

5 Families agree with protecting kids from social media misuse



8 Malaysian king calls for unity amid racial tensions



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28 'Africa real' World Cup winners, says Venezuelan prez Maduro



Ghanem, Saleh assure no cause for concern over unrest in Iraq

Government briefs lawmakers over Kuwait's readiness



KUWAIT: Lawmakers, ministers and security officials hold a meeting yesterday over the situation in Iraq. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said after a meeting with the government yesterday that there was no cause for concern over demonstrations in southern Iraq, but stressed that Kuwait is taking all necessary precautions. The meeting was attended by acting prime minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, in addition to other ministers and as many as 23 lawmakers. It was also attended by senior commanders of the army, the police and the national guard.

"Based on what has been raised during the meeting, I can say there is no cause for concern or panic at all, but there is a need for caution and readiness, especially since we in Kuwait had a bitter experience during the (1990) Iraqi invasion of Kuwait," Ghanem told reporters. He said that the foreign minister informed the meeting that the government is coordinating with Iraq at a high level, adding that the government was prepared in case the situation esca-

lated into Iraqis crossing the Kuwaiti borders, creating a refugee crisis.

The meeting was called by MPs after thousands of Iraqis demonstrated against their government in southern Iraq and who came close to the borders with Kuwait. Ghanem said the armed forces' commanders also made presentations to the lawmakers on the situation. He said Kuwait does not interfere in Iraq's domestic affairs but the government said it is coordinating with Iraqi authorities. Ghanem said Kuwait does not want to inflate the events, but at the same time wants to be prepared for the worst-case scenario.

He said that the government informed lawmakers that there was no military or security threat against Kuwait from the Iraqi unrest, and that the Kuwaiti government has contacted its allies for any help and also contacted humanitarian organizations in the event of any refugee problem. The speaker said the government's readiness for any eventuality is reassuring and called for consolidating national unity.

Continued on Page 24

News in brief

Indian minor raped by 18 men

NEW DELHI: Eighteen men appeared in court in the Indian city of Chennai yesterday on charges of repeatedly raping an 11-year girl over a seven-month period. The men included security guards, lift operators and plumbers working at the apartment block where the girl lived, police said. The men in Chennai sedated the girl, who has a hearing disability, with drugs and then took her to vacant apartments in the block to assault her. Local media reports said they had threatened her with knives, and told her they would release videos of the assault if she told anyone. — Agencies

Saudi Arabia executes seven

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday executed seven death row inmates who had been convicted of murder and drug trafficking, state media reported. Two Saudi citizens and three nationals of Chad were executed after being sentenced to death for the kidnapping and murder of a Pakistani security guard, with the alleged intent of robbing the warehouse he was guarding, according to the state-run SPA agency. Another Saudi was executed for murder after setting a man on fire, SPA reported. A Lebanese national was executed for attempting to smuggle Captagon into the kingdom, SPA said. — AFP

Egypt passes social media law

CAIRO: Egypt's parliament has passed a law giving the state powers to block social media accounts and penalize journalists held to be publishing fake news. Under the law passed on Monday, social media accounts and blogs with more than 5,000 followers on sites such as Twitter and Facebook will be treated as media outlets, which makes them subject to prosecution for publishing false news or incitement to break the law. — Reuters

Bezos sees jump in wealth

WASHINGTON: As Amazon marked its "Prime Day" with price cuts across a range of products, founder and chief executive saw his net worth hit new peaks, increasing his lead over fellow billionaires. Bezos's net worth topped \$150 billion on Monday, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, making him the richest person in decades. The surge in the share price for Amazon - in which Bezos holds a stake of some 16 percent - has lifted his wealth by some \$50 billion this year. And Bezos has moved into a wealth category by himself, far ahead of Microsoft founder Bill Gates, worth an estimated \$95 billion, according to the Bloomberg ranking. — AFP

Qatar Airways adapts to dispute, may avoid loss

FARNBOROUGH, England: Qatar Airways' chief executive said the airline was adapting to a regional political dispute that has prevented it flying some routes, and that those restrictions would not necessarily push it into the red for the current financial year. "There is a possibility that we will post also a loss in our current financial year, but it's only a possibility," Akbar Al-Baker told reporters at the Farnborough Airshow yesterday.

The airline lost access to 18 cities in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, and Bahrain in mid-2017, when those four countries cut ties with Qatar after accusing it of supporting terrorism. Qatar denies the allegation. The restrictions mean the company is set to post what Baker has said will be "a very large loss" for the financial year ended March 2018, but it has not been published yet. Baker said this would be made public in the coming weeks.

But for the current year, he said the airline might be able to mitigate the impact of the boycott, which includes a ban on using airspace over the four coun-

Expanding 'dead zone' in Arabian Sea raises fears

ABU DHABI: In the waters of the Arabian Sea, a vast "dead zone" the size of Scotland is expanding and scientists say climate change may be to blame. In his lab in Abu Dhabi, Zouhair Lachkar is laboring over a colorful computer model of the Gulf of Oman, showing changing temperatures, sea levels and oxygen concentrations. His models and new research unveiled earlier this year show a worrying trend. Dead zones are areas of the sea where the lack of oxygen makes it difficult for fish to survive and the one in the Arabian Sea is "is the most intense in the world," says Lachkar, a senior scientist at NYU Abu Dhabi in the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

"It starts at about 100 meters and goes down to 1,500 meters, so almost the whole water column is completely depleted of oxygen," he told AFP. Dead zones are naturally occurring phenomena around the world, but this one appears to have mushroomed since it was last surveyed in the 1990s. Lachkar and other researchers are worried that global warming is causing the zone to expand, raising concerns for local ecosystems and industries including fishing and tourism.

The discovery was made possible by the use of robotic divers, or "sea gliders", deployed in areas researchers could not access - an undertaking by Britain's University of East Anglia in collaboration with Oman's Sultan Qaboos University. The findings of the



FARNBOROUGH: Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al-Baker holds a model of a Gulfstream G500 Executive Jet during its launch at the Farnborough Airshow yesterday. — AFP

tries, meaning some of its flights have to take much longer routes. Qatar Airways is starting up to 18 new routes to offset the impact of the dispute, and said it could also make investments to help boost its results. "We will try to do investments which will give us returns to mitigate the negative impact on the bottom line of our company," Baker said, without giving details.

Continued on Page 24

Indian engineers in limbo over accreditation, visa renewal

By Ramona Crasto and Ahmad Jabr

KUWAIT: Four months after the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) issued a circular mandating all expat engineers in Kuwait to have their degrees accredited by an accreditation body from their country, expat engineers are struggling with getting their residencies renewed, with many left in limbo.

Kuwait Times spoke with many engineers who detailed the tedious procedures they had to go through in order to obtain the necessary papers from the Kuwait Society for Engineers (KSE) to process their visa renewal transactions. KSE meanwhile defended the new measures by explaining that they became a necessity in order to fight the spread of fake degrees in the country. (Full report on Page 3)



MUMBAI: People walk past as Arabian Sea waves strike the promenade during high tide on Monday. — AFP

2015 to 2016 study were released in April and showed the Arabian Sea dead zone had worsened in size and scope. And unlike in the 1996 measurements, when the lowest levels were limited to the heart of the dead zone - midway between Yemen and India - now the dead zone extends across the sea. "Now everywhere is the minimum, and it can't go much lower," the lead researcher Bastien Queste told AFP.

At NYU Abu Dhabi, Lachkar explains the Arabian

Sea dead zone appears to be stuck in a cycle where warming seas are depleting the oxygen supply which in turn is reinforcing the warming. This, he says, "can be very scary for climate". Ports from Mumbai to Muscat look out onto the Arabian Sea, making it a critical body of water. These coastal hubs and the populations beyond them will be affected by further expansion of the dead zone.

Continued on Page 24

Local

Amir, Crown Prince receive head of Cassation Court

Crown Prince receives Spanish Ambassador



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with head of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court Justice Yousef Al-Mutaw'a. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with head of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court Justice Yousef Al-Mutaw'a.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Spain's Ambassador to Kuwait Carlos Saenz de Tejada.



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday head of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court Justice Yousef Al-Mutaw'a. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received

Mutaw'a at Bayan Palace yesterday.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince separately received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince received Spain's Ambassador to Kuwait Carlos Saenz de Tejada on the

occasion of the end of his tenure as ambassador to his country. The meeting was attended by the head of protocol at the Diwan of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

In other news, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met yesterday with US Ambassador to Kuwait

Lawrence Silverman, where discussions over bilateral relations and latest regional and international developments took place. The meeting was attended by Assistant Deputy Foreign Minister Ayham Al-Omar and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas' Affairs, Minister Plenipotentiary Reem Al-Khaled. — KUNA

Military agreements with China fruit of great ties: Officer

KUWAIT: Military cooperation agreements signed with China were the outcomes of the old and outstanding relations with the Chinese army, said a Kuwaiti officer on Monday. Air Comodore Adnan Al-Fadhli made the statement to reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony of the Chinese Embassy, marking anniversary of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). He added that all deals were within the strategic framework. This strategy is based on several foundations, topped with concentrating on training and sharing military expertise between the two sides, Fadhli noted.

Meanwhile, Defense Attache of the Chinese Embassy Colonel Zhang Ge said that Kuwait is the first Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with his country. He added that traditional friendship ties between the two sides have been developing on all levels.

Addressing the ceremony, the attache pointed out that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, during his recent visit to Beijing, agreed with Chinese President Xi Jinping on establishing a strategic partnership so as to open new horizons. He stressed that China considers Kuwait as a main partner for cooperation within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. He also affirmed that China maintain regional peace and stability in the Arabian Gulf region. The Chinese official elaborated that the strategic cooperation and mutual confidence would be extended to further levels, indicating that this will have a positive impact on the two friendly nations.

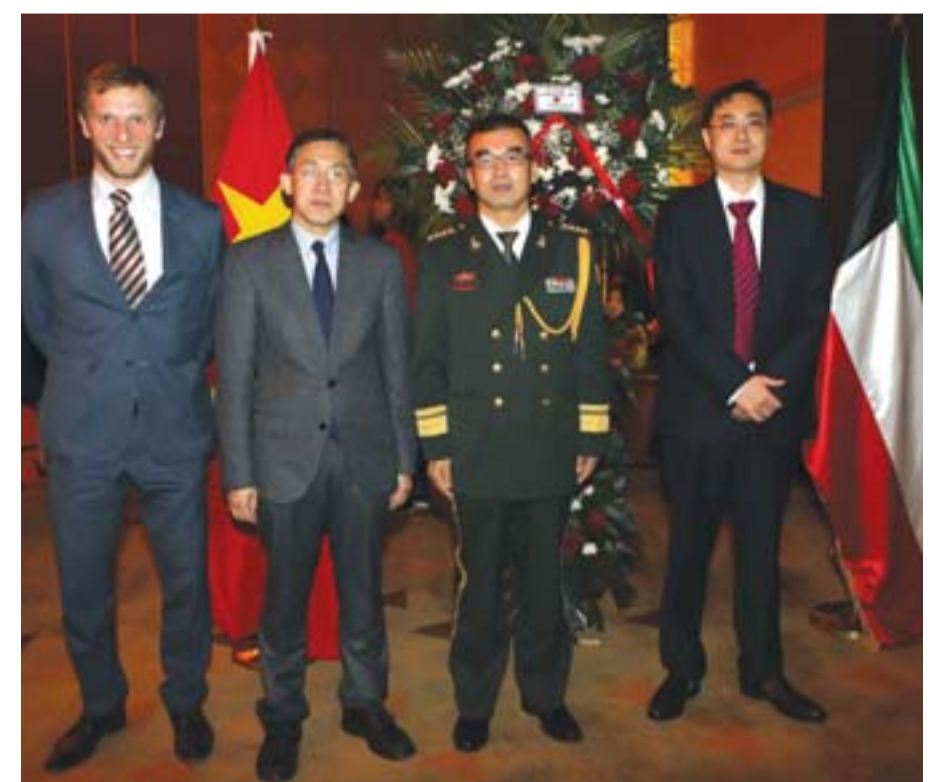
Iraq developments

Separately, Iraq's Ambassador in Kuwait Alaa Al-Hashemi said that Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi assured His Highness the Amir about ongoing developments in some provinces in southern Iraq. Speaking to reporters on sidelines of the ceremony, Hashemi praised His Highness the Amir's initiative to help Iraq overcome the protests. His Highness the Amir "is a man of wise initiatives and positions," he said. Hashemi said developments in some southern provinces "are domestic affairs which were used by Iraqi politicians for electoral gains."

Abadi assured His Highness the Amir, during a phone call yesterday, that security remains intact in Iraq amid nationwide protests over poor state services, lack of job opportunities, electricity outages, poor water supply, financial and administrative corruption. His Highness the Amir told the Iraqi premier that Kuwait stands ready to assist its neighbor to overcome the current turmoil, emphasizing that stability in Baghdad is among Kuwait's chief concerns. — KUNA



KUWAIT: (From left) The Charge d'affaires of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China Zhao Liang, Kuwaiti Air Comodore Adnan Al-Fadhli, and Defense Attache of the Chinese Embassy Colonel Zhang Ge cut the cake during a reception hosted on the occasion of the 91st anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



Local

Accreditation, visa renewal; Indian engineers in limbo

KSE defends new measures: 'Necessary to fight fake degrees'

By Ramona Crasto and Ahmad Jabr

KUWAIT: Sarah scrambles through her papers as she struggles to deal with a decision that has turned her life into a nightmare. She checks her documents one last time before heading to the Kuwait Society of Engineers (KSE) for the fourth time. "I have a Bachelors of Engineering in electrical and communications from Goa University, India, and after the new circular was issued, I submitted my documents in mid-April, which were approved in only three days," said Sarah (not her real name). The certification process takes only a few days, according to member of the board of directors of KSE Ali Mohseni, but these few days have turned into three months and Sarah has lost all hope of getting her residency renewed in time. Sarah's case is one of many cases which Kuwait Times had spoken with, of engineers going through troubles processing their visa-related transactions due to the new degree accreditation regulations.

Since the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) issued an administrative circular that stated that all expatriate engineers in Kuwait must be certified by the KSE in order to renew their residency, due to allegations of many fake and uncertified engineers present in Kuwait, many engineers expressed their frustration towards the process as well as the situation at the center.

At the time of the circular's issuance, KSE had already confirmed with educational authorities worldwide the list of accreditation bodies in each respective country that are authorized to accredit engineering degrees from graduates there. In most cases, each country has a sole authorized accreditation body, but there are very few cases where there are more than one body recognized by the government to accredit degrees, such as India.

The engineers mostly affected by this new rule are engineers who graduated from India, says Dr Abdul Razzak Rumane, ex-officio chairman of the Institution of Engineers of India (IEI), Kuwait Chapter. "Unlike other countries, India has more than one accreditation body. Earlier, there was only one accreditation body in India - the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).

In 2006, when delegations from Kuwait visited India, they were given the impression that by the end of 2006/2007, all colleges in India would be accredited by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA), and hence the KSE board preferred engineers from NBA accredited colleges to be working in Kuwait. When NBA became independent in 2010, this created a huge confusion whether KSE has to follow NBA or AICTE, as there was now more than one body accrediting colleges," he said.

The issue became more complicated when NBA sent a letter to KSE in 2013, stating that it is the only body authorized to accredit colleges in India. Until this year, engineers did not need to obtain KSE membership to work in Kuwait, unless they applied to work in government projects, but that changed when the new circular was released. "Since the circular came out abruptly and the rule was implemented immediately, people started panicking," Rumane added.

Taking an exam

Since Sarah's degree is not accredited by NBA, KSE staff asked to review her file for approval, which once she got, she was informed that she became qualified to take an exam. An engineer in this case has three chances to pass the test, after which they would earn their non-objection certificate (NOC), a necessary document to process a visa renewal transaction.

Sarah was instructed to go to the cashier to find her file and pay the fees for the NOC. However, the cashier immediately informed her that he could not find her file. After waiting for two hours, a staff member approached Sarah and offered to help find her file, which he found in a pile of files kept on a desk just behind the cashier's seat. Likely feeling humiliated, the visibly-upset cashier sent her to four different people, claiming one signature was missing from the file to be approved.

"I was finally sent to a man who found the signature that the cashier said was missing, but without any hesitation, he crossed it off, and told me to take an exam in order to get my file approved," Sarah said. But a seemingly simple process was made much more complicat-

ed due to an apparent lack of communication on the KSE staff members' part.

"The staff members at KSE said that they would contact me with the dates for the exam. After two days of waiting, there were no calls, so I went back to KSE and found out that I missed my exam, even though I was never contacted as promised. Since then, I have been to the place four times, and every time they promise they will contact me to inform me about the exam's date, but nothing happens. My residency expires in mid-August - if things don't get sorted out by then, I don't know what will happen," she said.

If an engineer fails to acquire an NOC, they won't have the necessary documents to process their residency renewal, unless they are given a different job title under a non-technical field. This choice however, which represents the last resort for those who are desperate to renew their residencies in time, means that an employee cannot be hired as an engineer, thus losing all privileges associated with the job in the process, including the ever so valuable driving license.

"Driving license is very crucial for any field engineer," said Peter (not his real name). "My file was rejected because my college isn't NBA accredited." Three months after his visa expired, Peter agreed to change his job title to have his visa renewed. But after changing his job title from an engineer to a system analyst, Peter says that his salary

was decreased, and lost his driving license because he never met the minimum salary criteria, or enjoyed the exception given to engineers.

There are many engineers who fear that they might run out of time and be unable to finalize their transactions before their already extended visas expire. John (not his real name) is racing with time to finish his residency renewal paperwork before his extended visa expires. "My seven-month pregnant wife has to leave the country at this odd time, simply because I cannot renew her visa while I am on an extended visa," said Jack, an engineer who has his degree certified from a different accreditation body in India than the NBA. "Belonging to a non-NBA certified college has become a curse for me and my family."

But according to Dr Rumane, this issue should not last for long. "With KSE's recent visit to India, and after they release their report, things should become easier to deal with," he reassured. "The process will become quicker, and the paperwork should finish before the visa extension expires."

It has been four months since the manpower authority issued its new circular, but little has changed since. After a visit to India in June to better understand the education system there, the KSE board members will prepare a report of approval based on a comprehensive list of certified engineering colleges sent by India.

Fake engineers

The general belief is that the manpower authority issued its circular to fight the supposed spread of 'fake engineers' or people with fake degrees who are hired in highly-technical engineering jobs in Kuwait. Engineers in Kuwait are not against the idea in general, but their main issue is with how the process is executed. "My college is accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in India. If there were going to be problems with the accreditations, we should have been informed well in advance," said Jack (not his real name).

Upon complaints from Kuwait-based engineers regarding issues with their courses or colleges, IEI Kuwait Chapter sent out messages asking them to report their problems, and gave them one week to do so. However, these messages could not possibly reach everyone among the thousands of engineers who graduated from India. "This message never reached me," Jack said. "I had no clue regarding this until it was too late to report. I don't know what's going to happen after the report is out. I can only hope for things to get easy for me and not having to visit the center every second day."

There are thousands of engineering colleges in India, and not all colleges have a national board of accreditation, said engineer Alwatheq Darwish, who graduated from Delhi College of Engineering of Delhi University in 1996. "Delhi University is a government college accredited by the government of India, but because it was established long before NBA, it isn't NBA certified. I have been working as an engineer for



KUWAIT: Engineers sit in an exam hall at the Kuwait Engineers Society to take their tests for accreditation.

20 years. Just because my college isn't accredited, does that not make me an engineer anymore? I am all for this new rule, but it should have been implemented gradually and in an organized and systematic way," he said. When approached, the Indian Embassy declined to comment on the matter, but has assured that they are continuously working to find a solution by cooperating with the Kuwaiti authorities "who have been very cooperative and understanding throughout the process."

Meanwhile, KSE Chairman Faisal D Al-Atel confirmed that all international bodies were well informed in advance - in 2017 - regarding the circular. "We have visited several countries to understand their education system. In India, as NBA follows the same international standards of accreditation as followed everywhere else, we prefer expat engineers to have their accreditation from there. A report can be prepared only after we receive the said list. KSE, which has led the

Federation of Arab Engineers (FAE) thrice and World Federation of Engineering Organization (WFEO) once, believes in doing what we have to for the betterment of our country. One cannot claim to be an engineer if they don't have the required qualification simply on the basis of experience," he said.

According to Atel, the new measures are necessary to help eliminate the existence of fake degrees in Kuwait and improve the quality of the profession in the market by removing unqualified personnel. "We are an NGO purely working towards making it easier for our fellow engineers by removing the rising trend of fake degrees and providing them with opportunities they deserve at different job levels. We are looking for the big picture here - the 2035 economic plan - where we have submitted three proposals which will create job vacancies for qualified engineers," Atel added. "Let's start with fixing this profession first, everything else will be calibrated."



Engineers pay at the cashier to receive their non-objection certificates.

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Local

Zubaidi back in local markets, but remains very expensive

Few fish in the market every summer

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The fish market in Souq Mubarakiya is almost empty in summer, as fish are expensive compared to other seasons. The reasons, according to some fish vendors, are limited supplies in the summer because many fishermen take a break or go on vacation to their home countries. Fishermen in Kuwait are mostly Egyptians, Iranians, Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis. "We have few fish supplies this summer, but this is not unusual since we face this situation every summer," a fishmonger told Kuwait Times.

On Monday, the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) announced the end of suspension of fishing for Zubaidi (sliver pomfret), a delicacy for many locals. Kuwaiti Zubaidi cannot be sold at fish markets from June 1 to July 17. Prices of Zubaidi in the past few months rose to as much as KD 12 per kilo and about KD 60 per basket, depending on its size. "Prices are

still up, and local Zubaidi is more expensive than what we are selling now from Iran and other neighboring countries. Also every summer, fish usually go to deeper waters, so as a result the catch is very limited," said a fish trader at Souq Mubarakiya.

The vendors hoped that by the end of the month, prices will change as supplies will start to increase. Fish caught in Kuwaiti waters account for 20 percent share of the Kuwaiti market, with the remaining imported from neighboring countries. Almost 80 percent of fish sold in Kuwaiti markets is imported from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka. Zubaidi, Hamour, Nuaibi and Maid are some of the variety of fish popular in Kuwait. Iranian and Pakistani Zubaidi is sold at the same price, while shrimp, which is mostly imported from Saudi Arabia and Egypt, is sold for KD 3 to KD 5 per kilogram depending on the size. But during the shrimping season, the price falls by 500 fils per kilogram.



KUWAIT: Two customers shop for Kuwaiti fish at the fish market in Souq Mubarakiya. — Photo by Ben Garcia

News in brief

KFSD snubs fire video

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) dismissed a video posted on social media showing a huge fire in the capital city of Kuwait, saying that it was just a past fire. "The circulated video shows a previous incident that was controlled by firefighters over a year back," the KFSD's media department said in a press statement on Monday. Therefore, it urged the users of social media to seek only credible news stories that are pertinent to the country's national security, according to the statement. — KUNA

No emergency landing

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways yesterday refuted reports of an emergency landing of one of its planes at a Jordanian airport. In a press release, the national carrier urged the public to be cautious of reports being put out by social media and follow official releases by the corporation. — KUNA

Milan route launched in Oct

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways said Monday it would operate a new route to the Italian city of Milan as of October 29. The airline will operate this route three times a week: Monday, Thursday and Saturday, Kuwait Airways said in a press statement. The move aims at boosting the number of the national carrier's destinations, and to buttress its strategic vision, according to the statement. Established in 1953, Kuwait Airways is one of the oldest airlines in the Arabian Gulf region. It covers more than 40 destinations across the world. — KUNA

Suspicious of corruption

KUWAIT: The Cabinet on Monday asked Minister of State for Housing Affairs and Minister of State for Services Affairs to open an investigation into suspicions of corruption in tenders in the Ministry of Services. This came after Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh briefed the ministers on a memo submitted by Central Agency for Public Tenders on this matter. Saleh also appraised the Cabinet of the Ministry of Information's inaction to sign a contract regarding a tender, so the Cabinet assigned Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs to probe this case. The Cabinet asked the Minister to refer the file to the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) in case corruption is confirmed. — KUNA

Corruption Perceptions Index

KUWAIT: The Cabinet asked the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority to analyze and study outputs of the global Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), and bases and criteria on which its ratings are made. The Cabinet studied proposals included in the report aiming to accelerate action and practical steps to achieve the desired goals. The Cabinet assigned the authority to follow up strenuous efforts so as to improve Kuwait's ratings in the CPI and to coordinate with the national bodies as well as promote contact with the Transparency International (TI). It asked the authority also to inform the TI that the country is not satisfied as its ratings in CPI is inconsistent with its regulatory institutions, regulations and disciplines which should guarantee state's deserved status. — KUNA

Al-Mawashi turns animal corpses into eco-friendly compost

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Livestock Transport and Trading Company (Al-Mawashi) has managed to transform carcasses into organic crop enhancers as an environmental preservation measure, its chief executive said yesterday. In a shared endeavor with Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, Al-Mawashi set the project, which deals with converting animal remains into fertilizers, in motion at the tail end of 2016, the company's CEO Osama Boodai said in a statement.

Two years after it took up the unorthodox technique, he said that it has already contributed towards a decline in the percentage of cattle deaths by 0.19 percent last year. On what Boodai described as a "less expensive and time consuming" approach, he revealed that the process to convert animal remains into fertilizer takes only 17 days, making it much less hassle than more conventional methods that typically last for months. Al-Mawashi is the Gulf region's oldest livestock trade firm, having been a top importer of sheep for decades. — KUNA

Memorial Journey for Pearl Diving kicks off tomorrow

KUWAIT: To celebrate the heritage and tradition of Kuwait, Gulf Bank has confirmed its platinum sponsorship of the 30th Memorial Journey for Pearl Diving for the 9th consecutive year. The annual journey begins on Thursday 19 July for one week and is organized by the Committee of Marine Heritage of the Kuwait Sea Sport Club, under the Patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

With a special 'Al-Dasha' ceremony, the journey will kick off at 8:30 am, with the dhows carrying captains as well as other participants heading to Bandar Al-Ghous in Al-Khairan for an entire week. The return ceremony 'Al-Qoffal' has been planned for the afternoon of Thursday, July 26, 2018. Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Adel Al-Kharafi will represent His Highness the Amir at both 'Al-Dasha' and 'Al-Qoffal' ceremonies.

Commenting on the sponsorship, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank said: "Raising awareness of Kuwait's heritage has always been a key component of our CSR strategy and a key objective that we are keen on fulfilling through various activities and initiatives such as the renowned Memorial Journey for Pearl Diving, which we have been sponsoring for nine years."

"On behalf of Gulf Bank, I would like to wish all participants a great safe trip, and also invite the people of Kuwait to join 'Al-Dasha' and 'Al-Qoffal' ceremonies, as they are both open for public to participate," added Amir.

Gulf Bank continues to maintain and strengthen its position as an integral part of the Kuwaiti society. The Bank supports and emphasizes the true Kuwaiti identity and the importance of the Kuwaiti traditions and customs, through sponsoring different social activities and events.

NBK honors students for academic excellence

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) honored the children of staff who achieved excellence in the academic year 2017/18, in recognition of their hard work and efforts, in a customized ceremony held in their honor. Students and their families joined the event which was attended by Emad Al-Ablani, NBK General Manager-Group Human Resources along with a group of NBK officials.

Ablani congratulated the students and urged them to continue working hard to achieve their goals. "We at NBK are proud of our children and what they have achieved and will achieve in the long run," Ablani explained. "I wish them success in their future studies and



strive for them to excel to build the right foundation as they are the future of our country."

"NBK is dedicated to honoring the outstanding children of staff in recogni-

tion of their academic excellence and effort each year, and also in recognition of the parents who constantly grant all the necessities of their children to ensure their success," Ablani added. NBK sup-

ports education and excellence for the youth of Kuwait in a variety of ways, including holding such honoring ceremonies to recognize and reward students striving toward excellence.

SMEs vital for development in Arab World: Study

KUWAIT: A new study said that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are vital to achieve sustainable development in Arab countries, reduce unemployment and create balanced income. SMEs provide variety in goods, services and job opportunities, said the study, conducted by the Arab Planning Institute in Kuwait. These projects boost production, allowing big companies to have lower cost and shorter time periods in production, it noted. SMEs are also perfect for investing in local resources, since they do not require big capitals. They also create balance between offer and demand in local markets with lower prices.

Meanwhile, the study said that SMEs tend to protect the environment as they usually recycle and use waste left by big factories and protect non-renewable resources.

These projects also adopt modern industry concepts such as time management, high quality, creativity and innovation, it added. The study noted that governments must provide facilitation for SMEs since they can boost the countries' economies. These include supporting infra-

structure for the projects, provide technical and economic consultation and facilitate loans and legal measures. The Arab Planning Institute is a non-profit organization established in 1972 to support development in the Arab World. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Arab Planning Institute in Kuwait.

Local

Families agree with measures to help protect children from 'social media abuse'

Young people spend nine hours a day using media: Study

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The public prosecution has ordered juvenile police to question children who misuse social media applications and hold their families responsible for allowing them to use those apps. The new instructions are in line with rules issued by the supreme national childhood committee of the health ministry applicable to children 13 years old and younger.

Iman Hussain, a mother of two, told Kuwait Times that the new rules are a great step to control 'social media abuse'. "Everyone wants to be famous. They use their cute children to show off on social media to get more likes, shares and followers," Hussain said. She noted that parents nowadays only care about how they can attain a fancy life by getting more followers, then more ads. "Children with poor communication and interaction skills find the internet to communicate easily with others and satisfy their emotions. Your child should be happy with their family life and the network of close relationships so that they are not vulnerable to emotional exploitation," she added.

For Ashraaqat Abu Raddaha, who has one son, social media is a way to keep the child busy and learn new things

through educational videos. "When I allow my son to watch videos online, I always place the computer where the whole family can see it - not in the bedroom or out of sight. Social media are often associated with intrusion into our homes as unwanted guests, but it is necessary to change this pattern of use, with some care and guidance."

Amal Nasr, a mother of four, expressed her anger on how teenagers use social media. "This is the most dangerous age," she said. "I had a hard time preventing my children from using social media. Parents are not the only one to blame, but also the school and society. Also, parents may have work most of time and large families are harder to monitor." She added that she always find inappropriate videos on what is supposed to be YouTube for kids. "I downloaded this app that is supposed to have videos for children, but it keeps showing inappropriate episodes of Spiderman. It has such a bad influence on my child," she said.

Nasr pointed out that parents must monitor their children and set age limits on social media sites, as some websites require the user to be over 13 years old. "Also, the most important rule is not to publish personal information such as addresses and phone numbers. Your



children watch you the way you watch them. Be honest and talk about the proper use of social networking sites and have a very open discussion," she added.

According to a large-scale study conducted by Common Sense Media, young people spend nine hours a day using media for their enjoyment. The study explored how kids aged 8 to 18 use media, studying their level of enjoyment, frequency of use and amount of time they devote to a wide array of media activities and devices. The study discov-

ered that the real impact of social media began to affect children who were moving up to secondary school - in year 7. Social media apps such as Snapchat, Instagram and WhatsApp are most popular with this age group.

We live in a digital age, but social media is putting young people at an emotional risk, according to the report. Children who use social media platforms such as Snapchat and Facebook can find themselves under pressure to compete with peers for social validation.

No injuries in Jabriya building fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Firefighters tackled a blaze reported in a three-storey building in Jabriya yesterday. Firemen arrived to the scene shortly after the fire was reported, and first helped evacuated a woman who was trapped in her second-floor apartment, before they put out the flames. The woman was evacuated safely, and no injuries were reported. An investigation was opened to determine the cause of the fire.



KUWAIT: Fire engines are seen outside a building in Jabriya where a fire was reported yesterday.

Robbery suspects arrested

Two out of three suspects who attempted to rob a money transport vehicle in Industrial Shuwaikh on Thursday were arrested, Al-Rai reported yesterday. The mastermind of the attempt had the weapon that was used and injured an employee of the company. The suspect has a record of robberies and thefts, and was recently released from prison. Criminal detectives from Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Capital and Hawally worked on the case, which is of special interest because it involved the use of a firearm. Investigations led to two out of the three suspects in a mobile chalet in Abdaly, where they were arrested.

They said their plan was to steal the money after they followed the vehicle from a mall in Rai, but failed. The two are bedoons and a third is being sought.

Jahra fire

Fifteen people suffered breathing difficulties during a fire in a Jahra residential building. They were taken to Jahra Hospital for treatment for smoke inhalation. Eight were discharged, while the rest remain hospitalized.



A room inside the apartment after the fire was put out.

Smuggling foiled

Nuwiseeb border customs officers prevented a citizen from smuggling out five Captagon tablets. He was sent to concerned authorities.

Harasser at large

A man chased and harassed a woman in a mall, and publicly asked her to take his mobile phone number. The girl hit him with her handbag then called police, but the suspect escaped. The woman, a citizen, was told to lodge a complaint at the police station.

Kuwait received no UN complaints regarding social aid

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Official sources at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) denied receiving any remarks from the United Nations concerning social aid paid to Kuwaiti citizens monthly. The sources added that the ministry will continue to pay the monthly aid to those who are entitled to it as per ministry resolutions and laws. The sources also refuted rumors about plans to transfer the social aid to Zakat House, noting that MSAL has a special committee to periodically review all cases of aid recipients. The sources explained that

the aid sum is KD 559 in addition to KD 121 to the wife or eldest child or sibling, plus KD 65 for the 3rd to 10th family member with a maximum of KD 1,200 and minimum of KD 255 per family.

Teachers' honoring

The Ministry of Education's (MoE) assistant under-secretary for educational development and activities affairs Faisal Al-Maqseed announced that the ministry has received the names of teachers nominated to be honored on World's Teachers Day from four educational areas. Maqseed added that the remaining two areas are being contacted to send the list as soon as possible so that all nominees' names could be checked. He also noted that 331 teachers and 50 schools will be honored.

Commercial licenses

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) is considering adding a special barcode to commercial licenses to enable more control and help verify all information using an advanced automated system, said

informed sources. The sources added that the barcode will be part of a plan that includes issuing new laws and modern commercial registers to facilitate the business environment and keep up with development rates according to world trade indicators. The source stressed that the new barcode would save both clerks' and licensees' time and effort by showing all related license data on scanning it.

Sports ban

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is scheduled to make its final decision concerning Kuwait's resumption of its international sporting activities next week, said informed sources, noting that the committee is currently reviewing all possibilities. However, the sources said the Kuwaiti government is optimistic about the decision and expects it to be positive, especially since the committee had agreed to hold a meeting in Kuwait last week in the presence of IOC's international affairs officer, which was a triumph in itself.

Finance Ministry keen on strengthening growth

KUWAIT: Minister of Finance Nayef Al-Hajraf affirmed yesterday Kuwait's keenness on strengthening its commercial and economic ties on a global scale. "Customs are an asset to enhancing the general budget of the country, and play a vital role in developing services and business environments," said Hajraf in a statement. His remarks came during a tour at Shuwaikh Port to check on the latest updates in the control room of the new structural projects of the Kuwait General Administration of Customs.

"It is a well-appreciated effort, and they (Administration) have our full support to achieve that vision," Hajraf noted, referring to His Highness the Amir's vision to turn Kuwait into an international financial hub. The minister assured the significance of the Kuwaiti human element in the Administration, and for the entity to fulfill its duties in various positions, saying "they are of the most integral and long-term investment," especially since the quantum leap the Administration have made in enabling companies to pay customary taxes online. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Finance Nayef Al-Hajraf is seen during a tour at Shuwaikh Port yesterday. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) honored the 'Green Hands' environmental voluntary team for their participation in a campaign launched by the public relations team at CBK during Ramadan to present suhoor meals to outdoor cleaning and construction workers.

Legalese

Domestic workers' right to day off



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

A social media influencer recently portrayed to her followers her dismissal of what she called new regulations for domestic workers of a certain nationality, when in reality these regulations have been there for a while. She was disappointed that she had to give domestic workers a day off every week by law.

I have said this so many times before, and will say it again now - the laws in Kuwait are fair towards employees, whether domestic workers or private sector ones, but some people have this mindset that these employees are in our homes because they are 'slaves'. As frustrating as her comment was, what was more frustrating was to see the people's reactions - many people responded by agreeing with her.

Domestic workers should be seen as any other employees when it comes to their rights. They are humans who have goals and aspirations, and although they may seem unfortunate to some of us because they are doing such a job, it is their right to work and we should all respect their hard work and the fact that they left their homes to earn money.

Workers' rights

Question: I am a domestic worker and I want to know what rights I have. Can you please explain, because I am told I have no rights.

Fajer: You have many rights as a worker - the main ones are as follows:

1. An hour-long break after 5 hours of work.
2. Not more than 12 hours of work a day.
3. A day off a week.
4. You have the right to keep your passport.
5. The right to leave the house on your day off (you should never be locked in).
6. The right to change jobs when your contract ends or to leave to work for another employer.
7. The right to receive your salary on time, and many more.

If you have any issues, contact your embassy. For questions or queries, please email us at info@tl-legal.com.

Nearly half million bachelors live in Farwaniya: Report

KUWAIT: The same old problem of 'bachelors' residing in private residential areas was the main topic at a meeting recently held at the Khaitan mayor's office. It discussed a considerable number of complaints by families about renting houses to bachelors in Khaitan and Farwaniya, as figures show that 92,000 bachelors live in Khaitan and around half a million (447,918) live in Farwaniya.

Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Sabah stressed that the problem will not be resolved unless both governmental and public efforts are combined by framing a number of legislations and laws that will protect Kuwait's demography on one hand and bachelors' rights on the other.

Speaking after the meeting held at the Khaitan mayor's office, where he was represented by the governorate's coordination manager Saad Al-Hedebah, Sheikh Faisal said the governorate had started segmenting areas mostly inhabited by bachelors to find suitable solutions and evict them to other areas. "We started in Rabiya and are now working on Khaitan, then Firdous, Ishbeliya and so on," he said.

Sheikh Faisal stressed that companies and citizens who recruit these bachelors and bring them to work in Kuwait should be partners in resolving the problem by not housing them in private residential areas for security and social reasons. He also noted that special teams had been formed to inspect buildings suspected to be inhabited by bachelors in areas designated for families, as well as receive citizens' complaints in this regard.

Moreover, Sheikh Faisal said Farwaniya's population is around 1,169,312, of whom 447,918 are bachelors, including 20,130 females and 427,788 males. "This is almost half of the governorate's population," he remarked, calling for combining all possible efforts to resolve the problem by building labor cities to protect those bachelors' rights and the rights of private residential area inhabitants at the same time. — Al-Rai



Hong Kong police seek landmark ban on pro-independence party
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Malaysian king calls for unity amid racial tensions

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HELSINKI: US President Donald Trump throws to his wife (unseen) a ball of the 2018 football World Cup that he received from Russia's President as a present during a joint press conference after a meeting at the Presidential Palace. — AFP

US lawmakers blast Trump over summit

'The most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory'

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump returned late Monday from his European tour to face ire in Washington, where US intelligence officials and senior Republicans were denouncing the president as "shameful" and "disgraceful" after he refused to challenge Russian leader Vladimir Putin over interference in American elections. Republican Senator John McCain said Trump's seeming acceptance of Putin's denial was a historical "low point" for the US presidency and the Helsinki summit between the two leaders a "tragic mistake."

"Today's press conference in Helsinki was one of the most disgraceful performances by an American president in memory. The damage inflicted by President Trump's naivete, egotism, false equivalence, and sympathy for autocrats is difficult to calculate," McCain said in a blistering statement. "No prior president has ever abased himself more abjectly before a tyrant." Taking direct issue with the president who appointed him, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said US spy agencies have been "clear" and "fact-based" in their assessment that Moscow interfered in the presidential race two years ago—an assessment that Trump refused to endorse in Helsinki.

Coats added that Russia remains behind "ongoing, pervasive efforts to undermine our democracy."

Denial came after 12 Russians indicted

Trump stunned US political allies and foes alike with his answer to a question about Russian hacking and interference in the 2016 election which saw him defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton. Putin "just said it is not Russia. I will say this: I don't see any reason why it would be," Trump said. That came three days after the US Justice Department indicted 12 Russians for hacking Democratic Party computers, the latest in a series of actions taken by the US government since late 2016 in retribution for what intelligence agencies say was a broad plan to support Trump's election campaign directed by Putin himself.

Yet Trump appeared to embrace Putin's word in dismissing that conclusion. "I have great confidence in my intelligence people. But I will tell you that President Putin was extremely strong and powerful in his denial today."

Trump also appeared to embrace Putin's offer to have Russian investigators work together with US prosecutors

on the case of the 12 just indicted. "I think that's an incredible offer." Astonished Republicans and Democrats uniformly condemned Trump, with harsh criticism coming even from hosts on Fox News—a network normally friendly to the president. "The president must appreciate that Russia is not our ally," said Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan. "There is no moral equivalence between the United States and Russia, which remains hostile to our most basic values and ideals," he said.

Senior Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said Trump's answer on meddling "will be seen by Russia as a sign of weakness." Bent on forging a personal bond with the Kremlin chief, Trump headed into the summit blaming the "stupidity" of his predecessors for plunging ties to their present low. "This is shameful," said Senator Jeff Flake, a fellow Republican and staunch critic of the president. "I never thought I would see the day when our American president would stand on the stage with the Russian president and place blame on the United States for Russian aggression." The language used by Democrats was much harsher, including accusations of "treason." "For the presi-

dent of the United States to side with President Putin against American law enforcement, American defense officials, and American intelligence agencies is thoughtless, dangerous, and weak," said Chuck Schumer, the senior Democrat in the Senate.

Democratic California Representative Jimmy Gomez charged: "To side with Putin over US intelligence is disgusting; to fail to defend the US is on the verge of treason." Congressman Adam Schiff, the senior Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said Trump had given Putin "a green light to interfere in 2018." Democratic Senator Chris Murphy was blunter: "This entire trip has just been one giant middle finger from President Trump to his own country. Just jaw dropping," he wrote on Twitter.

Coats' statement was seen as an uncommonly brusque pushback by the US intelligence community against the White House. Retired spy chiefs were more direct however. Coats' predecessor, James Clapper, called Trump's acquiescence to Putin "an incredible capitulation," while former CIA chief John Brennan labeled it "nothing short of treasonous." — AFP

Iran lodges complaint against US over sanctions

TEHRAN: Iran has lodged a complaint with the International Court of Justice against the United States' re-imposition of sanctions, the foreign ministry said yesterday. The complaint was registered the previous day, spokesman Bahram Ghasemi said on the ministry's website. The goal is "to hold (the) US accountable for its unlawful re-imposition of unilateral sanctions," Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on Twitter.

"Iran is committed to the rule of law in the face of US contempt for diplomacy and legal obligations. It's imperative to counter its habit of violating (international) law," he added. The complaint came in response to Washington's decision in May to abandon the 2015 nuclear deal and re-impose sanctions on Iran. Tehran says the action violates international obligations, including the 1955 US-Iran Treaty of Amity—an agreement signed well before Iran's 1979 revolution, but which is still invoked in ongoing legal battles.

Iran and the US have not had diplomatic relations since 1980, when American embassy officials were held hostage in Tehran. Nuclear-related sanctions will be re-imposed by Washington in two phases in August and November, seeking to bar European and other foreign companies from doing business with Iran and blocking its oil sales abroad. Iran and the other signatories to



TEHRAN: Spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Behrouz Kamalvandi (L) answers the press in the capital. — AFP

the 2015 agreement have been scrambling to preserve the limited trade deals they were able to secure since it was signed.

Zarif addressed world diplomats and Iranian businessmen at a lavish Tehran hotel on Monday night, in a meeting designed as a show of continued mutual support in the face of US aggression. "This administration in the United States doesn't know how to behave towards the world... it breaks international treaties as a tool. It is necessary to put a stop to this behavior," Zarif said.

Austrian ambassador Stefan Scholz, whose country currently holds the presidency of the European Union, said "unorthodox and innovative measures" were being considered to allow banking transactions to continue after US sanctions return. "We are all in this together, since the EU is facing a net loss of 10 billion euros (\$11.7 billion) in lost trade with Iran next year," Scholz said. The ICJ is already due to hear a complaint on October 8 that Iran lodged two years ago against the United States for freezing around \$2 billion of its assets held abroad. — AFP

Iraqi police use batons to disperse protesters outside Zubair oilfield

BASRA: Iraqi police wielded batons and rubber hoses to disperse about 250 protesters gathered at the main entrance to the Zubair oilfield near Basra yesterday as unrest across southern cities over poor basic services gathered pace. Since demonstrations began nine days ago, protesters have attacked government buildings, branches of political parties and powerful Shiite militias and stormed the international airport in the holy city of Najaf.

Officials and industry sources said the protests have not affected output at Zubair, run by Italy's Eni, and the other major oilfields including Rumaila developed by BP and West Qurna 2 managed by Lukoil. Many Iraqis believe their leaders do not share the country's oil wealth. Some demonstrators said foreign laborers were robbing them of employment at oil companies. Three protesters have been killed, including one at West Qurna 2.

"We the people of Basra hear about the Iraqi oil and its huge revenues, but we never enjoy its benefits," said 24-year-old protester Esam Jabbar. "Strangers have decent jobs at our oilfields and we don't have the money to pay for a cigarette.

That's wrong and must be stopped," Jabbar said he was unemployed.

Limping economy

At the gate of Zubair field, police beat protesters on their backs and legs with batons and rubber hoses. Blood ran down one policeman's face after protesters hurled stones. Policemen also threw sand to put out tyres that the protesters had set ablaze. Iraq is the second-largest producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries after Saudi Arabia.

Crude exports account for 95 percent of state revenue and any disruptions could badly damage its already limping economy at a time when Iraq needs tens of billions of dollars to rebuild after the three-year war with Islamic State. Prolonged instability in the south could drive up global oil prices. Production at the Zubair field was 475,000 bpd, an Iraqi oil official said in May. Iraq exported an average of 3.566 million barrels per day from its southern oilfields so far in July, said senior oil officials, levels confirming that the troubles have not disrupted crude shipments from the region. — Reuters

International

Free bus rides driving safer births for Nepali women

Program has helped over 2 million women access medical services

RAMECHHAP: As a teenager Meera Nepali was terrified as she went into labor with her first child at home in a remote village, miles from a hospital with nobody but her mother-in-law to help. "I was a scared, but that was the norm. We didn't have doctors close by," Nepali told AFP of her three-day labor in Khadadevi village in Nepal's hilly Ramechhap district.

This year however, she delivered her second child in a rural health centre thanks to a small cash incentive that is getting pregnant women to hospital by paying their bus fares. The Aama Surakshya, or "protection for mothers", program has helped more than two million Nepali women access medical services in the impoverished country where dying in childbirth remains a very real risk. The UN Population Fund says giving birth remains a leading killer of women of reproductive age in Nepal, where the risk of dying in childbirth is higher than anywhere else in South Asia except Afghanistan. A huge obstacle to safe deliveries is the Himalayan nation's tough terrain, which often makes getting to a health facility a long and expensive journey, as well as the paucity of clinics in many parts of the country.

"We found that one of the main reasons rural women did not go to a hospital during childbirth was because they did not have hard cash to pay for transportation," said Suresh Tiwari, one of

the original architects of the scheme. The program was started in 2005 with British aid money, but has since been taken over by the Nepal government. Today, it covers not just transport but medical costs for mothers and babies and includes a cash bonus for attending antenatal check-ups.

2017 marked a milestone for the program: more Nepali women opted for hospital births over home deliveries for the first time on record, official figures show. "The free service and transport incentive have been very effective in bringing women to health centers and hospitals where they can be saved in the case of complications," said Tara Nath Pokharel, head of the government's Family Health Division, which now runs the program.

'Die at home'

Nepali, one of the beneficiaries, paid nothing for her three-day stay at a clinic in Ramechhap district, east of Kathmandu, in January. She was discharged with 1,000 rupees (\$9) for transport plus a 400 rupee bonus for attending four antenatal appointments. "I returned home in an ambulance. We hardly had to spend anything. I am really grateful for this facility," Nepali said, cradling her young son in her arms.

The scheme is also saving lives outside the

maternity wards, in part by tackling cultural obstacles. Deeply patriarchal attitudes and traditional preferences for home births also see hospital visits dismissed as an unnecessary expense for poor families. Sita Khatri went into labor weeks before her due date and, unable to walk the three hours to the nearest health centre, gave birth to a healthy boy at home.

But the 27-year-old suffered a retained placenta, a painful and potential fatal complication of childbirth, and had to plead with her husband to take her to hospital. "He said we don't have money. I insisted, saying there are government facilities, we won't have to spend too much," Khatri said. "It is better to go the hospital than to die at home."

Eventually Khatri's husband relented, and she was treated for free at a nearby clinic. The couple was also given 1,000 rupees to pay for transport. But some women cannot be reached by road and must be carried, while others encounter poorly equipped facilities once they arrive, said Niliza Shakya, a doctor at a health centre in Ramechhap. "Some women still don't have the decision-making power to say they want to go to a hospital, and health posts like ours are not equipped enough," said Shakya.

Nepal managed to reduce maternal mortality by 71 percent between 1990 and 2015 —



RAMECHHAP: This photo taken on June 8, 2018 shows Nepali mother Pabitra Dhungel (C) getting into an ambulance a day after giving birth, at a health centre in the Ramechhap district, some 100 kms east of Kathmandu. — AFP

just missing out on an ambitious Millennium Development Goal to reduce the rate by three-quarters. But it has a long way to go in improving the overall quality of its healthcare, said

Binjwala Shrestha, a charity worker from the Safe Motherhood Network Federation of Nepal. "Reaching the hospital alone is not enough," she said. — AFP

Russia condemned by rights court over Politkovskaya

STRASBOURG: The European Court of Human Rights condemned Russia in two separate judgments yesterday over its investigation into murdered journalist Anna Politkovskaya and its treatment of the protest group Pussy Riot. In the case of Politkovskaya, who was gunned down in the stairwell of her Moscow apartment building in 2006, the court ruled that Russia "had failed to take adequate investigatory steps to find the person or persons who had commissioned the murder".

The judges at the court in Strasbourg found that Russian investigators should have explored possibilities that the crime was ordered by "agents from Russia's FSB domestic secret service or of the administration of the Chechen Republic". Politkovskaya, a reporter for the opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta, was a fierce critic of President Vladimir Putin and his role in the war-torn republic of Chechnya.

She was 48 when she was killed-on Putin's birthday-and her death sparked an international outcry. Four men, including an FSB officer, were originally tried over her killing but acquitted in 2009. After further investigations three of the same men-two brothers and a police officer, but not the FSB officer-were tried again along with two additional suspects. In 2014 they were sentenced to prison, with Rustam Makhmudov, who fired the fatal shots, and his uncle Lom-Ali Gaitukayev, identified as the organizer of the murder, now serving life terms. "However, an investigation into such a killing could not be considered adequate if no efforts had been made to identify the person who had commissioned the crime and paid for it," the court said in its ruling. It also criticized prosecutors for saying the inquiry continues, "without giving convincing reasons why it had lasted so long". The case was filed at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) by Politkovskaya's family, which has long claimed justice has not been done in the case.

'Humiliation'

The court ordered Russia to pay a total of 20,000 euros (\$23,500) to the four family members-Politkovskaya's mother, sister and two children. The ECHR covers allegations of rights abuses by any of the 47 governments signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights. Russia, which ratified the con-

vention in 1998, is obliged to implement the court's judgments.

A separate case involved three members of Pussy Riot, the feminist punk group which made headlines worldwide in 2012 when the women were arrested for performing a protest song in a Moscow church titled "Punk Prayer-Virgin Mary, Drive Putin Away". They were held in pre-trial detention for five months on the basis of what the court called "stereotyped reasons" before being convicted of "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred" at a widely followed trial that drew protests from rights groups.

The court concluded that Russia had violated their human rights by subjecting them to "humiliating and intimidating" treatment, not providing a fair trial and not allowing them freedom of expression. In particular, the seven judges hearing the case said the three women had been subjected to "overcrowded conditions" during their trial, often being transported to and from the courtroom in compartments measuring as small as 0.37 square meters.

Their access to legal counsel was also unfairly curtailed, since while being kept in a glass dock surrounded by police-itself a "humiliation", the court found-they could speak with lawyers only through "a small window one meter off the ground". The court said a defendant's right to speak with lawyers without being overheard is "one of the basic requirements of a fair trial in a democratic society". It also deemed their prison sentences had been "exceptionally severe".

Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina were released after serving one year and nine months of their two-year sentences. The other convicted member, Yekaterina Samutsevich, was detained pre-trial for seven months, but was released afterwards with a suspended sentence. The European court ordered Russia to pay damages of 16,000 euros each to Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina, and 5,000 euros to Samutsevich, as well as 11,760 euros for their legal expenses. Pussy Riot activists have continued to stage protests since, most recently at the World Cup final in Moscow on Sunday, when four members invaded the pitch dressed in police uniforms. On Monday, they were sentenced to 15 days in jail. — AFP

uncovering the facts". The spokesman said there were "a number of false accusations and incorrect assertions that are wholly inaccurate and do not stand up to scrutiny".

Spending rules

In the referendum, the official pro- and anti-Brexit campaign groups, designated by the Electoral Commission, had spending limits of £7 million (\$9.3 million, 7.9 million euros). The commission's report found that the Vote Leave campaign made a donation of more than £675,000 to BeLeave, and because they worked together had thereby exceeded the £7 million spending limit by almost £500,000.

The report said BeLeave, which was founded by fashion student Darren Grimes, spent more than £675,000 with AggregateIQ, a Canadian digital political advertising company, under a "common plan" with Vote Leave. Shahmir Sami, who worked with Vote Leave, alleged the money was used to pay AggregateIQ for targeted messaging services on Facebook and other social media. AggregateIQ was mentioned in the scandal over Cambridge Analytica, a now defunct British company accused of misusing data obtained from Facebook to micro-target political ads. Christopher Wylie, a Cambridge Analytica whistleblower, said that AggregateIQ was linked to Strategic Communication Laboratories, CA's parent company. — AFP

Kyrgyz student's killing fires critics of bride kidnapping

SOKULUK: Inside a nomadic yurt pitched next to her family home in northern Kyrgyzstan a young woman's female relatives sob loudly in a traditional ceremony marking 40 days since her death. "She was my youngest daughter. Humble and well-behaved," the victim's mother, Gulnara Kozhanalyeva, told AFP through tears.

"She had such big plans for the future," she said, inside the yurt where an Islamic cleric chanted prayers. Burulai Turdaaly Kyzy, a 20-year-old medical student, wanted to become a pediatrician and marry her long-term boyfriend. Instead, she was allegedly killed by a jealous kidnapper inside the confines of a provincial police station in Jayil district, in the northern Chui region, in May.

According to family members who saw her body, the 30-year-old suspect carved the young woman's initial and that of her sweetheart into her chest, although police refute this. The attack has horrified the ex-Soviet nation of six million people, prompting several thousand to take to the streets and drawing condemnation from the United Nations and rights groups. At least 23 police officers have been either disciplined, suspended or sacked for negligence after her suspected kidnapper allegedly stabbed her to death as she waited to give a witness statement against him.

'Eye for an eye'

But the girl's family has refused to accept the police account and her mother has criticized the country's justice system. "When we have justice served across the land, only then will we be able to bring an end to this tradition" of bride kidnapping, Kozhanalyeva said. The victim's uncle said the family should take matters into their own hands. "If laws don't work, then we should act. Eye for an eye, blood for blood," Seyit Kozhanalyev said. "How did the kidnapper manage to kill her so cruelly inside the walls of a police station?" he seethed. Police have denied claims that the attacker inscribed the letters N + B, representing the victim's name and the name of the man she had wanted to marry, on her chest.

Mali town learns to live without a state

KONNA: A herd of goats browse on grass in the stony front yard of Konna's local government offices—a town abandoned by the state and its security forces, like many others in central Mali. As the goats scatter to surrounding alleys, a policeman from the UN mission (MINUSMA) jokes: "The only residents have fled now." Sent from the regional capital, Mopti, the MINUSMA police want to ask an official about the progress of voter card distribution ahead of the July 29 presidential vote.

But as the weekly market bustles, attracting people from villages miles away, there is no one in the white subprefecture building. On a desk covered with documents, a Malian flag is the only proof there is a state in the town of 16,000. Near the statue that stands at the entrance of the town—a tribute to the first French soldier to die in the 2013 offensive against jihadists, which started in Konna—the brand new police station still has no staff. Last year, police dispatched to the town were instead sent to restive areas around Mopti, some 70 kilometers away, according to deputy mayor Yaya Traore. "The police officers who came here said they were leaving, but that soon we would have a new team here, at the station," he said.

The new officers are yet to arrive, leaving the town's security in the hands of the "Konna surveillance squad," which was set up in 2016 to



SOKULUK: Relatives grieve by the grave of Burulai Turdaaly Kyzy, a 20-year-old medical student, during a traditional ceremony marking 40 days since she was murdered in a police station by her kidnapper. — AFP

After the attack, the suspect turned the knife on himself and was hospitalized before being taken into pre-trial detention, police said. He is yet to be indicted but faces a murder charge, while a suspected accomplice is also under investigation on a bride kidnapping charge.

marriages occur following bride abductions. But only one person was sentenced to jail on bride kidnapping charges in Kyrgyzstan last year, according to official records.

'Irresponsibility of men'

Last month, several thousand people rallied in the capital, Bishkek, in two protests, one of which was backed by the education ministry. One male parliamentarian, Dastan Bekeshev, proposed building a monument to Turdaaly Kyzy outside the headquarters of the interior ministry. Many of his colleagues have been accused of staying quiet, however.

In a searing speech that went viral on social media, lawmaker Aisuluu Mamashova questioned why only female deputies raised the hot-button issue in parliament and called "the irresponsibility of men" a "national problem". Model and TV personality Assol Moldokmatova, who played a key role in organizing one of the two protests, argued that a mindset rooted in stigma, bans "and what would society think" reinforces bride kidnapping. The woman's killing, which triggered "a wave of non-acceptance" regarding the practice, could help change that, said Moldokmatova, claiming she received some 7,000 messages from victims of gender-based violence in the days following the rally. — AFP

UK's official Brexit campaign fined, referred to police

LONDON: Britain's official Brexit campaign, Vote Leave, has been fined for breaking spending rules in the 2016 EU membership referendum, the Electoral Commission announced yesterday, adding that it had referred the case to the police. The Electoral Commission regulator said the winning side in the referendum had worked together with a smaller pro-Brexit group called BeLeave and had made a donation to the youth organization to get around its own campaign finance limits.

"We found substantial evidence that the two groups worked to a common plan, did not declare their joint working and did not adhere to the legal spending limits," said Bob Posner, the commission's director of political finance and regulation. "These are serious breaches of the laws put in place by parliament to ensure fairness and transparency at elections and referendums," Posner said. A Vote Leave spokesman accused the Electoral Commission of being "motivated by a political agenda rather than



KONNA: A member of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) in Mali, leaves the building of the municipality. — AFP

fight crime. "We set it up all by ourselves with the youngsters," said Traore, who sits on the board of the surveillance squad of 486 people. "They are the ones who go everywhere, if there's a problem they will solve it," he says as his radio crackles.

They patrol from midnight to 5:00 am, forbidding any road traffic with few exceptions, the deputy mayor says. "During the day, we have a team called 'Delta Force.'" When suspects are arrested, they are held at the community centre

until the mayor decides whether or not to send them to a court in Mopti. Residents chip in every month. Yellow jackets, radios and sticks or machetes is the only equipment given to the force, which brings together butchers, tailors, shopkeepers and artisans. "We have 30 walkie-talkies that were sent by a Malian in Congo," the squad's president, Mahamane Kebe, told AFP in front of his tailoring shop. "Right now, some of our men are at the market to ensure its security," he added. — AFP

International

Hong Kong police seek landmark ban on pro-independence party

Semi-autonomous Hong Kong enjoys freedoms unseen on the mainland

HONG KONG: Police in Hong Kong sought to ban a political party which promotes independence for the city yesterday, citing it as a potential national security threat as Beijing ups pressure on challenges to its territorial sovereignty. Semi-autonomous Hong Kong enjoys freedoms unseen on the mainland including freedom of expression but concern is growing those rights are under serious threat from an assertive China under President Xi Jinping.

It is the first time such a ban has been sought since Britain handed sovereignty of Hong Kong back to China in 1997 and is the latest move to stifle any calls for independence, which have infuriated Chinese authorities. Hong Kong's secretary for security John Lee said yesterday he was considering the request made by police to ban the Hong Kong National Party (HKNP), a well-known but small group with a core membership of around a dozen, which promotes the city's independence from China.

"In Hong Kong we have freedom of association, but that right is not without restriction," Lee told reporters. Questioned how the party was damaging national security, Lee said he could not comment on the details. However, he added that under Hong Kong law, national security meant safeguarding the "territorial integrity and the independence of the People's Republic of China".

Lee said he would give the party 21 days to make representations. HKNP and rights groups said the move was a political decision to silence critics. "Today we Hong Kongers stand in opposition to our enemies, these Chinese colonizers and their puppets in the current Hong Kong

government, and it is this antagonism that defines our movement," it said in a statement on its Facebook page.

"This is a chilling day for freedom of association and freedom of expression in Hong Kong, with potentially far-reaching consequences," said Amnesty International's Patrick Poon. The ban has been requested under the city's Societies Ordinance, which stipulates groups can be prohibited in the interests of national security and public safety. Pro-democracy lawmaker and barrister Alvin Yeung said the ordinance was first established to crack down on Hong Kong's illegal triad gangs, not political organizations.

“ This is a chilling day for freedom of association ”

Police visit
HKNP has lost momentum over the past two years as the government seeks to muzzle pro-independence sentiment. The group's

leader Andy Chan told AFP police went to his home on Tuesday and handed him documents citing the requested ban, asking him to respond to the security secretary within the time limit. Chan said the documents included records of his speeches and Facebook history, adding that he thought the move may be linked to a recent trip he made to Taiwan where he spoke about Hong Kong civil and political rights at a public forum. China sees self-ruling democratic Taiwan as part of its own territory to be brought back into the fold. Pro-Beijing legislator Priscilla Leung told AFP any promotion of Hong Kong's independence by a political party was a "violation" of the city's semi-autonomous "one country, two systems" status. Activists calling for Hong Kong's independence from China



HONG KONG: This file photo taken on August 5, 2016 shows Andy Chan (R), leader of the pro-independence Hong Kong National Party and a disqualified candidate of the city's elections, speaking at a press conference at the start of a rally near the government's headquarters. — AFP

emerged after mass pro-democracy rallies in 2014 failed to win reforms. But pro-independence campaigners including Chan have since been blocked from standing for office and

others disqualified from the legislature. Leading independence activist Edward Leung was jailed for six years in June on rioting charges after clashes with police in 2016. — AFP

Bangladesh drug war death toll has hit 200

DHAKA: The death toll from Bangladesh's contentious Philippines-style war on drugs since May has hit 200, a local rights group said yesterday, with some 25,000 others imprisoned. Bangladesh launched the crackdown to smash the surging trade in "yaba", a cheap methamphetamine and caffeine pill, which authorities say has spread to almost every village and town.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan has said the "war" will last until the narcotics trade is brought under control, saying those killed are all involved in at least 10 drugs crimes. But rights groups say that many of the victims are shot by police in cold blood and that the onslaught was in part being used as a cover to settle scores. In June the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, said he was "gravely concerned" that "such a large number of people" had died.

Official declarations that none of the victims was innocent were "dangerous... and indicative of a total disregard for the rule of law," a UN statement said. Bangladesh's state-run National Human Rights Commission has also expressed alarm. "It is unprecedented in Bangladesh. So many people have been killed in such a short period of time," Sheema Hafiza, executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra rights group, told AFP.

"This is very unfortunate. We condemn these extrajudicial killings and want fair investigations into each of these killings," she said. Around 25,000 alleged drug dealers have been arrested, home ministry spokesman Sharif Mahmud Apu said. The prison population has shot up to 89,589 people, almost two and a half times higher than the system's capacity, he said. Last month the killing of a border town councillor in an anti-drug raid sparked outcry when his wife went public with tapes that she says prove her husband was murdered in a set-up.

Ayesha Begum says phone conversations she recorded with Akramul Haque on the night he died contradict the official narrative that he was armed and shot at police who returned fire in self-defense. "They killed him in cold blood," Begum told AFP from Teknaf in southeast Bangladesh, where her husband was gunned down May 27. — AFP

India orders all Mother Teresa care homes inspected

NEW DELHI: India has ordered an immediate inspection of all childcare homes run by a religious order founded by Mother Teresa after a nun was arrested over an alleged adoption racket. Illegal adoption is big business in India, with over 100,000 children reported missing every year, the government says. Many are given up by desperately poor parents but others are snatched from hospitals and train stations.

Police earlier this month arrested the nun and a worker at one of the Missionaries of Charity order's homes in Ranchi, the capital of eastern Jharkhand state, over allegations that at least five infants were sold for potentially thousands of dollars. The scandal blew up after local child welfare authorities informed police about a newborn missing from the home, which is meant to care for unwed pregnant women and mothers in distress.

In a statement late Monday, Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi said all state governments have been asked "to get child care homes run by Missionaries of Charity all over the country inspected immediately." She also said all childcare institutions should be registered and linked to the central adoption authority within the next month. In December India's Supreme Court had ordered mandatory registration of all childcare institutions and bringing orphanages under the central adoption system. Since then some 2,300 childcare institutions have been linked to the Central Adoption Resource Authority and about 4,000 are still pending, according to the government. — AFP

Cambodia govt calls campaign to boycott election a 'crime'

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's election commission yesterday described calls to boycott a controversial election on July 29 as a "crime" and said authorities were already pursuing charges against those who criticized the vote. Strongman leader Hun Sen is set to extend his 33-year grip on power in the upcoming election after supporting the dissolution of the main opposition group last year and turning up the heat on civil society and the media.

In recent weeks, however, opposition figures—mostly those who left the country in the wake of the sweeping crackdown—have pushed back and called on voters to skip the poll in protest. "In a democratic country, the election is very important, so the campaign against the election or to disrupt people from going to vote is a crime," Tep Nytha, secretary general of the National Election Commission, told reporters.

He said authorities would take legal action against anyone involved in the boycott and some people who called in to "curse" election officials and use "bad words" against them were being targeted, but did not elaborate. The government has previously warned of prosecuting boycott campaigners and Tep Nytha doubled down on the threat while unveiling tens of thousands of ink bottles yesterday.

Supporters of a boycott have posted photos on social media holding up a "clean finger"—a symbol of protest to urge Cambodians not to dip their fingers in the ink used in the process. The daughter of Kem Sokha, a leader of the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party who was arrested in the crackdown and remains behind bars on charges of treason, showed support for the boycott yesterday on Twitter.

"No CNRP, no real election! No voting, no dirty finger!" she said. Sam Rainsy, a senior opposition figure who helped found the CNRP and lives in self-exile in



PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's National Election Committee official use a bottle of indelible ink to mark a finger during a briefing on the voting process in Phnom Penh yesterday in preparation for the July 29 general election. — AFP

France, told AFP that the boycott was a form of political disobedience. "The CNRP is explaining to the population that voting is not legally binding in Cambodia and that exercising one's right not to vote on July 29 is a way of saying 'no' to Hun Sen and his totalitarian drift," he said.

The upcoming vote will be the most one-sided in recent memory following the dissolution of the main opposition party, which made significant gains in nation-

al elections in 2013 and in local polls four years later. But a poor turnout on voting day could also send a message. Andrea Giorgetta, director of the Asia desk for the International Federation for Human Rights, said the proposed boycott was perfectly legal and that government's reaction to it was "another sign of their fear". Western democracies withdrew funding for the vote but Cambodia's biggest backer China has maintained its support. — AFP

Malaysian king calls for unity amid racial tensions

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's king has appealed for calm amid growing racial tensions in the Muslim-majority country after an electoral earthquake in May toppled the Malay-dominated coalition that had ruled the country for decades. In his inaugural address to lawmakers during the new parliament session, King Sultan Muhammad V urged "every citizen to preserve and strengthen" Malaysia's "peace and unity."

Race, language and religion are closely intertwined with politics in Malaysia, where Muslim Malays make up about 60 percent of the 32 million population, followed by large Chinese and Indian minorities. Malaysia experienced deadly 1969 race riots that still haunt the country. Tensions have increased since May 9 elections that saw the Barisan Nasional coalition, led by ex-prime minister Najib Razak, defeated for the first time since independence from Britain in 1957.

Najib's own party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) had been the backbone of the coalition and championed the rights of Malays, who have long enjoyed a favored position in society under an official affirmative action program. Now in opposition, the



KUALA LUMPUR: The 15th King of Malaysia, Sultan Muhammad V (R) prepares to deliver his address during the opening ceremony of the parliament. — AFP

UNMO claims the government is undermining Malays' privileged status. Its supporters fear that the government's plans to officially recognize exams taken in Chinese-medium high schools will challenge the status of Malay as the country's official language, and have also accused the government of cutting back spending on the redevelopment of mosques. Lokman Adam, a UMNO supreme council member who led some 300 party members in a noisy protest near parliament, told AFP that race relations between Malays and other minority races were strained.

"Race relations are a bit tense. Malays are restless. We feel Islam is being treated badly (by the new gov-

ernment)." "We feel the current government is not able to protect Malay rights, Islam, the Malay language and the Malay rulers." The protestors, chanting "Long live the king" and "Allahu Akbar" were prevented by the police from marching to the parliament building, where the king later made his speech. Allegations of massive corruption were a major factor behind the defeat of Najib's long-ruling coalition and the ushering into power of a reformist alliance headed by his 93-year-old former mentor Mahathir Mohamad. Najib has since been charged for corruption over a multibillion dollar financial scandal at the state fund IMDB. He has denied any wrongdoing. — AFP

Woman 'detained' after tossing ink on Xi's poster

SHANGHAI: A woman who live-streamed herself throwing ink onto a picture of Chinese President Xi Jinping has been detained, according to activists who accuse authorities of suppressing speech to protect a "cult of personality" around the country's leader. The US-based Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) activist network said authorities have also taken the woman's father and a Chinese artist into custody after they sought to publicize her plight on social media.

The woman, who has been identified by activists as 28-year-old Dong Yaoqiong, went live on Twitter on July 4 in a video in which she accused the ruling Communist Party of employing "oppressive brain control". In the video, retweeted tens of thousands of times, Dong splashes ink on a poster bearing Xi's image at a location in Shanghai's financial district, saying defiantly: "Xi Jinping, I'm right here waiting for you to arrest me." CHRD said Dong is believed to have been arrested later that day and that her Twitter account was deleted hours after the incident.

Her final tweet included a photo of several uniformed men outside her apartment. CHRD said authorities were "suppressing freedom of speech to protect Xi Jinping's cult of personality". Twitter is blocked by China, along with some other major foreign social media sites like Facebook, but can be accessed via easily available censor-evading software.

Chinese authorities swiftly punish those who deface leaders' images and other Communist symbols. Dong's act comes at a particularly sensitive time as the government aggressively nurtures a cult of personality around Xi, especially since he dramatically strengthened his hold on power during a Communist Party congress late last year. — AFP

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Foiled peace bids and greedy gangs dog CAR

"This road isn't safe," warns a UN soldier at the edge of a jungle where the latest militia to darken hopes for peace in the Central African Republic has surfaced. Huddled with assault rifles in a pickup truck that slides across the thick red mud, the Tanzanian peacekeepers keep watch on the Mambere-Kadei forest, home to a small but violent group that came to the fore last September.

Known as Siriri, the force is drawn mainly from Fulani cattle herders, who say they took up arms to deal with rustlers. Cattle theft is frequent in the west of the country, where seasonal migration of livestock is common practice. Led by an individual named Ardo Abba, Siriri - its name means "peace" in Sango, CAR's main language - has led raids on villages, and warned the UN force of reprisals if its troops continue to operate in the region.

The movement is the latest armed group to surface in a conflict that has displaced more than a quarter of CAR's population of 4.5 million people and seen no fewer than seven peace accords signed and fail. "They arrived on motorbikes, about 20 of them, wanting to settle in the village, but people refused," said a man who gave his first name as Michel, describing an attack on New Year's Eve. "Then they started looting," he said. Two people were killed and 25 stores robbed. "They whipped me here," said Michel, displaying his neck. One fighter "got his rifle out to kill me, but their chief said no. That's when I made my escape."

Militia gaining strength

The raid is one of countless similar attacks in a largely lawless country with a weakened government since a coup in 2013. Outside the capital Bangui, much of the CAR is divided among 15 armed groups disputing control of natural resources. The church and foreign powers including the African Union have sought to mediate between the government and the militias. Last Thursday Russia tried to set up a meeting in Sudan. President Faustin-Archange Touadera's office says the Russian initiative was dropped as "the head of state believes there is no cause to engage in other processes while the African Union one is still under way".

Siriri is estimated to number no more than a hundred men but is steadily gaining in strength, according to the ex-chief of one of the "anti-balaka" militia groups, which emerged in mostly Christian communities to confront the mainly Muslim rebels behind the 2013 coup. "They have new uniforms, new weapons, new ranger boots. Some of them even have bulletproof vests," he said, acknowledging that neither he nor any other self-defense force could match such a well-equipped adversary.

Cattle for 'protection'

"Every month, they take ransom from villages: 1.5 million CFA francs (€2,300) for a big village, 500,000 for a little one. Cattle-raisers must pay them at least one head of cattle per month in exchange for 'protection'," he added. In response to the harassment, troops from United Nations CAR peacekeeping mission MINUSCA launched military action against the Siriri militia on April 12, killing dozens of fighters. The militia had put up a roadblock and shot at a UN patrol, which returned fire. Four rebels, including military operations chief Mahamat Djibrila, were killed.

Siriri went to seek allied reinforcements further north, from armed group the Democratic Front of the Central African People (FDP) and another group called the 3R. Last month Siriri killed a peacekeeper and wounded seven others in an ambush that also led to the death of 16 rebels. Apart from claiming to avenge the dead, the armed group is fighting against the creation of forward outposts on territory it says it controls. Tanzanian UN troops have already built four outposts and are preparing to install a fifth. A military source said the outposts were a positive step, but insufficient. "As long as the border with Cameroon escapes control, they (the armed groups) will always have sanctuaries where they can hide." — AFP



Tanzanian soldiers from the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), patrol the town of Gamboula, threatened by the Siriri group, on July 6, 2018. — AFP



'Reeducation camps' in spotlight in Kazakh

Secretive "reeducation camps" allegedly holding hundreds of thousands of people in a Muslim-majority region in western China are the focus of an explosive court case in Kazakhstan, testing the country's ties with Beijing. On trial is Sayragul Saulybay, an ethnic Kazakh Chinese national who is accused of illegally crossing the border to join her husband and two children in Kazakhstan. But it is the 41-year-old's testimony about her forced work in the camp system in the Xinjiang region that has drawn the most attention. Beijing has stepped up a crackdown in Xinjiang against what it calls separatist elements.

At a public hearing, Saulybay said she was granted access to classified documents that shed light on the sprawling network of re-education centers. China's predominantly Muslim ethnic minority groups are believed to make up the majority of the camps' populations. Chinese authorities have denied the existence of such facilities despite mounting evidence from both official documents and testimonies from those who have escaped them.

Asked under oath about a so-called "camp" where she worked as an employee of the Chinese state, court spectators gasped when Saulybay replied it held some 2,500 ethnic Kazakhs. "In China they call it a political camp but really it was a prison in the mountains," she said. Saulybay said authorities had told her she would never be allowed to enter Kazakhstan, where her family had obtained citizenship. "That I am discussing this camp in an open court means I am already revealing state secrets," said Saulybay, who asked Kazakhstan not to send her back to China.

'Dating service' gets young people into work

A few years ago, Thabo Ngwato's job prospects looked bleak. After graduating from high school, he started studying at the University of Johannesburg - but was forced to drop out when his mother retired and cash ran short. For a year and a half he hung around his home in a poor township in Boksburg, east of Johannesburg, playing football with friends and occasionally making job applications in town. He got no response - not a surprise in a country with one of the world's most persistently high youth unemployment rates.

In South Africa, a record 5.5 million young people are searching for work unsuccessfully, many living in slums far from big employers. But one day a friend mentioned to Ngwato he had found work through Harambee, a South African "youth employment accelerator" that links talent-hungry businesses with promising poor kids. "The best description I've heard is that we're a dating service and a finishing school," said Lebo Nke, an executive at the Johannesburg-based social enterprise, which since 2011 has helped more than 50,000 youths find work, including Ngwato.

For the past two years, the 23-year-old has worked at a Johannesburg call centre, earning enough to support his mother and nephew. He recently bought his first car to speed up his three-minibus trip to work. "I know how to network, look for employment. The skills are ones I can take anywhere," he said.

'This person will disappear'

Saulybay is one of many ethnic Kazakhs separated from relatives over the border after a crackdown in Xinjiang, where authorities cite separatist and extremist threats as justification for repressive policies. There are about 1.5 million ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang. They had however avoided extreme state repression suffered by Uighurs, another mostly Muslim Turkic group that forms a demographic majority in many parts of the region. Unlike Uighurs, ethnic Kazakhs had long moved freely between China and their historic homeland.

About 200,000 of them became Kazakh citizens since the Central Asian country's independence in 1991. That freedom disappeared however after a Chinese official known for his aggressive surveillance and population control measures in Tibet took charge of the nominally autonomous region in 2016, overseeing mass detentions and programs of re-education for Muslims. In late 2016 authorities took the unprecedented step of calling in Muslim minorities' passports, forcing anyone needing to leave the country to file official requests.

Saulybay's husband Wali Islam testified that for several months the family lost contact with her after she was reassigned to a re-education center from a state kindergarten. Saulybay told the court she had been tricked into working at the camps by authorities. The family was reunited only after she crossed the border this April. Kazakh security services arrested her on May 21. Saulybay's lawyer Abzal Kuspanov said the testimony of his client - who briefly consoled her 13-year-old daughter as she

was ushered into the dock by police - was a sufficient indicator as to what will await her if she returns to China. "We are not saying that she has not committed a crime by violating state borders using false documents. We have admitted that to the court and we are prepared to accept punishment," Kuspanov told AFP Friday. "What we are saying is - don't give her back to China. If we do send her back, this person will simply disappear," said Kuspanov.

Diplomatic tensions

The situation of ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang is embarrassing for Kazakhstan, which is China's leading economic partner in Central Asia. While the government is hesitant to confront Beijing, it is under growing pressure to speak out against the

repression. China has enlisted oil-rich Kazakhstan as a key partner in its trillion dollar Belt and Road initiative aimed at improving overland trade routes between Europe and Asia.

So far Beijing has kept silent on the allegations: Two Chinese diplomats present at the hearing refused to answer questions from activists and journalists. Under public pressure, Kazakhstan's foreign ministry has called for "an objective and fair review" of detentions of Kazakh citizens in the region. But Kazakhstan, which is seeking massive investments from China, is in a poor position to lobby for the rights of Chinese citizens like Saulybay. Her trial is a test "of the maturity of Kazakhstan-China relations", said Serikzhan Mambetali, a Kazakh political activist. — AFP



A picture taken on July 13, 2018 shows Sayragul Saulybay sitting inside a defendants' cage during a hearing at a court in the city of Zharkent. — AFP

Too few jobs

Globally, South Africa has one of the highest unemployment rates at 26 percent, a figure that has steadily increased over much of the last decade. Among young people, things are worse. One in three aged 15 to 24 are not employed, studying or in any kind of training, according to 2018 figures from government agency Statistics South Africa. The reasons include a public education system with high drop-out rates, slow economic growth, black empowerment schemes that have benefited only a few, and poor leadership by former President Jacob Zuma, who resigned in February facing corruption charges.

But South Africa's apartheid legacy plays a central role too. Many poor people still live in townships purposely built far from urban centers, with little access to cheap public transport. They have few prospects of finding work they can reach, or teaching their children how to get it. "It's

the geography part that's often missed," said Jak Koseff, head of Tshepo 1 Million, a youth jobs push run by Gauteng Province, where Johannesburg is located. "It's really at the heart of the problem."

Developing talent

To change that, Harambee sends young recruiters - who it calls "feet on the streets" - into deprived townships and collects contacts of young people hoping for jobs. It then invites some into its offices for a day to gauge their interests and skills, test their analytical thinking, and help them create an email account and CV. It also offers advice on everything from how to dress for a job interview to the kinds of questions they might be asked. Those without interview clothes can pick up an outfit free.

Young people who show promise for challenging jobs get additional assessment and then vocational training - as much as

eight weeks for call-center work - once a specific opportunity is identified. "They teach you things like how to manage if you get a difficult boss," said Ayanda Figlan, 25, currently on the training programme. "Someone might offend you but you can't fight with them and you can't cry."

Candidates then wait to be called for an interview when one of the 425 businesses Harambee partners with - from Nando's restaurants to Microsoft and Standard Bank - come looking for chicken-grillers or a front-desk clerk, Nke said. Matches depend not just on an applicant's aptitude and skills but how far they live from the job. "You have to consider the cost of maintaining that job," Koseff said. In some cases, transport costs will put a worker into debt, he added. Employers pay a share of Harambee's spending to prepare a candidate if they hire one. A big pool of well-coached applicants has helped them increase the diversity of their workforce and find staff who stick around, they say.

Breadwinners

Cathy Kalamaras, managing executive for people at Webhelp SA, the Johannesburg call center where Ngwato works, said on average more than 60 percent of call-centre staff quit before two years. But the two-year retention rate with Harambee workers is 97 percent, she said. "They're willing. They're hungry. Some are the main breadwinners of the family," she said. "What I absolutely love about sourcing from Harambee is that they come with that motivational factor."

Tailored training also means Webhelp hires one in two Harambee applicants interviewed, compared to one in six generally, Kalamaras said. That brings major cost and time savings - one reason the company has expanded from 350 workers five years ago to 4,200 today, she said. — Reuters



New employees at WebHelp, a call center in Johannesburg, practice their skills while overseen by supervisors on June 15, 2018. — Reuters

Business

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TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (center), European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (left), and European Council President Donald Tusk (right) smile after their joint press conference at Abe's official residence in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

EU, Japan sign sweeping free trade deal

Agreement a clear 'message against protectionism'

TOKYO: Japan and the EU signed a sweeping free trade deal yesterday saying they were sending a "clear message" against protectionism, as Washington puts up barriers and threatens a trade war.

The deal signed in Tokyo is the largest ever negotiated by the EU and creates a massive free trade zone, eliminating tariffs for everything from Japanese cars to French cheese. It also provides a stark counterpoint to US President Donald Trump's aggressive "America First" protectionism, which has seen Washington impose trade tariffs on allies and rivals alike. "We are sending a clear message that we stand together against protectionism," EU Council President Donald Tusk said after the agreement was signed.

Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker said the signatories of the agreement were making "a statement about free and fair trade, we are showing that we are stronger and better off when we work together". Trump has unsettled America's allies and provoked the ire of its rivals with bombastic statements, hefty trade tariffs, and threats of a trade war. Abe said the agreement "shows the world the unshaken political will of Japan and the EU to lead the world as the champions of free trade at a time when protectionism has spread".

Agreed last December, the deal is "the biggest ever negotiated by the European Union," according to Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas, and will create a free trade zone covering nearly a third of the world's GDP. Under it, Japan will scrap almost all its tariffs on EU goods, particularly dairy items like cheese, though the country's rice industry will remain protected.

The EU will also eliminate about 99 percent of its tariffs on Japanese goods, including crucially removing levies on Japanese cars from the eighth year after the deal is implemented, and scrapping tariffs on car parts immediately.

Taking aim at Trump

The agreement must still be ratified by the EU parliament, as well as Japanese lawmakers, but is expected to enter into force from 2019. The EU-the world's biggest single market with 28 countries and 500 million people-is trying to boost alliances in the face

of Trump's protectionist administration. On Sunday, the US president fuelled rising rancor by labeling the EU, along with Russia and China, "a foe" of the United States, and repeating his assertion that the EU has "really taken advantage of us on trade". Without mentioning Trump by name, Tusk made sharply clear that the agreement was intended as a counterpoint to Washington's current trade policy.

"It's a light in the increasing darkness of international politics," Tusk said. "We are sending a clear message that you can count on us, both Japan and the EU. We are predictable, responsible, and will continue defending a world order based on rules, freedom and transparency and common sense." He dismissed concerns about the deal's effect on small businesses, suggesting US trade policy was far more problematic. "Political uncertainty, tariffs, aggressive rhetoric, unpredictability, irresponsibility, they are the real risks for our businesses, not trade deals," he said.

The EU is seeking access to one of the world's richest markets, while Japan hopes to jump-start an economy that has struggled to find solid growth. Junichi Sugawara, a senior research officer at Mizuho Research Institute, said Trump's protectionism had "prompted Japan and the EU to speed up negotiations on the deal".

Abe "has good relations with Trump, but in terms of trade, Japan has sided with the EU," he told AFP.

"Japan and the EU will form a united front against a US threat to impose tariffs on key products such as cars." Talks last year closed the gap on most remaining issues between the EU and Japan, but a dispute resolution mechanism remains to be negotiated. Tusk and Juncker arrived in Tokyo from Beijing, where they urged calm instead of "conflict" in international trade.

"It is the common duty of Europe and China, but also America and Russia, not to destroy (the global trade order) but to improve it, not to start trade wars which turned into hot conflicts so often in our history," Tusk said Monday in Beijing. "There is still time to prevent conflict and chaos." Abe had been scheduled to sign the deal in Brussels last week, but cancelled his trip after devastating floods that killed more than 220 people. — AFP

Boeing lifts 20-yr industry demand forecast to \$6.3tn

FARNBOROUGH: Boeing Co raised its rolling 20-year industry forecast for passenger and cargo aircraft by three percent yesterday, but shaved its projections for wide-body as well as regional jets, as its battle with Airbus intensifies in smaller planes.

The world's largest planemaker said at the Farnborough Airshow it expected 42,700 industry deliveries over the next two decades, up from its estimate of 41,030 a year ago. That would be worth \$6.3 trillion at list prices versus last-year's \$6.1 trillion prediction.

Dominating that tally is a five percent increase in the forecast for single-aisle aircraft, such as the Boeing 737 and Airbus A320 families, underpinned by a prediction for average global traffic growth of 4.7 percent, unchanged from last year. The Chicago-based planemaker

now sees 31,360 deliveries in the medium-haul, single-aisle category, which is the cash cow of the world's two largest planemakers and popular with low-cost airlines, Boeing said at the air show south west of London.

Air travel has been on a sharp uptrend fuelled by emerging economies, and China looks set to overtake the United States as the world's biggest domestic air travel market in 10-15 years, Boeing's vice-president of commercial marketing Randy Tinseth told a press briefing. The growth of China's domestic market, and its insatiable demand for aircraft made by both Boeing and Europe's Airbus, underscores Boeing's risks should the escalating trade dispute between Washington and Beijing become a full-blown trade war.

Tinseth refused to be drawn into commenting on US trade policy, saying: "We are going to focus on what we can control." Boeing, which calls itself America's biggest exporter, delivered more than one out of every four jetliners it made last year to customers in China, one of the world's fast-growing aircraft markets.

Two weeks ago, Airbus raised its own rolling forecast for industry deliveries by more than seven percent and revamped the way it predicts demand, introducing new plane categories from 'Small' to 'Extra-Large' and blurring the tradi-

tional boundaries between aircraft types.

Boeing's Tinseth said Airbus sought to show it was winning a sizable share of the aircraft market. "Let me make one thing clear," Tinseth said. "By every measure, in every way, our wide-bodies are winning. Period." Even so, Boeing lowered its wide-body delivery forecast by 140 aircraft to 8,070, saying higher deliveries over the last year and longer-range single-aisle planes ate into the rolling forecast. Boeing saw a small increase in demand in the cargo market, a barometer of trade and business confidence, forecasting 980 new freighters from a projected 920 a year ago, fuelled by the growth of e-commerce, particularly in China.

The planemaker unveiled a volley of freight orders in the first two days of the Farnborough show. Boeing's overall forecast tally is a bigger number partly because it counts aircraft with 90 seats or more, whereas Airbus starts at 100 seats. The smaller-end of the aircraft market has seen its biggest shake-up in decades after Airbus closed a deal to buy Bombardier's 110-130-seat CSeries jet, mirrored last week by Boeing's tentative deal to acquire the commercial unit of Brazil's Embraer SA. Boeing shaved its forecast for the regional jet fleet to 2,320 deliveries. Analysts expect Boeing and Airbus to use their



Deal to create massive free trade zone



FARNBOROUGH: Visitors watch as a Boeing 737 Max lands after an air display during the Farnborough Airshow, south west of London, on Monday. — AFP

scale to heap pressure on suppliers to lower costs, which could trigger consolidation. Tinseth said Boeing's market assessment could change if regional jets become "a lot more efficient or a lot

lower cost to operate, and maybe there is a possibility pricing might change." "Anytime that happens, demand will go where the lowest potential cost is," he added. — Reuters

Business

Russia, Ukraine in EU-backed talks to avoid fresh 'gas wars'

Europe still hooked on Russian gas supplies

MOSCOW: Officials from Moscow and Kiev were set to gather in Berlin later for EU-backed talks on the future of the transit of Russian gas through Ukraine in a bid to minimize disputes when the current contract expires next year.

Russian gas giant Gazprom has already dramatically reduced the volume of gas transiting via the country, as Moscow and Kiev remain at loggerheads over the annexation of Crimea and simmering conflict in the east of Ukraine. Kiev fears the loss of revenue from transit taxes, on top of being bypassed politically as well as physically by new gas pipes.

The meeting will bring together delegations from Gazprom and its Ukrainian counterpart Naftogaz, which have been locked in legal battles for years.

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin will also be present. "It is clear that time is of the essence. The negotiations that lie ahead of us are complex," said European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic ahead of the talks. The meeting will focus on Gazprom's plan to construct and put into operation by the end of next year the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which would bring gas to Germany via the Baltic Sea, bypassing Ukraine.

The pipeline will follow the track of the existing Nord Stream 1 and will double the amount of Russian gas arriving in the European Union's most powerful economy via this route.

Germany has long insisted this is a purely "commercial" project and in March lifted the final obstacles to its construction. But the following month German Chancellor Angela Merkel delivered an unexpected blow to Moscow's strategic initiative, insisting Ukraine should continue to play a key role in the transit of gas to Europe.

"There are also political factors to take into consideration," Merkel said at a joint press conference in Berlin with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko at the time.

"(Nord Stream 2) is not possible without clarity regarding the transit role of Ukraine," she said. For his part, the Ukrainian president said the project was

"absolutely political". "Why spend tens of billions of dollars to make the European economy less efficient, less competitive and the energy politics of the EU more dependent on Russia?"

Criticism from Trump

The project has also been criticized by US President Donald Trump. The United States has an interest in selling shipped liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Europe, but for the moment this is much less economically viable than Russian gas. "So we will be selling LNG and competing with the pipeline. I think we'll compete successfully. Although there is a little advantage location-wise," Trump said after meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki yesterday.

Another project, the Turkish Stream pipeline, is further set to reduce the role of Ukraine in gas transit. But Putin was conciliatory, saying Russia was ready to keep up transit via Ukraine after Nord Stream 2 becomes operational and extend the transit agreement. Putin said this was possible if Ukraine's national gas company Naftogaz and Gazprom resolve their gas dispute at a Stockholm arbitration court.

European demand for gas has been rising since 2015, largely because of a drop in production in the Netherlands. Last winter Gazprom raised exports to the continent to a record high thanks to the cold weather. On the record day of March 2, gas pipelines delivering Russian gas to Europe were working at up to 99 percent of their capacity, said researcher Jack Sharples in a recent publication by the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies.

What happens now

"Gas transit via Ukraine will continue to be necessary in substantial volumes throughout the year until Nord Stream 2 and Turkish Stream are launched," he said. But after that the role of Ukraine would depend on an agreement reached with the European Commission or the demands of clients, he added.



BERLIN: German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier (left) and European Commission Vice-President in charge of Energy Maros Sefcovic arrive to address a press conference yesterday at the Economy Ministry in Berlin as Germany hosts trilateral ministerial talks with Russia and Ukraine on the long-term transit of gas to Europe. — AFP

Thierry Bros, a researcher at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, said the sides must not only reach an agreement about what happens after 2019, but also what happens now—given that Gazprom is turning to the courts to demand the annulment of its current contracts with Ukraine.

"Now a global contract must be reviewed with two

unknowns—the Nord Stream 2 project and the transit tariff, since we do not know what Ukraine will propose," he said.

"If this were just a commercial question, Ukraine would be able to make Nord Stream 2 uncompetitive by lowering its own transit tariffs," he said, though in fact Kiev is asking in courts for the rate to be increased to make up for the decline in volume. — AFP

Global economic slowdown is likely later in 2018 or 2019: Analyst

LONDON: No one likes to predict recession, but the global economy is likely to experience a significant slowdown before the end of 2019, and the slowdown may be necessary to relieve upward pressure on oil prices. In its latest World Economic Outlook, the International Monetary Fund forecasts the global economy will expand at 3.9 percent in both 2018 and 2019, slightly faster than the 3.7 percent achieved in 2017.

But beneath the sanguine headline numbers, the outlook provides a long list of downside risk factors, including mounting trade tensions, rising interest rates, political uncertainty and complacent financial markets. "Growth generally remains strong in advanced economies, but it has slowed in many of them, including countries in the euro area, Japan, and the United Kingdom," the IMF admits.

"Even US growth is projected to decelerate over the next few years, however, as the long cyclical recovery runs its course and the effects of temporary fiscal stimulus wane." The broad global expansion that began roughly two years ago has plateaued and become less balanced, according to the Fund ("Global expansion: still strong but less even, more fragile, under threat", IMF, July 16).

The principal economies are still growing rapidly, with high levels of business and consumer confidence, and contributing to optimism among investors, but there are signs of a potential future slowdown. Global trade volumes are still increasing but the growth rate has slowed significantly since the second half of 2017, according to the Netherlands Bureau of Economic Policy Analysis ("World Trade Monitor", CPB, July 2018).

Leading economic indicators monitored by the OECD have weakened since the start of the year and point to slower expansion over the next six to nine months ("Composite leading

indicators", OECD, July 2018). The OECD says that growth momentum is stable in the United States and Japan but is easing in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Canada. At global level, the expansion is exhibiting increasing signs of maturity, with commodity prices and interest rates rising and capacity constraints emerging in some sectors. For example, aircraft manufacturers Boeing and Airbus are struggling to deliver orders on time as they strive to expand production and their supply chain ("Boeing and Airbus land \$43 billion worth of airliner orders", WSJ, July 16). US trucking firms are complaining about the lack of qualified drivers, and U.S. airlines are preparing to cut their schedules in response to rising fuel costs.

Late cycle

In the United States, where growth remains strong, the expansion now shows unmistakable signs of being at a late stage. The US economy has been expanding for over nine years, according to the Business Cycle Dating Committee of the National Bureau of Economic Research.

The current expansion is already the second-longest on record and will overtake the long boom of the 1990s if the economy is still growing in July 2019. Unemployment is close to its lowest level for 50 years and at or below the levels seen at the height of previous booms. Industrial production is growing at some of the fastest rates for 20 years.

The Institute for Supply Management's composite index shows one of the broadest increases in manufacturing activity in the last 70 years.

And the University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index shows household confidence close to multi-decade highs. But consumer prices are rising at the fastest rate since early 2012, cancelling out hourly wage growth, despite a strong economy.

And the yield curve for US government securities shows signs of inverting, which has often been a harbinger of previous economic slowdowns. All these indicators show strong cyclical behavior: in every case, they point to an expansion fast-approaching the top of the cycle.

Oil market

The global economy is rapidly running out of spare capacity and nowhere is that more obvious than in the oil market. The oil market's unused production capacity has fallen to multi-



NEW YORK: The headquarters of investment banking and securities firm Goldman Sachs is seen in lower Manhattan in New York. — AFP

decade lows as a result of strong consumption growth and a series of output disruptions in Venezuela, Libya and elsewhere.

Iran sanctions threaten to reduce spare capacity even further from the start of November, pushing it down to the lowest level since the oil shocks of 1973/74 and 1979/80.

Global oil consumption has surged by an average of 1.7 million barrels per day in each of the last three years, and is forecast to rise by a similar amount in 2018 and 2019. The result is that the global oil industry is being "stretched to the limit", according to the International Energy Agency ("Oil Market Report", IEA, July 2018).

Oil prices have already climbed by more than 75 percent over the last year, putting upward pressure on global inflation, though they have subsequently eased back slightly in recent days.

In the past, the final stages of an economic expansion have usually coincided with a sharp escalation in oil prices, with prices dropping back during the subsequent economic contraction. — Reuters

US challenges trade war counter-tariffs at WTO

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday launched challenges at the World Trade Organization to hit back at the major trading partners that have retaliated against President Donald Trump's tariffs on metals and goods from China.

Washington opened separate disputes against China, the European Union, Canada, Mexico and Turkey, challenging the counter-tariffs those countries have imposed on American farm exports and machinery, the US Trade Representative said in a statement.

Despite outrage over the US actions, the White House says alleged unfair trade by these economies means Trump's stinging tariffs are justified—but retaliation is not.

"The actions taken by the president are wholly legitimate and fully justified as a matter of US law and international trade rules," US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said in a statement.

"Instead of working with us to address a common problem, some of our trading partners have elected to respond with retaliatory tariffs designed to punish American workers, farmers and companies."

Lighthizer said the counter-tariffs breached WTO obligations. Since March, Trump has ratcheted up pressure on China and traditional allies, imposing tariffs on scores of billions of imports in steel, aluminum, washing machines, solar panels and broad swathes of Chinese manufactured goods and machinery.

Mexico's Economy Ministry vowed to defend itself against the new US actions at the WTO.

"The measures applied by Mexico were in response to the duties imposed, unjustly and with national security argument, by the US government on



US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer

imports of Mexican steel aluminum," the ministry said in a statement. "US purchases of Mexican steel and aluminum do not represent a national security threat to that country."

According to the US Chamber of Commerce, retaliatory tariffs on US exports-targeted to cause pain in the voting areas on which the governing Republican party relies heavily—now cover about \$75 billion in American exports.

Trump this month responded to Beijing's retaliatory duties on American goods by formally beginning a process which could see tariffs imposed on an additional \$200 billion in Chinese products as soon as September.

The International Monetary Fund warned that growing trade restrictions were "the greatest near-term threat" to the world economy, amid projections for slower growth in Germany, France, Japan and China. "If countries could cooperate to revise the multilateral system in a way that allowed them better to address the tensions that have been out there, that would be very positive for global growth," IMF chief economist Maurice Obstfeld told reporters. — Reuters

Embraer sells United Airlines 25 jets valued at \$1.1bn

SAO PAULO: American carrier United Airlines has ordered 25 jets from Brazilian aerospace manufacturer Embraer, valued at \$1.1 billion, the aircraft maker said Monday. The contract for the 70-seat E175 jets, signed at the firm's factory in Great Britain, states the deliveries will begin in the second quarter of 2019.

"We are thrilled that United is adding another 25 Embraer aircraft to the large existing fleet of almost 400 E-jets and ERJ's currently flying in the United Express network," said Charlie Hillis, Embraer's vice-president of sales and marketing for North America. Embraer, the

world's third-largest airplane manufacturer, said at the weekend it projects demand for 10,550 new airplanes—with capacity of up to 150 seats and worth \$600 billion—over the next 20 years.

The latest order comes after Boeing and Embraer announced July 5 that Boeing will take control of the Brazilian firm's commercial business, valued at \$4.75 billion. Boeing will hold an 80 percent stake, the companies said.

The announcement followed months of talks to allay concerns of the Brazilian government, which since the privatization of Embraer in 1994 maintains a "golden share" that gives it veto power over strategic matters within the firm. The companies said financial and operational details were still being finalized, a process which would continue over several months, after which the deal would be subject to shareholder and regulatory approval, including by the government of Brazil. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL			
	Europe		Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
British Pound	0.394583	0.408483	Japanese Yen	0.002613	0.002793
Czech Korune	0.005713	0.015013	Korean Won	0.000259	0.000274
Danish Krone	0.043577	0.048577	Malaysian Ringgit	0.071405	0.077405
Euro	0.347702	0.361402	Nepalese Rupee	0.002623	0.002963
Georgian Lari	0.122969	0.122969	Pakistan Rupee	0.001833	0.002603
Hungarian	0.001008	0.001198	Philippine Peso	0.005507	0.005807
Norwegian Krone	0.033428	0.038628	Singapore Dollar	0.217553	0.227553
Romanian Leu	0.059286	0.076136	Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001610	0.002190
Russian ruble	0.004851	0.004851	Taiwan	0.009816	0.009996
Slovakia	0.009055	0.019055	Thai Baht	0.008811	0.009361
Swedish Krona	0.030373	0.035373			
Swiss Franc	0.297844	0.308844	Arab		
	Australasia		Bahraini Dinar	0.789699	0.806199
Australian Dollar	0.217155	0.229155	Egyptian Pound	0.014325	0.020043
New Zealand Dollar	0.200869	0.210369	Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
	America		Iraqi Dinar	0.000197	0.000257
Canadian Dollar	0.225755	0.234755	Jordanian Dinar	0.423694	0.432694
US Dollars	0.299350	0.304650	Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
US Dollars Mint	0.299850	0.304650	Lebanese Pound	0.000150	0.000250
	Asia		Moroccan Dirhams	0.020554	0.044554
Bangladesh Taka	0.003102	0.003903	Omani Riyal	0.781864	0.787544
Chinese Yuan	0.043958	0.047458	Qatar Riyal	0.079060	0.084000
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036889	0.039324	Saudi Riyal	0.079833	0.081133
Indian Rupee	0.003889	0.004661	Syrian Pound	0.001286	0.001506
			Tunisian Dinar	0.111779	0.119779
			Turkish Lira	0.056816	0.067116
			UAE Dirhams	0.081193	0.082893
			Yemeni Riyal	0.000987	0.001067

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

US Dollar	303.090
Canadian Dollar	231.655
Sterling Pound	402.860
Euro	356.635
Swiss Frank	304.625
Bahrain Dinar	806.030
UAE Dirhams	82.925
Qatari Riyals	84.160
Saudi Riyals	81.720
Jordanian Dinar	428.770
Egyptian Pound	16.949
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.894
Indian Rupees	4.434
Pakistani Rupees	2.437
Bangladesh Taka	3.626
Philippines Peso	5.671
Cyprus pound	18.035
Japanese Yen	3.695
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.767
Malaysian Ringgit	76.110
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.815
Thai Bhat	10.110
Turkish Lira	62.910

Business

China confident of hitting 2018 growth target despite challenges

Bumpy H2 seen amid raging trade war with US

BEIJING: China is still confident of hitting its economic growth target of around 6.5 percent this year despite views that it faces a bumpy second half as a trade row with the United States intensifies, the state planning agency said yesterday.

The remarks came a day after China reported slightly slower growth for the second quarter and the weakest expansion in factory activity in June in two years, suggesting a further softening in business conditions in coming months as trade pressures build.

Even after Monday's weaker data and the latest US tariffs, most economists predict Beijing is still likely to come in around its official GDP growth target this year, though some China watchers believe activity levels are already much weaker than official data suggest.

Yan Pengcheng, spokesman for the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), told a news conference that China has ample policy room to deal with any shocks.

"Overall, We have the confidence, conditions, and

enough capability to effectively cope with the uncertainties in the world economy and make sure we accomplish the target we set at the beginning of the year," said Yan.

Yan said he was responding to "some views" that China will have a tough time keeping maintaining stable economic development in the second half this year due to the Sino-US trade frictions and domestic structural problems.

"China will improve the flexibility of macro-economic policy and ensure the macro-economic fundamentals remain stable," said Yan, adding that policymakers also will expand effective investment and look for ways to boost domestic demand.

He cited a number of supportive factors for the economy, including China's low budget deficit ratio and government debt levels, commercial banks' high capital adequacy ratio and provision coverage ratio, declining corporate debt levels and plenty of policy tools that authorities can employ.

Yan also said the NDRC had approved 102 fixed-asset investment projects in the first half of this year, worth a combined 260.3 billion yuan (\$39 billion). China's economy

has already felt the pinch from a multi-year crackdown on riskier lending that has driven up corporate borrowing costs. Policymakers have started to step up support for the economy and may be softening their campaign to reduce a rapid build-up in debt.

For firms impacted by the Sino-US trade frictions, China will provide "targeted" help after assessment of the impact, Yan said, without giving details.

"If the trade war does hit the economy hard, then the government will substantially increase investment, especially in high-tech sectors. This will help stabilize economic growth and job security to stave off social unrest," economists at ING said in a note on Monday.

"In this instance, the central bank will put financial deleveraging aside to focus on growth."

But ING added: "Though the government will provide support via fiscal and monetary policies, it is inevitable that industrial production will slow (as the trade war weighs on manufacturing and logistics sectors), which could hurt wage growth and consumption." — Reuters



BEIJING: A shop attendant waits at a jewelry store in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

After delays, Japan's regional jet faces dogfight with industry giants

FARNBOROUGH/SINGAPORE: Japan's Mitsubishi Aircraft Corp, trying to keep its new regional jet on track after series of delays, was forced to cancel a demo flight for the world's aerospace industry yesterday after the jet was hit by a truck.

The prang, which follows the jet's debut at the show on Monday, will not interrupt marketing efforts. But it will do nothing to help the Mitsubishi Regional Jet (MRJ) pull in orders at a time when giants Airbus SE and Boeing Co are extending their grip to the smaller end of the market.

The 90-seat MRJ, Japan's great hope for reviving a dormant commercial aviation industry, was launched a decade ago. Five delays later, it is now expected to enter service with Japanese carrier ANA Holdings Inc in 2020, compared with the initial target of 2013.

As a result, it missed a potentially lucrative window of opportunity to be the first to market with the latest generation of fuel-efficient regional jets.

It is now up against the already in-service Airbus A220 - the newly rebranded former Bombardier Inc CSeries - and the Embraer E2 series, which may be controlled by Boeing if a provisional deal between the manufacturers is completed. "These developments are disastrous for the MRJ," said Richard Aboulafia, vice president, analysis at Teal Group. "They are no longer competing with small companies from Canada and Brazil; they are now competing with global aerospace behemoths, with enormous pricing power and industrial scale."

Mitsubishi Aircraft is looking to gain orders despite the increased competitive threat, and executives at Farnborough, hosting a press conference as the rival A220 flew overhead, said they felt they had a good chance in the regional market.

"This is the newest plane design in several decades," Shunichi Miyanaga, President and CEO of parent Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd said. "Engine-wise and aerodynamically it is the newest type of regional jet and is highly competitive." — Reuters

Al-Raya United expands, opens new branch in Saudi Arabia

KUWAIT: As part of its strategic initiative to expand and serve the largest number of its clients, Al-Raya United Company for Real Estate Development recently opened a branch in Madina Monwara, Saudi Arabia. The opening ceremony was held in the presence of CEO Jassim Al-Fajji and a number of employees from Al-Raya's various departments.



Jassim Al-Fajji with the team



Fed to continue to raise rates gradually: Powell

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve will continue to raise rates gradually as the economic outlook remains strong despite uncertainty over trade policy, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said yesterday.

Powell was upbeat about the US economy, noting that

job creation remained strong and inflation was right around the Fed's two percent target. In addition to the recent tax cut, strong business investment is fueling consumer spending and business investment remains strong, he said in his semi-annual testimony to the Senate Finance Committee.

However, he acknowledged that it was "difficult to predict the ultimate outcome of current discussions over trade policy," a clear reference to the aggressive tariff policies adopted by President Donald Trump against China and many US trading partners. The International Monetary Fund warned Monday escalating trade tensions and tariff threats, if carried out, could disrupt global

growth and derail investments. Still, Powell said the Fed's interest rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee was satisfied with the central bank's efforts to get monetary policy back to normal by raising rates and reducing the size of investments accumulated in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. "With a strong job market, inflation close to our objective and the risks to the outlook roughly balanced, the FOMC believes that-for now-the best way forward is to keep gradually raising the federal funds rate," Powell said in his prepared testimony. The FOMC increased the benchmark lending rate by a quarter percentage point in March and June, and most economists expect two more rate hikes this year. — AFP

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Business

New Renault Megane GT arrives in Kuwait

Abdulmohsen Al-Babtain Co welcomes the newest member of Megane family



KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in the State of Kuwait is proud to announce the arrival of the all-new Megane GT. The newest member of the Megane family, tuned by Renault Sport, boasts a sportier look and the TCE 205 engine mated to 7 speed dual clutch automatic gearbox, achieving a swift 0-100km/h in just 7.1 seconds. The model is now available in Kuwait.

The Megane GT showcases an attractive sporty design, notably in the front grill and bumper, front C-shape DRL and full LED headlamps, and proudly wears the Renault Sport and GT logo on the front wings and at the rear. Rear LED tail lamp with distinctive 3D light effect and 18" GT MAGNY-COURS alloy wheels ensure the new model stands out from a crowd.

Combining dynamic style and ride comfort, the model offers first-class road handling thanks to 4CONTROL. The 4CONTROL chassis controls rear-wheel steering, delivering unprecedented and unrivalled driving experience. The model also boasts a GT Nappa leather steering wheel and GT style alloy pedals.

Commenting on the model's arrival in the region, Marwan Haidamous, Managing Director, Renault Middle East, said: "The Renault Megane GT has always been synonymous with sporty style and energetic performance, which can be traced into the technology we've embedded in the recent model, such as the 4CONTROL system. With its sporty new look, unrivalled driving performance and advanced technology we are confident that the model will prove extremely popular among the region's car buyers."

Driver comfort and convenience are enhanced with features such as the multi-sense through four available options for engine performance, sound, steering and variable damping: Comfort Mode, Normal Mode, Sport Mode



and Personal Mode. Each mode assures optimal convenience by allowing the driver to modify the accelerator pedal and engine response, adjust the speed of the efficient dual clutch (EDC) gearshifts, and fine-tune the firmness of the steering and ambience of the cabin lighting.

The new model delivers a connected driving experience thanks to R-LINK 2, which serves as the car's control cen-

Showcased via a modern 8.7" touchscreen, R-LINK 2 ensures an 'Easy Life' by offering a range of in-car features including easy park assist, rearview camera, Renault Smart Card with walk-away closing, as well as an electric parking brake, or even the Renault Sport mode switch button: RS Drive.

Engineers from Renault and Bose have collaborated

closely to produce a tailor-engineered sound that has been specifically configured for the new Megane GT. Thanks to the optimal positioning of a central loudspeaker at the front, eight further high-performance loudspeakers located around the cabin and a subwoofer built into the boot, the model generates sound that is precise, clear and well-balanced.

Turkey's economy seen growing at 4.1% in 2018

ISTANBUL: Turkey's annual economic growth is expected to fall short of the government's target through 2020, according to a Reuters poll, as inflation reaches double digits and investor sentiment sours under a new presidency. Hours after he was sworn in this month with sweeping new powers, President Tayyip Erdogan named his son-in-law as finance minister. That has heightened investor concern that Erdogan, a self-described "enemy of interest rates", will look to take more direct control of monetary policy.

Erdogan wants low rates to keep cheap credit flowing, particularly to the construction industry. Investors, who are worried about inflation and see the economy as overheating, want rates raised decisively. The economy will expand 4.1 percent in 2018, according to the poll of 55 economists, compared with a government's forecast of 5.5 percent, signalling a slowdown in the remainder of the year after 7.4 percent growth in the first quarter.

"We expect the Turkish economy to experience a sharp slowdown over the next 12 months," Jason Tuvey of Capital Economics said in a recent note to clients.

"If President Erdogan does pursue looser policy, we think this will ultimately result in slower (and more volatile) economic growth, higher inflation and further falls in the lira."

Under its medium-term economic program, the government is forecasting annual economic growth of 5.5 percent through 2020. The Reuters poll predicts growth of just 3.5 percent for 2019 and 4.0 percent for 2020.

Ratings cut

Last week, ratings agency Fitch cut Turkey's sovereign debt rating further into "junk" territory, citing the wide current account deficit, high inflation and policy uncertainty. Annual inflation, at 15.4 percent last month, is seen at 14 percent at the end of the year, based on the median forecast in the poll, significantly higher than the 10 percent forecast in April.

The lira has lost around one fifth of its value against the dollar so far this year, hit by concern about political influence over monetary policy.

Inflation is seen falling to 11.0 percent at the end of 2019 and 9.9 percent at the end of 2020, the poll showed. Economists put the central bank's main policy rate - which has been raised by 500 basis points since late April - at 18.0 percent in the third quarter from the current 17.75 percent. — Reuters

KIPCO hands over Hessah District infrastructure project to govt

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - announced the official handover of the Hessah Al-Mubarak District infrastructure works to relevant government entities. As such, Kuwait Municipality has now allowed developers to apply for construction permits for all residential and commercial land plots in the district. Faisal Al-Ayyar, KIPCO's Vice Chairman (Executive), said: "Early this year, we announced the completion of the district's infrastructure work, an important milestone given that KIPCO is the first company to lay down the infrastructure of a private real estate development. We would

like to extend our appreciation for the support and cooperation we have received from the different government entities with which we have worked to make this landmark project a reality."

On his part, Tawfiq Al-Jarrah, Executive Director - Hessah Al-Mubarak District, said: "We are delighted to announce that real estate developers and landowners are now able to apply for construction permits with Kuwait Municipality, and we expect construction work to begin soon. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the government entities - especially Kuwait Municipality, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Electricity and Water and the Ministry of Communication - for their cooperation. We would also like to extend our appreciation to all the consultant and architectural firms and contractors that contributed to this important phase of Hessah Al-Mubarak District."

The handover to the Ministry of Social Works included the road network inside and surrounding the district, as well as the rainwater and sewage networks. KIPCO also handed over the fresh water and firefighting grids to the Ministry of Electricity and Water, alongside civil engineer-

S Korea's wage policies backfire for jobless, low income workers

SEOUL: President Moon Jae-in wants South Koreans to work less and earn more - and to achieve that his government has hiked the minimum wage and slashed the maximum length of the working week. But Heo Jeong, who serves barley tea samples at a Lotte Mart store in Seoul, says she lost a third of her income as a result. Heo's store shortened its opening times and cut staff hours. The 48-year-old now makes 1.2 million won (\$1,077) a month working 32 hours instead of 40, a third less than before because she now isn't getting much night work at premium rates or as many chances to earn bonuses.

She is not alone. Many businesses are closing early rather than hiring additional staff after the legal cap on working hours was cut to 52 per week from 68, effective July 1. It is one of a number of signs that Moon's reforms are starting to backfire and his pledge to be the "Jobs President" who tackles inequality head on may be at risk, economists warn.

Another problem is that a January hike in the minimum hourly wage - the biggest in 17 years at a whopping 16 percent - may have had the opposite effect on incomes for the lower paid, and also become a deterrent to investment and recruitment. Household income for the lowest 20 percent fell 8 percent in the first quarter from a year earlier, marking the sharpest fall since 2003 when Statistics Korea began compiling data, and almost a quarter of those aged 15-29 remain unemployed.

"I want to work more hours, and take night shifts as much as possible," said Heo. "I don't necessarily see anyone actually making more money around me. I myself have cut down on groceries." A Lotte spokesman confirmed that most Lotte stores cut store hours, and some of its sub-contract workers worked fewer hours as a result. On Saturday, the government-mandated Minimum Wage

Commission heightened concerns over the issue by announcing that next year the minimum wage will increase another 10.9 percent to 8,350 won (\$7.40) an hour.

That prompted a small business group, the Korea Federation of Micro Enterprise, to threaten to refuse to implement the reform. "Small-business owners are at a crossroads where they cannot help but choose either business shutdowns or staff cuts," it said in a statement.

Certainly, South Korean companies have slowed down hiring. The monthly average number of jobs added so far this year, 142,000, is the slowest pace seen since the 2008-09 global financial crisis.

On Monday, Moon acknowledged possible negative consequences for small business owners and low-income earners from a higher minimum wage, but said his policies will continue to focus on boosting incomes. "Steep increases in the minimum wage aim to ensure a dignified life for low-income workers, while raising household income to boost domestic demand, which in turn will lead to job creation," Moon told his cabinet members at a policy meeting in Seoul, adding that efforts will be made to provide subsidies for the low-income earners who suffer as a result of the policies.

A Blue House official at the Presidential Committee on Jobs, a body Moon launched last year to fulfill his election promise of creating jobs, declined to elaborate further.

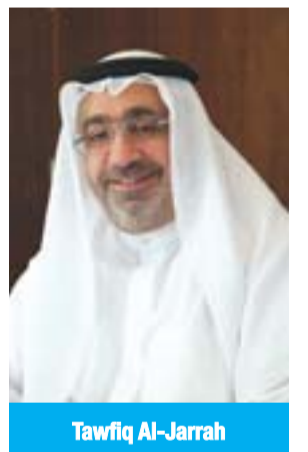
Moon remains popular, with 69 percent backing in polling in July, though that is down from a peak of 83 percent in May after his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his rating has fallen for a fourth week in a row, according to Gallup Korea. It is unclear how much the economy is playing into those numbers.

Shipbuilder Hyundai Heavy Industries and retailers Lotte Shopping and Shinsegae Inc are among companies who have begun to power off computers at 5:30 p.m. for office workers to prevent overtime, according to spokespeople for the companies.

A number of Korean retailers have pulled forward closing times to 11 p.m. from 12 p.m. because of the higher wage costs. "We're trying to make working hours flexible for our workers and have shortened business hours at most of our stores," an official at Lotte Shopping told Reuters, asking not to be named as he was not authorized to talk to the media. —Reuters



Faisal Al-Ayyar



Tawfiq Al-Jarrah

ing work for five secondary transformer stations and low voltage networks. Telephone and internet networks laid underground were handed over to the Ministry of Communication.

Jet Airways launches one week summer sale on flights to India and beyond

KUWAIT: Jet Airways, India's premier, full service international airline, is offering guests savings of up to 30 percent on their international travel using the airline's vast network of destinations in India and beyond. Effective yesterday (17th July 2018), guests travelling to India, Bangkok, Colombo, Dhaka, Hong Kong, Kathmandu and Singapore can enjoy substantial savings on their premiere as well as economy class bookings.

Tickets booked under the week-long fare sale from 17th July to 23 July, 2018 will be valid for immediate travel making it a wonderful opportunity for guests booking last minute and those planning their future travels. The promotion will be applicable for guests booking both one-way and/or return journeys.

Shakir Kantawala, Vice President Gulf, Middle East and Africa, Jet Airways, said, "It is one of the best times for guests to fly and make substantial savings in the bargain. We are confident that guests will take advantage of the week-long limited window to book their travel and create more memorable moments with family and friends while travelling with Jet Airways."

Jet Airways is India's premier international airline, currently operates flights to 66 destinations, including India and overseas. Jet Airways' robust domestic India network spans the length and breadth of the country covering metro cities, state capitals and emerging destinations.

Beyond India, Jet Airways operates flights to key international destinations in South East Asia, South Asia, Middle East, Europe and North America. The Jet Airways Group currently operates a fleet of 120 aircraft, comprising the latest B737 MAX, Boeing 777-300 ERs, Airbus A330-200/300, Next Generation Boeing 737s and ATR 72-500/600s.

Technology

Elon Musk's latest outburst raises doubts on leadership

Tesla shares dive 2.75% following controversy

WASHINGTON: Elon Musk has had a series of angry social media dust-ups with Wall Street analysts, journalists, employees and others. But his latest outburst on Twitter attacking a British rescue worker in Thailand has raised fresh concerns over the star tech entrepreneur's stability and leadership abilities. Musk, the South African-born innovator and billionaire behind Tesla and SpaceX, found himself in hot water after insulting Vern Unsworth, a British diver who worked on the Thai soccer team rescue and who dismissed Musk's plan to recover the trapped group.

The since-deleted weekend tweet referred to Unsworth as "pedo guy," an apparent reference to pedophilia, faced a deluge of criticism on social media and from analysts questioning whether Musk had crossed a line on responsible conduct for a CEO. "This is the most brand-damaging thing Elon Musk has ever done," said Roger Kay, analyst with Endpoint Technologies Associates who follows the technology sector. Kay said Musk appeared to be following in the footsteps of President Donald Trump in using Twitter to vent frustration and insult anyone with

whom he disagrees. "It's totally gratuitous. It wasn't necessary," Kay said of the Musk insult to the Briton, who has threatened a lawsuit. "It makes him very Trump-like." Tesla shares skidded 2.75 percent to close at \$310.10 following the latest controversy, adding to pressure on the electric automaker which has struggled to meet production targets for its Model 3, seen as crucial to its long-term viability.

Pressure fractures

Musk "is under a lot of pressure and we're seeing pressure fractures," Kay said. "He's been sleeping in his factories trying to get production up and that's been difficult. But when he talks to investors, he has to reassure them that all that money isn't going to fall on the floor." Musk has cultivated reputation as a creative genius, with some comparisons to another technology star known for being erratic, the late Apple-co-founder Steve Jobs.

Patrick Moorhead, analyst and consultant with Moor Insights & Strategy, said there were "some similarities up to this point" between Musk and

Jobs, but that the latest personal insult appeared to cross a line. "Steve jobs didn't take it to this extent," Moorhead said. To avoid long-term damage, "the first thing Musk needs to do is issue a huge apology," Moorhead said.

The analyst said the boards of Tesla and privately held SpaceX need to assert themselves in this situation to ensure Musk does not go off the rails. "If he does the right thing, he can recover from this," Moorhead said. This is America, and everybody likes a comeback story." Musk has become embroiled in a series of spats with the news media-chastising reporters for focusing on accidents of autonomous cars instead of their safety potential, and accusing one news organization of being "relentlessly negative" about Tesla.

Last month, he alleged "sabotage" at Tesla's operations by an employee, who responded by claiming to be a "whistleblower." When documents revealed he donated to a Republican political group, despite his criticism of the current administration, he responded by saying he gives "to both parties to maintain dialogue." In an earnings call, he berated analysts for asking "bor-

ing" questions and sidestepped questions about Tesla's massive capital needs. Musk's conduct "of course is not appropriate for a CEO," said Bob O'Donnell, founder of Silicon Valley-based Technalysis Research. O'Donnell said Musk has fallen into a "hero worship persona" but has failed to live up to the responsibility that implies. "He loves the fact that everything he says is reported in the media, but if you're in that position, you need to be an adult about it," O'Donnell said. "He keeps putting his foot in his mouth." Trip Chowdhry of Global Equities Research, who has long been bullish on Tesla, said the latest dust-ups involving Musk only show "he is human," and don't detract from his quality as a great innovator.

"Tesla is generations ahead of anything that is available today," Chowdhry said. "They have a backlog of \$14.5 billion (in orders), none of the competitors even have five cars in the backlog. They have software expertise, the competition is clueless." Chowdhry said that like other important innovators, Musk has "zero tolerance" for any distractions from his goals, even if he lacks the public relations skills of most CEOs,



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, Elon Musk, CEO of SpaceX and Tesla, speaks during the International Space Station Research and Development Conference at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC. — AFP

and that within five to 10 years, Tesla's innovations will be more appreciated. "Betting against Tesla is not only insane, but total stupidity," Chowdhry said. — AFP

Netflix shares dive as subscriber growth misses mark

SAN FRANCISCO: Netflix shares plunged Monday after the leading streaming television service said subscriber growth fell short of expectations in the recently ended quarter. Membership in the quarter grew 5.2 million to a total of 130 million, matching the same period last year but a million shy of what Netflix had forecast, according to a letter released along with earnings figures. Netflix shares dropped 14.11 percent to \$343.97 in after-market trade, in a setback to the television juggernaut operating in some 190 markets around the world.

"We had a strong but not stellar Q2 (second quarter)," Netflix said in a letter to shareholders. "Earnings, margins, and revenue were all in-line with forecast and way up from prior year." The Silicon Valley based company said it is beginning to "lead artistically" in some categories with its original content, earning enough Emmy nominations this year to break a 17-year top-spot streak by HBO. Netflix said it made a profit of \$384 million on revenue of \$3.9 billion in the recent quarter, compared to net income of \$66 million on \$2.8 billion in revenue in the same period last year.

Wall Street analysts had expected Netflix revenue to be slightly higher. "After four consecutive quarters of beating its own guidance, and analysts' expectations on key metrics such as revenues, profits, and subscriber gains, Netflix disappointed with a weak Q2," said eMarketer principal analyst Paul Verna. "This

isn't entirely surprising given rising competition in the video streaming market, where Amazon, Hulu, HBO and others are gaining share of subscription video dollars at Netflix's expense," he added.

Competition in the streaming television market includes YouTube, a platform under the umbrella of Google parent Alphabet, and entertainment titan Disney, along with AT&T. However, GBH Insights saw the Netflix subscriber forecast miss as a "speed bump," rather than start a downward trend, reasoning that the "content arms race continues to be a major tailwind" for the company.

"While the knee jerk reaction will clearly be negative from the Street's perspective, we would be buyers of Netflix on this weakness," GBH Insights technology research head Daniel Ives said in a note to investors. Netflix has spent billions of dollars on original content, backing films or shows from creators from a gamut of countries and cultures as it strives for broad appeal as a global television service. "We continue to ramp up our production of non-English originals," Netflix said in the letter. "Our international originals can be important to specific countries and regions and also play well outside of their home markets." Netflix added that while there is an increasing focus in the traditional film industry on super-heroes and sequels, the on-demand service can serve a broad variety of tastes. —AFP

Google boils down water data for new UN environment site

TEPIC, Mexico: Vast quantities of raw satellite imagery and data will be distilled into an online platform showing how water ecosystems have changed, and how countries can manage them to prevent further loss, said Google and the United Nations. Focusing initially on fresh water ecosystems such as rivers and forests, Google will produce geospatial maps and data for a publicly available platform to be launched in October in partnership with the UN Environment Program (UNEP).

"It's basically a time slide... you can go back in time, and what is does is show you where water has disappeared," said Elisabeth Mullin Bernhardt, a program manager at UNEP, on Monday. "It can show you where water never was and now is there. It can show you where water is seasonal." For Africa's Lake Chad, for example, access to comprehensive data and images showing surrounding land and rivers could help explain why the lake, on which so many depend, is drying up so quickly, said Kenya-based Bernhardt.

Given that most countries share water sources, the information could also be used to encourage neighboring nations to work together on strategies to manage rivers or lakes, she said. Google is



CALIFORNIA: Silhouettes of laptop and mobile device users are seen next to a screen projection of Google logo in this picture illustration. — Reuters

using artificial intelligence and cloud computing to process a massive amount of satellite imagery and data, stretching back over three decades, before it can be analyzed, said Rebecca Moore, director of Google Earth and Earth Engine.

"Much of the world does not have access to good data about the state of their forests, their rivers and lakes and coastal eco-systems and how they've been changing over time," Moore said by telephone. "It's a critically important time because there are dramatic changes going on, due to climate change and urbanization and a number of factors that are in some cases significantly depleting fresh water supply." Improved

information could lead to better investment in environmental services as countries try to meet their Sustainable Development Goals, said UNEP.

Agreed at the UN in 2015, the 17 global goals include targets to end poverty and hunger, combat climate change, and provide universal access to water and sanitation by 2030. Governments are currently reviewing progress on the goals at UN headquarters in New York, where UNEP and Google announced the satellite initiative. While researchers will focus on water ecosystems, the platform could be expanded to include issues such as desertification or plastics in the world's oceans, said Bernhardt. — Reuters

Google, Facebook urged to resist Vietnam cybersecurity law

HANOI: Seventeen US lawmakers have urged the CEOs of Facebook and Google to resist changes stipulated by a new cybersecurity law in Vietnam, which critics say gives the Communist-ruled state more power to crackdown on dissent. The law, which was approved by Vietnamese legislators last month and takes effect on Jan. 1, 2019, requires Facebook, Google and other global technology firms to store locally personal data on users in Vietnam and open offices there.

"If the Vietnamese government is coercing your companies to aid and abet censorship, this is an issue of concern that needs to be raised diplomatically and at the highest levels," the Congressional Vietnam Caucus said in a letter seen by Reuters. "We urge you to live up to your stated missions to promote openness and con-

nectivity," said the letter dated July 12 and signed by 17 caucus members.

Global technology firms have pushed back against provisions that would require them to store user data locally, but they have not taken the same tough stance on the parts of the law which bolster the government's crackdown on online political activism. Company officials have, however, privately expressed concerns that local data centers and offices could make it easier for the authorities to seize customer data and expose local employees to the threat of arrest.

Jeff Paine, Managing Director of the Asia Internet Coalition (AIC), an industry group that led efforts to soften the legislation before it was passed, said the law had created "great uncertainty" for Vietnam's reputation as an investment

destination. "Vietnam will need a more progressive approach and smart regulations on internet technology and digital services to benefit its economy and people in the long term," Paine said in a statement responding to the letter on behalf of AIC's eleven members, which include Facebook and Google.

Vietnam's foreign ministry did not respond to a request for comment. Despite sweeping economic reforms and growing openness to social change, the ruling Communist Party tolerates little dissent and exercises strict controls over media in Vietnam. Tuoi Tre, a popular newspaper in the Southeast Asian country, was given a three-month ban on publishing news to its website on Monday, Vietnam's information ministry said. The paper published "false information" and allowed inappropriate comments to be made on its website, the ministry said. Tuoi Tre apologized on Monday and blamed a technical error for the lack of moderation in its comment section. The paper was fined 220 million dong. — Reuters

NASA commercial crew program for space station faces delays

ORLANDO: Plans to launch the first NASA astronauts since 2011 to the International Space Station from the United States look set to be delayed due to incomplete safety measures and accountability holes in the agency's commercial crew program, according to a federal report released yesterday. SpaceX and Boeing Co are the two main contractors selected under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's commercial crew program to send US astronauts to space as soon as 2019, using their Dragon and Starliner spacecraft respectively.

But the report from the Government Accountability Office said the issues could cause delays in the launch of the first crewed mission from US soil by a private company and could result in a nine-month gap in which no US astronauts inhabit the ISS. "Boeing and SpaceX continue to make progress developing their crew transportation systems, but both contractors have further delayed the certification milestone to early 2019," the report said.

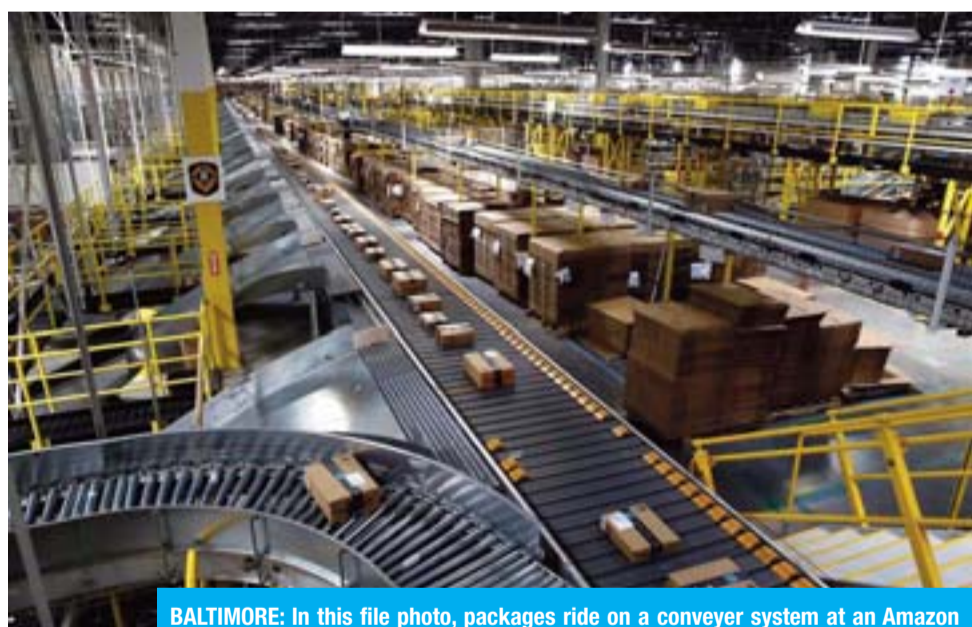
"Without a viable contingency option for ensuring uninterrupted access to the ISS in the event of further commercial crew delays, we concluded that NASA was at risk of not being able to maximize the return on its multibillion dollar investment in the space station," it added. Boeing said it was aiming for test flights this year. "Boeing is working with NASA to ensure that the CST-100 Starliner flies at the earliest time it is safe to do so," Boeing senior spokesman Jerry Drelling told Reuters in an email. Officials with SpaceX, formally known as Space Exploration

Technologies, and NASA could not immediately be reached to comment. In 2014, SpaceX and Boeing respectively received \$2.6 billion and \$4.2 billion contracts to build crew transportation systems under the commercial crew program. NASA's flagship campaign to use the private sector for ISS missions. In the report, NASA said it was working closely with its commercial partners to resolve the issues and was developing contin-

gency plans in case of further delays. Before SpaceX and Boeing can launch the astronauts they must demonstrate their crew systems are safe for human spaceflight, according to NASA. The GAO said it is tracking potential safety risks on the private companies' crew capsules, including a Boeing Starliner abort system meant to eject the capsule from a hazardous rocket explosion, and a since-upgraded fuel valve on SpaceX's Falcon rocket that triggered a costly 2016 launchpad explosion. Since 2000, NASA has bought seats on the Russian Soyuz spacecraft years in advance to send US astronauts to the space station from a launchpad in Kazakhstan. — Reuters



CALIFORNIA: SpaceX spacecrafts the Dragon, left, and the DragonRider sit on display at the SpaceX facility in Hawthorne, California. — Reuters



BALTIMORE: In this file photo, packages ride on a conveyor system at an Amazon fulfillment center in Baltimore. — AP

Amazon's Prime Day runs into early snags

NEW YORK: Amazon's website ran into some early snags Monday on its much-hyped Prime Day, an embarrassment for the tech company on the shopping holiday it created. Shoppers clicking on many Prime Day links after the 3 pm ET launch in the US got only images of dogs - some quite abashed-looking - with the words, "Uh-oh. Something went wrong on our end." People took to social media to complain that they couldn't order items.

By about 4:30 pm, many Prime Day links were working, and Amazon said later Monday that it was working to resolve the glitches. In an email to The Associated Press, it said "many are shopping successfully" and that in the first hour of Prime Day in the U.S., customers ordered more items than in the same time frame last year. Still, the hiccups could mute sales and send shoppers elsewhere during one of Amazon's busiest sales periods that's also a key time for it to sign up new Prime members. Shoppers have lots of options, as many other chains have offered sales and promotions to try to capitalize on the Prime Day spending. Analyst Sucharita

Mulpuru-Kodali at Forrester Research called the glitch a "huge deal." "This is supposed to be one of their biggest days of the year," she wrote in an email. "I am shocked this caught them off guard. But I guess the lesson is to not have a big unveil during the middle of the day when everyone comes to your site all at once."

Amazon, which recently announced that Prime membership would be getting more expensive, was hoping to lure in shoppers by focusing on new products and having Whole Foods be part of the process. It was also hoping parents would use the deals event to jump start back-to-school shopping. Jason Goldberg, senior vice president of commerce at Publicis.Sapient, noted that the problems could turn off shoppers for a while, particularly those who planned to sign up for Prime membership.

"If you were planning to find Prime deals to lower the cost of back-to-school (purchases), you're almost certainly going back to your traditional venue of choice," he said. Goldberg noted that it's easy for Amazon to extend deals on its own devices and brands, but trickier for it to extend deals for its third-party sellers because they signed up for different promotional slots. While Amazon doesn't disclose sales figures for Prime Day, Deborah Weinswig, CEO of Coresight Research, had estimated that it will generate \$3.4 billion in sales worldwide, up from an estimated \$2.4 billion last year. Prime Day also lasts six hours longer than last year. — AP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

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DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- ◆ Diagnosis/ Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- ◆ Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- ◆ Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of Otolaryngology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- ◆ Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
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- o Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- o Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- o Referee reviewer of International Journal of Dermatology.

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- o Laser Treatments.
- o Hair Transplant & Restoration.
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- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
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- ◆ Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
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General Surgery Consultant

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Scope of Clinical Practice:

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- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
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- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
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- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery
- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
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Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care

Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368
Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laposcopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates - Training

- ◆ Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

- ◆ Bariatric surgeries.
- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228 Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

What's On

Burgan Bank offers free ice-cream

A cool treat to beat the heat

A free ice-cream at Moo Milk Bar Tomorrow, Thursday 19th of July



Welcoming the warmest season of the year, Burgan Bank in collaboration with Moo Milk Bar is inviting all customers to have a free ice-cream on of July 19, 2018. For customers to avail the exclusive offer, all what they have to do is visit Moo Milk Bar, that is located in Mubarak Al Kabeer Street in Kuwait City and present any of their Debit or Credit Cards to get their free ice-cream.

Chicken Burgers with Avocado Corn Salsa



Ingredients:

For the Chicken Burgers:

- 1 1/2 lb ground chicken meat
- 2 scallions, chopped
- 1 cup shredded cheese
- 1/4 cup mayo
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper

For the Avocado Corn Salsa:

- 1 large avocado, sliced
- 1 ear of fresh corn, husks and silks removed
- 1/8 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1/2 tsp olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 lime, juiced

Method:

Place the chicken into a medium mix-

ing bowl. Add shredded cheese, chopped scallions, mayo, salt and pepper and mix everything well.

Using 1/2 cup as a measure, scoop the chicken mixture and form round shaped patties.

Using outdoor grill or a grill pan, cook the patties about 5 minutes on each side, until cooked through.

While the burgers are grilling, prepare the Avocado Corn Salsa.

Using a sharp knife, remove the kernels from the corn cob.

Place the corn kernels, sliced avocado and cilantro into a medium mixing bowl. Drizzle with olive oil, lime juice and season with salt and pepper. Mix well.

Serve this Avocado Corn Salsa atop the Chicken Burgers.

- Ingredients:
- 1 packet of hot dogs
 - 1 medium onion chopped
 - 1 green bell pepper chopped
 - 1 large jar of prepared spaghetti sauce
 - 2 cloves garlic grated
 - 1 tsp dried basil
 - 1 tsp dried oregano
 - 1 tsp sugar- if needed
 - red chili flakes to taste
 - salt and black pepper to taste
 - 2Tbs canola oil

Method:

Cook pasta in well-salted water according to package directions. Drain and set aside in a colander. In the same pot, you cooked the spaghetti, heat 2 Tbs canola oil and saute onions and bell pepper with a little salt over medium heat.

When onions begin to soften add garlic, black pepper, dried oregano, dried basil and red chili flakes. Sauté for another 2 minutes. Next, add the cut up hot dogs and saute for 2 minutes.

Next add jar pasta sauce, sugar (if needed) and adjust salt. Simmer with lid on for 15-20 minutes on medium-low heat. Finally, add cooked pasta and toss well in the sauce for 2-3 minutes. Garnish with onions and peppers. Enjoy.

ONE POT SPAGHETTI WITH HOT DOGS



Shivadham organises Arangetram-2018

Shivadham School of Dance organised Arangetram 2018, the first performance by students at Melpathur Auditorium, Guruvayur on July 15, 2018. The students of the school, hailing from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, performed Bharatanatyam with their Guru Ms Manjumithra Sarath. Shivadham School of Dance is a leading Indian dance academy based in Kuwait dedicated to the promotion and propagation of various Indian dance forms.



The founder and director Ms Manjumithra Sarath is a well-known exponent of Indian classical dances. She has undergone intensive training under the legendary dancers Guru Smt. Rama Vaidyanathan, Guru Smt Perumbavur Geetha Padmakumar, Guru Smt Kalamandalam Ajitha Ravikumar, Guru Sri Thrissur Janardhanan, Guru Sri T P Balan and Ms Meera Sreenarayanan. She was awarded the 'Kalathilakam' title consecutively in various youth festivals of Kerala till the age of seventeen. Under the auspices of Ms Manjumithra, the Shivadham School of dance has staged many classical dance productions in Kuwait. She has



choreographed enormous dance dramas and other varied forms of art too. Over the last five years, the academy has established a reputation for excellence in emotive performance and innovative choreography gaining accolades for their technical perfection exhibited by its students. It is a pavilion for the kids to mould and polish their rhythm and pace.

Ms Manjumithra Sarath hails from

Edappal, Kerala. After marriage she shifted to Kuwait where she started Shivadham School of Dance. Now it has four branches in various areas of Kuwait. She did her MA in English Language and Literature, MBA in Human Resource Management and B. Ed in English and Commerce. She is a faculty in the department of English at The Indian Community School (Senior), Kuwait.

Summer Vegetable and Sausage Lasagna

Ingredients:

- 1 small zucchini, sliced crosswise 1/2-inch thick
- 1 eggplant, sliced crosswise 1/2-inch thick
- 1 red, orange or yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded and cut into 6 pieces
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 links uncooked turkey sausage
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 1/2 cups pasta sauce
- 2 large eggs
- 1 16-ounce container ricotta
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 cup shredded Parmesan cheese, divided
- 6 no-cook lasagna noodles
- 1 1/2 cups shredded mozzarella, preferably fresh



Method:

Preheat the oven to 375 F. Preheat the grill to medium. Brush the eggplant, zucchini and peppers with the oil and season them with salt and pepper. Grill the vegetables for about 4 minutes on each side, until they are nicely marked and tender, and grill the sausage for about 10 minutes, turning it so that it cooks evenly. Cool the vegetables until you can roughly chop the vegetables, put them in a bowl, pour in the spaghetti sauce, and toss to combine. When the sausage is cool enough to handle, crumble it and stir it into the bowl with the vegetables and sauce.

In a medium bowl, beat the eggs lightly. Add the ricotta, basil, oregano, 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, and season with salt and pepper, and stir to blend. Spread all 6 of the lasagna noodles with even amount of the ricotta mixture. Place 2 noodles into the bottom of a 8 or 9-inch square baking pans, covering the bottom. Layer over 1/3 of the chopped vegetable mixture. Then evenly layer 1/2 cup of the mozzarella over the vegetable mixture. Repeat until you have three layers. Sprinkle the top of the lasagna evenly with the remaining Parmesan.

Cover the lasagna with tin foil. Bake for 25 minutes, then remove the foil and bake for another 20 to 25 minutes until the lasagna is bubbly and slightly browned on top. Let the lasagna sit for at least 10 to 15 minutes before cutting, so that the pieces hold together better.

Peach Melba sundae



Ingredients:

- 150ml double cream
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 40g icing sugar
- 3 scoops vanilla ice cream
- 2 peaches cut into wedges
- 75g raspberries
- 1 tbsp almond flakes, toasted, to serve

For the sauce:

- 75g raspberries
- 1 tbsp caster sugar
- 1 lime juiced

Method:

Put a sundae glass or bowl in the freezer to chill. To make the sauce, put the raspberries, sugar and lime juice in a blender, and blitz to a puree, loosening with a splash of water if necessary. Set aside. Meanwhile, whip the cream with the vanilla and icing sugar until it holds its shape, then transfer to a piping bag fitted with a star-shaped nozzle, if you like.

Neatly layer balls of ice cream, peach wedges, raspberries, raspberry sauce and cream, finishing with a big swirl of cream on the top. Scatter with the toasted almonds and serve straight away with two spoons.

Stars

CROSSWORD 1962



ACROSS

1. A wad of something chewable as tobacco.
 5. Someone who refrains from injuring or destroying.
 11. A small cake leavened with yeast.
 15. Type genus of the Ranidae.
 16. Speak in a nasal voice.
 17. (informal) Exceptionally good.
 18. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
 19. Russian evidence for.
 20. A Russian river.
 21. A brittle gray crystalline element that is a semiconducting metalloide (resembling silicon) used in transistors.
 22. Provide commentary for a film, for example.
 25. A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
 29. Decapod having eyes on short stalks and a broad flattened carapace with a small abdomen folded under the thorax and pincers.
 31. The shape of a bell.
 33. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
 35. Having help.
 39. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
 40. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
 44. Lie adjacent to another.
 47. Large evergreen tropical tree cultivated for its large oval smooth-skinned fruit.
 49. The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet.
 50. A herbaceous plant genus of the family Linaceae with small sessile leaves.
 52. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
 54. Type genus of the Prididae.
 56. Any member of Athapaskan tribes that migrated to the southwestern desert (from Arizona to Texas and south into Mexico).
 58. French writer who generalized surrealism to literature (1897-1982).
 60. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
 62. A metallic element having four allotropic forms.
 63. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
 64. Of or relating to or suggestive of dreams.
 69. A highwayman who robs on foot.
 72. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
 73. Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.
 74. Of or pertaining to or characteristic of Nepal or its people or language or culture.
 76. A machine-readable version of a standard dictionary.
 77. A boy or man.
 78. Winter aconite.
 79. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
- DOWN**
1. A steep rugged rock or cliff.
 2. The lean flesh of a fish similar to cod.
 3. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
 4. An ambitious and aspiring young person.
 5. A vicious angry growl.
 6. Apostle and patron saint of Ireland.
 7. Remote city of Kazakhstan that (ostensibly for security reasons) was made the capital in 1998.
 8. Desert shrub of Syria and Arabia having small white flowers.
 9. Other than what is under consideration or implied.
 10. Of flax, hemp, or jute, so as to promote loosening of the fibers from the woolly tissue.
 11. Any of various units of capacity.
 12. Any of several tall tropical palms native to southeastern Asia having egg-shaped nuts.
 13. Obvious and dull.
 14. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
 23. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
 24. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
 26. Primitive predaceous North American fish covered with hard scales and having long jaws with needle-like teeth.
 27. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
 28. (criminal law) Money that must be forfeited by the bondsman if an accused person fails to appear in court for trial.
 30. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation.
 32. A small digital computer based on a microprocessor and designed to be used by one person at a time.
 34. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
 36. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
 37. An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
 38. Fierce wild dog of the forests of central and southeast Asia that hunts in packs.
 41. Marked by excessive enthusiasm for and intense devotion to a cause or idea.
 42. Squash bugs.
 43. A South American shrub whose leaves are chewed by natives of the Andes.
 45. Not softened by the addition of padding.
 46. Ostentatiously lofty in style.
 48. Of or relating to the stomach and intestines.
 51. From 13 million to 25 million years ago.
 53. A sock with a separation for the big toe.
 55. Someone who sets snares for birds or small animals.
 57. A genus of Stromateidae.
 59. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
 61. A populous province in northeastern China.
 65. Not final or absolute.
 66. Avatar of Vishnu.
 67. A United Nations agency created to assist developing nations by loans guaranteed by member governments.
 68. (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
 70. A local computer network for communication between computers.
 71. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
 75. An informal term for a father.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

This is a beautiful time for you. Not only are you able to appreciate the beauty in everything in everyone around you, others are showering you with appreciation and praise. You are admired for your wit and eccentric ways. This is also a time of peace and harmony where not only will you be able to express strong feelings for those close to you, but you will also be showered with love and gratitude. It is time of clarification and this may come to you concerning your living situation. This could be in the form of a new place, a remodel, or even a new roommate. Aries, you may finally feel as if those close to you really understand who you are and what your all about. They finally get it! Enjoy the harmony you find in your world today.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is a great time to surround yourself with others. You may feel as if you are center of attention. All eyes are on you and you feel as though much praise and appreciation are being directed toward you. You are understanding and very sensitive when it comes to others and you know how to make them feel good. You may find yourself being offered a management position as these qualities are not only noticed by loved ones but also in the workplace. You are a natural born leader and make it easy for people to like you. Taurus, you have worked hard, and the rewards are forthcoming.



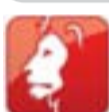
Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You are starting to move mountains. Things are falling into place and coming together for you just as you had envisioned. You focus, and drive are stronger than ever now that you see your dreams becoming a reality. Feeling the trends and knowing what is to come is playing a huge role in your success. You are a step ahead of the game and able to know what others want and provide it. The ideas are flowing, and others are drawn to your wit and charm. This is a time your mind is clear, and the lines of communication are open with all around you. Use this time of high energy to your advantage. Gemini, you may find yourself deep in an open conversation with a love one this evening that could be very beneficial to your future.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are strong and driven and passionate. You may see everything today as a sort of competition. You refuse to be second best. You are determined and focused and won't settle. These are the qualities that enable you to get your point across so easily. You say what mean and mean what you say. You seem to demand the same from everyone in your life who is close to you. You have a zero-tolerance attitude towards anyone that doesn't live up to this. Others see the radiance you exude and are drawn to you. It seems you may find yourself surrounded by peers who have chosen to follow your lead.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may be feeling a need to put a much greater focus on family life. Know that the seeds you plant today have great impact on your future. You may be feeling very nurturing when it comes to your love ones. Today is a great day to set the groundwork for tomorrow. You are looking for and desiring stability in the future. Your actions of today are leading you straight towards your goals. Leo, stability, structure, and growth are very important to you and to your future. Your close relationships with others are where your energy is focused today and partnerships or your marriage may be where you find yourself placing major effort.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may feel as if you are the center of attention today. All eyes are on you. You have begun to excel in the workplace and your superiors have taken notice to this. You may find that this is the job you actually enjoy and that is the driving force behind your work performance. You are at your best creatively and able to excel on projects and thinking outside of the box is bringing much attention your way. Mysteries are easily solved, and problems easily conquered for your today. You may find much support from someone close to you that has much admiration for the eccentric approach you are taking in the workplace. Know that you are admired and looked to as a role model.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Be careful not to overdo things at work today. Trying too hard to cause added stress to your world. You may find yourself having a desire for a social life. Choose your company wisely today as good times could quickly turn bad if surrounded by the wrong people. You may find yourself feeling stressed today and not much support from your peers. This is not the best day for communicating your feelings to others and would probably be the best just be and some time alone. It seems the least amount of stress or conflict is more than the feel you can handle today.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may feel as though you are having somewhat of a breakthrough today. You may have been experiencing a sort of inner struggle with the direction in which your life is going. Possibly a teacher, a boss, or someone's opinion you have great respect for will be available to give you that push you have been needing. You may need a bit of help prioritizing just what you need to accomplish the goals you have been desiring to reach. Remember, it is ok to ask for help and as independent as you are, you need it sometimes too.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Complete insight into your own inner self or psychology could come to the surface soon but do not fear, all of this is quite manageable. You may, however, find yourself in the mood for acute and penetrating conversations or thoughts. Solving problems or making important decisions should be easy for you most any time. You will find a way around just about any obstacle and should be able to guide yourself with ease. Your sense of inner direction is good and should lead to opportunities. Wanting to expand your horizons and trying to be the best that you can be could have you exploring some interesting places.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may find your focus placed on your roots and the family members who came before you that paved the path you are on today. A fondness of the hard work that was put forth and the journey your ancestors made seem to mean a lot to you. You are thankful for the opportunities that were handed to you. You may be starting to focus on your own legacy you will leave behind for those that come after you. You may find you have so heavily focused on family, past and present, that you may be neglecting some of your work duties. Your heart may have been elsewhere, and you could easily find yourself the focal point of some sort of conflict in the workplace.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You are drawn toward all that is luxurious. The good life is the life you desire. You may find yourself more materialistic than ever before. You work hard and want to visibly see the reward from that. The finer things in life is what you desire and find yourself spending your time acquiring these possessions. You find yourself working hard to bring harmony and peace into your relationships. You desire to be surrounded by all that is good. You may find yourself focused on your partner and working hard to develop a relationship that others will envy. All is well in your world, Aquarius, and it is only getting better.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

A greater appreciation of things of value seem to be where you place your focus. This is a very profitable time for you. This is a time of material gain and a time when you are more materialistic than usual. You may find a shopping trip is just the ticket to scratch the itch you are feeling. You feel as though your hard work deserves a reward and you want to reward yourself with a few new prizes. Your relationships come into focus. You crave stability and want to be the best you can be to those closest to you. Making sure those closest to you are happy keeps you happy and this brings peace and harmony into your world. This is a great time for you, Pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

The Beach

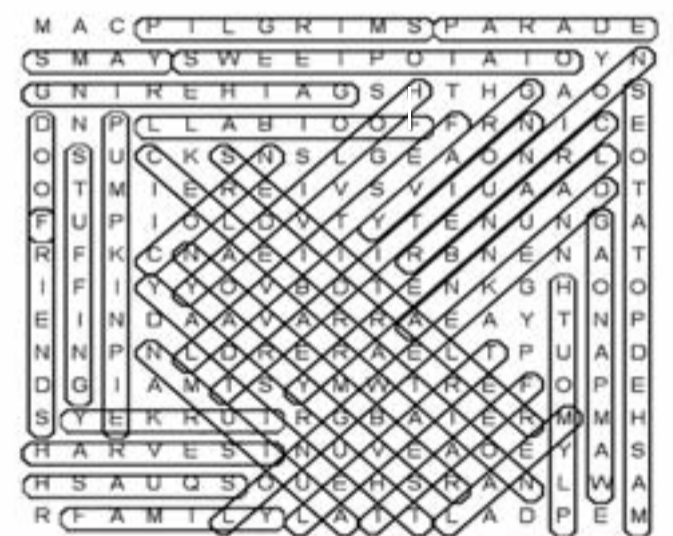
Find and circle all of the beach words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional beach word.



- | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| BARE FEET | SAILING | SURFBOARD |
| BEACH BALL | SAND | SURFING |
| BOAT | SEAGULL | SWIMMING |
| CLOUDS | SEASHELL | SWIMSUIT |
| DRIFTWOOD | SEASHORE | T SHIRT |
| HAT | SKY | TOWEL |
| KITE | STARFISH | VOLLEYBALL |
| LIFEGUARD | SUNGLASSES | WADING |
| OCEAN | SUNSCREEN | WATER |
| PAIL | SUNSHINE | WAVES |
| PIER | | |

Yesterday's Solution

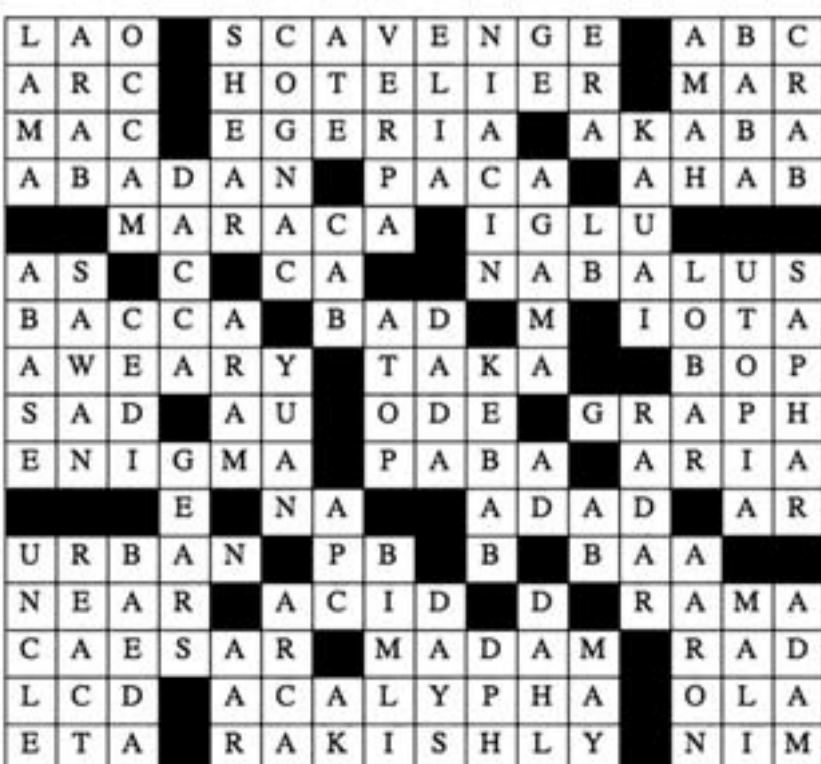
Thanksgiving (U.S.)



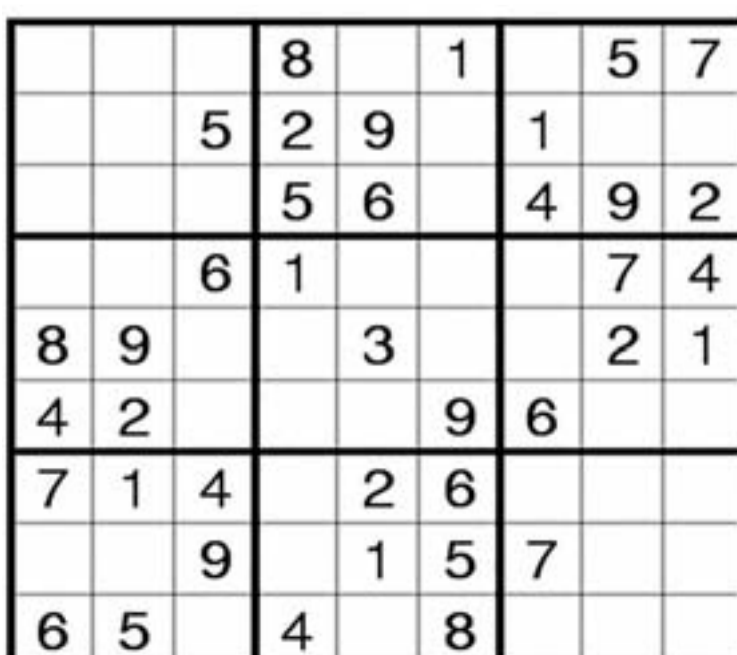
- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ANNUAL | GRAVY | RELATIVES |
| AUTUMN | HARVEST | REUNION |
| CELEBRATION | HOLIDAY | SQUASH |
| CORN | LONG WEEKEND | STUFFING |
| CRANBERRY | MASHED POTATOES | SWEET POTATO |
| FAMILY | MEAL | THURSDAY |
| FEAST | NOVEMBER | TRADITION |
| FESTIVAL | PARADE | TRAVEL |
| FOOD | PILGRIMS | TURKEY |
| FOOTBALL | PLYMOUTH | WAMPANOAG |
| FRIENDS | PUMPKIN PIE | YAMS |
| GATHERING | | |

The hidden message is: MACY'S THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 2018



In this file photo Danielle Bissonette, 13, plays the character Peridot from an animated TV show during Comic-Con 2017 in San Diego, California.



In this file photo Christian Ganiere, 8, plays the part of The Joker from the Batman series during Comic-2017 in San Diego, California.



In this file photo Tawni Franzen, 23, plays the part of Ahsoka Tano from Star Wars during Comic-Con 2017 in San Diego, California.

Get your geek on: 130,000 head for San Diego Comic-Con

Desk jockeys in eye-wateringly tight spandex will blur the line between fantasy and reality this week as they invade San Diego for the world's largest celebration of pop culture fandom. The 49th Comic-Con International will revel in movies, TV and—yes—comic books, as fans in pitch-perfect monster, alien and manga costumes swelter in the southern Californian heat over five surreal days. Where fandom abounds, controversy is never far behind. And the big bone of contention this year is Disney's decision not to bring its Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) to Comic-Con, despite a record-breaking year with "Black Panther," "Avengers: Infinity War" and "Ant-Man and the Wasp." "It's going to be an interesting year this year," said Syfy Wire editor-in-chief Adam Swiderski in a video preview of the Wednesday to Sunday get-together at the city's harborfront convention center. "A lot of the big players like 'Marvel,' 'Star Wars' and 'Game of Thrones,' who dominated past cons, aren't going to be there, which gives other properties an opportunity to step into the spotlight."

Since its humble beginnings in 1970 as the Golden State Comic Book Convention, a gathering of a few dozen geeks who swapped superhero magazines, Comic-Con has exploded in popularity. Each July, it attracts around 130,000 cosplayers, movie executives, sci-fi fans and bloggers to a feast on all manner of panels, screenings and other attractions.

Scare Diego

Described by Rolling Stone as the "Super Bowl of people who don't like watching the Super Bowl," Comic-Con's beating heart is the 6,500-seat Hall H, where a cornucopia of stars hawk their latest work. Devotees have been known to wait for days to be among the first to get into the sprawling arena, taking turns with family members and other fans

for toilet breaks and sleep. New Line Cinema and Warner Bros. kick off proceedings today with "Scare Diego," where fans will enjoy insights into "It: Chapter Two" and the frankly terrifying-looking "The Nun." The convention has traditionally persuaded most of the big studios to turn up for detailed presentations of their highly anticipated slates of upcoming movies—but not this year.

Disney is presumably saving its biggest treats for its own biennial D23 fan convention, and Universal's segment is dedicated to just two movies—M. Night Shyamalan's "Glass" and David Gordon Green's "Halloween." Elsewhere, Paramount brings its spinoff Transformers film "Bumblebee" and Fox has a "Deadpool 2" celebration and preview for its "Predator" reboot. Sony presents "Venom," and the animated "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse," neither of which are considered part of the MCU, although Marvel was part of the production team. That cedes the center stage to Warner Bros., which is expected to pull out all the stops in its two-hour Saturday spot. The schedule is kept tightly

under wraps, but insiders say there will almost certainly be thrills and spills from "Aquaman," "Godzilla: King of the Monsters," the new "Fantastic Beasts" movie and "Shazam!"

'Crazy busy'

"This is a fun room. It's going to be crazy busy for Warner Bros., like it always is," said James Riley of the SDConCast podcast. "But without the pull of the evening Marvel panel to generate such a fervor for the line... we have a feeling this is actually going to be an easy day to get into Hall H." The television side of the Comic-Con gets increasingly bigger as the stars follow the voluminous torrent of cash into TV productions funded on a scale never seen before. This year's Hall H is expected to be more notable than ever for its small-screen content, despite the absence of HBO's big-hitters. "Several other networks will be showing off new and returning series in a hope to cut through the cluttered landscape and maintain, or possibly grow, viewership," said Lesley Goldberg of The Hollywood Reporter.

AMC has the pick of the convention with a debut appearance from "Better Call Saul" alongside a 10th anniversary reunion panel for "Breaking Bad" and a discussion on acclaimed graphic novel adaption "Preacher." "The Walking Dead," the most successful show in US cable television history, is back ahead of season nine, expected to debut in October, and there is a panel for its sister show, "Fear the Walking Dead." Other studios plying their TV wares include YouTube Originals and Fox, while Syfy stages what promises to be an emotional farewell to the "Sharknado" franchise. Marvel's movie people might be largely absent, but the studio boasts numerous panels and other event for its TV output, including "Cloak & Dagger," "Iron Fist," and "Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest." — AFP



In this file photo Alex Waldron plays the part of Harley Quinn from the movie Suicide Squad during Comic-Con 2017 in San Diego, California. — AFP photos



In this file photo John and Michelle Pina are Mr and Mrs Silver Surfer in downtown San Diego adjacent to Comic-Con 2017 in San Diego, California.



In this file photo Jobeth Wagner plays the part of Hela from the movie Thor Ragnarok during Comic-Con 2017 in San Diego, California.



In this file photo Kaija Harris (left) plays the part of Poison Ivy and Kimmey Baykian plays the part of Harley Quinn, both from the Batman series, during Comic-2017 in San Diego, California.



This picture shows a general view of the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens, under the Acropolis archaeological site.



Tourists take in the view from the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens, under the Acropolis archaeological site. — AFP photos



Local resident, Alexandra Katoueani poses on the threshold of her home in the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens, under the Acropolis archaeological site.

A BIT OF THE **GREEK ISLANDS** IN THE HEART OF HISTORIC ATHENS



A local resident walks along a street in the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens.

The Acropolis? It's that way." Residents of historic Anafiotika are used to giving directions to tourists, lost in the narrow, winding alleyways of this unique but little-known hillside neighborhood in the heart of Athens. Looking as if it's lifted straight out of the Greek islands, Anafiotika's tiny white-washed houses with brightly-painted shutters and doors were designed to resemble their builders' own Aegean Sea homes. The tranquil neighborhood was constructed on the northeastern side of the hill leading up to the ancient Acropolis, and its 100-odd, tile-roofed houses—known as the Anafiotika—are as old as the modern Greek capital itself. "The Anafiotika have real historical value," says architect Panagiotis Paraskevopoulos, a resident of the nearby historic Plaka district. "Working-class architecture with Cycladic elements—it's like a journey back in time," he said.

When the Bavarian prince, Otto, became Greece's king in 1832, Athens was in ruins after a decade-long war of independence against the Ottoman Empire. To restore the city to a semblance of its classical glory fit for a state capital, he invited famed stonemasons from Anafi, one of the Cyclades islands in the Aegean Sea, to work on a grand rebuilding initiative. That included his new palace, which is now the country's parliament. Looking for a place to lodge their families, the workmen decided to take matters into their own hands.

With housing in short order, they built a new neighbourhood, making it reminiscent of their Cycladic houses back home, and used some of the best land available in the capital, just under the Acropolis that boasts the Parthenon and other ancient buildings. The move was technically illegal, but in the political upheaval that followed Otto's ouster in 1862 and the frenetic urbanization of the capital, especially after World War II, Anafiotika was left undisturbed.



A sign points the way to the Acropolis in the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens.

And in a touch of irony, what was once illegal is now part of the Athens architectural heritage zealously safeguarded by the Greek ministry of culture. There are no street signs here. The houses are tiny, mostly 50 square meters (538 square feet) in size, girded by gardens, and are protected by strict restoration guidelines. "It's not easy living here," said Alexandra Katsourani, a 30-year resident and member of a local heritage committee. "Not only must we abide by strict regulations, but we must also stay vigilant against efforts to turn the area into Airbnb rentals," she said. — AFP



A tourist makes her way along a passageway in the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens.



Young women relax in the shade in the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens.



This picture shows a general view of the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens, under the Acropolis archaeological site.



This picture shows a street view of the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens, under the Acropolis archaeological site.



A Greek national flag flies from atop a church of St. George in the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens.



Young men relax in the tiny Anafiotika district of Athens, under the Acropolis archaeological site.

Lifestyle | Music & Movies

'Grease' at 40: Still the one that we want

Four decades have passed since the Rydell High gang twisted, hand jived and crooned their way into the hearts of teenagers the world over-but we're all still hopelessly devoted to "Grease." The classic musical, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary, took moviegoers back to their high school days with girl next door Sandy (Olivia Newton-John) and bad-boy T-Bird leader Danny (John Travolta). "When we finished it, we really didn't know what kind of impact it would have," filmmaker Randal Kleiser, who made his feature-length theatrical directing debut with "Grease," said in an interview with AFP.

"We thought it would do well with teenagers for a summer or two but never thought that, 40 years later, that amazing amount of response from all over the world, and all ages, would happen." Based on a hit Broadway musical about the love affairs of 1950s high school students, it was shot over two months in LA for \$6 million, and was initially eviscerated by many critics. But it ended up grossing almost \$400 million and was the most successful live-action movie musical of all time until "Mamma Mia!". 30 years later. When Kleiser cast his leading couple, Travolta had already filmed "Saturday Night Fever" but was not yet released-and he was largely known as the young heartthrob from ABC sitcom "Welcome Back, Kotter." Newton-John was

a pop music superstar, with several hit records under her belt.

Dark lyrics

"John and I both wanted Olivia and she was resistant because she'd done a movie that didn't do well in England, a sci-fi movie, and she thought she might be a little too old to play opposite him," Kleiser says, referring to "Tomorrow" (1970). "She requested a screen test and we did it. John and I both treated her like a little sister, gave her all the encouragement, and it worked." Travolta and Newton-John have remained close friends over the decades, starting together again in 1983's "Two of a Kind," a flop by any measure, and reuniting in 2012 to make a Christmas album.

They swap text messages and have supported each other through dark times, including the death of Travolta's son in 2009 and the return of Newton-John's breast cancer after she had beaten it in the 1990s. Kleiser told AFP that while he had seen his stars separately over the years, an anniversary get-together at the motion picture academy in Los Angeles next month would be the trio's first full reunion. The director made other movies after "Grease"-most notably "The Flight of the Navigator" (1986) — but the lure of big studio blockbusters lost its luster and he moved away from the Hollywood system in the 1990s.



US director Randal Kleiser poses during a photo session for AFP with the 'Grease Lightning' car, for the 40th anniversary of the movie, at the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

In a wide-ranging interview he spoke of his frustration with Barry Gibb's lyrics for the iconic title track sung by Frankie Valli, which he thought struck an incongruously dark tone. Kleiser took Gibb aside and it emerged the Bee Gee knew nothing about the movie,

the screenplay or the stage show — and thought the word "Grease" was ridiculous.

More innocent age

"I spoke to him about changing the lyrics. I said, 'There's no serious themes in the

movie,' and he says, 'We'll why don't you shoot a serious scene so the lyrics will work?'" Kleiser believes the film's longevity can be attributed to its universal themes, the chemistry between his leads and its appeal to our nostalgia for a more innocent age "where there were no terrorist attacks or shootings." "That all came together in a perfect storm and hit the public zeitgeist," he said. Travolta became a global superstar and his career highlights in the intervening years-another 30-plus movies-barely need rehearsing.

After a lull in the 1980s, he underwent a resurgence sparked by an appearance in Quentin Tarantino's 1994 masterpiece "Pulp Fiction" that made him an icon for a whole new generation. Newton-John kept her music career going and went on to appear in "Xanadu" (1980) and "Two of a Kind" (1983). She says she still has the skin-tight black pants she wore in "Grease." Kleiser still goes to screenings but says he prefers these days to watch the audience experiencing and enjoying his crowning achievement. "I see lots and lots of flaws in it but I think the flaws are part of the charm of 'Grease'-the fact that it has a rough-around-the-edges feel," he told AFP. "It's not real slick-everything is not perfect-and I think that adds to the feel of it." — AFP



A man and woman rest in front of posters for the movie Asura at a subway station in Beijing. — AFP

China's most expensive movie becomes epic flop

With a \$113-million budget, the most expensive Chinese film ever made has become a flop of historic proportions, pulled from theatres on its opening weekend after bringing in a paltry \$7.3 million. Alibaba Pictures' special effects-heavy fantasy film "Asura" was intended as the first installment in an epic trilogy inspired by Tibetan Buddhist mythology, part of a drive by authorities to promote works bearing elements of traditional Chinese culture. The film cost 750 million yuan (\$113.5 million) to make, state media said, and opened on Friday, but Chinese ticketing platform Maoyan said it only took in just over \$7.3 million at the weekend.

By Sunday, the film's official social media account posted a statement declaring that it would be removed from theatres as of 10 pm that night. "We express our apologies to all those who wanted to but won't have the chance to see it," it said. Most of China's biggest blockbusters to date have been made with half the budget lavished on "Asura". The estimated loss of \$106 million would make it the fifth-biggest flop in movie history worldwide, behind frontrunner "Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas" which suffered losses of \$125 million, according to data from website Box Office Mojo. State media had touted the movie before it was released, with the China Daily hailing "Asura" as "the most hotly anticipated blockbuster of China's competitive summer season."

"It's a very imaginative movie. We wanted the film to raise confidence in our own culture and train more domestic talent," Yang Hongtao, chairman of Ningxia Film Group, one of the movie's backers, told the paper ahead of Friday's opening. Six years in the making, the film was heavy on expensive visuals, featuring 2,400 scenes with special effects in its runtime of just 141 minutes, the paper noted. Bankable Hong Kong actors Tony Leung Ka-fai and Carina Lau starred, while high-powered foreign talent-such as Oscar-winning Ngila Dickson, costume designer for the "Lord of the Rings" franchise-also took part.

Yet the film garnered a rotten 3.1 rating on Douban, China's most influential user review platform. "My god, it's horrifying! It's just a magnificent pile of excrement!" one user wrote. Wildly different reviews on the country's two largest ticketing platforms prompted a virulent retort from the movie's production team, posted Friday to its social media account. On opening day, "Asura" netted an 8.4 rating out of 10 on Alibaba-owned Tao Piaopiao. But on Maoyan, backed by Alibaba's rival tech giant Tencent, reviewers had given it just 4.9. The team accused Maoyan of using fake, paid reviewers to post 1-star ratings to artificially deflate the film's score, calling the alleged move "despicable, foolish, and ludicrous." Many users dismissed the film's team's statement. "It was garbage anyway," one reviewer wrote. — AFP

CARDI B LEADS NOMINATIONS AT MTV AWARDS

Cardi B has led the way at the 2018 MTV Video Music Awards (VMAs) with 10 nominations. The 'Be Careful' hitmaker — who gave birth to her daughter Kulture earlier this month — has had a record-breaking year thus far and it looks set to get even better after she swept the board with an impressive amount of nods ahead of the forthcoming music ceremony. The 25-year-old rapper managed to bag nominations for Artist of the Year and Best New Artist, while her 'Finesse' remix with Bruno Mars received five nods — including Video of the Year and Song of the Year — and her 'Dinero' collaboration with Jennifer Lopez and DJ Khaled is in with the shot of scooping the trophy for Best Latin Song of the Year. 'Bartier Cardi' — featuring 21 Savage — is also up for Best Hip-Hop and Best Collaboration.

Cardi is yet to comment on her impressive amount of nominations, but the usually-active social media user has been relatively quiet since becoming a mother a few weeks ago. Jay Z and Beyonce — who released their joint album 'Everything is Love' earlier this year — followed closely behind Cardi with eight nominations across the board, with their hit song 'Ape\$h**' from the LP scooping Video of the Year and Best Collaboration nods.

Childish Gambino and Drake both secured seven nominations, while Bruno Mars got six, but there is an opportunity for another artist to wiggle their way in and secure a few gongs as the Ariana Grande and Camila Cabello bagged five nods each, while Ed Sheeran, DJ Khaled and Young Thug sat at the lower end with an impressive four nominations each. The 2018 VMAs will air live from Radio City Music Hall in New York City on August 20. The nominees of the 2018 MTV VMAs in the major categories are as follows:

Video of the Year

- Ariana Grande - 'No Tears Left to Cry'
- Bruno Mars ft. Cardi B - 'Finesse (Remix)'
- Camila Cabello ft. Young Thug - 'Havana'
- The Carters - 'APES**T'
- Childish Gambino - 'This Is America'
- Drake - 'God's Plan'

Artist of the Year

- Ariana Grande
- Bruno Mars
- Camila Cabello
- Cardi B
- Drake
- Post Malone

Song of the Year

- Bruno Mars ft. Cardi B - 'Finesse (Remix)'
- Camila Cabello ft. Young Thug - 'Havana'
- Drake - 'God's Plan'
- Dua Lipa - 'New Rules'
- Ed Sheeran - 'Perfect'
- Post Malone ft. 21 Savage - 'rockstar'



This January 25, 2018 file photo shows Cardi B attending the Warner Music Group's annual Grammy celebration in association with V magazine in New York.

Best New Artist

- Bazzi
- Cardi B
- Chloe x Halle
- Hayley Kiyoko
- Lil Pump
- Lil Uzi Vert

Best Collaboration

- Bebe Rexha ft. Florida Georgia Line - 'Meant to Be'
- Bruno Mars ft. Cardi B - 'Finesse (Remix)'
- The Carters - 'APES**T'
- Jennifer Lopez ft. DJ Khaled & Cardi B - 'Dinero'
- Logic ft. Alessia Cara & Khalid - '1-800-273-8255'
- N.E.R.D & Rihanna - 'Lemon'

Best Pop

- Ariana Grande - 'No Tears Left to Cry'
- Camila Cabello ft. Young Thug - 'Havana'
- Demi Lovato - 'Sorry Not Sorry'
- Ed Sheeran - 'Perfect'
- Pnk - 'What About Us'
- Shawn Mendes - 'In My Blood'

Best Dance

- Avicii ft. Rita Ora - 'Lonely Together'
- Calvin Harris & Dua Lipa - 'One Kiss'
- The Chainsmokers - 'Everybody Hates Me'
- David Guetta & Sia - 'Flames'
- Marshmello ft. Khalid - 'Silence'
- Zedd & Liam Payne - 'Get Low (Street Video)'

Best Rock

- Fall Out Boy - 'Champion'
- Foo Fighters - 'The Sky Is A Neighborhood'
- Imagine Dragons - 'Whatever It Takes'

- Linkin Park - 'One More Light'
- Panic! At The Disco - 'Say Amen (Saturday Night)'
- Thirty Seconds to Mars - 'Walk On Water'

Best Hip Hop

- Cardi B ft. 21 Savage - 'Bartier Cardi'
- The Carters - 'APES**T'
- Drake - 'God's Plan'
- J. Cole - 'ATM'
- Migos ft. Drake - 'Walk It Talk It'
- Nicki Minaj - 'Chun-Li'

Best Latin

- Daddy Yankee - 'Dura'
- J Balvin, Willy William - 'Mi Gente'
- Jennifer Lopez ft. DJ Khaled & Cardi B - 'Dinero'
- Luis Fonsi, Demi Lovato - '?chame La Culpa'
- Maluma - 'Felices los 4'
- Shakira ft. Maluma - 'Chantaje'

— Bang Showbiz

Weinstein Co sale finalized, owners Lantern take over

Harvey Weinstein's one-time production company no longer exists. On Monday, its new owners confirmed they had concluded the purchase of The Weinstein Company and introduced its successor, Lantern Entertainment. The Weinstein Company was sold to Lantern Capital Partners for a reported \$289 million in a deal finalized nine months after Weinstein's career went into free-fall over explosive allegations of sexual assault, rape and harassment. The sale amounts to more than \$20 million less than the originally reported price of \$310 million.



"Today, we turn the page to begin anew," said Lantern Entertainment co-presidents Andy Mitchell and Milos Brajovic. The new company, they said, would be "anchored by creativity in a meritocracy-based culture" and across all disciplines, they were "extremely motivated to become a forward-thinking force in this industry." Last Thursday, The Weinstein Company announced that four of its five board members would step down upon the closing of the sale, including Weinstein brother and company co-founder Bob.

The sale gives Lantern a library of more than 270 films, which generated more than \$2 billion at the box office worldwide, as well as a television business that includes the hit reality fashion series, "Project Runway." Among the film titles are Oscar winners "The King's Speech" and "The Artist," as well as "Inglourious Basterds," "Silver Linings Playbook" and "The Hatful Eight." Its unreleased feature films include "The Upside," starring Bryan Cranston and Nicole Kidman and "The Current War" with Benedict Cumberbatch.—AFP

Depp, ex-managers settle financial lawsuit



In this file photo US actor Johnny Depp poses upon arrival to attend the world premiere of the film 'Murder on the Orient Express' at the Royal Albert Hall in west London. — AFP

Johnny Depp has reached a settlement with his former business managers, his representatives said Monday, allowing the Oscar-nominated American actor to avoid a trial over his finances that promised paparazzi fervor. A spokesperson said Depp, 55, was "pleased" with the confidential agreement reached with The Management Group, the company that handled his business affairs for nearly two decades. He had sued the organization in January 2017 for \$25 million, accusing TMG of mismanaging his finances, taking out loans without his approval, and concealing his ruinous finances.

Beverly Hills-based TMG had filed a countersuit against the Oscar-nominated actor seeking unpaid fees and damages. The group alleged Depp's lavish overspending had brought him to the edge of financial ruin, having dropped millions on a yacht, luxury cars, private planes and wine. The

agreement comes just before the trial was due to begin in August.

"The lawsuit taken out against The Management Group—and the subsequent settlement—is a further demonstration that Johnny is determined to take firm action to protect his personal and artistic reputation in the interests of his family and his career," Depp's spokesperson said in the statement announcing the deal. According to the magazine Rolling Stone, Depp's estimated \$650-million fortune has nearly all evaporated. Depp and actress Amber Heard, 32, reached an out-of-court settlement in 2016 to end their 18-month marriage, agreeing that he would pay her \$7 million. — AFP

Lifestyle | Feature



In this file photo 65-year old Mohammed Haroun sits in front of his home in Wadi Karkar, a new complex under construction in the desert west of Lake Nasser, Aswan, Egypt. — AP photos

Young Nubians revive dream of returning to land in Egypt



In this file photo Haggag Oddoul poses for a photograph at his home in Alexandria, Egypt.

The world of their parents and grandparents was turned upside down more than 50 years ago when they were evacuated from villages along the Nile River to make way for the High Dam. Now a younger generation has revived the long-dormant cause of Egypt's Nubians, campaigning for a return to their lands and struggling to preserve their culture.

Their timing could not have been worse. Recent peaceful marches by Nubians were met by swift suppression from the government of President Abdel-Fattah El-Sissi, which has shown little tolerance for dissent. To a state dominated by the military and security agencies, Nubians' assertion of their distinct identity and heritage amid the Arab majority looks like a threat to stability. "This country has so many colors and ethnicities, and it is so destructive that we are trying to give it just one identity," said Fatmah Imam, a Nubian activist born and raised in Cairo. Even during her days at university, she recalled, the message instilled was that the country should be homogeneous. "It is painful for me that I am unable to manifest my identity," she said. "I see Egypt as a mosaic."

Nubians are an ancient ethnic group who from Pharaonic times lived along the Nile in a stretch of territory from southern Egypt to northern Sudan, even becoming rulers for a period in the 25th Dynasty 3,000 years ago. Darker skinned than most Egyptians, they have a language and culture distinct from the country's Arab majority.

Succeeding a generation traumatized by displacement, young Nubian activists say they are determined to bring change. "You must not be worried about the future. I personally feel that the future, God willing, will be dear and generous for all of you." —Egyptian President Gamal Abdel-Nasser, addressing Nubians in 1960. Older Nubians remember vividly their lives in their original land. They talk of sprawling villages of large houses painted in brilliant colors spread out along the Nile. Receding river waters after annual floods left fertile land for crops.

Most important was the bond with the Nile. For generations they lived on its banks. Their rituals were closely linked to it. They would baptize their children in its waters, and before weddings, grooms would bathe in the river. On holidays they would float dishes of food on its current to the river's mythical guardians. Though Muslim, Nubians have traditions from their Christian past mixed in with their identity; for example, at weddings the guests often call to Jesus and Mary for blessings as well as to Islam's Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Nile's waters rose

When the government resettled the Nubians in the 1960s, it told them they were making a major sacrifice for Egypt's progress, giving up their villages for the sake of a dam that would electrify and modernize the nation. In return, the authorities promised, the socialist system would ensure them a prosperous future: new, model homes with electricity, running water and farmlands awaited them.

Officials raced to evacuate the Nubians as the Nile's waters rose. Nubians of that generation recall families frantically packing possessions and pulling livestock to riverboats as officials, soldiers and members of the only political party at the time, the Socialist Union, shouted, "Yallah, yallah!" — "Come on!" The Nubians were moved to 44 new villages, mostly clumped around the area of Kom Ombo, north of Aswan, more than 200 kilometers (120 miles) from their home region.

What they found was a startling blow. In some villages, houses hadn't been built yet — there were just chalk outlines. Houses that were ready were small and cramped. Often there was no running water or electricity. Farmland couldn't be farmed because a canal hadn't been built yet. Even worse for the Nubians, most of the villages were miles away from the Nile. The fact that all the new villages bore the same names as the Nubians' now submerged home villages seemed almost cruel. They became known as the villages of "tahgeer," or exile.

"People felt they were deceived and the first few years here were very tough," Mohammed Dawoud, 71, recalled as he sat in a mosque after the sunset prayers in Abu Simbel, one of the tahgeer villages. Nubians to this day still feel the trauma of having their community shattered. Many left the impoverished new villages for Cairo, Alexandria and other cities to find jobs, often as household servants or doormen. Customs fell away. Though the Nubian language is still spoken in some homes, it is not taught in schools, nor is Nubian history or culture. There is no official data, but some estimates put the number of Nubians today at 3.5 million to 5 million.

In the 50 years since, the tahgeer towns have become indistinguishable from neighboring Arab ones, a sprawl of dust-covered, eye-sore apartment blocks, mired in poverty and underdevelopment. Speaking Arabic haltingly with a heavy Nubian accent, Naemah Hussein, an 85-year-old grandmother, said her house in her original home village of Eneiba was right on the banks of the Nile, where she baptized her first two children. Eneiba at the time had one of the best river ports in the country, built by the British in the 1930s.



In this file photo the parents of Haggag Oddoul before they were forced to leave their homeland, in Egypt.



In this file photo shows lake Nasser, the other side of the high dam which flooded the Nubians' ancestral homeland in the 1950s and 1960s, in Aswan, Egypt.

Devil's valley

Now she lives in the "tahgeer" Eneiba. Since being evacuated there, she had four more children. The town "is a place that sends people away, no investments, no jobs," one of her sons said. It is also far from the Nile. "Well, it's a life," Hussein said with bitter resignation. "Now I don't even see the river in my dreams." "Our children are scattered everywhere working as help, serving the grandchildren of the foreigners and Pashas. And we are here, left like goats in the devil's valley. ... They killed us, my son. The folks with light skin killed us." —From the short story "Adeela, My Grandmother," or "Farewell, My Grandmother," by Haggag Oddoul. Haggag Oddoul, at 74, has spent a lifetime chronicling the miseries of the Nubians' displacement in dozens of novels and short stories while campaigning for the rights of his community.

In a debate over the legislation, parliament speaker Ali Abdel-Al, a close el-Sissi supporter, echoed the attitude that recognizing Nubian identity threatens stability. He called the constitutional clause about Nubians "a land mine" and said referring to any group of Egyptians by their ethnic identity was dangerous. During a visit to Aswan last year, El-Sissi spoke broadly about fulfilling Nubian demands, but talked about development without mentioning return.



In this file photo Nubian activist Fatmah Imam poses for a photograph in Cairo, Egypt.



In this file photo Nubian men talk at a home in Wadi Karkar, a new complex under construction in the desert west of Lake Nasser, Aswan, Egypt.

The 20th century brought a series of displacements, starting with the construction of the first reservoir at Aswan in 1902. The biggest came with the construction of the Aswan High Dam in the 1950s and 1960s under the rule of the charismatic, authoritarian Gamal Abdel-Nasser. Some 50,000 were subjected to forced resettlement in 1963 and 1964, and the creation of Lake Nasser flooded their ancestral homeland. Their dream since has been to return to land along the lake near their original villages.

Ethnic group

Nubian activists have found inspiration from the 2011 pro-democracy uprising that overthrew autocrat Hosni Mubarak. In 2014, there seemed to be a breakthrough when the crafters of a new constitution included a clause that for the first time recognized Nubians as an ethnic group and committed the state to organize their return to traditional lands and develop those areas by 2024. But so far, nothing concrete has been done, activists say.



In this file photo Nubian children pose for photograph in the 'tahgeer' Eneiba village, northern Aswan, Egypt.

"The government wants to implement the constitution and wants to see the Nubians return to their region. But this needs time," Mustafa Bakry, a lawmaker close to the military who has mediated between activists and the government, told the AP. The slow pace and the crackdown have convinced some activists that return will not happen any time soon. They are focusing on rescuing Nubian culture from disappearance. One has launched a YouTube channel that broadcast in Nubian for two hours every day. Another developed a mobile app to teach young people the Nubian language. Fatmah Imam said activists must not let up the pressure, which she argued has succeeded in forcing officials to talk about the issue. "We have no choice but to continue our struggle," she said. "From what I see, there's a lot of suppressed anger among Nubians. It has not come to surface yet." — AP



In this file photo Nubian activist Waleed Toka poses for a photograph in Cairo, Egypt.



In this file photo Sheikh Mohammed walks near his home in the 'tahgeer' Eneiba village, northern Aswan, Egypt.



In this file photo 85-year-old grandmother Naemah Hussein sits in her home 'tahgeer' Eneiba village, northern Aswan, Egypt.



In this file photo shows the general view of Abu Simbel, one of the 'tahgeer' villages, southwest of Aswan, Egypt.

Classifieds

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STATE OF KUWAIT
 DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
 METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
 Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 40 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 17/07/2018 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	35 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	33 °C		
ABDALY	47 °C	32 °C		
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C		
JAHRA	47 °C	34 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	45 °C	30 °C		
SALMIYAH	44 °C	34 °C		
AHMADI	45 °C	36 °C		
NUWAISIB	44 °C	33 °C		
WAFRA	47 °C	32 °C		
SALMY	44 °C	30 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	07/18	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas and some high clouds will appear	47 °C	33 °C	NW	15 - 42 km/h
Thursday	07/19	Very hot and some high clouds will appear	47 °C	35 °C	NW	08 - 30 km/h
Friday	07/20	Very hot with a chance for rising dust	49 °C	34 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h
Saturday	07/21	Very hot and Dusty	48 °C	33 °C	NW	20 - 55 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:27
Sunrise	05:00
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:29
Sunset	18:49
Isha	20:18

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	47 °C
MIN. Temp.	36 °C
MAX. RH	24 %
MIN. RH	08 %
MAX. Wind	NW 60 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

NOTICE
 July 8, 2018

Mr. Galvin Wilfred o Silva son of Mr. Wilfred o Silva, resident of Justina Colony, R No 7, Lower Kharod, Malad, West Mumbai 95 and Ms. Ashley Asses Allely daughter of Mr. Anthony Lawrence Allely, resident of G-6, Tulip, Sonesta Cosmos Apts, Malleshpalya, Bengaluru, Pin: 560075, Karnataka, both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (attachecons@indembkwf.org, welfaresection@indembkwf.org) / letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 22533125).

(Sanjeev Sakani)
 Attaché (Consular) and
 Marriage Officer,
 Embassy of India, Kuwait.

Ph: 00965-22550171 - 00965-22533125
 Fax: 00965-22573910
 Email: attachecons@indembkwf.org
welfaresection@indembkwf.org

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22087426
FlyDubai	22924455
Qatar Airways	22414400
KLM	22423888
Royal Jordanian	22425747
British Airways	22418064/5/6
Air France	22425635
Emirates	22430224
Air India	22921555
Sri Lanka Airlines	22438184
Egypt Air	22424444
Swiss Air	a22421578
Saudia	22421516
Middle East Airlines	22426306
	22423073

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

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Flight Schedule

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 18/7/2018				Departure Flights on Wednesday 18/7/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	405	Sohag	00:05	WAZ	351	Luxor	13:50
JZR	513	Sharm el-Sheikh	00:10	MSR	144	Doha	13:55
THY	772	Istanbul	00:15	UAE	611	Cairo	14:00
KAC	102	London	00:50	QTR	872	Dubai	14:15
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	KNE	231	Amman	14:15
JZR	539	Cairo	01:00	JZR	125	Hanoi	14:30
PGT	618	Alexandria	01:15	GFA	221	Asyut	14:50
MSR	858	Istanbul	01:35	SVA	500	Tbilisi	14:50
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	KAC	364	Beirut	15:00
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	FDB	059	Taif	15:00
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	512	Bahrain	15:00
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:00	KAC	286	Dubai	15:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC	788	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KNE	683	Dubai	15:05
AEE	956	ATH	02:25	KAC	304	Dubai	15:10
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	ETD	303	Doha	15:15
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	KAC	412	Jeddah	15:45
THY	768	Istanbul	02:40	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:50
THY	1404	AYT	02:45	KAC	562	Madinah	15:50
JZR	651	Lahore	02:55	OMA	645	Jeddah	16:00
KAC	418	Manila	03:05	KAC	502	Jeddah	16:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	ABY	127	Jeddah	16:00
OMA	643	Amman	03:05	UAE	857	Jeddah	16:00
RJA	648	Dammam	03:05	SVA	504	Dammam	16:05
RBG	215	Sohag	03:05	KAC	118	Amman	16:10
KAC	382	Delhi	03:10	SAW	705	Doha	16:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	16:15
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:25	JZR	535	Doha	16:20
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	QTR	1072	Doha	16:20
KAC	796	Madinah	03:45	FDB	051	Bahrain	16:40
JAI	572	Mumbai	04:00	NIA	361	Madinah	16:55
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	KAC	542	Sharm el-Sheikh	17:00
JZR	609	Hyderabad	04:30	SVA	510	Beirut	17:15
JZR	1541	Cairo	04:35	JAV	621	FDB	17:20
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	GFA	215	Doha	17:25
THY	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR	777	Colombo	17:35
KAC	770	Istanbul	05:15	JZR	145	Dubai	17:40
KAC	544	Cairo	05:20	WAN	976	Baku	17:45
JZR	603	Mumbai	05:25	JZR	177	Dubai	17:50
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	QTR	1080	Doha	18:10
KAC	154	Istanbul	05:35	JZR	483	Istanbul	18:20
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	WAN	874	Istanbul	18:25
JZR	561	Sohag	05:55	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30
BAW	157	London	06:10	RJA	640	Amman	19:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:25	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:05
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:25	UAE	875	Dubai	19:05
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:40	FDB	063	Dubai	19:10
KAC	678	Dubai	06:45	KAC	744	Dammam	19:10
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:20
JZR	505	Luxor	06:55	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:25
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:35
JZR	143	Doha	07:00	JAI	216	Delhi	19:40
WAN	342	Sohag	07:30	JZR	189	Dubai	19:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	674	Dubai	19:40
KAC	358	Kochi	08:00	WAN	352	Luxor	19:50
KAC	384	Delhi	08:05	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50
JZR	529	Asyut	08:10	KAC	104	London	20:00
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	DLH	624	Bahrain	20:00
SAW	703	Damascus	08:30	OMA	647	Frankfurt	20:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KNE	381	Taif	20:10
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	620	Doha	20:15
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:25	MEA	402	Beirut	20:15
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	166	Rome	20:25
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	QTR	1088	Doha	20:40
IRM	1188	Mashhad	09:55	KAC	172	Frankfurt	20:45
SYR	889	Latakia	10:05	JZR	803	Tbilisi	20:45
AXB	899	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:00
JZR	787	Riyadh	10:30	KAC	540	Sharm el-Sheikh	21:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	UAE	859	Dubai	21:15
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	ALK	209	Colombo	21:15
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:15
JZR	903	Baku	11:10	KAC	168	Paris	21:20
WAN	134	Doha	11:10	THY	764	Istanbul	21:30
JZR	165	Dubai	11:45	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:50
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	KAC	564	Amman	21:50
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05
THY	766	Istanbul	12:45	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:10
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:15
CLX	792	Luxembourg	12:45	AIC	975	Chennai/Goa	22:25
KAC	522	Al Najaf	13:00	WAN	136	Doha	22:25
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	SVA	514	Riyadh	22:30
JZR	239	Amman	13:00	WAN	118	Bahrain	22:40
JZR	357	Mashhad	13:05	SVA	502	Jeddah	22:45
RJA	644	Amman	13:20	JZR	185	Dubai	22:50
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:30	JAI	574	Mumbai	23:00
JZR	779	Jeddah	13:45	MSC	501	Alexandria	23:10
				MSR	2614	Doha	23:30
				FDB	071	Dubai	23:35
				JZR	241	Amman	23:40

In Mandela tribute, Obama warns of 'strange and uncertain times'

French World Cup victors show triumph of diversity



Former US President Barack Obama speaks during the 2018 Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture at the Wanderers cricket stadium in Johannesburg yesterday. —AFP

Police capture US serial killer

CHICAGO: Police in the US state of Texas yesterday captured a man they described as a serial killer who took the lives of at least three people in seven days. Jose Gilberto Rodriguez was arrested after a 14-minute car chase with police. A resident in a Houston suburb alerted authorities to the location of the 46-year-old's vehicle just hours after police put out a public warning that a serial killer may be on the loose.

Rodriguez was arrested without incident after the car chase ended and a pistol was recovered in his car, Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez told a news conference. "We're glad it ended without incident," Gonzalez said, adding that

authorities did not yet have a motive. "It's still early in the investigation. We'd like to figure that out."

Rodriguez is suspected of a crime spree that began July 9 with a home invasion robbery. He allegedly went on to kill at least three people and was also tied to the robbery and shooting of a Houston bus driver who was expected to survive. He was discovered early yesterday morning in a neighborhood he was thought to frequent, and where he allegedly targeted one of the victims. "It was possible he was casing the neighborhood in search of his next victim," Gonzalez said.

The first victim that police have tied to Rodriguez was a 62-year-old widow who lived alone, according to US media. Pamela Johnson was found dead in her home on July 13. In that killing and another of a 28-year-old mattress store employee the following day, Rodriguez allegedly took the victims' cars, according to reports. A third victim was found dead Monday at another Houston-area mattress store. —AFP

'Oddball' among 12 newmoons discovered around Jupiter

TAMPA: A dozen new moons have been discovered around Jupiter, bringing its total number of known moons to 79, the most of any planet in our solar system, astronomers announced yesterday. One of the new moons was described as a "real oddball" by researcher Scott Sheppard at the Carnegie Institution for Science, because of its tiny size, it measuring just about a kilometer) across. It also "has an orbit like no other known Jovian moon" and is "likely Jupiter's smallest known moon," he added.

This oddball takes about a year and a half to circle Jupiter, and orbits at an inclined angle that crosses paths with a swarm of moons traveling in a retrograde, or in the opposite direction of Jupiter's spin rotation.

"This is an unstable situation," said Sheppard. "Head-on collisions would quickly break apart and grind the objects down to dust."

The oddball moon, along with two other new moon discoveries, orbit in the prograde, or same direction as the planet's rotation. The inner moons take about a year to circle Jupiter, while the outer moons take twice as long. All the moons may be fragments that broke apart when their larger, parent cosmic bodies collided.

Astronomers have proposed the name "Valtudo" for the oddball moon, after the Roman god Jupiter's great-granddaughter, the goddess of health and hygiene. The Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei discovered the first four of Jupiter's moons in 1610. The current team of astronomers did not set out to find new moons of Jupiter, but was scanning the skies for planets beyond Pluto when the moons fell into the path of their telescope.

The new moons were first glimpsed in 2017, using a telescope based in Chile and operated by the National Optical Astronomical Observatory of the United States. It took a year for their orbits to be confirmed with a series of other telescopes in the United States and Chile. —AFP

Qatar Airways adapts to dispute...

Continued from Page 1

Qatar Airways is already an investor in British Airways-owner IAG, for example, owning about a 20 percent stake, and last year bought a stake in Italian carrier Meridiana. The CEO said he did not see the situation

with the regional political dispute improving any time soon. Despite that, Baker said his airline was sticking to its orders for new plane deliveries and was confident that Boeing would deliver its new 777-X jet, for which Qatar has made a big order, on schedule despite reported delays. "I think they will be on time," he said.

Qatar Airways was only moderately hedged on fuel and might need to hedge more in future as the price of oil rises, Baker said. "I am concerned about the oil prices. For the time being Qatar Airways is moderately hedged ... well if it comes I may have to (hedge)," he told Reuters, referring to a potential rise in oil prices. — Reuters

ensure food and other supplies in case the situation deteriorates.

Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said the government informed lawmakers that there was no military or security threat to Kuwait but the government is ready for all developments. He said that there is no cause for concern and Kuwait is keen to see stability and security in Iraq. The minister said Kuwait stands besides Iraq and recalled Kuwait recently hosted an Iraq reconstruction conference.

Ghanem, Saleh assure no cause...

Continued from Page 1

Ghanem said various government authorities are closely coordinating over the issue and in order to

JOHANNESBURG: Former US president Barack Obama yesterday used a tribute to Nelson Mandela to warn that the world had plunged into "strange and uncertain times", in what is likely to be seen as a veiled attack on Donald Trump. Obama made no direct reference to his successor but warned that "politics of fear and resentment" were spreading, driven by leaders who scorned facts and told lies with an "utter loss of shame". He also blasted climate-change denial, race-based migration policies, unbridled capitalism and "strongman politics" - stances often cited as the hallmarks of Trump's controversial presidency.

"Given the strange and uncertain times we are in, each day's news cycles brings more head-spinning and disturbing headlines, I thought maybe it would be useful to step back for a moment and get some perspective," Obama said at the start of his speech. Obama spoke to a crowd of more than 10,000 people at a cricket stadium in Johannesburg in the centerpiece event of celebrations 100 years since Nelson Mandela's birth. "It is in part because of the failures of governments and powerful elites... that we now see much of the world threatening to return to an older, more dangerous, more brutal way of doing business," Obama said.

On migration, he appeared to take a sharp jab at Trump saying "it is not wrong to insist that national borders matter... but that can't be an excuse for immigration policies based on race or ethnicity or religion". Obama singled out the African heritage of many players in France's World Cup-winning football team, saying that embracing diversity "delivers practical benefits since it ensures that a society can draw upon the energy and skills of all... people". "And if you doubt that, just ask the French football team that just won the World Cup - because not all these folks look like Gauls to me, they are French, they are French," he stressed with a smile.

France beat Croatia 4-2 in Sunday's final in Moscow, with a team featuring many players of African heritage. Of the 23 players in the French squad, around two-thirds are of Arab or African descent. Two of France's goal scorers against Croatia have African roots: Paul Pogba's parents are from Guinea while Kylian Mbappe's parents are Cameroonian and Algerian. Of the players who started in the final, Samuel Umtiti was born in Cameroon, Blaise Matuidi's parents are Angolan and Congolese, N'Golo Kante's parents are Malian while Raphael Varane's father is from the Caribbean island of Martinique.

Expanding 'dead zone' in Arabian...

Continued from Page 1

Fish, a key source of sustenance in the region, may find their habitats compressed from deep underwater to just beneath the surface, putting them at risk of overfishing and extreme competition. "When oxygen concentration drops below certain levels, fish cannot survive and you have massive death," says Lachkar. To carry out his data-heavy modelling, Lachkar relies on a sprawling supercomputer center which cost several million dollars to set up - a testament to local priorities to research climate change.

The UAE in 2016 renamed its Ministry of Environment and Water as the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, further evidence of the regional desire to meet this global challenge head-on. "I

think it is an important topic for different reasons, not only scientific reasons, but also economic," says Lachkar from his Centre for Prototype and Climate Modelling. "Fishing is an important source of revenue and it's directly impacted by the oxygen," he said. Even coral reefs and, by extension, tourism could be affected.

Down the hall from his research facility is the complementary Centre for Global Sea Level Change, where researchers like Diana Francis study the worldwide impact of the problem. The issue was at the top of the global agenda in 2015, when the world hammered out a deal in Paris to cut carbon emissions. But the landmark agreement received a blow last year, when President Donald Trump announced he would be pulling the United States out of the accord. "It is very disappointing, because a major country is not putting effort in the same direction as the others," says Francis of the decision. "But our role is to stick to science, be pragmatic and try to advance our understanding of the climate," she says. "Politics change over time," Francis tells AFP. "But science does not." —AFP

Obama met Mandela only briefly in 2005 but gave a eulogy at his funeral saying Mandela "makes me want to be a better man" and hailing him as "the last great liberator of the 20th century". Both men were the first black presidents of their countries. African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Mandela's widow Graca Machel were among the guests from Obama's speech - his highest-profile address since leaving office.

"I really appreciate it that Obama spoke out against Trump," 25-year-old management consultant Karabo Tima told AFP after attending the speech. "We see our brothers and sisters trying to seek a better life in the states, and we know that America was built on the backs of black people and they don't get the recognition."

Before arriving in South Africa, Obama paid a brief visit to Kenya, his father's home country. Obama will also host a town hall event in Johannesburg today for 200 young leaders selected from across Africa to attend a five-day training program. Mandela was imprisoned under apartheid rule in 1962 and only freed in 1990, when he went on to lead the African National Congress party to victory in the first multi-race elections in 1994. —AFP

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Sports

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Washington's Harper wins Major League Baseball Home Run Derby

Verlander: MLB should get rid of DH altogether

WASHINGTON: Washington Nationals outfielder Bryce Harper delighted home-ballpark supporters Monday by winning Major League Baseball's Home Run Derby, smashing the decisive homer to centerfield with his final swing of the bat. The 25-year-old from Las Vegas edged Chicago Cubs outfielder Kyle Schwarber 19-18 in the final of the ball-bashing competition for some of the top major league sluggers. "It was unbelievable," Harper said. "Just having the crowd out there, I really fed off them. It was an incredible moment not only for me but the organization and Nationals fans."

"I've been here since I was 17 years old. I've grown up in front of these fans." The contest serves as a warm-up attraction for Tuesday's 89th MLB All-Star Game, the first in the US capital since 1969. Players had four minutes to smack as many home runs as they could over the outfield walls in a knockout format, with bonus time earned for especially long blasts. Schwarber batted first in the final, the fifth seed smashing nine homers before calling a timeout with 1:49 remaining, then bashing nine more, setting Harper a total of 18 to beat.

Harper, in his first Home Run Derby since 2013, thrilled a home-stadium crowd of 43,698 at Nationals Park that chanted "Let's go Harper." Second-seeded Harper swatted only four homers in the first 82 seconds before calling a timeout, then hit five more before stopping again with 80 seconds to go. He was nine shy of equalizing as he chatted with Nationals star Max Scherzer, the National League All-Star Game starting pitcher.

"I had nine after that second timeout," Harper said. "I said, 'Max, I've got to hit nine.' He said, 'No, you've got to hit 10.'"

Harper smashed four in a row from the 30-second mark and another on the final pitch to equal Schwarber on 18, but he had earned a 30-second time bonus for a chance to win. The winning homer came on the second pitch Harper faced, a high-soaring blast over the centerfield wall, and streamers were fired from the top of

the ballpark to celebrate the triumph. "That was the kid in me you saw tonight," Harper said. "I was very fortunate to be able to show that to everybody. This was for the whole city of DC. I feel very fortunate to bring it back to them." New York Yankees star Aaron Judge, the 2017 winner, did not participate and Harper made it clear he won't be defending his title either.

"I don't have to do it ever again so that's great. My oblique is going to be feeling it tomorrow," Harper said. "If it wasn't in front of my home crowd, I wouldn't have done it." In the semi-finals, Schwarber blasted a last-pitch homer off the right field foul pole to edge eighth-seeded Philadelphia outfielder Rhys Hoskins 21-20 and Harper defeated third-seeded Los Angeles Dodgers first baseman Max Muncy 13-12. In the opening round, Hoskins downed Milwaukee's top-seeded Jesus Aguilar 17-12, Schwarber edged Houston's Alex Bregman 16-15, Muncy beat Javier Baez of the Chicago Cubs 17-16 and Harper defeated Atlanta's Freddie Freeman 13-12.

Get rid of DH

Spending his entire MLB career in the American League, Justin Verlander has only picked up a bat in interleague games and the World Series. On Monday, his pitching side took over. Speaking in Washington in advance of Tuesday's All-Star Game, Verlander said that he thinks the league should eliminate the designated hitter altogether. "I would take the DH out, even though I know the National League is talking about implementing the designated hitter," Verlander said, per USA Today. "For my pitching purposes, it's fun to face guys like me who can't hit. But I do think, for instance when we were in the World Series, the Houston Astros are playing the Dodgers, when we are at Dodger Stadium, we were a little behind. We were not used to hitting, bunting and things like that."

Verlander made his major league debut with Detroit in 2005 and remained there until his trade to Houston last Aug. 31. He's a seven-time All-Star and the 2011

with severe punishments in 2005. "Baseball has the best testing program, not only testing but drug program, not only in professional sports but all of sports," Manfred said. "If you talk to the Olympic groups, WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) and USADA, they will tell you ours is the best." The latest issue facing Manfred, who became commissioner in January 2015, is legalized sports betting, which thanks to a Supreme Court ruling is now open on a state-by-state basis.

Manfred, who said he disliked seeing references to oddsman lines on European football telecasts, would prefer a federal system compared to 50 state ones but vows MLB employees won't bet on baseball no matter what's legal. "The challenge for us is to make sure... those laws develop in a way where we can protect the integrity of the sport," Manfred said. "We want to be careful our product retains a certain pristine quality. Anyone who works for Major League Baseball, whether it's legal or not, will not be allowed to bet on baseball. We'll always have this rule." Retired Cincinnati Reds star Pete Rose, the all-time major league leader in hits and games played, was banned from baseball for life in 1989 for betting on baseball while manager of the Reds. Rose, 77, applied for reinstatement to Manfred in 2015 but was rejected, the commissioner saying to allow Rose back was an "unacceptable risk." —AFP

fight win over mixed martial arts champion Conor McGregor. Oscar-winning star Clooney earned an estimated \$239 million after selling the Casamigos tequila company he co-founded to British spirits company Diageo in June 2017. Forbes said the sale gave Clooney the best annual earnings of his 35-year career in film and television. Forbes said entertainers on its 2018 Celebrity 100 list earned a combined \$6.3 billion before tax, up 22 percent from last year's list. Many of the highest earners came from celebrities leveraging their brands through side ventures and through their social media presence.

"There's never been a more lucrative time to be famous than now, with 11 superstars earning \$100 million or more over the past year," Zack O'Malley Greenburg, senior entertainment editor at Forbes, said in a statement. "Entertainers have found all sorts of new ways to monetize their audiences, especially with the help of social media," he added. Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson almost doubled his earnings from the previous year to land in 5th place with estimated earnings of \$124 million. Forbes said the earnings of the "Jumanji" and "Fast & Furious" star were the largest acting-related earnings it had recorded in 20 years.

The top earner on last year's list, musician Sean Diddy Combs, dropped to No. 32 on the current list. His earnings on the 2017 list were inflated by a tour and the sale of part of his Sean John clothing line, Forbes said.



WASHINGTON: Bryce Harper #34 celebrates after the T-Mobile Home Run Derby at Nationals Park on July 16, 2018. — AFP

winner of both the AL Cy Young and Most Valuable Player awards. At the plate, however, he is a career .111 batter (five singles in 45 at-bats). He has one RBI in his career. He had three at-bats against the Dodgers in the 2017 World Series, striking out each time.

"When you're playing a championship, that determines the best team in the world, it should be an even playing field. It's the only sport like that with different

sets of rules in different leagues," Verlander said. He then addressed the NL's potential plan to adopt the DH, and his comments are likely to raise some eyebrows in Houston. "I like the game with no DH, personally. But who knows, one day I might be in the National League, so maybe they can keep it out of that league for a while," Verlander can become a free agent after the 2019 season. — Agencies

Steroid era is over, MLB boss declares

WASHINGTON: Major League Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred declared the sport's "steroid era" all-but over Monday but said new US betting laws will provide another challenge for the sport's integrity. On the eve of the 89th All-Star Game, the first staged in the US capital since 1969, Manfred hailed the impact of doping test protocols that include blood tests, biological profiles, random testing and an investigative staff.

"I don't believe there is the widespread use of performance-enhancing drugs in baseball any more," Manfred said. "I feel good that we've done everything humanly possible to prevent the use of performance-enhancing drugs. But we will remain constantly vigilant." Major League Baseball stars Alex Rodriguez and Mark McGwire admitted taking performance-enhancing drugs and steroid accusations tainted some of baseball's top stars, including US home run king Barry Bonds and pitcher Roger Clemens.

Only after pressure from US lawmakers did the major leagues ban steroids and begin a tougher testing policy

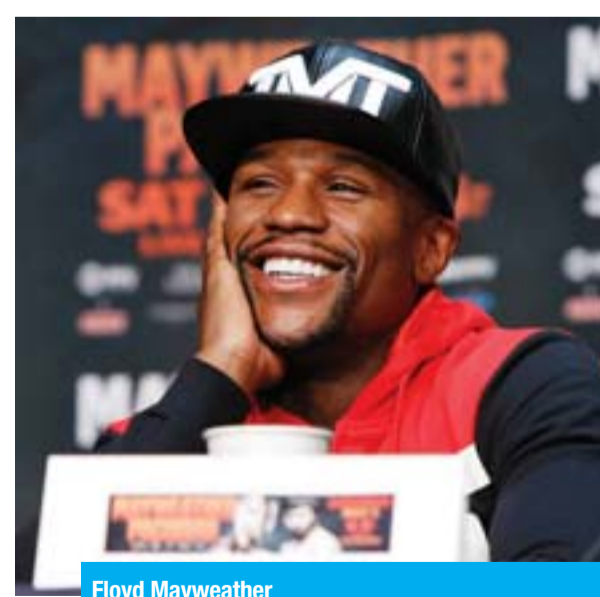
Mayweather, Clooney lead highest paid entertainers

LOS ANGELES: American boxer Floyd Mayweather was named the world's highest-paid entertainer on Monday on a list that saw actor George Clooney take the No 2 spot with the highest annual pay of his career. Reality star Kylie Jenner, 20, came in third on the annual Forbes Celebrity 100 list, largely thanks to her booming cosmetics line that Forbes said put her on track to become the youngest self-made billionaire in the United States.

Forbes compiled its 2018 list estimating pre-tax earnings from June 2017-June 2018, before deducting fees for managers, based on data from Nielsen, touring trade publication Pollstar, movie database IMDB, and interviews with industry experts and celebrities themselves. Mayweather pulled in some \$285 million in the period, largely thanks to his August 2017 comeback



WASHINGTON: MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred looks on during the T-Mobile Home Run Derby at Nationals Park on July 16, 2018. — AFP



Floyd Mayweather

Musicians and athletes fared well, with Irish band U2, British band Coldplay and British singer Ed Sheeran appearing in the top 10. Soccer players Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo also earned more than \$100 million, Forbes said. — Reuters

Mercedes still fastest despite the lost points

LONDON: Formula One champions Mercedes made mistakes in the last three back-to-back races but they still have the fastest car, according to team boss Toto Wolff. World champion Lewis Hamilton won in France last month but suffered his first retirement in two years at the following race in Austria and was second in his home British Grand Prix after going from pole position to last. The Briton heads to Hockenheim for this weekend's German Grand Prix with an eight-point gap to make up on Ferrari's four-times champion Sebastian Vettel, who will be racing in front of his home crowd. "We didn't score as many points in the triple-header as we had hoped for. A lot of that was down to our own mistakes," Wolff said in a team preview of Sunday's race.

"However, there is a silver lining to this-while we didn't maximize on points, we did bring the quickest car to all three races." Vettel won in Silverstone while Red Bull's 20-year-old Dutchman Max Verstappen took his first win of the season at his team's home race in Austria. The triple header was a first for Formula One, the scheduling aimed at avoiding a clash with the World Cup final in Russia. Mercedes started all three races from pole position but Hamilton and team mate Valtteri Bottas scored only 61 points between them, compared to 98 for championship leaders Ferrari and 65 for Red Bull.

Hockenheim is the 11th race of the 21-round season and Mercedes have won just three times, compared to six by the same stage last year. "We've had a decent first half," Wolff said. "On the one hand, we've left points on the table and had to do damage limitation more often than we would have wanted. On the other hand, we still scored a good amount of points, both drivers have shown strong performances and we have a fast car. So there are many reasons why we're looking forward to the second half of the 2018 season." Hockenheim did not host a race last year but Hamilton won there in 2016. — Reuters

Sports

Dancing, military parade greet Asian Games flame in Indonesia

From cloud seeding to vehicle curbs, Indonesia fights pollution ahead of Games

YOGYAKARTA: The torch for the 18th Asian Games was welcomed to the Indonesian city of Yogyakarta yesterday, with a military parade, traditional dancing and a flypast by the airforce. Jakarta and Palembang in Sumatra are set to host about 11,000 athletes and 5,000 officials from 45 Asian countries for the August 18 to September 2 Games, the world's biggest multi-sport event behind the Olympics. The flame, which was lit Sunday in India's capital New Delhi—the host city of Asia's first Asian Games in 1951—arrived on an Indonesian Air Force Boeing jet that was escorted by five fighters in golden eagle formation.

The arrival of the torch was marked by a traditional Yogyakarta welcoming dance, a dragon dance, a paragliding show, gun salute, military band and a fly-past by an acrobatics fighter jet squadron. Cheering crowds greeted Indonesia's torch ambassador and badminton legend Susy Susanti as she led a procession from Adisutjipto Airport through the city, which is renowned as Indonesia's cultural capital.

The torch will travel some 18,000km across 54 cities before landing in the capital Jakarta, where the Games opening ceremony will be held. Yogyakarta was chosen to receive the torch "because it is a city with a lot of history, one of the Kingdoms in Indonesia, and also at the same time it is famous as a city of tourism," said Erick Thohir, president of the Asian Games organizing committee. The torch relay will start tomorrow with the first leg from Yogyakarta to Solo.

As Indonesia prepares to host thousands of competitors and fans at next month's Asian Games, pollution concerns have flared following a spell of unhealthy air in Jakarta and forest fire hotspots near the second venue, Palembang in South Sumatra. Traffic congestion in Indonesia's sprawling capital of 10 million consistently ranks among the world's worst, and it has long struggled to boost air quality, regularly rated as unsafe by

the World Health Organization (WHO).

Organizers of the Asian Games, set to run from August 18 to September 2, drawing nearly 17,000 athletes and officials and more than 100,000 spectators, said they were working with city officials to tackle the pollution. "It is expected that there will be better air quality at Asian games competition venues," the organizers said in a statement yesterday.

Strategies being considered include wider curbs on private cars depending on whether their licence-plate numbers are odd or even, creating special lanes for the sports event, and building gardens. Indonesia is following a path blazed by other large Asian cities, such as Beijing, which adopted traffic curbs and closed factories to improve air during the 2008 Olympics. Jakarta's average score on the Air Quality Index (AQI) had exceeded 100 in the last week, said Budi Haryanto, an environmental health expert at the University of Indonesia.

"Air quality is unhealthy, and this with the odd and even vehicle plate policy," he told Reuters. By 11 am yesterday, the air quality in Jakarta stood in the "unhealthy" range at 171, the Real-Time AQI Index showed. "Since athletes need to give their maximum performance for the competition, a better AQI is a must," said Haryanto, who felt the optimum would be less than 50. Lung function is affected after over two months of daily exposure to an index reading below 200, Haryanto said, but gasoline emissions, a frequent pollutant in Jakarta, can be linked to cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases, besides cancer.

Fire hot spots

The smaller city of Palembang generally has cleaner air than Jakarta, but can suffer the ravages of forest and land fires, sometimes blanketing the area in a thick haze. "The primary pollutant sources in Jakarta are mostly



YOGYAKARTA: Indonesian dancers perform the Javanese Sekar Budiastuti dance as they welcome the Asian Games flame in Yogyakarta yesterday, following the flame's arrival from India for the 2018 Asian Games torch relay. — AFP

traffic and industry, while in Palembang, it is mainly from peatland burning," said Hsiang-He Lee of the Singapore-MIT Alliance for Research and Technology. "Now is the peak of the burning season." Indonesia's weather authorities are monitoring 12 fire "hotspots" in South Sumatra, they said this week.

Authorities are looking into the possibility of cloud seeding to combat the hotspots by triggering rainfall in dry areas with flares of salt shot into suit-

able clouds. The strategy was successful in 2011, when Indonesia hosted the Southeast Asian Games in Palembang, but would depend on weather conditions, said Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, the spokesman of the disaster management agency. Erick Thohir, head of the Asian Games organizing committee, told reporters last week he understood concerns over the haze, but believed efforts to control the fires were proving successful.— Agencies

Five favored contenders

FLORIDA: The Open gets underway at Carnoustie golf course tomorrow. Here AFP Sports looks at five of the favored contenders:

Rickie Fowler (USA)

One of the best players never to have won a major, Rickie Fowler's talent can be counted on to outshine his colorful taste in clothing. Known to step out in orange golfing gear and garish headwear, Fowler is hoping to light up Carnoustie with his extravagant talent. With regard to the majors he is yet to nail one, having the frustration of finishing runner-up in three of them, the latest the Masters this year, and third in the PGA Championship. Has shown he takes to links golf by finishing runner-up in the 2014 Open. He warmed up for this edition with a satisfactory sixth-placed finish at last weekend's Scottish Open.

Dustin Johnson (USA)

World number one Dustin Johnson could be forgiven for thinking that one major win, the 2016 US Open, is scant reward for a player so impressive on the world golf circuit. He may even resent the fact that the name Johnson already appears on the Open winner's Claret Jug but belongs to a lesser talent — the gritty Zach Johnson. The 34-year-old who is married to HL legend Wayne Gretzky's daughter Paulina, is once more a serious contender for Open glory. He comes to The Open having finished in the top 10 in both the Masters and the US Open and with two wins on the US Tour this season.

Jon Rahm (ESP)

No doubting the talent of the Spanish star who is another strong contender if he can win his biggest battle — for control of his own temperament. Many great players have played with their hearts on their sleeves but Rahm, 23, has a harder time than most getting a grip on the emotions that inevitably swirl around when a few shots go awry. The signs are that the contest is going his way — he has two wins to his credit this season, one in the US and the other on home soil at the Spanish Open. Add to that a strong performance in The Masters where he finished fourth. Another string to his bow and vital at Carnoustie — he can play links golf, having won the Irish Open last year at Port Stewart and put up a decent defence of his title this time round.

Rory McIlroy (NIR)

He could be the exact opposite of Rahm in that his undoubted talent might need to be backed up by more fire from his temperament. McIlroy gives the impression at times that if things don't go his way as in the final round of The Masters this year, where he failed to put the pressure on overnight leader and playing partner Patrick Reed, he lets his shoulders slump rather than getting to grips with himself. Started the season brightly with a win on the US Tour but little has flowed for him of late. The 29-year-old Northern Irishman only sparked back into life in the final round at the PGA Championship at Wentworth when it was too late and the pressure was off. Has not added to his four majors since 2014 but despite his lack of form there is always the feeling he is never far from rediscovering the vim of yesteryear.

Jordan Spieth (USA)

Defending Open champion but hasn't won a tournament since that 2017 triumph. Came close to securing a second Masters this year with a sublime 63 in the final round, but in the end Patrick Reed kept his nerve to prevail. Missed the cut at the US Open but he will certainly not be surrendering his crown lightly.—AFP

Woods: The Open is my best chance to add to majors haul

FLORIDA: American superstar Tiger Woods returns to The Open after three years saying said yesterday that it is his best long-term chance to add to his 14 Major victories. The 42-year-old — whose dominance of the sport ended with the emergence of his serial infidelity in 2010 and, from 2014, serial back problems which led to several operations — told a press conference two days ahead of teeing off at Carnoustie that links golf suited classy ageing golfers well. The three-time Open champion, who has shown glimpses of form since returning to the circuit last December and has been in contention for a couple of titles this season, cited the examples of Tom Watson and Greg Norman, who in their 50's came close to winning The Open in 2009 and 2008 respectively.

"As far as long-term, certainly I would say 'Yes', because of the fact you don't have to be long to play on a links-style golf course," said Woods, who has not played The Open since missing the cut in 2015. "You get to places like Augusta where it is just a big ball park and the golf course outgrows you unfortunately. A links-style golf course you can just roll the ball. "Distance becomes a moot point on a links golf course. Creativity plays such an important role." Woods, who is four off equalling Jack

Bolt poised for a surprise trial with an Australian club

SYDNEY: Usain Bolt is on the verge of sealing a deal to trial with the A-League's Central Coast Mariners, the Australian club said yesterday, as the sprint legend pursues his dream of playing professional football. Eight-time Olympic champion Bolt, 31, who retired from athletics after August's World Championships in London, is an avid Manchester United fan who has long dreamt of playing top-flight football. The 100m and 200m world record-holder trained with Norwegian club Stromsgodset last month and Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund in March.

The planned arrangement will see him take part in a six-week trial starting next month at the Mariners' base in Gosford, some 75 kilometers (47 miles) north of Sydney, chief executive Shaun Mielekamp said. A season-long deal could follow if it goes well, he told commercial broadcaster Channel Seven. Football agent Tony Rallis, who has been working on the deal, told Sky Sports Radio's Big Sports Breakfast Tuesday it has been agreed "in principle... subject to a couple of benchmarks".

"Mainly, a trial, and of course marquee funds support from (governing body Football Federation Australia)," he said, adding that the arrangement was not a gimmick. "Once the FFA comes back and says that they'll be part of the process, we're going to the trial... This bloke's an ambitious athlete. The A-League needed a hero, and we got superman." Mielekamp said his club had been working on the agreement for four to five months, and there was still "some work to do". "But fingers crossed things might play out, but the most important thing is we wait to find out and see how good a footballer he is first. "If all goes well, who knows? He may be playing in the A-League this season."

Mielekamp said reports of Bolt's performance at the European clubs he has trialed with have been "pretty

Nicklaus's all-time majors record of 18, said even to be back competing at an Open represented a small victory.

"There were points when I never thought I'd play in this championship again," he said. "It's great watching on TV but even better in person. "But to come back to Carnoustie is a blessing. There were times when I didn't think this was possible but, lo and behold, here I am in my third major this year." Woods, whose last victory in The Open came in 2006, says he is slowly but surely regaining his competitive edge. "Each tournament I feel a bit better because I'm starting to play golf again," he said. "I feel I've got a better understanding of my game and it's coming with a little more experience. Everything is going just a little bit better."

'I was an anomaly'

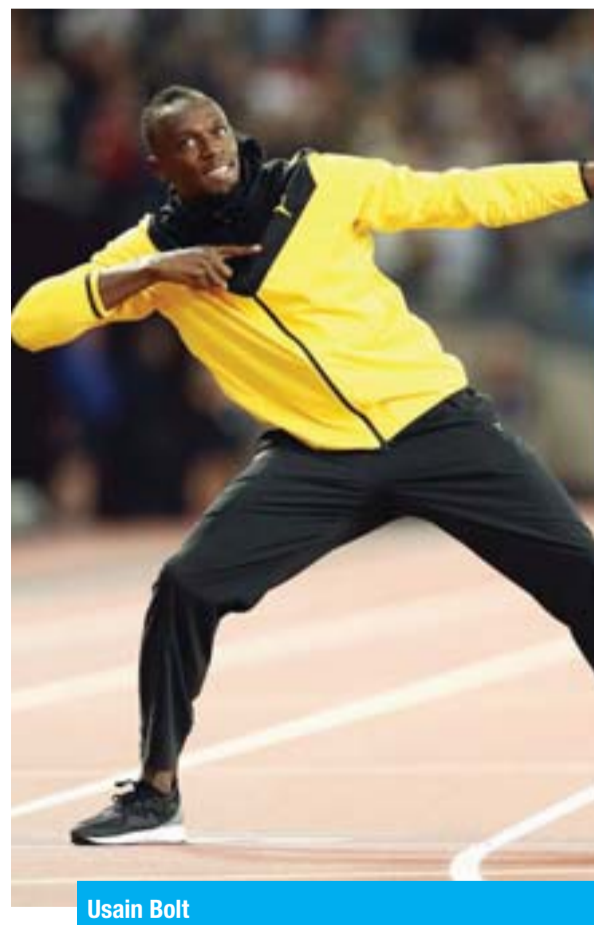
Woods, who has failed to sparkle at the two majors this year, tied for 32nd in The Masters and missed the cut at a punishing US Open. He says he has a special affinity with links courses. "I think I've got experience of playing this type of golf course," he said. "You got to manage your way around this course. "I have always loved playing links golf because the style of golf you have to play is creative."

"You are not going to get the perfect bounces and that is part of it. "It is the fun challenge of it. "Feel has a lot to do with it." While the stars of Woods and compatriot and fellow great of the game Phil Mickelson have dimmed, a whole swathe of 20-something Americans, such as defending champion Jordan Spieth, two-time US Open winner Brooks Koepka and Masters victor Patrick Reed, have swept to the forefront. Woods said this group's emergence and their closeness — they regularly see each other off the course — is very different to his day when he was unique



CARNOUSTIE: US golfer Tiger Woods watches his approach from the 1st fairway during a practice round at The 147th Open golf Championship at Carnoustie, Scotland yesterday. — AFP

among his generation and not just for his natural talent. "When I came out of college early I was an anomaly," he said. "No one turned professional aged 20 back then. Most players went through their four years of college and then tried to qualify for the tour. "Thus, all the guys I had been friends with and played at college level weren't on tour with me from the start so I gravitated towards older players like Payne Stewart and Mark O'Meara. "By the time my generation joined the Tour I had played in Ryder Cups and Presidents Cups. "Now they are turning pro at 18 and 19, and they are close and have been for a while." — AFP



Usain Bolt

good", and that "every time he trains, he improves significantly". "He has a very good left foot, and time will tell at what level he is at and if it fits the A-League... it would only be big if he could play and go really well," he said. "If he comes in and he is not up to the level, it could have a detrimental effect." Bolt has dominated sprinting since taking double individual gold at the Beijing Olympics in 2008. The charismatic sportsman went on to win a further six Olympic golds and pick up 11 world titles. The A-League season starts in October.—AFP

Player slams golf authorities over tardy dope test

CARNOUSTIE: Dope testing is due to be introduced at The Open for the first time this week at Carnoustie but South African golfing legend Gary Player questions why it has taken so long. The 82-year-old — one of whose nine majors came at Carnoustie in the 1968 Open — has not shied away from raising the spectre of golfers taking performance-enhancing drugs having first broached the explosive subject in 2007.

Player concedes that tennis and golf to his mind are the cleanest sports but still is not content it has taken such a long time to bring in testing, with the PGA Tour introducing blood testing last year. "Why so late? We are the last of all sports to do it," he told Tuesday's edition of The Times. "We have had players who have used performance-enhancing drugs. "Are we ever going to be able to stop it? No. There's too much involved. That's the world we live in." Player said it is nonsense to suggest doping would not aid a golfer's cause. "It makes you stronger," he said. "You don't get injured so quickly, you can hit more balls and you can practice harder."

Player had not been the only one to raise the issue with Northern Irish star Rory McIlroy demanding more tests two years ago — golf had been revealed as the Olympic sport which tested their athletes the least by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in 2015. However, top English golfer Tommy Fleetwood while accepting blood testing is now part of the sport feels golf is clean. "I'm pretty confident that it's a clean sport but the rules are rules," said the 27-year-old. "If everybody's doing the right things then it shouldn't be a problem." — AFP

Sports

Record scorer Cahill retires from international football

Tim Cahill scored 50 international goals in 107 appearances

SYDNEY: Australia's all-time leading goal-scorer Tim Cahill retired from international football yesterday, ending an illustrious career that has taken him to four World Cups. The 38-year-old, who scored 50 international goals in 107 appearances, last played for the Socceroos when he came off the bench for their final group game against Peru at the World Cup in Russia.

"Today's the day that I'm officially hanging up my boots on my international career with the Socceroos," Cahill tweeted. "No words can describe what it has meant to represent my country. Massive thank you to everyone for the support throughout all my years wearing the Australian badge." The former Everton striker, one of the finest players to come out of Australia, did not say if he would continue playing club football.

He joined his former club Millwall in the English Championship on a short-term deal in January after quitting Australia's Melbourne City in a bid to secure more game time before the World Cup. Governing body Football Federation Australia chief executive David Gallop hailed Cahill as a "genuine legend of our game and for a long time has been a great ambassador for football". Ex-teammates and Socceroo fans paid tribute to the tireless player and praised his leadership

on and off the field, using the Twitter hashtags #ThanksTim and #ThanksTimmy.

"When he put an Australian jersey on, he just had a knack of scoring goals and getting us out of trouble," former Socceroos great Archie Thompson told commercial broadcaster Channel Nine Tuesday. "He contributed in making football a brand and in making the Socceroos a brand." Cahill, born in Sydney to a Samoan mother, started his international career playing for Western Samoa under-20s and only became a Socceroo in 2004 after an intense lobbying campaign to world body FIFA.

Two years later in Germany, he became the first Australian to net a goal at the World Cup, going to score in two further tournaments in 2010 and 2014. In 2007, he also became the first Australian to score at an Asian Cup, and he helped the Socceroos win the Asian title for the first time in 2015. Before his stint at City, Cahill spent 14 years in England with Millwall and top-flight outfit Everton, scoring more than 100 goals, before signing for the New York Red Bulls. Cahill, known for his prodigious vertical leap and trademark goal celebration, when he uses the corner flag as a punching bag, also played for China's Shanghai Shenhua and Hangzhou Greentown.—AFP



SYDNEY: File photo shows Australia's Tim Cahill waving to the fans after Australia defeated Syria in their 2018 World Cup football qualifying match played in Sydney. Australia's all-time leading goalscorer Tim Cahill announced his retirement from international football yesterday. —AFP

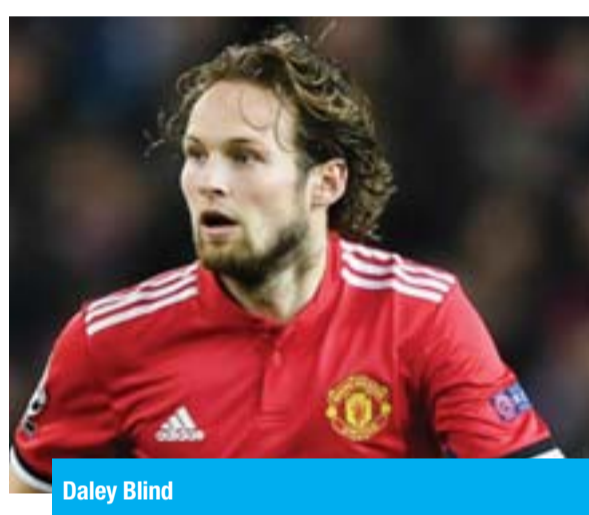
Blind returns to Ajax after Man Utd stint

AMSTERDAM: Daley Blind has returned to former club Ajax from Manchester United, telling his Twitter followers yesterday it was "time to go home". Blind has signed a four-year deal with the Amsterdam club, having left Ajax for United in a £14 million deal (\$18 million, 16 million euros) four years ago. Ajax said they would pay a transfer fee of 16 million euros for the return of the defensive midfielder and full-back, with add-ons that could see the fee rise to 20.5 million euros.

The 28-year-old Dutch international made 141 appearances for United, but his opportunities had

become increasingly limited under manager Jose Mourinho and he played only seven Premier League matches for the Old Trafford club last season. "I want to say how proud I am to be a part of the Manchester United family," Blind wrote on Twitter.

"To play for the biggest club in the world with such a history meant a lot to me. I had 4 great years with 4 trophy's (sic) "I want to thank you for all the love and support I received and still get. I will never forget some of the special games and moments, I will miss you 'The Theatre of Dreams'! But now it's time to go home." Blind is the first senior player to leave United in this pre-season, although former England midfielder Michael Carrick had already announced his retirement prior to taking up a post with Mourinho's backroom staff. United wrote on their Twitter feed: "We can confirm @BlindDaley has left #MUF to join Ajax. Thanks for everything, Daley, all the best for the future."—AFP



Daley Blind

Anderson will give team 'new dimension,' West Ham boss says

LONDON: West Ham United manager Manuel Pellegrini believes the London club's record signing, Felipe Anderson, will give his team a "new dimension". The 25-year-old Brazilian attacking midfielder signed for a reported £33.5 million (\$44 million, 38 million euros), potentially rising to £42 million, from Italian club Lazio on Sunday. "We feel he will bring a new dimension to the squad but also complement the attacking players we already have," Pellegrini said.

Anderson was the Hammers' seventh pre-season signing and former Manchester City manager Pellegrini, who took charge of the east London club after they

decided against renewing David Moyes' contract, even though the Scot guided them to top-flight survival last season. "Felipe has a very natural and skilful ability, in the traditional style of Brazilian football, but has proven at Lazio that he also has the strength and mentality to play at the top level in European football," Chilean manager Pellegrini added. Anderson has joined fellow recruits Ryan Fredericks, Lukasz Fabianski, Issa Diop, Jack Wilshere, Andriy Yarmolenko and Fabian Balbuena at the London Stadium.

West Ham co-chairmen David Gold and David Sullivan, together with vice-chairman Karen Brady, came in for fierce and often abusive criticism from Hammers fans last season but Pellegrini praised club officials for the way they had backed him in the transfer market. "We are very happy with the players we have signed since I arrived and it gives us a big confidence ahead of the new season," he said. "The club have made a very big investment this summer and I must thank the owners for their support and backing. "It has been a very successful week for us with the arrival of four new players, and we look forward to implementing their qualities into our plans and preparations."—AFP



Felipe Anderson

Not tall, not fast, but Cahill became a legend anyway

SYDNEY: Once dismissed as too small to be a professional, Australia's Tim Cahill, who retired from international football yesterday, became a giant of the game and his nation's most prolific goalscorer. Cahill hung up his boots after scoring a record 50 goals in 107 appearances since his debut in 2004, weeks after he played in his fourth World Cup in a cameo appearance against Peru in Russia. It leaves Australia, who were winless in Russia, with much rebuilding to do under new coach Graham Arnold as they head towards their Asian Cup title defense in January. "No words can describe what it has meant to represent my country," Cahill tweeted to his fans as he announced his decision. "Massive thank you to everyone for the support throughout all my years wearing the Australian badge." The 38-year-old is the last of the Socceroos' "golden generation" of footballers, who became national heroes when they qualified for the 2006 World Cup for the first time in 32 years. He went on to become the first Australian to net a goal at the World Cup, in Germany, and scored in the next two tournaments in 2010 and 2014.

The Sydney-born footballer's knack for scoring crucial goals led Socceroo fans to adopt the phrase "cometh the hour, cometh Tim Cahill". "That's why Timmy's Timmy. He's a great Australian sportsman," former national coach Ange Postecoglou said, after Cahill rescued Australia's stuttering World Cup qualification campaign with a double against Syria last year. "He's got an international record that stacks up against the best." In his later career, Cahill adopted the role of elder statesman among his younger team-mates as his contemporaries, including Mark Viduka and Harry Kewell, stepped away from the game.

Classic strike

Born December 6, 1979 in Sydney to a Samoan mother and British father, Cahill almost didn't represent Australia after playing briefly for Western Samoa under-

20s. But after trying for nine years and following an intense lobbying campaign to world body FIFA, he finally received clearance for Australian eligibility and made his debut against South Africa in 2004. The goals flowed in the following years as the box-to-box midfielder transformed into an outright striker while retaining his outstanding aerial ability. More than half Cahill's international goals came from headers, even though he stands only 1.78 metres (5ft 10in) tall. In 2006 in Germany, Cahill struck a late double against Japan that played a critical role in Australia reaching the last 16.

In South Africa in 2010, Cahill scored against Serbia, but the Socceroos were unable to progress from the group stages. Four years later in Brazil, Cahill found the back of the net against Chile, before unleashing a stunning volley against the Netherlands that was voted by FIFA as one of 2014's greatest goals. At club level, Cahill made waves in England after joining Millwall's academy as a teenager in 1997, with his parents going into debt to fund his footballing dream, despite critics saying he lacked the height to make it as a professional.

Toffees favorite

After reaching the 2004 FA Cup final with the second-tier club, he joined Premier League club Everton in 2005, making 256 appearances for the Toffees and scoring 68 goals over the next eight years. Stints at New York Red Bulls and Shanghai Shenhua followed before he returned home to the A-League in 2016 in a much-hyped move to Melbourne City that failed to meet expectations. Rarely featuring in City's starting line-up, Cahill quit the Australian club in December to rejoin Millwall on a short-term deal in a bid to make the squad for a fourth World Cup. But he only made cameo appearances for Millwall, with some critics questioning his inclusion in Bert van Marwijk's Socceroos squad. Despite playing only a minor role in Russia, Cahill's retirement is set to leave a gaping hole in the Australian line-up and dressing room as they forge ahead without their tireless talisman. "What youngsters will draw from (Cahill's career) is someone who wasn't gifted with blistering pace or wasn't technically better than some players, but worked hard and kept working even harder at the attributes he had," former Socceroos great Archie Thompson told commercial broadcaster Channel Nine yesterday. "I think that's what a lot of people, especially myself, admired about him."—AFP



SYDNEY: File photo shows Tim Cahill of Australia (right) heading home the winning goal as MHD, Zaher Almedani of Syria challenges during their 2018 World Cup football qualifying match against Syria played in Sydney. —AFP

Arsenal club sponsorship deal 'hit by China fraud'

SHANGHAI: English Premier League club Arsenal has launched an investigation after it was caught up in an alleged fraud involving its sponsorship deal with Chinese carmaker BYD. Arsenal said the deal, which was launched with great fanfare in May, was among those affected after BYD revealed what it described as a plot to defraud advertising agencies.

BYD said last week that a woman posing as the marketing manager of its Shanghai branch signed multiple contracts with advertising agencies to promote the company. One of the affected ad firms, Shanghai Jingzhi, has said BYD had been forced to refuse payment on contracts worth 1.1 billion yuan (\$165 million). "BYD has informed Arsenal that they believe they have been the victim of a fraud in relation to various advertising agreements," Arsenal said in a statement on their Chinese website. "This includes our partnership with BYD which was formally launched by both parties at an event at Emirates Stadium on 8th May."

The team said it was "investigating the situation" but that it would make no further comment. The statement gave no details of the alleged fraud or its impact on the sponsorship deal. BYD, however, has said that ads were indeed produced for the BYD-Arsenal partnership earlier this year as a result of the alleged fraud. BYD, based in the southern city of Shenzhen, is one of China's biggest carmakers and a leading producer of electric vehicles. The woman involved was arrested by Shanghai police on suspicion of contract fraud and falsifying company seals, BYD said earlier this week.—AFP

South Korea's Choo makes MLB All-Star debut at age of 36

WASHINGTON: South Korean outfielder Choo Shin-soo will realize his dream to play among the world's greatest players in the 89th Major League Baseball All-Star Game. Four days after his 36th birthday, and in his 14th major league campaign since coming to the United States from his homeland, the Texas Rangers standout will become the first South Korean non-pitcher in the mid-season classic as a member of the American League roster.

"You think about the best players from 30 teams and if I'm selected an All-Star, it's the baseball gods' gift," Choo said. "I'm very honored for my country, myself and my family. When I was growing up in Korea I thought about playing all my life. My goal was to play one game with the best players in the world."

"I just took every little step to get there, just play well every single day, respect baseball and give my best for every game."

Choo enters the All-Star contest with a 51-game on-base streak, the longest in the major leagues since Boston's Kevin Millar in 2007. It puts Choo among only 50 other players having achieved such a feat since the statistic was first kept in 1908. Among the American legends he joins are Joe DiMaggio, Ty Cobb, Barry Bonds and Ted Williams, who owns the major league record on-base streak of 84 games set in 1949.

"To see him do what he's done this first half at his age and really help that ballclub keep going, I'm excited to see him, and nothing but respect for him," said Japan-born Los Angeles Dodgers manager Dave Roberts, who will guide the National League All-Stars. "About Choo, it's bigger than all of us. What Major League Baseball has done, not only domestically but worldwide, is a great job in trying to make it not only our nation's sport but a worldwide sport."—AFP

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Maradona takes charge of Belarus club

Soccer star begins the latest chapter in his colorful career



BREST: Football star Diego Maradona arrives at the stadium in Brest. The 57-year-old Argentinean visits Belarus for the first time after becoming the chairman of the board of Dinamo. — AFP

BREST, Belarus: Hotfoot from creating a stir at the World Cup Diego Maradona arrived in Belarus yesterday to begin the latest chapter in his colorful career. Argentina's 1986 World Cup winner insisted that his new role as president of first division Dinamo Brest was "very serious" and said he hoped his presence would help the country's sport "get better every day". The 57-year-old also expressed a wish to meet authoritarian Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

"I have very good memories of Fidel Castro, (Hugo) Chavez and (Muammar) Gaddafi and I also know Putin," the former Argentinean number 10 said at a

news conference, listing late leaders of Cuba, Venezuela and Libya and the current Russian president. "Now I want to do a photograph with Lukashenko," he said of the former collective farm boss who has ruled the ex-Soviet state with an iron grip since 1994. "I hope after that he will become our fan," he added, speaking Spanish in translated comments. Lukashenko is better known as an avid ice hockey player. The Argentinean spoke of his desire to settle in Belarus, which is sandwiched between Russia and Ukraine and EU members Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, saying he did not fear the cold.

"When I was small, I had no shoes and I walked barefoot. So I'm not afraid of snow. I can live in Belarus without any problems," said the Argentinean, who grew up in a shantytown. He also said he was planning to learn Russian. Maradona signed a three-year contract in May and was set to watch his first match as the team's president on Monday evening, at home against fourth-placed Shakhtyor. Dinamo Brest are sixth in the table just before the halfway point in the Belarusian league season. "We'll try to create a team that will battle for the best places," said the former Ballon d'or winner whose infamous "Hand of God" goal against

England helped Argentina win the 1986 World Cup.

One of the greatest players of all-time, he became an increasing subject of ridicule at the World Cup in Russia. He made an obscene gesture from the VIP box to celebrate Argentina's dramatic 2-1 win over Nigeria which sent them into the last 16, drawing plenty of criticism. Even after his country's exit at the hands of France, he managed to keep himself in the limelight claiming that he would turn the team's fortunes around if named coach, and then being rebuked by FIFA after ranting about the officials following Colombia's loss to England.—AFP

Alaphilippe claims maiden stage

LE GRAND-BORNAND: Frenchman Julian Alaphilippe turned on the style to secure his maiden Tour de France stage win yesterday as Belgium's Greg Van Avermaet stubbornly held on to the yellow jersey. Alaphilippe, of the Quick Step team, launched an audacious lone attack on the third and penultimate climb and went on to solo over the finish several minutes ahead of the main peloton after a first day in the Alps marked by a yellow jersey truce.

Expected to challenge overnight leader Van Avermaet for the right to wear the race's fabled tunic into today's 11th stage, the Sky team of champion Chris Froome failed to muster a challenge despite their best-placed rider, Geraint Thomas, sitting only 43secs behind the Belgian in the overall standings. Van Avermaet, who is not a specialist climber, appeared under threat at the beginning of the 158.5 km race from Anancy featuring four categorized climbs and with a downhill finish into Le Grand Bornand. But the wily BMC rider exceeded expectations, joining an early breakaway that went on to build a healthy lead on the main peloton to stymie whatever plans Sky may have had of taking control of the race. In the end, Van Avermaet pro-



LE GRAND-BORNAND: France's Julian Alaphilippe celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the tenth stage of the 105th edition of the Tour de France cycling race between Anancy and Le Grand-Bornand yesterday. —AFP

duced a fantastic performance to finish 1min 43secs behind Alaphilippe, Thomas, Froome and Team Sky trailing over the finish over three minutes behind the stage winner.

In the overall standings Van Avermaet now leads Thomas, in second, by 2:22, with Alejandro Valverde (Movistar) now up to third overall at 3:10. Froome, who is bidding for his fourth con-

secutive Grand Tour win and fifth overall, is up to sixth place at 3:21. The 11th stage, held over 108.5 km between Albertville and La Rosiere, features the first summit finish of the race. The third and final day in the Alps is on Thursday when sparks are expected to fly on the 14km climb, over 21 hairpin bends, to the summit of Alpe d'Huez.—AFP

Africa 'real' World Cup winners

CARACAS: Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro believes Africa and not France are the true winners of the 2018 World Cup in Russia. France beat Croatia 4-2 in Sunday's final in Moscow, but with a team featuring number players of African heritage. "The French team seems like the African team, in reality Africa won, the African immigrants who arrived in France," Maduro said at an event to celebrate police day in Venezuela on Monday. "How much have they despised Africa, and in the football World Cup France won the trophy thanks to African players or the sons of Africans." Two of France's goalscorers against Croatia have African roots: Paul Pogba's parents are from Guinea while Kylian Mbappe's parents are Cameroonian and Algerian.

Of the players who started in the final, Samuel Umtiti was born in Cameroon, Blaise Matuidi's parents are

Angolan and Congolese, N'Golo Kante's parents are Malian while Raphael Varane's father is from the Caribbean island of Martinique. Of the 23-man squad, 16 have African roots of some sort, although captain Hugo Lloris, goalscorer Antoine Griezmann and striker Olivier Giroud are of European heritage. Maduro nonetheless congratulated the team for the "beautiful" way they played and paid tribute to his ally and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin for putting on "the best World Cup in the history of football."

The Venezuelan leader, who has presided over a collapse of the country's economy and who has been widely condemned for the repression of opponents, called on France and Europe as a whole to use this victory as a springboard to end the mistreatment of Africans and Latin Americans. "That's enough racism in Europe against Africans, enough discrimination against migrants," he said. "Hopefully France and Europe will appreciate that us, southerners, Africans, Latin Americans, are worthy and powerful." Maduro has a tense relationship with French President Emmanuel Macron who has accused him of implementing a "dictatorship" in the South American country.—AFP