



5 Dead body found near Al-Shaab Park; 2 held



6 Scores dead or missing in Indonesia ferry accident



24 Two fall critically ill near UK 'nerve poisoning' town



28 Flawless Federer delivers shot-making masterclass



Amir inaugurates Terminal Four at Kuwait International Airport

New terminal to increase the capacity to 25 million travelers



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other high ranking officials attend the opening of Terminal 4 at Kuwait International Airport. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Under the patronage and attendance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the opening ceremony of the new Terminal 4 (T4) at Kuwait International Airport was held yesterday morning. Upon arrival, His Highness the Amir was received by Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Services Affairs Jenan Mohsen Ramadan and Director General of Civil Aviation Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah.

The ceremony was attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and senior state officials. On her part, Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Services Dr Jenan Mohsen Hasan Ramadan said that the inauguration of Terminal Four at Kuwait International Airport (KWI) was a new step towards achieving the goals of Kuwait's development through the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The increasing number of travelers worldwide requires Kuwait to step up its efforts within the domains of aviation, said the minister, noting that the new terminal will increase the capacity to 25 million travelers by 2022. She added that the inauguration of the facility will provide necessary job opportunities for Kuwaitis at the Civil Aviation

Department and will develop the capabilities of the national carrier Kuwait Airways. During his speech at the event, Director General of Civil Aviation Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah thanked His Highness the Amir for supporting aviation projects in Kuwait. He noted that the Terminal Four project was planned and completed within a record time of two years. The project is part of Kuwait's development vision 2035, said Sheikh Salman.

He added that the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) aims to turn Kuwait into a very active regional aviation center. The DGCA also aimed to keep up with the growing numbers of passengers, which is expected to reach 40 million passengers annually by 2037, with an expected annual income of no less than \$800 million and about 40,000 job opportunities, he noted.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Salman said that DGCA's development plan would focus on investing in manpower, providing local and international training for Kuwaiti youth in the aviation sector. It also involved issuing new aviation laws in Kuwait in accordance with international laws and legislations. Moreover, the plan includes developing infrastructure and boosting partnership between public and private sectors, he said. The new terminal, which will be specifically used by Kuwait Airways, stretches over 225,000 square meters. It has 14 gates, duty free shops and parking space with a capacity of 2,450 cars. — KUNA

News in brief

IS leader's son killed

BEIRUT: Hudhayfah Al-Badri, son of Islamic State group leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, was killed during an attack by the jihadists in the central Syrian province of Homs, the IS propaganda agency Amaq announced Tuesday. Al-Badri was killed in an "operation against the Nussayriyyah and the Russians at the thermal power station in Homs," the group said in a statement alongside a photo of a young man holding an assault rifle. Nussayriyyah is the term used by IS for the Alawite religious minority sect of President Bashar Al-Assad. IS declared a cross-border "caliphate" in Syria and Iraq in 2014, seizing a third of Iraq during a sweeping offensive. The jihadists have since lost much ground to separate counter-offensives by Syrian and Iraqi forces as well as US-led operations, and the jihadist presence is now confined to a few holdouts. — AFP

Saudi, Comoros seal deal

MORONI: Saudi Arabia has signed agreements with Comoros worth \$22 million to help finance water and road infrastructure in the poor Indian Ocean island nation, as Riyadh seeks to expand its network of allies against its Gulf rivals. The agreements were signed during a meeting in the Comoros capital Moroni on Tuesday between the Saudi interior minister, Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef and his host President Azali Assoumani. Comoros officials said, "The Saudi minister is here with a message from (King Salman)," the president's adviser on the Arab world, Yahya Mohamed Ilyasa, told reporters. "Saudi Arabia is ready to support Comorians in their push to have an emerging country by 2030," he said. Comoros cut diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia's arch foe Iran in 2016 and with its other regional rival Qatar in June 2017. — Reuters

Houthi rocket hits Saudi

RIYADH: Yemen's Houthi rebels yesterday fired a rocket at Saudi Arabia's southern Jizan province, leaving a five-year-old child wounded, Saudi authorities said. The child was taken to a local hospital after the Katyusha rocket struck, civil defense officials said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency. The Iran-backed rebels have ramped up missile attacks against neighboring Saudi Arabia in recent months. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other allies intervened in Yemen in March 2015 to restore the internationally recognized government to power after the Houthi rebels ousted it from swathes of the country, including the capital Sanaa. Saudi forces have previously said they have shot down Houthi missiles with Patriot surface-to-air missiles purchased from the United States. — AFP

MPs call to allow authentication of Bahai marriage

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MPs Ahmad Al-Fadhli and Khaled Al-Shatti yesterday called for abolishing a 1966 decision that prohibited the authentication of marriage certificates for followers of the Bahai faith. The two lawmakers said that the decision constitutes a breach to Kuwait's constitution which stipulates total equality among citizens and accordingly must be abolished.

They said that since there are a number of Bahai citizens, they should be entitled with the same rights and duties of Kuwaitis belonging to other religions and ethnicity. The proposal requires the approval of the National Assembly, which is currently in summer recess until October, and the acceptance of the government. It is not known how many Kuwaitis follow the Bahai faith but their number, if any, is very small. But Bahais of foreign nationalities are believed to be living in Kuwait.

Founded around 150 years ago by Bahaullah in Iran, the religion spread to a number of Middle Eastern countries. The number of Bahais is estimated at under seven million people around the world. Their main shrine is located in the Palestinian city of Akka which had been occupied and became part of Israel since 1948.

In another development, the Court of Appeals yesterday upheld the acquittal of MP Faraj Al-Arbeed

from charges of buying votes during the 2016 National Assembly election. Arbeed and a lawyer had been acquitted from the charges by the Criminal Court. The lawmaker was initially declared a loser of the election in favor of Marzouk Al-Khalifa but later the Constitutional Court recounted the votes and declared him a member of the Assembly and disqualified Khalifa.

Meanwhile, MP Riyadh Al-Adasani yesterday welcomed the opening of the new terminal at Kuwait Airport but called on the government to help Kuwaiti job seekers to fill the jobs created by the new terminal which will be operational later this month. The lawmaker urged the government to operate the new terminal on time, take extra care in carrying out the necessary maintenance works and insisted on the need to open the new airport on time.

Iran's Rouhani in Vienna to shore up nuclear deal

VIENNA: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani yesterday was on the second leg of his European tour seeking assurances over the 2015 nuclear deal, a trip clouded by the arrest of a Tehran diplomat over an alleged bomb plot against opposition exiles in Paris. Hoping to boost economic cooperation to help offset the return of US sanctions following Washington's pullout from the historic deal, Rouhani arrived late Tuesday in Vienna—the city where it was signed.

"Insofar as it is possible for Iran, we shall remain party to the accord, we shall

not quit the JCPOA (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) on condition that we can also benefit from it," Rouhani said. "If the other signatories, apart from the United States, can guarantee Iran's interests then Iran will stay in the JCPOA", he insisted. US President Donald Trump unilaterally pulled out of the agreement nearly two months ago, to the ire of the other signatories—China, France, Germany, Britain and Russia—which along with the European Union have continued to back the accord.

"We need a balance between our duties and the hypothesis of restrictions.... We hope for decisive actions regarding trade and the economy," added Rouhani in comments sending a message to the other deal signatories, whose foreign ministers are due to meet in Vienna on Friday for the first time

Continued on Page 24



VIENNA: Austria's Chancellor Sebastian Kurz and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (left) give a joint press conference following a meeting yesterday at the Chancellery. — AFP

WhatsApp 'horrified' over India lynchings

NEW DELHI: WhatsApp said yesterday it was "horrified" by a spate of lynchings in India sparked by false rumors shared on its platform as the government accused the messaging service of irresponsibility. More than 20 people have been killed in India in the last two months, according to media reports, after rumors were spread on

smartphones about child kidnappers, thieves and sexual predators.

The attacks—usually targeting outsiders—have left authorities scrambling to mount an effective response, with awareness campaigns and public alerts having limited effect. A stern statement issued by the electronics and IT ministry late on Tuesday expressed the government's "deep disapproval" to the senior management of WhatsApp over the "irresponsible and explosive messages". "The government has also conveyed in no uncertain terms that WhatsApp must take immediate action to end this menace," it added.

In a letter to the Indian government, WhatsApp said it "cares deeply about

Continued on Page 24



CHENNAI: Photo shows apps for WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and other social networks on a smartphone. Indian police urged people not to believe false rumors on WhatsApp. — AFP

Local

Amir visits China Saturday in his second state visit since taking office

Sheikh Sabah eyes closer ties in China visit: Envoy

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah starts on Saturday an official second visit to the People's republic of China since assuming rule. During his visit, His Highness the Amir is set to hold talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and top Chinese officials over efforts to boost bilateral relations and cooperation in various domains.

On May 10, 2009, His Highness the Amir visited China for the first time as the Amir of Kuwait, and signed an agreement to establish an oil refinery and several other bilateral agreements in the fields of education, energy, infrastructure, sports and environmental protection. On July 5, 2004, when he was a Prime Minister, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad visited China and signed several bilateral agreements for cooperation between the two brotherly countries contributed to increasing the volume of investments and enhancing trade exchange. Back in 1991, His Highness the Amir, who was the foreign Minister at the time, paid a thanking and gratitude visit to Beijing following the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion to express Kuwait's gratitude for the stand adopted by China in standing up



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

with the Kuwaiti right and the return of freedom and legitimacy of Kuwait.

Iraqi Invasion

On December 26, 1990, His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah paid the People's republic of China a three-day visit, the first for a Kuwaiti Amir, and he was warmly received, and he discussed with the Chinese leadership ways to end the Iraqi Invasion.

After the liberation of Kuwait, the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad visited China on November 15, 1991 for three days where discussions focused on the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners in Iraq, besides bilateral relations with Chinese officials. On April 5, 1995, Kuwaiti Crown Prince and Prime Minister, the late Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah held talks with top Chinese state officials that focused mainly on enhancing relations between the two countries in politics, economy, and trade. His visit to Beijing lasted until April 10.

As for the first visit paid by a Kuwaiti official to the Republic of China, it was back in 1964, when the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who was the Finance Minister back then, visited Beijing. Kuwait was the first Arab and Gulf country that starts comprehensive diplomatic ties with China since March 22, 1971. This helped in building a strong friendship and bilateral rela-

tion with the State of Kuwait.

Signing of agreements

China's Ambassador to Kuwait Wang Di said meanwhile that His Highness the Amir's visit to Beijing will witness signing a number of agreements between the two friendly countries. "The deals include vital fields such as commerce, energy and finance, in addition to the 'belt and road' initiative," said the ambassador in a press conference held in the embassy's headquarters to announce His Highness the Amir's visit to China. Wang affirmed the continuous military cooperation between the two countries, saying that his country participated in numerous missions to preserve peace in the Middle East.

The Chinese envoy highlighted the strong ties between Kuwait and China, appreciating Kuwait's contributions towards many global issues, more recently, the mediation role His Highness the Amir played in the Gulf crisis.

Meanwhile, Kuwait and China share vibrant trade ties, citing a "\$12 million worth of exchanges between the two countries last year," including a refinery project signed in 2014 and the fact that



KUWAIT: China's Ambassador to Kuwait Wang Di speaks during a press conference yesterday. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

more than 40 Chinese companies are doing business in Kuwait. The last few years witnessed a number of visits between Chinese and Arab officials, where they have increased cooperation in various fields, he told the press conference.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Lt Gen Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Ayse Koytak.

Amir receives congratulations on Sheikh Nasser's surgery

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday cables from the Palestinian and Senegalese Presidents, Mahmoud Abbas

and Macky Sall respectively, congratulating him on the successful surgery underwent by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir sent reply cables to both Presidents, thanking them for their sincere gesture.

Separately, His Highness the Amir sent a congratulatory cable to US President Donald Trump on his country's 24th independence anniversary. His Highness the Amir praised the distinguished historical and strategic ties between the two countries and lauded efforts to extend bilateral cooperation. His Highness the Amir wished

President Trump and his country all progress and prosperity during the Fourth of July celebrations. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also sent similar cables.

Crown Prince receives officials

In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Prime Minister. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also received the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Lt Gen Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. In other news,

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received at his office yesterday Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Ayse Koytak.

Separately, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met yesterday with the outgoing Argentinian Ambassador Jorge Omar Antonio Biga, wishing him well during his future endeavors. Jarallah met afterwards with Yemeni Ambassador Ali Mansour bin Sfaa. The meeting focused on means of enhancing bilateral ties as well as regional and international developments. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar attended both meetings. —KUNA



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with the outgoing Argentinian Ambassador Jorge Omar Antonio Biga.



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Yemeni Ambassador Ali Mansour bin Sfaa.

PAAET faculty hosts 'Islamic Heritage' exhibition

KUWAIT: The origins and educational management department at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) recently organized an exhibition under the title of 'A Journey Into Our Islamic Educational Heritage', under auspices of Professor Shafi Fahad Al-Mahboub, the dean of PAAET's faculty of basic education.

The exhibition focused on education and examples of education in Islamic heritage in its golden era, as well as the methodology used by educators in the past to develop

their societies. Speaking on the occasion, Mahboub stressed that PAAET's administration was keen on holding such activities, and also expressed admiration for students' interactions and responses towards exploring 'their historical treasures'.

Meanwhile, Professor Abdullah Al-Azmi, head of the origins and educational management department, stressed that the Islamic educational thinking development's major was one of the most important in preparing and training teachers. Furthermore, Professor Latifa Al-Kandary, assistant dean for students affairs, expressed her excitement to see students' products displayed in the exhibition, and pointed out that the faculty was keen on diversifying its activities. Professor, Mohammad Malak, a teaching staff member, stressed that preparations for the exhibition had been ongoing since Ramadan to include hundreds of images, miniatures and publications on Islamic educational ideas and expressions.



Local

New terminal helps Kuwait keep up with the growing numbers of passengers



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other officials pose for a group picture during the opening ceremony of Terminal 4 at Kuwait International Airport. —KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah tours Terminal 4 at Kuwait International Airport.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memento during the ceremony.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memento during the ceremony.



The check-in counters at the new terminal.

KUWAIT: The new terminal 4 (T4) at Kuwait International Airport was inaugurated yesterday in a ceremony that was attended by top state officials, led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The new terminal, which will be specifically used by Kuwait Airways, stretches over 225,000 square meters, has 14 gates, duty free shops and parking with a capacity of 2,450 cars. It will increase Kuwait International Airport's capacity to 25 million travelers by 2022.

The project is part of Kuwait's development vision 2035, and helps Kuwait keep up with the growing numbers of passengers that is expected to reach 40 million annually by 2037. The project is projected to make an expected annual income of no less than \$800 million, and create about 40,000 job opportunities. —KUNA



The departure gate.



An LED display board shows the flight schedule at the new terminal.

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Local

New doctors added value to health care in Kuwait: Minister

Kuwait University's Faculty of Medicine celebrates graduates



Faculty of Medicine's graduates are seen during the ceremony.



A group of graduates celebrate their graduation.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah said Tuesday that fresh graduates of Kuwait University's Faculty of Medicine would be an added value for health care sector, in which the skilled staff were at its core. Sheikh Bassel was speaking at the graduation ceremony of KU's Faculty of Medicine, held under auspices of His highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. "I am confident the new graduates will bear their professional, moral and humane responsibilities," he said. He said the health care has been rapidly evolving, calling for adapting to state-of-art technology in all medical specialties and protocols in order to provide top quality services.

The medical staff, added Sheikh Bassel, should also make sure they always improve their skills and abide by the patients' rights and safety. Faculty of Medicine's Dean Dr Adel Al-Khodhr said Faculty has been meeting international standards adopted in



Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah delivers a speech.



Faculty of Medicine's Dean Dr Adel Al-Khodhr addresses people in attendance.

renowned medical institutions. Khodhr said the faculty has paid extra attention on the development of the student as the core element

in the development of health care. He said the graduates realized how the health care system operated. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah honors a graduate of Kuwait University's Faculty of Medicine. — KUNA



NBK grants Abdullah's wish to become a photographer

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues its 'I Dream to Be' initiative, a first-of-its-kind initiative that aims at granting wishes for children with severe illnesses around Kuwait, giving them the chance to live their dreams.

Abdullah Jouda Owayed who is undergoing treatment at NBK Hospital, has always dreamt to become a professional photographer. NBK helped in making his dream come true in collaborating with the photographer Abdulaziz Al-Sorayea to teach him basics of photography.

Abdullah is 14 years old and is undergoing treatment at NBK Hospital. Sorayea gave him one-on-one photography lessons; in addition to his personal basic books. NBK offered Abdullah at the end of his training a professional camera and an iPad for him to apply the fundamentals of photography and enjoy his skills during his journey of health.

"Abdullah's dream to become a professional photographer is yet another wish granted through NBK's 'I dream to be' initiative. We are proud to be a part of the children's dreams and expand our support to them as much as possible," said Joanne Al-Abdul Jaleel, NBK Public Relations Officer. "The 'I dream to be'



initiative is a lifetime experience for children not only with life-threatening conditions but children with special needs as well," she added. "This initiative is a great way to spread joy and show that there's always a positive side to a difficult situation. We ask children what they want to be and try to fulfill that for them."

NBK gives top priority to children through its commitment to its corporate social responsibility. NBK works closely with the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospitals (KACCH), Bayt Abdullah for the Care of Children in Hospice (BACCH) and several other special needs organizations to maximize its reach to all the children in numerous hospitals and schools.

NBK has been at the forefront of supporting Kuwait's community through a range of initiatives towards education, health, sports and social responsibilities. The establishment of NBK's Children Hospital for Oncology and Hematology at Al-Sabah Medical Area stands as one of many ongoing corporate social initiatives towards health and children. 'I dream to be' aims at focusing and supporting NBK's efforts towards children and addressing their needs as much as possible.

ABK sponsors Faculty of Dentistry graduation ceremony

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently sponsored the graduation ceremony for Kuwait University, Faculty of Dentistry, which was held at the Four Seasons Hotel, where 22 students received their degrees in Dentistry. Attending the graduation ceremony on behalf of ABK was Fawzy Althunayan, General Manager, Board Affairs, who said: "The bank's support is based on its commitment to the importance of educating Kuwaiti youth. They are not only a valuable asset, they are the future of Kuwait and the country depends on them. The medical profession plays a crucial role in the wellbeing of the society and ABK is proud to be a part of sponsoring this important day as they end their academic life and transition into a life change where they will face important challenges in their career. ABK wishes them every success in their future and takes this opportunity to congratulate each one of them."



KUWAIT: Fawzy Althunayan, General Manager, Board Affairs, ABK, honors graduate Dr Fatima Al-Khalaf.

'Yalla Watani' receives 9th batch of trainees

KUWAIT: The 'Yalla Watani' youth qualifying program at National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) received the 9th

batch of new graduates, who are to receive training to work at NBK branches. This program, which helps qualify national manpower to work at the banking sector, comes in the framework of NBK's support to Kuwaiti graduates and as part of the bank's social responsibility towards youth.

Director General of human resources for NBK group Emad Al-Ablani said that 'Yalla Watani' is part of the training programs that NBK organizes on an annual basis to attract Kuwaiti youth, and is prepared in accordance with the local market's needs.



Emad Al-Ablani



Local

Time to issue absconding report reduced from 90 to 60 days

Ahmadi City ranks 20th worldwide in carbon footprint

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) announced reducing the time that the Interior Ministry needs to issue an absconding report from 90 to 60 days, as new measures would be put in effect to make sure the report is not malicious.

The authority works in collaboration with various sectors to develop its automated system and administrative measures in order to cut down the cycle of paper work needed, Deputy Director of the Labor Protection Department Abdullah Al-Motoutah said. He added that 4,500 absconding reports were filed since the beginning of 2018, of which 684 have been so far settled.

Further, Motoutah said that online services that the authority provides facilitate companies' inquiries about the reports that they make. He also noted that laborers themselves can use online services, by providing the authority with their mobile phone numbers.

In other news, PAM issued regulations concerning the transfer of labor visas amongst private companies, stipulating that the transfer should be made after a minimum of one year following the issuance of the work permit, and after obtaining the employer's approval. Meanwhile, the regulations also stipulate allowing the worker to transfer his visa within six months in exchange for an extra fee. The authority exempted companies listed on outstanding lists, by not allowing the transfer of their laborers before three years, and limiting the transfer within the industrial and agricultural sectors to companies working in the same sectors.

Non-oil revenues

Official statistics show that six state departments alone make 87 percent of the non-oil revenues expected to be collected in the fiscal year 2018-2019, which are estimated at KD 1.7 billion. Figures also show that non-oil revenues make up 12 percent of total revenues in the state's budget. Furthermore, the numbers show that the Ministry of Electricity and Water topped the list by generating 24 percent of the total non-oil revenues (KD 419.7 million).



KD 1.7 billion
non-oil revenues
estimated

In addition, the figures show that the Customs General Department came second by making 20 percent of non-oil revenues (KD 356 million), followed by the finance ministry with 17 percent (KD 293.6 million), the Ministry of Health with 10 percent (KD 184.2 million), Ministry of Interior with nine percent (KD 159.8 million) then the Ministry of Services with seven percent (KD 127.8 million). The statistics also show that tax and fees' revenues increased this year by 11 percent (KD 56 million) to become KD 551 million compared to last year. They also show that other revenues increased by 16 percent (KD 148.7 million) to become KD 1.09 billion.

Fertilizers factory

The Petrochemical Industries Company's fertilizers factory, which are used to produce ammonia and urea, have officially been shut down, company sources said. A specialized company has already started dismantling the factory's equipment, the sources explained, adding that EQUATE would operate the factory moving forward in order to manufacture polypropylene and praxilene.

CO2 emissions

A recent study made by the Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology (NTNU) about carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions and its effect on climate changes revealed that 18 percent of the world's CO2 emissions come from 100 cities alone. The study showed that Seoul, South Korea topped the list of 1,300 cities in terms of its carbon footprint, while Kuwait's Ahmadi City came 20th. The list also ranked the Chinese city of Guangzhou, with its population of 14 million people, in second place, followed by New York City.

Notably, carbon footprint is an index of measuring the average of CO2, or any other greenhouse gas, in the atmosphere. It measures the total emissions caused by an individual, event, organization, or product or country. It is measured by metric ton per year.

Carbon footprint is divided into two parts: the main one resulting from burning all types of fossil fuel, and the sub one, which measures non-direct emissions resulting from processing various primary production material.

NTNU researcher Daniel Moran said that he was

stunned by CO2 rates in small cities with low population and low income. He argued that this might have been caused by repressing greenhouse gases. He added that officials in Hong Kong acted to combat the problem of emissions and set a special plan to reduce emission by 2030. Moran also said that US President Donald Trump disappointed global hopes by withdrawing from the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.

The list of world cities with highest carbon footprint

included (in order): Seoul, South Korea; Guangzhou, China; New York, the United States; Hong Kong, China; Los Angeles, the United States; Shanghai, China; Singapore City, Singapore; Chicago, the United States; Tokyo/ Yokohama, Japan; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Dubai, the United Arab Emirates; Wuxi, China; Johannesburg, South Africa; Tehran, Iran; Moscow, Russia; London, the United Kingdom; Benha, Egypt; Beijing, China; Jakarta, Indonesia; Ahmadi, Kuwait.

CBK announces Range Rover winner



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently announced the name of the winner of a brand new Range Rover: Ahmad Heraimes Al-Enezi, in the 'Your Salary and More' promotional campaign. CBK also announced that Bedour Mohammad Ali Safar and Abdullah Merfa Al-Mutairi won cash prizes equal to double the value of their salaries. In this regard, CBK's

personal banking services' general manager Hameed Ibrahim Salman explained that all Kuwaiti clients who transfer their salaries during the campaign, which runs through December 31, 2018, have the option of choosing between KD 150 instant cash prizes, and scratch and win coupons of up to KD 10,000, or receive loans of up to KD 10,000 without interest.

Boy kidnapped, raped in Abu Hulaifa

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: An 11-year-old Syrian boy was kidnapped and raped in Abu Hulaifa yesterday. The boy was going to a grocery store when a sports-utility-vehicle pulled over next to him, then a man came out of

it and pulled the kid inside. The suspect took the boy to an isolated place where he raped him then left him and disappeared. The boy told his family about what happened, so they took him to the police station and lodged a complaint. Detectives are working on the case.

Kuwaitis can't leave GCC with old passports

KUWAIT: The Nationality and Travel Documents Department at the Interior Ministry has informed interior ministries at Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, where Kuwaitis can travel using their civil IDs only, to make sure that Kuwaiti travelers possess electronic passports before allowing them to travel outside the GCC. Interior ministries at GCC states were also informed that June 30 was the last date in which traveling using the old Kuwaiti passport was permitted. Meanwhile, sources explained that it became a must for any fugitive to come back to Kuwait to settle his legal status, then a new passport will be issued to him. Furthermore, citizens abroad who have expired passports can go to the nearest Kuwaiti embassy to receive a travel document that allows them to travel to Kuwait only.

Monitoring beaches

Municipal Council Member Dr Hassan Kamal suggested using surveillance cameras and GPS systems to monitor beaches around Kuwait, saying that this practice helps keep those vital public places under control on a 24/7 basis. Kamal argued that installing surveillance cameras and using drones should not cost much, especially considering their importance in helping authorities monitor beaches against possible security breaches or 'immoral behavior'.

Body found

Police received an emergency call about a body found on the beach near Al-Shaab Park. Police and paramedics responded to the scene and found out that the man was already dead. Detectives concluded that the man drowned while fishing after he became stuck in his fishing equipment. Meanwhile, police are questioning two persons on suspected foul play, as they claimed that they were with the victim when he went missing before reporting the case.

Driving under the influence

Dhaher police investigators referred three GCC nationals to the juveniles prosecution, and

impounded a luxury vehicle that was in their possession. This came after the three were involved in an accident while they were under the influence of drugs. The three were taken to the proper authorities after they survived an accident at the Seventh Ring Road in which an SUV they were driving flipped over. Two of the suspects were treated onsite while the third received treatment at the hospital. Police found hashish inside the suspects' vehicle.

Swindlers arrested

A bedoon man and woman swindled and blackmailed a Kuwaiti citizen out of KD 3,000. The victim had spent time with the woman after meeting in a cafe. A few days later, he received a call from a person claiming that he is the woman's lawyer, and wanted to discuss a case of 'sexual assault' she plans to file. The lawyer told the man that he could convince his client to change her mind if he would pay her KD 3,000, to which the man agreed. But after thinking that the issue was over, the man received a call a few months later from the same person, demanding more money. But this time, the citizen told his lawyer about what happened. Investigations revealed that the two are swindlers who planned to blackmail the Kuwaiti man whenever they needed money. Both were arrested and handed to authorities.

Intruder arrested

Jahra detectives are questioning a Syrian man to reveal the real reason why he entered a Kuwaiti citizen's house at dawn, and whether he had second motives other than burglary. Meanwhile, the suspect told detectives that he was beaten hard to the point he thought he was going to die. A security source said operations received a call about a stranger who was caught inside a house in Saad Al-Abdullah. Police responded and found the man tied up and beaten. The intruder confessed that he entered the house for burglary. Investigations are still ongoing.

Cell fire

A detainee at Taima police station was charged with damaging state property, after he sprayed water on electric wires inside his detention cell, causing a fire that was quickly put out.

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Malaysian ex-leader Najib charged with corruption

German leader under fire from left and right



AT SEA: Passengers cling to the side of a ferry as it sank off the coast of Selayar island, in South Sulawesi province.— AFP

A ferry runs aground off the coast of Indonesia

3 dozen dead in Indonesia ferry accident

SELAYAR: Nearly three dozen people have died after a ferry ran aground off the coast of Indonesia, according to an updated official toll yesterday, the latest deadly maritime accident in the Southeast Asian archipelago. The KM Lestari was believed to be carrying nearly 190 people when damage to its hull forced the captain to ground the vessel on Tuesday afternoon about 300 meters off Selayar island, near the larger island of Sulawesi.

Images from the scene showed terrified passengers clinging to the side of the tipped over ferry, while others floated in the sea awaiting

help. Waves swamped the boat's deck, sweeping trucks and other vehicles on the ferry overboard, as rescuers battled high winds and rough seas to pluck victims from the water. Indonesia's disaster agency said 34 people died in the accident while 155 passengers have been rescued, it added. A fleet of smaller boats, including local fishing vessels, worked to save passengers as bad weather prevented larger craft from approaching the stricken ferry, the transportation ministry said. It added that most passengers had been wearing life jackets. "The captain and ship owner were the last two people

to get off the ship," Agus H Purnomo, a director at the ministry of transportation, said in a statement. The 48-metre vessel was sailing from Sulawesi to nearby Selayar island when strong winds and high waves caused damage to its portside hull and it began taking on water.

'Firm action'

The captain deliberately ran the boat aground close to shore in an effort to reduce casualties, the transportation ministry said. Authorities warned that the boat's owner could face charges. "If the boat was found to be not

seaworthy we will take firm action against the operator," Transportation Minister Budi Karya Sumadi told reporters in Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi. The ship was also carrying some \$2 million worth of rupiah currency destined for a bank branch on Selayar to pay local civil servants a bonus. The money was retrieved from the boat yesterday, still neatly packed in seven gunny sacks. The deadly incident came on the same day authorities officially called off the search for more than 160 people missing after another ferry sank on a volcanic lake in Sumatra two weeks ago.

The vessel was believed to be operating ille-

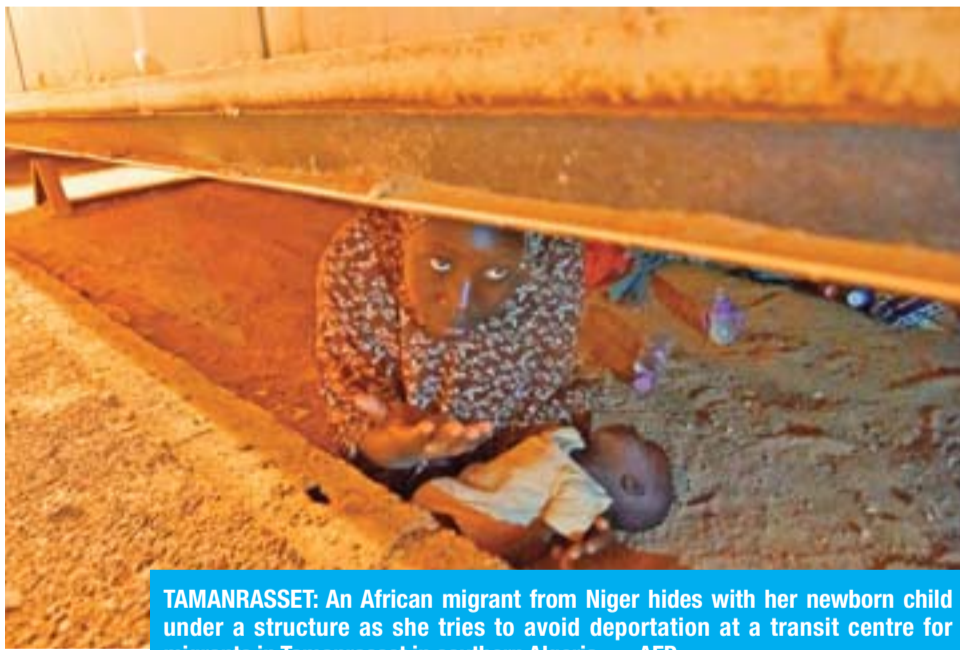
gally with no manifest and not enough life jackets when it disappeared into the depths of Lake Toba, a picturesque tourist spot. While some bodies have been recovered, many are believed to be trapped inside the sunken vessel at the bottom of one of the world's deepest lakes, which plunges 500 meters in spots. Deadly maritime accidents are not uncommon in Indonesia, where many people depend on boats to get around the 17,000 island nation despite lax safety standards. More than 300 people are estimated to have drowned in 2009 when a ferry sank between Sulawesi and Borneo islands.— AFP

Algeria showcases migrant expulsion in face of criticism

TAMANRASSET: Accused of dumping thousands of migrants at the border in the desert, Algeria has opened up the doors of its air-conditioned expulsion buses to try to allay criticism of its treatment of deportees. With food-filled rest stops and nappies for the babies, the journey south for more than 350 migrants being sent out of Algeria stood in stark contrast to the reports of those who have come before them.

Rights groups have accused the Algerian authorities of arbitrarily arresting and deporting migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, sometimes abandoning them without water or food in the desert. The government denies the allegations and invited the media on the trip of more than 2,000 kilometers from the outskirts of Algiers, where the more than 350 migrants arrested across northern Algeria were held. The majority were Nigeriens, including women and children, while others said they were from Mali, Cameroon and Guinea.

"I don't want to return to Niger," said Abdelkader Adam, 56, who told AFP he had sent money to his family during the 14 months he worked in construction in Tizi Ouzou, 100 kilometers east of Algiers. "I need to feed my two wives and my seven children who are there... I will do everything to come back to Algeria," he said. Travelling in a convoy of a dozen buses, the 27-hour journey to a transit centre included a stop where Red Cross volunteers distributed food and nappies. Arriving at the brand-new centre at In Salah—which the authorities say cost \$2.6 million—the migrants were served a sizeable dinner and given bottles of water and biscuits. The expulsion process on show by the Algerian government aimed to counter what it has termed a "malicious campaign" by rights groups, which have expressed alarm at the treatment of migrants. People interviewed by Human Rights Watch described being rounded up on the streets or at construction sites where they worked. They accused the police of beatings and stealing their belongings and said they were driven to the border and forced to walk through the desert.



TAMANRASSET: An African migrant from Niger hides with her newborn child under a structure as she tries to avoid deportation at a transit centre for migrants in Tamanrasset in southern Algeria.— AFP

'Emerging from the desert'

After resting overnight at In Salah, 1,300 kilometers from Algiers, the migrants being followed by the media continued their journey south to a centre at Tamanrasset, where a local official defended the government's policy. "The latest convoy "is a strong message for those who question the reality of the efforts taken by Algeria to take responsibility for these migrants," said prefect Djilali Doumi. AFP was not authorized to continue south beyond Tamanrasset and observe the border crossing—the point at which international organizations claim migrants are forced to walk through the desert with sometimes-deadly consequences. The United Nations migration agency said its officials have seen "migrants emerging from the desert in the thousands", including pregnant women, at the Nigerien border town of Assamaka. "IOM routinely sends search and rescue missions to pick up severely dehydrated and disoriented migrants who have been looking for shelter for days at a time," the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said last week. Algeria vehemently denies the accusations and the expulsion followed by AFP was also observed by representatives of the IOM and UNHCR refugee agency. "The IOM's

head of mission in Algeria, Pascal Reyntjens, welcomed the "coordination between all the people involved in the operation" to take care of "populations in distress".

Algerian authorities said the group of 354 Nigeriens, including 197 children and 77 women, was taken across the border to Assamaka on Monday. They were then transferred to the city of Agadez, under a deal with the Nigerien government.

"Those of other nationalities had to be "released", an official from Algeria's interior ministry said without giving further details. Algiers has claimed numerous sub-Saharan Africans are begging on the streets and more than 33,000 migrants have been repatriated since 2014, according to an Algerian official.

The IOM has reported a sharp rise in the number of migrants left to walk across the border between Algeria and Niger through the desert, up from 135 in May 2017 to 2,888 in April this year. While many aim to return to Algeria, others hope to never see the frontier again. Abdoulaye, a 19-year-old Malian, said during the journey south that he crossed the border a year ago and had to spend more than \$1,000. "In the end I'm back where I started," he said. "It's over. I'll never come back here."— AFP

Calls for calm after French police killing triggers riots

NANTES: The French government called for calm yesterday after the killing of a 22-year-old man by police sparked riots in the western city of Nantes, highlighting the simmering tensions between youths and security forces in deprived urban areas. Rioters set fire to cars and a medical centre in the city on Tuesday night after news spread that an officer had shot dead the 22-year-old, named by local newspaper Ouest France as Bubakar, after stopping his car over an infraction. Youths clashed with police in the northwestern neighborhood of Breil where the killing took place, lobbing molotov cocktails, before the unrest spread to two other poorer districts with a history of gang violence.

Burned-out cars littered the streets yesterday morning. Interior Minister Gerard Collomb condemned the violence, adding that "all the necessary resources are being mobilized" to "calm the situation and prevent any further incidents". Local police chief Jean-Christophe Bertrand said the youth had hit a policeman with his car, lightly injuring him, after a squad stopped the vehicle at around 8.30 pm for an alleged infraction and tried to take him to the police station for identification.

"One of his colleagues then fired, hitting the young man who unfortunately died," Bertrand told reporters. He was hit in the carotid artery and declared dead on arrival at hospital, police sources said. Judicial police and a national watchdog which investigates claims of police wrongdoing are investigating to clarify "the facts and determine in what circumstances the policeman used his weapon," said Pierre Sennes, public prosecutor for Nantes. He said yesterday that the young man had been wanted by police in Creteil, near Paris, for robbery and other offences.

'I saw everything burning'

French police have a long history of

strained relations with youths in poor, immigrant-heavy suburbs—not least since the death of two teenagers, electrocuted while hiding from officers, sparked nationwide riots in 2005. The assault of a young black man by police—which led to officers being charged, including for rape after a truncheon was shoved up the youth's anus—sparked fresh unrest last year. In January, the government vowed a crackdown on urban violence after shocking video footage emerged of a policeman being beaten by a crowd of youths in the Paris suburbs on New Year's Eve.

Breil, the Nantes neighborhood where the young man was shot dead Tuesday, is a socially mixed district home to a large housing estate with a history of gang violence. Police had boosted their presence in the area after a series of violent incidents on June 28. Malakoff and Dervallieres, the other neighborhoods hit by riots on Tuesday, have been plagued by drugs and poverty for years. They fall into a category of problem neighborhoods which are set to receive extra police help from next September under reforms by President Emmanuel Macron. Steven, 24, who lives in Breil, told an AFP journalist that he had "heard explosions" and headed to investigate.

"I saw everything burning. There were fires in the bins, the cars. They were breaking everything. It lasted ages," he said. Neighborhood residents were in shock yesterday morning at the young man's death. "That guy, he always had a smile on his face," a young man who gave his name as Chris told Ouest France. "He was a sweet guy. We have lost a friend, a brother." He added: "I knew him well. He was from Paris but he'd lived here for a while, he had family here. For us, he was a kid from the neighborhood." Nationally, French police have complained of coming under increasing strain in recent years, with a parliamentary report released Tuesday detailing high suicide rates within the force.— AFP

International

Rescuers weigh extraction; trapped Thai soccer team gets diving lessons

Video shows boys safe, in good spirits

CHIANG RAI: Rescue teams in northern Thailand were giving crash courses in swimming and diving yesterday as part of complex preparations to extract a young soccer team trapped in a cave, and hoping for a swift end to their harrowing 11-day ordeal. Divers, medics, counselors and Thai navy SEALs were with the 12 schoolboys and a 25-year-old assistant coach, providing medicines and food while experts assessed conditions for getting them out safely, a task the government said would not be easy.

"The water is very strong and space is narrow. Extracting the children takes a lot of people," Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan told reporters. "Now we are teaching the children to swim and dive," he said, adding that if water levels fell and the flow weakened, they would be taken out quickly. The SEALs posted photographs on Facebook showing their members working in chest-deep water in the cave, adding that it was pumping water as "fast as possible" as it prepares to bring out the stranded group.

About 120 million liters of water had been pumped out by late on Tuesday, or about 1.6 million every hour. It was unclear what the options were to get the "Wild Boar" team out of the Tham Luang caves in Chiang Rai province and how they would be steered through tight, fluid conditions and uncertain weather. Experts say divers have required three hours to reach the boys, located about 4 km (2.5 miles) from the mouth of the cave.

A video released by the SEALs showed two rescuers seated on an elevated part of the cave beside

boys wrapped in emergency foil blankets who appeared to be in good spirits, occasionally laughing. A torch is shone on each boy, who says hello and introduces himself with head bowed and palms pressed together in a traditional "wai" greeting. One wears what appears to be the red jersey of the England soccer team in Tuesday's World Cup second-round victory over Colombia. Another wears the blue shirt of English team Chelsea.

Nightmare outing

The group was discovered by the SEALs and two British cave diving experts on Monday, having been incommunicado since June 23, when a post-practice outing went awry, prompting the high-profile search and rescue effort. The multinational operation has included divers from the Australian Federal Police, US military personnel, British cave experts and teams from China, Japan, Laos and Myanmar. The Thai army has

sent in 31 divers to support the navy's SEALs, a spokesman said. News that the team had survived sparked relief, celebrations and an outpouring of praise in a country transfixed by the drama and its almost blanket media coverage.

Chiang Rai Governor Narongsak Osottanakorn said the authorities were keen to get the boys out and suggested that might have to happen in phases. "All 13 don't have to come out at the same time," he told reporters. "Who is ready first can go first." Officials have dismissed as speculation reports that the boys could be trapped for up to four months, although supplies have been prepared for that period of time. There



MAE SAI, Thailand: Rescue workers arrive as rescue operations continue for 12 boys and their coach trapped at the Tham Luang cave at the Khun Nam Nang Non Forest Park in the Mae Sai district yesterday. —AFP



Navigating caves a tough task as conditions change

was much work to be done in preparing the boys for what could be a demanding task, and rescue teams should not be pressured to act faster, said a deputy government spokesman, Weerachon Sukondhapatipak, who was at the cave yesterday.

"Some of them can't swim, so therefore it will take time for them to adjust," he said. "Officials would teach them how to move, how to dive, how to move their

body under those circumstances." Somboon Sompiangjai, 38, said his son Peerapat, 16, was able to swim, adding that he was confident the SEALs' experience and professionalism would help get the boys home safely. "I am not worried if the kids have to swim and dive," he said. "I felt much better after seeing the clips with the children in good spirits, even though they were in there for 10 days." —Reuters

Gabon struggles to stem tide of child trafficking

LIBREVILLE: Senami, a 13-year-old girl, was purchased in Benin. "My father didn't want to sell me, but someone put a spell on my uncle and he persuaded my father," she said. Taken to oil-rich Gabon, Senami slaved as a domestic servant and later as a roadside peanut seller. With a mixture of rage and sorrow, she recounts her tragic life-inhumanly long hours, a mat on the floor to serve as a bed and scraps for food. She worked for a "wicked" Beninese woman in the Gabon capital Libreville who made her "do everything."

"But when she found that 100 CFA francs (15 centimes) were missing she beat me with slippers and then with a stick," she said. Niakate Tene, 12, was bought by a man in her native Mali for 500,000 CFA francs (760 euros) in 2012 and was forced to marry him. She was found by the police chained in her husband's home and in tears. Her husband only did a month in prison before being temporarily released.

Senami and Niakate—their names have been changed—are among many, possibly hundreds, of foreign boys and girls who toil in Gabon as de-facto slaves. Yet Gabon is only one of nine West African nations, alongside Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mali, Nigeria and Togo, where the UN says centuries-old exploitation of child labour remains entrenched. Recruitment for domestic work appears to be the most prevalent form but other types of labour include work in plantations, small trade, begging and soliciting.

The children survive on meagre portions of food and are generally made to sleep on the floor. If they are paid, the rewards are meagre, for the salary goes



LIBREVILLE: Aissatou Ba Bourkinabe, a young peanuts street vendor, walks through traffic in Libreville. Hundreds of child victims of trafficking arrive in Gabon, a relatively wealthy oil country in Central Africa struggling to fight against networks of traffickers. —AFP

to the trafficker. Many youngsters are brought to Gabon through perilous routes, sometimes on rickety boats on winding rivers. "Six people died during our journey—we travelled on a dugout canoe for four days," said Senami, who came to Gabon at the start of this year. Today she lives in a state-run transit centre housing about 80 other rescued foreign children. She only dreams of returning to Benin "to be back with my family and to work for myself."

Trafficking web

Child trafficking in West Africa involves a murky, complex web of cross-border greed, said Michel Ikamba, a Unicef official in Gabon. It entails traffickers

in the country where the child is picked up, middle men in a transit nation such as Nigeria, and finally "receivers" in the host country who take the children and put them to work, said Ikamba. The gang cream off the money from the children's work, said Melanie Mbadanga Matsanga, a member of the Gabonese national committee in charge of fighting child labor. A child nanny is paid between 100,000 and 150,000 CFA francs (150 to 230 euros) a month but the money goes to traffickers, Ikamba said. "The child is not paid... and nothing goes back to the home village," he said. "Trafficked children can work from 10 to 20 hours a day, carry heavy loads, operate dangerous tools and lack adequate food or drink," a Unicef report said.—AFP

France's president in Nigeria to boost culture, security

LAGOS: French President Emmanuel Macron met with his Nigerian counterpart Muhammadu Buhari on Tuesday in Abuja before taking off his jacket and tie in Lagos to celebrate African culture. Macron's high-voltage visit to the Shrine-Afrobeat legend Fela Kuti's music venue was part of his latest attempt to forge closer ties with English-speaking Africa. "I'm very happy to be here with you tonight," said Macron, addressing the cheering and whistling crowd in English.

Macron's jet touched down in Abuja from Mauritania, where he attended the final day of an African Union summit dominated by security issues in the restive Sahel region. He was met on the tarmac by Nigeria's foreign minister, Geoffrey Onyeama, before the presidential convoy left for Buhari's Aso Rock residence on the edge of the capital. The 40-year-old former investment banker, who speaks fluent English, spent six months as an intern at the French embassy in the city in the early 2000s.

He told reporters travelling with him: "I like Nigeria a lot. It's an appealing country. I've got a lot of memories... that haven't left me." Since coming to power he has made a point of boosting ties with France's former colonies but also improving trade with anglophone countries. He visited Ghana last year and Nigeria-Africa's economic powerhouse

and the continent's leading oil producer—was the next logical step. Nigeria, a country home to over 180 million people, produces nearly two million barrels of crude oil per day and is a key economic partner for France.

Security talks

Macron said en route from Mauritania that "regional security and the fight against Boko Haram" would be high on the agenda in talks with Buhari, calling him a "key player". Nine years of violence in the remote north-east has spread across the wider Lake Chad area. As a result, Macron said "the mobilization of African states is fundamental". Nigeria and its French-speaking neighbors Cameroon, Chad and Niger are involved in a joint military force to combat the jihadists, whose violence has killed at least 20,000 people. Nigeria is also currently gripped by a resurgence of violence between nomadic cattle herders and farmers, which has claimed some 1,000 lives since January this year.

Amnesty International last week said some 1,813 people have been killed in all types of violence since the start of 2018—more than double that in the last 12 months alone. That has put former military ruler Buhari, 75, under pressure as he looks towards securing a second term in elections in February next year. In Nouakchott, Macron held talks with the leaders of the French-backed five-nation military force fighting Al-Qaeda-linked jihadists in the Sahel. Niger and Chad, where France has a sizeable military presence, are part of the "G5 Sahel" group, which has faced a rise in attacks in recent days.



ABUJA: French President Emmanuel Macron and Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari greet each other in Abuja. —AFP

Homage at the Shrine

Late Tuesday, Macron touched down in Lagos and went directly to the Shrine, where he praised Nollywood-Nigeria's massive film industry—and the country's music. Describing the concert hall as "iconic", Macron said that "we have to build a new common narrative" in Africa. "You have to recognize the bad and negative pages of this history, but you have to move forward," he said to applause. He launched the African Cultural Season which

will take place in France in 2020, at an event showcasing music, fashion and theatre. The choice of location surprised many Nigerians given its association with the anti-establishment musician.

No elected president is believed to have previously officially visited the spiritual home of the so-called "Black President", which is more synonymous with marijuana smoke and gyrating dancers than diplomatic niceties.—AFP

Thousands of Kenyans go hungry after floods

NAIROBI: Tens of thousands of survivors of Kenya's worst floods in recent years are living on the brink with barely enough food to eat two months after the disaster, aid workers warned yesterday, calling on authorities to provide increased funding and support. Incessant heavy rainfall in March and April caused dams and rivers in parts of the East African nation to overflow, submerging crops and washing away homes. At least 186 people died and more than 300,000 others were forced to flee. While water levels have receded and many people have returned home, aid workers in the worst affected coastal region of Tana River county said most of those displaced were still living in camps with little means of survival.

"The majority of the 150,000 people displaced in Tana River are still in the camps as they have not received any information from authorities on whether it is safe to return or not," said Matthew Cousins, humanitarian director for Oxfam Kenya. "They also have nothing to go back to. Their homes and crops have been destroyed and they have not been given any help to rebuild their lives." After a severe drought last year, East Africa was hit by two months of heavy rains, disrupting the lives of millions of people in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and Uganda.

Kenya experiences two rainy seasons - from March to May and then from October to November - but seasonal rainfall recorded this year has been the highest in 50 years, according to the country's meteorological department. In Tana River county, the floods not only damaged infrastructure such as roads, bridges and schools, it also submerged swathes of farmland and killed thousands of livestock. A lack of clean drinking water and poor sanitation in the camps has also resulted in a cholera outbreak with around 300 people contracting the potentially fatal disease, although aid workers said there had been no new cases for over 7 days.—Reuters

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International

Poland's top judge defies 'purge,' shows up at work

Disputed top judge defies retirement law

WARSAW: Poland's disputed top judge showed up at work yesterday in defiance of a retirement law pushed through by the right-wing government but criticized by the EU as a threat to judicial independence. Chanting "Free courts!", "Constitution!" and "Irremovable!" several thousand supporters greeted Supreme Court chief justice Malgorzata Gersdorf as she made her way into the court building in central Warsaw.

Gersdorf has branded the reform—which has put Poland's Law and Justice (PiS) government at loggerheads with Brussels—a "purge". Insisting that she has a six-year term under the constitution, Gersdorf, 65, refused to comply with the new rules that require her to step down immediately, cutting short her tenure that was set to end in 2020.

"I'm not engaging in politics; I'm doing this to defend the rule of law and to testify to the truth about the line between the constitution and the violation of the constitution," Gersdorf told journalists and supporters outside the court. "I hope that legal order will return to Poland," she said. Twenty-seven of the court's 73 judges are affected. Under the law, the judges can ask the president to prolong their terms, but he can accept or deny their requests without giving a reason. Sixteen judges have made requests, according to Polish media reports.



Thousands of supporters greet Supreme Court chief justice Gersdorf

leading liberal daily Gazeta Wyborcza. Presidential aide Pawel Mucha insisted that Gersdorf was "going into retirement in accordance with the law" and said the court was now headed by Judge Jozef Iwulski, who was chosen by President Andrzej Duda as an interim chief justice.

The PiS government has refused to back down despite the EU legal action, insisting the reforms are needed to tackle corruption and overhaul a judicial system still haunted by the communist era. "Every EU country has the right to develop its judicial system according to its own traditions," Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told a session of the European Parliament. Critics have warned that the judicial overhaul poses a threat to key pillars of democracy in the EU member state.

'Harassment'

Amnesty International charged in a report last month that "judges are indeed experiencing political pressure in Poland" and said those who refuse to bow to the reforms have reported harassment including disciplinary proceedings. "I would like my country to be free, democratic and to respect the separation of powers," Warsaw resident Grazyna Kwadrans told AFP at Wednesday's protest. Anti-communist hero Lech Walesa will join demonstrations later Wednesday to support Gersdorf and other affected judges, his spokesman said. Gersdorf was long a member of the Solidarity trade union that was key to the toppling of communism in Poland in 1989.

She said after showing up for work that she plans to go on holiday from next week, and that Iwulski would be standing in for her during her absence. "I'm not a replacement for, nor the successor of, the Supreme Court chief justice; I only fill in if she is absent," Iwulski said, appearing to contradict the presidential aide. The European Commission,



WARSAW: Polish Supreme Court Justice president Malgorzata Gersdorf (center) is surrounded by media and supporters as she arrives for work at the Supreme Court building yesterday. —AFP

the bloc's powerful executive arm, said Monday that the PiS reforms undermine "the irremovability of judges" and judicial independence, breaching the country's obligations under EU law.

Poland has a month to respond and the dispute could end up in the European Court of Justice (ECJ), the bloc's top tribunal. Brussels in December triggered so-called

Article Seven proceedings against Poland over "systemic threats" to the rule of law, which could eventually see Warsaw's EU voting rights suspended. Tens of thousands of Poles have hit the streets since the PiS government came to power in 2015, protesting at its judicial reforms and attempts to tighten Poland's already strict abortion law, among other causes. —AFP

News in brief

Family members butchered

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazilian police said Tuesday it was investigating the murder of six members of the same family in Rio de Janeiro, in which the only survivor was a seven-month old baby. According to Brazilian press reports, the massacre related to a settling of scores between drug traffickers. They named 19-year-old Bruno de Souza, known as "Indio," as the primary target of the assassins. The slaughter took place overnight between Monday and Tuesday in Mangaratiba, 100 kilometers south of Rio. Rio police would only confirm the investigation into the deaths of de Souza, his 22-year-old partner, a 37-year-old woman and her 33-year-old partner, as well as their two children, aged 16 and 18. According to Extra newspaper, the mother of one of the two murdered women said she had found the crying baby on a couch among the bullet-ridden bodies. —AFP

Police find 41 bodies

KANO: Nigerian police say they have found the bodies of 41 men with their throats cut in a northern area that is notorious as a hideout for criminal gangs. Eighteen bodies were found in a river on Sunday while 23 others were discovered in a nearby forest in the Zumi area of Zamfara state, police commissioner Kenneth Ebrimson said on Tuesday. Police arrested four suspects after searching the bush area and also found machetes and guns, he told reporters in Gusau, the state capital. He said the suspects were identified as members of a widely-feared local vigilante group "who decided to carry out the extra-judicial killings". Police believe the victims were gang members who had been involved in cattle rustling and kidnapping. But local residents were unable to identify any of the bodies, suggesting they were not resident in the area, he said. —AFP

Fireworks fire kills 9

NEW DELHI: A powerful blast tore through a fireworks factory in southern India yesterday, killing nine laborers who had just reported for work, police said. The manufacturing unit in the Warangal district of Telangana state burst into flames soon after the workers entered at about 11am, a local police official said. "We have counted the bodies of nine people. Four others are injured and are undergoing treatment," police spokesman Mohana Krishna said. Images showed thick black fumes billowing out of the factory premises with one of its gates shattered by the impact of the explosion. Firefighters battled to douse the flames and rescue those trapped, but some victims were charred beyond recognition by the time they were reached. Local media reports said the explosion was likely triggered by an electrical short circuit. —AFP

Eritrea leader's rare trip

DUBAI: Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki has made a rare trip abroad, meeting Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE operates a military base in Eritrea that it uses for its campaign in Yemen's war and the leaders discussed how to strengthen ties, according to statements from both countries released after Tuesday's meeting. A new prime minister took office in April in Ethiopia, Eritrea's neighbor, and his reforms have shaken up regional politics. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has announced plans to liberalize the state-dominated economy and pledged to honor the terms of a 2000 peace deal with Eritrea. Last week, Eritrea and Ethiopia said they had "opened the door of peace" after the first high-level visit from Asmara to Addis Ababa in nearly two decades. —Reuters

Merkel under fire from left and right

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel defended yesterday a deal on tightening immigration controls from attacks directed by both her Social Democrat coalition partners and the far-right opposition. The left criticized Merkel's plan, sealed at the weekend with her Bavarian conservative allies, as being too draconian while the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) party called on Merkel to resign, denouncing it as too soft and vague.

Migrant arrivals peaked in 2015 at more than a million people, many of them fleeing the Syrian war and therefore entitled to asylum, while others were trying to escape poverty. Numbers have since dropped sharply but Merkel told parliament that Germans had to be reassured. "Order must be brought to all forms of migration so people have the impression that law and order is being implemented," she said to applause for her own lawmakers but jeers from the AfD.

Eritrea and peace with Ethiopia: The questions

NAIROBI: The leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea are scheduled to meet soon to discuss reviving relations that have been in deep freeze for decades. Analysts believe that ending their bitter dispute could be transformative for Eritrea, whose policies have been driven by the deadlock with its neighbor. Here are things to know about why the quarrel matters so much to Eritrea—and why ending it could reshape the country.

How important is the dispute?

Very. Eritrea contends—and a United Nations-backed boundary commission agreed in 2002—that Ethiopia is illegally occupying land along the two countries' border that belongs to Eritrea. It was along this frontier that Ethiopia and Eritrea, a former Ethiopian province, went to war, from 1998 to 2000, in a conflict that killed around 80,000 people. Since the 2000 Algiers agreement ended the war, Eritrea's president, Isaias Afwerki, has used Ethiopia's rejection of the subsequent boundary ruling to justify a host of repressive domestic policies. These include jailing journalists and dissidents, refusing to implement the constitution and running an indefinite military conscription program the UN likens to slavery. "The country was put on hold for 20 years and everything revolved around [the border dispute]," says Abraham Zere, an exiled journalist and executive director of the literature and rights organisation, PEN Eritrea.

Does Eritrea want rapprochement?

Yes, by all indications. Ethiopia's new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed made the first move in June by announcing Ethiopia would withdraw from the town of Badme and other disputed border territories, in accordance with the 2002 ruling. Eritrea responded

Merkel offered the chance for people seeking a better life, including Africans, to contribute to German society too. "There must be legal possibilities for study and work," she said. "We need a law on immigration for skilled workers so we can create a win-win situation. Otherwise we won't be able to combat the people traffickers." Merkel averted a resignation by Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, who leads the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), by agreeing a system of transit centers on the German border. From there, migrants already registered elsewhere in the European Union and not entitled to settle in Germany could be deported.

The agreement, aimed at settling a row that threatens to topple her three-month-old government, has disconcerted some Social Democrats (SPD) who fear for the migrants' civil liberties. The centre-left party, which must back the plan for it to go ahead, wants to avoid creating the impression that the transit centers will amount to internment centers for refugees. "We reject mass camps," wrote SPD Foreign Minister Heiko Maas in a Tweet. "We need a humanitarian and realistic migration policy."

Talks between the three awkward coalition partners continue, and it may yet prove hard to reconcile Seehofer's



BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel gets out of her car as she arrives at German public television station ARD yesterday in Berlin, where she is to record an interview for a TV show to be broadcast later in the day. —AFP

CSU, which faces a strong AfD challenge in Bavarian elections in October, with the Social Democrats' more dovish line. AfD co-leader Alice Weidel, issuing her demand for Merkel to quit, dismissed the deal as a "bundle of commonplaces that they want to sell to us as a European solution". German officials are laying the groundwork for the deals they will also

need to reach with neighboring countries to return migrants if the plan is to have any chance of working. Today, Seehofer is due to visit Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, while Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, another outspoken critic of Merkel's hitherto open-doors immigration policy, is due in Berlin. —Reuters

by sending two top officials to Ethiopia, and later a meeting between Abiy and Isaias was announced, though no details have been given. "I think it's fair to say the Eritrean leadership is committed to political rapprochement," says Michael Woldemariam of Boston University's Frederick S Pardee School of Global Studies. Ethiopia has not withdrawn from the contested areas yet, but doing so will meet a long-stated Eritrean demand. PEN's Abraham says the offer was too good for Isaias to refuse, even if by removing the Ethiopian threat he risks increasing domestic pressure for reform. "He is probably aware that it is the only way out. The peace proposal and engagement from both sides is not an option, but a necessity," says Abraham.

How would peace benefit Eritrea?

Hugely. Eritrea and Ethiopia are among Africa's poorest nations, but while Ethiopia has seen its economy grow by double-digit figures in recent years, Eritrea has stagnated. Analysts believe normalizing ties would benefit both countries. Eritrean industries could service the growing markets of its much larger and more populous southern neighbor. "Eritrea is going to gain a lot, because it will be able to follow Ethiopia's economic momentum," says Marc Lavergne of the National Centre for Scientific Research in Paris. Woldemariam argues settling the dispute with Ethiopia could also spur foreign investors to consider Eritrea free of the fear of incurring Addis Ababa's wrath.

"It is likely that improving relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea will further solidify the Eritrean state's rehabilitation on the international scene," he adds. Peace could also help resolve Ethiopia's problem of lack of access to the sea: the country became landlocked after Eritrea, which comprised Ethiopia's entire coastline, seceded in 1993. The outbreak of war five years later stopped the flow of Ethiopian goods through Eritrea's Red Sea ports, but trade and transport could restart if the two countries come to terms. "The port of Massawa will get a boost and become one of the alternative ports for Ethiopia," Lavergne says. —AFP

Violence in southern Ethiopia forces more than 800,000 to flee

NAIROBI: Violence in southern Ethiopia since June has forced more than 800,000 people to flee their homes and they need food and other aid, a report by the United Nations and the government said yesterday. The inter-ethnic violence erupted in April around 400 km south of the capital and in all more than 1.2 million people have been forced to flee, said the report that gave no details of casualties.

"Renewed violence along the border areas of Gedeo and West Guji zones since early June ... has led to the displacement of over 642,152 IDPs (internally displaced persons) in Gedeo zone ... and 176,098 IDPs in West Guji zone of Oromia region," the report said. Traditional leaders encouraged the movement of people back to their homes after the initial fighting in April but many have fled again in June, the report said.

"The security situation has been challenging despite the deployment of the Ethiopian Defense Forces in the area, with reports of continued destruction of houses, other assets and service infrastructure," it read. Ethiopia is an ethnically diverse country of 100 million people and ethnic discontent helped fuel protests that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in February. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took office in April and has pledged political and economic reforms to address complaints of marginalization by a number of ethnic groups including his own group, the Oromos.

Diplomats told Reuters that more than 200 people were killed during last month's but said the figure was an estimate because a lack of security made confirmation impossible. The fighting is one of several ethnic conflicts fuelled by grievances over land in Ethiopia, Africa's second largest country by population. Last year, dozens died in violence between people from the Somali and Oromo ethnic groups. Hundreds of thousands of people fled their homes and are yet to return. Ethiopia's ruling coalition took power in 1991 and has created regional states based on ethnicity in a federal republic. —Reuters

International

Malaysia ex-leader charged with abuse of power, breach of trust

Former prime minister pleads not guilty

KUALA LUMPUR: Just eight weeks after losing an election, former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak was charged yesterday with abuse of power and criminal breach of trust in an investigation over billions of dollars missing from a state fund. Najib pleaded not guilty, but the charges, the first of their kind faced by a Malaysian premier, and his court appearance were the culmination of a swift and stunning downfall for the man who led the country for nearly a decade. "I believe in my innocence and this is the best chance to clear my name," Najib told reporters outside the courtroom after being released on bail of 1 million ringgit (\$247,000).

Crowds of journalists and onlookers jostled for a glance of Najib, and some of his backers chanted and held up placards in support of a man whose father, Malaysia's second prime minister, is held in high regard. National television networks broadcast live images of Najib's convoy moving through morning rush-hour traffic to the court in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, an extraordinary spectacle few could have imagined before the May 9 election upset.

Najib thwarted corruption allegations for three years after revelations in 2015 that hundreds of millions of dollars from troubled state fund IMDB were diverted to his personal accounts. But his life has unraveled since the election defeat by his one-time mentor and the country's most seasoned politician, Mahathir Mohamad, who returned to the prime minister's office he occupied from 1981 to 2003. Mahathir reopened an investigation into the fund, Malaysia Development Berhad (IMDB), and barred Najib from leaving the country. Yesterday's charges fulfilled an election promise to prosecute Najib, whom he called a "thief" during the campaign.

Najib has been charged with abuse of power and three counts of criminal breach of trust, each of the four charges carrying prison terms of up to 20 years. The abuse of power charge also carries a fine of five times the "value of gratification". He was ordered to surrender his passports and the judge set the trial for Feb 18 next year. Yesterday's charges relate to funds of about 42 million ringgit (\$10.4 million) that allegedly went from SRC International, a former IMDB unit, into Najib's personal bank account. This represents a small

fraction of the \$4.5 billion the US Department of Justice has said was misappropriated from IMDB, which is being investigated in at least six countries on suspicion of money laundering.

Malaysia's attorney general indicated there could be more charges in the case as the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission continues its investigations. SRC has been the initial focus of Malaysian investigators as all the suspicious transactions involving it went through Malaysian entities, unlike other IMDB-related transactions that went through foreign banks and companies. The judge imposed a temporary gag order to stop public discussion of the case. Najib's lawyers have said their client has been dragged through a trial by the media.

Family questioned
Najib entered parliament at 23 and attained the top job in 2009, setting up

IMDB shortly after, but his second term in office was plagued by allegations about the fund. Mahathir, who helped Najib's political ascent before turning on him as the accusations surfaced, led a campaign to unseat him, appealing to voters' disgust with a government apparently mired in corruption. Mahathir told Reuters last month that embezzlement and bribery using government money were among the charges being considered against Najib, adding that his former protegee was fully responsible for the IMDB scandal. Since the election loss, investigators have seized luxury handbags, jewelry and other items worth nearly \$275 million from properties linked to Najib's family.

His wife Rosmah Mansor and stepson Riza Aziz have also been questioned. Riza is the co-founder of Red Granite Pictures, a company US prosecutors say financed three Hollywood films, including the 2013 Martin Scorsese movie "The Wolf of Wall Street", with funds misappropriated from IMDB. Najib must be held accountable, said Anwar Ibrahim, the prime-minister-in-waiting and former opposition leader. "Because of the allegations against him regarding IMDB, he must be held accountable in court," Anwar told reporters in neighboring Indonesia. In a pre-recorded message posted on Twitter after his arrest on Tuesday, Najib said he was not perfect and "not all the accusations against me and my family are true." — Reuter



Najib ordered to surrender passports



KUALA LUMPUR: Supporters of former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak shout slogans after he appeared before a judge at the Dutra court complex in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP

Afghan tensions rise as protest turns violent

MAZAR-I-SHARIF: At least one person was killed and nine were wounded in the Afghan province of Faryab yesterday during a protest that underlined the tension between powerful regional leaders and President Ashraf Ghani ahead of elections due in October. Hundreds of demonstrators gathered in Maiman, the capital of the northern province of Faryab, to demand the release of a prominent militia commander close to General Abdul Rashid Dostum, the ethnic Uzbek vice president who is in exile in Turkey.

The commander, area police chief Nizamuddin Qaisari, was arrested after a violent dispute during a meeting with

leaders of government security forces on Monday, drawing angry protests from Dostum's supporters. The dispute has highlighted fragile security in Faryab, where Islamic State fighters have gained a foothold, battling militia commanders loosely affiliated with the government. Dostum, in exile in Turkey after accusations that he ordered a political opponent to be tortured and sexually assaulted, issued a statement calling for the release of Qaisari and warning that the province, on the border with Turkmenistan, could collapse in chaos.

The protest descended into violence when protesters tried to force their way into governor's compound and security forces fired in the air to stop them, said Karim Yourish, spokesman for the provincial police. But the head of a provincial council, Mohammad Tahir Rahmani, said at least one person was killed and eight wounded in the firing, which then prompting the crowd to break into the compound. "We were trying to control the protesters and have a peaceful protest, but unfortunately it turned violent after security forces opened fire," Rahmani said, adding that one member of the provincial council was among the injured. — Reuters

'Ageing Japan,' Akita a glimpse of graying future

AKITA: On a recent weekday morning, a group of men in their 70s and 80s gathered for baseball practice just down the road from a junior high school where students were arriving to start the day. At full strength, the Shimohama Club baseball team's 33 players outnumber the students. Only 27 children attend the school, one of about two dozen in Akita city, about 450km (280 miles) north of Tokyo. It is the capital of Akita prefecture, the oldest place in Japan, with more than one third of its residents over 65.

The prefecture's demographic woes reflect what the nation as a whole faces, experts say. "It's scary," said Koji Otomo, 87, a retired teacher and head of Shimohama Club. "With the population declining steadily and quickly like this, there is no way of painting a vision for the future." Akita's population is forecast to fall 41 percent by 2045, when half of the prefecture's estimated 600,000 residents will be older than 65, according to the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research. In 2015, the prefecture crafted a plan to stop the demographic decline with steps such as expanding medical subsidies for schoolchildren, providing extra day care support and helping workers pay back student loans.

But so far little has changed. Several cities there are redesigning themselves to provide more efficient services

for the dwindling population. The prefecture is more than five times the size of Tokyo but has just a fraction of the population. "It is quite costly to offer administrative services in an area where the population is getting scarce," Akita Governor Norihisa Satake told Reuters in an interview. "It is very difficult to maintain such communities."

Empty streets
As evening falls, pedestrians become scarce on the main street leading to Akita station, the city's transportation hub. "Let's enjoy night shopping," reads a sign at a nearby department store - but it closes its doors at 7:30 pm. With 15.5 deaths for every 1,000 residents in 2017, the prefecture tops the country with its death rate. Its birth rate, at 5.4 births per 1,000 residents, is Japan's lowest. "We now have more funeral parlours. There are increased instances where an old building is torn down and a new one under construction at the site turns out to be a funeral house," said Fumika Miura, a local government employee.

Although labor shortfalls persist across Japan, the issue is compounded in Akita: there are not enough workers to meet growing demand for elderly care. Jun Numaya, director of elder care provider Fukinotou, said a lack of qualified caregivers have forced it to suspend operations at one of its three facilities last year. "Potential clients are out there, but we cannot take them because of the labour shortage. That's what's happening in this industry," he said. Numaya, who is also a member of Akita's prefectural assembly, said Akita's problems will eventually have a direct impact on Tokyo. "Children born and raised in the countryside move to Tokyo, produce, spend money and get the economy moving. That's how things have worked since the era of Japan's post-war economic growth," he said. — Reuters

Chinese tycoon dies in freak fall in south France

MARSEILLE: Chinese tycoon Wang Jian, whose sprawling conglomerate HNA Group owns a host of foreign assets, has died after a falling off a wall while sightseeing in southern France, police and his company said yesterday. Wang suffered the fatal accident on Tuesday in the picturesque hillside village of Bonnieux after climbing onto a parapet, either to see the view of the valley below or to have his photograph taken, local security sources told AFP.

"He jumped up on to the wall and was carried over it by his own momentum," a source close to the case told AFP on condition of anonymity. The 57-year-old businessman, the co-founder of HNA and its second-highest ranking executive, fell into a 10-metre void, sustaining serious injuries that emergency services were unable to treat at the site. "Together, we mourn the loss of an exceptionally gifted leader and role model, whose vision and values will continue to be a beacon for all who had the good fortune to know him," his firm said in a statement issued in China.

HNA said Wang, whose personal fortune is estimated at 1.7 billion dollars by Forbes magazine, had been visiting Bonnieux during a business trip to France. The company started as a small provincial airline servicing China's Hainan Province but has expanded quickly in recent years under the leadership of Wang and business partner Chen Feng. The firm's \$230 billion in assets were built up during a foreign buying spree that saw it diversify into tourism and finance via major deals to buy shares in companies including the Hilton



Wang Jian

hotels group and Deutsche Bank. It also took stakes in foreign airlines such as Virgin Australia, France's Aigle Azur and TAP in Portugal.

Corporate turbulence
But HNA came under pressure last year as Beijing cracked down on the risky debt-fuelled financing that enabled its expansion. The conglomerate has started selling parts of its empire to pay down its loans, including its Hilton and Deutsche Bank shares, and Wang's death was seen as likely to complicate the unwinding process. "Wang's passing will mark the end of an era of aggressive expansion by HNA," Corrine Png, chief executive at the Singapore-based research firm Crucial Perspective, told the Bloomberg financial news agency. "It will also put HNA Group and related companies' restructuring plans back on the drawing board, in our view," Png added.

Warut Promboon, managing partner at credit research firm Bondcritic, told the news agency that Wang's death would be a blow because the company "relies on personal connections, especially with Chinese banks and Chinese government officials." At the end of 2017, the company reported that its debt was 638 billion yuan (81.5 billion euros), up 36 percent from 2016. Wang owned about 15 percent of the Chinese group, making him one of the group's biggest shareholders, Bloomberg reported. Wang began his career in civil aviation planning in 1983. Bonnieux is a mediaeval village in the Provence area of the south of France, a favored destination for the rich and famous over the peak summer holiday period. — AFP



Press Release

Carrefour to Lead the Charge on International Plastic Bag Free Day

Kuwait, 03 July 2018: Majid Al Futtaim, the leading shopping mall, communities, retail and leisure pioneer across the Middle East, Africa and Asia, which holds the exclusive franchiserights to operate Carrefour in 38 countries, announced a range of initiatives as a call to action in response to International Plastic Bag Free Day set to take place on July 3rd.

Shoppers at two Carrefour hypermarkets and all supermarkets throughout Kuwait can avail of atwo-for-one offer on reusable eco-bags. Priced at 60 and 250 Fils, the bags come with a lifetime guarantee and will be replaced free-of-charge at the customer's request. To help customers get into the habit of bringing their eco-bags with them on every grocery trip, Carrefour will be introducing two dedicated "Green Checkout" counters as a pilot project in hypermarkets located in Avenues and 360 Mall as well as one dedicated counter in each of the Carrefour markets.

-END-

About Carrefour

Carrefour is one of the largest hypermarket and supermarket chains in the world. The brand was launched in theregion in 1995 by Majid Al Futtaim, which is the exclusive franchisee to operate Carrefour in 38 countries across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

In 1995, Carrefour opened its first hypermarket in City Centre Deira UAE and through the years, expanded to 237 Carrefour stores in 15 countries across the region, serving more than 750,000 customers a day.

Carrefour operates different hypermarket and supermarket stores to meet the growing needs of its diversified customerbase. In line with the brand's commitment to provide the widest range of quality products and value for money, Carrefour today offers an unrivalled choice of more than 100,000 food and non-food products as well as thousands of household goods.

Carrefour is dedicated to rewarding its loyal customers and offering access to a unique and pleasant shopping experience through special offers and promotions throughout the year. Carrefour is committed to continued business growth in convenient locations across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia to create great moments for everyone, everyday. More than 36,000 colleagues work at Carrefour stores operated by Majid Al Futtaim Retail.

About Carrefour in Kuwait

Carrefour was launched in Kuwait in 2007. Today, Carrefour operates 2 hypermarkets and 6 supermarkets, employing more than 950 colleagues.

About Majid Al Futtaim

Founded in 1992, Majid Al Futtaim is the leading shopping mall, communities, retail and leisure pioneer across the Middle East, Africa and Asia. A remarkable business success story, Majid Al Futtaim started from one man's vision to transform the face of shopping, entertainment and leisure to 'create great moments for everyone, every day'. It has since grown into one of the United Arab Emirates' most respected and successful businesses spanning 15 international markets, employing more than 40,000 people, and obtaining the highest credit rating (BBB) among privately-held corporates in the region.

Majid Al Futtaim owns and operates 23 shopping malls, 13 hotels and three mixed-use communities, with further developments underway in the region. The shopping malls portfolio includes Mall of the Emirates, Mall of Egypt, City Centre malls, My City Centre neighbourhood centres, and four community malls which are in joint venture with the Government of Sharjah. The Company is the exclusive franchisee for Carrefour in 38 markets across Middle East, Africa and Asia, and operates a portfolio of more than 230 outlets in 15 countries.

Majid Al Futtaim operates 322 VOX Cinema screens and 34 Magic Planet family entertainment centres across theregion, in addition to iconic leisure and entertainment facilities such as Ski Dubai, Orbi Dubai and Ski Egypt, among others. The Company is parent to the consumer finance company 'Najm', a fashion retail business representing international brands such as Abercrombie & Fitch, AllSaints, lululemon athletica, Crate & Barrel and Maisons du Monde. In addition, Majid Al Futtaim operates Enova, a facility and energy management company, through a joint venture operation with Veolia, a global leader in optimised environment resource management. The Company also owns the rights to the LEGO Store and American Girl in the Middle East and operates in the food and beverage industry through a partnership with Gourmet Gulf.



Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

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ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
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Ambitious plans for megalopolis trigger fears, hopes in HK

Some Hong Kong officials and lawmakers are encouraging younger residents to consider living across the mainland China border so that they can escape the territory's sky-high apartment prices and find more job opportunities. It is not an easy sell but some pro-China business leaders say resistance to the idea will eventually crumble.

The government has seized upon a Beijing plan to integrate the former British colony into the Pearl River Delta to create the Greater Bay Area, a region comprising nine cities in China's Guangdong province, plus Hong Kong and Macau, that would have the equivalent of the fifth-largest economy in the world by 2030 and a population of nearly 70 million. Hong Kong's population is currently about 7.4 million.

Moving to one of those other cities would mean that Hong Kong's millennial generation, many of whom have been priced out of Hong Kong's housing market, could afford to buy their own homes or rent more than a shoe box. They would also have a wider range of jobs to choose from. They may, though, miss the freedoms of Hong Kong that are guaranteed under a "one country, two systems" system for the 50 years after the British handover of the territory to China in 1997. In Hong Kong, for example, the media and the Internet are relatively freewheeling, while in China they are censored vigorously.

A further diffusion of people who are Hong Kong born and bred into the mainland may dim support for the pro-democracy movement in the territory, especially if more rich Mainlanders move into Hong Kong to replace them. But Beijing has made it clear that economic integration is key to reinforcing its sovereignty over Hong Kong - and it gets support from within the business community. "We will no longer be Hong Kong people, but Greater Bay Area people," Jonathan Choi, Chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce of Hong Kong, told the Hong Kong Economic Times last month. "We should therefore focus on integration rather than on the interests of Hong Kong," said Choi, who is also a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the top advisory body to China's parliament.

Building bridges

A series of major infrastructure projects due to be finished in the next three months are going to connect major cities in the region through fast trains and road bridges, reducing the time to commute to and from Hong Kong significantly. "That distance, I believe, will no longer be a problem once they have learned about the latest progress of our growing transport infrastructure links with the Bay Area," Hong Kong Chief Secretary Matthew Cheung said in a blog in June titled, "Debunk the myths over Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area".

The migration has already been happening. At least 500,000 Hong Kong people resided in the mainland last year, up from 155,000 in 2009 and just 62,000 in 2003, according to official data. It is a stunning transformation from the days only 40 years ago when the Pearl River Delta was more of a sleepy, poor agricultural region that was not much more than a curiosity to people in Hong Kong. It is now one of the world's industrial engines, whose cities have among the highest per capita incomes in China.

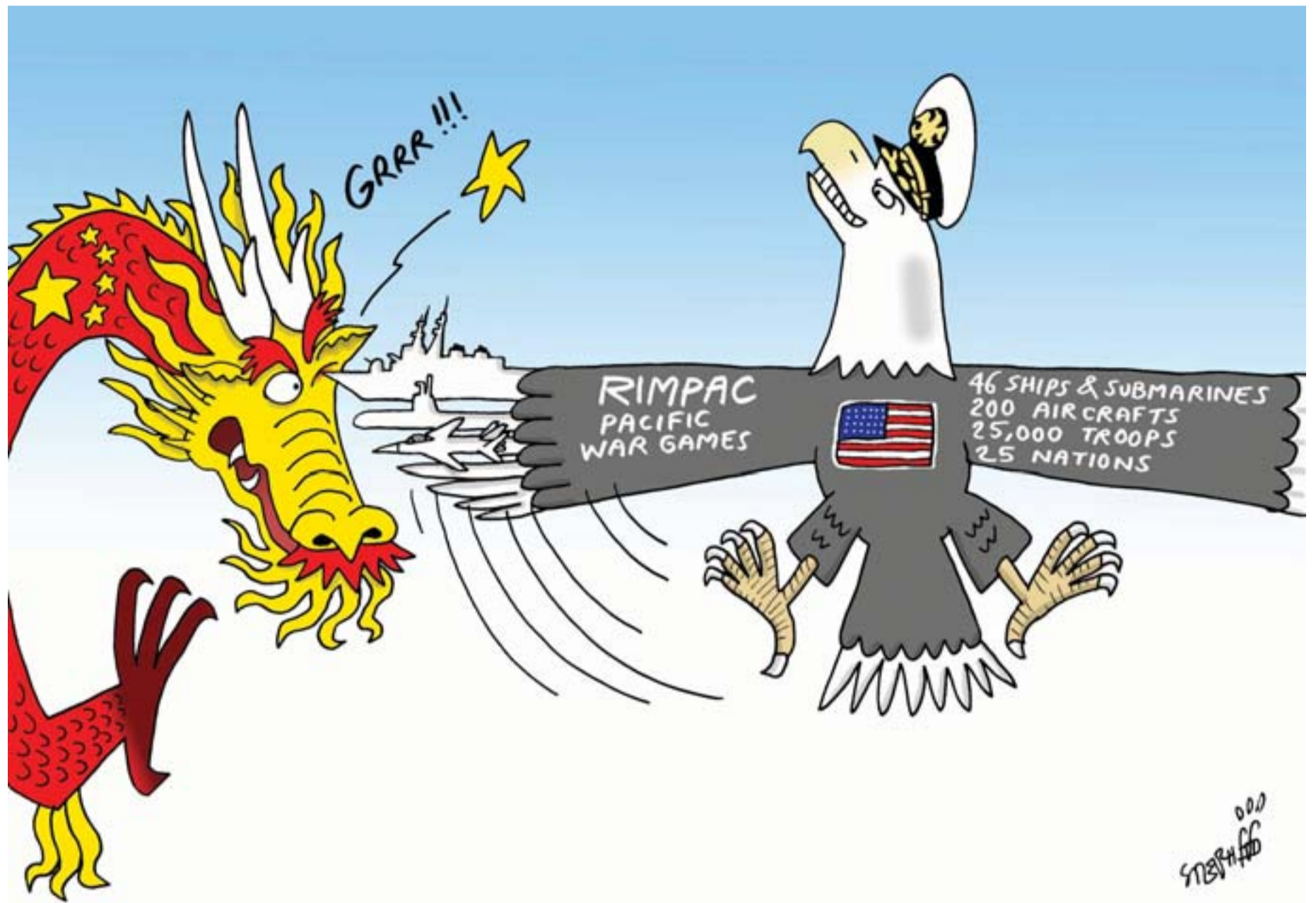
Property agents in southern China said they had seen a jump so far this year in the number of Hong Kong people looking to buy homes across the border, especially in cities such as Zhuhai and Zhongshan, although most were sophisticated investors rather than the youth the government is targeting. One said the increase had been as much as 40 percent.

Jackie Chan, a Hong Kong investor unrelated to the movie star of the same name, bought a home in the southern Chinese city of Zhongshan in April, betting that Beijing's backing of the Bay Area plan was sure to bolster prices. "I bought for the Greater Bay Area concept because it's a national initiative and it will support the development of many new industries," said Chan, who already owns four apartments in Hong Kong, among the world's most expensive real estate markets.

In Zhongshan, homes can be snapped up for 1,400 yuan (\$209.47) per square foot, while those in Zhuhai go for around 4,000 yuan per square foot - a steep discount to the roughly HK\$15,000 (\$1,923) per square foot for an apartment in Hong Kong. Still, the bulk of Bay Area purchases so far have been for investment purposes or holiday homes, rather than as primary residences.

Another barrier is China's "Great Firewall", which ensures many foreign websites are blocked on the mainland in the name of maintaining social stability, but that is not the case in Hong Kong.

While supporters of Hong Kong independence remain a small minority in the city and the pro-democracy camp faces a crisis of confidence over its future, younger residents overwhelmingly identify themselves as Hong Kong people, rather than mainland Chinese. Hong Kong Youth Power Association, a pro-establishment organization, published a survey in May that showed almost 60 percent of the 878 young people polled said they would not consider working or living in the Bay Area. Reasons included not wanting to be far from home, higher income taxes on the mainland and being unfamiliar with Chinese government policies. —Reuters



The cover-up: How much 1MDB probe was obstructed

The government of former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak spent years systematically obstructing probes into the alleged looting of state fund 1MDB, while also ruthlessly muzzling critics, according to current and former government officials. They said the meddling in the investigation by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) effectively shut down local inquiries into the scandal at Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) even as five other countries, including the United States, Switzerland and Singapore, carried out their own probes.

Any suppression of the probe in Malaysia ended abruptly in May when Najib lost power in an election. On Tuesday, Najib was arrested by the Malaysian authorities in relation to a probe into SRC International, a former 1MDB unit, according to an investigating task force. Sources close to the matter said he may face several charges. Najib, who lost power in an election last month, has consistently denied any wrongdoing in relation to 1MDB and SRC. A current Najib aide declined to respond to allegations there was meddling and a cover-up. Interviews by Reuters with a dozen current and former government officials show that the obstruction of investigators occurred on multiple levels.

One senior MACC investigator said he was convinced there was tampering with key witnesses. The official, who declined to be identified because he is still involved in the 1MDB probe, said he felt that by the time MACC got to talk to the witnesses they had been coached on what to say or were too frightened to talk because they had been threatened. Other witnesses couldn't be found. "There were some witnesses who disappeared, ran abroad," and some were clearly told by officials from other government agencies to do so, said the MACC official. He didn't name these witnesses because some of them are still being sought.

Najib's office also sought to tightly control any public comment on 1MDB. MACC is supposed to be an independent government agency that works without government interference, but three former MACC communications officers told Reuters that many of the press releases on the 1MDB probe issued by MACC were written by the prime minister's office. And it wasn't just at the anti-corruption agency that the heat was intense. New Finance Minister, Lim Guan Eng, told Reuters there was an "extensive cover up" at the ministry of finance (MOF).

'Almost perfect case'

Malaysia's new Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad told Reuters the week before last that he holds Najib fully responsible for the 1MDB scandal and that Malaysian authorities have "an almost perfect case" against him. As a result of an anti-kleptocracy probe, the US Department of Justice has alleged more than \$4.5 billion was misappropriated from 1MDB and that about \$700 million of the

fund's money ended up in Najib's personal bank accounts. Najib told Reuters in an interview last month he shouldn't be blamed for any of the problems at the fund and declared he knew nothing about why hundreds of millions of dollars from 1MDB allegedly appeared in his bank account.

Some of the ways in which those looking into the 1MDB scandal had been sidelined have been known for some time. For example, in July 2015, Najib removed the then attorney general Abdul Gani Patail for "health reasons" at a time when the official was preparing to charge Najib. He also removed deputy prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin the same month after he had criticized Najib over his handling of the scandal. But the intensity of the pressure that MACC faced from other arms of government is only now becoming clear.

Bullet sent to his home

In May, about two weeks after Najib's ousting, the newly appointed head of the MACC, Mohn Shukri Abdull, recalled how his investigation into 1MDB had been

blocked in 2015. Shukri, who had been deputy commissioner at MACC until he retired two years ago, recalled how he had faced threats to his job and worse - a bullet was sent to his home in 2015.

He sought and received US police protection during a visit to Washington and New York because he felt he was being followed by Malaysian government agents. "We didn't know who were the main people who were putting the pressure on MACC, but there were many of them," another MACC official said.

It "was coming from all sides." The senior MACC official also said police interfered in MACC's investigations as they closed in on a probe on how about \$10.6 million from SRC went into Najib's bank account. He said some witnesses in that probe could not be found because they were being held at police headquarters. Malaysian police did not respond to an emailed request for comment. Khalid Abu Bakar, who was Malaysia's police chief from 2012-2017, has been barred from leaving Malaysia since the election. Mahathir has said Khalid would be investigated for his role in the 1MDB probe. — Reuters



Former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak (center-red tie) is surrounded as he leaves the Duta court complex after posting bail in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP

England find a new calmness to banish the hoodoo

As captain Harry Kane walked away from the celebratory England fans after his team's heart-stopping World Cup penalty shootout win over Colombia on Tuesday he looked so relaxed he could have been strolling to the corner shop for a bottle of milk. Then it all dawned on him. Kane's face broke, his eyes closed shut in total relief and he looked to the heavens, mouthing his gratitude for the end of his team's horrendous run of defeats in major tournament shootouts.

The skipper and his team mates had kept their cool when it mattered most - for 120 minutes of a tense and tetchy game played at a Spartak Stadium which resembled Bogota, given the dominance of Colombia's passionate supporters. England, none more so than Kane who had put them in the lead from the penalty spot in the 57th minute, held their nerve at the decisive turning-points in an intense match, showing an unexpected maturity for the youngest team left in the tournament.

They avoided losing their heads during moments of provocation from the Colombians and periods when

American referee Mark Geiger lost control of the game. Crucially, they were able to stand up and fight on after the punch in the gut that came with Yerry Mina's stoppage-time equalizer. And then, facing the shootout test that has proved too much for England teams for so long, they kept their emotions in check, put history out of mind and focused on the task in hand.

The history weighed heavily - England had the worst senior shootout record in world football, losing on penalties in World Cups in 1990, 1998 and 2006, and at the European Championship in 1996, 2004 and 2012. All that had to be banished from their minds. Kane was handed the task of opening the trial for Gareth Southgate's side and he unflappably passed the test. Marcus Rashford also converted his penalty and after Jordan Henderson's effort was saved, the Tottenham Hotspur pair of Kieran Trippier and Eric Dier stepped up to beat David Ospina while Colombia's final two penalty-takers fluffed their lines. Victory secured, the calmness vanished immediately.

Quiet confidence

The waist-coated Southgate, whose quiet confidence and tranquil air have set the tone for this side, almost collapsed as his knees buckled the very moment Dier squeezed the ball past the touch of Ospina and into the corner of the net. Southgate's assistants caught his fall and his face told his own story.

Southgate deserves a large share of the credit for the breaking of the hoodoo. Since March, the man who missed the decisive kick in the Euro 96 semi-final against Germany, has made sure his team prepared for this very

outcome. The 47-year-old has been smart enough to realize that while pundits may dismiss the shootout as a lottery, it is in fact a supreme test of nerve and skill. The England manager knew that practice could only help, that preparing his players technically and psychologically for the moment was an investment of time and resources that might be rewarded. And so it proved.

England can now look forward to a quarter-final against Sweden with the curse of the shootout lifted. This really is a different England team. Not only have they lost the fear and tendency to panic which have cut short previous campaigns, they also have acquired something else that has always been present in their more successful rivals - Germany, Italy, Spain and Argentina, in particular. England showed shrewdness, sharp-wittedness and cold calculation to ensure the referee was aware of every push, shove and pull inside the area until he finally awarded them a penalty when Kane tumbled under a challenge.

They allowed - and perhaps at times pushed - the Colombians to lose their tempers while keeping their own firmly under control. "We are getting smarter, and maybe played by the same rules as the rest of the world," Southgate said. "But we kept our dignity and our sportsmanship and if we were down it was because we were fouled. I am proud of the discipline," he said. They played like veterans, men rather than boys. A young team whose natural confidence and positivity has been nurtured rather than curtailed by their manager. Kane's face said it all. It was over. The curse had ended but one sensed that for the players that was already someone else's history. Their own story, as Southgate noted before the game, is now for his players to write. — Reuters

Business

THURSDAY, JULY 5, 2018

12 US motorists react to rising gasoline prices**13** Merkel warns Trump against unleashing all-out trade war**15** ZTE given temporary reprieve from US; removes more execs

WARSAW: A picture taken on June 15, 2018 shows the recreation place of the Cosmopolitan apartment tower in the heart of Warsaw. — AFP photos

Polish luxury returns after years of hardship

A new social group of entrepreneurs has rapidly emerged

WARSAW: A grey Ferrari comes to a halt in Warsaw and a young woman emerges. Wearing Chanel sunglasses and carrying a little dog, she enters the Raffles Europejski hotel, a symbol of the luxury that has returned to Poland. Her destination is the historic pastry shop Lourse, which is located at the hotel, where guests pay between 250 and 4,000 euros (\$290 and \$4,700) a night and can count on perks like a personal butler. The legendary Hotel Europejski, which was considered eastern Europe's best in the 19th century, has just reopened after five years of renovation work spearheaded by the Raffles brand.

Poland's first Hermes store could be housed at the site, a source told AFP, though the French luxury goods giant would only confirm that it was looking into a project "in Warsaw in late 2019, early 2020". Luxury has become increasingly visible in Poland after a long absence due to the country's devastating losses during World War II and the policy of egalitarianism later touted by the communist regime. Decades on, a new class of wealthy Poles has appeared, whose members include heads of successful family businesses, real estate agents and high-flying bankers. Many of the elite live in the 44-floor Cosmopolitan apartment tower in the heart of Warsaw. Opened in 2014, the building boasts a minimalist design by German-American architect Helmut Jahn, who also designed the European Union's headquarters in Brussels. Of the 100 most expensive real-estate sales in Warsaw

between 2015 and 2017, 79 concerned flats in the Cosmopolitan building, said Karolina Kaim, president of Tacit Investment, the Polish firm that financed the building's construction.

'Vertical village'

The apartments vary in price depending on the floor and view. The most sought after units look out onto the Vistula River and the old part of town and cost nearly 10,000 euros per square meter—a figure that may not shock Parisians or Londoners but is staggering to the average Pole who earns around 1,100 euros a month. Most of the apartment owners are Polish but there are also a handful of foreigners living in the "vertical village", which cost more than 100 million euros to build, according to Kaim.

Residents include pop stars, football players and actors. Other luxury symbols seen around town include high-end cars from brands such as Bentley, Ferrari, Lamborghini and Rolls-Royce. Only a few years ago, the appearance of a sports car with the famous horse logo would have drawn a small crowd of onlookers, but today, Ferraris no longer stop traffic in Warsaw.

The Italian luxury car manufacturer has two Polish dealerships, one in the southern city of Katowice and another in the capital. Their marketing head Karolina Szulecka prefers not to reveal sales figures but says that client interest is constantly on the rise. Were it not for the company's policy of limiting production, Poles would snap up "10 or 15 percent more" Ferraris, she told AFP.

From the collapse of communism, a new social group of entrepreneurs rapidly emerged, often former managers quick to buy shares in the newly privatised companies and develop them, or small entrepreneurs and artisans who swiftly adapted to the new conditions to create or grow a family business. EU funds and foreign investment into the country followed and increased after Poland's 2004 EU entry.

Between 1990 and 2015, gross domestic product (GDP) more than doubled. Exports are growing and, according to International Monetary Fund forecasts, growth is expected to be just over four percent this year partly on "strong domestic consumption". Today, Poland's wealthiest are often the third generation of those small business owners.

A dozen Ferraris

Meanwhile, some Poles have many more than just one sports car. A land developer, who declined to be identified, admitted he had three Ferraris parked in his garage, while the brand's biggest collector in Poland has 12. He also prefers to remain anonymous. The general manager of the Bentley and Lamborghini dealerships in Poland, Piotr Jedrach, expects to sell around 50 British limousines in 2018 — an increase on previous years thanks in part to the recent addition of an SUV model. Prices start at around 230,000 euros. As for Lamborghinis, displayed in Warsaw in a car dealership that looks more like a futuristic temple, they too are forecast to see a boost in



WARSAW: A Lamborghini car stands in a car dealer's shop.

sales, with 60 expected to sell in 2019, thanks to the SUV Urus. The average Pole has nothing against the ultra wealthy. "If I had that much money, I'd also buy myself a Ferrari," said Hanna Mrowiec, a retired middle manager who lives in a small one-bedroom apartment. "But to have three? That's absurd. You can't drive three Ferraris at once," she told AFP. Nevertheless, luxury in Poland generally remains discreet, more the purview of cultural sponsorship than bling-bling excess. The Swiss owner of Raffles Europejski,

Vera Michalski, paid for around 500 modern Polish works of art to adorn her hotel. She also lent some from her own collection. As for the Cosmopolitan, there was an art exhibition earlier this year on the 42nd floor.

It featured work by the late painter and sculptor Wojciech Fangor, the only Pole to ever have a solo exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. The Cosmopolitan exhibition was free for anyone to attend—not just the happy few living there. — AFP

China looks to replace US farm goods in trade war

BEIJING: American cherries are tantalizingly sweet. They are so loaded with sugar and low on water that China's home-grown cherries cannot compete on taste or texture. But this alone may not be enough, said Zhao Xiaoyu, a Beijing fruit merchant, who believes Chinese consumers will be biting into domestic cherries and lower quality fruit from elsewhere after July 6, when China is expected to impose a 25-percent border tax on hundreds of American goods.

Simmering trade tensions between the world's top two economies are set to erupt into a full-blown trade war Friday, with

Washington poised to impose new tariffs on \$34 billion in Chinese goods. Beijing has pledged to hit back dollar for dollar, placing a new tax on American goods like cherries, soybeans, autos, pork and whiskey, putting them at a disadvantage to their global rivals. Washington's list is heavy on tech goods, aiming in part to shift supply chains away from China, while Beijing has put politically sensitive US farm goods in the firing line.

"For simple products it's going to be faster to shift production, but for more complex products it's going to be difficult," said Denis Depoux, from consultancy Roland Berger, noting the quickest manufacturers will need at least a year and "won't make the changes until they know this is real and here to stay." Farm products would appear simpler to substitute, Depoux noted, adding it would depend on the volumes available elsewhere and may require a planting season or two.

'A day without beans'

The Chinese saying "Take a day without

meat, but not a day without beans" speaks to the importance of soybeans in the world's number-two economy. Providing critical protein in animal feed and used in cooking oil, 1.4 billion Chinese rely on imported soybeans, primarily from the US and Brazil.

Last year, China imported \$14 billion of soybeans from the US, its largest imported good. No other single country grows enough to satiate China's demand, soybean traders say, with annual imports of about 95 million tons—about the weight of 60 million cars—making it hard to move completely away from the US.

"As soon as the tariffs are slapped on, this will be reflected in the price of soybeans," said Cui, a soybean trader at Scents Holdings Beijing, which has bought tens of millions worth of the beans from the US, according to figures from Panjiva, a trade data firm. "When it gets to regular people's dining room table, whether it's meat or cooking oil, there will be a price effect," Cui said, asking for his full name not to be used.

To lessen the self-inflicted shock, Beijing

is searching for replacements. "There are prospects for more soybeans from South America, the so-called 'Stan' countries in central Asia and even Eastern Europe," said Si Wei, a professor at China Agricultural University.

"How much we can replace, this still needs to be looked into," he said, adding China may also substitute rapeseed from Australia and Canada to make animal feed. At home, Beijing is ramping up production in northern provinces, providing subsidies to farmers and launching an advertising blitz, according to government edicts. "Expanding soybean production is the chief political task," declared the agriculture commission in the city of Changchun.

'Rotting in warehouses'

Sorghum, used in animal feed and liquor making, is another grain the US sends to China in bulk, moving 4.8 million tons last year, according to Chinese data.

In recent years, the cheap American grain beat out exports from Australia, which had

been China's primary source in 2013, according to Panjiva. Experts expect Australian growers to benefit from the trade fight.

Trade tensions earlier this year gave a foretaste of what may be to come: when China slapped a new customs deposit on the US grain, several ships carrying sorghum bound for China changed course en-route. The looming trade war also has US traders and growers worried. US Senator Ron Wyden blasted commerce secretary Wilbur Ross last month, noting growers with 1.5 million boxes of cherries ready for China came to him in a panic.

"They're worried those cherries are going to end up stuck at the dock or rotting in a warehouse due to China's retaliation," Wyden said. Zhao the Beijing cherry importer said existing contracts for this year's cherry harvest would make it hard to stop buying American cherries altogether. "If we lose some money on contracts this year, there's nothing we can do about it," said Zhao. "If it's still going on next year, we'll go straight to Turkey and Uzbekistan." — AFP

Business

NBK Capital June report: US Trade war weighs heavily on market performance

KUWAIT: Global equities in June continued with negative performance, dropping 0.7%...

April. Germany and France's major indices followed suit with the DAX Index and CAC 40 Index shedding 2.4%...

Internally, the EU governments have come to an agreement with Greece delaying repayment of EUR96 billion for an additional ten years...

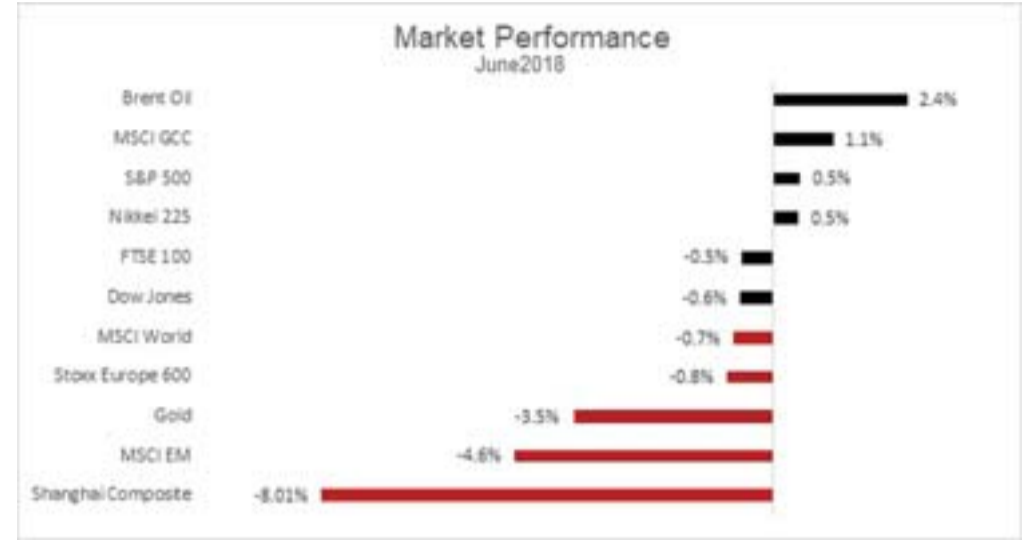
The UK's FTSE 100 Index in June was unable to maintain its positive momentum from the previous two months...

the month, the BOE met and on a split vote of 6-3 held its key policy rate unchanged. In terms of economic news, the Markit Manufacturing PMI was flat for June...

Japan's Nikkei 225 in June posted a gain of 0.5% registering a Q2 2018 close of positive 4.0%. The BOJ reduced its inflation expectations...

Rising oil prices

Emerging markets in June continue to bleed posting a loss 4.6% as measured by the MSCI Emerging Market Index. In terms of quarterly performance, the Index in Q2 2018 is down 8.7%...



with North Korean leadership. In China, the economic activity remains positive with the Caixin Manufacturing PMI coming in at 51. The Non-Manufacturing PMI in June increased by 0.1 to 55. In South Korea, the Nikkei Market Manufacturing PMI remains below 50...

Brent Oil in June closed up 2.4%, marking the fourth straight month of positive returns. On a quarterly basis, the commodity is up 13% while on a YTD basis it is up 18.8%...

form poorly, dropping in June 3.5% bringing its Q2 performance to -5.5%.

GCC equities ended the month of June in positive territory, up 1.3%, as measured by the S&P GCC Index. The GCC equity markets benefited from news of Saudi Arabia's MSCI upgrade to Emerging Market status...

EU retaliating

In Europe, June's performance as measured by the Stoxx Europe 600 was down 0.8%, yet on a quarterly basis remains up 2.4% given the strong performance back in

US motorists react to rising gasoline prices

LONDON: US traffic volumes are leveling off in a sign the previous stimulus from cheap gasoline prices is fading as pump prices rise. The volume of traffic on US roads was down by almost 0.6 percent in April compared with the same month a year earlier...

Traffic volumes declined year-on-year for the first time since the first quarter of 2014, according to the Federal Highway Administration ("Traffic volume trends", FHWA, July 2018).

The quantity of gasoline supplied to domestic consumers during the first four months of 2018 rose by just 4 million barrels or 0.4 percent compared with the same month a year earlier ("Petroleum Supply Monthly", EIA, June 2018).

The quantity of gasoline supplied to domestic consumers during the first four months of 2018 rose by just 4 million barrels or 0.4 percent compared with the same month a year earlier ("Petroleum Supply Monthly", EIA, June 2018).



FORT WASHINGTON: Automobile traffic moves along the Capital Beltway during rush hour one day before the 4th of July holiday. — AFP

another 60,000 bpd in 2019 ("Short-Term Energy Outlook", EIA, June 2018).

Fading stimulus

Besides the impact on miles driven, oil prices influence gasoline consumption through motorists' choices about new vehicles purchased and the retirement of older vehicles from the fleet.

Now prices are climbing, fuel economy is set to become more important for vehicle buyers again, and there is likely to be a shift back towards smaller, more fuel-efficient engines...

Oil consumption is normally led by gasoline during the first phase of each cyclical upswing until distillates become the primary driver in the second phase. During the first phase of the current cyclical recovery, the rise in oil consumption was led by gasoline consumption by private motorists...

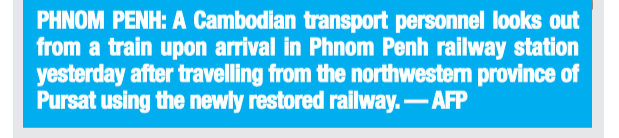
45 years on, Cambodia restores railway link to Phnom Penh

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia yesterday reopened the final stretch of a railway running from the capital Phnom Penh to the border with neighboring Thailand, the first time the line has been operational in 45 years.

Cambodian transport minister Sun Chanthol said a train ran yesterday morning from the northwestern province of Pursat to Phnom Penh, the last remaining section of the track between the two countries to be finished.

Much of Cambodia's railways—built by the French during their colonial occupation—were damaged by years of bitter conflict that engulfed the country during the Cold War era.

PHNOM PENH: A Cambodian transport personnel looks out from a train upon arrival in Phnom Penh railway station yesterday after travelling from the northwestern province of Pursat using the newly restored railway. — AFP



Financial Markets Daily Report table containing Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, Global Bond Yields, and Commodities.

EXCHANGE RATES

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

Table of exchange rates for various currencies including British Pound, Czech Koruna, Danish Krone, Euro, etc.

Table of exchange rates for various currencies including Indonesian Rupiah, Japanese Yen, Korean Won, Malaysian Ringgit, etc.

Table of Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd rates for various currencies including US Dollar, Canadian Dollar, Indian Rupees, etc.

Business

Merkel warns Trump against unleashing all-out trade war

'Prevent this conflict from becoming a real war'

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday warned US President Donald Trump against unleashing an all-out trade war after he threatened to impose steep tariffs on cars from the European Union. In a speech to the Bundestag federal parliament, Merkel said both sides were effectively locked in a "trade conflict" since Trump's decision to slap punitive tariffs on steel and aluminum imports.

"It is worthwhile to prevent this conflict from becoming a real war," she said, adding however that this "would require both sides" to take steps. Trump on Sunday charged that Europe is "possibly as bad as China" on trade, as he reiterated that he is mulling import taxes of 20 percent on EU cars. The EU has slapped tariffs on iconic US products including bourbon, jeans and Harley-Davidson motorcycles, as a symbolic tit-for-tat response to the metals duties.

Taking aim at Trump over his complaint that the EU, and in particular economic powerhouse Germany, is running a massive trade surplus against the US, Merkel said that his calculation is skewed as it is based only on goods, not services. "If you include services like the digital services, then you have a completely different trade

balance sheet, with the US showing a surplus against the EU," she noted. "It is almost old-fashioned to only calculate goods and not include services," Merkel said.

Merkel has previously voiced backing for a "digital tax" that would target multinationals like Amazon, Facebook or Google, which have come under fire for shifting earnings around Europe in order to pay lower taxes. But the EU is divided over the proposal, as countries including Luxembourg and Ireland are loath to see US tech giants head for the exit. With the US-EU trade row showing few signs of easing, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker is heading to Washington by the end of July to seek a way out of the conflict.

Reliable NATO partner

Relations between the US and other industrialized powers have turned increasingly tense as Trump has pushed his "America First" stance with punishing consequences for trading partners, regardless of whether they are allies or adversaries. Historically strong ties between Berlin and Washington have also taken a beating since the US leader repeatedly skewered

Germany over its record trade surplus as well as its relatively small defense spending. Merkel acknowledged that Berlin has not been investing enough on defense, but stressed that it will push outlays to 1.5 percent of gross domestic product by 2025. Nevertheless, Berlin's planned spending is still short of the NATO goal of 2 percent that Trump insists on.

And despite its 1.5 percent pledge, its latest budget forecast for the coming years shows the proportion actually falling to 1.23 percent in 2022 from 1.24 percent this year—something that could emerge as a point of contention when NATO leaders gather in Brussels next Wednesday and Thursday (July 11-12). Merkel stressed however that "Germany is a reliable partner in NATO". "We are the second biggest provider of troops, we are participating in several missions and Germany will remain a reliable partner of NATO," she said. Merkel said "wars are raging on our front door," listing the Syrian war, Islamic State group militancy, unrest in Afghanistan and the conflict in Ukraine. "To not be prepared for defence of the alliance would be negligent," she said. — AFP



BERLIN: General view of the plenum taken as German Chancellor Angela Merkel (R) delivers a speech at the Bundestag, the lower house of parliament. — AFP

UK economy picks up speed, raising chance of rate rise

LONDON: Britain's large services industry grew last month at its fastest rate since October, a survey showed yesterday, prompting investors to increase bets that the Bank of England will raise interest rates next month. After a weak first four months of 2018, the IHS Markit/CIPS services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 55.1 in June, easily beating economists' average forecasts in a Reuters poll of 54.0, unchanged from May's reading.

June surveys this week for the smaller manufacturing and construction sectors also beat expectations. Taken together, the three PMIs point to overall economic growth of 0.4 percent in the second quarter, double the pace of the first, IHS Markit said. Sterling rallied and British government bond yields rose as financial markets priced in a greater chance that the Bank of England will raise interest rates to 0.75 percent from the 0.5 percent they have stood at for most of the past decade. In May, the BoE postponed a widely-expected rate hike after the economy slowed more than forecast in the three months to March, due in part to unusually harsh winter weather. High inflation and continuing deep uncertainty about the terms Britain's departure from the European Union in March 2019 have acted as underlying drags on growth.

The central bank also said in May that in the event of a recovery, rates were likely to rise for only the second time in more than a decade as part of a gradual move away from the emergency stimulus program it rolled out during the financial crisis. "These PMIs - the last before the



BRUSSELS: British Prime Minister Theresa May laughs during a bilateral meeting with Irish Prime Minister during an European Union leaders' summit focused on migration, Brexit and eurozone reforms on June 28, 2018 at the Europa building. — AFP

Monetary Policy Committee finalize their August 2 decision - are consistent with a robust second-quarter rebound, and keep our call for an August hike on track," Morgan Stanley economist Jacob Nell said.

Spend while the sun shines?

Last month BoE chief economist Andy Haldane joined two other members of the BoE's nine-strong Monetary Policy Committee in calling for a rate rise, and data was revised to show the first-quarter slowdown was less severe than first thought. The BoE has forecast 0.4 percent GDP growth for the second quarter and also expects inflation to pick up in the coming months due to higher oil prices. Yesterday's survey backed up the BoE's view, showing service firms contending with higher wage and fuel costs and overall input costs rising at the fastest pace since September 2017. New business flowed in at the fastest rate in just over a year,

with firms registering a boost to consumer spending from unusually warm weather. But expectations among businesses for the next 12 months - during which Britain is due to leave the EU - were below their average for the years since the financial crisis, with Brexit-related uncertainty to blame, IHS Markit said.

Britain cannot yet count on a transitional EU trade deal for the period immediately after Brexit, which means firms cannot rule out border disruptions after March. "Such a divergence between current and expected future activity stokes worries that the upturn is being fuelled by short-term spending ... and likely masks a lack of longer-term business investment," IHS Markit economist Chris Williamson said. Euro zone PMI data yesterday showed businesses in the bloc at their gloomiest since late 2016, despite activity growing at its fastest in four months, reflecting concerns about a possible trade war with the United States. — Reuters

Euro zone yields pinned near lows on ECB duration bet

LONDON: The gap between short- and long-term euro zone borrowing costs was near its tightest in over a week yesterday as the European Central Bank appeared to push on with plans to focus its bond-buying on longer-dated debt. The ECB stepped up purchases of government bonds in June to their highest level this year and Commerzbank suggested the central bank had also increased the duration of its purchases. Reuters reported last week that this would be the bank's focus in the future.

That has helped drive the yield spread between Germany's two- and 10-year debt to the flattest in a year at 97 basis points. The gap between 10- and 30-year yields has narrowed 10 basis points over the past week. The moves in the German curve also follow the flattening momentum in the US Treasury bond market, where the two-10 yield spread has fallen under 30 bps at the tightest levels in over a decade.

Elsewhere, French 30-year borrowing costs are close to their lowest level in 18 months and the Italian 10s/30s bond yield spread has tightened 18 basis points over the past week to 74 bps. "This is hugely important because at the end of the day the amount of stimulus depends on the amount of duration the ECB extracts," said Commerzbank strategist Christoph Rieger.

HSBC reckons 10-year German Bund yields could end the year as low as 0.4 percent, slashing its previous 0.75 percent forecast because of global growth concerns

and the recent flare-up in German political tensions. Central bank buying of longer-dated debt magnifies the effect of the monetary policy by providing an incentive for long-term borrowing and, by extension, further spending.

It also allows countries and companies to term out their debt profiles and make them more sustainable. The German state of Nord Rhein Westphalia looks to be the first to benefit as it plans a 50-year bond sale yesterday. At the last update, it was planning to raise 1.25 billion euros from the sale. "The demand for 50-year is there for good reason. There's a lot of convexity value for pension funds and for asset managers," said Rieger of Commerzbank.

Belgium's Flemish Community was also in the market for a 20-year bond yesterday, and was set for a 750 million euro deal. But on a day of thin liquidity caused by the Independence Day holiday in the United States, euro zone government bond yields were largely flat. Elsewhere, China is putting pressure on the European Union to issue a strong joint statement against US President Donald Trump's trade policies at a summit later this month but is facing resistance, European officials said. Meanwhile, euro zone business activity nudged up slightly faster than previously thought last month, surveys showed. But with companies at their gloomiest since late 2016, a more robust rebound seemed unlikely. — Reuters

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Business

For the first time in Mideast, Kuwait sees opening of Hafele Design Studio



Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Extending to its leadership and success in the industry All Wood Design - a subsidiary of Mohamed Al Mahmoud Company signs an agreement with a well-reputed German company Hafele. This agreement was established to create a joint design studio between All Wood Design Studio and Hafele. This ultimate partnership will enable All Wood Design to offer its customers with an enhanced custom experience for all sorts of wood works. Their partnership was celebrated during the grand opening of Hafele Design Studio that took place on July 3rd, 2018. The showroom was specifically designed to highlight All Wood Design's modern and exceptional products operated by Hafele technical solutions.

Commenting on this partnership is Eng. Mohamed Al Mahmoud, General Manager of Mohamed Al Mahmoud Company: "We are pleased to announce that Hafele has confidently chosen us as a partner to open the first in the Middle East Hafele Design Studio being introduced here in Kuwait. Through this joint showroom we are offering customers with a wide range of cabinets, doors and furniture enabling customers a peace of mind as it is an internationally designed and developed technology."

Speaking on behalf of Hafele is its Regional Manager, Younis Saeed: "We have established a well-reputed name in the international marketplace as we were able to create local



market confidence while using our products. Today, we begin a new journey with All Wood Design that is a subsidiary of Mohamed Al Mahmoud Company, as we have come to realize that they share our same vision and strategy of offering customers sophistication in furniture design while assimilating high quality; hence our integration comes about to establish for the first time in the Middle East here in Kuwait Hafele's Design Studio."



Mohamed Al Mahmoud Group is one of the prominent companies in Kuwait that manufacture metal and wooden doors and all its accessories and supplies. It successfully established its name in the local market gaining market confidence, and thus making itself the preferred company of choice for many leading projects in Kuwait such as individual and corporate clients. The Group's most renown projects include: Kuwait Central Bank, Al Hamra Tower, Rotana Al

Manshar Hotel, Al Farwaniya Hospital, and Al Asima Tower.

The Group owns a factory to manufacture wood works to suit any client's needs, that is well equipped with the latest industrial technology of equipment and machinery. The factory is run by professional and high-level engineers and technicians. The plants production capacity is able to produce more than 150 finished doors per day. The engineering team within the factory is committed to adhere to the highest standards of quality and accuracy of production to produce the final desired product, which provides customers with the highest levels of satisfaction of the quality. For more information about All Wood Design please follow @AllWooddesign on instagram to keep update with their latest innovations.

Hafele is one of the world's leading door and furniture accessories manufacturers, as it has international market experience of a 100 years. The company employs more than 7,600 employees in various productive and engineering sectors, and includes agents in 37 other centers around the world. The company produces a wide array of high quality and durable accessories including sling hinges, bolt fasteners, drawer rails, regular and electronic locks, office tables and supports, drawer doors, cabinets and lighted shelves, and other small engineering pieces and accessories for doors and furniture.

KFH: Int'l toll free service in 6 countries

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) offers "International Toll Free Service" to its customers in 6 countries outside Kuwait (USA, UK, Canada and France, in addition to Turkey and Germany) without any additional fees. This comes as part of the bank's strategy of delivering superior customer service, supporting the bank's continuing efforts to improve innovation and reinforcing the network of its banking services. To use this service and reach KFH's Allo Baitak Call Center on radio station Kuwait Pulse (88.8 FM) 1803333, customers can call on the following toll free numbers.

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Turkey	908503902170+

(Local tariff charges may be applied in Turkey by local Turkish telecoms companies when calling this number)

Calls from those numbers have priority to pick up from the Call Center agents. This service in conjunction with the travel season, enabling KFH's customers to contact the KFH Call Center from the mentioned countries at any time of the day or night, adding to the customers' peace of mind in knowing that their bank is a local phone call away, wherever they are.

Meshal Al Obaid, Executive Manager - Direct Channels, explained, "We pride ourselves in delivering the best and highest in service quality standards, and this new addition to our services allows us to further enhance these standards at the Call Center. It also has the added benefit of building trust with KFH customers by making it easy for them to contact the Call Center." KFH is continually striving to deliver the best and most convenient in banking technology, in efforts to meet customers' aspirations.



Meshal Al Obaid

Burgan Bank offers chance to attend screening of 'Hotel Transylvania 3'

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday its latest exclusive offer with Grand Cinemas, to invite its 'BuBa' Kids customers to watch 'Hotel Transylvania 3 - A Monster Vacation' movie at Grand Cinemas- Al Hamra Luxury Centre, on Thursday 12th of July, 2018 for free at 5:30pm and 7:30pm. Each BuBa customer will be entitled to two free tickets. To avail those tickets, customers need to visit the box office at Al Hamra Luxury Centre starting from today.

This offer comes as part of the bank's wide and exclusive range of valuable privileges and benefits that are specially designated for its BuBa customers. Burgan Bank strives to offer its customer-base with best-in-class services along with benefits that suits their needs, and today's announcement is a clear indication of that.



Customers are among the bank's main priorities and by partnering with Grand Cinemas, Kuwait's newest and most luxurious movie theater; the bank continues to reinforce its position as a leading financial institution that meets its individual customer aspirations. This

step forward marks a new era for Burgan Bank and Grand Cinemas conjoint customer service, which falls in the strategies of both firms to keep pioneering the entertainment industry and upgrading their clientele's service to the highest of levels.

GBK announces Al Danah's second quarterly winner

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced Hashem Hasan Abu Al Qasem Hashem as the winner of its second quarterly Al Danah draw, taking home a cash prize of KD 250,000. The announcement was aired live on Wednesday 27th June 2018, at the 'Diwaniyat Al Yaqout & Al Ansari' program on radio station Kuwait Pulse (88.8 FM)

Gulf Bank's Al Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD200 to open an account, and the same amount must be maintained to be eligible

for the upcoming Al Danah draws. If the account balance falls below KD200 at any given time, a KD2 charge will be made monthly to the account until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and deposit money will enter the daily draw within two days.

To take part in the Al Danah 2018 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw. Gulf Bank encourages its customers to increase their chances of winning with Al Danah by depositing more money into their

Gulf Bank account using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking.

Al Danah also offers a number of unique services including the Al Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which helps account holders deposit their money at their convenience, as well as the Al Danah calculator to help customers estimate their chances of becoming an Al Danah winner. Gulf Bank's Al Danah third quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 will be held on 26 September 2018, and the final Al Danah draw for KD 1 million - the Guinness World Record acclaimed largest prize linked to a bank account in the world - will be held on 10 January 2019, when the Al Danah millionaire will be announced.



Hashem Hasan Abu Al Qasem Hashem receives his prize from Gulf Bank management.

Technology

ZTE given temporary reprieve from US; removes more execs

On track to have supplier ban lifted

NEW YORK/HONG KONG: China's embattled ZTE Corp has received a temporary reprieve from the US government to conduct business needed to maintain existing networks and equipment as it works toward the lifting of a US supplier ban. ZTE, which makes smartphones and networking gear, was forced to cease major operations in April after the United States slapped it with a supplier ban, saying it broke an agreement to discipline executives who conspired to evade US sanctions on Iran and North Korea.

The authorization seen by Reuters from the US Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Services runs from July 2 until Aug 1. It allows China's No 2 telecommunications equipment maker to continue operating existing networks and equipment and provide handset customer support for contracts signed before April 15. It also permits limited transfer of funds to or from ZTE.

On Tuesday, ZTE also announced the departure of 1 senior executive in a stock exchange filing, while a source who saw an internal memo told Reuters seven others were removed. As part of its settlement agreement reached in June with US authorities, ZTE had promised to radically overhaul its management. The company also agreed to pay a \$1 billion penalty and put \$400 million in an escrow account as part of the deal to resume business with US suppliers - which provide almost a third of the components used in ZTE's equipment.

Sensitive matter

ZTE said in exchange filings late on Tuesday that Xu Weiyan, a shareholders' representative supervisor in the company's supervisory committee, has resigned due to personal commitments with immediate effect and no

longer holds any position in the company. An insider source told Reuters a memo was sent out on Tuesday announcing the removal of seven other executives, without providing a reason. They included vice presidents Wang Keyou, Xie Jiepeng and Ma Jie, who were in charge of the legal, finance and supply chain departments, respectively.

Reuters could not immediately contact them for comment. The source declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of the matter. As part of the deal to lift the supplier ban, ZTE had agreed to remove all members of its leadership at or above the senior vice president level, along with any executives associated with the wrongdoing within 30 days.

It is not immediately clear whether the eight departures on Tuesday were related to ZTE's compliance violation. ZTE announced a new board last week in a radical management shakeup. Li Zixue was appointed the new chairman while the previous board led by Chairman Yin Yimin resigned with immediate effect.

Despite the agreement reached almost a month ago, the ban is yet to be lifted amid strong opposition among some US politicians. ZTE has made the \$1 billion payment but has yet to deposit the \$400 million in escrow, according to sources.

The uncertainty over the ban amid intensifying US-China trade tensions has hammered ZTE shares, which have cratered around 60 percent since trading resumed last month following a two-month hiatus, wiping out more than \$11 billion of the company's market valuation.

ZTE's Hong Kong shares were down 0.5 percent yesterday, while its Shenzhen shares were up more than 4 percent. Jefferies on Monday upgraded ZTE to a "buy"



BEIJING: In this file photo taken on May 2, 2018 the ZTE logo is seen on a building. — AFP

rating from "underperform". Its analyst, Edison Lee, said in a note on Tuesday that the temporary reprieve was "a very positive indication that ZTE is on track to a full lifting

of the export ban". A representative for ZTE declined to comment. The US Department of Commerce did not respond to requests for comment. — Reuters

Facebook bug unblocks unwanted connections

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook said it is notifying more than 800,000 users that a software bug temporarily unblocked people at the social network and its Messenger service. The glitch active between May 29 and June 5 has been fixed, according to Facebook, which has been striving to regain trust in the aftermath of a Cambridge Analytica data privacy scandal.

"We know that the ability to block someone is important," Facebook chief privacy officer Erin Egan said in a blog post. "We'd like to apologize and explain what happened." Blocking someone on Facebook prevents them from seeing posts in a blocker's profile; connecting as a friend, or starting Messenger conversations. Blocking someone also automatically "unfriends" the person. "There are many reasons why

people block another person on Facebook," Egan said.

"Their relationship may have changed or they may want to take a break from someone posting content they find annoying." People are blocked for harsher reasons, such as harassment or bullying, Egan added. The software bug did not restore any severed friend connections at the social network, but someone who was blocked could have been able to reach out to a blocker on Messenger, according to Facebook. "While someone who was unblocked could not see content shared with friends, they could have seen things posted to a wider audience," Egan said of the glitch.

The vast majority of the more than 800,000 people affected by the bug had only one person they had blocked be temporarily unblocked, according to Facebook. People affected by the bug will get notifications encouraging them to check their blocked lists. Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg earlier this year was grilled by the European Parliament and the US Congress about a massive breach of users' personal data in the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Facebook admitted that up to 87 million users may have had their data hijacked by British consultancy Cambridge Analytica, which worked for US President Donald Trump during his 2016 campaign. — AFP



MANCHESTER: In this file photo taken on March 22, 2018, a computer screen displays logos associated with the social networking site Facebook. — AFP

Ugandan netizens unite against social media tax

KAMPALA: Politicians, clerics, feminists and others have formed a broad coalition of Ugandans calling Tuesday for an end to a social media tax the government hopes will raise revenue and silence "gossip". On Sunday Uganda's communications regulator blocked access to social media including WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter, as well as dating sites Tinder and Grindr, unless users pay a 200-shilling (\$0.05, 0.04 euro) daily tax. The outcry was immediate.

"I was in a village on Sunday when the tax started and people were outraged," said Siraje Nsambu, a spokesman for the Tabliq Muslim sect. "Even a poor boy will [now have to] strive hard to buy a Chinese mobile phone and get online," he said. Feminist writer and activist Edna Ninsiima slammed the "insane" tax. "It's trampling freedom of expression and infringing our rights," she told AFP.

Mobile internet users now have to input a telephone code to pay the tax before they are able to access most social media sites, although implementation has proved patchy with some blocked services still available. Some have turned to virtual private networks (VPNs) to disguise their location and avoid the levy, a trick learned during elections two years ago when the government tried to shut down social media.

Finance minister David Bahati said Tuesday the tax will help pay for "the development of the country" and ordered the communications regulator to stop Ugandans using VPNs, though it is unclear how this directive can be carried out. President Yoweri Museveni-an avid Twitter user with 855,000 followers-urged the imposition of the tax earlier this year, to put an end to "gossip". Opponents have given these justifications short shrift. "The whole idea of the tax is to curtail social media," said singer and parliamentarian Bobi Wine-real name Robert Kyagulanyi-whose election last year was fuelled by social media and who wants the tax abolished. — AFP



BEIJING: A boy sits in a Tesla car during a visit at Tesla showroom. — AFP

Tesla Model 3 production leader leaves company

SAN FRANCISCO: Tesla on Monday confirmed that the head of Model 3 production, who went on leave after chief executive Elon Musk took over his duties, will not be returning. The departure of engineering senior vice president Doug Field came as California-based Tesla appeared to have finally hit a self-imposed goal of cranking out 5,000 Model 3 electric cars in a week. Tesla co-founder Musk fired off a Twitter post over the weekend saying "7,000 cars, 7 days."

In a note to investors on Monday, Analyst Trip Chowdhry of Global Equities said that in the preceding week, Tesla produced 5,000 of its Model 3 cars, along with a combined total of 2,000 Model S and Model X vehicles. Tesla has been under pressure to increase production to show it can operate profitably and at the kind of scale needed to be considered a major auto company. Musk has been managing the Tesla production line, which has been rejiggered to pump out cars faster.

Field will not be returning to the company, according to Tesla. "After almost five years at Tesla, Doug Field is moving on," a company spokesman told AFP. "We'd like to thank Doug for his hard work over the years and for everything he has done for Tesla." Tesla announced in June that it was cutting nine percent of its workforce to enhance profitability, but said the move would not affect an ambitious production ramp-up of its Model 3 sedan.

The job cuts are part of a company-wide restructuring to address excess staff in some areas due to the company's speedy growth. Musk said in an email to employees. The cuts concern salaried staff but not production workers and will not affect Model 3 output targets, said Musk, who characterized the downsizing as an acknowledgement of the need to focus more on costs.

"Given that Tesla has never made an annual profit in the almost 15 years since we have existed, profit is obviously not what motivates us," Musk said in the message. "What drives us is our mission to accelerate the world's transition to sustainable, clean energy, but we will never achieve that mission unless we eventually demonstrate that we can be sustainably profitable." Shares of Tesla closed the formal trading day down 2.3 percent to \$335.07 but regained some of that ground in after-market trades. — AFP

China's Baidu shows its self-driving buses

BEIJING: China's internet giant Baidu announced yesterday it had begun mass producing the country's first autonomous mini-bus, as the firm prepares to roll them out in tourist spots and airports. CEO Robin Li watched the 100th vehicle roll off a production line of a factory in the southeastern city of Xiamen.

"2018 marks the first year of commercialization for autonomous driving. From the mass production of Apolong, we can truly see that autonomous driving is making great strides-taking the industry from zero to one," said the CEO. The 14-seater Apolong, about one-third of the size of a normal bus, has no steering wheel, driver's seat, accelerator or brake. Co-produced by Baidu and Chinese bus manufacturer King Long, they will soon be pressed into commercial use in enclosed areas such as tourist areas and airports in several cities

including Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and the country's new megacity Xiong'an.

Early next year, they are set to enter Japan's self-driving market as shuttle buses at nuclear power stations or in Tokyo to ferry around elderly people in local communities. The vehicles have the "fourth level" of automation as defined by the Society of Automotive Engineers, meaning they can operate within an enclosed location without human intervention.

This is one short of the highest level, where vehicles can operate anywhere on the road. "I took a self-driving car to come to the developer conference last year, and ended up getting a ticket at (Beijing's) fifth ring road," Li quipped. Baidu, often referred to as China's Google, operates the country's leading search engine and also invests heavily in services ranging from online payments to connected devices and artificial intelligence. "In the past, China exported cheap commodities to the world. In the future, China will export AI technology to the world," Li said at the firm's annual AI developer conference. He also announced a new AI chip called Kunlun at the conference, which can support a wide range of AI applications including voice recognition, natural language processing and autonomous driving. — AFP



SHANGHAI: This file picture taken on June 13, 2018 shows an Apolong self-driving mini bus by King Long exhibited at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) Asia. — AFP

China court 'bans sales' of chips from US firm Micron

SHANGHAI: A Chinese technology firm embroiled in a patent dispute with US chip giant Micron said yesterday that a court had ruled in its favor and ordered an immediate halt of several Micron products in China. According to the state-owned Fujian Jinhua Integrated Circuit Co, a court in the southeastern city of Fuzhou has ruled that Micron must stop sales of more than a dozen solid-state drives, memory sticks and chips. The court ruling was not immediately available.

A Taiwanese partner of Jinhua, United Microelectronics Corporation (UMC), issued a similar statement, saying the court had issued a preliminary injunction against 26 Micron products. The case comes amid increasing trade friction between the world's top two economies, with billions of dollars in fresh trade tariffs due to come into force on Friday.

Earlier this week, US authorities blocked a seven-year application from China Mobile to enter the domestic market, citing national security concerns. Micron is the world's fourth-biggest semiconductor supplier by sales revenue following South Korean firms Samsung and SK Hynix and US chip giant Intel. More than half of its net sales come from China, the Idaho-based firm said in its 2017 earnings report.

It said in June the case could "have a material adverse effect" on its business, requiring changes to its China operation. China established Jinhua in February 2016 in a bid to make its own home-produced chips, with the firm investing 37 billion yuan that year to build a production line with technology support from UMC. Jinhua said Micron's "unbridled behavior" had caused "irreparable damage" to the firm and it will keep monitoring any other products that used Micron's chips.

Semiconductors are among China's biggest imports, rivaling oil, and have become a stark reminder of its dependence on US technology. — AFP

Health

Shortage of vets spells misery for Karachi zoo animals

KARACHI: A white African lioness stares blankly at the spectators crowded outside her small, steel-barred cage, her extraordinary coat dotted with numerous spots, the result of a fungal skin disease that has marred her once pristine fur. The ailment is curable — or, rather, it should be. But at the Karachi Zoological Garden there are not enough vets to give proper treatment to its more than 850 animals, many held in cages built over a century ago.

"Here we have a mere two veterinarians and three paramedics. They are not at all sufficient," said the zoo's chief, Mansoor Ahmed Qazi. Management have been pushing the city council to approve a third veterinary position for the zoo's population, including lions, tigers, elephants, chimpanzees, birds and reptiles. But the council has usually focused more on sewage, roads, and garbage removal in the chaotic port megacity of some 20 million people, which until recently had been rocked by years of political and ethnic violence.

"This is unfortunate, that the zoo is heavily understaffed and thus not able to take good care of the animals," said Humaira Ayesha, an expert from the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF) in Karachi. Unfortunately the problem is not limited to Karachi. Islamabad's zoo has long been criticized for its treatment of its lone elephant, Kaavan, which became the

subject of a high-profile rights campaign backed by music icon Cher in 2016 after it emerged the animal was being kept in chains.

And the zoo in northwestern Peshawar, which opened in February, has admitted that 30 animals so far have died while being transferred or in quarantine, including three rare snow leopard cubs. "Peshawar Zoo is very understaffed, and those we have are untrained," spokesman Naimat Khan said. There is little legislation in Pakistan to help support animal welfare. The most recent law on the books addressing animal cruelty dates from 1890. Such little legal recourse "makes it difficult for the country to improve animal welfare standards in its zoos", Ayesha of the WWF said.

'Animals have emotions'

At the Karachi Zoological Gardens, shops have encroached on the zoo property, still dotted with centuries-old tamarind, banyan and ficus trees. "Stones and garbage from the shops are thrown into the animal enclosures. That amounts to cruelty," Faheem Zaman, a former chief of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, says. Visitors also throw things into the animals' cages.

An official recalled that a spectator once threw a handkerchief knotted with a steel wire towards an ostrich, which gulped it down. "The long neck of the

ostrich was badly damaged and we had to operate," says Abida Raees, a zoologist and deputy chief of the zoo. At least one young chimpanzee, Raju, has been known to unwrap juice boxes thrown to him by visitors and drink from the plastic straw. Raees said the zoo appealed to visitors not to feed animals but an AFP reporter could see no such signs on display. However efforts are finally being made to revamp the northwest portion of the facility to make it more "humane and animal friendly", replacing the enclosures with large wet and dry ones that are far closer to the animals' natural habitat.

Zain Mustafa, a consultant to the government, and his team surveyed and studied eight zoos in different countries including the United States, Germany, Singapore, and India, drawing from what they saw to plan the renovations in Karachi. Work appears to be going on in fits and starts, with little chance of being completed by the 2019 deadline, but he hopes the new enclosures when finally complete will provide a more suitable home for the animals. "The old Victorian concepts of keeping wild animals for exhibition, as a toy, or amusement is over now," said Mustafa. "Studies tell us that the animals have emotions, they feel loneliness and depression if kept in captivity and an unnatural environment." —AFP



KARACHI: File photo shows a lion eats meat in a cage. —AFP

CLINIC

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Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

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Academic Certificates – Training

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What's On

District 20 - Toastmasters celebrates new year's beginning



Winds of change blow at District 20 of the Toastmasters fraternity as the reigning District Officers pass the baton to the incoming team. The 1st of July marks the advent of a new term (2018-19), and of a new executive committee which will be headed by District Director DTM Khurram Salman.

The new team has some big shoes to fill as the reigning committee spearheaded by Immediate Past District Director DTM Mohammad Makhoul put up a spectacular term filled with exciting events such as open houses, debates, contests, blood donation camps etc. The latest was the Executive Committee Training which was held on the 22nd of June, at The Palms Beach Hotel, Kuwait. The training was focused on the importance of team work, education program, commitment to the cause and recognition of the deserved. "The most important take back message was the significance of not just learning, but also passing on that learning," said one of the trainers.

Toastmasters International is a non-profit organization that is a world leader in communication and leadership develop-



ment. Headquartered at Colorado, USA, it aims to build a "community of learners" and nurture the innate leadership skills in its members through a systematic way.

District 20 comprises of approximately 129 clubs with more than 2,500 members that have 7 Divisions and 30 Areas spread over Kuwait and Bahrain. Each club meets

at a particular location, and at a specific time. Anyone with the willingness to learn and grow can attend the meetings as a guest with no entry fee. These clubs oper-

ate in English, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil and even as Bilingual clubs. To monitor and regulate program quality while maintaining the club growth is a tremendous feat, and District 20 is equipped with DTM Wafaa Salman and DTM Mohamed Saleem to take on those challenges, supported by TM Abdulla Bu Hamed for Arabic Club Affairs. For the new term, Naseema Khan is in charge of Public Relations, TM Venkata Ramana Rao will manage the funds, TM Mary Sharon will head the administration department, while TM Anil Menon will take on the challenge of logistics.

Toastmasters is an experience of a life time. Every meeting is a gold mine of opportunities, and every speech is a step taken toward confidence and self-development. Through that self-development, one finds their way towards leadership. The journey of every leader in the toastmaster's fraternity began with a single speech. The quality of the reigning District Officers are a testament to the vision of Toastmasters International. District 20 wishes their new leaders grand success in their pursuit to inspire and motivate budding leaders and communicators.



Many happy returns of the day to Zaid. Congratulations and best wishes from father Ahmad Aleem, Um Zaid and uncle. Zaid is celebrating his 2nd birthday today.

SACGC sponsored Kuwaiti inventor

Sabah Al-Ahmed Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) recently sponsored inventor Asma Al-Ateeq's participation in the International Women's Invention Exposition 2018, which was recently held in South Korea.

Ateeq presented her e-classification device, which is a unique device that electronically classifies waste to recycle them and help protect the environment. In this regard, Mahmoud Al-Zaman, the head of the inventions development department at SACGC, said that this sponsorship came



as part of the center's plan to support Kuwaiti inventors and market their inventions. He also noted that Ateeq won the Semi Grand prize.



KFH honors top high school students



Kuwait Finance House (KFH) recently honored top high school graduates for the academic year 2017-2018. KFH Group CEO Mazen Al-Nahedh expressed pride in the achievements of the outstanding students and their families. He said that KFH is a pioneer in the private

sector in terms of employing and training national labor, as many Kuwaitis are currently being employed at the bank. Meanwhile, Education Ministry's Undersecretary Dr Haitham Al-Athari appreciated the KFH's role in supporting the educational process and students' activities.

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JULY 5, 2018



A model presents a creation by Elie Saab during the 2018-2019 Fall/Winter Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris yesterday. — AFP

MARVEL'S NEWEST STAR ON FEMALE VILLAINY, KARAOKE WITH SPIELBERG

When Hannah John-Kamen learned she was to be Marvel's next supervillain, she let out a yelp, hung up the phone and cranked up "Do My Thang," Miley Cyrus's empowering paean to self-determination. "Wrecking Ball" might have been a better fit, given the actress's shock-and-awe introduction in "Ant-Man and the Wasp" as Ghost, an ethereal entity who passes through walls but packs a vicious punch. "I was back in London and I got the call, and it was all my agents together. I remember I literally just screamed. I was in my apartment, I was walking around, going, 'Oh my God, oh my God!'" the 28-year-old Briton recalls. "I was so excited. And then I just blasted out Miley Cyrus's song 'Do My Thang.' I don't know why, it was just on my playlist, and I blasted that out and just danced."

In Hollywood, a role in a Marvel movie that lasts until the end credits can be a key to the kingdom, offering follow-up appearances in spin-off movies and all manner of "Avengers" mashups. John-Kamen—who has credits in "Game of Thrones" and "Black Mirror" as well as parts in "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," "Tomb Raider" and "Ready Player One"—is ready for superstardom.

'Movie moment'

The daughter of a Nigerian forensic scientist and Norwegian former fashion model from northeastern England, she still pinches herself when she thinks about working with Steven Spielberg. She describes taking direction from the icon on the spring blockbuster "Ready Player One," in which she played sinister gamer gang leader F'Nale Zandor, as "absolutely amazing." "There's no feeling like when you've done a take and he's so happy and he'd go, 'Now that's a movie moment!' And you've got that coming from Spielberg," she told AFP in an interview in Pasadena, southern California. "I mean, it's nuts. We would sing show tunes together. We'd sing 'Singin' in the Rain,'



we'd sing 'Guys and Dolls.' In between takes, we'd sit. Sometimes we'd get the lyrics printed and we'd just sing."

Spielberg, according to John-Kamen, has a "wonderful voice" and a joy about him that makes his movie set a "fun playground that you get to go in and play." "Ant-Man and the Wasp," which hits US theaters tomorrow, is the sequel to 2015's "Ant-Man," the 20th release in Disney's Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), and the first to feature a woman in the title role. Starring Paul Rudd and Evangeline Lilly, it is also only the second MCU film with a female principle adversary, after Cate Blanchett's Hela in "Thor Ragnarok" (2017).

John-Kamen's Ava/Ghost—an anti-capitalist saboteur turned supervillain in the comics—acquires her mysterious powers in a lab accident that makes her cells intangible.

"It's a male character in the comics... but to be the first person to take it off the page and actually give her life, it was an honor," John-Kamen said.

High stakes

The actress says it was important not to play Ghost as a traditional villain—no dastardly plans for taking over the planet—instead giving a nuanced performance that emphasizes her tragedy. "I'm doing this for a reason, as an objective. The stakes are high. I don't think you just wake up in the morning and go, 'Ha ha! World domination—that sounds fun!'" the actress said. "So I definitely approached that with the mind of going, 'Okay she's the good guy and everyone else can go to hell.'" Executive producer Stephen Broussard said Marvel was looking for someone less recognizable and was taken with John-Kamen's "intensity, her vulnerability and with her sense of humor."

Her previous training as a dancer coupled with the desire to fully flesh out Ghost's threadbare backstory made her perfect for the role, he added. As is Marvel's custom, John-Kamen was initially told very little about the part but enjoyed "every single minute" of the audition process, which eventually took her to Atlanta to meet director Peyton Reed. "You think with an audition you'd be like, 'Oh my gosh, I was so nervous. Oh my goodness, I was shaking.' Of course, there's a high anxiety but I remember just getting in there and going, 'Oh, okay—I feel really relaxed,'" she recalled. "I'm really excited about this material and what we can do, and I'm excited to show you what I've come up with." — AFP

Louvre sets up Beyonce and Jay-Z art tour

The Louvre has dedicated a new art tour to Beyonce and Jay-Z after pop's biggest power couple shot the video for their latest hit in the Paris museum. The R'n'B stars' hit song "Apeshit"—which used some of the museum's greatest masterpieces as backdrops—has been viewed 56 million times on YouTube alone since it was released a fortnight ago. Now the Louvre, which already has a tour based on the US rapper will.i.am's hit "Smile Mona Lisa", has created another based on the Carters' night in the museum.

It follows the video through 17 paintings and sculptures which feature in the six-minute clip, going from the monumental white Greek marble "Nike of Samothrace" to Marie Benoist's "Portrait of a Negress". The choice of works which they used or posed in front of has been taken as a celebration of black bodies and empowerment in an institution which was built on the spoils of conquest and imperialism. "Portrait of a Negress" was painted in 1800, six years after revolutionary France had abolished slavery in its Caribbean colonies only for Napoleon to reinstate it two years later.

But perhaps the most striking image is of Beyonce at the center of a line of black dancers in front of David's "The Coronation of Napoleon I and the Crowning of the Empress Josephine" singing, "I can't believe we made it." The song is part of their surprise joint album, "Everything is Love"—their first—which they released under their real family name, The Carters.

Sonic black power manifesto

It is a celebration of African-American identity and their marriage, whose problems and Jay-Z's infidelity Beyonce detailed in her 2016 album "Lemonade". The guide describes in detail each artwork in the video but stops short of explaining what it is used to signify in the video. But Professor James Smalls, of the University of Maryland, described the video—directed by Ricky Saiz, who also made the Beyonce clip "Yonce"—as "arresting... I would even go so far as to say brilliant."

He argued that it "appropriates, exploits, and reinterprets Western paintings and sculptures as a way to chart and celebrate the Carters' success, and black bodies in an artistic canon inextricably linked to histories of colonialism." "The video is an unapologetic visual and sonic manifesto about spaces, power, and control," he wrote in Frieze magazine. "It is all about bodies—an orchestrated contrast of energetically writhing and animated black physiques set against frozen white forms of the past." The Louvre has refused to say how much the couple paid to shoot their video in front of the "Mona Lisa", the "Venus de Milo" and Gericault's "The Raft of the Medusa", in which Jay-Z poses looking up at the muscled black hero at the apex of the canvas. — AFP

Giant penguin and dancing hare animate London park art fair

Visitors to London's Regents Park this summer will be met with the unusual sight of a giant penguin and a dancing hare as part of an annual sculpture fair. For the second year, Frieze Sculpture will take over the famous park's English Gardens for three months, showcasing the work of 25 international artists, free of charge. Curator Clare Lilley, from the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, said the event would allow the public to experience "a snapshot of the fantastic imagination of artists and variety of sculpture being made today".

The "celebration of sculpture", which opened yesterday, brings together a diverse roster of artists, including South Korea's Kimsooja, India's Bharti Kher and Britain's Larry Achompong. "There is a geographic spread: the artists come from South Africa, South Korea, Scandinavia, Europe and the United States," Lilley told AFP. "In terms of age too, there is a nice span, since Haroon Gunn-Salie,

from South Africa, is 29, whereas John Baldessari, from the United States, is 87. "Also, there are a lot of female artists this year, that is important for us," she added. "Optic Labyrinth" by British artist Conrad Shawcross comprises a four-meter (13-foot) high stainless steel installation with holes for visitors to walk through.

"At first, one sees it as minimalist, industrial, austere but when you go around, the sun goes through and it becomes alive, decorative and generous," he explained. More than five million people visited last year's inaugural event, which has two sister events—Frieze London, dedicated to contemporary art, and Frieze Masters, specializing in art from the ancient era and Old Masters to the late 20th century. — AFP



A member of staff poses with 'Treadpad B - Pair 1' (right) and 'Treadpad B - Pair 2' (left) by British artist-engineer James Capper in Regents Park London on July 3, 2018 as part of the Frieze Sculpture exhibition. — AFP



Models present creations by Alexis Mabille at the end of the 2018-2019 Fall/Winter Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP photos



Penelope Cruz

to be face of Chanel



Chanel has announced that Academy Award-winning actress Penelope Cruz is to become the newest face of the house. The 44-year-old Spanish star stunned in a pale tweed mini dress and a white beret at Chanel's couture show Tuesday. Cruz, who is no stranger to the industry and who has been the face of Spanish brand Loewe, will officially become Chanel fashion ambassador and front the 2018-19 resort collection campaign. The photography was shot by designer Lagerfeld himself. Here are some highlights from Tuesday and Wednesday's collections.

Alexis Mabille's artistry

It was a mixed couture bag for Alexis Mabille. The French designer stumbled at the start of his collection with several sheer lace looks that lacked originality. But later into the 47-piece display inside the chic Salle Pleyel concert hall he really found his mojo. Off-kilter floor-length trapeze gowns with stripes were followed by dresses that opened up or fanned out dramatically at the chest - the focal point of his best designs. A series of tiered tulle gowns with extreme-cinched waists - one in dark vanilla and another where colors subtly blended from azure-white to butter - were the work of a true artist.



Lifestyle | Fashion

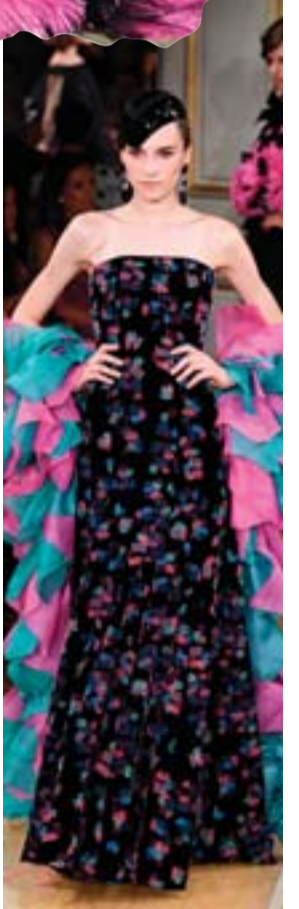
Tina Turner steps out at Armani

Music icon Tina Turner was among the notables at the Giorgio Armani Prive display inside the resplendent Italian Embassy in Paris' chic Left Bank. The Armani Prive collection called for two shows, each comprising some 96 looks, and were followed by cocktails, making the event a serious contender (along with Chanel) for the most time-consuming one on the couture calendar. A dominant theme in the varied show was the strong, rounded shoulder.

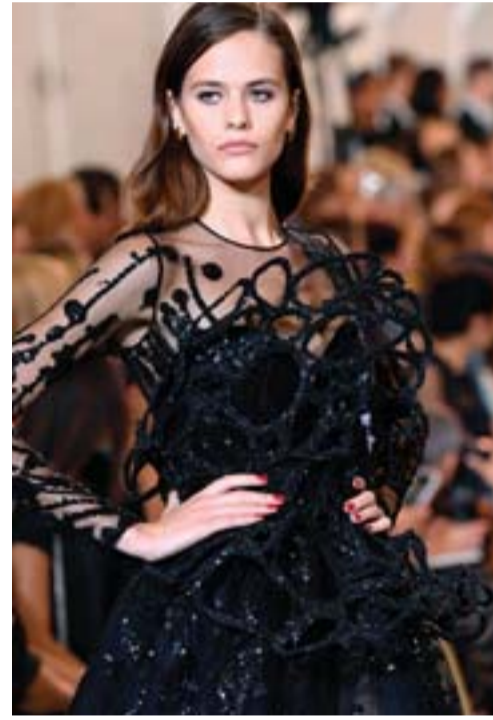
The silhouette appeared on a champagne lame silk crepe pantsuit and a black and white checked jacquard jacket, both designed as daywear. For evening, the gowns dazzled and amused in equal measure - showing that at 83, Giorgio Armani has not lost his humor.

A motif of crossed arms in crystal embroidering - perhaps mimicking the fashion press' critical attitude - adorned one black silk velvet dress. Models poised their arms on a hip, a send up of the embroidery that provoked wry smiles among fashion insiders. Armani really went over the top toward the end with a 70-centimeter (27.5-inch) headpiece that looked a little like a bath sponge in pink and blue. Sometimes, really, less is more. — AP

Models present creations by Giorgio Armani at the end of the 2018-2019 Fall/Winter Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.



Lifestyle | Fashion



Models present creations by Elie Saab at the end of the 2018-2019 Fall/Winter Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.





KARANGASEM, Indonesia: A tourist takes a selfie with his phone as a plume of fresh ash is released by Mount Agung volcano at the Kubu subdistrict in Karangasem Regency on Indonesia's resort island of Bali yesterday. — AFP

HK court grants UK lesbian 'right to spousal visa'

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's top court ruled yesterday that a British lesbian should be granted a spousal visa in a landmark judgment that could open the door for expatriate same-sex partners to move to the Chinese-ruled city. The British woman, who requested to be identified only as QT in court, sued the director of immigration in 2014 after she was denied a spousal visa that would have granted her resident status and allowed her to work without the need for a separate visa.

The woman and her partner, a dual British and South African national identified only as SS and who was offered work in Hong Kong, had entered into a civil partnership in Britain. QT did not appear in court. "Although I cannot be with you in person today, that does not diminish the joy I feel, knowing that Hong Kong's highest court has upheld my right, as a lesbian woman, to be treated equally by the Hong Kong government," QT said in a statement. She plans to live in Hong Kong, instead of flying back and forth to Britain as she has been doing for years.

"I won't feel like a second citizen anymore and I can have the basic rights like anyone else, from as simple as having a

library card to having healthcare," she told reporters by phone. The unanimous ruling by five judges, upholding a lower court's decision, brings to an end the case involving rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, which won support from more than 30 global banks and law firms, including Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley. "This ruling strengthens Hong Kong's ability to attract global talent and its competitiveness as Asia's pre-eminent global centre for commerce," the companies said in a statement.

The decision goes beyond immigration and effectively recognizes the rights of local and foreign same-sex couples who legally entered civil partnerships abroad, said the British woman's lawyer, Michael Vidler. "We never argued this case is about same-sex marriage for Hong Kong, but we hope this case will pave the way for exactly that," he said outside the Court of Final Appeal. Hong Kong's Immigration Department said it respected the ruling. "We are studying the judgment carefully and shall seek legal advice as necessary before deciding the way forward," it said.

Hong Kong could become the first Asian jurisdiction to officially grant dependent visas to same-sex partners, even though it already makes some exceptions to diplomats. Foreign diplomats in mainland China also say the Chinese government has been issuing de facto spousal visas to same-sex partners in recent years. Although Taiwan set a precedent in Asia last year when its constitutional court ruled that same-sex couples have the right to legally marry, gay marriage has not been legalized yet. — AFP

UAE delays launch of Arab World's first nuke reactor

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates said yesterday that its first nuclear reactor would come online in late 2019 or early 2020, further delaying the launch of the Arab World's first atomic power station. Construction of the first of four reactors at the \$20 billion (17 billion euro) Barakah plant has been completed ahead of "operation by the end of 2019 (or) early 2020," Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation said, quoted by the state-run WAM news agency.

The first reactor had been due to come online last

year, but the launch was initially delayed until 2018 to make time for regulatory approvals and complete safety checks. No reason was immediately given for the latest postponement. State-owned ENEC said a second reactor was 93 percent complete, a third is 83 percent finished and the fourth was 72 percent complete.

The nuclear plant west of Abu Dhabi is being built by a consortium led by the Korea Electric Power Corporation. When fully operational, the four reactors should produce 5,600 megawatts of electricity, around 25 percent of the UAE's needs, according to the energy ministry. Nuclear and renewables are targeted to contribute around 27 percent of the UAE's electricity by 2021. The UAE says it wants 50 percent of its energy to be generated by clean sources by 2050. Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude oil exporter, plans to build up to 16 nuclear reactors, but the projects have yet to materialize. — AFP

WhatsApp 'horrified'...

Continued from Page 1

people's safety" and had taken steps to combat the scourge of fake news and hoaxes. "We're horrified by these terrible acts of violence and wanted to respond quickly to the very important issues you have raised," WhatsApp said in the letter seen by AFP. The company said it was working with Indian researchers to better understand the problem and had introduced changes it said would reduce the spread of unwanted messages.

It would also soon launch a new label in India to help users identify messages that had been forwarded as opposed to written by someone they know. Rumours

on WhatsApp about child kidnappers saw eight men killed in eastern India last year but the same information has since resurfaced. Attacks have been reported in at least 11 states recently, most recently in Maharashtra where five men were bludgeoned to death by a crazed mob on Sunday. Last week a "rumor buster" official tasked with warning the public against such hoaxes was killed in northeastern Tripura.

With more than 200 million users, India is WhatsApp's biggest market. Its parent company Facebook has also been grappling with a global data privacy scandal. WhatsApp said it planned to run a public safety campaign in India "given its importance" to the company, and mentioned efforts by police to use its platform to raise awareness about its misuse. "We believe that false news, misinformation and the spread of hoaxes are issues best tackled collectively: by government, civil society and technology companies working together," WhatsApp said. "With the right action we can help improve everyone's safety." — AFP

Two fall critically ill near UK nerve poisoning town

AMESBURY: Two people are in hospital in critical condition after exposure to an "unknown substance" in the same British town where a former Russian spy and his daughter were poisoned with a nerve agent earlier this year, officials said yesterday. Counter-terrorism police, who led the investigation into the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, said they were assisting local police in the investigation which has been declared a "major incident" by the emergency services.

Scientists at Britain's defense laboratory at Porton Down are carrying out tests to try and establish if there is any connection between the two incidents, British media reported. The couple, a man and a woman in their 40s, were discovered unconscious at a house in a quiet, newly-built area in Amesbury, a village near the prehistoric monument of Stonehenge. Amesbury is about 12 kilometers from Salisbury, where the Skripals were found slumped on a bench in March in an incident that sparked a bitter diplomatic crisis with Russia. The two patients "are both currently receiving treatment for suspected exposure to an unknown substance at Salisbury District Hospital," a police statement said.

"They are both in a critical condition." The hospital is the same one where the Skripals were treated. The pair were found on Saturday with police saying they initially suspected that they had fallen ill after using "heroin or crack cocaine from a contaminated batch of drugs." "However, further testing is now ongoing to establish the substance which led to these patients becoming ill and we are keeping an open mind as to the circumstances surrounding this incident."

Security cordons have been set up around the areas where the pair went before they fell ill with security

boosted in both Amesbury and Salisbury. A spokesman for Public Health England (PHE) said "it is not believed that there is a significant health risk to the wider public." "This will be continually assessed as further information becomes known," he said. Local resident Natalie Smyth, 27, told AFP she saw fire engines and ambulances arrive at the house on Saturday.

"They shut the road. They said it was a chemical incident and then that it was drug-related. It is so strange, it is such a quiet place," she said, indicating that the emergency services personnel were wearing protective suits. Robert Yuill, a local councillor, said he had seen five ambulances outside the house. But he said the emergency services reaction to the incident was "far less intense" than after the Skripal poisoning.

One of the areas cordoned off was Amesbury Baptist Church, which held a party that the two attended on Saturday. "We understand this may well be the last event this couple went to in public," church secretary Roy Collins told reporters. "We are all quite puzzled and shocked—naturally the connection with Salisbury and recent events there mean there is a heightened public interest," he said, indicating the pair were "not church members or regulars".

"We are praying for the couple, one of our members knows them and clearly there are concerns for them and any others in the community," Collins said around 200 people had attended the event but "nobody else has suffered any ill effects". The hospital said it remained "open as usual" and advised people to attend routine appointments unless contacted to do otherwise. Wiltshire's Police and Crime Commissioner Angus Macpherson said police had worked hard to contain "any risk that might be there", the BBC reported.

Macpherson said there was "no reason to think it's connected" to the Skripal case. Skripal, 67, and his 33-year-old daughter Yulia, who was visiting from Moscow, collapsed on March 4 in Salisbury. They were treated for an extended period of time before being released from Salisbury hospital. A police officer who came to their aid, Nick Bailey, was also taken to hospital. — AFP

Iran's Rouhani in Vienna to shore...

Continued from Page 1

since Trump's decision to dump the deal. Austria just took up the European Union's six-month rotating presidency, while Vienna is the home of the UN nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, which monitors Iran's compliance with the accord.

Rouhani's European trip will be of "prime importance" as it could "provide a more precise picture of cooperation between Iran and Europe," the Iranian foreign ministry spokesman said at the weekend. The Iranian government has itself warned that it will not continue to abide by the nuclear agreement if doing so goes against its economic interests. Rouhani, a moderate conservative re-elected in 2017, began meeting President Alexander Van der Bellen yesterday, and met Chancellor Sebastian Kurz later in the day.

The nuclear deal has been the cornerstone of Rouhani's policy of greater openness with the West, and the US departure has seen him severely criticized by ultra-conservatives at home. Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, has demanded Europe provide a number of economic guarantees in order for Tehran to continue its commitment. Increasing the pressure on Iran's European partners, he ordered preparations be made to quickly restart nuclear activities in case talks col-

lapse. Rouhani's visit follows reports of the Iranian diplomat's arrest along with five others over a purported foiled attack on a rally of thousands of Iranian opposition supporters in Paris.

Rouhani has not changed his program over what his foreign minister dismissed as a "false flag ploy" designed as a distraction. "How convenient: Just as we embark on a presidential visit to Europe, an alleged Iranian operation and its 'plotters' arrested," Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted. Just hours before welcoming Rouhani to Austria, Vienna summoned Iran's ambassador and announced that the unnamed diplomat's status would be withdrawn. The diplomat attached to the Iranian embassy in Austria, who was detained in Germany, was believed to be a contact of a couple at the centre of the alleged plot.

He may soon be extradited to Belgium, which is spearheading a probe into the alleged bomb plot, prosecutors told the German news agency DPA. "We are waiting for full clarification" on the case, Kurz said at a press conference alongside Rouhani. Zarif, who is accompanying Rouhani, will on Friday meet top envoys from the five powers for the first time since Washington's withdrawal. Kurz had said he would speak plainly with Rouhani about Iran's role in the Middle East, as Tehran continues to deny accusations it is destabilizing the region. The Austrian Chancellor said he considered it "absolutely unacceptable" to question the right of Israel to exist or call for the state's destruction. — AFP

Sports

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Rock-solid Brazil living up to billing as World Cup favourites

Aim to lift the World Cup for a record sixth time in Moscow

SOCHI: While some of their biggest rivals have already fallen by the wayside in Russia, Brazil have been making serene progress towards the latter stages of the World Cup. After watching holders Germany, Spain and Argentina all exit the competition in the last week in various states of disarray, the Selecao eased into the quarter-finals with a 2-0 victory against Mexico on Monday. As they aim to lift the World Cup for a record sixth time in Moscow on July 15, their next opponents are Belgium in Kazan on Friday, in what will be something of a clash of styles—the best defence up against the best attack. This Brazil team is not just about Neymar, even if his theatrics and intermittent magic, like his opener against Mexico, are what immediately catch the eye and dominate the headlines. Look a little more closely and it becomes clear what is really making them tick—coach Tite has instilled an admirable collective discipline and his team are built on solid foundations. They have conceded just one goal so far at this World Cup, and Steven Zuber's effort for Switzerland in a 1-1 draw in Rostov-on-Don could have been disallowed for a foul on Joao Miranda.

Since then, goalkeeper Alisson Becker has kept three straight clean sheets, with Brazil winning 2-0 against Costa Rica, Serbia and Mexico. They have conceded just four shots on target in four matches.

It is the kind of record that the Italians, the old defensive masters who are conspicuous by their absence in Russia, would have been proud of. Brazil are looking to Italy for inspiration. "Juventus have been champions for the last seven years, and only once without having the best defence," said Tite's assistant Sylvinho, the former Arsenal and Barcelona left-back, after the Mexico game. "In such a short tournament, we want balance to be what characterises us, and that does not make us a defensive team."

History shows that the team with the best defence tends to win the trophy. And while Brazil have always possessed brilliant individuals, they have also long been pragmatists above all else. There will be moments of magic from Neymar, who is gradually coming to the boil following foot surgery in March—as long as they go with defensive discipline. On Monday in Samara, Tite switched to a 4-4-2 formation after Mexico caused Brazil early problems, and they had a foundation to go on and win the game in the second half. Fagner might be a weak link at right-back, but there is strength in depth throughout the squad—Casemiro, Paulinho and Philippe Coutinho provide different qualities in midfield, while Willian came up with his best performance of the tournament against Mexico. Gabriel Jesus has yet to find the net, but Roberto Firmino came off the bench to score on Monday and is pushing for a start. Brazil defend from the front, with captain Thiago Silva admitting the aim is to concede no more goals.

"That is our objective," he said. "But always emphasising that the defensive part begins with the attackers. When the ball does come into our area, it is much easier to cut it out. Our attackers play a big part in that."

And so to Friday when Brazil, who have the joint-best defence at the tournament along with Uruguay, face a Belgium outfit who have been the most prolific with 12 goals scored. For now they are living up to their billing, although it remains to be seen how they will cope in the absence of Casemiro, the Real Madrid powerhouse who screens the defence from deep in midfield. He is suspended, meaning Fernandinho is likely to come in. The 33-year-old does not offer the same degree of protection, although his inside knowledge of Manchester City club colleague Kevin De Bruyne could be invaluable as Brazil look to keep their challenge for a sixth title going. — AFP



SOCHI: Brazil's coach Tite (C) looks at his players during a training session at Yug Sport Stadium, in Sochi, yesterday, during the Russia 2018 World Cup football tournament. — AFP

This time England left nothing to chance in shoot-out

MOSCOW: England manager Gareth Southgate knows all about the pain of missing a crucial kick in a penalty shootout and as he sportingly consoled Colombia's Carlos Bacca on Tuesday night at the Spartak Stadium, the memories couldn't have been far away.

"It will never be off my back, sadly. That's something that will live with me forever," said Southgate said after the game when reminded of the Euro 96 semi-final loss to Germany where he missed the crucial kick in the shootout.

Southgate was mocked in a pizza advertisement following that defeat but he also learned a valuable lesson that had a huge impact on the World Cup last 16 win over Colombia — the shootout is not a 'lottery' and it is something you can prepare for.

"When something goes wrong in your life it doesn't

finish you and you should become braver, knowing that you've got to go for things in life and don't regret (that) you didn't try to be as good as you might be," said Southgate. After England secured passage to the knockout stage, Southgate explained how that mentality had translated into his thinking on penalties.

"I've had a couple of decades thinking it through. It's not about luck. It's not about chance. It's about performing a skill under pressure," he said. "There are things you can work on, things that can be helpful for the preparation for the players. We have studied it. There is a lot we can do to own the process, and not be controlled by it."

That mentality and the preparation was evident in the way England dealt with the challenge of the shootout. "I believed our goalkeeper would save one, and the technique of our players in taking them was superb. I have to credit our big support team who have done a lot of work in that area over the last few months," said Southgate.

England had their list of kickers well prepared in advance but substitutions made during the game forced a change to the list of five kickers with Eric Dier stepping in. Players had already been evaluated during practice drills and their past performance taken into

account, in contrast to previous tournaments, such as in 1998 when David Batty, who had never taken a penalty in a match, missed the decisive fifth kick in a round of 16 loss to Argentina.

Also, as one of the shootout scorers Kieran Trippier noted, Southgate made his team practice penalties when they tired at the end of a training session, to simulate the fatigue that is present after extra-time.

Vitaly England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford's guesswork regarding which way to anticipate a kick was not based on instinct but research. Pickford guessed the right way for all of Colombia's kickers except for Radamel Falcao — and said that was largely due to his work with goalkeeping coach Martyn Margetson and other FA staff. "We did our research on them, with Margetson and the analysis staff," Pickford said. "I had a fair feeling. Falcao was really the only one who didn't go 'his' way. But it's about: set, react and go with power."

"I've got power and agility. I don't care if I'm not the biggest keeper. I've got that power and agility to get around the goal. I'm very good at it," he added. It is hard to believe that none of this was done before by previous coaching staffs, but after the triumph that sent England into the last eight it will surely be standard practice now. — Reuters

Akinfeev's 'Foot of God' answers Russia's World Cup prayers

MOSCOW: The World Cup joke around Russia is that goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev has the "Foot of God". Comparisons to the "Hand of God" goal Argentina great Diego Maradona scored against England in 1986 came naturally to Russians enraptured by the unlikely performance of their team.

Akinfeev had already won admiration for stopping two Spain penalties that sent the 2010 champions packing and Russia through to their first World Cup quarter-final since 1970. But his winning left-foot save against Spain's Iago Aspas has some in the host nation thinking of the 32-year-old in even more reverential terms. "Akinfeev himself is a god," said his childhood coach Pavel Koval. "I think Igor is better than (Spain 'keeper David) de Gea." This level of exuberance is relatively new terrain for a solid player with his share of bad luck. During the 2014 World Cup Akinfeev palmed a soft shot in Russia's opener against South Korea that somehow arched in over his head. The Russians came back to draw the game but looked miserable walking off the pitch. They were eliminated two games later from what may have been one of the easiest groups in the draw.

Akinfeev's personal misfortune came when he suffered a knee injury while negotiating a lucrative move from CSKA Moscow to England's Premier League a decade ago. The deal fell through and the Red Army club captain ended up spending his career in the relative anonymity of the domestic league—one of the modern game's rare one-team stars.

Akinfeev will get his chance to shine before an even bigger audience when he pulls on his gloves on Saturday in Russia's most important match in generations. A win against Croatia in Sochi would put Russia in the semi-final of a World Cup for only the second time since the Soviets did it in England in 1966.

That team was led by Lev Yashin—one of history's greatest goalkeepers with whom Akinfeev is occasionally compared. Yashin features on the retro poster Russia prepared for its first home World Cup. There is some symmetry there as well.

Russia's central bank created a stir by pointing out that a 100-ruble note commemorating the World Cup it issued in May also shows a 'keeper making a save with his left foot'. The hologram image is tiny and remained unnoticed by most. Officials later said it had not necessarily been meant to resemble Akinfeev. The mystique that surrounded Yashin and his later Soviet successor Rinat Dasayev—their cult status propagated by the Communist Party—is yet to catch up with Russia's current No. 1.—AFP

NBK gives Visa prepaid cardholders chance to win Zlatan signed jersey, cash prizes

KUWAIT: Rewarding its customers with unique and unraveled offers and promotions, NBK most recently partnered with Visa to give cardholders of the FIFA World Cup Visa Prepaid Card a chance to win one of three jerseys signed by the famed football player, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, in addition to a cash prize.

The offer is exclusive to cardholders of the FIFA World Cup Prepaid Card. New customers can apply for the limited edition card for a chance to be one of the three winners.

Customers can easily apply for the card through NBK mobile banking or NBK.com. The card will be delivered straight to the customer's doorstep without additional charges.

Abdullah Al Maqseed, Senior Manager Card Products, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "Following the all-expenses paid trips to the FIFA World Cup finals awarded in April comes the signed jersey by the Swedish professional football player, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, and a cash prize,



Abdullah Al Maqseed

thanks to the new NBK FIFA World Cup Visa Prepaid Card."

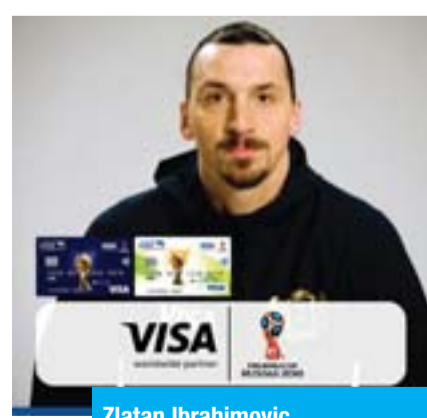
Launched in May 2018, the NBK FIFA World Cup Visa Prepaid Card is exclusive to NBK customers and includes all standard prepaid card benefits and options such as NBK Rewards loyalty program, Visa Global Assistance and other flexible and convenient offers and benefits.

The card enables customers to

better manage their spending limit by choosing the amount to be transferred into the card and make secure payments online as it is recognized worldwide. The card can be reloaded through the NBK mobile banking app or NBK.com website.

Al Maqseed added: "The NBK FIFA World Cup Visa Prepaid Card is not only a convenient and safe way to complete transactions, but also a rewarding experience giving the large football fan-base chances to win valuable prizes while enjoying the benefits and rewards of the card."

The card provides important benefits including control over budgeting and spending, worldwide recognition and NBK secure Shopping. Cardholders can determine how much to transfer to the card, thus setting their own spending limits. The card can also be reloaded via the NBK mobile banking app or NBK.com website. Prepaid cardholders also earn cash back and other rewards as part of the NBK



Zlatan Ibrahimovic

Rewards loyalty program.

NBK has also partnered with Visa and awarded three all-expenses paid trips to the FIFA World Cup finals in Moscow, Russia. Three lucky winners, along with a friend each, received first class tickets, 5-star hotel accommodation, transportation and tickets to see the FIFA World Cup finals and KD 1,000 in cash.

Sports



France's Mbappe sprints towards superstar status at World Cup

Lilian Thuram expects Mbappe to thrive on the challenge

MOSCOW: As Didier Deschamps plots another World Cup title tilt with France, Kylian Mbappe, who was not even born when his coach lifted the trophy in 1998, has become an indispensable figure for Les Bleus. It was only two-and-a-half years ago that the teenager made his professional debut, but the rise of Mbappe—the second-most expensive player in history—has been meteoric.

After winning successive French league crowns with Monaco and then Paris Saint-Germain, the 19-year-old announced himself on the global stage by knocking Lionel Messi's Argentina out of the last 16 in Russia. With Cristiano Ronaldo, a childhood hero of Mbappe's, crashing out of the competition on the same day with Portugal, it felt like a passing of the torch to a new generation.

Mbappe's breathtaking acceleration and steely composure were used to devastating effect as he became the first teenager since Pele 60 years ago to score at least twice in a World Cup match. "I gave Kylian a new nickname, it's 37, because he reached a peak of 37km/h (kilometres per hour) against Argentina," said France teammate Florian Thauvin.

To put his searing speed into context, triple Olympic 100-metre champion Usain Bolt's career peak was clocked at 44.72 km/h during his world record run at the 2009 world championships. And while Mbappe may be the game's new superstar, the French teenage sensation is not forgetting his roots.

According to L'Equipe, he has promised to donate his World Cup bonus to organise sporting initiatives for children in hospital. He will likely find a robust Uruguay defence far less charitable, but former France

defender Lilian Thuram expects Mbappe to thrive on the challenge.

"He is young, and young players really enjoy themselves when the standard of the opposition increases," said Thuram. France great Thierry Henry, who followed a similar trajectory to the top as Mbappe, cited the latter's intelligence as the driving force behind his success.

"When I watch him dribble, he's thinking," Henry said in an interview with Canal+. "There's something that gets me going and saddens me at times. We often speak of a player and say: 'He's fast, he's tough, he jumps high', but we never speak about a player's brain."

"He thinks when he plays, and that for me is the most important thing in a player, he uses his brain," explained Henry. "It's the sign of a guy who can go very far." Ludovic Batelli, coach of the France team that won the Under-19 European Championship in 2016, said Mbappe had a rare level of maturity for someone so young.

"He has this clear-headedness, this sangfroid in front of goal which is the mark of great goalscorers," said Batelli. "It's often acquired more in the second part of one's career. He has it at a very, very young age. It's what is going to allow him to become a future great."

Mbappe scored 21 goals in his first season in Paris after joining the club in a monumental deal worth an eventual 180 million euros (\$210 million). Paul Pogba, one of the cornerstones of the current France side, said Mbappe has only just scratched the surface of what he is capable of achieving.

"He's got a lot more talent than me," Pogba said of Mbappe. "And he's not going to stop there. He's got so much talent." — AFP



MOSCOW: France's forward Kylian Mbappe (R) and teammates control balls during a training session at Glebovets Stadium, Istra outside of Moscow yesterday, during the Russia 2018 World Cup football tournament. — AFP

Ronaldo receives offer to sign for Juventus

MADRID: Cristiano Ronaldo has received an offer to leave Real Madrid and join Italian champions Juventus, a source close to the player told Reuters yesterday. Ronaldo, who joined Real from Manchester United in 2009 for a then world record 80 million pounds (\$105.65 million), is the Spanish club's all-time top scorer with 451 goals in all competitions and has won two La Liga titles and four Champions League trophies with them.

Despite the glut of silverware, however, the five-times world player of the year has had frequent fallouts with Real and has declared on several occasions that he wants to leave the club. Moments after lifting a third consecutive Champions League trophy by beating Liverpool 3-1 in the final on May 26, Ronaldo appeared to suggest he had already decided to leave Real, telling a television reporter on the pitch at Kiev's NSC Olympic Stadium: "It was beautiful to play for Real Madrid." Ronaldo, 33, appeared to backtrack on that

statement during Real's celebration parade through the Spanish capital the next day, when he told a mass of supporters: "See you next season." The Portugal forward was reported to be on the verge of leaving last June after a news story appeared in Portuguese newspaper Record declaring he was unhappy with the club.

He also caused a stir in 2012 when he declared in a post-match interview after a game with Granada: "I'm sad and the club know why." Spanish newspaper Marca suggested yesterday that Ronaldo is unhappy at Real because they are searching for a successor to him and president Florentino Perez has publicly courted Paris St Germain forward Neymar, urging the Brazilian last year to come to Madrid if he wants to win the prestigious Ballon d'Or award.

Ronaldo scored two goals against Juventus in Real's 4-1 win in the 2017 Champions League and struck a jaw-dropping bicycle kick against the Italians in a 3-0 win in a quarter-final first leg game in Turin which prompted Juve supporters to give him a standing ovation. The Portuguese converted a stoppage-time penalty in the second leg to knock the Italians out 4-3 on aggregate. Ronaldo had an explosive start to the 2018 World Cup by scoring a hat-trick in his side's 3-3 draw with Spain and he hit the winning goal in a 1-0 win over Morocco. He missed a penalty in a 1-1 draw with Iran and failed to score in his side's 2-1 defeat by Uruguay in the last 16. — Reuters



Cristiano Ronaldo

Neymar should drop injury act: Matthaeus

MOSCOW: Brazil winger Neymar is a world class footballer who does not need to exaggerate when his is fouled because it does not earn him any sympathy with the fans, former Germany captain and World Cup winner Lothar Matthaeus said yesterday. Neymar, who has scored twice so far to help Brazil into the World Cup quarter-finals in Russia where they will face Belgium on Friday, has been sharply criticised for a string of exaggerated reactions when clashing with an opponent.

"Neymar does not need it. He is an excellent player, one of the five best players in the world," the 57-year-old Matthaeus, who won the 1990 world cup with West Germany, told reporters. "Why does he need the acting?"

"It does not bring him sympathy. (1986 World Cup winner) Diego Maradona was not acting, (Argentina captain) Lionel Messi is not acting. We need players like Neymar but not the acting," Matthaeus said it was up to referees to put a stop to it, adding that during his playing days Colombia's Carlos Valderrama was one such culprit but now there were just too many.

"I remember Colombia (against England on Tuesday) how they were acting," he said. England beat Colombia 4-3 on penalties in a bad-tempered game that was almost constantly interrupted with referee Mark Geiger booking six Colombians and two English players.

"In the 1990s they had one Carlos Valderrama, now Colombia have six. I don't like this provocation and acting and I cannot understand why a player likes to cheat. With video assistant referees (VAR) this should not be possible."

Matthaeus also blamed Geiger for not punishing players for it. "You have to cut this. He (Geiger) forgot to cut it at the right time. He let them (Colombians) do it." Geiger awarded England a penalty in the 57th minute but Harry Kane needed to wait several minutes before taking it as Colombian players had surrounded the referee, disputing his decision.

"With the penalty we missed three minutes of football because of the discussions. We don't need this acting. We want to see football games, people always come to watch a football game. If they want acting they should go somewhere else," the German said. Matthaeus, however, had only praise for the England side and their brand of quick football. "England played very well yesterday. These are high level players and the English national team profits from coaches in the Premier League working with these young players. They also learned how to shoot penalties," he added.

"This young generation, they are believing in themselves. They do not play kick and rush. They like to play out of the defence. This is the style of the English clubs." — Reuters

Paulinho rises from footballing grave with Messi assist

KAZAN: If there is one Lionel Messi assist over the last year that Brazilian football fans should be grateful for, it is the one that helped take Paulinho from the elephants' graveyard of modern football to the Nou Camp. Twelve months ago, Paulinho was at Guangzhou Evergrande in the Chinese Super League and resigned to playing out the prime of his career against the likes of Chongqing Lifan and Changchun Yatai.

The midfielder had made the move to China after a difficult spell in England with Tottenham Hotspur and was enjoying his life and football, until Messi made him a stunning offer during a friendly between Brazil and Argentina in Melbourne.

"All of a sudden, Messi walks straight up to me, looks me in the eye, and says, 'So... are we going to Barcelona or not?'" 29-year-old recalled this week on www.theplayertribune.com.

"I thought maybe he was joking, like he was trying to mess with my head or something. But we were just playing a friendly... so maybe not?" A few months later, Paulinho was indeed on his way to Barcelona to join a team that would win the Spanish title, sharpening his skills to ensure he would be one of

the first names on Tite's squad list for the World Cup. Hard running and aggressive, Paulinho has played every game for the Selecao in Russia as Brazil have established themselves as favourites for a sixth world title heading into Friday's quarter-final against Belgium in Kazan.

An artisan box-to-box operator among the artists of the Brazil team, Paulinho has a knack of being in the right place at the right time, as he showed when he latched onto Philippe Coutinho's through ball to score against Serbia.

If Messi played a part in securing his move to Barcelona, the resurrection of Paulinho's international career was down to the appointment of his former boss at Corinthians as Brazil coach. "One person who always believed in me was Tite," Paulinho added.

"I get emotional when I speak about Tite, because we are connected in a way that is about more than football." There have been other dark days in Paulinho's career - he almost quit the game as a teenager after being racially abused while playing in Lithuania and he suffered from depression when he was dropped at Spurs.

The premature birth of his twin son and daughter at the end of last year has helped to put his footballing woes in perspective, however.

"Football is full of ups and downs. It's unpredictable. Going from China to Barcelona is incredible, but it's not a miracle," he said. "A miracle is when you come home from football, and no matter what the result was that day, your children look up at you, and their eyes say, 'Ola, Papai.'" — Reuters



SOCHI: Brazil's midfielder Paulinho catches a ball during a training session at Yug Sport Stadium, in Sochi, yesterday, during the Russia 2018 World Cup football tournament. — AFP

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Federer, Serena, Venus move on

Wozniacki crashes out, Pliskova downs Azarenka



LONDON: Switzerland's Roger Federer returns against Slovakia's Lukas Lacko during their men's singles second round match on the third day of the 2018 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, yesterday. Federer won the match 6-4, 6-4, 6-1. —AFP

LONDON: Roger Federer extended his flawless winning streak at Wimbledon to 26 consecutive sets as the defending champion crushed Lukas Lacko, while Serena Williams powered to her 16th successive win in yesterday's second round action.

While Federer and Serena strolled, Caroline Wozniacki suffered fresh Wimbledon woe as the world number two suffered a shock 6-4, 1-6, 7-5 defeat against Ekaterina Makarova. Federer delivered a Centre Court masterclass lasting 89 minutes as the Swiss star hit 48 winners and 16 aces in his 6-4, 6-4, 6-1 victory. The 36-year-old is now on his joint second longest streak of sets won at Wimbledon—his best was 34 between the third round in 2005 to the 2006 final. Next up for Federer is a third round tie against German world number 64 Jan-Lennard Struff who came back from two sets down to defeat 39-year-old Ivo Karlovic 13-11 in the final set.

In his 20th Wimbledon appearance, top seed Federer, a 20-time major winner, is bidding to become only the second player to claim nine singles titles at the All England

Club after Martina Navratilova. On the evidence of his ruthless demolition of Slovakian world number 73 Lacko, it will take something special to stop Federer making more Wimbledon history.

"I played very well. I felt good out there, less nerves than in the first round," Federer said. "I'm happy how I am hitting the ball, good concentration on my service games and able to mix it up with some slices."

"Of course, you sometimes play the percentages, but if you do that too much it becomes boring, so I like to mix it up," Federer wasn't the only former champion in peak form on Centre Court as seven-time winner Serena routed Bulgarian qualifier Viktoriya Tomova 6-1, 6-4. Williams brushed aside Tomova in just 66 minutes with 24 winners and four aces to extend her streak of consecutive match wins at the All England Club. "It was better than the first round. I'm happy I'm going in the right direction," Serena said. "I'm getting there. I expect to get there, not only for Wimbledon but for the tournaments in the future." The 36-year-old, whose winning run encompasses her Wimbledon

titles in 2015 and 2016, missed the grass-court Grand Slam last year while she prepared to give birth to daughter Alexis Olympia in September. Serena, seeded 25th after her return from maternity leave, faces France's Kristina Mladenovic or Germany's Tatjana Maria for a place in the last 16. Wozniacki, plagued by an invasion of flying ants during the Court One clash, saved five match points but has now failed to get past the last 16 in 12 visits to the All England Club. It was a bitter defeat for the 27-year-old Dane, who was expected to challenge for the Wimbledon title after winning her maiden Grand Slam crown at the Australian Open in January.

With flying ants stuck in Wozniacki's hair and dive-bombing her throughout the match, the former world number one asked the umpire if there was something that could be sprayed to keep the bugs away.

"They're in my mouth and in my hair and everywhere—we need to do something. Is there a spray?" she said. "I want to be here to focus on tennis, not eating bugs." Five-time champion Venus Williams battled into the third round

with a 4-6, 6-0, 6-1 win over Romanian qualifier Alexandra Dulgheru. Venus reached her ninth Wimbledon final last year, but the American star was denied a sixth title by Garbine Muguruza.

Making her 21st Wimbledon appearance, 38-year-old Venus is the oldest woman in this year's tournament. But she didn't look her age in making it 89 career match wins at Wimbledon by demolishing Dulgheru in the final two sets. Asked if her wealth of Wimbledon experience was a key factor, Venus said: "I'd love to have that extra advantage. If that's working for me I'm all for it. "It's just about winning the match. If that's your best or not doesn't matter." Venus next faces Dutch 20th seed Kiki Bertens, who beat Russian world number 107 Anna Blinkova 6-4, 6-0.

Former world number one Karolina Pliskova finally made it to the third round on her seventh visit to Wimbledon after seeing off two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka 6-3, 6-3. Former Wimbledon finalist Agnieszka Radwanska lost 7-5, 6-4 to Czech world number 66 Lucie Safarova. —AFP

World Cup big guns primed for last-eight battles

MOSCOW: England became the last team to qualify for the World Cup quarter-finals after a dramatic penalty shootout as favourites Brazil and fancied France trained their sights on their last-eight opponents. England's victory against Colombia takes Gareth Southgate's team into what looks like a winnable match against Sweden, who edged out Switzerland 1-0 earlier on Tuesday.

Both teams are in the bottom half of the draw in Russia, along with the host nation and Croatia, with England the only former winners of the four teams. The top half contains more heavyweights, with 1998 champions France taking on two-time winners Uruguay and Brazil set to face Belgium.

On a dramatic night in Moscow's Spartak Stadium, England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford

made a key save from Carlos Bacca before Eric Dier's spot-kick gave England their first-ever win on penalties at a World Cup at the fourth attempt — ending the jinx that has dogged them for so long.

The Sun tabloid coined his save the "Hand of God", harking back to Diego Maradona's "Hand of God" incident in 1986, when the Argentine used his hand to put the ball into the net against England. "It's the headline we have waited a lifetime to write... England win on penalties (Yes really!)," the paper said.

Southgate said he was already looking forward to Saturday's quarter-final against Sweden in Samara, with a last-four clash against either Croatia or Russia up for grabs. "This was special but I want us to go on," said Southgate, whose own penalty miss saw England lose to Germany in the semi-finals of Euro 96 at Wembley.

"Sweden is another team we have a poor record against. We have underestimated them for years. They have created their own story and made history. I don't want to go home yet." Janne Andersson's Sweden have recovered well from a heartbreaking group-stage defeat by Germany, seeing off Mexico before edging out Switzerland 1-0 in the last 16.

RB Leipzig midfielder Emil Forsberg grabbed the only goal of a tight encounter midway through the second half to send his country into the quarters for the first time since the 1994 side who finished third in the United States. For all the drama around England, the winner of the tournament is more likely to come from the top half of the draw, where the teams can boast a combined eight tournament wins. Favourites Brazil will come up against Belgium's 'golden generation' in Kazan tomorrow while an exciting young France side spearheaded by Kylian Mbappe take on a shrewd Uruguay outfit in Nizhny Novgorod.

Much of the focus surrounding Brazil's bid for a record-extending sixth world title has inevitably been on Neymar. But the world's most expensive player has hit the headlines as much for his perceived play-acting as for the on-pitch performances that have helped his side ease into the last eight without ever being seriously troubled.

Mexico coach Juan Carlos Osorio said the stoppages caused by Neymar's antics stalled his team during their 2-0 last-16 loss to Brazil, claiming the Paris Saint-Germain forward's reaction to Miguel Layun stepping on his leg was a "shame for football". —AFP



MOSCOW: England's players celebrate winning the penalty shootout at the end of the Russia 2018 World Cup round of 16 football match between Colombia and England at the Spartak Stadium in Moscow on Tuesday. —AFP