

Champions crowned for national racing season

The champions of the 2019/2020 national racing season have been crowned in both circuit racing and karting. | P 08

WORLD 6 S. Korea's Moon under fire over sex offender's family funeral

THE DAILY **tribune**



Mom reveals Eilish's intense Justin Bieber adoration 7 CELEBS

BUSINESS 4 Musk says Tesla close to developing fully autonomous car

BE Determined

Public Awareness Campaign to Combat Coronavirus (COVID-19)

SIO, Government team discuss urgent reform package

TDI | Manama

A high-level meeting yesterday discussed an urgent reform package for extending the validity of pension and insurance funds until 2086.

The discussions focused on a package recently approved by the Social Insurance Organisation and being reviewed by the Government. Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, the Minister of Finance and National Economy, Jameel bin Mohammad Ali Humaidan, the Minister of Labour and Social Development, Ghanem bin Fadhel Al-Buainain, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Mahmood Hashem Al-Kooheji, the Chairman of SIO and Eman Mustafa Al-Murbati, the CEO of the SIO were present.

The meeting said the reforms cannot be delayed any further for it has to meet the financial needs of 95,000 Bahraini retirees.

The assets of the public-sector pension fund will be depleted in 2024 and that of the private-sector pension fund in 2033.

HM King, French President call for joint action

TDI | Manama

Joint action is crucial for preserving regional stability and enhancing development, said His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and French President Emmanuel Macron in a joint statement yesterday.

The leaders stressed that reaching political solutions to the crises in the region is crucial to fulfilling peoples' aspiration for progress, stability and peace.

HM, the King was holding a telephonic conversation with the French President during which they reviewed ways to



HM the King



French President

bolster strong relations and strategic partnership.

The leaders also reviewed re-

gional and international developments, mainly the Palestinian cause and the crises, particular-

ly in Syria and Libya.

In this context, HM the King praised the role of France in maintaining international peace and combating terrorism.

The two sides also touched upon the developments in the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures to deal with it.

HM, the King congratulated the French President on his firm leadership in controlling the pandemic.

Macron hailed Bahrain's role in promoting peaceful coexistence through dialogue and promoting security and peace in the region.

Coronavirus can be airborne during medical procedures

Reuters

The World Health Organization said airborne transmission of the novel coronavirus can occur during procedures that generate aerosols. The agency said some reports related to indoor crowded spaces have suggested the possibility of aerosol transmission, combined with droplet transmission, such as during choir practice, in restaurants or in fitness classes.

Saluting healthcare heroes

HRH PM exempts healthcare workers from licence renewal fines

TDI | Manama

Healthcare heroes of Bahrain should not be troubled with fines or dues for any licence renewal delays amid the deadly pandemic, ordered HRH the Prime Minister.

Do not collect fines or dues from frontline health workers if they were not able to renew their permits on time, the order states.

The directive, Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa said, appreciates the efforts exerted by the medical personnel to combat COVID-19 and guaranteeing the safety and health of the Kingdom's citizens and residents.

The new order is effective for licence renewal delays since February 2020.

The rule exempts health workers who have not renewed their licences from paying any fines or financial dues for not being on time.



HRH the Premier

In a statement, Bahrain Medical Society (BMS) president Dr Ghada Al-Qassim said the move confirms PM's "constant care and support for doctors" and has also filled the "hearts of the medical staff with joy."

She said the order "would stimulate frontline doctors to step up their efforts to combat the pandemic."

The latest announcement follows various initiatives rolled out recently including stimulus packages announced to cushion the financial pain inflicted by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Dr Al-Qassim thanked President of the Supreme Council for Health, Lieutenant-General Dr

Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulla Al Khalifa and Chief Executive of National Health Regulatory Authority (NHR), Dr Mariam Al Jalahma for their constant support for doctors.

Reports say there were more than 14,000 health workers in the Kingdom, between the period from 2013 to '17, with the majority of them being in the public sector.

Now, following government directives, the MoH is working to increase the percentage of Bahrainis employed in the sector to 80 per cent by 2021.

Bahrain also issued Law 1/2019 in March 2019 amending Article 14 of the Private Health Establishments Law, giving priority to recruiting qualified Bahraini physicians, technicians, and nursing staff in private health establishments.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the ratio of doctors available to treat Bahrain's population was 0.92 per 1000 people in 2016.

Fighting the pandemic



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister yesterday Chaired the 332nd meeting of the Government Executive Committee held remotely. The meeting reviewed the latest developments on measures to combat the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Tamkeen doubles support for businesses hurt by COVID-19

TDI | Manama

Tamkeen yesterday doubled its financial grants to businesses in the most adversely affected sectors amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

The move follows the directives of HRH Prince Salman bin

Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister as part of expanding the outreach of its Business Continuity Support Programme to maximise beneficiaries.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Tamkeen



Shaikh Mohammed bin Essa Al Khalifa Labour Fund, Shaikh Moham-

med bin Essa Al Khalifa, said the programme will partially cover the operating expenses of small and micro enterprises to ensure their business continuity and better manage their recovery amid the deadly pandemic.

For the purpose, Tamkeen said it is developing an opera-

tional plan, details of which will be announced soon.

The programme, which supported 15,600 cos and 900 Bahrainis to date also backs taxicab drivers, public transport and bus drivers, driving instructors and kindergarten and nursery workers.

BAHRAIN COVID-19

TOTAL CASES 31,528

ACTIVE CASES 82

DEATHS 103

DISCHARGED 26,520

NEW CASES 597

CRITICAL 54

210 fils (includes VAT)



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Man in the dock for car arson attack



The car destroyed in the attack

TDT | Manama

Police arrested a 27-year-old man on a charge that he set his friend's car on fire after promising to buy the vehicle from him under a deferred payment condition.

Police arrested the suspect following an investigation into a parked car catching fire in the A'ali area.

The officials were acting on information received that a car parked in A'ali area is on fire and that it has spread to a nearby parked car.

Security officers who

reached the scene extinguished the fire immediately and determined that the fire was an arson attack.

The ensuing investigation resulted in the police suspecting the 27-year-old man's involvement in the incident.

Investigators found that the man set the car on fire over a financial dispute he had with the car's owner.

The Director-General of Criminal Investigation and Forensic Science said all legal measures have been taken to refer the case to Public Prosecution.



Minister of Finance and National Economy Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa with outgoing US Ambassador to Bahrain Justin Siberell. The minister emphasised the need to further boost bilateral relations and praised the efforts of the US ambassador during his tenure to enhance bilateral ties. Shaikh Salman wished him every success in his future duties. The US ambassador wished Bahrain and its people further growth and prosperity.

Bahrain records five more COVID-19 fatalities

TDT | Manama

Bahrain yesterday reported five more COVID-19 deaths, after a two-day pause.

Three Bahraini men aged 43, 62 and 80 and two expatriate men aged 54 and 56 are the latest casualties.

The deaths were reported separately by the Ministry of Health on its twitter handle yesterday.

The ministry expressed condolences to the families of the

victims.

With this, the number of deaths in Bahrain has increased to 103, as it also cured 26,073 people of the infection.

There are currently 4,756 active cases in the Kingdom, of which 4,704 are stable. Eighty-two of the active cases are currently under treatment at various treatment facilities in the Kingdom.

Yesterday, the Health ministry conducted 9,466 COVID-19 tests to detect 597 new cases.

Expatriate workers account for 313 of the total cases while 281 cases were contacts of actives cases.

Three of the new cases were travel related.

The ministry also announced 447 new recoveries yesterday increasing the total recoveries to 26,520.

Bahrain which confirmed its first COVID-19 cases on 21 February 2020 has performed 640,219 tests until yesterday to detect 31,528 cases in total.

Illegal massage service: Capital police arrest four

TDT | Manama

Four people were arrested for selling intoxicating substance and providing massage services illegally in the Capital Governorate.

The Director-General of the General Department of Investigation and Criminal Evidence said the suspects, Asians by nationality, were running a massage centre flouting all Health ministry norms at an apartment in the Governorate.

Investigators found that the services were provided in blatant violation of all coronavirus precautionary measures the ministry has taken to prevent the deadly spread.

The arrests were made based on a tip-off about illegal activities in the governorate.

Upon receiving the information, police formed a team to investigate the claims and identify the suspects.

The raid resulted in seizing equipment used as well as cash collected from customers.

Legal measures are taken to refer the case to Public Prosecution.

Sizzling 'NEOWISE' is giving us another celestial treat

TDT, agencies | Manama

Putting on a spectacular display on our night skies these days are a comet visiting from the most distant part of our solar system.

Named C/2020 F3 NEOWISE, the comet's cruise is visible in the morning sky today, and then just after sunset until mid-August.

What makes the comet's transit a fireworks display to us is its passage just inside Mercury's orbit on July 3.

The nearness, according to NASA, turned the outermost icy layers of the comet into gas and dust, creating a large tail of debris.

Now, observers all over the world are racing to see the comet's fireworks before it speeds away into the depths of space.

Mohammad Shawkat Odeh, Director of the Abu Dhabi based-International Astronomical Center, told *AlAyam*, "As the comet approaches the eastern horizon, its height from horizon becomes less at dawn also making it extremely difficult to see as the sunlight dims out the light of the comet."

NEOWISE, according to *Earth-Sky*, will be low on the horizon in the northwest sky from July 12 through July 15.

"However, the comet will be visible in the northwest after



A map showing the location of the comet in the eastern sky 50 minutes before sunrise from July 09 to July 14. (Courtesy of Al Ayam)



NASA's Near-Earth Object Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (NEOWISE) mission discovered the icy visitor on March 27, 2020, using its two infrared channels, which are sensitive to the heat signatures given off by the object as the Sun started to turn up the heat.

The comet made its once-in-lifetimes close approach to the Sun on July 3, 2020, and will cross outside Earth's orbit on its way back to the outer parts of the solar system by mid-August

sunset." Which means, if you want to see the magic, look in the West-North-West direction at an altitude of 58° above the horizon.

"Given its current magnitude, C/2020 F3 (NEOWISE) is visi-

ble to the naked eye under dark skies, might require a small binocular from light-polluted areas," Odeh said.

"Visibility from Manama depends

on the condition prevalent at the time," as Odeh points out that the brightness of the comet may increase suddenly or diminish drastically.

"It revolves around and completes a cycle around the sun

Now, observers all over the world are racing to see the comet's fireworks before it speeds away into the depths of space.



once in every 6,800 years," Shawkat Odeh said adding that the comet was closest to the Sun on July 3 and at that time it was at a distance of 43 million kilometres away from the Sun.

The comet, Odeh said, will reach the closest point to the Earth on July 23, at a harmless distance of 64 million miles or 103 million kilometres from the Earth. "This allows astronomers to learn more about its composition and structure."

NEOWISE was visible to people here yesterday morning from about an hour and a

half before the sunrise, which means the window was narrow to watch it.

"Key to finding it was looking for Venus, a bright object over the eastern horizon and then moving 30 degrees left until you reach a bright orange star called Al-Ayooq and looking down towards the horizon until you notice a glowing, fuzzy dot moving across the sky," Odeh said.

He points out that it will be easier to see the comet from the deserts than from the cities. However, it will possible to see even from cities, if we know the exact location and the sky is clear. "A binocular will make the task much easier," he added.

According to Joseph Masiero, NEOWISE deputy principal investigator at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California, the comet's length is about 5 kilometres [3 miles] across.

"By combining the infrared data with visible-light images, we can tell that the comet's nucleus is covered with sooty, dark particles leftover from its formation near the birth of our solar system 4.6 billion years ago," he added.

As it speeds away from the Sun, Comet NEOWISE will begin to make its appearance in the evening sky.



Fireworks for National Day, pantry items for BAC

Hot contest going on at Tender board to grab government contracts

● EWA invites bids for providing internal audit services and Citrix software maintenance

● Bahrain Airport Company looking for pantry item and printed stationery suppliers

● Bapco's contract is for IBM Enterprise server platform renewal

TDT | Manama

Bahrain tender board yesterday opened more than 35 bids tabled by private sector players for various government contracts in the Kingdom, tender board's website said.

Gulf Air, Electricity and Water Authority, Bahrain International Circuit, Bahrain Airport Company, Tatweer Petroleum, Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco), Bahrain Polytechnic, Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company and the University of Bahrain are the purchasing authorities according to the board's data.

Most numbers of bids were for winning Gulf Air's contract to supply various type of Biodegradable plastic bags. Eight companies are competing for the contract. Tatweer's contract for network upgrade has six bidders, while five companies are competing to win EWA and BIC contracts.

Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco)'s tender for IBM Enterprise Server Platform Re-



Most numbers of bids were for winning Gulf Air's contract to supply various type of Biodegradable plastic bags.

newal bid shows a value of BD 423,133.200. Bahrain Business machines is pursuing the tender which states, "lowest price bidder is not necessarily awarded the tender."

Award of the tenders, Tender Board website says, are subject to technical and financial evaluation. "The price shall be the principal criterion in case of fulfillment of technical and other criteria."

Pantry items for BAC

Bahrain Airport Company's tender to Supply Pantry Items with a total value of BD 2,625.290 received a bid from Madaris Trading Co. Meanwhile, the company's tender to supply 'Printed Stationery' received two bids - from Awal Printing

Press (BHD 6,886.000) and Union Press Company. Union Press co's bid now stands suspended.

Fireworks Displays for National Day 2020

Bahrain International Circuit's tender for 'Fireworks Displays for National Day 2020' and 'Formula One Race 2021' received a total of five bids ranging from BD 420,713.000 to BD 29,925.000.

Pico International, Faalyat, Nash Media, Motivate Events and Media, and Groupe F are the bidders. NASH Media is the highest bidder.

Internal audit- EWA

The Electricity and Water Authority placed two tenders, the first is to conclude a main-



Representative picture (Courtesy of Tender board)

tenance contract for CITRIX programme and the second for providing internal audit.

Tender for Citrix software Maintenance contract received two bidders - Bahrain Business machines and Almoayyed Computers Middle East SPC. Bids range between BD 43,718.850

and BD 30,843.750. Almoayyed Computers is the highest bidder.

EWA's tender for conducting internal audit has five bids. The bidders include PricewaterhouseCoopers ME Limited (BD 215,250.000), BDO (BD 88,200.000), Grant Thornton - Abdulla Gulf Au-



Established in 2002 by Legislative Decree No: 36, the Tender Board is an independent, regulator of government procurement practices in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

dit (BD 129,150.000), Protiviti Member Firm (Bahrain) SPC (BD 93,240.000) and Ernst & Young Middle East ((Opt. 1 - BD 145,683.000, Opt 2 - BD 192,666.000).

Biodegradable plastic bags

Some eight companies are competing to get a contract to supply various type of Biodegradable plastic bags to Gulf Air.

Kairun Co, Kaelis On Board Services, Manama Packaging Industry, Genprise Co, Maskati Bros & Co., Bagasse International, Maskati Commercial Services and Al Salem Trading ENT are the bidders for which the value is not disclosed.

Some five bidders are also competing to win a contract to supply Books for University of Bahrain & Bahrain Teachers College. Awal stationery, friend book library, Growmore Learning Solutions, Middle East Consultancy Centre and STM Middle East are the bidders. The bid value is not disclosed.

Defying the odds of disability

Muhammad Uthman inspiring journey of grit and perseverance

TDT | Manama

Conquering the world is not an easy task, for the gruelling challenges it unleashes in each moment. To overcome it, one must fight hard. Not to say what would it be for a differently-abled person.

But, hats-off to Muhammad Uthman who has defied all the odds to become one of the top scorers from Isa Town Secondary School for Boys.

Uthman feels overwhelmed with joy and pride in the result he achieved.

Overcoming all the health condition, the differently-abled student went on to score 92.1 per cent in this year's school examination.

"Thanks to the tremendous support of the school for this



Overcoming all the health condition, the differently-abled student went on to score 92.1 per cent in this year's school examination

happen," said Uthman.

The school, Uthman said, was ready to integrate deaf students with the ministry of education providing all necessary facilities, including teachers specialised in sign language.

The support was continuous and extensive throughout the academic period, Muhammad Uthman told Al Ayam.

The atmosphere was so welcoming that communication was not difficult, Uthman added.

"School provided me with a special supervisor and a sign language translator to help communicate with others."

When asked about future plans, Uthman expressed op-

timism. Uthman said the plan is to pursue university studies in graphics, 3D designs or electronics to help contribute to the development of the country. Before closing, it would be apt to recall a famous quote by Stephen Hawking, who was one of the world's most famous scientists and most famous disabled

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MUHAMMAD UTHMAN

timism.

Uthman said the plan is to pursue university studies in graphics, 3D designs or electronics to help contribute to the development of the country.

Before closing, it would be apt to recall a famous quote by Stephen Hawking, who was one of the world's most famous scientists and most famous disabled

people, a true inspiration to the disabled and the abled.

"My advice to other disabled people would be, concentrate on things your disability doesn't prevent you from doing well and don't regret the things it interferes with. Don't be disabled in spirit as well as physically."

This made him a role-model and inspiration to many.

'Abusive' mother: Court lets 17-year-old daughter go with grandparents

TDT | Manama

A Bahrain court has accepted a 17-year-old girl's plea to live with her grandparents, rejecting the custody request of her mother, whom the court found as 'abusive'.

The dramatic incidents occurred in the Minor Sharia Court recently in a case involving the girl, her mother, grandfather and her aunt.

The girl's Bahraini mother moved a case against the others demanding her daughter's custody.

However, the court, based on evidence showing that the mother abused her daughter both verbally and physically rejected the case.

According to the defence attorney, Ebtissam Al Sabbagh, the 17-year-old girl was the eldest of the Bahraini woman's three children - two girls and one boy.

Incidents leading to the case occurred when the girl who was travelling abroad took refuge at her grandfather's house after landing back, refusing to return to her mother's house.

Learning about the abuse the girl suffered, the grandfather and her aunt filed a complaint with the police and also took the girl to the Child



Defence attorney, Ebtissam Al Sabbagh

Protection Centre for psychological therapy.

The attorney told the court that the grandparents enrolled the girl in a school and helped her improve her academic performance also resulting in the girl's psychological-health improving noticeably.

Al Sabbagh argued that the mother resorted to abusing the girl, who was very much attached to her late father, claiming that the man "didn't leave enough money behind for them to survive."

In reaching the verdict, the court accepted the girl's testimony, her demand to live with her grandparents, statements of the aunt, who is an unmarried doctor, to bear all financial responsibilities of the girl.

Another 1.3 mn workers file for US jobless benefits

● The figure for the week ended July 4 was 99,000 lower than the prior week

AFP | Washington

Another 1.3 million US workers filed for unemployment benefits last week, as the slowdown in the pace of layoffs amid the coronavirus crisis continued, the government reported yesterday.

The figure for the week ended July 4 was 99,000 lower than the prior week, showing a steady decline as the world's largest economy gradually reopens and workers are recalled to their jobs.

But the level remains far higher than any pre-pandemic week. In the same week of 2019, only 211,000 people filed initial claims for jobless benefits.

The decline in the latest week slowed the four-week moving average to 1.44 million, the Labor Department reported, while 18 million remained on the jobless rolls through the week ended June 27.

President Donald Trump, who is counting on a strong economy to help in his tough reelection



Hundreds of unemployed Kentucky residents wait in line outside the Kentucky Career Center in mid-June 2020 for help with their unemployment claims in Frankfort

bid in November, has cheered the recent signs of recovery in the US labor market.

But economists and the Congressional Budget Office warn that it will take years for employment to return to pre-pandemic levels.

And the US could suffer a second wave of layoffs as more states see spiking case counts,

and once expanded jobless benefits expire.

"Filings remain high and are declining at a stubbornly slow pace," said Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics.

"We could see upward pressure in coming weeks in response to a surge in virus cases and related closures of businesses."

The unemployment rate in June dropped to 11.1 per cent as 4.8 million jobs were added, with huge gains in the leisure and hospitality sector, which suffered the biggest blows from COVID-19 restrictions on travel and restaurants.

But Trump says the "crisis is being handled" and the economy is "roaring back."

Japan to limit financing of overseas coal power plants

Tokyo

Japan said yesterday it would tighten rules for investment in foreign coal-fired power stations on environmental grounds, but stopped short of ending government funding for projects.

The move comes with the world's third-largest economy under fire for financing projects to build coal plants at home and abroad -- notably in Southeast Asia.

Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Hiroshi Kajiyama told reporters the government "has decided to tighten" the rules for supporting investment.

Countries seeking investment would be required to change



Protesters wearing masks of world leaders including Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe demonstrated against climate change and coal during the G20 summit in Osaka

their "behaviour" towards decarbonisation, Kajiyama said, but added that the new policy was not about cutting back

funding. "There are developing nations in the world that can only choose coal as an energy

source," he said.

Further details were not immediately available.

The government currently provides funding to Japanese companies if their projects meet certain criteria -- such as when a foreign country has no options but to choose coal due to economic reasons.

The Global Energy Monitor watchdog said last year that Japan accounted for over US\$4.8 billion in financing for coal power plants abroad -- particularly in Indonesia, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Kimiko Hirata, international director of the environmental NGO Kiko Network, said the new investment decision was a "major decision."

AirAsia to emerge stronger from pandemic: Fernandes



AirAsia boss Tony Fernandes said the top budget carrier would emerge 'stronger' from the coronavirus pandemic despite a warning about its future

AFP | Kuala Lumpur

AirAsia boss Tony Fernandes insisted yesterday the top budget carrier would emerge "stronger" from the coronavirus pandemic despite a warning about its future, and said the airline was hopeful of raising a sizeable cash injection.

In an interview, the colourful chief executive said he never imagined the industry could face such a crisis, which has triggered massive layoffs worldwide and led to some carriers collapsing.

"I never believed the aviation industry could be hit this hard. But... we are still flying," he said from his office in downtown Kuala Lumpur.

"This will not go on forever. We will come out stronger."

AirAsia pioneered low-cost travel across Asia in the early 2000s, feeding insatiable demand for cheap flights from a rapidly-emerging middle class, and became one of the region's top budget carriers.

But the Malaysian carrier reported dismal first-quarter results this week after grounding almost its entire fleet due to the virus, prompting auditor Ernst & Young to warn of "significant doubts" about its future.

It also noted the airline's liabilities currently exceeded its assets by 1.84 billion ringgit (\$430 million).

Fernandes said the airline could not "run away" from the assessment but added: "We

had four months of no revenue, that does not mean liabilities will exceed assets for the rest of our lives."

AirAsia was taking steps to minimise costs, including cutting about 7.5 percent of 23,000 staff across its businesses, he said, but added he hoped there would not be any further job losses.

'Flying won't disappear'

Fernandes said the airline was in talks with international and local lenders to raise funds to weather the crisis, adding he was hoping to raise "more than one billion" ringgit (\$230 million) -- and possibly up to double that within six months.

Business has rebounded strongly since flights resumed in late April, and Fernandes said he was confident conditions would improve, particularly in AirAsia's key markets.

"We are flying domestically, we know that international flights are not far away," he said.

"AirAsia is in a good market because COVID has been pretty well controlled in (Southeast Asia) and North Asia."

He said the impact on budget carriers would not be as severe because people were more likely to fly short-haul.

Long-haul travel would "take a while" to recover, he added.

He also played down speculation AirAsia might merge with crisis-wracked Malaysia Airlines, the country's flag carrier, saying the airlines served different markets.

Musk says Tesla close to developing fully autonomous car

● Tesla already enables partial autonomy for its cars

● Analysts say the road to full autonomy faces considerable legal and regulatory hurdles

AFP | Shanghai

Tesla founder Elon Musk said yesterday that the world's recently crowned most valuable auto company could achieve a fully autonomous car by the end of 2020.

Musk, who has made premature predictions about the ad-



Elon Musk

vent of completely autonomous cars before, offered the updated timetable in a pre-recorded mes-

sage to a Shanghai tech fair.

"I'm extremely confident that 'Level 5', or essentially complete

autonomy, will happen, and I think will happen very quickly," Musk said.

"I remain confident that we will have the basic functionality... complete this year."

In years past, Musk had said Tesla may develop the technology for a completely autonomous vehicle by 2018, and then last year he said it may come by early 2020.

The California-based electric carmaker became the world's most valuable auto manufacturer earlier this month and its shares have soared this year thanks to strong output figures despite disruptions from the coronavirus epidemic.

The complexity and autonomy of self-driving car technology is classified up to "Level 5". Lower



Tesla founder Elon Musk, who has made premature predictions about the advent of completely autonomous cars before, offered the updated timetable in a pre-recorded message to a Shanghai tech fair

levels feature some combination of autonomous decision-making by the vehicle, along with as-needed human intervention.

But Level 5 denotes a car that requires no human intervention at any time, allowing the passenger to sleep or watch a movie while the car handles all navigation as well as adjustments to avoid collisions.

Tesla already enables partial autonomy for its cars, but analysts say the road to full autonomy faces considerable legal and regulatory hurdles, not to mention getting consumers to feel comfortable entrusting their cars with full control.

Tesla is racing with Waymo, Uber and traditional automakers to bring autonomous vehicles to market.

Seoul mayor found dead after ‘#MeToo allegations’

AFP | Seoul

Seoul's outspoken mayor Park Won-soon, long seen as a potential South Korean presidential candidate, was found dead, police said Friday. He was 64.

A former Seoul City employee filed a police complaint -- allegedly involving sexual harassment -- against him on Wednesday.

Park's body was found on a mountain in northern Seoul, police said, hours after hundreds of officers started searching for him.

If Park does prove to have killed himself he would be the highest-profile South Korean politician to do so since former president Roh Moo-hyun, who jumped off a cliff in 2009 after being questioned over corruption allegations involving family members.

Park's daughter reported him missing on Thursday afternoon, saying her father had been unreachable for several hours, police said.

He left a message that sounded like "last words" and his phone had been turned off, she told police.

A heavyweight figure in the ruling centre-left Democratic party, Park ran South Korea's sprawling capital -- home to almost a fifth of the national population -- for nearly a decade.

He has consistently been spoken of as a potential candidate in the race to succeed President Moon Jae-in, and did not deny ambitions on that front when asked by AFP earlier this year.

Park had a similar background



Seoul mayor Park Won-Soon (R) attends a meeting

to Moon as a student activist in the days of South Korea's military dictatorship and later a human rights lawyer.

He was kicked out of Seoul National University in 1975, barely a month after entering the prestigious school, for taking part in a rally against then president Park Chung-hee, and jailed for four months.

Jailhouse to courthouse

But he described his time in prison as a happy and productive period that allowed him to formulate his life goals.

After completing his studies, Park went into law and defended many political activists in the 1980s and 1990s.

He helped launch the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, an influential NGO pushing to reform the conglomerates that dominate South Korean business.

Park also founded the Beautiful Foundation -- a philanthropic

group that promotes volunteerism and community service -- in the hopes of giving people the ability "to feel wonderful and beautiful" by donating to its cause.

It grew into one of the largest non-profit organisations in South Korea and launched the Beautiful Stores, a chain of charity shops modelled after Britain's Oxfam shops.

Besppectacled and soft-featured, Park was considered a political novice when he first entered the Seoul mayoral race as an independent candidate in 2011 but he defeated Na Kyung-won, the most prominent female lawmaker for the then ruling conservative party.

He subsequently joined the Democratic party and made a name for himself as a three-term mayor of the South Korean capital -- his final victory coming in a 2018 landslide when he took more than 50 percent of the vote.



Park Won-soon was seen as a potential presidential hopeful for the liberals in the 2022 presidential elections

During his campaign, Park -- known for his hardworking and down-to-earth character -- pledged to create a cleaner city that ensured gender equality, and to bring about peace between North and South Korea.

On his official Twitter account, Park introduced himself as a "Social Designer", saying: "These days, I... dream of creating Seoul that puts the people first. Please join me in this dream."

But he also earned a reputation as a workaholic boss, with reports saying a handful of civil servants at the Seoul city government had committed suicide due to work-related stress under him.

Earlier this week he courted controversy by being one of several senior Democratic party politicians to attend the funeral of the mother of Ahn Hee-jung, a former provincial governor convicted of sexual offences last year.

News in brief

China landslides leave at least 14 dead or missing

◆ Heavy rains and landslides in China have left at least 14 people dead or missing over the past day, burying houses and causing scenic areas to temporarily shut. Six people have been unreachable since a landslide in

southwestern Guizhou province hit three villages on Wednesday, local authorities said. At least 156 people have been relocated, and six who were trapped had to be rescued after the incident.



◆ A wooden sculpture of US first lady Melania Trump was torched near her

US first lady Melania Trump statue set on fire in Slovenia

hometown of Sevnica, Slovenia, on the night of July Fourth, as Americans celebrated US Independence Day, said the artist who commissioned the sculpture. Brad Downey, a Berlin-based American artist, said he had the life-sized blackened, disfigured sculpture removed as soon as police informed him on July 5th of the incident.



◆ The frozen body of an Indonesian man has been found aboard

Indonesian found in freezer on Chinese fishing vessel

a detained Chinese fishing vessel, authorities said, adding that they suspected foul play in the crew member's death. Indonesian police said they intercepted two boats in the Malacca Strait this week after receiving a tip off that a crew member had died aboard one of the vessels.

◆ Hundreds of Rohingya refugees on a flood-prone island in the Bay of Bengal will not be allowed to leave unless they agree to return home,

Bangladesh authorities said. The 306 Muslim Rohingya from Myanmar were put on Bhashan Char island in April after being taken off two boats trying to traffic them to Malaysia.

Bangladesh says Rohingya refugees can't leave island

◆ A French retiree could face the death penalty in Indonesia on charges that he molested over 300 children and beat those who refused to have sex with him, authorities

said. Police said they nabbed Francois Camille Abello, 65, last month at a hotel in Indonesia's capital Jakarta, where they found two underaged girls in his room.



Turkish verdict paving way for Hagia Sophia mosque expected today: officials



Tourists visit Istanbul's famous Hagia Sophia

Reuters | Ankara

A Turkish court is likely to announce today that the 1934 conversion of Istanbul's Hagia Sophia into a museum was unlawful, two Turkish officials said, paving the way for its restoration as a mosque despite international concerns.

President Tayyip Erdogan has proposed restoring the mosque status of the sixth-century UNESCO World Heritage Site, which was central to both the Christian Byzantine and Muslim Ottoman empires and is now one of the most visited monuments in Turkey.

The prospect of such a move has raised alarm among U.S.,

Russian and Greek officials and Christian church leaders ahead of a verdict by Turkey's top administrative court, the Council of State, which held a hearing last Thursday.

At issue is the legality of a decision taken in 1934, a decade after the creation of the modern secular Turkish republic under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, to turn the ancient building into a museum.

"We expect the decision to be an annulment (and) the verdict to come out on Friday," a senior Turkish official told Reuters.

An official from Erdogan's ruling AK Party, which has Islamist roots, also said the decision "in favour of an annul-

ment" was expected on Friday.

Pro-government columnist Abdulkadir Selvi wrote in the Hurriyet newspaper that the court had already made the annulment ruling and would publish it on Friday.

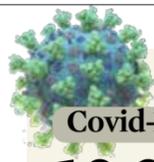
"This nation has been waiting for 86 years. The court lifted the chain of bans on Hagia Sophia," he wrote.

The association that brought the case said Hagia Sophia was the property of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, who in 1453 captured the city, then known as Constantinople, and turned the already 900-year-old Byzantine church into a mosque.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual head of some 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide and based in Istanbul, said a conversion would disappoint Christians and "fracture" East and West. The head of Russia's Orthodox Church said it would threaten Christianity.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Greece have also urged Turkey to maintain the museum status.

But Turkish groups have long campaigned for Hagia Sophia's conversion, saying it would better reflect Turkey's status as an overwhelmingly Muslim country.



Global

Covid-19 Cases:

12,277,179

Deaths

554,501

Recovered:

7,143,586

New cases

+121,150

New deaths

+3,304

Middle East

Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
1 USA	3,184,939	+419	135,281
2 Brazil	1,727,279	+300	68,355
3 India	794,196	+478	21,622
4 Russia	707,301	+176	10,843
5 Peru	312,911		11,133
6 Chile	306,216	+109	6,682
7 Spain	300,136	+5	28,401
8 UK	287,621	+85	44,602
9 Mexico	275,003	+782	32,796
10 Iran	250,458	+221	12,305
11 Italy	242,363	+12	34,926
12 Pakistan	240,848	+61	4,983
13 South Africa	224,665		3,602
14 Saudi Arabia	223,327	+41	2,100

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Egypt	78,304		3,564		22,241	52,499	41	765
Saudi Arabia	223,327	+3,183	2,100	+41	161,096	60,131	2,225	6,413
UAE	53,577	+532	328	+1	43,570	9,679	1	5,416
Kuwait	52,840	+833	382	+3	42,686	9,772	150	12,370
Oman	51,725	+1,518	236	+3	33,021	18,468	129	10,126
Qatar	102,110	+557	142	+4	97,272	4,696	145	36,366

S. Korea's Moon under fire over sex offender's family funeral



Moon Jae-in (L) receives a kiss from Ahn Hee-Jung (R) (file photo)

AFP | Seoul

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who promised to be a “feminist leader” during his election campaign, was under fire yesterday for sending condolence flowers to the funeral of a convicted sex offender's mother.

Moon and dozens of senior politicians -- almost all of them male, and from both sides of the aisle, but mostly from his ruling centre-left Democratic Party -- sent bouquets for this week's ceremony for Ahn Hee-jung's mother.

Former provincial governor Ahn was once a rising star and came second to Moon in the race for the 2017 Democratic presi-

dential nomination, but was convicted last year of sexual intercourse by abuse of authority after his female assistant accused him of repeatedly raping her.

He is serving three and a half years in prison.

The controversy over the funeral laid bare the attitudinal gender divide in a society that remains highly patriarchal -- it has the highest gender wage gap in the OECD club of developed economies.

And women hold only 19 percent of seats in its newly elected parliament, which would put it 116th in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's previously published 2020 ranking.

Sexual harassment victims often face pressure to stay si-

lent for fear of public shaming, but signs of change emerged after the country's own #MeToo movement -- sparked in 2018 by a prosecutor who publicly accused a superior of groping her at a funeral, prompting many to share their stories.

Ahn was by far the highest-profile individual named as a result.

But after he was temporarily released from jail to attend the funeral ceremonies, he received visits from scores of political heavyweights offering their condolences -- among them Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun, his predecessor Lee Nak-yeon, and ruling party leader Lee Hae-chan.

Ahn allowed media to cover

The controversy over the funeral laid bare the attitudinal gender divide in a society that remains highly patriarchal -- it has the highest gender wage gap in the OECD club of developed economies



Former provincial governor Ahn was once a rising star and came second to Moon in the race for the 2017 Democratic presidential nomination, but was convicted last year

the event and pictures showed a large white wreath in prime position, with a plaque bearing the presidential logo and Moon's name.

Furious response

Women's groups and progressive politicians reacted furiously, saying the moves demonstrated the political establishment's traditionalist mindset and sent a signal that sexual crimes could be disregarded.

“Every message from a president is an act of government, including condolences,” wrote commentator Choi Moon-sun in the Hankook Ilbo newspaper.



A bouquet from President Moon Jae-in, on display at the funeral

When Moon sent the flowers, she said, “there was no president for South Korean women”.

Jo Hye-min, a spokeswoman for the opposition Justice Party, said Ahn's victim was “still struggling in life in the face of non-stop shaming”.

“It is so clear that a message

and action by a politician is not a personal one but has a public nature,” she said. “We can't help but ask what their actions mean.”

The presidential office said yesterday it sent the flowers following a “comprehensive review of the situation”.

India among most open economies, says India's Modi, calls for global investment

PTI | New Delhi

Wooing global companies, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said Asia's third-largest economy is one of the most open in the world and offers investment friendly, competitive business environment and immense opportunities.

Speaking at the India Global Week 2020, he said green shoots of economic revival are already visible in India that is coming out of coronavirus lockdown.

“India remains one of the most open economies in the world. We are laying a red carpet for all global companies to come and establish their presence in India. Very few countries will offer the kind of opportunities India does today,” he said.

He listed recent reforms in agriculture as well as those in defence and space sectors to seek global capital.

“We are making the economy more productive, investment-friendly and competitive,” he said. “There are many possibilities and opportunities in various sunrise sectors in India.”

Reforms in the agriculture sector provide a very attractive investment opportunity to invest in storage and logistics, he said. “We are opening the doors to investors to come and invest directly.”

Also, reforms have been



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address

brought in the small, micro and medium enterprises (MSME) sector, which will complement big industries.

“There are investment opportunities in the defence sector,” he said, referring to opening up of certain parts of defence manufacturing to the private sector.

Also, there are opportunities for private investment in space sector. “This will mean greater access to commercial use of space tech for the benefit of people,” he said.

Modi said the talk of global economic revival after the pandemic is often linked to the revival of the Indian economy.

Indians, he said, have the spir-

it to achieve what is believed to be impossible. “No wonder that in India we are already seeing green shoots when it comes to economic recovery.”

“When India talks of revival it is a revival with care, revival with compassion, a revival which is sustainable - both for the environment and the economy,” he said. “On the one hand India is fighting a strong battle against the global pandemic. With an increased focus on people's health, we are equally focussed on the health of the economy.”

History, he said, has shown that India has overcome every challenge, be it social or eco-

“India is ready to do whatever it can to further global good and prosperity. This is an India that is reforming, performing and transforming”

NARENDRA MODI

nomic.

During the last six years, India has made great gains in areas such as financial inclusion, housing and infra construction, ease of doing business and bold tax reforms like the GST, he said.

“India is ready to do whatever it can to further global good and prosperity. This is an India that is reforming, performing and transforming,” he said.

The Prime Minister also spoke of his government's coronavirus relief package comprising free ration, cooking gas and cash to poor.

“In this time of a pandemic we have provided relief to our citizens and undertaken big structural reforms,” he said. “Our relief package has been smart and targeted to provide the most poor with the most help. Thanks to technology every penny has reached the beneficiaries directly.”

Bali hosts first centre to return captive dolphins to the wild



Dolphins are seen as Femke Den Haas cleans a net, after they were relocated at the Bali Dolphin Sanctuary rehabilitation centre

Reuters | Banyuwedang Bay, Indonesia

a bay on the tropical island for treatment.

Just a year ago, Rambo was confined to a shallow, chlorinated pool in an Indonesian hotel on the island of Bali entertaining visitors from around the world by jumping through hoops.

Now, the bottlenose dolphin is swimming freely after being brought to what organisers say is the world's first permanent rehabilitation centre under a project initiated by Bali's government and animal rights groups.

“It's a model. It can be duplicated. And we're trying to do that in Europe as well, in Italy and in Crete,” said Ric O'Barry, an animal activist and founder of the Dolphin Project, the charity that runs the centre.

With the help of Indonesian authorities, activists rescued four dolphins last year and brought them to the centre in

“It's more stressful for dolphins in captivity than any other animal we'll see at the zoo,” said O'Barry, who was featured in the Oscar-winning documentary “The Cove” about the capture and slaughter of dolphins in Japan.

More than 3,000 dolphins are in captivity around the world as part of an entertainment industry that generates up to \$5.5 billion annually, a 2019 report by World Animal Protection says.

Returning dolphins to the wild depends on their health and ability to catch food and interact with other dolphins.

“Often they switch off the sonar when they are kept in captivity, so that's one of the main tasks of the team here to prepare them for their life in the wild,” said Femke Den Haas, who runs the rehabilitation centre.



A woman poses with Buckwheat the donkey at Farmhouse Garden Animal Home

Buckwheat the donkey is a Zoom superstar, making office workers giggle with her appearances to benefit the Farmhouse Garden Animal Home, the Canadian animal sanctuary where she lives outside Toronto

AFP | Toronto

The coronavirus pandemic has led millions of people to embrace meetings via Zoom, but admittedly, those can be as tedious as in-person conferences.

So one animal sanctuary in Canada, in dire need of cash after being forced to close to visitors, found a way to solve both problems.

Meet Buckwheat, a donkey at the Farmhouse Garden Animal Home, who is ready to inject some fun into your humdrum work-from-home office day -- for a price.

"Hello. We are crashing your meeting, we are crashing your meeting -- this is Buckwheat," says sanctuary volunteer Tim Fors, introducing the gray and white animal on a Zoom call.

In the video application's signature window panes, the call attendees offer some oohs and aahs as they realize what's happening -- and then erupt in laughter.

"Buckwheat is crashing people's meetings in order to make some money," Fors tells AFP.

"They donate to the sanctuary when they want her to crash a meeting, so it's mostly a fundraiser so we can feed the cows, especially during COVID."

The Farmhouse Garden Animal home in Uxbridge, about an hour's drive northeast of Toronto, used to rely on visitor dona-



Buckwheat the donkey at Farmhouse Garden Animal Home

tions and paid on-site activities to make ends meet.

But since the pandemic erupted in mid-March, the former cattle ranch can no longer welcome outsiders, putting a serious dent in its finances.

Big money for 10 minutes

"About four years ago, Mike Lanigan, who is the farmer here -- he is a third-generation cattle farmer -- he had a change of heart and decided not to send his cows to slaughter anymore,"

Fors explains.

The animal sanctuary was born: it's now home to about 20 cows, chickens, ducks, a horse and Buckwheat, the female donkey born 12 years ago.

With the pandemic threat-

ening the sanctuary's survival, its leaders quickly realized they needed to identify other ways to bring in money.

They themselves were using Zoom calls for work -- and thus was born the idea of having animals sit in on people's work calls to lighten the mood.

On the sanctuary's website, interested parties can fill out a form to hire Buckwheat, Melody the horse or Victoria, whom Fors calls the "matriarch of the herd."

A 10-minute Zoom appearance costs CAN \$75 (US \$55). For double the time, the price shoots

up to CAN \$125, and \$175 for 30 minutes, sanctuary co-founder Edith Barabash told Toronto Life magazine.

"We are always happy when the people on the meeting are surprised," says Fors.

"We started about the end of April, and I think we done about 100 meetings and sometimes we are crashing meetings three or four times a day."

On one call, Fors tells attendees that he hopes they will visit the sanctuary once lockdown measures are lifted.

"Definitely," one of them says.



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A screenshot of a Zoom meeting with Buckwheat the donkey

UN forecasts even warmer temperatures over next 5 years

High latitude regions and the Sahel are likely to be wetter than the recent past, the World Meteorological Organization says

AFP | Geneva

The annual mean global temperature is likely to be at least one degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels in each of the next five years, the World Meteorological Organization said.

The WMO said there was a 20 per cent chance that it will exceed 1.5 C above 1850 to 1900 average levels in at least one year, according to its annual climate predictions for the coming five years.

The last five-year period has been the warmest five years on record, said the Geneva-based United Nations agency, which counts 193 member states.

Temperatures over the next five years, 2020 to 2024, are very likely to be within the range of 0.91 C to 1.59 C above pre-industrial levels.

Almost all regions, except parts of the southern oceans, are likely to be warmer than the recent past, which is defined as 1981 to 2010.

"This study shows -- with a high level of scientific skill -- the enormous challenge ahead in meeting the Paris Agreement on Climate Change target of keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 C," said WMO secretary-general Petteri Taalas.

The 2015 Paris accord seeks to limit global temperature rises through sweeping cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

Wetter Sahel

The WMO forecasts do not take into account changes in



A man cools himself in a fountain in Gorky park in central Moscow

greenhouse gas and aerosol emissions due to the shutdown of economic and industrial activity triggered by the coronavirus crisis.

"Due to the very long lifetime of carbon dioxide in the atmos-

phere, the impact of the drop in emissions this year is not expected to lead to a reduction of CO2 atmospheric concentrations which are driving global temperature increases," Taalas said. The planet's average temper-

Due to the very long lifetime of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the impact of the drop in emissions this year is not expected to lead to a reduction of CO2 atmospheric concentrations which are driving global temperature increases

PETTERI TAALAS

WMO SECRETARY-GENERAL

ature is already more than 1.0 C warmer than the pre-industrial period, the WMO said.

Looking at the five-year period 2020 to 2024, the organisa-

tion said there was a 70 per cent chance that at least one month would be 1.5 C warmer than pre-industrial levels.

However, there is only a three per cent chance that the entire period would be 1.5 C warmer than that baseline level.

The northern North Atlantic region could have stronger westerly winds, leading to more storms in western Europe over the next five years. High latitude regions and the Sahel are likely to be wetter than the recent past, the organisation predicted.

The WMO also said that in 2020 alone, many parts of South America, southern Africa and Australia are likely to be drier than the recent past.

Meanwhile, the Arctic is likely to have warmed by more than twice as much as the global mean.

Champions crowned for national racing season

● The newest title winners were confirmed following the decision of the Bahrain Motor Federation (BMF) to officially conclude the 2019/2020 season

● Current championship standings were considered as the final championship classification

TD | Manama

The champions of the 2019/2020 national racing season have been crowned in both circuit racing and karting.

They include Ahmed bin Khanen for the BIC 2,000cc Challenge; Gracie Rose Grantham, Shantosh Kumar, Lewis Smith, Fahad Al Khaled and Osama Azzouka in the Bahrain Rotax Mojo Max (BRMMC) Challenge; and Ali Baslar in the Bahrain Sprint Sodi World Series (BSSWS).

Praga Middle East and BirelArt Bahrain were also multiple winners as entrants in the BRMMC; while GO Bahrain were double champions in the Bahrain Karting Endurance Championship (BKEC), with Bapco Motorsport, Racing BH Junior and Bapco Engineering winning a title apiece.

The newest title winners were confirmed following the decision of the Bahrain Motor Federation (BMF) to officially conclude the 2019/2020 season, with remaining events of the season cancelled. As per regulations, the BMF concluded that current championship standings were considered as the final



Participants in action during Bahrain Karting Endurance Championship

championship classification.

Bin Khanen was able to claim his first-ever title in the BIC 2,000cc Challenge. The Saudi driver concluded the highly competitive season eight points ahead of his closest rival, Bahraini Raed Raffii; while 14 points clear on the championship standings was former multiple champion, Bahrain's Shaikh Salman bin Isa bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa, in third place overall. All three were competing in the series' Pro class.

Bin Khanen accumulated 206 points in the six of seven rounds held in the season, in which he took on the field driving a Honda Civic EG4. He was able to clinch one victory from 12 races and was on the podium five other times.

Wiebke Buelow emerged as the top driver in the Novice class with 68 points, just three ahead of Husain Al Ghanem and seven in front of Andreas Buelow.

Shaikh Salman added to his top three overall finish by taking another pair of accolades. He also claimed the most pole positions with four, and registered the Season's Fastest Lap of 1min 16.450secs around Bahrain International Circuit's 2.55-kilometre Inner Track.

Meanwhile, in karting, the



The BMF has announced that new national racing season is scheduled to begin on October 2

BRMMC crowned Gracie Rose as champion of the Micro Max category after finishing the season with 158 points. Khaled Alnajjar (129 pts) and Rasihd Alkhalifa (109 pts) followed in second and third, respectively.

Shantosh won the Mini Max crown with 152 points, finishing ahead of Luca Kane Houghton (127 pts) and Tye Mejia (105 pts); while Lewis triumphed in the Junior Max class with 164 points, as Abdullah Aldossery (143 pts) and Fahad Almuqla (116 pts) followed.

Al Khaled was the Senior Max category champion with 146 points. Mohammed Mattar (125 pts) was the runner-up and Omar Aldereyaan (106 pts) came third. Azzouka clinched the title amongst the Max Mas-

ters karters with 165 points, with Fred Clark (152 pts) and Essa Aldossery (51 pts) joining him in the top three.

Praga came away with a championship treble after finishing first in the Micro Max, Junior Max and Max Masters classes; while BirelArt were champions among the Mini Max and Senior Max entrants.

In the BSSWS, Baslar capped a dominant season with 150 points—50 ahead of championship runner-up Abdulla Buhindi. Abubaker Ali was a distant third with 62 points among the series' 18 competitors.

Both the BRMMC and BSSWS were part of the Bahrain Karting Sprint Championship, which had its final two rounds of the season abandoned.

For the BKEC, which was able to complete its campaign with four races featuring three, six, 12 and 24 hours, GO Bahrain won the overall title with 155 points. Racing BH Junior followed with 144 points and Bapco Engineering with 129 points.

GO Bahrain secured their endurance double by also taking the Pro class title with 170 points, well ahead of Bapco Sadeem (135 pts) and Bahrain Airport Services (BAS) A (133 pts).

Bapco Motorsport clinched the Corporate class crown with 180 points, as BAS sister squads BAS C (137 pts) and all-ladies team BAS F (120 pts) were second and third.

Finally, Racing BH Junior and Bapco Engineering added to their top-three placings overall by sharing the title in the Nations class, scoring 167 points apiece. Manama Drift (85 pts) were a far second and BAS B (45 pts) third.

The BMF has also announced that new national racing season is scheduled to begin on October 2.

Federer hopes to play in front of crowds on 2021 return



Roger Federer waves to fans after a match (file photo)

AFP | London

Roger Federer, who turns 39 next month, says he hopes to play again in front of crowds as he targets his comeback from a knee injury in 2021.

Having beaten long-time rival Rafael Nadal in an exhibition match in Cape Town in February, in front of a record crowd of 52,000, Federer has not played since knee surgery at the end of that month.

He had another procedure on his right knee in June but hopes to return in 2021 even though he will turn 40 in August next year.

"I want to come back healthy. We'll see how long that lasts," he told German

weekly newspaper Die Zeit.

The Swiss ace says he has missed tennis more than ever since the coronavirus pandemic first hit and forced a shutdown of the sport in March.

"In the beginning it wasn't like that," he said.

"There was nothing we could do anyway, we were just especially glad that we weren't ill and that all our friends and family were doing well.

"But now I miss it, I'd love to be in a full stadium again."

After a career which has yielded eight Wimbledon titles in a total of 20 Grand Slams, the last of which was the 2018 Australian Open, Federer knows his career is drawing to a close.

Chris Froome to leave Team Ineos at end of season

AFP | London

Four-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome will leave Team Ineos at the end of the season, the team announced.

The BBC reported that Froome, Britain's most successful cyclist, would join the Israel Start-Up Nation team.

Froome first won the Tour de France in 2013, going on to dominate cycling's leading race for the three years from 2015 in the colours of Team Sky, which became Team Ineos



Chris Froome

last year.

"Chris's current contract comes to an end in December and we have taken the decision now not to renew it," said Team Ineos boss Dave Brailsford.

Pellegrini named as coach of Betis

AFP | Madrid

Former Manchester City and Real Madrid coach Manuel Pellegrini has returned to Spanish football as coach of Real Betis, his new club announced.

The 66-year-old Chilean, who has also worked in China, has signed a three-year deal with the Seville-based outfit, running until June 2023.

The arrival of Pellegrini at the Benito Villamarin had been an open secret for several days, although Betis decided to wait until their La Liga survival had been confirmed before announcing the appointment.

Wednesday's 3-0 home win over Osasuna left Betis in mid-table and ended any fears of relegation with three games of the season still to play.

BRAVE CF to host record-setting five shows in five consecutive weeks

TD | Manama

For the first time in its history, Bahrain's own BRAVE Combat Federation, the premier Mixed Martial Arts promotion founded by HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa will be hosting five shows in five consecutive weeks. The impressive milestone will set a new record for the organization, which is active since September 2016.

Recently, in early March, BRAVE CF took the lead worldwide among the MMA promotions and paused its operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, BRAVE CF also launched a global awareness campaign, involving the roster of athletes, coaches, celebrities, and influencers that it hosts under its umbrella.

With the recent developments in safety and security regulations, proposed by the Interna-

tional Health bodies, BRAVE CF confirmed that it was resuming its shows, and more, ensuring that the promotion would still host a minimum of 12 shows within 2020, as it was originally planned.

The return of BRAVE Combat Federation is set for July 20, in Romania, where the Bahrain-based organization will hold BRAVE CF 35. One week later, for the second show in a row in the Eastern European country, BRAVE CF 36 will take place.

Five days, and almost 3,000 kilometers, later, on August 1st, BRAVE Combat Federation will land in Scandinavia, for its first-ever event in the country of Sweden, BRAVE CF 37. The following two weeks, August 8 and 15, BRAVE CF 38 and 39 will take place once again in Sweden.

BRAVE CF officials have confirmed that the promotion is fol-



lowing strict health and safety regulations, that include severe social distancing protocols, multiple testing for all athletes and personnel involved in the event, and closed-door fight nights, broadcasted worldwide through BRAVE CF partners around the globe.

The return also means that Bahrain sports will be at the forefront worldwide once again, as BRAVE CF will be one of the first sports organizations to resume its activities. The organization is ready to take the Kingdom of Bahrain around the world with several fight cards across the globe.

The measures, alongside the full strength return, cement the position of BRAVE Combat Federation as the biggest sports media property in Asia, and a true representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain's core values, such as resilience, leadership, and pioneering mindset.