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Saudi agrees to US request to increase oil production

Prices too high! Trump lashes out at OPEC

France end Messi's World Cup dream



KAZAN: Argentina's goalkeeper Franco Armani (center) reacts as he takes France's third goal during the Russia 2018 World Cup round of 16 football match between France and Argentina yesterday. — AFP (See Page 28)

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said yesterday that Saudi Arabia's King Salman had agreed to his request to ramp up oil production, a week after OPEC already announced an output rise. The official Saudi Press Agency confirmed a phone call between the two leaders about oil, but mentioned no specifics. "Just spoke to King Salman of Saudi Arabia and explained to him that, because of the turmoil & dysfunction in Iran and Venezuela, I am asking that Saudi Arabia increase oil production, maybe up to 2,000,000 barrels, to make up the difference," Trump announced in an early morning tweet. "Prices too high! He has agreed!"

The Saudi Press Agency said Trump had called Salman and the two highlighted "the necessity of doing efforts in order to preserve the stability of the oil market and the global economy growth." They also discussed "efforts of the producing countries to cover any possible shortage in supplies," the agency said in its brief report. Saudi Arabia is the world's biggest oil exporter and has usually kept at least 1.5 million to two million barrels per day of spare capacity, according to the United States Energy Information Administration.

But oil officials cited by The Wall Street Journal said it is debatable whether the kingdom would be able to raise output by the amount Trump suggested. "This is just simply not doable," said one senior Saudi oil official cited by the Journal. Trump has repeatedly lashed out at OPEC on Twitter in recent months, piling pressure on Riyadh, a major ally, to boost output as he hopes for lower pump prices before midterm congressional elections in November.

His latest comments come a week after ministers from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries of which Saudi Arabia is the major member had agreed to raise output from July. Non-OPEC member Russia on June 23 also backed the effort, capping a week of tense

diplomacy for the grouping that averted a damaging rift between arch foes Iran and Saudi Arabia. The ministers announced they would ramp up oil production by around one million barrels a day from July. "I think it will contribute significantly to meet the extra demand that we see coming in the second half," Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Faleh told reporters at the time.

The talks had centered on whether to amend an 18-month-old supply-cut deal between OPEC members and allied countries, including Russia, that has cleared a global oil glut and lifted crude prices. The unprecedented supply-cut pact has lifted crude prices from below \$30 a barrel in early 2016 to around \$70.

Saudi Arabia, backed by non-member Russia, had argued strongly in favor of increasing production as grumbles in major consumer countries like the United States, India and China have grown about higher prices. Iran opposed any changes to the original production-cut deal at a time when its oil industry is facing renewed sanctions over Trump's decision to quit the international nuclear deal with Tehran. In the end, both sides were able to save face. The current production curb pact calls for participating countries to trim output by 1.8 million barrels a day.

But production constraints and geopolitical factors have seen several nations exceed their restriction quotas, keeping about 2.8 million barrels off the market, according to OPEC. By agreeing to collectively raise output by a million barrels, member countries are simply committing to comply fully with the deal struck in late 2016. Iran has accused Trump of trying to politicize OPEC and said it was US sanctions on Iran and Venezuela that had helped push up prices. Saudi Arabia was producing around 10 million barrels of crude a day in May, according to OPEC. — AFP

News in brief

Kuwait airport's fire

KUWAIT: A limited fire engulfed the smoking room at Kuwait International Airport due to short circuit yesterday, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said. The fire, which took place between Gate 9 and Gate 10 at the airport, caused neither casualties nor disruptions to air travel operations, it said in a press statement. Firefighters have already put the limited fire under control, according to the DGCA's statement. — KUNA



UNESCO heritage list

MANAMA: UNESCO yesterday added eight pre-Islamic Iranian archeological sites to its World Heritage List, the UN agency announced at a meeting in the Bahraini capital. The sites collectively appear on the worldwide list as the "Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars region (Islamic Republic of Iran)". A province in modern-day Iran's south, Fars was the cradle of the Sassanid dynasty, which appeared at the start of the third century. After the fall of the Parthian empire, the Sassanids ruled territory that, at its peak, stretched from the west of Afghanistan to Egypt, before falling to the Arab conquest under the Umayyad caliphate in the middle of the seventh century. "These fortified structures, palaces and city plans date back to the earliest and latest times of the Sassanian Empire," UNESCO said. — AFP (See Page 21)

Al-Hayat closes bureau

BEIRUT: Prestigious pan-Arab newspaper Al-Hayat closed its offices in birthplace Lebanon yesterday, as the Saudi-owned publication continued to downsize its operations. The newspaper closed its bureau in the Lebanese capital seven decades after it was founded there, with a source at the paper citing "financial reasons". "This closure is part of a decision to close all foreign bureaus for financial reasons and transfer the headquarters to Dubai," the source said. In January, the newspaper closed its head office in London ahead of moving to the Gulf emirate. And the printing presses stopped earlier this month in Beirut, several sources said, leaving the international edition only available online until further notice. — AFP

Syrian girl, 8, born with no legs, finds hope in Turkey

ISTANBUL: Earlier this month, Maya Merhi, 8, who was born with no legs due to a congenital condition, was moving around a Syrian displaced persons camp on artificial limbs made of plastic tubing and tin cans. But after pictures of her plight, including those taken by AFP in Syria, were seen around the world, she was brought to Istanbul for treatment. And her life should be about to change.

"Maya will walk," said Dr Mehmet Zeki Culcu, the prosthetics specialist treating her at an Istanbul clinic. "God willing, in three months time." Maya, originally from Aleppo region, had until her sudden transfer to Istanbul been living with her father at a camp for displaced people in the Idlib region of northern Syria, victims of Syria's over seven year civil war. Her homemade prosthetics had been cobbled together by her father Mohammad Merhi, 34, who also shares the same disability known as congenital amputation which means the person is born without lower limbs.

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Rape of 7-yr-old girl sparks angry protests in India

MUMBAI: Thousands of people took to the streets in central India this week demanding the death penalty for assailants who raped a seven-year-old girl lured away from school as she waited to be picked up by her parents. Two men have been arrested for the crime in the city of Mandsaur, police said. The victim was hospitalized but is recovering, doctors said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government introduced the death penalty for rape of girls under 12 and increased the minimum punishment for those whose victims were under 16, after the rapes of an eight-year-old girl and a young woman in two states ruled by his party earlier this year led to public protests.

There were 40,000 rapes reported in India in 2016 and the victims were children in 40 percent of those cases. Every day, newspapers carry fresh stories of sexual violence against women. In Mandsaur, the girl was waiting to be picked up from school by her parents, who were running late, police said. CCTV footage, accessed from nearby shops, showed her walking away with one of the accused. Police later found the victim unconscious in nearby bushes, said Manoj Singh, a



PARIS: Combination of photos shows disabled eight-year-old Maya Mohammad Ali Merhi and her father who like his daughter was born without legs, both at a camp in Idlib, Syria and upon her arrival at a hospital in Istanbul. — AFP



JHARKHAND: Indian National Congress party activist burn an effigy of Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das while holding placards during protest against the recent abduction and gang-rape of five charity workers in Chochang village of Khunti district. — AFP

police superintendent in the Mandsaur district. The two men were in custody, he added. "Our investigation is almost complete," Singh said. "We are waiting for the doctors to permit us to talk to the victim. We just want to confirm a few things with her and then we will put up the final report in court." Singh said thousands of people held street protests in about eight cities in the region, many seeking the death penalty for the accused. Shivraj Chauhan, the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh state, where Mandsaur is located, has also demanded the death penalty for those found guilty, according to news reports. — Reuters

Egypt to monitor popular social media users

CAIRO: Freedom of expression may shrink further in Egypt where lawmakers have approved the first reading of a bill that would monitor popular social media users in the name of combating "false news". Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have become one of the last forums for public debate in Egypt since a November 2013 ban on all but police-approved gatherings. In Egypt, more than 500 websites have so far been blocked, according to the Association of Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE).

On June 10, parliament gave preliminary approval of the bill, pending a final reading and then ratification by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Under the bill, internet users with at least 5,000 followers would be placed under the supervision of Egypt's Supreme Council for Media Regulation. The council, known for its criticism of foreign media and television programs accused of violating public morals, would oversee "every personal

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Local

Minister blames slacking teachers, students for spread of private tuition

Kuwait eyes labor treaties with India, Indonesia

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister Higher Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi said that private tuition was phenomenally spreading amongst students in all stages. Responding to a parliamentary inquiry made by MP Essa Al-Kandari, Azmi admitted that some teachers do not exert enough efforts in teaching their students and instead promote private tuitions, while some parents fail to follow up with their children's studies due to lack of time or incapability to teach them themselves. Furthermore, the minister blamed the spread of this phenomenon on the growing use of modern technology 'that has been keeping students busy at the expense of their studies,' as well as low achieving students who resort to private tuitions instead of paying more attention to learning in class.

In this regard, Azmi explained that many students ignore studying all term long, and instead resort to private tuitions before exams to make up for their lack of studying throughout the year. He also stressed that repeated absence, psychological and personal motives

on some parents and students were behind the phenomena.

"Private tuitions have been prevailing for years and several studies have been made in an attempt to control them over the years," Azmi added, noting that the Ministry of Education had dealt with the phenomena positively and realized some students' needs for extra guidance through evening classes opened for them. Further, Azmi stressed that the ministry follows procedures to limit the spread of this phenomena, which start with warning newly-appointed teachers of its consequences.

Urban area mostly overpopulated

The Kuwait-Philippines committee formed to follow up the implementation of the labor treaty signed between the two countries is due to meet in Kuwait this week, said informed sources, noting that the meeting would include officials from Kuwait's Foreign Ministry, Interior Ministry and the Public Authority for Manpower. Meanwhile, the sources said that Kuwait is currently coordinating with India, Indonesia and other countries to sign new labor treaties in order to facilitate

the hiring of domestic helpers.

Residential projects

Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Hosam Al-Roumi stressed that Kuwait's urban areas can no longer absorb any more residential projects, and warned that any further projects would lead to more traffic congestions, overpopulation and over-pressure on its infrastructure which is already suffering.

Bedoons' pilgrims

Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi announced that, in collaboration with Al-Zakat House and the Awqaf Secretariat General, the ministry would subsidize each bedoon (stateless) pilgrim with KD 500 of the total cost of this year's hajj season. Afasi announced the names of five hajj convoys that would serve bedoon pilgrims, noting that the five convoys chosen were the ones who offered the least prices. He also noted that subsidies would cover 1,000 bedoon pilgrims who would only have to pay between KD400 and KD480. In addition, Afasi said that the ministry would pay the full cost of hajj for 20 of the martyrs' children.

In other news, the Central Agency for Remedy of Illegal Residents Status announced yesterday that some 37,879 temporary ID cards have been issued for

bedoons in the country from January to June 2018. The agency welcomes new applications to renew the cards, Tareq Al-Baijan, director of ID cards department at agency, said.

However, applications are only accepted a month prior to the cards' expiration to avoid crowd congestion and facilitate matters for applicants, Baijan added. The agency has also issued around 274 'To Whom It May Concern' certificates for various state bodies between January and June 2018, he noted. The agency was keen on issuing those certificates as quick as possible and handing them to clients the next day to submit them, added the state official. Furthermore, the agency has also launched a special reception hall for non-Kuwaiti children and wives of citizens to complete their documents and procedures. The agency would also grant them special two-year valid ID cards labeled as "Kuwaitis' children" and "Kuwaitis' wives," he said. — KUNA



Education Minister Dr Hamed Al-Azmi

Municipality officials referred to prosecution

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Public Anticorruption Authority referred a number of municipality officials and a property owner to the public prosecution over charges of forging a property description certificate for an illegal property, assistant secretary general

for corruption detection and investigation Mohammed Abdul Rahman Buzobar announced yesterday.

Maintenance program

Two Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) officials; assistant undersecretary for power and water distillation plants Fuad Al-Oun, and the manager of the engineering programs' department Sana Al-Ghareeb, are currently working with the plants' operation engineers on following up with the 2018-2019 maintenance program which is due to start by the beginning of September 2018 and end in May 2019. Oun gave instructions to provide the needed spare parts and hold meetings with concerned contractors, sources said.



KUWAIT: Fire engines are seen outside a house in Dhahr where a fire was reported.



Firefighters tackle a blaze reported in a Sabhan factory.

Eight containers recovered after falling in sea at Shuwaikh port

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) said on Friday that divers have recovered eight empty containers that fell from a container ship into the sea at Shuwaikh port, but did not cause any casualties or material losses. The incident occurred Thursday night, as qualified national divers, from the department of Maritime Operations, were successful in controlling the situation, KPA said in a statement.

The agency's maritime operations

department immediately reacted to the rescue operation, which continued until Friday evening, the statement added. The statement also pointed out that the Department of Maritime Operations dealt with the situation in strict professional manner with the incident from the time they were called in. KPA noted that an investigation into the incident was created to know the exact cause and detailed report will be available within three days. — KUNA

Trio escape death in Dhahr house fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Three people narrowly escaped death when firemen rescued them from a fire that broke out at their house in Dhahr, said security sources. Firefighters from Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Qurain fire stations rushed to the scene immediately after the blaze was reported, and they managed to control the flames without recording any casualties.

Another huge fire broke out in a beverages' factory in Sabhan, which started in an open yard and part of the factory that contained fuel and packaging material. It took the efforts of 130 firemen to contain the fire which extended over an area of 4,000 square meters, sources said. Firemen from Sabhan, Farwaniya, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Salmiya, Mangaf, Operations Center, Backup Center, Suliabikhat and Al-Hilali fire stations responded to the blaze.

Traffic campaign

Traffic police launched an inspection cam-

aign over the weekend to track and apprehend reckless drivers, the Interior Ministry's relations and security media department announced yesterday. The campaign resulted in filing 25 traffic citations, impounding 24 vehicles and arresting 21 violators. The campaign was launched at 8:00 pm on Thursday and lasted until dawn on Friday. It covered the Arabian Gulf Road, the Second Ring Road, Damascus Street, Morocco Expressway, Ibrahim Al-Mezyan Road and Jahra Road, with participation of 35 police patrols as well as 84 officers and warrant officers.

Minor accidents

In another update, the department announced that articles 41/2 and 41/5 of the traffic code pertaining with accepting reconciliation in minor traffic accidents would take effect starting today. A driver who causes an accident and admits his or her fault inside a police station will be fined KD 20, and then reconciliation documents will be sent to insurance companies for compensation without having to go to court, the department explained.

Further, the department explained that in case of minor accidents and upon all sides' consensus, reconciliation would be accepted and drivers would have to remove their vehicles to prevent blocking traffic flow. "However, if no agreement is reached, the



A sports car impounded during a recent traffic campaign.

drivers involved would have to go to the concerned police station to settle the matter," the department added. The department also warned that drivers who refuse to remove their vehicles off the road would be fined for blocking traffic flow.

Kuwait committed to implement UNSC Resolution 2231

KUWAIT: Kuwait reiterated its commitment to follow up on the implementation of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2231 on the nuclear agreement to ensure that Iran and other states comply with their obligations. This came in a speech delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi during a UN session on efforts exerted on UN resolution in this regard that was held recently. The ambassador affirmed in his speech Kuwait's support to all efforts and endeavors aiming to achieve stability and security in the region, which has been suffering from wars and unrest. He stressed also "Kuwait's firm stance towards all issues of nuclear non-proliferation in general and making the Middle East region free from weapons of mass destruction in particular".

Kuwait has welcomed the agreement of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), despite its belief that it (agreement) does not tackle all concerns of the region's countries, he said.

"Based on the spirit of cooperation and support for diplomatic efforts, we expressed our hope that the agreement would contribute to enhancing security and stability in the Middle East region," he stressed. Despite the deterioration of security situation in the Middle East and facing constantly interferences into our internal affair as

well as destabilizing the region, Kuwait sees that it is imperative to support and encourage all concerned parties to preserve and carry out the deal's items, he pointed out.

Otaibi referred that causes, which pushed the US to withdraw from the nuclear deal known as JCPOA, require re-shedding light on tackling all regional and international concerns pertaining to the deal. He expressed concern over assessment by the secretary of implementing the resolution 2231 on the ballistic missiles fired on Saudi Arabia from Yemen and issues related to the transfer of military weapons to other countries in the region. He renewed that Kuwait condemns in the strongest terms the launch of the ballistic missiles on Saudi Arabia that target its national security and civil sites of both in the Arabia Gulf.

He affirmed the Arab League's stance, issued during the 29th summit on Jerusalem that has called for the necessity of maintaining security and stability of the region's countries and the safety of their nations. It also stressed the need to abide by not to interfere in internal affairs of countries, and to respect their sovereignty and maintain good-neighborly relations as well as stop provocative acts, which would undermine confidence-building and threaten security and stability. —KUNA

NATO-Kuwait ICI Regional Center keen on stability of region

KUWAIT: Established in January 2017, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Center in Kuwait serves as an entity dedicated to the stability of the region and the world. The headquarters of the center is equipped with the latest tools and training facilities aimed at providing NATO expertise to Kuwaiti government institutes and members of the ICI. The NATO ICI Regional Center is also hopeful to bolster cooperation with Kuwait within the security domain. Speaking on the services of the center, Director of Fawaz Al-Othman indicated that the center offered the latest in NATO expertise and training to members of the ICI.

The aim of the center is to build bridges of cooperation between NATO and allies especially with GCC countries, said Othman who indicated that the Kuwaiti government was one of the major benefactors of the center.

In regards to the administration of the center, Al-Othman indicated that Kuwait's National Security Bureau (NSB) handles the



KUWAIT: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Center in Kuwait. — KUNA

process in coordination with NATO, adding his country had always been a valid partner before and since joining the ICI in 2004. In December 2006, Kuwait organized the international NATO-GCC conference, which planted the initial seeds to host the ICI Regional Center, said Al-Othman, adding that the GCC member issued an official request to host the center in February 14, 2012 during its participation in another NATO-GCC meeting. The initiative was approved by NATO's

Chicago summit on May 20 the same year, reflecting the strong partnership between NATO and Kuwait, affirmed Al-Othman. He added that Kuwait also joined the organization's Individual Partnership and Cooperation Program (IPCP) in 2014, which further solidified cooperation. Since establishment, NATO-Kuwait ICI Regional Center hosted eight training programs with the participation of 400 personnel from Kuwaiti and GCC government institutes. — KUNA

Local

Amir visits First Deputy Prime Minister in Germany hospital

GCC leaders congratulate Sheikh Nasser on successful surgery

KUWAIT: Before his return to Kuwait, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited yesterday First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in the hospital where he is being treated in Germany. Sheikh Mubarak Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Sheikh Hamad Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, head of the Amir's office Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad and Amiri Diwan's head of protocols department Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah accompanied His Highness the Amir.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad received a phone call from Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud congratulating him on the successful surgery. Sheikh Nasser appreciated King Salman's call in which he expressed sincere compassion following the successful surgery he underwent, and he expressed good wishes to the Saudi King, his country and people, the Defense Ministry's of Moral Guidance and Public Relations Department said in a press statement.

King Salman congratulates Amir

His Highness the Amir also received a phone call from King Salman, in which he was assured on the health of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad. King Salman congratulated His Highness the Amir on the success of operation, which was crowned by the grace of Allah Almighty, wishing speedy recovery and well-being for the minister.

In turn, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of gratitude to King Salman for his sentiments and sincere wishes. His Highness the Amir also expressed best wishes and prosperity for the King and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its people under his wise leadership.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable from Saudi Arabia Crown Prince Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, in which he was assured on the health of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad. Prince Mohammad congratulated His Highness the Amir on the success of operation, which was crowned by the grace of Allah Almighty, wishing speedy recovery and well-being for the minister. In turn, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of thanks to Prince Mohammad bin Salman for his sentiments and sincere wishes.

Bahraini King sends congratulations

Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received a cable from Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa. In his cable, the Bahraini King inquired about the health of First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and congratulated His Highness the Amir on the success of Sheikh Nasser's surgery. He wished Sheikh Nasser

quick recovery and everlasting wellness. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad sent a reply cable to the Bahraini King thanking him on his sincere sentiments which embodied the strong brotherly bonds between the two families, countries and peoples. He also wished King Hamad bin Isa everlasting wellbeing.

In addition, His Highness the Amir received a cable from Bahraini Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa. In his cable, the Crown Prince inquired about the health conditions of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and congratulated His Highness the Amir on the success of Sheikh Nasser's surgery. He wished Sheikh Nasser quick recovery and everlasting wellness. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad sent a reply cable to the Bahraini Crown Prince thanking him on his sincere sentiments and wished him everlasting wellbeing.

Qatar Amir expresses congratulations

In the meantime, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad received a phone call from Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, in which he inquired about his health conditions and congratulated him on the success of the surgery. Sheikh Nasser expressed his sincere gratitude for Sheikh Tamim's phone call and wished him everlasting wellbeing, the Defense Ministry's Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations said in a press statement.

UAE top figures send congratulations

His Highness the Amir received cables from top UAE figures, congratulating him on the successful operation underwent by Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad. The cables - from UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan - wished Sheikh Nasser a swift and quick recovery. His Highness the Amir replied with cables thanking his UAE brethren on this sincere gesture, wishing evermore prosperity and wellness for the leaderships and people of the Emirates and Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable from the ruler of Ras Al-Khaimah Emirate and Member of the Federal Supreme Council of UAE Sheikh Saud Al-Qasemi. In his cable, Qasemi inquired about the health of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and congratulated His Highness the Amir on the success of Sheikh Nasser's surgery. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad sent a reply cable to the Ruler of Ras Al-Khaimah thanking him on his sincere sentiments and wishing him everlasting



BERLIN: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visits First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in Germany. — KUNA

wellbeing. His Highness the Amir received a similar cable from the Crown Prince of Ras Al-Khaimah Sheikh Mohammad Al-Qasemi congratulating His Highness the Amir on the success of Sheikh Nasser's surgery.

Moreover, His Highness the Amir received a cable from the ruler of the Emirate of Ajman and a member of the UAE Supreme Council of the Union, Sheikh Humaid Al-Nuaimi. In his cable, Nuaimi inquired about the health of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and congratulated His Highness the Amir on the success of Sheikh Nasser's surgery. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad sent a reply cable to the Ruler of Ajman thanking him on his sincere sentiments and wishing him everlasting wellbeing. His Highness the Amir received same cables of congratulates from the Crown Prince of Ajman Sheikh Ammar Al-Nuaimi and Ajman Deputy Ruler Sheikh Nasser Al-Nuaimi congratulating His Highness the Amir on the success of Sheikh Nasser's surgery.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable from the ruler of the Emirate of Umm Al-Quwain and member of the Federal Supreme Council of the UAE Sheikh Saud Al-Mualla. In his cable, Mualla inquired about the health of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and congratulated His Highness the Amir on the success of Sheikh Nasser's surgery. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad sent a reply cable to the Ruler of Umm Al-Quwain

thanking him on his sincere sentiments and wishing him everlasting wellbeing. His Highness the Amir received same cables of congratulation from the Crown Prince of Umm Al-Quwain Sheikh Rashed Al-Mualla congratulating His Highness the Amir on the success of Sheikh Nasser's surgery.

Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received a cable from the ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah and Member of the Federal Supreme Council of UAE Sheikh Sultan Al-Qasemi. In his cable, Qasemi inquired about the health of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and congratulated His Highness the Amir on the success of Sheikh Nasser's surgery. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad sent a reply cable to the Ruler of Sharjah expressing his gratitude and appreciation and wishing him everlasting wellbeing.

His Highness the Amir also received a cable from the ruler of the Emirate of Fujairah and Member of the Federal Supreme Council of UAE Sheikh Hamad Al-Sharqi. In his cable, the Ruler of Fujairah inquired about the health of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and congratulated His Highness the Amir on the success of Sheikh Nasser's surgery. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad sent a reply cable to the Ruler of Fujairah expressing his gratitude and appreciation and wishing him everlasting wellbeing. — KUNA

Kuwait featured in RAF Museum expansion

LONDON: Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, opened yesterday the Royal Air Force (RAF) Museum's expansion, featuring a pavilion for Kuwait, which made last year a contribution of five million Pound Sterling (\$6.5 million) to the facility. Prince Edward attended the event on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II. Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan, Kuwaiti embassy staff, senior British politicians and military personnel were present during the Earl Wessex visit to Kuwait's pavilion. The expansion of the RAF museum cost around 26 million Pound Sterling (around \$34.2 million).

Maggie Appleton, the chief executive officer of the RAF Museum and a board member of the Museums Association (MA), lauded Kuwait's contribution to the expansion process, affirming that it was reflective of the strong relations linking the two nations. The century of military ties made a strong case for the inclusion of a Kuwaiti-British section in the Museum, said Appleton who hoped that the two nations would continue to seek cooperation in the future. Meanwhile, Ambassador Duwaisan said that he was



LONDON: Prince Edward meets with Kuwaiti Ambassador to the UK Khaled Al-Duwaisan at the Royal Air Force (RAF) Museum. — KUNA

proud of the Kuwaiti involvement in the RAF Museum, saying that it was evident of the strong bilateral relations. The British RAF took part in defending Kuwait back in the 1920s and also in 1991 during the operation to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion, said the Kuwaiti diplomat who commended the distinguished efforts put into the establishment of the Museum. — KUNA

Kuwait, Brazil hold political consultations

KUWAIT: Kuwait and Brazil yesterday held the first meeting of political consultations between the two countries, marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between both. The Kuwaiti side was led by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas' Affairs Ambassador Reem Al-Khaled, while the Brazilian side was led by Undersecretary General for Africa and the Middle East of Brazil

Fernando Jose Marroni de Abreu, according to a statement by the foreign ministry.

Abreu delivered a message to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on promoting bilateral ties. The two sides held talks on bilateral ties and means of boosting common multilateral economic, military, investment and developmental issues, in addition to scientific research, and animal wealth. They also exchanged views on regional and international issues.

Diplomatic ties between Kuwait and Brazil were established in 1968. At first, relations were mainly focused on the trade and financial fields. Then,

they rapidly grew to cover various areas. Today, they are bound to a host of agreements covering technology, environment, sports and air services.

The statement pointed to the two countries' commitment to building a solid partnership and strong relations of understanding.

They also share a host of principles that direct their foreign policy, namely non-interference in internal affairs of other countries, settling disputes via diplomatic channels and cooperation as a toll for development. The statement stressed Brazil's support to electing Kuwait as a non-permanent member in the UN Security Council for two years: 2018-2019. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti and Brazilian officials attend the first meeting of political consultations between the two countries yesterday. — KUNA

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Local

Central Bank of Kuwait marks golden jubilee of establishment

Creation decree established Kuwaiti Dinar as Kuwait's official currency

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) marked yesterday the golden jubilee of its establishment as the premier government-banking institute in the country. According to the CBK, the bank was established by virtue of the Law 32/1968 concerning the Kuwaiti currency, the establishment of the Central Bank of Kuwait and organizing the national banking business. The CBK replaced the Kuwaiti Currency Board established by an Amiri Decree 41/1960.

The decree also established the Kuwaiti Dinar as the official currency of the country. The role of the Kuwaiti Currency Board was limited to the issuance of banknotes and coins, unlike the Central Banks' broad responsibilities ranging from setting and implementing monetary policies to the regulation and supervision of banking activities. CBK's establishment was in response of the need to keeping pace with domestic and international developments, particularly in view of the increasingly important role of the monetary and financial policy contributing to the advancement of social and economic development in the country.



Bank replaced Kuwaiti Currency Board

duties of the Central Bank of Kuwait. The paid-up capital of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) was at KD five million, fully paid up by the government.

A Board of Directors, encompassing the Governor of CBK and the Deputy Governor, manage the Central Bank of Kuwait and they are appointed by a decree for a five-year renewable term. The Board of Directors comprises of a representative of the Ministry of Finance, a representative of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and four other members with proven experience in the economic, financial and banking affairs, appointed by a decree for a three-year renewable term.

Main professions

Prior to the establishment of the CBK and the age of petroleum, Kuwait's monetary and economic policies were linked to the country's main professions of agriculture, pearl diving, fishing, and livestock herding. The first type of currency used in Kuwait was the Gulf rupee, a currency equal to the then Indian rupee issued by the British Empire. At establishment, the Kuwaiti Dinar was equal to 2.48 grams of pure gold, the same value of the British Pound Sterling back in the 1960s.

As for the banking sector, the first commercial bank was the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), which was established on an Amiri decree issue on May 19, 1952. While the 1960s and early 1970s were marked as periods of great economic and commercial boom, the 1980s with its various geopolitical challenges and the Kuwaiti market crash had affected the financial status of the country; however, the CBK tried its best to better situation namely through its 1986 program to handle hard debt. Kuwait did surpass this harsh period in its history; however, the Iraqi invasion of the country in 1990, which lasted for 7 months, had yet again posed as a threat to the Kuwaiti monetary system.

Core objectives

CBK commenced operation on April 1, 1969, to fulfill the core objectives of article 15 of Law 32/1968 regarding the issuing of the national currency on behalf of the State, maintaining the relative stability of the Kuwaiti Dinar, and securing the currency's free convertibility into foreign currencies.

The CBK's establishment also came to direct the credit policy with the aim of contributing to social and economic progress and enhance the national income. Supervising the state's banking system and serving as bankers and financial advisers to the government are also amongst the core



KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait's building in Kuwait City. — KUNA

After the liberation in 1991, Kuwait rebounded from its bleak situation and throughout the early 2000s and with the advent of the global economic crunch, which began in

late 2007 and lasted throughout 2008, the CBK managed to steer the monetary system in the country away from pitfalls and dangers. — KUNA



NBK sponsors heart foundation campaign

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsored Kuwait Heart Foundation Campaign "Sa'd" that aims at providing life support training sessions for ministries, universities, malls and institutions including NBK. The sessions aim to increase employees' awareness to learn more about the necessary actions that should be taken during emergencies.

The program comes as part of NBK's initiatives in

increasing health awareness. The program focuses on achieving the basic understanding for each employee and learning the details of how to perform rescue breathing and chest compressions.

Abdallah Al-Omani, NBK Public Relations Senior Officer, said "Supporting health programs comes as part of a comprehensive agenda aiming at building up awareness among individuals and in the society and learning the techniques that could give someone the best chance of recovery." "The training program for NBK employees is held under the supervision and direction of Kuwait Heart Foundation which follows up with the employees and monitor their progress," Omani added. NBK strongly supports health care awareness. Throughout the years, NBK also sponsored and organized several social awareness programs including blood donation drives and breast cancer awareness campaigns.

KIB sponsors Int'l Day Against Drug Abuse

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to build community-wide awareness, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored activities of the International Day Against Drug Abuse,

which was organized by the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior. The event featured a booth at the Avenues Mall which aimed at promoting awareness of drug abuse prevention, its damaging effects, as well as control methods. KIB believes in the importance of cooperation between both private and public institutions to fully support initiatives such as these.

Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najja, said: "Our sponsorship of these activities comes as part of our comprehensive social responsibility program,

aiming at supporting important social issues that affect diverse segments of the community, particularly youth. Of course, this all comes under our new strategic direction of being a 'Bank for Life', reflecting our key role in the community as a partner in every aspect of people's lives."

KIB remains committed to participating in and sponsoring a number of various international events, particularly those that are locally-led. As a result, these initiatives aim at shedding light on Kuwait's active interest in international events, which positively reflects on the local community.



KFH recognizes 20 winners of its Quran competition

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) honored 20 winners of Quran competition organized for Baiti account holders. The competition is clustered into two categories: for customers under the age of five and for customers aged between 6-10 years.

The recognition emanates from KFH's endeavors to motivate its customers and followers on social media accounts to encourage their children to participate in

such competitions that serve in motivating the children and inculcating moral values in them.

Participants posted short videos of verses recited from Holy Quran on KFH Instagram account with hashtag #KFHQuran. A specialized committee from the bank reviewed and assessed the participants and qualified 20 winners.

The honoring ceremony that was held to celebrate the winners was attended by officials from Research and Fatwa Department at the bank, the Public Relations team and the parents of the winners. The winners received certificates of appreciation and cash prizes deposited in their bank accounts. The competition encompassed only KFH Baiti account holders. KFH is keen on organizing competitions and events that would contribute in preparing a distinguished generation equipped with moral and ethical values.



China's Huawei can contribute to Kuwait's development: Minister

KUWAIT: Working with Chinese network and smart phone giant Huawei provides Kuwait with the opportunity to absorb some of the global tech firm's cutting-edge knowledge. Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan said yesterday. Kuwait stands to gain from the success of the "tech powerhouse," where a productive partnership can help get youth-designed projects off the ground, Roudhan was cited as saying in a statement issued by the commerce ministry.

After his talks with Li Xiangyu, Vice

President of Public Affairs and Communications, Huawei Middle East, the Kuwaiti minister explained that working with the Chinese tech firm can help open the door to unprecedented projects in the country. On a business-friendly environment, which the ministry is working to put in place, Roudhan said it provides youngsters with opportunities for employment, subsequently leading to a more diverse economy. With a fully integrated service center in Kuwait, China-based Huawei is the largest telecommunications equipment manufacturer in the world. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan meets with Li Xiangyu, Vice President of Public Affairs and Communications, Huawei Middle East. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Old and new buildings in Kuwait City. —Photo by Joseph Shagra

Media delegation concludes Australia visit



SYDNEY: Executive Director of the Sydney Business Chamber Patricia Forsythe meets with members of the visiting Kuwaiti delegation. —KUNA

SYDNEY: A Kuwaiti delegation, consisting of personnel representing various media outlets and organizations, concluded its tour to Australia aimed at getting familiar with major media and journalistic institutes. Ambassador of Kuwait to Australia Najeeb Al-Bader said that he was pleased with the results of the delegation's visit to Canberra and Sydney. Such visits will reinforce media ties between Kuwait and Australia, creating a better understanding of the situations and happenings in both countries.

Head of the delegation and chief of the Asia, Africa, and Australia media department at the Ministry of Information Mazen Al-Ansari said that the goals of the visit were achieved thanks to the efforts of the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission and top Australian media institutes. He affirmed that such visits would have a positive

impact on Australian-Kuwaiti media ties.

On Friday, Executive Director of the Sydney Business Chamber Patricia Forsythe said that infrastructure is a major field for Kuwaiti investments in Australia. A multitude of infrastructure projects are being carried out in Australia and the Kuwaiti side can invest in them, Forsythe told the Kuwaiti delegation. The visit was organized by the Kuwaiti embassy in Australia, the Kuwaiti Information Ministry and the Foreign Ministry in cooperation with the leading media foundation of Wokley Foundation.

In return, the chamber chief said she was willing to learn about the investment opportunities available for the Australian investors in Kuwait. Meanwhile, Forsythe said that Australian farmers were willing to have a swift solution to their live sheep exports to the Middle East. —KUNA

OPEC production decision to curb speculation: Analyst

VIENNA: The member states of the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) took the necessary decision to curb speculation and uncertainty in the global market, an analyst said yesterday. Former Director of Research at OPEC and CEO of Kuwait Catalyst Company (KCC) Dr Hassan Qabazard said that what OPEC had achieved on the verge of the summer season was the most decisive measure to address the current status quo of the market.

The official lauded OPEC and non-OPEC producers' decision to increase output by one million barrel per day (bpd), saying that if all involved parties kept with 2016's 1.8 million bpd production slash, the prices would have gone beyond normal levels. On prices reaching around \$80 per barrel, Dr Qabazard said that consumers might be negatively affected by the out-

come, which came as a result of geopolitical moves on part of the US administration to pullout from the nuclear deal with Iran and impose more sanctions on their adversaries there.

Though some entities might want speculation and uncertainty to dominate the global oil scene, it is important to stomp any such attempts for the sake of all who are involved, said the official who added that a balance must be achieved to meet the aspirations of both consumers and suppliers. —KUNA





شركة البترول الوطنية الكويتية
A Subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation

Notice of sale certain Shuaiba Refinery Assets

Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) a subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, is pleased to announce the sale of certain retired physical assets of its decommissioned Shuaiba Refinery, Kuwait through sealed-bid auction sale process.

Potential buyers interested to participate in the sale process are invited to access the information and download Expression of Interest file through KNPC webpage:

<https://www.knpc.com>

Potential buyers are required to submit their responses on or before **23 July 2018** through email:

SHUAssetsSale@knpc.com



Syrian rebels say in talks with Russia for southwest deal

Jim Mattis in Asia, fixing Trump-rattled relationships

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WASHINGTON: Demonstrators march against the separation of immigrant families in New York. — AFP

Protesters march against immigration policy in US

‘Occupy ICE’ camps set up in several US states

WASHINGTON: Demonstrations were expected across the United States yesterday against President Donald Trump's headline immigration policy, as calls grow by activists for abolition of the country's frontline immigration enforcement agency. "We're rallying in Washington DC, and around the country," organizers of the "Families Belong Together" protest said on their website. The Washington protest was to begin in Lafayette Square—directly across from the White House—before a march toward the Capitol.

Starting in early May, in an attempt to staunch the flow of tens of thousands of migrants to the southern US border every month, Trump ordered the arrest of adults crossing the boundary illegally, including those seeking asylum. Many trying to cross the US-Mexico border are destitute people flee-

ing gang violence and other turmoil in Central America. As a result of Trump's crackdown, distraught children were separated from their families and, according to widely broadcast pictures, held in chain-link enclosures, a practice that sparked domestic and global outrage.

Last week, Trump signed an order ending the separation of families but immigration lawyers say the process of doing so will be long and chaotic. About 2,000 children remained split from their parents, according to official figures released last weekend. More than 500 women, including a member of Congress, were arrested Thursday in the US Capitol complex protesting Trump's immigration policy. There have been protests elsewhere in the country but yesterday's demonstrations are expected to be far larger, with 50,000 or more

expected in Washington. Trump has made fighting immigration—both illegal and legal—a major plank of his "America First" policy agenda. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) makes arrests and otherwise enforces the administration's immigration crackdown, but an emerging coalition of politicians, activists and pro-immigrant protesters has begun calling for the dismantling of ICE. Critics say the agency has treated some would-be immigrants cruelly and unfairly. "Occupy ICE" camps have been set up in several US states.

One of the first voices to call for the abolition of ICE was New York Democratic gubernatorial candidate Cynthia Nixon. She has since been joined by New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, who told radio station WYNC, "You need some kind of agency to deal with immigration, but ICE is not that"; and

by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, also of New York, who in a tweet called ICE "a cruel deportation force." Yesterday, Trump tweeted support for ICE, saying "radical left Dems want you out. Next it will be all police. Zero chance, it will never happen!"

The political backlash against ICE is so intense that members of the agency's criminal investigative division have asked Homeland Security Secretary Kirsten Nielsen to split them off as a separate agency. The Washington Post reported on Thursday. The Post said the request came from the majority of special agents in charge of the Homeland Security Investigative Division, which handles transnational investigations related to counterterrorism, narcotics and human trafficking. —AFP

Divers progress in search for missing Thai kids

MAE SAI, Thailand: Rescue divers reached several kilometers inside a flooded cave yesterday where 12 boys and their football coach have been trapped for a week, offering a flicker of hope for the harrowing search. There has been no contact with the boys, aged 11 to 16, and their coach since they went into the Tham Luang cave last weekend and were hemmed in by heavy rains that blocked the entrance. The desperate, round-the-clock search for the team has been beset by torrential downpours that submerged tunnels near the entrance, blocking divers from going on.

But Navy SEAL divers nearly reached a T-junction in the depths of the cave just two or three kilometers from where the boys are believed to be, Chiang Rai governor Narongsak Osottanakorn said.

Divers reached the same spot earlier in the week but were forced back by rushing floodwaters. Water levels inside the complex labyrinth of tunnels finally dropped thanks to dozens of pumps set up to drain the pools even as heavy rain continued to pound the area near the Myanmar and Laos borders.

"The situation is better today than yesterday and the day before. Water has receded considerably and we are pumping out water in all chambers (near the entrance)," Narongsak told reporters. As the search for the boys hit its seventh day, attention turned to their chances of survival inside a cave with little or no food and light. The group likely has access to fresh water—either dripping in through rocks or rushing in through the entrance—but experts warned that runoff water from nearby farms could carry dangerous chemicals or bacteria.

"If they drink the water in the caves and it makes them sick it could hasten the problem that they are in, but if they don't drink it then they are also in trouble," Anmar Mirza, coordinator of the US National Cave Rescue Commission, said. But even without food he said young, athletic boys could "easily live for a month

or a month and a half" but the main challenge now would be mental resolve. "The biggest issue that they are facing right now is if they are alive is psychological because they don't know at what point they might get rescued," Mirza said in a telephone interview from the US state of Indiana.

Practice drills

The dramatic week-long rescue has galvanized the nation and prompted emotional outpourings online from well-wishers praying for their safe return. Cartoon images of the smiling boys being found by divers circulated along with messages for the team, such as "Stay Strong, We are Coming". Teams of foreign experts, including more than 30 US military personnel, have descended on the remote mountainous site to join some 1,000 Thai rescuers. Australian, Chinese and Japanese experts also joined efforts.

Several teams trekked into the thick jungle above the cave desperately looking for new openings that might lead to the trapped boys. One team was drilling into a 40-metre chimney that led to a muddy chamber, which the governor described as a "promising" lead. But there was still no indication it linked to the main cave complex. "We have been rotating our staff into the chimney since yesterday, they are inside... still searching and we are waiting for their findings," Surachai Thathes, chief of the parks ministry rescue team for northern Thailand, said.

But the main priority was trying to reach the boys through the main entrance, governor Narongsak said. Earlier in the day medics and police staged practice drills to prepare for the quick and complex evacuations that will be required if and when the boys are found. Stone-faced relatives kept vigil under a makeshift tent near shrines where monks are leading prayers. Stretching 10 kilometers and with complicated, snaking pathways and narrow corridors, Tham Luang is one of Thailand's longest and toughest caves to navigate.

Officials said the boys know the site well and have visited many times before, buoying hopes that they might have trekked to a large airy chamber in the centre called Pattaya Beach. Rescuers found footprints and handprints in a chamber near that spot earlier in the week, further in from where they found the kids' football boots, backpacks and bicycles. —AFP

Three dead in attack on Mali HQ of G5 Sahel anti-terror force

BAMAKO: A suicide bomber in a vehicle painted in UN colors attacked the Malian headquarters of an international anti-terror task force, the G5 Sahel, on Friday, killing two soldiers and a civilian, according to a security source and a local leader. The building's entrance wall was destroyed, with the force of the blast throwing the vehicle inside it, according to witnesses and pictures of the scene.

The Al-Qaeda-linked Support Group for Islam and Muslims, the main jihadist alliance in Africa's Sahel region, claimed the attack in a telephone call to the Mauritanian news agency Al-Akhbar. UN secretary general Antonio Guterres condemned "the complex attack perpetrated against the G5-Sahel Joint Force's Headquarters", his spokesman said in a statement. It was the first attack on the headquarters of the five-nation force, set up with the backing of France in 2017 to roll back jihadist insurgents and criminal groups in the vast, unstable Sahel region.

"Shortly after Friday prayers, a suicide bomber in a vehicle painted with UN colors blew up at the entrance to the G5 base in Sevare. It was a huge blast," a military source in the G5 Sahel force said. Two soldiers from the force and a civilian were killed, as well as two attackers, according to a source within the force and the governor of Mopti, the regional capital. The Malian government later said that the two soldiers killed were members of its armed forces. A previous toll of six people killed was revised down. Governor Sidi Alassane Toure said there had been "confusion" in the morgue. "We have arrested four suspects," he told AFP, adding that search operations would take all night.

Guterres, who visited the Sevare headquarters last month, highlighted security shortcomings on several of the force's sites in Mali in a report published in May. "Poor conditions on and

around the site represent an important security threat, and are delaying the deployment of the remaining soldiers," the report said. Residents in Sevare, 600 kilometers northeast of the capital Bamako, hid inside their homes during Friday's attack, according to Bouba Bathily, a trader who sheltered from the gunfire in his house. A local orange seller, Haoussa Haidara, said "there was a huge blast" followed by shooting that lasted more than an hour. The attack came three days before a meeting in the Mauritanian capital of Nouakchott between French President Emmanuel Macron and the heads of the G5 Sahel states to discuss progress made by the force. The G5 Sahel aims to have a total of 5,000 troops from five nations—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, but has faced funding problems. It operates alongside France's 4,000 troops in the troubled "tri-border" area where Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso meet, and alongside the UN's 12,000-strong MINUSMA peacekeeping operation in Mali.

France's armed forces minister, Florence Parly, condemned the "cowardly attack" in a Twitter statement. "Solidarity with our African partners with whom we will continue the fight against terrorism," she said. The G5 Sahel was scheduled to be fully mobilized by mid-2018, but its deployment has faced delays, equipment worries and accusations of human rights abuses. On Tuesday, the UN said Malian soldiers within the force had "summarily" executed 12 civilians in a market in central Mali in May in retaliation for the death of a soldier.

Malian Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga said that the government had "taken the necessary measures" after the bloodshed, which he condemned. France intervened militarily in Mali in 2013 to help government forces drive Al-Qaeda-linked jihadists out of the north. But large tracts of the country remain lawless despite a peace accord signed with ethnic Tuareg leaders in mid-2015 aimed at isolating the jihadists. The violence has also spilled over into both Burkina Faso and Niger.

Earlier Friday, French military headquarters said troops from its Barkhane mission in Mali had killed or captured 15 jihadists on June 22 in a joint operation with local forces. The clash took place in a woodland area of the Inabelbel region, southeast of Timbuktu, it said in a statement. —AP

International

Syrian rebels say in talks with Russia for southwest deal

Rebels do not accept Russian terms

AMMAN/BEIRUT: Syrian rebels are negotiating with Russia to return state sovereignty in areas they control in the southwestern Deraa province, where the army has made rapid advances this month, insurgents said yesterday. Air raids continued overnight and yesterday morning on rebel areas, a war monitor said, backing an offensive that the United Nations says has driven 160,000 people from their homes, threatening a humanitarian catastrophe.

State television reported another town had agreed to come back under state rule, raising the government's flag from its buildings yesterday. Russia, the Syrian government's strongest supporter, has supported army advances with air strikes since entering the war in 2015 and has played a role in mediating surrender deals. Southwestern Syria is one of two remaining rebel strongholds, along with a region of the northwest that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has sworn to recapture, along with territory held by US-backed Kurdish forces in the northeast.

The army's offensive there follows the capitulation of rebel enclaves near Homs and Damascus, including eastern Ghouta, which was recaptured after a scorched-earth assault that killed over a thousand

civilians and laid waste to several towns. Warfare in the southwest could risk further escalation because of its proximity to Israel. The Israelis have already targeted Iran-backed militia fighting on Assad's side, which they have vowed to keep far from their country's borders.

The government's offensive so far has focused on Deraa province, which borders Jordan, but not Quneitra province, which borders the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. The deal being discussed does not include Quneitra, the rebels said. The entire

southwest is part of a "de-escalation zone" agreed last year by Russia, the United States and Jordan. Despite Washington's threats that it would respond to breaches of that arrangement, it has shown no sign of doing so, and the opposition's top negotiator on Thursday accused it of having struck a "malicious deal" to stay silent.

Negotiations

Insurgent negotiators and a spokesman said a six-member civilian and military committee of the southern rebels held a preliminary meeting along the administrative borders of neighboring Sweida province. "The committee held its first meeting with Russian officers who presented their demands," said Ibrahim Jabawi, a spokesman of the central operations room set up by the main Free Syrian Army groups in southern Syria. A second round of talks was expected yesterday.

Jordan, which borders Deraa province, has been facilitating talks between rebel factions and Moscow over a deal that would end the violence in exchange for the return of state rule there. Russian negotiators have demanded rebels accept terms like those agreed for eastern Ghouta, where insurgents either left for opposition territory in the northwest along with their families or accepted the return of state rule, Jabawi said.

The southwest rebels did not accept this, and were instead proposing the return of civilian state institutions in the opposition areas and the entry of Russian military police rather than Syrian government forces. However, the army has already captured large parts of the eastern zone of rebel-held territory in Deraa province in less than two weeks of fighting, and several



DARAA: Smoke rises above opposition held areas of the city of Deraa during airstrikes by Syrian regime forces. —AFP

“ Warplanes carried out 32 air strikes overnight ”

more towns still held by the insurgents have reportedly agreed to settle with Assad.

Yesterday, state television said the town of al-Ghariya al-Sharqiya had accepted a "reconciliation" agreement with the government, and the national flag had been raised there. It said on Friday that four other towns nearby had agreed to surrender their arms and accept state rule. The army had gained control over the towns of al-Harak, Ibtat and Rakham, it said, and a

rebel said opposition lines in one area had collapsed.

The Observatory reported that warplanes carried out 32 air strikes overnight as the offensive continued, hitting nine towns in Deraa province. So far, about 100 civilians have been killed in air raids and shelling since June 19, it said. Clashes escalated around Deraa city, which lies close to the border with Jordan, and where army advances could cut the insurgent territory in the southwest in two, it said. —Reuters

Threats, reforms and challenges: A momentous week for Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia has capped an extraordinary week in which its new prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, pushed ahead with bold reforms undeterred by a grenade attack that sparked fears of backlash by hardliners. Just three days after a blast killed two people at a rally Abiy had addressed in the heart of the capital, the prime minister greeted a delegation from Eritrea, a neighbor with whom Ethiopia has been at war—both hot and cold—for decades.

Abiy took office in April after years of anti-government unrest and quickly announced unprecedented changes including liberalizing parts of the state-controlled economy and releasing jailed dissidents. But perhaps his biggest policy shift so far is towards Eritrea, with Abiy promising to cede territory occupied since a brutal two-year-long border war ended in 2000. Last Saturday's blast triggered panic at the rally and a stampede in which 150 were injured, raising fears of a backlash by party and security hardliners opposed to Abiy's reforms.

"Definitely, it's true that there are many groups, individuals and organisations that are not happy with the kind of reform that he's undertaking," said Ethiopian political analyst Hallelujah Lulie. But in the week since, Abiy has barely missed a step—and analysts say his momentum has not been lost. "It was an attack, not only on the prime minister himself, but on the freedom of the people," said Seyoum Teshome, a university professor who organised the rally. "He's going to get more support from the people." Dozens of suspects were quickly arrested and the administration warned of "conspiracies... to deter ongoing reforms", but Abiy quickly moved on, hosting an Eritrean delegation in the days that followed.

Unthinkable meeting

Ethiopia had seethed with anger before the 42-year-old former army officer and cabinet minister was appointed by the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front



WASHINGTON: Supporters of Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed rally for US support outside the State Department in Washington, DC. —AFP

(EPRDF), becoming the first leader in modern times from the country's largest ethnicity the Oromo. Violent anti-government protests led by the Oromos—and the second-largest ethnicity, the Amhara—began in late 2015. Hundreds died but even a 10-month state of emergency could not quell the anger.

One of Abiy's first acts was to tour the country's restive regions to raise his profile and curry support, and then lift a second emergency decree issued after the February resignation of his predecessor, Hailemariam Desalegn. The rally in Addis Ababa's central Meskel Square was his first big public appearance in the capital and, dressed casually in a t-shirt and porkpie hat, he spoke of peace and unity to a crowd of hundreds of thousands before making a hasty exit after the grenade blast.

On Tuesday, he was relaxed and smiling as he strode down a red carpet to greet two high-ranking Eritrean officials who travelled from their capital Asmara in the first official visit to Ethiopia since the border war. A band played, dancers per-

formed and the visitors were wreathed with garlands and greeted by Ethiopia's cultural and sporting elite. "Great statesmen in Eritrea and Ethiopia have summoned the courage and vision to blaze the trail and build the pillars for enduring regional peace anchored on law and justice," Eritrea's information minister, Yemane Gebremeskel, said on Twitter after the men arrived.

Unthinkable just months ago, the rapprochement with Eritrea was announced by Abiy earlier in June at the same time as the economic liberalization. While the liberalization is expected to unfold over the coming years, the Eritrean reconciliation is moving far faster: Ethiopia's government says Abiy will soon meet Eritrea's president, Isaias Afwerki, in person. "We will celebrate the new year in Asmara and Addis Ababa, so you need to start preparation," Abiy told guests at a dinner for the visiting Eritreans, in a flash of diplomatic bonhomie. The new year, in the Ethiopian orthodox calendar, falls this year on September 11. —AFP

Army's role under the spotlight in Nicaragua

MANAGUA: The presence of armed and hooded paramilitaries on the streets of Nicaragua has sparked calls for the army to intervene to end two months of unrest that has killed more than 200 people. Human rights groups have consistently denounced the shady pro-government forces which are accused of being involved in the killing of scores of anti-government protesters. "You cannot have two armies in this country. Under the constitution, the Nicaraguan army should disarm the paramilitaries," said a former ambassador to the US, Carlos Tunnerman, now a member of a civil society delegation in talks with the government to end the unrest.

The protests began in April as demonstrations against now-scrapped social security reforms, but a heavy-handed police reaction transformed them into demands for justice for those killed, and for the exit of President Daniel Ortega and his wife Vice President Rosario Murillo. The military has publicly committed itself not to take part in repression of anti-government protests, and called for dialogue and an end to the violence.

But its attitude has been criticized as ambiguous. When Ortega appeared in public for the first time since the beginning of the protests, he was accompanied by the army chief, General Julio Cesar Aviles. And residents in flashpoint areas have reported the presence of soldiers or ex-soldiers siding with riot police during clashes. —AFP

Big hurdles await West African anti-crime initiative

ABIDJAN: Facing a rising crime wave from drug-running to human organ smuggling that siphons money into terrorism, 16 West African states have launched an unprecedented data-sharing scheme to fight illegal activity, but observers say the initiative faces sizeable hurdles. The scheme—which aims to set up a cybernet where national police forces will pool information on wanted individuals, criminal records, illegal weapons, and stolen cars and documents—brings together 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) plus Mauritania.

Known as WAPIS—the West African Police Information System—the EU-funded scheme has been in gestation for several years and will ultimately be hooked up to Interpol's global criminal databases. It will be "crucial to effectively combating transnational organized crime and terrorism", according to the international police agency. Interpol's secretary general, Juergen Stock, said that smuggling in drugs, weapons, human beings, fake drugs and even human organs was rife in West Africa.

He put regional criminal turnover at "more than \$3 billion annually," added to which is maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, estimated to have cost coastal states around \$800 million last year. The WAPIS scheme was officially launched to much pomp on Tuesday in Abidjan, Ivory Coast's economic hub, in a ceremony gathering security ministers, police chiefs and national security heads from across this vast, complex and varied region.

Defenders of WAPIS say the scheme will be a boon for police forces battling an escalating wave of crime in West Africa, where criminals and terrorists find an easy place to hide in the cracks between different jurisdictions. "It will be a key solution for strengthening security in the region," predicted Ivorian Interior Minister Sidiki Diakite.

Terrorist funding

"Cross-border crime is continually rising," said Francis Behanzin, a general from Benin who is an ECOWAS commissioner in charge of political affairs and security. Behanzin said transnational crime was also becoming more "hybrid"—with more and more crime being used to raise funds for terrorist activities. "Organized crime has colossal means at its disposal, as well as determination—sometimes it is better organized than states themselves," he told journalists.

However, the rollout of the WAPIS program shows just how badly states are struggling to keep up. It was first introduced as a pilot scheme in 2012 in Benin, Ghana, Mali and Niger—Tuesday's launch marks the next phase in which it will be extended to the 12 other partners over the next four years, starting with Burkina Faso, Chad, Ivory Coast and Mauritania. The first step will be to computerize police records: most of them, in 2018, are still on paper, a presentation document revealed.

Cross-border crime-busting projects in West Africa have a long history, dating back more than 20 years, but they have had only faltering progress. In 2005, ECOWAS leaders agreed a deal to create an "Office for Information and Criminal Investigation"—a WAPIS forerunner for data sharing—but the protocol was never ratified, Behanzin said.

Competition and corruption

Before this week's Abidjan meeting, national police and security chiefs had not met for four years, he said. "The security services in the countries of West Africa do not cooperate enough," he said, describing their relationship as marked by "competition". Jean-Francois Valette, the EU's envoy to Ivory Coast, said that cooperation was a learning process, for national police forces had a "natural reflex to keep information to themselves". —AFP



An Announcement for selling Flight A310 & Simulator - Airbus A300

Kuwait Airways Co. is intended to sell Flight Simulator - Airbus A300- 600 & A310- 300.

The Simulator will be sold along with all its attachments including computers and spare parts. Taking into account that the simulator is in good condition and serviceable.

The applicant authority shall bear all dismantlement and transportation costs, without assuming any liability towards Kuwait Airways.

All quotations shall be submitted in sealed envelopes to the below address:

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International

Jim Mattis in Asia, fixing Trump-rattled relationships

Japan, South Korea worried about US security commitment

WASHINGTON: US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis spent four days in East Asia trying to keep on the rails key relationships—two friendly, one adversarial—that his boss President Donald Trump has thrown into confusion. It's now a familiar role for the Pentagon chief, not just in Asia but across Europe and the Middle East. With Trump disrupting one relationship after another, provoking rivals and unnerving friends, Mattis is the one making sure they can still work on their traditional foundations.

This week, he had to tell the leaders of South Korea and Japan—close allies who have depended on the US security umbrella for decades—that Washington remains committed to protecting them. That was always understood before Trump suddenly canceled defense exercises with South Korea as an enticement to North Korea's Kim Jong Un to negotiate giving up his nuclear weapons. And Mattis had to cut through the noise of Trump's trade war threat against China to deliver one of the toughest warnings in recent years, that the US has grown dangerously impatient with Beijing's military expansionism in the region.

The challenge was to get the Chinese to focus on his terse, carefully calibrated message and not conflate the US president's trade hoopla, so that they do not overreact. "I'm here to keep our relationship on the right trajectory, keep it going in the right direction and to share ideas with your military leadership, as well as look at the way ahead," the Pentagon chief told Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Mattis, a 67-year-old Marine veteran of multiple wars and conflicts, and a deep student of history, insists he is only advancing administration policy. But under Trump, it is an uphill battle to prevent key relationships from souring. Japan and South Korea alike have been deeply worried about the US security commitment after Trump's historic summit with Kim in Singapore on June 12. As they agreed to enter into denuclearization talks, Trump abruptly canceled a key US-South Korea exercise slated for later this year.

Despite their longstanding effect of keeping North Korea at bay, Trump called the war games "expensive" and "provocative." How worried were the allies? In Seoul, Mattis had to declare bluntly that US troop levels in South Korea, the central pillar of the US defense commitment, would not change, and reiterate that the US commitment was "ironclad." In Tokyo, he pledged a continuing strong, "collaborative" defense stance with regional allies, and that Japan will remain a "cornerstone" of regional stability. His predecessors never had to travel to the region to make that so clear.

Increasingly concerned

And yet, with US negotiations with Pyongyang hyper-secret, allies still aren't sure. "They are increasingly concerned and worried about the reliability of our reassurances," said James Schoff, a former senior Pentagon East Asia specialist now in the Carnegie Asia Program. In meetings Friday with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Japan's foreign and defense ministers, Mattis was repeatedly reminded that if the US negotiates only to eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles which can strike the United States, Japan will still feel deeply vulnerable.

Tokyo pressed the US defense chief to ensure that North Korea's other weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological weapons, and its short- and medium-range ballistic missiles that can deliver them to South Korea and Japan, are also included. Mattis could not make that promise, saying the talks are in the hands of "the diplomats." But he said the two sides discussed the possibility of deepening their military relationship, and told Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera "to remember you have a friend in the Pentagon."

In China, Mattis sought to warn that Beijing weaponizing small islands in the South China Sea and its stepped-up pressure against Taiwan, the longtime US security ally that China



TOKYO: US Secretary of Defense James Mattis, left, is welcomed by Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, right, ahead of their meeting at the Abe's official residence in Tokyo. —AFP

views as a renegade province, were close to going too far. It was possibly one of the most serious and delicate messages Mattis had to deliver yet in the 17 months of the Trump administration. But it came as Trump appeared on the verge of launching an all-out commercial war against Beijing, creating the possibility that China would conflate the two and overreact.

It was a tense balancing act, and though US officials said their Chinese opposites were positively engaged in the discussions, in a statement Xi toughly rebuffed the criticisms on the

South China Sea and Taiwan, saying China would not give up "one inch" of its territory. But the reception Mattis had in Beijing, meeting not only Xi but the country's top military leaders, showed they were ready to pay attention. Still, the question leaders in East Asia and elsewhere have is, as trustworthy as Mattis is, does Trump pay him any heed? "There are some things the Asian leaders can't control. Mattis clearly realizes there are some elements that he may not be able to control," said Schoff. —AFP



Trump cancels key US-South Korea exercise

Road rage: Drivers seethe as France lowers speed limit

PARIS: The Nationale 7 holds a cherished place in France's popular culture as the Vacation Highway, leading generations of families south toward summer holidays on the Riviera before multi-lane motorways became the norm. So when officials chose three stretches of the road back in 2015 to test lowering the speed limit to 80 kilometers per hour from 90, they surely knew they would rattle motorists.

Three years later some drivers have swung behind the change, but many others are still fuming. "Yesterday I was going at 80 and it felt like I was going to fall asleep," said Gerard Laguette, a local business owner in Croze-Hermitage, referring to the lower limit while driving on a 20-kilometre run to Valence in southeast France. Such complaints—and opinion polls showing 74 percent of respondents against the move—haven't stopped President Emmanuel Macron from pushing ahead with a countrywide rollout of the lower speed limits starting today.

Officials say it's the only way to reverse an alarming rise in road deaths, which reached 3,684 last year. The 80 km/h limit on 400,000 kilometers of two-lane roads with no separating guardrail—often lined with trees in many parts of the country—aims to save 400 lives a year while also reducing auto emissions by 30 percent. But critics deride the measure as "Paris snobbery" and the latest proof that Macron is the "president of the rich" with little regard for the concerns of ordinary voters.

The 40-year-old former investment banker has recently come under fire for blasting the "crazy amounts of dough" spent on social security, even while ordering pricey new presidential china and a private pool for his official vacation residence. He has also raised taxes on pensions and pushed through laws making it easier for firms to fire workers, while slashing taxes for high earners. The lower speed limit is widely seen as an easy way to fill state coffers with more tickets. The government "prefers tech-savvy city cyclists to country people driving diesels," Vincent Descoeur, an opposition Republicans lawmaker, said in parliament this month.

Political milestone

The government launched TV and radio campaigns to try to quell motorists' anger, saying the new limits would add only a few minutes to most trips while cutting a driver's petrol costs by 120 euros a year. A 10-kilometre trip, for example, would take 45 seconds longer, or just two minutes more for 25 kilometers. "The goal is not to piss people off," Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said Friday, reiterating that he was ready "to live with being unpopular." He said a similar reduction on the Paris ring-road a few years ago led to an 18 percent drop in accidents. He also has promised that any spike in speeding fines will be allocated to caring for car crash victims.

Yet some local officials have vowed they won't put up the new signs, even though Philippe has promised to reimburse municipalities for the expected total cost of 6-12 million euros. The president of the Hautes-Alpes department said he would make up the lost time for drivers by lifting the 70 km/h limit on some particularly twisty sections of roads in his mountainous region. For Mathieu Flonneau, a French transport historian, even though the government has logic on its side, it risks appearing dismissive of the millions in rural areas who rely on their cars for work. —AFP

Annapolis mourns victims of newspaper shooting

ANNAPOLIS: Flowers, a notebook, a newspaper tied with white ribbon: these are some of the items placed at a makeshift memorial near the newsroom where a gunman shot dead five people in the US city of Annapolis. The shooting rocked Annapolis—the capital of Maryland—a city of less than 40,000 residents where employees of the small local newspaper are known to many. "The people who worked here are our friends, our neighbors, our colleagues, so it's sort of like a part of us has been taken with their death as well," said Christine Feldmann.

"This paper represented everything great about this country: democracy and community. And to think someone would try to stop that and murder five innocent people, is just horrific and makes me feel very hopeless, unfortunately." She placed flowers on the memorial in a commercial area dotted with retail stores, restaurants and a lingering police

presence following the shooting. On Thursday, a gunman armed with a shotgun and smoke grenades blasted through the door of the Capital Gazette, then killed four journalists and a sales assistant.

The suspect has been identified as Jarrod Ramos, who had a long-standing grudge against the paper over a 2011 article about a criminal harassment case brought against him by a former high school classmate. The shooting hit especially close to home for Mike Driscoll, who worked at the Capital Gazette in the administrative department and as a freelancer. It's "like I lost family. I don't think I know anyone still there, but still, I lost family," Driscoll said.

Heartbreaking

In the center of the city, a postcard-worthy area of cobblestone streets and red brick buildings, Diann Alaiz said she was "shook," because "Annapolis is safe to me." "I never thought something like that would happen here. We're just really a tight community and it has pretty much shaken everyone around here," the souvenir shop owner said. She said it was "heartbreaking" to see the names of the victims in the newspaper a day after the shooting.

"They were the local hometown paper and still are... there's nothing that's changed about that," said Annapolis res-



ANNAPOLIS: People light candles during a candlelight vigil to honor the 5 people who were shot and killed at the Capital Gazette newspaper in Annapolis, Maryland. —AFP

ident Tom Wenger. The shooting has rekindled the long-running debate over gun control in the United States, where the right to bear arms is constitutionally guaranteed. The shotgun used in the shooting was legally purchased, according to police. "A firearm, you know, (it's) in the national DNA, so they're never gonna go away," Driscoll said.

"But there needs to be responsibility.

They don't solve any problems, they just create more. And if you can't handle a gun in an honorable, mature way, you know, you shouldn't be allowed to have 'em." Despite the tragedy, Driscoll said, the newspaper will persevere. "The paper has been published this morning, we're back. That means the b*****s did not win, and they never will," he added. —AFP

Abortion row reignites as US supreme court justice retires

LOS ANGELES: Justice Anthony Kennedy's retirement from the United States Supreme Court has sparked fears over universal abortion rights as President Donald Trump looks for an ultra-conservative replacement judge. Before Trump's election, the court was finely balanced at four Republican appointees against four Democratic picks, with one seat vacant, and the then-candidate pledged to nominate only anti-abortion justices.

Abortion is largely a state-level issue in the US, although the legal right to access nationwide was enshrined in the landmark 1973 decision known as "Roe vs Wade." "There is a very high risk that Roe vs Wade would be seriously exorcised by the soon-to-be nominated United States Supreme Court justice," women's rights lawyer Gloria Alred told AFP. Kennedy, a Ronald Reagan appointee, was considered a moderating voice on a variety of contentious issues, including abortion, and the Center for Reproductive Rights has described his departure as "devastating."

Left-wing Senator Elizabeth Warren sees the appointment of Kennedy's replacement as "the fight of our lives," while the anti-abortion movement is already claiming its own victory. "If the next justice appointed supports the basic human right to life for ALL people, this could be the end of the horrific, immoral and unjust 1973 Roe vs Wade decision," said activist Lila Rose. The Pew Research Center says 57 percent of Americans support the right to abortion, while evangelicals, Mormons and other religious groups make up most of the 40 percent who are against.

The religious right argues that since Trump's anti-abortion stance was plain for all to see during the 2016 campaign, he and Vice President Mike Pence, who describes himself as a "born-again, evangelical Catholic," have their popular mandate.

Bible Belt fundamentalism

Women's rights activists worry that the political wind is turning against them after a string of conservative judgments

by the Supreme Court. Just two days ago, in a 5-4 ruling, justices reversed a lower court decision upholding a California law that requires anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers to more fully disclose what they are and make clear that they do not perform abortions. The state enacted a law in 2015 to ensure that these centers do not mislead their patients, intentionally or otherwise, when giving advice about abortion and the alternatives.

Across America's red states, examples of Christian pharmacists being permitted by law to refuse to give out contraceptives or morning after pills are legion. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court recently ruled in favor of a Colorado baker who refused to make a cake to celebrate the marriage of a same-sex couple because of a religious objection. Local laws restricting access to abortion have tightened in recent years in the so-called Bible Belt—the southern and midwestern states where conservative Protestant fervor thrives.

In parts of America such as Arizona, patients have to drive for hours to get to a handful of clinics in the big cities, entailing travel and childcare costs that many young women cannot afford. Two years ago, Kennedy was the deciding vote in overturning a Texas law requiring abortion clinics to undergo stringent and expensive upgrades—from surgical equipment to parking availability and staffing—to bring them up to the standards of a hospital room.

Activists say the improvements were unnecessary, and would have achieved their real goal of curtailing abortion through the forced closure of around three-quarters of clinics. "There are already abortion deserts... with very few providers," said Jennifer Dalven, of the American Civil Liberties Union. "The Supreme Court justices don't need to overturn Roe vs Wade. They could stop short of that and (still) make it unavailable to millions of women."

Allison Hoffman, a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania, says many Supreme Court decisions that fell short of a full repeal of Roe vs Wade have nevertheless eroded women's rights. "If repealed, women would not be guaranteed access to abortion, so any state that wanted to pass laws that restrict or outlaw abortion could do so," she said. "You can imagine which states would restrict and which wouldn't." Supreme Court nominees need to be backed by a simple majority of the 100-strong Senate. —AFP

Jetliners and limos on the block as Gambia sells autocrat's assets

BANJUL, Gambia: Gambia's ex-president Yahya Jammeh flew into exile last year, leaving a fleet of presidential planes and luxury cars as a memento of more than two decades in power. Now the government is looking to sell the former autocrat's assets to raise millions of dollars for health and education projects in the dirt-poor nation. Five planes and 30 luxury cars including Rolls-Royces and Bentleys, as well as four plots of land in some of the country's finest tourist areas, are to be auctioned online.

On the tarmac of Banjul airport, a Boeing 727, a Bombardier Challenger 601 and a Soviet-era Ilyushin Il-62M painted with the words "Republic of the Gambia" are now covered by a thin layer of dust. Jammeh's old planes—including two crop dusters whose green paint is gradually becoming veiled—can be seen from the airport's restaurant. In the garage of the presidential office, two armour-plated Hummers share the space with five Rolls-Royces, one Bentley, BMWs, pickup trucks, Mercedes and a Mini Cooper with a plate bearing the initials "MYJ"—for Mariam Yahya Jammeh, the daughter of the former president.

The West African state hopes to raise 10 million dollars from the sale, Amadou Saneh, the finance minister, told parliament last year. "What we are doing as a government now is to design a web portal where all the assets would be posted," Lamin Camara, permanent secretary for the ministry of finances, told AFP. A date for the sale has yet to be decided. Jammeh's 22-year rule was marred by accusations of rampant corruption and human rights abuses.

The strongman was ousted when a coalition fronted by Adama Barrow won elections in December 2016. After refusing to step down, he fled into exile in Equatorial Guinea. "As far as we are concerned, these vehicles, these properties were purchased with state resources. They rightly belong to the state," Abubaccr Tambadou, the justice minister, said. —AFP

International

Military's shadow darkens media coverage of Pakistan elections

Foreign envoys air concerns fearing stability in the country

ISLAMABAD: Facing abductions, censorship and financial ruin, journalists in Pakistan say they are under unprecedented pressure from authorities ahead of nationwide polls, sparking allegations the military is overseeing a "silent coup". Media houses describe a sustained campaign by the security establishment ahead of the July 25 election to curb their coverage. Those who refuse to toe the line are increasingly targeted while their employers face financial blowback, sparking widespread self-censorship.

"We have never witnessed the censorship which we are facing today," said Afzal Butt, president of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists. Pakistan is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists and activists, and there have long been red lines, but the uptick in pressure is seen as brazen and extraordinary. The country's largest broadcaster Geo TV was partially forced off air for weeks this year until it reportedly cut a deal with the military to adjust its coverage, according to local and international media.

And Pakistan's oldest newspaper Dawn complains its sellers are being "threatened and coerced by state institutions" following an interview with former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in May, where he suggested Pakistani militants were behind the 2008 Mumbai attacks which killed 166 people. Such pressure on two of Pakistan's most powerful media houses is a clear message, says Waqas Abbasi, a correspondent for The News: "Other outlets have no chance. So basically they're also falling in line."

Foreign envoys have also privately aired concerns, fearing for stability in the polarized country as polls approach. "There is clearly a concerted effort to muzzle the media in

Pakistan," a diplomatic source requesting anonymity said. "This is deeply concerning."

Unfair elections

Much of the tension centers around the stand-off between Sharif and the powerful military, which has ruled Pakistan for roughly half its 70-year history. Sharif, who at times appeared to seek a better relationship with arch-enemy India, was ousted by the Supreme Court last year following corruption charges and banned from politics for life. He has since repeatedly accused the military of wanton political interference. His quotes on the Mumbai attacks during an interview with Dawn journalist Cyril Almeida approached a widely acknowledged taboo in Pakistan: criticism of the armed forces' alleged policy towards militant proxies in India and Afghanistan.

Journalists now face pressure to cease favorable coverage of Sharif and his incumbent Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), said Abbasi. It is hard to quantify the extent of censorship, and how it might

hamper voters' ability to make informed choices between the PML-N and other parties—namely the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, led by former cricketer Imran Khan. The Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, a think tank, said the electoral process appeared "unfair".

Journalists believe they are "facing restraints at the hands of a silent coup in place by the military and its intelligence affiliate, the ISI," it reported recently. Omar Waraich, deputy South Asia director at Amnesty International, said: "Elections aren't manipulated on the day in Pakistan. The question is: do you have a level playing field before, leading

Local authorities nevertheless created a billboard with several large photos of the family near the border, heralding the "photo records of steps of repatriation". In recent months, Myanmar says dozens have been repatriated after crossing over from Bangladesh illegally. It says others who tried to flee to Bangladesh by boat but accidentally washed up back in Myanmar have also been sent to live with relatives after being processed at the transit camp. Bangladesh does not recognise these as legitimate returnees. "The repatriation process has not begun," Bangladesh refugee commissioner Mohammad Abul Kalam said.

'We haven't been to Bangladesh'

Nine Rohingya purportedly released from prison in May after crossing back over illegally were brought by Myanmar officials to meet journalists on Friday. But cracks quickly emerged in the story, with some saying they had never even been to Bangladesh and were "repatriated" from prison in Myanmar. "We were arrested in November last year (in Myanmar) and sentenced to four years imprisonment each under the immigration act," said Yar Sein, 35, a farmer and father-of-four. "We were arrested from school and accused of coming from Bangladesh. We haven't been to Bangladesh."

The prolonged delays in repatriation have also strained relations with Bangladesh, which plans to send a protest note after a 10-year-old Rohingya boy in the buffer zone was struck by a bullet from the Myanmar side on Thursday.

Myanmar says it fired at people attempting to damage the border fence. As the two countries blame each other for the delay, Myanmar has embarked on what it says is a massive development project in northern Rakhine, bulldozing Rohingya towns and remaking the entire landscape in the name of reconstruction. The UN has said conditions in Rakhine are not ripe for a safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation, but signed an agreement with Myanmar to assess conditions on the ground to help refugees make an informed decision. Myanmar has faced global condemna-



RAWALPINDI: This picture shows the facade of the leading daily Pakistan's newspapers 'The News' in English and 'Jang' in Urdu languages in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. —AFP

up to the elections?" For news anchor Matiullah Jan the answer is simple.

"I think the judiciary and the armed forces are doing it ... nobody might be saying it so openly but everybody

knows it," he said, likening it to "a fixed cricket pitch". The military did not respond to requests for comment from AFP and has previously said it does not interfere with media coverage. —AFP

Myanmar transit camps sit empty as Rohingya fear return

MAUNGDAW: The transit camp in Myanmar's Rakhine state stands ready to welcome back 150 Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh every day. But on most days it lies completely empty, as members of the stateless minority dread returning to a place they were violently driven from by the military, and Myanmar makes little effort to reassure them things will be different this time. "We have been ready to receive them since January, when we opened," said Win Khaing, immigration director at Nga Khu Ra, standing in the desolate camp with reporters on Friday as part of a two-day government-chaperoned trip to the area.

The result is a stand-off, as Myanmar immigration officials wait in empty offices shuffling papers and arranging biometric equipment but with little to do except greet visiting delegations and journalists. Fewer than 200 Rohingya Muslims have been resettled in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state from the 700,000 who fled a violent army crackdown in August. Rohingya women say they were raped by security forces, while witnesses described summary executions and a merciless campaign of violence that the UN has said amounts to ethnic cleansing.

Myanmar says it only targeted militants, although the military has admitted one instance of executing captured suspects. Even the limited number of Rohingya who have returned have all done so under murky circumstances. In April the government trumpeted the arrival of a Rohingya family of five, but it was later slammed as a PR stunt as it emerged they had come from a buffer area between the two countries that is technically part of Myanmar.



KABUL: Afghan president Ashraf Ghani speaks during a press conference at Presidential Palace in Kabul. —AFP

Afghan forces resume offensive operations after govt ceasefire ends

KABUL: Afghan security forces resumed offensive operations yesterday after President Ashraf Ghani declared an end to the government's unilateral ceasefire with the Taliban. Ghani said the ceasefire, which lasted 18 days after it was extended once and overlapped with the Taliban's unilateral three-day truce for Eid, had been "98 percent successful". "The ceasefire is over. The Afghan security and defense forces are allowed to restart their military operations," Ghani told reporters.

The three days of no fighting were unprecedented in the nearly 17-year conflict and triggered jubilant scenes across the war-weary country. Taliban fighters and security forces spontaneously celebrated the holiday that caps the holy month of Ramadan, hugging each other and taking selfies. The militants were also mobbed by relieved

civilians, who have borne the brunt of the war, raising hopes of a renewed push for peace talks. Ghani said the ceasefire had shown that the majority of the insurgents wanted peace and it was the "Taliban's turn to give a positive response".

"I am ready to extend the ceasefire anytime when the Taliban are ready," he said at a press conference. But the sight of its fighters openly mingling with security forces and civilians over Eid appeared to alarm the Taliban's leaders, who on Sunday ordered their men back to their posts. The Taliban vowed Tuesday to continue their bloody fight against the government and their foreign backers, brushing aside rising civilian casualties.

The insurgents returned to the battlefield last week after refusing a government request to extend their ceasefire, launching attacks across the country that have seen scores killed or injured. The renewed violence has poured cold water on hopes the truce would provide a clear path to peace talks, with the Taliban refusing to bow to pressure to lay down their arms until foreign forces withdraw from Afghanistan. The truces did not extend to the Islamic State group, which has a relatively small but potent presence in Afghanistan, and launched two deadly attacks on ceasefire revelers during Eid. —AFP



MAUNGDAW: Rohingya refugees gather near the fence in the "no man's land" between Myanmar and Bangladesh border as seen from Maungdaw, Rakhine state. —AFP

tion for its treatment of the Rohingya, and Amnesty International said this week that several senior military figures should be tried for crimes against humanity. A US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report Thursday downgraded Myanmar for failing to protect Rohingya Muslims fleeing the crackdown and leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking rings. The Rohingya are loathed by many in Myanmar, where they were stripped of citizenship and branded illegal immigrants from Bangladesh despite calling Rakhine their homeland. Min Aung Hlaing, the army chief, said last month that Rohingya have nothing to fear as long as they stay in places "designated" for them, raising concerns that they would be placed back into the apartheid-like conditions they escaped. —AFP

Malaysia to amend human trafficking law after US report

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's new government said yesterday it is considering amending laws on human trafficking and migrant smuggling just days after the US State Department reported a lack of progress in the country's efforts to counter trafficking in the past year. The Home Ministry said proposals under discussion focused on protecting victims, by giving them more freedom of movement and work, and introducing stiffer penalties for traffickers.

On Thursday, the US State Department released its annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, in which downgraded Malaysia to the Tier 2 Watch List, a category denoting nations that deserve special scrutiny, noting that the Southeast Asian country had failed to demonstrate stronger efforts than the previous year. The report said victim protection efforts by the government remained largely inadequate and that complicity among law enforcement officials hampered some anti-trafficking efforts.

"The Malaysian government... takes note of the report on human trafficking and is fully committed to eradicating human trafficking crimes," Home Ministry said in a statement. A new government, led by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, was formed last month, as Malaysians voted for change after nearly ten years of being led by Najib Razak's scandal-tainted administration.

Malaysia has long been known as a destination for trafficking victims, including documented and undocumented workers. It relies heavily on cheap foreign labor from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines, among other countries. It has nearly 2 million registered migrant workers, but there are millions more in the country without work permits. —Reuters

As Mexico goes to the polls, indigenous enclaves go their own way

CHERAN, Mexico: As Mexicans prepare to cast their ballots today, the people of Nahuatzen, an indigenous village tucked into the country's western mountains, are busy blocking the street with bonfires to keep out electoral authorities. Similar scenes have played out in several states across the country—a rejection of a system that indigenous Mexicans say only serves to pick the next batch of corrupt politicians who will plunder their communities.

The indigenous Purepecha people of Nahuatzen sip coffee as they warm themselves by the large bonfires, standing guard against any attempt by the National Electoral Institute to set up a polling station in the village. "We're ready for them if they come," said one man on night watch, after the Michoacan state government announced it would launch a military and police operation to guarantee the vote statewide, by force if necessary.

Thousands of indigenous Mexicans have blocked highways and protested against the elections in recent weeks, angry over corruption, drug cartel violence and the pillaging of their ancestral lands. Their inspiration is the village of Cheran, a Purepecha community in Michoacan that made history by suing for the right to abolish elections and set up its own system of government, complete with its own police force.

They took their case all the way to the Supreme Court, and won in 2011 — essentially becoming a tiny state within a state. Instead of a mayor and city council, Cheran now has an Assembly that includes the entire community, and 12 representatives who form a so-called Great Communal Council—chosen without campaigns, parties or ballot boxes.

Women take control

Instead, Cheran's 5,000 inhabitants crowded into a village schoolyard last month to elect their 12 "keris" (great ones). Just like their ancestors, women in traditional "rebozo" shawls and men in huarache sandals raised their hands to cast their votes for their chosen leaders. "No to servitude and slavery! Yes to victory!" shouted a woman trying to organize the chaotic event—the third such vote the village has held since winning its court case. Cheran brought the lawsuit after the chronically corrupt Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) — Mexico's current ruling party—won the elections to govern the municipality where the village is located in 2008.

As happens all too often in Mexico, the new mayor, Roberto Bautista, proceeded to fill his government with cronies and strike a dirty deal with a local mafia—in this case, illegal loggers armed with machine guns who sowed terror in Cheran. "There were daily shootouts, right in the middle of the street," recalled Irma Campos, a retired teacher. The first ones to rise up were village women. Offended by the destruction of their forest, they started a protest movement that ultimately led the village to banish all politicians, disband the corrupt police, launch a new community police force, and reforest more than 8,000 pillaged hectares.

Rotten power

"I'm happy with this new government, and our struggle to use our own customs. Now we don't have to walk around in fear," said Campos, 59. Not everyone agrees. "It's the same as it was with the political parties, only worse," said Salvador Queandon, a farmer in a straw hat who alleged that logging cartel thugs have now infiltrated the community police force. Other indigenous communities embraced the national elections this year, after a reform that allowed independents to run. That cleared the way for an indigenous Nahuatl woman named Maria de Jesus Patricia, or Marichuy, to launch a presidential bid. —AFP

Analysis

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ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24835619
COMMERCIAL : 24835618P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Washington Watch

Consequences of upholding US ban

Dr James J Zogby
President Arab American Institute

The Supreme Court decision upholding the Trump Administration's infamous "Muslim ban" will have consequences far beyond its restriction on visas for nationals from the affected countries. Of the greatest concern is the validation it has given to the president's virulent anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant rhetoric. It was Trump's inflammatory language against Muslims that caused lower courts to strike down his first iteration of the ban.

While the Administration claimed to hold no anti-Muslim animus, the courts noted that during his campaign for the White House, Trump had said "I think Islam hates us...we can't allow people coming into this country who have hatred of the United States." And that he had called for "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." In an effort to deflect criticism and save face, the Administration attempted a second and third version of the ban, adding Venezuela and North Korea to the list of banned countries and repackaging the effort as a national security "travel ban".

It was this third version that was upheld by the Supreme Court. In upholding Trump's ban, the court recognized the president's absolute right to "suspend entry of aliens into the United States", regardless of whether or not his intention was to discriminate against Muslims. It is frightening to think of the consequences of handing such power to any president—especially this one.

The decision will also have a direct and hurtful impact on hundreds of thousands of recent immigrant Syrian, Yemeni, and Somali Americans in addition to others from the affected countries. They will no longer be able to have their families visit them. And if they are still Green Card holders, they will now be at risk of being denied reentry if they leave the US to visit their families abroad.

The ban and the decision to uphold it also make a mockery of national security concerns. While Trump has repeatedly claimed that this measure was designed to keep "dangerous people out of our country" there is no evidence that immigrants from the targeted countries have engaged in terrorist acts here in the US. And, as for the president's oft-expressed concern of the dangers posed by refugees from these countries, saying that "we don't know who these people are", this ignores the rigorous 12-stage security vetting process already in place to screen them. In fact, we know more about refugees than we do about any other group of immigrants coming to the US.

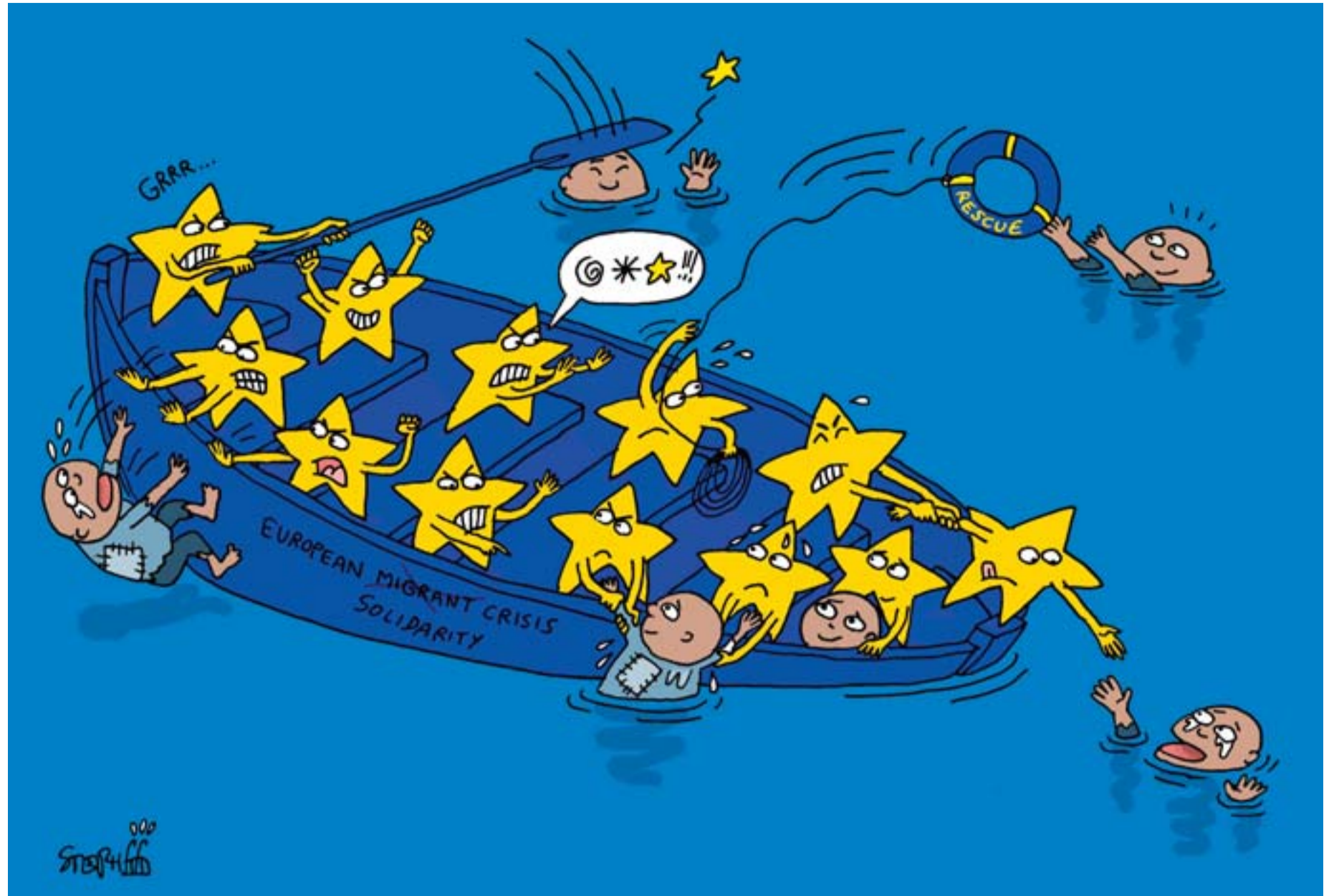
Finally, this Supreme Court decision coming on the heels of the Trump Administration's horrific behavior in separating refugee and asylum-seeking families and putting them in long-term detention camps without recourse to judicial review will only serve to embolden the White House to commit new outrages in the name of national security. Whether this is a "Muslim ban" or a "travel ban" is, on one level, irrelevant. What it is, in either case, is a cruel and arbitrary act motivated by bigotry.

Trump fueled his campaign with hostility toward selected groups of foreigners—Muslims, Mexicans, and other "people of color". They were, he has said, an "infestation" that was threatening our culture and our society. His behavior since taking office and the individuals he has appointed to senior posts in his administration have only served to amplify this inflammatory stance.

The Supreme Court has now validated his behavior and from the supportive comments of some of his key supporters we can only expect more, not less, of this dangerous appeal to xenophobia. We can expect his base to be empowered, hate to increase, and targeted communities to live in fear and dread. This may be what the president wants, but it's not the country we want to leave to future generations. A final thought: it is clear that Trump's rhetoric and actions are political in intent. He is firing up his supporters in the hopes that they will insure continued Republican control of Congress. A GOP victory, he feels, will protect him from accountability and possible impeachment.

This is reason enough to consider that the 2018 mid-terms may be the most important election in the recent history of our country. They present is a challenge for both parties. Republicans who initially rejected Trump and saw him as a danger to their party and the country, became cowards in the face of "Trump's base". They decided to swallow their pride and their principles and tagged along for the ride. They got what they wanted: tax cuts and deregulation, a conservative Supreme Court Justice, and the gutting of Obamacare. All the while, they privately recoiled in horror at his inflammatory rhetoric and his courting of "hate groups", but did nothing to challenge him.

As a result, they have become complicit in Trump's corrupting abuse of presidential power. Republicans can no longer be allowed to turn a blind eye to this president's degrading of American political culture. Democrats too must face down this challenge. They can no longer play "business as usual" fielding comfortable candidates who hold on to the power and privilege of high office and once there do little or nothing to challenge the status quo. This moment in our history and this election is too important. At stake is our very democracy.



Hardline EU members crowd victory over migrant deal

Four eastern EU states which have all taken a tough anti-migrant stance crowded victory on Friday over a controversial deal dropping the bloc's mandatory quota system in favor of measures designed to stem the influx of asylum seekers. Hammered out in marathon all-night talks, the deal allows EU members to choose whether they receive migrants, foresees creating secure centers for migrants inside the bloc and "disembarkation platforms" in North Africa. Hailed as a "big step" by hardline EU members, the deal outraged aid workers saying it would hinder rescue operations at sea.

The idea of imposing financial sanctions on countries refusing to accommodate refugees also disappeared. Leaders from Visegrad group (V4) countries, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, hailed the new measures as a vindication of their staunch opposition to mandatory migrant quotas. Poland claimed a "huge success" on the migrant issue as it is locked in a bitter dispute with the EU over judicial reforms that the bloc insists pose a "systemic threat" to the rule of law.

"After more than two years of difficult discussions, controversies and pressure, all the 28 EU states have unanimously adopted the position of Poland and the V4," Poland's right-wing Premier Mateusz Morawiecki said on Twitter. He also hailed the EU's "NO for compulsory sharing of migrants and unanimous agreement on reforming the Dublin regulation", which assigns responsibility for asylum seekers to the nation of first entry. "We were threatened by saying that if we don't welcome refugees, we'll have to pay... we have remained firm in our position, that we must not pay, because the whole philosophy is wrong and we must know how to defend external borders," he said.

'Big fight, big success'

The Polish leader was echoed by populist Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, called the new EU migrant deal a "great victory". "There was a real threat that migrants would be redistributed from refugee camps to European countries," he said, adding that "Hungary will remain a Hungarian country and will not become a country of migrants."

"Billionaire populist Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis

Austria's right-wing 'rock star' Kurz at the helm of EU politics

Feared as a "rock star" by an American ambassador and courted by Angela Merkel's right-wing critics: it's a dream start for Austria's youthful Chancellor Sebastian Kurz as his country takes over the EU's rotating presidency. Aged just 31, Kurz is poised to steer the bloc as one of his pet themes—a tougher migration policy—rises rapidly up the European agenda again.

Kurz, whose centre-right People's Party (OeVP) has governed with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) since December, rarely misses an opportunity to boast of his role in closing the "Balkan route" for migrants in 2016 when he was foreign minister. He made a clampdown on immigration a central theme of his campaign in last year's elections. While his stance hasn't been universally welcomed, Kurz "is in tune with the prevailing mood," said Patrick Moreau, Austria expert at France's National Centre for Scientific Research.

"More and more people agree with his criticism of (German Chancellor) Angela Merkel's decision to temporarily open the

Russian women fear later-life hardship from pension reform

Russian government plans to raise the pension age have sparked a rare outpouring of anger, not least among women who say it will cause hardship at a stage of life when they already struggle to work. On the day the first football fans descended on Russia for the World Cup, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev announced plans to increase the age by eight years to 63 for women and five years to 65 for men. Critics immediately complained that with men's life expectancy at 66, many may not live long enough to get their pensions.

But Russian women are angry for another reason: once in middle age, they will struggle to find work to tide them over for the extra years without a pension. "It's very hard to find a job as a woman over a certain age. Women are scared of being left without a pension or a job," said Muscovite Tatiana Volochkova, 57. She receives a state pension of 17,000 rubles (\$269) but continues to work as an accountant. Many women say the eight-year rise in their retirement age is disproportionate. "A gradual reform is probably necessary but not with such a big difference (in the rise) between men and women," Volochkova said.

Valentina Zholkina, 44, has been unsuccessfully looking for



TRIPOLI: Migrants who survived the sinking of an inflatable dinghy boat off the coast of Libya are grouped on the shore of Al-Hmidiya, east of the capital Tripoli. — AFP

said Friday that "quotas were an issue for four years, and now everyone has dropped the topic."

"It was a big fight, the V4 was united and we achieved our goal. It's a big success," said Babis, who is fighting fraud allegations at home and has controversially solicited the Czech Communist Party to support his minority coalition government. Slovak Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini struck a more moderate tone on Friday saying that "when it comes to voluntary quotas, I will be very careful." "Slovakia still feels that the capacity of our facilities is still available and sufficient, where we can temporarily accommodate migrants," he told reporters in Brussels.

But Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who governs in

borders in 2015," Moreau said. His stance as a "critical Europhile" is also increasingly popular: Kurz emphasizes his support for the EU but on condition it gives more powers to member states. The FPÖ and other far-right parties have moved closer to this position having put aside for now any plans to leave the bloc. "Whether as the manager of a refugee crisis, the great hope of the right or a cool tactician, Austria's EU presidency gives the chancellor the chance to make his mark," the centrist Kurier newspaper said.

Austrian pride

It's a far cry from 2000, the last time the OeVP went into coalition with the FPÖ, then led by the controversial but magnetic Joerg Haider. A wave of international revulsion greeted the FPÖ's entry into government and the EU imposed diplomatic sanctions for several months.

Now, with the "identitarian" right gathering steam across the continent, "Kurz is being recognised on the international stage and Austrians are proud of that," said Moreau. The new American ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell called Kurz a "rock star" in an interview while Merkel's critics in the Bavarian CSU party, her coalition partner, have emphasized their "common position" with Kurz on immigration. There are however signs that it may not all be smooth sailing with Austria's FPÖ Interior Minister Herbert Kickl rejecting plans by his German

a job in Moscow for two years. The company she used to work for shut down while she was on maternity leave. Now she says employers are put off by her age. "In private, they say that after a certain age, it's not right for women to sit behind a banking counter," she said. Zholkina said that older men can take temporary physical work if they are short of money. But older women struggle to get employed even in low-paid jobs. Receiving a pension at 55, she said, at least gave them a safety net.

All yours, Babushka

Anna Nesterova, a 50 year-old Moscow-based designer, said the pension reform could also affect young families as Russian grandmothers play a larger role in bringing up children than in the West. "People have a choice either to send their child to nursery or leave them with the grandmother. Many still choose the family option," she told AFP. Others say grandmothers sitting at home with children is a thing of the past. "Babushkas (grandmas) are modern now. We don't want to sacrifice all our time looking after children," said 67-year-old pensioner Antonina, who refused to give her last name. But she agreed that an eight-year increase is too much. "In Russian families, everything depends on women. You need to balance work and family," she said. "Sixty-three is very high."

'Huge' problem

Alyona Popova, a women's rights activist who runs an organization to support women professionally, said attitudes to

coalition with a far-right anti-immigration party, refused to host any secure centers for migrants: "Of course not... we are not a first arrival country unless people jump from parachutes," said Kurz, who will push the migration issue when Austria takes over the EU's rotating six-month presidency in July. Arrivals have dropped by 96 percent since the peak of Europe's migration crisis in 2015 when over a million people fleeing conflict and poverty in the Middle East and Africa arrived mostly in EU members Greece and Italy. But the tough stance of Italy's new populist anti-immigration government thrust the issue back to the top of the EU agenda.— AFP

CSU colleague Horst Seehofer to send some migrants back across the Bavaria-Austria border. But domestically the government is still doing well in the polls. "The government's strength is in presenting an image of harmony, thanks to some very intensive political marketing," particularly on social media, said political scientist Thomas Hofer.

'Master of distraction'

Only a few weeks into the new administration, the FPÖ had to face embarrassing revelations about neo-Nazi sympathies in organizations close to the party but Kurz refrained from making any harsh comments about his coalition partners. When asked about the FPÖ's echoing of Hungary's nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban's rhetoric against liberal US billionaire George Soros, Kurz simply said he was of a "different opinion".

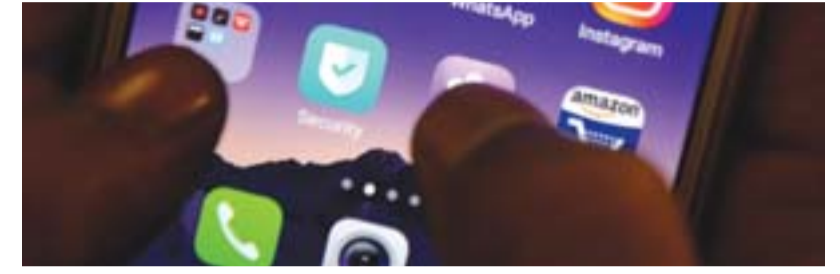
On a recent visit to Budapest, Kurz did not comment on a slew of controversial laws restricting NGO activity, only saying that Austria wanted to be a "bridge builder" to central Europe. But the slick image and balancing acts haven't charmed all. "Kurz is a master of distraction," the liberal Falter weekly said recently, pointing to a press conference where Kurz and other ministers announced—with much fanfare—plans to close several mosques. The paper suggested part of the purpose was to deflect attention from unrelated allegations of wrongdoing leveled at Interior Minister Kickl.— AFP

Petition to Putin

President Vladimir Putin's sky-high approval rating dropped after the pension proposal. In a rare show of public anger, over 2.5 million Russians signed an online petition asking him to drop the reform. "Protests in Russia are starting," said Boris Kravchenko, the chairman of the trade union that launched the petition. He said his organization has applied for protest permits in 70 cities from this weekend, despite its loyalty to the Kremlin. No protests have been called in cities hosting World Cup football matches, where they are banned. The analyst Stanovaya agreed Russia needs a pension reform but said authorities underestimated this and have a "communication problem". "They only think about how to sell it to the people in order to avoid protests." — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, JULY 1, 2018

13 Investors hopeful Mexico's Lopez Obrador will veer to the center**13** Indonesia hikes rates to reverse rupiah slump**15** Facebook boosts transparency as it braces for int'l elections

HAMILTON: In this file photo taken on June 4, 2018, steel coils lay in a yard at ArcelorMittal Dofasco steel plant. —AFP

Canada hits back at US with tariffs

'We will not escalate and we will not back down'

OTTAWA: Canada hit back at the United States on Friday with retaliatory tariffs on American summertime essentials including Florida orange juice, ketchup and Kentucky bourbon in its opening salvo in a trade war with President Donald Trump. As temperatures and tensions increase, the measures targeting Can\$16.6 billion (US\$12.6 billion) in US steel, aluminum and consumer goods will take effect today, when Canadians celebrate a national holiday and just days before Americans celebrate Independence Day amid a heatwave expected in both countries.

The tit-for-tat duties are a response to the punishing US steel and aluminum tariffs imposed at the start of June. Ottawa also unveiled Can\$2 billion (US\$1.5 billion) in aid for the two sectors and their 33,500 workers. Ottawa "had no choice but to announce reciprocal countermeasures to the steel and aluminum tariffs that the United States imposed on June 1, 2018," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told Trump in a call on Friday, according to a statement from his office.

"The two leaders agreed to stay in close touch on a way forward," it said. Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland announced the tariffs at a steel facility in Hamilton, Ontario where she was flanked by brawny workers in yellow hardhats. "We will not escalate and we will not back down," she said, while noting

that this trade action was the strongest Ottawa has taken since World War II. But she said the move was made with "regret" and "very much in sorrow, not in anger" against a close ally.

The list of more than 250 US goods subject to Canadian duties—including Florida juice, Wisconsin toilet paper and North Carolina gherkins, which are labor intensive to produce—aim to pressure Trump supporters key states in November's US midterm elections. The penalties will add 25 percent to the cost of US steel, and 10 percent to aluminum and consumer goods.

NAFTA negotiation ploy

Canada and Mexico initially were exempted from the US metals tariffs—as was the European Union—but Trump allowed the duties to take effect June 1 after talks stalled to revamp the 1994 trilateral North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). After the EU unveiled similar retaliatory tariffs, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer earlier this week lashed out calling them groundless and illegal.

"These retaliatory tariffs underscore the complete hypocrisy that governs so much of the global trading system," he said in a statement, and "do great damage to the multilateral trading system." Business executives warned lawmakers this week that esca-

lation into an all-out trade war would be devastating to the Canadian economy, which sends about 75 percent of its exports to the United States. If Trump steps up his attacks on Canada's economy and imposes a 25 percent tariff on automobiles as threatened, it would lead to "carnageddon," Flavio Volpe, president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association, told a Commons committee hearing on Tuesday. Canadians, however, are overwhelmingly in favor of the retaliation. In Ottawa, officials and others have declined an invitation to the US ambassador's annual July 4th bash.

"I've politely declined because I'm not happy with the direction of the American government and their constant attacks on our country," Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson told public broadcaster CBC. Canadian patriotism, meanwhile, has flourished under hashtags like #BoycottUSA, #BuyCanadian and #VacationCanada that urge people not to buy American goods and travel packages.

Neighboring ties lowest in decades

Canada and the US are among the world's two largest trading partners with an estimated \$673.9 billion worth of goods and services exchanged in 2017, with the US scoring a small surplus (\$8.4 billion), according to the US government data. The United

States also is the top destination for Canadian vacationers, who made 42 million trips to the US in 2017. But relations between these two neighbors have plunged to their lowest in decades, reaching new depths at the recent Group of Seven summit when Trump abruptly rejected the joint statement and insulted Trudeau.

On the campaign trail this week, Trump continued his attacks on Canadian dairy, wheat and duty-free customs allowances for Canadians returning home, saying they were scuffing up brand new shoes in order to sneak them in. US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross last week defended the Trump administration's tariffs before Congress but admitted that Canada's steel industry was "not being accused of directly or individually being a security threat." Freeland took note, saying this was "self-evident."

She also repeated that Trump's decision to invoke national security to justify the US tariffs on steel and aluminum imports was "insulting" to Canadian veterans who had stood by their US allies in conflicts dating back to World War I. Canadian steel is used in American tanks, and Canadian aluminum is used in American planes. The United States has a \$2 billion trade surplus on iron and steel products, and Canada buys more American steel than any other country, accounting for 50 percent of US exports, Freeland said. —AFP

Thyssenkrupp, Tata sign deal to become Europe's second biggest steelmaker

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German industrial giant Thyssenkrupp said Friday it had finally agreed the merger of its steelmaking business with India's Tata, making the merged firm Europe's second biggest steelmaker. Conceived to take on the flood of cheap Chinese steel unbalancing world markets, the merged firm known as "Thyssenkrupp Tata Steel" will be based in the Netherlands. It will be second only to ArcelorMittal in the European steel industry.

Thyssenkrupp's executive and supervisory boards agreed to "create a 50/50 joint venture, which will combine the European steel businesses of Thyssenkrupp and Tata Steel", the Essen-based group said in a statement. Final signatures would follow "shortly", it added, while competition



This combination of pictures created on June 29, 2018 shows the logo of German steel group Thyssenkrupp (L, on November 16, 2015) in Essen, western Germany and a Tata Steel logo (on March 30, 2016) outside the entrance to the Brinsworth Strip Mill, operated by Tata Steel, in Rotherham, northern England. —AFP

authorities in the European Union and other jurisdictions must still give the go-ahead.

Bosses hope the tie-up, which took more than two years to negotiate, will create between 400 and 500 million euros (\$468-585 million) per year in savings. The merged firm will boast 48,000 employees spread around 34 sites, producing around 21 million tons of steel per year for revenues of around 15 billion euros.

Thyssenkrupp and Tata previously

warned that the merger would mean around 4,000 jobs will be slashed in both production and administration, split evenly between the two firms. Last December, Thyssenkrupp offered guarantees against layoffs and site closures to powerful German trade union IG Metall. Workers had demonstrated several times against the plans by the group, whose products range from elevators to submarines as well as steel. —AFP

EU leaders deal Macron eurozone reform setback

BRUSSELS: EU leaders tackled watered-down proposals to reform the euro single currency on Friday, with an ambitious plan for a eurozone budget wanted by French President Emmanuel Macron left on the sidelines. The discussion fell on the second day of a two-day summit that was largely dominated by Italy's ire on migration, which overshadowed all other topics, including the eurozone and Brexit.

EU President Donald Tusk, who organizes summits, invited non-euro members to the Friday talks, in a show of support for smaller countries worried about Franco-German dominance. The bloc's 27 leaders, meeting without Britain, largely worked off proposals set down with great pomp by France and Germany, known as the Meseberg Declaration after the site of a recent meeting between Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Emmanuel Macron.

Europe's twin engines of EU unity, France and Germany make up nearly half of the eurozone economy, and a compromise by them usually leads to a deal among the single currency's 19 member countries. But smaller members, led by the Netherlands, have voiced their irritation at having the EU's future announced from on high by the bloc's biggest powers, especially a proposal for eurozone budget.

National governments have for months been mulling the French proposal to create some sort of budget capacity for the single currency bloc which could be used in case of crises or economic shocks. Even if modest, Macron sees a eurozone budget as a symbolic step towards a more centralised and mutually supportive Europe. "I hate symbolic levels. This is real money from real taxpayers," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said after the talks. "What is a eurozone budget? I would argue that at the moment that we already have a eurozone budget which is the 200 billion euro (EU budget)," he added. Fiscal hardliners, usually led by Germany, fear an unnecessary transfer union, with disciplined countries in the north propping up over-spenders to the south. —AFP

Business

NBK Economic Update

UAE outlook: Growth to accelerate in 2018 as non-oil activity recovers, oil output increases

KUWAIT: After moderating for two straight years, real GDP growth in the UAE is set to accelerate over the forecast period...



Growth to benefit from a new package of economic reforms. Moreover, in a further effort to support the non-oil economy...

The move is part of a wider plan that includes residency visas of up to 10 years to investors and highly skilled expats...

Dubai International Airport came in at a record high of 23 million in IQ18, just above the average 22 million recorded in 2017...

A number of downside risks persist, however. If downward pressures on oil prices re-emerge, this could lead the government to adopt stricter fiscal consolidative measures...

tionary trend for the remainder of the year is expected to be downward-it fell to 3.5% y/y in April-as the initial impact of the tax/fuel hike wears off...

After registering a deficit for three consecutive years, the fiscal balance is expected to return to a surplus in 2018, albeit a small one...

Loan growth remains subdued

Loan growth continued to hit multi-year lows in IH18, against the backdrop of a weak real estate market, higher interest rates and tighter lending rules...

Deposit growth also eased in IH18. This is largely a reflection of a drawdown in government deposits. Latest figures showed deposit growth easing from 3.8% y/y in March to 3.4% y/y in April...

Residential property prices continued to ease

The impact of more stringent loan-to-value regulations (introduced back in 2013) on Dubai's residential property market continues to be compounded by the effects of increased supply and higher interest rates...

Inflation set to come in higher in 2018

After trending downwards for most of 2017, consumer prices increased in January following the introduction of a 5% VAT and the paring of fuel subsidies...

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. Includes Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, and Global Bond Yields.

Bayt Exclusive

Should you work at a startup?

Working at startups is becoming more attractive for job seekers, especially the younger workforce. Startups usually have the eye catching perks that a job seeker often looks for...

them access to information that changes the directions of the job they are currently working on. There might also be many new faces that get hired and leave in a short period of time...

The constant change

Startups usually have a fast paced work environment, and things often move quickly. Change is one factor that will always be present in startups...

Teamwork

Working at a startup means you will be working with a team almost at all times. It's all about the teamwork. It isn't avoidable or questionable...

The job and its working hours

In a startup environment, you are expected to forget the 9-5 work shift, and understand that in some cases a 50 hour week is just normal. The company is working hard to flourish, and

Embrace the good

At the end of the day, startups are challenging to work for but not impossible. They have a unique experience that is associated with a relaxed and fun workplace...

EXCHANGE RATES

Table listing exchange rates for various currencies (BUY/SELL) and bond yields (2-Year, 5-Year, 10-Year, 30-Year) provided by Bahrain Exchange Company WLL.

Business

Investors hopeful Mexico's Lopez Obrador will veer to the center

Mexican debt has traded in relatively tight range to US benchmarks

NEW YORK: Mexican assets are poised to strengthen even if leftist front-runner Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador wins Sunday's presidential election, analysts say, on expectations he will govern from the center and as the uncertainty stemming from the race fades. Lopez Obrador, a former Mexico City mayor, holds a roughly 20-point lead over his nearest rival ahead of the July 1 vote, according to the latest polls, putting him on track to become the first leftist Mexican president since the 1930s.

Strategists at Miami-based Bulltack Capital, however, are among those who believe that Lopez Obrador will pursue centrist policies once in office. When the peso went above 20 to the US dollar "we went long Mexican assets, both equities and fixed income, and we retain these bullish positions, which we believe will perform favorably as the investment community draws similar conclusions regarding AMLO in the wake of his victory," Bulltack said in a note to clients, citing the acronym used to refer to Lopez Obrador.

Corporate credit risks

The peso had lost as much as 16 percent versus the US dollar over the last 12 months, partly due to investor concerns about a Lopez Obrador presidency as well as rising trade tensions between Washington and Mexico City. The currency is up roughly 6 percent from the 2018 low of 20.88 to the dollar it hit earlier this month, corporate credit risks due to its low reliance on offshore capital inflows, credit ratings agency

Moody's said in a report this week.

Fitch Ratings said the main corporate credit risks in Mexico involved currency weakness and uncertainty about domestic policy, but the credit ratings agency added that there were buffers in place. "Broad geographic diversification of operations and strong capital structures are expected to mitigate the credit risk of most rated issuers, resulting in only modest rating changes during the next 12 months," Alberto Moreno, senior director at Fitch, said in a statement.

Mexican debt has traded in a relatively tight range to US benchmarks. Mexican bonds on the benchmark JPMorgan Emerging Markets Benchmark Index Plus (EMBI+) were at 209 basis points over corresponding US Treasuries on Friday, not far from the average of 189 basis points over the last year. Early last month that yearly average was at its tightest since 2015. Mexico's benchmark IPC stock index is on track to post its largest monthly increase in over three years but is still down near 4 percent for the year, as is the U.S.-traded MSCI Mexico ETF.

Options data suggest traders are moderately defensive on the peso and the US-listed iShares MSCI Mexico Capped ETF. Lopez Obrador's early and sustained lead in the polls is hardly the only reason why Mexican assets have felt pressure. The unexpected strength of the US dollar, bolstered by rising US interest rates, has undercut emerging market currencies. Investors have further soured on Mexico due to the testy negotiations to modernize the North America Free

Trade Agreement as well as an ongoing oil output drop, drug-related violence and corruption.

Lopez Obrador, who heads the Morena party, has pledged to clean up government and clamp down on violence, but there are lingering concerns he could boost spending on social programs and roll back changes that have opened up Mexico's oil and gas industry to private and foreign investors. Some members of Lopez Obrador's team have stressed that he will not govern as a radical leftist but rather as a left-of-center leader who will, among other things, fight to preserve the NAFTA deal with the United States and Canada.

'Relaxed victory'

Citi analysts said they expected a continued rally in the peso as hedges unwind, as they have in past elections, "though concerns over AMLO's administration and NAFTA should return over the medium term." The Wall Street bank's base-case scenario calls for a "relaxed victory" for Lopez Obrador and his party becoming the largest party in both chambers of Congress, with the possibility it will have majority control.

In a strategy note, Commerzbank said the extent of Morena's dominance in Congress was now the bigger question. "Should the president no longer be limited by an opposition-dominated Senate, nervousness over excessive spending by the new government could mount in the financial markets," Commerzbank analyst Alexandra Bechtel wrote.



MEXICO CITY: Supporters of Mexico's presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, standing for the "Juntos haremos historia" party wait for the start of the closing campaign rally at the Azteca stadium. — AFP

"It remains to be seen how (Lopez Obrador's) plans will actually be implemented - election campaign rhetoric is often populist, whereas their implementation is often more pragmatic." Some investors are also betting Mexican consumers will help keep the likes of Walmart de Mexico going strong. The stock is up 9 percent in the year-to-date period.

"The average consumer is still going to buy at Walmart," said Rishikesh Patel, London-based portfolio manager of the BMO LGM Emerging Markets Fund. Patel said concerns over the direction of economic policy could even push the stock of the retailer higher because "if you feel less optimistic, you look for places that give you more value for your money." — Reuters

Key US inflation indicator hits 6-year high

WASHINGTON: A key measure of US inflation hit a six-year high in May, matching the central bank's target, in another sign that price pressures are finally rising, the government reported Friday. The long-awaited rise in the Personal Consumption Expenditures price index, the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation measure, came amid a slight slowdown in consumer spending last month, according to the Commerce Department. The weak spending could weigh on GDP growth in the second quarter but incomes posted sharp gains. On an annual basis, the PCE price index hit 2.3 percent, the highest since March 2012.

And excluding the volatile food and fuel components, "core" PCE over 12 months rose two percent, the highest since April 2012 and the first time it has hit the Fed's two percent target in more than six years. The Federal

Reserve has signaled it is comfortable letting inflation run above target for a while to compensate for the extended period of weakness during the current economic recovery. The US central bank has raised the benchmark lending rate twice so far this year, most recently on June 13.

At that meeting, officials also altered their rate forecasts to include a fourth rate hike in December to keep a lid on mounting inflation. Futures markets on Friday slightly increased their estimated probability of a December rate hike to just over 45 percent, suggesting many investors still feel the Fed might hold fire. Price increases in May included also strong gains for energy goods and services that were partially offset by falling food prices. The PCE price index rose 0.2 percent compared to April, for both the headline and the core.

Weaker spending?

Meanwhile, disposable personal income rose 0.4 percent, or \$63.2 billion, for the month, the largest gain since January. But spending rose only 0.2 percent, slowing from the 0.5 percent gain in April. In inflation-adjusted terms, real expenditures fell by less than a tenth of a percentage point. Spending

undershot analyst expectations, held down by consumption of services in the month, which was nevertheless up 4.2 percent over May of last year.

Jim O'Sullivan said the weakness in consumption was tied to a plunge in spending on utilities, which are linked to weather. At an annual rate, inflation-adjusted spending in the second quarter was 2.8 percent, up from the sluggish first-quarter average of 0.9 percent, he added.

"Spending growth was weaker than expected, although it still shows re-acceleration after a weak Q1," he said in a client note. "The data still look positive for Q2 GDP, albeit not to the degree that seemed likely going into the report." Still, Gregory Daco of Oxford Economics said while the spending figures pointed to a rebound in the first half, this likely will moderate in latter half of 2018.

As a result, GDP growth likely will hit a peak in the April-June period at 4.2 percent before slowing to 2.5 percent in the second half of the year, he said in a research note. "With inflation likely to show resilience around the Fed's two percent target, we continue to expect a total of four rate hikes in 2018," Daco said, but "trade policy could spoil those plans." — AFP

Indonesia hikes rates to reverse rupiah slump

JAKARTA: Indonesia's central bank on Friday raised interest rates for the third time in six weeks as it moves to shield the rupiah from a selloff in emerging market currencies. Bank Indonesia raised its key rate to 5.25 percent from 4.75 percent. The rupiah has slid more than five percent against the dollar this year to below 14,000 — its lowest level since 2015.

Rising US interest rates are prompting investors to sell the rupiah and other currencies

to buy dollar-denominated assets in search of better returns. "The rate increase comes against a backdrop of continued weak economic growth and subdued inflation, and clearly indicates the main focus of the central bank is boosting the rupiah," said Gareth Leather, senior Asia economist at research house Capital Economics.

While the latest move may offer respite to the depreciating currency, raising borrowing costs could stifle efforts to boost the economy's sluggish growth rates.

In a bid to rev up Southeast Asia's biggest economy, the central bank had been repeatedly slashing borrowing costs over the past year and a half until it reversed course in May. Indonesia is targeting annual growth of seven percent, but the commodities-driven economy has remained stuck in the 5.0 percent range. — AFP



JAKARTA: Indonesians visit a motorcycle workshop in Jakarta on June 21, 2018, after the Eid Al-Fitr festival where millions of people travelled to their hometowns using motorcycles and cars. — AFP

CBK holds Al Najma draw today

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait announces holding Al-Najma account KD

500,000 prize draw today, Sunday July 1st, 2018 noting that the draw would be done and broadcast live on the Diwaniya program at Nabdh Al-Kuwait 88.8 station at 12:30 pm. In this regard, CBK's assistant manager for individual banking services, Hameed Ibrahim Al-Salman said that two draws would be made for Al-Najma account holders and three for the 'Transfer Your Salary' account holders. "Al-Najma draws will include the weekly KD

5000 and the bimanual prize of KD 500,000", he explained reminding that the draw for the world's largest prize of KD 1.5 million would be held on the first week of January 2019. Furthermore, Al-Salman said that three more draws would be made for the 'Your Salary & More' account holders and that the winners would get twice as much as their salaries in addition to draws to win a Range Rover.

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Banking sector achieves growth in 1Q 2018 as oil prices stay up

KUWAIT: By the end of June 2018, the first quarter of the current fiscal year 2018/2019 ended and the average price for Kuwaiti oil for most of June scored US\$ 72.1 per barrel, which is US\$ 22.1 (44.2%) higher than the new hypothetical price in the current budget at US\$ 50 per barrel. It is also US\$ 27.1 higher than the hypothetical price for the preceding fiscal year which was US\$ 45 per barrel.

The past fiscal year 2017/2018 which ended on March 31, 2018 scored an average price for Kuwaiti oil of US\$ 54.5 per barrel. The average price for June is higher by about 32.3% than the average price for last fiscal year but is less by US\$ -2.9 per barrel than the parity budget price in the current budget which is US\$ 75 per barrel according to the estimates of the Ministry of Finance and after deducting 10% for the future generations reserve.

Kuwait is supposed to have achieved oil revenues in the amount of about KD 1.6 billion in June. Assuming that production and prices would continue at the current levels -an unrealistic assumption- Kuwait's oil revenues would score about KD 17.8 billion in oil revenues for the entire current fiscal year, which is KD 4.5 billion higher than the value of oil revenues estimated for the budget at KD 13.3 billion. Adding an amount of KD 1.7 billion in non-oil revenues, total budget revenues would score KD 19.5 billion for the current fiscal year.

Comparing this figure with expenditures allocations in the amount of KD 21.5 billion, it is likely that the general budget for FY 2018/2019 would achieve a deficit in the amount of KD 2 billion. However, the actual deficit remains a variable with the movement of oil prices and production during the remainder of the fiscal year.

Warba Bank Financial Results

Warba Bank announced results of its operations for the first quarter of the current year, which indicate that the Bank's net profits (after tax deduction) scored KD 2.92 million compared with KD 1.36 million for the same period of 2017, showing a rise in its profits by KD 1.56 million or by 115%. The rise in net profits is due to the rise in total operational income by a higher value than the rise in total operating expenses. Therefore, the bank's operating profit rose by KD 3.1 million or by 80.4%, reaching KD 6.9 million compared with KD 3.8 million.

In details, total operating income of the bank increased by KD 3.13 million or by 40.4% and scored KD 10.88 million, compared with KD 7.75 million for the same period of 2017. This resulted from the rise in the item of net financing income by KD 2.6 million or by 45.5%, and scored KD 8.3 million versus KD 5.7 million. All other operating income items rose by KD 583 thousand, except for the item of net investment income that declined by KD 59 thousand. Total

operating expenses increased by a lesser value than the increase in total operating income by KD 72 thousand or by 1.8%, scoring KD 4.02 million compared with KD 3.95 million. The rise included all items of operating expenses except for the item of depreciation that dropped by KD 85 thousand. Percentage of total operating expenses to total operating incomes scored 36.9% compared with 50.9%. Item of provision for impairment increased by KD 1.4 million or by 58.8% and scored KD 3.8 million, compared with KD 2.4 million for the same period of last year. This explains the rise in the net profit margin to 26.8% in the first three months of the current year, compared with 17.5% for the same period of last year.

The bank's financial statements indicate that total assets increased by KD 60.9 million or by 3.4% and scored KD 1.835 billion versus KD 1.775 billion in the end of 2017. While total assets increased by KD 519.3 million or by 39.5%, in comparison with the same period 2017 when it scored KD 1.316 billion. Item of financing receivables rose by KD 97.4 million or by 7.7% and scored KD 1.361 billion (74.1% of total assets) versus KD 1.263 billion (71.2% of total assets) in the end of 2017.

It rose by KD 390.2 million or by 40.2% compared with KD 970.5 million (73.7% of total assets) in the same period of 2017. Percentage of total financing receivables to total deposits scored 83.2% compared with 85.6%. Item of cash and balances with banks rose by KD 32.3 million and scored KD 45.5 million (2.5% of total assets) versus KD 13.2 million (0.7% of total assets) in the end of 2017. It also rose by KD 39.8 million compared with KD 5.7 million (0.4% of total assets) in the same period of 2017. While the item of placements with banks and CBK decreased by KD 81.9 million or by 33.2% and reached KD 164.6 million (9% of total assets), compared to KD 246.5 million (13.9% of total assets) by the end of 2017. It also decreased by KD 24.3 million or by 12.9% compared to the same period of the previous year when it reached KD 188.9 million (14.4% of total assets).

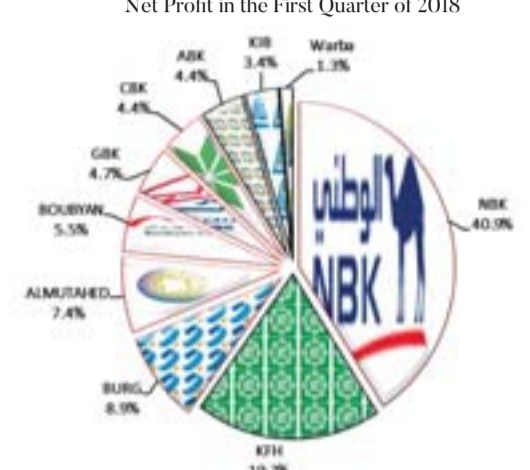
Figures indicate that the bank's liabilities (excluding total equity) increased by KD 59 million or by 3.7% and scored KD 1.657 billion, compared with KD 1.598 billion in the end of 2017. It also increased by KD 513.6 million or by 44.9%, if compared with the total in the same period of last year, when it reached KD 1.143 billion. Percentage of total liabilities to total assets scored 90.3% compared with 86.8%.

Results of analyzing financial statements calculated on annual basis indicate that most of the bank's profitability indexes rose compared with the same period of 2017. The average return on equities relevant to the banks shareholders' (ROE) increased to 11.5% compared with 5.7%. The

Total Operating Income in the First Quarter 2018



Ten Bank's Share of the Sector Net Profit in the First Quarter of 2018



average return on capital (ROC) increased and scored 11.7% versus 5.4%. Likewise, the average return on assets (ROA) increased to 0.6% compared with 0.4%.

Basic and diluted earnings per share (EPS) scored 0.48 fils compared with 1.36 fils, due to the discount of profit payment on Perpetual Tier 1 Sukuk by KD 2.4 million in the end of the first quarter of the current year. (P/E) scored 122.9 times versus 46.9 times due to the decrease of the basic and diluted earnings per share by 64.7% and the decrease of the market share price by 7.5%, compared to their levels in 31 March 2017. (P/B) scored 1.3 times compared with 1.5.

Aggregated performance of the banks sector

The banking sector comprising 10 banks achieved noticeable growth in its net profits in the first quarter of 2018 versus the same period of 2017. First quarter of 2018 profits scored KD 228.9 million (after deducting taxes and minority equities) an increase by KD 32.9 million or 16.8% compared with KD 196 million in the same period of 2017.

The operating profit for the 10 banks rose by KD 34.1 million or by 8.8%, and scored KD 422.8 million compared with KD 388.7 million, prior to the discounting of allocations due to rise in operating income by 12.7% against a rise in total expenses by 16%. The impact was reflected directly on the rise in net banks' profit. The Kuwaiti banks continued to implement blocking allocations against irregular loans so that total allocations blocked in the first quarter scored KD 165.6 million compared with KD 162.6 million in the first quarter of 2017, a rise by 1.9% and it also

increased by 17.4% above the last quarter of 2017 when they scored KD 141 million.

Profits of 5 traditional banks scored KD 144.9 million, 63.3% of total net profit of the 10 bank, a rise by 18.9% compared with the same period of 2017. Share of Islamic banks scored KD 83.9 million, representing 36.7% of the 10 bank's net profits, a rise by 13.3% compared with the first quarter of 2017 level. This indicates that the performance of Islamic banks during the first quarter is growing at a lower rate maybe for the first time. Price to earnings multiplier (P/E) for the 10 banks' sector calculated on last 12 months' profits scored 14.8 times, compared with 14 times for the same period of 2017. Return on total assets (ROA) remained at 1.1%, calculated on the last 12 months' profits. Return on equity (ROE) rose to 9.1% versus 8.5%.

Comparing the performance of the 10 banks, "National Bank of Kuwait" continued to achieve the highest profit value which scored KD 93.6 million (15 fils EPS) or about 40.9% of the 10 banks' net profits, a rise by 9.6% versus the first quarter of 2017 due to the increase in interest returns and net revenues from Islamic financing. "Kuwait Finance House" achieved the second highest profits by KD 43.9 million (7 fils EPS) or 19.2% of the 10 banks' net profits and at a growth rate of 13.9% compared with the same period of 2017, due to the increase in net financing revenues, commissions fees and investment revenues. "Commercial Bank of Kuwait" achieved the highest growth in profits by 116.7% and scored KD 10.1 million compared with KD 795 thousand, due to the drop in total provisions by KD 12 million or by 42.8%, reaching KD 16.1 million compared with KD 28.1 million in the first quarter of 2017.

AUB organizing exclusive marketing event in London

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) has announced an exclusive event for its clients on 12 July in London to learn about the latest developments of the London Property Market and specifically the Paddington Gardens Project. This is part of Ahli United Bank's approach to ensure clients are kept informed of the variety of their wealth management options, and key trends that could affect how they plan for the future while protecting our clients' interests.

Commenting on this occasion, AUB's Senior General Manager - Private Banking & Wealth Management, Medhat Tawfik said: "The Paddington Gardens Project is located in the heart of London and is an exceptional opportunity for our customers to own a housing unit in this prestigious project. The project involves four towers, with many units already sold, and we expect the demand to continue for the remaining units. As part of the event, customers will be given a tour of the site to allow them to see first-hand the progress of the project and the quality of the finish. With an attractive finance package this supports those interested in having a property in London or expanding on their existing portfolio.

We are delighted to present this real estate project in the real estate sector for customers and investors, following the significant success or previous launches by AUB with the most recent being the Prince of Wales Gardens Project in Battersea, another one of London's prime areas". Tawfik explained that the project has the advantage of being a preferred destination for a family home in London or as an investment in the city's real estate sector. The project boasts a unique location in the heart of London, a few minutes from Hyde Park and Paddington underground station and its proximity to the city's important areas"

He concluded by saying: "We, at Ahli United Bank, are keen to provide our customers with these services, building on our pioneering role in catering for the needs of our elite customers. AUB continues to innovate and our efforts have been recognized with the prestigious 'Best Private Banking in Kuwait' award from the Banker Middle East, in 2017 and 2018 respectively." Over the coming weeks and months Ahli United Bank will be continuing to enhance our capabilities to support our customers and their planning for the future.



flydubai lands in Thessaloniki

DUBAI: flydubai has inaugurated its flights to Thessaloniki becoming the first UAE carrier to offer direct flights from Dubai. Yesterday's flight from Terminal 2, Dubai International landed at Thessaloniki Airport "Makedonia" and was greeted by a water cannon salute.

On board the flight was a delegation led by Jeyhun Efendi, Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations at flydubai. On arrival in Thessaloniki, the delegation was greeted by Khaled Alqaydi, the Charge d'Affaires for the UAE Embassy in Greece and George Vilos, Executive Director of Commercial & Business Development, Fraport Greece Management.

Speaking at a press conference to mark the occasion, Jeyhun Efendi, Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations at flydubai said: "As the first carrier to operate direct flights from Dubai to Thessaloniki we are excited about the new opportunities that this route will provide for trade and tourism between the UAE and Greece. Since more than 70% of our network was previously underserved we remained committed to the vision set for us to create free flows of trade and tourism and to strengthen direct air links with the UAE."

Trade between the UAE and Greece continues to grow. Currently there are more than 170 Greek companies registered with the Dubai Chamber of Commerce, while non-oil trade between the UAE and Greece exceeded \$212 million in the first nine months of 2017, a growth of 10 per cent over the same period in 2016. Greece has also been working closely with the UAE to development platforms to target compelling investment opportunities found in key sectors of Greece's Economy.

"Thessaloniki remains a popular leisure destination and with the start of these flights, we expect more passengers to take advantage of our reliable and affordable services to discover this beautiful country," Jeyhun Efendi Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations at flydubai added.

flydubai provides its customers with a better travel experience by offering greater choice and flexibility. With flydubai's Business Class, passengers can enjoy a more personalised flying experience while Economy Class offers comfortable seating and a convenient way to travel.



On flydubai's newest aircraft, the Boeing 737 MAX 8, the efficient and environmentally friendly aircraft features a new cabin offering a flat-bed in Business Class for passengers to sleep comfortably during their flight. Economy Class offers new RECARO seats, which are designed to optimise space and comfort. flydubai also offers exceptional inflight entertainment with a full HD, 11.6-inch screen, featuring more than 1,000 hours of movies, TV shows, music and games in Arabic, English and Russian.

Emirates will codeshare on this route and as part of the Emirates flydubai partnership, each airlines' passengers will have the opportunity to connect in Dubai to hundreds of destinations across the world.

Thierry Aucoq, Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations at Emirates said, "Our

local communities in Greece has always been the introduction of more flights and new services connecting this beautiful country with the rest of the world. More travel options and more connectivity will result in more passengers and help drive Greek tourism.

"flydubai, our latest airline partner, begins its service connecting Thessaloniki with Dubai. Travelling between those two enchanting destinations is now easier than ever before. I would like to thank the flydubai team for working with Fraport Greece and realizing for the first time ever this very important route," Alexander Zinell, the Chief Executive Officer of Fraport Greece added. With flights to Catania in Italy, Dubrovnik in Croatia, Krakow in Poland, and the start of flights to Helsinki, Finland in October, flydubai's route network in Europe will reach 27 points.

Mastercard and Burgan Bank's Qatar Airways co-branded card promises benefits

KUWAIT: Mastercard, a leading technology company in the global payments industry, has teamed up with Burgan Bank for the launch of a Qatar Airways co-branded Mastercard World card. The new card will enable card holders to earn Qatar Airways Qmiles against every purchase, and comes with an exciting package of travel, lifestyle and insurance rewards.

Designed especially for affluent global travelers, the Burgan Bank Qatar Airways Mastercard World Credit Card offers a range of best-in-class benefits. Burgan Bank's customers will receive 20,000 complimentary Qmiles on payment of the upfront annual card fee, after which they can earn 6 Qmiles for every Kuwaiti Dinar spent locally and 12 Qmiles per Dinar on international spends. In addition, frequent flyers will appreciate the complimentary LoungeKey membership, which unlocks access to more than 800 airport lounges across 415 cities worldwide.

Cardholders can also enjoy exclusive car rental deals, discounted chauffeur rides with Careem, special accommodation packages from Starwood Hotels & Resorts and a 25% discount on the My US shipping service. Other benefits include family travel insurance, purchase protection and extended warranty, together with an exclusive collection of offers and discounts at leading destinations around the world as part of Mastercard's Priceless platform.

The card comes with the added convenience of Mastercard's contactless payment technology, which allows cardholders to complete their transactions by simply tapping their card at any NFC-enabled point-of-sale terminal. Khalid Elgibali,



Division President, MENA, Mastercard, said: "We are pleased to collaborate with Burgan Bank for the launch of the new Qatar Airways co-branded card, which provides an array of outstanding benefits. The rewards associated with our World card are designed to provide best-in-class privileges for cardholders, and place a range of exceptional experiences at the fingertips of seasoned travelers."

Naser Al Qaisi, Acting Chief Retail Banking Officer of Burgan Bank, welcomed the launch, commenting: "Burgan Bank's delighted to launch this card, which brings a range of fantastic value-added propositions to our customers. Thanks to Mastercard's innovative technology, cardholders will enjoy greater convenience and enhanced security for every transaction. The new card represents another important step in our journey to simplify the payment journey for our customers, and we look forward to working with Mastercard to bring further improvements to their experience in future."



partnership with flydubai enables travellers in Thessaloniki and the greater surrounding area to easily access destinations across Emirates network, particularly cities in Australia, Thailand, and China, all of which are popular for local travellers. We also expect the route to boost the number of visitors to the region, from important inbound markets like Melbourne and Sydney, as well as China and Japan."

For bookings under the codeshare, Emirates passengers receive complimentary meals and the Emirates checked baggage allowance on flights operated by flydubai in Business and Economy classes. Commenting on the launch, Alexander Zinell, the Chief Executive Officer of Fraport Greece said: "I wholeheartedly welcome the start of flydubai's year-round flights from Dubai to Thessaloniki. Our commitment to the

Flight Details

Business Class return fares to Thessaloniki will start at AED 8,365 while Economy Class return fares will start at AED 1,879 including taxes. Flights can be purchased from flydubai's website (flydubai.com), its Customer Centre (+971) 600 54 44 45, flydubai travel shops or through travel partners.

Flights can be booked through flydubai's website (flydubai.com), the official flydubai App, Contact Centre in Dubai on (+971) 600 54 44 45, the flydubai travel shops or through our travel partners. For competitive travel packages visit Holidays by flydubai which provides passengers with thousands of hotel options that suit all budgets and ancillary services including airport transfers, sightseeing packages, UAE visa facilitation, car rental and excursions.

Technology

Facebook boosts transparency as it braces for int'l elections

Labeling and archiving policies applied to political ads

MENLO PARK: Facebook announced new steps recently to let people see who is behind ads and other content on the leading social network as it braced for elections in the US and Brazil. The moves come as Facebook strives to avoid the kind of nefarious manipulation of its platform by fake accounts that stoked division and spread misinformation ahead of the US presidential election in 2016.

"We have learned across hard issues from election interference to data privacy to fake news that we under-invested in proactively policing the ecosystem that we built," Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg told reporters at the company's headquarters in Silicon Valley. "On of the absolutely most important things we can do across our platform is really increasing transparency."

Facebook began letting users see all ads a page is running at the social network or at its Instagram or Messenger services. The information can be accessed by clicking on an "Info and Ads" tab added to pages. People will also be able to find out more about Facebook pages—the accounts created by organizations and companies—such as when they were created and the names behind them.

'Very focused'

Authorization, labeling and archiving policies applied to political ads on the social network in the US are

being expanded to political ads in Brazil, according to director of product management Rob Leathern. Facebook is "very focused" on the upcoming mid-term elections in the US, with a priority on scuttling the kinds of fake accounts used to promote discord or misinformation in 2016, Sandberg said. The social network has enlisted third-party fact checkers in 50 states, according to Sandberg.

"We are working hard to find articles with false information on state and local levels," she said. Facebook is distinguishing political news stories from ads, but opting for transparency where distinctions might not be clear, according to Sandberg. "We understand these things are different," Sandberg said. "Our goal is transparency, so we are erring on the side of being more transparent."

Sandberg said the process may be labor-intensive and cause delays in some ads. "We have definitely gotten complaints from politicians running ads," she said. "More manual reviews and checks mean more delays. No one likes delays." Separately, Twitter unveiled a new "ads transparency center" which allows anyone across the globe to view ads that have been served on the short messaging service. "We are making it clearer than ever who is advertising US federal political campaign content on Twitter by including a visual badge and disclaimer information," Twitter executive Bruce Falck said in a statement. — AFP



CHENNAI: This file photo taken on March 22, 2018 shows icons of WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and other social networks on a smartphone. — AFP

Media bootcamp is arming Filipinos to fight fake news

BALER: A room full of Filipino police and soldiers stares intently at headlines projected on a screen, the latest students of a media bootcamp aimed at fighting their nation's flood of fake news. Scores of people ranging from girl scouts to government workers have already received the same innovative instruction in the Philippines, ranked the world's top user of social media.

"Which one is real?" asks class teacher Rowena Paraan, a veteran journalist with the top Philippine TV network ABS-CBN, as she stands in a sweltering gym on a military base. Her lesson is part of the channel's long-running citizen journalism training programme, which since late-2016 has shown some 25,000 people how to fight the fake news spike that accompanied President Rodrigo Duterte's rise.

The first headline zeroes in on the nation's struggle against the infamous jihadists on its southern islands: "Donald Trump sends 5,000 troops to fight Abu Sayyaf". It's fake and several students quickly shoot up their hands to say so. But subsequent headlines get harder and harder until the only sound is Paraan's footsteps as she paces among the students.

The training, which is delivered free-of-charge to groups who request it, provides an overview of how fake news works as well as techniques to spot and debunk it. It is one of several similar efforts that have sprouted up since Duterte's election, including one run by the news website Rappler, known for battling with the president over his brutal drugs war.

Formats and content vary, but generally the classes are run by journalists teaching social media-obsessed youth how not to get fooled online. Paraan says the risk of being manipulated has serious consequences. "It (fake news) generated more support for the president... either it encouraged you to hate the president's enemies or urged you to support the president," Paraan tells AFP, referring



BALER: This photo taken on May 11, 2018 shows journalist Rowena Paraan speaking during a lecture about fake news in Philippine Army Camp Jaime Bitong in Baler, Aurora, north of Manila. — AFP

to Duterte's 2016 election. Duterte's camp has repeatedly been accused of employing online trolls to sing his praises and savage dissenters with fierce words or even threats.

'Be our own gatekeepers'

Some of Duterte's inner circle have been caught passing on false information, including his one-time campaign spokesman. His government has been largely quiet on the classes, but has spoken against a bill in Congress that would penalise public officials who spread fake news. One of Paraan's pet examples of pro-Duterte fake news is the US space agency NASA allegedly recognising him as "the best president in the solar system". It was shared more than 6,500 times on Facebook.

"Hello? Did they canvass Mars, Pluto and other places?" Paraan asks with mock seriousness. Among the

nearly three dozen police and soldiers in class is officer Bernadette Leander, who came because she has already tangled with fake news at work. After a rumour circulated on social media that Duterte had doubled all police officers' salaries, the local force was deluged with inquiries from potential recruits.

"People started asking us about it. We told them it wasn't true," Leander, who works in public affairs, told AFP. "We had to conduct an information campaign (against it)." One of the reasons the Philippines is a key battleground for fake news is the sheer volume of its online activity. According to consultancy We Are Social, the average Filipino spends nearly four hours per day on social media, the most in the world. Facebook said the Philippines-home to 106 million people—has 69 million users, the sixth-largest country group. — AFP

Facial recognition key in identifying shooting suspect

WASHINGTON: Facial recognition technology, which has drawn criticism from civil liberties activists in recent years, was used to identify the suspect in Thursday's newsroom shooting which left five dead in Annapolis, Maryland. Police said suspect Jarrod Ramos, who had a prior arrest record, had refused to cooperate with authorities after he was taken into custody and that his fingerprints could not immediately be identified.

"We would have been much longer in identifying him and being able to push forward in the investigation without that system," said Anne Arundel County police chief Timothy Altomare. "It was a huge win for us last night and thus, for the citizens of Anne Arundel County." As facial recognition use has grown for applications in law enforcement, border security and for commercial purposes, activists have warned of privacy risks for databases which are largely unregulated.

The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services has had a facial recognition database since 2011 which has never been audited, according to a

2016 report by the Georgetown University Center on Privacy & Technology. The report noted that Maryland's database has some seven million images from drivers' license images and three million from "known offenders," and can also search the FBI "mug shot" database of 24.9 million.

Facial recognition is also used to unlock the new iPhone X and can be incorporated into payment technology—the so-called "smile to pay" system. Yet privacy activists warn that facial recognition could be used for warrantless surveillance and that the technology is still imperfect, with errors considerably higher for people of color and women.

Some point to China's use of facial recognition to identify dissidents and even jaywalkers, in some cases displaying photos of offenders on electronic billboards. Revelations that US tech giant Amazon was working with law enforcement on its face recognition system called Rekognition sparked protests and petitions to halt those efforts.

But dozens of other tech firms including Microsoft and Facebook also use facial recognition technology, which relies on algorithms which scan a person's face to match against images in other databases. Google for example uses it to help people find family and friends in their picture libraries. According to the Georgetown report, Maryland's system uses NEC and Cognitec face recognition algorithms. The Georgetown study found nearly one in two American adults are in a facial recognition database and that few agencies have meaningful protections to prevent the misuse of the technology. — AFP



ANNAPOLIS: Police tape marks the entrance to the building complex where The Capital Gazette is located. — AFP

Cisco helps narrow the IT skills gap in the Middle East

KUWAIT: Cisco in the Middle East celebrated several accomplishments of the Cisco Networking Academy, its IT skills and career-building program available to learning institutions and individuals worldwide.

As recognition of its contribution to narrowing the IT skills gap in the region, Cisco Networking Academy was honored with two coveted industry awards - 'Network Training Provider of the year' at the Network World Middle East Awards 2018 and 'Training Provider of the year' at the Channel Middle East Awards. With over 520 active academies across 14 countries in the Middle East, more than 55,000 active students, close to 1,200 instructors and an average female student participation of 28%, Cisco Networking Academy has been helping fill the regional demand for skilled ICT professionals for over 20 years.

"As many Middle East countries accelerate their digitization initiatives and continue to drive economic diversification efforts, there is a growing need for skilled, tech-savvy people. Cisco is committed to support the innovation, talent and entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Middle East and contribute to the knowledge economy," says David Meads, Vice President - Middle East & Africa, at Cisco.

"The skills gap, particularly in the ICT field, continues to be a top government priority and this is where Cisco Networking Academy is making a significant impact by developing local talent. We work closely with local schools, universities and government organizations. The education Cisco Networking Academy has the power to change people's lives, elevate careers, and transform communities. We have trained over 295,000 students in the Middle East over the last 20 years," Mr. Meads added.

Cisco Networking Academy is the company's longest-running and largest corporate social responsibility program. It provides a broad and deep IT curriculum for students of all backgrounds, teaching the hands-on technical and business skills they need to succeed. Additionally, with many industries experiencing a shortage of IT talent, Cisco Networking Academy seeks to give students the skills most in demand worldwide and helps create a trained, diverse workforce for the digital economy.

Since founding Cisco Networking Academy(r) in 1997, Cisco has made \$2.6 billion in in-kind contributions of tools, resources, and support to students, schools, and instructors worldwide. Curriculum and training for the network's more than 22,000 instructors are provided free of charge to academy partners, which include high schools, colleges, universities, and other nonprofit community organizations.

In line with Cisco's culture of innovation, Cisco Networking Academy remains dedicated to evolving the program curriculum to meet the ever-changing IT skills demand, including big data and analytics, cloud, cybersecurity, automation, machine learning, and artificial intelligence. "Cisco Networking Academy plays a crucial role in Cisco's commitment to positively impact over one billion people by 2025 through digitization. We are proud of what it has achieved both globally and here in the Middle East. For over 20 years, Cisco Networking Academy has inspired people to take on the trends, technologies, and challenges changing the world," Mr. Meads concluded.

California ramps up online privacy law

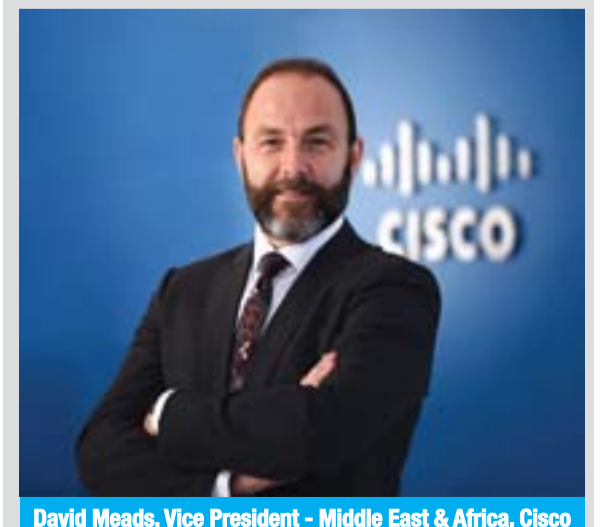
SAN FRANCISCO: California recently passed a strict new law aimed at protecting people's privacy online, a move that promised to shift the terrain on which internet firms operate in the wake of recent scandals. The bill, signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown, followed in the spirit of the General Data Protection Regulation, which recently took effect in Europe.

The legislation cut off an initiative that is heading for the ballot in this state in the fall. It was crafted to ensure rights including knowing what personal information is collected by companies on the internet and whether it is sold, and to whom, according to the bill signed by Brown. The law also gives people a right to "say no" to the sale of their personal information, and calls for them to be treated the same as anyone else online if they opt to restrict use of their data.

Internet businesses that receive "verifiable" requests by people to have their data deleted will be required to do so, with a list of exceptions that include keeping what is needed to complete transactions, detect security breaches, or protect against illegal activity. "A consumer shall have the right, at any time, to direct a business that sells personal information about the consumer to third parties not to sell the consumer's personal information," the legislation said. "This right may be referred to as the right to opt out."

Business home pages will be required to provide "clear and conspicuous" links titled "Do Not Sell My Personal Information" that take people to opt-out pages. People whose personal information is stored unencrypted and not sufficiently protected were also given the right to pursue civil claims. The shift both in Europe and California came after the harvesting of Facebook users' data by Cambridge Analytica, a US-British political research firm, for the 2016 US presidential election.

Nonprofit advocacy group Consumer Watchdog called the California legislation "landmark reform" and branded it the toughest state privacy law in the US. "Silicon Valley companies will very likely implement many of these reforms across their entire customer base, not just for Californians," said Consumer Watchdog president Jamie Court. — AFP



David Meads, Vice President - Middle East & Africa, Cisco

Health

High times as US seniors join cannabis craze

LOS ANGELES: Kyle Johnson, who is 68, swears by cannabis for treating back pain and insomnia. Martha Macbeth, 63, uses it to soothe her sciatica and get a good night's sleep. Both Californians are part of a surging new wave of senior Americans turning to cannabis to ease aches and pains as the craze for the drug spreads across the country and more states legalize it. "They are coming in droves with curiosity and interest, looking for relief from pain and sleep problems," said Macbeth, a consultant at Octavia Wellness, a San Francisco startup that caters to senior communities across the state, which has legalized recreational marijuana and is the country's biggest market for legal cannabis.

Interest is such, she says, that Tupperware-like presentations to showcase cannabis products at retirement homes are overflowing with silver-haired potential customers. The products include tinctures, sprays, edibles and topicals such as lotions and oils that provide relief for a wide range of ailments without getting users high. "We had one presentation in San Jose (northern California) recently and there were 400 people wanting to go in," Macbeth said. "We were overwhelmed." Several studies indicate that seniors are the fastest growing population in

America to adopt cannabis and if the trend continues they could overtake the younger generation in terms of weed consumption.

From arthritis to insomnia

Marijuana use among Americans aged 65 and over increased by 250 percent between 2006 and 2013, according to the National Survey of Drug Use and Health. Another study found a 71-percent increase in marijuana use among adults aged 50 and older between 2006 and 2016. In California, one of 29 US states to have legalized marijuana for medical use, the industry is projected to raise \$6.5 billion in sales statewide by 2020. Experts say the older crowd is turning to the drug to treat a host of ailments—from arthritis to neuropathy, insomnia and chronic pain—and to avoid the side-effects associated with prescription drugs, including opioids.

"Some seniors are taking over 20 different prescription drugs a day ... and all too often these drugs have an impact at the beginning and then wear off," said Beverly Potter, the author of "Cannabis for Seniors," a book that helps older people navigate the new market. Potter said she has been swamped with requests for advice at speaking events and cautions

her audience against believing marijuana is the go-to drug for all ailments, especially in light of little medical research on the effects of the drug which remains illegal at the federal level. Still, she firmly believes that cannabis in many cases is a better alternative than traditional painkillers or sleep medication that can leave patients with bleeding ulcers or addicted.

'Start low, go slow'

"My advice to people who want to try it is the same slogan you are hearing everywhere: start low and go slow," Potter told AFP. "This is not about getting high. It's about learning how to study your body." She said the effects of medical marijuana vary depending on whether the drug is taken as an edible—cookies or gummies—or in the form of tinctures or rubs. Barbara Blaser, a registered nurse for 50 years and now the head of clinical services at Magnolia Wellness, a marijuana dispensary in Northern California, said the customers she encounters are not looking for the buzz of their youth but rather a new lease on life.

"Some people tell me 'I just want to be able to work in the garden but my knees hurt'," said Blaser, 72, who began using marijuana following a serious ill-

ness and ended up becoming an advocate. "If properly used, cannabis can change your life and give it back to you," she added. And as social perceptions of the drug change and the stigma associated with it evaporates, Blaser predicts its use as an alternative medicine will become more mainstream. Take Kyle Johnson, who recently founded a cannabis club with neighbor Mary Lou Molinaro at their gated retirement community in Brentwood, north of San

Francisco. "We started the club in March and at the first meeting we had, 160 people showed up and they were worried about letting anyone else know they were using medical cannabis or that they were interested," said Johnson, who uses cannabis for back pain and insomnia.

"Now, people stop either of us on a regular basis and say 'Oh, can I ask you this question, I can't sleep, I have arthritis pain' or whatever and we help them as best we can," she added. Molinaro, 67, said she equates cannabis with getting stoned. "I say 'look at me, do I look like I'm walking around high?'" she exclaimed. "In most cases, if you use the right product and see what works best for you, you will find relief and not look like a stonehead." —AFP

CLINIC

PAGE





248 33 199

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Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo – Rectal Surgeon

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tel: 1802 555

 daralshifa

Email: aahaddad@daralshifa.com



د. فهد علي المخيزوم
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What's On

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Ensuring the best deals this season, Burgan Bank is pleased to announce a new offer that aims to treat all Burgan Bank clients a discount from Zalatimo Sweets, a well-known Palestinian sweet bakery. With local and regional presence, Zalatimo Sweets has been selling desserts from natural ingredients, fresh hand-made tradi-

tional bakery sweets, and fine pastries for over 150 years. Due to its wide popularity, Kuwait is the first GCC country besides Jordan to own Zalatimo Sweets. Burgan Bank customers can enjoy the current opportunity offer by visiting any of the two branches in Kuwait - KIPCO Tower or The Story Mall in Hawally.



Governor meets Rabiya residents



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah met recently with Al-Rabiya mayor with the presence of the Farwaniya municipality manager and some citizens living in the area, in order to discuss complaints made about houses rented to bachelors, as well as open yards used for trucks' parking.

Municipality personnel inspect Dajeej



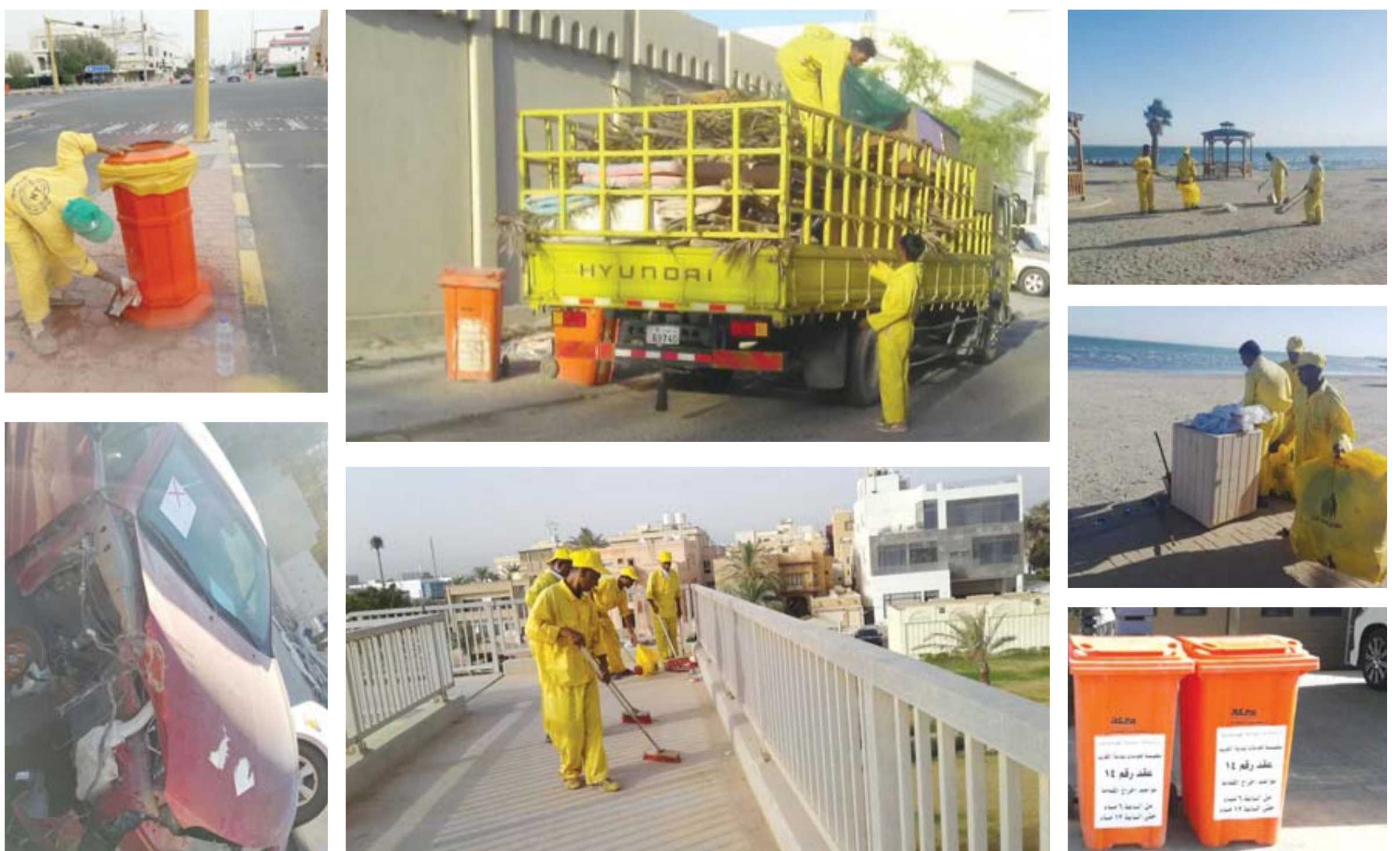
Farwaniya municipality inspection teams recently inspected various commercial stores in Dajeej in a campaign held also to pursue peddlers and remove all violations on state property such as illegal use of open yards and vehicles abandoned on various streets. In this regard, team leader Saeed Al-Azmi said that the campaign resulted in filing 14 citations, removing 83 expired ad licenses and issuing 12 warning notices.

Head of the Museums Department honored



Sultan Al-Duweesh, Head of the Museums Department at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCAAL), was honored during an event held recently to celebrate graduates of Kuwait University's History Department.

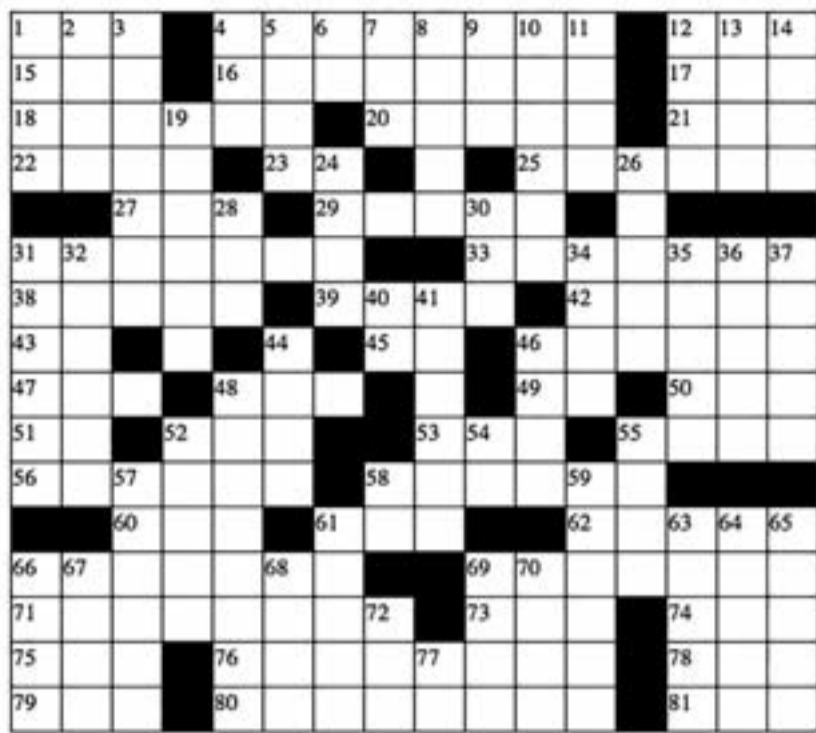
Municipality conducts wide-scale inspection



Kuwait Municipality's public relations department announced that the cleaning and road occupation department at the municipality recently inspected various automobile rentals, cafes and restaurants, as a number of abandoned vehicles were removed during the campaigns. Inspection teams were led by the capital's cleaning department's manager Meshaal Al-Azmi.

Stars

CROSSWORD 1947



ACROSS

1. An index of the cost of all goods and services to a typical consumer.
 4. Predict or reveal through, or as if through, divine inspiration.
 12. An audiotape recording of sound.
 15. A large vase that usually has a pedestal or feet.
 16. Any of various showy orchids of the genus *Sobralia* having leafy stems and bright-colored solitary or racemose flowers similar to those of genus *Cattleya*.
 17. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
 18. A furnished sitting room with sleeping accommodations (and some plumbing).
 20. A thermoplastic polyamide.
 21. A light touch or stroke.
 22. Surpassing the ordinary especially in size or scale.
 23. A radioactive transuranic element.
 25. Medium-sized tree-dwelling monkey of the Amazon basin.
 27. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
 29. A family of languages spoken by people scattered throughout central India.
 31. Any of numerous New World woodland birds having brightly colored males.
 33. (of tempo) Moderately slow n.
 38. United States conductor (born in Japan in 1935).
 39. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
 42. At full speed.
 43. A polyvalent metallic element that resembles chromium and tungsten in its properties.
 45. A state in northwestern North America.
 47. Sandwich filled with slices of bacon and tomato with lettuce.
 49. 16 ounces.
 50. Decay usually accompanied by an offensive odor.
 51. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
 53. The cry made by sheep.
 56. A city of central Russia south of Moscow.
 60. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
 62. Music performed for dancing the polka.
 66. A strong paper or thin cardboard with a smooth light brown finish made from e.g. Manila hemp.
 71. (Greek mythology) Daughter of Zeus and Demeter.
 73. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
 74. A master's degree in business.
 75. Extinct flightless bird of New Zealand.
 76. Someone who prefers negotiations to armed conflict in the conduct of foreign relations.
 78. Tag the base runner to get him out.
 79. (prefix) Opposite or opposing or neutralizing.
 80. A portable rectangular traveling bag for carrying clothes.
 81. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- DOWN
1. A three-dimensional shape with six square or rectangular sides.
 2. Preparatory school work done outside school (especially at home).
 3. A state in midwestern United States.
 4. A unit of pressure.
 5. A training program to prepare college students to be commissioned officers.
 6. A Russian river.
 7. According to need (physicians use PRN in writing prescriptions).
 8. Austrian composer who influenced the classical form of the symphony (1732-1809).
 9. An extension at the end and at right angles to the main building.
 10. Of or relating to the Sioux people or their language and culture.
 11. A member of an extinct North American Indian people who lived in the Pit river valley in northern California.
 12. An informal term for a father.
 13. (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
 14. A sock with a separation for the big toe.
 19. Poor handwriting.
 24. A form of magnetic resonance imaging of the brain that registers blood flow to functioning areas of the brain.
 26. Botswana statesman who was the first president of Botswana (1921-1980).
 28. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
 30. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
 32. A genus of fern sometimes placed in its own family Azollaceae.
 34. Material used to daub walls.
 35. The basic unit of money in Nigeria.
 36. A picturesque mountainous province of western Austria.
 37. Related on the mother's side.
 40. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
 41. A vehicle resembling a bicycle but having skis instead of wheels.
 44. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
 46. Showing or causing joy and pleasure.
 48. Goat grass.
 52. Any of numerous perennial bulbous herbs having linear or broadly lanceolate leaves and usually a single showy flower.
 54. An associate degree in nursing.
 55. Any of various flat-bottomed boats with sloping ends.
 57. East Indian tart yellow berrylike fruit.
 58. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
 59. United States author (born 1932).
 61. An island of central Hawaii.
 63. Minute aquatic herbs floating on or below the water surface of still water consisting of a leaflike frond or plant body and single root.
 64. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
 65. Jordan's port.
 67. (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.
 68. The function or position properly or customarily occupied or served by another.
 69. An island northwest of Wales.
 70. Wading birds of warm regions having long slender down-curved bills.
 72. A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
 77. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

This is a good time to utilize your strong ability to exercise self-control. You may find yourself in a situation where others tend to push your buttons. Just relax. Some circumstances may force you to take a step back and re-group. Aries, you may find yourself in a very affectionate mood. You may find yourself experiencing a strong urge to get out and about. Choose your company wisely. Aries, put your mind to work. Mental discipline should come easy for you.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may be entering a phase of self-awareness. You want to know why you do what you do. You are learning more about your needs and wants every day and focusing much of your time also on the feelings of those around you. Today should be a relaxing smooth day for you. Things will seem as if they just fall into place. All is well in your world and you should take some time to be with those closest to your heart. Seems as if everything is your favor today. Taurus, go home this evening and enjoy a special time with someone you love.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You are ambitious and have a great desire to be noticed. You want to be the center of attention and stand out in the crowd. You are determined to position everything and everyone in your life to achieve this goal. Today may find you feeding off gossip and seeking understanding of those around you. You are interested in getting to the root of what makes those around you do the things they do. You feel this will give you insight and authority over them. You are well on your way to achieving a level of organization that will put you right where you want to be.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This is a great time for you to experience the breakthrough you have been focusing on. Everything seems to be working in your favor. You may find yourself being drawn to all that represents romance. Take a stroll in the park, have a nice lunch with someone dear to you, a great time to curl up with a book or just a nice long bath may be just what you need today. You may find yourself helping a friend in need today. You are often a source of support and help to others. A friend that everyone wants to have is you are looked at with admiration. Cancer, enjoy yourself today and appreciate the fact you are loved by so many.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may find yourself realizing how special you are today. Appreciating all your gifts and talents and feeling a sense of pride. This is a great time of communication with those around you as you are able to express your emotions clearly to others. Dedication and devotion have gotten you to this point in life and you in a position you can provide much help to others. You are in touch with not only your emotions but also very in touch with the needs and emotions of those close to you. This is a very nice time in your life. You may find someone close shows great support and sympathy to you today when a situation you encounter puts you in need of a listening ear.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may find yourself feeling a bit left out. For a short period, you may find yourself feeling a sense of isolation. Your standards are high, and you may not approve of all that goes on within your social circle and may find that rather than face that disapproval your friends may recently be excluding you. This feeling won't last long, however, you may want to surround yourself with a group you fit in with. You may find that tension is high at this time and could easily find yourself surrounded by conflict. Isolation may be a positive thing in your world for now.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Others admire your ability to accomplish any task that is assigned to you. Not only are you able to do this with ease you are able to overcome any obstacle in your path. You are strong and driven with a strong desire to always do your best. This is noticed not only on a personal level, but many look up to you and admire you in the work place. You may find that someone is following your lead. Watch your steps because you are a guiding light in the lives closest to you.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today seems as if it will be a day when you see things that have been troubling you very clearly. Make those plans. Mental discipline is heightened and choices and decisions that you were once unsure about become very clear today. It is also a great time to break away from old habits and start anew. Stick to your routine for now as your current surroundings may hinder progress if starting new projects.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Learning from others and sharing what you know is a talent you possess. This is important to you now. Keeping the lines of communication open is a priority and focus. You compete with yourself, not others, and some find this odd and unproductive behavior while others applaud you. You're entering a phase of taking life easier, enjoying the lighter, more enjoyable side of life more often. Attitude is everything when you are working towards accomplishing your hopes and dreams. Your vision for your future is clear and firm.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Follow your conservative tendencies when you have an urge to walk on the wild side. This isn't the time to gamble or take chances on anything you're doing now. You want people to be grateful for what you do for them. You have trouble getting your point across to someone who seems fuzzy. The heavens indicate you could find yourself in many new places meeting new people. Letting events unfold on their own time supports moving forward.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may feel like you are on top of the world today. When you exude this kind of confidence it may tend to bring out conflict with others. Emotions around you may be high today. You may even feel as if someone or something is coming against you. Avoid the emotional confrontation as this is just an attempt by someone to steal your joy. Aquarius, you have worked hard and stayed focused. This will pay off for you in the workplace.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may find yourself at odds with those around you today. You could encounter obstacles and other bumps in the road that slow your progress and cause you to have to sit back and reevaluate your choices and decisions. You may find you feel you are being deceived or misled by someone who has authority over you. You may feel as if the actions you are being asked to take in the workplace go against your values. This is a time to sit back and watch, rather than speak and a time to put deep thought into your decisions before you act. This may leave you in a disapproving mood and your day overall could bring a level of frustration that leaves you feeling defeated. Chin up, Pisces, things will be back to normal soon.

Wordsearch Puzzle

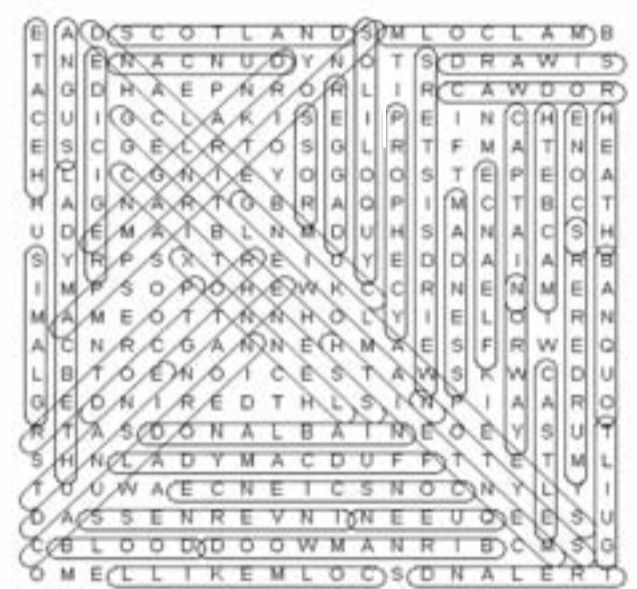
Soccer

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 37 letters spell a secret message.



- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| ASSIST | FORMATION | MATCH | SLIDE TACKLE |
| BALL | FORWARD | OFFENSE | SOCKS |
| CAPTAIN | FUL | OFFSIDE | SPORT |
| CHEERING | GAME | PENALTY KICK | STORAGE TIME |
| CLEATS | GOALIE | POSITION | STRIKERS |
| CLUB | GOALS | PRACTICE | SUBSTITUTE |
| COACH | GRASS | RED CARD | SWEEPER |
| COEN TOSS | HALVES | REFEREE | THROW-IN |
| CORNER KICK | HAT TRICK | SCORE | TOUCHLINE |
| DEFENSE | HEADING | SHIN GUARD | WALL |
| FANS | JERSEY | SHOOT-OUT | WORLD CUP |
| FIELD | JUGGLING | SHORTS | YELLOW CARD |
| FIFA | KICK-OFF | SHOT | |

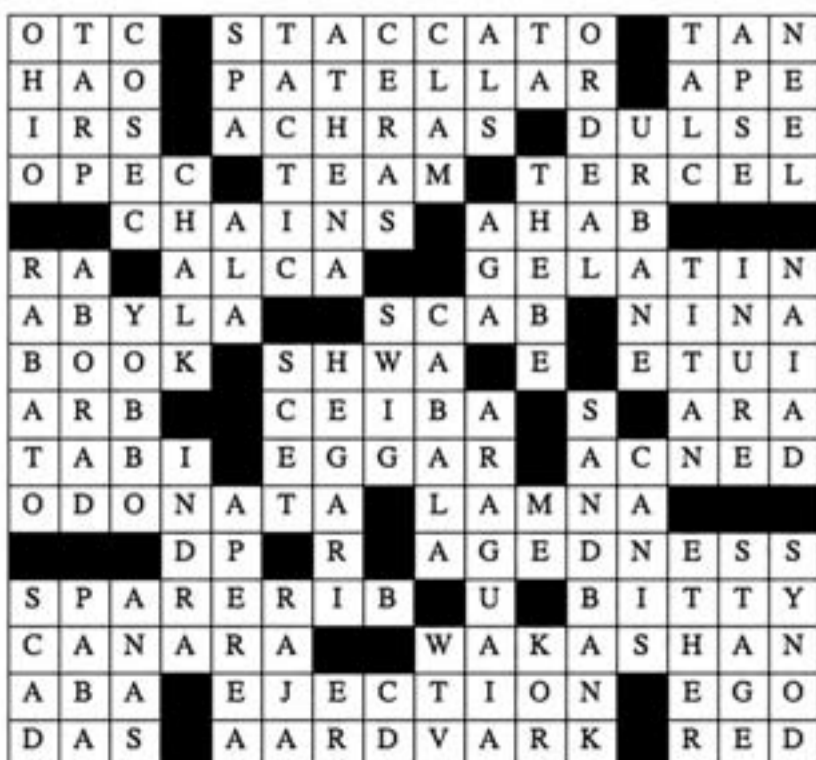
Shakespeare: Macbeth



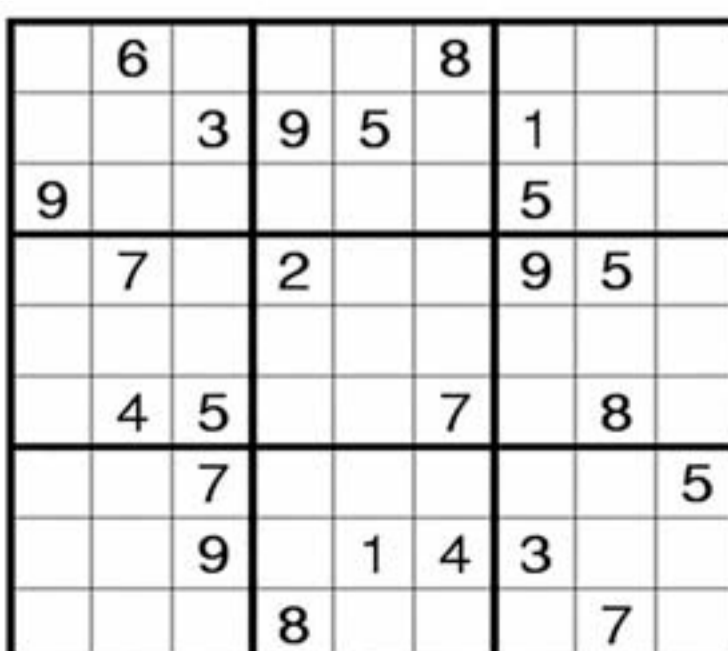
- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| ANGUS | DAGGER | IRELAND | REGICIDE |
| APPARETIONS | DOCTOR | LADY MACBETH | ROSES |
| BANQUO | DONALD | LADY MACDUFF | SCOTLAND |
| BIRNAM WOOD | DUNCAN | LENNOX | SEYTON |
| BLOOD | DUNSMINE | MACBETH | SIWARD |
| CAITHNESS | ENGLAND | MADNESS | SLEEPWALKING |
| CAPTAIN | FLANCE | MALCOLM | SOLLOQUY |
| CASTLE | GENTLEWOMAN | MENTEITH | THANE |
| CAULDRON | GLAMIS | MURDERERS | WEIRD SISTERS |
| CAWDOR | GUILT | NORWAY | |
| COLMEXILL | HEATH | PORTER | |
| CONSCIENCE | HECATE | PROPHECY | |
| CUMBERLAND | INVERNESS | QUEEN | |

Hidden sentence: BY THE PRICKING OF MY THUMBS, SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

Friday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, JULY 1, 2018



Women of the Rendile tribe wait for their dance performance during the 11th Marsabit Lake Turkana Culture Festival in Loiyangalani near Lake Turkana, northern Kenya, on June 28, 2018. The annual 3-day festival features the cultural traditions of 14 ethnic tribes in Marsabit county to promote tourism and build better relationship between tribes. — AFP

Gods of soccer: Ronaldo, Messi like you've never seen them

Looking regal in his Russian uniform, Cristiano Ronaldo gazes out pensively with his arms folded and "CR7" embroidered near his left shoulder. Behind him is Lionel Messi, also snappily dressed and with the hairs of his moustache twirled up either side of his mouth. Luis Suarez, Mohamed Salah, Antoine Griezmann, Sergio Ramos - it's a gathering of soccer's most venerated players and coaches.

Welcome to the "Like The Gods" exhibition at the Museum of the Russian Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg. The collection includes digitally made portraits of around 40 modern soccer superstars dressed in military and royal uniforms dating back to the 19th century, intertwined among sculptures of ancient gods, made about 200 years ago. "They just emphasize the main concept of this exhibition: modern heroes and ancient gods," says Anastasia Sergeeva, exhibition specialist at the museum. "Like some perfection or ideal that you can reach. And these people are reaching it now." It is the work of Italian artist Fabrizio Birimbelli, who is both a digital illustrator and a big fan of soccer. Birimbelli was there for the opening of the exhibition June 20, while former FIFA President Sepp Blatter was a visitor two days later.

"He came last week with his wife," Sergeeva says of Blatter, "and just said that he was really impressed by the exhibition and that it's really great that Russian museums are taking part in this way in the World Cup. This is just an idea of heroes in sport and football, expressed in the language of art."

Sergeeva says Ramos, the Spain captain, also has given the project the thumbs-up and was happy to be presented as a "modern hero." Birimbelli has had some fun with the portraits, all of which he signs with "Fab." Liverpool's larger-than-life coach, Juergen Klopp, has a cheeky grin on his face as he pulls a button on his uniform. Zlatan Ibrahimovic turns side on and looks like a warrior in his suit of armor, a Swedish flag fluttering beside him. France midfielder Paul Pogba has tricolored hair.



Former England captain Wayne Rooney has long, thick sideburns on his face. Brazil goalkeeper Alisson holds a caipirinha cocktail. Eric Cantona, fondly referred to as King Eric by fans of his former club Manchester United, wears a crown and holds a ball in his right hand. "Birimbelli has easily perceived sincerity in each portrait that is sometimes missed by professional experts," the museum literature reads "Birimbelli's heroes of modern football are equal to heroes of (Greek sculptors) Lysippos or Polykleitos," it adds. "Antiquity inspires modernity." The exhibition runs until July 15, the final day of the World Cup. — AP

A waiter carries drinks past a portrait of Argentine soccer legend Diego Maradona.



Visitors watch a portrait of Egypt's soccer star Mohamed Salah, part of the "Like The Gods" exhibition.



Visitors speak in front of a portrait of Argentine soccer star Lionel Messi, part of the "Like The Gods" exhibition at the Museum of the Russian Academy of Arts in St Petersburg, Russia.



File photo shows a woman watches a portrait of Portugal's soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo, part of the "Like The Gods" exhibition at the Museum of the Russian Academy of Arts in St Petersburg, Russia. — AP photos



Visitor walks among portraits with a portrait of France's soccer star Paul Pogba, left, part of the "Like The Gods" exhibition.



This file photo shows vehicles passing by an Art Deco building on Marine Drive in Mumbai. — AFP photos

Mumbai's Victorian Gothic and Art Deco buildings win UNESCO status

Mumbai's Art Deco buildings—believed to be the world's second largest collection after Miami—were added yesterday to UNESCO's World Heritage List alongside the city's better-known Victorian Gothic architecture. The decision was approved at a UNESCO meeting in the Bahraini capital Manama. A not-for-profit team of enthusiasts are in the process of documenting every single one of Mumbai's Art Deco treasures but they estimate there may be more than 200 across India's bustling financial capital.

The majority of them, built on reclaimed land between the early 1930s and early 1950s, are clustered together in the south of the coastal city where they stand in stark contrast to Victorian Gothic structures. "The Victorian ensemble includes Indian elements suited to the climate,

including balconies and verandas," UNESCO said in a press statement announcing the decision.

"The Art Deco edifices... blend Indian design with Art Deco imagery, creating a unique style that has been described as Indo-Deco," it added. The two vastly different architectural traditions face off against each other across the popular Oval Maidan playing field, where enthusiastic young cricketers hone their skills. On one side lie imposing and rather austere 19th century buildings housing the Bombay High Court and Mumbai University, with their spires and lancet windows.

On the other side stand sleeker buildings boasting curved corners and balconies, vertical lines and exotic motifs. They were built by wealthy Indians who sent their architects to Europe to come up with modern designs

different to those of their colonial rulers. "Mumbai's Art Deco buildings have always lived in the shadow of the Victorian Gothic structures built by the British but this recognition by UNESCO today helps elevate Art Deco to its rightful place," Atul Kumar, the founder of Art Deco Mumbai, told AFP.

"Across a 22-acre stretch of playing field we have two distinct architectural styles. One symbolic of India's colonizers. The other representing the aspirations of a new, wealthy Indian class." Mumbai's Art Deco buildings house residential properties, commercial offices, hospitals and single screen movie theatres, including the popular Regal and Eros cinemas. Their characteristics include elegant Deco fonts, marble floors and spiral staircases. Most of the Art Deco buildings, including along the three-kilometer

long palm-fringed Marine Drive promenade, are five storeys high and painted in bright colors such as yellow, pink and blue. Some of Mumbai's most recognizable buildings are built in the Victorian Gothic style, including the city's famous main train station, which used to be known as Victoria Terminus.

The Bombay High Court, Mumbai University and the headquarters of the city's civic authority are other examples of that style. They were built in the 19th century as Britain strengthened its hold over India. Many of the edifices boast linted windows, flying buttresses and ornate carved figures. — AFP



This undated picture shows the former Nokubi Church in Nagasaki. — AFP photos

Japan Christian sites added to UNESCO World Heritage list

A dozen Christian locations in parts of southern Japan where members of the faith were once brutally persecuted were selected for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage list yesterday. The 12 sites include 10 villages, Hara Castle and Oura Cathedral, a Catholic church in Nagasaki that is dedicated to 26 Christians who were executed for their beliefs



This file photo shows a relief of Father Petitjean, a priest of the French Societe des Mission, with a group of Japanese 'kakure kirishitan' or 'hidden christian' displayed at a church in Nagasaki city in Japan's southern island of Kyushu on July 2, 2007.

over four centuries ago. The decision was announced in the Bahraini capital Manama. In a press statement UNESCO said that the 12 sites "bear unique testimony to a cultural tradition nurtured by hidden Christians in the Nagasaki region who secretly transmitted their faith".

Christianity in Japan dates back to 1549, when European Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier arrived in the country with two companions and the religion began spreading in western Japan. As more missionaries arrived and the faith spread, Japanese military leaders became increasingly suspicious of its growing influence and a crackdown against Christians began from 1589. The Christians commemorated at Oura — 20 Japanese and six foreigners—were executed in Nagasaki in 1597 as the persecution intensified.

For Japanese converts, hiding their religion became a matter of life and death for the next 250 years, with Christianity banned and Japan closed to the outside world. As they practiced their faith but tried to blend in, the Christians created a blended religion that incorporated elements of Buddhism. It wasn't until 1865 that these "hidden Christians" or Kakure Kirishitan became known outside of their communities. A group of nervous peasants approached a French priest at Oura Cathedral and one woman whispered "our hearts are the same as yours", prompting the discovery of what turned out to be tens of thousands of Japanese Christians who had kept their faith a secret.

Gothic-style Oura, which was built in 1864 by French priests and was known by locals as the "French temple," is the oldest Christian-related building in Japan. It was designated a national treasure by the government in 1933, but was partly damaged by the atomic bomb dropped by the US on Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, three days after the bombing of Hiroshima. The other sites added to the list include Sakitsu village in Amakusa, in southwestern Kumamoto, where Christians practiced their faith in secret in the Edo period. The martyrdom of hidden Catholics and Jesuit missionaries in Japan in the 17th century was the subject of the 2016 Hollywood film "Silence", directed by Martin Scorsese. — AFP

'Sicario' star Isabela Moner on getting the measure of Del Toro

Taller than Danny de Vito but much shorter than the average household refrigerator, child star Isabela Moner is the first to admit that she hardly cuts an imposing figure. But the five foot (1.5 meter) Cleveland native steals scenes alongside seasoned veterans like Josh Brolin and Benicio del Toro in the brutal action sequel to 2015 crime thriller "Sicario." The actress, who turns 17 in a few days, got no kid-gloves treatment filming her role as a kidnap victim in the fierce, emotional and R-rated "Sicario: Day of the Soldado."

"Basically, I was treated the same way that the adult actors were, which I appreciated a lot, because I can handle it," the actress told AFP in an interview in Beverly Hills about her latest role. Filming for the high-ly-topical story of drugs, terrorism and human trafficking at the US-Mexico border began on a cold November morning in late 2016 at a ramshackle adobe house in Albuquerque. Moner soon discovered that playing a victim of violent crime meant putting up with all the privations that the adult actors endured, including being bound and gagged.

"It was really intense. For the first few takes of that scene, they actually used duct tape on me because I was okay with it for some reason," she told AFP "Now I'm like, 'Why would I do that? Why would I agree to that?' But back then I was like, 'Oh yeah, sure, let's get into it.'" Moner was best known for the Nickelodeon series "100 Things to Do Before High School" before she became a bona fide movie star with last year's "Transformers: The Last Knight."

Big head

In "Soldado," which hit US theaters on Friday, she plays the innocent but spoiled 12-year-old daughter of a Mexican gangster leading one of the cartels suspected by the US of trafficking jihadists across the border. The film reteams Oscar-winner Del Toro, as the mysterious attorney-turned-assassin Alejandro, with federal agent Matt Graver, portrayed once again by Josh Brolin. Del Toro, who shares most of his screen time with Moner after kidnapping her, has a reputation for his intense approach to his craft, but his young co-star says this is just "his exterior." "It took a bit for him to warm up to me, and for me to warm up to him, kind of like in the movie. It was kind of like sizing each other up, kind of like, 'What are you about?'" she said.

"But once the filming process happened we were forced to be buddies, because we spent hours in the Humvee, all of us. He's not that hard to get along with, to be honest. He's just kind of quiet." As for man-of-the-hour Brolin, who has starred in "Deadpool 2" and "Avengers: Infinity War" this spring, the first thing Moner noticed, she says, was his literally, physically, anatomically big head. "He's so funny, oh my gosh. And he's like a little kid," she said, breaking into a broad grin. "I think he stopped aging at one point inside, and he's just like this really fun guy and I'm so happy for him."

'Little tomboy'

Moner grew up in Ohio and still lives in Cleveland,

but says she feels more in touch with her Peruvian mother's culture, despite her "Americanized" accent when she speaks Spanish. "I don't think I related to the Irish Catholic surroundings that was my environment when I was growing up. (Mom) raised me speaking Spanish in the household and we ate Peruvian food a lot." Moner's transformation into a TV star was somewhat ironic, given that she grew up in a home where cable TV was banned in favor of sending the young girl and her brothers to play outside.

"I was a little tomboy growing up but we had to go to the library every weekend if we wanted some form of entertainment," she said. "And I would gravitate towards the Shirley Temple, Judy Garland section of the library, and I would just pop that in and watch on replay because kids can watch movies over and over again." The family lost everything in a house fire around 10 years ago and, needing something to keep her occupied, the younger Moner was signed up by her mother for an am-dram performance of "The Wizard of Oz."

"I wanted to be Dorothy but I got a munchkin," she laughs. "I fell in love with it. I don't know when I started getting good at it. But I mean I guess I'm okay," she says. Moner's ambitions for the future include working with fellow former child star Natalie Portman—"the best part about 'Star Wars'"—and, one day, directing her own movie. "I think that would be an awesome opportunity for sure, and I would give it my all, everything that I have." — AFP



Actress Isabela Moner attends the premiere of Columbia Pictures' "Sicario: Day of the Soldado" in Westwood, California. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



This undated handout shows the Tongdosa temple in Yangsan.



This undated handout photo released by UNESCO via Yonhap shows the Seonamsa temple in South Jeolla province. — AFP photos



This undated handout shows the Magoksa temple in Gongju.



This undated handout shows the Daeheungsa temple in Haenam county.

The most important hall is on the highest level at the back, and halls for meditation, everyday living areas for monks, and a pavilion form the other three sides. But Buddhism's influence began to wane after the Chosun dynasty, which took over in the 14th century, adopted Confucianism as its ideology and launched an extensive and enduring crackdown on the religion. It forced many urban temples to close, leaving only those in remote hills to survive. — AFP



This undated handout shows the Buseoksa temple in Yeongju.

UNESCO lists Korean mountain Buddhist temples as World Heritage sites

Seven ancient Korean mountain temples, which typify the way Buddhism in the country has merged with indigenous beliefs and styles, were listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites yesterday. The seven mountain temples—Seonamsa, Daeheungsa, Beopjusa, Magoksa, Tongdosa, Bongjeongsa, Buseoksa—were all established during the Three Kingdoms period that lasted until the 7th century AD. UNESCO made the announcement at a meeting in the Bahraini capital Manama. “These mountain monasteries are sacred places, which have survived as living centers of faith and daily religious practice to the present,” UNESCO said in a press statement.

Buddhism was imported to the Korean peninsula in the fourth century and accepted by the ancient kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla, establishing it as the national religion for more than 1,000 years. During the religion's heyday in the fifth and sixth centuries many houses of worship were built under strong state patronage, accelerating the importation of Buddhist culture, architecture and style. Over time elements of traditional Korean beliefs merged into the religion, forming the Tong Buddhist doctrine, meaning consolidation or integration, and temple architectural layouts followed suit.

Buildings were constructed in supposedly auspicious locations and many temples set up in hilly areas, in line with the traditional Korean reverence for mountains and the Zen focus on meditation in a calm environment. Temples were built on high positions protected by hills and commanding an open view over other mountains. A typical mountain temple has a long winding entrance path up the slope, buildings laid out in a square with an inner courtyard in the middle.



Ruins of the 13th century tomb of Bibi Maryam at Qalhat, near Sur in eastern Oman.

Saudi Arabia, Oman sites added to UNESCO World Heritage List

UNESCO added Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahsa Oasis and Oman's ancient city of Qalhat to its World Heritage List on Friday, the world cultural body said. Authorities in Riyadh, as well as Muscat, have put tourism high on their economic agendas as Gulf states look to diversify their oil-dependent economies. Saudi Arabia's lush Al-Ahsa oasis is dotted with yet-to-be-excavated archeological sites, and carries traces of human occupation dating back to Neolithic times. Al-Ahsa “was a

commercial centre for the Hajar territory of Bahrain,” reads the Saudi submission to UNESCO.

“Archaeological evidence shows that it exchanged products from southern Arabia and Persia as well as throughout the Arabian Peninsula.” Riyadh's tourism drive, backed by reformist young Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has not shied from highlighting pre-Islamic heritage in the conservative Muslim kingdom. Oman's Qalhat also dates back to pre-Islamic times. The port city on Oman's Indian Ocean coast was once a key hub for trade in goods including Arabian horses to Chinese porcelain, according to the Omani submission. The case of Qalhat also demonstrates the power women could hold in Arabian society at the time.

“In the 13th century ... the governor Ayaz split his presence between Hormuz and Qalhat, which in his absence was ruled by his wife Maryam,” the submission reads. “She, Bibi Maryam, is said to have built the Great Friday Mosque and a mausoleum for her late husband. She continued ruling after her husband's death until at least 1319.” The World Heritage designation is a prestigious one for the Gulf states, looking to make their mark as culturally rich, safe tourist destinations.

The UNESCO gathering in neighboring Bahrain however comes at a sensitive time for the world body as it scrambles for funding following Washington's withdrawal last year. US President Donald Trump's administration pulled out of UNESCO citing its continuing “anti-Israel bias”, six years after the organization allowed the Palestinians to join. Israel's ambassador to UNESCO said Tuesday he was urging his government to reconsider its decision to quit the body, saying it had halted its “anti-Israeli resolutions” over the past year.



The Qasr Ibrahim mosque in the Al-Ahsa oasis in Saudi Arabia.

A Bob Dylan guitar fetches \$495,000 at auction

A guitar that played a key role in Bob Dylan's artistic evolution from folk music to rock fetched a half million at auction yesterday. The guitar, a 1965 Fender Telecaster that belonged to Robbie Robertson, Dylan's guitarist, was used by Dylan, Eric Clapton and George Harrison, Julien's Auctions said Saturday. It had been expected to fetch between \$400,000 and \$600,000. The guitar marked the singer's path from folk stylings like “The Times They Are A-Changin'” (1964), to electric rock, like his 1965 hit “Like a Rolling Stone.” Other famous guitars went under the hammer on Saturday: George Harrison's first electric guitar, a \$40,000 Hofner Club 40, and a Fender Telecaster rosewood guitar made for Elvis Presley in 1968, priced at a cool \$115,200.

More than 40 years after his death, Elvis items still fetch a handsome price. A heavily decorated Elvis belt, which he wore during a concert in Hawaii in 1972, sold for \$354,400. A star-shaped diamond ring donated by Elvis to an admirer at a concert in 1975 brought in a sparkly \$100,000. The sale also included show cos-



Bob Dylan

tumes that belonged to artists from Elton John, to Britney Spears and Michael Jackson. A leather jacket and pants suit from the late “Thriller” singer, with a yellow shirt, brought in \$217,600, Julien said. — AFP

Drake on course to smash streaming records with ‘Scorpion’

Canadian rapper Drake, the world's best-selling artist of 2016, looked on course to set records tumbling again on Friday with his soul-baring new album “Scorpion,” in which he reveals he is a father. Spotify said the album was streaming at an average rate of 10 million times an hour on Friday, while Apple Music said “Scorpion” was the No. 1 streamed album in 92 countries. On the 25-track double album, Drake, 31, confirms long-standing rumors that he has fathered a son, but does not name the mother.

“Single father, I hate when I hear it,” he raps on the final track “March 14.” The album also features collaborations with Jay-Z, Nicki Minaj, Ty Dolla Sign, and posthumous vocals by Michael Jackson. “Scorpion” follows Drake's best-selling 2016 album “Views” and his 2017 release “More Life,” which set a record across all music streaming services of 385 million streams in its first week of release.

The Recording Industry Association of America



In this file photo taken on March 5, 2009 US popstar Michael Jackson addresses a press conference at the O2 arena in London.

said on Friday that Drake had become its top digital song artist, with 142 million digital single sales units, ahead of Rihanna and Taylor Swift. Streaming services in 2017 became the recording industry's biggest single revenue source, overtaking sales of physical albums and digital downloads. Rap officially surpassed rock in 2017 as the biggest music genre in the United States. “Scorpion” is a joint release on Warner Bros. and Universal Music-owned labels OVO Sound, Young Money Entertainment, Cash Money Records and Republic Records. — Reuters



The Grizzly Giant sequoia tree, which is 96 feet in circumference and thousands of years old, is seen under a starry sky at the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias in Yosemite National Park, California which recently reopened after a three-year renovation project to better protect the trees that can live more than 3,000 years. — AFP photos



Visitors look at the Grizzly Giant tree in the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias.



Sequoia trees, both standing and fallen, are seen under a starry sky at the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias.



Sequoia trees are seen in the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias.



The Fallen Monarch sequoia tree is seen in the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias.



A girl investigates the base of a sequoia tree in the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias.

THE ANCIENT GIANTS OF YOSEMITE, UNDER A BILLION STARS

The Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias, at the heart of California's Yosemite National Park, is home to 500 of the towering trees—many at least 2,000 years old, having sprouted around the time of Jesus Christ. One of the world's 65 remaining natural sequoia groves, and the largest in Yosemite, Mariposa Grove reopened in June, three years after the start of a \$40 million restoration project to protect the ancient giants for future generations. The oldest sequoias can live for more than 3,000 years, their bark resisting insect attacks and helping them survive countless wildfires over the millennia.

Gone are the gift shop, suffocating fumes from a chugging diesel tram and 115 spaces of parking lot asphalt that once cluttered the site, a major tourist destination four hours' drive from San Francisco. Only a small parking lot remains alongside new restrooms. The removal of asphalt helps protect the trees' shallow root system from compaction, allows water to flow naturally again, and reduces damaging air pollution from excess vehicles.

Four miles (6.5 kilometers) of new trails and bridges have been constructed. A new boardwalk through part of the grove is elevated over sensitive areas and facilitates handicapped access to view the trees. During most of the day, free shuttle buses ferry tourists to the heart of the grove from a new visitor center two miles away. People stand in line to photograph one another at the California Tunnel Tree, a surviving sequoia through which a wagon-sized hole was long ago bored. But like the rest of the forest, Mariposa Grove never closes, so after the last shuttle bus returns and the road gate is reopened, more adventurous visitors can drive to the tiny parking lot and hike through the night in the ancient woods. And as day becomes night, billions of stars shine down on the 300-foot (90-meter) tall trees, the 1,800-year-old Grizzly Giant and its age-old fellows towering over the silent scene. — AFP

Beat the heat with a proper binge session on the latest boxsets on WAVO

As temperatures in July soar, WAVO offers the perfect reason to stay indoors, keep cool and enjoy great entertainment anytime and anywhere at your convenience. With an all-new inclusive price of just \$9.99 a month for unlimited access, get ready for a hot roster of the latest boxsets including WAVO's exclusive library of content from HBO to set summer binge-watching sessions on fire.

New Binge-watching Boxsets

Westworld, S1-S2

Starting Sunday, July 1

Set at the intersection of the near future and the reimagined past, explore a world in which every human appetite can be indulged without consequence. Westworld season 2 will be available as a full boxset along with season 1 for sci-fi fans.

Marvel, Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. S1-S3

Starting Sunday-Tuesday, July 1,2,3

Phil Coulson (Clark Gregg, reprising his role from The Avengers and Iron Man) heads an elite team of fellow agents with the worldwide law-enforcement organisation known as S.H.I.E.L.D (Strategic Homeland Intervention Enforcement and Logistics Division), as they investigate strange occurrences around the globe.

True Blood, S1-S7

Starting Saturday-Monday, July 7,8,9

Telepathic waitress Sookie Stackhouse encounters a strange new supernatural world when she meets the mysterious Bill, a southern Louisiana gentleman and vampire.

Carnival, S1-S2

Starting Thursday, July 12

A supernaturally slanted good-versus-evil series set during the 1930s, focusing on a young man with mysterious talents who is picked up by a carnival crossing the Dust Bowl. At the same time, a California preacher predicts doom while battling his own demons.



Agent Carter, S1-S2

Starting Sunday, July 15

An action-adventure series following Peggy Carter (Hayley Atwell) as she does undercover work for Howard Stark while also holding down a routine office job for the Strategic Scientific Reserve.

Mildred Pierce, S1

Starting Monday, July 16

A five-part adaptation of James M. Cain's 1941 novel about a Depression-era housewife whose husband leaves her with two young daughters in Glendale, California, forcing her to start her life anew.

Rome, S1-2

Starting Tuesday-Wednesday, July 17, 18

A down-to-earth account of the lives of both illustrious and ordinary Romans set in the last days of the Roman Republic.

The Handmaid's Tale, S1-S2

Starting Friday, July 20

The Handmaid's Tale is the story of life in the dystopia of Gilead, a totalitarian society in what was formerly the United States. Facing environmental disasters and a plunging birthrate, Gilead is ruled by a twisted fundamentalism in its militarized "return to traditional values." Season 1 is currently available as a boxset and will be joined the season 2 on July 20.

The Leftovers, S1

Starting Saturday-Monday, July 21,22,23

In a global cataclysm, "The Sudden Departure," 140 million people disappeared without a trace. Three years later, residents of Mapleton, New York, try to maintain equilibrium when the notion of "normal" no longer applies.

Strike, S1

Starting Friday, July 27

Drama series based on the novel by Robert Galbraith. Cormoran Strike (Tom Burke), an injured war veteran turned PI, and secretary Robin Ellacott (Holliday Grainger) seek the truth surrounding a mysterious death.

Ka'anouh Embarah S1

Starting Tuesday, July 3

Egyptian social drama series focusing on a married couple whose life is turned upside down when their young son is kidnapped.

Helow We Mor S1

Starting Friday, July 6

Studying gastronomy and culinary arts at university, aspiring professional chef, Nazli, wants to become a master in Japanese cuisine and dreams of opening her own restaurant.

Cyber war, Syria airstrikes feature in revamped RAF museum

Visitors to Britain's revamped Royal Air Force Museum opening on Saturday can fend off cyber attacks, identify airstrike targets and practice landing jets on flight simulators. The north London attraction has been overhauled to mark the RAF's centenary this year, with celebrations culminating in a spectacular flypast over Buckingham Palace next month. Its three new exhibitions look at the force's first hundred years, modern conflicts such as its ongoing campaign in Syria, and its future in the ever more hi-tech decades to come.

The centenary "was the opportunity to develop exhibitions that are much more engaging and up to date," the museum's chief executive Maggie Appleton told AFP. The

"RAF: First to the Future" section includes joystick-controlled simulator drone missions surveilling enemy movements and installations on the ground. After identifying potential targets, visitors can weigh up the risks, including ethical and legal factors, before deciding whether to launch precision missile strikes. The new exhibition feature could prove controversial.

Lindsey German, convenor of the anti-war Stop the War Coalition, told AFP: "There is something wrong with a museum encouraging simulation of precision bombing. We should be teaching these horrors, not imitating them." Visitors can also play cyber-attack defense simulations, protecting information from falling into enemy hands. The future section also showcases the F-35B

Lightning II stealth fighter, intended to be Britain's main strike aircraft until at least 2040. The first four arrived in Britain earlier this month.

Royal chopper

The new-look Hangar 1 focuses on the first 100 years of the RAF from its foundation in 1918, with the emphasis on human stories and interactive experiences. It features the Sea King search and rescue helicopter used by Prince William during his 2010-2013 years as a chopper pilot in northwest Wales. It has flight simulators, jet engine inventor Frank Whittle's blue-grey uniform and a giant Sunderland flying boat. Three big hangars house the collection of around 120 classic planes such as the Spitfire fighter and the Lancaster and Vulcan bombers.

The third new section, in Hangar 6, is called "The RAF in an Age of Uncertainty", looking at its role from 1980 onwards. The hangar has Tornado, Jaguar and Harrier planes used in action in multiple recent conflicts. It looks at the RAF's role in Afghanistan and the current campaign against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. "It's been a very busy period for the RAF over the past 40 years and the story of contemporary conflict wasn't told anywhere," Andrew Dennis, who curated the hangar, told AFP. "It's post-Cold War but how it will be seen in the future, we're not sure. It's less nation state, more counter-insurgency. It's still a time of flux," he said. The RAF centenary celebrations will culminate on July 10 with a flypast over Buckingham Palace of 100 aircraft from classic Spitfires, Hurricanes and Lancasters to modern fighter jets. — AFP



In this file photo a Royal Air Force (RAF) Museum employee poses for a photograph with a World War Two (WWII) Spitfire Mk XVI fighter plane, in London.



In this file photo a Royal Air Force (RAF) Museum employee poses for a photograph with a World War One (WWI) Sopwith Snipe fighter plane, in London. — AFP photos

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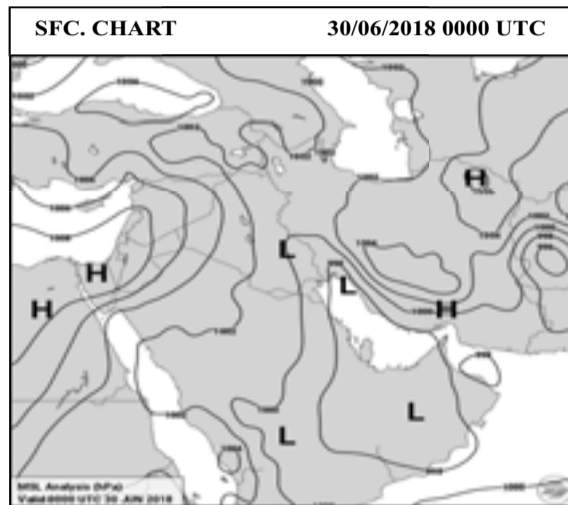
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h causing rising dust especially over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light to moderate freshening at times over costal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h.

| WEATHER WARNING | No Current Warnings |
|-----------------|---------------------|
|-----------------|---------------------|

| STATION | MAX. EXP. | MIN. REC. |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| KUWAIT CITY | 46 °C | 33 °C |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 47 °C | 34 °C |
| ABDALY | 47 °C | 31 °C |
| BUBYAN | ---- °C | ---- °C |
| JAHRA | 48 °C | 32 °C |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | 43 °C | 31 °C |
| SALMIYAH | 41 °C | 33 °C |
| AHMADI | 41 °C | 35 °C |
| NUWASIB | 45 °C | 32 °C |
| WAFRA | 47 °C | 32 °C |
| SALMY | 46 °C | 28 °C |



| 4 DAYS FORECAST | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|---|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| DAY | DATE | WEATHER | Temperatures | | Wind Direction | Wind Speed |
| | | | MAX. | MIN. | | |
| Sunday | 07/01 | Very hot and rising dust | 47 °C | 32 °C | NW | 25 - 60 km/h |
| Monday | 07/02 | Very hot and rising dust | 47 °C | 30 °C | NW | 20 - 45 km/h |
| Tuesday | 07/03 | Very hot and some high clouds will appear | 48 °C | 32 °C | VRB-NW | 08 - 32 km/h |
| Wednesday | 07/04 | Very hot and some high clouds will appear | 48 °C | 32 °C | VRB-S | 08 - 30 km/h |

| PRAYER TIMES | |
|--------------|-------|
| Fajr | 03:16 |
| Sunrise | 04:51 |
| Zuhr | 11:51 |
| Asr | 15:25 |
| Sunset | 18:51 |
| Isha | 20:24 |

| RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| MAX. Temp. | 47 °C |
| MIN. Temp. | 30 °C |
| MAX. RH | 20 % |
| MIN. RH | 08 % |
| MAX. Wind | N 50 km/h |
| TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR. | 0 mm |

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|------------------------------------|------|-----------------|-------|--------------------------------------|------|------------|-------|
| Airlines | Flt | Route | Time | Airlines | Flt | Route | Time |
| JZR | 513 | Sharm el-Sheikh | 00:10 | SAW | 704 | Damascus | 11:30 |
| THY | 772 | Istanbul | 00:15 | GFA | 214 | Bahrain | 11:35 |
| DLH | 625 | Dammam | 00:50 | MEA | 405 | Beirut | 11:55 |
| KAC | 504 | Beirut | 00:50 | SYR | 342 | Damascus | 12:00 |
| KAC | 102 | London | 00:50 | JZR | 776 | Jeddah | 12:05 |
| JZR | 539 | Cairo | 01:00 | QTR | 1075 | Doha | 12:10 |
| PGT | 858 | Istanbul | 01:15 | JZR | 176 | Dubai | 13:10 |
| UAE | 853 | Dubai | 01:40 | SAW | 702 | Damascus | 13:30 |
| KLM | 446 | Bahrain | 01:45 | THY | 767 | Istanbul | 13:40 |
| THY | 1464 | Istanbul | 01:50 | JZR | 144 | Doha | 13:55 |
| KKK | 1268 | Istanbul | 02:00 | MSR | 611 | Cairo | 14:00 |
| JZR | 267 | Beirut | 02:10 | JZR | 552 | Alexandria | 14:05 |
| ETH | 620 | Addis Ababa | 02:15 | AXB | 394 | Kozhikode | 14:10 |
| GFA | 211 | Bahrain | 02:15 | UAE | 872 | Dubai | 14:15 |
| AEE | 956 | ATH | 02:25 | RJA | 645 | Amman | 14:15 |
| QTR | 1086 | Doha | 02:30 | JZR | 802 | Tbilisi | 14:50 |
| THY | 768 | Istanbul | 02:40 | FEG | 442 | Asyut | 14:50 |
| KAC | 414 | Bangkok | 02:40 | IAW | 158A | Al Najaf | 14:55 |
| WAN | 714 | AGP | 02:45 | KAC | 673 | Dubai | 15:00 |
| KAC | 418 | Manila | 03:05 | GFA | 222 | Bahrain | 15:00 |
| ETD | 305 | Abu Dhabi | 03:05 | FDB | 060 | Dubai | 15:05 |
| OMA | 643 | Muscat | 03:05 | QTR | 1079 | Doha | 15:15 |
| RJA | 648 | Amman | 03:05 | SWA | 501 | Jeddah | 15:45 |
| KAC | 382 | Delhi | 03:10 | KAC | 775 | Riyadh | 15:55 |
| MSR | 612 | Cairo | 03:15 | KAC | 785 | Jeddah | 16:00 |
| PGT | 860 | Istanbul | 03:25 | JZR | 606 | Kochi | 16:00 |
| JAI | 1076 | Doha | 03:30 | KAC | 563 | Amman | 16:10 |
| JAI | 572 | Mumbai | 04:00 | KAC | 619 | Doha | 16:15 |
| LMU | 510 | Cairo | 04:00 | ABY | 128 | Sharjah | 16:15 |
| JZR | 551 | Alexandria | 04:05 | PGT | 304 | Abu Dhabi | 16:20 |
| KAC | 1544 | Cairo | 04:25 | OMA | 646 | Muscat | 16:20 |
| KAC | 609 | Hyderabad | 04:30 | KAC | 675 | Dubai | 17:00 |
| KAC | 784 | Jeddah | 04:30 | SAW | 710 | Latakia | 17:00 |
| JZR | 1541 | Cairo | 04:35 | KAC | 503 | Beirut | 17:15 |
| THY | 1414 | TZY | 05:05 | FDB | 052 | Dubai | 17:20 |
| FDB | 069 | Dubai | 05:05 | WAN | 135 | Doha | 17:25 |
| DHX | 170 | Bahrain | 05:10 | QTR | 1073 | Doha | 17:40 |
| THY | 770 | Istanbul | 05:15 | UAE | 858 | Dubai | 17:45 |
| JZR | 603 | Mumbai | 05:25 | FEG | 242 | Alexandria | 17:45 |
| KAC | 344 | Chennai | 05:30 | KAC | 381 | Delhi | 17:45 |
| QTR | 8511 | Doha | 05:30 | NIA | 362 | Alexandria | 17:50 |
| JZR | 561 | Sohag | 05:55 | KAC | 331 | Trivandrum | 17:55 |
| BAW | 157 | London | 06:10 | KAC | 283 | Dhaka | 18:00 |
| WAN | 338 | Alexandria | 06:25 | KAC | 343 | Chennai | 18:00 |
| KAC | 284 | Dhaka | 06:25 | SWA | 511 | Riyadh | 18:15 |
| KAC | 204 | Lahore | 06:30 | GFA | 216 | Bahrain | 18:20 |
| KAC | 678 | Dubai | 06:45 | JZR | 184 | Dubai | 18:20 |
| RBG | 559 | Alexandria | 06:50 | JZR | 608 | Hyderabad | 18:25 |
| KAC | 302 | Mumbai | 07:00 | JZR | 240 | Amman | 18:30 |
| JZR | 143 | Doha | 07:00 | JZR | 538 | Cairo | 18:35 |
| MSR | 2616 | Sohag | 07:05 | JZR | 266 | Beirut | 19:15 |
| KAC | 358 | Kochi | 07:40 | KAC | 345 | Ahmedabad | 19:20 |
| JZR | 503 | Luxor | 07:50 | QTR | 1081 | Doha | 19:20 |
| FDB | 053 | Dubai | 07:50 | WAN | 117 | Bahrain | 19:30 |
| KAC | 332 | Trivandrum | 08:00 | MSR | 621 | Cairo | 19:30 |
| WAN | 352 | Luxor | 08:00 | GFA | 218 | Bahrain | 19:50 |
| KAC | 384 | Delhi | 08:05 | FDB | 064 | Dubai | 19:50 |
| UAE | 855 | Dubai | 08:25 | RJA | 641 | Amman | 20:00 |
| ETD | 301 | Abu Dhabi | 08:55 | ABY | 124 | Sharjah | 20:00 |
| IRC | 528 | Ahwaz | 09:00 | RBG | 556 | Alexandria | 20:20 |
| ABY | 125 | Sharjah | 09:00 | JZR | 602 | Mumbai | 20:30 |
| IRA | 665 | Shiraz | 09:25 | FDB | 058 | Dubai | 20:30 |
| QTR | 1070 | Doha | 09:30 | UAE | 876 | Dubai | 20:35 |
| FDB | 055 | Dubai | 09:40 | DLH | 624 | Dammam | 20:50 |
| IAW | 157 | Al Najaf | 10:00 | KAC | 357 | Kochi | 21:00 |
| SVA | 512 | Riyadh | 10:00 | OMA | 648 | Muscat | 21:05 |
| SAW | 703 | Damascus | 10:30 | MEA | 403 | Beirut | 21:15 |
| JZR | 787 | Riyadh | 10:30 | KAC | 1543 | Cairo | 21:20 |
| GFA | 213 | Bahrain | 10:40 | KAC | 301 | Mumbai | 21:35 |
| MEA | 404 | Beirut | 10:55 | QTR | 1089 | Doha | 21:50 |
| SYR | 341 | Damascus | 11:00 | DHX | 171 | Bahrain | 21:50 |
| QTR | 1074 | Doha | 11:00 | KAC | 203 | Lahore | 22:00 |
| WAN | 134 | Doha | 11:10 | ETD | 308 | Abu Dhabi | 22:05 |
| JZR | 903 | Baku | 11:10 | JZR | 1540 | Cairo | 22:10 |
| JZR | 165 | Dubai | 11:45 | ALK | 230 | Colombo | 22:20 |
| KAC | 614 | Bahrain | 12:20 | KAC | 783 | Jeddah | 22:25 |
| SAW | 701 | Damascus | 12:30 | THY | 1403 | AYT | 22:25 |
| UAE | 871 | Dubai | 12:45 | KAC | 383 | Delhi | 22:25 |
| THY | 766 | Istanbul | 12:45 | UAE | 860 | Dubai | 22:35 |
| WAN | 542 | KTM | 12:50 | GFA | 220 | Bahrain | 22:50 |
| KAC | 742 | Dammam | 12:50 | ETD | 310 | Abu Dhabi | 23:00 |
| MSR | 610 | Cairo | 13:00 | KAC | 411 | Bangkok | 23:15 |
| JZR | 239 | Amman | 13:00 | QTR | 1083 | Doha | 23:20 |
| | | | | WAN | 337 | Alexandria | 23:40 |
| | | | | JZR | 560 | Sohag | 23:45 |



BHUBANESWAR: Bystanders help push a car through a water-logged area after heavy rain showers in Bhubaneswar yesterday. — AFP

Courts and DNA help Chile moms search for 'stolen babies'

SANTIAGO: Prosecutors are revisiting one of the darkest chapters of Chilean history, when under the Pinochet dictatorship hundreds and possibly thousands of babies were stolen from their mothers and given away just after being born. On July 9, 1977, Margarita Escobar gave birth to a baby girl at Santiago's Paula Jaraquemada hospital. She saw her daughter for only a few moments before staff took her away. Four decades, Escobar hasn't given up on meeting the grown woman her daughter may have become, buoyed by the prosecutors' push for the truth about Chile's stolen babies, and under-the-table adoptions.

She told AFP hospital staff kept her sedated back then. "Every time I woke up I asked about her again, until a midwife told me, 'your baby was stillborn.'" She wasn't allowed to see the body. "Nobody even gave me a document. They sent me home. I don't know how I got there. I was totally doped." Fast forward almost 10 years, to February 1985, and Maria Orellana gave birth in the same hospital to a boy she named Cristian. "I heard that he was a boy, then they gave me an injection and that was the last I knew about it," she told AFP.

Like other mothers, she was told her baby had died and, as it would be "too cruel" for her to see the body, the hospital took care of the burial. "Keep the memory that you had of your little boy," she recalls being told. Like Escobar, Orellana was given no documentation. "There is nothing. It is as if I had never even been in that hospital," she recalls now, determined like thousands of other mothers to find a child she never held.

The path of justice

Tasked with helping thousands of mothers in the same situation, Chile's Special Judge for Human Rights Mario Carroza has been investigating the kidnappings since January. Most occurred during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) but others have been reported as recently as 2000. Carroza has ruled out the state using child stealing as a means of repression, a tool commonly used by the military dictatorship in Argentina. Instead, he says the ultimate goal was financial gain, making Chile's situation more reminiscent of Spain.

The first trial in a case of "stolen babies" under Francisco Franco's 1939-75 regime has just begun. The practice in Spain continued there long afterward for

monetary gain. "We have not established a link with a policy of state repression. It appears more like a kind of illicit association, an organization set up to make money from illegal adoptions," said Pablo Rivera, a lawyer of the National Institute for Human Rights, who has filed complaints on behalf of the mothers. At the heart of the scheme was a network of social workers, nuns, doctors and municipal officials who identified mothers in vulnerable situations.

"In general, the cases are related to low income mothers who gave birth to a boy or a girl and were later deceived by hospital officials that they were dead or sick," Rivera said. A law, which remained in force until 1988, facilitated the scheme. It allowed the destruction of all records of biological families after adoption, Karen Alfaro, a historian at Austral University, told AFP. For Alfaro, the practice was "also part of the Pinochet dictatorship's ideological struggle, a type of social violence inflicted on the poorest."

DNA testing

According to official figures, 26,611 adoptions were registered in Chile between 1973 and 1987, but no register exists for how many children went to families abroad. Carroza has determined that at least 2,021 children were adopted in Sweden between 1971 and 1992. Thousands more went to Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Holland, Switzerland, the United States, Uruguay and Peru. Each adoption was worth between 3,000 and 5,000 dollars. Without supporting documents, many mothers have maintained a painful silence for decades. But as the first cases were made public and search groups were formed on the internet, they realized thousands of women shared their experience.

One of these groups, the "Sons and Mothers of Silence," has 3,000 members on Facebook, children seeking their biological parents, and mothers grasping for any clue that could lead them to the baby who was snatched from them. "What we need is for the files, the hospital files, to be opened. For this to be done publicly so that people who are outside Chile realize that they could have been adopted illegally," says Marisol Rodriguez, spokesperson for the group.

In three years, the group has achieved almost 90 mother-and-child reunions. The best way is through DNA testing, which despite the cost, many mothers undertake so their information is put into international gene banks. "What I want to know is what happened to my daughter and if my daughter is looking for me," Josefina Sandoval told AFP after undergoing a DNA test. In theory, the daughter snatched from her at birth on June 24, 1980, should have just turned 38 years old. "We are looking for her and with this we will find her." — AFP

Egypt to monitor popular social...

Continued from Page 1

website, blog or electronic account of any person with 5,000 followers or more".

It would also have the right to suspend or block such accounts if they "publish or broadcast false news" or information inciting "breaking the law, violence or hatred". "Every citizen will think 1,000 times before they can write a post in which they criticize the action of the government or the regime," said Mohamed Abdelsalam, director of research at AFTE. He urged social media companies to "reject the practices of the Egyptian government and stand on the side of the rights (of citizens) and civil society organizations".

In another move in early June, lawmakers passed a law on cyber-crime that allows authorities to block any website or account that threatens Egypt's national security or economy. Those who administer such websites face jail time or fines. Domestic and international human rights groups regularly criticize violations of freedom of expression by President Abdel Fattah El-

Sisi's government. Sisi, then defense minister, led the military's July 2013 ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi after mass protests against his rule. Following waves of arrests in the wake of Morsi's ouster, authorities have also detained activists and bloggers on charges of "publishing false news".

Wael Abbas, a blogger and journalist, and Shadi Ghazali Harb, a youth leader during the 2011 uprising that toppled longtime president Hosni Mubarak, are among those arrested. Lawyer Gamal Eid who heads the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information told AFP: "The problem is that the prosecution does not elaborate on the nature of the false news in the accusations." Khaled Elbalsby, a former press syndicate board member, said the new bill was "a continuation of the context of repressing the press and confiscating and silencing speech".

"It's an attempt to silence everyone who tries to speak, extending this control even to social media users," Elbalsby said. Several prominent activists, contacted by AFP, declined to comment. In its defense, parliament's media committee head Osama Heikal said that "electronic accounts have widespread access, more than some newspapers". Egypt, which ranks 161st out of 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), was "not the first country to go in that direction." — AFP

Nigeria massacres: Extreme violence with complex roots

JOS, Nigeria: Some say it was the theft of 300 cows, others the murders of five Muslim Fulani herders by young Christian farmers. But exactly what sparked the slaughter of more than 200 people in central Nigeria—and who was behind it—remains a mystery. The only certainty is that the attacks, conducted at dusk last Saturday on a dozen villages in Plateau State, were extremely well organized and coordinated.

Multiple witnesses told AFP that hundreds of men armed with assault rifles and machetes descended from the surrounding hills on the villages below. Most wore black clothes, some had their faces covered with scarves, while others wore bullet-proof vests. Alerted by the first gunshots and residents screaming for help, "our personnel moved to the location and came under fire from the attackers," said Major Adam Umar, spokesman for the Safe Haven military operation in the area.

"We were able to repel them but then we started to get information that there were other gunshots in other communities around," said Umar, who described the attackers only as "unidentified gunmen." While all the villagers said the culprits had "fair skin" and were talking Fula, the language of the nomadic herders, Adam refuses to disclose any more details about the gunmen. Three men were arrested on Thursday. An investigation is ongoing, said Umar. Ethnicity and religion, stoked by access to land, are at the heart of the resurgence of violence.

The unrest is characterized by tit-for-tat attacks between "indigenous" mostly Christian communities and Fulani nomads, who are mostly Muslim and described as "invaders". It is a volatile situation: over decades cattle herders have come further south from the Sahel to central Nigeria in search of water, where the population density has rapidly increased, putting pressure on already scarce resources. The conflict has intensified across central states. Since January, more than 1,000 people have been killed in clashes, according to Human Rights Watch in a Thursday statement.

The tragedy is that the state of Plateau has seen this all before—it was the site of bloody clashes between

Christians and Muslims less than a decade ago. "We have to go four or five years back to find an attack with this scale of casualties," said political analyst Chris Ngwodo who is based in Jos, the state capital.

In 2001, tension began rising in Jos, a spiritual capital to both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. It culminated in 2008 in a series of attacks and mass riots which resulted in 800 deaths in the space of a week. In 2010, more than 1,000 people were killed between January and March. Since then, the state has worked to stop the bloodshed through reconciliation programs, such as financial compensation for cattle theft and developing interfaith tin-mining initiatives. Saturday's killings, directed mainly against Christian farmers, reawakened hatred and painful trauma in the Barakin Ladi district.

Many people were burned alive in their homes. Adults and young children were attacked with equal brutality. At the Jos University Teaching Hospital, where the wounded were brought, a three-year-old girl's neck was sliced by a machete. On the next bed sat eight-year-old Plangnam Danjuma, who was shot in the right shoulder and saved by her neighbor. "When people started to run for their life, he hid me in a house with three other children," she said. "But they saw him and shot him dead. After they targeted us, 'I am the only one who survived.'"

Ngwodo said it was hard to pinpoint the precise origin of the latest spike in violence. The conflict was "multi-layered" and driven by not only ethnicity and religion but a rise in organized crime and political disenfranchisement. With less than a year to the next general election, President Muhammadu Buhari, himself a Fulani Muslim, has been heavily criticized by opponents fuelling anti-Fulani sentiment.

In the Nigerian media and across social networks, front-page headlines like "Fulani herdsmen worse than Boko Haram" have become common and divisive messages circulate daily on WhatsApp. Youth unemployment has reached record levels and there has been an explosion in weapons across the Sahel from the war in Libya. At the same time, Ngwodo said there has been "a general breakdown of law and order (in Nigeria), with parts of the territory completely abandoned to banditry". The inability of the Nigerian security forces to curb the violence is prolonging the crisis, he said. "If the perpetrators are not being arrested and punished, people will start to take justice into their hands," he added. — AFP

Syrian girl, 8, born with no legs, finds...

Continued from Page 1

After the pictures of her shuffling with difficulty around the refugee camp made a huge impact across the world, the Turkish Red Crescent intervened. The father and daughter were evacuated from Syria by the Turkish authorities and brought to Istanbul for treatment at a specialized clinic. They had been living in the countryside of the south of Aleppo region but had to leave for Idlib at the start of the year as fighting began to rage in their native region.

Maya, like her father, had been able to move around more easily by crawling. But recent surgery, which further reduced the length of her limbs had impeded this. "After the operation, she was not able to move around and was sitting the whole time in a tent," Mohammad told AFP in an interview at the Istanbul clinic. "In order for her to move out of the tent, I had the idea to fix on her limbs tubing, stuffed with a spongy material to reduce the pressure." Then, I added two empty cans of tuna because the plastic was not strong enough to resist the friction with the ground."

With these impromptu prosthetics, Maya was able to walk outside of the tent and could even go on her own to the camp's school. Mohammad, who has five other children none of whom suffer from the condition, said he replaced the plastic tubing once a month and the tins once a week. While her father spoke to AFP at the clinic, Maya sat in his arms in his wheelchair, clearly overwhelmed by the experience of the last days. Her father will also be given prosthetic legs at the Turkish clinic. But it's above all the fate of his daughter that worries him. "It's more important that she can walk so that she is autonomous. It would be like a new life for us," he said. "I dream of seeing her walk, going to school and back without suffering," he added.

Dr Culcu said that he had been "very touched" by the pictures of Maya walking on her tins and had decided to take on the cost of her prosthetic legs and those of her father. "We have been contacted by people all over the world who want to make the donation. But this issue is closed and I will take on the cost," he said. He said the homemade limbs her father had constructed in the Idlib camp were likely to prove of huge benefit because they had got her used to walking. "We can't really call what she has prosthetics," Dr Culcu said. "It's a kind of makeshift system for her to walk. With the energy of desperation, without any means, her father turned that suffering into hope." — AFP

Sports



Underdogs Russia seek World Cup miracle against Spain

Russia's first appearance in the World Cup knockout stages

MOSCOW: Russia's last World Cup game against Uruguay brought the overachievers down to earth with a thud. Their next one against Spain might just send them over the moon. The hosts play their most important match in three decades when they face the 2010 champions in Moscow today in the last 16.

They are making their first appearance in the World Cup knockout stages in the post-Soviet era as the ultimate underdogs-Spain have not lost a match in two years while Russia entered the tournament without winning a game in eight months. The last competitive match between them saw the Spaniards prevail 3-0 in the semi-finals of Euro 2008. "We want to perform a minor miracle," said Russia forward Artem Dzyuba. "We want to give our supporters an even bigger present."

The month-long extravaganza has always been about much more than football to Russian President Vladimir Putin. The hosts are spending a record \$13 billion to put on a show that projects Putin's vision of Russia as a global power that has regained its Soviet might.

Russia's stadiums were meant to wow the crowds. Its football team was not. And then it did. The men in red kicked off the tournament in Moscow's 80,000-seat Luzhniki Stadium—the crucible of Soviet and Russian sport—with a 5-0 thumping of Saudi Arabia.

The performance, including two goals from midfielder Denis Cheryshev, made a mockery of Russia's ranking as the tournament's worst team. But it also came against lowly opposition and left many feeling a sense of relief that their

lowly Sbornaya were not embarrassed on the world stage.

Russia's 3-1 defeat of Mohamed Salah's Egypt raised more eyebrows. The win came with its own caveat: Salah was not at his best after a shoulder injury he suffered in Liverpool's Champions League loss to Real Madrid.

Yet Russia really were looking better than advertised. The number of fans who thought they might actually win the whole thing edged up from 11 to 14 percent. And then came last Monday's 3-0 defeat to Uruguay in a game that decided who finished first in Group A.

"Welcome back, Sbornaya!" said one sardonic tweet when the score was 2-0 and Russia were down to 10 men. "I finally recognise my team," another quipped. The number of Russians who still thought their team could become champions promptly fell to six percent.

Russia now return to the Luzhniki for the Spain encounter, with no one seemingly certain about how good they are. A victory would be a famous one. A defeat would only confirm doubts that have surrounded the team since the Soviet Union's collapse.

The Soviet Union reached the last 16 at the 1986 tournament in Mexico, losing 4-3 to Belgium in extra time. That squad featured the great forward Oleg Blokhin and agile goalkeeper Rinat Dasayev. The team went on to lose the final of Euro 1988 to Ruud Gullit's Netherlands. A similar result against Spain would see the Russians leave the tournament with their heads held high. "We are simply delighted with making it out of the group," local organising committee chief Alexei Sorokin said. — AFP



MOSCOW: Spain's forward David Silva (L) and Spain's coach Fernando Hierro (R) poses for pictures upon their arrival for a press conference at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow, yesterday, on the eve of their Russia 2018 World Cup round of 16 football match against Russia.—AFP

Argentines caught between love and indifference for Maradona

BUENOS AIRES: Argentine legend Diego Maradona is a controversial idol, worshipped as a god for his World Cup-winning exploits but whose life of excess has left a tormented public back home torn between veneration and derision.

The 57-year-old hit the headlines in Russia this week when he was filmed making two-handed middle-finger gestures to fans during Argentina's narrow win over Nigeria in their final World Cup pool game.

How to take his attention-grabbing outbursts is a recurring theme back home in Argentina. "He thinks that the love that Argentines lavish on him is so great that when he behaves badly we'll look the other way," said 55-year-old businessman Bruno Sollner.

Daniel Carballo, 56, agreed that Maradona "is not an example, at least not for me and most of my friends and my family, no." "There are things that are not acceptable, but well, he's like that," Carballo added.

Other South Americans tend to perceive Argentines as arrogant, and Maradona's cockiness and public anguish seem to personify a nation's suffering at its team's stuttering performance in Russia.

"He is arrogant, he gets out of control because of arrogance," said Sollner. Maradona got adoration for his goals against England in the 1986 World Cup, both the cheat goal he scored with his hand—he called it the "Hand of God"—and another, when he danced past five English players to score what is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest goals of all time. In Buenos Aires that day, he became a god. It was almost as if he had avenged with a football Argentina's painful defeat in the Falklands War against Britain four years earlier.

Irreverent, charismatic and provocative, Maradona remains an idol in Argentina, even for a generation too young to have seen him play, when his name became synonymous with footballing genius. Paula Garcia Paz, a teacher, was six when Maradona lifted the World Cup in 1986. "I'll never forget it, that goal against England is something so memorable for Argentines," she said. Sollner said "we love him because he has stood up to the powerful, because on the pitch he never gave up, and you can see how much defeat hurts him. "That devotion for a soccer fan is vital, it's called sweating for the shirt," he added.

The antics at the World Cup have been amusing and disturbing by turns, but for Argentines a distracting sideshow to the main event on the pitch. Carried out of his seat in the VIP box after the match, he was forced to deny rumors he had been hospitalized, saying the next day that he was "very alive."

"In Russia he's caused a stir, he's a guy who retired decades ago and who won things 30 years ago, but if he sneezes, we're all on tenterhooks, waiting. That's unique. That's Maradona," said Sollner. Those who know Maradona describe him as having an explosive personality while keeping his feet on the ground, despite having reached a sporting Olympus. "Diego was a kid in the slum, with a kite, on which he wrote the name Maradona. He started to run and the kite took flight, but he stayed on the ground," is how biographer Guillermo Blanco puts it. Blanco said Maradona "just like everyone else has goodness, badness, ego, solidarity... but when he does something, he's unlike others who are considered 'balanced.' He does it to the Nth degree."

Angry with his daughters, in a legal battle with his ex-wife, scammed by a relative or banned for doping at the 1994 World Cup, Maradona's turbulent front-page life makes him a figure of pity for many Argentines, particularly the middle class.

They still deride him for flaunting his friendships with late leftist leaders Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez. He insists he no longer takes cocaine, a habit that began in his heyday with Italian team Napoli, but his behavior during the Nigeria match has given rise to some concern.

"He needs to continue getting attention like in former times, but by giving an even worse example," said Laura Orsi. "He is an icon of another time, but he erased all the



Diego Maradona

glory with his behaviour: Drugs, alcohol and fame went to his head," said the 56-year-old systems analyst.

There are inevitable comparisons between Maradona and Lionel Messi, but until the younger man wins a World Cup, Maradona remains a cut above for most Argentines. "Messi is a phenomenon, but the world of football, until now, has not seen a player like Maradona," his old teammate Claudia Caniggia said recently. Another contemporary, Julio Olarticoechea, agreed: "Seeing him, not only in games, but in training, was something else. Diego was magic. That's the word." "Messi still hasn't managed to give us the happiness Diego did," said Garcia Paz, the teacher.

"He thought he was a god and made many mistakes, but I know that the day he leaves this world, Argentina will be paralyzed." — AFP

Briefs from World Cup

Financial gains

How much are you willing to pay to see your country win the World Cup? Dutch bank ING asked supporters of nine World Cup finalists. Argentines topped the poll, with 41 percent questioned saying they were prepared to give up one percent of their annual salary to see Lionel Messi and company lift the trophy on July 15. The French, Argentina's last-16 rivals, were less committed, with only 14 percent prepared to sacrifice some of their hard-earned euros on seeing Didier Deschamps's men triumph.

On the chin

Michy Batshuayi's clumsy celebrations after Adnan Januzaj scored against England have become a source of online amusement. The Borussia Dortmund striker mis-hit the ball, it ricocheted off the goalpost and hit him smack bang on his face. He took it on the chin, tweeting: "Why am I so stupid, bro?"

Sacked

Football and politics don't mix. A candidate for mayor in the Mexican town of Atlixco can certainly vouch for that. Juan Antonio Villarreal Garcia travelled to Russia to support the national team. His trip appeared on social media, and he was promptly fired. "He abandoned his responsibilities," his political party declared.

India's World Cup pupils

Iceland, population 330,000, made it but India, population 1.25 billion, has never graced the World Cup stage. That's not only the view of all Portugal and Real Madrid fans but also the president of the United States. "They say he is the greatest player," Donald Trump told Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa when the two heads of state met in the White House. "So, tell me, how good a player is he?" asked Trump. "Are you impressed?" "I'm very much impressed. He's the best player in the world," nodded De Sousa. But despite his popularity, Ronaldo has no chance of swapping the keys of his dressing room locker for the keys of state. "So will (Cristiano) ever run for president against you?" Trump asked Rebelo de Sousa. "He wouldn't win! You know he won't win?". "Well, president, you know there's something I must tell you," replied Rebelo de Sousa. "Portugal is not the United States. It's a little different!" —AFP

Ronaldo for president?

"Cristiano Ronaldo is the greatest player in the world." That's not only the view of all Portugal and Real Madrid fans but also the president of the United States. "They say he is the greatest player," Donald Trump told Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa when the two heads of state met in the White House. "So, tell me, how good a player is he?" asked Trump. "Are you impressed?" "I'm very much impressed. He's the best player in the world," nodded De Sousa. But despite his popularity, Ronaldo has no chance of swapping the keys of his dressing room locker for the keys of state. "So will (Cristiano) ever run for president against you?" Trump asked Rebelo de Sousa. "He wouldn't win! You know he won't win?". "Well, president, you know there's something I must tell you," replied Rebelo de Sousa. "Portugal is not the United States. It's a little different!" —AFP

Former final ref says corners would make good tiebreaker

MOSCOW: Former World Cup final referee Arnaldo Cezar Coelho disapproves of fair play as a tiebreaker at the tournament and thinks a corner count would be a better way of separating teams who finish level on points and goals, he told Reuters.

Senegal became the first team in World Cup history to be eliminated on yellow cards after finishing level with Japan on points, goal difference and goals scored in Group H on Thursday. The Africans picked up six

yellow cards in their three games to Japan's four. FIFA said it had no plans to change the rules.

Brazilian Coelho, who also criticised the use of video assistant referees (VAR) in incidents such as handball, said tiebreakers should be decided by objective criteria. "The problem is that a yellow card is subjective... and some referees tend to be stricter and give more yellow cards than others," he said in an interview. "So, if a team plays in a match with a stricter referee, they will be at a disadvantage. "For me there is another way... counting corners. It's a technical criteria and to win corners you have to attack, you have to play football." Japan's final match, a 1-0 defeat by Poland, ended in farce as they effectively stopping playing, thereby avoiding picking up bookings or red cards that would have jeopardised their second-place finish.

"They wouldn't have done that if corners had been used," said Coelho, who commentates for Brazilian television. He said there was nothing match officials could do in such circumstances and added that he was speaking from experience, having been a linesman during the

so-called "non-aggression" match between West Germany and Austria in 1982.

"I felt powerless," he said, recalling Germany's 1-0 win that sent the both teams through at the expense of Algeria after a soulless kick about. Coelho, the first non-European to referee a World Cup final when he officiated at the Italy-West Germany match in 1982, said that VAR was a good idea in principle but its use should be restricted to objective decisions such as offside. "In these cases, VAR is important to resolve problems, to help save the referee... it's a parachute," he said. "On the other hand, to resolve any incident which is a matter of interpretation, it's very risky because the referee on the field sees the normal movement of the game and can interpret things at five metres distance by the movement of the players. "The video referee, meanwhile, makes calls based on slow motion which distorts the incident because it does not always reflect the intensity of the movement." Coelho said that similar handball incidents were still producing different decisions, even with the help of VAR.—Reuters

Sports

New York Yankees crush Red Sox 8-1, take first game of crucial series

Jason, Ben and Kyle homers to lead Chicago to victory over Minnesota

NEW YORK: CC Sabathia pitched seven effective innings and Greg Bird hit a pair of solo homers as the New York Yankees opened a three-game series against the Boston Red Sox with an 8-1 victory Friday night at Yankee Stadium. In front of the Yankees' 12th sellout crowd of 47,120 and largest crowd of the season, Sabathia (5-3) allowed one run on six hits and completed seven innings for the fourth time this season. He struck out five and walked one. Bird recorded his second career multi-homer game and first since Aug. 19, 2015, by homering in the fourth off Eduardo Rodriguez (9-3) and off Justin Haley in the eighth. Rookie Miguel Andujar drove in three runs with an RBI single and a two-run homer as the Yankees improved to 4-3 in the season series with Boston. The Red Sox snapped a four-game win streak and lost for the second time in their last eight games.



Tampa Bay take advantage of Houston's short lineup

NATIONALS 17, PHILLIES 7

Bryce Harper, Anthony Rendon and Juan Soto each hit three-run home runs, and Washington snapped a three-game losing streak in a rout at Philadelphia. The Nationals hit seven home runs, three coming in the first two innings off Philadelphia starter Nick Pivetta (4-7). Trea Turner and Soto each hit two-run homers in the first inning, and Rendon followed in the second inning with his 10th home run of the season to give Washington a commanding 7-0 lead. Washington's lead grew to 10-0 on a three-run home run by Harper in the fourth inning. It was Harper's 20th of the season. He now has six seasons with at least 20 home runs, putting him one behind Ryan Zimmerman and Andre Dawson for the most in franchise history (Montreal and Washington).

CUBS 10, TWINS 6

Addison Russell hit a wind-blown grand slam, and Jason Heyward, Ben Zobrist and Kyle Schwarber also homered to lead Chicago to victory over visiting Minnesota. Heyward had two hits, scored three runs and drove in two more, and center fielder Albert Almora Jr. also had three hits and scored two runs for Chicago, which won for the third time in its last four games. Anthony Rizzo added two hits and an RBI, and Zobrist chipped in two RBIs and two runs scored. Joe Mauer homered, drove in five runs and had three hits, and Eddie Rosario and Mitch Garver each had two hits for Minnesota, which lost for the sixth time in its last eight games.

RAYS 3, ASTROS 2

Wilmer Font carried a shutout into the sixth inning before departing with an injury, and host Tampa Bay took advantage of Houston's shorthanded lineup in a tight win. Font (2-3) surrendered just one hit and one walk through five innings before issuing a free pass to Astros center fielder Jake Marisnick leading off the sixth. Then, in the middle of his at-bat with third baseman Alex Bregman, Font suffered a strained right lat and departed leading 3-0. Right-hander Diego Castillo entered in relief of Font and surrendered a two-run homer to Bregman. But the Astros, without Carlos Correa (back), George Springer (rest) and Yuli Gurriel (paternity) in the starting lineup, would score no more in having their 11-game road winning streak snapped.

ANGELS 7, ORIOLES 1

Mike Trout and Martin Maldonado both hit solo homers, and Los Angeles cruised to victory at Baltimore. The win snapped a six-game losing streak for the Angels, while Baltimore now has lost six in a row. Trout gave the Angels a quick lead when, as the game's second batter, he homered to put them up 1-0. He ended a 13-game streak of no extra-base hits and got back into center field after playing nine straight games at the designated hitter due to a sprained right index finger.

BREWERS 8, REDS 2

Chase Anderson gave up one run and two hits in six innings, and Keon Broxton hit two home runs and drove in four runs in just his third game of the season as Milwaukee won at Cincinnati. The Brewers got their second straight win to start the four-game series and are 7-1 against the Reds this season, including winning the last seven. Brewers outfielder Ryan Braun left for a pinch hitter in the seventh as the result of lower back tightness.

BRAVES 5, CARDINALS 1

Johan Camargo and Dansby Swanson each had three hits to support the six scoreless innings thrown by Julio Teheran and give Atlanta a win over host St. Louis. Camargo was 3-for-5, and his one-out double in the eighth against Jordan Licks split the gap and drove home two runs to give the Braves some breathing room. Swanson was 3-for-4 and drove in Camargo with a single against Greg Holland. Teheran (6-5) bounced back from



NEW YORK: Greg Bird #33 of the New York Yankees hits a home run against the Boston Red Sox in the fourth inning during their game at Yankee Stadium on Friday in New York City. — AFP

last week's ineffective start against Baltimore to fire six shutout innings. The right-hander allowed two hits and two walks and struck out four. He retired 10 straight batters from the second through the fifth inning.

BLUE JAYS 3, TIGERS 2

Justin Smoak hit a two-run homer, Marcus Stroman pitched seven strong innings to earn his first win of the season and Toronto defeated visiting Detroit. The loss was the 10th in a row for the Tigers, who had a solo homer from Jeimer Candelario. Stroman (1-5) allowed two runs, five hits and no walks in seven innings. He struck out four in his second start since going on the disabled list with right shoulder inflammation on May 11. He had lost six straight decisions dating to last season.

MARLINS 8, METS 2

Sandy Alcantara took advantage of a six-run third inning to record his first major league win in his 2018 season debut, pitching Miami to victory over visiting New York. Lewis Brinson opened the third-inning uprising with a solo home run, and JT Riddle capped it with a three-run shot, providing Alcantara (1-0) all the offense he would need to snap the Marlins' three-game losing streak. Alcantara, acquired from St. Louis in the Marcell Ozuna trade in December, allowed three hits and walked five in five innings, but limited the Mets to a single run before

leaving with a 6-1 lead.

RANGERS 11, WHITE SOX 3

Rougned Odor, Robinson Chirinos and Nomar Mazara ripped home runs in a seven-run second inning, and Yovani Gallardo pitched 7 1/3 strong innings as Texas rolled to victory over visiting Chicago. Gallardo (2-0) gave up three runs on four hits and a walk while striking out seven. Shin-Soo Choo extended his on-base streak to 41 games by drawing a leadoff walk in the first inning. Choo's streak is the longest in the majors this season and tied with Toby Harrah for the third-longest on-base streak in club history.

GIANTS 2, DIAMONDBACKS 1

Austin Slater had three hits and a pair of RBI doubles as rookie left-hander Albert Suarez extended his strong June run in San Francisco's win at Arizona. Slater had an RBI double in the second inning for a 1-0 lead, and he broke a 1-1 tie with a seventh-inning double off Andrew Chafin (1-3) as the Giants won for the fifth time in six games and the eighth in 10. Slater was recalled from Triple-A Sacramento for the fourth time this season last Saturday. Suarez (3-4) gave up one run on seven hits, but five of those hits did not leave the infield. He struck out five and walked two, lowering his ERA to 2.62 ERA in six starts this month. Suarez has not walked more than two in any of his 13 starts this season, extending his franchise record (since 1913). — Reuters

Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah receives president of ITF

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Tennis Association Honorary President Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received President of International Tennis Federation (ITF) David Haggerty at his Bneid Al-Qar diwan.

Director General of Public Authority for Sports (PAS) Dr Humoud Fulaiteh Al-Shimmari, USA Deputy Chief of Mission Patricia L. Fietz, Honorary President of the Arab Tennis Federation (ATF) Sami Al-Brahim and other dignitaries were in attendance. Haggerty was in Kuwait at the invitation of President of Arab and Kuwait Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber said the ITF president makes his first visit to Kuwait to have a look at the new site of Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber International Tennis Compound, currently under construction, adding the visit was very productive, as he saw full presentation for the project. Sheikh Ahmad added that ITF President Haggerty said the project is one of the best projects in the world. He thanked the President of Tamdeen Group Moamden Jassim Al-Marzouq for his commitment and interest he expressed since the contract was signed. He said the project is a qualitative move of tennis in Kuwait.

He said, as the compound will be ready by the middle of next year, we look forward to see the best players of the world participate in Kuwait Tennis Open. We hope to attract the youth and juniors as well as the entire Kuwaiti family to play tennis, as the compound have covered courts, and this is a factor that will attract entire families. Sheikh Ahmad said the project is progressing ahead of schedule which was scheduled to be completed at the end of next year, but the opening will take place in the first half of next year.

Meanwhile, ITF President David Haggerty was impressed with the project saying it is among the best worldwide, adding that ITF will support the project through organizing ITF events here and provide all is necessary to ensure its success of such a distinguished facility.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, he said it all comes together in developing the future generation of tennis, as



KUWAIT: KTF President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber (third left) presenting the memento to ITF President David Haggerty (second left). Also seen are Honorable President of KTF Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah (left), US Deputy Chief of Mission Patricia Fietz, (third right) KTF Technical Director Abbas Al-Busairi (second right) and Sheikh Meshal Al-Jaber. — Photo by Yasser Al Zayyat

there are certain elements in leadership, we have management, communications and collaborations, so some of the important elements sit in the core of our mission to grow the sport. He said that Davis Cup and Fed Cup are premier competitions, it is a team event, the grand slam of team sport and the Olympics which we hold so high.

Haggerty said "one of the best elements of our ITF 2024 vision is to take tennis from cradle to grave, in other words we start the players at a young age as juniors to play in national events, then ITF events as they make their way to circuit events, then they go to the ATP or WTA then they are seniors that is when they come back and play tennis in ITF senior events all the way up to age 95." He added our job is to ensure that we have over 15,000 competitions, events and tournaments that we run every year.

When asked how he sees Kuwait's tennis especially in Davis Cup, he said "I see great opportunity for Kuwait to continue to grow and improve. I think you had a challenge of not having an indoor facility, and no place for players to train, while in Europe it is the opposite, and now that there is an indoor training and players will have the advantage of being able to play year round and be able to continue and this will help

elevate the level of tennis.

He said "you have good juniors, 12 and under, 14 and under and we need to take them further up the pyramid so that they can continue to play and go to professional carriers and help the team in Davis Cup.

When asked to comment after visiting Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Tennis Compound he said "amazing, I cannot wait to come back for the opening, my minds is just racing from the great presentation. There are elements that are considered for this project, so it will be part of the community after it is built, and will attract high level players, whether it will be juniors or professionals to come to play here. It is a great atmosphere with the 5 star hotel that will be there, as players will not have to leave the facility and do their conditioning right there at the facility. He added that with the amount of green that is interwoven within, that makes you feel as if you were outdoors. Having the academy there, as well as areas for fitness, is one of the best facilities that I have seen, and cannot wait to come back and be able to see it when it is completed. Having the first indoor courts in Kuwait is game changer for Kuwait juniors and be able to now think about this as a carrier than having to spend a lot of money to travel to another part of the world to train for half a year.

One-two victory for Toyota at 2018 FIA World Championship

BRUSSELS: Toyota has started the 2018 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) season with a one-two victory in the Total 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps. Sebastien Buemi and Kazuki Nakajima won the race for the second successive year in the #8 TS050 Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV) they share with newcomer Fernando Alonso, who enjoyed victory at Spa for the first time since an International Formula 3000 triumph 18 years ago.

The #7 TS050 Hybrid Electric Vehicle of Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi, and Jose Maria Lopez completed a remarkable comeback by finishing second, just 1.44 seconds behind, despite starting one lap down from the pit lane due to a qualifying penalty. The result marks Toyota's 17th win from 49 WEC races and its third at Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps. Toyota, therefore, leads both the teams' and drivers' World Championships going into the Le Mans 24 Hours on 16 and 17 June.

"We are very proud of our teams' performance in the 2018 WEC at Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps. Securing the top two positions in this highly competitive race proves the efficiency and performance of our Hybrid Electric vehicles as part of Toyota's mission to make ever-better cars," said Yugo Miyamoto, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation. "Toyota has been pioneering hybrid electric technology for more than 20 years delivering not only great fuel efficiency and low carbon emissions but also an engaging driving experience, and seamless fun and exhilaration for the driver. We appreciate and thank our fans for their continuous support and look forward to stepping up the excitement levels in the races to come." Hisatake Murata, Team President, said: "I am very pleased with our performance during the week of the race. To get a one-two after the problem we faced required a big team effort. I am proud of everyone for their good work. The atmosphere during the weekend of the race has been fantastic, so I would like to thank the many fans who visited Spa, including a lot of colleagues from our home in Cologne. I hope they enjoyed the first race of the season. It's a great result to start the season, but this is only a small step towards our big target: the Le Mans 24 Hours. We have



identified areas to improve, and I'm sure our rivals have too, so we will be working flat-out in the next weeks to be ready for a close fight at Le Mans." Following six years of competition with hybrid vehicles from fellow manufacturers in Le Mans Prototype 1 (LMP1), this year Toyota takes on a field of eight private, non-hybrid vehicles that benefit from the new regulations for this season, strengthening them with 49% more fuel energy per lap, 37.5% more fuel flow, and 45 kg lighter weight compared with Toyota HEVs. To compete under those conditions, Toyota needs to demonstrate again the development progress of its Hybrid Electric power train that has seen a 35% reduction in fuel consumption at Le Mans since 2012. The race began under blue skies, with Sebastien Buemi making a clean getaway from pole position in the #8 car and gradually extending his advantage over the competitors. Meanwhile, Mike Conway took the #7 car to sixth position by the time of the first pit stops. By then, Buemi had extended his lead to over 30 seconds. However, this evaporated shortly after the hour mark due to an appearance from the safety car.

During the resulting 30-minute delay, Kamui Kobayashi replaced Mike Conway in the #7 car while Fernando Alonso took over the #8 for his first WEC race laps. His first task when the race resumed was to defend

the lead from competitors, which he did via a spectacular passing move on several GT cars on the Kemmel Straight.

Fernando's stint was interrupted by a full-course yellow, but he took advantage when the track was green and built a substantial lead, before handing over to Kazuki Nakajima just before half distance. The #8 car made an immediate return to pit lane to adjust Nakajima's seat belts and lost more time with a harmless spin at turn one. Meanwhile, the #7 car was continuing its impressive progress through the field and started the second half of the race in second position, around a minute behind the leading #8 car when Jose Maria Lopez took over from Kamui Kobayashi at the next pit stop.

The two TS050 Hybrid Electric Vehicles tightened their grip on the race as the last hour approached, with Fernando Alonso preparing to take the #8 car to the chequered flag with a lead of around one minute over the #7 car, with Mike Conway at the wheel. However, another safety car closed the gap to just six seconds with 50 minutes remaining.

Fernando Alonso and Mike Conway stayed at the wheel through a final fuel stop with 25 minutes to go, after which the team chose to hold positions and avoid any unnecessary risks after over 1,100km of flat-out racing.



SNIPPETS



Help or hindrance? Neymar's Brazil form under scrutiny

Neymar has given the ball away 84 times at this tournament

SAMARA: Criticised for being selfish, profligate and over-dramatic, Neymar has struggled to such an extent at this World Cup that another flop in the knockout stage, starting against Mexico tomorrow, might have terminal consequences for Brazil. While his supporters regale his past exploits and point to the foot injury he suffered in February that kept him out of the game until June and left him short on match fitness, his detractors are starting to make themselves heard.

After three underwhelming performances, where his errors appeared to be those of a man trying to hog the limelight rather than play himself back to form and help his team, questions about his role in the side have become increasingly audible. According to FIFA, the world's most expensive player after costing Paris St Germain 222 million euros (\$259 million) last year, has attempted more dribbles than anyone else in Russia with 42, a startling 14 more than nearest rival Lionel Messi.

Yet one of the more frustrating things about watching Brazil's group games was the futility and persistence of Neymar's efforts to take players on and, unsurprisingly, the statistics paint a dismal picture of his performance.

Neymar has given the ball away 84 times at this tournament, which after Brazil's 2-0 victory over Serbia in their final group stage encounter, was 22 occasions more than any other player, according to Opta.

If the other parts of his game were all still razor sharp, he may be forgiven some occasional profligacy on the ball. Yet his wastefulness in front of goal is probably just as worrying for Brazil coach Tite as Brazil head into the knockout stages. The 26-year-old has had 18 'goal opportunities', according to FIFA, more than anyone else at the tournament, and yet scored once. Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo has had 10 and scored four.

Yet the finals have also been characterised by Neymar's emotional volatility—he broke down and wept after the 2-0 win over Costa Rica—and a ten-



This combination of pictures created yesterday shows Brazil's forward Neymar (L) during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group E football match between Serbia and Brazil. And Mexico's forward Javier Hernandez during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group F football match. Brazil will face Mexico on July 2, 2018 for their round of 16 match. — AFP

dency to go down under the slightest contact. The forward has spent so much time on the turf that one bar in Rio was offering a round of shots for every Neymar fall in the game against Serbia. The punters were no doubt delighted when, after one challenge from Serbia's Adem Ljajic, Neymar rolled on the ground a full 4-1/2 times before coming to a stop, much to the amusement and dis-

dain of the watching millions.

Perhaps, as Tite suggests, he is feeling the weight of shouldering the hopes of the world's most expectant football nation. Yet his struggles have nonetheless left fans and pundits wondering whether on current form he is a help or a hindrance to a Brazil side with numerous other 'Galacticos'. — Reuters

It's a man's game? WCup women fight groping, sexism

MOSCOW: In the sweat and heat of Nikolskaya Street, men hug and pose for photographs with smiling women amused by their coloured wigs and horned Viking helmets.

The strip of bars and shops a few hundred yards from the Kremlin is a feast of beer and mirth for football fans visiting Moscow for the World Cup. It is also where Mariana Zacarias was sexually harassed while doing her job. Like numerous other female journalists, she has been groped and kissed while covering the tournament.

With more women watching and working in football than ever before, stories like hers have drawn outraged reactions on social media, thrusting the problem of sexism and harassment into the spotlight at the world's biggest sporting event.

A man in a white T-shirt grabbed Zacarias's head in both hands and forced his mouth onto her face as she struggled, microphone in hand, in front of the camera. She published the video online in a report for Mexican sports website Medio Tiempo.

During another broadcast, a passing man slapped her bottom. On a third occasion, another man grabbed hold of her.

"It is unpleasant and offensive and it shouldn't happen," she told AFP. "We are doing our job and you deserve respect, whether you are a man or a woman." A string of clips published online have shown fans kissing and groping reporters or singing obscene or insulting songs at female fans.

At least two female AFP journalists have been harassed by fans while covering the World Cup. One of them was groped and thrown in the air by

fans celebrating a goal. In Nikolskaya Street on one match night, AFP caught on film the moment a man grabbed and kissed Russian television reporter Yulia Shatilova.

"It has turned into a sort of entertainment, a kind of game, especially with female reporters," she said afterwards. "It's rather embarrassing what is happening here, especially at night."

Women journalists say they often hear men telling them they know nothing about the beautiful game. But more women appear to be watching and working in football than ever before, bringing the issue of sexism to the fore.

A FIFA survey of television viewing figures across 25 key markets during the 2014 World Cup indicated that nearly 40 percent of viewers were female. The London-based network Fare, which campaigns against discrimination in sport, named 44 female broadcasters involved in frontline broadcasting at the World Cup and said there were known to be "many more".

"From the number of women involved in leadership, the storylines of TV advertising, the constant TV close-ups of attractive women in the crowd, to the number of female toilets inside stadiums—the role of women is passive, often as objects of adornment," Fare said in a blog.

But "there is another story to this World Cup. One that sees the spaces for women to make their mark growing," it added. "For the first time in the history of the tournament the general secretary of FIFA is a woman," Fatma Samoura of Senegal.

She herself called in a tweet this week for women professionals at the tournament to be respected. Less than a year ago the Harvey Weinstein scandal forced sexual assault out into the open in the film industry and sparked the "Me too" movement to denounce such abuses online.

Though this month's harassment cases have involved fans rather than officials, some are wondering whether this World Cup will be a kind of #MeToo moment for football.

England's Alli backs Kane to get better of team mate Sanchez

REPINO: England midfielder Dele Alli is backing striker Harry Kane to get the better of their Tottenham Hotspur team mate Davinson Sanchez in the last 16 clash against Colombia on Tuesday. Central defender Sanchez will be directly up against the England captain and, while Alli was reluctant to discuss the few areas in which the former Ajax Amsterdam player can be exposed, he believes Kane will come out on top.

"I think he (Sanchez) is a great player, I don't

think any player is perfect, we know things, we know how he plays and he has a lot of strengths. We're going to look to do as well as we can to exploit his very few weaknesses," he told a news conference yesterday. The 22-year-old Sanchez has just completed his first season in the Premier League after joining Spurs in a 42 million pounds (\$55.48 million) deal from Ajax and Alli said he had been hugely impressed with the Colombian's performances.

"He's really impressed me since he has come in - he is a great player, he is physical, he is strong, he is good on the ball," he said. "Davinson is a great player, he is a great guy as well. It's hard not to support him but as players there are no friends on the pitch, you have to go out and do your job and hopefully Harry comes out on top," added Alli.

The midfielder is now back to full fitness and in contention to regain his starting place in Gareth Southgate's lineup. Alli missed England's second Group G game against Tunisia with a thigh injury and sat out the 1-0 loss to Belgium in their final

match in the section.

He said that talk of England losing momentum by playing a second-string side in that defeat was wide of the mark. "We've come here with a big squad and everyone is fighting for their place. It was a great opportunity and I think the boys have done well," he said.

"I don't think we lost any momentum. We're all fighting, we're all raring to go and we're all looking forward to the next game," he added. The 22-year-old thought viewing England's position in what is seen as the easier half of the draw was a trap they could not fall into. Sweden or Switzerland await in the quarter-finals. "I think it's very dangerous. We have to approach every game like we're playing the best team in the world," he said. "These are top sides. No international game is easy. For us, we're not focusing on the next game (after Colombia), we've got to get through against Colombia. They are a dangerous side and we have got to get through that and not look into the future," he said. — Reuters

WORLD CUP 2018

Today's Matches (All local timings)

| | | |
|---------|-------|---------|
| Spain | 17:00 | Russia |
| Croatia | 21:00 | Denmark |

25 Underdogs Russia seek World Cup miracle against Spain

26 New York Yankees crush Red Sox 8-1, take first game of crucial series

27 Help or hindrance? Neymar's Brazil form under scrutiny



France end Messi's WCup dream

Mbappe, first teenager to score twice in a World Cup match since Pele



KAZAN: France's midfielder Paul Pogba (6) heads the ball with Argentina's defender Nicolas Otamendi (C) and Argentina's defender Nicolas Tagliafico (2ndR) during the Russia 2018 World Cup round of 16 football match between France and Argentina at the Kazan Arena in Kazan yesterday. — AFP

MOSCOW: France roared back against Argentina to reach the World Cup quarter-finals yesterday as wonderkid Kylian Mbappe sent Lionel Messi home empty-handed following a seven-goal thriller. The 1998 champions won 4-3 and looked a different side from the one that struggled to find their cutting edge in the group stage, pouring forward with pace and purpose to stretch the ageing Argentine defence in Kazan. Antoine Griezmann gave France the lead from the penalty spot but the South Americans levelled after a sweet hit from Angel Di Maria and edged ahead shortly after half-time through Gabriel Mercado. But defender Benjamin Pavard equalised with a thunderous strike to pull France level and once more change the complexion of the game. That set the scene for 19-year-old Mbappe, who netted two goals in four second-half minutes to become

the first teenager to score at least twice in a World Cup match since Pele in 1958.

Sergio Aguero gave Argentina late hope but they ran out of time and head home after a rollercoaster ride in Russia that ultimately ends in bitter disappointment for the two-times former champions. Man-of-the-match Mbappe brushed off the Pele comparisons. "I'm very happy and it's flattering to be the second teenager (to score twice in the knock-out rounds) after Pele but let's put things in context: Pele is in another category, but it's good to be among these people," he said.

Beaten finalists four years ago, Argentina only reached the last 16 by the skin of their teeth after a shambolic group phase and despite a brave effort against France, their ageing squad and lack of balance ultimately caught up with them.

Messi, at the age of 31, may have played his last World Cup game in a career curiously unfulfilled at international level despite his astonishing achievements with Barcelona and his multiple individual awards. France will play either Uruguay or Portugal in the last eight. Cristiano Ronaldo—with his eternal rival Messi now out of the way—will be looking to further burnish his reputation against Uruguay in Sochi. Ronaldo tore out of the blocks in Russia, smashing a hat-trick in his first game against Spain and he added another goal in the 1-0 win against Morocco. But Portugal's problem against a Uruguay team with the meanest defence of the tournament could be their over-reliance on the 33-year-old five-time world player of the year.

"We have to play as a team. If Ronaldo plays alone we will lose," Portugal coach Fernando Santos said. Uruguay

won the last of their two World Cups in 1950 but they have high hopes thanks to their stingy defence and two of the world's most prolific strikers, Edinson Cavani and Luis Suarez.

FIFA have declared the video assistant referee system, introduced to the World Cup finals for the first time in Russia, a success. Pierluigi Collina, the chairman of FIFA's referees committee, said he was pleased with the impact of VAR but that it did not mean all decisions would be perfect.

FIFA said VAR crews conducted checks on 335 incidents during the group stage, helping achieve a 99.3 per cent rate of correct decisions. "VAR doesn't mean perfection," Collina said. "There could still be some wrong interpretation or even mistakes, so it's not a perfection that can be reached having implemented VAR." — AFP

Cavani fires Uruguay into last eight as Ronaldo dream ends

SOCHI: Edinson Cavani scored twice as Uruguay shattered Cristiano Ronaldo's World Cup dream with a 2-1 victory over Portugal here yesterday. Paris Saint-Germain striker Cavani curled home a superb 62nd-minute winner to settle a thrilling second round duel in Sochi which sends Uruguay into a quarter-final against France next Friday. Cavani had already put Uruguay in front early on, only for Pepe to head Portugal level in the 55th minute in a thrilling contest that was not the battle of attrition many predicted.

Pepe's goal was the first time the South Americans' defence had been breached in this tournament, but they stood firm after that and are beginning to look like genuine contenders moving

into the latter stages in Russia.

The only downside for Oscar Tabarez's side was the sight of Cavani limping off late on, raising a question mark over his fitness for next week's last eight showdown with the French in Nizhny Novgorod. Meanwhile, European champions Portugal go home, as Ronaldo and Lionel Messi bow out of the competition on the same day. In contrast, Uruguay march on with arguably the best defence in international football and one of the best strike pairings anywhere.

Suarez and Cavani combined brilliantly for the seventh-minute opener on Russia's Black Sea coast. Cavani picked out Suarez on the left with a cross-field ball, before continuing his run into the penalty area and meeting the Barcelona striker's return delivery at the back post, the ball smacking off his face and flying in. Suarez almost doubled the lead from a free-kick midway through the first half that forced a good save from Rui Patricio. Meanwhile, Ronaldo did not touch the ball once in the opposition area in the first period. But with Uruguay sitting back, Portugal did equalise 10 minutes into the second half. A corner was played short to Raphael Guerreiro, and his cross from the left was headed home from close range by Pepe,

rising high above Diego Godin in the area.

After nearly five and a half hours of football, it was the first goal Uruguay had let in at this World Cup—indeed it was the first they had conceded in 2018. But their response to that was magnificent as they went quickly to retake the lead, Rodrigo Bentancur teeing up Cavani for a magnificent first-time curling strike into the far corner on his right foot.

Portugal coach Fernando Santos threw up his hands in disgust, realising that coming from behind a second time against this Uruguay defence was going to be a tall order. Goalkeeper Fernando Muslera did almost gift them another equaliser, dropping a high ball at the feet of Bernardo Silva, but the Manchester City man could only volley over.

Cavani then had to be helped off by Ronaldo before watching the rest of the game from the dugout with ice on a calf injury. His side held out, and if he recovers, Cavani can now look forward to coming up against his Paris Saint-Germain strike partner Kylian Mbappe, so impressive for France against Argentina. But Mbappe is unlikely to find the Uruguayan defence so accommodating. — AFP



SOCHI: Uruguay's forward Luis Suarez (L) heads the ball with Portugal's defender Pepe (back) and Portugal's defender Jose Fonte during the Russia 2018 World Cup round of 16 football match between Uruguay and Portugal at the Fisht Stadium in Sochi yesterday. — AFP