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Private businesses, workers hit hard by virus downturn

MP says Farwaniya lockdown unfair • Eid lockdowns mulled for some areas

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Private businesses have been hit hard by a sharp decline in the number of customers that made almost 80 percent of companies unable to cover expenses, the financial and economic affairs committee said in a report to the National Assembly. The committee prepared the report to justify a draft law that would allow private businesses to cut salaries of their staff or ask them to go on leave during the coronavirus crisis.

The report said that the number of cus-

tomers dropped by 75 percent in May, which hit revenues badly and made as many as 80 percent of companies unable to cover their expenses for six months. The committee said 26 percent of companies are on the verge of collapse after their revenues dropped by as much as 80 percent on average.

It also admitted that due to the delay in issuing the necessary legislation, 21 percent of companies violated the laws and forced their employees to take unpaid leaves, while 15 percent laid off their employees. The draft law, which has been

under debate for months in the Assembly, allows companies to reduce the salary of their employees by 50 percent provided that the new salary is not below minimum wage. The reduction must be made after mutual agreement and working hours should be reconsidered.

The bill also allows companies to ask their staff to go on a special leave with 30 percent pay or the minimum wage, whichever is higher. The action applies during the lockdown months or during restrictions imposed by the government. The draft law insists however that end of

service indemnity must be calculated on the basis of the original pay. The bill however obliges the government to pay the amounts deducted to Kuwaitis employed in the private sector and in some cases the social security agency will pay unemployment benefits to affected Kuwaitis for six months.

MP Ali Al-Deqbas in the meantime called on the health minister to reconsider his decision of continuing the lockdown on Farwaniya, the last residential area under isolation. The lawmaker, who represents the area, said markets and malls have

reopened everywhere except in Farwaniya, which impedes commercial activity and hurts the interests of the people. He said what is surprising is that the number of cases has been rising in other areas but only Farwaniya remains under lockdown, which means the decision is "unfair".

The government is meanwhile contemplating the possibility of placing certain areas under total lockdown during Eid Al-Adha, which starts at the end of the month. The aim is to prevent mixing of people, which has become the main source of spreading the disease.

As virus rages, Trump finally wears a mask

BETHESDA: US President Donald Trump wore a face mask in public for the first time Saturday, finally yielding to intense pressure to set a public health example as the coronavirus rampages across America. Trump had on a dark mask with the presidential seal as he walked through the corridors of Walter Reed military hospital outside Washington to meet wounded veterans.

Trump strode past reporters and did not stop to speak to them about what had become a hotly anticipated moment - would he have a change of heart on a practice recommended by the government's own medical experts? "I've never been against masks but I do believe they have a time and a place," Trump said as he left the White House.

News reports this week said aides practically begged the president to relent and wear a mask in public - and let himself be photographed - as coronavirus cases soared in some states and as Trump trailed Democrat Joe Biden badly in polls ahead of the November election. Trump has steadfastly

defended his administration's handling of the pandemic even though the United States is the hardest-hit country in the world.

The country posted yet another daily record of confirmed cases on Saturday night, with 66,528 new infections, while the death toll rose by almost 800 to nearly 135,000. States have been left to figure out on their own how to reopen without a clear and coherent strategy from the White House. To wear a mask or not has become a sort of political fulcrum for a deeply divided America. Conservatives who back Trump often refuse to don one on grounds it impinges on their freedom, while progressives tend to back the practice as a show of collective responsibility at a time of a life-or-death crisis.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend people wear masks in public when they cannot engage in social distancing. But Trump - at political rallies, media briefings and elsewhere - has repeatedly avoided wearing a mask, even after staffers at the White House tested positive for the virus and as more aides, including Vice President Mike Pence, have taken to wearing them. In May, Trump even made fun of Biden when the latter started wearing a mask in public, sharing a tweet that featured an unflattering photograph of the former vice president in a black face covering.

Continued on Page 2



BETHESDA, Maryland: US President Donald Trump wears a mask as he visits Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Saturday. — AFP

'Misaligned' radar led to jet downing

TEHRAN: Iran said that the misalignment of an air defense unit's radar system was the key "human error" that led to the accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane in January. "A failure occurred due to a human error in following the procedure" for aligning the radar, causing a "107-degree error" in the system, the Iranian Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) said in a report late Saturday.

This error "initiated a hazard chain" that saw further errors committed in the minutes before the plane was shot down, said the CAO document, presented as a "factual report" and not as the final report on the accident investigation. Flight 752, a Ukraine International Airlines jetliner, was struck by two missiles and crashed shortly after taking off from Tehran's main airport on January 8, at a time of heightened US-Iranian tensions.

The Islamic republic admitted several days later that its forces accidentally shot down the Kiev-bound plane, killing all 176 people on board. The CAO said that, despite the erroneous information available to the radar system operator on the aircraft's trajectory, he could have identified his target as an airliner, but instead there was a "wrong identification".

The report also noted that the first of the two missiles launched at the aircraft was fired by a defense unit operator who had acted "without receiving any response from the Coordination Center" on which he depended. The second missile was fired 30 seconds later, "by observing the continuity of trajectory of the detected target", the report added. — AFP

Aishwarya COVID positive; Amitabh, Abhishek stable

MUMBAI: Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and her daughter tested positive for the new coronavirus yesterday, a day after her father-in-law and top Indian actor Amitabh Bachchan and her husband and actor Abhishek were hospitalized for COVID-19. Maharashtra state health minister Rajesh Tope said in a tweet that Aishwarya and her eight-year-old daughter had tested positive for the virus that causes the disease.

It was not clear whether had been admitted to hospital, as

Amitabh and Abhishek were on Saturday, when they said they had mild symptoms. Hospital officials and government health authorities said earlier yesterday that Amitabh and his son Abhishek were in stable condition. Authorities launched a massive sanitizing drill at the Bachchans' upscale residence in Mumbai, spraying disinfectant in the large compound and on cars parked there. Reports were awaited on the condition of Amitabh Bachchan's wife Jaya, also a highly regarded actor. — Reuters (See Page 13)



KOLKATA: A fan of Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan hangs posters of the actor as a woman passes by at the gate of the All Bengal Amitabh Bachchan Fan Club yesterday. — AFP

Egypt grounds kites for safety, security reasons

CAIRO: Egyptian police have seized kites from people flying them after a ban by a northern governorate for "safety" reasons and a lawmaker's warning they posed a "national security threat". Police seized 369 kites in Cairo on Friday, Al-Ahram reported, while Akhbar Al-Youm, another state newspaper, said police confiscated 99 kites and fined five people in the northern region of Alexandria.

The ban was brought in "to ensure the safety of citizens after a number of accidents" involving kites, Alexandria's governorate said this week on its Facebook page. Fines imposed for kite-flying in the Mediterranean city can reach up to 1,000 pounds (about \$60). Egypt's skies have been filled with thousands of colorful paper kites flown by

Continued on Page 2



CAIRO: In this file photo taken on May 22, 2020, Egyptian youths fly handmade kites from an overpass on the capital's Ring Road before iftar during the holy month of Ramadan. — AFP

Local

Customers complain of 'extra' shipping fees during pandemic

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Thousands of customers may have been victims of overcharging by some shipping and delivery companies. During the pandemic, online shopping skyrocketed, but people have complained about paying extra amounts described as customs fees and other unclear charges. Also some customers didn't receive an invoice or receipt for the fees charged or the invoices were fake.

An inspector with the customer protection department of the ministry of commerce explained to Kuwait Times that the department has experienced a significant increase in complaints from customers regarding shipping fees. "When a consumer complained of being asked to pay excessive fees just to receive his shipment, our inspectors received the complaint and went to the company, which said that these invoices were not issued by the company,

blaming the delivery personnel for stealing the money," the inspector, Abdullah, said.

Consumers have also complained of not being given invoices for their payment, as the deliverymen told them they do not issue receipts. According to ministry decree no. 216/2014, a company or its employees are obliged to give a receipt for any payment they receive. Some shipping companies issue invoices with unclear or wrong fee descriptions, and only in English. According to the above-mentioned decree, issuing the invoice only in English is a violation, as it should also be issued in Arabic, which is the official language of Kuwait.

Regarding the fees, some are inflated or overcharged. Customs fee is set at KD 1 by the General Administration of Customs. This was confirmed by an official statement by its General Director Jamal Al-Jalawi during a live TV show on KTV broadcasted in January, during which he said the customs

fee is KD 1 only, and any additional fee can be reported to the general prosecution.

Also, many companies demand fees for shipping and handling from the consumer. These may be double-charged fees since the shipper has in most cases already paid for the package to be shipped and handled. Basically, the shipping company is charging twice for the same service, irrespective of whether customers have already paid in advance or whether the sellers paid it by offering free shipping.

Due to the high number of customer complaints, a Kuwaiti online shopper outraged by the excessive charges by shipping companies launched a campaign to combat such practices. This campaign was launched on social media through the hashtag #ExemptingPersonalShipments. "We launched this campaign to get the support of the ministry of commerce and customs administration, which are not performing their duties," said Mubarak Al-

Ajmi, who is behind the initiative.

According to Ajmi, many shipping companies refer to some charges as customs fees, but customs fees should only be KD 1 - any further fees are not set by the customs department. "A source at the customs told me that some companies receive around 6,000 shipments a day, and they charge each customer the fee separately, although they pay once for each shipment consisting of 50 parcels," he stressed.

The campaign became very popular over the past weeks and even reached the parliament. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani wrote on his Twitter account that increased customs fees on personal shipments should be canceled, assuring he will take action in the future sessions of the parliament. Also, MP Mohammad Al-Huwailah demanded relieving personal shipments under KD 500 of customs fees.

Coronavirus in Kuwait: What we know so far

KUWAIT: Kuwait has recorded 54,058 cases infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as of Saturday, in addition to 386 deaths. With the exception of 150 cases in intensive care, all infected cases are in stable condition and are recovering in quarantined locations designated by the government for this purpose, while thousands have been discharged from quarantine after exhibiting no symptoms during their 14-day quarantine period, the Ministry of Health confirmed. Meanwhile, 44,610 people have recovered completely after previously being infected with the virus, while there are 9,062 people receiving treatment.

Curfew

Kuwait imposed a three-week partial curfew starting May 31 (from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am), as part of a five-phase plan for a gradual return to normal life, brought to a standstill by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The curfew hours were later reduced to start on 7:00 pm and end at 5:00 am, starting from June 21, 2020. The first phase includes a total lockdown on Farwaniya, Khaitan, and Hawally, joining Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh which were put under lockdown earlier. The lockdown ended in Hawally and Khaitan on June 21, 2020, and in Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh on July 9, 2020. Activities resumed in the first phase included home deliveries of restaurants, telecommunication companies, food retailers, companies' transportation of employees, gas stations, private clinics and car workshops.

Kuwait moved to the second phase starting from June 30, 2020. The second phase saw the curfew shortened to be between 8:00 pm and 5:00 am, while resuming work in the government and private sectors with the workforce being less than 30 percent, in addition to resumption of constructions, banking sector, pickups from restaurants, as well as reopening of commercial complexes, malls, parks, and other places of leisure between 10:00 am and 06:00 pm.

The third phase would see an end of curfew, and health authorities would be assessing situation of areas under lockdown. It would see increase of workforce to less than 50 percent. Visits for social care homes would be allowed, reopening of hotels, resorts and hotel apartments. Taxis will be allowed to operate with only one passenger, and mosques would be allowed to perform Friday prayers.

Phase four would see an increase in workforce, restaurants would be receiving customers but with restrictions, and public transportation resumed but with distancing. All activities would resume in phase five, government and private sector returned to normal, families could gather, weddings and graduation ceremonies, health clubs and gyms to reopen, as well as cinemas and theaters.

Mosques in the so-called 'model residential areas' reopened their doors for worshippers on June 10 amid strict health precautionary measures. Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Afasi said that mosques in commercial, markets and heavily-populated areas will remain closed for the time being. Worshippers must wear face masks, keep social distancing between queues and between worshippers must be strictly observed. Worshippers must bring their own mats so they do not get in contact with mosque carpets. Mosques will reopen five minutes before prayer time and close 10 minutes after prayer.

Earlier, Kuwait imposed a total curfew from May 10 to May 30, allowing room for people to walk out for daily exercise between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm, and to shop at co-ops and supermarkets once every six days during the curfew hours by making an appointment through www.moci.shop. Before that, Kuwait enforced a country-wide partial curfew from 5:00 pm to 6:00 am, which was later extend-

ed to start from 4:00 pm until 8:00 am during Ramadan, while allowing restaurants and food stores to make home deliveries from 5:00 pm until 1:00 am. The government also locked down Mahboula and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh in a bid to contain the spread of the virus and enable health workers to test inhabitants. Earlier, the government decided to close all shopping malls, beauty salons and barber shops as part of its measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The government also allowed supermarkets, restaurants and shops to host a maximum of five people at a time and in case there are lines, the distance must be at least one meter between people. The Ministry of Commerce launched a website (www.moci.shop) to enable people to book appointments to shop at co-operative societies in their areas. The Public Authority for Industry also announced that companies can apply to evacuate their workers from Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Mahboula. To do so, they must fill a 'workers evacuation form' available on www.pai.gov.kw, and send the form via email to: jasiri@moh.gov.kw.

Precautions

Kuwait halted all commercial flights until further notice, and has sent special flights to repatriate Kuwaitis back home from countries affected with the virus' spread. Kuwait took all measures to test Kuwaitis repatriated from infected areas for potential infection. Kuwait had required all expatriates who arrived from travel on March 1 and beyond to visit Kuwait International Fairground where the Ministry of Health has set up a center to test people for possible infection. Meanwhile, the Cabinet announced on April 9 the operation of all airline flights for expats who are wishing to return back to their countries. Authorities also announced a public holiday in the country starting from March 12, while entities providing vital services will remain open. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has suspended classes at all public and private schools (for both students and teaching staffs): first from March 1 to March 12, and later extended it until March 29, before eventually suspending schools until August for grade 12 and October for other stages. State departments have been on high alert to take precautions against the potential spread of the virus. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has taken measures to make sure that facemasks, hand sanitizers and other goods remain accessible to the public.

Kuwait suspended issuing entry permits and visas unless those issued through diplomatic missions. The Interior Ministry issued an amnesty allowing residency violators to leave the country between April 1 and April 30 without paying any fines or airfare with a chance to return to Kuwait later. The amnesty was issued in view of the circumstances the country is currently going through and as part of the precautionary measures taken to fight the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). During the amnesty period, individuals desiring to procure valid residencies in Kuwait and were willing to pay the fines without being subjected to investigations were allowed to pay the fines and legalize their status if they meet the required conditions.

Hotlines

The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619.

The Education Ministry set the following hotlines to receive inquiries on school closures related to the anti-coronavirus measures:

- 24970967 (24/7 hotline)
- 51575591 (Capital Educational Zone)
- 51576117 (Hawally Educational Zone)
- 51576576 (Farwaniya Educational Zone)
- 51577055 (Jahra Educational Zone)

- 51577655 (Ahmadi Educational Zone)
- 51577951 (Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone)
- 51578171 (Religious Studies Department)
- 51588599 (Private Education Department)
- 51592515 (Services Department)
- 51594544 (Public Relations Department)

Medicine delivery

Kuwait's Ministry of Health (MOH) launched a new medicine delivery service for people in Kuwait, which they can use to order medications to be delivered during curfew hours. The medications will be delivered within 72 hours after the order is submitted. To place an order, patients should send a WhatsApp to the numbers for the hospitals and medical centers as listed below. The patient should include their name, Civil ID number, hospital or clinic file number, mobile phone number and the medicine needed to the following numbers:

- Amiri Hospital: 50880699
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital: 50880755
- Farwaniya Hospital: 50880852
- Adan Hospital: 50880908
- Jahra Hospital: 50881066
- Sabah Hospital: 97632660
- Jaber Hospital: 96992079
- Ibn Sina Hospital: 99613948
- Chest Hospital: 99258749
- Razi Hospital: 97633487
- Kuwait Cancer Control Center: 96735242
- Psychiatric Hospital: 97350113
- Physiotherapy Hospital: 99824037
- Maternity Hospital: 98559531
- As'ad Al-Hamad Dermatology Center: 98514508
- Zain Hospital: 97552031
- NBK Hospital: 96931761
- Al-Rashed Allergy Hospital: 94162470
- Infectious Diseases Hospital: 96989164
- Palliative Care Hospital: 94024786
- Sabah Al-Ahmad Urology Center: 90952469
- KFH Addiction Treatment Center: 94169363

Meanwhile, all licensed pharmacies in Kuwait delivering medicine are allowed to continue their services 24 hours a day. The Ministry of Health is also asking doctors and nurses affiliated with the private medical sector to volunteer in order to contribute to the fight against the virus. Volunteering is available through the link: <http://volunteering.q8-health.com>. The ministry had closed all private clinics and medical centers effective March 22, 2020 until further notice.

Mental health assistance

The Kuwait Psychological Association (KPA) is providing consultation through the phone for people suffering from the psychological impacts of coronavirus. Different doctors are working on the hotline in different timings as follows:

- Dr Rashed Al-Sahh: on Monday and Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9797-6168.
 - Dr Fahad Al-Tasha: daily from 8:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 9904-8258.
 - Dr Othman Al-Asfour: daily 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm. Call 9938-5350.
 - Dr Mohammed Al-Khalidi (head of this team): daily 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Call 9903-6470.
 - Dr Ahmad Al-Khalidi: daily 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9910-7965.
 - Dr Muneera Al-Qattan: Monday and Wednesday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Call 9953-3108.
 - Dr Zainab Al-Saffar: Sunday and Thursday 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 9954-9908.
 - Dr Sameera Al-Kandari: Tuesday 9:00 pm - 12:00 am. Call 6770-9434.
 - Dr Kawthar Al-Yaqout: Monday and Wednesday 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Call 5521-0088.
- For information and other concerns, call 9401-4283.

As virus rages...

Continued from Page 1

The Biden campaign slammed Trump for not wearing a mask earlier. "Donald Trump spent months ignoring the advice of medical experts and politicizing wearing a mask, one of the most important things we can do to prevent the spread of the virus," Biden spokesman Andrew Bates said in a statement, according to NBC News. "Rather than taking responsibility and leading, he wasted four months that Americans have been making sacrifices by stoking divisions and actively discour-

aging people from taking a very basic step to protect each other."

Trump has reportedly told aides that wearing a mask would make him look weak and he could not stomach the idea of letting the media photograph him in one. Even Saturday as he left the White House to head to Walter Reed, Trump made it sound like he would wear a mask only because he would be in a hospital - not that he had come around and embraced the idea of donning one regularly. "I think when you're in a hospital, especially in that particular setting, where you're talking to a lot of soldiers and people that, in some cases, just got off the operating tables, I think it's a great thing to wear a mask," Trump told reporters. — AFP

Egypt grounds kites for safety...

Continued from Page 1

youths from rooftops and on corniches, as the hobby took off during night-time curfews to limit the spread of coronavirus.

But they have also raised complaints, including from an MP. Khaled Abu Taleb, a member of par-

liament's Defense and National Security Committee, said last month he wanted the prime minister briefed on the dangers of flying kites because they posed "a national security threat". The kites might be equipped with surveillance cameras, he said. Abu Taleb was roundly ridiculed on social media in Egypt, where operating a

drone is only authorized with a special permit. A three-month curfew was lifted in June, even as cases of COVID-19 in Egypt continue to rise, with over 80,000 declared infections and nearly 4,000 deaths to date. — AFP

In My View

Knowledge is wealth



By Abdellatif Sharaa

local@kuwaittimes.com

Every society has its own unique traditions, customs, behaviors and a certain ways of communicating. What may be alright in one place may not be in another, especially when it comes to local dialects and so on. When I travelled to Morocco, a North African Arab country, for example, I was cautioned not to say certain phrases that we are used to here in the eastern part of the Arab world, because if I say them, I will get in trouble although they are supposed to be complimentary!

Now, the internet and social media are making things easier, although it is still human nature to do what one is used to. Many are the means through which we can learn about other people's customs and traditions, including the internet, documentaries and movies, and we can pick what is beneficial and what we need to know. Still, it is much better for the enrichment of our knowledge to read about other societies and their history.

Of course I am not asking we should become anthropologists, but common knowledge, and knowledge itself, is a wealth like no other. There may be some people out there who believe that I am promoting and pushing for picking up the habit of reading, and I am, because this is what will take us to new horizons and add to the civilization of mankind, and let us not forget that early civilizations were born out of the book.

There are sayings that mean a lot and need to be understood so that their logic and wisdom can be well digested. I chose few lines to share with our dear readers, such as:

- Illness is a destiny, but treatment is a decision.
- Marriage is a destiny, and divorce is a decision.
- Having people in your life is a destiny, keeping them is a decision.
- If you do not own destiny, you have decision.
- If there are any faults in the body, they can be concealed with two yards of fabric, but faults of the thought can be exposed during the first discussion.
- Illness is not in the body alone, but in manners and morals also, so if you meet someone with bad manners, pray that he be cured, and thank God for being free from what he is suffering from.
- We are created from a spermatozoon, so do not judge people by their looks; rather judge them by what is in their hearts.
- We originated from mud and the best of our clothes come from a worm, and the tastiest of our foods comes from a bee, and our resting place underground is a hole.
- It is amazing how one can find an excuse for everything, and does not excuse people for anything.
- The butterfly, despite its beauty, is an insect.
- A cactus despite its harshness is a flower.
- Be whatever you want to be because today you are walking, and tomorrow you may be buried.
- Do good regardless of how small it may be, as you do not know what deed may take you to heaven!

Fire crew controls Amghara storage facility blaze



KUWAIT: Firefighters managed to put out a blaze that erupted in a 2,000-square-metre store of blankets and bags in Jahra governorate's district of

Amghara, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFS) said on Saturday. The firefighters, which were dispatched from five different fire stations, cordoned off

the area and controlled the fire despite the active wind, the directorate's media and public relations department added in a statement. No human injuries

were reported, but there were some material losses, it said. An investigation team is working on uncovering the causes behind the incident, it noted. — KUNA



Hundreds shops shut for breaching COVID-19 precaution

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality said on Saturday it recently carried out its largest shop closures under phase two of coronavirus lockdown easing, with a total of 122 forced shut due to a lack of health standards and commitment to social distancing. Some nine closures included the "Friday Market, a large supermarket in Mirqab and a famous furniture company at a mall," Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi said in a statement. They come after 113 shops were sealed off before the June 30 phase two of lockdown easing. The Municipality will not hesitate to shut down any shop or

market found not complying with health and safety precautions issued by the Cabinet and the Ministry of Health, he said. The official added that after being granted approval for the reopening, health authority precautions and social distancing rules at the Friday Market were not observed, therefore the decision was taken to close the outdoor venue. Meanwhile, Manfouhi led a Municipality team that went on an inspection tour at Mubarakiya Market yesterday to check on shops' compliance with precautions set by authorities to help limit the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi and other municipality officials inspect Mubarakiya Market yesterday.

News in brief

Expat labor checkups back

KUWAIT: Health inspection centers for expatriate labor reopened yesterday with online registration now made possible, a health ministry official has said. The centers began operating according to a 30 percent capacity during the first phase of coronavirus lockdown easing, which will gradually increase in later phases, public health director Dr Fahad Al-Ghimlas added. The registration process, simply by entering one's civil ID information on the ministry website, is open to the employee's sponsor, a company representative or the expatriate themselves. The checkup's destination is selected according to the address of the applicant or their workplace but the time will be optional based on available timeslots. Visitors will only be allowed entry wearing a face mask and will be required to maintain social distancing with others by no less than two meters.

Friday prayer regulations

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health announced health requirements to be taken during Friday prayers at mosques, which are expected to resume starting next Friday. The requirements include opening the mosque for half an hour before prayer, allowing entry to the mosque only for men aged between 18 and 50 years, worshippers must use a personal prayer mat, Friday sermons must last for only five minutes, worshippers must wear facemasks and gloves, and observe social distancing, and mosques must open all doors to allow prayers to go out easier after the prayer is finished.

Visa transfer resumes

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower announced the resumption of the transfer service from one employer to another employer for 'Article 18' visa holders. The service is available online through the authority's 'Ashal' platform, and is available for business owners by yearly subscription, the authority explained

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A photo taken on July 11, 2020, shows a partial view of the Sheikh Jaber causeway in Kuwait City at sunrise. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Adan Hospital's ECMO center wins int'l excellence award

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KUWAIT: Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah receives members of the ECMO department at Kuwait's Adan Hospital. — KUNA

KUWAIT: ECMO department at Kuwait's Adan Hospital has won the Gold Level Center of Excellence Award, provided by the Extracorporeal Life Support Organization (ELSO), in recognition of its life support application. Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) is one of the top new technologies in ICU units, said Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah in a statement on Saturday, after receiving members of the ECMO department at his office. He added that this technol-

ogy is aimed at improving the condition of patients suffering heart and respiratory system failure, by providing sufficient levels of oxygen in the bloodstream. The ECMO committee had been preparing for this award for three years, the minister noted. Kuwait's center is one of five similar centers out of 44 that won the award in the West Asia and Africa region. The award also considered Adan's ECMO as one of the best 150 centers out of 1000 worldwide providing such services. — KUNA

Athletes adapt to COVID-19 restrictions: PAS

KUWAIT: Sports activities in Kuwait have just passed the first phase of resumption, the body overlooking the sector said on Saturday, citing athletes were subjected to rigorous testing to ensure they were free of the novel coronavirus. Athletes who have not been examined are "strictly prohibited" from resuming training, Kuwait's Public Authority for Sports' (PAS) deputy direc-

tor general Saqer Al-Mulla said in a statement, urging all sports clubs to abide by guidelines and safety precautions outlined by the country's health ministry. Sports activities were allowed to restart under rigid health protocols in light of the coronavirus pandemic, amid strict surveillance measures put in place by a tripartite committee comprising PAS, the health ministry and Kuwait's Olympic Committee, the official added. To ensure their safety, the athletes will have to respect social distancing guidelines and be mindful of the risks when they carry on individual or group performance training, he explained. After more than three months of shutdown, competitive sport in Kuwait was given the green light to resume last month provided strict conditions are met. — KUNA



KUWAIT: PAS deputy director general Saqer Al-Mulla with the Health Ministry's team. — KUNA

International

MONDAY, JULY 13, 2020



In crisis-hit Lebanon, will French-language schools survive?

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Hagia Sophia: Erdogan rebuffs worldwide condemnation

Page 6



SANAA: Yemeni drivers wait in line to refill their cars at a nearby petrol station in the capital Sanaa amid fuel shortages.— AFP

Yemen fuel supplies ‘weaponized’

Fuel shortage putting millions of lives at risk

SANAA: A fuel shortage is blighting life in the swathes of Yemen controlled by Houthi rebels, cutting electricity supplies, halting water pumps and stranding people in need of medical care as warring sides trade blame. Energy scarcity is nothing new in a country ravaged by years of conflict, but queues at the pumps have been getting longer by the day since mid-June.

“What’s happening is an injustice,” said Sanaa resident Hames Al-Tawil as he waited in a snaking line of vehicles that reached the gates of the presidential palace four kilometers away. Cars and vans parked three abreast stretched through the summer heat as far as the eye could see. “At least have mercy on the people who’ve been waiting in this queue for three days,” Tawil said through the rusted doorframe of his pickup truck.

Yemen is already at breaking point, facing what the United Nations calls the world’s worst humanitarian crisis after almost six years of violence. The war, which has claimed tens of thousands of lives, pits the government against the Iran-allied Houthis, who in 2014 seized the capital Sanaa and much of the country’s north. The government and the Saudi-led military coalition backing it have accused the rebels of causing fuel shortages to

boost their case for the lifting of crippling restrictions imposed by the coalition’s naval and air blockade. The Houthis meanwhile accuse coalition forces of obstructing fuel shipments to hamstringing them economically.

‘Millions at risk’

A similar fuel crisis last year prompted aid group Oxfam to accuse warring parties in Yemen of “using the economy as a weapon of war”. Oxfam’s Yemen director Muhsin Siddiquey warned last month of dire knock-on consequences if the fuel crisis persists. Many Yemenis rely on groundwater extracted with pumps, while millions displaced by fighting and living in camps survive on water brought in by diesel-powered trucks. “A protracted fuel shortage could put millions at risk of both contracting coronavirus and water-borne diseases like cholera because fuel is essential for the supply of clean water in Yemen,” Siddiquey said.

Shortages have also affected hospital operations,

halted transport services and sent prices of essential goods soaring. One liter of petrol now sells for 1,200 riyals (two dollars) on the black market-triple the price before the current shortages. The Houthi-controlled Yemen Petroleum Company last month warned that its gasoline and diesel stockpiles were being depleted. It charged that the coalition had for more than 90 days been preventing 15 tankers delivering 420,000 tons of petrol and diesel to the southwestern port of Hodeida.

The coalition has been inspecting ships bound for Hodeida, Yemen’s main import hub, to block arms deliveries to the Houthis. “We’re hoping that a resolution is found very quickly because the impact on the population is devastating,” the UN humanitarian coordinator in Yemen Lise Grande said. “Fuel that’s needed to keep hospitals functioning and water plants functioning and irrigation systems functioning... is being held up in ships.” She said the country’s economic situation

“looks scarily similar to what we saw when the country was on the brink of famine 18 months ago”.

The Houthis have also barred fuel convoys from government-held areas entering their territory, claiming the products are of substandard quality and don’t meet safety guidelines, according to independent Yemeni energy sector sources. The director of the Al-Thawra public hospital in Sanaa said shortages had had a “direct effect” on the facility, which no longer has a regular power supply. “Due to the lack of fuel, the doctors and nurses cannot easily get to the hospital for their shifts,” said Abdallatif Abu Taleb, adding that dialysis treatment and intensive care operations were particularly vulnerable.

In Hodeida, health centre worker Fatima said she had been queuing at the pumps for two days in temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) to fill up. “I left my car in the queue overnight,” she told AFP, adding that food prices have surged due to higher transportation costs. Bus driver Hani Mohammed, who plies the route between Hodeida and the capital Sanaa, suspended his service for a fortnight before resuming. But the fuel shortage has forced him to double his fares.— AFP



Yemen is already at breaking point

Sudan criminalizes genital mutilation

KHARTOUM: Sudan’s highest governing body Friday ratified a law criminalizing female genital mutilation, a widespread ritual in the African country, the justice ministry announced. The sovereign council, comprising military and civilian figures, approved a series of laws including criminalization of the age-old practice known as FGM or genital cutting that “undermines the dignity of women”, the ministry said in a statement.

The reform comes a year after longtime president Omar Al-Bashir was toppled following months of mass pro-reform protests on the streets in which women played a key role. Sudan’s cabinet in April approved amendments to the criminal code that would punish those who perform FGM. “The mutilation of a woman’s genital organs is now considered a crime,” the justice ministry said, punishable by up to three years in prison.

It said doctors or health workers who carry out genital cutting would be penalized, and hospitals, clinics or other places where the operation was carried out would be shut. Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok hailed Friday’s decision. “It is an important step on the way to judicial reform and in order to achieve the slogan of the revolution—freedom, peace and justice,” he tweeted. The premier vowed that Sudan’s new authorities would “forge ahead and review laws and make amendments to rectify flaws in the legal system”. Nearly nine out of 10 girls in Sudan fall victim to FGM, according to the United Nations. In its most brutal form, it involves the removal of the labia and clitoris, often in unsanitary conditions and without anaesthesia. The wound is then sewn shut, often causing cysts and infections and leaving women to suffer severe pain during sex and childbirth complications later in life. Rights groups have for years decried as barbaric the practice, which can lead to myriad physical, psychological and sexual complications and, in the most tragic cases, death.

The watershed move is part of reforms that have come



OMDURMAN, Sudan: Vendors ride on a horse-drawn cart in the Sudanese capital’s twin city of Omdurman, as the country eases lockdown measures following three months of tight restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.— AFP

since Bashir’s ouster. “It is a very important step for Sudanese women and shows that we have come a long way,” women’s rights activist Zeinab Badreddin said in May. The United Nations Children’s Fund has also welcomed the move. “This practice is not only a violation of every girl child’s rights, it is harmful and has serious consequences for a girl’s physical and mental health,” said Abdullah Fadil, the UNICEF Representative in Khartoum. The UN says FGM is widespread in many countries across Africa, the Middle East and Asia, affecting the lives of millions of girls and women.

In Sudan, rights campaigners say the custom has over the past three decades spread to remote regions where it was previously not practiced, including Sudan’s Nuba mountains. In neighboring Egypt, as in several other countries, genital cutting is now prohibited. A 2008 law punishes it with up to seven years in prison. Sudan’s anti-FGM advocates came close to a ban in 2015 when a bill was discussed in parliament but then shot down by Bashir who caved in to pressure from some Islamic clerics. Yet many religious leaders have spoken out against genital cutting over the years.— AFP

Inventor of Israel’s Iron Dome seeking virus game-changer

TEL AVIV: Daniel Gold, who led the team that invented Israel’s Iron Dome missile defense system, has a history of safeguarding the country against what he identifies as existential threats. With the nation facing surging coronavirus cases amid a pandemic that has triggered unprecedented economic hardship, Gold is trying to replicate his Iron Dome breakthrough in protecting Israel against the virus.

Gold, who heads Israel’s Defense Research and Development Directorate and holds PhDs in electronic engineering and business management, has become a celebrated figure in the Jewish state. Iron Dome faced widespread skepticism over its effectiveness before it was deployed in 2011, but it has since been credited with intercepting countless rockets fired from the Gaza Strip. Gold told AFP that he first became convinced of Israel’s need for missile defense technology during the 1990-91 Gulf War, when Saddam Hussein’s forces launched Iraqi scud missiles towards Tel Aviv.

“Tel Aviv was empty” at the time, he said in an interview at Israel’s defense ministry. “I decided we had to do something.” In 2004, when Gold was a general heading R&D for the defense ministry, he resolved to move forward, even without the full backing of Israel’s defense establishment. “I anticipated (rocket-fire) would be a main threat to Israel... a major threat with no solution,” he said. “I told my superiors, give me the money. I will do it... All the hierarchy said no. The government said no.” Gold’s team started work anyway, collaborating with private defense contractors.

They developed two dozen missile defense concepts, scrapped them all, then started from scratch. In 2007, Iron Dome was formally selected as Israel’s missile defense system. The same year, the Islamist group Hamas took control

of Gaza in 2007. Its fighters and militants from other jihadist groups have since lobbed thousands of rockets and other projectiles towards Israel. Israel has imposed a strict blockade on the territory that it says is necessary to contain Hamas but which critics argue amounts to collective punishment and deepens Gaza’s humanitarian crisis.

‘Game-changer’

Gold said his motivation for designing Iron Dome was to “save lives” and “maintain the continuity of life in Israel”. Even in times of crisis, with rockets raining down, he said he wanted people to “at least (be able) to go to work”. The nature of the pandemic threat may be different, but Gold’s motivations in combating the virus are strikingly similar. Since developing Iron Dome, he has retired from the army and worked in the private sector before returning to the defense ministry as a civilian to lead its R&D directorate. In early March, during a meeting at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office, he realized the gravity of the coronavirus threat, he said.

His department’s coronavirus work has focused on three areas: “life-saving”, including domestic production of ventilators, helping the health system prepare for an overwhelming caseload and what he termed a “game-changer”. The final category has largely centered on designing coronavirus tests that give accurate results in less than 60 seconds, using breath, smell or artificial intelligence. Various concepts are undergoing major trials, involving private sector and government partners. “We hope that if we succeed, it is a game-changer around the world,” said Gold.

New friends?

And while he noted that his primary motivation is to keep Israel safe from the virus, an Israeli coronavirus breakthrough could help forge ties among countries that do not recognize the Jewish state. His team has heard “from countries we never worked with before”, he said. Last month, companies in the United Arab Emirates and Israel announced plans to jointly develop anti-virus technology, despite the two countries having no official diplomatic ties. Coronavirus research “is already creating new relationships”, Gold said.— AFP

International

Tunisian families battling to repatriate jihadists children

Kids stuck in a displacement camp in Syria

KAIROUAN: Over WhatsApp from Tunisia, Taheyya has watched her grandchildren grow up in Syria, where her son joined a jihadist group. She hopes one day to be able to hold the three surviving siblings in her arms, but for now they are stuck in a displacement camp in the war-torn country. "These are our grandchildren. All we are asking is to be able to take care of them, for them to live somewhere other than in war, poverty and ignorance," Taheyya said.

Like others AFP spoke to, she preferred not to provide her surname for fear of reprisals against the children. For three years, Taheyya has done the rounds of ministries and NGOs to try to repatriate her three-year-old granddaughter and two grandsons, aged five and six. Their father left for Syria in 2012, where he joined the Islamic State group and was killed. She said the eldest grandchild needed treatment for a head injury, and two other siblings have already died because of a lack of medical care.

In a folder, Taheyya carefully keeps a bundle of documents that sums up their torturous lives: pixelated photos, identity papers issued by the fleeing IS caliphate. The children now live in a camp on the Turkish-Syrian border with their mother, a young Syrian who was married when she was not yet 14. Tunisians have constituted one of the largest groups of foreign jihadists in Syria, Iraq and Libya since 2011, with almost 3,000 departures, according to the Tunisian authorities. Like Taheyya, dozens of other families are trying to repatriate at least 140

Tunisian children stuck in conflict zones, where their parents are suspected of joining jihadist groups.

'The will exists'

The Observatory of Rights and Freedoms of Tunis, which is in contact with the families, counts 104 children in Syria, almost all of them in camps. Three quarters were born there and are under the age of six. Another 36 are in Libya, either detained by militias or being looked after by the Red Crescent. While public opinion at home is hostile towards the return of jihadists, President Kais Saied raised families' hopes in January by bringing back six orphans from Libya and promising to "speed up the repatriation" of the others. But since then, there have been no further returns. From a middle-class family in central Kairouan, Taheyya's son was one of the first in his neighborhood to leave for Syria. A cook in the merchant navy, he survived a hostage-taking by Somali pirates and later joined groups fighting the regime in Syria.

He opened a restaurant in the city of Raqa, once the de facto capital of IS in Syria, and was killed in late 2018 while trying to flee, according to his family. "He had asked me to take care of his children," his younger brother said, adding that he himself had travelled to Turkey twice but had failed to obtain their return. "We talk to them every two or three days, when the network allows, but we have gone for several months without news," Taheyya said. "I have never been able to hug them." Officials at the



KAIROUAN, Tunisia: Taheyya, a grandmother from the Tunisian city of Kairouan, about 160 kilometers south of the capital Tunis, is pictured with her grandchildren whose uncle was killed in Syria.

Tunisian foreign ministry said that "the will exists" for repatriations, pointing the finger at foreign authorities and the novel coronavirus pandemic that has slowed down discussions.

'How can you sleep?'

The foreign affairs bureau of the Kurdish administration in northeastern Syria denied the Tunisian government had contacted them about repatriations. AFP correspondents in Syria said they saw



BATINTAH, Syria: Photo shows an aerial view of a camp for displaced Syrians from Idlib and Aleppo provinces. — AFP photos

many Tunisians leaving the former IS bastion of Baghouz during the final battle of 2019. People there were taken to the Kurdish-run Al-Hol camp, now home to thousands of IS wives and their children. No specific figures were available for the number of Tunisians currently at Al-Hol.

Like Taheyya, Fethia is also looking for her grandchildren. Her daughter was taken to Syria in 2013 by her husband, who had joined groups fighting against the regime. — AFP

News in brief

Quake rattles Chinese city

BEIJING: A 4.7-magnitude earthquake struck the northern Chinese city of Tangshan yesterday, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), reviving memories of a devastating 1976 quake there that was the deadliest in modern times. Yesterday's tremor occurred at 6:38 am, the USGS said, with the epicenter in a suburban residential district just outside downtown Tangshan, about 200 kilometers east of Beijing. China's seismological authority put the magnitude at 5.1 and said it struck at a depth of 10 kilometers. On July 28, 1976, Tangshan, then a coal mining city of about one million people, was obliterated by a 7.8-magnitude quake and subsequent 7.1 aftershock about 15 hours later. China says about 240,000 people were killed, although it is widely believed to have downplayed the number for political reasons. — AFP

Nearly 300 wildfires in Siberia

MOSCOW: Russia's forest service said there were nearly 300 wildfires blazing across the vast country's northern wilderness on Saturday, as it attempted to contain them with methods including explosives and cloud seeding. Freakishly warm weather across large swathes of Siberia since January, combined with low soil moisture, have contributed to a resurgence of wildfires that devastated the region last summer, the European Union's climate monitoring network said this week. Both the number and intensity of fires in Siberia and parts of Alaska have increased since mid-June, resulting in the highest carbon emissions for the month - 59 million tons of CO₂ - since records began in 2003, it said. Russia's Aerial Forest Protection Service said it was trying to suppress 136 fires over 43,000 hectares as of Saturday. Firefighters are using explosives to contain the fires and seeding clouds with silver iodide to encourage rain, it said. — AFP

'Conversion therapy' content

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook said it is banning content that promotes "conversion therapy," which is based on the unfounded notion that gays can change their sexual orientation through psychological or spiritual intervention. Facebook and its image-centric social network Instagram are updating policies to require removal of content that directly promotes conversion therapy when such posts are flagged by users, according to the California-based internet giant. The move is an extension of an existing ban on ads that promote the tactic, which medical experts consider ineffective and often harmful. "We don't allow attacks against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity and are updating our policies to ban the promotion of conversion therapy services," a Facebook spokesperson said in response to an AFP inquiry. — AFP

Twitter accounts suspended

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter has suspended more than 50 white nationalist accounts for violating policies against violent extremism. "The accounts in question were suspended for violating our policies in relation to violent extremism," a Twitter spokesman told AFP, confirming a report by NBC News. The move came days after release of a report by nonprofit Global Project Against Hate and Extremism saying that propaganda pushed by white supremacist network Generation Identity is "rampant" on Twitter and YouTube. "At this point, it is well accepted that white supremacy is as significant a threat for generating mass casualty terrorist acts internationally as other forms of extremism," the report concluded. — AFP

Mali president tries to calm unrest with court dissolution

BAMAKO: Mali's embattled president announced the dissolution of the constitutional court in an attempt to calm the major civil unrest gripping the vulnerable African country, as more opposition leaders were arrested. The court has been at the centre of controversy since it overturned provisional results for a parliamentary poll earlier this year, triggering protests in several cities that on Friday descended into violence.

Clashes raged again in the capital Bamako on Saturday as demonstrators-angered by a long-running jihadist conflict, economic woes and perceived government corruption-demanded the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. Authorities say four people have died in the unrest, while six opposition figures have been detained in two days as the government cracks down on an alliance



BAMAKO: Protesters set fire to barricades to block the circulation on the Martyrs bridge of Bamako. Malian Prime Minister Boubou Cisse has vowed to rapidly form a government 'open to facing the challenges of the day', adding that four more people had died in the country's worst civil unrest in years. — AFP

known as the June 5 Movement. Keita said he had repealed the licenses of all remaining members of the constitutional court so that new judges could be appointed from next week.

"The reformed court can quickly help us find



ISTANBUL: People walk in front of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, a day after a top Turkish court revoked the sixth-century Hagia Sophia's status as a museum, clearing the way for it to be turned back into a mosque. — AFP

Hagia Sophia: Erdogan rejects worldwide condemnation

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday rejected worldwide condemnation over Turkey's decision to convert the Byzantine-era monument Hagia Sophia back into a mosque, saying it represented his country's will to use its "sovereign rights". Erdogan, who critics say is chipping away at the Muslim-majority country's secular pillars, announced Friday that Muslim prayers would begin on July 24 at the UNESCO World Heritage site.

In the past, he has repeatedly called for the stunning building to be renamed as a mosque and in 2018, he recited a verse from the Koran at Hagia Sophia. "Those who do not take a step against Islamophobia in their own countries ... attack Turkey's will to use its sovereign rights," Erdogan said during a ceremony he attended via video-conference. A magnet for tourists worldwide, the Hagia Sophia was first constructed as a cathedral in the Christian Byzantine Empire but was converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453.

Erdogan's announcement came after a top court cancelled a 1934 cabinet decision under modern Turkey's secularizing founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk to preserve the church-turned-mosque as a museum. The court ruled that "there are no provisions whatsoever in the convention (concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural

Heritage) that prevents ... the usage of the Hagia Sophia in accordance with domestic law."

Erdogan then signed a presidential decree handing the control of the "Hagia Sophia Mosque" to Turkey's religious affairs directorate, Diyanet. "We made this decision not looking at what others say but looking what our right is and what our nation wants, just like what we have done in Syria, in Libya and elsewhere," the Turkish leader said Saturday.

'A blow to global Christianity'

Erdogan went ahead with the plan despite appeals from NATO ally the United States and from Russia, with which Ankara has forged close relations in recent years. Greece swiftly condemned the move as a provocation, France deplored it while the United States also expressed disappointment. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko said Saturday Moscow regretted the decision. "The cathedral is on Turkey's territory, but it is without question everybody's heritage," he told the Interfax news agency.

The influential bishop Hilarion, who heads the Russian Orthodox Church's department for external church relations, also expressed his sorrow. "It is a blow to global Christianity ... For us (Hagia Sophia) remains a cathedral dedicated to the Savior," he told state TV Rossiya24 late Friday. And the World Council of Churches, which represents 350 Christian churches, said it had written to Turkey's president expressing their "grief and dismay".

But Ozgur Nuhisaricki, Ankara director of the German Marshall Fund, told AFP the move would win hearts and minds at home as most Turks "would favour such a decision for religious or nationalist sentiments." — AFP

Burkina Faso's Kabore clinches party backing despite jihadist unrest

OUAGADOUGOU: Burkina Faso President Roch Marc Christian Kabore's party backed him Saturday to run for re-election despite struggling to crush a bloody jihadist insurgency. Simon Compaore, president of the People's Movement for Progress (MPP), made the announcement to cheering supporters at a stadium rally in the capital Ouagadougou. The decision, which came after several hours of closed-door discussions among party delegates, came as little surprise, as he was his party's only candidate to run. Kabore himself could not attend the event, because of his role, said a party executive. But in a message read out by a party spokesman, he welcomed the decision and promised to build "solidarity and development" in the country.

Thousands turned out in a massive show of force, filling a 5,000-capacity sports stadium in Ouagadougou and 20 giant tents outside. Crowds wearing the party colours of white and orange had been bussed in from all over the country. The prime minister, national assembly speaker and first lady also turned up at the stadium, ignoring the coronavirus pandemic, to voice support as the crowd inside the stadium shouted "MPP Victory!" "It's a message to opposition political parties. They shouldn't think they can beat our champion," said Kader Tapsoba, a 46-year-old businessman.

Surge of jihadist violence

Since Kabore took charge however, a jihadist offensive has advanced across the nation, igniting ethnic squabbles, claiming at least 1,100 lives and forcing nearly a million people from their homes. Kabore's performance during this mounting crisis is now under scrutiny as the presidential ballot looms in November. The grim public mood today is the polar opposite of the optimism that swept the country in 2015, of when Kabore rode to electoral triumph with more than 53 percent of the vote.

Nearly a third of the country's provinces are in a state of emergency, swathes of territory are de facto no-go areas, and more than 2,000 schools have closed. The flow of foreign tourists has dried up, dealing a further blow to one of the world's weakest economies. "The surge of attacks and rising violence are due to the fact that there hasn't been an appropriate response to the threat," said security expert Mahamoudou Savadogo. But party leaders insist that 63-year-old Kabore is the best man for the job. Kabore's successes are "incontestable", MPP president Simon Compaore told AFP, citing road infrastructure projects, improvements in the health sector and greater access to drinking water. — AFP

International

We face famine or COVID: Syria's displaced alarmed at aid impasse

A divided UN holds up a renewal of cross-border humanitarian aid

MAARET MISRIN: After surviving months of bombardment, Nasr Sultan now fears his 10 children may starve or catch coronavirus as a divided UN holds up a renewal of cross-border humanitarian aid to rebel-held northwest Syria. A UN Security Council resolution authorizing aid deliveries through the Turkish border expired on Friday as Russia and China vetoed an extension. The world body's failure to agree on a compromise formula has threatened humanitarian assistance to an estimated 2.8 million people who depend on such handouts.

Germany and Belgium are still working on an initiative to rescue the authorization in place since 2014, with hopes of bringing it to a vote this weekend. But regime-ally Russia is pushing for reduced access on the grounds of sovereignty, prompting outrage in northwest Syria's Idlib province, which this week recorded its first coronavirus cases. In a crowded Idlib displacement camp, 45-year-old Nasr said life without aid would plunge into hunger many of those who had already lost their homes in Syria's nine-year war. "We have abandoned our home, our land and our livelihoods. The aid they give us is all we have," he said from inside his tent near the town of Maaret Misrin. "If the assistance is scrapped, we will face famine."

'Coronavirus will get us'

The Idlib region, Syria's last major opposition bastion, is home to some three million people, nearly half of whom have been displaced from other regions. Nasr's family fled their hometown in southern Idlib to safer areas near the border with Turkey after a regime offensive that displaced nearly a million people between December and March. A truce

has stemmed the Russia-backed campaign on Idlib, a region dominated by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a jihadist group led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, and their rebel allies.

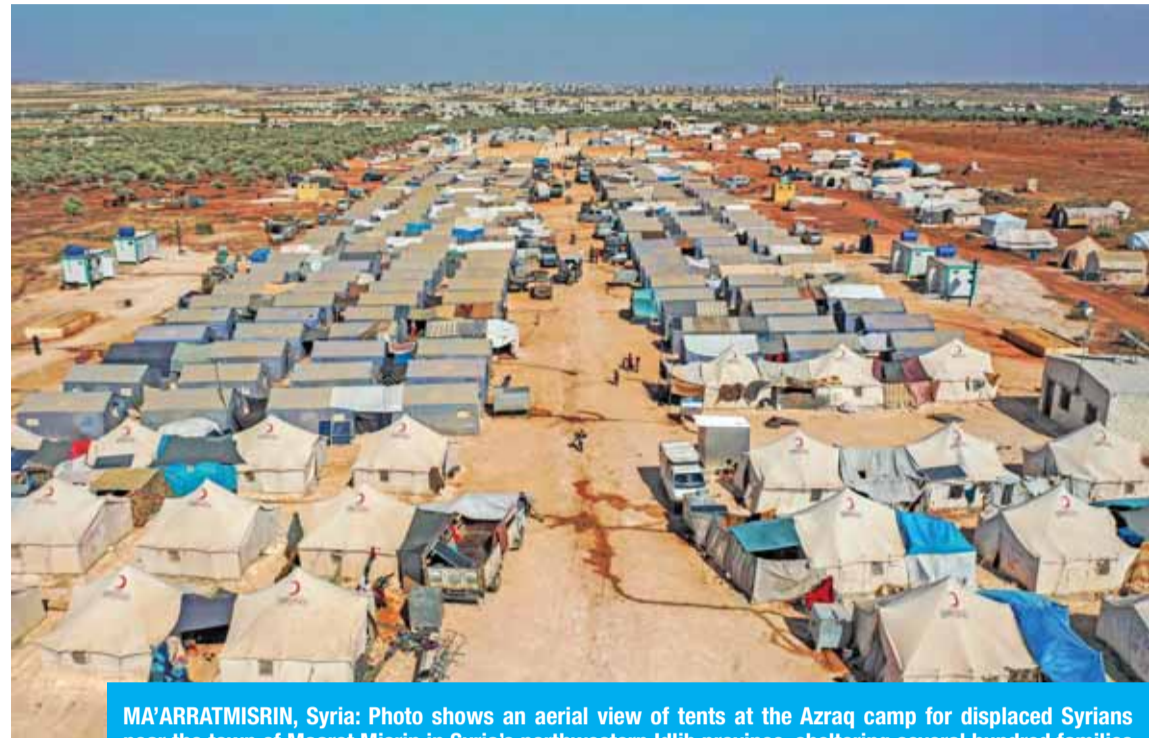
Apart from food insecurity, Idlib has recorded at least three cases of COVID-19 since Thursday, sparking fears of a health catastrophe if the pan-



Russia and China veto extension

dem hits overcrowded displacement camps. The confirmed cases are all medical personnel working in hospitals near the Turkish border. "If medical assistance is not delivered to the camps, then we will be finished" said Nasr. "The coronavirus will get us."

Abed al-Salam Youssef, also displaced, said camp residents will be more vulnerable to the coronavirus if aid is halted, especially since many will have to venture out to seek food and work. "How can we commit to confinement inside the camps if people can't even secure their basic daily needs without humanitarian assistance?" he asked. "Most of the displaced rely entirely on monthly food baskets" distributed by aid groups to survive, Youssef added.



MA'ARRATMISRIN, Syria: Photo shows an aerial view of tents at the Azraq camp for displaced Syrians near the town of Maaret Misrin in Syria's northwestern Idlib province, sheltering several hundred families displaced by conflict from the northern Hama and southern and eastern Idlib countryside. — AFP

Save the Children also condemned the UN's failure so far to renew the authorization for aid distribution to the displaced without having to pass through Damascus. "The border crossings were the only meaningful way for vital humanitarian aid ... to reach families in northwest Syria," it said in a statement. "If the border crossings are not reinstated,

many families will not be able to eat, will not receive healthcare, and will not find shelter" said the charity's CEO, Inger Ashing.

European countries and the US want to maintain two crossings on the Turkish border—at Bab al-Salama, which leads to the Aleppo region, and Bab al-Hawa, serving Idlib. — AFP

Panama hospitals on verge of collapse as COVID cases surge

PANAMA CITY: Hospitals in Panama are on the brink of collapse as coronavirus cases spike in the Central American country worst hit by the pandemic, where doctors are already exhausted. With a population of four million, Panama has gone from 200 cases a day to 1,100 over the last few weeks. "Our daily number of infected patients has been increasing in a sustained way to the point of passing 1,000 cases," David Villalobos, head of the intensive care unit at the Arnulfo Arias Madrid Hospital in Panama City, told AFP. "There are no hospitals that could sustain such a number," he said.

The sharp increase has forced authorities to adapt existing hospitals and look for new spaces, like convention centers, to boost a health system with a range of problems including long waiting lists. "The fear of the collapse of the public system in our country is evident if the number of cases remains the same," Domingo Moreno, coordinator of a coalition of healthcare workers' unions, told AFP. "In the next two weeks we probably won't have anywhere to put beds." With 42,000 cases and 839 deaths, Panama has the worst official tally of coronavirus infections in the region.

'It's exhausting'

According to official figures, close to 20,000 people are in isolation at home or in hotels. Another 1,000 are receiving hospital treatment, 159 of whom are in intensive care. Authorities estimate that of every 100 people infected, 20 end up in hospital-meaning that at the current rate, 200 people a day are being admitted to hospital, and 50 to intensive care. "It's exhausting, sometimes we have to go back at night for admissions. But here we are," Giselle Sanchez, a doctor caring for the most serious COVID-19 patients, told AFP.

Doctors and nurses around the country have protested in recent weeks demanding medical supplies and protective equipment. "There's fear of infection, of being in a situation that puts your life at risk. This is a war of attrition," said Moreno. President Laurentino Cortizo recently pledged to carry out 4,000 tests a day to find and isolate those infected. But some people, like Silda Idalia Rios, are afraid of taking the test because of rumors circulating about the pandemic. The virus "has come to attack us", she told AFP, conceding that "you need to accept that you have to take a test to see if it's positive."

Health Minister Francisco Sucre said he was aware of a significant group of people continuing to go out despite knowing they had contracted COVID-19, making it harder to get the outbreak under control. "We are directly dependent on what the people can do or prevent in the street. The people really need to understand that we're going to collapse," said Malena Urrutia, from the COVID-19 coordination team at the Arnulfo Arias Madrid Hospital. Cortizo said: "As president I would like to tell you that it's over, but it isn't. We still don't have a vaccine. The battle goes on." — AFP

Body of Bangladesh newborn dug from grave and dumped

DHAKA: Leaders of a minority Muslim sect in Bangladesh on Saturday accused "fanatics" of digging up the body of a baby girl from a cemetery grave just hours after being buried and dumping it by a roadside. The incident, which has sparked outrage on social media, is the latest targeting Ahmadi Muslims who many mainstream Muslims consider "infidels".

The three-day-old girl was buried in a cemetery in Ghatara in the eastern district of Brahmanbaria on Thursday, local Ahmadi leader, S.M. Selim said. "Fanatics" dug up the child's body shortly after and left it by a roadside, he added. A photo of the body laid on a straw mat on a road has been widely shared and drawn angry comments. "Her crime is



DHAKA: Workers clean the huge Arabic word 'Allah-hu' atop of the Baitul Mukaram national mosque in Dhaka. Leaders of a minority Muslim sect in Bangladesh on July 11, 2020 accused 'fanatics' of digging up the body of a baby girl from a cemetery grave just hours after being buried and dumping it by a roadside. — AFP

she was born to an Ahmadi Muslim family," said Selim. Police in the district said no complaint had been made however and one officer said the inci-

dent had been resolved "peacefully". A local councilor, Azad Hazari, said he had intervened with police and the child was finally buried another graveyard some 10 miles away. A local cleric Munir Hossain denied the body had been exhumed but said local Muslims prevented the parents from burying the baby at the cemetery. "It is against the Sharia to let an infidel be buried in a Muslim graveyard," he told AFP. "The pious Muslims of the village would never let it happen." The Ahmadiis are an offshoot of the mainstream Sunni Muslim branch but are controversial because they believe their founder was a prophet.

They have faced attacks and had religious rights taken away in some Muslim majority countries, including Pakistan. The 100,000 Ahmadiis in Bangladesh have come under regular attack. In recent months, hardline Muslims have threatened to hold protests demanding that the sect be declared "non-Muslims" by the authorities. In 1999, a bomb at an Ahmadi mosque in the southern city of Khulna, killed at least eight worshippers. A 2015 suicide blast at an Ahmadi mosque in the northwestern town of Bagmara injured three people. — AFP



ZAHLE: Photo shows an empty classroom at Our Lady of Lourdes school in the Lebanese city of Zahle, in the central Bekaa region. — AFP

In crisis-hit Lebanon, will French-language schools survive?

ZAHLE: Inside the French-language school she has run for years in east Lebanon, Sister Colette Moughabghab welcomed parents devastated by the news the century-old establishment was locking up its classrooms. Books are stacked by the stairs leading to the playground that will no longer see pupils flood in autumn, after the school became the latest victim of a crippling economic crisis. "I did everything to obtain financial aid... but in vain," said Moughabghab, who has run Our Lady of Lourdes in the eastern town of Zahle for four years. "It's like closing up a home," added the nun, visibly upset about closing a school that had welcomed Christian and Muslim pupils since 1885. Lebanon, where Arabic is the official language, has a long tradition of education in French.

The first French schools were set up by Christian missionaries in the 19th century before the country came under French mandate in 1920 until its independence in 1943. Until recent years, Lebanon's French-speaking schools, mostly private and a majority of them Catholic, taught 500,000 children-equivalent to around half of all pupils nationwide. But the country's worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war has left them battling to

stay afloat as parents struggle to pay fees. "It's catastrophic," says Father Boutros Azar, secretary general of a network of 331 Catholic schools.

"Fifty to 70 schools in our network risk closing" by September, Azar said. "Without the Catholic schools, there will be no French-speaking education in Lebanon." Up to 80 percent of the schools in his network teach primarily in French and a quarter of the students who frequent them are Muslim. Fees there are up to half those of high-end private secular schools, which are also struggling to survive. The French Secular Mission that runs five private teaching institutions has already laid off 180 teachers and expects more than 1,500 students to leave over their inability to pay school fees.

Lebanon's economic crisis has seen tens of thousands of Lebanese lose their jobs or take pay cuts since the autumn. With banks capping dollar withdrawals, the Lebanese pound has lost up to 80 percent of its value on the black market, sparking alarming inflation and plunging a large segment of the population into poverty. In Sister Colette's office in Zahle, the parents of seven-year-old Julien and his younger brother are worried about the future. Other parents plan to send their children to other private schools when the new term begins, but Julien's father Samer said he is cash strapped.

"I make about 1.2 million Lebanese pounds a month, which is now worth just a little more than 150 dollars," instead of 800 a year ago, said Samer, who declined to give his surname. "I won't be able to pay for my second son to go to (private) school next year," said the 47-year-old. — AFP

At border with Iran, Iraq PM vows to fight customs corruption

MANDILI BORDER CROSSING: Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi launched a new campaign on Saturday against corruption at the country's borders, saying millions of dollars were being lost by not properly taxing imported goods. Speaking at the Mandili crossing on the border with Iran, Kadhemi said Iraq's frontier had become "a hotbed for corrupt people". "This is the beginning of our promise to combat corruption. The first phase is to protect border crossings with new security forces," he said. "The second is to fight 'ghosts' trying to blackmail Iraqis, and the third is to automate the crossing with new technology," the premier said, standing alongside Border Crossing Commission head Omar al-Waeli.

In response to a question by AFP, Kadhemi added: "We encourage businessmen (importing goods) to pay the customs, not the bribes." "This will serve as a message to all corrupt people." Iraq imports virtually all of its consumer goods from either its eastern neighbor Iran or its northern neighbor Turkey. But government officials, foreign diplomats and businessmen have long complained that the import process at both borders is complicated and rife with corruption. They accuse customs offices of getting kickbacks from traders in exchange for charging no or low import duties.

In June, Finance Minister Ali Allawi said the government would seek to boost its non-oil revenues, including through import duties, to make up for the collapse in state income from falling oil prices. "The ports should give us revenues of seven trillion Iraqi dinar a year. We only get one trillion right now," he told reporters at the time. "To close that gap, we'll need a string of reforms to the customs administration," he said. Mandili was established in 2014 and is currently controlled by a mix of intelligence forces and the Hashed al-Shaabi, a state-sponsored network of groups including many close to Tehran. There was no noticeable activity at the border on Saturday, as all of Iraq's 32 crossings remain officially closed to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus. Hashed fighters could be seen standing in the blistering midsummer sun. Iraq is ranked one of the top 20 most corrupt countries in the world according to Transparency International, with some \$450 billion in public funds vanishing into the pockets of shady politicians and businessmen since 2003. Every premier has pledged new measures to fight corruption but few have been able to make a dent in the deep-rooted practices across the public and private sector. — AFP

MONDAY, JULY 13, 2020

Business

Big Tech enthusiasm getting stronger

Pandemic lifts tech sector into stratosphere on Wall Street

NEW YORK: Tech stocks were going strong even before COVID-19, but behavioral shifts during the pandemic have lifted the sector further into the stratosphere, leaving the broader stock market far behind.

The tech-dominated Nasdaq Composite Index has closed at records in six of the last seven sessions, reflecting investors' confidence that tech companies benefit from the so-called "stay-at-home" trade even as the market has pummeled airlines, hotels and brick-and-mortar retailers.

"There's clear winners and losers right now in the market," said Dan Ives, an analyst at Wedbush Securities, who thinks the biggest tech giants could still gain another 30 percent this year.

"From a winner perspective, the clear spotlight [is on] tech names." Technology companies are a "pocket of certainty" in a time of economic weakness, said Quincy Krosby, chief market strategist at Prudential Financial.

The latest surge means that just five companies, the so-called "FAANG" group — Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google — now account for more than 20 percent of the value of the S&P 500. With spiking coronavirus cases in the US expected to bolster the dynamics behind the recent surge, the industry's biggest worry is probably politics, analysts said.

The CEOs of Apple, Google, Facebook and

Amazon are scheduled to appear on July 27 at a Capitol Hill hearing on antitrust issues, possibly raising concerns that the government's interest will move beyond political noise. "July 27th is an important day to see if it's more of a political grandstanding event or the beginning of something much broader in terms of going after the breakup of these companies," Ives said. Krosby agreed that politics remains a wildcard, and if former Vice President Joe Biden wins the battle for the White House in November that could make aggressive action by Washington more likely.

Bigger biotech

Large tech companies are expected to be a bright spot in the upcoming earnings period, which kicks off this week. While airlines and cruise companies saw revenue drops of 90 percent or more during parts of the second quarter, tech giants such as Amazon and Netflix are projected to see gains of more than 20 percent, according to Wall Street analysts.

The Nasdaq surge also reflects gains by biotech companies working on vaccines and drugs to treat COVID-19, said David Kotok, co-founder of Cumberland Advisors. The sector "is a bargain today," he said. "Healthcare companies are spending today and the revenue will come tomorrow."

"I don't think it's a bubble," Kotok added.

While the success of the Nasdaq is the most



Big tech CEOs (from left) Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, Sundar Pichai of Google, Tim Cook of Apple and Jeff Bezos of Amazon are scheduled to testify in Congress later this month.

obvious sign of the tech surge, the broad-based S&P 500 also shows the increased weight of the sector. As the COVID-19 crisis spread, the index removed motorcycle company Harley-Davidson and department stores Nordstrom and Macy's, replacing them with less familiar names like Tyler Technologies and Bio-Rad Laboratories.

Howard Silverblatt, senior index analyst at S&P Dow Jones Indices, said the pace of change could accelerate as fallout from the coronavirus crisis continues to mount. "In turbulent times, you get higher turnover," Silverblatt said. "The index at some point needs to react to the market and to the economy."

Tesla bubble?

The information technology group currently accounts for around 28 percent of the S&P 500, up from 16 percent in 2010. Silverblatt

declined to comment on speculation that Tesla will soon be added to the S&P 500, but one of the criteria is to post profits over four consecutive quarters, a requirement Tesla could meet when it reports results on July 22.

Shares of the electric car maker have enjoyed a meteoric rise of late, eclipsing even other tech companies, and they now trade at more than four times their level in mid-March. Though Tesla initially struggled to attain profitability, the surge has made it the world's biggest car company in terms of market value, well above Toyota, General Motors and other traditional auto giants that sell many times the number of vehicles.

But some think Tesla's surge has gotten out of hand, including analysts at JPMorgan Chase, who see "lofty valuation coupled with high investor expectations and high execution risk." —AFP



Large tech firms expected to be a bright spot

Global Saudi rebrands to Kamco Invest

RIYADH: Following the merger of Global Investment House (the parent company) with Kamco Investment Company, the regional investment company headquartered in Kuwait, end of last year and after obtaining the approval of the Company's general assembly and the relevant regulatory authorities in the Kingdom, Global Investment House Saudi (Global Saudi) changed its legal name and brand to Kamco Investment Company in line with the group's strategy to operate under one unified brand, "Kamco Invest".

On this occasion, Engineer Sufyan Zamil Al-Zamil, Chairman of Kamco Invest in Saudi Arabia, said, "By applying the new brand, the Company joins the Group companies located in Kuwait, the Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC) in addition to the representative office in Istanbul."

He added, "Regulated by the Capital Market Authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kamco Invest will continue to serve its clients, upgrade its services and provide diversified investment solutions to become the preferred choice for its clients".

Al-Zamil touched on the Company's business and future initiatives, noting that the Company, through the experiences it enjoys, is prepared to play a pivotal



Engineer Sufyan Zamil Al-Zamil

role in the Kingdom, while leveraging on the group's regional presence. In terms of asset management, Kamco Invest in Saudi Arabia manages the Kamco Saudi Equity Fund with AUM in excess of SAR 581 million, making it the second largest conventional Saudi equity fund, and the largest fund managed by an independent investment company not affiliated with a local bank. Although the Fund reported a negative performance since the beginning of the year until end of June 2020 by 7.34 percent and 7.18 percent for classes of units "A" and "B", respectively, due to market performance, it was still the best performing among the traditional Saudi equity funds that aim to achieve long-term capital growth.

On the investment banking side, Kamco Invest in Saudi Arabia assists clients in realizing value by matching investors with suitable investment opportu-



nities across the GCC and wider MENA region. The Company will leverage its expertise and regional presence to provide services for local and cross-border deals. It is worth mentioning that Kamco Invest has AUM of over \$13 billion as at 31 December 2019 allocated to various asset classes and jurisdictions, making it the fifth largest asset manager in the GCC according to Moody's September 2019 asset management report. It has acted as investment banker to deals exceeding \$22.3 billion from its inception to December 2019 in equity capital markets, debt capital markets and mergers & acquisitions. Al-Zamil concluded, "On this occasion, we cannot but extend our sincere appreciation to our clients for their continued confidence and support, assuring them of our continuous commitment to meet their ambitions and exceed their expectations".

Dubai unveils new economic package worth \$408m

DUBAI: Dubai has announced a new package worth 1.5 billion dirhams (\$408 million) to help the economy cope with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, the crown prince of the emirate, Hamdan Bin Mohammed Al-Maktoum, said on Twitter on Saturday. The package is the third announced by Dubai, the second-largest and second-wealthiest member of the United Arab Emirates federation. The three packages are worth a total of 6.3 billion dirhams, Sheikh Hamdan said. The latest intervention includes cancelling certain fines imposed by the government and the customs department, tax reimbursements to hotels and restaurants, financial guarantee refunds to the construction sector and exonerating private schools from licensing renewal fees. The Dubai support measures come on top of initiatives implemented at the federal level, especially by the UAE central bank, to ease financial and liquidity requirements on lenders and businesses. Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital and the largest and wealthiest member of the seven-member federation, has also introduced its own stimulus packages. —Reuters

China economy rebounds in Q2 after virus hit

BEIJING: China returned to growth in the second quarter after the coronavirus pandemic handed the world's second largest economy its first contraction in decades, according to an AFP poll of analysts. The survey of analysts from 11 institutions pegged China's growth at 1.3 percent—a far cry from the 6.1 percent expansion posted last year but in better shape than other countries still grappling with the contagion.

The coronavirus, which first emerged in China's industrial central province of Hubei late last year, has shut businesses worldwide and destroyed hundreds of millions of jobs. But analysts forecast China will be the only major economy to experience positive growth this year—partly because it was first to be hit by COVID-19 and therefore first to recover. China is expected to post 1.7 percent growth for the full year, according to the economists surveyed by AFP, compared with IMF forecasts of a global contraction. Growth data for the April to June period will be published on Thursday.

The government essentially shut down the country for months to bring the virus under control, halting factory work, keeping workers at home and limiting travel. But activity has resumed as China largely brought the epidemic under control and ended the lockdown of Hubei and its capital Wuhan in April. Authorities were

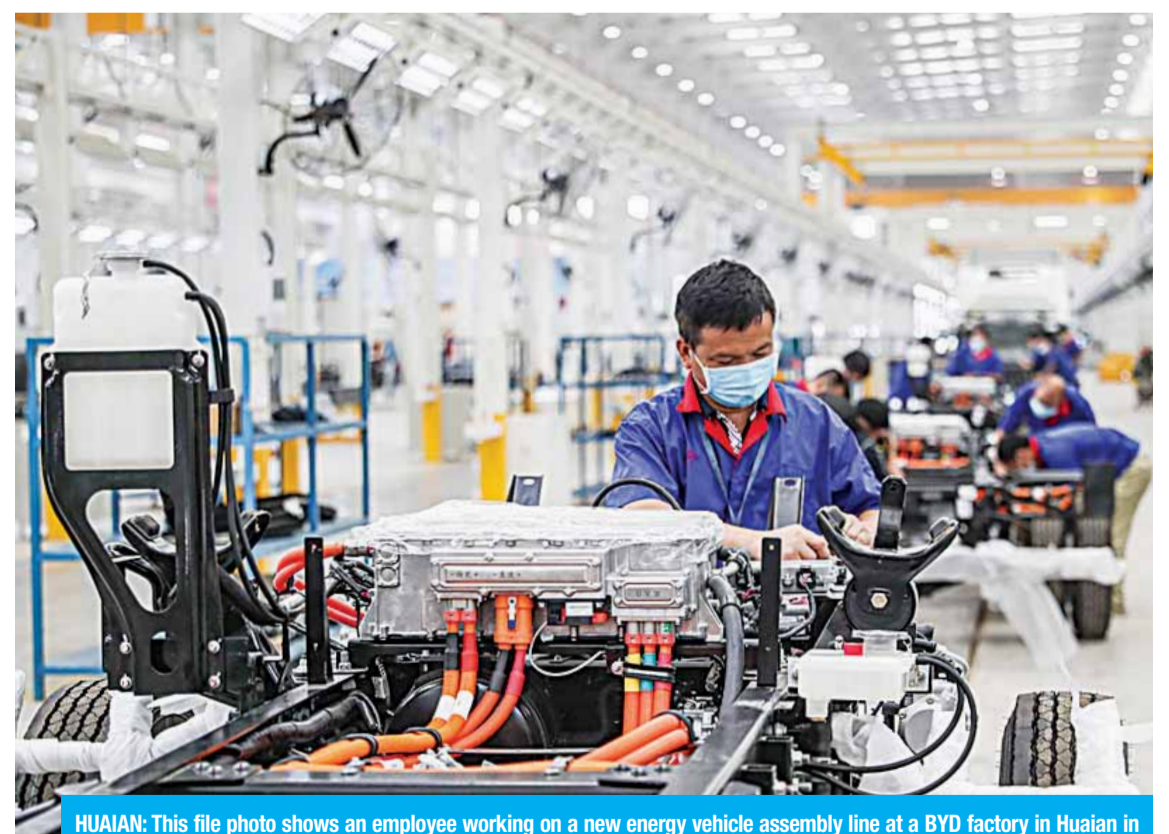
able to rein in an outbreak in Beijing last month with very limited restrictions. Xu Xiaochun of Moody's Analytics said mass testing and targeted lockdowns in the capital limited economic disruption, giving investors "quiet confidence that China stands ready to prevent a full-blown second wave of infections as the country continues to reopen".

High uncertainty

After the economy sank by 6.8 percent in the first three months of the year—the first contraction since China began logging quarterly data in the early 1990s—the government has turned its focus to stabilizing employment and ensuring living standards. It raised its budget deficit target and set aside one trillion yuan (\$140 billion) of government bonds for COVID-19 control, working to prop up businesses hit by the virus fallout. Oxford Economics' lead economist Tommy Wu expects China to continue recovering from the second quarter onwards "as it is no longer being held back by supply-side disruptions", with factories back to life.

Gene Ma, head of China research at the Institute of International Finance, said another factor behind recovery is China's more industrial-based economy. "Industrial sectors can recover faster than service sectors in the wake of the COVID-19 shock," Ma said. But Xu said there is high uncertainty ahead: "It remains to be seen how the slowdown in external demand will dampen the recovery."

External demand has been cooling with the manufacturing powerhouse's key trading partners hit by COVID-19, renewing officials' calls for businesses to turn towards the domestic market instead.



HUIJIAO: This file photo shows an employee working on a new energy vehicle assembly line at a BYD factory in Huijiao in China's eastern Jiangsu province. —AFP

Other risks include US-China tensions over issues such as cybersecurity, trade and Hong Kong's national security law, which threaten to reignite the bruising trade war, said Xu. HSBC chief China economist Qu Hongbin expects recovery to be "uneven", with a pick-up in infrastructure and other public investment but

the revival of private sector investment to "remain slow".

Qu added that consumer spending—a vital engine of China's economic growth—is expected to lag behind the recovery, impacted "in the absence of a sizeable fiscal rescue package for the affected workers and families." —AFP

Business

NBK launches its 'Summer Cashback Campaign' in collaboration with Visa

Campaign as part of rewarding its customers all year round

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait continues to reward its customers all over the year through a variety of campaigns, draws and prizes that are tailored to meet their needs and expectations. In this regard, the bank launched its annual Summer Campaign for 2020 that allows eligible NBK Visa Credit cardholders to receive a guaranteed 10 percent cashback on purchases made locally or internationally at a variety of participating merchants. The campaign will last for three months until 5 October 2020, and cashback amount will be credited to eligible NBK Visa Credit Card accounts no later than November 2020, for customers who registered for the campaign through the bank's website and met the conditions.

The list of participating merchants include: Talabat, Xcite, Eureka, Zain, Ooredoo, etc. Namshi, Farfetch, Pottery Barn, Carrefour and The Sultan Center. Eligible NBK Visa Credit Cards are: NBK Visa Signature Credit Card, NBK Visa Platinum Credit Card, NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card, NBK-

Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Signature Credit Card, NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Infinite Credit Card and NBK Visa Infinite Privilege Credit Card.

In addition, NBK-Kuwait Airways (Oasis Club) Visa Credit cardholders will also earn 3 Oasis Club Miles for every Kuwaiti Dinar spent locally, and 4 Oasis Club Miles for every Kuwaiti Dinar spent internationally. Cardholders can accumulate miles now and redeem them later for tickets and more.

On this occasion, Hisham Al-Nusif, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "Our seasonal cashback campaign this summer is totally exceptional:



Exceptional rewards for NBK customers

not only in terms of the rewards and participating merchants, but in view of the emergency health conditions of coronavirus pandemic, which confirms our keenness to reward our customers all year round, and that no circumstances will dissuade us from enriching their banking experience that integrates with the top-notch banking services and products we provide to them."

"NBK is always closer to its customers, so all campaigns and rewards are tailored to their needs and expectations. In addition, our campaigns are based on detailed monitoring of their preferences, which we identify through various communication channels available around the clock, as well as a huge database and

sophisticated analytical tools," he continued.

Al-Nusif stressed on NBK's keenness to enrich the banking experience of NBK Visa Credit cardholders by offering them a distinctive lifestyle, and the opportunity to participate in unique and outstanding campaigns all over the year, which have always been well-received with remarkable interaction from them. NBK Visa Credit Cards are the best way to pay by giving customers more convenience as well as access to many benefits, especially when using their credit cards for shopping, including NBK Rewards Program, NBK Miles Program, purchase protection and extended warranty.



Hisham Al-Nusif

KIB commences stage two of return to normal life

KUWAIT: In line with the Council of Minister's decision to commence the second phase of return to normal life in the country - which also includes return to work for the financial and banking sectors - Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that it will be resuming normal operations with added preventive measures put in place to safeguard the health and well-being of its employees and customers. The Bank has now reopened 50 percent of its branches with 30 percent staff occupancy, in addition to continuing to provide banking services through digital channels.

Commenting on the occasion, Othman Tawfeq, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB said: "KIB has always been keen to support the efforts of the Kuwaiti government in preventing the spread of the Coronavirus. In addition to adhering to all the officially mandated preventive measures to safeguard the health and well-being of both our employees and customers, we continue to offer remote banking services through our innovative online services. Customers can carry out their transactions around-the-clock with ease from the comfort of their homes, through our digital channels."

Customers will also be able to visit the Bank's operating branches from Sunday to Thursday, from 8:30 am to 1 pm, using the appointment booking facility on the KIB mobile application - a service provided using the Q-Matic system. Operational branches for corporate and personal banking services include the head office, Fintas, West Jahra and Ahmadi. Additionally, only personal banking service will be available at KIB branches in Al-Zahraa, Saad Al-Abdullah, Salmiya (Laila Gallery and Amman Street), Hawalli (eMall), Al-Daiya, Jaber Al-Ahmed, Fahaheel (opposite Al-Kout mall) and the Avenues Mall, with working hours in the latter being from 10 am to 2 pm.

It serves to note that KIB is planning to launch a number of new projects, in addition to enhancing its existing electronic services to meet the needs of all of its current and potential customers, with customer satisfaction continuing to be the Bank's top priority.

Commenting on the efforts currently underway, Musab Al-Shalan, Deputy General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at the Bank said, "KIB has been effectively utilizing its internal Social Media channels to stay in constant touch with its employees, keeping them updated with the latest business and local developments. The remote working system currently used by KIB allows a majority of the Bank's employees to continue providing service in the comfort and safety of their homes, while adhering to the strategic framework for cybersecurity recently launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait."



Othman Tawfeq

Musab Al-Shalan

In conclusion, Al-Shalan reiterated that KIB is keen to adhere to all preventive measures that curb the spread of the coronavirus between the Bank's employees and customers inside the branches, by providing special medical staff to measure the temperature of customers and to ensure that they are wearing masks and gloves before entering the branches. The Bank's branches will only allow a limited number of customers to enter at a time, while providing shaded waiting areas as well as the option for customers to wait in their cars with the bank employees calling upon them once their turn has arrived. Additionally, KIB's head office and all of its branches and ATM machines are being sanitized regularly, hand sanitizers being provided at all branches and in all ATMs for optimal safety.

Ooredoo Kuwait launches 'back to business' offers

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Telecom, the first to introduce innovative digital services in Kuwait, is launching an exciting offers targeting companies in the country with the aim of helping them run their business smoothly and to stay connected; especially as the country is preparing for Phase 3 of the 'gradual return to normal life'.

Ooredoo Business is offering SME a welcome package of three-month free services to provide them with a full support through the pandemic the country is facing. In addition, the customer will get an extra value on their virtual wallet which can be used to pay their bills or purchase new handsets. The new offer will allow customers to enjoy more benefits by doubling their local data and local minutes on mobile voice plans ensuring the smoothness in running their business.

Ooredoo Business is also launching new splendid offers to Employees in the government sector and all associations catering for all type of mobile devices such as Apple, Samsung, and Huawei with affordable prices making sure that all the business sector is staying connected with the latest devices in the market.

Amidst the disruption and challenges caused by COVID-19, Ooredoo Kuwait offered an array of resourceful and efficient solutions to companies in the country. These solutions included free trials on virtual meetings, business continuity solutions, and smart solutions to help enterprises and business customers to stay resilient during this challenging period and to ensure their safety as well as their business continuity.

Commenting on this, Chief Business Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait Abdulaziz Al-Babtain stressed the company's pioneering role in digital transformation in Kuwait and how digitalization is the heart of the company's response to COVID-19; which spurred Ooredoo to offer companies in the country with different types of smart solutions. Al-Babtain said, "During this unprecedented and economically challenging period, supporting and providing the latest

business solutions remains our priority all the time, we at Ooredoo Kuwait has taken major steps to ensure that its network, business services and teams are well equipped to cover all the customer needs. The Ooredoo Business Team is working non-stop to make sure that customers, including government institutions, large enterprises, SMEs and the entire businesses sector, stay connected. We are committed to remaining resilient, reliable and flexible to adapt to the changing demands of our customers and the economic environment."

Al-Babtain concluded, "Ooredoo Kuwait will continue offering all the connectivity tools and services that our customers need to remain connected. We will ensure their business continuity while using our fastest fixed broadband and strongest mobile network in Kuwait."



Abdulaziz Al-Babtain

US town grows money from trees during downturn

NEW YORK: Tenino had become a ghost town, and small businesses were struggling to survive amid the coronavirus pandemic, so local officials revived an unconventional idea from the last century: printing the town's own currency on thin planks of wood.

"There was no trading, no selling and the city streets were dead. They looked the same at 3 pm as they did at 3 am," said Wayne Fournier, mayor of the town of 1,800 people in Washington state, in the northwestern United States. "We were getting a lot of calls from businesses saying they were not sure if they would be able to hang on," he said.

The town's museum had a printing press, so it was put to use to make \$10,000 worth of bills on wooden rectangles, each nominally worth \$25. They feature a portrait of President George Washington and bear a Latin inscription that translates as "We've got it under control." The money is being given as a grant to locals who demonstrate they have been economically harmed by the pandemic. Each resident is allowed up to \$300 per month.

Known as "Tenino dollars," "COVID dollars" or, sometimes, "Wayne dollars" after the mayor himself, the bills are traded at almost all shops in the town at a fixed rate equivalent to \$1. The currency is good only inside the town limits.

Desperate times

The idea is not new: town officials last tried it during an even worse period of economic devastation, the

Great Depression in the 1930s. A national scarcity of dollars at the time prompted officials in Tenino to print money on spruce bark.

"The concept became 1930s viral," Fournier said, with other communities, businesses and chambers of commerce eager to emulate the town's example. Media attention piqued the curiosity of investors, and over the years the wooden currency became a collector's item sold on eBay and Amazon.

The contemporary version of wooden currency, like the previous edition, aims to help the town through an economic crisis that forced businesses to close nationwide. "It's more of an advertisement for the town itself," said Chris Hamilton, the manager of the town's main grocery store. "It brings a lot of people into town that may not even know about Tenino and want to check this place out that makes its own money."

"They might stop off here, buy an ice cream or go down the street and buy a hamburger."

Similar complementary currencies exist elsewhere in the US and Europe, aimed not at replacing the national money but supporting the local economy—a key distinction since American authorities take a dim view of anyone trying to create a bill to compete with the almighty dollar. The US Treasury declined to comment on its position regarding local currencies. Switzerland's WIR system, created in 1934, is considered the oldest local currency in the world, used by thousands of small businesses every day.

Response to globalization

Facing an unemployment rate of 11.1 percent in June—one of the highest rates since the Great Depression—American advocates of complementary currencies say now is the time to consider them as a means to help residents. "The crisis in municipal funding is pushing creativity. Administrators are exploring this concept of issuing their own currency instead of bonds to finance



Mayor Wayne Fournier is pictured at the Tenino Depot Museum where an 1890s-era press is being used to print wooden money, in Tenino, Washington on July 10, 2020. Tenino had become a ghost town, and small businesses were struggling to survive amid the coronavirus pandemic, so local officials revived an unconventional idea from the last century: print its own currency on planks of wood.

their COVID response," said Susan Witt, director of the Schumacher Center for a New Economics.

The research center developed BerkShares, a currency in circulation since 2006 in the Berkshires region of western Massachusetts, which is distributed by local banks. Witt is advising several US municipalities interested in similar initiatives. Advocates of local currencies also see them as a bulwark against unbridled globalization.

"People are starting to realize that we went too global, too fast and we lost our local skills," said Chris Hewitt, founder of Hudson Valley Current, a currency in upstate New York which operates as a mutual credit system. Supporters hope to create a nationwide movement.

Wall St investors await BlackRock earnings after rally

NEW YORK: Investors will watch next week's earnings from BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, for a snapshot of how the industry performed during the second quarter's dramatic rebound in global financial markets. Most expect numbers from industry bellwether BlackRock and other asset managers to reflect the sharp stock market rebound. The S&P 500 rose 20 percent in the second quarter after falling as much in the first three months of 2020 as the coronavirus pandemic slammed the economy.

Since the performance of asset managers tends to be tied to how markets fare, investors see a range of risks ahead, including further acceleration of US coronavirus cases and potential market volatility around the Nov 3 presidential election. Still, "just on a market level, the asset managers are in much better shape coming out of the second quarter than they were coming out of the first quarter," said Macrae Sykes, global financial services sector analyst at Gabelli Funds. BlackRock is scheduled to report on July 17, with T. Rowe Price, WisdomTree Investments and Invesco among asset managers reporting in the following weeks.

Analysts expect a strong recovery in the sector's assets under management (AUM) in the second quarter, driven by rising financial markets and improving risk appetite. Higher levels of AUM mean more fees and stronger margins and earnings, analysts said. BlackRock's assets fell to \$6.47 trillion at the end of the first-quarter, from \$7.43 trillion at the end of 2019.

Improving fund flows are also likely to help second-quarter earnings for the group, analysts said. Fixed income flows reversed back into positive territory in April and stayed that way throughout the quarter while equity flows improved from March lows, according to Jefferies. Analysts at Morgan Stanley recently raised their estimate for second-quarter earnings-per-share for traditional asset managers by 19 percent. Most analysts expect BlackRock to show robust flows into its \$2 trillion exchange-traded funds business, with strength in the fixed income and alternatives ETFs offsetting outflows from equities.

Investors will also look for details on BlackRock's role in the Federal Reserve's debt-buying efforts as the central bank sought to stabilize a corporate bond market roiled by economic fallout of the pandemic. The firm's own ETFs accounted for a large share of corporate bond ETFs it bought on behalf of the Fed as part of the central bank's relief program. BlackRock waived asset management fees on ETFs purchased on behalf of the Fed. BlackRock's shares are up about 9 percent year-to-date, outperforming a 3 percent decline in the S&P 500. The broader sector has not fared as well, with the Refinitiv US Investment Management & Fund Operators Price Return Index is down about 13 percent for the year. Some investors worry asset managers could take a hit if a resurgent pandemic forces parts of the United States to halt or reverse the reopening of their economies.

Analysts at Goldman Sachs last week said the US economy would shrink by 4.6 percent in 2020, from an earlier forecast of a 4.2 percent contraction. "We remain cautious with equity markets nearing post Covid-outbreak highs amid risk of a market correction should a second coronavirus wave impede the pace of the global economic recovery," analysts at Deutsche Bank said in a note to clients about the sector. The US presidential election could also heighten market volatility. A victory by Democratic challenger Joe Biden could threaten Republican policies championed by President Donald Trump and generally favored by Wall Street, including lower corporate tax rates and fewer regulations, analysts said. A separate indication of the financial industry's health may come next week from several big Wall Street banks set to report earnings, including Goldman Sachs Group Inc and Morgan Stanley. —Reuters



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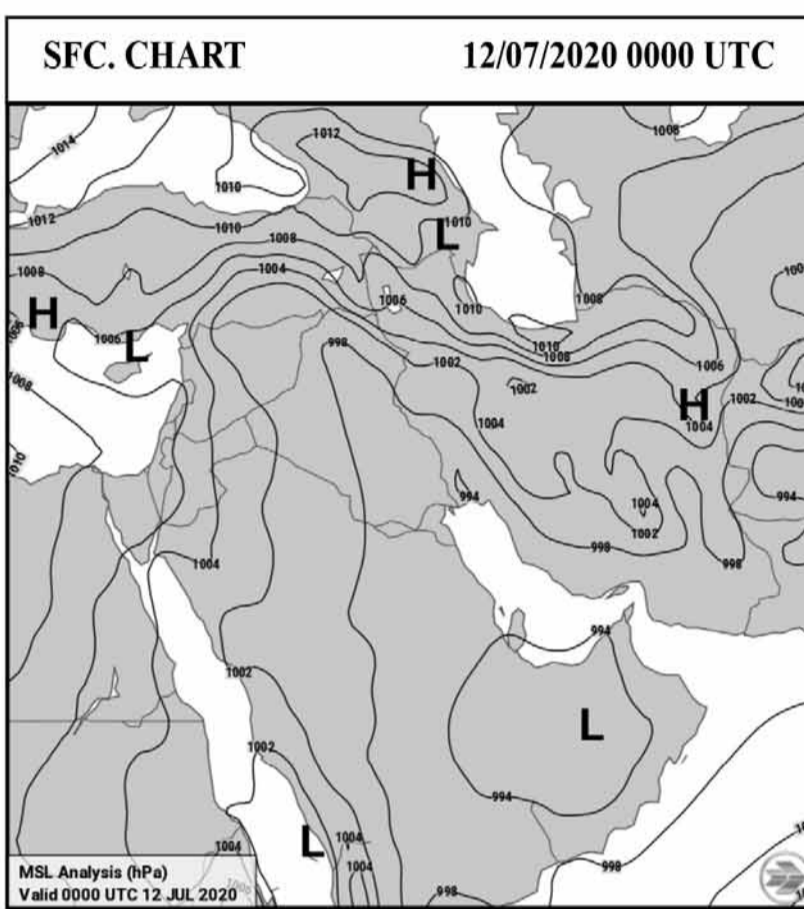
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times northerly wind to north westerly wind with speed of 15 - 40 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Hot to rather hot with light to moderate north easterly wind to light variable wind with speed of 10 - 35 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	49 °C	36 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	50 °C	37 °C
ABDALY	50 °C	33 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	50 °C	37 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	47 °C	35 °C
SALMIYAH	45 °C	35 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	47 °C	32 °C
WAFRA	49 °C	33 °C
SALMY	48 °C	32 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	07/13	Very hot and and some scattered clouds will appear	47 °C	31 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Tuesday	07/14	Very hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	48 °C	33 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Wednesday	07/15	Very hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	49 °C	33 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 35 km/h
Thursday	07/16	Very hot with a chance for rising dust	50 °C	36 °C	NW-N	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	03:23
Sunrise	04:57
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	15:28
Sunset	18:50
Isha	20:21

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	50 °C
MIN. Temp.	31 °C
MAX. RH	39 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	N 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 The possibility of some future houseguests might have you checking your home to see what needs to be done to make it presentable. It may need a few minor repairs, Aries, and you could do some online shopping to dress the place up a little. Books might give you some workable ideas. Your mind might be working more quickly than your body, however. Take care not to push yourself too hard.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 Recent developments have brought new interests into your life, Cancer. As a result, you might be seriously considering enrolling in a formal course of study in the future involving these subjects. If you really want to do this, it's definitely the right time to start planning. Others in your community might want to do the same, so a discussion on the subject might help. Books and magazines could also be useful.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 Your intuition is operating at a very high level today, Libra. You tend to follow your heart by nature, so you don't always go out of your way to be logical or objective. However, more than one event could occur during the day in which it's imperative that you go with your intuition even though it defies all logic. Have a little faith and go with your gut!

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 A friend could put you in touch with a lot of interesting people, some in fields such as law, education, or the ministry. Expect at some point to be treated to a monologue on social and ecological responsibilities, Capricorn! You'll have a lot of definite ideas on those subjects, but you'll be more likely to listen than talk for most of the day. Enjoy your day.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 Today you might decide to participate in activities involving children, Taurus. Field trips either for pleasure or educational purposes may take place, if possible, and you could enjoy it as much as the kids. Letters and phone calls could bring good news from far away, which you'll almost certainly want to pass on to others. Tonight, curl up with the latest mystery. Intrigue should be especially appealing now.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 Your mind is especially sharp, Leo. You're logical and objective by nature. However, today you're likely to find that your thinking is more influenced by feeling than usual. This is a positive development. It demonstrates that your intuition is operating at a high level, so don't fight it. This is definitely the day to follow your heart rather than your head.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Today should be a gratifying day, Scorpio, full of great news, pleasant surprises, and opening doors of opportunity on just about every level. Career breaks and chances to earn more money could come your way. New friends may be introduced to you, and future opportunities for education and travel also may arise. Whatever actually manifests out of all this is up to you. You might find decisions difficult.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
 You may spend much of your day trying to sort out financial matters for yourself, your job, or perhaps for a friend or relative, Aquarius. A lot of phone calls, and a lot of research, perhaps on the Internet, could be necessary in order to accomplish this. Whatever you decide to do, you'll attack it with determination and feel a great deal of satisfaction when you're done. Go to it!

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 Your financial situation looks particularly good right now. An increase in income could be coming your way, Gemini. The downside could be that contracts might be involved, and you'll have to spend time perusing boring legal documents that need to be executed. A lot of people could reach out to you tonight, probably to exchange ideas and information. Don't talk or text for too long.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 A group you're involved with may want to discuss a future trip of some kind, Virgo, perhaps to a convention. The drive to expand your horizons is very strong today. Therefore, trips like this or other opportunities to learn and grow can be especially appealing. You might come up with a few ideas of your own that you prefer to pursue alone. Give it some thought!

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 Paperwork involving financial transactions may need to be handled today, Sagittarius, but it won't be as tedious as you think. Whatever information is required is easily obtained. Most of what is presented to you should be clear and understandable, and the people involved helpful. It's important that you do get this done. If you wait, it might not go as smoothly.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 Today you might spend a lot of time with the special person in your life if that's possible, Pisces. Romance and affection are definitely a powerful factor in the course of your day, but much of what might bring you closer together is conversation. You're likely to exchange information that interests you both about specific subjects and yourselves and future plans. A short journey might also take place. Enjoy your day!

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Adaliya	22517144
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Mannequins are placed at the bar to provide social distancing at a restaurant in old Montreal amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. —AFP photos



Customers dine near mannequins placed to provide social distancing at a restaurant in old Montreal.



Mannequins are placed at tables to provide social distancing at a restaurant in old Montreal.



Canadian designer Philippe Dubuc dresses mannequins to be used to provide social distancing at a restaurant.

Mannequins do double duty in a chic restaurant in virus-hit Montreal

In one Montreal restaurant, patrons are getting a fashion-food two-for-one: Mannequins placed at tables not only ensure social distancing but also sport chic outfits that can be purchased to benefit charity. With Quebec province at the forefront of Canada's coronavirus pandemic, businesses have been reopening cautiously. Le Monarque, a fashionable restaurant in Old Montreal, reopened its doors just a few days ago—but not without putting some creative safety measures in place first. “We wanted to give customers more space,” chef and owner Jeremie Bastien told AFP. “But we didn't want to remove tables or put up Plexiglas panels.”

Bringing worlds together

So when Le Monarque fired up its ovens a few days ago, it took several steps to ensure social distancing. The idea of filling some seats with mannequins, thus providing separation between human clients, came from the team behind the Sarah Pacini clothing line, including prominent Quebec menswear designer Philippe Dubuc. “We wanted to make a stylish, high-end installation because we are bringing two worlds together, those of fashion and gastronomy,” said Dubuc, adding, “I think these two worlds have always been close.” The restaurant's 29 mannequins all sport Sarah Pacini and Philippe Dubuc designs. They are meant to be “visually beautiful,” both inspired by



A server (left) wearing a facemask adjusts glasses on a table next to mannequins placed at a table to provide social distancing at a restaurant in old Montreal.

and fitting in with their elegant surroundings. “We are there, of course, to create and market our clothing,” Dubuc said. “But we are also there because our job is to make people dream.”

Silent auction

Nassim Habashi, who was enjoying lunch at Le Monarque, approved, saying, “I think it's a wonderful idea both to mark the separation between tables and to make the atmosphere much more pleasant, given the current situation.” At the end of each meal clients are given a gift certificate redeemable in Sarah Pacini and Philippe

Dubuc outlets. Chef Bastien says the partnership has been “very advantageous” for both sides. But he stresses that it is about more than just “creating distance or dressing up the space.”

The idea, he said, was to “go a bit deeper (and) figure out what we can do to help the people around us who have suffered during the pandemic.” The mannequins' clothes are not yet for sale. But restaurant patrons will eventually have a chance to take part in a “silent auction” and purchase the clothing they see—with all profits going to charities. —AFP

Ghana library showcases black, African literature

A small group of visitors waits eagerly at the entrance to a single-storey building in Ghana's capital Accra, looking to explore the literary treasure inside. This is the Library of Africa and the African Diaspora - a passion project launched by Ghanaian-British writer Sylvia Arthur. Based around Arthur's personal book collection, the library provides a remarkable opportunity to bring literature from the global black community to a country considered a cradle of African civilisation, and which was once a hub of the transatlantic slave trade. “Our work has been neglected, it's not been showcased, it's not been respected, it's not been archived and that's the purpose of this library,” Arthur said as she guided her visitors around. The library was founded in 2017 when Arthur moved to Ghana after working in Europe.

It was renamed and relaunched this year, welcoming its first guests again in July as restrictions to curb the spread of the coronavirus were eased in the west African nation. The library boasts around 4,000 books, from almost every country on the African continent. Many names will be familiar to those who have seen the growing international acclaim for African writers such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ben Okri, Mariama Ba and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. But this collection is a rarity in Africa. It not only spans the entire continent, including authors such as Assia Djebar from Algeria and Naguib Mahfouz from Egypt, as well as white authors from southern Africa such as Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee - it also includes black writers from across the world including the US, Caribbean and Europe. It also has a special collection of rare and out-of-print books,

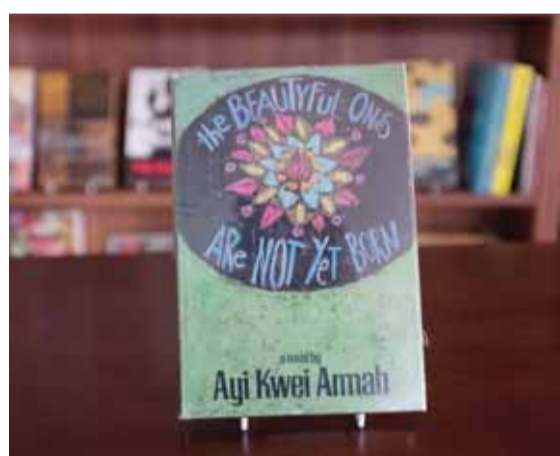


Sylvia Arthur, founder of the Library of Africa and the African Diaspora (LOATAD), poses for a photograph in the library in Accra, Ghana. —AFP photos

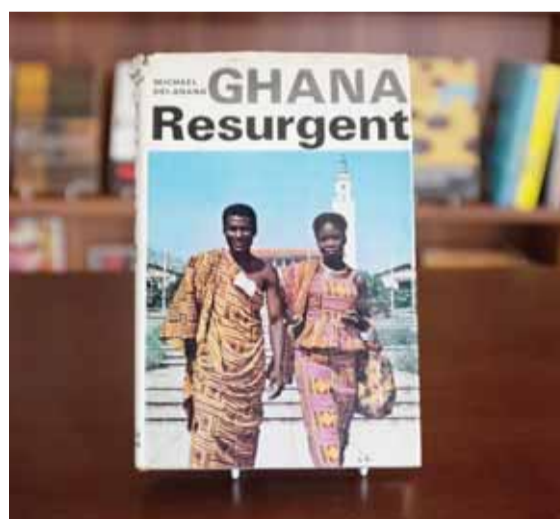
drawing historical links between the works of African and diaspora writers, and offers residences for authors from abroad. “We started off in one room and now we are in a whole house,” Arthur said.

Black Lives Matter

The library's aims have been made even more relevant by the Black Lives Matter protests that have swept the globe and sparked renewed debates on history and equality. “I definitely think what we do is very empowering,” said Arthur. “It shows people that no matter what they've been taught in schools, and in Western schools, we actually come from a race of people who are intelligent, smart, literate.” Ghana - a beacon in Africa's struggle for independence - has long played a role as a hub of thought and memory for the broader black community. American writer and civil rights activist Maya Angelou lived in Accra in the early 1960s and the government has tried to attract black people to move to the country. In 2019 the authorities staged the “Year of Return” - four centuries after the first slave ship landed in what is now the US - urging African Americans to “come home”. —AFP



A rare book by author Ayi Kwei Armah is displayed in the Library of Africa and the African Diaspora (LOATAD).



A rare book by author Micheal Dei-Anang is displayed in the Library of Africa and the African Diaspora (LOATAD).

Louis Vuitton quits Paris to show in China and Japan

Louis Vuitton is taking its men's fashion collections on the road for the first time, the luxury brand said Friday, with shows in China and Japan rather than Paris. The label's American designer Virgil Abloh said the spring 2021 collection will be unveiled in Shanghai on August 6 and in Japan afterwards. Both will be open to the general public and will be livestreamed, he added. The announcement came after Abloh made a mixed live action and animated film for Paris men's fashion week, which is being held online for the first time because of the coronavirus pandemic.

“Message in a Bottle”, the first in a series of teaser films, shows a character called “Zoooom” and his friends packing up crates at Vuitton's headquarters on the edge of the French capital and putting them on a barge on the River Seine before waving them off on their journey to the Far East. Asia is becoming luxury brands' most important market, with China alone likely to account for nearly half of sales by 2025, according to some estimates. Abloh, the first black American creative director of a top French fashion house, also revealed that he was making a push toward greater sustainability in Vuitton's collections.

Abloh, who also founded the streetwear label Off-White, said this would involve both recycling, upcycling and even “recycling of existing ideas for new creations”. “This next show is probably the biggest leap that I've made in terms of proposing a new system, how it lives and operates,” he told the industry bible, Women's Wear Daily. The fashion industry has been thrown into turmoil by the coronavirus, with designers questioning how it operates, the frenetic calendar of seasonal collections and even catwalk shows themselves. Paris men's fashion week ends Monday, with the avant-garde Chinese designer Sean Suen showing Friday alongside big hitters Dries Van Noten and the American Rick Owens. —AFP



Books by author Kwame Nkrumah are displayed on a shelf in the Library of Africa and the African Diaspora (LOATAD) in Accra, Ghana.



Books are displayed on a shelf in the Library of Africa and the African Diaspora (LOATAD).

Lifestyle | Features

Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan hospitalized with COVID-19

Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan, 77, tested positive for COVID-19 on Saturday and was admitted to hospital in Mumbai, with his actor son Abhishek—who also announced he had the virus—saying both cases were mild. “I have tested Covid positive .. shifted to Hospital,” Amitabh Bachchan told his 43 million Twitter followers. “All that have been in close proximity to me in the last 10 days are requested to please get themselves tested!” His son Abhishek added “both of us having mild symptoms have been admitted to hospital... I request all to stay calm and not panic.”

Millions of Indians revere Amitabh Bachchan, hanging on his every word, seeking his blessings and congregating outside his Mumbai bungalow every year on October 11, his birthday. Affectionately known as “Big B”, he shot to stardom in the early 1970s in huge hit movies such as “Zanjeer” and “Sholay”. His films still open to packed cinemas across India, but his new movie—comedy-drama “Gulabo Sitabo”—was

released online due to coronavirus restrictions closing cinemas. Abhishek Bachchan, 44, is also a successful Bollywood actor and producer, and is married to actress and former Miss World Aishwarya Rai.

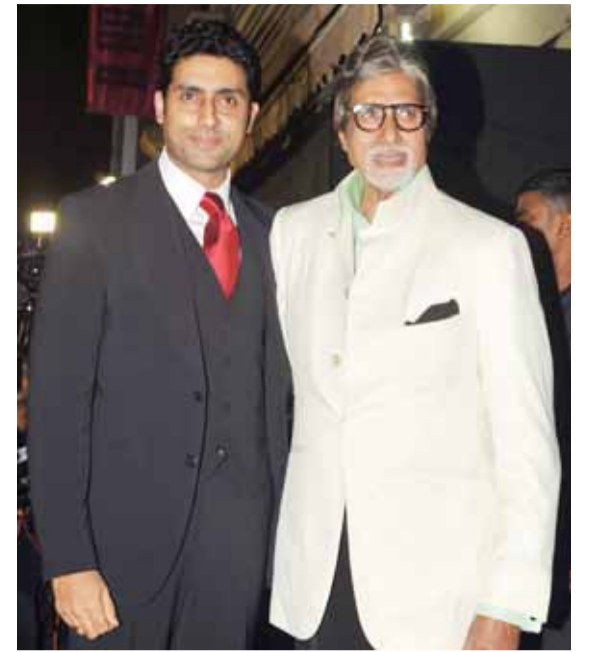
India's rising death toll

India's nationwide coronavirus toll rose on Saturday to 820,916 cases—the third highest in the world—with 22,123 deaths. Health workers have complained about stretched facilities and severe staff shortages. Critics say the vast country is not testing enough and many infections are undiagnosed. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has eased lockdown restrictions despite a surge in cases, but he has warned the nation to be more cautious. Bollywood recently resumed film shoots after a months-long hiatus due to the nationwide lockdown since late March.

Amitabh Bachchan is the doyen of India's movie industry, and his career has branched into television presenting, business and politics, as well as countless

commercial endorsements. Early in his acting life, he earned his reputation as India's “angry young man” for portraying violent heroes fighting an unjust system and injecting a new aggressive element into Bollywood movies, which had previously consisted of polite romances.

After some lean years, Bachchan bounced back spectacularly, largely due to his stint as host for the Indian version of the TV game show “Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?”, which revived his artistic and financial fortunes. According to local media, he was being treated at Mumbai's Nanavati hospital. As best wishes poured in on Saturday, former Indian cricket star Sachin Tendulkar tweeted “praying for your good health and quick recovery.” The Mumbai region, which accounts for about a quarter of India's virus deaths, has suffered a new surge in infections, forcing authorities to build makeshift hospitals and quarantine facilities. —AFP



In this file photo taken on January 12, 2013 Bollywood actors Amitabh Bachchan (right) and his son Abhishek Bachchan pose during the inauguration of a furniture showroom by actors Sunil and Mana Shetty in Mumbai. —AFP



A man poses with the artwork “Narcissi” created by Masako Hirano outside Same gallery after he took the painting during an stealable art exhibition. —AFP photos



Artist Minoru Murata poses next to her installation artwork “Gods and Mom believe in you” at Same gallery during the opening ceremony of a stealable art exhibition.

Up for grabs: Tokyo art exhibit invites theft

The Tokyo art exhibit opened to enthusiastic visitors, but many of those circulating weren't just there to soak in some culture—they were casing the joint for a midnight raid. Hours after the gallery closed for the night, a crowd had gathered ready to pounce on the artworks. The police station was nearby, but officers only intervened for crowd control, because all the pieces at the Stealable Art Exhibition were up for grabs. The event was intended as “an experiment”, to alter the relationship between artists and visitors, organiser Tota Hasegawa told AFP. It was originally conceived as a low-key event that might attract some covert thievery, but word spread so fast on social media that a crowd of nearly 200 people packed the streets near the gallery hoping for a chance to grab a prize.

Would-be robbers were told they could raid the gallery from midnight, but the crowd was so big that the theft started half an hour earlier, and the exhibition that had been billed as running for up to 10 days was emptied of art in less than 10 minutes. Yusuke Hasada, 26, was a rare winner, gripping a crumpled 10,000 yen (\$93) banknote in a frame, which was part of the “My Money” installation by Gabin Ito. He arrived an hour before midnight only to see a crowd had already formed. Since there was no apparent queue, he manoeuvred himself into a spot right in front of the gallery. “The moment the staff said they should open early due to the big crowd, people rushed in from behind me. I was in the front, and I almost fell over,” he told AFP. “It was scary.”

Auction resales

Hasada said he plans to hang the work, among those on display supplied by 10 contemporary artists, in his home. But not everyone stealing the items appeared to have the same idea, with several artworks appearing on online auction sites within hours with price tags as high as 100,000 yen. Even after the exhibit was emptied out, would-be thieves continued arriving, forcing a nearby police station to dispatch officers for crowd control. “You



In this picture two men hold an artwork after taking it from Same gallery that organised a stealable art exhibition in Tokyo.



People leave Same gallery after the exhibited artworks were taken by people during a stealable art exhibition in Tokyo.

are blocking traffic!” officers shouted. Yuka Yamauchi, a 35-year-old systems engineer, showed up 15 minutes before midnight but was too late.

“I entered with my husband and it was just packed with so many people... We saw larger artworks taken out by those who came earlier,” she said. “I haven't seen so many people in a long time as we have been refraining from going out due to the coronavirus.” But Yamauchi didn't leave completely empty-handed. “I've got a clip... It must have been one of those used for the cloth installation. I found it dropped, so I picked it up as a souvenir,” she said with a laugh.

“Well-mannered” thieves

Yamauchi recognised the clip because she was at a preview of the

artwork six hours earlier to “case” the venue. She said she would happily come back for a similar “participatory” art event, where some of the artists showcased work that was purpose-made for those hoping to make off with it. Naoki “SAND” Yamamoto's work “Midnight Vandalist” was composed of a stack of peelable pages with printed illustrations. Another work was a large cloth printed with lines to be cut along with scissors. But would-be thieves were responsible for organising their own getaway vehicles. A notice was posted at the entrance: “We do not assist art thieves with packing or transporting artworks, so you are responsible for everything.” —AFP

Christie's online sale fetches \$421 mn despite virus pandemic

Roy Lichtenstein's “Nude with Joyous Painting” was the big seller as a Christie's hybrid sale fetched an impressive \$421 million Friday, signaling the art market is holding firm during the coronavirus pandemic. The event, entitled “ONE,” started with an auctioneer in Hong Kong selling a series of works, before another took over in Paris, followed by London and then New York. Christie's opted for the unique, one-day format after it was forced to rework its spring sales, a traditional highlight of auction season, because of the COVID-19 crisis. Lichtenstein's 1994 painting sold for the highest price at \$46.2 million, well above its pre-sale estimate of around \$30 million.

Several records were broken, most notably for the American abstract painter Brice Marden, whose “Complements” went for \$30.9 million. No painting crossed the \$50 million mark, but 94 percent of the works found buyers—a high rate even in non-pandemic times. “It showed that the market is ready for new formats of selling and for new formats of collecting art,” said Alex Rotter, head of contemporary art at Christie's.

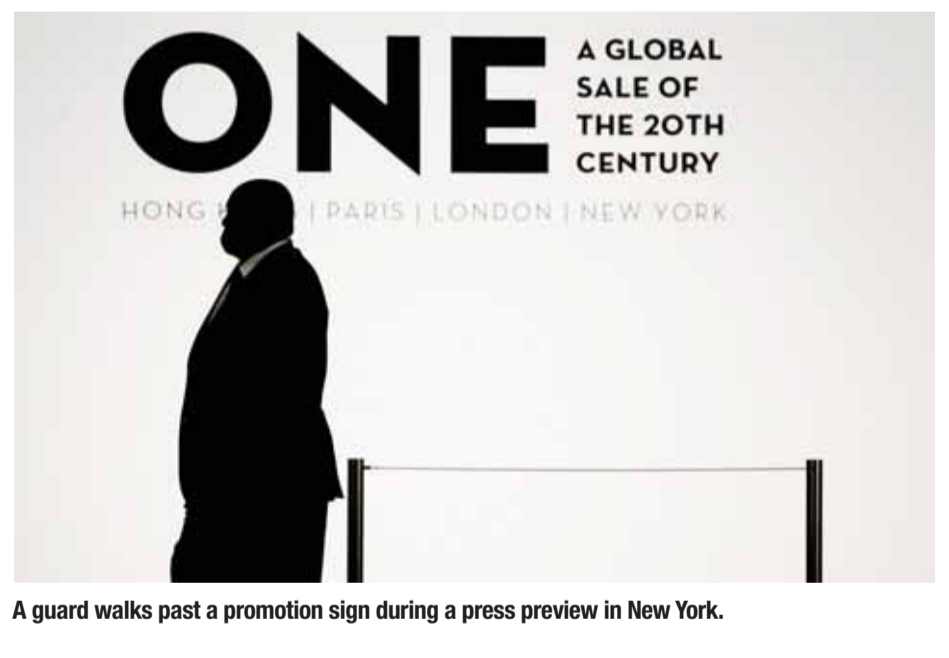
More than 20,000 art aficionados followed the four hours of sales online. Including fees and commission, the total value of items sold was \$421 million. Collectors could bid online and by phone. In Hong Kong, Paris and London, some collectors were able to attend the sale in person but the New York leg was closed to the public because of social distancing restrictions. —AFP



In this file photo a woman looks at Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997) “Nude with Joyous Painting” during a press preview in New York. —AFP photos



A woman walks past Richard Prince's “Navy Nurse” during a press preview.



A guard walks past a promotion sign during a press preview in New York.

New York's Met Opera to host virtual concert series

Several of opera's biggest stars beamed in from around the world on Saturday to announce the Metropolitan Opera's latest virtual initiative amid the coronavirus outbreak. The New York opera house, which suspended live performances in March, plans a dozen pay-per-view concerts through mid-December featuring leading singers from around the world. Tickets will cost \$20. The series kicks off on July 18 with German tenor Jonas Kaufmann at the Polling Abbey outside Munich performing some of opera's greatest hits including “Nessun dorma” from Puccini's “Turandot” and popular arias from “Tosca” and “Carmen.”

Others performances include American soprano Renee Fleming at the Dumbarton Oaks Museum in Washington in August and Russian soprano Anna Netrebko from the Liechtenstein Palace in Vienna. Details about later performances are still being worked out. None of the shows will have a live audience, a Met spokeswoman said. Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel plans a holiday concert from a to-be-determined church in Wales in December. “Hopefully by then there will be a semblance of an orchestra,” Terfel said on the Zoom press conference. American soprano Angel Blue will also perform in December at a New

York venue yet to be named. Blue said she hopes to include some patriotic numbers that could bring people together in the wake of mass protests for racial justice.

“We are a melting pot,” said Blue, who is African American. Music has the capacity to help people “come together for the good of the community,” she added. The series is the opera's latest effort to stay on the public radar and garner some revenue at a time when live performances remain suspended. The Met last month cancelled its fall 2020 season. The current plan is to launch the season on December 31, but that also depends on public health conditions. Like their audiences, singers said they have been grappling with how daily life has been upended by COVID-19. Instead of jetting around the world to perform, singers have been home-schooling kids, baking bread and making home repairs. —AFP



In this file photo people walk past the Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts on in New York City. —AFP

Sports

Photo of the Day



DOHA: Filip Salac seen during Qatar Moto3 in March 2020. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Dixon captures third straight IndyCar race

LOS ANGELES: Scott Dixon became the first IndyCar driver since 2006 to open the season with three straight wins on Saturday by capturing the first race of a week-end doubleheader at Road America.

The Kiwi took the checkered flag by beating Will Power by 2.538 seconds in the first race of the season that allowed fans to attend.

"We're in the business of winning so we've got to win," Dixon said. "It's so cool to be back at a track with fans, and there's tons of them here today." Alex Palou finished third while Ryan Hunter-Reay and Colton Herta rounded out the top five at Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin.

Dixon has won each of the three IndyCar races in the pandemic-delayed season, winning last month's season opener in Texas and last Saturday on the Indianapolis road course. A.J. Foyt (1964) and Al Unser (1971) are the only other drivers to open an IndyCar season with at least three consecutive wins. Foyt won the first seven races of the 1964 season.

Coronavirus delayed the start of the campaign from March and forced the Indianapolis 500 to be delayed until August 23. Rescheduling has also created three two-race weekends, the first at Road America — where a limited number of spectators were allowed — and the second next week in Iowa.

Dixon can make it four in a row with another victory on Sunday in Elkhart Lake. Dixon, who has the most consecutive starts among active IndyCar drivers with 261, has 49 career series victories, three shy of Mario Andretti for second on the all-time list.

Pole-sitter Josef Newgarden lost a comfortable race lead and dropped out of the top 10 after stalling twice during his second pit stop. That opened the door for Dixon to duel for the lead with Power.

American Alexander Rossi won last year's Lone Star IndyCar race. — AFP

'Heart in my mouth': Rain king Hamilton storms to Styrian Grand Prix pole

Verstappen led the way in the final shootout

SPIELBERG BEI KNITTELFELD: Defending six-time world champion Lewis Hamilton delivered one of his greatest qualifying performances in treacherous rain-swept conditions on Saturday when he stormed to pole position for the Styrian Grand Prix.

The Mercedes driver, who struggled in practice on Friday, bounced back to his best with a fastest lap in one minute and 19.273 seconds, outpacing nearest rival Max Verstappen of Red Bull by a stunning 1.2 seconds.

His performance confirmed his enduring class on a day when heavy rainstorms had delayed the session by 45 minutes and forced the cancellation of third practice. It was his third pole success at the Red Bull Ring circuit, the 89th of his career and confirmed his reputation as a great driver in the wettest conditions. "What a tricky day," said Hamilton.

"It was so difficult for all of us with this weather and some of the time you can't see where you are going, but I loved it - though I did have a big aquaplane and had my heart in my mouth."

Ferrari-bound Carlos Sainz was third for McLaren ahead of Valtteri Bottas, winner of last Sunday's season-opening Austrian Grand Prix at the same circuit, in the second Mercedes, Esteban Ocon of Renault and Lando Norris in the second McLaren.

Norris, however, will drop three places on the grid after taking a penalty on Friday for ignoring yellow flags in opening practice. That will elevate Alex Albon, who was seventh in the second Red Bull, Pierre Gasly of Alpha Tauri and Daniel Ricciardo, ninth in the second Renault, but leave Sebastian Vettel 10th in the

leading Ferrari on another difficult day for the Italian team.

His team-mate Charles Leclerc qualified 11th. Leclerc, however, was later penalised three places on the grid for blocking Kvyat. After a 45-minute delay, Q1 began with Vettel first out for Ferrari. Both the four-time champion and Bottas were promptly told that the rain would intensify, making it vital to record a "banker" lap, in case the conditions deteriorated seriously.

"I can't see a thing," said Verstappen as Vettel clocked a time soon trimmed by his rivals, including George Russell of Williams, the best lap time descending rapidly as plumes of spray lifted water off the asphalt.

Having been trapped 19th, Hamilton jumped to the top to be replaced by Leclerc and then Bottas and Verstappen in succession as others, including Ocon and Grosjean, slithered off and recovered.

After his travails in Friday's practice, Hamilton was sensational. "Just leave me to it," he told his engineer on team radio as he pulled clear before Antonio Giovinazzi crashed at Turn 10, recovered and then parked his Alfa Romeo.

His exit brought red flags out with seconds remaining, a move that meant early elimination for both the Italian and his team-mate Kimi Raikkonen along with Sergio Perez of Racing Point, Williams rookie Nicholas Latifi and Romain Grosjean of Haas.

Perez had been fastest in opening free practice on Friday morning. All this meant Russell delivered Williams' first Q2 appearance since the 2018 Brazilian

putts when I need to, I've hit some great chips and great bunker shots when I needed to."

This week's Workday Charity Open is the first of back-to-back events at the Jack Nicklaus designed Muirfield Village, added in to boost the coronavirus-disrupted calendar.

The Nicklaus-hosted Memorial will follow next week, and Thomas said efforts to give the two events a different look made for some tricky holes.

"Some pin placements I've never seen before," he said. "A lot of ins, like 11, you see in practice rounds, they're kind of right in the middle of the green. They look easy, but they're on huge slopes or they're on a floor." After rain, wind and lightning led to two suspensions on Friday, the weather was sunny but windy for the third round. Tee times have been moved up for Sunday, however, with more inclement weather in the forecast.

Thomas, who hasn't had a bogey this week, said he wouldn't be focused on keeping that streak alive in the final round. "Overall bogeys are going to happen," said Thomas, who won the CJ Cup at Nine Bridges back in October and the Tournament of Champions in January before the tour halted play in March in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I'm just going to go out there and keep executing my game plan. I'm not trying to not make a bogey. I'm stepping on the tee trying to hit the fairway, trying to make birdie. If you're out of position, then you try to make a par." Hovland is seeking his second US tour title this season, having gained his maiden win at the Puerto Rico Open in February. His six-under effort was powered by his length off the tee. "Out here driving is very important," he said. "I've kind of been spraying a couple out to the right so if I can keep them a little straighter tomorrow I'm going to give myself a lot of birdie looks." — AFP

Thomas seizes PGA Tour lead at Muirfield

WASHINGTON: Justin Thomas closed in on his third win of the coronavirus disrupted US PGA Tour season Saturday, firing a six-under par 66 to take a two-shot lead over Viktor Hovland at Muirfield Village in Ohio. Thomas, whose 12 tour titles include a major triumph at the 2017 PGA Championship, had six birdies without a bogey on the way to a 54-hole total of 16-under 200.

Norway's Hovland had eight birdies in his 66 as he joined Thomas in overhauling overnight leader Collin Morikawa, who started the day with a three-shot lead and fired an even par 72 to head into Sunday alone in third on 203.

It was a further two strokes back to Sam Burns (70) and Kevin Streelman (71) on 205.

Back-to-back birdies at the fifth and sixth let Morikawa preserve his lead even as Thomas strung together three straight birdies at five, six and seven — blasting out of a greenside bunker to two feet at the seventh to gain a stroke on the leader.

Morikawa's bogeys at the ninth and 10th opened the door for Thomas, who took full advantage, rolling in an 18 foot birdie putt at the 11th to seize the lead and padding it with birdies at 14 and 15.

World number five Thomas maintained his cushion with a par save from a greenside bunker at 16.

"I got around very well today," Thomas said. "Scrambling, chipping and putting, I've made those

“
What a
tricky day
”



SPIELBERG: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton gets out of his car after the qualifying for the Formula One Styrian Grand Prix on July 11, 2020 in Spielberg, Austria. — AFP

Grand Prix, a welcome tonic for the struggling former champions. Vettel was first out for Q2, but without the pace to worry the front-runners as Verstappen duelled with Hamilton and both Ferraris struggled, Leclerc failing to make the top-ten cut. The Monegasque qualified 11th one place ahead of the remarkable Russell, claiming his career-best starting spot, ahead of Lance Stroll's Racing Point, Daniil Kvyat of

Alpha Tauri and Kevin Magnussen of Haas.

Verstappen led the way in the final shootout. "There's a lot more water down," warned Hamilton as the Dutchman clocked 1:21.800 to set the pace, his extreme wet tyres visibly shedding water. Hamilton then took control with a surge of rapid laps before the Dutchman responded but spun off in a final flurry of late high-speed action. —AFP

Hurricanes hold off Highlanders for Super Rugby win

WELLINGTON: The Wellington Hurricanes held off a hard-fighting Otago Highlanders for a 17-11 Super Rugby Aotearoa victory in Wellington yesterday hailed as "massive" by captain TJ Perenara. The Hurricanes were cruising at 17-0 ahead, commanding more than 66 percent of possession in the second half, before the Highlanders came to life.

The visitors were within striking distance of snatching an unlikely victory as the clock ticked down but lost their own throw at a lineout which allowed the Hurricanes to hang on. The three-tries-to-one win moved the Hurricanes past the Highlanders into third place halfway through the domestic version of the southern hemisphere club championship featuring five New Zealand teams.

Unbeaten Canterbury Crusaders, the Super Rugby champions for the past three seasons, are the runaway leaders with their 26-15 win over previously unbeaten Auckland Blues on Saturday putting them on 18 points with a perfect four wins from four outings.

The Blues have 12 points followed by the Hurricanes on eight, the Highlanders on six with the winless Waikato Chiefs on three. "That was mas-

sive for us," said Hurricanes skipper TJ Perenara. The Hurricanes dominated by employing Ardie Savea, Asafo Aumua, Ngani Laumape and Vince Aso as battering rams to tie up the Highlanders defence.

Perenara admitted there were still problem areas that need to be addressed, not least turning the ball over sloppily. "What we will look at is we are giving away a lot of penalties that are getting teams up to our end of the field which is hurting us," he said.

Both sides had tries scrubbed out because of obstruction in the early skirmishes. It took until the 28th minute for Perenara to open the scoring when he neatly sidestepped his fellow All Blacks scrum-half Aaron Smith and strolled 10 metres to the line.

Jordie Barrett orchestrated the second try with a long pass to Kobus Van Wyk to score in the corner. The Hurricanes turned with a 12-0 lead and were quick to build on it when play resumed.

After battering into the Highlanders defensive wall for more than five minutes they eventually found a crack for flanker Devan Flanders to dive through. At 17-0 down, the Highlanders began their comeback with a Mitch Hunt penalty and a try from Aaron Smith, who ducked around the short side of a lineout maul to reduce the deficit to nine points.

A Hunt penalty seconds from the full-time hooter secured a bonus point for the Highlanders and gave them one last chance to snatch victory but they turned over the ball soon after the restart. —AFP

Sports

Messi tees up victory as Barcelona cling on to fading title hopes

'When you're tired, you lose more balls, make bad decisions'

MADRID: Lionel Messi made it 20 assists for the season in Barcelona's stodgy 1-0 win over Real Valladolid on Saturday, even as his team's La Liga challenge appears almost over. Messi teed up Arturo Vidal's winner at Jose Zorrilla to become the first player to provide 20 assists in Spain's top flight since Xavi Hernandez in 2009.

Victory for Barca means Real Madrid cannot clinch the title today by beating Granada but only an incredible collapse will prevent them putting their name on the trophy later in the week. If they beat Granada, Madrid will win La Liga by prevailing at home to Villarreal on Thursday, regardless of Barcelona's results.

Overall, Madrid need only five points from their remaining three matches to secure their third La Liga title in eight years.

"We are doing things that deserve more than where we are," said Barca coach Quique Setien.

"To win La Liga, I don't know, because our rival is winning everything." Yet even as Barca's turbulent domestic campaign draws to a close, Messi continues to shine. His delightful pass for Vidal in the 15th minute, a scoop between two Valladolid defenders, triggered more remarkable milestones.

As well as matching the best La Liga total for assists by one player in the last 11 years, Messi extends his own career-best number of assists in a single league season.



Messi continues to shine

expires in 2021, perhaps to express frustration with the running of the club.

As Barcelona's title challenge has wilted, Setien's position has come under scrutiny too, despite him only taking over in January. But he was bold against Valladolid, deploying a 3-5-2 formation, with Nelson Semedo and Jordi Alba as wing-backs and the versatile Sergi Roberto dropping into the back three. Luis Suarez started on the bench but replaced Antoine Griezmann at half-time, the Frenchman enduring one of his quieter displays before having to go off injured. "He came off because he had a problem," Setien said. "It was him who asked for the change."

After playing Messi behind Suarez and Griezmann against Villarreal on Sunday, Setien appears to be experimenting, perhaps with an eye on the Champions League's resumption next month.

Or he may be making the best of a stretched squad that appears to be feeling the effects of fatigue. Setien only named five outfield players on the bench. "We've had a lot of games, a lot of wear and a lot of players playing a lot of minutes. It's not rocket science," he said.

"When you're tired, you lose more balls, make bad decisions. It's normal." The system worked well in the first half but Barca's problem of converting possession into chances remained and Valladolid grew in confidence late on.

Defeat leaves Valladolid 14th but survival looks all-but secured, with seven points between them and the bottom three. Griezmann snatched an early finish inside the box before Vidal showed him how it was done.

Messi recovered the ball on the edge of the area

same here as elsewhere. Other countries don't give penalties like that.

"These are the rules here, fine." Juve started brightly but it did not take long for the visitors to take control and start to dominate possession. Josip Ilicic fired the first real chance of the game wide, but Atalanta grabbed the lead in the 16th minute, scoring for the 25th consecutive match in all competitions.

Papu Gomez was the creator, wriggling free in midfield before exchanging passes with Duvan Zapata before sliding the ball back for the Colombian to drill home his 15th league goal of the campaign.

The goal made Atalanta the first Serie A club in almost 70 years to have three players score 15 times in a league season, with Zapata joining Ilicic and Luis Muriel in reaching the mark. Zapata was proving a real nuisance for Juve, with Matthijs de Ligt doing well to block another goalbound effort, before the striker narrowly failed to connect with Timothy Castagne's cross.

Paulo Dybala almost levelled for the hosts against the run of play, but his volley was deflected wide. The reigning champions were gifted a route back into the game nine minutes after half-time as Marten de Roon was penalised for handling Dybala's cross.

Ronaldo stepped up to score his 27th Serie A goal this term, drawing him within two of Lazio's Ciro Immobile at the top of the goalscoring charts. Atalanta continued to attack in search of the victory

League, where he started his career. But the defensive midfielder took to Instagram to confirm he was hanging up his boots aged 35.

"I was a young boy from Western Sydney with a dream to play professional football," he said. "My journey to reach that goal was full of so many experiences, challenges and memories that will always be cherished."

"I want to thank all the clubs I rep-



VALLADOLID: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (C) vies with Real Valladolid's Spanish defender Kiko Olivares during the Spanish league football match between Real Valladolid FC and FC Barcelona at the Jose Zorrilla stadium in Valladolid on July 11, 2020. —AFP

and after receiving it back from Semedo, scooped it through to Vidal, who gathered and unleashed all in one movement to find the far corner. Valladolid's Kike Perez raced clear of Gerard Pique but lost his footing at the crucial moment before Messi weaved through but drove wide.

Marc-Andre ter Stegen had to make two saves in the second half as Valladolid pushed, the first from an Enes Unal header and the second in injury-time, after Sandro Ramirez was allowed space at the back post. Third-placed Atletico Madrid made sure of their place in the Champions

they needed to boost their title hopes, but shortly after substitute Muriel fired a free-kick into the wall. Malinovskyi's low strike flicked the base of the post.

Ronaldo almost put Juve in front with 10 minutes to play, but visiting goalkeeper Pierluigi Gollini made an excellent save to keep out the Portuguese star's half-volley. Malinovskyi did put Atalanta back into the lead in the 81st minute, as Muriel picked out his fellow sub to hammer a fierce shot past Wojciech Szczesny. But Atalanta shot themselves in the foot again in the 90th minute, as Ronaldo fired in his second spot-kick after Muriel was penalised for handball.

LAZIO STUMBLE AGAIN

Earlier on Saturday, Lazio's title dream suffered yet another setback as Francesco Caputo's injury-time header grabbed Sassuolo a late victory at the Stadio Olimpico. The capital club sit eight points adrift of Juve in their tilt at a first league title since 2000, but have suffered three straight defeats.

"Talking about the Scudetto was always a bit of a stretch and we have to look reality in the face," coach Simone Inzaghi told Sky Sport Italia.

"That doesn't mean we will give up. Next season, in the Champions League, we'll be able to rotate the squad more." Luis Alberto gave Lazio a first-half lead, but that was their only shot on target in the match as Sassuolo fought back through goals from Giacomo Raspadori, on his full league debut, and Caputo. —AFP

resented for allowing me the opportunity to do so. It's now time for a new chapter." Palace paid tribute on Twitter, calling Jedinak "a leader of men and a club legend".

He played 79 times for his country, featuring at three World Cups before bowing out of international football in late 2018. One of his biggest triumphs was captaining the Socceroos to win the 2015 Asian Cup on home soil. —AFP

Ronaldo's penalty double edges Juve closer to title

MILAN: Cristiano Ronaldo scored two penalties as Juventus snatched a dramatic 2-2 draw against Atalanta on Saturday to take a massive step towards a ninth straight Serie A title. Lazio's 2-1 loss to Sassuolo earlier in the day gave Atalanta, on an 11-match winning streak heading into the game, the chance to move second and cut the gap to Juve to six points.

But despite trailing twice and being outplayed for long periods, Maurizio Sarri's Juventus moved eight points clear at the top with six matches remaining as Ronaldo took his tally to 28 league goals this season.

"We can't make calculations yet, we can't take our foot off the gas until we are mathematically champions," said Juve captain Leonardo Bonucci. It was an ultimately frustrating outing for Atalanta who stay third, nine points off the pace, after conceding both spot-kicks for handball.

"What are we meant to do, cut our arms off? You can at most put your arms in front of your body." Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini told DAZN. "The interpretation of the rule is not the

Crystal Palace captain Jedinak calls it a day

SYDNEY: Former Australia captain and Crystal Palace stalwart Mile Jedinak announced his retirement

Holder gets Stokes again to spark England collapse

SOUTHAMPTON: West Indies captain Jason Holder removed opposing skipper Ben Stokes to trigger an England collapse that saw a late flurry of wickets fall on the fourth day of the first Test at Southampton on Saturday.

England were 284-8 in their second innings at stumps, a lead of 170 runs in a match that marks international cricket's return from lockdown. England fought back during a fourth-wicket partnership of 98 between Zak Crawley and Stokes.

But their 249-4 was soon transformed into 279-8 as five wickets fell for just 30 runs inside the final hour. No sooner had stand-in England skipper Stokes (46) fallen to rival all-rounder Holder for the second time in the match than Crawley was caught and bowled by paceman Alzarri Joseph for a Test-best 76.

Jos Buttler then fell for nine when bowled through a huge gap between bat and pad by Joseph, who had stumps figures of 2-40. And there was

Sunday, saying it was "time for a new chapter". The 35-year-old spent five seasons at the London club, joining from Turkey's Genclerbirligi in 2011, skipping Palace to promotion back to the Premier League via the playoffs in 2013.

He moved to Aston Villa in 2016 but was released at the end of the 2018-19 season with speculation that he may rejoin a team in Australia's A-

League, where he started his career. But the defensive midfielder took to Instagram to confirm he was hanging up his boots aged 35.

"I was a young boy from Western Sydney with a dream to play professional football," he said. "My journey to reach that goal was full of so many experiences, challenges and memories that will always be cherished."

"I want to thank all the clubs I represented for allowing me the opportunity to do so. It's now time for a new chapter." Palace paid tribute on Twitter, calling Jedinak "a leader of men and a club legend".

He played 79 times for his country, featuring at three World Cups before bowing out of international football in late 2018. One of his biggest triumphs was captaining the Socceroos to win the 2015 Asian Cup on home soil. —AFP

still time for Windies spearhead Shannon Gabriel (3-62) to bowl Dom Bess and Ollie Pope.

West Indies hold the Wisden Trophy but they have not won a Test series in England for 32 years. Victory today, however, would put them 1-0 up with two to play. "All you can do is get the two remaining wickets and bat normally," West Indies coach Phil Simmons told reporters.

"If we bat for five hours tomorrow to chase 180-190 it's a normal batting day, not a chase where you have to go at it." But teams have faltered before facing seemingly modest fourth-innings chases and Crawley told Sky Sports: "It should be tight if we bowl well tomorrow. "We've definitely got the bowlers to take 10 wickets on there," England were still one run behind West Indies' first innings 318 when Crawley came to the crease. But the 22-year-old, in his fifth Test, completed a well-made fifty when he reverse-swept off-spinner Roston Chase for four before surpassing his previous best of 66 against South Africa at Johannesburg in January.

Stokes, skipping the side in the absence of Joe Root, had already top-scored with 43 in England's meagre first-innings 204 before



SOUTHAMPTON: England's Ollie Pope is bowled by West Indies' Shannon Gabriel on the fourth day of the first Test cricket match between England and the West Indies at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton, southwest England on July 11, 2020. —AFP

leading their attack with 4-49.

'BIG SPELLS'

But towering paceman Holder, number one ahead of Stokes in the ICC's Test all-rounder rankings, squared up the England talisman and had him caught by Shai Hope, cleverly posi-

tioned as the finer of two gulleys for the left-handed batsman.

It was a tactical as well as personal triumph for Holder, with Simmons saying: "It's what he does. He comes back and puts in the big spells for the team — that's how he leads. I didn't expect anything different." —AFP

League next season with a 1-0 win over Real Betis despite playing more than half an hour with 10 men. Diego Costa grabbed the only goal from a Yannick Carrasco free-kick in the 73rd minute after VAR had earlier ruled out two goals.

Atletico full-back Mario Hermoso had been red-carded in the 57th minute. Earlier, Celta Vigo surrendered a valuable point in the relegation battle by conceding in the 91st-minute to Osasuna, Jose Arnaiz sealing a 2-1 win. Defeat means Celta stay four points clear of the bottom three but having played a game more than those below them. —AFP

Man City to learn fate of Champions League ban appeal

LONDON: Manchester City's Abu Dhabi project and the future of UEFA's financial fair play (FFP) rules face a pivotal day today when the Court of Arbitration for Sport delivers its verdict on City's appeal against a two-season ban from European competitions. The stakes could not be higher for the English side, who have always strongly denied any wrongdoing over allegations they deliberately inflated the value of income from sponsors with links to the Abu Dhabi United Group, also owned by City owner Sheikh Mansour, to avoid falling foul of FFP regulations between 2012 and 2016.

In February, UEFA imposed a fine of 30 million euros (\$32 million, £25 million) on City as well as suspending them from European competitions for the next two seasons.

Since Sheikh Mansour's takeover 12 years ago, City's fortunes have been transformed from perennially living in the shadow of local rivals Manchester United to winning four Premier League titles in the past eight years among 11 major trophies. Yet the prize that has eluded them is the one the Abu Dhabi project most desires - the Champions League.

GUARDIOLA'S LAST SHOT?

No matter the outcome today, City will have the chance to do so in August as they resume their Champions League campaign with a 2-1 lead over Real Madrid from the first leg of their last 16 tie.

That could be the last chance for some of City's biggest names to win the Champions League for the club as a two-year ban would have severe consequences for the club's finances.

Manager Pep Guardiola's contract runs until the end of the 2020/21 season and the Catalan is unlikely to still be in charge in two years' time.

Star players such as Kevin De Bruyne and Raheem Sterling are also unlikely to want to waste two of their peak years without Champions League football. "Two years would be long. One year is something I might be able to cope with," De Bruyne told Het Laatste Nieuws in June. It would still take huge fees from rival clubs to tempt City to sell, but they may be forced to downsize to gain re-entry to the Champions League even after any ban is over.

City made 93 million euros from UEFA prize money and TV rights from last season's Champions League, with gate receipts and extra sponsorship revenue from Europe's premier club competition added to that tally.

It would be almost impossible for the club to lose that level of revenue for two years and remain FFP-compliant without cutting costs on transfer fees and wages, or selling players.

Even more painfully for City, Manchester United could be one of the major beneficiaries of their exclusion.

City are comfortably second in the Premier League table, but if they are banned, fifth will be good enough to qualify for the Champions League. —AFP

14 Rain king Hamilton storms to Styrian Grand Prix pole



15 Messi tees up victory as Barcelona cling on to fading title hopes



15 Holder gets Stokes again to spark England collapse



YAS ISLAND: Kamaru Usman of Nigeria celebrates after his victory over Jorge Masvidal in their UFC welterweight championship fight during the UFC 251 event at Flash Forum on UFC Fight Island on Yas Island in Abu Dhabi. — AFP

Usman outclasses Masvidal

UFC debuts on 'Fight Island' in UAE

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: Kamaru Usman put on a 'Fight Island' masterclass Sunday to retain his Ultimate Fighting Championship welterweight world title by grinding down a brave Jorge Masvidal in Abu Dhabi.

"I'm at the top of the mountain and everyone's looking at me," declared the 33-year-old Usman after scoring a unanimous points decision 50-45, 50-45 and 49-46 on the three judges' cards.

The Nigerian-American Usman (17-1) looked the fresher with Masvidal (35-14) having taken the UFC 251 headline bout at just six days' notice when Brazil's Gilbert Burns (19-3) tested positive for COVID-19 and was unable to travel.

The Las Vegas-based UFC pulled off a power-packed schedule with three world title fights to kick off a series of mixed martial arts cards.

It helped fulfil supreme Dana White's vision of a coronavirus-free 'Fight Island', something he first floated when the pandemic caused a global shut-down of sport in March.

UFC has decamped to Abu Dhabi's locked down Yas Island in the United Arab Emirates until the end of July to isolate fighters from the threat of the COVID-19 and ensure the shows roll on.

Strict protocols mean athletes and staff are tested twice before leaving for the UAE, and twice again on arrival, before spending 48 hours in quarantine — measures that caught out Usman's original opponent Burns (19-3).

Usman never gave the 35-year-old replacement Masvidal the space to land the combinations for which he is noted, and he monstered Cuban-American when the action hit the cage, and the canvas.

"Gamebred (Masvidal) is the biggest, baddest dude out there right now and I had to take him," said Usman.

"I know a lot of noise was made about him preparing on short notice but all these guys are preparing for one guy and that's me.

"I'm just at a level better. I have more tools in the tool box and when I need to I can pull them out and

use them."

The pair had exchanged heated words via social media in the lead-up to the event — Masvidal claiming his opponent had "crossed lines" — and they were chipping away at each other in between rounds.

But there were smiles at the end when the judges ruled overwhelmingly in favour of Usman with Masvidal, who was without his coach Mike Brown who had also tested positive for COVID-19, applauding his opponent.

Usman's 12-0 UFC welterweight record is equalled only by future Hall of Famer Georges St-Pierre (26-2). The headline fight and the two other title fights delivered on the hype that had been built around the "Fight Island" showpiece.

Australian featherweight world champion Alexander Volkov (22-1) edged the tightest of split decisions 48-47, 47-48, 48-47 in a thrilling rematch against former champion from Hawaii, Max Holloway (21-6).

Brazil's former three-time world champion Jose

Aldo (28-7) was stopped in the fifth by relentless Russian Petr Yan (15-1) who claimed the vacant bantamweight crown.

The 27-year-old Yan rained in blows on his 33-year-old opponent for three minutes before the referee stepped in to save the veteran.

"Aldo is a legend. I have only respect for him," said Yan. "It was a good knockout. I liked it."

Before those title fights came a brutal women's strawweight rematch between America's Rose Namajunas (10-4) and the Brazilian Jessica Andrade (20-8). Andrade had stripped the title from Namajunas in May 2019 by pile-driving her to the canvas for a knockout.

This time the pair traded blows before the 28-year-old Namajunas, her face bloodied, edged a split decision 28-29, 29-28, 29-28.

The 38-year-old Namajunas will now likely get a world title shot against champion Zhang Weili (21-1) from China, who took the title from Andrade 11 months ago. — AFP

Sheff Utd cruise past Chelsea

LONDON: Sheffield United dealt a major blow to Chelsea's chances of a Premier League top-four finish by thrashing the Blues 3-0 at Bramall Lane, while Liverpool's long winning run at Anfield came to an end in a draw with Burnley on Saturday.

Manchester City did guarantee their presence in the top four for a 10th successive season with Raheem Sterling scoring a hat-trick in a 5-0 win at Brighton. However, they will have to wait for the outcome on Monday of their appeal against a two-season ban from European competitions to see if they will play Champions League football next season.

Norwich will be playing in the Championship after Michail Antonio's four-goal blitz confirmed the Canaries' relegation in a thumping 4-0 win for West

Ham that should seal the Hammers' top-flight status for another year.

Sheffield United have long since achieved that feat in their first season in the Premier League for 13 years and the Blades are still eying the top four themselves as they moved within five points of fourth-placed Leicester.

Chelsea remain in third, but could end the weekend down in fifth if Leicester and Manchester United beat Bournemouth and Southampton respectively. The Blues have already reinforced their attack for next season with the signings of Timo Werner and Hakim Ziyech, but Frank Lampard was again shown it is at the other end his side desperately need to improve.

David McGoldrick's long wait for a first Premier League goal came to an end when he was quickest to react after Kepa Arrizabalaga saved Oli McBurnie's deflected shot. More slack defending from the visitors then allowed McBurnie a free header to double the hosts' lead.

Lampard sent on Antonio Rudiger at the start of the second-half, but the German international did lit-

tle to improve Chelsea's defending as his attempted clearance from Lys Mousset's cross only teed up McGoldrick to score his second 13 minutes from time.

"They were better than us, physically, in the mind and with the ball," said Lampard. "I learned a lot and I won't forget that."

LIVERPOOL HELD

For the first time since January 2018, Liverpool failed to win a Premier League game at Anfield as an inspired performance by Nick Pope in the Burnley goal and Jay Rodriguez's equaliser to cancel out Andy Robertson's first-half header gave Burnley a share of the spoils. Jurgen Klopp's men now need to win their remaining three games to be surpass the record total of 100 points in a Premier League season set by City two years ago. "We left the door open, we didn't close it. We should have scored two, three, four goals at least," said Klopp.

City scored four or more goals for the fourth time in six league games at Brighton. Sterling's treble took his best ever season's tally to 27, while Gabriel Jesus

and Bernardo Silva also netted in another rout for a pleased Pep Guardiola, who is hoping his players' efforts on the pitch are rewarded by playing Champions League football next season.

"We deserve to be there because we won it on the pitch. Hopefully on Monday UEFA can allow us to play like this team and these players deserve to," said Guardiola.

NORWICH RELEGATED

At Carrow Road, a seventh successive league defeat condemned Norwich to relegation as Antonio's ruthless display boosted West Ham's own survival bid. "We wanted to beat the odds again but when the dust settles the outcome is more or less what was expected. It doesn't take anything away from the fact that we are disappointed," manager Daniel Farke said.

West Ham's second win in four games opens up a six-point cushion over the bottom three. The early signs were ominous for Norwich as West Ham took the lead in the 11th minute through Antonio's close-range volley. — AFP