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MPs slam flight cancellations by Wataniya, demand damages

KAC to the rescue after Crown Prince orders bringing back stranded passengers

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers yesterday questioned the cancellation of several flights by private Kuwaiti carrier Wataniya Airways and demanded compensation, after the civil aviation directorate issued an ultimatum to the carrier. Kuwait Airways rushed to help yesterday by deciding to bring back stranded passengers in Istanbul and some other places after Deputy Amir and Crown Prince HH Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah ordered

that passengers should be brought back home.

Wataniya Airways expressed deep regrets for what happened and said that the cancellations were forced because the company could not find planes to lease due to the heavier than expected summer rush. The company said it will take all the necessary measures to rectify the situation. The civil aviation authority issued a statement on Saturday giving the airline until Sept 5 to deal with the situation and set its record straight, otherwise it will suspend its operating license.

Wataniya Airways resumed operations a few months ago after several years of stoppage due to losses and debt. Kuwait Airways said it will send a plane to bring back the stranded passengers in Istanbul and vowed to do the same with other destinations.

In a related development, MP Mohammad Al-Mutair yesterday charged that the government was delaying the issuance of visas and providing residence permits to employees of a private company operating

the T4 terminal, which has been allocated to Kuwait Airways. He said on Twitter that the company cannot fully operate the terminal because it does not have enough employees, adding that the government failed to issue visas under pressure from a competing local airline in order to benefit from the summer rush. Mutair also charged that Kuwait Airways flights and luggage are being deliberately delayed to make people dislike the national carrier. He warned that he plans to grill the prime minister over the matter.

Kuwaiti shooter, karateka strike Asiad gold



(Left) Gold medalist Kuwait's Mansour Al-Rashidi bites his medal during the awards ceremony for the men's skeet shooting final during the 2018 Asian Games in Palembang yesterday. (Right) Gold medalist Kuwait's Ali Al-Shatti bites his medal during the awards ceremony for the men's 67-kg category karate event in Jakarta yesterday. — AFP (See Page 28)

KUWAIT: Shooter Mansour Al-Rashidi yesterday bagged Kuwait's first gold medal at the Asian Games held in Indonesia. Rashidi won his gold medal in the men's skeet category, in Kuwait's first official participation after the lifting of an international sports suspension. Vice president of Kuwait shooting federation Duajj Al-Otaibi said in a phone call with KUNA that he dedicates this big win to HH the Amir Sheikh

Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and all Kuwaiti people.

Later yesterday, karateka Ali Al-Shatti won a second gold medal for Kuwait at the Games after defeating Kazakhstan's Didar Amiralii in a 4-0 match. Shatti expressed joy over his achievement and also dedicat-

ed his win to HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince, HH the Prime Minister and the Kuwaiti people. He noted that his achievement was due to tremendous efforts and serious training, thanking his family, especially his mother, for supporting him all these years. President of Olympic Council of Asia Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd Al-Sabah sponsored the inauguration ceremony for Shatti and his colleagues. — KUNA

US mourns John McCain, war hero and political icon

WASHINGTON: Flags were flying at half-staff yesterday over the White House and US Capitol in honor of John McCain, the Vietnam War hero and two-time presidential candidate known for a legendary temper but whose personal courage and insistence on treating even his foes with respect earned him near-universal admiration. McCain died on Saturday, four days shy of his 82nd birthday, following a yearlong battle with an aggressive brain cancer. He leaves a wife, Cindy, and seven children, three by an earlier marriage.



John McCain

He will lie in state in the US Capitol - an honor accorded only a few notable Americans, including John F Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and civil rights icon Rosa Parks - as well as in the Arizona Capitol, the state he represented for 35 years. His funeral is expected to take place in the National Cathedral, the massive Gothic structure overlooking Washington, before he is laid to rest according to his wishes at the Naval Academy in nearby Annapolis, Maryland.

Former presidents George W Bush, a Republican, and Barack Obama, a Democrat - his successful rivals in, respectively, the 2000 and 2008 elections - are to

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News in brief

Jaber Hospital opens next month

KUWAIT: Kuwait is putting the finishing touches on a new medical facility, while two others will complete renovations in September, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said yesterday. The Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital will soon be up and running, while major refurbishments are being carried out at Amiri Hospital and Sabah Al-Ahmad Medical Center, he said in a statement after meeting officials from across the health ministry. — KUNA

Health official faces graft charges

KUWAIT: The Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) referred yesterday a former senior health ministry official and others to the public prosecution on charges of corruption. Dr Mohammad Bouzuber, Nazaha's assistant secretary general for investigations and official spokesman, told KUNA that the suspect and others were allegedly involved in a suspicious transaction regarding the import of heartbeat regulators. The suspect abused the ministry's purchase procedures and made a direct deal with a local supplier, importing the devices in exchange for unlawful commission, said Bouzuber. — KUNA

US playwright Simon dies

NEW YORK: Neil Simon, the prolific and Pulitzer Prize-winning US playwright who wrote for stage, television and cinema, and won more Oscar and Tony nominations combined than any other writer, died yesterday. He was 91. A legend of American theater, Simon was credited with shaping American humor in the 1960s and 1970s in a vein similar to film director Woody Allen, with a focus on life in the big city and family conflict. — AFP (See Page 24)

Palestinians see US 'liquidating' their just cause

JERUSALEM: US President Donald Trump's cut of more than \$200 million in aid for Gaza and the West Bank is the latest in a series of steps Palestinian leaders say aims to "liquidate" their cause. The move follows Trump's recognition in December of the disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital as well as his freezing of \$300 million in annual funding for the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA). Washington's new policy on Jerusalem

overturned decades of precedent and prompted the Palestinian leadership to break off relations with the White House. The US president responded by threatening to withhold aid until they returned to the negotiating table, and Friday's announcement of the cut appeared to be in line with his stance. For many Israelis, the changes made by Washington are long overdue and bring years of failed peace efforts closer in line with reality. But Palestinian leaders argue the White House is playing into the hands of Israeli politicians.

Speaking in June, when the US aid was merely frozen instead of cut, long-time Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat spoke of the need to "defeat the American-Israeli scheme to liquidate the Palestinian cause".

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NABLUS: Palestinian women stand outside the gate of the closed-down Institut Francais (French Cultural Institute) in the occupied West Bank yesterday. — AFP

Cryptominers dreaming of price rebound

LONDON: Surrounded by the cryptocurrency mining "rig" that is taking over his bedroom, "Ali" lays bare the risks of his trade, revealing his profits "are a tenth of what they were". Prices of cryptocurrencies have plunged since the heady heights of last year, slashing the profits of miners such as Ali. "This is the worst possible time to invest," the young Lyon native, who preferred to keep his name secret, told AFP.

Ali still ekes out a profit and has amassed enough reserves to absorb

around six months of losses, but the days of generating €15,000 (\$17,450) profit per computer seem long gone. He acquired his first rig, an assembly of six graphics cards, in Jan 2017, and was just about to buy his seventh. This investment totalled around €13,000, soon paid off with his initial gains.

But the cryptocurrency boom at the end of 2017, of which bitcoin was the best-known example, has multiplied the number of miners. Many virtual currencies require that machines are connected to the network and miners are rewarded with units of currency when they create a new block, achieved by solving complicated mathematical problems. However, the more units are mined, the more the currency is devalued.

Continued on Page 24



KIRISHI, Russia: An employee inspects machines for the production of bitcoins and lightcoins at the "Kriptounivers" (CryptoUniverse) mining center during a presentation of the largest cryptocurrency center in Russia on Aug 20, 2018. — AFP

70 percent expats in private sector not qualified: Minister

'Important decisions' soon to address demographic imbalance

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Seventy percent of expatriate workers in the private sector are not qualified, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and State Minister for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh said. Workers who make up this percentage do not have intermediate or university degrees, the minister explained, adding that they need to be "filtered" through a mechanism that assesses the actual need for their services.

Speaking to reporters during a reception for Eid Al-Adha well-wishers yesterday, Sabeeh said that the Public Authority for Manpower inspected several companies around Kuwait during the holiday, and detected a 'large number' of violations, adding that proper legal procedures will be taken in that regard.

Nearly 60 percent of expatriates working in the private sector in Kuwait have an intermediate degree or lawyer, according to statistics released by the Labor Market Information System of the Central Statistical Bureau as of the end of March 2018. Meanwhile, less than 11 percent of expatriates in the private sector have university degrees.

Sabeeh also mentioned that the Supreme Committee for Demographic Structure is set to meet soon and make 'important decisions' in order to help address the demographic imbalance in Kuwait by targeting visa trafficking. Separately, Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower Abdullah Al-Mutoutah said inspections on roaming laborers and violating butchers resulted in the arrest of 112 roaming laborers.

Separately, Director of the Central Inspection Department at the Public Authority for Manpower Mohammad Al-Ansari said the authority succeeded in suspending the files of all violating farms through field tours by the department during the past two years. He said that the authority received a letter from the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources not to renew files of farms that obstruct the path of the railway project. He said there will be a new mechanism to monitor workers allocated to the farms by moving the authority to the need estimation department. He said the department carries out periodic inspections on companies of the private and oil sectors to make sure they are in compliance

with law 6/2010.

Proposed laws

The government is preparing to approve seven new proposed laws and send them to the National Assembly to complete the laws with regards to the legislative requirements within the development plan. The proposals include a law to organize programs and privatization operations for the technical agency for the privatization program, including amendment of law 116/2014 with regards to partnership projects between the public and private sectors, tourism law of the information ministry, amendment of the commercial register, tax procedures, psychological, social and educational advisory services for the supreme council for family affairs and the civil aviation law. Meanwhile, four government areas are working on developing the environmental system in the country through the implementation of six projects worth nearly KD 1 billion.

Storage areas

Assistant Secretary General of the Committees Secretariat at the Council of Ministers Saleh Al-Mulla sent the proposal of the Kuwait Fire Service



Hind Al-Sabeeh

Directorate (KFSD) to build storage areas in Kuwait governorates to avoid the use of basements in private residential areas to Kuwait Municipality and asked for its opinion. Director General of KFSD Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad said in a letter to Deputy Premier and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh that inspections of investment residences revealed that many businesses resort to renting building basements for storage, which is something very dangerous in case of fire. He called for the state to make available storage facilities of various sizes in Kuwaiti governorates, which should meet the standards of KFSD. He proposed the establishment of a government company specialized in logistics, transport and storage, which all investors can utilize.

Hajj mission

Deputy head of the medical services team of Kuwait hajj mission Mugheer Al-Shimmari said the number of Kuwaitis who received treatment in all clinics since they were opened on Aug 13 until Aug 26 in Naseem, Mina and Arafat were 1,340 - 1,105 men and 325 women. He said the medical services team completed its job and the clinics were shut down after making sure all pilgrims returned home safely. He said the team will return today, and lauded the support of Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah and Undersecretary Dr Mustafa Redha.



Violators arrested during Eid crackdowns

Foreign Minister receives Eid well-wishers



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives well-wishers on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met yesterday with Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and the heads of diplomatic missions in the country on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha. Sheikh Sabah expressed hope to all on this auspicious occasion of health and wellness and to perpetuate our country's prosperity under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister and a number of senior ministry officials. — KUNA



Ghanem blasts those who caused sport suspension

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday said the credit of the lifting of a three-year suspension on Kuwaiti sports should go to HH the Amir, HH the Prime Minister, the government and specifically the defense minister, in addition to the commerce and information ministers. He however blasted those who caused the suspension in the first place and charged they were still trying to reimpose the sanctions on Kuwaiti sports. International sports bodies had suspended Kuwaiti sports due to alleged government interference in the sports movement.

Meanwhile, MP Mohammad Al-

Dallal proposed yesterday the formation of a crisis team from the interior, commerce and social affairs and labor ministries to resolve what he called a maid problem in Kuwait. The lawmaker charged that influential people who own private offices for the recruitment of maids have refused to implement decisions by the government to limit the cost of recruitment, but those offices have failed to observe the set prices. He said the crisis team should confront those owners and other pressure groups that are benefiting from the high cost of domestic helpers.



Marzouq Al-Ghanem



MP Mohammad Al-Dallal



KUWAIT: Minister of Oil, Minister of Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rasheedi yesterday attended a reception held at the Ministry of Electricity and Water, where he received well-wishers on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Local

Crown Prince receives top state officials at Seif Palace

Amir sends condolence cable over Iranian earthquake victims



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



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



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness also received Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh. In addition, His Highness received Minister of

State for Housing and Services Affairs Dr Jenan Boushehri. In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Iranian President Dr Hassan Rouhani, expressing his deepest sympathies over the victims of the earthquake that hit Kermanshah Province yesterday. In his cable, His Highness the Amir also wished a speedy recovery for all those wounded, hoping officials will overcome the effects of this natural disaster. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to the Iranian President. — KUNA



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



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of State for Housing and Services Affairs Dr Jenan Boushehri.

Cabinet Minister meets US Ambassador

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh met yesterday US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman. During the meeting, they discussed ties and the latest

developments regionally and internationally. They also discussed ways to strengthen and reinforce relations, and agreed to push forward bilateral cooperation in all fields in the upcoming period. — KUNA



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

KRCS launches charity campaign in Avenues Mall

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society launched yesterday a charity campaign called 'Donate to Educate' for the fourth consecutive year in the Avenues mall to aid families in need in Kuwait. Deputy Chairman Anwar Al-Hassawi, said in the campaign's press conference, KRCS seeks to provide education to all poor families in Kuwait that are unable to pay for learning which may reach up to five thousand students. Hassawi added that this campaign is being launched for the fourth year in row and aims to support the biggest amount of students possible. Hassawi also assured that this campaign seeks to reinforce social responsibility



Kuwait Red Crescent Society's Deputy Chairman Anwar Al-Hassawi

between private institutions and companies, and to promote their leading role in supporting human and social issues by providing financial aid in order to provide best learning opportunities for the children. He also appreciated the cooperation with the National Bank of Kuwait and its role in social responsibility to come up with a strategic partnership to support those families. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A donor uses a machine provided by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society as part of a charity campaign to aid families in need in Kuwait. — KUNA




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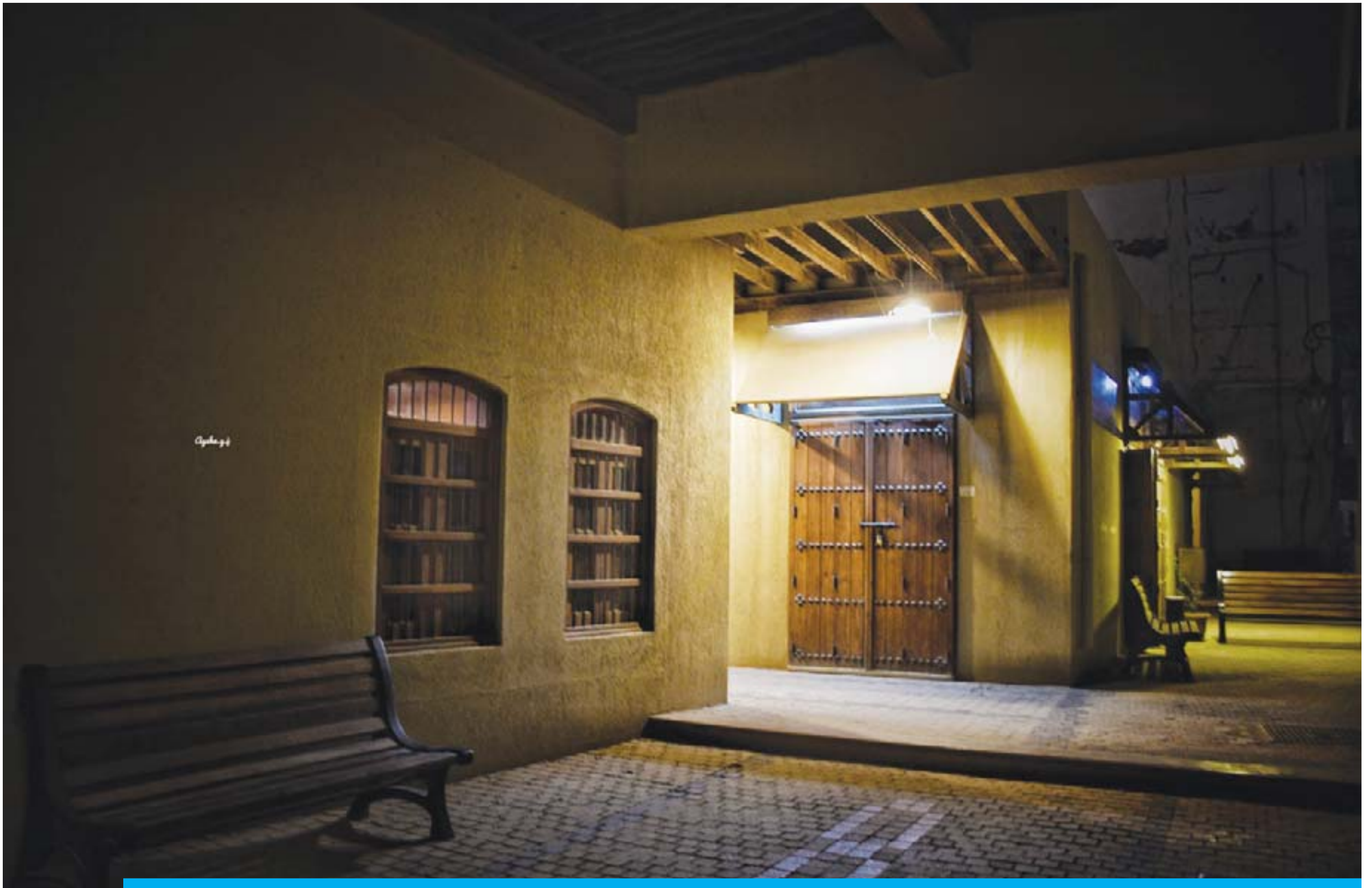


Enjoy

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Shop fronts at Souq Al-Mubarakiya. — Photo by Aisha Al-Jalahmah (KUNA)



KUWAIT: The Corporate Communications Department at the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) organized a staff visit to the pediatric section at the Amiri Hospital during the Eid Al-Adha holiday.

Third Wall's gates: Evidence of Kuwait's history

KUWAIT: Five old and famous gates including Bneid Al-Qar, Shamiya, Al-Maqsab, Al-Shaab and Jahra were the

main entrances to Kuwait City and part of Kuwait's Third Wall which was built in May 1920.

The Wall, which was completed in two months, remains an evidence of Kuwait's history and is still instilled in the memories of Kuwaitis. The third wall was half-circle in shape located five miles behind Kuwait from the sea, and about 27.4 meters high. It contained 26 observation towers. In 1957, this wall was demolished except for its five gates, which were kept to commemorate the memory of the wall that remains instilled in Kuwaitis' hearts. — KUNA



Al-Shamiya Gate



Al-Jahra Gate



Al-Shaab Gate



Al-Maqsab Gate



Al-Jahra Gate

One hurt in six-storey building fire in Salmiya

Three arrested in connection to Asian man's death



KUWAIT: This handout photo shows an apartment where a fire was reported yesterday.



The scene inside the apartment after the fire was extinguished.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Hawally and Salmiya fire centers tackled a blaze reported in a six-storey building in Salmiya yesterday. Firefighters evacuated the building as soon as they arrived to the scene in response to an emergency call, then extinguished the flames which had engulfed a third floor apartment. One person suffered from smoke inhalation, as investigations began to determine the cause of the fire.

Drug abuse

Interior Ministry operations received a call about a dead body found in the parking lot of a Salmiya school. Investigations revealed that three of the Asian man's friends were involved in his death. The three were arrested and confessed that the victim was with them

when they were abusing the psychoactive drug 'chemical', which is a street name for a drug prepared from 'Spice' (synthetic marijuana) with added chemicals. The victim lost consciousness and started bleeding from the mouth and nose, so his friends dumped him between cars and escaped, they said. They were sent to concerned authorities.

Fugitive arrested

A person with a criminal record added yet another charge to his record when he resisted arrest and stabbed a detective in his hand, Al-Rai reported. The

man, who is wanted on theft charges, showed fierce resistance before his arrest which came two weeks after he stole a car from a Shuwaikh garage, and was found driving it using fake license plates. The suspect is a bedoon (stateless) and has a record of theft and drug use.

Disturbance

Hawally police arrested two drunk women in Nugra following several calls from a building's residents. Police received calls about disturbance at an apartment, adding they were admonished by a woman when asked

to lower the noise. A police patrol went to the flat and arrested the two women for disturbing the peace.

Thefts

Two thieves stole a citizen's car at gunpoint. A security source said the citizen, who was terrified, told Sabahiya police that while he was driving, a car approached him and told him to stop. When he did, one of the men walked towards him, pulled a pistol in his face and ordered him to leave the car. The person then got in and drove away. The victim said his phone and wallet remained in the stolen car. Ahmadi police are working on the case. Separately, a thief broke into an Egyptian mandoob's (company representative) car and stole mobile phone accessories worth KD 3,200. The victim lodged a complaint at Abu Halifa police station. Detectives were asked to look for the culprit.



Fugitive arrested after fierce resistance



KUWAIT: Acting head of the emergency team at Hawally Municipality Ahmad Ramadan said inspectors issued 182 warnings for encroachment on state property during a recent campaign. Furthermore, the municipality personnel removed 35 encroachments, and issued four real estate warnings, seven warnings to bachelor residences and 11 citations for illegal use of pavement. —By Hanan Al-Saadoun



CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief
Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan,
management and staff
convey their deepest
condolences to

Al-Rashid Family

on the sad demise of

Khalifa Al-Rashid

May Allah Almighty bestow His Mercy on him



Pontiff 'begs for God's forgiveness' for abuse

Iraqi grandmother faces daily battle caring for 22 kids

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MOON TOWNSHIP, Pennsylvania: In this file photo taken on Nov 03, 2008 Republican presidential candidate Arizona Senator John McCain speaks at a campaign rally. — AFP

McCain: Unbridled titan of US politics

Republican maverick shared and defended America's values worldwide

WASHINGTON: John Sidney McCain III had but one employer throughout his iconic and tempestuous career: the United States of America. It was a family tradition. McCain was a direct descendant, he claimed, of a captain in George Washington's army during the Revolutionary War. And like his father and grandfather before him, each four-star admirals named John McCain, he lived in the service of his country: First as a US Navy fighter pilot, then as a lawmaker until his death Saturday at age 81, following a brain cancer diagnosis in the summer of 2017. He too might have become an admiral, if a Soviet-made surface-to-air missile had not cut short his own high-flying military trajectory on October 26, 1967. On the day of his 23rd mission over Vietnam, his A-4 Skyhawk was hit as he flew across Hanoi's skies.

McCain ejected, and parachuted into a small lake in the center of town, where he was nearly lynched by a furious mob. His two arms and right knee were badly broken. With his father the commander of all US forces in the Pacific, McCain would remain a prisoner of war for more than five years. He was released in 1973 after the Paris Peace Accords, but the physical consequences of his deliberately ill-treated fractures - and torture in prison - would cost him his career as a pilot. "For some reason it was not my time then, and I do believe that therefore because of that, that I was meant to do something," he said in a 1989 interview.

Defeated by Obama

That something, it became clear, would be politics. After a few years as the Navy's Senate liaison, McCain moved to Arizona, the home state of his second wife, and won a seat in the US House of Representatives in 1982. His

ambitions grew, and he rose quickly to the Senate, the most powerful political body in America. It became his second home for 30 years.

McCain long cultivated the image of a Republican maverick, defying his party on issues ranging from campaign finance reform to immigration. He saw little use for party discipline, an attitude reinforced by his past episodes of rebellion-as an unruly student at the US Naval Academy, or a hotheaded prisoner provoking his Vietnamese jailers. "Surviving my imprisonment strengthened my self-confidence, and my refusal of early release taught me to trust my own judgment," McCain wrote in his 1999 memoir, "Faith of My Fathers."

It was this unorthodox, unbridled McCain, disdainful of authority and occasionally arrogant, who threw his hat in the ring in the 2000 presidential race. A self-proclaimed "straight talk" campaigner, he offered Americans his moderate-right vision, while keeping at arm's length the



Senator was in effect general without army

Christian conservatives that his opponent George W Bush had successfully seduced. McCain came up short, but solidified his stature and eventually seized the Republican torch from the unpopular president Bush. In 2008, he made peace with the party establishment, and finally won the presidential nomination.

With the White House within reach, he made an instinctive - and deeply controversial - call. Many of his associates would never forgive him for choosing as his running mate a virtual unknown, the untested Alaska governor Sarah Palin. The decision helped usher in the grassroots Tea Party revolution and the rise of populism later embodied by Donald Trump. Democrat Barack Obama easily prevailed in the election. McCain, now twice defeated, took to joking about how he started sleeping like a baby: "Sleep two hours, wake up and cry, sleep two hours, wake up and cry."

Dismayed by Trump

McCain could work a crowd. In Washington, he held court with reporters in the halls of Congress, at times pithy and impatient. "That's a dumb question," he told one probing journalist. But the snappy tone could turn to self-deprecation: "I don't think I'm a very smart guy," he once said. He could also be volcanic, especially about causes dear to him: the armed forces, American exceptionalism and, in his later years, the threat posed by Russia's Vladimir Putin, whom he branded "a murderer and a thug." McCain's fellow Republicans occasionally mocked his interventionist reflexes, noting he could never say no to a war. After all, he once referenced a Beach Boys tune when singing about whether to "bomb bomb bomb" Iran.

To the end, McCain remained convinced that America's

values should be shared and defended worldwide. He routinely hopped a flight to Baghdad, Kabul, Taipei, or a revolution-wracked Kiev, received more like a head of state than a lawmaker. After the annexation of Crimea, Russia placed his name on a blacklist in retaliation for US-led sanctions. "I guess this means my spring break in Siberia is off," he shot back. Regarding Russia or Syria, McCain's voice carried far. But the senator was in effect a general without an army.

Trump's election seemed to trample on the struggles and ideals of the veteran Republican, who quickly grew dismayed by the billionaire businessman's nationalism and protectionism, his flirtation with Putin and his seeming contempt for the dignity of the office of president. He even took issue with Trump's multiple draft deferments during the Vietnam war, granted after he was diagnosed with bone spurs in his foot. But none of it made McCain want to recede into happy retirement. Perhaps thinking of his grandfather, who died just days after returning home following Japan's surrender in World War II, McCain sought to remain in the Senate for as long as he could, even faced with a diagnosis of aggressive brain cancer. Since December 2017, he was kept away from the Senate floor as he underwent treatment in Arizona and received at his ranch a steady stream of friends and colleagues come to bid him farewell, away from the media gaze. On the eve of his death, his family announced that he was ending his treatment. McCain let it be known in his memoir published in May, "The Restless Wave," that he wished to be laid to rest in Maryland, near his old Navy pal, Chuck Larson. He is survived by his wife Cindy and seven children, three of them from a previous marriage. — AFP

Kerala flood toll hits 445

KOCHI, India: The death toll from devastating floods in the southern Indian state of Kerala rose to 445 yesterday with the discovery of 28 more bodies as the waters recede and a massive cleanup gathers pace, government officials said. Around a million people are still packed into temporary relief camps and 15 are reported missing even as the government mounts an operation to clean homes and public places that have been filled with dirt and sand left by the floods.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan in a tweet said that more than 130,000 flood-hit houses had been cleaned, or nearly a third of those affected. Authorities are also in the process of restoring electricity connections. People returning to their homes have been told to stay alert as receding waters leave behind a glut of snakes. State authorities and wildlife experts have formed teams to come to the aid of those who have found snakes in their home, according to local media. With death toll rising daily, Kerala authorities said "due process will be followed to ascertain if all these deaths are flood related". A 68-year-old man committed suicide Wednesday after seeing the state of his home at Kothad in Ernakulam district. A 19-year-old boy took his own life earlier in the week because his school certificates were destroyed by the floods, police said. The government says that more than 10,000 km of roads have been destroyed or damaged while a legislator said 50,000 houses had been wiped out. — AFP

McCain's 'Hanoi Hilton' jailor recalls the stubborn POW

HAIPHONG: As a prisoner of war in the "Hanoi Hilton", navy pilot John McCain was known as uncompromising, frank and an avid reader who fiercely debated the war with his Vietnamese jailors. One of them, the former director of the infamous Hoa Lo prison, recalls verbally sparring with the famous inmate and says McCain's refusal to budge on his views eventually earned his admiration. "It was his stubbornness, his strong stance that I loved when arguing with him," retired colonel Tran Trong Duyet said. In the decades following the Vietnam War, McCain - who died Saturday at the age of 81 - forgave the enemies who once held him captive, and helped reconcile the two countries that today enjoy strong ties.

His five and a half years in prison began in October 1967 when McCain was thrown into the French-built jail after his Skyhawk divebomber was shot down over Hanoi's Truc Bach lake. Fished out with a broken leg and two broken arms he was shipped to the cold, crowded facility where some 500 prisoners of war were held. His captors quickly learned McCain's father was a navy admiral, and the young prisoner soon developed the nickname "Crown Prince". The early years were grim.

McCain was held in solitary confinement and suffered from dysentery. For months on end, he was fed only bread and pumpkin soup. He communicated with fellow inmates by tapping codes on the thick concrete

walls. In his memoirs, McCain wrote that solitary "put me in a pretty surly mood" and that he would ward off depression by hollering insults at guards. And then there were the interrogations and beatings. "Ropes were put on me and I sat that night bound with ropes," McCain wrote after his 1973 release, recalling one brutal session. "For the next four days, I was beaten every two to three hours by different guards. My left arm was broken again and my ribs were cracked."

English classes, jokes

Duyet denies McCain or others were mistreated and says he punished any fellow guards who stepped out of line. "There was no torture, Vietnamese people saved him," Duyet said in an interview earlier this year at his home in the port city of Haiphong, where he displays both photos of American POWs and more recent images of himself in military uniform posing with US officials. By the end of his long years in prison, Duyet said his relationship McCain started to warm. "Out of working hours, we considered each other friends," he said. "He taught me English... he had good teaching skills." In his post-prison writings, McCain said things got easier for him in the early 1970s, which he called the "coasting period".

He read propaganda texts about Vietnam communist revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh, and was allowed to roam the prison yard with fellow Americans, who named different sections of the compound after Vegas hotels. His former jailor preferred to focus on the rosier memories, recalling how they joked, shared stories about family and travel, and even dished about women. "We laughed together and agreed that women are the same everywhere - they like flattery, they like to sulk, and they're jealous," he said, smiling. McCain left the navy in 1981 for a long career in politics, most notably as



HAIPHONG, Vietnam : This photo taken on Jan 3, 2018 shows Tran Trong Duyet, the former director at the Hoa Lo prison in Hanoi, speaking in front of photos of US prisoners of war on display in his home. — AFP

Republican Senator for Arizona. But his "Hanoi Hilton" experience resonated throughout his life. Donald Trump said during the campaign for the presidency that McCain was "not a war hero" because he was captured in Vietnam. The controversial comments inflamed his throngs of supporters, many of whom saw his time as a POW as a defining experience. "John McCain will always be America's prisoner of war, that experience is now inseparable from the name John McCain and the person that has been John McCain," said Alvin Townley, author of "Defiant" about American POWs held in Hoa Lo. McCain was also celebrated for his role in reconciling the United States and Vietnam, which in the half century since the war's end have become close allies. "(His) openness towards Vietnam and the willingness to revisit not only the country, but his experiences there have certainly helped heal a lot of wounds," Townley said. — AFP

International

Mnangagwa sworn in as president of Zimbabwe bitterly-contested election

Opposition leader rejects court ruling, vows 'peaceful protests'

HARARE: Emmerson Mnangagwa was officially sworn in as president of Zimbabwe yesterday after winning a bitterly-contested election which was the country's first since the ousting of strongman Robert Mugabe. Mnangagwa, whose victory in the July 30 polls was challenged by the main opposition, pledged to "protect and promote the rights of Zimbabweans" at an inauguration ceremony attended by thousands of supporters at a stadium in Harare.

"I Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa swear that as president of the republic of Zimbabwe I will be faithful to Zimbabwe (and) will obey uphold and defend the constitution of Zimbabwe," he said to thunderous applause from a crowd that also included several African heads of state. "We must now focus on addressing the economic challenges facing our nation," he said. "We are all Zimbabweans, what unites us is greater than what could ever divide us."

Since independence from Britain in 1980, Zimbabwe has known only two presidents - Mugabe, who ruled with an iron fist for 37 years, and his erstwhile right-hand man Mnangagwa. Nicknamed "The Crocodile", Mnangagwa was appointed after Mugabe was forced out by the military in November last year. The newly-minted leader yesterday hailed his victory as a new "dawn" for Zimbabwe after years of repression and economic mismanagement which left the country burdened by shattered public services, mass poverty and unemployment.

But his promises of reform and pledges to entice back investors were marred by the army opening fire on protesters, killing six shortly after the poll, as well as allegations of vote-rigging and a violent crackdown on opposi-

tion activists. At the inauguration, Mnangagwa vowed to open a probe into the violence, which he called "regrettable and most unacceptable". Supporters, many wearing caps and T-shirts emblazoned with Mnangagwa's image, filed into the stadium yesterday under banners proclaiming "Celebrating a new Zimbabwe" and "Unity takes us for-



Zimbabwe's first since the ousting of Mugabe

ward, peace keeps us going."

"We were stressed with what was happening with the court procedures but we are happy now because everything has been finalized and we want people to unite and work together," said supporter Malvern Makoni of the opposition's legal appeals over the vote. Other supporters also expressed an appetite for reform. "Our country is now going to develop with president Mnangagwa now in charge. Mnangagwa is the right man to lead Zimbabwe to prosperity," said 41-year-old Blessing Muvirimi. "We want Zimbabweans to work together." Mugabe did not attend

the swearing-in but was represented by his daughter Bonu, who had previously called Mnangagwa a "traitor" after her father's ousting.

'Peace and unity'?

Mnangagwa of the ruling ZANU-PF party won the election with 50.8 percent of the vote - just enough to meet the 50 percent threshold to avoid a run-off against his main opposition challenger Nelson Chamisa, who scored 44.3 percent. International observers said the polls were largely free of the violence which characterized previous votes in Zimbabwe.

However, the European Union earlier expressed concern that Mnangagwa had benefited from heavy state media coverage. Similarly, US monitors said yesterday that Zimbabwe had "not yet demonstrated that it has established a tolerant, democratic culture". The country's top court on Friday dismissed Chamisa's bid to have the results annulled on grounds they were rigged. But the opposition leader has rejected that ruling and vowed to lead "peaceful protests".

"I have a legitimate claim that I am supposed to lead the people of Zimbabwe," Chamisa, who heads the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party, said Saturday. "The court's decision is not the people's decision. The people who voted do not believe in (Mnangagwa). We have got a clear majority." Mnangagwa has sought to turn the page on the issue, calling for "peace and unity" in a televised address after the court decision. "Let us put whatever differences we might have behind us. It is time to build our nation and move forward together." — AFP



HARARE: Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa (left) arrives with his wife Auxilia to take his oath of office in Harare yesterday. Emmerson Mnangagwa was officially sworn in as president of Zimbabwe after winning a bitterly contested election that marked the country's first vote since Robert Mugabe was ousted from power. — AFP

Iraqi grandmother faces daily battle caring for 22 kids

MOSUL: More than a year since the Islamic State group's expulsion from Mosul, Sana Ibrahim bears daily hardship to look after her 22 grandchildren, after losing five family members during the jihadists' occupation of the Iraqi city. Dressed in a long black robe, 61-year-old Sana never seems to stop. She is surrounded by children - little girls with pigtails and little boys in colorful t-shirts, the youngest of whom is just two years old.

She also cares for her 71-year-old husband, Mowafaq Hamid, who has Alzheimer's disease. Sana's greatest challenge is finding enough food for the household, which in total comprises 32 people. During the jihadists' three-year rule of Mosul, her sons Fares and Ghazwan were abducted by the Islamic State group, along with her son-in-law Massud. The men were members of the security forces and considered "apostates" by IS.

The group probably killed them, says Sana, who hopes one day to find their bodies. Throughout the IS occupation, hundreds of government soldiers and police officers were kidnapped and executed by the jihadists, their bodies dumped in mass graves around the northern city. Iraqi forces launched an offensive in 2016 to retake Mosul, prompting a months-long battle into the heart of the city which culminated in the jihadists' ouster in July 2017. Two of Sana's other children were killed in the battle. Her 20-year-old son Youssef and her daughter Nour, 18, were shot by snipers as they tried to flee their long-time home in the Old City.

Living on donations

The historic district of western Mosul was devastated in the fighting. Sana and her family had to rush to find a new place to live after their home was destroyed. They moved to the eastern part of the city, paying 500,000 dinars (\$430) a month to rent a house where they squeeze into a 150 square meter space. Paying the rent is a struggle for Sana, whose four surviving children are all unemployed. "We live thanks to the donations of charitable souls in Mosul. Without them we would have already



MOSUL: Sana Ibrahim, a 61-year-old Iraqi matriarch and caretaker of 22 grandchildren, poses with her family and husband Mowafaq Hamid in their home on Aug 14, 2018. — AFP

have died from hunger and illness," she said. During AFP's visit, one such benefactor appeared bearing bags of clothes and food. The civil servant said she gives part of her monthly salary and that of her son to help struggling families. She is far from the only one to help, said Sana as she separated two squabbling grandchildren and cleaned the face of a third. In the small kitchen behind Sana, her youngest son's wife was busy preparing food for the increasingly impatient children.

Future hopes

Despite her busy daily life, Sana was clear when asked about her hopes for the future. She wants her grandchildren "to study so that they can find good jobs and can get by," she added. "I don't want them to beg on the streets like many other orphans." In the absence of official statistics, non-governmental organizations have estimated there are more than 3,000 orphans in Mosul. Sana is already "very proud" of her grandchildren who are old enough to attend school, all of whom passed their end-of-year exams. Ahead of the new academic year, 12-year-old Iman was enthusiastic about returning to the classroom. "At the moment I'm at secondary school, but I want to continue my studies," she said, as her grandmother looked on. "I will go to university and become a doctor." — AFP

HIV, which are common among the Warao. Public health has been especially hard hit by Venezuela's disintegration, with hospitals lacking almost everything.

Artisanal crafts

The majority of Warao here are familiar with being on the move. They typically follow the tourist seasons, selling their artisanal wares, said anthropologist Emerson Rodrigues, who works at Pintolandia. In Brazil there are many Warao in the Amazon region cities of Manos and Belem, as well as in Roraima state. They are scattered but secure. "Here it's a safe zone where they can stay and build some kind of future," Rodrigues said. Help is given to the Warao to go out and sell their handmade goods, to find work and to organize the communal kitchen and other basics of camp life. No one knows how long they'll be there. "They aren't thinking about going back right now," Rodrigues said. "They come and work, put some money together, then go back to bring money and food, but not to go back and stay — not till there's a better outlook."

Missing the river

At the Janokoida shelter in Pacaraima, about 125 miles (200 kilometers) from Boa Vista, Warao children gather outside at dusk. Reggaeton plays on a small loudspeaker and volleyball and football games get underway as adults cook chicken and tortillas on open fires. Camp administrators at first offered the refugees prepared meals but the indigenous people prefer going out into the countryside to collect firewood and prepare their own food, said Socorro Lopes dos Santos, who has been coordinating the Janokoida shelter for six months.

Just as at Pintolandia, the common refrain at the shelter, which houses 426 people, is a longing for the distant river and opportunities to hunt and fish that are integral to the tribe's culture. "Recently, we did a group activity where we asked them to paint something. Every one of the drawings depicted water," dos Santos said. "It's a community that needs to find its way, and we are trying to help them to take new paths, whether in Brazil or returning to their country of origin," dos Santos said. Zapata thinks he may end up as far away as the Brazilian Amazon city of Manaus, several hundred miles to the south, but he still hopes to return to Venezuela one day. "God wants us to get our country back," he said. — AFP

Two dead, 255 injured in Iran earthquake

TEHRAN: A strong 6.0-magnitude earthquake struck western Iran near the border with Iraq early yesterday, killing two people and injuring more than 250, officials said. The shallow quake hit 26 kilometers southwest of the city of Javanrud in Kermanshah province, the US Geological Survey said, near the site of a powerful quake last year that killed hundreds. Kermanshah governor Houshang Bazvand told state broadcaster IRIB that two people were killed and 255 injured. The head of the emergency department at Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences, Saeb Sharidari, said the two dead were a pregnant woman and a 70-year-old man who suffered a heart attack.

State news agency IRNA quoted local officials saying that electricity had been cut to 70 villages but that it was restored to at least 50 by dawn. It added that there had been more than 65 aftershocks. Bazvand said at least 500 buildings had been destroyed and would need to be completely rebuilt. There were potential problems with drinking water due to damaged infrastructure in villages, but the local Red Crescent chief, Mohammad Reza Amirian, said it had not yet been necessary to distribute food and tents.

A crisis centre was set up, with hospitals and relief

organizations placed on alert. But the local director of crisis management, Reza Mahmoudian, told the Mehr news agency that "the situation was under control" and no request for help had been sent to neighboring provinces. There were reports that the quake was felt far across the border into Iraq. Images on social media showed people being rushed to hospitals, but suggested relatively light damage to infrastructure.

Iran sits on top of two major tectonic plates and sees frequent seismic activity. Kermanshah is still recovering from a devastating 7.3-magnitude quake that struck last November, killing 620 people in the province and another eight people in Iraq. That quake left more than 12,000 people injured and damaged some 30,000 houses, leaving huge numbers homeless at the start of the cold season in the mountainous region. Local officials said the estimated cost of reconstruction would be measured in the billions of dollars, at a time when Iran is struggling with a deepening economic downturn.

There was criticism that much of the new social housing built as part of a scheme championed by ex-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had failed to withstand the tremor. President Hassan Rouhani said those responsible would be held to account. Iran's deadliest quake in recent years was a 6.6-magnitude tremor that struck the southeast in 2003, decimating the ancient mud-brick city of Bam and killing at least 31,000 people. In 1990, a 7.4-magnitude quake in northern Iran killed 40,000 people, injured 300,000 and left half a million homeless, reducing dozens of towns and nearly 2,000 villages to rubble. — AFP

Venezuela crisis turns indigenous people into the lost tribe

CARACAS: Auxiliano Zapata may be a Warao chief but after fleeing chaotic Venezuela for neighboring Brazil his people are a lost tribe, wondering if they will ever settle in their beloved Orinoco river delta again. The Warao, who number around 20,000 and usually alternate between towns and traditional rural areas in Venezuela's northern Orinoco River region, were among the first to flee to Brazil from the economic near-collapse and political unrest under hard-leftist President Nicolas Maduro.

"There was no medicine, no food, no transport, nothing. Everything became too expensive. To get here I had to sell everything. I had a television, a cellphone, a fridge," said Zapata, 43, at the Pintolandia refugee camp in Boa Vista, the capital of Brazil's frontier state of Roraima. The tribal chief, sheltering at Pintolandia with some 600 other Waraos, came across the border five months ago with his wife and 12-year-old son.

Bit by bit the emergency sanctuary, run by the local government, NGOs and Brazil's military with help from the UN refugee agency, has taken on a more permanent look. White gravel has been spread over the ground and a volleyball court - almost always in use - set up. A new shelter capable of housing a hundred more sleeping hammocks is under construction. While he doesn't have any work yet, Zapata at least knows his family can get food, feel safe and have access to a school. Such basics have been stripped from society in Venezuela, sending growing waves of migrants and refugees into neighboring countries.

"I would return to Venezuela but I have to wait. I went back three weeks ago to see my father, who is looking after our house, and there is nothing there," Zapata said. "I won't tell you more because it makes me sad." He says he feels pain for other tribal members who have not managed to get away, especially those suffering from tuberculosis or

CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief,
management and staff convey
their deepest condolences to

**Mohammed Safir
Shaikh Ibrahim**

on the sad demise of his

Father

May Allah Almighty bestow His Mercy on him

International

Pontiff 'begs for God's forgiveness' for Catholic sexual abuse scandal

Vatican official accuses Pope of ignoring abuse claims

KNOCK: Pope Francis in Ireland yesterday "begged for God's forgiveness" for the child sexual abuse scandal rocking the church but faced accusations by a former Vatican official that he had personally ignored allegations against senior clergy. Francis is due to speak in front of some 500,000 faithful in Dublin's Phoenix Park as part of his two-day visit to the former Catholic stronghold of Ireland, as abuse victims and their supporters gathered in a "Stand for Truth" rally in the city centre to demand justice. During the address to 45,000 supporters at the rain-soaked Knock shrine in the west of the country, the pope "begged for God's forgiveness" for the "open wound" of the scandal and demanded "firm and decisive" measures to find "truth and justice".

The scandal has dogged the visit, and intensified overnight when a former Vatican envoy to the US accused Francis of personally ignoring sexual abuse claims against prominent US cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who was forced to resign last month. Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò wrote in a letter published in the National Catholic Register that he had told Francis of the allegations in 2013, but that he had responded by lifting sanctions imposed on McCarrick by predecessor Pope Benedict.

"He (Pope Francis) knew from at least June 23, 2013 that McCarrick was a serial predator," wrote Viganò, adding "he knew that he was a corrupt man, he covered for him to the bitter end." The Vatican said it had no comment to make on the claims. Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar on Saturday directly urged the pope to take action against abuses and ensure justice for victims worldwide. Francis

said inaction over "these repellent crimes has rightly given rise to outrage, and remains a source of pain and shame for the Catholic community. I myself share those sentiments".

Francis on Saturday also met eight abuse victims, including a woman assaulted by a priest when she was in hospital aged 13 and a man who was illegally adopted because his mother was unmarried. In a strongly-worded speech at the start of the pope's visit, Varadkar said the abuses in Ireland were "stains" on the Catholic Church, the state and Irish society as a whole. "There is much to be done to bring about justice and truth and healing for victims and survivors. Holy Father, I ask that you use your office and influence to ensure that this is done here in Ireland and across the world," he said.

He demanded of Francis "that from words flow actions". Paul Jude Redmond, who was illegally adopted from a Church-run "Mother and Baby Home" and met the pope on Saturday, said the pontiff appeared "genuinely shocked" by the stories of abuse. But at a news conference in Dublin on Saturday by the group Ending Clergy Abuse (ECA), victim Mark Vincent Healey said the pope's speech in Dublin was a "total missed opportunity". "We're still waiting. We're left with uncertain silence. When is he going to act? What is he going to do?"

Silent vigil

This is the first papal visit to Ireland since John Paul II spoke in front of 1.5 million people during a visit in 1979. The Church's role and standing has been badly dented by the abuse scandals and the Irish have shed traditional



DUBLIN, Leinster: Pope Francis leads the Holy Mass at Phoenix Park in Dublin yesterday, during his visit to Ireland to attend the 2018 World Meeting of Families. — AFP

Catholic mores, voting earlier this year to legalise abortion after approving same-sex marriage in 2015.

The pontiff is in Ireland to close the 2018 World Meeting of Families (WMOF) - a global Catholic gathering that addressed issues including the treatment of gay people in the Church. Street vendors in Dublin selling papal

souvenirs complained of sluggish trade, as protesters rubbed shoulders with devout Catholics in the streets of the city. In Tuam, a town in western Ireland not far from Knock, a silent vigil was planned in solidarity with victims of "mother and baby" homes-institutions accused of being punishment hostels for unwed pregnant women. — AFP



Irish leader urges pope to take action

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar on Saturday directly urged the pope to take action against abuses and ensure justice for victims worldwide. Francis

Ethiopian PM vows 'free and fair' 2020 polls

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed yesterday pledged the 2020 election would be "free and fair" and promised a democratic transition if his party loses, as he pushes forward with lightning reforms to transform the one-party nation. Abiy, who took office in April, has prioritized reconciliation between critics and the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which has held power unopposed for 27 years.

In an announcement on Saturday night, he said work had been done to make the Electoral Commission "non-partisan and credible", adding that the country could adopt an electronic voting system for the upcoming polls. In his first press conference since taking office, he ruled out postponing the polls and said the ruling party wanted to "conduct truly democratic elections".

"EPRDF's desire at this moment is to conduct a truly democratic election," he said. "If EPRDF wins a truly democratic election it can implement its agenda with full confidence, and if EPRDF loses, it will fulfil its long-held pledge to implement democratic transition." The EPRDF has held power unopposed since the elections of May 2015 when it scooped up all 547 seats in the parliament, in a ballot denounced by the opposition as a "farce". Observers say the EPRDF, which has held power since 1991, has been forced to change course due to a wave of anti-government protests by the country's two largest ethnic groups that began in late 2015, leaving hundreds dead.

A year later, with the unrest ongoing, the government of then prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn imposed a state of emergency. But he resigned in February this year, paving the way for Abiy to take over, becoming the first leader to ever come from the Oromo people, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group. Since then, Abiy has launched a series of sweeping changes which have shifted the power balance within Africa's second-most populous country. He has shaken up the security services, ended the state of emergency, freed jailed dissidents and signed a peace deal with neighboring Eritrea, ending two decades of hostilities. — AFP

Russia calls Black Sea interceptions 'dangerous'

MOSCOW: Russia accused Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) of intercepting its military aircraft over the Black Sea in a dangerous fashion designed to provoke Moscow after the RAF made two such interceptions in a single week. The accusation, leveled by Russia's embassy in London, came after the RAF intercepted a Russian maritime patrol aircraft over the Black Sea on Friday and scrambled to intercept two suspected Russian fighter aircraft on Wednesday. "... What kind of threat to Britain or even its allies does a Russian patrol aircraft hypothetically pose while conducting flights near Russia's own coastline, more than 2,000 km (1,242.74 miles) from the British Isles," the Russian embassy said in a statement released on Saturday.

"Instead of strengthening anyone's security, the British authorities are using such a military presence (in the Black Sea area) for provocative actions. Not just by making verbal statements, regrettable as they are, but also in real military terms, which is simply dangerous." The British defense and foreign ministries declined to comment yesterday. Three countries bordering the Black Sea - Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey - are NATO allies of Britain.

Britain's Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, spoke about "an ever more assertive Russia" in a speech in London in July. He said the RAF had been forced to intercept Russian military aircraft more than 80 times over the last decade. — Reuters

Sweden's far-right poised for record election score

STOCKHOLM: Barring a major upset, Sweden's far-right is on course for a record result in September 9 legislative elections, capitalizing on the mood of voters who feel they are being left behind in favour of hundreds of thousands of newly-arrived asylum seekers. With two weeks to go to the election, opinion polls suggest the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats (SD) could sweep around 20 percent of votes, making them the second- or third-biggest party.

That could give SD - an offshoot of the neo-Nazi movement but now clamoring for political legitimacy - significant influence over Swedish politics. SD has said it is willing to collaborate with either the left or right, as long as it can shape the country's immigration policy. However, it will have a hard time wielding any newfound clout.

While some parties on the right-wing have occasionally appeared tempted to court the SD for informal support to pass legislation in parliament, none of them seems ready to forge a more formal collaboration with a party still seen as pariahs by a large majority of Swedes. The far-right first entered parliament in 2010, garnering 5.7 percent of votes cast. Four years later, they more than doubled their score, taking 12.9 percent of votes and 42 of the 349 seats in the 2014 election. SD also holds one of three deputy speaker positions in parliament, a post occupied by Björn Söder, a hardliner who in June said the country's Jews were "not Swedes".

Founded in 1988 and headed since 2005 by Jimmie Akesson, SD appeals to young voters and those disillusioned by social democracy, as well as those in declining rural areas where industries, schools and maternity wards are shutting down. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven's Social Democrats are expected to remain the country's biggest party, but polls suggest they are headed for their worst election result since proportional representation was introduced in 1911. They are seen winning around 25 percent of votes, down from 31 percent four years ago.

Italy lets migrants off stranded boat as deal reached

ROME: Nearly 140 migrants who had been stranded on a boat at a port in Sicily were allowed to disembark early yesterday after Ireland and Albania agreed to take some of them in. The boat docked at Catania port on Monday but Italy had refused to let those on board disembark in the absence of any EU commitment to relocate them, prompting a new bitter row with Brussels.

But following a deal brokered by the Catholic Church late on Saturday, Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini agreed to allow them to leave the Diciotti, the Italian coastguard ship which rescued them some 10 days ago. There were initially around 180 migrants on board when it arrived at Catania, but Rome allowed 27 unaccompanied minors to disembark on Wednesday and a dozen women and men left the boat Saturday following a request from health authorities.

Albania, which is not a member of the EU, was the first to offer safe haven to 20 of the migrants. The migrants disembarked several hours after Sicilian prosecutors said they had opened an inquiry into Salvini for "illegal confinement, illegal arrest and abuse of power" over his refusal to allow the migrants to disembark, media reports said. EU migration commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos welcomed the deal, saying it was the result of "solidarity

across borders and communities". "But we cannot always wait for this type of goodwill solidarity. We need to have structural measures," he said in a statement.

A warning to Italy

The Diciotti standoff was the latest in a string of incidents involving Italy's recently-installed populist government, which has increasingly refused to take in boats carrying migrants rescued off Libya, prompting sharp divisions across the EU. On Friday, Rome threatened to pull funding for the EU unless it agreed to take in some of those on board the Diciotti. But Avramopoulos warned that Italy would end up "shooting itself in the foot" by its ongoing attacks over the bloc's policies on migrants. "I think that politicians in your country need to understand that you are not alone, that Europe is trying to help you. On the contrary, anyone who attacks the EU is shooting himself in the foot," he told Sunday's edition of La Repubblica newspaper.

Leading the charge has been Salvini, who heads the far-right League party and Luigi Di Maio, leader of the anti-establishment Five Star. "The Commission has clearly said 'no' to threats, that they are unacceptable. All governments are required to respect their obligations regarding membership in the EU," Avramopoulos said. And he stressed the need for a clear policy on how to handle any future incidents involving migrants rescued at sea. "We cannot move ahead with ad hoc solutions for each boat. The migration phenomenon is not going to stop overnight so we need to manage it together as one European family," he said.

'Once we were Eritreans'

On Saturday, Albania's Foreign Minister



SUNDSVALL, Sweden: File photo show Jimmie Akesson - leader of the Sweden Democrats, campaigns in Sundsvall, Sweden. General elections will be held in Sweden on September 9, 2018. — AFP

Social inequality

While Sweden's economic indicators all look rosy - unemployment is at its lowest level in a decade, growth is forecast at around three percent this year - income inequality is growing faster than in any other OECD country, a thorn in the side of a nation that has long prided itself on its egalitarian values. "These new social gaps have to be addressed to keep Sweden cohesive. If we do that, then there's no room for extremism," Goran Persson, who served as Social Democratic prime minister from 1996 to 2006, told AFP on Friday. The Social Democrats, which have dominated Sweden's political scene since the 1930s, are paying the price after welcoming in more than 300,000

asylum seekers since 2015 - the highest number in Europe per capita, pushing the Swedish population over the 10 million mark. At the height of the migrant wave in the autumn of 2015, the Scandinavian country was overwhelmed: migrants were crammed into overcrowded school gyms, social services were swamped, and asylum housing centers were torched by angry locals. Three years later, after the government sharply curbed its refugee policy and suspended family reunifications, the situation has calmed down considerably. The massive chaos predicted by those opposed to the initially-generous refugee policy never materialized. But Sweden now finds itself confronted with the challenge of integrating its new arrivals. — AFP



CATANIA: Migrants gather on the deck of the Italian Coast Guard vessel 'Diciotti' in the Sicilian port of Catania as they wait to disembark following a rescue operation at sea. — AFP

Ditmir Bushati sent a message to his Italian counterpart Enzo Moavero Milanesi which was published on Twitter, saying Tirana was "ready to help". "We cannot replace Europe but we are always here, on the other side of a sea where once we were the Eritreans suffering for days and nights in the middle of the sea, waiting for Europe to wake up," Bushati wrote. After the fall of communism in early 1990s, Italy accepted thousands of people who fled Albania by sea, with Tirana keen to return the favor. "Yesterday, Italy saved us, today we are ready to give a hand," the minister said.

Race to the bottom

Migration is a hot-button issue in Italy, where hundreds of thousands of people

have arrived since 2013, fleeing war, persecution and poverty in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Under EU rules people must seek asylum in their country of arrival, but Rome has recently moved to block boats from docking at its ports. Speaking on Friday, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said Europe had "a fundamental moral and legal obligation" to help those fleeing war and persecution. "The time has come to end the back-and-forth that has seen countries competing in a race to the bottom on who can take the least responsibility for people rescued at sea," he said. "It is dangerous and immoral to put the lives of refugees and asylum-seekers at risk while states engage in a political tug-of-war on long-term solutions." — AFP

International

Afghan leader rejects resignation letters from spy chief, ministers

Government faces fierce criticism over deadly insurgency

KABUL: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani yesterday rejected the resignations of the intelligence chief and the interior and defense ministers, as the government faces fierce criticism over an increasingly deadly insurgency. Ghani called on Defense Minister Tariq Shah Bahrami, Interior Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak and intelligence chief Masoom Stanekzai to continue their duties, after rejecting their resignation letters submitted Saturday and demanding they help bolster the country's defenses. "President Ghani did not approve their resignations... and gave them the necessary instructions to improve the security situation," said a palace statement.

Earlier Saturday Ghani's powerful national security adviser Mohammad Haneef Atmar had resigned, in a blow to the embattled unity government before parliamentary elections scheduled for October. The palace announced later that Atmar had been replaced by Hamdullah Mohib, who was serving as Afghanistan's ambassador to the United States.

"Accepting the resignation of a long-time friend and colleague was a difficult decision for me, but the decision had to be taken for the sake of the interest of the country," said Ghani, according to a statement.

The Ghani administration has been widely criticized for its inability to counter an energized insurgency. The Taliban have intensified assaults on police and troops across the country and the Islamic State group has targeted the capital Kabul. This month has seen an extraordinarily violent series of incidents, including an attack that saw the Taliban storm the provincial capital of Ghazni - just a two-hour drive from Kabul-despite

repeated warnings from local officials that the city was in danger.

Militants held large parts of the city for days and Afghan forces needed US air power to push them back, resulting in widespread destruction and estimates of hundreds of deaths. The resignation letters came a week after Ghani offered a conditional three-month ceasefire to the Taliban, a move welcomed by the United States and NATO after nearly 17 years of war. The Taliban have yet to officially respond to the offer. A brief ceasefire in June had sparked hopes that a path for talks with the insurgents was opening.

Islamic State leader killed

The leader of the Islamic State (IS) in Afghanistan was killed by airstrikes over the weekend along with 10 other people, government officials said Sunday following a string of deadly attacks by the extremist group. The intelligence agency said Saad Arhabi died in a joint operation with coalition forces late Saturday in the

group's eastern stronghold in Nangarhar province near the border with Pakistan. "The Emir of Daesh in Afghanistan along with 10 others was killed," said a statement by the National Directorate of Security, calling the group by an Arabic acronym. Arhabi is the fourth leader of IS's Afghan branch to be killed since the group first emerged in the country around 2014. The agency also said a large number of weapons, ammunition and explosives were destroyed by the air attacks.

Provincial governor's spokesman Attaullah Khogyani confirmed the leader's death, also citing a joint opera-

"landslide victory for Abe, as he has already obtained support from an overwhelming majority of MPs." The election is decided 50-percent by MPs and the other half by the LDP's rank-and-file members. "There is no one else qualified to lead Japan in an environment where (President Donald) Trump's US and China continue their trade battles that could hit the world economy," Masuyama said.

'Forever renounce war'

Analysts believe Abe, 63, will seize on the expected victory to resume his push to reform Japan's post-war constitution, specifically an article that forces the country to "forever renounce war" and that armed forces will "never be maintained." The article creates a headache for Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF), a well-equipped military stuck in a constitutional grey zone. With regional tensions still high, allies have urged Japan to bolster the role of the SDF but former foes in Beijing, Seoul and Pyongyang would likely react furiously. "The revision of the Constitution is a long-held policy goal" of the LDP, Abe said earlier this month. "We cannot keep just discussing (it)," he said.

Revising the Allied-imposed Constitution is a very sensitive matter in pacifist Japan and an August 5 poll in the Asahi Shimbun newspaper showed 52 percent of people were opposed to changing it, compared to 31 percent in favor. Moreover, more than two-thirds of people in an NHK poll in April said there were more pressing issues in Japan, which continues to battle deflation and problems relating to an ageing society. According to Masuyama, Abe intends "to clarify the role of the Self-Defense Forces, and nothing more," whereas defense hawk Ishiba prefers a deeper reform of Japan's military strategy. "It's unthinkable that Japan



KABUL: Smoke and dust (center) rise following an air strike from an Afghan military helicopter during ongoing clashes between Afghan security forces and militants near the Eid Gah Mosque in Kabul. — AFP

tion involving strikes. US forces in Afghanistan confirmed they had conducted a strike in the location described by Afghan officials, which "targeted a senior leader of a designated terrorist organization". IS has a relatively small but potent presence in Afghanistan, mainly in Nangarhar but more recently in the northern province of Jowzjan. Hours before the raid the group claimed a deadly suicide attack which appeared to target a sit-in protest outside an election commission office in the city of Jalalabad. Two people were killed.

The bombing followed a number of bloody attacks

claimed by IS in recent weeks, including assaults on several government installations in Kabul and a bombing at a school in a Shiite area of the capital that killed at least 37 people. The group, however, has suffered repeated setbacks in the latest fighting season amid a bloody turf war with the much larger Taliban. Estimates of their numbers in the country run as high as around 2,000. More than IS 150 fighters surrendered to Afghan forces in Jowzjan on August 1, a move which troops and the Taliban hailed as the end of the group's foothold in the north of the country.—Agencies

Japan PM seeks 'record tenure'

TOKYO: Shinzo Abe confirmed yesterday he would run in his ruling party's leadership election, putting him on track to become Japan's longest-serving premier and bolstering his dream of reforming the constitution. Abe is expected to be re-elected head of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) easily, with the vast majority of lawmakers behind him and only one challenger, former defense minister Shigeru Ishiba.

"I have decided to lead Japan as the LDP leader and the prime minister for three more years, and with this determination, I will run for the leadership election next month," Abe told reporters in a televised news conference. Winning the September 20 run-off would effectively keep the hawkish Abe in power for another three-year term at the helm of the world's third-largest economy, with no real political party opposition to speak of.

Abe pledged yesterday to focus on the demographic issues raised by Japan's rapidly ageing society as well as the "tumultuous changing international situation." His rival Ishiba has also identified demographic concerns and the regional security threat from nuclear-armed North Korea as the two biggest challenges facing Japan. In April, Abe found himself on the ropes amid twin cronism scandals that reignited the debate over whether he had sufficient backing to win a third term as LDP leader as his approval ratings dipped.

But Mikitaka Masuyama, professor of political science at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), predicted the election would be a



TARUMIZU, Japan: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe speaks to the media as he announces his candidacy for the upcoming ruling Liberal Democratic Party presidential election, during a press conference yesterday. — AFP

would take a path towards military power," said the analyst.

Abe took power in December 2012 after a landslide general election victory for the LDP, making a dramatic comeback after a bowel ailment forced him to resign the premiership in 2007 following a year in the role. Currently, the longest serving Japanese prime minister is Taro Katsura, who served as premier three times between June 1901 to February 1913. If Abe serves beyond November next year, completing more than 2,886 days as premier including his 2006-2007 term, he will be the longest serving prime minister in the country's history.—AFP

China's transport ministry censures Didi after murder

BEIJING: China's transport ministry yesterday slammed Didi Chuxing's safety lapses as the ride-hailing giant said it would suspend its Hich service after the rape and murder of a passenger, the second such killing this year. A 20-year-old female passenger was raped and killed by her driver on Friday in the eastern city of Wenzhou, barely three months after a similar incident in May. "These two vicious incidents that have violated the life and safety of passengers has exposed the gaping operational loopholes of the Didi Chuxing platform," the Ministry of Transport said in a statement. "The Ministry demands that Didi... stops making empty promises and takes concrete steps to ensuring passengers' safety."

Among a list of demands, the ministry called on the Chinese firm, which calls itself the world's leading mobile transportation platform, to improve its driver vetting and driver education process. The statement was released after a meeting yesterday between the company, the public security ministry and the transport departments of Beijing and Tianjin. Didi said earlier yesterday that it would suspend the Hich service — which links up commuters travelling in the same direction - beginning midnight on Monday.

The announcement came a day after the company admitted it bore responsibility for the crime, failing to act on a complaint about the same driver from another passenger. She claimed he drove her to an isolated area and followed her in his vehicle after she left the car. "The incident shows the many deficiencies with our customer service processes, especially the failure to act swiftly on the previous passenger's complaint and the cumbersome and rigid process of information-sharing with the police," Didi said in a statement yesterday.

It would also launch a review of the Hich service and look again at its emergency response button. The head of Didi Hich and the vice president of customer service have been removed from their positions. Wenzhou police said the driver, identified by the surname Chung, picked up the victim on Friday afternoon but she went missing soon after sending a friend a text message asking for help. This prompted a manhunt which saw the driver arrested in the early hours of Saturday, police said.

'Get out'

The killing has sparked fresh criticism of Didi - which muscled Uber out of the market following a bruising battle - as angry users voiced concern about its safety. "Since the company can't regulate itself, get out of the market," wrote one user on the Twitter-like Weibo. In a scathing commentary, the official Xinhua news agency yesterday pointed out that Didi has been slapped with over one million yuan (\$148,000) in fines over the past 10 months in Wenzhou alone. "Despite repeated punishment, there has been recalcitrant behavior and no change, a reflection of the company's indifference to safety and social responsibility," the commentary said, calling on Didi to be punished if it fails to put customer safety first.—AFP

Passengers flee as 'illegal' boat runs aground

SYDNEY: An unknown number of people were believed to be on the run in a crocodile-infested region of north-eastern Australia after a fishing boat ran aground yesterday, authorities and reports said. An illegal fishing vessel was located in the vicinity of Daintree River, a mangrove estuary in Far North Queensland state, the home affairs department said. "We can confirm that 11 people have been located. The first priority is to confirm the safety and welfare of the people on the fishing vessel," the department added in a statement.

The department did not respond to questions of whether the vessel was carrying asylum-seekers, illegal migrants or fishermen. Brisbane's Courier Mail and commercial television broadcaster Channel Seven said those found were either asylum-seekers or illegal immigrants. Channel Seven said those found were Indonesian, while The Australian newspaper said they were believed to be Vietnamese, adding that up to 40 people were believed to have been onboard the vessel. A local tourism operator said he had seen an empty boat that "looked like Chinese junk".

"Apparently, other boats were saying over the radio, it was adrift and before that people were seen leaving it and running off into the bush," David Patterson told national broadcaster ABC. "We saw this boat and didn't think a lot of it really, then after the radio chatter (we heard) it was deserted and people were seen leaving it." —AFP

Australia's new PM rewards allies, keeps rebels in his cabinet

SYDNEY: New Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison rewarded supporters and extended an olive branch to rebel right-wingers as he unveiled his "new generation" cabinet yesterday after taking power in a party-room coup. Morrison, the former treasurer (finance minister), was sworn in as prime minister Friday after winning a Liberal Party leadership challenge against incumbent moderate Malcolm Turnbull.

The challenge had been instigated by Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton, whom Morrison — also to the right of the party - defeated in a secret ballot. He sought to heal the wounds exposed by the infighting. "This new Liberal-National team is a next-generation team," Morrison told reporters in Canberra of the governing coalition between the Liberals and the rural-based Nationals party.

"What we have done today in pulling this team together is provide for stability... it does begin the process of healing," Dutton kept Home Affairs but his super-sized portfolio was split to separate immigration and national security, with migration issues to be handled by former assistant finance minister David Coleman. The environment and energy portfolio, which was held by the man who is now Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, was also broken up in an acknowledgement of the tensions the two issues caused within the party.

Environment and energy policies were key bones of contention between Turnbull and the right-wingers, who wanted him to prioritize older electricity generation sources such as coal over renewables and emissions mitigation. Wind-farm critic and Dutton supporter Angus Taylor was chosen as energy minister, tasked with the job of lowering soaring electricity prices. MP Melissa Price, who represents major mining and agriculture centers in Western Australia state, picked up the environment ministry. Marise Payne, the former defense minister, was given



CANBERRA: Australia's outgoing Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull walks back with his granddaughter after a press conference in Canberra. —AFP

the foreign affairs portfolio after incumbent Julie Bishop resigned yesterday. Bishop, a rare female voice in the Australian government, had put her hand up to be one of three candidates to replace Turnbull. But she received minimal support from colleagues, even as opinion polls pointed to her popularity among voters. Her departure has raised questions about whether she fell victim to party politics and to a perceived glass ceiling for women in Canberra. Renowned for her steely gaze dubbed the "death stare", Bishop's highlights as foreign minister include her strong condemnation of Russia's role in the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines MH17 in 2014.

Moderate Christopher Pyne was promoted to defense minister, while Dutton allies Matthias Cormann (finance), Mitch Fifield (communications) and Greg Hunt (health) remained in their cabinet roles. Former deputy PM and Nationals leader Barnaby Joyce, who was forced to quit in February and move to the backbench over his affair with his younger former media adviser, returned in a drought advisory role. But there was no room for ex-PM Tony Abbott - a vocal critic of Turnbull after Turnbull ousted him as leader in 2015. Morrison said he was open to Abbott, who had supported Dutton, being involved in government decisions in an advisory capacity.—AFP

Analysis

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Trump's social media 'censorship' claim is fake but widely believed

There is little evidence to back up Donald Trump's persistent claim that social media firms "silence" or "censor" conservatives, but the notion has nonetheless gathered widespread acceptance among his considerable following. The US president returned to the topic on Friday with a tweet saying: "Social Media Giants are silencing millions of people... People have to figure out what is real, and what is not, without censorship!"

The comments marked the second time in a week Trump has attacked tech platforms over alleged political bias. Days earlier, he tweeted that "Social Media is totally discriminating against Republican/Conservative voices. Speaking loudly and clearly for the Trump Administration, we won't let that happen." Both Twitter and Facebook deny bias in policing their platforms, and various studies suggest conservatives are thriving on social media.

Still, a Pew Research Center survey released in June found 43 percent of Americans think major technology firms support the views of liberals over conservatives, and 72 percent accepted the idea that social media platforms actively censor opposing political views. Among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents, a whopping 85 percent said they think social media sites intentionally censor political viewpoints, Pew found. The blocking of Alex Jones, who operates the conspiracy theory site Infowars, has given ammunition to those claiming motivations behind bans.

And on Friday, a US House committee announced that Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey and other tech executives will appear before a panel on September 5. Dorsey acknowledged in a recent CNN interview that the company's bias "is more left-leaning" but that this is not reflected on the platform. "The real question behind the question is, are we doing something according to political ideology or viewpoints? And we are not. Period," Dorsey said.

'Game the refs'

According to Angelo Carusone, president of the left-leaning media watchdog group Media Matters for America, conservatives are railing at social media firms "to game the refs," and put more pressure on the platforms. Carusone said this strategy worked in 2016 when Facebook "essentially fell for a fake news story" after claims of bias against conservatives and eliminated its "trending topics" section. Social media firms are to blame in part, because "in an attempt to mollify their right wing critics they have reinforced and validated the critiques even though they are baseless," he said.

Carusone said a study by his group and another by the social media monitoring firm NewsWhip found no systematic bias on tech platforms and concluded that conservatives had substantial presence on tech platforms. But the loud complaints from the president and his supporters can still influence public opinion even if the claims are untrue, notes Jeff Hemsley, a Syracuse University professor of information studies. "Conservatives have long held the view that all media is liberal, so this is an old complaint they're now applying to social media," Hemsley said.

Algorithms, legal questions

Complicating the debate is how social media feeds are organized by algorithms based on user profiles. While some users might claim bias, "the algorithms take into account your interests, your habits and those collectively can influence what you see," said Liz Woolery, a policy analyst at the Washington-based Center for Democracy and Technology. Trump's assault however raises of host of legal and political issues about the rights and obligations of social media platforms.

As private entities, they can set their own terms. If they are not public spaces they can't be accused of censorship. Conversely, the president's threats could be viewed as an infringement of the constitutional rights of the companies, legal scholars say. "Even if social media providers were biased against conservatives (and there is no evidence to support this), they would be fully permitted to do so - just like the constitution protects Fox News's or Breitbart's strong editorial biases," Eric Goldman, co-director of the High-Tech Law Institute at Santa Clara University, said in a blog post. "As a result, any action Trump might take against social media providers would be clearly and unambiguously unconstitutional."

Still, social media firms could face pressure from the unrelenting attacks by the president, said Hemsley. "I'm not sure the president has much legal recourse but I wouldn't put it past this administration to try to institute laws that give the government more control over media in general and that includes social media," said Hemsley. — AFP



How Venezuelan crisis affects South America

Venezuela has seen a mass exodus of citizens fleeing poverty, hyperinflation, failing public services and shortages of basic necessities. Here, AFP looks at how this situation came about and its impact not just on the country, but also on South America as a whole.

What is the scale of Venezuelan migration?

According to the United Nations, 1.6 million Venezuelans have been displaced in the region since 2015 as the fallout from the country's economic crisis took hold. It says 2.3 million Venezuelans are now living abroad but others put the figure much higher. The Central University of Venezuela's diaspora think-tank says 3.8 million people have left the country since socialist revolutionary Hugo Chavez came to power in 1998. Venezuelan sociologist Tomas Paez says between 10 and 12 percent of Venezuelans currently live abroad in more than 90 countries. Traditionally, the majority were in Colombia, the United States and Spain - but Peru has seen the biggest influx percentage-wise since 2015 with the numbers increasing more than 150-fold. As most are leaving on foot, it's an arduous journey in a continent that has an area of 17.8 million sq km. Many end up sleeping in makeshift camps or on the streets, living off food donations and trying to earn scraps cleaning car windows at traffic lights.

Why did this happen?

It all began when president Hugo Chavez entered office in 1999, according to Paez, but the crisis has accelerated since current President Nicolas Maduro's assumption of power in 2013. Venezuela's over-reliance on its vast oil reserves - 96 percent of its earnings come from crude - caused a problem when the price

plummeted in 2014, causing shortages of foreign capital. The government's response was to print more money, but that only pushed up inflation, ushering in four years of recession. Paez says "insecurity" and the "repudiation of the... ownership of one's own life," are the main factors driving Venezuelans to flee the country. Add to that "economic deterioration ... the terrible scarcity and value of the bolivar" and the situation has become "a humanitarian crisis," Paez argues.

How does it affect Venezuela?

Initially the country was hit by a brain drain and an exodus of capital. "At first the immigration was by people with capital and a university education," said Alfonso Iannucci, who runs a website that diffuses testimonies from the Venezuelan diaspora around the world. Tomas Perez Bravo, of the Central University of Venezuela diaspora think-tank, says now there is only one type of person leaving the country. "The poor are leaving because now everyone is poor."

He adds they are fleeing on foot "not because they're not chemists, sociologists or engineers" but because "it would take 30 years to save up for an airplane ticket". Carlos Malamud, Latin American analyst at the Elcano Royal Institute think-tank in Madrid, says the exodus is a deliberate ploy orchestrated by Maduro, who's "using migration as a political weapon against the opposition."

How does it affect the region?

Iannucci says "the avalanche of Venezuelans" has "collapsed" border towns ill-prepared for such an influx, such as Paracaima and Boa Vista in Brazil's Roraima state. Venezuelan migrants were blamed for a rise in petty crime and competition for jobs and hospi-

tal beds there, leading a band of local vigilantes to torch migrant camps and chase them back over the border. "We're close to breaking point," said Roraima state government secretary Marcelo Lopes.

But Iannucci thinks things are going to get worse: "This is just the tip of the iceberg." The impact isn't entirely negative, though, and can also be of great benefit to host countries, Perez Bravo says. "In Argentina they say that those arriving are young, entrepreneurial and well-qualified." Some 60 percent of doctors applying for jobs in Chile are Venezuelan. Peru and Ecuador both announced stricter border controls before then easing them. Ecuador is organizing a meeting of 13 Latin American countries next month while the UN is to set up a special team to ensure a coordinated regional response to the crisis.

How does it compare to other migrations?

In terms of numbers it has already surpassed the Cuban exodus following Fidel Castro's revolution that toppled the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship. Around 1.4 million Cubans fled to the US with another 300,000 heading for other parts of Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe, according to the Washington-based Migration Policy Institute think-tank. But that was over six decades, not four years.

Most Cuban migrants went to the US, but "Latin American societies aren't prepared for such wide-scale arrivals," says Malamud. The Venezuelan exodus "is a complete crisis". "Given the distances covered, this phenomenon could be compared to the refugee crisis in Syria," he said. According to the UN, 5.6 million Syrians have fled the country while another 6.6 million are internally displaced as a result of seven and a half years of brutal civil war. — AFP

McCain and Trump: No love lost

One of John McCain's final wishes, as he struggled against a devastating brain cancer, could not have been more clear: He made it known that he did not want Donald Trump to attend his funeral. The two men never pretended to like each other. It was not just their clashing personalities or vastly dissimilar backgrounds. Their differences were fundamental, their values dramatically at odds, and their disagreements public and pointed.

When Trump announced his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination in June 2015, suggesting that many Mexican immigrants were criminals and "rapists", McCain denounced him for using language that "fired up the crazies". Trump's response: McCain was a "dummy" who had barely managed to graduate from the US Naval Academy.

Never one to give in, Trump then attacked the former navy pilot over what might have seemed his least vulnerable point: The military career - including more than five years as a wounded and tortured prisoner of war in Vietnam - for which he received a slew of decorations including the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit and three Bronze Stars. Trump, who received serial deferments and did not serve in the military, said that McCain was "a war hero (only) because he was captured," adding, "I like people that weren't captured." That comment that drew widespread condemnation, including from several veterans groups.

McCain's response starkly illustrated the two men's different characters: The senator sought no apology on his own behalf but said that Trump did owe an



Putin and Trump

apology "to the families of those who have sacrificed in conflict" and of those taken prisoner while "serving their country". The rise of Trump's populist candidacy in 2016 was widely seen as a disavowal of McCain-style Republicanism and of the more establishment approach he took during his own presidential run in 2008.

Eight years later, here was a man who openly professed his love of money, who had avoided military service because of a foot problem he later said had healed itself, a man who bragged about greasing the wheels for his New York real estate empire by donating to both Democrats and Republicans, a man who, in short, unapologetically flouted the long-established traditions of American politics and the presidency. As McCain pursued his own re-election to the Senate in 2016, he broke with his party's nominee after a video aired in which Trump could be heard bragging that when he saw beautiful women he would sometimes "grab 'em by the p***y". McCain announced that he would instead vote for "some good conservative Republican who is qualified to be president."

One day in Nov 2016, not long after Trump's surprise victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton, the Arizona senator exploded when journalists in the Capitol continued to pummel him with questions about the incoming president: "Do not ask me about Donald Trump. I do not want to be rude to anyone, but I do not want to be asked about Donald Trump." It was not an easy vow to carry out, given Trump's undeniable talent for dominating political debate even while blowing up long-established norms and tenets of American domestic and foreign policy.

But what most scandalized the aging senator was the new president's persistent refusal to acknowledge and confront Russian meddling in the US political process. As time went on, McCain's resistance grew more direct and his words sharper. As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee he opened his own inquiry into Russian interference. And when he heard Trump's accommodating words toward Russian President Vladimir Putin when the two met in July in Helsinki, he could

contain himself no longer.

"Today's press conference in Helsinki was one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory," McCain said in a blistering statement. "The damage inflicted by President Trump's naivete, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate." Even as McCain's health ebbed, he missed few opportunities to lash out at the president. He was one of just three Republican senators to vote against - and thus defeat - a Trump-backed effort to repeal Barack Obama's signature healthcare law. That single vote earned lasting disdain from the president.

But McCain did not back down. In an op-ed article in the Washington Post, he called the president "impulsive" and "often poorly informed". In a prepared speech that seemed directed at the president and his aides, McCain denounced the "spurious nationalism" of people who "would rather find scapegoats than solve problems". And when an Oct 2017 interview turned to the subject of service in the Vietnam War - a profoundly marking experience in McCain's own life - he did not hold back. "One aspect of the conflict, by the way, that I will never countenance is that we drafted the lowest-income level of America, and the highest-income level found a doctor that would say that they had a bone spur," he said. "That is wrong. That is wrong."

The allusion to the medical deferment that saved a young Donald Trump from serving in that war could not have been clearer. The patent contempt the two men displayed for each other showed no sign of fading, even as McCain continued to weaken. A few weeks ago, Trump could not even bring himself to say McCain's name during a signing ceremony for a defense funding bill that fellow senators had named in the Arizona lawmaker's honor. — AFP

Business

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TEHRAN: Iran's Economy Minister Masoud Karbasian (second left), Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zangeneh (center), and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (second right), attend a parliament session in the capital Tehran yesterday before a vote by lawmakers which saw Karbasian impeached. — AFP

Iranian parliament removes finance minister

Economic situation worsening amid sharp fall in rial

TEHRAN: Iran's parliament sacked the minister of economic affairs and finance yesterday, state media said, amid a sharp fall in the rial currency and a deterioration in the economic situation.

The Iranian economy is dogged by high unemployment and the rial has lost half its value since April. The United States reimposed some sanctions in early August and a second set targeting Iran's oil industry is due to take effect in November.

The head of the elite Revolutionary Guards said Iran faced "unique" challenges and the foreign minister accused the United States of waging "psychological war" on his country. The Iranian parliament backed the removal from office of Masoud Karbasian, minister of finance and economic affairs, by 137 votes to 121 against, state media said. The sacking was the latest in a continuing shakeup of top economic personnel. In early August Iranian lawmakers voted out the minister of labor and last month

President Hassan Rouhani replaced the head of the central bank. The US sanctions, reimposed after President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of a 2015 international deal aimed at curbing Tehran's nuclear program, have exacerbated an already difficult economic situation in Iran.

"(America's) focus is on a psychological war against Iran and its business partners," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said yesterday, according to the Tasnim news agency. "From the time that Trump announced the withdrawal from the nuclear deal, America has not been able to reach its goals," Zarif added, according to the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA).



Rouhani's woes mount as sanctions bite

'Complicated situation'

Other parties to the 2015 accord - China, Russia, Germany, Britain and France - are trying to salvage the deal, which lifted some economic sanctions against Iran in return for curbs on Tehran's nuclear program.

But their companies now face the risk of US penalties if they do business with Iran. Washington also wants Tehran to end its support for militant groups in Syria and Iraq. Protests linked to the tough economic situation in Iran began last December, spreading to more than 80 cities and towns and resulting in 25 deaths. Sporadic protests, led by truck driv-

ers, farmers and merchants in Tehran's bazaar, have continued regularly since then and have occasionally resulted in violent confrontations with security forces.

The head of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards, Major General Ali Jafari said yesterday Iran was facing a "unique, complicated and sensitive" situation, with both external and internal threats to its security, Tasnim reported. The US withdrawal from the nuclear deal has undermined Rouhani, a relative pragmatist, and emboldened his hardline opponents who always opposed any compromises with Washington.

Zarif appeared to offer guarded criticism of Rouhani's opponents. "There are some in the country who, instead of laying the groundwork for using the opportunities presented by the nuclear deal, chose a political fight," Zarif said, according to ISNA. "And this political fight led to despair and disappointment." — Reuters

French growth forecast for 2019 cut to 1.7%

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron's government will tackle social spending in the next wave of its reforms, the prime minister said in an interview, even though France will face a weaker growth outlook in next year. Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said in an interview in Le Journal du Dimanche yesterday the government would press on with its reform drive in the face of record unpopularity after little more than a year in office.

Macron has so far largely turned a deaf ear to criticism of his reforms, with detractors dubbing him the president of the rich

after cuts in capital income during his first year in office which he said encouraged investment. His government has sold its pro-business reforms on promises they will boost growth and jobs, but Philippe said growth would be weaker than expected next year. Philippe told Le Journal du Dimanche that the 2019 budget would be based on a growth forecast of 1.7 percent, instead of the 1.9 percent forecast in April.

The prime minister acknowledged that that was likely to weigh on the public budget deficit, which was already under pressure due to plans to make a payroll tax credit scheme permanent. "But that does not prevent us from sticking to our commitments on reducing taxes while reining in public spending and debt," he added. The slower growth outlook raises the chances that when the government produces its 2019 budget at the end of September it may need to change its

target for a public deficit of 2.3 percent of economic output. The government has been under pressure from Brussels and the International Monetary Fund to detail plans to rein in public spending, which is among the highest in the world.

Philippe said that the government wanted to reduce spending in particular on what he described as ineffective policies like housing or subsidized jobs.

He said that housing allowances, family welfare benefits and pension payouts would increase only 0.3 percent in 2019 and 2020. That is far less than the 1.5 percent average inflation rate economists polled by Reuters expect next year and the 1.8 percent expected in 2020. Meanwhile, the government would consider reducing unemployed people's jobless benefits over time as part of a reform of unemployment insurance, Philippe said. Criticisms of Macron's aloof leadership style

and a summer scandal over his top body guard beating May Day protesters helped push his approval ratings to a record low of only 34 percent in August, according to an Ifof poll for Le Journal du Dimanche. Philippe responded to criticism saying that the government's policies were designed to reward workers and discourage unmeasured increases in welfare handouts.

Philippe said that tax on overtime pay would be axed as of September 2019 on top plans to do away with worker contributions jobless and health benefits and housing tax.

Meanwhile, he said that efforts to shrink France's vast public sector would be maintained with plans to cut 4,500 state jobs in 2019 and more than 10,000 in 2020. "This is going to be a real bloodbath for the state and the public services," far-left leader Jean-Luc Melançon told reporters, responding to Philippe's comments. — Reuters



PARIS: Prime Minister Edouard Philippe leaving his weekly meeting at the Elysée palace. — AFP

Business

Kazakhstan's port in decline bids for slice of China trade

China's trillion dollar Belt and Road initiative remains a buzz-phrase

AKTAU, Kazakhstan: With the outlines of its six idle cranes obscured by thick fog and pouring rain, Kazakhstan's Caspian seaport Aktau seems an unlikely stop on China's much-hyped new silk road.

But the sleepy port, which has been badly hit in recent years by new oil routes, is vying for a slice of the pie as competition for Chinese trade warms up on the shores of the world's largest inland sea.

China's trillion dollar Belt and Road initiative has been a buzz-phrase in Kazakhstan ever since Chinese leader Xi Jinping unveiled the overland trade and infrastructure vision during a 2013 visit to the capital Astana.

For the moment, evidence of Beijing's economic might is light on the ground at Aktau, more than 2,300 kilometers (1,400 miles) from the China-Kazakhstan border crossing that is a key entry point for goods bound for Europe overland. "This used to be an old port in poor condition with old equipment," said Oraz Koptleuov, a native of Turkmenistan who began working at the port of Aktau as a machinist in 1995.

"Now we have new technology... But there is not enough work. Let there be more work!" he told AFP of the port where 500 people are now employed, down from 700 several years ago.

During a recent visit, an AFP correspondent saw a corrugated steel container marked China Shipping being unloaded on an otherwise deserted dock. The container had carried a shipment of engine oil from Turkey to Kazakhstan via Azerbaijan's capital Baku, Koptleuov said, but would make the return journey empty.

Middle Kingdom, middle route

The experience of the Aktau port mirrors broader economic struggles in energy-rich Kazakhstan, which was badly burned by the oil price collapse in 2014 and hopes a trade and transit boom can ease an unstable

commodity dependence.

Oil once underpinned business at the port—more than 14 million tons of crude passed through annually—before a more economically efficient network of pipelines grew up, reducing the figure tenfold and triggering layoffs. But port president Abai Turikpenbayev now expects Aktau to emerge as an important overland trade node that can offer an alternative to the better-known northern route to Europe via Kazakhstan and Russia.

"The Chinese call our route the middle route," Turikpenbayev said of the route boosted by Kazakhstan's own investments in domestic road and rail infrastructure. Authorities hope these investments can kickstart stagnating regional economies.

The "middle route" includes a Caspian crossing and allows a shipment of goods from Chengdu in China to reach Istanbul via Aktau in just over 20 days by rail. This is both slower than the northern route, via which trains can reach Vienna in a fortnight, and more expensive than sea journeys that take over a month and account for over 90 percent of East-West trade.

Nevertheless, the route via Aktau offers exporters access to very different markets in Turkey, the Caucasus and Iran. It could also offer cover for businesses suffering in the Moscow-Brussels sanctions battle. Turikpenbayev said the involvement of Dubai-headquartered logistics giant DP World in port operations—"their specialists and their brand"—has been a key part of convincing investors in China the new route is viable.

Aktau port expects to process 1,500 containers from China in 2018, he says—double last year's figure but still only three percent of the port's own modest overall turnover.

Neighborhood competition

Aktau is not the only Caspian port jockeying for the China trade. Neighboring Turkmenistan's leader



AKTAU: Men work in the Kazakhstan's Caspian seaport of Aktau. — AFP

Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov unveiled a \$1.5 billion port in Turkmenbashi in May, while on the other side of the Caspian Azerbaijan has invested heavily in a new port called Alat.

Domestically, the Aktau port might also one day be overtaken by rapidly modernizing Kuryk, which lies three hours south and benefits from a slightly milder climate. Kuryk, where many former Aktau laborers now work, was presented with great fanfare to diplomats

and businessmen by Kazakhstan's 78-year-old President Nursultan Nazarbayev this month.

Adil Kaukenov, director of China Centre—a think tank based in Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty—said there may well be enough trade to go around so long as "conservative" businessmen in China buy into the less established routes. "If these routes take off the problem might be that these ports lack the capacity to meet demand," Kaukenov said. — AFP

Trade tension, strong dollar hit Latin America's growth

MEXICO CITY: Latin America's economic growth is set to come in lower than expected this year, as US protectionism and widespread wariness of emerging markets put a drag on the region, a UN panel said.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) slashed its growth forecast for the region by 0.7 point to 1.5 percent, saying the "complex global scenario" had dimmed the outlook since its last report in April. It has been a tough year for emerging markets across the board, with global trade tension taking its toll and the strong US dollar battering many currencies and bonds—notably in Argentina and Turkey, which have faced full-blown currency crises.

ECLAC cited a laundry list of problems slowing Latin America's economies:

- "trade disputes between the United States, China and other nations"
- "growing geopolitical risks"
- "a decline in capital flows toward emerging markets in the last few months and a rise in sovereign risk levels"
- "depreciations of local currencies against the dollar"
- "a global economic expansion that is tending to lose momentum"

It has been a roller-coaster ride for emerging markets in recent years, and Latin America has been whipped around as much as any region. Growth in the emerging economies helped pull the world out of recession after the 2008 financial crisis, but the lingering effects of that crisis



PACARAIMA: A woman shows new bills of the new Venezuelan currency, the Bolivar Soberano, at a barbershop in the border city of Pacaraima, Roraima State, Brazil. — AFP

have taken their toll—now exacerbated by the impact of US President Donald Trump's protectionist policies and the soaring dollar.

Latin America's economies posted solid growth of 6.2 percent in 2010, but then tipped into a two-year regional recession in 2015. The region's gross domestic product returned to growth of 1.2 percent last year. But now its tepid recovery is in jeopardy.

Trump effect

Some Latin American countries have found themselves in Trump's firing line. The most notable case is Mexico, which sends some 80 percent of its exports to the United States under the North American Free Trade Agreement. Trump has insisted on renegotiating that deal, and threatened to scrap it altogether. The US president has hit Brazil, Mexico and Argentina with steel and aluminum tariffs or

quotas, along with the European Union, Canada and other countries. The region also has suffered the indirect effects of the current global climate, one "marked by uncertainty and volatility," said ECLAC.

Uneven outlook

Ironically, Latin America's fundamentals remain relatively solid. ECLAC predicted the region-wide primary deficit would fall to 0.5 percent of GDP this year, and that average inflation would remain within the expected range at 6.5 percent to June—excluding regional basket-case Venezuela.

But the outlook is uneven across the region, said the head of the United Nations panel, Alicia Barcena, who presented the report in Mexico City. "Mexico and Central America are doing better than South America in 2018," she said. — AFP

funds embezzled from PDVSA. Krull became involved in 2016 when another member of the ring asked him to help launder the proceeds.

They used Florida real estate and "sophisticated false-investment schemes to conceal that the \$1.2 billion was in fact embezzled from PDVSA," the statement said.

He pleaded guilty in a Florida court to conspiracy to commit money laundering. He is scheduled to be sentenced October 29. Krull's co-conspirators "include former PDVSA officials, professional third-party money launderers, and members of the Venezuelan elite, sometimes known as 'boliburgueses.'"

US authorities arrested Krull in Miami last month, while Gustavo Hernandez Friero, a Colombian, was arrested in Italy and is awaiting extradition.

The Venezuelans indicted in the case are Francisco Convit, shareholder of energy company Derwick Associates; Carmelo Urdaneta, former petroleum and mining ministry legal advisor; Abraham Ortega, ex-PDVSA staffer; and Jose Vicente "Chente" Amaran, a businessman and "professional money launderer" with links to Spain and Malta.

Venezuela's economic freefall continues, with hyperinflation expected to soar to one million percent, according to the International Monetary Fund. On Tuesday, President Nicolas Maduro introduced a new currency, dropping five zeros and devaluing the "sovereign bolivars" by 96 percent. — AFP

S African farmers 'furious' over Trump land reform tweet

BELA BELA, South Africa: South African farmers have demanded Donald Trump "leave us the hell alone" after the US president criticized the country's land reform plans, accusing him of trying to deflect attention from his own scandals.

"The people were furious about Trump—and I think they still are," said Preline Swart, a 37-year-old black woman who farms grain and cattle with her husband east of Cape Town.

"He's an outsider and he knows nothing about farming," she said on the sidelines of a summit of farmers, officials and industry players in Bela Bela, 100 miles (160 kilometers) northeast of Johannesburg. Trump's Wednesday tweet, posted on the eve of the "Land Solution" gathering, touched on the overwhelmingly white ownership of farmland in South Africa—one of the most sensitive issues in the country's post-apartheid history.

"I have asked Secretary of State... (Mike) Pompeo to closely study the South Africa land and farm seizures and expropriations and the large scale killing of farmers," tweeted Trump to his 54 million followers. His tweet apparently followed a segment on conservative Fox News about Pretoria's plan to change the constitution to speed up expropriation of land without compensation to redress

racial imbalances in land ownership. "South African Government is now seizing land from white farmers," said Trump's post, which tagged the show's host, Tucker Carlson, as well as the channel.

"I think Donald Trump must really take his long hair... and leave our people the hell alone," added Swart. While many of the farmers at Thursday and Friday's land summit rejected Trump's intervention, many are unsure what the government's plan to expropriate land to fix historical injustices will mean for them.

"The deputy president assured farmers government isn't going to do anything reckless," said conference speaker Tshildizi Matshidzula, 30, a dairy farmer with 1,000 cattle on his ranch in the country's Eastern Cape province.

"(But) as a farmer, although I'm black, expropriation is a serious concern. The sooner we get formal clarity on how it will be handled, the better."

As he spoke, other black delegates congratulated Matshidzula for the speech he had just given on how to resolve land inequality. According to President Cyril Ramaphosa, who himself farms cattle on a 5,100 hectare ranch, the white community that makes up eight percent of the population "possess 72 percent of farms". — AFP

Swiss banker pleads guilty in \$1.2bn Venezuelan laundering scam

MIAMI: A former Swiss bank manager pleaded guilty in a US court on Wednesday for his role in a \$1.2 billion money laundering scheme involving Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA, the Justice Department announced.

Matthias Krull, 44, a German national and Panamanian resident, was one of a ring of conspirators and he admitted the scam began in late 2014 with "a currency exchange scheme that was designed to embezzle around \$600 million from PDVSA," the Justice Department said in a statement.

PDVSA was the crown jewel of Venezuela's imploding economy and remains virtually the only source of hard currency for the embattled government. But it also has made the company a target of theft and graft. The Justice Department said the stolen fund were "obtained through bribery and fraud."

The conspiracy in 2015 doubled to \$1.2 billion in

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British Pound	0.384067	0.397967	
Czech Korune	0.005704	0.015004	
Danish Krone	0.043288	0.048288	
Euro	0.346296	0.359998	
Georgian Lari	0.137727	0.137727	
Hungarian	0.001144	0.001334	
Norwegian Krone	0.032409	0.037609	
Romanian Leu	0.065042	0.081892	
Russian ruble	0.004550	0.004550	
Slovakia	0.009067	0.019067	
Swedish Krona	0.029305	0.034305	
Swiss Franc	0.302869	0.313869	

Australia

Australian Dollar 0.214705 0.226705

New Zealand Dollar 0.197465 0.206965

America

Canadian Dollar 0.228077 0.237077

US Dollars 0.299600 0.304900

US Dollars Mint 0.300100 0.304900

Asia

Bangladesh Taka 0.003029 0.003830

Chinese Yuan 0.043124 0.046624

Hong Kong Dollar 0.036946 0.039696

Indian Rupee	0.003862	0.004634
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002648	0.002828
Korean Won	0.000262	0.000277
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070631	0.076631
Nepalese Rupee	0.002626	0.002666
Pakistan Rupee	0.001941	0.002711
Philippine Peso	0.005693	0.005993
Singapore Dollar	0.217304	0.227304
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001561	0.002141
Taiwan 0.010421	0.010601	
Thai Baht	0.008963	0.009513

Arab

Bahraini Dinar 0.790468 0.806968

Egyptian Pound 0.014341 0.020059

Iranian Riyal 0.000084 0.000085

Iraqi Dinar 0.000200 0.000260

Jordanian Dinar 0.424048 0.433048

Kuwaiti Dinar 1.000000 1.000000

Lebanese Pound 0.000156 0.000256

Moroccan Dirhams 0.022432 0.046432

Omani Riyal 0.782513 0.788193

Qatar Riyal 0.079129 0.084069

Saudi Riyal 0.079900 0.081200

Syrian Pound 0.001287 0.001507

Tunisian Dinar 0.106397 0.114397

Turkish Lira 0.047107 0.058607

UAE Dirhams 0.081261 0.082961

Yemeni Riyal 0.000987 0.001067

Business

'No grass': Europe's livestock sector stricken by drought

Farmers send much of their herds to slaughter due to lack of feed

PARIS: "Our cows have been living off hay cut in June, there isn't any grass," says Jean-Guillaume Hannequin, a farmer in eastern France, who like his counterparts across much of northern Europe is wondering how he will feed his animals this winter.

Mediterranean countries long ago adapted their farming practices to little rain, but this year it is the north of Europe confronting a widespread drought that could see farmers having to send much of their herds to slaughter due to a lack of feed.

In Sweden, where swathes of territory were burned by wildfires this summer as the country baked under century-high temperatures, the grain harvest is expected to be down around 30 percent and it is unclear whether recent cooler temperatures will allow farmers to take in more hay.

"The feed shortage will be felt this coming winter," Harald Svensson, chief economist for the Swedish Board of Agriculture, told AFP, explaining that "most farmers have relied on their winter feed reserves during the drought this summer."

The situation is similar in Germany, where officials say one in 25 farms is at risk of going out of business. In Lower Saxony, a key region for growing fodder crops, the harvest is expected to be more than 40 percent down from normal years.

In the Netherlands, the deficit for fodder

is estimated to be 40 to 60 percent, according to the agricultural association, with the deficit for grain at 20 percent.

Price gouging

The English countryside is far from its normal undulating green this year, having not seen a drought like this in 80 years, according to the official Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB). Milk production is down sharply due to a lack of hay.

In France, "the east has been suffering since the beginning of July, and the rest of the country since August with an extended heatwave," said Patrick Benezet of the FNSEA umbrella group of French farmers' unions.

"In many places, even in the Massif Central, the 'water tower' of France, there won't be a second cutting of hay, this is really worrying," he said.

Benezit also criticized the price gouging for straw. "Farmers need to buy straw to mix with hay to feed their animals, and the traders are profiting from the situation" by asking for up to 100 euros (\$116) per tonne, he said, when straw sold for between 60 and 80 euros last year.

As prices for fodder and hay climb higher, farmers are sending animals to the slaughterhouse earlier than usual. In Britain,

the number of cattle slaughtered jumped by 18 percent in July, with dairy cows making up a large portion, according to the AHDB.

In Germany, where the government has unlocked emergency aid for farmers, there was a 10 percent increase in animals slaughtered in the first two weeks of July, according to authorities.

The Swedish government has responded by pledging 1.2 billion kronor (117 million euros, \$135 million) in aid for farmers to buy fodder and avoid sending their animals to the slaughterhouse.

French farmers are concerned due to the monopoly on slaughterhouses by the Bigard group.

"We are afraid they'll turn the drought into a bonanza by buying our animals at even lower prices when we already have difficulty surviving," said one livestock farmer who requested anonymity.

Throwing in the towel?

The situation is dire for dairy farmers, who have already been complaining that they are not being paid enough for their milk to survive. "The winter risks being catastrophic," said another French farmer. "To complement the rations of the animals we are going to have to buy grain, the price of which went up this summer, so milk will become more expensive to produce."



PARIS: This year the north of Europe is confronting a widespread drought that could see farmers having to send much of their herds to slaughter due to a lack of feed.

According to Erwin Schoepges, president of the European Milk Board which counts as members more than 100,000 small dairy farmers, "even before this drought, production costs weren't being covered."

He said farmers were producing milk at 40 to 45 cents per litre, but able to sell it for only around 30 to 33 cents a liter. With

the drought, their production costs will increase further, he said.

The European Commission has promised exceptional aid to farmers, like speeding up aid payments and allowing farmers to cut hay from fallow land. But French farmer Hannequin is not optimistic. "There are going to be a massive number of farms abandoned," he warned. — AFP

Trump hints US and Mexico on verge of trade agreement

WASHINGTON: The United States and Mexico are close to reaching a consensus over key issues stalling efforts to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, officials from both countries said Saturday.

The trilateral treaty, which includes Canada, has been a key target in the US president's aggressive trade strategy, and he has repeatedly threatened to scrap it altogether, branding it a "disaster."

But after a year of intense negotiations to salvage the 25-year-old pact, the US and Mexico now appear close to a point where Canada—which had been waiting for US-Mexican agreement on auto industry rules—can rejoin the talks.

Speaking to reporters Saturday, Mexico's incoming government's negotiator suggested the US has even eased off on demands for a contentious "sunset" clause.

"Our relationship with Mexico is getting closer by the hour," US President Donald Trump tweeted. "Some really good people within both the new and old government, and all working closely together...A big Trade Agreement with Mexico could be happening soon!" On his way into Saturday's talks in



WASHINGTON DC: In this file photo taken on August 23, 2018, Mexico's Secretary of Economy Ildefonso Guajardo speaks to reporters outside the Office of the US Trade Representative during a day of meetings on the NAFTA treaty in Washington DC. — AFP

Washington, Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo praised the US president's "optimism," but remained cautious.

"I think, depending what happens today, we could confirm it," he said. "But we are still not there, as I have said before." "Today will be an important day," he added. "Nothing is finished until everything is really finished."

Guajardo and Mexico's Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray have been shuttling back and forth to Washington for more than a month for meetings with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to try to iron out major

bilateral stumbling blocks, including rules for the auto market, before the end of August. Jesus Seade, an economic advisor to Mexico's incoming president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, has also been participating in portions of the talks.

According to him, the US's "sunset" proposal—to require that the pact be reauthorized every five years — has been "taken out," with new alternatives under discussion.

"It is no longer what the US proposed in any way, it is an approach focused on future evaluation and continuation," he said. — AFP

US pushing for quick progress on EU trade issues: Germany

BERLIN: Washington is pressing the European Union to move more quickly on trade negotiations launched after last month's meeting between US President Donald Trump and EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, two German officials said on Saturday.

Emily Haber, Germany's ambassador to the United States, told reporters that a working group formed after the Trump-Juncker meeting had convened for the first time this week, and U.S. officials were pressing "for very rapid results". She said EU officials would need a clear mandate to move beyond the current "scoping exercise" and an agreement would need to be reached well ahead of European Parliament elections in May 2019.

"The Americans are in fact pressing for very rapid results," Haber said at an event to unveil plans for more than 1,000 events in the United States next year aimed at strengthening bilateral ties. "As far as the timelines go, I would point out that we have European Parliament elections next year, and an agreement would have to be reached in a timely manner before these elections," she said.

Trump agreed during the meeting with Juncker to refrain from imposing threatened car tariffs on European firms while the two sides launched negotiations to cut tariffs on steel, aluminum and other goods.

The surprise agreement eased the threat of a transatlantic trade war, but US officials have grown frustrated about the slow pace of progress in subsequent weeks, with the first working group meeting postponed until after European holidays.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said last month he was hopeful the issue could be resolved "very quickly." A European Commission spokesman confirmed that a meeting of the EU-US working group took place this week but gave no details. — Reuters

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Business

Britons living in EU could lose access to UK bank services in no-deal Brexit

EU action needed to help minimize disruption

LONDON: Britons living in the European Union could lose access to their UK bank account services and businesses on the continent could be cut off from investment banks in London if there is a no-deal Brexit, the British government said. In a document detailing contingency planning if Britain leaves the EU in March with no transition deal, the government said unilateral action on several fronts could only minimise disruption up to a point.

While Britons will still be able to use their bank cards to withdraw money in EU countries, over a million UK citizens living abroad may not be able to use their British accounts for borrowing and deposit services, or insurance contracts such as annuities that pay pensions, the document said.

Banks offering these services may also be affected. "This could impact these firms' ability to continue to service their existing products," it added. All Britons will face higher costs to make card payments in the EU when travelling or shopping online. The EU agreed this year to cap the fees retailers pay to process debit and credit card transactions. Without a deal between London and Brussels, British customers will no longer be covered by a ban on cross-border surcharges, which prevents business from imposing excessive charges on consumers.

The government had previously said those charges cost Britons about 166 million pounds (\$212 million) in 2015. "Leaving the EU without a deal would cause major inconvenience to millions of pensioners, travellers and drivers," said Hugh Savill, director of regulation at the Association of British Insurers.

Currently banks, insurers and fund managers in Britain have unfettered access to the EU, their biggest export market, worth 26 billion pounds last year, under the bloc's

"passporting" rules. Without a deal, banks, insurers and pension providers would have to establish operations in the EU or be legally barred from serving clients or sending out payments.

Brexit minister Dominic Raab played down the threat that tens of thousands of British retirees in the EU - many of whom live on the Spanish Mediterranean coast - could lose access to their pensions.

"It's hardly in the interests of southern Spain to do harm to the UK pensioners out there," Raab told reporters. The government said it was committed to giving regulators such as the Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority a "general transitional tool" to phase in changes easing the impact if no deal is agreed.

Britain to take measures to cushion impact

However, the EU would also need to take action to avoid disruption in cross-border financial services, it said. Brussels has said it is primarily up to banks and insurers themselves to prepare for Brexit, such as by opening new hubs in the bloc.

EU action needed

The document said the EU needed to reciprocate British action to ensure continuity in cross-border insurance policies, derivatives contracts, and core market services for companies and people. Without EU action, it said, businesses across the bloc could no longer use investment banks in Britain.

Brussels, for example, would need to give investors in the EU permission to continue using a share trading platform or clearing house in London, where most euro-denominated derivatives are currently cleared. The finance ministry and the Bank of England will give details next month on how customers in Britain can continue using a settlement house in the EU, a critical step whereby cash is



BRUSSELS: In this file photo, Britain's Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union Dominic Raab and European Union's chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier brief the media after a meeting at the EU Commission headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. — Reuters

exchanged for legal ownership of a stock or bond.

Fund managers in the City of London operate many funds listed in the likes of Luxembourg and Dublin, and the plans said Britain was ready to agree cooperation arrangements with the EU as soon as possible to ensure

this could continue. "The stark fact is that there can be no continuity without EU reciprocity. Mutual interest may point to some deal, but the EU holds all the cards," said Simon Morris, a financial services lawyer at law firm CMS. — Reuters

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, the second largest in terms of assets, announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

- Raed Habbib Mohammad Al-Saffar
- Wali Abdulwahab Dolati Ghabdhan
- Ali Hussain Abbas Al-Saffar
- AmAr Abdulqader Baqer Alawadhi
- Ayten Shareef Allabban

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

Al-Tijari announces winner of Al-Najma new prize program

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced the winner of the weekly draw as follows :-

Weekly draw prize KD 5,000- Ibtesam A A Bebbhani

The draw was conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Ms. Latifa Al-Jeean.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000 and monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the grand prize (the biggest prize in the world) of KD 1,500,000 for which the draw will be held in January 2019. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

Now CBK existing customers can open Al-Najma Account through Al-Tijari Online and enter all draws without visiting the Bank's branch. However, CBK non-customers can submit an account opening application via the Bank's website where the Bank's Sales Unit will call them to arrange a visit to the customers to complete the account opening formalities.

Alibaba's revenue jumps but investments to prolong margin squeeze

BEIJING: Alibaba Group Holding Ltd., China's biggest e-commerce firm, warned investments in its delivery business would keep pressuring profits even as it reported its strongest-ever quarterly revenue growth, largely in line with estimates. US-listed shares of Asia's most valuable public company rose early but then erased gains to end the day down 3 percent. While Alibaba makes money from its core businesses, including online marketplaces Tmall and Taobao and payment platform Alipay, it also has far flung investments in sports content, microchips and facial recognition technology.

"As Alibaba continues to invest in New Retail initiatives, the consolidation of lower margin businesses such as Cainiao, Ele.me, and Lazada is shifting the long term margin profile of the core business," Baird analyst Colin Sebastian said in a note.

"We expect management's ongoing focus on New Retail market share will continue to be a profitability headwind for the foreseeable future," said Sebastian, cutting his price target on the stock by \$5 to \$215. In April-June, Alibaba's gross margin was 11 percent versus 29.2 percent a year earlier, the lowest since the company's 2014 stock exchange listing.

WALL STREET WEEK AHEAD

US stock fund investors show no fear of King Dollar

NEW YORK: US fund investors are in no rush to shore up defenses against the strong dollar. The greenback's 6 percent leap over the past six months has flummoxed markets from Turkey to Argentina, whose governments have to repay debt in dollars. The stronger currency, which makes US exports more expensive to foreign buyers, has also frustrated President Donald Trump, who is trying to reduce US trade deficits.

Yet among the least popular exchange-traded funds (ETFs) this year are "currency hedged" funds, which invest in stocks abroad but strip out the effect of a foreign currency's performance using derivatives. That makes the funds more resilient in a "King Dollar" world, when the greenback is dominant, which hurts US investors converting foreign stock gains back into dollars.

Some investors are betting that the dollar's run has gone too far given the risk of seismic US congressional elections in November or the potential for the US Federal Reserve to slow down the pace of interest rate hikes.

"We're not really hedged right now even though the consensus is for a strong dollar," said Komson Silapachai, vice president of research and portfolio strategy at Sage Advisory Services Ltd. "We think there's a bigger chance that the market is underpricing the chance

for a weaker dollar." US-based currency-hedged funds have logged \$10.2 billion in withdrawals this year, while their unhedged counterparts have attracted \$30.7 billion, according to FactSet Research Systems Inc. Hedged funds took in \$51.9 billion in 2014 and 2015 as the dollar leapt by more than a fifth, FactSet data shows. Currency-hedged ETFs nearly tripled in number from 20 to 58 from 2014 to 2016 in the United States. The figure has not grown since 2017.

In the more than eight months of the year-so-far, the dollar has depreciated about 2 percent against the yen but gained more than 3 percent against both the euro and a basket of top trading partners' currencies.

The euro's decline helped the WisdomTree Europe Hedged Equity Fund, up 5.2 percent this year, significantly outperform the nearly flat 0.4 percent return of the unhedged Vanguard FTSE Europe ETF, according to Thomson Reuters' Lipper research unit. Nonetheless, the hedged WisdomTree Europe fund hemorrhaged \$2.2 billion because of withdrawals this year, far higher than the \$755 million investors pulled from the unhedged Vanguard Group Inc product, Lipper said.

Fast-trading investors are playing a risky game. Morningstar Inc analyst Daniel Sotiroff studied the performance of the currency-hedged funds from 2010 to 2018 and found investors typically underperformed the market by attempting to time the currency market.

Still, the dollar tends to falter later in the year, especially ahead of US midterm elections, Silapachai said. The November elections could hand control of the US Senate or House of Representatives to Democrats, who are currently in the minority, opinion polls show. — Reuters



Profit margins at Alibaba are typically well above 20 percent. On Thursday, the company said it had formed a holding company for its food delivery platform Ele.me and food and lifestyle services firm Koubei, for which it had received over \$3 billion in new investment commitments, including from SoftBank Group Corp and Alibaba itself.

Quarterly net profit at Alibaba, led by China's second-richest man Jack Ma, plunged 41 percent, hurt by a one-time charge for stock-based compensation paid to employees to account for a jump in valuation of its affiliate Ant Financial. Without the charge, Alibaba said its net

income would have risen by 33 percent from the year-ago period. Excluding one-off items, the company earned 8.04 yuan per share, or \$1.22 per share, missing the average estimate of 8.15 yuan per share.

Ant Financial, China's largest financial technology company, is controlled by Ma and has a profit sharing agreement with Alibaba. It announced a \$14 billion fundraising in June, which valued it at around \$150 billion. Ant Financial, which is expanding rapidly into foreign markets, is locked in a costly battle for market share at home with WeChat Pay, owned by Alibaba's arch rival Tencent Holdings Ltd. — Reuters

No-deal Brexit will bring tangle of red tape, Britain warns companies

LONDON: Britain told companies trading with the European Union they would face a tangle of red tape, possible border delays and more costly credit card payments if the government fails to negotiate an exit deal before Britain leaves the bloc.

Brexit minister Dominic Raab said he remained confident the two sides would reach a deal, but set out in a series of 25 notes what could change without one.

With little more than seven months to go until it leaves the EU on March 29, Britain has yet to reach an agreement with the bloc on the terms of its departure. Prime Minister Theresa May's plan for a "business-friendly" deal has failed to impress negotiators in Brussels and has been heavily criticised at home.

"We have a duty, as a responsible government, to plan for every eventuality," Raab said. "To do this, we need to have a sensible, responsible and realistic conversation about what a no deal situation really means in practice." After more than 40 years in the EU, Britain is having to set out its plans for every aspect of life. Around 80 technical notices are expected over the coming weeks, with the first 25 covering everything from the movement of organs, blood and sperm to nuclear regulation and organic food.

The guidelines make it clear that companies trading with Europe would face new customs and excise rules and require paperwork covering customs and safety declarations. If Britain left without a deal "the free circulation of goods between the

UK and EU would cease," the guidance said. Chris Goodfellow, who runs logistics group Lockerfreight, said his clients were asking if they needed more staff to handle customs. "My head is spinning and my clients are panicking," he told Reuters. "My phone has not stopped."

"The companies that only deal with Europe don't realize how much more work is involved." Supporters of Brexit say there may be some short-term pain for the British economy but it will prosper in the long-term when cut free from the EU's rules and regulations. A European Commission spokesman said it was clear that the withdrawal of the UK was going to lead to disruption "with a deal or without a deal. And that's why everybody, in particular economic operators, needs to be prepared." The government asked drugmakers to stockpile medicines for six weeks above normal operations - a target the industry said would be challenging - and called for medicines with short shelf-lives to be flown in to the country.

The drugs sector is one of the most vulnerable because of uncertainty as to how medicines oversight will function. It welcomed plans to recognise EU tested and licensed products, but said the EU needed to show similar flexibility, echoing warnings from other industry bodies that government contingency plans could be blunted unless the EU cooperates.

Industry also welcomed the fact that import Value Added Tax on goods would not have to be paid upfront under a new "postponed accounting" rule, but UK recipients of expensive parcels from EU businesses will have to pay tax in line with current rules for non-EU countries. On financial services the government said Britons will have to pay more to make card payments in the EU and businesses on the continent could be cut off from investment banks in London if there is a no-deal Brexit. More than a million Britons living abroad may not be able to access their UK bank services to receive pensions and salaries, the document said. — Reuters

Technology

Delayed wages and lower profits: Chinese gaming companies fret

Chinese gaming industry expected to rake in \$37.9bn this year

BEIJING/SHANGHAI: As a publisher of family-friendly games like "Gardenscapes" and "Toy Blast", iDreamSky Technology never expected to get caught up in a tangle with Chinese regulators.

But the Shenzhen-based gaming company is enduring an unprecedented wait for over a dozen of its games to be approved for release in China, a situation it fears could impact profits this year.

iDreamSky is one of many Chinese gaming firms fretting over the implications of a regulatory hold-up that began in March and prompted Tencent, China's largest social media and gaming company, to warn of slower revenue growth.

The reason for the approval slowdown appears to be the result of a bureaucratic reshuffle this year as China tightened its grip on content for entertainment ranging from video games to television reality shows. Those changes have bogged down the approval process as the purview of each regulatory office is refined, industry insiders say. While analysts expect Tencent to bounce back thanks to its many business streams, they say many smaller companies that rely on a few game releases a year are at risk.

"It's hurt us a lot," said one iDreamSky employee, referring to the approval situation. "This will have an impact on our business in the second half of this year and next year." The employee spoke on condition of anonymity, citing market sensitivities.

iDreamSky, which is planning to list on the Hong Kong stock exchange, said in May it expected to launch 13 licensed and self-developed games in 2018 and 2019, in gen-

res ranging from sports to puzzles.

The company was previously listed on the United States' Nasdaq board and is backed by Tencent, which is its second-largest shareholder with a 20.65 percent stake. iDreamSky did not respond to requests for comment.

Rich pickings

China overtook the United States as the largest single gaming market by revenue in 2016, and is expected to rake in \$37.9 billion this year, up 17 percent from last year, according to the research firm Newzoo.



Regulatory approval freeze hits

The Chinese gaming industry comprises over 200 companies, 188 of which are publicly listed and earn 90 percent of total revenue, Newzoo said. These companies are subject to complicated game approval procedures in China, with executives saying that it can take six months or more for a game to be approved for sale.

Games have to be approved by the government watchdogs for media publication, cyberspace and intellectual property, as well as the ministries for culture and information

technology, who scrutinise things like content and copyrights. Additional approvals are required for imported games.

"You need licenses for everything in China," said David Hanson, co-chief executive of the gaming distribution platform Ultra. "But in the West it's instant - you work in a basement and then release your game."

Long queues

Tencent last week said a government restructuring had caused a temporary suspension of approvals that would have allowed it to monetize its most popular game. The Chinese government in March split the industry's main regulator into two units, while transferring some power to the Communist Party propaganda department, in a step aimed at strengthening its grip over content and ideology. Government data shows that the reorganization coincided with a halt in approvals.

China gave the green light to 1,982 domestic and foreign online games between January and March this year before suddenly stopping approvals, according to government data. In 2017, it approved a total of 9,651 domestic and foreign online games. China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism did not respond to requests for comment. A founder of a gaming studio in the northern province of Hebei, who would only agree to use his surname, Cang, said he been forced to delay salary payments and use his own money to keep his business going.

"The approval freeze hits small game companies like mine the hardest, it makes it hard for us to go on," said Cang, whose



FUYANG, China: People playing online games at an Internet cafe in Fuyang, Anhui province, China. — Reuters

company has seven employees. "My goal for this year is not to go bankrupt."

Fuchun Technology Co Ltd, which makes mobile, console and online games, said in July that it would likely report a fall in profit of up to 75 percent for the first half as it was unable to release new games as scheduled.

No zombies

Some reprieve has been given in the form of a "green channel" which allows new games to obtain one-month temporary licenses for new games, but only ten have so far been granted this, industry executives said. The government is still assessing games despite the halt in approvals, said a censor at a publishing house in the eastern

city of Hangzhou who examines games before they go to the central regulator for further checks. He said that there had been a tightening this year on what types of content were acceptable.

Content seen as being at odds with China's "socialist core values" is being scrubbed, while games that are too violent and gory - for example those involving zombies - are being rejected, said the censor, who only gave his surname as Zhang.

For now, companies can only keep applying for approvals and hope things change, said the iDreamSky employee. "We're still filling out all the applications," she said. "Maybe things will get back to business by October or end of the year. We all hope so." — Reuters

Drones offer high-tech help to Japan's ageing farmers

TOME, Japan: The next generation farmhand in Japan's ageing rural heartland may be a drone. For several months, developers and farmers in northeast Japan have been testing a new drone that can hover above paddy fields and perform backbreaking tasks in a fraction of the time it takes for elderly farmers. "This is unprecedented high technology," said Isamu Sakakibara, a 69-year-old rice farmer in the Tome area, a region that has supplied rice to Tokyo since the 17th century.

Developers of the new agricultural drone say it offers high-tech relief for rural communities facing a shortage of labor as young people leave for the cities.

"As we face a shortage of next-generation farmers, it's our mission to come up with new ideas to raise productivity and farmers' income through the introduction of cutting-edge technologies such as drones," said Sakakibara, who is also the head of JA Miyagi Tome, the local agricultural cooperative.

The drone can apply pesticides and fertilizer to a rice field in about 15 minutes - a job that takes more than an hour by hand and requires farmers to lug around heavy tanks.



TOKYO: Developers of the new agricultural drone say it offers high-tech relief for rural communities facing a shortage of labor as young people leave for the cities.

The Nile-T18 was developed by drone start-up Nileworks Inc and recently tested in collaboration with JA Miyagi Tome and trading house Sumitomo Corp.

Their aim is to ease the physical burden and improve productivity in rural areas battling decades of falling birth rates and migration to urban areas. In Tome, farmers are an average 67-68 years old and they may only have another 4-5 years of farming left, Sakakibara said.

"It's a matter of whether the body breaks down first, or the tractor," he added.

Compared to larger radio-controlled mini-helicopters that cost around 15 million yen (\$135,758) with spray equipment, the drone is smaller and cheaper, with a pricetag of about 4 million yen. Nileworks is negotiating with authorities to allow operators to fly its drone without a license. It can be controlled with an iPad and runs on mapping software that is simple to operate. — Reuters

Data dump: China sees surge in personal info up for sale

SHANGHAI: When William Zhang's car insurance was about to expire in March, he didn't need to look far for renewal options. In the two months before the policy was up Zhang received calls almost daily from insurers trying to sell him a new one. Since his initial policy was from Ping An Insurance Group, it was natural the company had been in touch.

"What confuses me is how other insurance companies knew about it," said Zhang, a 26-year-old government employee from Shandong. Three other car owners told Reuters that they had experienced the same problem. Personal data has become widely available in China and can be scooped up for pennies by insurance companies, banks, loan sharks, and scammers alike, according to sellers and financiers interviewed by Reuters.

In May, China introduced its most comprehensive data protection laws to date, tightening restrictions on the sharing of private data held by financial institutions and other firms.

"Personal information leaks are risky," said Susan Ning, a partner at the law firm King & Wood Mallesons in Beijing. "Such information can facilitate other crimes," she added.

Data trade

Insurers often buy numbers from shadowy



People have their picture taken by the China International Big Data Industry Expo logo in Guiyang, Guizhou province. — Reuters

online data sellers, who themselves have acquired the information illegally, according to people in the industry.

Some companies illegally buy information from the department of motor vehicles, car licensing authorities, car sellers, or from police stations, said Michelle Hu, a partner at Boston Consulting Group who has been a consultant on insurance deals.

By entering keywords like "personal data" or "cellphone data", in Chinese, Reuters found more than 30 groups created for the purpose of selling and buying personal information on

Tencent's instant messaging service QQ and Baidu Inc's forum site Tieba.

Baidu declined to comment. In a statement emailed to Reuters, Tencent said it was "committed to the protection of user privacy and maintaining data security".

Information sellers post ads in the online groups and negotiate with buyers through private messages on QQ or WeChat. Five sellers offered to sell Reuters lists from financial institutions of "people who need loans", "people who need insurance", and "Shanghainese men aged between 30 to 50". — Reuters

Tech giants aim to coordinate fight on misinformation

WASHINGTON: Major technology firms including Facebook, Google and Twitter were set to meet Friday as part of an effort to coordinate the battle against misinformation campaigns by foreign agents, a media report said.

The report by BuzzFeed based on a leaked email said the companies were set to meet at Twitter's headquarters in San Francisco. Microsoft, Snapchat and other tech firms were expected to participate in the gathering called by Facebook cybersecurity head Nathaniel Gleicher.

"As I've mentioned to several of you over the last few weeks, we have been looking to schedule a follow-on discussion to our industry conversation about information operations, election protection, and the work we are all doing to tackle these challenges," Gleicher wrote, according to BuzzFeed.

Twitter declined to comment on the report. Facebook and Google did not immediately respond to an AFP query. The news follows actions by

Facebook, Twitter, Google and Microsoft blocking accounts from Russian and Iranian entities which the companies said were propagating misinformation aimed at disrupting the November US elections.

On Thursday, Google said that working with the cybersecurity firm FireEye, it linked the accounts to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting as part of an effort dating to at least January 2017.

Earlier this week, Facebook announced it removed more than 650 pages, groups and accounts identified as "networks of accounts misleading people about what they were doing."

Separately, Twitter said it suspended 284 accounts "for engaging in coordinated manipulation," adding that "it appears many of these accounts originated from Iran."

Former Facebook security chief Alex Stamos said in a blog post Wednesday that gaping holes remain in online platforms and that not enough is being done to counter foreign interference ahead of the elections. "The revelations are evidence that Russia has not been deterred and that Iran is following in its footsteps," Stamos wrote on the Lawfare blog.

"If the United States continues down this path, it risks allowing its elections to become the World Cup of information warfare, in which US adversaries and allies battle to impose their various interests on the American electorate." — AFP

'Fortnite' fever may be cooling: Market tracker

SAN FRANCISCO: The frenzy over the phenomenally popular video game "Fortnite" may be easing, according to revenue estimates released Thursday by market tracker SuperData.

The free online game's revenue grew just 2 percent in July from the previous month-despite creator Epic Games releasing a new season of its "battle pass" offering digital perks and added challenges. "Fortnite's peak may be behind us," SuperData said.

However, some game industry insiders contend that the game's typically school-age fans may just be on summer vacations-and could come back in force once lessons get back underway.

"Fortnite" became an eSports phenomena after last year's release of a free "Battle Royale" mode that lets up to 100 players vie to be the last character

standing on ever-shrinking terrain.

The game passed a billion dollars in revenue last month, after earnings from sales of digital items such as dance moves or avatar outfits climbed 7 percent from April to May.

Reasons for its popularity include that it can be played for free on a range of devices including smartphones, personal computers and consoles.

"Fortnite"-the star of Los Angeles' Electronic Entertainment Expo video game extravaganza in Los Angeles in June-still remained the top money maker on consoles in July, according to SuperData.

However, the game faces increasing competition as game makers add battle royale modes to popular titles and promote eSports leagues to win over players. Metrics from Amazon-owned game play streaming service Twitch on Thursday showed that "Dota 2" was the most popular title with viewers so far in August, relegating "Fortnite" to second place.

Players worldwide spent \$8.2 billion on digital games in July, in a 3 percent increase from the same month late year, SuperData said. — AFP

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Health & Science

French farmers furious as wild boars run amok

Boars ravage land, crops as their population soars

SAINT-MALO, France: With a gaping hole in the ground and tangled corn stalks strewn across Yves Rolland's field, it looks as if it has been hit by a tornado. He already knows who the culprits are. "Every year it gets worse. They destroy everything," the French farmer fumes, striding through what's left of the crop. "The boars come every night, in a pack. They nibble a little bit over here, a little bit over there, trampling on everything."

Like farmers across Europe, Rolland is suffering the consequences of an explosion in the wild boar population over the past three decades, venturing off woodland in search of food. They have already ravaged eight hectares of his land this year — 10 percent of his farm on the edge of the Paimpont forest in the northern French region of Brittany. As well as the valuable crops lost, the large bristly pigs have munched through feed he was growing for his livestock, which he will now have to buy. "My father never saw boars when he was a farmer. Now we've been invaded," he says.

The number of boars shot by French hunters gives an idea of how their numbers have soared. Some 150,000 were killed in 1990-91, according to hunting authority ONCFS, but by 2016-17, the figure had swelled to 700,000. "The animals are very

fertile, reproducing quickly and adapting to pressure from hunting," says ONCFS researcher Christine Saint-Andrieux. Various factors have encouraged the pigs to multiply and to leave the woods, she says, notably urbanization and climate change which is altering their traditional habitats.

Ageing hunters

In the Ille-et-Vilaine area of Brittany where Rolland lives, 3,000 boars have been killed this year, but farmers say recreational

create business and don't maintain their fences." The Regional Hunters' Federation offers compensation to farmers whose land is wrecked by boars, but Jean-Baptiste Mainsard, a member of France's Chamber of Agriculture, says it is not enough. "When they send an expert who decides that the damage comes to less than 200 euros or three percent of the land, the farmer gets nothing and has to pay for sending them out," Mainsard says. Among possible solutions, he adds, "We have to make hunting easier." Regional measures such as a 50 euro fee for each boar shot discourage hunting, he complains.

Anger in the countryside

The farmers meeting near Saint-Malo have created a petition urging the state to act, including by setting up a volunteer hunting force that could spring into action when needed. Regional hunting chief Andre Douard says he is already doing "everything possible to encourage" people to take aim at the pigs. "Hunting is a hobby, it's voluntary. We don't have the power to force anyone," he says. The 50 euro fee per boar goes to the compensation fund for farmers whose land gets trampled, he adds, so scrapping it would not help.

A large part of the problem, according to Douard, is that hunters are "getting older and rarer" as rural France empties out towards the cities. One farmer warned that the boars could be "the straw that breaks the camel's back" for French farming, an

“
The boars come every night
”

hunting is failing to keep their numbers in check. Under the driving rain in a field near the Breton port city of Saint-Malo, a dozen farmers meet to brainstorm solutions. "Some hunters are doing their bit but others prefer to hunt just on the weekends during the hunting season. They're not putting in the work," one farmer grumbles.

Another charges that private companies that rent hunting land "feed the boars to



RHODES, France: This file photo shows a wild boar at the Animal Park of Sainte-Croix in Rhodes, eastern France. —AFP

industry already in crisis because of rising costs and falling prices. Douard says that centrist President Emmanuel Macron is already aware of the problem.

Yet the boars add to a litany of issues causing anger in the countryside, where critics say their struggles are low down the list of priorities for the former investment

banker. Any government moves to encourage hunting will meet with stiff opposition from the animal rights lobby, however. Actress and vocal animal rights activist Brigitte Bardot has already called on environment minister Nicolas Hulot to resign, saying he is not cracking down on hunting enough. —AFP

Birds that blush: Scientists document an animal mystery

WASHINGTON: Have you ever heard of macaws that blush, much like humans do at an emotional moment? Researchers still don't quite understand how it works, but a French team says they have observed the phenomenon multiple times in a group of five captive blue-and-yellow macaws (*Ara ararauna*) macaws. They published their findings Wednesday in the journal PLOS One.

Blue-and-yellow macaws have a part of their cheeks that is naked, uncovered by feathers, and researchers noticed that this fair skin would redden during interactions with their handlers. "Birds don't have muscles in their faces," explained lead researcher Aline Bertin of INRA, a French public research institute dedicated to agricultural science. "Their facial expressions have never been studied," she told AFP.

Anecdotally, people who took care of macaws noticed them blushing, their cheeks reddening with increased blood flow, much like in humans. But they still needed to document the phenomenon. So they set up an



WASHINGTON: This undated handout photo shows a 'blushing' Macaw, left, compared to a 'non-blushing' Macaw, right. —AFP

experiment to film and photograph the birds on perches during organized interactions with their habitual human handlers, such as talking and looking at them. Sure enough, they saw the birds' skin redden around the eyes during these encounters.

The experiment was limited by its small size-only five birds were studied. So scientists cannot say for certain why the birds appeared to blush. "We don't know if these birds can feel positive emotions," said Bertin. But the research could pave the way for more experiments on aimed at "better understanding the sensibilities of birds." If the emotional lives of

birds remain a mystery, plenty is known, however, about their intelligence, which can be high and comparable to that of some mammals.

Many birds are known to be able to use tools in order solve problems, for example. When it comes to emotions and stress, scientists have described birds ruffling their feathers during mating rituals, or conflict situations. "People don't usually think of birds as having an emotional life that is as complex as an ape, a dog, or a cat," said Bertin. "It doesn't shock anyone to see a parrot in a pet store cage. We don't really see this with primates. There's a disconnect there." —AFP

Rain brings relief to drought-stricken Australia farmers

SYDNEY: Widespread rain fell across drought-affected parts of eastern Australia over the weekend, bringing relief to farmers struggling to cope with the driest conditions in more than half a century. Grazers have had to hand-feed sheep and cattle, sell down stock—and in some cases even shoot them to end their suffering—as they run out of hay and grain in the severe conditions affecting Queensland and New South Wales states.

The wet weather was the first farmers in some areas had seen for more than a year, and even included hail. But locals cautioned the ground had become so dry in recent months that more downpours over the next few weeks and months would be needed to make a difference. "Those rains will be far from drought breaking," National Farmers' Federation president Fiona Simson told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on Sunday.

"What we need is 20 next week on 20 the next week, 20 the next week, and... (in the) next few months... to aptly build up those depleted soil and moisture reserves in the soil." The respite came as new Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he would make addressing the drought the top priority of his government. "It was pleasing to see the report on the rain yesterday in the last 24 hours," Morrison, who will visit stricken areas with the deputy PM this week, told ABC radio early Sunday. "That is encouraging, but we know that is nowhere near what is obviously needed."

The government under previous PM Malcolm Turnbull, who was ousted in a party coup Friday, had pledged Aus\$1.8 billion in financial aid for grazers and local communities. The Labor opposition called on



TAMWORTH: Sheep eat grain on a drought-affected paddock on a property on the outskirts of Tamworth, New South Wales in Australia. — Reuters

Morrison to factor the battle against climate change into his drought policies, amid a push by the right wing of his Liberal Party to ditch an emissions mitigation policy which contributed to Turnbull's ousting.

"If he is not prepared to stand up and say 'this is a consequence of climate change and I am going to commit to both mitigation and adaptation', then he will fail farmers," shadow agriculture minister Joel Fitzgibbon told Fairfax Media. While droughts are not uncommon in Australia, the length and severity of the dry conditions have strained farmers' efforts to stay afloat. —AFP

'Snake alert' issued in India's flood-hit Kerala

NEW DELHI: Hospitals are readying anti-venom and flood victims returning home in the Indian state of Kerala have been told to stay alert as receding waters leave behind a glut of snakes. Local media reports warned that snakes may be "hiding in cupboards" or under carpets, among clothes or inside washing machines in homes previously submerged by floods that have devastated parts of the southern state.

"Snakes are spotted at many flood-hit homes and alerts have been issued to exercise caution when returning home," Kerala government spokesman Subhash T.V said on Friday. "Hospitals too have been equipped to face the situation. Instructions have been given to arrange facilities to treat snakebite victims. "Anti-venom and other necessary medicines are stored at all hospitals, especially those in flood-hit areas," he added.

Local media said several hospitals

in the worst-hit areas of northern and central Kerala had reported an increase in the number of patients seeking treatment for snake bites. Vava Suresh, a local snake handler, told the Hindustan Times newspaper he had received some 22 calls from worried residents and caught 5 cobras in Ernakulam district. "One was found inside the wardrobe on the second floor of a house... while another one was inside a shelf in a house," he said.

State authorities and wildlife experts have formed teams to come to the aid of those who have found snakes in their home, according to local media. The PTI news agency said the government had roped in a local snake expert, who advised returning residents to use a stick to sift through their belongings and not to touch household appliances with bare hands.

Around a million people are still packed into temporary camps even though the floods, which have left at least 420 dead and missing, are fast subsiding. The government says that more than 10,000 kilometers of roads have been destroyed or damaged while a legislator said 50,000 houses had been wiped out. —AFP

Saga of early humans etched in DNA of mixed-species child

PARIS: Denny was an inter-species love child. Her mother was a Neanderthal, but her father was Denisovan, a distinct species of primitive human that also roamed the Eurasian continent 50,000 years ago, scientists reported Wednesday in the journal Nature. Nicknamed by Oxford University scientists, Denisova 11 — her official name—was at least 13 when she died, for reasons unknown.

"There was earlier evidence of interbreeding between different hominin, or early human, groups," said lead author Vivian Slon, a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. "But this is the first time that we have found a direct, first-generation offspring," she told AFP. Denny's surprising pedigree was unlocked from a bone fragment unearthed in 2012 by Russian archeologists at the Denisova Cave in the Altai Mountains of Siberia. Analysis of the bone's DNA left no doubt: the chromosomes were a 50-50 mix of Neanderthal and Denisovan, two distinct species of early humans that split apart between 400,000 to 500,000 years ago. "I initially thought that they must have screwed up in the lab," said senior author and Max Planck Institute professor Svante Paabo, who identified the first Denisovan a decade ago at the same site.

Worldwide, fewer than two dozen early human genomes from before 40,000 years ago—Neanderthal, Denisovan, Homo sapiens—have been sequenced, and the chances of stumbling on a half-and-half hybrid seemed vanishingly small. Or not. "The very fact that we found this individual of mixed Neanderthal and Denisovan origins suggests that they interbred much more often than we thought," said Slon. Paabo agreed: "They must have quite commonly had kids together, otherwise we wouldn't have been this lucky." —AFP

DR Congo rolls out prototype Ebola drugs

BENI, DR Congo: An outbreak of Ebola in eastern DR Congo has killed 67 people this month, authorities said yesterday, as they roll out a battery of new drugs to tackle the virus amid concerns it has spread to a rebel-encircled area. A total of 105 cases have been reported since the flare-up of Ebola began on August 1 in Mangina in North Kivu province, according to the health ministry, out of which 77 have been confirmed by laboratory tests.

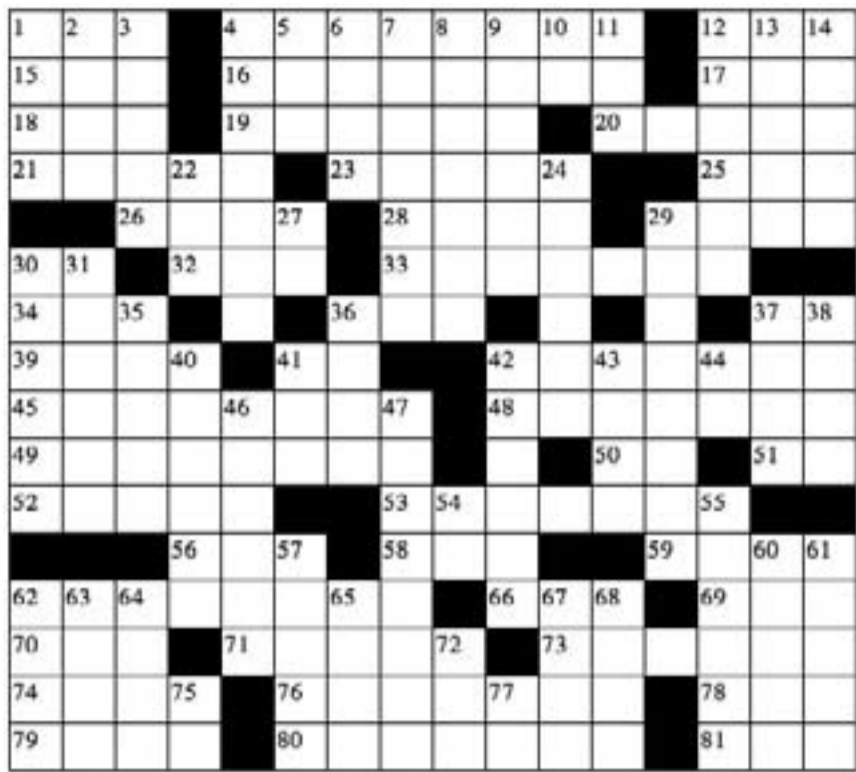
It said 11 people have recovered from the virus and 67 had died. Health minister Oly Ilunga Kalenga travelled to Mangina on Thursday and saw two patients being discharged after they were treated with a new prototype treatment called mAb14. "These two people are among the first 10 patients to have received the therapeutic molecule mAb14," the ministry said in a statement.

Developed in the United States, it is the first therapeutic drug to be used in an active Ebola epidemic in the DRC. Earlier this week, the health ministry said four other experimental drugs had been approved for treating infected patients. On Friday, the World Health Organization warned that signs the virus had spread to the city of Oicha in North Kivu could frustrate efforts to contain the virus.

While Oicha itself is not under rebel control, WHO emergency response chief Peter Salama said the city was entirely surrounded by territory held by a feared Ugandan insurgent group known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). —AFP

Stars

CROSSWORD 1993



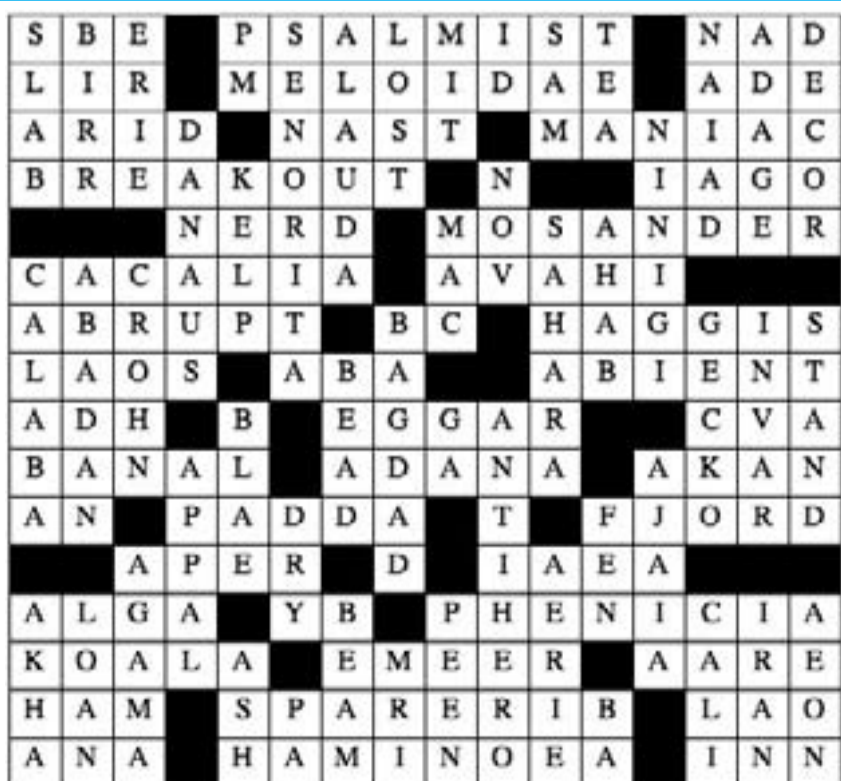
ACROSS

1. A change in the electrical properties of the skin in response to stress or anxiety.
4. The visual percept of a region.
12. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
15. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
16. Trees or shrubs of the families Ebenaceae or Saprotaceae or Styracaceae or Symplocaceae.
17. A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.
18. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
19. A metrical unit with stressed-unstressed-unstressed syllables.
20. A minor Hebrew prophet (8th century BC).
21. A genus of Inndriidae.
23. The civil and religious leader of a Muslim state.
25. Nocturnal mouselike mammal with forelimbs modified to form membranous wings and anatomical adaptations for echolocation by which they navigate.
26. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
28. A roll of photographic film holding a series of frames to be projected by a movie projector.
30. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
32. Light informal conversation for social occasions.
33. The provision of something by issuing it (usually in quantity).
34. A transuranic element that has not been found in nature.
39. Being of delicate or slender build.
45. Growing on or living among rocks.
48. Lacking motor coordination.
49. Imperfect development.
50. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
51. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
52. A program that is broadcast again.
53. An event resulting in great loss and misfortune.
56. Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
58. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
59. (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
62. (biology) Having a nucleus or occurring in the nucleus.
66. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
69. (used as a combining form) Recent or new.
70. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
71. A person who is deemed to be despicable or contemptible.
73. A bay on the Mediterranean Sea in northern Egypt.
74. Turn sharply.
76. A distillery where beer is brewed.
78. The compass point that is one point south of due east.
79. A local and well-defined elevation of the land.
80. Strip something of drapery.

DOWN

1. Offering fun and gaiety.
2. Speaking a Slavic language.
3. A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.
4. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
5. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
6. The part of an organism that connects the head to the rest of the body.
7. The smallest of the Great Lakes.
8. Having no parts resembling rays.
9. An alliance of nations joining together to fight a common enemy.
10. A state in New England.
11. The residue that remains when something is burned.
12. Talks a great deal about uninteresting topics.
13. Clear to the mind.
14. Make less active or intense.
22. An ugly evil-looking old woman.
24. Easy and graceful in shape.
27. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
29. Be earlier in time.
31. An organ in its earliest stage of development.
35. The cardinal number that is the sum of five and one.
36. An island in Indonesia east of Java.
37. Lacking sufficient water or rainfall.
38. A ruler of the Inca Empire (or a member of his family).
40. Of or relating to the hands.
41. An alliance made up of states that had been Soviet Socialist Republics in the Soviet Union prior to its dissolution in Dec 1991.
42. Medium-sized tree-dwelling monkey of the Amazon basin.
43. A cord that is drawn through eyelets or around hooks in order to draw together two edges (as of a shoe or garment).
44. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
46. Small often spiny insectivorous mammal of Madagascar.
47. Having an illustrious reputation.
54. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
55. Used by southerners for an inhabitant of a northern state in the United States (especially a Union soldier).
57. Found along western Atlantic coast.
60. Tropical American trees with palmately compound leaves and showy bell-shaped flowers.
61. A ridge of the earth's crust that has been forced upward between two faults and so is higher than the surrounding land.
63. Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
64. part of the peritoneum attached to the stomach and to the colon and covering the intestines.
65. A circular segment of a curve.
67. An association of people to promote the welfare of senior citizens.
68. Make amends for.
72. A nuclear reactor that uses water as a coolant and moderator.
75. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
77. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It may seem as if your life has taken on a somewhat mystical quality at an emotional and instinctive level. You find your dreams take priority over your realities. Forgiveness is on your mind and you long to have harmony in all of your relationships. A sense of true peace is what you desire. You may find with minimal effort today is a day that you are able to dissolve barriers. Fences may be mended, and awkward relationships may fall right back into place. You long for peace and it may seem as if peace is longing to return to your life. Wishes do come true and today will be proof of this in your world. Enjoy all this day has to offer.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Whether a surprise to day is good or bad depends on your interpretation. Look on the positive side of things. Assume the situation will have a good outcome, and then work to make it happen. You can do anything you set your mind to do. You have tremendous powers that are waiting to be activated. Believe in yourself, Taurus. In addition to convincing others, you may have to convince yourself.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Forgiveness and understanding are two awesome qualities to possess. You are able to put both of these to great use today. Both mending fences and repairing relationships are on the top of your priority list. You seem to be focused not only on the past but also on the future. You know to move forward and be at peace you need to let by gones be by gones. This will be a very emotional but empowering time in your life. The decisions you make today will have lasting effects on your life. You seem to really be in touch with a psychic ability you possess today. You are able to read the reaction of the people you approach. Love and luck are in your favor today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have the ability to get outside yourself and see what is going on with others. This may mean you see things others are unable to see. It is a gift that could serve you well in journalism or crime detection. Or, you may just find it useful in personal relationships. You can see beyond the "what" and identify the "why" in the behavior.



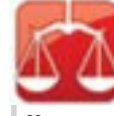
Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is a time of healing in your life. You may see barriers seem to dissolve and relationships repaired. Life is to short to hold grudges and you seem to be willing to do whatever it takes with anyone you feel as wronged you. This will bring peace and harmony into your life.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

People are attracted to your non-judgmental attitude. You always give the benefit of the doubt. This leads people to trust you when you make suggestions for change or improvement. Your friends and coworkers all know they can depend on you to come through for them. The downside may be that you don't see character flaws. This can lead to deep disappointments. Don't change your attitude Virgo. It's a valuable asset. Just watch for the clues.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may find your life taking on a kind of mystical quality on the emotional and instinctive levels. Dreams and illusions, forgiveness and understanding of human frailties are the things that arouse deep feelings. The past and the future come together. The stumbling blocks between people seem to dissolve on their own. Things seem to be falling in place around you. Little or no effort needs to be made by you. This is the key to the greater psychic and spiritual sensitivity that you may be feeling now. Everything surrounding you and everyone you encounter seem to bring out the best in you.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, you may find your life taking on a kind of mystical quality on the emotional and instinctive levels. Dreams and illusions, forgiveness and understanding of human frailties are the things that arouse deep feelings. The past and the future come together—thankfully the stumbling blocks between people go away. This is the key to the greater psychic and spiritual sensitivity that you may be feeling now. This a great time for you to be in group setting and be able to express yourself with great understanding of your audience. You value your own life situation at this time.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

It seems as if your job requirements could stifle your sensitivity and hold you back from growing. Do not let all the seriousness take away your emotion. Take special care when handling this situation. It seems as if everything is bringing out the best in you. Your unique and unusual qualities seem to shine now. You are blessed to find someone close to you shows you much support. They may find your eccentricities refreshing and find that they are drawn to you. This would be a great time to find new solutions to old problems or great inventions.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Call it intuition or psychic ability. Whatever label you choose, now is a time you clearly see what the future holds, the next move others are about to make, and the consequences before the action occurs. You are in touch with your spiritual side. You are extremely sensitive to all that is around you. The feelings of others seem to weigh heavily on you, as if they were your own. You may feel as if you are weighted down with emotional baggage. This is not from personal issues, rather from the negative energy you seem to be absorbing from others. This is a good time for you to make arrangements to spend some time alone. This is a time to remember, the only person you can change is you.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Life seems to take on a mystical quality for you now. You may find you develop a greater understanding of just how fragile life is. A wake-up call seems to make you realize each day you are alive is a blessing. You are determined to live life to the fullest. This is a time you may start living as tomorrow will not come. Life is short and you are determined to love hard. This seems to influence you to be more affectionate and loving to those you are close to. You are in love with your life and all those in it.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are sensitive and understanding. This makes you a friend that others want to have. Not only do you find others turning to you for advice, but you feel loved and admired. You are in a great position for your voice to be heard. You will be able to share your opinions on the matters that mean the most to you and will find that you will easily gain support and backing for your cause. You feel great about who you are and what you stand for and are eager to have others join your team.

Wordsearch Puzzle

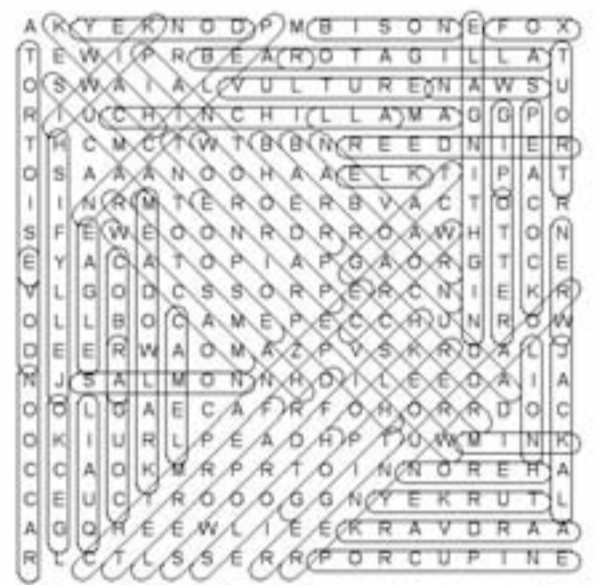
Animals 2

Find and circle all of the animals that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of an additional animal.



- | | | | | | | |
|-----------|----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| ANTELOPE | ELEPHANT | JAGUAR | KANGAROO | ORCA | PANTHER | SHREW |
| BAT | EMU | FLAMINGO | KOALA | PARAKEET | TURTLE | STORK |
| BEAVER | BOBCAT | GAZELLE | LAMPREY | PENGUIN | WALLABY | JELLYFISH |
| BARRACUDA | BEAR | CHICKEN | GOOSE | MONKEY | RABBIT | YAK |
| BISON | CAMEL | CHIMPANZEE | CHINGILLA | COBRA | COUGAR | CROW |
| FOX | GECKO | MACAW | MEADOWLARK | HAMSTER | HAWK | HERON |
| LEOPARD | LION | LLAMA | MACAW | MEADOWLARK | HAMSTER | HAWK |
| PEACOCK | PELICAN | PIG | PORCUPINE | QUAIL | RACCOON | RAVEN |
| TIGER | TROUT | TURTLE | VULTURE | WOLVERINE | WOODPECKER | WREN |

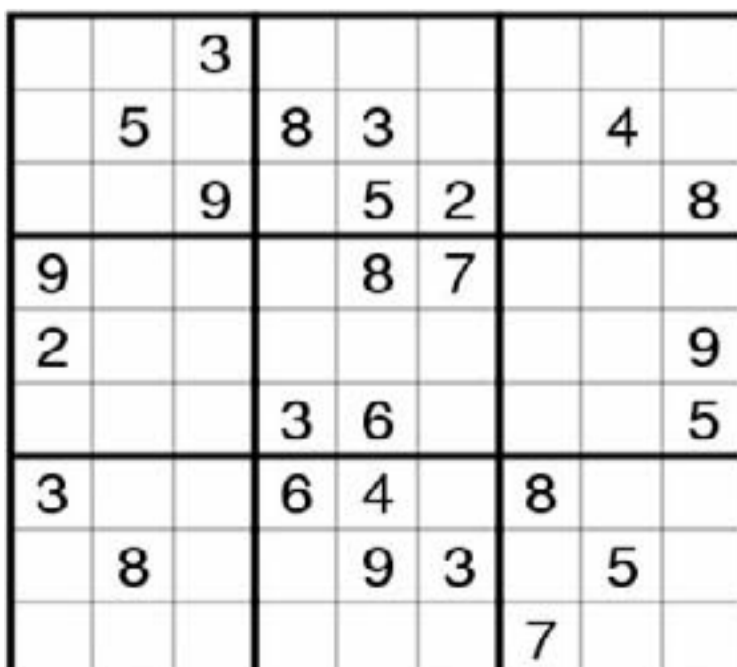
Animals 1



- | | | | | |
|-----------|------------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| AARDVARK | DONKEY | HIPPOTAMUS | OFFER | SALMON |
| ALLIGATOR | EAGLE | JACKAL | PANHER | SLOTH |
| BAROON | ELK | KIWI | PARROT | SWAN |
| BARRACUDA | FERRET | LEOPARD | PEACOCK | SWORDFISH |
| BEAR | FOX | LION | PELICAN | TIGER |
| BISON | GECKO | LLAMA | PIG | TROUT |
| CAMEL | CHIMPANZEE | MACAW | PORCUPINE | TURKEY |
| CHICKEN | CHINGILLA | COBRA | QUAIL | VULTURE |
| COUGAR | COUGAR | HAMSTER | RACCOON | WOLVERINE |
| CROW | HERON | NIGHTINGALE | ROADRUNNER | WREN |

The hidden animal is: AMERICAN CROCODILE

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

MONDAY, AUGUST 27, 2018



In this photo Bhutanese people monk walk in a square overlook by The Buddha Dordenma statue atop a hill in Kuensel Phodrang Nature Park in Bhutan's capital Thimphu. — AFP

Sent packing: Hong Kong's elderly cardboard collectors

Her fingers are bent from 20 years of collecting cardboard from Hong Kong's streets, but Au Fung-lan says she has no desire to give up the grueling work. At 67-years-old she is one of around 2,900 collectors, mainly women over the age of 60, whose frail figures are a familiar sight, guiding trolleys loaded with cardboard through a city clogged with traffic and people.

They pick up discarded packing boxes from shops, markets and residential buildings, selling them for a few dollars to recycling depots, where cardboard is more valuable than plastic. The depots then ship it abroad—up to 95 percent of it to mainland China in 2016, according to local authorities—as Hong Kong has no recycling plants of its own to convert it into usable materials. However, as China closes the door to imported rubbish, even from semi-autonomous regions such as Hong Kong, Au's livelihood is under threat.

Beijing no longer wants the country to be a global trash can and has already started phasing out taking solid waste—a process it expects to complete by 2020. Pragmatic Au says she tries not to think too much about her work drying up. She continues to put in 14-hour days so she can afford a carer for herself and her 77-year-old husband, also a cardboard collector, when they finally decide to give up work. "Some people think our work is arduous and look down on us. They say: 'You are so old, go home and enjoy life. Why collect cardboard?'" Au told AFP. "But

if I can still work, I don't want to rely on others."

Au turned to cardboard collecting after being laid off as a factory worker and courier. She has three grown-up children with jobs but does not want to depend on them for help. By working from pre-dawn until dusk, she earns up to HK\$300 (around \$38) daily, selling 300 kilograms of cardboard at HK\$1 (13 US cents) per kilo. It is a phenomenal work rate and much higher than the average collector who makes around HK\$47.30 a day, according to concern group Waste Pickers Platform (WPP).

Au attributes her bent fingers to years of tearing cardboard with her hands to flatten it. She has been hit by a car twice, injuring her shoulders and feet as she pushes her trolley along a busy road to the local depot in the residential neighborhood of Kwai Fong. Her trolley and cardboard have also been confiscated several times by government hygiene inspectors. But she says she enjoys what she calls the freedom of working for herself. "I'm not afraid. I do it every day," she says.

As unofficial freelance workers, collectors like Au have no legal recognition or employment rights. China's imminent waste ban could wipe out this informal economy, which NGO workers say is key to some of the city's elderly. Eighty percent of the collectors are over 60, with the oldest in their 90s. Eighty percent are women and around a third work at least an eight-hour day, according to WPP.

Many are doing it to supplement their pen-

sions and savings in a city where the wealth gap is growing—the cost of living in Hong Kong ranked fourth highest in the world in 2018, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit. "Cardboard collecting is part of a sub-economy activity which supports grassroots residents' livelihoods," says WPP spokesman Tang Wing-him.

Waste crisis

WPP estimates at least 193 tons of waste paper is delivered to recycling depots by the elderly collectors each day. Jacky Lau, director of a local business association for the waste and recycling industry, said the China ban could not only wipe out work for collectors like Au, but would be devastating for the cities' depots too. If those businesses were forced to close there

could be a "waste paper crisis" in Hong Kong as rubbish piles up, eventually ending up in landfill sites, he said.

The city relies on landfills to dispose of most of its waste but they are already overloaded. Lau says he hopes Hong Kong will still be allowed to export some waste to China, given its status as a Special Administrative Region of the country. Other countries are not an option due to the cost of shipping, according to Lau. He also urged the Hong Kong government to speed up a plan to build a local recycling plant to process waste paper. With the future uncertain,

Au and her husband at least have a roof over their heads—they own an apartment they bought in the 1970s, which gives them some security. But it also precludes them from receiving government subsidies, except for a small monthly allowance for the over 70s, which Au's husband receives on top of his pension as a former bus driver. Au's children have urged her to give up cardboard collecting, but she sees it as an investment in her future. "I told them: 'If you think I bring shame on you, then don't call me Mum when you see me,'" she told AFP. "They kept quiet after that."—AFP



This picture shows the hands of cardboard collector Au Fung-lan.



This picture shows workers at a recycling depot loading cardboard into an industrial compactor.



This picture shows cardboard collector Au Fung-lan tying down her trolley full of cardboard before making her way to a recycling depot in the Kwai Fong district of Hong Kong. — AFP photos



Cardboard collector Au Fung-lan pushes her trolley full of cardboard.

Glamorous Venice Film Festival courts controversy

Global superstars Lady Gaga, Ryan Gosling and Vanessa Redgrave descend on Venice this week as the annual film festival kicks off Wednesday to controversy over the inclusion of Netflix productions and there being just one female director in competition. Some 21 features will be locking horns for the prized Golden Lion, which will be awarded on September 8 at the Palazzo del Cinema on the Venice Lido, the iconic setting for Luchino Visconti's masterpiece "Death in Venice".

The festival jury is chaired by Guillermo Del Toro, last year's winner with "The Shape of

Water". Australian Jennifer Kent is the only woman gunning for the Golden Lion this year, with "The Nightingale". The lack of female directors was blasted by feminist associations in an open letter sent on August 11 to the festival's artistic director Alberto Barbera.

The letter was a reaction not just to the festival's male-centric selection but also to statements by Barbera, who in a recent press conference explained that he made his choices based on "the quality of the film and not the sex of the director". "If we impose quotas, I resign," he said, defending a selection criticised as "politically incorrect", especially compared to the latest edition of Cannes, which saw a call for gender equality in cinema.

A number of films being shown in Venice have been picked up by streaming service Netflix, including the the Coen Brothers' "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs". Starring Tim Blake Nelson, James Franco and Liam Neeson, "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs" features six tales about the Wild West narrated by Joel and Ethan Coen. The inclusion of Netflix films and their contemporaneous release in theatres and online has drawn the wrath of Italy's two major cinema associations Anec and Anem, who feel people will stay at home rather go out to watch the movies.

"I can't see any reason why a film by (director of Golden Lion contender "Roma", Alfonso) Cuarón or the Coens should be excluded just because they're produced by Netflix," Barbera



British actress Vanessa Redgrave gestures as she leaves a hotel during the 64th Venice International Film Festival in Venice.



US actor and director George Clooney signs autographs before the premiere of the movie 'Suburbicon' presented out of competition at the 74th Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido. — AFP photos

said during the press conference presenting the festival to reporters last month.

First Man

The star-studded festival kicks off with

"First Man", the new film from the Oscar-winning director of "La La Land" Damien Chazelle. The film, which stars Canadian Ryan Gosling, follows the life of astronaut Neil Armstrong in the years leading up to 1969, when he became

the first man to walk on the moon. However the most eagerly awaited appearance on the red carpet will undoubtedly be that of provocative pop superstar Lady Gaga, who stars in the out-of-competition "A Star is Born".

Bradley Cooper plays a hard-drinking country artist who discovers a young singer played by Gaga and is also making his directorial debut with the film. The pair also wrote and recorded new songs for the film, the third remake of the entertainment industry romance classic. Among the major names expected on the lagoon are Frenchman Jacques Audiard—who this time is taking on the Western genre with "The Sisters Brothers"—and his countryman Olivier Assayas, in competition with the comedy "Non-Fiction", starring his favorite actress Juliette Binoche.

Grand Prix winner at Cannes in 2015 and Oscar winner for best foreign film the following year with his first feature film "The Son of Saul", the Hungarian Laszlo Nemes will return to big competition with "Sunset". Big things are also expected from "The Favourite", a period drama by Greek director Yorgos Lanthimos that plunges viewers into the court of Queen Anne at the beginning of the 18th century and stars Emma Stone and Rachel Weisz. As every year, the festival will award two Golden Lions for their career to two film giants, in this case the 81-year-old British actress Vanessa Redgrave and Canadian director David Cronenberg. — AFP

SUDAN, MUSIC CAPITAL: ALBUM RECALLS FORMER RHYTHM BEACON



In this file photo a member of Sudan's Nuba community dances during the Nuba Mountains Cultural Heritage Festival, marking the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples in Omdurman. — AFP

Traveling Africa in search of its music, Vik Sohoni was struck by a common influence—Sudan, whose songs still hold power over a generation in much of the continent. Sohoni, the founder of Osinato Records, a New York-based label devoted to bringing the music of overlooked and conflict-riven countries to wider audiences, has led a restoration of Sudan's musical heritage through a new album that arrives as the major artists of the country's golden era fade away.

"Two Niles to Sing a Melody," which comes out on September 14 on three LPs or two CDs, follows Osinato's project on Somali music, "Sweet as Broken Dates," which was nominated this year for a Grammy for Best Historical Album. Unlike Ethiopian or even Somali music, which soaked up the big-band brass and jazz of the United States, Sudan's music is notable not for its foreign inspirations but the lack thereof.

The Sudanese sound, as developed in the capital Khartoum in the 1960s and 1970s, was driven by accordions and lush, precise violins-string arrangements that were common elsewhere in the Arab world, including neighboring Egypt. But underlying the music was a distinctly African rhythm—the fast-paced tum-tum drumming that attest to Sudan's Nubian culture. "Sudanese music seemed to be something that was organically created and produced. Instead of absorbing a host of influences, it spread those influences out across Africa, not just musically but in terms of stature," Sohoni said.

Foremost in impact was Mohammed Wardi, Sudan's best-known singer who married classic poetry with the nascent pop scene and challenged a succession of political strongmen. A communist, Wardi was imprisoned and then fled into exile in Cairo and Los Angeles. He returned home before dying in 2012 at age 80. To Sohoni, Wardi was a historic figure who parallels Nigeria's Afrobeat activist Fela Kuti, although Wardi, while packing crowds in Africa, remains far less known outside. Two of Wardi's songs appear on the 16-track album. Other featured artists include Saied Khalifa, who had roots in the Sufi mystical tradition of Islam and was a rare Sudanese singer to have formal musical training, and Khojali Osman, whose songs of longing won him a following across the Arab world.

Focus on capital

Few casual observers outside Africa are likely to think first of music when considering Sudan. Military ruler Gaafar al-Nimeiry in 1983 began to impose a strict version of Islamic sharia law. By the 1990s in the early days of Sudan's current president, Omar al-Bashir, the government took off the airwaves most music that did not glorify Islam or military campaigns. While Sudan remains scarred by multiple conflicts, "Two Niles to Sing a Melody" focuses on the music of Khartoum, a decision Sohoni made reluctantly.

Sohoni's attempts to gain access to Sudan's National Radio archives were rebuffed. The building is guarded by national security services—which Sohoni likened to the CIA being stationed outside the Smithsonian museum complex in Washington. Instead, "Two Niles to Sing a Melody" relies on cassette tapes recovered in nearby countries including Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia and the breakaway Somaliland area—attesting to the regional clout of the erstwhile Khartoum music scene. — AFP

NEXT SEASON OF 'BIG BANG THEORY' TO BE ITS LAST

Award-winning ratings smash "The Big Bang Theory" will end with the finale of its 12th season in May next year, CBS said on Wednesday, lavishing praise on the long-running comedy. Focusing on a highly intelligent but socially-awkward professor and his group of scientist friends, "Big Bang" was the biggest comedy ratings draw on broadcast television for years, winning 10 Emmys.

"We are forever grateful to our fans for their support of 'The Big Bang Theory' during the past 12 seasons," CBS said in a statement released jointly with producers Warner Bros. Television and Chuck Lorre Productions. "We, along with the cast, writers and crew, are extremely appreciative of the show's success and aim to deliver a final season, and series finale, that will bring 'The Big Bang Theory' to an epic creative close."

The show—which will end its 12-year run

on 279 episodes—is a rare example of a long-running hit TV series that has managed to retain its massive viewing figures. The last season attracted an audience of almost 19 million per episode, not far off its ninth season peak of 20.4 million. It hit the headlines in its most recent seasons for a deal which meant its lead cast of Jim Parsons, Johnny Galecki, Kunal Nayyar, Simon Helberg, Kaley Cuoco, Mayim Bialik and Melissa Rauch all earning the same-estimated at a shade under \$1 million an episode.

"There are many ways to look at the dozen years of 'Big Bang Theory' as we draw to a close, but for me it will be the family that gathered each week to create a true labor of love," tweeted co-creator Bill Prady. "I will treasure my Big Bang family to the end of my days." Last year CBS premiered "Young Sheldon," a prequel series starring Iain Armitage as a nine-year-old



version of nerdy genius Sheldon Cooper. It begins its second season on CBS in September. The main show's final season premieres on Monday September 24 before shifting back to its regular Thursday time slot. — AFP

NEJLOUD AL-YAGOUT RELEASES DEBUT NOVEL



Nejdoud Al-Yagout
— Photo by Djimane Alsuwayeh

Poet, essayist, and founder of Co-Exist Kuwait Nejdoud Al-Yagout is releasing her groundbreaking debut novel, set to release this fall from Luminare Press. Threading together the narratives of multiple protagonists during their journey to distinguish between their culture and their true selves, Motorbikes and Camels confronts the need for tolerance and acceptance in a society steeped in dogma.

Drawing from her own experience as a Kuwaiti as well as a soul of the universe, Al-Yagout brings a relatable and essential voice not normally seen in Middle Eastern literature. While the Kuwaiti narrative has traditionally been overlooked, Al-Yagout masterfully brings not only one worthy new voice to the table, but several through her dynamic and reflective characters.

The unique, interlaced narratives of different characters per chapter examine the individual hardships many people face in relationships and as members of a larger community. The book is available on Amazon and other online retailers. Al-Yagout is also an occasional contributor to the Kuwait Times.

Abstract artist Nicolas Manev dies at 78

French-Bulgarian artist Nicolas Manev, who worked in France for 50 years, died Saturday in Paris at the age of 78, his family told the Bulgarian BTA news agency. Manev was hospitalized on Thursday after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage. His funeral will be held in Bulgaria, his son Alexandre Manev told BTA. After graduating from the National School of Fine Arts in Paris, Manev moved to France before making a series of trips around the world.

A landscape artist and creator of abstract compositions, Manev held more than 140 solo exhibitions, including in Paris, London and Geneva. More than 3,000 of his works are housed in collections and museums in some 30 countries. After the fall of communism in Bulgaria in 1989, Manev often returned for exhibitions in his homeland. — AFP

After US hype, Asia greets 'Crazy Rich Asians' with a shrug

Crazy Rich Asians has been hailed as a win for diversity in Hollywood and sparked controversy in Singapore for its portrayal of the city-state—but in much of Asia the movie is being greeted with little more than a shrug. The first Tinseltown film to feature a majority-Asian cast for a generation, the adaptation of author Kevin Kwan's bestseller about Singapore's ultra-rich Chinese elite has soared to the top of the North American box office.

The rom-com, which tells the Cinderella-like story of an ordinary Asian-American woman and her super-rich boyfriend, will likely do well in parts of Asia when it is released this week. But it is not generating the same level of excitement as in Hollywood, where the Asian-American community has long been marginalized, and many in the region may well be wondering what all the fuss is about.

"Asians have been seeing themselves on screen in their own domestic films since cinema began," Maggie Lee, chief Asia film critic for Variety, told AFP. Still, those that watch the movie are likely to enjoy the film for what it is—an entertaining rom-com—and recognize the Hollywood hype is something particularly related to the Asian-American experience, she added.

Fabulous wealth, stunning clothes

A two-hour celebration of fabulous wealth, stunning clothes and idealized love, the movie's main character is economics professor Rachel Chu—played by American actress Constance Wu—who flies to Singapore for a break with her lecturer boyfriend Nick Young. It is only in the affluent city-state that Rachel realizes the man she has been dating for a year, played by British-Malaysian actor Henry Golding, is the scion to one of Asia's wealthiest families.

Dazzling jewels, private jets and an imperious mother are all thrown into the mix, as Rachel seeks to navigate the world of Singapore's super-wealthy. The first Hollywood production since the "Joy Luck Club" in 1993 to have a majority-Asian cast, the movie has generated frenzied publicity in the US and has generally been well reviewed. Asians have often been relegated to sidekick roles in Hollywood in recent times while there have also been much-criticized attempts at "yellowface" casting, when white actors attempt to make themselves look Asian. This was the case when Scarlett Johansson was cast in the Hollywood remake of Japanese anime classic "Ghost in the Shell". Other Hollywood productions, such as "The Great Wall" set in China and "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" in India, have been criticized for drafting in a major white star to play the lead role or their cliché-filled representations of Asia.

Just a movie

In Singapore, where much of the film's action takes place, there has predictably been considerable buzz, with many curious to see how local culture is depicted and happy that their tiny country is starring in a Hollywood hit. But some have been angered about how the film focuses primarily on the country's ethnic Chinese, who make up about three-quarters of the city-state's inhabitants. The country of 5.6 million, where the film is released Wednesday, is also home to substantial ethnic Indian and Muslim Malay minorities, as well as large numbers of expatriates.

Singapore activist Kirsten Han has been strident in her criticism, writing that the movie "isn't really a win for diverse



Actress Constance Lau poses at the film premiere of 'Crazy Rich Asians' at the Capitol Theatre in Singapore. — AFP photos

representation. "What I would like to see as a Singaporean is something that reflects my country and society in all our diversity and complexity," she said. In other parts of Asia, the reception is likely to be much more muted, with a Hollywood production offering little real competition to booming domestic entertainment industries, from Bollywood and Korean movies to Chinese soap opera.

Even in Singapore, many accepted the film was meant to be light entertainment, rather than an attempt to accurately depict the city-state's society. "People, it's just a movie," said one Facebook post under an article on the website of broadcaster Channel NewsAsia discussing the portrayal of Singapore in the film. "Sit back and enjoy." — AFP



Actor Henry Golding, right, and his wife Liv Lu, left, arrive at the film premiere of 'Crazy Rich Asians.'



People pose for a photograph during the 'Red Love Festival.'

'Red love': Hundreds of redheads gather in western France

Ginger, auburn, strawberry blonde: all types of redheads turned out in their hundreds in western France yesterday for the first "Red Love" festival. "I was born red, I will stay red and I am beautiful like everyone around me," declared Simon, a 32-year-old farm worker who travelled to the festival to hang out with "people like us." "I was teased when I was young, called named like 'carrot-top,'" he added, "it's the same as if you're fat."

Waiting to be served at a food truck, Liam Fife was standing with three friends he met at "Roodharigendag" (redhead day) the biggest get-together of redheads in the world which takes place every year in the Netherlands. "Until I was 15, it was awful for me," said the young man with a long red beard. "Now when I see a child I encourage them. I don't want them to be subjected to the same isolation," he said at the festival, held in the Brittany town of Chateaugiron.

The festival-goers enjoyed concerts and shows including a fashion parade of 18 redheads in wedding dresses. Among the best-selling items on display were T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan "Ginger is the new black". By midday, 1,200 people had showed up, said organizer Pascal Sacleux, who expressed the hope that "one day the jokes at the expense of redheads will be a thing of the past, when everyone realizes how unfounded and stupid they are". —AFP



Models present creations during a bridal fashion show as part of the 'Red Love Festival,' the first festival dedicated to redheads, in Chateaugiron, near Rennes, western France. — AFP photos



Alexia Barat, blogger and fashion designer of the brand 'Tee by Alertte Rousse,' poses with her t-shirts on which is written 'Rouquine ta mere' and 'Forever Rousse' during the 'Red Love Festival.'

Syrian carpenters dust off workshops after years of siege



Hussam Obayd, a 46-year-old Syrian carpenter, measures wood at his store as he prepares for its reopening in the town of Saqba in Damascus eastern Ghouta. — AFP photos

In a town outside the Syrian capital, Abu Suleiman dusts off his work table and pulls cobwebs from a cupboard he started making before the war. Prior to the outbreak of the seven-year conflict, his hometown of Saqba near Damascus was famed for its carpenters and their handmade furniture. But Abu Suleiman was forced to shutter his workshop after rebels overran the town in 2012, sparking years of deadly regime bombardment and a crippling siege. A 2011 calendar still hangs on the wall. "I started making this bedroom set for my son Suleiman eight years ago, but I never finished it," says the 53-year-old carpenter, removing cobwebs from a cupboard festooned with wooden flowers. "I'm waiting for him to return for us to finish it together, so I can give it to him as a wedding gift," he says. After protests against President Bashar al-Assad first broke out that year, Abu Suleiman encouraged his son to flee in case the situation

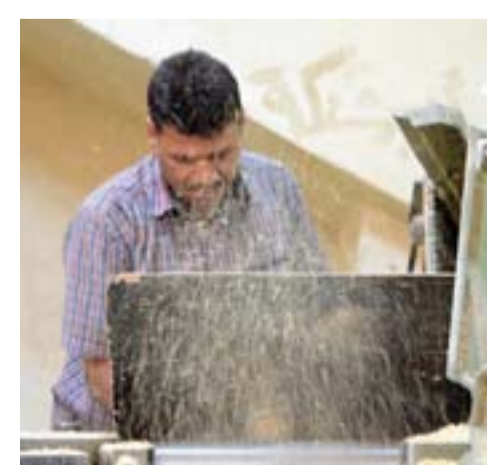
escalated. Suleiman headed to Germany, where he remains today. His craftsman father only returned to the dusty workshop last week, after regime forces retook control of Saqba in March and the wider region of Eastern Ghouta the following month. It was a welcome return to his craft after five years of doing other jobs to survive the devastating siege. Regime forces completely surrounded Eastern Ghouta in 2013, making any furniture shippings impossible as well as causing severe shortages of food, medicines and fuel. During the winter, many were forced to burn their furniture to keep warm, Abu Suleiman says, his voice wavering. Fellow carpenter Abu Nader says others smashed it up to sell as tinder. "I would

stop people carrying their furniture to chop it up for firewood, and beg them not to do it," he says. "I felt like every piece of wood I had worked with my hands was a chunk of my heart."

“
Every piece of wood was a chunk of my heart
”

Trade of the future
The siege of Ghouta was one of the bleakest episodes of the conflict, which has killed more than 350,000 people and caused millions to flee. But today, Saqba's workshops have sprung back to life. Electric saws and sanding machines spew out sawdust, their high-pitched whirring filling the street once again. In the town centre, Yussef al-Qabuni has also gone back to work, fixing doors, windows and pieces of furniture for a handful of customers.

As he gently raps on the door of a cupboard to check its condition, he says he is delighted to be back doing a job that makes him proud. "I've been working in this trade since I was 10," the burly 50-year-old says. Saqba used to produce hundreds of complete bedroom sets before the war broke out, he says. Hundreds of businesses drew in tradesmen from neighboring Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan, the Gulf-even Cyprus. Not far off, Hussam Obayd nails two planks of wood together at a right angle. A large majority of Saqba's inhabitants are carpenters, the lean 46-year-old says. "In each family, there are two or three carpenters at least," says Obayd, who recently reopened his workshop with the help of his teenage son. Even if orders are still few and far between, he is excited about teaching 16-year-old Alaa the secrets of the trade. "This is a trade of the future," he says. With fighting over, "everybody is going to want to rebuild their home, and fix its windows and doors." —AFP



Yussef al-Qabuni, a 50-year-old Syrian carpenter and furniture store owner, trims a piece of wood at his workshop.



Members of "The Pirates" American football team take part in a training session in the Moroccan capital Rabat. — AFP photos

IN MOROCCO, AMERICAN FOOTBALL ISN'T A MEN-ONLY AFFAIR



Under the scorching summer sun in Rabat, coach Ichtar Zahraoui bellows directions to "The Pirates", young Moroccan men and women learning to play American football together on the gridiron. Focused and sweaty, 30 players gather every Sunday to practice the sport, an unusual scene in a country obsessed with soccer, the variety of football far more commonly played across the globe. "It's not easy to make young Moroccans love American football," 39-year-old Zahraoui says. "It's an aggressive sport that requires a lot of energy, work and equipment," says Zahraoui, who founded "The Pirates" men's and women's teams in 2017.

Lacking numbers and resources, they have to train together on the same modest plot of land in the heart of Rabat's Old Town—and if that's not available, the beach. At practice the "Pirates Boys" and "Pirates Girls" zigzag between cones and plough into tackling dummies, training pads and sometimes each other. Without hesitation, the players—mostly students aged under 30, recruited by word of mouth—from mixed teams and alternate between offence and defense. "We're trying to make the sport known and to explain to people that football isn't rugby," Zahraoui says.

A 'real team'

The breathless self-taught coach has dreams of setting up the kingdom's "first real American football team". To do so, she needs the support of an "American coach and a large NFL club", she says, referring to the National Football League in the United States with which she has had "interesting contacts". American football made its debut in Morocco in 2012 with the creation of amateur teams in cities like Casablanca, Rabat and Tangiers. Two years later, the men's national team won an inaugural African championship.

In 2015, Morocco's first women's football team—the "Black Mambas"—was formed in Rabat. The sight of women playing the rough sport in the conservative Muslim society has sparked interest from Moroccan

media and across social networks. But Zahraoui says she has not once encountered a "problem of a sexist nature" since launching the project. Female Moroccan athletes are nothing new, she says—they "have distinguished themselves in sports since the 1980s". "What we need are teams, a federation, coaches, referees, trainers and a championship," she insists. For now, the Pirates prefer to play flag football, a watered-down,



low-contact version of the sport that requires little equipment. The lighter touch has helped draw in participants from other sports such as basketball and judo who otherwise may not have joined. "I came to watch a friend train, but the coach convinced me to come and try," says Ghita Ouassil. The chance encounter last year has turned the 21-year-old English literature student into a football regular. "Before I was shy, but this sport helps develop your personality and self-control and to be less tense." — AFP



RUSSIAN ARTIST HONORS PHOTOGRAPHY'S ROOTS

A Russian artist is going back to the roots of photography, creating eye-catching wooden cameras based on the basic principles of the art form and attracting buyers from around the world. Sergei Lebedev's work, which includes both the cameras themselves and the unusual photographs he creates, is now on show at an exhibition in his native region of Kaliningrad. His unique cameras cost around \$150 each.

The former factory worker uses driftwood, pebbles and shells to create his cameras, combing the shorelines of his home for parts of fallen trees, naturally polished by the sea's waves. From these, he crafts wooden boxes. "This is the simplest principle of cameras and the way in which photography began," he explained. "Essentially, they were simple wooden boxes... Light penetrates through a small hole, made with a needle. This is all that is needed in order to get an image on the film". — Reuters



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Monday, August 27, 2018

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind changing to south easterly wind later on, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h causing rising dust over western areas.

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 30 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 26/08/2018 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	35 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	45 °C	34 °C			
ABDALY	47 °C	30 °C			
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C			
JAHRA	47 °C	32 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	46 °C	29 °C			
SALMIYAH	44 °C	34 °C			
AHMADI	44 °C	35 °C			
NUWAISIB	47 °C	31 °C			
WAFRA	46 °C	31 °C			
SALMY	45 °C	28 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	08/27	Hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	46 °C	32 °C	NW-SE	12 - 32 km/h
Tuesday	08/28	Very hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	47 °C	34 °C	NW-NE	10 - 35 km/h
Wednesday	08/29	Very hot and rising dust over open areas and some high clouds will appear	47 °C	33 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h
Thursday	08/30	Hot	44 °C	32 °C	NW-VRB	10 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:59
Sunrise	05:22
Zuhr	11:50
Asr	15:24
Sunset	18:17
Isha	19:38

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	30 °C
MAX. RH	25 %
MIN. RH	08 %
MAX. Wind	NW 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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Arrival Flights on Monday 27/8/2018				Departure Flights on Monday 27/8/2018				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	JZR	176	Dubai	13:10	
THY	772	Istanbul	00:15	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30	
KAC	102	London	00:50	THY	767	Istanbul	13:40	
KAC	504	Beirut	00:50	JZR	144	Doha	13:55	
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00	
WAN	976D	Baku	00:55	IRA	666	Esfahan	14:15	
JZR	539	Cairo	01:00	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15	
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:15	PIA	645	Amman	14:15	
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	FEG	342	Sohag	14:50	
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	IAW	158A	Al Najaf	14:55	
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	KNE	382	Taif	15:00	
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:00	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00	
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00	
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:05	
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	QTR	1079	Doha	15:15	
THY	768	Istanbul	02:40	JZR	124	Bahrain	15:40	
THY	1404	AYT	02:45	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45	
JZR	651	Lahore	02:55	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:55	
JZR	607	Kochi	02:55	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00	
KAC	418	Manila	03:05	KAC	ETH	621	Jeddah	16:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05	
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:10	
KAC	382	Delhi	03:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15	
MSC	415	Sohag	03:10	KAC	619	Doha	16:15	
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20	
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:25	OMA	646	Muscat	16:20	
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	KAC	121	AGP	16:20	
JAI	572	Mumbai	04:00	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:40	
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	04:15	KAC	191	Tbilisi	16:45	
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	KAC	561	Alexandria	16:55	
JZR	609	Hyderabad	04:30	SAW	706	Damascus	17:00	
JZR	1541	Cairo	04:35	FDB	052	Dubai	17:20	
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	QTR	1073	Doha	17:25	
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	KAC	361	Colombo	17:35	
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40	
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:20	KAC	381	Delhi	17:45	
JZR	603	Mumbai	05:25	NIA	362	Alexandria	17:50	
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	KAC	331	Trivandrum	17:55	
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	283	Dhaka	18:00	
JZR	561	Sohag	05:55	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15	
BAW	157	London	06:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20	
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:25	JZR	184	Dubai	18:20	
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:25	JZR	608	Hyderabad	18:25	
KAC	204	Lahore	06:30	JZR	240	Amman	18:30	
KAC	678	Dubai	06:45	JZR	538	Cairo	18:35	
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	JZR	266	Beirut	19:15	
WAN	342	Sohag	06:55	QTR	1081	Doha	19:20	
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	19:20	
JZR	143	Doha	07:20	KAC	151	Istanbul	19:25	
JZR	529	Asyut	07:30	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30	
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:45	GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50	
JZR	503	Luxor	07:50	FDB	064	Dubai	19:50	
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	RJA	641	Amman	20:00	
KAC	384	Delhi	08:05	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:00	
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	JZR	552D	Alexandria	20:05	
IAW	157	Al Najaf	08:30	FDB	058	Dubai	20:30	
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	JZR	602	Mumbai	20:30	
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	UAE	876	Dubai	20:35	
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	DLH	624	Dammam	20:50	
SAW	703	Damascus	09:30	KNE	232	Riyadh	21:00	
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	353	Bengaluru	21:00	
IAW	157	Al Najaf	10:00	OMA	648	Muscat	21:05	
MSC	405	Sohag	10:15	MEA	403	Beirut	21:15	
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	KAC	301	Mumbai	21:35	
WAN	312	Asyut	10:20	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50	
JZR	787	Riyadh	10:30	QTR	1089	Doha	21:50	
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00	
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:05	
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:10	
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	1543	Cairo	22:15	
JZR	1539	Cairo	11:05	ALK	230	Colombo	22:20	
JZR	165	Dubai	11:45	THY	1413	TXZ	22:25	
WAN	134	Doha	12:20	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:25	
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	KAC	383	Delhi	22:25	
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	UAE	860	Dubai	22:35	
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	JZR	604	Ahmedabad	22:40	
THY	766	Istanbul	12:45	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:50	
JZR	239	Amman	13:00	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:00	
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20	
IRA	667	Esfahan	13:15	SVA	515	Riyadh	23:30	
RJA	644	Amman	13:20	WAN	337	Alexandria	23:40	
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:30	SVA	503	Jeddah	23:45	
JZR	779	Jeddah	13:45	JZR	560	Sohag	23:45	
FEG	341	Sohag	13:50					
KAC	672	Dubai	13:55					



McLaren's Spanish driver Fernando Alonso crashes during warm-up ahead of the Belgian Formula One Grand Prix at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Spa yesterday. — AFP

Cryptominers dreaming of...

Continued from Page 1

"We were of course very uneasy about seeing our customers not getting what they expected," recently admitted Genesis Mining, a company that rents computing power. It blamed the "downward trend" of prices and the "heavily rising difficulty" of mining since April. The collapse of bitcoin, which has lost two-thirds of its value since December and dragged many more cryptocurrencies in its wake, has not discouraged miners. On the contrary, the power dedicated to bitcoin mining has more than tripled since its peak prices, and the trend shows no sign of abating, according to the bitinfocharts site.

A "farm" consisting of more than 3,000 mining units was inaugurated in Russia last week, cutting profitability even further. In mid-December, the reference unit for computing power, the THash/second, permitted the equivalent of \$3.84 to be mined in one day, compared to only 25 cents today. As a result, Genesis Mining offered its customers newer equipment to rent at a reduced price, halving maintenance costs, but the proposal was not greeted warmly. "This is not fair! Your early customers helped you get to where you are now. Give us a free upgrade, we deserve it and you know it,"

tweeted one customer.

Mining can also be expensive due to the huge amount of electricity required to earn units. For example, the Antminer S9 - a mining device dedicated to bitcoin - is worth more than €600 and consumes €1,600 of electricity per year. Individuals, who generally focus on other virtual currencies that are easier to mine than bitcoin, tend to rely on graphic cards to do the heavy lifting, which are less power hungry.

Those who get special rates on their electricity bills, such as EDF employee Philippe Vanbaelinghem, a miner for almost a year, can therefore exploit their "huge advantage" for monetary gain. His staff discount allows him to reduce his bill by €80 per month, helping him generate around €140 in monthly mining earnings. "Not everyone is equal on this," he admitted, pointing out that he could still have made a profit on standard tariffs when prices were high, but not now. As a tenant, Ali's electricity bill is fixed each month, and he has not received any complaints from his landlord.

Other costs include technical faults, maintenance and the hours required to learn how to optimize equipment, meaning miners have little room to cut costs, despite market prices. "As strong believers in the industry and its potential, we are certain the market will soon recover," said Genesis Mining. Ali and Philippe are among the many miners who have incorporated speculation into their business model, hoarding some of their mined cryptocash. Ali hopes to stop mining in four or five years. With cryptos, "you have to expect everything," said 25-year-old. — AFP

erful advocate for the nation's veterans. As a fervent Atlanticist, a persistent critic of authoritarian leaders, and a frequent congressional traveler, he earned respect around the globe.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called McCain "one of the great political figures of our time (who) fought tirelessly for a strong transatlantic alliance"; Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he was "an inspiration to millions"; British Prime Minister Theresa May said McCain "embodied the idea of service over self" while French President Emmanuel Macron saluted "a true American hero". Across the Pacific, the China Daily referred to him as a "titan of American politics".

Sarah Palin, whom McCain plucked from obscurity to become his 2008 White House running mate, described him as "a fighter, never afraid to stand for his beliefs". McCain drew criticism from the left for giving a platform to Palin's rightwing views, contributing to the rise of the Tea Party movement. But he also earned respect on the left for his steadfast opposition to torture and his push for immigration reform. Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said he would seek to rename a Senate building in his honor.

Praise for McCain however was not universal: Chinese social media users called him an "enemy of China" for his hawkish foreign policy views. And comments on the US far-right Breitbart website slammed the senator for his key vote against the Obamacare repeal. McCain had been away from the Senate floor since December, remaining at his Arizona ranch for treatment of glioblastoma - the same form of brain cancer that took the life of another Senate giant, Democrat Ted Kennedy, in 2009.

The son and grandson of four-star admirals, McCain will be buried in the cemetery of the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, on a peaceful hillside overlooking the Severn River. As a student at the academy he had a reputation as a rebel, but with a wit and charm that drew people to him. In 2015, McCain himself revealed the simple epitaph he wanted on his tombstone, which will stand alongside those of naval heroes going back to the 1800s: "He served his country." — AFP

Prolific US playwright Neil Simon dead at 91

NEW YORK: Neil Simon, the prolific and Pulitzer Prize-winning US playwright who wrote for stage, television and cinema, and won more Oscar and Tony nominations combined than any other writer, died yesterday. He was 91. A legend of American theater, Simon was credited with shaping American humor in the 1960s and 1970s in a vein similar to film director Woody Allen, with a focus on life in the big city and family conflict.

His death, early yesterday in a New York hospital of complications from pneumonia, was announced by his longtime friend Bill Evans. His wife, daughter and grandson were at his bedside, Evans told AFP. He had represented Simon for three decades from 1976 to 2006. Simon was the author of critically acclaimed and commercial hits such as "The Odd Couple" (1965) "The Sunshine Boys" (1974) "Barefoot in the Park" (1963) and "Lost in Yonkers" (1990).

Several of his plays went on to become major Hollywood movies, including "The Goodbye Girl" in 1977 that won Richard Dreyfuss an Oscar for best leading actor and "The Odd Couple" in 1968 about two friends sharing an apartment starring Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon. While several of his plays were darker, he was best known as the king of comedy, peppering his plays with witty one-liners.

Much of his work explored the everyday struggles of the middle-classes, or what he called "domestic wars" and inter-family conflict, influenced by his troubled upbringing in the Bronx during the Great

Depression in a family where money was scarce. "He was a writer and an artist who couldn't stop going inside of himself and finding new things. Like any creative artist there was a compulsion to explore and go deeper," Evans told AFP. "He wrote every single day. He went to his office, a nondescript office and wrote," he added. "He found a connection in all of us."



Neil Simon

Simon first made a name for himself in the early 1960s, starting with "Barefoot in the Park," about a bickering married couple, and "The Odd Couple" credited with capturing the zeitgeist of that decade. "The phrase 'odd couple' is now used in so many different contexts. It was a privilege knowing him," said Evans.

Simon followed up in the 1980s with trilogy "Brighton Beach Memoirs", "Biloxi Blues" and "Broadway Bound" in which the leading character Eugene Jerome is an alter ego for the playwright himself. The trilogy starred a young Matthew Broderick, now the celebrated stage actor and husband of film star Sarah Jessica Parker, as the leading character in what Evans called a "Slice of Americana."

In 1991, Simon achieved the highest honor in US drama, winning the Pulitzer Prize for "Lost in Yonkers," an autobiographical comedy about a mother and her daughter, which was his last big splash on Broadway. In 1983 he gained the rare accolade of having a New York stage, the Neil Simon Theatre, named in his honor. In addition to his Pulitzer, he won a Golden Globe and three Tonys. — AFP

US mourns John McCain, war hero...

Continued from Page 1

speak at the funeral, according to the New York Times. Media reports earlier this year said the senator had expressly asked that President Donald Trump not be invited. Instead, Vice President Mike Pence is expected to attend.

As tributes poured in from the US and abroad, Trump said simply that he sent his "deepest sympathies and respect" to the McCain family. Trump's wife Melania, his daughter Ivanka and Pence saluted the senator's service to the nation. A rare Republican critic of Trump, McCain had accused the president of "naivete", "egotism" and of sympathizing with autocrats, especially after Trump's widely criticized appearance in Helsinki alongside Russian president Vladimir Putin. McCain cast a decisive vote last year that killed Republican attempts to repeal Obama's healthcare reforms. The repeal was a Trump priority, and the president never forgave McCain.

The hawkish McCain was an unrelenting critic of Obama's foreign policy, saying the Democratic president was weak on Libya, Iraq and Syria. Still, Obama said he and the senator "shared, for all our differences, a fidelity to something higher - the ideals for which generations of Americans and immigrants alike have fought, marched and sacrificed". Bush, whose tough campaign against McCain in 2000 left both sides bruised, praised the Arizonan as "a man of deep conviction and a patriot of the highest order". Hillary Clinton, whose encounters with McCain also left bruises, called him "a patriot".

McCain spent more than three decades in the Senate, looming large in debates over war and peace and the moral direction of the nation. As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, he was a pow-

Palestinians see US 'liquidating'...

Continued from Page 1

He and other Palestinian leaders reacted furiously to Friday's announcement, with one calling it "cheap blackmail" to coerce them into accepting terms of the peace plan that the White House has promised to unveil. "America is now sharing in the dreams and the policies of Israel's right-wing government," said Palestinian political analyst Jihad Harb.

But for Kobi Michael, formerly in charge of Palestinian issues at Israel's strategic affairs ministry, Trump's approach serves as a necessary rude awakening for the Palestinian leadership. He cited Palestinians' refusal to accept Jerusalem as Israel's capital, coupled with the UN's method of classifying Palestinian refugees, as "characteristics which are much more than absurd in the eyes of the majority of the Israelis".

The aid cut adds to the financial woes of the Palestinian Authority, whose \$5 billion budget for this year includes a \$1.2 billion deficit. Foreign aid was put at \$775 million. Humanitarian conditions in the Israeli-blockaded Gaza Strip, which is run by Islamist movement Hamas, are also badly deteriorating. Just last month, the World Bank announced it was increasing its annual allocation to the Palestinians to \$90 million from \$55 million "in response to an increasingly difficult situation".

The US funding that was cut was for humanitarian programs, infrastructure and budget support in the occupied West Bank. It also included assistance for humanitarian programs, such as healthcare, in the Gaza Strip. The White House has maintained some \$61 million in assistance this year for the Palestinian security forces, which coordinate with their Israeli counterparts.

The Trump administration is taking on core questions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with Jerusalem's status being the most controversial of them all. The Palestinians see east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state and almost the entire international community takes the position that the issue must be negotiated between the two sides. After the dramatic reduction in funding, refugees' rights are now reportedly in Washington's crosshairs.

Some 750,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled during the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Those still alive today along with their descendants are classified as refugees, amounting to a total of five million people who are eligible for services provided by UNRWA. Palestinians and rights groups say the agency provides vital assistance - including schooling for hundreds of thousands of students - that otherwise may not be available.

But Israel argues UNRWA's means of operation perpetuates the refugee problem. It also insists on the Palestinian leadership giving up its demand that refugees be granted the right to return to their former lands now inside Israel. On Saturday, Israeli television reported the US now wanted to cap the number of Palestinians classified as refugees to 500,000. A US embassy official did not confirm the report. — AFP

Sports

Rockies rock Cardinals with eight-run inning in 9-1 win

Astros run winning streak to 4 with 8-3 win over Angels

DENVER: DJ LeMahieu and Nolan Arenado had two hits each in Colorado's eight-run eighth inning. Matt Holliday homered and the Rockies pounded the St. Louis Cardinals 9-1 in Denver on Saturday night. Carlos Gonzalez had three hits, including a tiebreaking double in the eighth, and reliever Adam Ottavino (6-2) got the win despite giving up a run to tie the game 1-1 in the top of the eighth. The Cardinals had their nine-game road winning streak snapped and saw the National League wild-card race tighten. The Rockies tied Arizona for first place in the NL West. Colorado is also tied with Milwaukee for the second wild-card spot a half-game behind St. Louis. Pinch-hitting for German Marquez, who allowed just three hits in seven shutout innings, Holliday hit a solo homer in the seventh, his first for the Rockies since 2008. The 38-year-old is in his second stint with Colorado after being added to the roster earlier this week.

MARINERS 4, DIAMONDBACKS 3 (10 INNINGS)

Denard Span hit a one-out homer in the 10th inning after Kyle Seager hit a two-out, two-run, game-tying double in the ninth as Seattle rallied at Arizona. Span, who entered as a pinch hitter in the eighth inning, homered off Jake Diekmann (1-2) to give Seattle its first series victory since a four-game sweep at Houston from Aug. 9-12. Edwin Diaz recorded his major-league-leading 50th save by pitching out of trouble in the last of the 10th. Paul Goldschmidt and David Peralta singled to put runners on the corners, but Goldschmidt was thrown out at home on a grounder before Diaz recorded two flyouts to end it.

PIRATES 9, BREWERS 1

Adam Frazier hit a three-run home run to help visiting Pittsburgh end a four-game losing streak by pounding Milwaukee. Gregory Polanco added a two-run single, Josh Harrison and Colin Moran an RBI double each and Sean Rodriguez an RBI single for Pittsburgh, which has scored 15 runs in splitting the first two games of this series after totaling seven runs total during a seven-game homestand. Christian Yelich hit a solo homer for Milwaukee, which had won four of its previous five games. The Brewers fell 4 1/2 games behind the first-place Chicago Cubs in the National League Central.

CUBS 10, REDS 6

Daniel Murphy and Kyle Schwarber launched two-run home runs, and Javier Baez added a solo shot and drove in three runs overall as host Chicago battered Cincinnati. Murphy, playing in his fourth game for the Cubs since being acquired from the Washington Nationals, homered to right-center field off Reds starter Luis Castillo. His eighth home run of the season capped a three-run second inning. It was also Murphy's second home run in two days against the Reds. It was the fourth straight win for the National League Central-leading Cubs, including the first three games of the series. The Reds have lost four in a row and five of six.

DODGERS 5, PADRES 4 (12 INNINGS)

Justin Turner hit a game-winning RBI double in the 12th inning immediately following a 20-minute power outage as Los Angeles edged visiting San Diego. The Padres tied the game 4-4 in the ninth inning on a home run from Austin Hedges off Dodgers closer Kenley Jansen. It was the third consecutive game Jansen gave up either the game-tying or go-ahead home run since coming off the disabled list because of an irregular heartbeat. Dodgers sluggers Manny Machado and Max Muncy each reached the 30-

homer plateau. Clayton Kershaw gave up three runs (two earned) on seven hits with nine strikeouts. Los Angeles is 2 1/2 games back in the NL West.

YANKEES 10, ORIOLES 3 (GAME 1)

Miguel Andujar, Brett Gardner, Gleyber Torres and Aaron Hicks all homered, and J.A. Happ kept host Baltimore quiet for six innings as New York cruised to victory in the first game of a day-night doubleheader. Andujar hit a three-run homer during a four-run third inning that gave the Yankees control en route to their second straight win in this series. He finished the game 2-for-5 with four RBIs. Giancarlo Stanton nearly hit his 300th career homer, but rookie center fielder Cedric Mullins made a leaping catch at the fence and robbed him in the sixth.

YANKEES 5, ORIOLES 1 (GAME 2)

Austin Romine homered while Aaron Hicks and Giancarlo Stanton each had RBI singles, and New York completed a doubleheader sweep at Baltimore. New York starter Sonny Gray (10-8) has been inconsistent throughout much of this season but is 4-1 in five starts against the Orioles, giving some of his best performances. The right-hander allowed just three hits in 6 1/3 shutout innings, striking out seven. The Yankees will go for a four-game series sweep on Sunday night. Baltimore now has lost seven consecutive games.

RAYS 5, RED SOX 1

Tommy Pham homered, and Kevin Kiermaier tripled among two hits to score what proved to be the game-winning run and help lead Tampa Bay to its seventh straight victory with a win over visiting Boston. Joey Wendle and Matt Duffy each had two hits and a walk, and Ji-Man Choi had an RBI triple for Tampa Bay, which has won the first two of the three-game series with the Red Sox. Boston entered the weekend with a 14-series unbeaten streak (10-0-4), the team's longest since 1972 (10-0-6). The Red Sox, who haven't been swept in a series all year long and face Rays ace Blake Snell on Sunday, last lost a series on June 29-July 1 to the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium.

BLUE JAYS 8, PHILLIES 6

Aledmys Diaz hit a three-run double with two out in the bottom of the eighth inning, and Toronto came back to defeat visiting Philadelphia. Toronto's Kendrys Morales homered for the sixth game in a row, a two-run shot in the fourth inning, to equal the club record set in 2001 by Jose Cruz Jr. Morales has seven homers in the span. Billy McKinney added a two-run blast in the seventh inning for the Blue Jays, who have won the first two games of the three-game series as part of a five-game winning streak.

MARLINS 3, BRAVES 1

Wei-Yin Chen continued his home mastery, and Brian Anderson hit a pinch-hit, two-run home run to lead host Miami over Atlanta. Chen (5-9) is 1-6 with a 9.35 ERA on the road this year. At home, however, he has been brilliant as he was once again this night, tossing six scoreless innings and striking out 10. He allowed six hits and two walks and lowered his home ERA to 1.86. The Braves are 13-5 against the Marlins this year. But, after winning on Thursday, Atlanta has lost two straight in this four-game weekend series.

METS 3, NATIONALS 0

Zack Wheeler pitched seven gritty innings for his



DENVER: Matt Holliday #7 of the Colorado Rockies follows through after hitting a seventh inning solo homerun against the St. Louis Cardinals at Coors Field on Saturday in Denver, Colorado. Players are wearing special jerseys with their nicknames on them during Players' Weekend. —AFP

career-high seventh straight win, and Amed Rosario homered in the sixth inning as New York dealt visiting Washington its third straight shutout loss. Wheeler (9-6) allowed six hits and frequently used his defense to work out of jams. He is 7-0 with a 1.68 ERA in his last eight starts and picked up his latest win despite putting runners on in five of seven innings. The Nationals were shut out in three consecutive games for the first time since moving to Washington in 2005. The franchise last was shut out in three straight games April 13-15, 2004, when the Montreal Expos were blanked against the Marlins.

ASTROS 8, ANGELS 3

Marwin Gonzalez keyed a four-run eighth inning with a leadoff home run, and Houston extended its winning streak to four games with a win over Los Angeles at Angel Stadium. Gonzalez slugged his 14th homer, and eighth this month, to end what had been a frustrating stretch for the Astros, who stranded runners at third base in the fifth, sixth and seventh innings. Justin Verlander (13-8) carried a 26-inning scoreless streak at Angel Stadium into the fourth before Shohei Ohtani belted a two-run homer the opposite way to left-center field. Verlander allowed three runs on six hits and two walks with six strikeouts over six innings.

ATHLETICS 6, TWINS 2

Jonathan Lucroy hit the 13,000th home run in Oakland franchise history, a three-run shot that paved the way to a win over Minnesota at Minneapolis. Right-hander Mike Fiers (10-6) remained unbeaten in four starts since joining the A's earlier in the month, limiting the Twins to one run in 5 2/3 innings en route to Oakland's second straight win after a loss in the series opener Thursday. With the win, the A's remained 1 1/2 games back in the American League West.

ROYALS 7, INDIANS 1

Ryan O'Hearn had three RBIs, including a tiebreaking two-run double, and Lucas Duda went 3-for-4 with a homer as Kansas City routed visiting Cleveland. Right-hander Heath Fillmyer (2-1) allowed one run and three hits over six innings as the Royals notched back-to-back wins for the first time since victories on July 31 and Aug. 1. Indians right-hander Corey Kluber (16-7) was tagged for five runs and nine hits over 5 1/3 innings to squish his attempt to become the first 17-game winner in the majors. The loss was the fourth in a row for Cleveland, matching a season worst that occurred twice earlier this season.

GIANTS 5, RANGERS 3

Left-hander Andrew Suarez shut out Texas over seven innings, and Brandon Crawford capped a four-run first inning with a three-run home run to propel host San Francisco to victory. On a day when star catcher Buster Posey was shut down for the rest of the season in order to have hip surgery, the Giants held on to win for only the third time in their last 10 games. Suarez (5-9) limited the Rangers to three hits in seven innings. He walked three and struck out five.

WHITE SOX 6, TIGERS 1

Lucas Giolito pitched seven strong innings, and Kevan Smith blasted a two-run home run as Chicago rolled to victory at Detroit. Giolito (10-9) recorded his third consecutive win and second against the Tigers this month. He limited them to one run on three hits while striking out six. Smith's homer was his first of the year. Matt Davidson and Yoan Moncada each had two hits, a run scored and an RBI for the White Sox, who have won two of three in the four-game series. — Reuters

Mercedes to explore closer ties with Force India

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS: Formula One world champions Mercedes say they will explore closer ties with Force India after that team's change of ownership, along the lines of Ferrari's relationship with Haas and Sauber.

Some rivals—notably Renault, McLaren and Williams—have expressed concern that Formula One risks becoming even more of a two-tier championship with manufacturer 'A' teams and closely-linked 'B' outfits. US-owned Haas has a close technical agreement with Ferrari while Swiss-based Sauber have a long tradition of using the Italian team's engines and running drivers contracted to Ferrari.

Red Bull also own two teams, with Toro Rosso the junior outfit, who will both have Honda engines next year. "Obviously a few years ago when Ferrari spotted the potential in collaborating closely with another team it triggered a thought process with everybody else," Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff told reporters at the Belgian Grand Prix.

"You can see that, and only Ferrari will know how much benefit that has generated but there is benefit in such a cooperation if it is structured well," added the Austrian, who also emphasised there were limits.

"No team wants to be a B team, no team wants to be a junior team... everybody will want their own success and this is something you need to honour and to respect in Formula One," said Wolff. "If you can meet on an eye level then a collaboration can make sense. But making it happen is not trivial."

Wolff noted that Force India's Silverstone factory was just a few miles down the road from Mercedes' Brackley base and said the champions would "explore all avenues" within the permissible regulations.

Force India already use Mercedes engines, as do former champions Williams whose Canadian driver Lance Stroll looks set to switch to Force India after his billionaire father Lawrence took over at the head of a consortium of associates. Williams are a family-run independent constructor who have switched engine supplier over the years.—Reuters



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's Los Pumas Marcos Kremer (C) is tackled by South Africa's Springboks Francois Louw (L) and Lukhanyo Am (R) during a Rugby Championship 2018 test match at Malvinas Argentinas stadium in Mendoza, some 1050 km west of Buenos Aires, Argentina on Saturday. Argentina's Los Pumas won by 32-19. — AFP

All Blacks still likely to tinker against Pumas

WELLINGTON: The All Blacks are expected to stick to their strategic plan of giving some of their less experienced players an opportunity to start against Argentina in their next Rugby Championship match even though the Pumas are coming off a win over the Springboks.

Steve Hansen's team beat Australia 40-12 at Eden Park yesterday to sew up the Bledisloe Cup with a game to spare, while Mario Ledesma's Pumas upset South Africa 32-19 later in the day to record a rare victory in the southern hemisphere competition. Hansen had indicated prior to the tournament that his long-term goal was to develop experience this year as a means of bedding down tactics to take through to the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan. That had not changed, he told reporters in Auckland on Sunday, even if the temptation was to stick with a winning side, with several first-choice players likely to be rested ahead of the clash with the Springboks in Wellington on Sept. 15.

"You're always flexible in your thinking but we've got a plan in place, and we've just got to trust everybody to do their jobs," Hansen said. "You can't get sidetracked by

results, and you've got to understand what you're trying to do. "We're very fortunate we've got a strong squad and what will make it stronger is giving people game-time from time to time and trusting them.

"Through trusting them they will grow and all of a sudden people start talking about how much depth we've got." That planning is likely to see players such as flyhalf Richie Mo'unga, who has just one cap off the bench, and uncapped scrumhalf Te Toiroa Tahiriorangi getting the nod in Nelson on Sept. 8.

Loose forwards Shannon Frizell and Jackson Hemopo could also make the 23-man squad for the clash against the Pumas, who in recent years have often been competitive for 60 minutes before falling away in the final quarter.

Under Ledesma, the Jaguares—which is essentially the national side—advanced to the Super Rugby playoffs for the first time this year and the players have appeared eager to adapt to a more free-flowing game plan. "They're going to be tough. They've had a good win (against South Africa)," Hansen said. "We know they're a good side. (Ledesma) has got them going well, and playing probably a little more fluently than they were. "They're using the Super Rugby style of game and we'd expect them to bring that into the test arena." Hansen added that Ryan Crotty, who was concussed in the All Blacks' 38-13 victory over the Wallabies in Sydney last week and Rieko Ioane (hamstring) should be in contention for the Nelson game. Sonny Bill Williams, however, was still a doubt after a shoulder injury forced him out of the first two matches of the Rugby Championship. — Reuters

Tiger, Spieth confident in Ryder Cup security plans

PARAMUS: American stars Tiger Woods and Jordan Spieth expressed their confidence in security arrangements for next month's Ryder Cup team golf showdown in France. Ryder Cup organizers have been working with French police and government agencies on security measures at the course, Le Golf National, and team hotel in Versailles since May 2011, when France was awarded the Ryder Cup.

The Telegraph of London reported earlier this week a "Ring of Steel" would be in place. And if French President Emmanuel Macron and his US counterpart, Donald Trump, were to attend, elite special forces would be placed on duty with mobile surface-to-air infrared missiles also deployed, according to the story. As well, the Versailles area will be closed to air traffic, with the exception of registered helicopters and fighter jets. An expected 50,000 fans are expected to flock to the course, with the September 28-30 event expected to be the strongest-guarded golfing event in the history of the ancient club-and-ball game. Woods has played the Le National course just once, back in 1994 as an amateur, and while he was named a USA Team vice-captain earlier this year, the 42-year-old winner of 14 major titles is expected to be announced by US captain Jim Furyk next month as one of four captain's picks for the 12-man roster.

"I have traveled all over the world playing golf, so I've experienced different security scenarios where ever I've been," Woods said from this week's PGA Northern Trust tournament. "I am sure the Ryder Cup will be fine and the organizers will have covered every security issue.

"We saw the security in place for the London Olympics some years back and you could argue London is in a similar state of alert as France but I have all confidence in the organizers," Spieth, who automatically qualified for a third USA Ryder Cup team berth, was equally supportive of security preparations and safety precautions.

"No, I'm not worried and I can imagine just how security-tight the golf course is going to be," Spieth said Saturday at the Northern Trust. "If anything, I was more scared about going to Brazil two years back for the Olympic Games.— AFP

Sports



Governing body hopes Asian Games helps secure weightlifting's future

N Koreans have won seven of 13 available weightlifting gold in Jakarta

JAKARTA: As weightlifting battles for its Olympic future, China and Kazakhstan's absence from the Asian Games due to doping suspensions indicates how seriously the sport's governing body is taking the crisis. The two nations were among nine handed suspensions by the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) last October as the body sought to crack down on doping, which has plagued the sport and threatened its spot on the Olympic programme.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has threatened the sport with removal from the Olympic schedule for the Paris 2024 Games if it fails to improve its doping record and it remains on probation.

Several nations, including Russia and Kazakhstan, will only be allocated two places each at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. This is due to the new rules stating that any nation with 20 or more doping violations from 2008 to 2020 will be allowed only one man and one woman at the Games.

The IWF has also changed the Olympic qualification criteria to ensure athletes must compete at least six times during the 18-month qualifying period to secure an Olympic berth. The IWF hope new changes will not only reward clean athletes, but also prove to the IOC that they still deserve a place at sport's top table.

"It has been a balance between sanctions and education and support, because we would like to achieve long-term changes in the sport of weightlifting in these countries," the IWF's Director General Attila Adamfi told Reuters yesterday.

"Not just banning them for one year or not having them here and then they return with the same system." China, Kazakhstan and seven other countries were suspended by the IWF for 12 months due to committing at least three doping offences when samples from the 2008 and 2012 Olympics were reanalysed.

At the time of the ban the Chinese Weightlifting Association (CWA) expressed "regret" at the decision, stating it was "firmly against doping and has a zero-tolerance approach to this particular problem."

Despite an appeal before the Asian Games in Jakarta, the bans on China and Kazakhstan-winners of eight gold medals between them in Incheon four years ago were upheld.

"There is no other option (other than for China and Kazakhstan to accept bans)," said Adamfi, who has made it his mission to clean up the sport. "There are rules and there was a decision and so you have to follow that decision. I believe that not only these countries, but also the rest of our members fully understand and support these positive changes."

CAS APPEAL

Kazakhstan has twice challenged the IWF in the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). The Kazahks lost the first case heard earlier this year, in which it challenged its one-year suspension on the grounds that doping violations were "outside its control".

It is currently contesting the IWF's new qualification rules at CAS. If Kazakhstan were to succeed in overturning the new rules, Adamfi believes no positives will come of it. "Of course, we are not very happy because we believe nobody will win in this case. It doesn't matter who wins legally, nobody will really win and the sport will definitely lose," said Adamfi, who sees the Kazahks as going against the IWF, the IOC and the other national federations.

"I do hope that, sooner rather than later, they realise that they can win something short term but the consequences for our sport, I do believe, would be negative so I hope they reconsider their position."

One nation to benefit from the absence of



JAKARTA: North Korea's Rim Jong Sim lifts during the clean and jerk women's 75kg weightlifting group A event during 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta yesterday. —AFP

Kazakhstan and China—who have won more than twice the number of gold medals in weightlifting than any other country at the Asian Games—is North Korea.

The North Koreans have won seven of the 13 available weightlifting golds in Jakarta, including titles for sisters Rim Jong-sim and Rim Um-sim. "Our special training secret is just that we always remember that we

have to repay, because whenever one person competes, the whole team will support with our might," Rim Jong-sim told reporters after her win yesterday.

The IWF says it is one of the few governing bodies to carry out independent out-of-competition testing in North Korea and is confident all those competing in Jakarta are clean. — Reuters

DAY NINE OF THE ASIAN GAMES

JAKARTA: Highlights of day nine of the 18th Asian Games in Jakarta and Palembang yesterday.

CHINA'S WANG LEAPS TO LONG JUMP GOLD

China won their fourth gold medal of the day through Wang Jianan in the men's long jump competition. His effort of 8.24m was the best by an athlete in the Games since 1994, when compatriot Huang Gang won gold with a leap of 8.34m.

CHANI LEADS SAUDI IN 10,000M RACE

Hassan Chani helped Bahrain clinch their fourth straight Asian Games gold in the men's 10,000m event. His compatriot Abraham Cheroben was second. India's Lakshmanan Govindan came in third but was later disqualified to hand China's Zhao Changhong the bronze medal.

HISTORIC GOLD FOR COMBINED KOREAN TEAM

The unified Korean team sealed their first gold medal in a multisport event yesterday, with their canoeists winning the women's 500 metre dragon boat race. "We showed the power and courage of the Korean people to the world," To Myong-suk, who served as a drummer, said. "Although we didn't have enough time, we were all united and achieved a big thing after 20 days." The team had won the bronze medal in women's 200 metre competition on Saturday.

GONG EXTENDS CHINA'S SUPREMACY

China's Gong Lijiao bagged the gold medal in the women's shot put event with an effort of 19.66m. The Asian giants have triumphed in the competition at every Games since 1978.

HASSAN CRUISES TO MEN'S 400M GOLD

Abdallah Hassan secured Qatar's first gold medal at these Games, winning the men's 400m event ahead of India's Mohammed Anas Yahiya and Ali Khamis of Bahrain. Bahrain's Salwa Naser won gold in the women's race. India's Hima Das was second ahead of Kazakhstan's Elina Mikhina.

DAVID WINS SQUASH GOLD ON 35TH BIRTHDAY

Malaysian squash great Nicol David defeated compatriot Sivasangari Subramaniam in the women's singles final to win a record-extending fifth Asian Games gold medal on her 35th birthday.

KUWAIT OPEN ACCOUNT WITH SHOOTING GOLD

Kuwait's Mansour Alrashidi secured the country's first medal at these Games by winning the men's skeet shooting competition. China's Jin Di claimed silver while Saif Almansoori of the United Arab Emirates took bronze.

DOUBLE DELIGHT FOR PHILIPPINES IN GOLF

The Philippines claimed their second Asian Games gold medal in golf by winning the women's team event. Yuka Saso, who also won the individual competition, Bianca Pagdanganan and Lois Kaye Go teamed up to finish ahead of South Korea and China.

INDONESIA SURPASS 1962 GAMES GOLD MEDAL TALLY

Indonesia surpassed their previous record gold medal tally dating back to the 1962 Jakarta Games by winning their 12th gold yesterday. Aqsa Sutan Aswar won the jetski endurance runabout to beat their previous record, which was matched earlier yesterday when Rifki Ardiansyah Arrosyid claimed the men's 60kg karate event. Indonesia are on course to reach their pre-Games target of 16 golds.

THAI SHOOTER SUTIYA MAKES IT THIRD TIME LUCKY

After finishing third in the last two editions, Thai shooter Sutiya Jiewchaloemmit won gold in the women's skeet competition. China's Wei Meng won silver. South Korea's defending champion Kim Min-ji settled for bronze.

WEN CLINCHES KARATE GOLD FOR TAIWAN

Taiwanese karateka Wen Tzuyun defended her 2014 gold medal in the women's 55kg category. Iran's Taravat Khaksar won silver while Indonesia's Cokorda Istri Agung Sanistyarani took bronze.

JAPAN'S NOGUCHI CLIMBS TO GLORY

Akiyo Noguchi claimed Japan's first gold medal in sport climbing at the Asian Games with an assured performance in the women's combined event.

CHELIMO HANDS SAUDI FIRST GOLD AT GAMES

World champion Rose Chelimo gave Bahrain their first gold medal at the 18th Asian Games by easily winning the women's marathon yesterday. The Kenyan-born runner's winning time of two hours, 34 minutes and 51 seconds was the slowest at the Games since China's Zhao Youfeng won clocked 2:35:19 in Beijing in 1990. Keiko Nogani won silver for Japan by finishing in 2:36:37, while North Korea's Kim Hye Song took bronze. — Reuters

Ginting sails into badminton semi-finals

JAKARTA: Indonesia's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting extended his giant-killing spree on the badminton court with a stunning victory over the reigning Olympic champion in the Asian Games quarter-finals yesterday.

Ginting beat Chen Long 21-19, 21-11 to sail through to the semis, guaranteeing Indonesia a medal in the men's singles event in Jakarta.

The 21-year-old, fresh from victory against Japanese world champion Kento Momota on Saturday, brought the curtains down on China's medal hopes after Shi Yuqi's swift exit in the first round. The new Indonesian poster boy will now face Taiwan heavyweight Chou Tien Chen, who battled past NG Ka Long Angus of Hong Kong 21-18, 21-18. World number 10 Kenta Nishimoto kept up the Japanese fight after defeating Korea's Son Wan ho in straight games and will meet Indonesia's Jonatan Christie in the final-four clash. In the women's draw, India's Saina Nehwal and PV Sindhu assured their country of at least a bronze after making the semi-finals. Sindhu, who was recently listed as the world's seventh highest paid sportswoman by Forbes, got past Thailand's Nitchanon Jindapol 21-11, 16-21, 21-14 in the last-eight match. But the lanky Indian—who is ranked third in the world—admitted to making mistakes in the second game, saying she was nervous.

"I made unforced errors. I felt that I could have finished off in two sets but I think due to my easy errors I gave her the second set," Sindhu told reporters. "I was leading and then I started giving off points and then I was nervous. I thought nothing is



JAKARTA: Indonesia's Anthony Sinisuka Ginting hits return against China's Chen Long during their men's singles quarter-final badminton match at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta yesterday. —AFP

going on, nothing happening with my strokes. They were simple errors but I began to get more nervous," she said. Earlier Sindhu's teammate and rival Nehwal got past fourth-seeded Ratchanon Intanon of Thailand 21-18, 21-16. It is the first time in 36 years that India will be getting an individual badminton medal at the continental games since the late Syed Modi's gold in 1982.

The Indian shuttlers will go head-to-head if they win their respective semis on Monday and Sindhu is looking forward to the challenge.

"Hopefully if that happens then it is very good for

Indian badminton. Proud moment for the country. Two singles players in the finals," said Sindhu, who recently lost the gold to Nehwal in the Commonwealth Games. "Definitely hoping to get the best. Not just the medal but it should be a gold. It's not over yet and I have to keep going," she added.

Nehwal will face the world number one from Taiwan, Tai Tzu Ying, who knocked out 2017 World Champion Nozomi Okuhara of Japan 21-15 21-10. Sindhu will play world number two Akane Yamaguchi of Japan, who won her match against Chen Yufei of China 21-19, 21-11. — AFP

China star sets Games record to win Asian 100m

JAKARTA: China's Su Bingtian stormed to the Asian Games 100 metres title in a meet record of 9.92 seconds yesterday, missing out on a new continental best by a whisker. The 28-year-old streaked away to win the Jakarta final ahead of Nigerian-born Qatari Tosin Ogunode—the younger brother of Femi Ogunode, with whom Su shares the Asian mark of 9.91.

Su pumped his fists and roared in delight as he won by eight-hundredths to improve on his 2014 silver medal. Japan's Ryota Yamagata took the bronze. "All I was thinking about was winning the gold medal," Su told reporters. "The time doesn't matter. I was finding it a little hard to get up for the races and was doing just enough in the heats. But I found a little something extra when it mattered."

Bahrain's Edidiong Odiong snatched the women's 100m title in 11.30 seconds after a photo finish with India's Dutee Chand, who clocked 11.32 with China's Wei Yongli taking bronze. Odiong, who originally hails from Nigeria, was one of six African-born athletes to snaffle track and field gold medals in Jakarta yesterday.

Chand's silver came after she missed the 2014 Games in a row over her elevated testosterone levels caused by hyperandrogenism, the condition that also affects South African middle distance star Caster Semenya. "I've gone through a lot of pain and anguish since the last Asian Games," said Chand. "To come here and win a silver I feel is redemption for all that I've suffered in that time."



JAKARTA: (L-R) Indonesia's Muhammad Zohri, China's Su Bingtian and Taiwan's Yang Chunhan compete in the final of the men's 100m athletics event during the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta yesterday. — AFP

Bahrain's Salwa Naser blazed to gold in the women's 400m, silver dreadlocks billowing behind her as the Nigeria-born sprinter clocked a Games-record 50.09. Naser, who took silver at last year's world championships in London, led from wire-to-wire with India's world junior champion Hima Das runner-up seven-tenths back.

Bahrain's Hassan Chani raced away to win the men's 10,000m in 28:35.54 with Abraham Cheroben, another naturalised athlete now competing for the Gulf state, runner-up in 29:00.29.

China's Wang Jianan leapt to victory in the men's long jump with a new Games record of 8.24 metres, with countryman Zhang Yaoguang claiming silver with a jump of 8.15. Japan's Keisuke Ushiro retained his decathlon title with 7,878 points to pip Thailand's Suttisak Singkhon, while South Korean pin-up Jung Hye-lim won the women's 100m hurdles. Qatar's Abdallah Hassan bagged the men's 400m title in 44.89 by some distance from India's Asian title-holder Muhammed Anas, with Bahrain's Ali Khamis third. — AFP

Sports

Watford sink Palace to extend perfect start with 2-1 victory

Capoue fortunate to escape with only a yellow card for an early foul

WATFORD: Watford extended their superb start to the Premier League season with a 2-1 victory over Crystal Palace yesterday after Etienne Capoue escaped a red card and created the Hornets' opening goal.

Capoue could consider himself fortunate to escape with only a yellow for an early foul on Wilfried Zaha. And that proved a crucial moment as Capoue set up Roberto Pereyra's third goal of the season to put Watford ahead.

Jose Holebas's miscued cross found its way into the net to double Watford's lead. Zaha got one back for Palace in the closing stages, but it came too late to stop Watford securing their third successive league victory.

Palace boss Roy Hodgson was furious that Capoue avoided a red card, saying: "We were unlucky he was not sent off. At the time I thought it was a bad challenge. "It definitely affected Wilf. We didn't see anything like the best of him until late in the game.

"One can understand that type of challenge affecting him. Players of his match-winning ability do get targeted." Capoue appeared to deliberately rake the Achilles of Zaha in just the fourth minute under the nose of referee Anthony Taylor, who only gave a yellow card.

The Palace forward, who had been booked on his

previous two trips to Vicarage Road, was shown a yellow card almost immediately after for a challenge on Holebas. Pereyra, who scored twice in the 2-0 victory over Brighton on the season's opening weekend, had the hosts' first chances when he saw one shot deflect wide and another saved by Wayne Hennessey as they gathered some momentum.

Inevitably it was Capoue who created the game's opening goal in the 53rd minute. He resisted two challenges in midfield to play in Pereyra and his teammate did the rest with a cool finish into the bottom corner. Watford rode their luck to make it two in the 71st minute.

Holebas took a touch to move beyond Andros Townsend and was fortunate when what appeared a cross curled into the top right corner and beyond Wayne Hennessey's reach. Zaha gave Palace renewed belief in the 78th minute with his second goal of the season.

Having played a one-two with substitute Max Meyer he ran the ball down the left wing, moved into the area and sent a powerful finish under Ben Foster. In stoppage time, Joel Ward headed just wide as Palace came close to snatching an equaliser. — AFP



WATFORD: Crystal Palace's English midfielder Andros Townsend (C) during the English Premier League football match between Watford and Crystal Palace at Vicarage Road Stadium in Watford, north of London yesterday.— AFP

Mitrovic shines as Fulham earn first win

LONDON: Aleksandar Mitrovic inspired Fulham's first Premier League success this season as the Serb's double secured a 4-2 win over Burnley yesterday. Mitrovic fired Fulham to promotion from the Championship with 12 goals on loan from Newcastle last term.

Now playing for Fulham on a permanent basis, he is doing all he can to ensure their stay in the top-flight is not a short one. Jeff Hendrick had cancelled out a stunning goal from Ivory Coast midfielder Jean Michael Seri when Mitrovic struck with two headers in two minutes.

James Tarkowski pulled one back for Burnley, but Andre Schurrle's late strike ensured Fulham got off the mark after losing their first two matches against Crystal Palace and Tottenham.

Just three minutes had elapsed when Seri came up with a memorable first goal in English football. Collecting a ball inside from Luciano Vietto 25 yards out, Seri turned, looked up and launched a ferocious shot which left Claret's goalkeeper Joe Hart grasping at thin air. Yet if Burnley were feeling the effects of their midweek trip to Greece it was not immediately apparent, as they took just seven minutes to equalise. A loose pass from Maxime Le Marchand in midfield allowed them to break with Aaron Lennon leading the charge.

The winger raced to the edge of the area before squaring the ball to Hendrick, who needed a couple of bites at the cherry before beating Fulham keeper Marcus Bettinelli at the far post.

However, when Hart misjudged Tom Cairney's deep cross Mitrovic stole in at the far post to head Fulham back into the lead. Moments later Mitrovic struck again,



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English midfielder Dele Alli (L) vies with Fulham's Dutch defender Timothy Fosu-Mensah (R) during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Fulham at Wembley Stadium in London, yesterday.— AFP

this time with a glancing header.

Shellsheated Burnley did manage to get back into it four minutes before half-time, although there was a hint of offside as Tarkowski prodded in Ben Mee's header from a corner.

They could not muster a response after the break, though, and Fulham wrapped up the victory seven minutes from full-time. Mitrovic was denied a hat-trick when Hart pushed his shot against a post but Borussia Dortmund loanee Schurrle drilled in the rebound. — AFP

Vettel wins in Belgium to rein in Hamilton

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS: Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel sped away from first corner carnage to celebrate a commanding Belgian Grand Prix victory yesterday and trim Lewis Hamilton's Formula One lead to 17 points with eight races remaining.

Hamilton, last year's winner in Belgium, started from pole position but finished second for Mercedes while Red Bull's Max Verstappen gave his army of Dutch fans something to cheer with third place.

In the battle of four times world champions, Hamilton now has 231 points to Vettel's 214. "I had a great start, I'm not sure Lewis saw me as he pushed me to the left in the first lap, but after last year I ended up short, and this year it was the other way around," said Vettel of his decisive pass on Hamilton.

"As soon as I was ahead I relaxed. I had a good restart after the safety car, and after that it was a very smooth race," he added. The start provided most of the afternoon's excitement, with Fernando Alonso's



SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS: Winner Ferrari's German driver Sebastian Vettel (R) celebrates on the podium with Ferrari aerodynamicist David Sanchez after the Belgian Formula One Grand Prix at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Spa yesterday.— AFP

McLaren flying over Charles Leclerc's Sauber at the La Source hairpin after being rammed by Renault's Nico Hulkenberg.

All three retired as the safety car was deployed for four laps but Leclerc had reason to thank the 'halo' head protection system-introduced this season-for allowing him to step away unscathed. Television close-up images after the race showed the structure heavily marked by the impact. "The Halo was a very good thing to have today. I think for him, it helped," commented Spaniard Alonso, who will be leaving Formula One at the end of the season.

Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen, a four times winner in Belgium, and Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo also collided at the start and retired after pitting, the Finn having to wait for his 100th career podium. At the front, Vettel swiftly seized the lead from Hamilton down the Kemmel straight on the opening lap and never looked back, taking the chequered flag 11.0 seconds clear of Hamilton.

"He drove past me like I wasn't even there on the straight," said Hamilton, who was quick to shake his

rival's hand and offer congratulations. "They have got a few trick things going on in the car," he added. "I did what I could, we did what we could so we have to keep working."

It was the German's fifth win of the campaign, matching his British rival, and 52nd of his career—more than the great four times champion Alain Prost managed. Hamilton's team mate Valtteri Bottas finished fourth, and set the fastest lap, after starting 17th.

Force India began their existence under new ownership with a haul of points that lifted them immediately off the bottom of the standings. The team, who had started with all their constructors' points taken away following confirmation as a new mid-season entry, had Mexican Sergio Perez fifth and Frenchman Esteban Ocon sixth.

Haas duo Romain Grosjean and Kevin Magnussen were seventh and eighth, with France's Pierre Gasly ninth for Toro Rosso and Sweden's Marcus Ericsson 10th for Sauber. McLaren's Belgian driver Stoffel Vandoorne was last in his home race. — Reuters

US Open celebrates 50th birthday with \$600 million facelift

NEW YORK: The US Open turns 50 this year and rather than easing towards old age, it will celebrate the landmark birthday by unveiling a \$600 million facelift. A grand slam that began life in an elegant country club in leafy Forest Hills, the US Open long ago cast aside its quaint roots and has grown into a big, bold and brash money spinning tennis machine that according to Forbes will this year churn out a record \$350 million in revenue.

"Forest Hills was very much a private club setting and the members took it as a sort of intrusion," tennis historian and author Steve Flink, who has attended every U.S. Open, told Reuters. "A lot of them would have preferred it to themselves.

"They came there to play." The Forest Hills members got their courts back in 1978 when the U.S. Open found a new home in Flushing Meadows, overhauling the decaying infrastructure left behind from the 1964 World's Fair.

The grounds, now called the 'Billie Jean King National Tennis Center' have been transformed into a state-of-the-art facility boasting 22 courts, including two futuristic stadiums with retractable roofs.

While the move across the Borough of Queens was just a few miles, it marked a seismic shift for the sport. The switch from a private club setting to a public facility meant tennis had moved from the "classes to the masses". Suddenly the traditional tennis whites dress code had a blue collar.

"It was sad in a way (the move) because it was such an elegant setting but it was too much of crush," explained Flink. "But it was also very wise to move it and go over to a public facility like Flushing Meadows and establish a new identity and make it more for the "masses than the classes" that was the phrase we all used but it was true.

"When they made that move that was what they were in the process of doing." When the United States National Championships opened its doors to professionals in 1968 and became the US Open, the well-mannered Forest Hills crowds still observed tennis etiquette. However, 40 years after the move to Flushing Meadows, the polite applause has gone the way of the wooden racket.

Taking on the hustle and bustle personality of the Big Apple, the US Open is loud and proud, a rock and roll show in tennis gear played out on the sport's biggest stage, the late night crowds in the City That Never Sleeps howling with each and every shot. "It's New York, and it's a show," said six-time US Open champion Chris Evert, who will be commentating for ESPN from today when first round action gets underway. "Every Grand Slam has its charm, and every Grand Slam has its niche. In New York the US Open, the last one of the year, it's showbiz. "It's a spectacle. It's an event, and it's always exciting. "Night time is more exciting in a US Open than any other Grand Slam."

Organisers have planned a major extravaganza for the 50th milestone, turning the two week tournament into a three-week festival. The qualifying rounds to the year's final grand slam were given greater prominence in the week leading up to the Aug. 27 to Sept. 9 tournament in what organisers called the 'Fan Week', while 50 former champions (27 men and 23 women) were also being celebrated and recognised on-court during special legends matches.

There is a new sleek stylised logo and slogan "Built for Glory". Built for Glory and turning a profit. The new 14,000-seat Louis Armstrong Stadium marks the completion of an ambitious five-year \$600 million project that revamped nearly 90 percent of the sprawling facility. Among other things, according to a Forbes report, the renovation has doubled the overall square footage of the retail, food and restaurant footprint on the grounds.

"Obviously it cost a lot of money," John McEnroe, a native New Yorker and four-time US Open winner told reporters during a conference call. "But I believe the US Open brings more money from what I understand... to the city than the money they receive from the (baseball teams) Yankees, Mets, (ice hockey's) Rangers and (basketball's) Knicks combined.

"It's obviously a big two weeks for New York, for tennis. "But even for the city, the excitement level is ramped up. I think it will be even more so. "I think people are going to love it." — Reuters



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Man United v Tottenham Hotspur 22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2

SPANISH LEAGUE

Levante v Celta de Vigo 21:15
beIN SPORTS HD 3

Athletic de Bilbao v Huesca 23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1

AS Roma v Atalanta 21:30
Cosmote Sport 2 HD

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

AS Roma v Atalanta 21:30
beIN SPORTS HD 4

25 Rockies rock Cardinals with eight-run inning in 9-1 win



26 China star sets Games record to win Asian 100m crown



27 Watford sink Palace to extend perfect start with 2-1 victory



Officials hail Kuwaiti gold medalists

Proud to see Kuwaiti flag high, thanks to our heroes at Asian Games: Speaker



JAKARTA: Gold medalist Kuwait's Ali Al-Shatti poses for a photo during the victory ceremony for the men's 67kg category karate event at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta yesterday. — AFP



Kuwait Shooting Federation Chairman Duaij Al-Otaibi with Kuwaiti shooter Mansour Al-Rashidi (right). — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah praised yesterday the achievements made by two Kuwaiti athletes, Mansour Al-Rashidi in the shooting competitions of Skeet and karate player Ali Al-Shatti for winning gold medals at the 18th Asian Games in the Indonesian capital Jakarta. His Highness expressed his sincere congratulations to the heroes of Kuwait and his pride in these results achieved during the Asian Games and to raise the banner of Kuwait high in the skies at the Indonesian capital and through international sports arena. His Highness stressed that the Kuwaiti youth is a source of pride for the country and its wealth, wishing everyone prosperity and success.

Kuwait's Information Minister and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammed Al-Jabri expressed keenness yesterday to translate the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to provide all means and care for Kuwaiti youth, especially athletes. Jabri congratulated players Mansour Al-Rashidi, winner of the gold medal in shooting game skeet and Ali Al-Shatti, winner of the karate (67 kg) gold medal at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta. The Kuwaiti athletes always prove their excellence and their ability in the international competitions and their keenness to raise the flag of their country in all forums, affirming Kuwait's experiences and talents worthy of appreciation and pride, Jabri said.

Jabri praised the great interest paid by His

Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the youth and his constant support for them to activate their positive participation in building the nation and its prosperity. He noted to the great care given by the government, especially His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, through an ambitious national strategy to empower the Kuwaiti youth, support their initiatives and innovations, and develop their skills, which reflected positively on their participation in regional and international forums.

Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem expressed yesterday his joy in watching the flag of Kuwait flying high thanks to achievements made by our heroes Al-Rashidi and Al-Shatti at the 18th Asian Games. "We were thrilled to see the flag of Kuwait flying high in a scene that we were deprived of for a long time after Al-Rashidi won the gold medal in the shooting competitions (Skeet) and Al-Shatti also in the karate competitions," Al-Ghanem told reporters at the National Assembly. He expressed his hope that "more achievements will be achieved by our young heroes at the Games, despite the limited potential and lack of preparations because the ban was just lifted." He also congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people in general and athletes in particular for the Olympic suspension which was temporarily lifted and hoping it to become permanent

as it did for football. Al-Ghanem expressed his thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince for all their support towards their children who are fulfilling their duties in this case and to the government side, represented by His Highness Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister who formed a ministerial committee consisting of three ministers to follow up. He also thanked the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for his keenness and support to the organisers of this file led by Director General of the General Authority for Sport, Dr Hamoud Fleith. He also thanked the Information Minister, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammed Al-Jabri, former youth ministers Khaled Al-Roudhan, who is currently Minister of Trade and Industry and Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, who currently serves as the Civil Aviation Chief. He thanked the parliamentary Youth and Sports Committee and all the deputies who attended the session of December 3rd and resulted in the adoption of Law No. 87 of 2017 on the sport.

Meanwhile, President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Engineer Duaij Al-Otaibi expressed great pride in Rashidi's gold medal achievement in the 18th Asian Games in Jakarta and for raising the flag of Kuwait in this prestigious continental sports arena. Otaibi said that what has been achieved at this competition makes the Kuwaiti shooting sport 'very proud', especially that this participation was decided

just two days before the games began, but Rashidi was prepared and performed heroically in all stages of the competition. Otaibi added that he was optimistic to continue on these achievements in light of the great support given by the Kuwaiti government, expressing the hope that the Kuwaiti and Arab teams will achieve more in this session.

Otaibi dedicated this victory to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister and all Kuwaiti people. He thanked all those who contributed to this achievement from the family of the Kuwaiti Shooting Club, in particular the honorary president of the club, the head of the General Directorate of Civil Aviation Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and other members of the club, and also appreciated the support and patronage of Minister Jabri, for all club activities.

The Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi said that this achievement is evidence of the distinguished Kuwaiti champions in this heritage sport, stressing that Kuwait has high-class shooters who are able to overcome all difficulties they face. Osaimi said that this win is of great importance and to have Rashidi raise the Kuwaiti flag at the Asian Games, although the decision to participate came late because the ban was lifted from the Kuwaiti sport just two days before the launch of the 2018 Asian Games in the hope that Kuwaiti shooters will continue to make achievements. — KUNA

Chelsea leave it late as Yedlin own goal kills off Newcastle

NEWCASTLE: Chelsea required an own goal from Newcastle's DeAndre Yedlin to maintain their 100 percent start to the Premier League season as the Blues ground out a 2-1 win at St James' Park yesterday. Yedlin deflected Marcos Alonso's shot into his own net in the 87th minute to settle a match that had threatened to end in frustration for Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri.

Earlier, Chelsea needed a penalty from Eden Hazard to finally breach a black and white wall erected by manager Rafa Benitez, whose defensive approach succeeded for 76 minutes. The Newcastle manager acknowledged the massive gap in quality between the two sets of players, packing his defence and granting Chelsea the ball for 80 percent of the game.

It was possession that they were unable to turn into goals until Fabian Schar's chal-

lenge on Spanish defender Alonso produced a penalty. Newcastle responded with a goal from Joselu in a rare attack and looked set to steal a point before Chelsea's last-gasp winner made it three successive victories for the Blues. Benitez will say his approach was justified and it acknowledged the gap in quality between the two squads. Before this game he earmarked Sarri's team as genuine title candidates and even gave them the edge over Manchester United, Tottenham and Arsenal, so Benitez was never likely to go toe-to-toe with Chelsea.

Jorginho, a player Benitez bought while he was in charge of Napoli, prompted intelligently in midfield and Hazard, starting for the first time this season, twisted and turned as he probed for a gap in Newcastle's defence that often featured nine men in front of keeper Martin Dubravka.

But too often, Chelsea failed to find a way through and were particularly frustrated in the first 45 minutes. Hazard placed two shots wide, while Antonio Rudiger and Pedro was also off-target before Pedro finally forced Dubravka to make a save.

It was a satisfying half for Benitez, who saw his side create two opportunities on the break when Kepa Arrizabalaga had to save from Jacob Murphy and Salomon Rondon wasted an excellent chance by heading wide.

At the interval, Newcastle must have sensed they could collect at least a point, a target that appeared to be more difficult before the start when Benitez was forced to rule out two of his most influential players, Jamaal Lascelles and Jonjo Shelvey.

The official line was that both were injured, although there were unconfirmed rumours that a training ground argument between Lascelles and Benitez had prompted the manager to leave him out. Benitez insisted, however: "Shelvey has been playing with pain, we tell him you cannot carry on with pain because it will stop him. Jamaal came in with ankle problem."

It meant four of Newcastle's summer signings were starting a game for the first time in a line-up and two of them-Schar and Federico Fernandez-were at the heart of Newcastle's defence. Both performed well, particularly in the second half when the pattern was the same but Chelsea delivered more crosses towards Alvaro Morata as they started to run out of patience. Rudiger almost made the breakthrough when he powered a shot against the bar in the 72nd minute, shortly before Hazard's penalty. Even the most optimistic Newcastle supporter must have feared the worst, but Joselu's 83rd minute header offered them hope before Chelsea won it in dramatic fashion. — AFP



NEWCASTLE: Newcastle United's US defender DeAndre Yedlin (L) challenges Chelsea's Spanish midfielder Pedro (R) during the English Premier League football match between Newcastle United and Chelsea at St James' Park in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, north east England yesterday. — AFP