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Haley slams Kuwait, other Arab, Islamic states on Palestinian aid

Erdogan calls Israel 'fascist, racist' • Israel downs Syrian jet as Golan heats up



GOLAN HEIGHTS: A picture taken yesterday from Tal Saki hill shows smoke rising above buildings across the border in Syria. — AFP

UNITED NATIONS/ISTANBUL/ JERUSALEM: US envoy to the United Nations Nikki Haley yesterday slammed Arab and Islamic states for talking a lot about supporting the Palestinians but not giving more money to help, calling out countries like Egypt, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Haley listed how much those countries, along with Algeria, Tunisia, Pakistan, Oman and Turkey, had given - or not given - to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which helps Palestinian refugees. Washington, long the biggest donor, cut its aid to \$60 million from a promised \$365 million this year.

"No group of countries is more generous with their words than the Palestinians' Arab neighbors, and other OIC member states," Haley told a UN Security Council meeting on the Middle East, citing the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. "But all of the words spoken here in New York do not feed, clothe, or educate a single Palestinian child. All they do is get the international community riled up," she said.

"Where are the Arab countries when it comes to encouraging reconciliation between Palestinian factions, which is essential to peace? Where are the Arab countries when it comes to denouncing Hamas terrorism? Where are the Arab countries when it comes to supporting compromises that are necessary for peace?" Haley said.

Haley highlighted American assistance to the Palestinians, saying that in addition to aid to UNRWA, Washington provided \$300 million in bilateral aid last year, and "over six billion - with a B - dollars in bilateral

assistance to Palestinians" since 1993. "How much have the Arab countries - some of whom are wealthy countries - how much have they given to the Palestinians?" she asked.

Haley also called out China and Russia for talking "a big game about the Palestinian cause" but providing only \$350,000 and \$2 million respectively to UNRWA in 2017. "It is time for the regional states in particular to step up and really help the Palestinian people, instead of just making speeches thousands of miles away," said Haley. US President Donald Trump withheld UNRWA aid after questioning its value and saying the Palestinians needed to agree to renew peace talks with Israel, while the State Department said UNRWA needed to make unspecified reforms.

There are gaping divisions between Washington and the Palestinian leadership that have widened since Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December and moved the US Embassy there, overriding decades of US policy. Haley said that if the Arab countries "really cared" they would tell Palestinian leaders "how foolish they look for condemning a peace proposal they haven't even seen yet".

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday called Israel a "fascist" state while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Turkey was becoming a "dark dictatorship" as the rivals engaged in a new war of words over a controversial law. Turkey has led condemnation in the Islamic world of a hotly debated new law adopted by the Knesset last

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News in brief

UAE arrests 3 over 'Kiki' challenge

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi has ordered the arrest of three "famous" social media users for taking part in a viral dance challenge based on Canadian hip-hop superstar Drake's hit song "In my feelings". As part of the "Kiki" dance challenge, people get out of a slowly moving car and leave the door open as they dance alongside it in sync with the music. "Participants in this challenge get out of a moving car and leave the door open and dance on a public road next to the car, which is a danger to them and others on the road," it said in a statement. The detainees will be investigated "on charges of endangering their lives and the lives of others, and violating public morals using social networking sites to promote practices that are incompatible with the values and traditions of society." Those caught taking part in the challenge could be punished with a fine or imprisonment, the prosecutor's office said. — AFP

Modi donates 200 cows to Rwanda

KIGALI: For centuries China has used gifts of giant pandas to foreign countries as a soft power diplomacy tool. But India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has staked a claim to the concept of "cattle diplomacy". During a visit to Rwanda yesterday, Modi donated 200 cows - considered sacred in India - to poor residents of Rweru model village, south of the capital Kigali. The gesture builds on a Rwandan government scheme called "Girinka" which since 2006 has contributed cattle to poor rural families in an effort to combat malnutrition by ensuring children have access to milk. "Girinka" is a greeting in the local Kinyarwanda language meaning "may you have many cows". Modi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame also announced a series of deals including a \$200 million Indian loan that will be used to develop Rwanda's irrigation schemes and expand the Kigali Special Economic Zone. — AFP

Coalition kills top IS members

BAGHDAD: The US-led coalition fighting Islamic State said yesterday it has killed high-value leaders from the group who were planning attacks targeting Saudi Arabia, the United States and Sweden. On April 24, a coalition air strike killed Syrian-based Islamic State member Munawwar Al-Mutayari in Operation Inherent Resolve, the coalition said in a statement. He had been planning attacks on Saudi Arabia. Soufiane Makouh, a Belgian foreign fighter who travelled to Syria to plan attacks against the US and its interests, was killed by an air strike on June 2. — Reuters

Qatar, US plan 'expansion' of Udeid airbase

DOHA: The US and Qatar launched a plan yesterday to expand Al-Udeid airbase, the biggest military facility used by Washington in the Gulf as it battles militants, Qatari state media said. The two countries also discussed making Al-Udeid a "permanent" base, the official QNA news agency said, as Doha seeks to bolster ties with Washington at a time of tensions with its Gulf neighbors. QNA said representatives from both countries yesterday "laid the foundation stone for expanding" Al-Udeid. The project includes "the construction of barracks and service buildings to support joint

security efforts, as well as improving the quality of life of the troops stationed at the airbase," it said.

But the Pentagon played down the development, pointing out nothing concrete had been decided. "It is premature to discuss aspects of a potential base expansion at Al-Udeid air base in Qatar," Lieutenant Commander Rebecca Rebarich said in a statement. "The US military is working with the Qatari ministry of defense on further details of the proposal to help us to plan appropriately and ensure we will use any new facilities effectively," she said.

Around 10,000 US troops are deployed in Al-Udeid, the largest US base in the Gulf where Washington stocks munitions and equipment and deploys warplanes used in the battle against the Islamic State group. Other members of the US-led coalition fighting

Continued on Page 24



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May greets Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the steps of 10 Downing Street yesterday. — AFP



MATI, Greece: An aerial view shows burnt houses following a wildfire in this village near Athens yesterday. — AFP

Flames ravage Greek seaside as fires kill 74

ATHENS: Raging wildfires killed 74 people including small children in Greece, devouring homes and forests as terrified residents fled to the sea to escape the flames, authorities said yesterday. Orange

flames engulfed pine forests, turning them to ash and leaving lines of charred cars in the smoke-filled streets of seaside towns near Athens after the fires broke on Monday. Rescuers rushed to evacuate residents and tourists stranded on beaches. Others were overtaken by the flames in their homes, on foot or in their cars. AFP photographers saw the burnt bodies of humans and dogs.

The charred bodies of 26 people, including small children, were discovered

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Scores missing in Laos after dam collapses

BANGKOK: Hundreds are missing and an unknown number feared dead after a partly built hydropower dam in southeast Laos collapsed after heavy rain and sent a wall of water surging through six villages, state media and contractors said yesterday. Laos News Agency said the accident happened on Monday evening near the border with Cambodia, releasing five billion cubic metres of water - more than two million Olympic swimming pools.

The agency said there were "several human lives claimed, and several hundreds of people missing" while some 6,600 people had been made homeless as authorities scrambled to evacuate villagers. Communist Laos is traversed by a vast network of rivers and several dams are being built or planned in the impoverished and landlocked country, which exports most of its hydropower energy to neighboring countries like Thailand.

Aerial footage posted on the Facebook page of local news outlet ABC Laos showed a vast brown inundation swamping houses and jungle



ATTAPU, Laos: This screen grab shows an aerial view of flooded plains yesterday after a dam collapsed the day before. — AFP

alike over a huge area. Another video showed families waiting for rescue on the rooftop of their house, with a nearby Buddhist temple partially submerged.

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Amir, Crown Prince meet officials at Bayan Palace

Speaker receives Yemen, Ukraine ambassadors



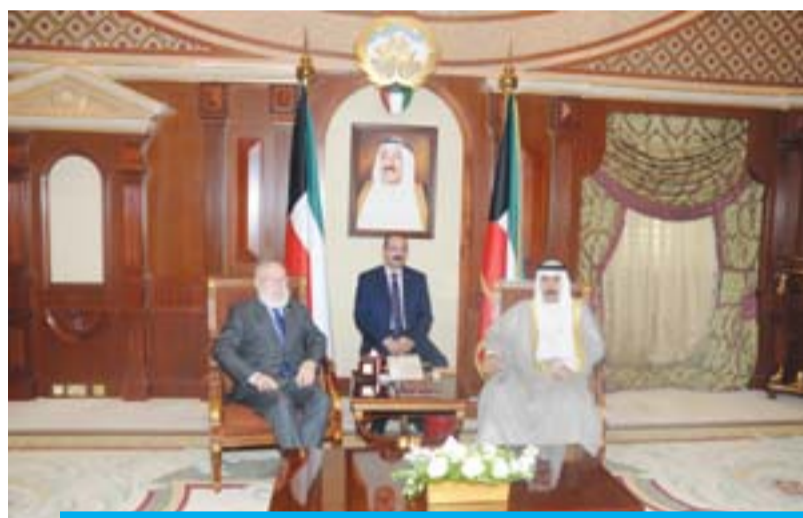
KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



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 Zimbabwean Ambassador to Kuwait Mark Marongwe.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Argentinian Ambassador to Kuwait Jorge Omar Antonio.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem meets with Ambassador of Yemen to Kuwait Dr Ali bin Safa'a.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem meets with Ambassador of Ukraine Volodymyr Tolkach.

KUWAIT His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh

Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, as well as the outgoing Zimbabwean Ambassador to Kuwait Mark Marongwe and Argentinian Ambassador to Kuwait Jorge Omar Antonio

on the occasion of ending their tenures. The meetings were attended by head of the Protocols at the Diwan of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. In other news, National

Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem received Ambassador of Yemen to Kuwait Dr Ali bin Safa'a, as well as the Ambassador of Ukraine to Kuwait Volodymyr Tolkach. — KUNA

Pearl divers celebrate with families, media



KUWAIT: In an aim to revive Kuwait's pre-oil discovery heritage, participants in the ongoing 30th Pearl Diving Expedition met up with family members at a ceremony held during the one-week event. Media personnel were also invited to the ceremony, which was organized by Kuwait Sea Sports Club (KSSC) at Khairan. Some 175 men onboard 13 dhow vessels, four of which were gifted by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, are participating in the annual trip which concludes tomorrow. — KUNA photos

Local

Legalese

Fake degrees: What are the legal consequences?



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

Everyone seems to be talking about 'fake degrees' - from online memes to radio shows to newspaper articles. The media are exploding with questions like: "What are the legal consequences for those who forged their certificates?" and "How many people forged certificates?" and maybe more importantly, "Who forged the certificates?" These questions should not be taken lightly and we should trust that the governmental officials will do all that they need to do to protect everyone.

As for the legal consequences, employers under Kuwait labor law "may terminate the employment contract with immediate effect if the employee obtained the job by means of dishonesty such as fraud and cheating. Such termination shall be without notice, compensation or end of services benefit".

Also, fraud is a crime punishable under Kuwait penal law, with punishments of up to seven years in jail depending on the document that is being forged. According to the Kuwaiti penal code, the penalty for a person who commits forgery of an official document is imprisonment up to seven years and/or a financial penalty.

In the event where forgery is committed by a governmental employee, the penalty will increase to up to 10 years of imprisonment and/or a financial penalty. If the document is not an official document, the penalty would be up to three years of imprisonment and/or a financial penalty. To differentiate between an official and non-official document, a person must see if the document is authenticated by officials or not. If the document is authenticated, then the document is official.

For questions or queries, please email us at info@ftl-legal.com.

33 NGOs release joint statement condemning fake degree holders

Wards allocated at Mubarak, Farwaniya Hospitals for defense ministry in emergencies

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A number of Kuwaiti NGOs expressed total rejection of what they described as 'illegal and unethical' violations committed by some people to make personal gains through forgery of their degrees and cheating at the expense of both the nation and other citizens. A joint statement issued by 33 Kuwaiti NGOs said this issue had been raised years earlier but no measures were taken to resolve the problem then. "The number of cases discovered recently shows the volume of such a disaster and everybody's fear for this nation's future," the statement said.

"Out of our role as NGOs representing all social factions, out of keenness on the soundness of our educational structure and in order to ensure a better future for our children, we announce joining a public call recently launched on various social media networks to have a better Kuwait," added the NGOs, who signed the statement and called for holding whoever is responsible or involved legally accountable.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the government employees syndicates union Hussein Al-Azmi highly commended measures taken by Education Minister Hamed Al-Azmi on exposing holders of fake certificates and degrees and urged him to keep investigating the matter, going back to years before he came to office. Azmi stressed that forged degree and certificates are extremely dangerous to any society and that they undermine all states' foundations. "Minister Hamed Al-Azmi should be fully supported in fighting such a dangerous phenomenon", he underlined.

Wards allocated

Health minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah issued a decision allocating two fully equipped wards at Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Farwaniya Hospitals to serve the defense ministry in case of any emergencies. Commenting on the decision, Kuwait army chief of joint staffs Lt Gen Mohammed Al-Khodor thanked the minister and highly commended cooperation amongst various ministries during emergencies. Khodor also sent a number of medical officers from Jaber Al-Ahmed Armed Forces Hospital to inspect the two wards.

Ambulance drivers

Informed sources said that the Ministry of Health

(MoH) has stopped recruiting ambulance drivers because the medical emergencies department has enough drivers. The sources expected medical zone, hospital and department directors to be reshuffled when Sheikh Basel returns from vacation next week. The sources added that around 70 percent of hospital department heads will be reshuffled with the aim of developing various ministry sectors before launching major health projects in September.

Kuwaiti teachers

Ministry of Education's (MoE) undersecretary Haitham Al-Athari announced the appointment of new Kuwaiti teachers will start on Sunday (July 29), that of non-Kuwaitis locally contracted will start on Aug 5, and those contracted abroad will start on Aug 14. Athari added that the new teachers will start work on Aug 28 by attending a seven-day training course. Separately, MoE allocated a budget of KD 40 million for the indemnities of teachers referred to retirement, including those who had reached the legal retirement age, those who willingly retired and those retiring according to disabled employees' conditions. In another MoE-related concern, the Audit Bureau strongly criticized the ministry for not collecting a fine from a company that had hired illegal laborers to provide cleaning and services in various schools in Hawally.

Terminal 4

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DCGA) urged concerned companies to file their bids for three contracts to operate and maintain Terminal 4 at Kuwait International Airport. Informed sources explained that the first contract involves luggage carts and handling, the second involves developing, operating and maintaining parking lots and the third involves running duty free stores at the terminal.

Solar Power

Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) is currently in the final stages of naming a financial advisor to get a KD 700 million loan from local banks for the Debdebah Solar Power Plant project. Informed sources said it is expected to sign a contract with an advisor within 45 days and that the advisor's job will include studying the loan's feasibility and interest rates. The sources added that the project tender is expected to be officially offered for bidding before the end of July or by the beginning of August. They also noted that the project's estimated cost will be \$ 1-1.5 billion and that the project, due to be built over an area of 32 sq km to the northwest, is expected to generate 1.5 megawatts of solar power, ie 15 percent of the total power expected by 2030.

Departure notice required for expats' indemnity

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) reactivated a decision to not pay public sector expatriate employees their end of service indemnity until they submit proof of leaving the country, informed sources said. The commission told ministries and other state departments to send the names of expats whose contracts are terminated and who are supposed to receive their indemnities,

the sources noted, adding that they should cancel their residencies that are under article 17 and submit a departure notice.

The commission will not allow expats whose services in government are terminated to transfer their residencies to the private sector, otherwise they will lose the indemnity, the sources said, adding that the commission will write to concerned authorities to stop the transfer from article 17 to other articles that allow them to work. But it kept the possibility open of having them leave the country, then return under other articles such as 18, which allows them to work in the private sector. The sources said this measure is part of an integrated plan to implement the replacement policy and reduce the number of expats in the public sector. — Al-Jarida

Fishmonger used nails to increase fish weight

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Responding to a complaint about inserting steel nails inside fish to increase their weight, the



KUWAIT: Some of the fish found with the seller.

Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) yesterday announced referring a fishmonger to the commercial prosecution for commercial fraud. A press statement issued by MoCI said responding to a video showing a female citizen who found steel nails on gutting some fish, Minister Khaled Al-Roudhan instructed the consumer protection section to inspect the entire fish market to make sure all fish displayed for sale are safe and arrest the fishmonger who sold the fish to the woman. MoCI urged consumers to keep their purchase bills and the number of the fish market outlet they buy from to protect their rights in case of any further fraud attempts.



Steel nails that the seller inserted in the fish to increase their weight.

Six rescued from sinking boat

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: A boat sailing between Failaka and Salmiya sank with seven citizens onboard. Coastguard and sea rescue men were able to save six of them, while search is on for the seventh, the Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department said in a press statement. In a separate case, coastguards recovered the body of an unidentified person who drowned while swimming. Police received a call about a drowned person near a popular hotel, so they responded and located the man. After his death was confirmed, the body was referred to the coroner.

17 citations

Kuwait Municipality's public relations department said Mubarak Al-Kabeer municipality branch removed 998 advertisements from streets and yards and checked 105 stores. It added that 17 citations were issued - 12

for signboards and follow up and five for food related violations.

Indecent acts

A citizen called police after he saw three men and a woman engaged in indecent acts near a co-op in Adan. Police who responded to the call did not find anyone. Another indecent act was observed in Salmiya near a popular restaurant.

Head injury

Police broke a fight in the stables area that left one person with a head injury. Police responded to a call about the fight accompanied by paramedics, and found the fighters, six of them, used sticks, pipes and sharp objects. Preliminary investigations revealed that one man got angry that others were talking about him in diwanias.

Threat

An Egyptian man complained against a citizen for misusing a telephone. The complainant refused to rent a chalet to a group of bachelors, so the citizen insulted him verbally and threatened to immolate him. The complaint was lodged at Nuwaiseeb police station.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The Fatima Mosque at Abdullah Al-Salem area. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Coded Juniors Summer Camp kicks off in strategic partnership with Zain

Company keen on contributing to the development of tech innovation

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the launch of Coded Juniors Summer Camp at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center. The program comes in strategic partnership with Zain, and aims at teaching children the basics of coding and technology using the latest tools and gadgets.

Zain's support to Coded Juniors Summer Camp comes in line with its strategy towards encouraging innovation and digital transformation. The company is keen on contributing to the development and advancement of tech innovation within all age groups, including school children, with the aim of boosting their coding and technology skills, as such skills are essential for the modern digital world.

The first day of Coded Juniors Summer Camp witnessed positive participation from the children, their parents, as well as Zain and Coded officials. The program mainly aims at teaching school children (ages 7-12) the basics of coding languages and technology using the latest tools and gadgets like robots, smart toys, computers, and more, as well as traditional learning methods such as art, drawing, and music. The program features a fun educational environment that will last for 4 weeks in the

Space Museum at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center.

Through supporting this unique program, Zain seeks to offer the best educational environment for children in Kuwait to nurture their talents, enrich their skills, and promote tech innovation within them from an early age. Zain believes in the important role tech innovation plays in building the future and progressing the national economy.

Zain is keen on playing a vital role as an integrated digital service provider in light of the rapid digital changes witnessed by the modern world. The company always seeks to reach new levels of excellence with its customers through offering the best innovative services, meeting their needs and aspirations, as well as supporting programs and initiatives that embrace tech innovation and aim at developing it.

Zain further reaffirms its commitment to supporting any entity that offers the proper educational environment for the next generation as per the highest international standards. The company will spare no efforts in offering its support to such initiatives and programs that serve the community and contribute to the further progress of the country.



Discussions to admit bedoon students in private universities



KUWAIT: Executive Chairman of CARIRS Saleh Al-Fadhlah chairs a meeting to discuss the possibility of accepting bedoon students in private universities. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Executive Chairman of the Central Agency for Remedying Illegal Residents' Status (CARIRS) Saleh Al-Fadhlah held talks yesterday with Secretary General of

Private Universities Council Dr Habib Abul on considering accepting bedoon (stateless) students. Fadhlah discussed in the meeting the procedures for accepting the students

and number of admissions, said CARIRS in a press release. Both agreed to assign a liaison officer to coordinate and follow up the process, the statement added. — KUNA

Longest lunar eclipse on Friday: Kuwait Science Club

KUWAIT: Kuwait will witness the longest total lunar eclipse of the century on Friday, going up for one hour and 45 minutes, said Kuwait Science Club yesterday. The lunar eclipse will go through different phases including penumbral eclipse where the moon passes through earth's penumbral shadow, partial eclipse, total eclipse, partial again and then back to penumbral, head of the Department of Astronomy and Space at the club Ali Bo Abbas said in a press statement. He added that the process will start at 8:14 pm and will end at 2:29 am local time.

People will be unable to observe the penumbral stage; however, they can see the partial stage with the naked eye starting at 9:24 pm. Bo Abbas added that the total eclipse will occur at 10:29 pm and end at 12:13 am on Saturday. This rare astronomical phenomenon occurred last century, about 100 years ago, said Bo Abbas, noting that the moon will turn to deep red at the total eclipse phase and will be at the furthest point away from earth, which is about 402,000 km. — KUNA



Kuwait avoids downgrade in 2018 US Trafficking in Persons Report

State remains in Tier 2 for third straight year; granted waiver from 'required downgrade to Tier 3'

KUWAIT: The United States Department of State recently released its annual Trafficking in Persons Report, which also lists Kuwait in Tier 2 for "countries whose governments do not fully comply with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards." Kuwait was able to maintain its Tier 2 position for the third straight year, and avoid a downgrade thanks to devoting sufficient resources to implement a written plan that helps the country meet the minimum standards. The following is a transcript for Kuwait's section in the 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report:

The Government of Kuwait does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated significant efforts by initiating more investigations and prosecutions; referring significantly more cases of illegal recruitment for criminal investigation; amending the domestic worker law to incentivize unscrupulous recruiting practices; and operationalizing a government-run central recruitment company intended to reduce recruitment costs and combat illegal recruiting fees. The government also established a specialized prosecutorial unit to expedite trafficking cases, and, formally passed and funded its five-year national strategy to combat trafficking. However, the government did not demonstrate increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period. Some officials continued to use arbitration and administrative penalties to resolve grievances filed by domestic and other migrant workers, instead of investigating such cases as human trafficking crimes. Protracted litigation and subsequent appeals processes led most victims to decline to file court cases, and widespread corruption sometimes dissuaded workers from reporting trafficking cases to law enforcement. The government did not regularly use formal established procedures for identifying victims, and some foreign workers who quit their jobs without permission were subjected to criminal penalties, detention, and/or deportation. Because the government has devoted sufficient resources to a written plan, that, if implemented, would constitute significant efforts to meet the minimum standards, Kuwait was granted a waiver per the Trafficking Victims Protection Act from an otherwise required downgrade to Tier 3. Therefore Kuwait remained on Tier 2 Watch List for the third consecutive year.

Recommendations for Kuwait

Continue to increase law enforcement efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers, including Kuwaiti citizens, under the 2013 anti-trafficking law; investigate, prosecute, and convict sponsors and employers who subject foreign domestic workers to involuntary servitude or illegally hold migrant workers' passports; strengthen enforcement of the domestic labor law (law 68/15) to ensure domestic workers rights are protected; fully employ the centralized recruitment company; continue to institute reforms to the visa-sponsored employment system; routinely employ procedures to proactively identify and refer to protection services all victims of human trafficking; continue to train law enforcement officials to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, and proactively screen for human trafficking victims during migrant round-ups to ensure victims are not wrongfully punished; ensure the availability of shelter and services to all trafficking victims; fully implement the new national anti-trafficking strategy; and continue to expand efforts to raise awareness and prevent trafficking.

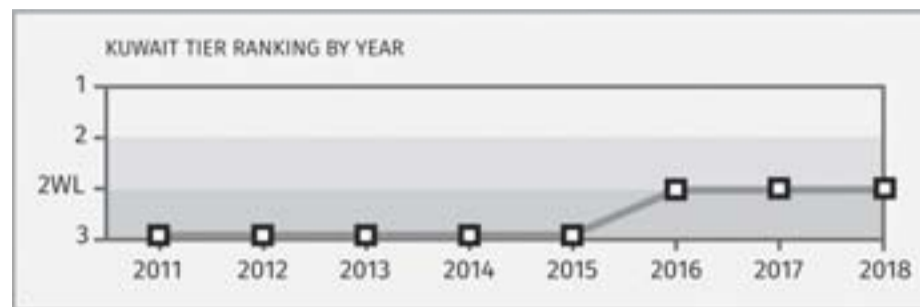
Prosecution

The government demonstrated uneven law enforcement efforts. The 2013 anti-trafficking law criminalized sex and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties ranging from 15 years to life imprisonment, which were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape. In 2017, the public prosecutor's office created a specialized unit to manage, investigate, and expedite the processing of trafficking cases. During the year, the government investigated 60 potential trafficking cases, an increase from six investigated in 2016. It discovered cases through tips from foreign embassies, civil society, hotlines, and the government-run shelter. Officials prosecuted 22 defendants in 10 cases, compared with 15 perpetrators prosecuted during the previous reporting period. The government charged five defendants (in 10 cases) with forced labor and 17 defendants (in seven cases) with sex trafficking. The government charged all 22 defendants- including four Kuwaiti nationals-with trafficking under the 2013 anti-trafficking law. At the close of the reporting period, the government convicted two sex traffickers and sentenced them both to 15 years imprisonment while it adminis-

tered life sentences for four other sex traffickers. The trials of 15 defendants remained pending though it sentenced six convicted traffickers: during the previous reporting period the government achieved nine convictions-including one Kuwaiti citizen-under the anti-trafficking law. The Ministry of Interior's (MOI) Domestic Labor Department (DLD) investigated employers and recruiting agencies, in addition to initiating investigations following grievances filed by employees, NGOs, embassies of labor-sending countries, and private citizens, and subsequently arbitrated such grievances. MOI authorities continued to investigate domestic worker recruitment agencies and residences to ensure compliance with the 2015 domestic labor law. During the reporting period, officials conducted 17,560 such inspections, referred more than 440 for criminal investigations following trafficking screenings, blacklisted 500 employers, and permanently shut down 82 recruitment agencies for domestic labor law contraventions, substantially up from 1,806 inspections, 39 referrals, none blacklisted, and 90 permanent closures, respectively, during the previous reporting period. Generally, Kuwaiti authorities did not categorize or investigate labor violations of domestic workers as human trafficking and continued to typically treat such cases as administrative infractions, using official arbitration resulting in monetary compensation and repayment of backwages to victims, application of administrative fines, and closure of recruitment firms to resolve such cases: such approaches do not provide adequate deterrence to the commission of forced labor crimes. If a settlement could not be agreed upon, DLD officials referred the case to the courts, and if the complaint involved a gross violation, such as assault or domestic worker abuse, authorities transferred the case directly to the public prosecutor's office. Many domestic worker abuse cases were not prosecuted due to lack of evidence or witnesses, or, in many cases, prohibitively expensive legal fees. In some cases, characterized by local media as including trafficking indicators, the government sought prosecution for abuse or simple assault rather than as violations of anti-trafficking laws. Although the withholding of workers' passports is prohibited under Kuwaiti law, this practice remained common among sponsors and employers of foreign workers; however, in nearly all of the 3,800 complaints of passport retention received by the government during the reporting period, employers were ordered to return employees' passports. Reports claimed some government officials sold work permits to illegal recruiters or even directly to migrant workers, potentially facilitating trafficking; the government did not report efforts to prosecute and convict officials complicit in trafficking or trafficking related offenses. The MOI's anti-trafficking unit conducted four anti-trafficking training programs during the reporting year, which covered signs of trafficking and a victim-centered approach to law enforcement efforts and reached 120 trainees across all MOI departments. It also facilitated eight training programs in cooperation with an international organization, reaching approximately 45 front-line responders at the MOI. The DLD produced internal training programs on a weekly basis targeting investigators and labor inspectors.

Protection

The government maintained efforts to protect trafficking victims. During the reporting period, the government identified and referred 48 domestic workers-including 13 of whom were trafficking victims-to its shelter, compared to 76 it referred during the previous one. It provided shelter to a total of 3,000 domestic workers, including some potential forced labor victims, in its shelter dedicated to runaway female domestic workers: this is compared to 5,000 in 2016. The shelter received referrals from embassies, NGOs, international organizations, churches, private citizens, and other migrant workers. Although the government had in place a screening process to identify potential trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, such as foreign migrant workers, domestic workers, and women in prostitution, the extent to which the government employed this proactive screening mechanism during migrant roundups was unknown. The shelter served as a one-stop facility, providing medical and psychological care, repatriation assistance, and access to officials from various ministries to facilitate legal assistance, including filing cases against employers. Residents at the shelter had access to cell phones and adequate freedom of movement. Although a shelter for men was not established during the reporting period, officials allocated and approved a budget for construction of one. The government apportioned an annual budget of 2 million Kuwaiti dinar (\$6.6 million) for shelter operations and protection programs for trafficking victims, a slight increase from 1.9 million Kuwaiti dinar



The diagram taken from the Trafficking in Persons Report 2018 shows Kuwait's tier ranking by the year, with 'Tier 1' being the best and 'Tier 3' being the worst.

(\$6.3 million) the prior year. Some international organizations, in conjunction with foreign affairs officials, provided assistance to an unknown number of domestic workers from nations without diplomatic representation in Kuwait who needed to procure travel documentation. Embassies of the Philippines, India, and Sri Lanka maintained their own domestic worker shelters and worked closely with the Kuwait government to seek compensation and legal redress for their nationals subjected to exploitative working conditions in the country. The MOI continued its voluntary repatriation program and facilitated the repatriation of and provided transition assistance for more than 200 foreign domestic workers who were trafficking victims during the reporting period. Separately, the DLD provided repatriation assistance for 858 additional domestic workers and recouped approximately 193,720 Kuwaiti dinar (\$643,600). The government allowed victims residing in its shelter to either change sponsors or be repatriated to their country of origin once their residency status was resolved or pending the resolution of a legal case, without respective sponsor approval. It did not report deporting those who faced retaliation or retribution in their respective home countries. In compliance with a UN Security Council Resolution, the government reportedly repatriated North Korean nationals, many of whom were potential trafficking



Government increased efforts to prevent trafficking

victims. In January 2018, the MOI offered a general residency amnesty for all visa violators and absconders-including an estimated 154,000 expatriates-to either pay a fine and adjust their status if they were gainfully employed or return to their home countries without paying any outstanding fines and would still be eligible to return to Kuwait with a new work permit; the amnesty period existed for three consecutive months. In August 2017, the MOI amended provisions of the domestic worker law that pertained to costs of doing business as recruitment professionals. The amendments stipulated that for issuance or renewal of a license for a domestic labor recruitment firm, single offices were required to submit financial deposits of 40,000 Kuwaiti dinar (\$132,890) bearing a validity of two years, while larger companies were obliged to present a letter of guarantee worth 100,000 Kuwaiti dinar (\$332,230) also with a two-year validity; this allowed the government to build a reserve of funds to adjudicate cases of labor law violations, use the money from the deposits to pay unpaid wages, and also cover repatriation fees. However, systemic challenges, including threat of criminalization and limited access to legal support, remained an impediment to the government's protection efforts. The 2013 anti-trafficking law did not stipulate that victims who flee abusive employers should be immune from prosecution. Therefore, some workers who fled their employers without permission risked criminal penalties and arrest, detention at police stations, and deportation, even if they were fleeing an abusive sponsor. The risk of penalization, coupled with protracted litigation

processes and expensive legal fees, discouraged workers from appealing to police or other authorities for protection and adequate legal redress for their exploitation. In addition, it was not uncommon for sponsors to file counter-grievances against trafficking victims who reported their own, which sometimes resulted in administrative deportation or detention of the employees. The government reported public prosecutors willingly tried cases on victims' behalf using their oral and written statements; however, it lacked privacy laws to protect victims against potential retribution and often was unable to provide adequate care for victims throughout the duration of legal proceedings.

Prevention

The government increased its efforts to prevent human trafficking. In February 2018, the Council of Ministers officially approved and funded Kuwait's national strategy to combat trafficking and tasked the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs to commence implementation. Several ministries, in collaboration with an international organization, printed and disseminated anti-trafficking pamphlets and actively participated in public awareness campaigns that warned against using illegal domestic worker recruitment companies and stressed the importance of hiring workers with the requisite documentation. Various officials also took part in awareness messages on local television outlets and continued to disseminate pamphlets to educate migrant workers on their rights, which were published in multiple languages in airports, embassies, and labor-recruitment agencies. In September 2017, the government's new centralized recruitment center, which was developed during the previous reporting period in adherence to the domestic labor law, became fully operational in reducing recruitment costs, curbing illegal recruitment fees, hiring male domestic workers, and securing labor agreements for female employees; the government did not report how many domestic workers the government recruited via this central agency. The domestic labor law (Law 68/15) guaranteed domestic workers one day off per week, a maximum 12-hour workday, minimum wage paid per month, paid annual leave, and access to file formal grievances at the MOI, among other protections, and 2016 by-laws regulated implementation of this law. Amendments to the 2010 labor law, passed in 2016, increased penalties for non-payment of wages, made mandatory documentation of all paid wages, and required prison time and fines for employers and government officials who failed to adhere to provisions of this law. In January 2018, authorities launched the Mobile Labor Disputes Office to help workers in remote areas of the country file complaints against labor law violating employers. The mobile unit was run by an emergency team of investigators, inspectors, translators, lawyers, and lay volunteers. Officials also unveiled online services that allowed workers and employers to dock and track workplace issues electronically, automatically alerted workers if an employer filed an absconding charge, notified the respective source country embassy, and ensured users the ability to challenge any settlement incurred. During the reporting period, the government received approximately 20,600 official grievances from foreign workers, the most common included pay discrepancies, requests to transfer employment to a different sponsor, and overtime pay disputes. According to government reports, roughly

90 percent of grievances pertaining to employment transfer grievances were resolved in favor of the employee. The grievances unresolved via mediation were referred to the labor courts, with 7,590 cases sent during the year. The government did not report outcomes of the cases referred for criminal investigation or which, if any, would be considered for prosecution under the anti-trafficking law. In January 2017, authorities investigated a Kuwaiti company on suspicion of labor law violations against its foreign workers; at the close of the reporting year, the government was still negotiating with the company and employees to determine punitive charges or fines to levy on the former and adequate compensation for the latter. However, the government repatriated those workers who decided to return home or readjusted the status of those workers who found new employment. Both the DLD and the MOI's anti-trafficking department launched hotlines to assist vulnerable migrant workers, to include potential trafficking victims. The government made appreciable efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex and forced labor. The government provided anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel.

Trafficking profile

As reported over the past five years, Kuwait is a destination country for men and women subjected to forced labor and, to a significantly lesser extent, forced prostitution. Men and women migrate from Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, to work predominantly in the domestic service, construction, hospitality, and sanitation sectors, and the vast majority arrive voluntarily. Domestic workers are especially vulnerable to forced labor, physical and sexual abuse as they often have limited access to assistance. As conditions remain perilous for many, several labor-sending countries, including Nepal, India, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, and most recently, the Philippines, continue to restrict their female nationals from domestic employment in Kuwait. As countries restrict labor movements to Kuwait, the government has commenced recruitment of domestic employees from African labor-sending countries including Uganda, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, the Gambia, and Liberia, and most recently Cameroon, Togo, Benin, Guinea, and Burundi. Upon arrival, some sponsors subject migrants to forced labor, including non-payment of wages, protracted working hours, deprivation of food, substandard housing, threats or harassment, physical or sexual abuse, and restrictions Kyrgyz Republic on movement, such as confinement to the workplace and passport confiscation. Although the practice is illegal, many migrant workers pay exorbitant fees to recruiting agents in their countries of origin and/or are coerced into paying labor broker fees in Kuwait which, according to Kuwaiti law, should be paid by the employer, thereby rendering workers vulnerable to forced labor, including debt bondage. In some cases, workers are not provided copies of their contracts, or the contracts are not written in a language they can read. Additionally, many sponsors pay high fees to agencies for migrant workers. Some labor recruiting companies facilitate trafficking through the use of deceptive techniques to bring in migrant workers on the basis of unenforceable contracts, fraudulent visas, and nonexistent positions. Reports allege officials take bribes or overtly sell work permits to illegal labor recruiting companies or directly to migrant workers. For more than a decade, reports indicate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea) has sent more than 4,000 North Korean laborers to Kuwait for forced labor on construction projects, sourced by a North Korean company operated by the Workers' Party of Korea and the North Korean military. According to these reports, employees work 14 to 16 hours a day while the company retains 80 to 90 percent of the workers' wages, and monitors and confines the workers, who live in impoverished conditions and are in very poor health due to lack of adequate nutrition and health care. In a previous reporting period, the government ceased issuing new work visas to North Korean workers, and during the current reporting period, it discontinued visa renewals for these workers. Kuwait's sponsorship law-which ties a migrant worker's legal residence and valid immigration status to an employer-restricts workers' movements and penalizes them for leaving abusive workplaces; as a result, domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to forced labor inside private homes. Many workers report experiencing work conditions substantially different from those described in the contract. In addition, previous sources report runaway domestic workers are sometimes exploited in forced prostitution by agents or criminals, who manipulate their illegal status. Although illegal, passport confiscation by employers continues to be a common practice in Kuwait.

Key findings from the report:

- Government demonstrated uneven law enforcement efforts.
- Officials prosecuted 22 defendants in 10 trafficking cases.
- 17,560 inspections on domestic worker recruitment agencies.
- 440 referred for investigations; 500 employers blacklisted.
- Offices required to submit financial deposits of KD 40,000 bearing a two-year validity.
- 3,800 complaints of passport retention.
- Shelter provided for 3,000 domestic workers.
- Victims allowed to either change sponsors or be repatriated.
- General amnesty for all visa violators and absconders, including an estimated 154,000 expatriates.



Army spreads out across Pakistan ahead of elections

HK academics warn of 'political battleground' at universities

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TOKYO: A woman holds an umbrella as she walks along a street. — AFP

Japan heatwave kills 65 in one week

Classifying the record-breaking weather as a 'natural disaster'

TOKYO: An "unprecedented" heatwave in Japan has killed at least 65 people in one week, government officials said yesterday, with the weather agency now classifying the record-breaking weather as a "natural disaster." In the week to Sunday at least 65 people died of heat stroke while 22,647 people were hospitalized, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency said in a statement.

Both figures are "the worst-ever for any week during summer" since the agency began recording fatalities resulting from heat stroke in July 2008, an agency spokesman told AFP. The Fire and Disaster Management Agency said Tuesday that a total of 80 people have died from the heat since the beginning of July, and over 35,000 have been hospitalized. Among those killed was six-year-old school boy who lost consciousness on his way back from a field trip.

"As a record heatwave continues to blanket the country, urgent measures are required to protect the lives of schoolchildren," top government spokesman Yoshihide Suga told reporters yesterday. The government said it would supply funds to ensure all schools are equipped with air conditioners by next summer. Less than half of Japan's public schools have air conditioning, and the figure is only slightly higher at public kindergartens.

Suga said the government would also consider extending this year's summer school holidays as the heatwave drags on. On Monday, the city of Kumagaya in Saitama outside Tokyo set a new national heat record, with temperatures hitting 41.1 Celsius (106 degrees Fahrenheit). And temperatures over 40 degrees were registered for the first time in Tokyo's metro area, where the government is promoting Uchimizu, a tradi-

tion where water is sprinkled onto the ground, as part of a summer heat awareness campaign.

'Unprecedented levels'

It was marginally cooler yesterday — 36 degrees in Tokyo according to the national weather agency — but temperatures remained well above normal in most of the country, and little relief is forecast. "We are observing unprecedented levels of heat in some areas," weather agency official Motoaki Takekawa said late Monday. The heatwave "is fatal, and we recognize it as a natural disaster," he told reporters. The agency warned that much of the country will continue baking in temperatures of 35 degrees or higher until early August.

Officials have urged people to use air conditioning, drink sufficient water and rest often. Japan's summers are notori-

ously hot and humid, and hundreds of people die each year from heatstroke, particularly the elderly in the country's ageing society. The heatwave follows record rainfall that devastated parts of western and central Japan with floods and landslides that killed over 220 people. And many people in the affected areas are still living in damaged homes or shelters and working outdoors on repairs, putting them at great risk.

The record-breaking weather has revived concerns about the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, which will be held in two years time in July and August. Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike this week promised that the heat would be given the same priority as measures to counter terrorism. "It's just as important because the purpose is also to protect people's lives," she told reporters, comparing Japan's summer to "living in a sauna." — AFP

After painful search, Syrians learn detained relatives are long dead

BEIRUT: "That's it? You're sure he's dead?" Seven years had passed with no news, but Salwa could hardly believe her nephew, a Syrian activist arrested in 2011, had been dead the last five. That's what the civil records employee in Salwa's native Hama, a central government-held city, declared last month after shuffling through papers at her desk. "She told me, 'Yes, we received the names of everyone who died inside' prison, Salwa told AFP, using a pseudonym because she fears reprisals in regime territory.

Tens of thousands of people are estimated to be held in government jails across Syria, with relatives and advocates saying they are often tortured, denied fair trial, and deprived contact with families. Their relatives are left in limbo, spending years and precious savings shuttling between security services to know where loved ones are held or if they're even alive. Now, activists and families of imprisoned Syrians say authorities have quietly updated civil records to mark detainees as "deceased", backdating deaths to as long ago as 2013.

Hearing of this through word of mouth, families of detained Syrians are flooding registries to ask: "Are they alive?" For around 400 detainees in recent months, the answer has been "no", said Fadel Abdul Ghany, head of the Syrian Network for Human Rights. The SNHR estimates 80,000 Syrians remain forcibly disappeared by the government. "Before, the regime was giving no details on the detained. It wouldn't declare them dead," Abdul Ghany told AFP. "Now it is, but in a barbaric way."

Hama's records were updated first, followed by Homs, the capital Damascus, Latakia and Hasakeh, and new names are still arriving at registries, the SNHR said. In seven years of documenting Syria's uprising-turned-war, Abdul Ghany said he had never before seen families learn of the fate of the detainees in this way.

"Usually, you take a death certificate to the registry and inform them your relative is dead, not the other way around," he said. On that June morning, Salwa and her sister-in-law worried they'd be the only people at the registry asking about imprisoned relatives. "But when we got there, we saw a line out the door," she said. "Most were women, mothers and sisters of detainees. Security forces stood among them, and every single woman was wiping her tears and covering her face with her scarf."

Weeping, Salwa went home to hold a single day of hushed condolences for two nephews: Saad, arrested in 2011 and marked deceased in 2013, and Saeed, detained since 2012 and recorded to have died last year. The family had no bodies to bury and was afraid of grieving publicly in a regime-held city. "They scorched our hearts — those two boys were like roses. Even in mourning, we're afraid and hide our grief," Salwa said.

'No going back'

The last time Islam Dabbas' family saw him was late 2012, behind bars at a regime prison near Damascus. "He wore a sweater that read 'Just Freedom'. We stopped hearing anything a

while after that," recalled his brother Abdulrahman, who has since moved to Egypt. This month, a relative still in Syria learned of the updated files and checked Islam's. "It said he died January 15, 2013 in Saydnaya," Abdulrahman said.

Amnesty International has dubbed the infamous prison "the human slaughterhouse", after reports of mass executions there. "Honestly, it's a relief. My mother told me, 'He's lucky. He's at peace,'" Abdulrahman said. They held condolences for Islam last week in Egypt, hundreds of kilometres (miles) from home and without a body. Abdulrahman and his mother then broke the news by phone to his father, still in Syria serving out his own prison sentence.

But confirming what many long suspected is not enough, said Noura Ghazi, a Syrian lawyer and member of the detainee advocacy group Families for Freedom. "OK, you've told us they're dead, but we want to know where the bodies are. We want to know the real way they died," Ghazi said. Others are hesitating. "People are so tired. Of course there's denial. Others are suspicious, saying 'Why would we believe this document is real? Or this date to be true?'" said Ghazi, who lives in Beirut.

Her husband, activist Bassel Khartabil, vanished after his October 3, 2015 arrest. In 2017, through her networks, Ghazi confirmed he died in regime detention. "I held condolences for him, I wore black. I thought I had processed the truth," she said. That changed when a relative of Khartabil visited a Damascus registry in early July and saw the government's freshly-recorded date of death: October 5, 2015. "When we saw that, it's like he died all over again," said Ghazi. "There's no going back. For more than two years I fought to know his fate. Now I'll be fighting my whole life to get his body." — AFP

Danish imam charged over call to kill Jews

STOCKHOLM: Danish prosecutors yesterday charged an imam with calling for the killing of Jews in the first case of its kind in the Nordic nation and which sparked political outrage. Imam Mundhir Abdallah, who preaches in the Copenhagen neighborhood of Norrebro at the Masjid Al-Faruq mosque, which media have linked to radical Islam, is accused of citing a hadith or Quranic narrative calling for Muslims to rise up against Jews.

"Judgement Day will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them," Abdallah said in a Facebook and YouTube video post in March. "These are serious statements and I think it's right for the court to now have an opportunity to assess the case," public prosecutor Eva Ronne said in a statement. This is the first time the prosecution has raised such charges under a criminal code introduced January 1 2017 on religious preaching.

Ronne said it's legal to quote religious books like the Quran and the Bible, but that inciting or welcoming the killings of people could be punishable by up to three years in prison. "It has always been illegal to accept killings of a certain group of people, but it's new for us to target hate preachers," she added. The case will be brought before the Copenhagen district

court but no trial date has been set, the prosecution said.

The Jewish community, which in May filed a complaint over the imam's speech, welcomed the prosecution's decision to press charges. The community's head Dan Rosenberg Asmussen, told the Danish broadcaster TV2 that "there was no doubt about the intentions" of the imam's statement. "It was deeply worrying," Rosenberg added. Minister of immigration and integration, Inger Stojberg, who has been outspoken against Islamic practices in Denmark, has described the imam's address as "horrible, anti-democratic and abominable".

According to broadcaster DR, Omar al-Hussein, who was behind a series of shootings at a free-speech conference and a Jewish synagogue in Copenhagen in February 2015 which left two people dead, had visited the mosque the day before going on the rampage. Denmark published in May a list of six foreigners accused of preaching hatred — five of them Muslim preachers and one Evangelical, banning them for at least two years. The list includes two Saudis, a Canadian, a Syrian, and two Americans, including pastor Terry Jones who burned copies of the Koran in 2011. — AFP

International

Venezuelan professor's worn out shoes bring flood of solidarity

'My salary as a university professor is not enough to pay for new soles'

CARACAS: Jose Ibarra is 41, has a masters degree, is studying for a PhD and works as a university professor, but thanks to Venezuela's economic crisis, he cannot even afford to have his shoes repaired. Ibarra has become something of a social media hit after a tweet he posted in late June went viral. His tweet was a photo of a pair of black shoes with broken soles, accompanied by the message: "I'm not ashamed to say this: I go to the UCV with these shoes. My salary as a university professor is not enough to pay for new soles."

The post has been re-tweeted almost 10,000 times, liked 5,400 times, and provoked nearly 1,000 comments plus a whole lot of goodwill. Ibarra works at the Venezuelan Central University (UCV), the most important in the South American country, and earns 5.9 million bolivars (\$1.70 on the black market) a month. In a country gripped by hyperinflation — the International Monetary Fund projects will hit a mind-blowing one million percent by the end of this year — that's barely enough to buy a kilo of meat but nowhere near sufficient to pay the 20 million bolivars necessary to get his shoes repaired. Ibarra's story is a sorry reflection of the catastrophic effects Venezuela's collapsed economy has had on its people.

'Explosion of frustration'

Since he posted his tweet, Ibarra has

received donations of shoes, clothes, money and hundreds of messages of support that led him to launch his "Shoes of Dignity" campaign to help other colleagues. "The tweet was an explosion of frustration. As hardly anyone was following me, I thought no one would see it," Ibarra told AFP. "But already I've received 12 pairs of shoes — of which I've given away nine — clothes and money." "I created the movement because I kept receiving donations."

Messages and offers of help have come from far afield: Argentina, Colombia and even Spain. "We have a shoe shop in Colombia, we repair and make them. How can we send them?" said one Twitter message Ibarra received. He has kept two pairs of used shoes and one new pair of trainers. He also gained 2,900 followers, more than 10 times the number he had before the tweet. Ibarra plans to give away some of the money he received to "the professors who need it the most so they can buy food," some of whom have "lost weight because they don't eat well." Some public university lecturers have intermittently gone on strike over the last three weeks, demanding improved wages.

'Impossible to buy shoes'

Venezuela's economic crisis has had wide-reaching consequences on the country, which is dependent on its vast oil reserves, exports of which provide 96 percent of its hard currency

revenue. Food and medicine shortages have hit the population hard but so, too, has a breakdown in public transport. Privately owned bus companies cannot afford to run their vehicles because passenger fares cannot cover maintenance costs such as replacing tires.

A shortage of buses led President Nicolas Maduro's government to put on free transport in pick-up trucks known locally as "kennels", but that's been widely criticized due to safety concerns. It all means that people like Ibarra have been forced to walk where once they would have taken public transport, with his soles obviously bearing the added workload. "It's impossible to buy shoes. The money I have doesn't allow me to buy personal effects, not even food," said Ibarra.

Lluvia Habibi, in charge of the store in which Ibarra tried to get his shoes repaired, told AFP that prices were high because raw material providers kept pushing up theirs. Ibarra insists he's lost 15 kilograms (33 pounds) during the crisis and has had to rely on help from family and friends. After his infamous tweet, a friend in Mexico sent him money so he could "eat an ice-cream or pizza."

Other members of his family have also lost weight and don't have the money to buy new clothes. It means an old sewing machine in his home gets used regularly to take in baggy clothing. A study by leading universities, UCV includ-



CARACAS: Professor Jose Ibarra of the Central University of Venezuela, poses with a pair of old shoes in a classroom. — AFP

ed, found that poverty levels had risen to 87 percent of the population in 2017, with hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the country's crisis

in recent years. Despite his travails, Ibarra won't be joining them, though. "Venezuela can be saved," he insisted. — AFP

Toronto gunman had mental issues

TORONTO: The 29-year-old man who opened fire on restaurant goers and pedestrians on a Toronto street overnight, killing two people and wounding 13, had "severe" mental health issues, his family said Monday. Police identified the gunman as Faisal Hussain of Toronto. He was found dead near the scene of the shooting after an exchange of gunfire with police.

Toronto Police Chief Mark Saunders said an 18-year-old woman and a 10-year-old girl were killed in the shooting rampage and 13 people — aged 10 to 59 — wounded, some seriously. The authorities have not yet determined a motive for the attack that took place in Toronto's bustling Greektown neighborhood around 10:00 pm Sunday.

Hussain's family, in a statement to CBC News, denounced his "horrific actions" and said he was suffering from mental problems. "Our son had severe mental health challenges, struggling with psychosis and depression his entire life," the family statement said. "The interventions of professionals were unsuccessful," it said. "Medications and therapy were unable to treat him. "While we did our best to seek help for him throughout his life of struggle and pain, we could never imagine that this would be his devastating and destructive end," the family said.

Video footage posted by Canadian media showed Hussain, clad all in black, walking on a sidewalk and suddenly pulling out a handgun and shooting into a restaurant. Just hours after the shooting rampage in Toronto, police arrested a man who tried to stab a member of the ceremonial guard outside parliament in Ottawa. The man was quickly arrested and no one was injured in the incident, the Canadian defense ministry said.

'Unfolded very quickly'

There was no immediate explanation for the knife attack and police were also seeking a motive for Hussain's overnight shooting spree in Toronto. "At this stage of the investigation, we do not know



TORONTO: A man leaves flowers for the victims at the scene of last night shooting. — AFP

why this has happened yet," said Saunders, the police chief. "It's way too early to rule out anything," he said. "Absolutely everything is open right now." Witnesses said the shooting rampage lasted just a few minutes and sparked panic in the popular neighborhood of bars and restaurants. "It was a very rapid and fluid incident that unfolded very quickly," said Detective Sergeant Terry Browne. Andrew Mantzios told The Globe and Mail newspaper that he was having coffee with friends when shots rang out around 10:00 pm.

Mantzios said he saw a man with a "horrible expression on his face" shooting at a crowd of people waiting to cross the street. "And then a lady tried to run and she fell down," he said. "He turned around and shot her point blank, two or three times." "Believe me, I've never seen anything like that," he said. "I am still in shock."

Revives gun control debate

"Our entire city has been shocked by this cowardly act of violence," Toronto Mayor John Tory said. "Gun violence in any part of our city is horrible and completely unacceptable." "I promise all of the people of Toronto, but most importantly

those directly affected by this tragedy, that we will all be relentless in getting answers about why this senseless attack happened," Tory said.

Witnesses reported hearing at least 20 shots during the rampage on Danforth Avenue, Greektown's main drag. "There must've been 20, 30 shots, altogether. It was a lot. We just ran," John Tulloch, a resident who was out for a walk at the time, told The Globe and Mail. Jody Steinhauer told CBC she was at a restaurant with her family when she heard what sounded like 10 to 15 blasts of firecrackers. She said she was told to run to the back of the restaurant. "We started to hear people scream out front," Steinhauer told the broadcaster.

Ontario's new Premier Doug Ford called it a "horrific act of gun violence" and said his heart went out to the victims. The shooting rampage comes amid concern over a surge of shootings in Canada's largest metropolis. Canada traditionally has relatively low levels of gun violence, particularly compared with the neighboring United States. Tory, the mayor, called the shooting "evidence of a gun problem" in Toronto. "That leads to another discussion, 'Why does anyone in this city need to have guns at all?'" he said. — AFP

Nigerian senators dump Buhari for main oppn

ABUJA: More than a dozen senators left Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari's ruling party for the main opposition yesterday, in a move seen as a challenge to his bid for re-election. "Over 15 people have decamped, have defected," Senate President Bukola Saraki said in the National Assembly. The senators left former military ruler Buhari's ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on the last day before parliament adjourns for recess. "Fifteen senators have just announced their defection from the APC to the PDP," said Saraki's spokesman Olu Onemola. Nigeria's upper house has 109 members.

The list of senators includes Rabiu Kwankwaso, a former governor of the key northern state of Kano, who lost to Buhari in the APC presidential primaries before the 2015 election. He has been seen as a potential presidential candidate for the upcoming election in February next year but has not yet declared. Rumors of potential defections have been swirling in recent weeks because of deteriorating relations between the executive and legislature.

Buhari has held closed-door meetings with the ambitious Saraki, who despite being a member of the ruling party believes he has

been marked out as a critic and rival by the presidency. Saraki's hand has been seen in claims from lawmakers that the security services were being used by the government to target perceived political opponents.

Many of those under investigation or on trial for corruption are PDP members. Saraki himself defected from the PDP to the APC before the last election. Earlier this month, Saraki was cleared at Nigeria's Supreme Court of corruption charges, which he said were politically motivated. Police on Monday summoned Saraki in person to answer claims he was linked to a gang that conducted a violent armed robbery in April in his home state of Kwara. Saraki on Monday evening called the invitation a "ploy" to stop the mass defection and said the police were being used by the executive to conduct a political "witch hunt". Yesterday morning, police surrounded his house in Abuja but he managed to make it to parliament. "The security services are being used to settle political scores," said Cheta Nwanze, of SBM Intelligence, a Lagos-based advisory firm. "Security forces have been amenable to the will of the executive but what has happened now is that the sheer impunity at a level that we've not had since the military era." — AFP

Co-founder of Femen feminist group found dead

PARIS: Oksana Shachko, one of the founders of the Femen feminist protest movement, has been found dead in her Paris apartment, the group said on Monday. Activists from Femen, known for its bold topless protests, said the 31-year-old Ukrainian had been found on Monday with a suicide note next to her body. "It is with great regret and deep pain that I must confirm the death of Oksana," said Inna Shevchenko, one of Femen's leaders, who also lives in the French capital.

Another Femen founder, Anna Gutsol, wrote on Facebook: "RIP. The most fearless and vulnerable Oksana Shachko has left us. "We mourn together with her relatives and friends," she said, adding that the group was

awaiting "the official version from the police". Shachko was one of four feminist activists who founded Femen in Ukraine in 2008.

Exiled in France since 2013, she had since left the group and was working as an artist. Operating under the slogan "I came, I stripped, I won," Femen quickly drew attention around the world with its bare-breasted protests against sexism. Their protests eventually started targeting authoritarianism and racism, with Russia's Vladimir Putin a particular target, alongside France's far-right National Front party. But in recent years the group has struggled with internal divisions as well as legal proceedings against its members.

In 2011, Femen said Shachko was among three members "kidnapped" by security agents and forced to strip naked in a forest after staging a topless protest mocking Belarussian strongman Alexander Lukashenko. The agents had poured oil over the three women, threatened to set them on fire, and cut off their hair, Femen said. She was abducted again by unknown assailants during a visit by Putin to Ukraine, according to the group. Femen's lawyer said Shachko was beaten so badly that she was briefly hospitalized. — AFP

Woman savaged by dingoes in Australia

SYDNEY: A woman has been savaged by dingoes in the Australian desert, with the mining worker describing how she feared for her life as the pack of wild dogs tore flesh from her legs. Deb Rundle was on her lunch break at a site in the Pilbara region of Western Australia last week when she followed a small dingo after it snatched her phone.

The 54-year-old said she then noticed three other nearby animals, and as she began backing away, they attacked. "There was blood everywhere on the ground. I just looked at my wounds and 'Oh my God,'" she told Channel Seven television late Monday from her hospital bed. "I looked down and thought 'Oh my God, am I going to die? are they going to get me down?'" Rundle, who will undergo reconstructive surgery to graft skin

to her body, said she screamed for 10 minutes before co-workers came to her aid. "They just wouldn't let go. I think once they had the taste they just didn't let go," she said of the feral dogs, which are native to Australia.

A relative of the woman added: "She had bites everywhere but her head." East Pilbara shire president Lynne Craigie said she had never seen a dingo attack like it in her 20 years living in the region. "Obviously any animal that's hungry is going to be aggressive but I was very surprised to hear there were three of them sort of attacking in a pack," she told broadcaster ABC. Dingo attacks are rare, with just a handful of incidents reported in recent years.

In 2012 a German man was savaged while camping on Fraser island in Queensland state, while a three-year-old and a South Korean woman were bitten in separate incidents on the popular tourist destination known for its dingo population the year before. A nine-year-old boy was killed by wild dogs there in 2001. The most prominent dingo case involved baby Azaria Chamberlain who was snatched by one in 1980. — AFP

Fires sweep much of Europe as countries swelter in the heat

PARIS: Dozens of wildfires have hit countries across northern Europe and Greece as a heat-wave continues to hold across much of the continent. The fires have been particularly devastating in the Attica region around Athens, where dozens of people have died. Here is a roundup of the impact of the fires and the soaring temperatures.

Greece

Greece's deadliest blazes in more than a decade have left 60 dead after wildfires ravaged the seaside areas around Athens. The bodies of 26 people, including small children, were discovered in the courtyard of a villa at the seaside resort of Mati — the devastation blamed on winds of more than 100 kilometers per hour (60 mph) forcing the flames through the village. More than 160 people have been wounded, including several children, the government said.

Sweden

Sweden's emergency services said Tuesday there are 21 active wildfires across the country as much of Scandinavia baked in a heatwave. Some 25,000 hectares (62,000 acres) of land has already gone up in smoke or continues to burn — an area twice the size of the city of Paris. Authorities on Monday warned of an "extreme" risk of new outbreaks in the south of the country due to high temperatures.

Finland

In Finland's northernmost Lapland province

Norway

Norway, which experienced its hottest May temperatures on record, has experienced several small fires. One firefighter was killed on July 15 trying to contain a blaze.

Latvia

Fires have raged for almost a week in Latvia, destroying more than 800 hectares in the Baltic state's western regions.

Germany

The German Meteorological Service DWD



A picture taken on July 22, 2018 shows a burnt forest around Angra, in Ljusdal municipality, after a major wild fire. — AFP

— which calls itself the "official home" of Santa Claus — fires have ravaged woods and grassland close to the border with Russia.

has warned of a significant risk of fires in fields and forests due to drought. It forecast daytime temperatures to reach between 30 and 35 degrees Celsius (95 Fahrenheit) during the week.

UK & Netherlands

Parts of the UK continue to experience a prolonged heatwave. The government has issued a "heat-health watch" alert for much of east and south-east England.

While the Dutch National Institute for Public Health has issued a heat warning for the whole week, warning air quality was likely to be "bad" for much of the country. Twelve bridges in Amsterdam have been closed as the extreme heat could buckle the metal, the NOS public broadcaster reported. — AFP

International

Army starts to spread out across Pakistan ahead of tight elections

The contest has largely been distilled to a two-party fight

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's military fanned out across the country ahead of today's election, deploying hundreds of thousands of troops to oversee polling stations in a short but acrimonious contest that analysts say is still "up for grabs". Armed soldiers watched closely as election officials in the capital Islamabad yesterday distributed ballot boxes and voting materials for polling stations across the city.

The armed forces have stationed over 370,000 personnel nationwide to ensure the vote goes smoothly — the largest such deployment in Pakistan's history on an election day. "Deployment of troops completed across the country," the military said in a statement late on Monday, saying the troops would work with local law enforcement to ensure "a safe and secure environment" for voting.

The mammoth deployment coupled with a recent decision by election authorities to grant military officers broad powers inside polling booths has stirred fears of possible manipulation ahead of the contest. The military's manoeuvring was just the latest source of controversy in a short but bitter campaign season that has seen accusations of "pre-poll rigging", the expansion of headline religious parties and a string of bloody militant attacks that have killed more than 175 people, including three candidates.

“
A safe and secure environment”

Final days

Despite the controversies and bloodshed, political parties continued to criss-cross the country in the final days before the polls, holding dozens of rallies in key battleground areas. The contest has largely been distilled to a two-party fight between jailed former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's incumbent Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party, and cricketing legend Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

"Our predictions are very murky right now," Bilal Gilani, executive director of Gallup Pakistan, told AFP, adding that a huge chunk of voters remain undecided. "It's still up for grabs." Political parties held their final rallies Monday night — before campaigning was suspended — in a last-ditch attempt to energise voters. "I am giving this task to all of you to wake up early on the 25th and cast your vote," Khan told thousands of party faithful in the eastern city of Lahore.

In southern Punjab, PML-N leader and brother of the former premier Shahbaz Sharif said victory was "certain". "Despite all the odds PML-N is winning the July 25 polls," he was quoted as saying by Pakistani media. The PML-N has complained it is being targeted by the powerful military, accusing it of manipulating candidates and the media ahead of the vote in a bid to



KARACHI: Pakistani soldiers patrol on a street in the port city of Karachi. — AFP

push out the party and install a pliant government, with Khan seen as the likely beneficiary.

Activists and think tanks have also widely decried a "silent coup" by the generals. At a PML-N rally in the military garrison city of Rawalpindi, anger simmered over

what participants said was engineering by "the establishment" — referring to the military — with some vowing to take to the streets after the polls if directed by their leaders. "After the election, we will fight," said PML-N supporter Aftab Anjum. "Yes, we are all ready." — AFP

HK academics warn of 'political battleground' at universities

HONG KONG: Pro-democracy Hong Kong academics say they have been sidelined from city universities for their political views as fears grow that education is increasingly under pressure from Beijing. Although semi-autonomous Hong Kong enjoys rights unseen on the mainland, including freedom of expression, there are growing concerns those liberties are being squeezed as China's tolerance for dissent diminishes.

A former member of a top decision-making body at one of the city's leading universities described the situation for academics as a "bloodless political battleground". Students have voiced their support and concern for staff they feel have been targeted over their views. In recent years they have joined faculty members in protesting against what they believe are political appointments of pro-Beijing management figures at universities.

Several academics who spoke with AFP said they felt their careers or those of their colleagues had been scuppered because of their political stance. Pro-democracy lawmaker Cheng Chung-tai was dismissed in January this year from Hong Kong Polytechnic University having taught social sciences there for seven years.

He was fired after being prosecuted by the government for turning the China and Hong



HONG KONG: This picture taken on July 19, 2018 shows pro-democracy campaigner and political science assistant professor at Hong Kong Baptist University Benson Wong posing for a picture in Hong Kong, after receiving a letter in February from the university stating that his contract will not be renewed this year. — AFP

Kong flags upside down in the legislative chamber as a form of protest against the pro-Beijing camp. He was convicted and fined by the court for "desecrating" the flags. "The action I took at the Legislative Council has nothing to do with my conduct as a teacher," he told AFP.

He accuses the university of "kneeling down" to Chinese authorities for commercial gain to safeguard its intake of mainland students, who pay higher fees than local students, and protect donations from pro-Beijing enterprises. PolyU described Cheng's actions as "inconsistent with its commitment to quality education and aspiration to embrace internationalisation" in a dismissal letter seen by

AFP. The university said a two-month disciplinary investigation had found Cheng's behaviour "deviates from the university's requirements" in a statement to AFP.

Some academics fear university funding is also prone to political manipulation as grants are decided by a government-appointed committee. Concerns that freedoms on campus are under threat were further exacerbated last year when 10 leading universities penned a joint statement to students warning them not to discuss Hong Kong independence. President Xi Jinping emphasises territorial integrity as key to a resurgent China and independence talk in the territory is a red flag for Beijing. — AFP

N Korea begins dismantling rocket test site

SEOUL: North Korea has started dismantling some facilities at its main satellite launch station, seen as the testing ground for its intercontinental ballistic missiles, according to expert analysis of recent satellite images. If confirmed, the analysis by respected US-based website 38 North could signal a step forward after last month's landmark summit between Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump, although some experts questioned the significance of the gesture.

After the summit, Trump had declared the North Korean nuclear threat was effectively over, and US media reports suggest he is privately furious at the lack of any subsequent progress on the denuclearization issue. His public statements, however, remain upbeat and the 38 North analysis came as the president pronounced himself "very happy" with the way talks were progressing with Pyongyang. The website said imagery indicated the North had begun taking down a processing building and a rocket-engine test stand that had been used to test liquid-fuel engines at its Sohae Satellite Launching Station.

Sohae, on the northwest coast of North Korea, is ostensibly a facility designed for putting satellites into orbit, but rocket engines are easily repurposed for use in missiles and the international community has labeled



This undated picture released by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday via KNS shows North Korean leader Kim Jong-un visiting a nursery ranch maintained by the Korean People's Army Unit 122 in Gangwon-do province. — AFP

Pyongyang's space program a fig leaf for weapons tests. 38 North analyst Joseph Bermudez called the move an "important first step" for Kim in fulfilling a promise that Trump said the North Korean leader made during their June summit in Singapore.

Since Sohae is "believed to have played an important role in the development of technologies for the North's intercontinental ballistic missile program, these efforts represent a significant confidence-building measure on the part of North Korea," Bermudez said. Trump said in Singapore that Kim had committed to destroying a "major" missile engine

test site, without specifying the site.

Sohae has been the North's main rocket launch site since 2012, and South Korea — whose president brokered the landmark summit between Trump and Kim — called it a step towards denuclearization. "It's a better sign than doing nothing," Nam Gwanpyo, deputy director of the presidential national security office, told reporters. "I believe they are moving step by step towards denuclearization," Nam added. But some experts cautioned against reading too much into the work described in the 38 North analysis. — AFP

Mali's Severe airport hit by mortar fire, no casualties

BAMAKO: Two mortar rounds landed on central Mali's Severe airport late Monday in a suspected jihadist attack days ahead of a presidential poll, according to security sources and local authorities. No casualties were reported. Severe lies close to the regional capital of Mopti and is home to a UN mission (MINUSMA) base as well as to the headquarters of the G5 Sahel anti-terror force which draws troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

The G5 Sahel's headquarters were hit by a terror attack on June 29, killing three people and two of the attackers. Malians are due to vote in a presidential election on Sunday. Shortly before midnight (GMT) on Monday evening, Severe's airport "was targeted in a terror attack. Two shells were fired," a foreign security source on the ground

told said yesterday.

A Malian security source confirmed the incident. "Both rounds came from the east of the airport. One exploded in the south and the other in the north, close to the fuel depot, which obviously was a target," the source told AFP. "One mortar round exploded near the runway and the other close to the airport buildings. Light automatic weapons were fired after the shelling." The attack was confirmed by a local government source, who insisted there were no casualties.

Security forces "secured the airport" several hours after the attack, the Malian source said. Mali's unrest stems from a 2012 ethnic Touareg separatist uprising, which was exploited by jihadists in order to take over key cities in the north. The extremists were largely driven out in a French-led military operation launched in January 2013. But large stretches of the country remain outside of the control of the foreign and Malian forces, which are frequent targets of attacks, despite a peace accord signed with Touareg leaders in 2015 aimed at isolating the jihadists. The violence has also spilled over into both Burkina Faso and Niger. — AFP

Three wounded as rockets are fired into Kabul

KABUL: At least three people were wounded after five rockets were fired into Kabul yesterday, police said, but there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the latest attack on the Afghan capital. The rockets landed in residential areas "near the mountains in PD5 (police district)" in the west of the city, police spokesman Hashmat Stanikzai said. It is not clear if a nearby police academy was the intended target.

Three civilians were wounded in the attacks and police have been deployed to find the launch site, Stanikzai added. The rocket attacks came two days after a suicide bomber blew himself up near Kabul international airport, killing at least 23 people, including AFP driver Mohammad Akhtar. A further 107 people were wounded.

Sunday's attack was claimed by the Islamic State group (IS), which said it had targeted Afghan Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum, who returned to Kabul after more than a year in exile. Scores of government officials, political leaders and supporters had gone to the airport to welcome home Dostum, a powerful ethnic Uzbek leader and former warlord. Dostum was unharmed in the attack, his armored vehicle having already whisked him away when the bomber struck.

The attacks also came a day after top US commanders told reporters in Kabul

that they were seeing progress in the nearly 17-year war. General Joseph Votel, who heads the Central Command that oversees US operations in the region, expressed "cautious optimism" that President Donald Trump's South Asia strategy was working.

As evidence, Votel pointed to the Afghan government's unilateral ceasefire last month that was reciprocated by the Taliban for three days — the first formal nationwide truce since the war started. "Our campaign approach of (increasing) military pressure provided the time and space for diplomatic and social pressure to pursue this opportunity," Votel said.

'More work to do'

US air and ground operations in Afghanistan have been ramped up under Trump's plan, announced last August, that gave American troops more leeway to go after Taliban and IS fighters in Afghanistan. "We do recognize there's a lot more work to do here... But the momentum is moving in the right direction here under our strategy," Votel added. While the roughly 14,000 US troops in Afghanistan provide the main component of the NATO mission to support and train local forces, some are also involved in counterterrorism operations. Ordinary Afghans have borne the brunt of the grinding war that has turned Kabul into one of the most dangerous places in the country for civilians. Militant attacks and suicide bombs were the leading causes of civilian deaths in the first half of 2018, a recent UN report showed. The total number of civilians killed was 1,692, the highest number for the period since the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan began keeping records in 2009. — AFP

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Analysis

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E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
Website: www.kuwaittimes.netChina caffeine war:
Luckin brews up a
threat to Starbucks

Oian Zhiya may be Starbucks' worst nightmare. The 42-year-old Chinese entrepreneur says she is betting that her fledgling Luckin Coffee brand will eventually have more cafes in China than Starbucks, and she has Singapore's sovereign wealth fund and other investors bankrolling her plan. Luckin, which only officially launched in January, has opened more than 660 outlets in 13 Chinese cities thanks to a supercharged growth plan based on cheap delivery, online ordering, big discounts and premium pay for its staff.

Its assault comes at a crucial time for Starbucks, which has 3,400 stores in China - its second biggest market after the US - and plans to almost double that number by 2022. And the speed of the attack is a warning to other established consumer brands in China that they too could be vulnerable to a start-up's attempt to reinvent a market, brand consultants say. Starbucks' shares were pummeled in June after it warned same store sales growth in China had plunged to zero or worse last quarter, against 7 percent growth a year earlier. Its fiscal third-quarter results are due out on Thursday.

Starbucks said some new café openings were cannibalizing customer visits at nearby stores and it also blamed a drop-off in orders through delivery firms. While it did not mention increased competition, investors and analysts said it is clear that Luckin does represent a threat. However, they also point out that Starbucks' brand has been very resilient to challenges from rivals around the world over the years, largely because of the ambience of its stores, its service and the consistent quality of the coffee served. There is also no sign that Chinese consumers have turned against such a very American brand as a protest over US President Donald Trump's imposition of punitive tariffs on Chinese exports.

Big promotions

Reuters spoke to 30 consumers in Beijing Yintai Center, a shopping mall that has a Starbucks, Costa Coffee and Luckin outlet, among others. Half of those polled said they had tried Luckin; most said they liked it, though more than two-thirds said their top choice remained Starbucks. The majority drank coffee in-store or bought to take away, with only a small number saying they had coffee delivered, a potential challenge for Luckin's delivery-focused strategy. Taste, convenience and environment were their top three priorities, more than price.

Luckin's customers can order coffee via an app, watch a livestream of their coffee being made, and have it delivered to their door in an average of 18 minutes, the company says. A regular latte, roughly the size of a Starbucks grande, costs 24 yuan plus 6 yuan for delivery (free delivery for orders of more than 35 yuan), but can be half price after promotions. A grande latte at Starbucks costs 31 yuan. More than half of Luckin's stores are larger "relax" outlets or pick-up stores with some seating. The rest are delivery kitchens.

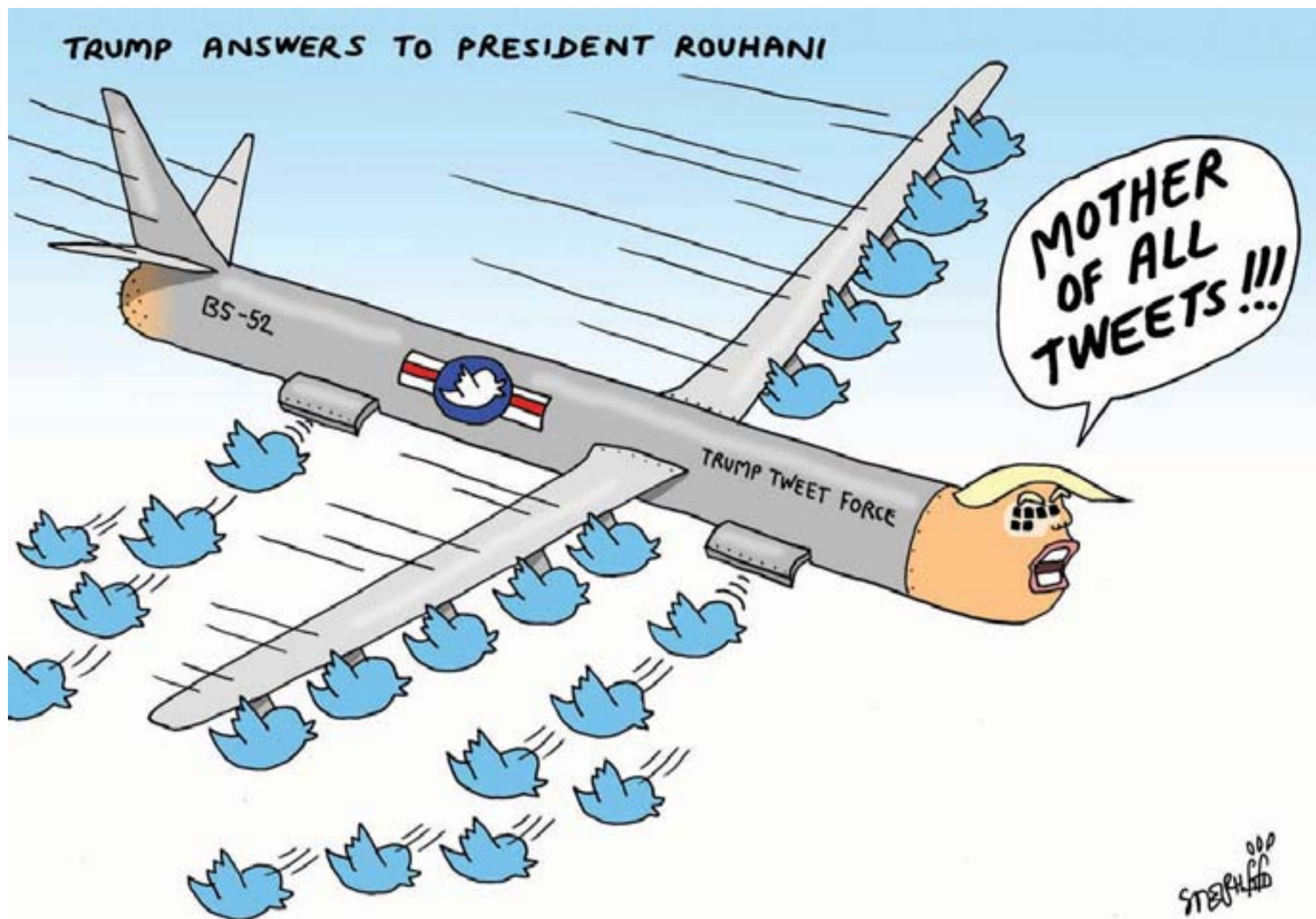
The speed of Luckin's growth is extraordinary - it took Starbucks about 12 years to open as many stores. In many ways it echoes the way in which some major Chinese technology firms, such as ride hailing platform Didi Chuxing, have burned through cash to grab market share and been valued highly as a result. Qian, who was previously chief operating officer at Chinese ride hailing firm Ucar, says Luckin's focus now is all about increasing customers. "I don't have a timeline for profit," Qian told Reuters at the firm's Beijing headquarters as she sipped her third Luckin coffee of the day. "For us, what we care about now is the number of users and if they are coming back to us, whether they recognise us, whether we can take market share."

The firm raised \$200 million this month to help fund its expansion, including an undisclosed sum from Singapore government fund GIC, a funding round which Luckin said valued the firm at \$1 billion. "In the future we will have more cafes than Starbucks," she declared. One of the investors in the latest fundraising said it is the logical time for there to be a shake-up of the coffee world in China. "This model will appeal to young customers amid the country's consumption upgrade," said the investor, who asked not to be identified. The use of online ordering and delivery should be enough to unnerve many established brands, said Bruno Lannes, Shanghai-based partner with consultancy Bain & Co. "It's a big threat, that's why western brands need to pay attention," he said.

'Flash mob'

Still, not everyone agrees the Internet model translates easily to the coffee business, given the need for costly stores and quality control. "It remains to be seen if they can really hook consumers in and create a monopoly in the market, like those we see in sectors like cab-hailing," said Liu Xingliang, president of tech consultancy China Internet Data Center. And some of the consumers Reuters spoke to in the Beijing mall saw hurdles ahead for Luckin. Liu Xu, 23, an advertising professional, who compares Luckin to a "flash mob" that came out of nowhere, said he tried the firm's coffee out of curiosity but prefers hand-drip single-origin coffee.

And Lian Yiheng, 22, a student, said she was attracted by Luckin's promotions and the convenience of delivery, but felt it needed to improve its selection of coffees and store decoration to lure people in the longer run. Qian said the plan was to have more sit-in stores and reduce the proportion of delivery-only outlets, which would require higher spending on setting up in better locations and on décor. On the question of quality, she says that it uses select arabica beans from Ethiopia. — Reuters



Can Iran nuclear deal still be saved?

By Maysam Behravesht

The exodus of international firms from Iran is accelerating as the August deadline for the re-imposition of US sanctions against Tehran approaches. President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the multinational Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which lifted international sanctions against Iran in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program, has left the 2015 accord hanging dangerously in the balance.

On July 7, French shipping giant CMA CGM announced its decision to leave Iran "due to the Trump administration," the group's chief executive Rodolphe Saadé said. The announcement came two days after talks in Vienna between Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif and his counterparts from Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia produced no breakthroughs. The first of its kind since Trump's withdrawal announcement in May, the meeting was intended to provide the Islamic Republic with an economic package that would make up for its losses under US sanctions.

Today, the weakened nuclear agreement confronts three possible fates: Survival, abrupt death, or gradual demise. Since the conclusion of the accord, Iranian leaders have maintained that Tehran will remain in it as long as its interests are preserved, and the deal continues to benefit Iran's economy. Their position did not change after the US administration's decision to shelve the agreement. President Hassan Rouhani reiterated Iran's commitment to the pact shortly before the Vienna meeting but, a few days later, in a phone conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, he described the compensatory European Union package as "disappointing" and lacking "a clear roadmap".

To persuade the Iranian leadership to abide by the JCPOA, Europe has a three-pronged action plan that consists of guaranteeing European Investment Bank (EIB) services to Iran, activating the "blocking statute" to safeguard European firms active in Iran against US secondary sanctions, and securing direct credit transfers to Iran's central bank that would bypass the US financial system.

According to French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, Europe will probably fall short of shielding Iran from US nuclear sanctions by August, but its protective economic package may yet come through by Nov 4, when the second round of penalties against Tehran are set to take effect. Barring significant domestic or foreign developments, the Iranian leadership is likely to wait till November, while monitoring European efforts. Notably, on

July 17, Behrouz Kamalvandi, spokesperson for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) confirmed that Tehran has received Europe's package of incentives and that it meets "elements of Iran's demands but still requires further consideration".

'Revolutionary' decision

Nevertheless, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei may be tempted to use the impaired agreement as an opportunity to boost his credibility with an increasingly recalcitrant Iranian public by taking a "revolutionary" decision to jettison the nuclear accord once and for all. It was

Gradual demise
appears the
most likely
outcome

Khamenei's policy of "heroic flexibility" that made entering nuclear negotiations with world powers in 2013 possible in the first place, and the near failure of that landmark policy, manifested by the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and the restoration of sanctions, has cost Iran's top leader politically. A decision by Khamenei to take this path would see Iran resuming nuclear work on a larger scale and faster pace than in the past, and cause the sudden collapse of the agreement.

Such a decision by the Iranian leader, however, would alienate China and Russia and set Iran on a collision course with Western powers, not least Europe. It would also pave the way for the re-adoption of UN Security Council sanctions against Tehran. For this and other reasons, including the concern that Israel could launch a military response, the Iranian leadership is unlikely to go down the path of nuclear "breakout".

To avoid inviting military action at a time of growing domestic dissent and heightened tensions with neighbors, or having its nuclear dossier reopened at the UN Security Council, Iran will probably try to creep out - rather than break out - of the JCPOA if efforts to guarantee benefits of

staying in it fail. This is partly because Tehran seems to have reached the conclusion that even if Europe does summon the political will to shield Iran from US penalties, it may not be able to resist American pressure in the long run, and it may ask Tehran to make other compromises, such as on its missile program and regional interventions, in return. Recently, European Investment Bank President Werner Hoyer cast doubt on the EU's ability to deliver on its pledge to salvage the Iran nuclear accord, cautioning that EIB's global operations would be imperiled if it invested in Iran as it is the kind of country "where we cannot play an active role".

On June 4, in his first official response to Trump's pullout decision, Khamenei ordered the AEOI to lay the groundwork for achieving "190 000 SWUs [Separative Work Units]" involving uranium enrichment capacity "as soon as possible," but "within the framework of JCPOA for the time being." (By some assessments, Iran's enrichment capacity before the deal was around 10000 SWUs; today it is about 6000 SWUs.) This speech came days after Rouhani instructed the same organization to make preparations for "industrial-scale enrichment without limits."

In practice, creep-out may take the form of implementing the accord selectively, perhaps by measures like allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors limited or delayed access to Iran's nuclear sites. In its first report since Washington's pullout in May, the agency tacitly criticized Tehran for dragging its feet on so-called "complementary access" as part of the Additional Protocol, which Iran agreed to implement "voluntarily" under the JCPOA.

Gradual demise of the nuclear deal appears the most likely outcome if Europe, Russia and China fail to neutralize crippling US sanctions against Iran. Though it might not lead directly to war, this scenario would substantially escalate regional tensions and further destabilize the Middle East. Finally, with the escalating war of words between the Islamic Republic and Washington, including Trump's all-caps "never, ever threaten the United States" tweet - a response to Rouhani's "mother of all wars" speech on Sunday - Iran's desire to keep Europe and other powers on its side as a bulwark against American military action may serve as the ultimate - but imperfect - savior of the nuclear deal.

NOTE: Maysam Behravesht is a multimedia journalist at the TV channel, Iran International, a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science and an affiliated researcher at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Lund University, Sweden — Reuters

Unease as Khan
invokes blasphemy

Pakistan's politicians, including PM hopeful Imran Khan, are mainstreaming extremism by invoking hardline issues like blasphemy to get votes, analysts say, warning the tactic could deepen sectarian fractures and potentially spill into violence. The warnings come as Pakistan confronts anger over a new wave of militant attacks which have killed 175 people at campaign events ahead of nationwide polls on July 25. The country's long-persecuted religious minorities are on their guard as a result.

"Previously it was only a bunch of extremists spreading hatred against Ahmadis," said Amir Mehmood, a member of a community which has long been targeted by extremists in Pakistan, particularly over blasphemy. "Now mainstream parties like the PTI (Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) are doing it." Ahmadis consider themselves Muslims, but their beliefs are seen as blasphemous in most mainstream Islamic schools of thought. They are designated non-Muslims in Pakistan's constitution.

Khan, the cricketer-turned-politician who is the main challenger in the election, has caused concern in recent weeks with his full-throated defense of Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws, which carry a maximum penalty of death. It is a hugely inflammatory charge in Pakistan. The state has never executed a blasphemy convict, but mere accusations of insulting Islam have sparked mob lynchings and murders. International rights groups have long criticized the colonial-era legislation as a tool of oppression and abuse, particularly against minorities. In recent years, it has also been weaponised to smear dissenters and even politicians. The topic is so incendiary that mere calls to reform the law have provoked violence, most notably the assassination of Salman Taseer, the governor of Pakistan's most populous province, by his own bodyguard in 2011. The assassin, Mumtaz Qadri, was angered by Taseer's reformist stance on



Pakistani cricketer turned politician Imran Khan speaks to supporters during a campaign rally on July 22, 2018 in Karachi ahead of the general election. — AFP

blasphemy. Feted as a hero by hardliners, he was executed by the incumbent Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government in 2016, provoking Islamist fury.

'There is a shift'

Now Qadri's image is being used on election banners, and some of Khan's candidates are asking Pakistanis if they plan to vote for "the party who executed him", placing themselves firmly on the side of Islamists. At one rally in Islamabad this month, Khan told clerics in televised comments that the PTI "fully" supports the blasphemy law "and will defend it". "No Muslim can call himself a Muslim unless he believes that the Prophet Mohammed is the last prophet," he said - a statement that raised alarm among Ahmadis, who are persecuted for their belief in a prophet after Muhammad (PBUH).

Analyst Amir Rana says "there is a shift" in this election: "The mainstream political parties are also exploiting the religious narrative." He predicts this change would deepen sectarian divides, empower radical groups, and could provoke violence. Khan may simply be trying to target the

PML-N with his comments on blasphemy, says minority activist Kapil Dev. But when the potential next prime minister of the country shares an inflammatory stance with extremists, "people take it seriously", Dev warned. Jibril Nasir, a prominent human rights activist running as an independent candidate in the southern city of Karachi, is already facing threats over the issue. Islamist hardliners stormed his election events and warned him not to campaign in the area over his refusal to denounce Ahmadis. In a video posted online, one cleric in Nasir's constituency is seen referencing the assassin Qadri in a threatening speech.

'Heretics'

Organisations like Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP), which blockaded the capital Islamabad for weeks last year over blasphemy, are widely contesting the polls. The party's chief, Khadim Hussain Rizvi, reportedly told journalists in Karachi that if he took power in the nuclear-armed country he would "wipe Holland off the face of the earth" over cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Other radical groups contesting the vote include Sunni sectarian extremists Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), and the Milli Muslim League, linked to Hafiz Saeed, the man accused of masterminding the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

"If we get power in the evening and if a single Shia is alive by the morning in Pakistan then change my name," ASWJ leader Muhammad Ahmed Ludhianvi told an election rally. Both groups have been banned from the election but their candidates are contesting under the banner of other, lesser-known parties. The analyst Rana suggested PTI and Khan may also be trying to weaken the appeal of radical religious groups by co-opting their rhetoric. But if he really is seeking to cut support for these parties, it will only increase the appeal of extremism, warns the Ahmadi activist Mehmood. In his town of Rabwah in central Pakistan, a hub of the Ahmadi community, residents say not one politician has visited its 40,000 registered voters this campaign season. "Nobody dares to come here," Mehmood says. "They will be considered heretics." — AFP

Business

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Dollar over-valued, says IMF report

Excess trade surpluses in China, Germany aggravate tensions

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund said yesterday that the US dollar is over-valued, China's yuan is in line with fundamentals and nearly half of global current account balances are now excessive, adding to growth risks and trade tensions.

The IMF, in its annual External Sector Report, which assesses exchange rates and current account surpluses and deficits, also said current account surpluses and deficits are becoming increasingly concentrated in advanced economies. The report was based on data and IMF staff projections as of June 22. However, China's yuan has dropped significantly in recent weeks as trade tensions with the United States have intensified.

China's yuan hit a fresh 13-month low yesterday of 6.8295 to the dollar as authorities in Beijing signaled further monetary loosening to support the economy amid an escalating tariff war with the United States.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin told Reuters exclusively on Friday that he was concerned about the yuan's fall and the Treasury is "going to very carefully review whether they have manipulated the currency."

The IMF said its staff estimated China's current account surplus grew slightly last year to 1.7 percent of gross domestic product and listed China among countries with excessive balances. Other excessive surplus countries cited by the IMF included Germany, South Korea, the Netherlands, Sweden and Singapore.

Countries that it cited as having excessive current account deficits—those that borrow too much—included the United States, Britain, Turkey and Argentina. The report said IMF staff assessed the US dollar again to be over-valued compared to levels implied by medium-term fundamentals, by about 8 percent to 16 percent last year.

US President Donald Trump has broken with protocol in recent days and complained that Federal Reserve interest rate hikes were causing the dollar's value to rise and to erode the US "competitive edge" in exports.

Trade tensions

As growing trade frictions engulf much of the world, the IMF warned that large trade surpluses in Germany and China together with the large US deficit could exacerbate that conflict.

But in a message that seem directed largely at US President Donald Trump, the IMF once again warned against using protectionist measures to address trade issues, since they can harm growth without resolving the problem. In addition, US fiscal stimulus-like the massive tax cut approved in December—"is leading to a tightening in monetary conditions, a stronger US dollar, and a larger US current account deficit," the IMF said.



BUENOS AIRES: IMF Director Christine Lagarde (center) speaks with US Chairman of the Federal Reserve Jerome Powell (left), after the family picture of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in Buenos Aires on Sunday. — AFP

Those are precisely the developments Trump railed against on Twitter last week, breaking with longstanding tradition to chastise the Federal Reserve for raising interest rates, which has caused the dollar to strengthen.

Trump has pursued a multi-front trade confrontation with key economies, especially China, but also has singled out Germany and the European Union in general for allegedly treating the US unfairly. The tariffs he imposed have angered trading partners and prompted swift retaliation. Germany's surplus is "substantially stronger" than justified by the state of the economy, while those in China and South Korea were classified as "moderately stronger," as was that of the European Union.



Chinese yuan in line with fundamentals

China 'overly reliant' on credit
Those countries "should focus their efforts on reforms to reduce excess saving, through safety net and pension reforms," the report said. For Germany, "boosting public investment would also help reduce excess surpluses."

That has been a long-standing recommendation of the IMF and other economists who have urged Germany to spend more and encourage more demand to help with the global recovery. Germany posted a surplus of eight percent of GDP last year which is in part fueled by the fact the euro's value has been held down by the weak economic performance in member nations, including Greece, which makes German exports more

competitively priced.

In China, the IMF cautions that the economy has been "overly reliant on credit and investment (which) could culminate in an abrupt growth slowdown and a resulting resurgence of large external surpluses."

That outcome "could be met with stiff protectionist responses," the report said. And those export-led nations cannot continue to rely on demand from debtor countries, most notably, the United States, the IMF said.

In the short term, if the US trade deficit continues to widen from 2.4 percent of GDP last year—exacerbated by fiscal stimulus and a stronger dollar—it risks "intensifying the US administration's approach to reducing its deficit through trade measures," the report said. "New trade barriers and possible retaliatory actions could derail global growth, with likely only limited impact on excess global imbalances." The report noted that allowing increased immigration—something Trump strongly opposes—also could help the United States. — Agencies

Oil market hits a cyclical pause

LONDON: Brent crude futures prices are trading in contango for the first time in 10 months, as traders anticipate an increase in crude availability during the remainder of 2018.

The Brent calendar spread for the first six months slumped into a contango of 43 cents per barrel on Monday, from a backwardation of \$3.50 as recently as April 26.

Brent futures are trading in contango for the four contracts closest to delivery, from September 2018 through January 2019. Hedge funds and other money managers have sold a large number of long positions in recent weeks, depressing the front-end of the curve.

Portfolio managers tend to hold a majority of their positions in contracts close to expiry because that's where the liquidity is normally greatest. Just as position-building by the hedge funds spurred the rise in spot prices and calendar spreads in the second half of 2017 and first quarter of 2018, liquidation is now accelerating the correction.

More fundamentally, traders have reacted to pledges of increased output and exports from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Russia.

Saudi Arabia and its OPEC and non-OPEC allies have responded to pressure from the United States to counter rising prices by increasing their production. Extra barrels have been loaded in June and July, with more promised in August, ensuring increased availability in the second half of the year. Fears about slower consumption growth as a result of a strengthening dollar and the intensifying trade conflict between the United States and China are also weighing on oil prices.

Because the oil market is forward-looking, concerns about the strength of consumption growth later in 2018 and 2019 are being discounted back to lower oil prices in the near-term. Spot prices and calendar spreads both exhibit cyclical behaviour at all scales from very short-term (seconds, minutes and days) to longer time horizons (months, quarters and years). — Reuters

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Business

AUB announces KD 29.0 million net profit for first half of 2018

Operating profits grew to KD 63.9 million in H1

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) reported a net profit for the first half of 2018 amounting to KD 29.0 million compared to KD 26.5 million during the same period last year, reflecting a 9.4 percent growth. Earnings per share (EPS) reached 15.4 fils as compared with 14.0 fils EPS for the same period last year.

The bank attributed the increase in net profits to the continued growth of its core revenues, which reflects an increase in net return on financing which amounted to 6.5 percent during the first half of 2018.

AUB's operating profits grew to KD 63.9 million as at 30 June 2018, reflecting a 13.7 percent increase as compared with KD 56.2 million achieved in the same period last year. Shareholders' equity increased by 1.5 percent to reach KD 413.2 million as at the end of the first half as compared with KD 406.9 million as at 31 December 2017. AUB has continued to maintain a sound capital adequacy ratio of 16.4 percent being higher than the minimum regulatory required level of 13 percent.

The Bank has achieved a return on equity and return on assets of 14.0 percent and 1.6 percent respectively during the first half of the year, which are amongst the highest in the local market.

Total assets, customer deposits and net financing receivables reached KD 3,696 million, KD 2,379 million and KD 2,745 million respectively during the first half of 2018 - all of which are managed in a balanced, precise and secure manner to ensure the generation of higher financial returns.

Commenting on these positive results, AUB's Chairman, Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf said, "We are pleased with these positive results which reflect the Bank's overall success and progress in a balanced manner, whilst preserving its leadership position across the Islamic banking sector."

"AUB continues to drive its strong performance and once again reaffirms its position, financial strength, successful strategy as well as a diversified and robust assets base. The

Bank's conservative policy has protected it from negative implications resulting from the global and regional events that directly impact the wider economic environment," added Dr Al-Mudhaf.

Positive outlook

Dr Al-Mudhaf further reiterated the positive market outlook with an increase in government capital spending and its expected reflection across the local operating environment, which will provide more opportunities for banks locally. Confirming that AUB enjoys a solid legacy and a successful track-record being the oldest bank operating in Kuwait for 77 years the Bank has excelled in a large number of achievements across the years and has cemented its leadership role as being more than ready to leverage such opportunities and contributing to the national Kuwaiti financing plan to contribute to economic success - as part of the Kuwait 2035 vision.

Dr Al-Mudhaf pointed out that AUB maintains strong credit ratings from global ratings agencies, which directly reflect the Bank's strategy, strength of its financial capabilities and robust asset quality, along with the experienced executive management, in addition to the trust that customers and shareholders have placed in AUB.

Bank's core revenues continue to grow



The Bank has continued to receive high credit ratings from international credit rating agencies, such as Fitch, Moody's and Capital Intelligence. The Bank maintained a credit rating of "A+" on the long term and "F1" on the short term with stable outlook by Fitch Ratings Agency, and "A2" on the local currency with stable outlook by Moody's. Capital Intelligence affirmed the Bank's long term credit rating of foreign currency to "A+" and enhanced the short term foreign currency rating to "A2". All these ratings confirm the credit standing, capital quality, and stability of the Bank for future growth. Richard Groves, AUB's CEO also said, "AUB has maintained a leadership position in

Kuwait, thanks to the overarching strategy and continuous strong performance across multiple fronts."

During the course of the current year, AUB won a number of prominent awards including 'Best Retail Bank in Kuwait 2018' and the 'Best Retail Marketing Kuwait 2018' award from Global Banking and Finance Review. These awards are a testament to the Bank's significant achievements across retail banking, which reflects its efforts in further developing and tailoring banking solutions that facilitate customers banking experiences and making them more flexible and efficient. The Bank has a deep commitment to reinforcing customers' experiences by providing added value banking services as well as a keen investment in technology, providing a network of branches that provide high quality services.

AUB won the 'Best Private Banking Bank in Kuwait 2018' award from The Banker Middle East - the region's top financial publication. The award reflects the Bank's overall vision as a strong financial organization that adopts best international practices.

The Bank also won the 'Best Human Resources Award in Kuwait' from CPI Financials Banker Middle East, one of the region's most leading financial magazines. The award came in recognition of the Bank's achievements in different fields of Human Resources, reflecting the best practices endorsed in the Human Resources Department.

Technological innovation

AUB also won the coveted Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) 2018 award from the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) - Kuwait Chapter. The accolade recognizes the Bank's ongoing efforts and commitment to alleviate the risks in the workplace and to the awareness of the principles and requirements of safety and health.



Dr Anwar Al-Mudhaf



AUB was also able to move ahead with its plan to embrace the latest banking technological developments and digital transformation to continue its strategy in the field of development and innovation. During 2018, the Bank launched a new partnership with Ajar Online Services to promote the growth of real estate rental payments through digital channels which provides comfort to tenants and property owners. In cooperation with Automated Services Network Company (eNet), the Bank also has successfully launched the service of bill payments of all major telecommunications companies in Kuwait, through the Bank's online banking service and mobile banking application.

Finally, in concluding his statement, Dr Al-Mudhaf extended his thanks and appreciation to the Central Bank of Kuwait, the Bank's Board of Directors, customers, shareholders, management and staff for the confidence and support they have conferred upon the Bank. This has enabled the Bank to realize these continued achievements and maintain its preminent position in the Kuwaiti banking sector.

Zimbabwe economy desperate for election turnaround

HARARE: Zimbabwean factory manager Sifelani Jabangwe is a survivor of the Mugabe years, overseeing a company that stayed in business despite hyperinflation, abandonment of the national currency and an exodus of investors. Now he hopes that next week's election will mark a turning point if the vote brings in a legitimate government that can relaunch the shattered economy after Robert Mugabe was ousted last year.

Jabangwe's company, James North Zimbabwe, is the country's largest producer of industrial protective wear and tarpaulins, specializing in protective gloves and shoes.

It has survived by exporting to neighboring Mozambique and Malawi as well as Kenya and Rwanda, as its client base in Zimbabwe shrunk in line with the declining economy. Today it employs 150 people-down from 400 about 15 years ago-on the Southern industrial area in the capital Harare, where derelict buildings overgrown with grass are more common than open businesses.

"The normalization of relations with the rest of the world is the key takeaway in these elections so that we are not seen as a pariah state anymore," Jabangwe, who is also president of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries, told AFP on a tour of his factory.

"We have lost too much time with the politics. It's now

time to develop the economy. "When the rest of the economy is functioning and everyone has money to buy what they want, we also benefit."

An economy ruined

President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who is standing in the election to retain power after succeeding Mugabe last year, has vowed to re-engage with the west after years of isolation.

He has already scrapped much of the unpopular indigenization laws that forced foreign firms to cede 51 percent stakes to locals, and he has campaigned relentlessly on a promise to revive the economy.

Under Mugabe, the seizure of white-owned farms wrecked the agriculture sector and triggered hyperinflation, with GDP nearly halving between 2000 and 2008 - the sharpest contraction of its kind in a peacetime economy. Previously solid health and education services collapsed, millions fled abroad to seek work and poverty rates are still climbing.

Life expectancy has only just recovered to its 1985 level of 61 years. "We have been reeling under self-inflicted economic pain by and large," said Shingi Munyeza, a hotel investor who also owns one Mugg and Bean cafe in Harare after a second premises closed.

"These watershed elections pose a great opportunity. We have a serious challenge of getting everybody out of this mess."

"The political establishment was more focused on retaining power. "We hope we are crossing from the type of leadership which maintained power at the expense of the economy and the rights of its citizens."

"I am hoping the winner will win with grace and the loser will lose with dignity and that both should embrace one another."

Monday's election comes after Mugabe, now 94, was forced to resign following a brief military takeover in November, end-



HARARE: A worker at James North factory puts finishing touches on rubber safety gloves along a production line at the company's factory in the Southern industrial area in the Zimbabwean capital Harare. —AFP

ing his 37 years in power.

Mnangagwa, a favorite of the military, has pledged to hold a fair election and boost investor confidence, but critics say that the same corrupt elite from Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF party will likely still have a grip on power after the vote. Mnangagwa faces opposition leader Nelson Chamisa of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) who has also prioritized economic growth-but Zimbabwean economist John Robertson warned that the country faced a long haul.

"The government that comes in has to relax the levels of control. There are too many uncertainties with rules being changed and lots of corruption. Businesses don't want that," he told AFP. —AFP

Turkey CB keeps rate unchanged, lira slumps

ANKARA: The Turkish central bank yesterday kept its key interest rate unchanged, defying pressure for a rate hike to keep a hold on soaring inflation and prompting a new slump in the value of the lira.

The bank said in a statement that it would keep the one week repo rate unchanged at 17.75 percent, despite calls from economists to raise rates.

The lira lost 3.5 percent in value to reach 4.9 against the US dollar after the bank's announcement as markets reacted with disappointment to the decision, which had been seen as a key test of the bank's credibility. The bank appeared to keep the door open for further hikes saying a "tight stance in monetary policy will be maintained decisively until inflation outlook displays a significant improvement." Inflation in Turkey was 15.39 percent in June from the same period the year earlier, the highest reading in almost one-and-a-half decades.

But it said that recent data had shown a "rebalancing trend in the economic activity" with "signs of deceleration in domestic demand become more visible" even as external demand remained strong. —AFP

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Business

KIB reports KD 12 million net profits for first half of 2018

Net profit increased by 10%, 22% growth in financing income

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) reported a net profit of KD 12 million attributable to shareholders and earnings per share at 12.82 fils for the first half of 2018. Net profit increased by 10 percent compared to similar period last year.

Total financing income witnessed a robust growth of 22 percent to reach KD 42.5 million compared to KD 34.7 million in first half of 2017, contributing to the increase of total operating income by 13 percent to reach KD 34.5 million compared to KD 30.7 million in 2017.

KIB's total assets witnessed a growth of 10 percent to reach KD 2.1 billion, as compared to the same period of last year. The bank's financing portfolio also increased by 14 percent, or by KD 192 million, to reach KD 1.5 billion compared to the same period of last year. Moreover, the bank's investment portfolio increased by 21 percent to reach KD 151 million.

On this occasion, Chairman of KIB Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah stated that KIB continues to follow its new cus-



Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah

tomers-centric strategic direction, focusing on offering a next-level customer experience. As a result, depositors' account increased by 11 percent (KD 124 million) to reach KD 1.3 billion, compared to KD 1.2 billion in the same period last year.

Al-Jarrah also pointed out that distribu-

tions to depositors' registered a consistent growth whereby the annualized gross return at the end of the second quarter of 2018 on Al-Boushra (KD) three-year deposits was 3.35 percent and Arzaq (KD) deposit increased to 2.75 percent. Similarly, the savings investment account (KD) achieved a net return of 1.65 percent per annum in Q2 2018.

Commenting on the robust financial results, Al-Jarrah said: "KIB is implementing its new strategic transformation: a comprehensive and long-term program which is aimed at transforming the way KIB engages with customers across every touch point, whether through e-communication or face-to-face. This new strategy focuses on offering a next-level customer experience that delivers much more than just "banking" in the traditional sense - but rather establishes KIB as a partner in every aspect of its customers' lives: a true 'Bank for Life.'" With this theme, KIB launched its new brand during the second quarter.

Al-Jarrah noted that this newly implemented strategy seeks to revolutionize the KIB customer experience and improve service levels. In turn, this change will reflect positively on the Bank's overall financial performance and in attracting a series of notable achievements and awards.

Al-Jarrah also pointed out that KIB received a slew of awards during the first half of 2018, including the "Best Customer Acquisition in GCC" award for the year 2017 by World Finance. The bank was also recognized at the 2018 Cybersecurity Excellence Awards forum. Most recently, the Bank was awarded 'Best Customer Acquisition in Kuwait' for the year 2018 by CPI Financial. KIB was also recognized by the Bahrain Society for Social Responsibility for its active role in driving positive change and supporting sustainable development programs and social responsibility projects in 2017.



HIGHLIGHTS

- 14% growth in financing receivables
- 11% growth in depositors' accounts
- Annualized gross profit rate in Q2 2018 on Arzaq deposit (Kuwaiti dinars) increased to 2.75%
- Annualized return in Q2 2018 on Al-Boushra Kuwaiti dinar 3-year deposits were offered 3.35%
- Annualized net return in Q2 2018 on Savings investment account (Kuwaiti Dinar) were offered 1.65%

Financial Results

First Half of 2018

	First Half 2018	First Half 2017	%
Net Profit "KD Million"	11.97	10.91	10 ↑
Earnings Per Share "Fils"	12.82	11.69	10 ↑
Financing Income "KD Million"	42.5	34.7	22 ↑
Total Assets "KD Billion"	2.08	1.89	10 ↑
Financing Receivables "KD Billion"	1.52	1.33	14 ↑
Customer Deposits "KD Billion"	1.29	1.16	11 ↑

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Business

Warba Bank launches 'Express Financing', a digital solution for personal finance

Exclusively in Kuwaiti banking sector through its digital infrastructure

KUWAIT: At its press conference held yesterday, Warba Bank, the best corporate and investment bank in Kuwait, launched its latest digital financing solution, "Express Financing", through which both Warba Bank customers and non-customers, who wish to obtain personal finance, can apply using the bank's digital platforms without having to visit any of the branches through a fully automated process that saves time and efforts for the customers and the Bank alike.

The press conference was attended by a wide range of the Kuwaiti newspaper reporters and representatives of the Bank's Management headed by Shaheen Hamed Al-Ghanem, Chief Executive Officer, the Bank's spokesman gave an account of this new exclusive service and explained that it would enable those wishing to obtain personal finance to apply through an easy, time-saving, five-step process.

In the first step, the applicant answers personal questions, including the personal identification number and telephone number. The Bank sends a text message to the phone number of the concerned applicant with an activation code to be entered on the screen in order to validate and authenticate the information provided. Then, in step two, the applicant will determine the type of personal finance needed. In step three, the applicant is redirected to a page containing the amount applied for, the number of the monthly installments, as well as the repayment period of the due amounts. In the fourth step, the applicant will attach the necessary documents for completion of the application such as a copy of the ID, upload a personal video to ensure that it matches the identity of the applicant, a copy of bank account statement for the last six months, and a salary certificate. Finally, the applicant signs and agrees on the personal finance terms and conditions. Upon completion of these five steps, the Bank will send an electronic link to the applicant's smart-



phone so that the applicant can obtain copy of the draft contract copy, review the contract and details of the personal finance and follow up the application and see if it is under study, approved or rejected or if the applicant needs to visit one of the bank's branches to complete some paperwork in accordance with the conditions required to obtain personal finance. After getting the approval, the applicant will visit the branch to complete the process of obtaining personal finance.

In addition to speed and ease, this new service provides the highest level of protection for the customers' information provided online. The latest information security standards are applied to match the photo of the person on ID card with the selfie photo taken by the smartphone. Moreover, the applicant will be required to make electronic signature so as to verify and validate the information

provided. Commenting on the new service, Alghanem said: "Warba Bank has recently focused its efforts on creating new banking services and solutions that are tailored to the needs of our customers and are in line with the spirit of times in which we rely heavily on modern technology in our every-day lives."

"At the beginning of the year, we launched a service for new customers allowing them to fully open an account without having to visit any of our branches. Now, we add our personal finance application through digital platforms so that we can meet all our customers' needs in a safe, efficient and rapid manner, thus expanding our exclusive digital banking services in the Kuwaiti banking sector. This simply reflects our commitment to achieving our vision of providing advanced digital services to individuals that focus on speed, easiness and flexibility in all banking transac-



tions," he added. Warba Bank has doubled its efforts by injecting necessary investments to enhance its digital infrastructure at international levels, by which the Bank ensures that its digital services are designed to meet customers' expectations and aspirations, saving both time and efforts.

Today, Warba Bank's customers can directly complete their banking transactions through the Warba online App. The Bank's interactive website that undergone major enhancements to become a flexible electronic branch that easily responds to customers' requests. In addition, the Bank's application for smartphones (Warba App) has proven to be a great success; it is heavily used by customers. It enables them to quickly carry out a series of unique banking services without having to visit a branch, turning these deals into a quick and enjoyable banking experi-

ence, away from the monotonous paperwork.

The Bank's approach in developing its digital services infrastructure is exemplary, given the high technology and sophistication it applies to provide customers with a distinctive banking experience. A good example of this is the Bank's latest service launched in late 2017, the "Express Bank", an interactive electronic branch that enables customers to easily manage their banking operations. In addition, the Bank has launched a series of digital services recently under the name "Express", including: Express Bill, and Express Call, Express Eidiyah, Express Finance, Express Share, Express Transfer, Express Salary and Skip Services and many more. The Apple Watch allows customers to view and follow up their accounts and operations performed via banking cards through the Android and Apple Watch.

Will you be the lucky winner of Alfa Romeo?

KUWAIT: Online customers of Al Mulla Exchange are awaiting with bated anticipation for one of the most exciting marketing promotions in Kuwait. For the recently launched Mobile App and revamped remittance portal, Al Mulla Exchange had launched an exclusive marketing promotion on the 13th of May 2018. This promotion will conclude in just 20 days with the lucky draw on the 15th of August 2018.

Speaking about the promotion, R Shankar, General Manager of Al Mulla Exchange, said "For those customers who have not started using Al Mulla Exchange's online tool, this will be the right time to do that. With just 21 days away, you should not miss out on the numero uno car that is offered as a prize by Al Mulla Exchange. Moreover our online promises the best to the customers in terms of price as well as convenience. With all the positive attributes there is no doubt that customers will get to gain from Al Mulla Exchange's products and offerings."

To be automatically qualified for the draw, customers have to remit using the online and App portals of Al Mulla Exchange. "There is a great chance that you could be the winner of the fabulous Alfa Romeo. Who knows? You could be our next winner!" Shankar said.

As one of the pioneers in remittance industry, Al Mulla Exchange set a new milestone in the remittance industry by being the first in Kuwait to launch a Remittance Application. Within a short span of time, the App has soared to be one of the most downloaded App on the Android and iOS platforms. The application which is very simple to use has been interlaced with a very interactive user interface as well as easy maneuverability.

The online platform, www.almullaexchange.com, which was launched a couple of years back also went through a major revamp and is in sync with the App as well. The online platform now boasts a very elegant look and feel with robust security features. With this, customers will be able to transact even when they are travelling anywhere and anytime across the globe.



Al-Shaya & Al-Sagar introduces up to KD 2700 on top of your trade-in

KUWAIT: Kuwait Automotive Imports, Al-Shaya & Al-Sagar, the official agents of Mazda vehicles has announced its highest offer that grants clients the opportunity to own Mazda cx9 and get the highest value on top of their trade-in car.

While Mazda insists on its firm traditions to being one of few vehicles manufacturers located in Japan, the company developed the cx9 to be one of the finest & most reliable 4-wheel drive SUVs that combines the quality of a premium seven-seater and design to satisfy both the head and the heart in equal measure. As well as a full suite of Mazda's groundbreaking SKYACTIV TECHNOLOGY that now includes G-Vectoring control (GVC).

The trade-in offer includes the CX-9 R model that displays the power of a 2.5 turbo 231hp engine with SKYACTIV TECHNOLOGY. Athletic proportions are highlighted by the sleek cabin, a strong and stable lower body featuring large 20-inch wheels & a confident stance.

Nader Salmeh, Senior Divisional Manager- vehicles, stated that this offer is the perfect chance for clients to own the CX9 which is considered one of most desired vehicles in the Mazda range. And this great opportunity should be seized since it is for a limited period.



Turkish Airlines embarks on exclusive sponsorship with CNN in global brand campaign

KUWAIT: Turkish Airlines is the exclusive sponsor of CNN International's newest show - Quest's World of Wonder - in a TV and digital campaign to further raise awareness amongst business and leisure travellers that the airline is a leading global player flying to more countries and international destinations than any other airline.

Starting this week through a partnership with CNN International Commercial (CNNIC), the sponsorship of Quest's World of Wonder sees Turkish Airlines billboards around every TV episode of the new immersive travel show. Each month the 30-minute show produced by CNN Vision follows the inimitable Richard Quest as he visits a different destination to dig deep into its DNA, exploring what drives a city and the people who live in it. The sponsorship also features a ground-breaking and stylish product placement that seamlessly integrates Turkish Airlines into the title sequence of each show, uniting CNN and Turkish Airlines in their shared passion for travel.

On digital, Turkish Airlines has exclusive advertising on a dedicated online destination within CNN Travel for the show and additional content about the cities that Quest explores. In addition, a Turkish Airlines brand campaign will run across various CNN TV and digital platforms later this year.

"This partnership is a compelling combination of first-rate content, innovative creative solutions and clever use of CNN's various TV and digital platforms," said Rani Raad, President, CNN International Commercial. "Turkish Airlines has an impressive story



to tell about its ever-expanding customer offering, and with this project we're delighted to provide them the opportunity to share this story with the world through the various CNN channels. As CNN continues to set the standard for the industry we relish working with partners such as Turkish Airlines who are willing to experiment with new ideas and go beyond traditional advertising solutions."

Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee M. Ilker Ayçi added: "We have a strong long-standing relationship with CNN and we knew the series would be in safe hands with a seasoned traveller such as Richard Quest. The series was a natural choice for us given the synergies in global appeal, reach and audience and with the upcoming opening of the Istanbul New Airport, more people than ever can travel with Turkish Airlines. We fly to 304 destinations worldwide and the 13 destination which Richard selected for this series provides a real cross section and mix of experiences. We hope viewers will enjoy the variety and take inspiration from widening their world."

China Tower seeks \$8.7 billion IPO

HONG KONG: China's state-owned China Tower-the world's largest operator of telecommunications towers-announced yesterday it will aim for an \$8.7 billion initial public offering in Hong Kong, the biggest globally in four years. China Tower is offering 43.1 billion shares globally at a range of HK\$1.26 to HK\$1.58 (US\$0.16 to US\$0.20) each with pricing expected on August 1 and will debut on the Hong Kong exchange on August 8.

It would be the largest IPO since Alibaba's \$25 billion New York debut in 2014, according to data compiled by Bloomberg News. Hillhouse Capital, affiliates of China National Petroleum Corp and Taobao-a subsidiary of Alibaba-are reported to be among the 10 cornerstone investors.

The company said yesterday at its IPO launch event in Hong Kong that "international companies and giant domestic companies" were among the cornerstone investors. "The potential to cooperate with Alibaba is great. We have a certain level of communication as well as understanding," added Tong Jilu, chairman and executive director of China Tower, speaking at the event at Hong Kong's Conrad Hotel.

China Tower was formed by merging the operations of state-owned China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom in 2014 in a massive joint venture to streamline the industry.

Observers said investors may see the company as a safe bet on China's mobile market because of its government backing. But some argued the fact it was a state-backed monopoly could limit growth due to lack of competition. Caution over China stocks due to trade disputes with the United States could also temper interest. Hong Kong is seeking to become a destination for major IPOs after being snubbed by Alibaba's overseas listing in 2014. But the China Tower deal comes amid a slump in the Hong Kong bourse, with the benchmark Hang Seng Index trading down about 6 percent from the start of this year. — AFP

Technology

Drug-fuelled HIV surge raises concerns at AIDS meeting

Shortage of funds to cause AIDS to spiral out of control

AMSTERDAM: Celebrities from actress Charlize Theron and pop star Elton John to Britain's Prince Harry will call for action on the second day of a world AIDS assembly in Amsterdam, as concerns grow over an HIV surge in some parts of the world. Some 15,000 delegates—researchers, campaigners, activists and people living with the AIDS-causing virus—have gathered for a five-day war council amid dire warnings that complacency and a shortage of funds may yet cause AIDS to spiral out of control.

While reviewing the latest science and policy developments, the 22nd International AIDS conference is also seeking to harness the star power of celebrity activists such as singer Conchita Wurst to bolster a battle that experts warn is losing ground in certain countries—largely those where strict laws cause drug users to share virus-laced needles. The 2014 Eurovision song winner, an Austrian drag queen who announced in April she was HIV-positive, used the opening ceremony on Monday to question why millions of people still have no access to life-saving drugs.

"How long will it take until we make our research and affordable therapies accessible to every single human who needs it?" she asked. "I would like to know why medical treatment advances that I have access to are still not available to so many affected." With a record 36.9 million people now living with HIV, experts warn that complacency, and a shortage of billions of dollars, risked undoing or even reversing many hard-won gains.

"In Eastern Europe and Central Asia new infections have increased 30 percent since 2010," International AIDS Society (IAS) president Linda-Gail Bekker said. It was, she said, "the only region in the world where HIV is rapidly increasing, in large part related to injecting drug use." A UNAIDS report last week said that new HIV infections, while down overall, were rising in about 50 countries.

“Progress on ending AIDS is still slow”

Too slow

"Despite all the remarkable advances that have been made, progress on ending AIDS is still slow," said Tedros Ghebreyesus, director general of the World Health Organization. And he warned the world "will not" meet UN 2020 targets on HIV/AIDS, "because there are too many places in the world where people don't get prevention and treatment services they need." Spread mainly through sex and blood contact, the immune-system attacking HIV virus has infected nearly 80 million people since the early 1980s.

More than 35 million have died. "When I was born 20 years ago with HIV, the landscape of the epidemic looked very different to what it does now," said Mercy Ngulube, a youth activist attending the conference. "It is so wonderful to be able to live a life where I don't have to wake up and wonder if we have the tools to fight HIV. But it is also sad to live a life where I know that we have the tools and I know that people cannot access them." According to UNAIDS, some 1.8 million people were newly infected with AIDS last year.

No to war on drugs

This is partly due to the criminalization of injecting drugs, particularly heroin, in many countries. Fear forces users onto the fringes of society and puts them at risk of infection by sharing soiled needles, then passing the virus on to their sexual partners. "Close to half—more than 45 percent of all new HIV infections in the world are in... the most affected and hard to reach groups, and that of course includes people who use drugs," said Chris Beyrer, director of the Center for Public Health and Human Rights at Johns Hopkins University.



AMSTERDAM: British Prince Harry, second left, and sir Elton John, third left, pose for a picture during a session about the Elton John AIDS Fund on the second day of the AIDS 2018 conference, in Amsterdam. —AFP

The meeting saw an address by UNAIDS head Michel Sidibe interrupted by women protesting what they called the "patriarchy machine." Sidibe faces calls for his resignation over complaints that he shielded a deputy from sexual harassment claims and attacked whistleblowers. "Michel, we call on you to step away from the scripted and rehearsed propaganda machine and for once look us in the face... and speak the truth," one woman shouted.

Sidibe assured the group saying "I heard you," but added there must be no division in the fight against AIDS. "We have come so far, but we have miles to go," he said. The conference paid tribute to six IAS colleagues who died when Malaysian Airlines MH17, on its way to the 2014 AIDS conference in Melbourne, was shot down. "The world continues to seek justice for what happened on that dreadful day," conference chairman Peter Reiss said.—AFP

Singapore disconnects healthcare computers from the Internet

SINGAPORE: Singapore has disconnected computers from the Internet at public healthcare centers to prevent cyberattacks of the kind that caused its worst breach of personal data, a government official said yesterday. Singapore started to cut web access for civil servants in 2016 to guard against cyberattacks, but stopped short of including public healthcare institutions. Officials may still surf the web using separate personal or agency-issued devices.

In the most recent attack in June, hackers stole particulars of more than 1.5 million patients, including the prime minister's drug prescriptions, in what the government has called "a deliberate, targeted and well-planned cyberattack." The government on Monday wrapped up the task of disconnecting staff computers at public healthcare facilities from the Internet, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean said.

"We could, and should, have implemented Internet surfing separation on public healthcare systems, just as we have done on our public sector systems," Teo said in a speech at an engineering conference. "This would have disrupted the cyber kill-chain for the hacker and reduced the surface area exposed to attack. This has now been done." He did not say why the measure had not been adopted earlier.

The disconnection will cause "some inconvenience for patients and healthcare staff, as a result of the unavailability of some IT system connections that require the Internet," the health ministry said in a statement on Monday. Government officials did not say who might have been behind the attack, and cybersecurity experts said it was too early to identify the infiltrators. —Reuters

With drones and satellites, India gets to know its slums

BANGKOK: Satellites and drones are driving efforts by Indian states to map informal settlements in order to speed up the process of delivering services and land titles, officials said. The eastern state of Odisha aims to give titles to 200,000 households in urban slums and those on the outskirts of cities by the end of the year. Officials used drones to map the settlements.

"What may have takes us years to do, we have done in a few months," G. Mathi Vathanan, the state housing department commissioner, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation yesterday. Land records across the country date back to the British colonial era, and most holdings have uncertain ownership, leading to fraud and lengthy disputes that often end in court.

Officials in Mumbai, where about 60 percent of the population lives in informal settlements, are also mapping slums with drones. Maharashtra state, where the city is located, is launching a similar exercise for rural land holdings. In the southern city of Bangalore, a seven-year study that recently concluded used satellite imaging and machine learning. The study recorded about 2,000 informal settlements, compared with fewer than 600 in government records. —Reuters

Remote Greek isle lights up green energy

TILOS, Greece: When the power fails on the tiny Greek island of Tilos - a regular problem, particularly in the summer when tourists flood in - hotel owner Andreas Lardopoulos struggles with failed appliances, rotting food and inconvenienced guests. But an effort is underway to turn the remote Dodecanese island, 78 km (48 miles) from Rhodes, from an importer of dirty diesel power into a largely self-sufficient energy hub capable of exporting clean electricity to neighboring small islands.

Using a grant of 11 million euros from the European Commission, as part of the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation push, the plan is to transform Tilos into one of the Mediterranean's first green energy islands. The effort will use solar and wind power to generate enough electricity for the 550 residents who live on Tilos year-round and thousands of tourists who visit every summer to enjoy the island's tranquil beaches and laid-back vibe.

In the coming weeks, a hybrid power plant consisting of a single wind turbine, a photovoltaic solar panel station and battery storage system is expected to start meeting the daily electricity needs of between 250 and 300 households. The system will generate and store enough power to supply about three-quarters of the island's annual demand, backers say, with any excess power passed to other islands in the area. Lardopoulos hopes the new electricity system will put an end to the frequent power cuts - some lasting more than 12 hours - that make his life as a small hotel owner challenging. "Hopefully the renewable energy will help us solve these problems and save some money," he said.

Dirty, unreliable power

Tilos currently receives all its electricity from a diesel power plant on the island of Kos, 69 km away. It is the last of three islands connected to the plant via an underwater cable, which is vulnerable to outages. That existing system is costly and polluting, as well as unreliable when power demand on Kos rises, according to the team operating the Tilos project.

"If you have a large demand that you have to cover in Kos, then this provides a low quality of electricity arriving on Tilos," said Zisimos Mantas, chief business development officer of

Eunice Energy Group, the Greek company managing the project. Diesel electricity production on Greece's smallest, most remote islands costs 20 times more than on the mainland and is heavily subsidized by the state, according to Dimitris Zafirakis, coordinator of the Tilos project and a lecturer in energy at Piraeus University of Applied Sciences.

Seasonal fluctuations in electricity demand on Tilos also ramp up production costs significantly, he said. In the peak summer season, the population doubles as people come across from Rhodes and Kos to work in Tilos' hotels, restaurants and shops. Last year, 23,000 tourists visited Tilos, drawn to the island's picturesque villages and abundant wildlife. As energy demand rises from June through September, the overloaded grid frequently collapses, Zafirakis said. The new battery system will lower energy production costs and provide reliable electricity year-round, with excess energy stored to provide power in peak demand periods, operators said. Storage is key for an island like Tilos where electricity demand changes throughout the year, and solar and wind sources are intermittent, explained Salvador Suarez, a partner on the project and head of renewable energy at the Technological Institute of the Canary Islands (ITC). The long-term plan is for Tilos to export surplus energy to Kos in winter. "Instead of importing oil-based electricity from Kos, we want to export renewable energy to Kos," Zafirakis said.

Green legacy

Renewable energy has been on the local government's radar for some years. The idea of transforming Tilos into a clean-energy island was first proposed in 2009 by the late mayor, Tassos Aliferis, an environmentalist who banned hunting and promoted eco-tourism. The current mayor, Maria Kamma, continues to champion his green legacy, hoping it will improve residents' quality of life and give Tilos a more secure future. She recalls growing up on an island that was "slowly dying".

In the 1990s, the population fell to 200 and the school was on the verge of closing, she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Investment in infrastructure and transportation drew young people back to Tilos starting in 2000. Kamma hopes the new energy system will lure even more people to Tilos in search of a better life.

Green energy will help the island become a "circular economy" - one that produces little waste or pollution - and protect Tilos' rich biodiversity, with more than 150 species of birds and almost 350 plant varieties, she said. Transforming Tilos into a self-sufficient energy hub will ensure residents "have a very good



TILOS, Greece: A wind turbine, battery storage and central control rooms at the renewable energy "Tilos Project", are seen on the north coast of the Greek island of Tilos.



TILOS, Greece: Solar panels are installed on a hill in front of the town of Megalo Chorio on the north coast of the Greek island of Tilos. —Reuters photos

standard of living", and can live and work permanently on the island, Kamma said.

Island blueprint?

The Tilos project provides a blueprint for other remote islands that depend on the mainland for electricity and are looking to become self-sufficient, its operators say. The model is particularly relevant as systems that store wind and solar energy in batteries "become more and more competitive", Suarez predicted. Installing renewable energy on isolated islands

is a growing trend, from the Hebrides to the Canary Islands, he added.

El Hierro, the smallest of the Canary Islands, has built a wind-pumped hydropower station, which generated and stored enough energy to supply 60 percent of the island's electricity between January and April, according to Suarez. Switching remote islands to green, sustainable electricity is "a groundbreaking scenario", said Mantas of Eunice Energy. "We hope that the Tilos project will be replicated in many more islands," he said.—Reuters

Alphabet sees record highs despite EU fine

WASHINGTON: Google parent Alphabet shares lifted Monday on a stronger-than-expected earnings report for the past quarter, as the tech giant's results eased concerns over huge fines imposed by the European Union for antitrust actions. Profit dipped 9.3 percent to \$3.2 billion in the second quarter after accounting for the EU fines, the company said.

Revenues meanwhile jumped 26 per-

cent from a year ago to \$32.7 billion, better than most analysts expected. Shares in Alphabet jumped 3.6 percent to \$1,254.12 in after-hours trade, which could mark a new record for the internet giant if confirmed when markets open Tuesday. "We delivered another quarter of very strong performance," chief financial officer Ruth Porat said. "Our investments are driving great experiences for users, strong results for advertisers and new business opportunities for Google and Alphabet."

Last week, EU officials slapped a 4.34-billion-euro penalty on the US tech giant for illegally abusing the dominance of its operating system for mobile devices. Without the fine—which is being appealed by the company—profit would have been

\$8.3 billion. Brussels accused Google of using the Android system's near-stranglehold on smartphones and tablets to promote the use of its own Google search engine and shut out rivals.

Daniel Ives of GBH Insights said in a research note that despite some regulatory concerns, "advertising and 'bread and butter' search revenues were healthy and a good barometer of potential strength heading into the rest of 2018/2019." The future of the Android mobile operating system—which powers more than 85 percent of smartphones—has been clouded by the EU action, which could force Google to change its business arrangements with device makers.

Google chief executive Sundar Pichai

said that it was too soon to speculate on how Android may be affected by the ruling but said the company would take a "constructive approach." "We look forward to finding a solution that preserves the enormous benefits of Android to users," Pichai told analysts after the earnings release.

Following a reorganization of the company, the Google unit that includes the main search engine and YouTube video service still delivered the lion's share of revenues at \$32.5 billion, with "other bets" driving \$145 million in revenue. Within Google, advertising remained the key revenue source, pulling in \$28 billion in the three months ending in June, a 24 percent rise from a year ago. —AFP

CLINIC PAGE



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What's On



National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Secretary General Eng Ali Al-Youha yesterday received Indian Ambassador K Jeeva Sagar in his office. They discussed means to further strengthen cooperation between Kuwait and India in the fields of culture and arts.

ASSP conducts HABC Training Program



American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) Kuwait conducted "Highfield Awarding Body of Compliance (HABC) Risk Assessment level II" - Training Program on July 20, 2018 at Hotel Best Western Mahboula, Kuwait. Jahid Thakor, Secretary of ASSP Kuwait chapter welcomed the participants. He briefed about the significance of the training program and the importance of conducting the training program to help the people get certification in the field of Health, Safety & Environment.

Mohammad K S Mohiuddeen, Advisory Committee member of ASSP Kuwait chapter congratulated the participants for their interest shown to learn and updating their knowledge

and committed to serve the community by providing such training courses for enhancement of professional's skills. Jahid introduced the trainer Amir Rasheed, current president of ASSP Kuwait Chapter.

Amir Rasheed is a Chartered Safety & Health Practitioner (CMIOSH), Lead Auditor & Tutor of ISO 9001, 14001 and ISO 45001, Full Member of IIRSM UK, Lead Tutor of NEBOSH IGC, IOSH, HABC Tutor as well as obtained many International HSE certifications. Amir is a Mechanical Engineer and poses 15 years of valuable experience in Oil & Gas, Petrochemical and Construction industries. Group assignments were done on risk assessment between sessions. Thirty-six ASSP mem-

bers utilized this opportunity.

ASSP - Kuwait Chapter headed by Chairman Eng. Fadhel Al Ali, is a non-profit organization which always strives to excel in providing quality trainings and consultation in the field of Health Safety and Environment all across different public and private sectors in Kuwait. American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) members globally showed a great vision in taking the historic step to approve the name change from June 1, 2018 as American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP). ASSP Kuwait Chapter will continue to do its best for the progress of the society and its members, by organizing such important and remarkable events in future too.



Green Hands Environmental Team, Kuwait visits Oman

Green Hands Environmental team of Kuwait visited Oman (Salalah) to take part in various volunteer activities including Blood Donation Drive, Children Festival for Great Future etc.

ICAI organizes overseas Campus placement outreach program

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) along with its Kuwait Chapter organized an overseas campus placement outreach program in Kuwait. This year the Institute wanted to promote the campus placement initiative in the Middle East and this was to highlight prospective employers in Kuwait about the program. The Institute has extended this program not only to the newly qualified but also to experienced CA's. The Central Council committee member Babu Abraham gave a presentation on the various aspects of the CA course and the campus placement process and invited prospective employers to participate.

The program was well attended by senior management and HR personnel from leading Corporates, Banks and Audit/Consulting firms in Kuwait. The ICAI is a statutory body established by the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949 for the regulation of the profession of Chartered Accountants in India. Currently ICAI has over 250,000 members spread throughout India and in different parts of the world. This year ICAI will step into 70 years of its glorious existence. There are over 450 registered members with the Kuwait Chapter.

The Indian Chartered Accountancy course is one of the most rigorous accountancy courses in the world and

equips successful candidates with the skills required to excel in the field of accounts and finance. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India organizes campus place-

ments twice a year in India which provides a platform for corporates to recruit from a rich talent pool of newly qualified chartered accountants.



Local Arab recipe



Shanklish

Shanklish is a type of sheep's milk or cow's milk cheese in Arab cuisine, which is made into very small balls. The balls are then covered in za'atar, a typical Arabic herb, and Aleppo pepper. The balls are then stored and dried for a long period before they can be eaten. It has a strong flavor and odor.

Ingredients

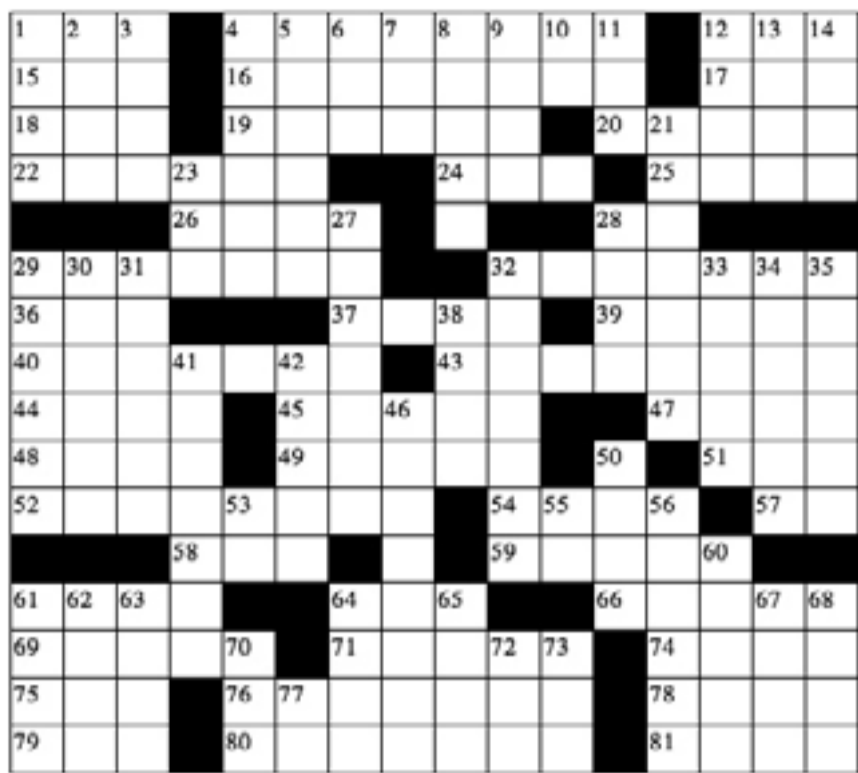
- 1 cup water
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 3 quarts plain yogurt
- 2 tsp crushed hot pepper
- 1 tsp coarse sea salt
- Za'atar seasoning for coating

Method

Combine everything in a saucepan except the za'atar. Stir and boil the mixture until curds separate. Strain it through a colander, lined with cheese cloth. Shape the cheese into small balls, when its cool enough to handle. Dust a plate with za'atar and roll the shanklish in the spice to coat them. Refrigerate before you serve.

Stars

CROSSWORD 1968



ACROSS

1. The rate at which heat is produced by an individual in a resting state.
4. Creation that is created again or anew.
12. A unit of conductance equal to the reciprocal of an ohm.
15. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
16. Outer membrane covering an axon.
17. Consisting of or made of wood of the oak tree.
18. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
19. West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
20. (Norse mythology) God of light and peace and noted for his beauty and sweet nature.
22. Relating to or characteristic of Arabs.
24. The basic unit of electric current adopted under the System International d'Unites.
25. A Hindu prince or king in India.
26. A Chad language spoken south of Lake Chad.
29. Lac purified by heating and filtering.
36. Any of various dark heavy viscous substances obtained as a residue.
37. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
39. A person who gives a name or names.
40. A Bantu language spoken in Angola.
43. An abnormally high degree of irritability or sensitivity or excitability.
44. A symptom of some physical hurt or disorder.
45. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
47. Evergreen trees and shrubs having oily one-seeded fruits.
48. A genus of Strigidae.
49. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
51. Late time of life.
52. In a remote manner.
54. God of love and erotic desire.
57. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
58. Fiddler crabs.
59. Annual to perennial herbs of the Mediterranean region.
61. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
66. (Old Testament) The wife of Abraham and mother of Isaac.
69. A genus of Ploceidae.
71. The large trunk artery that carries blood from the left ventricle of the heart to branch arteries.
74. The head of a branch of an organized crime syndicate.
75. Any high mountain.
76. Rotating a log rapidly in the water (as a competitive sport).
78. United States composer noted for his innovative use of polytonality (1874-1954).
79. A widely distributed system consisting of all the cells able to ingest bacteria or colloidal particles etc, except for certain white blood cells.
80. A salt or ester of maleic acid.
81. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.

DOWN

1. The capital and chief port of Qatar.
2. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
3. Avatar of Vishnu.
4. Of or related to genetically distinguished groups of people.
5. A bet that you can pick the first and second finishers in the right order.
6. The molecular weight of a substance expressed in grams.
7. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
8. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
9. (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
10. A metric unit of length equal to one billionth of a meter.
11. Light informal conversation for social occasions.
12. Among the largest bony fish.
13. A pilgrimage to Mecca.
14. Long green edible beaked pods of the okra plant.
21. A member of a North American Plains people (now living in Oklahoma and Wyoming).
23. Any of various units of capacity.
27. (zoology) Lacking a tail or taillike appendage.
28. Altered from an originally straight condition.
30. The wrist bone in line with the 4th and 5th fingers.
31. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
32. Singing popular songs accompanied by a recording of an orchestra (usually in bars or nightclubs).
33. The boy whose upbringing was described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
34. Sell (something) again after having bought it.
35. A large fleet.
38. Family based on male descent.
41. Not in good condition.
42. Indigo bush.
46. Absence of systole.
50. A doctor's degree in music.
53. A crystalline metallic element not found in nature.
55. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
56. Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus Acacia.
60. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
62. Informal terms for money.
63. A system of one or more computers and associated software with common storage.
64. A British peer ranking below a Marquess and above a Viscount.
65. An elaborate song for solo voice.
67. Someone who copies the words or behavior of another.
68. Socks and stockings and tights collectively (the British include underwear as hosiery).
70. A defensive missile designed to shoot down incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles.
72. Explosive consisting of a yellow crystalline compound that is a flammable toxic derivative of toluene.
73. How long something has existed.
77. A state in midwestern United States.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may be putting a great emphasis on your sex life. A desire for intimacy and a partner are strong on your mind. It is a great time for you to reflect and discover how you truly feel about yourself and what is driving your focus. Today will be a nice day for you. You may be tempted to be too strict on yourself. Loosen up a bit and enjoy what this world has to offer. You may find yourself in the company of someone who eager to follow your lead. Do not hesitate to take control. Your ambition will be your driving force today, Aries. You may find that you are appreciated and admired for your ambition today and others hold you in high regard.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

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



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today may find you in a very serious mood dismissing all that you find trivial in this world. You have a no-nonsense attitude and a strong desire to succeed. You may find yourself in an extremely strict and disciplined mode and very ambitious. You are driven and passionate about your career and this is being noticed in the workplace to the point you may be approached to take on a special project. You are an excellent manager of yourself and your time and this may lead to an opportunity to excel as a manager of others. Gemini, you are on a prosperous and successful path. This is a great time for you to surround yourself with friends and family. This may lead to a more relaxed environment for you.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Today may be a day of deep reflection. You may find answers to problems you are experiencing by simply reflecting on similar situations in your past. You made it through last time and are able to look back and realize the problem looks smaller now that you realize you conquered it once before. You may find today you seem to be drawn to the new, and unusual. You may find others are caught off guard by some of your choices today and do not support your decisions. This is a side of you they are not accustomed to and the more edgy you don't seem to find much support. A dreamy day full of longing for change in store.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your main focus seems to be family. You crave a solid foundation and know that the root of your success and happiness begins and ends with your family. You have needs and you want to be needed by your family and those closest to you. This is a strong desire you have for your life and you are extremely focused on these relationships. You seem to be holding yourself to the highest possible standards and are extremely strict on yourself. You seem to dismiss anything that does not contribute to your goals. You may find that this is not the best of times to try and get your point across to others. You feel as if you encounter a bit of a block when trying to communicate with others today.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Seems as if all is well in your world. You should be experiencing much love and support from those around you. You are able to sense and respond to the needs of others. This is a quality that draws many to you. You are the friend others not only want to have but also wish they could be. You are extremely sympathetic and understanding to others and this is a trait that finds you surrounded with many friends. This may be a very spiritual time in your life and you could find yourself going above and beyond for someone very close to you. Count your blessings and continue to bring blessing to the lives of those around you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are so independent you tend to forget this sometimes everyone needs a friend to lean all or shoulder to cry on. You seem to try to take on the world all alone. This is a time you may find yourself needing support and the security of knowing someone is there for you. This causes your relationships to take on a deeper meaning for you. Today finds you serious with an awareness of time. You are very ambitious and have zero tolerance for anything that does not contribute to your success. You find yourself with a no-nonsense attitude and very dedicated and devoted to the task at hand. You have great appreciation for those who are supporting you at this time.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You find yourself in admiration of the mystical world around you. You are more determined than ever to put your talents to use whether artistic or psychic. You may find you are faced with opportunity to use these talents and bring the mysterious, the glamorous, and the intriguing into your life. You may be curious of how your mind could be so active and overwhelmed by the ideas that are flowing through in over drive. You feel the need to express these ideas as fast as they come to you and could catch yourself talking the ears off of anyone that would listen.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sympathy and understanding take on a greater meaning in your world today. These emotional qualities are driving forces for you. You want to share your wisdom with others. Getting to know those close to you on a deeper more intimate level is a strong desire for you. You want to look beyond someone's faults and mistakes and understand the driving force behind them. You may find yourself developing stronger and more meaningful relationships with those close to you. You are actual looking beyond the surface and focusing on who you really are and wanting to know the same about those close to you. Sagittarius, the new compassionate you will thrive in any situation put before you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today may find you focused on your feelings. This is a time of soul-searching for you. You may feel the need to discover who you are and where you are headed. You may find you are equally concerned with who will be by your side on this journey. This is a time you decide to take a step back and focus your energy on your lover or close friend. You will find much pleasure building and nurturing this relationship. You may find that you are in much more reflective mood rather than expressive and are truly enjoying your time at home with those closest to you. Capricorn, be thankful for those who love and support you.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Your marriage or partnership or lack thereof, seem to be a major focus for you. You feel the need to be needed and need to be loved. You want someone by your side and someone to share your life with. You crave a beautiful relationship and the word soulmate takes on great meaning for you. You desire someone you can share your deepest thoughts and dreams with and someone to always be there to love and support you. You find all these feelings beautiful and desire this type of harmony in your life. Aquarius. Love is what seems to make your world go around at this time. Surround yourself with as much as possible.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may find you are the one that everyone turns to when things go wrong. This can be a frustrating but also rewarding position to be in. Always focus on the positive. Be thankful you seem to be admired in a way that others depend on you. You can not take on all of the problems of the world. Be cautious not to let others emotionally drain you. You can listen, offer advice, and walk away. The weight of the world does not belong on your shoulders alone. You are very compassionate and understanding but remember some of the best advice you can give and lessons you can teach is helping others learn to help themselves.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Types of Music 1

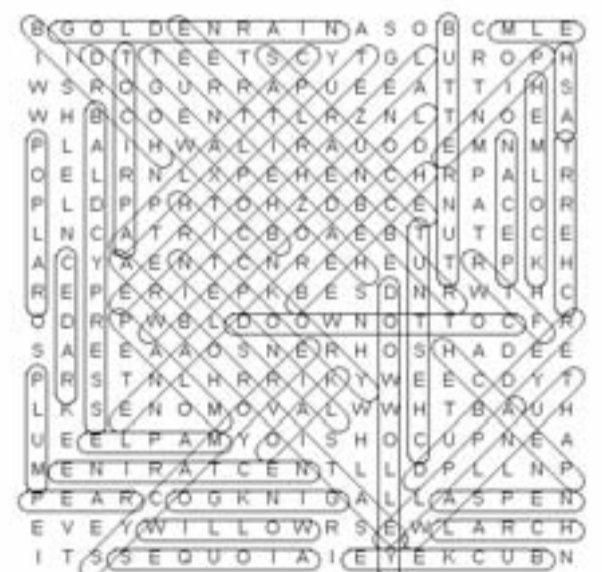
Find and circle all of the different types of music that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 14 letters spell an additional type of music.



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| ACAPPELLA | CHRISTMAS | HIP HOP | PSYCHEDELIC |
| ACID ROCK | CLASSIC ROCK | INDIAN | PUNK |
| ACOUSTIC | DANCE | INDIE | ROCKABILLY |
| AMBIENT | DISCO | JAZZ | SAMBA |
| AVANT-GARDE | ELECTRONICA | LATIN MUSIC | SOUL |
| BIG BAND | FLAMENCO | LOUNGE | TANGO |
| BLUEGRASS | FOLK | MERENGUE | WALTZ |
| BROADWAY | GANGSTA RAP | MEXICAN | WORLD |
| CABARET | GOthic | NEW WAVE | |
| CHORAL | HEAVY METAL | POLKA | |

Yesterday's Solution

Trees



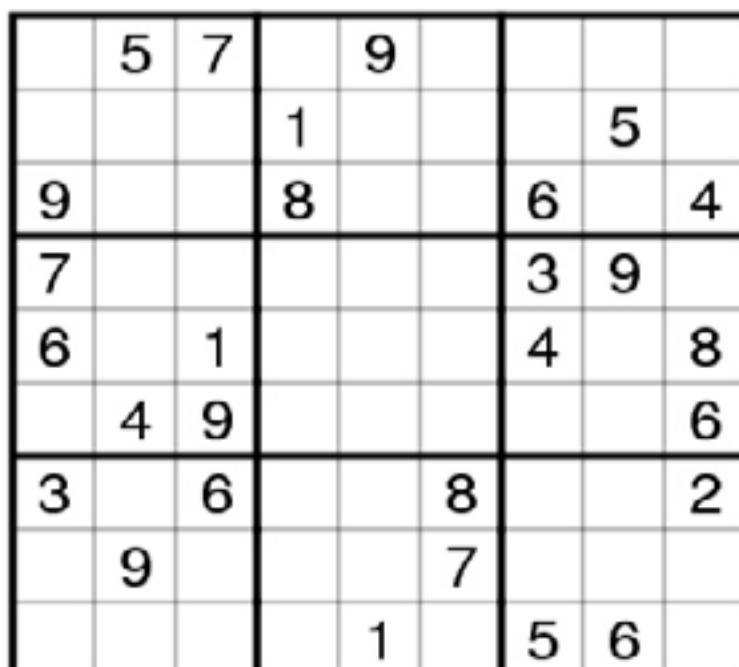
- | | | | |
|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| APPLE | CEDAR | LINDEN | POPULAR |
| APRICOT | CHERRY | LONDON PLANE | REDWOOD |
| ASH | CHESTNUT | MAPLE | RUBBER TREE |
| ASPEN | COTTONWOOD | NECTARINE | SEQUOIA |
| ARBORVITAE | ELM | OAK | SPRUCE |
| BALD CYPRESS | FIR | PALM | SPICAGORE |
| BEECH | GINKGO | PEACH | TULIP TREE |
| BIRCH | GOLDENRAIN | PEAR | WALNUT |
| BOXWOOD | HAZELNUT | PECAN | WITCHHAZEL |
| BUCKEYE | HEMLOCK | PLUM | WILLOW |
| BUTTERNUT | HICKORY | PINE | YELLOWWOOD |
| CATALPA | LARCH | | |

The hidden sentence is: I A SOCIETY GROWS GREAT WHEN OLD MEN PLANT TREES WHOSE SHADE THEY KNOW THEY SHALL NEVER SIT IN

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 2018



A visitor to Sugar Republic takes a selfie as she reclines in a display of balls resembling lollies in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Indonesia's tattoo removers zap the sin from your skin



Tattoo remover Sandi Widodo preparing a Muslim man for the process of removing his tattoos. — AFP photos



Indonesian tattoo remover Sandi Widodo does a brisk business zapping sin from skin at bargain-basement prices. But there's a catch for pious Muslims keen to shed body art at his Jakarta shop: they've got to recite 50 Quranic verses from memory and repent for their tattooed past. That's a small price to pay for Riki Irawan, who hopes that getting rid of three tribal-style tattoos will bring him closer to God. But he has another reason for ditching the ink—his fiancée's devout parents won't let him marry their daughter unless he is tattoo-free. "The joy of having a tattoo is temporary," the 31-year-old said. "It only lasts for a few weeks and after that your life is ruined."

Irawan is not alone his regret judging by the volume of business at Widodo's clinic, which has a waiting list of over 1,000 people. The stigma over tattoos has long faded in the West, with everyone from college kids to celebrities and athletes happy to display their body art in

public. But in some Asian countries, tattoos are often associated with crime and loose morals.

Tattoos are also frowned upon in Islam, making it especially tough for wearers in the world's largest Muslim majority country. "It was uncomfortable to go into a mosque," said Widodo, who still has a fading tattoo on the side of his face. "I tried to act normal but people were looking at me."

'Remove tattoo & repent'

Widodo's current profession is a long way from his former life as a successful tattoo artist in the Hindu-dominated resort island Bali, where local men frequently sport body art and there are few hang ups about the practice. His tattoo-seeking clients asked for everything from relatives' names to elaborate, centuries-old designs still worn by the Southeast Asian archipelago's indigenous people. A traditional practice known as hand-tapping—artists gently

tap a stick mounted with a needle on a subject's skin—has even enjoyed a revival in recent years. But for Widodo, finding religion marked a turning point and he turned his back on the business. "Tattoos are associated with negative stuff like drugs and partying," he said. "So I decided to quit and sold my equipment."

Indonesia's Muslim clerics say the choice is clear. "Tattoos are not allowed in Islam because you're not only hurting yourself, but it is altering God's creation," said Huzaemah Tahido, an official at top religious body the Indonesian Ulema Council. "If possible, remove your tattoo and repent. If you can't remove your tattoo because it's too painful, then leave it but you must still repent."

Renny Rengganis, a practicing Muslim, has no plans to repent or ditch her tattoos. In fact, she wants to enlarge a design depicting a mother and son that covers three-quarters of her back, despite the objections of her devoutly

religious relatives. "I didn't get tattoos to rebel against anything or to express my right to do what I want with my own body," said the 35-year-old public relations professional. "I simply like tattoos that have meaning and wanted (them) inscribed on my body forever."

'Drop your sins'

For those who do regret their body art, plenty of Indonesian clinics offer tattoo removal services. But most charge several thousand dollars for the repeated treatments necessary to clear color pigmentation—putting them out of reach for many ordinary Indonesians. In response, cheaper tattoo removal shops have opened in recent years including a service in Indonesia's second-biggest city Surabaya that also requires clients to recite Quranic verses.

Islamic lender Bank Muamalat has sponsored a mobile tattoo removal van on the country's main island Java. Years ago, cheaper options

weren't available for regretful tattoo enthusiasts like Widodo. So he set out to start a tattoo removal shop with a crowd-funding campaign that raised about \$6,500 — enough for a pair of laser removal machines.

His shop—which has a sign that reads "Drop your sins, clasp the hand of a Muslim brother"—opened its doors last summer. Widodo has since removed tattoos from a few hundred customers and many more are eager to tap his 150,000 rupiah (\$11) service.

One of them, Maulidul Irfan, was so desperate to remove his tattoos—which he chalks up to teenage rebellion—that he tried everything from cashew sap and breast milk to harsh chemicals that scarred his skin, all without success. "I'm studying to be an Islamic study teacher so it would be embarrassing to have tattoos," the 23-year-old said at the clinic. "People don't always judge us on who we are now, but rather what we did in the past." — AFP



Lifestyle | Music & Movies

Gloria Estefan awarded Spain's gold medal for the arts

Gloria Estefan, the Cuban-American pop star who achieved worldwide fame in the 1980s, was honoured by the Spanish government on Monday for her contribution to the arts. Accompanied by her music-producer husband Emilio, the singer was presented with the Gold Medal of Merit for the Arts by Culture Minister Jose Guirao in Madrid's Teatro Real opera house. The ceremony was organized especially for Estefan, who could not attend an event earlier this year where King Felipe presented medals to several other recipients.

Speaking to reporters afterwards, the multi-Grammy Award winner, who has had hits in Spanish and English, spoke out on some of the issues facing Latino people in the United States, including the policy of separating the children of migrants from their parents.

"We are frightened about the treatment those children received," Estefan told a news conference. "It's a very difficult moment and I think the whole of the United States is a bit anxious. It's a difficult time worldwide." Estefan said she had finished recording an album to be

released in January: "We have re-invented some of my tracks so you can consider it a 'Greatest hits' so to speak, but no, because it also has four new tracks." — Reuters

Cuban-US singer Gloria Estefan (center) poses with Spanish Culture and Sports Minister Jose Guirao (left) and her husband Emilio Estefan after receiving Spain's Gold Medal of Merit in the Fine Arts during a ceremony at the Teatro Real in Madrid. — AFP



U2 top-paid musicians in US last year

U2 may not be the freshest faces in music but the Irish rockers were the industry's top earners in the United States last year, Billboard said in an annual survey Monday. U2 earned \$54.4 million last year—more than 95 percent of it from touring as Bono and company packed stadiums for concerts to mark 30 years since their seminal album "The Joshua Tree." Veteran country star Garth Brooks was a close second at \$52.2 million as he kept up the massive tour launched in 2014 when he came out of retirement, while metal legends Metallica ranked third at \$43.2 million.

Lady Gaga was the top-ranking woman at number six, while Pulitzer Prize winner Kendrick Lamar was the highest

grossing rapper at number 13. Billboard confirmed that touring has overwhelmingly become the top means of revenue for musicians in an era of stagnating traditional album sales but a rapid rise in streaming. Among the 50 highest-grossing artists, touring accounted for nearly 80 percent of revenue. Only two artists who didn't tour last year made the Top 50 — 37th-ranked Drake, the king of streaming who earned \$8.6 million from Apple Music, Spotify and other online platforms, and 48th-ranked Taylor Swift, who made most of her money on old-fashioned CD sales and downloads. — AFP

More than 240,000 people seek James Gunn re-hire

More than 240,000 people have signed a petition for Disney to rehire "Guardians of the Galaxy" franchise director James Gunn, who also garnered celebrity support just days after he was axed over a series of offensive tweets. "I'm smart enough to know this most likely won't change anything but hopefully, this could get Disney to realize the mistake they made and not do it again in the future," said a person named Chandler Edwards, who launched the petition on Change.org. "I agree on the point that if people say a bunch of stupid shit while working for a studio, the studio has full right to fire him over the possible controversy."

"This situation is very different, though, as he made these jokes years before he was working for Disney and also the fact that they were jokes," Edwards argued that if Gunn was being punished by being removed from the third installment in the



In this file photo US director James Gunn poses for a photograph upon arrival at the European Gala screening of "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 2" in London. — AFP

popular series, "you have to do it for all the other directors who have said some crappy joke sometime in their life, which is all of them." The tweets, mainly from 2008 and 2011, joked about taboo topics such as rape and pedophilia. Gunn, 51, has been an outspoken critic of President Donald Trump and has drawn the ire of conservative critics, who went back through his timeline and dug up the tweets.

"Guardians" star Dave Bautista defended Gunn on Twitter. "What will you do when the #cybernazis attack you? Who will stand by you? Who will cowardly distance themselves from you? Who will punish you for horrible JOKES in the past instead of defending you for INSPIRING millions? MILLIONS!!!" he wrote. — AFP

FIVE OF THE BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS FROM COMIC-CON 2018

San Diego Comic-Con 2018 ended Sunday as workers stripped the branding off the buildings, windows, buses, elevators, escalators and every other square inch of open space in the city's Gaslamp District. Weary attendees squeezed in one last thing before heading home with bags of merchandise, sore feet, some sunburns and fewer dollars in their bank accounts.

The four-day comic book convention attracts some 130,000 souls every year who come for the swag, the parties, the exclusives, the stars and the wild experience of being with like-minded, and often costumed, pop culture fanatics. It has the potential to be the epicenter of geek culture — and for brands and studios, a valuable litmus test for what might pop and what might fizzle in the years to come. Here are a few of the biggest takeaways from this year.

The #METOO factor

After other big gatherings like the Sundance Film Festival and the Cannes Film Festival made overtures to explicitly address harassment issues and detail procedures for how to report, Comic-Con, which has been criticized over the issue in the past, chose to defer to its standing Code of Conduct and partnerships with local law enforcement and private security companies. Programming director Eddie Ibrahim didn't use his platform introducing nearly every Hall H panel to mention the topic at all.

For many female attendees, harassment at conventions is nothing new, but some noted an improved atmosphere. "I have seen a difference," said Paige Campbell, a 22-year-old from Chicago. "I have been cosplaying for seven years. It's been getting better, but we still have a long way to go." Also, after Chris Hardwick stepped down from moderating panels following misconduct allegations (which he has denied), he was replaced in many instances with women, like Yvette Nicole Brown and IGN's Terri Schwartz.

Gunn firing upstages comic-con

There was some news out of Comic-Con — television's first transgender superhero will appear on the CW's "Supergirl" in Nia Nal (played by Nicole Maines), the beloved animated Star Wars series "Clone Wars" is coming back for another season. Andrew Lincoln confirmed his departure from "The Walking Dead" and a Walter White cameo was teased for "Better Call Saul" — but certainly not as much as years past.

It didn't help that this year nearly everything was upstaged by James Gunn, who was fired from writing and directing the third "Guardians of the Galaxy" by the Walt Disney Co after controversial tweets from a decade ago were resurfaced. It dominated off-stage conversation from attendees and creators. "It's a tough one, you know," said "Aquaman" direc-

tor James Wan. "You've got to be mindful. It's just that fine line of freedom of speech on one hand. And on the other hand, you've got to be mindful of things that get out there. I don't know. Where do we sit today, in the culture and the space — are we going too far one way or are we going too far the other way?"

Warner Bros steals the show

Warner Bros. has had some ups and downs with its DC Universe films, but with a clear runway to be the biggest show of the convention with the absence of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Star Wars or "Game of Thrones," the

every day with a DJ blaring tunes as guests waited in line to see folks like Joe Manganiello and "Riverdale's" Lili Reinhart and Cole Sprouse, National Geographic brought out astronauts on stilts and Neil deGrasse Tyson, while Doug Liman held court at a Variety and YouTube event.

The EW soiree on the Hard Rock rooftop was once again packed to the gills with celebrities of every kind, from "Aquaman's" Jason Momoa to "Sharknado's" Tara Reid. The stars of "The Good Place" could be seen dancing to Nicki Minaj, as Ezra Miller tested out the big branded float in the middle of the pool and



(From left) JD Pardo, Clayton Cardenas, Edward James Olmos, Sarah Bolger and Danny Pino speak during the "Mayans MC" discussion and Q&A during Comic-Con International 2018 at San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, California. — AFP

studio came to Comic-Con ready to fight with "Aquaman," "Shazam!" and some early footage from "Wonder Woman 1984," which is only three and a half weeks into its shoot.

It was easily the best-received presentation of the convention and generated interest for its superhero slate with a notably light-hearted tone, in stark contrast to the DC darkness that has basically become a cliché (and fodder for a "Deadpool 2" meta joke). The studio also for the second year broke out its horror films from New Line into a second event, Scare Diego, held at a more appropriate post-dinner hour to preview films like "It: Chapter Two," which also just started filming, and "The Nun."

A bigger party scene

For years Entertainment Weekly's starry Saturday night party was the only bash in town, but everyone has been getting into the branded party game this year from Variety to Nerdist luring attendees with promises of star sightings, free drinks, fun sights and photo booths. The WIRED Cafe was a bumping scene

the new star of "Doctor Who," Jodie Whittaker, bounced around the party with a big smile on her face.

Lines, lines everywhere, especially in town

Comic-Con is infamous for its epic lines to get into Hall H, the 6,500-seat room that hosts the highest profile stars and studios, but for many it was not a problem to breeze into the fabled room. Sure, some still slept overnight in line to ensure the best possible seat, but many reported that it was no problem to get in. Instead, the biggest lines were often to get into the Rotten Tomatoes "Your Opinion Sucks!" live-shows and for the various branded installations and experiences like the "Jack Ryan" Escape Room (3-hour wait), the Laika exhibit with a Neil Gaiman-signing (5-hour wait), or a "Ready Player One" installation (which also had its own escape room and hosted nearly 2,000 people a day). — AP

How Cruise brings 'the Tom factor' to 'Mission: Impossible' stunts



Director Christopher McQuarrie and Angela Bassett attend the US Premiere of "Mission: Impossible - Fallout" at Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.



Actor and producer Tom Cruise arrives for a screening of "Mission Impossible - Fallout" at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.

The "Mission: Impossible" movie franchise has become synonymous with daring stunts where lead actor Tom Cruise climbs the highest building in the world or hangs off the side of a speeding plane. "Mission: Impossible - Fallout," which starts its global rollout today, sees Cruise become the first actor on camera to perform a HALO (high altitude, low opening) skydive from 25,000 feet. Reuters spoke with the film's stunt coordinator, Wade Eastwood, who has also worked on the James Bond and Jack Reacher movies, about how stunts are devised and what drives Cruise, 56, to perform them himself.

Who comes up with the ideas for "Mission: Impossible" stunts?

We get an outline (for the movie), then I will try and come up with the style, and it's really Chris (McQuarrie, director), Tom and I who will sit down and hash out a bunch of ideas. The big difference between "Mission: Impossible" and other movies is that all the action is very character-based. Tom is playing a character who isn't superhuman.

What kind of training do you put Cruise through?

I lay out a training schedule — this is how much driving we have to do, this many sessions on a bike, and he will adhere to it 100 percent. And then I will push his training harder and harder. The harder you push, the more the training is grueling — he will suffer but he will never quit. We employ some of the world's best to take Tom to the next level. You are trying to teach someone to get as close to that world class level as you can, not in 20 years but in

two months.

How much training was there for the HALO stunt?

We built the largest outdoor wind tunnel in the world. In lunch breaks, if Tom had an hour between scenes, we'd just run down to the wind tunnel. I did 500 hours in the wind tunnel working out the moves. We came up with a helmet that didn't have an ugly oxygen attachment to the nose and mouth and that would work for real. We did 150 jumps in Abu Dhabi and 102 different takes to make it perfect.

What other stunts will audiences see?

There's a helicopter stunt in New Zealand. It's the biggest helicopter sequence ever shot — 30 helicopters in the air. There's a mountaineering sequence in Norway. That was pretty hairy, hanging off the side of the rock and dropping, freezing snow everywhere. There's a big car and motorcycle chase in Paris and with a truck and a boat.

Has Cruise ever turned down a stunt because it's too dangerous?

"No. He would have been one of the best stunt men in the world if he wasn't an actor, for sure. With stunt men and women it doesn't matter how your face looks. But with Tom, he is also playing a character, so he has to jump out and act the character while trying to be a professional. That's the challenge that to me stands him above the rest.

How many actors insist on doing so many of their own stunts?

It's quite rare. There are a few actors who are quite ath-

letic, who do a lot of their own stuff. Hugh Jackman is a mega athlete. Tom is a very physical person. He never approaches it from an egotistical point of view. He approaches it very much as "it's cool for the character and the story and I'll have a lot of fun training and getting to do this cool stuff."

What sets the "Mission: Impossible" franchise apart from other stunt-heavy movies?

The Tom factor. Tom is just an energy ball. He lifts you up, he lifts the crew up, he makes everyone want to make a great movie. You just feed off his energy. — Reuters



Tom Cruise greets the fans at the US Premiere of "Mission: Impossible - Fallout" at Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



Artists called "Le couple en chocolat" take part in the festival "Statues en Marche" in Marche-en-Famenne, Belgium. — Reuters photos



An artist called "The Trashformer" takes part in the festival "Statues en Marche" in Marche-en-Famenne, Belgium.



An artist called "Albert Einstein" takes part in the festival "Statues en Marche".



An artist called "La Bohemienne" takes part in the festival "Statues en Marche".



An artist called "Aladin" takes part in the festival "Statues en Marche".



Artists called "Les Emmeles" take part in the festival "Statues en Marche".



An artist called "L'Amazone" takes part in the festival "Statues en Marche".



An artist called 'Isaac Newton' takes part in the festival 'Statues en Marche'.



An artist called 'La Sirene/The mermaid' takes part in the festival 'Statues en Marche'.



An artist called "Kiberg Pilot" takes part in the festival "Statues en Marche".

Stay still! Living statues take over Belgian town

Isaac Newton, Leonardo Da Vinci and Albert Einstein strode into a tiny Belgian town at the weekend to stand alongside more unconventional figures at Europe's biggest "living statue" festival. A man and a woman made entirely of chocolate, a mermaid with a flowing tail and an axe-wielding medieval executioner were also on display at the annual event in Marche-en-Famenne.

Living statues are a common sight in many city centers, but it is rare to see such a diverse range of this peculiar form of street art for which performers must keep still for painfully long periods of time to create the desired illusion. Some of the statues in Marche came to southern Belgium from as far away as Argentina, Russia and Italy and were seen by more than 50,000 visitors. — Reuters



Artists called "Les hommes de papier" take part in the festival "Statues en Marche".

Panerai introduces power reserve system

The very long running time is part of the technical history of Panerai that originally used a caliber from the Swiss Angelus Company, a movement with a power reserve of 8 days, for its military production. The purpose of this was to improve the practicality of use, making it possible to plan missions with great accuracy while no longer requiring the underwater commandos to rewind the watch by hand every day, with a consequent reduction in the wear of the winding parts. The calibre P.2002, the first movement developed by Panerai manufacture in Neuchatel, has brought Panerai up-to-date as well as expressing its past, introducing a power train of highly complex construction.

To achieve an extended power reserve, this innovative power train is based on three barrels in series to provide excellent time-measuring performance throughout the whole period of 8 days. By means of this system, the force of the spring remains almost constant for the whole duration of the winding, to optimize the movement's accuracy and to reduce the wear of the components to a minimum. Panerai has patented the system of the three barrels associated with the power reserve indication.

Radiomir 1940 3 days GMT automatic acciaio - 45mm

The P.4001 is developed from the automatic P.4000 movement: the off centered micro-rotor which rotates in both directions, the power reserve of three days stored in two spring barrels linked in series, the mechanism for stopping the balance, enabling the time to be set with absolute precision and the full balance bridge with twin supports for greater stability.

The new calibres also have some extremely useful additional functions: the date, the GMT function with a central hand which indicates the time in a second time zone, am/pm indication (relative to home time) in the small seconds dial and, finally, indication of the remaining power reserve.

The P.4001 has the circular indicator on a bridge of the movement. Finally, two very useful devices make setting the watch extremely simple and precise: the first is the mechanism which stops the balance and zeroes the seconds hand as soon as the winding crown is pulled out; the second enables the local time hand to be adjusted forward and backward in jumps of one hour at a time, without stopping the minute hand or interfering with the running of the watch, but automatically adjusting the date.



Radiomir 1940 3 days GMT power reserve automatic acciaio - 45mm

The P.4002 calibre shares the same characteristics of the P.4001 calibre: the off-centred micro-rotor which rotates in both directions, the power reserve of three days stored in two spring barrels linked in series, the mechanism for stopping the balance, enabling the time to be set with absolute precision and the full balance bridge with twin supports for greater stability.

The new calibres also have some extremely useful additional functions: the date, the GMT function with a central hand which indicates the time in a second time zone, am/pm indication (relative to home time) in the small seconds dial and, finally, indication of the remaining power reserve.

The P.4002 has the indicator positioned directly on the dial at 5 o'clock. Finally, two very useful devices make setting the watch extremely simple and precise: the first is the mechanism which stops the balance and zeroes the seconds hand as soon as the winding crown is pulled out; the second enables the local time hand to be adjusted forward and backward in jumps of one hour at a time, without stopping the minute hand or interfering with the running of the watch, but automatically adjusting the date.

Lifestyle | Features



People perform on the stage a scene from the play "To kill the elephant", during the premiere of the festival called "Class Act: East-West" in Kiev. — AFP photos



People perform on the stage a scene from the play "Romeo from Avdiivka", during the premiere of the festival called "Class Act: East-West".



Actors and directors hold placards reading a hashtag "FreeSentsov" with an appeal to free Ukrainian film director Oleg Sentsov, at the end of the premiere of the festival called "Class Act: East-West".

UKRAINE TEENS PEN PLAYS TO BRIDGE WAR DIVIDE

A boy flees his war-scarred hometown, leaving his mother behind. A gay youth struggles for acceptance from his parents. A gang harasses a young black footballer. These and other dramas took center stage in a show in Kiev this month, which brought together teenagers from the east and west of Ukraine to write plays. "It is moving," said 15-year-old Filip Kazlauskas, who wrote one of the pieces, a rock opera entitled "Romeo from Avdiivka". "I wanted to achieve the effect of making audiences sad and making them burst into tears." The play is named after the teenager's eastern hometown, which lies on the frontline of the conflict dividing the country.

Performed by professional actors, it won a standing ovation from the audience. But the event was really about the young playwrights-in a bid to bridge the cultural divide in the war-scarred country. "This project positively affects the future... it establishes a dialogue between the east and west" of Ukraine, one of the organizers, Natalya Vorozhbyt, told AFP as spectators filed into the auditorium in Kiev city center. "When young playwrights from different parts of the country meet and find common themes, then dialogue emerges, and an understanding that they have much in common."

Backdrop of war

The "Class Act" theatre project was born three decades ago in Scotland and has migrated to various countries. It first came to Ukraine in 2016. Twenty pupils aged 14 to 16 came to Kiev from Avdiivka, a government-controlled eastern town, and from the western town of Chop. The 10 short plays they devised were produced by professional directors and staged back-to-back. "We worked very easily," Valentyn Yelizaryev, a 15-year-old from Chop, told AFP. "I really liked it, I've learned a lot from being here." In post-Soviet Ukraine, cultural differences persist between the Ukrainian-speaking west and the mainly Russian-speaking east.

A Moscow-backed insurgency broke out in two industrial eastern provinces in 2014 and has claimed more than 10,000 lives. That is the backdrop for "Romeo from Avdiivka". The government-controlled town of 20,000 inhabitants lies right on the frontline. It suffers near-daily armed clashes between Kiev forces and pro-Russian rebels. "A son fled the country but his mother opted to stay there as the war rages," says Kazlauskas, the young playwright.

Like his protagonist, he himself got away from the war zone-if only for a week of rehearsals and a one-off performance with the "Class Act" professionals. "The very fact

that these children are going to Kiev, that they are studying under the influence of playwrights... gives us hope that a new intellectual generation can grow up," said one of the actors involved, Oleksiy Vertynskyi. "If it helps even half of them decide on their future, that would be great."

alleged terrorism in Russian-annexed Crimea. But he insists he is a political prisoner.

At the end of the show in Kiev, everyone who had been involved in the performances went onstage and held up signs saying #FreeSentsov. Despite the regional and cultur-

“ This project positively affects the future... it establishes a dialogue between the east and west ”

Jailed filmmaker's blessing

The project won praise from one of the most prominent artistic figures caught up in the conflict, Ukrainian film director Oleg Sentsov. He wished the teenagers good luck in a letter published online by a friend. Sentsov, who is being held in a remote Russian prison, has been on hunger strike for more than two months after being jailed for

al divide, the participants are "so similar in our differences", Pavlo Arie, one of the project's directors, told AFP. "Young people get the belief that they are worth something and that they can do something beautiful." — AFP



Six paintings by Dutch-American abstract master Willem de Kooning, artist of "Excavation" seen on an electronic billboard in New York in 2014, were found in a storage locker in New Jersey. — AFP

Art dealer 'finds' six de Koonings in New Jersey unit

When an American art dealer dropped \$15,000 on what he thought was "junk" in a New Jersey storage locker, he never imagined it could be the deal of a lifetime. But he now believes stashed in the unit were six paintings by Dutch-American abstract master Willem de Kooning, which could be worth millions of dollars. The auction record for a de Kooning is \$66.3 million, set for large canvas "Untitled XXV" at Christie's in 2016, while another sold privately for a reported \$300 million in 2015. Another piece of luck, according to New York gallery owner David Killen, is a painting by Swiss modernist Paul Klee that he says was also found in the unit.

The works originally came from the studio of Orrin Riley, a superstar in the art restoration business who died in 1986, leaving everything to his partner, Susanne Schnitzer, who was killed in a traffic accident in 2009. Her executors-friends in New Jersey spent years trying to find rightful owners for the art, but no one came forward to claim the 200 pieces languishing in the storage unit, near the Ho-Ho-Kus township. "Honestly all I knew was (another) auction house passed on it, so my feeling was it was a bunch of junk," Killen told AFP by telephone. "All these things are boxed up. I said, 'Look, I'll give you \$15,000 for it. I'll take a chance,'" he said. If nothing else, he thought the items would pad out auctions he holds every two weeks. It was only once the items were being unloaded that he spotted what he believes to be de Kooning paintings.

'Blown away'

The work is not signed, but Killen said a restorer based on Long Island, who used to work for both Riley and de Kooning, also believes they are genuine. "I can see in his eyes, he's shaking," Killen told AFP. "He said 'this is exactly what de Kooning was doing in the '70s, one after the other.'" Art conservator Lawrence Castagna says he "absolutely" believes the six oil-on-paper works to be de Koonings, but stressed it was "just my opinion." "I'm just blown away by the whole discovery to tell you the truth," he told AFP. Castagna said he did "minor repair work" but otherwise the works would be sold as they were found, anticipating significant interest when they go on display for the first time publicly in nearly 35 years.

Killen is hosting a party on Tuesday to unveil the paintings, which he believes could fetch anywhere from \$10,000 to \$10 million when he offers them for auction later this year and next January. "I'm excited. Believe it or not-and people will laugh when they hear this-it's not about the money. I want some publicity for my auction house," he said.

But what would he do with a bonanza check? New doors for his gallery and a "really nice apartment," he replies. The New York Post first reported the story on Sunday. Since then, the telephone has been ringing off the hook, he said. "The reaction's been tremendous." — AFP

Book fair turns the page for literature in Somaliland

Aged just 16, Abdishakur Mohamed confidently presented his latest work to the Hargeisa book fair, an event that has transformed Somaliland's literary scene over the past decade. Abdishakur spent four years writing "Ab-ka haleel" ("In the footsteps of our ancestors"), intended as a rebuttal of friends who he says were not "embracing their culture." "Instead they see it as unimportant, and their Somali identity is in danger," he told AFP.

At the first annual event in 2008, organizers only exhibited a handful of books borrowed from friends and attracted just 200 visitors. Ten years on and literature has taken a prominent place in Somaliland's culture. New writers have emerged, volumes are being edited, book clubs formed and public libraries opened.

The book fair, being held from Saturday July 21 to Thursday July 26, has been a key factor in Somaliland's embrace of literature. The fair now has international appeal and attracts exhibitors from across the world while helping to raise awareness of the self-proclaimed country's relative stability in contrast to Somalia. Somaliland broke away from the rest of the troubled Horn of Africa country in 1991 — but has gone without international recognition since.

'Here to encourage the young'

"I come because it's a space that really allows people from all walks of life, from ambassadors, to politicians, to artists, to thinkers; different people to just come here and share ideas about the future of Somaliland-as well as looking back at the past," said filmmaker Khadra Ali. "We are here to encourage the young people and tell them the value of writing, whether it's books, poetry or things related to art," said author and playwright Yasmin Mohamed Kabin, whose work was exhibited at this year's fair.

Somaliland and Somalia have a long oral storytelling tradition that celebrates poets like Mohamed Ibrahim Warsame, known as Hadraawi, who is considered by some to be the Somali Shakespeare. It was only in 1972 that the Somali language was codified by the military government of Siad Barre in an effort to strengthen national identity. But armed resistance to Barre's increasingly authoritarian rule slowed the momentum of the language's formalization. The Somali army subsequently bombed Hargeisa, pushing Somalilanders into exile in Europe and the Gulf as well as to refugee camps in Ethiopia.

One visitor to the fair is activist Edna Adan, the 80-year-old former foreign affairs minister and wife of Somaliland's second president, Mohamed Ibrahim Egal. Adan, who enjoys celebrity status among young people for her activism, recalled her late 1990s visit to the site where the Hargeisa cultural center that hosts the fair now stands. The complex, comprising a library, gallery and theatre, opened its doors in 2014. "I couldn't walk in the streets here because the Somali soldiers had laid mines," she said. Initial efforts to promote books and reading received a "very tepid" response, she said. "But then it

took off extraordinarily." Adan added that every year there were more and more young people inspired to write in Somali, as well as foreign languages including Arabic and English.

'The value of books'

"It introduced young people to the value of books-something they didn't know before," she said. Jama Musse Jama, a researcher at the University of Pisa, returned from Italy in 2008 and founded the fair. He had previously assumed that his countrymen did not read because of their strong oral tradition. "But then I came here and I realized that was not the reason. What was missing was the raw material. There were no books circulating," said Jama.

"We forgot who we are. We forgot art, culture, music. You know, in the 40s, 50s, 60s, Somali music used to be one of the best African music scenes. Today maybe young people have no idea what Somali music is." But Jama insists that "things have completely changed" as awareness of literature and other art forms has grown. Photographer Huda Ali, who in 2017 published an anthology of images depicting Somaliland, agrees. "Ten years ago they were sometimes surprised to see a girl with a camera in the street-it was something very strange to accept. But over time they changed," she said. A delegation from Rwanda were the guests of honor at this year's event. Rwandan artist Carole Karemera said that Somaliland, like her own country, had been buoyed by a new artistic "self-confidence" after coming close to total destruction.



Young Somalia residents attend a book fair held in Hargeisa, Somaliland. — AFP

Classifieds

Wednesday, July 25, 2018

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate variable wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 35 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 24/07/2018 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	34 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	29 °C		
ABDALY	46 °C	28 °C		
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C		
JAHRA	46 °C	32 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	45 °C	29 °C		
SALMIYAH	44 °C	33 °C		
AHMADI	41 °C	35 °C		
NUWAISIB	44 °C	31 °C		
WAFRA	46 °C	29 °C		
SALMY	43 °C	30 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	07/25	Very hot and some scattered clouds will appear	48 °C	31 °C	NW	12 - 38 km/h
Thursday	07/26	Very hot and Dusty and some scattered clouds will appear	48 °C	32 °C	NW	25 - 55 km/h
Friday	07/27	Very hot and Dusty	48 °C	34 °C	NW	22 - 60 km/h
Saturday	07/28	Very hot + rising dust	48 °C	35 °C	NW	20 - 50 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:32
Sunrise	05:03
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:30
Sunset	18:46
Isha	20:14

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	29 °C
MAX. RH	24 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	NW 43 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

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KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
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Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

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DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Flight Schedule

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 25/7/2018					Departure Flights on Wednesday 25/7/2018				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
MSC	405	Sohag	00:05	FEG 341	Sohag	13:50	JZR	176	Dubai
JZR	513	Sharm el-Sheikh	00:10	KAC 618	Doha	14:10	THY	767	Istanbul
THY	772	Istanbul	00:15	KAC 618	Doha	14:10	WAN	351	Luxor
KAC	102	London	00:50	QTR 1078	Riyadh	14:10	JZR	144	Doha
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	JZR 121	Bahrain	14:10	MSR	611	Cairo
JZR	539	Cairo	01:00	GFA 221	Bahrain	14:15	UAE	872	Dubai
PCT	858	Istanbul	01:15	SVA 500	Jeddah	14:15	RJA	645	Amman
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:25	KAC 364	Colombo	14:20	CLX	792	Hanoi
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	FDB 059	Dubai	14:20	ASYUT	442	Asyut
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC 512	Mashhad	14:25	JZR	802	Tbilisi
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	KAC 286	Dhaka	14:25	WAN	415	Beirut
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:00	KAC 788	Jeddah	14:25	KNE	382	Taif
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC 683	Madinah	14:55	GFA	222	Bahrain
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC 304	Mumbai	15:05	KAC	673	Dubai
AEE	956	ATH	02:25	ETD 303	Abu Dhabi	15:05	KAC	539	Sharm el-Sheikh
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	KAC 412	Bangkok	15:10	FDB	060	Dubai
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	KNE 529	Jeddah	15:10	JZR	188	Dubai
THY	768	Istanbul	02:40	KAC 562	Amman	15:20	QTR	1079	Doha
THY	1404	Istanbul	02:40	OMA 645	Muscat	15:20	SVA	501	Jeddah
JZR	651	Lahore	02:55	KAC 502	Beirut	15:35	KNE	684	Madinah
KAC	418	Manila	03:05	ABY 127	Sharjah	15:35	KAC	775	Riyadh
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE 857	Dubai	15:45	JZR	530	Jeddah
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	SVA 504	Madinah	15:55	KNE	606	Kochi
RJA	648	Amman	03:05	KAC 118	New York	16:00	KAC	743	Dammam
RBG	215	Sohag	03:05	SAW 705	Damascus	16:00	KAC	785	Jeddah
KAC	382	Delhi	03:10	MSR 575	Sharm el-Sheikh	16:10	KAC	563	Amman
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR 535	Cairo	16:10	ABY	128	Sharjah
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:25	QTR 1072	Doha	16:15	KAC	619	Doha
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	FDB 051	Dubai	16:20	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi
KAC	796	Madinah	03:45	KAC 361	Alexandria	16:50	OMA	646	Muscat
JAI	572	Mumbai	04:00	KAC 542	Cairo	17:00	KAC	615	Bahrain
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	SVA 510	Riyadh	17:15	SVA	505	Madinah
JZR	609	Hyderabad	04:30	JAV 621	Amman	17:30	MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh
JZR	1541	Cairo	04:35	GFA 215	Bahrain	17:30	SAW	706	Damascus
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	JZR 777	Jeddah	17:35	KAC	503	Beirut
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR 145	Doha	17:35	FDB	052	Dubai
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	WAN 976	Baku	17:40	QTR	1073	Doha
KAC	544	Cairo	05:20	JZR 177	Dubai	17:40	KAC	361	Colombo
KAC	603	Mumbai	05:25	QTR 1080	Dubai	18:10	UAE	858	Dubai
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	JZR 483	Doha	18:10	KAC	743	Dammam
KAC	154	Istanbul	05:35	JZR 483	Istanbul	18:20	NIA	362	Alexandria
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	WAN 874	Istanbul	18:25	KAC	331	Trivandrum
JZR	561	Sohag	05:55	MSR 620	Cairo	18:30	KAC	283	Dhaka
BAW	157	London	06:10	RJA 640	Amman	19:00	KAC	343	Chennai
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:25	GFA 217	Bahrain	19:05	SVA	511	Riyadh
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:25	UAE 875	Dubai	19:05	JZR	184	Dubai
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:40	FDB 063	Dubai	19:10	GFA	216	Bahrain
KAC	678	Dubai	06:45	KAC 744	Dammam	19:10	JZR	608	Hyderabad
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	ABY 123	Sharjah	19:20	JZR	240	Amman
JZR	505	Luxor	06:55	KAC 156	Istanbul	19:25	JAV	622	Amman
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	KAC 776	Riyadh	19:35	JZR	538	Cairo
JZR	143	Doha	07:00	JAI 216	Delhi	19:35	QTR	1073	Doha
WAN	342	Sohag	07:30	KAC 674	Dubai	19:40	KAC	151	Istanbul
JZR	503	Dubai	07:50	WAN 352	Luxor	19:50	JZR	266	Beirut
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC 564	Dubai	19:50	QTR	1081	Doha
KAC	358	Kochi	08:00	KAC 104	London	20:00	WAN	135	Doha
KAC	384	Delhi	08:05	KAC 616	Bahrain	20:00	MSR	117	Bahrain
JZR	529	Asyut	08:10	DLH 624	Frankfurt	20:05	KAC	621	Cairo
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	OMA 647	Muscat	20:05	GFA	218	Bahrain
SAW	703	Damascus	08:30	KNE 381	Taif	20:10	FDB	064	Dubai
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC 402	Doha	20:15	RJA	641	Amman
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	MEA 402	Beirut	20:15	ABY	124	Sharjah
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:25	KAC 166	Rome	20:25	JZR	320	Alexandria
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	QTR 1088	Doha	20:40	JZR	602	Mumbai
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC 172	Frankfurt	20:45	FDB	058	Dubai
IRM	1188	Mashhad	09:55	JZR 803	Tbilisi	20:45	UAE	876	Dubai
SYR	341	Latakia	10:05	KLM 445	Amsterdam	21:00	JAI	215	Delhi
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	KAC 540	Sharm el-Sheikh	21:00	DLH	624	Dammam
JZR	787	Riyadh	10:30	UAE 859	Dubai	21:15	KNE	232	Riyadh
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ALK 229	Colombo	21:15	KAC	381	Doha
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	ETD 307	Abu Dhabi	21:15	OMA	648	Muscat
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC 168	Paris	21:20	MEA	403	Beirut
JZR	903	Baku	11:10	THY 764	Istanbul	21:30	KAC	301	Mumbai
WAN	134	Doha	11:10	GFA 219	Bahrain	21:50	DHX	171	Bahrain
JZR	165	Dubai	11:45	KAC 564	Doha	22:05	QTR	1089	Doha
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	QTR 1082	Abu Dhabi	22:10	KAC	205	Islamabad
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	ETD 309	Jeddah	22:15	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi
THY	766	Istanbul	12:45	KAC 786	Jeddah	22:15	KLM	445	

Young Iranians persevere, but many want to escape

TEHRAN: Some young Iranians are determined to modernize their country and rescue it from economic collapse. But facing relentless US pressure and increasing hardship, many of the educated elite simply want to leave. On an up-market balcony in Tehran, shaded from a roasting summer sun, a string of entrepreneurs are filming success stories and advice for the next generation of start-up wannabes. For a country supposedly on the brink of economic meltdown, the mood is surprisingly upbeat.

"We are experts in adapting to times of trouble," said Reza Ghiabi, CEO of a tech-focused consultancy firm, who calls himself an "unshakable responsible optimist". "Many Iranians had success in the past in Berlin, Silicon Valley and London, but our generation is tired of emigrating and being just an employee. Now we're trying to create something for ourselves," he told AFP.

Everyone knows the challenges are daunting: Rampant unemployment, rising prices, a crashing currency. None of it is helped by the return of full-scale US sanctions next month following Washington's decision to abandon the 2015 nuclear deal, nor the bellicose threats between President Donald Trump and Iranian officials in recent days. "We understand this is not a good situation, but we can't just wait for things to get better. We have to do it ourselves," said Alireza Khodaei, 30, who makes high-end shoes and is one of the organizers behind Tehran's inaugural Start-Up Week that begins on August 3.

There are a few examples that offer hope for Iran's highly educated, globalized youth: The huge success of taxi app Snapp, a slew of hip new cafes and restaurants, and tech hubs fostering everything from music streaming services to online education portals. The more business-friendly government of President Hassan Rouhani is less suspicious than its predecessors of these Western-influenced innovations. "We've tried to be independent in the past, but we can't ignore the government, and there are now people who understand and listen. We want to be part of policy-making," said Khodaei.

'I won't find work'

But that sort of optimism is fading among Iran's educated middle- and upper-classes, who see little prospect of political and economic change. If officials in Washington hope that will lead to mass protests against the government, they are likely to be disappointed. The brutal response to past demonstrations, and fears that protests could degenerate into violent chaos like in Syria, have bred a weary resignation. Instead, most just want to



TEHRAN: A picture taken yesterday shows a view of Navvab street in the Iranian capital. — AFP

leave. "Young people have lost all hope in their future," said 21-year-old law student Parisa.

"I've been looking for work for three months to pay for my studies and help my father. I'm a law student but I know that once my studies are finished I won't find work," she said. "There are many who want to leave and they are right because over there, they can progress and will have a decent salary."

The US stepped up its pressure campaign this weekend, with Trump threatening unprecedented "suffering" for Iran, and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announcing a renewed propaganda effort to undermine its leaders. But that is largely background noise to Iran's youth. Around two-thirds of Iranians were born after the 1979 revolution and have grown up with the incessant back-and-forth between their government and Washington.

They are more focused on what is happening internally, and for many it was the decision in April to block the most popular social media app Telegram that was the final straw. "I spent two days in my room, I was so depressed," said a film editor in her 20s who campaigned for Rouhani's re-election last year when he vowed no more censorship. "He made all these promises, and still this happened. I used to be so angry with all my friends who were leaving, but for the first time I thought maybe it's time to go."

'Officials don't listen'

In some ways things have improved for young people, but not fast enough to meet their heightened expectations. Today, they openly criticize the government and the system in a way that would have been unthinkable even a

few years ago, but they feel ignored. "Officials don't listen to young people. They ignore their hopes, their views on life, society, religion, politics," said Ehsan, a 24-year-old student. "I was one of those who told my friends they must vote because that allowed us to demand things... but now I see we can't do anything."

But abandoning friends, family and homeland is tough, so for the optimistic entrepreneurs there is a determination to struggle through. Sanctions have not been entirely negative, said Amirreza Mohammadi, another of Start-Up Week's organizers. By blocking foreign competition, sanctions "created jobs for young Iranians and created a desire to push forward our own projects," he said. "Maybe one day I'll be forced to leave too," said Khodaei. "But this is somewhere I can have an impact and that moves me to stay." — AFP

Qatar, US plan 'expansion' of...

Continued from Page 1

IS in Syria and Iraq are also deployed at Al-Udeid, located 35 km southwest of Doha. QNA said the expansion project "underscores Qatar's commitment to deepening its strategic military relations with the United States". "The State of Qatar, along with its strategic US ally, is working on drawing up a roadmap for the future of bilateral relations, including the addition of Al-Udeid Air Base to the list of US permanent military bases," it said.

Ryan Gliha, the US charge d'affaires in Doha, echoed this in remarks at a news conference after the ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the expansion of Al-

Udeid. "We saw today the opening of a new construction project... what we hope to see in the coming years and months is (the) strengthening" of bilateral ties, he said. "Billions of dollars have been spent already at Al-Udeid over the last 15 years to support our operations... These are essential to the fight against Daesh and our ability to lead the coalition," he said, using an Arabic acronym for IS. Gliha described Qatar as an "indispensable partner for the United States".

In April US President Donald Trump welcomed to the White House the Amir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, for talks on improving bilateral ties that had been strained by Qatar's row with Gulf states. The year-long crisis has seen regional kingpin Saudi Arabia and a number of its Arab allies impose a diplomatic and trade embargo on Qatar. Trump had initially supported an economic blockade on Qatar, but aides - mindful of the pivotal role of Al-Udeid in US Middle East operations - convinced him to take a more moderate approach. —AFP

Haley slams Kuwait, other Arab, Islamic...

Continued from Page 1

week defining Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people. The spat is just the latest tension between the two leaders that threatens to derail a normalization in relations between Israel and one of its few Muslim partners. In his first reaction to the law, Erdogan did not mince words, likening Israel's leadership to Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler and even drawing parallels between racial policy in Nazi Germany and modern Israel. "This measure has shown without leaving the slightest room for doubt that Israel is the world's most Zionist, fascist and racist state," Erdogan said in a speech to his ruling party. Erdogan claimed there was "no difference between Hitler's obsession with the Aryan race and Israel's understanding that these ancient lands are meant only for Jews". "The spirit of Hitler, which led the world to a great catastrophe, has found its resurgence among some of Israel's leaders," he added. The Nazis killed around six million Jews in the Holocaust during World War II.

But Netanyahu hit back with characteristic speed, lashing out at Erdogan for Turkey's campaigns inside Kurdish-held areas of northern Syria and its mass crackdown after the 2016 failed coup. "Erdogan is massacring Syrians and Kurds and has imprisoned tens of thousands of his citizens," Netanyahu said in a statement. "Turkey under Erdogan is becoming a dark dictatorship, while Israel is meticulously maintaining equal rights for all its citizens, before and after the law."

The legislation makes Hebrew the national language of Israel and defines the establishment of Jewish communities as being in the national interest. Arabic, previously considered an official language, was downgraded to one with a "special status". The law does not specify equality and Israel's democratic character, implying that the country's Jewish nature comes first, analysts said. Arab citizens account for 17.5 percent of Israel's population of more than eight million.

Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin then hit back at Netanyahu, saying the prime minister of Israel - which he described as a "Zionist apartheid state built on racism, occupation and displacement - (was in) no position to lecture our president on human rights". Kalin said the Israeli law was "a shameless attempt to institutionalize discrimination against the Palestinian

people" while Turkey's criticism was "a universal call for justice and peace".

Separately, Israel said it shot down a Syrian warplane that crossed into the occupied Golan Heights yesterday, but Damascus said the jet was fired on as it took part in sorties against rebels within Syria. The incident added new fuel to weeks of tensions over the Golan, a strategic plateau between the two old enemies and where Israel has been on high alert as Syrian government forces, supported by Russia, close in to regain rebel-held ground. Israel worries Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad may defy a 1974 UN armistice that demilitarized much of the Golan, or let his Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah reinforcements deploy there. Netanyahu said the Syrian jet had been in "gross violation of the separation of forces between us and Syria". Israel "took appropriate action" he said.

For the second time in as many days, Israeli sirens sounded on the Golan and witnesses saw the contrails of two missiles flying skyward. The military said it fired Patriot interceptor missiles at a Syrian Sukhoi jet that crossed 2 km into Israeli-controlled air space, after first trying to warn it off. UN peacekeepers "observed burning debris falling from an aircraft" some 10 km inside Syrian territory southeast of the Golan buffer zone, their agency said in a statement. The warplane's pilot was killed, a non-Syrian source close to the Syrian government told Reuters.

The source said the plane fell in a pocket of territory held by Islamic State-affiliated forces adjoining the occupied Golan Heights. The Syrian army is advancing into this pocket to try to bring the whole of southwest Syria back under its control. Syrian state media said the plane was targeted by Israel and hit while conducting raids in Syrian-controlled air space. "The Israeli enemy confirms its support for the armed terrorist groups," the official news agency SANA quoted a military source as saying. Lebanon's pro-Damascus TV station Al-Mayadeen said the plane fell 15 km inside Syrian territory and did not enter the air space of the occupied Golan.

The spiralling Israeli-Syrian tensions have spurred intercession by Moscow, which sent Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and its top general on Monday for talks with Netanyahu. Israeli officials said Netanyahu rebuffed as insufficient a Russian offer to keep Iranian forces 100 km from the Golan lines. Nikolay Mladenov, a UN envoy for the Middle East, warned yesterday of "a disturbing trajectory of increasingly frequent and dangerous confrontations" between Israel and Syria. "I call on all parties to abide by all the provisions of the 1974 agreement," he told the UN Security Council. — Agencies

Scores missing in Laos after...

Continued from Page 1

Nearly 24 hours after the collapse, local authorities said they were struggling to gauge the extent of the disaster. "We do not have any formal information yet about any casualties or how many are missing," an official in Attapeu province, where much of the flooding occurred, told AFP on condition of anonymity, adding that there was no phone signal in the flooded region. "We sent rescue teams who will help them and provide basic assistance first," the official added. The Thai government said it would also send rescue experts to its northern neighbor.

The \$1.2 billion dam is part of a project by Vientiane-based Xe Pian Xe Namnoy Power Company, or PNPC, a joint venture formed in 2012 between a Laotian, a Thai and two South Korean companies, according to the project's website. Ratchaburi Electricity Generating Holding, the Thai company, said it had been told by operators that a 770-metre-long auxiliary dam used to divert river water had failed after heavy rainfall. "The incident was caused by continuous rainstorm which caused high volume of water to flow into the project's reservoir," it said

in a statement.

One of the South Korean companies, SK Engineering and Construction, said it had sent a crisis team to Laos, according to Yonhap news agency, and was bringing in helicopters from Thailand. South Korea's foreign ministry said another Korean firm, Korea Western Power, was also involved. The companies and others had sent helicopters, boats and rescue workers. "All of our 53 nationals who were taking part in this construction evacuated in advance," the ministry said in a statement. Pope Francis said in a Vatican message he had learned with sadness of the loss of life, and expressed "heartfelt solidarity" with all those affected.

The 410 megawatt capacity plant was supposed to start commercial operations by 2019, according to the venture's website. The project consists of a series of dams over the Houay Makchanh, the Xe-Namnoy and the Xe-Pian rivers in Champasak Province. It planned to export 90 percent of its electricity to energy-hungry Thailand and the remainder was to be offered up on the local grid. Under the terms of construction, PNPC said it would operate and manage the power project for 27 years after commercial operations began.

Dam projects in Laos, mainly providing power to neighboring countries, have long been controversial with fears over environmental damage and the impact on local communities who are often displaced. — AFP

Flames ravage Greek seaside as...

Continued from Page 1

in the courtyard of a villa at the seaside resort of Mati, 40 km northeast of the capital, said rescuer Vassilis Andriopoulos. They were huddled together in small groups, "perhaps families, friends or strangers, entwined in a last attempt to protect themselves as they tried to reach the sea", he said. Video footage showed people fleeing by car as the tourist-friendly Attica region declared a state of emergency.

"I saw the fire move down the hill at around 6:00 pm and five or ten minutes later it was in my garden," said 60-year old Athanasia Oktapodi. Her home is surrounded by dry pine trees. "They caught fire. I ran out like a crazy person, got to the beach and put my head in the water. Then the patrol boats came."

Fire service spokeswoman Stavroula Maliri raised the overall death toll yesterday to 74 from an earlier count of 60. She said the toll was not yet final since firefighters were still searching for victims. Winds of more than 100 km per hour in Mati caused a "sudden progression of fire" through the village, said Stavroula Maliri. "Mati no longer exists," said the mayor of nearby Rafina, Evangelos Bourmou. He added that more than a thousand buildings and 300 cars had been damaged.

The national government had earlier said at least 172 people were hurt, including 16 children, with 11 adults in a serious condition. Officials said they were Greece's deadliest blazes in more than a decade. At least five people died trying to escape the flames into the sea. Some 715 people were evacuated by boats to Rafina, the government said. "People are shocked, lost. Some of them have lost everything: children, parents, homes," said Red Cross spokeswoman Georgia Trisbioti.

Greece's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras cut short a visit to Bosnia to return home. He announced three days of national mourning. Anticipating questions about the high death toll and the emergency planning, Tsipras stressed the "extreme" scale of the fires. Government

spokesman Dimitris Tzanakopoulos said "15 fires had started simultaneously on three different fronts in Athens" on Monday. The European Union activated its Civil Protection Mechanism after Greece sought help. Several countries said they were sending aircraft to help fight the flames. European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker tweeted yesterday that the EU "will spare no effort to help Greece and the Greek people".

Tsipras said "all emergency forces" have been mobilized to battle the fires. Interior Minister Panos Skourletis said yesterday the priority was to extinguish a fire that was still burning in Kineta, 50 km from Athens. Near the town of Marathon, residents fled to safety along the beach, while 600 children were evacuated from holiday camps in the area. Officials raised the possibility the blazes could have been started deliberately by criminals out to ransack abandoned homes. "I am really concerned by the parallel outbreak of these fires," Tsipras said. Supreme court prosecutors announced they had opened an investigation into the causes of the fire.

Fires are a common problem in Greece during the summer. Blazes in 2007 on the southern island of Evia claimed 77 lives. Temperatures have climbed to 40 degrees Celsius but showers and falling temperatures were expected later in Athens. Wildfires have also caused widespread damage in northern Europe in recent days. Sweden is experiencing an unprecedented drought and the highest temperatures in a century. It has counted more than 20 fires across the country.

In Finland's northernmost Lapland province fires have ravaged woods and grassland close to the border with Russia. Norway, which experienced its hottest May temperatures on record, has also seen several small fires. One firefighter was killed on July 15 trying to contain a blaze. Fires have raged for five days in Latvia, destroying more than 1,000 hectares in the Baltic state's western regions. The German Meteorological Service DWD warned of a significant risk of fires in fields and forests due to drought. In the Netherlands, a wildfire broke out over about four hectares yesterday in the central nature reserve of Hoge Veluwe, known for its red deer and wild boar, Dutch media said. The fire brigade brought the blaze quickly under control. — AFP

Sports

Cardinals fall despite Ponedeleon's stellar debut; Braves down Marlins

Diamondbacks overwhelm Cubs 7-1

FLORIDA: On a night dominated by seven no-hit innings from St. Louis right-hander Daniel Ponedeleon in his major league debut, the Cincinnati Reds rallied with two outs in the bottom of the ninth to upend the visiting Cardinals 2-1 on Monday. The Reds entered the ninth inning with only one hit, an eighth-inning single off reliever Jordan Hicks, and Cardinals closer Bud Norris retired the first two batters in the ninth. Eugenio Suarez then hit a 1-0 fastball for a home run, and two singles and a walk later, pinch hitter Dilson Herrera smacked the first pitch he saw from Norris (3-3) for a game-winning single to center. The first seven innings belonged to Ponedeleon, who allowed only three walks while striking out three. He left after seven innings, having thrown 116 pitches, 75 for strikes. In May 2017, Ponedeleon needed emergency brain surgery after he was struck by a line drive in the right temple while pitching in Triple-A.

Braves 12, Marlins 1

Freddie Freeman slugged a two-run homer, Dansby Swanson blasted a solo shot, and Charlie Culbertson had a career-high four hits as Atlanta won at Miami. Culbertson went 4-for-6 with two doubles and three RBIs for the Braves, who stroked 16 hits, including eight for extra bases. Freeman's opposite-field blast was his fifth homer in eight games against the Marlins this season. Sean Newcomb (9-5) overcame four walks to earn his first win since June 6, ending a five-game drought. He had entered Monday 0-3 with a 9.75 ERA this month, but he limited the Marlins to four hits and one run in six innings, striking out five.

Pirates 7, Indians 0 (six innings)

Josh Harrison finished 2-for-3 with a three-run home run, and Pittsburgh increased its winning streak to 10 games with a rain-shortened victory at Cleveland. The game was called in the top of the seventh inning after the third rain delay of the night. The start of the game was delayed an hour by inclement weather, and more rain prompted a second delay in the bottom of the third. Starling Marte and Gregory Polanco had two RBIs apiece for the Pirates, who have not dropped a game since July 10 and have a double-digit winning streak for the first time since 2004. Trevor Williams pitched an abbreviated shutout, allowing four hits.

Dodgers 7, Phillies 6

Max Muncy, Yasmani Grandal, Chris Taylor and Joc Pederson homered, and Los Angeles won at Philadelphia. A ninth-inning wild pitch by Seranthony Dominguez (1-3) with the bases loaded scored Alex Verdugo to give the Dodgers a 6-5 lead. After Dominguez was replaced by Luis Garcia, Matt Kemp added a run-scoring single for a 7-5 advantage. Maikel

Franco led off the bottom of the ninth with a solo homer, his second of the game and 15th of the season, but Kenley Jansen retired the next three batters for his 29th save. Rhys Hoskins and Odubel Herrera also homered for the Phillies, and Franco had three hits.

A's 15, Rangers 3

Jonathan Lucroy's fourth career grand slam ignited an 18-hit assault on Cole Hamels and four Texas relievers, and surging Oakland rolled in Arlington, Texas. Stephen Piscotty, Matt Chapman and Khris Davis also homered for the A's, who won for the 24th time in their past 31 games. Brett Anderson (2-2) benefitted from Oakland's third-largest run total of the season, coasting through six innings for the win. He allowed two runs and six hits while striking out six and walking one.

Red Sox 5, Orioles 3

Mitch Moreland homered, Andrew Benintendi hit a two-run double, and Rick Porcello threw six shutout innings as Boston won at Baltimore. Porcello (12-4) scattered six hits and a walk while striking out six. Craig Kimbrel closed it in the ninth and earned his 32nd save despite giving up a run. The Red Sox now have a 10-1 record against the Orioles this season. Baltimore dropped its fourth consecutive game.

Diamondbacks 7, Cubs 1

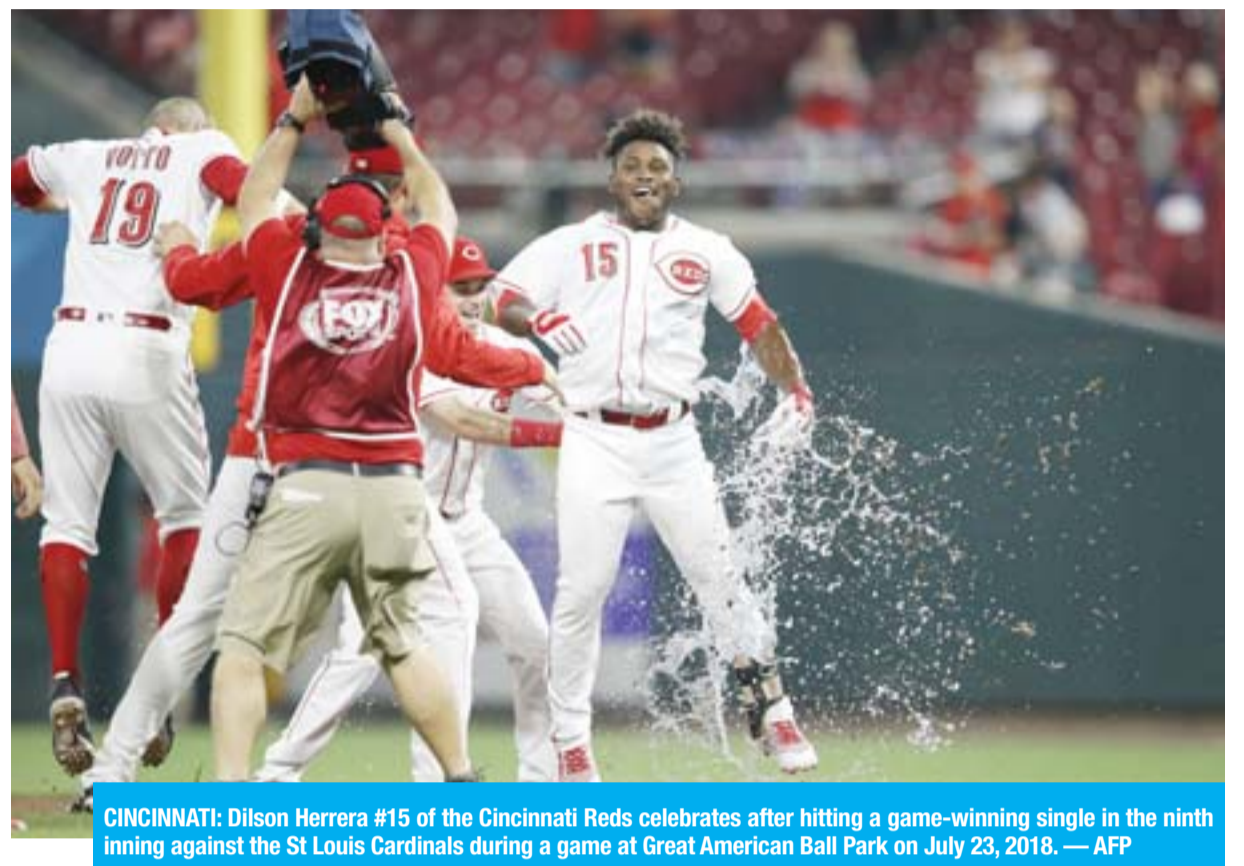
Patrick Corbin pitched seven strong innings, and Paul Goldschmidt hit a home run as Arizona won at Chicago. Corbin (7-4) allowed one run on six hits. He didn't walk a batter and struck out nine while winning for the first time in eight starts. Jeff Mathis' two-run double capped the Diamondbacks' five-run first inning, and Goldschmidt's solo shot in the second made it 6-0.

Padres 3, Mets 2

Freddy Galvis and Manuel Margot had RBI hits in consecutive at-bats, and San Diego took advantage of shoddy fielding by the Mets to defeat host New York and ace Jacob deGrom. DeGrom (5-5) allowed just one hit while facing the minimum through the first four innings and was nursing a 1-0 lead before the Mets' defense began letting him down in the fifth. Right fielder Jose Bautista dropped a routine one-out fly by Christian Villanueva, who stole second and scored the game-tying run on Galvis' single. Margot followed with a triple to deep center field. Joey Lucchesi (5-5) earned the win after allowing two runs on six hits and no walks while striking out six over 5 1/3 innings.

Twins 8, Blue Jays 3

Logan Morrison hit a home run and had three RBIs, Max Kepler added a two-run blast, Adalberto Mejia pitched into the sixth inning, and Minnesota won at



CINCINNATI: Dilson Herrera #15 of the Cincinnati Reds celebrates after hitting a game-winning single in the ninth inning against the St. Louis Cardinals during a game at Great American Ball Park on July 23, 2018. — AFP

Toronto. Mejia (1-0), recalled from Triple-A Rochester to make the start, allowed one run, eight hits and two walks while striking out three in 5 1/3 innings. The Twins ended a three-game losing streak while stopping the Blue Jays' string of three straight wins. Lourdes Gurriel Jr hit a solo homer for the Blue Jays.

Rays 7, Yankees 6

Jake Bauers had two hits, including a three-run homer, as Tampa Bay pounded New York ace Luis Severino and held on for a win at St. Petersburg, Fla. The Yankees loaded the bases with one out in the top of the ninth before Tampa Bay reliever Jose Alvarado enticed Aaron Hicks and Gary Sanchez into groundouts to earn his fourth save of the year. Rays rookie Hunter Wood started and went two innings before leaving for Matt Andriese (3-4), who threw the next 3 2/3 innings to earn the win. Severino allowed seven runs (six earned) on 11 hits in five-plus innings.

Brewers 6, Nationals 1

Jhoulys Chacin struck out a season-best nine in 5

2/3 innings and also contributed an RBI single as Milwaukee recorded a victory over visiting Washington. Christian Yelich delivered a three-run triple and Erik Kratz drove in two runs for the Brewers, who won for just the second time in 10 games. Chacin (9-3) gave up one run and two hits and didn't walk a batter while winning his third consecutive decision. Daniel Murphy homered for the Nationals, who have dropped four of their past six games.

Tigers 5, Royals 4

James McCann drove in two runs, including a go-ahead double during a three-run ninth, and Detroit rallied for a victory at Kansas City. Jim Adduci supplied a two-run double, and Jose Iglesias knocked in the other run for Detroit. Alex Wilson tossed 1 1/3 innings of scoreless relief to pick up the win. Shane Greene got the last three outs for his 20th save. The Tigers' rally denied Royals rookie Heath Fillmyer his first major league victory. Fillmyer gave up two runs (one earned) on three hits and struck out six in 6 2/3 innings. Lucas Duda drove in three runs for the Royals. — Reuters

Cavs, Love agree to four-year, \$120 million extension

MINNESOTA: Kevin Love is the new centerpiece of the Cleveland Cavaliers. General manager Koby Altman announced at Quicken Loans Arena yesterday that Love signed a four-year, \$120 million extension with the Cavaliers for a contract that now equals \$145 million over five seasons. "When I got traded here a few years back, I was committed to the long-term," Love said. "I was committed to the culture." Love, who joined Altman in an impromptu setting inside the arena surrounded by an audience of construction workers and team employees, asked those gathered for patience as the team takes on a new look next season.

"I'm very excited. I hope that you guys are too," he said. "I know we've been to four straight Finals and been a little bit spoiled. I'm hoping that you guys will grow with us through the years." Love had two seasons remaining on his deal with the Cavaliers—including a now moot player option totaling \$49.7 million. He will be paid \$24.1 million in 2018-19. The Cavaliers, Altman said, were "stunned" when LeBron James announced earlier in the month he was signing with the Los Angeles Lakers, leaving the Cavaliers with a decision to make on Love. Altman



Kevin Love

denied simmering rumors that Love was on the trade block, but there had been no indication a contract extension was in the works.

Retaining Love, who turns in 30 in September, leaves the franchise with a stand-out to reload around. Love averaged 17.6 points and 9.3 rebounds in 59 regular-season games last season. The five-time All-Star has

helped the Cavaliers reach four straight NBA Finals alongside James. Cleveland lost three of them to the Golden State Warriors. Love has career averages of 18.3 points and 11.3 rebounds over 10 seasons with the Minnesota Timberwolves and Cavaliers. He twice averaged 26 or more points during his six seasons in Minnesota. — Reuters

Amid trade rumors, Patriots WR Mitchell 'has knee procedure'

NEW ENGLAND: New England Patriots wideout Malcolm Mitchell's future with the team is in doubt after he had a knee procedure Monday, and the team is shopping him in trade talks, according to multiple reports. The Providence Journal reported Mitchell—who missed all of 2017 but one preseason game with a knee injury—faces "an uphill climb" to play at all in 2018 after Monday's procedure.

Multiple outlets confirmed Mitchell had a procedure on Monday as part of an evaluation with doctors to determine the cause of discomfort in his knee.

Multiple outlets reported earlier Monday that the Patriots are shopping Mitchell, whose path to a roster spot looks cloudy, even with Julian Edelman's four-game suspension to start the season. Mitchell, who turned 26 on Friday, carried injury concerns when the Patriots made him a fourth-round pick out of Georgia in 2016. He tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee early in the Bulldogs' 2013 season while celebrating a touchdown run by Todd Gurley and missed five games the following season.

Through two years in the NFL, Mitchell has played in 14 games (six starts), all in 2016, catching 32 passes for 401 yards and four scores. He added six grabs for 70 yards in the team's Super Bowl LI victory that postseason.

The Patriots traded Brandin Cooks and allowed Danny Amendola to leave in free agency this offseason, but the team still has Edelman (who will miss Weeks 1-4) and Chris Hogan penciled in as starters, with free agent signee Jordan Matthews likely to join them. New England also exercised a team option on Kenny Britt, traded for Cordarrelle Patterson, drafted Braxton Berrios this offseason, with last year's trade acquisition Phillip Dorsett also on the roster. Britt was placed on the active/PUP list Monday with a hamstring injury but isn't expected to be out long. Offseason reports have said the team expects him to earn a significant role. Also on Monday, the Patriots signed former Arizona State wideout Devin Lucien, who New England took in Round 7 of the 2016 draft. He has bounced around the league on practice squads of four other teams since last year and has yet to appear in a regular-season game. — Reuters

Marchionne exit raises questions for Ferrari

NEW YORK: Luxury sports car maker Ferrari faces new questions over its growth plan with the sudden exit of chief executive Sergio Marchionne. Shares in the iconic Italian company, which Marchionne spun off from Fiat Chrysler, fell in both Milan and New York on Monday as markets took stock of Marchionne's unplanned departure due to serious health problems. "Ferrari loses a winner," said a note from Credit Suisse that pointed out that the company's stock price had risen 155 percent since making its market debut in 2015.

Ferrari announced Saturday its board had learned with "great sadness" that Marchionne, 66, "will be unable to return to work" and would be replaced by Louis Camilleri, a former chief executive of Philip Morris. The company also announced that John Elkann, the grandson of legendary Fiat founder Gianni Agnelli, would take over as chairman. The Agnelli family holds 23.5 percent of Ferrari through its holding company Exor and has an agreement with Piero Ferrari, the son of the company's founder, covering another 10 percent of the shares.

The announcement came in parallel to one from FCA, which had also been led by Marchionne. At FCA, Marchionne will be succeeded by Mike Manley, accelerating a succession plan that had been expected to take place next year. "Manley has a track record of success with the very profitable Jeep SUVs and Ram trucks, which should bode well," said Efraim Levy, an analyst at CFRA Research. "Still, while the management shift was already planned for 2019 and considering our expectation of a relatively smooth transition, we often see increased corporate risk of underperformance following the exit of a dynamic, transforma-

tive and charismatic leader." FCA's financial performance has benefitted from a slate of trucks and SUVs increasingly dominant in the US, even as it faces challenges with restoring its reputation with regulators after safety lapses and industry-wide headwinds over trade tariffs. Adding to that is a growing labor-management fight in Kokomo, Indiana in the US Midwest where workers approved a strike over festering grievances, the United Auto Workers confirmed Monday. An FCA spokeswoman said the company had agreed to meet with workers. "We are meeting to address their concerns," said FCA spokeswoman Jodi Tinson.

A tough act to follow

While Marchionne had been expected to retire from FCA in 2019, he had planned to stay at Ferrari through 2021 and had been planning to outline a five-year strategy around September. The plan had been expected to spell out a blueprint to boost profitability, in part by launching new products, such as a sports utility vehicle. Analysts differed as to whether Marchionne's departure would significantly dent those ambitions. Despite the loss of Marchionne, "the path forward remains unchanged," said Credit Suisse. Camilleri, who has been on the Ferrari board since 2015, has "deep ties" to the company and "intimate knowledge" of the five-year plan, Credit Suisse added.

Morningstar analyst Richard Hilgert was more cautious. "While we do not question Camilleri's management capabilities, we would have preferred to see management succession go to someone with more luxury goods and Formula 1 experience," Hilgert said in a note. "However, we realize that someone with that particular set of skills is likely hard to come by in this extreme situation." Shares of Ferrari fell 2.5 percent in New York to \$136.49, while FCA dropped 1.8 percent to \$18.98. In Milan, shares of Ferrari finished down 4.9 percent at 113.95 euros, while FCA dipped 1.5 percent at 16.17 euros. By all accounts, the new chief executive will have a tough act to follow. The success of Ferrari's stock has silenced naysayers who doubted Marchionne's plan to split the company off from FCA. — AFP

Sports

Molinari rises to sixth in world rankings; Tiger returns to top

Merritt captures rain-hit Barbasol by one stroke

PARIS: Newly-crowned British Open champion Francesco Molinari climbed to a career-high world ranking of sixth on Monday, as 14-time major winner Tiger Woods edged back into the top 50. Molinari became the first Italian in history to win one of golf's four majors on Sunday with a flawless final-round 69 at Carnoustie, and has jumped nine places in the rankings and now tops the European Ryder Cup points list. The 35-year-old started 2018 outside the top 20, but his strong recent form had already produced wins in the European PGA Championship and the Quicken Loans National.

Woods, who has struggled with back injuries, was outside the world's top 1,000 before his latest comeback late last year, but leapt 21 spots to 50th courtesy of finishing tied for sixth behind the Molinari. The American star needed to break the top 50 in order to qualify for the last-ever WGC Bridgestone Invitational event to be held at Firestone in Ohio next month—a tournament he has won eight times.

The 42-year-old just about managed that thanks to late dropped shots from Jordan Spieth in Scotland, bumping him up from a tie for seventh which would have seen him miss out. But that will only be a small consolation for Woods after leading 10 holes into his final round before slipping away to fail in his bid to claim a first major title for over 10 years. Dustin Johnson remains at the top of the rankings, although Englishman Justin Rose is the new world number two after finishing in a four-way tie for second at the Open to leapfrog Justin Thomas.

Rain-hit Barbasol

In another development, American Troy Merritt endured several weather delays to close with a five-under 67 and capture the Barbasol Championship by one stroke in a Monday finish. The 32-year-old Merritt claimed his second career Tour title after opening with a 10-under 62 to tie the course record and then highlighting his final round with an eagle-two by holing a 133-yard approach shot at the par-four eighth hole.

He finished at 23-under overall to edge out Billy Horschel (67), Tom Lovelady (68) and Richy Werenski (66) by a single shot. "To get a win like this late in the season and move up to No. 65 on the points list and secure a job for two more years, it's a pretty good feeling," said Merritt. Merritt was one of 52 players who had to return to the course on Monday to finish the final round after a total of 5.2 inches of rain fell on the Keene Trace course in Kentucky over the week.

He finished his third round on Saturday and did not begin his final round until Monday morning. Just 21 players finished the fourth round on Sunday, resulting in the second Monday finish on the Tour this season following Jason Day's playoff victory at the Farmers Insurance Open. American JT Poston was fifth on 21-under with Brian Gay sixth at 20-under. With victory, Merritt punches his ticket into next month's USPGA Championship, the final major of the season. Merritt, who started his round as one of four men tied for the lead, also rolled in five birdies to hold off the rest of the field.—Agencies



CARNOUSTIE: Italy's Francesco Molinari kisses the trophy as he poses for pictures with the Claret Jug - the trophy for the Champion golfer of the year after winning the 147th Open golf Championship at Carnoustie, Scotland. — AFP

Briefs

Barcelona to host Real

MADRID: Defending Spanish champions Barcelona will host Real Madrid on October 28 in the first Clásico of the 2018/19 season, the Spanish football federation said yesterday. Real Madrid, who finished third in the league, 17 points behind champions Barcelona, will host the second meeting of the two Spanish giants on March 3, the federation added as it unveiled the season calendar. The season opens on the weekend of August 18-19, and ends on May 18-19. The Spanish capital's derbies will be at Real's Santiago Bernabeu on September 30 and at Atletico Madrid's Wanda Metropolitano on February 10. The Copa del Rey final will be held on May 25 at a yet-to-be determined stadium, the federation said.—AFP

Cash inducement claims

ABUJA: Nigeria's chief coach Salisu Yusuf has denied any wrongdoing after footage broadcast yesterday showed him accepting money from undercover reporters posing as football agents. The BBC showed video of Yusuf taking what it said was \$1,000 (850 euros) after a conversation about the selection of two players for the 2018 African Nations Championship (CHAN). He was also told he would receive 15 percent of the fee if the players were included in the Nigeria squad for the tournament, which is open only to home-based African footballers. The BBC said the footage was part of a wider investigation into corruption in African football by Ghanaian journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas. His expose has led to the resignation of the head of the Ghana Football Association, Kwesi Nyantakyi, after he was accused of soliciting bribes and kickbacks. The two players in the latest report were not identified.—AFP

Spanish football probe

MADRID: A complaint has been lodged against the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) president Luis Rubiales accusing him of trying to finance work on his house through the union of players he chaired, according to Spanish media reports on Monday. Radio Cadena SER, which first reported the story, said a court in Valencia opened a preliminary inquiry after a complaint from Miguel Angel Galan, a former leadership candidate for the RFEF. Rubiales, president of the RFEF since May, would owe 120,000 euros for the work on his house, according to Cadena SER. But he reportedly proposed to pay part of his personal debt with money which was meant to be used for a construction project for the Spanish Players' Union (AFE). The local courts of the Valencia region confirmed to AFP the filing of the complaint, but refused to comment on the opening of a preliminary investigation.—AFP

Swiss star Federer pulls out

LOS ANGELES: Eight-time Wimbledon champion Roger Federer has pulled out of next month's ATP Rogers Cup tournament in Toronto due to scheduling concerns. The 36-year-old Federer said he needs to be prudent about how many tournaments he plays in a season. "I'm so disappointed not to play at the Rogers Cup this summer," said world number two Federer. "I had a fantastic time in Montreal last year and always enjoy playing in front of the Canadian fans. "But unfortunately with scheduling being the key to my longevity moving forward, I have regrettably decided to withdraw from Toronto this year." Jeremy Chardy of France will take Federer's place in the main draw. Organizers said the event, which takes place August 4-12 at Toronto's York University, will feature 19 of the top 20 players in the world including reigning Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic and world number one Rafael Nadal.—AFP

Indonesia hope Asian Games could re-boot national soccer team

JAKARTA: Indonesia hopes hosting the upcoming Asian Games will help revive the fortunes of its troubled national soccer team and act as a springboard for their qualification for the 2024 Paris Olympics, the nation's soccer association said. Indonesia were barred from international soccer in 2015 due to government meddling in their domestic league, shutting them out of qualifying for the 2018 World Cup and 2019 Asian Cup.

Soccer's world governing body FIFA lifted the ban in 2016, but the men's team is currently languishing at 164th in the world, slotted between Belize and Fiji, despite the game's huge popularity in a country of more than 250 million people. "Asian Games is a starting point and PSSI (Football Association of Indonesia) wants to achieve more than that. If we

have to set a short-term plan that would be the Olympics in 2024," Joko Driyono, deputy chairman of the PSSI, told Reuters.

Driyono said the PSSI and the government were committed over the next three to five years to improving infrastructure for soccer at all levels to support the target. Spain's former under-21 coach Luis Milla was appointed manager of Indonesia at the start of 2017 in order to overhaul the national squad. The Asian Games, which are set to run from Aug 18 to Sept. 2, are expected to draw nearly 17,000 athletes and officials, and more than 100,000 spectators. The 24-team men's soccer tournament, which has an under-23 age limit but permits up to three over-age players, will be played in four stadiums in West Java province, while the women's event will be held in Palembang in Sumatra.

"Of course, we always try to win and become a champion but our primary target is to win the heart of Indonesian people with our performance," Indonesia's Montenegro-born forward Ilija Spasojevic told reporters. Despite the optimism, some fans remain skeptical. "The development of soccer in Indonesia is very poor," said Muhammad Ali, 49, after playing a game on the rooftop of an abandoned building in capi-



TOKYO: Picture shows an aerial view of the Olympic Village under construction in Tokyo for the upcoming Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.—AFP

tal Jakarta. "As a national team we are still underperforming, we can't even be the regional champion, how can we top Asia's ranking?"—Reuters



JAKARTA: Countdown boards for the 2018 Asian Games are seen past traffic at the Bundaran Hotel Indonesia roundabout in Jakarta yesterday. Jakarta and Palembang in Sumatra are set to host the Asian Games from August 18 to September 2 - the world's biggest multi-sport event behind the Olympics.—AFP

Landmarks illuminated as Tokyo celebrates 2 years until Olympics

TOKYO: Famous landmarks across Japan were illuminated simultaneously yesterday to mark two years to go until the start of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Tokyo Tower and the Yoyogi Building shone in the Japanese capital, while other buildings stretching from the Goryokaku Tower in the northern Hokkaido region to Fukuoka Tower in the south were also lit-up in the colours of the Olympics rings. Tokyo Skytree, the tallest tower in the world, was also illuminated following a countdown event held halfway up the 634-metre structure.

At the ceremony, commemorative lanterns were lit by school children, athletes and dignitaries, including

Tokyo 2020 President Yoshiro Mori and Governor of Tokyo, Yuriko Koike. "We want to send a message to the world that Tokyo is a host city. Also, the success of the Tokyo Games depends on reconstruction (in Fukushima)," said Koike. Eric Garcetti, the mayor of 2028 host city Los Angeles, was also in attendance as a guest of Koike. "We share a common geography of the Pacific and we share a common dream of the future between Los Angeles and Tokyo," Garcetti said. "We come here with a delegation from Los Angeles today to pay our respects to the wonderful organizing efforts of Tokyo 2020."

The presentation stage was decorated with 731 paper lanterns, each representing the days remaining until the Games' opening ceremony. Attendees wrote their wishes for the 2020 Games on the lanterns. Sport climber Miho Nonaka, who will hope to be competing in the sport's Olympic debut in Tokyo, said she wrote 'even higher' on her lantern. "I want the (climbing) walls and my goals to be higher, and I want to climb to the highest point," she said. After the illumination, the athletes joined the assembled children in performing the Olympics' official song 'Tokyo Gorin Ondo 2020.' The Tokyo Games will start on July 24, 2020 and run until Aug 9.—Reuters

Taiwan slams China; youth games axed

TAIPEI: Taiwan accused China of dragging sport into politics yesterday after a multi-million-dollar international youth event due to be held on the island next year was suspended. It comes as Beijing ramps up military and diplomatic pressure on self-ruling democratic Taiwan, which it sees as part of its territory to be brought back into the fold. According to Taiwan sports officials, members of the East Asian Olympic Committee (EAOC) voted in a meeting in Beijing Tuesday to revoke Taichung city's right to host the first-ever East Asian Youth Games in 2019.

Taiwan voted for the games to continue as planned, while Japan abstained. The other members of the committee—China, South Korea, North Korea, Hong Kong, Macau, and Mongolia—voted for the suspension, according to Taiwanese officials. Taiwan's presidential office said the EAOC had made the "wrong decision" and accused China of bullying. The Taichung city government expressed indignation, saying it had already invested Tw\$670 million (\$21.9 million) to build facilities for the games. The decision comes a day after gay rights activists in Taiwan accused China of pressuring organizers of the Gay Games to bar the island's national flag at next month's competition in Paris.

China is particularly sensitive to Taiwan's use of names, emblems and flags at international events. These sensitivities—backed up by Beijing's clout on the world stage—mean Taiwan is forced to compete as "Chinese Taipei" at the Olympics and a host of other international sports competitions. Taiwan's Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee said Tuesday it believed the axing of the youth games was linked to Beijing's anger over a campaign by NGOs and some leading local athletes for a referendum on whether the island should join the 2020 Tokyo Olympics under the name "Taiwan", not "Chinese Taipei".

The EAOC and the Olympic Council of Asia were not immediately reachable for comment. Relations between Taipei and Beijing have deteriorated since President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan's independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party took office two years ago, as her government refuses to recognize the island as a part of "one China". Beijing has cut off official communication with Tsai's government. Under pressure from Beijing, a growing number of international airlines and companies have recently changed their website classifications of Taiwan to "Taiwan, China" or "Chinese Taipei". China has also poached four of Taiwan's few remaining official diplomatic allies since Tsai came to power.—AFP

Sports

Albania Skenderbeu football club is No 1- at match-fixing

Most rampant match-rigging in football history

TIRANA: Two months ago Albania's top football club, Skenderbeu, was raising a trophy to the sky as confetti rained down on the team, gleeful after clinching their seventh national title in eight seasons. But that joy is now a distant memory after the side was suspended from all European competitions for a decade - the heaviest ever sanction imposed by UEFA.

The European sports body also slapped the team with a one million euro (\$1.1 million) fine for what it claims was some of the most rampant match-rigging in football history. "This club has been fixing football matches like nobody has ever done before in the history of the game," UEFA's ethics and disciplinary committee wrote in a damning report leaked in March. Any lingering hope of a reprieve was dashed in June after the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne confirmed that the suspension would go into force without waiting for an appeal, whose date has not yet been set.

For Skenderbeu, the ruling is nothing short of a "death sentence," said the club's president Ardian Takaj, who had hoped to bring the team to the preliminary rounds of the Europa League in July. The team, named after the 15th century military commander Skanderbeg, is the only Albanian club to make it to the league's group stage. Their blacklist from a future in European football has crushed a fervent fan base who gathered by the thousands in the team's home base in southeastern Korçe in February pleading: "Do not kill our dream!"

53 fixed matches

Relying on its Betting Fraud Detection System (BFDS), which tracks irregular betting movements around games, UEFA estimated that 53 Skenderbeu matches had been fixed since 2010. Those include national, European and "even in friendly matches", the sports body said, describing the practice as "persistent and recurrent". Skenderbeu officials and players continue to insist on their innocence, but more than a few matches have raised suspicions over the years.

For example, in July 2015, Skenderbeu was leading Northern Ireland's Crusaders 2-1 at the end of regular time in Belfast before their fortunes suddenly turned. At the end of the match "hundreds of thousands of dollars" were put on the bet that at least four goals will be scored, according to UEFA. The Northern Ireland side then scored twice in a minute during the added time, thanks to slip-ups by Skenderbeu's defense and goalkeeper (3-2). "If there is not a UEFA investigation into our game tonight, then there is something wrong," the Crusaders' goalkeeper, Sean O'Neill, tweeted at the time.

A report based on 'rumors'

Club president Ardian Takaj, who owns a seaside hotel and used to run a TV channel, is furious over UEFA's allegation that he holds an "influential role in illegal activities of Skenderbeu," including links with betting companies. The 54-year-old firmly denies any wrongdoing and argues that UEFA is taking advantage of Albania - a "small country, a small club with a small budget" - to "promote its (BFDS) system". "I do not think that UEFA would dare to take such a measure against a Western team... on the basis of doubts emerging from movements of the ratings," he said. The team's recently retired goalkeeper-turned-coach, Orges Shehi, said he was also offended by a report "founded not on proof but on rumors". UEFA noted suspicious results in at least 46 of the former player's performances. "The football is not an exact science, we see even more serious mistakes all the time," the 41-year-old said.

'Who should go to prison?'

Justice now rests in the hands of Albania, a gambling-mad country rife with corruption and impunity for elites. Armando Duka, the president of Albania's football federation since 2002, says he is following up on the UEFA report and has asked the prosecutor's office to open investigations. Match-fixing "is not an Albanian phenomenon, but a European phenomenon," said Duka, who celebrated with Skenderbeu when they



DURRES: Photo shows KF Skenderbeu president Ardian Takaj speaking during an interview with AFP in the city of Durres. After an investigation, UEFA decided to lead to a 10-year ban for the team from the Champion League and a one million Euro fine for alleged match-fixing. —AFP

lifted the Albania Cup in May. But Artan Shyti, president of the country's betting companies federation, notes that Albania has been slow to probe such crimes in the past. UEFA tried to start a joint investigation with Albania seven years ago, but was met with "a lack of cooperation from the authorities," said Shyti, who is also a rector at the University of Sports in Tirana.

There are 4,000 betting offices the country of 2.8 million, not including the illegal bookmakers and websites that are of the biggest concern, said Shyti. While

Prime Minister Edi Rama has said he intends to shut-down those online betting rings, calling them a hub of "economic crime", the task is easier said than done. Shyti says one solution would be to shift some tax revenue from legal betting to the clubs in order to diminish the temptation of "illegal financial sources". But before that, key questions about Skenderbeu remain. In fact, the UEFA report left much unanswered: "Who was betting? Who won? And who should go to prison?" Shyti asks. —AFP

Ozil's Turkish hometown switches the street sign

ISTANBUL: Authorities in the ancestral Turkish town of soccer star Mesut Ozil have erected a new street sign showing him posing with President Tayyip Erdogan after the player quit the German team, saying he faced "racism and disrespect" for his Turkish roots. The sign marking "Mesut Ozil Avenue", named in honor of the player, replaces one picturing him wearing the international strip of Germany, the country of his birth.

The picture of a smiling Ozil and Erdogan side by side, holding up the team shirt of his English club Arsenal, set off a row in Germany when the photo was snapped in May. Erdogan, who was campaigning for re-election when the photo was taken, has drawn criticism in Germany for a crackdown following a coup attempt in 2016, with the president responding in kind.

Mustafa Semerci, the mayor of the Black Sea town of Devrek - the original home of Ozil's family - said he had changed the sign after "we watched with sadness what was done to Ozil", according to Turkish news agency DHA. Ozil, 29, a key member of Germany's World Cup-winning team in 2014, was also photographed with Erdogan along with Ilkay Gundogan, a team mate likewise of Turkish descent. Ozil's announcement that he would no longer play for Germany came amid a political debate about an influx of 1.6 million migrants in the past four years that has fuelled a far-right resurgence and weakened support for traditional parties. — Reuters



ZONGULDAK, Turkey: People gather under a cardboard bearing a photo of German national team football player Mesut Ozil (left) and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan - reading 'Mesut Ozil street' during a street name ceremony in Zonguldak's Devrek district. — AFP

Erdogan praises Ozil's decision to quit German team

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday said he had spoken to Turkish-origin football star Mesut Ozil after his decision to quit the German team on the grounds of racism, offering his praise for the Arsenal player's move. "Last night I spoke to Mesut. His attitude in the statement is completely patriotic," Erdogan said, quoted by state TRT Haber broadcaster. "It is not possible to accept this kind of racist attitude towards a young man who poured so much sweat for the German national team's success. This cannot be tolerated."

Ozil's decision to quit playing for Germany and his strongly-worded four-page statement caused uproar in Germany even as it was applauded by Turkish ministers. He had faced heavy criticism during the World Cup, especially over a controversial photograph with Erdogan in May ahead of presidential and parliamentary polls in Turkey. Ozil, a key member of the squad which won the 2014 World Cup, criticized the German Football Association (DFB) bosses, sponsors and the media.

He lamented a lack of support from DFB president Reinhard Grindel. "In the eyes of Grindel and his supporters, I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose," Ozil, 29, wrote. But the association said in a statement on Monday that it rejected "the notion that the DFB is associated with racism". In his statement, Ozil addressed critics of the photo and said that he was not making a political statement when he appeared with the Turkish leader before the World Cup finals. "I have two hearts, one German and one Turkish," said Ozil. Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul on Monday congratulated Ozil, saying he had "scored the most beautiful goal against the virus of fascism." — AFP

Klopp: Pressure on Liverpool to deliver trophies

LONDON: Liverpool will feel the weight of increased expectation to deliver silverware this season after making encouraging forays into the transfer market, manager Jurgen Klopp said. The German is about to undertake his third full season in charge but despite the progress since he took over in 2015, he is yet to win his first trophy with the club. "You're right and people will say that it is the next step. We need to be ready for that," Klopp told reporters in New York, where Liverpool were continuing their pre-season tour.

"I know about the expectations and that's completely normal. First of all we have to play the football that gives us an opportunity to win something. We cannot talk about winning something before we start the season." The last of Liverpool's 18 domestic league titles was won in the 1989-90 season, while the club's last major trophy was the 2011-12 League Cup.

Klopp took Liverpool to three finals, but lost the 2016 League Cup to Manchester City on penalties, the 2016 Europa League title to Sevilla 3-1 and the 2018 Champions League final to Real Madrid by the same scoreline. Liverpool ended the Premier League season fourth, 25 points behind winners City, and the squad's lack of depth was exposed as the campaign played out. The German has made four signings since, adding goalkeeper Alisson from AS Roma, midfielder Naby Keita from RB Leipzig, defensive midfielder Fabinho from Monaco and winger Xherdan Shaqiri from Stoke City.

Klopp hopes the signings will help the squad better cope with the intense style of play he demands and that



CHARLOTTE: Jurgen Klopp coach of Liverpool huddles with his player Sheyi Ojo #54 during a break in action against Borussia Dortmund during an International Champions Cup match at Bank of America Stadium on July 22, 2018. —AFP

his team can improve on last season's record of 12 Premier League draws. "It's not just that we have to be more consistent, we have to create circumstances where we can be more consistent," the 51-year-old added. "Nobody is consistent with 11 players. What we are working on is the depth of the squad because you need it. "We expect more

from ourselves. We will go again for the championship and each kind of cup, but that does not mean I can sit here and we will get it. We have the highest ambitions, 100 percent." Liverpool continue their pre-season against Manchester City in the International Champions Cup in East Rutherford, New Jersey today. — Reuters

Man City's Sane determined after World Cup snub

NEW YORK: Leroy Sane has thanked Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola for helping him overcome his World Cup heartbreak. The City forward, who was a key member of Guardiola's Premier League title-winning side last season, was left stunned by Germany coach Joachim Low's decision to omit him from the squad for the tournament in Russia.

It was a move which backfired for Low after his side failed to exit the group stages, leaving many to question the wisdom of leaving out a player who scored 10 goals and provided 15 assists in a campaign which ended with him being named as the Football Association young player of the year. Yet with the Euro 2020 qualifiers on the horizon, Sane, who refused to comment on the Mesut Ozil racism scandal which has engulfed German football, believes he will have a chance to resurrect his international career under Guardiola's guidance.

"Yes, Pep had a chat with me after it happened," said Sane, when asked about his shock omission from Germany's squad. "We talked about everything and how my mind was and now we are just looking forward. "I was disappointed but from that moment and now I'm just looking forward. I'm just preparing to be ready for the start of the new season. It gives you motivation. It would be a dream to play in the World Cup." —AFP

25 Cardinals fall despite Ponedeleon's stellar debut; Braves down Marlins



26 Landmarks illuminated as Tokyo celebrates 2 years until Olympics

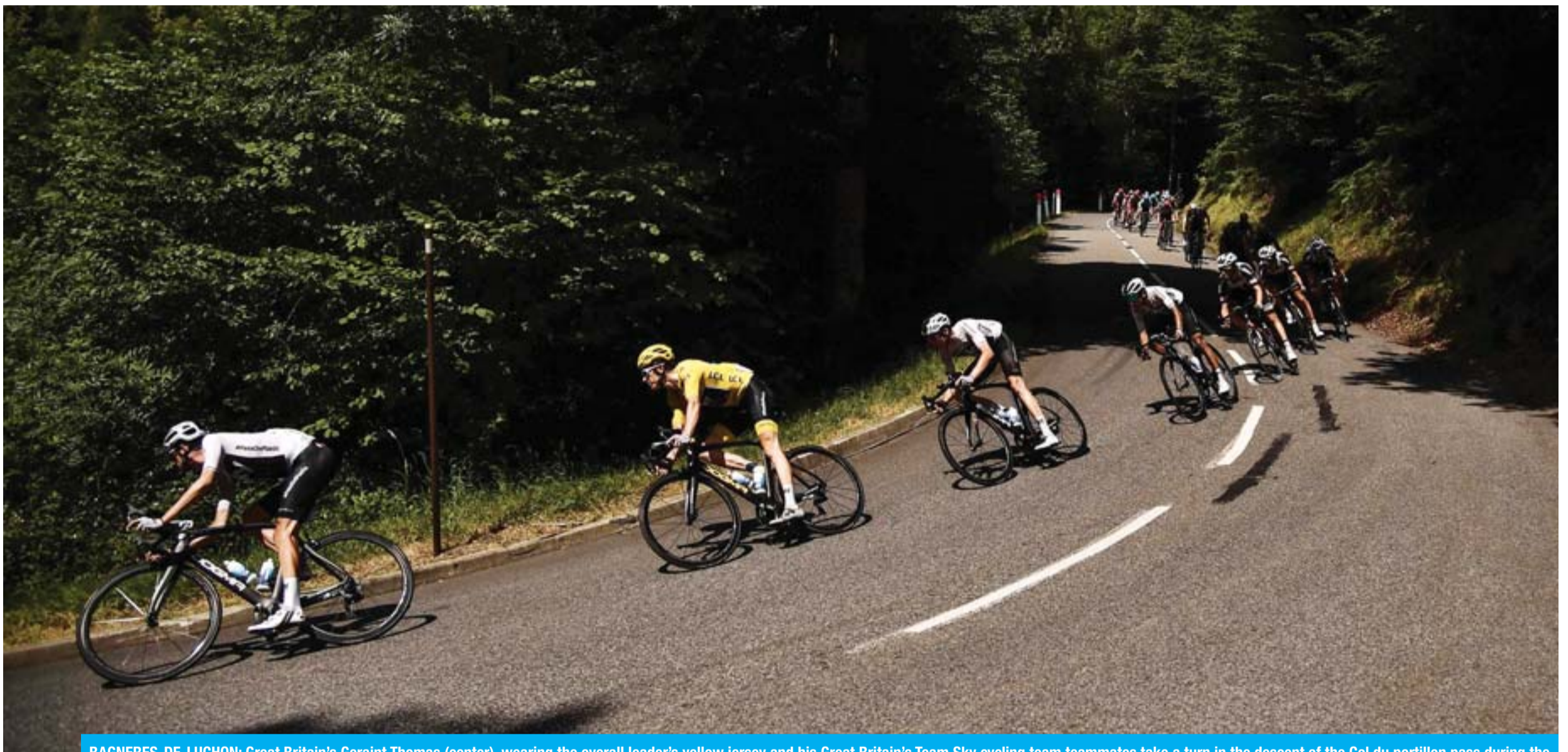


27 Albania Skenderbeu football club is No 1 - at match-fixing



Alaphilippe whizzes to 2nd stage win

Thomas retains the yellow jersey



BAGNERES-DE-LUCHON: Great Britain's Geraint Thomas (center), wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey and his Great Britain's Team Sky cycling team teammates take a turn in the descent of the Col du portillon pass during the 16th stage of the 105th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, between Carcassonne and Bagneres-de-Luchon, southwestern France yesterday. — AFP

BAGNERES-DE-LUCHON: Julian Alaphilippe's descending skills made the difference as the Frenchman claimed his second victory in this year's Tour de France to take the 16th stage yesterday. The Quick-Step Floors rider, who already prevailed in the 10th stage in Le Grand Bornand, whizzed past Adam Yates six kilometers from the line after the Briton had hit the asphalt in a left-hand curve in the final descent. Spain's Gorka Izagirre took second place and Yates finished third, 15 seconds behind.

The stage was briefly interrupted with 187km to go by a farmers' protest, police using tear gas to disperse the demonstrators with some riders being

affected. Among them was world champion Peter Sagan and Briton Geraint Thomas, who retained the overall leader's yellow jersey after an otherwise comfortable 218-km mountain ride from Carcassonne.

Thomas still leads his Team Sky mate and defending champion Chris Froome by 1 minute, 39 seconds and Dutchman Tom Dumoulin by 1:50 going into today's 17th stage, a brutal 65-km, up-and-down trek from Bagneres-de-Luchon to Saint-Lary-Soulan. Downhills were tricky yesterday and former world champion Philippe Gilbert went spectacularly over a low stone wall in the descent from the Col du Portet d'Aspet. The Belgian got back on his bike after disap-

pearing in the ravine for a couple of minutes.

It was in the same descent that Italian Fabio Casartelli crashed and died in the 1995 Tour de France. "It's pure happiness after a day of suffering," said Alaphilippe, who tightened his grip on the polka dot jersey for the mountains classification. Alaphilippe fought hard to get his place in the day's large breakaway and he produced his effort at the right moment to be the second rider to reach the top of the Col du Portillon, 20 seconds behind Yates. He was gaining time in the descent when Yates went down. "I knew the last kilometers of the stage. I'm sad for Yates who crashed but it could have happened to

me. I took a lot of risks. It's bike racing," the Frenchman said.

A breakaway of 47 riders took shape after the race was briefly interrupted by the farmers' protest. "Please respect the riders, even if you have a cause to fight for," said Tour director Christian Prudhomme. The stage resumed after a 15-minute interruption and Alaphilippe stayed quiet in the breakaway group until the last climb to the Col du Portillon. Sagan virtually secured a record-equalling sixth green jersey for the points classification, which he will officially wrap up if he reaches Paris. He leads Norway's Alexander Kristoff by 282 points with 270 still up for grabs.

Don't insult French fans, UCI boss urges Team Sky's Brailsford

BAGNERES-DE-LUCHON: International Cycling Union (UCI) president David Lappartient urged Sir Dave Brailsford yesterday not to insult French fans after the Team Sky principal said spitting and booing at riders was a "French thing". Defending champion Chris Froome was slapped across the shoulder by a spectator during the climb up to l'Alpe d'Huez last week, and the Briton has also said he has been punched and spat on. His team mate Geraint Thomas, the overall race leader, was booed on the podium after he won the Alpe d'Huez stage, as some fans expressed their frustration that Sky have dominated the Tour since 2012.

In comments that will have offended the host nation, Brailsford said on Monday that the physical intimidation "just seems to be a French thing. Like a French cultural thing." But Frenchman Lappartient, whom Brailsford has previously accused of having a "French mayor mentality", asked the Sky team's boss not to stir up animosity among the local fans. "First thing, there are not just French fans on the Tour. They come from everywhere, and I don't think it is healthy to make it about nationalities," said Lappartient.

"This is happening just as we are trying to call the fans to be calm, to make sure that the riders - their riders - and especially Chris Froome, are respected. He is pouring oil on the fire. It's not very good."

Froome was cleared of a doping offence just days before the start of this year's race, after an investigation that had dragged on since last September, leading some to call for him to be excluded from the race. Lappartient spoke to Reuters in Carcassonne before the start of the 16th stage of the Tour, which was briefly brought to a halt as bales of hay were thrown on to the road by protesting farmers and police tear gas blew into the faces of some of the riders. Lappartient said he believed Brailsford was reacting to the fact that his team has not been popular in France, where their domination of the race in the last few years is reminiscent of that of Lance Armstrong's US Postal in the early 2000s.

"He might be frustrated that his team is not popular, but it's not a reason to lash out at a country," he explained. "You have to respect the spectators, those who come to see a cycling race. When you have a cycling team, you don't insult those who come to see a race." Lappartient, however, praised Froome and Thomas for their calm amid the storm. "Chris Froome said that he loves France, that he loves racing in France and that he trains every day in France. He speaks our language, and he knows what the Tour gave him," he said. "As we and the riders are trying to ease the pressure, it's wrong that a team manager pours oil on the fire."

Tour de France interrupted

Meanwhile, a protest by local farmers brought stage 16 of the Tour de France to a halt yesterday



BAGNERES-DE-LUCHON: Gendarmes detain a protester as Great Britain's Geraint Thomas (right) - wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, and the pack ride behind, during a farmers' protest yesterday. — AFP

as bales of hay were thrown on to the road on the route from Carcassonne to Bagneres-de-Luchon and police tear gas blew into the faces of some of the riders. The gas was used to disperse the protesters but it ended up blowing in the direction of the peloton, which led to the race being stopped at the 187 km-to-go point. The race continued after the brief hiatus. World jersey holder Geraint Thomas and world champion Peter Sagan were among the riders rinsing their eyes after the incident, which stopped the stage for 15 minutes. It is not the first time that protesters have interrupted a prominent race, the most memorable incident happening in the 1984 Paris-Nice, when French great Bernard Hinault punched one of the demonstrators. — Agencies

Deschamps, Zidane on FIFA coach of the year shortlist

PARIS: France coach Didier Deschamps and former Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane head the shortlist for The Best FIFA Men's Coach award, world soccer's governing body announced yesterday. Deschamps's France lifted the World Cup in Russia, and his 1998 world title winning team mate Zidane helped Real Madrid claim a third consecutive Champions League.

England's Gareth Southgate was also named on the shortlist after guiding the national team to a first World Cup semi-final in 28 years. Four women and six men are part of the 10-candidate list for the women's coach of the year award. The nominations include Asako Takakura, who guided Japan to the Women's Asian Cup title and Reynald Pedros, whose Olympique Lyonnais won a third consecutive Champions League and the French league title. The three finalists for each award will be revealed at a later date, with the winners to be announced in a ceremony in London on Sept. 24.

Full list of nominees

Men's coach of the year: Massimiliano Allegri (Juventus), Stanislav Cherchesov (Russia), Zlatko Dalic (Croatia), Didier Deschamps (France), Pep Guardiola (Manchester City), Juergen Klopp (Liverpool), Roberto Martinez (Belgium), Diego Simeone (Atletico Madrid), Gareth Southgate (England), Ernesto Valverde (Barcelona), Zinedine Zidane (Real Madrid)

Women's coach of the year

Emma Hayes (Chelsea), Stephan Lerch (VfL Wolfsburg), Mark Parsons (Portland Thorns), Reynald Pedros (Lyon), Alen Stajcic (Australia), Asako Takakura (Japan), Vadao (Brazil), Jorge Vilda (Spain), Martina Voss-Tecklenburg (Switzerland), Sarina Wiegman (The Netherlands) (Reporting by Hardik Vyas in Bengaluru Editing by Christian Radnedge—Agencies)