



6 Hopes of miracle fade in search for blast survivor



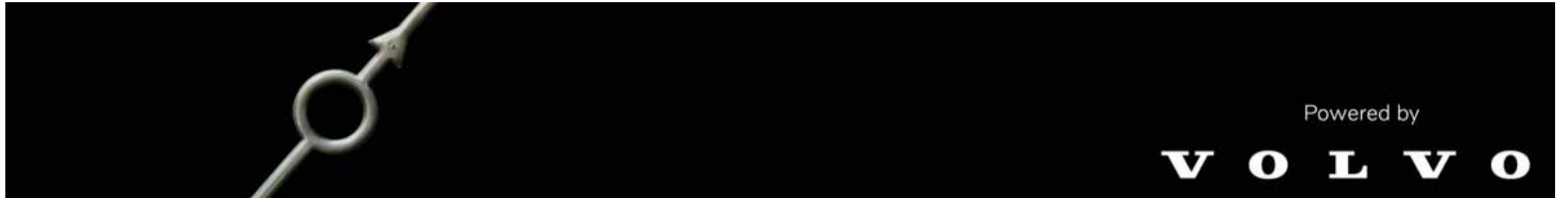
8 Glove makers struggle to keep pace with demand



12 Elephant at Pakistan zoo prepared for new home



15 Messi to remain at Barca but future still in doubt



MoH refutes reports of fake COVID test results

MoI warns against spreading rumors • Kuwait reports 3 deaths, 720 new cases

KUWAIT: The health ministry has categorically denied that it sent text messages containing results of coronavirus (COVID-19) tests without conducting the tests actually on persons. Reports circulating on social media networks in this regard are totally untrue, the ministry said in a press release on Friday.

When the health authorities conduct a COVID-19 test on a person, they register their personal data, including the ID card number and phone number. Sometimes two persons have the same phone number, so an SMS containing the test

result could be sent to the phone number of more than one person associated with the ID card number of the person in question, the ministry explained.

The interior ministry again urged people to help fight the spread of rumors about COVID-19. "Do not help those spreading rumors by sharing or reposting them, as merely doing so makes you an accomplice. Reports circulating on social media networks does not mean they are authentic. Only rely on official sources. Report those spreading rumors about the disease and false statistics through social media net-

works," the ministry tweeted.

Kuwait yesterday recorded 720 confirmed coronavirus infections in the past 24 hours, raising the tally to 88,963 cases, with three deaths raising the death toll to 540, a health ministry official said yesterday. The figures include people who came into contact with infected individuals and others whose source of infection is currently being investigated, health ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said.

In terms of health zones, 177 cases were reported in Hawally, 169 in Ahmadi, 130 in the Capital,

127 in Farwaniya and 117 in Jahra. Earlier, the ministry said 486 people recovered from the virus, taking the total number of those who have overcome the disease to 79,903. Sanad said 91 patients are currently in intensive care out of a total 8,520 patients hospitalized.

He added 4,414 swab tests were conducted in the past 24 hours, raising the total to 640,634. The official reiterated the strict need to abide by health precautions, urging nationals and expatriates alike that following social distancing rules is the only way to keep the virus at bay.

News in brief

India tops 4m virus cases

NEW DELHI: India has become the world's third country to pass four million coronavirus infections, setting a new record daily surge in cases yesterday as the crisis shows no sign of peaking. The 86,432 new cases took India to 4,023,179 infections, third behind the US which has more than 6.3 million and just trailing Brazil on 4.1 million. India now has the world's fastest growing number of cases at more than 80,000 a day and the highest daily death toll at more than 1,000. — AFP

16 killed in Bangladesh blast

DHAKA: A suspected gas explosion tore through a Bangladesh mosque killing at least 16 people, while dozens suffered life-threatening burns, police said yesterday. Worshippers were at Friday evening prayers when the blast sent a ball of flames through the mosque in the central district of Narayanganj, emergency services said. Investigators suspected a spark from an air conditioner - which came on after a power cut - set off the gas. All six air conditioners in the mosque exploded during the incident. — Agencies

Iran explosion injures 200

TEHRAN: The explosion of a chlorine gas canister being transported by a truck in western Iran has injured 217 people but caused no deaths, state news agency IRNA reported. The blast struck late Friday in Chardavol county in Ilam province, the news agency said. The head of the province's medical university, Mohammad Karimian, told IRNA driver "carelessness" was suspected. The incident is the latest in a series of fires and explosions that have hit military and civilian sites across Iran since June. — AFP

Iraq warns it may 'lose control'

BAGHDAD: Iraq on Friday recorded its highest single-day rise in COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic, prompting authorities to warn hospitals may "lose control" in the coming days. According to the Iraqi health ministry, 5,036 new coronavirus infections were confirmed on Friday, bringing the total number of cases across the country to 252,075. The ministry attributed the spike to recent "large gatherings" that took place without recommended safety measures. — AFP

Qatar project sets two records

DOHA: Guinness World Records has declared Qatar the dual titleholder of the longest bicycle path and largest continuous concrete pour, the 2022 World Cup host's public works ministry said yesterday. The two world records were achieved by the local Al-Khor road project, in which 65 km of paved roads were completed in roughly a month. — KUNA

Blazing tanker pushed from Lanka coast

COLOMBO: A fire-stricken oil tanker was pushed away from Sri Lanka's coast and into deeper waters yesterday, rescuers said, after successfully containing the blaze during a 36-hour operation. The 20-year-old New Diamond, chartered by Indian Oil Corp (IOC), had sailed from Ahmadi port in Kuwait loaded with 270,000 tons of Kuwait Export Crude. It was heading for the Indian port of Paradip,

where state-run IOC has a 300,000 barrel-per-day refinery.

The Panamanian-registered New Diamond had drifted dangerously close to the eastern shores of Sri Lanka since issuing a distress message on Thursday morning. The Indian Coast Guard and the Sri Lankan navy said the 330-m vessel was towed overnight to deeper waters some 60 km away from the coast. "There is no oil slick reported," the Indian Coast Guard said after a joint effort by the two countries to contain the blaze.

Sri Lanka's navy said rescuers were still spraying foam on the vessel but that the blaze had been brought under control. There was no immediate danger of the tanker breaking up

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This handout photograph taken on Friday shows fireboats battling to extinguish a fire on the Panamanian-registered crude oil tanker New Diamond, some 60 km off Sri Lanka's eastern coast. — AFP

Outrage after soldier kneels on Palestinian

JERUSALEM: Footage of an Israeli soldier throwing a Palestinian activist to the ground and kneeling on his neck has sparked outrage in the Palestinian territories and beyond. The protester, named as Khairi Hanoun, a man in his late 60s, took part in demonstrations on Tuesday near Tulkarm, in the north of the West Bank, against moves to extend a neighboring Israeli settlement.

Footage taken by AFP in recent weeks at different protests has shown him shouting at Israeli soldiers. Hanoun was also involved in Tuesday's demonstration at a road bordering the village of Shufah, between Nablus and Tulkarm. He was seen waving a Palestinian flag, along with dozens of other protesters, and watched by several journalists.

In video footage, Hanoun appeared to touch an Israeli soldier, who then pushed him to the ground, putting his knee on his neck as he secured his hands with a plastic tie. Edited footage of the incident has been circulating on social media and Palestinian television channels. Several are posted with the hashtag #PalestinianLivesMatter. They compare the image with George Floyd, an unarmed African

Continued on Page 2

Charges dropped against US man tried six times

WASHINGTON: US prosecutors dropped charges Friday against a black man who was tried six times and spent more than 20 years in prison for the same murders. Curtis Flowers served 23 years for a quadruple murder committed in Mississippi in 1996. He has always maintained his innocence. The prosecutor in all six trials was ultimately accused last year by the US Supreme Court of trying hard to keep black people off the jury and eventually resigned from the case.

Flowers - who has been sentenced to death four times in the case - was released on bail in December, although another trial was still possible. But on Friday Mississippi's attorney general dismissed the charges against him. "I am finally free from the injustice that left me locked in a box for 23 years," Flowers said in a statement. "The day I've prayed for is here at last."

Under US law, a suspect acquitted of a crime cannot be tried again. Still, Flowers was tried six times. His case became well known in a podcast called "In the Dark". Each of the convictions and death sentences in the first three trials was overturned by the Mississippi Supreme Court for prosecutorial misconduct. The next two ended in hung juries. In 2010, Flowers was convicted a final time and sentenced to death.

But this decision was overturned in 2019 by the US

Supreme Court because of what it called a prosecutor's "relentless, determined effort to rid the jury of black individuals". That prosecutor, Doug Evans, had been on the case from the outset. In January he agreed to step down from the case and the state attorney general Lynn Fitch started the proceedings from scratch. She asked that the case be thrown out, and a judge agreed. — AFP



Curtis Flowers

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: People walk along a boardwalk that stretches into the sea as the sun sets over Kuwait City on Friday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Police apprehend suspect with loads of drugs



KUWAIT: Police arrested a Kuwaiti man in Shaab yesterday with possession of 66 bags of the 'chemical' (street name for a brand of synthetic marijuana) and 87 Captagon tablets, the Interior Ministry announced

yesterday. The suspect was sent to concerned authorities for further legal action, the ministry's Relations and Security Information Department said in a press statement.

Outrage after soldier kneels...

Continued from Page 1

American killed in police custody, who was photographed with police kneeling on his neck.

Saeb Erakat, secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization, wrote on Twitter on Wednesday about the images condemning the "aggression". The Islamist movement Hamas, in

power in the Gaza Strip, said "such acts" were among the "main causes" of tensions in the region. However, Israel's army said the images did not show the extent of the confrontation.

"We emphasize that the videos on social media are partial, heavily edited and do not reflect the violent riot nor the violence against IDF (Israeli) troops that happened prior to the apprehension," the army said. Israel's army said "a Palestinian known as an inciter" had "shoved" a soldier "a number of times". According to the army, soldiers "showed restraint" but "were forced to apprehend the suspect that repeatedly assaulted them". Soldiers provided medical care after his arrest, the statement added. — AFP

Blazing tanker pushed from...

Continued from Page 1

despite a two-meter crack in the hull 10 m above the waterline, it said. Rear Admiral Y N Jayarathna said the metal had cracked in the intense heat as the ship's diesel fuel tanks burned when the fire spread from the adjoining engine room.

The fire was triggered by an engine room explosion that killed a Filipino crewman on Thursday morning as the vessel was passing Sri Lanka on its way to Paradip. It issued a distress signal 60 km from Sri Lanka's eastern coastal town of Sangamankanda Point. Three tugboats - two Indian and one chartered by the owners - were brought into action on Friday night to push the vessel back into deeper waters amid fears of an environmental disaster should the oil leak.

A total of 16 vessels, including specialized fire-

fighting tugs and four aircraft, were deployed to bring the blaze under control by Friday night. Water and foam cannons were used to smother the flames, Sri Lanka's Disaster Management Centre chief Sudantha Ranasinghe said. He said the blaze had not spread to the massive crude cargo and 1,700 tons of diesel fuel.

Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Agency said legal action could be taken against the owners, Liberian-registered Porto Emporios Shipping Inc "should the worst happen and the ship breaks up". Sri Lankan officials said they were considering a ship-to-ship transfer of the crude before salvaging the tanker.

The vessel is larger than the Japanese bulk carrier MV Wakashio, which crashed into a reef in Mauritius in July leaking more than 1,000 tons of oil into the island nation's pristine waters. The Maldives, which neighbors Sri Lanka, has raised concerns that any oil spill from the New Diamond could cause serious environmental damage in the atoll of more than 1,000 coral islands that is heavily dependent on tourism and fishing. — Agencies

Credit Bank: \$42 million loans, grants in August

KUWAIT: Kuwait Credit Bank announced that overall loans in the property sector, for women and grants reached KD 12.8 million (\$42 million) in August. The bank said in a statistical report released yesterday that total spent loans of the real-

ty portfolios, during the same month, amounted to KD 49,000 (\$161,000), noting that the granted loans for building private construction reached KD nine million (\$29.7 million). Loans for government construction units amounted to KD 12 million (\$39.6) and houses' purchase KD 2.6 million (\$8.5 million). The bank report also noted that approximately 142,000 (\$468,000) were spent for expanding and renovating private houses and KD 630,000 (\$two million) for expanding and refurbishing government residences. Total grants for citizens of special needs amounted to \$132,000 for expansion and renovation works and KD 9 (\$29,007) for restoration works. — KUNA

Oil industry placing risky bet on plastics

LONDON: Big oil producers are pinning their future growth on the world's insatiable appetite for plastic, researchers said Friday, in a "bet" on society's failure to tackle disposable consumption that risks stranding billions of dollars in petrochemical investments. The industry has faced increasingly urgent questions in recent months about whether "peak" oil demand has been reached, with the coronavirus pandemic leading to a dramatic drop in transport fuel consumption, while cleaner energy makes ever greater headway.

But oil producers now see plastics as the biggest driver of future demand, according to a new report by financial think tank Carbon Tracker and sustainability and development group Systemiq. Plastic production has increased around four percent every year since 2000, the report said, adding that most firms in the industry appear to expect that rate of growth to continue, driven mainly by emerging economies.

Plastics currently make up less than nine percent of oil demand, but the report said they are the largest component of oil demand growth. It said the industry now plans to invest at least \$400 billion in the next five years to expand supply for so-called virgin plastics by a quarter, but warned that this risked huge losses for investors.

"The plastics industry, in its assumption of a doubling of demand for plastics in the next 10, 20

years or so, is making a bet that society will fail to find any solutions to reduce, substitute or recycle plastic," said report author Kingsmill Bond, energy strategist at Carbon Tracker. He told AFP that it was an "unreasonable assumption to imagine that you could carry on doing for the next 50 years what you've done for the last 70 years, which is polluted with impunity".

Some 350 million tonnes of plastic are produced annually - about half in Asia, 19 percent in North America and 16 percent in Europe. The International Energy Agency forecast in 2018 that the growth in demand for petrochemical products - including plastics, fertilizers, detergents and other items - would see them account for over a third of the predicted increase in oil demand to 2030, and nearly half to 2050.

But surging plastic use has caused a pollution crisis, with least 8 million tonnes thought to end up in oceans every year. This has spurred governments to mandate greater recycling, impose tighter restrictions on waste disposal and in some cases introduce bans on single-use items.

The Carbon Tracker report forecast that mounting pressure to cut plastic use could slash growth in demand for virgin plastic from four percent a year to below one percent, with demand peaking in 2027. It also found that the plastic value chain - from extraction of the oil, to when it is burned, buried or recycled - releases roughly twice as much carbon dioxide as producing a ton of oil. "These guys think that they are going to be completely unaffected by the world's attempt to cut down carbon usage," said Bond. — AFP

WHO tempers hopes for quick vaccine

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said Friday it did not expect widespread immunization against the novel coronavirus until mid-2021, tempering hopes just as research unveiled encouraging early results from a Russian vaccine. The virus which has killed nearly 870,000 people worldwide continues to spread, with Italy's flamboyant former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi now in hospital after becoming the latest high-profile figure to test positive for Covid-19.

Across the world, governments are hoping to announce a vaccine as soon as possible against the virus, which has infected well over 26 million people, upended millions of lives and wreaked havoc on the

global economy. The UN health agency welcomed the fact that a "considerable number" of vaccine candidates had entered final stage trials, which typically involve tens of thousands of people.

But "in terms of realistic timelines, we are really not expecting to see widespread vaccination until the middle of next year," WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris said. And WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the agency would not endorse a vaccine if it is not effective and safe.

Russia has already approved a vaccine, and research published in The Lancet medical journal on Friday said patients involved in early tests developed antibodies with "no serious adverse events". But scientists cautioned the trials were too small - just 76 participants - to prove safety and effectiveness.

Washington has also urged US states to get ready for a potential vaccine rollout by November 1, sparking concerns President Donald Trump's administration is rushing to begin distributing a vaccine before the Nov 3 election. — AFP

Local

Firemen battle container crane fire at Shuaiba Port

Three hurt in nine-vehicle crash on King Faisal Road



Firefighters tackle flames that engulfed three vehicles in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. — KFSD photos



A fireman at the scene of an accident involving a trailer truck and eight other vehicles on King Faisal Road.

KUWAIT: Firemen spent a busy weekend dealing with several fire and road accident reports made from different locations around Kuwait. One of these incidents was a blaze that burned a container crane at Shuaiba Port yesterday. Firefighters from the Shuaiba, Mina Abdullah, and Um Al-Haiman fire stations rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call, and managed to put out the fire after they contained the flames before they could spread to other containers. No injuries were reported, and an investigation was opened to determine the cause of fire, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said.

Meanwhile, firemen battled a blaze that started after a power cable caught fire near a house in



KUWAIT: A thick cloud of smoke comes out of the burning container crane at Shuaiba Port.



A fireman battles the Shuaiba Port crane blaze.



A minibus heavily damaged following a fatal accident reported on Salmi Road.



Firemen examine the scene after the Shuaiba Port crane blaze was extinguished.



Man dead in Salmi Road accident

Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh on Friday, and the flames engulfed three vehicles parked nearby. Firefighters' quick intervention helped prevent the flames from spreading to other nearby vehicles, KFSD said, noting that no injuries were reported in the incident. An investigation was opened. Separately, Farwaniya firefighters put out a fire that broke out in a vehicle at Ghazali Road Friday evening. No casualties were reported.

Road accidents

In other news, a man died in an accident involving a minibus on Salmi Road near the intersection with the Sixth Ring Road on Friday. Investigations are ongoing to identify the victim who did not car-

ry any identifications on him, and reveal the circumstances behind the accident, KFSD said. Jahra firefighters handled the accident.

In the meantime, three people were injured in an accident involving a trailer truck and eight other vehicles, which was reported on King Faisal Road near Al-Siddiq Thursday evening. Farwaniya firefighters headed to the scene after the accident was reported, KFSD said. An investigation was opened into the accident. Similarly, a three-vehicle collision on Fourth Ring Road Thursday evening left three persons slightly wounded, KFSD reported. Sulaibikhat firemen rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call, and they put out a fire that started in two of the vehicles as a result of the accident. An investigation went underway to determine what caused the accident to happen.

News in brief

Fine for not wearing facemask?

KUWAIT: People who fail to wear facemasks in public could soon be fined on the spot in Kuwait, according to an Al-Rai report published recently and alleges that the government is currently drafting a law amendment in this regard. The current law stipulates that violation of health precautions against contagious disease is punishable by a maximum of three months in jail and/or a maximum 5,000 fine.

Platform for expats stuck abroad

KUWAIT: The government is looking into the possibility of starting an online platform where public sector expatriate employees stuck abroad can register with in order to return back to Kuwait amid restrictions on flights. A government team led by Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel is studying this subject, Al-Jarida reported, noting that registration will likely be made available only to employees whose service are urgently needed such as doctors and medical staff members.

Forged sick leaves

KUWAIT: Criminal detectives arrested three people who sold forged sick leaves to public and private sector employees for around KD 30 each, Al-Qabas reported. Police found 14 stamps belonging to doctors that were stolen from health ministry polyclinics years ago by a worker who has since left Kuwait, according to the investigations report.

Kuwait, UK prepare for meeting

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah on Thursday received a telephone call from the British Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa James Cleverly. The two sides reviewed during the call the bilateral relations and preparatory meetings for the next session of the Joint Steering Group. The Group has recently held a virtual meeting. They also discussed regional and international issues.

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Manpower authority trains youth to join labor market

KUWAIT: The manpower authority's official spokesperson and public relations manager Aseel Al-Mazyad said the authority will hold a training course for senior students titled 'My Career' in collaboration with the vocational guidance department and Injaz Society. Mazyad added that the course is part of the authority's strategy to train youth and develop their skills to prepare them for the labor market. "The course will be held online via the Zoom application in the period of September 7 to 9. It will be held for two hours daily from 4 to 6 pm and will be open to Kuwaitis aged 18 to 24, who will be trained on time management, verbal and written communication, interviews and the concept of leadership," she added, noting that the course will be taught in Arabic.

Field visit

Separately, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Rana Al-Fares paid a field visit to the East Taima housing project site to follow up on work progress. Speaking during the visit, where she met the housing authority officials and the site manager, Fares said work in the project was going well according to schedule, stressing that 84 percent of construction has been concluded so far.

Electronic archive

In other news, Ministry of Electricity and Water's assistant undersecretary for power grid affairs Mutlaq Al-Otaibi announced that the ministry plans to electronically archive the blueprints of all buildings built since 1959. Otaibi added that this step comes within the ministry's plans to digitalize all its services with the aim of facilitating access to building information as well as various procedures. "The blueprint unit has so far scanned 70 percent of the blueprints," he stressed, noting that the scanned documents include buildings built in the period between the beginning of the 1990s until 2019, and that the remaining buildings of the 1960s and 1970s are relatively limited due to the construction boom at the beginning of the 1990s.

Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Anbaa

'Tamkeen' is one of steps to alter country's demographics: Aqeel

Initiative will address weaknesses in the current system



KUWAIT: Officials attend the press conference announcing the signing of the 'Tamkeen' initiative. —KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of State for Economic Affairs of Kuwait Mariam Al-Aqeel confirmed the 'Tamkeen' initiative is among steps the government is taking in its efforts to address the demographic imbalance in Kuwait, especially amid the challenges created due to effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Minister Aqeel spoke during the signing of the 'Tamkeen' initiative Thursday between the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development and the Public Authority for Manpower with the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Development Organization in Kuwait.

Aqeel said the initiative contributes to strengthening the global position of Kuwait within the framework of Kuwait National Development Plan "New Kuwait 2035" by strengthening the national mechanisms for good governance of immigration and facilitating the workers for an improved employment experience. 'Tamkeen' means fair employment of workers, and enabling national labor recruitment agencies to update evidence-based policies and program national efforts aimed at improving institutional

governance for expatriate workers, she added. She indicated that initiative will address the weaknesses in the current system that were evident during COVID-19. Aqeel praised the partnership between the General Secretariat for Planning and



Promoting fair employment

Development and the Manpower Authority with the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Development Program in Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Dr Khaled



Mariam Al-Aqeel



Dr Khaled Al-Mahdi

Al-Mahdi, said in a press statement on the sidelines of the signing that the Kuwaiti government has submitted an integrated project to the Human Resources Committee in the National Assembly to draw up a roadmap towards reforming labor market imbalances, whose effects will be reflected in modifying the demographic composition in the country.

The 'Tamkeen' initiative is a major part of the program and project set by the Kuwaiti government that consists of several stages, the most important is the existence of an international system that applies international conditions and standards to approve the recruitment of workers into the country via the smart system, he added.

Mahdi pointed out that this is the first initiative to introduce recruitment agencies and to apply to international standards before workers enter the country, in addition to their contribution to promoting fair employment in labor markets. He indicated that the initiative will have a significant impact on the country's reputation as one of the pillars of the development plan and will contribute in elevating Kuwait's status in international forums. —KUNA

Arab finance ministers plan integration amid pandemic

KUWAIT: Arab finance ministers came together via video call for talks aimed at setting a path towards greater economic cooperation, as a raging coronavirus pandemic continues to pummel the global economy. The talks, presided over by Kuwait's Finance Minister Barrak Al-Sheetan, come on Thursday: a day after a similar digital gathering

involving senior officials from the Arab Economic and Social Council as part of its routine sessions, said a Kuwaiti finance ministry statement. As the global economy is battered into recession by the pandemic, Sheetan said more cooperation on the economic front would only behoove the region, citing record high levels of unemployment across the world. The minister expressed hope that some of the economic body's most promising projects, including a pan-Arab food security initiative, would inevitably see the light of day, added the statement.

The aftermath of a "catastrophic port explosion" last month in the Lebanese capital Beirut that pushed the country to the precipice of economic collapse was front

and center on the agenda, the statement revealed, in addition to other pressing matters such as Palestinian efforts to fight a coronavirus outbreak. The ministers, along with major financial institutions across the Arab world, will also look into some of the recommendations and suggestions the council has put forward, the statement added. —KUNA



Barrak Al-Sheetan

British Airways resumes flights to Kuwait airport

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced on Friday British Airways would resume flights to Kuwait International Airport at a rate of three flights per week. The DGCA said in a statement that "this step has been taken to boost direct flights between and

transit operations between the two countries according to terms set by the competent authorities." Meanwhile, DGCA announced new precautions for arrivals at T-4 terminal. The DGCA said in a statement that only 60 people will be allowed to be present at the same time in the arrivals' hall. Priority will be for who comes first and only a single family member will be allowed to wait for the incoming passenger at the hall. Moreover, entry into the terminal to receive passengers will be allowed only one hour ahead of the scheduled arriving flight. Those seeking to wait for receiving coming passengers must present information about the arriving flight to the security personnel to allow them enter the airport. —KUNA

Kuwait commercial flights travel guidelines

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

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation presented a set of rules for the safe resumption of air travel. The new rules mandate all travelers to wear protective facemasks and keep a hand sanitizer in

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

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

COVID-19 and mental health hotlines

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health has set the following hotlines to receive inquiries about the coronavirus 24/7: 24970967 - 96049698 - 99048619. Meanwhile, the Kuwait Center for Mental Health provides help through its suicide hotline: 24621770 (8 am - 5 pm). Furthermore, 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.

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Hopes of miracle fade in search for Beirut blast survivor

University professor admits she posed as black woman

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US AIR FORCES CENTRAL COMMAND: Photo shows US soldiers standing next to an F-35A Lightning II stationed at the Emirati Al-Dhafra base, about 32 kilometers south of Abu Dhabi. — AFP

Bahrain to allow UAE-Israel overflights

Overflight marks a sign of cooperation with Jewish state

DUBAI: Bahrain said it had agreed to allow UAE flights to and from Israel to overfly the kingdom, a day after a similar decision was announced by Saudi Arabia. The announcements come after a US-Israeli delegation visited Abu Dhabi on Monday, on the first direct commercial flight from Tel Aviv to mark the normalization of ties between the Jewish state and the United Arab Emirates. Bahrain, like Saudi Arabia, has no official diplomatic relations with Israel, but their decision to allow overflights marks a sign of cooperation with the Jewish state.

"Bahrain will allow all flights coming to and departing from the United Arab Emirates to all countries to cross its airspace," reported the official Bahrain News Agency, citing an official source at the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications. The UAE and Israel have agreed to normalize ties in a US-brokered agreement announced last month by President Donald Trump, making the Emirates the first Gulf country to establish diplomatic relations with the Jewish state and only the third Arab nation to do so.

'Matter of timing'

Contacts between Bahrain - the first Gulf country to welcome the UAE-Israel deal - and the Jewish state date back to the 1990s. Bahrain, like most other Gulf countries, shares with Israel a common enemy in Iran, which Manama accuses of instigating protests by the nation's Shiite Muslim community against the ruling Sunni Al-Khalifa dynasty.

The UAE's decision to normalize ties with Israel has been welcomed by some Arab countries, but despite cheerleading from the US, others have rejected the idea and many approach it with caution. The Palestinians have condemned the deal as a stab in the back by a major Arab player while they still lack a state of their own. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who was on a Middle East visit last month, expressed optimism that more Arab nations will sign up.

Analysts say that Bahrain is one of the most likely countries to follow in the footsteps of the UAE. "I believe Bahrain will be next to normalize relations with Israel," Cinzia Bianco, a research fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, told AFP earlier this week. "It's mostly a matter of timing and incentives to do so." White House advisor Jared Kushner visited Bahrain on Tuesday, a week after a visit by Pompeo, as the US tries to seize on the momentum of the UAE's move.

He met with King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, who said stability in the region relied on Saudi Arabia, according to state media. Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia, while not condemning the deal, has refused to normalize ties until Israel signs an internationally recognized peace accord with the Palestinians. Under the accord, Israel agreed to suspend its planned annexations in the occupied West Bank — but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted the plans remain on the table. — AFP

Dead or alive? Charlie Hebdo jihadist widow eludes capture

PARIS: Described as France's most wanted woman, Hayat Boumeddiene has been on the run ever since her partner Amedy Coulibaly killed a policewoman and four Jews in the January 2015 terror attacks that shook the country. Boumeddiene left France in the days before the attacks on satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo and a Jewish supermarket left 17 people dead.

The track has run cold ever since. Speculation she was dead was contradicted by reported sightings in Syria and authorities do not know if she is dead or alive. Coulibaly was killed by security forces in the aftermath of the massacre, as were the two brothers who attacked Charlie Hebdo, meaning that none of the actual killers can face justice in a terror trial that started Wednesday.

Boumeddiene, the only woman among the gunmen's fourteen alleged accomplices on trial for the attacks, stands accused of association with terrorism. She will be tried in absentia along with two others. Prosecutors believe Boumeddiene - who was 26 at the time - knowingly participated in the attacks, collecting funds and organizing the logistics. She was last seen on January 2, 2015 - less than a week before the attacks - as she

passed through security at Madrid airport and then boarded a plane to Istanbul.

She passed through Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen airport unnoticed, with airport security footage showing her entering the country like any tourist wearing a headscarf and accompanied by a bearded, unidentified man. Boumeddiene then travelled to the south of Turkey and within a week after her arrival passed over its southern border into northern Syria which was then under the control of Islamic State (IS) jihadists. There, she largely slipped off the radar.

Bikini to niqab

One of seven children, Boumeddiene's mother died when she was six. She spent her childhood hopping from one foster family to the next. Boumeddiene first made contact with Coulibaly in 2007 through a joint acquaintance while he was in prison for minor crimes relating to drugs and hold-ups. But he met radicalised Islamists in jail, and became radicalized himself. The couple married in a religious Muslim ceremony in 2009. The photos of the pair smiling on the beach in swimming trunks and a bikini gave way to a shot a year later where Boumeddiene wore a black niqab revealing only her eyes and carrying a crossbow. Coulibaly held a gun.

Boumeddiene began working to convert young girls to her new way of life. In 2010, Coulibaly was sent back to prison for participating in the attempted break-out of Smain Ait Ali Belkacem, convicted for a 1995 attack in Paris. French police interrogated Boumeddiene. Islam brought her peace, she told authorities, but they noted her radicalized discourse. Coulibaly was freed in 2014.

In the months leading up to the January 2015 attacks, the couple undertook a pilgrimage to Makkah. Boumeddiene gathered funds through fraudulent operations and emptied her bank accounts.

No remorse

In phone calls intercepted by French police after the attacks, Boumeddiene said she was not aware of the planned attacks and simply did her partner's bidding by fleeing to Syria to join IS jihadists. But she expressed no remorse for the attacks, saying she was treated "like a princess" in Syria as the widow of a "martyr". "It's amazing," Boumeddiene told her sister by phone in April 2015 in the call intercepted by police. She said she wanted the same destiny as her partner's: "the death of a martyr".

For several years after the phone calls, police lost track of her whereabouts and some reports indicated she had died. Until last autumn. A Frenchwoman who had returned from Syria said she recognised Boumeddiene in October 2019 in the huge Syrian refugee camp Al-Hol, where over 10,000 foreign jihadist women and children are being held. Since October, Boumeddiene is believed to have fled the camp, possibly towards one of the last pockets of jihadism, in the Idlib province in northwestern Syria.

Paris-based anti-terror monitor the Center for the Analysis of Terrorism (CAT) said in May she and 12 other suspected female jihadists had escaped from prisons in northern Syria, now Kurdish-controlled. Prosecutors argue Boumeddiene must have known that the funds would go towards terrorist acts.—AFP

Far-right US militants nabbed

WASHINGTON: Two Americans who belong to the far-right movement known as Boogaloo Bois have been arrested after providing gun silencers to people they believed to be from the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, officials said Friday. Michael Solomon, 30, and Benjamin Teeter, 22, have been charged with conspiring and attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, the Justice Department said. Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, refuses to recognize Israel and is considered a terrorist organization by Israel and the United States.

Boogaloo Bois is a loose-knit movement that shares followers with some neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups, as well as with libertarians and anarchists. The stridently anti-police and anti-authority movement promotes a "boogaloo" - a new civil war to overthrow the government. Few had heard of it before this year.

But the group drew attention after African American George Floyd was

killed by police in May in Minneapolis, when its members joined street demonstrations as a ploy to attack police.

They are distinguished by their embrace of assault weapons and military tactical vests, sometimes worn over flowery Hawaiian shirts, an inside joke for the group. The Justice Department said Solomon and Teeter, who admit belonging to Boogaloo Bois, were seen openly carrying guns in a Minneapolis neighborhood during the Floyd demonstrations and interacted with a witness who reported them to the FBI. They later came into contact with a police informant they believed to be a representative of Hamas in the United States.

They proposed to act as "mercenaries" for Hamas and provide it with silencers and other gun parts in exchange for money to finance their own organization. They were arrested after delivering silencers to an FBI agent posing as a more senior Hamas official. "This case can only be understood as a disturbing example of the old adage, 'The enemy of your enemy is your friend,'" said Assistant Attorney General John Demers. "Thinking that they shared the same desire to harm the United States, they sought to join forces and provide support, including in the form of weapons accessories, to Hamas. They failed." — AFP



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International

Kosovo recognizes Israel; Serbia to move embassy to Jerusalem

Jewish state scores two diplomatic gains

JERUSALEM: Israel scored two diplomatic gains Friday when majority-Muslim Kosovo agreed to recognize the Jewish state and Serbia said it would move its embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv. Those decisions came out of a White House-brokered agreement between the two Balkan archrivals and announced by President Donald Trump Friday to normalize economic relations two decades after they fought a bitter war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Serbia will become the first European country to transfer its embassy to Jerusalem, following Washington's ground-breaking recognition of contested Jerusalem as Israel's capital almost three years ago. Kosovo will also set up its Israel mission in Jerusalem and in exchange earn Israel's recognition, as it seeks to further legitimize its 2008 declaration of independence and statehood.

"I thank my friend the president of Serbia... for the decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to transfer his embassy there," Netanyahu said, saying the controversial move would happen by July 2021. "I would like also to thank my friend President Trump for contributing to this achievement," he said in a statement. It was the second big news out of Washington in a month for Israel on the diplomatic front.

In August the United States brokered a deal for the United Arab Emirates to normalize relations with Israel, symbolically marked on Monday by the first commercial air flight between the two countries. The agreement, expected to be signed at a White House ceremony in coming weeks, would be Israel's first with a Gulf nation, and the third with an Arab country after those it reached with its neighbors Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994.

Election ploy?
Palestinians reacted with cynicism about the Kosovo and Serbia announcements, suggesting they were more to bolster Trump's reelection prospects in two months while victimizing them. "Palestine has become a victim of the electoral ambitions of President Trump, whose team would take any



Two Balkan archrivals seal deal

action, no matter how destructive for peace... to achieve his re-election" in November, tweeted Saeb Erekat, the secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

"This, just like the UAE-Israel agreement, isn't about Middle East Peace," he added. "What else will Trump procure for Israel before November?" said senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi. But in Washington Trump senior advisor and son-in-law Jared Kushner, a key player in Middle East negotiations, said the moves advance peace and make Americans safer. "Today's breakthrough really is historic," Kushner said at the White House. "This is just another chapter that this administration has been able to write towards making the world a safer and more peaceful place," he said.



WASHINGTON: National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien (right), with Advisor to the President on Serbia-Kosovo Richard Grenell (left) and Senior Advisor to the President Jared Kushner, holds a press conference in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House. — AFP

Contested Jerusalem

Traditionally, most diplomatic missions in Israel have been in Tel Aviv as countries stayed neutral over the disputed city of Jerusalem, holy to the three Abrahamic faiths, until its status could be settled in an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal. Israel seized control of East Jerusalem in 1967 and later annexed it in moves never recognized by the international community.

Israel considers the city its undivided capital, but Palestinians see the mostly Arab eastern part

of Jerusalem, including the Old City with its holy sites, as the illegally occupied capital of their future state.

The United Nations and the European Union, Israel's top economic partner, say the city's final status must be negotiated between Israelis and Palestinians, and say that until then countries should not locate their embassies there. But Trump smashed that taboo in December 2017 by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and shifting the US embassy from Tel Aviv to the city. — AFP

News in brief

Ten soldiers killed in Mali

BAMAKO: At least 10 Malian soldiers were killed in an overnight ambush in a central region near the Mauritanian border where armed jihadist groups are rampant, security and local sources said Friday. It is the third time Malian security forces have suffered heavy losses since the military took power in a coup on August 18. According to an internal security ministry report seen by AFP, 10 soldiers were killed, including a senior officer, in the attack in Guire and four vehicles were torched. An elected official from the Guire region confirmed the toll. "In the night, shots prevented us from sleeping, it looked like bombs, our houses were shaking," the official told AFP by phone. A local administrator speaking on condition of anonymity said men on motorcycles had been in the area since Monday. — AFP

Mother 'suffocates' 5 children

BERLIN: A 27-year-old German woman is suspected of smothering five of her children as she was feeling "emotionally overwhelmed", investigators said Friday, a day after the lifeless bodies were found in their family apartment. The suspect then attempted suicide by throwing herself under a train, before being rescued with serious but not life-threatening injuries, said lead investigator Marcel Maierhofer. She is believed to have "carried out the act while she was feeling emotionally overwhelmed, and that too is the motive," said the investigator. Police believe that the three girls aged one, two and three, and two boys aged six and eight were sedated and then smothered to death either on Wednesday or Thursday. A sixth child, 11, survived. He had told schoolmates in a group chat that all his siblings were dead, said investigators. — AFP

Niger soldiers execute dozens

NIAMEY: Soldiers in Niger executed dozens of civilians during the counterinsurgency campaign against jihadists in the country's troubled Tillaberi region earlier this year, a probe into the deaths reported. The West African nation has suffered years of conflict with Islamic militants operating in the vast and inhospitable Sahel desert, with thousands of soldiers and civilians killed to date. The national armies of Niger and its neighbours Mali and Burkina Faso have been accused of war crimes in their response operations, including forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. Niger's National Commission on Human Rights was investigating reports by Amnesty International and other rights groups that 102 civilians had gone missing in the western province between March 27 and April 2 after an army operation. — AFP

Groups urge journalists' release

BEIRUT: The Committee to Protect Journalists urged Egypt on Friday to release two jailed journalists, including one with Covid-19, after Human Rights Watch said four inmates had died in Egyptian custody within 72 hours. The CPJ, a New-York based press freedom advocacy group, called on authorities to immediately free Hany Greisha and El-Sayed Shehta, who were both arrested from their homes last month. They both worked at the private pro-government tabloid Youm 7. The CPJ said Greisha was charged with spreading false news and joining a terror group, charges regularly invoked against dissidents, while it was unclear whether Shehta faces charges. — AFP

Trump called Marines killed in WWI 'losers'

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump referred to US Marines buried in a WWI cemetery in France as "losers" and "suckers" for getting killed in action, according to a report Thursday in the Atlantic magazine. The report, penned by the magazine's editor-in-chief Jeffrey Goldberg, said Trump had refused to visit the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery near Paris in 2018 because "he feared his hair would become disheveled in the rain," although the official explanation offered by aides was that the helicopter due to take him there could not fly due to weather.

"In a conversation with senior staff members on the morning of the scheduled visit, Trump said, 'Why should I go to that cemetery? It's filled with losers,'" the article said. "In a separate conversation on the same trip, Trump referred to the more than 1,800 marines who lost their lives at Belleau Wood as 'suckers' for getting killed," the Atlantic added, citing four unnamed people it said had firsthand



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump calls reporters for questions during a press conference in the James S Brady Briefing Room of the White House on September 4, 2020. — AFP

knowledge of the discussions.

Trump slammed the report late Thursday, after his aides earlier called the allegations "disgusting, grotesque, reprehensible lies." "Somebody makes up this horrible story that I didn't want to go," he told reporters after returning from a campaign rally in Pennsylvania. "If they really exist, if people really exist that would have said that, they're low lifes and they're liars. And I would be willing to swear on anything that I never said that about our fallen



BEIRUT: Rescue workers use a tube to vacuum debris from a badly damaged building in Lebanon's capital Beirut, in search of possible survivors from a mega-blast after scanners detected a pulse on September 4, 2020. — AFP

Hopes of miracle fade in search for Beirut blast survivor

BEIRUT: Rescue teams kept up their search for survivors in Beirut yesterday even as hopes raised by sensor readings of a pulse beneath the rubble of last month's blast began to fade. The cataclysmic August 4 explosion in the port of Beirut killed at least 191 people, making it Lebanon's deadliest peacetime disaster. One month on, seven people are still listed as missing. On Wednesday night, a sniffer dog deployed by Chilean rescuers detected a scent beneath a collapsed building in the heavily damaged Gemmayzeh neighborhood adjacent to the port.

High-tech sensors confirmed an apparent heartbeat and, a full month after the August 4 blast, rescue teams took up the search. But despite removing piles of masonry, they have yet to find the source of the sensor reading. "Search operations have been going on since the day before yesterday but the chances are very low," the civil defence agency's

operations director, George Abou Moussa, told AFP. "So far, we have found nothing."

Yesterday was the search teams' third straight day of digging, much of it by hand. "We are not leaving the site until we've finished going through the rubble, even if a new building collapse threatens," said civil defense officer Qassem Khater. Chilean specialist Walter Munoz put the chances of finding a survivor at "two percent". Lebanese officials had played down the chances of anyone surviving so long beneath the rubble. But even the faint hope of a miracle caught the imagination of a country already reeling from the coronavirus pandemic and the country's worst economic crisis in decades.

"I was not aware I needed a miracle that much. Please God, give Beirut this miracle it deserves," said Selim Mourad, a 32-year-old filmmaker. Lebanon lacks the tools and expertise to handle advanced search and rescue operations, so they have been supported by experts from Chile, France and the United States. The Chileans, in particular, have been praised as heroes by many Lebanese on social media, who have compared their expertise with the lacklustre performance of what they see as an absent state. The country observed a minute's silence for the dead on Friday. — AFP

heroes," he said. "No animal, nobody, what animal would say such a thing?"

'Disgusting & jealous'

However, some critics pointed to Trump's denigrating comments about late senator John McCain, who was captured in Vietnam and was widely regarded as a war hero. Trump said in the run-up to the 2016 election: "He's not a war hero. He was a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren't captured." The US president acknowledged on Twitter that he was "never a big fan" of McCain, but that lowering of flags after the senator's death and his "first class" funeral in Washington "had to be approved by me, as President, & I did so without hesitation or complaint. Quite the contrary, I felt it was well deserved."

"Also, I never called John a loser and swear on whatever, or whoever. I was asked to swear on that I never called our great fallen soldiers anything other than HEROES," Trump added. "This is more made up Fake News given by disgusting & jealous failures in a disgraceful attempt to influence the 2020 Election!" Around 1,800 US Marines died in the battle at Belleau Wood, holding off a German advance toward Paris in 1918. — AFP

California braces for record-setting heatwave, fires

LOS ANGELES: California is bracing for record-breaking temperatures and dangerous fire weather conditions this Labor Day weekend, with the National Weather Service urging people to limit outdoor activity and to stay hydrated. "Saturday and Sunday will be about 20 to 30 degrees above normal across the entire area," Frank Fisher, a NWS meteorologist for the southern part of the state, told AFP.

"By Monday, we should be 10 to 20 degrees above normal ... but still very warm and dangerous outside," he added. Fisher said temperatures are expected to peak to 108 degrees Fahrenheit (42.2 Celsius) in the Los Angeles area on Sunday and to 118 Fahrenheit (47.8 Celsius) further inland in Woodland Hills. Excessive heat warnings through the holiday weekend and possibly beyond have also been issued in other western states including Arizona and Nevada.

The warm temperatures in California come as the state is recovering from another heat wave in mid-August and devastating wildfires that have burned some 1.5 million acres in the last three weeks. That heat wave also set records, with Death Valley - located near the border with Nevada - recording a high of 130 degrees, one of the hottest temperatures ever measured on Earth with modern instruments. Weather forecasters said red flag warnings indicating the potential for dangerous fire conditions had been issued in many parts of California for the weekend, notably in the Santa Barbara mountains, north of Los Angeles.

"We have the heat, winds and low humidity," a perfect cocktail for fires, Fisher said. "Our big issue with this excessive heat," he added, "is the fact that it's a holiday weekend and a lot of people are going out." He said the National Weather Service was recommending people refrain from outdoor activities such as hiking and remain indoors during the day. Once the sun sets, however, evening temperatures are not expected to bring much relief. "This is going to be the warmest nighttime we are going to have in a while," Fisher said. "We are looking for temperatures to be in the upper 70s and even upper 80s, the warmest being Saturday night." And if you're expecting to go to a restaurant in the Los Angeles area or other regions, where only outdoor dining is allowed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, you may want to think twice. — AFP

International

Navalny's poisoning stirs anger in English city hit by Novichok

Picturesque city of Salisbury contending with painful memories

SALISBURY: A long way from the cauldron of Russian politics, the picturesque city of Salisbury is contending with painful memories and a burning sense of injustice as the nerve agent Novichok again hits headlines. The cathedral city in south-west England is all too aware of the chemical weapon's terrifying potency, as survivors of a March 2018 attack follow news of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's fight for life in a German hospital.

The previous attack in Salisbury targeted Russian former double agent Sergei Skripal, who was living in the city. He and his daughter, Yulia, survived. But four months later, homeless woman Dawn Sturgess died after coming into contact with a perfume bottle thought to have contained Novichok. Sturgess' boyfriend, Charlie Rowley, was also exposed and spent nearly three weeks in hospital.

He says he felt "devastated" after hearing of the attack on Navalny, which Germany says bore "unequivocal evidence" of the use of Novichok. "I thought it was over but it clearly isn't," Rowley told ITV News in an interview broadcast on Thursday, recounting a debilitating range of long-term physical and mental health problems he has suffered since 2018. "I think it gives the Russians some strength that they can do their business and get away with it," he added. "I feel justice hasn't been served and I hope this new incident will bring on more news and we will get some truth."

'Waves of trauma'

Skripal and his daughter were found slumped on a bench in central Salisbury. Both spent weeks in hospital and now live in an undisclosed location under official protection. The bench was removed for investigation by police wearing biohazard suits, and two sites the Skripals had visited were cordoned off for weeks. Today, a discolored patch of empty pavement marks the site of the bench in the Maltings retail area, which is again busy with shop-

pers, many wearing masks as a precaution against the coronavirus.

The two places visited by the Skripals on the day they fell ill—the Italian restaurant Zizzi and the Bishop's Mill pub—are back doing brisk business after months of Covid-19 lockdown. Kelvin Inglis, vicar of St Thomas's Church, whose parish includes the Maltings, said Salisbury's resilience had been sorely tested over the past two and a half years. "It was traumatic at the time," the reverend told AFP. "We had two waves of trauma with the initial attack



Burning sense of injustice

and four months later when Dawn Sturgess died. "But since then people have pulled together and we have been busily rebuilding after all the challenges of this year."

Anger at Boris

Echoing Sturgess's boyfriend, Inglis added: "I still long for the day when the culprits of the Salisbury attack are brought to justice for their criminal act. "Equally, I hope that whoever has done this latest terrible deed will be brought to justice." Wiltshire Police Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey almost died after he was also exposed to the chemical agent in 2018. He was one of the first officers to enter the Skripals' house on the edge of Salisbury, which still stands empty, plastic sheeting on the windows and a pile of post visible behind the front



SALISBURY: People walk across a footbridge over the River Avon heading toward the Bishop's Mill pub in Salisbury, southern England that was cordoned off following the nerve agent attack on Russian ex-spy Sergei Skripal in March 2018. — AFP

door. The handle of the front door—since replaced—was said to have been smeared with Novichok.

Bailey's story featured prominently in a hit BBC drama this year called "The Salisbury Poisonings", which was dedicated to the memory of Sturgess. "I have so much that I want to say about this tweet," he wrote on Twitter on Wednesday, responding to a message from Prime Minister Boris Johnson condemning the Russian government after the attack on Navalny. "But I can't, and I won't," Bailey said. The next day he followed up to express regret at sending "such an ambiguous tweet", saying "emotion got the better of me".

The policeman's wife Sarah Bailey was clearer in pointing blame at the British government, which has long stood accused of turning a blind eye to questionable flows of Russian money into the British economy, and into Conservative Party coffers. "It's been almost 2 1/2 years after the events in Salisbury and there has been no justice for Dawn and her family and none for the Skripals, Charlie (Rowley) or us. And now it's happened again," she tweeted. "There appears to be no consequences for the culprits. The Government are right to condemn these actions, but in 2 1/2 years will it be forgotten about? That's how it feels for us. #RIPDawn." — AFP

Portland protests: 2 dead on either side of divide

PORTLAND: One was a far-right activist, the other a member of the far-left Antifa movement. Both men paid with their lives after getting drawn into the anti-racism demonstrations that have shaken the US for the last three months. Aaron Danielson, 39, a supporter of a far-right group called Patriot Prayer, was fatally shot last weekend in Portland, Oregon after he joined pro-Trump supporters who descended on the western US city, sparking confrontations with Black Lives Matter counter-protesters.

Five days later, the man suspected in the shooting, Michael Reinhoehl, 48, was killed in the neighboring state of Washington as police tried to arrest him on Thursday evening. Shortly before his death, Vice News published an interview with Reinhoehl, a former professional snowboarder who appears to have taken part in many of the nightly protests in Portland, according to his Instagram page. Reinhoehl appeared to acknowledge shooting Danielson in the interview. He said on the night of the tragedy, he and a friend had ended up in a standoff with a man he claimed had a knife.

"Had I stepped forward, he would have maced or stabbed me," Reinhoehl told VICE.



LACEY: Investigators move the body of a man who is reportedly Michael Forest Reinhoehl after he was shot and killed by law enforcement in Lacey, Washington. — AFP

"I was confident that I did not hit anyone innocent and I made my exit," he added. He said he fired his gun in self-defense. "You know, lots of lawyers suggest that I shouldn't even be saying anything, but I feel it's important that the world at least gets a little bit of what's really going on," he said. "I had no choice. I mean, I, I had a choice. I could have sat there and watched them kill a friend of mine of color. But I wasn't going to do that."

However one of Danielson's friends, Chandler Pappas, who was with him when he died, insists he was gunned down because he was a supporter of Patriot Prayer and was wearing a hat with the group's logo. "He was a good man and he was just killed senselessly for no reason

other than he believed something different than they do," he told supporters during a rally Sunday. "He was Christian. He was conservative."

The exact circumstances surrounding Danielson's death may never be known but cellphone video of the shooting shows both him and his assailant on a darkened street. Three shots ring out and Danielson is then shown on the ground as Pappas slaps him in the face yelling "Jay, Jay," his nickname. What is certain is that Danielson and Reinhoehl may well have crossed paths before during the nightly demonstrations that have taken place in downtown Portland since the death of African American George Floyd at the hands of police in Minneapolis. — AFP

Highest Nile waters for a century swamp Sudan

KHARTOUM: On Sudan's Tuti Island, where the Blue and White Nile meet, the highest river waters since records began have left people struggling to hold back the rising floods. Wedged between the twin cities of Khartoum and Omdurman, people on Tuti fill bags with sand and small stones in an often futile bid to stop the lapping water from swamping their homes.

The world's longest river is life-giving, but the Nile also brings misfortune and misery to many. "Three days ago the water invaded my house around midnight," said Swakin Ahmad, dressed in a red headscarf. "We were knee-deep in it. My husband and I, with our five children, fled... carrying a few things in our hands." Every year during the rainy season the river floods, and the people of the island expect the waters to rise. But nothing in the past compares to the floods of today, residents say.

More rain forecast

"In previous years, we would leave our house for two months to live with friends," Ahmad said. "But this year that was impossible, because water had entered their homes too." Civil defense officials say that seasonal floods have killed 94 people, injured 46 and destroyed or damaged over



KHARTOUM: A picture shows flood waters in Tuti island, where the Blue and White Nile merge in the Sudanese capital Khartoum. — AFP

60,000 homes across Sudan during the current season. The level of the Blue Nile has risen to 17.57 meters, the ministry of water and irrigation said this week, breaking all records since measurements began more than a century ago. But many fear the worst is yet to come. Heavy rains are forecast to continue through September, both in Sudan and upstream in neighboring Ethiopia, the source of the Blue Nile.

"Young people tried to rescue things from my house," Ahmad said. "But it was hopeless, because they had water up to their necks and could not see anything." Residents have thrown up makeshift barges in the path of the water, but their efforts have been engulfed by the rising river. Iqbal Mohamed Abbas, who welcomed many of those forced from their

homes at her educational centre, described "the courage with which young people tried with simple means to slow down the flood." She recalled previous occasions when the island was flooded, remembering a tune her grandparents sang decades ago.

"I am proud of these young people who came to try to stop the Nile with their bodies," Abbas said, reciting the lyrics. But this time it appears much worse. Sudan's water ministry predicts that this year's flood is larger than that of 1998, which destroyed tens of thousands of homes in several states and displaced more than a million people. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that more than 380,000 people have already been affected across the country. — AFP

Pharmacy in racism row over black hair images

JOHANNESBURG: A leading South African retail pharmacy chain sparked a racism row on Friday after posting images on its website describing black hair as "dull" and white hair as "normal". Angry South Africans took to social media pillorying Clicks Pharmacy for what they deemed racially insensitive images that categorised black hair as "dry & damaged" and "frizzy & dull" while an image of blonde hair was captioned "normal" and "fine & flat".

"Not only is this disrespectful to black lives, it is also evidence of an absence of representation and diversity within the organization," tweeted Zozibini Tunzi, who wears short natural hair and was crowned Miss Universe in December. "And we are talking about a South Africa with a population of about 80% black people.... No ways," she wrote. Radical leftist opposition Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party lawmaker Mbuyiseni Ndlozi tweeted mostly in capital letters: "We are the black majority & should never, ever accept racism in any form. Our hair, our skin & our bodies, in our country & the world, must

be respected". The pharmacy has pulled down the images and issued "an unequivocal apology".

"We are strong advocates of natural hair and are deeply sorry we have offended our natural hair community," it said in a statement on its Twitter account. "We have made a mistake and sincerely apologize for letting you down," said the pharmacy group, one of the two largest in the country. The images sparked hashtags #RacismMustFall and #BlackHairIsNormal—with black women proudly posting their afros. The EFF member of parliament, who has more than a million followers on Twitter, urged black people to "get their justice" at the pharmacy, which boasts of more than 500 branches across the country.

In 2018, the EFF staged protests, trashing outlets of Swedish clothing giant Hennes and Mauritz (H&M) in Johannesburg over a controversial advertisement of a black child. A photo on the company's online website of a black boy wearing a green hoodie with the inscription "coolest monkey in the jungle" had triggered outrage on social media. H&M and Clicks are not the only major companies to be hit by advertisement scandals in recent years. Spanish clothing brand Zara in 2014 removed striped pyjamas with a yellow star after facing outrage over its resemblance to clothes worn by Jewish prisoners in concentration camps. — AFP

US professor admits she posed as black woman

WASHINGTON: A US university has launched an investigation after a professor admitted she had lied for years about being black and is in fact white—a stunning admission amid a tense national reckoning on race issues including cultural appropriation. In a post on the platform Medium, Jessica Krug—a history professor at George Washington University in the US capital focusing on Africa—said she had been pretending "for the better part" of her adult life.

"I have eschewed my lived experience as a white Jewish child in suburban Kansas City under various assumed identities within a Blackness that I had no right to claim," she wrote. Krug, who is light-skinned, said she first claimed "North African Blackness, then US rooted Blackness, then Caribbean rooted Bronx Blackness." One of her former students told CNN that Krug voiced pride in her Bronx

roots, but told another student she was from Puerto Rico.

Krug said on Medium that her actions were the "very epitome of violence, of thievery and appropriation, of the myriad ways in which non-Black people continue to use and abuse Black identities and cultures." The professor called herself a cultural "leech." In a statement Friday evening the university said: "While the university reviews this situation, Dr. Krug will not be teaching her classes this semester." It did not say what will happen now with her. "We want to acknowledge the pain this situation has caused for many in our community," it added.

Krug's situation brought to mind the case of controversial US activist Rachel Dolezal, who made headlines in 2015 after saying she identified as black, even though both of her parents are white. "I'm more black than I am white," Dolezal said at the time. Cultural appropriation has become more and more taboo in the United States, notably in progressive and university communities. Pop diva Adele recently found herself in hot water after posting a photo of herself on Instagram with her hair in Bantu knots, a traditional African hairstyle. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2020

US job growth loses speed, stimulus ebbs

Racial gap in jobless rate widens again in August

WASHINGTON: US employment growth slowed further in August and permanent job losses increased as money from the government started running out, raising doubts on the sustainability of the economy's recovery from the deep COVID-19 recession. Nearly a fifth of the job gains reported by the Labor Department on Friday were from the government's temporary hiring for the 2020 Census. While the unemployment rate fell below 10 percent, it was biased down by a continuing misclassification problem.

The slowdown pressures the White House and Congress to restart stalled negotiations for another fiscal package and is likely to become political ammunition for both Democrats and Republicans with just two months to go until the presidential election. "The labor market has entered a frustratingly slower second phase of the recovery," said Lydia Boussour, a senior US economist at Oxford Economics in New York. "With one in two laid-off workers still unemployed and Congress unable to pass urgently needed fiscal aid, slower and more volatile job growth represents a significant risk for the economy."

Nonfarm payrolls increased by 1.371 million jobs last month after advancing 1.734 million in July. Government employment rose 344,000, with 238,000 temporary workers hired for the decennial census. Excluding government, payrolls rose 1.027 million. Private sector employment gains were led by the retail sector, with 249,000 jobs created. Though professional and business services added 197,000 jobs, more than half of the gain was in temporary help services, reflecting the uncertain economic environment.

Employment in leisure and hospitality increased by 174,000 jobs, but hiring has stepped down from June and July when 2.0 million and 621,000 jobs were added respectively. Manufacturing employment rose 29,000 and construction added 16,000 jobs. Meanwhile, the gap in unemployment rates

between Blacks and whites in the United States widened for a fourth straight month in August, and the spread between the races is now the largest in nearly six years.

The jobless rate for Blacks dropped by 1.6 percentage points to 13 percent in August from



Nonfarm payrolls up 1.371m

14.6 percent in July, while the rate for whites dropped at a faster rate of 1.9 percentage points to 7.3 percent from 9.2 percent a month earlier. The overall US unemployment rate fell more than expected last month to 8.4 percent from 10.2 percent in July.

The 5.7 percentage point gap was the widest since December 2014. One year earlier, in August 2019, the spread had been a record-low 2 percentage points. It was 2.5 points in April, when the US economy shed a record 20.8 million jobs as a result of business shutdowns imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19. The racial gap in US jobless rates has come under closer scrutiny in the months since the pandemic struck as minorities and women suffered an outsized share of job losses, exacerbating long-standing economic inequality. The widening also occurs against a backdrop of protests against police violence against Blacks, which has become a central issue in the US presidential election campaign.

Programs to help businesses pay wages have



MIAMI, Florida: Construction workers are seen on a job site on Friday in Miami, Florida. The Bureau of Labor Statistics released a report Friday that shows the unemployment rate fell to 8.4 percent last month, down from a COVID-19 pandemic peak of 14.7 percent in April. — AFP

either lapsed or are on the verge of ending. Economists credited government largesse for the sharp rebound in economic activity after it nearly ground to a halt following the shuttering of businesses in mid-March to control the spread of the coronavirus.

August's report is one of just two monthly labor market scorecards left on the calendar before the Nov. 3 presidential election. President Donald Trump, who is trailing in polls behind former Vice

President Joe Biden, the Democratic Party nominee, cheered the continued job gains as a sign that the economy is improving after suffering its biggest shock in at least 73 years in the second quarter.

"Great Jobs Numbers!" Trump wrote on Twitter.

Biden said the economy was in a K-shaped recovery, where "those at the top are seeing things go up those in the middle and bottom are seeing things go down and get worse," because "Trump has mismanaged the COVID crisis." — Reuters

Surgical glove makers struggle to keep pace with booming demand

PARIS: With no end in sight to the coronavirus pandemic, worldwide demand for surgical gloves-as for other types of personal protective equipment-is booming, leaving manufacturers struggling to keep up. The global PPE market-from masks, gowns and gloves, to shoes and sanitizing gels-is expected to balloon from \$52 billion in 2019 to \$93 billion in 2027, according to German market data specialist, Statista.

And, like other such products that were previously predominantly the domain of specialist medical personnel, the surgical glove has become much sought after even by the general public.

US-based Allied Market Research estimates that the global disposable gloves market amounted to \$6.8 billion in 2019, and is expected to nearly triple to \$18.8 billion by 2027. Just as worldwide shortages of masks and disinfectant gels have pushed up the prices of those products, single-use medical gloves have become increasingly difficult and costly to come by during the health crisis.

"We have health centers calling us every day trying to get their hands on gloves," said Sebastien Lenoble, director of Netherlands-based Shield Scientific, which markets gloves for medical, industrial and laboratory applications. "These aren't our usual clients. They're coming to us because they're desperate to find gloves."

No protection?

While the World Health Organization says that wearing rubber or latex gloves in public offers little protection against infection, they are becoming an increasingly common sight in shops and public transport around the world. "We are observing a more than threefold increase in demand for examination gloves, and demand for surgical gloves has also increased significantly," said Monika Riedel, spokeswoman for Austrian company Semperit, whose Sempermed subsidiary makes between seven and eight billion gloves every year.

Malaysia is the world's biggest maker of rubber gloves, accounting for around 60 percent of global exports. — AFP



The global PPE market including masks, gowns and gloves is expected to reach \$93 billion in 2027. — AFP

London businesses count cost as workers avoid office

LONDON: Nestled between central London's rows of office blocks, eateries once packed with customers grabbing lunch or a morning coffee are counting the cost as the coronavirus keeps workers at home. "The City is not going to go back to normal," said Berat, manager at Turkish restaurant Haz close to St Paul's Cathedral, which before Covid-19 was thronged with lunchtime crowds. "People saw they can work from home... we can't serve someone from home," Berat told AFP as he greeted a handful of customers.

He says that Haz has only 15 percent of its usual custom, although it expects the figure to rise to 30 percent next month as companies increasingly ask staff to return to the office, at least on a part-time basis. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his Conservative government are using the end of the summer holidays and reopening of schools to encourage Britons to return to the office.

While no longer ghostly as was the case when Britain was in lockdown for around three months from late March, the roads around central London remain largely free of commuters. "It's very calm," lamented one sandwich seller opposite St Paul's, losing out also from a lack of tourists. At a neighboring office block, the manager estimates that only 40 percent of companies renting space have returned, though she too expects an increase in the coming months. According to Transport for London, traffic on the capital's underground railway network is 70 percent below its level before lockdown. "This will continue to be a period of change, with new ways of working needed to respond to Covid-19," concluded this week Bank of England official Alex Brazier.

Urban exodus

Meanwhile, with a majority of office workers

Britain advances digital ID plans

LONDON: Britain set out its plans this week for a digital identity system aimed at making it easier for people to access public services and buy age-restricted goods - whether registering with a new doctor or buying a bottle of wine. But the British government's latest plans come as digital rights campaigners worldwide warn about the privacy concerns posed by identification technology, which allows biometric data such as fingerprints to be accessed online.

Here is what you need to know about Britain's digital identity plans:

What is a digital ID?

A digital identity is an electronic form of identification that can be used to prove an individual's identity online. Existing digital identity systems usually link biometric data such as fingerprints and



LONDON: While no longer ghostly as was the case when Britain was in lockdown for around three months from late March, the roads around central London remain largely free of commuters.

continuing to do their jobs remotely, recent data has shown a jump in the number of people seeking to move out of the capital and into less urban areas. Oil giant BP, which is slashing 10,000 jobs after the pandemic crushed energy demand and prices, is actively encouraging non-frontline staff to work from home, while it is reportedly planning to leave its historic London headquarters.

Barclays bank says that only a small number of its 80,000 staff worldwide have returned to office working. "Any return will be phased and gradual and it goes without saying that the health and safety of our colleagues, customers and clients is a priority in this regard," said a spokeswoman.

The picture is similar at Lloyds bank, where 50,000 of its 60,000 staff are working remotely,

while HSBC says its office occupancy is down to just one-fifth.

Natwest bank is telling staff to work from home until next year, while Google's London staff can until at least July 2021. "With many office blocks still empty and much of the public avoiding public transport, footfall is not returning to towns and city centers and this is having a devastating effect on the local economies in these areas," said Helen Dickinson, chief executive of the British Retail Consortium.

British coffee and sandwich chain Pret a Manger last week said it was cutting 2,800 jobs as a result of the impact of the coronavirus outbreak. Rival Costa Coffee on Thursday announced 1,650 job losses. — AFP

policies would be based on six principles, including privacy, transparency and inclusivity. No details on how the system would work were provided, but digital rights experts suggested it could take the form of digital ID cards that would for example allow online stores to check shoppers' age.

How has the British plan been received?

Reaction to the announcement has been mixed, with business groups and some politicians praising the initiative and rights groups calling for caution. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said a digital identity system could help unlock economic growth while techUK, an industry trade group, said the preliminary plan was welcome though lacking in detail.

A 2019 study by the McKinsey Global Institute calculated that by increasing access to services and easing transactions, digital IDs could unlock economic value equivalent to 3 to 13 percent of GDP in 2030. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair told the BBC it was "common sense" to move towards digital IDs as part of efforts to fight coronavirus as the government would want to keep a record of who had been vaccinated. — Reuters

Business

Fears of no-trade deal Brexit rise as UK says progress unlikely at talks

PM Johnson: We're ready for any eventuality

LONDON/BRUSSELS: The chances of Britain leaving the European Union without a trade deal have risen sharply as negotiations have been threatened by London's insistence that it have full autonomy over its state aid plans, negotiators and diplomats said. The United Kingdom left the EU on Jan. 31, turning its back after 47 years on the post-World War Two project that sought to build the ruined nations of Europe into a global power. The British exit followed more than three years of wrangling over an exit deal since the 2016 referendum that sent shockwaves through global financial markets. Since Brexit, talks on a new trade deal have so far made little headway. But fears in London, Brussels and other European capitals are mounting that a British exit without a trade deal could sow yet more economic chaos amid the turmoil of the coronavirus crisis which has hammered European economies.

Ahead of talks next week, Britain said there was likely to be little progress due to the EU's refusal to be flexible. "We will negotiate constructively but the EU's stance may, realistically, limit the progress we can make next week," Britain's top negotiator David Frost said. "From the very beginning we have been clear about what we can accept in these areas, which are fundamental to our status as an independent country."

Failure to reach a trade deal could roil financial markets as nearly a trillion dollars in trade, from car parts and medicines to lamb and fish, would be

thrown into turmoil.

Sterling fell 0.6 percent to \$1.3199. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said if the EU was sensible, it would give Britain the Canada-style solution it is seeking. But he added that Britain was ready for any eventuality.

"The chances for a deal, or a no-deal, are 50/50," said one senior EU diplomat. "There has been absolutely no movement from the British side in the talks. If this approach doesn't change quickly, we won't be able to negotiate a deal in time."

European Council President Charles Michel told reporters: "Sooner or later, the UK should clarify what they want. It's not possible to leave the European club and at the same time keep all the benefits." "We have no certainty that we'll reach a deal. I hope it will be possible - but not at all cost," he said.



EU diplomat says it is 50-50

Brexit crunch

The current sticking point is state aid. The bloc's Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier went to London on Tuesday to tell his UK counterpart, David Frost, that Britain must move on state aid, or there will not be an agreement, according to EU diplomats.

Afterwards, Barnier said London had not shown enough flexibility and creativity on fair competition, fisheries and solving disputes in order to seal a deal on new trade ties by a "strict deadline" of end-October. "The Commission now worries the next negotiating round will end up with nothing," the

'Super-charged'

The Geneva-based organization is mired in stalled trade talks and struggling to curb trade tensions between the United States and China. The global trade body has also faced relentless attacks from Washington, which has crippled the WTO dispute settlement appeal system and threatened to leave the organization altogether. And now the WTO, set to remain leaderless for several more months at least, is struggling to help members navigate a severe global economic slump sparked by the coronavirus pandemic. The WTO has presented a timeline for selecting one of the eight leadership candidates—three Africans, two Europeans, two from Asia and one Latin American—within a few months.

But increasing politicization within the organization, which relies on consensus to reach decisions, has sparked fears that the process could take much longer. Fox acknowledged "there is at least a technical chance that that could be slowed down" by the politicized climate. But he said WTO members were eager to settle quickly on a new director-general to help navigate an increasingly complex reality. "All the issues faced by the new DG are super-charged by the Covid crisis," he said. "I think there is an understanding of the urgency in the process."

Like 'Eurovision'

Fox, 58, said that as a politician with long experience of elections, he found the WTO selection process "highly unusual". It includes elimination rounds during which countries express their preferences in confidential "confessionals". "I would describe it as somewhere between choosing a pope

and the Eurovision Song Contest," he quipped. Fox insisted he was the right person to tackle the numerous political issues facing the WTO, and that he could help bring Washington back into the fold and rescue the WTO's appeals system. The Brexit-backer rejected suggestions his chances might be hurt by animosity towards Britain over its decision to leave the European Union. Most countries, including European nations, see challenges facing global trade as going "way beyond the issues of Brexit," the Scot said. "These are very big and important issues... and made more important by the Covid emergency," said Fox. "If we get them wrong, it would make anything that might happen with Brexit look like a picnic." —AFP

especially if there is a spike in Covid-19 cases. In the months prior to Canada's coronavirus shutdown, full-time employment had reached record highs, while growth in part-time work was relatively flat. As a result of the lockdown, the unemployment rate had more than doubled from 5.6 percent in February to a record high of 13.7 percent in May. All of the August new jobs were full-time, said Statistics Canada. But employment remains far below pre-pandemic levels for low-wage workers and youth, it said. Unemployment among Arab, Black and Southeast Asian Canadians also continues to be higher than the average.

In August, employment continued to increase at a faster pace in the services-producing sector (+218,000 jobs) than in the goods-producing sector (+28,000). Accommodation and food services as well as retail trade were among the industries hardest hit by the initial shutdown. In the goods sector, August gains in manufacturing were partially offset by a decline in the number of people working in natural resources industries. Going forward, nearly a quarter of manufacturers expect to add more employees over the next three months, according to the labor survey.

The number of Canadians working from home continued to fall in August for a fourth consecu-

in economic output and the impact of inflation.

The index has exhibited large and sustained deviations from trend, sometimes lasting years or decades, but has proved consistently trend-reverting, implying valuations are anchored in fundamentals over the long term. But in the 12 months to the end of August, the index rose by nearly 20 percent, one of the fastest increases in the last decade, and a significant turnaround from the market slump in February and March.

By the end of August, the index was 34 percent above its long-term trend, the largest positive deviation since October 2007, shortly before the subprime housing bubble burst and the business expansion ended. The index's positive deviation was in the 90th percentile for all months since 1930, indicating it was richly valued, with an above average risk of



LONDON: Ahead of talks next week, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said there was likely to be little progress due to the EU's refusal to be flexible. —AFP

diplomat said. "If the UK doesn't move a bit on the state aid thing, we have a problem."

Britain does not want to allow Brussels authority over its state aid rules. "The EU need to realize that what they're asking for is at odds with what the British people voted for, twice, and not something we could accept," the British source said.

Senior officials in British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's office see only a 30 percent-40 percent chance that there will be a Brexit trade agreement due to the impasse, the Times reported. "There is a risk of a no-deal scenario at the end of the year," an EU official said. "People need to be ready for that." —Reuters

Could pandemic be 'kiss of death' for managed trade?

GENEVA: The coronavirus pandemic has heaped pressure on the troubled World Trade Organization, a WTO leadership candidate said, warning the crisis could spell the end of rules-based international trade altogether. Liam Fox, Britain's first post-Brexit international trade secretary and one of eight candidates vying to become the WTO's next director-general, voiced concern that countries might turn their backs on its multilateral trading model. "The reaction of some countries to the COVID emergency will be to seek solace in protectionism and to believe that they will get more resilience by ... closing themselves off, if you like, from the global economy," he told AFP Thursday in an interview.

"Exactly the opposite I believe is true," he said during a conversation using the video link Zoom, insisting that countries will find more security by opening up and ensuring diversity of supply.

"For the rules-based trading system, COVID could be the kiss of life if we embrace the right policies—or the kiss of death if we don't." Roberto Azevedo stepped down as the WTO chief this week, a year ahead of schedule. His successor will lead an institution that was already facing multiple crises before the pandemic hit.

Canada adds 246,000 jobs in August as rebound continues

OTTAWA: Canada added 246,000 jobs in August as most coronavirus restrictions eased and businesses reopened, cutting the unemployment rate to 10.2 percent, the national statistics agency said Friday. With those gains, the Canadian economy has now recovered almost two-thirds of the jobs lost since March when a lockdown was ordered to slow the spread of the outbreak.

Some 1.1 million positions have yet to be recouped, according to Statistics Canada. "The labor market recovery continued in August, but the going is getting tougher," CIBC analyst Andrew Grantham said, noting that the latest figures were in line with forecasts. Grantham pointed in a research note to "reopening plans having largely gone as far as they will go before a vaccine is available."

As such, he said, "we will be entering a new phase of the recovery where the path (to) higher employment is slower and potentially uneven,"

US equity markets surge in reprise of the 1990s

LONDON: US equity prices are increasingly deviating from their multi-decade trend, implying there has been a fundamental shift in valuation, or the market has become overheated and risks a sharp downward correction. Since the 1920s, the broad-market Standard and Poor's 500 equity index (S&P 500) and its predecessors have increased at a compound average rate of 6.8 percent per year, reflecting the growth



GENEVA: Britain's first post-Brexit international trade secretary Liam Fox attends a press conference in Geneva following his hearing before 164 member states' representatives, as part of the application process to head the World Trade Organization (WTO) as Director General. —AFP

and the Eurovision Song Contest," he quipped. Fox insisted he was the right person to tackle the numerous political issues facing the WTO, and that he could help bring Washington back into the fold and rescue the WTO's appeals system. The Brexit-backer rejected suggestions his chances might be hurt by animosity towards Britain over its decision to leave the European Union. Most countries, including European nations, see challenges facing global trade as going "way beyond the issues of Brexit," the Scot said. "These are very big and important issues... and made more important by the Covid emergency," said Fox. "If we get them wrong, it would make anything that might happen with Brexit look like a picnic." —AFP



MONTREAL: In this file photo, servers wait for clients in a restaurant terrace on the Place Jacques-Cartier, close to the Old-Port in central Montreal, Canada. Canada added 246,000 jobs in August as most coronavirus restrictions eased and businesses reopened, cutting the unemployment rate to 10.2 percent, the national statistics agency said on Friday. —AFP

live month to 2.5 million, from 3.4 million at the peak. As schools started planning for fall reopenings, employment in educational services, meanwhile, rose sharply in August. The number of job seekers has also continued to rise over the past six months. —AFP

correcting lower in future.

The only period when the index exhibited a larger and sustained positive deviation was between late 1996 and early 2002, the era of "irrational exuberance" culminating in the dotcom bubble and its aftermath.

Monetary easing

The duration and magnitude of the deviation from trend during the late 1990s and early 2000s should serve as a warning that mean reversion does not always happen quickly. In the late 1990s, equity valuations were boosted by sharp reductions in interest rates as the Federal Reserve sought to keep the business expansion going and address liquidity risks within the financial system. —Reuters

Hungary CB sees slower recovery, stimulus wanes

BUDAPEST: Hungary's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic will likely be slower than previously expected, two central bank sources told Reuters, adding that the bank was nearing its limits with tools to stimulate the economy. The sources said earlier hopes for a V-shaped recovery were dashed after second-quarter data showed the economy contracted by an annual 13.6 percent, the worst in central Europe and nearly double the pace the bank had flagged in June.

The National Bank of Hungary (NBH) cut its base rate by a combined 30 basis points to 0.6 percent in June and July, and maintained its forecast for economic growth in 2020 of 0.3 percent to 2 percent - whereas economists in a Reuters poll projected a contraction of 4 percent to 5 percent.

The bank's optimistic forecast and hopes for a quick recovery rested on two key assumptions, that government investments would soften the blow to the economy and that a second wave of the pandemic can be avoided, the sources said.

They said the bank was now revising its GDP forecast. "We had assumed that investments, especially government investments would kick in, but the second quarter turned out really miserably," one of the sources said. "My gut feeling is that there could be a 5 percent to 7 percent downturn this year, but the new forecast is only being drawn up." The sources said a recovery shaped like a 'Nike swoosh' now looked a more realistic scenario. Asked about the remarks, the central bank's press office declined to comment beyond the latest Monetary Council policy statement.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban said on Friday that Hungary must take steps to kick-start the economy.

Orban's government spent hundreds of billions of forints this year on a job saving program and medical equipment needed during the pandemic and has flagged further possible measures that could push the budget deficit to 7 percent to 9 percent of GDP. Hungary registered 459 new coronavirus cases on Friday, its highest daily tally since the outbreak of the pandemic, which has led to 621 deaths in the country. The bank has launched a 1 trillion forint (\$3.3 billion) quantitative easing program, a 1.5 trillion forint scheme to provide small businesses with cheap loans and a 450 billion forint corporate bond program to help larger businesses.

"Based on our current knowledge, we are pretty much at the limit," the second source said when asked about the bank's room for manoeuvre. "The QE program is ongoing, while there is still abundant financing available in the cheap loans scheme."

Based on the latest tally, companies have received 467 billion forints of financing under the scheme, with many opting to refinance earlier, more expensive loans. "The central bank has room to increase the size of these lending programs but what good is it if even the current amount is not exhausted? Demand is rising very cautiously and banks are more conservative," one of the sources said.

The central bank has ruled out further cuts in its base rate and one source said any rate easing was now an "absolute taboo." The bank's wiggle room is also limited by high inflation, seen stuck at the top of the bank's 2 percent to 4 percent target range in August, and renewed falls in the forint since Hungary's worse-than-expected second-quarter GDP data. "Next year is still bound to be difficult and we cannot know what the second wave brings and how long it will last," one source said. —Reuters

Business

Lexus Design Award 2021: Call for entries now open

9th edition of annual program offers a unique opportunity for 6 finalists



LDA mentoring workshop



Lexus LC 500h

KUWAIT: Lexus has recently launched the Lexus Design Award 2021 and is calling on talented creators from around the world to submit their entries to its annual design competition. Now in its ninth edition, the prestigious award offers a unique platform for aspiring designers to develop and showcase their talents on the global stage. Established in 2013, the program continues to evolve and inspire innovations in design from emerging creators whose works can lead to a better future. Lexus remains committed to supporting tomorrow's talented designers by providing a launchpad for their careers that offers world-class mentoring, prototype funding, and unparalleled international exposure.

Every year, the event attracts thousands of entries from around the world. The proposals submitted span a diverse collection of disciplines, ranging from industrial design, architecture, and engineering to interior design and fashion design. Applicants are encouraged to develop innovative concepts and imaginative solutions that highlight the creative interplay between design and technology.

One Grand Prix winner will be selected from among six finalists by an esteemed judging panel of today's most influential figures in art, design, and technology. Past judges have included renowned luminaries Paola Antonelli, Aric Chen, and Sir David Adjaye. The judges' decision will be based on three key principles of the Lexus brand: Anticipate, Innovate, and Captivate, with an emphasis on design that leads to a better tomorrow.

"We are delighted to launch the 2021 edition of the Lexus Design Award and invite emerging creatives to share their visions with the world. The award represents a unique opportunity for talented young designers to transform their ideas into exciting new possibi-

ties with the help of seasoned industry experts," said Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "Pushing the boundaries and going beyond the conventional are at the heart of Lexus' approach to design, and these awards underline our commitment to inspiring the great minds of tomorrow to anticipate the future and create amazing experiences. I would like to extend my gratitude to design enthusiasts around the world for their continuous support, which contributes to the award's success and serves as powerful motivation in our quest to uncover creative solutions to tomorrow's challenges through brave design."

In early 2021, Lexus will announce the six finalists who will go on to participate in a workshop with world-class design professionals acting as mentors. Each participant will receive up to JPY 3 million (over \$25,000) to develop their designs into physical prototypes, and will also benefit from continual follow-ups and advice. Mentors confirmed for this year's program include Nigerian architect Mariam Kamara, Dutch designer Sabine Marcelis, and the sought-after American creative and entrepreneur Joe Doucet.

The Lexus Design Award will conclude with the announcement of the Grand Prix winner following the presentation of prototypes by each of the six finalists on a world stage during Press Day at Milan Design

Week 2021.

The judges for Lexus Design Award 2021 include Paola Antonelli, Senior Curator of Architecture & Design at The Museum of Modern Art, and Simon Humphries, Head of Lexus Global Design. They will be joined by two additional judges whose identities have yet to be revealed. The complete list of Lexus Design Award 2021 judges and mentors will be announced in the fall of 2020.

Entries to the Lexus Design Award 2021 competition will be accepted through October 11, 2020.

Please visit discoverlexus.com/highlights/entries-open-for-lexus-design-award-2021 for more information. Title

Lexus Design Award 2021

Last Submission Date
October 11, 2020

Judging criteria

Anticipate: Do the concept and design anticipate not only the needs of user experience but also society?

Innovate: Does the design demonstrate new thinking and originality in its proposal and execution?

Captivate: Is the design intriguing and compelling when in concept and execution?

Judges

Paola Antonelli and Simon Humphries, plus more TBA

Mentors

Mariam Kamara, Sabine Marcelis, and Joe Doucet,



The finalists' prototypes to be showcased

Spend and win this summer with ABK

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), yesterday announced the launch of its summer campaign, 'Spend and Win this summer with ABK'. This year's campaign offers 20 lucky ABK customers the chance to win KD 500 each, which will be given through two monthly draws starting from 1st September to 31st October 2020. Eligibility for the monthly draw will be based on a minimum KD 250 per month total transaction spend completed with the following bank cards:

- ABK Credit Cards - Local or International transactions through POS, e-Com and cash
- ABK Prepaid Cards - Local or International transactions through POS and e-Com only

Customers with ABK credit and prepaid cards issued prior to the start of the draw will be eligible to participate in this campaign. The more you spend the more chances you have of winning. Every KD 10 spent locally or internationally offers 1 entry into the draw. ABK holds various campaigns to reward its existing clients with the best summer offers.

Al-Tijari offers Fitbit Pay to customers on MasterCard cards

KUWAIT: Al-Tijari, Commercial Bank of Kuwait, yesterday announced that Fitbit Pay is now available to its debit and prepaid card customers as well as credit cards customers, enabling them to make easy and secure contactless payments via their select Fitbit devices. The announcement is part of the Commercial Bank of Kuwait's proactive policy to provide its customers with advanced electronic services to meet their needs amid the current climate. Current circumstances have resulted in an increased reliance on the sophisticated banking services offered via bank e-channels and contactless payment solutions for ensuring customers' safety and convenience.

Exclusive offers for Gulf Bank Salary Account customers

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced an extensive set of Salary Packages for Kuwaiti Salary Account customers working in various sectors of the country. Gulf Bank is unique in tailoring its offers and services according to their clients' needs, including an exclusive offer for frontline workers who have been working during the pandemic since its spread in Kuwait earlier this February.

Regarding the various exclusive services that Gulf Bank provides its clients, Mohammad Al-Qattan, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank said: "Gulf Bank's Salary Account is one of the Bank's most important accounts, offering a wide range of offers and benefits to employees working in various sectors of the country. In recognition of the vital role of the employees working on the frontlines of the pandemic, we recently launched a special offer in recognition and in honor of their efforts. Through their exclusive Salary Package, frontline workers can choose a cash gift, an interest-free loan, or special car loan offer from the approved showrooms upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank. In addition, these employees are automatically entered into Gulf Bank's Salary Account draws, including monthly draws to win up to 12 times their salaries, and annual draws to win up to 100 times their salaries. We would like to invite employees across the various national sectors to take advantage of these offers and opportunities, and wish everyone the best of luck and success."

Abdulaziz Essa Malak, Assitant General Manager - Retail Banking Division said, "The addition of Fitbit Pay to our suite of solutions reflects our efforts to provide innovative e-payment solutions to our customers."

Fitbit Pay will now provide Al-Tijari customers with seamless and secure one-touch payments directly on their select Fitbit devices, including the new Fitbit Charge 4 fitness tracker. Fitbit Pay is also available on Fitbit Ionic, Fitbit Versa 2, Fitbit Versa 2 Special Edition and Fitbit Charge 3 Special Edition.

To activate Fitbit Pay, customers can use their Fitbit App (Android and iOS) to add any valid Al-Tijari bank cards holding Mastercard logo to their Fitbit Wallet. Fitbit Pay makes it quick and easy to make secure payments anywhere that contactless payments are accepted without pulling out your wallet or phone - something consumers are doing more of to avoid contacting

Frontline workers salary package

Gulf Bank has recently tailored a special offer for employed Kuwaiti frontline workers who wish to transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank. Upon transferring their salaries, these clients will immediately receive a set of benefits, including a cash gift of up to KD 500, or an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000 or a special car loan offer from approved showrooms. They will also be eligible to receive a Visa or MasterCard credit card with all annual fees waived for the first year, a free MasterCard World card (upon KD 5,000 expenditure), in addition to 15,000 Gulf Bank Rewards Points credited in the card. The frontline offer also consists of other benefits, including a free safety deposit box for a period of one year upon opening the account, free concierge services, preferential FD rates, and a customer segment upgrade. The new frontline offer is open to Kuwaiti employees working in the Fire Brigade, National Guard, Civil Aviation (including Kuwait Airways) and in the following Ministries: Health, Defense, Information and Interior.

Salary package - exclusive offer

As part of the vast range of services and benefits available to Salary Account customers, Gulf Bank offers its clients the opportunity to choose the most appropriate benefits from a wide selection of attractive options.

With the 2020 Kuwait Salary Offer, new customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance to win cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary. Customers are also enrolled in a yearly draw of Kuwait's largest salary prize, a cash prize of up to 100 times the winner's salary.

Gulf Bank's Salary Account also gives new customers the opportunity to receive either an up to KD 200 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf

Bank, or an interest-free loan of up to KD 15,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and are eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank. Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a Visa or MasterCard credit card free of charge for a year. They can also apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000 with a repayment period of 15 years, or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000. The Salary Package offer is available to employees working in the Ministry of Education, the oil sector, and Kuwaiti heroes working in various public sector agencies and institutions, in addition to workers in the Ministry of Defense, women working in the government sector, members of the army, and "Preferred" segment clients.

LEXUS DESIGN AWARD 2021

plus more TBA

Award categories

One Grand Prix winner (selected from the six finalists)

- Six finalists
- Prizes/benefits: Six finalists invited to the mentorship session with mentors from diverse fields who provide guidance to help elevate prototype design.
- Six finalists invited to Milan Design Week 2021
- Six prototypes exhibited at the Lexus exhibition space during Milan Design Week 2021
- Six finalists receive up to 3 million JPY (over \$25,000) each to cover prototype production costs.



Mohammad Al-Qattan

Salary Account draws

Gulf Bank conducts monthly and annual Salary Account draws, in which all salaried customers who transferred their salaries to Gulf Bank in 2018, 2019 and 2020 are automatically enrolled. During the monthly draws, Salary Account customers have the chance to win a prize of up to 12 times their salaries, and can even win up to 100 times their salaries in the annual draw.

It is worth noting that Gulf Bank is the only bank in Kuwait that offers its salaried customers the opportunity to win sums of these amounts on a monthly and annual basis, as a reward for transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank. The eighth monthly Salary Account winner of this year will be announced on 14 September 2020.

Amazon to add 10,000 jobs in Seattle suburb

NEW YORK: Amazon plans to add 10,000 permanent jobs to a suburb of the west coast US city of Seattle in the coming years in the growing tech behemoth's latest expansion near its headquarters, the company said Friday. The jobs will be based in Bellevue, 10 miles (16 kilometers) east of Seattle, an Amazon spokesman said. The company did not specify how many of the jobs were entirely new to the US, but told AFP the figure included "a combination of new roles and teams from Seattle."

The move comes as upheaval from the coronavirus accelerates growth at Amazon, which recently reported a 40 percent rise in quarterly revenues to nearly \$89 billion. The jobs are on top of 15,000 new Bellevue positions announced in February. Amazon has leased two million square feet (185,000 square meters) of additional office space in Bellevue, said a blog post from John Schoettler, Amazon's vice president of global real estate and facilities. —AFP



Abdulaziz Essa Malak

Classifieds

Sunday, September 6, 2020

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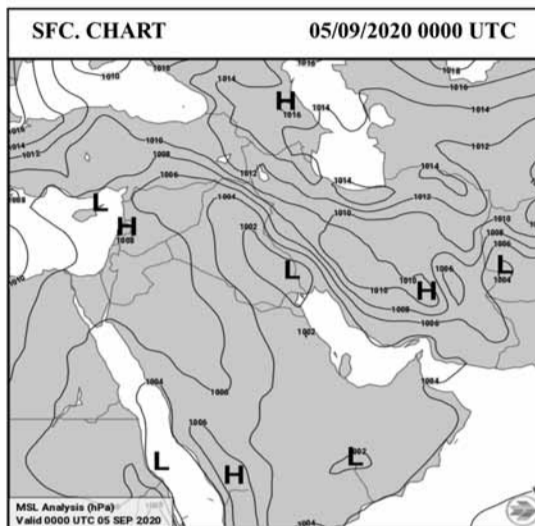
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot and Relatively humid with light variable wind changing to light to moderate south easterly wind with speed of 08 - 35 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Rather hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind with speed of 08 - 30 km/h with a chance for fog forming.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	34 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	46 °C	29 °C
ABDALY	48 °C	29 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	48 °C	31 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	45 °C	32 °C
SALMIYAH	39 °C	33 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	45 °C	29 °C
WAFRA	47 °C	32 °C
SALMY	46 °C	29 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	09/06	Hot	45 °C	28 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Monday	09/07	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	45 °C	26 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Tuesday	09/08	Hot	47 °C	26 °C	NW-NE	12 - 38 km/h
Wednesday	09/09	Very hot and some scattered clouds will appear later on with a chance for scattered light rain	47 °C	29 °C	NW	12 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:05
Sunrise	05:27
Zuhr	11:47
Asr	15:20
Sunset	18:07
Isha	19:26

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	48 °C
MIN. Temp.	29 °C
MAX. RH	37 %
MIN. RH	06 %
MAX. Wind	S 60 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

NOTICE
 September 2, 2020

Mr. Jaison John Serrao, son of Mr. John Serrao Andrew Serrao, resident of 205 B Wing Nilangi Apartments B P Road, Above Majestic Hotel, Kanderpada Dahisar West Borivali, Mumbai Suburban, Maharashtra 400068 and Ms. Jessica Genesis Crasto, daughter of Mr. George Crasto, resident of C 1 102, Bindra Complex, Mahakali Caves Road, Andheri East, Mumbai 400093 both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (welfare2@indembkwt.gov.in) / letters/ telephonic calls (00965 - 22533315, 00965 - 22533125).

(Ranveer Bharti)
 Second Secretary (Cons) and Marriage Officer.

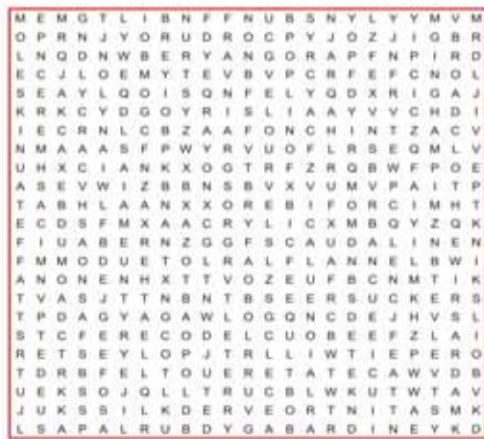
Embassy of India, Kuwait.
 Email: welfare2@indembkwt.gov.in

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22420224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073

Word Search

Cut From the Same Cloth



- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Acetate | Cotton | Linen | Satin |
| Acrylic | Denim | Lycra | Seersucker |
| Angora | Faux Fur | Madras | Silk |
| Bamboo | Felt | Microfiber | Spandex |
| Boucle | Flannel | Maleskin | Suede |
| Broadcloth | Fleece | Muslin | Taffeta |
| Brocade | Gabardine | Nylon | Terry |
| Burlap | Gingham | Oilskin | Tweed |
| Canvas | Grograin | Organza | Twill |
| Cashmere | Jersey | Percale | Velour |
| Chiffon | Jute | Polyester | Velvet |
| Chintz | Lace | Poplin | Viscose |
| Corduroy | Leather | Rayon | Wool |

Join the Dots



STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
 Today is a good day to ask for a raise or consider other ways to increase your income, Aries. Superiors will be in a receptive mood and likely feeling more benevolent than usual. This is a good time to study and consider investment possibilities, but it isn't a good time to make investments. The facts may differ from what you read or hear. Wait about a week before deciding.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
 Interesting communications from friends could center on possible world developments or maybe some juicy gossip about people you know, Cancer. Enjoy yourself, but don't take everything you hear at face value. Much of it is less actual fact than the product of someone's fertile imagination. Short journeys in your area could bring news of upcoming changes in your community.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
 You may have strange dreams and vivid premonitions today, Libra. Your intuition and telepathic faculties are operating at a high level. You could think of someone who later phones. There's also a tendency to be too paranoid. Don't panic if some of the messages you receive seem disturbing. Check out the facts first. You're likely to find that all is better than you thought.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
 Some new information could come your way that causes you to focus on a new interest, Capricorn. It'll set your mind traveling to faraway places and times. You may also communicate with some new people who are highly educated, from foreign lands, or both. They might have fascinating stories to tell! Whatever happens, today promises to excite your curiosity and stimulate your intellect.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
 You should be feeling especially romantic and sensual now, Taurus, and you might draw admiring glances from those around you - even strangers. Your passion is high, so this is an excellent day to plan a romantic evening. You could also feel especially creative and want to spend your day in some sort of artistic activity. Go to it!

Leo (July 23-August 22)
 Today you might earn corporate kudos, Leo, for all signs indicate that your imagination is flying high and can be put to work to increase your job effectiveness. You might even earn a promotion or increase in salary. However, it's important to curb the impulse to hide the downside of whatever you're doing from those in power. Be honest! It will benefit you more in the long run.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
 Today you could be feeling warm and friendly toward everyone. You might be involved in virtual social events or receive invitations to future parties. You'll probably have a great time and make some new friends. Take care to take lots of vitamin C. There could be colds or other bugs flying around and you could be more susceptible to such infections at this time.

Aquarius (January 20-February 18)
 You could have some intense dreams tonight, Aquarius. You might find that they bring inspiration for creative projects, perhaps for redecorating or otherwise beautifying your home. You could feel energetic now and want to charge ahead and work on your project until you drop. Take care to pace yourself. You might tire to the point of feeling ill.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
 Strange, passionate stirrings could find you wanting to escape from civilization with a lover, Gemini. This is a great day for it. At least plan a quiet evening at home with your special someone. You might also want to satisfy other sensual cravings, such as a desire for delicious food, drink, or comfortable chairs or beds. Flow with it. We all need a little self-indulgence now and then!

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
 Your mind is likely to be going a thousand miles an hour. Ideas for imaginative and innovative projects may come faster than you can possibly turn them into reality. Write them down. You may not have time to work on them now, but you will later. You could decide to attend a virtual lecture, sign up for an online class, or make plans to join friends and attend another kind of small group activity, if possible.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
 Relations with people on the job should be warm, Sagittarius, and this could do wonders for your career. Take nothing at face value. All may not be as it seems. Someone has issues with you that render him or her untrustworthy. Take care to avoid getting too close to anyone who seems a little under the weather. Your immune system is a bit weak, and you could catch a bug.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
 A welcome communication from a business or romantic partner could arrive today, Pisces. This could generate a lot of enthusiasm on both your parts and do wonders for your relationship or for whatever business you do together. Be honest with your partner. Don't conceal your concerns. It's better to get things out in the open. Don't worry. Everything will be OK!

Lifestyle | Features



An Italian military attaché stands as Swiss President Simonetta Sommaruga (right) attends a press conference on the eve of the inauguration of the Ceneri Base railway tunnel. — AFP photos



A picture taken in Camorino, southern Switzerland during the inauguration of the Ceneri Base railway tunnel shows a train arriving.

New Swiss Alps tunnel set to transform Europe's rail links

Switzerland opened its Ceneri tunnel on Friday-completing a mammoth project cutting a new route through the Alps which should transform rail links between northern and southern Europe. After opening the Lotschberg Base Tunnel in 2007 and the Gotthard Base Tunnel in 2016, the Ceneri in Switzerland's southern Ticino region is the final stage of the New Railway Link through the Alps project. The route should ease the flow of goods along a railway freight corridor running from the North Sea at Rotterdam, Europe's largest seaport, to Genoa, Italy's biggest port, on the Mediterranean. It is hoped the link will slash the number of trucks rumbling through the Alps by offering an alternative rail route.

But the 15.4-kilometre-long Ceneri tunnel, which fully enters service in December, will also cut travel time for passengers crossing western Europe's greatest mountain range. For example, travel times between Zurich and Milan-already significantly shortened by the Gotthard tunnel-will be cut by 40



Alphorn blowers arrive on stage in Camorino, southern Switzerland during the inauguration of the Ceneri Base railway tunnel.

minutes to just three hours. Transporting freight in Switzerland has long required powerful locomotives to navigate the mountain passes-and also heavy operations to load containers onto trains at

the border before crossing the landlocked country.

"This is the final link that gives us a flat line straight through the Alps," Swiss Federal Railways chief executive Vincent Ducrot told AFP at the tunnel's media launch on Thursday. "In the future, we will be able to have freight trains 750 meters long that can carry up to 2,100 tons of goods" per convoy, he said, highlighting the environmental benefits. By taking the equivalent of 3,000 trucks off the roads and transporting those containers on the new rail route, it should be possible to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 900 tons per day, he said.

'Project of the century'

The tunnel, at 329 meters above sea level, should see 170 freight and 180 passenger trains passing through per day. Swiss President Simonetta Sommaruga officially opened the tunnel in a ceremony marked by alphorns and musicians from German-speaking parts of Switzerland and Italian-speaking Ticino, symbolizing the new link

between the north and south of the mountainous country. Sommaruga cut the ribbon at the northern end as the first freight train passed through, heading south.

"This new train line through the Alps is the project of the century for our country," the president told AFP. "It is the biggest investment we have ever made," she said, calling it "a strong sign of an intelligent transport policy." The NRLA plan was initially approved by a referendum in 1992. The three-tunnel project cost 24 billion Swiss francs (\$26.4 billion, 22.7 billion euros) and was partly financed by licence fees on heavy goods vehicles. The Ceneri tunnel cost 3.6 billion francs-far behind the 12.2 billion invested in the Gotthard tunnel, which is the world's longest at 57 kilometers. — AFP



Local wildlife officials and veterinarians of Four Paws International, feed Kvaan, the elephant slated to be moved to a sanctuary in Cambodia after it became the subject of a high-profile rights campaign backed by music star Cher, before a medical examination of relocation at the Marghazar Zoo Islamabad. — AFP photos

Pakistan's only Asian elephant prepared for new home

A team of international vets using tranquilizer darts, flatbreads and the soothing lyrics of Frank Sinatra conducted a medical examination Friday on Pakistan's only Asian elephant, ahead of his planned move to Cambodia. The plight of Kaavan, an overweight, 35-year-old bull elephant has drawn international condemnation and highlighted the woeful state of Islamabad's zoo, where conditions are so bad a judge in May ordered all the animals to be moved.

Following the ruling, Austria-based animal welfare and rescue group Four Paws International were enlisted to help move Kaavan - whose case was boosted by the singer and activist Cher. A transport crate must be built and the elephant habituated to it before being flown to a 25,000-acre Cambodian wildlife sanctuary in a "jumbo" jet — probably a giant Antonov An-225 airlift cargo plane.

But first, experts must know how Kaavan has fared since the last examination in 2016, so on Friday they sedated him to get up close. Armed with a tub filled with bananas and flatbreads, Four Paws veterinarian Amir Khalil coaxed the elephant into an emptied-out concrete bathing pond while head vet Frank Goeritz used a tranquilizer pistol to fire three large darts into the animal. Unaccustomed to close human contact, the elephant grew a little agitated, prompting Khalil to sing Sinatra's classic melody "My Way", which appeared to calm the pachyderm as he chomped on chapatis.

Once the tranquilizers kicked in, Khalil and Goeritz measured Kaavan's hefty frame and girth, took blood samples and inserted a microchip in his left shoulder. "He is in good general condition... but he is totally obese, he weighs way too much and his feet are terrible," said Goeritz, pointing to the elephant's cracked and malformed toenails that will need medical attention. With little legislation to safeguard animal welfare, zoos across Pakistan are notorious for their poor conditions. In 2018, 30 animals died within months of a new zoo opening in the northwestern city of Peshawar, including three snow leopard cubs.

'Bored' elephant

Goeritz said Kaavan has been eating up to 200 kilograms of sugar cane each day and deprived of intellectual stimuli, resulting in "stereotypic" behavior where he swooshes his head and trunk from side to side for hours on end. "He is bored. He needs definitely physical and mental challenges," said Goeritz,



Veterinarians of Four Paws International examine and take blood samples from Kavaan, the elephant slated to be moved to a sanctuary in Cambodia.

who has spent three decades working with captive elephants around the world.

Outrage over Kaavan, gifted by Sri Lanka in 1985, went global a few years ago after California vet Samar Khan saw him chained in his enclosure during a visit to Islamabad. She launched an online petition that eventually caught the attention of American pop icon Cher. Kaavan's mate Saheli, who arrived also from Sri Lanka in 1990, died of gangrene in 2012. It is hoped Kavaan might eventually be able to re-partner once he is moved to Cambodia. Tireless efforts by a team of local animal advocates resulted in May's court ruling, under which Kaavan was supposed to be moved within 30 days, though the deadline has been extended.

Lawyer Owais Awan, who filed last year's court petition, said the elephant has appeared happier as vets and volunteers worked with him this week. "It was quite a moment today because it was the first time in Kaavan's life there was a detailed medical assessment," Awan said. "I feel happy yet sad. No one thought about doing a detailed assessment on him earlier." Only a few animals remain at the zoo and attempts by local workers - many of whom have never been given animal care training - to move some of them have been disastrous.—AFP

Catwalk shows to return for London Fashion Week

The British Fashion Council on Friday announced the return of live catwalk shows at London Fashion Week, after holding its previous event online because of the coronavirus outbreak. More than 80 designers will showcase their creations at the event, which takes place from September 17 to 22, the organization, which promotes the sector, said in a statement. Seven of the shows will take place in front of a slimmed-down live audience, 21 will be a mix of physical and digital, with the 50 remaining events taking place online only.

June's Fashion Week was held entirely online because of coronavirus restrictions. The September shows are traditionally for womenswear but this year the BFC said it would be a "gender-neutral showcase" featuring men's, women's and mixed collections. "LFW is one of the few international events to still be going ahead in London, proving the industry's resilience, creativity and innovation in difficult times," the BFC said. The body said coronavirus restrictions provided an opportunity to reassess formula and innovate to maintain the industry's influence, particularly in terms of employment. —AFP

500-year-old sturgeon found in Danish royal shipwreck

A two-meter long sturgeon, a species today near extinction, has been found preserved in the pantry of a 500-year-old Danish royal shipwreck in the Baltic Sea, archaeologists told AFP. "During archaeological excavations in 2019, a wooden barrel submerged inside the shipwreck revealed the almost complete and well-preserved remains of a sturgeon fish," archaeologists from Lund University in Sweden wrote in a recent article in the Journal of Archeological Science.

The discovery, qualified as "unique" by the researchers, was possible thanks to the special characteristics of the Baltic, a semi-closed sea with low oxygen levels. "The wreck is in such good condition because of the strange Baltic environment.

Mouse to go: Rodent kebabs fill the empty stomachs in Malawi

A popular snack when food is bountiful, mice have become a vital source of protein in Malawi since the coronavirus outbreak aggravated food shortages and economic hardship. Vendors waving long skewers of roasted field mice typically stand along Malawi's main highway, targeting motorists travelling between the two largest cities, Blantyre and Lilongwe. Seasoned and cooked to a crisp, mice are also sold at street stalls and markets across the southeast African country.

But these salty roadside bites also come in handy when times get tough. Malnutrition and food insecurity are perennial issues in the small, landlocked nation, where more than half of the population live below the poverty line. The coronavirus, which has infected nearly 5,500 people and killed more than 170, has only exacerbated food shortages as many livelihoods have been curtailed by confinement measures.

For mice hunter Bernard Simeon, from Malawi's central Ntcheu district, the pandemic has brought new complexities to his poverty-stricken life. "We were already struggling before the coronavirus," he told AFP shortly after preparing his daily mice catch. "But now because of the disease, things have really gone bad." The 38-year-old is primarily a peasant farmer but he also hunts and hawks mice to supplement his livelihood. His wife Yankho Chalera and their child depend on his earnings. "When times are hard we rely on mice to supplement our diet because we cannot afford to buy meat," said Chalera, washing dishes after lunch.

Free protein

Malawi's government has promised a \$50 (42-euro) monthly stipend for people who lost income due to anti-coronavirus regulations that restricted movement and business. The scheme was meant to start in June, but last week the government said roll-out logistics were still being finalized. Health officials have meantime urged the poorest communities in some rural villages to supplement their diets with free and naturally available resources. Mice are "one of the sources of proteins," said Sylvester Kathumba, principal nutritionist in the health ministry.

"We have been encouraging a diet of all food groups, especially in this time of coronavirus which attacks people with low immunity," said Francis Nthalika, nutrition coordinator at a government-run health office in the Balaka district. The area, tucked

The low salinity here is unsuited for shipworm, which eat wood in the world's ocean system. The sea floor is a fine clay, ideal for preserving organic material, and low dissolved oxygen levels further contribute to preservation of organics," Brendan Foley of Lund University, who supervised the excavations, told AFP.

Denmark's King Hans sailed to Sweden in 1495 on his best vessel the Gribshunden, the most imposing warship in the region, with the aim of restoring a union of the three Scandinavian countries under his crown. "We interpret the fish not so much as a gift, but as a prestige display," Foley said. "One possible interpretation, and the one we like best considering the political nature of the entire voyage, is that it is part of Hans' effort to subtly influence the Swedish nobles to join the Nordic Union," he suggested.

But the ship sank, along with its precious cargo and part of its crew, off the coast of Ronneby, a town which now belongs to Sweden but was at the time part of Denmark. Hans was not on board at the time. "The loss of the ship had to be a terrific blow to Hans' prestige, and must also have materially affected his political and military strength," Foley said. The union of the three countries did go ahead several years later, but was dissolved when Sweden seceded in 1523.— AFP



A man sells mice at Manjawira along the Lilongwe-Blantyre road in the Ntcheu District, eastern region of Malawi. — AFP

into Malawi's Southern Region, is widely associated with mouse hunting. Environmentalists, however, have voiced concern about damage caused by hunting methods as demand increases. The rodents are typically found in corn fields, where they grow plump on grains, fruit, grass and the odd insect. After crops are harvested, hunters burn bushes to identify mice holes so they can trap them.

'Long-term destruction'

In so doing they destroy a lot of the ecosystem within the bush," said Duncan Maphwesesa, director of the Balaka-based environmental rights group Azitona Development Services. "Much as we appreciate that they have to sustain a livelihood due to poverty, the bushfire issue is a long-term destruction," he said. "They don't see that they are affecting the environment and that they are part and parcel of those who are causing climate change". But tradition is hard to break. Fifty-year-old musician Lucius Banda reminisces about mouse-hunting adventures during his youth in rural Balaka. "As a village boy, you learn how to hunt mice from as early as three years old," said Banda, a former two-time parliamentarian for the district. "And in the village, this is not viewed as a task but more as a form of entertainment that is enjoyed by both boys and girls." —AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Children study in back of truck in virus-hit Mexico

An improvised school in Mexico's capital is helping underprivileged children keep studying during the pandemic with classes in the street, a blacksmith's shop and even the back of an old truck. The project is aimed at students struggling to keep up with a distance-learning program launched by the government for tens of millions of children whose schools have shut.

Each morning, after washing their hands, students in face masks squeeze into the back of a pick-up truck parked at the side of a street in Mexico City and sit at desks ready to learn. "We've equipped it with television, internet, a laptop and a smartphone to help disadvantaged children to take their classes," Dalia Davila, the 34-year-old manager of the project, told AFP. Under a canopy to protect against the sun, a mother tried to connect an old cellphone to a Wi-Fi network to download teaching materials for her 11-year-old daughter.

A notice informs passers-by: "We ask you for respect, you are entering a

study area." Around 30 million Mexican children began a new school year last month with distance learning via television in collaboration with four private channels. Schools have been closed since March in Mexico, which has recorded more than 66,000 coronavirus deaths-one of the world's highest tolls. Around 70 children between the ages of six and 15 have so far attended the "Little Corner of Hope" street school in a suburb of the capital.

The community effort relies on the support of several volunteer teachers, donations of electronic equipment, a blacksmith who allows the use of a workshop and a tortilla shop that provides a free internet connection. "The most difficult things are the weather, sometimes there's a lot of sun, a lot of noise, and it's difficult to teach a language in the street," said English teacher Eduardo Soto. The 50-year-old offered his services for free after the pandemic left him without work.

Car horns and the noise of street traf-



Vanesa Quintana (left) and Javier Chavez take their class at the improvised street classroom called 'Rinconcito de Esperanza' (Little Corner of Hope), set up as part of the 'All For Leo Movement' in Heroes de Padierna neighborhood in Mexico City. — AFP photos



Volunteer Fatima Rodriguez (right) speaks with Maria Luisa Moreno (center) and her son Marcos Hernandez at the improvised street classroom called 'Rinconcito de Esperanza'.

fic test the concentration of the students as they grapple with technological challenges. "It's been very difficult (for the children), first because they didn't know how to use a computer, then because they didn't give us any training to use

the applications," said mother-of-three Martha Hernandez. "I didn't even know how to insert a file," she said. For Davila and her partner, helping disadvantaged children is a way of coping with the death of their own young son, Leonardo,

due to a heart condition. "All this pain we transform into love, in sharing with those most in need," she said. — AFP



White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany speaks while a video plays of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi walking into a hair salon as she holds a press briefing in the Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House on Sept 3, 2020. — AFP

Hair fights, wrinkles and sassy strongmen: US campaign trail

With less than two months until the US elections, the race for the White House - long pushed to the margins by the coronavirus pandemic - has finally taken off: a good time for AFP to make a weekly list of offbeat moments on the campaign trail.

Unleash the age spots

No holds are barred for the Donald Trump campaign, which this week launched a series of Facebook ads including one featuring a picture of Democratic opponent Joe Biden, touched up to add wrinkles and age spots to make the 77-year-old look older. A campaign official also admitted sharing a falsified video montage that appeared to show Biden falling asleep in the middle of a television interview. Trump is 74 years old.

Misdirections

Biden's digital team came up with its own way of bursting the bubble of the president's supporters: it bought up the online domain KeepAmericaGreat.com, one of the key slogans of the Trump campaign. When Trump fans click on it, it redirects them to a site attacking the president's record.

A different Lincoln memorial

In the bitter fight for the White House, a former occupant of the residence is placed in a very particular position: Abraham Lincoln. Donald Trump likes to portray himself as a natural heir to the man who abolished slavery, while anti-Trump Republicans have appropriated his name for a Trump-bashing campaign, The Lincoln Project. That fight over the 16th president made it perfect for a lock of Honest Abe's hair, snipped off during the autopsy after his assassi-

nation in 1865, to go on the auction block. The macabre keepsake came attached to a bloodstained telegram announcing the president's death. The RR auction house in Boston put the hair and telegram on sale online, with a deadline for bids on September 12. As of Friday, the highest bid was \$28,000.

Political hair pulling

Hair also made headlines this week when it emerged that Nancy Pelosi, the powerful Democratic speaker of the House of Representatives, said she was the victim of a "setup" after she was filmed on a security camera visiting an indoor hair salon in defiance of pandemic regulations in her hometown of San Francisco. Pelosi, a fierce critic of Trump's handling of the health crisis, said she had fallen for a trap set by the salon's owner, who has been pushing for months to be allowed to re-open. Trump was quick to take to Twitter to attack one of his most outspoken critics. "Maybe the Beauty Parlor owner should be running the House of Representatives instead of Crazy Nancy?" the president said.

Joe's mow woes

Biden, who has largely kept a low profile in recent months as controversies dogged his opponent, finally stepped fully onto the campaign trail this week, visiting Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, two key states in the election. On Friday he returned to his home state of Delaware to take part in an online fundraising push, but a loud noise in the background forced him to ask his interlocutor to raise his voice. Biden explained it was just his neighbor mowing his lawn, and that he couldn't ask him to stop: surely a Trump supporter. — AFP

DISNEY'S ALL-ASIAN 'MULAN' MAKES HISTORIC DEBUT

Disney's live-action "Mulan" featuring an all-Asian cast finally premieres Friday, launching on streaming service Disney+ in a bold small-screen gamble that analysts say could change Hollywood forever. The lavish \$200 million film about a legendary female Chinese warrior was due to hit movie theaters in March, but became an early victim of the coronavirus pandemic, with multiple release date delays.

Last month, still uncertain over when or if movie-going families would feel safe to return, Disney rocked the industry-and its own cast-by announcing "Mulan" would skip theaters and premiere in living rooms instead. "The decision for it to go on Disney+ was a big shock I think for a lot of us," said actor Jason Scott Lee, who plays the movie's main villain, adding that the film was "meant to be seen" on the big screen. "At first it was devastating," Tzi Ma, who plays Mulan's father, told AFP. "But after a day or so, I thought about the silver lining... with Covid-19, our responsibilities grow. We want to keep everybody safe."

Alongside health concerns is an experiment in on-demand viewing that could dramatically alter the way audiences watch movies. The release of "Mulan" comes on the same weekend that Warner Bros. sci-fi blockbuster "Tenet" hits US theaters-or at least, the roughly 70 percent that have reopened, at reduced capacity. Unlike its rival studio, which will have to split box office receipts with theaters, Disney will keep 100 percent of profits for "Mulan," which will cost viewers \$30, on top of existing subscriptions.

While Disney has produced plenty of



US actor Jason Scott Lee

straight-to-video movies, it has never tried this approach with anything close to the budget of "Mulan"-and Tinseltown will be watching nervously. "What happens this weekend may be remembered forever, may be a tipping point for all of Hollywood as we go into the future," said Jeff Bock, senior analyst for industry tracker Exhibitor Relations. "This is about how audiences are going to digest blockbuster entertainment in the future," he added.

'This is huge'

Easing the decision for Disney was the fact that in China-where Disney+ is not available-many theaters have reopened. The movie launches on big screens there next week. Based on a 1,500-year-old Chinese ballad about a young girl who takes her ailing father's place in the imperial army, "Mulan" was already expected to be one of Disney's biggest films ever in that marketplace. "Mulan" is groundbreaking in other ways, too.

The entire cast is Asian or Asian-American-a demographic serially under-

represented in Hollywood, particularly among mega-budget blockbusters. Eddie Murphy's wise-cracking dragon Mushu from the 1998 animation is nowhere to be seen. "This is huge, that a major studio has the confidence in an all-Asian, Asian-American cast, to put their weight and financial support behind it," said Ma. "It should be a benchmark. It should be something the world can see, that this is viable."

Gone too are the musical numbers and romantic sub-plots. New Zealand director Niki Caro ("Whale Rider") chose a more mature tone, with beautifully choreographed fight scenes and landscapes reminiscent of "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon." The theme of women's empowerment also comes to the fore, both in star Yifei Liu's physical performance, and the introduction of a mysterious new female foe (Gong Li). "I don't think Niki wanted to do a remake," said Ma. "That's not what we're trying to do. We really want to connect to the original ballad as our focal point. I loved the songs... but it is not our mission here."

'Set free'

Initial reviews have been cautiously positive, with many praising the film's stunning visuals and willingness to depart from the animation, but some criticizing a lack of character depth or humor. For the cast, after months of limbo, the film's long-awaited release alone is reason to celebrate. "It's been so long, I feel like the film has been caged up, and it just needs to be set free," said Lee. "It needs to have its wings... let people see it in whatever format." — AFP



In this file photo, US-Chinese actress Yifei Liu attends the world premiere of Disney's 'Mulan' at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. - AFP photos

Film reveals Thunberg as steely, funny and a secret dancer

Greta Thunberg said Friday the weight of having to sound the alarm on climate change was "too much" for her or any child after a hugely surprising fly-on-the-wall film about her rise was premiered at the Venice film festival. The Swedish teenager allowed film-maker Nathan Grossman to follow her for a year after he met her in 2018 on the very first day of her schools' strike, sitting alone outside parliament in Stockholm with her homemade placard.

In that time she went from being a

self-confessed "shy nerdy person" to global icon. The resulting film, "Greta", reveals not only the inside story of the pain and risk Thunberg has put herself through for the climate cause - braving death threats and a hair-raising North Atlantic crossing in a racing yacht - but her love of breaking into dance and her gift for comedy.

Thunberg told AFP that she hoped the intimate, often touching portrait that tracks her extraordinary rise would put an end to the "conspiracy theories that I don't think for myself and someone else writes my speeches." "In the movie you can see that is not actually true, that I do decide for myself," said the activist, who has been dismissed as a "brat" by Brazil's far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who claimed she was being manipulated.

Living off baked beans

Several scenes show in the documentary her clashing with her actor father, Svante - who she convinced to become a vegan - often over her perfectionism as she writes and rewrites

her speeches. Speaking via Zoom during a break in classes at her secondary school in Stockholm, Thunberg said the film was true to the real her, someone who "loves her dogs and routines" but whose life has been turned upside down by the climate cause. The film shows how she dances in her pyjamas to relieve stress as she criss-crosses Europe on trains



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg holds a poster reading 'School strike for Climate' as she protests in front of the Swedish Parliament Riksdagen. — AFP

and in her father's electric car, living off baked beans and pasta as she urges leaders to act to save the planet.

At another point she despairs that the responsibility of her role to remind the world of the existential crisis it faces is "too much", a fear she repeated Friday during her virtual press conference at Venice. "It is such a responsibility. I don't want to have to do all this," she said. Yet when far-right critics vilified her as "mentally ill" in the film, Thunberg, who has Asperger syndrome, laughed it off saying, "Sometimes I think it might be good if everyone had a bit of Asperger's. I don't see the world in black and white, just the climate crisis."

'Kids were mean to me'

Despite the adoration Thunberg now receives at demonstrations and on social media, in the film she admits that "kids were mean to me" when I was younger. "I was never invited to parties and was left out." The activist, now 17, said she was relieved the documentary does away with the idea that

she is an "angry naive child who sits in the United Nation General Assembly screaming at world leaders, because that is not the person I am." Indeed, she drew a laugh from reporters and Grossman by admitting that at one stage she "doubted his seriousness" as a film-maker because he worked on his own. "Why don't they send a sound guy? Why aren't they more professional?" she wondered.

The film shows how the straight-talking schoolgirl went from being a quiet introvert to a global celebrity in a few months in 2018, and her frustration at the gulf between politicians' promises and their actions. "I think the most surprising thing about Greta is that she is very, very funny," Grossman told reporters. "Sometimes I joke that she could have been a comedian. She is very charming and funny as you have seen in this press conference." — AFP

Sports

Photo of the day



The Red Bull Racing prepare for a pitstop in England. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Gregory returns to NFL Cowboys

NEW YORK: Dallas Cowboys defensive back Randy Gregory was conditionally reinstated by the NFL on Friday, but he won't be able to practice with the team or play until October. Gregory's fourth banishment by the league was for an indefinite span and came in February 2019 for violating the NFL's substance abuse policy and terms of a 2018 reinstatement deal.

"Today is a day of celebration and thanks," Gregory tweeted in a statement, thanking a host of people, "and most importantly my family for sticking by (me through) thick and thin and to helping me get to the positive place I am at today."

"It's go time. I am in a good place and plan to use this second chance to be a great father, player, citizen of Dallas and teammate. Let's get this," Gregory will be allowed to report to the Cowboys on Monday for COVID-19 testing, solo workouts and meetings but cannot practice until October 5 and will not be able to join team workouts or play until the week of the Cowboys' October 19 home game against Arizona.

Gregory will have an acclimation period to work on conditioning and prepare to rejoin the club, which is finishing pre-season work this week before starting the 2020 season on September 13 at the Los Angeles Rams.

The 2015 second-round NFL Draft selection applied for reinstatement last March. In five NFL seasons, Gregory has made 41 tackles and seven sacks in 28 NFL games played since 2015. — AFP

Two world records as Farah makes track return, Hassan sizzles

Sifan set new best in the women's equivalent race

BRUSSELS: Mo Farah blitzed to a new world record in the rarely-run one-hour event on his return to the track on Friday at an empty Brussels stadium that also saw Sifan Hassan set a new best in the women's equivalent race.

Three years after having opted for road running, Farah showed no sign of cobwebs as he ran 21.330 kilometres over the 60 minutes behind closed doors at the Brussels Diamond League meet at the King Baudouin Stadium.

Farah, who won 5,000-10,000m doubles for Britain at both the London and Rio Olympics, bettered Ethiopian Haile Gebrselassie's previous best of 21.285km, set back in 2007, by 45 metres.

"I'm very pleased to break the world record today," said Farah. "What an amazing way to do it and show people what is possible."

It was a formidable record: the equivalent of 52-and-a-half laps at an average of 67 seconds per lap, or 2:47min per kilometre. And at one stage, the 37-year-old Briton, also a six-time world gold medallist, looked to have dropped that vital programmed pace, with Belgian training partner Bashir Abdi still in the running.

There might have been no crowd thanks to coronavirus-induced health protocols, but the record attempt featured piped-in music, audience cheering and a visual time guidance aid: 400 LED lights installed in drainage covers that lit up to mirror the desired pace. Farah and Abdi duly took note of the flashing lights and upped the pace to get back on record-setting time. With five minutes to run, Abdi took the lead for the first time, sweeping Farah around on his coattails.

As the gun fired for the final minute, Farah opened up his rangy stride to shoot past the Belgian and maintain his form through to a second gunshot

that ended the race. While Farah holds every British record for all events between the 1,500m and marathon, it was his first ever world record.

CONCENTRATED HASSAN

Ethiopian-born Dutch runner Hassan, like Farah once a member of the now-disbanded Nike-backed group of disgraced coach Alberto Salazar, smashed the women's world record. Hassan, the reigning world 1,500 and 10,000m champion, produced a thrilling kick over the final minute to see off Kenya's world marathon record holder Brigid Kosgei (who was later disqualified) and notch up 18.930km. Hassan's final distance added 413m — more than a lap — to the previous record of 18.517km set by Ethiopian Dire Tune Arissi in 2008.

"I'm very happy," said Hassan, who last season also set world record marks for the mile (4:12.33) and 5km on the road (14:44). "An hour is long, it takes a lot of concentration and focus. After the first half I found my rhythm. I never thought I'd run so far!" There was no such luck for Faith Kipyegon, however, the Kenyan once again thwarted in her attempt to break the long-standing world record in the women's 1,000m.

The reigning Olympic 1500m gold medallist missed out on bettering Russian Svetlana Masterkova's WR of 2:28.98 set back in 1996 by just 0.17sec in Monaco.

This time out, Kipyegon paid the price for a slight lapse in tempo halfway through the race, finally coming through in 2:29.92. Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen, who claimed the European 1,500m record from Farah when he finished second in Monaco to Timothy Cheruyiot last month, blitzed to victory in the event in the Belgian capital, in 3:30.69. In his last race as a teenager, the 19-year-old was



BRUSSELS: Britain's Mo Farah celebrates after victory and a world record in the men's one hour event at The Diamond League AG Memorial Van Damme athletics meeting at The King Baudouin Stadium in Brussels. — AFP

paced through to the line for a facile victory, two seconds off his continental record. "That was really fun, finally I could take a win!" joked the Norwegian.

"In the final metres I missed someone to push me. It's impossible to run a really really fast time if you're all on your own." World heptathlon champion Katarina Johnson-Thompson bagged a season's

best of 13.57sec as she finished fourth in the 100m hurdles won by local Anne Zagre (13.21), before high jumping a best of 1.84m for sixth in an event claimed by Australia Nicola McDermott (1.91).

Sweden's Armand Duplantis, fresh from a world lead and new outdoor personal best of 6.07m in Lausanne this week, won the men's pole vault with a best of 6.00m, a meeting record. — AFP

Rahm matches Johnson for PGA Tour Championship lead

WASHINGTON: Spain's second-ranked Jon Rahm fired a five-under par 65 to match world number one Dustin Johnson for the lead after Friday's opening round of the US PGA Tour Championship. Rahm managed to find only three of 14 fairways at East Lake but reached 14 of 18 greens in regulation to equal Johnson at 13-under after 18 holes in a 30-man season-ending showdown in Atlanta for a \$15 million playoff prize.

"I kind of survived the first six or seven holes, took it on the back nine and played a really solid round of golf," Rahm said. "My driving could use a little improving. It was just a little bit of every which way. I was a little hesitant off the tee and that's what I'd like to change."

Johnson, who shot 67, began on 10-under by virtue of his season points lead. Rahm was next on 8-under with third-ranked American Justin Thomas on 7-under and other rivals starting up to 10 strokes adrift in the staggered start system.

"I'm pleased with the way I played," Johnson said. "It's a decent score. I need to keep doing what I'm doing and giving myself some looks." Thomas, the 2017 playoff champion, had three birdies in his first four holes on the way to a 66 to stand third on 11-under, two strokes ahead of world number four Rory McIlroy, who shot 64 to leap into contention.

New dad McIlroy, who began seven behind Johnson, is chasing his third US PGA playoff crown in five seasons and still thinking of daughter Poppy. "I was like, 'OK, there's a feeding coming up.' It's natural — between shots you think of other things," McIlroy said.

"It's nice to have this little four or five hours to myself. I played really well, as good as I have in a long time and that was very encouraging." Last-pair partners Rahm and Johnson continued their duel from last week's BMW Championship, when Johnson sank a long putt on the 72nd green to force extra holes and Rahm

made a 66-footer for birdie to capture the playoff. "It was fun playing out there with Jon," Johnson said. "Pretty solid." Johnson sank a six-foot birdie putt at the second and dropped his approach inches from the cup at the par-5 sixth for a tap-in birdie to reach 12-under. But he made bogey at the eighth and par-3 ninth after missing the fairway and 10-foot par putts.

"Need to hit it a little straighter," Johnson said. "I didn't hit enough fairways... if you hit it in the fairways, there's not a hole you can't get after." Rahm made a 19-foot birdie putt at the second, took bogey at three, then dropped his approach inches from the cup to set up a birdie at six.

"It was hard the first four or five holes, not uncomfortable but just doubtful of the dynamics of everything," Rahm said. "After that I was a little bit more comfortable." Johnson and Rahm each birdied the 12th, 13th and par-3 15th, the world's top-ranked players bringing out the best in each other. After Rahm made a 29-foot birdie putt at 12, Johnson followed him from 27 feet. At 13, Rahm sank a 12-footer for birdie and Johnson topped him from 10 feet.

On the par-3 15th, Rahm sank a 23-foot birdie putt and Johnson made a 16-footer behind him. Rahm, followed with a 16-foot birdie putt at 16 after Johnson missed from 25 feet, leaving them both at 13-under.

"I putted as well as I ever have on Bermuda greens in my life," Rahm said. At the par-5 18th, Johnson blasted out of a greenside bunker to 4 1/2 feet but lipped out on his birdie putt while Rahm lipped out on his bunker bid for birdie and settled for a tap-in par. RORY'S 'SANCTUARY'

Four-time major winner McIlroy, who celebrated Poppy's birth Monday, went four days without touching a club. "Golf was the furthest thing from my mind the first few days this week," said McIlroy. "That meant I could come here and somewhat focus on what I'm supposed to do."

Golf provided McIlroy an escape into his usual challenges. "It's sort of a sanctuary," he said. "Great start. I played some nice golf." McIlroy has not managed a top-10 finish since the US PGA Tour returned from a three-month COVID-19 shutdown in June, impending fatherhood and spectator-less events taking a toll.

"It was a perfect storm," he said. "I've seen signs my game is getting better. I was coming in with no expectations... I'm happy to start the way I have." — AFP

Rebels edge Force in nailbiter to make Super Rugby playoffs

NEWCASTLE: Matt Toomua converted a try at the death to book a Super Rugby AU playoff berth for the Melbourne Rebels yesterday, clinching a thrilling 34-30 win over gallant Western Force. Dave Wessels' team needed to beat the Perth side by at least four points to clinch third spot ahead of the NSW Waratahs and ensure a clash against the Queensland Reds next weekend, with the winner facing the ACT Brumbies in the September 19 final.

They got over the line, but left it very late. Trailing by three points with 20 minutes remaining, they had two tries disallowed before Cabous Eloff finally got the breakthrough and Toomua safely converted on the full-time hooter to sneak victory.

"A little bit of relief and really just proud of the boys. It was a great effort to fight back and score that try," said skipper Dane Haylett-Petty as the Rebels made a Super Rugby playoffs for the first time ever.

"Just another Rebels-Force nailbiter. Over the last 10 years they've all gone down to the wire. Another great game," he added. The win ended the season for the "Tahs, who had a bye this week.

Defeat was a crushing blow for the hard-working Force who have the dismal record of eight losses from eight on their return to Super Rugby after

being axed in 2017. Despite this, skipper Ian Prior paid tribute to his team, who have spent 10 weeks on the road due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"I'm proud of the guts and the effort of the guys week in and week out," he said. "We haven't got the results that we wanted but are really proud of the patches of performances we strung together."

Played at Newcastle, north of Sydney, Prior booted his side into an early 3-0 advantage. But the Rebels dominated possession and Toomua offloaded out of a scrum to winger Tom Pincus who sprinted to the try line on 17 minutes, only for the Force to hit back through Henry Taefu, who burst through the defence to restore their lead.

Toomua converted two quick penalties to give them a 13-8 cushion and they bagged another try from Reece Hodge off a charge-down. The Force stayed in touch with a set-piece try by Andrew Ready from the lineout right on half-time to send them to the break trailing 20-13. Ready pounced again soon after the restart, with Prior converting to level the scores at 20-20 then kicking a penalty to give them the lead.

Brynard Stander got a fourth try for the Force, before Haylett-Petty combined with Marika Korobete to haul them within three points. — AFP

Sports

Bergwijn leads Koeman-less Dutch past Poland, Italy held by Bosnia

Czechs beat neighbours Slovakia

LONDON: Steven Bergwijn ensured the Netherlands did not feel the absence of recently departed coach Ronald Koeman to beat Poland 1-0 in the Nations League, while Italy's record winning run came to an end in a 1-1 draw with Bosnia and Herzegovina on Friday.

Koeman left to take charge of Barcelona last month, less than a year before he was due to lead his country to a major international tournament for the first time.

A rejuvenated Netherlands reached the final of the inaugural Nations League under Koeman and Bergwijn is one of a number of exciting young talents alongside Frenkie De Jong and Matthijs de Ligt that make the Dutch among the favourites for next year's Euros. The Tottenham winger netted his first international goal by tapping home from close range on the hour mark to give caretaker boss Dwight Lodeweges the perfect start.

Also in League A Group 1, Italy extended their two-year unbeaten run but a run of 11 straight wins came to an end in Florence. Edin Dzeko put the visitors in front in the country where he plays his club football for Roma before Stefano Sensi levelled 10 minutes later.

"We're disappointed not to win, but there was no sharpness," said Italy boss Roberto Mancini. "Our winning streak had to end sooner or later, and we're glad it came with a draw and not a defeat."

Scotland and Israel drew 1-1 in a dress rehearsal of their Euro 2020 playoff semi-final back at Hampden next month. Ryan Christie's penalty late in

the first-half masked a poor performance from Steve Clarke's side, who were pegged back 17 minutes from time when Eran Zahavi drilled high into the far corner.

Clarke handed Lyndon Dykes a debut up front, while he changed to three at the back to try and fit left-backs Kieran Tierney of Arsenal and Liverpool's Andy Robertson into the same team.

"I think we should be doing better," said Dykes. "Looking at the squad, we've got world class (play-



Dress rehearsal

ers). We need a bit of belief, a bit of confidence." In the other game in the group, the Czech Republic shrugged off the disruption of key players Tomas Soucek and Patrik Schick being forced to self-isolate after coming into contact with a backroom staff member who tested positive for coronavirus.

The Czechs beat neighbours Slovakia 3-1 in Bratislava. Gavin Whyte's goal four minutes from time salvaged a 1-1 draw for Northern Ireland in



AMSTERDAM: Poland's defender Jan Bednarek (L) vies with Dutch's defender Nathan Ake (C) during the UEFA Nations League football match between Netherlands and Poland at the Johan Cruyff Arena stadium, in Amsterdam. — AFP

Romania despite being down to 10 men for over 50 minutes after Josh Magennis's first half red card.

Erling Haaland's first international goal for Norway was not enough as the hosts lost 2-1 to Austria in Oslo. Michael Gregoritsch and Marcel

Sabitzer's penalty put the visitors 2-0 in front before the Borussia Dortmund striker's deft finish opened his international account.

In League C, Kazakhstan beat Lithuania 2-0, while Albania were 2-0 victors in Belarus. — AFP



Jubilant Kuwait Sports Club players and officials with STC trophy.

Kuwait SC wins STC football league for fourth time

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Sports Club (KSC) are officially the champions. The team closed their season with an emphatic win against Al-Shabab with the score

of 5-1 and retained the STC Football League plaque for the fourth consecutive season after collecting 43 points.

Kuwait's goals were scored by Jumaa Saeed in the 6th minute, Yousuf Nasser in the 11th and 70th minutes and Ahmad Al-Zanki scored in the 59th and 90th minutes.

Jahra Football Club won the lower league title and will move into the STC league next season. Meanwhile results of the final round matches in the STC league were as follows:

Kazema defeated Sahel 4-1, Arabi defeated Tadamon 2-1, Salmiya defeated Yarmouk 4-2, Nasser defeated Qadisiya 1-0.

The final standing is as follows:

Club	played	won	drew	lost	points
Kuwait	18	13	4	1	43
Qadisiya	18	10	6	2	36
Salmiya	18	11	2	5	35
Arabi	18	9	4	5	31
Kazima	18	9	1	8	28
Nasser	18	6	3	9	21
Sahel	18	4	6	8	18
Shabab	18	4	5	9	17
Tadhamon	18	3	4	11	13
Yarmouk	18	1	5	12	8.

Tadhamon and Yarmouk are demoted to the lower league.

England beat Australia in T20 thriller

SOUTHAMPTON: England beat Australia by two runs in a last-ball thriller as they won the first Twenty20 international at Southampton on Friday to go 1-0 up in a three-match series.

Australia were cruising to victory at 124-1 chasing a target of 163, with openers David Warner (58) and skipper Aaron Finch (46) getting them off to a sound start.

But Australia, in their first competitive match for nearly six months because of the coronavirus, lost four wickets for nine runs and an eventual victory target of 15 off six balls proved beyond the world's top-ranked Twenty20 side as England, second in the standings, held their nerve.

England, sent into bat, were restricted to 162-7, with only Dawid Malan (66) and Jos Buttler (44) making significant scores. Australia pacesman Kane Richardson took 2-13 from three overs and occasional spinner Glenn Maxwell 2-14 from three. The series continues at Southampton today. — AFP

Kiviranta scores in OT for Stars in game 7

LOS ANGELES: Joel Kiviranta capped his hat trick by scoring the overtime winner as the Dallas Stars punched their ticket to the NHL Western Conference finals Friday with a 5-4 win in game seven over the Colorado Avalanche.

Kiviranta got open in front of the Colorado net and took a pass from Andrej Sekera then beat Avs goaltender Michael Hutchinson with a one-time 7:24 into the overtime.

It was the first career hat trick for the 24-year-old Finn, who also scored in the second period to tie the game 2-2 and in the third to tie it 4-4 which set the stage for his overtime heroics in the NHL's quarantine hub in Edmonton, Alberta.

"This is what you dream about when you are a young kid," said the 24-year-old rookie forward, who scored just one goal in the regular season. "This is the first game seven in my life. I didn't know what to expect."

Kiviranta's second goal came late in the third and just 10 seconds after Vladislav Namestnikov had scored to give Colorado a 4-3 lead with 3:40 left.

The Stars advanced to the NHL's final four where they will face the Vegas Golden Knights, who shut out the Vancouver Canucks 3-0 to win their series in seven games. The first game of the series is Sunday in Edmonton.

Despite having to rally three times from deficits on Friday — from 2-1, 3-2 and 4-3 — the Stars controlled the play and look more confident with the puck in overtime. Whenever the Stars and Avalanche have met there has been plenty of fireworks and this series was no different. In seven games the two teams combined for 57 goals.

Slovakian defenceman Sekera started the play on the winning goal by skating along the boards then stopping behind the Colorado net and waiting for Kiviranta to give the Avalanche defenceman the slip and get open.

"Their defence lost me a bit and they didn't know who was going to pick me up. I tried to find a soft spot and it was a great pass," Kiviranta said.

Kiviranta is an undrafted free agent who joined the Stars late last year after spending his entire career playing for teams in Finland.

He played just 11 games this season for Dallas and was inserted into the lineup halfway through this series to replace injured forward Andrew Cogliano. "We had a secret Finnish weapon," said Stars captain Jamie Benn.

Russian Alexander Radulov also scored twice for Dallas, who advanced to their first Conference finals since 2008. Namestnikov scored twice and Andre Burakovsky and Nazem Kadri had a goal each for Colorado.

LEHNER GOLDEN FOR KNIGHTS

Vegas goalie Robin Lehner stopped 14 shots for the shutout and the Golden Knights killed off a five-minute penalty to Ryan Reaves — who was thrown out of the game for vicious check to the head on Canucks forward Tyler Motte.

The Golden Knights finally solved Vancouver's rookie netminder Thatcher Demko, who was coming off two straight wins over Vegas and kept Friday's winner-take-all showdown close until the final minutes.

Defenceman Shea Theodore scored the eventual winner with just over six minutes left in the third period, snapping the 0-0 tie by sneaking a long wrist shot through a maze of players and into the top corner of the Vancouver net. "He's a great goalie. We had a lot of quality chances, it was good to see that one go in," said Canada's Theodore. Vegas outshot Vancouver 34-14 but they couldn't beat American Demko until the second half of the final period. — AFP

Messi admits he is forced to stay at Barcelona

MADRID: Lionel Messi said on Friday he will stay at Barcelona but only because the club's president Josep Maria Bartomeu broke his word to let him leave. Messi's stinging attack on Bartomeu and the club means his future still remains in doubt.

Even if he is not allowed to go this summer, 33-year-old Messi can negotiate with other teams from January 1 and leave for free when his contract expires in July. Bartomeu could yet respond with his resignation, having previously indicated he would step down if Messi publicly said he was the problem and agreed to stay.

But three hours after Messi's explosive interview with Goal, Barcelona had not made any public statement. "It has been a long time since there has been a project or anything at all," Messi said. "They are always juggling and plugging gaps."

Messi believed he had a clause in his contract that meant he could leave for free at the end of last season but Barca said that option expired on June 10. "The president always said that at the end of the season I could decide if I wanted to go or if I wanted to stay and in the end he didn't end up keeping his word," Messi said.

"And this is the reason why I am going to continue in the club... because the president told me that the only way to leave was to pay the 700-million-euro release clause. "This is impossible, and then the other way was to go to trial. I would never go to court against Barca because it is the club that I love, that gave me everything since I arrived, it is the club of my life, I have made my life here."

Messi had requested to leave the club he joined as a boy following Barcelona's humiliating 8-2 defeat to Bayern Munich in the Champions League, with Manchester City the favourites to sign him.

His lawyers sent Barca a burofax on August 25 stating his intention to depart but Messi says he made his feelings clear to Bartomeu long before. "I told the club, especially the president, that I wanted to go," said Messi. "I've been telling him all year. I believed it was time to step aside."

'EVERYTHING BECAME DIFFICULT'

"I believed that the club needed more young people, new people and I thought my time in Barcelona was over, feeling very sorry because I always said that I wanted to finish my career here."

"It was a very difficult year. I suffered a lot in training, in games and in the dressing room. Everything became very difficult for me and there came a time when I considered looking for new goals, new horizons."

"It wasn't because of the Champions League result against Bayern, I had been thinking about it for a long time. I told the president and the president always said that at the end of the season I could decide if I wanted to go or if I wanted to stay and in the end he did not end up keeping his word."

Barcelona ended the season without a trophy for the first time since 2008, which also extended Messi's unsuccessful run in the Champions League to five years. He has scored 634 goals and won 34 titles with the club that he joined as a 13-year-old and where he came through the ranks at La Masia. — AFP

14 Two world records as Farah makes track return, Hassan sizzles



15 Bergwijn leads Koeman-less Dutch past Poland, Italy held by Bosnia



15 Kuwait SC wins STC football league for fourth time



NEW YORK: Angelique Kerber of Germany returns a shot during her Women's Singles third round match against Ann Li of the United States on Day Five of the 2020 US Open at USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in the Queens borough of New York City. — AFP

Djokovic through to last 16

Osaka battles into last 16 of US Open

NEW YORK: Novak Djokovic sailed into the last 16 of the US Open on Friday as off-court intrigue forced the delay of a men's singles match over issues linked to coronavirus.

Djokovic outclassed Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff 6-3, 6-3, 6-1 in a routine victory for the world number one, who is chasing an 18th Grand Slam singles title.

Far from routine was a last-minute attempt by New York health officials to prevent France's Adrian Panarino from playing his last-32 encounter against German fifth seed Alexander Zverev.

The intervention led to a back and forth between tournament organizers and the state government and resulted in the match, which Zverev won in four sets, starting over three hours late.

"It was a weird situation for me," said Panarino, one of 11 players put under enhanced safety protocols earlier this week after compatriot Benoit Paire was withdrawn from the tournament after testing positive for coronavirus.

"I was just laying on the sofa still trying to be focused just in case I would go on court," he said, following Zverev's 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2 victory.

Zverev will now play unseeded Spaniard Alejandro

Davidovich Fokina in the last 16 while Djokovic will play Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta for a place in the quarter-finals.

OSAKA STRUGGLES

Earlier, Japan's Naomi Osaka battled into the last 16 of the women's draw. The two-time Grand Slam winner required three sets and 2hr 33 min to dislodge 18-year-old Ukrainian Marta Kostyuk in an early game at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The Japanese fourth seed, who threw her racquet in frustration after losing the second set on tie-break, prevailed 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-2 against the world number 137.

"I just felt like I had so many points that I didn't capitalise on. I think when I went up, I became a bit passive and then she came in because she has no fear," said Osaka, 22.

Her experience came to the fore in the deciding set as she held her serve and broke Kostyuk twice to set up a match against 14th seed Anett Kontaveit of Estonia for a place in the quarter-finals.

Elsewhere, sixth seed Petra Kvitova breezed past American Jessica Pegula 6-4, 6-3 to set up a last-16 encounter with Shelby Rogers, also of the

United States.

Eighth seed Petra Martic of Croatia swept aside unseeded Russian Varvara Gracheva 6-3, 6-3.

Martic will play Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan in the last 16 after the 23rd seed powered past Vera Lapko of Belarus 6-3, 6-3.

Germany's 17th seed Angelique Kerber also progressed to the fourth round, making light work of American Ann Li 6-3, 6-4.

Kerber, the 2016 US Open champion, will go up against Jennifer Brady for a quarter-final spot after the American 28th seed knocked out France's Caroline Garcia 6-3, 6-3.

Garcia had provided the biggest upset of the tournament on Wednesday when she eliminated top seed Karolina Pliskova.

TSITSIPAS STUNNED

In the men's draw, Croatia's 27th seed Borna Coric staged a remarkable Houdini act to stun fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas in a 4hr 36min late-night thriller.

Coric appeared to be heading for certain defeat after Tsitsipas, leading by two sets to one, opened up a 5-1 lead in the fourth.

But Coric rallied superbly, saving six match points and fighting back to take the set 7-5 to force a decider.

Tsitsipas went a break up once more in the fifth but couldn't press home the advantage as Coric forced a tie break before clinching a 6-7 (2/7), 6-4, 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7/4) win.

Twelfth seed Denis Shapovalov recovered from 5-2 down in the fourth set to pip American number 19 seed Taylor Fritz 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2.

Fritz, 22 was within two points of victory before the 21-year-old Shapovalov completed a remarkable comeback. "I think we both deserved to win," said Shapovalov. "It was great tennis and I think I just got a little bit lucky."

The Canadian will do battle with seventh seed David Goffin for a place in the quarter-finals after the Belgian brushed aside Serbia's 26th seed Filip Krajinovic 6-1, 7-6 (7/5), 6-4.

Britain's involvement in the singles ended on Friday with both Dan Evans and Cameron Norrie exiting. France's Corentin Moutet knocked out Evans 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) 7-6 (7/1) as they resumed their second round match that was postponed Thursday because of rain. — AFP

Heat surge late to push Bucks to NBA brink

MIAMI: Jimmy Butler powered the Miami Heat to a 115-100 victory over Milwaukee on Friday that pushed the top-seeded Bucks to the brink of elimination in the NBA playoffs. Butler scored 17 of his 30 points in the Heat's scorching fourth quarter, Miami out-scoring the Bucks 40-13 in the final period to seize a 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference semi-final series.

It was the most lopsided final period in a playoff game since the NBA introduced the shot clock in 1954. Western Conference top seeds the Los Angeles Lakers were also beaten Friday in the NBA's coronavirus quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida, falling 112-97 to the Houston Rockets in game one of their conference semi-final series.

A near triple-double of 21 points, 16 rebounds and nine assists from the Bucks' reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo was simply not enough as the Heat remained unbeaten in the playoffs. "I'm not surprised," Butler said of the fifth-seeded Heat's commanding position. They can close out the series on Sunday. "I think everybody else in the world might be, but not us here. We've got so much fight, we never give up. We always give ourselves a chance to win."

The Bucks, who took the best record in the league into the post-season, must now try to do what no NBA team has done before in 139 prior attempts: Rally from an 0-3 deficit to win a best-of-seven playoff series. Antetokounmpo said the Bucks could be the first if they take it not game-by-game but "play-by-play, possession, by possession."

"We've got to believe in ourselves," he said. "We can do it." Bam Adebayo added 20 points and 16 rebounds for the Heat. Jae Crowder scored 17 points, Goran Dragic added 15 and Tyler Herro chipped in 13 off the bench.

The Bucks got a scare midway through the first period when Antetokounmpo rolled his right ankle on

a drive. Despite a few wincing he insisted it didn't trouble him, and Milwaukee looked like clawing back a victory when they led 57-50 at halftime and 87-75 going into the fourth quarter.

Butler and Miami took control from there. Adebayo's hook shot with 4:20 remaining — with an assist from Butler — put the Heat up 100-99. Two free throws and a driving shot by Butler stretched the lead and it was Butler, thwarted on a drive to the basket, who found Crowder for a three-point dagger that put Miami up 107-100 with 2:15 remaining.

"I think everybody knew, Jae was making that shot," said Butler, who was celebrating before the ball was through the net.

HARDEN FUELS ROCKETS

James Harden's 36 points fueled the Rockets, whose size disadvantage against the Lakers proved no handicap.

Russell Westbrook added 24 points, nine rebounds and six assists and Houston harried the Los Angeles team led by superstar LeBron James and Anthony Davis — who sat out the waning minutes with the game out of hand.

"Our defense, that's going to get us to where we want to go," Harden said. "This (Lakers) team is the best team in the West, if we can hold them under 100 points, defensively we've got something."

Harden bounced back from a poor shooting night in the Rockets' game-seven win over Oklahoma City on Wednesday. The Lakers hadn't played since polishing off the Portland Trail Blazers six days earlier, but the Rockets made them look sluggish.

Houston forced 17 Lakers turnovers that led to 27 Rockets points never trailing after the first quarter and taking firm control with a 14-0 scoring run in the fourth quarter.

"Offensively, we've got to clean up the turnovers," said James, who finished with 20 points, eight rebounds and seven assists. Davis led the Lakers with 25 points and 14 rebounds.

"I think it's the speed, they play with a lot of speed both offensively and defensively," James said of the challenge posed by the Rockets. "You can watch it on film, but until you get out there (you don't) get a feel for it. And that's what we did tonight. We got a feel for their speed and we should be fully aware of that going into game two." — AFP