following numbers: the Foreign Affairs Ministry's Operations Office on + 973-17227555; the Bahrain Embassy in Damascus on +963991144444; or the Office of Bahrain in Lebanon on +9613824709.

Continued on Page2



Parliamentary committee calls to halt economic, tourist activities with Turkey

TD | Manama

A call has gone out to take strict measures and halt economic activities with Turkey and ban visits of Bahraini and GCC tourists to Turkish cities.

This was made by the Council of Representatives' Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee.

It stressed this yesterday in

view of Turkey's continued interference in Arab internal affairs and the issuance of hostile statements, and based on the principle of Arab national solidarity.

The committee said that it is time to take a unified GCC and Arab stance against the Turkish blatant interference in Arab countries, emphasising that it is clear that Ankara's policy in the region is based on an expansionist agen-

da, and that it violates all norms of international relations and law.

The committee affirmed Bahrain's solidarity with the UAE in the face of the unprecedented Turkish campaign targeting its sovereignty and reputation.

"Any targeting of the UAE is a targeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and all Arab countries," the committee said. The committee

renewed its condemnation and denunciation of the hostile statements made by Turkey's defence minister against the UAE, stressing its categorical rejection of the statement issued by the Turkish defence ministry regarding that of Bahrain's Foreign Affairs Ministry.

The panel said that the Turkish defence ministry's statement was far from reality, considering

it as a clear attempt to undermine and ignore the principles of international law, conventions and norms, as well as to strain relations in the region.

The committee stressed that GCC regional security is an integral part of Arab national security, in accordance with the Arab League Charter, and serious moves must be taken to confront blatant Turkish ambitions.

BAHRAIN COVID-19

- TOTAL CASES: 42,132
- ACTIVE CASES: 2,646
- DEATHS: 151
- DISCHARGED: 39,335
- NEW CASES: 297
- CRITICAL: 43

210 fils (includes VAT)



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Expanding into new markets

Supreme Council for Women partners with Industry Ministry, through Export Bahrain, to lead women-owned businesses into regional, international trade

TDT | Manama

The Supreme Council for Women (SCW) and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism have announced their new collaboration through Export Bahrain in developing and intensifying Bahraini exports and facilitating entry into global markets.

The aim is to support Bahraini women-owned projects by providing them with facilities and consultations to develop their products and services, in order to enhance their participation in regional and international trade.

Industry, Commerce and Tourism Minister and SME Development Board chairman Zayed bin Rashid Al Zayani commended the new collaboration inked between the ministry and SCW.

“Bahraini women enjoy a global outlook, and this collaboration will provide confidence



Supporting women has always been at the heart of all our endeavours and this collaboration will seek to reinforce these efforts and accelerate growth opportunities for women business owners.

INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND TOURISM MINISTER ZAYED BIN RASHID AL ZAYANI



Bahraini women have a major stake in the free market, owning 42 per cent of active individual Commercial Registrations in the first quarter of 2020, in addition to owning 48 per cent of Virtual Commercial Registrations.

SCW SECRETARY-GENERAL HALA AL ANSARI



more than \$32 million in exports over the 18 months since its inception, targeting 32 markets around the world.

“We have supported current and new exporters, including women-owned companies, which accounted for 20 per cent of all exporters, and our support has spanned multiple economic sectors to export various products and services,” he said.

“Export Bahrain has had an important role in taking Bahraini products and services to new markets and placing them on the global map as future competitors with other international brands. More than 25 per cent of our exporters have access to new markets, more than 30 per cent of exporters have exported for the first time, while more than 15 per cent have exported services.”

He added: “Our diversified practical solutions have been designed to create a successful export framework for all Bahraini exporting companies.

“In order to create an ideal market without borders, Export Bahrain has provided customised solutions, including providing e-commerce solutions and export credit solutions, to provide competitive credit terms, international links via the export facilitation platform, support for the shipping and logistics process, and support for smart market information for quick access to information related to other markets.

“Moreover, Export Bahrain provides solutions and tools for existing export projects and supports projects in Bahrain, to start the export journey as well as its international growth in larger markets, because we want Bahraini companies to make their mark globally and to have their export potential recognised.”

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Export Bahrain provides an ideal environment to support and develop domestic exports and achieve Bahrain’s 2030 vision of promoting export-oriented sectors, for Bahraini companies to embrace world markets for products and services. It works with local and international partners to offer Bahraini companies greater global opportunities. Export Bahrain offers export focused solutions, including financing, credit insurance, training and knowledge sharing.

and create new outlets of export opportunities for Bahraini women,” he said.

“By utilising Export Bahrain, women-owned businesses can scale and expand into new markets, and tap into global opportunities. Supporting women has always been at the heart of all our endeavours and this collab-

oration will seek to reinforce these efforts and accelerate growth opportunities for women business owners.

“Export Bahrain is a critical national initiative that will push the role of women exporters in the Kingdom by joining their efforts and resources in cooperation with the SCW.”

The Industry Minister expressed his gratitude for the efforts taken by SCW, led by Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, wife of His Majesty the King and SCW president.

“The SCW has led notable nation-wide programmes and initiatives to develop the participation of women and their contribution to the national economy, especially amidst this challenging time,” he said.

SCW secretary-general Hala Al Ansari said that the cooperation with the Industry Ministry and Export Bahrain was established in accordance with the mandate of the SCW to support the participation of women in public life, as well as integrate their efforts in national developmental plans.

The objective of the pro-

gramme follows the implementation of one of the initiatives of the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women dedicated to raising the competitiveness of Bahraini women, in addition to diversifying their contribution to the national economy.

This collaboration is in line with the SCW’s partnerships with the various institutions concerned with economic development through services, facilities and support, such as the Riyadat Financial Fund, business incubators with their administrative, consultancy, training and technical services such as the Riyadat Center, she added.

This newly developed programme, comes at a very important time, in light of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the business sector as a whole, including women-owned projects.

She added that the SCW will, through its remote consultant platform and its multiple services, direct the beneficiaries to the Export Bahrain programme.

International standards

Al Ansari expressed confi-

dence that both the SCW team and the Export Bahrain team will work together to provide Bahraini women entrepreneurs and business owners with the support and guidance necessary to develop their products and services, according to international standards of competitiveness and quality, in a way that enhances their access to opportunities in global markets.

She noted that the collaboration will lead to creating more economic opportunities for business owners, while working with a wider network of local and international partners to raise the balance of foreign trade through their exports.

The SCW secretary-general said Bahraini women have a major stake in the free market, owning 42 per cent of active individual Commercial Registrations (CRs) in the first quarter of 2020, in addition to owning 48 per cent of Virtual Commercial Registrations (VCRs), that can be implemented easily and conveniently on virtual business platforms across the globe.

Export Bahrain Chief Executive Dr Nasser Qaedi said that Export Bahrain has facilitated

Al Ansari expressed confi-

Beirut blasts described to be like ‘atomic bomb’, ‘earthquake’

Continued from Pg1

Residents in Beirut had said yesterday that the explosions that rocked the Lebanese capital, killing dozens and injuring thousands more, were like “an atomic bomb” or “an earthquake”.

Makrouhie Yerganian, a retired schoolteacher in her mid-70s who has lived near the port for decades, described the blasts as “like an atomic bomb”.

“I’ve experienced everything, but nothing like this before,” even during the country’s 1975-1990 civil war, she said. “All the buildings around here have collapsed. I’m walking through glass and debris everywhere, in the dark.”

“Buildings are shaking,” tweeted one resident, while another wrote: “An enormous, deafening explosion just engulfed Beirut. Heard it from miles away.”

A woman in the city centre told AFP the blast “felt like an earthquake” and “bigger than the explosion in the assassination of Rafic Hariri in 2005”.

AFP video footage of the aftermath of the blasts showed areas



Above and right, views of the damage caused by the blast

of near-complete devastation, with cars flipped onto their roofs like children’s toys, and warehouses flattened.

Soldiers tried to clear the streets of dazed civilians, some

of them drenched from head to toe in their own blood.

Volunteers led stunned survivors away to seek medical help, using their shirts as makeshift bandages to staunch deep gashes

on their faces and bodies.

“We heard an explosion, then we saw the mushroom,” said a Beirut resident who witnessed the second, deafening explosion from her balcony in the city’s



Mansourieh district.

Outside a local hospital, dozens of wounded people, many covered in blood, were rushing to be admitted to the centre, including children.

A huge blaze sent up black smoke from the port area, as helicopters dumped water on burning buildings. A ship moored off the port was on fire.

The port zone was cordoned off by the security forces, allowing access only to a string of ambulances, fire trucks with wailing sirens and relatives of workers who had been inside.



I’ve experienced everything, but nothing like this before. All the buildings around here have collapsed. I’m walking through glass and debris everywhere, in the dark.

BEIRUT RESIDENT MAKROUHIE YERGANIAN

Reports denied of positive COVID-19 cases among inmates

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Interior's Reformation and Rehabilitation Directorate denied yesterday reports claiming that there were confirmed positive cases of the coronavirus (COVID-19) among inmates.

The directorate said in a tweet that it is committed to the implementation of precautionary measures against COVID-19 as the protection of the health and safety of inmates is a top priority.

Isolation procedures for some inmates were implemented for the safety of inmates, it added.

"Reports on positive coronavirus cases are false," said a tweet. "Out of transparency, the directorate will announce

”
Reports on positive coronavirus cases are false. Out of transparency, the directorate will announce confirmed positive cases if any. Kindly ignore malicious rumours and seek information from official sources

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR'S REFORMATION AND REHABILITATION DIRECTORATE IN A TWEET

confirmed positive cases if any. "Kindly ignore malicious rumours and seek information from official sources."

Three teenagers arrested for setting house façade on fire

TDT | Manama

Three teenagers have been arrested after they deliberately set the façade of a house in Sitra on fire, the Ministry of Interior has reported.

The ministry said that the General Directorate of Criminal Investigation and Forensic Science was able to arrest the three youth, aged between 15 and 18, less than 24 hours after receiving the report.

A search for the teenagers led to the disclosure of their identities, which resulted in their detention.

During questioning, it was found that there were personal disputes with one of the residents of the house, the façade of which was destroyed by the fire.

Legal procedures were completed and the case has been referred to the Public Prosecution.

Drivers honoured in 'Thank You' initiative



A driver being honoured by a traffic police officer

TDT | Manama

Drivers who were seen diligently following traffic rules during the Eid Al Adha holidays were honoured by the General Directorate of Traffic, in cooperation with Al Salam

Bank.

The honouring was part of the directorate's "Thank You" initiative.

The campaign aimed to support community partnership with road users and appreciate ideal drivers.

Interactive map of Hezbollah terrorist activities launched

● Washington Institute for Near East Policy issues resource tool on the terrorist operations carried out by the Lebanese Hezbollah terrorist organisation around the world, including acts of terrorism carried out in Bahrain

TDT | Manama

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy has issued an interactive map on the terrorist operations carried out by the Lebanese Hezbollah terrorist organisation around the world, whether through funding, training, or direct implementation.

Hezbollah operations included acts of terrorism carried out in Bahrain, and the interactive map shows the plans of sabotage and international terrorism under which the party operates as a terrorist arm of the Iranian regime.

The interactive map is based on several sources, including extensive visits and meetings

held by specialists and experts from the institute with officials in the Ministry of Interior.

The map contributes to showing the extent of the operations by Hezbollah, a terrorist organisation that tops the global list of terrorism.

According to the institute, Hezbollah, while highly public about its social and political work, goes to great lengths to conceal its illicit pursuits.

"As a result, no single repository of the collected, open-source information about Hezbollah's worldwide activities is yet available," it said. "This deficit has hindered the emergence of a fully informed public debate on the totality of Hezbollah's activities."

"The Lebanese Hezbollah Select Worldwide Activity Interactive Map aims to fill this knowledge gap. A multimedia tool, the map is searchable by numerous modes, and includes photographs, videos, event summaries, linkages among entries, and primary-source documents.

"This project—easily the most ambitious and comprehensive of its kind—illuminates the full range of Hezbollah's activities, from travel routes and aliases to larger themes related to the organisation's founding, devel-



The Lebanese Hezbollah Select Worldwide Activity Interactive Map illuminates the full range of Hezbollah's activities, from travel routes and aliases to the organisation's founding, development, and relationship with key state sponsors. It is a multimedia tool that includes photographs, videos, event summaries, linkages among entries, and primary-source documents. It was designed for policymakers, intelligence analysts, law enforcement officials, journalists, academics, researchers, and students alike.

opment, and relationship with key state sponsors?"

Hezbollah is a global, multifaceted organisation, engaged in a wide range of endeavours, including overt social and political activities in Lebanon, Syria, and throughout the Middle East; and covert militant, criminal, and terrorist activities around the world, the institute added.

In the words of one Hezbollah operative, the "golden rule" of the External Security Organisation—the entity responsible for Hezbollah international terrorism operations—is "the less you know about the unit, the better".

US National Counterterrorism Center former director Nicholas

Rasmussen described the map as a "tremendous resource".

"It helps draw connections among all the different pieces of Hezbollah-related activity around the world in a way that no other tool I have seen has succeeded in doing," he said.

The tool is designed for policymakers, intelligence analysts, law enforcement officials, journalists, academics, researchers, and students alike.

Founded in 1985, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy says it is today the largest research institute devoted exclusively to the study of the Middle East.

Northern Governor hails Team Bahrain's COVID-19 fight

TDT | Manama

Northern Governor Ali bin Al Shaikh Abdulhussain Al Asfour has praised the efforts made by Team Bahrain, led by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, in committing to combat the coronavirus (COVID-19) and mitigate its spread.

This came during his follow-up of the governorate's sanitisation campaign, carried out in solidarity with national efforts to address the pandemic.

Deputy Northern Governor Brigadier Khaled bin Rabia Sinan Al Dossary was on hand along with other officials from the General Directorate of Civil Defence and the Northern Governorate Police Directorate.



The Northern Governor along with other officials during the sanitisation campaign

The operations were conducted along a number of commercial complexes across the governorate.

The Northern Governor praised the efforts of the vol-

unteers who participated in the campaign, and expressed his appreciation for their service to the Kingdom and its people.

The Northern Governor also

stressed the importance of such activities to continue the fight against the pandemic, in accordance with precautionary and preventive measures issued by authorities.

Necessary steps taken for public security during Eid holidays

TDT | Manama

Police patrols deployed in various areas of the Kingdom during Eid Al Adha were able to successfully enforce precautionary measures against the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, according to Public Security for Operations and Training Affairs assistant chief Brigadier Dr Shaikh Hamad bin Mohammed Al Khalifa.

Dr Shaikh Mohammed asserted that the Interior Ministry had taken all required steps to ensure the safety of citizens and residents during the Eid holidays. He hailed the cooperation

of the public with the police in carrying out their security-related duties.

Dr Shaikh Mohammed revealed that during the Eid holiday, the police directorates had taken 106 procedures to ensure social distancing and registered 900 violations of not wearing masks at public places. They also organised 23 awareness campaigns about the importance of following precautionary measures.

Northern Governorate Police deployed 25 patrols to take the required steps to prevent gatherings of more than five persons



Police officers carrying out their duties in public places across the Kingdom

at public places, such as beaches, parks and markets. It reported 253 mask-related violations, took 20 steps to ensure social

distancing and four awareness campaigns.

Capital Governorate Police took specific procedures to pro-

tect security and public orders, along with assisting people. It registered 161 masked related violations and took eight procedures to ensure social distancing.

Muharrag Governorate Police took four steps to protect social distancing between people in public and reported 162 mask-related violations. It also conducted 11 field awareness campaigns, including distributing masks among people and gifts for children.

Southern Governorate Police carried out eight awareness campaigns and reported 73 mask-related violations. It

took 34 steps to ensure social distancing.

The Public Security presidency registered 251 violations related to not wearing masks at public places and 40 steps to ensure social distancing in all parts of Bahrain. The Operations Directorate deployed "Najda" (Rescue) patrols, while the Ports Security General Directorate evacuated 171 travellers and facilitated the testing of 840 individuals who arrived in Bahrain.

The National Ambulance Centre dealt with 52 cases of carrying confirmed and suspected coronavirus cases.

Gold prices hit \$2,000

AFP News

Gold prices yesterday hit \$2,000 an ounce for the first time, the latest surge in a commodity seen as a refuge during economic uncertainty.

The precious metal hit the symbolically important benchmark near 1615 GMT before retreating somewhat then crossing the line again about 30 minutes later.

Gold prices have risen more than 30 per cent this year as the coronavirus outbreak has weakened the economy and clouded the global financial outlook.

Also weighing on investors were concerns over whether the United States will pass another spending measure to support the world's largest economy as it weathers a prolonged and deadly coronavirus outbreak.

Democrats and Republicans in Congress have yet to strike



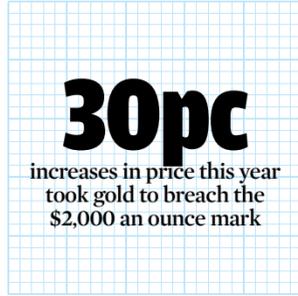
Coronavirus and uncertainty over stimulus in the United States has sent gold over the \$2,000 per-ounce threshold

a deal despite days of negotiations.

"The gold price is viewed as buying opportunities," Commerzbank said in an analysis.

"This comes as no surprise in

view of the ongoing high numbers of new COVID-19 cases, the continuing cliffhanger in US Congress over an additional economic aid package, ever more widespread negative real



interest rates and highly-valued stock markets."

Wall Street stocks were cautiously advancing around 1645 GMT with the Dow up 0.4 per cent as traders digested reports claiming recent progress towards a deal in Washington.

"There's a big desire from both parties to get some kind of stimulus passed. I think the market is expecting that," said Bob Phillips, at Spectrum Management Group.

ByteDance founder defends TikTok's US strategy in staff letter



People have high expectations of a company founded by a Chinese person which is going global but have little information about it. With lots of grievances towards the US government, they tend to lash out at us with harsh criticism

ZHANG YIMING, FOUNDER AND GLOBAL CEO OF BYTEDANCE

Reuters | Beijing

ByteDance founder Zhang Yiming told employees on Tuesday there were misunderstandings on Chinese social media about TikTok's situation in the United States and that the company could face more difficulties as anti-Chinese sentiment rose abroad.

His comments in a letter to ByteDance's Chinese employees came after the company and Zhang were heavily criticised on Chinese social media for entering into talks with Microsoft Corp to sell TikTok's US operations.

Chinese media first reported the contents of the internal letter. A source confirmed the content of the memo to Reuters.

ByteDance did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

"I actually understand (the criticism)," Zhang said in the letter. "People have high expectations of a company founded by a Chinese person which is going global but have little information about it. With lots of grievances towards the US government, they tend to lash out at us with harsh criticism."

Since Monday, some users of China's Twitter-like Weibo have said they would uninstall ByteDance's Chinese short video app Douyin and news aggregator Jinri Toutiao because they believed ByteD-

ance had given in too quickly to Washington.

Others urged ByteDance to learn from US giant Google, which opted to pull its search engine out of the Chinese market in 2010 after China asked it to censor its search results, rather than selling off its Chinese operations.

Zhang said some people had misunderstood the US situation. He said Washington's goal was not to force a sale of TikTok's US operations through the Committee of Foreign Investment in the US (CFIUS) but to ban the app, and there was a legal process ByteDance had no choice but to follow.

Zhang told staff on Monday in another internal letter that the company had started talks with a tech company so it could continue to offer the TikTok app in the United States.

US President Donald Trump initially dismissed the idea of selling TikTok's US operations to Microsoft but changed his mind following pressure from some advisers and many in the Republican party, because banning TikTok could alienate many young voters, Reuters has reported.

Zhang also told employees that over the last two years, anti-Chinese sentiment had risen in many countries and the company must brace for more difficulties in the current atmosphere.

Stock markets gain support from US stimulus optimism

Europe's stock markets ended the session mostly higher

AFP News

Stock markets recovered from early weakness yesterday as optimism about a fresh US economic stimulus package crept back into trading rooms.

Democrats and Republicans are battling to hammer out a new package to help the US economy recover from the ravages of the pandemic, with analysts pointing to reports claiming good progress had been made.

"There's a big desire from both parties to get some kind of stimulus passed. I think the market is expecting that," said Bob Phillips, at Spectrum Management Group.

The dollar weakened on expectations of more money being injected into the economy.

Adding to optimism about a recovery, already fuelled by up-

Key figures around 1540 GMT

London - FTSE 100:	▲ 0.1 pc at 6,036.00 points (close)
Frankfurt - DAX 30:	▼ 0.4 pc at 12,600.87 (close)
Paris - CAC 40:	▲ 0.3 pc at 4,889.52 (close)
EURO STOXX 50:	▲ 0.2 pc at 3,254.29
New York - Dow:	▲ 0.5 pc at 26,784.16
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▲ 1.7 pc at 22,573.66 (close)
Hong Kong - Hang Seng:	▲ 2.0 pc at 24,946.63 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▲ 0.1 pc at 3,371.69 (close)
Euro/dollar:	▲ at \$1.1768 from \$1.1764 at 2100 GMT
Dollar/yen:	▼ at 105.85 yen from 105.95 yen
Pound/dollar:	▼ at \$1.3063 from \$1.3076
Euro/pound:	▲ at 90.10 pence from 89.97
West Texas Intermediate:	▲ 1.3 pc at \$41.55 per barrel
Brent North Sea crude:	▲ 0.5 pc at \$44.39

beat data in recent days, were forecast-beating US factory order numbers published Tuesday.

Europe's stock markets ended the session mostly higher, the main exception being Frankfurt, having clawed back earlier losses.

On Wall Street, the Dow had added over 100 points by the end of the New York morning,

after reversing a weaker opening trend.

"US stocks are tacking onto yesterday's strong start to August," said analysts at Charles Schwab.

"Monday's plethora of upbeat global manufacturing reports is being followed by today's stronger-than-expected June US factory orders data, while Friday's July nonfarm payroll

report looms," they said.

Earlier Tuesday, Asian stocks had rallied on the back of Wall Street's strong overnight performance which saw the Nasdaq establish a new record high.

There was some relief in markets that "on the virus front, encouraging signs are emerging as many hotspots are seeing slow improvements", noted Edward Moya at OANDA.

"New cases and hospitalisations are declining in most second wave states, but this will need to improve more strongly for optimism to grow," he said.

Whatever desire there was to take new risks with stocks was being held in check by uncertainty, including about the shape of any economic recovery, analysts said.

"The composition of China's economic recovery offers a roadmap to the rest of the world that is not especially bullish for a consumer-driven rebound," said AxiCorp's Stephen Innes.

"It's easier to normalise the supply-side of the economy than the demand side in a post-pandemic-shock environment."

Google's \$2.1 bn Fitbit deal hits roadblock

Reuters | Brussels

Alphabet unit Google's bid to take on Apple and Samsung in the wearable technology market by buying Fitbit hit a hurdle yesterday as EU antitrust regulators launched an investigation into the \$2.1 billion deal.

The EU antitrust enforcer said the deal would further entrench Google's dominance in online advertising and that Google's data pledge was insufficient to allay its worries.

"The data collected via wrist-worn wearable devices appears, at this stage of the Commission's review of the transaction, to be an important advantage in the online advertising markets," the Commission said.

It said the deal would give Google a data advantage in per-



Fitbit Blaze watch is seen in front of a displayed Google logo

sonalising ads via its search engine and displays on internet pages, making it difficult for rivals to compete, and ultimately result in higher prices for adver-

tisers and publishers.

The Commission will decide by Dec. 9 whether to clear or block the deal.



The move by the European Commission on Tuesday came despite Google's pledge last month not to use the fitness tracker's data for advertising purposes in a bid to address competition concerns.

Kuwaiti and Egyptian shares up in first trading after Eid



Representative picture

Reuters

Stock markets in Kuwait and Egypt rose on Tuesday as trading resumed after Eid holidays, while the Dubai index, which reopened on Monday, extended gains from the previous session.

Other Gulf markets, including Saudi Arabia, were closed.

Closing Bell

DUBAI	▲ 0.7% to 2,079 pts
ABU DHABI	▼ 0.1% to 4,318 pts
KUWAIT	▲ 1.1% to 5,472 pts
EGYPT	▲ 0.2% to 10,620 pts
SAUDI	Closed
QATAR	Closed
BAHRAIN	Closed
OMAN	Closed

SOS in sand saves three



An Australian Army ARH-90 Tiger Helicopter lands on Pikelot Island in the Federated States of Micronesia

Rescuers spot three men stranded on an uninhabited island in the Pacific Ocean

AP | Wellington, New Zealand

Three men have been rescued from a tiny Pacific island after writing a giant SOS sign in the sand that was spotted from above, authorities say. The men had been missing in the Micronesia archipelago for nearly three days when their distress signal was spotted Sunday on uninhabited Pikelot Island by searchers on Australian and US aircraft, the Australian defense department said Monday. The men had apparently set out from Pulawat atoll in a 7-meter (23-foot) boat on July

30 and had intended to travel about 43 kilometers (27 miles) to Pulap atoll when they sailed off course and ran out of fuel, the department said. Searchers in Guam asked for Australian help. The military ship, Canberra, which was returning to Australia from exercises in Hawaii, diverted to the area and joined forces with U.S. searchers from Guam. The men were found about 190 kilometres (118 miles) from where they had set out. "I am proud of the response and professionalism of all on board as we fulfil our obligation to contribute to the safety of



Australian Army soldiers during the rescue mission



Stranded mariners wave goodbye after receiving food and supplies from HMAS Canberra following a search and rescue mission

life at sea wherever we are in the world," said the Canberra's commanding officer, Capt. Terry Morrison, in a statement. The men were found in good condition, and an Australian military helicopter was able to land on the beach and give them

food and water. A Micronesian patrol vessel was due to pick them up. SOS is an internationally recognised distress signal that originates from Morse code.

News in brief

COVID-19 deaths in Yemen reach 500



The number of people who have died in Yemen after contracting the new coronavirus has reached 500, according to a Reuters tally, although aid organisations say the death toll is probably much higher. About 80 per cent of the population rely on humanitarian assistance in Yemen after years of war.

Iran confirmed yesterday over 2,700 new COVID-19 infections, its highest single-day count in more than a month, as the health ministry called for those without masks to be fined. Deaths and infections from the novel coronavirus have been on a rising trajectory in the Islamic republic since hitting a months-long low in May.

Iran records highest COVID-19 cases in over month

China accuses US of 'outright bullying' over TikTok

China accused the United States yesterday of "bullying" over popular video app TikTok, after President Donald Trump ramped up pressure for its US operations to be sold to an American company. In the latest diplomatic spat between the world's two biggest economies, Beijing hit back after Trump gave TikTok six weeks to arrange a sale of its US operations -- and said that his government wanted a financial benefit from the deal.



Thailand's cabinet approved amendments on Tuesday to its narcotics act to allow private production and sale of marijuana for medical use, officials said. With a tradition of using the leaf to relieve pain and fatigue, Thailand became the first Southeast Asian nation to legalise

marijuana in 2017 for medical use and research, but only the government was allowed to grow plants. Deputy government spokeswoman Traisuree Taisaranakul told reporters after a cabinet meeting that the proposed amendments would also allow patients, businesses and medical professionals to produce, export, import and sell the leaf.

Thailand plans to widen medical marijuana production

WHO says China team interviewed Wuhan scientists over virus origins

A World Health Organization team in China to probe the origins of COVID-19 had "extensive discussions" and exchanges with scientists in Wuhan where the outbreak was first detected, a spokesman said yesterday. The talks included updates on animal health research, he said. China shut down a wildlife market in Wuhan at the start of the outbreak, a day after discovering some patients were vendors or dealers. The WHO says the virus most likely came from bats and probably had another, intermediary animal "host".

A second wave of the coronavirus epidemic is highly likely to hit France in the autumn or winter, the government's top scientific body warned on Tuesday as authorities seek to contain an increase in new cases over the past two weeks. The warning came as an increasing number of French cities decided to make mask-wearing mandatory in crowded outdoor areas - including possibly Paris, according to a report by newspaper Le Monde.

Second COVID wave highly likely to hit France this year

Egypt invites Musk after 'aliens built pyramids' tweet

AFP | Cairo

Egypt has invited Elon Musk to visit its famed pyramids after the SpaceX and Tesla founder posted a satirical tweet stating that clearly extra-terrestrials had built the giant monuments.

"Aliens built the pyramids obv," Musk had tweeted, picking up on a theme popular with conspiracy theorists and kicking off a predictable flood of replies ranging from light-hearted to furious.

Among the avalanche of

one-liners, memes and potshots were some angry messages from nationalistic Egyptians who demanded the eccentric engineer and high-tech billionaire better check his facts.

Egyptian International Co-operation Minister Rania al-Mashat, a savvy social media user, however, saw a marketing opportunity to help revive the country's pandemic-battered tourism sector.

"I follow your work with a lot of admiration," wrote Mashat, a former tourism minister. "I invite you & Space X to explore

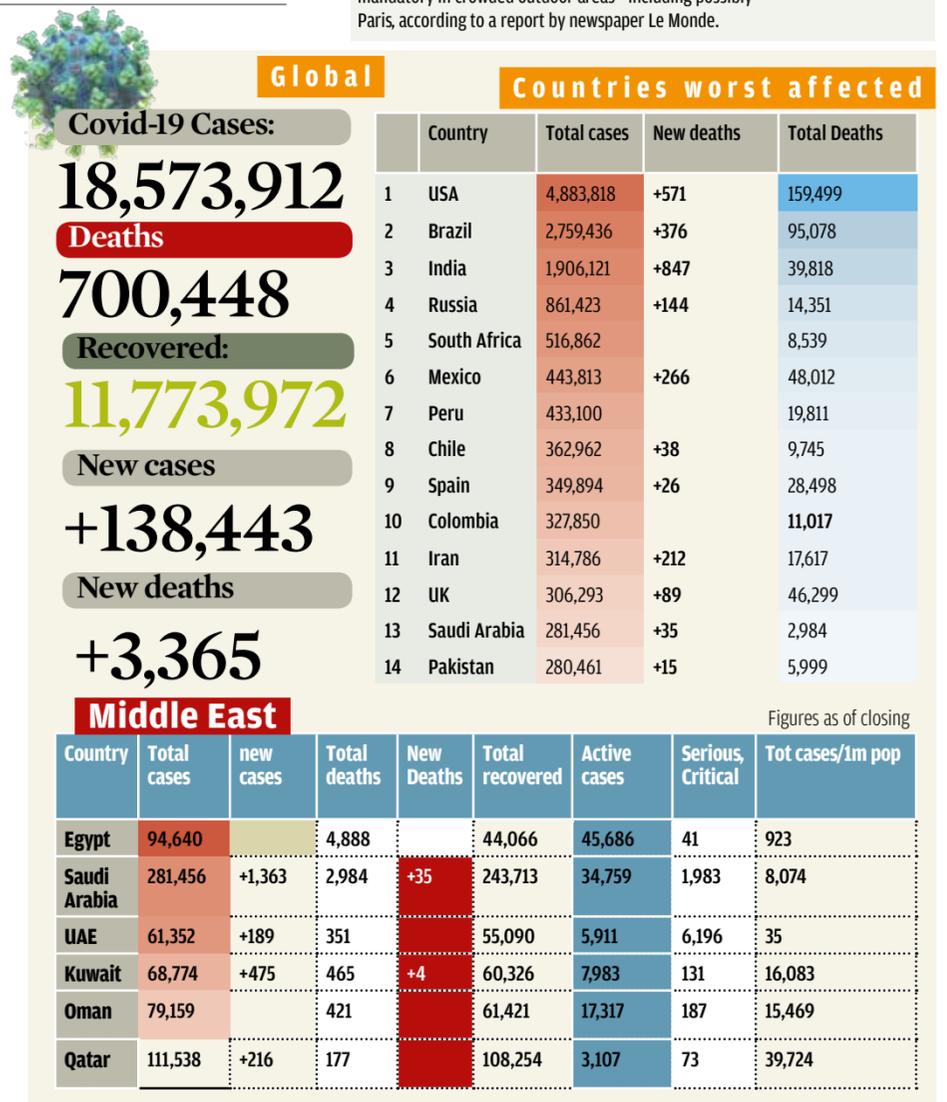
the writings about how the pyramids were built and also to check out the tombs of the pyramid builders.

"Mr. Musk, we are waiting for you," she added, inviting the entrepreneur to come and see for himself one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, Egypt's enormous tombs built for pharaohs and their consorts.

Musk followed up by posting a link to a BBC article about the history of the giant structures, calling it "a sensible summary" of how they were constructed.



The most famous and largest of Egypt's ancient monuments, the Giza Pyramids outside Cairo, reopened to the public last month after a three-month closure forced by the coronavirus pandemic.



Kashmiri youth creates 80,000 face masks to help COVID fight



Kashmiri youth avail PMEGP scheme to create new opportunities, contribute against COVID fight

ANI | Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India

Zahoor Ahmad is a busy man, but feels 'fulfilled.' As Covid-19 crisis gripped the Kashmir Valley, his garment-manufacturing unit, nestled in South Kashmir's Pulwama, manufactured thousands of face masks for the people of the region.

"When this virus came, we made about 80,000 face masks after district administration placed an order with us," says Ahmad, sitting in a cozy chair in his factory amidst the sound of dozens of sewing machines.

Ahmad's spirit of 'help your neighbour' is inspiring. The Khadi Village Industries Board (KVIB) helped him establish the factory, where other youth also work.

After the abrogation of Article 370 in August last year, several governmental schemes have reached Kashmir and benefitted many like Ahmad, who borrowed a loan under Prime Ministers Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP).

One of the flagship schemes of the government, PMEGP is

a credit-linked subsidy programme aimed at generating self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector by helping traditional artisans and unemployed youth.

Tariq Ahmad is one such beneficiary, who established a similar sewing unit, where over 20 men meticulously stitch garments for the people.

"This is a very good step by the central government and unemployed educated youth are being benefited," Tariq told ANI.

He is now not only earning for himself but has been able to provide employment to several other youths in the district.

Javaid Malik, an employee of the unit said he got work opportunity the under PMEGP.

"I was jobless but now I am working at my friend's unit here. It is a good initiative by the administration, and I am thankful to them for giving me employment," said Malik.

The Kashmir Valley is home to nearly seven million people, out of which a little less than half are youths.

Sun Pharma latest to sell favipiravir in India

● Favipiravir was originally developed by Japan's Fujifilm Holdings Corp as Avigan

Reuters | Bengaluru

India's Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd said on Tuesday it would soon begin selling its version of favipiravir, becoming the latest generic drugmaker to supply the antiviral to treat COVID-19 in the world's third worst-hit nation.

Favipiravir, along with another antiviral, remdesivir, has

emerged as one of the most sought-after drugs at hospitals fighting COVID-19 in India, which saw a surge of 50,000-plus infections for the sixth straight day on Tuesday.

Sun's version of favipiravir, to be called FluGuard, will cost 35 rupees (47 cents) per 200 mg tablet, making it the cheapest version available. Stocks will be available from this week.

Shares in Sun Pharma, one of the world's largest generic drug manufacturers, climbed after the news and were last up 1.7% in an upbeat Mumbai market.

Favipiravir was originally developed by Japan's Fujifilm Holdings Corp as Avigan. Once



vir in June in an effort to tackle the "urgent and unmet" need for COVID-19 treatments in the country.

Separately, another Indian drugmaker, Jubilant Life Sciences Ltd, on Monday announced the launch of its version of remdesivir, priced at 4,700 rupees per 100 mg vial. Jubilant is among the companies producing the drug under licence from US-based Gilead Sciences Inc.

Global coronavirus cases have crossed 18.3 million, resulting in close to 694,000 deaths. India has a caseload of over 1.8 million, the third biggest, behind the United States and Brazil.

Insider Jagdishan to take reins at India's most valuable lender



Sashidhar Jagdishan (Courtesy of Live mint)

Reuters | Bengaluru

India's top private-sector lender HDFC Bank Ltd has received the approval to name insider Sashidhar Jagdishan its chief executive officer, the bank said yesterday, as it steers itself through the coronavirus downturn.

Jagdishan, who will replace Aditya Puri - HDFC Bank's CEO of 26 years, takes over at a time when the country's lenders are facing a flood of potential loan defaults as the pandemic brings small businesses to the brink.

Currently the head of finance and "strategic change agent" at the Mumbai-based bank, Jagdishan will start his new role from Oct. 27, the lender said, after the Reserve Bank of India cleared the appointment.

Puri, who has been at the helm since HDFC Bank's inception in 1994, is the country's highest paid banker and has been credited with turning the bank into a financial powerhouse over the years.

Puri has run the bank with an iron hand, preventing it from accruing a high level of bad loans at a time when most of its peers are struggling, analysts have said.

It is one of three domestic lenders that the Reserve Bank of India has designated as "too big to fail". The bank has been able to maintain strong profit growth and stable asset quality amid the pandemic.

Heavy rain batters Mumbai



People drive through a flooded street during heavy rains in Mumbai, India

Reuters | Mumbai

Authorities in the Indian city of Mumbai issued a red alert yesterday and warned people not to venture out after heavy overnight rain in the financial hub brought flooding and travel chaos.

Some suburbs have seen more than 300 mm of rain in the 24 hours to Tuesday morning and more heavy rain is expected over the next two days, said India Meteorological Department (IMD) official K.S. Hosalkar.

The department issued a red alert for the city for the next two days and civic authorities advised people not to venture out unless absolutely necessary.

Trains, already running skeleton services due to the novel coronavirus lockdown, were suspended in several places because of flooding and traffic was disrupted on some of the city's main roads.

A landslide swept down a slope onto a main road in a northern suburb, media reported.

There was no impact on operations at Mumbai's airport apart from reduced visibility, a representative said.

World's highest railway bridge over Chenab river getting ready

PTI | New Delhi

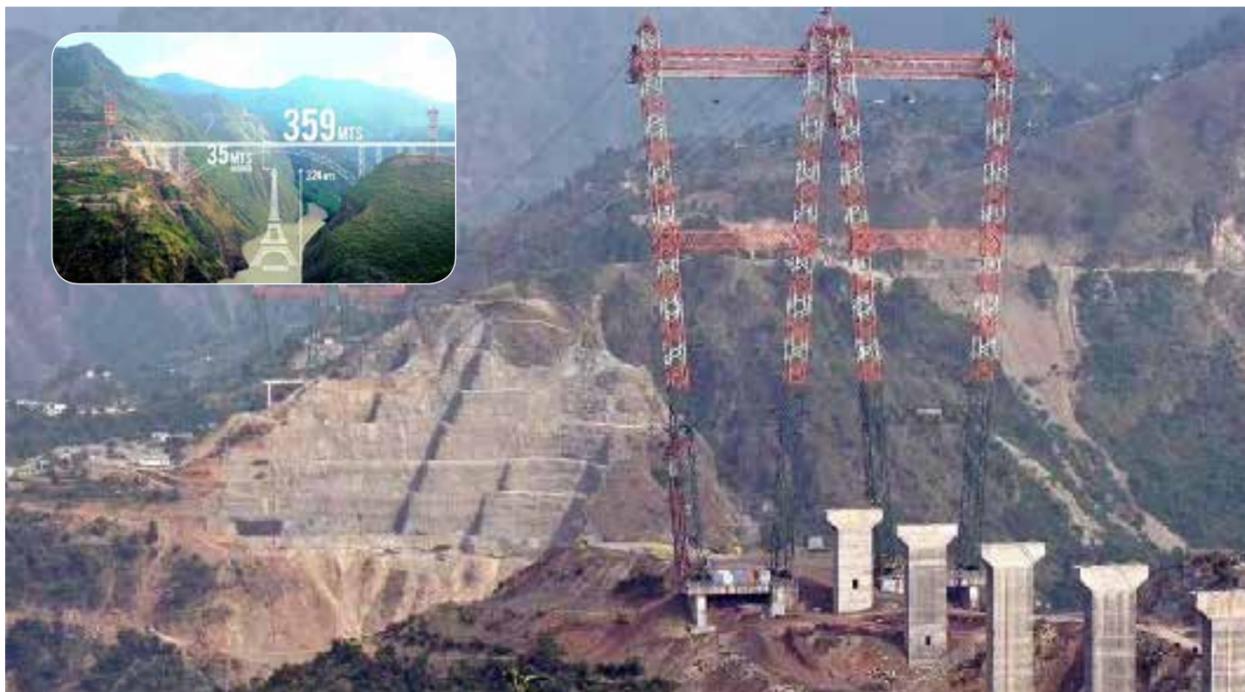
The world's highest railway bridge over river Chenab in Jammu and Kashmir will be ready by next year, and will connect the Valley with the rest of India by train for the first time by 2022, officials said on Sunday.

"This is the tallest railway bridge in the world and the maximum designed wind speed for the bridge is 266 kmph," a senior government official said.

The construction work of the bridge was accelerated in the last one year under the direct supervision of the top echelons of the central government, the official said. According to the plans, Kashmir will be connected with train by December 2022.

The Udhmapur-Katra (25 Km) section, Banihal-Quazigund (18 Km) section and Quazigund-Baramulla (118Km) section have already been commissioned.

The last remaining section, the 111 km Katra-Banihal section is currently under execution. It is targeted for completion in December 2022. The 126 km out of 174 km of tunnels on this section has already been completed.



File photo of a general view of the site of the under-construction railway bridge on Chenab river in Jammu-Kashmir (HT /AFP File Photo) Inset picture, courtesy of metrorailnews

There has been a greater push in the last one year for imple-

mentation of various projects under the Rs 80,068 crore Prime

Minister's Development Package (PMDP) announced on No-

vember 7, 2015, the official said. The package is meant for

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The bridge, which has a central span of 467 metres, is being built at a height of 359 metres from the bed level. The height of Qutab Minar in Delhi is 72 metres and that of the Eiffel Tower in Paris is 324 metres.

strengthening socio-economic infrastructure and balanced regional development of Jammu and Kashmir.

The programme touches practically every sector and provides for massive investments in basic infrastructure, another official said.

In a flash, a **changed** world

Reuters

Remembering Hiroshima

The atomic bomb the United States dropped on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945 killed tens of thousands and flattened the Japanese city in an instant.

“Little Boy,” as it was known, was the endpoint of years of research, wrangling a physics theory into a mechanism that would release the energy that binds together atoms.

The concept was simple: driving together enough uranium or plutonium at high enough speeds would create a “critical mass” so quickly that it would start an uncontrolled, nearly instantaneous chain reaction of neutrons knocking apart atomic nuclei.

Each atom's lost mass is converted to energy at a staggering exchange rate. Only 1.09kg of the 64kg of uranium in Little Boy became energy, but it was the equivalent of detonating 15,000 tons (13.6 million kg) of TNT, according to Los Alamos National Laboratory calculations.

About one square mile of Hiroshima was flattened, crushed by the hammer blow of Little Boy detonating about 580 metres (1,900 ft) overhead. Nearly everyone in that area died instantly. Farther away, the bomb's heat ignited buildings and people, and deadly radiation bloomed.

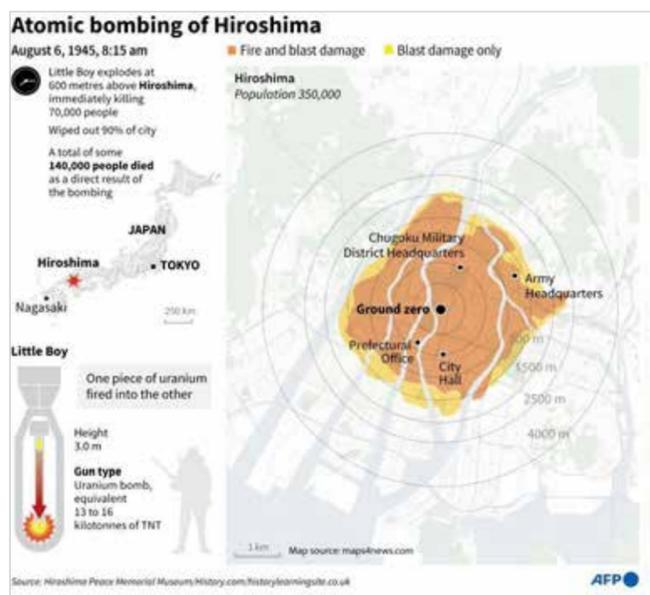
Since World War Two, no country has attacked another with a nuclear weapon. But at least eight have developed them. More than 2,000 nuclear weapons have been detonated in experiments since 1945.

Thousands of nuclear weapons now sit in arsenals around the world, ready to deploy by aircraft or missile. The Arms Control Association estimates that there are nearly 14,000 such weapons, although of these only a third or so could be immediately used in a war.

Even so, 75 years have passed without a nuclear attack.

“I am hopeful that we can stretch the streak for decades more - but the real question is whether nuclear deterrence will work forever,” said Jeffrey Lewis, head of the East Asia Nonproliferation Project at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies.

“I am not so sure about that. And that means, sooner or later, our luck will run out.”



Radiation effects

The bomb attacks unleashed radiation that proved deadly both immediately and over the longer term.

Radiation sickness was reported in the attack's aftermath by many who survived the initial blast and firestorm.

Acute radiation symptoms include vomiting, headaches, nausea, diarrhoea, haemorrhaging and hair loss, with radiation sickness fatal for many within a few weeks or months.

Bomb survivors, known as hibakusha, also experienced longer-term effects including elevated risks of thyroid cancer and leukaemia, and both Hiroshima and Nagasaki have seen elevated cancer rates.

Of 50,000 radiation victims from both cities studied by the Japanese-US Radiation Effects Research Foundation, about 100 died of leukaemia and 850 suffered from radiation-induced cancers.

The foundation found no evidence however of a “significant increase” in serious birth defects among survivors' children.

The bombs

The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in western Japan on August 6, 1945 by the US bomber Enola Gay.

The bomb, weighing 13-16 kilotons, was nicknamed “Little Boy” but its impact was anything but small.

It detonated about 600 metres from the ground, with a force equivalent to 15,000 tonnes of TNT, and killed 140,000 people.

Tens of thousands died instantly, while others succumbed to injuries or illness in the weeks, months and years that followed.

Three days later, the US dropped a second bomb dubbed “Fat Man” on the city of Nagasaki, killing another 74,000 people.

The attacks remain the only time atomic bombs have been used in wartime.

The attacks

When the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the first thing people noticed was an “intense ball of fire” according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Temperatures at the epicentre of the blast reached an estimated 7,000 degrees Celsius (12,600 Fahrenheit), which caused fatal burns within a radius of about three kilometres (five miles).

ICRC experts say there were cases of temporary or permanent blindness due to the intense flash of light, and subsequent related damage such as cataracts.

A whirlwind of heat generated by the explosion also ignited thousands of fires that burned several square kilometres (miles) of the largely wooden city. A firestorm that consumed all available oxygen caused more deaths by suffocation.

It has been estimated that burn- and fire-related casualties accounted for more than half of the immediate deaths in Hiroshima.

The explosion generated an enormous shock wave that in some cases literally carried people away. Others were crushed to death inside collapsed buildings or injured or killed by flying debris.

“I remember the charred bodies of little children lying around the hypocentre area like black rocks,” Koichi Wada, who was 18 at the time of the Nagasaki attack, has said of the bombing.

The aftermath

The twin bombings dealt the final blow to imperial Japan, which surrendered on August 15, 1945, bringing an end to World War II.

Historians have debated whether the devastating bombings ultimately saved lives by bringing an end to the conflict and averting a ground invasion.

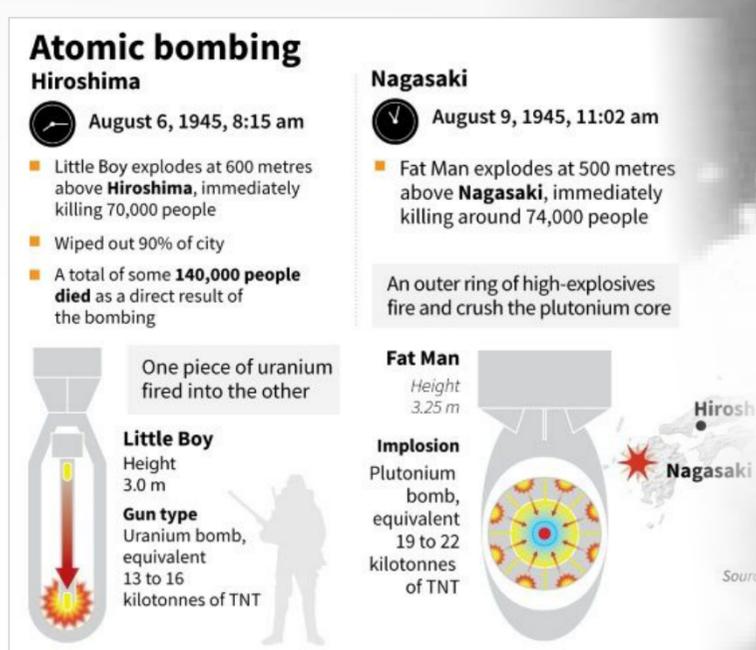
But those calculations meant little to survivors, many of whom battled decades of physical and psychological trauma, as well as the stigma that sometimes came with being a hibakusha.

Despite their suffering and their status as the first victims of the atomic age, many survivors were shunned -- in particular for marriage -- because of prejudice over radiation exposure.

Survivors and their supporters have become some of the loudest and most powerful voices opposing the use of nuclear weapons, meeting world leaders in Japan and overseas to press their case.

Last year, Pope Francis met with several hibakusha on visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, paying tribute to the “unspeakable horror” suffered by victims of the attacks.

In 2016, Barack Obama became the first sitting US president to visit Hiroshima. He offered no apology for the attack, but embraced survivors and called for a world free of nuclear weapons.



Venezuela produce market at center of COVID-19 outbreak

The open-air bazaar, where people pay little heed to social distancing though most wear masks, upsets President Nicolas Maduro's government's efforts to stop an accelerating number of coronavirus cases from overloading Venezuela's dilapidated health system

Reuters | Caracas

Venezuela capital Caracas' largest produce market is at the center of a worsening COVID-19 outbreak, but cash-strapped merchants refuse to stop hawking food there for the city's 5 million residents, many of whom are starving.

Three days a week - down from six before the pandemic - some 10,000 people, including retailers and consumers, pack into the state-run Coche Wholesale Market. The produce is trucked out to the city's supermarkets, providing a lifeline amid Venezuela's six-year economic crisis.

"Caracas depends on this market," its administrator Walter Rivera said in an interview, adding that about 17,000 tonnes of goods are sold there each month.

But the open-air bazaar, where people pay little heed to social distancing though most wear masks, upsets President Nicolas Maduro's government's efforts to stop an accelerating number of coronavirus cases



Sellers wait for customers under the rain at the Coche wholesale market amid coronavirus (COVID-19) disease outbreak in Caracas



Customers walk at the Coche wholesale market amid coronavirus (COVID-19) disease outbreak in Caracas



A child pulls a cart at the Coche wholesale market amid coronavirus (COVID-19) disease outbreak in Caracas

from overloading Venezuela's dilapidated health system. So far authorities have confirmed 20,206 cases and 174 deaths, though the opposition and medical NGOs warn that testing is insufficient.

On July 29, authorities limited the opening hours of wholesale markets across the capital to between dawn and 2 p.m.

Coche is a "potential site of high contagion" due to its lack of social distancing, Jose Manuel Olivares, a health advisor to opposition leader Juan Guaido, said in an interview.

Maduro ordered harsh lockdown measures in March which slowed the virus' spread, but basic goods shortages forced many merchants to return to wholesale markets to make a living.

"If you don't go out every day you don't eat," said Moises Rojas, 23, who sells carrots, potatoes and onions in Coche.

Rojas, one of the market's 3,500 workers, said on pre-pandemic days he could sell three 45-kilogram sacks of carrots. Now, he may sell only 5 kilos. Some traders lugging sacks

and pushing carts around the market said they feared getting infected, but they were more afraid the government would stop them working.

"It would get ugly for us," said Angel Serrano, who has spent 32 of his 44 years selling there. "This supports all of us here."

Coche administrator Rivera said in the last few weeks they carried out 4,500 rapid antibody tests there, with only one positive result. "We're working so that they don't shut the market," he said.

Trump says coronavirus outbreak under control 'It is what it is'



They are dying, that's true. It is what it is. But that doesn't mean we aren't doing everything we can. It's under control as much as you can control it. This is a horrible plague

DONALD TRUMP

Reuters | Washington

President Donald Trump said the coronavirus outbreak is as under control as it can get in the United States, where at least 155,000 people have died amid a patchy response to the public health crisis that has failed to stem a rise in cases.

The Republican president continued to press for US schools to reopen in an overnight Twitter post, and defended his administration's response to the virus in an interview with the Axios news website released late on Monday.

"They are dying, that's true," he said. "It is what it is. But that doesn't mean we aren't doing everything we can. It's under control as much as you can control it. This is a horrible plague."

Coronavirus cases continue to surge in the country and dozens of US states have had to pause or roll back their reopening plans. The White House coronavirus task force coordinator, Dr Deborah Birx, said on Sunday the virus was "extraordinarily widespread" in rural areas as well as cities.

With US deaths reaching a record 1,000 a day, Trump pressed the view of deaths in proportion to the number of cases instead of as a proportion of the population, in which the United States fares worse than other Western nations.

In the Axios interview, Trump again insisted that increased diagnostic testing in the United States accounted for the increase in cases, an assertion disputed by health experts who say expanded testing accounts for some, but not all, of the growth in cases.

Health experts also call it a key tool in fighting the spread of the disease, which had been detected in at least 4.6 million people across the United States as of Saturday.

Thai PM asks student protesters 'not to create chaos'

Reuters | Bangkok

Thailand's prime minister yesterday asked increasingly bold student-led protesters "not to create chaos" after some broke longstanding taboos by openly calling for reform of the constitutional monarchy.

Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, a former army chief who staged a coup six years ago and has led military-backed governments ever since, also promised that parliament would consider protesters' demands to amend the constitution.

"I beg people not to create chaos at this time. We are solving these problems together," Prayuth told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

He said he was "worried" about the young protesters who have been gathering in small groups in different parts of the country calling for the dissolution of parliament and new elections.



Harry Potter-themed pro-democracy protest in Bangkok

Prayuth said a committee has been formed in parliament to discuss possible changes to a 2017 constitution drafted under military auspices and a mechanism to gauge the views of

young people would be set up this month.

Opposition activists say that under the constitution, Prayuth was virtually assured of staying on a prime minister after a dis-

puted 2019 general election by the creation of a junta-appointed Senate.

"I support changes that are needed and I am not in conflict," he said.

He did not say what changes would be considered in parliament, where his ruling coalition holds a comfortable majority after a main opposition party was dissolved in February.

A court ban of the opposition Future Forward Party sparked campus demonstrations and student protesters took to the streets last month with some 2,500 rallying at Bangkok's Democracy Monument. Since then, protests have spread.

Prayuth has previously warned protesters not to insult the monarchy, which is illegal in Thailand, though he said King Maha Vajiralongkorn had asked that people no longer be prosecuted under that law.

On Monday night, student protesters issued a statement calling for changes in laws "that expand the power of the monarch and that could impinge on democracy where the king is the head of state".

Officials at the Royal Palace on Tuesday said they had no comment when asked about the protest demands.

The constitution says the king is to be "revered" and insulting the monarchy is a crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison under "lese majeste" laws.

After the king took the throne in 2016, the palace required revisions to the new constitution that gave him greater emergency powers. He has since taken personal control over some army units and palace assets worth tens of billions of dollars.

Asked about the protesters openly discussing the king, Prayuth said it was a matter of law enforcement.

"I won't stop it from happening. This issue is for authorities to follow the law," he said.

"Protests are a right under the law, but they have to respect the law and rules. I am not threatening, but I am worried."

'Nuclear like explosion'

Social media yesterday went awash with claims of “nuclear explosion” in Beirut soon after a deadly blast rocked its main port sending out a mushroom-shaped cloud. While the rumour-mill continued to churn out stories, Lebanon PM Hassan Diab on his twitter handle wrote, “We will reveal facts regarding this dangerous warehouse that has been there since 2014.” Below is a look at the way social media reacted to yesterday’s blast



The aftermath of the explosion in Beirut. Picture shared by @iam_Mian. Inset, picture of the port before the blast. (Courtesy to @iitishamm)

TDI | agencies, social media

The massive explosion in Lebanon which shot huge plumes of darkish-orange cloud and debris into the air producing a distinctive mushroom-shaped cloud made yesterday several to believe that it was indeed a “nuclear blast.”

With the world also nearing the impossible to forget memories of Aug 6, 1945, many were quick to draw similarities.

“Disaster akin to Hiroshima”

Marwan Abboud, the Governor of Beirut, reportedly called the explosion a “national disaster akin to Hiroshima”.

Within minutes, social media went awash with scary footages, pictures, and concerns shared by people who witnessed from near and far the shocking moments which flattened much of the port and caused several buildings to collapse. The cyclical nature of the internet soon took things to its hands with tweets after tweets claiming a “nuclear blast” in Beirut.

“That’s atomic”

“Good Lord. Lebanese media says it was a fireworks factory. Nope. That’s a mushroom cloud. That’s atomic,” Leslie Odom-biographer Chris Palmer tweeted out. Palmer then followed this with “The mushroom cloud forms outside of the factory. There is no question that was an atomic bomb. That is a controlled detonation. If every firework went off at the same time

it wouldn’t do that. A fireworks factory exploding wouldn’t blow out windows 10 miles away.”

He, however, deleted the tweet later without explanation.

Meanwhile, footages continued to pour in through twitter handles of the blast showing a column of smoke rising with many rushing to claim the cloud as a “mushroom” and an atomic bomb.

“Looked like a nuclear blast”

“Never seen an explosion like that unless it was a Bomb, it looked like a Nuclear Blast,” one Twitter user wrote sharing a video of the blast.

“Are that Israelis?”

Another saw the possibility of Israel dropping a nuclear bomb in Beirut. “Possibility of tactical nuclear weapon/bomb used by the Israelites. Dropped from a very high altitude,” wrote @Bhutta_Hammad.

“Looks like the aftermath of a nuclear explosion,” @TruthRaiderHQ wrote on his handle. The user also called for “Contribute blood immediately at local hospitals. All blood types needed.”

Another described the blast as “far larger than you can ever imagine.” The city seems like it has been hit by a small scale nuclear weapon,” wrote @simhkt-n-egn.

Orange grey cloud

“My town in Lebanon is literally 2 hrs away from beirut and in the sky there’s like an

orange grey cloud like this is a f***** nuclear bomb,” wrote another startled citizen.

“Reports said all the windows 15miles from the hitted area has blown out and atleast 400 people are dead after somethinglike nuclear hit the city,” wrote @ALameen_Yabo.

Don’t spread “rumours”

Meanwhile, several users rejected the ‘nuclear bomb’ claims asking not to spread “scare and rumours.”

“Dear people of #Lebanon, Port Bomb wasn’t nuclear, or Beirut would’ve been incinerated, not chemical, or people would’ve been choking, foaming at the mouth. It was unusual explosion/bomb, maybe dirty, but not mass destruction,” urged @hahussain.

“I’m heartbroken, you don’t deserve this, nobody deserves this. I wish our prayers will do something but I doubt. My thoughts and prayers with everyone in #Beirut, Lebanon. It’s looking like nuclear explosion. No idea of exactly what caused the #Lebanonexplosion,” wrote @U_3322.

“This is just clearly wrong. Mushroom clouds form in all explosions – they just stick around a lot longer for big ones. You can tell from the colour of the explosion (deep red/orange) that it is not hot enough to be nuclear (which always starts white/yellow, even small nukes),” said Alex Wellerstein, historian of science at Stevens Institute of Technology to *Forbes*.



Smoke rises after an explosion in Beirut in this picture obtained from a social media video.



A picture shared by social media user @Guldenay007 shows a scene following the blast

Mushroom is not nuclear

Forbes also quoted David Dearborn, a physicist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, as saying, “Contrary to a common misconception, the shape of the mushroom cloud does not depend on the nuclear or thermonuclear component; as you note, a massive detonation of chemical explosives would produce the same effect.”

Dearborn continued: “A mushroom cloud forms when an explosion creates a very hot bubble of gas. In the case of a nuclear detonation, the bomb emits a blast of x-rays, which ionize and heat the surrounding air; that hot bubble of gas is known as a fireball. The hot air is buoyant, so it quickly rises and expands. The rising cloud creates a powerful updraft which picks up dust, forming the stem of the mushroom cloud.”

600 to 800 injured

At the time of writing this article reports started claiming that more than 70 died and around 600-800 people were injured.

MTV Lebanon channel said the explosion appeared to have been caused by “huge quantities of ammonium nitrate” stored at the port.

So, since that is cleared, for now, we might take some time to know exactly what might have actually caused the disaster in Beirut yesterday.

However, as of now, we can rule out the possibility of “nuclear origin”.

CELEBS

celebs

Cate Blanchett: Have always identified as a feminist

ANS | Los Angeles

Hollywood star Cate Blanchett says feminism is all about equality, adding that true power lies in bringing up other people.

"I've always identified as a feminist but I was also a part of the anti-wave in the mid-eighties and during the nineties. Feminism was a dirty word. The conversation that was going around in the 1970s, and I think it continued negatively into the 1980s and 1990s," Blanchett said.

"Being a feminist meant that you were anti-family and that is just an anathema to me. I think feminism, at its base, is about equality but it also means that someone who is holding all the power has to share and that is a fearful thing for a lot of people.

True power is about self-respect, and respect for others."

The actress feels if we survive into the next century, "it will be about collaboration".

"It will involve deep listening, it will involve doubt, it will involve humility. Women who I greatly admire, who've done extraordinary things across industries, I'll ask them a question hoping that they're going to solve the problem and they take the time and have the courage to say 'I don't

Cate Blanchett



know, what do you think? So suddenly, you're in dialogue," she noted.

"Real power is bringing up other people with you, and women are by and large great at doing that. I am really excited about the generations that are coming up. It feels now like there are a lot of growing examples of women who are finding their own voice. They have a more se-

cure and broad platform to be seen by audiences," she added.

The actress continued: "Alma Har'el's work was amazing in 'Honey Boy'. And (American writer-director) Mariel Heller and (French filmmaker) Claire Denis -- all these are people whose work is so fascinating. I am working on 'Stateless' and finally got to work with the wonderful Jocelyn Morehouse and Emma Freeman who are great TV directors. Apart from Ryan Fleck, all of the directors on 'Mrs America' were women."

On the work front, Blanchett plays Phyllis Schlafly in the series "Mrs America", aired in India on Star World. It tells the story of the movement for the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s, and the backlash led by the conservative Schlafly.

Kim Kardashian, Kanye West 'trying' to save relationship

ANI | Washington

American reality TV star Kim Kardashian and rapper husband Kanye West are trying to save their relationship, which is going through an extremely rough, by planning on a family trip that may set things straight for the couple.

The sources close to the couple told TMZ that the couple decided to board a plane on Sunday (local time) and take a private family vacation to try and work things out. The outlet has been told the trip was something the couple discussed when Kim visited Kanye on an emotional trip to Wyoming last weekend.

Lately, things between Kim and Kanye have been cold and they hadn't seen each other much at all for months.

Earlier, Kanye during his South Carolina rally said that he asked Kim for a divorce last year and he raised the subject of divorce several times at the

event. The outlet has been told that it was something that has definitely been discussed.

As per TMZ, the 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star and Kanye reunited this week in Wyoming for the first time since Kanye's off-the-rails campaign rally in South Carolina, which set things in a bitter after which Kim tried to get the 'Yezy' founder treated for a serious bipolar episode.

The family trip will mark one of the first the family have taken in a long time, and outside the vacation, Kim and Kanye had not spent much time together outside family birthdays and holidays.

As per reports to TMZ, the list of grievances from the SKIMS founder to Kanye is pretty long, the outlet has been told that the list involves everything from him continuing Kanye's presidential campaign to his Twitter rants and what he said at his rally.

Kelly Clarkson says she's not 'the worst mom ever' after dyeing daughter's hair, ensures it's safe

Fox | Los Angeles

Kelly Clarkson is defending herself.

The 38-year-old singer took to Twitter on Saturday to share an update on what she's been up to with her daughter River, 6.

"I put a purple streak in my daughter's hair today and I swear to you she thinks she is as cool as Prince now," wrote Clarkson. "Full on air guitar, singing at the top of her lungs, that is what's happening."

Clarkson shares River with her estranged husband Brandon Blackstock, who she recently filed for divorce from. The two also share a 4-year-old son, Remington.

In her tweet, the "Since U Been Gone" singer then preemptively came to her own defense, predicting she'd be criticized for coloring her daughter's hair.

"And before I get attacked for

being the worst mom ever, it's safe, organic paint," she said, adding an eye-roll emoji for effect.

The comments were filled with fans offering support.

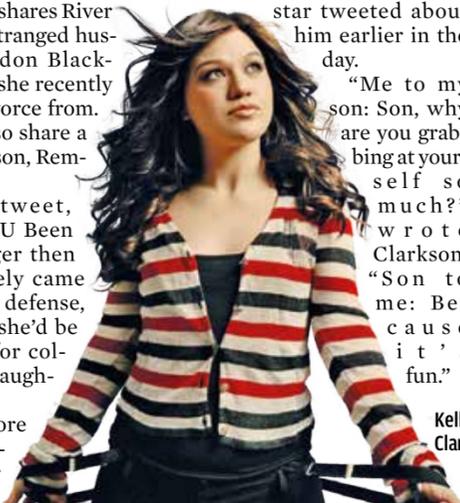
"My niece's hair was PURPLE at 4 years old," wrote one fan, sharing a photo of a purple-haired child. "Have fun with your kiddos Kelly."

Clarkson retweeted the photo, adding, "Oh my gosh this is so rad! LOVE IT!!"

Little Remington got some love on Twitter as well, as the star tweeted about him earlier in the day.

"Me to my son: Son, why are you grabbing at yourself so much?" wrote Clarkson. "Son to me: Because it's fun."

Kelly Clarkson



Nicole Kidman reunites with her mom after 8 months in coronavirus lockdown

Fox | Los Angeles

Nicole Kidman reunited with her mother after spending eight months apart due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

She shared the big moment on Instagram with a pair of photos showing the two embracing after they had appropriately quarantined themselves.

"Feels so good to be able to hug my mum! It's been 8 months. I missed her 80th birthday but I'm here now. Love you Mumma," Kidman, 53, captioned the pair of images.

According to People, Kidman recently returned to Australia to work on her new series, "Nine Perfect Strangers." She, her husband, Keith Urban, and their two daughters Sunday, 12, and Faith, 9, spent the mandatory two weeks in quarantine at their home in the country's Southern Highlands. The couple caught some backlash for being allowed to spend the quar-

antine at their home while other citizens haven't been so lucky.

The New South Wales Government website states: "Under the Public Health Order by the Minister for Health and Medical Research, all people returning from overseas must quarantine in a designated quarantine facility, such as a hotel.

"Exemptions are rare due to the high risk of not quarantining. They are only considered where there are strong medical, health or compassionate grounds," the statement continues.

Nicole Kidman



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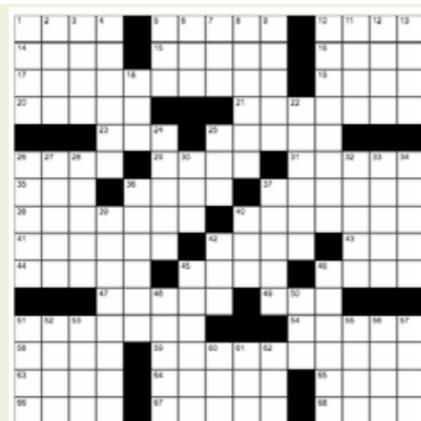
		8	4	6		1	3	
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	3		7			6		
	8					7		
	7						6	
		9					8	
		3			2		5	
8					5	9		
	6	5		9	3	2		

Yesterday's solution

7	6	9	4	8	3	2	1	5
2	4	8	5	9	1	7	3	6
1	5	3	2	7	6	9	8	4
9	1	6	8	4	7	3	5	2
4	2	5	3	6	9	8	7	1
3	8	7	1	5	2	6	4	9
6	9	1	7	3	5	4	2	8
8	7	2	6	1	4	5	9	3
5	3	4	9	2	8	1	6	7

How to play
Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

CROSSWORD



Across

1- Med school subj.; 5- Lost in Paris?; 10- Being to Brutus; 14- Indonesian holiday resort; 15- Bay window; 16- Chain piece; 17- Germinated seed; 19- Gen. Robert ; 20- "Lou Grant" star; 21- Broken; 23- Nile reptile; 25- Sumptuous meal; 26- Boxer Max; 29- Biting; 31- Lute of India; 35- Mil. officers; 36- Jutting rock; 37- Godlike; 38- Parihau; 40- Arid areas; 41- Whip up; 42- Strike forcefully; 43- Ballpark fig; 44- Prepared to pray; 45- Haul; 46- Ice cream brand; 47- Choir members; 49- Spanish aunt; 51- Bribe; 54- Inflict; 58- Jai ; 59- At right angles to the vertical; 63- Drops from the sky; 64- Prevention dose; 65- Raison d' ; 66- Run in neutral; 67- Ruhr city; 68- Bambooize;

Down

1- Benny, Björn, Anni-Frid, and Agnetha; 2- Scottish refusals; 3- Lawyer Dershowitz; 4- Musical ineptitude; 5- Explosive sound; 6- Drop the ball; 7- Grande; 8- Confounded; 9- Extreme; 10- Optional; 11- Worm fiber; 12- Dagger of yore; 13- out a living (barely got by); 18- Grads-to-be; 22- Help; 24- Analyze a sentence; 25- Cookie fruit; 26- Child's building cube; 27- Done to ; 28- Rival of Helena; 30- Feline; 32- Out of gas; 33- Fidgety; 34- Reposes; 36- Bovine animals; 37- Passed out; 39- Lotion for skin eruptions; 40- Singer Shannon; 42- Clear tables; 45- Permeable; 46- Made; 48- Lake in the Sierra Nevada; 50- Jima; 51- Dress often worn by Hindu women; 52- Decked out; 53- Frozen rain; 55- Famous last words; 56- Over-50 org.; 57- "Twittering Machine" artist; 60- Hosp. staffers; 61- Frozen water; 62- Mahayana movement of Buddhism;

Yesterday's solution

N	O	S	I	R	A	S	S	B	A	S	R	A
A	R	O	N	I	R	C	A	O	I	L	E	R
G	L	A	N	D	U	L	A	R	B	R	A	V
S	Y	R	T	E	R	I	T	E	T	E	S	
C	H	A	N	E	L	R	A	N	I			
A	E	R	A	T	E							
M	A	I	N		A	G	O		S	I	D	E
P	L	E	N	I	S	H		A	B	A	T	E
N	E	A	T	O								
C	O	R	N	U		S	T	E	N		E	W
A	S	T	O	R		S	E	P	T	E	M	B
N	E	E	D	A		T	S	E		T	S	A
E	D	S	E	L		S	S	E		A	S	Y

Champions League ready to resume, at long last

The Champions League resumes on Friday with the remaining last 16 second legs

● **Pep Guardiola's Manchester City face Real Madrid on Friday looking to clinch a place in the quarter-finals, fresh from having their two-year ban from the Champions League overturned**

● **The final will be in Lisbon on August 23**

AFP | Paris

After an enforced hiatus of almost five months, the UEFA Champions League and Europa League resume this week in order to clear up the last remaining business in a troubled season.

Both competitions were frozen in March as the coronavirus pandemic took hold across the continent, and while European football's governing body acted swiftly to move Euro 2020 back a year, for a long time it was unclear how it would manage to complete its two landmark club competitions.

In the end the solution was to set up two mini tournaments bringing all teams together in one place from the quarter-finals onwards, with all ties being decided in one-off matches behind closed doors.

And so the Champions League will move to Lisbon for the 'Final Eight' starting on August 12 and ending with the final at Benfica's Estadio da Luz on August 23.



A man looks on as the UEFA Champions League trophy is displayed at the UEFA headquarters

The Europa League, meanwhile, will be played to a conclusion at a series of venues in western Germany, with the last eight beginning on August 10 and the final in Cologne on August 21.

"I believed it from the first moment," said the UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin recently when asked if he ever doubted it would be possible to play the tournaments to a conclusion.

"You should always be optimistic, and if something like this crisis happens, you must have a plan ready.

"At the present time, we will be playing matches without spectators until further notice. We will not take any risks."

UEFA not worried

There is, though, no question

of further changes being made to the formats despite concerns about an increase in Covid-19 cases in and around Lisbon, and more recent worries in Germany about a rise in cases there.

UEFA also recently insisted it was "confident" there would be no more delays despite cases of coronavirus emerging among players at Real Madrid and Sevilla.

It is, in any case, now or never.

Indeed, the preliminary round of next season's Champions League begins next Saturday, the same day Bayern Munich entertain Chelsea and Napoli visit Barcelona in their outstanding last 16 second legs.

Before that, Manchester City defend a 2-1 first-leg lead at home against Real on Friday as Pep Guardiola's side target Champions League glory on the back of the club's success at getting a two-year ban from the competition overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

The winner of that tie will face Juventus or Lyon in the quarter-finals in Lisbon.

Wolves' longest year

It is the Europa League which is first up, though, with the last 16 being completed on Wednesday

and Thursday.

Two ties -- Inter Milan against Getafe and Sevilla against Roma -- will go ahead as one-off ties in Germany as the first legs were never played.

Six second legs will also be played with the winners heading to Germany for the last eight.

Among the ties to be completed is Manchester United's against Austrian side LASK, which will be a formality for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's team after they won 5-0 in the first leg in March. Their form since the Premier League resumed in mid-June has been excellent and they have already sealed a place in the 2020-21 Champions League, but now they want to finish this never-ending season with a trophy.

"Now our focus is on the Europa League because this is a really good trophy and we want to win," Bruno Fernandes told MUTV.

"I came to Manchester to win trophies. We need to play every game to win. If we go into the Europa League and win every game, we know we'll win the trophy."

United, Europa League winners in 2017, could yet find themselves facing Premier League rivals Wolverhampton Wanderers in the semi-finals in Cologne on August 16 should both teams get there.

Wolves entertain Greek champions Olympiakos on Thursday having drawn 1-1 in the first leg of their last-16 tie.

After going six games without a win after the coronavirus hiatus, Villa have given themselves hope with four points from their last two matches, although conceding a late equaliser at Everton on Thursday was a major blow.

Bournemouth's win against Leicester on July 12 was their first in 10 games, but a defeat at City kept them in the mire.

Watford had won their previous games before a 3-1 loss at West Ham on Friday dented their survival bid.

Marquez out of Czech MotoGP after second operation on arm



Honda's world champion Marc Marquez

AFP | Paris

Reigning MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez will miss his second straight race after he was ruled out of Sunday's Czech Grand Prix following another operation on his fractured right arm, his team said yesterday.

"After undergoing a second operation on his injured right arm, Marc Marquez and HRC have decided that the world champion will not ride in the Czech Republic in order for him to recover more," Repsol Honda said in a statement.

The Spaniard underwent further surgery Monday in Barcelona on the arm he broke in the season opener in Spain on July 19. He missed the following race in Jerez despite initially being declared fit to take part, just 48 hours after having a titanium plate inserted.

Marquez will be replaced this weekend by German test rider Stefan Bradl, who has made 95 career starts in the premier class.

"The first operation was successful, what was not expected was that the plate was insufficient," doctor Xavier Mir said

Monday. "An accumulation of stress in the operated area has caused the plate to suffer some damage, so the titanium plate has been removed and replaced by a new fixation.

"The rider has not felt pain during this period. He has always followed the medical advice given and the feeling from his body. Unfortunately, an over-stress has caused this issue. Now we have to wait 48 hours to understand the recovery time," the doctor added.

Six-time world champion Marquez made a remarkable return in practice ahead of last month's Andalucia MotoGP, four days after surgery, but later dropped out of qualifying having struggled to keep pace.

The 27-year-old Marquez has yet to register a point this season and already trails championship leader Fabio Quartararo by 50 points after the young French rider secured back-to-back victories at the Jerez circuit.

Next on the calendar, which has only 13 confirmed races, is the Czech race at Brno before a double-header at the Red Bull Ring in Spielberg, Austria, on August 16 and 23.

Chelsea's Pedro undergoes surgery for shoulder injury

Reuters | London

Chelsea's Spanish winger Pedro has had surgery after sustaining a shoulder injury in Saturday's FA Cup final defeat by Arsenal, the 33-year-old said.

Pedro had replaced forward Christian Pulisic in the game which Chelsea lost 2-1, after the American, who scored in

the first half, pulled up with a hamstring problem.

"The surgery went well, I will be back soon. It was a pity not to win the FA Cup. Thank you all for your support," Pedro said on Instagram.

Pedro, whose Chelsea deal expires at the end of the month, has reportedly agreed a move to Italian Serie A side AS Roma on a free transfer.



Manchester United, Europa League winners in 2017, could yet find themselves facing Premier League rivals Wolverhampton Wanderers in the semi-finals in Cologne on August 16 should both teams get there

Madrid Masters tennis cancelled due to COVID

AFP | Madrid

The Madrid Open tennis tournament has been cancelled due to fresh outbreaks of coronavirus in the region, organisers confirmed yesterday, raising doubts around the upcoming US and French Opens.

Originally scheduled for May, the postponed Madrid tournament was scheduled to take place on the clay courts at Caja Magica between September 12 and 20.

"We share in the disappointment that the Mutua Madrid Open will not be able to take place this year," said Andrea Gaudenzi, the ATP Chairman.

The tournament was expected to boast a stellar field, including world number two



and five-time champion Rafael Nadal, and would have been a key warm-up event two weeks before the start of the French Open.

The Italian Open is due to go ahead in Rome in the week leading up to the grand slam at Roland Garros but it remains to be seen how other competitions react.

Before then, hard-court events are planned later this month in Lexington and New York ahead of the US Open at Flushing Meadows, which is due to start on August 31.

Federer pays surprise visit to rooftop tennis girls

AFP | Milan

Two Italian girls whose rooftop tennis video went viral have received a surprise visit from Roger Federer.

The video of Vittoria Oliveri and Carola Pessina playing on the rooftops of neighbouring buildings in Finale Ligure during the COVID-19 lockdown garnered over 10 million views.

The girls thought they were preparing for another media interview when they were asked about their favourite players.

"Roger Federer. If I were to meet him, I would jump on him, or I would be starstruck," Vittoria, 13, said.

"I would like to have Federer's elegance while playing and (Rafa) Nadal's power," 11-year-old Carola added.

The girls were then left wide-eyed and speechless when



Roger Federer with Vittoria Oliveri and Carola Pessini

Federer came out from behind a curtain. The 20-times Grand Slam champion later played some rooftop tennis with the girls before inviting them for lunch.

"I nearly fainted when he showed up," Vittoria was quoted as saying by The Times. "He figured out the distances pretty

fast and started playing shots between his legs from one roof to another, which was amazing.

"I didn't think he was real. I thought it was a mannequin." Federer also told the girls he had arranged for them to go to a summer camp at the Rafa Nadal Academy.

"Personally, for me, that was

"I have played in many cool places around the world, but this one is definitely up there for me as a special experience. We showed that we can play anywhere and have fun with it"

ROGER FEDERER

a very special moment in my career as a tennis player to surprise a fan, or children, like I was able to with Carola and Vittoria today," Federer said.

"I have played in many cool places around the world, but this one is definitely up there for me as a special experience. We showed that we can play anywhere and have fun with it."

Spain legend Casillas retires

● **Spanish World Cup winner Casillas called time on career after being sidelined for more than a year with a heart problem**

Reuters | Madrid

Spain's World Cup-winning captain and goalkeeper Iker Casillas announced his retirement from the professional game yesterday, ending a career that spanned over two decades in which he captured the game's biggest prizes.

The former Real Madrid skipper had called time on his five-year spell with Portuguese side Porto last month after his contract with the club expired.

Casillas, 39, has not played any competitive football since he suffered a heart attack during a training session last year.



Spain's Iker Casillas (C) raises the World Cup trophy after the final match in 2010

"The important thing is the path you travel and the people who accompany you, not where it takes you, because that comes with work and effort alone," Casillas said on Twitter. "I think I can say, without

hesitation, that the path I have taken is the one I dreamt about." Casillas was given a role on Porto's technical staff at the start of last season and was included in the first-team squad, although he was never named in a matchday squad.

He captained Spain's 'golden generation' that won a maiden World Cup title in 2010 as well as two consecutive European Championships in 2008 and 2012.

The shotstopper, who came

through Real Madrid's youth system, made his senior club debut in 1999 at the age of 18 and went on to make 725 appearances over 16 seasons, winning five La Liga titles and the Champions League three times.

However, he made a tearful exit without any fanfare in 2015 when he announced his departure from his boyhood club at a news conference, a move for which Real were heavily criticised and led to fans chanting for club president Florentino Perez to resign.

"The best goalkeeper in the history of Real Madrid and Spanish football joined us at the age of 9," Real Madrid said in a statement yesterday.

"He was formed here and defended our shirt for 25 years, becoming one of our most emblematic captains of all time. Iker Casillas earned the love of madridismo and is a symbol of the values that Real Madrid represents."

Casillas holds the record for most appearances in the Champions League, featuring 177 times -- 150 of which came with Real Madrid -- as well as the most clean sheets in the history of the competition (57).

Dar Kulaib advance to Crown Prince Cup volleyball final



Action from the match

● **Finalists upset heavily favoured Muharraq with a come-from-behind victory over five sets**

TDT | Manama

Dar Kulaib punched their tickets to the final of the Bahrain Volleyball Association's (BVA) Crown Prince Cup last night, following a come-from-behind 3-2 (18-25, 25-19, 22-25, 25-22, 15-12) victory over heavily favoured Muharraq.

The first of two final four clashes was played at the BVA arena at Isa Sports City in Riffa.

Dar Kulaib fell a set behind twice in the contest but were able to battle back each time. In the deciding fifth set, Ali Ebrahim made two key plays—first to break a late 12-all deadlock before applying the final dagger to seal the win.

With their victory, Dar Kulaib denied Muharraq a chance to claim a fantastic league-

and-cup double, with Muharraq having already secured the Bahrain First Division Volleyball League title earlier this year.

Dar Kulaib now move on to the Crown Prince Cup final where they will face the winner of the other semis battle between Al Ahli and Al Najma, which will be held tomorrow at 6pm at the same venue. The title game has yet to be scheduled by the BVA.

There were no fans present in last night's match and all guidelines set by authorities to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) diseases were followed.

It was also the first game played between top flight teams in Bahrain volleyball, and second official volleyball match that has taken place since sports leagues were given the green light to resume activities following a lengthy months-long ban due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Previously, the final of the Bahrain Second Division Volleyball League was played, and Busaiten were crowned champions while gaining promotion to the top flight.

Bahrain's Abdullah Yusuf joins Czech outfit Slovan Liberec on loan

TDT | Manama

Czech champions Slavia Prague have reached an agreement with first league rivals FC Slovan Liberec to loan Bahrain national team star Abdullah Yusuf for the 2020/2021 season.

The striker has contributed greatly to the title run of Slavia



Abdullah Yusuf

Prague. He also became the first player from the Gulf to participate in the UEFA Champions League.

Yusuf will now compete with Slovan Liberec in their quest to claim a place in next season's Europa League.

Slovan Liberec finished their domestic league campaign in

fifth place this past season.

The loan marks Yusuf's third European club, all of which were in the Czech First League. He started with Bohemians Praha 1905 for the 2018/2019 campaign, before signing with Slavia Prague for three seasons starting 2019/2020.

BRAVE CF president Shahid confirms Mokaev's next fight

TDT | Manama

Muhammad Mokaev made a huge impact on his professional debut last weekend, during BRAVE CF 37, in Sweden. The 23-0 amateur, who's been labeled as the "new Khabib Nurmagomedov", won via dominant and unanimous decision over a bitter rival in Ireland's Glenn McVeh.

Hungry and ready for more, Mokaev made sure to ask for a quick turnaround and publicly stated he wanted to fight as soon as possible, preferably in one of the upcoming BRAVE CF cards in Europe within the next weeks.

BRAVE CF President Mohammed Shahid listened carefully, and impressed by Mokaev's potential, granted the Russian-British phenomenon his wish, confirming that "The Punisher" will be seen inside the BRAVE CF arena soon, more specifically in Poland.

BRAVE CF will land in Poland on September 5th, for its first-ever fight night in the Eastern European Country. Poland will then become the 21st nation to host a BRAVE CF fight card in history.

Despite confirming that



Muhammad Mokaev

Mokaev will have his second pro fight within less than six weeks, Mohammed Shahid didn't announce who is going to be his opponent. The name of the other part of this Bantamweight bout is expected to be revealed in the upcoming days.

Before going to Poland, though, BRAVE Combat Federation has two more cards in Sweden scheduled. After BRAVE CF 37 last weekend, the promotion will host both BRAVE CF 38 and BRAVE CF 39 in the Scandinavian country.

Both events, as the previous one, will be co-promoter with local organizers Bulldog Fight Night (BFN) and take place, respectively, on August 8 and 15, in Stockholm.

Champ Al-Selawe's shadow looms for winner of BRAVE CF 38's main event

TDT | Manama

Welterweight champion Jarrah Al-Selawe has his eyes set on BRAVE CF 38's main event. The show will take place in Sweden, this Saturday (8), and is set to be headlined by two of Al-Selawe's recent rivals in Carl Booth and Abdoul Abdouraguimov, the latter a former champion himself. Both men have shared the cage twice with the reigning titleholder, and they're 1-1 with Al-Selawe.

While BRAVE CF hasn't officially confirmed that the winner of Abdouraguimov vs Booth will get the next title shot, the logical step is for one of them to settle their score with "The Jordanian Lion", who has been waiting for his next title defence since regaining his belt against Abdoul last year at BRAVE CF 27.

And Al-Selawe has already



Jarrah Al-Selawe looks on prior to a bout

started the trash talk with both men ahead of their first encounter, claiming he favoured the grappler Abdouraguimov

over the striker Booth. Jarrah commented on a social media post saying that "The Bomber" would not come out victorious.

The Englishman, who's based in Nottingham and is riding a two-fight win streak, responded harshly saying that Al-Selawe was hoping for his loss so they wouldn't be matched up again. Booth is the only man to knock out Jarrah when they met ear-

ly on in their pro career back in 2014. It was Carl's first pro fight and Jarrah's second. Since then, both men have gone on to become two of the best Welterweights in the world, and Booth feels that he has learned a lot since his decision loss to Al-Selawe in their second encounter, back at BRAVE CF 9.

Since then, Booth has amassed two straight victories, including a domination of Hayder Hassan in the main event of BRAVE CF 32, when he disfigured his opponent's face, showcasing improved defensive wrestling and even more of a striking prowess.

He will now face one of the most accomplished grapplers in the division. Abdouraguimov is coming off two straight fights against Jarrah, winning a close decision to capture the BRAVE CF title and then losing in their immediate rematch by way of TKO.

Whoever comes out on top this Saturday might have the chance to settle his differences with the reigning champion, and bring a nice, shiny belt back home in the process.



Jarrah Al-Selawe has been waiting for his next title defense since regaining his belt against Abdoul last year at BRAVE CF 27