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GCC ready to face closing of Hormuz Strait: Rasheedi

Hajraf details state budget's final accounts in webcast

Kuwait remembers its martyrs



KUWAIT: A billboard with the names of martyrs who were killed during the 1990-91 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is seen in Kuwait City yesterday. — (See Page 2)

KUWAIT: Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rasheedi said yesterday GCC states have prepared emergency plans in case the Strait of Hormuz was closed. Iran, in its row with the United States over sanctions, has threatened to block the Strait of Hormuz, a major strategic shipping route for oil from the region and the main route for Iranian crude exports. About 18.5 million bpd of oil or more than 30 percent of seaborne traded crude was transported in 2016 through the Strait of Hormuz, making the waterway at the southern end of the Gulf the most important oil transit channel in the world, according to US EIA figures. The strait, which is about 54 km wide at its narrowest point, separates the Arabian Peninsula from Iran.

In a press statement during his tour of southern Al-Zour power station, Rasheedi also expressed optimism on resuming oil production in the neutral zone with Saudi Arabia. As for importing natural gas from Iraq, Rasheedi expected the two sides to reach an agreement on the issue before end of 2018. Meanwhile, he said that Kuwait was never asked to increase production to offset any shortage of Iranian oil supply due to US-imposed sanctions on the country. Kuwait's main concern is the stability of markets, the minister said, adding that the country is able to provide the needed amount of crude oil for these markets.

Separately, Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf revealed the state budget's final statement of accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018 in a live web conference involving local and global business communities. The initiative reflects the Kuwaiti financial apparatus' determination to share monetary information in a clear and transparent manner, as well as its desire to engage the business community, the finance ministry said in a statement.

The ministry said the webcast brought together more than 70 financial institutions from around the world, all of whom listened intently as Hajraf explained the intricacies of the state budget's final accounts. The participants were also allowed to field questions ranging from the last fiscal year's performance to existing economic policies in Kuwait, the statement added.

The ministry had previously revealed that the fiscal deficit dropped by 18.1 percent by the end of the last fiscal year, while non-oil revenues surged by 21.7 percent. Meanwhile, oil revenues stood at KD 14.3 billion (around \$47 billion), up 22.2 percent from last year, while total revenues increased by 22.1 percent from last year to reach KD 16 billion (\$52.7 billion). The fiscal year in Kuwait starts on April 1 of each year and ends on March 31 of the following year. — KUNA

News in brief

US sanctions Turkey ministers

WASHINGTON: The US Treasury Department yesterday hit Turkey's justice and interior ministers with sanctions over the case of an American pastor being tried on terror charges. "We believe he's a victim of unfair and unjust attention by the government of Turkey," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders told journalists, referring to Andrew Brunson, an American pastor at the center of a bitter diplomatic spat between NATO allies. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan earlier yesterday had vowed Turkey would not give into threats from the US, accusing Washington of showing an "evangelist, Zionist mentality". — AFP

UAE offers 'visa amnesty'

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates, a major hub for migrant laborers, yesterday began an amnesty for workers who entered the country without a visa or overstayed their work permit. The government said those who entered the UAE illegally or overstayed their visas and who come forward by Oct 31 would not be fined or charged if they choose to leave the country voluntarily. The amnesty also grants those looking for employment a six-month visa to find a job. It excludes, however, those who are "blacklisted" or with legal cases pending. The UAE press published testimonies of blue collar laborers who had come forward for the amnesty yesterday. — AFP

India warns against sharing Aadhaar

MUMBAI: The body running India's biometrics-based national identity card system has warned people against sharing their unique card number publicly after the country's telecom regulator tweeted his in a challenge to critics to do him "any harm". R S Sharma, the head of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the Unique Identification Authority of India's (UIDAI) first director general, last week posted his Aadhaar number on Twitter after users challenged him to share the details to prove it was a safe system. As Twitter users dug out Sharma's personal details - including his phone numbers, WhatsApp profile, the brand of smartphone that he carries and his address - Sharma insisted he had not been harmed. People making Aadhaar numbers public or encouraging others to do so could be liable for prosecution and penal action, UIDAI said. — Reuters

Women defiant as Danish ban on niqab takes effect

COPENHAGEN: Hundreds of Danes rallied in Copenhagen yesterday in protest at a new ban on the wearing of face veils in public, accusing the government of infringing on women's right to dress as they choose. Denmark's parliament enacted the ban in May, joining France and some other European Union countries to uphold what some politicians say are secular and democratic values. The protesters, many wearing the niqab veil or the all-enveloping, body-length burqa, began a march from the Danish capital's central district of Nørrebro to Bellahøj police station on the outskirts of the city.

Demonstrators, often with children in tow, included non-niqab-wearing Muslim women and non-Muslim Danes with faces covered. No incidents were reported. "We need to send a signal to the government that we will not bow to discrimination and a law that specifically targets a religious minority," Sabina, 21, a niqab-garbed student, told Reuters, asking that her full name not be used. She is one of about 150-200 Muslim women - 0.1 percent of those in the country - who daily wear either the niqab or burqa garments covering the face or the entire body. Muslims account for around 5 percent of Denmark's 5.7 million population.

Saudis try once 'lowly' jobs as economy bites

RIYADH: Dishing out burgers and fries slathered with melted cheese, "One Way Burger" is like any other trendy food truck in Riyadh. But it offers something rare - the cook behind the sizzling hot grill is a Saudi. In the once tax-free petro-state, which long offered its citizens cradle-to-grave welfare, blue-collar occupations such as cooking, cleaning and working at gas stations have largely been the preserve of foreign workers, who far outnumber Saudis.

But Saudis are increasingly taking on such "low status" jobs in a new age of austerity when gas is no longer cheaper

than water, with the government trimming oil-funded subsidies and tackling sluggish economic growth and high unemployment. "When I started this food truck two years ago many people said: 'What? You will sell burgers and sandwiches in the street? You come from a big family and big tribe'," said Bader Al-Ajmi, the 38-year-old owner of One Way Burger. "People were surprised," he added, as a Porsche pulled up at the side of his truck to place an order.

Since Ajmi started his business, dipping into his personal savings, owning a food truck has become the trend du jour and attained a level of respectability. Working inside as a cook apparently still has not. Still, many Saudis, long reliant on the welfare state for secure and undemanding white-collar jobs, are embracing manual labor jobs. For the first time, a new crop of nationals are



COPENHAGEN: Women wearing niqabs take part in a demonstration yesterday, the first day of the implementation of the Danish face veil ban. — AFP

Under the law, police will be able to instruct women to remove their veils or order them to leave public areas. Justice Minister Søren Pape Poulsen said officers would fine them and tell them to go home. Fines will range from 1,000 Danish crowns (\$160) for a first offence to 10,000 crowns for a fourth. A 30-year-old Muslim woman interviewed in daily Berlingske, identified only as Sarah, said she had "lost faith in the system". Born and raised in Denmark by parents who emigrated from Turkey, she has worn the niqab since she was 18.

"I've realized that democracy doesn't work. Politicians boast of freedoms and rights when they are making fun of Muslims and when they are drawing

Continued on Page 24

WhatsApp to start charging business users

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook Inc's WhatsApp messenger service will start charging businesses for sending marketing and customer service messages, it said yesterday, as the social network company's flagship brand faces slowing usage and revenue growth. The messages will be charged at a fixed rate for confirmed delivery, ranging from 0.5 cents to 9 cents per message depending on the country, WhatsApp said. Facebook has been looking at ways to monetize its WhatsApp service in the face of rising costs as it spends heavily to improve privacy safeguards and tackles concerns about social media addiction.

WhatsApp, which has around 1.5 billion users, said starting yesterday, businesses can use its WhatsApp Business API to send notifications such as shipping confirmations, appointment reminders and event tickets. WhatsApp acknowledged that it is charging a premium compared to SMS rates. Wireless carriers typically charge businesses well below a penny per SMS, and the price is still close to a penny when including fees collected by intermediaries between carriers and businesses. WhatsApp had announced in January it would

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RIYADH: A picture taken on July 5, 2018 shows Bader Al-Ajmi (right), owner of "One Way Burger", serving customers from his truck on a main street in the capital. — AFP

Local

Brand IMC launches campaign to commemorate martyrs' sacrifices

700 martyrs paid ultimate price for Kuwait's prosperity: Obaid



KUWAIT: Brand IMC launched an advertising campaign on the anniversary of the August 2 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait themed "Shuhada Al-Kuwait... Nujoomha" (Kuwait's Martyrs are its Stars), to run from July 31 to August 10. Brand Information Group CEO Abdellatif Al-Obaid said: "As 28 years have elapsed since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, it was necessary to take a patriotic stand to remind of the martyrs' sacrifices and have their names displayed to the post-invasion generation. They should know Kuwait's prosperous lifestyle and independence is due to the ultimate price more than 700 martyrs paid for liberating their homeland and entrusting it to those who came after them."

"In reality, the martyr does not need to be honored, as Almighty Allah has honored him. But it is a reminder of the meaning of martyrdom, which is giving without waiting for a reward," he said. "We chose the campaign slogan 'Kuwait's Martyrs are its Stars', as we see youth taking idols who do not rise to the level of martyrs and their sacrifice. How can

those who gave away their souls for the sake of their country be equal to others? Martyrs deserve to be regarded as idols and are more deserving of being starts."

"We were keen, along with the Martyrs Office, to place the names of all martyrs on billboards instead of speaking in general about martyrs to acquaint the current generation with their names, and to remind the youth that each family, tribe and area has a number of martyrs, since Kuwait is precious, and the price to protect it is high. Under the current challenges the region is going through, and our need to remember the value of martyrdom, it became important to highlight this value in order to face challenges that put the Kuwaiti society's unity at risk," he said.

"The campaign carries a message to martyrs' families that we will not forget the sacrifices of your children, and that each Kuwaiti owes you forever. The sacrifice of your children will remain instilled in our hearts," Obaid added.

Martyr's names on billboards around Kuwait



Kuwaiti youth reflect on invasion's anniversary

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwait is remembering those who died during the Iraqi invasion of 1990-91 with billboards in several areas mentioning the names of the martyrs. The seven months from Aug 2, 1990 until the liberation on Feb 26, 1991 are engraved in the history of Kuwait – a tragedy that led to the loss of a homeland and souls of many Kuwaitis. Kuwait Times spoke to a number of Kuwaiti youth to learn what they know about the Iraqi invasion.

Ebtihal Al-Rabea, 19, told Kuwait Times that her parents suffered and lost a lot during the Iraqi invasion. "From what we learned at school and what we have been told, it is not easy to erase the memory of people who died for Kuwait. My mother told me they were praying to live and get through the days. I can't

imagine how you can stay quietly in your home waiting for the moment of your death." She added that to not know about the Iraqi invasion is like deleting a big important chapter of history. "It is easier for those who do not carry the weight of memories. Some young people do not know the details of the invasion. I cannot understand how people still see Saddam Hussein as a hero!"

Hassan Al-Basri, 17, said his parents do not talk about that Iraqi invasion but he knows details from reading books. In his opinion, most countries around the world faced wars at some point but they got over it to live in peace. "I am not disrespecting the memory of martyrs, but life goes on. It does not mean forgetting the past. There is a difference between overcoming war and ignoring it." He refuses to erase the collective memory of the people of Kuwait and forget their suffering and pain, but he does not want people to live in a state of hate. "We must not make our hearts full of hatred towards those who have no sin. We really want to build a better society for our generation. It is nice to look forward and reconcile with the Iraqis, especially since many Kuwaitis have Iraqi relationships or roots," he said.



Essa Al-Kandari

Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

national community for Kuwait during its crisis. This should be a reminder for us to put aside our political differences," Kandari said in a press statement yesterday. He hoped that Kuwaiti people would all unite under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Sabah.

Deputy speaker remembers heroism of martyrs

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy National Assembly Speaker Essa Al-Kandari recalled the bravery and sacrifice of Kuwaiti martyrs during the Iraqi Invasion in 1990. "On the 28th anniversary of the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait, we remember the sacrifice of our martyrs and the support of the inter-

Kuwaitis, Iraqis still 'burying the hatchet' 28 years after the invasion

KUWAIT: The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which occurred 28 years ago on August 2, 1990, has reshaped relations amongst countries in the region, causing material and moral damages still felt to this day. Despite the horrific event, Kuwaitis and Iraqis have worked together to visit every venue and utilize any opportunity to 'bury the hatchet' amongst the people in both countries. During the era of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait had made it its mission to provide necessary support to the people of Iraq who have in recent years suffered from the wails of war, terrorism and crippling economic conditions, which prevented Iraq from reaching its true potential.

KUNA, in its capacity as a state news agency, interviewed several officials on the 28th anniversary of the invasion, trying to find out what Kuwaitis and Iraqis were doing to bridge any possible gap in ties. Kuwait's Ambassador to Iraq Salem Al-Zamanan said that Kuwaitis were "looking forward to the same welfare that the brethren in Iraq were looking for." The Kuwaiti leadership and people are keen on achieving stability in the region, which will in turn create prosperity for all countries including Iraq and Kuwait, said Ambassador Zamanan. On the anniversary of invasion, he said "we stand in remembrance of the strong Kuwaiti will both on the leadership and popular levels which was confident the country will return to its rightful owners with the aid of brethren and friends around the globe."

Both countries are trying to work through the pain caused by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and hopefully such effort would accumulate with the return of the remains of Kuwait POWs who went missing in Iraq after their unjustly imprisonment, affirmed Ambassador Zamanan. The Kuwaiti diplomat noted that the Kuwaiti leadership was for the efforts to further bridge the gap caused by the invasion,

indicating that Kuwait had shown repeatedly its willingness to overcome the past by aiding Iraq against its security and economic crises. Providing aid to those affected by the terror of the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and organizing the three-day Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI) are undisputed signs that Kuwaitis were keen on Iraqis' welfare and security, said the Kuwaiti diplomat.

Closest ally

Meanwhile, Iraqi government spokesman Saad Al-Hadithi said that both countries were looking into means to fix the blunders left by the Saddam Hussein regime during the invasion. Kuwait has always been the closest ally to Iraq in the past and what mishap that occurred in the past should be resolved for the future and welfare of both countries, said Hadithi who commanded the Kuwaiti leadership strong stance with his country especially with the holding of the KICRI. Iraq is eager to "bring relations back to what they were in the past," affirmed the Iraqi official who stressed that ties, prior to the invasion, are exactly what the two brotherly countries are looking for.

Iraqi army spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Abdulrasoul said meanwhile that the current formation of Iraq's army was utterly different from the one back in the Saddam regime era, pointing out that the army's main concern was to fend off threats posed against Iraq. Iraq has nothing but respect to Kuwait and its people, said the army official who affirmed that the Iraqi army and security forces will show a gesture of solidarity with the Kuwaitis in the efforts to retrieve the remains of Kuwaiti POWs who went missing in the country.

The Iraqi Defense Ministry announced on July 18 that those able to provide information on the whereabouts of Kuwaiti POWs remains would be eligible for a reward. While Iraq was going through some tough periods, Kuwait had been providing substantial relief aid and support. In 2015, Kuwait allocated \$200 million to help relief aid efforts in Iraq. More recently, a sum of \$100 million was given to Iraq to help those who fled from the terror of defeated IS. The KICRI held in Kuwait resulted in the allocation of \$30 billion in loans, grants, and bonds to Iraq. The current energy drought, heat wave, and mass protests in southern Iraq led Kuwait to donate 17 generators to help ease the pains of many Iraqis. — KUNA

Local

Amir receives Acting Premier; FM meets award-winning director, UNICEF representative

Deputy FM bids farewell to outgoing Canadian envoy



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. —KUNA photos



Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Kuwaiti film director Dr Reham Al-Rughaib.



Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the UNICEF's new representative in the Arabian Gulf region Eltayeb Adam.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received Kuwaiti film director Dr Reham Al-Rughaib on the occasion of winning two awards in the Migrati Film Fest held in Italy. Rughaib received a copy of the festival's logo which was authenticated by the Italian Ministry of Culture, in addition to a copy of an award presented by the judges for the movie 'Globalization', which she directed. Several Foreign Ministry officials attended the meeting.

Furthermore, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received the United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) new representative in the Arabian Gulf region Eltayeb Adam. The meeting focused on Kuwait and UNICEF's common goal of protecting children's rights, especially those who have had to withstand adversity and dismal living conditions. The Kuwaiti minister spoke highly of UNICEF's contributions towards such noble causes and

its commitment to ameliorate the lives of children in more than 190 countries. Meanwhile, the UNICEF official expressed his gratitude for the support the Gulf state has given to the UN program, saying it was instrumental in allowing UNICEF to bring its human development goals to fruition.

In other news, Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met Canada's outgoing ambassador Martine Moreau yesterday, wishing her the best in her future endeavors. Elsewhere, Jarallah and the Canadian envoy signed an agreement for bilateral high-level talks, in addition to an aviation deal between the two countries. The meeting brought together a number of officials from the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry.

Separately, Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh received yesterday US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman to discuss how to enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields. They also discussed several issues of mutual interest and ways to strengthen the ties between the two friendly countries. —KUNA



Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and Canada's outgoing ambassador Martine Moreau sign an agreement for bilateral high-level talks between the two countries.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh meets with US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman.

Zain hosts 'KON' in partnership with LOYAC

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, organized a workshop for participants of the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) at the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh. The event, brought to Kuwait in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, came as part of Zain's Strategic Partnership of LOYAC, a non-profit organization that aims at developing the youth's talents and skills.

Zain hosted the participants of the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program as part of its Strategic Partnership of LOYAC, which continues this year for over 14 consecutive years. The partnership comes in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy, which centers around the development of the Education and Youth sectors, especially in regards to nurturing and developing entrepreneurial skills within the youth.

Zain hosted the students at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) at the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh, where they took part in a workshop facilitated by Khalid Al-Amiri, owner of the Li3ib project and an ex-participant of Zain's fourth Zain Great Idea accelerator program. The workshop covered tech startup acceleration, common challenges of entrepreneurship and how to overcome them, the basics of starting your own business, and more.

KON, one of LOYAC's latest youth development programs, trains youth (12-16 years) in the area of Social Entrepreneurship throughout 6 weeks at the American University in Kuwait. The program is brought to Kuwait in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, considered the most prestigious entrepreneurship college in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education.

This year, Zain's support to LOYAC will extend to a great number of educational initiatives and programs that cater to developing the youth's skills and talents, including KON Social Entrepreneurship Program, the IFAD Internship Program, where young Kuwaiti talents are sent abroad to learn from international experts, the LOYAC AC Milan Soccer School, and more.

Through its Strategic Partnership with LOYAC, Zain also trains hundreds of students as part of the LOYAC Summer Internship Program. The students take part in completing tasks, learning new skills, and go through professional training in the real business world at various departments and divisions within the company. Zain also offers the students financial rewards in recognition of their efforts and as an encouragement to their dedication.

Zain is proud to be one of the strategic partners of LOYAC since its inception, especially that it is considered one of the most prominent national programs that cater to the youth and offers them a healthy and empowering environment to develop their skills and talents in an educational, fun, and social atmosphere.

Zain believes in the development of the communities in which it operates, and it is a very important part of the company's overall success. The company considers education as a core element in the community development process, and it will continue to support it to contribute to the further progress of the country's youth.

Since its inception in 2002, LOYAC has grown to be the first choice of the youth in Kuwait when it comes to innovative and high quality educational programs. LOYAC runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and to help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.



KON students with Zain and LOYAC officials during the workshop.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A picture taken yesterday shows a general view of Kuwait City taken from the top of Al-Hamra Tower. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Burgan Bank contributes to integration of children with autism into society

Through its support of Autism Partnership - Kuwait

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, one of the leading contributors to social inclusion in Kuwait, reiterates its commitment to supporting Autism Partnership Kuwait (APK) for the Rehabilitation and treatment of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) through financial aid as it will reduce the heavy mental and financial burden of the parents and families. Burgan Bank also strives through this support to provide the necessary services and care based on worldwide proven therapeutic methodologies, in order to encourage those children to achieve the highest degree of development, which enables them to complete the integration with their peers in the community.

Driven to deliver meaningful contributions that will produce a lasting impact in the society, Burgan Bank seeks to generate wider awareness of autism and the importance of early diagnosis and treatment, as well as to highlight the increasing rates of autism in Kuwait and its relevant challenges. Autism is a spectrum or a series of challenging disorders, accompanied by difficulties related to social skills and communication, and repetitive behaviors, in addition to deficiencies in verbal and nonverbal communication.



Generate wider awareness of autism

Autism Partnership (AP) is specialized in providing rehabilitation and treatment services for autism spectrum disorders. AP is run by international consultants and specialists and has become a worldwide authority for autism spectrum disorder with branch offices in many countries around the world.

Autism Partnership - Kuwait (APK) is one of the most important centers offering a variety of services for the rehabilitation and treatment of children with autism spectrum disorders and their families, in addition to awareness campaigns, workshops and lectures that are arranged for the public, professionals and individuals involved in the treatment and education of children with autism.

Loulwa Abdulla Al-Ayoubi, Acting Group Head of Investor and Corporate Communications, Burgan Bank commented on the partnership agreement with Autism Partnership - Kuwait, "At Burgan Bank, we believe in fulfilling our role as a responsible member of the Kuwaiti



Loulwa Abdulla Al-Ayoubi



Engineer Ghosson Al-Khaled

society by addressing local societal issues and making progress in areas of concern. We are particularly pleased that through the support provided by the bank, children with autism will be able to receive advanced treatment methods which has a positive impact on the speed of their response to rehabilitation and treatment. I am pleased to partner with likeminded entities that share similar humanitarian principles and believe in the empowerment of every individual child to enjoy equality and the best of potential."

Engineer Ghosson Al-Khaled, AP-Kuwait Co-founder

and Director, said, "Autism Partnership - Kuwait was established as a humanitarian center, affiliated to a world-class organization and reputation, and its founders have extensive experience and history in autism research and studies, we are here to contribute to the rehabilitation and treatment of children with autism and to meet the growing need to provide treatment opportunities for autism within Kuwait. Through Autism Partnership - Kuwait we look forward to helping our children and their families, believing that autism is a condition that can be changed, if the appropriate educational environment and methods are available. We would like to thank Burgan Bank for endorsing our work and role in the Kuwaiti society and look forward to fulfilling our mission of providing children with autism a better future with the highest quality of life possible."

Burgan Bank's support to this initiative falls under its recently launched full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the Kuwaiti society.

ABK's summer made sweeter with Baskin Robbins

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently announced the conclusion of its Baskin Robbins roadshow that kicked off at the bank's head office on July 18, 2018. For the fourth consecutive year, ABK cus-

tomers and staff were treated to free scoops and cones of Baskin Robbins' ice cream and milkshakes. The roadshow covered all ABK's branches across Kuwait, finishing off at the Bank's Sabhan Branch.



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) sponsored a ceremony to honor Capital Governorate volunteers. Capital Governor Thabet Al-Muhamna attended the event which took place recently at Nayef Palace.

Cabinet may see reshuffle in November to avoid grillings

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Parliamentary sources said the government may see a Cabinet reshuffle before the end of the year and expected it to take place in November to avoid grillings that will affect those ministers. The government also wants a term that is full of legislative achievements.

Sources said Oil Minister Bakheet Al-Rasheedi may leave his post in the anticipated reshuffle, especially since he faced a grilling during the previous term and may face a new one that has the support of MPs who sided with him during the first grilling. They said new events in the oil sector and the projects there call for a new minister who is aware of the future plans away from any clashes with the National Assembly.

Furthermore, the sources said Social Affairs Minister and State Minister for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh could also leave her post as she faced five grillings and will face a new one in the coming term. Her presence has become an embarrassment for the government, as it defended her a lot in the past to save her politically, the sources proclaimed. Meanwhile, MPs who sided with her have told the government that to continue their support is politically very expensive for them, especially since she did not deal with issues she promised to tackle, including social aid and handicapped and social care homes inmates, besides her failure in the development plan issues so far.

Information Minister and State Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri will return to parliament as an MP, said the sources, adding that plans are to appoint two MPs as ministers in the government. It is rumored that Ali Al-Deqbasi will be one of them, as he belongs to the Rasheedti tribe. Meanwhile, Housing Affairs Minister Jenan Bushehri may leave her post because she did not add anything to the housing issue, though she may take the social affairs portfolio if Sabeeh leaves, according to the sources. The commerce ministry may see a ministerial change, but it is not clear so far if Minister Khaled Al-Roudhan will leave the Cabinet or take another post, which may be of finance or oil, if an MP does not take it, the sources speculated.

FATCA treaty

The Capital Markets Authority issued a circular to all licensed entities with regards to the FATCA treaty signed on April 29, 2015 between the Finance Ministry and the US Department of Treasury, which stipulates that finance establishments operating outside the US must submit a report regularly to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and the following should be adhered to:

- The finance ministry receives FATCA reports for the year 2017 during the period from June 1 until Aug 30, 2018 through the ministry's website, as per the statement of the IRS with regards to copy number 2 regarding requirements of the FATCA report form.

- Financial establishments registered on the IRS site should adhere to submit FATCA reports annually even if they do not have US accounts.

- Financial establishments that have late reports for previous years must submit them separately for each year.

- Companies that wish to cancel previous reports due to mistakes can do this through direct contact with the IRS.

Egypt seeks exoneration in degree fraud case

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and Agencies

CAIRO/KUWAIT: Egypt's ministry of higher education said yesterday that none of the country's schools have issued fake college degrees to Kuwaiti students, underlining its "concern" over a case where fraudulent certificated were awarded to dozens of Kuwaitis.

"Egyptian universities are not involved in this scandal and we assure Kuwaiti authorities that

the degrees in question are fake," the ministry said in a statement. Egyptian schools have recently employed cutting-edge technology to ensure that the degree certification process is highly resistant to fraud, the statement emphasized. It added that the Egyptian education body is willing to cooperate with Kuwaiti authorities and join investigations, if need be, in order to get to the bottom of this sensitive matter.

The statement revealed that Egyptian colleges have established a close rapport with foreign embassies in the country, keeping them updated on the academic progress of their students. Kuwait's education ministry had recently uncovered some 40 fake college certificates issued in an unnamed Arab country and investigations into the case remain ongoing.

Meanwhile, Head of the Private Sector Union

Mansour Al-Mutairi said the Cabinet has a serious stance towards the fake degrees issues, and there is an insistence to tackle corruption due to its negative effects on the society and in defense of those with authentic degrees who spent their lives to get these academic qualifications. It said that the measures taken by the Cabinet were necessary to stop these people from getting leading posts without deserving them, and demanded violators be considered criminals and sent to court. In the meantime, Kuwait Engineering Society lauded the Cabinet's decision to take necessary legal measures against those proven to forge certificates. President Faisal Al-Atal said the Cabinet's strict measures to examine degrees of all state employees is a step on the road of fighting all forms of corruption



KUWAIT: The price of a shrimp basket during the first day of shrimping in Kuwaiti waters yesterday reached KD 90 in an auction. Each basket weighs between 21 to 22 kg, and only 52 baskets were available at the auction held in the fish market in Sharq. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Seven teams controlled junkyard fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Seven teams succeeded in controlling a fire that broke out in Al-Naeem junkyard next to Al-Salmi road on Tuesday, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) announced. In a press release by the public relations and media department, KFSD stated it received a call about the fire 7:00 pm, and the teams from Al-Shaqaya, Al-Jahra, Al-Esnad, Al-Ardhiya, Sabhan, Al-Madina and Al-Salmiya police station responded to the fire. The blaze broke out in a number of cars and spread to 6,000 square meters, as the KFSD teams were able to contain the fire area despite the challenges they encountered.

The challenges were of the site itself as junkyard is in a far desert area and the yard is full of serious violations, in addition to vast amounts of gas, oil and tires. Firefighters also faced high-speed winds with tight spaces preventing the fire engines from entering burning areas with no close source of water supply, which constituted dangerous situations for the firemen. The use of bulldozers, cranes and ladder trucks made it possible for the teams to tackle the fires and control it in record time. An investigation over the causes and circumstances behind the fire accident was opened.

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The Venezuelan city where nothing works anymore

Page 8

US to urge pressure against N Korea at Asian talks

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TEHRAN: People walk through Tehran's ancient Grand Bazaar. — AFP

Iran slams US ‘threats and PR stunts’

‘Try respect: For Iranians & for (international) commitments’

TEHRAN: Iran waved away US President Donald Trump's claims that talks with the country's leaders were imminent, saying "threats, sanctions and PR stunts won't work". With Washington pulling out of the landmark 2015 nuclear deal and set to reimpose full sanctions on Iran from August 6, Tehran has responded coolly to Trump's offer on Monday to talk "any time" without preconditions. "Threats, sanctions & PR stunts won't work. Try respect: for Iranians & for (international) commitments," tweeted Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

The Revolutionary Guards also made their opposition to talks clear. "The Iranian people do not authorize officials to meet the Great Satan... Mr Trump, Iran is not North Korea," said General Mohammad Ali Jafari, commander of the Guards, in an open letter published in local media. Trump told a rally in Tampa, Florida earlier on Tuesday: "I have a feeling they'll be talking to us pretty soon... And maybe not, and that's OK too."

He used the occasion to again blast the "horrible, one-sided" 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers which he abandoned in May. "It's a horror show," Trump said. "I hope it works out well with Iran. They are having a lot of difficulty right now." There was not yet an official response from the top leadership, but supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said a fortnight

ago that talks with Trump would be "useless." Skepticism is indeed rife in Tehran over Trump's latest tactic, with one high-profile lawmaker saying negotiations would be a "humiliation."

'People are worried'

Despite the rejection, many Iranians are deeply concerned that sanctions could tip the country into a major crisis. Tehran's Grand Bazaar was packed on Wednesday lunchtime as customers rushed to snap up goods for fear of what might happen when full sanctions return on Monday. "It's been really busy these last few days. People are worried that if they don't buy things today, they won't be available tomorrow," said Ali, who runs a kitchen store in the bazaar. "They are right-if I sell these knives, I won't be able to get any more."

He said the reason was that wholesalers and importers were refusing to provide new stock, preferring to sit on their inventory until the extent of the economic

crisis is better understood-a claim backed by other shopkeepers. The biggest sign of the crisis so far has been the collapse of the currency, which has lost two-thirds of its value since the start of the year, including a near-20-percent drop on Sunday and Monday alone.

The rial rallied slightly after Trump's offer of talks, but still stood at 109,000 to the dollar on Wednesday morning-a figure that would have seemed incredible even a few months ago. Several Iranian public figures said it was impossible to imagine negotiations with Washington after all the hostility of recent months. "Iran & US had 2 yrs of talks. With EU/E3+Russia+China, we produced a unique multilateral accord-the JCPOA (nuclear deal). It's been working. US can only blame itself for pulling out & leaving the table," Zarif wrote on Twitter.

Ali Motahari, the high-profile deputy speaker of parliament, said: "With the contemptuous statements (Trump) addressed to Iran, the idea of negotiating is inconceivable. It would be a humiliation." Only last

week, Trump fired off an all-caps tirade at his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani on Twitter, warning of untold "suffering" if Iran continued to threaten the United States. "We cannot negotiate with someone who violates international commitments, threatens to destroy countries, and constantly changes his position," said analyst Mohammad Marandi, of the University of Tehran, who was part of the nuclear negotiating team.

Some officials remained more receptive. "Negotiations with the United States must not be a taboo," said Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, head of parliament's foreign affairs commission, in an interview with the semi-official ISNA news agency. Motahari added that hardliners, who have long opposed any rapprochement with the US, share the blame for the collapse of the nuclear deal. "If the whole Iranian system had worked to implement this agreement, today we would be witnessing the presence of European companies in Iran and their investments, and even Trump would not be able to withdraw so easily from the deal," he said.

"But from the start one part of the system did not want the agreement to work." The Trump administration says its "maximum pressure campaign" is designed to force Iran into a new deal that goes beyond limiting its nuclear program and includes curbs to its regional behavior and missile program. — AFP



Talks with Trump would be "useless"

Thieves snatch royal jewels in daylight heist

STOCKHOLM: Robbers who nabbed two 17th century royal crowns and an orb from a Swedish cathedral remained at large yesterday, a day after fleeing their daring midday heist by motorboat. The thieves, who have not been identified, and the jewels are being sought internationally via Interpol, Swedish police spokesman Stefan Dangardt said, noting the objects were a "national treasure" and would likely be "very difficult to sell".

The 1611 gold burial crowns belonging to King Karl IX and his wife Queen Christina were originally interred with the couple but were later exhumed and had been on display in a locked cabinet in Strangnas Cathedral, located 100 kilometers (60 miles) west of Stockholm. King Karl IX's crown is made of gold and features crystals and pearls, while Christina's is smaller and made of gold, precious stones and pearls.

"We have as yet no value of the stolen goods, except that it is a national treasure," Dangardt told AFP. "Several people were seen leaving the church by boat or waterscooter after the theft. We have spoken to witnesses, but we are interested in further information from anyone that has made any observations," he said.

Tom Rowsell, who was having lunch outside the cathedral where he is to be married this weekend, told daily Aftonbladet he saw two men dash from the building toward a



STRANGNAS: This undated file handout picture released by Swedish police yesterday shows Swedish royal funeral regalia, including gold burial crowns (dated from the 17th century) belonging to King Karl IX (top-L) and his wife Queen Christina (top-R) that were on display at the Strangnas Cathedral, located 100 kilometers (60 miles) west of Stockholm. — AFP

motorboat waiting on Lake Malaren. "I saw a white little boat with an outboard motor on the back. The two men hurriedly jumped on board and it sped off," he said. "I knew immediately they were burglars, because of the way they were behaving," he added.

'Not possible to sell'

The theft occurred just before noon on Tuesday, and police quickly had helicopters, patrols, and search dogs looking for the thieves but their efforts have so far proved fruitless, Dangardt said. "There is of course going to be a lot of media interest in these types of objects. There will be pictures in the

media. It's just not possible to sell these kinds of objects," the national police coordinator for thefts of cultural artefacts, Maria Ellior, told news agency TT.

"So we can only speculate about (the thieves) intentions," she added. Similar heists have occurred before. In 2013, King Johan III's burial regalia was stolen from Vasteras Cathedral. It was recovered several days later in a garbage bag left on a countryside road, following an anonymous tip. "One can hope that something like that will happen in this case," Ellior said. The perpetrators of Tuesday's heist risk up to six years in prison for aggravated theft. — AFP

Eiffel Tower shut in dispute over 'monstrous' queues

PARIS: Staff at the Eiffel Tower shut down the Paris landmark yesterday afternoon in protest over a new access policy which they say is generating "monstrous" queues for tourists. Access to the monument, which welcomed more than six million visitors last year, was blocked from 1400 GMT, according to a sign at the base of the tower. Staff had already been set to strike today.

The site's management said staff took action after talks with unions fell apart earlier yesterday afternoon. The site was not evacuated, and tourists already inside were allowed to finish their visit. Staff are angry over a decision last month to start setting aside half of the Eiffel Tower's daily tickets for people who buy them online in advance and choose a scheduled time for their visit. Previously just 20 percent of tickets to go up the 324-metre "Iron Lady" could be booked ahead of time. The tower's management has also started reserving specific elevators for each type of ticket holder, a move which "creates lines that are at times monstrous and often lopsided," the CGT

union said.

During off-peak times for pre-booked tickets, such as the early afternoon, the reserved elevator might be half empty — despite lines of up to three hours at the elevator for walk-ins. And high demand at the pre-booked elevator can cause back-ups that force people to wait long beyond their scheduled visit. "Employees' patience has run out," the CGT's Denis Vavassori said on Monday, adding that many visitors were unhappy with the long waits.

Staff want all the elevators to be available to all visitors, no matter what kind of ticket they have bought. SETE, the company which runs the site, says it sells 10,000 online tickets for the tower every day and that "the waiting time is very short". "For visitors who come without tickets, the waiting time at the checkouts at the foot of the Eiffel Tower is exactly the same as last year, while the number of visitors has increased," it insisted. The tower has been hit by repeated strikes by its 300-strong staff in recent years over issues ranging from pick-pocketing to maintenance work. — AFP

International

Man shot dead in Zimbabwe as post-election clashes erupt

EU: Un-level playing field and lack of trust in the process

HARARE: Protests in Zimbabwe's historic elections turned bloody yesterday as a man was shot dead during demonstrations over alleged vote fraud and President Emmerson Mnangagwa appealed for calm. The man died after soldiers fired live ammunition during opposition protests in downtown Harare, AFP reporters saw.

The polls-the first since autocratic president Robert Mugabe was forced out by a brief military takeover in November-had offered Zimbabwe the chance of turning the page on a brutal chapter of its past. But the mood quickly descended into anger and chaos as supporters of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition declared they had been cheated. "You said you were better than Mugabe-you are the picture of Mugabe," shouted one young male protester wearing a white T-shirt. "We need security for the people."

Official results showed that the ruling ZANU-PF party had easily won the most seats in the parliamentary ballot-strengthening Mnangagwa's prospects of holding onto power in the key presidential vote. MDC supporters burnt tires and pulled down street signs as protests spread from the party headquarters in Harare. "Now is the time for responsibility and above all, peace," wrote Mnangagwa on his verified Twitter account. "At this crucial time, I call on everyone to desist from provocative declarations and statements."

'Un-level playing field'

European Union observers had earlier said they found an "improved political climate" in the elections but an "un-level playing field and lack of trust in the process." It called for transparency in the release of results. EU chief observer Elmar Brok said there were "efforts to undermine the free expression of the will of the electors through inducements, soft intimidation, pressure and coercion... to try to ensure a vote in favour of the ruling party."

"On many occasions, preparation, financing, media and hopefully not in the counting-it was advantageous for the ruling party,"

he told AFP. Mnangagwa, 75, had promised a free and fair vote after the military ushered him to power in November when Mugabe was forced to resign. Under Mugabe's 37-year reign, elections were often marred by fraud and deadly violence, with the EU observers banned since 2002. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) said yesterday that of 210 parliamentary seats, 153 had been counted with ZANU-PF winning 110 and the MDC Alliance 41. "The results are biased, trying to give the impression that ZANU has won," said Lawrence Maguranyi, 21, an MDC supporter and university student protesting at the party headquarters. MDC leader Nelson Chamisa, 40, said the presidential results were fraudulent. "ZEC seeks to... reverse the people's presidential election victory. The strategy is meant to prepare Zim mentally to accept fake presidential results," he tweeted. "We won the popular vote and will defend it!"

Delayed results?

The regional SADC bloc, in its preliminary report, said yesterday that the campaign and election had "proceeded in a peaceful and orderly manner and were largely in line" in Zimbabwean law. It called for any aggrieved candidates to "refrain from any form of violence". If no presidential candidate wins at least 50 percent of the ballots cast in the first round, a run-off vote is scheduled for September 8.

The electoral commission warned that final results of the presidential first round may not be known until Friday or even Saturday. Commission chairwoman Priscilla Chigumba, a high court judge, has flatly denied allegations of bias and strongly disputed accusations of rigging. Mugabe, 94, voted in Harare alongside his wife Grace after he stunned observers by calling for voters to reject ZANU-PF, his former party.

His attempts to position Grace as his successor are widely thought to have driven the military to intervene and put their favoured candidate, Mnangagwa, in power. Mnangagwa, Mugabe's former right-hand man, was the clear election front-



HARARE: A wounded man reacts at the sight of soldiers while taking shelter in a stall at a market. — AFP

runner, benefitting from tacit military support and control of state resources. But Chamisa, a lawyer and pastor who performed strongly on the campaign trail, sought to tap into the youth and urban vote. He has repeatedly accused ZANU-PF and election authorities of trying to use a flawed electoral register and fixed ballot papers to steal the election. Mnangagwa was allegedly involved in violence and intimidation during the 2008 elections when then opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai pulled out of the run-off after attacks claimed the lives of at least 200 of his supporters. — AFP



SIVAS: A handout picture taken and released yesterday by the Turkish Presidential Press service shows Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (R) shaking hands with a relative of a mother and her 11-month-old baby, killed after a roadside bomb, during their funeral. — AFP

Erdogan accuses US of 'evangelist, Zionist mentality'

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday vowed Turkey would not give into threats from the US over the case of an American pastor being tried on terror charges, accusing Washington of showing an "evangelist, Zionist mentality". Andrew Brunson, who led a Protestant church in the Aegean city of Izmir, is at the centre of one of the most bitter diplomatic spats between the NATO allies in years that risks escalating further.

Brunson was last week put under house arrest after nearly two years in jail. But the crisis has since escalated rather than being defused, with US officials furious he has not been allowed to leave Turkey. US President Donald Trump and his Vice President Mike Pence have threatened Turkey with painful sanctions if the pastor was not freed. "We will not give any credit to this type of threatening language," Erdogan told reporters in Ankara.

Pence said last week that Brunson was "a victim of religious persecution" but Erdogan insisted that Turkey did not have the "slightest problem against religious minorities. It is not possible for us to accept that America gets up, especially with an evangelist, Zionist mentality, and uses this kind of threat-filled language," Erdogan added.

Erdogan's comments come after senior figures from Turkey's religious minorities issued a joint statement yesterday denying that there was pressure against their followers. Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, Turkey Armenian Deputy Patriarch Archbishop Aram Atesyan and Turkey's Chief Rabbi Ishak Haleva signed the declaration among other minority leaders. Hurriyet daily reported. "We practice our faiths and worship according to our traditions freely," it said. Both Pence and Brunson are evangelical Christians. Brunson's Izmir church is affiliated to the Orlando-based Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). — AFP

Yemen rebels announce 2-week Red Sea ceasefire

SANAA: Yemen's Houthi rebels announced a two-week pause in Red Sea operations yesterday, after attacks against Saudi tankers last week prompted Riyadh to suspend oil shipments through a key waterway. "The unilateral suspension of our naval operations is for a limited period," the rebels said in a statement released by their defense ministry.

The Houthis' Twitter and Facebook accounts said the suspension will last two weeks. But "it can be renewed and expanded to other fronts if this initiative is well-received and reciprocated", the statement said. The Houthis are fighting a Saudi-led military coalition that backs Yemen's government. A spokesman for the coalition did not immediately respond to a written request for comment on the Houthis' unilateral truce.

On July 26, Saudi Arabia said it was temporarily suspending oil shipments through the Bab Al-Mandab Strait-one of the world's busiest shipping lanes-after two oil tankers operated by Saudi shipping group Bahri were attacked, slightly damaging one vessel. The pro-Houthi Al-Masirah television said at the time that the rebels had targeted a Saudi warship named Al-Dammam, without providing further details. — AFP

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International

San Juan: The Venezuelan city where nothing works anymore

‘There have been times where we’ve had no electricity for 24 hours’

SAN JUAN DE LOS MORROS: Power blackouts are daily fare, running water comes only once a month, cash machines are empty and waiting for a bus can take hours. Welcome to San Juan de los Morros in Venezuela, where nothing works. “They send (running) water once a month. The rest of the time we have to buy it,” moaned Florimar Nieves, a 39-year-old primary school teacher. “There have been times where we’ve had no electricity for 24 hours.”

This is not some sort of remote village outpost but a city of 160,000 inhabitants, 150 kilometers south-west of the capital Caracas. Yet every corner reeks of the stench of Venezuela’s acute economic and political crises. Nieves lives with her two daughters and a granddaughter on the outskirts of San Juan, in a neighborhood of small, unfinished houses, dirt roads and skinny dogs.

She spends a quarter of her income buying water while her medical student daughter has to go to a neighbor’s house to use the internet. Yet protests in San Juan are as scarce as food, medicines and sanitary products. Many residents seem resigned to their fate. Some collect rain water, while others pray that frequent power cuts won’t damage their electrical appliances.

Tired of waiting

Venezuela’s economic crisis that saw the International Monetary Fund predict inflation would reach one million percent this year, has hit San Juan hard. And this in the country that was once one of the top 10 oil producers in the world. Adults and children alike, dressed in shabby, ill-fitting clothes, walk long distances to get to work or school, tired of waiting hours for one of the few buses still running. Those who cannot buy water and haven’t received any for weeks face trips to the “tap” in the center of town, supplied by a system of pipes leading from a well.

“We come here two or three times a week. We haven’t had water for 12 days,” said Arélis Oliveros as she filled up several containers. The problem has

reached such desperate levels that 17-year-old Alejandro often washes in rain water because his grandfather’s house, where he lives, regularly goes days without receiving water. “Sometimes I get fed up with washing this way because I smell bad, so I treat myself, blowing 10,000 bolivars on the bus to go and wash at my mother’s house,” he said.

It’s luxury in a country where the currency is losing value at such an alarming rate that the largest denomination bank note, 100,000 bolivars, which once would buy five kilograms (11 pounds) of rice, is barely enough for a single cigarette. Cash has practically vanished from circulation throughout the country, but in San Juan the cash machines don’t work anyway and residents have to queue for hours at banks to withdraw money. In any case, they are only allowed to withdraw a maximum of 100,000 bolivars, half the price of single egg.

‘You have to punch and kick’

President Nicolas Maduro’s government has announced it will try to ward off economic collapse by stripping five zeros off the currency, but a similar move by his predecessor Hugo Chavez 10 years ago — he knocked off three — didn’t stop the country descending into today’s crisis. Earlier this week, Maduro admitted he and his government were at fault for failing public services. He vowed to quadruple oil production, which has dropped from a high of 3.2 million barrels a day 10 years ago to a 30-year low of 1.5 million in 2018, but predicted it would take two years to see “the first symptoms” of “economic prosperity.” That won’t cheer the residents of San Juan, though.

Carolina Azuaje, a 17-year-old medical student, leaves home at 6:00 am to try to get on one of the free buses supplied by her university, but often has to wait hours to do so. “You have to punch and kick your way onto the bus,” she said. “Last week, I broke a finger.” It’s no exaggeration. When the bus arrives, she jostles with around 100 people to try to board. Many don’t make it, but most just laugh. Nieves says there’s no



CARACAS: Employees of a shoe store are pictured during a power cut. —AFP

point complaining as it will only lead to greater hardship. When people do protest the lack of services, they are threatened with the loss of food subsidies while the government and military “lash out against them.”

‘The biggest orphanage’

Sociologist Francisco Coello says parts of society have accepted the crisis because “they’ve not seen anything else” after two decades of chavista governments.

Maduro usually blames opposition “sabotage” for the failings but the government “has left the population in the biggest orphanage, with two options: leave the country or depend on benefits,” said Cuello. “An underfed and uneducated population ensures that the regime stays in power.” Nieves is thinking about joining hundreds of thousands of others in fleeing the country. “Living in Venezuela is a struggle, an anguish, a great despair,” she sobbed. —AFP

Ex-Trump campaign chief goes on trial for tax fraud

ALEXANDRIA: President Donald Trump’s former campaign chief Paul Manafort considered himself to be “above the law,” prosecutors said Tuesday as his high-profile trial on bank and fraud charges began. Manafort, 69, is the first defendant to go to court to fight charges stemming from Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election. But the veteran Republican operative is not on trial for anything he did while serving for three months as the chairman of Trump’s presidential campaign.

Instead, Manafort is in court for alleged crimes related to his lobbying activities on behalf of the former Russian-backed government of Ukraine. “A man inside this courtroom believed the law did not apply to him,” Assistant US Attorney Uzo Asonye said in his opening statement to the six-man six-woman jury in the Alexandria, Virginia courtroom. “Paul Manafort placed himself and his money above the law,” Asonye said.

The prosecutor accused Manafort of seeking to hide millions of dollars from his Ukrainian lobbying efforts from the Internal Revenue Service and failing to report his foreign bank accounts. “All of these charges boil down to one simple issue—that Paul Manafort lied,” Asonye said. He also went into detail about Manafort’s spending—including a \$15,000 jacket made of ostrich-before US District Judge T.S. Ellis cut him off saying this was not a crime.

Manafort’s defense lawyers appeared to plan to place the blame on his former business partner Rick Gates, who was also charged by Mueller but pleaded guilty to lesser charges and is cooperating with prosecutors. “Paul’s trust was misplaced,” defense attorney Thomas Zehnle said. “Rick Gates took advantage of this trust. “Rick was handling the financial operations while he was lining his own pockets.”

The trial is expected to last about three weeks. Graying at the temples and somewhat leaner after a month in prison, Manafort was dressed in a dark suit and white shirt. He appeared relaxed in court, conferring with his lawyers, taking notes and smiling occasionally at the judge’s light-hearted remarks. A few anti-Trump protesters gathered outside the courthouse holding signs reading “Lock Him Up,” “It’s Mueller Time” and “Trump Wouldn’t Spend One Second In Prison For You.”

Angelique Brickner, a 53-year-old artist, and her 17-year-old daughter were among the members of the public who snared seats in the packed courtroom. “I came here because I want to see justice done and prove to my daughter that there is justice when the world is upside down,” Brickner said. Manafort, who helped Republicans Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan reach the White House, was Trump’s campaign chairman from May to August 2016, when he was forced to step down amid questions about his lobbying work for Ukraine’s former pro-Russian leader Viktor Yanukovich.

‘No Collusion’

Prosecutors plan to produce nearly three dozen witnesses during the trial, including Gates, Manafort’s former associate. Mueller has indicted more than 30 people—including 26 Russians—in connection with his probe into whether members of Trump’s campaign colluded with Russia to help get the real estate tycoon elected.

Trump has denounced the probe as a politically motivated “witch hunt” and denied there was any collusion with Moscow to defeat Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton. “Collusion is not a crime, but that doesn’t matter because there was No Collusion (except by Crooked Hillary and the Democrats),” Trump tweeted. While Gates and others have pleaded guilty, Manafort has refused to strike a deal and has insisted on having his day in court. —AFP

97 injured as Mexican plane crashes at airport in hail storm

DURANGO: An Aeromexico flight crashed on takeoff during a heavy hail storm in northern Mexico, engulfing the plane in flames and injuring 97 people, officials said Tuesday. The Embraer 190 aircraft, which was operating between Durango and Mexico City and crashed around 3:00 pm local time (20:00 GMT), was carrying “88 adults, nine minors, two infants, two pilots and two flight attendants,” the airline’s director general Andres Conesa told a news conference.

“It is confirmed that there have been no deaths from the flight #AM2431 accident,” tweeted Jose Rosas, the governor of Durango state where the crash occurred. The accident did cause two series injuries: a pilot had to undergo a spinal operation, and a young girl suffered burns on 25 percent of her body, the governor said. A total of 97 people were admitted for treatment following

the crash, most of them for “very light” injuries, according to Durango civil defense spokesman Alejandro Cardoza.

Cardoza said the plane was caught in a heavy hailstorm and the pilots tried to make an emergency landing, after which the fire broke out. Conesa thanked the crew “for their professionalism” and said that the aircraft “was perfectly maintained,” but did not provide details on the circumstances of the accident. Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer announced the dispatch of a team to investigate the crash. Dozens of lightly injured passengers were seen leaving the plane, which was engulfed in gray smoke in a field.

‘We had to jump’

An image taken using a drone and obtained by AFP shows the aircraft immobilized in a field at the end of the runway. “We were on the runway when the visibility grew worse,” 47-year-old Jacqueline Flores, who was traveling with her 16-year-old daughter, told AFP. “When we were already aloft, up high, it felt like the plane was going to level out but just then is when it plunged to the ground.

“I think we fell back on the runway



DURANGO: Handout picture released by Durango’s Civil Protection showing the wreckage of a plane that crashed with 97 passengers and four crew on board on takeoff at the airport of Durango. —AFP

because it was a hard surface, then we skidded on the ground until it stopped,” added the Durango native, a housewife who was on a journey back to Colombia where she lives. With the plane on the ground amid some bushes and brush, Flores said luggage began sliding down the aisle and she started to smell smoke.

“I undid my seatbelt and saw flames, and realized we had to jump. “There was

a hole right next to us and the plane had broken up, I told my girl ‘We have to jump over here’ and we jumped,” she added. According to Rosas, the passengers helped each other quickly evacuate the aircraft through the openings in the cabin caused by the accident. In July 1981, an Aeromexico flight crashed on landing in northern Chihuahua due to bad weather, killing 32. —AFP

UK former far-right leader Robinson freed from prison

LONDON: British former far-right leader Tommy Robinson was freed from prison yesterday after winning a legal challenge in a case that has galvanized his supporters worldwide. Robinson, who founded a street-level Islamophobic fringe group called the English Defence League, was serving a 13-month jail sentence.

He was jailed for contempt of court and breaching a previous suspended sentence, having used social media to live-stream outside a court in Leeds in northern England in breach of reporting restrictions around a trial. Since his imprisonment, supporters of US President Donald Trump, including former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, have taken up his cause.

Street protests have demanded the release of Robinson, who has previous convictions for assault, drug possession

and fraud. A panel of three judges at England’s Old Bailey central criminal court in London “as soon as reasonably possible”, the judges said. The 35-year-old, whose real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, was not in court for the hearing. Around 20 supporters, outnumbered two to one by police officers, chanted his name outside court. “I’m very very happy, he’s going home to his family,” said supporter Dean Henry, 53. Around 20 or so counter-protesters were also present, chanting “Nazi scum, off our streets”. “We want



LONDON: Supporters of jailed English Defence League (EDL) founder Tommy Robinson, real name Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, react outside the Royal Courts of Justice. —AFP

to stop Tommy Robinson, I’d like to see him in prison for life for what he is and what he does... there is no free speech for fascists,” said anti-racist campaign-

er Mary. “The danger is that the fascists, who are the hardcore of all this, will spread their venom to the right wing who don’t like migrants.” —AFP

Should the next UN rights chief treat leaders more gently?

GENEVA: He called Hungary’s prime minister a racist, suggested the Philippine president needed a “psychiatric evaluation,” and accused US President Donald Trump of driving humanity off a mountain. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, has acknowledged that his unvarnished criticism of world leaders has

made it impossible for him to secure a second term. “I have irritated, I think, all governments over the course of (my) four years,” Zeid, a member of Jordan’s royal family, told the BBC at the weekend.

As the deadline approaches to replace Zeid, one candidate vying for the job has argued that with the UN human rights system facing unprecedented threats, the right chief’s office needs a change in tone. “The next high commissioner must understand that defending human rights is not about attacking governments, it is not an exercise aiming to attribute blame or fault,” wrote Nils Melzer, the current UN special reporter on torture, in an letter announcing his bid to succeed Zeid.

“There is no point in winning perceived moral

superiority at the price of mutual loss of respect, influence and understanding,” added Melzer, a Swiss national. Melzer told AFP that even though he is probably not a frontrunner for the job, he tweeted his application letter to trigger a necessary debate. He expressed “tremendous respect” for Zeid but said that “antagonising” political leaders does not work.

“We are on the brink of the whole system rights system disintegrating,” Melzer said. “If we want to avoid a global shipwreck, we will have to find a common language.” Anyone interested in the long-term survival of the UN’s human rights system “will realise that the high commissioner can’t be an activist,” he said. —AFP

International

US to urge pressure against North Korea at Asian talks

Concern that UN sanctions on North are being relaxed

SINGAPORE: The US will urge the international community to keep up sanctions pressure against North Korea at a security forum in Singapore this week, as concerns mount that Pyongyang has made little progress towards denuclearization. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his North Korean counterpart will attend the gathering in the city-state where US President Donald Trump and the North's leader Kim Jong Un held their historic summit two months ago.

Pompeo and top diplomats from other countries involved in trying to curtail Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions will scrutinize whether the North has taken concrete steps towards abandoning its nuclear weapons. At his landmark talks with Trump in June, Kim signed up to a vague commitment to "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" — a far cry from long-standing US demands for complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament.

While there have been small signs of progress, news reports indicate Pyongyang is continuing to build rockets, and there are mounting concerns that the enforcement of United Nations sanctions on the North is being relaxed by some member states. A US official said Washington was "concerned" by North Korean violations of UN-approved sanctions, including illegal shipments of oil by sea. Gatherings like Saturday's ASEAN Regional Forum are "an opportunity to remind all coun-

tries of their obligations in adherence" of UN Security Council resolutions, the official said.

'Lasting peace, stability'

The annual forum, hosted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), brings together top diplomats from 26 countries and the European Union for talks on political and security issues in Asia-Pacific. The foreign ministers from all nations involved in stalled "six-party" negotiations with North Korea aimed at reining in Pyongyang's nuclear program will be at the gathering: the US, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea.

Cutting off oil and fuel to the North would require enforcement primarily by China, which supplies most of North Korea's energy needs, but also by Russia, which delivers some oil to Pyongyang. Despite the concerns about the North's progress toward abandoning its nuclear weapons, ministers at the forum are expected to strike an upbeat note about the agreement between Trump and Kim.

They will encourage the US and Pyongyang "to continue working towards the realization of lasting peace and stability on a denuclearized Korean Peninsula", according to a draft copy of the chairman's statement obtained by AFP. US officials have not said if Pompeo will meet his North Korean counterpart, Ri Yong Ho, on the sidelines of the forum. But even if he does, Sung-Yoon Lee, a Korea expert at the Fletcher School

of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, was skeptical that there would be any fresh signs of progress when it came to denuclearization. "Pompeo shall gain nothing substantive other than North Korea's amenability to further talks about talks," he said.

'Free and open'

The US secretary of state will also focus on another major regional flashpoint at the forum — rival claims in the South China Sea and China's growing presence there. China claims nearly all the strategically vital sea, including waters approaching the coasts of ASEAN members Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei. Beijing has in recent years expanded its presence in the sea by building artificial islands capable of holding military bases.

Ahead of his trip to Southeast Asia, which will also take him to Malaysia and Indonesia, Pompeo called for a "free and open" Indo-Pacific region and will expand on the theme at the Singapore meeting, according to the State Department. The disputed waters will be in focus when the 10 ASEAN foreign ministers hold talks among themselves during a working dinner on Wednesday, with the regional bloc and China expected to announce some progress in long-running talks aimed at coming up with a code of conduct for the sea. They are expected to announce that they have agreed on a single draft text that reflects the starting negotiating positions of countries



SINGAPORE: In this file photo taken on June 12, 2018 US President Donald Trump (R) and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un shake hands following a signing ceremony during their historic US-North Korea summit, at the Capella Hotel on Sentosa Island. — AFP

towards a code. Analysts however stressed it would be another small step coming over 15 years after negotiations began. Hoang Thi Ha, an analyst at the ASEAN Studies Centre in Singapore, said

the development represented "some initial progress" but noted that drawing up the code "will continue to be a painstaking and painfully slow process". — AFP

IS fighters surrender in Afghanistan's north

MAZAR-I-SHARIF: More than 150 Islamic State fighters surrendered in Afghanistan yesterday, Afghan officials said, a move which they and the Taliban hailed as the end of the extremist group in the northern part of the country. The apparent IS capitulation comes after weeks of intense fighting with the Taliban in Jowzjan province in the north, and ongoing pressure from Afghan and US forces. "Their fighters have surrendered in the past, but this time it is more important because the Daesh leader and deputy surrendered with more than 150 fighters all at once," Mohammad Hanif Rezaee, spokesman for the 209 army corps in the north, told AFP.

Rezaee said 30 women and children had also handed themselves in to Afghan authorities. "With this the Daesh chapter is going to be closed in the north," he added, using the Arabic acronym for IS. IS has a relatively small but potent presence in Afghanistan, mainly in the eastern province of Nangarhar, but more recently in Jowzjan. The group has fought turf wars with the much larger Taliban since emerging in in Afghanistan in 2014. Estimates on their numbers in the country run as high as around 2,000.

Until a few weeks ago there had been around 500 IS fighters in Darzab and Qush Tepa districts of Jowzjan, provincial governor Lutfullah Azizi has said. But the Taliban stepped up fighting with the group there after an IS attack on their fighters last month killed at least 15 people,

Azizi said. The Taliban took credit for the surrender announced by Afghan officials on Wednesday, saying it had "cleared" the north of IS fighters. It claimed it had captured 130, wounded more than 100, and killed 153.

The development comes as the Afghan army took over security in the eastern city of Jalalabad in IS's main stronghold of Nangarhar province after a spate of attacks, mostly claimed by the group. More checkpoints have also been set up and special forces are conducting operations after militants stormed a government office in the city on Tuesday, killing 15 people. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack, but IS is widely suspected of carrying it out. "To provide better security for the people, the national army is leading the security in the city," Attaullah Khogyani, spokesman for the governor of Nangarhar province, told AFP. "Police and other security forces are supporting them."

Under the new security plan, the army would lead efforts "to contain the emergency situation" for a week, Khogyani said, declining to provide details. Eventually, police and soldiers "will join hands to secure the city", he added. "IS has come under intense pressure from the government and the Taliban. They have lost a lot of men," former general Hadi Khalid, now a military analyst, told AFP. "The only strategy that can keep them going is to attack soft targets and that is what they have been doing recently." — AFP

Indian police probe use of growth hormones on children in brothels

CHENNAI: Indian police are investigating the use of growth hormones in a sex trafficking case, following the arrest of eight people charged with exploitation of children in brothels in Telangana state. Eleven girls, including four below age 7, were rescued from brothels in the temple town of Yadagirigutta where they were being groomed to become sex workers, a senior police officer said yesterday.

"The traffickers have confessed to us that they were giving hormone injections to the girls," said Mahesh Bhagwat, an officer in the state capital of Hyderabad, about 70 km from Yadagirigutta. "It is a clear case where we see that the girls were being groomed and injected with drugs to look older than their actual age," he said by phone. "We are also looking for the doctor supplying drugs to the traffickers."

Of the estimated 20 million girls and women working in India's sex industry, 16 million are

victims of trafficking, according to non-governmental organizations. A 2017 report by the West Bengal government highlighted the brutal "breaking in" of girls trafficked into brothels, a process that often includes rapes, beatings and starvation. The use of growth hormones, as well as drugs to sedate girls while they are being trafficked from one place to another, is rampant but rarely investigated, according to campaigners. "In most rescues, we come across young girls who have been pumped with drugs to look older," said Rishi Kant, of the anti-trafficking charity Shakti Vahini. "The police just mention it in their report and don't bother to investigate this aspect further," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The eight traffickers arrested in Monday's raids had paid families up to 200,000 Indian rupees (\$2,917) for each girl, according to a police statement. In other cases, they targeted young orphans. — Reuters

US indicts woman at heart of Philippine graft scandal

MANILA: A businesswoman at the centre of a massive Manila corruption scandal has been charged in the US with laundering about \$20 million allegedly pilfered from the Philippine state, prosecutors said, adding they would seek her extradition. A federal grand jury in California indicted Tuesday Philippine national Janet Lim Napoles, a key suspect in the so-called "pork barrel" scandal where politicians allegedly embezzled roughly \$200 million that was supposed to help poor Filipinos.

Napoles, along with five family members, is accused of siphoning \$20 million of the stolen money from the Philippines to California bank accounts, the US attorney's office said in a state-

ment. Lim, 54, is already behind bars in the Philippines, where she is on trial over graft charges stemming from the alleged embezzlement. The Manila law firm representing her declined to comment. The US indictment alleges the defendants used the money to buy real estate, shares in businesses, two Porsche Boxsters and finance the living expenses of three US-based Napoles family members.

"We will work with our Philippine counterparts to secure the extradition of the defendants to the United States," said US Attorney Nick Hanna. The US government won a court order in 2015 to freeze \$12.5 million worth of assets bought by Napoles and others using the allegedly stolen funds. "If the court orders the assets forfeited, the United States will work... to return the stolen funds back to the Philippine government," the statement said. The money was intended for use in development projects chosen by lawmakers, but instead it was diverted to phoney non-profit organizations and stolen. The scandal rocked the Philippines, where one in five people live on the equivalent of just over a dollar a day. Three Filipino senators were among those arrested in Manila in 2014 over the scam. — AFP

N Korea remains likely to be American: US agency

OSAN: The remains of foreign soldiers returned by North Korea last week are likely to be American, an official at the US agency that deals with troops missing in action said yesterday, as a US military aircraft prepared to repatriate the cases to Hawaii. Last week Pyongyang returned 55 cases of remains from the 1950-53 Korean War, in line with an agreement between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at their summit in Singapore in June.

The process of identification could take years, according to experts. But John Byrd, director of scientific analysis at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), said preliminary findings suggested that "they are likely to be American remains". "The remains are consistent with remains we have recovered in North Korea... in the past," Byrd told reporters at the Osan US Air Base in South Korea. The cases have been kept there since Friday, awaiting their repatriation to Hawaii for further forensic analysis. "There's no reason at this point to doubt that they do relate to Korean War losses," he added.

Around 500 officials from the United Nations Command (UNC), the United States and South Korea attended a formal repatriation ceremony at the airbase yesterday. The cases, each draped with a white and blue UN flag, were lined up in rows as the ceremony got under way. "The Korean War fallen have never been forgotten by the United States of America," the UNC said in a statement. "UNC never leaves troops behind, living or deceased, and will continue the mission of repatriation



US General Vincent Brooks, commander of the United Nations Command, US Forces Korea and Combined Forces Command, speaks during a repatriation ceremony for the remains of US soldiers who were killed in the Korean War and collected in North Korea, at Osan Air Base in Pyeongtaek. — AFP

until every service member returns home," it added. After the ceremony uniformed soldiers carefully deposited each case into a C-17 cargo plane. Byrd told reporters that "there was a single dog tag (US soldier's identity tag) provided with the remains." "The family of that individual has been notified," he said. "But I would caution... that it's not necessarily the case that the dog tag goes with the remains... in the box," he added, underscoring the challenges of identifying the recovered remains. The returned material also included military hardware and uniforms, including helmets, water bottles and boots, he said.

DNA, bones, dental records

Former DPAA official Jeong Yang-seung, who previously worked on identifying US remains from the North, said it was unusual to locate dog tags during the search and recovery process. "It's once in a blue moon that dog tags are recovered," Jeong, now professor of forensic anthropology at the Middle

Tennessee State University, told AFP. "I don't think North Korea is refusing to give dog tags when it has more but it probably doesn't have dog tags lying around," he said. "So when... only one dog tag was provided, it's probably not to tease the US but rather that it was sent because it could offer clues to the remains."

DNA analysis, skeletal studies of bones, dental records as well as details of where the remains were found play a key role in such investigations, he said. "It's a very thorough process with many, many procedures so it takes a long time," he said. "If it's identified quickly, it would be around five to six months, but if not, it could take decades." More than 35,000 Americans were killed on the Korean Peninsula during the war and around 7,700 of them are still considered missing, including 5,300 in North Korea alone. Between 1990 and 2005 229 sets of remains from the North were repatriated, but those operations were suspended when ties worsened over Pyongyang's banned nuclear weapons program. — AFP

One-party rule 'terrible setback' for Cambodia: Opposition chief

BONNIEUX: The co-founder of Cambodia's disbanded opposition has decried the landslide victory of Hun Sen's ruling party in an uncontested poll as a "terrible setback", urging a campaign of non-cooperation with the next government. A provisional count from Sunday's poll has handed the Cambodia People's Party of strongman Hun Sen, who has ruled for more than three decades, all 125 parliamentary seats — cementing the country's status as a one-party state.

The election was held without the only credible opposition, the Cambodia National Rescue Party, which was barred from running after it was dissolved by the Supreme Court late last year. "It's a fake victory... a fake election, with a foregone conclusion," said CNRP co-founder Sam Rainsy, who lives in self-exile in Paris to avoid a slew of convictions he contends are politically motivated. "It is a return to the old system, the one-party system, like during the Cold War, during the Communist times... it is a terrible setback for Cambodia," he told AFP in an interview given in France's southern Provence region.

Hun Sen has hailed Sunday's vote as "free, fair and just", with his party saying the estimated 82 percent turnout made a mockery of CNRP calls for a boycott. Yesterday, his first public appearance since the electoral endorsement, Cambodia's ruler since 1985 said he is eyeing "big success" this year in



PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen (C) poses for photos with people as he attends the official launch of a public shuttle boat. — AFP

"building the economy... and democracy". But critics say the poll was held against a backdrop of local-level intimidation while dissenting voices in the media and civil society had been quieted in the run-up to the vote.

In the last elections in 2013 the CNRP took around 44 percent of the popular vote — threatening Hun Sen's hold on power. The CNRP's leadership has since either been jailed, pressed into leaving the country or silenced by court cases and intimidation. Rainsy urged his party's supporters to "mobilise to protest against this fake election" in a campaign of non-cooperation against any government that emerges from

the landslide win. He also said the international community should "reject" the result.

Cambodia and Hun Sen lent heavily on the Western world for aid and investment to rebuild the country from the ruins of decades of civil war, rule by the brutal Khmer Rouge and occupation by Vietnam. But under fire from his old allies for his increasingly authoritarian bent, Hun Sen has in recent years turned to China for no-strings soft loans, investment and diplomatic ballast. Washington and the European Union have condemned Sunday's uncontested poll, while Beijing offered its congratulations to the Cambodian people. — AFP

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961Founder and Publisher
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E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
Website: www.kuwaittimes.netWrenching choice
for families: Go
public or stay quiet?

After Siamak Namazi was arrested in Tehran in 2015, his family faced a wrenching choice: involve the diplomatic machinery of the US government, speak out publicly about the arrest, or quietly work for his release through Iranian officials. It's the same dilemma diplomats and relatives grapple with each time a US citizen is imprisoned in Iran. There's no clear policy on whether families should publicize an arrest or remain quiet, current and former diplomats say, but rather an ad hoc mix of what the family wants and the inclinations of US negotiators.

Still, American diplomats have often advised family members that publicizing arrests could upend chances for release. Hua Qu, the wife of Xiyue Wang, an American graduate student who has been imprisoned in Iran for nearly two years, says she received early guidance from the State Department after her husband's detention in Aug 2016: Keeping quiet could give Iran more flexibility to release Wang.

In a statement on its website, Princeton said it kept Wang's arrest confidential "on the recommendation of multiple knowledgeable advisers who counseled that publicity would likely impede efforts to secure Mr Wang's release." Qu said she agreed. "We were always hopeful that the Iranian authorities, they will just ultimately drop the case and let him go home at a certain point," she said in an interview in her apartment near Princeton's campus last year. "We actually didn't expect that the situation could last this long."

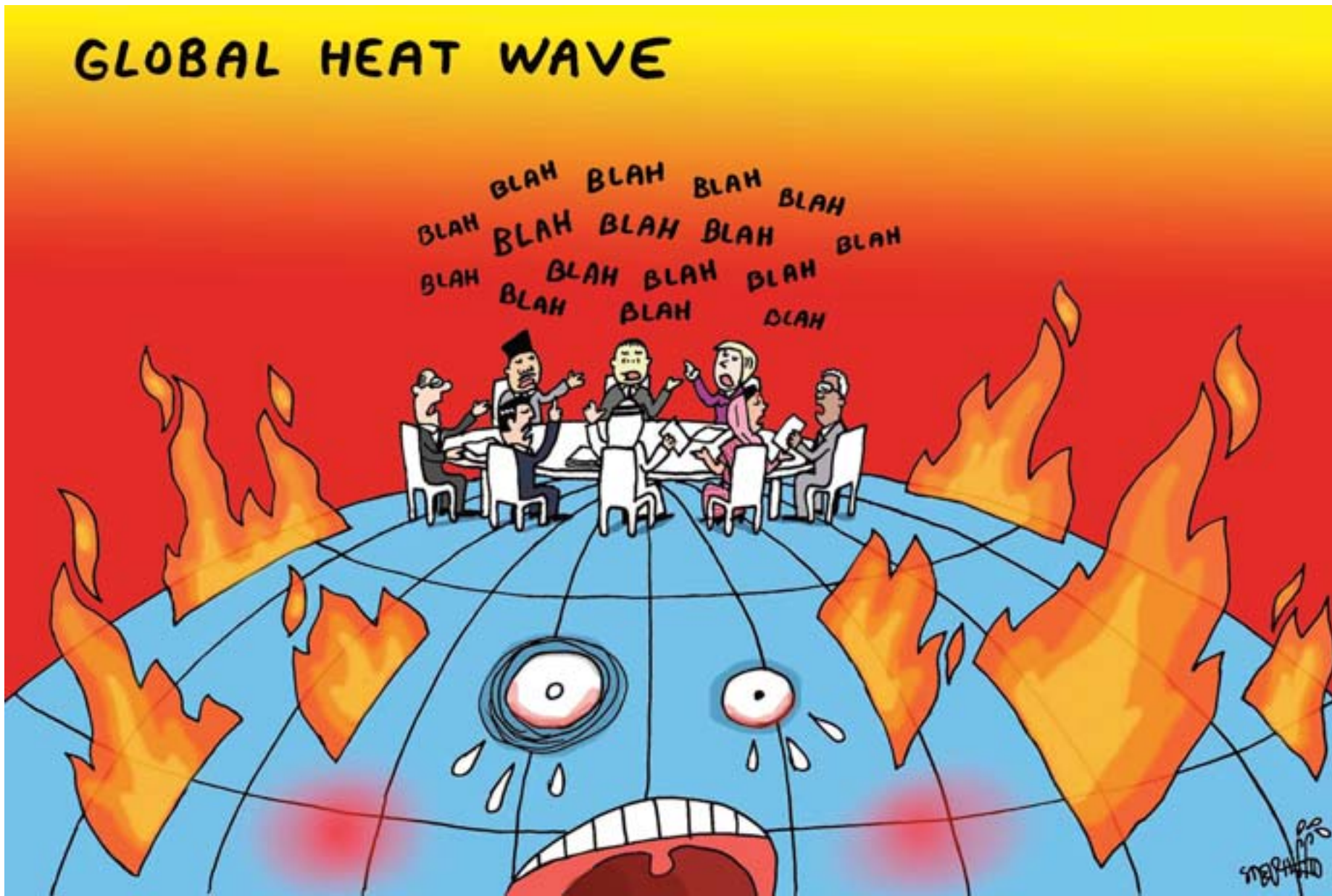
Ultimately, the United States, Princeton and Wang's family kept his detention under wraps for nearly a year, even after he was convicted of espionage and sentenced in April 2017. It was the Iranian government that publicized his case last summer. In private diplomatic memos released by Wikileaks, American officials grappled with the nuances of whether to go public in individual cases. In one instance they described it as more effective to mount an international pressure campaign when the captive was a well-known journalist with a pregnant wife. But publicity was deemed harmful in another case partly because the Iranian-American worked for a nonprofit viewed with suspicion by Iran.



A woman walks past a sculpture in front of a park in the capital Tehran on July 31, 2018. — AFP

Adding to the complication for families: Iranian authorities sometimes make promises about their loved ones' quick release - if only they keep quiet. "They arrest someone and then they always tell the families, 'Oh don't tell anyone, this is a matter of one week or two weeks and then it will be resolved,'" said Bijan Khajepour, a relative and former business partner of Siamak Namazi. Khajepour was himself jailed in Iran in 2009.

Iran historian Shaul Bakhash, the husband of Haleh Esfandiari, a scholar arrested by Iranian authorities in 2007, said "it's always wrong to stay quiet". Esfandiari was prevented from leaving the country and regularly interrogated. Initially, Bakhash said, the family kept quiet. But when she was arrested, he broadcast that Iran had arrested a grandmother in her 60s on vague charges. "It's important for the Iranian authorities ... to realize that this kind of conduct is unacceptable by international standards," Bakhash said. — Reuters



America's unending hostage crisis with Iran

A year before leaving office, Barack Obama stunned the world with a prisoner trade with Iran. After more than a year of secret negotiations, the US president announced that five Americans were freed from captivity, closing a deal he dubbed a "one-time gesture". But even before Obama stepped down, American diplomats were back at the negotiating table, struggling to secure the release of more prisoners. His successor, Donald Trump, blasted Obama as soft on Iran. As a candidate, Trump made a bold pledge on Iran's prisoner taking: "This doesn't happen if I'm president!"

Trump didn't deliver. More than a year into his presidency, Iran still holds prisoner at least five US citizens and permanent residents - including one taken during Trump's tenure. The White House declined to comment, and the State Department said the United States works "tirelessly" to free Americans held in Iran. His administration confronts a troubling reality: There is no easy way to stop Iran from taking Americans prisoner, a tactic Tehran has employed since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

That year, Iran took 52 Americans hostage at the US embassy in Tehran. Since then, it has detained at least 25 American citizens or permanent residents, Reuters found through interviews and a review of court documents and news reports. Democratic and Republican administrations alike have struggled to find an effective response. From military strikes to placating Iran through arms sales and cash payments, US presidents have employed force, diplomacy and persuasion. Each path has led only to more prisoners, concessions and tension.

"These are probably the hardest issues that I ever dealt with when I was at the White House working on Iran," said Kelly Magsamen, a former National Security Council official who handled Iran during the Bush and Obama administrations. "The Iranians are quite adept at, essentially, hostage-taking." Iranians say the Americans have been held with just cause. "US citizens that have been detained in Iran have been arrested for committing grave security and non-security related offenses," said Alireza Miryousefi, a spokesman for Iran's diplomatic mission to the United Nations.

Iran has detained not just Americans but also Europeans. A 2017 Reuters investigation found that the Revolutionary Guards had arrested at least 30 dual nationals in two years. One is Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian aid worker employed by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, whose family and employer deny the charges against her. Another is Ahmadreza Djalali, a Swedish-Iranian scientist arrested in 2016 after attending a conference in Tehran.

For Washington, progress often comes with a catch. The prisoner trade negotiated by Obama contained elements all but ensuring future American concessions to Iran - including the likelihood of some combination of cash transfers and the release of more prisoners - and vexing questions about the captives left behind. To understand America's unending hostage crisis with Iran, Reuters interviewed 12 current and former US and Iranian officials with direct knowledge of the prisoner cases, in addition to lawyers, family members and friends of American captives. These voices provide fresh insight into how the intricate negotiations unfolded - and into the path now being followed by Trump.

As part of the swap, Iran released the five Americans named by Obama - Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian, Christian pastor Saeed Abedini, former US Marine Amir Hekmati, businessman Nosratollah Khosravi and student Matthew Trevithick - and one Iranian-American whose release the White House kept secret at the time. In return, the Obama administration agreed to either free from jail or drop charges against seven Iranians in the United States. Those Iranians were almost all charged with or convicted of violating a US trade embargo on Iran. Washington also agreed to drop charges against 14 Iranians living overseas. A day after the prisoners were set free in January 2016, the United States announced it would release \$1.7 billion to Iran, linked to a separate, long-running dispute over arms sales.

Missing FBI agent, imprisoned businessman

The deal did not resolve the longest-running case: The disappearance of Bob Levinson, a former Federal Bureau of Investigation agent who vanished on Iran's Kish Island in 2007 while on an intelligence mission. The Obama administration also did not win the release of Siamak Namazi, an Iranian-American businessman seized by Iran in Oct 2015, just as diplomats were nearing a final deal over the other prisoners. Months later, Iran would capture Namazi's ailing father, Baquer, after enticing him to return to Iran by promising a visit with his jailed son.

All told, in the year after the trade, Iran arrested at least another five American citizens and permanent residents. The dynamic raises a question among family members and advocates for American prisoners: How did American negotiators seal a bargain with Tehran that excluded a former American government agent and an Iranian-American well connected in Washington? The answer lies deep in the 2015 talks. The months-long negotiations sometimes pitted the competing interests of prisoners held by Iran against each other, in a drama that played out during Obama's fraught effort to reach a nuclear agreement with Tehran.

Trump has opened the door to new talks, though they are now dormant. Yet any new prisoner deal between Iran and the Trump administration would have to resolve Levinson's case, or risk the ire of US law-enforcement agencies, said former US negotiators. Most current and former US officials who spoke to Reuters did so on condition of anonymity in order to discuss confidential negotiations. The negotiations behind the 2016 deal began as a

quest to recover Levinson, they said. For years the FBI has pushed for his release, even as Iran maintained it had no idea what happened to him. Washington believes Iran detained Levinson on Kish Island, 10 miles off the southern Iranian coast.

Wendy Sherman, then the number-three diplomat at the State Department, had launched secret negotiations in 2014 aimed at resolving the Levinson case and freeing the other captives. Brett McGurk, a senior State Department official, led the negotiations, which began in earnest in 2015. By then, it had been years since definitive proof surfaced that Levinson was alive. Some State Department diplomats believed the United States should prioritize citizens they knew were alive, two former officials said. But negotiators faced pressure for answers from the FBI, lawmakers and the Levinson family.

Those dueling pressures - finding what happened to the missing agent, while working to free those imprisoned later but known to be alive - created another raft of complications in the negotiations. For years, Levinson's whereabouts were often a vital line of interrogation FBI agents pushed when questioning Iranian suspects about sanctions violations, even those who would have no obvious reason to know about his fate. "It's like their first question when they come into the room: 'Where's Levinson?'" said a person with direct knowledge of the conversations.

The Iranians sent a team that included a representative from the Ministry of Intelligence. Typically, the United States only had access to Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The involvement of this senior intelligence operative was kept a closely guarded secret and taken as a strong signal Iran was serious. As talks progressed, the two nations began developing lists of prisoners each held in its jails, slowly feeling out what the other side would concede.

From the start, the United States was willing to consider trading even Iranian prisoners seen as threats to national security, so long as Iran released Levinson, returned his body, or provided conclusive information on his status. "We told the Iranians very clearly we would have a different conversation if Levinson was included," a former diplomat said. The Iranians responded with a startling offer. In return for Tehran's assistance in recovering Levinson, they wanted Washington to reveal the location of Ali Reza Asgari, an Iranian general who vanished in Turkey in 2007, just one month before Levinson's disappearance.

For the Americans, Asgari was a special case. In the 1980s, he held top leadership roles in Iran's security and intelligence apparatus in Lebanon. That made him a crucial player in the establishment of Hezbollah, the Lebanese militant group that killed scores of American troops and civilians in bombings in Beirut. The United States has long denied involvement in Asgari's disappearance. US diplomats approached the Central Intelligence Agency with this offer but were told American agents had no information on Asgari's whereabouts. And without that, resolving Levinson's disappearance was off the table.

"It became pretty clear pretty soon that this was not something [the Iranians] were prepared to budge on," said the former US negotiator. Iran continues to maintain it has no knowledge of Levinson's whereabouts. So, by late summer of 2015, US negotiators had decided they would agree to a deal with Iran even without resolving the Levinson case. On Jan 16, 2016, as Stephanie Curry, Bob's daughter, was coaching her daughter's basketball team in Dallas, she received dozens of text messages from family members: There had been a prisoner trade with Iran. "Oh my gosh, my Dad has been released," she recalled thinking. Then she learned the truth. "I can't even describe what that feeling was like for myself and the rest of my family," she told Reuters.

'It's on TV'

That same day, 8,000 miles away, another family suffered the same sequence of elation, confusion and devastation. When news flashed that five Americans had been freed, Babak Namazi, a lawyer living in Dubai, called his parents: His brother Siamak was coming home, he told them. Iranian media initially reported, erroneously, that Siamak was among the released detainees. Babak rushed to tell his mother: "He's free, he's free, he's free!" "Are you sure?" she asked. Babak recounted in a conversation with reporters last year. "It's on TV," he replied.

Over several harrowing hours, the family learned Siamak was not on the plane with the other Americans. He remains jailed in Iran to this day, and recently spent his 1,000th day in prison. Siamak, now 46, had been arrested by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps three months earlier and eventually charged with allegedly spying for the United States. For weeks, Babak had frantically shuttled between Dubai and Iran to press for his release. In the 1990s and early 2000s, when Iran had a moderate, reform-oriented president in Mohammad Khatami, Namazi ran consultancies that advised foreign investors on doing business in Iran. But in 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a hardliner hostile to the West, was elected president. By 2007, Siamak left Iran, and largely spent those years living abroad. In 2009, during massive unrest in Iran, Bijan Khajepour, Siamak's business partner and relative by marriage, was accused of espionage and jailed for three months.

In 2013, Iranians elected the more moderate Hassan Rouhani as president. Expatriates and US officials hoped his election would usher in détente with the West. Siamak received periodic warnings from associates that Iran was still too dangerous for dual citizens, especially those with global connections. Still, Rouhani's election inspired hope that Siamak might be able to

help his native country. In 2013, he authored a report documenting medical supply shortages in Iran as a result of Western sanctions. He began organizing a May 2015 trip of the World Economic Forum's Young Global Leaders to Tehran, coordinating the conference with senior Iranian officials, including Rouhani's then-chief of staff, Mohammad Nahavandian. But after some participants were unable to obtain Iranian visas, Siamak abandoned the effort. Soon after, he received a warning. An Iranian associate had been interrogated by security agents. In June 2015, that man told Siamak he had been questioned about their relationship and that it would be dangerous for him in Iran.

Siamak was undeterred. During a trip to Iran in July 2015, he was blocked from leaving the country, and over the next three months, was repeatedly interrogated. Finally, on Oct 13, 2015, he was arrested, and eventually convicted of "collusion with an enemy state", referring to the United States. The timing of his capture - just three months before the big prisoner trade - presented a problem for US negotiators. They were nearing the end of complex talks on prisoner releases, the lifting of sanctions, cash settlements and limits on Iran's nuclear program. So, the broad outlines of agreements between the two countries had already been set by the time Siamak was captured.

Two months later, in December, Iranian security forces took yet another prisoner - Matthew Trevithick, an American studying Persian in Tehran. A month after Siamak's arrest, in mid-November, State Department negotiator McGurk contacted Siamak's relative and former business partner Khajepour, and indicated a prisoner trade was possible. Did the family want Siamak to be in the deal? The Namazi family's account of their response to the State Department diverges from that of current and former US officials who spoke to Reuters. "We wanted Siamak to be included, and we didn't even hesitate to ask for it," Khajepour said.

A US official said Khajepour told McGurk not to include Siamak in the deal, fearful that American involvement would harm their chances of gaining his release through their own connections in Iran. Three current and former US officials said the Namazi family eventually did ask to be part of the swap in the final hectic days of negotiations. As the day of the swap drew near, US negotiators asked Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif to release Siamak and Trevithick as part of the prisoner trade. Zarif told then-Secretary of State John Kerry that Siamak could not be included, said former US officials with direct involvement.

"We were given essentially a flat 'no,' that trying to include him in the deal would blow up the rest of the deal," said a former US official. "And that would have jeopardized the lives of the five other people coming out." The Iranians considered Trevithick a less serious case, in part because he did not hold Iranian citizenship, and released him hours before the other prisoners flew out of Iran. The prisoner deal was negotiated separately from the nuclear agreement, under which Tehran accepted limits on its uranium enrichment program in exchange for the lifting of sanctions. Still, in some ways, the two were linked: Kerry used leverage from the nuclear deal and cash settlement to free the prisoners, a former State Department official said. And, had the prisoner deal collapsed at the last minute, it could have jeopardized the nuclear deal.

The stakes were high. Rezaian, Abedini and Hekmati each had been behind bars for extended periods - Hekmati for more than four years - sometimes undergoing solitary confinement and torture. Miryousefi, the Iranian UN mission spokesman, said US citizens detained in Iran are "treated with humanitarian and Islamic considerations". Rather than demand Siamak's release, Kerry accepted a pledge from Foreign Minister Zarif that he would be freed after the deal was done, former US officials told Reuters. The officials disagree on whether Zarif gave a hard promise or simply said he'd try. But after nearly two years of talks, all viewed Iran's chief diplomat as credible.

The same day as the prisoner trade, the United States lifted sanctions against Iran. The next day, Obama announced Washington had begun repayment to Iran of \$1.7 billion to settle a decades-old dispute over an arms deal predating the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The Namazi family believes Washington squandered leverage. In addition to the cash payment, the nuclear deal gave Iran access to about \$100 billion that had been accumulating in foreign banks in payment for Iranian oil sales. "You're releasing a hundred billion dollars in unfrozen assets and hundreds of millions of dollars in cash, and you think you have leverage the day after you've done that?" asked family lawyer Jared Genser.

Kerry, through an aide, declined to comment on the specifics of the negotiation. But he "wishes everyone had the same outcome, and prays for the day every family will have the peace of mind they all deserve," said Matthew Summers, the aide. Instead of releasing Siamak Namazi, the Iranians arrested his ailing father, Baquer, a month later, while the now 81-year-old was in Tehran hoping to visit his son. The Iranians released Baquer home to his family several months ago.

As word of the swap blanketed cable news, one man declared his opposition: John Bolton, former US ambassador to the United Nations and at the time a frequent television commentator on foreign policy. The deal, he said, was "wonderful for the American hostages and their families" but a "diplomatic debacle" for the United States. "Are we simply incentivizing Iran to take further hostages?" he asked. Bolton is now Trump's national security advisor, in office since April. That makes him a central figure in deciding what concessions, if any, — Reuters

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TOKYO: Japanese companies are rethinking how they hire and train staff amid a growing labor crunch. Flexible working hours, personal benefits like day care and even rent assistance are now on the table alongside salary.

Japan Inc turns ‘more flexible’ amid labor crunch

Companies are rethinking how they hire and train staff

TOKYO: Misaki Harada wants to quit her job as a receptionist at a restaurant management company in Tokyo and move into marketing for an apparel maker. But the 24-year-old said she wanted more than just a bigger paycheck. Her next employer would need to improve her quality of life.

“If you ask me whether I prefer more money or more flexible working hours,” she said. “I want to get married soon and start a family. I want to make sure I have time to take care of my children.” As Japan’s population dwindles, its companies are being forced to change how they attract job seekers like Harada from an ever-shrinking labor pool.

Nationwide, there are 1.62 jobs available for every job seeker, the strongest demand for labor in more than 44 years. The jobless rate is 2.4 percent, near a 25-year low, and real wages adjusted for inflation have fallen in five of the past six years.

Flexible working hours, personal benefits like day care and even rent assistance are now on the table alongside salary. Such perks, common in the United States and Europe, are only just catching on Japan, which until recently relied on a culture of complete devotion to an employer in exchange for job security and steady pay increases. Toyota, for instance, opened a 24-hour day care facility in April for shift workers at its plants near its headquarters in Toyota City. “Japanese companies are becoming more flexible about when and where you work,” said

Toshiaki Matsumoto, chief executive of HR Strategy, a human resources consultancy.

Some companies, like Jtekt Corp, the world’s biggest supplier of vehicle steering systems, are simply moving some of their operations away from competition. Jtekt last year cut the ribbon on a new technology development center in Akita Prefecture, northern Japan, known more for its rice, sake and namesake dog breed than engineering. The facility, which will develop technology for self-driving cars, is far from other companies hiring into the industry.

So far the company, a key supplier of Toyota Motor Corp, has hired about 20 engineers and plans to roughly double its workforce by the end of the year.

“In larger cities, it’s difficult to get across the message that we are hiring because we’re competing with many companies for the same talent,” said Fukami Imai, the center’s representative director. Denso Corp, another Toyota supplier, took the opposite route, moving part of its self-driving research program to Tokyo because it is a more attractive locale than its headquarters in gritty Nagoya.

“Some companies are offering free food or subsidizing

rent so workers can shorten commuting time,” Matsumoto said. “Some companies even provide counseling and time off for couples trying to conceive.”

Forced to adapt

Japan’s working-age population peaked in 1995 at 87 million and is forecast to fall to 45 million by 2065. Businesses slow to respond to that demographic change have been hit hard. Silicon Technology, a semiconductor material maker, is running one rural plant at half-capacity because it can’t hire enough workers. Toyobo Co Ltd said it needs to ramp up production of film used in flat-panel displays, but can’t fully staff the production line.

Keeping employees from quitting – and not just throwing money at the problem – is another crucial piece of the labor puzzle, experts say. “My new employer paid me more money, but the working hours were awful,” said Daisuke Okamoto, 42, an accountant who left a job in advertising in April for a position at a consumer goods company. “At first, I had a lot of regret. Now the company has given me more flexible working hours and the freedom to occasionally

work from home, so I feel better about the job.” Daikisangyo, which assembles plane fuselages and wings for Boeing Co, was having trouble retaining new employees. Then it introduced a mentoring program that reduced turnover to zero, at least for now.

“It’s not just about the money anymore,” said Tsuyoshi Saso, a manager at Interworks, a nationwide recruitment site for jobs in manufacturing. “They also want to work in a positive work environment with good colleagues.”

Changing the workforce

Foreign workers can help fill some of the gaps, although they make up only about 2 percent of the current labor force, and companies hiring for “unskilled” positions like farm work must rely on trainees under an internship program that lasts up to five years. The government has said it will create new categories for foreign workers with more limited skills, but will issue only a small number of such visas. Mazda Motor Corp’s suppliers, which typically operate independently, are cooperating to figure out the best way to use artificial intelligence and robots to remove human workers from the equation altogether. “Our goal is to create unmanned production lines that can operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year,” said Masato Uno, chairman of the Hiroshima Manufacturing Engineering Association, a consortium of Mazda suppliers and IT companies. “We expect this to address problems with productivity and labor shortages.” — Reuters

China vows to hit back if Trump slaps 25% tariff on its imports

BEIJING/WASHINGTON: China said yesterday that “blackmail” wouldn’t work and that it would hit back if the United States takes further steps hindering trade, as the Trump administration considers slapping a 25 percent tariff on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods.

The proposal would increase the potential tariff rate from 10 percent the administration had initially put forward on July 10 for that wave of duties in a bid to pressure Beijing into making trade concessions, a source familiar with the plan said on Tuesday.

The tariffs target thousands of Chinese imports, including food products, chemicals, steel and aluminum and consumer goods ranging from dog food, furniture and carpets to car tires, bicycles, and baseball gloves and beauty products. While the duties would not be imposed until after a period of public comment, raising the proposed level to 25 percent would escalate the already bitter trade dispute

between the world’s two biggest economies. The source said President Donald Trump’s administration could announce the tougher proposal as early as Wednesday in Washington. The plan to more than double the tariff rate was first reported by Bloomberg News. China, which has accused the United States of bullying, again vowed to retaliate if Trump proceeds with the measures, warning that pressure tactics would fail.

“U.S. pressure and blackmail won’t have an effect. If the United States takes further escalatory steps, China will inevitably take countermeasures and we will resolutely protect our legitimate rights,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a regular news briefing.

Investors fear an escalating trade war between Washington and Beijing could hit global growth, and prominent US business groups, while weary of what they see as China’s mercantilist trade practices, have condemned Trump’s aggressive tariffs.

Representatives of US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Chinese Vice Premier Liu He have been speaking privately as they seek to restart negotiations to defuse the budding trade war, Bloomberg reported, citing sources. A spokeswoman for the US Trade Representative’s Office declined to comment on the proposed tariff rate increase or on whether any changes would alter the deadlines laid out for comment period before implementation. Asked about communication between the two countries on the dispute, Geng said China had “always upheld using dia-

logue and consultations to handle trade frictions”, but that dialogue must be based on mutual respect and equality. “Unilateral threats and pressure will only produce the opposite of the desired result,” Geng said.

American pocketbooks

In early July, the US government imposed 25 percent tariffs on an initial \$34 billion of Chinese imports. Beijing retaliated with matching tariffs on the same amount of US exports to China. Washington is preparing to also impose tariffs on an extra \$16 billion of goods in coming weeks, and Trump has warned he may ultimately put them on over half a trillion dollars of goods – roughly the total amount of US imports from China last year. The \$200 billion list of goods targeted for tariffs – which also include Chinese tilapia fish, printed circuit boards and lighting products – would have a bigger impact on consumers than previous rounds of tariffs. Erin Ennis, senior vice president of the US-China Business Council, said a 10 percent tariff on these products is already problematic, but more than doubling that to 25 percent would be much worse.

“Given the scope of the products covered, about half of all imports from China are facing tariffs, including consumer goods,” Ennis said. “The cost increases will be passed on to customers, so it will affect most Americans’ pocketbooks.” Trump had said he would implement the \$200 billion round as punishment for China’s retaliation against the initial tariffs aimed at forcing change in China’s joint venture, technology



TAMPA: US President Donald Trump is now considering a 25 percent tariff on \$200 billion in Chinese imports, rather than the 10 percent previously touted, reports said on Tuesday. — AFP

transfer and other trade-related policies. He also has threatened a further round of tariffs on \$300 billion of Chinese goods. The US Trade Representative’s office initially had set a deadline for final public comments on the proposed 10 percent tariffs to be filed by Aug. 30, with public hearings scheduled for Aug. 20-23. It typically has taken several weeks after the close of public comments for the tariffs to be activated. — Reuters

Business

Britain on verge of interest rate hike to combat inflation

BoE eyes Brexit fallout, global trade war

LONDON: The Bank of England appears set for today to hike interest rates to combat high inflation, as it eyes fallout from both Brexit and the global trade war, economists say.

Policymakers are widely expected to ramp up the British central bank's main interest rate by a quarter-point to 0.75 percent—which would be the highest level in more than nine years.

The BoE's nine-strong monetary policy committee (MPC) will reveal the outcome of its August gathering at 1100 GMT. No change is anticipated in quantitative easing stimulus policy, which has been in place alongside ultra-low rates since the aftermath of the global financial crisis.

"The market is confident we are in for an August rate rise," said Laith Khalaf, senior analyst at stockbroker Hargreaves Lansdown.

Brexit-facing Britain was the only G7 economy to experience a slowdown in 2017, the Office for National Statistics highlighted this week. However, it also noted that growth has been more resilient than was initially expected after the Brexit referendum in 2016.

Factories

British factories lost momentum in July and manufacturers were their most downbeat in nearly two years, a survey showed yesterday, but the data was unlikely to deter the Bank of England from raising interest

rates today. The weak domestic demand highlighted in the IHS Markit/CIPS UK Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) added to other signs of a largely sluggish British economy facing an uncertain exit from the European Union in less than eight months' time.

The PMI slipped to its second-lowest level since late 2016 at 54.0, down from 54.3 in June and weaker than a median forecast of 54.2 in a Reuters poll of economists.



UK factories lose steam on eve of BoE decision

Rob Dobson, an IHS Markit director, said the sector—which accounts for 10 percent of the British economy—had provided no meaningful boost to economic growth so far this year. "The financial markets still seem to have an interest rate increase nailed on for August," he said, referring to Thursday's policy announcement by the BoE.

Ammunition against downturn?

"The bank would dearly love to normal-

ize monetary policy, if only to give itself a bit of ammunition to ward off an economic slowdown," Khalaf added.

"Moreover, last time the MPC met, three members voted for a rate rise, which now means only two doves need to become hawks for policy to tighten." Rising interest rates are a boon for savers but ramp up the cost of credit for consumers and companies. In June, the MPC panel had voted 6-3 to keep the rate on hold at 0.50 percent, as chief economist Andy Haldane joined those calling for a rise. The previous decision in May had been 7-2 in favor of no change.

BoE governor Mark Carney has meanwhile warned that the global trade war, spearheaded by US President Donald Trump, is damaging the outlook. Despite the gloom, most economists believe above-target inflation will persuade policymakers to hike, although weak manufacturing survey data has injected some caution.

The central bank will also unveil its latest quarterly economic forecasts today. Britain's 12-month inflation rate has now held above the BoE's official 2.0-percent target range since February 2017 — or for the last 17 months in a row. "The new inflation forecast should reflect a high risk of a target-overshoot by 2020," said analyst Danielle Haralambous at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

"This, combined with a broader desire to



LONDON: Policymakers are expected to ramp up the British central bank's main interest rate today. — AFP

normalize the policy stance to give some room for manoeuvre ahead of the next cyclical downturn, should convince a majority of MPC members to vote for a hike."

The BoE had implemented an emergency quarter-point rate cut to a record low 0.25 percent in August 2016 on fears over the economic impact of the Brexit vote.

However, it then lifted borrowing costs back up to 0.50 percent last November to

help bring down inflation. That was the first UK interest rate hike in more than a decade, since 2007.

'Symbolic moment'

"If the bank does increase rates it will be a pretty symbolic moment—the first time since the financial crisis that rates have moved above 0.50 percent," said Khalaf. — AFP

US hiring surges in July: Survey

WASHINGTON: US private firms hired at a torrid pace in July, far faster than economists expected, payrolls firm ADP said yesterday, which could point to another dip in the unemployment rate.

ADP's monthly survey showed nearly every industry had gains, and the US tariffs battle with key trading partners has yet to have a major impact on jobs. Coming on the day the Federal Reserve is due to announce its latest interest rate decision, the survey shows the American labor market remains strong, which could be a signal that wages will accelerate as well, fanning inflation.

The Fed is not expected to raise the benchmark lending rate again until September, but will watch wages and inflation closely to determine if it should be more aggressive about letting steam out of the economy. The central bank is expected to hike twice more this year.

ADP said the private sector added 219,000 new jobs, the most since February and surpassing the 175,000 consensus forecast among economists. "The labor market is on a roll with no signs of a slowdown in sight," said Ahu Yildirmaz, vice president and co-head of the ADP Research Institute. "Nearly every industry posted strong gains and small business hiring picked up."



SAN FRANCISCO: In this file photo, a now hiring sign is posted on the window of a 7-11 store in San Francisco, California. — AFP

ing picked up."

The dominant US services sector led the way, adding 177,000 new jobs, with health care and leisure/hospitality accounting for the bulk of the gains. The goods producing sector hired 42,000 in the month, including 23,000 in manufacturing. The ADP report is closely scrutinized as it comes ahead of Friday's all-important government jobs report, although the two reports are not always in line.

With the unemployment rate at four percent and wages starting to rise at long last,

the Fed will be on alert for signs inflation going beyond the two percent target.

Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody's Analytics, said, "The job market is booming, impacted by the deficit-financed tax cuts and increases in government spending." And while many firms have reported concerns about the ongoing trade confrontations, and some have cut jobs, Zandi said that is not showing up in the data. "Tariffs have yet to materially impact jobs, but the multinational companies shed jobs last month, signaling the threat." —AFP

Al-Tijaria achieves a net profit of KD 7,154,131 up to Q2 of 2018

KUWAIT: Abdulfatah M R Marafie - Chairman of The Commercial Real Estate Company (Al-Tijaria) has stated that the business outcome of the company for the financial period which ended on 30.06.2018, resulted in achieving net profits of KD 7,154,131.

The shareholders' equity grew by 1.4 percent and the net operational profits of the company driven by the rental income from the investment properties and the hotel, has shown growth by 3.4 percent compared with the same period of year 2017. The return on shareholders' equity is 2.5 percent and the return on the capital is 4 percent for the 6 month period ended Jun 30, 2018.

Marafie further stated that "the com-

pany is focused on improving its performance and results by strengthening operational revenues, cash flow and minimizing costs. To this end we have implemented a strategy which is fully functional and delivering timely action plans which will preserve and add value to the shareholders equity in the midst of the current political and economic challenges."

He further stated that "in the second quarter of 2018", the company successfully held many Events, to improve its vital role in corporate social responsibility. Such initiatives targets various segments of the society, and augments the company's belief in its social responsibilities and commitment to the ideal application of corporate governance principles.

To conclude, Marafie expressed his deepest gratitude and appreciation to all shareholders, Member of the Board of Directors and all employees for their efforts, continuous support, and hard work for reaching the goals and objectives.



Abdulfatah M R Marafie

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Business

KFH holds webcast to highlight financial results, Group strategy

Management presents overview of Kuwait's operating environment

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) held a webcast on its earnings on July 30 in which speakers from KFH executive management Mazin Al-Nahedh, Group Chief Executive Officer, Shadi Zahran, Group Chief Financial Officer and Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem, Group Chief Strategy Officer attended. Fawaz Al-Sirri moderated the conference.

While welcoming the participants to the second quarter 2018 earnings conference call for Kuwait Finance House Group, Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem highlighted the Kuwait operating environment with an overview of KFH and the second quarter business highlights.

"We'll also share with you KFH's strategy, as well as the second quarter financial results," he said.

Looking at Kuwait economic indicators the GDP value is expected to slightly increase by year end with expectations of higher growth in 2019 especially with oil prices closing near the 75-dollar range almost 18 percent above last year's close. Central Bank of Kuwait held its benchmark interest rates at a 3 percent following the last US Federal reserve rate hike. Fitch also affirmed Kuwait's sovereign rating at AA, he said.

Overview

As an overview of Kuwait Finance House Group, the bank maintains either the top or second position between competitors within the local or regional markets. Being the first and largest Sharia-compliance bank in Kuwait, it is the second largest in the world by assets. In terms of our geographical diversification, we have 399 branches in Turkey, 59 in Kuwait, 14 in Malaysia, 10 in Bahrain, 5 in Germany and 1 in Saudi Arabia.

As part of KFH strengths going forward in addition to the long relationship and large customer base, we have long-term agreements with key partners such as Microsoft to keep our system up to date and to gain the latest technology solutions which reflect positively on our customer service delivery. And this is in line with a variety of other contracts with international IT solution providers.

For the key business highlights, we've launched a variety of services to benefit the Youth segment in Kuwait, who are considered to be the driving force for the future success of Kuwaiti society. In addition to upgrading the group level websites for our subsidiaries including Bahrain, using the latest technologies. KFH continues its strong support and sponsorship for its CSR activities.

Highlighting the financial performance for the first half 2018 of KFH, Group CEO Mazin Al-Nahedh said net profits to shareholders reached KD 95.22 million for the first half of 2018 compared to KD 81.64 million for the same period last year an increase of 16.6 percent. Y-o-Y.

Total financing income for H1 this year reached KD 424.14 million a growth of 22.2 percent compared to the same period last year.

Net financing income for H1 this year reached KD 277.8 million a growth of 32 percent compared to the same period last year. The cost to income ratio decreased to 39.5 percent for the first half of 2018, compared to 41.6 percent for the same period last year.

Earnings per share for the first half of 2018 reached 15.23 fils, compared to 13.06 fils for the same period last year i.e. an increase of 16.6 percent.

In terms of our strategy, we are focusing on the quality of assets and improving our competencies within the bank, and we have seen a remarkable improvement during the period. The focus on moving forward will be with investment in technology and digital transformation of the bank. At KFH we look forward to a customer-centric approach through adoption of technology development. We invested heavily in this, whether internally or through investments in VCs, to provide fundamentally the latest technologies that benefit our customers.

Islamic finance

Islamic finance can take advantage of technology to provide more efficient and accurate services to customers, helping to meet their banking needs that go beyond their expectations.

One of the most important aspects is to focus on human resources and customers by ensuring that our employees are highly committed to the organization, which is reflected in their performance in providing the best services to our customers.

In regards to our strategy in supporting the national economy and achieving the comprehensive development, KFH financed different mega projects in Kuwait and the countries where it operates including financing of terminal II building for Kuwait International Airport and the construction of Canakkale Bridge in Turkey.

KFH enjoys a leadership position in the Sukuk market and the Islamic financial services in general. The vast experience of KFH Group in the Sukuk issuance has positioned it as a trustworthy and highly recognized organization by major corporates and governments globally.

Finally, the positive ratings as mentioned by my Colleague Fahad, by international rating agencies are considered as a positive indicator on the soundness and success of set plans.

Financial performance

KFH's Group's Chief Financial Officer Shadi Zahran presented the financial performance of KFH Group for the first half 2018.

The Group Net Profit After Tax (NPAT) attributable to shareholders at KD 95.2 million has increased by KD 13.6 million or 16.6 percent compared to June 2017 resulting mainly from an increase in net finance income by KD 67.0 million, offset by a decrease in investment income by KD (26.1) million, increase in Provisions by KD 14.9 million, besides an increase in Operating Expenses by KD (11.2) million. And we will explain each part separately in the coming slides, however, I'd like to highlight that despite the increase in provisions for the first half compared to last year the group profit improved from the core stable activities with drop in investment income.

Net Financing Income at KD 277.8 million has increased by KD 67.0 million or 31.8 percent compared to June 2017 mainly on account of increase in Financing income, primarily due to increase in average yielding portfolios from all banking subsidiaries by KD 1.1 billion or 8.7 percent which was further supported by increase in local and international profit rates.

Accordingly, the Total Operating income at KD 389.9mn increased by KD 46.7 million or 13.6 percent resulted from an increase in net finance income by KD 67.0mn contributing 71.3 percent to the total operating income higher than comparative period last year by almost 10 percent (H1-17: 61.4 percent), accordingly the non-financing income contribution has dropped by 10.4 percent to reach 28.7 percent on account of lower investment income that resulted from less divestment of non-core assets due to unfavorable market conditions. And timing differences.

Non-Financing Income Fees & Commissions remained at same level for the group of last year at KD 49mn, however investment income decreased by KD 26.1 million (from KD 55.9 million to KD 29.8 million) as a result of less divestment gain (KD 1.8 million vs. KD 20.8 million same period 2017); accordingly total non-financing income dropped from KD 132 million to KD 112 million. Investment income contribution dropped from 42 percent to 27 percent.

With Regards to Total Operating Expenses at KD 154.1 million increased by KD 11.2 million, an increase of 7.8 percent. We look at the components -

Staff cost - The increase in staff cost is mainly from Kuwait Parent Company and due to impact of labor law amendments besides the annual increment of salaries and staff benefits, in addition to the increase in headcounts mainly in Turkey subsidiary as a result of high growth and expansion of banking operations.

Other expenses (G&A & Others) increased marginally by KD 0.7 million or 1.7 percent as the Group maintained its stringent policy towards cost optimization.

Net Operating income at KD 235.8 million increased



by KD 35.5 million or 17.7 percent compared to H1-17.

Although operating expenses have increased by 7.8 percent and that's mainly attributable to support the growth in Kuwait and international banking operations as well translated to the increase in operating income by 13.6 percent. This proves continuous efficiency in group operations reflected in further reduction in C/I ratio which has reached 39.5 percent for H118 at a Group level compared to 42.8 percent for 2017 coming from 51 percent for 2014

Furthermore, at KFH-Kuwait, C/I ratio is maintained at 34.3 percent which is below both the local Islamic Banks average of 37.5 percent and local conventional Banks average of 35.3 percent for Kuwait as published for Q1-18. Average Profit Earning Assets volume is up by 8.6 percent, vs. 2.7 percent growth in total balance sheet increasing yielding assets contribution trend. This is an evidence of efficient balance sheet that focuses on sustainability of earnings and also reflected in the improved NFI. As we said the 67 million growth, he pointed out.

Group NFM at 3.30 percent shows a 49bps increase over last year of 2.81 percent. The yield increased from financing and MM placements as a result of higher profit rates (in both local & international markets) and optimized balance sheet.

Provisions and Impairments increased on account of more conservative impairment against legacy real estate investments in GCC due to negative outlook. (KD 63.7 million out of total provision charge of KD 98.0 million taken in H1-18)

It worth to mention that Central Bank of Kuwait has still not fully adopted IFRS 9, and requirements for ECL on financing facilities have been replaced by CBK existing credit loss requirements. However, we have implemented internally IFRS 9 completely for the entire group entities and generated ECL numbers on financing facilities which are materially lower than current provisions.

Operating Profit from banking activities still at 92 percent of total Operating income of the Group and this is being maintained as part of overall Group Strategy and reflecting the contribution of the core banking activities to the group.

Total assets

Total assets at KD 17.6 billion increased by KD 458mn or 2.7 percent over a 12 month (H118 vs. H117) .

Financing receivables at KD 9.6 billion is the main



Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem



Shadi Zahran



Mazin Al-Nahedh

contributor to the balance sheet growth as increased by 7.3 percent over a 12 months (H118 vs. H117) period. Growth in financing receivables came from all banking entities and business units, driven largely by Corporate Banking. Growth in financing portfolio compared to December 2017 is 3.7 percent despite the devaluation in TRL. Growth without TRL devaluation is 8.8 percent.

Depositors' Accounts at KD 11.9 billion increased by KD 492.1 million or 4.3 percent over a 12 month (H118 vs. H117) period from KD 11.5 billion in Jun-17 (YoY increase in CASA is KD 287 million. Our CASA forms 48 percent of total deposits as of H118). As Compared to December 2017 our Depositors' accounts increased by 3.0 percent. If we take into account growth without TL devaluation is 7.4 percent.

Customer deposits as a percentage of total deposits at 80.3 percent remains at a very healthy funding mix. It is worth to mention that KFH Kuwait dominates the market in saving accounts at market share of 42.5 percent.

Q2 2018 highlights

Profit attributable to shareholders for Q-2 2018 was KD 51.2 million representing KD 8.2 million or 18.6 percent increase as compared to Q-2 2017. And that resulted from improved operating income by 14.9 percent while keeping operating expenses at marginally higher than comparative period at KD 75 million with increase of 2.7 percent only higher than last year.

Profit attributable to shareholders for Q-2 2018 was higher by KD 7.3 million or 16.6 percent increase as compared to Q-1 2018 and that resulted from improved operating income by 6 percent with lower operating expenses by 5 percent, offset by higher provision by 6 percent.

Group C/I ratio for Q2-2018 three months period was only 37.5 percent as compared to 41.7 percent for Q118 and 42.8 percent for 2017 full year. This shows the continuation of improved efficiency.

Topline net financing income the main driver of growth

KUWAIT: The speakers took questions from the audience following the presentations. Excerpts from the Q&A segment:

Khaled Al-Ahmad: What were the main drivers for the higher results?

Shadi Zahran: As I mentioned the main drivers for higher results and that witnessed in the second quarter standalone or in the first half as compared to the last full year or for the last year same period is mainly from the top line net financing Income and that came mainly from the increase in the profit yielding assets in the balance sheet as I said increased by 8.6 percent while the balance sheet net increased by 2.7 percent, increased by KD 1.1 billion... besides the increased and improved profit rates.

Moderator Fawaz Al-Sirri: Can you elaborate on the Cost to Income Ratio?

Shadi Zahran: The group before 2014 and before was operating in let's say, less efficiency at 51 percent Cost Income Ratio the group since starting from 2014, the group management, we started the projects on more cost saving and cost optimization, restructuring and centralization and that actually benefited the drop from 51 percent in 2014 to now reaching below 40 percent to the 39.5 percent. And if you look at the last quarter standalone it is at 37.5 percent and that proves the improvement is going on and we expect to further improve "Insha Allah".

Fawaz Al-Sirri: Could you give us any update on the AUB-KFH merger talks after an invite was sent by KFH? Also, if you could throw some colour on the rationale behind this in terms of cost/revenue synergies and international rationalization that you are looking at? Also, do you see any hurdles in terms of shareholder structure of both banks? (Janany Vamadeva from Arqaam Capital, UK)

Mazin Al-Nahedh: Just to give you an update... we did send an invite and received a reply from Ahli United Bank accepting the signing of a memorandum of understanding and a non-disclosure agreement, so as such, we have disclosed on the 22nd July 2018 that KFH has signed an MOU and a non-disclosure agreement with AUB. HSBC and Credit Suisse have been selected based on their expertise and credentials in the investment banking industry, to conduct a study and valuation for the purpose of determining a fair exchange ratio.

Should the two banks agree on the exchange of share ratio which will be studied by those institutions and agree on the due diligence outcome and other related tasks on conservative basis, an official request will be submitted to the regulatory bodies Central Bank of Kuwait and the Central Bank of Bahrain and all other relevant regulatory bodies in addition to obtaining the shareholders general assembly approval at which time we would receive an approval from central bank to start with the official due diligence process and opening up of the books.

After which a study or after the due diligence process is completed, the final outcome will be presented to both boards. Both boards would naturally have to agree on the exchange ratio, if that is done, then an official request would be submitted to the regulatory bodies along with obtaining the general assembly approval on the transaction and that would be subject to a final approval by the regulatory bodies subject to providing them with all our plans for the new entity.

The second part of your question was...can you read it again please.

Fawaz Al-Sirri: Also, if you could throw some color on the rationale behind this in terms of cost/revenue synergies and international rationalization that you are looking at.

Mazin Al-Nahedh: Well, as we stand today we anticipate that the organic growth for KFH Group, given our current footprint is not up to the expectation of our shareholders nor our board, as such they have requested us to see how can we accrete EPS value for shareholders and as such this process started three years ago in trying to identify how can we expand our operation and grow profitably and increase EPS value to our shareholders. And as such the non-organic growth approach through either acquisition or a merger was one of the considerations and as such we've looked at many targets and the one that would fit most to KFH strategy and geographic distribution would be Ahli United Bank. It demonstrated all the right financial structure and management expertise in addition to its long standing performance record, notwithstanding the geographies that they operate in that we would like to get into... the ... rationale again ... is going to be to create a large significant Islamic Financial Institution that would be able to compete and to support the development of the future projects of both Kuwait and the countries that it operates in and what makes Ahli United Bank unique is this would have.. if this merger goes through, it would give the opportunity for KFH Group or the new entity to have two home markets which I think is not available in any of their regional markets, those two markets being Kuwait and Bahrain since we will be one of the market leaders in Kuwait and in the market leader in Bahrain post-merger if it happens.

The final part of your question is, do I foresee any hurdles in shareholder structure of both banks...

Mazin Al-Nahedh: I do not foresee any hurdles, we



are still at very early stages we would like to see what the conversion prices and if it's acceptable to both banks at that stage we can shed more clarity on the process and on the viability of the transaction but until we reach that stage we are not in a position to comment on such hurdles.

Fawaz Al-Sirri: With regards to margin expansion, how much of the yield gain on the financing side for the year came from Q2 vs. Q1 2018?

Shadi Zahran: Well, I can tell that Q2 is keeping the same momentum as Q1 of the yield. And the improvement of Q2 compared to last year same period, three months, is actually 26 percent. To recall the first quarter we had the same thing. There is another aspect that improved the yield, or the financing income, as I mentioned the growth in the portfolio by KD 1.1 billion over the 12-month period and that actually reflected the profit for the first half, first quarter and second quarter as well, and enhanced the balance sheet to be more towards the income-generating assets. Answering your question simply, yes same momentum as first quarter and expected to continue.

Technology

Facebook uncovers political campaign ahead of midterms

Facebook shuts down 32 fake pages, accounts

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook said Tuesday it shut down 32 fake pages and accounts involved in an apparent “coordinated” effort to stoke hot-button issues ahead of November midterm US elections, but could not identify the source although Russia is suspected of involvement. It said the “bad actor” accounts on the world’s biggest social network and its photo-sharing site Instagram could not be tied directly to Russian actors, who American officials say used the platform to spread disinformation ahead of the 2016 US presidential election.

The US intelligence community has concluded that Russia sought to sway the vote in Donald Trump’s favor, and Facebook was a primary tool in that effort, using targeted ads to escalate political tensions and push divisive online content. With the 2018 mid-terms barely three months away, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg announced his company’s crackdown. “One of my top priorities for 2018 is to prevent misuse of Facebook,” Zuckerberg said on his own Facebook page.

“We build services to bring people closer together and I want to ensure we’re doing everything we can to prevent anyone from misusing them to drive us apart,” Trump, now president, has repeatedly downplayed Kremlin efforts to interfere in US democracy. Two weeks ago, he caused an international firestorm when he stood alongside Russian President Vladimir Putin and cast doubt on assertions that Russia tried to sabotage the vote. But after Facebook’s announcement, the White House stressed Trump opposed all efforts at election interference.

“The president has made it clear that his administration will not tolerate foreign interference into our

electoral process from any nation state or other malicious actors,” deputy press secretary Hogan Gidley told reporters. Facebook said “some of the activity is consistent” with that of the Saint Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency—the Russian troll farm that managed many false Facebook accounts used to influence the 2016 vote.

“But we don’t believe the evidence is strong enough at this time to make public attribution to the IRA,” Facebook chief security officer Alex Stamps said during a conference call with reporters. Special

because one of the pages being covertly operated was orchestrating a counter-protest to a white nationalism rally in Washington.

The coordinators of a deadly white-supremacist event in Charlottesville last year reportedly have been given a permit to hold a rally near the White House on August 12, the anniversary of the 2017 gathering. Facebook said it will notify members of the social network who expressed interest in attending the counter-protest.

US not doing enough

Facebook has briefed US law enforcement agencies, Congress and other tech companies about its findings. “Today’s disclosure is further evidence that the Kremlin continues to exploit platforms like Facebook to sow division and spread disinformation, and I am glad that Facebook is taking some steps to pinpoint and address this activity,” said the Senate Intelligence Committee’s top Democrat Mark Warner. The panel’s chairman, Republican Senator Richard Burr, said he was glad to see Facebook take a “much-needed step toward limiting the use of their platform by foreign influence campaigns.”

“The goal of these operations is to sow discord, distrust and division,” he added. “The Russians want a weak America.” US lawmakers have introduced multiple bills aimed at boosting election security. While top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer applauded Facebook’s action, he said the Trump administration itself “is not doing close to enough” to protect elections. Some of the most-followed pages that were shut down included “Resisters” and “Aztlán Warriors.”

Facebook said some 290,000 users followed at



PARIS: In this file photo taken in Paris shows the logo of social network Facebook displayed on a screen and reflected on a tablet. —AFP

least one of the pages. “Resisters” enlisted support from real followers for an August protest in Washington against the far-right “Unite the Right” group. Inauthentic pages dating back more than a year organized an array of real world events, all but two of which have taken place, according to Facebook.

The news comes just days after Facebook suffered the worst single-day evaporation of market value for any company, after missing revenue forecasts for the second quarter and offering soft growth projections. Zuckerberg’s firm says the slowdown will come in part due to its new approach to privacy and security, which helped experts uncover these so-called “bad actors.”—AFP

Sri Lanka reverses hybrid car incentive

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka yesterday sharply increased customs duties on imports of the top-selling Japanese hybrid car, in an apparent shift in its policy of encouraging greener vehicles. The duty on the popular Suzuki Wagon R hybrid model was raised from 825,000 rupees to 1.25 million rupees with immediate effect, finance ministry officials said. According to the latest data, out of 5,190 new cars registered in the country in April, more than half were the small hybrid Suzuki models.

Only last November the government reduced duties on electric and hybrid cars as part of its plans to phase out fossil fuel vehicles by 2040 in the island nation of 21 million people. The new announcement came as the central bank warned that car imports had inflated the trade deficit by \$700 million year-on-year to \$4.9 billion for the first five months of 2018. Sri Lanka’s rupee has been under pressure this year with the local currency losing over four percent of its value against the dollar in the first seven months amid a surge in imports.

Last year, Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera announced plans to replace all state-owned vehicles with electric or hybrid models by 2025, a move that will be extended to private vehicles by 2040. Sri Lanka had joined Britain and France in announcing plans to phase out fossil fuel vehicles by 2040. India wants to make new vehicle sales all-electric by 2030. Sri Lanka had around 7.2 million vehicles, most imported from Japan and India, on its roads at the end of 2017, including over 720,000 cars.—AFP

Rare blue diamonds may be Earth’s deepest secret

WASHINGTON: The Hope Diamond, a rare blue diamond that is one of the world’s most famous jewels, has had a complicated history, passing through the hands of monarchs and bankers and heiresses and thieves before landing for all to see at a Washington museum. The geological history of blue diamonds is even more complex, according to research published yesterday examining these exceptionally scarce and valuable gems.

Scientists analyzed 46 blue diamonds, including one from South Africa that sold for \$25 million in 2016, and determined that they can form at depths of at least 410 miles (660 km), reaching into a part of the Earth’s interior called the lower mantle. Tiny mineral fragments trapped inside them provided clues about the birthplace of the diamonds. Blue diamonds comprise only about 0.02 percent of mined diamonds but include some of the world’s most famous jewels.

Diamonds are a crystalline form of pure carbon, forming under enormous heat and pressure. Blue diamonds crystallize alongside water-bearing minerals that long ago were part of the seafloor but were shoved to great depths during the inexorable movement of the immense tectonic plates that shape Earth’s surface, the researchers said.

Scientists already knew these diamonds acquired their blue hue from the element boron. This study indicated this boron once had been in ocean water and was incorporated into the seafloor rock that over millions of years moved deep underground. “This is the first time anyone has come up with a fact-based story or model for how blue diamonds form. Prior to this study we had no idea where they form, what kinds of host-rocks they form in, or where they might be getting their boron from,” said Gemological Institute of America research scientist Evan Smith, who led the study published in the journal Nature. —Reuters

GOSH experts encouraging children to be active during the summer

KUWAIT: This summer, medical experts across departments at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children (GOSH) in London have come together to raise awareness of the importance of children keeping active and engaged during the summer months, especially for children who have a long-term illness, are in hospital or currently unable to leave the house. Asia Kujawa, Specialist Pediatric Physiotherapist; Erin Hanna, Play Specialist and Caroline Kermarrec, Senior Pediatric Occupational Therapist all work at the London-based hospital which treats 1,500 children from the Middle East every year.

Keeping children active

Asia Kujawa, Specialist Pediatric Physiotherapist at GOSH, helps to enable children to be as active as possible and participate in activities with their family and friends during their stay at hospital. “We all know that activity is recommended for every child in order to stay as fit and healthy as they can,” explains Asia. “This is particularly important in the summer period when children may be less active as they are not going to school or participating in physical education. Exercise has so many benefits for children of all ages and is crucial for physical and mental health.”

The NHS recommends that children under the age of 5 years should only spend very short periods of time inactive unless asleep. They should spend at least 180 minutes a day being active. This helps promote motor development, cognitive development, healthy weight and enhances bone and muscular development, as well as supporting learning of social skills. Children over 5 years should spend at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of vigorous activity a day.

This should include a combination of strength, endurance activity. This provides benefits for cardiovascular health, bone health, maintain a healthy weight, improve self-confidence and develop social skills. “There are many activities

that children and families can participate in. Swimming can often be a great form of activity and some swimming pools do have access for children with disabilities too. The buoyancy of the water can make it easier for some children to move, and it is good fun. For some children it may be difficult to participate in activities for a long time, so it’s important to pace activities, and have periods of rest in between,” explains Asia.

Routine and structure

Occupational Therapists (OT) work with children who have difficulties carrying out every day activities due to illness or disability. They help children to learn and develop new skills through play and become more independent with bathing, toileting and dressing. According to Caroline Kermarrec, a senior pediatric OT at GOSH, it is important for all children to keep routine and structure during long periods when not at school, such as during the summer holidays.

“Children need to keep their brains stimulated to encourage learning of new skills and to prepare them for their return to school,” explains Caroline. “Children who are in hospital or who have mobility problems may have weakness, fatigue and reduced bone density. It is particularly important for these children to play and be active to increase their muscle strength, bone density, balance and coordination and increase their mood.”

Play is important too

According to Erin Hanna, play is also just as important for children to keep engaged and active during the summer holidays because they can experience learning loss when they do not engage in developmental activities. Children also thrive on routine, so when summer comes, and regular school activities have finished, this may cause children to become bored.

Erin explains that children instinctively play and it is through play that they learn new skills and develop. “Play is important for healthy brain develop-

“It’s much more obvious here, because we only have one shelter that gets all the koalas, so we are able to see the problem to a deeper degree.” Australia is experiencing extremely dry weather, although the most intense drought has struck further north, in the state of New South Wales. However, in trying to prevent uncontrolled fires, the clearing of land threatens koalas, which mostly survive on a diet of eucalyptus leaves.

Largely found near Australia’s coastline, the marsupials were introduced to places such as Raymond Island to help them survive after European settlers keen to trade their fur shot them almost to extinction. But introduced populations often outgrow their captive environments and risk starvation if reproduction controls are inadequate, said Valentina Mella, a professor of life and environmental sci-



ment and it is through play that children engage and interact in the world around them. As a play specialist, our job is to normalize the hospital experience and provide play opportunities to support their natural learning through play,” Erin concludes.

Tips from GOSH experts

Do research into what is available in your area: You may find there are children’s play groups and on-going sports activities in your nearest indoor leisure centre. Find out if there are swimming pools or centers which also have disabled access to encourage children to participate more in activities over the summer months. Also, joining groups and societies where other children may have a similar condition will allow you to speak to other parents in a similar situation, share ideas and equip yourself with a larger support network.

Compile a timetable: Plan how you will spend your days prior to the holidays starting. This will ensure you get the most out of each day and is great way to stay organized. If your child is able to then you can get them involved in helping you design the timetable and ask them to help suggest activities.

Use your imagination: To carry out some of your activities, you may need to change your home environment for

example, putting your sofa pillows on the floor for a soft play activity or placing blankets between dining table chairs to create a tent.

Inspire communication: Encourage communication and socialization with friends and family. If your child is in hospital, invite guests to the hospital to play with your child, although always check with ward staff about visiting times and how many guests can come. If this isn’t possible, try and connect with family and friends virtually.

Plan engaging activities: Engage your child in appropriate cognitive and craft-based activities, such as reading stories, “I spy” games, pairing games like “Snap”, coloring, drawing, cutting, sticking and playing board games. Try to have a balance between rest and play and avoid passive screen-based activities during your play.

Physical activity is important too: Engage your child in appropriate physical activity. This could mean positioning your child into their standing frame to play a game, encouraging your child to play whilst they are on their tummy, playing a physical game in the house such as hide and seek or throwing and catching games.

Have fun yourself: Use this as an opportunity to have fun and join in with the activities with your children.



SYDNEY: Koalas are found dead from starvation due to deforestation on Raymond Island, Australia.—Reuters

ences at the University of Sydney.

“Bushfires, particularly in Victoria, have also been terrible for them,” Mella said. Australian law classifies koalas as a

vulnerable species, with fewer than 90,000 left in the wild, perhaps even as few as 43,000, the Australian Koala Foundation estimates.—Reuters

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Must do safari

It's not easy to pick just a few, but these are some of the best safari experiences on offer in South Africa:

Addo Elephant National Park

If it is elephants you want to see then head to Addo Elephant Park. Now South Africa's third largest national reserve, Addo Elephant National Park lies in the malaria-free Sundays River valley in the Eastern Cape, just over an hour's drive from Port Elizabeth.

Addo is home to one of the densest African Elephant populations on earth, roughly 550 of them. They once roamed the entire continent. By 1979 there were only 1.3 million African elephants left, and in 1989 they were added to the international list of the most endangered species, with only sixteen left in the Greater Addo area.

More recently the Addo Elephant National Park has expanded to become the only park in the world to lay claim to Africa's 'Big 7' - elephant, rhino, lion, buffalo, leopard, southern right whale and great white shark. Hiking trails in the reserve include the Alexandria Hiking trail - a 2-day, 36km trail in the Woody Cape part of the park, Tree Dassie Trail - a 7km day hike, Zuurberg Mountain Trails that range from 2.4km to 8km in length, and the PPC Discovery Trail through the Albany thicket ecosystem.

Agulhas National Park

Lying in what is known as the Agulhas Plain at the southernmost tip of Africa is the Agulhas National Park, just 45 kilometers from the popular village of Gansbaai. This might be the meeting place of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, but the Agulhas National park's focus is on some of the most splendid examples of lowland fynbos and lowland fynbos on limestone soils - considered endangered and restricted largely to the southern Overberg.

Cape lion and hippo are amongst the animals to be re-established in this former 'Serengeti of the Western Cape'. Other highlights of a visit to the Agulhas National Park include the cairn that marks the southernmost tip of Africa, the lighthouse at Cape Agulhas, the graveyard of ships that lie just off the coast once known as 'the Cape of Storms', where some 250 ships have been wrecked over time, and whale watching in season.

Augrabies Falls National Park

One of the most popular tourist destinations in South Africa's Northern Cape Province, the Augrabies Falls are a 145m waterfall and is a magnificent sight to behold. The Augrabies Falls waterfall and the adjoining ravine are considered one of the most spectacular sights in South Africa and is a highly recommended destination. Located in an arid-area, the reserve offers spectacular scenery and is one of the best locations in South Africa to view Klipspringer and Dassies (Rock Hyrax). The nature reserve is not only about the waterfall and visitors should take time to explore the surrounding area as well.

The Klipspringer Hiking trail is a 3 day, 2 night hiking trail that leads one further into the reserve, providing an excellent overview of the landscape. There are a number of observation points near to the waterfall from which visitors can enjoy spectacular views of the waterfall. The game viewing road network allows visitors to explore the reserve and enjoy sightings of the 48 different mammal species found here, including Springbok, Red Hartbeest, Greater Kudu and Giraffe. Steenbok are also common along the open sand-flats and Klipspringer are regularly seen in the rocky areas.

Aside from the beautiful scenery and breath-taking natural splendour of the Augrabies Falls, the Augrabies Falls National Park offers a well-priced restaurant and comfortable accommodation. The game drive does not provide sighting of abundant game, but is still recommended as a way of getting a bigger overview of the reserve and its landscape.

Bontebok National Park

Bontebok National Park is the smallest in South Africa but has the highest density of rare and endangered bird life, fynbos species and animal life. This Western Cape Nature Reserve in South Africa was established at the foot of the Langeberg Mountains in order to protect the Bontebok from extinction. It also contains indigenous plant life found nowhere else in the world. Visitors in the Bontebok National Park have access to the lovely Breede River, for angling, canoeing and refreshing swims.

Thanks to the conservation efforts of Bontebok National Park, the species of antelope after which it is named, has been brought back from the brink to roam freely in sustainable numbers. Bontebok numbers have increased from a mere 17 in the park to around 3,000 worldwide. This region between the Langeberg Mountains and the Breede River is also home to around 200 bird species including Stanley's Bustard, Blue Crane and Secretary Bird. Visitors can also see Cape Mountain Zebra, Red Hartbeest and Grey Rhebok amongst other wildlife.

Guests in this Western Cape Nature Reserve in South Africa can enjoy outdoor activities and picturesque views of the mountain or take a short drive into Swellendam. This historic Overberg town has all modern amenities, a great choice of restaurants and there are interesting things to do in the vicinity. Bontebok National Park offers accommodation such as Guest houses and country lodges, the activates include, Game viewing, birding, swimming, canoeing, fishing and hiking.

Camdeboo National Park

One feels a humbling sense of awe when you're standing on top of towering dolerite columns overlooking the vast Karoo plains. Particularly so when you find yourself at eye level with a magnificent soaring black eagle and pause to contemplate the fact that these pillars, rising to heights of up to 120 meters, were formed by volcanic and erosive forces over a period of 200 million years.

This is the breathtaking Valley of Desolation in the Camdeboo National Park, which virtually surrounds the town of Graaff-Reinet. Also known as the Cathedral of the Mountains, the site was declared a national monument of geological and scenic significance in 1935. The road to the top of the valley was tarred in 1978 and today provides tourists with easy access to the viewpoints with their panoramic views of the landscape of the Camdeboo and further afield.

The park is filled with activities for nature lovers and adventure seekers. This includes the picnic and braai sites, 4x4 trails, short and long hiking trails, mountain biking, game viewing, birding and watersports and fishing which are done at Nqweba Dam.

Garden Route National Park

The Garden Route National Parks extends an impressive 121,000 hectares and includes the existing Wilderness and Tsitsikamma national parks, the Knysna Lakes area and roughly 52,000 hectares of newly proclaimed land. It is no surprise to learn that the Garden Route is one of the most important conservation areas in the country in terms of biodiversity and that its sheer beauty attracts a major number of tourists, both local and from overseas.

The Garden Route is regarded as a critical focus area. The Knysna estuary and Wilderness lake areas alone are rated number one and six respectively; it is home to a section of 60,500 hectares of indigenous forest - the largest continuous complex of such forest in the country; and the fynbos of the Garden Route falls within the Cape Floristic region - a global diversity hotspot. The Garden Route National Park is so large it falls across both the Eastern Cape and Western Cape and brings together a series of tourist facilities that include camping areas, chalets, hiking and mountain bike trails, forest trails, canoeing, diving and other local activities.

Golden Gate Highlands National Park

Golden Gate Highlands National Park lies at the foothills of the Maluti Mountains of north-eastern Free State, roughly 300 kilometres south east of Bloemfontein and 257 kilometres south of Wepener on Route 701, the Golden Gate National Park, through which the Caledon River flows, is also home to the Welbedacht Dam situated in the southern parts of the reserve.

This 11,600 hectares of unique environment is true highland habitat, providing home to a variety of mammals including black wildebeest, eland, blesbok, oribi, springbok and Burchell's zebra - and birds, including the rare bearded vulture (lammergeier) and the equally rare bald ibis, which breed on the ledges in the sandstone cliffs. Activities include Short nature trails varying from 1 hour



to 5 hours, game viewing at leisure in own vehicles, guided excursions, night drives, video shows and lectures during school holiday periods. Activities also include environmental education courses, horse-riding during peak periods and swimming in the natural pool at Glen Reenen.

Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park

Africa's first formally declared trans-border conservation area, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, on the border of South Africa and Botswana, was officially launched on May 12, 2000 by then South African President Thabo Mbeki and Botswana President Festus Mogae.

The Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is situated approximately 250 km from Upington in the far Northern Cape and 904 km from Johannesburg. The absence of man-made barriers (except to the west and south of the Park) has provided a conservation area large enough to maintain examples of two ecological processes that were once widespread in the savannahs and grasslands of Africa. The large scale migratory movements of wild ungulates; and predation by large mammalian carnivores. It is especially renowned for predator watching and for the seasonal movement of large herbivores such as blue wildebeest, springbok, eland and red hartebeest.

Ground Squirrel and Suricate (Meerkat) are two more of the park's more prominent



species. Both these ground dwelling species live in large family groups for added protection and can easily be seen throughout the park. Honey Badger (Ratel), Pangolin (Scaly Anteater) and Bat-eared Fox are some of the park specials to search for. Excellent chances of seeing cheetah, leopard, brown and spotted hyena and the definitive black-maned lion exist.

Kruger National Park

Lying in the heart of the Lowveld is a wildlife sanctuary like no other, its atmosphere so unique that it allows those who enter its vastness to immerse themselves in the unpredictability and endless wilderness that is the true quality of Africa.

The Kruger National Park lies across the provinces of Mpumalanga and Limpopo in the north of South Africa, just south of Zimbabwe and west of Mozambique. It now forms part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park - a peace park that links Kruger National Park with game parks in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and fences are already coming down to allow game to freely roam in much the way it would have in the time before man's intervention. When complete, the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Park will extend across 35,000 square kilometres, 58 percent of it South African, 24 percent Mozambican and 18 percent Zimbabwean territory.

This is the land of baobabs, fever trees, knob thorns, marula and mopane trees under-



neath which lurk the Big Five, the Little Five (buffalo weaver, elephant shrew, leopard tortoise, ant lion and rhino beetle), the birding Big Six (ground hornbill, kori bustard, lappet-faced vulture, martial eagle, pel's fishing owl and saddle-bill stork) and more species of mammals than any other African Game Reserve.

The Kruger Park is a self-drive destination, although there are guided tour operators, with an excellent infrastructure that includes picnic sites, rest camps, waterholes and hides. The Kruger Park is a remarkable reserve offering an incredible experience of Africa at its most wild. (See Kruger Park Tours for overnight and package tours lasting from 1 night and 2 days to weeks long safaris or see Kruger Park Day Tours for single day guided trips into Kruger National Park).

Namaqua National Park

Namaqualand not only has some of the richest bulb flora of any arid region in the world, but more than a 1,000 of its approximate 3,500 plant species are not found anywhere else on Earth. Whilst for most of the year Namaqualand is a semi-desert, July to September sees a burst of colour after the rains resulting in literally millions of flowers that literally transform the landscape of the Namaqua National Park into a show that easily rivals the natural wonders on Earth.

Namaqualand is an area of striking con-

trasts and a harsh climate that has meant that flora and fauna have had to adapt or die. Namaqualand includes the Atlantic Ocean, from where it extends all the way to the small town of Pofadder in the east, the Orange River to the north and beyond the little village of Garies to the south. The Namaqua National Park lies within this vast landscape, 495 kilometres from Cape Town, and close to the little town of Kamieskroon.

Table Mountain National Park

At the south-western tip of South Africa, the Table Mountain National Park encompasses the incredibly scenic Peninsula mountain chain stretching from Signal Hill in the north to Cape Point in the south, a distance of approximately 60 kilometres. The Table Mountain National Park has two world-renowned landmarks within its boundaries: the majestic Table Mountain and the legendary Cape of Good Hope.

Recognised globally for its extraordinarily rich, diverse and unique flora, this singular land formation, with rugged cliffs, steep slopes and sandy flats, is a truly phenomenal natural, scenic, historical, cultural and recreational asset both locally and internationally. Nowhere else in the world does an area of such awesome beauty and such rich biodiversity exist almost entirely within a metropolitan area - the thriving and cosmopolitan city of Cape Town.

The Table Mountain Aerial Cableway provides access to the top of Table Mountain, while a funicular carries visitors to Cape Point. Restaurants and curio shops operate at Rhodes Memorial, Kirstenbosch, Cape Point and on Table Mountain. Scenic drives can be taken along Boyes Drive, Chapman's Peak Drive, Victoria Road, the Ou Kaapse Weg, from Simon's Town to Smitswinkel Bay, from Kommetjie to Scarborough and to Cape Point.

Popular picnic spots are located at the Signal Hill lookout, The Glen, Van Riebeeck Park, Newlands Forest, Constantia Nek, Oudekraal, Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Tokai, Soetwater, Buffels Bay, Bordjiesrif, Miller's Point and Perdekloof. Southern Right Whales entertain thousands of spectators each year as they come close to shore to mate and calve. Sightings peak in September, and there are a number of view sites along the scenic coastline and Boulders Beach is home to a growing colony of the African penguin.

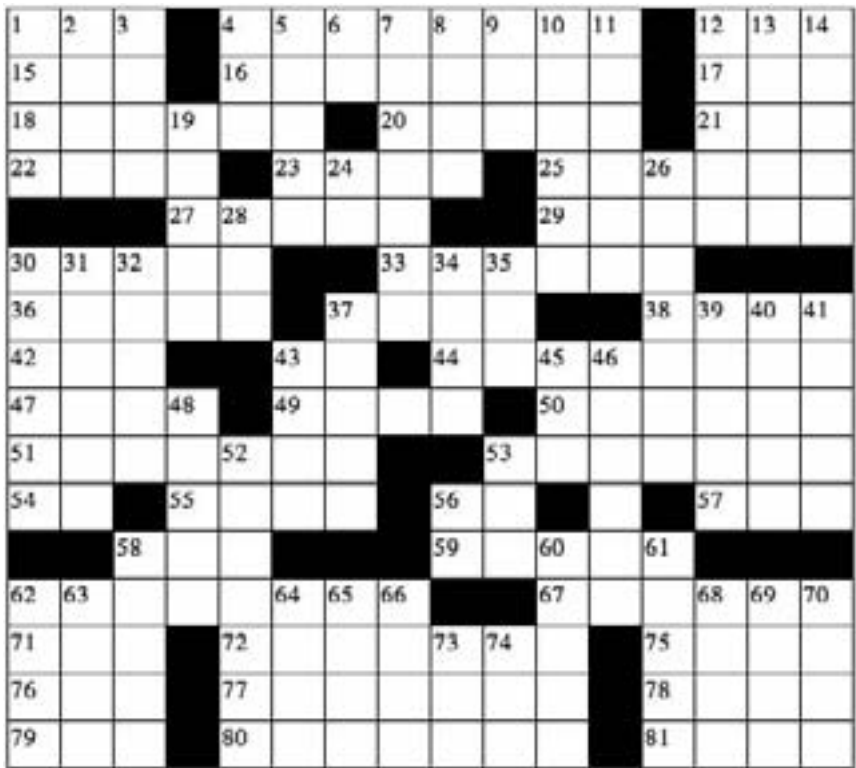
Tankwa Karoo National Park

The 80,000 hectare Tankwa Karoo National Park was proclaimed in 1986. After the occasional shower, the park erupts into a dazzling display of flowering succulents. With an average rainfall of 80mm a year, even a scant shower is reason for celebration. Only two Southern African regions have been bestowed the honour of designation as Biodiversity Hotspots by Conservation International. One is the Cape Floral Kingdom, and the other the Succulent Karoo. For those whose image of the south-western Karoo is a shimmering wasteland to be endured as briefly as possible en route to Cape Town or Johannesburg, this may come as a surprise.

Though the remarkable endemism and diversity of the Succulent Karoo flora (at its most spectacular from August to October) is its most renowned aspect, the Karoo as a whole naturally has a great deal to offer the birder. The Park protects one of the most starkly beautiful tracts of the Tankwa Karoo and is well worth visiting for several reasons, among them its koppie-studded, moon-like landscape, diversity of succulent plants, fine Karoo birding and, perhaps most notably for hardened birders, above-average chance of finding the enigmatic Burchell's Courser.



CROSSWORD 1975



ACROSS

- 1. Blood cells that engulf and digest bacteria and fungi.
- 4. An ancient branch of the Semitic languages.
- 12. One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- 15. The fatty flesh of eel.
- 16. Oceanic sharks.
- 17. Perennial herb of East India to Polynesia and Australia cultivated for its large edible root yielding Otaheite arrowroot starch.
- 18. An industrial city in southern Poland on the Vistula.
- 20. A convex molding having a cross section in the form of a quarter of a circle or of an ellipse.
- 21. A shape that sags.
- 22. God of fire.
- 23. The highest level or degree attainable.
- 25. Any fern of the genus Osmunda.
- 27. (Jungian psychology) The inner self (not the external persona) that is in touch with the unconscious.
- 29. A member of the Indian people of northern California and southern Oregon.
- 30. A single splash.
- 33. 100 lepta equal 1 drachma.
- 36. A low evergreen shrub of the family Ericaceae.
- 38. A visual presentation showing how something works.
- 42. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
- 44. Of or relating to or exhibiting isomerism.
- 47. 100 lwei equal 1 kwanza.
- 49. A Loloish language.
- 50. A woman's large folded hooped hood.
- 51. Italian fashion designer (1946-1997).
- 54. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
- 55. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- 57. Canadian hockey player (born 1948).
- 59. (informal usage) A general feeling of boredom and dissatisfaction.
- 62. The organ stop having a tone of soft sweet string quality.
- 67. Atlantic coast round clams with hard shells.
- 71. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- 72. Windowpane oysters.
- 75. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
- 76. A kind of person.
- 77. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- 78. On or toward the lee.
- 79. A statement that deviates from or perverts the truth.
- 80. The great hall in ancient Persian palaces.
- 81. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.

DOWN

- 1. Flightless New Zealand rail of thievish disposition having short wings each with a spur used in fighting.
- 2. A large mass of ice floating at sea.

- 3. Group of people related by blood or marriage.
- 4. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- 5. An island of Hawaii northwest of Oahu.
- 6. A metric unit of length equal to 1000 meters (or 0.621371 miles).
- 7. Genus of beetles whose grubs feed mainly on roots of plants.
- 8. A cheap disreputable nightclub or dance hall.
- 9. An artificial language that is a revision and simplification of Esperanto.
- 10. A town in central Belgium.
- 11. A river that rises in eastern Kansas and flows eastward into Oklahoma to become a tributary of the Arkansas River.
- 12. A battle between the successors of Alexander the Great (301 BC).
- 13. Of great mass.
- 14. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
- 19. Deciduous South African tree having large odd-pinnate leaves and profuse fragrant orange-yellow flowers.
- 24. A metric unit of length equal to one hundredth of a meter.
- 26. South African statesman who was released from prison to become the nation's first democratically elected president in 1994 (born in 1918).
- 28. Last or greatest in an indefinitely large series.
- 31. Disparaging terms for small people.
- 32. A workman who laces shoes or foot-balls or books (during binding).
- 34. English essayist (1775-1834).
- 35. The foot of a human being.
- 37. Australian shrubs and small trees with evergreen usually spiny leaves and dense clusters of showy flowers.
- 39. (Greek mythology) The Muse of lyric and love poetry.
- 40. A stingy hoarder of money and possessions (often living miserably).
- 41. Of a moderate orange-yellow color.
- 43. German organist and contrapuntist (1685-1750).
- 45. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
- 46. A member of the Manchu speaking people of Mongolian race of Manchuria.
- 48. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
- 52. Roman general who commanded the fleet that defeated the forces of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium (63-12 BC).
- 53. A unit of length equal to one thousandth of an inch.
- 56. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- 58. Visionary British poet (1757-1827).
- 60. Jordan's port.
- 61. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- 63. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
- 64. A city in northwestern Syria.
- 65. A quantity of no importance.
- 66. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
- 68. An interior passage or corridor onto which rooms open.
- 69. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- 70. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
- 73. Fiddler crabs.
- 74. (British) Your grandmother.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today may find you more impulsive than you usually are. You seem to be direct and outspoken when dealing with others today. You desire a fresh start. Your mind is on new beginnings and developing new habit patterns. Out with the old and in with the new. The consequences of the choices and decisions you make today will be long lasting. Take your time and put much thought into the changes you are making. Remember, acting on impulse is not always the best way to handle decisions and problems. Change can be good as long as you take the time to think things through and realize every action has a consequence.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may find yourself having emotional differences with someone. This could cause you to become frustrated. There may be someone or something that just doesn't feel right to you and you are unable to put your finger on it. Trust your gut on this one. You are usually a great judge of character and able to know who and who not to keep in your circle. This is one of those people that you do not need to allow to become a part of your life. You can save yourself some heartache by walking away.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may be entering a phase of directness and impulsiveness. You could find yourself experiencing powerful and forceful feelings. Your emotions are at an all time high. You seem to be craving a new start, some sort of new beginning is what you feel you need. New habits will start to be developed. These are habits that will have lasting effects on your life. Make sure these are positive things for you because they will have a long-term effect on your life. You may find that your mind is in overdrive. Slow down and think things through before making any big decisions. Do not act in haste.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Will find you entering a phase of directness. You may be very impulsive. You may want to bite your tongue to prevent putting your foot in your mouth. Others could find this quite offensive. Try and remember to take a moment to think before you speak. You should have no problem getting your point across to others, whether it be positive or negative. Try and remember to keep things positive today and put on a happy face to avoid conflict. This is a great day for new beginnings. Out with the old and in with the new.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You are not lacking charm today. It seems as if everyone is drawn to you. Today is the date to make the date or apply for the job you have been thinking about. Others will be drawn to you today. You crave a fresh start. Out with the old and in with the new. Reach out to mend fences and ask for new beginnings. This is a time in your life where new habit patterns will be developed. Make sure they are good ones. Actions have consequences and these new habits will have lasting effects on your life. Make yourself known, Leo. This is a time for you to shine.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today finds you direct and impulsive. What a combination! Powerful emotions are the driving force behind your mood. You may want to count to ten before you speak today. You are driven to make a fresh start. New beginnings are what you desire. This is a great time to make decisions and changes you will stick to. Make sure they are good ones. New habits will set the tone for quite some time in your life. A good day to keep to yourself to avoid conflict with others. That mouth could get you in trouble.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Weather

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional weather word.

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

BAROMETER	FLOOD	ICE	STORM
BLIZZARD	FLURRIES	LIGHTNING	SUNNY
CELSIUS	FOG	MIST	TEMPERATURE
CLOUDS	FORECAST	MONSOON	THERMOMETER
COLD	FREEZE	OVERCAST	THUNDER
CYCLONE	FROST	RAIN	TORNADO
DOWNPOUR	HAIL	SHOWER	TSUNAMI
DRIZZLE	HOT	SLEET	TYPHOON
DROUGHT	HUMIDITY	SNOW	VISIBILITY
FAHRENHEIT	HURRICANE	SQUALL	WINDY

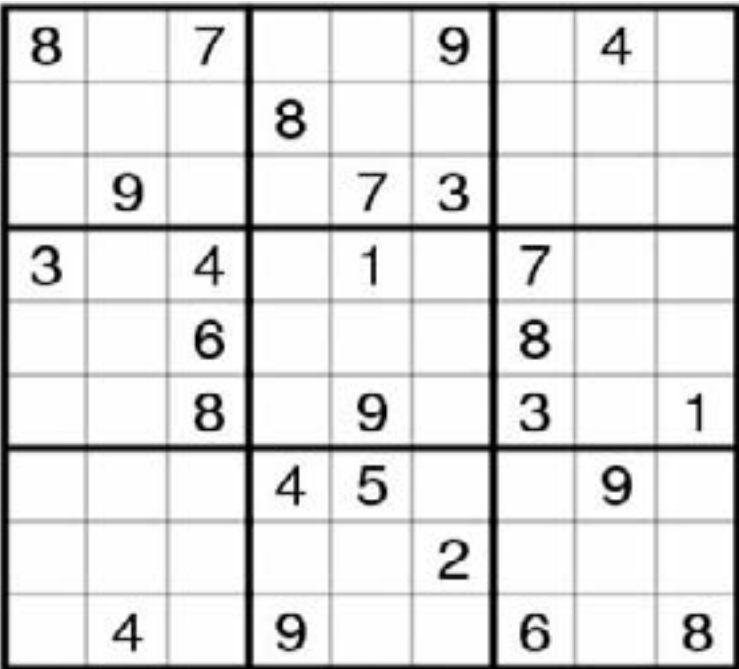
Yesterday's Solution

Washing a Car

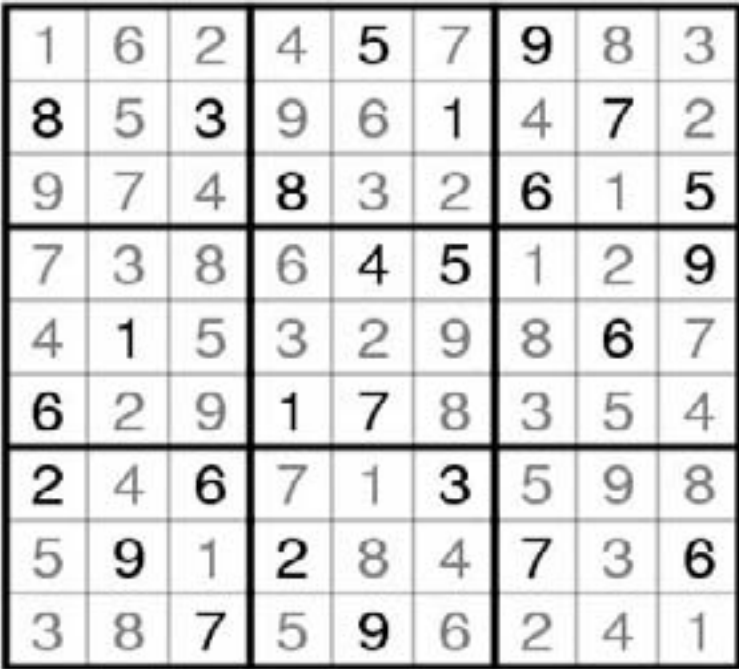
BRUSH	FENDERS	PREPARATION	TIRES
BUCKETS	FRONT	REAR	TOP
CHAMDIS	GARDEN HOSE	RINSE	TOWELS
CHROME	GLASS	ROOF	VEHICLE
CLEAN	GRIME	SCRUB	WASH
DEAD BUGS	HEADLIGHTS	SIDES	WATER
DIRT	HOOD	SOAP	WAX
DOOR HANDLES	HUBCAPS	SPONGE	WHEELS
DOORS	LICENSE PLATE	SQUEEGEE	WINDOWS
DRIVEWAY	MIRRORS	SUOS	WINDSHIELD
DRY OFF	MUD	TAIL LIGHTS	

The hidden message is: BIRD DROPPINGS

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, AUGUST 2, 2018



Visitors walk along the 150-meter long Cau Vang "Golden Bridge" in the Ba Na Hills near Danang. Nestled in the forested hills of central Vietnam two giant concrete hands emerge from the trees, holding up a glimmering golden bridge crowded with gleeful visitors taking selfies at the country's latest eccentric tourist draw. — AFP (See page 21)

L'OREAL GOES VEGAN WITH GERMAN COSMETICS MAKER

French cosmetics giant L'Oreal said yesterday it had acquired Germany's Logocos Naturkosmetik, a firm that offers vegan and organic beauty products, which it plans to offer more widely internationally. Founded in 1978, the firm includes the premium Logona brand sold mostly in organic shops and the Sante label sold in mass retail shops, and generated sales of 59 million euros (\$69 million) last year. L'Oreal did not disclose the amount of the transaction.

The acquisition of Logocos brings to L'Oreal "two authentic and certified natural brands as well as a unique expertise from a worldwide pioneer of the organic beauty market" said Alexis Perakis-Valat, president of the consumer products division. Natural cosmetics are "one of today's major beauty ascending trends", he added. — AFP



Anna Wintour

Nast says Wintour not leaving Vogue

Glossy magazine empire Conde Nast on Tuesday quashed months of rumors about the impending departure of Vogue editor-in-chief Anna Wintour, declaring that the magazine's 30-year veteran was staying "indefinitely." "Anna Wintour is an incredibly talented and creative leader whose influence is beyond measure," said CEO Bob Sauerberg in a statement tweeted by the company. "She is integral to the future of our company's transformation and has agreed to work with me indefinitely in her role as @voguemagazine editor-in-chief and artistic director of Conde Nast." Legendary for her glacial demeanor, and for making or breaking designers' careers at the flick of a manicured talon, 68-year-old Wintour had been at the helm of American Vogue since 1988 and artistic director of Conde Nast since 2013.

The announcement comes one day after The New York Times reported that Vogue's fashion director and executive fashion editor were leaving staff jobs to become contributing editors. The magazine's Los Angeles director was also moving to Conde Nast's in-house creative agency, the newspaper reported. The changes come with the magazine empire, which also owns The New Yorker and Vanity Fair, tightening staff overheads, and expected to make \$100 million dollars less revenue in 2017 than in 2016, according to the Times. Rumors had been rife since April that Wintour would leave the American edition of the magazine after the July wedding of her daughter Bee Shaffer at her Long Island estate with the all-important September issue allegedly her last. Her influence spreads far beyond the world of magazine publishing, seared into popular culture with nicknames such as "Nuclear Wintour" and for turning the annual New York Met Gala into the hottest A-list celebrity party on the planet.—AFP

Madonna launches fundraiser to mark 60th birthday

Madonna on Monday launched a \$60,000 fundraiser to support her work with children in Malawi, and had already raised more than \$10,000 in the first 24 hours. The "Rebel Heart" singer, who has adopted four children from the African nation in the past 10 years, said 100 percent of every contribution would go directly to her Raising Malawi foundation's rural orphanage, Home of Hope. She launched the fundraiser, which will run throughout August, through her Facebook page to mark her 60th birthday on Aug 16. "For my birthday, I can think of no better gift than connecting my global family with this beautiful country and the children who need our help most," Madonna wrote. "Every dollar raised will go directly to meals, schools, uniforms and healthcare," she added.

According to her website, more than 200 people had contributed almost \$11,000 of the \$60,000 target on the first days of the project's launch. Madonna established the non-profit Raising Malawi in 2006 to provide health and education programs, particularly for girls. In 2017 she adopted four-year-old twin Malawi girls, Esther and Stella, and opened a children's hospital in the country's second-biggest city, Blantyre. Madonna's family also includes Malawi children David Banda and Mercy James, and biological children Lourdes and Rocco from her previous relationships. — Reuters



Madonna

Survivor of acid attack hopes art can change law

Doused in acid as punishment for rejection, Patricia Lefranc is typical of the thousands of women whose lives are ruined by ex-partners armed with acid. But instead of hiding away, the 54-year-old Belgian is using her disfigurement to fight for change. The mother of three is fronting a Europe-wide campaign for tighter scrutiny over the sale of acid, found in common household cleaners from paint stripper to drain clearer. Lefranc wants a new law requiring anyone buying acid in the European Union to show an ID card first.

"There is only bad intention when buying acid ... in my eyes identification is the only way that will stop this sort of violence," Lefranc told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. In a campaign video due to be released at the end of August, a painting of how Lefranc looks now, her face laced with scars and disfigurement after more than 100 surgeries, will transform into an image of her face before the 2009 sulphuric acid attack. "I was very angry that the doctors didn't let me die. I thought I was a monster on earth. Now it's different, I know the reason I'm still alive," Lefranc said in an interview.

Revenge attack

Charity Acid Survivors Trust International (ASTI) estimates that women and girls make up 80 percent of acid attacks in Europe, where nearly 1,500 attacks were recorded in 2017. England and Wales ranked worst, with 950 attacks recorded - an increase of a third on the year before. Six in 10 attacks are believed to go unreported each year, the charity said.

On Tuesday, a man was jailed for 17 years for manslaughter after he doused a 47-year-old Briton, Joanne Rand, with acid. Rand, who had been visiting her daughter's grave, died 11 days after the attack following multiple organ failure. Acid melts skin and tissue and victims face permanent disfigurement, medical complications, psychological trauma and social and economic isolation.

End of the affair

Lefranc was 45 when she ended her affair with the man who would go on to attack her with acid, Richard Remes. After the breakup, she said he deluged her with up to three hundred text messages a day, then came to her apartment disguised as a delivery man and showered her in liquid. After spending three months in a coma and nine

"I was very angry that the doctors didn't let me die. I thought I was a monster on earth. Now it's different, I know the reason I'm still alive"

months in rehabilitation, she began researching acid attacks and petitioning the European Parliament for change.

"How many victims will still have to be attacked before it serious enough to ratify a law to regulate sale of acid? We should not underestimate just how dangerous acid can be," she said. Jaf Shah, executive director of ASTI, said the campaign for a new law was still in its early stages, but the film would raise awareness of what an attack can entail for victims. "Understanding the trauma, the pain and the disfigurement that comes about as a consequence of such an attack is really important," Shah told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "This film is a critical part of kick-starting the campaign in order to gain recognition and raise awareness," Shah said. "Once that's started, we can start to exercise some influence." — Reuters



Patricia Lefranc, a Belgian acid attack survivor, poses in front of a portrait of her being painted for a campaign film to bring change in EU legislation and awareness of acid attack survivors in London.—Reuters



West bonding with father since cancer diagnosis



The 41-year-old rapper was left devastated last week when he was told his dad Ray West was battling prostate cancer and, although they've become distant in recent years, the 'Bound 2' hit maker is determined to repair their relationship now. According to TMZ.com, Kanye has been taking his three children: North, five, Saint, two, and Chicago, seven months, whom he has with his wife Kim Kardashian West, to see his father in hospital as he has been receiving treatment in Los Angeles. A source said: "Ray's been able to spend time with him, Kim and his three grandkids." Ray's cancer battle comes roughly 10 years after Kanye sadly lost his mother Donda to coronary artery disease and he admitted back in 2016 that his mental down was triggered by the death of his mum as the 10-year anniversary was fast approaching. Although he's determined to be there for his father - who divorced his mother Donda when Kanye was still a child - the 41-year-old

rapper has been battling his own issues as he admitted recently that he's previously contemplated ending his own life. Kanye - who has three children: North, five, Saint, two, and Chicago, seven months, with his wife Kim Kardashian West - said: "Oh yeah, I've thought about killing myself all the time. It's always an option. Like Louis C.K. said: 'I flip through the manual. I weigh all the options. I'm just having this epiphany now, 'cause I didn't do it, but I did think it all the way through. But if I didn't think it all the way through, then it's actually maybe more of a chance of it happening.'" He was also rushed to hospital by his wife Kim recently with a nasty bout of flu. Taking to his Twitter account, he said: "I had a sinus headache on a flight once and I got a cat scan after because it was so bad (sic)."

DAVID HASSELHOFF GOT MARRIED



The 66-year-old actor tied the knot with his model partner Hayley Roberts - who he met in 2011 when he was a judge on 'Britain's Got Talent' - in an intimate ceremony in the southern region of Puglia, Italy, on Tuesday according to People.com. The former 'Baywatch' star reportedly flew his daughters Taylor, 28, and Hayley, 25 - whom he has with his second ex-wife Pamela Bach - out to Europe for his big day. David - who proposed to Hayley just over two years ago - shared details of his then-forthcoming wedding day and romantic honeymoon during an interview last month. He said at the time: "We're gonna get married on the 31st, you know, in Italy. "My birthday is on Tuesday and then we shoot out to the UK and a few places and then we're gonna get married, but a very small wedding with her family from Wales in Puglia, which is southern

Italy. And then from there we're gonna go to the Maldives and we'll stay underwater for about two weeks." David previously claimed his engagement to 37-year-old Hayley was his first "from the heart" because his proposals to Pamela and first wife Catherine Hickland were either "ultimatums" or something he felt he "had" to do. He said: "I don't want [Hayley] to get away. I want to trap her, because this is one that I really love, and this is the one when I got down on my knees and said, 'Will you marry me?' It was from my heart. It wasn't an ultimatum. "My other marriages were kind of like, well, you've got to get married, or there was an ultimatum. This one is something that I wanted to do."

Noah Cyrus is dating rapper Lil Xan



The 18-year-old singer is reportedly really happy with the Soundcloud rapper but their relationship is very "new". A source told People magazine: "It's new." The pair sparked speculation of a romance after they shared a string of pictures on social media together. Captioning one, Noah wrote: "Ok fr look at this lilnuggettttt!!!! also we both so sad its so sweet (sic)" Noah is still quite new to fame but luckily has her older sister Miley Cyrus to guide her. Miley previously said she always tells her younger sister to keep the comments function turned off and to never search herself on Google. She said: "I always tell Noah, keep your Instagram comments turned off. Never read anything that anyone says about you. Don't Google yourself... Now with Noah being on the road, she kind of understands, more than ever, how I feel of how draining it is. She kind of understands how hard it is now. Now having someone that really understands how hard it can be when you're away from home for a month, me and my little sister have a new bond over that ... I'm really proud of her that she did. I think she really didn't involve me as much ... I think she just wanted to get out on her own two feet without this having anything to do with me." And if Noah hadn't made it a singer, she would be an equestrian. She said: "I thought I was going to go to the Olympics riding horses. Then I fell off one, broke my shoulder and had to take time out. I couldn't move. I was in the worst shoulder contraption ever and I had to have two surgeries."

Kristen Bell will 'never forget' witnessing 9/11 tragedy

The 38-year-old actress - who was in the midst of preparing for her Off-Broadway production - has opened up about seeing first-hand how the world was brought to a standstill on September 11, 2001. She recalled: "We rushed outside and walked to the theatre in time to watch the second tower fall from the street. We tried to donate blood, then we went to our producer Stephanie's apartment and stayed there for the next 24 hours. "We just waited to figure out what was happening. It was scary, and I'm still grateful that I had a safe group of people to be with. It's one of those things you never forget." The 'Forgetting Sarah Marshall' star explained how the experience created a special bond amongst the cast and crew. She told Vulture: "I just love those people so, so much. I have a very special relationship with that film. "We were all together during the event, which bonds you to people, dare I say more, than being in a show with someone, when you're spending 12 hours together every day for six months at a time." Despite the devastation that surrounded the city, production of the movie-musical - which was a comedy remake of the 1936 classic cult film - opened four days later. The actress shared: "We still ended up opening the show. We agreed that we didn't know what people were going to want, but we had to keep our minds busy. "We thought it might bring some people joy, and figure we ought to do the job we'd been paid to do. For about three weeks, we performed in a 500-seat theatre to an audience of four people."



JB Gill has become a father again

The former JLS star has announced that he and his wife Chloe - who already have three-year-old son Ace together - welcomed a little girl into the world on July 30. Taking to his Instagram account, the 31-year-old singer uploaded a photograph of him clutching his daughter's hand and wrote: "These are the hands that hold my future. So proud to announce the beautiful baby girl born to @chloesiobhangill and I by God's grace, on 30th July 2018. Our little boy @Acejgill is simply the BEST big brother a girl could ask for and she is literally lighting up our lives with every moment that passes. We are in love all over again... (sic)." Details on the baby - including her weight and name - are yet to be announced. The couple - who got married in 2014 - revealed that they were expecting their second child in April after their son Ace pointed out that he had a "sister" coming. Chloe said at the time: "We were out shopping when he said, 'Mummy, we need to get some clothes for my sister'. "I said to him, 'But you don't have a sister.' His face went all serious and he went, 'I do, Mummy - in your tummy.' When I told J, we were like, 'Whoa!'" However, the pair decided to keep their news under wraps for a little while because Chloe had a traumatic birth with Ace and they were worried about complications. JB explained: "Because we know people who have had complications, we were cautious to say anything before now. In our line of work, you never have the job until you're on that stage and I guess we've approached this the same way - we wanted to make sure we were firmly on that stage."

Paris Hilton planning 'winter princess' wedding

The 37-year-old socialite got engaged to Chris Zylka in January and they want their nuptials to reflect his proposal on the ski slopes of Aspen, Colorado, so have hired party planner Colin Cowie to arrange their frozen festivities, which will take place in Beverly Hills, California, in November. A source told The Sun newspaper: "Paris loves a party and wants this one to be the most memorable yet. "She is planning to have decorative icicles everywhere. It will be a real winter wonderland." And fans may get to catch a glimpse of the wedding as the former 'Simple Life' star recently admitted she and the 33-year-old actor have received multiple offers for a reality show about their preparations for their big day, the ceremony itself and the aftermath. She said: "We've been getting a lot of calls and a lot of offers from different networks, pitching that show so maybe." Paris has been trying to keep details about her wedding close to her chest but she has promised that her dress for the nuptials is

very "elegant" and the ceremony will be small. She explained when asked how many people she was planning to invite: "It's going to be very hard [to narrow down the guest list] because I have friends from all around the world. It's going to be a hard choice or else I'll have like a million people there." And, once they've become husband and wife, Paris is desperate to start a family. She said: "I think that's [kids] just the next step in life. I definitely want to have some cousins for [my sister] Nicky's babies to play with and I can't wait to have kids." Paris began dating the 'Leftovers' star in 2016 and she believes he has "saved" her by loving her. She explained: "It's the best feeling in the world just to find the one person who is your best friend. I trust him so much. He's so supportive and loving and like an angel. I feel like he saved me. I can't imagine my life with anyone else." — Bang Showbiz

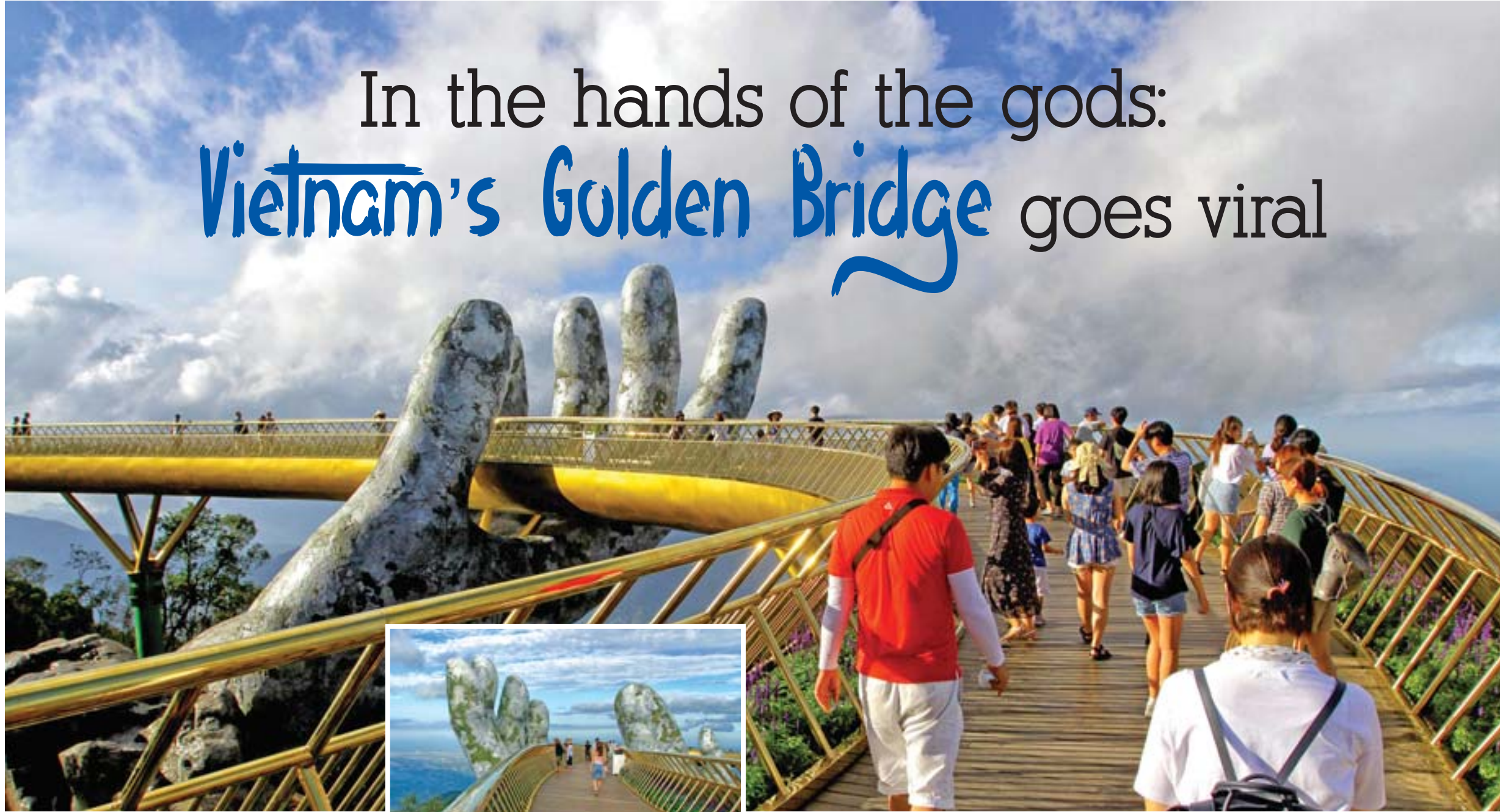


Khloe Kardashian 'completely over' mommy shamers

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star - who has daughter True with her partner Tristan Thompson - is fed up of being criticized for the way she parents her daughter or for her body. She wrote on Twitter: "Completely over mommy/body shamers! Women who choose 2take their time after baby, I'm so proud of you! Women who choose to work out after baby, I'm so proud of you! We all must do what's best for US! Please b kind 2urself! A happy mommy makes for a happy baby! Love your process. "We are so hard on ourselves Please be patient and gentle with your journey. Don't compare yours to anyone else's. You are right where you need to be! You are amazing!! You are worthy!!! (sic)" Meanwhile, Khloe previously hit back at those who have criticized her for "focusing too much on her body" following the arrival of her daughter. She shared recently: "The beginning parts of working out kind of suck because you're pushing your body so hard, you're so tired. It's much more difficult than you expect it to be. I've been working out for 11 days now, I feel really good, but tired. My body is sore because it's re-waking itself back up. What I'm annoyed about is I've read a couple of times on Twitter that, ya know, they feel that I'm focusing too much on my body, but the truth is, I've worked out five or six days a week before I got pregnant and that's my sanctuary and something I love to do. I want to start doing that now and get back to my rhythm and in between feedings I want to find time to work out because that's going to be my new normal. Just because I have a baby, doesn't mean I have to stop doing the things that I love, and I love working out and getting my mind right."



In the hands of the gods: Vietnam's Golden Bridge goes viral



Nestled in the forested hills of central Vietnam, two giant concrete hands emerge from the trees, holding up a shimmering golden bridge crowded with gleeful visitors taking selfies at the country's latest eccentric tourist draw. Designed to make visitors feel like they're taking a stroll on a shimmering thread stretching across the hands of gods, the "Golden Bridge" has attracted hordes of guests since it opened in the Ba Na Hills near Danang in June. Images of the bridge have gone viral on social media, much to the surprise of the architect who had no idea it would attract so much attention.

"We're proud that our product has been shared by people all over the world," principal designer and founder of TA Landscape Architecture, Vu Viet Anh, told AFP. At 150 meters long (490 feet), the bridge snakes through the forest high up in mountains first developed by French colonists as a hill station in 1919. Today the area is a major tourist attraction, boasting a cable car, replica French medieval village—including faux castle and cathedral-manicured gardens and a wax museum featuring statues of Lady Gaga and Michael Jordan. The only remnants of the original French occupants are the crumbling remains of their holiday homes that can still be spotted from the cable car. But visitors are mostly interested in the newly built Cau Vang, which means "Golden Bridge" in Vietnamese.

"The bridge is beautiful with an amazing architectural style, from here we can see Danang City, it's so nice," Nguyen Trung Phuc told AFP. Another visitor, Nguyen Hien Trang, said: "I have travelled quite a lot but I've never seen any bridges as beautiful as this one." The Ba Na



Hills project was built by Sun Group, which has divided opinion with audacious projects elsewhere in Vietnam. In 2016 it opened a cable car on Vietnam's tallest mountain Fansipan in the tourist hotspot Sapa, prompting complaints from locals who felt it spoiled the landscape and took business away from trekking guides. Vietnam is no stranger to off-the-wall attractions.

A "crystal cloud" installation of 58,000 shimmering Swarovski beads in the rice-terraced hills of northern Vietnam opened earlier this year, while the surreal "Crazy House" hotel in central Da Lat, designed to look a trippy treehouse, has long attracted legions of curious visitors. The communist country has long sought to boost visitor numbers and position itself as a must-see destination in Southeast Asia. It clocked 13 million foreign visitors last year, mostly from China—a far cry from the 35 million international visitors to Thailand in 2017. Golden Bridge designer Anh said he already has another project in the works: a silver bridge made to look like a god's strand of hair that will connect to his existing structure in the Ba Na Hills. — AFP



Visitors walk along the 150-meter long Cau Vang "Golden Bridge" in the Ba Na Hills near Danang. — AFP photos

'Superfood' craze makes big business of Africa's baobab

Taerou Dieuhiou has been shinning barefoot up baobab trees in Senegal's southern Casamance region to collect the oblong fruit since he was 15. Business has never been better. Inside the hard, green shell that dangles from the spindly branches of Africa's most iconic tree is a citrusy pulp that has become a popular "superfood" in the United States and Europe. Rich in vitamin C, calcium and magnesium, it can be ground into a powder, mixed into smoothies or sprinkled on porridge. Coca-Cola's Innocent, UK yogurt maker Yeo Valley and U.S. wholesaler Costco are among the major brands to embrace baobab.

The imposing tree dots the dry African savannah from Senegal to Madagascar and can live for over a millennium. It can store thousands of liters of water and grow trunks so thick that one South African tree became a pub with a dart board that could hold 60 people. Until recently baobabs were only tapped for local use but in a major business shift a small network of producers and suppliers has pushed the fruit's profile abroad. While some experts question the baobab's sustainability, demand has taken off.

"It is a better price now. Now I make more for each sack," said the 31-year-old father of four. He climbs the trunks in ripped jeans and a t-shirt, gripping a long pole to dislodge the fruit from the outer branches. "It's all I have." Exports of the hard-shelled fruit rose from 50 tons in 2013 to 450 tons in 2017, according to industry group the African Baobab Alliance. They are expected to reach 5000 tons by 2025, about 500 shipping containers a year. This would make it a \$400 million industry. The transfor-

mation has started to bring in much needed revenue to African farmers. Baobab des Saveurs, a small company with buyers in Australia and Canada pays Dieuhiou up to 10,000 CFA francs (\$18) per sack, more than double what he received from local middlemen a few years ago.

'A great African tree'

Slaves shipped from West Africa in the eighteenth century wore necklaces of baobab seeds for luck and to remind them of home. Today it is used locally to treat liver disease and malaria in rural Senegal. Herders in Niger mix it with grains to make gruel. Goblets are made from the fruit's empty shell, the bark is pound to make rope or cork, or flattened into roof tiles. "The trunks are the bus shelter, water tank, lavatory, prison, tomb, hiding place, shade," said Thomas Pakenham, an arborist and historian who wrote a book about the baobab. "It is the great tree of the African village."

It is this history that makes the baobab so vital at home and so marketable abroad. The European Union approved imports of baobab in 2008 but business slowed in the credit crunch. "People weren't interested in a new fruit from Africa," said Gus Le Breton, the chief executive of B'Ayoba, a Zimbabwe-based baobab producer. "There was a five-year hiatus."

Producers and retailers pushed back. They went to trade shows, gave out free samples, launched a #Makebaobabfamous campaign on Twitter. In January, Yeo Valley started to sell a vanilla and baobab yogurt in Britain's biggest supermarkets. Costco this year intro-



duced a breakfast bowl with baobab and acai, a berry from the Brazilian Amazon. Coca-Cola-owned Innocent released a baobab smoothie in 2016.

"I've got kids and I was looking for ways to kind of sneak some extra nutrition into their diet," said Dan Nessel, the owner of Limitless Good, a health food company based in Northampton, Massachusetts whose baobab sales tripled last year. "The baobab...has six times antioxidants of blueberries, six times the vitamin C of oranges, more potassium in bananas, more calcium than milk."

'Praying for rain'

Unlike coffee or cocoa found in abundance in Africa, baobab is not a plantation crop. It takes so long to mature

that farmers rely largely on existing trees to harvest. There is evidence that those trees are under threat. In June, the journal Nature Plants published a paper saying that 9 of the world's 13 oldest baobab trees had died in the last 12 years. Some of the trees were over 2,000 years old and included South Africa's so called "pub tree".

Their decline was an event of "unprecedented magnitude" potentially linked to climate change, it said. Dieuhiou has noticed a change. "Normally the rain has started by now, but we have had only one storm," he said in July. "I have to go to other villages. Before, there was enough right here." Some producers have planted new baobabs while others have trained farmers to pick fruit without damaging trees.

Andrew Hunt, co-founder of London-based Aduna, which sells about \$500,000 worth of baobab products from fruit in northeast Ghana said villagers should nurture new plants. "It is only when the trees are providing income that the communities themselves will...plant, nurture and protect baobab seedlings," he said. In Casamance, baobab picker Ndella Badiane said she can afford to send her kids to school and buy them clothes since overseas interest reached her hamlet in a forest clearing. "We are aware of the possibility that the baobab is becoming more and more rare," she said. "We pray that there is enough rain for the baobabs to be able to produce more." — Reuters



Moss cascades from tree branches overhead in this image of the Barataria Preserve.



Photo shows a sign marking Bayou Coquille on a trail in the Barataria Preserve, part of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve in Marrero, Louisiana, just outside of New Orleans.



Photo shows a walkway in the Barataria Preserve, part of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve in Marrero, Louisiana, just outside of New Orleans. — AFP photos

FROG SYMPHONY AND ANCIENT TREES IN A VERDANT LOUISIANA SWAMP

It was 93 degrees and humid when I set out on a 4-mile stroll through a Louisiana swamp. Crazy, you say? But let me tell you what I found there, in the Barataria Preserve of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. A symphony of frogs. A 700-year-old tree. And a verdant landscape of dripping moss and neon green that seemed to melt with the heat into the woods and wetlands. Fan-shaped palmettos waved hello along the trails. Strange formations of cypress trees known as knees pushed up through the swampland. Moss cascaded from branches overhead. I half-expected to spot a mythical creature like

@JeanLafitteNPS, retweeted it with this message: “That’s the way to stand up to a south Louisiana summer – pack a bottle of water & stroll thru the swamp.” I had to find out who was behind this empowering never-mind-the-weather message, and a couple of phone calls led me to Kristy Wallisch, a park ranger who handles Jean Lafitte’s public information.

Six distinct sites

“Traditionally summer is our low season because it’s very hot,” Wallisch said. But while locals head to Gulf

led the Americans to a David-versus-Goliath triumph over British forces.

Jackson owed his victory in part to the man for whom the park is named: Jean Lafitte. Lafitte was a privateer – OK, let’s just call him a pirate – who supplied Jackson with soldiers, guns and more. Had Lafitte shown up at the docks in New Orleans with his contraband, he would have had to pay taxes on it. Instead, he used the waterways as back roads. Some of his operations were based where the Barataria Preserve is now. My visit included a walk on the Palmetto Trail and the Bayou Coquille Trail. Coquille is the French word for shell, named for an enormous mound of shells discarded by Native Americans who once inhabited the area. A sign marks that spot today.



Lizards and snakes

Another sign showcases the “Monarch of the Swamp,” a massive old-growth bald cypress tree estimated to be 700 years old. These trees were prized in the South because they were resistant to termites, so many of them were cut down. “We always wonder why that one survived,” Wallisch said of the Monarch, adding that the joke goes that loggers must have encountered it on a Friday afternoon when they were ready to knock off work and said, “We’re not starting on that tree today!” Hikers might also see lizards and snakes – but if you do, don’t panic: “For the most part, they are not interested in us at all. They just want to go about their snaky business,” Wallisch said. And if you see a white-tailed deer, you might notice that it appears smaller than deer in other regions but with bigger feet. “They adapted,” Wallisch said. “They evolved with those feet because it’s easier to walk on wet ground.”

The preserve is a great spot for birding too, especially in fall and spring as millions of birds head south to Central or South America for the winter, then return. For tourists taking a side trip to the park from New Orleans, it’s interesting to consider that the preserve “is pretty much what New Orleans looked like” when European settlers arrived 300 years ago. The region’s swampy landscape and oppressive weather “may not be what we’d consider prime real estate,” Wallisch said, “but the location on the Mississippi River was so perfect they said, ‘We’ll just tough it out and build a city.’” — AP

“Traditionally summer is our low season because it’s very hot”

the rougarou – half-wolf, half-man in Cajun folklore – lurking in the forest. But no werewolves or fairies crossed my path, though I was startled by the creepy sight of a couple of alligators floating motionless and half-submerged in dark waters.

I was also enchanted by the continuous soundscape of creatures baying, chirping and croaking, from bronze frogs that sound like bicycle horns to narrow mouth toads that sound like sheep. That night, back in my air-conditioned hotel room a half-hour drive from the park in New Orleans, I tweeted out a few seconds of a video I’d taken on my cellphone, showing the wet, green world I’d encountered, along with its natural soundtrack. A short time later, the park’s official Twitter feed,

Coast beaches this time of year to escape the heat and humidity, the park does get out-of-towners – like me. “Kids are out of school, people are traveling, and they’re saying, ‘OK, it’s going to be hot and humid, but we’re also going to see and hear amazing things we’re never going to see and hear anywhere else,’” she said, adding: “You’ll forget the heat and humidity three days later. But you’ll always remember what a wonderful time you had.” The Barataria Preserve is one of six distinct sites that make up Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. The other sites include a visitor center in New Orleans’ famous French Quarter and the Chalmette Battlefield, where the Battle of New Orleans was fought in 1815. It was the final great battle of the War of 1812, in which Andrew Jackson

Visitors taking in the verdant landscape of woods and wetlands at the Barataria Preserve.



The title of the book “Little Women,” by Louisa May Alcott, is embossed on the cover of an 1869 edition of the book at Orchard House, in Concord, Mass. — AP

Little Women at 150: Visiting Louisa May Alcott’s Orchard House

The beloved novel “Little Women” turns 150 this year, and it’s a great time to plan a trip to Orchard House, in Concord, Massachusetts, to honor this enduring literary classic. Orchard House is where author Louisa May Alcott lived and where tours offer insight into her life, times and the book.

We’ll talk about why “Little Women” still holds so much meaning for readers in the 21st century, and we’ll let you know about events planned to celebrate the book’s sesquicentennial. And while you’re in the area, you might drop by nearby Walden Pond to see the cabin in the woods where one of Alcott’s famous neighbors, Henry Thoreau, lived.

New episodes of “Get Outta Here!” are published every Wednesday. Host Beth J. Harpaz is travel editor for The Associated Press, a volunteer Big Apple Greeter and a licensed tour guide in her native New York City. She recently completed a quest to visit all 50 states.

Before becoming travel editor, where most of the news-thank goodness-is about happy people going on nice vacations, Beth covered politics, disasters and all manner of mayhem for the AP. And not to reveal her age, but she also worked for several newspapers way back in the 20th century and even wrote three books. She does not own wheeled luggage but instead carries her belongings around the world in an ancient backpack and various tote bags. — AP

History, Hollywood and voodoo all in a New Orleans cemetery

If you’ve heard about New Orleans’ famous cemeteries with their above-ground tombs, chances are you’ve heard about the gravesite of the so-called voodoo queen. Her name was Marie Laveau and she is buried in St Louis Cemetery No. 1. But visitors looking to visit her grave need to know a couple of things. First, you can’t sightsee there on your own. Since 2015, tourists have been allowed into the cemetery only on guided tours.

“We were having so much vandalism in the cemetery, in addition to panhandlers saying they were tour guides and handing visitors markers to mark up the tombs,” said Sherri Peppo, executive director of New Orleans Catholic Cemeteries. “It got out of hand.” Even with the rules, the cemetery still gets some 200,000 visitors a year on authorized tours. And unlike the sprawling 19th-century garden cemeteries found elsewhere in the country, St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 is tiny and crowded, not much bigger than a square block. Chances are you’ll be snaking in a line along the graveyard’s cramped and narrow paths, taking turns gawking at the vaults where its most famous denizens are spending eternity.

The second thing to know is that Laveau’s story is just one of many fascinating tales connected to this place. You’ll also hear the story behind one of America’s most famous court cases, Plessy v. Ferguson. You’ll get a glimpse of a gleaming white tomb shaped like a pyramid owned by a Hollywood celebrity. And you’ll see the vault where a famous scene from a classic 1960s movie was shot.

Architecture and history

New Orleans is celebrating its 300th birthday this year, marking the city’s founding by French settlers in 1718. St

Louis Cemetery No. 1, the city’s oldest graveyard, dates to 1789. Two explanations are offered for why its burial vaults are built above ground: because of the high water table and flooding, and because it was a European cultural custom. The vaults are laid out like little houses in mazelike aisles that feel like tiny streets. Many are surrounded by black iron fences, as if they have private front yards.

“There is no architecture in New Orleans, except in the cemeteries,” wrote Mark Twain in his book “Life on the Mississippi.” He described the crypts as “graceful and shapely ... their white roofs and gables stretching into the distance,” giving new meaning to “the phrase ‘city of the dead.’” Some tombs are decorated with sculptures and crosses. Many are in a picturesque state of decay, revealing layers of paint, brick and stone while weeds sprout through the cracks. Some structures have wall vaults, with family members or individuals connected through various social organizations interred in separate chambers in one large tomb.

The famous inhabitants

A marker on Laveau’s tomb calls her the “notorious voodoo queen ... the most widely known of many practitioners of the cult.” She died in 1881. Stories that she was also a hairdresser explain why some visitors drop ponytail holders and bobby pins at the site. Before the crackdown on vandalism, visitors asking her spirit to intervene for them would sometimes mark Xs on her tomb. If you’re a serious chess fan, you’ll want to pay your respects at the burial site for Paul Morphy. He was a child prodigy and the greatest player of his era, dying in 1884.

An important name from US civil rights history also

appears on a tomb here: Homer Plessy. Plessy was born in New Orleans to Haitian parents and was of mixed European and African descent. Because of his light complexion, he was able to pass for white, but he chose to be the Rosa Parks of his time, purposely breaking a law that segregated passengers on trains. Plessy sat in a car reserved for whites while making his race known to challenge segregation, contending that it violated the 13th and 14th amendments of the US Constitution.

Plessy was found guilty by a Louisiana judge, and in 1896, the US Supreme Court upheld that decision in a notorious 8-1 ruling supporting “separate but equal” accommodations. That Plessy v Ferguson decision stood as a legal justification for segregation until the 1950s.

The Hollywood connection

Actor Nicolas Cage is alive and well but he’s built a 9-foot-tall tomb shaped like a pyramid as his future resting place in St Louis No. 1. The pristine white structure bears the words “omnia ab uno,” which means “everything from one.”

Fans of the 1969 cult classic movie “Easy Rider” will recognize the elaborate Italian Benevolent Society tomb as the backdrop for a scene where actors Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda dropped acid while cavorting with women. The scene was shot without permission and led the archdiocese to ban filming in the cemetery except for authorized documentaries. Fortunately, tourists are still allowed to take photos here – as long as they’re on one of those authorized tours. —AP



Photo shows tour guide Jeanne Wilson of Save Our Cemeteries with a group of visitors at St Louis Cemetery No. 1 in New Orleans.



Actor Nicolas Cage is alive and well but he owns this gleaming tomb shaped like a pyramid in St Louis Cemetery No. 1 in New Orleans.



Photo shows an offering and plaque marking the tomb for Marie Laveau at St Louis Cemetery No. 1 in New Orleans. — AP photos

Classifieds

Thursday, August 2, 2018

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DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 35 km/h .

BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 32 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	<div>SFC. CHART01/08/2018 1200 UTC</div>	
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	33 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	46 °C	33 °C		
ABDALY	46 °C	31 °C		
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C		
JAHRA	46 °C	33 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	46 °C	30 °C		
SALMIYAH	42 °C	34 °C		
AHMADI	44 °C	35 °C		
NUWAISIB	46 °C	32 °C		
WAFRA	46 °C	33 °C		
SALMY	44 °C	29 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	08/02	Hot	46 °C	33 °C	NW	10 - 32 km/h
Friday	08/03	Hot	45 °C	33 °C	VRB-NW	06 - 28 km/h
Saturday	08/04	Very hot	47 °C	34 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 30 km/h
Sunday	08/05	Very hot and some scattered clouds will appear	47 °C	35 °C	NW	12 - 40 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:40
Sunrise	05:08
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:30
Sunset	18:40
Isha	20:06

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	47 °C
MIN. Temp.	34 °C
MAX. RH	26 %
MIN. RH	10 %
MAX. Wind	N 60 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SUBBARAJU
BURLAKUNTA, R/o
D.No: 3/105 Pulapathuru
(V&P) Rajampet (M.D)
Kadapa (DL) A.P, India,
Passport No. R7701669,
Aadhaar no.
261881686499, have
changed my name to
SINGARAJU SUBBARA-
JU, Father name Singaraju
Balaraju, Mother name
Singaraju Roshamma,
name of spouse Singaraju
Krishna Veni. (C 5410)

I, BURLAKUNTA
KRISHNA VENI, R/o
D.No: 3/105 Pulapathuru
(V&P) Rajampet (M.D)
Kadapa (DL) A.P, India,
Passport No. L678008,
Aadhaar no.
935022351849, have
changed my name to
SINGARAJU KRISHNA
VENI, Father name G.
Subbaraju, Mother name
G. Ragamma, name of
spouse Singaraju
Subbaraju. (C 5411)
2-8-2018

For labor-related inquiries and com-
plaints: Call MSAL
HOTLINE 128

Automated enquiry about
the Civil ID card is
1889988



Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9



Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 2/8/2018				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
MSC	405	Sohag	00:05	AXB 393
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	KAC 774
THY	772	Istanbul	00:15	KAC 792
DLH	625	Dammam	00:25	KAC 341
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC 672
SAI	441	Lahore	00:50	IAW 157A
KAC	504	Beirut	00:50	QTR 1078
JZR	539	Cairo	01:00	KNE 231
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:15	KAC 618
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	GFA 221
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	SVA 500
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	FDB 059
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	KAC 798
WAN	866	TZX	01:50	JZR 789
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:00	KAC 788
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	KAC 194
JZR	267	Beirut	02:10	FDB 8065
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC 304
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	ETD 303
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	KNE 529
THY	768	Istanbul	02:40	KAC 412
WAN	714	Agp	02:45	KAC 562
JZR	553D	Alexandria	02:50	OMA 645
KAC	607	Kochi	02:55	AXB 645
JZR	418	Manila	03:05	KAC 502
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE 857
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	SAW 705
MSR	606	Jeddah	03:05	KAC 118
RBG	215	Sohag	03:05	KNE 531
KAC	382	Delhi	03:10	MSR 575
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR 535
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:25	QTR 1072
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	FDB 051
JAI	572	Mumbai	04:00	NIA 361
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	JZR 125
KAC	152	Istanbul	04:15	KAC 542
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	SVA 510
JZR	609	Hyderabad	04:30	GFA 215
THY	1414	TZX	05:05	JZR 777
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	JZR 145
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR 177
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	THY 1416
KAC	544	Cairo	05:20	QTR 1080
JZR	603	Mumbai	05:25	JZR 483
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	WAN 874
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	MSR 620
KAC	561	Sohag	05:55	RJA 640
KAC	362	Colombo	06:00	GFA 217
BAW	157	London	06:10	UAE 875
JZR	123	Bahrain	06:15	KAC 744
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:25	FDB 063
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:25	ABY 123
QTR	8511	Doha	06:35	KAC 662
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:40	KAC 156
KAC	678	Dubai	06:45	NIA 161
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	KAC 776
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	RBG 555
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	07:05	KAC 674
JZR	143	Doha	07:20	WAN 966
JZR	529	Asyut	07:30	FDB 057
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:45	KAC 178
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	JZR 189
JZR	503	Luxor	07:50	KAC 174
KAC	358	Kochi	08:00	KAC 616
KAC	384	Delhi	08:05	DLH 624
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	QTR 647
WAN	352	Luxor	08:50	KNE 381
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC 620
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	MEA 402
SAW	703	Damascus	09:30	KAC 692
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	QTR 1088
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	JZR 553
IAW	157	Al Najaf	10:00	KLM 445
SYR	341	Damascus	10:00	UAE 859
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	ALK 229
THY	1516	TZX	10:05	ETD 307
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC 168
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	THY 764
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC 676
JZR	541	Cairo	11:05	KAC 564
JZR	165	Dubai	11:45	GFA 219
KAC	5101	Baku	11:55	QTR 1082
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:20	ETD 309
SAW	709	Latakia	12:30	KAC 786
MSC	411	Asyut	12:30	DLH 8456
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	AIC 981
THY	766	Istanbul	12:45	BBC 043
ABY	121	Sharjah	12:55	JZR 185
JZR	239	Amman	13:00	TRQ 200
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	JAI 574
JZR	357	Mashhad	13:05	MSR 2614
JZR	1543	Cairo	13:05	FDB 071
				JZR 241

Departure Flights on Thursday 2/8/2018				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	AWB 702
MSC	502	Alexandria	00:10	THY 122
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30	JZR 767
MSR	2615	Cairo	00:30	JZR 144
FDB	072	Dubai	00:30	JZR 124
JZR	528	Asyut	01:05	MSR 611
FEG	344	Sohag	01:05	JZR 552
MSC	406	Sohag	01:05	AXB 394
THY	773	Istanbul	01:45	UAE 872
SAI	442	Lahore	01:50	FEG 242
DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50	IAW 158A
JZR	502	Luxor	01:55	KAC 673
KAC	677	Dubai	02:00	KNE 382
KAC	691	Manila	02:00	GFA 622
PGT	859	Istanbul	02:45	KAC 601
THY	765	Istanbul	02:50	FDB 060
WAN	351	Luxor	02:50	JZR 188
AXB	396	Kozhikode	02:55	QTR 1079
KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55	SVA 501
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KAC 775
KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10	FDB 8066
Bahrain	122	Jeddah	03:20	KNE 530
UAE	854	Dubai	03:30	KAC 785
JZR	769	Doha	03:35	KAC 743
JZR	142	Istanbul	03:45	KAC 563
RBG	216	Sohag	03:45	ABY 128
MSR	607	Luxor	04:05	KAC 619
OMA	644	Muscat	04:05	ETD 304
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05	OMA 646
QTR	1087	Doha	04:15	KAC 615
MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	KNE 532
PGT	831	Istanbul	04:25	MSR 576
LMU	511	Cairo	04:40	SAW 706
JAI	571	Mumbai	05:00	KAC 675
QTR	1077	Doha	05:15	KAC 503
KAC	303	Mumbai	05:35	FDB 052
FDB	070	Dubai	06:00	QTR 1073
THY	1465	Istanbul	06:00	UAE 858
JZR	771	Istanbul	06:30	KAC 381
GFA	1542	Cairo	06:40	NIA 362
RJA	643	Bahrain	06:50	KAC 343
JZR	356	Amman	07:00	KAC 283
JZR	164	Mashhad	07:15	SVA 511
RBG	550	Alexandria	07:30	JZR 184
KAC	167	Paris	07:30	GFA 216
KAC	173	Munich	07:35	JZR 608
KAC	413	Bangkok	07:40	KAC 240
JZR	238	Amman	07:40	JZR 512
KAC	501	Beirut	08:00	JZR 538
QTR	8512	Sialkot	08:05	THY 1283
WAN	713	Agp	08:10	JZR 266
BAW	156	London	08:20	QTR 1081
KAC	177	Vienna	08:30	KAC 151
FDB	054	Dubai	08:35	WAN 865
KAC	791	Madinah	09:00	MSR 621
KAC	613	Bahrain	09:00	GFA 218
KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05	FDB 064
KAC	117	New York	09:15	RJA 641
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40	ABY 124
KAC	561	Amman	09:40	KAC 331
JZR	534	Cairo	09:45	RBG 556
KAC	773	Riyadh	09:45	JZR 602
UAE	856	Dubai	09:50	NIA 162
JZR	482	Istanbul	09:55	FDB 058
KAC	541	Cairo	10:00	UAE 876
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:00	DLH 624
KAC	101	London	10:00	KNE 232
KAC	515	Tehran	10:00	KAC 357
THY	797	Taif	10:05	KAC 353
KAC	617	Doha	10:10	OMA 648
KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25	MEA 403
SAW	704	Damascus	10:30	JZR 550
QTR	1071	Doha	10:40	KAC 301
FDB	056	Dubai	10:40	DHX 171
SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00	QTR 1089
SYR	342	Damascus	11:00	KAC 203
IAW	158	Al Najaf	11:00	ETD 30

Lebanon hash farmers fear going legal may hit profits

YAMMOUNEH, Lebanon: The sun-soaked cannabis fields are just out of reach of a nearby army checkpoint. Its production is lucrative in Lebanon, but growers fear legalizing its medical use could slash profits. The remote territory surrounding the northeastern Lebanese town of Yammouneh is blanketed in the potent plant, harvested and sold by powerful families. "All these red-shingled houses around us have been built with marijuana money," says a local grower, speaking on condition of anonymity to avoid legal troubles.

Lebanon bans growing, selling, and consuming cannabis, but the underground trade developed over decades into a multi-million dollar industry pumping resin into other countries. Lawmakers are now considering legalizing its medical use, after the government asked consulting firm McKinsey to study if doing so could help bolster Lebanon's faltering economy as part of a broad reform program. But growers and distributors fear government regulation would eat away at their revenue, or see bigger corporate players run them out of business altogether.

"We don't have a problem with legalization, but the primary beneficiary must be the grower," says Yammouneh's deputy mayor Hussein Shreif. He spoke to AFP during a tour of the town, where many residents are involved in the trade. Growers prefer the current "free market" system, Shreif says, because they can sell to "big traffickers to make 10 times more money". "If the state gets involved, the profit won't be the same."

Taking root

Cannabis production blossomed during Lebanon's 1975-1990 war, and authorities struggled to clamp down on the trade after the conflict ended. Security forces regularly bust attempted drug exports at Beirut airport and have even gone to the source, destroying thousands of acres of cannabis fields. UN-backed programs have tried to persuade farmers to switch those fields into vineyards, with little success. Cannabis culti-

vators claim that no other crop can survive the arid climate of Lebanon's eastern Bekaa. "If you tossed hashish on a pile of pebbles, it'd take root. You see it on the roadside and on piles of trash," says the grower.

In Lebanon, cannabis is typically planted in spring and harvested in September, then sun-dried for three days, chilled and pressed. Yammouneh's farmers say they sell their product to distributors at an average of \$400 per kilo, more if it is of a higher quality. Distributors then either sell to local consumers for several times that price, or export it. In 2016, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime ranked Lebanon as the third main source of cannabis resin after Morocco and Afghanistan, which are both much larger.

Lebanon's exports go mainly to nearby markets in Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Cyprus, Turkey, and even arch-foe Israel. Some of those countries have legalized medical marijuana, which can be used to relieve chronic pain or anxiety, nausea among cancer patients, or symptoms of epilepsy. While cannabis is usually smoked, for medical purposes it can be consumed in pills or concentrated oils. A growing number of governments are allowing its prescription, including countries across South America, Europe, and most US states.

'Let us grow it'

The details of potential legalization in Lebanon remain hazy, but growers are already setting a few conditions. "If cannabis production must become legal, it should at least be limited to areas it's currently growing in," says Jamal Shreif, another local official in Yammouneh. "If someone buying from us now can grow it himself, then he'll stop coming to us." Residents of Lebanon's Bekaa Valley are also hoping that a legalization bill would come with an "amnesty" for more than 30,000 people wanted on drug-related charges, says the deputy mayor, Hussein Shreif.

The charges usually end in jail time, but earlier this month a Lebanese army raid on a high-profile traffick-

supply. It's "not enough to power all the lights and the air conditioning at the same time", he said. "Sometimes the generators break down or stop when they run out of fuel, which can damage our electrical appliances," the 40-year-old added. Generators are a regular fixture on street corners in Baghdad and other major cities, often hastily installed by small businessmen to exploit peak summer demand. Tangles of wires protrude from the devices, disfiguring the city and sometimes causing electrical fires. But as with every crisis, there are winners as well as losers. If the power situation "was resolved, we would lose our work", said Hussein Kazem, who sells fuel to the owners of generators.

Experts say supply of electricity falls at least 40 percent short of demand during the summer. And a substantial slice of the estimated \$40 billion allocated to the power sector over the past 15 years has vanished. Money from public tenders has allegedly lined the pockets of corrupt politicians and businessmen who fronted fake contracts. In a bid to quell protests, Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi on Sunday fired electricity minister Qasim Al-Fahdawi.

Fahdawi had been the architect of a privatization program that was meant to herald electricity 24 hours a day. Iraqis say the project worked well for a few months in the zones where it was tested. But as soon as the summer heat arrived, power cuts multiplied once more. The authorities say they have upped electricity generation by nearly 50 percent to 17,000 megawatts since 2014. Ordinary Iraqis are skeptical about this figure. "This is all lies and theft," said Mazen, who fixes generators and did not want to give his full name. "The leaders divert the money and hide it abroad. And when they say the situation is improving, you can be sure they are lying," he said. — AFP

"Saudization" - as well as a backbreaking expat levy are driving a huge exodus of expats, who hold 70 percent of all jobs. Official statistics show nearly 800,000 foreign workers have left the kingdom since the beginning of 2017, creating what business owners call a "hiring crisis". An Indian diner said it was in trouble, unable to secure work permits for its South Asian chefs, leaving its expansion plans in limbo. The exodus has sent the rental property market plummeting and cities like Riyadh are dotted with empty storefronts and shopping malls amid slack customer demand.

Some businesses implementing "Saudization" also complain of a high rate of attrition and a displaced sense of entitlement among more expensive Saudi workers accustomed to different economic realities. A manager at a refrigerator manufacturing plant that recently hired dozens of Saudi assemblers and technicians said a handful of them were found "sleeping in their cars during working hours". Many companies are reported to be circumventing the policy by paying Saudi workers small salaries to sit at home, effectively creating bogus jobs in a malpractice termed "fake Saudization".

The contentious policy is not driving down joblessness among nationals. Unemployment among Saudis rose to nearly 13 percent in the first quarter of this year. The challenge, observers say, is not just to create more jobs for Saudis but also to convince citizens to take them. Flipping sizzling slabs of meat inside his food truck, Ajmi said in the early days his business was a one-man show. He did everything from dicing vegetables to handling the countertop deep fryer. He has since hired two more Saudis and two Indian workers, but recruiting Saudis willing to do the late-night job - from 9:00 pm until midnight - remains a challenge.

A dazzlingly lit coffee and dessert food truck parked next to his is also owned by a Saudi, but the workers inside are all Filipinos. Ajmi said his success, which also spotlights the kingdom's nascent startup scene, prompted him recently to buy another food truck emblazoned with the "Mercedes Benz" logo - which has added a new veneer of respectability to the job. "Many people... were against the (food truck)," Ajmi said. "Now they say: 'If you have a job, let me know.'" — AFP



YAMMOUNEH, Lebanon: Workers cultivate plants at a cannabis plantation in this village in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley on July 23, 2018. — AFP

er's home in the Bekaa left him and seven others dead. It came just days after Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri announced lawmakers were preparing to discuss legalizing cannabis for medical use to boost the economy. Lebanon's economy has been in a downward spiral for years, with political divisions paralyzing the government.

The outbreak of war in neighboring Syria in 2011 added to those woes, keeping tourists away and triggering an influx of refugees that strained services. Public debt stands at \$80.4 billion, equivalent to 150 percent of

GDP, the third highest worldwide after Japan and Greece. "If you really want to legalise cannabis, then let us grow it and export it," says the deputy mayor. "Drug traders could close out the public debt in a year." Lebanon is also ranked by Transparency International as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, and cannabis croppers fear that will seep into their trade if it is regularized. "They've stolen everything in Lebanon - there's only cannabis left, and now they want to steal that too," says Jamal Shreif. — AFP



BAGHDAD: A picture taken on July 26, 2018 shows loose wires coming from a generator supplying homes with electricity in a Baghdad neighbourhood to supplement the poor public power grid. — AFP

Women defiant as Danish ban on...

Continued from Page 1

caricatures of the prophet. But when it comes to me, they take away my right to choose how I want to dress," she said. "I have come to the realization that Muslims don't have the same rights as others. So much of politics is hypocritical." Sarah said that instead of enabling Muslims to integrate Danish values, the ban risked having the opposite effect of increasing segregation. "When the mosque is one of the few places where we can (wear veils), then I think the law will mean that more people will go to the mosque."

Despite its generic wording, the legislation is being widely interpreted as discriminating against Denmark's Muslims and violating women's right to freedom of expression and religion. Critics, noting the tiny number of Muslim women in Denmark who actually wear a niqab, regard the law as largely a sop to increased anti-immigrant sentiment in the Nordic country. "If the intention of this law was to protect women's rights, it fails abjectly," said Fotis Filippou, deputy Europe director of human

rights group Amnesty International. "Instead, the law criminalizes women for their choice of clothing - making a mockery of the freedoms Denmark purports to uphold."

Police said none of the veiled protesters would be penalized since certain uses of face veils, such as to exercise freedom of speech as part of a peaceful protest, are exempt from the law. The justice ministry explained that the ban would focus on women forced by their families to wear veils, though it has been faulted for vagueness in stipulating who would fall afoul of it. Danish Police Union chief Claus Oxfeldt said he would have preferred more comprehensive guidance on how to enforce the ban.

"We need as thorough guidance as possible so we don't end up in situations where (police officers) don't 100 percent know how to act," he said. As an example, he was unsure whether Asian tourists wearing anti-pollution masks would be covered by the ban. France - with the largest Muslim community in the EU - as well as Belgium, the Netherlands, Bulgaria and the German state of Bavaria have all imposed some curbs on face veils in public. France's controversial 2011 ban added to a broader sense of alienation felt by many Muslims and some evidence surfaced that it encouraged assaults in the street on women wearing still legal headscarves as well. — Agencies

WhatsApp to start charging...

Continued from Page 1

start allowing small business accounts to communicate through the WhatsApp Business application, which has over 3 million active users. Chief operating officer Matt Idema said at the time that the WhatsApp intends to charge businesses in the future.

Facebook also said yesterday that users on its name-sake app and Instagram can now see the amount of time they spend on the app each day and receive notifications when they exceed a self-prescribed threshold. Users also can mute notifications from the apps for up to eight hours. "We want the time people spend on Instagram and Facebook to be intentional, positive and inspiring," the statement said.

"Our hope is that these tools give people more control over the time they spend on our platforms and

also foster conversations between parents and teens about the online habits that are right for them," it added. Facebook said it was introducing a daily reminder, whereby users are alerted when they reach the time limit they set for themselves to spend on the app. It is also introducing an option to deactivate notifications on smartphones.

Facebook has in recent months introduced a string of changes to its content, including a major plan earlier this year to update its newsfeed to emphasize posts from friends and family. That shift had prompted fears it could drive away advertisers if people spent less time on the social network. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg had announced the changes in 2017, as his firm sought to respond to accusations that it encouraged addiction to its platform.

Earlier this year, Zuckerberg said: "In 2018, we're focused on making sure Facebook isn't just fun to use, but also good for people's well-being and for society." Since the measures were introduced, viral videos have seen a significant drop in reach. The plan in turn saw a 5 percent drop in time spent on Facebook in the last quarter of 2017. — Agencies

Saudis try once 'lowly' jobs as...

Continued from Page 1

working as tea sellers and car mechanics. Posh Lexus-owners work as Uber drivers for spare cash. "Will Saudis ever work as street cleaners?" columnist Abdulhadi Al-Saadi recently asked in the daily Saudi Gazette. "Some people will look down at this proposal... They should know that nations only rise on the shoulders of their own people," he wrote. Last December, residents of eastern Al-Ahsa region feted a handful of young Saudis who swallowed their pride to do another job long deemed dishonorable - working at a gas station. "There is no shame in this work," a gas station customer said in a Snapchat video. "Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to work as a shepherd."

It remains unclear how many nationals have moved into blue-collar jobs but the trend defies a popular maxim among Saudis: "They (expats) work for us, we don't work for us." "Saudis are moving into jobs historically dominated by expatriate workers," said Graham Griffiths, senior analyst at the consultancy Control Risks. "The social stigma surrounding certain types of manual or service-based labour has been strong, but economic necessity is pushing many to take such jobs regardless of their social status."

Cultural attitudes to work are changing amid a major retooling of Saudi Arabia's lagging economy, with the country seeking to wean citizens off government largesse as it prepares for a post-oil era. Nearly two-thirds of all Saudis are employed by the government, and the public sector wage bill and allowances account for roughly half of all government expenditure. Saudi economist Abdullah Al-Maghlouth said the new economy will push more Saudis to become plumbers, carpenters and tailors, jobs that were acceptable decades ago in the pre-oil boom era.

Meanwhile, the government's push to replace foreigners with Saudi workers - a policy known as

Sports

Nationals score team-record 25, overwhelm New York Mets

Astros beat Mariners, snap 5-game skid

WASHINGTON: Daniel Murphy homered twice and drove in six runs, and Tanner Roark knocked in three and threw seven solid innings as the Washington Nationals defeated the New York Mets 25-4 Tuesday night at Nationals Park. The 25 runs were a franchise high for Washington, which finished with 26 hits and five homers. Roark lined a three-run double that was the key hit in a seven-run first inning. The Nationals scored at least three runs in each of the first five innings, then added six runs in the eighth off Mets infielder-turned-pitcher Jose Reyes. Murphy went 3-for-4. Anthony Rendon finished 3-for-6 with four RBIs. Roark was 2-for-5 while Ryan Zimmerman (2-for-5) homered and drove in three. Trea Turner added four hits and three runs, and Juan Soto and Michael A. Taylor had three hits apiece.

Brewers 1, Dodgers 0

Wade Miley tossed seven scoreless innings and Jeremy Jeffress earned his fourth save as Milwaukee won at Los Angeles. Miley's mastery of Dodger Stadium continued as the left-hander improved to 4-0 in seven career starts at the venue and lowered his ERA to 2.06 there. He gave up just two hits with five strikeouts and two walks. The Brewers collected the only run in the third inning. Christian Yelich beat out an infield single with two outs, and Lorenzo Cain ripped an RBI double to right field against Dodgers starter Walker Buehler (4-4).

Yankees 6, Orioles 3

Masahiro Tanaka pitched six scoreless innings, and rookie Miguel Andujar hit a three-run homer as host New York beat Baltimore. Tanaka (9-2) followed up his three-hitter at Tampa Bay last week by allowing three hits. He struck out eight, walked two and threw 105 pitches, matching his pitch count from a week ago in his sixth career complete game. The right-hander also ran his unbeaten streak to 13 games, and he is 7-0 since his last loss on April 17 against the Miami Marlins.

Pirates 5, Cubs 4

Francisco Cervelli hit a two-run homer, and Gregory Polanco added a solo shot for the winning margin as Pittsburgh downed visiting Chicago. David Freese added two RBI doubles for the Pirates, who have won three of four games and 14 of 17. Javy Baez belted a three-run homer and finished a triple shy of hitting for the cycle for the Cubs, who have lost three of four.

Indians 6, Twins 2

Greg Allen had three hits and scored three runs, and Jose Ramirez had three hits and drove in two runs as Cleveland snapped a two-game losing streak with a win over Minnesota in Minneapolis. Edwin Encarnacion drove in three runs and Francisco Lindor had two hits and scored twice for Cleveland, which won for just the fourth time in 11 meetings with the Twins while improving to 31-15 against American League Central opponents. Trevor Bauer (10-6) allowed two runs on four hits but also walked four and hit a batter in 6 1/3 innings. He struck out three, snapping a streak of 12 consecutive starts with seven or more strikeouts.

Phillies 3, Red Sox 1

Jake Arrieta pitched seven strong innings, and Roman Quinn led the offense with three hits as Philadelphia posted a victory at Boston. Maikel Franco had two hits, walked twice and scored two runs for the Phillies, who snapped a four-game losing streak. Carlos Santana added a pair of hits. Arrieta (9-6) allowed six hits and one run. He struck out seven, didn't walk a batter and threw 94 pitches, 66 for strikes.

Rockies 6, Cardinals 3

Charlie Blackmon and Carlos Gonzalez homered to back the strong pitching of right-hander Jon Gray, helping Colorado turn back host St. Louis. Gray (9-7) went 7 1/3 innings, allowing three runs (two earned) and four hits. He walked two and struck out five. After Matt Carpenter hit Gray's fourth pitch of the first inning for a leadoff home run, the Rockies did all the scoring until the eighth, building a 6-1 lead in the process. Blackmon's homer, his 21st of the season, came with two outs in the third inning and gave Colorado the lead for good.

Diamondbacks 6, Rangers 0

AJ Pollock homered, Zack Godley tied a career high with 10 strikeouts, and Arizona regained first place in the National League West with a win over visiting Texas. Jon Jay had two singles and an RBI, and Nick Ahmed had a two-run double for the Diamondbacks, who have won seven of 10 and moved one-half game ahead of the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Colorado Rockies in the division. Godley (12-6) gave up two hits in seven innings, singles by Robinson Chirinos in the second inning and Willie Calhoun in the fifth, walked one and hit a batter. Godley struck out the first batter in each of his seven innings, the first in the majors to do that since 1974, according to STATS LLC.

Braves 11, Marlins 6

Ronald Acuna Jr. homered for the second straight game, and left-hander Kolby Allard won his major league debut as host Atlanta beat Miami. Acuna led off the game with a home run, his 11th, to give Allard an early lead. The lefty wound up pitching five innings for the win, the third straight for the Braves. Allard gave up five runs (four earned). Acuna was 3-for-5 and drove in two runs to pace Atlanta's 19-hit attack. Acuna is seventh player in franchise history to hit double-digit home runs before turning 21. Five other Braves had multi-hit games, with Ender Inciarte getting four and Freddie Freeman collecting three.

Royals 4, White Sox 2

Ryan O'Hearn made his major league debut a memorable one, when his first career hit, a two-run homer, snapped a scoreless tie and lifted visiting Kansas City past Chicago. The Royals have won six of their past 11. The White Sox have lost five of six. O'Hearn, 25, was recalled from Triple-A Omaha earlier in the day after playing 558 minor league games, and he is expected to see regular playing time down the stretch for the rebuilding Royals. Starting as the designated hitter, he grounded out in his first at-bat in the third inning before homering to right in the fifth to score Jorge Bonifacio, who had walked.



SAN DIEGO: Evan Longoria #10 of the San Francisco Giants is tagged at the plate by Austin Hedges #18 of the San Diego Padres during the eighth inning of a baseball game on July 31, 2018. — AFP

Rays 10, Angels 6

Tampa Bay scored seven runs in the fourth inning and coasted to a win over Los Angeles in St. Petersburg, Fla. The Rays got six hits, two walks and a hit batter in the decisive inning. Michael Perez's double the only extra-base hit in the frame. All but two singles in the inning came against Angels starter Tyler Skaggs (8-7), who was charged with 10 runs on eight hits and three walks in 3 1/3 innings, by far his worst performance of the season. In all, the Rays had 14 hits, including three each from Mallex Smith and Matt Duffy, two from Carlos Gomez, and a home run from Jake Bauers. Everyone in Tampa Bay's starting lineup had at least one hit by the end of the sixth inning.

Tigers 2, Reds 1

Matthew Boyd outduelled Homer Bailey, and Niko Goodrum hit a solo homer to lead host Detroit past Cincinnati. Boyd (6-9) held the Reds to four hits and a walk in eight scoreless innings while striking out seven. Shane Greene recorded his 22nd save despite giving up a run in the ninth. Goodrum broke a scoreless deadlock with a fourth-inning homer. Detroit's Mike Gerber, who was called up from Triple-A Toledo earlier in the day, supplied a run-scoring double in the eighth inning for his first major league hit and RBI.

Athletics 6, Blue Jays 2

Khris Davis smacked his 29th home run among three hits, powering Oakland past visiting Toronto. Trevor Cahill (3-2) limited the Blue Jays to two runs over six

innings, and the Oakland bullpen cleaned up with three innings of one-hit relief, helping the A's open an eight-game homestand with a second straight win. The Blue Jays scored in the top of the first against Cahill on an RBI single by Kendrys Morales before Davis contributed a single to a two-run bottom of the first that gave the A's the lead for good.

Astros 5, Mariners 2

Charlie Morton pitched six strong innings, and Evan Gattis hit a tiebreaking home run as Houston snapped a season-worst, five-game losing streak with a win at Seattle. Houston's Josh Reddick, who went 3-for-5 with three RBIs, added a two-run homer in the top of the ninth off left-hander Zach Duke, who was making his Mariners debut after being acquired in a trade with the Minnesota Twins. Morton (12-2) allowed two runs on six hits. He walked one and struck out eight. Hector Rondon pitched a perfect ninth inning for his 10th save.

Giants 3, Padres 2 (10 innings)

Brandon Crawford singled home Evan Longoria with two outs in the 10th inning to give visiting San Francisco a second straight extra-innings victory over San Diego. San Francisco, which arrived in San Diego having gone 3-6 since the All-Star break, won its third straight. The loss was San Diego's seventh straight, and the Padres have dropped 14 of their past 16 games. They went 5-20 in July, the second-worst month in the franchise's 50-year history by winning percentage.— Reuters

Kenya's Mweresa fails dope test ahead of African showpiece

NAIROBI: Kenyan sprinter Boniface Mweresa has failed a doping test and been dropped from the team for the African Championships which started in Asaba, Nigeria yesterday, a senior official from the Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK) has said. Samples from Mweresa, who won silver in the 400m and gold in the 4x400m at the 2015 African Games in Brazzaville, were taken at the June 6-8 Kenya Defense Forces Championships in Nairobi and contained a banned substance, the official said on Tuesday.

The Kenyan delegation travelled to Asaba on Monday without Mweresa, who was a member of the team at the 2013 and 2017 World Championships in Moscow and London respectively and at the 2014 and 2018 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the Gold Coast. Mweresa, 24, could not immediately be reached for comment by Reuters but the athlete told local media he was innocent and had taken supplements which he had declared to ADAK. "Declaring that he took supplements does not make him innocent if we find banned substances in his samples," the ADAK official, who did not wish to be identified, told Reuters.

Mweresa, who would have been a medal prospect at the African Championships in the Delta State city of Asaba, told local media he would challenge the decision at the Kenyan Sports Tribunal. Senior officials from the country's governing body, Athletics Kenya, have travelled to Asaba for the African Championships and could not be reached for comment. Kenya is renowned for its middle and long distance running prowess but the east African nation's athletes have suffered more than 50 failed doping tests in the past six years.

The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU), an independent global body that manages all doping-related matters, said this month that Kenyan-born Olympic steeplechase champion and world record holder Ruth Jebet, who runs for Bahrain, is being investigated after returning a positive test for the blood booster EPO. The AIU also confirmed in May that Kenya's former Olympic and three-time world 1,500m champion, Asbel Kiprop, had failed a test for EPO. Kiprop has denied wrongdoing and his case will be heard at an AIU tribunal being held in London next month.

The sport's world governing body, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), said on Friday that it had approved new rules which spell out the obligations of its member federations in the fight against doping. Athletes from Kenya, Ethiopia, Belarus and Ukraine will be tested three times in the 10 months prior to world championships and Olympics. They are in category A which is described as having "member federations majorly at risk of doping." Previously, the obligations under the anti-doping code were focused primarily on individuals rather than member federations. The AIU recommended the new regulations to the IAAF as a crucial step in protecting the integrity of the sport. — Reuters

Reigning champion Rose confirms 2018 Turkish Airlines Open appearance

KUWAIT: Justin Rose has announced he will defend his title at the Turkish Airlines Open, the sixth Rolex Series event of the European Tour's 2018 Race to Dubai, in Antalya in November. Englishman Rose, currently second in the Official World Golf Rankings, made three birdies in his last four holes to secure a thrilling victory at last year's tournament at Regnum Carya Golf and Spa Resort, with the trophy being delivered in spectacular style by a Turkish Airlines drone. Rose was awarded Turkey's Distinguished Service Award for his charity work by Minister of Foreign Affairs Mevlut Cavusoglu during the prize presentation.

The memorable win came in a sparkling run of three victories in six tournaments in the closing weeks of 2017 for Rose. The Olympic gold medalist and former US Open champion has been in fine form once again this year, adding the Fort Worth Invitational title in May. Last year's was a second triumph on Turkish soil for Rose, who beat a stellar field that included Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy to win the Turkish Airlines World Golf Final in 2012.

The Turkish Airlines Open was played on the European Tour for the first time the following year and Rose is excited at the prospect of returning for the sixth staging of the event. Rose, 37, said: "I'm really pleased to be going back to defend at the Turkish Airlines Open. Last year was a win that I won't forget. To shoot 64 and 65 over the weekend with a birdie at the last to get it done was a special feeling. I've always had a great time in Turkey, the hospitality and the facilities are second to none, and I can't wait to get back there. It's one of the events that all of the guys look forward to and it's been amazing to see how much golf has grown in Turkey since I was there in 2012."

This year's Turkish Airlines Open is being held

between November 1 and November 4 and is once again part of the Rolex Series, the premium category of tournaments on the European Tour's Race to Dubai, each with a minimum prize fund of \$7million. Turkish Airlines also supports a Challenge Tour event and an unrivalled amateur series, the Turkish Airlines World Golf Cup. Turkish Airlines Chief Marketing Officer Ahmet Olmudur said: "We are delighted to have Justin back at the Turkish Airlines Open this year. Turkish Airlines is extremely proud at the way that this event has established itself as one of the most important on the European Tour calendar."

Last year gave us our one of the most iconic moments yet and we are sure that Justin will contribute to put on another show that will excite golf fans all around the world." Ahmet Agaoglu, President of the Turkish Golf Federation, said: "The Turkish Airlines Open really has gone from strength to strength and Justin coming back shows our determination to put on another incredible event. Justin is a true champion and I know the golf fans here in Turkey will be so excited to see him in Antalya to defend the trophy. The Turkish Airlines Open continues to help us grow our sport in Turkey."



Sports

Mathews and Dickwella help Sri Lanka to 244-8 in 2nd ODI

Half-centuries from skipper, Dickwella lift Sri Lanka

SCOREBOARD

DAMBULLA, Sri Lanka: Scoreboard after Sri Lanka's innings in the second one-day international against South Africa in Dambulla yesterday:

Sri Lanka

U. Tharanga c de Kock b Ngidi	9
N. Dickwella b Phehlukwayo	69
K. Mendis lbw b Ngidi	0
K. Perera c Ngidi b Phehlukwayo	12
A. Mathews not out	79
S. Jayasuriya c de Kock b Mulder	18
T. Perera c de Kock b Ngidi	19
A. Dananjaya c Miller b Rabada	9
S. Lakmal b Phehlukwayo	7
P. Jayasuriya not out	10
Extras (lb3, w9)	12
Total (8 wickets, 50 overs)	244

Did not bat: K. Rajitha

Fall of wickets: 1-13 (Tharanga), 2-13 (Mendis), 3-56 (K. Perera), 4-123 (Dickwella), 5-165 (S. Jayasuriya), 6-197 (T. Perera), 7-216 (Dananjaya), 8-227 (Lakmal)

Bowling: Rabada 9-1-48-1 (w4), Ngidi 8-1-50-3 (w2), Mulder 7-0-26-1, Phehlukwayo 9-0-44-3 (w2), JP Duminy 7-0-30-0 (wl), Shamsi 10-0-43-0

South Africa: F. du Plessis, H. Amla, Q. de Kock, A. Markram, JP Duminy, D. Miller, W. Mulder, A. Phehlukwayo, K. Rabada, T. Shamsi, L. Ngidi

DAMBULLA: Half-centuries from skipper Angelo Mathews and Niroshan Dickwella helped Sri Lanka post 244 for eight against South Africa in the second one-day international in Dambulla yesterday. Both Mathews, who made an unbeaten 79 off 111 balls, and Dickwella, who hit a fluent 69, showed grit against a persistent bowling attack which took wickets regularly after the hosts elected to bat first. Fast bowler Lungi Ngidi and fellow paceman Andile Phehlukwayo claimed three wickets each.

The Proteas won the opening ODI of the five-match series on Sunday. Ngidi struck twice in his very first over – the second of the innings – to reduce Sri Lanka to 13-2. He had Upul Tharanga caught behind for nine and then trapped Kusal Mendis lbw for nought. Dickwella, Sri Lanka’s wicketkeeper-batsman, then got going with several valuable partnerships including a crucial 67-run fourth wicket stand with Mathews.

Phehlukwayo bowled Dickwella when the left-hander dragged a delivery onto his stumps midway into the innings. Mathews hung on with an uncharacteristic sedate knock to reach his 36th ODI fifty and help his team post a total that seemingly keeps them in the hunt. Ngidi, Phehlukwayo and pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada kept getting wickets to rattle Sri Lanka’s middle and lower order and also checked the flow of runs in the last few overs. The islanders managed just 28 runs from the final 30 deliveries. — AFP



DAMBULLA: Sri Lanka's Niroshan Dickwella plays a shot in front of South Africa's Quinton de Kock during the second one-day international match between Sri Lanka and South Africa at the Rangiri Dambulla International Cricket Stadium in Dambulla yesterday. — AFP

Lightning Spear at last hits Group One target

LONDON: Veteran Lightning Spear finally won a Group One race yesterday, after finishing in the first three on six previous occasions, when he landed the Sussex Stakes at Glorious Goodwood. The seven-year-old-trained by David Simcock–was delivered with precision timing by Oisín Murphy to pass Expert Eye and take the honors and the winner's cheque of £593,000 (\$778,000, 600,000 euros) for owners Qatar Racing Limited.

In a race that lacked pace, it was left to unbeaten favorite Without Parole to lead but while he battled gamely for much of the finishing straight he faded to finish second last. Murphy, who collected his first English Group One success only last month with Roaring Lion in the Eclipse Stakes, said he had battled nerves prior to the off. “I never ever get nervous before the big races like the Derby and poke fun at the other jockeys,” said Murphy.

“However, I think I was nervous this time because I felt I had left behind a Group One with this horse earlier in the season (the Lockinge Stakes at Newbury) and I owed the team one. “But what a horse! He deserved it and at seven years of age,” added Murphy. Simcock’s wife Jenny was in tears after seeing Lightning Spear finally end his Group One jinx. “Six Group Ones he threatened to win but never quite came off and at last today he has won one,” said Simcock. “We always knew from his work on the gallops that he was Group One standard but it was just a case of him reproducing that form on the track. “He finally clicked today and above all I am really pleased for the horse.”

The Molecomb Stakes, the day’s other Group One race, went to the Richard Spencer-trained Rumble Inthejungle, repeating the feat of his sire (father) Bungle Inthejungle six years ago. Tom Queally had the race wrapped up with a furlong (200 meters) to go and finished clear of Life of Riley and the favorite Soldier’s Call. Queally, who had higher-profile success on the same track in successive Sussex Stakes in 2011 and 2012 with the legendary unbeaten Frankel, said his winner has great potential. “Excellent run but he has always been a pretty good horse,” said Queally. “He is not short of gears and a child could have ridden him,” added the 33-year-old Irishman.— AFP

Williams and Russell power West Indies over Bangladesh

BASSETERRE: Kesrick Williams’ career-best bowling figures and a hurricane batting cameo by Andre Russell highlighted an efficient effort by the West Indies in defeating Bangladesh by seven wickets in the rain-affected opener of the three-match T20 International series at Warner Park in St Kitts on Tuesday. After off-spinner Ashley Nurse rocked the visitors with the wickets of both openers without scoring in the first over of the match, fast bowler Williams claimed four for 28 to ensure there would be no substantial recovery for the tourists despite a fighting topscore of 35 from Mahmudullah as they finished at 143 for nine.

Set a revised target of 91 off 11 overs after rain delayed the West Indies response by more than 90 minutes, Russell blazed an unbeaten 35 off 21 balls with three fours and three sixes to ensure there were no alarms for the home side in taking a 1-0 lead ahead of the final two matches in Florida at the weekend. They reached 93 for three off 9.1 overs. Russell and Marlon Samuels (25) put on 42 for the third wicket after seamer Mustafizur Rahman despatched opening batsmen Evin Lewis and Andre Fletcher without conceding a run in his opening over to give the Bangladeshis hope of restraining the home side. Rowman Powell then joined Russell after Samuels fell to Rubel Hossain to ensure the Caribbean team romped to the target. “Our intention is to win this series 3-0 after the disappointment of the one-dayers,” said Russell, who was chosen as “Man of the Match.” “We are mindful of how good this Bangladesh side is but we are feeling good about ourselves.” Put in to bat earlier by West Indies captain Carlos Brathwaite, Bangladesh got off to the worst possible start.

Tamim Iqbal, who scored two centuries and a fifty to be “Man of the Series” in the one-dayers, was smartly stumped by Denesh Ramdin to the first ball of the match while opening partner Soumya Sarkar also failed to score, being bowled by Nurse three balls later. Curiously, it was the only over bowled by the off-spinner in the innings. “I know I will get a lot of stick for that after the experiment of bowling Ashley first paid off,” said Brathwaite. “I just couldn’t find a way to give him another over because the other bowlers were doing such a good job.”

Despite the loss of those early wickets, Bangladesh were progressing at almost ten runs per over halfway through the innings. But that scoring rate dropped alarmingly as the wickets continued to tumble. Mahmudullah managed useful partnerships with Liton Das and Mushfiqur Rahim, however Williams’ clever variations of pace strangled the innings, his dismissal of Mahmudullah effectively ending the tourists’ hopes of a substantial score. “We lost too many wickets at crucial times and that cost us,” said Bangladesh captain Shakib al Hasan.— AFP



WARNER PARK: Tamim Iqbal (left) of Bangladesh is dismissed by Denesh Ramdin of West Indies during the 1st T20i match between West Indies and Bangladesh at Warner Park, Basseterre, St Kitts, on July 31, 2018. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

BASSETERRE, Saint Kitts and Nevis: Scoreboard of the rain-affected opening fixture of a three-match T20 International series between the West Indies and Bangladesh at Warner Park in St Kitts on Tuesday:

Bangladesh Innings

Tamim Iqbal stpd wkpr: Ramdin b Nurse	0
Soumya Sarkar b Nurse	0
Liton Das c Fletcher b Paul	24
Shakib al Hasan c Williams b Paul	19
Mushfiqur Rahim c Powell b Williams	15
Mahmudullah b Williams	35
Ariful Haque b Russell	15
Mehidy Hasan c Nurse b Williams	11
Nazmul Islam c wkpr: Ramdin b Williams	7
Rubel Hossain not out	2
Mustafizur Rahman not out	3
Extras (lb-2, w-10)	12
Total (20 overs, 9 wickets)	143

Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Tamim Iqbal), 2-5 (Soumya Sarkar), 43-3 (Mushfiqur Rahim), 43-4 (Shakib al Hasan), 5-90 (Mushfiqur Rahim), 6-116 (Ariful Haque), 7-125 (Mahmudullah), 8-132 (Mehidy Hasan), 9-137 (Nazmul Islam)

Bowling: A. Nurse 1-0-6-2, A. Russell 4-0-27-1, S. Badree 3-0-35-

West Indies Innings (revised target - 91 off 11 overs)

A. Fletcher c wkpr: Mushfiqur Rahim b Mustafizur Rahman	7
E. Lewis c Liton Das b Mustafizur Rahman	2
A. Russell not out	35
M. Samuels c Mahmudullah b Rubel Hossain	26
R. Powell not out	15
Extras (b-1, lb-1, w-6)	8
Total (9.1 overs, 3 wickets)	93

Fall of wickets: 1-10 (E. Lewis), 2-10 (A. Fletcher), 3-52 (Samuels)

Did not bat: D. Ramdin, C. Brathwaite, R. Powell, A. Nurse, K. Paul, S. Badree, K. Williams

Bowling: Mehidy Hasan 1-0-9-0, Mustafizur Rahman 2-1-18-2, Shakib al Hasan 2.1-0-27-0 (lw) Nazmul Islam 2-0-24-0, Rubel Hossain 2-0-13-1 (lw).

Result: West Indies won by seven wickets

Axelsen and Okuhara keep badminton world title defenses on track

NANJING: Viktor Axelsen and Nozomi Okuhara stormed into the third round to stay on course for back-to-back men’s and women’s titles at the badminton world championships yesterday. Denmark’s Axelsen, the top seed and men’s world number one, subdued a spirited first-game challenge from China’s unseeded Huang Yuxiang. The first game was tied at 16-16 when water drops on the court forced a lengthy delay and eventually the relocation of the match to another court.

That’s when Axelsen caught fire, closing out the first game and stepping on the gas in game two to win the match 21-17, 21-8. “I was not prepared for the unexpected incident on the court,” Huang said. “He

(Axelsen) went into the game much better after the break. I didn’t get used to the new court as quickly as he did.” Women’s eighth seed Okuhara of Japan made shorter work of unseeded Rachel Honderich, sending the 22-year-old Canadian packing 21-11, 21-9 in just 28 minutes in Nanjing.

Hosts China, led by the great Lin Dan, are the sport’s superpower, but they have seen their dominance slip of late and can expect a tough fight against the rest of the world’s best in Nanjing. It was so far so good yesterday as Lin, the number nine seed, got past Sameer Verma of India, 21-17, 21-14. Also for China, men’s number three seed Shi Yuqi defeated England’s Rajiv Ouseph 21-18, 21-9 and Olympic champion Chen Long dispatched Khosit Phetpradab of Thailand, 21-16, 21-11.

Their compatriot, women’s fifth seed Chen Yufei, had a rougher time against Gregoria Mariska Tunjung of Indonesia. After Chen won the first game 21-17, Tunjung jumped out to a 17-10 lead in the second and looked ready to extend the match to a third game. But Chen, 20, stormed back to take the game 22-20 and win the match. “I think I’m better prepared today, mentally and technically, and this makes me more confident,” Chen told state-run Xinhua news agency. Also moving ahead were women’s singles second-seed Akane Yamaguchi, who got past Fabienne Deprez of Germany. — AFP



NANJING: Viktor Axelsen of Denmark hits a shot against Huang Yuxiang of China in their men's singles match during the badminton World Championships in Nanjing yesterday. — AFP

Sports

Iraq withdraw from Asian Games soccer tournament

India wrestlers get sponsor boost

HONG KONG: Iraq have withdrawn from the football tournament of this month's Asian Games in Jakarta, potentially throwing the competition into turmoil less than two weeks before kickoff. The Iraq Olympic Committee have pulled the team from the event, according to a source in Baghdad, and the decision will leave officials needing to address an imbalance in the opening phase of the tournament. Last week the Asian Football Confederation conducted a redraw of the competition's group stage to add Palestine and the United Arab Emirates after the pair had been left off the original entry list.

That meant two of the six groups swelled from four teams to five, but Iraq's withdrawal now means one group - containing China, Timor Leste and Syria - will feature just three countries. The Olympic Council of Asia, the organizers of the Asian Games, have yet to respond to a request from Reuters for comment. A source at the Iraq Football Association had initially denied reports the team would be removed from the competition and that the squad's preparations were being finalized following the completion of a training camp in the northern city of Erbil.

Earlier this week, football officials were reported to have been fired over their involvement in the selection of overage players for the nation's under-16 team after they were stopped at passport control on their way to participate in a regional tournament. The withdrawal of Iraq's footballers follows a decision by the Philippines not to send the nation's basketball team to Jakarta in the aftermath of their on-court brawl with Australia during a recent World Cup qualifier. The football tournament at the Asian Games begins on August 10 and features teams made up of players 23 years of age and under. Coaches are permitted to select three overage

players. The final will be played on Sept 1.

India wrestlers

In another development, India's wrestlers received a welcome boost ahead of this month's Asian Games after the federation got automaker Tata Motors as their principal sponsor yesterday. Wrestling has been the most productive sport in recent times at the Olympics for the country, bringing in five medals - one silver and four bronze - in the last three Games. While some wrestlers have received sponsorship in individual capacities, the Wrestling Federation of India had been looking for corporate support for its athletes' international training and exposure trips.

Tata Motors, owner of British luxury brands Jaguar and Land Rover, will sponsor wrestling for three years, beginning with the upcoming Asian Games in Jakarta and will continue till 2021. "I am happy with the adulation the sport has received ever since 2008 Beijing Olympics as we have been successfully winning medals in three consecutive Olympics," Sakshi Malik, who won a bronze at the Rio Olympics, told reporters. "We have been giving the best performances but have the least sponsors. This partnership will inspire us more." Financial details of the deal were not announced but Tata Motors said they will also support top performing 50 wrestlers, both men and women, on both domestic and international circuit as part of the deal.

Pakistan averts boycott

Meanwhile, Pakistan has averted an Asian Games boycott by its hockey players after the country's federation gave assurances that overdue daily allowances would be paid in full before the multi-sports event begins in Indonesia later this month. The Pakistan men's



JAKARTA: Indonesian armed police conduct a security drill in Jakarta 2018 ahead of the 2018 Asian Games. Jakarta and Palembang will host about 11,000 athletes and 5,000 officials from 45 Asian countries for the Asian Games, which will be held from August 18 to September 2. — AFP

team are the most successful at the Asian Games with eight gold medals but players had threatened to skip the upcoming edition after not being paid their allowances for the last six months. However, captain Mohammad Rizwan Senior said on Tuesday that Pakistan Hockey Federation President Khalid Sajjad Khokar had assured

him unpaid allowances would be cleared before the Aug. 18-Sept. 2 Games and therefore the players would end their protest. "We will clear all dues before going to Asian Games," Khokar was quoted as saying by local media. "Unfortunately, our grant was stopped due to certain unknown reason.—Agencies

FIFPro complains of insufficient break for WCup players

ZURICH: Global footballers' union FIFPro says that at least 15 World Cup players have taken part in UEFA club competitions less than four weeks after returning from Russia, leaving without a sufficient close season break. The union reiterated its call for a mandatory rest period of at least four weeks between the final game of one season and the start of pre-season training for the next. "Players are coming under too much pressure, caught between the needs of their clubs and their own personal well-being," said the union in a statement.

"While FIFPro understands the financial implications of the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League for clubs, the health of these players is being put at risk because of such a congested match schedule." The group stage of the World Cup in Russia, which was officially part of last season, finished on June 28 while the final was played on July 15. The first round of qualifying for this season's

Champions League began on July 10, meaning that the two seasons in effect overlapped by a few days.

Iceland's Arnor Traustason played and scored for Swedish champions Malmo in a 3-0 win away to Kosovar side Drita in a Champions League qualifier on July 10. Serbia World Cup squad members Nemanja Radonjic and Milan Rodic played for Red Star Belgrade in a Champions League qualifier on July 11 and compatriot Vladimir Stojkovic played for Partizan in the Europa League the following day. While clubs from smaller leagues are already involved in European qualifiers, big clubs are on lucrative tours abroad. On Sunday, Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho said his team's World Cup participants should consider cutting their holidays short to help the depleted team in the opening stages of the Premier League season. Several players from United's first-choice starting line-up, including Frenchman Paul Pogba, Belgian Romelu Lukaku and Englishman Jesse Lingard could miss the opening league fixture against Leicester City in less than two weeks' time. England defender Phil Jones and forward Marcus Rashford are expected to return early to help prepare for the start of the season. Mourinho, frustrated after seeing his side lose 4-1 to Liverpool in the US on Saturday, has suggested that others should do the same. — Reuters



MIAMI BEACH: Real Madrid's Spanish defender Alvaro Odriozola (left) vies for the ball with Manchester United's British defender Luke Shaw during the International Champions Cup friendly football match at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami, Florida on July 31, 2018. — AFP

Managers to be shown yellow, red cards for misconduct

LONDON: Managers in English soccer will be shown yellow and red cards for misconduct in the technical area during competitive fixtures in the new season, the Football Association (FA) said on Tuesday. Cards will be issued in the FA Cup, English Football League, EFL Cup, EFL Trophy and National League. Managers and coaches in the Premier League, however, will not be issued cards, but given verbal warnings instead. The decision comes after a review of the technical area code of conduct by the stakeholders of the English game. "Stage one warnings" will be issued to occupants of the technical area for inappropriate language and gestures towards match officials, the FA said. Other forms of "irresponsible behaviour" that could



result in a yellow card or warning include kicking or throwing water bottles, coats or other objects in a show of dissent as well as sarcastic clapping. An automatic one game suspension will be triggered when an individual reaches four warnings. Eight warnings carry a two-game ban and 12 warnings will result in a three-game ban. The FA will hand misconduct charges to individuals accumulating 16 warnings, with a regulatory commission determining subsequent sanctions. — Reuters

Moran handed torch for Calgary 2026 Olympic bid

CALGARY: Calgary took another step towards making a bid for the 2026 Winter Olympics on Tuesday when Mary Moran was named chief executive officer for the group tasked with exploring the potential of hosting the Games. Moran, who becomes the first woman in Canada to spearhead an Olympic bid, will take a leave of absence from her current position as president and chief executive officer of Calgary Economic Development in order to implement the strategic direction of Calgary 2026.

"There are four big things we have to focus on, the first one is completing a rigorous analysis that needs to

be done so we can get all parties agreeing to what the costs are going to be," Moran told Reuters in a phone call from Calgary after her appointment was announced. "Then I would say the second big priority is going to be making sure we get the multi-party agreement done, the third would be the plebiscite and all the way along in that is public engagement. "Also I think Calgarians have a lot of questions and we need to start listening to them and have healthy discussions about the concerns or hopes that they have."

Calgary, which hosted the 1988 Winter Games, Swedish capital Stockholm, Turkey's Erzurum, Japan's Sapporo and an Italian bid involving Cortina d'Ampezzo, Milan and Turin have all expressed interest in hosting the 2026 Games, according to an International Olympic Committee (IOC) announcement in April. The IOC has struggled in recent years to convince potential candidates of the benefits of hosting the Games and about a dozen cities have withdrawn bids. Earlier this month the Austrian city Graz withdrew from the running for the 2026 Games when it did not get the necessary political backing and support. —Reuters

Briefs

Barkley ready to flourish

LONDON: Chelsea midfielder Ross Barkley says he feels "better than ever" after recovering from a long-term injury and is relishing the freedom to influence all areas of the pitch under new manager Maurizio Sarri. The England international missed a majority of last season with a hamstring injury and made just four appearances for Chelsea across all competitions since moving to the London outfit from Everton in January. "I arrived here with a long-term injury," Barkley is quoted as saying by The Daily Telegraph. "I didn't play many games because of that... from the time that I joined in January, I have got my body feeling better than ever before." Barkley started the club's pre-season matches against Perth Glory and Inter Milan and is relishing Sarri's playing philosophy. "The new manager obviously has a different style... There will be freedom because you have three men in the midfield," he added. — Reuters

Everton sign defender Digne

BARCELONA: Everton have signed defender Lucas Digne from Spanish champions Barcelona on a five-year contract, the Premier League club said yesterday. The 25-year-old France international joins Everton after two seasons in Barcelona, where he made 46 appearances across all competitions, as the Nou Camp outfit won the La Liga last term and retained the Spanish Cup. "I want to show my best football here and discover the best league in the world. Everybody loves the Premier League, I am loving the fact I am coming here," Digne told Everton's website. "I am not afraid, I am excited. For me, it is a new challenge to discover a country, a league, people and a great club such as Everton. It is fabulous." Digne, who missed out on France's World Cup squad this year, previously played for French top-flight side Paris St Germain, winning two Ligue 1 titles, and also completed a loan spell at Italy's AS Roma. —Reuters

Soccer field suicide bomb

BRUSSELS: A man walked to the middle of an empty soccer pitch in a Belgian town and blew himself up with a grenade on Tuesday in what authorities said was an act of despair. A 65-year-old former soldier left farewell notes at his home nearby saying he could no longer bear his life and making his last will, the public prosecutor said in a statement. It classed the death as suicide but did not name the man. The blast initially caused concern as Belgium has been rocked by Islamist violence in recent years. Verviers, an eastern industrial town near Liege, was the scene in January 2015 of a shootout in which two men associated with later attacks in Paris and Brussels were killed. However, details of Tuesday's incident offered a very different picture. —Reuters

City sign Dutch defender

LONDON: Manchester City have signed defender Philippe Sandler from Dutch top division side PEC Zwolle, the Premier League champions announced on Tuesday. The 21-year-old, a product of the Ajax Amsterdam youth system, has represented the Netherlands at under-20 level and can play as a centre back or in a holding midfield position. City did not provide financial details of the deal, but media reports said the fee was in the region of 3 million euros (\$3.51 million). The reports added that Sandler could be loaned back to a club in the Netherlands. Sandler is City's third signing of the close season and follows forward Riyad Mahrez and defensive midfielder Claudio Gomes into the club. City face FA Cup winners Chelsea in the Community Shield on Sunday, before Pep Guardiola's team take on Arsenal in their opening league clash on Aug 12. — Reuters

Man United Women face Liverpool in Cup

LONDON: Manchester United Women will play Liverpool in their first match since the previous team was disbanded in 2005 after they were drawn together in the League Cup group stage as the fixtures for the 2018-19 season were released by the FA yesterday. Second-tier United, managed by former England captain Casey Stoney, will travel to top division side Liverpool in Group Two North of the Women's Super League Cup on Aug 19. The competition includes 22 teams in four groups divided into north and south sections with the top two teams from each group going into the quarter-finals. Arsenal are the holders. Stoney's United team, which was only established earlier this summer, will also be competing in the second-tier Women's Championship starting at Aston Villa on Sept. 9.

Champions Chelsea open their Super League campaign at home to 2016 winners Manchester City on the same weekend. It is the inaugural campaign for England's highest three divisions in their rebranded form, with the top-tier Super League becoming fully professional for the first time with 11 teams competing. The Championship will have 12 teams comprising a mixture of full-time and part-time. The third-tier National League has six regional sub-divisions at amateur level. The fixtures for the FA Women's Cup, which was won by Chelsea last season, will be announced at a later date. — Reuters

25 Nationals score team-record 25, overwhelm New York Mets



26 Viktor Axelsen, Okuhara keep world title defenses on track



27 Managers to be shown yellow and red cards for misconduct



United hold on to beat Real Madrid

Mourinho finally given something to smile about



MIAMI: Marcos Llorente #18 of Real Madrid in action during the International Champions Cup match against Manchester United at Hard Rock Stadium on July 31, 2018. — AFP

MIAMI: Jose Mourinho was finally given something to smile about as a tempestuous trip to the United States ended with Man United's 2-1 win over former club Real Madrid thanks to first-half strikes from Alexis Sanchez and Ander Herrera. Mourinho has cut a miserable figure during their two week trip to the United States, lashing out at a lack of transfer activity while reserving stinging criticism for a number of first team players.

But seeing his side establish a two goal lead in the first half was encouraging, as was holding Real at bay after Karim Benzema's goal just before the interval gave the Spanish side hope of mounting a comeback. "I didn't learn anything (from this tour)," said Mourinho. "I know what Ander Herrera, Juan Mata and Alexis Sanchez are. I know the kids are very young and need time to grow up, I know my players gave everything

and in the last 15 mins we are dead and they bring on Toni Kroos and Asensio and Isco and I thought we wouldn't resist but we did.

"That's the spirit we need because our first two or three weeks in the Premier League are going to be really hard for us because we didn't prepare for that." The Portuguese has been without 12 key players for most of the tour with many enjoying an extended break following the World Cup. In front of 64,141 at Miami's Hard Rock Stadium, United were finishing off their pre-season preparations against a Real Madrid side just starting theirs.

La Liga starts a week later than the Premier League so new Real manager Julen Lopetegui was able to name the likes of Gareth Bale to start while Germany star Toni Kroos was on the bench. Spanish international

David de Gea was making his first start since returning from the extra time given to him following the World Cup and he was almost beaten in the eighth minute - Bale starting a move which saw Benzema fire just wide from close range. Brazilian Fred, who was signed earlier this summer for £52 million, was making his first United start and looked comfortable in his new surroundings. And on 18 minutes, United were ahead. Herrera fed Matteo Darmian and teed up Sanchez who clinically swept the ball home.

Taken superbly

It was Man United's first real opportunity - and it was taken superbly. "Alexis Sanchez is fresh, the way the man is running, I think he is in a fantastic condition," said Mourinho. The second goal which arrived on 27

minutes was equally impressive. Darmian lifted the ball to Mata and once the Spaniard had regained his composure he crossed for Sanchez who was able to divert the ball into the path of Herrera who made no mistake.

Bale curled wide soon after but just before the interval, Benzema tapped in an excellent Theo Hernandez cross to give the vast amounts of Madrid fans in Miami something to cheer. Bale, a one time target for Mourinho, was withdrawn for the second half as Lopetegui shuffled his pack and one of the substitutes, Martin Odegaard should have leveled on 56 minutes when he blazed over the bar from eight yards. The Norwegian saw a free-kick saved by De Gea late on but United held firm to lift Mourinho's mood. It was their first victory in regulation play this pre-season - AC Milan were defeated on penalties in Los Angeles last week.— AFP

Serena suffers career's worst loss to Konta

CALIFORNIA: Twenty-three times major champion Serena Williams suffered the worst loss of her storied career on Tuesday, falling 6-1 6-0 to Britain's Johanna Konta in the first round of the Silicon Valley Classic. After a routine hold to start the match, Williams lost the next 12 games in a one-sided affair that lasted less than an hour, stunning the partisan crowd of 3,000 at San Jose State University.

Those expecting to see Williams continue to battle back after a difficult child birth last year were left disappointed as the 36-year-old committed 25 unforced errors to Konta's nine and managed to put just 41 percent of her first serves into play. "I think she played well in the second set and I think I wasn't sharp at all in the first set and she got confident and she clearly ran away with it," the American said after the loss. Williams, who lost the Wimbledon final earlier this month to German Angelique Kerber, had never lost a match before where she did not win at least two games since turning pro in 1995.

As poorly as Williams played, the 27-year-old Konta was sharp, firing six aces and smacking 17



SAN JOSE: Serena Williams of the United States reacts during her match against Johanna Konta of Great Britain at Spartan Tennis Complex on July 31, 2018. — AFP

winners to Williams' nine while controlling the tempo of the match. "She obviously wasn't playing at her best level, nowhere near it, and I really just tried to play the match on my terms," said Konta, who won the tournament two years ago. "I tried to put aside the incredible champion she is and just play the player of the day," she said. "I

felt I did better than her on the day but it's still a humbling experience to be out here with her." With the loss Williams falls to 11-4 since returning to the tour and will look to bounce back when she competes in the Cincinnati Open next month, another hard court tune-up ahead of this year's US Open. — Reuters

Wawrinka ousted by qualifier Young

WASHINGTON: Three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka, struggling in his comeback from left knee surgery, was ousted by US qualifier Donald Young at the ATP and WTA Washington Open on Tuesday. Young, ranked 234th, outlasted the 33-year-old Swiss 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 7-6 (7/3) and advanced to a second-round match with Japanese seventh seed Kei Nishikori. "It was a tough fight, a lot of nerves because he can hit any shot," Young said. "Stan at the top is totally different than when he's working his way back. I'm sure he'll be back. I won't want to play him when he's back." Wawrinka, ranked 198th, fell to 6-11 this year after missing most of nine months before returning in May.

"It's painful to lose in the first round here, especially 7-6 in the third,"

Wawrinka said. "I was missing a lot for sure. It's tough when you haven't played a lot of matches. Tough loss for sure." On the women's side, reigning US Open champion Sloane Stephens opened by beating fellow American Bethanie Mattek-Sands 7-5, 6-4. Third-ranked Stephens, who captured her first Grand Slam title last year in New York, rallied from 5-2 down in the first set to book a second-round match against Germany's Andrea Petkovic. "I'm super excited about the hardcourt season again," Stephens said. "It was good I was able to fight back and win."

Wawrinka, who began his career in 2002, won his first Grand Slam title at the 2014 Australian Open and added the 2015 French Open and 2016 US Open titles. He reached the Wimbledon quarter-finals in 2014 and 2015 but hasn't gotten past the second round since. Hard-learned patience over 12 years before his Slam breakthrough is paying dividends as Wawrinka tries to recapture top form. "There are different steps. Right now is to get back a little confidence and get rid of all the doubt you have in your game," Wawrinka said. "I feel like I'm really close, but sometimes really far. I'm sure I'll get back where I want to be.—AFP