


**Cabinet  
assesses efforts  
to resolve  
Gulf crisis**

**Jordanian  
soldier gets  
life for killing  
3 US trainers**

**Australian  
woman killed  
in Minneapolis  
police shooting**

**Philander  
leads South  
Africa rout  
of England**


150 FILS

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32 PAGES



## MPs DEMAND ANSWERS AFTER 'ABDALY CELL' FUGITIVES FLEE

**HASHEM PROPOSES 10-YR CAP FOR EXPATS, BAN ON DEPENDENT VISAS**

 Min 34°  
 Max 47°  
 High Tide  
 05:59 & 18:53  
 Low Tide  
 12:46

## FM MEETS SISI; EGYPT INSISTS ON DEMANDS

CAIRO: Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi at Cairo's Al-Ittihadiya Palace yesterday. The minister delivered a message of greetings from HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Egyptian leader. He also expressed Kuwait's condolences over lives lost in "terrorist incidents" that recently targeted Egypt. Furthermore, he reiterated Kuwait's "steadfast and unwavering support" of Egypt's anti-terrorism efforts and measures taken by Cairo aimed at bolstering security and stability. During the talks, the two officials discussed regional and international developments.

Meanwhile, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry told Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled yesterday Egypt is standing by the list of demands it and three Gulf Arab countries made of Qatar and will keep sanctions against Doha in place. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt imposed sanctions on Qatar on June 5, cutting diplomatic and transport ties with the tiny Gulf monarchy, after accusing it of financing militant groups and allying with their regional arch-foe Iran. Doha denies the accusations.

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CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (right) meets Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah (center) as Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry looks on yesterday. —AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Islamist opposition MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei yesterday questioned Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah over reports that 14 Kuwaitis convicted of forming a cell with ties to Tehran fled by sea to Iran to escape imprisonment. Citing high-ranking security sources, a local daily reported yesterday said the 14 men fled to Iran on speedboats hours after the cassation court overturned their acquittals by the appeals court and sentenced them to lengthy jail terms for plotting attacks in the state.

The men were initially convicted by the criminal court early last year and sentenced to various terms in jail. But several months later, the appeals court acquitted them and set them free. On June 18, when the court of cassation issued the final verdict in the case, the 14 men fled the country to Iran after they learned they had been sentenced to several years in jail. The men are part of 25 Kuwaitis and one Iranian charged with forming the so-called 'Abdaly cell' with links to Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah group and plotting attacks in Kuwait. One man was sentenced to life, 20 others were jailed between two and 15 years and two acquitted. The remaining three are still at large. The interior ministry has not commented on the report.

Tabtabaei asked the interior minister if the report was true and how the convicts managed to escape the interior ministry's security system. He demanded a list of names of officials responsible for the boats that carried them to Iran and the names of people responsible on that day.

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## UAE DENIES ANY HACKING OF QATAR

### News

in brief

#### 5 police killed in Sinai; strikes kill 30 militants

EL-ARISH, Egypt: Militants launched a series of attacks against Egyptian police in the northern Sinai Peninsula yesterday, killing five of them and wounding another 11, security officials said. They said the militants opened fire on an armored vehicle before setting it ablaze in the city of El-Arish. When reinforcements arrived, the militants set off a roadside bomb. The two attacks killed a total of five policemen and wounded another five, the officials said. Another roadside bomb struck a third armored vehicle near the airport south of the city, wounding six police. Earlier in the day, Egyptian F-16 fighter jets struck gatherings of suspected militants in different areas across northern Sinai, killing 30, officials said.

#### Doctors find 27 contact lenses in woman's eye

LONDON: Doctors intending to perform cataract surgery on a 67-year-old woman in Britain found something rather unexpected - 17 contact lenses mashed together in her right eye. In a case report published yesterday in the journal BMJ, the doctors said that the woman had worn monthly disposable contact lenses for 35 years; she had "deep set eyes" and poorer vision in that eye, which they said might have contributed to a failure to remove some of the lenses. The doctors said the 17 lenses were bound together by mucus. A further 10 were found by the surgeon using a microscope. Rupal Morjaria, a specialist trainee in ophthalmology, said the "large mass" would have caused quite a lot of irritation. The patient had chalked it up to old age and dry eye, Morjaria said.

LONDON: The United Arab Emirates was not responsible for an alleged hack of Qatari websites which helped spark a month-long diplomatic rift with Doha, the UAE's minister of state for foreign affairs said yesterday. Anwar Gargash denied as false a story in the Washington Post that cited US officials saying the UAE had orchestrated the hack of Qatar's state news agency.

The report quotes unnamed US intelligence officials as saying that senior members of the Emirati government discussed the plan on May 23. On the following day, a story appeared on the Qatari News Agency's website quoting a speech by Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, in which he allegedly praised Iran and said Qatar has a good relationship with Israel. Similarly incendiary statements appeared on the news agency's Twitter feed. The agency quickly claimed it was hacked and removed the article. But Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt all blocked Qatari media and later severed diplomatic ties.

"The Washington Post story today that we actually hacked the Qataris is also not true," Gargash told the London-based think-tank Chatham House. The Emirati Embassy in Washington also released a statement in response calling the Post report "false" and insisting that the UAE "had no role whatsoever" in the alleged hacking.

"The information published in the Washington Post on 16 July 2017, which revealed the involvement of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and senior Emirati officials in the hacking of Qatar News Agency, unequivocally proves that this



Anwar Gargash

hacking crime took place," Qatar's government said in a statement yesterday. US officials have said that experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) helping Qatar investigate the incident are convinced QNA was hacked, but that identifying the culprit will take time.

Gargash said the four Arab powers were in the process of discussing additional sanctions on Doha. "There will be some tightening of the screws," he said in an interview, declining to give a timeframe on when new measure could be introduced. "We will see what are these screws, whether they are financial, whether they are other, but they completely within our (remit) as sovereign states."

Yet the UAE would not escalate its boycott by asking companies to choose between doing business with it or with Qatar, he added. Gargash, who also suggested international monitoring of Qatar was needed, added there were no plans for a meeting between the two sides under the auspices of Kuwait, a neutral Gulf Arab country seeking to mediate in the spat.

Continued on Page 11



ISTANBUL: Syrian-American Rania Kisar talks to AP in this March 13, 2017 photo. — AP

## US-SYRIAN WOMAN SETS UP SCHOOL IN QAEDA-RUN AREA

ISTANBUL: When Syria's uprising broke out, Rania Kisar left her job in the United States and returned home to join what she dreamed would be the ouster of President Bashar Al-Assad and the building of a new Syria. Her main focus these days has been to keep Al-Qaeda-linked militants from taking over the dream. Syrian-American Kisar runs a school in the last main enclave in Syria held by the opposition, the northwestern province of Idlib. The strongest power in the territory is Al-Qaeda's affiliate, and it is increasingly intervening in day-to-day affairs of administering the province. That means Kisar

has had to become adept with dealing with them to keep her school running.

Sometimes that means making concessions to them, sometimes it means pushing back. Throughout, she knows why the militants keep trying to get their way: "If they don't interfere, they won't be considered powerful." Al-Qaeda's branch leads an alliance of factions known as Hayat Fatah al-Sham that dominates the opposition administration running Idlib. But the group has to tread carefully, balancing between its aim to control and its wariness of triggering

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## GIRL'S POST IN MINI DRAWS IRE

DUBAI: A young Saudi woman sparked a sensation online over the weekend by posting a video of herself in a miniskirt and crop top walking around in public, with some Saudis calling for her arrest and others rushing to her defense. State-linked news websites reported yesterday that officials in the deeply conservative Muslim country are looking into taking possible action against the woman, who violated the kingdom's rules of dress. Women in Saudi Arabia must wear long, loose robes known as abayas in public. Most also cover their hair and face with a black veil, though exceptions are made for visiting dignitaries.

The video, first shared on Snapchat, shows her walking around an empty historic fort in Ushaiager, a village north of the capital, Riyadh, in the desert region of Najd, where many of Saudi Arabia's most conservative tribes and families are from. Competing Twitter hashtags emerged, with one demanding the woman's arrest and another asserting that freedom of dress should not be a crime. Ibrahim Al-Munayif, a Saudi writer with more than 41,000 followers on Twitter, wrote on his official account that allowing people to disobey the law leads to chaos. "Just like we call on people to respect the laws of coun-

tries they travel to, people must also respect the laws of this country," he wrote.

Others defended her by posting images from President Donald Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia in May, in which First Lady Melania Trump and his daughter Ivanka, though modestly dressed in higher necklines and longer sleeves, shunned wearing a head cover or the abaya. Ivanka Trump's blonde tresses and attire sparked a Twitter hashtag during the president's visit, with Saudi males commenting on her looks and referring to the president as Abu Ivanka, meaning Ivanka's father.

One Twitter user, whose post was shared more than 1,700 times, superimposed an image of Ivanka's face on the young Saudi woman's body, writing: "Enough already, the situation has been solved." Others wrote that had the woman been a foreigner, people would be talking about her beauty, but because she is Saudi, they are calling for arrest.

The Saudi Okaz news website reported that officials in Ushaiager called on the region's governor and police to take actions against the woman in response to the video, without elaborating further.

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KUWAIT: Amateur fishermen fish at a pier on a beach in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan, and the new assistant undersecretaries. —Amiri Diwan photos



**His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Acting Premier and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.**

## AMIR MEETS NEW ASSISTANT UNDERSECRETARIES

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan. During the meeting, Minister Roudhan presented to His

Highness the newly-appointed Assistant Undersecretary for Corporate Affairs and Commercial Licenses Ahmad Al-Faris and Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Affairs and Trade Development Mohammad Al-Enezi on the occasion of being appointed in their new posts. The

meeting was also attended by Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Mohammad Dhaifalla Sharar. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Acting Premier and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrived Sunday night in the United States on a private visit. —KUNA

## SHEIKH SABAH AL-KHALED MEETS EGYPTIAN FM, ARAB LEAGUE CHIEF

**CAIRO:** Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met yesterday with Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukry in Cairo. This meeting came during the course of Sheikh Sabah's official visit to Egypt. Kuwait's top diplomat later met with Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Abulgeit as well.

Several Kuwaiti officials attended the meeting, including Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt Mohammad Al-Thuwaikh. Moreover, Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Ambassador Azeez Al-Daihani, Kuwait's representative at the Arab League, Ambassador Ahmad Al-Bakr and a number of Foreign Ministry officials also attended the meeting. —KUNA



**CAIRO:** Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah (left) speaks with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry during a meeting in the Egyptian capital Cairo yesterday. —AFP

## CABINET ASSESSES EFFORTS TO RESOLVE GULF CRISIS

**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet yesterday mulled over the progress of Kuwait's role as the main mediator in the Gulf crisis, as the country seeks to defuse an ongoing Gulf row. Presided over by Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Cabinet held its weekly routine meeting at Bayan Palace. Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah explained to the Kuwaiti executives that recent visits by US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, UK National Security Advisor Mark Sedwill and French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian shored up support for Kuwait as it aims to quell the ensuing rift in the Gulf region.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet looked over a report issued by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, which detailed the progress of Kuwait's largest housing project, known as 'South Al-Mutlaa city'. Similarly, the Cabinet was also

informed of how far has construction come on Kuwait's Sabah Al-Salem University City, a new 490-hectare campus in Shadadiya. The Cabinet examined another report, by the Public Authority for Industry, concerning a planned electronic system (e-system) that would link all government bodies, as it tasked PAI to provide monthly updates on the progress of the e-system. Moreover, the Cabinet inspected a report by the Public Authority for Manpower over employment fraud, an issue that has plagued the private sector.

As part of talks over the latest international happenings, the Cabinet deplored attacks in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which it described as criminal acts that run counter to humanitarian values. In Saudi Arabia's eastern Qatif city, a soldier was killed and another injured in an attack on their patrol vehicle, while an Egyptian stabbed two tourists to death and wounded four others at a seaside vacation spot on the Red Sea. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Acting Premier and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's meeting yesterday. —KUNA



## YOUTH AUTHORITY LAUNCHES 'MAKAREM' EDUCATION CLUB

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Public Authority for Youth (PAY) on Sunday launched the 'Makarem' educational training club for girls at Al-Shamiya Youth Center. The five-week club offers a series of programs and events with the chief aim of instilling morals and good values among girls aged 5-11 years. The club's director, Khaldah Al-Salahi, said in a statement that the 50-member club aims to promote positive behavior, such as cooperation, honesty, respect of others, kindness and patriotism, through engaging them in non-stop activities and fun. She added the new program also aims to train girls to be able to master making speeches, debating, and encourage them to join voluntary work. The club also seeks to promote the skills in painting, photography, cooking and sports, such as swimming and karate. —KUNA



**Khaldah Al-Salahi**





**KUWAIT:** Firefighters tackle a blaze in a building at the industrial area of Amghara yesterday.

## FIREFIGHTERS PUT OUT AMGHARA BUILDING BLAZE

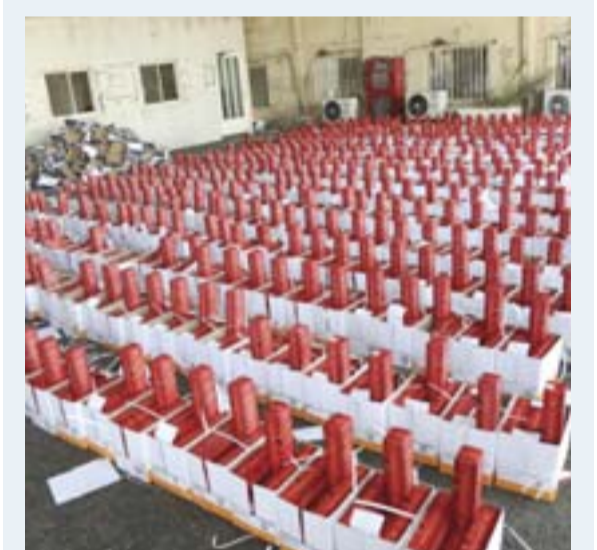
### 5,500 LIQUOR BOTTLES FOUND IN A CONTAINER



Firemen take a short break before resuming their duties.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Firemen tackled a blaze which erupted in a building in the industrial area of Amghara, west of Kuwait City yesterday, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said. According to initial reports, the fire had engulfed the building, which spanned an area of 1,000 sq/m. A total of five fire department squads were dispatched to the site after the fire was reported. No injuries were reported.



### Liquor smuggling foiled

Drugs Control General Department in cooperation with the customs department foiled the attempt of smuggling nearly 5,500 liquor bottles in a container nearly 5,500 liquor bottles in a container in Shuaiba port. Tips were received about an Arab national who brings in liquor through a business man. Investigations confirmed the tips and the suspect was arrested and liquor worth KD 300,000 was found in the container. The suspect said he gets the liquor from an Asian country for sale here.



### Drugs found with four persons who were arrested yesterday.

### Drug dealers caught

Criminal security men busted a network of people on charges of drug trafficking. Detectives verified the authenticity of information received about the suspects' activity, then sent an undercover agent to buy drugs from one of the suspects who was arrested during the exchange. The suspect told police about the source of the drugs; a man who was arrested with shabu (meth), and he in turn led them to a third person who was busted with possession of 30 grams. The third person led police to a fourth man in Farwaniya, who was arrested with possession of 170 grams of shabu and more than 100 Tramadol tablets. The suspects were sent to concerned authorities.

### Municipality crackdowns

Ahmedi municipality removed 200 animal feed vending stands in Wafra. Director Gen Fahad Al-Shateeli said the operation was carried out over two stages because of the large area of encroachment on state property. Director of Inspection and Engineering follow up Eng Saud Al-Dabous said the removal was preceded with warnings. Meanwhile, Farwaniya municipality carried out an inspection campaign on kitchens in Industrial Ardiya and a co-op, resulting in issuing 18 citations.

# HEALTH MINISTRY SUES LAWYER OVER FALSE 'FAKE DOCTOR' CLAIM

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Health (MOH) has lodged a complaint with the public prosecutor against a lawyer who it accuses of making up a false claim that an unqualified person has impersonated a Kuwaiti doctor working at a local medical facility.

Earlier yesterday, MOH warned of 'legal

ramifications' over erroneous information on social media which claimed a Bangladeshi national's impersonation of a Kuwaiti physician. "The information provided by a lawyer on social media has no basis in fact," read a statement by the ministry, as it urged citizens and residents not to pay heed to false statements. Kuwaiti authorities continue to vigorously investigate a case of a Bangladeshi

man posing as a doctor and charging patients for phony procedures, it added.

On Sunday, the Interior Ministry denied that the lawyer came forward with evidence to prove that the man in question had impersonated a Kuwaiti doctor who had left Kuwait nearly thirty years ago. A lawyer had posted online that he gave police the Bangladeshi man's ID and origi-

nal passport, in addition to the forged Kuwaiti passport that allegedly belonged to a Kuwaiti man who used to work for the Health Ministry and also served as his sponsor. The Interior Ministry said in a statement that those claims are not true, and that police had instead called the lawyer who failed to provide any concrete evidence to support his claims.

## EQUATE, HEALTH MINISTRY SIGN COOPERATION PROTOCOL

**KUWAIT:** EQUATE Petrochemical Company, a global producer of petrochemicals, and the Ministry of Health (MoH) continued their strong partnership through signing a cooperation protocol in medical affairs.

MoH's Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health Dr Majda Al-Qattan said: "We devote our attention and efforts to serve all organizations and individuals in Kuwait. It gives us great pleasure to successfully sign a cooperation protocol with EQUATE, which is a leading industrial enterprise, and we look forward to work closely together to continue having a safe and healthy work environment. As we work to deliver world class medical care for the community as a whole, the MoH aspires to build similar partnerships to the one we already have with EQUATE."

Meanwhile, EQUATE's Corporate and Government Services Leader Yaqoub Al-

Kandari said: "This partnership represents a strategic objective for EQUATE to ensure overall development with all stakeholders, especially the MoH. Health is one of the main pillars of EQUATE's Sustainability Strategy and it is a priority for everyone. We would like to extend our utmost appreciation and gratitude to the ministry, especially its Undersecretary Dr Mohammad Al-Khashti and Dr Majda Al-Qattan, for their leading role and positive efforts to provide the best medical services to Kuwait as a whole."

Throughout the years, MoH and EQUATE have launched several health and awareness campaigns that included Breast Cancer Awareness Program (Keep Your Life Rosy), Initiative for a Healthy Society (Lighten UP), Hypertension Awareness Campaign (Stay Normal), and Awareness Campaign for Diabetes (Stay Normal 2).



**KUWAIT:** Farwaniya Governorate Security Director Major General Saleh Al-Enezi honored the head of the emergency team at the Farwaniya Municipality Khalid Al-Radaan, his deputy Abbas Al-Aswad and several inspectors in recognition for their efforts during recent campaigns against irregularities in the governorate.

— By Hanan Al-Saadoun

## KUWAIT'S ENERGY OUTPUT EXPECTED TO HIT 14.3 THOUSAND MW: OFFICIAL

**KUWAIT:** Local power consumption could reach 14.3 thousand megawatts, while any less than that average would be an accomplishment, Kuwait's Minister of Electricity and Water said yesterday. As he presided over a meeting dealing with water and energy conservation, Mahmoud Boushehri said that a mere 10 percent reduction in energy consumption would save the government KD 600 million.

He pointed out that efforts to curb water and power consumption have started to come to fruition, saying it was imperative for government bodies to work together in espousing the merits of power and energy conservation. Meanwhile, Ali Al-Aidi, the head of a delegation tasked with overseeing efforts to cut water and energy consumption, said that the government had received apparatuses that will be used in a string of projects designed to save water. — KUNA

## GOVT LOOKS TO 'UPROOT' EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, State Minister for Municipal Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri yesterday headed a meeting of the higher committee to boost centrism, after which he highlighted the role that the committee plays to strengthen centrism and fight extreme ideologies. "However, we are looking for more innovation in the committee work," he said.

Al-Jabri called for consolidating efforts of all ministries so that terrorist ideologies can be uprooted in order to maintain security and safety in Kuwait under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Awqaf Ministry Undersecretary General of the Higher Committee Farid Emadi said the committee approved the "Tahseen" (enhancement) project which is directed towards schools, universities, government and private institutions in addition to students in military schools and institutions that belong to the interior and defense ministries through intensive workshops.

In addition to Emadi, other officials who attended the meeting include Director



Mohammad Al-Jabri

General of Investigations Directorate at the Interior Ministry Maj Gen Dr Fahad Al-Dousary, Assistant Undersecretary for Information Planning at the Information Ministry Mohammad Al-Awash, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Research at the Education Ministry Saud Al-Harby, Assistant Undersecretary for Financial and Administrative Affairs at the Social Affairs Ministry Saad Al-Khraz, Assistant Undersecretary for Allied Services Sector at the State Ministry for Youth Affairs Yousuf Al-Yatama and head of the coordination team with ministries.

## JAHRA, ABDUL NASSER ROAD PROJECTS TO BE COMPLETED BY END OF NEXT YEAR: MINISTER



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa speaks to reporters during the ceremony. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



**KUWAIT:** The development of Al-Jahra and Jamal Abdul Nasser main roads will be completed by the end of next year, Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa said on Sunday. The minister made his remarks during a ceremony to inaugurate two tunnels and a bridge in Al-Jahra and Jamal Abdul Nasser road projects, part of the overall projects, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, represented by the General Directorate of Traffic.

Al-Jahra road project is now 93 percent complete, while Abdul Nasser road is 85 percent complete, Mutawa said.

The minister added that his ministry will continue to be part of the inauguration process for road projects to facilitate traffic for the use of roads and to reduce traffic congestion, especially in these traffic density areas surrounding the two projects.

These projects are vital for several service institutions and populated areas, Mutawa noted, adding that both projects will be completed by the end of next year. Mutawa thanked citizens and residents in the areas near the two projects for their understanding during this period, espe-

cially during the closure of other roads and the opening of some alternative routes that may have caused some inconvenience to some of those who use these roads.

Mutawa pointed also to the completion of several projects implemented by the Ministry of Public Works during the summer, such as the Ministry of Education building project, the Ministry of Education building project, the building of the Institute of Medical Communications, the Kuwait Institute for Judicial Studies building and many road maintenance projects around the country. — KUNA

In Brief

ARAB LEAGUE DISCUSS AQSA MOSQUE ASSAULT

CAIRO: The Arab League Council held an extraordinary session at the level of the permanent delegates of member countries yesterday to discuss the latest developments in Jerusalem after the Israeli 'assault' against Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Palestinian representative to the Arab League Ambassador Jamal Al-Shobaki presented a detailed report on 'Israeli violations' against Islamic and Christian holy sites. The Kuwaiti delegation at the talks was headed by the permanent representative to the Arab League Ambassador Ahmad Abdulrahman Al-Baker. — KUNA



KUWAIT, JORDAN SHARE STRONG ACADEMIC TIES

AMMAN: Head of the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance Dr Nouria Al-Awadhi said yesterday that the academic cooperation between Kuwait and Jordan is strong and solid. Al-Awadhi made her remarks during a meeting with heads of the Jordanian universities organized by the Kuwaiti embassy in Jordan with the presence of Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Dr Hamad Al-Duaij. — KUNA



US DOLLAR STABLE AGAINST DINAR

KUWAIT: The US Dollar exchange rate against the Kuwaiti Dinar was stable yesterday exchanging at KD 0.302 while the Euro went down to KD 0.346, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). Meanwhile, the Sterling Pound remained unchanged at KD 0.396, whereas the Swiss Franc dropped to KD 0.313 and the Japanese Yen was firm at KD 0.002. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Al-Safat Square's tunnel sprinkles water to cool pedestrians. — Photo by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

ZAIN RECOGNIZES RAMADAN CAMPAIGN VOLUNTEERS

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, recently held a special ceremony in the company's main headquarters to recognize the efforts of its Ramadan CSSR campaign's volunteers. The event witnessed the attendance of the executive management headed by Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan.

The volunteers were present during Zain's multiple social and humanitarian initiatives as part of the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility campaign during the Holy Month of Ramadan. The volunteers helped draw a smile on the faces of those who are less fortunate in the society, including children in hospitals, people with special needs, orphans, and the elderly, as well as medical administrations and men on duty who work tirelessly to save people's lives.

its extensive CSSR campaign. Zain's Ramadan contributions, which the volunteers helped organize and coordinate, included the distribution of essential food supplies (Machla boxes) to multiple charitable organizations based in Kuwait as well as the Iftar Halls initiative which provided daily meals throughout the holy month through two main halls.

The volunteers also visited the Department of Airport security to share the Iftar meal, visited children in hospitals and orphans, special needs, and the elderly in social care centers, as well as organized a special event for Al-Amal children with cancer. Additionally, the volunteers provided comfort to worshippers performing their Qiyam prayers at Jaber Al-Ali Mosque during the last 10 days of Ramadan by distributing prayer essentials. The volunteers also shared the joys of Eid with needy laborers and underprivileged individuals by distributing Eid breakfast meals after Eid prayers in a number of Kuwait's largest mosques in partnership with the Kuwait Food Bank.

Zain's social, corporate sustainability and social responsibility campaign during the holy month of Ramadan included an extensive array of initiatives and programs, focusing on helping less fortunate people to enjoy Ramadan happily, as well as celebrating the true spirit of the holy month brought.



Through this special ceremony, Zain's executive management was keen on highlighting the amazing efforts exerted by volunteers, both from within and outside the company, as their positive energy and determination reflected the beautiful values the holy month brings.

ple with special needs, orphans, and the elderly, as well as medical administrations and men on duty who work tirelessly to save people's lives.

Ramadan presented a special occasion for Zain to communicate and interact with the Kuwaiti community through



INVESTMENT OFFICE AWAY FROM SUPERVISION: MP

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: MP Khalil Al-Saleh said it is necessary to revive the issue pertaining with the Kuwaiti investment office in London, and that supervision must be strict towards this office 'which has become distant

from supervision and financial examination systems and relies on packaged reports.' The lawmaker said that the National Assembly discussed the issue in 2015 and that many points were brought up. 'We are still drawing attention to this issue, but there is no response from

state officials regarding it,' he said. Saleh further indicated that MPs called for national personnel to follow up this issue, and demanded that the State Audit Bureau carries out its duties in that regard. 'Those demands were met with deaf ears, however,' Saleh lamented.

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Crime

Report

POLICE DENY INMATES ASSAULT REPORTS

**KUWAIT:** Informed sources at the Interior Ministry denied social media rumors which speculated that central prison police attacked some jailed bloggers. The sources said the claims were made in an attempt to "hamper efforts of security men after they carried out surprise campaigns in which they caught inmates who sold phones and banned products to other cell mates." Security men found mobile phones with SIM cards, knives and drugs with the suspects.

Suicide

A man in his 20s hanged himself from the stairs of his family's house and the body was taken to the coroner. Investigations are underway to find out the reasons behind his actions. Separately, a 13-year-old boy hanged himself from a ceiling fan. His father rushed him to hospital but died upon arrival.

Car 'trashed'

An unknown person emptied the contents of a garbage container on a parked car in front of a cafe. The car's owner called police and said that she came out to discover that trash was dumped on her car. The woman said that she suspected the waiters because she parked at the cafe's entrance.

Fight

A fight broke out between two men over a girl they were chasing in a mall. Security men broke up the fight before police and paramedics arrived to the scene. Both were arrested and charged accordingly. Separately, a medical center official and a Kuwaiti pharmacist exchanged accusations and insults. The official claimed he was insulted by the pharmacist; who argued that she was the one who was insulted.

Drug possession

Farwaniya police sent an Egyptian who was caught with 25 envelopes of shabu (meth), 107 Tramadol tablets, and three envelopes of chemical to the Drug Control General Department (DCGD). The suspect injured his head by knocking it against the metal barrier inside the police car and claimed police beat him.

Forgery

Residency affairs detectives arrested two Arab nationals for forging government stamps of KD 10, then selling them. Detectives made an agreement with the two to buy 400 stamps of KD 10 for KD 2,000, and both were arrested red handed.

—Translated from the Arabic press



Fingerprints device

Al-Qabas

JOINT FATE AND INTERESTS

By Khalid Al-Tarrah

**W**hen the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was formed 36 years ago, the common dominator then was that the fate of member countries was the same at all levels. But since a few years ago, some issues became very complicated, then we got accustomed to some calm that was accompanied with caution. The dispute between GCC member states that we are witnessing today is not a political surprise, as the sides to the current dispute in the GCC saw political developments that must lead to a new vision locally and internationally. Fate is bringing member countries closer and not dividing them. Yet, today a difference came up on defining the joint fate and interests, to a point where fate became unknown under the current complications. There is a 'list of demands,' and there are reservations towards it too, and in all cases, demands should be negotiable to reach a pragmatic solution that makes the ceiling of demands not too high, so that the process of achievement does not become impossible. It should be realized that today's complications are the result of political accumulations that were not dealt with from their roots, and the method of treatment was overcome with courtesy, not transparency and frankness. What we are seeing in the form of media exchanges confirm that the political environment was not right, as differences entered the stage of acceptance and not acceptance.

The terrorism's heat has hit the Gulf countries such as what happened in the world, and there is no doubt that if there was not a cradle for terrorism in the Gulf and neighboring region, its heat would not spread to the point where we are today. Containing terrorism is a foregone conclusion, but it is important to set priorities according to their degrees, and discuss them without the consideration of winning and losing, as the loser and winner are the countries and people of the GCC. Meanwhile, the lack of a joint definition of terrorism maybe complicates reaching an agreement on the procedures to confront it.

Being strict with demands and presenting them as conditions isn't the way to make agreements, nor decisive rejections and strict answers are a wise stand to solve crises that may become more complicated between brotherly countries who have the same fate. 'The March of the GCC' was not void of failures, and the best example is the clinical death of the council's secretariat general, but this cannot be interpreted as the basis of the disputes, but rather should lead to reviewing obstacles, bringing views close and correcting the path of joint action. Complications like these cannot be solved by media forums, rather they are supposed to be made into windows of understanding and bringing stands closer, and not to deepen the differences.

Timing must be considered as well as the surrounding challenges as division is not in the interest of any party. Rather, sitting down behind closed doors should be preceded by wishes to agree, bearing in mind the need of each Gulf party to the other, especially under the increased alliances around the world - contrary to what is going on between GCC countries.

The Kuwaiti mediation initiative is going on under charged skies and official and media exchanges, which should be done in preparation for negotiations that will end with agreements, as there are foreign parties that benefit from any Gulf dispute, and this is what must be realized to keep the joint fate and interests.—Translated by Kuwait Times

Al-Anbaa

Al-Anbaa

THE 2035 VISION

By Nermin Al-Houti

**T**his is not a dream as some people may think, rather it is a truth that one day we will see the civilization's sun emanating from Kuwait's islands and reflect its rays on Silk City and Kuwait. That is the reality His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad drew for us, and as we sat with Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad who took us in a trip 15 years into the future to see it with our own eyes and hear about the status of our children, and how he planned their future so as to guarantee them a dignified life just like what our grandfathers have done for us.

Time is here for our efforts to be consolidated and ideas should come together to search for an alternative for the oil wealth, and this is what we heard from 'Bu Abdullah' over two hours with a comprehensive vision for all what has been and will be done in the Kuwait islands and the Silk City project. Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad's message was clear when he met with President and members of Kuwait Journalists Association as well as

some dignitaries and media men recently at Yarmouk cultural center, giving a detailed explanation for His Highness the Amir's vision about Kuwait's various alternative sources of income, so that we preserve our generations future. That evening leaped with us to see how we can preserve Kuwait's economy and its financial center, and showed us that bright future so that we can see its shining civilization. We must come together and unite our ideas to build the future and stay away from all noise and rigid ideas.

We need to take a moment and think deeply of the words of 'Bu Abdullah', which made me visualize that future period and brought many questions to my mind, the first of which: Until when are we going to continue to suppress innovative ideas while we have the minds of 2035? Until when will we keep rejecting the other? Until when will we keep placing ourselves in the mold of rules that were made before the 1970s? Until when will we not see the sun of the 2035 civilization?—Translated by Kuwait Times

Until when are we going to continue to suppress innovative ideas?



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**India votes for next prez from lowest Dalit caste**

WITH 2018 LOOMING, DEMOCRATS DIVIDED ON THEIR CORE MESSAGE

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**AMMAN:** Jordanian judges preside over the trial of Maarik Al-Tawaiha, charged with the killing of three American military trainers outside an army base last year. — AFP

## JORDANIAN SOLDIER GETS LIFE FOR KILLING US TROOPS

‘I HAVE ALL THE RESPECT FOR THE KING, BUT I WAS DOING MY JOB’

**AMMAN:** A Jordanian soldier was sentenced yesterday to life in prison after being convicted of killing three US military trainers last year, but some said questions lingered about his motive for the shooting at a Jordanian air base. Jordan has ruled out terrorism in the November shooting in which the convoy of the US Army Green Berets came under fire at the base entrance. The defendant has said he felt no animosity toward Americans and opened fire because he believed the base was coming under attack.

However, relatives of the slain US troops have described security camera footage that they say shows him shooting for six minutes, reloading and aiming at the Americans, even as they identify themselves as friendly forces. After a “not guilty” plea, the Jordanian soldier, 1st Sgt Marik Al-Tuwayha, was tried by a military court in Jordan’s capital of Amman for the killings of Staff Sgt Matthew C Lewellen, 27, of Kirksville, Missouri; Staff Sgt Kevin J McEnroe, 30, of Tucson, Arizona; and Staff Sgt James F Moriarty, 27, of Kerrville, Texas.

During the monthlong trial, he watched the proceedings silently while standing in a cage in the courtroom. He did not react yesterday when the judge announced the verdict and the maximum possible sentence, life in prison with hard labor. When he was led out of the cage, he said: “I have all the respect for the king, but I was doing my job.”

### ‘Take the pain away’

Relatives of two of the US soldiers sat quietly as the judge read the ruling. Charles Lewellen, 53, whose son was killed, later told The Associated Press that the verdict “won’t take the pain away,” but that it proved “what we have been saying all along ... that he murdered our sons.” Some of the relatives criticized Jordan’s handling of the case and said the defendant should have received the death penalty. Jordan allows the death penalty, but it is usually handed down in terrorism cases or in a murder coupled with another crime.

The Americans were killed Nov 4, as their

convoy waited at the gate to the Al-Jafr base in southern Jordan. Jordan initially said the Americans triggered the shooting by disobeying entry rules, a claim that was later withdrawn. The trial “confirmed that the deceased US service members followed all established procedures when accessing the base the day of the incident, as we have noted before,” the US Embassy in Jordan said. “We are reassured to see the perpetrator brought to justice.”

Jordan is a member of a US-led coalition fighting Islamic State group extremists in neighboring Syria and Iraq. Jordan hosts troops, including trainers, from the US and other countries as part of the anti-IS battle. At the trial, Al-Tuwayha and some of the gate guards testified they heard what might have been a pistol shot coming from the direction of the US convoy. Al-Tuwayha said he opened fire because he feared the base was under attack. Other guards said they held their fire because they couldn’t determine the source of the sound. Al-Tuwayha has said he had “no inten-

tion of killing anyone” and felt no resentment toward Americans.

### Friendly forces

According to the surveillance video described by the relatives, Lewellen and McEnroe were the first to be hit by gunfire. Moriarty and another soldier jumped out of their cars to take cover and returned fire from their pistols, according to the descriptions of the video. They yelled that they were friendly forces, the relatives said. The defendant kept shooting, they said. He was seriously wounded in the exchange. The video was shown to the family by US law enforcement, but has not been released to the public. Some of the relatives have questioned why the video was not screened at the trial and why the court did not ask a surviving US soldier to testify, despite what they said was his willingness to do so.

Moriarty’s father, Jim, wrote in a letter Monday to the Jordanian Embassy in the US that the “successful prosecution” was a “good

first step, but it is only the first step.” In the letter, a copy of which was given to the AP, Moriarty listed several demands to Jordan. These included allowing the defendant to be re-interviewed by the FBI about his motive and releasing the security video to the families. Moriarty, a lawyer, said the video had been entered into evidence at the trial.

Cynthia Lewellen, 53, the mother of Matthew Lewellen, expressed sympathy for all those affected by the shooting, including the family of the defendant. “In this verdict, nobody comes out happy,” she said. “I mean for us as losing our sons and knowing the man that killed him will spend 20 years in prison, but also for his family that because of his actions ... lost a father, a husband, a provider.” In Jordan, life in prison can mean 20 years, with time off for good behavior. Defense lawyer Subhi al-Mawas said he would appeal Monday’s court ruling. Earlier this year, a Jordanian soldier who killed seven Israeli schoolgirls in a 1997 shooting rampage was released after 20 years. — AP

## ON THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF MH17, FAMILIES UNVEIL ‘LIVING MEMORIAL’

**VIJFHUIZEN:** Three years after Flight MH17 was shot down by a missile over war-torn Ukraine, nearly 2,000 relatives gathered yesterday to unveil a “living memorial” to their loved ones. A total of 298 trees have been planted in the shape of a green ribbon, one for each of the victims who died on board the Malaysia Airlines flight en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur.

Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima joined government and international officials at a solemn ceremony to dedicate the memorial in the park of Vijfhuizen, close to Amsterdam’s Schiphol airport, where the flight took off from on July 17, 2014.

The names of all the 298 passengers and crew killed in the disaster were read out by their emotional families, and the Dutch royals and others laid flowers.

While most of the victims were Dutch, there were 10 nationalities on board including Australians, Britons, Malaysians and Indonesians. “It’s three years to the day that MH17 was shot down in mid-air,” said Evert van Zijveld, the head of association of the victims’ families. “But for us it was yesterday. That day... left a void in our lives. There is a life before and after July 17, 2014.”

“These victims can never be forgotten,” he said. “This monument is for now and for future

generations.” “A tree symbolizes ‘hope’ and ‘future’ in many cultures,” the victims’ families association said in a statement. “We not only want to honor the MH17 victims, but also want to create a place where everyone can keep their memories of the 298 passengers alive.” Funded by donations, the project was designed by artist Ronald A. Westerhuis and landscape architect Robbert de Koning after it was chosen out of three proposals by relatives in late 2015.

### ‘Never forget’

As the third anniversary of the tragedy dawns, no suspects have been arrested although it was announced this month that any trials would be held in The Netherlands. About 100 people are wanted in connection with the disaster, after Dutch-led investigators concluded the plane was shot down by a Russian-made BUK missile transported from Russia into areas held by pro-Moscow rebels. In Kiev, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko yesterday insisted Moscow must be held to account over the tragedy. “It was a barefaced crime that could have been avoided if not for the Russian aggression, Russian system and Russian missile that came from Russian territory,” Poroshenko wrote on Facebook.

Russia and the separatist authorities it supports, however, continue to deny any involvement and have sought repeatedly to deflect the blame onto Ukraine. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said in a statement his thoughts were with the victims’ families and urged “all states to cooperate fully with efforts to establish accountability” for the incident.

### Sunflowers

The trees in the memorial will be surrounded by sunflowers, which bloom in July, and will “radiate a golden glow,” the foundation said. The flowers also represent “the sunflower fields in eastern Ukraine where some parts of the plane wreckage were found”. Each of the trees bears the name of one of the victims. And at the heart of the forest of 11 different tree varieties is a steel memorial shaped like an eye, turned upwards looking at the skies.

One apple tree has been dedicated to 16-year-old Gary, from Rotterdam, whose body has still not yet been identified. “It’s nice to think that he has a tree, since we have not received his body. We don’t want Gary to be forgotten. We don’t want any of the 298 victims to be forgotten,” his father, Jan Slok, told the daily AD newspaper. — AFP

## TRUMP BACK ON OFFENSIVE AFTER BRIEF RESPITE IN PARIS

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump, fresh from a political holiday in Paris, went back on the offensive Sunday as a new poll showed his popularity dropping amid doubts about Russian election meddling and deepening frustrations over stalled health care legislation. In an early morning tweet, Trump used some of his toughest language against a favored target, the press, saying: “With all of its phony unnamed sources & highly slanted & even fraudulent reporting, #Fake News is DISTORTING DEMOCRACY in our country!”

Trump also sent one of his private lawyers, Jay Sekulow, onto five Sunday talk shows to argue that there was nothing illegal about his eldest son Donald Trump Jr.’s meeting last year with a Russian attorney following a promise of damaging information on Democratic rival Hillary Clinton. “What took place at the meeting... is not a violation of any law, statute or code,” Sekulow told NBC’s “Meet the Press.” He repeated an earlier assertion that Trump is not the subject of any current investigation into alleged Russian efforts to tilt last year’s election in the Republican’s favor.

The concerted pushback came as a Washington Post-ABC News poll near the six-month point in Trump’s administration showed him facing significantly declining approval rat-

ings, down from 42 percent in April to 36 percent today. Similarly, the president’s disapproval rating has jumped five points to 58 percent, according to the survey of 1,001 adults.

Trump responded to the poll in a tweet, saying: “The ABC/Washington Post Poll, even though almost 40% is not bad at this time, was just about the most inaccurate poll around election time!” Nearly half of respondents — 48 percent — said they “disapprove strongly” of the president’s performance in office, a low level never reached by ex-presidents Bill Clinton or Barack Obama, both Democrats, and reached only once by George W. Bush, during his second term.

And 48 percent said they saw American global leadership weakening since Trump entered the White House, while 27 percent said it is stronger.

That would seem to show mixed results, at best, from a series of high-profile foreign visits by Trump, including to Saudi Arabia and to a Group of 20 meeting in Germany, where he met with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Trump’s Bastille Day visit to Paris came a day after the poll ended. Two thirds of respondents said they do not trust Trump, or trust him only somewhat, in negotiating with foreign leaders. — AFP







## ITALY DELAYS CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS BILL UNDER MIGRANT PRESSURE

**ROME:** Italy's government has delayed a parliamentary vote on a citizenship rights bill as tensions rise over the number of migrants arriving on the country's shores. The proposal to give children born on Italian soil to foreign parents citizenship rights at birth or after at least five years of Italian schooling enjoys the support of Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni's centre-left Democratic Party (PD). But Gentiloni said late Sunday that

the bill would be dropped until later in the year considering other "urgent deadlines" and "difficulties that have arisen on certain fringes of the majority".

He gave his "personal commitment" to ensure the bill was approved in the autumn. Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano, who leads a small centrist party in the ruling coalition, had said that while the bill had his support in principle, he could not guarantee the neces-

sary votes in favour considering the current climate.

A poll last week showed the bill is losing support among Italians, even though such a path to citizenship exists in many other EU countries, and despite supporters insisting the draft law has nothing to do with newly-arrived migrants. Over 86,000 migrants have arrived so far this year, up over 10 percent compared with the same period in 2016.

The left-leaning La Repubblica daily called on the political class to "be straight with Italians and dismantle lies". "This law has nothing to do with those who are disembarking on our coasts," it said. Under the proposed bill, one of the parents would have to have been legally present in Italy for five years for children born here to be granted citizenship, so it would not apply to those refused asylum and ordered to leave the country.

Matteo Salvini, head of the anti-immigration Northern League party, described Gentiloni's decision as "a victory" for his party, saying: "If they try again, they'll find us ready. Stop invasion". Some 45 mayors in Sicily have demanded a meeting with the government this week after a heated protests over the distribution of newly-arrived migrants on the southern Italian island. —AFP

### News

in brief

#### Death toll climbs from India's monsoon floods

**NEW DELHI:** The death toll from severe monsoon flooding across India has risen to at least 76, officials said yesterday, with eight people killed in the past day in the worst-hit states. Heavy rain in Gujarat has claimed 11 lives since Saturday as the monsoon intensified across the western state. "Seven of these died in the last 24 hours and at least four others are still missing," Pankaj Kumar, a Gujarat government official, told AFP. Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in India's northeast have been the hardest-hit, while pockets of the eastern states of Odisha and Bihar have also been affected. In the hilly state of Assam 60 people have been killed and a state-wide emergency relief operation has been underway since the wet season arrived in April.

#### S Korea offers talks on tension, family reunions with North

**SEOUL:** South Korea yesterday offered talks with North Korea to ease animosities along their tense border and resume reunions of families separated by their war in the 1950s. It was unclear how North Korea will react since it remains suspicious of new South Korean President Moon Jae-in's outreach to it. But Moon's overture, the first formal offer of talks since his inauguration in May, indicates he wants to use dialogue to defuse the international standoff over North Korea's weapons programs, despite having condemned the North's first intercontinental ballistic missile test on July 4 and vowed a firm response. If realized, the talks would be the first inter-Korean dialogue since December 2015.



**NEW DELHI:** A cyclist takes refuge under a tree from the pelting rain. —AP

#### 'Taleban' suicide bomber kills two in NW Pakistan

**PESHAWAR:** A suicide bomber struck a vehicle carrying paramilitary troops in Pakistan's northwest on yesterday, killing two soldiers and wounding eight other people in an attack claimed by the Taleban. The attack on the Frontier Corps (FC) took place in the upscale Hayatabad area of Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The blast came a day after the Pakistani military said it had launched a fresh ground operation in a valley in the northwest, part of an offensive that began last November to clear the militancy-racked area. Local senior police official Imran Malik, who gave the death toll, said four civilians were among the eight injured. The Frontier Corps, which is part of the army, specializes in operations along the border with Afghanistan.

#### Malian soldiers' bodies recovered after attack

**BAMAKO:** The bodies of eight missing Malian soldiers have been found following a presumed jihadist attack on July 9, official sources told AFP yesterday. The soldiers were ambushed in Mali's northeast and two escaped with their lives, but until now there had been no trace of the missing. "Eight soldiers missing after clashes with terrorists near Menaka have been found yesterday killed by bullets," a senior army official told AFP. A local official in the area said eight bodies were found in Inkadogotane, 60 kilometers from the town of Menaka, and added that they were captured alive before being executed.

#### 18 dead, 18 missing in China flooding: Media

**BEIJING:** Flooding in China's northeast has left 18 dead and 18 missing, state media said yesterday, after the latest deadly deluge to hit the country this summer. The central and eastern parts of Jilin province were hit by driving rain Thursday and Friday, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. More than 110,000 were forced to flee the city of Jilin due to the heavy rain, it said, adding that the government had sent over 32,000 rescue workers to the area. China has been hit by a series of fatal floods this summer, leaving dozens dead and displacing huge numbers of people. Last week authorities said that at least 63 were killed by landslides and floods in central China, which forced 1.6 million to flee. —Agencies

# INDIA VOTES FOR NEXT PREZ FROM LOWEST DALIT CASTE

## MODI TERMED NATIONWIDE VOTE A 'HISTORIC' ELECTION

**NEW DELHI:** Indian lawmakers voted yesterday for a new president certain to come from the bottom of the Hindu caste system, in an election seen as strengthening Prime Minister Narendra Modi's grip on power. Some 4,900 legislators nationwide voted in what Modi termed a "historic" election to choose the titular head of state.

Ram Nath Kovind, the candidate of Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a former lawyer and state governor from the Dalit community, is certain to win. His main rival is Meira Kumar, the nominee of the Congress-led opposition and also a Dalit. But the BJP, which won a landslide in a general election in 2014, has for the first time assembled enough Electoral College votes across the country to push through its presidential candidate. Congress has traditionally dominated the post.

"There is no rocket science, Ram Nath Kovind will win today," Praful Patel, a leader of the small opposition Nationalist Congress Party, conceded as he cast his vote. Modi was among the first to vote, using a specially approved violet ink pen. The election commission barred the use of personal pens to ensure clean voting. The result will be announced Thursday. "The presidential poll this time is historic. Probably for the first time no party has made any undignified or unwarranted comment on the rival candidate," Modi tweeted on the eve of the poll.

"Every political party has kept in



**NEW DELHI:** In this June 19, 2017, file photo, Ram Nath Kovind, center, waves to media upon arrival at the airport. —AP

mind the dignity of this election." India's prime minister wields executive power, but the president can send back some parliamentary bills for reconsideration and also plays a guiding role in the process of forming governments. Analysts said the election of Kovind, 71, would help Modi tighten his grip on power and accrue political capital by sending an important message to the Dalits, a long-disdained electoral group once known as "untouchables".

#### Dalit attack

Dalits, who number around 200 million in the nation of 1.3 billion, are among India's poorest communities and relegated to the margins of society. Despite legal protection, discrimination is rife and Dalits are routinely denied access to education and other advancement opportunities. On the day of the vote, media reported the case of a Dalit laborer allegedly beaten to death by upper-caste attackers, highlighting the plight of the

"untouchable" caste. Modi's rivals have protested at Kovind's nomination, citing his association with the radical right-wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the ideological power behind the BJP. The opposition nominee Kumar, the daughter of freedom fighter Babu Jagjivan Ram, was a diplomat before entering politics in 1985 and became India's first woman speaker in 2009. Her nomination, which followed Kovind's, was seen by many as an opposition attempt to counter Modi's move to woo Dalits.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi rallied opposition ranks before the vote, calling the contest a "clash of ideas and a conflict of disparate values". "We cannot and must not let India be hostage to those who wish to impose upon it a narrow-minded, divisive and communal vision," Gandhi said. Votes from the BJP's traditional Hindu base propelled Modi to his 2014 legislative victory, especially in the battleground states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Dalit support will be key for the BJP before the 2019 general election as the party has been largely shunned by Muslims, who make up about 14 percent of the population. "The Dalit community has bases across the country especially in all the big, electorally significant states," said Nistula Hebbbar, political editor of The Hindu newspaper. "The community's vote is important for all, especially for the BJP. In a democracy, their numbers matter a lot," she said. —AFP

## PHILIPPINE REBELS: PEACE PACT 'BEST ANTIDOTE' FOR EXTREMISM

**MANILA:** The Philippines' largest Muslim rebel group said yesterday a peace accord it's trying to implement with the government is "the best antidote" for violent extremism exemplified by a bloody siege of southern Marawi city by Islamic State group-aligned militants. Government and rebel representatives submitted a new draft law to President Rodrigo Duterte which aims to establish a more powerful Muslim autonomous region in the country's south under a 2014 peace deal that stalled in Congress under his predecessor.

"This is the best antidote to the violent extremism that has wrought havoc" in many Muslim areas, Moro Islamic Liberation Front Vice Chairman Ghazali Jaafar said during the presentation of the proposed autonomy bill to Duterte at the presidential palace in Manila. Once established, the autonomous government, to be called Bangsamoro, "would be at the forefront of keeping public order and safety, dispensing justice within the bounds of law and addressing the basic requisites of a good life," Jaafar said.

Duterte pledged to back the bill in Congress as long as it adheres to the Philippine Constitution and promotes the plight of minority Muslims. "I am for this," Duterte said to applause from officials and the insurgents, who came in business suits. "Within the context of the Republic of the Philippines there shall be a Bangsamoro country." The rebels, who dropped their secessionist bid in exchange for broader autonomy, signed a pact with the government to establish a region with more powers and funding for minority Muslims in the south of the predominantly Roman Catholic nation and end a decades-long rebellion.

#### Poverty-racked region

The conflict has left about 150,000 people dead and stunted development in the resource-rich but poverty-racked region. The peace pact would have been a major legacy of Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino III, but the legislation stalled in Congress in 2015 after

some rebels from the 11,000-strong Moro Islamic Liberation Front became entangled in fighting that killed 44 police commandos during an anti-terrorism raid in southern Mamasapano town.

The commandos managed to kill top Malaysian terror suspect Zulkifli bin Hir, who had long been wanted by the United States, but the large number of police deaths sparked public outrage and prompted lawmakers to stall passage of the autonomy bill. Rebel leader Al Haj Murad Ebrahim said amid growing frustration among Muslims over the bill's failed passage, extremist groups in the south emerged.

"These misguided people have filled the vacuum created by our failure to enact the basic law and fed into the frustration of our people," Murad said at the ceremony, which was attended by leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives. "Today, we watch with utter disgust at the destruction that violent extremism has inflicted in the city of Marawi," Murad said.

Irene Santiago, a government official dealing with the rebels, said public and congressional support for the Muslim autonomy bill is crucial. "The dangers are staring at us in the face," she said. Officials say more than 550 people, including 411 militants, have been killed in nearly two months of fighting in Marawi, a bastion of Islamic faith in the south.

On Sunday, troops cleared 50 more buildings and houses after clashes that left eight militants and two soldiers dead, military chief of staff Gen. Eduardo Ano told reporters. Troops are bracing for a "final push to really break their line and finally clear the whole area of Marawi," Ano said, adding that "the battleground is now down to less than a square kilometer area." Duterte is expected to announce this week whether he will extend a 60-day declaration of martial law in the southern region to deal with the Marawi insurrection, the most serious security crisis he has faced since assuming power in June last year. —AP



**MANILA:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (C), along with members of government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace representatives, gestures with the peace sign during a ceremony where a draft of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) was submitted to the president at the Malacanang Palace. —AFP



**KABUL:** This file photo taken on May 31, 2017 shows the bodies of Afghan victims of a car bomb attack loaded in the back of a police vehicle at a hospital. —AFP

## AFGHAN CIVILIAN DEATHS HIT NEW HIGH, SAYS UN

**KABUL:** The people of war-torn Afghanistan continue to bear the brunt of the grinding conflict with civilian deaths at their worst since records began, the United Nations said yesterday. In the first half of the year, 1,662 civilians were killed and more than 3,500 injured with deaths in the capital Kabul accounting for nearly 20 percent of the toll, according to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) report.

The majority of the victims were killed by anti-government forces including the resurgent Taleban and in attacks claimed by the Islamic State, the report said, underscoring spiraling insecurity in the country nearly 16 years after the US invasion. The UN has documented civilian casualties in the war-ravaged country since 2009. The first six months of the year have seen a significant rise in the number of civilian lives lost in highly coordinated attacks involving more than one perpetrator, with 259 killed and 892 injured—a 15 percent increase on the same period last year.

Many of those deaths happened in a single attack in Kabul in late May when a truck bomb exploded during the morning rush hour, killing more than 150 people and injuring hundreds. UNAMA put the civilian death toll at 92, saying it was the deadliest incident to hit the country since 2001. The UN's special envoy to Afghanistan Tadamichi Yamamoto said the human cost of the conflict remains "far too high".

"The continued use of indiscriminate, disproportionate and illegal improvised explosive devices is particularly appalling and must immediately stop," he added in a statement. The bloody toll of the first six months of 2017 has unsettled the government of President Ashraf Ghani, who has come under increasing pressure since the May attack in Kabul. Protests and deadly street clashes hit the Afghan capital in the wake of the May attack as people incensed by security failures called for his government's resignation.

#### 'Psychological trauma'

Women and children have borne the brunt of the increase in civilian casualties, with UNAMA blaming the use of IEDs and aerial operations in populated areas for the jump. A total of 174 women were killed and 462 injured—an overall rise in casualties of 23 percent on last year while 436 children were killed in the same period, representing a nine percent increase.

Save the Children expressed alarm at the heavy toll—a third of all civilian deaths on the country's youth. "It's extremely concerning to see the number of children killed and injured by conflict increasing, reflecting the growing danger faced by young Afghans," the charity's Afghanistan country director David Skinner said in a statement. The UNAMA report said that nearly half of Afghanistan's 34 provinces have seen an increase in civilian deaths in the first six months of the year, mainly due to the rise in attacks by anti-government forces across the country. "The statistics in this report, horrifying though they are, can never fully convey the sheer human suffering of the people of Afghanistan," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.

"Many Afghan civilians are suffering psychological trauma, having lost family and friends, and are living in fear knowing the risks they face as they go about their daily lives." The ground offensives by Afghan security forces are the second leading cause of civilian casualties, though UNAMA said there had been a 10 percent decrease compared to the same period in 2016. —AFP

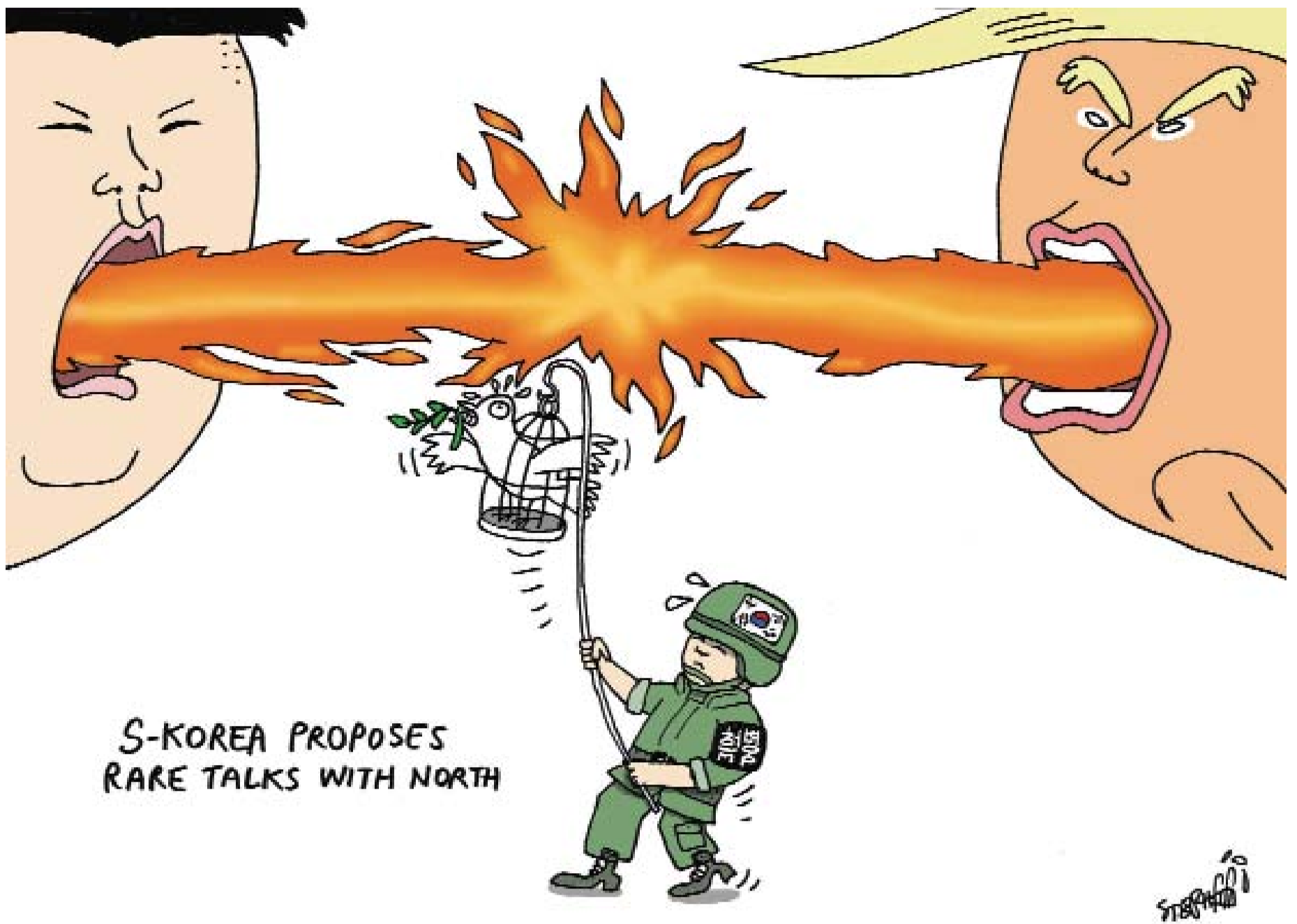
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Focus

WIN OR LOSE, AUSTRIAN FAR RIGHT'S VIEWS HAVE ENTERED GOVERNMENT

Even if Austria's far-right party fails to enter government after Oct 15 elections, its views on immigration already have. The anti-Islam Freedom Party's (FPO) popularity reached new heights during Europe's migration crisis in 2015 when it denounced the centrist government's decision to throw open Austria's borders to hundreds of thousands of refugees and other migrants. It ran first in opinion polls for more than a year, with support of more than 30 percent, and its candidate came close to winning last year's presidential election.

Now the party has slipped to second or third while the Social Democrats and conservative People's Party (ÖVP) - the two parties in government, which have dominated post-war politics - have moved towards the far right's positions. Most of the migrants and refugees carried on to Germany in 2015 but 90,000, or more than 1 percent of Austria's population, stayed and sought asylum. The two centrist parties have since promised to make sure this never happens again. "Both government parties are something like FPO light," political analyst Anton Pelinka said. "They are not exactly the same as the FPO but the crossover has become very fluid."

A spat with Italy on July 4 about control of their shared border has highlighted the shift. In the past month Italy has asked other EU countries to help it cope with a surge in the number of migrants reaching its Mediterranean shores from Africa. Concerned about another influx, Austrian Defense Minister Hans Peter Doskozil said he was preparing to take action if they headed towards Austria.

In an interview with Austria's top-selling tabloid, he said he expected border controls at the Brenner Pass, a gateway for Italy to northern Europe, "very soon". The article added that 750 soldiers and four armored vehicles were available to secure the border if needed. Italy reacted furiously, summoning Austria's ambassador to Rome before Doskozil and Chancellor Christian Kern, both Social Democrats, backed away from the comments. But the remarks are the latest example of how Austria's two centrist parties are trying to beat the far right at its own game. "The Social Democrats and the ÖVP are in a kind of race to see who can take issues away from the Freedom Party," Pelinka said. "They are hurting the Freedom Party with this. Precisely because of this, it has fallen in the polls."

'Parallel Societies'

The ÖVP and its 30-year-old leader, Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, have taken the lead in opinion polls. Kurz has focused on immigration and integration since taking over as party leader in May, calling for migrants rescued in the Mediterranean to be taken to Africa rather than Europe. His positions and language are sometimes so close to the FPO's that the far right party has accused him of plagiarism.

When Kurz said last month that he wanted to do away with Muslim kindergartens, which he and the FPO describe as breeding grounds for "parallel societies" at odds with the rest of Austria, the FPO said it had been making the same demand for years, and Kurz lacked the "will and courage" to carry it out. Chancellor Kern's Social Democrats (SPO) have opposed Kurz on that issue, but Kern put forward a plan on Wednesday to "take back control of migration" and cut arrivals from Africa sharply by 2020. He also oversaw a law-and-order drive this year that included a ban on Muslim face-covering veils.

Kern's emphasis has, however, been more on employment and the economy. He has pushed for measures that would favour local workers over foreign rivals, including a tax break for firms that fill newly created posts with people registered as unemployed in Austria. While Kern's approach is more targeted than the sort of national preference the far right calls for, it is testing the limits of freedom of movement under European Union law, and the measure has yet to be approved by Brussels.

Going Mainstream

Even though some stigma around the FPO itself remains, it has found new acceptance within the political establishment. The center-left SPO has opened the door to forming a national coalition with the far right, lifting a self-imposed ban of 30 years. Parties rarely obtain a majority in Austria's proportional electoral system, and almost always need a coalition partner to form a government. The SPO and ÖVP have governed together for most of the past 70 years but they are now at loggerheads, making them less likely to join forces again.

"The (FPO's) chances of joining the government as a junior partner are the highest they've been in more than 10 years, but the chances of coming first and securing the chancellor's job are very, very slim," political analyst Thomas Hofer said. —Reuters

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CRACKDOWN THREATENS KASPERSKY'S DREAM

Eugene Kaspersky, the CEO of the Russian cybersecurity software firm that bears his name, had a big American dream. He wanted his company to go beyond selling anti-virus software to consumers and small businesses and become a major vendor to the US government - one of the world's biggest buyers of cybersecurity tools. Kaspersky set up a US subsidiary, KGSS, in Arlington, Virginia that would be focused on winning that business. He sponsored flashy conferences with high-profile speakers -including Michael Flynn, who was briefly President Donald Trump's national security adviser - sought to join US trade groups and even underwrote programming on National Public Radio.

All of this was done to burnish Kaspersky's image and help it become an accepted vendor for the US government despite its Russian roots, according to people familiar with the strategy. But Eugene Kaspersky was never able to overcome lingering suspicions among US intelligence officials that he and his company were, or could become, pawns of Russia's spy agencies. Kaspersky "has never helped, nor will help, any government in the world with its cyberespionage efforts," the company said.

Kaspersky's American ambitions were further eroded by the sharp deterioration in US-Russia relations following Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014, and later when US intelligence agencies concluded that Russia had hacked the 2016 US presidential election. Testifying before the US Congress in May, US intelligence chiefs for the first time publicly expressed doubt that Kaspersky products could be trusted. FBI agents last month interviewed Kaspersky employees, asking whether they reported to Russia-based executives and how much data from American customers could be seen by Russian employees, according to three current and former employees. The FBI declined to comment on Thursday. On

Tuesday, the US General Services Administration, the government agency that manages the federal bureaucracy, removed Kaspersky from a list of approved vendors, saying GSA's mission was to ensure the security of US government systems. There is also a bill before Congress that would explicitly bar the Defense Department from using any Kaspersky products.

Kaspersky says his company is being targeted for political reasons. "These reckless actions negatively impact global cybersecurity by limiting competition, slowing down technology innovations and ruining the industry and law enforcement agency cooperation required to catch the bad guys," he said in a statement to Reuters. The Arlington offices of KGSS were empty when a Reuters reporter visited them on Thursday. A Kaspersky spokeswoman said most of the staff, which number less than 10, often work from home.

The US crackdown comes even though officials have offered no public evidence to suggest the company has done anything untoward or that the Russian government is using its software to launch cyber attacks. Two former employees and a person briefed on the FBI case told Reuters that Kaspersky software has at times inappropriately inspected and removed files from users' machines in its hunt for alleged cyber criminals, even when those files were not corrupted by viruses. "Kaspersky Lab believes it is completely unacceptable that the company is being unjustly accused without any hard evidence to back up these false allegations," the Kaspersky spokeswoman said in response in an email.

Unusual Step

It is extremely rare for a company to be singled out for federal buying restrictions in the absence of clear evidence of wrongdoing. "This sets a really danger-

ous precedent" where other nations could make similar, unsubstantiated claims against US vendors, said Robert M. Lee, a former cyberwarfare operative for US intelligence and now CEO of cybersecurity startup Dragos. The Russian government has denounced the Kaspersky crackdown and said it does not rule out retaliatory measures. Officials at US tech companies with significant operations in Russia say they fear they could become targets.

Federal contracting databases reviewed by Reuters show only a few hundred thousand dollars in purchases from Kaspersky, and an employee confirmed the company's federal government revenue was "miniscule". But Kaspersky also sells to federal contractors and third-party software companies that incorporate its technology in their products, so its technology may be more widely used in government than it appears from the contracting databases, US officials say. Founded in 1997, Kaspersky grew rapidly through the 2000s to become one of the world's leading anti-virus software companies. But the company was dogged from the start by suspicions about its ties to Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), the main successor to the KGB. Eugene Kaspersky attended a KGB school and the company has acknowledged doing work for the FSB. As the company grew, Kaspersky was determined to overcome those fears. "We have to be more American than Americans," Kaspersky told Reuters in 2013, when a US goodwill offensive began.

'Public Shaming'

A cornerstone of the effort was a series of KGSS-hosted conferences in Washington where prominent US officials including Flynn, a former Defense Intelligence Agency director, former CIA and NSA Director Michael Hayden and House of Representatives Homeland

Security Committee Chairman Michael McCaul discussed cybersecurity issues. The company privately courted US intelligence and law enforcement officials by sending experts to brief them on nation-state hacking campaigns uncovered by the firm, according to people present at those meetings.

"They came to us and said, 'We want to change our image, we know people don't trust us,'" said one former senior Obama administration official who took part in some of those meetings. But the suspicions never subsided. When the company sought to join one Washington-based technology trade organization, it was "politely told it couldn't happen," according to an industry source with direct knowledge of the matter. The source said industry group officials had an inside joke: "Kaspersky (membership) is like having the Kremlin join."

Not coincidentally, Kaspersky's government sales effort never gained traction. In an email to Reuters, the company noted "complexities associated with doing business with North America's government sector." Privately held Kaspersky said its US revenue, most of which comes from selling anti-virus software to consumers and small businesses, slipped from \$164 million in 2014 to about \$156 million in 2016.

Some US national security experts say Kaspersky is being treated unfairly. Lee said he has long been bothered by the "public shaming" of Kaspersky by people who make allegations without presenting evidence. The US government has the right to choose not to use Kaspersky products for any reason, he said, but "the way they are doing it" is wrong. "I don't believe in geographic restrictions that say, 'Because Kaspersky is a Russian-based company, therefore it is bad,'" said former White House cybersecurity policy coordinator Michael Daniel. "You would want your decision to be based on actual corporate bad behavior." — Reuters

FEDERER EYES NEW ERA OF SUPREMACY

Booned by his record-setting eighth Wimbledon title, Roger Federer warned rivals yesterday that he could play until he's 40, spearheading a late-life era of supremacy alongside Rafael Nadal. Federer eased past injury-hit Marin Cilic to become the oldest Wimbledon men's champion of the modern era on Sunday, breaking the tie for seven All England Club titles he had shared with Pete Sampras since his last triumph in 2012. It also gave him a 19th Grand Slam title in his 29th final at the majors.

With his 36th birthday just three weeks away Federer believes that he could still be playing the tournament when he's 40. "You would think so, if health permitting and everything is okay," said Federer, who won his first Wimbledon title in 2003. His confidence in his longevity is based on the radical transformation he's made to his playing schedule since his semi-final defeat to Milos Raonic at Wimbledon in 2016. He immediately shut down his sea-

son, missing the Olympics and US Open, to rest a knee injury. As a consequence, his world ranking slumped to 17 in January, his lowest since 2000. But the gamble paid off as a rejuvenated Federer won a fifth Australian Open on his return before adding back-to-back Masters at Indian Wells and Miami. He skipped the clay court season in the knowledge that a fully-fit Nadal was always likely to dominate the French Open.

Back on grass, Federer won a ninth Halle title before easing to his stunning Wimbledon landmark. Wimbledon, where he became the first man to win the trophy without dropping a set since Bjorn Borg in 1976, was only his seventh tournament of 2017. By contrast, the unfortunate Cilic was playing his 15th, so it was hardly surprising that wear and tear contributed to his downfall, albeit in the shape of a humble but debilitating blister.

Federer's match-win record for 2017 now stands at 31-2. His appearances on the tour will remain limited. He hinted he may sit out the Montreal Masters and play only in Cincinnati before an assault on a sixth US Open where he hasn't won since 2008.

Eager to play

As always, it's a decision he'll make with those closest to him just as he did when he took his six-month break in 2016. "I did ask them the question sincerely, to everybody on my team, if they thought I could win majors again," Federer explained. "Basically the answer was always the same from them: that they thought if you're 100% healthy and you're well-prepared, you're eager to play, then anything's possible. "That's how it played out, so they were all right. I believed them. I had the same feeling. I think that's why the break last year was necessary to reassess and get back to 100% physically."

Federer is also within touching distance of returning to the world number one ranking by the end of the year. Eleven of the last 14 Wimbledon champions have finished the season on top of the pile. That list includes Nadal who, despite losing to Gilles Muller in a five-set last-16 epic at Wimbledon, remains one of the year's in-form players with 46 wins and just seven losses. The 31-year-old Nadal made history in June with a 10th French Open.

As well as winning the first three majors of 2017, Nadal and Federer have also captured four of the five Masters played so far. Where Federer triumphed in California and Miami, Nadal swept to victories in Monte Carlo and Madrid. Highly-rated, but still unproven, Alexander Zverev prevented a Masters sweep by the two old-stagers by winning in Rome. If Federer and Nadal remain fit, they will start as favorites for the US Open which gets underway in six weeks' time especially with question marks over the fitness of Andy Murray (hip) and Novak Djokovic (elbow). — AFP





People sit in a boat on a lake at sunset outside the Russian city of Sortavala yesterday. — AFP

## UAE DENIES ANY HACKING OF QATAR

Continued from Page 1

Gargash also warned Qatar it could not belong to the Gulf Cooperation Council if it undermined regional security, calling for a "change of behavior" but not "regime change". He repeated claims - denied by Qatar - that the country funds extremists. "This is our message: You cannot be part of a regional organization dedicated to strengthening mutual security and furthering mutual interest and at the same time undermine that security," he said. "You cannot be both our friend and a friend of al-Qaeda."

The Gulf crisis is the worst to hit the region since the establishment of the GCC in 1981. "We've sent a message to Qatar. We've said we are not there to escalate. We are not after regime change. We are after a change of behavior," Gargash said. "We need to do that and

when we do that, come back to the fold and we can work together," he added.

Gargash said there was a broader problem with financing for extremists in the Gulf but that countries like Saudi Arabia were "dealing with it". "The difference is that the Saudi government realizes it does have an issue and the Saudi government is acting over the last years to deal with this issue," he said. Regarding the possibility of Qatar being excluded from the GCC, Gargash said: "The GCC is in crisis and I don't think it serves our purposes to say let's take Qatar out."

"What we really do want is we either reach an agreement and Qatar's behavior changes, or Qatar makes its own bed and they can move on and we can move with a new relationship. But we cannot have a member who is undermining us and supporting extremism," he said. — Agencies

## MPs DEMAND ANSWERS AFTER 'ABDALY CELL'...

Continued from Page 1

The lawmaker also asked if Kuwaiti authorities have demanded that Iran extradite the 14 men to Kuwait to serve their jail terms. Tabtabaei also asked the minister about what precautionary measures the ministry has taken to avoid the reoccurrence of what he described as the most serious breach of Kuwait's security.

In a related development, Islamist MP Mohammad Hayef said yesterday that one of those convicted in the pro-Iran cell was working as the director of a private television station. In questions to the acting information minister, the lawmaker demanded a copy of the license of the channel and names of its board of directors. He asked about the measures taken by the ministry against the channel after its director had been convicted in a final court verdict and demanded to know the reasons if no actions had been taken until now.

Separately, MP Safa Al-Hashem continued her anti-expatriate proposals by demanding a 10-year cap on the stay of foreigners in the country and a ban on dependent visas, except for parents. The lawmaker, who has already proposed taxing expatriates and imposing a five-percent fee on their money transfers, also called yesterday for doubling the charges for the recruitment of expatriates - to be paid by sponsors.

Hashem said that the country's demographic structure is very imbalanced in favor of expatriates, whose numbers are three times that of Kuwaitis, and called for strict measures to deal with this imbalance. Hashem said she submitted her proposals because many laws and decisions regarding foreign workers are not being implemented, which has enabled expatriates to work in more than one job, thus depriving Kuwaitis of such jobs.

She proposed that contractors of government projects must be forced to repatriate their expat workers back to their home countries after completing the projects. She also called for activating the rules and conditions regulating the process of estimating the needs of businesses of manpower from abroad to control the recruitment process.

Hashem proposed a total ban on dependent visas except for parents, and if any exceptions are provided, the sponsors must bear all their medical expenses. She also called for doubling the recruitment fees to be paid by the sponsors, but she exempted recruitment of maids from the increase. Hashem also proposed that the stay of expatriates in Kuwait should be limited to 10 years with the possibility of extending it only once for highly skilled employees. According to the latest official figures, there are 3.1 million expatriates in Kuwait at present against just 1.35 million Kuwaiti citizens.

## US-SYRIAN WOMAN SETS UP SCHOOL...

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a backlash from residents and other factions. So far, it has stayed relatively pragmatic: it takes every opportunity to show it is in charge but has shown no interest in a wide-scale imposition of an extremist vision of Islamic law.

They halted public killings of criminals; there are no religious police patrolling streets, arresting or beating people - and they haven't forced women to wear the niqab face veil. That is a sharp contrast to the Islamic State group in the stretches of Syria and Iraq where the rival militant group has ruled the past three years. Instead, Al-Qaeda administrators and fighters try to enforce some rules on a smaller scale while avoiding heavy-handed confrontation and presenting themselves as the champions of Syria's "revolution" against Assad.

Idlib now stands in a tenuous position among the international and regional powers that are effectively carving up Syria. Assad's Russian-backed military is focused on fighting Islamic States militants further to the east, as are the United States and its Kurdish led-allies. Turkey and its allies have seized a pocket of territory neighboring Idlib. Eventually, all these forces will turn their attention to the fate of the opposition enclave.

In the meantime, Idlib, swelling with more than 900,000 Syrians displaced from fallen rebel enclaves elsewhere, is the

refuge of an opposition movement that only a few years earlier appeared to have the momentum in the conflict. Now Kisar and others like her are trying to keep Al-Qaeda's influence at bay. "Everyone sold us out," she said in a recent interview in her office in Istanbul, where she regularly travels. Kisar said the international community's fear of radical Islamists taking over Syria is exaggerated and reflects a lack of understanding of the Syrian opposition. She and others argue that the militants are needed, they provide services and infrastructure as well as skilled fighters for now, but will not have support later.

From the start, Kisar has been a true believer in the uprising. After the revolt began in 2011, she left her administrative job at a Dallas university and joined the opposition. She traveled with fighters on the front lines, helping displaced people. She organized services in opposition territories. Along the way, she survived an airstrike and lost a colleague who was kidnapped by Islamic State group militants and was later believed killed.

Finally, she settled in Maaret Al-Numan, Idlib's second largest city. It was one of the few strongholds of the moderate Free Syrian Army, the umbrella group for the internationally-backed opposition factions. In recent years, radical factions like Al-Qaeda have grown in influence and gained a foothold. But Maaret's residents largely continued to support the FSA. They held repeated protests whenever Al-Qaeda fighters went too far, arresting journalists or cracking down on opponents. — AP

## GIRL'S POST IN MINI DRAWS IRE

Continued from Page 1

Saudi news website Sabq reported that the kingdom's morality police had corresponded with other agencies to investigate further after the video was brought to their attention.

Social media is wildly popular in Saudi Arabia as a space

to vent frustrations and gauge public opinion. With more than half of the population of Saudi Arabia under 25-years-old, the country's 30-year-old heir to the throne, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has pushed for greater openings for entertainment in part to appease the country's youth, but strict gender segregation rules and other restrictions on women's movement remain in place. — AP

## FM MEETS SISI; EGYPT INSISTS ON DEMANDS

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait has been leading mediation efforts between Qatar and the four Arab states boycotting it. Sisi told Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled he appreciated what HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah was doing to preserve Arab unity, but that Egypt would not let anyone interfere in its affairs and would stand strong against policies that support terrorism, his spokesman Alaa Youssef said in a statement.

"The foreign minister affirmed to his Kuwaiti counterpart Egypt's commitment to the list of demands presented to the

state of Qatar and the continuation of sanctions taken against it," Foreign Ministry spokesman Ahmed Abu Zeid said in a statement. The insistence comes "in light of what the quartet states see as Qatar's stalling and procrastination, and lack of concern for the concerns of the four states," he said.

Shoukry told Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled the only way the crisis would be resolved was if Qatar fulfilled the demands, which include curtailing its support for the Muslim Brotherhood, shutting down the pan-Arab Al-Jazeera satellite TV channel, closing a Turkish military base and downgrading its relations with rival Iran. — Agencies

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## IAAF PROVISIONALLY SUSPENDS FREDERICKS IN PAYMENT PROBE

**MONACO:** Four-time Olympic medalist Frank Fredericks has been suspended from duty by track and field's governing body, the IAAF, while he is investigated for alleged corruption suspected of being linked to the 2016 Olympics hosting vote.

The independent Athletics Integrity Unit said yesterday that its request for an interim ban on Fredericks, a former sprinter from Namibia, was granted by the IAAF disciplinary panel. Fredericks, who is also an International Olympic Committee member, is separately being

investigated by the IOC ethics commission over a near \$300,000 payment he received on Oct. 2, 2009 - the same day Rio de Janeiro won the 2016 Olympic hosting vote in a four-city contest.

French daily Le Monde alleged in March that the payment came from a Brazilian businessman and was channeled through a sports marketing company created by Papa Massata Diack, the son of former IAAF president Lamine Diack. Both Diacks are implicated by French prosecutors in a corruption case that includes extorting money from athletes to cover up doping.

Fredericks denies wrongdoing, claiming the money was for contracted consultancy work. He previously offered to step aside from his IOC work and his IAAF duties except his seat on the ruling Council.

"I am not prepared to voluntarily consent not to undertake my duties in respect of the position I hold as IAAF Council Member," Fredericks wrote to the disciplinary panel. However, he did agree to avoid attending a meeting in London next month on the sidelines of

the Aug. 4-13 world championships.

Fredericks plans to contest the suspension at a hearing, the integrity unit says. In its published interim ruling, the IAAF disciplinary panel said Fredericks had the presumption of innocence while under investigation.

Still, the panel chairman noted that "Fredericks has not, in the answers and explanations he has provided to date, disturbed the prima facie case of matters warranting investigation." Those matters include "whether there was any connection between the Payment and

the IOC vote to award the 2016 summer Olympics to Rio de Janeiro," the IAAF panel said.

Fredericks was seen as a rising star in Olympic circles until the case was reported. He had to resign as chairman of the IOC panel evaluating the bids of Los Angeles and Paris to host the 2024 Olympics, and agreed not to take part in that hosting decision due in September.

The 49-year-old official won silver medals in 100 and 200 meters at both the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and 1996 Atlanta Olympics. — AP

## QUINTANA DISTANCES HIMSELF FROM FATHER'S CRITICISM

**LE PUY-EN-VELAY:** Tour de France hopeful Nairo Quintana sprung to the defence of his Movistar team yesterday after his father had blasted the Spanish outfit in the Colombian press. This has been a Tour to forget for Quintana and Movistar, right since the opening stage.

Alejandro Valverde, who was third overall two years ago, crashed out in the stage one time-trial and suffered a broken kneecap. Since then, Quintana has been far from his brilliant best, losing almost four minutes to his yellow jersey rivals on Sunday when he dropped to 11th and more than six minutes off the pace of leader Chris Froome. He is paying for having ridden in May's Giro d'Italia, where he finished second, and has complained of tiredness during the Tour. That led to his father telling a Colombian radio station that Movistar are flogging his son and compromising his Tour chances. "I haven't spoken to my father for a few days. He has his opinion, what people tell him," said Quintana.

"He's getting drunk on the people's praise, for his words, for his frustrations, in one way or another, by all Colombians." But Quintana said this is only happening

because the Tour is going badly. "When you're in front and winning, no-one says anything and everything's perfect.

"His words were of anger, in the moment. I don't think you should take much notice of them, and I don't share them." Luis Quintana had complained that his son shouldn't have raced at the Giro when his main aim is the Tour de France.

It is widely considered that there is not enough time to recover from the exertions of riding the Giro in May before the Tour in July. "Colombians are protesting because of what they (Movistar) are asking Nairo to do," Luis Quintana had told Radio Caracol on Thursday. "He shouldn't have ridden the Giro if they were taking him to the Tour." Last year, Quintana finished third at the Tour before going on to win the Vuelta a Espana in September.

It led Movistar to believe he was stronger in his second Grand Tour of the year than his first, so they decided to try the Giro-Tour double this year. However, Quintana has struggled several times in the mountains, despite finishing second on Friday's Pyrenean stage, and has admitted that it was a mistake. — AFP



**LE PUY-EN-VELAY:** Great Britain's Simon Yates celebrates his white jersey of best young on the podium at the end of the 189.5 km fifteenth stage of the 104th edition of the Tour de France cycling race on Sunday between Laissac-Severac l'Église and Le Puy-en-Velay. — AFP

### CYCLING

## ORICA'S LONG TERM PLAN FOR YATES TWINS

**LE PUY-EN-VELAY:** British twins Adam and Simon Yates will be given time to develop into Grand Tour champions, their Orica team sports director Matt White said. Adam Yates won the young riders' white jersey at the Tour de France last year and Simon is currently in pole position in that category this time around.

But at 24 years of age, Orica and White are wary of putting too much pressure on the talented brothers from Bury, England. "We knew they were talented but we had lots of talented kids come through here, but the rate that they developed was incredible really," White told AFP. "One reason they're here and they stay here is we've given them great opportunities from the start. "We took Simon to the Tour de France as a neo-pro and had to send him home after two weeks because it wasn't the best thing for him. "It wasn't that popular a decision at the time but for the long term I didn't want to kill him in his first Tour. "Now it's his third Tour and he's got those other two years under his belt, and that's why he's handling the pressure of being in the white jersey very well and riding top 10 of the Tour de France as well, because it's not easy." Yates is seventh overall and three minutes clear of South Africa's Louis Meintjies atop the young rider competition.

He was sixth at last year's Vuelta a Espana, his best Grand Tour showing so far, while Adam was fourth at last year's Tour and ninth at May's Giro d'Italia. "They're still kids, they're 24-years-old, they're a long way from being at the best of their abilities," added White.

"We've had them since they turned professional and they've developed really well, and we're going to continue that development."

### GOLDFISH BOWL

The Tour may be the biggest goldfish bowl in cycling but White insists the Yates brothers should not be judged only by their results in France. "We'd like to but at the moment we're not ready to win the Tour de France with the roster we've got, but I think long-term we'd love to win the Tour de France.

"But we'd also like to win the Tour of Italy (Giro) and the Tour of Spain (Vuelta) and maybe they're races that suit our riders' characteristics better." Orica have sent the Yates brothers to four Grand Tours each and later this year they will both ride the Vuelta, the first time they've taken on two Grand Tours in the same calendar year.

"The season's long and we've got more objectives than one bike race, and we're developing them as well," said White. "Part of their development this year is doing two Grand Tours: Adam's doing the Giro and the Vuelta, Simon's doing the Tour and the Vuelta as well, so they'll be in the Vuelta together." It will be only the second time they ride together in the same Grand Tour after the Grand Boucle two years ago, where Adam finished 50th and Simon 89th. In the meantime, Orica are simply concentrating on retaining the white jersey rather than looking to push Simon Yates higher up the overall standings, even though he's only two minutes and two seconds off the yellow jersey. "It's pretty tight between pretty much the top eight or nine guys. The levels are quite similar and there's only three opportunities where time can change, or if guys have a bad day," added White.

"We want to finish as high as possible but

we're certainly not here with the goal of finishing on the podium. "The goal we came here with was to win the white jersey and finish inside the top 10, and so far, so good." — AFP

## NEWGARDEN RACES TO SECOND TORONTO INDYCAR VICTORY

**TORONTO:** Josef Newgarden had some fun at hometown star James Hinchcliff's expense in the Honda Indy Toronto. "I love beating Hinch in Canada," Newgarden said. Newgarden raced to his second Toronto victory in three years Sunday, dominating on the streets surrounding Exhibition Place. Hinchcliff was third behind Alexander Rossi.

"I love Hinch. He's a great representative, but this is so good," Newgarden said. Newgarden came out in front on Lap 25 after a crash by Tony Kanaan caused a caution and maintained an advantage of over two seconds for the majority of the rest of the race. The 26-year-old Tennessee driver has five career victories, also winning in Alabama in April. He gave Team Penske its 193rd victory, the most of any team. "I think that is twice I have had good calls and got into the pits at the right time," Newgarden said. "Thank you to the guys and thank you to Tim (Cindric) for making that call. We got it right, but it was all about managing the race after that. I thought we had a very fast car, we got a pretty good start, and stayed out of the mayhem. Very, very happy for all of Team Penske."

Rossi had his first podium finish of the year and best result since winning the 2016 Indianapolis 500. "It's been a long time coming, looking for that first podium and hopefully it can be a foundation to go into more wins," Rossi said. "At least we finally kind of got the monkey off our back. It was a huge turn

around overnight by Andretti Autosport to get this car to where it needed to be." Hinchcliff was third for the second straight year.

"We were catching Alex and Josef in that last stint," Hinchcliff said. "The car really came alive on the blacks so big thanks to Schmidt Peterson Motorsports, all the guys - great stops - and all the fans in Toronto. I mean the support that we feel each and every year is amazing." Marco Andretti was fourth, followed by Simon Pagenaud, Ryan Hunter-Reay, Max Chilton, Helio Castroneves, Graham Rahal and series leader Scott Dixon. Dixon has a three-point lead over Castroneves with five races left. Kanaan had his brakes lock up while leaving the pits and connected with the protective tires in Turn 1. The caution caused the top-three cars of Castroneves, Pagenaud and Rahal to fall back. Thundershowers were a threat throughout the race but held off. It started out sunny and humid, then clouded over during the event and it rained lightly at a few points.

Newgarden said the weather threat and possibility of having to switch to a different set of tires was an added stress. "I was concerned about that and how it would throw a wrench into the works," Newgarden said. "If it starts raining when I'm on the wrong end of the track, then that wouldn't be very good."

Esteban Gutierrez, the rookie who crashed late in qualifying Saturday, was cleared to race after experiencing concussion-like symptoms. He finished 14th. — AP



**TORONTO:** Josef Newgarden lifts a trophy on the podium after winning the Honda Indy Toronto in Toronto on Sunday. — AP

## UNEASY FROOME TO EXTEND TOUR LEAD BEFORE TT

**LE PUY-EN-VELAY:** Chris Froome admitted yesterday he wouldn't feel serene during Saturday's time-trial in Marseille in the penultimate Tour de France stage unless he can take more time out of his rivals beforehand.

The stage 20 race against the clock will be the last opportunity for any overall contender to make a bid for the yellow jersey. And even though Froome is widely considered a better time-trialist than his rivals, and he currently leads the race by 18 seconds from Fabio Aru, the Briton said he'd want more of a buffer to feel genuinely secure.

"I wouldn't be sleeping easy (if that's the advantage he had on Saturday). We always knew it was going to be a close race and that's exactly what it is," said the 32-year-old reigning champion.

"This was to be expected and I knew that every stage, every single second is going to count."

Three riders currently sit within 30 seconds of Froome-Aru at 18, Romain Bardet at 23 and Rigoberto Uran at 29 — with fourth placed Dan Martin only 1min 12sec further back.

But it is Uran who Froome fears most as the Colombian is usually the best time-trialist of the Sky team leader's closest competitors. "Each rival presents different threats. If you look at Fabio Aru, he won the first mountain-top finish on the Planche des Belles Filles.

"Perhaps he didn't have such a good day a couple of days ago, (but) he's been strong in the third week (of a Grand Tour) before. We'll have to wait and see how he

goes. "Romain Bardet has always been strong in the last week of a Grand Tour and he also has the team (AG2R) to back him up, as we saw yesterday-he put me under a lot of pressure yesterday and we really had to use the whole team just to control that situation.

"Rigoberto Uran may be more of the dark horse who just slips under the radar a little bit. "He's probably the strongest time-trialist of this group of GC riders, so with Marseille in mind he's a big threat."

### 'THE END OF YELLOW'

This Tour has been far from plain-sailing for Froome, who crashed in the first week and has had two mechanical problems at crucial times in mountain stages over the last week.

He admitted that when he had such a difficulty on Sunday, and had to stop to get a spare wheel off team-mate Michal Kwiatkowski while his rivals rode off up the road, he feared a fourth Tour victory was slipping away.

"I think it dawned the second AG2R put the hammer down yesterday and I was standing still on the side of the road with Kwiatko trying to change my back wheel, I knew then already that this could be the end of my fight for the yellow jersey.

"So I'm just incredibly grateful obviously the way my team-mates responded under pressure there and that I had the legs to get back to that main group by the top of the climb. "Had I not got there, that could have been the end of the race for the overall for me." — AFP



**LE PUY-EN-VELAY:** Britain's Christopher Froome leaves his bicycle before a training session during the 104th edition of the Tour de France cycling race yesterday in Le Puy-en-Velay. — AFP

## LAKERS OVERCOME BALL'S INJURY TO BEAT MAVS, REACH TITLE GAME

**LAS VEGAS:** Lonzo Ball's bid for a third straight triple-double was short-circuited by a calf injury. The lead he helped the Los Angeles Lakers build while he was in the game proved to be just enough to top Dennis Smith Jr. and the Dallas Mavericks. Ball had 16 points and 10 assists in 21 minutes before leaving with a strained right calf, and the Lakers held on for a 108-98 victory in the Las Vegas Summer League semifinals on Sunday night. Kyle Kuzma scored 24 points, Matt Thomas had 20 and Vander Blue added 17 to help the Lakers reach the championship game. They will face the Portland Trail Blazers, who beat Memphis 87-82 in the other semifinal, tonight. Smith scored 21 points on 7-for-13

shooting for the Mavericks, who trailed by as many as 26 points in the second half before mounting a huge comeback in the fourth quarter. Yogi Ferrell added 15 points and Dorian Finney-Smith and Brandon Ashley each had 13. Wearing Jordans on his feet instead of the family's Big Baller Brand ZO2s, Ball made 5 of 7 shots and had a beautiful punch-ahead pass to Alex Caruso for a dunk that had thousands of Lakers fans out of their seats in the first half. He also had four rebounds, putting him well on his way to this third triple-double of summer league play before his right calf tightened up. Ball tried to jog it off in a back hallway in the third quarter, but he was hob-

bling a little bit and was shut down for the remainder of the game. Lakers summer league coach Jud Buechler said it was too soon to tell if Ball would be available for the championship game. "His health comes first," Buechler told reporters after the game. "We'll see how he feels in the morning." The injury took a little of the edge away from an anticipated matchup of two rookie point guards who have excelled in Vegas. Ball was drafted second overall and Dennis Smith was taken ninth. Both have been cast as the future faces of their respective franchises, and both have made strong first impressions in summer league play. The two went right at each other

from the jump, combining to hit their first seven field goals in a back-and-forth affair. The Lakers led by as many as 26 points before the Mavericks mounted a comeback, trimming the deficit to two with 2 minutes to play. Smith went right to the rim, using a little Euro-step to draw a foul. But Thomas, who went 6 of 7 from 3-point range, hit a 3 on the other end and the Lakers were able to hold off the charge. In the other game on Sunday night. **TRAIL BLAZERS 87, GRIZZLIES 82** Jarnell Stokes had 22 points and 15 rebounds to lead Portland over Memphis in the first semifinal on Sunday night. Caleb Swanigan continued his

strong summer league with 15 points and 11 rebounds for the Blazers, who trailed by 16 points in the first half before rallying to overtake the Grizzlies in the second half. Stokes got his NBA start with the Grizzlies, playing 19 games for Memphis in 2014-15 after he was acquired in a draft-night trade with Utah. The Grizzlies traded Stokes to Miami the following season in the deal that brought Mario Chalmers to Memphis. He played two games with the Nuggets last season. Wayne Selden led the Grizzlies with 13 points in 22 minutes. Jorge Gutierrez added 16 points and eight assists, including a pair of nifty, behind-the-back passes for easy layups, for the Grizzlies. — AP



BOSTON: Mookie Betts #50 of the Boston Red Sox slides under the tag of Didi Gregorius #18 of the New York Yankees in the sixth inning of game two of a doubleheader against the New York Yankees at Fenway Park on Sunday. — AFP

BASEBALL

## QUINTANA DAZZLES IN CUBS DEBUT TO BEAT ORIOLES

**BALTIMORE:** Jose Quintana dazzled in his debut for the Chicago Cubs, striking out a season-high 12 in seven innings to beat the Baltimore Orioles 8-0 Sunday for a three-game sweep. Acquired by the World Series champions during the All-Star break from the Chicago White Sox for a playoff push, Quintana (1-0) allowed three hits, walked none and joined Matt Garza as the only pitchers in Cubs history to fan 12 in their debut. Kris Bryant and Anthony Rizzo homered to help the Cubs move over .500 for the first time since June 29. The Cubs hit 10 home runs during the sweep. Ubaldo Jimenez (4-5) allowed six runs and 11 hits, one shy of tying a career-high, over 3 2/3 innings.

**DODGERS 3, MARLINS 2**

Justin Turner homered and singled to increase his batting average to .374, and Los Angeles won for the 29th time in 33 games, including nine in a row. Five Los Angeles pitchers combined for 16 strikeouts with no walks. Kenley Jansen got the four outs for his 23rd save in as many chances as the Dodgers (64-29) climbed 35 games above .500 for the first time since 1977 by completing their big league-high 11th sweep. Giancarlo Stanton lost his glove over the 8

1/2-foot wall in right field trying unsuccessfully to catch a triple by Chris Taylor. Rich Hill (6-4) allowed one run and struck out nine in five innings. Chris O'Grady (1-1), making his second big league start, gave up three runs in five innings.

**NATIONALS 14, REDS 4**

Daniel Murphy hit two of Washington's five home runs and had five RBIs. Adam Lind and Jose Lobaton added two-run shots and Anthony Rendon had a solo homer, his third home run in two games, to help the Nationals to their fourth straight victory. Earlier in the day, the Nationals acquired relievers Ryan Madson and Sean Doolittle from Oakland for right-hander Blake Treinen and a pair of prospects. Tanner Roark (7-6) allowed three unearned runs in six innings, and Homer Bailey (2-3) gave up eight runs and hits in four innings.

**YANKEES 3, RED SOX 0, 1ST GAME  
RED SOX 3, YANKEES 0, 2ND GAME**

Mookie Betts hit a two-run homer and Jackie Bradley Jr. went over the bullpen wall to teal one from Aaron Judge, helping Boston a split of the day-night doubleheader. A day after the teams played 16 innings,

they spent another long day at Fenway Park and ended the four-game series the way they started: with the Red Sox 3 1/2 games up in the AL East. In the night game, Price (5-2) pitched eight innings, allowing seven hits and striking out eight. One night after giving up a tying homer in the ninth, Craig Kimbrel pitched the ninth for his 24th save. Masahiro Tanaka (7-9) gave up three runs on eight hits in 7 2/3 innings, striking out nine. The Yankees are the last team in the majors to be shut out. CC Sabathia (8-3) allowed two hits over six innings in the opener, and Didi Gregorius hit a solo home run for New York. Rick Porcello (4-12) was the loser. CC Sabathia (8-3) allowed two hits over six innings, and Didi Gregorius hit a solo home run around the Pesky Pole in the opener of a day-night doubleheader. Boston stranded 10 runners and went 0 for 11 with runners in scoring position, leaving the Red Sox 2 for 31 RISP in series and 2 for 51 against the Yankees this season. Rick Porcello (4-12) gave up three runs - one earned - and nine hits in six innings. New York took a 2-0 lead in the fourth when Ji-Man Choi hit a sacrifice fly and Ronald Torreyes had an RBI single after shortstop Xander Bogaerts allowed Clint Frazier's grounder to bounce off his glove and chest for an error.

**TIGERS 6, BLUE JAYS 5**

Miguel Cabrera walked with the bases loaded in the 11th inning Sunday, giving the Detroit Tigers a 6-5 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays. With the score 5-all, Alex Avila was walked by Jeff Beliveau (1-1) leading off the 11th, Nicholas Castellanos reached on an error by third baseman Josh Donaldson and Lucas Harrell walked Justin Upton and Cabrera, Warwick Saupold (2-1) got the win with a scoreless 11th.

**ROCKIES 13, METS 4**

Ian Desmond provided an instant spark for the slumping Rockies in his return from the disabled list, and Nolan Arenado hit one of Colorado's three homers. Charlie Blackmon was credited with an inside-the-park home run - even though his drive actually cleared the orange line atop left-center field fence - and Gerardo Parra also went deep to help the Rockies win for only the sixth time in 21 games. DJ LeMahieu and Mark Reynolds each had four of Colorado's

18 hits to back rookie Jeff Hoffman (6-1), handed a huge early lead while pitching with family and friends in the stands. Steven Matz (2-3) gave up seven runs and nine hits and was chased after failing to retire four batters in the second.

**BRAVES 7, DIAMONDBACKS 1**

Matt Kemp hit a three-run homer and Brandon Phillips doubled three times as Atlanta completed a three-game sweep and sent Arizona to its season-high fifth straight loss. Jaime Garcia (3-7) allowed one run and four hits in seven innings as the Braves (45-45) reached .500 for the first time since April 17, when they were 6-6. Zack Godley (3-4) gave up seven runs despite his career-high nine strikeouts in six innings.

**PIRATES 4, CARDINALS 3**

Adam Frazier's game-ending single capped a two-run rally in the ninth against Brett Cecil (1-3), who also gave up Jordy Mercer's RBI double. Wade LeBlanc (4-2) pitched a hitless ninth.

**MARINERS 7, WHITE SOX 6**

Nelson Cruz homered on a 3-0 pitch from Chris Beck (1-1) leading off the 10th inning, his 19th home run this season, as Seattle overcame a 5-0 deficit and won its fourth straight. Chicago has lost four in a row. Nick Vincent (3-1) earned the win, and Edwin Diaz struck out Jose Abreu, Todd Frazier and Garcia - all swinging - for his 16th save.

**ASTROS 5, TWINS 3**

Mike Fiers (6-4) struck out a season-high 11 over seven innings, while allowing two runs and four hits. Nori Aoki had two hits and two RBIs. Kyle Gibson (5-8) yielded four runs and six hits in six-plus innings.

**PHILLIES 5, BREWERS 2**

Rookie Nick Williams hit his first career grand slam - on lefty reliever Tyler Webb's first pitch since he was acquired Thursday from the Yankees for minor league first baseman Garrett Cooper. Williams homered off Webb last month in the minors. Jeremy Hellickson (6-5) struck out six and allowed four hits and two runs over five innings for his first win since June 4. Rob Scahill (1-3) allowed three runs and did not retire a batter.

**ROYALS 4, RANGERS 3**

Texas right fielder Shin-Soo Choo lost Lorenzo Cain's routine fly in the sun, and the ball glanced off his glove for a tiebreaking RBI single with two outs in the ninth as Kansas City stooped a five-game losing streak overall and a 12-game skid against Texas. Choo tried to shield his eyes, but even sunglasses didn't help on Cain's sliced flyball. Kelvin Herrera (2-2) pitched a spotless ninth. Jason Grilli (2-5), acquired by Rangers from Toronto on July 2, took the loss.

**ANGELS 4, RAYS 3**

Pinch-hitter C.J. Cron connected for a tiebreaking, two-run homer in the eighth off Adam Kolarek after Andrelton Simmons singled against Jumbo Diaz (1-4). Trailing 4-2, the Rays scored once in the ninth and loaded the bases with one out. Bud Norris got Tim Beckham to ground into a double play for his 14th save, ending Tampa Bay's four-game winning streak. David Hernandez (1-0) pitched a scoreless inning as Los Angeles avoided a three-game sweep.

**ATHLETICS 7, INDIANS 3**

Cleveland starter Trevor Bauer got just two outs in a four-run first inning and matched the shortest start of his big league career as the Oakland completed a surprising three-game sweep of AL Central-leading Cleveland, which has lost four straight for the first time since 2015. Bauer (7-8) allowed four runs, three hits and two walks while throwing just 24 of 43 pitches for strikes in facing seven batters. Ryon Healy and Jaycob Brugman hit two-run singles in the first, and Jed Lowrie homered against Dan Otero for a 5-0 lead in the third. Sean Manaea (8-5) struck out eight in seven innings, allowing two runs and five hits.

**PADRES 7, GIANTS 1**

Hector Sanchez and Corey Spangenberg each hit a three-run home run off Jeff Samardzija (4-11), who allowed seven runs and nine hits in six innings. Samardzija is tied with Colorado's Tyler Chatwood for the most losses in the NL. Sanchez homered for the second straight game as he once again replaced injured catcher Austin Hedges. Trevor Cahill (4-3) gave up one run and eight hits in 6 2/3 innings. —AP

### MLB Results/Standings

Boston 3, NY Yankees 0; San Diego 7, San Francisco 1; Oakland 7, Cleveland 3; LA Angels 4, Tampa Bay 3; Kansas City 4, Texas 3; Houston 5, Minnesota 3; Philadelphia 5, Milwaukee 2; Seattle 7, Chicago White Sox 6 (10 innings); Atlanta 7, Arizona 1; Chicago Cubs 8, Baltimore 0; Pittsburgh 4, St. Louis 3; Colorado 13, NY Mets 4; LA Dodgers 3, Miami 2; Detroit 6, Toronto 5 (11 innings); Washington 14, Cincinnati 4; NY Yankees 3, Boston 0.

American League					National League				
Eastern Division					Eastern Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB		W	L	PCT	GB
Boston	52	41	.559	-	Washington	55	36	.604	-
Tampa Bay	49	44	.527	3	Atlanta	45	45	.500	9.5
NY Yankees	47	43	.522	3.5	NY Mets	41	48	.461	13
Toronto	42	49	.462	9	Miami	41	49	.456	13.5
Baltimore	42	49	.462	9	Philadelphia	30	60	.333	24.5
Central Division					Central Division				
Cleveland	47	43	.522	-	Milwaukee	52	42	.553	-
Minnesota	46	45	.505	1.5	Chicago Cubs	46	45	.505	4.5
Kansas City	45	45	.500	2	St. Louis	44	47	.484	6.5
Detroit	41	49	.456	6	Pittsburgh	44	48	.478	7
Chicago White Sox	38	52	.422	9	Cincinnati	39	52	.429	11.5
Western Division					Western Division				
Houston	62	30	.674	-	LA Dodgers	64	29	.688	-
Seattle	46	47	.495	16.5	Arizona	53	39	.576	10.5
Texas	45	46	.495	16.5	Colorado	53	41	.564	11.5
LA Angels	46	49	.484	17.5	San Diego	40	51	.440	23
Oakland	42	50	.457	20	San Francisco	35	58	.376	29



# Sports

S Korea's Park Sung-Hyun wins US Women's Open



Mexico beat Curacao 2-0 to win CONCACAF Gold Cup Group C



TUESDAY, JULY 18, 2017

## QUINTANA DAZZLES IN CUBS DEBUT TO BEAT ORIOLES

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NOTTINGHAM: South Africa's Quinton de Kock (L) appeals for the wicket of England's Moeen Ali (R) on the fourth day of the second Test match between England and South Africa at Trent Bridge cricket ground in Nottingham, central England yesterday. — AFP

# PHILANDER LEADS S AFRICA ROUT OF ENGLAND

**NOTTINGHAM:** Vernon Philander led a fine all-round bowling effort as South Africa thrashed England by 340 runs in the second Test at Trent Bridge yesterday. Victory saw the Proteas level the four-match series at 1-1 after they themselves had been well beaten by 211 runs in the first Test at Lord's. England, set a mammoth 474 runs for victory, collapsed to 133 all out 40 minutes before tea on the fourth day.

Man-of-the-match Philander took three wickets for 24 runs in 10 overs, including an early double strike. That gave him five wickets in total in a match where he also made scores of 54 and 42 with the bat. No England batsman made a fifty in a second innings where former captain Alastair Cook's 42 was the top score.

The most made by any side to win in the fourth innings of a Test is the West Indies' 418 for seven against Australia at St John's in 2003. But the more immediate task for England yesterday was to see if they could at least keep South Africa in the field. They failed miserably, the hosts bowled out in 44.2 overs despite South Africa being without Kagiso Rabada after the fast bowler was suspended for swearing at England's Ben Stokes at Lord's.

### 'BETTER BASICS'

A sign of the difference in batting application between the teams was that South Africa's first innings 335 lasted 96.2 overs, while England were bowled out twice in 96.1 overs. "We did our basics a

lot better, put England under pressure for longer periods in the game," South Africa captain Faf du Plessis, who did not play at Lord's following the birth of his first child, told Sky Sports.

Meanwhile a delighted Philander said: "All the senior players put their hand up and made it easy for us. "Coming into the Test I was a bit cold, but I got my groove going and I'm feeling a lot better." For England opener Joe Root this chastening defeat, the hosts' first loss in eight Tests at Trent Bridge, was in marked contrast to his first match as skipper at Lord's. "We weren't good enough with the bat for the whole game," he said. England resumed with Cook and fellow left-handed opener Jennings both unbeaten on nought. Philander, renowned for his ability to move the ball at a lively fast-medium pace, had a wicket with just his fifth ball yesterday.

South Africa-born Jennings (three) was undone by a nip back delivery that uprooted his off stump. Gary Ballance, in his third stint of Test cricket and under huge pressure for his place, was then lbw to Philander on review for four.

Philander had taken two for eight in 19 balls, with Root once more coming in after a top-order slump. Root had made 190 in his first innings as captain at Lord's and top-scored with 78 in their meagre first innings 205 this match.

But he fell cheaply yesterday, Chris Morris producing an excellent yorker to knock over the Yorkshireman's off-stump. Cook's near two-hour

innings ended when he was beaten for pace by a well-directed Morris bouncer and gloved down the legside, where wicket-keeper Quinton de Kock held a fine catch. It meant Morris had taken two for two in 20 balls, with Cook's exit the cue for England to lose their last seven wickets for just 61 runs. Only last year Stokes (258) and Jonny Bairstow (150 not out) shared a stunning partnership of 399 against South Africa at Cape Town.

### 'DUMB BATTING'

But their stand on Monday was worth just 12 when Bairstow (16) dragged an intended drive off left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj straight to mid-on. "I can't believe I have seen that," said angry former England captain Michael Vaughan, commenting on BBC Radio's Test Match Special.

"All you need to do is dangle the carrot and they'll go for it. Dumb batting! What is he thinking?" Moeen Ali hit six fours in his 27 before he too made a present of his wicket to Maharaj, sweeping the spinner straight to square leg. Stokes at least gutted it out for more than an hour while making 18 before he was caught and bowled off a low checked drive by Philander.

England lost their last three wickets on 133, paceman Duanne Olivier-only playing because Rabada was banned-ending the match when he dismissed Mark Wood and James Anderson with successive deliveries. The series continues at The Oval on July 27. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

**NOTTINGHAM, England:** Scoreboard yesterday after South Africa beat England by 340 runs in the second test at Trent Bridge to level the four-match series at 1-1.

South Africa 1st Innings: 335		England 2nd Innings	
Heino Kuhn c Root b Anderson	8	Alastair Cook c De Kock b Morris	42
Dean Elgar c Anderson b Stokes	80	Keaton Jennings b Philander	3
Hashim Amla lbw b Dawson	87	Gary Ballance lbw b Philander	4
Quinton de Kock c Bairstow b Anderson	1	Joe Root b Morris	8
Faf du Plessis lbw b Stokes	63	Jonny Bairstow c Morris b Maharaj	16
Temba Bavuma c Root b Ali	15	Ben Stokes c and b Philander	18
Vernon Philander c and b Ali	42	Moeen Ali c Kuhn b Maharaj	27
Chris Morris c Ballance b Ali	13	Liam Dawson not out	5
Keshav Maharaj c Broad b Ali	1	Stuart Broad c Morkel b Maharaj	5
Morne Morkel not out	17	Mark Wood c Morris b Olivier	0
Extras: (8b, 8lb)	16	James Anderson c De Kock b Olivier	0
TOTAL: (for 9 wickets dec.)	343	Extras: (5lb)	5
Overs: 104.		TOTAL: (all out)	133
Did not bat: Duanne Olivier.		Overs: 44.2	
Fall of wickets: 1-18, 2-153, 3-154, 4-216, 5-253, 6-275, 7-304, 8-307, 9-343.		Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-28, 3-55, 4-72, 5-84, 6-122, 7-126, 8-133, 9-133, 10-133.	
Bowling: James Anderson 20-4-45-2, Stuart Broad 19-4-60-0, Mark Wood 18-5-68-0, Moeen Ali 16-2-78-4, Ben Stokes 20-4-34-2, Liam Dawson 11-1-42-1.		Bowling: Morne Morkel 13-4-30-0, Vernon Philander 10-3-24-3, Duanne Olivier 3.2-0-25-2, Chris Morris 6-3-7-2, Keshav Maharaj 12-2-42-3.	
		Result: South Africa won by 340 runs.	
		Series: Four-test series level at 1-1.	



UTRECHT: Netherland's Vivianne Miedema (C) vie for the ball with Norway's Ingrid Hjelmseth (L) and Maren Mjelde during the UEFA Women's Euro 2017 football tournament between Norway and The Netherlands at Galgenwaard Stadium in Utrecht on Sunday. —AFP

### SOCCER

# NETHERLANDS, DENMARK WIN WOMEN'S EURO OPENERS

**UTRECHT:** Shanice van de Sanden's bullet header lifted hosts the Netherlands past Norway while Denmark beat Belgium as the women's Euro tournament kicked off with two Group A games on Sunday. Liverpool winger Van de Sanden's 66th-minute goal gave the Dutch a deserved win over the 2013 runners-up in the competition opener in Utrecht.

In Doetinchem, Sanne Troelsgaard spoiled Belgium's European championship debut as she headed home on just six minutes after Belgian keeper Justien Odeurs had tipped a free kick into the crossbar. Van de Sanden capitalised on a superb cross from Lieke Martens from the left wing that found her face to face with helpless Norway keeper Ingrid Hjelmseth.

Pleasing Utrecht's sold-out Galgenwaard stadium, the Dutch were on the front foot throughout the game, with Martens and Arsenal striker Anna Miedema a constant threat. Martens was denied

twice by Hjelmseth early into the game as the keeper first cleared her shot in the first minute following a cross from van de Sanden, then tipped another over the bar ten minutes later.

Miedema, who turned only 21 on Saturday, sent two shots wide after halftime, then another five minutes from the end. "There was team work, there was fighting spirit, and we also wanted to play good football," said Dutch coach Sarina Wiegman.

"Today all those ingredients were there. That's something to be proud of." Norway had a good chance in the second minute when Kristine Minde chipped the ball over Dutch keeper Sari van Veenendaal but failed to find the goal. Norway's coach Martin Sjogren said the hosts' victory was "fair".

"We had major problems in our attacking game and we ended up very disorganised in defence because of that." Denmark dominated the first half after the early goal and Nadia Nadim almost made it 2-0, but her two shots

were blocked by the Belgian defence—the second one with an arm but no penalty was awarded.

"We played a decent first half and we deserved to score," said Denmark coach Nils Nielsen. "In the second half Belgium started causing us trouble and it was a bit tough but my players fought hard for the win and I am happy about that."

Belgium stepped up their pressure after halftime, but Janice Cayman flicked Maud Coutereels's header into Danish keeper Stina Petersen who also stopped a low shot from Tessa Wullaert, Belgium's offensive gem. Belgium got the closest to scoring just before the end when Danish defender Simone Boye deflected Wullaert's free kick into the crossbar with a header.

"We started off with too much respect for Denmark and in awe of the finals but at half-time I told them not to show Denmark that much respect... it's a pity we didn't equalise," said Belgium coach Ives Serneels. — AFP



# Kuwait Times <sup>55</sup> BUSINESS

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**Air France wins pilots' nod for low-cost airline**

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**EasyJet chief executive flies into British TV firm's top job**

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**Emirates, flydubai announce extensive partnership deal**

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## CHINA BULLS KEEP STOCKS NEAR RECORD HIGH



BEIJING: A woman carries an umbrella past a shopping mall's window with reflection of construction buildings at the Central Business District in Beijing yesterday. — AP

# CHINA ECONOMY POSTS STEADY GROWTH AMID RISKS

GOVT TO ACCELERATE MARKET OPENING, EXPAND IMPORTS: XI

**BEIJING:** China posted better-than-expected second quarter growth yesterday, but analysts warned that the momentum will not last as authorities clamp down on rising debt.

The economy expanded 6.9 percent in April-June, the same as the previous three months and better than the 6.8 percent tipped in an AFP survey. "The national economy has maintained the momentum of steady and sound development in the first half of 2017, laying a solid foundation for achieving the annual target and better performance," national statistics bureau spokesman Xing Zhihong said.

"However, we must be aware that there are still many unstable and uncertain factors abroad and long-term structural contradictions remain prominent at home," Xing told reporters. Industrial production grew 7.6 percent in June while retail sales were up 11 percent, both better than the previous month, according to the official data. But analysts expect a deceleration of the overall economy. "China's strong first half to the year won't last," Julian Evans-Pritchard, China economist at Capital Economics, said in a note. "The recent crackdown on financial risks has driven a slowdown in credit growth, which will weigh on the economy during the second half of this year," he said.

### Crackdown on risk

Debt-fueled investment in infrastructure and real estate has underpinned China's growth for years but Beijing has launched a crackdown over fears of a potential financial crisis. Fitch Ratings on Friday maintained its A-plus rating for the country for China but said its growing debt could trigger "economic and financial shocks". The statement followed Moody's decision in May to downgrade China for the first time in almost three decades on concerns over its ballooning credit and slowing growth.

### Market opening

President Xi Jinping said yesterday China will accelerate market opening and clear administrative hurdles to boost foreign investment, while stepping up financial regulation to fend off risks.

China should quicken the pace to eliminate restrictions on foreign capital in areas such as baby products, elderly care, architecture design, accounting, auditing, logistics, and e-commerce, Xi told the Communist Party's financial and economic leading group in a regular meeting, as reported by state radio. "We need to continue to utilize foreign investment to push forward supply-side reform and elevate our economy to catch up with the global innovation pace," Xi said.

"We must push forward market opening faster in areas that protects consumer rights, increase financial competition and fend off financial risks."

Foreign companies have long complained about a ban on them entering certain strategically important sectors and requirements to hold a minority share in the form of a joint venture with local firms even in sectors they are allowed to participate in. Xi said China should create a new basic law governing foreign investment and set a deadline to get rid of existing rules that are against market-opening principles. "Foreign firms should be treated fairly," Xi was reported as saying. He stressed excessive checks and penalties against foreign firms should be cleared and reduced.

China will also expand imports while keeping exports steady, Xi said. It would keep its yuan currency basically stable and its exchange rate within a "reasonable" range, he was reported as saying.

The government will continue to deleverage the economy through prudent monetary policy and by reducing leverage in state-owned enterprises, Xi said. The conference showed that authorities will intensify financial regulation "unprecedentedly, through a much more centralized and empowered organizational set-up," ANZ's China economist Raymond Yeung said in a note. "Debt reduction will become an important consideration in monetary policy," Yeung said, predicting more corporate defaults and a tightening of credit policy among banks. Despite the economic deleveraging, however, "we do not think this event will trigger an immediate monetary tightening."

### 'Gradual slowdown'

Analysts expect tighter restrictions on property purchases and bank lending will continue to weigh on the economy in the months ahead. But a sharp slowdown in the second half is unlikely as policymakers prepare for an important Communist Party congress later this year that will likely cement Xi's place as the most powerful leader in a generation. "It is therefore highly probable that authorities will use the resources and policy tools at their disposal to ensure a positive economic outcome," Citibank said in a note.

The government has trimmed its 2017 growth target to around 6.5 percent, after it expanded 6.7 percent in 2016 — its slowest rate in more than a quarter of a century. While the Nomura Group raised its 2017 growth forecast from 6.7 percent to 6.8 percent, the Tokyo-based financial firm said in a note that it still expects a "gradual slowdown" as the property sector appears set to "lose steam" in the second half. Premier Li Keqiang said last month that the country could reach this year's economic growth targets. Last quarter's growth momentum had continued into the current one, he said, noting that traditional economic indicators such as power generation and consumption, and new business orders had increased "significantly". —Agencies

## ABK RECORDS SOLID H1 NET PROFIT OF KD 16.2 MILLION

BANK POSTS 7.7% PROFIT GROWTH OVER 2016

**KUWAIT:** Building on its positive results for the first quarter of 2017, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait yesterday announced a net profit of KD 16.2 million for the first half of 2017, marking a 7.7 percent growth. Operating profit reached KD 46.8 million compared to KD 44.2 million in the first half of 2016, recording a 6 percent growth. Earnings per Share (EPS) is 10 fils, compared to 9 fils in first half of 2016. Total assets as at end of June 2017 reached

KD 4.33 billion up 1 percent compared to end of December 2016. Asset quality remained strong with NPL ratio at 2.52 percent and NPL coverage increasing to 293 percent from 281 percent in December 2016. Capital adequacy ratio was robust at 16.41 percent.

Commenting on the Bank's results, Chairman of Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait, Talal Behbehani said: "Our positive performance continues to pave the way for further developments within the ABK group. We are proud to have celebrated our 50th anniversary in May, and we look forward to further building on the great history of this Bank. We are keen to

maintain our management approach, which has proven successful especially in the midst of the market challenges and strong competition in the Kuwait market. I am confident moving forward and we look forward to a good year."

Michel Accad, Chief Executive Officer, said: "This year has started on a positive note, and we have continued to perform and deliver at the expected levels. Our benchmark debut issue from our recently established \$1.5 billion Euro Medium-Term Note (EMTN) program was very well received from the global markets. We are implementing our Simpler Banking strategy that is the driving force for the Bank, and last but not least defining strategic opportunities that will work in favor of our expansion plans, and further solidify our presence in the Kuwait market and the region as a whole.

ABK-Egypt has delivered very strong profit and growth and continues to operate at a healthy pace. All 39 branches have now been rebranded and we are currently enhancing the customer experience and revamping the inside of the branch-



Talal Behbehani



Michel Accad

es." ABK was recently awarded the 'Best Retail Bank in Kuwait' for 2017 by the Asian Banker, for the second consecutive year, 'Best Retail Bank' from The European, 'a Thomson Reuters affiliate', 'Best Commercial Bank in Kuwait' for the second consecutive year, 'Best New Brand in Egypt' by Banker Middle East, 'Bank of the Year' by Arabian Business Magazine -highlighting the Bank's series of milestones and achievements that have been recorded throughout the past year and 'Employer of the Year' by Naseba for the second consecutive year in

recognition of its substantial 'Working Culture and achievements all round'.

### Financial performance summary

- Underlying operating profit of KD 46.8 million, up 6 percent.
- Underlying net profit of KD 16.2 million, up 7.7 percent reflecting strategic management actions under challenging market conditions.
- Underlying total shareholders' equity of KD 555 million.
- Underlying Earnings per Share (EPS) at 10 fils in H1 2017, up 11 percent compared same period last year.

## IMF HAILS FRENCH REFORMS UNDER MACRON

**PARIS:** The IMF yesterday hailed French President Emmanuel Macron's "ambitious" reform program, saying his spending, labor and tax overhauls could go "a long way" towards tackling high unemployment and weak growth.

The International Monetary Fund raised its 2017 growth forecast for France by 0.1 points to 1.5 percent and said it could "further accelerate" next year. "The new government is pushing ahead with an ambitious economic program to make France's economy more dynamic and its public finances sustainable," the IMF said after its annual analysis of the French economy.

"The envisaged labor and tax reforms are aimed at boosting growth, employment and competitiveness," it added. It also said the centrist government formed by Macron, a 39-year-old for-

mer banker, "has rightly emphasized" the need to decrease public spending.

A less profligate approach will "help gradually reduce the budget deficit and debt," the Washington-based IMF said. Macron's government has pledged to meet the EU deficit limit of 3.0 percent of GDP in 2017, a target France has missed for the past decade.

It has identified 4.5 billion euros (\$5.1 billion) in savings across government departments this year. Local governments will also have to tighten their belts, Budget Minister

Gerald Darmanin said yesterday, announcing 13 billion euros in funding cuts for towns, departments and regions by 2022. Former economy minister Macron took over from Socialist president Francois Hollande in May after beating far-

right leader Marine Le Pen in the presidential election.

Macron has vowed to make France more attractive to investors by slashing corporate and payroll taxes and liberalizing the labor market. He also wants to cut 120,000 civil service jobs by the end of his five-year term to help fund a 50-billion-euro investment program.

In June, his fledgling *Republique En Marche* (Republic on the Move) party, which claims to be neither of the left nor the right, won a resounding majority in elections to the National Assembly.

The IMF said Macron's "strong political mandate" and the improving economic conditions give him a "unique window of opportunity" to implement his agenda. — AFP







## ECOLOG APPOINTS ADIL TOUBIA AS VICE CHAIRMAN, CEO

**DUBAI:** Ecolog, a Dubai-based leading provider of supply chain, construction, technology, facility management, and environmental services, is pleased to announce the appointment of Adil Toubia as Vice Chairman & CEO. As a well-recognized global executive in the oil and gas industry, Toubia brings to Ecolog a wealth of experience and a long list of recognized achievements. His stellar background perfectly aligns with Ecolog's strategic development and vision to become the pacesetter in its field of activities. Ecolog, currently working in more than 35 countries, provides turnkey and customized support solutions to governments, defense, humanitarian organizations and commercial clients in the sectors of Oil & Gas, Mining, Energy, and Infrastructure.



Adil Toubia

Toubia is the former world-wide president of the Wireline and Drilling divisions at Schlumberger, the world's leading oilfield services company, where he worked for more than two decades and held various executive roles. "Ecolog is very pleased to have found the perfect individual to steer us into deeper specialization and optimization as we continue our global expansion," said Nazif Destani, Ecolog Founder and Chairman. "Adil's vast knowledge and proven track record make him uniquely qualified to



lead Ecolog during this exciting time of growth."

From 2012 to 2014, Toubia was Global CEO of Siemens Oil & Gas Division, at Euro 5 billion turnover with 17,500 people. He last served as Group CEO of Al-Ghurair Investment, and has previously held top executive positions with Energy Capital Group and GCC Energy Fund, private equity firms making investments in the energy and power sectors.

"I am delighted to join Ecolog and totally committed to our company

reaching market leadership and becoming the most recognized name in our industry," Toubia said. "I'm very impressed with the company's global expansion and its growing list of contracts, and I plan to build on the good initiatives already launched."

Ecolog also is happy to announce that outgoing CEO Paul Broekhuijsen, under whose leadership Ecolog reached new levels in its goals and operations, will continue to contribute his expertise as he moves to the holding, nd GROUP B.V. in Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

Ecolog is a leading global provider of customized camp facility and infrastructure services, supply chain and logistic solutions, and environmental services to Governments, Humanitarian

organizations and Commercial market sectors like Oil & Gas, Mining, Energy, and Retail.

Since the start of the company two decades ago, Ecolog has successfully performed over 1,100 projects. With an extensive network of operations of more than 150 locations and with about 12,000 people actively available in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, Ecolog is able to quickly mobilize new operations as well as develop robust supply chains and total service solutions on a global scale. Ecolog has a strong and proven track record in delivering on-time and high-quality solutions that enhance the living and working conditions of the people it serves.

## EMIRATES, FLYDUBAI ANNOUNCE EXTENSIVE PARTNERSHIP DEAL

### AGREEMENT TO OFFER CUSTOMERS UNMATCHED TRAVEL OPTIONS

**KUWAIT:** Emirates and flydubai yesterday unveiled an extensive partnership which will see the two Dubai-based airlines join forces to offer customers unmatched travel options. Both airlines will continue to be managed independently, but will leverage each other's network to scale up their operations and accelerate growth.

The innovative partnership goes beyond code-sharing and includes integrated network collaboration with coordinated scheduling. The new model will give flydubai customers seamless connectivity to Emirates' worldwide destinations spanning six continents. For Emirates' customers, it opens up flydubai's robust regional network.

The two airlines will also further develop their hub at Dubai International, aligning their systems and operations to ensure a seamless travel experience through the ultra-modern airport; currently the world's busiest for international passengers.

Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Group and Chairman of flydubai, said: "This is an exciting and significant development for Emirates, flydubai, and Dubai aviation. Both airlines have grown independently and successfully over the years, and this new partnership will unlock the immense value that the complementary models of both companies can bring to consumers, each airline, and to Dubai."

Emirates today has a wide-body fleet of 259 aircraft, flying to 157 destinations (including 16 cargo-only points). flydubai operates 58 New-Generation Boeing 737 aircraft to 95 destinations. The current combined network compris-

es 216 unique destination points. The partnership is working to optimize the networks and schedules of both airlines, to open up new city-pair connections offering consumers greater choice. Additionally, this will help both airlines feed more traffic into each other's complementary networks. By 2022, the combined network of Emirates and flydubai is expected to reach 240 destinations, served by a combined fleet of 380 aircraft.

The Emirates and flydubai teams are working together on a number of initiatives span-

ning commercial, network planning, airport operations, customer journey, and frequent flyer programs alignment.

The partnership will be rolled out over the coming months, with the first enhanced code-sharing arrangements starting in the last quarter of 2017. Further details will be communicated as they become available.

Fully owned by the Investment Corporation of Dubai (ICD), both Emirates and flydubai are operated independently and under separate management teams.



Stewart Lockie, GM Retail Banking - ABK and Ali Al-Mousa, Assistant Manager Service Quality - ABK with the ISO certificate.

## ABK RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL QUALITY CERTIFICATION - ISO 9001-2015

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently received the ISO 9001-2015 certificate for Service Quality Management a highly recognized certification. ISO is an international rating system used to classify the applicable standards, which requires a high quality professional service performance. Upon receiving the certification, Stewart Lockie GM Retail Banking at ABK said: "Applying ISO's system of international standards at ABK is of

extreme importance, as it reflects positively on the Bank's customer service and reaffirms that the Bank is operating in line with international standards".

ABK has received a number of awards throughout the year including: 'Best Bank' by Arabian Business, 'Best Retail Bank' by Asian Banker, 'Best Commercial Bank' by Banker Middle East, as well as being recognized by Euromoney for the 'Most Innovative Bank' in 2016.

## STERLING SLIPS BACK BELOW \$1.31 AS BREXIT TALKS BEGIN

**LONDON:** Sterling slipped back below \$1.31 yesterday after soaring to its highest levels in 10 months at the end of last week on a broad dollar sell-off. Traders were cautious as four days of Brexit negotiations began in Brussels.

The pound jumped almost 2 cents on Friday to hit \$1.3113 <GBP=D3, its strongest since last September, after U.S. inflation and retail sales data came in weaker than expected, putting into doubt the prospect of a further rate hike from the Federal Reserve this year.

But sterling started the week by edging down from those highs, trading down 0.1 percent on the day at \$1.3089 and flat against the euro at 87.50 pence, still close to a three-week peak hit on Friday. Brexit Secretary David Davis, in the Belgian capital for talks with the European Union's chief negotiator Michel Barnier a month after a first meeting, said on Monday that having "made a good start" during their last encounter, "this week we'll be getting into the real substance".

With less than two years to settle divorce terms before Britain leaves, deal or no deal, on March 30, 2019, the 27 other EU national leaders want British Prime Minister Theresa May to rally her divided nation swiftly behind a clear, detailed plan that can minimize economic and social disruption across Europe.

Investors will be watching the talks closely, with any signs that Britain will lose preferential access to Europe's single market likely to weigh on the currency. "It seems that the British government wants to (take) major steps towards the EU in the upcoming round of negotiations... It has for example admitted by now that it would meet its financial obligations towards the EU — an auspicious beginning," wrote Commerzbank analysts in a note to clients.

"The situation remains difficult for the pound, however, as the recent reports of domestic political quarrels in the UK show... In the short term, it may not be a breakdown of the Brexit negotia-

tions, but a breakdown of the British government which is the biggest risk for sterling."

British finance minister Philip Hammond was the subject of a number of newspaper stories over the weekend, including one which said he had called public sector workers "overpaid". The finance minister said he was being attacked for his Brexit views. Some analysts, though, said sterling's main drivers at the moment were less about politics and more about the economy and the outlook for monetary policy. Recent warnings from Bank of England policymakers that interest rates could be set to rise have provided support to the currency.

Investors will be watching British inflation data due today closely. "It seems that monetary policy is having more weight than the Brexit talks; if Tuesday's inflation figures from the UK surprise to the upside, expect sterling to continue rallying," wrote FXTM strategist Hussein Sayed. — Reuters

## US FIRMS FACE HIRING DIFFICULTIES: SURVEY

**WASHINGTON:** A growing share of US employers are struggling to hire new workers and some have raised wages as a result, according to a survey released yesterday.

The National Association of Business Economists said its quarterly survey showed members were a little less sanguine about the prospects for strong economic expansion over the next year, although most still expect sustained quarterly growth of better than two percent. With unemployment already very low, anecdotal reports indicate employers around the country are struggling to fill open positions and have been obliged to boost compensation to lure in new candidates.

But official figures show only sluggish wage growth and weak inflation with average hourly earnings disappointingly up less than 0.2 percent in June something that has puzzled policymakers at the Federal Reserve, although it has not yet prompted them to alter their course of gradual interest rate increases.

"Slightly over one third of panelists reports that their firms have experienced some difficulty in hiring," NABE survey chair Emily Kolinski said in a statement. The survey of 101 NABE

members showed rising sales, profits, hiring and capital spending.

However, "Pricing power-or lack of it-and labor costs are generating some headwinds for a significant number of firms," she said. The share of firms reporting increased wages rose eight points from April to 47 percent. But expectations that wages will keep rising over the next three months rose only three points, also to 47 percent.

Half of firms reported gains in sales, up from 45 percent in April. About 60 percent of respondents said they expected GDP to expand by more than two percent over the next four quarters, but the share foreseeing growth under two percent rose eight points to 38 percent.

Kolinski, chief economist at Ford Motor Company, said firms have not changed course on hiring and investment decisions based on any hope of stimulus from the Trump administration, which has vowed to slash taxes and regulation. And just 12 percent said it was likely they would revisit long-term strategies in light of President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the 2015 Paris Climate accord, while 50 percent said this was unlikely. — AFP

## WHITE HOUSE SAYS BUDGET DEFICIT TO BE \$99BN HIGHER THIS YEAR

**WASHINGTON:** The White House says worsening tax revenues will cause the budget deficit to jump to \$702 billion this year. That's a \$99 billion spike from what was predicted less than two months ago.

The report from the Office of Management and Budget comes on the heels of a rival Congressional Budget Office analysis that scuttled White House claims that its May budget, if implemented to the letter, would balance the federal ledger within 10 years. The OMB report doesn't repeat that claim and instead provides just two years of updated projections. The White House budget office also says the deficit for the 2018 budget year that starts on Oct. 1 will increase by \$149 billion to \$589 billion. But lawmakers are already working on spending bills that promise to boost that number even higher by adding to Trump's Pentagon proposal and ignoring many of Trump's cuts to domestic programs.

Last year's deficit registered \$585 billion. The White House kept the report to a bare-bones minimum and cast blame on "the failed policies of the previous administration." "The rising near-term deficits underscore the critical need to

restore fiscal discipline to the nation's finances," said White House budget director Mick Mulvaney. "Our nation must make substantial changes to the policies and spending priorities of the previous administration if our citizens are to be safe and prosperous in the future." In late May, Trump released a budget plan proposing jarring cuts to domestic programs and promising to balance the budget within a decade. But it relied on rosy predictions of economic growth to promise a slight surplus in 2027. Trump's budget, however, left alone Social Security retirement benefits and Medicare, though House Republicans are poised next week to again propose cutting Medicare as they unveil their nonbinding budget outline.

CBO says that Trump relied on far too optimistic predictions of economic growth and that Trump's rosy projections are the chief reason his budget doesn't balance as promised.

Trump's budget predicts that the US economy will soon ramp up to annual growth in gross domestic product of 3 percent; CBO's long-term projections predict annual GDP growth averaging 1.9 percent. — AP



SHENYANG: New cars are seen in a parking lot of the Brilliance factory in Shenyang, in China's northeast Liaoning province yesterday. — AFP

## OECD CALLS ON AUSTRIA TO SPEED UP DIGITAL TRANSITION

**VIENNA:** The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) warned Austria that its transition towards digitalization was lagging behind most rich countries, and that the gaps relative to the others have even widened in recent years.

"The differences are particularly striking for tasks related to the internet such as real-time discussions, emailing, or executing transactions online," the Paris-based OECD, a wealthy-country think-tank, said in a report published yesterday.

In particular, Austria's small- and mid-cap companies were slow in adopting innovative information and communications technology, the organization said. Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern set out ambitious objectives for the transition to a digital economy to close those gaps in January, when he introduced a 10-year plan focused on creating jobs and boosting public investment.

His "digital roadmap" aims to provide high-speed broadband internet to the

remotest parts of the Alpine country by 2020. It also outlined an education initiative to start digital education as early as possible and make sure no child leaves school without digital competencies.

The government's plan needs a transparent monitoring system with timelines, and should integrate a digital skills plan for small firm owners and managers, the OECD recommended. It also said that a changing demand in skills had affected the equality of opportunities in Austria.

An education reform project, which started in 2015 and includes measures to increase the autonomy of schools and teachers, should be intensified and special emphasis needs to be put on teacher training. Coordination across the many stakeholders of the Austrian education system, which included different ministries headed by different political parties and different authorities, needed to improve to make sure learning tracks better fit changing labor markets requirements, the OECD said. — Reuters

# OUT OF THE WOODS: THAI HERMITS HARNESS WEB

## CROP OF MYSTICS USE TECH TO CULTIVATE FOLLOWINGS

**KHON KAEN, Thailand:** From communing with forest spirits to whipping up love potions, Thailand's cave-dwelling hermits once conducted their supernatural endeavors with just ancient magic and ritual as their guide. But today's sorcerers are more connected than ever: armed with smart phones, Facebook profiles and business-savvy, a new crop of mystics are harnessing tech to cultivate followings across Asia. "Woah," Toon says ominously as he peers down at an astrological chart on his smartphone, the tips of his scraggly grey beard dangling just above the screen.

"You will have some kind of accident by the end of the month," he tells an AFP reporter, offering to conduct a ceremony to counteract the bad karma. Surrounded by a cornucopia of glittering Buddha statues, eerie dolls and other spiritual trinkets, the 57-year-old uses sacred powders and ointments to conduct his 'good luck' ritual. Several other hermits-known in Thai as "reusee"-are gathered in the teak-wood room in his spacious home in northeastern Thailand.

But hundreds of other disciples abroad are also hanging onto his every word, with a Taiwanese client broadcasting the ceremony on Facebook Live and translating for viewers back home. "His customers and students want to see. They miss him," the Taiwanese woman, Ann Liu, explains as Toon wraps protective string around her husband, a regular client. "He has over 200 students there."

### The jet-set

A former bank employee, Toon is at the forefront of a growing number of 'new age hermits' to crop up in Thailand's spiritual underworld-a densely populated scene of shamans, exorcists and astrologers. While the kingdom is overwhelmingly Buddhist, there is still widespread belief in animistic spirits and ghosts. Toon was called to the spiritual practice 16 years ago, swapping his secular garb for white robes, growing out his beard and decorating his arms in hand-etched tattoos.

Using Facebook and LINE to advertise his services, he has tapped a deep well of overseas intrigue-especially among ethnic Chinese-for rituals and charms aimed at



**THAILAND:** This photograph shows 'hermit' Toon, left, inscribing a protective charm with holy oil on the forehead of a Taiwanese client during a ritual in the northern Thai province of Khon Kaen.



**THAILAND:** This photograph shows a video on the mobile phone of Taiwanese client Ann Lui of Thai 'hermit' Toon performing a ritual in the northern Thai province of Khon Kaen. —AFP photos

boosting business prospects and mending relationship woes. He now has hundreds of followers in places such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Malaysia and Singapore, and travels far and wide to offer spiritual solace. But his jet-setting is on his clients' tab, in a luxury lifestyle that could not be further from the solitary, forest-dwelling existence of his predecessors.

Thailand's traditional hermits were ascetics who disavowed worldly excesses and spent most of their time alone in the jungle, engaged in deep meditation. "Now hermits have to live in towns so they can help people easily," Toon explained to AFP outside his luxurious home-a decorated compound that merges a traditional Thai sala with a modern house, replete with a shiny black SUV in the driveway. "Also, I have a wife and I'm worried she couldn't live in the forest," he added.

### Supernatural boom

Anthropologists say Toon and his 21st century peers, whose numbers are estimated to be around 200 in Thailand, are only the latest players to profit from a "supernatural boom" in Asia. Free-market forces and technology have abetted, rather than diluted, superstitions that can dictate everything from daily routines and business moves to high-level political decisions. Thailand is renowned for its coterie of occult figures and spiritual fads. Unlike other governments in neighboring countries like China and Vietnam that have suppressed folk religions, Thai authorities have given fringe practices a free reign to flourish.

From life-like 'angel dolls' to limited edition protective amulets, superstitious crazes routinely sweep the kingdom, fuelled by celebrity endorsements and media cov-

erage. Many of the must-have charms are aimed at promoting wealth and other modern aspirations. "The reuseses (hermits) fit into the recently emerging popularity of this kind of practice," said Thai anthropologist Visitsya Pithongvijayakul. "A lot of customers, especially business owners, now come to Thailand to seek auspicious power from alternative people other than monks," he added.

It is undoubtedly a lucrative business for people like Toon, whose clients pay hundreds of dollars for the ceremonies. Thanks to the power of the web, he now has more foreign customers than Thais. But he claims his practice hasn't changed at all. "All of my followers are human... and so their thoughts are the same: they want love, they want good luck, and they want to be rich." — AFP

## DELL TECHNOLOGIES EXPLORES NEXT ERA OF HUMAN-MACHINE PARTNERSHIP

**DUBAI:** In 2030 every organization will be a technology organization and as such businesses need to start thinking today about how to future-proof their infrastructure and workforce, according to a report published by Dell Technologies. The research, led by the Institute for the Future (IFF) alongside 20 technology, academic and business experts from across the globe, looks at how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, virtual reality, augmented reality and cloud computing, will transform our lives and how we work over the next decade.

The report titled 'The Next Era of Human-Machine Partnerships' also offers insight on how consumers and businesses can prepare for a society in flux. The report forecasts that emerging technologies, supported by massive advancements

in software, big data and processing power, will reshape lives. Society will enter a new phase in its relationship with machines, which will be characterized by:

Even greater efficiency and possibility than ever before, helping humans transcend our limitations

Humans as "digital conductors" in which technology will work as an extension of people, helping to better direct and manage daily activities.

Work chasing people, in which by using advanced data-driven matchmaking technologies, organizations can find and employ talent from across the world.

People learning "in the moment," as the pace of change will be so rapid that, new industries will be created and new skills will be required to survive.

Dell Technologies commissioned the study to help companies navigate an uncertain world and prepare for the future. Today, digital disruption is ruthlessly redrawing industries. For the first time in modern history, global leaders can't predict how their industry will fare further down the line. According to Dell's Digital Transformation Index, 52 percent of senior decision makers across 16 countries have experienced significant disruption to their industries as a result of digital technologies. And nearly

one in two businesses believe there's a possibility their company will become obsolete within the next three to five years.

"Never before has the industry experienced so much disruption. The pace of change is very real, and we're now in a do-or-die landscape. To leap ahead in the era of human-machine partnerships, every business will need to be a digital business, with software at its core," said Jeremy Burton, chief marketing officer, Dell. "But organizations will need to move fast and build capacity in their machines, ready their infrastructure and enable their workforce in order to power this change."

"We've been exposed to two extreme perspectives about machines and the future: the anxiety-driven issue of technological unemployment or the over-optimistic view that technology will cure all our social and environmental ills," said Rachel Maguire, research director, Institute for the Future. "Instead we need to focus on what the new relationship between technology and people could look like and how we can prepare accordingly. If we engage in the hard work of empowering human-machine partnerships to succeed, their impact on society will enrich us all."

In 2030 humans' reliance on technology will evolve into a true partnership with humans, bringing skills such as creativity, passion and an entrepreneurial mindset. This will align with the machines' ability to bring speed, automation and efficiencies, and the resulting productivity will allow for new opportunities within industries and roles. By 2030 personalized, integrated artificial intelligence (AI) assistants will go well beyond what assistants can do now. They'll take care of us in predictive and automated ways.

Technology won't necessarily replace workers, but the process of finding work will change. Work will cease to be a place but a series of tasks. Machine learning technologies will make individuals' skills and competencies searchable, and organizations will pursue the best talent for discrete tasks. An estimated 85 percent of jobs in 2030 haven't been invented yet. The pace of change will be so rapid that people will learn "in-the-moment" using new technologies such as augmented reality and virtual reality. The ability to gain new knowledge will be more valuable than the knowledge itself.

## ALPHABAY DISAPPEARS: THREE SCENARIOS TO LOOK FOR NEXT

By Rick Holland, VP Strategy at Digital Shadows

The AlphaBay dark web marketplace has been inaccessible since 5 July, 2017. With no substantive explanation from the site's owners, users have speculated that either an exit scam (where administrators steal user crypto currency deposited to the marketplace and shut down the services) or law enforcement action has taken place. Dark web market exit scams are nothing new; the Evolution market exit scam infamously resulted in the loss of 40,000 bitcoins.

These exit scams are one of the risks when conducting business in criminal market places. Recent reports have suggested that international authorities had seized the site, alongside the arrest of one of its alleged operators. Both explanations remained unconfirmed at the time of writing, but with each day that passes the prospect of AlphaBay returning becomes increasingly unlikely. So, what would a post-AlphaBay future look like? We believe there are at least three possible scenarios:



### An older marketplace

As is often the case when a popular marketplace disappears, users will simply migrate to other established sites. Already we have seen former AlphaBay vendors advertising their products on other market places, including Hansa and Dream Market. Sellers have leveraged their AlphaBay vendor ratings as a measure of their trustworthiness and reputation. Relocation is made easier as many established vendors and regular customers would have already had multiple accounts across the major markets.

With AlphaBay seemingly out of the picture, other sites will jostle for supremacy by trying to attract new users through advertising and membership deals. RS Club Market, for example, announced a referral offer on 09 Jul 2017 (a few days after AlphaBay's disappearance) encouraging members to invite new users in return for 30 percent of the site's commission fee. The House of Lions marketplace, similarly, has given AlphaBay sellers an opportunity to negotiate on the vendor fee if they can verify their experience and reputation.

Enlarging your customer base, however, brings its own challenges. Hansa users have reported issues with accessing the site in the last week. As Hansa does not require users to login to view products, a large increase in web traffic may have disrupted the service. Now Hansa administrators have been forced to suspend new registrations as the deal with "technical issues" caused by what they have called an "AlphaBay refugee" influx.

### New marketplace to replace AlphaBay

Some AlphaBay users were so fond of their former haunt that they have created a new iteration of the marketplace, dubbed GammaBay. We discovered the following call to arms by a self-described AlphaBay veteran on Reddit:

At this stage, the GammaBay site is still in its infancy, and the marketplace section remains unfinished. With only 20

members registered on the site so far, it is unlikely the new site will be able to reach the heights of its predecessor. Moreover, with rumors that AlphaBay had been disrupted by law enforcement, many users have expressed a reluctance to register for GammaBay, fearing that the site is actually a honey pot intended to lure in former AlphaBay vendors. Perceived trust in a market will play a large role in its chances of future success.

### Alternative solutions

The fallout from AlphaBay's disappearance could have far-reaching implications for the future of the marketplace model. If an exit scam has taken place, the declining trust in these markets may lead disillusioned users towards alternative methods for conducting online transactions. If law enforcement was responsible, then the risk of legal action will only encourage vendors to seek more secure and anonymized methods of trade.

Although sites such as AlphaBay are very popular for goods such as drugs and credit card information, cybercriminals selling sensitive data or malware variants have frequently opted for direct peer-to-peer (P2P) communication and relationships made on specialized forums. While vendors and customers might lose the convenience of trading on a popular marketplace, they could decide that a P2P model will give them more control and help safeguard against exit scams and loss of funds.

Following the seizure of Silk Road in 2013, some people began working on a new, fully-decentralized marketplace known as OpenBazaar. This open source project is a P2P marketplace that allows the unrestricted sale of goods between anonymous users. OpenBazaar is accessed through a front-end client which can be freely downloaded from the project website. All transactions are made using Bitcoin and are recorded on the project Blockchain as cryptographically signed smart contracts.

### Short, long-term forecasts

In the short-term, we assess that an existing marketplace such as Dream Market or Hansa will most likely fill AlphaBay's shoes. The most successful marketplaces usually have a combination of: a user-friendly interface, administrator support services, attractive fee structures, and - crucially - a strong overall level of stability and reputation among the online community. As perhaps the two most established markets with the largest number of existing users, Dream Market and Hansa are best placed to capitalize.

Nonetheless, as Hansa's recent technical difficulties have highlighted, these sites will have to undertake improvements to ensure their user experience is in line with what members will demand. For Hansa and Dream Market, this will mean minimizing technical issues and refining their associated forum pages, which both pale in comparison to what the AlphaBay forum once offered.

In the long-term, the fall of yet another popular dark web marketplace will only increase calls for a more secure, stable and trustworthy alternative to the current marketplace model. Here we believe P2P models such as that espoused by OpenBazaar have the potential to become increasingly attractive offerings to vendors and customers alike. It remains to be seen when a suitable platform will finally break through and disrupt the market. Digital Shadows will continue to track the likely demise of AlphaBay and its successors.





**PORT DICKSON, Malaysia:** This file picture shows seized ivory tusks kept inside a container before being publicly crushed during an event at the Kuala Alam Waste Management centre in Port Dickson, outside of Kuala Lumpur.—AFP

## MALAYSIA ARRESTS VIETNAMESE MAN FOR IVORY SMUGGLING

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysian authorities have arrested a Vietnamese man and seized a stash of elephant ivory worth almost \$70,000, an official said yesterday, highlighting the country's role as a hub for the wildlife-smuggling trade. The man was detained Friday at Kuala Lumpur's main international airport after flying into the country from Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, said airport customs chief Hamzah Sundang. Officials stopped the suspected smuggler whose identity was not revealed in the airport terminal as he was acting suspiciously. When they checked his luggage, they found 10 packages containing elephant ivory weighing 36 kilograms that had been cut into small pieces, which activists said was likely going to be fashioned into jewelry. Authorities said the haul was worth about 300,000 ringgit (almost \$70,000). The man had been due to travel on to Vietnam, where there is high demand for ivory which

is prized locally for decorative purposes and in traditional medicine. The latest seizure underlines Malaysia's role as a transit point in the global wildlife smuggling trade. Earlier this month, Hong Kong customs officials discovered 7.2 tons of ivory tusks in a shipment from Malaysia. The global trade in elephant ivory, with rare exceptions, has been outlawed since 1989 after populations of the African giants dropped from millions in the mid-20th century to around 600,000 by the end of the 1980s. Anyone found guilty of importing rare animals or their parts into Malaysia can be jailed for up to three years and fined. Kanitha Krishnasamy, acting regional director for wildlife trade monitoring network Traffic, hailed the latest discovery by Malaysian authorities, which follows recent seizures of rhino horns and pangolins. She said the operations were "crippling illegal traders from profiting from this business".—AFP

## HEARING IS BELIEVING: SPEECH MAY BE A CLUE TO MENTAL DECLINE

**NEW YORK:** Your speech may, um, help reveal if you're uh ... developing thinking problems. More pauses, filler words and other verbal changes might be an early sign of mental decline, which can lead to Alzheimer's disease, a study suggests. Researchers had people describe a picture they were shown in taped sessions two years apart. Those with early-stage mild cognitive impairment slid much faster on certain verbal skills than those who didn't develop thinking problems. "What we've discovered here is there are aspects of language that are affected earlier than we thought," before or at the same time that memory problems emerge, said one study leader, Sterling Johnson of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This was the largest study ever done of speech analysis for this purpose, and if more testing confirms its value, it might offer a simple, cheap way to help screen people for very early signs of mental decline. Don't panic: Lots of people say "um" and have trouble quickly recalling names as they age, and that doesn't mean trouble is on the way. "In normal aging, it's something that may come back to you later and it's not going to disrupt the whole conversation," another study leader, Kimberly Mueller, explained. "The difference here is, it is more frequent in a short period," interferes with communication and gets worse over time. The

study was discussed Monday at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in London. **Indicators of struggle** About 47 million people worldwide have dementia, and Alzheimer's is the most common type. In the US, about 5.5 million people have the disease. Current drugs can't slow or reverse it, just ease symptoms. Doctors think treatment might need to start sooner to do any good, so there's a push to find early signs. Mild cognitive impairment causes changes that are noticeable to the person or others, but not enough to interfere with daily life. It doesn't mean these folks will develop Alzheimer's, but many do - 15 to 20 percent per year. To see if speech analysis can find early signs, researchers first did the picture-description test on 400 people without cognitive problems and saw no change over time in verbal skills. Next, they tested 264 participants in the Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer's Prevention, a long-running study of people in their 50s and 60s, most of whom have a parent with Alzheimer's and might be at higher risk for the disease themselves. Of those, 64 already had signs of early decline or developed it over the next two years, according to other neurological tests they took.—AP

# KICKING UP A STINK: UKRAINE'S LVIV BLIGHTED BY TRASH CRISIS

MAYOR BLAMES CRISIS ON GARBAGE BLOCKADE

**LVIV, Ukraine:** Ukraine's western city of Lviv is famous for its picture-postcard graceful domes and cobblestone streets but it's not such a pretty sight in the back alleys, which are blighted by growing mountains of garbage. Waste has not been removed from some neighborhoods in the city of 700,000 people since May, with the stench scaring off tourists and a rat infestation threatening public health. The trash piles have built up due to an apparent political impasse between the Ukrainian government and the authorities in the city, arguably the most European-looking in the post-Soviet nation.

Kiev accuses Lviv's mayor of failing to handle waste management but the mayor blames the crisis on a "garbage blockade". Last month, locals took action into their own hands, blocking city streets to protest about the situation, with some even setting fire to the mounds of waste. Lviv resident Mariya Sydorovych, 58, said that despite summer heat of more than 30 degrees Celsius she does not dare open the windows. "It's just an indescribable stink. Some rubbish piles have reached the level of the second floor," she said. "We have garbage cans near the playground. Children have not been playing there for weeks, because they cannot stand it." Doctors share residents' concerns about the possible deterioration of the health of the city's inhabitants. "If we do not ensure removal of garbage from Lviv in time, we could face dangerous consequences for the health of Lviv residents," Volodymyr Zub, the city council's health department chief, said.

"Such a situation can lead to frequent and prolonged outbreaks of intestinal infections. Under such conditions, the number of rodents that are carriers of dangerous diseases may increase." While many locals accuse city authorities of causing the crisis, Lviv mayor Andriy Sadoviy said that it was impossible to move the rubbish out of the city because of a "garbage blockade".

### Mismanagement or politics?

He said the problem started in May 2016 when the main landfill for Lviv's waste caught



**UKRAINE:** A woman throws rubbish to a pile of garbage in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv.—AFP

fire and four firefighters died, prompting state authorities to shut down the site. "But since then we have a problem of where to move our 600 tons of garbage daily," 48-year-old bespectacled Sadoviy lamented. "With 5,500 landfills in Ukraine, I thought that we would be able to solve the problem but all these landfills began to close to my city one after another."

The embattled mayor went further, accusing the government of pressuring landfill owners across the country not to accept refuse from Lviv in order to discredit him not just as mayor, but also as leader of the Samopomich political party. Sadoviy was once an ally of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko but Samopomich (Self-Reliance) left the president's ruling coalition bloc last year, joining the opposition. "The reason (for the blockade) is that we prevent the authorities from realizing undemocratic plans," Sadoviy said.

"This is a political issue more than economic," Vadym Karasyov, the head of Kiev-based Institute of Global Strategies, said. "If Sadoviy did not pretend to be a politician of national scale the problem would be resolved much faster." With Sadoviy and central authorities locked in a war of words, the Kiev government has rejected claims of a blockade, saying Lviv city hall is at the root of the waste dilemma.

The conflict reached a new level last month as three lawmakers from Sadoviy's party went on a six-day hunger strike to put more pressure on Kiev to solve the problem. That pushed Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman to urge the country's municipal authorities to help the western city by accepting the city's garbage at their landfill sites. Groysman said the government was willing to allocate 50 million hryvnias (\$1.9 million, 1.7 million euros) for construction of a new landfill in the Lviv region.—AFP

## DRUG CRISIS CREATES POLLUTION THREAT

**LOWELL:** They hide in weeds along hiking trails and in playground grass. They wash into rivers and float downstream to land on beaches. They pepper baseball dugouts, sidewalks and streets. Syringes left by drug users amid the heroin crisis are turning up everywhere. In Portland, Maine, officials have collected more than 700 needles so far this year, putting them on track to handily exceed the nearly 900 gathered in all of 2016. In March alone, San Francisco collected more than 13,000 syringes, compared with only about 2,900 the same month in 2016.

People, often children, risk getting stuck by discarded needles, raising the prospect they could contract blood-borne diseases such as hepatitis or HIV or be exposed to remnants of heroin or other drugs. It's unclear whether anyone has gotten sick, but the reports of children finding the needles can be sickening in their own right. One 6-year-old girl in California mistook a discarded syringe for a thermometer and put it in her mouth; she was unharmed. "I just want more awareness that this is happening," said Nancy Holmes, whose 11-year-old daughter stepped on a needle in Santa



**MASSACHUSETTS:** In this photo, activist Rocky Morrison, of the 'Clean River Project', holds up a fish bowl filled with hypodermic needles, that were recovered during 2016, on the Merrimack River next to their facility in Methuen, Massachusetts.—AP

Manchester, New Hampshire's largest city, which collected 570 needles in 2016, the first year it began tracking the problem. It has found 247 needles so far this year. Needles turn up in places like parks, baseball diamonds, trails and beaches - isolated spots where drug users can gather and attract little attention, and often the same spots used by the public for recreation. The needles are tossed out of carelessness or the fear of being prosecuted

for possessing them. One child was poked by a needle left on the grounds of a Utah elementary school. Another youngster stepped on one while playing on a beach in New Hampshire. Even if adults or children don't get sick, they still must endure an unsettling battery of tests to make sure they didn't catch anything. The girl who put a syringe in her mouth was not poked but had to be tested for hepatitis B and C, her mother said. Some community advocates are trying to sweep up the pollution.

Rocky Morrison leads a cleanup effort along the Merrimack River, which winds through the old milling city of Lowell, and has recovered hundreds of needles in abandoned homeless camps that dot the banks, as well as in piles of debris that collect in floating booms he recently started setting. He has a collection of several hundred needles in a fishbowl, a prop he uses to illustrate that the problem is real and that towns must do more to combat it. "We started seeing it last year here and there. But now, it's just raining needles everywhere we go," said Morrison, a burly, tattooed construction worker whose Clean River Project has six boats working parts of the 117-mile river.—AP

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Latifa Al-Saleh, Consultant at Loyac's training Department

## LOYAC ORGANIZES 'KNIGHTS OF INDUSTRY'

Loyac organized the "Knights of Industry" in cooperation with Kuwait Industries Union for the age category from 12 to 17 years old as a first stage. 21 students participated in the program that lasted for a week, and will be held again during the period between

August 20 to 24, 2017. The program included workshops at the chamber of commerce and industry on how to build a team, time management, communications skills, in addition to several field visits to the most important factories in Kuwait.

## MOVENPICK HOTEL KUWAIT OFFERS SWIMMING LESSONS FOR CHILDREN



Summer season has opened its doors, and school is on holiday. For this occasion Movenpick Hotel Kuwait - Free Zone decided to create and offer exclusive swimming lessons for children aged 4 to 10, to be conducted by a certified coach. Babysitters will be available to watch over the children. Registrations have begun on 12 July 2017, and families may book their children by simply and conveniently calling the hotel. Not to forget, for a truly refreshing summer, the Lagoon restaurant by the poolside will reopen to serve all our guests with a range of food and cocktails.

Movenpick Hotel Kuwait - Free Zone serves a variety of cuisines in its restaurants, including a gourmet dining experience with five themed, international restaurants and lounges offering all-day dining. Bay's international restaurant is located on the ground floor, overlooking the swimming pool and garden, whilst cozy and casual Al Dente restaurant and cafe has the look, feel

and fare that are authentically Italian. On the other hand, Cuts, a steakhouse restaurant, offers the finest spit-roasted meat selections that are carved at your table alongside trendy food and live entertainment.

Meanwhile, the Garden is the ideal setting to enjoy our lush greenery. Whether you are dining outside or enjoying your sheesha, coffee or tea in one of our private tents, there is no better place to sit back and relax whilst you watch the latest soap operas or football on your own private TV. Finally, Tea Lounge is a sophisticated English-style lounge serving a selection of Movenpick teas, light snacks and pastries. Movenpick Hotel Kuwait - Free Zone is proud of its professional event management, competence and know-how. Movenpick Meeting and Events stands for a professional quality program in our hotel. The program creates perfect conditions to ensure that your meeting, banquet, business event or birthday celebration is a complete success.



## IISM ORGANIZES JUNIOR INVESTITURE

India International School Kuwait had its investiture ceremony for the academic year 2017-2018 on May 9, 2017. It was a graceful occasion where the young students were all prepared to become leaders and discharge the responsibilities entrusted upon them by the school.

The event commenced at 7.30 am - students attired in their respective house col-

ors, marching to the beat of the drums and music added to the grandeur of the event.

Chief Guest Salman Ibrahim (Director - PACE group of institutions) accompanied by the Director of the school Malayil Moosa Koya graced the event.

The Principal F M Basheer Ahmed welcomed the gathering. He introduced all the four houses of IISM - Imperial, Ideal,

Sparkle and Marvel and the importance of their symbolic representations. He also reminded the duties and responsibilities of the leaders.

The head boy Master Eric Paul and head girl Sai Katya with all council members, house captains, vice captains and prefects took the pledge to devote the best of their ability, knowledge, power, duty and disci-

pline in accordance to the vision and mission of the school.

The principal honored the academic toppers of the previous academic year with medals and certificates. The program turned out to be a great success under the guidance of Sr. vice principal Narinder Kaur, vice principals Sophy John, Indulekha Suresh and Saleem K.



## TSC'S GOLD CARD PROGRAM EXPANDS LIST OF PARTNERS

With the prime aim to distinguish the Gold Card customers with exquisite rewards and benefits, The Sultan Center is expanding its list of partners of the TSC loyalty Gold Card program, offering customers a gateway to luxury with a variety of top-notch services.

Launched by TSC last September, the Gold Card was designed to reward the most loyal customers with a unique shopping experience combined with unparalleled benefits; with the expanded partners'

list, the Gold Card members will have access to additional privileges that suits their lifestyle and best reflect their Golden status.

Customers who enter into the Gold Card program will avail unprecedented awards tailor-made exclusively for them including considerable discounts from a variety of individually chosen partners; monthly draws; priority check-out; first to know and so much more. The new partners provide different services catering to all customers'

needs such as: health care services, travel, fitness, children's activities, restaurants and more.

These partners are: Zoughaib Jewelry, Kuwait Airways, KLM Airlines, Zero Zero healthy food, Sama Dental Clinic, Brigitte Khoury Beauty Lounge, ProntoWash, Promenade Ice Skating, Orchid Medical Center, Hollywood Smile Dental clinic, Flex Health Club, Posta plus, TSC Group of Restaurants and Just Ask. In this regard, Ibrahim Dimachk - Loyalty Program

Manager at TSC- said, "TSC is pleased to expand the benefits for the Gold Card customers by adding new partners onboard, which will diversify their choices of rewards that suit their lifestyle and needs"

He added, "The Gold Card loyalty program has succeeded in elevating customers' shopping experience at TSC, therefore we are strictly committed to constantly upgrading the program to satisfy our customers' needs to luxury shopping topped up with rewards".









MUSIC & MOVIES



(From left) British actor Tom Glynn-Carney, British singer, songwriter and actor Harry Styles, British film producer Emma Thomas, British-American film director Christopher Nolan, British actor Jack Lowden, British actor Fionn Whitehead pose on July 16, 2017, during a photo-call at the cinema Ocine in Dunkirk, for the premier of the movie "Dunkirk". — AFP photos



(From left) British actor Tom Glynn-Carney, British singer, songwriter and actor Harry Styles, British actor Jack Lowden and British actor Fionn Whitehead pose during a photo-call at the cinema Ocine in Dunkirk, for the premier of the movie "Dunkirk".

## Harry Styles shines in debut film 'Dunkirk'

The path from pop to screen stardom is strewn with the wreckage of a thousand broken dreams but British singer Harry Styles may have pulled it off first time in wartime epic "Dunkirk". If initial reactions to the big-budget wartime epic—which is released this week—are anything to go by, Styles may be about to join a select club that includes David Bowie and Mark Wahlberg as rare exceptions to the rule. The One Direction singer plays a teenage British soldier desperate to escape northern France in 1940 as German troops push the Allies into the sea.

"Harry put in an amazing performance," said the film's British director Christopher Nolan, the man behind some of the biggest blockbusters ever made. "He very much earned his seat at the table and did a wonderful job," the maker of "Interstellar," "Inception" and "The Dark Knight" told AFP. Critics canvassed after its red-carpet premiere this weekend were also pleasantly surprised by how well the pop star did, with one tweeting "Harry Styles can act!"

The 23-year-old singer trained with the film's stunt crew before the arduous shoot on the same beaches from which 338,000 British, French and Canadian troops were evacuated despite constant shelling and bombing raids in the nine days that became known as the "Miracle of Dunkirk".

### Big gamble

Styles has screen time alongside heavyweights Cillian Murphy, Kenneth Branagh and Mark Rylance in the movie.

But co-star Jack Lowden said neither he nor the film's other big screen first-timers, British actors Fionn Whitehead and Tom Glynn-Carney, looked out of place in such company. "It's remarkable what the boys did," he told AFP. "On a set like this you could pick the wrong two or three guys and they could implode on you. Christopher Nolan took a gamble and it worked." Styles, whose debut solo single "Sign of the Times" topped the charts in 84 countries in May,



British singer, songwriter and actor Harry Styles poses during a photo-call.

admitted that the shoot, which was hampered by bad weather, was tough and that he was "overwhelmed" by his first few days on set. Unlike almost all big Hollywood directors,

Nolan eschews special effects. He insisted on using the actual locations where the events took place, real warships and World War II aircraft and many of the original "little boats" that brought the soldiers safely to England. Nor did he stop filming when gales blasted the French coast, tearing lumps off an historic jetty he had had rebuilt. "The whole film was a bit of a challenge. We were not working in normal film set conditions," Styles told AFP before its premiere in Dunkirk on Sunday. "Chris is very visceral in the way he works, which can be intense at times. It was nothing of course compared to the real story... but yeah it was tough."

### Who's Harry Styles?

Styles's character Alex is one of a group of young soldiers whose ordeal on the beaches is followed over a week in the film. "Alex has this edge to him. He comes off a little more hardened than the other guys. Alex likes the idea of being the tough guy, but he's also really scared," he

said. "It is impossible to know how you would have reacted (in that situation). And luckily we haven't had to."

"Growing up in England you learn a little bit about Dunkirk in school. But because it is not our finest moment it is often washed over and told quite quickly," Styles added. "It is this fairytale story of people who were on the beach and then were picked up and taken home" by the plucky little boats. Nolan, 46, who made his name with "Memento" starring Guy Pearce in 2000, admitted that he didn't really know who Styles was before he began casting for the film.

"My kids talked about him, but I don't think I was that aware of how famous Harry was. "We were looking at thousands and thousands of young men in open casting calls" when Harry put himself forward, he said. "We were determined to cast fresh faces—unknowns ironically... (but) Harry very much earned his seat at the table." — AFP



In this file photo, director George Romero poses with some fans dressed as zombies after accepting a special award during the Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto. — AP

## George A Romero, father of the zombie movie, dead at 77

US filmmaker George A Romero, whose 1968 cult classic "Night of the Living Dead" spawned the zombie movie genre, died on Sunday aged 77. Tributes poured in from Hollywood and beyond for the legendary director who according to his manager Chris Roe passed away "listening to the score of The Quiet Man, one of his all-time favorite films." "He died peacefully in his sleep, following a brief but aggressive battle with lung cancer, and leaves behind a loving family, many friends, and a filmmaking legacy that has endured, and will continue to endure, the test of time," Chris Roe added in a brief statement.

Shot in black-and-white on a budget of just over \$100,000, "Night of the Living Dead" daringly featured black actor Duane Jones as its lead in a script about a group of people attempting to survive an attack by re-animated corpses. Some film scholars later suggested it was a subversive critique of US society

during the 1960s, while its gory realism was reminiscent of footage from the Vietnam war that was airing on American TV at the time. The film went on to gross over \$30 million worldwide, and led to five sequels including "Dawn of the Dead" and "Day of the Dead"—inspiring an entire genre that remains a Hollywood staple to this day, though the director admitted he was himself influenced by Richard Matheson's 1954 novel "I Am Legend".

"Night of the Living Dead" was added by the Library of Congress in 1999 to its National Film Registry for works considered "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant." Other notable works include 1981's "Knightriders", about a traveling medieval reenactment troupe that jousts on motorcycles, and 1982's horror anthology "Creepshow" written by author Stephen King.—AFP

## From Quebec underground, a fresh take on prog rock

If the progressive rockers who briefly dominated the cultural landscape in the 1970s were just getting started today, how would they sound? Perhaps like the band Atsuko Chiba. The Montreal-based group played Sunday on the final night of the 50th anniversary edition of Quebec City's summer festival, which featured massive acts from Metallica to the Backstreet Boys but also aimed to give space to emerging artists. Atsuko Chiba takes inspiration from prog rock, the movement that gained force in the early 1970s and treated music more as classical symphonies than as radio-friendly jingles.

But prog rock, as Atsuko Chiba's guitarist and synthesizer player Kevin McDonald noted, was itself an amalgamation of influences, and the Montreal group casts its net wide. "Wasabi Hands," the opening track off its latest EP, "The Memory Empire," is dominated by a heavy bass as a whirl of guitar effects builds and the tempo switches gears. In a clear departure from classic prog rock, Karim Lakhdar's vocals on the song take their cue from hip-hop and punk, delivering punches in a style reminiscent of Rage Against the Machine's Zack de la Rocha.

"Damonsta Titillates," another track off "The Memory Empire," floats with sci-fi electronics over 10 minutes before exploding into furious guitars and screams. "For me, prog rock has always been about pushing boundaries and trying to do something a little bit different—bringing a tasteful amount of technicality while also trying to write very interesting and evolving musical numbers," McDonald said. All five members of Atsuko Chiba grew up listening to King Crimson, one of the pioneering prog rock bands.

"We are fans of prog rock for sure—we will wear that influence pretty proudly," McDonald said with a laugh. "But we're also fans of a whole bunch of other things, too, like hip-hop and punk and rock music and electronic music." Atsuko Chiba, which sounds like the name of a Japanese woman,

has no connection to Japan. McDonald chose the moniker on a whim as the band formed six years ago after watching the anime film "Paprika." The group, which released two separate EPs last year, strives for flexibility in form and often lets its songs segue into one another. Atsuko Chiba designed its own studio in a remote industrial area of Montreal where the band jams at night. "We really wanted to build a space that would allow us to be creative and to do our own music and record it and release it on our own," McDonald said.

### Sensual punk from Madagascar

The 11-day festival, known by its French name Festival d'été de Québec, draws some 90,000 people to its giant main stage but also features small stages across the historic provincial capital. One of the more provocative acts to play was The Dizzy Brains, a group from Madagascar that transports the energy of punk rock to the island nation's politics. Playing for a small but enthusiastic crowd, frontman Eddy Andrianarisoa wasted little time before casting away his T-shirt and triumphantly declaring that in Quebec City he had the freedom to show the sexuality of the music.

The Dizzy Brains—whose rage-filled garage rock guitar is infused, like The Clash before them, with the rhythmic sounds of ska—have found a growing audience overseas with protest anthems such as "Vangy," which takes on corruption in Madagascar. "It's not easy living with all those cops ready to shoot at you/ If you bring it on too much, man, they bare their fangs," he sings in Malagasy. The Quebec festival had one of its more experimental headliners Saturday with Gorillaz, the side project of Blur's Damon Albarn.

Envisioned as a "virtual band" of animated characters, Gorillaz in its stage version was clearly real with Albarn playing with guests including rising R&B singer Kelela—but the "members" of the group appeared behind them as cartoon actors. — AFP



Damon Albarn of the English band Gorillaz performs for the first time at the Quebec City Summer Festival.



Ethiopian-American singer Kelela performs on stage.



The Quebec group Atsuko Chiba performs on stage.



Madagascar's Eddy (left) and Mahefa (right) of The Dizzy Brains performs on stage.



The Quebec group Atsuko Chiba performs on stage.

## Jay-Z extends record for No. 1 albums - one week late

Rap mogul Jay-Z on Sunday extended his record as the solo artist with the most number-one US albums, after a one-week delay when his Tidal streaming service declined to release data. "4:44" debuted at the top of the Billboard album sales chart for the week through Thursday, replacing rapper DJ Khaled's "Grateful" and marking Jay-Z's 14th number one, tracking service Nielsen Music said.

Jay-Z expanded his lead as the solo artist with the most number-one albums since the chart's creation in its current form in 1956. Bruce Springsteen and Barbra Streisand are tied in second place at 11. Among all artists, Jay-Z trails only The Beatles who have 19 number-one albums in the United States. Unusually for such a high-profile release, "4:44" entered the chart only on its second week after Jay-Z released it on CD, Apple's iTunes and rival streaming services—with the

exception of Spotify. It sold 262,000 units.

Jay-Z released the album on June 30 as an exclusive on his Tidal streaming service, which is partly owned by telecom operator Sprint. Tidal, which has been trying to close Spotify's sizable lead as the biggest streaming service, did not release data for its first week. Tidal, which is privately held by entrepreneurs led by Jay-Z, has been guarded about releasing its streaming figures publicly. Sprint also gave away free downloads of "4:44," which would be ineligible for the chart under Nielsen Music's criteria. The album, Jay-Z's first in four years, won favorable reviews and marked growing introspection from the 47-year-old rapper. Jay-Z on the album apologizes to his wife, pop superstar Beyoncé, for infidelity, references their newborn twins and supports his mother as she comes out as lesbian. — AFP

# Oscar-winning actor **Martin Landau** dies at 89



This file photo shows US actor Martin Landau kissing the Oscar he received for Best Supporting Role at the 67th annual Academy Awards in Los Angeles. — AFP photos

Veteran actor Martin Landau, whose versatile screen career stretched from the 1960s TV series "Mission: Impossible" to his Oscar-winning turn as Bela Lugosi in "Ed Wood," has died at 89, his publicist said Sunday. Brooklyn-born Landau died Saturday of unexpected complications during a hospital stay in Los Angeles, according to a statement issued by publicist Dick Guttman. "We are overcome with sadness to report the death of iconic actor Martin Landau," said the statement. "He had just celebrated his 89th birthday."

Screenwriter Joss Whedon said Landau's turn as philandering eye doctor and brother of Jerry Orbach in Woody Allen's 1989 "Crimes and Misdemeanors" was "perfect." "RIP Martin Landau," he added on Twitter. Landau got his start on Broadway in the 1950s, before a 1959 film debut in Alfred Hitchcock's classic thriller "North by Northwest." "I had tea with Mr Hitchcock one afternoon and asked him how he could have cast me in that part, because what I was playing in (the play) 'Middle of the Night' was so different," Landau told the Los Angeles Times last year.



This file photo shows actor Martin Landau attending a ceremony for director Tim Burton to place his handprints and footprints in the cement of the forecourt of the TCL Chinese Theatre in the Hollywood, California.

"My dear Mah-tin," Landau said in impersonating the British filmmaker, "you have a circus going on inside you. If you can do that part in the play, you can do this little trinket of mine." Landau's film roles ranged from the grand to the quirky, from "Cleopatra," to "The Greatest Story

Ever Told" and "Nevada Smith." That was before he met with massive success playing the master of disguise Rollin Hand in the "Mission: Impossible" TV series-in which his wife Barbara Bain also starred. He was nominated for three Emmys and a Golden Globe in 1968. Landau also starred alongside Bain in the 1970s in the British science fiction series "Space: 1999." The couple had two daughters together-actress and ballerina Juliet Landau and producer-director Susan Landau Finch-before divorcing in 1993.

### Lean years, then comeback

He made a strong screen comeback the following decade, starring in Francis Ford Coppola's 1988 "Tucker: The Man and His Dream," and "Crimes and Misdemeanors" the following year. He earned Oscar nominations for both. But it was not until 1994 that he scooped up the Best Supporting Oscar playing declining horror film star Lugosi in his poor, elder years as a morphine addict in Tim Burton's "Ed Wood." He also scooped up a slew of other awards for the role.

"It's weird," Landau recalled about the role in a

1994 interview with the Times. "Tim called me out of the blue. He said, 'You've worked with everybody, you've done very good movies with major directors, you've done tacky, rotten movies with awful directors. You have a presence and there are a lot of things that coincide (with Bela)!' That's how he came to me. I was shocked. He said, 'You popped into my head and I couldn't get you out.'" In recent years, Landau starred on television hits "Entourage" and "Without a Trace."

His leading role with Paul Sorvino in the upcoming "The Last Poker Game" premiered at the 2017 Tribeca Film Festival. "It is being hailed as a major comedy-drama relating to the challenges and complexities of old age but emphasizing that life must be lived fully at any age," his publicist said. Landau, who had a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and was of Jewish heritage, got the Israel Film Festival's Career Achievement Award in 2013. — AFP



The farmers ride on the back of a wooden plough tied to a pair of racing buffaloes during the annual rice planting festival in Chonburi. — AFP photos



Farmers bath a racing buffalo in between racing in a rice paddy field.

## MUD BATHS AND FACEPLANTS: RUNNING OF THE BULLS THAI STYLE

Languidly ploughing flooded paddy-fields, Thailand's buffaloes don't usually strike people as the quickest of beasts. But farmers in eastern Thailand on Sunday showed off their fastest bovines in a unique, muddy speed test. The race is the highlight of an annual rice planting festival in Chonburi, two hours east of the capital Bangkok, where a small group of local farmers try to keep the tradition alive even if most of their fields are now ploughed by tractor.

Throughout the day pairs of buffaloes attached to a wooden plough thundered down a flooded field as human drivers attached by a rope desperately tried to keep up behind their charging beasts. "To win, the buffalo and the racer need to pass the finishing line together," explained Jai Indramaporn, a wizened 73-year-old buffalo owner. "If the racer falls, then he's disqualified."

Many racers found themselves faceplanting into the mud, sparking cheers and laughter from the crowds. But for those who stayed attached and won, glory awaited. For centuries Thais relied on water buffalo to plough their rice paddies, provide transportation and even defend villages during war, but with mechanized farming the animals have seen their importance diminish.

Local official Samart Suksawang said the festival was about reminding youngsters of the crucial role beloved bovines played for farmers in what is one of the world's great rice growing nations. "I want to preserve it so that the new generation can see that in the old days, to do rice farming we used buffalo to plough and rake the rice fields,"



A pair of buffaloes receive a bath in between racing in a rice paddy field.



A buffalo received a bath in between racing in a rice paddy field.



Farmers ride on the back of wooden ploughs tied to pairs of racing buffaloes.



A farmer rides on the back of wooden ploughs tied to pairs of racing buffaloes.

## Tips on hosting an amazing party

By Yalda Golsharifi

As you guys may know, my 31st birthday was a few months ago and I hosted a 'tropical themed' birthday party at my house. I throw a party almost every year for my birthday because I really enjoy the whole process. I love to host my friends and family and celebrate my birthday with them; it makes my birthday so much more enjoyable and special. There are a few tips that I like to follow to guarantee a successful night and avoid getting stressed and overwhelmed which can happen sometimes.

### 1. Avoid stress by hiring a party planner you trust

I always hire a party planner to help me out when throwing a party because it takes away so much stress off my plate and gives me more time to think about the personal touches I'd like to add to the party, which make so much difference to me! "Lets Sparkle" are my favorite party planners because I feel like they understand my taste and what I like and they always manage to get it exactly right which is so important.

### 2. Choosing the right Theme

The theme for my party was "tropical". Choosing a theme first is so important because it will help you to then choose a corresponding design as well as food, music and even your outfit. Not choosing a theme will leave you stuck and overwhelmed with your choices because there is so much out there to choose from so it's always better to narrow it down.

**Food:** Since my theme was tropical, I went for sushi as my choice of food for the night. I chose Ovo Bar to handle the catering and they did an amazing job. We had a sushi bar and canapés which the guests really loved. I did a tasting before my party, which I recommend everyone to do when choosing a catering service.

**Music:** Going with my tropical theme, I set the mood at the beginning of the night with some live music which was a really great way to start and gave a really nice vibe as guests were arriving. Later on in the night was when the DJ started. I chose DJ Hesh to play at my party. He's a good friend of mine

and an amazing DJ that I trust. It was so important to me that my party had the best fresh, new music playing so I made sure to make that happen!

**Outfit:** I chose to go for a colorful, fun dress for my party to match the tropical summery theme. My dress was custom made by Amgad Al Adab, an amazing designer and a good friend of mine. You always want to feel and look your best during your party so make sure to choose something to wear that makes you feel comfortable and beautiful.

As for my make up and hair, Coiffeur 17 hooked me up with a gorgeous hairstyle and Yasmin Othman did a beautiful make up look on me! I always recommend going to someone for hair and make up that you are familiar with and have tried before. If not, then make sure you do a trial look before your party just to make sure you are happy and comfortable with everything before the day.



Photo shows the back garden of the 427-year-old Figueiredo Mansion, a Portuguese heritage home, in Goa, India. — AP photos



Photo shows the dining room of the sprawling Figueiredo Mansion, a 427-year-old Portuguese heritage home in Goa, India.

## Aged Portuguese mansion an oasis of calm in chaotic India

'I knew I would come back to my roots someday'

Age sits lightly on the sprawling, 4-centuries-old Figueiredo Mansion. The home is a lived-in repository of memories tracing to the days when the west-coast Indian state of Goa was a Portuguese colony. The Figueiredo family of Portuguese diplomats, lawyers and parliamentarians began building the mansion in 1590 as they made their home in quaint Loutolim, surrounded by paddy fields and a few neighbors. The family added a second section with similar design to the home 200 years later. Today, about an hour's drive from Goa's airport, a roadside sign reads "Casa Museu VJ De Figueiredo Loutolim" to let visitors know they've reached their destination.

Far from the party beaches and liquor shacks for which Goa is now known, the mansion operates as a homestay and a museum, filled with antique furniture and artifacts from the 17th century. The musty smell of aged wood fills arched corridors, with rooms to both sides. "It's really like Portugal in India," said Portuguese student Purity Lino, 19. "Sometimes I look at the walls and I see something that reminds me of my Mum. Or the smell, only the smell reminds me of my grandmother." Three generations of the Figueiredo family live in the house, a personal, living link to history.

### 'Many, many parties'

At 87, Maria de Lourdes Figueiredo de Albuquerque is frail and speaks slowly, admitting her memory is fading. But her eyes light as she recalls the "many, many parties" hosted in the grand ballroom, with its wall-length mirrors, teak wood floors and Belgian crystal chandeliers. Now the owner of the mansion, Maria de Lourdes grew up in the mansion along with her sister when the family was based in the west Indian state. She moved to Portugal as a young woman, where she witnessed the political turmoil that led to the end of the European country's 451-year colonial rule in Goa in 1961.

A few years later, she became the first female member of Portugal's parliament in 1965-69. Then, two decades ago she returned to Goa to help her sister take care of the home. "We have to watch these things with some respect," she said, her watchful eyes taking stock of the paintings and embroideries adorning the walls. "Because these things are not made every few years. It's once made for ages." When her sister died with no children, Maria de Lourdes inherited. She has ruled out ever selling the property, saying her daughter and grandson would succeed her.



A run-down sign board on the side of the road reads 'Casa Museu VJ De Figueiredo Loutolim' near the 427-year-old Portuguese heritage home in Goa.

Maria de Fatima Figueiredo de Albuquerque, now in her 50s, was born in the house before the end of colonial rule but grew up in Portugal. Two years ago, she left her job as an executive with an international cosmetics company and returned to Goa to help her mother take care of the house. "I knew I would come back to my roots someday," she said, while giving visitors a tour of the museum. Every artifact in the mansion has its own story, and Fatima's narrative helps in bringing some of that composite culture alive for the guests. "This is the ballroom and all the furniture is made in Goa by Goans, and by Hindus, Muslims and Catholics," Fatima said, pointing to a wooden chair with the figures of three Hindu gods carved into the back.

### Family treasure

Nearby, an antique chest of drawers made of ivory, metal, rosewood and teak with images of lions carved into the base is similar to a piece in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. But that is "smaller than this one," Fatima said. "This is the only one that exists with four lions and also in this size." Moving

next through the dining room, Fatima points to another family treasure - a 60-piece crockery set made for the family by the East India Company some 200 years ago. Guests also delight in seeing the family's 350-year old cradle, which Fatima herself was the last to use.

Her own children were born in Portugal. Other treasures included an 18th-century German piano, porcelain vases from China and Japan, mirrors and boxes with intricate gold filigree work and ceiling murals depicting Portuguese explorer Vasco De Gama's journey to India by sea. Taking care of so many treasures was daunting, Fatima said. "I hope that nothing can be broken during my existence in this house." Tourists said the walk through history was fascinating. Many said the mansion felt like a home, with its library stocked with old books in English, French and Spanish. "You don't have this opportunity every day," said Lilianna Sanchez, from Colombia. Pedro Figueiredo de Albuquerque de Oliveira Novais, as Fatima's only son, is already thinking about how to expand the mansion's homestay business.



Maria de Lourdes Figueiredo de Albuquerque, 87, right, and her daughter Maria de Fatima Figueiredo de Albuquerque walk in one of the rooms of their 427-year-old Portuguese heritage home in Goa, India.

### More rooms

He said taking over the family legacy would eventually be his duty, but that the property must sustain itself financially. Born and raised in Lisbon, the 24-year-old trained as an industrial designer and has already begun overseeing renovations to create more rooms. The homestay currently offers five rooms, each fitted with air conditioners and modern bathrooms.

But maintaining the mansion to its original standards has become difficult, he said. Finding skilled and trustworthy craftsmen to restore antiques and repair the house is harder, with many of India's artisanal crafts dying out. Still, he plans to retain the hospitality and personal touch offered by his mother and grandmother. "I never knew a lot of the family," he said, but he wants to maintain the traditions. "I want to keep the experience of having dinner with guests." — AP

File photo shows Samantha Harris arrives at the 22nd annual Critics' Choice Awards at the Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, Calif. — AP



## Samantha Harris hosts Gordon Ramsay's new 'Culinary Genius'

Samantha Harris is the host of a Fox TV cooking contest show airing next month. Fox said yesterday that Harris will host "Culinary Genius," a half-hour show produced by celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay. Harris is a former co-host of "Dancing with the Stars" and "Entertainment Tonight." "Culinary Genius" will air for three weeks on Fox owned- and operated-stations in certain TV markets. One is Los Angeles, with others to be announced. It's getting a summer tryout with viewers, following the pattern of Fox programs such as "The Wendy Williams Show" and "TMZ Live." "Culinary Genius," adapted from an English show of the same name, opens with lead chef Edward Lee giving contestants a cooking demonstration. Then the competition begins. Ramsay will appear on "Culinary Genius," which debuts Aug 7. — AP

## Surf epic is escapist bestseller for Trump's America

William Finnegan tested the patience of his publisher in the 20 years it took him to write his remarkable memoir of his lifelong obsession with surfing, "Barbarian Days." "I gave up a couple of times, but she always believed," the laconic American writer told AFP. Her zen attitude paid off. The book has been heaped with awards including a Pulitzer prize and become a runaway bestseller, with former president Barack Obama among its many fans. The New York Times called it a classic, the "finest surf book ever" — and up there with Jon Krakauer's "Into the Wild" as an account of what happens when "ideas of freedom and purity take hold of a young mind and fling his body out into the far reaches of the world."

Finnegan's youthful odyssey "as a weird frontier guy" in search of the perfect wave took him from the Los Angeles suburbs to the jungles of Java and apartheid South Africa, surviving on his wits and the kindness of strangers. Sports Illustrated, not normally prone to literary eulogizing, declared that "reading this guy... on waves and water is like reading Hemingway on bullfighting, William Burroughs on controlled substances and Updike on adultery." Such praise surprised no one more than Finnegan, who spent his childhood between the beaches of

California and Hawaii, where his father worked as a producer and union fixer twisting arms to get television series like "Hawaii Five-O" made. "I had visions of people throwing the book across the room because they couldn't bear another description of a wave," he told AFP. "But people who'd never surfed in their lives told me they completely went with it."

### 'Surfing was my secret'

Still more were taken with his limpid style and lightly worn sea lore, such as how ancient Polynesian mariners navigated not only by the



US writer and 2016 Pulitzer prize winner William Finnegan. — AFP

stars but by dipping their testicles in the briny. "Strange but absolutely true," Finnegan insists. Now 65, the distinguished war correspondent and New Yorker magazine journalist had kept quiet about his surfing side "until well into middle age", knowing that his years as a surf bum-a species not renowned for their intellectual acuity-might sit awkwardly with his writerly ambitions. "Most people didn't know I surfed. It was a huge part of my life but it wasn't how I saw myself. It was a secret."

Beyond this coming-out narrative, the book is also a reminder of how free and easy life could be in mid-century America, where children were not wrapped in the same shackles of parental concern they are now. "It was a historical moment where the kids were off on their bikes all day long and nobody ever thought twice about it," Finnegan said.

### 'Lost boy'

"I had hitchhiked the length of California by the time I was 15. I was doing the same thing on the East Coast at 16 and I first came to Europe on my own at 17. "My parents didn't know where I was for months on end," Finnegan said he was lucky to be in the right place at the right time to ride the wave of 1960s liberation to the full. "I

had lots of adventures and I survived. Not everybody came through so smoothly between drugs and general risk taking," he said.

"It would never have happened 10 years later, and these days you can forget it. People just don't let their kids out of their sight." That said, Finnegan admitted that "a lot of my compulsions were driven by a lost boy feeling. I left my family too young. I kept trying to reconstitute my family elsewhere." Indeed he recounts his relationships with other surfers almost as others would love affairs, each intimately attached to the sea and the waves they rode together.

Part of the book's popularity he believes may be down to the fact that its blast of escapist ozone is an antidote to "growing dread and gloom" of Donald Trump's America. "It exists outside this increasing darkness. People read it as saying life was better, the country was better, politics were better. However, Finnegan insists that the US was just as divided during the Vietnam War. "I was in high school then and it was full blown culture wars. You were either pro-war or anti-war. The athletics departments were pro-war, and you pretty much couldn't go out for sports if you weren't for it." — AFP

FEATURES



Runners prepare at the starting line for the "Ultra maraton de los Canones 2017" (Ultra marathon of the Canyons), at La Sinforosa Canyon, in Guachochi, Chihuahua state, Mexico. — AFP photos



Raramuris indigenous people take part in the half marathon (21 kilometers) of the "Ultra maraton de los Canones 2017".



## INDIGENOUS MEXICANS BEST PROS ON EXTREME MOUNTAIN RUN



In old indigenous Latin American cultures, women toil at farming and tackle family duties. Atop this remote Mexican mountain, they also slap on sandals and crush pro athletes on long-distance runs. Talk about extreme sports: the Raramuri people-part of the Aztec family over five centuries ago fled up the mountains of Chihuahua state to stay safe from Spanish invaders. There they stayed. Over the years they have become cliff-dwellers, often sleeping in caves.

But they also are moving their animals along constantly-and as part of their nomadic lifestyle learned to master truly extreme long-distance runs. This year's Canyons Ultramarathon brought together more than 1,000 competitors from around the world-Russia, Canada, the United States, Ecuador and Spain-to take on the steep slopes of the Sinforosa range of the Tarahumara mountains in the Sierra Madre Occidental. With the wail of "Weringa" which means "Onward" in their language, runners were off. They battled it out in the men's and women's 63-kilometer and 100-kilometer contests from Friday through Sunday.

The results: all four races swept by Raramuri (which means Light of Feet) talent. The course was not some manicured

grass pitch; the trail-which follows mountain ridges-is clotted with mud, rocks and even takes runners over a traditional woven suspension bridge. While some competitors were decked out in high-tech gear to absorb sweat or avoid friction, local champions stuck mostly to their traditional gear. It famously includes sandals hand-carved out of old car tires and their centuries-old handwoven shirts, petticoats and scarves, for women, and a slightly lighter outfit for their men.

"We really don't have to do a lot to train. Because since we don't have cars, we walk or run everywhere," said Miguel Lara, 27, who won the 100-kilometer sprint in nine hours and 46 minutes. His record is eight hours and 47 minutes. The locals are attached to tradition, but clearly are not afraid of innovation. At some point in the past, obviously, someone shifted from sandals made of natural materials for running, to recycled tire tread sandals with a light strap. Perhaps Lara's shoe sponsorship contract could go to Michelin. — AFP



## Britain celebrates literary icon Jane Austen on bicentenary of her death



This file photo shows Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England, standing alongside the concept design for the new Bank of England ten pound banknote, featuring author Jane Austen, during the presentation at the Jane Austen House Museum in Chawton, southern England. — AFP

Two hundred years after Jane Austen's death, Britain is celebrating one of its best-loved authors, who combined romance with biting social commentary that still speaks to fans around the world. The author of classic novels "Pride and Prejudice", "Emma" and "Sense and Sensibility" had only just become known when she died on July 18, 1817, aged 41. But her six novels, dissecting the lives of 19th century rural aristocracy, have since sold millions of copies, led to film adaptations and even spawned a zombie spin-off.

She has inspired countless other authors, from Virginia Woolf, who praised her "genius", to Helen Fielding of the best-selling "Bridget Jones" series. Next week the Bank of England will issue a new £10 note bearing Austen's image, during this year of special events including walks through her native Hampshire in southern England and exhibitions about her life. Part of Austen's appeal rests on her depiction of a romanticized England with love affairs, tea and parties in the glorious surroundings of sprawling stately homes.

Some have even compared her to Barbara Cartland, the late English romantic novelist. But

Austen's novels have long been studied for their critique of a world of rigid class structure that was nevertheless in flux thanks to the Napoleonic wars. "One of the things she is concerned with as a moral writer is social responsibility," said Professor Kathryn Sutherland of the University of Oxford, co-curator of a new exhibition in Winchester. Austen also shone a harsh light on the status of women, for whom a good match in marriage was considered the only goal. "She was very conscious of the plight of women, of women's dependence on men and she found that frustrating," Sutherland said, calling her a feminist.

### 'Mysterious Miss'

The daughter of a clergyman, Austen herself remained unmarried despite a proposal, and spent most of her life with very little money. "She always had to hide it, to give the appearance of wealth that she didn't have," said Catherine Rihoit, a French author writing a biography of Austen. Austen sought to earn money by getting her work published. The manuscript of "Sense and Sensibility" was finally accepted in 1811, after sev-

eral attempts. "Sadly, the success and the money only began coming in when she died," Rihoit told AFP. Austen is buried in the cathedral in Winchester, the Hampshire town where she died and where Sutherland and Louise West are staging their exhibition, "The Mysterious Miss Austen".

Surprisingly little is known about the author, after her sister Cassandra destroyed almost all her letters. There are even doubts about how she looked, and the exhibition brings together six portraits for the first time. Among recent visitors to the exhibit was 70-year-old Bridget, who said she has read all of Austen's books five or six times since being introduced to them at the age of 12. "You think it's all romantic love stories, but it isn't. She was very acerbic, witty. The language is brilliant," she told AFP. And Austen's appeal goes well beyond England. "She speaks to people in far-flung countries, to other cultures. It's really very clever," said Rihoit. — AFP

# Lifestyle

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Indigenous Mexicans best pros on extreme mountain run

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People sit in a boat on a lake at sunset outside the city of Sortavala yesterday. — AFP

## Shopping-weary Chinese find refuge in souped-up man caves



This photo shows a man playing video games in a booth at a shopping mall in Shanghai. — AFP

It's a familiar sight in shopping malls around the world-weary-looking men dutifully following their wives from store to store. But China may have the solution: so-called "husband rest booths". While their partners shop, users can retire to the glass-encased kiosks, which contain a comfortable massage chair and an elevated screen for playing computer games or watching television. Its makers say the futuristic mini man-caves are a first in China and they have installed four in a high-end mall in Shanghai at a cost of 40,000 yuan (\$6,000) each.

You can reserve the pod in advance via a mobile phone app, and it costs nothing to use at the moment. In English, each has the words: "Private Lounge. Waiting for you in the bar." Owen Wei, project manager at makers Ingrem, a Shanghai company, said if the first batch proved popular they would roll out more at malls in the city. "Some men don't like to go shopping or stay with their wives, and prefer to play games or watch television," he told AFP at the enormous Global Harbor mall, where one husband lay slumped in a nearby booth shooting aliens.

Not everyone is a fan, however. On one recent day most of those visiting the pods were teenagers, members of the media and curious onlookers. One husband said he preferred his wife's company, while Liu Tianguo said his partner did not approve of the scheme. "I told my wife, 'I'll be here. You go shopping and you'll find me here,'" said Liu. "It's comfortable and I can have a rest while she spends my money. She was ok with it-as long as I don't stay here too long." — AFP

## 'Oh, bother': Chinese censors can't bear Winnie the Pooh

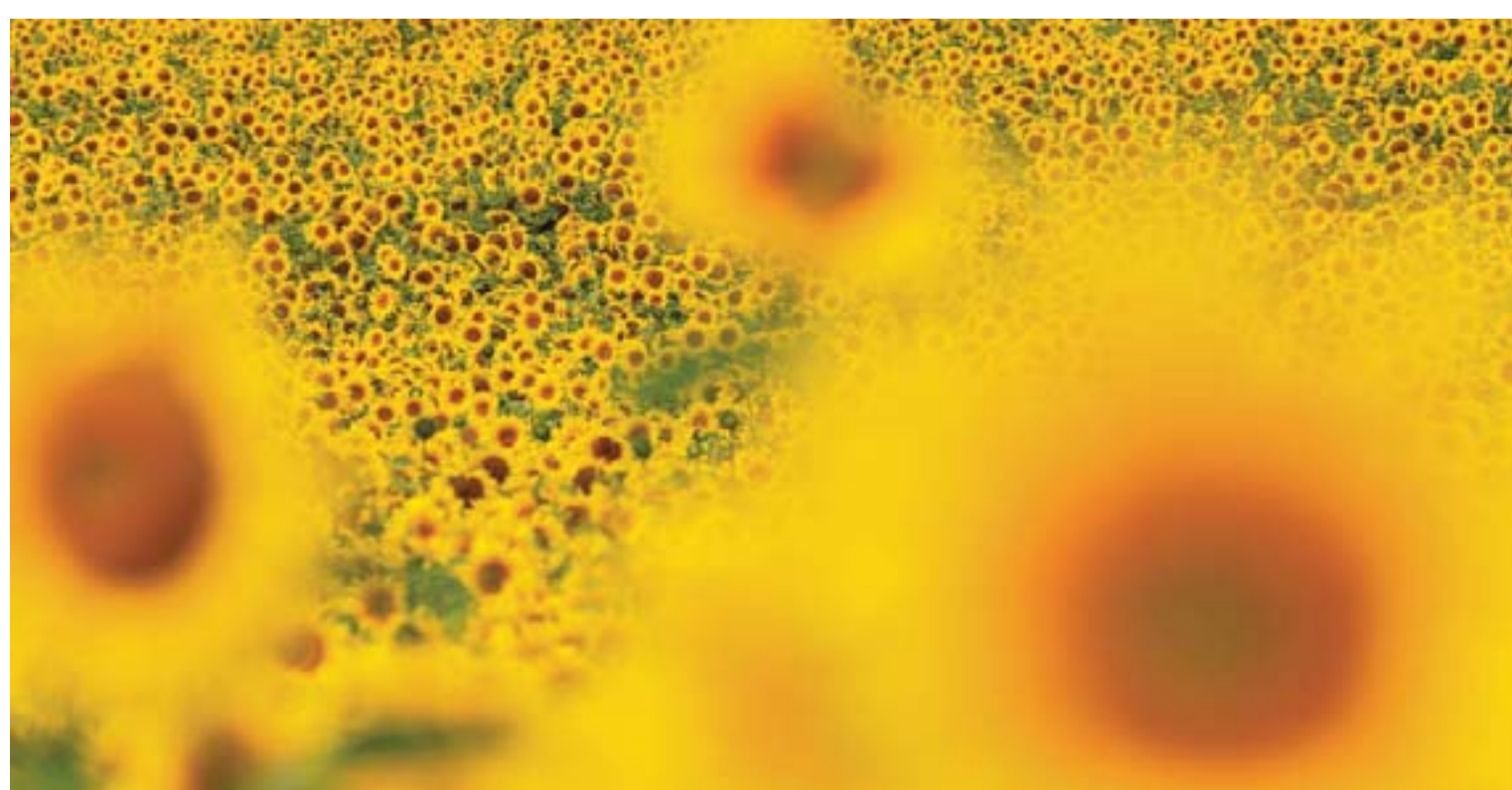


Has Winnie the Pooh done something to anger China's censors? Some mentions of the lovable but dimwitted bear with a weakness for "hunny" have been blocked on Chinese social networks. Authorities did not explain the clampdown, but the self-described "bear of very little brain" has been used in the past in a meme comparing him to portly Chinese President Xi Jinping. Posts bearing the image and the Chinese characters for Winnie the Pooh were still permitted on the Twitter-like Weibo platform yesterday. But comments referencing "Little Bear Winnie"-Pooh's Chinese name-turned up error messages saying the user could not proceed because "this content is illegal."

Winnie the Pooh stickers have also been removed from WeChat's official "sticker gallery," but user-generated gifs of the bear are still available on the popular messaging app. Comparisons between Xi and Pooh first emerged in 2013, after Chinese social media users began circulating a pair of pictures that placed an image of Pooh and his slender tiger friend "Tigger" beside a photograph of Xi walking with then-US President Barack Obama. In 2014, a photographed handshake between Xi and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was matched with an image of Pooh gripping the hoof of his gloomy donkey friend Eeyore.

And in 2015, the political analysis portal Global Risk Insights called a picture of Xi standing up through the roof of a parade car paired with an image of a Winnie the Pooh toy car "China's most censored photo" of the year. Qiao Mu, an independent media studies scholar and former professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University, said the blocked bear content was unsurprising given the ruling Communist Party's sensitivity to depictions of its leader. It is a particularly sensitive year as Xi is expected to consolidate power at a key party congress this fall. "It's very murky what's allowed and what isn't, because officials never put out statements describing precisely what will be censored," Qiao said, noting that many Winnie the Pooh photos were still proliferating on the Chinese internet.

In other contexts, references to the staple Chinese breakfast food "baozi" have been taken down for evoking the president's nickname: "Steamed Bun Xi," Qiao said. Yesterday many Chinese social media users were testing the boundaries of the restrictions imposed on the bear who groans "oh, bother" when things don't go his way. "Poor Little Winnie," one Weibo user wrote. "What did this adorable honey-loving bear ever do to provoke anyone?" — AFP



Sunflowers bloom on a field near Fresdorf, northeastern Germany yesterday. — AFP