

6 Iraqis dig up COVID dead to rebury in family graves



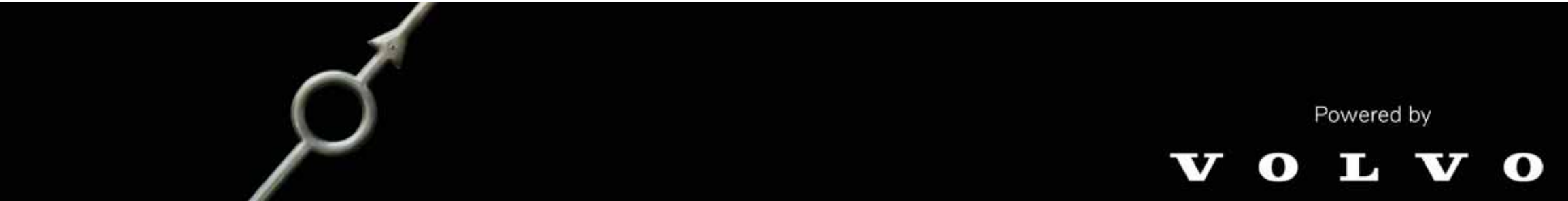
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Two MPs test COVID positive, Assembly session in doubt

Tribal primaries continue despite ban • Adasani: Accounts of 12 MPs inflated

Boursa Kuwait makes historic move with Premier Market listing

Leading the region in innovative investing



Hamad Al-Humaidhi



Bader Al-Kharafi



Mohammed Al-Osaimi

KUWAIT: Underscoring its pivotal role in the growth and development of Kuwait's capital markets, Boursa Kuwait announced that it will list its shares on the "Premier Market" following the Capital Markets' Authority's approval on Wednesday, Sept 2, 2020. Trading of the company's shares will commence during the opening trading session today (Sept 14, 2020) under the ticker symbol "BOURSA".

The company will be classified under the "Financial Services" sector, bringing the total number of companies on the exchange to 174, while the number of listed companies in the "Premier" Market rises to 20 companies.

Boursa Kuwait's position as a regional leader among stock exchanges continues to be reinforced with the listing of the bourse on the local stock exchange, continuing a series of firsts for the company.

Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, in his capacity as both a representative of the consortium awarded a 44 percent stake in the company and as Chairman of the Executive Committee at Boursa Kuwait, said: "We are proud of the consecutive string of achievements for Boursa Kuwait, which is undoubtedly a role model for companies that want to undergo privatization and list on the exchange." (See Page 8)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday said the ministry of health informed him that two MPs have tested positive for the coronavirus, and as a result tomorrow's session will most likely be cancelled. Ghanem said the Assembly office will meet today to discuss the issue, and expected it will decide to postpone the regular session this week until next week.

He said the health ministry also informed him that it will test all MPs and Assembly staff on Saturday because at

least seven days should have passed after any contact with infected people. The names of the two infected lawmakers were not disclosed, but MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei said he learnt that one of them is MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain.

The Assembly was expected to debate two grillings against HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah filed by MPs Abdulkarim Al-Kandari and Subaie for alleged mismanagement of state affairs. It has not been disclosed whether the prime minister will accept to face the grilling in public or in a closed session, or could ask the grillings to be studied by the

Assembly's legal and legislative committee to examine if they breach the constitution.

MP Kandari said he heard that the premier is not willing to face the grilling and would rather use the same tools used by former premiers, which include referring the grilling to the legal panel or even to the constitutional court.

He called on the prime minister to face the grilling in a public session so all the people can hear his defense. MP Subaie also criticized the government's request to postpone the Assembly session using the "pretext of coronavirus", and called for

Continued on Page 2

Kuwait Times welcomes new deputy editor-in-chief

By Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan
Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief

KUWAIT: As Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times, I am always thinking about the future of the news industry in Kuwait and the world. So much has changed since the launch of Kuwait Times in 1961 - the industry continues to grow and transform while playing a critical role in the national discourse.

This week we are all delighted to welcome onboard Abdullah Bofain, a well-known media professional who will be adding to Kuwait Times' vision of the future by leveraging his vast experience and building a partnership with Kuwait News e-paper. We are all cautious about the continued impact of the coronavirus pandemic, but at the same time are excited about the future of Kuwait Times and the media industry in our beloved country.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan (center) is flanked by Deputy Editors-in-Chief Abdullah Bofain (right) and Dr Ziad Al-Alyan.

Lebanon's new work contract end of 'kafala'?

BEIRUT: Lebanon has approved a new work contract allowing foreign domestic workers to resign and keep hold of their own passport, but activists say the exploitative "kafala" system remains in place. The economic crisis-hit Mediterranean country is home to around 250,000 migrants, mostly women from Africa and Asia, who toil away in people's homes as housekeepers, carers or nannies.

They are not protected by the country's labor law, but instead work under a set of laws, policies and cus-

oms called kafala repeatedly slammed by rights groups as allowing a wide range of abuse. Under kafala, meaning "sponsorship" in Arabic, the employer sponsors the worker's legal immigration status in the country, and the latter cannot resign without their consent or they become undocumented. The law also does not ban withholding a worker's passport.

All this leaves a worker at the employer's mercy. Lebanon's economic and coronavirus crises have increased the urgency for reform over the past year, with many families now paying their workers in the devaluated local currency, and some not at all. In recent months, dozens of foreign helpers have been thrown out into the streets without due pay or even their passport, many of them interviewed by AFP.

Continued on Page 2



BEIRUT: A photo taken on March 26, 2020 shows foreign domestic workers walking their employers' dogs in the Lebanese capital. — AFP

Virus dents Turkish weddings

ISTANBUL: Her bridal hair and makeup done just right, Ayse Keles looked ravishing and relieved: She managed to sneak her wedding day in before Turkey's latest wave of coronavirus restrictions hit. "I have a close friend who had to delay her wedding five times," the 28-year-old said in her white bridal gown while preparing for a photo shoot on the Asian side of Istanbul.

Since premarital cohabitation is frowned upon in the mostly Muslim but secular country, lavish weddings

with fancy cakes, sparkly dresses and wild parties are a huge deal, laying the foundation for a new life for millions. But the joyous day drew the government's wrath when videos of raucous street parties with mask-free, arm-to-arm dancing went viral just as Turkey's infection rate began to edge back up to levels last seen in May.

In the Black Sea city of Trabzon, dozens who celebrated henna night - a wedding custom gathering the bride's female friends and family before she leaves her mother's home - all had to be quarantined after one of them tested positive. The government's hammer fell on Sept 4, when weddings, engagement parties and circumcision ceremonies were limited to an hour in length and banned from having dances or serving food.

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ISTANBUL: Ayse Keles and her husband Alp Colak pose for a wedding photo shoot on Sept 5, 2020. — AFP

Half a million iqama holders stuck abroad

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's assistant undersecretary for residency affairs Maj Gen Anwar Al-Barjas said residency law amendments are being currently prepared pending referral to relevant authorities for approval. In an interview with Al-Anbaa daily, Barjas said the total number of expats stranded abroad who still hold valid residency visas (as of Aug 23) is 426,871, adding residents with expired iqamas will not be allowed to enter Kuwait.

Responding to a question about resumption of visit and entry visas, Barjas stressed that the issuance of all types of visas has been suspended for all nationalities until further notice. "As soon as we get health ministry instructions to do so, we will immediately put them into practice," he underlined.

Barjas explained that the state had earlier allowed residents with expired contracts and expired residency or entry visas effective Jan 1, 2020 to depart Kuwait without any legal accountability or fines. During the amnesty period, the state had paid the expenses of their departure and allowed them to return to Kuwait. "Those who failed to leave during this grace period will be held legally accountable, will not be granted residency visas, will be immediately deported and will not be allowed to return to Kuwait," Barjas concluded. — Al-Anbaa



Anwar Al-Barjas

Local

Deputy Amir keen for all to be equal before law: Public Prosecutor

Sheikh Nawaf hosts senior state officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Public Prosecutor Dherar Al-Asousi yesterday affirmed that His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is keen on ensuring that everyone is equal before the law without any discrimination. Asousi, in a press statement after meeting with His Highness the Deputy Amir, expressed his sincere gratitude and support towards him, on behalf of all members of the Public Prosecution. He added that the Deputy Amir's continuous support strengthened the role of the Public Prosecution in applying the law to all.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. His Highness the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince also hosted His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He also received Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh and Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Deputy Amir and

Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated, in two separate cables, UAE's Vice-President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashed Al-Maktoum, and Deputy Ruler of Dubai and Finance Minister Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashed Al-Maktoum on latter's return from a treatment. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

In the meantime, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince sent a cable of condolences to US President Donald Trump over the victims of the wildfires that hit several areas in the west

coast. His Highness the Prime Minister sent a similar cable to President Trump. Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf sent a cable of condolences to Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi over victims of a gold mine collapse in the town of Kamituga in South Kivu province following heavy rains in the eastern region. In the cable, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince expressed wishes for speedy recovery and good health for the victims. He has also wished success for the Congolese officials in coping with the catastrophic accident. His Highness the Prime Minister sent a similar cable. — KUNA

Foreign Minister meets GCC chief, Iraqi official

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received yesterday Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf. The two senior officials discussed regional and international issues of mutual interest, as well as GCC affairs, the foreign ministry said in a statement. Assistant Foreign Minister for GCC Affairs Nasser Al-Muzayyen and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of Foreign Minister Saleh Al-Loughani attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad received Undersecretary at the Iraqi Foreign

Ministry Abdulkarim Hashem and the accompanying delegation. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the first session of the following up committee of the joint Kuwaiti-Iraqi Higher ministerial committee. During the meeting, both sides discussed the close bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and other issues of mutual concerns. Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Ambassador Fahad Al-Awadhi, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ayham Al-Omar, Loughani and other officials at the ministry attended the meeting. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf. — KUNA photos



Foreign Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Undersecretary at the Iraqi Foreign Ministry Abdulkarim Hashem.

Kuwaiti-Iraqi Higher ministerial committee holds first session

KUWAIT: The follow-up committee of the joint Kuwaiti-Iraqi Higher ministerial committee held a session yesterday. The Kuwaiti side was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, and the visiting Iraqi delegation was headed by the senior Undersecretary of the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Abdulkarim Hashem. Jarallah pointed out in the meeting the importance of the depth of the existing fraternal relations between the two countries and praised the recent achievements of these relations.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi official praised the bilateral relations between the two countries and the two countries' keenness to reach new heights. The committee reviewed the agenda of the eighth session of the joint Kuwaiti-Iraqi Higher Ministerial Committee, which will be held during the last quarter of this year. The two sides expressed vitality to accomplish the work entrusted to the committee, reflecting the depth and strength of relations and the keenness of the wise leadership in both countries to strengthen and develop them in all fields. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Members of the follow-up committee of the joint Kuwaiti-Iraqi Higher ministerial committee meet yesterday.

Virus dents Turkish...

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Keles married the love of her life, Alp Colak, on Aug 21, just in time for a real wedding but still two months later and slightly smaller than planned because of uncertainties about what was being allowed. "It was fun but we had bigger plans that didn't come through because of the restrictions," Colak recalled. "Still, if it were now, even that would be a dream."

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca says Turkey is living through "a second peak of the first wave" of the pandemic, which has officially claimed nearly 7,000 lives in the nation of 83 million people spanning Europe and Asia. Koca specifically blamed

"carelessness during religious festivals and weddings" for the rise.

But while not popular anywhere, uncertainties over weddings can be especially traumatic in places such as Turkey, where most couples live with their parents before becoming husband and wife. "Every couple would like to have a wedding like a fairy tale. But we, the 2020 corona brides, we are all anxious," Keles said.

Turkey has 600,000 weddings annually. Contracts for their organization are concluded months in advance and often involve sums equal to households' yearly incomes. In return, gold coins, jewelry and money gifted to the couple help reduce their families' debts. "We are talking about a 60 billion lira sector (\$8 billion) if we think an average of 100,000 lira (\$13,000) is spent on each wedding," said Emek Kirbiyik, who heads dugun.com, Turkey's biggest wedding planning website. — AFP

Two MPs test COVID...

Continued from Page 1

holding the session to conduct the grillings.

Meanwhile, major tribes continued to hold tribal primaries to elect their candidates for the forthcoming parliamentary elections expected to

be held in November. Tribal primaries are banned by law but bedouin tribes hold them to boost their chances of winning more seats in the Assembly by fielding a small number of candidates.

Also yesterday, MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said 12 lawmakers are implicated in the case of inflated bank accounts. He urged the government to take legal actions against them by referring the cases to the public prosecution.

Lebanon's new work contract...

Continued from Page 1

After the August 4 blast at Beirut port that devastated swathes of the capital and killed more than 190 people, foreign workers have staged rallies outside their consulates appealing to be sent home. The labor ministry finally this month published a new and revised work contract for domestic workers, the main legal document governing their stay in Lebanon.

Outgoing labor minister Lamia Yammine has said the new contract - to replace a 2009 version - "abolishes the kafala system". Campaigners have welcomed the detailed five-page document outlining workers' rights, but say it is only a beginning. "It is no doubt a much better version than the older one," said Amnesty International researcher Diala Haidar. But "a contract alone doesn't end kafala."

Most importantly, the new contract gives the workers the right to resign and change employers, and says they can keep their passport. If their employer withholds their wages or passport, they can immediately quit without notice. It finally gives the worker the right to the national minimum wage of 675,000 pounds (\$450 before the crisis, less than \$100 at the black market rate) - albeit allowing the subtraction of an undetermined amount to cover food, board and clothes.

The new contract states workers must be provided with a private, well-ventilated room with a key, an improvement after many women said they were forced to sleep in the living room or on a balcony. It limits labor to eight hours a day in a six-day week, and details the right to daily rest, paid holidays and sick leave. — AFP

Japanese Embassy announces 2021 scholarship program

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Japan is pleased to announce that the government of Japan offers scholarship to those who wish to study at Japanese universities as undergraduate and research students. The Japanese Government Scholarship was established in 1954 in order to increase mutual understanding between the people of Japan and other countries, as well as to make an international contribution to the intellectual field.

All Kuwaiti citizens who meet these qualifications are eligible to apply: - Undergraduate students: Completed 12-year school curriculum, good academic standing, born after April 2, 1996. Years of study: 5 years (including one year for studying the Japanese language) from April 2021 to March 2026. Fields of study: National sciences, social sciences and humanities.

- Research students: Completed 16 years of school education, born on or after April 2, 1986. Years of study: From September 2021 to March 2023 (might extend depending on the major category). Fields of study: Field of study majored at university or related to it.

Application forms, detailed information and other conditions can be downloaded from Embassy's website: (https://www.kw.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/11_000001_00094.html). The deadline for submitting applications is Tuesday, October 13, 2020 (for undergraduate students) and Tuesday, November 3, 2020 (for research students). Only soft copies, PDF format, and sent by email to the Embassy, will be accepted.

The application process consists of document screening, written exams, and personal interview. Applicants are advised to prepare for it by referring to the past exams. (<https://www.studyinJapan.go.jp/en/planning/scholarship/application/examination/>). For inquiries, please contact cultural section, Embassy of Japan at: Tel: 2530926. Email: danazibar@kw.mofa.go.jp.

Local

Kuwait's firefighting force to get new hospital, academy and allowances

Preparing firefighters for natural disasters, major accidents and crises

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: A new law (13/2020) was recently issued to reorganize the fire department, which provides more benefits to firefighters. "Although they do a very hard and dangerous job, they don't get the benefits given to other military officers. This law is a quantum leap for firefighters, which achieves community security and protects lives and properties. It will also improve the performance and skills of firefighters," Lt Ridha Al-Salman, Head of Social Media at Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD), told Kuwait Times.

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate will be renamed as Kuwait General Fire Force. "According to this law, a firefighting academy will be founded. The academy will be of international standard and will allow more students to study this field. Presently, 450 to 500 graduates are trained as firefighters annually, but at the new academy, this number will be much higher, and even students from the GCC can join the academy," Salman said.

"Currently, firefighters only get courses from the

Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, in addition to training at a fire station. Their certificate is equal to a diploma, but this academy is at the university level. We prepared the curriculum to conform to modern fire sciences and urban development," he added.



KFSD renamed 'Kuwait General Fire Force'

"We need to prepare the firefighters for natural disasters, major accidents and crises. With developing technology and modern lifestyles, we need specialized firefighters able to deal with these cir-

cumstances. The academy will accept high school graduates to study firefighting sciences and engineering. More fields may be added according to the needs of the administration. The graduates will be from both diploma and university levels," stressed Salman.

Women currently work at the fire prevention department, and according to Salman, after the founding of this academy, more courses will be available for them according to the needs of the force.

The new law will preserve the material and moral rights of firefighters. "Firefighters deserve receiving more benefits. This includes some allowances similar to officers in the ministry of defense or the ministry of interior. Moral benefits include building a hospital for firefighters and their families. It also includes establishing a club for fire officers and even noncommissioned officers. The government has already allocated land in Messila to build the club," he revealed.

This law also amended sanctions on violators of fire prevention requirements. "This amendment

should eliminate prevention violations, as the penalty was increased from up to KD 500 as maximum fine to up to KD 50,000 as the maximum fine for serious violations, and/or imprisonment up to one year. This is more deterrence for institutions, which will make them follow preventive conditions and secure their sites, which in the end is in their own favor," explained Salman.

"Before applying these increased sanctions, a media campaign will be held at various organizations. Through this campaign, we aim to make investors and business owners become aware about the new sanctions to achieve full compliance with fire prevention conditions and requirements for more safety at institutions," he concluded.

The law number 13/2020 to establish the Kuwait General Fire Force became effective after it was published in the national gazette 'Kuwait Al-Yaum' on September 6, 2020. It explains the regulations that organize the work of the firefighting force in Kuwait, as well as the rights and benefits firefighters enjoy, in addition to penalties in case of violations committed.

Navy carries out live ammunition drill

KUWAIT: Kuwait Army announced that the navy force is scheduled to conduct live ammunition drills tomorrow and Wednesday, from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, at the location showed in the map in red. Meanwhile, the coastguard department cautioned that Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) is conducting a repair operation of a marine cable and pipeline at Al-Zour area throughout September. Accordingly, the Interior Ministry urged all citizens and residents to be very cautious while cruising through the southern waters, namely Al-Zour area. The department also advised sea goers to avoid sailing in the areas designated by the coordinates below and urged them to mark those coordinates in their GPS devices or any other navigation systems they use in order to keep off the operations' area by at least 500 meters, and sail in the designated area at speeds suitable to achieve safety for all.

Border marks Coordinates:

A 28° 42' 13.2" N 048° 23' 32.4"E
B 28° 42' 4.9" N 048° 24' 37.2"E
C 28° 41' 12.2" N 048° 26' 31.9"E
D 28° 40' 23.3" N 048° 26' 2.9"E
E 28° 41' 11.7" N 048° 24' 17.7"E
F 28° 41' 18.6" N 048° 23' 23.4"E



Ministry opens investigation in health zone blaze

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) formed a special committee to investigate the huge fire that broke out Friday in a building under construction in Sabah health zone and determine the cause of the fire pending taking legal action against whoever caused it. MoH stressed that the building is still in the custody of the construction contractor, Al-Rai reported yesterday.

Up to 300 firemen battled the huge fire that erupted at the parking lot of a building under construction in the Sabah health zone, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) had said on Saturday. The department reported that 55 of the fire fighters suffered from severe exhaustion after they were exposed to the blaze. A thermal camera employed by the department recorded that the heat at the scene hit scorching 322 C degrees. It indicated in a statement that some floors of the building had been transformed into makeshift warehouses where materials had been stacked randomly with no consideration to safety rules. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Anas Al-Saleh had arrived at the scene to follow up closely on the incident.

Separately, firemen put out a blaze in a carpenter shop located in Amghara on Saturday, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said. Jahra, Shuhada, Fahaeel, Tahreer and backup fire stations responded to the scene following an emergency call, and worked together to prevent the flames from spreading outside the shop where the



Firemen battle the Sabah health zone blaze.



A fireman extinguishes the Amghara fire.

fire started. No injuries were reported, and a case was filed for investigations. Meanwhile, KFSD said that a fire broke out in four buses in Mahboul, as Mangaf fire station men contained and put out the flames. No injuries were reported, and an investigation was opened.

Kuwait COVID-19 cases climb by 553 to 94,764

KUWAIT: The number of novel coronavirus infections in Kuwait rose by 553 yesterday to push the total count to 94,764, while a pair of fatalities upped the country's death toll to 560, the health ministry said. The figures include people who have had sustained contact with infected individuals and others whose source of infection is being investigated, according to ministry spokesman Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad. In terms of health zones, Hawally governorate recorded the lion's share of cases with 148 infections, followed by Ahmadi (115), the Capital (109), Farwaniya (100) and Al-Jahra (81), according to government figures. The number of people hospitalized with the virus stands at 9,209, of whom 94 are in intensive care units, the data showed, revealing that 2,739 tests were conducted in the past day out of a total of 675,742. Some 591 people recovered from the virus in the last 24 hours to raise the total to 84,995, added the spokesman. Urging the public to be mindful of health precautions, he said following social distancing rules was the only way to ward off the infectious disease. — KUNA

News in brief

PACI morning shift for Kuwaitis

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) announced allocating the morning shift from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm for citizens and GCC nationals only, while expatriates can go to the PACI building during the evening shift from 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm.

Water maintenance

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water announced that some parts of Abu Fataira and Fnaitees witnessed low water pressure due to maintenance works carried out on the water network. The maintenance works lasted for eight hours last night starting from 8:00 pm.

Building fumigated

KUWAIT: Kuwait Port Authority (KPA) building was fumigated yesterday after an employee tested positive with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The authority resumes operations as usual today.

Stay safe. Stay home. Stay informed.

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Kuwait chairs Arab Group at UN Human Rights meeting

GENEVA: Kuwait will chair the Arab Group for the 45th session for the UN human rights council due to be held today at the United Nation Palace in Geneva, Kuwait Permanent Representative to UN in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim said yesterday. In a statement to the press, Ghunaim affirmed that the State of Kuwait firmly defend goals, interests and causes of the Arab countries. In the statement, Ghunaim added that the agenda will feature many files related to the current situations in the Arab World including Israeli violation against human rights in Palestine and banning the UN special envoy for human rights to enter the Palestinian territories to carry out his duties. The meeting will discuss human rights in Syria and Yemen in addition to dialogues for human rights in Sudan, Libya, and Somalia. Racism and racial discrimination will be up for discussion, beside following-up with to the implementation of the Vienna Program of Action, Ghunaim said. He stressed that the upcoming human rights session's agenda will be topped by important resolutions that will make the Arab group to follow up and seriously undertake resolutions related to national institutions for human rights and the terrorism. In this regard, Ghunaim stressed that "the State of Kuwait will spare no effort in preserving Arab interests and defending Arab issues raised during the next session of the Human Rights Council." The UN Human Right Council was established in 2006 and includes in its membership 47 countries that are elected periodically. — KUNA

Kuwait sends second relief plane to Sudan

Eighty four tons of humanitarian aid sent in two days

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) sent yesterday a second plane-load of relief supplies to Sudan, carrying 40 tons of humanitarian aid meant for the victims affected by the flash floods. The plane carried foodstuffs, medicine, tents and water pumps, KRCS's emergency management director Yousef Al-Miraj said in a press statement. He expressed his wishes that this aid will alleviate the suffering of the Sudanese people. KRCS team will coordinate with Kuwait's embassy in Sudan and the Sudanese Red Crescent to rapidly distribute the aid. Miraj added that the association will inspect the affected places and know the requirements of those affected by the natural disaster. "This is an obligation towards our brothers in Sudan," he said.

On Saturday, a planeload of relief supplies dispatched (KRCS arrived in Khartoum, carrying 44 tons of humanitarian supplies. Kuwaiti charge d'affaires in Khartoum Abdul Karim Al-Mejaim said the planeload of relief materials was sent in according to instructions by the Kuwaiti political leadership to help the Sudanese brothers cope with the floods' catastrophe — an initiative that coincided with the sixth anniversary of the UN designation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as Leader of Humanitarian Action and the State of Kuwait as Center for Humanitarian Action.

Meanwhile, the deputy chairman of the Sudanese Red Crescent Society Mohammad Abdulhamid

expressed gratitude for the State of Kuwait for standing alongside the Sudanese people in these dire circumstances. In the meantime, Abdulrahman Al-Aoun, the KRCS Director General, said the aid was sent according to directions by His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Sudanese authorities have declared a three-month

“Obligation towards our brothers”



state of emergency since September 5 when the nation was engulfed with torrential rain and large parts of the land were covered with raging waters caused by overflow of the Nile. More than 557 people have been adversely affected with the catastrophe and 100 people have lost their lives. The raging waters have also inflicted wide-scale destruction in properties, particularly in rural areas. — KUNA

Nearby markets still benefit from Kuwait flights ban: Report

KUWAIT: The list of 32 countries from which passengers are banned from traveling directly to Kuwait still awaits the health ministry's assessment to review it, Al-Rai reported quoting informed sources, noting that the entry requirement of passengers from those countries to Kuwait via a third country after spending 14 days there is still unchanged. However, the sources described banning passengers coming directly from those countries as a 'continuation of wasted chances and opportunities' and expressed amazement at the stalling in reassessing and reviewing the list as previously declared, wondering about the worth of continuing

the ban on flights from those countries despite considerable losses to the state treasury and creating economic opportunities for neighboring countries to benefit from the ban. "Those countries are attracting travelers with promotional touristic packages for over two weeks including medical test fees and other expenses," the sources said. The source added that relevant Kuwaiti bodies had already prepared special studies in this regard in order to revive the economy in various commercial, medical, touristic and other sectors. "The study is so far not approved," the sources lamented.

Upon resuming commercial flights on August 1, Kuwait announced that 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.

School meals

In other news, Al-Rai reported that the Ministry of Education (MoE) contacted the State Audit Bureau requesting the renewal of a contract to supply meals to kindergarten schools in some educational areas, despite the current precautionary measures taken to fight the spread of COVID-19, which necessitated opting for online education and preventing students from going to schools. In this regard, informed sources said the State Audit Bureau responded by setting three conditions to renew the contracts:

- 1- How often will meals be provided in various schools in view of MoE's plans to use online education in various educational stages.
- 2- Submitting a report from the health ministry about the possibility of serving those meals during the current circumstances.
- 3- A copy of the health ministry memo on the health conditions and specifications of those meals and school canteens.

Two arrested for assaulting cops in Sabah Al-Salem

KUWAIT: Two Kuwaitis with criminal records were arrested in Sabah Al-Salem after one of them waved a sword at a police detective and the other tried to strangle another officer while attempting to escape from a police patrol, said security sources. Case papers indicate that based on a report about spotting two individuals acting strangely, two detectives from Mubarak Al-Kabeer rushed to the scene, where one of the suspects waved a sword threatening to harm them. However, the detectives managed to control and cuff the suspects. They put them in the patrol vehicle, but one of the suspects managed to cut loose and tried to strangle one of the detectives, so a backup force was dispatched to help control the suspects. A case was filed and the suspects are facing charges of assaulting and insulting security agents and resisting arrest.

Stabbing suspect identified

Detectives managed to identify and arrest a suspect who had appeared in video while stabbing someone during a fight in a parking lot, said security sources, noting that the victim had filed a case. The suspect was referred to relevant authorities pending further investigations.

Physical assault

A young man sustained serious injuries when he was assaulted in Kabd. He was rushed to Farwaniya Hospital in critical condition, said security sources. Case papers indicate that the victim's brother filed a complaint at Kabd police station accusing a Kuwaiti he knows of assaulting his brother. A case was filed and the suspect is being summoned for further investigations.

Robber sentenced

A British court sentenced a woman born in Kuwait to eight months in prison for stealing the purse of a female Kuwaiti tourist including personal belongings worth £76,000 (around \$100,000) two years ago. According to British media including the Sun and the Daily Mail, the theft happened in Sept 2018 during a train trip from London Paddington station to Cardiff Central station, where the Kuwaiti citizen met the woman - a mother of two children who has been living in Britain since she was six. Case papers showed that the suspect approached the citizen and started chatting with her, during which she was focused on the shelf above her and the purse on it. She managed to distract the victim when she left the train at Cardiff Central and snatched the purse. The citizen only discovered the purse's disappearance when she reached her destination 65 km away. Following months of investigations after identifying and arresting the suspect, she confessed and was sentenced to a suspended sentence of eight months in jail because of her children. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

In my view

Health mandate for Kuwaiti women

By Eiman M Al-Harbi, lawyer

In the implementation of Article 29 of the Kuwaiti Constitution, which equates citizens with dignity and before the law, without any discrimination based on "gender, origin, language or religion," the Kuwaiti National Assembly recently approved an additional right owed to Kuwaiti women, and a step described by society as adding a new addition to Kuwaiti women's rights. The issuance of Law No. 14 of 2020, which amends the second paragraph of Article 30 of Law No. 16 of 1960 issues the Penal Code, and includes the mother as a guardian of self or in the event of an emergency that requires immediate surgical intervention and the circumstances that do not allow approval to be obtained, then doctors can intervene without prior approval.

What is meant by health mandate "is the responsibility of a person to make a decision on health procedures, diagnostic or therapeutic for another person before the medical staff in centers and hospitals, and it gives him the right to sign, whether to agree to any procedure or accept the serious complications that may result from an inevitable procedure decided by the doctor."

This law came into effect as a result of continuous complaints about mothers not having the right to give permissions for health examinations for their children, and also not being allowed to make decisions about health procedures for their children, such as operations, etc without the father's permission and presence. This prohibition may expose the sick child to dire consequences, and the same applies to all family members who fall within the mother's custody.

The Kuwaiti Penal Code used to limit this important procedure of acting as legal guardian to only the father of the child, which led to the filing of lawsuits before the Family Court. As a result, the Family Court recently upheld the right of Kuwaiti women and added them as legal guardians of their children. That gives them the right to sign all necessary papers and transactions before the bodies affiliated with the Ministry of Health without the consent of the father.

In my point of view, the law's concept of Kuwait Women Health Mandate is contradictory and misleading because it gives the right to the mother, not the wife or sister. However, it is a step in the right direction towards overcoming the obstacles that Kuwaiti women face in terms of implementing the principle of equality.

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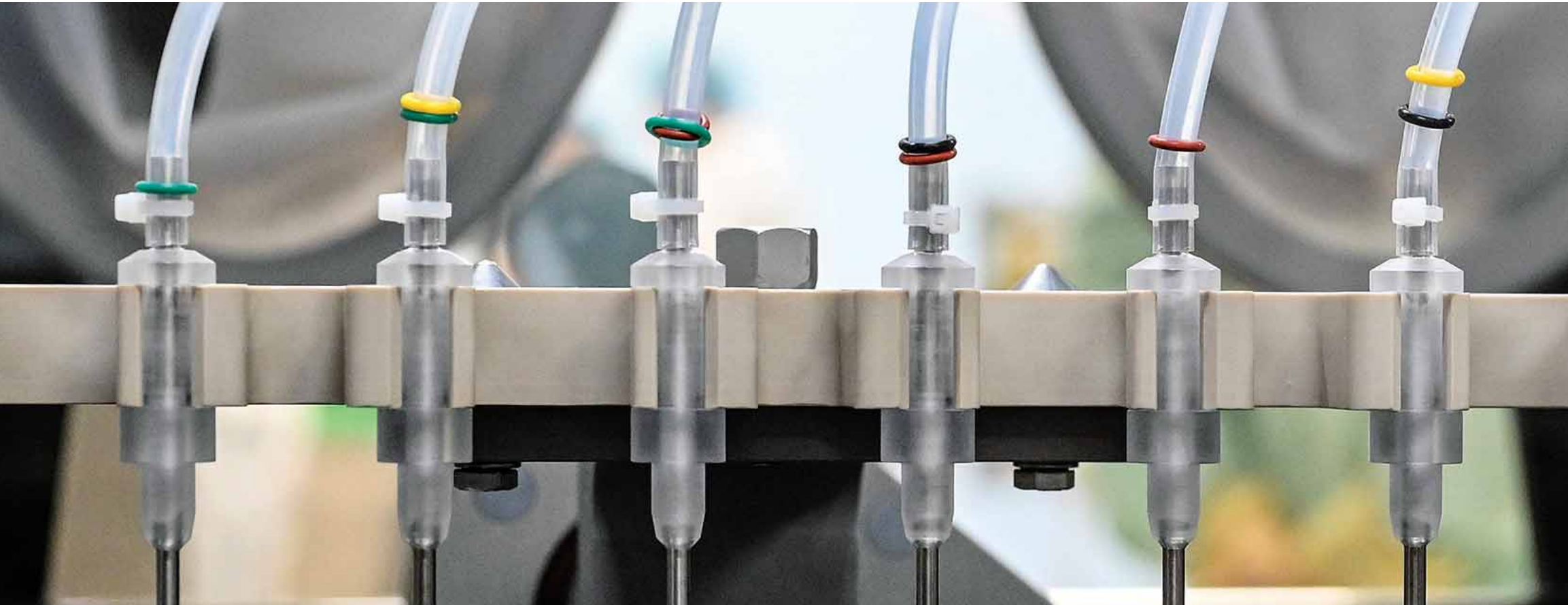
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Iraqis dig up COVID dead to rebury in family graves

Bahrain’s deal spotlights Saudi’s stealth normalization with Israel



ANAGNI, Italy: Filling and packaging tests for the large-scale production and supply of the University of Oxford's COVID-19 vaccine candidate, AZD1222, are being conducted on a high-performance aseptic vial filling line at the Italian biologics' manufacturing facility in Anagni, southeast of Rome. — AFP

Vaccine clinical trial resumes

COVID infection numbers continues grim march upward

PARIS: Clinical trials of one of the most advanced experimental Covid-19 vaccines resumed yesterday after a brief safety pause, as infection numbers continued to march upward in countries across the globe. The world’s hopes for a reprieve from the pandemic were dealt a blow earlier in the week when pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca and Oxford University announced they had “voluntarily paused” their vaccine trial after a UK volunteer developed an unexplained illness.

Backlash

That public trust will be crucial to convincing a public that is impatient for a vaccine - and in some corners sceptical. Among the impatient is US President Donald Trump, who has been accused by rival Joe Biden of “undermining public confidence” by regularly raising the possibility that a vaccine will be ready before November’s election. The Republican president is under pressure as the US toll continues to rise, nearing 6.5 million cases on Saturday with more than 193,000 deaths - by far the most in either measure in the world. Biden also called Trump “reckless” for holding a rally in the Nevada city of Reno even after the venue had to be changed because the event breached local Covid-19 restrictions.

Television images of the rally Saturday showed a packed outdoors crowd, with few wearing face masks. Some of those potentially sceptical about a vaccine meanwhile turned out in numerous German cities and Poland’s capital Warsaw on Saturday, protesting against anti-coronavirus measures and often defying mask-wearing rules. The movement is made up of a number of different groups, from self-declared “free thinkers” to anti-vaccine campaigners, conspiracy theorists and far-right activists.

France, UAE milestones

There are signs of a resurgence of the virus in numerous countries that lifted many coronavirus

measures after beating back the first wave of infections months ago. France reported 10,000 new infections on Saturday, the country’s highest daily number since launching wide-scale testing. The milestone came a day after Prime Minister Jean Castex declined to announce any new major restrictions despite a “clear worsening” in the country’s outbreak.

“We have to succeed in living with this virus, without returning to the idea of a generalized lockdown,” Castex said. Another country to hit a daily milestone on Saturday was the United Arab Emirates, which recorded more than 1,000 new coronavirus cases for the first time. In Spain, which this week became the first EU country to pass half a million infections, a case was detected among Princess Leonor’s classmates.

The 14-year-old heiress to the Spanish throne - who only returned to school in Madrid on Wednesday - will now have to observe a two-week quarantine. The uncle of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, businessman Mohamad Makhoul, died from Covid-19 on Saturday, two close sources told AFP. And in Latin America, which this week passed the milestone of eight million virus cases, worst-hit Brazil charted more than 131,000 deaths from Covid-19 as of Saturday, the second-highest in the world behind the US. Latvia meanwhile reinstated a compulsory 14-day quarantine for arrivals from neighboring Estonia due to an upsurge in cases there. — AFP



Virus global death toll hits 916,000

But on Saturday the trial was given the all clear by British regulators to resume following a safety review. The company also announced it was resuming clinical trials in Brazil next Monday after being given the green light there as well. The global death toll from the coronavirus has risen to 916,000 with 28.5 million infections, while France and the United Arab Emirates posted grim new milestones for daily infections on Saturday.

And with billions still suffering from the fallout of the pandemic, a worldwide race for a vaccine is underway, with nine companies already in late-stage Phase 3 trials. Even during the pause, AstraZeneca said it remained hopeful that the vaccine could still be available “by the end of this year, early next year”. Oxford University said that “in large trials such as this, it is expected that some participants will become unwell and every case must be carefully evaluated”.

Charlotte Summers, lecturer in intensive care medicine at Cambridge University, said the pause showed the researchers’ commitment “to putting safety at the heart of their development program.” “To tackle the global Covid-19 pandemic, we need to develop vaccines and therapies that people feel comfortable using, therefore it is vital to maintaining public trust that we stick to the evidence and do not draw conclusions before information is available,” she said.

Iran executes wrestler, evoking shock and condemnation

TEHRAN: Iran said it executed a wrestler Saturday for murdering a man during a wave of anti-government protests in 2018, drawing widespread condemnation and eliciting shock from the International Olympic Committee. Navid Afkari, 27, was executed at a prison in the southern city of Shiraz, provincial prosecutor general Kazem Mousavi was quoted as saying on state television’s website. Afkari had been found guilty of “voluntary homicide” for stabbing to death Hossein Torkman, a water department employee, on August 2, 2018, the judiciary said.

Shiraz and several other urban centres across Iran had been the scene that day of anti-government protests and demonstrations over economic and social hardship. The International Olympic Committee said it was “shocked” by the execution and that it was “deeply upsetting” that pleas by athletes around the world and international bodies had failed to halt it. “Our thoughts are with the family and friends of Navid Afkari,” the IOC said in a statement.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denounced a “vicious” execution. “We condemn it in the strongest terms. It is an outrageous assault on human dignity,

even by the despicable standards of this regime. The voices of the Iranian people will not be silenced,” Pompeo tweeted. London-based rights group Amnesty International said the “secret execution” was a “horrifically travesty of justice that needs immediate international action”.

Reports published abroad say Afkari was convicted on the basis of confessions aired on television after being extracted under torture, prompting online campaigns for his release. Amnesty has repeatedly called on Iran to stop broadcasted videos of “confessions” by suspects, saying they “violate the defendants’ rights”. The judiciary’s Mizan Online news agency denied the accusations. According to Amnesty, Afkari’s two brothers Vahid and Habib are still in the same prison where he had been detained.

The death sentence had been carried out at “the insistence of the victim’s family”, said Mousavi, the prosecutor general for Fars province. Afkari’s lawyer, Hassan Younessi, tweeted that a number of people in Shiraz were to meet on Sunday with the slain worker’s family to ask for their forgiveness. He also said that based on criminal law in Iran “the convict has a right to meet his family before the execution.” “Were you in such a hurry to carry out the sentence that you deprived Navid of his last visit?”

Wrestling superpower

US President Donald Trump had pleaded for Afkari’s life earlier this month, saying his “sole act was an anti-government demonstration on the streets”.



JAKARTA: Workers wearing protective suits bury a coffin at a burial site for victims of the COVID-19 coronavirus in Jakarta. — AFP

Fires, fear, guns on America’s wild West Coast

ESTACADA: “This is just stuff. We’re gonna move on from it,” says Margi Wyatt, holding back tears as she stares at her burned-out mobile home destroyed by one of the fires raging through the US state of Oregon. The 70-year-old fled 30 miles from her home to Estacada in Portland’s south-east as the huge and still-uncontained Riverside Fire raced through.

The blaze devastated the mobile home site, located on a wooded hill next to a road. All the properties in Wyatt’s row were destroyed - but homes just ten yards away were left unscathed. It is one of scores of infernos ravaging that have burnt through a record 5 million acres and left at least 27 people dead. With smoke still rising from the hill, she and her husband Marcelino Maceda have come back to sift through the remains and pick up anything that may have escaped the flames.

But there’s little left in the ashes. Among the belongings they find is a partially melted watch, a blackened bracelet and a ring. “The police just told us to grab our things and go,” Wyatt said as the flames neared. “I gathered what I could in 20 minutes - cash, important papers, jewelry.” Everything else, she says, is in the blackened remains of her home, which they moved into just two years ago. But Wyatt - a retired caregiver - said she was glad that at least no-one was hurt, but adds: “I don’t want to come back. These are plastic houses. Our next move is a stick house.”

Guns and robberies

Luckier residents moved back in as soon as the evacuation order was lifted, and much of the site was occupied again on Saturday. Six miles to the north, a dense pall of smoke smothered the centre of Estacada. Some of the city’s 3,500 inhabitants have returned despite the acrid air and are patrolling in cars to prevent robberies.

Matt Watts, semi-automatic rifle in hand and pistol in his belt, is standing watch at his property to keep potential pillagers at bay. “I hear nothing but looters and arsons on the radio (scanner), I did not feel in fear of my house catching fire so I decided to hang around and protect it,” Watts says. “I hope to be a deterrent for somebody that means harm.” He says he has heard shots at night and seen cars with licence plates from other states, which make him suspicious. For days rumors have spread that radical leftists have been lighting fires in Oregon - false information that was debunked by the local branch of the FBI.

But James, 29, says the robberies are a reality - and that he has lost about \$15,000 worth of property, stolen from his workshop between Tuesday and Saturday. “We had our Dune racer stolen. I’ve had a whole bunch of construction tools stolen. My motorcycle, the most recent thing we found out today, my motorcycle’s gone out of the shop. Yeah, just a lot of different tools really.” He co-ordinates with his neighbors and they “come out at different times just to keep a watch on each other’s houses but outside of that we just had to monitor our cameras,” James says, pointing to images of the robbers. — AFP

International

Iraqis dig up COVID-19 dead to rebury in family graves

Authorities established a 'coronavirus cemetery'

NAJAF: Mohammad Al-Bahadli dug into Iraq's hot desert sand with bare hands to reach his father's corpse. "Now he can finally be with our people, our family, in the old cemetery," 49-year-old Bahadli said, as relatives sobbed over the body, wrapped in a shroud. After restrictions were eased for the burying of those who died of the novel coronavirus, Iraqis are exhuming the victims to rebury them in their rightful place in family cemeteries.

For months, families of those who died after contracting COVID-19 were barred from taking the body back to bury in family tombs, for fear the corpses could still spread the virus. Instead, the authorities established a "coronavirus cemetery" in a plot of desert outside the shrine city of Najaf, where volunteers in protective gear carefully buried victims spaced five meters apart. Only one relative was permitted to attend the speedy burials, which often happened in the middle of the night.

Victims from all religious sects - both Shiite and Sunni Muslims, as well as Christians - were buried there. But on September 7, Iraqi authorities announced they would permit those who died after contracting Covid-19 to be relocated to the cemetery of their family's choice. Many of those buried under the emergency rules came from other parts of the country. "The first time, he was buried so far away," Bahadli said of his 80-year-old father's funeral rites. "I'm not sure it was done in the proper religious way."

Grave mix-up

Iraq has been one of the hardest-hit countries in the Middle East by Covid-19, with more than 280,000 infections and nearly 8,000 deaths. On September 4, the World Health Organization (WHO) said "the likeli-

hood of transmission when handling human remains is low." Days later, after pressure from families, Iraqi authorities announced they would permit bodies to be transferred only by "specialized health teams."

But the first re-burials proved chaotic. At the "coronavirus cemetery" in the desert outside Najaf, hundreds of families began arriving late Thursday to dig up their family member and carry the body home. They brought their own shovels, baskets to scoop away the sand, and new wooden coffins to carry the dead. The sounds of fierce sobbing and mourning prayers mixed with the clinks of pickaxes echoed across the sand. There were no medical professionals or cemetery guides on site to help families locate or properly excavate the bodies, an AFP correspondent said.

In some cases, families dug into a grave site marked with a relative's name, only to find an empty coffin, or to uncover the body of a young man when they were expecting to find the corpse of their elderly mother. Other bodies were not wrapped in burial shrouds, required by Islam as a sign of respect. The findings sparked outraged criticism of the state-sponsored armed group that had taken charge of the burials in recent months, with some angry relatives setting fire to the faction's base nearby.

'Haunting'

"The grave-diggers don't have expertise or the right materials," said Abdallah Kareem, whose brother Ahmed died of complications from Covid-19. "They don't even know how to locate the graves," he told AFP while tending to the grave. Kareem, who comes from some 230 kilometers to the south in Iraq's Muthanna province, opted not to rebury his brother in case it violated religious edicts. In Islam, the deceased



NAJAF: An Iraqi family mourns around the coffin of a relative, who died of the novel coronavirus, during a reburial ceremony at the vast Wadi Al-Salam cemetery in the Shiite holy city of Najaf. — AFP

must be buried as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours. Cremation is strictly prohibited and reburials are virtually unheard of - although not necessarily outlawed if the body is kept intact, a Najaf cleric told AFP.

Despite the complications, families were nevertheless relieved to have the closure that a traditional burial brought. "Since my father was buried here, I keep replaying his words in my head before he died: 'My

son, try to bury me in the family cemetery, don't let me be too far from my relatives,'" Hussein, another mourner who gave only his first name, told AFP. The 53-year old dug up his father's body by hand to transfer him to the vast Wadi al-Salam cemetery, where millions of Shiite Muslims are buried. "The dream that had been haunting me for these last few months has been realized," Hussein said.—AFP

Johnson accuses EU of plotting food 'blockade' on UK

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson has accused the European Union of threatening to tear the UK apart by imposing a food "blockade" between Britain and Northern Ireland, throwing new fuel on the fire of simmering Brexit talks. Writing in Saturday's Daily Telegraph newspaper, Johnson said the EU's stance justified his government's introduction of new legislation to rewrite its Brexit withdrawal treaty - a bill that is causing deep alarm among former prime ministers and his own MPs. Talks between London and Brussels on a future trading relationship are deadlocked as both sides struggle to prise apart nearly 50 years of economic integration, after British voters opted for a divorce.

"My assessment is that an unregulated situation (no deal) would have very significant consequences for the British economy," German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz warned after an EU meeting in Berlin. "Europe would be able to deal with it and these would not be particularly difficult consequences after the preparations we have already made," he added. But absent a deal by the end of this year, when the full force of Brexit kicks in, Johnson said the EU was bent on an "extreme interpretation" of rules for Northern Ireland under the divorce treaty both sides signed in January.

"We are being told that the EU will not only impose tariffs on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, but that they might actually stop the transport of food products from GB to NI," he wrote. "I have to say that we never seriously believed that the EU would be willing to use a treaty, negotiated in good faith, to blockade one part of the UK, to cut it off, or that they would actually threaten to destroy the economic and territorial integrity of the UK." Johnson said the EU's stance would "seriously endanger peace and stability in Northern Ireland".

'Nonsense'

"We disagree," former prime ministers Tony Blair and John Major, who led Britain through historic peace talks in the 1990s, retorted in the Sunday Times. "The government's action does not protect the (1998) Good Friday Agreement - it imperils it," they wrote in a joint opinion piece, calling Johnson's claims to have only belatedly unearthed problems in the EU treaty "nonsense". "As the world looks on aghast at the UK - the word of which was once accepted as inviolable - this government's action is shaming itself and embarrassing our nation." The EU has threatened Britain with legal action unless it withdraws its unilateral changes by the end of September, and leaders in the European Parliament on Friday threatened to veto any trade pact if London violated its promises. Paolo Gentiloni, the EU's economics affairs commissioner, said it was up to Britain to "re-establish trust" with the bloc. "And in any case... we are prepared to deal with extraordinary negative outcome of this discussion," the former Italian prime minister added in Berlin.—AFP



HONG KONG: A security guard stands outside the US consulate general building in Hong Kong. — AFP

US brands Chinese curbs on American diplomats 'escalation'

WASHINGTON: The US on Saturday called a decision by Beijing to impose restrictions on all American diplomats on Chinese soil an "escalation," the latest rebuke in an ongoing tit-for-tat dispute over foreign missions. Relations between the world's top two economies have deteriorated in recent months, with both sides locked in fierce recriminations over trade disputes, human rights and the origins of the coronavirus pandemic. On Friday China announced "reciprocal restrictions" against US diplomats, days after Washington announced new restrictions on staff working for Beijing's foreign missions.

Beijing said that the unspecified countermeasures will apply to all US embassy and consulate staff, including the consulate-general in Hong Kong and its personnel, and called the move a "legitimate and necessary response." But the US said Saturday that the Chinese measures went further than anything it had done. A State Department spokesperson who spoke on condition of anonymity said Beijing's move was an "escalation," citing the targeting of its representative in Hong Kong and restrictions on Chinese citizens meeting with Americans in the form of a "new meeting pre-notification requirement."

"These notification requirements now include American citizens with no affiliation to the US government. We have no such requirement for PRC citizens," the spokesperson said, using the acronym

for the People's Republic of China. The dispute over foreign missions flared up in July when Washington ordered the closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston, prompting Beijing to shutter the American presence in Chengdu.

The battle over diplomatic outposts is only one front in an escalating confrontation between the US and China. Washington has imposed sanctions on officials accused of helping orchestrate China's mass internment of Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in the country's Xinjiang region, a program that has prompted a global human rights outcry. Last month it blacklisted officials it accused of suppressing "freedom and democratic processes" in Hong Kong, after the imposition of a national security law aimed at quelling civil unrest in the financial hub.

The move prompted China to issue its own sanctions against several prominent Americans. President Donald Trump has also provoked a furious reaction from Chinese officials by blaming Beijing for the global spread of the coronavirus. And Washington has additionally accused Chinese tech firms and platforms - from Huawei to TikTok - of working in the interests of the Chinese Communist Party. Beijing denied on Friday it was attempting to meddle in the upcoming US presidential election after tech giant Microsoft said it thwarted cyberattacks from overseas groups - including from China. — AFP

Russia holds regional polls in the shadow of Navalny's poisoning

NOVOSIBIRSK: Russians yesterday voted in regional polls overshadowed by the poisoning of main opposition leader Alexei Navalny, an economic crisis exacerbated by the coronavirus and major protests in some regions. In 41 of the country's regions, Russians are voting for regional governors and assemblies as well as in four by-elections for national MPs and other polls.

Coming a year ahead of parliamentary elections, the vote will be seen as a key test of the Kremlin's electoral machine amid simmering public anger over falling incomes and economic trouble. Tatyana Stanovaya, head of the R.Politik analysis firm, said the

results of the polls will help the Kremlin determine whether the unpopular ruling party United Russia needs to be reformed and if parliamentary elections should be pushed forward.

Navalny's poisoning could also influence voters and bring about "contradictory effects," Stanovaya told AFP. After he was evacuated from Siberia to Berlin, German doctors said Navalny had been poisoned with a Novichok nerve agent. His associates believe the use of the banned chemical weapon shows only the Russian state could be responsible. With Navalny in a German hospital and absent from Russia's political scene, the "smart voting" campaign he had launched may be undermined, Stanovaya said.

Led by Navalny, the opposition hopes to challenge Kremlin domination over Russia's political life by promoting tactical voting, urging Russians to back the strongest candidate on the ballot to defeat the ruling party. "On the other hand, what happened to Navalny caused a shock," Stanovaya added, noting that some of

those who did not support him in the past may now change their minds. President Vladimir Putin's top foe had been in Siberia to promote "smart voting" when he fell ill.

With United Russia facing a deep popularity crisis, elections in the country are for the first time being held over three days and some polling stations will be open-air. Early voting began on Friday and the main polling day was yesterday. The controversial three-day voting scheme was first tested this summer, when a national vote on constitutional amendments that made it possible for Putin to stay in power until 2036 was also held over multiple days.

At the time the Kremlin pulled out all the stops to bolster the turnout and makeshift polling stations - often ridiculed on social media - cropped up across the country, including in buses, tents and on street benches. The measures were officially introduced to guard against coronavirus, but the opposition accused the vote organizers of mass vote-rigging. —AFP



NOVOSIBIRSK: Sergei Boiko, the head of Alexei Navalny's Novosibirsk headquarters and the City Council candidate casts his ballot at a polling station in Novosibirsk yesterday. — AFP

International

Families fear for 'speedboat fugitives' in China custody

Chinese authorities intercept 12 Hong Kongers

HONG KONG: Relatives of Hong Kongers captured by China's coastguard as they tried to flee the city by speedboat said they feared their loved ones had disappeared into the authoritarian mainland's Communist-controlled judicial system. Chinese authorities said they intercepted 12 Hong Kongers some 70 kilometers southeast of the city last month, with the group handed over to police in neighboring Shenzhen on the Chinese mainland.

Local media said the group was en route to Taiwan, a self-ruled island that regularly offers sanctuary to people escaping the authoritarian mainland. Some of those on board were facing prosecution in Hong Kong for activities linked to last year's huge and often violent pro-democracy protests. Relatives of six of those detained held an emotional press conference on Saturday describing how family appointed lawyers had been repeatedly denied access in recent days, as they called on on Hong Kong's government to come to their aid.

"I'm very worried. I don't know if he's safe and sound, if he's still alive," the mother of detainee Li Tsz-yin, who did not give her name, told the media. The mother of another detainee, Tang Kai-yin, sobbed as she spoke. "I hope Hong Kong (government) can bring them back. Then we wouldn't need to be on tenterhooks, we could see him. But right now, we don't even know whether he is dead or alive," she said.

One country, two judicial systems

The incident is the latest to compound fears among many Hong Kongers of authoritarian China's growing reach into their lives. Semi-autonomous Hong Kong has its own internationally respected common law legal system where arrestees are promptly produced after their arrest and tried in

open court. On the mainland, the judicial system is a notoriously opaque entity controlled by the Communist Party and where conviction is all but guaranteed. In June Beijing imposed a new security law on Hong Kong, announcing it would have jurisdiction for some crimes and that mainland security agents could now openly operate in the city.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Friday he was "deeply concerned" by the treatment of the 12 Hong Kongers since their arrest. In recent days lawyers appointed by the families of those



'I'm very worried. I don't know if he's still alive'

detained have detailed how they were prevented from accessing their clients. They said authorities told them the group already have "government appointed lawyers". Rights groups and legal analysts have previously documented how Chinese authorities use "government appointed lawyers" to stop families hiring their own legal representatives in high profile cases.

"If we have a lawyer, why would we use a government-appointed lawyer," Li's mother said. "I have no trust in government-appointed lawyer." Among those arrested are a 16-year-old minor and Andy Li, a Hong Konger who was recently arrested



HONG KONG: Relatives of 12 Hong Kong people currently detained in Guangdong province after being arrested by mainland China's coastguards for reportedly trying to flee to Taiwan, attend a press conference in Hong Kong. — AFP

under the new security law. Two of those detained have British National Overseas passports. Another is a dual national with Hong Kong and Portuguese citizenship. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam has said the 12 "should be dealt with according to the mainland laws".

Her government on Saturday said its trade office across the border was keeping in touch with mainland authorities and the families of those arrested.

Those arrested were "in good health and they have hired mainland Chinese lawyers as their representatives", the statement said. The prospect of Hong Kongers getting entangled in China's judicial system was the spark that lit the seven months of protests last year. The movement began in response to a plan to allow extraditions to the mainland and soon morphed into wider calls for democracy and greater police accountability. — AFP

Women negotiators face hardline Taliban in peace talks

KABUL: Four Afghan women who endured the Taliban's oppressive rule and have fought for fragile gains since the militants were ousted are facing the hardline group in peace talks. Their presence at the negotiating table is significant in patriarchal Afghanistan, though they are outnumbered by the rest of the Afghan government's team of 17 men and the Taliban's male-only side. "The Taliban have to understand that they are facing a new Afghanistan with which they have to learn to live," negotiator Fawzia Koofi told AFP ahead of the talks, which got underway on Saturday.

The politician and high-profile women's rights campaigner has survived two assassination attempts during her career—the latest just last month in Kabul. "Being in such an important role is not something which is very common in Afghanistan, so you really have to find your way among those people who do not believe in a woman's presence," Koofi said before the shooting. When the Taliban ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, her husband was jailed and she was threatened with stoning for wearing nail polish, she said.

Religious police whipped women in

the street if they wore anything other than an all-concealing burqa, and those accused of adultery were sometimes executed at sports stadiums after Friday prayers. Today, the traditional patriarchal system remains the norm and life for most women in rural areas has improved little since the 2001 US-led invasion toppled the Taliban, who banned girls from going to school and women from working.

However, in Kabul and other Afghan cities, progress has been made. Some women study at secondary and tertiary level and hold elected positions or run businesses, albeit in disproportionately low numbers. Koofi is one of a few women who held unofficial talks with the Taliban in 2019 and knows the battle female negotiators are facing. "It's not just about what you are talking," she said. "People look at what you wear, whether your scarf is of the right size or not."

'We always have fear'

Washington signed a deal with the Taliban in February committing to withdraw foreign forces in return for a pledge from the insurgents to hold talks with the Afghan government, aimed at ending the war. After long delays over a



DOHA: Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar (right, bottom) speaks during the opening session of the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in the Qatari capital Doha. — AFP

controversial prisoner swap, direct talks finally opened in the Qatari capital Doha on Saturday. Islamic law expert and negotiator Fatima Gailani, 66, told AFP that women were apprehensive about negotiations with the Taliban. "Every woman in Afghanistan has a fear... we always have a fear that whenever there are changes in Afghanistan and whenever there is a political change, always women are hurt," said Gailani, a spokeswoman for the mujahideen against the Soviets in the 1980s and former president of the Afghan Red Cross.

But she said she has the support of

the men on her team, who "believe in exactly what I believe in". First, though, the talks should focus on "common values", such as Islam, and on achieving a ceasefire in Afghanistan's conflict, which has killed tens of thousands and left millions displaced since 2001. "I'd like very much to see an Afghanistan where you don't see yourself in danger... If we don't achieve it now it will never happen," Gailani said. The Taliban have made only vague comments about women's rights, saying these will be protected through Islamic values. — AFP

Dozens arrested at anti-lockdown protest in Melbourne

MELBOURNE: Authorities in Melbourne arrested more than 70 people for flouting stay-at-home orders to protest against lockdown restrictions yesterday, with some demonstrators clashing with riot police at a market in the city. About 250 people attended the illegal protest—the second in as many days in the city-promoted by coronavirus conspiracy groups on social media. The demonstrators ignored official warnings and public health orders to gather at the central Queen Victoria market, calling for an end to a weeks-long lockdown of Australia's second-biggest city. They were met by a heavy police presence, with scuffles breaking out as the

riot squad swept through market's fruit and vegetable aisles.

Police arrested 74 people and fined 176, saying in a statement that "many protesters were aggressive and threatened violence towards officers". One man believed to be a "primary agitator" is facing charges of incitement while another was charged with assaulting police, according to the statement. Last weekend, "Freedom Day" events were held across Australia to protest what some labeled the government's "overblown" response to the pandemic, which has killed more than 900,000 people worldwide.

The latest rallies come ahead of the gradual easing of virus restrictions in Melbourne, with daily outdoor exercise increased to two hours and small "social bubbles" allowed for people living alone from today. Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews, who has previously branded the protestors "selfish", said yesterday the state could not afford to reopen too quickly. "No-one is enjoying the reality we face, but none of us have the option of ignoring the reality that we face," he said. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Anti-lockdown protesters chant slogans at Melbourne's Queen Victoria Market during a rally yesterday, amid the ongoing COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

Bahrain-Israel deal spotlights Saudi's stealth normalization

RIYADH: Bahrain's move to formally establish relations with Israel could not have happened without Saudi Arabia's green light, another step in what observers call Riyadh's "alternative normalization" of ties with the Jewish state. Bahrain on Friday became Saudi Arabia's second Gulf ally to announce plans to formalize relations with Israel over the past month, after the United Arab Emirates' landmark agreement.

The move put a spotlight on the potential role of Riyadh, which has so far fended off pressure from US President Donald Trump to follow suit. The development, billed by Trump as "truly historic", was unlikely to have happened without the silent endorsement of Riyadh, which holds enormous leverage over Bahrain.

Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's biggest economy, was among the Gulf powers that pledged \$10 billion in financial aid in 2018 to cash-strapped Bahrain, and it sent troops in 2011 to shore up the ruling family following an Arab Spring uprising. "I trust that the kingdom of Bahrain consulted with the Saudis on this decision out of respect for them," Marc Schneier, an American rabbi who is an advisor to Bahrain's king, told AFP. "The Bahrain government has been very respectful of the Saudi position throughout this process."

Saudi officials have publicly remained tight-lipped over the development, but a source close to the establishment hinted it was a concession to Trump after he exerted enormous pressure on Riyadh to form diplomatic ties with Israel. "You're going to have quite a few countries come in, the big ones are going to be coming in. — AFP

Weary migrants wary of new migrant camp in Greece's Lesbos

LESBOS: Aided by a Farsi-speaking translator, Greek asylum staffer Michalis patiently explained to a group of Afghans that a new tent camp awaits them on the island of Lesbos. Over 11,000 people - including some 4,000 children - have been sleeping rough since the notoriously overcrowded and unsanitary camp of Moria burned down this week. "You cannot stay on the street. It's dangerous, and I remind you that coronavirus is everywhere," said Michalis, who declined to give his last name.

On Saturday afternoon, hesitant queues formed at the main entrance of the new camp of Kara Tepe, with some migrants agreeing to enter to secure shelter and food. "We are four days on the road, without food and water. Since we are in Greece, we must obey the local authorities. We feel more safe in an organized place", Jacob Yong Deng, a 25-year-old from Northern Sudan said. Police said around 200 migrants had checked in while dozens, mostly families, were waiting outside for hygiene and safety checks. Some Afghans were trying to dissuade them. Anybody entering is also frisked for flammable materials and cooking gas canisters, the police said.

Migrants blamed for fires

Officials have blamed migrants for the fires that gutted Moria, the first blaze breaking out shortly after 35 people faced isolation measures after testing positive for coronavirus. Only eight of the 35 positive cases have been located. On Saturday, a 20-day-old Afghan baby was found positive for coronavirus, state agency ANA said. The baby and its mother, who also tested positive, were expected to be transported in Athens. Most of the homeless are from Afghanistan, with smaller populations from Syria, DR Congo and Iran.

Lacking tents and even basic bedding, they have sought shelter wherever there is room — on the side of the road, in parking lots and even in a cemetery. "This camp will be different than Moria. We promise you the asylum procedure will be faster. You will be able to leave the island quickly," Michalis said. "A temporary accommodation area with tents, running water, and supplies has been created for you and your children at the Kara Tepe area", the Greek Asylum Service tweeted on Saturday.

Aided by army bulldozers, work crews have worked round-the-clock to erect a makeshift camp for 3,000 people a few kilometers from the ruins of Moria. Alexandros Ragavas, a spokesman for the migration ministry, said vulnerable asylum seekers will be the first to be housed. "We will give priority to families. It will be tents of six and the camp will be separated by ethnicities. The process of moving people will start today," he told AFP. Migration Minister Notis Mitarachi said the asylum seekers would be tested on entry, adding that a "special quarantine" area had been created near the camp.

Many of the asylum-seekers are wary of being confined after months of coronavirus lockdown and fear a repeat of the ethnic gang crime and dismal sanitation that plagued Moria. "In Moria we could come and go but here, (the camp) will be like a prison", Zola, a Congolese mother of a five-month-old told AFP. Others said the location of the new camp on a hilltop overlooking the sea bodes ill for winter. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

Boursa Kuwait makes historic move with Premier Market listing

Leading the region in innovative investing

KUWAIT: Underscoring its pivotal role in the growth and development of Kuwait's capital markets, Boursa Kuwait announced that it will list its shares on the "Premier Market" following the Capital Markets' Authority's approval on Wednesday, September 2, 2020. Trading of the company's shares will commence during the opening trading session today (14 September 2020) under the ticker symbol "BOURSA". The company will be classified under the "Financial Services" sector, bringing the total number of companies on the exchange to 174, while the number of listed companies in the "Premier" Market rises to 20 companies.

Boursa Kuwait's position as a regional leader among stock exchanges continues to be reinforced with the listing of the bourse on the local stock exchange, continuing a series of firsts for the company. It is the first stock exchange to be at least 90 percent owned by the private sector in the Middle East and the first government entity in Kuwait to successfully undergo privatization. The listing is considered the fruit of the company's labors and continuous efforts to institute long-term reforms on both the company level and in the Kuwaiti capital market since its establishment, as well as introducing products and services compatible with the best-in-class international standards, all in line with the company's vision to develop a liquid and transparent financial market, which allows issuers effective access to capital and provides investors with diversified revenue opportunities.

The company's paid-up capital amounts to approximately KD 20.1 million, which are divided into approximately 201 million shares. Furthermore, around 50 percent of the company's shares, or what amounts to around 100 million shares, were offered to Kuwaiti citizens in an initial public offering process that concluded in December 2019, seeing an oversubscription rate of 850 percent.

Solid strategy

Boursa Kuwait saw a net profit of KD 5.63 million for first half of 2020 while the company's total assets came in at approximately KD 41.7 million. Total



Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi



Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi



Mohammed Saud Al-Osaimi



Hamad Al-Ameeri

• **Al-Humaidhi:** The listing will pave the way for increased participation in the Kuwaiti capital market and drive more capital inflows to the country.

• **Al-Kharafi:** Boursa Kuwait is a role model for companies that want to undergo privatization and list on the exchange

• **Al-Osaimi:** Boursa Kuwait leads a progressive operation thanks to a strategy in line with world-class standards and best practices

operating expenses were KD 3.12 million while total operating revenue came in at KD 6.77 million.

The results no doubt reflect the strength of the operational model and the solid strategy in place as well as the company's financial solvency, which have allowed it to overcome the various challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and deliver an exceptional performance. These key components are effective catalysts of stability and growth, allowing the company to drive the successful journey of transformation further and take the exchange to new heights.

Commenting on the listing, Boursa Kuwait Chairman Hamad Mishari Al-Humaidhi said, "Boursa Kuwait's listing today marks a historic milestone for the company as it enters the next phase in its growth and development. We are proud of our journey, which has cemented us as the crown jewel of the Kuwaiti capital market and is indeed the model of a Kuwaiti success story, which in turn will contribute to the elevation of the country regionally and internationally. I would like to take this opportunity to commend

Boursa Kuwait's Board of Directors and Executive Management, with their solid structure consistent with the nature and activities of the company, and their efforts to develop a liquid, reliable and sound capital market that services all relevant asset classes, focusing on the interests of both issuers and investors through excellence in everything it does."

Achievements

Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, in his capacity as both a representative of the consortium awarded the 44 percent stake in the company and as Chairman of the Executive Committee at Boursa Kuwait, also commented, stating "We are proud of the consecutive string of achievements for Boursa Kuwait, which is undoubtedly a role model for companies that want to undergo privatization and list on the exchange. The listing of Boursa Kuwait represents a breakthrough in the transformation of the Kuwaiti capital market into a dynamic and diversified investment ecosystem

that thrives on international best practices and looks to increase the contribution of the private sector towards the growth and development of the national economy."

"We were guided by our belief in the private sector and its ability to develop a reliable and sound capital market with ever increasing liquidity levels, which constituted an incentive to develop Boursa Kuwait into a pioneering regional company that adheres to the best-in-class international standards and practices. Today we celebrate the success of the company and its leading role in the Kuwaiti financial scene over the past few years, moving forward to introduce innovative products and services aimed at encouraging even more companies - specifically substantial ones like family companies, companies in the oil sector as well as foreign companies - to list on the exchange," Al-Kharafi added.

The listing was also hailed by Boursa Kuwait CEO Mohammed Saud Al-Osaimi, who highlighted the company's operational excellence. "The listing of

Boursa Kuwait on the "Premier Market" marks another milestone in the company's journey of excellence. Apart from the major enhancements that the company drove as the engine of growth and development, the company also witnessed substantial growth in its own operations and continues to work towards strengthening the infrastructure and operational model. Boursa Kuwait has cemented its position as a leading stock exchange that pioneers innovative approaches to market development."

He added, "We remain committed towards strengthening our infrastructure and operational model to withstand any challenges that come our way as well as implementing new initiatives to further improve the efficiency, appeal and performance of the market to attract investments from local and international investors."

Boursa Kuwait previously appointed the National Investments Company as its listing consultant. Chairman Hamad Ahmad Al-Ameeri commented on the listing, saying: "We regard the listing of Boursa Kuwait as a momentous accomplishment that will lead to the prosperity of the Kuwaiti economy. We are excited by the investment opportunities that this promises to bring about for individual and institutional investors in the country. The National Investments Company is proud of the effective role it played as the listing consultant for this one of a kind listing, and the company is constantly striving to prioritize its investors' interests in all its endeavors. Lastly, NIC would like to congratulate Boursa Kuwait and all its stakeholders and partners on this success."

Since its inception, Boursa Kuwait has worked effortlessly to create a credible exchange built on efficiency and transparency, creating a liquid capital market, a progressive exchange platform and developing a comprehensive set of reforms and enhancements that has allowed it to compete on an international level.

Apple strives to reignite growth with line updates

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple is expected to spotlight its smartwatch, iPad, and subscription services tomorrow as it strives to reignite growth with a must-have holiday line-up.

A keenly anticipated iPhone 5G considered vital to the company's fortunes will likely star in a separate event later in the year due to disruption in production caused by the pandemic, according to analysts interviewed by AFP. Apple shares that had been soaring have slipped by more than seven percent this week.

The Silicon Valley-based iPhone maker on Friday had a market value of \$1.92 trillion based on share price, down from a record high of \$2.3 trillion at the start of this month. But Apple remains the most expensive company on Wall Street. Amazon comes in second with a market value of \$1.56 trillion and Microsoft is third with a value of \$1.54 trillion.

The Apple event was teased with a cryptic invitation reading "Time Flies." The company has remained mum about what it has in store. It is expected to showcase products or services other than iPhones being launched for the year-end shopping season.

That opens the potential for updates of Apple Watch, iPad, MacBook computers, services, and even Apple TV set-top boxes, according to analysts.

A new iPad model could include enhanced augmented reality capabilities, and Apple services such as music, news, and television might be offered in an attractively priced subscription bundle, analysts said. The latest software powering Apple Watch already indicates sleep tracking is coming, and the company may enhance features for fitness or health uses.

"There is competition in the smartwatch space, but Apple is the sales leader by a large margin and there is room for Apple to build on its lead," said Techspontential lead analyst Avi Greengart.



SINGAPORE: People queue to enter Apple's third retail store during its opening at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore. — AFP

"Apple has admitted they are at least working on monitoring blood sugar with the watch; it would be enormous if they could pull that off." Apple Watch also serves as an anchor to the tech giant's mobile software, since it syncs with the iPhone.

"The key part for Apple is to keep the base of iPhone users and sell them a ton of accessories like AirPods and get services," said analyst Patrick Moorhead of Moor Insights and Strategy.

Cherished China market

The time is ripe for Apple to hit the market with an iPhone tailored for super-fast 5G telecom networks taking root around the world. Greengart is among those expecting Apple to host a separate event, perhaps in October, for new iPhone models

including one for 5G telecom networks.

5G networks are touted as promising an exponential leap in the amount and speed of wireless data, enabling advances in self-driving vehicles, virtual reality, connected health and more as sensors and servers communicate instantly. "Apple absolutely needs 5G right now," Greengart said.

"Not for the US, but for China where 5G is driving purchase decisions." Apple rivals have already introduced 5G models, and China is far ahead of the US when it comes to the new generation networks. "5G is happening in China with or without Apple; in fact more 5G phones than non-5G phones are selling in China," said analyst Moorhead. "US carriers are waiting for Apple to announce a 5G iPhone to put the pedal

to the metal in the US."

US telecom firms are looking at a 5G iPhone as a catalyst for consumer interest that will justify big investments needed for those networks, according to analysts. New generation 5G networks have also taken shape in South Korea and in parts of Europe. Apple also needs an iPhone tuned for 5G to maintain its premium brand image, analysts added.

"Because of all the supply chain rumors saying the iPhone is running a little late, they will want to announce it closer to the launch date," said Technalysis Research chief analyst Bob O'Donnell. Baird senior research analyst William Power said in a report to investors that Apple's "ecosystem" looks strong due to its wearables, services, and the potential 5G iPhone. — AFP

Business

San Francisco exodus as tech giants lean in to remote work in COVID era

‘There used to be cranes in the landscape, now it’s U-Haul trucks’

SAN FRANCISCO: Real estate agent Kilby Stenkamp sees moving vans on San Francisco streets where she used to see building cranes and tech company hipsters. A work-from-home trend kicked into overdrive by the pandemic is disrupting a city long a haven for tech talent.

“People are leaving San Francisco, and they’re taking their jobs with them,” Stenkamp said.

“There used to be cranes in the landscape, now it’s U-Haul trucks.” Tech workers who flocked to San Francisco to be near Google, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter and other internet firms are moving to parts of the US where life is slower and the cost of living cheaper.

Tech titans are encouraging the trend. Facebook is changing its hiring practices to recruit talent far and wide instead of needing workers to live near campuses. The social networking giant said it even might save money, since it adjusts the pay for positions based on local cost of living.

Back in March, San Francisco became one of the first US cities to implement restrictions of moving around for work, school and other activities. Nearly six months later, life shows little sign of returning to the way it was before the pandemic, causing some residents to question whether to stay.

“Once upon a time, a reason why we wouldn’t have wanted to move was because we had friends who had kids the same age as ours and we saw them all the time,” said consultant Kyla Brown, who left the city for a town about 25 kilometers (16 miles) away. “Practicality right now was the number one priority; social life has all gone down the drain thanks to COVID.” The family moved closer to Brown’s parents for babysitting needs, and work is done by telecommute.

Move bytes not atoms

Twitter and online work collaboration tech firm Slack have announced employees can work from home indefinitely. Online bulletin board Pinterest announced recently that it spent \$90 million to cancel a lease for more Silicon Valley office space, saying it will stick with its current San Francisco offices. “As we analyze how our workplace will change in a post-Covid world, we are specifically rethinking where future employees could be based,” said Pinterest head of business operations Todd Morgenfeld.



Downtown skyscrapers deserted

“A more distributed workforce will give us the opportunity to hire people from a wider range of backgrounds and experiences.”

Google and Facebook are not expecting workers to return to their campuses until the middle of next year at the earliest. Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said he expects half of the firm’s employees will be able to permanently do their jobs from home within five to 10 years. “It is a lot easier to move bytes around than to move atoms around,” Zuckerberg quipped at one point.



Levi Benjamin-Brown, 5, helps his mother Kyla Brown unpack boxes of toys at their new home in El Cerrito, California, where the family moved from San Francisco. — AFP

Tech world shuffle

The couple set their sights on Denver, some 2,000 kilometers away but in a close time zone to Silicon Valley. They get the beauty of mountains and the joy of paying about 30 percent less in rent. While Facebook and other tech firms ultimately adjust pay to local costs of living, states such as Colorado and Texas tax pay at much lower rates than San Francisco. The exodus has left some downtown skyscrapers deserted, shops doubting re-opening, and streets haunts of the homeless. — AFP

ABK expands its digital banking portfolio with two initiatives

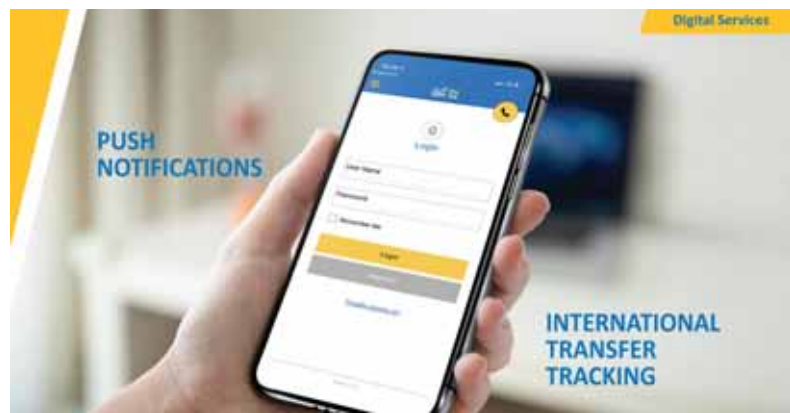
KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced two additions to their digital offerings to bolster their ‘Simpler Banking’ strategy, providing customers with smart and convenient ways to track remote debit/ credit transactions.

The recently launched mobile and online banking feature enables ABK customers to track international transfers, and offers real-time visibility of the status of every transfer request from initiation to completion. As customers increasingly adopt mobile finance apps, they can exercise overall coordination of all international transfers via the bank’s three-step revision process: ABK account, correspondent bank and eventually the beneficiary. Transaction status can be

checked remotely and around the clock through the online and mobile application, maximizing customer convenience.

Additionally, the Bank enhanced its customer’s experience by making the Push Notification feature available on the Bank’s mobile application, as the uptake of digital banking channels continue to rise. The function alerts customers with immediate updates on their bank accounts and card transactions.

ABK’s commitment to enhancing its digital banking solutions is part of its dedication to continual progression in the digital space. The Bank continues to monitor and adapt its business practices, offerings and services to prevailing COVID-19 conditions.



Brexit impasse sends pound back to lows

LONDON: Fears that Britain will end its post-Brexit transition period without agreeing any trading arrangements sent the pound to 5-1/2-month lows on Friday, overshadowing data showing the economy recovering and news of a new trade deal with Japan. The pound is set for its worst week against the euro and the dollar since mid-March, when the COVID-19 pandemic sell-off was at its height, having lost around 4 percent against both currencies.

“GBP has really underperformed this week as we expected due to tensions in talks”, wrote Jordan Rochester, a foreign exchange analyst at Nomura. At 1500 GMT on Friday, the pound was down 0.3 percent against the euro at 0.9255 pence and 0.2 percent to the dollar to \$1.2782. “For now the UK and EU are at a stalemate with time working against them, no deal is a real possibility and 1.20 in GBP/USD or 0.98 in EUR/GBP are still very possible if a no deal Brexit were to happen”, Rochester predicted.

Reports that Brussels has stepped



up planning for a ‘no-deal’ Brexit after Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s government refused to revoke an ultimatum on breaking the divorce treaty kept the pressure on sterling. “We are going to wait for the reaction of the United Kingdom by that deadline (end-September) and we will consider next steps once we have reached that particular bridge”, European Commission spokesman Eric Mamer told a news briefing.

Meanwhile, analysts remain broadly pessimistic for the coming days. “Despite its profound fall in the past few days, we expect the pressure on GBP to continue building next week as until-recently complacent investors adjust to the new reality of a heightened no-deal Brexit risk and start/continue building GBP shorts(bets against the currency).” ING analysts told their clients in a note. — Reuters

Greg Kelly, former aide to Nissan’s Ghosn, goes on trial

TOKYO: The lengthy saga of ex-Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn takes a new turn next week when the auto titan-turned-fugitive’s former assistant Greg Kelly goes on trial in Tokyo. Ghosn’s arrest in the Japanese capital in November 2018 on allegations of financial misconduct made headlines worldwide and kicked off an astonishing fall from grace for the businessman, once hailed as a corporate savior for rescuing Nissan from the brink of bankruptcy.

But Kelly was also detained that day, having been effectively lured back to Japan from the United States on the premise of an urgent meeting. And with Ghosn in Lebanon as an international fugitive after he made an audacious escape while out on bail in Tokyo last year, Kelly is now the only person expected to face trial any time soon in connection with the case.

The American lawyer appears in court from Tuesday facing a single charge: of conspiring to under-report tens of million of dollars in pay that Ghosn was allegedly promised after his retirement.

Kelly, who will turn 64 on the day the trial opens, denies any wrongdoing. He faces up to 10 years in jail if convicted. The trial, expected to last around 10 months, centers around one question, fraught with complex technicalities: did Kelly and Nissan between 2010 and 2018

illegally conceal payments of around 9.2 billion yen (\$87 million at today’s rates) promised to Ghosn on retirement? Nissan, which will be on trial alongside Kelly, says yes, and plans to plead guilty, multiple sources told AFP.

‘I didn’t do anything wrong’

But Kelly has insisted on his innocence since day one. “I didn’t do anything wrong,” he told AFP in an interview in early September. “Carlos Ghosn never got paid anything and he wasn’t promised anything,” he insisted.

Nissan and Japanese prosecutors disagree, arguing they have evidence that these future payments were pledged to Ghosn, and therefore should have been disclosed in the firm’s financial filings as required by Japanese law. Prosecutors have amassed a vast amount of documents, only a small portion of which the defense have been given so far, according to Kelly’s lawyers.

Despite that, his team decided to agree to move to trial, arguing they had “no choice”, with Kelly prevented from leaving the country and separated from his family while he waits for his case to go to court. Kelly’s legal team say they are confident he can be acquitted, despite the track record of Japan’s prosecutors, who win over 99 percent of the criminal cases they bring to court.

But they argue they have been put at a strong disadvantage by the court’s refusal to allow overseas witnesses to testify by videoconference.

The defense say some witnesses who could help acquit Kelly fear being detained if they testify in person in Japan.



This combination of file pictures shows an image of former Nissan executive Greg Kelly (left) and a file image of former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn. —AFP

“There is no trust in the Japanese judiciary system among foreign witnesses,” Kelly’s US lawyer James Wareham said.

“They are afraid, they are not going to come to Japan.”

Defense remains confident

Despite the obstacles, Kelly’s Japanese lawyer Yoichi Kitamura said he is “confident we can win the case”. Nissan has been tight-lipped about the trial, with a spokeswoman saying only “we do not comment on pending litigation”. The company appears uncomfortable to finally have arrived at the court date, with a source close to the firm’s leadership saying there was concern about negative media attention. One of the trial’s key witnesses will be Hari Nada, Kelly’s former colleague, who obtained whistleblower status from prosecutors in exchange for his cooperation. — Reuters

Family wrestles with climate change legacy

MAHANOH CITY, Pennsylvania: Mike Gaval looks out from the Gilberton coal-fired power plant down the valley to Mahanoy City, the town he grew up in, and up the hill to the wind turbines spinning on the horizon. Gaval would be the last person to call himself a coal critic. For 30 years, he’s worked at the plant, which supplies power to the local prison and the grid; before that, his grandfather was a miner who blasted massive seams of anthracite and brought it to the surface.

His hometown is a place made, and unmade, by anthracite, the coal that fueled the Industrial Revolution, provided heat for millions in sprawling cities, spawned rail networks and still heats homes in Mahanoy City. Trucks carrying anthracite and its byproducts constantly run back and forth through town, coating the old row houses that line the main street with a layer of gray dust.

But the glory days of coal are long gone, and Gaval wrestles with its legacy in heating not just homes and boilers, but the planet. “With climate change and how the industry I work in is contributing to that, it could be somewhat of a struggle, especially if you have kids. It makes you wonder: Are you doing the right thing?” said Gaval, 56, a husband and father of two sons. “But

on the other hand, people have got to work. And for people in this area, this has been their whole life.”

The two generations of the Gaval family, Mike and Cindy and their sons, Justin and Michael, are woven into the fabric of Mahanoy City. Both Mike and Michael played on the high school football team, the Golden Bears. Today Michael volunteers as a coach, but he dreams of leaving, if he can whittle down a mountain of student debt. Cindy is from Shenandoah, 10 minutes away, and has recently returned to work sorting goods at an Amazon warehouse plant after driving gun trucks down ancient alleys in Afghanistan while serving in the Army Reserve.

But even though they’re deeply rooted

in Mahanoy City, they’re also a minority in this region: voters who didn’t support Donald Trump in 2016 and who won’t vote for the Republican president in November, in a town where Trump signs sprout everywhere and no Joe Biden signs are to be seen, even though the Democratic nominee for president grew up in another blue-collar town, Scranton, an hour away. This year, the country almost seems at war with itself, over politics and the coronavirus pandemic, race and the economy, climate change and energy. Far from the streets of protest and the halls of power, the Gavals nonetheless find their lives intersecting with this moment of American crisis from Mahanoy City, a small town that gets smaller every year. This is the story of an American family and an American town, both struggling with what they once were - and what they will be. — Reuters



Mike, Cindy, Justin and Michael Gaval stand for a portrait in their newly renovated backyard in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania, US. — Reuters

Business

Grand Hyper opens their 64th store in Hawally, Block 10

Store witnesses a soft launch due to pandemic



KUWAIT: Grand Hyper, counted among the leading hypermarket chains in GCC, has opened its 64th outlet in Hawally Block 10, Al-Adasani Complex in Othman Street on single basement floor in an area spanning 20,000 sq ft on 10th September 2020. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the new store had a soft launch without regular inaugural celebrations. The objective to open new store during corona scare was to make available food and other necessary products for customers at their vicinity, as many customers prefer to travel within their locality for shopping during this time.

The new Grand Hyper has opened abiding to the guidelines and safety measures laid down by Ministry of Health, Kuwait. Grand has taken all

precautionary measures ensuring safety of customers visiting the store which involves regular cleaning and sanitization of all customer touch points, mandatory rule of temperature check for entry, wearing mask and gloves at all times.

Grand Hypermarket has a strong reputation and trust in Kuwait market as a brand for providing the customers with a wide range of products including food stuffs, electronic appliances, home appliances, footwear, health and beauty items and fashion wears and accessories from across the globe at the most affordable price. With 20 stores covering all major locations in Kuwait, Grand hyper is now a household name in Kuwait, serving 60,000 plus customers daily.



This is the 20th store of Grand in Kuwait which also happens to be their 3rd outlet in Hawally. Grand already has two other Hypermarkets in this area, one in Ibn Khaldun street and other in Tunis street. This outlet was planned to open before the pandemic in March 2020 but was put on hold due to coronavirus outbreak. Now despite the ongoing pandemic, Grand management has decided to open the new store primarily to be present closer to the customer for their convenience during these difficult times. Grand Hyper Hawally store inauguration was jointly done by Grand Hyper Kuwait Chief patron Jassim Mohammad Al-Sharrah, Capt Saad Mohamed Hamadah, Regional Director Ayoub Kechery, CEO Mohamad Suneer, COO

Rahil Bassim, General Manager Thahseer Ali along with other dignitaries and customers at 6 am on 10th Sept. 2020 at Al-Adasani complex, Hawally Block 10.

Grand Hyper is part of Dubai based Regency group which has varied business in GCC region. Grand is the retail arm of the group which has been on an aggressive growth and expansion since inception. The success of Grand Hypermarket is testified by the continuous expansion of the retail chain in various parts of the GCC countries on a daily basis. The benefit of price efficiency that the retailer gains through large-scale procurement of products is transferred onto the end-consumer.

Fed to meet as Congressional deadlock lingers

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve's policy-setting committee will meet on Tuesday amid a prolonged deadlock in Congress over how to support the US economy battered by the coronavirus downturn. The central bank deployed its most potent tools including trillions of dollars in liquidity lines and an emergency rate cut to near-zero in the pandemic's opening days, but the new fiscal support Fed Chair Jerome Powell and other officials have said the economy demands has yet to be approved by Congress.

The Fed is however loathe to wade directly into political debates and economists don't expect that to change at the regular two-day meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC).

Rather, officials will perhaps offer details on their new inflation targeting strategy while underscoring that, despite some positive economic signs, unpredictability reigns. "I would also expect them to say something along the lines of 'uncertainties abound because of the pandemic,' something we all know," said Jay Bryson, chief economist at Wells Fargo's corporate and investment bank.

The meeting will be the first after the Fed unveiled a new strategy that will keep interest rates lower for longer in a bid to achieve maximum employment for the benefit of the poor. Steve Chandler, managing director at Standard Chartered Bank, told AFP he expects the meeting to focus on that new strategy, while making clear the Fed's easy money policies aren't going away anytime soon.

The FOMC "will continue to encourage fiscal stimulus without taking sides," he said. And with this meeting the last before the November presidential election in which President Donald Trump vies for a second term against former vice president Joe Biden, the Fed is "fortunate in that there is no pressing need for any abrupt policy move."

Deadlock continues

Congress passed the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act in March to bolster the economy but key provisions have expired and an agreement on another measure has proven elusive, with a \$500 billion spending proposal failing to pass the Senate in recent days. The pandemic caused unemployment to skyrocket to 14.7 percent in April, though data has lately shown key sectors like retail and home sales rebounding to near their levels prior to the downturn.

The latest August data put unemployment at 8.4 percent, which Powell told National Public Radio indicated "significant improvement," though he said he also feared for people who were already earning low wages, and for whom the coronavirus has made life even more tenuous.

David Wessel, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, said he'd be watching the chair's opinion after the meeting for signs of his latest comments on the tricky situation. "With the economy showing a slightly better than expected rebound and Congress paralyzed by partisan tensions, he may be even more circumspect," Wessel said. —AFP

Fate of nickel factory clouds New Caledonia vote

NOUMEA, France: France's South Pacific territory of New Caledonia risks seeing the closure of a nickel factory that has long been the lifeblood of its economy, a threat that could weigh heavily on a looming independence vote. Advocates of remaining part of France worry that separatist parties could capitalize on a shutdown to press their case for taking back control of a strategic archipelago and its key industries.

"With the referendum just three weeks away, we are following this matter very closely and are indeed worried about the 3,000 jobs under threat," an official in the office of France's overseas minister Sebastien Lecornu said. Under a 1998 deal to

devolve powers to the territory, Paris promised to hold votes on the future of New Caledonia, which gives France a large, exclusive economic zone in the Pacific and rich fishing resources.

It also provides a military foothold in a region where China is looking to bolster its influence, a worrisome development for Australia and New Zealand, as well as other Asia Pacific nations. The first referendum two years ago saw independence rejected by 56.4 percent of voters, but the contest was much closer than polls had predicted, raising the stakes for the next vote on October 4.

'Economic tsunami'

Hanging over the vote is the future of a huge nickel extraction site owned by the Brazilian mining giant Vale, which says it can no longer afford to invest in the loss-making factory.

The territory is home to a quarter of the world's known supplies of nickel, used in stainless steel but increasingly sought as a vital electronics component, in particular for rechargeable batter-

ment of the new unit also provides the Bank with the capabilities and the necessary tools to forecast any internal and external challenges that may arise as a result of any developments in the global economy.

Momtaz Saif has extensive practical experience in the field of strategic planning, and has worked across Europe, the GCC region and Asia. Prior to joining Gulf Bank in 2018, Momtaz Saif was the Chief Strategy, PMO and Communications Officer for one of Kuwaiti Banks.

Momtaz Saif holds a bachelor's degree in Business Information Technology from Nottingham Trent University, and a General Management Program certificate from Harvard University.

formula and with a stealthier campaign to undermine its credibility through proxies, including veterans' groups and organizations that claim to advocate for patients but have ties to the pharmaceutical industry, Reuters found in a review of industry connections and funding among groups targeting ICER.

Two such groups - the Partnership to Improve Patient Care (PIPC) and Value our Health - are led by lobbyists of Thorn Run Partners, a Washington-based lobbying and public relations firm that counts nearly a dozen drugmakers as clients. PIPC denied it is part of a larger industry-financed proxy campaign to undermine ICER's impact. Thorn Run declined to comment, and Value Our Health did not respond to inquiries.

As remdesivir gained momentum, PIPC complained to ICER in a June letter that its methodology, which examines how a drug improves patient quality of life, was unfair for COVID-19 drugs. It also held a webinar for patients criticizing ICER's methods.

The group's chairman, former US Democratic Representative Tony Coelho, argued in the letter that ICER's methods yield a flawed value assessment for COVID-19 drugs that could lead insurers or government programs to limit coverage to the elderly and people with disabilities because ICER's formula attributes a lower value to their medicines than those for healthier patients. In a statement to Reuters, Coelho attacked ICER's formula as a flawed "one-size-fits-all assessment." —Reuters



New Caledonia is home to a quarter of the world's known supplies of nickel. —AFP

ies. On Tuesday, Vale said talks to sell the site to the Australian mining group New Century Resources had failed, and warned that unless a credible buyer emerged by end-October the site would be closed. —AFP

Fed meeting in focus as US stocks wobble

NEW YORK: Investors are shifting their focus to the Federal Reserve's monetary policy meeting next week as they seek cues following a recent technology-led US market sell-off. So far, few believe the past week's volatility in stocks - which knocked the Nasdaq down as much as 10 percent from its highs and rocked other indexes - is the start of a larger sell-off that will throw the market off its course after a six-month rally. Some worry, however, that the moves may herald the start of a volatile period, as a much-awaited fiscal aid package stalls in the Senate and the US presidential election looms. That's left investors looking to the Fed for its view of the nascent US economic recovery and what the central bank may do if markets continue to slide. "The market, especially in absence of that fiscal policy package, is looking for the Fed to do even more," said Michael Arone, chief investment strategist at State Street Global Advisors. "And it's not clear that they can do more or how much they're willing to do, at least at this point." The Fed slashed rates to near zero in March as stocks plunged on fears of the economic impact from the coronavirus, and has rolled out lending programs to support businesses and households. It is also buying tens of billions of bonds monthly to keep markets functioning smoothly.

Despite stocks' recent slide, some market participants believe equities would have to tumble much further for the Fed to act. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said earlier this month that while the central bank will keep its foot on the monetary policy gas, lawmakers also need to help with recovery relief, making the government's failure to pass the next round of stimulus an increasingly worrying development to some investors. "We have an economy that has not yet cleared the woods of the pandemic," said Nela Richardson, investment strategist at Edward Jones. "These risks that were ... maybe hidden a bit by all this stimulus are now starting to be highlighted and more transparent."

The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits hovered at high levels last week, suggesting the labor market recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic was stalling as government financial aid to businesses and the unemployed dries up. Analysts at BofA Global Research noted that September tends to be the weakest month of the year, with stocks notching gains less than half the time and the S&P 500's average return at minus 1 percent. —Reuters

Classifieds

Monday, September 14, 2020

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Fax: (+965) 24348714

www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Rather hot with light variable wind to light to moderate south westerly wind with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY DAY: Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind with speed of 08 - 28 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.
KUWAIT CITY	42 °C	32 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	25 °C
ABDALY	47 °C	24 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	46 °C	28 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	42 °C	32 °C
SALMIYAH	37 °C	32 °C
AHMADI	- °C	- °C
NUWAISIB	43 °C	31 °C
WAFRA	47 °C	28 °C
SALMY	45 °C	27 °C

SFC. CHART

13/09/2020 1200 UTC

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	09/14	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	45 °C	25 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 28 km/h
Tuesday	09/15	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for light fog forming at night	44 °C	25 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 32 km/h
Wednesday	09/16	Hot and Humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for fog forming at night	44 °C	24 °C	SE-VRB	08 - 35 km/h
Thursday	09/17	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas	44 °C	23 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 32 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	04:12
Sunrise	05:32
Zuhr	11:44
Asr	15:14
Sunset	17:55
Isha	19:14

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	47 °C
MIN. Temp.	26 °C
MAX. RH	60 %
MIN. RH	05 %
MAX. Wind	S 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP:0

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 9, 2020

Mr. Jenson Joy, son of Mr. Joy Thomas Chirackal, resident of Chirackal House, Muttom PO, Thodupuzha, Idukki, Kerala 685587 and Ms. Supriya Thayil Jose, daughter of Mr. Jose Thayil Mathew, resident of 2-82(A), Pilikala House, Rekhyia Enjira, Belthangady, Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka 574229, 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 (cw2.kuwait@mea.gov.in)/ letters/telephonic calls (00965 - 22533315, 00965 - 22533125).

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

Embassy of India, Kuwait.
Email: welfare2@indembkwit.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	22430224
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

DIRECTIONS:
Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

ACTIVITY
AEROBIC
AGILITY
BALANCE
BODY COMPOSITION
CARDIO
COORDINATION
DAILY
DEHYDRATION
ENDORPHINS
ENDURANCE
ENERGY
EXERCISE
FLEXIBILITY
FREQUENCY
HEALTH
HEAT EXHAUSTION

Physical Fitness

Word Search

M C Y X A Y P Q O R E A E C N A R U D N E V R
N R L L L N W B C L M A T D V T L F W C V M Z
D R R F Z Y G H Z R I H A A S V A G I L I T Y
M A X H E A R T R A T E R W V Y U J X Z F Y M
K I F D V F B Y T I V I T C A G F B Z W F J F
T G N I N I A R T X K B R O W R Z D A P S F E
N O I T A R D Y H E D G A F N E N M Q T D U J
P C L D L O H S E R H T E R O N C H K F M L T
R I L N R T U T S A G L H E I E M S P E E D Q Q
O F F O L H Q E Z E D L T Q T R G B E Z R J R
O F U A Y E S I C R E X E U I T E P S H B F R
R E E R H O R G T O G Z G E S M N B D A I L Y
E H Z M Z M D J Q B L W R N O I D R A C K E A
S C I Q G U M I H I X P A C P T O M C D W X H
S N N C J U I P J C D D T Y M Q R P C W X I E
I L P A S R E S P I R A T I O N P B P Z C B A
O N X C L Y T I S N E T N I C F H A Z D W I T
N H L T B A X Z V N L L P T Y B I M Y J S L S
W E W B S N B T D R Q F C G D G N I U I P I T
G U H M N O I T A N I D R O O C S R I C O T R
H E A T E X H A U S T I O N B Z V Y D F R Y O
H T G N E R T S M G Z Z P E Q O F B V T T X K
B R T E D K U T W X G B M O H T F E D C S C E

HEAT STROKE
INTENSITY
MAX HEART RATE
MUSCLE
PROGRESSION
RESPIRATION
SPEED
SPORTS
STRENGTH
TARGET HEART RATE
THRESHOLD
TIME
TRAINING

Join the Dots

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)
Ask for help if you need it, Aries. Your nature is to serve others, but in order to maintain that energy, make sure that you're taken care of as well. Offer extra support to the people you love. In work-related issues, make sure that you aren't biting off more than you can chew. Delegate tasks to others. Pamper yourself tonight with a hot bath and a good meal.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)
Bask in the sunshine of today, Cancer. Focus on the positive aspects of your life and work to expand these energies. There's a great deal of opportunity open at this time. The key to taking advantage of this is to stay close to the things that truly bring you the most happiness. The details will work themselves out with almost no effort. Have faith that you'll succeed, and you will.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
Your fantasy life is especially active today, Libra, so enjoy this little break into your dream world. Coming back to reality may be difficult. Keep tabs on your emotions so they don't get the better of you. The impressions you receive from the outside world may not be accurate today. Keep your wits about you and try not to get caught up in drugs and alcohol.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)
Your fantasy world is piqued today, Capricorn. Your imagination is running wild. Maintain a certain amount of control over your emotions or they may get the better of you. You could find yourself in a cloud of confusion by afternoon. Avoid this by trying to ground yourself throughout the day. Make sure your actions result from an equal balance between thought and emotion.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)
Keeping your emotions in balance is going to be the key to a successful day, Taurus. Don't get swept away by a fanciful situation that could send your mind spinning. Maintain control at all times. This might be easier said than done. Give yourself a break and avoid excess alcohol or any sort of drug use. It will be hard enough to keep your mind clear without them.

Leo (July 23-August 22)
Make sure you're getting enough sleep, Leo. You may seem groggy and your head could be a bit cloudy today, but try not to let this stop you from getting your work done. Much of what you perceive may not exactly correlate with reality. Your emotions could be especially distorted. You may have a strong desire to escape into a fantasy world. Try to keep both feet on the ground.

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)
You're in a fun-loving and jovial mood today, Scorpio, and you should make time to enjoy it with friends, if possible. The one caveat to the day is that your emotions may be a bit clouded. You may not have the most accurate impression of a situation. You might feel that people have the wrong impression of who you are. Try not to feel insecure. Have confidence in yourself and take the lead.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)
You may get the feeling that you're operating in an emotional crossfire today, Aquarius. On the one hand, you may have a "me first," selfish feeling that demands attention from others. You may also sense the need to work to serve others and bring like-minded people together. Realize that both of these energies are valid and deserve your attention. Balance is the key. Work to soothe your fluctuating emotions.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)
You may feel like you're running into a brick wall at every turn, Gemini, especially when it comes to emotions. The intensity of the day may have you feeling like you're in a pressure cooker. Try not to blow things out of proportion. Realize that much of the drama is more a figment of your imagination than reality. Clear away the clouds and get to the heart of the matter.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)
There may be an area of your life that seems completely fanciful now, Virgo. The issues regarding it have become a bit hazy. You may no longer be sure of the reality of the situation. Today's energies will bring these issues into focus. Your emotions are especially heightened, and they, too, will seem a bit clouded. Try to stay balanced and gain a new perspective on the situation.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)
You may have a strange paranoia that people are out to get you today, Sagittarius, but don't let this feeling paralyze you. Your emotions are more than likely getting the better of you. The reality of the situation is much different than your sensitive emotions perceive. Avoid the tendency to escape even further into this fantasy world. Stay away from drugs or alcohol.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)
You'll enjoy a day of high spirits and friendly interactions. The energy of the day is in your favor, although it may not seem like it. Your emotions may become cloudy and it might seem like people are working against you. Although this may be true to some extent, realize that much of this paranoia comes more from your emotional insecurity than another's plot against you.

Lifestyle | Awards



Jury President of the 77th Venice Film festival, Australian-US actress Cate Blanchett arrives to attend the closing ceremony of the 77th Venice Film Festival.— AFP photos



Disney's Marketing Director for Italy, Davide Romani acknowledges receiving the Golden Lion for Best Film on behalf of US director Chloe Zhao for "Nomadland" during the closing ceremony on the last day of the 77th Venice Film Festival.



Mexican director Michel Franco poses with the Silver Lion - Grand Jury Prize he received for "Nuevo Orden" (New Order).

'NOMADLAND' WINS TOP PRIZE AT VENICE FILM FESTIVAL



British actress Vanessa Kirby poses with the Coppa Volpi for Best Actress she received for "Pieces Of A Woman".



Polish cinematographer Michal Sobocinski acknowledges receiving the Award for Best Screenplay, on behalf of Indian director Chaitanya Tamhane for "The Disciple".

"Nomadland" by director Chloe Zhao scooped the top prize at the Venice film festival on Saturday, the first woman to win the Golden Lion in a decade. The film, an ode to American wanderlust and the highs and lows of the open road, won the top honour in a competition billed as a relaunch of global cinema bruised by the coronavirus crisis. Starring Frances McDormand, it is set among a motley tribe of ageing van dwellers, down on their luck and roaming the West. The double-Oscar winner plays a widow who takes to the road after losing her home. Its Chinese-born director Chloe Zhao picked up the coveted award 10 years after Sofia Coppola's 2010 win for her film "Somewhere", in a year in which nearly half of the films in the main competition were directed by women.

Via Zoom, Zhao and McDormand appeared from the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California—where the film had a US premiere on Friday—sitting inside the van used in the film. "Thank you so much for letting us come to your festival in this weird, weird world and way," said McDormand. "We will see you down the road," they said in unison, quoting a greeting used by the van dwellers in the film. The 77th edition of the "Mostra" festival—presided over by Australian actress Cate Blanchett as jury president—took place in a year when theatres have been closed, film sets shut down and moviegoers forced to embrace streaming video at home instead, during months of coronavirus-imposed lockdown.

Hot new talent

Zhao, 38, is one of Hollywood's hottest new talents, with Variety magazine having hailed her last film, "The Rider", about a rodeo grunt, as a "mini-masterpiece." She is currently making the next Marvel movie, "The Eternals". "Nomadland" was loudly applauded when it premiered at Venice Friday and had horns honking at a Pasadena drive-in cinema for its US premiere. The

Hollywood Reporter called the film "a unique portrait of outsider existence" while Variety said it was "a marvel of empathy and introspection". Zhao, who cast real van dwellers opposite McDormand, insisted the film was not political, but many saw it as a subtle allegory on US decline, with its humble heroes clinging onto the last threads of the American Dream.

High-profile 'test'

Normally attended by more than 10,000 film industry executives, critics, journalists and moviegoers, the Venice festival was the first major international movie competition to go ahead after others around the world, including its main rival, the Cannes Film Festival, were cancelled. Festival director Alberto Barbera called the event "a sort of test" for the film industry, which is slowly regaining its footing, with some production resuming and cinemas reopening, even as Covid-19 cases continue to rise in many parts of the world. In Italy, the festival was also viewed as a sign of hope and normalcy for the first country in Europe to be battered by the global crisis.

Nevertheless, big-budget blockbusters that have premiered in Venice in years past were missing, as was the bevy of Hollywood A-listers, who have fans screaming for autographs on the sidelines of the red carpet. Instead, the 2020 version was decidedly low-key, with about half the usual number of attendees, fewer films and seating in theatres that was staggered to respect social distancing. Masks were mandatory, hand sanitiser bountiful, temperatures were taken on entering the festival grounds and ubiquitous red signs warned attendees to respect the anti-coronavirus measures.

Street child winner

The festival's Grand Jury prize was awarded to "Nuevo Orden" (New Order) by director Michel Franco, an unflinching look at a dystopian Mexico. Japan's



(From left) Taylor Friedman, Frances McDormand, Chloa Zhao, Matthew Greenfield, David Greenbaum, and Fox Searchlight Co-Chairman Stephen Gilula attend the Drive-In Premiere of "Nomadland" hosted by Fox Searchlight and The Telluride Film Festival at Rose Bowl on September 11, 2020 in Pasadena, California.

Kiyoshi Kurosawa won a Silver Lion for his wartime espionage thriller "Spy No Tsuma" (Wife of a Spy). Britain's Vanessa Kirby, best known for the Netflix series "The Crown" won best actress for her performance in "Pieces of a Woman" by Kornel Mundruczo about a home birth that goes wrong. The best actor award went to Italian star Pierfrancesco Favino in "Padrenostro" (Our Father). A special award for young talent was awarded to Rouhollah Zamani from Majid Majidi's "Khorshid", (Sun Children), about child workers in Iran. Zamani, a street child cast as the 12-year-old lead, was unable to attend the festival after testing positive for coronavirus. Last year, "Joker" by US director Todd Phillips took home the Golden Lion and—in a controversial choice—Roman Polanski won the runner-up Grand Jury prize for "An Officer and a Spy."— AFP



Director Ana Rocha de Sousa acknowledges receiving the Special Orizzonti Jury Prize for "Listen".



Japanese Director Kiyoshi Kurosawa winner of Best director for "Wife of a Spy" speaking via internet.



Iranian director Majid Majidi receives on behalf of Iranian actor Rouhollah Zamani the Special Jury Prize "Marcello Mastroianni" Award for Best New Young Actor for "Khorshid" (Sun Children).



Italian screenwriter Pietro Castellitto poses with the Orizzonti Award for Best Screenplay he received for "I Predatori".



Italian actor Pierfrancesco Favino poses with the Coppa Volpi for Best Actor he received for "Padrenostro".



Russian director Andrei Konchalovsky poses with the Special Jury Prize he received for "Dear Comrades !".



Moroccan French director Ismael El Iraki poses with the Orizzonti Award for Best Actress he received on behalf of Moroccan singer and actress Khansa Batma, for "Zanka Contact".

Lifestyle | Features

Venice film festival winners

Golden Lion: "Nomadland" by Chloe Zhao, China-US
Jury prize: Michel Franco for "New Order", Mexico
Best director: Kiyoshi Kurosawa for "Wife of a Spy", Japan
Special jury prize: Andrei Konchalovsky for "Dear Comrades", Russia
Best actress: Britain's Vanessa Kirby for "Pieces of a Woman"
Best actor: Italy's Pierfrancesco Favino for "Padrenostro". — AFP

Last five winners of the Venice film festival

The Golden Lion top prize at the Venice film festival was awarded on Saturday in what has become a key barometer for Oscar glory. Winners have often gone on to triumph at the Academy Awards. Here are the last five:

2020 "Nomadland" by Chloe Zhao
 2019 "Joker" by Todd Phillips
 2018 "Roma" by Alfonso Cuarón
 2017 "The Shape of Water" by Guillermo del Toro
 2016 "The Woman Who Left" by Lav Diaz. — AFP

VANESSA KIRBY'S VENICE WIN MAKES HER HOLLYWOOD ROYALTY



British actress Vanessa Kirby poses with the Coppa Volpi for Best Actress she received for "Pieces Of A Woman". — AFP

Vanessa Kirby's best actress win at the Venice film festival on Saturday confirms her ascension to Hollywood royalty after breaking through playing a real royal in Netflix's "The Crown". The 32-year-old British star was the rebellious Princess Margaret, the British queen's younger sister, in the streamer's flagship series. Kirby had two films vying for the Golden Lion in Venice, the lesbian love story "The World to Come" and the tough drama "Pieces of a Woman", for which she won the prize.

Both made big demands on a woman that Variety called the "outstanding stage actress of her generation". "Pieces of a Woman" opens with Kirby in a jaw-dropping 25-minute childbirth scene, which was filmed in one shot. The film was inspired by the grief the film's Hungarian director Kornel Mundruczo and his screenwriter partner Kata Weber suffered when they lost their own child. Kirby threw herself "really deep" into her first lead role in a movie, she told reporters. But she admitted trying to be true to the suffering of the women she talked to before the shoot was "really scary", and she named and thanked them and their lost children in her acceptance speech.

As tears welled up in her eyes, she said she wanted to share the prize with all those parents "who have lost children... sometimes before even life began". "We can connect through our pain and heal through it," she said. If that was not scary enough, Kirby was having to act opposite Shia LaBeouf, one of Hollywood's most intense and demanding leading men, who she thanked for "championing this very female story".

Kirby though is not someone to be intimidated by fame. She grew up around stage and screen legends Vanessa and Corin Redgrave, who were friends of her family in London.

And although she has not exactly been an overnight success, there was no mistaking she was a major talent, with the theatre critic of The Independent newspaper saying she was "a star if ever I saw one" after seeing her in "The Acid Test" at London's Royal Court in 2011. A series of stage and television roles followed before she was cast in "The Crown", for which she won an Emmy for best supporting actor. Kirby then made her rather unlikely transition to Hollywood action films "Mission Impossible-Fallout" and "Hobbs & Shaw" two years ago. While "Pieces of a Woman" won her the Venice prize, critics also adored her in "The World to Come".

In it she plays a glamorous woman yolked to a backwoods farmer in 19th-century upstate New York who tries to escape the drudgery of her life when she begins an intense relationship with another farmer's wife. Critics were wowed by the slow-burn passion of this "ravishingly beautiful love story", with The Guardian's Xan Brooks saying he could stare at its "dense forest landscapes all day". "The World to Come" is one of a trio of acclaimed new historical lesbian romances, following "Portrait of a Lady on Fire" and "Ammonite" starring Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan. — AFP

MAGPIE STEALS SCENES FROM NAOMI WATTS IN 'PENGUIN BLOOM'

Oscar-nominated actress Naomi Watts has worked with Hollywood icons such as David Lynch and Sean Penn, but admitted Saturday that a magpie stole her scenes in "Penguin Bloom", premiering at the Toronto film festival. Watts plays Sam Bloom in the real-life drama about a mother who becomes paralyzed in an accidental fall, but is pulled out of despair by caring for an injured baby bird named Penguin. "That made me nervous. How do we get a performance out of a bird and, you know, magpies are famously not super friendly," Watts told a virtual news conference. The movie used some animatronics and CGI, but mostly "a multitude" of live birds, confirmed director Glendyn Ivin.

"They absolutely stole the scenes every single day," said Watts, describing how one used the bathroom on her head on the first day of filming. Speaking from her home in Australia Sam Bloom said the real Penguin had "brought a bit of excitement and happiness into our house" after the accident "made everyone sad." With a pandemic and a closed Canadian border forcing Hollywood stars and media to remain home, North America's biggest film festival has scrambled to find socially-distanced ways to present this year's line-up, with movies premiering online and at drive-in screenings.



In this file photo British actress Naomi Watts attends the opening ceremony of the 18th edition of the Marrakech International Film Festival in Marrakech. — AFP

With no live audiences, NY Fashion Week tries to support US designers

With almost no live audiences and few major names, New York Fashion week, which opened yesterday in city that was ravaged by the pandemic, is not giving up and is trying to help American designers survive an unprecedented crisis. Don't bother looking for Michael Kors, Tommy Hilfiger or Ralph Lauren, regular heavy-hitters on the lineup. They won't be attending this Fashion Week, which will last only three days, from Sunday evening to Wednesday.

many teetering on the brink.

Historically, American high-end ready-to-wear designs have relied heavily on department stores, which were in bad shape themselves and have fallen like dominoes during the pandemic, from Barneys and Lord & Taylor to Neiman Marcus. In-person fashion shows have practically vanished from the calendar this season, with a few (very rare) exceptions, including Jason Wu's opening show on Sunday, or Rebecca Minkoff, whose presentation is

the pragmatist, the 59-year-old, generally clad in a black suit, doesn't anticipate a "normal" season before fall 2021. In order to help American designers hang on, the CFDA invested in a new platform-named Runway360 — that is accessible to designers for free and lets fashion houses show their collections and create virtual events around their designs.

More than 50 of the 70 or so designers on the agenda for New York Fashion Week are using Runway360. Some of them have filmed their shows in New York in advance and will stream the videos at their appointed time. But even without in-person shows, "fashion is a business, and Fashion Week is a platform for designers to do business," CFDA CEO Steven Kolb told AFP. Crucially, "Fashion Week is about jobs... it's about people's livelihoods. It's about moving forward, but cautiously, with safety in mind," he said. Many young designers view this uncharted period as "an opportunity to get exposed," said Geoffrey Owens, an African-American designer showing his very first collection for his label Zoonek at the Flying Solo show.

Just one year ago, Owens, also a minister, was cutting hair in his salon in Virginia Beach, dreaming of fashion. Already skilled in drawing, he learned how to sew in just 30 days and was able to "activate that gift." "Doors have been opening ever since," he said. Fellow newbie Fashion Week presenter Mohamed ElMadawy echoed the hope: "Those big brands are not showing as aggressively anymore, so I think I have a better chance" of breaking through, he said. ElMadawy is Egyptian and has been living in New York since 2012. He is showing his first collection at Fashion Week for his brand Elmadawy on Sunday, also at the show by Flying Solo, a cutting-edge boutique in SoHo that scouts and promotes emerging designers. For Owens, a designer's role is to "set the bar" for society and "bring us out of... that dark place" of the past six months. "Let's live again," he said. — AFP



A model gets fitted during a NYFW behind the scenes fitting day for a Flying Solo runway show featuring a collective of local designers in New York City. — AFP

Eager to sell off some of the considerable stock accumulated since the start of the pandemic and sometimes held back by a much-slowed production chain, the big designers are showing their new collections later, separate from the usual fashion calendar. Marc Jacobs has given up his spring-summer 2021 collection altogether. The only fashion giant attending this week will be Tom Ford, who will show his new collection virtually for the closing event Wednesday night. His presence is a symbol of the willpower of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA), of which Ford is the chairman, to support American design houses of all sizes.

on Tuesday. Even if New York has become one of the stronger case studies in recovery, the US has struggled to get the coronavirus pandemic under control, which explains the discrepancies with Paris, Milan or London fashion weeks, where live fashion shows were much more frequent.

'Moving forward'

Apart from health risks, "when trying to simply pay as many employees as I can and not have to make further cuts or furloughs, to spend several million dollars on a show makes no sense," Ford said in an interview with industry publication Women's Wear Daily. Ever

Visionary UK designer Terence Conran dies at 88

British designer Terence Conran, whose Habitat chain brought high-end furniture and homeware to the high street in the Swinging Sixties, died on Saturday at the age of 88. Conran "passed away peacefully today" at his imposing country house outside London, his family said in a statement, acclaiming him as a "visionary who enjoyed an extraordinary life and career". Born in London's suburbs in 1931, Conran began his career making and selling furniture before opening restaurants across the capital and launching Habitat in 1964.

The chain made chic designs accessible to the middle classes, and Conran was credited with pioneering flat-pack furniture years before Swedish giant Ikea conquered the world. In 1989, he founded the Design Museum in London. "Terence Conran was instrumental in the re-designing of post-war Britain and his legacy is huge," the museum's director Tim Marlow said. "He is revered by generations of designers, from Mary Quant and David Mellor to Thomas Heatherwick and (Apple's) Jony Ive," he added. — AFP

Through a child's eyes

Earlier in Toronto, "Selma" star David Oyelowo unveiled "The Water Man," marking his directorial debut. "I made it for my 12-year-old self, I made it for those kids who don't get to see themselves represented in this kind of story," he said. Written by Emma Needell and backed by Oprah Winfrey, the film follows the adventures of a boy, played by Lonnie Chavis, who seeks out a fabled bogeyman hoping he can cure the terminal cancer plaguing his mother, played by Rosario Dawson. "It's very rare to see a black family at the center of this kind of story," Oyelowo said. "And I'm not just making it for black and brown people. I'm hoping that white people watch it and see themselves represented in it (too) because I do believe that seeing ourselves in different kinds of people is what engenders empathy and erodes ignorance," he said.

'Falling' into directing

"Lord of the Rings" star Viggo Mortensen also realized his dream of directing a movie, premiering "Falling," about a crotchety and demented father who relentlessly assails his son's homosexuality. The three-times Oscar-nominated actor last appeared in "Green Book," which screened at the Toronto film festival before winning a Best Picture Oscar in 2019. "It's one thing to know me as an actor, but I mean, I haven't directed anything," said the 61-year-old, who also stars in the main role.

The film shifts between the main character John as a boy, forced into tests of masculinity by his father, and John as an adult living happily as a gay man until his dad (played by Lance Henriksen) comes back into his life, spewing his usual vitriol and rancid homophobia. Producer Daniel Bekerman shared an on-set anecdote to describe Mortensen's directing resolve: In the film Henriksen wades into the ocean with a lit cigarette, but splashing waves keep extinguishing it. Behind the camera, Mortensen "had multiple lit cigarettes in (his) mouth" to give to Henriksen each time one went out. — AFP

Sports

Photo of the Day

Participants are seen at the Red Bull Half Court Finals 2020 in Vilnius, Lithuania. — Photo taken from www.redbullcontentpool.com

Sporting Kansas City player tests positive for COVID-19

NEW YORK: A player for Sporting Kansas City has tested positive for COVID-19, the Major League Soccer squad announced Saturday, and started self-isolation under league safety protocols. All other players and members of the club have returned multiple negative test results and have no symptoms, the team said in a statement.

Team medical officials will monitor the unidentified player, who will remain in isolation until medically cleared by Sporting Kansas City staff. The team has also started contact tracing ahead of the its home match Sunday against Minnesota United. MLS testing protocols require players to be tested every other day, including the day before each match. Sporting Kansas City and Minnesota are battling for the lead in the Western Conference, each on 17 points, one behind defending MLS champion Seattle, the West leaders.

Minnesota and Kansas City are both 5-3 with two drawn with a plus-five goal differential, the Loons ahead of sporting 21-20 in total goals to own second place. Eastern Conference leaders Columbus Crew battled back from two goals down Saturday to salvage a 2-2 draw against Chicago Fire at Soldier Field, with Gyasi Zardes capping the scoring with an 88th-minute strike. Djordje Mihailovic opened the scoring in the 11th minute, notching his first goal of the season for the struggling Fire.

Less than five minutes later, Robert Beric doubled the score, racing onto a cross from Fabian Herbers and firing it home. Although Mihailovic came off injured after 22 minutes, the Crew started the second half with energy, forcing Bobby Shuttleworth into a series of saves. Columbus pulled one goal back in the 68th minute through Fatai Alashe. And USA striker Zardes rescued a point with his 88th-minute strike, taking a deflected pass from Youness Mokhtar near the top of the penalty area and turning to score his third goal in two games.—AFP

Astros rally past Dodgers in 9th

White Sox overpower Tigers; Twins down Indians

LOS ANGELES: Six consecutive Houston Astros batters reached base to open the ninth inning, starting a five-run uprising that led to a 7-5 victory over the host Los Angeles Dodgers on Saturday in the opener of a brief two-game series. Yuli Gurriel drove in three runs for the Astros, who arrived at Dodger Stadium on Saturday afternoon greeted by angry Dodgers fans holding signs and banging trash cans as a reaction to Houston's 2017 cheating scandal. The Astros won the 2017 World Series in seven games over the Dodgers.

Trailing 5-2 and heading into the ninth inning against Dodgers closer Kenley Jansen, the Astros got singles from Carlos Correa and Aledmys Diaz before Josh Reddick hit a two-run double to bring Houston within a run. Martin Maldonado singled to put runners on the corners before Houston made it 5-5 when Dodgers third baseman Max Muncy was unable to field George Springer's hot smash. The Astros took a 6-5 lead on a single by Alex Bregman and Jansen (3-1) was replaced by Adam Kolarek. Houston added one more run in the ninth on a sacrifice fly from Gurriel. Josh James (1-0) did not allow a run over 1 1/3 innings to pick up the victory, while Ryan Pressley earned his ninth save.

White Sox 14, Tigers 0

Jose Abreu went 4-for-4 with a pair of three-run home runs and a career high-tying seven RBIs, and Tim Anderson had four hits and an RBI to power host Chicago past Detroit for the eighth time in nine games between the teams this season. One night after his career-best 22-game hitting streak was snapped, Abreu erupted to help the American League Central-leading White Sox to their seventh win in eight games. Every Chicago starter had a hit. Eloy Jimenez had three, and Nick Madrigal added two. White Sox right-hander Reynaldo Lopez benefited from the deluge of support, pitching five shutout innings to earn his first victory since defeating Detroit on the penultimate day of the 2019 regular season. Lopez (1-2) scattered three hits, one walk and two strikeouts while throwing 75 pitches.

Yankees 2, Orioles 1 (10 innings)

Luke Voit hit a game-winning sacrifice fly leading off the 10th inning as host New York won beat Baltimore for the ninth straight time at Yankee Stadium. The Yankees won their fourth straight following a 5-15 slide while the Orioles lost their fourth straight after winning six of eight, falling 4 1/2 games behind the Yankees for the second wild-card spot in the American League. The Orioles have been outscored 18-2 in the series. DJ LeMahieu was the automatic runner on second base and on the first pitch from Hunter Harvey (0-2) he took third on a wild pitch. Baltimore brought the infield in and Voit lifted a fly ball to center fielder Cedric Mullins to cap an eight-pitch plate appearance and easily score LeMahieu.

Rays 5, Red Sox 4

Brandon Lowe's team-leading 12th home run broke a seventh-inning tie as host Tampa Bay beat Boston in St. Petersburg, Fla. Lowe broke a 4-4 deadlock by sky-ing a long shot with two outs in the seventh off Marcus Walden (0-2) - a deep drive to right-center on a high fastball-to give the Rays their seventh victory in nine games against Boston. Tampa Bay starter Tyler Glasnow (3-1) worked seven innings and became the pitcher of record after Lowe's blast. Austin Meadows produced a solo homer, and Manuel Margot was 2-for-3 with a double and two RBIs.

Braves 2, Nationals 1

Rookie Ian Anderson allowed only a bunt single in seven scoreless innings to send visiting Atlanta to victory over last-place Washington. Anderson (3-0), ranked as the top pitching prospect in the Braves' organization, struck out a career-best nine. He became the team's first rookie to win his first three decisions since Williams Perez started 4-0 in 2015. Patrick Corbin was the hard-luck loser and suffered his fifth straight loss. Corbin (2-5) pitched a season-high seven innings and allowed two runs on nine hits with eight strikeouts.

Cardinals 7, Reds 1

Harrison Bader hit a three-run homer to power St. Louis to an easy victory over visiting Cincinnati. Brad

Miller, Matt Carpenter and Paul Goldschmidt also hit home runs for the Cardinals, who are 17-0 when they score at least five runs. The second-place Cardinals remained three games back of the NL Central-leading Chicago Cubs. St. Louis starting pitcher Dakota Hudson (3-2) held the Reds to one run on one hit and four walks in six innings. He also struck out four. Losing pitcher Tejay Antone (0-2) retired just nine batters. He allowed two runs on four hits and three walks.

Rangers 5, Athletics 2 (Game 1)

Rougned Odor belted Daulton Jefferies' 20th major-league pitch for a three-run homer and Ronald Guzman added a two-run shot in the first inning as Texas made it hold up for a victory over visiting Oakland in the first game of a doubleheader. The win was just Texas' second in eight head-to-heads with Oakland this season. The 25-year-old Jefferies walked two of the first four men he faced before Odor took him deep to right field for his fifth homer of the season and a 3-0 lead. After Elvis Andrus followed with an infield single, Guzman then crushed his third homer of the season to right, making it 5-0.

Athletics 10, Rangers 1 (Game 2)

Oakland vented the frustration of an earlier loss in a seven-run second inning, routing host Texas for a split of their doubleheader at Arlington, Texas. After Texas starter Colby Allard (0-6) had worked around a one-out single by Tommy La Stella in a scoreless first, the A's jumped all over the Rangers left-hander in the second as Ramon Laureano and Marcus Semien had RBI singles, and Sean Murphy a two-run hit as the A's put their first six batters on base. Oakland right-hander Chris Bassitt (4-2) benefitted from the abundance of support, coasting through six innings, allowing a home run to Joey Gallo, his ninth of the season, with one out in the sixth to end a shutout bid. Semien had two hits and 4 RBIs, including his sixth homer.

Blue Jays 3, Mets 2

Robbie Ray struck out five in five innings, Jonathan Villar had two hits, two stolen bases and an RBI and host Toronto defeated New York at Buffalo as the teams have split the first two games of a three-game series. Travis Shaw and Randal Grichuk also had RBIs for the Blue Jays. Amed Rosario had three hits for the Mets but was picked off first for the final out of the game after reaching base on a wild pitch after he struck out. Ray (1-0) allowed one run, four hits and two walks. Rafael Dolis pitched around a walk and a wild pitch in the ninth to earn his fourth save. Mets right-hander Seth Lugo (2-3) allowed three runs, seven hits and one walk with five strikeouts in 5 1/3 innings.

Twins 8, Indians 4

Byron Buxton, Williams Astudillo, Marwin Gonzalez, Eddie Rosario and Miguel Sano each homered as the Minnesota Twins hit a season-high five home runs to beat visiting Cleveland in Minneapolis. It was the ninth win in the last 11 games for the Twins, who remained a game behind the first-place Chicago White Sox in the American League Central. Rich Hill (2-1) picked up the victory, allowing two runs on four hits and two walks while striking out seven over five innings. Jose Ramirez homered and had two hits, Carlos Santana doubled and scored twice and Jordan Luplow had a triple and RBI for Cleveland, which lost its fifth straight game. Zach Plesac (3-2), who had won three consecutive starts, took the loss.

Phillies 12, Marlins 6

Didi Gregorius slugged a grand slam to lead visiting Philadelphia to a resounding win over Miami, despite two players leaving the game early. Bryce Harper went 3-for-4 with a solo homer, double, three runs scored and two walks for the Phillies, who tied this rare seven-game series 2-2. Brian Anderson hit a three-run homer and Jesus Aguilar went 3-for-4 with a solo homer for the Marlins. Phillies rookie starter Spencer Howard left the game in the fourth due to shoulder stiffness, and catcher JT Realmuto also was pulled in the eighth after experiencing reported hip discomfort while running the bases.

Angels 5, Rockies 2 (11 innings)

Jared Walsh hit a three-run homer in the 11th inning



LOS ANGELES: Enrique Hernandez #14 of the Los Angeles Dodgers jumps over Michael Brantley #23 of the Houston Astros, on his throw to first, on a double play attempt, during the eighth inning at Dodger Stadium on September 12, 2020. —AFP

to lift Los Angeles Angels over Colorado to even their three-game series in Denver. Walsh homered for the fourth consecutive game and fifth in his last seven, lifting a 1-1 slider from Tyler Kinley (0-2) over the fence in right. Albert Pujols and Justin Upton also had two hits apiece for the Angels, who have won seven of 10. Ty Buttrey (2-3) pitched a scoreless 10th before Matt Andriese pitched the 11th for his first save. Rockies starter Kyle Freeland went six innings, allowing two runs and four hits. He struck out four and walked two. Tyler Kinley (0-2) gave up Walsh's homer and took the loss.

Royals 7, Pirates 4

Adalberto Mondesi hit a two-run homer and Whit Merrifield added a solo shot as Kansas City beat visiting Pittsburgh, to give the Royals a season-best fifth straight win. Salvador Perez added an RBI single for the Royals. Josh Bell, Bryan Reynolds and Adam Frazier hit solo homers for Pittsburgh, which has lost three straight. Kansas City's Carlos Hernandez, in his first career start, pitched three innings, allowing three runs and three hits, with two strikeouts and no walks. Kyle Zimmer (1-0) pitched a scoreless 2 1/3 innings. Greg Holland pitched the ninth for his fifth save.

Cubs 4, Brewers 2

Jason Heyward hit a go-ahead, three-run homer in the top of the ninth inning, and Chicago rallied for a win over host Milwaukee. Heyward's blast to right-center field punctuated a wild comeback for the Cubs, who were two outs away from suffering their third shutout loss in the past four games. Ildemaro Vargas added a solo shot in the next at-bat to give Chicago a two-run advantage. Milwaukee squandered a shot at its third straight victory, which would have matched its longest winning streak of the season. Ryan Braun hit a two-run homer to lead the Brewers at the plate.

Mariners 7, Diamondbacks 3

Ty France homered for the second night in a row to highlight a four-run first inning as Seattle knocked off host Arizona in Phoenix. Jose Marmolejos also homered and drove in three runs while starter Justus Sheffield (3-3) held the Diamondbacks to two runs and five hits over seven innings as the Mariners snapped a three-game losing streak. Arizona got a two-run single from Wyatt Mathisen and saw a two-game winning streak end. Zac Gallen (1-2) took the loss after giving up seven hits, seven runs and five walks, against six strikeouts, over five innings.

Giants at Padres (postponed)

Saturday's game between San Francisco and San Diego at Petco Park was postponed for a second consecutive day because of a reported positive coronavirus test by a Giants player. The stadium underwent intensive cleaning on Saturday, and both teams are awaiting word on whether or not MLB will play Sunday's scheduled matchup.—Reuters

Stuard, Hahn and Percy share PGA Tour lead in Napa

SAN FRANCISCO: Brian Stuard rolled in a six-foot birdie putt at the 18th to join a three-way tie for the US PGA Tour Safeway Open lead on Saturday alongside James Hahn and Australian Cameron Percy. The trio topped a crowded leaderboard on a day when more than half a dozen players held or shared the lead at Silverado Resort in Napa, California. Stuard, chasing a second career PGA title to go with his 2016 Zurich Classic crown, started the day five adrift. But he got rolling with birdies at the third fourth and fifth. He made a four-foot birdie putt at 12 and a two-footer at 14 before picking up a stroke at the par-five 18th, despite finding the rough off the tee.

"You've got to make a bunch of birdies, that's the name of the game this week," said Stuard, whose six-under 66 put him on 16-under 200. Hahn also played without a bogey, firing five birdies in a five-under 67 for his share of the lead. "I just had a goal in mind today just to kind of have a clean scorecard," said Hahn, who returned in January after being sidelined almost eight months with an elbow injury. "Would have been nice to birdie a couple of the par fives, but anytime you birdie three out of the four par threes I think you're doing something good."

Percy carded a four-under par 68, moving to 16-under with his fourth birdie of the day, with a 32-foot putt at the 10th. Bogeys at 11 and 14 followed, but he birdied 16 and 17 to get back atop the board in the quest for a first US PGA Tour title at the age of 46. "It would mean the world to me," said Percy, who struggled throughout the round with a flare up of pain in his ribs. "This week it freed up, and then today the last few shots on the range really hurt," he said, adding that it prevented him from turning completely after impact with the ball.

"But I managed to keep it in play and hit a few nice wedges at the end there and got around in a good score." Overnight leader Sam Burns struggled to a one-over par 72 that left him a stroke off the lead on 201. He was tied with Mexican-born Norwegian Kristoffer Ventura, who carded a 66, and Harry Higgs, who followed his second-round 62 with a 70. Stewart Cink, the 2009 British Open champion, carded a 65 to head a group on 202 that also included Argentina's Emiliano Grillo (65), Scotland's Russell Knox (70), Doug Ghim (69) and DJ Trahan (70).—AFP

Sports

Hamilton beats Bottas to first ever Tuscan GP pole

Verstappen will line up third; Leclerc fifth for Ferrari

MUGELLO, Italy: Formula One championship leader Lewis Hamilton took pole position for the first Tuscan Grand Prix at Italy's Mugello circuit on Saturday and dealt another blow to Mercedes team mate Valtteri Bottas. Red Bull's Max Verstappen qualified third behind the Mercedes pair with Thai team mate Alexander Albon lining up fourth. Charles Leclerc kept Ferrari's head up for their 1,000th world championship grand prix, qualifying fifth at a track owned by the Italian team who are struggling after two dismal performances at Spa and Monza.

Sebastian Vettel was more than half a second slower and will line up 14th in the other Ferrari. The pole was the 95th of Hamilton's career and seventh in nine races this season, continuing Mercedes' 100% record on Saturdays. Bottas had every right to be disappointed, after lapping fastest in every practice session and also in the first phase of qualifying. The Finn was then denied a chance to go faster just when it mattered most when Renault's Esteban Ocon spun off and brought out yellow flags just after Hamilton had completed his final effort.

Hamilton's provisional pole lap of one minute 15.144 seconds was ultimately good enough for the top slot, while the best Bottas could manage was 0.059 slower. "It's been a really tough weekend," said Hamilton, who had struggled on Friday. "This track is phenomenal... It's a really, really challenging circuit and you saw Valtteri was quicker than me all day yes-

terday and even this morning, and in Q1 (the first phase). "I've been working so hard in the background to really try and improve on my lines, improve on the set up and with the engineers and mechanics we did such a great job and finally got the lap that I needed."

Hamilton is 47 points clear of Bottas in the standings after eight races and the Finn needs to pull out something special to prevent the Briton running away with a seventh title. He will have to make a much better start than last weekend, when he was also alongside Hamilton on the front row at the Italian Grand Prix at Monza but had dropped to sixth by the end of the first lap. The jury is also still out on how easy it will be to overtake at Mugello, a fast and flowing circuit making its championship debut after the COVID-19 pandemic forced other venues to cancel.

"I still had more time in there," said Bottas. "I was looking forward to the last lap but I didn't get the opportunity." Verstappen said he had been surprised by the Red Bull's pace: "I didn't expect to fight in qualifying but this weekend it has looked very promising," said the Dutchman. AlphaTauri's Pierre Gasly, who won the astonishing race at Monza, will need to pull off an even bigger shock on Sunday after qualifying 16th. "He had too much understeer on the car... he simply was too slow," said team boss Franz Tost.

Mexican Sergio Perez qualified sixth for Racing Point but will drop behind his Canadian team mate Lance Stroll on the grid due to a one-place drop in-



TUSCANY: Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton drives during the third practice session at the Mugello circuit ahead of the Tuscany Formula One Grand Prix in Scarperia e San Piero on September 12, 2020. — AFP

curred in Friday practice for a collision with Alfa Romeo's Kimi Raikkonen. Australian Daniel Ricciardo starts eighth for Renault with Carlos Sainz ninth for McLaren and Frenchman Ocon completing the top

10. "I am sorry for the guys that couldn't complete their laps," said Ocon of his spin. "Everyone pushes hard on this track and it bites you when you go over (the limit)." — Reuters

Dallas Stars take 3-1 stranglehold lead over Knights

LOS ANGELES: Jamie Benn scored the tiebreaking goal and Anton Khudobin stopped 32 shots as the Dallas Stars beat the Vegas Golden Knights 2-1 to take a commanding lead in their Western Conference final series. Despite being heavily outshot for the second straight game, the Stars got the victory thanks to superior goaltending and an ability to make the most of their scoring chances and now have a 3-1 playoff series lead.

Benn and Joe Pavelski both scored in the second period after defenceman Alec Martinez had opened the scoring for Vegas earlier in the period. Benn's goal came with under a minute to go in the second and from then on it was a matter of Russian goalie Khudobin closing the door in the third. "Unbelievable team effort, I would say. I really appreciate that. It's huge, huge, huge," said Khudobin. Vegas goaltender Robin Lehner was less busy making just 18

total saves.

Game five is today night in the quarantine bubble in Edmonton. There was no scoring in the first period. Martinez scored to make it 1-0 Vegas at 7:44 of the second by hammering a 92 mile per hour slap-shot past Khudobin on the powerplay. Pavelski tied it up about four minutes later with his ninth goal of the postseason. Andrew Coglianone forced a turnover for the Stars in the Vegas' end and the puck went to Pavelski whose backhand hit the stick of a Knight defender and deflected up over the shoulder of Lehner into the net.

"I was happy to see that one go in," Pavelski said. Benn scored the winner on the powerplay at 19:01 of the second by wristling home a shot after Lehner failed to control the rebound. It was another frustrating offensive performance by the Knights whose only goal Saturday came from a defenceman. They are being led in scoring this postseason by defenceman Shea Theodore, who has seven goals, 11 assists and 18 points.

"All we need is to finish," Vegas coach Peter DeBoer said. "I think the effort's there, I think we're creating a lot of really good looks." Vegas have outshot the Stars by a wide margin in the series 130-92. Vegas forward Mark Stone went to the dressing room with an injury after taking a shot from Pavelski



EDMONTON: The Vegas Golden Knights and Dallas Star scuffle during the third period in Game Four of the Western Conference Final at Rogers Place on September 12, 2020. — AFP

off his right foot. He returned in the third but appeared to still be in some pain. The winner of the series will play either the New York Islanders or the Tampa Bay Lightning in the Stanley Cup finals. Game four of their series is Sunday.—AFP

FIFA on trial as Valcke, Al-Khelaifi trial begins in Swiss court

LAUSANNE: FIFA's disgraced former secretary general Jerome Valcke and Paris Saint-Germain chief Nasser Al-Khelaifi go on trial in Switzerland today in the latest chapter of football's seemingly endless corruption saga. The two men have been indicted for alleged corruption in the attribution of football broadcasting rights-Al-Khelaifi is also the boss of beIN Media.

The hearing, which has already been delayed because of the coronavirus, is scheduled to last until September 25 at the Federal Criminal Court of Bellinzona. But it will open under another cloud as suspicions of collusion between the Swiss prosecution and FIFA have undermined its credibility. Centre stage is Valcke, former right-hand man of ousted FIFA president Sepp Blatter, who appears in two separate cases of television rights corruption—he faces up to five years in prison if found guilty.

The 59-year-old Frenchman stands accused of wanting to transfer the Middle East and North Africa rights for screening the 2026 and 2030 World Cups to the Qatari giant beIN Media, in exchange for "unwarranted benefits" from Al-Khelaifi. According to the prosecution, the case relates to a meeting on October 24, 2013 at the French headquarters of beIN, when Al-Khelaifi allegedly promised to buy a villa in Sardinia for five million euros, granting its exclusive use to Valcke. Al-Khelaifi, who has denied the charges, was then to hand the property over to the Frenchman two years later under certain conditions.

In return, the prosecution claims, Valcke committed to "do what was in his power" to ensure beIN would become the regional broadcaster for the two World Cups, something which happened on April 29, 2014, in an agreement that FIFA has never since contested. Legally, however, it is no longer a question of "private corruption". The prosecution had to drop that qualification because of an "amicable agreement" reached at the end of January between FIFA and Al-Khelaifi, the contents of which have not been made public. So Valcke must now justify having "kept for himself" advantages "which should have gone to FIFA".

An employee at the time, the obligation to return money received in the course of his duties "also applies to bribes", according to a decision in March. Al-Khelaifi, one of the most influential men in world football, faces the charge of "inciting Valcke to commit aggravated criminal mismanagement", for which he could also face five years in prison. "The major part of this file does not concern our client," his lawyers told AFP while dismissing the charges against him as "clearly artificial". Al-Khelaifi denies buying the property in question or promising it to Valcke.—AFP

LeBron leads Lakers to NBA West finals with rout of Rockets

MIAMI: LeBron James had 29 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists as the Los Angeles Lakers advanced to their first NBA Western Conference final in a decade with a 119-96 blowout win over the Houston Rockets on Saturday. Anthony Davis tallied 13 points and 11 rebounds, Kyle Kuzma had 17 and Markieff Morris finished with 16 for the Lakers, who eliminated the Rockets in five games in the quarantine bubble in Orlando, Florida.

Los Angeles advanced to their first NBA final four since the Kobe Bryant-led Lakers beat Phoenix for the conference title and then defeated Boston for the 2010 NBA championship, the last time they won. "It's the reason I wanted to be a part of this franchise is to take them back to a place they were accustomed to being. And that's competing for a championship," said James. "It's an honor for me to wear the purple and gold and for us to just try to continue the legacy and just play great basketball for our fans."

This will be James' 11th career conference finals but when asked by reporters how it feels, he changed the subject to talk about the group as a whole. "Every game is a learning experience for us. Every game is another opportunity for us to get better. We want to continue to build," said James. They will face either the Los Angeles Clippers or the Denver Nuggets in the next playoff round. The Clippers lead that series 3-2. The Lakers got off to their best start of the series, dominating the opening plays to take a 35-20 lead at the end of the first quarter.

Their only lull of the game came in the start of the second quarter when Houston briefly woke from their slumber and cut the lead to seven, 38-31. But the Lakers outscored the Rockets 33-18 in the third to take full command. They drained 19 three-pointers and shot 52 percent from the floor. With the game in hand, the Lakers sat three-time NBA champion James and Davis for much of the fourth quarter. "Everything is falling into place. When I got here the goal was to win a championship and now we are eight wins away," said Davis.

'A piece away'

Once again the James Harden-led Rockets put up little resistance as Houston, after surprising the Lakers in game one of the series, lost their fourth straight and their third in a row by more than 10 points. Harden led the Rockets with 30 points and Russell Westbrook scored just 10 in the loss. Harden had a



FLORIDA: Russell Westbrook #0 of the Houston Rockets handles the ball against Alex Caruso #4 of the Los Angeles Lakers and Rajon Rondo #9 of the Los Angeles Lakers during the fourth quarter in Game Five of the Western Conference Second Round on September 12, 2020. — AFP

disappointing series, delivering another series of fourth-quarter playoff disappearing acts that have pockmarked his career. "Tough season for us. Obviously it didn't end the way we wanted it to. So, we just got to figure it out," he said.

In the past five years, Harden has shot less than 25 percent from beyond the arc in post-season fourth quarters and overtime. He finished two-of-eight from three-point range on Saturday. Harden said Saturday all they need to become great is to add one more piece to the puzzle. "It's very, very frustrating. Especially the amount of work individually I put in," he said. "But I've got to keep chipping away. I've got to keep going and keep going until I can't go anymore. I feel like we're a piece away and we've just got keep trying to figure it out. Keep trying to put the pieces around me and Russ to get us where we want to go," said Harden.

Temper flared in the fourth quarter both on and off the floor. The brother of Lakers Rajon Rondo now has the dubious honor of being the first fan thrown out of a bubble game after he exchanged words with Houston's Westbrook. The public is not allowed in the arena because of the coronavirus pandemic but players are allowed to invite a limited number of family and friends to watch the games in person. Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni, whose contract expires at the end of the season, couldn't say whether he will be back. "We'll see what happens. I had four years. Hopefully it keeps going, but you just never know," he said.—AFP

Nadal renews Djokovic rivalry in quest for 10th Italian Open title

ROME: Rafael Nadal returns to competition after a six-month break chasing a tenth Italian Open title in Rome against his greatest rival Novak Djokovic before his bid for a 13th Roland Garros crown later this month. The Spaniard has won on the red clay of the Foro Italico, normally played in May but which starts behind closed doors in Rome on Monday, a record nine times, including the last two editions. World number one Djokovic, a four-time Rome winner and five-time runner-up, lost to Nadal last year in the final.

The 33-year-old is the top seed ahead of world number two Nadal, in the tuneup for the final Grand Slam of the season at the French Open which begins on September 27. Djokovic won the French Open in 2016, with Nadal having won the last three titles since. Nadal, 34, has not played since winning in Acapulco at the end of February, skipping the US Open over coronavirus concerns. Djokovic tested positive for coronavirus in June after an exhibition tournament he organised, but the Serb won his 80th career title at the Cincinnati Masters last month.

He also captured his 35th ATP Masters crown, matching Nadal's all-time record, with the pair battling to pull ahead in Rome this week. Djokovic arrives in Rome after his bid for an 18th Grand Slam ended amid controversy at the US Open a week ago when he was disqualified after accidentally striking a female line judge with a ball during his last-16 match. Nadal opens his Rome challenge on Wednesday against 27th-ranked fellow Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta, the recipient of a first round bye, after his run to the US Open semi-finals.

Nadal could play either Greek third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas or seventh seeded Italian Fabio Fognini for a place in the final. Nadal has a 61-6 tournament record, having not lost before the quarter-finals since 2008. Djokovic will start against either Italian Salvatore Caruso or a qualifier, with a potential semi-final clash against France's fifth seed Gael Monfils or tenth seeded Swiss Stan Wawrinka. US Open finalists Dominic Thiem and Alexander Zverev, the 2017 winner, both pulled out after their runs in Flushing Meadows, with injured Roger Federer also sidelined.

Halep top women's seed

Former French Open champion Simona Halep headlines the women's event which also includes defending champion Karolina Pliskova and two-time Rome winner Elina Svitolina. Serena Williams withdrew due to a left Achilles tendon injury sustained in her US Open semi-final defeat. The former world number one, a four-time Rome champion, joined 2019 US Open winner Bianca Andreescu and two-time Wimbledon winner Petra Kvitova in skipping the Italian event which will also be without world number one Ashleigh Barty and newly-crowned US Open champion Naomi Osaka.

World number two Halep won the Prague title a month ago, and will face either Anastasiya Sevastova or Jasmine Paolini in the second round. Former French Open champion Garbine Muguruza opens against American Sloane Stephens. Venus Williams, the 1999 Rome champion, has a tough start against US Open finalist Victoria Azarenka, with the winner taking on third seeded Sofia Kenin. Dutch player Kiki Bertens and Swiss Belinda Bencic are among the six top ten players in the field.—AFP

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15 LeBron leads Lakers to West finals with rout of Rockets



Leicester bounce back, thrash West Brom

Everton break Tottenham jinx as Calvert-Lewin heads winner



WEST BROMWICH: Leicester City's Belgian defender Timothy Castagne (center right) jumps to head the ball to score the opening goal during the English Premier League football match between West Bromwich Albion and Leicester City yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Leicester bounced back from a disappointing end to last season to get their new campaign off to a winning start as Jamie Vardy scored two penalties in a 3-0 win at West Brom. Belgian international Timothy Castagne opened the scoring on his debut as West Brom were given a harsh lesson on the step up in quality they face on their return to the Premier League. Leicester won just two of their last 10 games to miss out on a place in the Champions League on the last day of last season and Brendan Rodgers had voiced his frustration at a lack of funds to help their chances of success in four competitions this season.

But the one new signing the Foxes have added made a big impact as Castagne's towering header from Dennis Praet's cross opened the floodgates 11 minutes into the second half. Despite Leicester's drop-off in the second half of the campaign, Vardy still won the Premier League's golden boot last season and the 33-year-old launched his challenge to be top scorer once more with two expertly taken

spot-kicks in the final 16 minutes after he and James Justin had been felled inside the area.

Everton 1 Spurs 0

Everton ended a miserable run of form against Tottenham Hotspur as Dominic Calvert-Lewin's second-half header earned them a 1-0 away victory in their Premier League opener yesterday. Carlo Ancelotti gave debuts to three new signings including Colombian James Rodriguez but it was Sheffield-born Calvert-Lewin who gave Everton a dream start to the season as he headed powerfully home in the 55th minute.

Tottenham also gave debuts to right back Matt Doherty and midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg but were disappointing as they suffered a first defeat by Everton since 2012. Their best chances came before the break as Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford denied both Dele Alli and Doherty. Tottenham lacked imagination after Everton went ahead and the visitors held out with relative ease. — Agencies



LONDON: Everton's English striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin (left) climbs to plant this header in the net for Everton's first goal during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Everton at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium yesterday. — AFP

Could Messi departure unlock the Barcelona rebuilding project?

MADRID: Barcelona would be shattered if Lionel Messi left the club he has graced since he was a boy, but could the departure of arguably the world's top player create the financial conditions to rebuild? The Argentinean maestro, who has been with the club since he was 13, handed in a transfer request after Barca's humiliating 8-2 thrashing by Bayern Munich in the quarter-finals of the Champions League.

After all the highs of his 21 years with the club, this was one step too far for Messi. The focus, naturally enough, has been on the football ramifications for Barcelona: how would a Messi exit affect them on the pitch as they try to rebuild under new coach Ronald Koeman? But equally important for the Barca board is the financial implication of allowing the 33-year-old, who earns over 100 million euros (\$118 million) in salary and bonuses per year, to take his brand to another club. The Catalans, however, are in deep financial difficulty.

Quite apart from the 200 million euros it claims to have "lost" since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, Barca have been carrying a net debt of nearly 200 million euros since 2019. The club has taken out a loan of 140 million over five years with an American investment fund to help pay off the debt. And it has a massive player payroll, reported to be 542 million euros in the 2018-2019 season. So, in simple commercial terms a transfer fee, even if well below the 700 million euros quoted in his disputed release clause, would be a welcome windfall.

"Negotiate, agree, and smile," wrote FC Barcelona

journalist Xavier Bosch in a column in Mundo Deportivo on Tuesday, asking everyone to "act intelligently". That may be harder done than said in the world of football, where passion often overrules economic pragmatism. Not surprisingly the supporters do not want to see the player nicknamed La Pulga (The Flea) leave, even though his performances in the last year suggest a slight waning of his considerable powers. But his transfer could be the real starting point on and off the field for the reconstruction of a club that not so long ago was the yardstick and envy of the world. "I like Messi a lot, but I like Barca even more," former club president Joan Gaspart told the Marca sports daily last week.

"It is the club that is in control, not the player. If Messi leaves for an amount lower than that of his clause, it will be more humiliating than the 8-2" against Bayern, he said. According to Football Leaks, Messi's annual gross salary in 2018, including bonuses, was more than 100 million euros, almost double that of his former teammate Neymar. The Brazilian, who left Barcelona for Qatari-owned Paris Saint-Germain in 2017 for a world record fee of 222 million euros, is paid around 52 million euros in salary per year.

"There has been a lot of talk about the fact that Barca have a very high payroll but a large part of that sum was intended for Leo and Luis Suarez," economist and FC Barcelona specialist Juan Maria Gay de Liebana told AFP. So in simple terms, even if they recruit another high-profile replacement, Barcelona could slash a chunk of cash from the payroll. — AFP

Osaka wins US Open to confirm status as new star

NEW YORK: Naomi Osaka ended Victoria Azarenka's dream run to claim her second US Open title in three years with a 1-6 6-3 6-3 comeback win on Saturday which cemented her status as the sport's leading light both on and off the court. Unlike the 22-year-old Japanese's first U.S. Open win in 2018 over Serena Williams, which was played in a frothing Arthur Ashe Stadium, Saturday's drama unfolded in a strangely quiet arena as COVID-19 health and safety protocols prevented fans from entering the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center.

But the lack of buzz around the stands did not stop the two former world number ones from producing a dazzling display of shot making. As Osaka walked off with a third Grand Slam title, Azarenka was denied a US Open crown for a third time having also finished runner-up in 2012 and 2013. Still it was a remarkable and unexpected run for the 31-year-old Belarusian, who reached her first major final in seven years.

It was the second time in two weeks Azarenka, twice a winner at the Australian Open, and Osaka had set up a final showdown. The pair had been set to meet in the Western and Southern Open final on Aug. 29 until Osaka withdrew due to a hamstring injury. "I actually don't want to play you in more finals," Osaka told Azarenka with a smile during the victory ceremony. "I didn't really enjoy that. That was a really tough match for me. And yes, really inspiring for me because I used to watch you play here when I was younger so just to have the opportunity to play you is really great and I learned a lot."

The presentation ceremony showed the precautions

everyone has had to take during the COVID-19 era, with the two finalists having to pick up their respective prizes themselves from a table placed on court, while everyone stood socially distant for the obligatory photocall. As she has done in every match over the past fortnight, Osaka appeared on court with her left thigh strapped and a facemask with the name of a Black American victim of police brutality or racial injustice.

For the final it was Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old boy shot by police in 2014 while playing with a toy gun in a playground. Osaka had already replaced Serena Williams as top earner and now has assumed the leadership mantle that goes with it. With the United States rocked by unrest following the shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man, just three weeks ago by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Osaka had withdrawn from her semi-final at the Western and Southern Open in protest.

The men's and women's tour responded by postponing all the matches that were due to take place on the day of the protest by 24 hours and persuaded Osaka to contest the rescheduled match. By taking the stand, the 22-year-old activist had made her point. Azarenka, who ended Serena Williams bid for a record equalling 24th Grand Slam title in the semi-finals, carried that momentum into the final with a near flawless first set. One of top returners in the women's game, an energized Azarenka broke the fourth seed to start the final and twice more in a lopsided opening set that took just 27 minutes.

If any spectators had been allowed in Arthur Ashe Stadium, they no doubt would have been left stunned by events as a rampaging Azarenka again broke Osaka at the first opportunity in the second to go 2-0 up. But Osaka would not lose her composure. After no aces in the opening set, Osaka, one of the game's top servers, slowly began to find her mark in the second. She hammered down five aces while helping herself to three breaks on way to levelling the match. — Reuters