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THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 2017

THULHIJJA 9, 1438 AH

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His Highness
the Amir extends
Eid Al-Adha
greetings



Harvey hits
Louisiana as
Texas rescuers
race against clock



Qatar crisis
shakes East
Africa, home to
Gulf militaries



KFA amends
laws to get
FIFA ban
lifted



150 FILS
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32 PAGES

FAITHFUL GATHER FOR START OF ANNUAL HAJJ PILGRIMAGE

ENVIRONMENTALLY-CONSCIOUS WORSHIPPERS EYE GREEN INSPIRATION



Min 28°
Max 47°
High Tide
05:29 & 20:16
Low Tide
13:38

UN CHIEF CALLS FOR LIFTING OF GAZA BLOCKADE



GAZA: UN chief Antonio Guterres called for the blockade of Gaza to be lifted yesterday as he visited the Palestinian enclave enduring "one of the most dramatic humanitarian crises" he had seen. The secretary general's comments came as he wrapped up his first visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories since taking office. Repeatedly throughout the visit he had called for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, long the focus of international diplomacy but currently under threat.

Yesterday in Gaza, Guterres said he had been struck by humanitarian conditions in the overcrowded and impoverished enclave, where an electricity crisis has worsened and clean water is lacking. "I am deeply moved to be in Gaza today, unfortunately to witness one of the most dramatic humanitarian crises that I've seen in many years working as a humanitarian in the United Nations," Guterres said.

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Pilgrims walk and pray yesterday on Mount Arafat, also known as Jabal Al-Rahma (Mount of Mercy), southeast of the Saudi holy city of Makkah, on the eve of Arafat Day, which is the climax of the hajj pilgrimage. — AFP

MAKKAH: More than two million Muslims from around the world began the hajj pilgrimage at Islam's holiest sites yesterday, a religious duty and an epic multi-stage journey. On the esplanade of Makkah's Grand Mosque, the excitement was palpable as crowds from all four corners of the world gathered for a pilgrimage that all able Muslims are required to perform at least once in their lives. Tidjani Traore, a public service consultant from Benin, said he was on his 22nd pilgrimage at the age of 53. "Every time, there are new emotions," he said. "There are new innovations for organizing and hosting the pilgrims. Now, for example, the tents are air-conditioned."

Wearing the simple garb of the pilgrim, the faithful waited at dawn with their suitcases for buses to take them to Mina five kilometers to the east. There, hundreds of thousands will gather before setting off today at dawn to climb Mount Arafat, the pinnacle of the hajj. First, however, they must perform a ritual walk known as the tawaf seven times around the Kaaba, a black masonry cube wrapped in a heavy silk cloth embroidered in gold with Quranic verses at the center of Makkah's Grand Mosque. The shrine is the point towards which Muslims around the world pray.

"I still have to finish the tawaf!" said a breathless Nour, 30, from Saudi Arabia as she rushed past without stopping. Sitting on a folding chair in the middle of the esplanade,

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QATAR AND RUSSIA TO BOOST ECONOMIC TIES

PAGE 17

IN SMARTPHONE AGE, HAJJ IS FOR SHARING

PAGE 22

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.— KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday.

News

In brief



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tanzania Jassem Al-Najem holds talks with Second Vice President of Zanzibar Seif Ali Iddi.— KUNA

CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES SENIOR OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem at Bayan Palace. His Highness the Crown Prince also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber

Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He also received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince hosted Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh who introduced to His Highness the General Manager of Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) Jamal

Al-Jalawi and KGAC Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Taxes Affairs Aseel Al-Munaifi, as well as KGAC Assistant Undersecretary for State's Property Affairs and Legal Affairs Ghazi Al-Enezi on the occasion of their new appointment.— KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses for a group photo with General Manager of (KGAC) Jamal Al-Jalawi, (KGAC) Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Taxes Affairs Aseel Al-Munaifi, (KGAC) Assistant Undersecretary for state's property affairs.

Zanzibar, Kuwait seek stronger bilateral ties

KUWAIT: Zanzibar is keen on strengthening ties with Kuwait especially within trade and commerce, Second Vice President of Zanzibar Seif Ali Iddi said yesterday. This remark came during a meeting between Iddi and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tanzania Jassem Al-Najem. In a statement by the Kuwaiti embassy, Iddi thanked Kuwait for its efforts to support his country's plans for development. Zanzibar, a semi-autonomous region of Tanzania, is about to witness a new era of its history after recent oil and gas discoveries, which will increase chances of economic cooperation with Kuwait, he added. Iddi said he is looking forward to the upcoming visit by a delegation from Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) which will include the signing of a loan agreement to expand and re-equip the main hospital in Zanzibar. On his part, Ambassador Al-Najem affirmed his country's keenness on developing ties Zanzibar on all possible domains. The relation between Kuwait and Zanzibar dates back to the early 20th century.

Kuwait oil price down 40 cents to \$48.28 pb

KUWAIT: The price of the Kuwaiti oil dropped by 40 cents to settle at \$48.28 per barrel (pb) Tuesday compared with \$48.68 pb last Monday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said yesterday. At the global level, oil prices were down more than 1.5 percent due to a decline in US crude oil as Hurricane Harvey is wreaking havoc in the Gulf of Mexico. The storm affected 16 percent of US oil operations and production. The price of the West Texas Intermediate's future contracts for September delivery went down by \$62 to reach \$45.95 per barrel, the same case for the Brent crude's future contracts for October delivery, which went down 20 cents to reach \$51.69 pb.

ISESCO blasts magazine's anti-Morocco front page

RABAT: The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) condemned French magazine Jeune Afrique for the cover of its latest edition which depicts the Moroccan flag with the phrase "terrorism born in Morocco". "This an unprofessional act," the ISESCO Director General Abdulaziz Al-Tuwaijri said in strongly worded statement. ISESCO added that labeling a whole nation, which has long history of civilization and a flourishing present and adopts a wise internationally-recognized policy approach in the fight against terrorism and extremism, is unacceptable. The magazine also published the photos of 10 young European men of Moroccan origins belonging to the cell which carried out the recent terror attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils in Spain. "The perpetrators of these terrorist acts in European countries were born and raised in these countries and have nothing to do with Morocco and its culture," Al-Tuwaijri stressed. ISESCO urged all member states as well as human rights and press organizations to denounce the magazine's actions as a violation of a well-respected country and a violation of the ethics of journalism.

Society of Engineers to take part in first forum

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Society of Engineers and the Union of Engineering Offices and Consultancy Houses agreed to more cooperation during a meeting held between the society's chairman Faisal Al-Ottol and the union's president Bader Al-Salman. Ottol said the society is currently preparing to take part in the first forum of government projects' consultancy services due to be held under the auspices of HH the PM from Sept 17-19. Salman stressed that both the society and the union work jointly on developing engineers' vocational and professional performance.

OIC condemns violence against the Rohingyas

JEDDAH: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has condemned the renewed outbreak of violence against the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar's western Rakhine State. The condemnation comes in the wake of ongoing violent and bloody confrontations between Rohingya rebels and state police and army forces across several districts and villages in the state since Friday. The renewed violence has so far killed over 100 people, and forced thousands of civilians to flee their homes to neighboring Bangladesh. The violence against the Rohingya has been evident through the systematic and organized destruction of many villages and homes by army and police forces, OIC said in a statement. The organization denounced the indiscriminate use of military force, including heavy artillery against civilian populations, which has displaced over 20,000 Rohingya civilians across the region. The OIC also called upon the Myanmar government to bring back displaced families to their homes immediately, and allow humanitarian aid agencies to assist the conflict-affected people.

HAJJ MISSION KEEN ON FULFILLING THE NEEDS OF PILGRIMS

MAKKAH: The Hajj mission is keen on offering topnotch services to Kuwait's Hajj pilgrims, aiming at fulfilling their needs during this great Islamic rite, an official from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs said yesterday. Undersecretary at the Ministry of Awqaf Fareed Emadi made this statement during his visits to the headquarters of several Kuwaiti Hajj groups. Emadi said that the Kuwaiti Hajj mission

is following up on the latest developments during the season, affirming that the mission will work hard to answer the needs of the state's pilgrims. Head of the Kuwaiti mission Khalifa Al-Othaina and other officials accompanied Emadi during his visits.

Meanwhile, waves of white-robed pilgrims, beseeching His Almighty for forgiveness, mercy and blessing, completed gathering in Mina yesterday as they per-

form their first day Hajj rituals, ahead of grouping on Mount Arafat today. According to the official Saudi Press Agency, traffic squads backed by security personnel organized flow of the faithful from Holy Makkah to Mina.

Interior Minister, Chairman of the Supreme Hajj Committee Prince Abdulaziz Bin Saud and Advisor of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Makkah Amir and Chairman of the

Central Hajj Committee, Prince Khaled Al-Faisal and other ranking officials oversaw the pilgrims flow and the procedures taken for their safety. The pilgrims would stay in Mina until today's sunrise, where they start heading to Mount Arafat, about 20 kilometers east of Makkah. Arafat day is the main ritual of Hajj, where worshippers stand in contemplative vigil to repent from their past sins and seek mercy from God.— Agencies



KUWAIT: Undersecretary at the Ministry Of Awqaf Fareed Emadi poses for a group photo during a visit at the headquarters of several Kuwaiti Hajj groups.— KUNA

NBK HOSPITAL TO OPEN NEW STEM, HEMATOLOGY CLINICS

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait's (NBK) Hospital will start operating its outpatient clinics for hematology, cancer and stem cells in its new building after Eid Al-Adha, the Health Ministry said. The fully equipped clinics will offer chemotherapy for leukemia patients and other vital services for children suffering from blood diseases, Director of the hospital, Dr Maitham Hussein, said in a statement yesterday. The opening of the clinics comes within the first phase of the hospital's operational plan, which will be followed by the opening of an education unit and a lecture hall, he said. According to the NBK, the opening of outpatient clinics aim at providing comprehensive healthcare for children with hematology and oncology.— KUNA



KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait's Hospital



KUWAIT: Director of the hospital Dr Maitham Hussein

PM HOSTS TOP OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh. Minister Al-Saleh then presented to His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak the Director General of Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) Jamal Al-Jalawi, Assistant Undersecretary for Financial

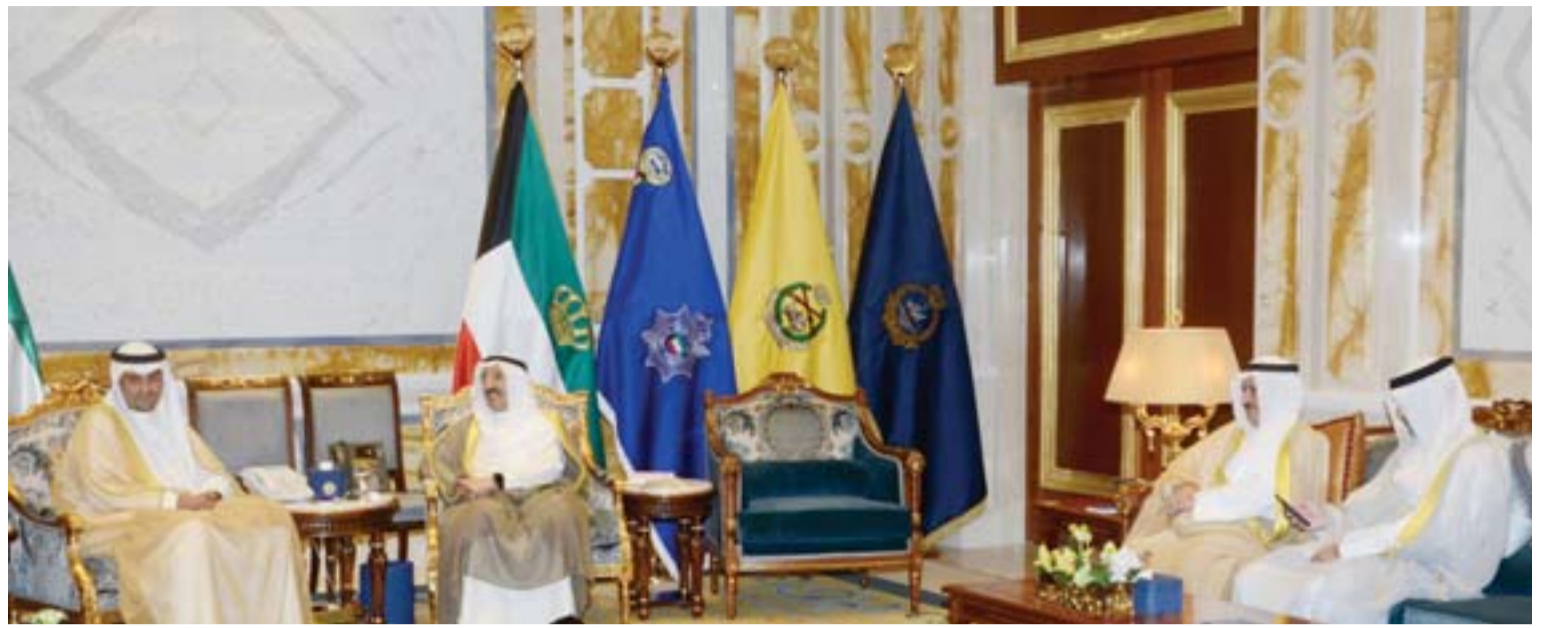
and Tax affairs in the Ministry of Finance Aseel Al-Munaifi and Assistant Undersecretary for State's property affairs and legal affairs Ghazi Al-Enezi on the occasion of their appointment to their new posts. The meeting was attended by Undersecretary at His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikhha Etemad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh, Director General of Kuwait General Administration of Customs Jamal Al-Jalawi and Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Tax Affairs Aseel Al-Munaifi — KUNA photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah poses for a group photo with the new appointed undersecretaries.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah hosted Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Khaled Al-Saleh at Bayan Palace as he presented to His Highness Director General of General Administration of Customs (KGAC) Jamal Al-Jalawi. He also presented to His Highness the Amir KGAC Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Taxes Affairs Aseel Al-Munaifi and KGAC Assistant Undersecretary for State's Property Affairs And Legal Affairs Ghazi Al-Enezi, on the occasion of their new appointment. The meeting was attended by Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Mohammad Dhaifallah Sharar. — KUNA

KUWAIT PARDONS DISCIPLINED SOLDIERS AHEAD OF EID AMIR EXTENDS EID AL-ADHA GREETINGS

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Army's Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khoder yesterday granted amnesty to soldiers penalized for disciplinary offenses, as a gesture of goodwill to mark the Holy Eid Al-Adha festival. The decision was made as per instructions given by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah to give the soldiers the chance to celebrate the joyous occasion with their families, read a statement by the Ministry of Defense. The Minister of Defense went on to extend Eid greetings to the people of Kuwait, wishing the country security and stability. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday congratulated citizens and residents of Kuwait on the advent of Eid Al-Adha, expressing his best wishes for health, security, and prosperity to all. A statement by the Amiri Diwan noted that His highness the Amir extended similar sentiments to the Arab and Islamic worlds, wishing everyone security and stability. — Agencies

KUWAIT: The Bishop of Armenian Church Father Masis Zobouyan has extended his heartiest congratulations to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha. Father Masis Zobouyan said that Kuwait is a unique example of co-existence amongst the followers of various religions - thanks to Kuwait tolerance, moderation and generosity. He wished Kuwait more stability and prosperity.



KUWAIT AIRWAYS AND ALAFCO SIGN AIRCRAFTS SELLING/RE-LEASING DEAL

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways and the Aviation Lease and Finance Company (ALAFCO) signed a deal to sell and re-lease four 777-300ER aircrafts. ALAFCO is now the legal owner of the four aircrafts and Kuwait Airways will be leasing the planes for 12 years, Kuwait Airways Chairman Sami Al-Rasheed said in a press statement yesterday. Kuwait Airways is taking measures to reduce losses, boost financial performance, and develop services to become a top competitor in the regional aviation market, he noted.

The company aims to assign tasks such as maintenance, engineering services and air cargo to other independent companies in order for Kuwait Airways to focus mainly on aviation, Al-Rasheed said. The company needs a period of five years to gain profits, said the chairman, adding that the

company succeeded in regaining the confidence of its former clients and attract growing numbers of new clients.

On his part, ALAFCO's assistant marketing manager Suleiman Al-Mudhaf said the company aims to increase its fleet to reach 100 aircrafts by 2020. With the new agreement, ALAFCO's fleet went up to 63 aircrafts, he added. Kuwait Airways is one of the oldest aviation companies in the Gulf. It was established in 1953 as a private company under the name "Kuwait National Airways", before the Kuwaiti government ceased full ownership of the company in 1962. ALAFCO was established in 2000 and was enlisted in Kuwait bourse in 2006. The company offers services that include aircraft selling and leasing, marketing and investment in aviation. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways, ALAFCO top officials signed a deal to sell and re-lease four 777-300ER aircrafts. — KUNA photos

HUMID WEATHER EXPECTED TO CONTINUE DURING WEEKEND

KUWAIT: Humid weather is expected to continue during the weekend, especially in the coastal areas, the official at the Kuwait Meteorological Department Yasser Al-Bloushi said yesterday. Al-Bloushi said that hot and humid weather would continue today and would gradually reduce late evening as the highest temperature would reach around 44-46 degrees Celsius. Wind will be light to moderate - coming from the northwest. As for the status of the sea, Al-Bloushi said that waves would be light to moderate at a height of one to four feet.

The lowest temperature would reach around 30-25 degree Celsius with light to moderate southwestern wind at speeds between 8-26 kilometers per hour (kph). Waves would be light to moderate at a height of one to four feet, he said. Tomorrow's weather will also be hot and humid especially in coastal areas - with southeastern light to moderate wind. The

speeds will be between 8-28 kph with high temperature between 45-43 Degrees Celsius. The status of sea tomorrow will be "light to moderate waves at heights of one to four feet. The lowest temperature will between 30-25 degrees where humidity will reduce at night," said the meteorologist.

As for Saturday Al-Bloushi said the weather would be hot and humid during the daytime, with a light to moderate southeast winds at the speed of 10 to 30 kph. Highest temperature would be between 45-42 Degrees Celsius and the lowest will be between 30-24 degrees. Status of the sea will be light to moderate waves at one to four feet high. On Sunday, the weather would be hot and humid with southeastern light to moderate wind at speed of 10 to 23 kph. Highest temperature would be between 45-42 degrees, and the lowest between 30-24 degrees. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: People gather at Al-Rai livestock market as Muslims prepare to celebrate the annual holiday of Eid Al-Adha, or the Festival of Sacrifice. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

MOH PREPARES SPECIAL BUDGET

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: MoH recently arranged to prepare a special budget to appoint 530 doctors and pharmacists at Jaber Hospital after the CSC agreed to hire 500 doctors and 30 pharmacists for the hospital. Meanwhile, informed high-ranking sources stressed that both the legislative and executive powers agree on 10 bills that will be prioritized once the parliament is convened. The sources explained that the bills include granting citizenship to illegal residents once the numbers are agreed upon before the end of this year. In addition, the sources said that both powers agree on passing child protection and charity laws, in addition to amending the anti-corruption and army laws to include enlisting bedoons and non-Kuwaitis. Commenting on plans to use fingerprint check-in and -out systems with teachers, the sources said that CSC stressed that teachers were role models for others and that there was no reason why they should be exempted from using it.

Preventing fraud

Ministry of Commerce And Industry's Assistant Undersecretary for Commercial Control and Consumer Protection Affairs Eid Al-Rasheedi stressed the ministry's keenness on having strict control over local markets to prevent commercial fraud. Rasheedi added that special preparations have been made for the Eid and inspectors are deployed in various markets to monitor quality and prices, especially sheep prices.

Dead body found

The body of a citizen in his twenties was found in an Andalus park, said security sources, noting that cigarette rolling paper and a joint

were found near the body, which had no IDs on it. Initial reports suggest that the cause of death might be an overdose. However, further investigations are in progress.



KUWAIT: Ahmadi Fire Department Prevention teams recently inspected various schools and universities in the governorate to make sure they were all fully equipped and matched safety standards.



KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares seen during the inspection. — KUNA photos

EDUCATION MINISTER INSPECTS SCHOOLS

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares has emphasized the importance of continuing field inspection of schools in various educational areas to check their readiness for the new academic year. He made these remarks to the press yesterday after inspecting Taima primary school for boys and Taima Kindergarten affiliated to Al-Jahra educational area.

Al-Fares checked classes, school-books, conditioning devices and all oth-

er facilities needed during the academic year. Director General of Al-Jarha Educational area Waleed Bin Ghaith said that he is exerting all possible efforts to encounter any obstacles that might hamper cherishing a successful academic year to students and teaching staff.

He also inspected readiness of the teaching, administrative staff at the kindergarten, primary and middle level schools to start by September 5, to be followed by the high school level by September 10. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Two people were seriously injured when their vehicles collided along airport road, said security sources, noting that firemen had to use special machinery and equipment to cut open the tangled metal and evacuate the injured to hospital for treatment.

'SHRIMPING SEASON' BEGINS SEPT 1

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The head of Kuwait Fishermen Union Thaher Al-Sowayyan urged Mol to cancel conditions that fishermen should carry their passports on sailing in and out of national waters, as long as they carried their Kuwaiti civil IDs and special forms. Sowayyan also said that the shrimping season in Kuwait territorial waters will begin on Sept 1, 2017, and accordingly, urged all fishermen to respect related Amiri decree number 46/1980 and other PAAFR regulations. He

hoped that this season will be better than last year's to help fishermen make up their losses.

Tender approved

The Central Tender Committee (CTC) approved a tender filed by MEW to maintain fire and alarm systems at Doha power and water distillation plant at a total cost of KD 888,250.

Handicapped law

The former head of the handicapped authority employees' syndicate Nasser Al-

Sholaimi said the handicapped law has many privileges for people with special needs, which encouraged many people to fake disabilities in the period between 2010-2015, when over 185,000 citizens applied to get disabled citizens' benefits, which posed great pressure on the understaffed authority, slowed down work and affected the transactions of the handicapped. Sholaimi added that all files must be automated to help input data into a digital system, especially since the authority deals with 61,000 cases.



CBK PRESENTS EID GIFTS TO KIDS AT AL-RAZI HOSPITAL

KUWAIT: In collaboration with Al-Razi hospital administration, CBK's PR Department recently visited children at Al-Razi hospital and presented some Eid gifts to them. Speaking on the occasion, CBK's Assistant Manager for PR and Publicity Amani Al-Wer'a said that CBK is keen on sharing joy with children on various occasions, especially those in hospitals. She also thanked the hospital manager Dr Mona Abdul Samad for receiving the bank's team.

Crime

Report

'WANTED MAN' NABBED

KUWAIT: Jahra detectives recently arrested a GCC national after a fierce resistance. The suspect had been on the run for two years and is wanted for a 3-year prison sentence and 12 other cases. Security sources said that the suspect had been hiding and only move around in the night to avoid arrest.

Traffic police recently seized nine vehicles with GCC license plate numbers which were being used for reckless driving in Jaber Al-Ali area. Responding to residents' reports, police patrol rushed to the scene and found many cars racing and crowd watching the drivers. Security sources said that the crowd blocked the police and stopped them from arresting the drivers. However, police combed the area later on and confiscated the vehicles.

Fire in Faiha

Fire broke in a house in Faiha. Firemen rushed to the scene and found out that the fire had started in an air-condition unit. No casualties were reported. In another development, fire ravaged three vehicles parked outside a citizen's house in Ferdous.



Fake passport

A Bangladeshi was arrested on arrival at Kuwait International Airport for using a fake passport. Security officials checked the man's fingerprint and found out that he had been deported from Kuwait.

Fake detectives

A laundry man in Jleeb reported that three unidentified robbers who claimed to be police detectives assaulted and tied him up before stealing his money. Security sources added that the man managed to take a photo of their vehicle. —Al-Rai/ Al-Qabas



Al-Anbaa



Fingerprint



الجريرة

Al-Jarida

TEACH YOUR KIDS

By Arwa Al-Waqian

Teach your kids that all the killings, car rammings and blasts taking place nowadays are extreme actions, because we all were created to coexist and accept each other on this earth. What is happening now is the result of exaggeration and extremism. Teach your kids to evaluate others according to their personality and conduct rather than according to color, race or origin. Teach them to accept others the way they are without showing any wish to change or destroy them, because you never know your child might stay for some time in a society that views him or her differently!

Teach them that religion means peace and love - not blasts, booby traps and blood. Teach them to help people in distress without inquiring about their religion; to just help for the sake of help.

Teach them that religion means peace and love not blasts, booby traps and blood. Teach them to help people in distress without inquiring about their religion; to just help for the sake of help. Teach them to cherish human diversity rather than rejecting it. They cannot enjoy the rainbow if it were not for its diverse colors. Teach your kids that whenever someone is in pain, they should help him merely because he is a human being, not because he shares the same religion, doctrine or nationality. Teach them to give to all the needy and not only to those belonging to their sect. Teach them that charity has room for everyone without favoritism or racism.

Teach them that someone is different from the other only by knowledge, conduct and modesty, rather than by boasting about someone's origin and the land from which his ancestors came. Teach them to boast about the present and what they have actually achieved rather than bragging about ancestors' legends and legacies. Teach them to create their own pride by pro-humanity achievements, not by ones against it.

Teach them that peace should have been adopted as law in this life and that what is happening nowadays is weird, though peace is spreading. Teach them that virtue starts by a single seed and that they themselves might be that seed for a brighter future filled with peace, love and respect with hopes that we might see a better world before we perish!

—Translated by Kuwait Times

الانباء

Al-Anbaa

KUWAITI FUR IN RUSSIA

By Salah Al-Sayer

My later father, may Allah have mercy on his soul, was born at the beginning of the twentieth century, over a hundred years ago. Just like many other Kuwaitis, he worked in many jobs on land or at sea. Many Kuwaitis used to work as builders then, and whenever the diving or commercial travel season began, they rushed to get a job onboard a diving or commercial ship and dhows.

In spring, he used to work as a logger, traversing the desert collecting dry wood or plants to earn a living and not ask for anybody's help. A Kuwaiti used to take risks in the quest of making a living. My late father told me that in 1904, Rashid Ahmed Al-Rasheed competed with a Jew specialized in purchasing fur from local markets, and thus Rashid carried pelts on camelback to sell it in Russia. He even died during one of his many trips there.

My father always told me about Kuwaiti hands and laborers who were greatly in demand, even in foreign markets such as date palm farms in Basra, where

Kuwaiti dhows used to dock during the date harvest. Kuwaiti merchants were keen on hiring Kuwaitis who used to flock to Basra during this season. The same used to happen with non-Kuwaiti ships and dhows docked in GCC ports in preparation to sail out to India. Whenever those ships needed sailors, Kuwaitis were favored at all these ports.

My father's testimony is one of an eyewitness that was later confirmed by the situations in local markets that attracted many jobseekers, and this is logical. Kuwaiti markets and fleets would not have developed without enough and well-qualified human resources. This cannot be achieved without geniuses. Similarly, good-quality and perfect produce cannot be achieved without skilled and productive labor. This is how Kuwaitis used to be. They always worked whenever others stopped. I finally have to lament that these facts exist no more and have been changed or obscured in education and the media! —Translated by Kuwait Times



MUNICIPALITY LAUNCHES INSPECTION CAMPAIGN

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality's Acting PR manager Mohammed Al-Mutairi said that a campaign has been launched to improve the standard of cleanliness as well as to have more control over foodstuff providers, warehouses,

storage areas, ads and licenses. Al-Mutairi added that the first phase of the campaign resulted in removing 331.367 cubic meters of garbage, destroying 83.631 tons of expired food items, removing 836 abandoned vehicles, filing 2378

citations, washing and replacing 8485 garbage containers, removing 3755 ads and closing down 26 stores. Meanwhile, Farwanya Municipality Manager Saeed Al-Azmi said that his teams had confiscated and destroyed 13 tons

of foul vegetables and 365.5 tons of expired food items found in some stores and warehouses. Al-Azmi added that his teams removed 9975 cubic meters of garbage and 138 abandoned vehicles.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A magpie is spotted in Bneider. Magpies are birds of the Corvidae (crow) family, including the black and white Eurasian magpie, which is widely considered one of the most intelligent animals in the world, and the only non-mammal species able to recognize itself in a mirror test. — KUNA



18,500 Rohingya flee to Bangladesh as unrest rages

MUMBAI FLOODS TOLL JUMPS TO 14, RAIN EASES UP



Interstate 69 is covered by floodwaters from Tropical Storm Harvey on Tuesday in Humble, Texas. (Inset) US President Donald Trump, accompanied by First Lady Melania Trump, holds up a Texas flag after speaking with supporters outside Firehouse 5 in Corpus Christi, Texas on Tuesday, where he received a briefing on Harvey relief efforts. — AP

HARVEY HITS AGAIN IN LOUISIANA

TEXAS RESCUERS RACE AGAINST CLOCK • NIGHTTIME CURFEW IN HOUSTON

NEW ORLEANS: Monster storm Harvey made landfall again yesterday in Louisiana, evoking painful memories of Hurricane Katrina's deadly strike 12 years ago, as time was running out in Texas to find survivors in the raging floodwaters. The fresh hit comes five days after the monster storm slammed onshore as a Category Four hurricane, pummeling the US Gulf Coast with torrential rains that turned neighborhoods into lakes in America's fourth largest city, Houston.

While Harvey is technically packing less of a wallop as a tropical storm, heavy rains are still drenching parts of southeastern Texas and neighboring southwestern Louisiana, complicating rescue missions and compounding the misery for millions of Americans. So far, only a handful of deaths have been formally confirmed, but when combined with suspected deaths, US media reported that the toll could be 30 so far - and still rising - as floodwaters

recede in some areas and bodies are found.

Hundreds of people are still unaccounted for, though officials stress they may simply have no access to phones or power. More than 30,000 people found refuge in shelters across the Lone Star State, from the giant Houston convention center to small churches, according to the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Brock Long. "We are in this for the long haul," acting Homeland Security Secretary Elaine Duke told reporters in a briefing yesterday on emergency operations. "We'll continue to support the people of Texas as long as necessary."

In Houston, Mayor Sylvester Turner issued a nighttime curfew aimed at aiding search efforts and thwarting potential looting in the flood-ravaged city. At least a quarter of Harris County, which includes Houston and the immediate surrounding area, is now under water, affecting tens of thou-

sands of homes, local officials have said. "After witnessing first hand the horror & devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey, my heart goes out even more so to the great people of Texas!" President Donald Trump said after visiting the storm zone. Trump was planning a second trip to Texas on Saturday, and may go to Louisiana as well, the White House said.

Drenching rain

So far, parts of Texas have seen more than 50 inches (1.27 m) of rain, while in Louisiana, the top total 18 inches so far - was increasing. Harvey made its second landfall just west of the Louisiana town of Cameron, not far from the Texas border, packing maximum sustained winds nearing 45 miles per hour, the National Hurricane Center said. Forecasters are predicting another five to 10 inches of rain in the region, with the downpour finally expected to stop on Thursday.

For now, southwestern Louisiana was taking the hardest hit, but New Orleans proper appeared to have dodged a bullet, with minimal rain. The arrival of the storm was nevertheless bittersweet for many in New Orleans, coming just one day after the 12-year anniversary of Katrina, which ravaged the vulnerable city famous for its jazz music and cuisine. "I began to pray for the people in Texas after having gone through that same experience myself as a Katrina survivor," said Crystal Harris, who works for the Second Harvest Food Bank, which was taking donations for storm victims. "It brings back memories," she said. "When you see images like... Houston, it reminds you of where you were 12 years ago."

Rescue teams scrambling

In Texas, emergency crews were still struggling to reach hundreds of stranded people in a massive

round-the-clock rescue operation, as the National Weather Service predicted weather conditions there were to improve at last. But the damage wrought was staggering - Enki Research put its "best estimate" at between \$48 billion and \$75 billion. Sheryl Kunai, a 57-year-old accountant from Rosenberg, southwest of Houston, left her home and was staying at a hotel in Winnie. She said her home was fine, but she was wary about heading back. "I still don't want to chance it. I'll just go ahead and give it one more day," she told AFP. "I'm more scared about driving in the water than anything else."

At least one bridge had crumbled, one levee had breached and dams were at risk in Texas. A Houston police officer was one of the latest confirmed victims of the storm - the body of Steve Perez, who went missing after reporting for duty in the early hours of Sunday, was recovered by divers on Tuesday. — AFP

US-LED STRIKE IN SYRIA BLOCKS IS FIGHTERS LEAVING LEBANON

BEIRUT: The US-led coalition carried out an air strike yesterday to block Islamic State group fighters evacuated from Lebanon from reaching eastern Syria, its spokesman told AFP. Hundreds of IS fighters and civilians were evacuated Monday from the border region between Lebanon and Syria under a ceasefire deal and were headed to an IS-held town near Syria's eastern frontier with Iraq. "To prevent the convoy from moving further east, we cratered the road

and destroyed a small bridge," said coalition spokesman Colonel Ryan Dillon, without providing further details on the exact location.

"IS is a global threat; relocating terrorists from one place to another for someone else to deal with is not a lasting solution," he added. The evacuation deal was negotiated between IS and powerful Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah, which has intervened in the war in neighboring Syria to prop up the Damascus government.

Hezbollah had fought a week-long offensive against IS on the Syrian side of the border with Lebanon, coinciding with a simultaneous assault by Lebanese troops on their side of the frontier.

The battles ended Sunday with the announcement of a deal that would see IS forces bussed hundreds of kilometres from Syria's western border with Lebanon to its eastern frontier with Iraq. Jihadists and civilians, including children, left the border region two days ago, but yesterday their buses were still held up at the entrance to Deir Ezzor province. "We know and understand that there are civilians" aboard the buses, Dillon said. "If we are able to strike them without harming civilians, then we will do so," he said, adding that the coalition was monitoring the convoy's movement in real time. Asked whether the presence of civilians had prompted the coalition to bomb the road instead of the convoy itself, Dillon said that would be "consistent" with protocol. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed that there was a delay in the buses reaching Deir Ezzor province but did not specify why. Syrian military sources reached by AFP declined to comment. The evacuation agreement had sparked a furious reaction from the United States, which considers Hezbollah to be a "terrorist" organization. "Irreconcilable #ISIS terrorists should be killed on the battlefield, not bused across #Syria to the Iraqi border without #Iraq's consent," US presidential envoy to the anti-IS coalition Brett McGurk said yesterday.

"Our @coalition will help ensure that these terrorists can never enter #Iraq or escape from what remains of their dwindling 'caliphate,'" he wrote on Twitter. — AFP



RAS BAALBEK, Lebanon: Youths ride on an armored vehicle next to Lebanese army soldiers during a celebration of their return from battling Islamic State (IS) group militants on the country's eastern front bordering with Syria in this eastern town yesterday. — AFP

VENEZUELA POLICIES LEAVE DEMOCRACY 'BARELY ALIVE'

GENEVA: The widespread rights abuses committed against protesters in Venezuela has left democracy "barely alive", the UN said yesterday, after France branded the Caracas regime a "dictatorship". A fresh UN report warned that the rights situation in Venezuela was at "grave risk" of unravelling further as the authorities continue to brutally repress demonstrators, and urged international action. Recent actions by Venezuela's authorities "support the feeling that what is left of democratic life in Venezuela is being squeezed", UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein told reporters in Geneva, where the report was launched.

Democracy in Venezuela "must be barely alive, if still alive", Zeid said. He did not go as far as French President Emmanuel Macron, who on Tuesday accused his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro of creating a "dictatorship ... at an unprecedented humanitarian cost", in one of the harshest condemnations yet of the South American regime by a European leader. Caracas hit back against Macron yesterday, with the foreign ministry expressing "firm rejection of the deplorable comments" by the French leader. "They constitute clear interference in the internal affairs" of Venezuela, it said in a statement.

'Crush dissent'

The UN report accused Venezuelan authorities of implementing a policy of repression to crack down on months of street protests against Maduro. "The generalized and systematic use of excessive force during demonstrations and the arbitrary detention of protesters and perceived political opponents indicate that these were not

the illegal or rogue acts of isolated officials," it said. The extent of violations "in our view point to the existence of a policy to crush dissent and instil fear in the population with the intention of curbing these demonstrations," one of the report authors, Herman Vales, told reporters.

Venezuela, which is suffering from an acute economic crisis marked by shortages of basic goods, has experienced months of deadly street demonstrations against Maduro that have left 125 people dead, according to prosecutors. Wednesday's report found that security forces and pro-government groups were responsible for at least 73 of the protester deaths. It remained unclear who was behind the remaining deaths, the rights office said.

Zeid also pointed out that his office had documented "serious violations of due process and patterns of ill-treatment, in some cases amounting to torture". The tactics listed in the report included "the use of electric shocks, severe beatings, stress positions, suffocation, and threats of sexual violence and death". After receiving no response to repeated requests for access to Venezuela to investigate the situation, Zeid deployed a team of human rights officers to monitor the country remotely. The investigators conducted 135 interviews between June 6 and July 31 with victims and their families, witnesses, civil society organizations, journalists, lawyers and doctors, among others. More than 5,300 people have been detained in Venezuela since April 1, with more than 800 still held, the report authors said, adding that more than 700 detained civilians had had their cases handled in the military justice system. — AFP

ISRAEL DECIDES AGAINST REVOKING JOURNO'S CRED

JERUSALEM: Israeli authorities said yesterday they had decided not to revoke the credentials of a journalist for Al-Jazeera over comments that his work was part of the Palestinian "resistance". Elias Karram's reports will instead be monitored for six months with the possibility of revoking his credentials later, Israel's government press office said.

Israeli authorities had earlier moved to revoke Karram's press credentials after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said last month that he wanted to expel the Qatari broadcaster from the country, accusing it of inciting violence. His comments raised concerns among free press advocates, with Amnesty International saying Israel's move against the broadcaster was a "brazen attack on media freedom".

Authorities said on Aug 16 they were moving to revoke Karram's credentials

pending a hearing, which was held five days later. The government press office distributed video of an interview last year in which the 40-year-old Arab Israeli journalist called his work an "integral part" of Palestinian resistance to Israel's occupation. During the hearing, Karram said "he had no intention of supporting or expressing sympathy for armed resistance", according to the press office.

"The 'resistance' he spoke of was not violent, but rather through the pen, the word and the camera. According to him, 'the resistance means only media exposure to the reality of the Palestinian people living under occupation. I did not adopt, call for or incite to resistance of any kind.'" Karram also said in the hearing that he never mixes opinion with his reporting, according to the press office. — AFP

7 CRISIS SHAKES E AFRICA, HOME TO GULF MILITARIES

DUBAI: Though far-removed from the Gulf, East Africa has been shaken by the Arab diplomatic crisis gripping Qatar. In recent years both Qatar and the other energy-rich nations arrayed against it have made inroads in the Horn of Africa by establishing military bases, managing ports and showering friendly nations with foreign aid.

As the rivalry heats up, with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain seeking to isolate Qatar, East African nations stand to gain or lose from an increasingly fierce competition for influence. And with Saudi Arabia and its allies mired in a war just across the Red Sea in Yemen, the area has never had more strategic value. "I think we're seeing a game of geopolitical chess being played out," said Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, a research fellow at the James A Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University.

Military Expansion

The importance of the Horn of Africa to Gulf nations can be seen with just a glance at a map. The Horn's shoreline comes as close as 30 km to Yemen at the Bab Al-Mandeb straight, a crucial chokepoint at sea for oil tankers heading from the Gulf to Europe. For years, the shores of East Africa provided a crucial point for smugglers to reach Yemen, as well as a target-rich hunting ground for pirates. Securing the area has taken on new importance for Gulf countries since March 2015, when a Saudi-led coalition launched its war against Shiite rebels and their allies who hold Yemen's capital.

Since the conflict began, the United Arab Emirates and others have established military bases in East Africa. In Eritrea, the UAE has a base at the port in Assab. Another Emirati military base will be built in Somalia's breakaway northern territory of Somaliland. "The UAE is very keen to show that it's a provider of security, not just a consumer of security," Ulrichsen said.

Saudi Arabia meanwhile has discussed putting its own base in tiny Djibouti, already home to an under-construction Chinese military base and a US base that launches drone missions over Somalia and Yemen. Analysts believe all these Gulf military installations will become permanent features in East Africa. "They are not only just momentarily engaging in the Horn and its countries, but they are becoming long-term strategic actors in the whole region," said Umer Karim, a researcher at the University of Birmingham.

Jockeying for Position in Somalia

In Somalia, whose first civilian government after decades of lawlessness is fighting against the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabab militant group, Gulf countries loom large. Saudi Arabia is the



MOGADISHU: In this Aug 27, 2011 file photo, an unidentified aide to Saudi Prince Al Waleed bin Talal shakes hands with a child during a visit to a refugee camp. — AP

Somali government's biggest benefactor, while the UAE has trained the country's military and launched a high-profile aid appeal this year. Somalia has meanwhile allowed Qatari aircraft to increasingly fly through its airspace as Arab nations have closed theirs off.

Gulf states are believed to have taken sides in lawmakers' February election of Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, which was marked by allegations of massive bribery. Mohamed appointed a former reporter of the Qatar-funded satellite news channel Al-Jazeera Arabic as his chief of staff. The UAE backed a different candidate.

Meanwhile, Turkey soon will open an overseas military base in Mogadishu. Its only other overseas base is in Qatar, which Ankara has backed amid the boycott. "You couldn't find any place more strategic for the Arab powers than Somalia," said Rashid Abdi, the Horn of Africa project director for the International Crisis Group. "That explains the intensity of these powers' interest in Somalia."

Bringing Eritrea Out of the Cold

For Eritrea, the Qatar diplomatic dispute actually could be a good thing. Ruled by an autocratic and repressive president, Eritrea has seen tens of thousands of its citizens flee mandatory national conscription that can last over a decade, something rights groups say amounts to slavery. The former Italian colony routinely ranks last among nations in personal and press freedom.

But when the Gulf crisis began, Qatar removed 400 peacekeepers from a disputed Red Sea island claimed by both Eritrea and Djibouti. Eritrea quickly sent its own troops in to seize it.

Meanwhile, Eritrea hosts the UAE military base at Assab while siding with the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen. Eritrean leaders likely hope this improves their image.

"There's no doubt that Eritrea is looking beyond the horizon and saying, 'We are becoming rehabilitated, we are now a major player in the region, we are getting noticed and whatever the West thinks of us, at least our Arab neighbors are taking us seriously,'" Abdi said. "That is a big psychological victory."

An Increasingly Nervous Ethiopia

For Ethiopia, which fought wars against Somalia and Eritrea in the last 20 years, the ongoing Gulf crisis adds new uncertainty. The country maintains one of the region's strongest militaries, but sees itself as being hemmed in by foreign military bases. Ethiopia has struggled to remain neutral in the dispute. In July, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn even acknowledged his concerns in a speech before parliament. "Ethiopia could be affected in the event of a regional destabilization," he said.

An empowered Eritrea may push back against Ethiopian gains in their costly war, which killed tens of thousands of people. Nearly all of landlocked Ethiopia's foreign trade passes through the port at Djibouti, now run by Dubai's DP World. Egypt, part of the Arab nations now boycotting Qatar, remains worried about a new giant dam in Ethiopia cutting into its share of the Nile. "The rift in the (Gulf) and the Saudi-led camp, and the acts of the UAE to become not only a port management power but also a military power in the greater Horn of Africa, poses a threat to Ethiopia," political analyst Mehari Tadele said. — AP

IRAN SLAPS UP TO 5-YEAR JAIL TERMS ON TELEGRAM ADMINS

TEHRAN: A revolutionary court in Iran has sentenced six reformist social media administrators to up to five years in jail, their lawyer told the ILNA news agency yesterday. Ali Mojtahedzadeh said the six group admins on the Telegram messaging app who were free on bail after their arrest in March were sentenced in court, without giving the date of the verdict or the charges.

"According to the verdict by Branch 15 of the revolutionary court, Mr Nima Keshvari and Mr Ahmadnia received five years, Mr Naghdi and Mr Jamshidi four years, and Mr Sobhan Jafari received three years in prison," he said, without giving all their first names. Mojtahedzadeh told the

reformist labor news agency that a sixth defendant, named Bagheri, was not in court for the verdict, apparently a two-year jail term. The lawyer said he would not be able to file an appeal until he received a copy of the 60-page verdict. Iran's conservative-dominated judiciary arrested 12 social media admins supporting reformist and moderate President Hassan Rouhani's camp ahead of the country's May election, on security and obscenity charges. "Some of these people have been arrested on national security charges and some... for committing crimes against public decency and publishing obscene content," deputy judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejeie said in April. — AFP

DUBAI CLEANERS BEATING HEAT WITH 'COOL COLLARS'

BEIRUT: Street cleaners in Dubai are wearing new 'cooling collars' to prevent heat stroke as they work in rising Gulf temperatures that can hit 45 degrees Celsius, Dubai said yesterday. The glitzy Middle East emirate issued 4,000 cleaners with orange fabric collars containing a chilled gel, similar to the cold compresses used for injuries, to fasten around their necks and stay cool as they work outdoors.

"This type of cooling material (can)... pro-

tect the body from high temperature so that the worker is not subject to heat exhaustion," Abdulmajeed Saifia, director of the waste department, said in a statement. Projections show the Gulf region will be the world's hottest region by 2100 as a result of climate change. With small, wealthy populations and minimal domestic food production, oil-rich states in the Gulf can respond better to rising heat than poorer countries in South Asia, experts say. — Reuters

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18,500 ROHINGYA FLEE TO BANGLADESH AS UNREST RAGES



An ethnic Rakhine woman, San Win, who escaped from unrest in Kin Chaung village near Maungdaw in Myanmar's Rakhine state, cries while holding her baby after arriving at Sittwe's jetty yesterday. At least 18,500 Rohingya have crossed into Bangladesh since fighting erupted in Myanmar's neighbouring Rakhine state six days ago, the International Organization for Migration said yesterday.

DHAKA: At least 18,500 Rohingya have crossed into Bangladesh since fighting erupted in Myanmar's neighboring Rakhine state six days ago, the International Organization for Migration said yesterday.

Plumes of smoke billowed from several burning villages in the worst-hit section of the state, according to an AFP reporter on a government-led trip to the area, as the violence showed little sign of abating despite security sweeps by Myanmar's police and troops. The streets of Maungdaw-northern Rakhine's largest town-were virtually deserted as fires flickered among charred remains of houses and occasional burst of gunfire echoed in the distance.

The clashes began on Friday when militants from Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim minority community staged deadly attacks on police posts, prompting raids on the community and searches by troops and police.

At least 110 people, including 11 state officials, have been confirmed dead since then and thousands of Rohingya have poured across the border to Bangladesh despite Dhaka's attempts to stop them.

"As of last night, 18,500 people have

come across," Chris Lom, the IOM's Asia-Pacific spokesman, told AFP, adding an unknown number were still stuck on the Myanmar side of the border.

An estimated 6,000 Rohingya on Tuesday massed at the "zero line" border with Bangladesh, days after the area came under mortar and machine gun fire by Myanmar security forces. The Rohingya, the world's largest stateless minority and subject to severe restrictions on their movements, are barred from officially crossing.

Bangladeshi authorities yesterday toughened patrols in a bid to prevent more arrivals in a country that already hosts an estimated 400,000 Rohingya, albeit in abject conditions. Rohingya have sneaked across the land border in large number or swum the Naf River which marks part of the frontier.

But tragedy befell some of them. The bodies of two Rohingya women and two children washed up on Bangladeshi soil yesterday, an official there told AFP, drowned after their rickety boat capsized.

Scores more were found alive on the remote Bangladeshi island of St Martin's, according to coastguards there, after taking a risky passage on barely seaworthy

vessels. Khadija Begum, a Rohingya woman from Rathedaung, was detained on arrival by Bangladeshi officials.

"We thought it would be easier to face the sea than the (Myanmar) army," she told AFP in tears.

Fight and flight

Ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and other tribal groups are also among the dead and displaced after allegedly being targeted by Rohingya militants. Five ethnic Buddhist men were found stabbed to death early Wednesday in Maungdaw, which is under curfew, Ye Htut, the town's district chief, told AFP.

With information trickling out, a picture has emerged of a cat-and-mouse game between militants and security forces played out in remote hamlets, fields and forest hideouts.

The office of de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi said militants have repeatedly detonated homemade explosives and tried to firebomb police posts and ambush patrols. Myanmar classes the militants as "Bengali terrorists" and accuses them of setting fire both to Rohingya homes and those of other communities. — AFP

US DIPLOMATS SET TO LEAVE RUSSIA AS TIES DETERIORATE

MOSCOW DEADLINE EXPIRES TOMORROW

MOSCOW: A Moscow deadline for almost two-thirds of US diplomatic staff to leave Russia expires tomorrow, an exodus that starkly demonstrates the souring relationship between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump.

There were hopes of improved ties between Moscow and Washington after Trump's election to the US presidency last year, when both leaders showered each other in praise.

But after the US Congress approved new economic sanctions against Russia over Moscow's alleged meddling in the November election, Putin in July ordered the drastic embassy cuts in retaliation. Putin said 755 diplomatic staff-both Russian and American-would have to stop work by September 1, although the US State Department has not confirmed the number. The number of US diplomatic staff will now be capped at 455, the same number that Russia has in the United States.

"We have waited long enough, hoping that the situation would perhaps change for the better," Putin said when he announced the cuts. "But it seems that even if the situation is changing, it's not for any time soon." Trump only reluctantly signed off on the Congress-backed sanctions, describing them as "significantly flawed" and partially unconstitutional.

"Our relationship with Russia is at an all-time & very dangerous low," he tweeted. Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said on Twitter the sanctions demonstrated Trump's "total weakness" and amounted to a "full-fledged trade war". It is

not clear how many of the 755 staff losing their jobs will be physically leaving the country, or how many are Russian citizens. The RBK news site cited sources saying that at least 600 are Russian.

The head of a firm servicing the Russian diplomatic corps, Alexei Izotov, said some former US embassy technical staff are applying for work and "have been added to the database".

'It could have been love'

"It could have been love between Trump and Putin. Hope remained until the latest sanctions were passed but it seems Russian authorities have come to the conclusion that Trump is hopeless," said political analyst Andrei Kolesnikov of the Carnegie Moscow Centre. "Neither Putin nor Trump know how to build such a relationship. They don't have a strategy or a real topic of conversation except technical questions about Syria."

While Trump has put a stop to US support for Syrian rebels, to the Kremlin's great satisfaction, he has fundamentally changed his thinking on other contested areas, digging in his heels over the Ukraine conflict, Moscow's annexation of Crimea and NATO's expansion in eastern Europe.

During a trip to Kiev last week, Pentagon chief Jim Mattis vowed to continue helping Ukrainian armed forces as they battle pro-Russian rebel fighters. Trump himself has stressed his desire to "move forward in working constructively" with Russia, including on cyber security to prevent hacking of future elections. His own team, however, has been skeptical over any moves to draw

closer to Moscow.

The United States this month complied with a demand from Moscow to stop using a Russian country house and a storage facility. The request came as a response to a US move to close access to two compounds used by Russian diplomats last year, a move that caused much bitterness in Moscow.

'Total impasse'

In another retaliatory move, Washington announced it would suspend the issuing of all non-immigrant visas in Russia between August 23 and September 1.

Visa operations at US consulates will remain suspended indefinitely. Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova called the decision "genocide of the common people" in an interview released Monday by independent Dozhd television channel. "The war of sanctions and counter-sanctions has got a new lease of life," political analyst Kolesnikov said, and sanctions have now become "the only way to demonstrate discontent."

Noting the current state of relations, Moscow has appointed a hawkish new ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Antonov, known as a hardliner and a tough negotiator with a deep suspicion of the United States. "No one pays attention to Trump anymore," said Kolesnikov. "All that remains is a battle between the Russian authorities and the US establishment." "The situation is mired in a total impasse." — AFP



SEOUL: People watch a TV screen showing a local news program reporting about North Korea's missile launch at Seoul Train Station in Seoul yesterday. — AP

TRUMP SAYS 'TALKING IS NOT THE ANSWER' FOR N KOREA

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump says that "Talking is not the answer" when it comes to North Korea. And he's claiming the US has been paying North Koreans what he calls "extortion money" for decades. "The US has been talking to North Korea, and paying them extortion money, for 25 years," Trump tweeted yesterday morning, adding: "Talking is not the answer!"

The tweet comes on the heels of the North's recent missile test over Japan, a close American ally. Trump's tweet did not spell out what he meant by "extortion" in the current standoff over North Korea's nuclear program, and the White House did not immediately respond to questions.

North Korea has in the past temporarily halted nuclear development when the US and others provided food aid or other types of compensation. But the North hasn't been making such demands, at least publicly, since Trump came into office. Instead, it has been focused on finishing its decades-long effort to master the technology for fitting a nuclear warhead on a missile that can striking the US mainland, calling such capability essential for its national defense.

Trump's assessment about the need for

dialogue also appears at odds with his top diplomat, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who had in recent weeks been softening the conditions for a possible, formal dialogue with Pyongyang. The US also has been maintaining a diplomatic back channel with North Korea.

Trump offered a surprisingly subdued response to Pyongyang's latest missile test Tuesday, avoiding a repeat of his bombastic warnings earlier this month of a potential military confrontation.

Nonetheless, US officials announced yesterday morning that they had conducted a missile defense test that resulted in the successful intercept of a medium-range ballistic missile off the coast of Hawaii. The test was conducted by the Missile Defense Agency and US Navy sailors.

"We are working closely with the fleet to develop this important new capability, and this was a key milestone in giving our Aegis BMD ships an enhanced capability to defeat ballistic missiles in their terminal phase," Missile Defense Agency Director Lt. Gen Sam Greaves said in a statement. "We will continue developing ballistic missile defense technologies to stay ahead of the threat as it evolves." — Agencies

BRITAIN'S MAY VISITS JAPAN WITH EYE ON BREXIT FEARS

TOKYO: British Prime Minister Theresa May arrived in Japan on an official visit yesterday with an eye to soothing Brexit fears and pushing ahead on early free-trade talks with the world's number three economy. May is scheduled to sit down with Toyota's chairman during her three-day tour which starts in Osaka before moving to Tokyo where she will meet with Emperor Akihito and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who visited Britain this year.

Britain formally told the EU in March it will withdraw from the 28-member bloc, stirring fears in Japan about what the move would mean for companies with significant business interests in the country. "We're going to ask for transparency and predictability so as to minimize the impact on (our) companies," a Japanese foreign ministry official in charge of European affairs said ahead of May's visit.

More than 1,000 Japanese companies do business in Britain, employing some 140,000 local people with many using Britain as a staging post to do business in Europe. Among them, automakers Toyota and Nissan have factories in Britain while tech giant SoftBank last year announced the \$32 billion purchase of British iPhone chip designer ARM Holdings.

But Britain is now at risk of losing the "passport rights" financial firms use to deal with clients in the rest of the European bloc. That, along with political uncertainty surrounding Brexit negotiations, has spurred foreign companies that have set up shop in Britain, or established European headquarters there, to begin looking for alternative locations.

Japanese megabank Mitsubishi UFJ has said Amsterdam and Paris were favourites to be the new European base for its securities operations.

Brokerage Nomura, Daiwa Securities and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group are planning to move their main EU bases from London to Frankfurt.

'Best scenario'

Britain's foreign minister Boris Johnson boasted about Japan-UK investment when he visited this summer, but local firms will be looking for solid assurances from May, who is travelling with a business delegation. "The best scenario for us is that Britain cancels its Brexit decision," said Ichiro Hara, head of the international affairs bureau at Japan's top business lobby Keidanren.

"But if that isn't an option, we are saying we need a transitional period... to mitigate the negative impact," he told AFP. — AFP



TOKYO: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May, left and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wait for their Shinkansen bullet train bound for Tokyo at Kyoto station in Kyoto, western Japan yesterday. — AFP

70,000 TO BE EVACUATED OVER WWII BOMB IN FRANKFURT

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Some 70,000 people in Frankfurt will have to leave their homes this weekend in one of the biggest such evacuations in post-war Germany, police said yesterday, after an unexploded World War-II bomb nicknamed "blockbuster" was uncovered. The operation on Sunday will allow for the safe defusing of the 1,400-ton British bomb, which German media said was nicknamed "Wohnblockknacker" (blockbuster) during the war for its ability to wipe out whole streets or buildings. The unexploded bomb was discovered on Tuesday during building work a stone's throw from the Westend Campus of the Goethe University Frankfurt, police said in a statement. Officers are guarding the site and there "is currently no danger".

Police said the bomb in question was a HC 4000, a so-called high capacity bomb used in

air raids by British forces. "Due to the large size of the bomb, extensive evacuation measures must be taken," police said. The Wismerer street where the ordnance was found is close to the city centre and just some 2.5 kilometres (1.5 miles) north of the main Zeil shopping area. More than 70 years after the end of the war, unexploded bombs are regularly found buried on German land, legacies of the intense bombing campaigns by the Allied forces against Nazi Germany. One of the biggest such evacuations to date took place last Christmas, when another unexploded British bomb forced 54,000 people out of their homes in the southern city of Augsburg.

Another 50,000 residents had to leave their homes in the northern city of Hanover in May for an operation to defuse several WWII-era bombs. — AFP

GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER SAYS EUROPEAN UNITY KEY TO FUTURE

PARIS: Germany's foreign minister said yesterday that Europe must stand together if it wants to stay relevant as its population shrinks, the US focuses more on Asia, and China's influence expands. Sigmar Gabriel warned against retreating into survival-of-the-fittest nationalism and urged a more vigorous European role on the world stage - especially important as Britain's pending exit from the European Union threatens the bloc's international standing and future viability.

Gabriel picked a symbolic place for Wednesday's appeal: the center of Paris, where he attended a French Cabinet meeting and stood with his French counterpart to try to reinvigorate European unity in an address to a gathering of French ambassadors. "If our children or grandchildren want to have a voice in the world ... it will be a common European voice," said Gabriel, a Social Democrat who also serves as

Germany's vice chancellor. In future crises, Europe may not always be able to "wait on the US and Russian foreign ministers to come up with a road map" and then see that translated into a cease-fire, he said. Germany has to offer its "capabilities" and be more engaged, he said. He acknowledged, however, that with Germany's militaristic past, the question of how the country can be more involved is complicated.

He urged a common European stance toward China, saying that "not only should there be a one China policy from us, China should have a one Europe policy that doesn't attempt to divide us."

Gabriel lamented what he called a "social Darwinist" attitude toward international politics from the Trump administration and some nationalist voices in Poland, driven by "the idea that not only is the world an arena on which one fights, but also that in the end only the stronger has the right to live." — AP



PARIS: German Vice Chancellor and German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel (Right) pets French President's dog, Nemo, as he meets with French president Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee presidential Palace in Paris yesterday. — AP

Commercial Planning Manager / Sr. Manager - VIVA Kuwait Telecom Company K.L.L - Kuwait

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MUMBAI FLOODS TOLL JUMPS TO 14, RAIN EASES UP

MUMBAI: Two toddlers were among 14 people killed in Mumbai after floods caused by heavy monsoon rains destroyed homes and disrupted traffic in India's financial capital, police said, but lighter-than-expected rain yesterday helped relief efforts.

More than 1,200 people have died across India, Bangladesh and Nepal in the worst flooding to strike South Asia in years. Several villages in the east Indian state of Bihar are still inundated, with people living in makeshift shelters for days amid widespread heavy damage to farmland.

Tuesday's deluge in Mumbai - nearly a month's average rainfall in a single day - had halted train services and led to flight cancellations. More heavy rains had been forecast for yesterday, forcing the government to order schools and colleges shut, but in many areas the downpours were lighter. "The city and suburbs received a few showers in the last few

hours but rainfall wasn't heavy like yesterday," said K S Hosalikar, a senior India Metrological Department official. "However in the next few hours Mumbai and adjoining areas are likely to get fairly widespread rainfall, which will be heavy in few pockets." Officials said train and air services were operating normally late yesterday in the city, which is home to India's two biggest stock exchanges and several major companies.

Police said a 45-year-old woman and a 1-1/2-year-old child, members of the same family, died after their home in the north-eastern suburb of Vikhroli crumbled on Tuesday, while a 2-year-old girl died in a wall collapse. In the neighboring city of Thane, three people died after being swept away by floods, police added. Some died by falling into open manholes in flooded streets in various suburbs.

Mumbai Police spokeswoman Rashmi

Karandikar said seven other people were missing in Mumbai.

In neighboring suburbs six people were missing, said a police official, who declined to be named. The deluge revived memories of 2005 floods that killed more than 500 people, the majority of them in shantytown slums where more than half of the city's 20 million people live.

Unabated construction on floodplains and coastal areas, as well as stormwater drains and waterways clogged by plastic garbage have made the city increasingly vulnerable to storms. On Tuesday several firms made arrangements to provide food and rest areas for employees stuck in offices, while officials of temples and religious bodies offered help to those stranded on streets. "Together, we can overcome any ordeal," the Mumbai Police tweeted. "Thank you all for showing what humanity is in the face of adversity!" — Reuters



MUMBAI: The monorail train runs as it resumes service in Mumbai yesterday after heavy rains brought major flooding to the coastal city. — AFP



In this Oct 16, 2016 file photo, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (left) talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the signing ceremony by foreign ministers during the BRICS summit in Goa. — AP

AHEAD OF MODI VISIT, CHINA SEES HUGE POTENTIAL FOR COOPERATION

ASIAN GIANTS' TIES REMAIN STRAINED AFTER BORDER STANDOFF

BEIJING/NEW DELHI: China yesterday sought to cast its strained ties with India in a positive light ahead of a likely meeting next week between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi following their most serious military confrontation in decades.

The countries agreed this week to end a more than two-month-old stand-off on their disputed Himalayan border, just in time for the start on Sunday of a summit of the BRICS grouping of nations, which also includes Brazil, Russia and South Africa.

It was normal for the two neighbors to have differences, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told a news briefing. "What's important is that we put these problems in the appropriate place, and appropriately handle and control them in the spirit of mutual respect and based on the consensus of both countries' leaders," he said. "There is huge potential for cooperation between China and India," Wang added, without giving details.

Xi and Modi are expected to hold talks on the summit sidelines in the southeastern city of Xiamen, officials in New Delhi said. That has raised hopes they will try and repair a relationship that has deteriorated as the two countries find their interests diverge - and often clash -

while competing for influence across Asia.

Neither country should claim victory after the standoff, said former Indian foreign secretary Nirupama Rao, an expert on relations with China. "The forthcoming summit can provide an opportunity to begin that restoration process when the leaders of the two countries meet," Rao said. "Diplomatic and not military manoeuvres must be the name of the game in this relationship."

Hundreds of troops were deployed on the Doklam plateau, near the borders of India, its ally Bhutan, and China after New Delhi objected to China building a road through the mountainous area. The quiet diplomacy that ultimately ended in de-escalation was based on a principle of stopping "differences becoming disputes" that Modi and Xi had agreed in Astana in June, an Indian official with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

Road building

Still, ties remain strained over the disputed frontier and India is deeply suspicious of China's growing military activities in and around the Indian Ocean. For its part, Modi's government has upset China with its public embrace of Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama,

whom the Chinese regard as a dangerous separatist, and growing military ties with the United States and Japan.

China has said its forces will continue to patrol in Doklam, which is claimed by Bhutan. Wang said he hoped India had learned a lesson from the incident. Chinese road construction had stopped and equipment removed, said a second government official in New Delhi aware of the situation.

But it was not clear whether China had given an assurance not to resume construction in a territory New Delhi says is too close for comfort for the security of its northeast.

India and China have deep historical and cultural links, but relations have soured since India lost a brief border war in 1962. Chinese troops have made about 300 transgressions this year into territory claimed by India, the second official in New Delhi said, up from about 225 last year.

Media on both sides kept up a nationalistic drumbeat during the recent crisis. Ties between the two appeared to be heading to a "breaking point", with neither backing down from its own nationalist agenda, said one Beijing-based Western diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity. — Reuters

FORMER SEX SLAVE FINDS FREEDOM IN HER ONE-ROOM MUMBAI FLAT

MUMBAI: On a workday morning in her one-room apartment on Mumbai's outskirts, Sonika packed her lunch box, got dressed in a black shirt and blue jeans, ate a sago snack for breakfast and took a hurried selfie before rushing to catch the 8.45 am bus to work.

Her morning routine seems little different to that of other working girls. But Sonika, 19, appreciates the normality more than most. Until two years ago she was a sex slave - trapped in a cycle of physical and sexual abuse for nearly five years.

"I hated my life, but I had no choice. My days stretched for 18 hours or more. I wanted to die," said Sonika, who was trafficked to work as a prostitute when she was barely 13. Sonika moved into the simple home she shares with a roommate earlier this year - a move that Kshamata, a charity that helps trafficking survivors live independently, helped her take.

"I feel safe here. I have my own schedule. I do what I like," Sonika told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, sitting cross-legged in her apartment. Sonika, who did not want to give her full name, is among some 50 trafficking survivors in Mumbai who have been helped by Kshamata to find jobs and live independently.

Of an estimated 20 million commercial sex workers in India, 16 million women and girls are victims of sex trafficking, according to campaigners. Nearly half of them are adolescents and children, some as young as nine. Studies have shown that most rescued girls are re-trafficked as they are not able to find any alternative sources of income or livelihood options when they return to their communities.

Those staying at government and charity-run hostels are given vocational training and some also find jobs, but few step out of the institutions that become their new homes.

"They never leave institutional care. They are not independent," said Bharathy Tahiliani, founder of Kshamata, meaning

capability in Hindi.

"That Sonika could step out of the shelter, live on her own and trust her flatmate and her co-workers is a victory for us, and of course for her," Tahiliani said.

Basket weaving

Recent Indian government data has shown a year-on-year rise in trafficking cases in India, but while the government has a cash compensation scheme for youth victims of sexual assault, adult survivors get no such support. Prostitution is illegal in India and girls are often "rescued" by police during raids on brothels. "We did a study on rescued girls in 2007 and found less than 10 percent had reintegrated into the society. We couldn't trace most rescued girls," said Tahiliani, a social worker and campaigner.

Tahiliani founded Kshamata in 2013 to support trafficking survivors become financially independent as it was "the only way to protect them from being trafficked again".

Rehabilitation programs at some charities have moved from traditional embroidery and basket weaving lessons to career counselling and public speaking sessions, said Pratishta Kale, who runs training modules for trafficking survivors at Kshamata.

"The girls are young and often confused about their career choices. So we guide them and help them find a job in line with their interests," Kale said.

Other charities such as Save the Children India also are working on similar rehabilitation models.

"There are shelters and hostels run by charities and also the government where working girls can stay at a subsidized rate but over the last few years, they prefer to stay independently," said Jyoti Nale, program director for Save the Children India. "There are better (work) opportunities. In some cases, the education level of survivors is better, helping them find a job. This is the best way forward." — Reuters



SRINAGAR: A Kashmiri Muslim livestock vendor smokes as he waits for customers at a market ahead of Eid Al-Adha festival in Srinagar yesterday. — AP

PAKISTAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CONDEMNS TRUMP COMMENTS

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's National Assembly passed a resolution yesterday condemning US President Donald Trump's accusations that Islamabad was prolonging the war in Afghanistan, denouncing them as "hostile" and "threatening". Speaking before the assembly,

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khwaja Asif Asif urged the government to consider postponing any visits by US delegations to Pakistan or by Pakistani officials to the United States and closing off "ground and air lines of communication through Pakistan".

On Sunday, Pakistan's foreign office announced that it had postponed a visit by a US acting Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells to discuss Washington's new Afghan policy, but at the time did not provide a reason.

Trump accused Pakistan of harboring "agents of chaos" and providing safe havens to militant groups waging an insurgency against the US-backed government in Kabul.

Pakistani officials bristle at what they say is a lack of respect from Washington for the country's sacrifices in the war against militancy and its successes against groups like al Qaeda, Islamic State or the Pakistani Taliban. Pakistan estimates there have been 70,000 Pakistani casualties in militant attacks since it joined the US war on terror after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

Successive US administrations have struggled with how to deal with nuclear-armed Pakistan. Washington fumes about inaction against the Taliban, but Pakistan has been helpful on other counterterrorism efforts, including against Al-Qaeda and Islamic State.

The United States also has no choice but to use Pakistani roads to resupply its troops in landlocked Afghanistan. US officials worry that if Pakistan becomes an active foe, it could further destabilise Afghanistan and endanger US soldiers. — Reuters



KILLA ABDULLAH: Pakistani vendors sell apples on a roadside stall in Killa Abdullah, a district in the north west of Balochistan province. Pakistan has postponed a visit by a US diplomat who had been due to arrive on September 4, a week after President Donald Trump publicly upbraided Islamabad for harboring militants attacking US and Afghan troops. — AFP

TRAPPING GIRLS AS TRAINEES IN INDIAN FACTORIES TO END WITH LEGAL CHANGE

CHENNAI: Trainee workers in India's garment manufacturing hub in south India can no longer be trapped in apprenticeships for years after changes to a 56-year-old law that must be implemented immediately, campaigners and trade unions said yesterday. After a decade of lobbying, the state government of Tamil Nadu has amended a 1961 apprenticeship law that restricts the time a worker can be kept in training and only allows 10 percent of a workforce to be trainees.

Campaigners had voiced concerns that tens of thousands of girls were trapped in trainee jobs in spinning mills and garment factories for three years or more, working long hours for below minimum wages with no welfare benefits or job security.

The new rules will limit apprenticeships to six months to a year and give workers the opportunity to join the permanent workforce. Campaigners called for the amended law to be implemented immediately. "Exploitation had become epidemic in the industry," said Anantharaman Sivakumar of the All India Council of Trade Unions (AICTU), who has been campaigning for changes in the law for over a decade now. "It has been a long road for these changes in the law and once implemented,

it will give workers medical benefits, social security, proper holiday schedules and a more dignified existence."

Campaigners said the revised rules will bring an end to schemes where young girls were employed as trainees but put on regular production within a week with the promise of a lump sum after three years.

The girls will now have formal contracts, limited training periods, and the possibility of a permanent job. "In many instances, workers are not even given a pay slip telling them what they have earned and what has been deducted," said Thivya Sesuraj, advisor to the all women Tamil Nadu Textile and Common Labor Union (TTCU). Tamil Nadu is the largest hub in India's \$40 billion-a-year textile and garment industry with about 400,000 people working in spinning mills and garment factories there to produce garments exported to Europe and the United States.

The industry draws its largely female workforce from poor families. In a detailed presentation in 2016, the state labor department said apprentices outnumbered permanent workers in most textile mills, were paid less and most were fired at the end of a "three year apprenticeship period". — Reuters



Crowds of people throw tomatoes at each other during the annual "Tomatina" tomato fight fiesta in the village of Bunol, 50 km outside Valencia in Spain yesterday. — AP

FAITHFUL GATHER FOR START OF ANNUAL HAJJ...

Continued from Page 1

Risvana cradled her six-month-old baby who is accompanying her on the pilgrimage. "I've planned everything for him," said the young mother, pointing to a bottle of water in her bag. Saudi authorities have mobilized vast resources including more than 100,000 security personnel to avoid a repeat of the stampede in 2015 in which nearly 2,300 people were killed. This year the colossal religious gathering comes with the Islamic State group under growing pressure having lost swathes of territory it controlled in Iraq and Syria. But the group continues to claim attacks in the Middle East and Europe.

The hajj is one of the world's largest annual gatherings. Tens of thousands of air-conditioned tents have been set up in Mina to house pilgrims, and more than 700 Saudi cooks have been recruited to feed the faithful. On the esplanade of the Grand Mosque, authorities had placed misting fans to take the edge off the intense heat. On the eve of the first rites of the pilgrimage, the walkways thronged with people and the smell of musk wafted through the air.

Sitting in the shade of trees or reinforced concrete bridges, the faithful waited patiently for the next call to prayer. Others continued their march, protected by a prayer mat or a small umbrella on the head. Several times throughout the day, well-run teams of employees, mostly Asian, cleaned the esplanade with jets of water. As the hour for prayer arrived, a young woman sat at a table in an ice cream shop and prayed, her hands crossed on her knees. A few paces from the Kaaba, Egyptian pilgrim Fathiya Taha could not hide her joy. At 67 the oldest in her group, she sat in her wheelchair in Islam's most holy spot. "I've been looking forward to this pilgrimage for four years," she said.

For billions of Muslims who are physically and financially able, hajj is a mandatory act of worship. But the religious celebration also has a substantial impact on the environment. Environmentally aware worshippers say that should be reduced, while inspiring Muslims to adopt a greener lifestyle. "Hajj is all about living lightly and centering yourself around God," 28-year-old pilgrim Shanza Ali told the Thomson Reuters Foundation from Makkah. "We make many journeys in our life, and we go to many places, but this is the only journey that's physical, mental and spiritual," said Ali, who is chair of UK-based group Muslim Climate Action. She has found many similarities between hajj's message of simplicity and being environmentally conscious, and has tried to minimize her own carbon footprint and waste during the pilgrimage, which lasts for at least six days and takes worshippers to a series of holy sites in Saudi Arabia. For Husna Ahmad, author of "The Green Guide for Hajj", Muslims are doctrinally required to be stewards of the Earth.

Tackling climate change is no longer about preserving the planet for future generations as its effects are evident now, she said. The majority of Muslims live outside Saudi Arabia and could collectively influence the greening of the sacred rituals, she added. "Consumer power is something

that people need to think about in terms of flights, what they take, what they wear, the rubbish they throw, plastic bottles and all those sorts of things. We have to be conscious of that," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Muslims need to move away from a fast, disposable society, she added, with hajj being the potential start of that journey. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has taken steps to green the hajj, such as setting quotas for pilgrim numbers and developing the Makkah metro system to limit pollution. The Saudi Green Building Forum, a Riyadh-based non-governmental group recognized by the United Nations, has recently been tasked with auditing green efforts in Madinah, the country's second holy city where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is buried and a site visited by millions of pilgrims.

Forum secretary-general Faisal Alfadl said his team will measure the green credentials of the holy cities of Makkah, Madinah and others against international guidelines on energy use, waste, water, transport and human well-being. People now realize it is politically and culturally incorrect not to respect the environment, said Alfadl. "We have moved forward," he said, noting a shift in the public mood from desert Bedouins to city dwellers on the importance of protecting the environment, with the focus now on action rather than simply raising awareness.

Reviving traditional practices could help - for example, sharing water among pilgrims from a communal source, which was common before plastic bottles became ubiquitous. And the white marble stones surrounding the Kaaba in Makkah naturally prevent the heat-island effect found in other urban areas, Alfadl said.

Recycling may not be at the top of pilgrims' minds, but Muslims have a duty to recognize the creator of the environment and reflect on Islamic teachings not to harm animals, waste water or cut down trees unnecessarily, said Fatima Ragie of Green Deen South Africa, a Muslim environmental network. Ragie, who completed hajj in 2009, urged greater efforts once the pilgrimage ends - for instance, ensuring food is not wasted when millions of animals are slaughtered, marking Abraham's near sacrifice of his son and the start of the Eid holiday. More mosques and Muslim leaders should also speak up about climate change and the environment, she said.

From Bangladesh to North Africa, climate change is a reality for many Muslims, as floods and droughts fuel instability and conflict, said Nana Firman, who participated in the UN Climate talks in Morocco last year for the Global Muslim Climate Network. "A lot of people feel like they don't know what to do, so it's really important that we engage (them)," she said. Indonesia - which has the world's largest Muslim population, according to the Pew Research Center - has launched initiatives, from a phone app showing pilgrims how to enjoy a green hajj, to offsetting carbon emissions from flights by planting trees, and limiting the number of times each person can undertake the pilgrimage, said Firman. She urged hajj pilgrims to "reflect and make a change in their lives when they go back, and care more for the environment". — Agencies

EGYPT PROMOTES BIRTH CONTROL TO FIGHT RAPID POPULATION GROWTH

CAIRO: Egypt is pushing to educate people in rural areas on birth control and family planning in a bid to slow a population growth rate that President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi said poses a threat to national development. The country is already the most populous in the Arab world with 93 million citizens and is set to grow to 128 million by 2030 if fertility rates of 4.0 births per thousand women continue, according to government figures.

In 2016, Egypt saw the birth of 2.6 million babies, the country's statistics agency CAPMAS said last month. "The two biggest dangers that Egypt faces throughout its history are terrorism and population growth and this challenge decreases Egypt's chances of moving forward," Sisi told a youth conference last month.

Egypt's health minister last month started Operation Lifeline, a strategy to reduce the birth rate to 2.4 and save the government up to 200 billion Egyptian pounds (\$11.3 billion) by 2030. Its target is rural areas where many view large families as a source of economic strength and there is resistance to birth control because of a belief that it is unlawful under Islam to aim to conceive a specific number of children.

Free Check-Ups

Egypt's Al-Azhar university, a 1,000-year-old seat of Islamic learning, endorsed the ministry's plan and said family planning is not forbidden. Ousted President Hosni Mubarak and his wife Suzanne set up a population control program decades ago but this is the first time the government says it is motivated by concern that rapid expansion saps the economy.

The health ministry said it would deploy 12,000 fami-

ly planning advocates to 18 rural provinces but gave no details of how it would attract more women to the program. The ministry runs nearly 6,000 family planning clinics where women receive free check-ups and can buy heavily subsidized contraceptives ranging from condoms at 0.10 Egyptian pounds to copper Intrauterine Devices at 2 Egyptian pounds. "Given how expensive the cost of living has become and the increase in prices, people have started becoming more aware. They know they can afford to have one or two children, but no more," Ahlam Saad, a nurse at a government-run family planning clinic on the outskirts of Cairo, told Reuters.

Inflation has surged in Egypt to record highs over the past year after the country floated its currency in November, a move which drove down the value of the pound. That drop created a shortage of medicines in pharmacies across Egypt, as scores of products including contraceptives became unprofitable to produce or import. "My fiance and I decided that we want to delay having a baby, I want to continue my studies and we're just not ready," said 30-year-old Sherin who sat in the waiting room with a score of others.

In line with government plans to reduce reliance on imports, the ministry contracted Acidima International, a subsidiary of the privately owned Arab Company for Drug Industries and Medical Appliances, to source locally produced hormonal contraceptives. The deal saves the government millions of dollars and covers 65 percent of local demand, Managing Director Tarek Abulela said, adding that the rest is exported throughout the region. — Reuters

UN CHIEF CALLS FOR LIFTING OF GAZA BLOCKADE

Continued from Page 1

He later said it was "important to open the closures", in a reference to Israel's decade-long blockade of Gaza and its border with Egypt that has remained largely closed in recent years. Guterres made the comments at a school run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, in the northern Gaza Strip. At least 70 percent of Gazans are dependent upon international aid. UNRWA plays a major role in the strip, with the same percentage of the population classified as refugees.

Palestinian militants in Gaza and Israel have fought three wars since 2008. Israel says the blockade is necessary to keep Islamist movement Hamas, which runs the enclave, from obtaining weapons or materials that could be used to make them. The blockade also serves to isolate Hamas. Guterres also made reference to Hamas' weaponry, saying "it is important to avoid the build-up of militarism that can also undermine the confidence between the two peoples", adding that he had a dream to "come back to Gaza one day and to see Gaza as part of a Palestine state in peace and prosperity".

UN officials say the enclave is fast becoming unlivable due to deteriorating humanitarian conditions. Hamas welcomed Guterres' trip, calling on him to make "all efforts to lift the siege on the strip and end the suffering for two million Palestinians living in the largest prison in the world". UN officials' contact with Hamas is limited and Guterres was not expected to meet directly with leaders of the group, which is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union.

Demonstrations also occurred during Guterres' visit to

the strip. At one protest, around 25 people held a fake coffin with a sign that said "Welcome to the largest prison in the world". Dozens of people also demonstrated as Guterres' convoy crossed the border with Israel into Gaza, calling for action in support of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. They included prisoners' relatives.

Before entering into the strip, Israeli officials gave Guterres a tour of the Gaza border area and he was shown a tunnel crossing from the enclave into Israel. Such tunnels, used by Hamas for attacks in the past, are a major concern for Israel. Guterres held talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders in Jerusalem and Ramallah on Monday and Tuesday. He gave a speech in Tel Aviv later yesterday before his departure. His trip was meant in part to express strong support for the imperiled two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu heads what is seen as the most right-wing government in his country's history, and has signalled he has no intention of evacuating settlements in the occupied West Bank. Israeli settlements are built on land the Palestinians see as part of their future state.

Prominent members of Netanyahu's government advocate annexing most of the West Bank, which would make an independent Palestinian state impossible. US President Donald Trump has said he wants to reach the "ultimate deal", but he himself has cast doubt on the two-state solution, saying he could support a single state if this meant peace. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is meanwhile unpopular and likely incapable of making major concessions, many analysts say. His Fatah party, based in the West Bank, also remains deeply divided from Hamas. — Agencies

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Focus

PUTIN'S WEIRD WAR
GETS EVER RISKIER

September will be a nervous month in Eastern Europe. On Sept 14, Russia will unleash what may be its largest military exercise since the Cold War. In Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and elsewhere, officials are openly concerned that the "Zapad ('West') 2017" drills near their borders will be used as cover for a military attack. Russian President Vladimir Putin sees both conventional and nuclear posturing as a useful tool to reassert Moscow's status as a world power and intimidate nearby enemies. The three years since Russia's annexation of Crimea have seen a dramatic increase in Moscow's military activity.

But Russia's escalating confrontation with the West goes well beyond that. Moscow, Washington and other Western governments understand that any direct conflict between Russia and the West would prove disastrous. Instead, the face-off is worsening in wider, often weirder ways. And while many Americans would blame Moscow, many Russians see it differently.

Part of that is down to a Kremlin media machine that relentlessly pushes the message that Moscow must assert itself to avoid being surrounded and impoverished - and paints the West as chaotic, corrupt and Machiavellian. Such views are deeply embedded in Russia's national mindset. An unclassified report released by the US Defense Intelligence Agency in June concluded that senior Russian leaders genuinely believed Washington was intent on toppling them, particularly under President Barack Obama.

That belief creates mounting dangers that damage and destabilize both sides - and that show no signs of subsiding. Despite signs that President Donald Trump would still like to be in Putin's good graces, Congress and much of the US government simply will not let him - particularly as probes into Russian election hacking and the Trump campaign's Moscow links gather steam. With a continuous drip feed of allegations and revelations, it will become ever more toxic to relations.

On Aug 2, Trump bowed to bipartisan pressure in signing a bill to impose new sanctions demanded by Congress. It was a sign of just how Capitol Hill, not the president, now may be calling the shots - Trump complained on Twitter that the sanctions might dangerously imperil relations with Russia, but he was politically unable to block them.

At the end of the Cold War, Western leaders took the deliberate decision to pull Moscow into the West's economic structures to cement peace. The latest round of sanctions may be the final nail in the coffin of that approach. Writing on his Facebook page, Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev described them as "economic war," saying they ended any hopes for a rapprochement under the Trump administration.

Even as the proxy war Washington and Russia have been waging in Syria appears to be tailing off, the one in Ukraine appears intensifying. Last week, US Defense Secretary James Mattis announced the government is considering supplying lethal weaponry to Ukraine - primarily US-made antitank rockets - to be used in its ongoing war with Moscow-backed Russian-speaking separatists.

Meanwhile, Moscow is inserting itself more deeply into Washington's confrontation with North Korea. Last week, nuclear-capable Russian bombers probed Japanese and South Korean airspace. Moscow is encouraging Russian tourism to North Korea, inevitably complicating any US decision to conduct military action on the peninsula.

Interference

Russia's suspected interference in Western politics now goes well beyond intermittent hacking and the release of potentially sensitive information seen in the American, French and other elections. Social media experts say an army of suspected Russian-run Twitter feeds and other web and social media outlets are now also energetically pushing their own disruptive narratives into American and European political discourse.

Suspected Russian-linked "bots" - believed to be largely automated Twitter feeds - were observed spreading far-right messaging both before and after the white supremacist demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia. They are also accused of spreading rumors and criticism of US National Security Advisor H R McMaster during his reported face-off with now-ousted Trump strategist Steve Bannon. —Reuters



FOCUS ON RISKY US SHOOT-DOWN OPTION

North Korea's firing of a ballistic missile over Japan could increase pressure on Washington to consider shooting down future test launches, although there is no guarantee of success and US officials are wary of a dangerous escalation with Pyongyang. More attention is likely to focus on the prospects for intercepting a missile in flight after North Korea on Tuesday conducted one of its boldest missile tests in years, one government official said.

Such a decision would not be taken lightly given tensions over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. And while President Donald Trump has repeatedly vowed that "all options are on the table", there has been no sign of any quick policy shift in Washington toward direct US military action. But Pyongyang's launch of an intermediate-range Hwasong-12 missile over Japan's northern Hokkaido island underscored how Trump's tough rhetoric, pursuit of sanctions and occasional shows of military force around the Korean peninsula have done little to deter North Korea's leader.

"Kim Jong Un has chosen to thumb his nose at the Americans and Japanese by conducting this test," said David Shear, former US assistant secretary of defense for East Asia. US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis

has already pledged that the military would shoot down any missile it deemed a danger to US or allied territory. What is unclear is whether Washington would be prepared to use its multi-layered missile defense systems to intercept a missile like the one that overflew Japan but never directly threatened its territory.

Doing so would essentially be a US show of force rather than an act of self-defense. "I would think that in government deliberations that would likely be one of the options out on the table," Shear said. Some analysts say there is a danger that North Korea would see it as an act of war and retaliate militarily with potentially devastating consequences for South Korea and Japan. China, North Korea's neighbor and main trading partner, would also likely oppose such a direct US military response.

Minimizing Damage

Experts say there is no guarantee that US missile defense systems, including Aegis ballistic missile defense ships in the region and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) systems based in Guam and South Korea, would hit their target, despite recent successful tests. A failed attempt would be an embarrassment to the United States and could embolden North Korea, which this

year has already conducted two tests of an intercontinental ballistic missile believed capable of hitting the US mainland. The United States has spent \$40 billion over 18 years on research and development into missile defense systems but they have never been put into operation under wartime conditions.

Mattis this month expressed confidence the US military could intercept a missile fired by North Korea if it was headed to Guam, after North Korea said it was developing a plan to launch four intermediate range missiles to land near the US territory. If North Korea fired at the United States, the situation could quickly escalate to war, Mattis said.

Growing Threat

Not everyone is convinced the US military can defend against North Korea's growing missile capability. Some experts caution that US missile defenses are now geared to shooting down one, or perhaps a small number, of incoming missiles. If North Korea's technology and production keep advancing, US defenses could be overwhelmed. "If a shootdown fails, it would be embarrassing, though not terribly surprising," said Michael Elleman, a missile expert at the 38 North think tank in Washington.

"Missile defense does not provide a shield that protects against missiles. Rather, it is like air defense; it is designed to minimize the damage an adversary can inflict," he said. One US official said the military would be especially cautious about shooting down a North Korean missile that did not pose a direct threat because of the risk of civilian casualties if it were intercepted over Japan or South Korea, as well as difficulty in determining how Pyongyang might retaliate. The official spoke on condition of anonymity. US military and intelligence officials warn North Korea could unleash a devastating barrage of missiles and artillery on Seoul and US bases in South Korea in response to any military attack.

Targeting of a North Korean missile in flight that did not endanger the United States or its allies could also raise legal questions. UN Security Council resolutions that ban Pyongyang's ballistic missile programs do not explicitly authorize such actions. Japan also faces questions over the legality of shooting down missiles in its airspace but not aimed at Japan. Under legislation passed in 2015, Tokyo can exercise a limited right of collective self-defense, or militarily aiding an ally under attack, if it judges the threat to Japan as "existential." —Reuters

US MAY FAIL TO HEED HARVEY CLIMATE WARNING

Unprecedented flooding unleashed by Hurricane Harvey in the southern United States underscores the need for even wealthy countries to ramp up their disaster plans to keep vulnerable people safe and help them deal with the knock-out blows climate change could bring, experts say. Yet few expect the devastation wrought by Harvey to convince US President Donald Trump to boost government funding for disasters or reinstate regulations that would limit heat-trapping emissions and protect infrastructure from extreme weather, let alone reconsider his decision to quit the Paris Agreement on climate change.

"What Hurricane Harvey is demonstrating to those few hold-out climate change sceptics is that this is our new reality. And it's only going to get worse," said Heather Coleman, associate director for climate change and energy policy at Oxfam

America. "As we've seen in other disasters here and around the world, it's the poorest who are the most vulnerable."

At least nine people have been killed and some 30,000 are expected to be forced from their homes by flooding brought by the slow-moving storm, which slammed into Texas from the Gulf of Mexico at the weekend. Police, national guard and rescue workers are helping people still trapped in Houston, the fourth most-populous US city, and a state of emergency has been declared in Louisiana. The biggest storm to hit Texas in 50 years, Harvey could cause up to \$20 billion in insured losses, making it one of the costliest storms in US history, according to Wall Street analysts.

Experts at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and the World Meteorological Organization have said Harvey's extreme rainfall was likely made worse by climate change. "State govern-

ments, governors, city mayors (and) scientists all over the (United States) are very much agreeing that climate change is real," said Saleemul Huq, director of the Dhaka-based International Centre for Climate Change and Development. "Harvey is sending tonnes and tonnes of water on their heads as proof that this is what is likely to happen with human-induced climate change."

Besides promising to pull the United States out of the 2015 Paris accord to curb global warming, Trump has threatened to cut billions of dollars in funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is now coordinating the Texas relief response. Key posts at US weather-tracking agencies remain empty, while a swathe of Obama-era environmental regulation has been dismantled under the Republican president, who is facing the country's biggest natural disaster since he

took office in January.

Earlier this month, Trump rolled back rules for environmental reviews and restrictions on government-funded building projects in flood-prone areas, revoking an executive order by his predecessor aimed at reducing exposure to flooding, sea level rise and other consequences of climate change.

'Playing Politics'

With disasters costing over \$175 billion in economic losses last year, according to reinsurer Swiss Re, investing in measures to better protect those at greatest risk is essential, as the intensity and frequency of extreme weather is expected to increase, experts say. "Let us stop playing politics around what is happening with climate change and nature, and really make the long-term decisions that deal not just with infrastructure, but the lives and livelihoods of people," said Jo Scheuer, director for climate change and disaster risk reduction at the United Nations Development Programme.

Key measures include "building back better" after a disaster, forecasting climate trends decades ahead, and factoring in estimates of sea level rise and storm surges when deciding how to rebuild shattered communities to reduce the impact of future storms, he said. In some cases, governments may have to decide to relocate people and infrastructure from disaster-prone areas, he added. "What we've gotten pretty good at overall is dealing with the immediate disaster event - meaning moving people out of harm's way... to eliminate the loss of life," said Scheuer. "In most cases, what we have not gotten good at is... to ensure that every investment we make is made with understanding the risk involved."

Despite the hefty cost of Hurricane Harvey, many experts doubt that Trump will acknowledge the scientific link between climate change and weather disasters, or bolster funding and regulation to limit devastation from future floods and storms. "The Trump administration so far has not really shown any inclination to create policy based on realities on the ground - and certainly not based on challenges that every day people are facing," said Brandon Wu, director of policy and campaigns for ActionAid USA. — Reuters



A boat makes its way up the flooded Lake Houston Parkway as floodwaters from Tropical Storm Harvey rise on Tuesday in Kingwood, Texas. —AP

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CRICKET

PAKISTAN BAN SHARJEEL FOR FIVE YEARS OVER SPOT-FIXING

LAHORE: Pakistan's anti-corruption tribunal yesterday banned opener Sharjeel Khan for five years over a spot-fixing case that has rocked the Pakistan Super League, the latest scandal to taint the sport in the cricket-crazy country.

The 28-year-old dashing left-handed opener had been provisionally suspended along with fellow opener Khalid Latif in February for violating the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) anti-corruption code. The charges centred on a match between Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi in Dubai in February.

Off four balls, Sharjeel scored a single, failed to score off two deliveries and was then out.

Spot-fixing involves bets on the outcome of a particular passage of play, unlike match-fixing in which there is an

attempt to prearrange the result.

Latif, who did not play in the game, was alleged to have orchestrated the deal. Both were also charged for not reporting the matter to the PCB's anti-corruption unit, resulting in an additional six month suspension for Sharjeel.

"Sharjeel is banned for five years, which has two-and-a-half years suspended," said Asghat Haider, who headed the three-member tribunal.

"We hold that the participant (Sharjeel) has committed all offences as charged by the PCB under its code."

Former PCB head Tauqir Zia and former Pakistan captain Wasim Bari were the other members of the tribunal formed in March.

Under the PCB code players can appeal rulings before an independent

arbitrator within 14 days of the decision.

Four other players — Mohammad Irfan, Shahzaib Hasan, Nasir Jamshed and Mohammad Nawaz — were also included in the investigation on multiple charges.

Irfan and Nawaz admitted not reporting the bookmaker's offer. Irfan was banned for one year with six months suspended and fined one million rupees (\$9,500). Nawaz was banned for two months (one suspended) and fined 200,000 rupees.

The tribunal is expected to rule on Khalid Latif's case next month.

Jamshed, who is being investigated by Britain's National Crime Agency, was said to be the "go-between" linking the players and the bookie.

His case and Hasan's is still under

investigation by the tribunal.

SPOTTY RECORD

Sharjeel's career blossomed last year when he cracked a hundred in the first edition of the Pakistan Super League. He then hit a blistering career-best 152 against Ireland and has played for Pakistan in all three formats.

The proceedings included testimony from Andrew Ephgrave, operations manager of Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) and from Ronnie Flanagan, head of the International Cricket Council's (ICC) anti-corruption unit. The NCA was said to have passed the initial information on the fixing to the ICC, which later informed the PCB of the allegation.

Sharjeel's lawyer Shaigan Ijaz said

they would appeal against the verdict.

"We have reservations over the decision because the fixing could not be proved," Ijaz told reporters.

Pakistan has a history of such cases, with former captain Salim Malik and paceman Ata-ur-Rehman banned for life after a match-fixing inquiry in 2000.

Six top players — Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Mushtaq Ahmed, Saeed Ajmal, Akram Raza and Inzamam-ul-Haq — were also fined in the same case.

Another former captain Salman Butt and pace bowlers Mohammad Amir and Mohammad Asif were banned for five years and jailed in Britain in a spot-fixing case in 2010.

Former leg-spinner Danish Kaneria is serving a life ban over a 2009 spot-fixing case in English county cricket. — AFP



MINNEAPOLIS: Minnesota Twins outfielders, from left, Eddie Rosario, Byron Buxton and Max Kepler show their three-point shooting form in their celebration of the Twins' 6-4 win over the against the Chicago White Sox in a baseball game Tuesday, in Minneapolis. —AP

BASEBALL

STANTON TIES MLB RECORD WITH 18TH HR

WASHINGTON: Giancarlo Stanton tied a major league record with his 18th home run in August, but Anthony Rendon had four RBIs and the Washington Nationals beat the Miami Marlins 8-3 on Tuesday. Stanton hit a long homer in the first inning off Edwin Jackson (5-3), his 51st this season, to open the scoring following a 26-minute rain delay. His August output matched the mark set by Rudy York with the Detroit Tigers in 1937. Sammy Sosa set the record for homers in a month when he hit 20 in June 1998, and Stanton has two games left this month to catch the former Cubs slugger. Stanton added an RBI with a deep sacrifice fly in the fifth inning. Rendon's three-run double in the seventh came after Washington's bullpen thwarted a rally earlier in the inning. Daniel Murphy also had a two-run single. The Nationals, 16-7 since Aug. 6, had five runs and nine hits in 4 1/3 innings against Vance Worley (2-4).

RED SOX 3, BLUE JAYS 0

Chris Sale and two relievers combined on a four-hitter, Hanley Ramirez hit a solo home run and Boston beat Toronto. Sale (15-6) fanned 11 in his major league-best 17th double-digit strikeout game, raising his league-leading total to 264. His 15 wins lead the AL. Sale, who matched a season-worst by allowing seven

runs in his previous outing, pitched seven innings. The left-hander has not allowed a run in 22 innings against the Blue Jays this season. Craig Kimbrel finished for his 31st save in 35 chances. Promoted from Triple-A Buffalo to make his first start for the Blue Jays, left-hander Brett Anderson (2-3) allowed one run in 5 2/3 innings.

ORIOLES 4, MARINERS 0

Dylan Bundy threw a one-hitter for his first career shutout, Manny Machado hit two of Baltimore's four solo homers, and the Orioles extended their winning streak to six games. Bundy (13-8) allowed just a bunt single to Kyle Seager in the fourth inning and set a career high with 12 strikeouts. The right-hander has a 2.00 ERA in August and has struck out 10 or more in three of his last four starts. Jonathan Schoop and Wellington Castillo also homered for the Orioles, who moved two games over .500 for the first time since June 10. Schoop collected his 29th homer of the season and 500th career hit with a solo shot in the first off Erasmo Ramirez (5-5).

ROYALS 6, RAYS 2

Whit Merrifield, Jorge Bonifacio and Eric Hosmer homered as Kansas City snapped a 45-inning scoreless streak on the way to a victory

over Tampa Bay. Merrifield's 16th home run with two outs in the third ended the Royals' drought, three innings shy of the major league record. The 1906 Philadelphia Athletics and 1968 Chicago Cubs share the mark with 48 scoreless innings. Bonifacio homered with two outs in the sixth off Alex Cobb (9-9). Cobb gave up a run on three singles and three wild pitches in the fourth. Hosmer scored on Mike Moustakas' single, but the Royals stranded runners at second and third. Royals rookie Jake Junis (6-2) did not allow a hit until a one-out single in the fifth.

CUBS 4, PIRATES 1

Jake Arrieta continued his dominant second half with six innings of two-hit ball, Ben Zobrist homered and Chicago beat Pittsburgh. Anthony Rizzo went 3 for 4 with an RBI, Alex Avila had an RBI single and Jason Heyward added a sacrifice fly for NL Central-leading Chicago. Arrieta (14-8) struck out four and retired the last seven batters he faced, leaving after 97 pitches with a 3-0 lead. He hasn't allowed more than two earned runs in any of his nine starts since the All-Star break, going 6-1 with a 1.59 ERA during that span. Wade Davis got the final three outs for his 27th save in 27 chances to establish a new Cubs record for consecutive saves opportunities converted. Chad Kuhl (6-10) allowed three runs in 5 1/3 innings.

CARDINALS 10, BREWERS 2

Matt Carpenter hit a two-run homer and Luke Voit drove in four runs, backing Luke Weaver's 10-strikeout night in a 10-2 win Tuesday over the Milwaukee Brewers. Carpenter's shot to right in the fifth had added importance for the third baseman after he had pledged \$10,000 for every home run that he hit the rest of the season to Hurricane Harvey relief efforts. The Galveston, Texas native looked up and pointed two fingers toward the night sky as he touched the plate to extend the Cardinals' lead to 9-1. St. Louis chased Matt Garza (6-8) with one out in the fourth. The right-hander walked five and allowed six runs, though only three were earned after the Brewers committed two errors in the third. The loss dropped the second-place Brewers to 3 1/2 games back of the NL Central-leading Cubs, who won on Tuesday.

RANGERS 12, ASTROS 2

Shin-Soo Choo homered and drove in four runs, helping Texas rout Houston in the open-

er of a series relocated to Florida due to flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey. Adrian Beltre of the Rangers drove in three runs to pass Hall of Famer Ernie Banks for 28th on the career RBI list with 1,637, and Joey Gallo hit a two-run homer off Mike Fiers (8-9) before an announced crowd of 3,485 at Tropicana Field, the home of the Tampa Bay Rays. The three-game series that concludes Thursday was moved from Minute Maid Park because of flooding in the Houston area, with the Astros serving as the home team after the Rangers declined a proposal to play the games in Arlington, Texas. It's only the fourth time in major league history that games have been relocated to neutral sites because of weather. Martin Perez (10-10) pitched seven strong innings for the Rangers.

TWINS 6, WHITE SOX 4

Jorge Polanco homered twice and Ervin Santana struck out seven while pitching into the seventh inning, leading Minnesota past Chicago. Eduardo Escobar drove in two runs for the Twins, who started the day with a one-game lead over the Los Angeles Angels in the crowded race for the second AL wild card. Santana (14-7) matched his highest total for wins since he was a 17-game winner 2010 with the Angels. Matt Belisle pitched the ninth for his fifth save. James Shields (2-5) has not won for the White Sox in 10 starts.

DIAMONDBACKS 7, DODGERS 6

A.J. Pollock hit a two-run homer and Arizona roughed up Rich Hill in his follow-up to a near no-hitter. Hill (9-6) pitched nine no-hit innings against Pittsburgh today, losing the no-hitter and the game on Josh Harrison's walk-off homer in the 10th. The Diamondbacks scored 11 runs to complete a three-game sweep of San Francisco on Sunday and kept hitting after a day off, knocking around Hill in a five-run first inning. Paul Goldschmidt homered and Fernando Rodney allowed a run-scoring single by Chris Taylor in the ninth before closing out his 33rd save. The wild card-leading Diamondbacks have won five straight. Taylor hit a two-run homer and Yasiel Puig a solo shot off Zack Godley (6-7) for the NL West-leading Dodgers, who have lost three in a row for the first time since early June.

ROCKIES 7, TIGERS 3

Nolan Arenado capped a four-run seventh inning with his 30th homer, and Colorado beat

Detroit. Arenado's three-run shot broke open a close game and helped the Rockies win for the fourth time in six tries. Colorado increased its lead to four games over Milwaukee for the second NL wild card. Colorado went ahead 4-3 on singles by Jonathan Lucroy and Trevor Story, and a sacrifice fly by pinch-hitter Carlos Gonzalez off starter Michael Fulmer (10-12). Charlie Blackmon reached on a fielder's choice. Warwick Saupold walked DJ LeMahieu, and Arenado followed with his three-run drive to reach 30 homers for the third straight season. He leads the majors with 111 RBIs. Rockies starter German Marquez tied a career high with 10 strikeouts before leaving with one out in the seventh. Pat Neshek (2-1) got the last two outs of the inning.

ANGELS 8, ATHLETICS 2

C.J. Cron hit two homers, including a three-run drive in the first inning, and Los Angeles beat Oakland. Ben Revere had two RBIs for the Angels, who have won three of four and are one game behind Minnesota for the second AL wild card. Cron drove a three-run homer off Chris Smith (0-4) in the first inning and also had a solo shot in the eighth. Jesse Chavez (7-10) threw four scoreless relief innings.

REDS 14, METS 4

Scott Schebler hit his first career grand slam, and Cincinnati ended its 14-game losing streak against New York. The Reds hadn't beaten the Mets since Sept. 6, 2014. They'd dropped their last eight to New York at Great American Ball Park, where the Mets are 30-16 all-time - the best winning percentage by any NL team. Cincinnati put it away with a seven-run eighth inning that featured Adam Duvall's three-run homer. Mets catcher Kevin Plawecki made his second appearance on the mound this season and induced a double-play grounder. Reds rookie Sal Romano (4-5) made his third straight solo start, allowing three runs and six hits in six innings. Schebler homered in the first off rookie Chris Flexen (3-3).

PADRES 6, GIANTS 3

Manuel Margot and Jabari Blash homered to back Luis Perdomo's six innings of solid pitching as San Diego beat San Francisco. Perdomo (7-8) settled in after his pitch count climbed as he wiggled from jams in the first two innings. Brad Hand handled the ninth for his 13th save. Matt Moore (4-13) was charged with five runs and eight hits, with a walk and a hit batter. He struck out two. — AP

MLB Results/Standings

San Diego 6, San Francisco 3; LA Angels 8, Oakland 2; Arizona 7, LA Dodgers 6; Colorado 7, Detroit 3; Kansas City 6, Tampa Bay 2; Minnesota 6, Chicago White Sox 4; Chicago Cubs 4, Pittsburgh 1; St. Louis 10, Milwaukee 2; Texas 12, Houston 2; Cincinnati 14 NY Mets 4; Boston 3, Toronto 0; Washington 8, Miami 3; Baltimore 4, Seattle 0.

American League Eastern Division				National League Eastern Division			
W	L	PCT	GB	Washington	80	51	.611
Boston	75	57	.568	Miami	66	65	.504
NY Yankees	70	60	.538	Atlanta	57	72	.442
Baltimore	67	65	.508	NY Mets	57	74	.435
Tampa Bay	66	68	.493	Philadelphia	49	81	.377
Toronto	61	71	.462	10	30.5		
Central Division				Central Division			
Cleveland	74	56	.569	Chicago Cubs	71	60	.542
Minnesota	68	63	.519	6.5	Milwaukee	68	64
Kansas City	65	66	.496	9.5	St. Louis	66	65
Detroit	57	74	.435	17.5	Pittsburgh	63	70
Chicago White Sox	61	78	.400	22	Cincinnati	56	76
Western Division				Western Division			
Houston	79	52	.603	12	LA Dodgers	91	39
LA Angels	68	65	.511	18	Arizona	74	58
Seattle	66	67	.496	14	Colorado	72	60
Texas	65	66	.496	14	San Diego	58	74
Oakland	58	74	.439	21.5	San Francisco	53	81

SOCCER

KFA AMENDS LAWS TO GET FIFA SUSPENSION LIFTED

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Football Association (KFA) plans to move forward with an effort to have its suspension from FIFA lifted after amending its statutes this week. "We should have met a long time ago. The general assembly meeting is based on the demands of FIFA, which rejects any government interference and wants Kuwaiti clubs to play an independent role," Saleh Al-Majroub, General Secretary of Fahheel Sport Club, told Kuwait Times.

The extraordinary general assembly of the Kuwait Football Association on Tuesday overwhelmingly approved amendments to its statutes in the presence of all Kuwaiti clubs in a bid to get its suspension lifted by FIFA. Majroub said the new amendments state "an extraordinary general assembly will be convened," adding that "members should be informed of the place, time and agenda within one week before the extraordinary general assembly."

He added members of the general assembly can hold an extraordinary general assembly to appoint the board

of directors of KFA and name a temporary five-year transitional committee of general members to manage the affairs of the association.

Majroub noted two articles have been amended, which provide for the convening of the extraordinary general assembly every three months. "We will hold the assembly every week if necessary. And the assembly has the right to dissolve the association," he explained. He added the Kuwaiti football clubs also discussed cooperation with FIFA and where the clubs stand now. Jawad Al-Ghareeb, assistant treasurer, board member and Salmiya Football Club representative at the meeting, said Salmiya Football Club joined the general assembly without any external pressures. "In light of the problems faced by the Kuwait Football Association, we decided it is our right to exercise our role in lifting the suspension, ending the damage caused to coaches and players and to resolve the problem," Ghareeb said.

"We have not been pressured to convene the general assembly. We have taken all decisions completely independently, where 14 clubs met to



Saleh Al-Majroub

discuss matters related to cooperation with FIFA. These amendments are fair and in the service of Kuwaiti sport and athletes. They will be beneficial for us without interference from any other party," Treasurer of Al-Sahel Club Faleh Al-Daihani said. The General Assembly adopted the amendments to the statutes with a majority of 13 clubs, with Qadsiya Sports Club registering its rejection of the changes.

Kuwait has been suspended by the world football body since 2015



Jawal Al-Ghareeb

because of alleged government interference. Last year, the authorities ordered police to seize the football association and Olympic committee offices, in the latest round of a sporting power struggle. The move came after the government's sports commission ousted Sheikh Talal Fahd Al-Sabah as head of the KFA and the Kuwait Olympic Committee.

Fawaz Al-Hasawi, who was named as new head of the football association, was the then owner of English



Faleh Al-Daihani

Championship side Nottingham Forest. At a press conference after the football offices were seized, Hasawi promised increased prizes in the Kuwaiti championship. However, the ousted head said authorities had used "threat and intimidation" in an official notice demanding that the KFA offices be handed over. Hasawi later resigned and two of its top teams withdrew from league competition after complaints against the league's chaotic disciplinary system.

CAMEROON NEED FOUR POINTS TO AVOID DOOM: HUGO BROOS

JOHANNESBURG: Cameroon coach Hugo Broos admits their 2018 World Cup qualifying campaign is doomed if they do not take at least four points off Nigeria in back-to-back clashes.

The Group B rivals meet in southeastern Nigerian city Uyo this Friday and in Cameroonian capital Yaounde three days later. Nigeria top the African "group of death" with six points after two rounds, African champions Cameroon have two and Zambia and Algeria one.

"If we still want to have a chance of qualifying, we must take at least four points off Nigeria," the Belgian told reporters.

"Should we fail to achieve that target, I do not think it will be possible to qualify for Russia." Broos is hoping for an away draw and a home victory — results that would reduce the gap between the countries to one point. The remaining two qualifying rounds are scheduled for October and November with only the five group winners in Africa securing places at the global football showcase.

"My players need little or no reminding of how important the matches against Cameroon are," said Germany-born Nigeria coach Gernot Rohr.

While Nigeria were fast out of the blocks late last year to defeat Zambia and Algeria, Cameroon did well to draw in Algeria only to be held at home by Zambia.

Bottom-of-the-table Algeria dumped midfielder Sofiane Feghouli, a recent Galatasaray signing from West Ham United, for a must-win showdown with Zambia in Lusaka Saturday.

Algeria, Cameroon and Nigeria qualified for the 2010 and 2014 World Cup tournaments, but only one of the three countries can make it to Russia.

Ghana, seeking a fourth consecutive World Cup appearance, host Congo Brazzaville in Kumasi Friday needing maximum points to have any realistic hope of overtaking Group E leaders Egypt.

The "Pharaohs" have six points and the

"Black Stars" only one with upstarts Uganda between them on four.

Ghana coach Kwesi Appiah called up long-time campaigners like the Ayew brothers, Andre and Jordan, and Asamoah Gyan, and also named five uncapped players. Egypt are away to Uganda Thursday in a repeat of a 2017 Africa Cup of Nations group match in Gabon won 1-0 by the north Africans thanks to a last-gasp Abdallah Said goal.

Said is in the squad, and so is 44-year-old goalkeeper Essam El Hadary, as Egypt seek a win after losing the 2017 Nations Cup final to Cameroon and a 2019 qualifier in Tunisia. South Africa accept that hopes of a fourth World Cup appearance could hinge on defeating Cape Verde twice in Group D, starting in Praia Friday.

Although an often windy national stadium can help the Cape Verdean "Blue Sharks", they have lost competitive matches there against Morocco, Libya and Uganda since last year.

Burkina Faso, who lead South Africa on goal difference, are away Saturday in Dakar to Senegal, whose formidable attack boasts in-form Liverpool winger Sadio Mane.

Gabon will lack 2015 African Footballer of the Year Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang when they host Group C pacesetter the Ivory Coast in Libreville Saturday.

Asked why the Borussia Dortmund striker was missing, a Gabonese football official said: "The coach (Spaniard Jose Antonio Camacho) has chosen players who were available." Ivory Coast have four points, Gabon and Morocco two and Mali one with the Herve Renard-coached Moroccans hosting the Malians in Rabat Friday.

Group A appears to be a straight fight between Tunisia and the Democratic Republic of Congo after they defeated Guinea and Libya in previous rounds.

The first top-of-the-table meeting is set for Friday in Rades and the Congolese will be handicapped by the absence of injured Everton flier Yannick Bolasis. — AFP



PORTO ALEGRE: Brazil's Neymar, right, and Firmino practice during a training session in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Tuesday. Brazil will face Ecuador in a 2018 World Cup qualifying soccer match today. — AP

ARGENTINA, URUGUAY COLLIDE IN SOUTH AMERICA QUALIFIERS

MONTEVIDEO: Luis Suarez could yet line up against Barcelona team-mate Lionel Messi today as South America's battle for 2018 World Cup places resumes with Argentina's trip to Uruguay the pick of the fixtures.

With leaders Brazil already locking up their place at next year's tournament, attention turns to the tussle for the three remaining automatic berths on offer in the marathon 10-team qualifying tournament. Colombia are second in the standings on 24 points while Uruguay and Chile occupy the other two automatic spots on 23 points. It means that fifth-placed Argentina have little margin for error as they head to Montevideo's Estadio Centenario for the latest instalment of their historic rivalry with the Uruguayans.

Argentina have spluttered their way through the qualifiers so far, notching only six wins in 14 games, but have shown signs of life under new coach Jorge Sampaoli. Sampaoli, who masterminded Chile's victory at the 2015 Copa America, took control of the 'Albiceleste' in May, and began his reign with a morale-boosting 1-0 win over Brazil in a friendly in June. A 6-0 romp over lowly Singapore provided a further clue that Sampaoli, who favours an aggressive, attacking style, may already have begun to have an influence.

HIGUAIN AXED

Sampaoli served notice of his determination to invigorate Argentina's ranks by axing striker Gonzalo Higuain in favour of Inter Milan's Mauro Icardi. Icardi is expected to start at the apex of a front three with Messi and Juventus prodigy Paulo Dybala lurking just behind.

Argentina's path to Russia has been complicated by the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruling on Tuesday that confirmed a sanction against Bolivia for fielding an ineligible player in their September 2016 0-0 draw with Chile. FIFA later converted that result to a 3-0 win for Chile, a ruling that means Sampaoli's former team now have a one-point advantage over the fifth-placed Argentines.

"Now we have to play catch-up to get to the World Cup," Sampaoli said Tuesday. Uruguay meanwhile are sweating on the fitness of Barcelona star Suarez. The 30-year-old talisman was initially ruled out of the fixture through injury but has travelled back to his homeland to train with the team. Veteran coach Oscar Tabarez hinted Suarez may yet make a dramatic return on Thursday, declining to rule out the striker. "He has shown signs of recovery that have rather surprised us," Tabarez said.

If Suarez fails to win his fitness battle, Uruguay will once again turn to in-form Paris Saint-Germain striker Edinson Cavani, who is the top scorer in the qualifying competition with nine goals. "It is a very,

very difficult match... We will see who has the most guts for it," said Tabarez. Elsewhere today, second-placed Colombia will aim to edge closer to qualification with an away victory over already-eliminated Venezuela. Fourth-placed Chile meanwhile host Paraguay in Santiago as they aim to remain ahead

of Argentina in the qualifying positions.

Brazil will have the luxury of being able to treat their game against Ecuador in Porto Alegre as a training exercise after securing qualification in their last outing, a 3-0 win over Paraguay in March — their eighth consecutive victory. — AFP

CRUCIAL DOUBLE DATE IN EURO WORLD CUP QUALIFYING

PARIS: The race to qualify for the 2018 World Cup in Russia is hotting up with just four rounds of games remaining in the European qualifying campaign. AFP Sports casts a glance over each group ahead of back-to-back rounds of fixtures over the next week:

GROUP A: FRANCE IN DUTCH SHOWDOWN

An error by Hugo Lloris that gifted Sweden a 2-1 win in Stockholm needlessly complicated France's qualifying hopes and left them facing a huge game against the Netherlands in Paris on Thursday. Coach Didier Deschamps' preparations have not been helped by the noise surrounding Kylian Mbappe's impending move from Monaco to Paris Saint-Germain. France are second on goal difference behind Sweden. Dick Advocaat's Dutch are third and a defeat in Paris will leave them facing the prospect of missing a second straight major tournament.

GROUP B: PORTUGAL PLAYING CATCH-UP

European champions Portugal have been playing catch-up with Switzerland ever since losing 2-0 in Basel last September. They are three points behind the Swiss, who have a perfect record ahead of matches against Andorra and Latvia. Currently suspended with Real Madrid, Cristiano Ronaldo is in the Portuguese squad preparing to face the Faroe Islands and Hungary. The Hungarians made it to Euro 2016, drawing 3-3 with Portugal, but unless they beat Latvia and Portugal their chances of making it to Russia will be over.

GROUP C: GERMANY CLOSING ON RUSSIA RETURN

Reigning world champions Germany return to qualifying action after winning the Confederations Cup in Russia in July. Joachim Loew's side, with six wins out of six so far, face the Czech Republic in Prague and then Norway

GROUP D: TIGHT AT THE TOP

This group is just about the toughest to call, with Serbia and the Republic of Ireland level on 12 points while unbeaten Wales lie four points back with Austria. Wales host Austria knowing defeat could be disastrous for their prospects of reaching a first World Cup in 60 years. Ireland's home match with Serbia on September 5 is also huge.

GROUP E: POLAND ON POLE

Poland are primed to qualify for a first World Cup since 2006 as they sit six points clear of Montenegro and Denmark in Group E. If they can emerge unscathed from a trip to Copenhagen and a home clash with Kazakhstan they will surely be heading to Russia.

GROUP F: ENGLAND IN CONTROL

Gareth Southgate's England are top of their group and still unbeaten, and matches away to Malta and at home to Slovakia should allow them to close in on qualification. Goalkeeper Jordan Pickford will miss the games due to injury. The Slovaks are just two points behind in second and first host Slovenia, who are third. After running England close in June, Scotland need to beat Lithuania and Malta to stay alive.

GROUP G: SPAIN OR ITALY?

The game of the weekend will be in Madrid as Spain take on Italy at the Bernabeu. The sides have won all their games so far apart from their 1-1 draw in Turin last year. They will be the top two, but this game will help work out who qualifies automatically. David Villa, now 35, has been recalled to the Spain squad. — AFP



LIBREVILLE: In this Sunday, Feb. 5, 2017 file photo, Egypt's Mohamed Salah, left, controls the ball in front of Cameroon's Ambroise Oyongo during the African Cup of Nations final soccer match between Egypt and Cameroon at the Stade de l'Amitie, in Libreville, Gabon. Egypt, the most successful team in Africa but a regular under-achiever in World Cup qualifying, is in control of Group E. — AP

JAPAN HOSTS AUSTRALIA WITH WORLD CUP SPOT FOR WINNERS

SEOUL: A win for either Japan or Australia when they meet at Saitama north of Tokyo today means a place at the 2018 World Cup, with both teams keen to seal their spot with a game to spare. If Japan, a point clear at the top of Group B above Saudi Arabia and Australia, wins then Japan does not need any points from a tricky trip to Saudi Arabia in the final group game on Sept. 5.

Despite sitting on top, the pressure has been building on Japan coach Vahid Halilhodzic after a series of uncertain performances. Just last week the national association denied reports that the Bosnian would be dismissed if the hosts fail to defeat Australia.

"I hear the recent criticism directed my way and it puts pressure on me but this is the kind of situation I like," Halilhodzic said. "The more I come under attack and the more criti-

cism I face, the more determined I am to respond." Japan is concerned over the fitness of Inter Milan fullback Yuto Nagatomo, but will otherwise be at full strength.

Both Japan and Australia received a boost on Tuesday when Saudi Arabia missed a chance to go top of the group and lost 2-1 away to the United Arab Emirates. That result means the Socceroos are able to qualify for Russia if they manage to win in Japan. A draw would leave the team needing to defeat group struggler Thailand in Melbourne next week to be sure of a fourth successive World Cup appearance.

Australia coach Ange Postecoglou denies that there is any pressure. "From the outside people look at it and see pressure, but for anyone involved, be it a coach or a player, you look forward to these occasions," Postecoglou said. — AP

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PAKISTAN BAN SHARJEEL FOR FIVE YEARS OVER SPOT-FIXING

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DHAKA: Australia's Glenn Maxwell, right, is bowled out by Bangladesh's Sakib Al Hasan, unseen, as Bangladesh's wicketkeeper captain Mushfiqur Rahim watches during the fourth day of their first Test cricket match in Dhaka, Bangladesh, yesterday. — AP

BANGLADESH STUN AUSTRALIA WITH HISTORIC TEST WIN

DHAKA: Bangladesh yesterday registered their first-ever win over Australia in Test cricket, beating Steve Smith's men by 20 runs in a thrilling match in Dhaka. All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan took 5-85 to help the hosts dismiss Australia for 244 shortly into the second session on the fourth day.

David Warner top-scored with 112 for the tourists, who were chasing a victory target of 265 after dismissing the hosts for 221 in their second innings. Shakib lived up to his billing as the world's number one Test all-rounder, finishing with a match haul of 10 wickets with his left-arm spin and making 84 in Bangladesh's first-innings total of 260.

Australia — who are touring Bangladesh for the first time in more than a decade — are currently ranked fourth to Bangladesh's lowly ninth in ICC Test rankings. They appeared to be coasting towards their fifth consecutive Test win over the minnows when Warner and Smith resumed the day on 109 for two.

Warner, who was unbeaten on 75 overnight, reached his 19th Test century off 121 balls with two runs off spinner Tajjul Islam. But Shakib brought

Bangladesh back into the game, dismissing both Warner and Smith (37) to put pressure on the tourists.

Pat Cummins hit a valiant 33 not out after Shakib bowled Glenn Maxwell (14) off the first ball of the second session, leaving Australia tottering on 199-8. Cummins hit three fours and two sixes to bring his side achingly close to a win, but Shakib's spin partner Tajjul brought the curtain down on the innings with his dismissal of Josh Hazlewood for nought. Hazlewood, who was already nursing an injury, has been ruled out of the second and final Test of the series.

'A GREAT FEELING'

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was watching from the stands, waved the nation's flag as the jubilant players embraced and celebrated their historic win. "It's a great feeling beating Australia, and I think it was a great effort by the boys, especially Shakib," said captain Mushfiqur Rahim of his all-rounder, who was named man of the match.

"Our performance in home conditions has been pretty consistent and against England also we were very close in the first Test and we beat them in the

second Test. "That's the belief we had and also our spinners did a great job," he added, saying Bangladesh would now be looking to seal the series. A dejected Smith said his men could have performed better with the bat in the first innings when they scored 217, since the bounce and spin proved especially devilish the second time around.

"It was a great Test match. Credit to Bangladesh, the way they played," he said. "The first innings, I thought the partnership between Shakib and Tamim really set the game up for them. I thought we fought back really nicely after that. "We probably let ourselves down a bit in the first innings with the bat. We probably needed to make a few more there."

Australia have not played a Test in Bangladesh since Ricky Ponting's team visited in 2006, six years after Bangladesh were granted Test status.

They were due to play two Tests in the country in October 2015 but the tour was cancelled amid security fears after a wave of attacks by Islamist extremists in the Muslim-majority nation. The second Test will be played in Chittagong from September 4-8. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

DHAKA: Scoreboard at close of play on the fourth day in the first Test between Bangladesh and Australia yesterday in Mirpur, Bangladesh.

Bangladesh 1st innings 260 (S. Al Hasan 84, T. Iqbal 71)
Australia 1st innings 217 (S. Al Hasan 5-68)
Bangladesh 2nd innings 221 (T. Iqbal 78; N. Lyon 6-82)

Australia 2nd innings (Target: 265 runs)

D. Warner lbw b Al Hasan	112
M. Renshaw lbw b M. Hasan	5
U. Khawaja c T. Islam b Al Hasan	1
S. Smith c Rahim b Al Hasan	37
P. Handscomb c Sarkar b T. Islam	15
G. Maxwell b Al Hasan	14
M. Wade lbw b Al Hasan	4

A. Agar c∓b T. Islam	2
P. Cummins not out	33
N. Lyon c Sarkar b M. Hasan	12
J. Hazlewood lbw b T. Islam	0
Extras (b-7 lb-2)	9
Total (all out, 70.5 overs)	244

Fall of wickets: 1-27 M. Renshaw, 2-28 U. Khawaja, 3-158 D. Warner, 4-171 S. Smith, 5-187 P. Handscomb, 6-192 M. Wade, 7-195 A. Agar, 8-199 G. Maxwell, 9-228 N. Lyon, 10-244 J. Hazlewood
 Bowling: Mehidy Hasan 19-3-80-2; Nasir Hossain 3-2-0-0; Shakib Al Hasan 28-7-85-5; Tajjul Islam 19.5-2-60-3; Mushfiqur Rahim 1-0-8-0.
 Bangladesh won by 20 runs

UAE BEAT SAUDI ARABIA TO BOOST WORLD CUP HOPES

AL-AIN: The UAE maintained their hopes of qualifying for the 2018 World Cup in Russia with a shock 2-1 victory at home against regional giants Saudi Arabia on Tuesday.

It was only the fourth win in nine matches for the Emiratis, who took their tally to 13 points from nine matches to be placed fourth in Group B in the final round of Asian qualifying.

Japan top the standings with 17 points with Saudi Arabia and Australia on 16 each, meaning all the top four teams in the group are in with a chance of clinching the two automatic spots for next year's finals. The UAE's victory on Tuesday in Al-Ain was all the more remarkable because they bounced back within a minute after being a goal down to stun the powerful Saudis. The hosts had conceded a penalty when Mohamed Fawzi fouled Nawal al-Abid in the penalty area and Al-Abid himself slotted the ball home with a left-footed shot to put the Saudis

ahead in the 20th minute. But barely had the Saudi celebrations died down when the home side struck for the equalizer.

A Tariq Ahmed cross found Ali Mabkhout and the UAE star made no mistake with a right-footed shot from the centre of the box into the bottom corner. Immediately after half-time, the Saudis had a golden opportunity to go ahead once again, but captain Osama Hawsawi's powerful header thudded against the crossbar. But with the match just an hour old, Ahmed Khalil completed a remarkable UAE revival with a stunning shot from well outside the box which flew to the top left corner of the net, beating Saudi Arabia goalkeeper Abdulla al-Mayouf all ends up. The UAE lost Mahmoud Khamis in injury time after he received a second booking, but managed to hold onto their lead to keep their chances alive when they take on Iraq on September 5 in their last match. — AFP

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KUFPEC doubles its interest in Gina Krog Field, Norway

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QUEENSFERRY: Traffic flows on both carriageways of the Queensferry Crossing this morning after it opened to traffic for the first time yesterday in Queensferry, Scotland. The new bridge, which crosses the Firth of Forth, is the world's longest three tower cable-stay bridge. — AP

US Q2 GDP REVISED UP, FASTEST IN TWO YEARS

CONSUMER, BUSINESS SPENDING ACCOUNT FOR UPWARD REVISION

WASHINGTON: The US economy grew faster than initially thought in the second quarter, notching its quickest pace in more than two years, and there are signs that the momentum was sustained at the start of the third quarter. Gross domestic product increased at a 3.0 percent annual rate in the April-June period, the Commerce Department said in its second estimate yesterday. The upward revision from the 2.6 percent pace reported last month reflected robust consumer spending as well as strong business investment. Growth last quarter was the strongest since the first quarter of 2015 and followed a 1.2 percent pace in the January-March period. Economists had expected that second-quarter GDP growth would be raised to a 2.7 percent rate.

Retail sales and business spending data so far suggest the economy maintained its stamina early in the third quarter. Other data yesterday showed private employers ramped up hiring in August, adding 237,000 jobs to their payrolls. That was up from 201,000 jobs in July.

The ADP National Employment Report was released ahead of the government's more comprehensive employment report tomorrow, which is expected to show solid job gains in August and diminishing labor market slack. The dollar extended gains versus a basket of currencies on the data, while prices for US Treasuries fell. US stock index futures trimmed gains.

Strong growth and a labor market that is near full employment support views the Federal Reserve will lay out a plan to start unwinding its \$4.2 trillion portfolio of Treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities next month and increase interest rates in December. With GDP quickening in the second quarter, the economy grew 2.1 percent in the first half of 2017. That was up from the 1.9 percent reported last month.

Republican President Donald Trump has set an ambitious 3.0 percent growth target for 2017, to be achieved through a mix of tax cuts, deregulation and infrastructure spending. The Trump



SAN JOSE: In this Aug 24, 2017 photo, Kathy Tringali (right), a recruiter for Big 5 Sporting Goods, talks to job seeker Jarrell Palmer during a job fair, in San Jose, California. The Commerce Department issued the second of three estimates of how the US economy performed in the April-June quarter yesterday. — AP

administration has so far failed to pass any economic legislation and is yet to articulate plans for tax reform and infrastructure. Chances are slim that the Republican-controlled US Congress will debate and pass tax reform legislation before the end of the year. So far, the political gridlock in Washington has not hurt either business or consumer confidence.

Consumer spending

Consumer spending, which makes up more than two-thirds of the US economy, grew at a 3.3 percent rate, the fastest in a year, reflecting more spending on motor vehicles, cellphones, housing and utilities than previously estimated. That was revised up from the 2.8 percent pace reported in July and accounted for the bulk of

the pickup in economic growth in the second quarter. But stronger consumer spending came at the expense of saving amid sluggish wage gains. The saving rate slipped to 3.7 percent from 3.9 percent in the first quarter. The second-quarter saving rate was previously reported at 3.8 percent. Households cannot, however, continue to rely on savings indefinitely to fund their

consumption. This raises doubts on the sustainability of the robust pace of consumer spending. Despite the acceleration in consumer spending, inflation remained benign in the second quarter. The Fed's preferred inflation measure, the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index excluding food and energy, increased at a 0.9 percent rate as previously reported.

Last quarter's rise was the slowest in more than two years and followed a 1.8 percent rate of increase in the first quarter. The gross domestic purchases price index, another measure of inflation pressures in the economy, increased at a 0.8 percent rate as reported last month. Businesses helped to carry the economy in the second quarter, with spending on equipment jumping at a rate of 8.8 percent. That was the fastest in nearly two years and was an upward revision to the 8.2 percent pace reported last month. It was the third straight quarterly increase. Investment on nonresidential structures increased at a 6.2 percent pace, rather than the previously reported 4.9 percent rate. That was still a moderation from the January-March period's brisk 14.8 percent rate and reflected some cooling in spending on mining exploration, wells and shafts.

Inventory investment had a neutral effect on second-quarter GDP as previously reported after chopping off 1.46 percentage points from output in the first quarter.

Trade added two-tenths of a percentage point to growth instead of the previously reported 0.18 percentage point, marking a second straight quarterly contribution. Housing was a drag on growth in the last quarter, with investment on homebuilding contracting at a 6.5 percent rate, instead of the previously reported 6.8 percent pace. It was the worst performance in nearly seven years. Motor vehicle production rebounded after two straight quarters of declines. Government spending contracted for a second straight quarter, weighed down by decreasing state and local government investment. — Reuters

QATAR AND RUSSIA TO 'BOLSTER' ECONOMIC TIES

DOHA: Two of the world's largest energy producers, Qatar and Russia, yesterday vowed to increase trade ties at a time when the emirate is facing an economic boycott from neighbouring states.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made the commitment after a "lengthy" meeting in Doha with his Qatari counterpart, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, and before that, the country's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. "We are committed to bolstering trade and economic ties," Lavrov told reporters afterwards.

He added that Moscow "attached great importance" to economic cooperation, including energy, between the two countries, a sentiment echoed by Sheikh Mohammed. Russia and Qatar

are two of the world's top four gas producing countries. Both are also major oil producers, and last year Qatar spent billions on taking a stake in Russia's state-controlled oil company, Rosneft.

Qatar has been expanding its economic ties after a group of countries led by Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates cut off political and trade links with Doha on June 5, initiating the Gulf's worst political crisis in years. The bloc accuses Qatar of supporting extremism, a charge the emirate denies.

On the crisis itself, Sheikh Mohammed said there had been little change and accused Saudi and others of ignoring Qatari calls for dialogue.

"Now we have reached 90 days of the crisis we are still in the same position," he said.

"We haven't seen any change or develop-

ment in reaching the end of the crisis." He accused Saudi Arabia and its partners of ignoring "on at least 12 different occasions" Qatari calls for talks on resolving the diplomatic impasse. Lavrov—who has also visited Kuwait and the UAE as part of his Middle East tour—called for all parties to find a solution.

He said the disputing countries should work with regional mediators Kuwait to resolve the crisis. "We are convinced that there's a need to seek a solution by searching for mutually beneficial approaches through dialect," said the Russian foreign minister. "It's in our interests for the GCC to be united and strong," he said, referring to the Gulf Cooperation Council comprised Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. — AFP

SMALLER UK MANUFACTURERS FEELING BREXIT PINCH: SURVEY

LONDON: The process of Britain's departure from the European Union has already hurt around 40 percent of small and medium-sized British manufacturers, an industry survey showed yesterday.

The quarterly National Manufacturing Barometer, conducted by business consultancies SWMAS and Economic Growth Solutions, chimed with other surveys showing robust manufacturing activity right now, but nervousness about the future. While 45 percent of small- and medium-sized (SME) manufacturers expected profits to improve over the next six months, a similar proportion thought

business conditions will deteriorate once Britain leaves the European Union.

"SME manufacturers are sending a clear message to government. The vast majority want to see free trade with the EU maintained to help minimize the cost of imports and keep red tape to a minimum," said Simon Howes, chief executive of the Exelin Group, which owns SWMAS. "Some manufacturers are already seeing the cost of materials rise due to recent falls in the value of sterling against the euro and uncertainty over the future of the UK's trade arrangements with the EU." — Reuters

ZAIN ANNOUNCES ANOWAR HOSSAIN WINNER OF KD 5000 GRAND PRIZE

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the winners of the fourth and final week draw of its "Win Cash Daily" campaign, which offered postpaid customers a chance to win daily and weekly cash prizes as well as a grand cash prize of KD 5000.

Zain announced Anowar Hossain winner of the KD 5000 grand prize, as well as the winners of the KD 350 daily cash prize: Shamlan Eisa Hussain Alharban, Basel Abdulkareem Mahmoud Yaseen, Majed Abdulrahman Majed Alzuabi, Ali Ahmad Mahmoud Fenahi, Naser Tareq Ahmad Alayoob, Sali Mohammad Abdulhameed Ahmad, Aqeel Ali Abd Hassan, and Ahmad Eissa Alenezi. The company also announced the winner of the KD 1000 weekly cash

prize: Ahmad Nader Ahmad Ibrahim.

Zain launched this new campaign in partnership with Samsung Al-Babtain as part of its strategy to reinforce its relationship with its postpaid customers. The company is keen on offering the biggest campaigns and promotions along with the latest technologies to its customer base, considered the largest in the country.

The campaign ran for four weeks, where draws were held on a daily basis. Today's announcement is a testament of Zain's tireless efforts in rewarding its customer base, further reinforcing its leadership position. The campaign further demonstrates Zain's pivotal role in Kuwait's telecom sector, sparing no effort in introducing exceptional offerings for technology and smartphone enthusiasts.

RYANAIR CEO SAYS WON'T BID FOR AIR BERLIN

BERLIN: Ryanair chief executive Michael O'Leary yesterday said his airline would not make a bid for insolvent Air Berlin, slamming what he called a German "stitch-up" designed to benefit Lufthansa.

Several airlines are jostling to take over parts of Air Berlin after it filed for insolvency earlier this month, a process Ryanair has been fiercely critical of. The chief executive of the Irish no-frills airline said at a press conference in Berlin that Ryanair would only join the scramble for assets if it "was a fair and open process". "But we are not getting involved in this process because it is a stitch-up," O'Leary said.

Air Berlin filed for insolvency after main owner Etihad Airways suddenly pulled the funding plug following years of losses. The German government then stepped in with a 150-million-euro (\$180-million) bridging loan to keep the carrier's planes flying for the coming weeks.

O'Leary accused the government and the two German airlines of conspiring to allow Lufthansa to take over a debt-free Air Berlin in violation of anti-trust rules, charges the government rejects.

The pugnacious Ryanair boss said awarding Air Berlin to Lufthansa would give Germany's flagship carrier control over "95 percent of the domestic market". This would make Lufthansa "not just a German champion but a German monster who will increase the cost of air travel for millions of Germans for the next 10, 15, 20 years".

German newspaper Bild has reported that Lufthansa—which already leases 38 of Air Berlin's 140 planes—could buy up to 70 aircraft with as many as 3,000 crew for its low-cost subsidiary Eurowings.

Other interested airlines cited in media reports include package holiday firm TUI, British low-cost carrier EasyJet and Thomas Cook subsidiary Condor, as well as Bavarian entrepreneur Rudolf Woehrl.

German Economy Minister Brigitte Zypries said last week that "for competition reasons, no single company can take over Air Berlin". Ryanair has lodged complaints with German and European Union anti-trust authorities, urging them to investigate the "obvious conspiracy playing out in Germany". —AFP



BERLIN: Ryanair CEO Michael O'Leary, who has expressed an interest in buying up parts of insolvent German airline Air Berlin, distributes press releases to journalists prior to a press conference in Berlin yesterday. — AFP

INDIA EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS FOR FIRST MONTH OF GST COLLECTION

NEW DELHI: India collected nearly \$14.5 billion from a new goods and services tax in its first month of operation, well beyond government estimates, according to official data. The government promised that the national tax, which replaced more than a dozen separate levies, would transform India's \$2 trillion economy into a single market for the first time.

In the first month of collection the tax netted just short of \$14.5 billion, some \$200 million more than forecast for July, data from the finance ministry showed.

"We have exceeded the target," Finance Minister Arun Jaitley was quoted by the Press Trust of India as saying on Tuesday. More than 60 percent of businesses which registered in July to comply with the new tax had filed returns, the data showed.

Businesses had been nervous about the imposition of the GST, which sets out four different rates of between five and 28 percent instead of the one originally envisioned. There were complaints that the rollout was rushed and businesses were unclear about what to charge for goods under the new tax regime. Some sectors went on strike. Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a special midnight session of parliament-boycotted by the opposition parties to launch GST which he called "a good and simple tax".

But changes are still being made one month afterwards. The government Wednesday approved a tax increase on luxury cars and sports vehicles, above and beyond the 28 percent GST already slapped on these vehicles. —AFP

LEBANON KICK-STARTS REFORM PLAN, BUT DEBT WOES MOUNT

MOODY'S RATING AGENCY RAISES OUTLOOK FOR LEBANON

BEIRUT: Lebanon has begun reforms to repair its fragile economy after years of paralysis in decision-making but is under pressure to do more to prevent its rising debt spinning out of control. President Michel Aoun, elected last year after 29 months without a head of state, signed off last week on public sector pay rises and tax increases to cover their cost-part of a series of government moves that have prompted Moody's rating agency to lift its outlook for Lebanon to stable from negative.

But finance ministry estimates indicate the measures will have little impact on the fiscal balance or debt burden, the world's third highest in terms of debt-to-GDP ratio and the main reason why Moody's has also downgraded its credit rating. Economists are calling for other reforms to boost revenue and stop the debt rising, including passing a budget, reforming the heavily subsidized electricity sector, raising fuel tax and tax collection and improving the investment environment.

"They've gotten government working again, they've gotten institutions moving again. The hope is they start tackling those major issues with the same seriousness and effectiveness," said Wissam Harake, a World Bank economist based in Beirut. Until Aoun was elected on Oct. 31 last year, Lebanon had gone nearly two-and-a-half years without a president because parliament was unable to agree on a candidate.

Since then, Prime Minister Saad Hariri's government has taken steps to improve stability and boost the economy by agreeing legislation intended to kick-start the development of its

oil and gas industry and passing an electoral law paving the way to a parliamentary election next year.

"The stable outlook reflects the return to a fully-functioning government, which will support reform momentum going forward," Moody's said.

Infrastructure

Economic growth has been battered by six years of war in neighboring Syria and political divisions, slowing to just over 1 percent a year from an average of 8 percent before the Syrian war, officials have said. Lebanon's debt has also risen strongly since Syria's civil war began in 2011. Moody's says the debt-to-Gross Domestic Product ratio, which indicates a country's ability to pay back its debt, will reach almost 140 percent in 2018. "Recent fiscal reforms are very unlikely to reduce the deficit in 2017 and 2018 ... further action will be needed to reverse the rising debt trajectory," Moody's said on Saturday, changing its rating to B3 from B2.

With revenues and growth low, the country relies on deposits made into local banks by millions of expatriate Lebanese. The banks buy government debt which finances the expanding budget deficit and debt. But deposits are sensitive to political risk and economists say the government needs to generate higher revenues and boost growth to put the economy on a firmer footing. Debt interest payments in 2016 accounted for about 48 percent of Lebanon's domestic revenues, up from 38 percent in 2014, said Harake, the World Bank economist.

With large sums spent on subsidizing the anti-

quated electricity sector, Lebanon has little revenue left to upgrade water, telecoms, roads and other crumbling infrastructure needed to encourage tax-generating industry and growth.

Central Bank role

The International Monetary Fund wants the government to raise taxes, particularly on fuel, and strengthen tax compliance to stem debt growth but Lebanon's business community says the proposed increases would undermine growth. Garbis Irdian, chief Middle East and North Africa economist for the Institute of International Finance, a global association of financial institutions, said the increases might result in some short-term inflationary pressure but were needed.

"Lebanon is undertaxed," he said, comparing it to countries such as Turkey, Morocco and Jordan. Lebanon's central bank quietly steered policy in the absence of political leadership, using stimulus packages and costly financial engineering to keep foreign reserves stable and growth ticking over. Central bank Governor Riad Salameh has said he will stabilise the economy for "as long as it takes" for the government to become more effective, pass a budget and tackle the structural deficit. Financial sources say confidence in Salameh is high, but economists and bankers have said the central bank cannot carry the burden indefinitely. "Without the government coming in with structural reform then monetary policy or central bank activity by itself cannot solve long-term structural issues," Harake said. — Reuters



PARIS: French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire is escorted by Medef head Pierre Gattaz (R) during his visit to the Medef 'summer university' meeting in Jouy-en-Josas yesterday. — AFP

MEXICO DUSTS OFF 'PLAN B' AS TRUMP THREATENS TO KILL NAFTA

MEXICO CITY: Mexico sees a serious risk the United States will withdraw from NAFTA and is planning for that eventuality, Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo said on Tuesday, calling talks to renegotiate the deal a "roller coaster" that could lead to an impasse.

US President Donald Trump has threatened three times in the past week to abandon the North American Free Trade Agreement, revisiting his view that the United States would probably have to start the process of exiting the accord to reach a fair deal for his country.

Trump has vowed to get a better deal for American workers, and the lively rhetoric on both sides precedes a second round of talks starting on Friday in Mexico City to renegotiate the 1994 accord binding the United States, Mexico and Canada.

"This is not going to be easy," Guajardo said at a meeting with senators in Mexico City. "The start of the talks is like a roller coaster." "Next Friday there is the possibility that we find an impasse, the possibility that this does not advance, we can't rule that out," he said.

Guajardo has previously estimated a 60 percent chance the talks would be wrapped up by an ambitious soft deadline for January, a date Mexico said was important to avoid the talks becoming politicized ahead of its July presidential election.

"NO NAFTA"

The need for a back-up plan in case Trump shreds the deal underpinning a trillion dollars in annual trade in North America has been a long-standing position of the trade minister, who travels to Washington on Tuesday with foreign minister Luis Videgaray to meet senior White House and trade officials.

"We are also analyzing a scenario with no NAFTA," Guajardo said. In an interview published earlier on Tuesday in Mexican business daily El Economista, Guajardo said "there is a risk, and it's high" that the Trump administration abandons NAFTA.

Responding to Guajardo's comments, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his government would continue to work "seriously" to improve NAFTA.

Earlier this month, Guajardo told Reuters a "Plan B" meant being prepared to replace items such as some of the billions of dollars in grain Mexico imports from the United States annually.

To that end, and to seek openings in more markets, Mexico is hosting trade talks with Brazil this week. Trade officials are also discussing a possible replacement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact that Trump ditched after taking office.

Overlapping with the NAFTA talks, Mexico will participate in separate trade meetings with Australia and New Zealand in Peru, and President Enrique Pena Nieto travels to China this weekend.

Still, attempts to diversify trade will not be easy. Some 80 percent of all Mexican exports go to the United States, and economies such as Brazil and China often compete with Mexico.

Guajardo also suggested World Trade Organization tariffs that would kick in if NAFTA crumbled would be more favorable for Mexico, a view held by many Mexican experts who think trade with the United States would survive the demise of the 1994 deal.

"I don't think it's going to make that much of a difference in terms of the trading relationship, said Andres Rozental, a former Mexican deputy foreign minister. "If we have to go to WTO tariffs, for us it's fairly straightforward." Guajardo's and Videgaray's trip to Washington was announced after Trump not only threatened to pull out of the trade deal, but again said that Mexico would end up paying for the wall he wants to build between the two countries.

Mexico has refused point blank to pay for a wall. In January, after similar comments led Mexico to scrap a summit with Trump, the two sides agreed not to talk in public about it. — Reuters

News

in brief

Ethiopian Airlines in talks to take over Arik Air

ADDIS ABABA: Africa's largest and most profitable airline says it is negotiating to take over management of West Africa's largest airline, the Nigeria-based Arik Air. Ethiopian Airlines' head for international services, Esayas Woldeariam, tells The Associated Press that the negotiations follow a request by Nigeria's aviation ministry. Nigeria's government took over Arik Air early this year after it declared heavy losses. "We definitely are willing and able to take over the management of Arik Air," Esayas said yesterday. Ethiopian Airlines is one of Africa's largest airlines. Taking over Arik Air's management would give the airline a major presence in Africa's most populous nation and one of the continent's top economies and oil producers. Latest official figures from Ethiopian Airlines say it generated total revenues of close to \$3 billion in 2016. —AP

Higher fuel costs pile heat on Chinese airline

SHANGHAI: Asia's biggest carrier China Southern Airlines said higher jet fuel costs clipped its profit in the first half, while China Eastern earnings rose but only with the help of a one-off asset sale. Net profit at state-owned China Southern dropped 11.1 percent year-on-year to 2.77 billion yuan (\$420 million) in January-June, the carrier said late Tuesday in a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange, where it is listed. Its bottom line was hit by a more than 30 percent rise in operating expenses due to higher jet fuel costs, which offset revenue gains, the Guangzhou-based airline said.

Buffett becomes top shareholder in BofA

WASHINGTON: American billionaire Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway group has officially become the top shareholder in Bank of America after exercising its right to buy 700 million shares at a discount. Buffett had received the warrants in 2011 after investing \$5 billion in the bank, which was suffering at the time from the fallout from the global financial crisis. Bank of America said Buffett had acquired the shares for about \$7.14 each—well below their Tuesday closing price of \$23.58. Buffett's investment is now worth \$16.51 billion, meaning he has made a capital gain of nearly \$12 billion. "In 2011, we welcomed Berkshire Hathaway as a shareholder, and we appreciate their continued support now as our largest common shareholder," the bank's CEO Brian Moynihan said in a statement.

FACEBOOK UNVEILS CENTER TO TEACH BRAZILIAN CODERS, ENTREPRENEURS

SAO PAULO: Facebook Inc unveiled its first training center in Latin America for coders and entrepreneurs, encouraging technology careers for young Brazilians saddled with staggering unemployment after a deep economic crisis.

The company's regional Vice President Diego Dzodan told Reuters the space in mid-town Sao Paulo, known as Estacao Hack, will bridge the gap in Brazil between a tech sector hungry for skilled talent and an eager but untrained generation with time on their hands.

"Imagine the opportunity," Dzodan said in an interview at Facebook's Latin America headquarters. "You've got people without a job, so they can't afford training. And yet there's so much demand for positions that the market can't fill."

One in four Brazilians aged 18 to 24, most with more formal education than their parents, were unemployed at the start of the year, as the country's worst downturn on record stunted the careers of a generation of young workers.

Facebook's 1,000-square-meter space

on the bustling Avenida Paulista is slated to open by December, offering free coding courses, career guidance, entrepreneur training and digital marketing workshops for 7,400 Brazilians in its first year.

Dzodan said Estacao Hack or "Hack Station" would draw on lessons from outreach projects like the Startup Garage in Paris, opened by Facebook in January, but was tailored to Brazil. For example, the Sao Paulo space offers workstations and mentoring for entrepreneurs focused on projects with social impact.

The initiative is one of several in Sao Paulo where major firms are making the most of a tech-savvy subculture - and a slump in the commercial real estate market - to create branded spaces for innovation in Latin America's biggest business hub.

In June 2016, Alphabet Inc opened the six-story Google Campus Sao Paulo, a half dozen blocks south of the new Facebook space, also offering mentoring for startups, training for entrepreneurs and free community events. Last week, Brazilian bank Ita Unibanco Holding SA announced it

was quadrupling its Cubo co-working space for tech startups, a joint investment with venture capital firm Redpoint ventures, which moves to a 12-floor building in Sao Paulo's financial district in June 2018. Dzodan, who declined to say how much Facebook was spending on its new space, said the impact would be measured in participants rather than brick-and-mortar investments. "The maximum impact will come from training and education," he said. "The multiplier effect of that is much greater than infrastructure." — Reuters



BERLIN: A fair worker uses a tablet to operate a tumble dryer during a demonstration how to operate smart controlled household appliances for "IQ800" washing and drying machines at the booth of Siemens as preparations are under way for the consumer electronics fair IFA in Berlin yesterday. The fair is open for the public from September 1 to 6, 2017. — AFP



BERLIN: A volunteer holds a remote control as he presents the "X-Spect" textile identification system at the booth of Siemens during the consumer electronics fair IFA in Berlin yesterday. — AFP

'GIFTED' HIGH-TECH TAKES SPOTLIGHT AT IFA FAIR

BERLIN: The gadgets on display at Berlin's mega consumer electronics fair this week may not look radically different, but they are smarter than ever before and designed to meet our every need-often before we've even thought of it ourselves.

As smartphones and other electronic devices make greater use of artificial intelligence (AI), the digital assistants already pervasive in our lives are set to become more intuitive and play a bigger role in our homes, observers said.

The humble television, overshadowed in recent years as viewers streamed their favourite shows on tablets and phones, is also poised for a comeback with better-than-ever screen quality and online applications.

This year's IFA is all about "AI to make our daily life easier," Klaus Boehm of consultancy Deloitte said ahead of the annual trade show which kicks off tomorrow.

Boehm pointed to Amazon's and Google's voice-controlled speakers that can answer questions, turn off the lights and do our online shopping as examples of the "smart home" trend. And in the race to be the smartest, developers are focussing less on hardware and more on intelligent software to woo consumers. A so-called innovations "hub" resembling a university library will take pride of place at the conference venue, where researchers, developers and start-ups will give fairgoers a glimpse of the gadgets of the future.

Such is the emphasis on AI this year that Chinese smartphone manufacturer Huawei, the world's third largest, will use the IFA stage not to present a new model but to unveil its first personal assistant, Kirin, which it hopes will rival the dominance of Amazon's Alexa, Apple's Siri and Samsung's Bixby.

From offering restaurant recommendations before you've realised you're hungry to asking if you'd like your usual coffee after your alarm goes off, life without smart aides will fast become unthinkable, observers predict.



BERLIN: A man sits on a couch inside a showroom of a so-called smart home at the ZVEH booth during the consumer electronics fair IFA in Berlin yesterday. — AFP

As the long-promised revolution of the "internet of things" is slowly making itself felt, IFA exhibitors are also set to showcase rubbish bins that know which items to recycle and fridges that can help you stick to your diet.

'Television not dead'

Smart TVs that respond to voice commands and allow for easy on-demand viewing are expected to help reclaim the telly's place

at the heart of the home as viewers are lured back with super-high-definition screens.

And of course, bigger is better. "TV is not dead," said Roland Stehle of Germany's gfu federation for electronics firms, a co-organiser of the IFA trade show. "People are buying bigger TV sets, so the picture sizes are increasing and it's necessary to have a high resolution."

IFA organisers are predicting a bumper year for television makers, as the latest OLED and

Ultra-High Definition (UHD/4K) technologies become more affordable. More geared towards the general public than its Las Vegas rival, the Consumer Electronics Show, IFA is known for lifting the veil on the must-have electronics most likely to end up under our Christmas trees.

"The demand for consumer electronics and household appliances is quite high, it's a good sign for IFA," said gfu president Hans-Joachim Kamp. Sales in the global market for consumer electronics, including mobile phones, are forecast to reach some 887 billion euros (\$1 trillion) in 2017, up four percent on the previous year, according to gfu data.

Some 240,000 visitors are expected at this year's fair, which runs until September 6, organisers said at a preview press conference yesterday. No major new announcements are expected in the smartphone arena as Apple traditionally skips IFA and Samsung already unveiled its latest high-end model last week, the Galaxy Note 8 that is supposed to banish memories of the ill-fated Galaxy Note 7 and its exploding batteries.

Instead, Samsung plans to use IFA to showcase its newest offerings of smart wearables, the Gear Fit2 fitness bracelet and the Gear S4 smartwatch. Having failed to live up to the initial hype, tech giants are betting that there is life in the wearables market yet.

The Gartner consultancy estimated earlier this month that wearable devices such as smart headphones, eyewear, clothing and watches will generate global revenues of some \$30.5 billion this year. And wireless headphones will become so standard that phones without audio jacks will become the norm, they said, a path already charted by Apple after it controversially ditched the 3.5-millimetre jack in the iPhone 7 last year.

"By 2021, we assume that almost all premium mobile phones will no longer have the 3.5 mm jack," said Angela McIntyre, author of the Gartner study. — AFP

NEW UBER CHIEF PACKS TRAVEL, MONEY SMARTS

SAN FRANCISCO: Expedia chief Dara Khosrowshahi is credited with turning the company into a global travel services behemoth, winning admiration from employees on the journey. Uber is hoping he will steer the controversy-battered ride-sharing service along a similarly glorious route.

The San Francisco-based startup confirmed late Tuesday that Khosrowshahi will replace ousted chief Travis Kalanick. "We are delighted to announce that Uber's board has voted unanimously to appoint Dara Khosrowshahi to be our new CEO," Uber executives said in an email to employees.

"We're really fortunate to gain a leader with Dara's experience, talent and vision," Khosrowshahi is known as an experienced top executive, willing to speak his mind and to advocate for women getting equal pay and leadership opportunities.

His most recent Twitter post criticizes US President Donald Trump for his response to a white supremacist rally that turned deadly in Charlottesville. "I keep waiting for the moment when our Prez will rise to the expectations of his office and he fails, repeatedly," Khosrowshahi said in the tweet, which included a link to a story about the Trump controversy.

Born in Iran, Khosrowshahi immigrated to the United States with his family as a child and became a citizen here. Expedia shares have climbed more than five-fold during the 12 years Khosrowshahi has been in charge of the travel services internet firm.

"I don't doubt his skills and his background in finance and hospitality, which is going to be very important," said Tim Bajarin, president of Silicon Valley technology analyst firm Creative Strategies. "The only thing we don't know is his ability to navigate some of the difficult settings around internal disciplinary issues and code of conduct that he will inherit."

Need for discipline

Khosrowshahi will have to address conflicts with regulators and taxi operators, a cut-throat company culture, sexism and board members feuding with investors over Kalanick. Kalanick was the driving force behind Uber, taking a spur-of-the-moment idea and turning it into the world's most valuable venture-funded tech startup.

But his brash personality and freewheeling management style, which some argue set a tone inside the company, made him a liability as well as an asset to the global ridesharing giant, and in June he stepped down as chief executive. Good chief executives typically ramp up discipline and accountability in employee ranks upon taking charge at companies, so that will likely be among steps taken by Khosrowshahi at the Uber helm, according to Bajarin.

"He is going to have to be highly aggressive in disciplining the company to stay on message and, more importantly, to stick within whatever the codes of conduct are," the analyst said. Khosrowshahi has consistently scored well at website Glass Door, where executives and companies are anonymously rated by employees past and present, suggesting he might be able to parent workers without alienating them.

And, since Uber's board members including Kalanick agreed to offer him the job as chief, he could have backing if he butts heads with those resentful of the founder was pressured to step down.

Is it enough?

Khosrowshahi's strong background in travel and transportation should be a benefit when it comes to guiding Uber through its next phase of growth, according to Bajarin. Khosrowshahi's experience includes jobs managing finance and strategy, having worked in executive positions at IAC/InterActiveCorp and the investment firm of Allen & Company, according to his LinkedIn profile.

Khosrowshahi, 48, was born in Tehran to a prominent family behind a conglomerate with interests in food, trade, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and more. His family immigrated to the United States prior to the Iranian Revolution in 1978.

"Dara came to America at nine years old when his family escaped Iran on the eve of the Iranian Revolution," Uber said in its message to employees. He attended college here, earning a university degree in electrical engineering.

Khosrowshahi proposed to his wife, Sydney, during a visit to Angkor Wat temples in Cambodia, and they have four children, according to Uber. Expedia is based in the city of Bellevue, near Seattle. Global Equities Research analyst Trip Chowdhry considered Khosrowshahi a fine choice to run Uber, but questioned whether one person can make a difference at a troubled company. "Dara is not a magician," Chowdhry said. — AFP

IN SMARTPHONE AGE, THE HAJJ IS FOR SHARING

MAKKAH: Arm outstretched, Abdul Rahman sweeps his mobile phone across the vista of Makkah, the Great Mosque dazzling in the sun, so his son in Tanzania can experience the pilgrimage to Islam's holiest sites.

He may be thousands of kilometres (miles) away and on another continent, but thanks to his father's smartphone and video sharing app, 18-year-old Nabil might as well be standing right next to him. "Someday I hope I can make the pilgrimage," he says on the screen, his father wearing a broad smile.

Abdul Rahman is one of the more than 1.7 million foreign pilgrims travelling to Mecca in Saudi Arabia for this year's hajj, which began yesterday. For the faithful it is a deeply spiritual journey, which for centuries every capable Muslim has been required to make at least once in their lifetime.

In the age of smartphones, social media and live video streaming, it's now also an experience to be shared in real time. "I'm showing him live... how happy we are, how lucky we are," Abdul Rahman tells AFP, showing off imo, the application he uses for video calls.

Across the holy city, pilgrims from around the world can be seen with their arms extended, showing off their surroundings to friends and family back home. Travel agencies in

charge of organising trips to the hajj are now offering packages that include mobile internet so they can avoid roaming fees.

In a shopping centre where the faithful flock to buy souvenirs, one pilgrim is scanning the images on his phone.

Which effect to choose?

He stops at a selfie and hesitates-what effect to choose, black-and-white or retro? He puts it away when the call to prayer sounds and the pilgrims roll out their carpets between escalators and boutiques to pray.

Later, on an upper floor of the shopping centre, Mohammed Ismaelzad, a 26-year-old pilgrim from Mali, is looking over the images on his phone, deciding which ones to post on his Instagram or Facebook accounts.

He has photographs of Makkah Masjid al-Haram-the Grand Mosque that is the largest in the world-and of the Kaaba, the black masonry cube at its centre. He has video of the Tawaf, when pilgrims circle the Kaaba seven times counter-clockwise, and more pictures of the mass prayers.

They will not only provide memories of his trip, Ismaelzad says, but give others the chance to see it. "My friends in my country... can't come here, so they can see the pictures," he says, a black-and-white keffiyeh



MAKKAH: Muslim pilgrims take a selfie at the Grand Mosque in the holy Saudi city of Makkah, early yesterday, on the eve of the start of the annual Hajj pilgrimage. For the faithful it is a deeply spiritual journey, which for centuries every capable Muslim has been required to make at least once in their lifetimes. — AFP

scarf wrapped around his neck. "They just see on TV, but with my pictures they will see another angle, like from my angle when I do the prayers."

As night falls, pilgrims gather on the esplanade of the Grand Mosque to mingle,

like cousins Mohammed and Abdelaziz Zahran, aged 19 and 20. "You can see all sorts of nationalities, you mix with people, sometimes we try to talk to them," Abdelaziz says. And of course they snap pictures of their meetings on their mobile phones. — AFP

RAPID TREATMENT OF HEART ATTACKS IS CRUCIAL TO SURVIVAL

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates: The risk of cardiac complications and even death after a myocardial infarction (heart attack) is significantly elevated if not managed appropriately with rapid treatment, according to healthcare experts ahead of World Heart Day 2017. With cardiovascular disease (CVD) continuing to be the leading cause of death in the UAE, Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, the region's leading heart care hospital, has warned that every minute following a heart attack is crucial.

"Time is muscle and for every minute not treating an acute myocardial infarction or heart attack, the heart muscle dies and increases the likelihood of heart failure, arrhythmia, mechanical complications, and even death," said Ahmad Edris, MD, a Cardiovascular and Interventional Cardiology Consultant at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi's Heart and Vascular Institute.

"Heart attacks are the cause of one-in-four deaths in the UAE. It is vital that chest pain symptoms are not ignored or underestimated, especially as CVD strikes Emiratis up to 10 years earlier compared with patients in the West." In April this year, the Health Authority - Abu Dhabi officially designated Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi as a Chest Pain Center. This means that any patient visiting the hospital's Emergency Department with chest pain

symptoms will have access to specialist acute care by consultant-level cardiologists and advanced technology, such as robotic hybrid cardiac surgery.

"We recognize the importance of managing heart attack patients early as it has large implications for patients and society as a whole that deserve the very best treatment," said Dr Edris. According to recent emergency department data from across the UAE, one-in-five patients who seek hospital treatment for chest pain are found to have an underlying heart condition, such as acute coronary syndrome (an unstable blockage in the coronary artery supplying the heart muscle).

Ahead of World Heart Day on September 29, Dr Edris is urging patients to call the emergency services if chest pain is accompanied by the following symptoms: shortness of breath, dizziness, sweating, nausea or vomiting, and a fast or irregular pulse. World Heart Day was founded in 2000 by the World Heart Federation, which is based in Geneva, Switzerland, to spread awareness about CVD. Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi is marking World Heart Day this year with its own theme of "Love Your Heart". The hospital is commissioning a nationwide survey into the root causes of Emirati heart deaths, to better understand UAE nationals' knowledge and attitudes regarding CVD.



RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil: View of *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes infected with a bacteria that prevents them from spreading dengue, Zika and chikungunya, before their release at Ilha do Governador in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP photos

MILLIONS OF INFECTED BRAZILIAN MOSQUITOES TO TACKLE DENGUE



RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil: Brazilian biologists handle mosquitoes larval at the Fiocruz Institute in Rio de Janeiro, before releasing *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes infected with a bacteria that prevents them from spreading dengue, Zika and chikungunya.

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazilian scientists on Tuesday began to unleash the first of millions of mosquitoes infected with a bacteria meant to prevent the insects from transmitting the dengue virus to humans. Thousands of *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes carrying the bacteria were released in front of journalists by scientists from the Fiocruz institute in Rio de Janeiro. The hope is that they will then breed and spread the bacteria, denting the insect population's ability to spread dengue and other viruses including Zika and chikungunya. Scientists have been preparing the project-developed by Australians who first put the *Wolbachia* bacteria into mosquitoes since last year.

Dengue causes fevers, rashes, nausea

and in some cases can be fatal, while Zika has been blamed for serious birth defects. In 2016, fears over Zika led to the United Nations health body to declare an international health emergency, ending in November. Fiocruz plans to release 1.6 million infected mosquitoes a week, later stepping that up to three million. "We found that when an *Aedes aegypti* mosquito has this (bacteria), it blocks or reduces the capacity of the mosquito to transmit viruses like dengue, Zika and chikungunya," said the head of the dengue program at Fiocruz, Luciano Moreiro. "So the idea is that when they are released, they will transmit this, as if they were immunizing the other mosquitoes and therefore transmission will be reduced." — AFP

SAN DIEGO BATTLES DEADLY HEPATITIS A OUTBREAK

LOS ANGELES: A record outbreak of Hepatitis A has killed 14 people and put scores in hospital in San Diego, hitting mostly homeless and patients using intravenous drugs. The latest data from San Diego County in California show that more than 350 cases have been diagnosed since the beginning of the year. Most of those have taken been identified since July, and 264 people have needed care in hospital. "As hepatitis A goes, the number of deaths is greater than in other large outbreaks reported to CDC, though not all outbreaks are reported to CDC," a spokeswoman for

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention told AFP.

Another outbreak in 2003 linked to green onions in Pennsylvania caused three deaths and sent 124 people to hospital. Authorities have not yet identified the cause of the latest outbreak. But they say it is being spread person-to-person and through contact with a fecally contaminated environment. This puts homeless people especially at risk since they do not have regular access to sanitary facilities and clean water to wash their hands, state health authorities noted. — AFP



LYNWOOD, California: File photo shows a nurse loading a syringe with a vaccine against Hepatitis A at a free immunization clinic for students before the start of the school year, in Lynwood. — AFP

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EID CELEBRATIONS AT JUMEIRAH MESSILAH BEACH HOTEL & SPA



During the joyful days of Eid Al-Adha, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa presents irresistible offerings to spend quality time with friends and family. General Manager, Savino Leone, said: "Eid Al-Adha is all about gathering family and friends and celebrating the special bond with each other while sharing flavoursome dishes together. At Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, we have taken our offers to the next level with lavish Eid preparations in all our restaurants including entertaining activities for children. We look forward to welcoming our guests of all ages and celebrating with them this holy occasion."

Garden Cafe Restaurant will offer the festive Eid Brunch with an impressive variety of international and local favorites displayed across Pepper Steakhouse and Salt Restaurant. The award winning team at the restaurant expands the boundaries of brunch this Eid by presenting for the first time the Camel Shawarma, pizza pass around and freshly cooked Kunafa with ice cream on the menu. There's also a dedicated beverage station serving a range of fresh mocktails.

A wide variety of more than 89 types of

sweets and desserts including Kuwait's largest chocolate fountain will be on display in the renowned Steakhouse, Pepper, which will be transformed into a dedicated chocolate and candy room. To enhance the mood, guests will be entertained by a live jazz band. Young brunch goers will be well catered for at Salt Restaurant, converted into a special children's area with a full range of activities including face painting, magic shows, movies, arts & crafts, in addition to videogames.

Children will also take center stage upon arrival during the early start of Eid, and will be greeted in the lobby by face painters, balloon makers and mascots. The Sinbad and Teen Scene Clubs will offer rock painting, arts & crafts, origami and fun games while being entertained by a DJ. Mint, the poolside cafe will be hosting a family-fun BBQ from 1pm to 8pm during the first three days of Eid featuring the tastiest barbecued chicken, beef, lamb, mixed kebabs and delicious Mezze or head to Olio Restaurant to taste the latest Italian creations. This Eid Al-Adha, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa invites its guests and visitors to celebrate together and create a memorable fun filled holiday.

SAFIR HOTEL & RESIDENCES KUWAIT HOSTS LOCAL MEDIA

Safir Hotel & Residences Kuwait - Fintas recently held a media dinner at its Al Roshinah Kuwaiti Traditional Restaurant, allowing media representatives to savor its new menu of traditional Kuwaiti platters, while experiencing Al Roshinah hospitality, including the Al Tannour fresh bread. The invitation was extended by Safir Hotel & Residences Kuwait - Fintas' Management to express the hotel's gratitude and appreciation for the media's ongoing support to the hotel and being business partners.

Valued guests were warmly welcomed by the Safir Fintas Management team at Al Roshinah Restaurant to showcase the platters as part of the traditional Kuwaiti cuisine and its delectable array of authentic local delicacies presented in the new menu while enjoying Kuwaiti music. The famous dishes reflect the fusion of tradition and modernity, the central theme of Al Roshinah cuisine and atmosphere. Director of Sales & Marketing at Safir Hotel & Residences Kuwait - Fintas Wassim Mahdi shared the feedback of media guests who confirmed that Al Roshinah Kuwaiti Traditional Restaurant mirrors the true authenticity of traditional Kuwaiti cuisine which aims to satisfy our most fastidious patrons.

He noted that Al Roshinah Restaurant, considered the only traditional Kuwaiti Restaurant that operates in a 5 star hotel in Kuwait, is open daily for lunch and dinner, and caters for private and corporate dining events. It is the perfect venue for locals as well as visitors to enjoy Kuwaiti cuisine in a modern environment. He thanked the media for their attendance, saying that this warm and magical evening was only possible with their presence at Al Roshinah Kuwaiti Traditional Restaurant.



SHERATON KUWAIT WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE PASTRY CHEF

Recently, Chef Torik Santoso Abdul Rahman joined the team of Sheraton Kuwait, a Luxury Collection Hotel and the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait as Executive Pastry Chef. With more than 20 years of experience in the field of Pastry and bakery kitchens in different foreign and Arab countries, Chef Torik is proud of his practice between the arts, traditions and contemporary desserts and aims to provide his unique knowledge combined with his long experience in innovating a world class confectionery industry.

Chef Torik began his career from Indonesia and moved to different countries, the most recent one was in Dubai where he worked in luxurious hotels there. Chef Torik guided the operations of the hotel services related to the production of sweets and desserts using integration of technology besides conceptualizing the menu of Arabic sweets to cater to the taste of its clientele and satisfy their sweet tooth.

He also provided adequate information and training on ways to decorate and bake sweets in a unique manner appropriate for the finest International hotels and resorts. The Sheraton Kuwait, a Luxury Collection Hotel and the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait, its management and the whole team welcomes Chef Torik, who in turn expressed his great pleasure to have come to Kuwait to highlight what is new in the world of taste and indulge with the Kuwaiti society who he knows is rich in the heritage, originalities and refined taste.



CROSSWORD 1700



ACROSS

- City in northern Austria on the Danube.
- A small flat triangular bone in front of the knee that protects the knee joint.
- A lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the blood.
- Type genus of the Amidae.
- Old World bird having a very long tail that jerks up and down as it walks.
- Being one more than two.
- North American woodland herb similar to and used as substitute for the Chinese ginseng.
- Relating to or having the characteristics of bees.
- State in northeastern India.
- Showing mental alertness and calculation and resourcefulness.
- A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
- A needle-like part or structure of a plant or animal or crystal.
- 30 to 300 gigahertz.
- A metric unit of volume equal to one tenth of a liter.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- A shifty deceptive person.
- A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
- Extravasation of urine into the scrotal sac.
- A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
- United States publisher of magazines (1898-1967).
- A master's degree in fine arts.
- Not mined.
- Type genus of the family Arcidae.
- A landlocked republic in eastern Africa.
- A sharp projection on an edge or surface.
- Equipped with or connected by gears or having gears engaged.
- A person whose head is bald.
- Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
- The quality of a color as determined by its dominant wavelength.
- A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
- Wear away.
- United States playwright (1906-1963).
- Of or relating to a seizure or convulsion.
- A three-dimensional shape with six square or rectangular sides.
- A depression in an otherwise level surface.
- Existing as an essential constituent or characteristic.
- The biblical name for ancient Syria.
- Used of a single unit or thing.
- A state in which the level of carbon dioxide in the blood is lower than normal.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

- A girl or young woman who is unmarried.
- (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
- (Babylonian) A goddess of the watery deep and daughter of Ea.
- The capital of Croatia.
- A group of African language in the Niger-Congo group spoken from the Ivory Coast east to Nigeria.
- Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
- Armor plate that protects the chest.
- The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- (astronomy) An indistinct surface feature of Mars once thought to be a system of channels.
- The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
- Flesh of large European flatfish.
- Lolish language.
- The face of a timepiece.
- Capital and largest city and economic center of Peru.
- The act of scanning.
- The cardinal number that is the product of 10 and 100.
- The phonological or orthographic sound or appearance of a word.
- Any of various aromatic trees of the laurel family.
- West Indian evergreen with medium to long leaves.
- Cheesecake food made of curdled soybean milk.
- A narcotic that is considered a hard drug.
- United States tennis player (born in Czechoslovakia) who won several singles championships.
- A strong-smelling plant from whose dried leaves a number of euphoriant and hallucinogenic drugs are prepared.
- Something considered choice to eat.
- A fence formed by a row of closely planted shrubs or bushes.
- Of or relating to or associated with the moon.
- First woman aviator to fly solo nonstop across the Atlantic (1928).
- A state in southeastern India on the Bay of Bengal (south of Andhra Pradesh).
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- The land mass formed by the continents of Europe and Asia.
- No longer having or seeming to have or expecting to have life.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- A state in the eastern United States.
- Paper with a crinkled texture.
- Tropical American trees with palmately compound leaves and showy bell-shaped flowers.
- A republic on the island of Malta in the Mediterranean.
- Frogs, toads, tree toads.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
- (Norse mythology) Ruler of the Aesir.
- An island in Indonesia east of Java.
- A United States liquid unit equal to 8 fluid ounces.
- A silvery malleable metallic element that resists corrosion.
- A state in southeastern United States.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

This is a very good day for job-related events-practical insights will come with ease. You could represent or speak for your company and may find yourself communicating about your skills. You are most persuasive with others. The situation is just perfect for your particular ideas and thoughts. There is an emphasis on fairness and harmony. The intellectual and communicative talents of those close to you take on greater importance. Any shortcomings of this kind stick out like a sore thumb. A young person, perhaps in the neighborhood, has come to your attention this afternoon. As you begin to realize that you can be a mentor to this child, you may begin to seek ways in which you can make a positive difference in the child's life.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are patient and determined to finish what you start today. Someone is happy to help and results become easier to find. You will, of course, be happy to help this other person in return. If you are not married, you are thinking very seriously about asking someone soon. Give this just a little more time as you are interested in the long-term and dependability is your game. You want to be sure that future difficulties with this person can be worked through. Enjoy each day and be observant; soon you will have an answer. If you are married, today is special to your mate as much as it is to you. Surprises are easy to find and you will enjoy the day as it unfolds. You are an appreciative person and you set a good example for others. Happy birthday!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

For the most part, your time is spoken for this day. It may be difficult to tend to what you feel you would like to accomplish. Compromise, cooperation and determination may be the only way to handle such a day. Group situations can be quite productive. Make up your mind now, to go with the flow when it comes to the workplace. There is an urge to set out on your own but if you keep your attention focused and stay on track, you will be pleased with the outcome. You have lots of energy to be productive. You will be drawn to many forms of self-improvement. Practice using your energies in positive, constructive and creative ways. It is through the struggles that successes we receive become more meaningful-don't give up.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Probing conversations find you at your mental best this morning. Your analytical abilities are good and you are prepared for your day. Others tend to navigate toward you for your input regarding work issues. You have a way of making others think for themselves without their realizing what you have done. In a few verbal exchanges you have most people quickly on their way to success. A difficult client or customer will become most pleased with the recommendations you make for them. You know just the right people that will do whatever work they may need. Your investments are showing some positive progress. You might be wise to let some investments grow before cashing in your share. You have a drive to be entertained tonight.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may shine in your particular job-a promotion is possible. You could represent or speak for your company. There is an opening to some business travel if you want it. This could include trips to colleges or high schools in a recruiting type of mode. You may be sought after as just the person for a particular job. Your management and directional abilities are good, and you tend to stay focused. This is not, however, a good time to make any concrete decisions about a relationship or a private business deal. Others may find you especially witty just now. During this time, additional responsibilities may be placed on you in the context of the home setting. Take some time this evening to relax and enjoy your loved ones in a relaxed setting.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your inventive imagination will get you out of some tight places today, including a difference of opinion in the workplace. You are open-minded, democratic and enthusiastic, and you have a definite sense of mission. When it comes to teaching or coaching young people, you are a natural, always able to motivate and inspire others. You may find yourself guiding someone younger than you in matters of importance. You may have insights or breakthroughs in regard to your living situation or life circumstances. You may find yourself torn between an environment that is very comfortable and supportive versus a real need to push out on your own. You could be neglecting home, family or career due to social involvement; easy does it.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may be receiving a great deal of confusion about what you are to accomplish at work today. Go to your immediate manager and ask for a chart of the "extras" tasks for the next few days. This way you can assure your manager that the jobs will be completed. What seems like extra responsibilities are given to you because you are reliable. Now you will be able to show your organization skills. You must know that you would not be given these extra responsibilities if others in management did not think you could handle them-a little guidance is expected. Try to delegate the work that slows you down from reaching the main goal. Quitting time will arrive before you know it and you can be happy that the work will soon be completed successfully.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

By taking the initiative at this time, you shine in your professional affairs. You are at your mental best with clear thoughts. You can add some creative and unusual touches to whatever you are working with or on today. You have that extra drive to succeed that brings about successful results. You have a way of sticking with a problem when others would walk away. You are just as motivated when it comes to possessions and material things. Higher-ups are aware of your natural abilities and when it comes to efficiency, the doors of possibilities are wide open. Your career gets plenty of support from other people and you feel at home while making practical and management decisions. There is a strong urge to invest, own and build.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This is an active day with an exchange of ideas in the workplace. Your patience and ability to remain cool under difficult circumstances affords you a great deal of command for yourself. You seem to be enjoying the way in which your work, as well as your personal life, is taking shape. New friends are in the forecast. Creating money is easier now, but so is spending it. It is important to have a definite, clear and practical plan for the financial achievements. This is how the achievements continue to multiply. Without a goal the candle burns out quickly... So to speak. With your goal in mind, consider how you will achieve your goal. Focus on the end result with pictures, smells and intention. Now... You have a game plan... Success will follow.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Your vanity and your pride may hinder interactions today. Think before becoming too involved in bragging. Take on an attitude of self-confidence but know that confidence within yourself. As you succeed with your goals, self-imposed as well as professional performance, people will follow you anywhere. This can make a big difference when you want support in accomplishing a group project. This is where real progress and understanding can be made. Communication among friends is strong this afternoon. There is a chance to understand those around you and to have a special time with someone you love. A young person may need guidance. He or she will find what is needed as you encourage thinking on his or her own.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Keep little reminders around for you to see that will direct you toward your goals. These may be seashells if you want to go to the ocean or stick-on stars, if you are training to be an astronaut or an astronomer, etc. As the days go flying by, you will find yourself automatically moving toward the opportunities that are required to fulfill your dreams. Your inner resources and emotions are accented. Expect a sense of support and good will from those around you. You are able to sort through most problems and find the source or cause in order to make the necessary changes. You may be able to bring a group together with words or ideas that transport others. Poetry and art may be enjoyed this evening; create these things or enjoy the reading.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Professional possibilities are promising. Keep yourself up-to-date with the new work opportunities that become available. This is a good time to be shrewd in your financial decisions. You should expend great zest in your moneymaking plans. Do not pick out a new car today but know that with your new plans it won't be long before you will be able to afford those needed wheels. Visiting with friends later this afternoon brings about memories of other fun times. Broadening your education comes to mind when the subject of continued education takes form. Learning about new ideas and new people that may or may not have similar interests can really keep your mind busy. Movies, books and all forms of escape could prove very relaxing tonight.

WORD SEARCH

Real Estate 1

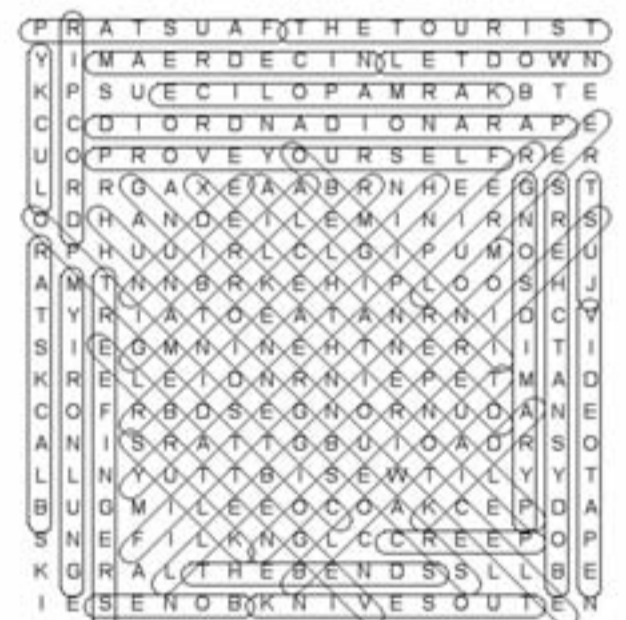
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 22 letters spell a common Real Estate phrase.



- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| AGENT | CONTRACT | INTERIOR | REALTOR |
| AMORTIZATION | CREDITOR | LAND | SELL |
| APPRAISAL | DEED | LAWYER | SKYSCRAPER |
| ASSESSMENT | DEPOSIT | LENDER | SOLD |
| ASSET | DEPRECIATION | LIEN | SQUARE FOOTAGE |
| BUILDING | DUPLEX | LOAN | TAXES |
| BUNGALOW | EXTERIOR | LOFT | TIMESHARE |
| BUYING | FLIPPING | MARKET VALUE | TOUR |
| CLOSER | FOR SALE | OFFER | TRIPLEX |
| COLLATERAL | HOUSE | PAYMENT | VACANCY |
| CONDEMNED | INSPECTOR | PLOT | VALLUATION |
| CONDO | INSURANCE | PROPERTY | ZONE |

Yesterday's Solution

Radiohead Songs



- | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| AIRBAG | HIGH AND DRY | MORNING BELL | PYRAMID SONG |
| ALL I NEED | HUNTING BEARS | MY IRON LUNG | RECKONER |
| BLACK STAR | IN LIMBO | NICE DREAM | RIPCORD |
| BLOW OUT | JUST | NO SURPRISES | SULK |
| BOOYSNATCHERS | KARMA POLICE | NUDE | THE BENDS |
| BONES | KID A | OPTIMISTIC | THE TOURIST |
| CREEP | KNIVES OUT | PARANOID ANDROID | TREEFINGERS |
| ELECTROWEARING | LET DOWN | PLANET TEXEL | VEGETABLE |
| FAUST ARP | LUCKY | PROVE YOURSELF | VIDEOTAPE |
| FITTER HAPPIER | LURGE | | |

The hidden song is: SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK ALIEN

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





GOSSIP

Pink Floyd's Exhibition set to break record for most visits

The Pink Floyd Exhibition: Their Mortal Remains' is on track to become the most-visited music exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The high-in-demand exhibit has seen the likes of Madonna, U2 and Guns N' Roses among 300,000 visitors to walk through the doors since it opened in May, and has now been extended by two weeks ending on October 15. It even looks set to knock the 'David Bowie Is Exhibition' off the number one spot with the most visits. The display is a look back at the psychedelic band's incredible career marking the 50th anniversary of the group's first album 'The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn' and their debut single 'Arnold Layne'. Roger Waters and Nick Mason reunited in London back in February for the launch - which they said they needed to do as they "might not be around much longer". As well as wanting to celebrate the 'Comfortably Numb' rockers' special birthday, Mason, 73, admitted it was important for them to curate the historic artefacts now because none of the surviving members - which also includes 70-year-old guitarist David Gilmour - are getting any younger. He told BANG Showbiz at the time: "Well, I think there's a couple of reasons: one is celebrating 50 years,

and two is that we're of an age where we might not be around much longer." Among the items on display in the 350 separate exhibits is concept art from the planning stages of the band's tours, paintings by original lead singer Syd Barrett, guitars, album art and clothes worn by the band at all stages of their musical journey. There are also unique pieces of rock 'n' roll memorabilia such as a letter from the helicopter pilot hired to chase the giant inflatable pig, suspended above Battersea Power Station for the cover of 1977 album 'Animals' after it broke free and floated off towards Kent and the actual corporal punishment cane that was used on Waters when he was at school in Cambridge, a formative experience that inspired songs on 'The Wall'. Visitors to the attraction are welcomed inside through a Bedford van which the first line-up - comprised of Waters, Mason and the late Barrett and keyboard player Rick Wright - used to tour the UK in the mid-60s. Tickets for 'The Pink Floyd Exhibition: Their Mortal Remains' can be purchased now.

Tito Jackson can't wait for UK fans to hear solo album

Tito Jackson can't wait for his UK fans to hear his debut solo album. The 63-year-old singer - a member of The Jacksons with his siblings Jermaine, Jackie and Marlon Jackson - is set to release 'Tito Time' this week, which includes the single 'When the Magic Happens' with R&B singer Jocelyn Brown. While the 'ABC' hitmaker is excited about the release, he said it's a completely different experience going it alone. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz at the UK premiere of 'Stratton' at VUE Cinemas in London's Leicester Square on Tuesday night, Tito said: "My brothers and I were here a few weeks ago performing in Blackpool and I decided to stay a little longer. I am releasing my solo album and single this week. It is my first solo album. The first single is with Jocelyn Brown. I thought it was a good opportunity to do radio and promote it. This is all new to me. My very first solo album. It feels brilliant. I am really proud of my work. I just had a really great time recording the whole thing and getting the music out. I am hoping the UK love it and you give it a chance and pick out your favourite songs." Tito recently said he was ready to embark on a solo career over a decade ago, but the shock death of his brother and former bandmate Michael Jackson in 2009 held him back. He said: "My brother passed away right when I built a recording studio to finish my project. And so it took about three years after he passed to get back in the groove and make it happen, so here we are today." Tito believes he can feel Michael's presence whenever he performs, as he previously revealed that the late 'Thriller' hitmaker's "spirit" visits him on stage. He said: "All the time I feel his spirit, especially when I'm performing with the brothers on stage at a live performance. You can feel the spirit all the time, absolutely. It's a happy feeling because Michael was a warm, happy, loving person. It's a comforting feeling."



GALLAGHER INSPIRED BY O'CONNOR-INSPIRED VIDEO

Liam Gallagher's 'For What It's Worth' music video will be similar to Sinead O'Connor's 'Nothing Compares 2 U'. The 44-year-old rocker's latest song from his debut solo album 'As You Were' is a sombre number and unlike his promo clips for lead single 'Wall of Glass' and second track 'Chinatown', Liam won't be doing anything extravagant with the visuals for his third one and will simply be singing to the camera. Making reference to the fact he's cut his hair short like Sinead's was in her video for the Prince cover in 1990, he told Radio X: "It's gonna be me, obviously, staring at the camera, signing the song. No bells and whistles. Letting the song do the business, do you know what I mean? Maybe like 'Nothing Compares 2 U' ... That kind of thing. I've got the haircut for it." The 'Bold' singer previously said the song is his "apology to all of the people he's p****d off" over the years. The former Oasis and Beady Eye frontman has a long line of people he's come to heads with over the years and he now uses Twitter to take aim at people, including his former bandmate and bitter sibling Noel Gallagher and the likes of U2 frontman Bono. Asked about the themes of regret on the third single from his forthcoming debut solo LP 'As You Were', Liam previously explained: "Yeah, obviously I've made a lot of mistakes. That's life. I guess it is an apology to whoever. I've p****d off a lot of people. But I'm certainly not gonna write a song for each and every one of them. There's one there. Deal with it and move on." 'For What It's Worth' is also reportedly an apology to Liam's ex-wife Nicole Appleton. The lyrics appear to allude to his split from his former flame, which came after her fathered a child, Gemma, four, following a fling with journalist Liza Ghorbani. He sings the chorus: "I'll be the first to say I'm sorry, I made my own mistakes. For what it's worth I know it's just a word and words betray. Sometimes we lose our way." 'As You Were' is released on October 6.



Lovato's new song about famous person

Demi Lovato's new album features a song about a famous person which will make headlines. The 25-year-old beauty recently announced her new record 'Tell Me You Love Me' will be released on September 29, and now she has revealed she is "nervous" about the world hearing one of the tracks written about a certain someone who she's not naming. She said: "Sometimes you put music that you just feel like everyone is going to know who it's about. Headlines are going to come out of it, and it's like, when you write a song, you're just being vulnerable, and you're just writing about something that's inspiring you, so all the baggage that comes with it is what I'm kind of nervous about." Demi is not giving away any clues as to who inspired the track and may never tell, but she won't let "theories" about the song get to her. She told MTV: "I think that everything happens for a reason, and certain emotions are felt at certain points in your life, and you don't always have to explain them to people. So whatever you want to think about it - you go into whatever theories you have - fine. But I know what it's about and who it's about and I'm just going to let it be." The 'Cool for the Summer' hitmaker has already shared a preview of the album-titled track. In the clip taken in the studio posted on her Instagram, she sings: "Tell me you love me/ I need someone on days like this, I do/ On days like this/ Oh, can you hear my heart say, 'Oh, whoa-oh, oh, oh.'" However, she is yet to unveil the full track-listing for her sixth studio album. So far, it includes 'Sexy Dirty Love', 'You Don't Do It for Me Anymore' and the title track.

METALLICA TO REISSUE MASTER OF PUPPETS

Metallica are re-releasing their third studio album 'Master Of Puppets' on November 10. The reissue of the classic 1986 metal record will feature unreleased material including demos, rough mixes, videos and live tracks, including a new version of 'Disposable Heroes' and a live recording of 'The Thing That Should Not Be'. The LP was the band's first record to go platinum and ended up going 6 x platinum in the US. 'Master Of Puppets' was the last studio release the band recorded with late bass player Cliff Burton, who was in the band from 1982 until his death in September 1986. Drummer Lars Ulrich - who is joined by James Hetfield, Kirk Hammett and Robert Trujillo in the group - previously opened up about how important the album was for the band. He said: "There are so many things associated with 'Master Of Puppets' - it is an immense project. 'Master Of Puppets' seemed to be the culmination of the journey that had started four or five years before with James and I getting together, writing some songs, Kirk and Cliff joining, and that lineup settling." Fans can get their hands on the reissue in a range of formats including Standard LP, Standard CD, 3 CD Expanded Edition, and the Limited Edition Deluxe Box Set. Pre-orders are on sale now from metallica.com. The 'Enter Sandman' hitmakers are gearing up for the Europe leg of their 'WorldWired' tour, which kicks off with two shows at London's The O2 on October 22 and 24 and concludes at Birmingham's Genting Arena on October 30.



Nicholas Hoult 'proud' of Ed Skrein

Nicholas Hoult is "proud" of Ed Skrein for dropping out of the 'Hellboy' reboot. The 34-year-old British actor had originally been cast as Major Ben Daimo in the upcoming movie, but announced he was stepping down earlier this week after the project garnered criticism over whitewashing, as the character in the original 'Hellboy' comic series is Japanese-American. Now, Ed's close friend Nicholas has praised his decision to back down as "honorable", as walking away from a job is "not an easy decision to make". The 'X-Men' star said: "I agree completely with what Ed did, I think it's very honorable. And I'm proud of him for making that decision ... It's not an easy decision to make, because, you know, we're trying to get work. But for him to get that role and realize it has been miscast probably on many levels, even though he would have given a great performance, I think it's important to do that." Nicholas, 27, also admitted he would do the same thing if he was cast in a role which he thought he wasn't right for. Speaking to TheWrap.com, he said: "I mean, yeah.

If you don't think you're right for something then you have to, or if you think there's something wrong about the casting, then yeah." Ed announced he would be quitting the project via a statement posted to social media earlier this week, in which he said the movie has a duty to "honor and respect" the ethnicity of the characters. He wrote: "It is clear that representing this character in a culturally accurate way holds significance for people, and that to neglect this responsibility would continue a worrying tendency to obscure ethnic minority stories and voice in the Arts. I feel it is important to honor and respect that. Therefore I have decided to step down so the role can be cast appropriately. Representation of ethnic diversity is important, especially to me as I have a mixed heritage family. It is our responsibility to make moral decisions in difficult times and to give voice to inclusivity. It is my hope that one day these discussions will become less necessary and that we can help make equal representation in the Arts a reality."

Lady Gaga starts work on 6th album

Lady Gaga has started writing her sixth studio album. The 'Born This Way' hitmaker is still touring her latest record 'Joanne', but is using her time on the road to muster up some inspiration to put pen to paper on new songs for her next album. She said: "I've started writing. But the star is yet to decide whether her latest album will spawn another single or not, despite online pleas by fans for 'Dancin' In Circles' to be released. She said: "I'll let ya know. I have a lot of ideas and a lot of things I want to create, so you'll see in a bit. I need some time to create." Gaga is known for playing some previously unreleased songs on her tours and while she is keen to do that again on her forthcoming 'Joanne World Tour' shows, she won't be able to change the set as much as usual because the technical side of things is "extremely complex". She added to 'Entertainment Weekly': "This show's actually extremely complex and complicated, and the stage is coded with a computer. It's intense and the cues all have to be met at a particular time. It's high stress and tense backstage to make sure everything happens at the exact moment it's supposed to. So, the setlist might change a little bit, but mostly you're coming to see a piece that we've created for you. It's two hours and fifteen minutes we've thought about very closely. It's from our heart, and it's from a band, dancers, artists, and everyone we've worked with in the 10 years we have behind us together." Gaga's 60-date 'Joanne World Tour' started in Canada on August 1 and is due to end in Inglewood on December 18 following further shows in North America, as well as gigs in Europe and one in Brazil.



MUSIC & MOVIES

Matt Damon goes mini in Venice opener 'Downsizing'

"Downsizing" has generated jumbo-sized buzz at the Venice Film Festival - not least as viewers debate how to describe it. Is it a science fiction film, a romantic comedy, a political parable, an apocalyptic thriller? Alexander Payne's movie mixes all those elements in its story of a man, played by Matt Damon, who tries to solve his problems by shrinking himself. Payne says that despite its sci-fi premise and international canvas, "Downsizing" is not so different to the films he's best known for - funny-sad stories of middle aged or Midwestern strugglers such as "About Schmidt," "Sideways" and "Nebraska."

"It has the same sense of humor and basically the same tone," Payne told reporters in Venice yesterday. That tone alternately puzzled and thrilled viewers in Venice, where the film has its gala premiere in the festival's coveted opening-night spot. Several recent Venice openers, including "Gravity" and "La La Land," have gone on to win multiple Academy Awards. "Downsizing" has ingredients that could help it strike a similar chord with audiences and awards voters: a likable, bankable star in Damon; a strong supporting cast that includes Kristen Wiig and Christophe Waltz; and an imaginative story laced with compassion and humor.

The movie applies Payne's wry eye for human foibles to a plot that explores the power and limits of science and the threat of environmental catastrophe. The script by Payne and Jim Taylor opens with a Norwegian scientist making a breakthrough he thinks will save humanity: a technique that can shrink people to 5 inches (12

cm) tall. That means they use a tiny fraction of the resources they once did - and need to pay less, allowing people of modest means to grow instantly rich by becoming small.

The movie has fun imagining what the miniaturized world would be like, as Damon goes to live in a luxury micro-city, a sort of retirement community for the tiny. Then it takes a serious turn to ask whether science could be humanity's salvation, or whether stubbornly fallible human nature is likely to be our species' undoing. Along the way, a movie that started in the familiar Payne territory of Omaha, Nebraska, takes viewers all the way to an underground bunker in a Norwegian fjord.

Many will find the journey unexpected, but reviewers in Venice were mostly happy to be swept along for the ride. The Guardian called the film a "spry, nuanced, winningly digressive movie," while the Hollywood Reporter said it was "captivating, funny" and "deeply humane." Ultimately, the film rests on Payne's knack for depicting human relationships. Damon's Paul becomes friends with a louche European neighbor, played by Waltz, and develops feelings for Ngoc Lan, a former Vietnamese political prisoner working as a house cleaner.

Spirited and complex character

Actress Hong Chau ("Treme," "Inherent Vice") is already being talked of as a potential awards nominee for her performance as the spirited and complex character. "This is a character that is normally in the background, that is low-status character in the culture, and not one that you



(From left) Actors Matt Damon, Kristen Wiig, Hong Chau and director Alexander Payne pose for photographers at the photo call of the film 'Downsizing' during the 74th edition of the Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy, yesterday. — AP/AFP photos



Actor Matt Damon arrives for the 74th edition of the Venice Film Festival, at Venice Lido, Italy.

typically see in the forefront of a story," she said. "That was such a pleasure to be able to read on the page and then also as an actor to be able to portray." "Downsizing" is the latest ordinary-Joe role for Damon, who exudes a likable everyman-under-duress quality whether he's action hero Jason Bourne or a stranded astronaut in "The Martian."

Damon said he thinks movies "are the greatest tool for empathy that we have." "What I love about this - what I love about a lot of these stories that I get to help tell - is it shows a relatable character whose life is different from our own but who we find common cause with," he said. "Ultimately I think this is a beautiful and optimistic movie. A journalist said to me, which I

thought was really great: This is Alexander's most optimistic movie, and it has the apocalypse in it. "I do think at the end of the day there's this sense that we're all in it together." — AP



Venice Biennale President Paolo Baratta, left, poses with members of the jury of the 74th edition of the Venice Film Festival, from second left; Ildiko Enyedi, Yonfan, Jasmine Trinca, Michel Franco, Edgar Wright, Annette Bening, David Stratton, Rebecca Hall, Anna Mouglialis and Venice Film Festival director Alberto Barbera pose for a family photo at Venice Lido, Italy, yesterday. — AP

Venice film festival kickstarts Oscars jousting

The 74th Venice film festival gets underway yesterday with Alexander Payne's sci-fi satire "Downsizing" in the high-profile opening slot that is increasingly coveted as a launchpad for the Oscars. Starring Matt Damon and Kristen Wiig, "Sideways" director Payne's latest quirky creation is a tale of a lower middle class couple in the US midwest. But the downsizing of the title is not a reference to job losses or selling off the family house: instead the pair are considering signing up for radical new surgery that would allow them to be shrunk to tiny versions of themselves, on the promise of a better life.

Written by Payne, a two-time Oscar winner for his screenplays, and Jim Taylor, the film will be seeking to emulate the success of "La La Land," "Birdman" and "Gravity," all Venice openers in recent years which went on to bag a bunch of Academy Awards and other prizes. Whether it does is likely to depend on how critics react to the film's intriguing plot, which Variety described as "Honey I Shrank the Kids with a deeper social message". Also being unveiled on the opening day is "Nico," a bio-pic focusing on the final years of the Velvet Underground singer and Andy Warhol muse which is being shown in the festival's "Horizons" section dedicated to cutting-edge productions.

Directed by Susanna Nicchiarelli, with Danish actress Trine Dyrholm in the lead role, the story catches up with one of 1970s New York's iconic figures in 1987 and 1988, the last two years of her life. It finds her battling a heroin habit but also finding fulfillment through her music and her relationship with her son.

Redford and Fonda

"Downsizing" is one of 21 films competing for Venice's top prize, the Golden Lion, which will be handed out on September 9, along with a string of other awards including the first for films in a new competition for virtual reality productions. As usual the international film line-up at Venice ranges from big-budget Hollywood productions, like George Clooney's sixth directorial outing, "Suburbicon", to new works by indie favorites Andrew Haigh and Warwick Thornton, via documentaries such as Chinese artist Ai Weiwei's epic look at the global refugee crisis, "Human Flow".

British director Haigh will be presenting "Lean on Pete", his first film since the acclaimed "45 Years", while Thornton arrives in Venice next week to promote "Sweet Country", a Western set in 1920s Australia that deals with the treatment of the country's indigenous peoples. In total, 71 new full-length films will be shown over the next 10 days, along with 16 short films and two TV series. Along with Clooney, the major stars due on the red carpet include Robert Redford and Jane Fonda, here to pick up lifetime achievement awards while plugging their new film "Our Souls at Night", a Netflix drama about an unconventional romance between two elderly neighbors. The theme of love after a certain age is also addressed in "Leisure Seeker", in which Helen Mirren and Donald Sutherland star as an independent, free-spirited couple coming to terms with Alzheimer's.

Bloodied heart

Spanish superstar duo Javier Bardem and Penelope Cruz team up again for a new drama about Pablo Escobar, "Loving Pablo", in which Bardem plays the Colombian drug baron and Cruz his long-term mistress. Bardem is also to be seen playing opposite Jennifer Lawrence in "mother!", a new film by "Black Swan" director Darren Aronofsky, that is one of several thrillers vying for honors. Promoted by a Mother's Day-release of a poster showing Lawrence holding her own bloodied heart, the film tells the tale of a couple thrown into turmoil by uninvited guests.

Another spine-chiller features Ethan Hawke in Paul Schrader's "First Reformed", which turns around a dark secret harbored by members of a church who are tormented by the deaths of loved ones. Also expected to make waves, with an out-of-competition world premiere, is "Victoria & Abdul", Stephen Frears' treatment of the true story of the elderly Queen Victoria's later-life friendship with an Indian clerk. British director Frears is to be honored on Sunday for his innovative contribution to cinema, ahead of the screening of his new work, in which Judi Dench stars as Victoria, opposite Bollywood actor Ali Fazal. — AFP



Fans wait for celebrities to arrive in front of the Cinema Palace for the opening film "Downsizing", by Alexander Payne. — AP

Who's sorry now? Not Kathy Griffin over Trump photo, video

Kathy Griffin retracted her apology for a gory image of a fake Donald Trump head, saying anger against her was overblown and should be directed at Trump and his administration. A feisty Griffin, interviewed Tuesday on Australian TV in advance of an international comedy tour, slammed the president and his actions as she reversed course from her tearful mea culpa in May. "So the picture happened, the outrage was ridiculous, I made an apology, and now in light of all the crazy stuff that he (Trump) and this administration are doing.... He's unhinged," she said on the morning show "Sunrise."

The comedian condemned Trump's pardon of former Arizona lawman Joe Arpaio and the president's call for a ban on military service by transgender people. She also referred to Trump as a "fool," among other derogatory terms. One "Sunrise" host pressed her on whether it was out of line to pose for photos and a video with a mask of Trump covered in tomato sauce to simulate blood from a severed head. Griffin pushed back. "Stop acting like my little picture is more important than talking about the actual atrocities that the president of the United States is committing," she said.

Griffin said she lost friends and work, and received death threats during the uproar. She had quickly apologized in a video in which she called the Trump image "disturbing" and also during a tearful news conference, but was fired from her most high-profile job as co-host of CNN's New Year's Eve Celebration. Comedy gigs were canceled. It didn't take long for her to realize that what was happening to her could be the basis of laughs, Griffin said during a satellite interview, and she decided to embark on the "Laugh Your Head Off" tour. She's also on "a mission to tell people, honestly, if it happened to me, as big mouthed and obnoxious as I am, it can happen to you," said Griffin. Griffin spoke this week by satellite to "Sunrise" and another Australian show, "The Project," to promote her upcoming appearances there. She'll also be on stage in Europe and elsewhere. — AP



In this file photo, Kathy Griffin attends The Hollywood Reporter's Women in Entertainment Breakfast in Los Angeles. — AP

Viewership down for MTV's Video Music Awards

No longer the event it was when Eminem ruled the charts, the MTV Video Music Awards tallied 5.68 million viewers across 10 different networks on Sunday for a show dominated by Kendrick Lamar's coronation and the debut of Taylor Swift's new video. That's down from the 6.5 million people who watched the VMAs in 2016, and the 9.8 million who watched the year before, the Nielsen company said. In 2002, back when the show was seen only on MTV, the event drew 11.9 million viewers.

Audiences for awards shows in general are down this year, and MTV had the misfortune of competing with the season finale of HBO's "Game of Thrones." But it's undeniable that MTV's once-outrageous awards show is no longer the fodder for water cooler conversation that it once was. MTV was encouraged by one finding in the ratings: it was able to beat "Game of Thrones" among teenagers.

Otherwise, "Game of Thrones" was dominant. The 12.07 million people who saw the show Sunday night was a record for the series, even if it likely represented only a fraction of its viewership. If you add in people who stream the show online or watch on a time-delayed basis, the average episode of "GOT" this season has been watched by 30.6 million people, according to HBO. NBC won the week in prime time, averaging 5.5 million viewers. CBS had 4.2 million, ABC had 3.1 million, Fox had 2.4 million, Telemundo had 1.5 million, Univision had 1.4 million, ION Television had 1.3 million and the CW had 890,000.

Fox News Channel was the week's most popular cable channel, averaging 2.4 million viewers in prime time. MSNBC had 1.8 million, USA had 1.62 million, HGTV had 1.4 million and CNN had 1.37 million. ABC's "World News Tonight" topped the evening newscasts with an average of 7.9 million viewers. NBC's "Nightly News" was second with 7.7 million and the "CBS Evening News" had 5.8 million.

For the week of Aug 21-27, the top 10 shows, their networks and viewerships: "America's Got Talent" (Tuesday), NBC, 12.59 million; "Game of Thrones," HBO, 12.07 million; "America's Got Talent" (Wednesday), NBC, 10.84 million; NFL Exhibition Football: San Francisco at Minnesota, NBC, 7.32 million; "60 Minutes," CBS, 7.16 million; "Big Brother" (Sunday), CBS, 6.28 mil-

lion; "NFL Pre-Game Show," NBC, 6.25 million. "The Big Bang Theory," CBS, 6.14 million; "Big Brother" (Wednesday), CBS, 6.11 million; "Big Brother" (Thursday), CBS, 6.03 million. ABC is owned by The Walt Disney Co. CBS is owned by CBS Corp. CW is a joint venture of Warner Bros. Entertainment and CBS Corp. Fox is owned by 21st Century Fox. NBC and Telemundo are owned by Comcast Corp. ION Television is owned by ION Media Networks. — AP



Kendrick Lamar accepts the award for video of the year for "HUMBLE." at the MTV Video Music Awards at The Forum on Sunday in Inglewood, Calif. — AP

FEATURES

Fall for Lake Tahoe's secret season: Autumn



Photo shows Eagle Lake, a small alpine lake above Lake Tahoe near Tahoe City.



Photo shows the sun rise over South Lake Tahoe near Tahoe City.



Jessica Brackett, of South Tahoe Standup Paddle, carries a paddle board along the shore of Lake Tahoe.



Lilyana Allen, of Guam, uses a telescope to view Lake Tahoe from an observation platform at the Heavenly Mountain Resort during a family visit to South Lake Tahoe.



Boats ride at anchor in South Lake Tahoe as the morning sun turns the hills around the lake pink near Tahoe City.



A pair of paddle boarders ply the waters of Lake Tahoe near Tahoe City.

Fringed by snow or gleaming cobalt blue under sunny skies, Lake Tahoe is a favorite in summer and winter. But there's a third side to Tahoe: fall.

As crowds thin out, the region seems to take a breath as it prepares for the seasonal switchover from camping and sailing to ski runs and cozy chalet evenings. Trails are roomier, rates cheaper and the lake waters are beautiful but bracing. All this and leaf-peeping, too.

Here are some suggestions:

The basics

Lake Tahoe is about 22 miles long (35 km) and 12 miles wide (19 km) at its widest point and straddles the California-Nevada state line. You can drive all the way around the lake most of the year although part of California Highway 89 along Emerald Bay Road may be closed in winter. Very broadly, the lake is divided up into North Lake Tahoe, reachable by Interstate 80, and South Lake Tahoe (the name of a city as well as an area), reachable by Highway 50. Tahoe City is partway down the lake on the west (California) side.

The east (Nevada) side of the lake is generally less developed, except for casinos in the north and south corners. On the southwest border, the city of South Lake Tahoe, California, abuts Stateline, Nevada, which is home to a number of casinos. To the north, casinos can be found in Incline Village and Crystal Bay, Nevada.

Lodging ranges from mid-century style motels to rentals-by-owner to upscale hotels such as the Ritz-Carlton, part of the Northstar California Resort near Truckee, and the new Lodge at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline. Temperatures usually stay mild through September and even into October, although expect cooler temperatures as winter nears. Resorts and outdoor outfitters shut down summer activities as the weather turns.

Leaf peep

Lake Tahoe is surrounded by pines so it's mostly green. But there are aspen groves that turn russet and gold in the fall. Most trails sport some fall color come mid-September, including the Eagle Lake trail. Another recommended spot is Page Meadow, near Tahoe City, which has a number of trails. To get there, drive 2 miles (3.2 km) south of Tahoe City on Highway 89, turn on Pineland Drive, and then turn on Forest Service Road 15N60 or 16N48. At the north end, a good place to try is the Tunnel Creek trail in Incline Village.

On the calendar

Two events celebrate food and wine this fall. On the northern side, the Lake Tahoe Autumn Food and Wine Festival takes place in Northstar, Sept 8-10, with more than 20 events including dinners, wine tastings, outdoor activities and cooking classes. Ticket prices vary; full weekend, \$270. On Sept 16, Sample the Sierra in South Lake Tahoe pairs offerings from more than 20 restaurants. Locally made art, jewelry and crafts will also be featured at the festival marketplace; Bijou Community Park, 1201 Al Tahoe Blvd, \$40.

Three Oktoberfests are planned:

In the north, the Village at Squaw Valley, Sept 23, \$20 entry. Tahoe City's Annual Oktoberfest, Sept 30, live music, local vendors, no admission fee.

In the south, Camp Richardson Resort, Oktoberfest, Oct 7-8, pumpkin patch, yodeling contests, no admission fee.

Also Oct 7-8, Taylor Creek Visitor Center, north of South Lake Tahoe on Highway 89, marks the annual migration of Kokanee salmon with a family event featuring treasure hunts, crafts and more.



Photo shows Eagle Lake, a small alpine lake above Lake Tahoe.

Hike/bike

Along the west shore of Lake Tahoe, the short hike up to Eagle Falls or the longer trek to Eagle Lake - about a mile (1.6 km), moderately steep - is always popular. Visiting in fall (as well as going earlier or later in the day) increases your chances of getting a parking spot in the small lot. To get there take Highway 89 north about 8 miles (13 km) from South Lake Tahoe and look for parking (\$5) on the left.

Mountain biking is popular whenever conditions permit, but it's especially relished in the fall, when crisp weather and empty trails make for good riding. Outfitters renting in the fall, weather depending, include Tahoe Adventure Company in Tahoe Vista, at the northern end of the lake (530-913-9212), and Flume Trail Mountain Bikes in Incline Village (775-298-2501). To take advantage of chair lift assist, the Northstar California Bike Park is open until approximately Oct 1. Downhill trails and lessons are available. In the south, the family friendly, paved, Camp Richardson Bike Path passes several beaches. A convenient starting point is Anderson's Bike Rentals, 645 Emerald Bay Rd. (877-720-2121).

Sun/swim

The Tahoe shoreline includes scores of tiny pocket beaches as well as publicly accessible stretches of sand. King's Beach at the north end of the lake is large, sandy and set in the small town of the same name. Parking \$5 during off-peak season. On the south shore, Baldwin Beach is quiet, excellent for picnicking and reachable via the Camp Richardson bike path. Parking \$8. Operated through mid-October. — AP

Some things to know about music lessons for children

Encourage your child to learn a new instrument

Andolina Collado didn't know where to start when her young daughter asked for violin lessons. An immigrant from the Dominican Republic who works as a home health aide, she asked everyone she saw carrying an instrument in her Manhattan neighborhood if they knew of affordable lessons. Finally, one man pointed her to a church where Whin Music Project offers sliding scale tuition based on income.

Her daughter Army thrived in violin and soon wanted to learn piano. Whin teachers pointed her to the MusicLink Foundation, which pairs motivated students from low-income families around the country with music teachers willing to give lessons at a discount. At age eight, Army wrote to MusicLink to ask if somebody who spoke Spanish could contact her mother. Julie Wegener, New York City coordinator for MusicLink, was so moved she decided on the spot to teach Army herself. Collado isn't the only parent who has watched instrument-toting strangers and wondered how to enter that world.

Private lessons are beyond the reach of many families and even music programs at public schools can come at a price. Students in elementary, middle and high school can expect to pay at least \$300 in instrument rental or related

costs, according to the "Backpack Index," an annual study of the cost of school supplies and fees conducted by Huntington Bank and the organization Communities in Schools. Even for families with means, there are tricky questions. Who wants to invest several hundred dollars in a guitar that might end up in the closet? But then how do you know if you have a Mozart in the family? Before plunging into music lessons, it helps to explore the landscape.

Have realistic expectations

It's extremely unlikely your child is the next Yo-Yo Ma, but that's no reason not to put him in lessons. Your child's first piano class could be the first step to a scholarship at Juilliard or the start of a lifelong hobby. Ask yourself if you're ok with either possibility because chances are the going will get tough after the novelty wears off.

Go in for the long-haul. Anthony Mazzochi, associate director of the John J Cali School of Music at Montclair State University, suggests giving it a go for two years or so before contemplating quitting. He suggests prioritizing daily practice like math homework. With the big picture in mind, a few struggles over practice won't seem like signs your investment is going down the drain.

Involve your child in the decision

It helps if you don't just drop an unsuspecting 6-year-old in piano lessons. Let your child explore different instruments first. Try the library or local park for free concerts and sing-a-longs. Mazzochi, who runs the website www.musicparentsguide.com, suggests watching YouTube videos of master performances. He advises searching for music stores that offer "petting sessions" for children to hold and try out instruments.

Take the time to find a good teacher

A good place to start is the Music Teacher National Association, which has a "Find-A-Teacher" search function and tips on what to look for, says Sue Wege, director of coordinators for MusicLink. Try to get a trial lesson and interview. The MTNA site offers a list of questions to ask, including whether the teacher offers performance opportunities that can be important for motivating children. Look for teachers who are plugged into the music scene and provide fun opportunities for children. In addition to recitals at her studio, Wegener takes her students to play pianos that the group "Sing for Hope" places outdoors throughout New York City in June. She sent Army's name to Piano Explorer Magazine, which prints the names of kids who achieve more than 100 days of practice. Army long surpassed that goal and is now close to 600. In February, she performed at the inauguration of New York State Sen. Marisol Alcantara.

Rent or buy, used or new?

There are pitfalls when it comes buying used or cheap instruments. A good rule of thumb is to consult with your child's music teacher before turning to Craig's List. George Shelby, a Los Angeles musician who tours with Phil Collins and created the Yamaha-sponsored website www.musicalinstrumentchoices.com, recommends sticking with reputable music stores for rentals and used instruments. While that might be pricier than going online, the instrument will come with a quality guarantee.

It is possible to find quality instruments on sites like eBay but Shelby urges buyers to bring a technician to check it out. Many dealers also offer rent-to-buy options. Let your child know he gets to keep the instrument if he practices every day.



Julie Wegener, center, a music teacher with the MusicLink Foundation, her student Army Paulino Collado, left, and Army's mom, Andolina Collado, are right, finish a music session.

Research, reach out, speak up

On the fence about private lessons? There's no rush. Find out how good your school's program is. Ask how often classes meet. Check out The National Association of Music Merchant's website for a list of school districts with the best music programs. It might be enough to supplement that program with lessons every other week. Group lessons are also a more affordable option, or seeking a graduate student who teaches at a discount.

Plan for the costs of a school music program

Because of fees, music is one of the three areas - along with sports and field trips - where low-income students get left out, according to Dale Erquiaga, president and CEO of Communities in Schools. He urges families to ask school officials about fee waivers or seek out a community coordinator for help. Reach out to parents of older children about hand-me-down instruments, unexpected costs and money-saving tips. "Some people are embarrassed to ask," said Collado. "I'm not embarrassed." — AP

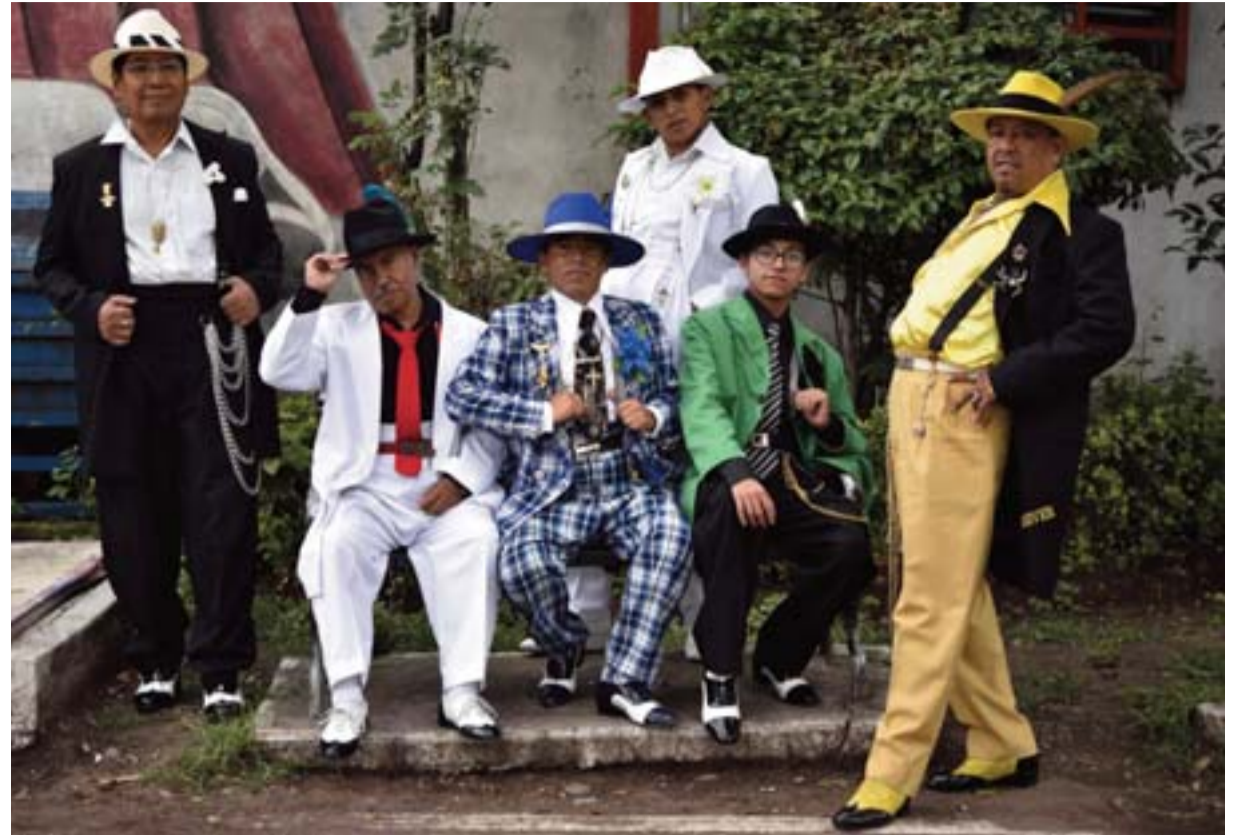


Army Paulino Collado plays the piano as her music teacher, Julie Wegener, background left, and mom, Andolina Collado, listen, in New York. — AP photos



Julie Wegener, left, New York City coordinator for MusicLink, her student Army Paulino Collado, right, and Army's mom, Andolina Collado, confer after Army's music lesson, in New York.

FEATURE



In these photos a group of "Pachucos" pose for a picture at the Cultural Poliforum Carranza square in Mexico City. — AFP photos



'Pachucos' perform during an exhibition of ballroom dancing as part of a tribute to Mexican artist 'Tin Tan' at the Cultural Poliforum Carranza in Mexico City.



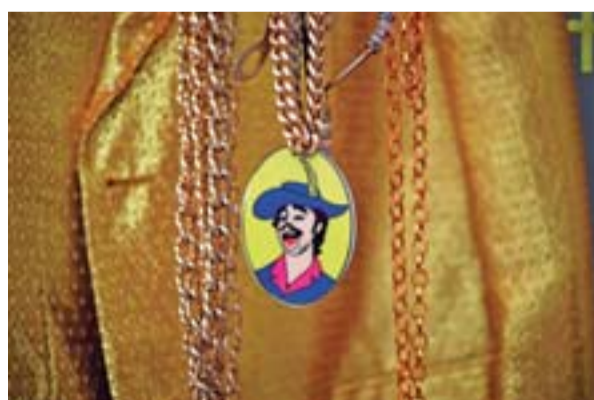
Pachuco style suits known as "Zoot Suit" are photographed in a house of a Pachuco in Tepito neighborhood.



A manufacturer shows different styles and colors of Pachuco hats at his workshop and store in the historical center of Mexico City.



View of Pachuco style accessories.



View of a Pachuco style suits -known as "Zoot Suit"- and accessories in Tepito neighborhood.



A Pachuco wearing traditional accessories is pictured.



View of Pachuco style accessories.



View of Pachuco-style hats at a workshop and store in the historical center of Mexico City.



View of a toy figure of Mexican actor known as 'Tin Tan' and who was a 'Pachuco'.



View of Pachuco-style hats, at the house of a Pachuco in Tepito neighborhood in Mexico City.



View of Pachuco-style shoes in the house of a Pachuco in Tepito neighborhood.

Mexico's 'pachucos' keep zoot suits, defiance alive

'What's beautiful about it is reviving the elegance of the past'

Decked out in baggy suits, their watch chains swinging to the mambo as feathers bob atop their wide-brimmed hats, Mexico's "pachucos" are keeping alive the tradition of the zoot suit—and the defiance it represents. Born in Mexican immigrant communities in the United States in the 1930s, pachuco culture started out as the gangsta style of its time—complete with criminal associations, baggy pants and bling. It was a time of deep prejudice in the American south and west, where restaurants often posted signs reading "No dogs, negroes or Mexicans."

In a show of defiance of the dominant white culture, young Mexicans joined urban blacks in sporting the zoot suit—long jackets, baggy pants tapering to a peg at the ankles, Oxford shoes, dangling watch fobs and splaying hats. It was "a proto-movement of social and cultural resistance," says Manuel Valenzuela, a sociologist at Mexico's College of the Northern Border, in Tijuana. These "pachucos," as the Mexicans called themselves, were portrayed as dangerous delinquents in the media, and were singled out for discrimination and violent attacks.

In 1943, white soldiers stationed in southern California went on a rampage against young Latinos, triggering a series of ethnic clashes known as the "Zoot Suit Riots." Fast forward 74 years, and the zoot suit has long faded from fashion. But in the age of US President Donald Trump, Mexican-American relations can still look a lot like they did back then. And pachuco style remains alive and well in Mexico, cultivated by a small but fervent group of aficionados who gather at a series of legendary Mexico City ballrooms to dance the mambo and the cha-cha, flaunt their zoot suits, and keep the flame of defiance burning. "Today, being a pachuco means being part of a culture. You're carrying on what came before, so the tradition won't be lost," says Ricardo Zamorano—alias "Pachuco For Ever"—a 55-year-old devotee.

'First metrosexuals'

The Mexican poet and Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz called pachuco style "an embodiment of liberty, of disorder, of the forbidden." Those keeping it alive in Mexico see it as the inheritance of a nobler time. "What's beautiful about it is reviving the elegance of the past," says Roberto Romero, a 73-year-old tailor who specializes in zoot suits. "People used to dress well back then... like gentlemen," says Antonio Fernandez, a haberdasher who has made pachuco hats since the 1950s. Zamorano's house is a monument to the pachuco universe, his closets overflowing with zoot suits in fabrics ranging from purple to plaid to gold with Swarovski crystals. He also has a large collection of hats, feathers and other accessories.

"Pachucos were the first metrosexuals," he says. "Me, I start my Tuesday thinking about what clothes I'll wear to go dancing on Saturday." On one recent night, Zamorano sashayed across the dance floor in a canary yellow suit alongside his girlfriend, Paola Tiburcio, 55. "I would have loved to be alive back then, with the twirling dresses and everything. I feel like I'm in a movie," says another dancer, Concepcion Valenzuela, 42, dressed in red from head to toe. Pachuco women were rebels, too, says sociologist Valenzuela.



"Pachuca women were figures who radically broke with the traditional, submissive woman's role. They went out, they drank, they smoked, they fought," he told AFP. Pachuca women's towering hairdos originally hid knives inside—just as the men's heavy watch chains were once used as weapons, he says. Unlike those rowdy youths, today's pachucos are an aging bunch. Roberto Reyes, 19, is one of the few young people keeping the tradition alive. "To me, wearing this suit is a symbol of pride. It means sincerity, respect, self-esteem," he says. "The pachuco says, 'Look at me, I exist. Respect me,'" he says, his face gleaming with sweat, before returning to the dance floor. — AFP

'Pachucos' perform during an exhibition of ballroom dancing as part of a tribute to Mexican artist 'Tin Tan' at the Cultural Poliforum Carranza in Mexico City.

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 2017

Mexico's 'pachucos' keep zoot suits, defiance alive

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A reveler covered in tomato pulp takes part in the annual 'Tomatina' festival in the eastern town of Bunol, yesterday. The iconic fiesta—which celebrates its 72nd anniversary and is billed as 'the world's biggest food fight'—has become a major draw for foreigners, in particular from Britain, Japan and the United States. — AFP

Wax museum revels in ridicule as critics lampoon its statues



Shameka Nurse, a guest host at the Dreamland Wax Museum, works tending to the Donald Trump wax figure standing in an Oval Office scene at the museum. — AP photos

A good roasting hasn't caused a meltdown at Boston's new wax museum. Officials at the Dreamland Wax Museum say they're embracing the extra attention brought by waves of online hecklers who have lampooned some of its less-than-flattering likenesses. "It's absolutely been a blessing to have all of that controversy," said Michael Pelletz, the museum's vice president of sales. "Even if it's negative press, it's working wonderfully." Photos of the museum's life-sized wax figures have been circulating online since it opened its doors in July, in some cases inspiring scorching ridicule.

It started with a wax portrayal of President Donald Trump that some say looks more like South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham. Then it was a statue of New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady that some called "creepy," with one online critic saying it looks like someone who "would murder you and hide the body." Now it's a figure of former Boston Celtics forward Paul Pierce, which one sports-news website simply said "looks like someone who's not Paul Pierce."

Pelletz says some of the figures aren't perfect because they're based on photos instead of actual measurements from the celebrities. And if the sculptors aren't keenly familiar with every contour of Brady's face, he said they can be forgiven — most are based overseas, in London and Paris. Still, Pelletz said even the imperfect statues are works of art that take months to create. "I'm proud of every single wax figure in here," he said. "Some people love Picasso, some people don't. It's perception."

Going forward, most new models will be created only after artists sit down with the subject to gather dozens of dimensions. The goal is to add about five statues a year, mostly of stars with roots in Boston. So far, the jeers have targeted only a small fraction of the museum's 101 wax models of musicians, actors and historical figures. Several others have drawn admiration for their impeccable likenesses. Brandi Zeitz of nearby Saugus was at the museum with her two sons this week when she stopped cold before a seated statue of rapper Snoop Dogg.

"He's spooky looking. He looks like he's going to stand up," said Zeitz, whose sons posed alongside the statue for a photo. Some researchers say wax models inspire mixed feelings because of a phenomenon called the "uncanny valley," an idea that people are unsettled by human replicas that look nearly — but not quite — real. Pelletz thinks that might help explain the online hoopla. But some visitors have said they left feeling disappointed, not unsettled, by the statues.

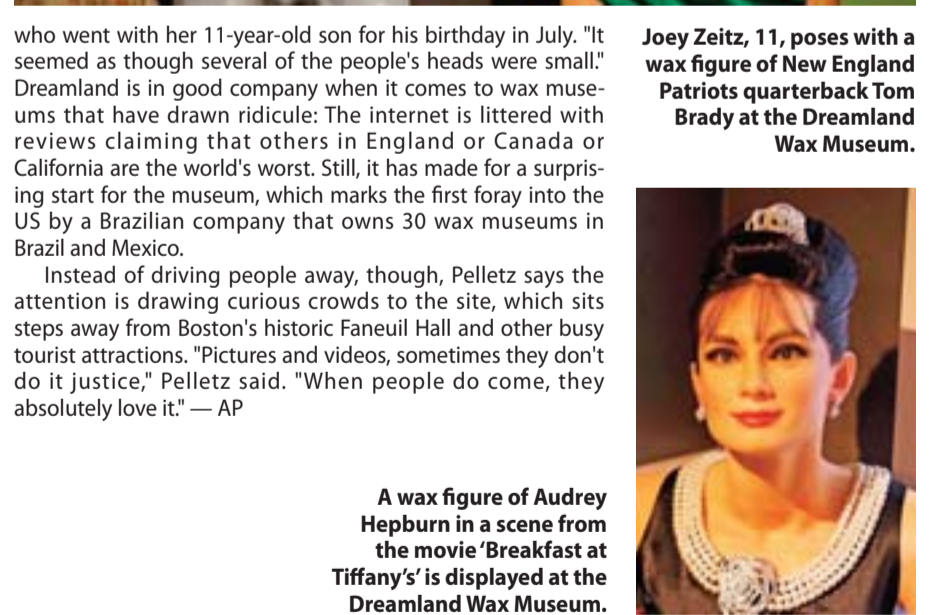
"We weren't impressed," said Donna Mulvey, of Dedham,



Joey Zeitz, 11, poses with a wax figure of New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady at the Dreamland Wax Museum.



Wax figures of George Herbert Walker Bush, right, and George W Bush at the Dreamland Wax Museum.



A wax figure of Audrey Hepburn in a scene from the movie 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' is displayed at the Dreamland Wax Museum.



A wax figure of Martin Luther King Jr. stands in front of a photo of the Mall in Washington at the Dreamland Wax Museum.



Wax figures of the Dalai Lama, right, and Mahatma Gandhi stand at the Dreamland Wax Museum.



A wax figure of Diana, Princess of Wales, is displayed at the Dreamland Wax Museum.